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The future Lord Red Ken

John O'Mahony reviews 'If Voting Changed Anything, They'd Abolish It', by Ken Livingstone. Collins, 12.00.

You can tell a lot about a party or movement by the people it chooses for its heroes or leaders — and even by the people it tolerates in prominent positions.

I don't know if anyone in the labour movement still considers Ken Livingstone a hero, but he remains popular on the left even after the fiasco to which he led the local government left.

That in itself might not be surprising. Defeats are part of the struggle, and even if the local government left had been better and more courageously led it might still have lost. What is surprising, and indicative of the state of the labour movement, is that Livingstone has not discredited himself utterly by the running commentaries he has given about his own motives for various discreditable retreats.

When he bottled out of confronting Thatcher, he did it after years during which he had led the London left into assuming responsibility for local government cuts and rate rises, while all the time justifying himself with promises that he was laying the ground for big battles in the future. Not yet, but soon, was his message.

Some of us didn't believe him, and we pointed out that you don't mobilise workers to confront the government by passing on government cuts. But the vast bulk of the London left did believe him.

And when he bottled out, how did he explain himself? "I'm for manipulative politics", he said — "the cynical soft-sell". His future career and his personal interest came before anything else. The future Lord Red Ken uber alles!

About the same time he clown-ed it up for the magazine *Time Out* in a cardboard crown and lordly robes.

Many reviewers have pounced on the passage in his book in which Ken Livingstone identifies



his own philosophy with that of a character in the novel and movie 'The Godfather'. One of the gangsters tries to set a trap for the Godfather Michael Corleone. He is thwarted, and is led away to be shot. He says to an old associate: 'Tell Michael it was just business. I always liked him!'

Of course, Livingstone means such comments to be disarming, and quite often they seem to succeed. Does he mean what he writes? Literally? Probably he does.

In pursuit of principled socialist politics, such an approach might even be admirable — pursue your political goals, if necessary in opposition to people you like or love and in alliance with people you don't care for, and try to keep down the personal friction, hatred and malice.

But such an approach used in pursuit of a grubby personal career? It differs from the fictional gangsters whom Livingstone so colourfully invokes only in its details!

Right now Ken Livingstone hovers somewhere between the soft left and the hard left, no doubt calculating that with Labour in opposition for four or five years it makes career sense to backtrack a bit from the sharp rightward move he made after the collapse of the GLC.

Socialist Organiser — and the present writer — figure strongly in Ken Livingstone's book, as the opposite pole to him on the left. Though his accounts of SO and the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory are inaccurate and sometimes silly, that is how it should be.

We did advocate the policies which would have avoided the collapse of the local government left. We did part company with those who founded *Briefing* because they were in Ken Livingstone's breast-pocket while they kidded themselves 'ideologically' that they were 'taking power' locally.

This is a self-apologist's book. Livingstone evades any account of how he came to found *Labour Herald* together with Gerry Healy's WRP. He lies blatantly

when he says it was not subsidised by the WRP — the WRP even had a Central Committee member, Steven Miller, as executive editor of the paper.

Another measure of the state of the left is this: that after all that, Livingstone is now back in the fold and a candidate of the left for Labour's National Executive — someone for whom those who want to oppose the right will have to vote.

Under two flags

Paddy Dollard reviews 'Terrible Beauty: a life of Constance Markievicz', by Diana Norman. Hodder and Stoughton, 14.95, and 'Prison Letters of Constance Markievicz', edited by Esther Roper. Virago 4.95.

The well-known author Tim Pat Coogan once made the cynical but true comment that Irish history has the only example of Communists and bourgeois nationalists joining together against imperialism in which it was the Communists who were gobbled up.

He was referring to the 1916 Rising and to what happened afterwards to the hundreds of socialist workers — members of the trade union militia, the Irish Citizen Army — who took part in it together with the secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, James Connolly, the military leader of the rising.

The Irish labour movement was absorbed in the general nationalist movement as an important but politically subordinate part. So were the socialists.

'Strike together but march separately', 'Don't mix up the class banners' — these were the slogans raised by Lenin and Trotsky to guide socialists involved in national struggles. Ireland between 1916 and 1923 is one of the classic examples of the truth in Lenin's and Trotsky's position.

Unfortunately it is a negative example. In Ireland all the banners were crossed, and the red flag was trampled in the mud. A new and unexpected meaning was given to the old Irish nationalist rallying cry expressing the fervent desire to put 'the green flag above the (English) red'. Now it was the Irish bourgeois green above the Irish working-class red.

Nobody symbolised the confusion and crossed banners which wrecked the brilliant prospects Irish labour seemed to have in the

second decade of the 20th century better than Constance Markievicz.

She was a member of the Irish Citizen Army and fought in the Easter Rising of 1916. She was sentenced to death when the British Army recaptured Dublin. Unlike 15 of the other prisoners of war — including James Connolly — who surrendered to the gallant British General Maxwell and were then shot after summary court martial, Markievicz was reprieved 'solely because of her sex'.

The Irish Citizen Army had been set up by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union to defend striking workers. A member of the Anglo-Irish ruling class and the wife of a Polish count, Constance Markievicz took the side of the workers against the Dublin bosses and the murderous policemen during Dublin's bitter labour war of 1913. She organised a soup kitchen at ITGWU headquarters, Liberty Hall.

She became a Connollyite socialist republican. After the strike James Connolly, acting secretary of the ITGWU, kept the Citizen Army going and linked it with the revolutionary nationalists, the Irish Volunteers. Together with the Volunteers, the Citizen Army rose in rebellion against British rule in 1916. It faced insuperable odds, but some 1000 rebels held Dublin for a week against the mighty British Army.

Markievicz was not just a member of the Citizen Army. She was also — with the support of James Connolly — a member of the Irish Volunteers, the petty-bourgeois nationalists. Yet she was an honest socialist who believed in the workers' republic.

She remained a sincere socialist, and was recognised as one of their own by Dublin workers, until her early death at 59 in a hospital for the Dublin poor. Tens of thousands of Dublin workers marched behind her coffin. But she died — still a follower of Connolly, and still a sincerely committed socialist — a member of De Valera's Fianna Fail party, the party which is today organising a savage drive against the Irish workers' living standards!

What happened to the militant Irish labour movement and to Constance Markievicz was that they merged and blurred their own political identity with that of petty-bourgeois and then bourgeois nationalists. They retreated into politics which combined, on one level, the militant pursuit of the national cause together with anybody willing to fight for it; on the other, militant but narrow trade unionism.

Socialism, the workers' republic, was there somewhere — but not yet the stuff of practical politics.

Socialism became indistinguishable from nationalism. It dissolved into a left wing na-

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Constance Markievicz

tionalist current and then, falling under the influence of Stalinism in the 1930s, into a sort of slushy populism. This was all the more unfortunate because what was then the big majority of the Irish proletariat, in the north-east, rejected and resisted nationalism.

After Connolly, the unions tried to avoid politics for mixed reasons, but one central reason was their desire to evade issues on which any answer — nationalist or Unionist — would alienate one or another group of organised workers, and maybe split the unions. That is probably the main reason for the astonishing abstention by the labour movement in the 1918 election, when the nationalists appealed for a majority on a programme of secession from the UK, and got it.

The political questions became the property of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, and their answers held sway even with the workers. Politically and organisationally, Irish labour never evolved beyond the politics of a tiny reformist Labour Party. Fianna Fail, initially a radical petty bourgeois party, gained the support of most workers and kept it, although it has been the main bourgeois party in independent Ireland.

Constance Markievicz — honest, devoted, and selfless socialist though she was — symbolises the confusion that created this situation. The most important of Connolly's comrades and heirs, if only because of her part in the Rising, she floundered helplessly. Had Connolly lived things might have gone differently, but he died before a British firing squad in May 1916.

Constance Markievicz ended up in Fianna Fail; so, in the '40s and '50s, did Connolly's daughter Nora Connolly O'Brien, though she too was always a socialist.

So today, though they are not in Fianna Fail, many Irish socialists can be heard sometimes muttering — especially at elections — about the latent anti-imperialist potential which still exists in Fianna Fail.

Diana Norman's book is a splendidly sympathetic account of Markievicz. I liked it a lot, though it should be said that it is the work of an uncritical enthusiast, the book of someone English who has newly discovered romantic Irish nationalism and has fallen in love with it. In any case she loves Constance

Markievicz — but that is appropriate. Constance Markievicz did what she could, and personally this upper-class woman held nothing back from the labour movement once she 'came over'. Tragic political confusion was not hers alone.

'The Prison Letters' is a treasure-trove, containing not only the letters but also a 130-page biography of Constance and her sister Eva (a socialist and feminist who worked in England) by Eva's life-long companion, Esther Roper.

New utopians

Gareth Kinnell reviews 'The Profit System: The Economics of Capitalism', by Francis Green and Bob Sutcliffe. Penguin, 5.95.

This book sets out to survey concisely how capitalist economies work today, and to show that capitalism is exploitative and oppressive. It concludes by presenting a sketch of a better society — socialism — which should replace capitalism.

It surveys capitalism mostly by presenting the results of orthodox academic economic research — as seen from a viewpoint informed by Marxism. For example, capitalism's tendency to crisis is explained by expounding the crisis theory of the great Liberal economist Maynard Keynes, criticising Keynes's ideas on how government intervention could save capitalism from crises, and (after 43 pages on those themes) summarising with two and a half pages which assert that capitalism inevitably generates crisis through the conflict between production and realisation of profit.

The job is done with great lucidity and directness. Far too often modern Marxists have dealt with orthodox economics just by demonstrating that it has "the wrong method" and leaving it at that. Wrong method or not, modern academic economics is a vast storehouse of empirical investigations and of logical examination of market mechanisms. Even if 99% of it is rubbish, that still leaves a considerable volume of genuinely enlightening material. Far better to work over that material seriously than to produce yet more methodological essays.

However, the range of the book is vast — it combines ex-

position of academic economic theory (assuming no previous knowledge) and criticism of that theory and tabulation of how capitalism actually functions today and a socialist critique of capitalism. The attempt to cover such a vast range without glibness or facile dogmatism produces a tremendous amount of "on the one hand this, on the other hand that", and a certain blandness.

Perhaps understandably, the book omits any discussion of either Marx's labour theory of value or 'marginalism' (the foundation of modern academic economics). But this compounds the blandness. Readers new to economic theory will find the book readable and informative but they will not get the mental jolt, the perception of issues and problems previously invisible, which can be got from reading 'Capital' or Keynes's 'General Theory'.

More seriously, I think such readers will find the book's arguments for socialism limp

Green and Sutcliffe argue that what they call the 'actually existing socialist' states are not authentically socialist. Indeed, they are "neither better nor worse" than capitalism.

But (if I have understood correctly) Green and Sutcliffe concede that these states arose from genuine socialist revolutions.

These revolutions degenerated. To the pro-capitalist argument that such degeneration is an inevitable sequel of socialist revolution, the authors reply: "Our response, which we cannot prove, is that socialism's failure to appear so far is due to a number of contingent historical reasons but not to the intrinsic impossibility of a socialist economy. Those countries that have embarked on a journey to socialism, from the USSR onwards, all have begun from a very low material base..."

They draw no distinction between the workers' revolution in Russia in 1917 and such revolutions as the Chinese of 1949, where the revolutionary forces had no links to the working class and moved against the working class soon after their arrival in power. Lenin's argument for some capitalist management techniques to be used to raise production in the USSR in the 1920s is cited as part of the same picture as the boss/worker relations in factories in the USSR today.

In their concluding section, which sketches how they see socialism, Green and Sutcliffe seem to be a lot less than confident that socialism does not inevitably produce Stalinism. They argue that the economy should be decentralised as much as possible into small units, but concede that a fair degree of centralised planning would be necessary. "Centralisation carries with it the threat of bureaucratisation and the separation of rulers and ruled... This difficulty reflects an in-built problem of a socialist economy..."

Now for Marxists all these issues come down to the capacities of the working class: are the workers, mobilised and organised by class struggle, capable of becoming a ruling class, or will we always suffer one or another elite ruling over us? But Green and Sutcliffe discuss socialism without any connection at all to the class struggle. They write that the question of how to get from capitalism to socialism is "too vast for us to tackle here, even if we felt qualified to do so". Their only reference to forces of opposition within capitalism mentions "traditional class struggle" perfunctorily before going on to women's, anti-racist, lesbian and gay, green and peace movements and concluding (without any great show of optimism) that the future depends on these movements somehow uniting.

In the conclusion the authors bluntly call their own approach "utopian". Sadly, it seems to be the utopianism not of the enthusiast convinced that everyone will rally to the vision of a better society once it is explained to them, but the utopianism of socialists who have been beaten down by the problems, setbacks and difficulties of struggle but feel that they must at least keep some hope, however minimal and abstract.

Bourgeois housing

Martin Thomas reviews 'A Social History of Housing 1815-1985', by John Burnett. Methuen.

The Tory Government has made housing the centrepiece of its manifesto. Already the Tories have cut public spending in housing by over half. They have reduced new building by councils to a trickle. Now they plan to cut off even that trickle, to get most of councils' existing stock sold off, and to make the private landlord central again.

On no front is 'socialism' more vulnerable. So the Tories reckon: and from their point of view, with some justice.

The big council estates built in the 1960s and early '70s, with huge blocks of flats, are seedy and bleak. They need a lot of maintenance and repair, which

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cash-strapped councils can't afford. In analysing the design faults of this housing, and proposing alternatives and remedies, Thatcherite writers like Alice Coleman have led the way, with left-wingers straggling along behind.

In 1964 Labour was able to win office by denouncing private slum landlords. Now the Tories reckon that they can win support by denouncing councils as landlords.

Socialists need to reorient. And John Burnett's overview of the whole of working class housing in industrial Britain will help us do that.

The British working class has much better housing than 150 years ago. Burnett demonstrates that the improvement owes little to the free operations of the capitalist market, and much more to the political efforts of the labour movement.

Laws on building standards, tenants' rights laws and direct house building and renovation work by public authorities, have pushed up standards notch by notch. The improvement has been made mainly in three surges — in the late 19th century, as the mass labour movement grew up, and after the two world wars, when the ruling class feared that 'if you do not give the people social reform, they will give you social revolution.'

Every surge of improvement has been followed by deterioration in the name of saving money. The fiasco of the 1960s was in large measure part of this pattern. Progress has been neither automatic nor inevitable. John Burnett's dispassionate and richly detailed history indicates beyond doubt that if the Tories get away with it, slums and squalor will boom.

The history also raises issues about what alternatives we should argue for. Burnett demonstrates that "Through momentous social, economic and political changes in the last century and a half the individual house in a garden has survived as the ideal of the majority of English people, more spacious, lighter, warmer, better fitted and equipped than its ancestor, but in essentials unchanged". In the worlds of the horse drawn cart and the aeroplane, of the candle and open fire and of electricity, of wells and of piped water, of word of mouth culture and of television, of before regular mail services and of the telephone, the house is much the same.

In its time the rising bourgeoisie did develop a type of house quite different from previous constructions. The bourgeois house is *private* from the outside world, and many of the rooms in it are *private* from the rest of the house. It is *intimate*, designed for a family who live much closer to each other than anyone else outside. It is *comfortable*, designed to be the centre of the inhabitants' lives.

It is separate, often far distant, from their work. It is *individual*: something, even if it is only the

layout of the garden or the embellishment of the front door, expresses the dwellers' choices and personality.

All this was different from the past. The huts and cottages of the poor had never allowed for privacy or comfort or anything but scanty shelter. The places of the rich were splendid, but not private, intimate, individual, or even comfortable. The house of the craftsman or merchant was a workplace, and full of servants and apprentices. (The 19th century bourgeois house also had lots of servants; but the house was carefully designed so as to separate their quarters as strictly as possible from the family's).

The historian Fernand Braudel records: "Seventeenth century luxury did not recognise privacy. When Louis XIV himself, in his palace at Versailles, wanted to visit Madame de Montespan, he had to go through the bedroom of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, the previous royal favourite. Similarly, in a Parisian town house of the seventeenth century, on the first floor, which was the storey reserved for the owners of the house, all the rooms opened off each other.

Everyone, including servants on domestic errands, had to go through them to reach the stairs.

"Privacy was an eighteenth century innovation. The pantry became distinct from the kitchen, the dining room from the drawing room; the bedroom was established as a realm apart."

These new trends became established on a grand scale in the 19th century. Since then, the bourgeois house has been modified by the disappearance of domestic servants and the elevation of the kitchen to a more dignified position, and the addition of the bathroom and inside toilet, but its essentials have not been changed. And the working class has sought, with some success, to get bourgeois housing for itself.

From late in the 19th century, flats have repeatedly been proposed as an alternative form of housing for the working class, either because they were thought to be cheaper to build (on the whole, in fact they weren't), or because the theorists of modern architecture thought that they were more socialist than the individualistic house. In the 1960s, councils, prompted by a need to build new housing quickly and by pressure from the big building firms who wanted schemes large enough to make new industrialised building methods profitable, built flats on a mass scale.

It was a fiasco. Burnett comments: "The architects' experiment with multi-storey dwellings, which some saw not only as a new way of living but as a new way of life, has receded into an 'incident', unlikely to be repeated". Over nearly a century, the working class has always preferred houses to flats.

In the early 19th century most working class households lived in

one or two rooms. The worst off lived in cellars, which accommodated around one fifth of the population in Liverpool and Manchester in the 1840's. Little better were the common lodging houses and tenements or 'rockeries'. In Church Lane, Westminster, in 1847 1095 people lived in 135 rooms in 27 houses.

The best working class housing was in 'back-to-backs', terrace houses, usually one room downstairs and one upstairs, built back-to-back with each other.

Even in the best dwellings, every drop of water for washing or cooking had to be brought in from a pump in the street outside. The whole household would have to share a bedroom. All cooking and washing would have to be done in the 'living room'.

The dwellings were often damp, houses were commonly built with walls only four and a half inches thick and impossible to keep clean, especially without running water.

Around mid-century, together with the Factory Acts, came the first laws setting minimum building standards.

The capitalist class had to do something about the most unhealthy working class slums, not only because they lowered productivity, but also because disease spread from them into the middle class areas of the cities.

A law of 1875 empowered local authorities to make by-laws about building standards. Many cities outlawed 'back-to-back' and new working class terrace houses were now often 'two up, two down' with their own backyards. The best off workers could get a house with an annexe at the back, allowing for a scullery separate from the kitchen and a third bedroom.

For the first time they had something of the rudiments of a bourgeois house. They made the most of it, setting patterns of 'house proud' behaviour which continued till recent times.

The front room would typically be set aside for use only on Sundays, and in this one room working class families would try and reach something like a middle class standard of elegance. "The possession of a parlour, appropriately furnished with ritual objects, was an important part of the struggle for achievement and respectability, and of the search for identity... Whether used or not, the parlour announced to the family, to neighbours and to visitors who first glimpsed it through its Nottingham lace curtains, a triumph over poverty and a challenge to the external environment of dirt, squalor and social disharmony". This parlour, the front door and doorstep, and the pavement outside the house was kept meticulously clean.

In 1890 the first law was passed which empowered councils to build and improve houses. But up to 1914 fewer than 5% of new dwellings were built by local authorities.

"In the closing years of the

(First World) war', however, 'and in the months immediately following the Armistice, fears of serious social unrest, even of the spread of Bolshevism to Britain, gradually persuaded all political parties of the urgent need for social reforms. A massive housing programme, with standards greatly in excess of those before the war, came to be seen as the most important part of this policy'.

After 1918, councils were empowered and assisted to build much more housing, and to subsidise the rents. Rents in private housing had already been controlled by law after the Glasgow rent strike of 1915. The standards set for the new council housing included parlours, bathrooms and inside toilets. At the same time, cheaper and better public transport allowed many workers to move to the suburbs, where most of the new council houses were built.

Still, however, only the best off sections of the working class got this better housing. In the 1930s 30,000 households in London still lived in cellars. 63% of families in London shared a house or a flat with others. Often this meant having one or two rooms in a rundown house, with one toilet and one water tap shared for the whole house.

Burnett summarises, "The housing conditions of the working classes on the eve of World War 2... about one third well housed in new, healthy accommodation, a second third inhabiting older, 'by-law' houses, sanitary but lacking in modern amenities and comforts, and a remaining third in very sub-standard property, much of it slum or rapidly becoming so... Viewed over the whole period of this study, the housing experience of many people showed little major change until the years after World War 2."

After 1945 trade union membership was nearly double what it had been before the war. The Labour Party had gained the solid majority of the working class vote. The ruling class was frightened of revolution, as it had been in World War I. Local authority housing was expanded to become a dominant form of housing for the working class, including for the worse off. New standards were set: in the 1940s council housing was built to higher standards than ever before or since. Kitchens, in particular, became larger, better laid out and better equipped. The whole house could now be brought up to middle class standards, and instead of the Sundays only parlour there would be a larger living room used every day.

Such has been the struggle of the working class, over more than 150 years, for the 'bourgeois' house, a struggle that will certainly continue in coming years, as the Tory government forces more and more people into squalor, overcrowding and homelessness.

Whatever the ideas of socialist thinkers about designing housing

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for larger communities, from the worker-housing projects in Vienna and Germany after World War I onwards, workers have overwhelmingly preferred bourgeois type houses.

Has this been a great victory for bourgeois brainwashing? Or what? The desire for a little house of their own has tied many workers to a heavy burden of mortgage payments, making them less willing to move around or to take risks or to go on strike.

It has meant the strengthening of bourgeois family norms in the working class. In the middle of the 19th century Marx and Engels thought that family structures had almost disappeared in the working class. By the end of the century the working class was plainly adopting the norm of the bourgeois family, with the woman's realm in the home and the man's in the world of work and public life.

But what is good about being forced to spend free time in club, pub or street because your home is so overcrowded and uncomfortable? The separation of private and public spheres meant working class people, for the first time, having the possibility of home comfort. No wonder workers did not see it as a bourgeois imposition.

Trotsky once remarked that the working class suffers from not too much but too little individualism. The revolutionary potential of the working class is based as much on its individualism, its assertion of human rights to liberty and enjoyment, as on its collectivism. Working class socialism, which aims to make the best in bourgeois culture and comfort the property of all, and then go beyond it, is different from the barracks socialism which simply says no to bourgeois culture and aims to level everyone down to equal pauperism.

In this perspective, there is nothing aberrant or diversionary in workers' struggle for domestic comfort, privacy and individuality. It is doubtful whether the strengthening of bourgeois family norms in the working class was even the defeat for women which socialists have usually seen it as. For most working-class women, to be established as mistresses of houses of their own was an advance over working long hours in factories and living in filthy cellars or tenements. To be sure, it meant that they were unfairly burdened with housework. But that was not new. It did not necessarily mean that men took no responsibility for the housework (Burnett documents this); nor did it mean that women renounced their demands for the right to jobs and an equal say in politics. Though women's participation in waged labour stayed at about the same rate from the middle of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th, there was a steady drift — at the same time as bourgeois family norms gained ground in the working class —

from women workers being domestic servants to jobs in industry and commerce. And this was also the period of the rise of socialist women's movements and of struggles for women's right to vote.

Socialism may well see more communal forms of housing. But those will surely be established by the working class gaining and then going beyond the standards which the bourgeoisie established as an advance on previous living conditions — not by the working class being stopped short of those standards by decree.

The demand for individualism in housing — and indeed for more individualism than has yet been achieved, for the claim to "a room of one's own" has so far been won by very few working class people — is entirely consistent with public provision. Indeed, as Burnett shows, it can be won only by public provision.

What is dialectics?

Bruce Robinson reviews 'An Introduction to the Philosophy of Marxism, Part One', by R S Bhagavan. Socialist Platform.

Of Lenin's "Three component parts of Marxism", philosophy is the most remote for many Marxists.

While the everyday struggle demands constant reapplication of Marxist politics and economics, Marxist philosophy is only too often left to academics, many of whom ignore one of its basic precepts — the unity of theory and practice.

When political groups have focused on philosophical questions it has often been for bad reasons — in the case of the Communist Parties to use 'dialectics' to justify 180° political turns and in the case of Mr. G. Healy's WRP to provide a mystical yet 'orthodox' explanation for their own virtue and everyone else's 'revisionism'.

Yet this general neglect of philosophy can be dangerous as philosophical methods and political positions are intertwined. Lenin, seeking the roots of the collapse of the Second International in World War I, returned to Hegel in order to understand the mechanical reformism of pre-1914 'Marxist orthodoxy'. Trotsky drew out the links between Burnham's rejection of

dialectics and his inability to understand the Stalinist USSR on the eve of World War 2.

R.S. Bhagavan's book is therefore welcome in attempting to explain the ideas of dialectics simply. Originally written as a series of articles for the youth magazine of the Sri Lankan LSSP, it looks at the main ideas of dialectics such as the unity of opposites and the transformation of quantity into quality by means of illustrations both from the philosophers, from the ancient Greeks such as Heraclitus, through Hegel to the Marxists, and from the natural world as presented by mathematicians, physicists, etc. This method of presentation makes the book more fragmented than a straightforward exposition, it also makes the subject matter more vivid and less dry.

By examining the dialectic through the natural sciences, the book provides ammunition against those who have tried to make Marxism a method purely for the study of society, and who have tried to divide the revolutionary politician Marx from the 'mechanical Darwinian evolutionist' Engels. This is in any case strange when one considers that Marx wanted to dedicate 'Capital' to Charles Darwin!

This book is not an all-embracing study of Marxist philosophy but is useful for someone starting to read in this area or as a handbook of examples that vindicate the Marxist approach.

Workers in 1917

Chris Reynolds reviews 'Red Petrograd', by Steve Smith. Cambridge University Press.

"Workers' control" was a more important Bolshevik slogan in 1917 than "Bread, land and peace".

Immediately after the February Revolution, when the Tsar was overthrown, workers' committees sprang up in the big factories. The factory committees controlled hiring and firing. To varying degrees they supervised production and kept an eye on stocks; as 1917 progressed, they became more and more concerned to keep production going and to combat what they saw as sabotage by the capitalists.

They organised workers' clubs, schools and entertainments; they ran campaigns against alcohol; they dealt with thousands of individual workers' complaints and problems; and their work

overlapped with that of the trade unions in the struggle for better wages and conditions.

The Mensheviks (the right-wing Marxian socialists) and the majority of the SRs (populists, who believed in a socialism made equally by peasants, workers and intellectuals) were against control of production by the factory committees. Instead they insisted on "state control of the economy" — by the bourgeois Provisional Government, with which they collaborated.

Even Menshevik members of the factory committees could not accept this. Indeed, some of the factory committees which took the most far-reaching control over production were Menshevik-dominated. The Bolsheviks won a majority in the factory committees, and in the working class by supporting workers' control and making it their own slogan.

However, the Bolsheviks' idea of workers' control differed from an anarchist idea. The Bolsheviks accepted the Menshevik/SR idea of "state control" with one qualification — *whose state?* They were for "state workers' control" or "workers' state control". Any local control by the workers in each factory had to be within that framework. And in the meantime, until workers' state control had been won, control by the factory committees should be limited to checking and vetoing. The factory committees should not take *responsibility* for the running of the factories. In contrast, anarchists argued for the workers of each factory to take over their own workplace and run it themselves.

Smith argues that the majority in the factory committees consciously accepted the Bolshevik arguments against the demagoguery of the anarchists. Even before October 1917, maintaining production and labour discipline was a major concern of the factory committees, Bolshevik, Menshevik, SR and non-party alike.

Some critics of the Bolsheviks — anarchists or right-wingers — argue that the Bolsheviks just used the demand for workers' control cynically. The Bolsheviks rode the wave of the disorderly spontaneous workers' rebellion, used it to lift themselves into power, and then once in power cracked down on the workers with a new repressive state.

Smith demolishes this story. During 1917 the Bolsheviks had to fight not only against the Mensheviks and the SRs but also against the anarchists. The anarchists were scattered and disorganised, but had influence in some factories.

Smith even reports that before October 1917 many factory committees and trade unions had accepted piece rates as a device to maintain productivity. In July 1917 the Bolshevik leadership of the Petrograd metalworkers' union fought very hard to get the union members to accept a guaranteed-output clause in their wage agreement. They wanted the

workers to take over a functioning industry, not one in ruins.

Steve Smith also chronicles how the Bolsheviks tried to deal with the social differentiation within the working class, which, he argues, was "probably greater than in the working classes of the West". About half the factory workforce in Petrograd were established workers of long standing; the other half were worker peasants who saw the countryside as their real home. This division more or less coincided with the division between skilled and unskilled workers. About one third of factory workers were women; they mostly had unskilled jobs and were less literate than men.

The factory committees and the trade unions were dominated by skilled male workers. But they made unrelenting efforts to draw unskilled workers and women into activity, and to win greater equality within the working class. Where redundancies could no longer be resisted, they fought against calls to sack women workers first. They also tried to unite white-collar workers with manual workers.

The factory committees were snuffed out relatively soon after the October Revolution. Steve Smith tells some of this story too, though in much less detail than developments between February and October 1917. He makes criticisms of the Bolsheviks (not all of which seem to me well-founded), but also explains the real problems of the period: the near-catastrophic decline of Petrograd industry in 1917, and the absorption of a large proportion of the leading worker activists into the Red Army and the new workers' state machine.

Is PASOK socialist?

Ian Swindale reviews 'Political Change in Greece before and after the Colonels', edited by Kevin Featherstone and Dimitrios Katsoudas. Croom Helm, 27.50.

Greece has undergone considerable economic, social and political change during the last 25 years.

The first hesitant steps towards liberal reform after decades of right wing government came in 1963 with the election of the Centre Union government of George Papandreou. This government of gradual and limited reform never-

theless posed a challenge to the monarchy and the army, both of which had played a major role in "guiding" Greek democracy in the years after the defeat of the Left in the Civil War (1946-9).

When the clash with the King finally came, in 1965, Papandreou resigned and instead of calling fresh elections, the King, determined to keep Papandreou from power, turned to the right-wing.

However, the political mood of the country was beginning to shift and when the Centre Union seemed set to win the next round of elections in the Spring of 1967, a group of army officers seized power.

The Junta remained in power for seven years until, in 1974, totally bereft of any social base within the country it tried to overthrow the government of Archbishop Makarios in Cyprus, brought Greece to the brink of war with Turkey and then collapsed.

The Colonels handed over power to Karamanlis, a former right wing Prime Minister whose hastily formed New Democracy party won the 1974 General Election.

But the political mood in post-Junta Greece was very different from that of the past. Traditional institutions and alliances had been seriously undermined and brought into question. The USA and NATO allies were perceived as having at least tolerated, if not actively encouraged the seizure of power by the Colonels. The army, whose claim to participate in public life was based on its victory over the Left in the Civil War, was now totally discredited by the repressive, inept and corrupt rule of the Junta. The monarchy, too, had been seriously undermined, while disillusionment with pre-junta "parliamentary democracy" had been such that nobody had considered it worth fighting and dying for when the Junta seized power.

This changed perception affected all parties, including the right. Karamanlis formed a liberal-right government which carried out a number of reforms and even took sections of the economy into public ownership.

But the changing mood within Greece was most clearly demonstrated by the dramatic rise of PASOK, led by George Papandreou's son, Andreas.

Andreas Papandreou had launched the Panhellenic Liberation Movement (PAK), committed to armed struggle against the Junta (itself a new departure for modern Greek politics, although PAK made little impact within Greece for most of the dictatorship). With the fall of the Junta, the liberation movement was superseded by the Panhellenic Socialist Movement — PASOK — which won 13% of the vote in the 1974 election.

By 1977 PASOK had become the major opposition party with 25% of the vote and in 1981 it formed the first left wing govern-

ment ever to hold power in Greece. The old Centre Union party completely disappeared from the political scene.

In order to win power, however, PASOK had needed to broaden its appeal to the widest layers of society. To achieve this much of the populist and Marxist rhetoric of 1974 and many of the policies espoused in the early years — opposition to NATO, the EEC and monopoly capitalism, and support for 'national liberation' and socialism — were watered down or dropped by Papandreou in the election campaigns of 1977 and 1981.

To what extent, then had real fundamental change taken place in Greece? Had the three political groupings of the early 1960s — the right, the liberal centre and the Stalinist left — actually survived intact, with PASOK occupying the centre left ground vacated by the Centre Union, or had the political perceptions of these political tendencies undergone radical transformation as a result of the experiences of 1963-74 and in the process brought into being a qualitatively new political formation?

These are among the many important questions addressed by the contributors to this volume. Essays on the main political parties, analysis of recent election results and a presentation of the findings of recent opinion polls on the social attitudes of Greeks form the core of this book, and all the evidence points to a major shift in attitudes, particularly among the young, since the early 1960s.

In broad terms, three fairly distinct groups of political and social attitudes have been identified. Those under the age of 35, whose political and social views were formed during the rise of the Centre Union and, later, opposition to the Junta, reveal the most radical political and social views, while the over-60s, whose political views took shape during the period of the Civil War tend to be the most conservative in their political and social attitudes, strong in their support of the US, NATO and capitalism.

The 35-60 age group is neither as radical as the younger generation or as conservative as the older, but if anything tends more towards radicalism than conservatism.

So, for example, 37% of Athenians questioned considered Marxism the best ever interpretation of the historical evolution of mankind; 46% blamed the right wing government of the time for the Civil War, against 35% who blamed the Communist Party (and this, despite 30 years of right wing 'official' history); 52% believed Greece's 1951 decision to join NATO had been wrong; 56% believed that Greece's alliance with Britain had been detrimental and 57% that Greece's alliance with the US had been detrimental.

Strong support was indicated in polls conducted in 1981 for fur-

ther nationalisations of private enterprise and for greater government intervention in the economy.

The basic social reforms carried out by PASOK after 1981 — abolition of the dowry, introduction of civil marriage, decriminalisation of adultery, more flexible divorce laws, etc. — also seem to reflect a change in social values in the country as a whole, and particularly the younger generations.

On social questions, for example, 64% opposed the church's condemnation of pre-marital sex and contraception, 55% opposed the Church's refusal to apply the automatic divorce law and 50% opposed the church's condemnation of abortion.

One of the most hotly debated questions on the far left in Greece since 1974 has been on the class nature of PASOK. Is it a workers' party with its base in the organised working class or is it nothing more than a bourgeois populist party, aiming to win support from all classes in society? The chapter on PASOK concentrates on those aspects which the party has in common with other populist parties — its rhetoric of 'national liberation'; its selective use of Marxist concepts; its deliberately ambiguous stance on many questions in order to broaden its cross-class appeal; the complete dominance of its charismatic leader over the party which, in turn, lacks any internal democracy; its rejection of the capitalist West and 'already-existing socialism' in the East and its espousal of a 'third road'.

Of course it is undeniable that PASOK reveals many populist traits and an analysis of its electoral support shows an incredible degree of consistency in its support from all classes in society, but it is a pity that other interpretations of PASOK, though alluded to, are not dealt with by the author as this is a particularly important, not to say contentious question on the left.

Other chapters look at the various interest groups in Greece — the unions, student unions, farmers', shipowners' and industrialists' organisations; the history of Greek radio and TV, both of which came into existence during periods of dictatorship and which have always been directly controlled by the government; Greek foreign policy — where a continuity of practice from the New Democracy governments of the 1970s to the PASOK governments of the '80s is indicated, with Papandreou asserting his independence of the Western Alliance on smaller questions in order to cover his retreat on the big questions; and Greece and the EEC.

As a general introduction to some of the themes of contemporary Greek society, the book is invaluable to the English-speaking reader as much of the information it contains is hard to come by. The only real drawback is its price.