

Workers' Liberty

The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself



Independence for Kosova

**Globalisation • Russia: eyewitness report
Stephen Lawrence • Ireland in 1798**

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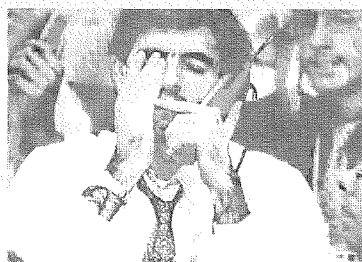
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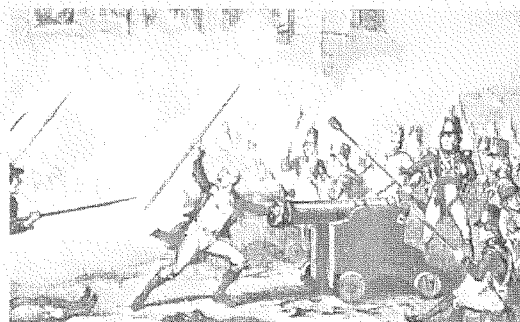
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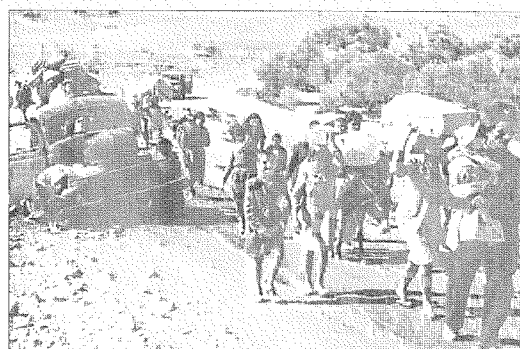
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Looking for justice

I THOUGHT: who am I going to turn to? Where can I get support? And I remembered meeting a group of trade unionists who said they were going to help."

These were the words of Neville Lawrence, thanking the TUC Conference in September for the help trade unionists had given his family in their fight to bring the racists who murdered his son, Stephen, to justice. The police, he told the conference, had treated his family and himself with indifference and hostility after his son was killed.

Yet the chances of Neville Lawrence seeing justice done on the thugs who killed his son are now almost nil.

The five hard-faced young men who are openly branded in the press as Stephen Lawrence's killers have stood trial. The prosecution failed. They can never be tried again for this crime. That is the end of the matter for them. They will enjoy a celebrity status and a glamour in some of the south-east London circles in which they move. To racists they will be heroes.

Let us pause here. An 18 year old boy waiting at a bus stop in a London street is knifed to death. His killers are known. They are openly branded as killers in the press. They have stood trial, yet they got off scot free. Why?

Because as well as the racists Stephen was unlucky enough to meet the night he died, there are an awful lot of other racists. There were malignant racists amongst the police who had the duty of investigating Stephen's death, collecting evidence, catching the killers, and bringing them before a court along with convincing proof of the guilt with which they are now publicly branded. There were so many racists involved at every level of the investigation into Stephen Lawrence's murder, and in preparing the prosecution case against those who were eventually identified as his killers, that the whole operation was bungled from start to finish.

It was, it seems, not something they cared very much about. They resented the attitude of the grieving parents of the murdered boy. They treated them like "criminals", Neville Lawrence told the TUC. There are allegations that police corruption was involved. Whatever the balance between racism and corruption

in this gruesome business, racism was paramount: it was as if they couldn't be bothered at first to seriously investigate this killing.

And so it has to be recorded that a black youth at the beginning of his grown-up life has had that life savagely ripped from him by racists, and that this deed was done with impunity. The killers of Stephen Lawrence will probably never be brought to justice.

Will the police who knifed justice for Stephen Lawrence as the racists knifed Stephen, be brought to justice? We do not know but the answer is most likely no.

How many of the police and ex-police who deliberately framed Irish people for bombings they did not do, and thus condemned innocent men to decades in jail — one, Guiseppe Conlan, died in jail — how many of those police have been brought to book? None of them.

Just as the killers of Stephen Lawrence found that there was one law for young black people and another for them, the police have been shown again and again by the higher authorities that they can get away with a great deal "in the line of duty" or, as in the Stephen Lawrence case, by shamefully neglecting their duty.

Sir Paul Condon, Chief of the Metropolitan Police, denies that the police are racist, or that there are enough racists in the police to taint the whole force. His equivalent in Greater Manchester, David Wilmot, is more candid. The police are racist, he says. So something drastic should be done? Well, no. The police, you see, "reflect society, so what can you do?"

You can purge the police! You can reeducate some of them. You can seriously test and probe new recruits. You can set up real, that is, independent, mechanisms for investigating complaints against the police. You can submit the police to democratic public accountability and the rule of law — of the law that they indefensibly failed to put at the disposal of Stephen Lawrence's family for the proper investigation of his death and the effective prosecution of his known killers.

One consequence of such atrocities as the Stephen Lawrence case is a likely growth in the influence on black people of demagogic organisations like Louis Farrakhan's black-separatist Nation of Islam. It is tragically understandable why young black people will listen to them. Neville Lawrence knows better.

A separate black society — "separate but equal" — cannot be realised even if it were desirable. Black people will win real, comprehensive, universally accepted, legally impregnable and enforceable equality, or they will always be unequal — at the mercy of boneheads in the street and of boneheads in the police force.

Neville Lawrence knows that. And he knows where the answer lies: in working class unity. Appropriately, the TUC delegates rose to their feet as he spoke, in sympathy and approbation. Black and white, unite and fight!

Workers' Liberty

Incorporating Socialist Organiser

THE WORKING CLASS WILL RISE AGAIN!

Editor: Sean Matgamna; Assistant Editor: Helen Rate;
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Milosevic's slaughterhouse of the peoples

THE many-peopled federation of Yugoslavia created something like equality for its peoples under the rule of Tito's comparatively liberal Stalinism. The state was no longer the Serb-dominated mini-empire of oppressed nations which had been pre-1939 Yugoslavia.

That changed in the late 1980s. Led by Slobodan Milosevic, Serb chauvinists mounted an offensive that has turned Yugoslavia into a slaughterhouse of the peoples in the last decade. Conflict and slaughter has erupted in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosova.

Kosova, ninety per cent of whose people are ethnic Albanian, was legally a province of Serbia, but under Tito it enjoyed autonomy little short of that exercised by the full Republics of the Yugoslav federation. In 1989, driving for Serb expansion and power, Milosevic abolished Kosova's autonomy. Here, as in all the other national and ethnic conflicts, the destabilising, aggressive nationalism was Serb nationalism. And here, even more than in Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina, the big powers supported Milosevic as the man most likely to restore order in the region. While mildly deploring Milosevic's excesses, they told the people of Kosova not to resist.

In Kosova, as elsewhere, Serb national oppression activated or intensified the nationalism of those marked down as its victims. A Kosova Liberation Army came into existence. There is serious fighting, so serious that it has prompted NATO to threaten air strikes against Serbia. As in Bosnia, the aim of NATO action is not to bring democracy and justice for the peoples, but to restrain the conflict and enhance the authority of the big powers. NATO air strikes will hinder, not help, the development of a working-class and democratic opposition in Serbia which can oust Milosevic.

From any consistently democratic, or honestly socialist point of view, the case for self-determination for the ethnic Albanians

of Kosova is unanswerable. They are the overwhelming majority. Whether they become again an autonomous province in a bigger state, or secede from that state, should depend only on the will of the people of Kosova. Whether they set up an independent state or link with Albania is that is for themselves and Albania to decide.

There is little room for doubt that they want independence from Milosevic's rule.

Unity of the ethnic Albanians and Serbian workers can only be won on the basis of the Serbs supporting the right of the ethnic Albanians to secede, and socialist ethnic Albanians opposing tendencies to anti-Serb chauvinism in the ranks of their own people.

Let Pinochet rot in jail!

WE learn as we go to press that Augusto Pinochet, the Hitler of Chile, has been detained by police in London, on a warrant from Spain charging him with the murder of Spanish nationals in Chile.

Pinochet murdered Chilean democracy, which was older than that of most European countries. In response to the victory of the moderate socialist Salvador Allende in the 1970 Presidential elections, the CIA and Chilean generals like Pinochet worked to destabilise the country. In September 1973, Pinochet organised a bloody coup. Tens of thousands of people were rounded up and butchered; the football stadium in Santiago was turned into a prison compound and a slaughterhouse. Trade unionists, socialists, and even liberals, were butchered.

The bloody repression in Chile not only drove Chile's workers back for decades, but intimidated labour movements world-wide. It was an important turning-point in the process whereby the ruling classes regained the initiative after the post-1968 workers' offensive, and prepared the way for their own offensive in the 1980s and '90s. In Italy, for example, the world's strongest Communist Party, based on what was then one of the world's most militant working classes, switched from outright opposition to the local Tories (the Christian Democrats) to a desire for a "historic compromise" with them.

At the same time in Britain, the trade unions were moving towards a confrontation that forced the Tories under Edward Heath out of office in an unscheduled General Election in February 1974. The events in Chile made leaders of the Labour Party fear that something similar would happen in Britain if the trade unions were not brought to heel.

Michael Foot, one of the most important left-wing ministers of the time, has testified to the importance of Chile in shaping what happened in Britain. If a coup could happen in the oldest and seemingly most stable democracy in Latin America, it might happen here.

Were the Labour leaders in a needless panic? The man who was then Britain's Chief of Staff, Lord Carver later publicly admitted that at the time some "fairly senior" army officers had started to talk seriously about taking a lead from Chile.

The Labour government demobilised working-class militancy. In 1979, the Tories returned to power and began the slower, legal process of shackling the trade unions with what are still the least liberal and the most oppressive labour laws in Europe.

Pinochet is 82. Let him rot in jail!

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Serbia, the west and Kosova

Workers' Liberty talks to Quintin Hoare*

QH: The signals about military action seem to change from day to day. The question is: if there is bombing, what will be its purpose? At the moment the British, US, French and German policy is to keep Kosova inside Yugoslavia. These governments and their military leaders have regularly said that they will not act as the Kosova Liberation Army's airforce. A military figure was quoted in *Herald Tribune* says quite clearly that if there is bombing it will neither be against Serbia or for Kosova. In other words they continue to deny either the legitimacy or desirability of Kosovan independence. If there are air strikes they will be carried out almost with reluctance and in order to get a deal which offers no type of justice to the Kosovars.

MO: There are some precedents for US-British policy. During the 1991 Gulf War the US stopped short of allowing the break-up of Iraq. They did not want to see a Kurdish state emerge in northern Iraq which would then destabilise Turkey. It seems that the British and Americans want to avoid the possibility of an independent Kosova destabilising Macedonia, or perhaps linking with Albania.

QH: In 1991 the European Union set up an international commission of eminent lawyers to discuss policy on the former Titoist Yugoslavia. The commission concluded that Yugoslavia had dissolved into its component parts, but without defining what those units were. The US and European governments took a pragmatic decision to ignore Kosova's rights and to allow it to remain under the domination of Belgrade, although they knew quite well that Milosevic's control was imposed illegitimately just a few years before.

They say — and seem to believe — that Kosovan independence would destabilise Macedonia and Albania. I think that they are simply mistaken.

During the last six months Milosevic has got away with his policy of outright repression in Kosova. During this period the Macedonian government has moved closer to the Serbs, believing that they too can get away with an anti-Albanian policy at home where relations between



the Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority are not good.

This is the force for instability. And the longer the repression goes on in Kosova the greater the instability in the area as Albanians move between Western Macedonia and Kosova and interact politically.

MO: Do you believe that socialists should have a concern with Macedonian integrity? If the argument holds that the Albanians of Kosova are entitled to the right to self-determination, then why not the Albanians of Western Macedonia, or, for that matter, Serb areas in northern Kosova?

QH: There have always been two different ways of posing national self-determination in the former Yugoslav area, and both were present in the old Yugoslav constitutions. One was based on the constituent units of the federation and one was based on whole nations.

In the former Yugoslavia the constituent units essentially governed themselves, even within the federation. Peaceful separation along these lines would be possible.

If we followed the idea that every ethnic/national minority has the right to self-determination we would be promoting war. Separation along these lines would be achievable in no other way and implies barbaric methods and mobilisations on the basis of ethnic purity.

I think there was no justification for

the Serb area created inside Croatia or the enclaves formed by Zagreb and Belgrade inside Bosnia. In Macedonia, although it is true that the Albanians are mainly in the west, the populations are not separate, they are inter-mixed. In some towns the populations are mingled rather like Belfast. And so the question is neither soluble by partitions, and nor is it desirable.

MO: On the pro-Kosova demonstration in London on 27 September the youth were wearing t-shirts calling for NATO air strikes and the placards were calling for independence. The demand is for independence rather than unity with Albania. Why?

QH: The demand for independence, rather than the very limited "autonomy" the US is suggesting, is now absolutely overwhelming.

Although Kosova and Albania were briefly united under Italian rule during World War 2, they have been separate entities for most of the last hundred years. In the period 1966 to 1981 there was some freedom of movement between the two states, however remember that during this period Albania was run by an ultra-Stalinist dictatorship and was much poorer than Kosova. Although there was an economic gap between Slovenia at one end and Kosova at the other at that time Kosova was relatively happily part of the Yugoslav federation.

MO: Why has the resistance to 10 years of terrible Serb aggression been so peaceful for so long?

QH: The main party, the LDK, is led by Rugova, who is a pacifist. This party has rested its case on legal arguments and has not only been against armed resistance but has also been very passive. What the LDK has achieved is a system of self help. They have built up a clandestine, parallel education and welfare system, funded by tithes from money sent back by people working abroad.

But this is not just a matter of the position of the Rugova party, but of most political groups before the recent months of repression. I think there are two reasons. First is because of the fear that any mobilisations, direct or armed resistance, would be met by massive bloodshed. And secondly the politicians had false hopes in the international community and hoped for outside help.

* Quintin Hoare, the Director of the Bosnian Institute, spoke to Mark Osborn on 10 October in a personal capacity.

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MO: How did the KLA take shape?

QH: My impression is that a small number of groups based abroad, particularly in Switzerland, became frustrated at the lack of action from the Pristina politicians and began small-scale military preparations and operations. Some of these groups stood in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, identifying with Albania.

Their opportunity came before the current Serb offensive with the collapse of the state structures in Albania. Vast amounts of weapons became available and the border became easier to cross. When widespread Serb repression began many volunteers sprang up in the villages and young men returned from abroad to fight. The KLA expanded very rapidly into a real national movement, and not on a very political basis. Much of the impetus was the desire of the rural population for self defence.

By June or July, a few months into the offensive, some of Rugova's party had gone over to the KLA, some had joined but remained in the LDK, and different tendencies emerged. It seems as if the higher levels have now united in the fight for an independent Kosova rather than looking to a greater Albania.

MO: Are there any hopeful signs for socialists? Is there any chance of independent working class activity?

QH: One consequence of the loss of Kosova's independence is that most industrial workers lost their jobs. Many workers have gone abroad, others are unemployed.

In Serbia some workers' organisations with some independence do exist. Many are unhappy with the situation in Serbia, although probably only a small minority would have a good position on Kosova.

MO: On the demonstration I was selling *Workers' Liberty*. The young Albanians were not hostile, in fact they were quite curious. Nevertheless they said they were not socialist. To what extent are socialists still suffering from the legacy of Stalinism and the specific problem that Milosevic calls himself a socialist.

QH: These are very powerful problems. It is clearly difficult for Albanians to see the socialist alternative at the present historical juncture.

● *The Bosnian Institute can be contacted at 14-16 St Mark's Road, London W11 1RQ. The Institute publishes Bosnia Report six times a year and meets on the first Monday of every month at the University of Westminster, Regent Street, London.*

Friends of the Institute receive publications and the Report: £20 per year (£5 unwaged).

Russia's crisis sparks general strike

As the world economic crisis deepens, Sam Benn reports on the general strike of 7 October

THE Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), along with other trade union associations called for a general strike on October 7 throughout Russia. The Communist Party also organised protests for the same day and in many towns shared a platform with the trade unions.

The level of involvement in the strike is an indicator of the level of discontent and politicisation brought about by the seemingly unending crisis in the Russian economy and society.

What is clear is that the position of ordinary working people is deteriorating, even when it seemed impossible for it get any worse. The catalogue of problems wrought by the reform process is well known. The level of wage arrears and pensions non-payment continues to grow and the current financial crisis has meant that the cost of living for ordinary workers has risen dramatically yet again. As a consequence, people are justifiably angry.

As would be expected the government sought to minimise the extent of involvement in the action and the Ministry of the Interior at first claimed that only about 60,000 people took part. This figure was clearly absurd and was later adjusted upwards by the Ministry of Justice to the similarly absurd figure of 615,000.

In reality protests were taking place at a variety of levels. Some enterprises struck and closed; some held meetings and demonstrations at their plants during the course of the day; and some participated in town centre meetings, marches and demonstrations. The trade union figures suggest that 12 million people at 39,000 enterprises went on strike or were involved in work stoppages, and later figures suggest 17 million were involved in meetings and demonstrations in towns and cities across the country.

Whilst in the west the actions in Moscow and St Petersburg may have been reported in many small towns in the regions of Russia demonstrations were taking place also. Here in Sverdlovsk Oblast, many small towns, where liveli-



Stalinists demonstrate against Yeltsin

hoods are precarious to say the least, participated in the actions.

However, a significant factor which affected turnout and involvement should be mentioned. Across much of Russia, Sverdlovsk Oblast included, the actions were hampered by the first severe snowfall of the winter — with conditions that would be described as a blizzard in the UK. Yet many thousands stood in wind and snow-swept squares to listen to anti-government speeches and passed anti-government resolutions.

In Yekaterinburg, an estimated 7,000 people joined a march from a number of the city's leading enterprises, through the city down Lenin Prospect to the central square, named after the 1905 revolution. (Interestingly many of the streets in this city have been renamed but everyone still refers to them by their previous revolutionary names — so it is possible to walk down Rosa Luxembourg Street, Sacco and Vanzetti Street and Narodnya Vola Street — and no one calls Lenin Prospect "Main Street" as it was renamed!)

In many parts of Russia the regional and local authorities' position on the strike showed the extent of regional disintegration. In Krasnoyarsk and Kemerovo the regional governors actually led the protests. In other regions governors speaking either on television or in

the press recognised the justice of the strikers' demands and in some small towns the mayor either attended or spoke at the meetings. Many authorities simply held an ambiguous position, facilitating the actions but not participating directly. In Yekaterinburg, for example, they allowed the demonstration to go ahead, closed roads to assist the progress of the march and provided access to the city's public address system, which meant the speeches could be heard a long distance away from 1905 Square.

However, at the same time everyone assumed that the possibility existed for serious disturbances and the authorities clearly organised for this. For example, in Moscow it was estimated that 15,000 police and interior troops were to be mobilised to guarantee order. There were even reports that army units were to be mobilised but the same reports pointed out that army units were not enthusiastic about the prospects of street fighting. Given the horrendous conditions in the Russian army, the level of dissatisfaction amongst troops and the divisions in the officer corps the army can hardly be counted on to turn on striking workers. Nevertheless, it was not without significance that the Ministry of Defence received sufficient funds to pay the army two months worth of its back wages only

a week before the strike!

The huge police presence was evident in 1905 Square in Yekaterinburg. Down every side street there were buses full of either militia or Ministry of the Interior troops. Office workers near to the square were told the day before the demonstration not to park cars near the square for fear that they might be damaged or worse. In fact the demonstration was cut short by the appalling weather and instead of three hours of speeches the demonstration finished after one hour.

From observation in the square the tone of the demonstration was obviously strongly anti-government but strangely good humoured. Indeed throughout Russia there were little or no reports of actual disturbances. As in most towns, the Yekaterinburg demonstration passed a number of resolutions. They wanted changes to the social and economic reforms of the recent past; they wanted no more privatisation; salaries and pensions arrears to be paid; salaries and pensions to be paid on time in the future; the acceptance of laws to defend trade unionists and workers' rights; and the resignation of the president.

The age composition of the demonstration was also worthy of comment. Whilst it was true that there were few young people neither was it totally dominated by pensioners. Most of the demonstrators appeared to be aged between 30 and 50 and although male workers seemed to predominate there were sizeable numbers of women workers too.

The banners and placards, as well as supporting the socio-economic demands of the action also called for direct political action. Inevitably economic demands in Russia become political demands. Every economic decision is transparently the result of government's choices, decisions and actions. Demands for Yeltsin's removal were evident everywhere, as were calls for him to be put on trial and imprisoned.

Although the Communist Party was involved in the demonstration, only one portrait of Stalin was visible — though this was somewhat bizarrely counterbalanced by a small monarchist grouping with their Romanov banner!

Demonstrations also occurred in many other towns in the Oblast. For example, in Nizhniy Tagil, 6,000 people met on the Theatre Square in the centre of the town. The demands were similar to those made in Yekaterinburg but they also called for the resignation of the local authorities. In the small town of Lesnoy 1,000 met and this demonstration also

called for the return of all the wealth and assets that have been taken abroad by the "new Russians". In Krasnoufimsk, Scrov, Kamensk-Uralsky, Asbest and Irbit demonstrations and meetings echoed the demands made elsewhere. In the small town of Artemovsky, were all three major enterprises are either closed or technically bankrupt and two major mines are about to close, 3,000 people joined the demonstration.

Differing forms of action were taken in various locations in the Oblast. For example, in Sloboda Turinskaya sit-in strikes were held in the local hospitals. In Talica strikes were held over a three-day period.

HOWEVER, no matter how widespread the strikes or how well they were attended a series of questions still remains. The central of these is how does this level of antipathy to the government and anger at the current crisis become transformed into political activity?

The obvious answer is through the activities of a socialist party capable of articulating a coherent and attractive alternative. But then a second question arises. How do socialists articulate such a programme and organise in an environment where for many people the idea of socialism is an anathema and fatally tarnished by the Stalinist past? And if it is not — they are invariably Stalinists!

A recent opinion poll published in a business journal in Yekaterinburg illustrates the nature of the problem. The research organisation sought to identify popular responses to the current economic, political and social crisis and polled a random sample of 400 people. It could be argued that as this was only in one city and a fairly small sample it is not truly representative. Nevertheless, it is illustrative of the general problem.

The vast majority of respondents (84%) expected the already desperate situation to deteriorate further. Almost a quarter of the respondents (24%) did not receive sufficient money to feed themselves regularly while 49% only received enough money for food purchases. So almost three-quarters of the sample buy nothing but food with their income! Only one per cent of the sample claimed to have sufficient income to meet all their needs.

The majority of respondents (65%) anticipated that more demonstrations, meetings and strikes would occur but an even bigger majority (77%) said they would take no part! Their response to the crisis was very much individualised and

almost a third of the sample were searching for additional sources of income whilst a quarter were busying themselves producing food on their private plot. Their fears for the future centred on further food price increases (60%); losing their salaries (40%); increasing criminality (30%); and amongst the older people in the sample there was a great fear of the increasing spread of disease and the breakdown in the health system.

The respondents are clearly correct to fear the future. Along with problems in the energy supply industry, which will probably lead to power cuts in the winter months, there are recent reports to suggest that far from experiencing the long-promised economic growth, GDP will contract again this year by anything between 6% and 12%. Furthermore, this year's harvest is thought to be 56% down on last year! Given the recent heavy dependence on imported food and the impact of the financial crisis on ordinary Russians' purchasing power coupled with the problems of production and supply internally, this will be a very difficult winter for the Russian population.

This again provides the explanation for individualised responses. Even if individuals recognise that atomised actions and individualised solutions are part of the problem they still have seemingly no choice! For students with stipends of 90 roubles per month private economic activity is the only way to eat if parents are unpaid. For workers without wages the private plot is essential to feed the family in the winter months, and so on. As one commentator noted, Stalin took a subsistence peasantry and through brutal means of fear, famine and terror forged an industrial proletariat. Yeltsin has simply reversed the process and turned an industrialised economy back into a subsistence peasant economy.

It should also not be forgotten that the repressive apparatus has not been dismantled and even if some of their membership have developed their own private activities, its essential form has not changed and its functions remain.

In conclusion, the strikes clearly showed the unpopularity of the regime but also the limitations of activity without a political focus. People may hate the government and hate the reform process but currently there is no clearly articulated alternative. Given the legacy of the past atomisation of the population, the individualised responses to the current crisis and the difficulties of disseminating any kind of authentic socialist programme, against the background of the memory of Stalinism, this impasse is liable to continue.

Can the crisis be contained?

"WE NEED to devise more effective ways of responding to crises," declares World Bank president James Wolfensohn, "ways that do not entail such pain on workers and small businesses and other innocent victims." And US president Bill Clinton has called for a, "new world financial system" which would include guarantees of, "social protection".

It is like ministers in a war government at last visiting the battlefields and bombed cities — or at least watching TV pictures — and saying they want a new way of waging war which brings less death and injury to conscript soldiers and civilians. Since the early 1980s all the established bankers, politicians and pundits have been telling us that the new world system of hyper-mobile finance capital is the ultimate in human civilisation, the "end of history". To desire an alternative is as futile as hankering after a flat world once it was discovered that the Earth was a globe.

Now billionaire speculator George Soros tells a US congressional committee: "The global capitalist system... is coming apart at the seams... A global credit crunch is in the making... [The] system is based on the belief that financial markets, left to their own devices, tend towards equilibrium. They are supposed to move like a pendulum [which] will... return to the equilibrium position. This belief is false. Financial markets are given to excesses... Instead of acting like a pendulum financial markets have recently acted more like a wrecking ball, knocking over one economy after another."

The core of the economic crisis which started in East Asia in the middle of 1997 was a classic capitalist mechanism: a great splurge of spending on new buildings, offices, factories and equipment ran up against a market too limited to buy the output, and went into reverse. It was much worsened by the fact that those East Asian economies had been enthusiastically pumping in footloose cash from the world financial markets, and that cash started streaming out again as soon as growth faltered.

Whatever happens next, there is already a big world economic crisis. Total worldwide industrial production is already stagnant. Over the last year it has slowed down as fast as it did in the 1980 recession, and faster than in the 1990



Going down?

one. 10 million workers have lost their jobs in Indonesia alone. Not only East Asia but also Russia and Brazil are hard-hit.

Global prices of major raw materials — wheat, coal, metals, and so on — have dropped about 20%. And there are channels by which the slump could spread further which are much murkier, and much more able to produce quick and drastic effects, than the obvious ones of world trade. Trade with Asia still represents only a few per cent of the economic activity of each of the USA and Europe, so on the face of it a big slump in that trade can pass without big overall effects. However, these days the capitalist centres in the USA and Europe are tied to Asia not only by trade but by a vast and unmapped web of credit transactions.

Kenichi Ohmae, one of the most vocal advocates of capitalist "globalisation", says: "After the funeral of the Long-Term Credit Bank [of Japan]... I count three major money-centre banks going down together... And that's very serious... This will cause systemic meltdown. Unless we do something now to contain this problem in Japan, it will create an enormous contraction of credit worldwide." Alan Greenspan, whose position as chief of the USA's central bank, the Federal Reserve, obliges him to try to be reassuring and upbeat, nevertheless declares: "I do think that we have to bring the existing instabilities to a level of stability shortly to prevent the contagion

from really spilling over and creating some very significant kinds of problems for all of us... The whole system could unravel."

On 23 September, the Federal Reserve rounded up several big Wall Street firms to provide \$6 billion credit to save the LTCM "hedge fund". LTCM operated by borrowing money from ultra-rich individuals, "leveraging" that cash up to larger amounts by borrowing from banks on the strength of it, and using the resulting stash to gamble on slight quirks and shades of difference in international interest rates. At its height it had borrowed a total of \$100 billion, but it had only \$600 million of assets to cover its losses if its gambles went wrong.

LTCM was run by John Meriwether, who had already had to resign from the big investment bank Salomon Bros because he was caught rigging bids for US Treasury bonds by submitting them in false names. The US government managed to bail out the US's multi-billion savings-and-loans (building society) crash of 1990 and stop it leading to a huge general slump, but will it be able, or willing, to bail out indefinite numbers of other operations like LTCM?

The G7 world capitalist leaders' conference failed to agree on any measures to control the crisis. The USA wanted a concerted cut in interest rates, to make credit easier world-wide. Such interest-rate cuts are only a weak and slow-acting remedy for the capitalist class, but even

that could not be agreed. The European states refused, for two reasons. Firstly, the interest rates in Germany and France are already, and have long been, much lower than in the USA and Britain. Governments and bankers do not want to experiment with even lower rates — which would be unprecedentedly, dramatically low for the modern era of high interest rates which started in the 1970s — at a time when they are gingerly putting together the delicate structure of European Monetary Union. Secondly, profits are still high in Europe (they are fairly high in the USA, too, but there is already a marked industrial slowdown there), and the Euro-capitalists still cling to the hope that the Asian-centred world crisis will pass them by.

But European capital is in fact probably at more urgent risk of being dragged into a globally-spreading financial collapse than US capital. Figures issued recently show that euro-area banks have \$426 billion out on loan to “emerging markets” (East Asia and Latin America), and US banks much less — \$117 billion. HSBC (which owns the Midland Bank in Britain) has loans outstanding in East Asia to the extent of 111% of its equity capital; the French bank Credit Lyonnais, 94%; Societe Generale, which dominates Belgium's economy, 56%. The Spanish bank Santander has loans outstanding in Latin America equivalent to 386% of its equity capital, the German Dresdner Bank 68%. (Loans to Russia are a much smaller factor for all these banks.) Moreover, the inbuilt instabilities in the patched-together structure of the euro are likely to amplify any financial turmoil in Europe.

The latest twist in the story is a Japanese government plan for a fund to nationalise or rescue its country's banks, which are crushed under nearly \$1000 billion of bad debts. (There is no such fund for Japanese workers, whose official unemployment rate is now an unprecedented 4.6%, and real jobless rate probably over 10%.) Whether this plan will stave off financial collapse in Japan, and, even more so, whether it will do that without generating large problems elsewhere, must be very doubtful.

Yes, a “new world financial system”, “more effective ways of dealing with crises”, are needed. The answer is not novel: common ownership and social control of the wealth of society, and democratic planning of the wealth of society, in place of letting our livelihoods be decided in the casino of the world's financial markets.

Chris Reynolds

Asylum seekers legislation

Whipping up racism

IN July of this year the Government published its White Paper — *Fairer, Faster, and Firmer* — on “reforming” asylum and immigration law. A sprinkling of concessions decorated a document which is opposed in principle to fairer asylum and immigration laws.

The concessions allow asylum seekers who have been waiting for a decision of their claim for more than five years to stay in the country, and also gives detained asylum seekers an automatic right to apply for bail.

But in essence the White Paper displays a basic hostility towards asylum seekers. Reading the contents of the White Paper it is difficult to see why Labour objected to the Tories' Asylum and Immigration Act of 1996 — unless of course, they opposed it for being too soft on asylum seekers.

The Tories removed the right of most asylum seekers to claim welfare benefits. Labour is removing the right of all asylum seekers to claim benefits.

The Tories trebled the number of asylum seekers in detention. Labour is promising to bang up even more.

The Tories reduced appeal rights for various categories of asylum seekers. Labour is planning to reduce appeal rights for all asylum-seekers.

The Tories increased the powers of immigration officers. Labour is going to give them even more powers.

The Tories introduced a so-called White List of seven countries, asylum seekers from which were presumed to be bogus and “therefore” subject to a special accelerated asylum-application procedure. Labour is introducing an asylum-application procedure which extends the worst aspects of the White List procedure to all asylum seekers: only five days after asylum interview for submission of further evidence; a decision on the application within two months; only one right of appeal; exhaustion of all appeal rights within four months.

As an editorial in the *Observer* put it shortly after publication of the White Paper:

“In opposition Michael Howard was denounced by Jack Straw for whipping up hatred of foreigners. Mr

Howard used the labels ‘bogus asylum seekers’ and ‘economic migrants’ to justify immigration rules which made it far harder for genuine refugees to find a safe home. In office, Mr Straw has gone further to the right than his Tory predecessor... the Government should stop colluding in xenophobia. The chances of any of this? Nil. Mr Straw should be ashamed.”

But many refugee organisations which were so trendily indignant when the Tories pushed their legislation through Parliament have been surprisingly moderate in their response to Labour's attacks on asylum-seekers.

In a briefing issued just before publication of Labour's White Paper the Refugee Council in London, for example, boldly declared: “The Refugee Council continues to call for a full restoration of welfare benefits for all asylum seekers.”

But in its post-White Paper briefing the Refugee Council decided that discretion was the better part of valour: “Though a return to welfare benefit rights seems politically unachievable, there are other ways to make a ‘support in kind’ system for asylum seekers more humane and fairer.”

The goal of campaigning by the Refugee Council and its equivalents in other parts of the country is thus no longer restoration of benefits for asylum seekers, but collaboration with the Government in order to paint a humane gloss onto its anti-asylum laws.

Fairer Faster and Firmer is a politically bankrupt document. It explicitly regurgitates the racist argument that “good race relations” in this country depend upon controlling the number of (black) foreigners coming here. Racism is thus portrayed as the fault of “too many foreigners” rather than the product of the workings of capitalism and white-dominated power structures.

The reforms proposed by the White Paper may lead to faster immigration and asylum procedures. They will certainly lead to firmer procedures. But what they will not lead to are fairer procedures.

Dale Street

Swedish election results mean more cuts

THE recent Swedish elections showed a growing polarisation in society. The ruling Social Democrats met a defeat of historic dimensions. Not since 1922 has their vote been lower, shrinking by 8.7% to 36.6% and losing 30 parliamentarians.

The Social Democrats lost to the left, to the ex-Communists of the Left Party (Vänsterpartiet). Vänsterpartiet got its highest vote ever: 12% and 21 new parliamentarians (now a total of 43). They also lost to the right: the Christian Democrats — a non-racist, homophobic, neo-liberal party. They had their best election since their foundation in 1964. They gained by 7.7% and went up to 11.8%. Finally the Social Democrats also lost to “the sofa”: the voting turnout went down from a “normal” 86% to 78%.

No openly racist party is represented in Sweden's Parliament, reflecting the still strong welfare-sentiment in the country. Even the parties who are for the European Union claim to be “friends of immigrants”.

Austerity and cutbacks were the main reasons behind the defeat. “I have hurt/harmed people,” said Prime Minister Göran Persson during the election period. “And I failed to explain why it was necessary.” Tellingly only 35% of Sweden's 500,000 jobless, who have a tradition of supporting the Social Democrats, gave them their vote.

This was also the first election after Sweden's entry into the EU. The Social Democrats were the most important “Yes” party in the 1994 referendum. All opinion polls in Sweden since the end of 1995 show a majority wanting to leave the EU — up to 70% of the blue collar union members! (Sweden has 84% unionisation, the highest in the world.) A new phenomenon for Swedish politics during the nineties — corruption scandals — also hurt the Social Democrats.

The Swedish political system is in a crisis. The parties connected to last year's



Left Party leader, Gudrun Schyman

government policy all did very poorly. Yet the parliamentary situation is very interesting, leading some to talk about the necessity of new elections! The Social Democrats will form a minority government with the support of the Left Party which will give the government 174 of 349 mandates in the parliament!

Being forced to negotiate with the Left Party may get the Prime Minister into trouble as they promised a lot of “justice” during the election campaign, for example shorter working hours, reforms for the poorer stratas etc. However the Social Democrats got Left Party support for cutbacks in the autumn of 1994. And two years ago a coalition of the Social Democrats, the Left Party and the Greens cut healthcare in the city of Stockholm by three billion kroner. Moreover the leaders of the Left Party say they are willing to compromise on “every issue”. But are *all* Left Party members elected willing to go along with new cuts? Perhaps not...

THE Communist Party of Sweden changed its name to The Left Party Communists in 1967. In 1968 the party strongly condemned the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Hardline Soviet Union supporters left the party in 1977. After the fall of the Berlin Wall the party turned towards build-

ing a united left. The Socialist Party/Fourth International was included on their lists for the 1991 election and was invited to join the Left Party (we declined the offer!). That year the Left Party caused a government crisis, voting against the Social Democrats who wanted to put a ceiling on public employee salaries.

Events in the ex-USSR and eastern Europe provoked a political crisis for the party. Several leaders left for the Social Democracy, the party changed its name to the Left Party, “communists” were demoralised and fell into passivity and a right wing strengthened its position. This right-trend was further helped by the lack of party organisations in the unions.

In 1995 the Social Democrats turned their back on the Left Party and co-operated in cuts with the liberal Centerpartiet. This cooperation let the Left Party off the hook during this recent election. The Left Party was able to demand “justice” for the unemployed, single mothers and social welfare recipients. In short, they stood for — in the eyes of the voters at least — a traditional Social Democratic welfare policy.

What will come out of the present negotiations? The outcome will be decided in the last analysis on the international level — with an economic crisis in Asia, Russia and Latin America there is small reason for optimism.

A crucial issue during the coming year will be unemployment benefits. The European Commission has said that they are too high and must be reduced. Finance Minister Erik Åsbrink promised to comply. During the campaign the Left Party solemnly swore to increase benefits...

No doubt the new government will stand for continued neo-liberal policies against the poor. The Left Party will go along. But it is an open question on how *far* the party will go along. That will be decided by forces outside the Swedish Parliament. Recent mobilisations in Sweden have not been high.

The extreme left, including the Socialist Party/Fourth International, defended electoral gains, but got no new officials. “It is very sad that the extreme left lacked the maturity to form a broad, democratic front during this campaign”, commented the Socialist Party. “This must be done before the European Elections in the spring of 1999. And we must now start to prepare a common struggle against the cutbacks that are unavoidable.”

Peter Lindgren

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Book Reviews

Australian right holds onto power

AUSTRALIA'S right-wing Coalition government narrowly won a new three year term in the general election on 3 October. The Coalition's platform was (headline) a Goods and Services Tax (like VAT) and (small print) new laws to make ballots compulsory before strikes and enable courts to order an end to strikes which become "protracted and costly". Labor's was (big headline) no GST, (smaller headline) a "target" of cutting unemployment from 8.1% to 5% over six years, but with only petty government job schemes as definite measures towards that target, and (small print) partial reversal of the Coalition government's anti-union measures since it was elected in 1996. Labor made it clear that if elected it would continue to operate the "Wik ten point" legislation from the Coalition, severely cutting back Aboriginal land rights.

Labor got a big swing, and more votes than the Coalition though fewer seats. Pauline Hanson's far-right One Nation party got 8% of the vote — much less than the 24% it got in Queensland's state election in June — lost Hanson's lower-house seat (won by her, in different electorate boundaries, as an officially-disowned Liberal in 1996), and secured only one seat (an upper-house seat from Queensland).

The Coalition's "mandate" for the GST — a policy which they had previously dropped in embarrassment after losing the 1993 election on it — and more anti-union laws is, however, very bad news for Australian workers.

According to Roger Boland, the worried industrial relations director of a bosses' organisation called the Australian Industry Group, the relentless squeeze from the bosses is, "creating a backlash among workers manifested in intense feelings of job insecurity, disillusionment, lack of trust, 'reform fatigue', and a shift to greater militancy."

A union activist in the public telecom business Telstra, describing the mood in the current industrial campaign there, paints the same picture from a different angle: "There is a vital element of revenge for many workers... Many people are sick of the way they are treated, but do not see a way forward."

In April-May the Coalition government, together with Patrick's, one of Australia's two big stevedoring companies, tried to sack the entire unionised Patrick's workforce and replace them with scabs. Mass picketing stopped that union-smash-

ing, and showed large numbers of workers to be angry, disgusted by what the Coalition government and the bosses have been doing, unimpressed by Labor's low-key opposition, and willing to act in solidarity. It also showed most workers are not yet confident about anything they can win beyond damage-limitation: the wharfies' union ended up negotiating a deal which axed nearly half of the already much-cut total of permanent jobs on the wharves.

For 23 years now Australian workers have been told by all sides of established politics that they have no choice but to adapt to a new world of cut-throat global capitalist competition. Established political debate has been reduced to an argument about shades of possibility for "civilising global capital". Combatting global capital is off the agenda. Though the current Labor leader, Kim Beazley, has tried to distance himself from the "economic-rationalist" (pro-free-market) excesses of the 1983-96 Labor government headed by Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, he has done so only in the direction of economic-rationalist moderation.

Such drab offerings from the big parties have pushed a sizeable minority towards the dangerous and racist One Nation party, as the only party signalling some urgency about economic insecurity and social decay.

Yet, as the Australian *Financial Review* has noted, much to its sorrow, "The consensus in favour of the free market, as unassailable as Uluru just a few months ago, now seems to be revealed to be more like a shopfront in a Wild West movie set — a lot of front, hollow inside, held up by only a few feeble props around the back, vulnerable to strong winds."

There are alternatives. Labor should tax profits — which are still riding high — and the rich. Public services should be restored and expanded. Means-testing should be phased out. Big job-cutting enterprises, like the stevedoring companies and BHP, should be nationalised and run as public services. The working week should be cut without loss of pay. Award conditions should be restored for all workers. These measures could guarantee decent jobs for all.

Such policies have strong support in the trade union movement, which is the organised force with the power to impose them. The problem with the union leaders' approach, however, is summed up in the newspaper of the Construction and

General Division of the CFMEU, one of Australia's best-organised and most combative unions. "It is to be hoped that the ALP have learned some lessons from the past and their slavish belief in economic rationalism..."

"We should welcome the commitment from the ALP [to restore award conditions]. But, as we all know, politicians are slippery customers. The ALP deserve to be given a chance but, as sure as hell, they had better deliver."

"Australia's working people and their trade unions need to keep the pressure on them — if they win power — to make sure their policies are put in place. And one thing is certain. The union movement does not need any return to the days of the Accord..."

The CFMEU is right to advocate that unions keep their scope for independent action, and put pressure on the ALP. But it makes no demands on the ALP for positive social improvements; it only calls on the ALP to keep its promise that it will partially reverse some of the Coalition government's attacks. It proposes no specific form of political action by the unions.

Many politicians are slippery. So are many union officials. The answer in the unions is to replace untrustworthy officials by better ones, to expand the democracy of the labour movement so that officials are kept to account, and to mobilise an active and informed membership which has clear, well-debated benchmarks of policy to guide its leaders. The answer in Labor politics is fundamentally the same. Unions should use their institutional strength in the Labor structure to fight for positive policies.

Lack of clear, publicly-pursued demands means lack of achievement which means lack of social vision or ambition. It is a vicious circle. Union activists can and must invert that vicious circle into a virtuous spiral, where a broader social vision informs sharp political demands which generate achievements which in turn enlarge and give confidence to the social vision.

Working class, trade union, and left-wing activists should set ourselves the aim of mobilising the trade unions to fight for a workers' government, a government which acts against global capital for working class interests and makes itself accountable to the labour movement.

Tony Brown



Visit to a small philosopher

IHAPPENED to meet Tony Cliff and partner Chanie Rosenberg of the Socialist Workers' Party recently and they invited me to dinner. Why? To recruit me to the SWP! I accepted. Dinner that is, not membership.

Cliff, ideological leader of the SWP, would I thought be worth a chat, and would provide a better argument than your average SWPer, who tends to be politically ill-educated and disablingly out of touch with the labour movement. I might learn something. Who knows, I might be able to put the old bugger straight on a couple of points.

I was to be disappointed. The food was fine; the politics, however, were indigestible. Cliff fleshed out and pressed home SWP policies with greater skill and subtlety than your average SWPer. He is wittier. But his politics are no better, nor his arguments noticeably more sophisticated.

Cliff's central argument? We're the biggest because we're the best; we're the best because we're the biggest. We're here because we're here because we're here because we're here...

He was little better on detail. No SWPer had tried to stop me selling papers on the train to the recent lobby of Labour Party Conference, (where I'd met Cliff). Neither had the SWP (which really does have 10,000 members) tried to stop us selling *Workers' Liberty* at their summer school. SWPers had never tried to smash up any *Workers' Liberty* meetings or assaulted any of our comrades! But I have witnessed or been involved in such things. No I haven't! "Bloody rubbish!"

Yes, Cliff conceded, in 1978, the SWP had ignored the fascists' attempt to march down Bengali-inhabited Brick Lane, east London, in favour of building the Anti-Nazi League Carnival (a party) in Brockwell Park, prioritising building the ANL and SWP over stopping the fascists. So what? They were right!

Yes, in 1992, as the Tories closed the last pits, the SWP had raised the call for a general strike — suddenly, from nowhere, and then just as suddenly dropped it. That was, "completely right." It went down well. It caught a mood. They sold a lot of papers. They didn't mean it? Obviously. But so what?

Doesn't the SWP expel anyone disagreeing with the leadership? "Bloody rubbish!" The SWP has expelled "maybe 50

people" in the last two decades — only for things like violence to other comrades. (Not for violence to members of other groups, though!) Most people claiming to have been expelled from the SWP haven't really been expelled; they're just, "making it up." Pardon? "Bloody rubbish!"

Why was *WL*'s forerunner expelled from the International Socialists, forerunner of the SWP? Because they thought the Soviet Union was a degenerated workers' state. They did, I said, but weren't they expelled because they opposed the decision to join Little Englanders and Stalinists in opposition to Britain joining the EC? They said that in the choice between a bosses' Britain and a bosses' Europe workers should say in effect: Neither Westminster nor Brussels but International Socialism! "Bloody rubbish!"

Why not debate *WL* now — on the Middle East, for example? Because *WL* is "small," "sectarian," "irrelevant," — "nothing." Straight to the heart of the political issues! In what way are we sectarian? We criticise the SWP! Oh... The problem is that *WL*, "sees the flea but not the elephant." I'll repeat that for less sophisticated readers: we see the flea but not the elephant.

And so it went on. The ANL/SWP alone prevented the rise of fascism in Britain. The SWP is "a big force" in the unions (and not just the white collar unions); it is "massive", makes all the campaigning initiatives... Drawing on my experience as a union activist in a large workplace I tried to prick Cliff's fantasy bubbles with the odd fact, but Cliff's bubbles are made of tougher stuff than soap suds.

Finally we got to Israel-Palestine — and then the cutlery was drawn and the croutons really started to fly!

Why, I asked Cliff, a Palestinian Jew in origin, were the Israeli Jews the only national/communal group on earth who do not have the right to self-determination? He listed every real and alleged atrocity committed by Israel. I agreed to condemn many things about Israel. My sympathy is with the Palestinians. But what about Jewish-Arab working class unity?

There can be no unity of Jewish and Palestinian workers, shouted Cliff, writing three million workers out of history, nor can there be a compromise giving national rights of both groups. In this portion of the Middle

East class politics cannot apply. Ever? Never!

The SWP never used the phrase "smash Israel" but, Cliff agreed, their policy amounted to that. Any Jewish state in Palestine will inevitably oppress Arabs, and be a tool of US imperialism.

To advocate any kind of Jewish state in Palestine, he insisted, was to favour immigration controls. This was bizarre, coming from the man who in an autobiographical piece in *Socialist Review* (issue 100) said that, in retrospect, he felt he was wrong in 1938-9 not to have favoured immigration controls to keep Jews out of Palestine. Jews fleeing Europe — when the alternative was certain death — before and during the Holocaust!

"The Zionists" had used the Holocaust to brainwash Jews into advocating imperialism and oppression in the Middle East. I — Cliff had twigged that I am Jewish in background — had been brainwashed, though my conscience made me advocate "concessions" to the Palestinians. Cod-psychoanalysing me, while he himself argued more from emotion and distant personal experience, heatedly evading what I thought was a reasoned case, I felt Cliff revealed more about his own psychology than mine.

The row became increasingly charged. Isn't the SWP's a policy hostile to all Jews alive today? Yes, he said, with a candour that surprised me. But only because they have been brainwashed! Cliff was being a vicarious Arab chauvinist, I argued. And so it went on... Cliff, I had said, was objectively an anti-semitic. He had attacked me as a pro-imperialist fruitcake.

The evening, I thought, had been a social failure: I had missed my chance to join "the socialists". I stood (or rather, sat) denounced as a murdering Zionist, Labourite, pro-imperialist, an idiot with the wrong idea about absolutely everything!

But no. Cliff and Chanie, their expressions softened, aren't sectarians. I would be more than welcome, said Chanie warmly, producing a membership form, in the SWP!

Paul Foot somewhere calls Cliff the Philosopher in Stoke Newington. As I left Cliff's house that night I knew for sure that Foot was half right. Tony Cliff does, indeed, live in Stoke Newington.

A postal worker

Scottish nationalism... or socialism?

By Stan Crooke

A RECALL conference of the Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) held in Glasgow last month agreed almost unanimously to vote the SSA out of existence and replace it with a Scottish Socialist Party (SSP).

The background to the launch of the new party gives its supporters only limited grounds for optimism.

Nearly 400 people attended the founding conference of the SSA in April 1996. Less than 150 attended its second conference in June of last year, and less than a hundred attended its third conference in June of this year. The recall conference itself was attended by around 150, a fair proportion of whom were observers and visitors.

The SSA magazine *Red* was launched as a bi-monthly in late 1996. In fact, it competes with *Critique* for irregularity of appearance — the fourth issue of *Red* was published over the summer. But given that few, if any, members of the SSA bothered to sell the magazine, how often it appeared was largely irrelevant.

Outside of Glasgow Pollok constituency the SSA's intervention in last year's General Election — standing 16 candidates — was spectacularly unsuccessful.

Tommy Sheridan picked up a healthy 3,639 votes in Glasgow Pollak — but this marked a fall of some 50% from his 1992 vote. With the exception of two other candidates in Glasgow (where around 3% of the vote went to the SSA) the average vote for SSA candidates hovered around 1%.

In local council by-elections, especially in Glasgow, the SSA's electoral results have varied from poor to occasionally respectable.

In late 1996 the SSA had a high profile and effective input into the Glaciers workplace occupation in Glasgow. A few months later it had a similarly high profile in campaigning against Glasgow City Council cutbacks. However, it was unable to build any sizeable base of support in the unions, its influence largely confined to two or three unions in a few localities.

Having made self-intoxicating predictions about imminent mass breakthrough, the SSA avoided explanations when the breakthroughs failed to come.

Before last year's General Election, the SSA boasted: "The SSA has entered 16 candidates (contesting over 20% of Scottish seats). This is a remarkable achievement for such a new organisation, reflecting the enthusiasm for a socialist alternative."

After the elections, however, just a single sentence in *Red* made any reference to the results: "The SSA vote was perhaps(!) disappointing, but its real achievement was in standing in so many seats and, as a result, becoming widely known." No doubt the Natural Law Party consoled itself with the same thoughts.

In place of serious political accounting the SSA chose the supposedly quick-fix solution of declaring itself the SSP and campaigning for an independent socialist Scotland.

The driving force behind the new line is Scottish Militant Labour (SML). Theoretically this is the Scottish wing of the Socialist Party (formally Militant) but in practice it is an independent organisation.

The rationale offered by SML for championing an "independent socialist Scotland" combines political incoherence with electoral opportunism, reincarnating some of the most vulgar-evolutionary aspects of traditional Militant dogma in a peculiarly Scottish form.

In an article in the current issue of *Red* SML full-timer Alan McCombes (whose main role in the life is now to construct the "theory" which justifies the opportunism of both the SSA and the SML) invents a history of Scotland which would embarrass even an overtly Scottish-nationalist historian.

"Over and over again, from time immemorial, Scotland's ruling classes have betrayed the national demands of the common people of Scotland," writes McCombes. Scotland's rulers who today oppose independence thus "conform to a treacherous historical pattern stretching back almost 1,000 years."

Oblivious to all the evidence to the contrary, McCombes claims that "even during the glory days of the British Empire there continued to run a strong strain of support for Home Rule among the working classes," and that Home Rule sentiments produced a "separate left-wing Scottish TUC."

During the "glory days of the British Empire" the call for Home Rule was largely the property of the Tory Romantics. In the latter part of the nineteenth century the cause was taken up by the Liberals, from whom it was carried over into the embryonic Labour Party by Keir Hardie. However the Scottish TUC did not come out in favour of Home Rule until 1914. The STUC has always been either indifferent or downright hostile to the demand for Home Rule.

According to McCombes, "the sections of society who favour Scottish independence are those who are generally more socialist leaning, including a big majority of young people and low paid workers." Thus "support for independence" is seen as a more revolutionary solution than anything on offer from the labour movement.

By coming out in favour of an "independent socialist Scotland" run the electoralist calculations, the SSP can attract the votes of these young people and low-paid workers.

But what is meant by the slogan "an independent socialist Scotland"? Either it means that socialism can be built in a single small state — in which case it is manifestly absurd. Or it is a call for an independent Scotland with a left-

of-centre government — in which case the SSP would be better off calling for a vote for the SNP.

It is hardly a coincidence that the current issue of *Red* carries an article advocating a "third way" to socialism, remarkably reminiscent of the old CPGB line: "The election of a Left government supported by popular forces outside Parliament united behind a programme of progressive change. The aim would not be socialism but to move society to the left, preparing the ground for further advances."

This unique brand of Kailyard Marxism — a combination of rewriting history, political ambiguity, Marxist phraseology, and pseudo-internationalist posturing — is a Scottish adaptation of old-style Militant scenario politics.

When Militant was in the Labour Party it argued that the eventual election of a *Tribune*-led Labour government would disabuse the masses of their illusion in left reformism and rally behind the forces of genuine socialism (which, incorrectly, they identified with themselves).

Now SML applies the same scenario to Scottish politics: "An SNP government in the future would inevitably be forced to abandon its programme of social reforms. Such a backlash against an SNP-type government would develop in a leftward direction and lead to a massive strengthening of the forces of genuine socialism."

"In that sense," argues SML, "even a capitalist independent Scotland would mark a step forward in the overall movement towards socialism; at the very least it would help to dispel any illusions that Scotland's problems could be solved by swapping a British capitalist government for a Scottish capitalist government."

Despite its limited influence and growing political incoherence the SSP nonetheless has a chance of seeing Tommy Sheridan elected to a Scottish Parliament. Under proportional representation a 6% vote could get Sheridan elected.

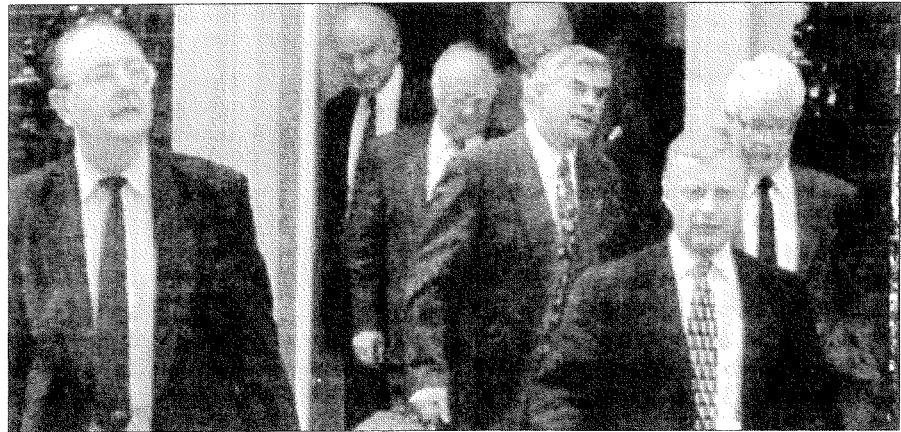
The SML lacks any strategy for promoting the emergence of a new trade union based party of labour from the debris of new Labour. Occasionally it has called for union disaffiliation from Labour and affiliation to the SSA — a demand which makes no sense politically and which, in any case, has not been pursued with any vigour.

The call for an independent Scotland may have some resonance with the youth on the housing schemes but it remains a non-starter in the unions. Members of the SSP and SML need to ask themselves whether a possible seat in the Scottish Parliament is a worthwhile exchange for an abandonment of basic socialist principles and an abandonment of any orientation towards the labour movement.

Taking the capital 'P' out of politics

By Sheila Cohen

In *WL 49*, Mark Sandell criticised the pamphlet *What's Happening? The Truth About Work... And the Myth of Partnership*, edited by Sheila Cohen, for downgrading politics in industrial struggle. Sheila Cohen replies.



"Challenging the existing union leaders must include challenging reformism."

What is the relationship between "political" perspectives and "industrial" struggles? Mark Sandell says that "the 'independence' Cohen claims to want is an 'independence' from politics that itself removes the key to building a class struggle perspective across the unions." The best answer to this point is to start is the philosophy I adopted as editor of the rank-and-file paper *Trade Union News*: "show not tell". *TUN* was a vehicle in which committed workplace activists could present ideas, exchange information and generally engage in a cross-class debate over where the movement, including their own struggles, was heading. No attempt was made to deliver a specific "line" or programme. The whole emphasis and focus was on independent class activity and organisation which could advance workers' interests and demands while demonstrating that these were interests held in common across the class as a whole.

Reading about others' struggles and fellow-activists' suggestions, workers could see for themselves the class meaning of the issues and struggles they confronted on a daily basis. The same philosophy lies behind *What's Happening?* I didn't "censor" contributions even where I disagreed. For example, I agree with *WL*'s assessment of the misplaced optimism in New Labour in one article. This optimism was shared by many workers at the time when the article was written and I felt that the pamphlet should express such views. *What's Happening?* was aimed at activists in general, not only at socialists. This kind of openness gives workers confidence that the discussion is within their frame of reference and reflects a reasonably wide spectrum of opinion, without any rigidly "correct" line outside which contributions

and discussion are unacceptable. Having said that, there are of course crucial parameters within which any discussion of workplace trade union strategy has to take place. To me the most essential of these is a perspective of class independence. Through this principle workers' gut-level impulsion to struggle for their own interests can be recognised and consolidated — a first step towards class consciousness as opposed to simple class activity. Such independence relates not so much to illusions or otherwise in Labour as to rejection of any notion that workers can have joint interests with their employers and capitalism as a whole — a notion which is of course central to the TUC's and many union leaders' conceptions of "social partnership". An emphasis on the falsity of this perspective is one of the central purposes of the pamphlet.

Mark Sandell says that the pamphlet conveys a "dangerous confusion" in dismissing union leaders as, for example, "more concerned with... public policy than with what's actually happening to their members." In reply he argues: "The union leaders showing such an interest in the correct politics, or even basic gut working class solidarity, would be a good thing!" Well, it would — if they did. I am well aware of the ultra-left dangers of dismissing trade union leaders as only "treacherous sell-out merchants". But the danger here is not in abandoning the hope that union leaders might occasionally support class struggles, or might conceivably be persuaded by socialists to "campaign for the Government to scrap the anti-union laws...etc...". The danger lies in the failure of such "infantilism" to recognise the fact

that union leaders share with their membership, however militant that membership, a certain ideology known as reformism: that is why union members on the whole have more faith in their leaders than in any stray revolutionary peddling a "betrayal" perspective.

We recognise that it is over-simplistic to reject union leaders as bureaucrats, not because they are likely to act in their members' basic class interests — do we really need convincing that on the whole they don't? — but because their own members fail as much as the leaders to consciously recognise and challenge the limits and structures of capitalism. This is why the challenge to existing union leaderships needs to be made from the bottom up in terms of challenging reformist ideology at the grass roots, rather than trying to elect left leaders or hoping that some of those now in office can be persuaded to adopt a socialist point of view.

To make this point a little clearer, let us look at how union bureaucrats grow. Despite the proliferation of TUC apparatchniks with degrees, a great many union leaders (local and national) come from where union leaders have always come from — the ranks. In other words, from militant, oppositional stewards do complacent, treacherous bureaucrats grow. And how? Why? Because the basic philosophy of reformism goes, by definition, unchallenged — because there is no explicit focus on the issue of consciously creating a gap between these two dialectically fused aspects of the movement — its objectively class conflict-based roots and its subjectively unconscious, fatalistic or collaborative outlook.

It's up to us — by which I mean socialists — to work at opening up this gap, as have the *Labor Notes* and TDU (Teamsters for a Democratic Union) initiatives in the US. The successful UPS strike last August was the result of a focussed perspective of challenging teamworking propaganda from the grass roots upwards and thus successfully organising an explicit class (rather than gut-level "militant"/reformist) response to the company's proposals. TDU has followed this up with a consistent, pervasive campaign to educate stewards in the importance of maintaining links with the membership base — another point emphasised in the pamphlet and the only strategy possible for avoidance of the familiar path from principled militant to compromised official. Such perspectives are part of a politics of concrete class struggle aimed at beginning a process of transition to more coherent class consciousness.

This takes us back to the point quoted above about the pamphlet's perspective seeming to indicate the wish for an "independence" from politics. Presumably what is meant here is a different kind of politics — the kind which I would subliminally spell with a capital P. I don't know how many times I've read in the left press statements like your statement in the review that "Only a combined political and 'industrial' movement to rebuild the welfare state — combining strikes with demonstrations, workplace organisation with community campaigns, national union action and a political battle inside and outside the Labour Party's structures - can win." True, no doubt, in theory — but the left has been making this kind of pitch for decades. While postal workers on the streets manage to reverse the purpose of a huge billion pound corporation (though not, of course, to halt its ongoing offensive), all the invocations and "campaigns" of the left have failed to have even this much impact on the balance of forces between capital and labour. However correct the campaign programme, however principled its demands, it remains an abstraction if not connected in some way to workers' own interests and concerns.

The demand for a shorter working week, prominent in both the review and the pamphlet, is an example of this. The left prides itself on its principled defence of what is of course a crucial transitional demand. But the very desirability of the shorter working week as a "political" demand has blinded many on the left to the concrete dynamic of its implementation — which, in a context of open class warfare, frequently means some semblance of shorter hours being exchanged for increased flexibility and intensification of labour. The article on London Under-

ground, where a shorter working week is being introduced in stages, makes this crystal clear: "So far the time off has been achieved by reducing meal breaks, reducing spare duty (time on call) length, and taking minutes off the end of duties... The concept of simply reducing the working week itself doesn't bear fruit because there are so many ways of manipulating work times to take time off here and there. The working time is reduced in the mathematical sense, but not in reality" (p28).

Another of our contributors, a respected shop steward in a major car plant, argues that "...what has happened in a lot of places is that companies have used ['Shorter Working Week' deals] to further maximise profit through changes such as more 'flexible' working practices... This is not an argument against reducing the working week, but against viewing all such changes... as meaningless 'bargaining counters' which in effect allow management to get their own way" (p68).

A perfect example of this — or what might have been one — was the postal workers' dispute, in which the left's enthusiasm for the shorter working week principle almost led them to use it precisely as a "bargaining counter" which would have allowed Royal Mail to introduce teamworking: "Some activists were so keen to get a formal reduction in the working week they would have given up opposition to the Employee Agenda on the basis of Royal Mail's offer on this issue alone..." (p16).

To this fetishisation of an undoubtedly worthy principle the author counterposes a more complex position in which "we have to make demands like the shorter working week work for us in terms of all our other goals of union control over jobs, better pay and security of employment" (p16). While Dave Ward's argument that "...we should be looking at a process that locks [management] into continuous moves towards the shorter working week in return for those increases in productivity they secure" is perhaps over-compressed, its meaning is more or less that of the review's statement that Royal Mail's profits are "not our problem". Indeed, they are not; our "problem" is to defend basic working class interests in the context of whatever strategy management threatens to adopt.

Still, going back to the *WL*'s argument, it certainly would be nice to have "a combined political and 'industrial' movement" to fight the offensives of capital, from damage to the welfare state to outsourcing and labour intensification at work. But how? How do we do it?

The key word in what I would see as the answer is "transition". We have to get from here to there. We don't get to there by telling people who aren't there yet that

this is where they should be. We do it by demonstrating that the objective meaning of what they are already doing is for them to be there rather than here. You won't stop workers struggling. No number of complacent comments in the capitalist press about "old-fashioned industrial action" will do that. But struggle in itself, as we all know, doesn't take us forward. The job of socialists is to build transitional organisations and strategies — "ramparts", as Marx once described early trade union organisation* — which can as it were "capture" the consciousness and meaning latent in everyday working class struggle and bring out its own politics, rather than an artificial socialist "Politics" imposed from above.

Contrary to Mark Sandell's assumption, in no way do I want "independence" from politics. But the politics to which initiatives like *What's Happening?* is devoted is a politics rooted in what workers are already doing — because their class position gives them no choice — rather than the Politics of even the most impeccable socialist programme of incisive analysis and rounded political demands.

So, given the difficulties of politicising workers who have been trained by capitalism precisely not to share the coherent world view of educated revolutionary socialists, the aims of *What's Happening?* and similar rank-and-file initiatives are indeed modest: firstly, to convince activists already committed and militant in their separate spheres to see the logic of cross-class action; secondly, to emphasise the crucial need for stewards and other reps to remain close to their base; and thirdly, to spell out the need for a explicit, not just gut-level, rejection of class-collaborationist notions of partnership, teamworking, jointness, etc.

An earlier issue of *Workers' Liberty* contained these words in its editorial (though the article as a whole did not elaborate on the theme): "A powerful rank-and-file movement for free trade unions is long overdue". Do readers of *WL* not agree what an enormous advantage it would be if we could just establish some stepping stones towards such a movement? "Low aspirations", perhaps, compared to those of "a combined political and industrial movement to rebuild the welfare state" — but achievable, transitional, meaningful and ultimately far more subversive in terms of building an ongoing and explicit class opposition to the offensive of capital.

● *What's Happening?* is available by mail order from Trade Union Forum, PO Box 21013, London N1 1WR. £3 per copy + 50p p&p - orders over 10, £2.50. For further information on TU Forum, write to the same address.

* Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Progress Publishers 1973 p149.

The Independent Labour Network

By Ken Coates MEP

THE triumph of allegedly "free" markets had already, before the onset of global crisis, brought about a dangerous erosion of democracy, and in Britain has undermined the independence of the Labour Party, with grave consequences for the representation of the majority of British citizens. The recent Labour Party Conference, for instance, was estimated to have involved two and a half million pounds of commercial sponsorship. Naturally, it was not possible to criticise those who funded this event. Indeed, one charitable organisation was asked to withdraw posters because they were deemed offensive by a commercial exhibitor in an adjacent slot in the Conference foyer. But of course, the commercial domination of the Conference is merely a public reflection of the private commercial domination of policy, with the incorporation of significant business interests at the heart of government.

Meantime, the traditional constituents of the Labour Party, whether they are working people and trade unionists, or whether they are pensioners, disabled people, students or poor people and claimants, find that their interests are not merely neglected, but they are actively targeted and victimised in a wholly unacceptable "reform" of the welfare state. In this matter, as in so many others, the present Prime Minister is a direct continuator of Mrs Thatcher's work.

The Independent Labour Network was formed in order to bring together people within and outside the Labour Party, who wished to contribute to a renewal of British socialism, on the basis of a thorough-going commitment to greater equality, sound environmental policies, and internationalism.

The priorities of the Network are the defence of the Welfare State, the demand for adequate pensions, opposition to the iniquitous imposition of student fees and the abolition of grants for students, and opposition to the penalisation of lone parents. From the beginning, the Network was actively involved in the defence of disabled people, who came under attack through the Disability Integrity Project.

Network members have been concerned to find the best way to help to organise the defence of these wide sectors of the population who are the direct victims of New Labour's declared subordination to the market, and the "dynamism of enterprise".

We have concluded that the appropriate challenge in the European Elections should come from an Alliance of those social and environmental groups who have been opposing the impact of adverse market decisions and greedy entrepreneurs, however "dynamic" they may be. For the elections of 1999, the Independent Labour Network seeks to create an Alliance, as inclusive as possible, which would enable pensioners, students, the disabled, and a multitude of environmental defence groups, to make common cause for electoral support.

We do not seek to create a new Party, but we are anxious to compel the Labour Government to return to its roots, and to uphold its long-term commitments to these constituencies.

Thus, we are committed to ending the scandal of poverty pensions, a pledge which every elected Labour representative has reiterated many times before the advent of Mr Blair to the Labour leadership. If our candidates were successful in the European Elections, they would naturally call on the Government to immediately take appropriate action to liberate our pensioners from poverty. If the Government were unwilling to do this, then the Alliance would reserve the right to field more candidates in the next round of elections, until new Labour agreed to honour the promissory note which had been issued by the Labour Party prior to the present take-over by neo-liberals. In the same way, we are committed to a comprehensive education system

"Our priorities are the defence of the Welfare State, the demand for adequate pensions, opposition to the iniquitous imposition of student fees and the abolition of grants for students."

open to all ages, free at the point of delivery. Making nursery places available to all children, lowering class sizes at primary and secondary level, ending tuition fees for students and restoring grants. Here, too, our abstention from future elections would require a reversal of Government policy.

Likewise, we are committed to rebuilding the National Health Service through democratic control and ownership. Services should remain free at the point of delivery, so that the Government should provide funding at the levels necessary to meet the health needs of the people. This implies an end to prescription charges, and action to make preventative care freely available. Similarly, we are committed to the provision of a decent Welfare System based on the redistribution of wealth through progressive taxation. We are committed to maintaining universal benefits free from means testing and taxation, and to ensuring that benefits are restored to 16 and 17 year olds. Levels of benefits, including pensions, child and maternity benefits and disability allowances must be fixed high enough to provide a decent standard of living. To meet these goals, we need to raise domestic spending levels on social welfare to at least the average enjoyed by our partners in the European Union.

We are committed to full employment by the introduction of a national 35 hour week, ending the casualisation of work, planning the social economy to create worthwhile jobs that

meet social needs and protect the environment. Above all, we are committed to promoting a European strategy for job creation, with a new deal for massive investment in the economic infrastructure, and social and environmental recovery. This new deal should be developed in agreement with all the other socially progressive forces in Europe, to prioritise employment over all other economic considerations.

We are committed to action against discrimination and the introduction of enforceable rights for all those sections of society usually faced with discrimination and social exclusion in all walks of life.

We are committed to the introduction of a charter of Trade Union and Workers' Rights which include the right to belong to a Trade Union, and the right to strike. We support full rights for all young people and part-time workers. And we are agreed that all existing anti-Trade Union laws should be repealed.

We are committed to protect our environment through the introduction of measures to control pollution, damage to health and environmental devastation.

Each of these commitments should be acted upon by the Government, but if no such action can be agreed, then its absence invites further electoral opposition. This, the Alliance should consider at the appropriate time.

As for the Independent Labour Network itself, we are strongly committed to peace and to European Nuclear Disarmament. In Britain this means the decommissioning of the Trident programme and the reduction of the defence budget to at least the average of other European Union members. The savings on military spending could be reallocated to help secure improvements to education and the Health Service.

As democratic socialists we are committed to internationalism. We believe that all people should have the right to self-determination and be free from imperialist interventions. We are in favour of measures to cancel the developing world's debt and we are opposed to the introduction of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). We are committed to work for a democratic and accountable federal Europe based on democratic socialism. This must be free from racism, xenophobic nationalism, and domination by multinational employer cartels. We are committed to work for democratic control over the Institutions of monetary union and the European Central Bank, so that the new single currency will be used to improve the life and well-being of European citizens rather than provide profits for the rich to the detriment of public services and the environment.

● *This text has been abridged.*

● *Contact the Independent Labour Network at 8 Regent Street, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 1SS. Tel: 01623 427622.*

The long road to working class independence

By Pablo Velasco

ON October 2nd 1968, a huge crowd of students, workers and political activists filled Tlatelolco Square in the centre of Mexico City. The demonstration was the culmination of months of protest before the Mexico-hosted Olympic Games. It was part of a world wide protest movement — the French general strike in May, the Prague Spring, the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations all over the world. Influenced by everything from Sartre to Guevara, from Bob Dylan to the Beatles, as well as authentic Mexican revolutionaries such as Emiliano Zapata and Ricardo Flores Magon, the demonstrators were united by their unwillingness to be ruled any longer by Mexico's one-party — the PRI — state which had endured since 1929. In response, President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz unleashed a wave of repression by the Mexican army. More than 300 people were murdered that day, 2 October in the square. Thousands were rounded up, tortured and jailed during the following years. The massacre of Tlatelolco Square became a running sore in the body of Mexican politics, a breach between the Mexican state and its people from which it has never recovered. Thirty years later the government still refuses to release the relevant documents.

What was the character of the movement in '68 in Mexico? Why did it arise? What were the consequences of the repression? These are the questions are still being debated by political activists today.

Between 1940-65 Mexico experienced an economic miracle. Production grew annually by more than 5%, cities expanded. Economic development at the turn of the century under the dictator Porfirio Diaz had helped generate the revolution of 1910. It began as a bourgeois reform movement for an effective suffrage, but became a peasant war, led by Zapata and Pancho Villa. Ultimately they were defeated. The capitalist class remained weak and the working class remained largely unorganised and without effective political representation. In these circumstances, a dictatorial Bonapartist regime established itself during the 1920s and 1930s, around the party which became the PRI. A president was elected for one six-year term, but effectively control remained with the same PRI political machine which incorporated mass organisations of peasants and the central trade union federation, the CTM, into the state machine.

The state sponsored the expansion of industry, and under Lazaro Cardenas nationalised the oil industry in 1938. The absence of a democratic political process masked the



1968: police confront students

dissatisfaction felt by the overwhelming majority of Mexicans, most of whom still laboured for a pittance as agricultural labourers, or factory and office workers, or tilled their tiny plots of land as peasants. Universal primary education since the revolution, and the rudiments of a welfare state in health and pensions, only served to raise expectations which were brutally disappointed. By 1968, the state was heavily in debt. Agriculture and the export industries slowed down.

The political movement of 1968 had many roots. It was politically a mixture of "Communism" and Maoism, Castroism (and bowdlerised Trotskyism) and of the populist Mexican nationalism with which the ruling party had welded together its people.

Led by the National Strike Committee, the movement was independent from the government, which had subsumed earlier radical elements into its structure. It was democratic in both its internal structures and its objective — to secure political democracy in Mexico and end one-party rule. It was a student-dominated movement, able nevertheless to reach out to workers and peasants. It represented, as did other student-led movements across the world an ideological rupture with the capitalist state. It questioned the purpose of education. It demanded a democracy... Mexico's political and economic crisis at the end of the sixties panicked the rules into the severe repression of 2 October and after.

Yet the government was forced during the 1970s to allow for alternative parties and slates to stand in Mexican elections. The growth of the PRT, an openly Trotskyist party with some local and national prominence

was an exciting development, although it declined after 1988. Oppositional caucuses and even independent trade unions developed amongst the organised working class (such as the Democratic Tendency led by electrical worker Rafael Galvan). Peasant movements seized land: a guerrilla movement appeared in Guerrero. Many of these movements were stubbed out by fierce repression.

The most substantial challenge to the PRI has come from the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), whose leaders were originally part of the ruling apparatus, only by fraud preventing Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, son of the ex-President, winning the Presidency in 1988. There is now an opposition majority in one tier of the Mexican parliament. The tragedy here is that the opposition is entirely confined to bourgeois-democratic reform. No independent workers' voice has been registered. As their name suggests, the PRD remain very much within the confines of the old state ideology.

The significance of 1968 for Mexicans is clear. It inspires those who currently battle with the regime. The massacre of 2 October also destroyed the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of millions. Economic crisis has continued unevenly, with short bursts of growth punctured by devaluation, debt crisis and slump. More than 80% remain below the poverty line, and some 800 people are reportedly still missing, according to Amnesty, with army massacres still an almost annual occurrence. The forty families who rule Mexico still contain as many billionaires as are found in France or Japan. While ex-President Salinas languishes in exile in Ireland, his brother was tried and is doing time for corruption, and involvement in drug trafficking and money laundering during Salinas' presidency. In 1993 I joined a demonstration of 10,000 people in Mexico City to commemorate twenty five years of opposition to the regime, and to remember those who died.

The opening of democratic space in Mexico undoubtedly offers new opportunities for the left, but to reconstitute a revolutionary left will involve a break with many of the populist and nationalist assumptions of most of the 1968 New Left, and the reassertion of class politics. The forces for this task exist, but they are scattered and disorientated. The Marxist left in Mexico will have to reconstitute itself and carry out the necessary work of clarification, linked with activism in the various movements against the regime.

Hi-tech cannibalism

It was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* last month that a hospital in Beijing has signed a contract with the Chinese state for the delivery of a regular supply of kidneys harvested from victims of the state's executioners.

WHY not, asked Jonathan Swift, an Anglican priest of Dublin, making his "modest proposal" for solving two of eighteenth-century Ireland's great problems, "overpopulation" and mass starvation — why not eat your small children?

That would keep down the population, he argued, and ensure that those who lived were well nourished. Much of Swift's text — one of the most effective satires ever written — was then given over, after the fashion of a cookery book, to a gruesomely detailed discussion of how best to dress and cook, and when best to serve, the various parts of a child butchered for the table.

He sustained it, grimly serious, for page after page, in terrifying detail.

Even in 18th century Ireland, reality never caught up with the nightmare of Swift's imagining. In our hi-tech cannibalistic capitalist civilisation we are gaining on it. In China, they have come very close to it. Arguably, they have surpassed it.

In China, very large numbers of "criminals" — for example, people who steal cars — are killed by the state; their organs are then removed and either used by well-off Chinese or sold abroad for hard international currency.

Capital punishment is normal for many petty offences in "socialist" China. The Chinese state kills more people than any other country. The lucrative market in human spare parts, so observers report, now ensures that cases are hurried along, that guilt or innocence is often a matter of indifference, and that many are killed who might otherwise be spared because their limbs and organs are valuable. This is not too far from what happened when the wife of the commandant of one of the Nazi concentration camps had inmates killed so that their tattooed skin could make pretty shades for her household lamps.

Orders can be accepted for particular body parts belonging to still-living people, who are then killed to order in the way most appropriate for preserving the bespoke organs. Thus, if hearts are needed, the alleged car thief or petty forger is shot in the head; if corneas are needed, the victim is shot through the heart, to make sure the eyes are not damaged.

Who decides what pieces of which crim-



An "enemy of the state" is sentenced to death on TV. After death the state will make use of his organs.

inal are to be preserved? There is a carefully worked-out set of procedures, spelled out in a secret 1984 legal directive:

"Where it is genuinely necessary... a surgical vehicle from the health department may be permitted to drive onto the execution grounds to remove the organs, but it is not permissible to use a vehicle bearing health department insignia, or to wear white clothing. Guards must remain posted around the execution grounds while... organ removal is going on."

Folk legends about vampire nobles in castles who drink the blood of 'their' peasants, are mythic representations of exploitation — folk versions, shaped by generations of the exploited people, of what Swift did in his study.

But you do not necessarily have to kill people to drain their blood. The collecting of Third World blood plasma for the US market, bought from hungry, undernourished people in places like Haiti — before the Aids plague — was long a gruesome symbol of the vampirism that sustains our civilisation.

The new trade in body parts — and it is not limited to China, though there it is an industry run by a totalitarian state able to ensure an adequate supply of raw material — is privatised medicine gone mad. Doctors take life — at second hand, but *they know* — from the poor and give it to the rich.

IN class society, technical progress is not always the same thing as social or human progress. Frequently, it is their enemy.

There is no shortage of examples. In the Southern states of America, for example, the savage working to death of black slaves, and the vast increase in the slave trade that went with it, were stimulated not by agrarian backwardness in the USA of that age but by the wonderful technological innovations out of which grew the British cotton industry 200 years ago. It inaugurated the Industrial Revo-

lution which would transform human society all over the globe. In Britain itself, women and children were, of course, also exploited savagely in the cotton factories run by the owners of the splendid new technology.

Class society is by its very nature socially cannibalistic. It is organised so that some people can rob, exploit and "consume" the capacities and lives of others.

IN a famous essay, Karl Marx described this feature of all class society in its most fluid and developed form. He is describing "the power of money":

"By possessing the property of buying everything, by possessing the property of appropriating all objects, money is thus the object of eminent possession. The universality of its property is the omnipotence of its being. It is therefore regarded as omnipotent... Money is the procurer between man's need and the object, between his life and his means of life. But that which mediates my life for me, also mediates the existence of other people for me. For me it is the other person..."

"That which is for me through the medium of money — that for which I can pay (i.e., which money can buy) — that am I myself, the possessor of the money. The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money's properties are my — the possessor's — properties and essential powers. Thus, what I am and am capable of is by no means determined by my individuality. I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most beautiful of women. Therefore I am not ugly, for the effect of ugliness — its deterrent power — is nullified by money.

"I, according to my individual characteristics, am lame, but money furnishes me with 24 feet. Therefore I am not lame. I am bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honoured, and hence its possessor. Money is the supreme good, therefore its possessor is good.

"Money, besides, saves me the trouble of being dishonest: I am therefore presumed honest. I am brainless, but money is the real brain of all things and how then should its possessor be brainless? Besides, he can buy clever people for himself, and is he who has power over the clever not more clever than the clever?

"Do not I, who thanks to money am capable of all that the human heart longs for, possess all human capacities? Does not my money, therefore, transform all my incapacities into their contrary?..

"That which I am unable to do as a man, and of which therefore all my individual essen-

* *Independent on Sunday* (30 October, 1994)

ANOTHER DAY: DERRY, 19 OCTOBER 1968



The "Troubles" in Northern Ireland reached the stage of open violence in October 1968, when the RUC batoned peaceful demonstrators, in front of TV cameras, including the MP for West Belfast, Gerry Fitt. This eye-witness account was written by a socialist Republican, Peter Graham, who would be the victim of a political assassination in 1971 (see WL no.36).

DEAR TONY,

L. and myself were up in Derry on the now famous Saturday when the RUC batoned demonstrators and passers by indiscriminately.

On the previous Saturday I was at a Civil Rights Committee in Derry. The majority of the committee was, as Eamonn McCann described it, "a bunch of middle-aged, middle-class and middle of the road fools." In that committee the only radicals were Cyril Toman, Mike Farrell, other Young Socialist members from Belfast and Derry, and Eamonn himself.

The Chief Marshall wanted the prerogative to beat marchers if they deviated from the "straight road," as defined by him.

On the march itself, the only ones in a position to do any beating were the cops!

They blocked us at the top of Duke Street with four big police vans and three lines of baton-waving cops in front and two lines behind. When the crowd first tried to break the cordon it was viciously driven back. Then some people spoke off a chair to the demonstrators (about 800 of them, only half of them men capable of fighting the police, of which there were 500).

Eddie MacAteer (Nationalist Party leader) was booed down and would not be listened to because earlier in the week he'd said: the Nationalist Party would "not participate as a party," though members from the Party could, "participate as individuals. We want to keep the politicians out of the Civil Rights Affair."

Betty Sinclair of the Northern Ireland Communist Party was also booed when she suggested that we go home. The next speaker was Eamonn.

He had absolute silence as he said: "I was bound over to keep the peace this morning, and I am not going to ask anyone to break that police cordon. But if anyone goes to break it, I won't say or do anything to stop him."

With that the crowd rushed the cops and the rest is history. We were beaten back down the road into the batons of two more lines of cops.

[Later] Sinn Fein had a meeting in solidarity with the Derry marchers and the meeting ended up outside the English Embassy. A hundred cops met us there. There were clashes and a petrol bomb was thrown. A certain Inspector Sheen was injured and had to be taken to hospital; this bastard is always on demos and has been a marked man for a long time.

Fraternally, Peter

tial powers are incapable, I am able to do by means of money."

THE rich have always appropriated the speed, strength, cunning, enterprise, skill, bravery, artistry, intelligence, creativity, etc., of others. The only limits to this are the limits of what is physically possible. When Karl Marx wrote, not all the money in the world could have appropriated the life potential of one person and given it to another with an incurable disease. But that is a matter only of what is technically possible at a given moment. And if technique sets the only limit to what is possible in the way of one person appropriating the bodily qualities of another, the expansion of medical technique and the invention of new techniques — the first heart transplant was made a mere 30 years ago — enlarges those possibilities, possibilities that are expanding all the time.

If my heart is diseased to the point of death, I can now buy a healthy new human heart and skilled technicians and doctors to put it in the place of my own. If my liver is rotten, I can buy someone else's liver. I can buy murderers to get me the organ I need for the prolongation of my own life. I can find states and state functionaries — in China, but not only in China — to legally kill people possessing good organs so that I can buy those I need from them. If I am blind, I can buy good eyes, if not from the person whose eyes they are, then from a murderer, or a murdering state.

The possibilities enlarge as medical technique expands. The possibilities for the rich to do what they have always done, but in a new way, and to a new degree, is thus enormously enlarged; and the rich are not dependent on organs made available by unavoidable death, nor are they forced to take a place in a democratic queue. Money decides.

*"If life were a thing that money
could buy,*

*"Then the rich would live and the
poor would die,"*

went the old song, in the days before technology and class oppression could combine to make it possible for the rich literally to take life and limb from the poor and the unfortunate and to bestow it on themselves. Vampirism and cannibalism is now no longer just folk metaphor for extreme exploitation, or deliberate satire such as Swift's. We arrive at a new form of organised cannibalism: some people now consume, though no longer orally, other people.

OF course, no light is shed on anything by crudely equating this monstrous Chinese industry in the body parts of people freshly killed to order and the state that organises and profits from it, with what happens in bourgeois-democratic Britain.

In Britain or in the USA, the rich and

their governments do not capture poor people — youths who go for joy rides in someone else's car, for instance — put them through a travesty of "justice" and then render down their carcasses for direct implantation in the rich.

Yet what is happening in China does bear a terrible family resemblance to what is happening in capitalist societies like those of Britain and the USA. It happens in a less "administrative" and less overtly barbarous form, but it happens nonetheless.

What else is it but social cannibalism when scarce health care is distributed by being bought and sold, so that the rich buy health and life, and increasingly the poor suffer and die where access to state-of-the-art health care might have healed them?

What else is it, when money is allowed to buy you health and the lack of it condemns you to premature sickness and death?

What else is it when, as in the USA now, desperate poor people sell — they do! — a kidney or an eye to other people rich enough to buy the right to cannibalise their bodies? No rarity, it is already a subject for "problem" drama on popular TV. This is likely to be a growth industry. There are even reports of enterprising private gangsters illegally doing what the Chinese state does legally.

In China, the state does it directly; in the USA, and increasingly in Britain, the liberal state holds the ring for the free market, and its god, money, to do it.

What is happening in China is all too nightmarishly real. Yet it is so plainly no more than two or three stages along our road, that it could, like Swift's "modest proposal," be an imaginary, satirical, extrapolation from what is happening to the poor here.

It bears the same relationship to what is happening in Britain and the USA as Swift's proposal to cook and eat children did to the system which ate up their lives without literally consuming their bodies.

PRIMITIVE people ate their war captives in the mistaken belief that they would thereby acquire their strength. Civilised people long ago passed that stage. Now the miracles of medical technology take us full circle.

Wonder-working technology under the control of ruling-class barbarians, farmers of the people, makes it possible for the victors in the class struggle, physically to annex and acquire as their own bodily attributes the organs, lives and strength of the defeated poor — to consume them. The ruling cannibals are doing that, and not only in China. The new combination of miracle-working technology and class society which open up new dimensions of exploitation are, on the eve of the 21st century, making the barbaric fantasies of primitive cannibalism everyday social reality.

Patrick Avaakum

Working class solidarity: The battles of Grunwick

By Jean Lane

ON 7 November 1977 a pitched battle took place on the streets of North London between the police and thousands of workers. It was one event in a year-long strike for trade union recognition. The strike was called Grunwick and many of the lessons from it were similar to those that were to come out of the great miners strike of 1984-5 seven years later, and, very recently, out of the Liverpool Dockers strike today. Questions of solidarity, the law, the role of the state, the need for rank-and-file organisation across the trade unions — all were raised then as they have been by working-class struggle since.

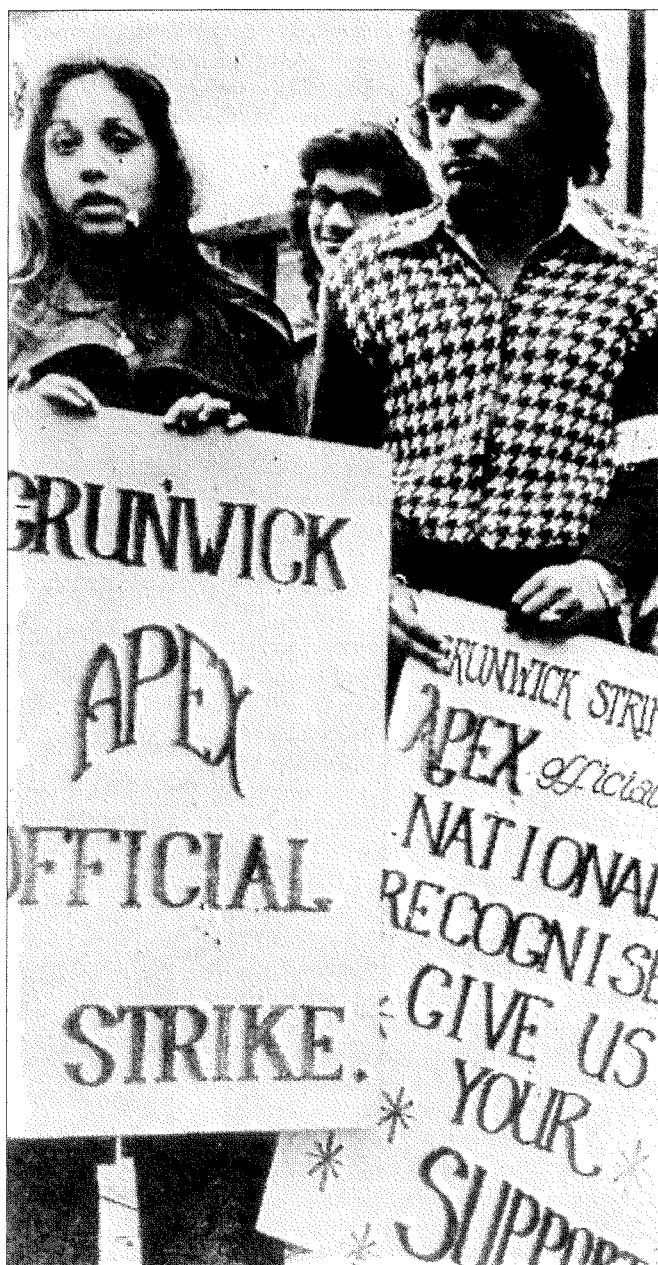
The Grunwick strike, however, was different from other big battles of the working class before it or since in one significant way. It was, in many ways, a strike that was not meant to happen. It did not involve workers in a large, powerful union with a militant history like the miners who had brought the Tory government down only a few years before, or the dockers or engineers who had helped the miners close the Saltley Gates. The workers of Grunwick were not unionised at all and had no experience of being in a union. They were mostly women, in large part young women, who had to fight their families for the right to join the picket line; they were overwhelmingly Asian, many of whom spoke little English, and who were being employed by Grunwick because they could be used as cheap labour. Yet their struggle would reverberate throughout the labour movement.

Grunwick was a small film processing plant situated on two sites: Chapter Road and Cobbold Road, in Willesden, North London. Conditions inside the factory were appalling. The workers had no representation. Rates of pay differed from one individual to another, though white workers were consistently paid more than black. Overtime was compulsory and could be imposed at a moment's notice. Conditions inside the centre of the dispute, the mail order department, were particularly draconian. Grunwick made itself competitive by firstly paying the lowest rates of pay in the industry, about £28 for a 40 hour week — the national average for wages at that time was £72 and a full time woman manual worker in London got £44 — and secondly by providing a fast service to people sending photographs in by post.

The pressure inside the mail order department was very high and the manager, a Mr Alden, ruled it like a despot. Women had to raise their hands to go to the toilet and were then timed. If they asked for time off to look after sick children they were told, "This is not a holiday camp". Compulsory overtime could be imposed when a woman was going to pick her child up from nursery. She would have to either work on worrying about the fate of her child or argue with her supervisor and get the sack. Sackings were high. The annual staff turnover was 100%! There was an atmosphere of subservience and fear.

The summer of 1976 was a record-breaking hot one. Everyone over the age of thirty can remember what they were doing in that incredible summer that seemed to go on and on. Everyone who had worked in Grunwick will have no problem remembering what they were doing then, and thousands more could tell what they did in the year that followed.

Inside the mail order department there were no windows



and no air conditioning. It was a very profitable time for Grunwick. People were taking photos as if they were on permanent holiday. The pressure of work was incredible. Four young men, who had earlier discussed the need for a trade union, decided to work slowly one Friday afternoon right under Alden's nose. One was sacked and the other three walked out, leaving a huge crate of work unfinished. That might have been the end of it as the four had no idea what to do next and just hung around the gates outside.

Inside, an argument developed between Alden and one of the women workers, Mrs Jayaben Desai who was to become one of

the leaders of the strike and its most eloquent participant. She had just been told that she could not go home as more work had come in. She demanded her cards and then instead of just leaving made a speech to the other workers standing in two sweltering lines along their work bench. Then she and her son Sunil took their cards saying to Alden: "What you are running here is not a factory, it is a zoo. But in a zoo there are many types of animals. Some are monkeys who dance on your fingertips, others are lions who can bite your head off. We are the lions, Mr. Manager". The two joined the other four still hanging around the gate.

The following Monday the six turned up with placards and petitions. Every member of the mail order department and other workers besides signed, on their way in to work, to say they wanted a trade union. Sunil rode to the nearest Citizens Advice Bureau on his bicycle to find out what to do next. They gave him the phone numbers of Apex — the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staffs — the TUC and Brent Trades Council. At 3pm that day 50 other workers in the mail order department walked out. The strike had begun.

The strikers marched to Cobbold Road where Grunwick's processing department was situated. The managers at Cobbold Road locked the doors, imprisoning the workers inside and turned up the radios so that no contact could be made between the strikers and the workers inside. One young woman had her face slapped when she tried to open a window. Another was threatened with a broken bottle by a driver guarding the entrance. Only 7 workers joined the strike from Cobbold Road that day. A mass meeting was called of all workers in a local car park, at which the decision to join a union was agreed. The management said they would rather the plant closed than see a union in. The strikers said they would not return as individuals, only as a union. Sixty workers joined APEX. More workers over the next week walked out of Cobbold Road until there were 137 strikers out of a workforce of 480. Thus began what might have been a small, localised, unwritten story of a strike for trade union recognition, but which became a long battle, nationally and internationally known and which involved thousands of other workers from up and down the country.

The striking workers were sacked and the fight quickly became one for reinstatement as well as recognition. APEX wanted a speedy resolution to the dispute through negotiation. But George Ward, the owner of Grunwick, refused. They then tried to get independent arbitration through ACAS, but Ward, full of his own important right to rule his own workers as he pleased ("I can buy a Patel for £15") wouldn't recognise their right to tell him what to do. His cause was taken up by the right wing and anti-union National Association For Freedom (NAFF) who funded and handled all Ward's legal business for the duration of the strike. They threatened, for example, legal action against the postal workers union, the UPW, for blacking Grunwick's mail. Tom Jackson, leader of the UPW immediately called the blacking off.

The strikers did get support. Kodak workers blacked photographic supplies to the factory. Grunwick managers bought it themselves in small quantities and smuggled it through the picket line in the boots of their cars. The postal workers refused to cross the picket line, so Grunwick had to go and collect it themselves. Mail order work from Germany, Belgium and Holland could only be got in by moving from port to port and eventually buying their own plane and flying it to small airfields.

On the picket lines strikers were being baited by the managers from inside the gate, and bullied by them on their way in. Mrs. Desai had her foot run over by one car and was taken to hospital. A pregnant woman was knocked over. The response of APEX was to call for a court of enquiry. While they got bogged down in the law, strikers got left at the gate, demoralised until one morning in March 1977 only one picket turned up. He was later found badly beaten up. Complaints to the police were met with "He deserved what he got". The police continued to pick off and harass pickets on the picket line. Mrs Desai was arrested and charged with assault of two of the Grunwick managers. She was 4'11" tall and on the other side of a high fence at the time. Not surprisingly her case was later dropped and the courts on releasing other pickets rapped the police over the knuckles for trying to impose a six-person picket which was not law. Costs were awarded against them.

But by now the strikers had lost any faith in the law or the police to be fair; or indeed, in the official labour movement to help them. Mahmood Ahmad, secretary of the strike committee said: "The TUC should be coming to ask us how they can help. Instead we have to keep going to them". And Jayaben Desai expressed their bitterness at being left on the picket line: "Official action from the TUC", she said, "is like honey on your elbow; you can smell it, you can see it, but you can never taste it".

The strikers put out a call for a mass picket. There was to be a week of action and the first picket on Monday 13 June 1977 was to be a women's picket which was, in the strike committees mind,

"On seeing the police put in their place by row upon row of engineers, dockers, seamen and builders, after a whole winter of watching them harassing and intimidating young women, Jayaben Desai said: 'When they talked of the power of the trade union movement I listened but I didn't really believe. Now I see that power'."

to emphasise the "peaceful intention of the picket" and to have a "restraining effect on the police". Far from it. The police, on the day, punched, kicked and dragged pickets across the road by their hair. This happened to Mrs Desai and she was kicked repeatedly. Another woman, arrested in the same way was released by the police who were immediately surrounded by a crowd of angry, sari-clad women, screaming at them to let her go. The ferocity of their response took the police by surprise. Johnny Patel of the strike committee was repeatedly hit by a policeman who was yelling in a rage, "You Paki bastard".

More workers from Cobbold Road joined the strike. Post Office workers at the Cricklewood office unofficially resumed their blacking of Grunwick's mail against the instruction of their leader Tom Jackson, and the other offices refused to handle it if it was transferred to their offices. T&G drivers refused to carry police to Chapter Road. Even bank workers attempted to get handling of Grunwick's account blacked.

By Friday of that week the mass picket was 1,500 strong. For the first time pickets outnumbered police. The week of action was extended and hopes were running high. On seeing the police put in their place by row upon row of engineers, dockers, seamen and builders, after a whole winter of watching them harassing and intimidating young women, Jayaben Desai said: "When they talked of the power of the trade union movement I listened but I didn't really believe. Now I see that power".

That week, Grunwick began bussing their scabs into the plant to prevent any contact with the pickets.

And for the first time ever the Special Patrol Group (SPG) — an armed, specially organised section of the police force, supposedly to deal with "terrorism" — was used in a trades dispute.

For the following month Grunwick's picket lines were the lead item on everyone's TVs. The police brutality was unbelievable. One miner described Saltley as a children's Sunday picnic in comparison. The media's lies too were extraordinary: getting in good

OUR HISTORY



a solid turn out every day and for another huge turn out for 8 August. Their concerns were now three-fold.

They still wished to persuade other Grunwick workers to join the dispute though they knew that they could never have a solid, all-out strike. Their best chance of winning now was solidarity from other key workforces, blacking essential services to Grunwick and forcing George Ward to give in. The mass picket was also, therefore to support and give

practice for the next miners' strike to come. (Print workers, on more than one occasion, took industrial action to redress the media balance in favour of the strikers). Just as the arch scab from Nottinghamshire's coalfields during the 1984 miner's strike, was to be lauded as "Silver Birch", as standing up for decent workers' rights to work, so seven years earlier, George Ward was celebrated for his fine struggle against intimidation from strikers and union "bully boys."

Shocked by the actions of the SPG, the miners called for a day of action on 11 July. Despite the fact that APEX recognised that it was the police who were creating the violence, they were not for a day of action: "We want to defuse the situation, not exacerbate it." They preferred, instead, to put their faith in the Court of Inquiry. The strike committee, however, who had a bellyful of legal loopholes, welcomed the call.

The TUC and APEX decided to defuse the 11 July mass picket by calling a march for the same day. They instructed the strike committee to call off the picket and support the march. The strike committee refused, calling on trade unionists to support both. This was a mistake.

On the day, a fantastic show of strength occurred outside Grunwick. 20,000 supporters turned up, outnumbering police by 3 to 1 and pushing them down the road. The scab bus was kept out. There was no violence and few arrests. But at 11am the vast majority of pickets went off to join the search on the other side of Willesden. The bus got in and 24 isolated pickets were arrested.

Two days before, in a desperate attempt to break the blockade, Grunwick, with the help of NAFF, 250 right-wing volunteers and 150 vehicles, got the built-up mail out of the plant to a depot outside London where it was stamped by strike-breaking "volunteers" and driven to district officers all over the country. The UPW, who now had a grievance of their own since non-union, non-Post Office people had handled the mail, still refused to make the unofficial blacking official. They sent telegrams to UPW branches telling them to sort the mail.

Jackson's spinelessness was matched by that of the leadership of the TUC and APEX in their efforts to wind down the mass pickets and persuade the strike committee to wait the outcome of the Court of Inquiry. The strike committee called over their heads for

confidence to the unofficial action taken by the Cricklewood postal workers.

The strikers did not totally dismiss the legal steps that their leadership was taking. To have ACAS rule in favour of the strikers, for example, had been a boost and a good media point in their favour. They saw the mass picket, however, as crucial because it put pressure on the courts and the independent arbiters to rule in their favour.

The trade union bureaucrats wished to use the law rather than direct action. The strikers believed that the action was the key to winning and that the use of the law could only benefit them while the action continued.

On 29 July — "Black Friday" — Roy Grantham, the APEX leader, and Ken Smith met the strike committee to pressurise them into calling 8 August off. At exactly the same time Norman Stagg, Deputy General Secretary of the UPW, met the Cricklewood postal workers to get them to call off their unofficial blacking. He threatened them with expulsion from the union which would affect their pension rights and leave them open to dismissal.

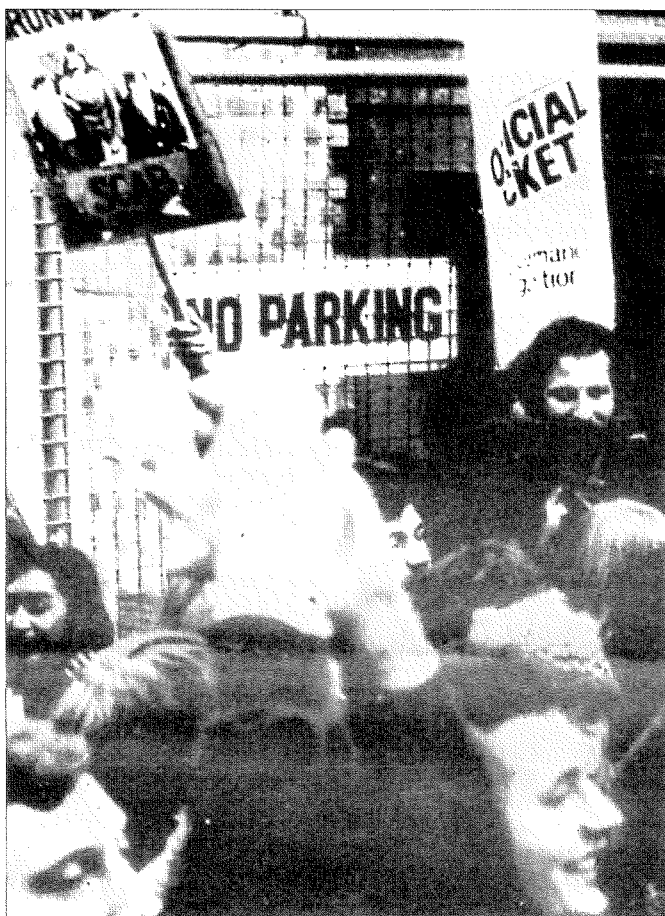
The strike committee were resisting bravely even though they were being threatened with their strike pay being cut by 60% until word came through that the Cricklewood workers had buckled, voting very narrowly to resume normal working. Mrs Desai angrily attacked the union leadership. She and all of the younger Asian women who had had to fight their own husbands and parents eleven months earlier to be able to take part in the dispute at all — voted en bloc against calling off the day of action. When a new strike committee was elected soon afterwards, it included five of these militants.

A UPW delegate told the next trades council meeting "our union leadership has done something that George Ward, John Gorst and the NAFF failed to do. They forced us back."

Three thousand people still turned up to picket on 8 August.

The new strike committee began putting pressure on the TUC to sanction the blacking of essential services to Grunwick. This was now the only way to win, but the relevant unions had all told the Grunwick strikers that without the backing of the TUC their members would not have the confidence to stick their necks out.

At Labour Party conference, the strikers received a standing



ovation. A resolution pledging support however, could only go as far as a call for an amendment to the law forcing employers like Ward to co-operate with ACAS. It was ministers from the Labour government who were overseeing the use of violent police tactics and the introduction of the SPG into a trades dispute, bullying the strikers into submission!

The strikers backed up their lobbying of the TUC and the Labour Party with a resumption of mass picketing and, sensing from those trade unionists who had given them support throughout that there was a limit to the number of times they could be called upon to travel up and down the country without a resolution to the battle in sight, decided to go for one final push to put pressure on the labour movement to help them bring George Ward to his knees. They called a "day of reckoning" for 7 November.

8,000 turned up. The police were savage, meting out organised and indiscriminate violence. One picket had his face smashed through the glass of the police van. Strikers who had become cut off from the main body of protest were made to run the gauntlet between two rows of truncheon-wielding policemen. Heavily protected policemen ran after pickets dressed in no more than shirt sleeves, jeans and trainers, kicked them senseless on the ground and then walked away laughing.

243 pickets were treated for injuries. 12 had broken bones, 113 were arrested.

When, after this, further requests from the strike committee for the blacking of essential services were met with excuses and empty promises of support, Mrs Desai and 3 other strikers, in desperation, began a hunger strike outside Congress House. Their union leadership tried to persuade them to do it outside Grunwick instead offering to lay on the services of a doctor! When the strikers pointed out that George Ward would happily see them starve and went ahead with their plan, they were suspended from the union without strike pay for 4 months.

For months the strikers continued on their own, taunted by the management on the other side of the gates just as they had at

the beginning of the dispute almost two years earlier. They finally announced the end of the dispute on the 14 July 1978. No reinstatements had been achieved. No union got into Grunwick.

Ironically wages inside the plant rose quite considerably during the dispute. At a time when the Labour government was imposing the "Social Contract" on the unions in the form of pay restraint and a holding down of the class struggle, George Ward bought his scab labour with, all told, a 25% across the board wage increase throughout the company.

If any other group of workers had demanded this type of pay increase at that time of "tightening of belts to help the country" they would have been slated by the media. George Ward was upheld as a fine and noble character.

That media hypocrisy, the savagery of the police, the support of NAFF for George Ward, and the gutlessness of the workers' leadership (who were more concerned to bolster up a rocky, minority Labour government than to fight the ending of sweat shop conditions in their own class) all combined to crush the Grunwick strike.

The two occasions during the dispute when Ward was nearly beaten, were those when the courageous Cricklewood postal workers blacked Grunwick's mail. That kind of rank-and-file confidence and solidarity in spite of weak leadership is the only way workers can ensure that they have the backing needed to win that Ward got from NAFF. Their class stick together. Ours should too. If the leaders of our movement won't deliver, the rank and file must organise to force them, or to cast them aside.

That same lesson was to surface again, with redoubled force, during the miners strike of 1984-5. Although it was to take place under different conditions, and over different demands, the basic lessons of class solidarity and rank-and-file organisation were the same, as were those of the hypocrisy of the media and the role of the state.

The Grunwick strikers lost, but the labour movement as a whole gained, in two important ways.

Firstly the strike helped to knock down very forcefully the prejudices inside the movement against black and women workers. It was, at that time, rare for a union to have the kind of anti-racist and anti-sexist policies that are considered the norm now. The myths that black workers are hard to unionise and undercut white workers jobs, and that women's place is in the home and that women only go out to work for pin money were exploded by this dispute for union recognition, union wages and conditions. A dispute led by Asian and women workers which drew in and influenced thousands of other workers every where.

Secondly, the few years in the run up to the Grunwick dispute saw a lull in the class struggle in Britain with very low strike figures. The general atmosphere was that of keep your head down, don't rock the boat, don't break the law. That goes with a weakly-led movement tied to, and in the pocket of, the government. The Grunwick strike put class struggle back on the agenda which was to lead, only one year later to the Winter of Discontent and the down fall of that government.

The Tories learned their lessons well and, piecemeal, removed the unions' influence on government and shackled the unions with laws that make a legal strike virtually impossible.

The next big class battle will certainly happen under a Labour government, one which has learned its own lessons, embracing the Tory philosophy and taking their anti-union laws to its own. The union leadership has for years held down their members' desire for action on the promise of a Labour government. They have it now: a Labour government which will not even pay the lip-service to class struggle that the 1974-79 government did.

The labour movement must learn its lessons too; not to rely on help from above, but to rely on its own strength and solidarity to win.

Globalisation and its discontents

In the second part of his consideration of the reality and theories of globalisation, **Martin Thomas** analyses the changes in the global economy and the practical conclusions for Marxists

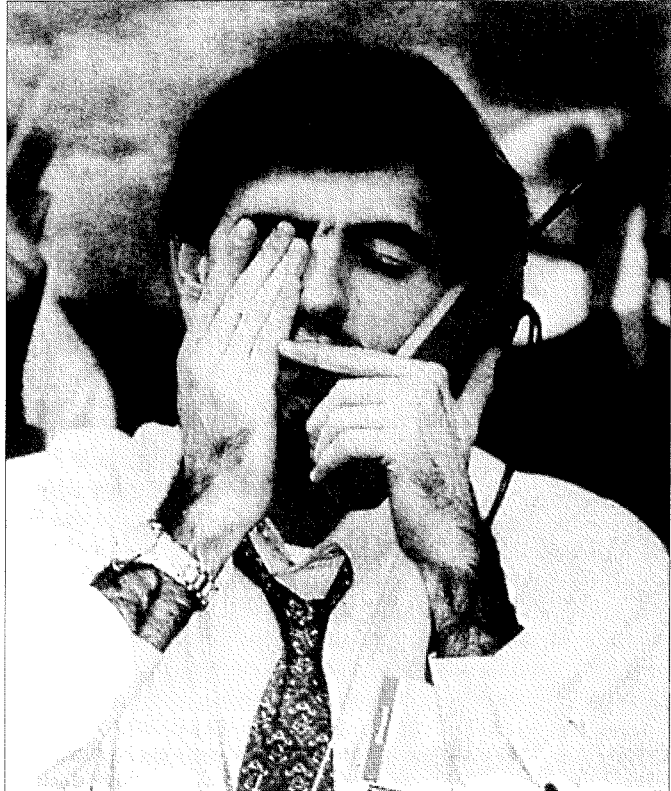
1. There is a real increase in the global interconnectedness of capitalism, but much that is called "globalisation" has dimensions and causes outside that increase.

POSTAL DELIVERIES IN London cannot be "outsourced" to workers in China. Hospital cleaning in Britain is in no market competition with hospital cleaning in Mexico. House-building, dock labour, bus and train driving, teaching, all have to be done on the spot and cannot be "out-sourced" globally.

Very often, when bosses and governments cite "the demands of global competition" or "the needs of the new global economy" as cause for attacks on workers' jobs, conditions and wages, the "global economy" is only a buzzword used to shift blame to the conveniently distant and intangible.

Even in terms of the most conventional economics, the idea that a nation where some economic sectors operate at higher cost than "world best practice" will plummet into misery is nonsense. Japanese capitalism made its amazing industrial advance with retail trade and agriculture much more costly than in other leading capitalist countries, and sumo-wrestling must be the world's most economically-inefficient national sport. Even assuming a national economy entirely open to bustling global trade, "inefficiency" generally just means slightly lower income per head. Whether that cost outweighs those of stress, unemployment, greater inequality, and so on is an open question. Or it would be, if the arguments about adapting to "globalisation" were really debates about the overall balance of gains and losses to a united community. They are not. Bosses squeeze workers in the name or in the cause of meeting levels of exploitation achieved elsewhere because they are profit-greedy capitalists, not because the economy is global.

Capitalism has become markedly more "global" in many ways since the early 1980s¹. According to a crisp summary by Martin Wolf in the *Financial Times* (1 October 1997), "Between 1930 and 1990 average revenue per mile in air transport fell from 68 US cents to 11 cents, in 1990 dollars. The cost of a three-minute telephone call between New York and London fell from \$244.65 to \$3.32... The unit cost of sea freight... fell 70 per cent in real terms between the beginning of the 1980s and 1996... Under the agreement reached at the end of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations, average advanced country tariffs on imports of manufactures will be reduced to under 4 per cent. Tariffs of developing countries are set to fall from 34 per cent between 1984 and 1987 to 14 per cent... Ratios of exports to global output were 9 per cent in 1913, 7 per cent in 1950, 11 per cent in 1973 and 14 per cent in the early 1990s². Where once integration tended to take the form of trade and capital movements at arm's length, it now occurs increasingly within companies. In 1996, the global stock of foreign direct investment was valued at \$3,200bn. Foreign direct investment flows grew at 12 per cent a year between 1991 and 1996, while global exports grew at 7 per cent. By 1995, 280,000 foreign affil-



iates generated \$7,000bn in global sales, which exceeded global exports of goods and services by 20 per cent. According to the World Bank, the share in world output of multi-national affiliates jumped from 4.5 per cent in 1970 to 7.5 per cent in 1995. Their share in manufacturing output was 18 per cent in 1992, up from 12 per cent in 1977."

The long-term trend for trade, investment, and even the organisation of production to cross national borders has accelerated markedly in the 1990s. However, the world is far from being one uniform global marketplace. For each of the USA, Japan, and the European Union, external trade is only about 12% of economic activity; and much of the USA's trade is with neighbouring Mexico and Canada, much of Japan's with neighbouring Asia. A great deal of foreign investment is also regional rather than global – Europe to Europe, USA to Mexico or Canada, Japan to China, and the like. A big chunk of the recent splurge of foreign direct investment, especially in the Third World, has been in finance, insurance, and real estate rather than manufacturing: in 1990, 40% of the stock of US foreign direct investment in underdeveloped countries was in banking, finance and insurance³. There are still only between a dozen and twenty true global companies, organising complex production processes on a global chessboard of production sites, with the whole world market in view, as distinct from companies firmly centred in one national base with offshoots in other countries⁴.

Since the long trend of capitalist trade and enterprise towards a world arena – depicted by Marx as early as 1848, in the *Communist Manifesto* – was thrown dramatically into reverse between 1914 and 1945, in many ways capitalism is no more "globalised" now than it was in 1913. In some ways it is less so: there was much freer international movement of labour then, and British capitalists before 1914 put a far bigger propor-

tion of their investment abroad, and in remote parts of the world, than US, Japanese and German capitalists do now. We should therefore be warned against rushing to the conclusion that today's political patterns are an automatic, or necessary, "reflection" of the economic processes of globalisation. The world capitalism of 1913, also characterised by masses of foot-loose finance capital splashing round the globe, had very different patterns, with the rise of "organised capitalism", widespread cartels, the beginnings of welfare states, and colonial empires.

Before 1914, Eduard Bernstein, the prime theorist of the non-revolutionary wing of the socialist movement, argued that the increasing interconnections of trade and investment between the leading capitalist countries must make capitalism more and more peaceful. The figures he cited to show those interconnections were true and impressive. In the mid-1970s, the French Marxist Michel Aglietta, in a pioneering analysis of how the leading capitalist economies were shifting to a new pattern of development after the long boom of 1945-70, described that incipient pattern as a move into state capitalism, "a new progress in the unification of the wage-earning class", "reinforced financial centralisation with tighter controls", and state wage controls. The new phase, he suggested, would

"destroy free enterprise as the pillar of liberal ideology"⁵. Aglietta, too, based himself on real and important facts of the time. In short, capitalism is a complex, multifarious, and contradictory system, and we will usually go wrong if we deduce the future by extrapolating the consequences of one strand of development - however central, well established, and even unstoppable it may seem. And "globalisation" (so I will argue in this article) is not a single solid trend, but a composite of many processes with different dynamics and effects.

2. Casino-globalisation is an important fact, but a phenomenon of chaos and interregnum, separable from other globalist trends, and not all-powerful.

QUALITATIVELY NEW SINCE the early 1980s, in a way that "globalised" trade, investment, and production are not, is the huge and rapid flow of short-term finance round the world - currency trading (\$1.5 trillion a day), international trading in shares and bonds (\$832 billion raised through international bond sales and bank loans in 1995), and the big and unmapped trade in "derivatives" (essentially, gambling on future price movements of bonds, shares and currencies without actually buying them in advance). Despite what they say to scare trade unionists, even global companies generally cannot easily switch production sites from one place to another. Machinery and buildings; transport, communication, supply, service and distribution networks; and stocks of skilled labour, cannot be moved or reconstructed easily. Multinational corporations mostly invest not where wages are lowest but in advanced capitalist countries and those Third World countries which have relatively high wages and rich markets and infrastructure. Huge amounts of cash are, however, footloose. They can drain out of Thai or Japanese shares into US government paper or German company bonds or French bank deposits within a few hours. Financial capital really is hyper-mobile, and its owners can use that hyper-mobility as a tremendous source of power.

This "casino capitalism" uses new communication technologies, but those technologies could flourish without it. So could

globalised trade, investment, and production. States can take part in global capitalism while keeping controls on capital movements, and some do (Chile, China). The dramatic rise of the world financial markets has been generated not by improved communications, expanded trade, or a new organisation of production, but by three other developments. One is the great rise in holdings of dollars (and other currencies) outside their home countries which started with the USA's heavy spending on the Vietnam war in the 1960s and accelerated with the big rise in oil prices in 1973-4. Second is the immense volatility of the prices of paper assets (currencies, bonds, shares) since the breakdown of the dollar-based international finance system of 1945-71. A

corporation, a pension fund, an insurance company, or a wealthy individual, keeping their stash in the wrong (or right) form - British government bonds, Mexican company shares, whatever - can lose (or gain) billions within weeks or days. Whether they want to play safe or to take risks, they have to be constantly on watch to switch money from one form to another. Third is the abolition of governments' currency-exchange controls between 1970 and 1992. "Casino" globalisation is thus not a phenomenon of a new, solid, dynamic, well-integrated regime of global capitalism, but of chaos, makeshift, and interregnum⁶. And it developed, not by deep-seated economic trends creeping up on

governments and overwhelming them, but through specific government decisions.

Having developed, it acquires a huge momentum of vested interest. Many thousands of very rich and well-connected people make their profits from the international financial markets. IMF chief Michel Camdessus says, "the world is in the hands of these guys", and the left-wing German authors Hans-Peter Martin and Harald Schumann assert: "Currency and security dealers... decide on the weal and woe of entire nations"⁷. Experiences like the Swedish social democrats' dramatic abandonment of full employment and embrace of welfare cuts in late 1990, under pressure from the financial markets, give these views weight. The *Financial Times* commented (27 October 1990) that "the international money markets have become the arbiters of Sweden's future, not the Social Democratic ideologues". Casino-globalisation applies a powerful torque to all capitalist policies, in the direction of sharpening the race for short-term profits, keeping interest rates (i.e. the share of capitalist loot allotted to "pure" finance) high⁸, and rating currency stability (low inflation) above such national economic indicators as employment and growth (witness many newspaper headlines on the theme: "Bad News for Markets: Unemployment Drops"). But both logic and facts indicate limits to the power of the managers of international finance. First, they are despite everything only a small section of the capitalist class⁹. Second, European Monetary Union. EMU is a move for greater international interconnectedness of capital, but it is also a blow against casino-globalisation. It wipes out speculation on exchange-rates between the European currencies involved. One dealer told Martin and Schumann: "It [EMU] would take away our work and our chances of making a profit, so naturally we are against it"¹⁰. In 1992, currency speculators wrecked the European Monetary System, a scheme of loose linkages between currencies designed to be a lead-in to full European Monetary Union. The European Union states had to choose between the prudent fall-back option of letting currencies float more freely and a drastic forced-march to monetary union despite the risk of further speculative catastrophes. Many analysts, including me, thought that

"The long-term trend for trade, investment, and even the organisation of production to cross national borders has accelerated markedly in the 1990s. However, the world is far from being one uniform global marketplace."

they would surely choose caution. But they chose to go the hard way. The states' clout, self-confidence, and energy in pursuit of their strand of "globalisation" were sufficient to do that even though there was much serious bourgeois opinion, quite separable from the vested interests of the speculators, warning that the detailed scheme for monetary union was botched and foolhardy. Casino-globalisation is separable from other "globalist" trends, and it is not all-powerful or unstoppable. When governments go with casino-globalist pressures for priority to currency stability, and company bosses go with pressures for maximum short-term profit, they are not "submitting" to alien pressure, but embracing priorities that suit their own class interests, despite the reluctance of some social-democratic ministers or "slow-but-steady" managers.

3. The trend is not to "giant firms and dwarf states". Much of the increased international connectedness of capitalism is engineered by states, not imposed on them.

FOR SOME WRITERS, however, not only casino-globalisation but also the more "organic" globalist tendencies of our times (such as growth of global and multinational companies) are annihilating the state and society. It is "becoming increasingly difficult for corporate managers to manage in the public interest, no matter how strong their moral values and commitment", and globalisation is destroying governance based on the theme that "rich and poor alike shared a sense of national and community interest"¹¹. States are "withdrawing from their main responsibility, the regulation of the violence of social relations to ensure the common good"¹². "The bourgeoisie of the Third World is no longer a national bourgeoisie working in the interests of its people but an international bourgeoisie working in the interests of international capital"¹³.

"The right balance... a social market economy... is being lost... the engineers of the new global economy throw overboard the insights gained by those who first made it a success"¹⁴. "Faced with the powerful rise of global firms, the traditional countervailing powers (State, parties, unions) seem more and more powerless... Can citizens tolerate this new-type global coup d'état?"¹⁵. According to Martin and Schumann, our task is "to restore the State"¹⁶.

But whose state? Restored by whom? The capitalist state restored by the working class? Trotsky described the "Popular Front" enforced by the Stalinists on the Republican side of the Spanish civil war as an alliance with "the shadow of the bourgeoisie"; the programme of "restoring the State" would commit the left to a Popular Front with a ghostly ideal of a bourgeois state. People complain that globalisation has brought the domination of economics over politics; but the domination of economics (profit-making) over human life is not an aberration in capitalist development. It is the essence of it. "This is capitalism"¹⁷ — not capitalism trampled, but capitalism in full flight. And "the global economy — the transnationalisation of markets and capital — not only presupposes the nation-state but relies on the state as its principal instrument"¹⁸. "Globalisation" must be seen as a politically rather than a technologically induced phenomenon... A number of states are seeking directly to facilitate rather than to contain the internationalisation of corporate activity in trade, investment, and production"¹⁹.

Despite Margaret Thatcher's talk about "rolling back the state", the capitalist states, as economic forces, are very far from becoming "dwarfs". In leading capitalist countries, some 30 or

40 per cent of national income, or even more, still passes through the hands of the state²⁰. Although Britain is not a very big state, and yet is home to several large multinationals, the assets and the turnover of the state far exceed those of any of those corporations. The state is no dwarf.

4. Economic and social structures are shaped not just by technology, but by class battles and class interests defined in those battles.

MARXIST THEORY PROPOSES that social development is governed by the logic of change in the modes of production of the material conditions of life, rather than by a diverse assembly of factors (ideologies, political factors, personalities of leading figures) any of which may have equal weight. Marxists have long disputed any crude "economic determinism", and even more so any idea that all social phenomena are automatically determined by technology. In the debate on globalisation, however, we find some Marxists, and many ex-Marxists and ordinary bourgeois writers, claiming that the whole development — including the weakening of working-class reform politics, the rise of identity politics and other particularisms, and the erosion of trade unions — is the inevitable result of technology. "If 'the handmill gives you society with the feudal lord and the steam-mill gives you society with the industrial capitalist', the microchip gives you society with the global capitalist"²¹. Marx wrote the aphorism about the handmill and the steam-mill. But it was a studied exaggeration, a flourish in passing. In the main line of his argument, Marx was clear about the fallacy of a view that sees the evolution of social and economic structures as a smooth reflection of technological advance. "The historical movement which

changes the producers into wage-workers, appears, on the one hand, as their emancipation from serfdom and from the fetters of the guilds, and this side alone exists for our bourgeois historians. But, on the other hand, these new freedmen became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production, and of all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements. And the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire"²². If the microchip has given us the imperious domination of the global capitalist, that result too comes from battles with

"blood and fire". In those battles the capitalist states have played a large role (on the side of globalisation, not against it) and they have redefined their basic priorities of capitalist class interest.

5. Capitalism and the state.

THE PICTURE PAINTED by some writers on globalisation of where we are heading — a world where states become shrivelled, powerless husks, and global market competition decides everything — is impossible. In *Capital* Marx mentions the state only in passing. But it is a fact, and Marx knew it well (he planned to write a further volume on the question), that the state must play a central role in capitalism. A primitive, "wild" capitalism can develop to some extent without an effective state, but fully-fledged capitalism needs a big state. It needs law to regulate commerce and the labour market. It needs public services, run or regulated by the state — education, health, water, hygiene, electricity, post, telephone, roads, railways, airports. It needs the state to regulate money, banking, and credit. That these things do not go without saying is shown by Russia

today.

There is no world state, despite all the efforts of the IMF, the G8 and the WTO. The truly global part of today's capitalism is thus limited to primitive, "wild" development, with only the USA's role as world-superpower to provide a very skimpy quasi-state framework. No-one, not even the most ardent free-market ideologue, expects the economic crisis underway now in Asia and Russia to be resolved through the automatic free play of the global markets. Everyone expects New York and Washington (the IMF, the Federal Reserve, the US government) to act. No-one disputes they have only very slight resources for control. The testimony of the famous speculator George Soros to the US House of Representatives Banking Committee in September 1998 is eloquent: "The global capitalist system... is coming apart at the seams... Financial markets are inherently unstable. The global capitalist system is based on the belief that financial markets, left to their own devices, tend towards equilibrium. They are supposed to move like a pendulum: they may be dislocated by external forces, so-called exogenous shocks, but they will seek to return to the equilibrium position. This belief is false. Financial markets are given to excesses and if a boom/bust sequence progresses beyond a certain point it will never revert to where it came from. Instead of acting like a pendulum financial markets have recently acted more like a wrecking ball, knocking over one economy after another. There is much talk about imposing market discipline, but imposing market discipline means imposing instability, and how much instability can society take?... Regulators do make mistakes... But that does not mean that financial markets can look after themselves. Everybody looking out for his or her self-interest does not lead to equilibrium but to what [Federal Reserve boss] Alan Greenspan called irrational exuberance and afterwards panic."

Since there is no world state, the nation-state remains central to capitalism. In fact, different nation-states "globalise" in different ways. "The same corporate strategists who in American or Germany brusquely reject any government interference in their investment decisions are quite willing in Asia to subject billion-dollar investments to the conditions imposed by state bureaucrats who quite shamelessly describe their work as central economic planning"²³. Savings and investment rates remain very different from country to country (high in Japan, for example, low in the USA). So do interest rates (high in Britain, low in Japan). Just as wages still vary as widely as ever despite universal pressure downwards, so there is no clear tendency for welfare provision, or trade-union rights, to "converge" to a common level somehow decided by an impersonal global-economic logic. All these matters are decided by struggle within the national, or European-Union, framework.

There is a "globalist" bias, towards wooing foreign investment, opening up to international casino-finance, reducing tariffs and trade barriers, etc., in almost all capitalist states today. Why? The state, so Marxist theory proposes, is the organ by which the ruling class seeks to secure its rule by managing irresolvable social conflicts. How it manages those conflicts depends on the condition of class forces at the particular time. How, under the impulse of what conflicts, have the world's states been shaping globalisation? Because the conflicts within capitalism are irresolvable, and the contradictions irrepressible, there is never an indisputable "right answer" for capitalist state policy. Historically, and still today despite some writers' claims of a

trend to global sameness, capitalist states have varied widely in the way they run things. Policy is always a makeshift. It can aim effectively for only a small number of "targets" at any given time, and only at the cost of assuming that the outcome in other respects is secure or can be bad without excessive cost. The priorities will be defined by capitalist class interests; but what defines those interests?

Hunger is a gut instinct. However, whether we are hungry for dog-flesh or pizza is determined not by the basics of human biology but by a complex social process. The same is true of class interests, but more so. Capitalists cannot be capitalists without a drive to exploit workers more and more. But capitalist class sense is not just an involuntary process like our bodies digesting food²⁴. Not just conscious capitalist controversies over strategy, but also priorities which become as instinctive a part of

capitalist class routine as desire for familiar food is part of our bodily routine, are formed by millions of interactions and experiences, in bourgeois political parties, in government offices, in universities, in newspapers, in boardrooms, and so on.

Capitalist company bosses must seek profits. That abstract fact, however, leaves open a variety of definitions of their capitalist class interest. Is immediate cash-in-the-hand profit, even at the cost of asset-stripping, to be valued above company growth, or research and development efforts, or consolidation of a stable and cooperative workforce, which may deliver greater profits in the long run? Is a course with a chance of high profits, but also a risk of ruin, to be preferred to one offering moderate but steady profits? On all accounts, bosses in different leading capital-

ist countries have differed on these matters, US bosses valuing big short-term profits, even if risky, more than German or Japanese, and in the 1990s there has been some convergence towards the US norm. In capitalist state policy, too, as in company-management policy, definitions of class interest evolve — and, perhaps, some patterns, some rules of "must-do" and "can't-do", can become so deeply embedded in social and economic structures and routines that they can be shaken loose and become "ideological", "intellectual" questions of dispute only in great crisis. In between times, the pattern, or paradigm, is not just an "ideological reflex" of capitalist class interest, or of economic structures, but is rather a formative element of that class interest and those structures, which, beyond some abstract rudiments, do not exist prior to it.

After 1945, the Western capitalist classes — and, one by one, as they gained independence, the ex-colonial bourgeoisies too — set about reconstruction with several grave dangers in mind from recent experience: industrial slump through insufficient effective demand; instability in international exchanges; working-class revolution as after World War I²⁵. Each major state believed that it must develop its own more-or-less integrated national industrial base — the reopening and revival of world trade came only bit by bit, and could not be taken for granted — and sought to sustain industry by state demand management. As for the working class, it might be repressed, or held in a more flexible frame with democratic safety-valves, but it must in any case be fed and not pushed to the point of revolt from sheer hunger and poverty. Because a long boom developed, those ideas became set into a paradigm which broke up only in the crises of 1973-5 and 1979-82. From those crises has emerged a new paradigm defining the essential capitalist state targets as keeping the currency stable (an especially exigent target in a

"If the microchip has given us the imperious domination of the global capitalist, that result too comes from struggle. In those battles the capitalist states have played a large role (on globalisation's side, not against it), redefining their basic priorities of capitalist class interest."



or passable substitutes, from somewhere. The decisive blow in blasting that target out of its niche in bourgeois common sense was the drive to destroy threatening bastions of working-class strength in industries like British coal-mining. Part of the reason for states wanting to attract foreign capital is the desire to import technical know-how, especially important in this era of rapid industrial restructuring. That is by no means all, though, for much of the foreign investment — in land deals or building hotels — brings no special science. The fiscal crisis of the state, and the danger of reviving inflation if state spending if budgets blow out, encourage states to want to scoop a bit of the vast worldwide flows of footloose capital for their own arenas, even if it is only to construct shopping malls. They have become attuned to casino-globalisation, but the states have not been disabled or gutted by it any more than corporate managements have been.

Third Way conference: desperately seeking a humane face to global capitalism

world of floating exchange rates), attracting foreign investment, and avoiding protectionism (despite the strong bourgeois pressures for it from the early 1970s on, which most Marxists, including me, thought would probably prevail). The imperative of a more-or-less integrated national industrial base has been dropped — the UK, which has let coal-mining, steel, machine-tools, shipbuilding, computer manufacture and cars dwindle almost to nothing, become 100% foreign-owned, or both, shows this most dramatically — and the assumption has been made that mass unemployment and poverty, and mass bankruptcies of smaller or slower businesses, are manageable costs.

The new paradigm was shaped by reaction among the capitalists against the chaos of the 1970s, and by class struggle. From 1968 and through the 1970s, workers rose up unexpectedly in many countries, but, essentially because of lack of commonly-understood clear political purpose — the problem of defining class interest again, this time on the workers' side — the offensive petered out. An offensive which peters out with your forces dispersed, disoriented, and disappointed can be more destructive for an army than a well-fought and well-understood outright defeat in battle. From the early 1980s, the main capitalist classes felt confident about driving for cuts, tightening trade-union laws, and accepting mass unemployment²⁶. As after 1945, the paradigm has become "locked in" by a period of capitalist success (in defeating workers in class battles of the early 1980s, and in profit growth in the 1990s), though the success may soon prove short-lived. The capitalist states have not been abolished or dwarfed. They have become more able, and more urgently impelled, to define an aggressive vision of "the economic" and chop away at the elements of the "political economy of the working class", or of mere bourgeois paternalism, which were conceded after 1945 as a sort of belated payment for the heroic but bloodily-defeated workers' battles of 1917-39 and then became entrenched in bourgeois "common sense" as things that must and could be reluctantly accepted.

States have dropped the target of an integrated national industrial base because with the more complex structure of modern industry, firstly, it is not tenable to sustain a whole integrated industrial complex in one nation except on a stunted and primitive scale, and, secondly, short of immense cataclysm, they can feel secure about being able to obtain all industrial inputs,

6. Other dimensions of globalisation: increasing world inequality and pauperisation, rise of more solid capitalist states in some Third World countries, a changed structure of world trade.

JOHN PILGER HAS argued that globalisation is really an euphemism for US reconquest of the ex-colonial world²⁷. IMF-imposed starvation plans in debt-strangled Third World countries have indeed brought terrible suffering. But the capitalist classes of those countries impose the plans primarily because they are capitalists, not because they lack national independence. In Latin America, for example, the same capitalist class which imposes huge wage, job and welfare cuts on the workers to pay interest to US banks will retain its own sizeable property holdings and bank deposits in the USA — uncut. The bourgeoisies of debt-strangled Third World states reject full-scale default on their debts not because they fear invasion, but because they want to carry on doing capitalist business with the big banks and multinationals. The states are not re-colonised any more than workers crippled by their banks' demands that they pay down their overdrafts are the same as serfs or debt-peons.

The apologists of capitalist globalisation are wrong to claim that it will level up economic conditions. But strengthened Third World capitalist states are part of the picture. As well as increasing relative to output, world trade has also changed in composition. The old pattern of industrial centres exporting manufactured goods and the colonial or ex-colonial "periphery" exporting raw materials has broken down. Manufacturing as a percentage of Third World exports has increased from 20% in 1960 to 60% in 1990. Within the reduced share of world trade due to agriculture, a new pattern has emerged "where the South specialises in exports of labour-intensive luxury crops... and the North [especially the USA] specialises in exports of capital-intensive 'low-value' raw foods"²⁸. This generally means more capitalist agriculture in the South. Several results follow. First, advanced capitalist economies become, probably, more rather than less diverse. Britain, for example, is now a big centre for the chemical and pharmaceutical industries and for finance, but no sort of centre at all in other industries which every big state saw as essential thirty years ago. Some important industries tend to "cluster" on a global scale, rather than just (as they have

always done) "clustering" within nations. Second, peasants pushed out of subsistence farming by the drive towards higher-priced world-market cash-crops, and whole peoples in those Third World countries still dependent on bulk raw material exports, suffer hideously. World inequality increases. Since 1960, the gap between the richest and the poorest fifth of nations has more than doubled²⁹. Third, those Third World states able to provide platforms for enterprises competitive in world manufacturing and services — and they include some with vast hinterlands of medieval poverty, like India and Indonesia — are entering globalisation not because their states have been weakened, but because they have been strengthened, because they are now established capitalist states rather than proto-capitalist states run by a thin middle class anxious to use all the levers of state protectionism to ward off big outside capital. "Transnational capital may be more effective than was the old-style military imperialism in penetrating every corner of the world, but it tends to accomplish this through the medium of local capital and national states.... it depends on many local political jurisdictions — on, say, the Indian or Chinese state — to maintain the conditions of economic stability and labour discipline which are the conditions of profitable investment."³⁰ That a successful embrace of globalisation requires a solid national capitalist state is shown by the counter-example of Russia³¹.

Ellen Meiksins Wood argues that the major "epochal shift since the 1970s" is the "universalisation" of capitalism. "This is not just a phase of capitalism. This is capitalism... The only concept we need to deal with this new reality is capitalism"³². It can be objected that this argument seems to assume an "ideal" model of capitalism, defined by the pure logic of its basic relations, towards which history has been tending, whereas in fact much in today's capitalism — the condition of the workers' movement, the impetus of the triumphalist backlash against collapsed Stalinism, the patterns of inequality between the world's regions, the state borders — can in no way be directly deduced from the general concepts of wage-labour and capital. It can also be objected that hundreds of millions of people still live in pre-capitalist subsistence agriculture. True and important, however, remain the facts that globalisation does signal the development of solid capitalist states and classes over a much wider spread of the world than before, and that the capitalist classes and states pursue their present drive against workers' conditions, trade-union rights, and the welfare state not because of some globalist fever, but because they are capitalist.

7. Globalisation and working-class politics.

THE DRASTIC WEAKENING of working-class reformist politics since the early 1980s is not caused by the nation-state becoming powerless. Nor is it due, as another theory has it, to the working class becoming hopelessly fragmented and strategically enfeebled by the new nimble-footedness, and ability to subdivide and contract-out, of global capital³³. Reformist politics has never been able to move beyond the left margin of the bourgeois consensus. Social democracy has moved right because the bourgeois consensus has moved right. That in turn happened only because the working class scared the bosses but failed to grasp the initiative in the 1970s; the capitalist class won the decisive battles around the early 1980s; and in the

process the dominant routines of capitalist class interest were redefined. The rule of profit has become more crushing because workers were defeated, rather than workers being defeated because the rule of profit acquired some extra "globalist" strength.

Here, however, effect also becomes cause. With casino-globalisation, a new phalanx of capitalist operators is well-placed to be a strong obstacle to any pro-worker reform: "In the stock exchanges and the dealing rooms of banks and insurance companies, in the investment and pension funds, a new political class has appeared on the world scene... Professional fund managers are only carrying out instructions by seeking the highest possible return on capital... but their superior power now allows them to challenge every step forward in

social equality that has been painfully achieved in a hundred years of class struggle and political reform."³⁴ Social-democratic party machines have increased their bureaucratic autonomy and weight by turning their politics more and more into an affair conducted between professional political careerists and the bourgeois mass media, with workers as fed-up or reluctantly semi-bamboozled spectators. Blair's New Labour is the extreme example, but the pattern is wider.

It will thus take very large crises and struggles, maybe of revolutionary dimensions, to reimpose reform. Is the working class capable of developing those struggles? Capitalist governments and employers have trashed or drastically re-organised whole swathes of industry which used to be trade-union bastions. For the trade union movement as for much else, the 1980s and '90s have been a

"For the trade unions as for much else, the '80s and '90s have been a story of 'all that is solid melts into air'. To recover strength, the unions need to organise new areas, and old areas on a new basis. Like the organisation of the old bastions in their time, this task is not easy; but it can be done."

story of "all that is solid melts into air". To recover their strength, the trade unions need to organise new areas, and old areas on a new basis. Like the organisation of the old bastions in their time, this task is not easy; but it can be done. France's workers in November-December 1995, and South Korea's workers in recent years, have shown the continued potency of the working class. Some groups of workers have less strategic power than in previous times, but telecom, transport, post, and finance workers still have their fingers on capitalist nerve-centres.

Can workers make the international links increasingly necessary in a more interconnected world economy? Cheaper phone calls, fax machines, the Internet, and cheaper air travel, are available to workers as well as to capitalists. So far Third World workers have used them more than those in the leading capitalist countries who have the advantage of higher wages and richer unions. The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions has distributed across the world, via the Internet, frequent instantaneous updates on its battles against the Korean government's efforts to make Korean workers pay the costs of the crisis³⁵. Within the USA, too, the National Science Foundation found that "When the poor gain access to technology, they... are the most enthusiastic... using it for employment, educational classes, and access to government reports" (rather than the masses of dreck also available on the Internet). There are now 130 million Internet users world-wide; 65% of teenagers in the USA have access, 65% of schools and 45% of public libraries are connected; and traffic doubles every 100 days³⁶.

Both apologists for and denouncers of globalisation often argue, simultaneously and contradictorily, that the 1990s have made vastly more information available to everyone — "never

before have so many people heard and known so much about the rest of the world" — and that genuine culture is being wiped out by the global assault of "the easy, fast and simple... Disney, McDonald's and MTV"³⁷. In so far as it is possible to test these claims against hard facts, it seems that both trends exist, but neither sweeps all before it. Everywhere more people get further up the educational scale, but, in Britain and the USA anyway, there is some evidence of standards worsening at each given point in the scale. There is a growing fringe of illiteracy or semi-literacy among youth in those countries, but book sales and library usage flourish. In the USA, in 1992-7, book sales grew at 4.7 per cent per year. Sales of books from university presses — that is, generally, more serious and scholarly books — are growing faster than sales overall. A 1995 survey found that more people in the USA were using public libraries than in 1978: about 44% of households had used a public library in the last month³⁸. In Britain, a quick day-trip across the Channel can confirm the fact that an interaction far closer and longer-spanned than that now operating between more remote nations under globalised capitalism has neither reduced British and French cultures to a single homogeneous blur — nor demolished walls of ignorance and nationalist self-satisfaction between the two cultures. The possibilities remain open. The outcome will depend on what working-class activists do now.

It would be wrong to conclude gloomily that "internationalism has changed sides"³⁹, with the implied conclusion that the only option remaining for us is to find and use left-wing forms of nationalism. It is true that the bourgeoisies have many more men and women than us who are familiar with the Hilton Hotels in a dozen capitals. They have people who can explain, with self-satisfied ingenuity, the nuances of the very different advertising pitches needed to sell yoghurt in different European countries. They have people who will fly from the USA to China to instruct the Chinese on privatising their industries without ever having so much as heard of Mao Zedong⁴⁰. They know the global marketing strategy for everything, and a way to organise a true world community for nothing. Their greatest real internationalist achievement to date, European Monetary Union, is botched and fragile. Their G8 and their IMF are plainly incapable of dealing with the latest crisis their global economy has generated. An important element in their globalisation — the casino-globalisation of financial markets — is a product of chaos and unresolved dilemmas rather than a measured step forward. To introduce conscious, planned, human co-operation across national borders is more urgent than ever, and only the working class will do it.

Footnotes:

1. See the first part of "Globalisation and its analysts", *WL* 49.
2. And by some reckonings 20% in 1995 — H-P Martin and H Schumann, *The Global Trap*, Zed 1997, p.108. Some sources give higher figures for 1913, too, but my comment in *WL* 49, "in 1913 the world ratio of trade to output was higher than it is now", was wrong.
3. Harry Magdoff, *Globalization: to what end?*, Monthly Review Press 1992, p.16. Some of that 40% is accounted for by transfers of capital to tax havens.
4. *Financial Times* survey on "The Global Company", 8 October 1997.
5. Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, Verso 1979, pp.385-7.
6. See, notably, David M Gordon, "The Global Economy", *New Left Review* 168; and Magdoff, p.23.
7. Martin and Schumann, pp.46, 45, 189.
8. See my article "The New Rules of Big Money", *Workers' Liberty* 42. Low interest rates, as in Japan in recent years, are not necessarily objectionable to "the markets", and may even allow great openings for speculative gains. But the general bias is towards high rates.
9. Every big multinational corporation today has its "treasury" charged with keeping the firm's cash on the hop round international financial markets with a view to maximum gain. In that sense, the ranks of "international finance" include a very broad range of leading capitalist interests. But in each big corporation the "treasury" is only one depart-

ment.

10. Martin and Schumann, p.80.
11. David Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World*, quoted by Doug Henwood in "Antiglobalization", *Left Business Observer* 71, January 1996.
12. P Golub, "L'incontrôlable contagion de la crise financière asiatique", *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 1998.
13. A Sivanandan, "Capitalism, globalization and epochal shifts", *Monthly Review*, February 1997.
14. Martin and Schumann, p.228.
15. Ignacio Ramonet, editorial, *Le Monde diplomatique*, June 1998 (which is also the source of the image of "giant firms and dwarf states").
16. Martin and Schumann, p.11.
17. E M Wood, "Modernity...", *op. cit.* p.559. It is for this reason that ideas developed by Marx in the *Grundrisse*, extrapolating the logic of capitalist development far beyond anything visible in his days, can help us understand the novelties of the 1990s: see Murray Kane, "Marx's *Grundrisse* and the 'post-modern' era" in this issue of *Workers' Liberty* (pp.49-52), and "The problems of the contemporary labour movement from the perspective of Marx's *Grundrisse*", in Carole Ferrier (ed), *The Point of Change*, University of Queensland 1998.
18. Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Modernity, postmodernity or capitalism", *Review of International Political Economy*, 4:3, autumn 1997, p.553.
19. Linda Weiss, "Globalization and the myth of the powerless state", *New Left Review* 225.
20. In one way this figure includes double-counting, for example of money included in government employees' wages but in fact just transferred from one wing of government to another as income tax on those wages.
21. A Sivanandan, *op. cit.*
22. Karl Marx, *Capital volume 1*, chapter 26.
23. Martin and Schumann, p.145.
24. This — to digress — is one reason for the falsity of the much-used argument that if the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR had been state-capitalist, then it would automatically have wanted to restore private ownership of factories.
25. How the Stalinist state bureaucracies defined their class interests — also capitalist, in my view — and how they fitted into the world pattern, is another question.
26. According to some accounts, mass unemployment has been caused by globalisation — by the increased ability of capitalists to shift production to cheaper sites worldwide — rather than globalisation being shaped by a capitalist class-interest paradigm which accepted mass unemployment as a manageable or even unavoidable cost. But detailed studies show that no large proportion of unemployment anywhere can be traced to increased manufacturing for export in the Third World, or to new technology.
27. John Pilger, *Hidden Agendas*, Vintage, 1998, p.61ff
28. McMichael and Myhre, in *Capital and Class* 43.
29. Martin and Schumann, p.29
30. E M Wood, "Globalization or globaloney?", *Monthly Review*, February 1997.
31. The shock that broke the paradigm in Eastern Europe came from economic impasse and the revolt of Poland's workers. But another condition for the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe was that, after many years of extensive dealings with the West and repeated market "experiments", large enough sections of the bureaucracies had acquired the coherent confidence to transform their states into "ordinary" capitalist states. That prerequisite has not existed in Russia, hence the breakdown there of capitalism into gangsterism.
32. E M Wood, "Modernity...", p.558-9.
33. *Marxism Today* used to promote this idea with something like glee. Some serious Marxist writers, however, have developed versions of it which truly deserve more detailed consideration than there is room for here, making it clear that they regret the weakening they observe and do not consider it total. See David Harvey, *The condition of postmodernity*, Blackwell, 1989, and Scott Lash and John Urry, *The end of organized capitalism*, Polity Press, 1987.
34. Martin and Schumann, p.46, 69.
35. See Eric Lee, *The labour movement and the Internet*, Pluto, 1997.
36. <http://www.shianet.org/~renewnew/stats.html>.
37. Martin and Schumann, p.14, 15.
38. Book sales, <http://www.publishers.org/home/stats/index.htm>; library use, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs/97446.html>.
39. Martin and Schumann, p.112. Leo Panitch ("Globalisation and the state", *Socialist Register* 1994) quotes the same thought from Perry Anderson (*Zones of Engagement*, Verso 1992, pp.366-7). The nationalist conclusion is drawn, for example, by important sections of the Australian left, like the Progressive Labor Party.
40. The yoghurt: Jean-Noel Kapferer, "Yoghurt culture", *Australian Financial Review* 2 September 1998; the ignorant privatiser, a newspaper report which I now can't trace.

Ireland's Year of Liberty

By Pat Murphy

**Who fears to speak of '98?
Who blushes at the name?
When cowards mock the patriot's fate
Who hangs his head for shame?**

The Memory of the Dead

FROM MAY TO September of 1798 the power of Britain in Ireland was threatened by fierce rebellion. The rising had the character of a forest fire. It was rarely clear where the main centre was. When any significant source of unrest was identified and attacked it appeared that the real danger lay somewhere else.

The Catholic peasants of Wexford, driven to desperation by savage landlordism, created a movement powerful enough to capture and hold Wexford town and many of its outlying areas. At one stage it seemed that the Wexford rebels would link up with their comrades from Carlow and Kilkenny and march on Dublin. In June mainly Protestant Ulster caught the revolutionary fever. Finally in August a fleet of ships carrying over a thousand officers and men from revolutionary France landed with the intention of bolstering the insurrection.

English rule in Ireland did indeed totter in 1798 — but it survived. More than that, the limited independence Ireland had experienced up until then was abolished after the rebellion and replaced by the Act of Union. More than 30,000 Irish, overwhelmingly peasants, were slaughtered in the months of revolt. The immediate political legacy was one of repression, terror and communal division. In the longer term the legacy of 1798 was much more positive and honourable: the emergence of modern democratic politics in Ireland.

The roots of such a powerful upheaval were deep but the catalyst was without doubt the success of the recent revolutions in America (1776) and France (1789). The Irish leaders were drawn, in the main, from the professional educated middle classes and were inspired by the ideas of Tom Paine, Voltaire and Rousseau. Their aim was not only to end English rule but to establish a society based on "the rights of man," the sovereignty of the people, and in the language of this new radicalism, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."

Given the basic facts of Irish society at the end of the eighteenth century these

leaders were of course Protestant. For that reason the age old movement to allow the Irish people the right to self-rule was transformed and redefined. No longer was it only a movement to avenge the wrongs historically done to the "native" Catholic Irish by "perfidious Albion", that is, an essentially backward-looking movement attempting to undo the conquest of Ireland by England. That aspect of Irish nationalism exists still but since 1798 it has had to compete with a much more dynamic and progressive tradition. 1798 saw the birth of Irish Republicanism and although, like communism and socialism, all sorts of abominations have been committed in its name the central idea it introduced into Irish politics was consistent democracy. The famous definition of republican aims provided by Theobald Wolfe Tone has lost none of the radical democratic edge it had then and compares well with the demagoguery and practice of much recent republicanism: to replace the names Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter with the common name Irishman.

Ireland in 1798

AS THE EIGHTEENTH century drew to a close Ireland appeared to have one foot in the new world of emerging capitalism and the other in a particularly repressive and constraining feudalism. Belfast and Dublin were substantial bourgeois centres with a sizeable class of artisans and wage labourers. For all that the bulk of the people were very poor peasants — in parts of the country barely subsisting — and the economy depended on agriculture. Poor harvests, disease and famine were recurring threats.

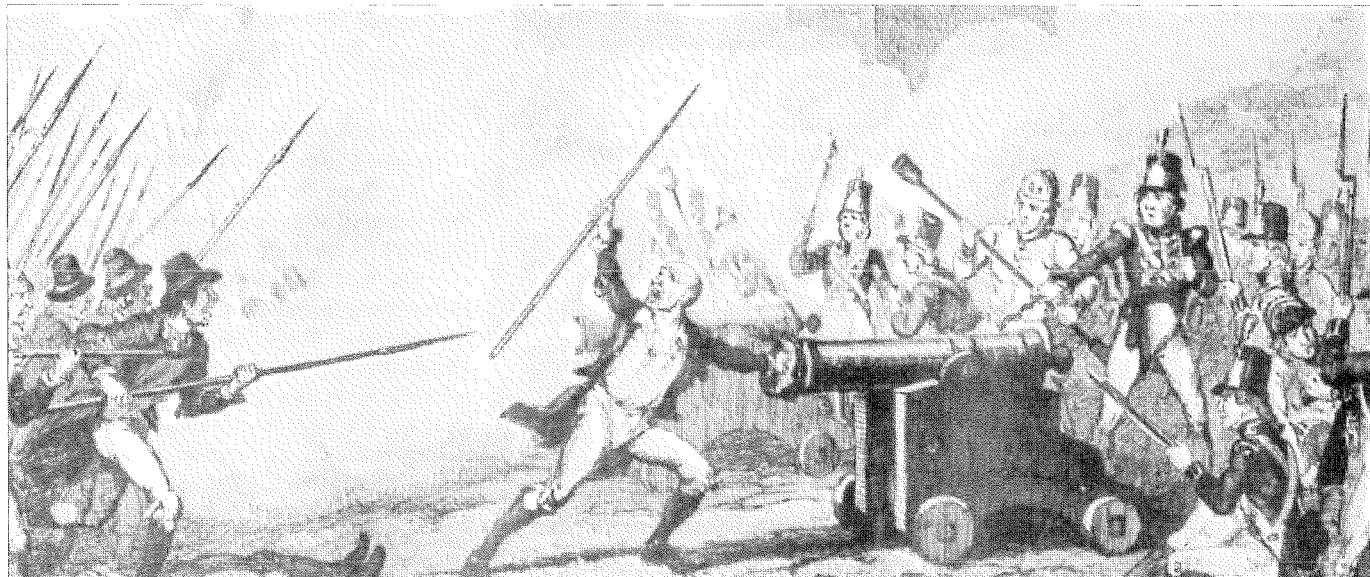
Political power was in the hands of the English government at Westminster and their representative in Dublin, the Viceroy, but Ireland had its own parliament too. However, the Irish, like the British, had an electoral system restricted to the privileged and riddled with rotten boroughs. This was 30 years before even the middle class gained the franchise in the 1832 Reform Act. A United Irish movement pamphlet painted a graphic picture of the Irish political system:

"17 boroughs have no resident elector; 16 have but one; 90 have 13 electors each; 90 persons return (MPs) for 106 rural boroughs — that is 212 members out of 300; 54 members are returned by five noblemen and four bishops."

In Ireland there was an additional injustice. The franchise for Protestants may have been ludicrously restrictive but there were votes and "elected" members from the richest section of that community. But the continuing existence of the so-called penal laws excluded Catholics from any effective political rights, from the right to stand for parliament to the right to vote. Ireland's three million Catholics were subject to parliament's laws and had to pay heavy taxes despite their penury — but they had no right to political representation.

The vast majority of Catholics had much more immediate concerns and little or no access to political ideas of any sort. Their main grievances, crippling tithes and taxes and religious persecution, could only be answered through the conquest of political power, however, and they were sympathetic to forces which offered a way out. Throughout the century peasants had protected their interests or wreaked revenge on their landlords through a series of secret societies like the Ribbonmen and Defenders.

This was a political system which excluded the middle class too and which was designed to protect the interests and maintain the power of the old aristocratic class. The growing anachronism of this system was perhaps most keenly felt in Ulster, where industry and trade were more developed and the land system less oppressive. Ulster had a rural as well as an urban bourgeoisie and was able to nurture the classes of merchants, artisans, farm labourers and industrial workers required by an early industrial society. Economic power was increasingly in the hands of this emerging bourgeoisie while political power remained the preserve of the big landowners. Ulster was experiencing more sharply than the other provinces the contradictions which in France, and later in other European countries, produced social and political revolution. There would be unique problems for revolutionaries in Ireland, though, as winning the support of the people, and above all the peasantry, meant bridging a deep-rooted and poisonous religious divide. The Irish revolutionary movement had to convince the Catholic peasantry that they and the radical Protestants had more than a common enemy in Britain. It needed to convince them that they had a common future in Ireland.



Despite the final outcome the attempt was inspirational, a great democratic moment in the history of a divided people still rich with lessons for those who believe that the unity of Ireland's workers is the precondition for that country's democratic unity.

The Year of Liberty

NOT QUITE TWO years before the United Irish revolt French ships carrying 12,000 troops and the United

Irish leader Wolfe Tone arrived unseen and unchallenged just outside Bantry Bay, a large naval base in Cork. This amazing success was outweighed by the fact that they could not land due to the unfavourable winds. After six days of waiting dangerous storms blew up and the attempt to land was abandoned. The fleet returned to France and Ireland had to wait a while longer for her revolution. Historians have speculated fruitlessly ever since about how different the next 200 years might have been had Tone landed. Loyalists have been happy to hum the Lillibulero and thank "the Protestant wind".

From 1797 societies of United Irishmen were established all over Ireland. The movement was secret and complex in structure. Led by a Directory there were committees in every province and substantial organisations in practically every town. This was without doubt a mass movement. Secret minutes passed over to the authorities by an informer revealed that the organisation had nearly 300,000 men under arms, which was five times the numbers of government forces. It was also a movement with important connections to the English Jacobin movement of the time, no small matter in 1797 when two major naval mutinies and a number of smaller disturbances threatened to pave the way for a revolution at the heart of the empire, backed by European invasion.

When the United Irish movement was ready to launch a full-scale revolt, however, the British government was much better prepared and the revolutionaries were in some disarray. Wolfe Tone was in exile in France where he remained throughout the key months, attempting to revive the idea of a supportive French invasion. The leadership in Ireland lay in the hands of people like Thomas Addis Emmet, whose brother Robert would lead the first revolt against the Union in 1803, Arthur O'Connor and the radical brother of Lord Leinster, Ireland's largest landowner, "Lord" Edward Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald was a committed advocate of the ideas of Paine and Rousseau who had railed

against hereditary power and wealth and resigned his seat in the Irish parliament after an earlier campaign against the government. Dublin Castle was shocked at how well placed and "respectable" many of the revolutionary leaders were. They were nevertheless divided on tactics and riddled with informers. These two fatal factors had the effect first of delaying the rising, second of breaking down its co-ordination and third of keeping the government reasonably well-informed of developments.

In March 1798, on the basis of information from a prominent informer, police broke up a meeting of the Leinster Directory of the United Irishmen, arresting the main leaders. There were some escapes and some absences but others were rounded up soon afterward and the documents captured were probably just as important. As the movement's leaders delayed their planned rising in the hope of a French invasion the government's actions were forcing the issue. Martial law was declared in a number of counties around Dublin and the people were instructed to hand over all weapons before all hell was let loose. A blank cheque was given to the most bloodthirsty army officers to make examples of and torture suspects in public in the hope that this would both unearth weapons and rebels and discourage the peasantry from giving rebellion any support. The brutality unleashed in Kildare, Meath and Wicklow certainly reduced the resources and morale of the underground movement but it also put an end to prevarication. This carefully-built and ambitious political force could either fight or surrender. Bit by bit it chose to fight.

In May the counties surrounding Dublin rose up in a revolt that shook the confidence of the authorities. Just as they thought they had pacified the worst areas towns began to fall, garrisons were captured and odd survivors arrived in Dublin, scaring the powerful and cheering the people with stories of disorder and defeat. In truth the revolt had already failed to go to plan. What should have been a co-ordinated rising at the west-

From The Wake of William Orr

Hapless Nation, rent and torn,
Thou wert early taught to mourn;
Warfare of six hundred years!
Epochs marked with blood and tears!

Hunted thro' they native grounds,
Or flung reward to human hounds,
Each one pulled and tore his share,
Heedless of thy deep despair.

Hapless Nation! Hapless Land!
Heap of uncementing sand!
Crumbled by a foreign weight:
And by worse, domestic hate.

God of mercy! God of peace!
Make this mad confusion cease;
O'er the mental chaos move,
Through it SPEAK the light of love.

Monstrous and unhappy sight!
Brothers' blood will not unite
Holy oil and holy water
Mix, and fill the world with slaughter.

Who is she with aspect wild?
The widow'd mother with her child—
Child new stirring in the womb!
Husband waiting for the tomb!

*William Drennan, 1754-1820,
a United Irishman*

ern borders of the three main counties of Wicklow, Kildare and Meath, stopping the mail coaches so that the counties further west would know the time had come to rise up, was patchy and chaotic. Enough was achieved to ignite the powder keg, however, and it would be five months before Dublin Castle regained control of the area beyond the pale.

By the end of the month the flames had spread south to Wexford. Fired by news of the successes to their north and angered by evidence of massacres and brutality by the army and police a peasant army led by Father John Murphy took to the roads and attacked the houses of landlords and government supporters. Troops were swept aside and reinforcements from the harbour town of Wexford were, unbelievably, defeated by the mass of untrained peasants armed mainly with pikes. By the beginning of June the two major towns of Enniscorthy and Wexford were in the hands of the rebels.

"That the long dreaded day, when the French revolution would spread to Ireland, had now arrived was all too clear to the gentlefolk of Wexford. They found their own tradespeople, their hatters and tailors, their coachmen and boatmen and shopkeepers, the solid and dependable foundations of the old social order, were their masters in the new." (Thomas Pakenham: *The Year of Liberty*)

Then, also in June, the revolution spread to Ulster. The first rising there broke out in Antrim followed within days by a similar outbreak in Down. As in the south it was in the hinterland of the major city that the revolutionary movement struck its first blows. The leader in Ulster was Henry Joy McCracken, a Presbyterian cotton manufacturer and longstanding member of the United Irishmen. Ulster had at one time been the movement's strongest area, shaped and held together by McCracken and Tone. McCracken was socially more radical than most of the other leaders. The revolt he led would certainly be hard. Not only was Ulster more tightly controlled by government forces but the mainly Protestant-led rebellion would need support from the more down-trodden Catholics, who barely trusted their comrades-in-arms and felt they would be treated a good deal more harshly in the event of defeat.

The government began to turn back the tide in the summer. Once they had prevented the attempt to surround and attack the capital they consolidated their grip on the surrounding counties with a mixture of offers of amnesty and threats of destruction. That done they began to concentrate on the relief of Wexford, a possible point of invasion, where the rebels held a sizeable number of loyalist prisoners. By the end of June the army had retaken Wexford, ending

Requiem for the croppies

The pockets of our great coats full of
barley—
No kitchens on the run, no striking
camp—
We moved quick and sudden in our
own country.
The priest lay behind ditches with the
tramp.
A people, hardly marching—on the hike—
We found new tactics happening each day:
We'd cut through reins and rider with the
pike
And stampede cattle into infantry,
Then retreat through hedges where cavalry
must be thrown.
Until, on Vinegar Hill, the fatal conclave.
Terraced thousands died, shaking scythes at
cannon.
The hillside blushed, soaked in our broken
wave.
They buried us without shroud or coffin
And in August the barley grew up out of the
grave.

Seamus Heaney

three weeks of rebel control. The peasant army, much reduced but not crushed, marched to link up with areas to the north still controlled by their comrades. While they succeeded in this these remnants were mopped up by the army in the following weeks. By the end of July the revolt to the south and west of Dublin was a shadow of what it had been. The rising in the north had been defeated in battle and McCracken arrested.

In August 1798 the Irish revolution experienced one final injection of hope. At last the revolution in France came to the aid of the people of Ireland. On August 23 a French force of 1,100 men landed at Killybegs on the coast of Sligo at the far west of Ireland. Led by a General Humbert they found very little resistance. After a period settling in the town, establishing local contacts and recruiting support they began to extend their territory. They captured the towns of Ballina and Castlebar and from then until the end of the rebellion in September they and their Irish allies were the government in what became known as the Republic of Connaught. Humbert's wider plan, however, was to march toward Dublin to meet up with and encourage the revolutionaries in other counties and link up with a much bigger invasion force due to arrive soon after his. This force would bring with it the leader of the new Ireland, Wolfe Tone.

In different circumstances this plan could have revived the movement. In the conditions which existed it was a false dawn.

Humbert travelled far but found only a brave few scattered rebels and a demoralised, leaderless people. He was finally surrounded and captured near a small village called Balinamuck on the border of County Longford.

The fleet of ships carrying Wolfe Tone was intercepted in early October. Tone was captured and brought to Dublin in early November. His final act of rebellion was to deny the British the opportunity to give him a public execution. He committed suicide by cutting his throat with a razor in his cell. He took a week to die.

The legacy

IN THE IMMEDIATE aftermath of the rebellion the British government decided to adopt a new and more drastic solution to the Irish question. They concluded that the self-government that had existed until this point had not only been ineffective but had contributed to the revolutionary mood. It would be replaced with an Act of Union which would ensure that Ireland would be governed from the Westminster parliament on the same terms as the rest of the United Kingdom. Opponents of the United Irish movement cite this as proof of the folly and failure of the revolt. Even in the short term, however, the Act of Union was seen as a defeat mainly for the tiny aristocratic oligarchy which had run the Irish parliament. It was the beginning of the end for the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland, as the following century would show. Most importantly the real legacy of the United movement is not, as James Connolly put it, "their military exploits on land and sea, their hairbreadth escapes and heroic martyrdom," but instead their work as, "pioneers of democracy in Ireland."

In the 200 years since the "Year of Liberty" the United Irishmen have suffered a further fate, one familiar to heroic failed revolutionaries. All sorts of movements and people have claimed to stand in their tradition. In nationalist Ireland they were universally celebrated and commemorated earlier this year. For socialists, however, what is important about this movement and this moment is what was new and radical at the time, because it hasn't lost its revolutionary edge. The United Irishmen insisted that Ireland's problem was not simply *who* ruled the country but *how* it was ruled, and they understood that it was only possible to fight for democracy with a movement built on democracy. Thus the question of the religious divide in their country was an immediate practical one which could not be dodged. They did not overcome that divide, but in the attempt they created the most serious and united challenge so far to the subjugation of the Irish people.

The pilots who weathered the storm

In the first of a series of critical responses to *The Fate of the Russian Revolution: Lost Texts of Critical Marxism*, recently published by Phoenix Press and *Workers' Liberty*, Alan Johnson* argues that the book can play an invaluable role in restoring democracy to the heart of Marxism and help lay to rest the theoretical confusions of post-Trotsky Trotskyism.

"However well-intentioned Marxists are nowadays about the need to value democracy the latter simply cannot play a significant theoretical role in the class analysis of politics." (Gregor McLennan, 1989:114).

"The iron dictatorship exercised by the Stalinist police administrative apparatus over the Soviet proletariat was not incompatible with the preservation of the proletarian nature of the state itself — any more than... the fascist dictatorship exercised over the bourgeois class were with the preservation of the nature of the capitalist state." (Perry Anderson, 1983).

"Stalinism is a social system based on the state ownership of the decisive means of production and the uncontrolled domination of the state machine by the bureaucracy, not by the working people. The state owns industry and an uncontrolled bureaucracy 'owns' the state. Socialism, on the other hand, is the collective ownership of the decisive means of production under the democratic control of the working people themselves. The vast difference is the existence of democracy for the mass of people.

"This is so because of the very nature of the working class as a class. Unlike the bourgeoisie, which is by nature a property owning class, it does not develop its economic and social power within the womb of the old society. The bourgeoisie could do this under feudalism because its social power is expressed in the first place through its ownership of the private property on which the wealth of society rests. The working class, which owns no property, can 'own' and control the means of production only through a political intermediary, the state. And it can 'own' and control the state only through democratic participation. Without democracy statification points not to socialism but to what we know as Stalinism. Democracy, therefore, is not merely of sentimental or moral value for the Marxists, nor is it merely a preference. It designates the only way in which the rule of the working class can exist in political actuality." (Hal Draper, 1950:242).

Can Marxism be democratic?

CAN Marxists be democrats? Few today would disagree with Vasily Grossman's novel and meditation on Stalin's Gulag, *Forever Flowing*, in which lurking somewhere behind the, "crazed eyes; smashed kidneys; a skull pierced by a bullet; rotting infected, gangrenous toes; and scurvy racked corpses in log-cabin, dugout morgues," stands the figure of Marx. (1986:69). Should we not then double, treble the guard over Marx's tomb, never mind Stalin's?

These questions would trouble Marxists more if we took



The Workers' Party tradition stood for neither London nor Moscow

measure of how comprehensively anti-Stalinist Marxism was pulled into the orbit of Stalinism itself. *The Fate of the Russian Revolution* critically reappropriates the writings of one tradition which did nurture Marxism's democratic roots in the face of Stalinism: the Workers Party-Independent Socialist League (1940-1958).

Sean Matgamna's introductory essay contains a clear and provocative critical analysis of Trotsky's evolving views about the fate of the revolution from his expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1929, to his murder at the hands of a GPU agent in 1940. Matgamna argues there are "two Trotskys" to be found in these writings, producing two very different Trotskyisms after 1940 the WP-ISL being a development of one strand of Trotsky's thought. For Matgamna the WP-ISL is, "the lineal defence, elaboration and continuation of Trotsky's ideas, that is of unfalsified Marxism, as they really were and as they really were developing at Trotsky's death. These writings are a precious part of the heritage of revolutionary socialism: in the post-Stalinist world they are no small part of the seed from which an unfalsified socialism will be reborn." (p.147).

To root democracy as theoretically and practically indispensable to Marxism and the socialist project the WP-ISL had first to break from some of the defining theoretical assumptions of the mainstream Trotskyist tradition. The debate on the "Russian Question" in the American Trotskyist movement in 1939-40 produced, on the part of the minority who opposed Trotsky, and who would go on to form the Workers Party, one of the most important bodies of writing in twentieth century Marxism. "The Dead Sea Scrolls of twentieth century Marxism," Matgamna claims. We can now do these people the honour of critically reading their arguments directly and not through the distorting myths and slanders thrown up by the orthodox Trotskyist tradition at the time. This process is well advanced in America, thanks to the work of Peter Drucker and others. British readers whose knowledge of the "Shachtmanites" is limited to *In Defence of Marxism* will be surprised at what they find if they can put down the pearls and garlic and look.

* Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences at Edge Hill University College. Alan Johnson is writing a political biography of Hal Draper

The "Russian Question" and Democratic Marxism: Trotsky's Shirt of Nessus

IN 1941 Joseph Carter pointed out that the dispute within American Trotskyism about the fate of the Russian Revolution, "has already revealed confusion and uncertainty on fundamental concepts of Marxism which far transcends in importance the 'Russian question' itself." (1941:216). One fundamental concept at stake was democracy: could a workers' state exist without workers' political power? Or was the nationalisation of property a sufficient condition for the establishment of a workers' state? The differing answers given would divide anti-Stalinist Marxism for the next half century.

Trotsky initially held that the meaning and significance of a "nationalised economy" derived from the fact that the working class held political power. Or, at least, from the fact that the "locum" of workers' power was, for now, a genuine workers' party. The state remained a "workers' state" because of, "the rule of the Party, the internal cohesion of the proletarian vanguard, the conscious discipline of the administrators, trade union functionaries, members of the shop nuclei, etc." For Trotsky analogies with the bourgeois revolution could be misleading because:

"...in general the productive forces, upon a basis of private property and competition, have been working out their own destiny. In contrast to this the property relations which issued from the socialist revolution are indivisibly bound up with the new state as their repository. The predominance of socialist over petty-bourgeois tendencies is guaranteed not by the automatism of economy — we are still far from that — but by political measures taken by the dictatorship. The character of the economy as a whole thus depends upon the character of the state power." (Trotsky, in 1998:550, emphasis added).

As long as there was hope that the working class could bring the bureaucracy under its control again — this was a reform perspective — it was still reasonable to call the USSR, in this strictly limited sense, a "workers' state". The "locum" was a temporary layer, balancing between the class forces which would settle the fate of the revolution. For Trotsky only two possibilities were admitted, either backwards to the restoration of private property or forwards to the restoration of proletarian political power and socialism. The possibility of a exploitative class society based on collectivised property was accepted theoretically but effectively denied by Trotsky as a practical possibility.

In fact, as Joseph Carter pointed out:

"Trotsky's prognoses were refuted by history...Contrary to Trotsky's predictions the destruction of the Bolshevik Party did not mean the end of state property and planning; Russia did not travel the road of Thermidorean, capitalist restoration. On the contrary, the Stalinist counter-revolution took a new hitherto unknown path, the road of bureaucratic absolutism." (1941: 217).

Later, when faced with a strengthening of state property and the destruction of the political power of the working class, Trotsky faced a dilemma:

"...either to maintain his old criteria and affirm that Russia is no longer a 'workers' state' or to revise completely the Marxist conception of the workers' state. He chose the latter course and thereby abandoned the Marxist view... He now affirmed that it was the state-owned character of property which determined the socialist character of property which determined the socialist character of the economy and the proletarian nature of the state." (Carter, 1941:217).

In other words, Trotsky reversed the relationship of politics and economics in his theory. Now, because property was nationalised, and because nationalised property was inherently progressive, the state remained a workers' state, progressive against capitalism, to be unconditionally defended in war. The working

class, fantastically, remained the ruling class, but its rule was expressed through, congealed in, the nationalised property. This was a theoretical disaster of the first magnitude. As Matgamna has it, Trotsky had put on his own Shirt of Nessus. In the legend the shirt was soaked by Deineira with the poisonous blood of the centaur Nessus and placed on the back of her husband Heracles, causing his death. So excruciating was the pain the shirt caused him, Heracles had himself burnt on a funeral pyre. Matgamna argues that the result of Trotsky's new theory was a self-immolation until all that was left was a wizened "critic" of Stalinism, fundamentally on its side and in its orbit. The problem was, argues Matgamna:

"...in its fully extended form the doctrine of the 'locum' implied that the workers could rule as abstract historical subjects, in 'high theory', even where as living people, in practice, they were beasts of burden exploited by a privileged autocracy." (Matgamna, 1998:110).

The Shirt of Nessus and the Russian invasion of Poland and Finland

IN his concrete assessments which tracked the degeneration of Russia, Trotsky did register the self-making of the bureaucracy as a new exploitative ruling class. However he left these observations at odds with his theory rather than allowing them to be the basis of a necessary theoretical development, not least because he expected the Stalinist bureaucracy to last only a matter of months or even weeks. At the end of his life, the tension internal to his thought (between his concrete descriptions of a regime which differed from fascism "only in its more unbridled savagery," and his theory of a "progressive workers' state") grew into a mix of wholly contradictory and incompatible frameworks.

When Russia invaded Poland and Finland in 1939-40, Trotsky, tragically, would fade out his concrete assessments and be guided by his workers' state theory, in effect supporting the invasions. Worse, Trotsky insisted that the Stalinist invasion of Poland, "gave an impulse to the socialist revolution through bureaucratic methods." (1998:574). In Finland, he insisted the "Red" Army was giving, "a tremendous impulse to the class struggle in its sharpest form," the Kremlin being, "forced to provoke a social revolutionary movement." This was all nonsense. Nothing of the sort was happening in Poland or Finland.

Henceforth "orthodox" Trotskyists would be left trying to reason within the terms of Trotsky's prior "revolt against reason" and would project locums within locums, endowing these with the qualities of the revolutionary proletariat. Thus, in Michael Lowy's (1981) account of the "proletarian socialist revolutions" of Tito, Mao and Ho, he sees not militarised petty-bourgeois Stalinist formations, embryos of the new exploitative ruling class but, fantastically, parties which, "acted as 'representatives' of the proletariat," nothing less than, "the political and programmatic expression of the proletariat by virtue of their adherence to the historical interests of the working class (abolition of capitalism etc.)." (Lowy, 1981:214).

Or take Alan Woods, theoretician of Militant writing in 1980 to defend the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. He saw not the national rights of the Afghans, nor the necessarily totalitarian dictatorship brought by the invaders, but only that, "the Russian bureaucracy is defending new, fundamentally progressive, social relations." (quoted in O'Mahony, 1985: 27).

These are the fruits of a totalitarian economism which Trotsky incubated with his contribution to the 1939-40 debate. It left Marxism as a rigid economic necessitarianism and orthodox Trotskyism as a, "critical adjunct of the full-blown Stalinist empires," now embraced as a distorted expression of "The World Revolution" and, "valued above the lives and liberties of the workers." As

Matgamna has put it, basic Marxist ideas were stood on their head until the mainstream of revolutionary socialism, "regressed back behind the political level attained in 1848 at the dawn of Marxism." (1998:143).

Democracy and the birth of the Third camp

HAL Draper wrote that it was in the resistance to Trotsky in the 1940 split that, "[the] Third Camp was born and raised." (Draper, 1963:8). Max Shachtman, the political leader of the minority, replied to Trotsky:

"I repeat, I do not believe in the bureaucratic proletarian (socialist) revolution. I do not mean by this merely that I 'have no faith' in it — no one in our movement has. I mean that I do not consider it possible. I reject the concept not out of 'sentimental' reasons or a Tolstoyan 'faith in the people' but because I believe it to be scientifically correct to repeat with Marx that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself... The proletarian revolution cannot be made by others than the proletariat acting... No one else can free it — not even for a day." (1998:575-6).

In Shachtman's critique of Trotsky one can see "The Road Not Taken" by revolutionary Marxism in the second half of the twentieth century¹.

It was Joseph Carter who first and most fully grasped that Trotsky's theory involved, "an important methodological error ...[a failure] to give adequate recognition to the decisive, qualitative difference between proletarian and bourgeois rule." In clarifying the roots and the consequences of this, "grievous theoretical error" (1998:275), Carter and Shachtman, later Draper, Jack Brad, Julius Jacobson and others established the rudimentary framework of a democratic Marxist alternative. Carter pointed out the, "key distinction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie" (in 1998:277):

"The rule of the proletariat cannot express itself in private ownership of capital, but only in its 'ownership' of the state in whose hands is concentrated all the decisive economic power. Hence its social power lies in its political power. In bourgeois society the two can be and are divorced; in the proletarian state, they are inseparable... from this... it follows in reality what does not follow in Trotsky's analysis. The proletariat's relations to property, to the new, collectivist property, are indivisibly bound up with its relations to the state, that is, to political power." (in 1998:277-9).

Therefore, the "correct and decisive" criteria of a workers' state is that the working class hold political power. The bourgeoisie can own and control the means of production without political power. The working class, by contrast, "differs from all others in history above all in the fact that it can conquer and rule only in its own name." "Proletarian Bonapartism" is therefore a theoret-

ical and practical impossibility. The failure to understand the, "decisive, qualitative difference between proletarian and bourgeois rule" was expressed at four levels.

(i) Property and power in the bourgeois and proletarian revolution

THE relation of the juridical and the socio-economic in the determination of the class content of the state power is different in the proletarian as compared to the bourgeois revolution. Trotsky in the 1939-40 debate thinks of property *forms* and property *relations* (social relations) as one and the same thing. This is in Alan Woods mind as he, critically to be sure, supports the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. But property forms, i.e., nationalised property were a secondary factor. Property relations, i.e., the relations of the various groups in Russia to this property, were primary. The mere fact of nationalised property forms does not establish what the property relations are. What establishes that is the relationship of people to the state to which all property belongs. To define property relations in terms of property forms is, for a Marxist, to reverse the order of categorial priority, to replace social relations with a juridical illusion and to substitute an economism for a rounded Marxist judgement. The consequences are disastrous for one's ability as a Marxist to theoretically ground democracy. For when the bureaucracy conquered state power the property relations established by October were, by definition, destroyed. To imagine that the property *relations* of October were somehow, mystically, congealed in the property *forms* of October, held there, intact, as long as capitalism was not restored, was a fatal error, a juridical illusion. In the words of Max Shachtman, "Where property is state-owned, control of the state is control of society as a whole." What is decisive is who controls the state: the working class or the bureaucracy. The workers lost political power to a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy which made itself into a new ruling class, based on the nationalised property.

(ii) Bonapartism and class in the bourgeois and proletarian revolution

WHILE the Bonapartist regime which rules over the bourgeoisie, depriving it of direct political power has to rule in the interests of the bourgeoisie, despite itself, the regime which emerged to rule in Russia, in that act, made itself, as a new ruling class, in and for itself. As Max Shachtman argued:

"Where a similar division of labour under capitalism does not transform the economic or political agents of the ruling class into a new class...it does tend to create a new class in a state reposing on collectivised property, that is in a state which is itself the repository of all social property." (283).

Likewise Joseph Carter:

"Trotsky defended his new position, that the Stalinist state is a workers state though the working class has no political power by citing the bourgeois Bonapartist regime. The analogy would be valid only if the political expropriation of the working class had been accompanied by the strengthening of its economic and social power, its domination over society. Such was the case under all Bonapartist regimes: the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by... the strengthening of its economic and social power... But what does the evidence show as regards Russia? Simply this: that the working class has been deprived of all economic and social as well as political power. The strengthening of state property and planning, which allegedly signifies the social rule of the proletariat, resulted in the increased economic, social and political oppression of the working class. Here is a process which is the exact opposite of what occurs under Bonapartism!"

1. The WP-ISL were — in the author's opinion at least — not alone in developing a revolutionary Marxism independent of Washington and Moscow. The other major tradition which did was founded by Tony Cliff. See his *State Capitalism in Russia*, Chris Harman, *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe* (1974) and Colin Barker's *Festival of the Oppressed. Solidarity, Reform and Revolution in Poland, 1980-1981* (1986). The relationship between these two components of the Third Camp, which developed close relations in both the 1950s and 1960s, is not the subject of this paper. For myself, I think the fundamental divide in anti-Stalinist Marxism lies between the workers' state theories on the one side and the state capitalist/bureaucratic collectivist theories on the other. Hal Draper (a bureaucratic collectivist) reviewed Tony Cliff (a state capitalist) and found an analysis which "winds up...virtually identical with our own," in which the, "political conclusions are very close to, if not identical with, those of Independent Socialism," and which he was happy to recommend as a book which, "belongs in every socialist's library." (*Labor Action*, 16 January, 1956, see *Workers Liberty*, 49, September 1998, p.43). In that sense Cliff is also, in my own opinion, "a pilot who weathered the storm".

(iii) The Conscious and the Unconscious in the Bourgeois and Proletarian revolution

THE role of conscious planning and deliberative self-controlling political action is profoundly different in the proletarian revolution as compared to the bourgeois revolution. Max Shachtman pointed out that, "The bourgeois revolution need not necessarily be carried out by the bourgeoisie itself, that is, by the bourgeoisie as a class. The bourgeois revolution need not necessarily bring the bourgeoisie to political power... For the bourgeoisie it suffices that its economic system predominates." (in 1998: 372-3).

The proletarian revolution however must begin with the proletariat raising itself to the position of ruling class. The first step is to, "win the battle of democracy," as Marx said. The economic system is not "its" unless it has secured these political victories. This victory cannot be the accidental or automatic "unfolding" of a "world revolutionary process" carried through by forces other than the working class — totalitarian forces at that. The proletarian revolution, "cannot but be a conscious revolution, purposeful, planned, prepared, organised, timed. It does not have the automatic character of the bourgeois revolution." (Shachtman, in 1998: 373).

(iv) The necessity of a democratic and plural polity in the bourgeois and proletarian revolution

DEMOCRACY and its indispensability for working-class rule is the heart of the Third Camp's analysis of Stalinism and its view of Marxism and the socialist project. As Shachtman put it, "consciousness and plan imply a self-active, aware, participating, deciding proletariat, which implies in turn a dying out of coercion and bureaucratism." (in 1998:374). Planning, the encroachment of a new social logic, is absolutely impossible without untrammelled democracy, civil liberties, a culture of pluralism, with maximum space for initiative from below, and for accountability of the government representatives.

A "revolutionary democratic socialism for our time"

DEMONISED, the heresy within the heresy, the political significance of the WP-ISL has still not been gauged. Socialist Outlook, an orthodox Trotskyist group in Britain, refused to even take an advert for this collection of writings (without exception taken from his period as a revolutionary Marxist) by a founding figure of American Trotskyism. Amid the rubble of the "workers' states" the contribution of the WP-ISL is deserving of critical attention and not just on the "Russian Question". Hal Draper claimed nothing less than that he and his comrades had established the basis of, "a revolutionary democratic socialism for our time":

"The political character of the ISL quickly broadened from this war position to a wide reinterpretation of the meaning of revolutionary socialism for our day. Reacting sharply against the bureaucratic concepts of both official Stalinism and official Trotskyism, it swung to a deepgoing emphasis on the integration of socialism and democracy in all aspects of politics. What was distinctive, however, was that this was accompanied by equally sharp opposition to the American establishment, to American imperialism, to capitalism and its political representatives here. What resulted was a unique combination of revolutionary opposition to both capitalism and Communism." (1963a:7)

The great contribution of the Third Camp was to grasp that Stalinism did not represent progress but a new totalitarian exploitative social system and a contender with both capitalism and socialism. The WP-ISL gave itself the theoretical lens to see that, "the world social conflict is no longer a duel between capitalism and socialism; it has become a triangular struggle." Moreover, argued Draper (1963a: 8-9) this:

"...triangle of forces, contending for mastery in the world...

is the source of the new and unprecedented ideological crisis of socialism today. This crisis is in the first place a crisis in the very meaning of socialism. What was needed was a socialist analysis which planted a firm fixed point — at the third vertex of the triangle so to speak — from which to carry on uncompromisingly the working class struggle against both of the rival exploitative systems contending for domination. This is the viewpoint the ISL worked out in the course of its eighteen and a half years of existence; and this is, in short, the heart of its 'Independent Socialism'. It formulated a revolutionary democratic socialism for our time."

Put Draper's arguments for a "firm fixed point" for the Third Camp next to Mandel's view that, "the Chinese Communist Party... was striving to destroy capitalism and therefore represented a fundamentally proletarian social force." (1979:158). Look at that little word, "therefore," and you see why the WP-ISL is so important.

In a world dominated by the Cold War between the two imperialist blocs the Third Camp was the inheritor of a democratic internationalist tradition. Before Stalinism Marxists had imagined the world as a zero-sum game: capitalism versus socialism. Actually it never was, but until an equally exploitative reactionary alternative proved to be capable of issuing from anti-capitalism that view was not, in practice, too harmful. After Stalinism it was a disastrous framework, theoretically and practically, not least in the implications for the place of democracy in Marxism. For there was now a three-cornered struggle for the world, not the duel of the *Manifesto*. Grasping that fact and renovating Marxism in light of it was one of the great contributions of the WP-ISL.

Whatever came after capitalism, it had been assumed, would be democratic. In the new world of the three-cornered struggle democracy was the condition for socialism. It had to be consciously fought for against an alternative totalitarian anti-capitalist force: Stalinism. This new approach to democracy is only possible to elaborate fully once you grasp the nature of Stalinism as a social system and as an anti-capitalist and anti-proletarian force. Once grasped then:

"In no other era than this does the fight for democracy rise to such a pinnacle of importance for the forces of progress. No other movement in the history of the world is so driven to place the democratic goal so close to everything it strives for." (Draper, 1953, in 1963a:65).

The Third Camp fundamentally recast the Marxists relationship to pluralism as the only possible polity in which the working class could exercise its rule. Its self-emancipatory drive, its self-controlling practice, requires pluralism. Socialism is, in that sense, scientifically and ethically inseparable from pluralism, democracy, and freedom. In 1952 Hal Draper wrote:

"This is the democratic heart of Marxism: for the first time in history it has become possible for the 'lowest' class to rule, that class on whose labor all the rest of society depends. For the first time, therefore, a new social order is possible in the interests of the most numerous class, whose rule by that token means the abolition of all class rule. It cannot substitute itself for the private rulers of property by itself gaining control of property; it can rule only through the collectivity, only democratically. Those who reject this as "visionary" are saying not only that socialism is impossible but that democracy is impossible."

In the WP-ISL tradition democracy is established as scientifically necessary for workers' rule and socialism in three senses.

First, an economic necessity for it is impossible to plan without democracy. The specific "mortal contradiction" of Stalinist society is not the same as capitalist society. It is that between the necessity of planning having abolished the only other possible economic regulator, the capitalist market, and the impossibility of planning having abolished the only possible basis of planning, democracy. The "fundamental contradiction" peculiar to Stalinist

society is the absence of democracy in a statified society.

Second political necessity. Without democracy it is possible to get rid of the old capitalist class but only to put a new bureaucratic ruling class in its place.

Third cultural necessity: democracy is the culture medium in which socialism, as a regulative idea, can be approached. Norman Geras has argued convincingly that the dynamics of self-emancipation requires, "liberal norms of political life." (1994:98).

In 1962 Draper debated with a group of academics at the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara. Arguing against the anti-democratic corporatism being developed there, Draper said of political democracy and the, "concerns of pluralism":

"One of my central ideas in regard to democracy is that you cannot have any kind of democracy, none whatsoever, of any type or form, without the political freedom of people to enter into opposition uncontrolled as far as the government is concerned. That would make political democracy not the sole content of but the sine qua non of democracy."

"One of the essential characteristics of such a political democracy is the right of people to oppose and organise their opposition. Free speech, free assembly... come under that head. Free speech without the right to free organisation and opposition means nothing, it's a fake, it's not even free speech. And economic democracy, racial democracy, sexual democracy... do not exist, are not really any kind of democracy without these political rights. Political rights by the way refer to rights of a person in a state structure. And in a statified economy like Russia, where it is the state as an institution that controls everything — political democracy is, as a matter of fact, in the last analysis, all kinds of democracy because the state is the economic boss as well as the political boss." (1962).

Karl Marx also appreciated the kind of political culture necessary for self-emancipation both within societies and socialist organisations:

"A country which, like old Athens, treats boot-lickers, parasites, toadies as exceptions from the general standard of reason, as public fools, is the country of independence and self-government. A people which... claims the right to think and utter the truth only for the court fool, can only be a people that is dependent and without identity." (Marx, quoted in Gilbert, 1991:174)

What distinguished the WP-ISL conception of democracy from, for instance Hannah Arendt, is the insight that unless democracy overflows the narrowly political, and spills over into all life, not least the economic, then the individual enjoys a merely political emancipation and not that human emancipation in which "man must... in his individual life and individual relationships, become a species-being... must recognise his own forces as social forces, organise them and thus no longer separate social forces from himself in the form of political forces." (Marx, in McLellan, 1995: 19-20).

When the WP-ISL rejected the analogy between the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions it broke Marxism decisively from economic necessitarianism, or what Matgamna calls, "totalitarian economism." Gregor McLennan has written of the falsity of defining, "the intrinsic value of a form of economic organisation" as something, "established prior to the specification of its framework of political institutions." Such is exactly what Perry Anderson does at the beginning of this article. The nadir of this method can be seen in Ernest Mandel's insistence that Pol Pot's Kampuchea was a workers' state:

"...where a radical agrarian revolution has occurred, where the existing bourgeoisie has lost state power and is no more a ruling class, where private property has been essentially suppressed, where the economy obviously does not operate any more on the basis of capitalist production and property relations and does not function any more according to the laws of motion of capitalism, a workers state has come into being, independently of the conditions under which this has occurred." (quoted in Goodwin, 1979:110)

The Suicide of the ISL

I WOULD make three criticisms of the book. First, Matgamna's selection of texts perpetuates the idea that this was "Shachtman's left". There are 37 articles by Max Shachtman, four from James Burnham, three from Trotsky, two from Hal Draper and two from CLR James. The problem is not that Shachtman was not the political leader of the WP-ISL. He was. But Shachtman did little with the theory of bureaucratic collectivism. Hal Draper did far more to elaborate the theory, in relation to Eastern Europe

after the war, to the development of capitalism in the west and in grounding the theory within the categories of classical Marxism, in his book *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution Volume 1*. The theory is often criticised as lacking a clear sense of either the laws of motion of bureaucratic collectivist society or its place in history. To the extent that there are responses to those questions within the tradition I think Draper did most to make them. Second I think Matgamna stretches too far the idea that Trotsky himself began the thinking about bureaucratic collectivism and is the "innovator". In 1939 Trotsky did discuss Bruno Rizzi but his use/abuse of Rizzi was part and parcel of his bad, mis-educating work in the last

years — a scary story to frighten the children — not his critical thinking. Hal Draper, who visited Rizzi in 1958, established that Rizzi's book was impounded, but he did manage to get copies of to various VIPs such as Mussolini and Trotsky. With Trotsky, says Draper, he, "hit pay-dirt." The fight over Finland was ongoing inside the SWP and Trotsky used Rizzi as ammunition to attack the minority. As Draper puts it, "Rizzi entered history when Trotsky whirled him around his head like a dead cat and let fly at the opposition." "If not me then Bruno R!" was Trotsky's message, as, "Rizzi's function was to scare the theoretical daylight out of the opposition" by a few "tendentious sentences and vague claims," says Draper. I can't see how it is accurate to say, "Shachtman will... adopt the position Trotsky, wearing the mask of Bruno Rizzi, puts forward." Trotsky only put forward a few sentences. Rizzi's book was never available to the minority. The idea, universally accepted that they copied the theory from Rizzi is nonsense. It seems to me Matgamna is straining the "two Trotskys" idea beyond the point it can legitimately go here. Matgamna is right to say that ironically it was post-war orthodox Trotskyism which was "Rizzian" in that it saw Stalinism as historically progressive and deserving of socialist support, a step toward socialism, the lowest rung etc. Can one get a more fervent Rizzian than Ted Grant? But I doubt Trotsky ever seriously considered bureaucratic collectivism in the way Matgamna implies. All this is driven, I think, by Matgamna's insistence that his is a Trotskyist critique of Trotsky.

Third, I think Matgamna is overly defensive about Shachtman's trajectory in the 1950s and 1960s, when he moved sharply to the right. Matgamna says, "Shachtman's machinations to find a road forwards for the mass labour movement were [not] necessarily discreditable." This was better than, "dawdling in sectarian aloof-

ness" — a comment, I suspect, on Draper's opposition. But not the least of Shachtman's "crimes" was that if the ISL could have held out a few more years it could have been floated off the beach by the rising tide of the new left. In fact the ISL youth group was anything but aloof and sectarian, and would have been extremely well placed to grow in the '60s, possibly even challenging the SDS. Instead it was left to Draper to hack out a Third Camp political tendency more or less from scratch, against Shachtman's bitter opposition and amid the tumult of the sixties' events. Let's be blunt. Max Shachtman ended up, as Dave McReynolds said in an interview, "telling the kids to shut up" about the Vietnam War. Figures like Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Reagan's representative at the UN, was in some real sense a (1960s vintage) "Shachtmanite". Albert Shanker, the teachers' union leader, when he backed the US arms build-up, was guided by the framework Shachtman built for him.

So how could this happen? Understandably many socialists recoil from the WP-ISL because they think Shachtman's sorry fate was the inevitable outcome of the 1940 split, a stupid dogma which itself reveals the religiosity in the Trotskyist movement. There is no need for defensiveness. Though I can't argue it out here, it did not happen because of the theory of bureaucratic collectivism. The post-ISL trajectory of Hal Draper is enough to scotch that. Shachtman had to break from the "firm fixed point" of the Third Camp to back the West as lesser evil. The answer lies elsewhere and I think it is well summed up in a letter from a European Third Campist, Giacometti, replying, in some anger, to a panicky Michael Kidron of the British International Socialists, who had written that he was, in light of the ISL entry to the American Socialist Party, "disturbed at whatever vague association there has been between us." Giacometti's reply can be a guide today for answering those who reach for their crosses and rosaries at the mention of Shachtman's name:

"As far as my association with the ISL is concerned, it has been anything but vague, and I am rather proud of it. All that I know about socialism, the ISL taught me, and if I am going to be of further use to the movement, it will be thanks to what I learned in the ISL. At present I am in disagreement with its policy, and I refuse to take further responsibility for it. You don't have to take responsibility for it either. This is a simple problem. Shachtman's present position with regard to the SP-SDF (and any foolishness that might derive from it in the future) in no way cancels out his merits in the battle for an independent revolutionary position at a particularly difficult time. Historically the ISL remains the organisation which has elaborated — since 1940, remember — the theoretical and practical foundations for a revolutionary socialist policy in our period; although many independent socialist movements do not refer to it, its work and its experience has been a decisive contribution to the formation of an independent socialist current in other countries. If the ISL is now dying of exhaustion, it may be because it has fought longer than most similar movements, at a time when the pressures were greater and the outlook not as hopeful." (March 1, 1958)

The pressures and the outlook then. The WP-ISL refused the comforting epochal illusions of the Fourth International, which looked at the creation of a totalitarian Stalinist empire and saw an "Unfolding World Revolution" to be defended against capitalism as a "fundamentally proletarian social force." It also refused to create the kind of monolithic sect culture which can hold small groups together at the price of turning their brains to mush. It was an extremely democratic organisation formed in part in revolt against Cannon's concept of the monolithic Bolshevik Party. Now add in the hammer blow of being a young organisation, which sent its members (those that weren't drafted) into the factories and worked tremendously hard to put down roots in the working class being faced at war's end with a quiescent and fearful working class,

and the long years of boom, McCarthyism and Cold War, and the evolution of the WP-ISL is not so surprising. Hal Draper, in interviews, said, "The ISL decided to commit suicide" and, "1958 and the decision to liquidate was a decision to give up their politics." Why? "Why does anyone give up their politics? This was at the end of a period of declining radicalism in which it was more and more difficult to retain your radical convictions, it was before the new upsurge in the 1960s but after a period in which the expectations that followed the war had not been born out, capitalism seemed to be stabilising itself, and so, people get tired, and simply cease fighting." Draper's was the sole vote against the dissolution of the ISL at the Convention of 1957. But that sole vote carried the soul of the WP with it.

Conclusion

THE relationship between democracy, freedom and human emancipation was lost by orthodox Trotskyism. Thinking of the socialist revolution and the rule of the working class by analogy with the bourgeois revolution and the rule of the bourgeoisie was a theoretical Shirt of Nessus, hesitantly, provisionally, placed on a young and beleaguered movement by Trotsky, enthusiastically buttoned up and tucked by Deutscher, and then sold to a couple of generations of socialists by *New Left Review*. It was a theoretical disaster. The ever-lasting historical significance of the WP-ISL is that it worked its way out from under, readapting in the new conditions of their time the principles of classical Marxism that socialism is self-emancipation, that a workers' state is impossible without workers' democracy. Third Camp Marxism restored the relationship between democracy and socialism and, in the widest sense, freedom and socialism. It is a tradition with rich resources to offer those who wish to do the same.

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For details of how to order a copy of *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*, see page 6

The Legacy of John Maclean (1879-1923):

The faith of a Scots internationalist

By James D Young

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS after his death, the themes of the past, present and future of John Maclean (1879-1923), the Clydeside socialist, highlight what connects his life, times and legacy to 1998.

I am a socialist, or radical in Karl Marx's sense of the word radical. It was Marx who argued that to be, "a radical means going to the root," and that, "the root is man." So we must try to see the now hidden connections between Maclean's own life and times, the world of the late 20th century, and the possibility of a genuinely Scottish-International radicalism in the next century.

In his book *Confound the Wise* (1942), Nicolas Calas, Greek Trotskyist and surrealist poet, provided some excellent signposts suggesting how from the vantage-point of a radical vision of the world we could connect the past, present and the future. "The best historians," he said, "are those who know what they want the future to be." He insisted that, "the future is part of the past," and that what we want must be in the future. In a key sentence — a sentence challenging post-modern pessimism and all the fashionable "doom and gloom" propaganda about the premature burial of socialism — he argued:

"If we do not believe in the prospects of the future, perhaps because we expect them to be blacker than the past, then we must try to revive modes of life of that part of the past we remember."

John Maclean would have had no trouble in accepting this approach to history.

The main outlines of Maclean's biography are now quite well known. The elements of continuity in his life and thought as a socialist before and after 1917 remain much more obscure. Maclean was a highly intelligent school teacher and socialist activist rather than a theorist or heavy-weight writer of learned tomes. As a thinker Maclean was not a Rosa Luxemburg; and he spent so much agitating that he did not have the time or leisure to write books. He contributed weekly articles to *Justice*, organ of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF, later the British Socialist Party) — the first Marxist organisation in Britain. His chief and best-known personal qualities were compassion for the "underdog", integrity, and independence of mind.

In 1914 all Scottish socialists joined



together to rubbish and ridicule the celebration of the 1314 Battle of Bannockburn, in which Scottish independence was secured against the English King. Maclean characterised it as a battle fought by serfs on behalf of, "a few barons." Unlike other Scottish socialists — for example, John Carstairs Matheson, perhaps the major Scottish Marxist writer before 1914 — Maclean did support the agitation for Scottish Home Rule. He also objected to the fact that there was not a "single Scottish representative" on the national committee of the (British) SDF.

The "Great War" of 1914 transformed Maclean. In prison in 1917, for his anti-militarist and anti-recruitment speeches, he began to think about James Connolly — who, a wounded prisoner of war, had been shot by the British government in May 1916 after the Easter Rising, and the Irish question, his ancestors' experiences in and eviction from the Scottish Highlands and Scottish Home Rule. Then he was inspired

by the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. He decided on a tactic of deepening the struggle for Scottish national independence to accelerate the break-up of the British Empire.

Maclean was, of course, influenced by his sense of identity as a Scot as well as his intense consciousness of his Marxism and internationalism.

More of an internationalist and anti-racist than ever before, in 1917 Maclean became known as a major international figure: he had been a jail-bird, an advocate of socialism from below and a critical supporter of the Bolsheviks. The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was formed in 1920, but he refused to join it.

And that was the rub: the origin of all the nonsense about his "insanity".

One reason for Maclean's refusal to join the CPGB was the Scottish national question; and in passing it should be noted that between 1919 and 1923 there was a heated debate in the early British communist movement about the Scottish question. But there were other reasons — the reasons of a Clydeside man of principle, a man who was anti-racist and anti-imperialist.

The leaders of the early CPGB were, in Maclean's eyes, guilty of a serious sin of omission, that is, of not opposing the First World War. None of them was sympathetic to James Connolly or to the Easter Rising in Dublin. And they were pro-imperialist. Indeed, at the Second Congress of the Third International, Tom Quelch told Lenin that they could not support Black struggles or anti-colonial revolts since the English workers would regard anything weakening the British Empire as, "treachery."

The legacy

ONE ASPECT OF Maclean's legacy was the support for anti-racism, anti-imperialism and revolutionary socialism in the ILP in Scotland as distinct from its counterpart in England. The Scottish socialists — who should not be confused with the working class as a whole — were also more inclined to "direct action" at the grassroots and to extra-Parliamentary politics. The latter tradition was set by Maclean when, in 1907, he asked unemployed workers to march across the floor of the Stock Exchange in Glasgow to highlight the problems induced by poverty and unemployment.

Moreover, after Maclean's death the CPGB became numerically stronger and ideologically more influential in Scotland than anywhere else in Britain. This pernicious Stalinist cultural orientation in the Scottish labour movement remains formidable — a cultural conservative bulwark shored up by New Labour's continuation of the Thatcherite revolution and disgusting talk about the need to return to "the actually existing socialism". And this is a good pathway into discussing the present.

The present

OUR OWN TIMES should have convinced socialists of the moral rotteness at the heart of contemporary capitalism. Unemployment; naked poverty; inadequate health care; the growing gap between the well-off and the unemployed and women and men who are paid dirt-cheap wages or sweeties; racism and the revival of fascism in conditions of economic scarcity: all these have combined to raise questions about capitalism. The propaganda of the New World Order communicates the "common sense" idea that free-market forces — i.e., global capitalism — will work. But for whom do they work, and for how much longer can capitalism survive?

In contrast to the past — in contrast to Maclean's time — the genuine democratic, class-struggle left is no longer in the ascendancy. Day in and day out working people everywhere are told that we have reached "the end of history" and that socialism — all visions of socialism — have been buried beyond any possibility of resurrection. In contrast to the past the left is isolated, often defeatist.

And yet the arguments for international socialism have never been more compelling or more difficult to refute in rational debate. In the midst of this situation historians like Kenneth Morgan and Christopher Harvey rubbish Maclean and the real Scottish

national question. So does a so-called "Trotskyist" like Bob Pitt [editor of the discussion journal *What Next?*]. But in asserting that Maclean was "insane" because he advocated Scottish national independence, refused to join the CPGB and formed the Scottish Workers' Republican Party, they ignore the fact that even some of the Scottish prison doctors refused to certify Maclean as "insane". Moreover Pitt ignores the fact that the Scottish prisons were, according to Peter Petroff, the Russian Bolshevik, worse than those in Tsarist Russia.

What is missing from the discussion about Maclean's alleged mental instability is any international context. When the Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer was put on trial in Spain in 1909, he was characterised as "insane" because he was an anarchist. Despite Ferrer's world prominence as a rationalist, Freemason and educationalist, he was buried in a common ditch after being shot by a military firing squad.

In 1919 Rosa Luxemburg was declared "insane", and buried in a pauper's grave in

"The real importance of Maclean for 1998 is that he offered people a radical vision of the better world to be won, a vision of authentic socialism from the bottom up."

Berlin. When the Nazis came to power in 1933 bulldozers were sent in to level the graveyard. Similar things were done in the 1920s in a Russia without soviets or workers' councils. In the early 1920s, too, Sacco and Vanzetti, the American anarchists of Italian origin, were declared "insane" by the American authorities, and Vanzetti was jailed in a mental hospital.

What, then, is left of the Maclean legacy? The real importance of Maclean for 1998 is that he offered people a radical vision of the better world to be won, a vision of authentic socialism from the bottom up.

Although struggles for social justice and democratic control will develop during the next few years, the genuine Scottish Left's critical and crucial role in the world at large is to expand solidarity and, above all, popularise its uncompromising vision of a radical egalitarian Scotland within a socialist world.

Far from socialism being inevitable, the "common ruin of the contending social classes" is a bigger danger than when Marx wrote those words in 1848.

However, if the world survives, it will be because socialists succeeded in devel-

oping a radical vision of a new global socialism free of inequality, poverty and oppression. Contrary to what authoritarian advocates of socialism from above have always argued, means and ends cannot be separated. And radical visions will be born inside the struggles against the New World Order.

The future

THE MYTH OF progress remains a dangerous one. In the circumstances of what is happening in various parts of the world, we should remember that Voltaire described history as, "a House of Funerals," and that Hegel saw the historical process as, "a slaughter-bench."

When he discussed the origins of "the inequality" of humankind, Rousseau wrote:

"The first man who enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows, 'Beware of listening to this impostor, you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.'"

In a socialist world there will be no "unfree" market forces or private ownership of land or the means of production.

In a sustained discussion and description of socialism in the future, in *Literature and Revolution* (1925), Trotsky said:

"Life will cease to be elemental, and for this reason stagnant... The shell of life will hardly have time to form before it will burst open again under the pressure of new technical and cultural inventions and achievements. Life in the future will not be monotonous."

But, although private capitalism was abolished in Russia after 1917, the dominance of Capital under totalitarian Stalinism thwarted the growth of any recognisable socialism. Any vision of a radical Scotland will have to repudiate any idea of "socialism in one country". In the 1950s the Scottish nationalists campaigned on the slogan of "Our ain fish guts for oor ain sea maws." Elements of that anti-internationalist mentality are again emerging from present-day Scotland. Radicals will need to stress that socialism must become thoroughly internationalist and global without distinction of creed, colour or sex. Just as the new radical movements of the Left will need increasingly to become multicultural, so a future global socialism will offer the vision of an emancipated humankind radiating all the colours of a beautiful rainbow.

1. See my pamphlet *John Maclean: A Reply to Bob Pitt*, for a detailed account of Maclean's enduring influence on popular culture, including novels.

The founder of the Indonesian Communist Party: The life and death of Henk Sneevliet, internationalist

LEOON Trotsky once said that the small revolutionary movement he led was like the apex of an inverted social pyramid, upon which the whole weight of capitalist society pressed down. Hounded and murdered by fascists and Stalinists, the Trotskyists suffered terrible casualties during and immediately after the Second World War, all across Europe, from France to Greece. The politics of independent working class socialism, which the Trotskyists represented, was everywhere defeated.

All that proved possible to Trotsky's small army was to keep the red flag of international socialism flying and by continuing the fight, in no matter how adverse circumstances, to prove that socialism could not be extirpated. If victory should prove impossible then at least a record of struggle embodying the proud traditions of revolutionary socialism could be established, preserved and passed on to those for whom, in better circumstances, victory *would* prove possible.

The preservation and the passing on of the unfalsified doctrines and traditions of revolutionary socialism would be an irreplaceable element in making the victory of international socialism possible in the future.

Magnificent deeds were done by the women and men of the Trotskyist movement. Deeds such as the publication by French and German Trotskyists in France of *Arbeiter und Soldat*, a paper appealing to the German workers in uniform, in the spirit of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg and the Spartacusbund in World War One Germany.

Twenty people lost their lives in this work. Its accomplishment in a Europe gone made with nationalism, chauvinism and racism could only be of symbolic value — but the values and traditions it symbolised were the ultimate antidote to nationalism, chauvinism, racism and national and class oppression.

Henricus Sneevliet was one of the heroes and martyrs of international socialism during the Second World War. He had been a founder of the Indonesian Communist Party,

when Holland ruled there as colonial master, and had been deported back to Holland. In the mid-'30s he separated from Trotsky and his comrades, but remained a revolutionary socialist. Together with half a dozen of his comrades, Sneevliet was shot by the German forces occupying Holland.

Max Shachtman, who had worked with him, wrote this account of Sneevliet's life and death in 1942. The unsigned eyewitness account of Sneevliet and his comrades facing death appeared in the magazine *Fourth International* (SWP-USA), in 1950.

IN the middle of April this year, the press in Europe announced that "Henricus Sneevliet, founder and chairman of an illegal political party in Holland, and seven collaborators have been sentenced to death and executed at The Hague on a charge of sabotage."

"Sneevliet was one of the few remaining personal links between the revolutionary present and the revolutionary past."

The report definitely and tragically confirmed what had been rumored for some time since the Nazi occupation of Holland — that Henk Sneevliet and his comrades had remained at their posts of battle even after the German steamroller flattened out Holland, that he was intent upon continuing the work of organizing the working class to which his whole conscious life had been devoted.

Sneevliet was one of the few remaining personal links between the revolutionary present and the revolutionary past. If ever there was a miasmatic reformist atmosphere in which to grow up in the workers' movement, it was the atmosphere created by the opportunists who led and developed the Dutch social democracy. No wonder — whole strata of the Dutch working class were corrupted and bribed by their lords, who ruled an empire in the Far East of such lush richness that at this very moment they are willing to lay down every life at their disposal — their own excepted —

for its reconquest. Sneevliet was, therefore, either very fortunate, or forged of different metal, or both, for he eschewed reformism long before the First World War and became, from the beginning of his activity in the Dutch labor movement, a comrade-in-arms of that valiant and militant band of revolutionists who rallied around the left-wing organ *Tri-bune* — Anton Pannekoek, David Wijnkoop, Henriette Roland-Holst and others. Comrade of theirs, he was also a comrade and friend of the best Marxists in Europe of the time, of the imperishable Rosa Luxemburg in the first place.

His radicalism was not of the contemplative type. Raised in a land that was rotten with imperialistic prejudice, especially toward the darker-skinned "inferiors" of the Indies from whom it extorted fabulous riches, he was nevertheless of that rare and durable revolutionary temper which led him to work at undermining the rule of his masters precisely at the most vulnerable and most forbidden spot — the Dutch East Indies themselves. How many men, even revolutionary men, of the world-ruling white race do we know who have gone deliberately to the dark villages and plantations of the colonial peoples for the purpose of mobilizing them against their "superiors"? Of the very, very few, Sneevliet was one, and one of the best.

The white revolutionist — not a true Dutch Jonkheer, but at the very least still a "Mijnheer" — proceeded to the Dutch East Indies, to the burning islands of Sumatra and Java to organize the first important revolutionary socialist movement among the native slaves of his own country's overlords. The work, perilous, dramatic, painfully difficult, politically invaluable, spiritually satisfying (how I wish Sneevliet had committed to paper some of the stories of his work in the Indies which he once told me throughout a night and into the dawn, stories that rivalled anything in the literature of romance), exercised a powerful attraction upon him and he continued it for years after the Dutch colonial administration banished him from the Indies and forbade his ever returning to them. The Jonkheers were outraged at this blatant treachery by "one of their own" who stimulated and organized and taught the early class-conscious movement of the East Indian natives against the foreign invader and exploiter.

Toward the end of the war, or right

afterward (I do not remember exactly at the moment), Sneevliet found himself in China, where he established contact with the revolutionary nationalist movement of the Chinese bourgeoisie, with the Sun Yat-Sen who was to become the idol of the Kuomintang, and with Chen

Tu-hsiu, leader of China's intellectual renaissance who was to become a founder and then the leader of the Chinese Communist Party. He was with the first Bolshevik emissaries to China and helped establish relations between that country and the young Soviet republic;

he was with the first congress of Chinese Bolsheviks to launch the Communist Party.

We find him in Moscow in 1920, a delegate to the Second World Congress of the Communist International from the Communist Party of the East Indies,

The last hours of the condemned men

An eye-witness account

I COME from an anti-revolutionary family and I am not today affiliated to any party. I was in a position during my four years of imprisonment to make many friends among the communists and the socialists, and I have a great deal of admiration for many of them.

After having served eight months in the Schevingen prison [a well-known Nazi prison near The Hague], on April 5 1942 I was transferred to the cell block at the Amersfoort camp and most of the time there I was kept in solitary confinement. The seven other cells of the cell block were empty. I spent six weeks there, after which they returned me to the camp proper.

The prisoners arrive

ON Sunday April 12 I was awakened by the sound of SS guards. They were Dutch SS led by German SS. It was about nine p.m. They opened the doors of all seven cells and set up a strict guard. I heard them shout: "*Es kommen jetzt gang gefährliche Leute.*" (Very dangerous people are arriving.) Orders were issued and a few moments later, I heard them lock up in each of the cells a comrade-in-misfortune.

Soon I heard one of the prisoners say: "Before the war, the Dutch government was hounding me; after May 15 1940 it was the German government. If I did not have the bad luck to be sent to hospital, they would never have found me."* Then I heard Sneevliet's magnificent voice:

"Lads, we are proud to be the first in the Netherlands to be condemned before a tribunal for the cause of the International and who must therefore die for this cause."

I should say in passing that the guard was so strict that every 15 minutes they

covered the cells (including mine) to look through the peep-hole to see if anyone was trying to commit suicide or escape. Two Dutch SS constantly turned their flashlights on the outside windows even though they were completely boarded up. This continued through the night, a tense troubled night. I quickly grasped who my comrades in the cell block were.

One of the prisoners made the remark that it was nice of the judge to have promised them that evening their wives (the wives of three of the prisoners, I believe) would be freed. "They are already at home, my friends," he said.**

About six a.m. the prisoners were informed that their request for clemency had been turned down (what a farce!) and that the verdict would be executed immediately.

Sneevliet then requested that they all be shot together, hand in hand. This was refused. "*Sie werden gefesselt mit den Händen auf dem Rücken.*" (Your arms will be tied behind your back.) Then Sneevliet requested that they not be blindfolded. This was granted. Then he demanded to be the last to be shot, being the oldest among them. I heard him say:

"It is my right, isn't it comrades, as the oldest among you? I was your leader, wasn't I?" He was then permitted to light up a cigar. They commented (oh, morbid humor!): "Yes, charge it to the Netherlands government."

"I kept my faith ..."

THEN Sneevliet began to speak and said something like this:

"Last night I went through my Gettysburg. When I joined the movement as a youth my pastor said to me: 'My boy, you can do what you want if you remain true to your faith.' Well, last night I struggled with myself and I kept my faith. My faith in the cause of the International. Many struggles and much suffering will still be needed, but the future belongs to us!"

That was what he said. Then he told some stories about Indonesia where he had worked for many years as a revolutionist

and where he had been deported in 1919 for having inspired the masses with the example of the workers and poor peasants of Russia.

"The Internationale shall be the human race"

THEN they put them all in a small cell, 90 centimeters by two meters, right opposite mine. Then came the most moving moment: "Shake hands, comrades" — and then with all their heart they sang the Internationale. What a melody and what words! I have attended many concerts but never have I heard anything sung with so much emotion and so much conviction. I am not ashamed to say that I wept. When later, I myself was condemned to death (the sentence was not carried out) I was no more stirred than at this unforgettable moment. Finally one of the prisoners requested silence to say a Catholic prayer. I do not know who he was. [Footnote: Undoubtedly he was the printer, not a member of the underground RSAP-MLL-Front — but sentenced to death because of his courageous attitude during the trial.] The silence was complete. The guards let them alone.

They were then led out to the place of execution. The first salvos were fired around nine-twenty. When four weeks later I was transferred from the camp cell block, I learned that all the barracks were locked up on the morning of the execution. No one was able to see who was being taken out of the cell block. Everyone knew that something unusual was happening in the camp. But no one knew just what it was. Later I was to tell my story to the party comrades of the condemned (they will remember Prisoner No. 15).***

I feel I must write that I have the greatest admiration for the way these men died, fearless and full of confidence in their cause. I cannot resist writing you these details, being the only one who was with these heroes in their last hours.

* [Footnote probably by Sal Santen, a Dutch Trotskyist who died this year] This, undoubtedly, was comrade Menist who shortly before his arrest was hurt in a street accident and sent to the hospital.

** This promise was actually made. But once again the Nazis did not keep their word. Comrades Mien Sneevliet-Draayer, Trian de Haan-Zwagerman, Jenny Schiefer and Jel Witteveen were imprisoned in the Ravensbrück concentration camp until the end of the war.

*** Many revolutionists were imprisoned in the Amersfoort camp. This was also the camp where Herman Peters, one of the principal leaders of the Dutch section of the Fourth International was murdered six months later.

appearing under the pseudonym he then bore, "Ch. Maring." Together with Lenin, M. N. Roy and others, he functioned in the famous commission which drew up the fundamental theses of the International on the colonial and national questions; he was the commission's secretary and there is no doubt that much that is contained in those theses was based on the rich experiences he had accumulated in his work in the East, perhaps the only one in the entire commission who had such experiences, for even Roy at that time was little more than a communistically-varnished Indian nationalist without much experience beyond the German-subsidized propaganda for Indian independence he had carried on during the war from a Mexican retreat.

The policy of concentrating upon work in the reformist trade unions encountered stiff resistance in Holland from Sneevliet and his friends. They had under their leadership the NAS (National Labor Secretariat), a left-wing, semi-syndicalist trade union movement which existed, on a small scale, alongside the big unions controlled by the Stalinists. It is not hard to imagine the overbearing, bureaucratic tactics employed by Zinoviev, Lozovsky & Co. to "convince" the Dutch comrades of the proper tactics to employ. Others might have been more successful, above all in other circumstances. But the real circumstances were the noticeable beginnings of the degeneration of the International. Sneevliet rebelled against it. He broke with the Comintern and became an increasingly aggressive critic of Stalinism.

With his comrades, he formed the small but entirely proletarian and militant Revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland. As the struggle in the Communist International between Stalinism and Trotskyism came to a head, Sneevliet and his comrades moved closer to the latter. In 1923-33, and especially after the miserable collapse of Stalinism before Hitler, a union was consummated between Sneevliet and the RSP and the International Left Opposition. Together they proclaimed the need of organizing and launching the Fourth International. In this declaration the signature of Sneevliet and his party was of considerable importance and weight.

Sneevliet had just come out of prison in Holland. After the famous "mutiny" of the militant sailors on the Dutch cruiser *De Zeven Provinciën* in the Far East, Sneevliet, the fire of the memories of his work in that world blazing again, came boldly and intransigently to the defense of the mutineers. Justice, as represented by the ministers of Her Most Gracious Democratic Majesty, Queen Wilhelmina, flung

him into prison. A veritable storm of protest broke loose among the workers, not only among Sneevliet's tough long-shoremen and building craftsmen, but even among social-democratic workmen. Even though the RSP was a very small organization, its candidate-in-prison, Henk Sneevliet, was elected to the Dutch Parliament by 48,000 votes!

Sneevliet remained in the Trotskyist movement for only a few years. I cannot say that he was flexible and easy to argue with. On the contrary, he was somewhat prickly, stubborn and even a little imperious, that is, he had qualities which are such great virtues... when hitched to a good cause and a wise course. They were not always so hitched with him. In addition to a whole series of minor internal conflicts in the International, and in his own party, Sneevliet came into sharper struggle with the rest of the movement over the question of policy in Spain, particularly over the opportunistic policy of the POUM. The conflict led to a rupture which was never healed. Sneevliet drifted gradually away from the Trotskyist movement and toward the orbit of the British ILP. He was associated with it at the end.

Could he have fled Holland when the Nazis came in? There is no certain answer, but in all probability, with his connections among workers, he could have. But he didn't. Should he have fled? There was a Nazi price on his head, he was a marked man, he could not hope to hide out forever. In any case, again, he did not flee. I do not pretend to know what there was in him that prompted him to stay — his proud contempt of those labor leaders who had been doing nothing in Europe for the past several years but fleeing from land to land, their funds carefully sent on ahead of them; his long, fierce hatred of fascism and an indomitable determination to keep fighting it out with the Nazis to the bitterest end; or the inability of the old soldier to quit even that post which the enemy has surrounded. Again, he stayed.

I am proud to remember my meetings with Sneevliet and his comrades at headquarters in Amsterdam's Paramaribostraat. They were a generation older than mine; sturdy and well-set like Sneevliet, or lean and long-boned like P., you saw in them a group of scarred, stiff-spined and unbreakable warriors. The dreadful picture of these obdurate revolutionary Hollanders before the Nazi firing squad is relieved only by our certainty that these sons of the proletariat stood there with such undramatic defiance that not even their executioners could fail to feel: This army we shall never conquer.

Never!

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Livingstone's legacy: Talking left and selling out

BEHIND THE CURRENT [1985] "realignment of the left" stands the fact that since 1979 the labour movement has failed to fight the Tory Government successfully.

The major responsibility for this lies with the top leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party.

Yet the local government left has been part of the failure too.

Nobody had any right to expect anything good from most of the TUC leaders or from the leaders of the Labour Party, who had after all pioneered monetarist cuts themselves when in government. Yet in 1981-2, Labour took control in many local authorities all over Britain, and new left-wing forces took control in key areas like London.

That put the local government left centre stage. Thatcher must have had waking nightmares that local government would be used as a series of fortresses from which the labour movement up and down the country would resist the Tory onslaught and rally the labour movement to fight back. That is what many on the local government left had promised and threatened to do.

Yet the local government left had to make a basic and fundamental choice. Would it orientate towards resistance and confrontation with the government? Or would it decide for Labour local government business as usual — with a few left-wing frills and a bit of "look-boss-I'm-not-serious" posturing?

Essentially the local government left opted for business as usual, with frills. Hilda Kean, former leader of Hackney council, put it very well in *Socialist Organiser* of June 12, 1985: "While on ideological issues councillors like Ken Livingstone have taken a progressive stand, when it has come to key economic and financial questions there has been a real absence of left strategy."

"If for example you look at the GLC's campaign against abolition, it has not centred on close working with the unions, nor did their campaign against rate-capping. It was centred far more on propaganda aimed at the population of London in general, rather than at the labour movement bodies that are capable of organising people in trade union action."

"You cannot take a socialist stand in relation to issues like women's oppression or racism without at the same time taking on board the economic factors that materially affect people's lives."

"How can the GLC on the one hand make all this propaganda about having a GLC



Women's Committee and supposedly taking notice of the interests of women in London, while at the same time it draws back from the fight for adequate resources for such facilities?"

The central choice was made well before 1981, when the local government left opted for a strategy for rate rises as its answer to the Tory cuts. Initially — for example, at the *Socialist Organiser* local government conference of June 1979 — this was presented as the "short term" answer that would give us time to prepare a fight back. The councils would fight "next time". But "next time" never came.

Rate rises were in fact alternative cuts — less hateful than direct cuts in services. They were not a preparation for, but an alternative to, a strategy of using Labour-controlled councils as fortresses around which to rally the working class and local communities to resist the Government.

The rate-rise strategy was presented by various people — including the editors of *London Labour Briefing* — as radical left-wing politics. In fact it was the unmistakable signal that it was to be local government business as usual, with more or less attractive frills like grants to good causes.

Lambeth, where the left took control in the late '70s, pioneered the general retreat. Ted Knight opted for cuts within two months of the Tory victory in 1979. The local Labour Party forced him to rescind the cuts; but in April 1980 he pushed through rent and rate rises, and in April 1981, 10 per cent cuts.

Ken Livingstone said in *Socialist Organiser* before his election to the leadership of the GLC that a left GLC would, "wherever there is an industrial dispute in London... go down and support it." Within weeks of coming to power he led the GLC into conflict with the NUR.

Instead of resisting all Tory-imposed cuts in living standards, the local government left tried to manoeuvre by passing on, or redirecting, the cuts by way of rate rises.

It became a war of manoeuvre and evasion. The left could not win. By playing it like that, the left prepared the ground for the Tories' relatively painless imposition of rate-capping and erosion of local democracy.

Instead of a whole rash of resistance across the country, we now have a wholesale collapse of resistance. This collapse is only a logical staging-post on the road that the local government left started down six years ago.

The left "realignment" is this: a whole layer of support for the next Kinnock-led Labour government has now been created from former leftists, who learned to be "balanced" and to "make responsible choices" in the school of local government. They are teaching themselves, and others, to accept the same approach from a Labour government which will — Neil Kinnock says so — not restore Tory cuts, nor even completely undo Tory anti-union legislation.

Many local government leftists would still jib at such conclusions. But that is where they are leading themselves, and others. There is not one single argument used by the local government left to justify the local-government policies of Ken Livingstone or Ted Knight that does not apply just as properly to a Labour government faced with a capitalist world environment and the IMF.

All of this was said by *Socialist Organiser* (or the majority of *SO*, before *London Labour Briefing* and others split away in the course of a dispute about local government) as early as 1979 — when the situation was much more favourable for the local government left to change course and to rally workers against the Tories.

For years Ken Livingstone's campaign against GLC abolition has been the clearest realisation in British politics of the cross-class coalition (popular-front) approach advocated by *Marxism Today* [the Communist Party magazine]!

Arguably the experience of the local government left is as important for the labour movement as the experience of the Labour governments of the '60s and '70s. And perhaps it has been worse. For while those governments pushed masses of people away from reformism and towards seeking a better road, the local government left has taken a lot of people back towards "choose-the-lesser-evil" reformism.

John Bloxam

● From *London Labour Briefing*, August 1985

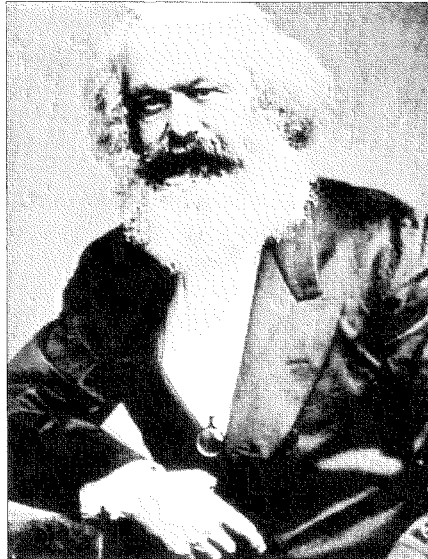
Marx's *Grundrisse* and the "post-modern" era

By Murray Kane

IN the latter part of 1857, at the height of the first generalised crisis of capitalism, Marx endeavoured to provide his first systematic exposition of the capitalist mode of production. The result was a series of notebooks, amounting to almost a thousand pages, in which, amid a rich diversity of problems and theses, the entire scheme of *Capital Vol. I* took shape. The notebooks, now known as the *Grundrisse*, were published for the first time in 1939, but not available outside the Eastern Bloc until 1953, and not fully translated into English until 1971. This article will discuss a series of themes from the text which I think allow us to comprehend the great positive significance of what is currently being experienced in the most advanced capitalist regions as an organisational and ideological fragmentation of the labour movement.

I begin with the contrast Marx makes between absolute and relative surplus value¹. The distinction between these two modes comes to light for the first time in the *Grundrisse* (p. 407-11) and was to prove decisive for the structure of *Capital Vol. I* ten years later. Absolute surplus value (ASV) expresses the expansion of capital as sheer quantitative growth. This mode of expanding capital depends upon a continual increase in the size of the labour force, both within a given region, by multiplying the points of production, and globally, through the export of capital, the proletarianisation of agricultural populations and the creation of new markets. With a working population of a given size, ASV can expand only through the brutal method of forcing workers to do the same labour faster or for longer hours.

Marx defines relative surplus value (RSV) as "production based on the increase and development of the productive forces". Through the development of new technology in existing branches of production, the capitalist is able to reduce the proportion of the working day necessary for the reproduction of the worker, or in other words, to reduce the proportion of the working day required to pay the worker's wages. It requires and causes continuous innovation in the forms of production and the creation of new forms of labour. Here, the differentiation of labour is not just a division of labour, but a qualitative transformation of the types of labour carried out, and a qualitative transformation of the



items and modes of consumption corresponding to it. It is the development of a constantly expanding and more comprehensive system of different kinds of labour, different kinds of production, to which a constantly expanding and constantly enriched system of needs corresponds.

Older forms of industry are broken down and supplanted. This more advanced form of self-expansion of capital brings about the "differentiation of labour in an ever richer form"²; it is a force which "constantly increases the circle of qualitative differences within labour (hence of surplus labour), mak[ing] it more diverse, more internally differentiated."³ Forms of labour become so numerous, and the specific skills required so narrow in application, that workers can move from one branch to another with ease, or as Marx puts it, with indifference.

"Indifference towards any specific kind of labour presupposes a very developed totality of real kinds of labour, of which no single one is any longer predominant.... Indifference towards specific labours corresponds to a form of society in which individuals can with ease transfer from one labour to another, and where the specific kind is a matter of chance for them, hence of indifference. Not only the category, labour, but labour in reality has here become the means of creating wealth in general, and has ceased to be organically linked with particular individuals in any specific form. Such a state of affairs is at its most developed in the most modern form

of existence of bourgeois society — in the United States".

If Marx could take this to be the case in the USA nearly 140 years ago, then it must be all the more applicable to advanced capitalist countries today. If we look at the logic of differentiation alone, the fragmentation of the contemporary labour movement can be inferred as a consequence of capitalist development. If the organisational form of the labour movement is based on given branches of production, then the growing complexity and inner differentiation of the latter must challenge and disrupt the unity of the former. There is an important clue here about what has happened to the left in the most developed regions, i.e., it has undergone fragmentation concurrently with the fragmentation of production. In general, the more developed the capital, the greater the diversification of the branches of production. Simultaneously with this sheer diversification, work itself begins to lose its specialised quality, and becomes a matter of indifference to the worker. To remain combative, the labour movement under these conditions is forced to confront the constant challenge of re-emergence within the new forms of the labour-capital relation. It is possible that too much discussion about the problems of the left has centred on consideration of the politics of past movements against capital and particularly the mistakes and inadequacies of the politics of these movements. I would suggest that Marx's approach in the *Grundrisse*, which provides a conspectus of the capitalist system in both its objective and subjective dimensions, offers a more fruitful way to view our contemporary problems, which may be summed up in the formulation "problems of differentiation and indifference". I would suggest that this twofold dynamic provides a fundamental framework for understanding the negative development which we are presently experiencing as a "crisis" of the left and the decline of formerly powerful anti-capitalist identities in the most advanced capitalist regions. Industries which once employed vast sections of the workforce in Europe, the USA and Australia — coal, steel, textiles, ships, cars and machine tools, to take key examples — have fragmented internally, and now employ a much smaller percentage of the population than they did in the past. In

their place has arisen a plethora of new industries and new forms of work, in which a diversified working class produces a plethora of new products aimed at a plethora of new points and modes of consumption. 150 years after Marx started writing these notebooks, the advanced capitalist countries are characterised by extremely high levels of differentiation and indifference. That the miners, wharfies, metal workers, construction workers still seem to be the most powerful sectors of the working class in Australia reflects a failure of politicisation in the new branches of production and the dominance of bourgeois ideas at fundamental levels in the workplace and in the unions that have developed to cover these workers.⁴

I have pointed to Marx's explicit emphasis that this differentiation of the branches of production is not just an intensive division of labour, but the creation of new forms of labour; however, it is as yet difficult to see how this has any significance for the working class other than a negative one, i.e. that of breaking down predominant types of labour within which the solidarity of shared experience has facilitated distinctive forms of proletarian identity and class-consciousness. But that development is matched by a number of associated transformations brought about in the spheres of consumption and circulation. In what follows, I want to focus on a little-noted emphasis that recurs throughout the *Grundrisse*, on the way in which the self-expansion of capital by relative surplus value enriches the subjective basis for the transition to socialism. This is an emphasis which is largely suppressed in Marx's polemical and strategic writings⁵ — the "civilising influence of capital" and the growing cultural wealth of the working class.

"Universally developed individuals, whose social relations, as their own communal relations, are hence also subordinated to their own communal control, are no product of nature, but of history. The degree and the universality of the development of wealth where this individuality becomes possible supposes production on the basis of exchange values as a prior condition whose universality produces not only the alienation of the individual from himself and from others, but also the universality and the comprehensiveness of his relations and capacities"⁶.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels criticise a range of other socialist currents for failing to look beyond the negative side of capitalism. They emphasise that capitalist development creates the conditions for socialism in two major ways.⁷ Firstly, at the economic level, it produces the vast means of production that could

support a socialist society, while secondly, at the political level, it creates in the proletariat its "gravedigger".

This is a well known theme. But taken as the framework for an exhaustive treatment of working class subjectivity it has grave limitations. In the *Grundrisse*, we find Marx describing the ways in which capital brings about a cultural transformation which is prefigurative of the socialist society not only at the economic and political level, but at the individual or psychological level. We will approach this notion first through consideration of the unique way in which Marx equates real wealth — social wealth — with the diversity and abundance of needs produced in capitalist society, and secondly, through a brief look at the way that the worker is "enriched" through involvement in the circulation and consumption of capital.

One of the most striking themes of the *Grundrisse* is what Marx calls "the civilising influence of capital".⁸ What he means by this is that capitalism as a mode of production, and specifically once it is generating relative surplus value, transforms the working population intensively and qualitatively. It depends upon the continuous differentiation of production, and this in turn presupposes, or as Marx would say, "posits", a continuous differentiation of consumption, or the constant creation of new use values and the needs for them. Capitalist society requires a working class to produce surplus value, but it requires also that the working class consume (or provide a "counter-value" to) the mass of new use values that it is driven to create. This leads to the radical and world-historic situation where the working population in capitalised regions develops an ever intensifying dependence on use-values for the enjoyment of which it must develop ever more sophisticated and cosmopolitan sensibilities. To give a simple example of what Marx means here one may look in the kitchen cupboard, the wardrobe and the TV guide in the average working-class household. In the cupboard we find five different forms of cereal, a dozen spices and food flavourings, ingredients and additives which have been produced in a score of locations. The actual or primary origin of many of these foodstuffs lies far beyond the country in which they are consumed. In the wardrobe we find linen, cotton, silk, wool, polyester, rayon and canvas. In the TV guide we find an incredible variety of representations of life-situations from all over the world. The average household is an environment saturated with use-values which a hundred years ago were either unknown, or considered luxury items⁹.

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx considers the worker not simply as the exploited and

alienated direct producer of wealth, but as the subject of a new kind of wealth, of social wealth, which expresses itself not in the extent of inorganic means for the satisfaction of a limited set of pleasures and needs associated with a specific social function and status, but as a qualitative enrichment of personality. "...The discovery, creation and satisfaction of new needs arising from society itself; the cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being, production of the same in a form as rich as possible in needs, because rich in qualities and relations — production of this being as the most total and universal social product, for, in order to take gratification in a many-sided way, he must be capable of many pleasures, hence cultured to a high degree — is likewise a condition of production founded on capital." And Marx asks: "When the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange?" He continues: "The greater the extent to which historic needs — needs created by production itself, social needs — needs which are themselves the offspring of social production and intercourse, are posited as necessary, the higher the level to which real wealth has become developed. Regarded materially, wealth consists only in the manifold variety of needs."¹⁰

It is of the utmost importance in the current period to recognise and develop Marx's insight that wealth has its internal or psychological dimension as need. On this view, we are forced to confront the strange but crucial fact that the working class is wealthier now than at any previous point in its history, despite the fact that it appears politically weaker than ever before.¹¹ From the perspective of the *Grundrisse*, we see the working class as creatively involved in the production and consumption of new use values. The quantitative limits set so rigorously by the capital-labour relation do not determine the inner structure of these new use values. The key process is the role that the worker plays as a counter-value¹², a holder of capital, of exchange value in the circulation process. As Marx points out, the capitalist does everything to ensure that his own workers' consumption is kept to a bare minimum, but "of course he would like the workers of other capitalists to be the greatest consumers possible of his own commodity."¹³ To this end he "inspires them with new needs by constant chatter etc."¹⁴ Although the money received for work is severely restricted quantitatively, it puts the worker in the unique position of being able to relate to and appropriate the totality of human culture in the form of the commodity. In one remarkable passage

Marx discusses the significance of money as conferring upon the individual "a general power over society, over the whole world of gratifications, labours etc."¹⁵ He goes on:

"It is exactly as if, for example, the chance discovery of a stone gave me mastery over all the sciences, regardless of my individuality. The possession of money places me in exactly the same relationship towards wealth (social) as the philosopher's stone would towards all the sciences".

The seemingly paradoxical idea that the materially impoverished and socially dominated working class undergoes a simultaneous enrichment both individually and as a class subject through the transformation of production and consumption, is clarified: "Since he exchanges his use value for the general form of wealth, he becomes co-participant in general wealth up to the limit of his equivalent — a quantitative limit which, of course, turns into a qualitative one, as in every exchange. But he is neither bound to particular objects, nor to a particular manner of satisfaction. The sphere of his consumption is not qualitatively restricted, only quantitatively. This distinguishes him from the slave, serf etc... the relative restriction on the sphere of the workers' consumption (which is only quantitative, not qualitative, or rather, only qualitative as posited through the quantitative) gives them as consumers... an entirely different importance as agents of production from that which they possessed e.g. in antiquity or in the Middle Ages, or now possess in Asia"¹⁶.

Detailed attention to all of these processes would I think be of great use in opening up areas of working class culture that have generally been taken in a negative way, i.e. as external forces which inhibit the solidarity and potentially revolutionary nature of the working class.

This brings me finally to the question of post-modernism. In the *Grundrisse* we find the capitalist system conceived as a self-reproducing and self-protecting Leviathan or "animated monster"¹⁷. Marx presents its substantial unity as an outer objective force system under or within which are created labyrinths of cultural development and interpenetration, levels of differentiation and indifference which make it an incubus of the social individual.¹⁸

The Leviathan creates relations of mutual dependence on a scale and intensity never before seen. Within these relations, which are largely unseen, or rather, a matter of indifference because of the enormity of the gulf separating the free individual from the massive objective form, we confront what Marx elsewhere discusses under the head of "the contradiction of bourgeois freedom". Post-modernism is best understood through this dichotomy. Indifferent

to the micro-processes of lived experience, but forcing constant differentiation and development within that experience, capitalism has created the polymorphous identities and hybrid phenomena of the current period, a period in which individualities, idiosyncrasies and modes of taking pleasure are developing in all directions. The imposition of the notion of individual freedom upon this phase gives us the post-modern. We live in a period in which hybridity of forms, pluralism, cultural relativism and the continuous subjective transgression of fixed standards, are being hailed or lamented as signifying a radically new and final phase of world history. But as Marx sagely comments about those who either give way to a cynical pragmatism or look back romantically to earlier and more wholesome forms of life as an alternative to forward-looking engagement with the spiritual alienation of the bourgeois epoch

"It is as ridiculous to yearn for a return to that original fullness as it is to believe that with this complete emptiness, which characterises the 'new age', history has come to a standstill."¹⁹

If the desires, beliefs, habits and social interactions of the working class are diversifying to the extent discussed in this paper, and if the present period in the advanced regions is characterised by high levels of indifference towards work, the workplace, and other workers as workers (and not as friends, neighbours, sporting colleagues, drinking buddies or club members), then it is clearly fundamental that efforts are made to understand where the energies of individual workers and groups or types of workers are currently being invested. The regeneration of socialist politics ultimately hinges on the workplace, the point of production itself, becoming a source of interest to workers as a position of strategic power in the defence or extension of their interests and as the most important — because quotidian and ready-made — sphere of experience in which the repressed public dimension of the personality can operate. To bring the developments outlined in this article into organic connection with the hinge of the workplace is our problem today.

The point of production, the workplace, is a potential community within which individual workers have connection with the public as opposed to the private domain. It is both a potential community and a genuine source of strategic power. Its potential as a point of crystallisation of publicly-oriented identities is far greater than that offered by the streets and the city-square. Movements which come together in these environments struggle to develop to the point where they can be taken seriously as counter-hegemonic. They are

important, but the workplace and the sites of training and education provide the key to the development of public identities capable of challenging the Leviathan.

What we are experiencing as breakdown, decline, fragmentation and high individualism, poses serious questions about organising towards counter-hegemony and the socialist revolution. But it would be a mistake to think that because solidarity and class consciousness are fundamental to this, we need to adopt the view that the modern individual is alienated, suffers from false consciousness, and is going backwards or losing something essential in giving way to the myriad individuating tendencies produced by the fragmented work environment and the myriad forms of consumption. If we take Marx's arguments in the *Grundrisse* seriously, we will find that we ourselves are trapped in a web of nostalgia if we see the current phase of history exclusively in terms of decline, loss and crisis for the socialist project rather than as a necessary structure of new challenges. We would do well to recognise with Marx that the longer capitalism persists and the further it extends and develops itself as a universal system, the further it proceeds towards producing the basis for a higher form of society. This is certainly not to say that socialism was impossible in Marx's time or at any point subsequent. The emphasis I have made about the positive effects of capitalist development must always be qualified by the understanding that capitalism can be overcome by the sudden emergence of class consciousness and independent working-class revolt at any point in its life cycle. But it is important to realise that in these times of relative peace in the advanced capitalist countries, the capitalist system is playing host to the development of material and human forces that make it more vulnerable than ever before.

Notes

1. Roman Rosdolsky (*The Making of Marx's 'Capital'* Tr. P. Burgess, Pluto Press, London, 1977, p.220-229) discusses the novelty of the distinction between relative and absolute surplus value, and in part VI offers an account of some of the cultural effects that the development of RSV produces.

2. *Gr*.414

3. *Gr*.408

4. This is not to deny that the political experience of workers in older branches of production can play a vital role in the politicisation of new branches, but the perspectives of the older industrial unionism and politics, even in its most radical form as Bolshevism, must open out to look at the issues over which workers in far less politicised sections are moved. There must be a recognition that new forms of work have produced fragmentation within the old solidarity, and that workers are now largely indifferent towards each other as workers. The experience of the stronger and older traditions of the labour movement can play an important role in countering the indif-

Czechoslovakia, 1968

IN 1967/68 the Stalinist rulers of Czechoslovakia split into a conservative and liberal wing. The victory of Alexander Dubcek led to an unprecedented liberalisation. Economically the most advanced of the Stalinist states, Czechoslovakia had had a mass Communist Party before the Second World War. This movement, frozen in Stalinist ice for 20 years began to revive. It was snuffed out by the invasion of the Russian and other East European Stalinist armies on the night of 20/21 August 1968, to reimpose Stalinist totalitarianism.

RUSSIA is threatening, manoeuvring, and brandishing her tanks and troops to intimidate the reforming [Czech] Dubcek regime. It shows just how insecure the Russian establishment feels. It knows that the Stalinist regimes in Russia and East Europe are built on sand — and recently the sands have been visibly shifting, largely in response to the Czech “liberalisation”. The Russians fear the disintegrating effects of the Czech example on the rest of the bloc. More than anything they are terrified that the Dubcek CP will lose control of the Czech ferment, thus reproducing the pattern that unfolded in Hungary in 1956.

The drastic reform from above to which the majority of the CPC was driven by the crisis in their economy has sent earth tremors echoing throughout East Europe and into Russia itself, where a cultural clampdown signals growing discontent.

At one point in late July it almost looked as if they would use Soviet troops to turn the Czech clock backwards. The Stalinists are acutely conscious that beneath the unstable bureaucratic crust is the lava of workers’ revolution, looking for cracks: they remember 1956. Thus once more we see that Stalinism is a regime of almost permanent crisis rent by explosive contradictions.

The basic contradiction is between the interests of the workers and of the rotten political/social bureaucracy which monopolises power and as a rule maintains a stifling dictatorship of the apparatus over the working class. This expresses itself as a contradiction between the nationalised economic structure from which the capitalists have been eliminated, and bureaucratic rule.

A nationalised economy needs planning and conscious control by those who do the work: real planning demands freedom of discussion, of information, of collective choice of goals. Working class democracy is as necessary for economic efficiency as is oxygen to a man’s bodily functions: lack of it produces convulsions, waste, contradictions. But the ruling bureaucracy is a parasitic social formation which ensures its own material well-being and privileges by tightly controlling society. It fears democracy because it would lead to the workers questioning its prerogatives and privileges. It fears democracy because it fears the working class. Thus it cannot plan or organise the nationalised economy rationally. It plans and organises the economy in its own way, from on high — administering people as things, with the workers alienated and excluded from control as under capitalism.

Though statification of the economy ends the characteristic fetters of capitalism on production internally, bureaucratic rule in these states creates new types of contradictions. The necessary dynamism of a nationalised economy is full conscious control in every pore of the economy — only possible by the democratic control of the millions who live in the pores of the economy. Crude control from above is an

anachronism, inefficient and wasteful, as if one had a new Jaguar and harnessed a mule to pull it. In advanced Czechoslovakia the economic consequences of this situation became so catastrophic as to force the present innovations (limited restoration of the free market internally, including its peculiar type of waste). First came the economic changes in early 1967, and later the political reforms, as the bureaucracy groped for a reorganisation that would allow it to keep control against the workers: the future of the Dubcek regime depends on whether it can maintain this control — and convince the Russians that it can.

In Russia the power of this bureaucratic caste arose out of backwardness and the isolation of the October Revolution. It seized power in a counter-revolution against Bolshevism. In most of the other East European countries the bureaucrats were lifted or aided into the saddle by their Russian puppet masters, in whose image they moulded themselves.

Added to the contradictions between the workers and the bureaucracy, in the [Stalinist] bloc as a whole there is tension arising from the national oppression and parasitism of Russia’s relations with most of the other countries; and also conflicts of interest between the various national bureaucracies. This patchwork of tensions is aggravated by the unevenness of development within the various “satellite” countries, and between these countries and Russia itself. When the rulers in one country move to ease their own situation they threaten the stability of their neighbours: [the Hungarian Revolution in] 1956 was initially sparked off by the much milder movement in Poland — and went on to flower into one of the most significant working class revolts in three decades.

Hence the alarm of the Russian, Polish and East German bureaucrats at the Czech liberalisation. What they fear was made plain in the notorious letter of July 18. They bluntly demanded a return of censorship and a general totalitarian reassertion of rigid control by the CP. That it is the contagion of liberalisation, and fear for the continued control of the CPC, which haunt the Russians, is shown by their explicit statement of support for the economic innovations of Sik and Dubcek.

The empirical Dubcek leadership first discovered the uses of “freedom” last January, because of the need to bludgeon the Old Guard CPC leadership — which was ruining the economy. For the moment the conflict with the Russians has consolidated their control in a genuinely popular way.

[But] sharp clashes between the workers and the reforming bureaucrats are in the making. Economic “rationalisation” will cut into workers’ standards. Among the tasks openly discussed is to “shake-out” and “redeploy” (sack) up to half a million workers. Dubcek may be assured of control at present — but the workers have yet to speak their piece on the “new model” “market socialist” economy.

Despite the bureaucratic nature of the new regime, Czech national self-determination and the political reforms (limited as they are) are to the advantage of the Czech workers. There is no doubt where they stand in the Russo-Czech confrontation. Experience, however, will show then that the other side of the liberal-bureaucratic coin is ferocious attacks on their standards and conditions. Then those who are mere pawns in the present confrontation of the Russo-Czech rulers will move to take control of the board!

Workers’ Fight, August 1968

ference of other workers towards work itself. But this cannot mean simply foisting the old union politics onto the newer branches. Recognising the authenticity of new individualities is a basic requirement in this regard. We must note the paradoxical phenomenon whereby the diversification of new branches of production and an increasingly self-differentiated work force has been accompanied by the formation of broader and broader super-unions covering even more industries and sub-industries than ever before. An artificial and cumbersome response to the new demands. The above holds true for those involved in maintaining the values of the older socialist tendencies and the older unionism. It is tempting to defend the value of the old by isolating it and holding it up as the trans-historical political form of the workers movement, but it is not Marx’s approach.

5. This type of analysis does not figure so prominently in Capital. Marx saw the *Grundrisse* as abstract, and was concerned to connect with the leadership of the workers’ movement in the International as he represented — popularised is not the right expression — his analyses in the far more detailed and concrete exposition of the first volume of *Capital* Vol.1, which required an enormous amount of additional research. It is possible then that though the method of *Capital* retains most of the central categories of the *Grundrisse*, and is more coherently organised, there remain emphases in the *Grundrisse* that politically speaking, were projected at phases of capitalist development that were far too far away to be worth thinking about in any further detail.

6. *Gr.* 160.

7. Especially Section III, “Socialist and Communist Literature”.

8. For the phrase itself see *Gr.* 160; 287; 410. For the related analysis that the growing richness of tastes, needs and abilities created inadvertently by the blind and culturally indifferent processes of capital formation constitute a central precondition for the transition to a socialist mode of production see *Gr.* 104; 160; 325; 409; 541.

9. *Gr.* 528.

10. *Gr.* 411, 488, 528.

11. In the second conversation of Holz, H.H., Kofler, L., Abendroth, W., *Conversations with Lukacs* Ed. T. Pinkus Tr. D. Fernbach, Merlin Press, London 1974, we find Lukacs making some fascinating remarks about Marx’s theory of relative surplus value formation and its central importance in the comprehension of western culture from 1929 onwards.

12. *Gr.* 414

13. *Gr.* 421

14. *Gr.* 287

15. *Gr.* 222, cf. also *Gr.* 421. For a full discussion of this side of money cf. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* pp127ff, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1977

16. *Gr.* 283.

17. *Gr.* 470

18. Indifference is a crucial theme: indifference of capital to the form that consumption takes — “value excludes no use value” (*Gr.* 541); indifference of capital to the labour of other capital (*Gr.* 287); the indifference of producers and consumers to each other (*Gr.* 160); the indifference of capitalists and workers to their own product — “crappy shit” (*Gr.* 273); indifference of the worker towards work (*Gr.* 104). A related thematic is that of the “autonomisation of the world market” (*Gr.* 160) and the “autonomy” of the system as Leviathan or “animated monster” (*Gr.* 470).

19. *Gr.* 161 The clause “which characterises the ‘new age’” appears in Rosdolsky *ibid.* 417, in what is otherwise Nicolaus’ translation.

Hal Draper and Israel

By Sean Matgamna

ONE of the consequences of disappointment with the Blair Government when it comes, as come it will, is likely to be a qualitative growth of fascism in Britain. Compared to much of Europe now — Austria, Belgium, Italy, France, Germany, Russia — Britain lags behind in the scale of its fascist movement. The British revolutionary left lags a long way behind the objective needs of the situation.

Large scale fascism, as a whole or in some of its parts, will be anti-semitic. With capitalism in trouble, the fascist demagogues will need scapegoats, and the myths and legends of the Jews as the evil genius of capitalism are too tempting and too well established and elaborated to be dispensed with; anti-black racism has limited uses. If a threatening anti-semitic fascist movement develops here, the fascists will in part have built on the currents of “left wing” anti-semitism that have washed about the labour movement and the left for thirty years, in the form of a Zionophobia which demonised Israel and its supports as the very essence of imperialism, racism and reaction, and consequently preached political hostility to most Jews alive who identify with and defend Israel. The pre-war fascists too of course, had currents of old “left wing” anti-semitism — equating capitalism, or financial capitalism with Jews — to build on. The German socialist leader August Bebel once said of this sort of anti-semitism: “It is the socialism of the fools.. For much of the revolutionary left, hostility to Israel has been the sharpest note in their “anti-imperialism”. *Workers’ Liberty* for many years has denounced this as the “anti-imperialism of idiots.” People who backed Russian, Chinese or Iraqi imperialism have made mortal hostility to Israel the great test of anti-imperialism. Socialism of the fools, anti-imperialism of the idiots! Immense damage has been done to the left itself and by the left to the labour movement by this nonsense. It has its mass origins on the left in the anti-semitic propaganda of the Russian Stalinist state after 1949 whose root idea was the crazy equation of Zionism and Nazism (see Stan Crooke’s article in *WL* 10).

Alan Johnson, whose description and defence of Hal Draper’s politics on Israel (*Workers’ Liberty* 49) I debate in this article, is not in the camp of the idiots of “anti-imperialism”. Nor was Hal Draper. Before proceeding it is useful to establish here what Draper’s final position was. It is in the introduction he wrote on the eve of his death to a collection of his articles in 1990 (*Zionism, Israel and the Arabs*): “The general line being followed by the PLO leadership under Arafat and by the Palestinian movement of rebellion [the Intifada] is essentially the line that we advocated amongst both Jewish-Zionists and Arab-nationalist socialists.” From 1988, the PLO had pursued a two states policy, recognising Israel and attempting to win a Palestinian state alongside it.

But Draper, I think, did contribute more than a little to the Zionophobe’s conquest of so much of the left. At the core of the Trotskyist left’s Zionophobia has been the refusal to accept and rationally come to terms with the existence of the Israeli Jewish state, as a Jewish state — the approach into which the Workers’ Party/Independent Socialist League almost “staggered” and from which Hal Draper rescued it, according to Alan Johnson’s (and Hal Draper’s own) account. Alan Johnson’s article on Hal Draper and Israel re-raises these questions.

I take them up because I fear that Alan Johnson’s exposition of Hal Draper’s views will lead to a blurring of the clear outlines of the solution we advocate: two states, for the two, Arab and Jewish, peoples.

Each nation should have self-determination in the territory where it has a majority. Full equality for members of each nationality in the other’s state. Eventually may come federation. Our particular concern as international socialists is to support a framework of consistent democracy and self-determination which will allow Jewish and Arab workers eventually to unite, within the states and across the borders, and learn in common action to work for a socialist revolution in the Middle East. On a narrower focus, we are concerned to cleanse the left, of which we form part, of a dangerous aberration. This approach has led critics, for example the SWP, to denounce us as “Zionists”. We are international socialists. If the policy outlined here seems “Zionist”, that is one measure of what our critics are: Arab nationalists and vicarious chauvinists*.

II

WHEN one argues for what one thinks is political sense on an important and complicated question, it is proper to observe respect and restraint when critically discussing the views of one who always embodied and advocated much of that sense. In 1948, Hal Draper, like the Workers’ Party whose magazine he edited, believed in the right of self-determination for the Jewish nation in Palestine, and in their right to defend themselves without which talk of “self-determination” would have been mere prattle. As Draper wrote in *Labor Action* on May 24 1948: “To recognise the right of the Jews to self-determination, if it is not merely to be a pious obeisance to a formula, requires socialists also to recognise the right of the Jews to defend their choice of separate national existence against any and all reactionary attempts to deprive them of that right, whether by Arab feudal lords or UN imperialism.”

In contrast to all the major Trotskyist groups, which were neutralist in the ‘48 war — itself a startling fact in the light of their later scarcely qualified “Arabism” — the Workers’ Party USA sided with Israel, while warning against a Jewish war of expansion. It was Israeli defencist. That, not its refusal to back the pan-Arab invasion, which it shared with all the other groups, was what was distinctive in the camp of Trotskyism about the Workers Party in 1948. Earlier, in the mid ‘40s, the Workers’ Party had defended the right of Jewish refugees, and then of the survivors of Hitler’s death camps, to go to Palestine.

On all these concrete questions the Workers’ Party (and after ‘49, the ISL) and Hal Draper were, I believe, politically right. Were they not de facto Zionists in the basic common meaning of the word? They would have answered that question with an emphatic no. Yet Draper always explicitly rejected the “smash Israel” policy of those “Trotskyists” who

*And it is not quite true that — as Alan Johnson says — in the exchanges with Jim Higgins both sides invoked Draper as an authority. I pointed out, as does Alan Johnson, that Draper had not been in the smash Israel camp, but in ours; yet I qualified it.

— from a toy-town “real politic” about the “Arab revolution” — let themselves become vicarious Arab nationalists (indeed, Arab chauvinists, or worse). On all the concrete questions Draper had the attitude we have. And no one can be a socialist and not have most of the concrete criticisms of Israel and Zionism Draper had. But costly mystifications were used by Draper to ward off the conclusion that their policy before 1948 and after was a form of left wing Zionism.

From this a great deal that was inadequate, contradictory, mystifying or simply wrong-headed politically and methodologically came to be part of Draper’s thinking and writing on this question. There is much in Draper’s legacy on this question that is unclear and confusing.

The truth — I will argue — is that there are two Hal Drapers on the Israel/Palestine question. They don’t always relate to each other coherently. There is the Draper described above who, on all the concrete questions, was as opposed as we are to those who want Israel destroyed and who was as “Zionist” as we are. But there is also the Draper in whom those concrete politics are surrounded and half-hidden, or more than half-hidden, by clouds of moralistic incoherent sectarian — I mean political sectarian — Zionophobia that blur and sometimes render invisible the distinction between his politics and those of what might be called the “consistent Zionophobes” of the “smash Israel” camp, those who draw different and, perhaps, more logical conclusions from the ideological Zionophobia and one-sided propaganda Draper sometimes shared with them.

Draper who was a “consistent democrat”, who supported the right of the Jews to defend themselves in ’48, and who never had any truck with the idea that there could be anything progressive in the conquest of the Israeli Jews by the Arab states. He was also an important, albeit inconsistent, propagandist outrider in the large army of the Zionophobes, many of whom — most I suppose — have wanted to destroy Israel and backed Arab states’ attempts to do that. Draper rejected the conclusions of the “smash Israel and back Nasser’s, Assad’s or Saddam Hussein’s” camp, but he shared with them not only one-sided Zionophobic propaganda but also and fundamentally an “ideological” longer-term rejection of Israel as a Jewish state.

In general terms and in the long term this was in contradiction to his practical commitment to Jewish self-determination and Israel’s right to defend itself. Its roots, as I will show, are in the mystifications he employed in 1948. One might say that on Zionism and Zionophobia two souls are at war in Hal Draper.

III

IT will save time if we cut through to bedrock at the beginning. Despite his endorsement in 1990 (quoted above) of a “two states” programme, Hal Draper repeatedly advocated, or seemed to advocate, a “bi-national state” as his answer to the Israeli-Arab conflict. Did — or can — a bi-national state, either in all of pre-1948 Palestine, or in Israel, ever make any sense? Did the “secular democratic state” with equal rights for Jews and Arabs, which *Socialist Organiser* once supported, ever make sense? Let us see.

There is much that is wrong, unpleasant, undesirable or intolerable about Jewish-Arab “relations”. There is a great deal in the history of the last 70 years that is regrettable and tragic. There is a great deal that is unsettled, despite the — still very inadequate — beginnings of a new Palestinian Arab state. Faced with so much that is unsatisfactory, in relatively recent history, it is tempting to go beyond the programme of adjust-

ment of reality, the one outlined above, to indulge in writing “alternative history” — and to turn that into a political programme. And it is easy to write.

You take the elements in the story — some of which may still be, or seem to be, fluid — and recombine them to your satisfaction. Would it have been better had a Jewish-Arab bi-national state been created in the ’40s? Perhaps. Would a secular democratic state, in which Jews and Arabs would have had equal citizenship have been better? *Socialist Organiser*, the forerunner of *Workers’ Liberty*, used to think so. Why not rerun the film of history?

The problem is this: How is the rearrangement of the elements going to be accomplished? Where is the lever to move the heavy stones of history to be placed? What will be, can be, its agency? Who will do it?

Every programme of large scale rearrangement — bi-national state, secular democratic state — involves replacing the Jewish state of Israel with another state in which Jews will not have a state (the pre-1988 PLO version of secular democratic state proposed to give them religious rights in an Arab state covering all of pre-1948 Palestine). What are the chances that the Israelis will agree to dismantle their state? Zero. You could hope to win Israeli agreement or majority agreement, reluctant or otherwise, for a Palestinian state and for equality for Israeli Arabs in the Jewish state. There is absolutely no chance that they can be persuaded to dismantle their state. No people in history has ever done that. Those who look back on a history of persecution, pogrom and in the mid-twentieth century, the systematically organised massacre of six million European Jews, in other peoples’ states are unlikely to be world pioneers in this matter.

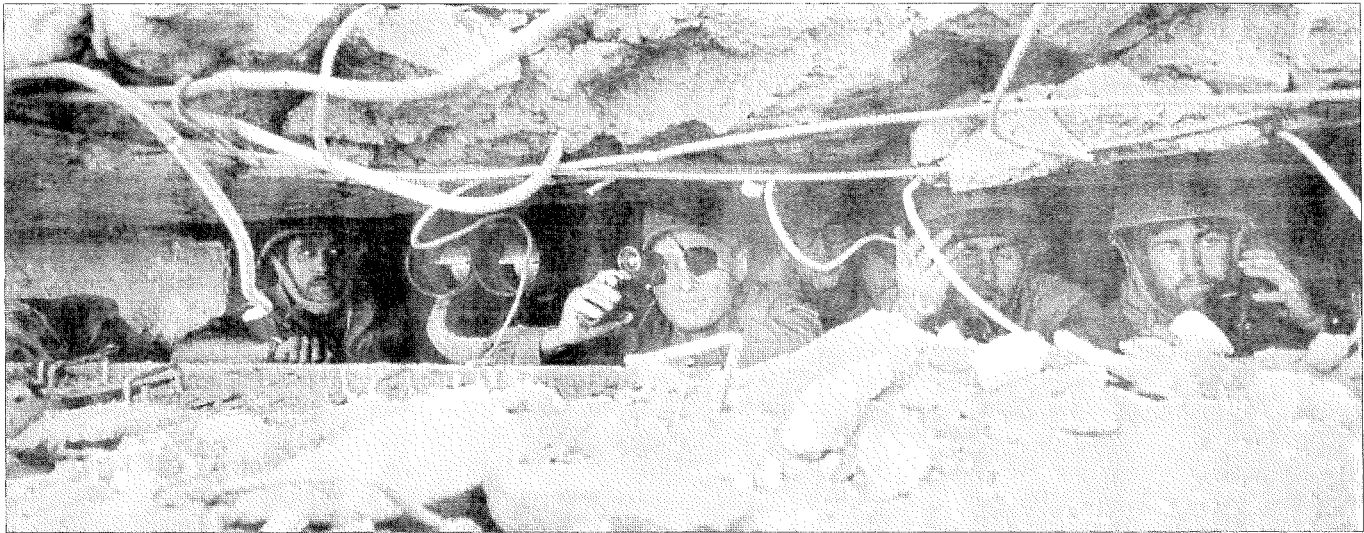
The modern left — in contrast to the right — has never before made that demand on any nation. That the left should make it on Israel is an abomination. A Marxist socialist revolution in the Middle East would have to have a programme of full national self-determination for Jews and Kurds and other minority nations in the region.

Voluntary, benign rerunning and rearranging of history, by agreement, is entirely ruled out. What then? All such schemes of rerunning history have as their central premise denial of the right of Israel to exist. The coming into existence of the Jewish state is the historical “error”, “anomaly”, “crime” at the core of what they want to rearrange.

They start by delegitimising Israel, denying it the right to exist as its Jewish majority want it to exist. That is just as well, because when voluntary rearrangement by agreement of the Israelis’ to liquidate their state is ruled out, proponents of all such schemes are left with only one conceivable means to the same end: coercion, the subjugation of Israel, the conquest and overpowering of the Jews and their state, so that they have no choice. If that’s your road the only forces that can do the job are the Arab states (thus the SWP backs Saddam Hussein against Israel). The delegitimising of Israel is prerequisite to that conclusion.

And once you have done the full operation in your head, beginning benignly with delegitimation in the name of kinder historical dispensations, and ending, as so much of the left in Britain still does, with support for coercion and bloodiest conquest, then you realise that the “middle-term” — doing it by agreement — has only been a transitional, a gestation, stage to something else entirely — an excursion up a blind alley: it is not and never could be part of the real world.

Yet many are led on the road to accepting coercion because at first they think the delegitimation of Israel is done by way of reasonable criticism, and coupled with a benign alternative — secular democratic state, or bi-national state —



Israel has been often at war with its neighbours. Moshe Dayan at an observation post in 1973

which is naively counterposed to the existing Jewish state. It is not yet coupled with a programme of Arab conquest which will retain the bad patterns of the past, only with the roles of victor and defeated reversed. In fact it leads naturally and inescapably to that conclusion: to an unavoidable policy of coercion and conquest. The benign alternative, which "reasonably" requires self-liquidation by Israel, serves only as a softener-up. Its good intentions serve the advocates of conquest by first taking the form of a moralistic ultimatum to Israel. Israel's rejection of that ultimatum eases and rationalises and gives moral justification to support for conquest. The moral ultimatum becomes a military ultimatum to Israel: if not this reasonable rearrangement (bi-national state; secular democratic state), if not Israel's voluntary self-liquidation, then this reasonable rearrangement, this desirable rerunning of history, must be achieved against its will.

If the voice to which this ultimatum is given is Nasser's, Assad's, Saddam Hussein's — why not? For the left, after '67 especially, it can be presented or passed off as "revolutionary" or "anti-imperialist". Militarism in a just cause can be a good thing! If not voluntarily, then the other way! Progress must be served; injustice must be undone. A bi-national state or secular democratic state "by any means necessary". All perfectly reasonable, and with a healthy, invigorating smack of no-nonsense revolutionary clarity about it.

But there is a problem with this too. The end initially desired — bi-national state, or secular democratic state — is utterly incompatible with these, its only conceivable, means. If the means are Arab conquest, the subjugation and overpowering of Israel's Jews and the forcible destruction and suppression from outside of their state, then the goal of a better arrangement than history has so far provided vanishes in the maelstrom. This instrument — the Arab states (or the Palestinian Arabs, if that were possible) as conquerors — and these means — war, conquest, reduction of the Israeli Jews to statelessness and helplessness — cannot produce this desired result. They can lead only to a rerunning of history that produces different winners and losers.

That a bi-national state or a secular democratic state with full Jewish equality would be the result is utterly inconceivable. All the good plans for staging a real life alternative history immediately turn into something very different. That starting point, the delegitimisation of Israel, the denial of Israel's right to exist, can go nowhere else in the real world than towards support for coercion in which all the desirable alternatives

prove to have been mirages. It cannot but work against the only possible approach to an equitable solution, two states. There is no middle ground between accepting Israel's right to exist, Jewish self-determination, and denying it in the only way it can be denied — by force of Arab state arms. Such has been the experience of all who have gone down this road, including ourselves when we supported a version of the secular democratic state. If the reader is inclined to respond: if Israel won't be reasonable, then too bad — that will serve as an example of it. Then answer this question: what do you propose? Any of the imaginary benign rerunnings are not available.

From what point of view, then, other than an Arab chauvinism, is the conquest and destruction of Israel acceptable? From what point of view, if not Arab — vicarious or natural — chauvinism, and in the name of what better conceivable solution do you reject two states? International socialist revolution? Such a revolution will have to have as part of its programme in the Middle East consistent democracy on the national question. It cannot but be for Jewish self-determination — that is for two states. Even if in your head you would like a bi-national or secular democratic state, in reality, if you support conquest of Israel by Saddam Hussein, or whomever, you are not for it. The idea of it can only light your way to its very opposite: conquest and reversal of roles. There is no middle ground here.

Either Israel has the right to exist, and its Jewish majority have the right to maintain separateness and independence as long as they like — or they don't. If they don't, all rights belong to the Arabs, and we have come full circle to a clear Arab chauvinist position. Sincere believers in a benign alternative history prove to be mere outriders for the Arab regimes — almost all of them quasi-fascist regimes loaded down by crimes against their own people or in the case of Syria, Jordan and the Christian Arabs in Lebanon, perpetrators of great massacres of Palestinian Arabs. That is the basic terrain of this question.

In a sense Marxism is "the science of alternative history" — we orient to one sort of possible development and fight to secure it, fight to push development off the track the bourgeoisie have laid down and so on. Equally we aim to tidy up history's messes and injustices, in so far as that is possible — but we are limited. And we have to base ourselves in the trends and reality that work for what we want to help to develop. The flat "Zionist" position of recognising Israel and demanding that Israel be recognised is the best position on which to stand. We also fight for the fullest equality for the Israeli Arabs. Call *that* a bi-national state if you like, but then it

it is a detail of the two-states solution, not a proposal to regard the entity of pre-1948 Palestine — which existed as a distinct unit, for only 30 years under British rule — as a sacred thing which must be restored in the form of one bi-national state. The two-states policy allows for all the concrete reforms Draper talks of, and for the education of the Arab workers away from chauvinism. It cuts off no revolutionary possibilities that otherwise would exist. It can, above all, allow the beginnings of working class unity.

Only a fool would say that the two-states policy would not create difficulties for socialists in Arab countries; only someone who forgets our ABCs could think it is dispensable, or that the Jews in Israel can be dismissed as a “troublesome little people” standing in the way of historical progress. Whose history? Whose progress?

IV

THERE is no rerunning of this history to get a better result from a humane, democratic, socialist, or working class point of view. Only a rerunning of history which reallocates the roles is possible. What *might* those have been? If the Palestinian Arabs, and the Arab states who invaded the area of pre-’48 Palestine allocated by the United Nations to the Jewish community, had won in ’48, the Jews would have been massacred and driven out. If the Nazis had got to Palestine — as in ’42 they might have — then the Palestinian Arab followers of Haj Hussein, the Mufti of Jerusalem, who was an exile in Europe helping to recruit Bosnian Muslim soldiers to fight for Hitler, would have joined the Nazis in killing Jews, and helped them round up others for neat and orderly factory-organised slaughter. That did not happen.

What did happen was that from 1939 Britain, to placate the Arabs and with fervid Palestinian and other Arab support, blocked entry to Palestine for Jewish refugees fleeing for their lives to their own community in Palestine. Many hundreds of men, women and children were consigned to watery graves. Those they caught were interned. There is strong evidence that the whole British gameplan in 1947-48 was to “withdraw” and then for the Arab armies, some of them officered by British soldiers, either to conquer the Jewish community or create a situation into which Britain would have to return as peacekeeper. There was an international embargo against arms for the Palestinian Jews — facing armies which were plentifully supplied. It is reminiscent of what happened in Bosnia in the early ’90s. The Stalinist state of Czechoslovakia, pursuing Russia’s policy, was the exception.

The Israelis not only survived, but routed their opponents. The common idea that the population movements of that war were organised by a mighty and all-controlling Israeli state machine is — whatever the details — very like the idea that the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917-19 faced the people like the totalitarian state machine of Stalinism. There is a confusion of calendars, a reading back of one set of circumstances into a world where they did not exist. The Israelis had to fight for their existence, facing a Palestinian Arab population allied — or, it was reasonable to think, potentially allied — to powerful invading armies.

There had been war, Arabs and Jews fighting for control of key areas, hills, connecting roads, etc., from the end of 1947, when the British power began to abdicate (though it still controlled the borders, and still, to the last day, kept out Jewish refugees). Any idea that in this situation only the malevolence of “the Zionists” prevented unity of Arab and Jew is ridiculous — ignorant-ridiculous or malevolent-ridiculous, but ridiculous in all cases. It only makes sense as the consis-

tently Arab chauvinist idea that the very existence of the Jewish/Zionist community in Palestine was the fundamental evil. That idea is not helpful if it is Jewish-Arab unity you want!

Were there Zionist leaders eager to win and “clear” as much territory as possible from those who had initiated a war of expropriation if not extermination against them? Yes. It would be strange if there were not. Those were nationalists. On the other side were also nationalists, Islamicists — and the British Empire... All this was tragic, regrettable, deplorable. Those marked down as victims (and by the dominant empire in the area too) emerged, against all the odds, as victors. Why is that more tragic, deplorable, regrettable than the alternative at the time?

What do socialists say to such situations? We say, self-determination — working-class unity, consistent democracy. We recognise that there are sometimes intense national-communal conflicts and intensely felt identities: and then we advocate the road to unity by way of separation, or support moves for separation. Unity is always our goal, in the first place working class unity. But there are conditions in which separation is the only way to begin to replace chronic antagonism with ultimate unity. Interspersing of populations made separation in Palestine difficult. What were the possible alternatives? Continued British rule was probably — I’d say, certainly — the only way of keeping Jews and Arabs in one state. Bi-national state? What did those who advocate a bi-national state propose? How could it be organised? There were variations, but any bi-national state in all of Palestine would depend on an intricate series of constitutional arrangements. It would have had to be something like the recent Northern Ireland agreement, perhaps, or the more informal system set up in the ’40s in Lebanon to balance the Christian and Muslim peoples there. Both Lebanon and Palestine had historically been part of Syria. Was a bi-national state like that possible? I don’t know: what in fact happened suggests that it was not remotely likely, and was probably impossible. Would it have been desirable? Certainly it would have been better than the decades of conflict.

Would a bi-national state, had one been set up in Palestine in the late ’40s, have avoided that conflict? It is utterly inconceivable that it would; or that, existing, it could have been long-lasting. Only the details of conflict would have varied. In Lebanon, conflict was intense but not as deep and stark as in Palestine. In 1958, at the time the British-linked monarchy in Iraq, broke down in an Arab nationalist revolution, Lebanon broke down in civil war. The US Army was sent in to control the situation. Every shift in population sizes, in basic political attitudes, in the broader picture, threatens such structures. Had a bi-national state in all of Palestine miraculously emerged in ’48: it is inconceivable that it could have survived the national storms and upheavals of the Arab world in the ’50s and ’60s which were part of a movement throughout the colonial and ex-colonial world.

V

ALAN Johnson is writing a political biography of Hal Draper. His focus on Draper as hero is natural. Unfortunately it misleads him. Whoever wrote this or that

"In fact, the case for an open press and free discussion rather than an arid press with one line only, that of the established leadership, could not be better made than by the example of *Labor Action's* and *New International's* treatment of this question. The substance of the “official” texts is sane and right compared to what the other Trotskyists were saying, but the richness of the Workers’ Party on this subject, is — I concluded, reading through it some years ago — in the non-official, non-ceremonial discussion pieces.

resolution or article, the sensible part of the 1948 writings of Hal Draper grew out of the culture, politics and traditions of the Workers' Party on this question. In this, on Alan's account, Draper had no part until 1948. He brought to the subject a too abstract rationalism and revolutionary fantasies about a Jewish alternative to the real Jewish state that would have been far more at home in the camp of the "orthodox" Trotskyists — except that Draper allotted the messianic role to the Israeli Jews where the "orthodox" looked to "the Arab revolution".

As I've said, the press of the Workers' Party for years before '48 had backed free Jewish immigration into Palestine and combined this with defending the Zionist Jews in their conflicts with the colonial power, Britain. There had been open and free discussion of a welter of positions.*

There had been polemics against the contradictory views and policies of the official Trotskyists (for example, a very impressive 1947 article by Al Glotzer against Ernest Mandel — whose anti-Zionism was fatalistically reconciled to and coupled with the idea that the Jews of the world had little hope of avoiding extermination in the years ahead...)

Everything said about Jewish right to self-determination and self-defence in 1948 — by Hal Draper or whoever — flowed organically from what the party had said in the events that led up to the Jewish-Arab war — from the work of quite a number of people.

More: the policies of the Workers' Party before and during 1948, the year of war and Israeli independence, were a continuation of the policies of Trotskyism before the Second World War. As was argued in an earlier article, while opposing the Zionist project and advocating Jewish and Arab working class unity and opposition to British imperialism in Palestine, they were in favour of free Jewish immigration into Palestine. More still: in this, the Trotskyists were themselves in direct continuity with the policy of the Communist International until 1929-30. What Trotsky might have said in '48 can only be a matter of surmise and extrapolation. It is to be doubted that he would have suddenly come out against Jewish freedom to migrate to Palestine, and against the freedom of the Palestinian Jewish community — about one in three of the population there — to receive them in the aftermath of the Holocaust, when there were nearly half a million Jews in displaced persons camps in Europe with nowhere to go and others, caught by the British trying to get into Palestine, in British internment camps. The point is that the radical change of direction was made by the official Trotskyists, not by the Workers' Party.

These continued to campaign, as they had during the war, for US "open doors" to Jewish refugees. Their co-thinkers in Britain, called for Jewish refugees to be allowed into Britain — but not that Britain should allow them into Palestine. They had decided that their first allegiance was to the anti-imperialist Arab colonial revolution; and, moreover, that the political cost to themselves in terms of "integration" into the revolution would be very high if they did not oppose Jewish migration to Palestine. They were honest and open about the reasoning and motives. What was distinctive about the Workers' Party policy (apart from the distinctive character of its 1948 "revolutionary perspective", to which I'll return) was not that they did not back "the pan-Arab invaders". Such restraint would have been remarkable in the official Trotskyists of later decades. In 1948 all the official Trotskyist groups — I know of no exception — refused to back the Arab invaders (we published their statements in *Socialist Organiser* in 1987). What was distinctive about the Workers' Party was that it sided with Israel, championing the Jews' right to self-determination and self-defence — that is to defeat the Arab armies trying to over-run the Jewish communities. In all the immediate practical questions their dis-

tinction from Zionism was reduced to the abstract and theoretical, to rejection of names, and of aspects of Jewish policy: support for Jewish self-determination and self-defence was in immediate terms, in fact, unconditional.

Their support was in theory conditional and pro-tem. In the longer term, they did not want the Zionist state they backed — they wanted something other than a Jewish state. The contradiction that Draper lived is there, stark: supporting the Jewish community's right to self-determination and to self-defence, it was a Jewish/Zionist state they supported. That is what the Jewish movement represented, wanted and, certainly, all they could have had "from" the Arabs.

Then to compensate for the Zionist reality, Hal Draper wrought messianic "perspectives" for a different Jewish nation in Palestine, playing a revolutionary role in the entire Middle East, which it was simply inconceivable that any nation so derived, so composed, so much at odds with the Arabs and Islam could conceivably have played. Then Israel was measured and judged against its having failed to play this role. Then the ways by which they sought to remain distinct from "Zionism" led the WP/ISL and, specifically, Hal Draper, to a series of utter self-contradictions. I will elaborate on these points.

VI

ALAN Johnson quotes Hal Draper: "Zionism — the ideology of Jewish chauvinism — showed that it is one of the deeply reactionary conceptions of the political world. The child of anti-semitism, it became the father of another form of ethnic oppression." This seems to me to be the same sort of stuff as the revolutionary perspective of 1948. There is righteous — and justified — indignation and moral fervour here, but there is also irresponsible playing with words and sloughing over of difficulties. The passage is an example of Draper in full voice with the Zionophobic chorus. It is self-contradictory and nonsensical.

Zionism was the project of creating a Jewish state in Palestine (for some Zionists, at one time, possibly elsewhere). At every step the Workers' Party, following in the practical tradition of the Communist International and the Fourth International, had supported the concrete manifestations of that unfolding project — free Jewish migration, Jewish self-defence, Jewish self-determination and the war to set up the Jewish state (or if you prefer, stop it being crushed in the egg). In Draper, the project is separated from the actors; Zionism is a devil ex-machina; Zionism — which is the project of a Jewish state and the preparatory work for it over decades — "is Jewish chauvinism"; and only extreme Jewish chauvinism is Zionism. Such a definition, annexing the word to the exclusive and self-hypnotising use of the Zionist Zionophobe, is untenable; it is a confusing private jargon, which works to obscure not clarify.

At every point, concretely, the Workers' Party and Draper had, as above, cumulatively supported the Zionist project, as it unfolded. I nearly wrote — rejecting only the binding-together concept of it. But what does it mean to say someone supported the thing — as the Workers' Party in 1948 supported Jewish immigration, Jewish self-defence and self-determination — but not the concept of it? It means we are in the land of mystification! The Workers' Party and Hal Draper accepted, so to speak, every letter in the word, but Hal Draper refused to pronounce the word and used force and fervour to insist that the word meant only the extremes of Jewish chauvinism, or that the letters somehow spelled out a different word.

Of course the WP/ISL — like the Communist International



1948 Palestinian refugees

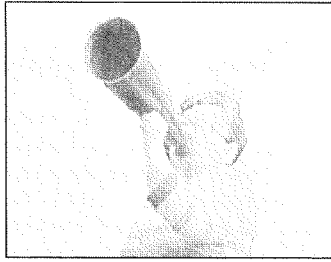
in the '20s and the 1930s Trotskyists — wanted to separate the Jews going to Palestine from the Zionist project. They wanted to unite Jewish and Arab workers in a common struggle for socialism and against imperialism. Supporting Jewish immigration and self-defence, they explicitly rejected the Zionist project, usually in rough and uncompromising words. But they did not make any conditions. It was Zionists who had won from the British the necessary political frame and set up the infrastructures that made possible the big migration of Jews to Palestine after 1933. From the early '20s both Jews and Arabs had had their own self-administration, states within the state: the whole logic of the situation was Zionist. There is truth in distinguishing the deeply ideological idealists and zealots of Zionism from the great mass of Jews driven towards Palestine by Polish, German and other anti-semites in the '20s and '30s and '40s, and from the Arab states after the late '40s. The anti-semites made Zionists of Jews who would, like those who were murdered, probably have chosen to remain where they were. Draper uses this just to blame and abuse the Zionists, and to present them as the evil spirit of the European Jews who survived the Holocaust.

Isaac Deutscher, a Jewish Pole in origin and from his youth a socialist anti-Zionist, wrote this in 1954. Socialists, liberals and Zionists "in eastern Europe... bitterly competed for the loyalty of the Jewish masses. A deep cleavage always existed there between the Zionist and the anti-Zionist Jews. The anti-Zionists urged the Jews to trust their gentile environment, to help the 'progressive forces' in that environment to come to the top, and so hope that those forces would effectively defend the Jews against anti-semitism. 'Socialist revolution will give the Jews equality and freedom; they have therefore no need for a Zionist Messiah, this was the stock argument of generations of Jewish left-wingers. The Zionists, on the other hand, dwell on the deep-seated hatred

of non-Jews towards Jews and urged Jews to trust their future to nobody except their own state. In this controversy Zionism has scored a horrible victory, one which it could neither wish nor expect: six million Jews had to perish in Hitler's gas chambers in order that Israel should come to life. It would have been better if Israel had remained unborn and the six million Jews stayed alive — but who can blame Zionism and Israel for the different outcome? Israel is more than a spiritual colony of the eastern European ghettos. It is their great, tragic, posthumous offspring fighting for survival with breathtaking vitality... I have, of course, long since abandoned my anti-Zionism, which was based on a confidence in the European labour movement, or, more broadly, in European society and civilisation, which that society and civilisation have not justified. If, instead of arguing against Zionism in the 1920s and 1930s I had urged European Jews to go to Palestine, I might have helped to save some of the lives that were later extinguished in Hitler's gas chambers ... Even now however, I am not a Zionist ... How is it possible not to embrace Zionism [his Israeli friends] ask, if one recognises the state of Israel as a historic necessity? ... From a burning or sinking ship people jump no matter where — on to a lifeboat, a raft or a float. The jumping is for them an 'historic necessity'; and the raft is in a sense the basis for their whole existence. But does it follow that the jumping should be made into a programme?..."

Deutscher's self-questioning is impossible for an honest socialist to evade without paying a high cost in muddle, incorrigible political sectarianism and mystification.

● In the next *Workers' Liberty* I will examine the fantastic nature of the "revolutionary perspectives" of 1948, in which the Israeli working class was called upon to initiate a war of liberation in the Middle East, and the connection of this position with Hal Draper's later positions on the question.



Debate: after the Good Friday Agreement

We should not lie to the working class

WHEN deciding on our attitude to the Northern Irish peace deal we must not base a judgement on wishful thinking or hope, but on a concrete assessment of whether or not the deal can work. It seems to me that as a solution to the sectarian divide it cannot.

At the most, I hoped the deal could possibly result in a cessation of sectarian violence, which may enable more "normal" working class activity to emerge. This scenario is looking more unlikely in the light of recent events. But even with that possibility, the deal remains a makeshift arrangement. Its ultimate solution is based on an undemocratic headcount to either force the Protestants into a united Ireland or the Catholics to remain part of the Northern Ireland statelet. Whatever accommodations the Nationalist and Unionist politicians may have made to form the deal, and however much they may have shifted from militarism as a tactic, the ultimate goals remain the same. This deal does not bridge this gap. It can work only as a holding mechanism within the existing Northern Ireland state.

As a solution to the national question in Ireland the deal contradicts what we argue for as an answer: consistent democracy and mutual acceptance of each community's national rights. These are ideas which we argue for the working class to take up and use as the basis of a solution; they are not advice to the bourgeoisie and not put forward in the hope that the ruling class will think it is a good idea.

During this debate various people have argued that we should vote yes because our ideas are not

presented as an option and the deal is the lesser evil. But since when have we relied on the bourgeoisie to present our ideas as an option? What we say will never be an alternative if, when we feel in a minority, we collapse in behind forces more powerful than our own. There is a certain desperation in the argument for a yes vote, to support anything which offers the hope of peace, however flawed and however vague. A generalised wish for peace is not enough.

It is true that that 71% voted for the agreement, and it is true that a large part of the reason was a desire for peace and an unprecedented level of war weariness. People are putting their faith for the realisation of this desire in the bourgeoisie, sectarian politicians and the deal. By advocating a yes vote we reinforce that faith in the deal to deliver what people hope it might. By telling the truth about it we may be going against the grain and we may not be saying what people will want to hear, but we have to say what our real assessment is. If we think the deal is inadequate we have to say so or we are lying to the working class. If we don't think it will work how can we urge a vote for it? We have a responsibility not to go along with the general hopes for peace if we believe they are unfounded. If we don't tell the truth and keep a hard line on an issue like this we will not gain the trust of the working class in the future.

It is also not good enough to say we can "walk and chew gum at the same time". We are a minority voice for working class politics in a world dominated by the ideas of the ruling class. Our ideas and our slogans need to be clear. Where the tide is going the wrong way we need to stand against it and not get carried along, later using the excuse that we said it might not work. If we say yes, that is the dominant part of the message we give out, not the critical part. We can give as many warnings as we like but overall we are saying we think this might work.

Many of the yes comrades have raised the problem that our ideas on the national question may be correct but what use are they if

they are kept in the abstract. This is a real problem, based on the fact that we are a very small group without any forces in Northern Ireland, or in most other places in the world where we have minority ideas for the way forward. We shouldn't give in to feelings of helplessness, putting off our ideas until a later stage. If we don't continue to argue our ideas as a real option for now then how can we expect anybody else to take them up as a way forward.

During the summer school debate on this issue a comparison was made with the situation in South Africa, of how we refused to support the ANC as a lesser evil and backed instead the Workers' List. What surprised me here was that some "yes" comrades countered this by claiming we supported WOSA because they represented a concrete alternative and that this was the difference. This implies that had WOSA not existed we would have called for a vote for the ANC, and I think that this is wrong.

As revolutionaries our job is not to advise as to the lesser evil in each situation or to simply judge things on the immediate material benefits they offer to the working class. If it was we would have advocated a vote for Roosevelt in thirties America, or the Israeli Labor Party in the last general election. We also have to assess this as what it is — a peace deal. It is not being put forward as a democratic reform, and self determination for the people of Northern Ireland as a totality is not the question here, it is the divide between the communities in Northern Ireland that this deal claims to deal with. If it is conceived as a peace deal that is how it must be judged, and on that criteria it will fail.

Finally, I do not think that the bourgeoisie can never come up with a solution to the national question (however unlikely) and I do not believe in putting a cross where they put a tick, but I do think we should wait until they come up with a solution we think will work and a deal we don't think is awful, before giving them our support.

Rosie Woods

Against ideological suicide

I SWITCHED from an initial, ill-thought through "yes" attitude on the Northern Ireland referendum to the abstentionist view. My own route to this, apart from being persuaded by argument, was through my attitude to the Middle East peace process.

1. The Middle East "peace process"

THE Middle East "peace agreement" signed in Oslo was similar to the Northern Ireland agreement only in that it was hailed by "world public opinion" as a major breakthrough. In fact it was a terrible deal, which granted the Palestinians autonomy far short of an independent state, gave the Israelis control over everything of any importance, and enshrined within the Palestinian Authority a viciously repressive semi-state machine. Netanyahu may have backtracked on the alleged "spirit" of Oslo, but he hasn't reneged on much of the letter of it.

Supporters of this arrangement, apart from those who just agreed with it, argued that, a) it was better than what existed before, b) it potentially opened the way to something better and, sometimes, c) it was all the Palestinians could realistically hope for.

My own view was that it might open the way to something better, but it equally might not. In fact, so far, it seems to me it has not.

In any case, we have a programme for the Israel/Palestine conflict. Since our programme was for an independent Palestinian state, and Oslo had not created one, whether or not it eventually led to one our job was to denounce the injustice of the "peace process". We were under no obligation passively to accept either the previous situation or the new one. We have an alternative to both.

Our role is not to bow down before "reality", but to use what

voice we have to change the options altogether. That is precisely why we have a political programme at all. All we are, fundamentally, until we have the influence to affect events, is our opinions.

If the Middle East "peace process" is an iniquitous monstrosity, all the more repulsive for the praise heaped upon it by a "world public opinion" ignorant of or indifferent to the real suffering, repression and moral and physical violence being perpetrated in its name, our job is to say so. Even if the existing alternative is worse. Otherwise we simply cease to exist. More powerful forces than us can manage the "real politik" quite adequately without us.

I think all these arguments apply to the situation in Ireland — with the added force that "our" government, our bourgeoisie, is a party to the deal. If the deal matched even in some details our programme for Ireland, there would be a case for critically endorsing it — just as if a bourgeois-negotiated deal in the Middle East resulted in genuine Palestinian independence. Even then we would warn against trusting the bastards. But nobody seems to be suggesting that the agreement in Ireland even approximates our programme, is even in a distorted or bourgeois-warped fashion similar to it.

I initially thought that the difference with the Middle East was that here there was a concrete political act which could affect events — a 'no' vote would be disastrous for the people of Northern Ireland. To stand aside in the name of general principles would be irresponsible.

But there was, in effect, a kind of referendum in Israel. It was the Israeli election. There is no doubt that in terms of realpolitik, a victory for Labour, which was committed to Oslo, would have been "better" than a victory for Netanyahu.

But could we in all conscience have called — or suggested Israeli socialists call — for a vote for Labor? The Israeli Labor Party is not only a thoroughly bourgeois party; it is the party of the establishment, which presided over the conquest, occupation and repression of Palestinians. And the agreement to which it was committed, Oslo, was as I have described. To have called for a Labor vote would have been to have abandoned — for today, no doubt, with the promise of reclaiming it tomorrow; just for this one little election, this one little vote — the entire project of working class independence and democracy.

Undoubtedly, many if not most of the Israelis (including Arabs) who voted for Labor or one of the parties likely to form a coalition with Labour did so because of a "desire for peace" and a fear of the consequences of a Likud victory. I am certainly not unsympathetic to their concerns; far from it. In a way they were right, and if our only interest was in realpolitik, we would go along with them. But we are also — and more — concerned with developing an independent working class voice, building and hoping to shape the forces which could create a real, democratic peace. Abandoning that project, even for this one little vote, is ideological suicide.

Moreover, if it is wrong to endorse a lamentable bourgeois solution to sectarian/communal/national conflict in the abstract, just at the level of editorialising, it is even worse to vote for the bloody thing.

2. The "vote yes" arguments.

THE argument that voting "yes" in Northern Ireland did not mean endorsing the Agreement rests fundamentally on three points. 1. That we couldn't countenance a 'no' vote, therefore had to vote yes or advise whoever might be paying attention that they should do so. 2. There are positive things in the Agreement which merit our critical support. 3. We have to "go through the experience with the working class", whose "yes" sentiment was an expression of the desire for peace, rather than support for the letter of the Agreement itself.

In fact, those supporting the "yes" position resort far more to the third argument than the other two, which is logically and politically by far the least respectable. Logically, it would mean going along with alleged working class sentiment quite regardless of the details of the deal. The deal could be a million times worse, by this logic, and we would still critically endorse it. You could apply the logic to almost anything with horrific results.

A far stronger case is to argue forthrightly that there was something in the deal which positively justified critical endorsement of it. You would have to argue that the positive aspects outweighed the negative. But most advocates of the 'yes' vote insist that they are no less critical of the deal than we are. Indeed, the main thing which is observed to be positive is the "desire for peace". But this means that the argument devolves back onto the shoddy argument about

working class perceptions referred to above.

The other positive thing is that a "no" vote would be a victory for the paramilitaries. Nobody disputes, I think, that on this level, a yes vote is infinitely preferable to a "no". Certainly, this is the real emotional substance to the argument.

We can go along with this lesser evilism by all means. But at what cost to ourselves? Maybe our ideological health is less important than the lives of Irish people who would die if there was a return to sectarian slaughter. But if our ideological health is important, it surely means that wherever we are faced with these options of bourgeois realpolitik, we refuse to make their choice. If you want, it does mean, unambiguously, that we are irrelevant in terms of the immediate question on the table. Okay. So be it. But we will only be relevant in the future because we have seen our primary objective — the independence of the working class — as the most important thing.

A "yes" vote means — whatever qualifications you add to it — giving endorsement to one of the bourgeoisie's miserable options. (Incidentally, "vote no" in practice means endorsing another, worse, miserable option, which is why the argument is for abstention.)

3. 'Taking responsibility' and elections.

WHY wouldn't we vote for Clinton or the ANC or any other bourgeois party? Because they're bourgeois parties. But that's a purely negative argument. The positive reason is that our priority is to help develop an independent working class outlook, voice and political movement. We call on workers to vote Labour because of what the Labour Party represents in this respect. We call on them not to vote Democrat, or ANC, but to develop their own party for exactly the same reason as we call on them to vote Labour.

The handful of votes WOSA got in the South African elections was more important than an ANC victory. If they had got enough votes to deprive the ANC of victory, it still — and even more so — would have been more important.

Building an independent working class movement is more important even than any short-term advantage it might give to our enemies, even to fascists. If an independent workers' party should deprive Liberals of votes, giving fascists a temporary electoral advantage, for us it remains more important to

build that movement. This is the force of Martin Thomas's reference to the Hindenburg/Hitler presidential vote-out: it was wrong to back Hindenburg, even if it meant Hitler should win, because backing Hindenburg would militate against crushing Hitler in the long run.

But where would the "vote yes" logic lead you in any of these situations? In South Africa: the victory of the ANC, for now, is vital because the alternative is dire. Workers will be better able to organise and fight for their rights under an ANC government... Or under a Clinton government... Or Hindenburg. In a certain "realistic", "practical" sense the argument is not without force. But only if you write out of the equation the possibility of the working class acting independently.

It is a dilemma that has always faced workers' movements. It faced the early Labour Party. It faced the Workers' Party in Brazil. Very early on they had to decide whether to back the most radical-liberal of the bourgeois parties in an election, long before they had much hope of winning elections themselves. To its immense and inspiring credit the Brazilian Workers' Party understood that its independence, the future it represented, was more important than immediate short-term considerations. If they hadn't made that decision then, if they had fallen in behind one bourgeois party "tactically", they would never have become a mass independent force.

On the basis of the comrades' yes-advocating logic, in any election you would simply look around and decide under which bourgeois government workers would best be able to fight. It is the death of working class politics.

Of course comrades don't mean to be calling our entire *raison d'être* into question, or committing ideological suicide. And I entirely sympathise with the emotional instinct behind advocating "yes". Personally I have a strong urge to succumb to that instinct on a purely humanitarian basis. But the "yes" argument amounts to an ideological collapse. Its consequences might seem negligible — even invisible — at the moment. But if you follow the logic in the future, it will lead to a bigger and worse collapse.

4. Other arguments

THREE other arguments:

1. Is there a difference between voting — voting Labour, for example — in elections and voting in a

referendum? 2. Is South Africa quite different from Ireland because the national question isn't an obstacle to working class unity? 3. Why can't we say "yes" and also make propaganda for our politics.

Of course there is a difference between an election and a referendum. One involves voting for parties, the other doesn't. But in either case, the same principle is at stake: does it advance our goal of a politically independent working class which can take power? The principle involved in not voting for a bourgeois party is not abolished because instead of a party there is a bourgeois policy.

The point being made in the Ireland debate is that a central argument for voting "yes" is entirely to do with the consequences of a "no" vote, ie not because of actually agreeing with the proposal on the table. If this is your argument, that it is vital for the possibility of working class politics in the future that we throw our hypothetical weight into backing the deal, you are logically faced with a problem come an election in which this is the fundamental line of divide.

The parallel with South Africa is irrelevant, some say, because the national question there is not an obstacle to working class unity. Actually it is. (Or a kind of national question. Consider the Zulus. Certainly the "liberal" position for many years was for "federalism", meaning a kind of Austro-Marxist perpetuation both of black/white divisions and tribalism. Would you have voted for that on the grounds that it was better than apartheid?)

In any case the point to the parallel with South Africa isn't intended to be about the national question. It's about the whole project of working class independence. That argument logically suggests that where the national question is pressing enough, it isn't necessary for the working class to have its own policy, or at best, that an independent working class policy is only a desirable preference.

Of course you can say "yes" and make propaganda for our programme. Nobody can stop you saying whatever you want. The question is whether it makes sense. You can tell your lover you love them one day and hate them the next. But forgive me if I consider you confused and emotional. "Walking and chewing gum" in this situation is to be able to recognise, on a simple, realpolitik assessment, that the new situation is at least potentially preferable to what

existed before, without actually endorsing it. The number of parallels which are absolutely basic to our politics are too numerous to mention. Suffice to say, with all obvious qualifications: the end of Stalinism.

Clive Bradley

The white rabbit and imperialism

JOE Craig's polemic reminds me of *Harvey*, a once famous stage play and then a movie. It is about a man — played by James Stewart in the movie — who has a friend, Harvey. He talks to Harvey, and talks about Harvey. He comments on Harvey's deeds and tells people about what Harvey has been saying lately. Harvey is a rabbit — a giant human-sized white rabbit. As well as that disadvantage, Harvey does not exist. He is a figment of his friend's imagination.

Joe Craig's picture of Irish reality is structured like the James Stewart character's picture of the world he inhabits. "Imperialism" plays an enormous role and, though Joe Craig is not alone in his delusions it is very difficult for some of us to see or define this "Harvey" he says he sees so clearly. I know what British colonialism and British imperialism is in Ireland's history. I know the role it played in partitioning Ireland and in creating the present situation. What is it now? In fact for Joe Craig it is a pseudonym for British capitalism — or Britain. And what about Irish capitalism? Britain does not exploit Ireland economically. The basis of its rule in the Six Counties — to which it provides enormous economic subsidies — has been the majority population there. Ireland is and for long has been of negligible importance militarily; partition cost Britain in World War 2, and then NATO in the Cold War, Southern Irish bases, when they did matter.

If foreign investment is considered imperialism in Ireland, then it is not especially British, but US and other imperialisms that dominate. The 26 Counties is an integral and equal part of the European Union, one of the more economically developed and privileged parts of the

globe. It has, since the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1985, shared political though not executive authority in Northern Ireland with Britain. Its influence is massively increased by the Good Friday Agreement, which commits Britain to legislate for a United Ireland if a bare majority of the Six Counties population votes for it. Britain's role in Ireland is thus neither economically, nor militarily, or in any other definable way imperialist — not in any previously defined sense, anyway.

Put at its strongest, there is a residue of the old colonial-imperialist nationally-oppressive relationship. I know of no reason to doubt that Britain is, and for long has been, working to liquidate that residue. I don't want to minimise either Britain's crimes against Ireland in the past, or the malign effect of the existing artificial Six/Twenty-Six Counties partition, which becomes ever more preposterous as the population balance shifts. I agree with those who say we shouldn't take responsibility for the Good Friday Agreement. But leave "Harvey" out of it, Joe!

The core problem with Joe Craig and his comrades is that they believe that Irish nationalism still has some progressive role to play in history. Sorting out the mess in Northern Ireland would indeed be progress, but the basic problem is one of relationships between the two Irish communities — and least of all here has Irish nationalism anything good to contribute.

There is democratic ground to be won by way of a United Ireland, *with autonomy for the Protestant majority areas* (and closer all-Ireland links with Britain, to reassure the Protestants). The maximum possible gain will be in clearing the ground for working class politics (the Good Friday Agreement will have the opposite effect, but, that is not something imposed on either the 6 Counties or the 26 Counties by Britain). There will now be no anti-imperialist significance in a United Ireland. There is no revolutionary anti-imperialist or working class significance in the sort of warmed-up populist nationalism Joe Craig and his comrades of Socialist Democracy advocate. The opposite, in fact: it confines itself to one community, spouting a mystified and "Marxistological" unteach-

able version of the ideas Gerry Adams and his friends have been forced to abandon.

Frank J Higgins

Debate: standing against the Blairites

Candidates must be part of a broader strategy

BRITISH politics are in flux. Blair's relentless drive to turn the Labour Party away from any form of independent working class representation; the removal of any structures by which a Labour government can be called to account by the wider labour movement; the likely introduction of proportional representation; the existence of the Scottish, Welsh and European Parliaments; possible changes to the funding of political parties; the decay of even a minimal socialist culture — all of these factors mean that Marxists can no longer take for granted the political framework within which we have operated for as long as we can remember. We must begin to consider how the fight for socialist politics can best be carried out in a new situation which is, as yet, far from frozen into any stable outcome.

John Nihill's article [*'Should socialists stand against Labour' WL49*] is therefore timely and raises many of the right issues: in particular, how can we advance basic class politics and independent labour representation in a period where the old structures through which this was expressed are largely blocked off, yet nothing has replaced them? How can we best bring new forms of working class political representation into being and gain a foothold for socialist ideas?

Precisely in such transitional periods, it is necessary to be very sensitive to questions of timing and tactics. Sharing a fundamental analysis of the processes underway and where they are likely to lead — as Nihill and I do — is not enough to dictate exactly what to do. It is not enough to base a strategy on an understanding of the objective changes alone without also taking into account existing levels of consciousness, which lag behind the real needs of the situation.

If the Marxists take their own analysis to be held more widely than

it is, there is the risk of running ahead of the process by which people become aware of the new realities and of becoming isolated. The Socialist Labour Party provides an object lesson here. This may occur out of the best motives — a desire to speak to the most advanced workers who are vigorously anti-Blair and want nothing to do with the Labour Party. However, it may cut us off from larger forces that could be brought to fight Blair on specific issues and through that fight won over to a more general political understanding.

Equally, there is a danger in a conservatism that assumes that everything can and must continue within the same structures and dynamics as in the past. This may mean missing new opportunities to transcend the limitations of those structures we take for granted merely because they have been stable for so long.

A sensitive balancing act is therefore required between focusing on struggles which will take people with us to a point where they realise that independent working class politics are only possible outside the structures Blair controls and addressing the most advanced workers, who have already broken with Blair and who may, without an alternative, fall into anti-political moods or disillusionment. Where I disagree with Nihill is on where precisely the emphasis should be placed now and what criteria should be used to decide on the type of electoral activity that should be supported outside the Labour Party.

The fight within the Labour Party is far from over. Blair controls both the internal policy-making and the external mechanisms (candidates' lists) through which discontent with his policies can make themselves felt within Labour Party structures. Nihill is right to say this means any reassertion of the left is bound to lead to a split in the medium term. However, this is not to say that discontent does not exist and that it cannot be harnessed to build a far stronger basis for any post-Blair organisation than would otherwise be the case. The recent NEC elections show a resistance to Millbank bullying and an identification with the left amongst a wide range of rank and file members, which needs to be organised in an open, democratic organisation that can take the initiative on political issues. The possibility of the trade unions asserting themselves either through campaigns such as the AEEU's for working class MPs or, more likely, through a range of issues on which the unions are

brought into conflict with the Government remains. These campaigns should form the basis for the left to seek Labour nominations for electoral office, which, when (rather than if) refused by Millbank, can then provide us with a strong basis for independent candidacies taking on the Blairite nominee. To exclude ourselves from the Labour Party without this fight would make no sense.

Nihill accepts this. He states that "to accept the definitive victory of Blairism prematurely ... would be desertion"; "the unions could still have the possibility of destabilising the the not-quite-set structures"; he talks about fighting around the de-selection of MPs; and opposes union disaffiliation. This seems to me however to argue for a more cautious and limited approach towards standing candidates against Labour, even though I agree we cannot wait passively for the day when the union leaders decide or are forced to fight Blair. The fundamental criteria that should decide whether we actively support a particular electoral campaign should be: whether it advances the struggle for independent working class political representation; whether it groups together forces outside the small groups of the revolutionary left; and whether it can be used to organise people on a longer term basis after the election. Electoral activity is, after all, a means to an end, not an end in itself.

For these conditions to be met, two things need to be the case. The first is that any candidacies we advocate must have some degree of labour movement support outside the small circles of the revolutionary left. This draws the line between the "toytown electoralism" — which Nihill condemns, but nowhere precisely defines — and a use of the electoral tactic to reorganise and rearm the movement. Without this, candidacies become either elaborate (and often unsuccessful) means for recruiting to whichever revolutionary group has the candidate (the SWP/Socialist Party model) or else a gesture that merely shows how isolated the left is and causes further demoralisation.

The second condition is that there is some genuinely democratic structure for the campaign to which candidates can be accountable and which might exist outside election times. This might, for example, take the form of a local "Convention of the Left" that chose candidates or some pre-existing framework such as the Socialist Alliances. This is necessary for three reasons. Firstly, we

should at the least demand of left candidates outside the Labour Party what we demand of Labour MPs. Electoral campaigns must be more than vehicles to get particular individuals elected and then leave them to do what they want. Secondly, an open, democratic organisation is the best way to build support for a campaign and draw people in. Lastly, left election campaigns need to be part of a long term strategy of the left campaigning and developing roots in particular localities. Without these roots it is unlikely that such campaigns will be productive or successful.

Where would this draw the line in practice between those candidates we would and would not support? We would still support:

(a) left candidates who had been prevented from standing as Labour by the party machine and were therefore forced to stand against Labour or accept their exclusion;

(b) labour movement activists who sought to use elections to campaign against Blair's policies;

(c) open campaigns of the left where the left has a real base.

It would exclude:

(a) tailending the SWP, Socialist Party, etc in their own campaigns where we had no input into "the soft electoralist face of the old debilitating left sectarians";

(b) candidacies (our own or those of left slates) that seek to use elections as a platform to make general propaganda for socialism without any particular cutting edge or local base.

Clearly, these points are general guidelines rather than infallible and inflexible rules that cover every eventuality. There may be all sorts of hybrids, unexpected situations or negotiating positions. However, it is important to try and formulate ideas of what sorts of electoral activity are useful and which are not in terms of our general political goals. Instead Nihill seems to see standing against Labour as some kind of gesture of defiance which will of itself challenge Blair's political monopoly. His article does not provide a clear link between standing candidates in the current situation and the other goals that we agree on.

The guidelines refer to active support for campaigns rather than where one puts one's cross on the ballot paper. I would not necessarily rule out calling for a vote for certain candidates who stand against Blairites even where we are critical of their campaign and do not actively support it. I would however rule out any blanket rule of

always supporting the far-left candidate against Labour.

Why exclude using candidacies as a means to make generalised propaganda for socialism? Mightn't running candidates itself be the catalyst for a reconstitution of the labour movement? Nihill himself states: "To counterpose a little bit of socialist propaganda to the labour movement in politics... did not make much sense." It still doesn't make much sense — not because we have to accept a New Labour monopoly on working class politics but because what is necessary is precisely to find ways to draw the labour movement into a new type of politics independent of Blair. Socialist candidacies that pick up a handful of votes are more of a hindrance than a help here. They provide a political weapon to those who wish to point to the unpopularity of the left and demoralise those who are involved in them.

If we look at the experience of the last few years (Nihill agrees), the record of far-left candidates is one of failure, with only a few limited successes (in terms of winning a few thousand votes) such as Dave Nellist's election campaigns where the candidate already had a strong local base and reputation, having been the Labour MP for five years. The total failure of the SLP's policy of standing in seats where they had had no previous presence at the last general election shows that there is little response to generalised socialist propaganda at elections.

Why has this been the case? Not just because of the SLP's politics or because of the anti-Tory feeling in 1992 and 1997. It is more importantly a reflection of the state of the labour movement and of socialist political culture in Britain. In a recent opinion poll, only 7% of those polled identified themselves as being "left", with a further 13% "left of centre". This is contradictory, of course, as large poll majorities have also shown themselves to support taxing the rich and for spending on the welfare state. However, it does point to the absence of much of a "taken-for-granted" socialist identity that can be tapped into by standing candidates. This largely needs to be reconstituted.

In other words, we again face the situation of 100 years ago. It seems to me to be unlikely that electoral activity (particularly if not the product of more long-term campaigning in the localities) will be the starting point from which this reconstitution will occur. This flows from the nature of electoral activity itself — sporadic, and, for most people, a passive, isolated and limited

action — but also from the way that consciousness develops through active involvement in the class struggle. Trade union activity is a much more likely pole around which the rebuilding of the labour movement and a socialist consciousness can occur. We should also not assume that there is a pre-existing mass constituency for a left alternative to Blair. It has to be created and in this process standing candidates flows from other forms of long term campaigning rather than the other way round.

For the foreseeable future we need a dual focus. Firstly, we should fight through the existing structures to bring the labour movement (including the Labour Party where possible, but primarily the unions) to break with Blair — politically and, eventually, organisationally — and begin to reassert itself as an independent political force. Secondly, we need to rebuild the labour movement from the bottom up. Standing candidates against Labour can play a role in both these aims, but only if it fits coherently into this strategy rather than being a gesture against Blair which leads nowhere.

Clifford Brown

But, should socialists stand against Labour?

NEXT year sees elections for the Welsh Assembly, the Scottish Parliament, the European Parliament and most local authorities in Britain.

With the Blairites now in control of the commanding heights of the Labour Party, socialists need to address the question of whether there is still any political value in continuing to call — and work — for a vote for (New) Labour.

John Nihill's article in *Workers' Liberty* 49 was contradictory: the conclusion he reached bore little or no relation to the analysis in the article.

Nihill argues — correctly — that the unions are effectively "imprisoned" within the Labour Party: they are still organically tied to the Labour Party, but the structures through which they have traditionally exerted an influence have largely been closed down.

The goal of the Blairite project

is "the driving of the working class movement out of politics." New Labour is, by definition, incapable of functioning as a vehicle for working class politics. It is "a barrier raised against politics for the labour movement."

Therefore, argues Nihill, "the fundamental strategic concern of the socialists is to argue within the trade unions for the reintroduction of class into British politics." Rather than call for unions to disaffiliate from Labour, socialists should "campaign to get the unions within the structures of New Labour to fight for class politics."

Nihill initially seems to oppose standing candidates against Labour, especially in the light of the political weaknesses of the organisations of the British left. To stand candidates would end up as "toytown electioneering", "small-scale electoralism", the "soft electoralist face of the old debilitating left sectarians."

But, after outlining the key tasks in the unions and the Labour Party, Nihill makes a jump in logic to draw the conclusion: "a combination of standing united left candidates in selected elections and continued work, as outlined above, in the Labour Party is what we need."

Only a few paragraphs earlier, however, Nihill writes that standing candidates in elections would "logically lead to calls for unions disaffiliating from the Labour Party." He opposes disaffiliation — but then goes on to advocate "united left candidates" standing against Labour!

At one point Nihill suggests that struggles within the Labour Party to select working class candidates could provide, "a broader base for an independent electoral challenge than could normally be produced simply by organising the already non-Labour left."

This is doubly contradictory.

On the one hand, it contradicts his proposals for work in the Labour Party — how do Labour Party members work in the Labour Party whilst simultaneously standing their own candidate against Labour? It cannot be done.

On the other hand, it is effectively an invitation to repeat the idiocies of Militant's intervention in the Liverpool Walton by-election of 1991, condemned by Nihill elsewhere in his article.

After all, Militant's argument in 1991 was that their candidate was the "real" Labour candidate, and would have been adopted as the official Labour candidate had it not been for the intervention of the Party bureaucracy.

It is also difficult to see how Nihill's vision of an electoral challenge to Labour emerging from within a CLP fits in with his vision of standing "united left candidates", given that the bulk of the Left is now outside the Labour Party.

Nihill's vision of "united left candidates" standing against Labour raises two further questions: where are they going to come from, and on what basis will they contest elections.

Given the divided and sectarian nature of the British left it is idiocy to suggest that in the immediate future fundamental antagonisms between various organisations will dissipate to such an extent as to allow the standing of jointly agreed candidates.

The SLP is committed to going it alone. Scargill is a guarantee of that. The SWP is likewise committed to candidates of its own. The undemocratic Cliffite regime is a guarantee of that. Calls for left unity from other organisations, such as the Scottish Socialist Party, are essentially diplomatic ploys.

It would certainly be sectarian to advocate that candidates stand against Labour on a full revolutionary socialist platform. But this does not justify indifference to the political basis of any electoral challenge to Labour. So what is on offer politically from the organisations committed to standing against Labour?

A debased form of syndicalism from the SWP (less than useful for standing in elections). Scottish populism from Militant in Scotland. Dewy-eyed nostalgia about Old Labour from the Independent Labour Network. And, from the Socialist Alliances, who knows and who cares?

If one accepts that the basic task facing socialists is, "to argue within the trade unions for the reintroduction of class into British politics" and to, "build rank and file trade union groups which combine the fight for labour representation in Parliament with the fight to democratise the unions," then there is nothing to be gained from standing candidates against Labour at this moment in time.

At the same time, however, it would be political bankruptcy simply to repeat yesterday's slogans of "Vote Labour and fight."

As Nihill puts it: "To continue to forgo socialist propaganda in elections in deference to the monopoly of the anti-socialist and anti-working class Blair party, is increasingly to boycott our own politics and our own proper, working class concerns."

But you do not need to stand a candidate to make socialist propaganda in elections. The SWP makes socialist propaganda at election times. It might not be very good propaganda, and it might be politically incoherent. But it is nonetheless evidence of a sort, that standing a candidate is not a precondition of making socialist propaganda.

Further debate on a socialist intervention in next year's elections should therefore not focus on the search for "united left candidates".

Rather, it should focus on how the elections can be used to spread propaganda about the basic ideas of independent union-based labour representation, and to help build groups within the unions committed to making such an idea a reality.

The precise mechanics of how this can best be achieved needs further discussion.

So too does the question of whether one should continue to call for a vote for Labour across the board, or advocate abstention where Blairites are standing — as *Workers' Liberty* has pointed out on previous occasions, New Labour is increasingly No Labour.

But it is certainly impossible to see how backing independent candidates against Labour — given the realities of the current political situation and the politics of the left alternatives — fits in with the task of rebuilding trade union political representation.

Stan Crooke.

Livingstone was forced to slobber

WHILE I agree with most of what Sean Matgamna has to say about the appalling Ken Livingstone, his case is not helped by inexactitude about facts. Livingstone may well have slobbered over Windsor's hand when the Thames Barrier was opened (in 1984) but, originally, he had wanted the ceremony to be carried out by representatives of the workers concerned and local Londoners — a sort of "anti-ceremony". This idea was scotched by the workers themselves. It was they who wanted a Royal presence *not* Livingstone (evidence can be found in Tom Nairn's book *The Enchanted Glass*, p. 47). Sean Matgamna is therefore wrong — Windsor was not present at the invitation of Livingstone. In itself this is a relatively minor point but, even when arguing against the ignorant drivell of Livingstone, it's necessary to get things as right as possible.

Len Glover



Woman on top?

Shekhar Kapur's film *Elizabeth* is the most recent contribution to the great mythology of Queen Elizabeth the First. It is very, very good cinema. Kapur makes the young queen (Cate Blanchett) the heroine of a political thriller, surrounded by plotters and counter-plotters. Elizabeth takes on and defeats her enemies — but at the price of love and innocence.

The myth of Elizabeth is of the Virgin Queen ruling over an expanding empire, of thrilling explorations, of Drake's voyage around the world and of finishing one's game of bowls before sailing out for an afternoon's battle with the Spanish Armada. Kapur's film, which is a portrait of the early years of Elizabeth's reign, sets out to recount how the image of the Virgin Queen was created by the Queen herself — rather in the style of Thatcher or Diana — for political ends. But the virgin image is not the only myth of Elizabeth's reign that collapses under closer scrutiny. Much of the popular myth of adventure and imperial expansion — although this is largely beyond the scope of the film — falls too.

In fact, Elizabeth's reign (1558-1603) provided, for 45 years, the relative stability which allowed the rapid development of capitalism — albeit still within the framework of a feudal state.

Huge political uncertainty had followed Henry VIII's death in 1547. The accession of his daughter Mary to the throne led to the restoration of Roman Catholicism as the official faith, and the persecution of Protestant "heretics". It was not until the Elizabethan "settlement" of 1559 — the passing of an Act of Supremacy (declaration that the Queen was Head of the Church) and an Act of Uniformity (the imposition of a Common Prayer Book) — that some religious stability was achieved.

Both the hysteria of the Marian persecution — although even the extent of that is now disputed by historians — and the political victory for Elizabeth that was the Act of

Uniformity are captured brilliantly in the film.

Until 1560, England remained at war with France, and in an uneasy alliance with Catholic Spain which had been made through the marriage of Queen Mary and King Philip of Spain. But the alliance collapsed and England and Spain were effectively at war from



the 1570s through to the 1590s. Elizabeth's foreign policy was based on careful diplomacy, playing off France and Spain — both significantly more powerful at the time than England.

There were a number of attempts backed by Rome and Spain to depose Elizabeth. A revolt of Northern feudal lords in 1570 (conflated into an earlier conspiracy in the film) — backed by a Papal Bull declaring Elizabeth had no right to the throne — was smashed, as was the Irish revolt of the 1590s, led by the Earl of Tyrone, Hugh O'Neill, with Spanish backing. O'Neill's tribal territory of Ulster was handed over to English and Scottish landlords. England also offered support to those fighting the Spaniards — notably the Protestant revolt against Spanish rule in the Netherlands, to which military aid was sent in 1585.

Spain was the leading imperial power at the time, controlling much of South America. England did not have the resources to compete with Spain in terms of colonisation, which, in the bleak Virginian woods, was expensive and did not make for immediate high returns. Walter Raleigh's attempt to colonise what he named "Virginia" in 1587 failed, and English colonisation did not really take off until the 1620s with the Puritan migration.

England's overseas expansion

was based on trade, and on piracy against the Spanish — which provided a quicker return than colonisation and was encouraged by the state as a useful boost to the war effort. In 1601 the East India Company was formally established, giving a group of merchants the monopoly over English trade with the East Indies.

The growing bourgeoisie had been boosted during the Reformation of 1536, when Henry VIII had expropriated the Church lands. These were given away or sold off at nominal prices to royal favourites or speculating farmers and citizens, which had the effect of creating a big new group of bourgeois landlords. The rise of the bourgeoisie was aided by the fact that the Wars of the Roses of 1455-85 had led to some of the biggest aristocratic dynasties effectively massacring each other.

The merchant class was growing rapidly. Social historian Trevelyan describes the City of London under Elizabeth: "Neither monarchy nor aristocracy had any strongholds within the City boundaries. The royal power lay outside in Whitehall and Westminster... and the Tower... The power and privilege of the Mayor and citizens, with their formidable militia, formed a State within the State — a society that was purely bourgeois, inside the larger England that was still monarchical and aristocratic."

The growth of capitalist enterprise meant a rapid increase in the general standard of living. Chimneys were built in many more houses; pewter replaced wooden plates; pillows and sheets were no longer a luxury.

But the lives of peasants were by no means uniformly

improved. The Reformation had led to the driving out of many hereditary sub-tenants from Church lands. Increasing specialisation in farming — with different regions producing particular crops — meant a move to private farms enclosed by hedges, through the grabbing of common land which had previously been used for subsistence farming. The increasing number of paupers forced the introduction for the first time, in 1601, of a Poor Law, which obliged parishes to levy a compulsory rate on local householders for the support of local paupers.

A rapid rise in the population (it doubled between 1550 and 1650) led to grain shortages and consequent price increases. An increase in the quantity of silver and gold on the world market — courtesy of Spanish plundering of South America — led to further price rises as the relative value of silver money fell.

The rise of the bourgeoisie had political consequences too, which had to be accommodated by the state. Although Elizabeth remained absolute ruler she was increasingly forced to rule with the consent of Parliament, which was constantly suspicious of proposed tax rises and requests for subsidies. In 1601 most of the monopolies which had been granted by the crown in return for cash were repealed under pressure from the Commons. Free trade — and the confidence of Parliament — expanded. The scene was set for the conflict between Crown and Parliament that would less than fifty years later lead to the declaration of a Republic and to the English Revolution.

Cath Fletcher

● *Elizabeth* is directed by
Shakhar Kapur

Trotsky down under

Nick Origlass, the central figure of Australian Trotskyism from 1937 to the late 1960s, was a prominent revolutionary socialist almost until he died, at age 88, in 1996.

Hall Greenland's fascinating book tells us a lot about what manner of people made

our movement in the hard days from the 1930s to the '60s. Hall was one of Nick's closest comrades in his last 30 years, but has done a fine job both in combining appreciation with critical review of that time and in doing justice to Nick's years as an "orthodox Trotskyist", from age 26 to his late 50s^[1].

In May 1933 a group of communists, expelled or distanced from the official Communist Party, and active in the Unemployed Workers' Movement, formed the Workers' Party of Australia, after seeing, by chance, a copy of US Trotskyist paper *The Militant*.

Nick had met the future Trotskyists when he came to Sydney, looking for work, in 1931-2. He joined the WP in 1934, and was active in the builders' and ironworkers' unions in his home town, Brisbane. In 1937 he moved back to Sydney. The first moving spirits of the Workers' Party, Jack Sylvester and John Anderson, were dropping out.

"For the next 30 years," as Hall recounts, "Nick was the chief of a small group of would-be revolutionaries. There were never more, and usually less, than 25 members in Sydney, 12 in Melbourne, and six in Brisbane." There were short-lived splinters and rivals, but Nick's was always the main Trotskyist group.

They were isolated, operating in a labour movement with no Marxist culture, where the left was dominated by a Stalinist party, always small numerically but sometimes very strong in the unions. Not until 1961 did a delegate from Australia attend an international Trotskyist gathering; not until 1976-7 did Nick himself travel overseas; no comrades with large experience from other countries arrived to help them. For instruction they relied on the US Trotskyist press, arriving by sea-mail or (in wartime) not at all. Nick read a lot. But, outside jobless spells around 1938 and 1959, he worked at hard manual jobs until 1971. Work and non-stop activism limited his reading to articles and pamphlets. He probably never read Marx's *Capital*. The "student" of the group was another young worker, Laurie Short^[2].

Initially the Trotskyists' activity centred round speaking in the Domain (Sydney's Hyde Park) on Sundays. They did not join the Australian Labor Party until 1941, and then the main impulse was to find a channel

for political activity safer from government persecution: their group had been declared illegal in June 1940, and three members had been jailed.

In 1945, however, the Trotskyists, and Nick personally, showed their ability to mobilise workers and combine stubbornness on principle with tactical flexibility. The Stalinist leaders of the ironworkers' union tried to disbar Nick as union delegate at Mori's Dock. Not only Nick's workmates, but also thousands of other workers in the shipyards of the Balmain peninsula (just across Darling Harbour from Sydney's city centre) struck for six weeks against their union leaders for the right to elect their own representatives. They won.

Because the Australian CP, unlike most others, switched from their wartime anti-strike policy to support for working-class militancy immediately the war ended, the Australian Trotskyists did not have the same rapid growth in the mid-1940s as their comrades in other countries. There were still only 26 of them in 1946. They did, however, suffer the same isolation and political crisis as Trotskyists overseas when the Cold War developed from 1947-8. In late 1948 Laurie Short and the group's other main writer on international issues, Jim McClelland, dropped out.

In his farewell letter, Laurie Short meticulously demolished the idea that the USSR was still a workers' state^[3]. He had read Max Shachtman and other dissident Trotskyists in the USA — no-one else in Australia had, except perhaps McClelland — but was influenced more by Eugene Lyons and Max Eastman than by Shachtman^[4]. He became not a Third Camp revolutionary but one of Australia's foremost right-wing union leaders, ousting the Stalinists from the Ironworkers. McClelland became a famous lawyer, then a Labor government minister.

Nick defended the faith. Searching for answers, and perhaps troubled by signals of uncertainty in the press of the US Trotskyists — whose leader, James P Cannon, was reluctant to accept the growing "orthodox Trotskyist" consensus that the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe were "deformed workers' states" — he turned to the writings of Michel Pablo, which had now started to arrive from France.

Nick knew no French, so he got a French dictionary and

translated the documents word by word. Pablo argued that the expansion of Stalinism was a contradictory expression of an underlying logic of world socialist revolution. The Trotskyists must embed themselves in "the process" by "deep entry" into Labour or Stalinist parties, where history would soon impel the creation of big revolutionary-tending left wings. In this millenarian vision Nick found a framework for his own fierce determination to stay active in the cause of working-class liberation.

His group immersed itself deeper in the Labor Party. In the 1953 division of the world "orthodox Trotskyist" movement between Cannon and Pablo, and in the '63-5 realignment where Pablo was pushed out with a small minority, they sided with Pablo.

However, their hope that ripples from Third World revolution would reach Australia and push along a big Labor left proved false. Worse, Nick's group so developed that when many more people did start looking towards Trotskyist ideas, in the late 1960s and early '70s, it could not organise them. The Cannonite "Resistance", from '67; the Healyite SLL, from '71; and the IS, from '72, were all led by young new activists. Not a single one of the old Trotskyists "carried over" into the new generation.

According to Bob Gould, who joined Nick's group in 1957, "it wasn't really a group." It was a collection of people, each with his or her own activity in the ALP or elsewhere, who gathered occasionally to hear Nick hold forth. In 1958 Nick became a local Labor councillor. He "was soon hooked. Local government catered for three of his key addictions: it made him 'somebody'; it provided a constant forum for political argument; and a base for democratic rebellion against 'higher' authority." He would remain on the council until 1995, with a break in 1980-4. He stood for Labor until 1968 (when the ALP expelled him for breaking the whip), a disaffiliated local "Balmain-Leichhardt Labor Party" from 1968-70, and as an independent thereafter. He joined the Greens in 1984. On the council he fought for democracy (council and committee meetings open for all residents to speak) and against noxious industrial and high-rise development (using mass "works inspections").

After 1960 Nick's group included some sympathisers of non-Pablo Trotskyism. But no progressive dialogue resulted. When Nick declared for Pablo in the split of 1965, the group split, "the younger members complaining that Nick dominated meetings, making it impossible to introduce and hold new recruits, who quickly became bored by his interminable lectures" — and the anti-Pabloites scattered. Nick was still full of ideas, but less able to organise a Marxist group. After about 1968, following Pablo, he preached "self-management", and became critical of Bolshevism as "substitutionist", though he remained an admirer of the 1917 Revolution and Lenin. In the 1970s he came to believe that the USSR was not a workers' state but bureaucratic collectivist; in this he was influenced not only by Pablo, but also Moshe Lewin and Rudolf Bahro. His political group became more and more a tail of his activity as a councillor. By about 1977 it had petered out, though into the '80s Nick continued to translate and circulate articles by Pablo.

When the young Trotskyists of the late 1960s and early '70s came to ask his advice and seek his support, he would lecture them about his council work and advise them to do similar or fall prey to "substitutionism." Nick's steamroller personality had combined with the vision of secret revolutionary logics within unpromising Stalinism or municipal reform to create an unbridgeable communication gap.

It is very hard for an individual to remain embattled against a world of greater culture without being dogmatic. Our job is to create a collective which can combine steadfastness with open thought.

Violet Martin

● *Red Hot: the Life and Times of Nick Origlass*, by Hall Greenland. Wellington Lane Press, Sydney, 1998. \$25.00. Available in UK from W. Greenland, 11 Temple Fortune Lane, London NW11. £10, incl. p&p.

^[1] My thanks to Hall, Laurie Short, and Bob Gould for filling out some details mentioned here.

^[2] On one issue the group had no choice but to develop an analysis of its own: the position of Australia in the world. Oppressed nation or what? Their formula was "dependent imperialism", though who coined it I don't know: Laurie Short says it was not he.

^[3] The text is in Susanna Short's *Laurie Short: a political life*, Allen and Unwin 1992.

^[4] Information from Laurie Short.

Fight for free education across Europe!

**By Kate Buckell,
Chair, Campaign for
Free Education**

ALL OVER EUROPE students are organising across national boundaries in a common fight for a free and equal education system.

As the bosses put a squeeze on public spending and attempt to replicate the free market, low-inflation, low-taxation economic model across the globe, the struggles we find ourselves engaged in become remarkably similar. For example, the *Unione Degli Universitari* in Italy states among its campaigning aims: a decent grant, resistance to tuition fees and defence of the welfare state. These themes and a willingness to campaign around them are common to the vast majority of student union federations across the world, the UK National Union of Students being a sorely obvious exception.

In response to this internationalisation of ruling class attack and to the common struggles across Europe the UDU took the initiative to call a Europe-wide week of student action. This now involves national student federations in France, Germany, Luxembourg, Italy, Switzerland, and Denmark, and the Campaign for Free Education in Britain. The list keeps growing...

There are several lessons to be learnt from this experience, not just for the student movement, but for the left as a whole. The response from the British left to any attacks at a European level, the Maastricht Treaty for example, has too often collapsed into petty nationalism of the "Keep Britain out of the EC", "Defend British Democracy From Brussels and Bonn" variety. Trade unions have even responded to companies relocating with ease across Europe by attempting to undercut European workers' terms and conditions. Most notably Jimmy Airlie on behalf of the AEEU, negotiated a wages and conditions package for Scottish Hoover workers so appalling that French workers could not possibly accept such terms. The result was that Hoover kept production in Scotland and shut a plant in France. Brother Airlie considered the loss of these French jobs to be a "success"!

The economic alternative to the free market put up by sections of the left, in particular the *Socialist Economic Bulletin*



The Campaign for Free Education has made links with European students' unions such as the French UNEF-ID

of Ken Livingstone and *Socialist Action* is no better. They argue not for socialism but for a protectionist, high-investment policy to rejuvenate the British economy and thus create "British" jobs. The point is that jobs, education, the welfare state are ours by right. To make their defence as just that in any way dependent on economic success, i.e., the level of the bosses' profits, is a capitulation and a blind alley.

We do not want to defend "British" jobs or the "British" welfare state or education system. We don't want any of this to be contingent on the pampered well-being of the ruling class. We want to defend these things as rights, not just for British workers but also for all workers of Europe and indeed the world.

That students are starting to make true European links to fight a common attack with a common struggle is a huge step forward; we now need an ongoing Europe-wide campaign for free education on the lines of the already-emerging International Union of Students and European Student Information Bureau.

A victory for students in France or Italy can only strengthen the hand of students in Britain, and vice versa. As the economies of Europe become increasingly integrated, so this becomes increasingly true. The same is true for the mass working class movement.

Although the central lesson to be drawn from this experience is that of international solidarity there are more lessons to learn, especially for the student movement. The National Union of Students

should learn from its isolation. Its policy of accepting any attacks the Blairites throw at us is viewed with the derision it deserves by other student federations.

The emphasis being placed on involving students in activity is something that the Campaign for Free Education has been arguing in the British student movement and is central to any campaign with a chance of success. There is also in Europe a stress on linking up with the workers' movement, again vital if students anywhere are to win. And the European Week of Action places attacks on education in the context of attacks on the welfare state — again something that the CFE has been arguing for some time against those in the student movement who insist that students exist in a bubble, isolated from the broader struggles in society.

Hopefully this experience will help us to relearn the central plank of Marxism, and indeed of any sort of socialism worthy of the name: international working class solidarity and struggle!

● The Week of Action takes place from November 16 - 20 and includes the CFE-led United for Free Education national demonstration in London on November 18.

● To join the Campaign for Free Education or for copies of the CFE's national petition, or details of regional demonstrations in Scotland (10 November), Newcastle, Sheffield, Leicester and other towns across the UK, call 0958 556756, write to PO Box 22615, London N4 1WT or e-mail cfe@gn.apc.org