

No.14. £1.20.

**WORKERS'
LIBERTY**

The triumph of the bourgeoisie?



**Anti-semitism
and the left**
*The new left
opposition in
Eastern Europe*
**Eric Heffer on
religion,
democracy,
and Europe**
*Albert Einstein on
socialism*
**Why Stalinism
collapsed in
Eastern Europe**

Plus: • **Reg Race on the Labour Left** • Robert Fine on socialist anti-Stalinism •
What the Trotskyists said on Palestine in the 1930s • West End musicals • In Memoriam: Hal Draper
• **The nature of the Stalinist states** • James P Cannon 1890-1974 • **and survey, Forum, reviews**

Letter to readers

We owe regular readers an apology for the break in the appearance in *Workers' Liberty*.

In a nutshell: our resources are normally overstretched. We need to sell more copies of *Workers' Liberty*, and have the money come in as soon as possible, for the magazine to be viable.

With this issue we launch a new drive to make ourselves viable. "Friends of Workers' Liberty" can, we hope, help; we ask the friends of the magazine to take some copies to sell, to give more money than the cover price, and to persuade others to do the same.

Last December we produced with *Socialist Organiser* a special pamphlet on the events in Eastern Europe. In this issue we carry a symposium of the views found among us on the character of the Stalinist states.

We have the final part of our in-depth interview with Eric Heffer. We have had to hold over the

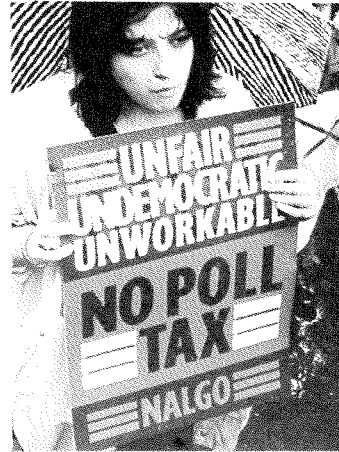
long-promised second instalment of 'The Essential Shachtman' for a later issue, and also the final part of Wang Fan-hsi's analysis of the Chinese Revolution. The next *Workers' Liberty* will carry Wang's article together with a letter from him correcting inaccuracies which appeared in the last *WL*.

The horrible wave of anti-semitism raises once again the problem of anti-semitism on the left. We carry an open letter from Sean Matgamna to Tony Cliff of the SWP on this question.

Albert Einstein was one of the most influential and important thinkers of the 20th century. His name is a byword for intelligence. That Einstein was a clear-headed socialist is scarcely known, but he was, as the article which begins on the back cover will make clear to you.

Finally, it needs to be said that signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the magazine. Writers have a wide range of discretion, as they must have on a magazine that has any life in it. In fact, we want to broaden the range of our contributors.

The next *WL* is scheduled for October. And once more: join the "Friends of Workers' Liberty"!



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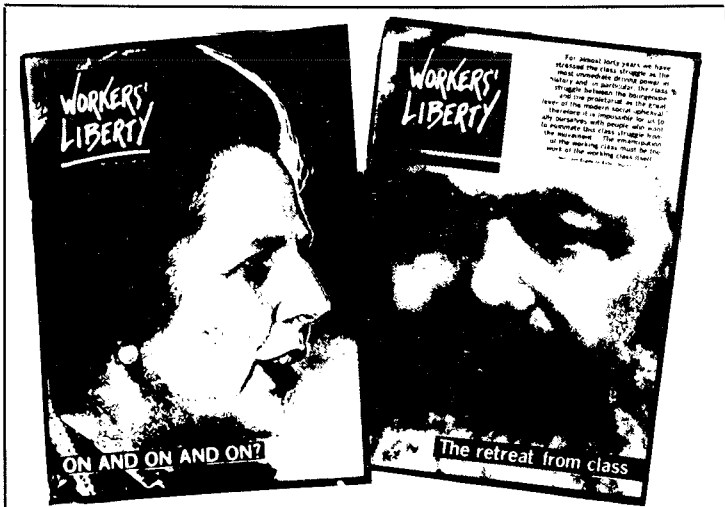
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Triumph of the bourgeoisie?

For over 60 years the typical totalitarian Stalinist society — in the USSR, in the USSR's East European satellites, in Mao's China, or in Vietnam — has presented itself to the world as a durable, congealed, frozen system, made of a hitherto unknown substance.

Now the Stalinist societies look like so many ice floes in a rapidly warming sea — melting, dissolving, thawing, sinking and blending into the world capitalist environment around them.

To many calling themselves Marxists or even Trotskyists, Stalinism seemed for decades to be "the wave of the future". They thought they saw the future and — less explicitly — they thought it worked.

The world was mysteriously out of kilter. Somehow parts of it had slipped into the condition of being "post-capitalist", and, strangely, they were among the relatively backward parts, those which to any halfway literate Marxist were least ripe for it. Now Stalin's terror turns out to have been, not the birth pangs of a new civilisation, but a bloodletting to fertilise the soil for capitalism.

Nobody foresaw the way that East European Stalinism would collapse. But

the decay that led to that collapse was, or should have been, visible long ago. According to every criterion from productivity and technological dynamism through military might to social development, the world was still incontestably dominated by international capitalism, and by a capitalism which has for decades experienced consistent, though not uninterrupted growth.

By contrast, the Stalinist states, almost all of which had begun a long way down the world scale of development, have for decades now lurched through successive unavailing efforts to shake off creeping stagnation. The main partial exception to that rule has been China — but even China's market reforms, despite some real successes, have run the country into an immense crisis. The Soviet Union has been heavily dependent on the West for modern technology. The gap between the two systems has been growing.

The Stalinist systems have become sicker and sicker. The bureaucracies tried to run their economies by command, and in practice a vast area of the economic life of their societies was rendered subterranean, even more anarchic than a regular, legal, recognised market-capitalist system.

The ruling class of the model Stalinist state, the USSR, emerged out of the workers' state set up by the October 1917 revolution by way of a struggle to suppress and control the working class and to eliminate the weak Russian bourgeoisie

that had come back to life in the 1920s. It made itself master of society in a series of murderous if muffled class struggles. Its state aspired to control everything to a degree and for purposes alien to the Marxism whose authority it invoked. And it did that in a backward country.

In the days of Stalin's forced collectivisation and crash industrialisation, the whole of society could be turned upside down by a central government intent on crude quantitative goals and using an immense machinery of terror as its instrument of control, motivation, and organisation. Most other Stalinist states have had such "heroic" periods — Eastern Europe in the late '40s and early '50s, China in the '50s and '60s. What that classic Stalinist model never did was establish viable economic mechanisms, integrated harmoniously with a guiding political system, for open-ended development.

When the terror slackened off — and that is what Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin essentially meant: he told the members of his bureaucratic class that life would be easier from then on — much of the dynamism of the system slackened off too. The bureaucrats had not created a system that was self-regulating, nor a system that could be regulated flexibly by conscious control. The bureaucracy had the aspiration to conscious control and planning, derived in a distorted way from the old programme of socialism. But the socialist programme of conscious control was necessarily a programme for democratic collective self-management, using various mechanisms which would include, for a long time, some market mechanisms. The bureaucracy's command economy was nothing like that.

To survive, the bureaucracy had to maintain its political monopoly. It could not have democracy because it was in a sharp antagonism with most of the people, and in the first place with the working class.

So there was a "compromise formation", neither a self-regulating market system nor properly planned, dominated by a huge clogging bureaucratic state which could take crude decisions and make them good, but do little else. State repression was now conservative, not what it was in the "heroic" days either in intensity or in social function.

In the USSR the system controlled vast resources. It produced impressive results in terms of crude mobilisation. In its first decade it existed in a capitalist world stricken by the great slump after 1929. Capitalism was in stark decline in most of the world for much of that decade. To many, even on the Right, capitalism was finished. The only question was, what would replace it. Stalin's system did indeed seem "post-capitalist" then, and if capitalism had continued to decline indefinitely one could well imagine the

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future would have been with Stalinist collectivism.

Capitalism plunged the world into a war in which 50 or 60 million people perished, and much of Europe was levelled to the ground. Afterwards, when Germany and Japan were defeated, capitalism revived under the hegemony of US imperialism. The old exclusive empire trading blocs of Britain, France, Belgium, and Holland, into which Germany had tried to break by means of war, were peacefully dismantled under the pressure of the American colossus. Relatively free trade developed. The reorganised world capitalist system burgeoned, with all the usual evils and contradictions of capitalism, but also with a tremendous dynamism.

The USSR slowed down and began to stagnate. The competition lasted many decades. And then the rulers of the USSR seemed to suffer a collapse of the will to continue. They collapsed as spectacularly as the old German empire collapsed on 11 November 1918.

Initiatives from the rulers in the Kremlin, acting like 18th century enlightened despots, triggered the collapse of the Russian empire in Eastern Europe. But it was a collapse in preparation for at least quarter of a century.

The Stalinists had tried nearly 30 years before to make their rule more rational, flexible and productive by giving more scope to market mechanisms. The vast bureaucracy stifled all such initiatives. Under Brezhnev, the system sleepwalked

Feelings of a republican on the fall of Bonaparte

I hated thee, fallen tyrant! I did groan
To think that a most unambitious slave,
Like thou, shouldst dance and revel on the
grave
Of Liberty. Thou mightst have built thy
throne
Where it had stood even now: thou didst
prefer
A frail and bloody pomp which Time has
swept
In fragments towards Oblivion. Massacre,
For this I prayed, would on thy sleep have
crept,
Treason and Slavery, Rapine, Fear and
Lust,
And stifled thee, their minister. I know
Too late, since thou and France are in the
dust,
That Virtue owns a more eternal foe
Than Force or Fraud: old Custom, legal
Crime,
And bloody Faith the foulest birth of
Time.

Percy Shelley 1816

on. His successors started to make changes, and found they could not hope to achieve anything without shaking up the political structures. Thus "glasnost". That unleashed a great ferment and breached the bureaucrats' political monopoly; and it didn't solve anything. It made things worse for the bureaucracy, stirring up the nations long oppressed, allowing the workers to raise their voice.

Now, it seems, the dominant faction in the USSR's bureaucracy has bit the bullet: they want full-scale restoration of market capitalism. Some of the bureaucrats hope to become capitalists themselves. But with its central prop — its political monopoly — gone, the bureaucracy is falling apart.

The fundamental determinant of what happened in Eastern Europe in the second half of 1989 was that the Kremlin signalled to its satraps that it would not back them by force: then the people took to the streets, and no-one could stop them.

The aspiration to have a market system is widespread in all the Stalinist states because it is equated with prosperity. But there are contradictions. The same people who say to pollsters that they want a market-controlled system also say that they do not want inequality, unemployment, and all the other things that go with the market.

If "the market" means prosperity to them, "socialism" means tyranny and Stalinism. Intellectuals and priests have a tremendous sway.

The authentic socialists suffered most savagely from the repression of the old regimes, and are weak as a result. And socialism itself is discredited because of the brutalities and the failures of Stalinism. But the road to the regeneration of capitalism in most of the East European states will take years to travel, and they will be years of class struggle. As workers defend themselves they will relearn genuine socialism, working-class socialism.

The conditions in Eastern Europe are not good for the democracy the people want. On the contrary, in the USSR the army already shows signs of grooming itself for the role that armies typically play in Third World countries with weak bourgeoisies. Things may not move in a straight line, either: the Stalinist bureaucrats retain great power, and even the ability to win elections, in Bulgaria and Romania. Stalinism is not quite dead yet in Eastern Europe. But it is highly improbable that anything like the system that collapsed in 1989 will ever be reconstituted.

It is an immense triumph for the world bourgeoisie — public self-disavowal by the rulers of the Stalinist system, and their decision to embrace market capitalism and open up their states to asset-stripping.

We deny that the Stalinist system had anything to do with socialism or working-class power. Neither a workers' state, nor

the Stalinist states in underdeveloped countries, could ever hope to win in economic competition with capitalism expanding as it has done in recent decades. The socialist answer was the spreading of the workers' revolution to the advanced countries; the Stalinists had no answer. The Stalinist system was never "post-capitalist". It paralleled capitalism as an underdeveloped alter ego. Socialists have no reason to be surprised or dismayed about Stalinism losing its competition with capitalism.

The bourgeoisie has triumphed over the Stalinists, but it has not triumphed over socialism. And genuine socialism receives the possibility of rebirth as a mass movement from the events in Eastern Europe.

Capitalism is not capable of indefinite expansion and boom, any more than it can give prosperity to all. Capitalism is not made better because Stalinism is falling apart. Capitalism is still the system of grinding exploitation it always was. The bourgeoisie rule as hypocritical tyrants within the bourgeois democratic systems.

There is every reason to believe that the destruction of the Stalinist scarecrow will, over time, make it easier for the workers, and those in society who ally with the working class, to settle accounts with that bourgeoisie and establish a society free from both exploitation and state tyranny. *Socialism* is the wave of the future!

Marxists after the collapse of East European Stalinism

The collapse of East European Stalinism has given a clear answer to the question which has confused and bedevilled the Trotskyist movement for many decades: the question of the place of Stalinism in history.

Stalinism is *not* "post-capitalist", but is in history a limited parallel to capitalism. Stalinist states are no kind of workers' state. The view held by most Trotskyists since the late 1940s — that the Stalinist states are "deformed and degenerated

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workers' states" — has been shattered.

The Trotskyists were thrown into a prolonged crisis in the mid 1940s by the survival of Stalinism in the USSR and, then, by its expansion into Eastern Europe and Asia on the bayonets of Stalin's army or of Tito's, Mao's, or Ho's peasant armies.

From 1923 until his death in 1940, Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism had been continually shifting and changing as the Stalinist regime changed and developed (though, it has to be said, the analysis lagged behind the developments). By the mid 1930s Trotsky advocated a "political revolution" in the Soviet Union. "Political" as distinct from "social" because — so Trotsky thought — the revolution would smash the Stalinist state, destroy the privileges of the bureaucracy (that is, deprive it of control of the surplus product), but maintain the nationalised economy, thus cleansed and taken over by the working class.

In *substance*, however, Trotsky's programme for the USSR, over the last half-decade of his life, was a full programme for a new working-class revolution in the USSR. One state power, the bureaucrats', would have to be smashed, and another, the workers', established; one form of "planned" or semi-planned statified economy would have to be replaced by another, very different. In 1940 Trotsky could fairly challenge those who said that the USSR had then and there to be recognised as a new form of class society to say what they proposed to add to the programme he had long ago worked out. They could add nothing.

Trotsky moved more and more towards accepting the idea that the USSR was some new form of exploiting class society. At the end of his life, his decisive reason for refusing to categorise the Stalinist USSR thus was that it had not established itself as a stable social formation. "**Might we not place ourselves in a ludicrous position if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall?**"

But the Stalinist system survived the war. It expanded into central Europe. Stalinists won power in Yugoslavia and China.

If the Trotskyists were to be guided by what Trotsky was saying at the end of his life, they had to conclude that the Stalinism, having shown such resilience and power to expand, was a new form of exploiting class society, and had been so through the '30s. But it was also possible to maintain the letter of Trotsky's last "position", and ignore the entire logic of his basic thinking, by basing oneself on his operational perspective that the likely form of the destruction of the Stalinist historical abortion was the restoration of the old bourgeois system. Since that hadn't happened, nothing fundamental had changed, and it was not necessary to

re-evaluate that which had remained unchanged to answer the question why it had survived and expanded.

Why then had Stalinism survived and expanded? Because of the superiority of nationalised property.

Trotsky too had considered even bureaucratic nationalised property superior amidst the decay of world capitalism in the '30s. At the same time, however, he insisted that it was doomed, or would become the basis of a new exploiting system, if it remained confined to backward and isolated areas of the world.

He emphatically rejected the Stalinist idea of "socialism in one country", that is, the idea that socialism means nationalised property in a backward country and the industrial development of that country following the world capitalist pattern.

During World War 2, however, the Trotskyists began more and more to em-

'Stalinism is not "post-capitalist", but is in history a limited parallel to capitalism. Stalinist states are no kind of workers' state'.

phasise the superiority of nationalised property as a self-sufficient explanation for everything they approved of, including the victories of Stalin's army against Hitler. For Trotsky it had been either/or: either workers' revolution in Europe would rescue the Soviet Union from isolation and cleanse it of Stalinism, or the USSR was doomed, in one way or another. That was forgotten. The alleged, and by implication autonomously self-acting, virtues of nationalised property enabled progress to continue regardless. The USSR's survival was now taken as proof of its strength and intrinsically proletarian character.

While they paid lip service to all sorts of other things, the *operational* politics of the mainstream Trotskyists was now a variant of "socialism in one country". They accepted the actually existing (monstrously Stalinised) nationalised economies as historically stable, progressive, and working-class; to emulate them must be the main goal of all revolutionary movements. They explicitly substituted national development for workers' self-emancipation as their criterion of progress for (seriatim) Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, and Cuba over the next two decades.

In short, the mainstream of the Trotskyist movement reconstituted itself on a radically new political basis, codified at

the "re-founding" congress of the Fourth International in 1951. The labels and name-tags used, where they were the same as Trotsky's, dealt with different things.

The Trotskyists thought they saw an unfolding world revolution spreading from the Stalinist states across the world — a world revolution which would, they said, in its first stages be bureaucratically deformed. In the name of avoiding sectarianism towards that revolution, people calling themselves Trotskyists have applied to Tito, Mao, Ho or Castro the politics not of Trotsky but of the "critical Stalinist" faction of "Right Communists" (Brandlerites) of the 1930s.

The record of disorientation is there in the files of Trotskyist publications, from glorification of Mao's mad Great Leap Forward, or even his monstrous Cultural Revolution, all the way through to the widespread "Trotskyist" support for the invasion of Afghanistan and the existence today of a powerful faction of "Trotskyists" who are Castroites. Mainstream Trotskyism has been a movement of people hypnotised by the "successes" of Stalinism.

The internal collapse of Stalinism now poses for honest Trotskyists the urgent need to reassess these questions, which have been central in shaping our history. There is no way of squaring the events of 1989 in Eastern Europe with the idea that the Stalinist systems were "post-capitalist" or "workers' states". The mainstream Trotskyist press of the last few months bears witness to that fact, with its feverish and bewildered oscillation between the hope that the events in Eastern Europe are the beginning of the "political revolution", moving society forward, and the fear that they are the beginning of social *counter*-revolution, regressing to capitalism.

Back in the 1940s the Trotskyist movement was devastated by the political crisis triggered by the unexpected survival and expansion of Stalinism. It will be one of history's ironies if — because of the political encrustations of four decades of accommodating to Stalinism — the dissolution of Stalinism destroys Trotskyist militants of today, disheartening and disillusioning them.

Without an honest and open reassessment of our own history, it will have such an effect. For the events in the Stalinist states simply shatter the world outlook within which post-1951 Trotskyism has been built — the perspective of the ongoing, Stalinist-led but nonetheless progressive, world revolution.

These things take time to percolate through — but they do get through. In this article and in others we have spelled out our own views on the question. The discussion continues. The pages of *Workers' Liberty* are open to contributions from others in the Trotskyist tradition.

South Africa

An historic compromise?

An 'historic compromise' is on the South African agenda. As the ANC and the government hold regular talks about talks, the Nationalists have declared that there can be no turning back: in the words of Barend Du Plessis, the Finance Minister: "If you think we are going to cancel this, forget it. We've jumped." He's right, the Nats have no way to go but forward and for this they need the ANC.

As the *Financial Times* put it, after thirty years of representing the 'swart gevaar' (the black threat), the ANC has re-entered centre stage as the white man's saviour. De Klerk and Mandela outdo one another in mutual courtesies; the SABC, the public voice of the government, broadcasts a hagiography of Mandela after 27 years in goal; Afrikaaner nationalism has found in African nationalism a potential blood brother. In the words of one National Party MP: "They are like Siamese twins; neither can survive on his own."

Both parties to the new deal confront alienated radical constituencies which oppose negotiations, but both these forces are at present weak. The ANC face the 'lost generation' of youth whose militancy they egged on but a few moments ago. Black Consciousness and the Pan African Congress are making determined efforts to win them over, but the incoherence of BC and PAC politics is likely to divert their militancy down a blind alley of radical black nationalism and non-collaboration. If so they will pose little political threat to the ANC.

Further, there is the South African Communist Party, which is making its own attempt both to present a left face to the youth and to lead them firmly down the path of negotiations. *Work in Progress*, for example, has reports of meetings between SAYCO (the youth Congress) and the Communist Party and COSATU. My own assessment is that there is such a strong groundswell of popular support for some kind of 'normality' after the murderous years of the mid-1980s that any party which opposes negotiations *tout court* will only be able to pick up on the wilder side of the movement and will be extremely vulnerable.

The anti-negotiations left will also find themselves isolated from the trade union movement, most of which is for negotiations and much of which supports the ANC leadership. The *Financial Times* reported one NUM (miners') official enthusiastically saying that "we're meeting ministers almost every day". There have indeed been numerous meetings between government officials and COSATU over



Nelson Mandela

the reform of industrial relations legislation and broader political issues like privatisation of state enterprises (which the unions are opposed to but which, apart from ISCOR, the Iron and Steel conglomerate, are unlikely to go ahead).

These trade union initiatives are very important, if political change is to bring workers improvements in their material conditions and capacity for self-organisation. The level of industrial action is high at present, four times as high as 1989, with major strikes being waged particularly among low paid public sector workers, including hospital

workers, teachers, civil servants and postal workers, and among better-paid metal workers.

The government has its own agenda for labour reform, based around the proposals of the National Manpower Commission of "less governmental involvement in labour affairs". What deregulation seems to mean is the decriminalisation of strikes but the extended use of civil law remedies. In practice, workers are finding employers as intransigent as ever.

What is key for the working class is that its own material and political demands are put on the negotiating agenda; both by themselves directly and by the central political negotiators. A lot depends on the political struggles being waged within the trade union movement.

There have been reports of Communist Party gains at all levels of the trade union movement, the CP presenting itself as the 'workers' party' and asserting a degree of independence from the ANC. In the absence of any rival workers' parties, it would be surprising if the CP, now legalised, did not win some support as the representative of 'anti-capitalism'.

The Communist Party is what it is. If in the 1990s Stalinism were to succeed in South Africa when everywhere else it is on the run, it would be a sign primarily of the weakness of the anti-Stalinist left. These are important times for the trade union movement to assert its independence from the existing politicians: not stupidly by rejecting negotiations (which would be a thoroughly retrograde step taking the movement back to its pre-Mandela-release days), but in a socialist way, by placing working class interests at the centre of the agenda.

Robert Fine

Happy Birthday, dear pill?

The contraceptive pill was 30 years old in June 1990.

Over those thirty years, we've been told so many contradictory things about the pill: it causes cancer, it prevents cancer, it prevents PMT, it causes depression, it's perfectly safe, it's a health risk. We've never had the unbiased truth.

Usually those doing the talking represent some vested interest. Drug companies have fallen over themselves to tell us how safe the pill is. Meanwhile, the morality brigade, worried about 'promiscuity' and access to sex, have played up fears about the pill's dangers.

There may be some truth in everything we have been told, but clearly we have not been getting the whole story.

We cannot trust drug companies to give us unbiased information on their products. Under capitalism, a drug company's first concern is not health, but making money. Health can be sacrificed, profit cannot.

Hence contraceptives deemed unfit for women in the USA and Europe are still made and shipped to women in the Third World. One company, Upjohn, tested the safety of a contraceptive injection suspected of causing cancers of the reproductive organs, on beagle bitches — after giving them hysterectomies.

The pill's major beneficial effect is undeniable: as a contraceptive it's extremely reliable. But many women suffer side effects: nausea, vomiting, headaches, depression, loss of libido, and more rarely, thrombosis.

Many women who take the pill suffer none of these. And

maybe as (apart from thrombosis) these are not fatal, they are not considered serious problems. However, any one of these can be completely debilitating for the sufferer.

Of course what we want is a contraceptive that's completely reliable and safe for our health (and doesn't spoil our enjoyment of sex). Given the state of science and technology it doesn't seem much to ask.

However, such a contraceptive doesn't exist, and until it does women need to be able to make an informed choice about which contraceptive to use, weighing up the pros and cons of each method for ourselves, using unbiased information.

We don't need doctors set up by drug companies to glorify the pill and gloss over its faults, any more than we need unjustified scaremongering about possible dangers. We need clear, honest information.

Rosey Sibley

SURVEY



Teachers on strike against 'Poll capping' Bristol, June 1990. Photo: John Harris

Poll Tax

Twelve million defy the law

Probably not since the New Poor Law of 1834 has a British government introduced a major change so widely and vigorously resented.

Since the poll tax started in England and Wales in April 1990, pitifully small amounts of it have been collected.

In London, 75 per cent of what should have been paid so far hasn't been. In some boroughs the figure is higher.

Attempts by councils to get tough have collapsed in chaos. Tory-controlled Medina council in the Isle of Wight was the first to go to court; the cases had to be called off because the council had not given non-payers enough notice. Across the country, if even a small proportion of non-payers keep their nerve and demand a hearing in court, the courts will be swamped.

Hackney council, in London, has collected only £1.5 million of the £8 million it expected so far. Camden has only

received 4 per cent of its poll tax revenue. In many other areas, 40 or 50 per cent have paid nothing. Leeds has no idea how many non-payers there are, as a failure in its computer system has meant no reminders, or revised bills taking account of rebates, have been sent out.

21 Labour councils have been "capped", i.e. had their budgets cut by government decree. After the failure of a court appeal against the "capping", they face administrative chaos as all bills have to be revised and sent out again.

In Scotland the tax started in April 1989. Around 15 per cent of people there have *still* not paid any tax. Only one per cent defaulted on rates.

The Scottish councils have been slow to move against non-payers, for fear of public reaction. But by now they face a shortfall in income of nearly £200 million. They will have to make more and more attempts to send bailiffs to seize people's property, and the tax will become even more unpopular.

But the deep popular revolt against the poll tax is not matched either by an organised militant response from the labour movement or a strong coordinated campaign in the communities.

The Labour Party's attitude has been appalling. Its leaders are resolutely in favour of people paying the poll tax and of councils pursuing those who don't. After the March demonstration in London which finished with violent confrontations between demonstrators and police, Kinnock did his best to denounce the "anarchists" even louder than the

Tories.

The trade union leaders have been no better. When the conference of the National Union of Teachers voted for national strikes against job cuts arising from the poll tax's squeeze on council finance and from "Local Management of Schools", general secretary Doug McAvoy promised sternly to ignore the decision altogether.

Anti-poll-tax unions have been set up in many areas. Some are active groups with a large membership; but many exist only on paper. "Mass non-payment" has been their slogan; but the mass non-payment actually happening is more spontaneous than a result of the campaigns.

What is needed is a campaign linking non-payment to action by trade unionists against the implementation of the poll tax, and pressure on Labour councils to refuse cooperation. There have already been scattered strikes by Town Hall workers over staffing and conditions for collection of the tax.

Councils are going to lurch further and further into chaos as the tax is not collected. If they try to get heavy, protest will grow. Coordinated national action could force the Tories to withdraw the poll tax, and force them out of office.

Cate Murphy

France's NF

Nazis of the '90s

Most French people, according to opinion surveys conducted after the attacks on Jewish graves at Carpentras in May 1990, think Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front is anti-semitic. And almost all French people say they deplore anti-semitism.

Yet the National Front has solid support. The latest opinion polls give it 15.5% of the vote. Since it broke out of far-right fringe status in 1983-4, it has consistently had between 10 and 15 per cent. In June 1984 it got 11 per cent in the Euro-elections; in the 1986 National Assembly elections, 10 per cent. Le Pen won 14.5% in the presidential election of April 1988. The National Assembly election of June 1988 gave the NF 10 per cent (but only one seat, as against the 32 it had in 1986, because in the meantime proportional representation had been abolished). In the June 1989 Euro-elections the NF got 12 per cent.

It has fallen below 10 per cent in local government elections, but it has also had some spectacular triumphs. The NF's first breakthrough was gaining 17 per cent of the first-round vote for the town

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council in Dreux (some 50 miles east of Paris) in September 1983, and then securing a winning coalition with the mainstream right for the second round. On 3 December 1989 it won again in Dreux, securing 61 per cent of the vote in a run-off against the mainstream right-wing RPR for a National Assembly by-election.

The NF is indeed anti-semitic. Le Pen and many of his close associates were long active in neo-Nazi crank groups before 1983. In November 1989 the NF's paper declared: "We are on the eve of a great confrontation, a great battle on the world scale between the Jewish international and the Christian, in the first place Catholic, international. Depending on the outcome of this battle, which is the great religious and political contest of the year 2000, either Christianity will manage to maintain itself in the face of the fantastic strength of the Jewish world; or, believers and non-believers alike, we will live under the law of the new religion, that of the Shoah." ("Shoah" is the Hebrew term for the Holocaust.)

Le Pen himself told an interviewer in August 1989: "The great internationals, like the Jewish international, play a not negligible role in the creation of this anti-national spirit." In October 1983 he said that "four superpowers" were "colonising" France — "the Marxist, the Freemason, the Jew and the Protestant..."

Such outbursts are revealing but exceptional. Since 1983 the NF has sought a non-violent, respectable, electoralist image. It bans skinheads from membership. It denies being racist or anti-semitic. Le Pen responded to the Carpentras attacks by appearing with a leading Jewish member of the NF to condemn the attacks — and to denounce much more forcefully, the "use" of the incident against the NF by other parties, hinting even that the attacks had been staged as a provocation against the NF.

Nowhere near all the people who vote for the NF are fascists or anti-semites. Anti-semitic incidents have actually declined in France since the early '80s (though there has been a rise since 1986), and a typical response from voters in the Dreux by-election to surveys of their opinion was that they "just wanted to give the government a warning".

The NF does not rule the streets. It mobilised 12,000 for its "Joan of Arc" demonstration on 1 May 1990, which is a lot, but tiny compared to what the French labour movement could mobilise. The NF Youth claims 12,000 members, and is a growing force on university campuses, but it has not driven the left off the campuses.

So this is a fascist movement which is still only beginning to develop its power. That it is fascist, however, was well

demonstrated by a survey of the opinions of the 1500 delegates at the NF congress on 30 March/1 April 1990 (*Le Monde*, 8 April).

54 per cent wanted "a government of authority" or a "monarchy", against only 32 per cent favouring a republic. 96 per cent thought that a hierarchy and leaders are essential in society. 88 per cent said that Jews have "too much power" in France. (The NF isn't "anti-semitic", you see: it's just defending the French people against the "superpower" of the "Jewish international"!)

83 per cent were for curbs on abortion rights, 74 per cent for ending France's wealth tax, 67 per cent for abolishing the minimum wage, 88 per cent for privatisation, and 77 per cent for cutting welfare benefits.

The electoral base of the National Front is typical of fascism: strongest among the self-employed and professionals, with some support also from the unemployed and workers. (The common story that the NF has taken the CP's working-class base is not true. That base has gone largely to the Socialist Party. But the NF has taken the majority of the working-class base of the mainstream right wing, and a chunk of the SP's worker base too).

The NF's strongest plank is racism directed against immigrants, mostly from Africa. Le Pen calls for the forcible repatriation of all immigrants who have

entered France since 1974. Since 1984 opinion polls have shown a consistent 25 to 30 per cent of French people supporting Le Pen on immigration.

In 1981 the National Front together with other far-right groups could get only 0.35 per cent of the vote for the National Assembly. Its dramatic rise began with the Socialist Party government's turn away from reform and towards cuts, in 1983; and its continuing support has been nourished by the bleak pro-capitalist policies pursued under President Mitterand ever since then. The equivocal stand of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party on racism (both favour a complete ban on immigration, and the Socialists have repeatedly back-tracked on promises to give immigrants the vote) has further helped the NF.

In a period of relative economic boom (as these things go these days) the NF has built and sustained a base. Unless that base is cut away now, it could launch the NF into tremendous, and much more openly menacing, growth as soon as a slump comes.

The NF threat should also be a warning to the labour movement in Britain. A Labour government with the sort of policies Neil Kinnock is advocating would almost certainly produce the same effects as the Mitterand regime in France: a rapid growth of the far right.

Chris Reynolds

Labour: towards a one-faction party?

As we go to press, our associates round the weekly paper *Socialist Organiser* are apparently about to be banned from the Labour Party.

We do not know for sure, and what we do know is gleaned from the capitalist press. That fact in itself tells much about the present regime in the Labour Party.

Labour's National Executive decided in February to "investigate" *Socialist Organiser*. Or so we understand from the press: the editorial staff of *Socialist Organiser* have not been officially informed or contacted, or even had their phone calls to Labour Party HQ returned.

The "investigation" was instigated by maverick right-wing MP Frank Field, as part of his campaign against his deselection by Birkenhead CLP. The best information available (again, the capitalist press) is that Field will probably lose his seat, but the banning of *Socialist Organiser* will be offered up as a compensation.

Sentence first, charges later, evidence and trial never! As the one-party states collapse in Eastern Europe, Neil Kinnock and his friends are driving Labour towards a one-faction party.

They think they can do it because the

working class is depressed after eleven years of Thatcherism, and willing to support almost anything which promises relief. They think they *must* do it because they want to protect and buttress a future Labour government against pressure from the working class.

At the same time as moving against the political left in the shape of Socialist Organiser, they have moved to try to forestall trade union militancy by committing a future Labour government to keep almost all the Tories' anti-union laws.

Socialist Organiser has been in the forefront of the fight on union rights. It launched the project of a Workers' Charter of union rights — fought for by Nottingham East, Wallasey and other CLPs at the 1988 and 1989 Labour conferences, and endorsed this year by the London and North West region Labour Party conferences and the NALGO union conference. October's Labour Party conference may vote down Kinnock on this issue.

The swish of Kinnock's sabre, aimed at the Marxist left (*Socialist Organiser*) and at the most elementary practices of trade union solidarity, should concentrate minds. If the party of the trade unions accepts that all trade union action other than the most tame bread-and-butter single-workplace action should be banned, then the working class is not going to achieve much in the near future. If *Socialist Organiser* is successfully banned, then every other newspaper or pressure group of the Left can be prohibited at Kinnock's whim. On these issues the Left must unite; and if we unite we can begin to regain ground.

Colin Foster

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Industry

A tale of two struggles

The present state of trade unionism in Britain can be quite usefully gauged by comparing two recent struggles: the September 1989-March 1990 ambulance dispute, and the national engineering dispute which was one year old by mid 1990.

Both campaigns were examples of 'new look' trade unionism, with great emphasis put on public relations. The ambulance unions pooled their respective press officers under the auspices of NUPE's Lyn Bryan, while the Confed (Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions) brought in an outside PR firm that specialises in union promotion.

Both were led by 'new realist' bureaucrats — NUPE's Roger Poole representing the 'left' face of new realism, the AEU's Bill Jordan unashamedly right wing.

Both disputes were carefully designed to stay within the Tory union laws, and militant posturing (these days fashionably derided as 'Scargillism') was avoided like the plague.

It was generally agreed that the ambulance unions won the PR battle hands down. Roger Poole, the identikit modern bureaucrat (well-groomed, young and reasonable) rang rings round the bumbling Duncan Nichol and the fatuous Kenneth Clarke. The ambulance workers already had a massive reservoir of public goodwill to call on, and with Poole's smooth presentation they quickly won 80%-plus in the opinion polls.

And yet the final deal at the end of February was clearly a victory for the government. The ambulance workers achieved no more than a 'repackaging' of the original offer. 6.5% over 12 months became 13% over two years.

The rank and file were plainly not taken in by Poole's dishonest bluster about a 'staggering' deal. But after six months of stalemate, and with no apparent way forward, they reluctantly accepted.

The national engineering dispute, 'Drive for 35', started out much less auspiciously. The 'drive for 35' did not arise from any obvious rank and file pressure, but was cooked up by Jordan and Laird of the AEU together with Alex Ferry of the Confed.

The unions' PR efforts were, in fact, aimed more at their own members than at the general public, and the employers (in the words of the *Financial Times*) "scoffed" at the threat of strike action. Support for the campaign was under-



Ambulance drivers leaflet Tory Party Conference. Photo: Paul Herrmann (Profile)

mined right at the start by Bill Jordan's announcement that the unions would be prepared to settle for 37 hours — a 'compromise' that meant that the vast majority of white-collar engineers, already on 37 hours, felt they had nothing to gain from the campaign.

Only selected groups of workers were called out, after being balloted on an individual plant basis so as to stay within the law. Only 12,000 workers and seven plants have been involved in strikes. The Confed leaders encouraged local deals that initially fell far short of the official demand for 35 hours *without strings*.

For these reasons, and because of a general dislike and suspicion of Bill Jordan, the left has been noticeably unenthusiastic about the campaign, with some militants even arguing that *no support whatsoever* should be given.

At first it looked as if the pessimists would be proved correct. Early settlements at NEI Parsons, Rolls Royce Glasgow and Smiths in Cheltenham all involved a lot of strings like bell-to-bell working and the removal of washing-up time. By the end of 1989, the national levy that financed strike pay was in deep trouble, and the entire campaign looked to be on the verge of collapse.

Then the tide began to turn. British Aerospace was crucial. The company had been hit by strikes at three plants, Preston, Chester, and Kingston. They had responded by imposing extensive layoffs and by busing in scabs. The scabbing was defeated by a mass picket at Preston, and the company was forced to scale down the layoffs.

Preston and Chester stayed out until March, while Kingston held out for 23 weeks and saw off most of the company's strings. Since then Lucas component workers at Pontypool and Cwmbran have won 37 hours without any strings, and engineers at Weir Industries have achieved a two-hour cut plus a 10.9% pay deal.

Dangerous concessions have been made, especially early on in the campaign, but overwhelmingly the balance sheet on the dispute is positive. Strings

can be fought line by line on the shop floor, but a cut in hours is a permanent gain, and the 37 hour week is now established as the norm throughout engineering.

The big difference between the engineers and the ambulance workers is, of course, one of old-fashioned muscle. The ambulance crews could never win on their own, but Poole and the TUC refused even to discuss turning the enormous level of passive support for the dispute into solidarity (i.e. strike) action. Intoxicated by their media success, the unions seemed to believe that public opinion alone could somehow assure them victory.

The engineers had the muscle to win, and in the end it was factors like the firm stand taken at Kingston and the mass picket at Preston that won the day... not slick PR. **Jim Denham**

Israel/Palestine

Influx and intifada

The influx of East European Jews, mainly Russians, to Israel is water poured on burning oil.

By the end of this year, maybe quarter of a million will have come since the beginning of this new exodus last year. Large numbers of the migrants are being settled in the occupied West Bank.

A big majority of the Russians would prefer to go to the USA. But that is no longer an option. They are looking for a home after fleeing oppression, and Israel's is the only door open.

By all accounts they tend to be extremely unsympathetic to the Palestinian Arabs, and certainly the Israeli authorities responsible for settling the migrants in the West Bank know that to the Palestinians such settlement is a brazen political provocation.

The West Bank settlements — about 80,000 Jews have settled there since the late 1970s — are a central issue in the

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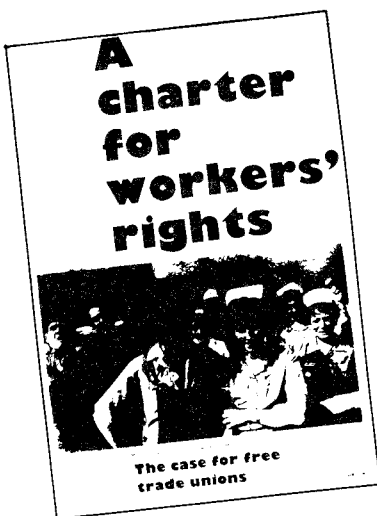
Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and in particular in the two-and-a-half year old *intifada*. The settlements are usually built on land taken from Arabs by compulsory purchase or some other means. Most of the settlers are on the right and far right of Israeli politics. The organisations which run the settlements do not consider the Palestinians to have any rights at all over the West Bank and Gaza. Surrounded by hostile neighbours, the settlements are maintained like fortresses, with armed defenders who treat the local Arabs with notorious brutality.

The new immigrants are indoctrinated into a belligerent political culture. It is one factor behind the recent upsurge in the Palestinian uprising. The incident which sparked off a big new wave of clashes in mid-1990 between demonstrators and the army was the cold-blooded murder of seven Arabs by a lunatic Israeli in Gaza.

Deep frustrations are developing among the Palestinians. Despite two and a half years of remarkably sustained political mobilisation, little headway is being made in the "peace process". Indeed, the Israeli government has become more, not less, intransigent.

Largely as a result of the political crisis caused by the *intifada*, the Likud-Labour coalition broke up in April. Labour, which had taken seriously Shamir's "peace initiative", tried to form a new government, but failed. Now Shamir has a slender majority for a coalition between Likud and a few far-right religious parties. Shamir himself is under considerable pressure from the Likud right, to whom he appears a dangerous moderate.

Demands for "transfer" — in plain English, mass deportation — of Palestinians will get louder, given extra force by the arrival of so many Russians.



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Workers' Liberty no.14 p.10

Socialists should not oppose the migration of refugee East European Jews to Israel. In itself, if other things were equal, their migration even to the West Bank would not be objectionable. But, of course, other things are not equal: Jewish settlement in the West Bank and Gaza is one of the most brutal and mortally threatening expressions of the oppression of the Palestinians.

The migrants should be absorbed into Israeli society. And Israel should get out of the West Bank and Gaza.

Clive Bradley

Northern Ireland Ulster says maybe

After the Anglo-Irish Agreement was agreed by the British and Irish governments in 1985 the Unionists of Northern Ireland put their well-oiled machine into gear and prepared to successfully block another initiative.

The walls of Protestant towns were bedecked with posters bearing the uncompromising legend 'Ulster Says No!' The best piece of graffiti I've seen for some time brightened up one of the entrances to Belfast: 'Ulster Says No!' said one piece of handwriting; 'But the Juice Man from Del Monte He Says Yes' some wag had written after it.

Ulster Unionists, five years later, are not quite saying yes, but if you listen closely you can hear a faint maybe. Soon they will enter talks with the main nationalist party, the SDLP, about a new form of government for Northern Ireland. After these talks they will meet representatives of the Irish Republic's government to discuss the relationship between any Northern Ireland government and the Republic. If both these issues can be settled to the satisfaction of all parties, the British and Irish governments will reconsider the status of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Of course there have been talks in Northern Ireland before, and all of these parties have at some stage been involved. In addition, there are many variables which could put a spanner in any stage of this process: loyalist pressure, the IRA campaign, trigger-happy security forces, etc.

The rock on which Unionists broke all previous proposals was the threat of a role for the Irish Republic. Paisley, above all, would not even talk to anyone who talked to the South. They removed Terence O'Neill on this issue, they removed Brian Faulkner and smashed the Sunningdale Powersharing Agreement in 1974. Now Ian Paisley and James Molyneux will lead the Unionists into talks with the Republic about the future of Northern Ireland. This, not only foreign but hostile, 'power' is to be

a negotiating partner.

Central to understanding these developments is the fact that militant Unionist opposition to the 1985 Agreement faded dismally. It wasn't that Protestants didn't turn out; they did, in huge numbers. The decisive factor was the determination of the British to pay them no heed. For four years the Unionists were told that they could only begin to affect the Agreement by negotiating an agreed settlement with the Nationalists. The British have got through with the message that they are not prepared to simply shore up Unionism on its own terms.

In the last year Peter Brooke has been conducting a series of talks with the leading parties. The aim, now apparently achieved, was to kick-start a serious advance to an internal settlement. These talks are on much firmer ground than their predecessors, they are hardest on the biggest obstacle, the Unionists. If the talks fail the Inter-Governmental Conference resumes. The SDLP are under pressure to make real gains because of the residual strength of Sinn Fein. The real pressure is on Unionists to concede what they bitterly fought in the past — powersharing and an Irish 'dimension'.

It has become fashionable in liberal circles in Northern Ireland to constrict the stagnation there with the excitement and fluidity of Eastern Europe.

No doubt this background influences popular consciousness. The biggest influence in Northern Ireland, however, like that in Eastern Europe has been the fundamental shift in the policy of the 'regional power'. The British government has changed its attitude to the competing communities in Northern Ireland and has allied itself much more to constitutional nationalism. The seriousness of that shift has finally hit the Unionists, soon it will have to be accounted for in the analyses of socialists also.

Patrick Murphy

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Anti-semitism and the Left

An open letter to Tony Cliff of the SWP

Dear Cliff,

The present nightmarish reawakening of the furies of Judeophobia in Eastern Europe demands of honest socialists whose commitment to the destruction of Israel puts them in an attitude of comprehensive hostility to all but a handful of the Jews alive in the world today that they look at their own political features in the mirror of these events.

After Hitler, anti-semitism disguised itself, and drew new nourishment from the conflict between Arab and Jew in the Middle East which had been intensified by the Holocaust. It was a doctrine that dared no longer speak its old name except in whispers and occasional back-alley fascist shouting; but by the '70s it had another name which it dared to speak, indeed to shout, in a loud chorus in which participated most of the governments and states of the world, including some of the worst governments in existence. A new name: anti-Zionism.

Of course, not all anti-Zionists were, or are, anti-semites, but almost all anti-semites were, by the '70s anyway, anti-Zionists.

That allowed them to enlist in the vast chorus of *progressive*, anti-colonialist, humanity. It conferred a new self-righteousness, and a new broad respectability, on their Judeophobic obsessions.

From obscure, intellectually low-grade, and discreditable theories about economics, and from racial myths which flew in the face of science and everyday experience as well as contradicting all hopes of human equality and solidarity, anti-semitism had risen to a higher plane of existence. It found a place on the revolutionary left it never had before.

After the 1967 war, Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and the manifest intention of some forces in Israel progressively to annex those territories, outraged the powerful mid-20th century sentiment of anti-colonialism. All democrats and liberals, Israelis too, and of course other Jews, condemned it, or aspects of it.

The hardened anti-semitic "anti-Zionists" could sing along in chorus, sharpening the note and intensifying the beat of the political chant here and there.

At the time of the June 1967 war the far left still universally accepted the right of the Israeli Jews to a nation-state, and demanded changes on that basis. Afterwards the left passively absorbed the new Palestine Liberation Organisation policy



Tony Cliff

of the 'secular democratic state' (i.e. an Arab state over all Palestine, with religious rights for Jews).

To Israel was posed the ultimatum that its citizens must surrender self-determination and the possibility of defending themselves, and dissolve their nation, settling for the rights of a religious minority in a projected Arab secular democratic state — which Arab state, by reason of size and the military force required to establish it, would be at the mercy of the bigger Arab states like Iraq or Syria, not one of which recognises minority rights.

To Jews who identify instinctively with Israel, most of the left is inexorably hostile. And none more hostile than the SWP, Comrade Cliff! The relationship is symbolised for me by lines of Socialist Workers Party members at the conference of the National Union of Students, many of them in the regulation tough-guy 'revolutionary' leather jackets, harassing young Jews about the Middle East.

Your stance, I contend, is anti-semitic. It packages a comprehensive hostility to most Jews — that is, what has always been the content of anti-semitism — in socialist and anti-imperialist verbiage. Those in the Second International who tried to express hostility to capitalism through hostility to Jews ("the Rothschilds", etc.) were aptly described as preaching a "socialism of idiots". What much of the left says today about Zionism, Israel and imperialism is the anti-imperialism of idiots. A central part of your political work for decades, comrade Cliff, has been to cultivate and spread that idiocy.

We should support the right of the Palestinian Arabs to have their own state; but to deny the Israeli Jews the same right, and to advocate a Socialist United States of the Middle East without self-determination for *all* the small nations in the region, is to step from democratic politics into the politics of communal and national revenge, and implicitly to assert that there is such a thing as a "bad people" undeserving of rights.

You, comrade Cliff, consider those politics Trotskyist. You consider especially intense, militant advocacy of those politics to be a hallmark of Trotskyism. In fact they stem more from Stalinism than from Trotskyism. It spread to the left from the USSR and the satellite countries, where, after World War 2, official government anti-Zionism provided a new flag of convenience for the Judeophobia long endemic there. (See Stan Crooke's article in *Workers' Liberty* no.10).

This official left "anti-Zionism" spread from the East throughout the labour movement. It spread to the non-Stalinist left partly by way of Stalinist influence, partly as a by-product of the left's proper involvement with campaigns against colonialism and imperialism.

You, comrade Cliff, bear a great deal of the responsibility for this state of affairs. The shift after the 1967 war from radical criticism of Israel to support for its destruction happened almost imperceptibly over time, almost by political osmosis between the left and militant Palestinian Arab nationalists to whom the left adapted itself.

But that happened because the left had been "educated" on this question by "anti-Zionist" horror stories in such works as your 1967 pamphlet *The Struggle in the Middle East*, which were completely devoid of any proper historical perspective on the events of the Jewish-Arab conflict and, while confining themselves to radical criticism of Israel and not supporting its destruction, were ambivalent at best on our programme.

The position we took on the June 1967 war put the finishing touch in practice. In 1948 the Trotskyists had sided with Israel or been for the defeat of both sides. In 1967 we came out for the destruction of the Israeli Jewish state and nation. One could not be defeatist here as, say, you could be defeatist for France or Germany, where even the worst defeat would not lead to national destruction. For Israel it would.

In 1967 we had all felt obliged to differentiate from PLO leader Ahmed Shukhairi, with his chauvinist calls for "driving the Jews into the sea". But soon we endorsed the call for the complete subjugation of the Jews in its new "reasonable" packaging — the call for a secular democratic state.

We thereby took our place in one of the strangest parades in history — the march

Anti-semitism

of anti-semitism from the condition of utter disorientation Hitler left it in back to respectability.

No people in recorded history ever did anything comparable to what you ask the Israeli Jews to do: surrender their state, disarm, and place themselves at the mercy of their bitter enemies of many decades. And if you want pioneering gestures arising out of boundless self-sacrifice or confidence in human goodness and solidarity, only a fool would go looking for them from the relatives of those who died in Hitler's murder camps!

Of course nobody expects it, and all such talk is just the build-up of moralistic lubricant for the real conclusion: that the Arab states should be supported against Israel.

In SWP-speak that conclusion is hedged about with ifs and buts and hopes and fantastic aspirations for a socialist solution to magically change the terms of the problem. The Arab working class will solve things.

I too fervently wish that the powerful Arab working class should emerge as an independent force. Like you I believe that the Arab working class will change the situation and that the Arab working class will win socialism in the Arab countries. But to invoke the Arab working class as the element which will wipe away the national conflict is a strange mixture of political sleight of hand, muddled thinking and wishful thinking.

Think about it. So, the workers of the different Arab countries become politically active and independent? But what will their programme be for the Jewish-Arab conflict? What should international socialists propose to the Arab workers that they should do about the Jewish-Arab conflict?

In fact, Cliff, your own programme is identical to the Arab nationalist programme! You cannot advocate that the Arab working class breaks with its own bourgeois nationalists' programme!

In response to the charge that the SWP is effectively anti-semitic, Chris Harman wrote in *Socialist Worker* some time back that the National Front was always denouncing the SWP as Jewish because many of its leaders are Jews. This was a not quite delicate way for Harman to say that some SWP leaders are Jewish. As if that was decisive, as if that wiped out the comprehensive hostility to most Jews and the unique attitude to Israel!

It is a good example of the self-deception practised on the left on this issue. We are not Nazi-style racists, or any sort of racists; we are not against Jews; some of us are Jews, and would be or are persecuted by Nazi-style racists; and we are not Christian bigots hostile to Jews — ergo, we *can't* be anti-semites!

But you are comprehensively hostile to almost all Jews! You want to destroy the Israeli Jewish state and the Israeli Jewish

nation. A sizeable part of the left considers Israel to be imperialist-racist evil incarnate, deserving of nothing but fire and sword in a holy war!

The left now is in the same moral position vis-a-vis individual Jews as the medieval Christians who could say honestly that they wanted to save the Jews from themselves. They wanted to convert them. They loved and tried to save the sinners, while hating the sin. The obdurate sinners in the dungeons and fires of the persecution probably didn't find that much compensation.

The "anti-Zionist" left thinks of itself not as persecuting but as the opposite; not as hate-mongering, but as promoting love and solidarity with the oppressed; not as murderous but a protest against murder and a crusade to stop it.

And yet... and yet... at its heart it proposes policies which amount to the murder of a nation, a nation which arose out of the ashes of the greatest mass murder in recorded history. And yet it does preach hate for a whole people, for a nation and for its diaspora of supporters around the world who will not "see reason". And yet, it does side with the potential oppressors of that nation.

Honest and uninhibited people, like Tony Greenstein and Uri Davis, face this straight: they say that anti-semitism does not matter now. Implicitly they say, as you do, what one of the world's biggest neo-Trotskyist groupings (the "Morenists") says explicitly: "Today Arab racism against Israel is progressive".

In which case we have just seen a 'progressive' political wave sweep across Europe! And things may get a lot more progressive yet.

Cliff, I suggest that your politics on this question are the opposite of the general Marxist teaching on how to resolve national and communal conflicts. I suggest that your approach to the question is not that of a Marxist at all, but that of someone who is rabidly subjective on the question — someone who is still fighting old faction fights with Zionists back in the Palestine of the 1930s and '40s.

If that isn't so, if your position on this question is derived from Marxist and socialist considerations and not from special feeling, then why, Cliff, don't you advocate the collective right of return for the ten million and more Germans driven out of Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War? Why do you not demand that Gdansk be renamed Danzig and returned to Germany?

You have not always had your present position. You did not have it even as late as 1967. Another article in this magazine (by Robert Fine, page 22) shows that you had radically different views back in 1938.

Yet — and I'll finish on this point — you now consider seriously mistaken the position you took in the '30s and '40s in favour of the right to enter Palestine for

Jews who could get out of the clutches of the Nazis (and who had nowhere else to go). So you said in an interview published in the SWP magazine a while back.

In retrospect you think that the British imperialists were right to shut the door in the face of Jews facing death! Let them die if the alternative is letting them into Palestine! Those *were* the alternatives, and that — in retrospect: you had better instincts at the time — is your choice. Could anything show more clearly the monstrosity of the position you now hold than that retrospective judgment?

Cliff, the fact that you are a Palestinian Jew has given what you say on this question an authority which you have not had to win by argument. Your nationality disarms the obvious criticism. But you left Palestine in 1946. You could get a passport and the means to come to Europe. What should the other Jews in Palestine have done then? Emigrated too? But nobody would have taken them, any more than they would have the many thousands of 'displaced' Jews then languishing in refugee camps in Europe.

I recall a passage in Trotsky's writings about Germany in the early '30s. He pours scorn on Communist Party officials who "are very much inclined to spout ultra-radical phrases beneath which is concealed a wretched and contemptible fatalism". Meanwhile "they get their passports ready".

"Worker Communists, you are hundreds of thousands, millions; you cannot leave for any place; there are not enough passports for you. Should fascism come to power, it will ride over your skulls and spines like a terrific tank. Your salvation lies in merciless struggle".

The Jews in Palestine couldn't leave either, Cliff. There were "not enough passports", just like in the '30s. The "merciless struggle" followed and goes on. There aren't "enough passports" now for the Jews migrating from Russia.

In that struggle you do not now represent the internationalism which the isolated and heroic (though I think in some respects politically mistaken) Trotskyists in Palestine defended in 1948; you have slipped back to communalism and nationalism. Only you have "changed peoples", and now function as an Arab chauvinist, the mirror image of the Jewish chauvinists you broke with in your youth. In your youth you despised the chauvinists on both sides; now you are a propagandist on one side.

It is time that you stopped miseducating young people on this question, Cliff, including some young Jewish people revolted by the brutal realpolitik of Israel. High time. There is no solution, still less a socialist solution, in Jewish or Arab (or vicarious Arab) chauvinism. Cut it out, Cliff!

Sean Matgamna

New agendas for the Labour Left

By Reg Race

The Labour Party is now fundamentally different, in my view, from the party which existed in 1980-1. First of all, the great levels of activism and commitment which existed at the rank and file level have dissipated, for all kinds of reasons.

Secondly, we have a central apparatus which is quite, quite different from anything we've ever seen before in the Labour Party.

Thirdly the traditional dominant role of the Parliamentary Labour Party has been reinforced. There was a period at the beginning of the 1980s when the PLP looked a bit beleaguered. We're far from that now, as is exemplified by the changes to the policy-making apparatus.

That policy apparatus now consists of a few trade union nominees, a few PLP nominees, and the leadership group. Those are the people who make the policy of the party. They produce policy documents in secret, they publish them after the National Executive has had them for 48 hours, the NEC doesn't amend them in any way because there is such a huge majority for the leadership on the NEC, and then we're told the policy documents are going to go to conference and anyone who puts in a resolution criticising the document which gets passed by Conference will just have the resolution 'noted', so the policy document produced by that process of behind-the-scenes deals is really unamendable.

The traditional dominant role of the Parliamentary Labour Party has been reinforced, as has the traditional dominant role of a few big trade union bosses. The trade union leaders have always had a dominant role in the Labour Party, but now we have a grouping of trade union leaders, led by the GMBU and NUPE in particular, which underpins the leadership. The trade union block vote is now much more concentrated than it ever has been before, and five or six unions can have a majority of Labour Party Conference.

All these things have led to a much



Reg Race

more authoritarian, undemocratic, unradical, uninteresting party than we've seen for many many years. The Party now is just terribly boring. It's also very

unspecific in many of its policy nostrums. I was struck by an article by William Renshaw in the *Independent* where he said that Labour's latest vote-loser was imprecision. Labour's leaders are being very precise on some things, like trade union law, but they're also being deliberately imprecise on issues like the economy and social spending because they do not want to stoke up the expectations of working people as to what a Labour government might do.

All of these things make fundamental changes to the way in which the Labour Party operates.

And at the grass roots level it has not just been a question of demoralisation. There has been a genuine change of opinion by significant sections of the rank and file of the party. We've got to admit that and say that our job is to change it back.

Where the left could have had an influence which it has failed to have is that the left has been too backward-looking. It has tried to defend and defend and defend again some of the issues which were won at the beginning of the 1980s and which have been 'reformed' out of existence by a salami process. I'm not saying that those issues aren't important — I think they are important, and I fought for them myself for many years — but I think our tactics have been defective. We should have got ourselves a new agenda.

After the revolutions in Eastern Europe, some people may say socialism equals Stalinism equals failure. However, I think the left has reacted quite positively, it has said, "Fine, now we've got that out of the way. Now that we can make it clear that Stalinism isn't socialism, we've got an opportunity to do something else".

There is an opportunity for a new agenda on Europe. We have been locked into a debate on Europe which has concentrated on the powers of the European Community, and that has been an unproductive debate for some time. We now have the opportunity of moving beyond the geographical limitations of the EC, and doing so in a practical political fashion.

It is conceivable now to think of Europe in ten years' time with no NATO and no Warsaw Pact; with a new security co-operation arrangement which encompasses both the West and certainly Central Europe, and potentially the Soviet Union as well; and with economic integration spread from the EC countries into other countries.

We need to talk seriously to our comrades in Europe who fought against Stalinism and who want to create a democratic socialist perspective in Eastern Europe. We need to build alliances with them very, very rapidly indeed. The agenda is moving so fast. Almost every week you see some prominent politician in

the United States or Britain arguing a case for a new way of rearranging the political structures in Europe. It's time that we started doing the same! The left has been silent.

Cross-European unity and taking on the City are two key issues for our new agenda. If you are going to have a radical transformation of the British economy — developing its productive base, reinvesting in manufacturing industry, redistributing wealth and income — you must control the activities of the City of London. I mean controlling the outflow of capital, directing investment, limiting the activities of the capital markets and share markets.

We need institutions which are capable of dealing with transnational capital. You can't deal with transnational capital on a single-country basis, through the Westminster Parliament.

Then, if you have a European parliament with significant power, what is the role of the Westminster parliament? If you want to devolve and decentralise power to people, both at work and in civil society, then you have to strengthen the role of local and regional government. That would imply a polarity of strength at local level and at the European level, not so much at Westminster level. That issue has got to be debated.

And we need to raise the issues of economic democracy. They really haven't been discussed at all in the labour movement since the early 1970s. We need to discuss how to integrate worker and community control into national planning.

The cornerstone of socialism in the 1990s must be the ability to divest the state of power, to pull it down to the individual and to smaller collectives, and to have a political arrangement which enables those people to aggregate their views together so that they can control the great institutions of state and the great financial and economic institutions.

On all these issues — and there are many more — the role of the Socialist Movement and Labour Party Socialists is to get the issues debated and discussed. If we try to enlighten through discussion, there will be a much greater level of agreement. That was the failure of the left in previous years.

The Socialist Movement was never intended to be a specific inner-Labour-Party caucus. It's because we thought the twin-track approach was necessary that Labour Party Socialists has been formed. I want to see it carrying forward a very broad programme in two basic areas, policy development — not just criticising the Labour Party's policy, but also developing a whole new policy for the left — and a new constitutional settlement for the Labour Party.

I think Labour Party Socialists will perform that role, and I think it has got off to an excellent start.

Reg Race was talking to Martin Thomas.

The poverty of anti-Stalinism

By Robert Fine

"I am not for setting up a dogmatic standard. On the contrary, we must attempt to help the dogmatists make their dogma clear to themselves. Especially *communism* is a dogmatic abstraction." (Marx¹)

That Left and Right should find common ground on the issue of Stalinism has been a source of discomfort for a 'negative' socialism which defines its politics in opposition to the Right rather than according to its own independent standards.

One of the driving forces behind the history of left apologetics for Stalinism has been a misplaced determination to avoid common ground with the anti-communism of the bourgeois establishment, whatever the justice of the case. This attitude of mind has been a cause of great weakness for the Left.

The Right has its own good reason for being opposed to Stalinism, since Stalinist states and parties have a long and sometimes successful history of attacking the traditional capitalist classes and expropriating their property. I am thinking of the destruction of the native bourgeoisie in the Soviet Union itself after 1929, in the Baltic republics and Finland in the early 1940s, in the Soviet-dominated east and central European states after the war and in a number of Third World countries in the 1960s and 1970s — in all of which cases some form of Stalinist model was adopted on the ashes of traditional bourgeois rule.

To this extent, the hostility of the Right to Stalinism, whatever its additional ideological justifications, has been entirely rational. Since Marxism and Stalinism have in common a seemingly 'anti-capitalist' project, that is, a record of decisive inroads against capitalist private property, from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie this identity is far more important than any distinctions between them. Marxism and Stalinism appear either as equivalent phenomena or at least as located on a continuum characterised by the 'authoritarian' appropriation of capitalist private property.

From the standpoint of the working class, however, hostility to Stalinism derives not from its anti-capitalism but from its suppression of independent working class life. If for the bourgeoisie the distinction between Stalinism and Marxism appears peripheral, for the working class it is everything. For Stalinism represents not only 'anti-capitalism' but also the disenfranchisement of the working class and the suppression of independent working class organisation; in short, the opposition of

Stalinist states and parties to private property is accompanied by the crushing of political democracy and the freedoms of civil society. Marxism aspires not merely to anti-capitalism but to a definite form of anti-capitalism which empowers the working class and democratises both the state and society to its roots.

The distinguishing feature of Stalinism lies in the reactionary form it gives to the 'anti-capitalist' struggle: it represents the abrogation both of the particularity of bourgeois society (individuality, free will, civil liberties) in the name of the battle against egoism, and of the universality of bourgeois society (equal right, political democracy, universal suffrage) in the name of the class struggle. Marxism by contrast represents the extension of bourgeois particularity and universality beyond the limits imposed by bourgeois society; to use Marx's own phrase, communism is the 'positive supersession' of bourgeois property, law and state and not their 'abstract negation'. In this regard, in spite of their common commitment to 'anti-capitalism', Marxism and Stalinism are mutually and inherently antagonistic.

When I write of what Marxism is, perhaps I should say what Marxism ought to be if, firstly, it followed the spirit of Marx's own critique and, second, it placed itself firmly in the camp of democracy. Unfortunately, this is not what 'actually-existing' Marxism — not just official communism but also many strands of independent Marxism — has often stood for. Its critical emphasis has typically been placed on the insufficiency of Stalinist 'anti-capitalism' rather than on the surfeit of Stalinist anti-Marxism.

This attitude has been most visible in the interpretation of Stalinism as an essentially 'rightist' political force, which is destined to compromise with capitalism and collaborate with the bourgeoisie, akin in most respects to the extreme right wing of the labour bureaucracy. This partial analysis finds its historical foundation in those periods in which Stalinist states and parties, inside and out of Russia, have been ready to co-operate with sections of the established bourgeoisie against the more militant sections of the working class: I am thinking especially of the classic 'popular front' periods of 1924-28, 1936-39, and 1941-47; we could then add the years of peaceful co-existence and market reforms after 1956, the advent of Euro-Communism and 'historic compromise' in western Communist Parties in the late 1960s and the present readiness of sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy to embrace the accumulation of private capital as a solution to their problems.



Karl Marx: communism is the positive supersession of bourgeois property, law and state, and not their 'abstract negation'

The existence of these 'rightist' periods of Stalinism has led many Marxists to misconstrue Stalinism as *essentially* a force for class collaboration with the bourgeoisie, so that Stalinism came to signify at best an irresolute anti-capitalism and at worst a positive opposition to anti-capitalist politics. The Stalinist doctrine of 'socialism in one country' was interpreted in this light as an abandonment of anti-capitalism outside of the Soviet Union itself. The same characterisation of Stalinism as a 'rightist' political force was shared by many Communists and Marxists who attached a positive meaning to

"Marxism cannot be defined negatively... the slogan of anti-capitalism and anti-Stalinism may be a useful starting point, but it is no substitute for the positive reformulation of Marxism".

popular frontism, idealising it as the 'golden period' of Communist Party history, when the demands of international Communism were married to those of indigenous national movements and when Communists escaped from sectarian isolation in order to lead the struggles of the people as a whole. Their rose-coloured retrospectives on the popular front have been amply criticised on the anti-Stalinist left², but the bitter fights between Stalinists and anti-Stalinists over the assessment of popular frontism obscure the common ground they share: namely that Stalinism is fundamentally designed for class collaboration.

The identity of argument between supporters and critics of popular frontism consists in their common appraisal of the popular front as the kernel of the Communist-Stalinist tradition. We should add that the fog is further thickened when supporters of popular frontism have reserved the name of 'Stalinism' for the left turns of the Communist Party and elevated popular fronts as the jewel of the 'authentic Communist tradition'.

The defect of this paradigm — I use the term to denote a mode of thought which contains different and opposing political judgements — is that it projects definite and limited periods of Communist politics, its so-called 'right turns', as the essence of Stalinism. Consequently the 'left turns' of Stalinism have either been ignored, repressed or assimilated in some other way to this model, for example, by interpreting them as the result of pressures from below on a reluctant Stalinist bureaucracy or seeing them as a temporary zig-zag soon to be rectified. It is not surprising that the Right has perceived the 'anti-capitalist' aspect of Stalinism with much greater clarity than the left, since the traditional national bourgeoisies have been its immediate victims. In seeking out the 'quintessence' of Stalinism, the left definition of its leaning on and towards capitalism is but the obverse of the traditional bourgeois definition of its unrelenting anti-capitalism. Neither addresses the phenomenon as a whole.

For socialists caught up in this way of seeing Stalinism, periodic disorientation has followed each Stalinist turn to the left. On each occasion that Stalinist states and parties have both spoken the language of anti-capitalism and translated their word into deed, these socialists have been trapped by their own imagery: they have either denied reality, asserting that the Stalinists

have not in fact moved against the bourgeoisie, or have treated the left turn as an inessential passing phase. When the reality of left Stalinism breaks through the constraints of this theoretical paradigm and forces itself on consciousness, socialists have been drawn to the entirely erroneous conclusion that the Stalinists have adopted the programme and policies of revolutionary socialism; interpreted on the left as a belated seeing of the revolutionary light and on the right as an ultra-left deviation.

Consequently, Marxists — the revolutionary wing of socialism — have turned themselves either into the extreme left wing of Stalinism, pushing for a quicker and yet more radical turn to the left, or into the democratic wing of Stalinism, pushing for a more humane, softer version of the same. The identification of Stalinism with class collaboration has led to both an inconsistent anti-Stalinism, over-critical of its right turns and under-critical of its left turns, and to an identification of 'true' socialism with left Stalinism. By defining Stalinism as insufficiently anti-capitalist, the left presents itself as really anti-capitalist, as what we might call anti-anti-capitalist.³

Such has been the source of the Stalinisation of Marxism far beyond the confines of Stalinism itself and is the central problem of defining a Marxist response to the contemporary crisis of Stalinism. Marxism cannot be defined negatively; it is neither simply the negation of bourgeois forms of social life nor is it simply the negation of Stalinism. The slogan of 'anti-capitalism, anti-Stalinism' may be a useful starting point for socialists, but is no substitute for the positive re-formulation of Marxism.

One of the stock Marxist answers to the identification of Stalinism and socialism is to say that whatever Stalinism is, it is not socialism. Stalinism is counterposed either to the *idea* of socialism, the definition of which is given prior to the critique of Stalinism, or to the *ideal realisation* of socialism, which is usually located in the Russian revolution. This line of argument inverts the procedure of investigation which is required: it sets socialism up as a dogmatic standard against which to measure Stalinism, whereas the proper method must be a criticism of Stalinism that is not afraid of its findings, even when these findings undermine our idea of socialism or our belief that we have beholden its ideal realisation. It is through the critique of Stalinism that we reconstruct the ideal of socialism; it is not by positing socialism as a dogmatic abstraction that we complete our critique of Stalinism.

1. Karl Marx: Letter to Arnold Ruge, September 1843.

2. See for example Leon Trotsky: 'Problems of the Chinese Revolution'; Theodor Draper: 'The History of the American Communist Party'; Felix Morrow: 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain'; George Orwell: 'Homage to Catalonia'; Dan Guerin: 'Front Populaire: Revolution Manquée'; Jacques Danos and Marcel Gibelin: 'June '36 Class Struggle and the Popular Front in France'; and Robert Fine 'Beyond Apartheid: Labour and Liberation in South Africa'.

3. To adapt a passage from Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verse*.

The new left opposition

By Martin Thomas

Today the political tides in Eastern Europe are flowing strongly for the pro-capitalist right wing, and sometimes for nationalists and chauvinists, not for workers' liberty. The authentic socialists, those who fight against both Stalinism and capitalism for a self-managing commonwealth, are everywhere a small minority.

Poland

The strongest of the movements for workers' liberty in Eastern Europe is in Poland.

In 1980-81 the whole of Solidarnosc committed itself to the programme of a "Self-Managing Republic". "We demand the implementation of...a new socio-economic order which will conciliate the plan, self-management and the market.

"The basic organisational cell for the economy should be a social enterprise, governed by the workers represented by a council, and with the running of the enterprise entrusted to a manager chosen by the council through competitive vote and recallable by it. The social enterprise will dispose of the common property entrusted to it in the interests of society and of its own workforce. It will do business on the basis of economic calculations. The State should influence it through regulations and by means such as prices, taxes, loans, rates of exchange, etc...

"Reform should humanise planning. The main plan should reflect the aspirations of the population and be accepted by it..."

Probably some members and leaders of Solidarnosc supported this socialist programme only because it seemed to them inopportune, unnecessarily risky, or impossibly radical, to advocate a free market economy. But there was a genuine movement for a democratic working-class alternative to both Stalinism and capitalism.

Somewhere around the mid-'80s, according to opinion surveys, that movement petered out. Polish workers and their leaders swung round to the view that the best they could aim for was a Western-style market economy. That shift of opinion in Poland shaped working-class politics right across Eastern Europe.

A full analysis of its causes is matter for another article. That the period after 1983 was the first since the Second World War when the West was markedly more stable and dynamic economically than Eastern Europe must have been a factor, even

though Latin America and Africa suffered worse times than Eastern Europe. The Western Left's hesitant, equivocal, or sometimes plainly hostile attitude to the Polish workers' movement was another factor.

Under martial law the leaders of Solidarnosc found their strongest — and wealthiest — support from pro-capitalist circles in the West. Their politics shifted to suit. A minority of Solidarnosc activists responded by launching the *Polish Socialist Party (PPS)* in 1987.

In 1988 the PPS split, more on the lines of impatient young activists versus cautious veterans rather than left versus right. The PPS-Lipski is now a small group in the secular social-democratic wing of Solidarnosc's political front (the Citizens' Committees). The PPS-RD (Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution) became an energetic, visible activist group, although with only a few hundred members.

In early 1990 the PPS-RD again split, this time on political lines. The name PPS-RD was kept by the group around Zuzanna Dabrowska and Piotr Ikonowicz, centred in Warsaw; the other faction, centred around Jozef Pinior in Wroclaw but with members in Warsaw too, took the name "Socialist Political Centre".

The politics of the Dabrowska-Ikonowicz faction are somewhere between anarcho-syndicalism and social democracy. They are revolutionaries, in favour of the workers taking over the factories, mines, shipyards and offices. But after the workers' takeover they reject any central planning, wanting instead market relations between the worker-run enterprises purged of any monopolistic elements.

They concede that a state is necessary. But instead of advocating that the bureaucratic state be replaced by a *workers' state*, they propose that the state be *limited*, for example by reducing the army from a conscript force to a professional force and by transferring all powers of taxation to local government.

The split between them and the Pinior faction came after a confused and furious argument over "Trotskyism", the Dabrowska-Ikonowicz faction being "anti-Trotskyist". Another issue was orientation to Solidarnosc, the Dabrowska-Ikonowicz faction being more inclined to cooperate with green, pacifist, and anarchistic groups and to downgrade work in Solidarnosc.

The Pinior faction ("Socialist Political Centre") is now a distinctively Trotskyist

group, of maybe a hundred members. Of the various neo-Trotskyist factions internationally, it has the closest relations with the Mandel group ("United Secretariat"), but it does not share Mandel's view that the old regime in Poland was a "deformed workers' state" and it remains open to other ideas.

Despite its small size, the "Socialist Political Centre" has considerable influence and contacts in Solidarnosc, at least in the Wroclaw region. Jozef Pinior himself is one of the best-known Solidarnosc leaders from the period of martial law.

The "Socialist Political Centre" champions Solidarnosc's programme from 1980-1, the "Self-Managed Republic". And it has spelled out a programme for workers' action in much more detail than any other left opposition group in Eastern Europe. It demands weekly cost-of-living increases to wages, with prices monitored by the unions; social control over food distribution; the right to work, and a shorter work week; and the opening of the books of management.

Pinior assesses Poland today as follows: "The bureaucracy is trying to change itself into a strong class with a lot of elements of capitalism. I don't know whether it will be capitalism or not capitalism. Of course it will not be socialism! The bureaucracy is completely reactionary.

"It is different to say how this process will look. On the one hand the bureaucrats' position is very strong because they have the army and police, on the other hand very weak because they have workers' resistance.

"They couldn't advance economic production. They organised the first step on a massive scale — industrialisation — then stopped. Now they are looking for a new way to advance themselves."

Germany

The *United Left* in East Germany is bigger than the Polish left groups, or than the other left groups in Eastern Europe, though its roots in the working class are nowhere near as strong as the Polish left's. Although the Honecker regime tolerated very little independent political activity, it could not stop people watching West German TV, and the books of Trotsky, for example, were available in German to anyone with a bit of determination and access to a university library. Some space was thus created for a left opposition culture to develop.

The *United Left* is a loose federation of groups — left-Christian, semi-anarchist,



United Left conference: "Self-management, not sell-out"

radical reformers from the old Stalinist party, independent Marxists. It must have several hundred members. In the March 1990 elections it won 20,000 votes.

It was founded in early October 1989 on the basis of the "Bohlen platform":

1. Social ownership of the means of production as the main foundation now and for the future for socialist socialisation.
2. Extending self-determination of the producers in carrying through real socialisation of total economic activity.
3. Consistent implementation of the principle of social security and social justice for all members of society.
4. Political democracy, the rule of law, consistent application of unrestricted human rights and the free development of the individuality of every member of society.
5. Restructuring of society in accordance with environmentalist principles.
6. All these principles are valid worldwide.

Despite being a loose federation, with a constitution carefully designed to favour local initiative and forestall a strong centre, the United Left has vigorous internal debate, and has produced a much more detailed manifesto than any other left opposition group in Eastern Europe. Having devoted much thought and discussion to the question of the market and planning, the United Left explains itself with great clarity on this question. It explains that it wants both *more market* and *more planning*.

"It is not planned economy which has collapsed in the GDR, but a system of bureaucratic command economy disguised as 'planning'. It is a specially harmful form of planlessness, because a system of state control, based on huge apparatuses, veiled the devastating results of its management with penetrating claims of success.

"We need not somewhat less, but more planning — economic regulation according to need, economically based, work-

ing with value and price regulators, based on workplace self-management and operating through the use of market mechanisms.

"Below the accountable central planning of infrastructure, market regulators must operate, to ensure proportionality and the needed production, in particular, of goods of mass consumption. The state should influence the economic planning of self-managed enterprises not through command but through regulation.

"Planning in the sense of a people's economy will thus gain acceptance 'from below to above', in a centrally influenced economic framework.

"The apparent alternative, 'planned economy or market economy', is used by the advocates of a 'social market economy' in the current discussions in order to offer as 'the solution' for the GDR a capitalism which is anything but social."

Not all the groups of the United Left would argue the same way. A manifesto produced by the Rostock group, for example, for the March elections, tends much more towards the "market/self-management" model proposed by the Dabrowska-Ikonowicz group in Poland.

Distinctively, also, the United Left has a feminist plank in its programme, and an organised Marxist-feminist group ("Lila Offensive") within it. Defence of the liberal East German abortion law (abortion on request within the first three months) against the much more restrictive West German law will be one of the big issues for the left as Germany unifies.

The United Left opposed German unification. Though different people in the United Left had different slants on this — some seeing unification under any foreseeable circumstances as a veritable catastrophe, others saying that it was really a matter of arguing over the *conditions* for unification — still a basic leaflet ("What Does the United Left Want?") had as its very first words, "We are for the defence of the sovereignty of the GDR

vis-a-vis all demands for a quick 'reunification'..."

As some comrades in the United Left will concede, the strongest drive for unifying Germany came from *the East German workers* — and not necessarily because these workers are nationalist-minded, or pro-capitalist (though many are), but because they could see that the East German state was *finished* and wanted to grasp levers which would enable them to secure the same rights and conditions as West German workers. The United Left thus isolated itself from the workers.

Now that unification is fast becoming an established fact, maybe that isolation can be mended. Maybe, also, the independent trade union groups in East Germany can make progress. The Initiative for Independent Trade Unions (IFUG) has so far remained very small, and the old East German government-controlled unions are being taken over lock, stock and barrel by West German unions. The East German TUC (FDGB) has dissolved itself so that the East German unions can be taken over one by one. IFUG's policy is now to build links with rank-and-file groups in West German trade unions.

The United Left, too, will have to consider its relations with West German groups; the debates on the German left in coming years will be a unique microcosm of the relations between East European and West European leftists. According to Thomas Kupfer, a United Left member from Halle, "There are some Trotskyists in the United Left — but not dogmatic. You have to defend Trotsky against a lot of Trotskyists..."

"I would accept none of the theories about the nature of the Stalinist states. They all elevate one aspect. There are a lot of theories in the United Left.

"It wasn't capitalism in the traditional sense used by Marxists. State capitalism? It's true it was not an alternative to exploitation and alienation in capitalism. Socialism in one country is not possible.

"But the Stalinists were forced to make

some improvements, for example in social security. And a lot of things were promised in the laws which weren't realised but should be defended — for example, we defend the 'people's property' against the bureaucrats' attempts to sell it off although in fact it was the property of a minority.

"Bureaucratic collectivist' theories are interesting too. But it's very complicated."

Czechoslovakia

In Czechoslovakia there was the only Trotskyist publicly active in Eastern Europe before 1989, Petr Uhl, a sympathiser of Ernest Mandel's "United Secretariat". In and out of jail, constantly harassed and under surveillance, Uhl remained bravely active as a leading member of the "Charter 77" democracy movement.

In the revolution of 1989 "Charter 77" became the basis for the Civic Forum, now (with its Slovak sister group Public Against Violence) Czechoslovakia's ruling party. Civic Forum is a coalition, mainly of Christian Democrats and hard-nosed free-market economists. Although the people of Czechoslovakia told an opinion survey in December 1989 that only three per cent of them wanted capitalism, they also wanted a government of "experts" — and the economic experts in Civic Forum are free-marketeers, now increasingly in the ascendant. In June 1990 they announced a crash programme for selling off most state enterprises within two years.

Uhl is still accepted as a left-winger *within* Civic Forum. He is now boss of the government news agency, and was a Civic Forum candidate in the June 1990 elections.

Late in 1989, however, Uhl did launch a group called "Left Alternative", which remains active even though Uhl himself plays little role. It has about 50 members, with a periphery of maybe 150 more. Its members are mainly veterans of 1968, mainly in Prague. Left radical youth are more attracted to anarchist groups, though Left Alternative is able to collaborate with some of them.

Left Alternative's platform demands that: "The mammoth 'state enterprises' must be divided into rationally functioning economic subjects. The self-management structures must work not just on the level of factory management, but also the plant and workplace level.

"The bureaucracy must be rejected. It's necessary to find a form of organising work, and of legal authority, which would not just guarantee productivity, but in which the paid employee would have a real influence on the management and results of his labour and on the distribution of the profits created."

Unlike anywhere else in Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia has had a strong reform movement in its official, formerly

government-controlled, trade unions, which has replaced their entire leadership. So far Left Alternative has failed to make links with that (mainly syndicalist) reform movement. But a turn away from its origins as a left wing of Civic Forum, and towards the working class, is vital for the future of Left Alternative.

Hungary

Hungary had had a more liberal political regime than the rest of Eastern Europe for some years before 1989. A left group had developed on the fringes of the ruling party, called the Alternative Left. In a manifesto dated March 1989, it declared:

"The success of the workers' efforts is prevented by the State as well as by Capital. We believe that the Left should commit itself to the realisation of workers' self-management..."

"In the given conditions of the international relation of forces, Hungary should strive to create a mixed economy, dominated by social property, which would contain a direct social sector alongside the state and private capitalist sectors. This direct social sector would be the domain of direct collaboration of consumers and producers, organised from below..."

The Alternative Left, however, was unable to play any role in the hectic events which followed. A tiny Trotskyist group exists in Hungary (the League of Revolutionary Socialists of Hungary, linked to the Workers' Revolutionary Party in Britain) but it also has had little impact.

Most of the radical youth have gone to FIDESZ, the Federation of Young Democrats, a group distinguished by a more radical and activist drive for democracy than the two main opposition groups, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (now the governing party) and the Alliance of Free Democrats. Dominant opinion in FIDESZ is pro-capitalist, but there are, it seems, a few socialists in it.

A Hungarian "Solidarity" union movement was launched by activists from FIDESZ, but it remains very tiny. Other independent unions, of white-collar and technical workers, are larger, but not very large, and strictly bread-and-butter movements. The left remains very weak in Hungary.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria has an independent trade union movement called Podkrepa (Support). According to the scanty reports in the Western press, it is mainly based among white-collar and technical workers, with only some tens of thousands of members. Nevertheless, in early 1990, it felt strong enough to call for a one-day general strike (for faster progress towards democracy) against the neo-Stalinist government and against the wishes of the opposition coalition (Union of Democratic Forces, UDF) in which

Podkrepa participates. The strike was called off only after definite concessions from the government.

Podkrepa has taken part in counter-demonstrations opposing chauvinist protests against the government's restoration of rights to Bulgaria's Turkish minority. But we have no information about it developing an economic and social programme independent of the UDF's.

The UDF's programme is the standard one of the middle-class opposition movements in Eastern Europe: democracy, a market economy, protection of the environment. Unfortunately for the UDF, the revamped neo-Stalinist party in Bulgaria has moved deftly enough to win the June 1990 elections on much the same programme, and to control the whole process of reform, so far, from above.

USSR

Boris Kagarlitsky's Socialist Party and Socialist Trade Union Association (Sotsprof) are, of all the Eastern left opposition groups, by far the best-known in the West. Kagarlitsky himself has had two thick books published in Britain ('The Thinking Reed' and 'The Dialectics of Change'), and received the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize. The Socialist Workers' Party has launched fund-raising efforts for Sotsprof to the exclusion of all other socialist and workers' groups in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

The Socialist Party and Sotsprof are certainly important groups which deserve support from Western socialists. But they are not the be-all and end-all of the Eastern left. They have less weight in the USSR than the Polish left groups or the East German United Left have in their countries; and they are less clear politically than the Polish or East German groups.

Kagarlitsky himself is a sort of left social-democrat. "In my view," he writes in 'The Thinking Reed', "Martov and Allende were right, not Lenin." He defines the USSR as having a non-capitalist and non-socialist "statocratic mode of production", which he also sees as prevailing in such Third World states as Mexico. He seeks a "middle way" to a new society, between reform and revolution.

The Socialist Party and Sotsprof have only some hundreds of members. The USSR, however, unlike Eastern Europe, has a fast-growing and militant independent trade union movement. An independent miners' union is now (June 1990) in the process of formation, with around one million members. An independent trade union centre, the Confederation of Labour, was formed in May 1990. Kagarlitsky's group, mainly intellectuals, has little influence in these circles, which tend towards ideologies of worker self-management at enterprise level, a free market, and social-democratic welfare provision.

'A socialist party — that is the basic need of today'

Milka Tyszkiewicz, a member of the Socialist Political Centre in Poland, spoke to Workers' Liberty about the lessons for socialism from Eastern Europe.

How do you think a democratic system should work? What is your idea of a workable democracy?

I cannot say what a democratic Poland would be like because I cannot imagine full democracy in Poland within non-democratic surroundings.

In my opinion democracy should be based on mass cooperation of workers, employees, and consumers. Now in Poland there is 30 per cent of bourgeois democracy. But I think that full parliamentary democracy is not the end of democratic thought.

I can imagine more democratic systems, socialist systems of self-organisation from below.

Could you define socialism as you see it?

You ask what socialism means. What does capitalism mean? Does it mean the most developed countries, or Latin American countries? Does it mean the political system in Britain, or the political system in South Africa? How can I answer what socialism is when there is no socialist country in the world?

For me socialism means a direction. The most important aspect is democracy, democracy from below. Second, socialism means cooperation of people from less developed and more developed countries, working for democracy and the most basic human rights, not only the right to vote once every four years but also full employment, housing for everybody, education, health care for everybody.

For me, socialism is the fight for human rights.



Milka Tyszkiewicz

In Poland now, although the political monopoly of the PZPR has been broken, the state machine is still mostly run by the old bureaucrats. What policy do you think would be best for trying to replace that entrenched bureaucratic power by democracy from below?

In Poland we are coming out of a big black hole, 40 years of a monopolistic system and monopolistic power. In general, Polish society knows very well what a trade union is, but we are just starting on organising ourselves into political parties. We are starting our political differentiation.

We've got 30 per cent of parliamentary democracy, and we have got two great powers. On the one hand, there is the former Stalinists, who have now split into two political parties. On the other hand, we have Solidarity, the trade union. I think the next step has to be the creation of a political workers' or labour party which will fight for democracy from below. A socialist party — that is the basic need for today.

We face a great economic crisis. This is a problem not only of Poland, but also of other East European countries. An IMF plan was introduced in Poland at the beginning of January this year. I can't agree with such so-called adjustment which makes big groups of our society hungry. I disagree with the programme of our government. It has to be changed.

In my opinion, our economy needs great changes, but they have to be decided in Poland, by the people who are interested primarily in the situation of the Polish economy — not by small groups of rich people or bureaucracy but by all of society, not by the IMF or by some groups in the government.

A self-limited state instead of a self-limited revolution, in the context of Poland, is a great idea. But it can't work in Poland alone, or even in Eastern Europe, or Europe alone. It has to be introduced on an international scale.

But if in the coming months Polish workers mobilise against the austerity plan in a revolutionary way, and they want to change society, what form of government do you think they should introduce? Through what forms of democracy should they try to take control of society?

If there should be such an uprising — if — as in 1980-81, we have seen already how it works. Workers organised themselves in the factories, and also on the territorial scale. We saw the same in the uprising of the Siberian miners, who took control not only over atomised factories but also over a whole territory. They took control not only over production but also over distribution.

A new state would be organised from below, from the level of the factory, town or neighbourhood up to a general representation of society which would be a mixture of territorial self-management bodies, factory self-management bodies, different political parties, women's liberation groups, national minorities, and so on. The general model is parliamentary democracy, but based much deeper than here.

The reason why we call a workers' state a semi-state is that it would be democratic, it would be based on the majority, not the minority: but it would also be a state, in that if you make a revolution you must repress those who are against the revolution. The workers would need to arm themselves, they would need to fight the armed forces of the old system.

I am very wary of saying semi-state or state together with workers' control, because the border line between self-defence and repression is very thin. Sometimes, somebody who starts from self-defence can finish as the same Stalinist, trying to make socialism in one country, as we have seen for the last sixty years. Because of that, I don't like to use that phrase at all. I would rather avoid it.



Polish socialists protest

It's true that you cannot avoid the question of the state, but I think it has to be done on a more general scale. Sixty years ago, or in the time of Marx, the relationships between the working class, the state, and the flow of capital were completely different from what they are now. We have a different capitalism from sixty years ago, a different flow of capital between states, and a different working class, and different states.

In my opinion, you can't just talk about the relationship between the working class and the state, forgetting about foreign capital. You always have to consider them together, the working class, the state, and capital.

So what do you think the relationship between the working class and capital should be?

Ten years ago there was a group of workers in France who tried to organise a beautiful socialist factory at Lip. They did it, but they forgot the relationship between their power and the power of capital around them. They ended up bankrupt, and before that they had to introduce some unemployment at their factory.

So talking about the relationship between the workers and power is not enough. They took power in their factory...

But they didn't take power in the state...

But taking power in the state is also not enough, if you compare one state to the rest of the world. Today, capital has much bigger power than the workers could have by taking power within one state. To talk of a semi-state only is dangerous, because

you can forget that it's not enough in one state — still, capital controls what you do.

What assessment do you have of the shape and tempo of the class struggle that will develop in Poland with the move to the free market and the IMF austerity plan?

It's difficult to talk about Poland alone. It's a dynamic process in Eastern Europe, and not only in Eastern Europe but also China, South Africa, Brazil — the election result of Lula. All these are small parts of the same process. This year might be very important not only for Poland but for societies in the whole world.

There is an incredible movement for democracy. For the first time in this century there is such a great movement fighting for democracy and for freedom and for human rights. I think that it can't be stopped that easily on the level of an austerity plan for Poland. That movement is much broader than just within Poland. It cannot be stabilised in Poland on the level of austerity measures. It can't work.

We face the problem of the reunification of Germany, of the destabilisation of the Russian state, of the danger of the limits of sources of energy. There is a great movement for ecological production. Probably we are somewhere at the beginning of changes in the world — not in the middle, but at the beginning.

The possibilities are open. The situation is very complicated, and because of that we should be concerned rather with the direction of our own behaviour than with prospects. My direction is for human rights, rights for full employment, for housing, for eating, for health care, for

clean food, clean life, forests... We should cooperate with every power in the world which tries to keep the same direction — political power, trade union power, democratic power.

How do you explain the way that the bureaucrats in Poland, whose whole system has been centred on state control, have suddenly become converted to the free market and privatisation?

I'm not that surprised. The Polish bureaucracy want more exploitation. They wanted to discipline the Polish working class. I think that the pro-market reforms, for them, mean new methods of disciplining the working class, not only through political or police and army measures, but also through economic measures.

If they had any connections to leftist ideology, they broke those connections years and years ago. So they are trying to cooperate with those powers who help them with increasing the discipline and exploitation of the working class, and getting bigger profits for themselves.

To what extent could you define the bureaucracies in Eastern Europe now as just tools or instruments of the Western bourgeoisie?

It's very difficult to say now, at the beginning of the changes, how big an initiative the bureaucracies in the East have. For example, I don't think you can't say that Mr Gorbachev has not made any initiatives on the world, or that he didn't put pressures on the Western countries...

Isn't there a distinction between the Russian bureaucracy, which is more solid, and

the East European bureaucracies, which had been propped up by Russia?

I don't treat the Polish bureaucracy as a separate power. Not so long ago, decisions about the Polish situation were made in the Kremlin, not in Warsaw. So for me the Polish bureaucracy is the same power as the Kremlin.

The decisions used to be made in the Kremlin. Do you think they will be taken now in New York or Frankfurt?

Margaret Thatcher is very afraid of Western Germany unified with East Germany, and she says it will be a big centre of controlling Europe. Maybe Frankfurt, maybe Tokyo. I don't know. Maybe in the Kremlin.

Do you think the Stalinist system in Eastern Europe has now collapsed completely, or could there be a comeback?

In Poland we had elections with 30 per cent of parliamentary democracy. The Stalinists keep power by controlling the National Bank, the army and the police, and Jaruzelski is president. Being realistic, one should say that the Stalinists still have power in their hands.

The question is whether the bureaucracy means the Stalinist party, or the Stalinist party is only an instrument of the bureaucracy. If the bureaucracy means the same as the Stalinist party, then the problem of the bureaucracy has disappeared. The bureaucracy has collapsed. But if the Stalinist party was only an instrument, a political measure to control the working class in Poland, then the same people have kept power, or part of power. The old bureaucrats are still very important in Polish political life.

I would like to be careful.

Why do you think the Stalinist systems in Eastern Europe have had this big crisis?

What does "Stalinist system" mean? I found in Britain that people say "Stalinist system" and they mean the political Stalinist party controlling society by a party-state system. But for me it means also a huge bureaucracy which controls political, economic and cultural life.

For sure the Stalinist parties have collapsed. That is easily seen in Poland, in Czechoslovakia, in Eastern Germany, maybe even in Russia. But when you look deeper into everyday life in Poland, you see that the same bureaucrats keep the same positions, mostly. There are some small changes at the top, but in the factories, for example, the same bureaucrats still control. In some factories there are more bureaucrats than workers. On the level of the economy, the bureaucrats are still in power.

There is still a long way before us before we will get out of the Stalinist system.

How would you define or describe the Stalinist system?

It is different in different countries. I can say what the Stalinist system *doesn't* mean. It *doesn't* mean only a state-party

political system of controlling economic and political life. It doesn't mean *only* keeping political control by the Kremlin; you have for example China or Angola, countries which are not connected to the Kremlin but it is very difficult to call them capitalist.

I don't think the Stalinist system can be compared with capitalism. What is capitalism?

Wage labour, production for profit...

Wage labour in Britain, or in Brazil?

Both Brazil and Britain have wage labour, at different levels...

Poland also has wage labour...

Personally, I think the Stalinist systems are state-capitalist, but other people would say that because the state rather than the market controls economic relations they are not any form of capitalism, but rather "bureaucratic collectivism"...

What would you call the Lip factory? Because of the big pressure of the market outside, they had to expel some workers. Could you call them capitalists?

Not really. But you can't necessarily use terms like capitalist, bureaucratic collectivist, or workers' state for one factory, only for a whole system.

You cannot compare systems just by seeing the relationship between the working class and the state. You have to look at the working class, the state, and the market.

So it's impossible to say what is better. Capital is not something which is separate in the West and in the East, it exists everywhere. We have the problem not only of the relationship between the working class and the state, but also of the relationship between more developed and less developed countries, countries which are in debt and countries which are centres of capital.

I can imagine Poland very poor if it is in the same position as Mexico or Brazil, so I think the question "what is better" is wrong.

What do you think is the best democratic or socialist way of dealing with the nationalities question in Eastern Europe?

Socialism means democracy and self-organisation from below. It also mean self-determination from below. I don't know what the Ukrainian minority in Poland wants. I can ask them and they will decide what they want.

How far do you think the rights of such minorities extend? For example, in Kosovo, in Yugoslavia, the Serbian minority there demanded that Kosovo should be part of Serbia.

The freedom of movement of your fist finishes at the nose of your neighbour. If someone thinks that freedom means that he can hit the nose of his neighbour, he's wrong.

Freedom means the right of self-determination for everybody, not only majorities, but also minorities. It means

proportional decision-making.

Do you think there are lessons to be drawn from the experience of Stalinism for whether a planned economy is possible or how a planned economy should work?

The economy is planned everywhere, not only in the Eastern Bloc. The economy is planned much better in capitalist states, especially in the centres of capitalism, where the economy is planned for years in advance.

The economy in Poland has not been planned, it has been ordered. It's a sort of hand-made economy. It's a big difference.

My question about the planning of the economy is not if it will be planned, because it is obvious that it will be, but by whom. That is the difference between me and a rightist. I say that the economy should be planned by the majority, in response to their needs.

What are human needs? Not only profit. I disagree with Adam Smith, that everybody stands for gain. I think everybody stands for a good life, which means good housing, good food, a good place for rest, a good job, a good atmosphere around, good relationships between people, and no war. These are human needs, and the economy should be disciplined by those human needs.

What do you think should be the relationship between planning and the market?

Last September there was an IMF meeting in Washington. The IMF economists were horrified by the fact that they could plan for two or five years ahead, so they could make only short-term investments.

It's a wrong question. The question is not what proportion between the market and planning, but what the economy means — standing for gain or for a good life. The relationship between the market and planning is a secondary problem.

What do you think of the argument that Stalinism was a direct product of Leninism and Bolshevism?

It's a very complicated question. Stalinism was also a direct product of the human dream about paradise.

There have been many revolutions in the world, and millions and millions of people were involved in making those revolutions. I can't believe all the revolutionists in Russia, in Cuba, in Nicaragua, in China, were standing for profit, for power. There was quite a big number of people who wanted a better life in their countries, and not only for themselves but for society as a whole.

It's very difficult to know what the proportion is between human wishes and objective conditions. Maybe there is somebody in secondary school who will grow up and write the next volume of *Capital*.

So how would you explain how Stalinism arose?

That is the next volume of *Capital!*

Before the Holocaust:

Trotskyists debate Palestine

In this article Robert Fine looks at working-class socialist views from the late 1930s on Palestine.

The road towards the bloody debacle of 1948 — when half a million Arabs were driven out as the Israeli Jewish state established itself in war against invading Arab armies — was already clear then. Nazi persecution, and curbs by countries like Britain and the US on Jewish immigration, pushed the Jews towards Zionism and the Zionists towards anti-Arab chauvinism; Zionist advance, and the desperation of Arab peasants driven off their land and jobless, pushed the Arabs towards anti-Jewish chauvinism. The British administration in Palestine played “divide and rule”.

Read backwards into history, the conventional left view of today would imply uncompromising support for the Arabs against the Jews in Palestine. That position was indeed represented on the left in the late '30s — by the Stalinists, and a small fraction of the Trotskyist movement.

Most of the Trotskyists — while differing among themselves on precise programmes — argued for Arab-Jewish reconciliation for class and anti-imperialist struggle.

“What was a relatively marginal deformation of a small section of the Marxist movement in the 1930s,” the survey concludes, “appears to have become an orthodoxy in the 1980s.”

British Colonialism

The tried-and-tested method of British colonialism was divide-and-rule. Palestine was no exception. The British authorities used every kind of device to set Jew against Arab and Arab against Jew. They didn't create these antagonisms but they exploited them to the full.

The British imperial interest in Palestine was essentially strategic. It was close to Suez, the gateway to India; it provided an air base en route to the Far East; it was a conduit for oil from Iraq; most important, through the naval base at Haifa, it was a base for British policy in the Mediterranean known as the ‘Singapore of the Near East’.

The list of ways in which the British, consciously or inadvertently, incited national hatred between the Arab and Jewish peoples was long. Under the British mandate between the wars, there were four bloody Arab attacks on Jews (1920, 1921, 1929 and 1936-38). After the 1921 attacks, two leading anti-Jewish provocateurs were released from gaol and appointed by the British to the highest Arab offices in the land. The British used the Wailing Wall to set

gangs of Arabs against the religious Jews. The British administration suppressed all attempts at reconciliation between the two peoples. It attacked the Arab liberal party in Haifa which raised the slogan ‘Peace Between Jews and Arabs’. It prohibited membership of the non-racial railroad workers union and brought in thousands of Egyptian workers to break the union. It proscribed the non-racial Achwath Poulim (or Labour Brotherhood). Instances of understanding were not frequent, but when they arose the colonial government put them down.

The effects (and perhaps purpose) of British policy on Jewish immigration and on the land question were equally divisive. It opened the door to some Jewish immigration (perhaps needing a counter-weight to Arab nationalism) and then closed it in fear of the consequences of a large Jewish working class. When the door was open, Arab chauvinism against the alliance of the British and the Jews was excited. When the door was shut (i.e. in 1938), Jewish chauvinism against Arab influence over the British was equally generated.

On the land, the British professed to protect the fellahin (Arab peasants) from eviction by the effendis (semi-feudal Arab landlords). It was formally forbidden to evict tenants unless they were given land elsewhere — except if they refused to pay higher rents or to work the land assigned to them! Jews, seeking an unlimited right of purchase and the freeing of land from all ‘feudal’ restrictions, opposed these ineffectual laws for the protection of tenants. Both the British and the effendis could then direct the anger of the fellahin not against their direct exploiters (the landlords) nor against their political oppressors (the British administration) but against the Jews.

For trotskysts like L. Rock (a pen-name for Tony Cliff, today a leader of the British SWP and advocating very different views) this was the starting point for analysis of the Palestine question. The fundamental conclusion Rock drew was that the task of anti-imperialists was not to support one or other national chauvinism — Zionism against Arabs or Arab nationalism against Jews — but to support one or other kind of reconciliation between Arabs and Jews, the better to fight British imperialism.

Arab and Jewish bourgeoisies

The national bourgeoisies who led the Jewish and Arab nationalist movements were both riddled with racism towards

their opposite numbers and thoroughly unreliable and inconsistent in their professions of anti-imperialism. The leadership of Arab nationalism was in the hands of the semi-feudal class of landlords, who used anti-semitism to deflect the anger of their tenants from themselves. They led the attempted pogroms of Jews. In 1921 they argued that Jews wanted to gain possession of the holy places and that they were importing bolshevism. In 1929 they pressed religious arguments in the cause of anti-Jewish agitation. In the 1930s, as Arab nationalism stressed the unity of all Arabs, Christian and Moslem, the destructive influence of Jewish immigration economically was put to the fore: “The Jews buy land and drive out the Arab peasants; the conditions of the Arab peasants is so hard because of Jewish immigration; Arab industry suffers because of the development of Jewish industry...therefore you must fight the Jewish immigration and settlement”.

During the boom between 1932 and 1935, when the living standards of Arab peasants and workers improved alongside Jewish immigration, the nationalist leaders concentrated on the political set-up of the projected Zionist state.

With the decline of the boom in the latter half of the 1930s (according to Rock — it would be interesting to check his periodisation) the Arab nationalist movement was permeated with an exclusivist spirit of struggle against the Jews and became fertile soil for fascist ideas. German Nazis and Italian Fascists sent their agents to arm, finance and propagandise within the movement. As one contribution to The New Internationalist put it: “This movement does not incline to the Rome-Berlin axis only because it is assisted by the axis. The reverse is truer, that it is assisted by the axis because it is near to it in spirit”. (Hoov (El Nour), N.I., June 1939)

The Arab ruling classes had always been ready to strike compromises with British imperialism at the expense of Jews. One of their main leaders, Djemal al Husseine, agreed that Palestine should become a British crown colony, provided that Jewish immigration was stopped. There was no fundamental conflict between British policy and the Arab upper classes; the Balfour Declaration promising a homeland for the Jews was opportunistically passed to win Jewish support during the First World War and was coupled with another declaration two years earlier to obtain the support of Arabs that Palestine would become part of an independent



Arab nation. The Arab rulers hated the Jews, however, not because Jews were agents of imperialism but because they represented the bourgeois modernisation of the economy and the abolition of feudal forms of landlordism. When the Arab nationalist leaders became more 'anti-imperialist' in the late 1930s, what they really meant was support for German imperialism against British. In this regard, they were not unlike the Afrikaner Nationalists in South Africa.

Jewish nationalists in the Zionist movement were of a very different species but they shared many of the self-same chauvinistic tendencies. Slogans like '100% Jewish labour, 100% Jewish production' were coupled with picketing against Arab workers who held jobs in Jewish enterprises. Even the left Haschomer-Hazair joined the picket lines, though they excepted Jewish firms where Arab workers had been engaged

for many years, but the further left Poale-Zion was against the pickets.

Generally, the Zionist movement was against political independence for Palestine. The extreme right, the 'Revisionists' under Jabotinsky, called for the establishment of a Jewish state on the basis of "an understanding between the Jewish legions and the strategic interests of British imperialism". Arguing that "we have no Arab policy" and that "history teaches us that all colonisations have met with little encouragement from the 'native' on the spot...and we Jews are no exception", Jabotinsky went on to argue that between Britain's interest in a stronghold in the Mediterranean and a Jewish Palestine surrounded by Arabs "there is almost a providential basis for a permanent alliance".

The centre-ground of the Zionist movement argued that for biblical reasons 'the Jewish and Arab claims are

not equal' with regard to Palestine. Originally supporting a 'bi-national' state, Dr Weizman moved to the position that "Palestine will remain as Jewish as England is English". Mapei supported the British plan for partition with retention of a British military presence.

Haschomer-Hazair demanded the fullest co-operation and equality between Arab and Jew, addressing a leaflet to Arabs in 1937 expressing the noble ideal of Arab-Jewish peace. This didn't stop it from picketing Arab workers and calling for the retention of the British Mandate. The whole Zionist movement supported British rule in Palestine in the late 1930s: not surprising perhaps given that 'independence' threatened to bring with it the rule of the anti-semitic Arab Nationalists and the tying of Palestine to German and Italian imperialism.

For revolutionary marxists like L.Rock the reactionary and chauvinist nature of both the Arab and Jewish national bourgeoisies — that is, the leaders of their respective national movements — was the second major premise of their analysis. Seeing these national bourgeoisies arm locked in a fundamental conflict, Rock concluded that the only way forward was to seek to split the national movements, with their legitimate anti-imperialist aspirations, from their respective leaderships.

National Liberation and the Jewish and Arab masses

Marxists had to recognise the separation of legitimate national demands from their chauvinistic and racist deformations and the separation of the interests of the masses from those of the leadership. These separations became increasingly difficult to make empirically toward the end of the 1930s, as the Arab and Jewish masses rallied behind their respective nationalist leaderships on increasingly chauvinistic lines, but they were crucial to make analytically.

The idea that Jews were an integral part of the imperialist camp — the idea held by extreme Arab nationalists and stalinists — was often based on a spurious analogy with whites in South Africa. But the so-called 'imperialist' role of Jews was hard to sustain. Jews made up more than half of the entire working class of Palestine. Skilled and unskilled labour were represented in both Jewish and Arab sections of the working class. But both Jews and Arabs were oppressed by an alien government and deprived of democratic rights. In the two cities where Jews were a majority, Jerusalem and Haifa, the Mayors were in accordance with decrees of the colonial administration Arab. In financial terms the Jews contributed 63% of the government income and in return received a mere 14% of public expenditure on education, 34% on public

works, etc. Labour legislation was as repressive for Jews as for Arabs. So much for the theory that Jews were agents of imperialism and played the privileged role of the South African white. The theory was in effect anti-semitism dressed up in left-wing, anti-imperialist apparel.

The British government always declared that it undertook measures of suppression against Arabs not to maintain its own rule but to protect the Jews. It always declared its desire to realise the establishment of a Jewish national home. This way it strengthened anti-Jewish currents among the Arabs without offering the Jews any concrete benefits. So when the British army demolished Arab villages, blew up hundreds of dwellings and killed villagers, Arab terror was directed not against the British government but against the Jewish population.

Every possible obstacle was put in the way of Jewish immigration by the British government. In Europe Jews were facing a catastrophe more profound than for any other section of the population. The writing of the Holocaust was already on the wall. The Jewish masses sought freedom from oppression. The Zionists were wrong to say that emigration to Palestine offered a solution to the millions of Jews trapped in Europe — who after all would facilitate their departure even if they wanted to go? — but migration was a democratic right which offered an escape for at least some Jews. The great influx of Jews into the United States was stopped by the Johnson Quota Law of 1924. Canada and South Africa followed suit. The stalinist state in Russia closed its doors to foreign Jews as well diverting the smouldering hatred of the masses away from the heights of the bureaucracy to the middle and lower layers, many of whom were Jews. (The right of Jews in the Soviet Union to their own autonomous republic of Biro-Bidjan had been suppressed under the guise of anti-nationalism along with the right of all other Soviet nationalities).

So when the terrible oppression of Jews under Grabski's regime in Poland and under Hitlerism in Germany occurred, where else was there to go but the shores of Palestine? When they reached these shores, they found British immigration policy so restrictive that the Zionist movement boycotted the official immigration channels in 1937 before they were virtually blocked off in 1938/9. There was nothing about Jewish immigration *as such* that was against the interests of the Arab masses. On the contrary the Jewish working class was a potential force for anti-imperialism and for breaking the stranglehold of the feudal landowners. The point at issue for marxists was not to stop Jewish immigration into Palestine — this was the role of British imperialism — but to dissociate the Jewish masses from an ex-

clusivist Zionism.

While the opposition of the Arab upper classes to Jews was thoroughly reactionary, the struggle of the Arab masses against Zionism was progressive. As L.Rock put it: "The upper classes are today successful in diverting the national struggle of the masses into anti-Jewish channels by means of the fact that the predominant majority of the Jewish population is Zionist. The anti-Jewish terror has only increased the influence of Zionism on the Palestinian Jewish masses...All this leads to a situation where today a great part of the Arab masses believe that through their struggle against the Jews they are furthering their own national liberation whereas in fact they are only making their struggle more difficult to the extent that they are strengthening the position of imperialism, Zionism and the feudal Arab leadership". (N.I., Nov 1938)

The rational basis of the antagonism of the Arab masses to the Jews — what allowed a clique of 'effendis' to gain control of a militant national movement of hundreds of thousands — was not (as the Zionists argued), only that the Jews created a modern labour movement and the supersession of feudalism by capitalist development. Their principle opposition arose from the fact that they saw in the Jewish population the bearers of Zionism, a political system based on national exclusivity and hostility to the aspirations of the Arab masses for independence and democratisation.

The Way Forward

The general conclusion drawn by L.Rock and his fellow-thinkers was that a consistent struggle for the easing of Jewish-Arab conflict was "only possible on the basis of the struggle against Zionism, against Arab national exclusivism and anti-Jewish actions, against imperialism, for the democratisation of the country and its political independence". What this meant concretely was the object of some debate.

Rock himself argued for the establishment in Palestine of a democratic independent republic, of a joint organisation of workers, of a joint struggle against national terror, all exclusivist tendencies, the right of immigration for all Jews and Arabs, the transfer of land from the landowners and religious institutions, the annulment of the debts of the fellahin, an eight hour working day, etc.

Others arguing within a similar framework, such as another contributor, 'Haor', argued that "the best way to realise the independence of Jews and Arabs is the partition of the country, in one way or another, into two free parts, not depending on one another...The patriots would not be satisfied, of course, with either of the parts, but the masses would turn their attention to their vital needs and at any rate the 'na-

tional aspirations' would not succeed in penetrating the spirit of the masses and distorting their struggle to the extent that they do today...Self-government of the Jews and the Arabs, each group within the limits of its own settlement, this is the correct and only solution...Therefore it is the correct way towards the full solution of the problem of the country, that is, the establishment of a system that will know neither 'majority' nor 'minority' but a single community of brothers living by its labours". (N.I., June 1939)

I don't want to enter this difficult debate between 'democratisation' and 'two-states'. What was more important were the premises they shared on the divisive role of British imperialism, opposition to the chauvinism of *both* the Zionist and Arab nationalists, recognition of the legitimate national aspirations of the Jewish and Arab masses, the need to *break* the unity of both Jewish and Arab nationalist movements, the need to build for reconciliation between the Arab and Jewish masses. It was a programme whose anti-Zionism was coupled with a powerful opposition to the reactionary leadership of Arab nationalism and the anti-Jewish poison they spread.

It was also a programme which rejected entirely the stalinist view, expressed by the Palestinian Communist Party, that the Jewish population was an integral part of the imperialist camp and the slogans they arrived at: 'Block Jewish immigration! Prohibit the sale of land to Jews! Expropriate the land of the Jews and arm the Arabs!' The stalinists drew the false analogy of Jews in Palestine and whites in South Africa. The stalinists preened themselves before the Arab population with anti-Jewish terroristic actions.

After the First World War members of the Comintern in Palestine, while being absolutely opposed to Zionism, declared at the same time that the Jewish population was not to be identified with Zionism and demanded the maximum freedom of movement for Jewish immigration into Palestine and material aid for Jewish immigrants. They declared that the struggle against Jewish immigration shifted the anti-imperialist struggle into anti-semitism and would only strengthen Zionist chauvinism among the Jewish masses.

With the turn to the right in the colonial policy of the Comintern under Stalin, the CPP in the 1930s began its struggle against Jewish immigration, saying that it was an immigration of conquest and that the struggle of the Arab nationalist movement was defensive.

After the First War, the Comintern in Palestine was for the protection of the Arab peasants against the landlords but at the same time demanded that Jewish settlement on large areas of uncultivated land be made possible. Under the stalinists the Comintern began in the

Palestine

1930s its struggle against the right of Jewish settlement. In short, not only did the stalinists let themselves be taken in tow by the Arab feudal leaders, they themselves took a lead in developing the movement along anti-Jewish lines. It was perhaps small wonder that in May 1938 The New International printed an article by Palestinian Communists on "Why we quit the Communist Party".

Degenerated Trotskyism

Jack Weber (N.I., April 1938) made the point that: "anti-semitism is part of the cancer of Nazism that spreads poisonously outward from the centre of infection...into a world problem". Unfortunately, the trotskyst movement itself was not immune. It came out most sharply in an article entitled 'Zionism and the Arab Struggle' (N.I., Feb 1939) written by The Spark, the organ of the Workers Party of South Africa. The article represented an appalling capitulation to Arab chauvinism, anti-Jewish feeling and stalinist ways of thinking about the issue.

Their basic line was that the "modest" demands of the Arab bourgeoisie must be supported since they expressed "the will of a united people to attain national liberation". These demands were: first, that immigration, i.e. Jewish immigration should be stopped; second, that the sale of Arab land should be prohibited, that is to Jews; third, that there should be established a national government, that is, an Arab national government, in

Palestine. Spark argued that there was a special relation between the Jewish people and British imperialism, since the British "would greatly like to have a Jewish state as its outpost but under pressure from Arab nationalists was forced to concede the demands concerning immigration and land".

According to Spark, confusion had spread among the ranks of marxists who had been "swept off their feet" by the rising wave of anti-semitism. The problem with the stalinists, so it was said, was that while they supported Arab nationalists, they advocated moderation and compromise. What was needed was no compromise in the fight against the Jewish take-over of Palestine. In relation to the growth of anti-semitism in Europe, all The Spark had to say was that Zionists were trying to "cash in" on the sufferings of persecuted Jews and that because of the persecution of Jews and Zionism there was "no connection whatsoever"! Spark drew the false analogy of Jews in Palestine and whites in South Africa, claiming that the function of Zionism was to squeeze profits out of the Native population (i.e. Arabs). It argued that the Jewish labour movement was 100% chauvinist — the left-wing talk of socialism designed only to mislead young Jewish idealists — and that while it was wrong to see all Jews in Palestine as Zionists, it was "understandable" that Arabs drew this conclusion.

The nub of the problem for Spark was Jewish immigration. Its argument went thus: "International socialists were always for free unrestricted immigration and for

complete freedom of movement as part of our democratic rights...It would therefore be ridiculous to assert that we are against free immigration. But the Jewish immigration into Palestine is something entirely different. It is an immigration with the avowed aim of destroying the rights of the native population...It is an invasion under the protection of imperialism. The aim of this immigration is to attain a majority in Palestine...Against this aim, to defeat them, the Arab people, the Natives of Palestine, have waged this war...The immigration question was and is the pivotal point in this struggle".

In the same breath as denying Jews the right of immigration into Palestine, Spark declared that the "solution" lay in "solidarity of Jewish and Arab workers" and "socialism"! As for the persecution of Jews worldwide, Spark declared that there was no anti-semitism in the Soviet Union while in the rest of Europe "their fate is intrinsically bound up with the fate of the working class...So for the Jews there is no special remedy except the advance in union with the working class". This was in 1939.

It is perhaps instructive that The Spark (or Workers Party of South Africa) voluntarily dissolved itself in 1939, many of its main activists to re-appear in 1943 under the guise of the ultra-nationalist and non-socialist Non-European Unity Movement. It is also instructive that its sentiments were strongly criticised in the pages of subsequent issues of The New Internationalist.

What was so terrible in Palestine was that there was a strong national differentiation between Jews and Arabs and on the other hand national unity in the Arab camp was very firm. It was therefore a grave error for The Spark to speak with enthusiasm of the Arab national unity which was displayed in the late 1930s. Marxists had to fight for free migration without falling into illusions about its liberating role and without adopting a chauvinistic attitude to this migration. How far the struggle against Jewish immigration distorted the anti-imperialist struggle was revealed in an incident reported by L.Rock: "A short time ago rumours spread in Palestine that the government was on the verge of stopping Jewish immigration, whereupon the Arabs organised joyous demonstrations in which they cried 'Long live Chamberlain! Long live England! The government is with us!'"

There was no possibility of independence for Palestine without the support of Jewish workers. As long as anti-Jewish terror and the struggle against Jewish immigration were retained, there was no possibility of the liberation movement receiving this support.

The great tragedy is that what was a relatively marginal deformation of a small section of the marxist movement in the 1930s, appears to have become an orthodoxy in the 1980s. Ridding our movement of its stalinist heritage is no easy road.



Revolution set to music

By Clive Bradley

West End musicals might not seem an obvious issue for socialist comment. Most people on the Left probably see them as inevitably trash, designed for money-loaded tourists and without any social or political meaning. Yet coach parties of working class people also go to see these shows. And, maybe, not because they are too culturally stunted to distinguish drama from *Neighbours*.

Over the last few years there has been something of a sea change in the issues people write musicals about. Boy meets girl at stage door and they dance their way to fame and fortune (and love, of course) is out. Now we get the 1830 revolution in France (*Les Miserables*), the Vietnam War (*Miss Saigon*), and Martin Luther King (*King*).

King, however, died a very quick death as a result of semi-political furore before it opened. Coretta King, Martin's widow, objected to parts of it, lyricist Maya Angelou disowned it, the director had to be changed. So bookings were poor, because no one knew if it would ever even open, and with lukewarm reviews, the show folded.

Possibly, although there doesn't seem to be any hard evidence for this, its failure had something to do with having an almost all black cast; apparently it attracted bigger black audiences than most musicals, although that's hardly surprising. Maybe rich white tourists were less interested in *King* than in *Phantom of the Opera*.

In the end *King* did get official approval: Coretta King attended the opening night. But by then it was too late.

A few years ago, it would have been unlikely that a modern political theme of this nature would have been tried. *West Side Story*, while not overtly political, did deal with modern 'social' issues. Since then, there was, of course, the highly controversial *Hair*, which celebrated hippy culture and lambasted old-fashioned values and the Vietnam War. Otherwise, there had been little of that type of musical.

Mr Big in the world of musicals is, of

course, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and his name — he is a Tory — does not conjure up visions of profound political thought. His first two successes, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Evita* were an attempt to deal with substantial issues. *Superstar*, I think, is really about sixties hippydom, naive utopias and all that and is much in the *Hair* mould, but without the radicalism (though it did upset the religious establishment). *Evita* is, of course, about Eva Peron.

But Lloyd Webber's politics (or those of his lyricist Tim Rice) are excruciatingly banal, as well as being catch-penny. *Evita* has Che Guevara anachronistically wondering around representing the spirit of continental revolution, and the theme seems to have been picked more for Peron's charismatic glamour than for anything political. *Superstar's* hippy, like one of *Hair's*, ends up dead, but exactly what he did sacrifice, and whether it was worth it, is left open.

Since then, Lloyd Webber has abandoned all pretence at dealing with 'big' questions. Now, it's pussy cats dancing to horrendously mangled TS Eliot poems, musical resettlings of silent movies, and — I ask you! — people roller skating across the stage pretending to be trains!

Aspects of Love is the polar opposite of social-conscience musicals: it's about personal relationships, love, life, death, with little intrusion from the outside world.

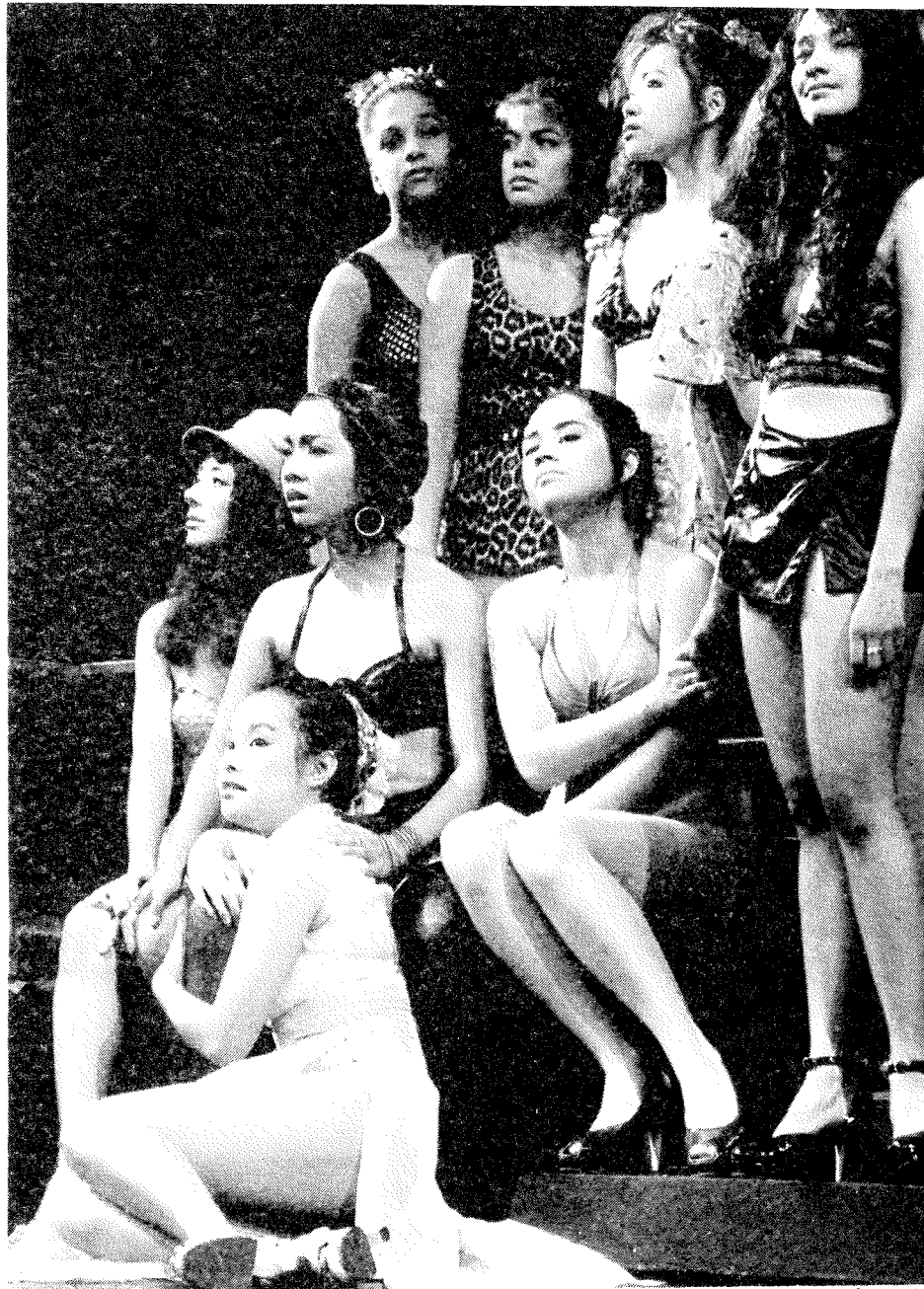
While less well-known as names than Lloyd Webber, French composer Claude-Michel Schönberg and lyricist Alain Boublil must soon be rivalling his income. They now have two mega-hits on the London stage, *Les Miserables* and *Miss Saigon*, which boldly set out to tackle major historical and political subjects. Both have huge advanced-bookings, and *Les Miserables* has been a success all across the world.

City Limits describes *Miss Saigon*, which is still playing with its original cast, as "a tuneless, exploitative bore", which epitomises modish left attitudes towards West End stage musicals. It is an incomprehensible and stupid judgement, motivated either by abject tone-deafness or, more likely, by a determination to hate it on principle — a principle set, however, by nothing more respectable than peer pressure and snobbery.



Miss Saigon is an up-date of *Madam Butterfly*. Instead of Japan, it's set in Vietnam, beginning on the eve of the American evacuation. A GI sleeps with a virgin prostitute, and they fall in love. But he is forced to leave the country without her. Three years later, now married, he discovers that she is living in Bangkok, with his child. When she learns that he has a wife, she kills herself, knowing there is no other way she can make sure her little boy will be taken back to a new life in America.

As much as you could expect within the limits of a musical, *Miss Saigon* covers its themes with subtlety and sophistication. The Vietnamese prostitutes (and their pimp) all have wild dreams of escape to America which never materialise, and anyway are false. Part of the emotional tension created by the climax is that when Kim, 'Miss Saigon', sings to her child,



Scenes from 'Miss Saigon'

"You will be who you want to be, you can choose whatever heaven grants," the audience knows that it is simply not true. He will go to America with his father, but hardly to the fantasy world she has in her head.

Politically, it is resolutely liberal, very much on the level of the recent spate of 'Nam' movies. The Americans did no good for Vietnam. But the Vietnamese are portrayed as victims not only of the Americans, but also of the Viet Cong, who are all fanatics and sadists. The Vietnamese whose ingenuity in survival we most admire are the prostitutes and pimps, who understand the world ("Men will always be men, the rules are the same"), and get by on the strength of their wits and their illusions.

But within that framework, I cannot see how it is "exploitative". And from a certain point of view — namely, that of its

characters — its picture of reality is not entirely false. I'm sure a lot of Vietnamese did see themselves as innocent bystanders.

Les Miserables is a setting of Victor Hugo's epic account of revolution and counter-revolution in France. It nods at the idea that revolution is a naive waste of blood. But it ends with the ghosts of all those who have fallen to the bullets of the police, or the travails of life in general, promising that one day, justice and liberty will be won. Again, pretty liberal, no doubt, and therefore limited. But it brought tears to my eyes.

And it wasn't designed and written to be a major money-spinner. Originally, in England, it was produced at the Barbican arts centre, and became a hit because it was so impressive.

Musically and visually both *Les Miserables* and *Miss Saigon* are extremely classy (at the risk of obsessiveness, I

repeat that *City Limits'* claim that *Miss Saigon* is "tuneless" is completely beyond me).

Whether the coach parties and tourists paying £20 a ticket get much of a political message from them is another matter, of course; and so is whether paying £20 or more to watch stories about desperately poor people isn't odd in itself. But is that not the fault of the theatre business, rather than the musicals themselves? All West End theatre is expensive. It would be idiotic to knock Shakespeare because you have to pay too much to see him.

Given a choice between the standard musical plot, and something with a bit more relevance, surely we should go for relevance. Less money is wasted producing a West End musical than a Hollywood blockbuster. I spent £7.50 to see *Miss Saigon* on a Saturday, and I think it was worth every penny.

Eric Heffer's socialism

After a quarter century in what Lenin pointedly referred to as "their parliament", Eric Heffer is still a man who knows himself to represent the dispossessed and exploited class, still the foremost voice putting a broadly Marxist point of view in the House of Commons.

Before entering Parliament in 1964, he had been a socialist and trade union activist for almost 30 years. He discussed his ideas and experiences with John Bloxam and John O'Mahony.



I think I still believed in God when I left the church.

So you made a sort of radical Protestant criticism of the Anglican church?

No, there was nothing Protestant about it! I wouldn't go as far as that. I just didn't go to church, and I got mixed up in the labour movement, and I read Marx. I also began to read the rationalist press.

I went right through the war, incidentally, as one of the few servicemen with "atheist" on my tags.

I remember being asked by the sergeant when I was first called up what religion was I? And I said that I had not got a religion. He said "You've got to have a religion." "What do you mean I've got to have a religion? I haven't got a religion". So he said "are you an atheist?" I said "that's right".

"Oh my god, how were you brought up?" "I'm not telling you how I was brought up. I'm an atheist". He sent for the Church of England padre, and he said to me: "Supposing you're in battle and you are wounded and lying there on the field. If people come along and find 'atheist' on your tag they might just leave you there..."

And I said, "right, atheist! That's it, atheist." So I went through the war as an atheist.

You got a lot of prejudice for being an atheist. When I was selected for Parliament, I was still an atheist, and it was raised at my selection meeting. So I told a story.

When I was in the forces I had atheist on my tags. At the bottom of your bed there was a card with your name, rank and religion. I always put atheist.

In the bed next to mine was a Salvation Army man, and he used to go down on his knees to pray before going to bed. We had Church of England, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Baptist there, and they used to snigger at him, and sometimes throw boots at him.

I used to take them on. I told them to

leave him alone, that he should be respected. "You don't do that to someone who has got a belief — respect him". Then I said: "If I am selected here today, you respect me for my views." And they tell me that that was the final thing that carried the vote.

But I have to say I always had a sort of sneaking thing about religion. I never really got rid of it. I would sometimes go to church on my own. And sometimes I would go to mass. It was just something that I did, inexplicable to me because my head said that it was not on, but my heart said something else.

And then one day something happened to me and I have never disbelieved in god since.

A long time ago?

1967 or 1968... I never made anything of it...but I think my wife was quite happy because she had never been other than a Methodist all her life, even when she was in the CP. But we got married in church only to please both her parents and mine. Naturally I wanted to get married in a registry office.

Can we ask what exactly it is you believe?

I believe that there is a sort of presence, I think there is a God — I just think there is, that's all, it's as simple as that. I suppose it's a part of my childhood, when you've been brought up to believe from the time you were born. I suppose there was always a great conflict in myself over this matter, because sometimes when I listen to what some of them have to say — I can't possibly believe in some of the things they say, it's just not true. But it's a very personal thing, and that is why I don't proselytise about it. If I'm asked do I believe in God, I have to be honest and say, "yes, I do".

What I do argue is that Jesus was a revolutionary. He was a carpenter, he was from the working class of his time, he fought to change society. He was crucified, not because he was the Son of God, but because he challenged the establishment of the day — that's why. And when you read the things he said — you only have to read Matthew, the Magnificat, the Sermon on the Mount — it's a revolutionary document.

But it's not against slavery!

No, but I don't think he ever said that slavery was acceptable. Christ never once mentioned slavery — he didn't have much to do with slavery. His class weren't owning anybody.

There is a tradition in Christianity, as there is in the Old Testament, of the pro-

The Christianity of the poor

One area we wish to discuss is personal philosophy, religion and so on. Being an active Christian, an Anglican, marks you as very unusual on the hard left. Would you explain your outlook? You come from a Church of England background — did you cease to be a Christian, or was it dormant? Did you break with it, and later come back to it?

It's a very difficult thing for me to ever explain because it's a very personal matter. I don't proselytise. I don't think I have the right. I have always refused to go on television to talk about it. It's just a personal thing.

As a boy I served on the altar. The church was not as high as some I went to later, but reasonably High Church. I went to church three or four times on a Sunday! You were always there. I seemed to spend more times on my knees than anything else!

Suddenly one day, after I had begun to read a great deal — I must have been 14 at the time — I just said to my poor mother, who was greatly upset by it, that I was not going to church... it no longer had any meaning.

What issues, concerns, doubts, made you break?

The old and much disputed question of the Real Presence of Christ. I didn't think the words a priest said over the Host transformed it into the actual body of Christ. I was very sceptical about it all. I used to listen very carefully to what the parson was saying, and he seemed to be talking nonsense. I didn't believe it.

Did you believe in God still?



"The struggle goes on... in the so-called socialist countries". Stalinist militia in Gdansk, 1981.

phets in the Old Testament being revolutionaries. They called upon God to help them fight their class enemies.

It's the same thing here in this country — John Ball, the 'hedge priest' during the Peasants Revolt against the poll tax and other things back in 1381. They hung him at Hertford, the town I was born in.

In my own church, there were priests who were very, very anti-Tory, very anti-establishment, very much on the side of working people. I did hear one of them preach once, Father Conrad Noel from Thaxted — had had the Sinn Fein tricolour and the Red Flag in his church. There was a battle of the flags, when students from Cambridge went down there and tried to remove them. People turned out to support him and they had a battle in the streets, over his right to have the flags. There was that part of it — that part I think affected me.

Isn't that very much the exception? You know the adage about the Church of England being the Tory Party at prayer...

It was, absolutely no doubt about it.

Is your belief intellectual or emotional? It's primarily emotional, isn't it?

Yes, I think so.

What would you say now to the Marxist criticism of Christianity, and the historical materialist analysis of Christianity's own development and evolution as part of human history? You will have read Kautsky's 'Foundations of Christianity',

presumably...

Yes, I have...

What would you say to that whole school of thought?

Most of the criticism of the church throughout history is absolutely right — I don't have any argument with that. It comes down to the question of strict personal belief — you believe or you don't believe. The interesting thing now is that, within the church, and particularly within the Roman Catholic church, they have "liberation theology" — a whole group of Christian people who have taken the side of the oppressed and are even prepared to die in the struggle.

But they in turn are being suppressed by the Pope.

Yes, they are fighting the hierarchy of the church. My Christianity is their Christianity, not the Christianity of the Vatican nor the Christianity of the church hierarchy. It is the Christianity of the poor.

Can I ask a linked question? Are you a royalist?

No, no, not at all.

I didn't mean to be insulting, but the Queen is head of your church.

I don't think we as a movement have to make a great fuss and dance over whether we should abolish royalty. What we have to do is what Tony Benn has suggested — take all their powers away.

A struggle throughout the ages

The struggle for the rights of ordinary people has gone on throughout the whole history of society. Those at the bottom end of the ladder have had to fight for their rights — in slave society, in feudal society, or in early capitalism, and now in both late capitalist society and in the so-called socialist societies. Always.

There's always been this need for working people to fight and it is no good just saying it is just a matter of the transformation of society according to scientific concepts. The class struggle **does** lead to a transformation of society from one system to the other. But within that, throughout the whole history of society — and latterly in the so-called socialist societies of the East — there has always been this ethical problem of transforming society. We want to transform society because it is right to do so, so long as there are people who suffer in society.

It is wrong that they should suffer. It is wrong that they shouldn't have freedom. It is wrong that they shouldn't have basic human rights.

Although Marx talked in scientific



"In the House of Commons it's easy to move away from your roots. You must remain part and parcel of the working class".

terms, in terms of "scientific socialism", in fact he never totally threw off his ethical utopianism. They say he did, but he didn't. He had ideas which were very much moral ideas, moral concepts. He did believe that certain things were absolutely ageless. So that's how I see it.

I think we have to use all that is good in anybody's philosophy, and use it effectively if it contributes to the struggle for mankind to live better, end oppression, democratise society, end poverty, and create a better ordered society. That is how I see socialism.

The continuing thing it not just that socialism develops in capitalism. Modern socialist ideas couldn't develop until you had capitalism, until society had reached a certain stage of development. But even when things were organised and structured differently in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, you still got oppression. So you can see why I think there is a whole continuous struggle throughout the ages, all ages.

Is it possible to spell out your ethical principles? Like, for instance, that it is morally wrong to have wage slavery, and so on.

Well, I think it is. But again, you can't always be totally hard and fast, because you gain something, and then you discover, having gained that, that you actually created something else which is the opposite of what you really want to create. But plainly it is quite wrong that one person, or a group of persons, should oppress others.

Nobody should be oppressed in society. People should be free at all times to think what they wish, to say what they want to say, and to have the right to form an organisation which can work to put their ideas into effect. People also have a right to hold any religious concepts, or non-religious concepts, as long as they do not oppress anybody else. But if you use those concepts to oppress others, then that is wrong and unacceptable.

In relation to the economic system,

plainly it is quite wrong to have a society where some people monopolise all the wealth in society, or most of it, while the mass of those who create that society's wealth don't get the full fruits of their labour. All this is basic socialism, and that's how I see it.

Do you think there is a lack of ethical firmness in the labour movement now? I'm thinking, for example, about leaders who talk publicly about what is good for their careers, even when what is good for them is not what is good for the labour movement — open, obviously unashamed careerists, who scarcely bother even to fake.

If you look at the early stages of the labour movement you'll see that even people we might consider to be on the right were generally much more principled. They had ethical concepts which meant something to them. They weren't necessarily looking for careers. They were in the movement because they believed that the movement was essential to building a better society. But now, increasingly, you get naked and shameless careerists.

To come down to concrete things, the House of Commons pays an enormous wage now.

When I came to the House of Commons in 1964 I got £1,250 per year. Out of that you paid your London lodgings, you had to supply your own secretary and every stamp you put on an envelope. You paid for every phone call outside of London, and so on. The fact is, you didn't really live much better than you lived in your own area as a worker. You did it mainly because you thought it right to fight for the ideas you believed in.

Of course, Tories — and some others — earned money outside politics and the money from the House of Commons was just a useful additional income. But to us it didn't really mean that much. We struggled, but we didn't really complain about it. That's the interesting thing, we didn't really complain much.

It's like in the old days when I became a councillor, all you got was loss of pay. If I had a full day off I'd lose £2-£3, a lot of money in those days. You didn't complain about it because you were in the movement and you were doing it because you thought it was right to do it. You weren't looking out for yourself.

Now people in the movement seem to accept capitalist concepts. They believe in looking after yourself and making money out of it. That inevitably leads to a measure of corruption — I don't mean corruption in the sense of people going after money and nothing else. I mean the corruption that is burnt into people seeing what they do and say in politics in terms of a career structure, of what it will mean for their own careers, instead of being in politics to change society. Such people — when the chips are down — turn out to be in politics to bring about beneficial changes in their own lives, or to avert the unpleasant changes that sometimes goes with standing by your principles. That is very bad; it has a bad effect on the movement and it is very dangerous for it.

It's like the bureaucratised trade unions. I remember that when I became a shop steward of a huge construction site, the firm gave me an office and somebody to do the typing, and a spare room where the shop stewards could meet. Well, it was very nice for me. It rained out there but I wasn't out there. One day a chap came over to me from about half a mile away to get me to go to a meeting to talk about a strike they felt they needed. It was pouring with rain. I looked out the door and I said to him: "Do you want me now?"

And as I said it I thought, "hang on, this is disgraceful! I am now at one remove from these workers that I represent, and used to be working with. And if I'm at one remove, the District Office is twice removed, the Regional Office is three times removed, and the National Office is so far away from what goes on amongst the workers on a construction site or in a factory that they begin to regard those workers out there as a nuisance."

Next day I said to the management, "I want to go back. I'm still senior steward, but I'm back on the line at work, and working in a gang and that's it. I'm working outside with everybody else." And that's what I did. I could see that otherwise I'd become as much a bureaucrat as the others.

It's very important. You should never allow yourself to get into that position. In the House of Commons you do tend to get more and more remote. That's why it is important to go home to your family at weekends, important that you live in a council flat and that you go to the local Labour Club and to the pub and to the lads on the football terraces. You must remain part and parcel of them. You're never going to be quite the same again, of course, because you do spend most of

your time in the House of Commons. Nevertheless, you've got to watch that. Do your best. It's so easy to move away from your roots, almost without noticing it. To go back to Jesus, he didn't move away, he remained with them all the time, and he ended up on the cross because he clearly was identifying himself with the ordinary people and they didn't want that.

Why has there been this growth of corruption? Is it just to do with the greatly increased perks of local government? Or is it to do with the role played by MPs and local government councillors? There is now a great wave of the type of careerist corruption you describe, isn't there?

I think there is. There was always corruption, of course. Some people became corrupt because there weren't any perks! They made deals, planning deals, and so on. The old corruption was clear and straightforward and it could be dealt with for what it was. But in this case...

When I was a councillor in Liverpool we used to have two interviews or "surgeries" a week. You sat in the Labour Party rooms and people came about their housing and so on, masses of people. You didn't even think of claiming for that. Nowadays, they tell you you actually have money for that!

Corruption took many forms in the past. I do say that in the last few years it has got far worse. We've become increasingly integrated into the capitalist system. The leadership of the movement now say openly that capitalism is acceptable. In the old days even the right wingers didn't say openly that they thought capitalism an acceptable system.

What you might call the process of rot and disintegration that began almost at the commencement of the labour movement has just got worse as time has gone on.

Another thing that strikes me is that recently certain key people (I won't name names) have buckled under pressure and then explained their behaviour in terms of the needs of their careers! Done it openly and publicly, taking it for granted that nobody would hold it against them. And not a lot of people seem to have, either! The notion that you're in it for what you get rather than for what you can give seems increasingly to dominate even on the so-called Left. You know John F Kennedy's speechwriter's dictum — ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country? Well, that used to be the old socialist approach — and in any case it is the irreplaceable and necessary approach within any fighting movement of the exploited and oppressed. Now there seems to be a general acceptance of the approach of "me, me, me", "me and my career within the established political structures".

Yes. For example, a lot of people supported the fight for the leadership around Tony Benn without accepting what Tony

In Memoriam: Hal Draper

Hal Draper, world-renowned Marxist scholar and socialist activist, died at his home in Berkeley, California on 26 January 1990. He was 75 years old.

He began his socialist career in 1932 when he joined the Student League for Industrial Democracy and then the Young People's Socialist League, youth section of the American Socialist Party. He later helped found the American Youth Congress and assisted it in organising the largest anti-war strike in the country.

When the Trotskyist movement entered the Socialist Party in 1936, Draper, by then the national secretary of the YPSL, was recruited to it, along with the majority of the SP's left-wing. Later, aligned with Max Shachtman, he became dissatisfied with Trotsky's theory that Russia remained a degenerated workers' state despite its imperialist encroachments on Finland and Poland.

After the split from the Socialist Workers' Party, Draper continued to play a leading role in the Workers' Party and its successor, the Independent Socialist League. For years he was an organiser in the Boston, Philadelphia, New York and Los Angeles branches, and later the editor of the organisation's journal, *New International* and its weekly newspaper, *Labor Action*.

Labor Action, as one commentator put it, was written for intellectuals and intellectually minded workers. No doubt this was in part attributable to the low ebb of socialist popularity that isolated the movement during the McCarthyite years. Nevertheless, *Labor Action* set a standard for depth and originality under Draper's stewardship which, many believe, has yet to be surpassed.

The ISL decided to scuttle its apparatus and merge with the Socialist Party in the late 1950s. This — in theory at least — was to prepare a neutral turf needed to attract disillusioned CPers to a multi-tendency Debsian vehicle and thus realign the American socialist movement. In fact, it created a rather hardened, narrow social-democratic sect which was insensitive to the stirrings of



the leftward moving student movement of the early 1960s.

Draper, whose base at this point was in Berkeley, became one of the two leading adult participants in the Free Speech Movement. As one of the student leaders remarked, Draper "ha(d) always been ready with encouragement, but ha(d) consistently refrained from giving inappropriate and unsolicited 'vintage 1930s' advice. This is far from common..." And it stood in marked contrast to the SP's rather heavy handed dealings with the Students for a Democratic Society.

Eventually, in response to the war in Vietnam and the emerging student revolt, Draper led a leftist group out of the SP, the core of which were to become the International Socialists.

Draper fortified his co-thinkers with what might be considered the seminal formulation of "Third Camp" socialism — "The Two Souls of Socialism". Whereas different kinds of "socialism" had customarily been divided into revolutionary or reformist, peaceful or violent, democratic or authoritarian, Draper held that the fundamental divide is between Socialism-from-Above and Socialism-from-Below.

The unifying theme of all forms of socialism-from-above — and this includes both Stalinism and social democracy — is its realisation through the beneficence of a governing elite rather than through the self-activity of the masses. "It is the conception of Socialism-from-Above which accounts for the acceptance of Communist dictatorships as a form of 'socialism'. It is the conception of Socialism-from-Above which concentrates social-democratic attention on the parliamentary superstructure of society and on the

manipulation of the 'commanding heights' of the economy, and which makes them hostile to mass action from below."

The great contribution of Marx was to synthesise the socialist idea with revolutionary democracy thereby exorcising the siamese twin spirits of utopianism and elitism. Marx, as Draper propounded it, argued that socialism-from-below was possible "on the basis of a theory which sees the revolutionary potentialities in the broad masses, even if they seem backward at a given time and place". This is a lesson well worth remembering especially now that some 'socialist' faint-hearts begin to recoil from the Eastern European masses because of their free-market illusions.

During this period, Draper also turned out a remarkable "political guide" entitled "The ABC of National Liberation Movements". Here he outlined a framework through a set of theses wherein the issues associated with national liberation movements could be analysed. The point, as Draper reflected, was to combine the "most militant opposition to the American government in the war together with a refusal to glorify the NLF and its leader Ho Chi Minh." Here Draper reminded socialists that a "distinctive feature of the Marxist approach is the distinction between military support of a given armed struggle and political support to a given organisation (including a government) which may be officially 'in charge' of that armed struggle."

Draper, along with a number of comrades, ultimately left the International Socialists in 1970 over the "American Question", specifically over what was felt to be a sectarian approach to the trade union movement. Much of his subsequent years were devoted to his monumental four volume work "Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution", an indispensable study guide to socialist politics.

In 1981 he co-founded and directed The Center for Socialist History. The Center has the aim of rearming the socialist movement in the US by re-examining the historical (pre-1914) roots of American socialism. The Center houses

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was saying or the socialist ideas Tony had moved towards. It was a bandwagon. They thought the left was going to win and thought they ought to have a share of it. When Tony didn't win, the same people very rapidly switched their allegiance to the new leadership. Now you find people who were so-called Bennites have become staunch Kinnockites, mouthing the Kinnockites' arguments, talking about the need to drop unilateralism, learn from Thatcher, and so on.

They've backtracked on just about every issue. Yes, because they put their career in front of everything else. Their career is what they're in it for. It saddens, but it doesn't totally surprise, me. People I would have thought a few years ago were really staunch, now won't even talk to me about it, about the Party. I'm an embarrassment.

Is there any connection between this careerism and the question of financial self-interest and the nature of the parliamentary and even local government systems? I mean that system as compared with the workers' council ("soviet") system Lenin advocated — "every cook shall govern", the easy recallability of representatives at every level, every representative getting a worker's wage, and thus no possible structure of protected career building. Isn't the whole careerist blight a necessary part of the parliamentary system?

I suppose we're so used to the parliamentary system as it has developed, and the local government system as it has developed, that it is quite difficult for us to think in terms of new concepts. You get involved, become part of something for such a long time. But we have got to think differently, and work for something different. The present parliamentary system is not necessarily the way that society will be governed in the future.

The American Marxist Hal Draper wrote a pamphlet redeveloping the concept of the two souls of socialism. Look at the early days of the movement and you'll find that there was always a big argument

between those who believed in what we called state socialism and those who believed in non-state socialism, or socialism from above as against socialism from below.

In Britain, during the early development of socialism, people like William Paul and the Socialist Labour Party used to argue for non-state socialism as against the state socialist Social Democratic Federation. Even the best Labour Party socialists have been state-socialists. There has always been a fundamental conflict between the two approaches.

I think we've got to re-examine this dispute, and go over it again, thinking about it and updating it. Society is now in a state where the ideas of socialism from below equate best with what we require if we are to refine, renew and move forward our socialist concepts. This is the thing which is important. We must get away from the concept of socialism as a great vast bureaucratic centralisation of both the economy and society. We have to get away from that.

The non-state concepts have to be allowed to grow. Probably non-state socialism has always been the only real type of socialism. It cannot lead to bureaucratic distortions. Stalinism has put back socialism for decades and lent credibility to those who argue that socialism is not possible after what happened in the Soviet Union. This is why I think education is so important. Because Marx was right: "the emancipation of the working class must be self-emancipation". Workers have to learn from books as well as experience that they can actually do it, that they have the ability to build a new society.

One thing impressed me when I first went to an Israeli socialist kibbutz. I met a bloke who was sweeping up the canteen. I enquired about him because he looked as if he was getting on a bit for the job.

They said, "He's last year's manager. We don't allow people more than a year in different jobs. He's got the ability to be the manager, a great manager, but we

take different jobs each year, so that you're never tied totally into one thing. You don't become the one who runs everything. Next year you'll be sweeping up, and the next year you might be helping them cook." That to me was socialism.

I also witnessed great arguments about whether they should build factories linked to the kibbutzes. And should the factories have non-kibbutz workers, say Arab workers? The old socialists said: "No, we musn't do that. If the state, or the Arabs, want to build factories, that's for them. But we can't exploit these people."

I don't suggest we can do exactly the same, but we can do something very similar. This is how we have got to look at it, and why I think that public ownership could take many forms. You could have local authority, public ownership, individual companies publicly owned, co-operative public ownership. The essential thing is that in each of them the workers have got to have not just the final say, but the say right through, involved in running and controlling the enterprise from beginning to end.

You agree with the idea of some sort of real soviet system, democracy such as Lenin expounds in 'The State and Revolution'?

Yes, if we're going to build this new society we've got to have new concepts. This is essential, to have a further look at such people as the "Council Communists", Gorter and Pannekoek. Why did they argue this, why were they at the Workers' Opposition in the Soviet Union, and so on. Why were they discounted? Let's face it, Trotsky was also very much part of the narrow bureaucratic concept, just as much as Lenin. Lenin was alright originally, stating the case for socialism from below, but after a bit he moved away from it, even Lenin.

Didn't they move under the pressure of material conditions — without changing their goals?

Of course. This is what happens. We are not always masters in our own house.

They didn't say, "this is good"; they said "this is what we have to do, for now".

That's right. But then, after a bit, what you have to do becomes the accepted norm, the accepted view. It's then you need to be a brave soul to say "hang on, that's not what we believe". They're the ones who stand up and fight, the ones who argue for workers' councils, the ones who argue for the old concepts again, but in a new situation.

This is what we have to do. We cannot say, as Neil Kinnock and others do, "well, history is dead". History is not dead. History is something you learn from, and if you don't then you are dead. You just accept society as it is; you become part of it: you just stick your nose in the gravy trough and that's it.

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one of the largest socialist libraries in the US.

Most recently Draper was involved with the Independent Socialist Press, which is engaged in propagating the "Third Camp" perspective. The first volume of the latter, "America as Overlord", was issued in 1989 and contains a collection of Draper's essays outlining the role of the US as arbiter and overlord of the capitalist bloc. Several other volumes are planned,

including "Free Speech and Political Struggle", "American Student Movements", "Israel and the Arabs" and "Political Warfare". (The Independent Socialist Press can be contacted at 11 Eton Ct., Berkeley, California USA 94705).

Unfortunately, some of Draper's most provocative articles on the political-economy of bureaucratic collectivism and on the prospects of other (non-Stalinist) forms of bureaucratic collectivism are relatively inaccessible. This is all the more lamentable since Draper was one of the few socialists who, by identifying

the overriding similarities between social-democratic and Stalinist conceptions of socialism-from-above, could have been said to anticipate recent events.

As Stalinist reformers in Hungary, East Germany and elsewhere "transform" their parties by donning social-democratic mantles, an intriguing question presents itself. Can bureaucratic-collectivism, like capitalism, assume a multiplicity of state forms, democratic as well as authoritarian?

As the revolutionary events in the Eastern bloc unfold, surely Draper's penetrating analyses will be sorely missed.

Barry Finger



Eric Heffer walks out of Labour Party conference 1985 in protest against platform attacks on Liverpool council.

Democracy and workers' councils

If the corruption which blights the labour movement is linked to the nature of the parliamentary political system, then the question arises: can we gain from a campaign to improve the existing system by making it more democratic?

I was reading a file of the 'Workers Dreadnought' the other day, the paper published by Sylvia Pankhurst. After 1917, they tried to apply soviet concepts to the British parliament. They went back to the Chartist demand for yearly parliaments, and advocated a whole series of other reforms to make MPs more accountable. Essentially they tried to translate the democracy of workers' councils as experienced in Russia after 1917 into British parliamentary terms and advocated a programme of changes. Is there any re-educational value in a campaign for annual parliaments and similar things? Wouldn't it maybe cut against the domi-

nant careerists in the movement?

If we had annual parliaments, it would be right to say that you shouldn't elect the same people. If you always elect the same people then they're going to have a real in-built belief that they must always be there.

So you think we might help cleanse the movement of corruption through a campaign for the reform of the whole parliamentary and local government systems?

In time, yes, not immediately. Immediately what we're concerned with is winning the next election.

For socialists, long term?

Long term, yes. We have to re-discuss and work out how the campaign should go. What we would be arguing for would have to come out of discussions. In the trade unions I've always believed that all officials should be elected, always. We used to have that in my union. We even elected all officials every year in Merseyside ASW, including the full-time officials, so that we were all involved.

We were discussing corruption... in the obvious sense, and also in the sense of the corruption of ideas and standards, a world where people can say they trim what they do to fit their career needs, yet

don't lose standing with our people. We seemed to agree that this is connected with the state of parliamentary democracy and that, maybe, then, something can be gained by a campaign to improve democracy — such things as the Chartist demands for annual parliaments. Can something be done to cleanse the movement, and regenerate it by way of a campaign to develop deeper, real democracy? Something perhaps like Trotsky advocated in France in 1934 — defend, deepen democracy. Is that worth pursuing?

It's not the democratic instrument it should be, and therefore we should have a highly critical attitude towards parliamentary institutions. But if you're going to have — for example, annual parliaments — then you can't have the same people elected all the time. Even if they are elected annually, they will develop ways of doing things and keeping control and it will undermine the whole idea. I think you've got to have a far wider representative democracy, therefore people should perhaps only be able to stand for one or two terms.

That is something that we must look at. If people go in for being representatives in the House of Commons it should not be a well paid well-heeled job forever. This is

very important. And we've got to abolish the House of Lords!

Also I think the 'representatives' should be representative. The Labour Party started off as a working class organisation and in the main its representatives in the House of Commons were working class, but nowadays there are hardly any industrial or working class people in the House of Commons! I mean people who worked on the shopfloor to earn a living, who know what it's like to get sacked on a Friday night. Most people in the House of Commons today simply have no idea what it's like to live under those circumstances, to be a worker who must submit to exploitation and at the same time fight it — in order to live.

I would say there is nothing wrong in having a campaign for a different type of representation, a different type of parliament. After all, we musn't be tied to these institutions forever. If they are not doing the job, then you change them and create new ones. The old syndicalists always used to argue for a different type of representation altogether. They would say that the new state, the new form of social organisation, was being built up through working class organisation in industry. Workers' councils? We don't have to slavishly follow anybody's blueprints but we do need to look very closely at existing

institutions and get down to developing new ideas and new ways of doing it.

How about soviets?

Soviets were workers' committees. It may not be the method that we need here. Maybe we need part workers' councils and part representation on the basis of where you live, and districts, and so on.

You seem to favour a mixture of parliament and workers' councils. After World War I in Austria and Germany for a while you had a mixture of parliament and workers' councils — and in Austria, at least, the partial institutionalisation of workers' councils. Yet in practice, the bourgeois parliament dominated and eventually sapped and destroyed the workers' councils. Isn't there a choice that has to be made between workers' councils and parliament?

Well, when you have dual control anywhere in the end one has to dominate, no question, unless there was acceptance by everybody that they were working for the same end, part of a new way of developing democracy.

The name 'soviets' is unfortunate now. And now it's pretty meaningless, or rather, like communism and even socialism, it has acquired a different meaning. But workers' councils — which were 'soviets' in revolutionary Russia —

came into existence in a whole range of countries, Bavaria, Hungary, Germany, Hungary 1956, partly Poland in 1956 and 1980. The experience is that where you have a lack of real democracy they are the natural form of self-organisation of the workers. Gdansk is the latest example. The workers' committee there in August 1980 was a 'soviet', a workers' parliament in every sense of the word. That being so, doesn't history tell us that the soviet is the natural easy form of workers' self-organisation at a high level of out-and-out class conflict?

It certainly is a form of workers' organisation and every time there's been a great struggle in Eastern Europe, the workers have thrown up workers' councils. They did it in Hungary, in Poland, to a lesser extent in Czechoslovakia. They do appear in every great struggle. The workers instinctively establish workers' councils to carry through their struggle. The only point — whether we like it or not — is that a minority of the people are involved, and therefore it doesn't involve the majority. So it does tend to become a dictatorship. And that does carry the seeds within it if you're not careful of the dictatorship of the party, and then the dictatorship of individuals within the party. That is the problem. We have to look at that very carefully if we are going to have genuine democracy — and socialism does mean that.

In the Wilson government

Can we go back to the '70s, and your experience of being a government minister? Do you think you were right to take the job? What about your resignation?

The job I was offered was building up the National Enterprise Board, getting work directed into underdeveloped areas, setting up development areas. I think I was right to take the job. It is far better that somebody who believes in socialist policies should do it than a careerist who does it for the perks.

But almost the first day I got into the job I was in conflict with the government. The first issue was Britain building warships for Chile. We had said before Labour was elected that we would not send the warships. But we did.

I made a speech, and was threatened with being sacked. I told Wilson: "If you're going to throw me out, then throw me out". He didn't. He backed away.

I was then given the job of working out the industry policy. My White Paper was based on Labour Party

policy. It called for taking over a number of companies. Wilson got hold of it, and decided to change it all.

I was going to resign there and then. But we were just coming up to the general election, so I didn't. I think I should have resigned. It was the time to resign.

After we won the election with a big majority I was given a job working the policy through. What was embarrassing to me was that comrades moved amendments with which I totally agreed but I couldn't support them. It was very embarrassing.

Then the Common Market came up, and I was able to say: "This is Party policy. The leadership is against Party policy. I'm going to speak out in the House of Commons" — knowing that Wilson would sack me.

The experience was worthwhile. I learned about the tremendous power of the civil service, far greater power than you would think. They would undermine ministers, and use other ministers to speak in Cabinet against them. Richard Crossman revealed that in his diaries.

There are civil service meetings, with all the top civil servants, parallel to the ministerial meetings, and they really have an effect. The idea of the civil service being a neutral force is ridiculous.

Having been a minister also meant that you could speak with a certain authority on some issues which you wouldn't have if you had never been a minister.

One view at the time was that Wilson appointed you and Tony Benn as ministers to co-opt the left, and to try and butter up the working class. There was tremendous working-class militancy in 1974-5. Later, when Wilson felt more secure, he could spew you out. In other words, you were used by the right wing.

Well, I went very early, after 15 months. I don't think it was part of their plan that I should resign the way I did.

I was always clear about what I wanted to do. When I realised that it was not possible, I was clear that I couldn't stay. No doubt it was quite useful for Harold to put us in jobs.



Trotsky at the Soviet of People's Commissars, 1918



Eric Heffer speaks at the Constituency Labour Parties Conference, 1988

Socialists and the EC

As I understand it, you've had different attitudes to the Common Market. Could you summarise?

Originally I said that whether we liked it or not, the capitalist forces were going to get together in Europe and create a Common Market. Capitals were overflowing the national boundaries. There was nothing we could do about that, as long as the capitalist system was there; the only answer to the power of capital was the power of the working class, working together to offset the internationalism of the capitalists by the genuine internationalism of the workers.

I wasn't necessarily opposed to Britain joining the Common Market, because I knew you couldn't stop it anyway.

But the Treaty of Rome was a treaty which consolidated the capitalist system. I always thought we could get changes in the Treaty of Rome. Then I realised we weren't going to get any changes, and that the effect of Britain's entry into the Common Market on the British working class was going to be horrific. Areas like Liverpool were going to become almost derelict once we joined the Common Market.

All that turned me against joining the Common Market.

That was the dominant left-wing view. I don't want to sound rude, but much of the left's position was very nationalist,

and even chauvinist.

Well, I don't think that's true.

The Communist Party?

I don't think anybody took much notice of the Communist Party.

They set much of the tone in the 1960s.

Yes, of course they were influential. But sovereignty matters if you want to carry out socialist policies and everybody else in the Common Market wants to stop you.

They said we couldn't have policies to help our development areas. We couldn't put certain money in because it was against the Treaty of Rome. And their agricultural policy was mad.

I believe in a United States of Europe, but I don't believe in the Common Market.

How do we get from where we are to a socialist Europe?

We work with other parties, with workers in Europe, with the trade union movement in the Common Market.

But you've got nothing like genuine socialist forces in government in Europe, and unfortunately you're not likely to. If you did get genuine socialist forces in various governments in Europe, then you could begin to get together and make agreements, perhaps even set up a federated Socialist Europe. But that's going to be even more difficult that it was in the past.

Since the creation of the Iron and Steel Community in 1950, there has been a tremendous economic knitting-together of the core European Community countries.

George Orwell

"I have always opposed Stalinism". So every time-serving Labour politician will tell you these days, proudly displaying some mild comment they once made about the Kremlin's methods being a bit bureaucratic while anxiously shoving their praise for "the socialist countries" to the back of the filing cabinet.

George Orwell, who died 40 years ago this year, really did oppose Stalinism — and at a time when it took strong nerves and a clear head for anyone on the left to do that.

While more "sophisticated" intellectuals blinded themselves to what was really going on in Russia in the '30s, and Fabians like Shaw and the Webbs wrote paeans of praise to Stalinist totalitarianism, Orwell cut through the then-fashionable crap.

In 1937 he put his life on the line as a POUM militia volunteer in the Spanish Civil War. The POUM was politically vague and unstable, but it retained enough socialist principles to find itself (along with the anarchists) on the receiving end of the Stalinists' murderous onslaught. Orwell's account of his Spanish experience, *Homage to Catalonia*, exposed the Stalinists' lies.

Orwell became a patriot in World War 2. And his attacks on "earnest ladies in sandals" and his obsessive dislike of birth control would certainly have placed him on the wrong side in modern debates on feminism.

But his famous later novels, *Animal Farm* and *1984*, are not the anti-communist diatribes they are made out to be. Orwell's objective was not to denigrate revolution, but to expose the betrayal of revolutionary ideas by bureaucrats.

Underpinning *1984* is a world view very close to that developed in the early '40s by the ex-Trotskyist James Burnham, who quickly went over to the right wing, and by Max Shachtman, who remained a revolutionary socialist into the '50s. Orwell summarised Burnham's theses as follows:

"Capitalism is disappearing, but socialism is not replacing it. What is now arising is a new kind of planned, centralised society... The rulers of this new society will be the people who effectively control the means of production: that is, business executives, technicians, bureaucrats and soldiers, lumped together by Burnham under the name of 'managers'.

"These people will eliminate the old capitalist class, crush the working class, and so organise society that all power and economic privilege remain in their own hands..."

Orwell did not accept the "Managerial Revolution" and the world of *1984* as inevitable. He criticised Burnham for "trying to build up a picture of terrifying, irresistible power". Orwell detected an element of "power worship" in Burnham; and that, he commented, "blurs political judgment because it leads, almost unavoidably, to the belief that present trends will continue".

Despite the undoubted pessimism in his later writings, Orwell remained committed to socialist change. And the force he believed could bring about that change was the working class.

Jim Denham

It's now something like an international confederation, but not even bourgeois-democratic. It is run by bureaucrats. So isn't there a strong case that the European workers should demand democratic accountability to a proper sovereign European parliament?

No.

Why not?

Because we'd be kidding them.

How?

It's dominated by the Treaty, isn't it?

Which can be revised. A sovereign European parliament could overrule it.

I thought it could be revised. Now I don't think it can. I think we should just argue for working together with socialists in Europe. We should have a basic programme that we can argue for throughout the whole of Europe, not just in the Common Market countries.

Should we raise the call for a Socialist United States of Europe?

I think so. We don't have to be confined to the Common Market. Even in Western Europe, what about Sweden? They're not in the Common Market.

But the Common Market is a fact we must reckon with, an integrated community.

Yes, dominated by the Germans!

Isn't it in our interests to try to democratise it? It's not going to break apart.

It's a red herring.

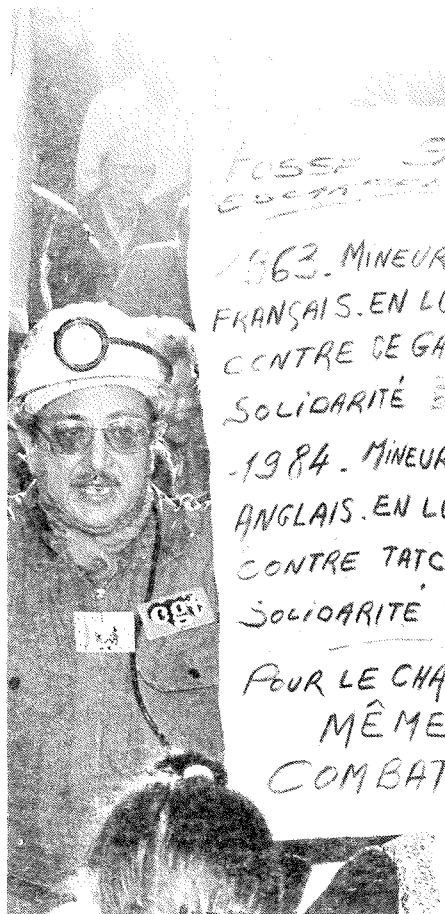
Wouldn't working-class cooperation in a drive for democracy in the European Community be a real step towards socialism and internationalism in practice?

Internationalism in practice could start if, for example, when the British seamen were on strike, seamen and dockers in other parts of Europe acted to support them.

We wouldn't choose the Common Market. It is often as irrational as capitalism as a whole. But it's there. It's there because we, the socialists, failed over the last six decades to create a Socialist United States of Europe, and we've got to take account of that.

In the middle of the First World War, Trotsky asked: "What do we do supposing that Germany unites Europe? Do we then demand it is taken apart again?" He answers no; he argues instead for a European working-class struggle for the democratisation of the German European empire — a republic, sovereign parliament, and so on.

That's the same argument as was used by the Austrian Marxists in relation to the Austro-Hungarian empire. It didn't work because people didn't want it.



French miner gives solidarity during 1984-5 strike

It was very logical to say that we shouldn't get rid of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but instead make it a democratic socialist federation. But people didn't want it. And they aren't going to want it now, are they?

From a socialist point of view, what was wrong with the Austro-Hungarian Empire was that it didn't allow for self-determination and secession. It wasn't democratic. States have the right to secede from the Common Market.

The socialists created a socialist party with national sections throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In my opinion, that was a sensible and legitimate Marxist view. But it didn't work, because the Hungarians wanted their own state, the Austrians wanted their own, the other nationalities wanted their own, and so it all broke up.

But if the Austro-Hungarian Marxists had been genuine revolutionaries and had created a revolution in the centre, it might have held the whole thing together on a new basis.

Anyway, national oppression and subjugation of peoples doesn't exist in the Common Market. The Common Market is not an empire. It is a federation of democratic bourgeois states. It is in many ways foul and filthy, but it's not an em-

pire.

Well, they've got a chance now. They've got a majority of socialists in the European Parliament. Why don't they put forward a series of proposals to change the character of the EC?

Because they're not socialists!

Some of the Labour Group in the European Parliament are on the Left of the Labour Party.

The Left doesn't do it because the Left focuses on getting out.

The reality is that it's not going to happen. If it's not going to happen, then why should we waste our time and energy? Why not build up genuine working-class solidarity through the trade unions and so on?

But we need a working-class programme for the Socialist United States of Europe, and also a democratic programme — because it's not a democratic system. The bureaucrats rule, and the Parliament is feeble!

The capitalist European Community has existed now for nearly 40 years. We wouldn't choose that road to European unity. It has come like this because we were defeated in all the revolutionary upsurges. But it's there. It's the bourgeoisie's version of our old programme of uniting Europe. They've done it in their own way.

They haven't. I don't agree. I don't think the unity is very real.

Isn't there a parallel with the unification of Germany in the 1860s?

No. It was a different matter of the unification of Germany. It was different with Italy. You had a people with the same language, the same cultural background, the same roots. It's different.

But the the economy of the core European Community states is in some ways more integrated than the USA.

I don't think that's true.

So we should still call for withdrawal?

I don't know whether we should call for withdrawal. There seems to be no question of withdrawal at the moment. I just don't think we should pay too much attention to the whole damn thing.

We should either do our best to break it up, or fight for a democratic European Community.

I think we should talk about a wider Europe which brings EFTA, the Common Market, and East European countries together. We should use the Council of Europe as the basis. That's far more important than the Common Market. The Common Market is going to stand in our way if we have a real socialist government in this country.

James P Cannon 1890-1974

Maybe all revolutionaries should aim — like the hero of Irish mythology, Cucullain — to die young and leave a great name behind them.

James P Cannon, whose centenary falls this year, lived 30 years longer than Lenin and a quarter century longer than Trotsky.

He lived so long that when he died in August 1974 he was a contemporary of his own epigones, and indeed appeared to be one of his own epigones himself.

He died a member of the epigones' party, the Socialist Workers' Party USA, the party which he, together with Shachtman, Abern, Swaback and others, had founded almost half a century earlier. He appeared to be at one with his own unworthy successors, who had already moved a long way from the politics Cannon had shared with Trotsky in the '30s. They were to move a long way further, to the openly Stalinistic politics they have had for a decade now.

Cannon did, as I will argue, agree with the SWP leaders on certain of the things which propelled and shaped their subsequent development, and he does bear much responsibility for the depressing degeneration of the party he founded into the grotesque and repulsive Castroite sect it is today. But there is more to the story than that.

Two things placed Cannon at the very centre of post-Trotsky Trotskyism in the decade when it reformulated and reconstituted itself — the death of Trotsky in August 1940, and the collapse as an organisation of the very weak Fourth International at the beginning of World War 2.

When the Fourth International was reconstituted at the war's end, it was largely under the SWP's influence. But it needed to be reconstituted politically, too.

Stalinism could no longer be seen as only a phenomenon of the decay of the Russian workers' state. It had survived the war and expanded enormously, and looked as if it would continue expanding.

Capitalism too had survived the war, and had begun to rebuild itself. The future would be determined by the competition of those two systems, in neither of which the working class ruled.

The goals, aspirations, and doctrines of revolutionary socialism had to be reformulated for this world. It was a task the Trotskyist movement never did adequately. All its conclusions and codifications were piecemeal and unstable.

By the end of the '40s the Trotskyists had grudgingly come to the conclusion that we were living through a deformed world revolution. The vanguard, for now, of that revolution was the Stalinist movement, which at one and the same time must be opposed, hated and fought, and supported and championed against capitalism and imperialism.

On the basis of the general ideas codified at the Third World Congress in mid 1951, calling the Stalinist systems degenerated and deformed workers' states, it was possible to develop various radically different policies. You could maintain a hard working-class attitude, the same attitude to Stalinist regimes



as pre-1940 Trotskyism, advocating a so-called "political revolution" that was in fact full-scale social revolution and in practice treating the Stalinist bureaucracies as the fully-fledged ruling-class enemy they in fact were¹. You could be against the military expansion of the Soviet Union and for its withdrawal from Eastern Europe, even while refusing to label the Soviet Union as imperialism, and "defending" it against imperialism.

But you could also go completely "soft" on the bureaucracies, recognising them as the "leadership" of this or that revolution — as indeed the Maoist bureaucracy, for example, was the leadership of the Chinese revolution. You could look with hope to the taking over of new areas by Stalin's "Red" Army.

Or you could do both, oscillating.

Cannon supported the ideas of "reconstituted" 1951 Trotskyism. His tendency gave them a "hard working-class" interpretation. Others took the opposite fork from the bivouac at that 1951 crossroads. Many zig-zagged back and forth.

Cannon split the world organisation in 1953, denouncing others — Pablo and Mandel — for not supporting the East Berlin workers' uprising. In the '60s the SWP would give scarcely critical support to the Castroites; by the end of the '70s they supported the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and rediscovered a fervent enthusiasm for Castro, now a Stalinist even among Stalinists.

From Cannon to Barnes (the present SWP leader) there is a steep and continuous decline. The generation after Cannon, Dobbs and Hansen, were Trotskyists disintegrating politically; the present leaders of the SWP are visibly a bunch of ignorant pigs with neither socialist principles nor working-class loyalty. They have evolved into a different species.

Cannon always remained superior to the people who were to ruin the SWP USA. As an old man, he spent a long period in retirement and semi-retirement, during which he more than once came out against them.

Indeed, the story of Cannon's last 30 years could be told as a story of his attempts to intervene against or moderate the "excesses" of his followers, not only in the SWP but internationally. He was trying to undo, reverse, limit — or sometimes deny, by way of world-play and 'ideological' self-deception — the consequences of the fundamental political decisions he had taken or licensed in the late '40s and early '50s.

He was always dragged down by the magnetic pull on post-Trotsky Trotskyism of the seemingly successful revolutionary Stalinist movements. His efforts were never effective. They were like the efforts of someone trying to lift himself up against the

power of gravity inhering in the terrain he had chosen to stand on. They became increasingly feeble and tragic as his force and strength declined.

In 1953 he could shatter the Fourth International in a panic-stricken and emotional leap away from the policies which the majority leaders of the organisation had built on the basis of the Third World Congress decisions. A dozen years later he could not dissuade the SWP leaders from taking a series of organisational decisions which he knew risked "strangling" the party.

In his last published article, printed in an official "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" volume (*Fifty Years of World Revolution*) along with all sorts of Castroite and semi-Maoist rubbish, Cannon took issue with some of the woollier enthusiasms of his comrades. "The weakness of the enemy in the backward countries has opened the possibility of coming to power with a blunted instrument. However, this factual observation does not dispose of the entire question, or even touch its most important aspects. The deformations of the regimes emanating from the revolutionary movements headed by the Stalinised parties, and the opportunism and sectarianism exhibited by their leaderships... demonstrate that the need for organising genuine Marxist parties is not ended..."

In effect he publicly reprimanded his international tendency (the "USFI"); but even in doing so he criticised the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies in political terms, as a poor political leadership in a common struggle, not as a hostile social force.

For Cannon, that attitude to the Stalinist bureaucracy was unusual; for some of his co-thinkers, the norm. They were closer to the Brandlerite "Right Communists" (or critical Stalinists) of the '30s than to the genuine politics of Leon Trotsky.

When Cannon died in 1974 I wrote an obituary which said this: "Cannon and the post-Trotsky Trotskyists leave us with many problems to solve. But the very possibility of repairing the ravages of the last decades and developing an adequate Marxist outlook is real only because of the work of the Trotskyist movement, only because it represented the link with the heroic age of communism and its Marxist renaissance which flowered, however briefly, in the Comintern under Lenin and Trotsky."

To Cannon we owe a great deal for this possibility. He passes on to us a priceless heritage and a great example. [In the Communist International] a whole army set out to change the world — and fell victim to the virus of Stalinism, or to ruling class repression.

When almost all of them had sunk into renegacy, taken up the trade of power brokerage for Stalin, or become ministers in bourgeois or Stalinist governments — when the army of revolutionary heroes had sunk and shrunk into philistine power-worship — Cannon was the last outstanding leader of Lenin's Comintern to remain unbowed and unchanged, uncorrupted and unrepentant."

Sixteen years later the "problems" can be seen to be far deeper and bigger than we thought, and the condition of what Cannon left behind far worse. Cannon did the best he could in very hard and unfavourable circumstances. I see no reason to change the judgment I made when comrade Cannon died.

Sean Matgamna

1. That was the political character of the self-proclaimedly "Cannonite" Workers' Fight group, all through its history as a "workers' state"-ist tendency.

Why you should be a socialist

From back page

control of education, made the class division of society into a permanent institution and created a system of values by which the people were thenceforth, to a large extent unconsciously, guided in their social behaviour.

But historic tradition is, so to speak, of yesterday; nowhere have we really overcome what Thorstein Veblen called "the predatory phase" of human development. The observable economic facts belong to that phase and even such laws as we can derive from them are not applicable to other phases. Since the real purpose of socialism is precisely to overcome and advance beyond the predatory phase of human development, economic science in its present state can throw little light on the socialist society of the future.

Second, socialism is directed towards a social-ethical end. Science, however, cannot create ends and, even less, instill them in human beings; science, at most, can supply the means by which to attain certain ends. But the ends themselves are conceived by personalities with lofty ethical ideals and — if these ends are not stillborn, but vital and vigorous — are adopted and carried forward by those many human beings who, half unconsciously, determine the slow evolution of society.

For these reasons, we should be on our guard not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems; and we should not assume that experts are the only ones who have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organisation of society.

Innumerable voices have been asserting for some time now that human society is passing through a crisis, that its stability has been gravely shattered. It is characteristic of such a situation that individuals feel indifferent or even hostile toward the group, small or large, to which they belong. In order to illustrate my meaning, let me record here a personal experience. I recently discussed with an intelligent and well-disposed man the threat of another war, which in my opinion would seriously endanger the existence of mankind, and I remarked that only a supra-national organisation would offer protection from that danger. Thereupon my visitor, very calmly and coolly, said to me: "Why are you so deeply opposed to the disappearance of the human race?"

I am sure that as little as a century ago no one would have so lightly made a statement of this kind. It is the statement of a man who has striven in vain to attain an equilibrium within himself and has more

or less lost hope of succeeding. It is the expression of a painful solitude and isolation from which so many people are suffering in these days. What is the cause? Is there a way out?

It is easy to raise such questions, but difficult to answer them with any degree of assurance. I must try, however, as best I can, although I am very conscious of the fact that our feelings and strivings are often contradictory and obscure and that they cannot be expressed in easy and simple formulas.

Man is, at one and the same time, a solitary being and a social being. As a solitary being, he attempts to protect his own existence and that of those who are closest to him, to satisfy his personal desires, and to develop his innate abilities. As a social being, he seeks to gain the recognition and affection of his fellow human beings, to share in their pleasures, to comfort them in their sorrows, and to improve their conditions of life. Only the

What the worker receives is determined not by the real value of the goods he produces, but by his minimum needs and by the capitalists' requirements for labour power in relation to the number of workers competing for jobs.

existence of these varied, frequently conflicting, strivings accounts for the special character of a man, and their specific combination determines the extent to which an individual can achieve an inner equilibrium and can contribute to the well-being of society. It is quite possible that the relative strength of these two drives is, in the main, fixed by inheritance. But the personality that finally emerges is largely formed by the environment in which a man happens to find himself during his development, by the structure of the society in which he grows up, by the tradition of that society, and by its appraisal of particular types of behaviour. The abstract concept "society" means to the individual being the sum total of his direct and indirect relations to his contemporaries and to all the people of earlier generations. The individual is able to think, feel, strive, and work by himself; but he depends so much upon society — in his physical, intellectual, and emotional existence — that it is impossible to think of him, or to understand him, outside the

framework of society. It is "society" which provides man with food, clothing, a home, the tools of work, language, the forms of thought, and most of the content of thought; his life is made possible through the labour and the accomplishments of the many millions past and present who are all hidden behind the small word "society".

It is evident, therefore, that the dependence of the individual upon society is a fact of nature which cannot be abolished — just as in the case of ants and bees. However, while the whole life process of ants and bees is fixed down to the smallest detail by rigid, hereditary instincts, the social pattern and interrelationships of human beings are very variable and susceptible to change. Memory, the capacity to make new combinations, the gift of oral communication have made possible developments among human beings which are not dictated by biological necessities. Such developments manifest themselves in traditions, institutions, and organisations; in literature; in scientific and engineering accomplishments; in works of art. This explains how it happens that, in a certain sense, man can influence his life through his own conduct, and that in this process conscious thinking and wanting can play a part.

Man acquires at birth, through heredity, a biological constitution which we must consider fixed and unalterable, including the natural urges which are characteristic of the human species. In addition, during his lifetime, he acquires a cultural constitution which he adopts from society through communication and through many other types of influences. It is this cultural constitution which, with the passage of time, is subject to change and which determines to a very large extent the relationship between the individual and society. Modern anthropology has taught us, through comparative investigation of so-called primitive cultures, that the social behaviour of human beings may differ greatly, depending upon prevailing cultural patterns and the types of organisation which predominate in society. It is on this that those who are striving to improve the lot of man may ground their hopes: human beings are **not** condemned, because of their biological constitution, to annihilate each other or to be at the mercy of a cruel, self-inflicted fate.

If we ask ourselves how the structure of society and the cultural attitude of man should be changed in order to make human life as satisfying as possible, we should constantly be conscious of the fact that there are certain conditions which we are unable to modify. As mentioned

before, the biological nature of man is, for all practical purposes, not subject to change. Furthermore, technological and demographic developments of the last few centuries have created conditions which are here to stay. In relatively densely settled populations with the goods which are indispensable to their continued existence, an extreme division of labour and a highly-centralised productive apparatus are absolutely necessary. The time — which, looking back, seems so idyllic — is gone forever when individuals or relatively small groups could be completely self-sufficient. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that mankind constitutes even now a planetary community of production and consumption.

I have now reached the point where I may indicate briefly what to me constitutes the essence of the crisis of our time. It concerns the relationship of the individual to society. The individual has become more conscious than ever of his dependence upon society. But he does not experience this dependence as a positive asset, as an organic tie, as a protective force, but rather as a threat to his natural rights, or even to his economic existence. Moreover, his position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his make-up are constantly being accentuated, while his social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate. All human beings, whatever their position in society, are suffering from this period of deterioration. Unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, they feel insecure, lonely and deprived of the naive, simple, and unsophisticated enjoyment of life. Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society.

The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil. We see before us a huge community of producers the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labour — not by force, but on the whole in faithful compliance with legally established rules. In this respect, it is important to realise that the means of production — that is to say, the entire productive capacity that is needed for producing consumer goods as well as additional capital goods — may legally be, and for the most part are, the private property of individuals.

For the sake of simplicity, in the discussion that follows I shall call “workers” all those who do not share in the ownership of the means of production — although this does not quite correspond to the customary use of the term. The owner of the means of production is in a position to purchase the labour power of the worker. By using the means of production, the worker produces new goods which become the property of the capitalist. The essential point about this process is the relation between what the worker pro-

duces and what he is paid, both measured in terms of real value. Insofar as the labour contract is “free”, what the worker receives is determined not by the value of the goods he produces, but by his minimum needs and by the capitalists’ requirements for labour power in relation to the number of workers competing for jobs. It is important to understand that even in theory the payment of the worker is not determined by the value of his product.

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labour encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of the smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organised political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the

It is necessary to remember that a planned economy is not yet socialism. A planned economy as such may be accompanied by the complete enslavement of the individual.

legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

The situation prevailing in an economy based on the private ownership of capital is thus characterised by two main principles: first, means of production (capital) are privately owned and the owners dispose of them as they see fit; second, the labour contract is free. Of course, there is no such thing as a **pure** capitalist society in this sense. In particular, it should be noted that the workers, through long and bitter political struggles, have succeeded in securing a somewhat improved form of the “free labour contract” for certain categories of workers. But taken as a whole, the present day economy does not differ much from “pure” capitalism.

Production is carried on for profit, not for use. There is no provision that all those able and willing to work will always be in a position to find employment; an “army of unemployed” almost always exists. The worker is constantly in fear of losing his job. Since unemployed and poorly paid workers do not provide a profitable market, the production of consumers’ goods is restricted, and great hardship is the consequence. Technological progress frequently results in more unemployment rather than in an easing of the burden of work for all. The profit motive, in conjunction with competition among capitalists, is responsible for an instability in the accumulation and utilisation of capital which leads to a huge waste of labour, and to that crippling of the social consciousness of individuals which I mentioned before.

This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career.

I am convinced there is only **one** way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals. In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilised in a planned fashion. A planned economy, which adjusts production to the needs of the community, would distribute the work to be done among all those able to work and would guarantee a livelihood to every man, woman and child. The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own innate abilities, would attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that a planned economy is not yet socialism. A planned economy as such may be accompanied by the complete enslavement of the individual. The achievement of socialism requires the solution of some extremely difficult socio-political problems: how is it possible, in view of the far-reaching centralisation of political and economic power, to prevent bureaucracy from becoming all-powerful and overweening? How can the rights of the individual be protected and therewith a democratic counterweight to the power of the bureaucracy be assured?

Clarity about the aims and problems of socialism is of greatest significance in our age of transition. Since, under present circumstances, free and unhindered discussion of these problems has come under a powerful taboo, I consider the foundation of this magazine to be an important public service.

(Monthly Review, 1949)

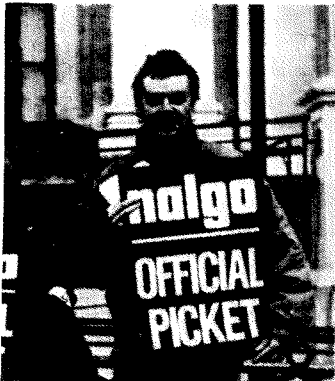
How not to fight the poll tax

It seems almost incredible that it took until late June 1990 for a national conference of trade unionists against the poll tax to be held.

It was well over a year after the poll tax came into effect in Scotland, and nearly three months after it was introduced in England and Wales.

Millions of people are refusing to pay, and impressive anti-poll-tax unions exist in working-class communities and estates. But trade union action has been sporadic and uncoordinated.

The main blame, of course, must lie at the door of the TUC and the national union leaders, who have consistently urged compliance with the law. But *Militant* and the All-Britain Anti-Poll-Tax Federation also bear responsibility.



They have a one-sided, simplistic strategy for beating the poll tax — Don't Pay. They talk for the record about trade union action, non-collection and non-implementation. But in practice they pay virtually no attention to fighting within the unions and make non-payment a panacea, ignoring its limitations and difficulties, and channelling the anti-poll-tax movement away from concern with the trade unions.

Take the case of the CPSA, a union of central importance to the implementation of the poll tax and one, moreover, where *Militant* supporters play a key role.

In late 1989 a number of social security offices in London took unofficial action against registering claimants for the poll tax. It was the first time workers had struck against the tax. The right wing union leaders denounced the strike as "illegal" and ruled out of order any discussion of non-implementation or non-payment within the union.

And the response of the *Militant*-dominated Broad Left was not much better. They made no attempt to encourage or spread the strikes. *Militant* supporters in some regions even refused to debate motions calling for non-cooperation with the tax for fear of the NEC's reaction!

At a small Broad Left meeting in February 1990 *Militant* supporters overturned existing Broad Left policy, instead voting for a policy which in effect calls for any strike against the poll tax by CPSA members to be conditional on the success of a mass non-payment campaign. Talk about putting the cart before the horse!

But that is typical of *Militant*: fine words, grand slogans, but when the going gets tough they make for the nearest bolt-holes.

It was exactly the same back in June and July 1984, when the *Militant*-dominated leadership of Liverpool City Council backed away from making a second front against the Tories with the miners, and instead cobbled together a squalid deal with the government to increase the rates by 17 per cent.

And it was the same after the Trafalgar Square riot in March 1990. Steve Nally and Tommy Sheridan, the *Militant* leaders of the All-Britain Federation, went on television promising to "go public and name names" of rioters — that is, to turn their names over to the police. A bit of hostile pressure from the police and the media, and "super-Marxists" Tommy and Steve buckle.

True, Nally and Sheridan later retracted their statements, but only after an outcry from anti-poll-tax campaigns up and down the land.

The other characteristic of *Militant* is their unwillingness to enter into united activity with other people on the left — or even to debate seriously with other socialists.

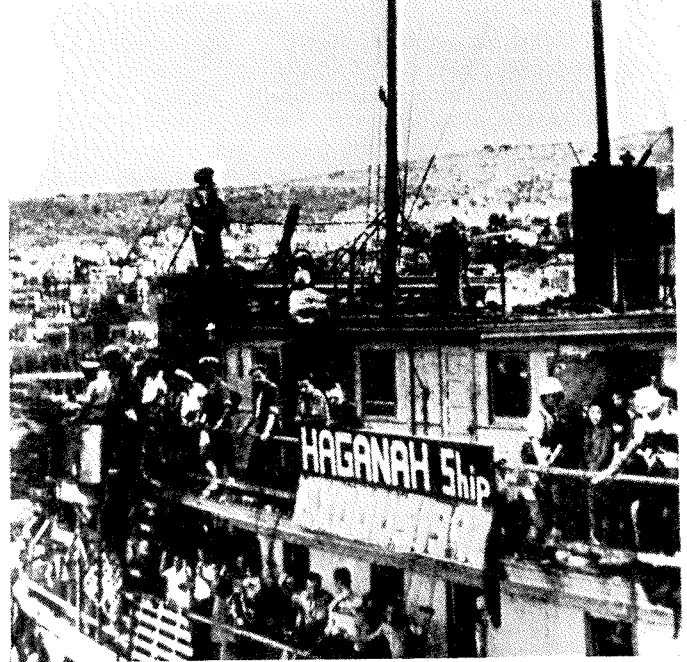
All too often anti-poll-tax federations are packed out with "delegates" from groups representing little or nothing on the ground, while representatives of genuine local groups are excluded just in order to maintain *Militant* control.

The November 1989 'All Britain Anti-Poll-Tax Federation Founding Conference' was turned by *Militant* into a self-congratulatory rally. The June trade union conference was originally proposed by the Socialist Movement and the Federation's own (non-*Militant*) trade union officer as a united effort with the Federation.

The Federation leaders (i.e. *Militant*) decided to go it alone rather than organise a conference with other socialists.

No-one can deny the energy and commitment which *Militant* supporters have put into the poll tax struggle. But their simplistic over-emphasis on non-payment, their lack of concern with trade union action, and their unwillingness to work with broader forces, are in danger of leading the struggle into a blind alley.

Jim Denham



Jewish refugee ship, 1942

Trotsky on Zionism

In an article in *Socialist Organiser* (No.388, 9 February 1989) John

O'Mahony stated: "At the end of his life he [Trotsky] believed that the persecution of the Jews and the effect of that persecution on the consciousness of the Jewish people had made the creation of some sort of Jewish state an inescapable necessity. He did not support the Palestine programme of the Zionists, or anyway not as conceived by them. But — his train of thought is clear — he was for a Jewish state nonetheless."

The quotes given for Trotsky's views are from 1937. However, Trotsky's final views on the subject were given in 1940.

Based on the following discussions between Sam Gordon and Leon Trotsky and an extract from his writings it is my contention that at the end of his life Trotsky opposed a Jewish state.

"Gordon: What tactical approach would you suggest [towards Jewish workers in the USA]?"

"Trotsky: That is another thing. I am not informed very well about that phase. The first thing is to give them a perspective, criticise all the past, the democratic tendency, etc. To pose for them that the socialist revolution is the only realistic solution of the Jewish question. If the Jewish workers and peasants asked for an independent state, good — but they didn't get it under Great Britain. But if they want it, the proletariat will give it. We are not in favour, but only the vic-

torious working class can give it to them."

The above is from a discussion between Sam Gordon and Leon Trotsky on 15 January 1940 (*Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939-40*, Pathfinder Press, 1973, p287).

"The attempt to solve the Jewish question through the migration of Jews to Palestine can now be seen again for what it is, a tragic mockery of the Jewish people. Interested in winning the sympathies of the Arabs who are more numerous than the Jews, the British Government has sharply altered its policy towards the Jews, and has actually renounced its promise to help them found their "own home" in a foreign land. The future development of military events may well transform Palestine into a bloody trap for several hundred thousand Jews. Never was it so clear as it is today that the salvation of the Jewish people is bound up inseparably with the overthrow of the capitalist system."

The above is an extract of Trotsky's writings published in *Fourth International* December 1945, p379.

From what I have read on Trotsky's views on the question of the Jewish state it appears that at different times he had different views as to whether or not there should have been such a state. However, John O'Mahony was clearly wrong not to have provided readers of *Socialist Organiser* with Trotsky's 1940 position.

Readers who wish to study Trotsky and the Jewish question should read *Trotsky and the Jews* by Joseph Nedava, obtainable through your library. *Leon Trotsky on the Jewish Question* and *The Jewish Question* by Abram Leon are also required reading. The last two publications are available at left bookshops.

Barry Buitkant

Hitler, Stalin and art

The last issue of *Workers' Liberty* contained an article outlining Stalin's effect on Soviet arts. Stalinist paranoia led to the creation of a cultural bureaucracy which strangled genuine artistic production by insisting on following particular forms and content.

Stalin's basic barbarism was masked by propaganda in favour of expanding artistic production, and taking art and culture 'to the people'. The regime was also determined to portray a society which was making great strides forward. This vision was forced on the Soviet people (who were not allowed any choice) as well as being the only picture of Soviet life available to the outside world.

Yet this bureaucratic smothering of the arts came straight after a great *flowering* of Russian culture. In the decade before the revolution, Russian artists were beginning to use images from their country's history and peasant culture while simultaneously being given access to the Western avant-garde for the first time. Russian artists were at the forefront of developing European artistic discoveries. After the revolution, Russian art again moved forward, putting much artistic theory into practice through teaching, propaganda, architecture, posters and radical theatre.

But Stalin crushed those genuine movements, calling them decadent and bourgeois. By contrast, he insisted on a form of so-called 'realism' which was based on 19th century bourgeois culture.

The same cultural 'realism' could be found in Hitler's Germany, around the same time. Like Stalin, Hitler claimed to be bringing art 'to the people' while actually force-feeding them on propaganda and pastiche. As in Russia, the fruits of the artistic explosions of the earlier decade were either suppressed or ridiculed. As in Russia, painting followed a 19th century naturalism, with either sentimental or heroic content. The same is true of film, a medium favoured by both the Nazi and Stalinist regimes.

Both Russia and Germany were home to tremendous film-making talent. Eisenstein in Russia made such films as 'October', 'Battleship Potemkin' and 'Ivan the Terrible'. He used Russian history (ancient and modern) as his subject, and a visual style — montage — which focussed on



The "socialist-realist" worker is from a Nazi poster

repeated movements and images for impact. Probably the most famous Eisenstein sequence, from 'Battleship Potemkin', is of a pram with a baby in it rolling down the Odessa steps. Soldiers march inexorably down, step after step, cutting the mother off from the pram. The camera shows the pram wheels, over and over again, bouncing down, with anonymous soldiers' feet and legs behind it.

In Germany, the expressionists produced films of terror and distortion, such as 'M', 'Nosferatu' and 'The Cabinet of Dr Calgari'. These films also use historical themes, but tell of a divided self rather than a divided society. They make use of fantastic, gothic sets and lighting, folding and twisting the buildings and faces like a hall of mirrors. German expressionism was a powerful influence on the paranoid Hollywood 'film noir' and is still an influence on film today — for example, 'Blade Runner', 'Black Rain' and many horror movies.

But Hitler and Stalin ridiculed and condemned these films, preferring second-rate, bland propaganda features. Even the best

of Stalinist or Nazi film-making (eg. 'Chapayer' or 'Triumph of the Will') cannot compare with even the most hackneyed Hollywood piece. 'Chapayer' (a Russian civil war story) is well made, and 'Triumph of the Will' (about Nazism) likewise. But in both, the film-makers' talents are used only to get the ideological message across. The style is naturalistic — except where the content requires something more dramatic and theatrical. In both films the 'action' (which is very slow) is occasionally halted for a trite, theatrical pose of hero against the sky to be fully exploited.

There is far more in common between 'Chapayer' and 'Triumph of the Will' than either has in common with Eisenstein or German Expressionism. Yet the two former films were supposed to be in essentially *national* styles.

The visual arts of both Nazism and Stalinism focused on the rural as opposed to the urban, on national rather than international, and both made ordinary people (peasants, soldiers, housewives) into heroes. Under each regime the image of the Leader as both a historic figure of great impor-

tance and a simple, caring man is common.

Architecture followed the same broad pattern of 19th century classicism in both countries. Stalin built less than Hitler but his urban centres are scaled down models of Hitler's monumental colonnades. Both leaders favoured stylised 'traditional' pageants and military-style parades. Both used endlessly repeated symbols — the red flag, hammer and sickle, (identical) statues of Lenin, swastikas, 'perfect' male figures.

In neither case have the artistic forms proved enduring. Stalinist art and literature was largely ignored by the Russian people in favour of those classics which were available. German architects quickly abandoned classicism for modernism after the war. The best of the artists had either left, gone underground or been persecuted under Stalin and Hitler so that artistic innovation shifted to other countries, notably the USA. Far from bringing art 'to the people', Stalin and Hitler sent it abroad, or killed it, so denying it to the people for decades.

Elizabeth Millward

A symposium on Stalinism

The last Workers' Liberty carried a symposium of different revolutionary socialist assessments of the Stalinist systems. Oliver Macdonald put the "workers' state" position; Robert Brenner argued that Stalinism constitutes a distinctive form of class society, neither capitalist nor proletarian; Frank Furedi argued that there was simply no ruling class in the Stalinist states; an Iranian Marxist contended that the former "degenerated workers' state" in the USSR had degenerated to the point that it was no longer a workers' state, though it was not capitalist either; and Martin Thomas put *Socialist Organiser's* general position that the Stalinist societies are exploitative class systems roughly parallel to capitalism.

Here we print a short symposium of opinions on the question held by supporters of *Socialist Organiser* and *Workers' Liberty*. Collectively we believe that the Stalinist states are a form of class society which, in history, parallels capitalism, and is in no sense post-capitalist. We advocate that the working class in those societies should make their own socialist revolution.

The precise scientific characterisation of those states we see as matter for ongoing discussion. A recent *Socialist Organiser* editorial board endorsed the following definition of how we see the way forward on this question.

"Quite apart from the possible immediate ill-effects of the establishment of a name-tag 'position' by factional vote-out — and because of the wide agreement on the substantive questions that might not be very much — we would pay a very high price. We would choke off a very promising discussion; saddle ourselves with a shibboleth in the form of a name-tag theory; introduce an additional and possibly envenomed element of factionalism into the discussion, especially in the run-up to the vote-out.

Above all, we would be turning our face firmly, and our practice energetically, towards the tradition of sects and shibboleths which has

bedevilled this question since Trotsky died. We would be turning away from the aspiration to an open-ended scientific — that is, Marxist — approach, which is what has guided us on this question for a long time, indeed, since long before we even thought of abandoning the 'workers' state' position".

In the following statements, which have been excerpted from material circulated among SO supporters or from SO, is covered the range of opinion found among SO supporters. Alan Johnson puts one variant of a state-capitalist thesis, Martin Thomas another; Duncan Chapple, Pete Keenlyside, and others defend the degenerated and deformed workers' states position; Stan Crooke puts the "no ruling class" position associated mainly with Hillel Ticktin; and Sean Matgamna argues that the Stalinist states constitute a form of society distinct from both capitalism and socialism.

The earthquake now shaking the Stalinist world throws a sharp new light on the discussion. This small collection records the state of the debate on Stalinism among SO supporters before the earthquake.



National plan, international competition, state capitalism

Workers in the Stalinist societies are wage-labourers, exchanging their labour power to obtain the necessities of life. They receive wages which do not rise over a historically conditioned level of subsistence. They are 'free' wage labourers: free from ownership or control of the means of production and free to move from one enterprise to another. So, in other words, the situation of the Soviet worker is in essence identical to that of the worker under private capitalism.

And what of the position of the bureaucracy? In what sense is it a "collective capitalist"? Isn't it plain that one can't have a capitalist state without private capitalists?

Capitalism is not defined by private ownership of the means of production. Capitalism is defined by the nature of the accumulation process. This is its "central dynamic" which both links nineteenth century private capitalism and twentieth century state capitalism. Peter Binns defines it as the process by which "The direct producers are exploited and the fruits of this exploitation — Marx called it surplus value — is accumulated in further means of production".

In pre-capitalist societies exploitation led to increased consumption (castles, cathedrals and armies). In capitalist society the entire society is subordinated to the drive to accumulation of capitalist means of production: this is made possible by the separation of the working class from ownership and control of the means of production and the fact of competition between those who own the means of production (which compels the individual capitalist to accumulate the fruits of exploitation).

A critical theoretical insight of state capitalism is that as competition drives on the accumulation process, that process reacts back on it and can transform the mechanisms of competition. So Marx and Engels noted the processes of concentration and centralisation of capital leading to joint-stock companies and trusts ("an end not only to private production but also to planlessness" — Engels).

Surely there is no competition within the Soviet Union, so no drive to accumulate? Looked at purely internally this is true. But the Soviet Union is part of the world economy. The accumulation process changes the form of competition also on a world scale.

Bukharin argued in 1916, over 70 years ago, that the formation of monopolies, the domination of money-capital and the world struggle for markets were part of a fundamental change in capitalism. State and monopoly capital were becoming even more intertwined, the nation-state was replacing the individual firm as the organising centre of capitalist production, and accumulation and competition between capitals assuming a military form.

"The state power thus sucks in almost all branches of production; it not only maintains the general conditions of the exploitative process, the state more and more becomes a direct exploiter, organising and directing production as a collective capitalist."

But as plan replaces planlessness on a national scale, "the system of world economy is

just as blindly irrational and 'subjectless' as the earlier system of national economy" wrote Bukharin in 1920. The world market is, therefore, an integrated system of which individual nation-states were component parts. Competition on a world scale, said Bukharin, led to a tendency toward state capitalism within individual national economies.

In the Soviet Union the bureaucracy, unable/unwilling to link its fate to international working-class revolution, had to defend itself by competing with its rivals on the world economy.

So the Soviet bureaucracy stands in a capitalist relation to the Soviet working class and a capitalist relation to the other capitalists and state capitals that make up the world economy: the USSR inc.

From an analysis of the social relations of production, starting with the conditions of the immediate producers, we have seen how the absence of workers' power at the point of production resulted in a subordination to the world capitalist economy, which in turn made necessary the competitive accumulation of capital, which led to intense exploitation of the working class, which required for its enforcement a totalitarian dictatorship and bourgeois relations of production in the workplace.

Alan Johnson, summer 1989.

Deformed capitalist states

The revolutions which created state-monopoly industrialism were all made in underdeveloped capitalist countries. They were not just capitalist countries, but capitalist countries with a great weight of colonialist or pre-capitalist landlord domination (or, in Cuba, a particularly archaic and stagnant form of capitalism).

The revolutionaries mobilised the masses not against capitalism but against foreign and landlord domination.

The revolutionary forces were militarised. At the head of peasant armies, there were tightly-knit elites of middle-class origin.

The most important capitalists in these countries were closely tied to foreign and landlord interests. No wonder that a section of the — very large — middle classes turned against them, fighting for a better national industrial development. On taking power, the revolutionaries did not want to share their victory with those established capitalists.

The result is a form of economy parallel to market capitalism. Its characteristic divergence from market-capitalist

development are *systematisations* of divergences imposed ad hoc by many less monopolistic states, concerned to develop a base for national industrial capitalism. So is state-monopoly industrialism a special form of state capitalism?

Objection 1: Capitalism is a market system. A command economy can't be capitalism.

Answer: Notice that the Marxist classics never raise this issue, although their theoretical models of 'state capitalism' are obviously not free-market systems.

For Engels, under state capitalism 'freedom of competition (would) change into its very opposite — into monopoly; and the production without any definite plan of capitalistic society capitulates to the production upon a definite plan of the invading socialistic society (but) so far still to the benefit and advantage of the capitalists' (*Anti-Duhring*, p329). What makes this state capitalism still *capitalism* is that 'The workers remain wage-workers — proletarians'.

Capitalism is the system of exploitation of wage-labour by capital, whether carried out in a free market or a state-controlled economy. And the workers remain wage-workers under state-monopoly industrialism.

Objection 2: The workers are not really wage-workers under state-monopoly industrialism. They are state slaves. Wage-labour implies a more or less free labour market.

Answer: "State capitalism, for the worker, is wage-labour plus control and surveillance," as the Algerian Marxist Benhouria puts it.

But for all that, there are labour markets in the state-monopoly industrialist societies. Instead of being handed rations, the workers are paid *wages* and buy their subsistence. Indeed, in the USSR, and much of Eastern Europe, enterprises bid against each other by offering bonuses to attract good workers. There is a difference between the situation of the bulk of the workers — wage-workers — and that of the slaves in forced-labour camps.

The connected political question is this: do the state-monopoly industrialisms create a wage-working class of the sort discussed in Marxist theory? A class with socialist potential? Yes!

Objection 3: Wage-labour alone does not define capitalism. It is wage-labour and *capital*. You need to show that *capital* exists in the USSR. Machinery and factories are not of themselves capital. Capital is a social relation.

Answer: The record of the last 50 or 60 years is undeniably that the state-monopoly industrialisms aim *not* just for the production of particular use-values — be they palaces or power stations — but for the production of *wealth in general*, wealth not limited to any predefined form. That is



capital.

What mechanism drives them to that aim? It is the *competition of their national capital on the world market*. For some it is direct and immediate competition in world trade.

The USSR and China were long outside world trade. But weren't those state-monopoly industrialisms attempting to *prepare themselves* to enter world trade without being devastated? Isn't that also a form of competition?

Objection 4: If these state-monopoly industrialisms are just forms of capitalism, then why can't they be ordinary capitalist societies? Why don't they allow trade unions and opposition parties?

Answer: They are very special forms of capitalism. Trotsky thought state-capitalism would be impossible because the single state capital would be "too tempting an object for social revolution". Engels thought the same: "No nation will be put up with...so barefaced an exploitation of the community by a small band of dividend-mongers".

Trotsky and Engels were not entirely wrong. These regimes are inherently tense and vulnerable.

Objection 5: State-monopoly industrialism is very different from what we know as capitalism in Britain. What is the sense in applying the same term to two such different societies?

Answer: Only in the textbooks does history proceed tidily from stereotype slavery to stereotype feudalism to stereotype capitalism. Each of the major modes of production known to history has seen wide variations. History is full of hybrid and exceptional formations which cannot be slotted tidily into one category or another.

For decades Trotskyists argued that the USSR could be a "degenerated workers' state", despite being utterly different on almost every point from the theoretical norm of a workers' state; why should its rather smaller differences from the theoretical norm of a capitalist state prevent it being considered a "deformed capitalist state"?

Martin Thomas, October 1988

It remains a workers' state

Because the USSR retains the nationalised property forms established by the 1917 October revolution, it remains a workers' state, though horribly degenerated. Since 1933 our movement has stood for a political revolution of the working class against the bureaucracy, and with the Soviet workers in defence of the gains of the revolution against both imperialism and the bureaucracy.

After the war, capitalism was also overthrown in other states. This totally disoriented the Fourth International. The FI considered states like Yugoslavia and China to be run by relatively healthy revolutionary parties.

The same mistakes were made by the majority in the FI when Stalinists and nationalists created deformed workers' states in Cuba, Vietnam and elsewhere.

The states came around because of the growing weakness of imperialism after the war and the absence of Marxists within the international working class movement. They smashed the old capitalist state to develop a dictatorship over the working class based on the property relations as exist in the Soviet Union. They were workers' states, monstrously deformed from birth and modelled on the degenerated workers' state of Stalin, not the healthy workers' state fought for by Lenin and Trotsky.

But why was the mainstream of the FI so wrong? They had abandoned the concept that Stalinism could be simultaneously revolutionary against capitalism and counter-revolutionary against the workers.

Duncan Chapple, Pete Keenlyside and others, early 1990

The loss of political power by the workers to the Stalinist bureaucracy did not mean the restoration of capitalism.

The bureaucracy was not the old ruling class reformed, running a nationalised economy because it happened to be the best way to make profits. Rather, the bureaucracy is a layer of *parasites* that depends on the nationalised economy, but is unable to exist without it.

In terms of its basic make-up, the USSR is an unstable not natural formation. It was able to duplicate itself because of the weakness in the late '40s of both the working class and the imperialists.

And as we have seen many times, it produced not a cohesive stable structure, but an unbalanced, contradictory kind of society which has exploded time and time again.

The USSR is a society trapped between capitalism and communism. The bureaucrats fight had to keep it away from revolution and counter-revolution. The fact that they have halfway succeeded in keeping that balance does not mean that there must have been some massive change.

People who argue that the length of time the bureaucrats have held power means that they are now a capitalist or other form of stable class argue against both Marxism and reality.

A relationship between time and change does exist. But it is not the only determinant. Imagine all the things that happen to a tree during a period of time: it can rot or it can continue to grow; it can be chopped down or burned; or it can fossilise or turn to oil.

What is the best way of telling what actually has happened? Looking at the tree or looking at your watch? The answer is clear. The same point is true of the Soviet Union. A state blocked in transition does not automatically turn into another form of society just because of time!

Trotsky argued (in *The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism*, 1935) that the nature of the USSR could only be determined by its *substance* — "its social foundation and economic tendencies". The nature of a state remains the same until something happens to make it change — until a revolutionary force, either the capitalists or the workers, take power.

The way to tell if the class nature of the Soviet Union has changed is to look if its foundations have fundamentally changed. They haven't, at least in the 65 years since the Soviet thermidor began.

As Trotsky wrote, "He who asserts that the soviet government has gradually been changed from proletarian to bourgeois is only, so to speak, running back the film of reformism" (*The class nature of the Soviet state*, 1933).

August 1989

Neither planning nor market operates

There can be only two possible regulators for the supply and extraction of human social labour: direct social regulation (either 'customary' as in feudalism, or conscious as in communism) or the blind workings of the price-form (ie. where the product of social labour has the commodity form and is an exchange value, as in capitalism).

In relation to the Eastern Bloc

states the problem — both for those attempting an analysis and also for the bureaucracies trying to rule — is that neither of these two possible regulators operates.

The former (direct social regulation) could operate only on the basis of socialist democracy.

The latter (the blind workings of the price-form) could operate only where labour power is a commodity. But for the labour power to be a commodity in the Soviet Union (or anywhere else) it would have to be bought and sold on a labour market, and the wage paid would have to be in return for labour-time.

Such circumstances manifestly do not pertain in the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries. Workers can move around the country, within limits, but this is not the same as the existence of a labour market; and what the worker receives in the pay packet might be a "wage" in name, but in reality, given the secondary and limited role played by money in the Soviet economy, it is more akin to a ration card for withdrawing from the net product produced.

In other words, and put more plainly:

a) Production in the Eastern Bloc states does not take place on the basis of a plan. There cannot be a plan because there is no democracy. (It is true that orders are given, and that some are partially obeyed, after a fashion. But giving commands about production is something different from the planning of production).

b) Production in the Eastern Bloc states is not governed by the workings of the capitalist "free market". This cannot be the case because there is no market (or any other of the categories of capitalism) in these states.

This explains much about the features of the Eastern Bloc states — the atomisation of the working class, the acute instability of the bureaucracies, the low quality of Eastern Bloc products, the constant failure to meet the "plan" targets, the inherent problems in the introduction of new technology, etc., etc. However, the point at issue here is what the above means with regard to the existence or otherwise of a "ruling class" in the Eastern Bloc states.

Just as the defining feature of society is how unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producer, so too, it logically follows, the defining feature of a ruling class (i.e. what makes a group of people a ruling class in reality and not just in name) is control over the surplus product.

It is control over the surplus product which is the crucial category, not oppressiveness (all ruling classes are oppressive; but oppressiveness in itself does not make the agents of oppression a "ruling class") nor "ownership of the means of production" (the belief that "ownership of the

means of production" is the criterion of a "ruling class" is a Stalinist invention; Marx himself never said any such thing).

Given that the Stalinist bureaucracy does not, and cannot, exercise control over the surplus product, it cannot be a "ruling class" in any Marxist sense. The individuals who constitute the bureaucracy have no control over the surplus product as individuals. Nor does the bureaucracy collectively have control over the surplus product.

The "system" in the Eastern Bloc states is therefore a historical blind alley. It is a historical blind alley in which the ruling stratum, whilst striving to become a ruling class, can never actually become one, because the "system" over which it presides is one which precludes the possibility of it ever achieving that control over the surplus product which is the criterion of a ruling class.

Stan Crooke, late 1988



A unique way of getting surplus product

It seems to me nonsense to characterise Russia in terms of capitalism.

To take — as some *SO* comrades do — aspects of capitalist states throughout the world, and of capitalist formations throughout history, and from them to create a kind of pastiche, is a-historical. It loses sight of Russian realities, and it obscures the particular Stalinist socio-economic formation we are examining by pasting a collage of images and, so to speak, historical snapshots over it.

Capitalism is essentially the exploitation of wage labour by capital for the extraction of surplus value, and an economic system that is regulated by the consequences of that fundamental class relationship, by way of a really controlling and regulating market. It is regulated by such facts as that investment is determined by profit, and if you don't make a profit you go under.

That's an abstract model, but it's the essence of capitalism. Today, of course, and for most of this century, you find various inroads made by state activity into the classic model of capitalism, inroads which mitigate the laws and change some of the workings of capitalism.

In the USSR it has been a mat-

ter not of mitigations and offsettings of the laws of capitalism, but of a qualitatively different system.

The dominant thing there is the existence of a state bureaucracy millions strong, clustered in and around an all-controlling, all-owning, all-encompassing state, which operates the economy politically. Political, or politico-economic, decisions broadly determine what the spontaneously regulating market determines in the classic capitalist model, and what the market and government intervention on behalf of the capitalist class determine in recent real capitalism.

The Stalinist system is not regulated by anything like 'spontaneous capitalism'. It is different from even the most extreme modification we have seen of spontaneous capitalism — that of wartime Nazi Germany. It is not regulated by any kind of autonomous mechanism, but by state power.

The rulers' real control over what happens in the interstices of the economy has been assessed by socialists since Trotsky's time as blind and feeble. Silt has built up, clogging the arteries of the system, and producing strains and convulsions.

Nevertheless, it has to be either/or. Either there is some broad correspondence between what is decided and what happens, or the system would have collapsed into chaos long ago. Instead of the once-impressive industrialisation achieved in the USSR by the Stalinist system, there would have been a collapse into peasant subsistence economy and the generation of market capitalism out of that.

Even when it ceases to exercise active, centralised, deliberated control, the state bureaucracy squats on the society exercising the control of inertia. Because of it nobody else can move and do things on the requisite scale.

In the totalitarian state monopoly systems the central feature is the preponderance of state power. Therefore to call it state capitalism is to miss the point. It is a distinct form of economy, or rather a distinct socio-economic formation.

In any case, we should not, like vulgar Marxists, try to analyse a society just by saying 'What's the economic mainspring?' We should talk about socio-economic formations. In Stalinist states we have a unique level of bureaucracy and state power, together with the elimination of the old ruling class, or their utter marginalisation and subordination (China). We have a unique way of appropriating surplus product.

How did the Stalinist bureaucracies evolve? If bureaucracies similar to that of the USSR arise in other countries such as Yugoslavia, Vietnam, or Cuba, how do you explain them?

Monopoly capitalism has developed the forces of production on a world scale. It competes with the rest of the world and with its 'other selves' on the basis of vast concentrations of the means of production. In order for backward countries to compete they too must concentrate the means of production, and only the state can do this. So a vast spread of statification occurs.

This happens both in "bureaucratic collectivist" states and in other societies which are quite different and where there is a ruling bourgeoisie. The root cause is the same, though the medium varies — capitalist military regimes, Stalinist peasant armies, hybrid formations like the Syrian and Iraqi factions of the "developmentalist" Ba'ath party, etc.

The end result varies, too, from Egypt, where a military regime conducted a 20-year experiment in almost Stalinist state power, without eliminating the old ruling class, to Mao's China; from the Stalinist, and seemingly durable, level of state control imposed on Burma by the army for 30 years to the looser "Stalinism" of 1960s Cuba.

Those socio-economic formations which are the result of a thoroughgoing "anti-capitalist revolution" in which the old ruling class is eliminated fully, and fully replaced by a new collective ruling elite clustered around the state power, which is *its* collective state power — those seem to me to be qualitatively different from the in-between and hybrid cases, like 1960s Egypt.

You must divide the states subject to statification into two distinct types. In the first type you have a powerful mass movement which makes a revolution and eliminates the old ruling class. It is simultaneously counter-revolutionary against the working class. That type is Stalinist, in that it has a programme based on the Russian revolution in its degenerate Stalinist phase and creates mechanisms to squeeze the working class. It has a very strong ruling elite and it is very stable, for a long time.

The other variant is where a less powerful, less ideologically motivated group takes power from the old ruling class, usually in a military struggle, and then sets out to develop the means of production using the state. These don't usually destroy the old ruling class.

There is an essential distinction between state capitalism and the Stalinist formations. The distinction lies in the nature of the ruling class and in its relationship to state power and the relationship of state power to society. There are all kinds of halfway houses, but there's no reason to equate the hybrids with the basic distinct species.

Sean Matgamna, Summer 1987.

The real history of US labour

Dianne Finger and Barry Finger review 'An Injury to All' by Kim Moody, Verso, London.

"This book," as Moody correctly forewarns, "is about the demise of the labour movement that was born in the 1930s and 1940s." While chronicling its social decline in contemporary American life, this book concerns itself with the "abandonment of the early social unionism of the CIO in favour of a modern version of business unionism". It is written from the singular perspective of the rank and file militant. Moody therefore suffers no pretensions of having offered anything resembling an "official" history, nor one which may aspire to such ends.

Moody himself is uniquely equipped in providing this anti-concessionist, "alternative guide" to modern unionism. He is one of the founders and leading forces behind the rank and file newsletter, Labor Notes. This journal, founded in 1979, picks up from where the International Socialists of the 1960s and '70s left off. The IS group(let), probably never numbering more than a few hundred, was unique among the so-called New Left. It traced its roots back to the non-orthodox wing of the 1930s' Trotskyist movement which in its day played a memorable, if minor role in the early period of the CIO.

Unlike their more blinkered cohorts of the "official" Trotskyist party, the Socialist Workers Party, the Workers Party, later the Independent Socialist League, developed a Third Camp socialist position. It refused to support, critically or otherwise, the Soviet Union as a workers' state, and championed instead a socialism from below. This perspective, at once revolutionary and democratic, firmly committed the group to participation in the



Pittston miners' strike, 1990

mass movements of its day with pride of place naturally reserved for labour struggles. But such participation never entailed the subordination of its activities to the interests of any existing social system. This tradition was faithfully replicated in the IS which, unlike the New Left in general, never wound up as claquers in the authoritarian of the month club for Mao or Hoxha or Castro or Ho or Tito.

The IS itself no longer exists. Its membership dissolved into the insurgency movements of organised and semi-organised labour, while its political apparatus merged with other distantly similar groups on the American left. But it did not vanish from the political scene before playing a leading part in the 1976 founding of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, nor before bequeathing in Labor Notes an ongoing project of linking the anti-bureaucratic chorus in the labour movement to new voices within the Black, feminist and anti-interventionary movements. The critical assumption that informs Labor Notes as it does *An Injury to All* is that "the working class remains the central agency of progressive politics and social change".

The heyday of American trade unionism was the later 1930s and early 1940s when, as Moody evokes, "millions of workers

flowed into new organisations, stamping them with their own democratic aspirations and shaping a new generation of leaders from the shop floor to the international union headquarters". Concomitant with this organisational challenge to the accommodationist AFL's business unionism was a new vision of social unionism.

In this modern version of social unionism the values of the old Knights of Labour were to find new expression. The democratic, collectivist thrust of the new industrial unions envisioned organised labour as a "force that would lead to the raising of the living standards of the entire nation...(and pointed to) an egalitarian future for all..." This egalitarianism and its broader social vision provided the "only real potential springboards toward the development of an aggressive, class-based movement in post World War Two America."

Though not socialist, the new unionism of the 1930s was aggressively participatory, organisationally iconoclastic and if not built completely from the ground up was at least a "hybrid of rank and file democracy and bureaucracy". It provided a hospitable environment for radicals not only due to the freewheeling structure of the organisations which were conducive to new initiatives, but

because workers began to see themselves as a class. As the CIO's Phillip Murray was to admit in 1944, "It is a new departure for American labour to lead...a national movement devoted to the general welfare just as much as to the particular interests of labour groups."

But with the resurgence and ultimate triumph of business unionism this all came to an end. For Moody the wartime institutional accords between the CIO, management and the federal government provided the immediate backdrop to the decline of social unionism. "Basically," according to Moody, "the leadership of the CIO offered the Roosevelt administration a no-strike pledge and a wage freeze in return for government pressure on the employers to allow the growth and stabilisation of union membership". Shopfloor initiative was too unwieldy to be compatible with the routinisation of industrial relations needed to prosecute the war effort. The transference of ever more issues from the local level summoned forth a standing, self-perpetuating union bureaucracy required to implement and enforce these trilateral agreements.

This bureaucratic mechanism bore fruit in the form of industry-wide wage patterns and standardised grievance procedures, while at the same time choking off union democracy and suppressing internal dissent. As mediator rather than immediate participant in the shopfloor struggle, the union bureaucracy eventually began to identify the well being of the worker with the wealth and profitability of the company.

Ever more remote were the days when labour could be counted to rally to any social cause. Nothing perhaps more illustrates this than the decline in the level of the union participation in the civil rights movement. When in the 1930s at least some of the CIO unions worked in a cooperative relationship with the Black community, by the 1960s active participation gave way to interested bystanding. The civil rights movement was to find its principal allies and organisational support outside the union establishment.

Sidney Lens aptly described this transformation. "In both its moral overtone and its intrinsic philosophy it has tended to blend with the very forces of Big Business which it fights so steadily on the narrow economic front. Instead of remaining a maverick force with the social stream, as it has grown older, it has become 'responsible', sluggish towards new ideas, practical rather than idealistic, legalistic rather than militant, more conformist than anti-conformist." The unions were, in other words, willing to utterly concede to the bosses the right to manage in exchange for

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the expansion of wages and benefits.

Eventually with the throttling of internal political ferment, labour's role as "a pressure group within the Democratic Party — rather than as the leader of a broad movement — was unchallenged policy." Labour's agenda was pared down to a narrow compass of legislative goals that directly affected the unions themselves. National health care, federal public housing, economic planning all retreated to the background to be dusted off only for ceremonial display. With the eventual decline in the worldwide competitiveness of American business, the post-war accord between labour and management was to erode. And when the time came, the descent into narrow, business unionism had already disarmed labour and stripped it of its ability to challenge capital.

For Moody argues explicitly that the decline of labour in the 1970s and '80s was not due to the structural shift in employment patterns from manufacturing to services. Indeed, the level of unionisation has declined in both sectors. Rather the cause resides in the lack of adaptability on the part of a mummified labour movement. This retreat reached its climax during the 1979-80 Chrysler bailout, when the UAW overrode recalcitrant locals and forced workers to accept a wage freeze and other massive concessions. Despite these givebacks, almost half the workforce eventually lost their jobs.

Concessionary bargaining is not seen by employers as an aberration, to be invoked only under extreme financial circumstances. Moody points out that profitable firms such as GM, Kroger, Iowa Beef, Gulf Oil, Texaco, Caterpillar Tractor and UPS demanded and received concessions. Moreover, some of the industries such as trucking, meatpacking and the airlines were not declining but prosperous sectors. And in any case, labour costs most often do not account for even 50% of the current costs of production where concessions have been common.

The acceptance of quality of work-life schemes, team concepts and other contrivances of management have further eroded labour's adversarial edge. Moody effectively reveals these "power-sharing" tools as utter failures in terms of altering the real power relationships between labour and management. More ominously, "the popularity of non-adversarial labour relations reflects the conversion of a large number of union leaders to the competitive logic of the business enterprise". Unions became a mechanism whereby work life is adapted to the needs of intensified global competition.

This slide in the quality of shop-floor and union life is not

inevitable or irreversible. Drawing on a masterful discussion of the P-9 and Watsonville Canning strikes as well as a detailed history of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, Moody presents what he calls "A new vision for US Labour". This vision draws on the "positive traditions" of past labour organisations. "In the US these traditions include the social inclusiveness, the rank and file democracy, the nascent egalitarianism, and the quest for universal justice that characterised, to one degree or another, the Knights of Labour, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the early CIO."

Compared to the present, Moody's project would be more culturally diverse, bringing to bear feminist and multi-ethnic concerns; it would "return to industrial structure"; and would "include cross- or multiunion formations such as stewards' councils, rank and file based coordinated bargaining, the use of corporate campaigns; and the... regularisation of active solidarity through the recognition of picket lines and through various forms of mass action." As Moody argues, "The restructuring of the unions must include the most thorough rank and file democracy possible. This is not simply because democracy is a nice thing or even because the rank and file are presumed to be more militant than the bureaucrats, but because the working class cannot remake its own institutions unless it controls them."

Finally, Moody would crown this movement with the creation of a union-based labour party. Business unionism, and the Democratic Party to which it is wed, have exhausted their abilities to defend the living standards of working people. Moody sees the catalyst for a new party in the possible break-away by any major social constituency of the Democratic Party, such as the Rainbow Coalition or unions at the state or local levels, and the activation of a significant number of working class non-voters.

Only this new labour movement could give resonance to solving the problems of the Black underclass, of joblessness, of environmental and community decay, and of ageism, racism and sexism. But it could do so only by challenging the business/individualist values of American culture. Moody concludes that "embodied in the slogan 'An Injury to One is an Injury to All' is an ethic in which labour takes social responsibility for all working people...It is the opposite of the irresponsible business ethic in which the competitive struggle of each against all is imagined to advance the common welfare...Labour's rebirth requires even more than new tactics or new forms of organisation: it requires a vision that allows the

millions facing downward mobility to see labour as the carrier of justice."

It is in keeping this vision alive that Moody's work above all else stands out as a contribution to American labour history.

It takes all sorts?

Liz Millward reviews Reg and Ron Kray, 'Our Story'

A fictional detective once said that the trouble with most criminals was their inability to reason from B to C. The Kray twins could only make it to B, if the path of reason ran along a well-worked cliché.

Ronnie and Reggie Kray were imprisoned on 8 March 1969, with a recommendation that they serve at least 30 years. Ronnie is in Broadmoor and unlikely ever to be released. Technically, the twins were sentenced for the murders of Jack McVitie and George Cornell, but they were also suspected of having a hand in at least three other murders. They ran several protection rackets and frauds, and acted as an information service for London criminals. The Krays are probably the best-known criminals of post-war Britain.

Their 'autobiography' is based on a series of interviews conducted in prison. Thus the book consists of Ron and Reg's 'own' words. In fact, the words, and the sentiments they express, come from the pre-printed messages inside birthday and Christmas cards.

During their reign as 'Kings of the Underworld' the Krays — like the gentlemanly man-eating shark in the children's song "who ate neither woman nor child" — never hurt women, children or old folks. They loved their mum, were shattered when they 'lost' loved ones, kept the code of silence, believed in god, and honour among thieves, etc, etc.

There was no view so hackneyed that the Krays did not subscribe to it, from 'no place like home' to 'blood is thicker than water'. Ronnie and Reggie have held on to their beliefs despite having them contradicted by reality over and over again. The sheer banality of the autobiography is overwhelming. The book consists of clichés strung together one after another. The following extract was obtain-

ed by opening the book at random.

...the extermination of a man no better than a sewer rat has cost me my freedom for the best part of my life. I have paid the greatest price of all. Hanging would have been preferable to the hell I've been living through for the past 20 years. Every day, even now, is a living nightmare... (Reg Kray [my emphasis]).

The twins believed that they were 'good' for the East End, that they kept crime off the streets. They think that they compare well with the criminals of today in that they were less violent and didn't deal drugs. This is said in all seriousness, in the same book which describes Ronnie shooting a man in the leg for owning money for 'poppers'!

The brothers helped hide a man who had stabbed someone to death. For this they were persecuted by the police. 'For trying to help someone in trouble!' they cry in injured tones.

Ronnie (now certified insane) had/has the most developed double standards. He admits to getting 'nasty', but only when 'provoked'. It was this provocation which led to the killing of George Cornell. Cornell called Ronnie a 'fat poof'. In Ronnie's immortal words: 'he signed his own death warrant'. No one could call Ronnie Kray a fat poof and live!

In the whole autobiography there is only one touch of genuine feeling from Reg (there is none from Ronnie — or if he means what he says he is a lot madder than people think). Reggie's comments concern his stabbing to death Jack McVitie. From all accounts this was a brutal, bloody and pointless affair. McVitie was lured to a flat in Stoke Newington where Reggie tried to shoot him. But the gun jammed. McVitie pleaded for his life and tried to jump through a window, but got stuck. As a scene in a comedy film it would have been a wild success — until, that is, two men held McVitie so that Reggie could stab him in the face, neck and stomach. Reggie hated the killing.

'I felt bad afterwards though. Not because I'd killed McVitie — one of the nastiest villains I've ever met — but because sticking a knife into anyone is not a pleasant thing to do unless you are a psychopath, which I'm not. It's a bloody awful feeling.'

Reggie was not obsessed with killing like Ronnie was. During periods of inactivity Ronnie's favourite pastime was assembling lists of people to be killed. Reggie was happy to injure, but didn't want to kill. Moreover, Reggie didn't have to kill anyone. His excuses for 'having' to kill Jack McVitie are lame to say the least, on a par with George Cornell's provocation. At best McVitie was killed 'pour encourager les autres', at worst to assuage Ron-

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nie's need for blood.

Equally there was no excuse for the racketeering, the maimings, or the gang fights which the twins indulged in. None of the Krays' activities appeared to have given them any lasting pleasure — the money was quickly spent, and the 'high' brought on by violence soon dissipated. The brothers were incapable of making their (self-defined) successes last longer than a few months. In his full-scale study of the Krays, 'The Profession of Violence', John Pearson says that Reggie might have 'made it' on his own, but that he was dragged down by Ronnie's psychotic need for power through violence.

Having gained criminal prominence together, argues Pearson, Reggie could have dumped Ronnie and consolidated his gains. While Ronnie was in prison in 1959, 'the firm' moved into legal and semi-legal West End gambling clubs and protection rackets. They made vast sums of money and could have gone on doing so, remaining untouched by the police. Good publicity was assured by various charitable activities in the East End.

But then Ronnie reappeared, and so did organised gang violence. Profits started to fall away at the same time.

Ronnie was not interested in simply accumulating wealth — he needed terror and violence to control his paranoid fantasies. According to Pearson, Reggie went along with this because he could not stand up to his brother. Reggie may have known Ronnie was a psychopath (his comments about how only a psychopath would enjoy killing McVitie are surely a comment on his brother), but he could not bring himself to have his brother certified, and put out of circulation, although he did consult a psychiatrist more than once about Ron.

Ron is now certified insane, and not for the first time. He was certified for the first time in 1957 whilst in prison. He should have been under a psychiatrist's care from then onwards. That he wasn't was the failure of the whole Kray family who refused to face up to his madness and helped him escape from prison. So for Ronnie perhaps there was no choice about his violent behaviour.

Reggie, however, insists that he is and always has been quite sane, except for a short spell in prison when he became paranoid. John Pearson makes a case for Reg being so heavily influenced by his twin that he could not help himself — he had to try to 'keep up' with Ronnie.

Ronnie, on the other hand, seemed to remain relatively 'sane' if his murder fantasies were occasionally realised. To that extent Ronnie was indulged by Reggie in preference to losing his brother's

love, or losing the limited control he had over his behaviour.

The recent film, 'The Krays', propounds the idea that both the twins were influenced by their mother, and the other female family members, into having their weirdly lopsided relationship with reality. The twins' mother, Violet, refused to see that there was anything unusual in her son's behaviour, and to that extent encouraged them in it.

It has been suggested by more than one critic (including John Pearson) that the twins were simply acting out their fantasies of American gangster movies. In having a film made about their lives, those fantasies have now reached the final fulfilment.

But despite the explanations, sociological and psychological, the question of personal choice and responsibility remains. The East End of London after the war was no easy place to grow up, and the twins had no education to speak of. Apart from their boxing ability (which was considerable) the Kray twins had no 'advantage' to help them make their way in the world. Yet the same was true of thousands of other people, very few of whom turned to crime. The twins' philosophy can be summed up in Ron's own words: 'Only idiots work'. Fine. Such is the choice the twins made.

For the people in similar circumstances who made a different choice, life was (and is) a life of grinding poverty with few possibilities of escape. Socialism is all about changing that. But Ron and Reg Kray did not help their own people by terrorising them and stealing from them.

Ronnie and Reggie now think they should be released from prison. Reggie in particular says he will not return to crime and considers that he has spent long enough behind bars. He wants to spend his 'retirement' in the country, living on money made from both crime and publicity, never troubling the rest of us again.

Lots of people agree with him and think Reggie should be released. I don't. I would quote the one hackneyed cliché the twins have always avoided: 'You made your bed — now you must lie on it.'

As modest as Stalin

Jim Denham reviews 'The Artful Albanian

— the Memoirs of Enver Hoxha' edited by Jon Halliday, Chatto, £6.95

Back in the late '70s a Maoist who had just transferred his allegiance from China to Albania, told me a joke.

During one of their many heated disputes, Krushchev turned in exasperation to Enver Hoxha and declared "We have nothing in common — even our backgrounds are completely different. I come from the proletariat, while you're from the bourgeoisie!" At this, Comrade Enver calmly replied, "But we do have something in common, Comrade Krushchev: We're both class traitors."

Not exactly side-splittingly funny, I agree. But after reading the memoirs of the man who ruled Albania with a rod of iron for over forty years, I can almost believe that he really did say that. Certainly he is on record as describing Krushchev as "the greatest counter-revolutionary buffoon and charlatan the world has ever known."

Unusually (one suspects) for a Stalinist dictator, Enver Hoxha appears to have possessed a certain sense of humour, albeit one that manifested itself mainly in the course of vitriolic mockery of the pretensions, stupidity and cowardice of his political opponents and rivals within the "family" of Stalinism.

Editor Jon Halliday has painstakingly selected extracts from Hoxha's voluminous memoirs, covering World War Two and its aftermath (including the break with Tito's Yugoslavia in 1948), the 1950s (in the course of which Albania's warm relationship with Russia deteriorated to the point when Hoxha broke altogether with the "Krushchevite revisionists"), and the period of close alignment with China throughout the 1960s and into the '70s until Hoxha broke with them as well.

The memoirs are in diary form, which Halliday reckons is on the whole a frank account of events as Hoxha saw them, although some self-justifying re-writing of history with the benefit of hindsight is pointed out by the editor. Halliday also provides some most useful historical background and commentary for those of us not entirely 'au fait' with the finer points of post-war Balkan politics.

So well does Halliday present the witty, gossipy style of his subject's diaries, that it is easy to be seduced into regarding Hoxha as a rather jolly fellow — at worst a likeable, erudite rogue. One memorable scene is of Hoxha and the Brigadier who headed the British mission in Albania

towards the end of World War Two, discussing the merits of Swift, Byron, Shelley, Kipling (!) and Jerome K Jerome (!!).

But we are brought back down to earth with a bump by the accounts of Hoxha's ruthless purges of political opponents (real and imagined) including many old comrades from the early days, like Koci Xoxe (strangled to death on Hoxha's orders as a suspected Titoite agent) and Mehmet Shehu, prime minister from 1954 until his supposed "suicide" in 1981. How many other less prominent "spies", "agents", "enemies of the people", "counter-revolutionaries", etc. also perished on Hoxha's orders can only be guessed at.

When Hoxha comes to discuss Stalin, his tone becomes suddenly stilted and reverential: "Stalin was no tyrant, no despot. He was a man of principle, he was just, modest and very kindly and considerate towards people, the cadres and his colleagues...No mistake of principle can be found in the works of this outstanding Marxist-Leninist," intones Hoxha. Stalin's open and benign regime is contrasted with the "Mafia-like methods" of his revisionist successors.

Halliday points out that Hoxha's account of a discussion with Stalin on the Greek Civil War simply does not tally with the known facts. According to Hoxha, his hero expressed full support for the Greek Communists as late as March 1949: in fact, Stalin had abandoned them at least a year earlier. Whether Stalin was lying to Hoxha about this, or Hoxha re-wrote the account to fit in with his picture of the great man as the embodiment of revolutionary principle, is not clear.

Even more chilling, perhaps, is Hoxha's account of a meeting in 1948 with Andrei Vyshinsky, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, who had been chief prosecutor in the 1936-8 Moscow Trials, and who demonstrated that he had not lost his touch by holding an impromptu "trial" of the "Yugoslav Titoites" especially for his host Hoxha.

"With his penetrating style, with arguments and the amazing clarity characteristic of him, Vyshinsky, as the true Bolshevik prosecutor that he was, made their content even clearer to us. This time we did not have the accused before us in the dock, but the fact is that their trial was being held and it was a fair trial, based on sound arguments, an historic trial, the justice of which was to be completely confirmed by the passage of time..."

Apart from a total contempt for the laws of natural justice and for democracy in any shape or form, one other constant theme runs through these memoirs: an absolute commitment to Albanian

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nationalism. Every situation, every alliance and every dispute is viewed from the standpoint of Albania's immediate political and economic interests. This is what really lies behind Hoxha's disputes with Tito and Krushchev. Such fierce nationalism, combined with a keen instinct for the maintenance of personal and political survival, plus a total unfamiliarity with the working class, made Enver Hoxha the consummate post-Stalin Stalinist.

These memoirs provide us with a disturbing glimpse of the kind of society that such people would put into effect given the chance. Jon Halliday's book should be made compulsory reading for all supporters of Socialist Action, Briefing and Socialist Outlook.

Helter skelter and stage by stage

Martin Thomas reviews
"Livingstone's Labour: A Programme for the Nineties", by Ken Livingstone, Unwin Hyman £12.95; and "Beyond the Casino Economy", by Nicholas Costello, Jonathan Michie and Seumas Milne, Verso.

When I was about nine years old, I spent some weeks ill in bed, reading through a vast heap of old boys' annuals, Readers' Digest, and similar literature contributed by my godfather.

"Livingstone's Labour", with its helter-skelter-would-you-believe-it style, reminds me strongly of that reading matter. When I interviewed Ken Livingstone for *Socialist Organiser* shortly before he became leader of the Greater London Council in 1981, he assured me that he had never read any Marx; indeed, he said, he had no time to read

anything but council papers. Judging from his bibliography, he has still read no Marx, but he has read a few other books, and this is a sort of scrapbook of the ideas he had picked up from those books and from his associates.

Hopping around from the prehistoric origins of women's oppression through the glories of Irish Gaelic culture in the first century BC to the "confidence and enthusiasm for the future" that Livingstone found "in almost every conversation with an ordinary Soviet citizen", in political conclusions the book shows the influence especially of John Ross and Gerry Healy.

One chapter claims that all post-war British politics has been governed by the machinations of MI5 and MI6. There are a few qualifying phrases — "irrespective of these treasonable activities [by MI5 and MI6] Callaghan would have succeeded Wilson and the Tories would have won the 1979 election" — but the drift of the chapter is in line with Healy's characteristic spy-mania and Livingstone's recent allegation that the break-up of Healy's "Workers' Revolutionary Party" in 1985 (when Healy was expelled for sexual abuses) was engineered by MI5.

Healy's influence is also visible in the chapter lauding Gorbachev — "a new moral leadership for the world".

John Ross of *Socialist Action* is credited for the "economic data base" and "much of the material for the chapters dealing with international relations". His influence shows in the book's economic programme.

The book explains Britain's economic problems as shaped by "key decisions", "between 1841 and 1846", which led to an exceptionally large proportion of British capitalists' investments being overseas. The remedy? Bring back the Corn Laws? No, a drive to force capitalists to bring their money back to Britain; a cut in arms spending; increased taxes on the rich; and a trade pact with the USSR.

This programme is proposed in radical language, both by Livingstone and by *Socialist Action*. However, it is neither workable nor necessarily anti-capitalist.

Livingstone does not propose any new public ownership beyond the renationalisation of utilities sold off by the Tories. He certainly does not propose public ownership of the banks and financial institutions, only remarking vaguely that "If the City refused to cooperate then the public anger that such economic sabotage would arouse would allow Labour to take further powers (what?) to ensure that the mandate of the voters prevailed".

Without public ownership — and effective workers' control at all levels — the programme is

nothing more than a proposal to put more cash in the hands of the capitalists and of the capitalist state, and to hope that they will invest it in bright new industries bringing prosperity to all. The programme is wishful thinking today; tomorrow, after a severe world slump and lurch towards protectionism, a version of it might be sober capitalist policy.

Like so much of Livingstone's self-publicity, it's two-faced: the top side is radical, socialist, quasi-revolutionary; the flip-side of the same coin, "an achievable package" (as he calls it) "of modernising reforms capable of being carried out in the lifetime of one Parliament".

"Beyond the Casino Economy" is a much more solid and well-crafted book. Like Livingstone's volume, it was published for last October's Labour Party conference. It was sponsored by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the National Communications Union, and the National Union of Mineworkers, and acknowledges contributions from dozens of economists, trade unionists and Labour activists.

To the great credit of the three authors, it reads well and clearly, not like a book drafted by committee. The core of it is detailed and convincing argument that modern information technology make planning and social control *more*, not less, necessary and practicable. The technology lends itself easily to wide free distribution of information, but capitalism compels "increasingly roundabout strategies aimed at making knowledge unusable by competitors".

The book, however, has two grave shortcomings.

Any convincing socialist programme today has to explain very clearly how what it proposes is different from the debacle of Stalinism. The authors, however, accept the claim of Stalinism to represent socialism, with only minor criticism ("the advantages of exclusive reliance on highly centralised planning have now exhausted themselves"). Drafted before the recent upheavals in Eastern Europe, but published in the midst of them, the book suffered discredit from events before it was even on the shelves.

The texts it quotes reverently to back up its strategic arguments — titles like "Zarodov, *Leninism and Contemporary Problems of the Transition from Capitalism to Socialism*", Moscow 1976" — are those now being pulped or relegated to dusty reserve stacks all over Eastern Europe.

Strategic ideas from such sources contribute to the second main problem with "Beyond the Casino Economy". Having made a good case for a comprehensive socialist programme of public ownership and workers' control,

the book then concludes by proposing no such thing, but instead that old Stalinist favourite, an "anti-monopoly" programme.

This "anti-monopoly" programme would centre around the nationalisation of 25 of the top 100 industrial companies, and of the banks and financial institutions. This would not "of itself break the boundaries of capitalist society", but it would move us into an intermediate state (presumably what the Stalinists used to call "advanced democracy") from which progress to socialism would be easier.

The tiger of capitalism still cannot be skinned claw by claw. Limited action programmes to mobilise workers round particular issues are one thing; blueprints for a future Labour government to skin one claw of the tiger are another.

Marxism without bullshit?

Jon Pike reviews
'Alternatives to Capitalism (Studies in Marxism and Social Theory)', Edited by Jon Elster and Karl Ove Moene. CUP

'Alternatives to Capitalism' is the latest in the series 'Studies in Marxism and Social Theory' that has provided the main voice for the school known as analytical Marxism. The book is fairly boring in itself but it is an important mark in the evolution of that group to an acceptance of 'market socialism' and provides an opportunity to assess the way academic Marxism has gone over the last decade.

'Analytical Marxism' or 'no bullshit Marxism' began with the publication of Gerry Cohen's 'Karl Marx's Theory of History' in 1978. This was an attempt to recast orthodox historical materialism with the tools of analytical philosophy. There are two key features of this approach. Firstly, the analytical Marxists tend to assume that all fundamental entities are 'simples' — non-contradictory, unitary 'small bits'. Therefore analysis means getting down to these simples: the nuts and bolts. But

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nuts and bolts are static ideas and this poses problems for Marxists. To elaborate, Marxism has to do with movement: the 'laws of motion', processes of development, and so on. But movement implies contradiction. At its most basic level it implies something both is, and is not, in a certain state at a particular instant of time. Contradiction within an entity however means that the entity has at least two attributes, for example, it is both a use value and an exchange value. If an entity has two attributes *essentially* (in other words, take away one attribute and you haven't got the same thing — in this case a commodity) then it's not a 'simple' as required for analytical purposes.

The second and consequent problem is that it's difficult for analytic philosophy to include the idea of necessary connection or causation, since, as Hume pointed out, if we can imagine *every* connection, why should we believe that *any particular* connection should hold true. Causation then becomes a matter of coincidence and accident rather than of necessity.

This adds up to Marxism without Hegel, dialectics, or the analysis of alienation. Cohen's book presents a form of 'technological determinism' where the productive forces are the determining feature of any society and the productive relations exist in a form that is functional for the development of the forces.

'Karl Marx's Theory of History' struck a lot of people as an interesting and worthwhile book, but one which could be read in a number of different ways. With the publication of 'Making Sense of Marx' (sic) by Jon Elster in 1985 the theoretical framework becomes clearer. The rescuing of Marxism meant the abandonment of Marx's method and his world of essence and its replacement by rational choice theory and 'methodological individualism': the idea that classes as such don't act and instead all worthwhile explanation must be rooted in terms of individuals. These two approaches meant a framework lifted more or less straight from classical economics. Economic Man, that all-knowing, all-calculating, entirely selfish fiction is the new basis for the rescue of Marxism.

Two things are worth saying: first that this is not only wrong but shows a wilful misunderstanding of Marx. His polemic against the bourgeois economists and 'robinsonades' is a polemic against much of what passes for text book Marxism today. Marx argued that the idea of the 'individual' was a socially and historically specific construct, related to the needs of a capitalist ruling class to promote competition and narrow self interest as its ideological justification.

Second, that to use the loaded

notion of the individual like this is less a rescue of Marxism itself than an attempt to rescue the Marxism of the academy, by bringing the most respectable tools of non-Marxist study — analytical philosophy, rational choice theory and liberal economics — to bear on Marx's writings. As such, the project has secured a few careers — Cohen is now Professor of Political Theory at Oxford. But the analytical Marxists are not just careerists. They also reflect Anglo-Saxon prejudice against the sorts of tradition Marxists value: the essentialist, dialectical methods of Aristotle, Hegel and Marx himself, and against continental philosophy more generally. The school can also be seen as an attempt to patch up the gaps in Stalinist 'theory' after key bits of Marxism have been abandoned. The analytical Marxists end up throwing away the labour theory of value, dialectics and contradiction, class, alienation, essence and appearance and the conception of society as a totality of social relations.

'Alternatives to Capitalism' reveals something of what is left after this de-bullshitting of Marxism has happened. But there's a problem. Elster and Moene don't seem too sure of what capitalism *is*, since the main focus is on profit-sharing and competing cooperatives within a framework of market relations and widescale private ownership.

More than this, however, the impression is of an amalgam of hugely different articles (we go from 'internal subcontracting in Hungarian Firms' to 'Are freedom and equality compatible?' (!) in eighty pages) and a comparison of various 'alternatives' completely abstracted from the living movement for socialism. The introduction gives us a discussion of four criteria on which we're supposed to decide upon which 'alternative to capitalism' to go for. This sort of choice, outside history, is the mark of utopianism, unrelated to the labour movement and its history or to any analysis of where capitalist societies are going.

Why is any of this important? It's been true for a long time that active socialists treat academic Marxism with a great deal of caution. On the other hand, the label 'bourgeois theory' is too often used as a meaningless swear word. We need to say *why* these books are bourgeois and welcome the exceptions. Analytical Marxism constitutes a challenge to and critique of Marxism normally from within, and is widely influential, for example in the *New Left Review* and the turn towards market socialism. It should be rejected in favour of a decent materialist and dialectical method and a politics that is rooted in the labour movement.

P.S.



'I have made enough faces'

"She's like wax in my hands ...and when I am finished with her, she will please the very gods."

Thus spoke Mauritz Stiller, the Swedish film director who discovered Garbo and took her to America in 1924. Garbo was only nineteen but was soon to become the brightest star at MGM, the studio whose boast was "more stars than there are in heaven".

Garbo may have been impressionable while she was still learning the craft of film acting, but the shy star was soon to become formidable. When, after three successful pictures, MGM refused to raise her wages from \$600 to \$5,000 a week, Garbo went on strike for six months. MGM, with the public clamouring for more Garbo pictures, was forced to climb down. Garbo had won her independence.

She lost all her savings in the Wall Street crash of 1929, but went on to make another fortune in costume dramas like *Camille*, *Conquest* and *Anna Karenina*. At 27 she was earning \$250,000 a picture. She died a millionairess.

Public interest in Garbo never waned. Her romances which, despite a few close calls, never led to marriage, her yoga, her brief vegetarianism, were all splashed across the world press. She was as newsworthy in her eighties as she had been in her heyday. Sightings of Garbo on the streets of New York were rare, but always eagerly reported. With her death came more probings of the mystery surrounding the star.

For Garbo never explained herself. In her last press interview in 1928, she said: "Your joys and sorrows, you never can tell them. If you do tell them, you cheapen the inside of yourself." Garbo refused to speak to the press again. When she retired at the height of her spectacular career, her only explanation was: "I have made enough faces".

Garbo's films were immensely

popular, providing romantic escapism to a country in the grip of the great Depression. Surprisingly, most of her films ended unhappily. The audience went to see her suffer, to indulge in an orgy of masochistic martyred nobility. For Garbo was always noble.

More sinned against than sinning, her fallen women always redeemed themselves by self sacrifice of the loftiest kind. Her lovers, usually callow younger men, were renounced at the cost of great suffering. Her eyes seemed fixed on an ideal, something higher than human love, a divine love, distant and noble, far removed from the mundane and everyday. Her eroticism wasn't threatening, or carnal, like Marlene Dietrich's; it was almost spiritual. On screen she wasn't a woman, she was a goddess, a goddess in love with love, and therefore different from mere ordinary mortals.

"You only get a face like that in front of the camera once every hundred years," said Stiller, and the public agreed. But it wasn't only her incredible beauty that made Garbo enduringly interesting. It was her mystery, her reserve, and the inexplicable world weariness that lay behind the amazing face. What was wrong with Garbo? Why couldn't she find happiness?

Garbo was only twenty six when she played the ballerina Grusinskaya in *Grand Hotel*, but when she spoke the lines: "I've never been so tired in my life," the words rang true. In that film she also spoke the lines that would ever after be attributed to her: "I want to be alone".

And it seemed she did. She became ever more of a recluse, using aliases and disguises to protect herself from the discomforts of her enduring fame. She wanted to be left alone, but the world would not let her be. No wonder she grew tired of it all.

Garbo was strikingly beautiful, but she was also a blank, a sphinx, and that may explain the secret of her appeal. As critic Pauline Kael said: "You could look into Garbo." It's true. Garbo seemed very open to the camera, but she didn't signal her feelings and thoughts the way some actresses do. She seemed to enclose you in a private moment and to speak to you alone, as if you alone could understand what she was feeling. Her blankness helped. Simone de Beauvoir said: "Garbo's visage has a kind of emptiness into which anything could be projected." She could be wax in your hands too.

What the camera captured in her too brief career was the magic "of a sensitive face under the power of inspiration." Shall we ever see her like again?

Lilian Thomson

To the Finland Station

Belinda Weaver takes a fresh look at 'To the Finland Station', by Edmund Wilson

In suppressing the Paris Commune of 1871, the first workers' government, the French ruling class killed and exiled and imprisoned more people in one week than the three years of the Robespierre terror had done. Yet which is still held up today as an example of unrivalled brutality?

Facts like this point up how crucial the socialist historical tradition is to us. Our movement has suffered millions of casualties, but they lie in unmarked graves, those class-war martyrs whose names have been wiped from the record of history. We need to mark the places where our dead are buried; we must record how and where they fell. We too have our anniversaries.

The Paris Commune was the point from which two strands of history, bourgeois and socialist, separate and run parallel. There was official history, serving the ruling class, and our history, marginalised and little known.

If school history bored us, with its dry recitation of dates and dynasties, it's because something was left out — the people. All those buried generations need a voice which can take us beyond understanding into a world of fellow feeling and kinship. That is what history should do.

It rarely does. Apart from feeding us distortions and lies, official history kills our curiosity. We don't seek to *understand*; to endure (and pass exams) is enough.

Without knowledge of our history, we're like ducks in a shooting gallery, compelled to go round and round in a well worn, purposeless groove. Understanding of history, coupled with a materialist analysis, helps us to break out of the rut.

That can be daunting. When you are new to the left, it is hard to know where to start exploring the vast range of books, pamphlets, papers, and magazines. If only there was one book which summed it all up!

To the Finland Station comes close. It is an incomparable explorer's guide to how socialist ideas developed.

One little known date, January 1824, turned out to be crucial for the socialist historical tradition. In that month, a young French professor called Jules Michelet saw a reference in a book to the

writings of an earlier Italian historian, Giovanni Vico. So interested was Michelet in Vico, a writer then little known and untranslated into French, that he set about learning Italian so he could read him.

I can only admire his determination, and be thankful for it, since it inspired Michelet, one of the earliest social historians, to develop Vico's ideas further. Michelet wrote:

"From 1824 on, I was seized with frenzy caught from Vico, an incredible intoxication with his great historical principle."

Vico had begun to write history in a new way, to study the past the way scientists like Bacon had begun to study the world. No longer would history be written as "a series of biographies of great men or as a chronicle of remarkable happenings or as a pageant directed by God". Social history — the study of societies — had begun.

What Vico taught Michelet was that "societies...like individual human beings...have passed through regular phases of growth...The social world is certainly the work of men..."

This was not exactly a new idea. The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, the writings of Voltaire and Montesquieu, had done much to explain the origins of social institutions. But "Vico, by force of an imaginative genius of remarkable power and scope, had enabled him [Michelet] to grasp fully for the first time the organic character of human society and the importance of re-integrating through history the various forces and factors which actually compose human life."

When Michelet, influenced by Vico, began his *History of the Middle Ages*, he hoped that for the first time would be heard "the whispers of the souls who had suffered so long ago and who were smothered now in the past."

Vico and Michelet put into the historical record what, up till then, had always been left out — the people.

Some centuries later, Edmund Wilson describes the elation he felt reading Vico: "The fogs that obscure the horizons of the remote reaches of time recede, the cloud-shapes of legend lift. In the shadows there are fewer monsters; the heroes and the gods float away...The myths that have made us wonder are projections of a human imagination like our own..."

No wonder Michelet was inspired. Michelet's writings began in the Middle Ages, where he felt the drag of the long, dark, unlighted centuries, making him impatient for the

Renaissance, through to the French Revolution of 1789, and beyond. In Michelet's study of the French Revolution can be found the sense of humanity creating itself anew, taking steps to build a better world. Michelet scoffs at the idea of the French Revolution being primarily the work of a few prominent men like Danton or Robespierre.

"...The people were usually more important than their leaders... It is quite wrong to take these brilliant and powerful talkers, who expressed the thought of the masses, for the sole actors in the drama... The principal actor is the people."

Excited by the French Revolution, Michelet no longer wanted to be on the sidelines recording the action; he wanted to use his knowledge to act upon society. He was a precursor of the socialist tradition of men like Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, who wanted to change the world.

Edmund Wilson's book, *To the Finland Station*, is subtitled "A study in the writing and acting of history". Beginning with Michelet's discovery of Vico, it closes with the arrival of Lenin at the Finland Station in Moscow in 1917. With that historic moment, says Wilson, the writing and acting of history became one.

From Michelet to Lenin, we cross a crowded terrain of ideas and personalities, with the early socialists, Saint-Simon, Babeuf, Fourier, Owen and later Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, as markers on our journey. Complex as the story is, it is never dull. The writing sparkles. No other book quite generates the intoxication of ideas.

Wilson, an American literary critic, was briefly married to the writer Mary McCarthy. Both were on the periphery of the American Trotskyist movement of the thirties, when Wilson started to work on *To the Finland Station*. It took him six years, in which he read over a thousand books.

It was an immense task. To write as easily, as clearly and as simply as he does required tremendous knowledge and familiarity with his subject. The book is a towering labour of love, yet it retains a freshness and vigour all through. Wilson's enthusiasms are not small ones; his excitement over Marx's *Capital* positively springs off the page. Reading him, you feel both the magnetic pull of the ideas he is explaining, and the counter attraction of the books that inspired him. You want to finish Wilson, but you want to read the others too.

Wilson's is not the least interesting of voices in the book. His description of the miseries of men in industrial society circa 1848 has rarely been bettered.

"Taking all the classes up one by one, the author [Michelet] shows how all are tied into the socio-economic web — each, exploiting or being exploited, and usually both extortionist and victim, generating by the very activities which are necessary to win its survival irreconcilable antagonisms with its neighbours, yet unable by climbing higher to escape the general degradation. The peasant, eternally in debt to the professional money-lender or the lawyer, and in continual fear of being dispossessed, envies the industrial worker. The factory worker, virtually imprisoned and broken in will by submission to his machines, demoralising himself still further by dissipation during the few moments of freedom he is allowed, envies the worker at a trade. But the apprentice to a trade belongs to his master, is servant as well as workman, and he is troubled by bourgeois aspirations. Among the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, the manufacturer, borrowing from the capitalist and always in danger of being wrecked on the shoal of over-production, drives his employees as if the devil were driving him. He gets to hate them as the only uncertain element that impairs the perfect functioning of the mechanism; the workers take it out in hating the foreman. The merchant, under pressure of his customers, who are eager to get something for nothing, brings pressure on the manufacturer to supply him with shoddy goods; he leads perhaps the most miserable existence of all, compelled to be servile to his customers, hated by and hating his competitors, making nothing, organising nothing. The civil servant, underpaid and struggling to keep up his respectability, always being shifted from place to place, has not merely to be polite to the tradesman, but to make sure that his political and religious views do not displease the administration. And, finally, the bourgeoisie of the leisure class have tied up their interests with the capitalists, the least public-spirited members of the nation; and they live in constant terror of communism. They have now wholly lost touch with the people. They have shut themselves up in their class; and inside their doors, locked so tightly, there is nothing but emptiness and chill."

Wilson's enthusiasm for *Capital* is infectious. He praises Marx's book for "its power of

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imagination as well as the cogency of the argument" and finds it has the "momentum of an epic". Marx has shown the human principle at work and revealed "those passions which are at once the most violent, the basest and the most abominable of which the human breast is capable: the furies of personal interest".

No-one but Marx, claims Wilson, has had so good a sense of "the infinite capacity of human nature for remaining oblivious or indifferent to the pains we inflict on others when we have a chance to get something out of them for ourselves."

Wilson gets parts of Marx wrong. He makes an unholy mess of the labour theory of value, for instance, but the flaws in no way spoil the book. His enthusiasm is what we remember, and the curiosity he generates, the drive to discover the ideas at first hand for ourselves.

After reading *Capital*, says Wilson, other economics never seem quite the same again. "We can always see through their arguments and figures the

realities of the crude human relations which it is their purpose or effect to mask".

Impersonal formulas and equations add up to "pennies withheld from the worker's pocket, sweat squeezed out of his body, and natural enjoyments denied his soul". Reading *Capital*, we feel we have been "taken through the real structure of our civilisation, and that it is the ugliest that has ever existed — a state of things where there is very little to choose between the physical degradation of the workers and the moral degradation of the owners".

To the Finland Station is firmly on the side of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and all the people who want to act on history. Wilson approvingly calls one chapter 'Karl Marx decides to change the world'. He loves the vigour and ideals of the early Michelet, and is appalled by the decline of the historical tradition in the middle to late nineteenth century. From Renan through Taine down to Anatole France, the active principle is flagging. Wilson criticises France for his pygmy aims, for being content to capture the essence of

a period, rather than draw conclusions for action as the earlier historians had done.

Wilson saw the cultivation of intelligence for its own sake as a sign of growing decadence and lifelessness in the writing of history.

But hope was on the horizon. With the appearance on the scene of Marx and Engels, complacency about one's own superior understanding was replaced by more lofty ideals. The last thing Marx, even as a young man, wanted to do was fall into the fascination of abstract thought. He stated clearly as a student that one must make sure that "one has a field to serve humanity...[that there can be] no fulfillment unless working for the welfare of our fellows; then only shall our burdens not break us, then only shall our satisfactions not be confined to poor egoistic joys."

Still, Marx and Engels did not believe that thought should be strictly functional. Rather, as Wilson says, the tradition of the Renaissance hung around Marx and Engels. They wanted to act on history, but they also loved learning for its own sake, or rather they believed that learning gave power. Both Marx and Engels had tremendous respect for the past, for the wealth of accumulated culture and learning, a stance very different from the later ideas of some Bolsheviks, who believed that revolutionary man would begin to build a wholly new culture, borrowing nothing from the past, starting with a fresh slate.

Marx would not have agreed with that. He declared "Nihil humanum alienum puto [Nothing human is strange to me]". In fact, one of the chief objections Marx and Engels had to modern, industrialised society was that it narrowed down the possibilities open to man, that it schooled man to develop only a single aptitude. One of their great arguments for communism was that it would produce "complete" men and women again.

Marx believed many kinds of mastery were possible for human beings. After all, Engels, with his business, conviviality, his talent for sports, languages, natural sciences, economics, military studies, article writing, books, drawings, verses, and politics, was a Renaissance man, a thinker and a man of action, with a head for arts and sciences.

Capitalism crushed and destroyed men's potential for arts, politics and learning; socialism would set these impulses free.

Through his own writings, we know that Trotsky was passionately interested in culture, in literature and art. But Lenin too was not indifferent to such joys. While listening to Beethoven, he once remarked to a friend: "I

know of nothing that is greater than the Appassionata; I'd like to listen to it every day...I always think with pride — perhaps it is naive of me — what marvellous things human beings can do!"

Wilson understands the importance of words, the tremendous impact ideas, simply and truthfully expressed, can have. He quotes Gorky on Lenin: "[His words gave] the impression of the physical pressure of an irresistible truth..." He seemed to speak "not of his own will, but by the will of history".

Lenin had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and ideas. A colleague described him picking up "a fresh newspaper to read as if he were burning a hole in it".

What struck me about *To the Finland Station* was the intelligence and breadth of culture behind it, the ceaseless striving by Wilson to achieve what Marx had achieved in *Capital* — an artistic whole.

Wilson made a valiant attempt to trace the entire trajectory of socialist thought and action. We should be equally ambitious today, interpreting the past as a guide for our future. It is a big task, but it must be done. Our movement desperately needs thinkers, people who can forge new ideas and discredit false ones.

After all, without Marx, what would have happened to the early socialist movement? Marx's *Capital* truly shook the world. It is never out of print; it has been translated into countless languages. Ideas leaped off its pages to become weapons for action all around the globe.

If we are to continue that trailblazing tradition, we have to steep ourselves in our culture and history. We must be interested in everything, whether past, present or future, as Marx and Engels were; we must be open to ideas, avid for knowledge.

But ideas don't appear by magic. It's not a matter of luck, nor of genius. Ideas, even ideas that shake the world, need the compost of living culture to flower. As Engels and others were to say:

"If I had seen farther, it is because I stood on the shoulders of giants."

We build on what has gone before. We must break the fetters that capitalism imposes and strive for knowledge and understanding; that's the only way to break out of the narrowness that this society imposes on us, the only way to become "complete" again. Remaking the world will help us remake ourselves. The first step is to reclaim our past.

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past." — Karl Marx.

Why you should be a socialist

By Albert Einstein

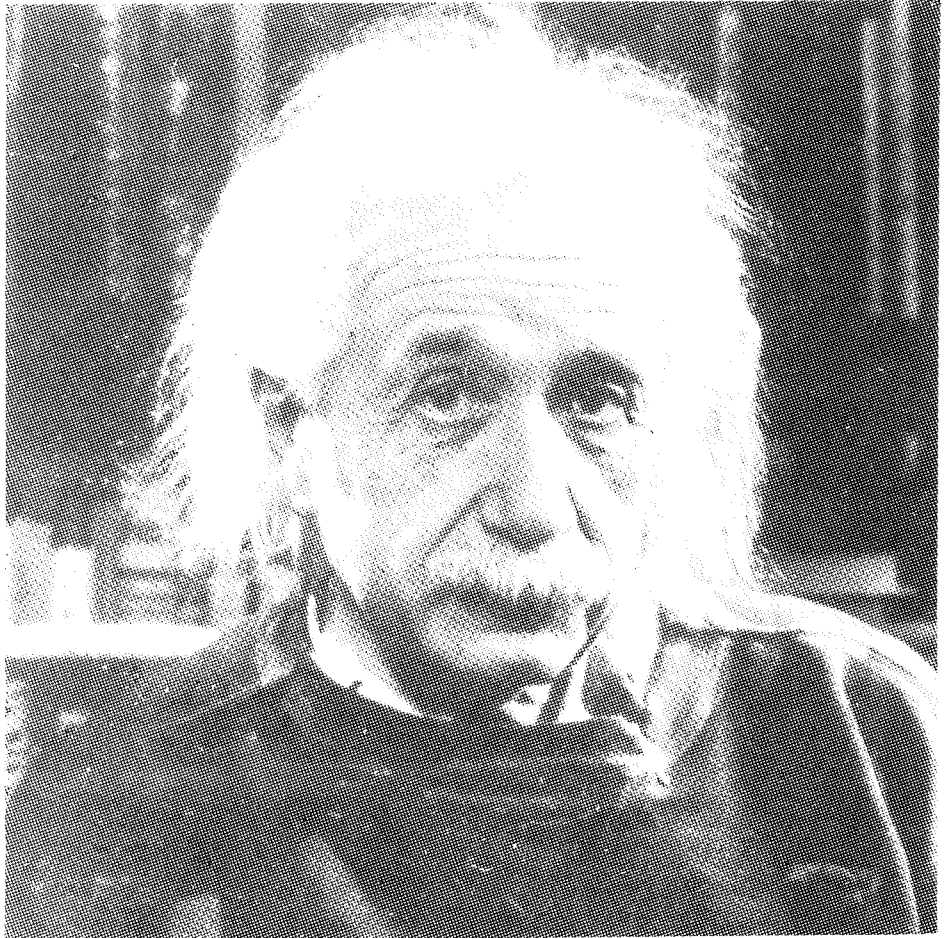
Albert Einstein was one of the most revolutionary thinkers in the history of science. In the 17th century Galileo and Newton had worked out a general theory of the movement of objects, whether apples falling down from trees or the earth going round the sun. Their theory, however, contained an unjustifiable assumption: that somehow, somewhere, there was an "absolute" frame of reference by which to decide whether objects were still or moving, and whether events were simultaneous or not. Einstein cut away that assumption — and showed that, while for everyday purposes Newton's equations were still sound, under extreme circumstances unexpected conclusions followed, such as that time was different in different frames of reference and that energy and mass could be interchanged ($E=mc^2$, the formula which defines the release of energy arising from the destruction of mass in nuclear reactions).

Born in 1879 in South Germany, he made his great scientific breakthrough in 1905. He also contributed much to quantum theory (the idea that radiation as well as matter was made up of 'particles'). Einstein spent most of the last 50 years of his life (he died in 1955) trying to generalise his relativity theory.

He was a pacifist and internationalist from his youth; he signed a manifesto for peace against the First World War in 1914. He was a Zionist who constantly stressed the need for a peaceful settlement with the Arabs. He began to speak out for socialism after the Great Crash of 1929; he was always critical of the oppressive regime in the USSR.

Is it advisable for one who is not an expert on economic and social issues to express views on the subject of socialism? I believe for a number of reasons that it is.

Let us first consider the question from the point of view of scientific knowledge. It might appear that there are no essential methodological differences between astronomy and economics: scientists in both fields attempt to discover laws of general acceptability for a circumscribed group of phenomena in order to make the interconnection of these phenomena as clearly understandable as possible. But in



reality such methodological differences do exist. The discovery of general laws in the field of economics is made difficult by the circumstances that observed economic phenomena are often affected by many factors which are very hard to evaluate separately. In addition, the experience which has accumulated since the beginning of the so-called civilised period of human history has — as it well known — been largely influenced and limited by causes which are by no means exclusively economic in nature. For example, most of the major states of history owed their existence to conquest. The conquering peoples established themselves, legally and economically, as the privileged class of the conquered country. They seized for themselves a monopoly of the land ownership and appointed a priesthood from among their own ranks. The priests, in

The oligarchy of private capital cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organised political society. The members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties financed or influenced by private capitalists. Moreover, private capitalists control the main sources of information (press, radio, education).
