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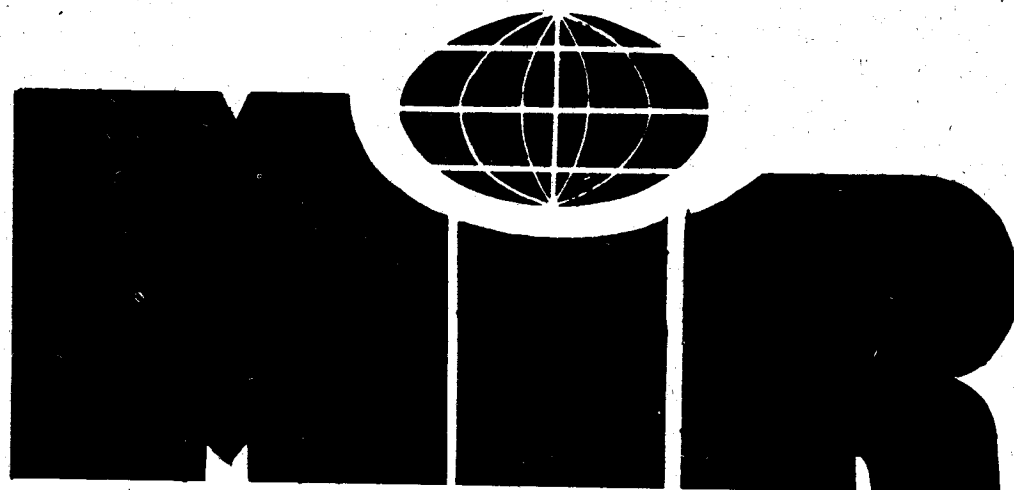
AUTUMN 1977



Photo: Chris Davies (Report)

- ★ TRADE UNIONS
- ★ SOUTH AFRICA
- ★ POLAND
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REVIEW



MILITANT INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

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In this edition of the Review we are carrying two main articles, on the trade unions [concentrating on Britain] and on South Africa.

The world economic crisis and the political tensions that have appeared in one form or another in all the advanced capitalist countries have inevitably been accompanied by changes in the trade unions. Even in West Germany, one of the strongest capitalist economies at the moment, the trade union leaders have begun to question the viability of the "social market economy", i.e. of capitalism, reflecting the pressure building up within the rank and file of the mass organisations. But it is above all in Britain that the trade unions have been brought to the front of the political stage. Here, probably the weakest ruling class [alongside the Italian capitalists] in the West is faced with the most powerful trade union organisations in the capitalist world. The role of the unions and perspectives for their development in the coming period of upheaval and sharpened political struggle are therefore key questions for Marxists.

The "winds of change"—in this period the winds of revolutionary change—are blowing through Africa. After the direct US invasion of the former Belgium Congo in 1960 and the Sharpsville massacre in South Africa, which led to defeat and demoralisation, there was a period of relative stability and quiet throughout most of the continent. Supporting the white regimes, like Rhodesia or South Africa, or working through the new Nationalist regimes, as it suited their purpose, world imperialism continued and even intensified the exploitation of Africa. But the chain reaction set off by the downfall of Portuguese imperialism has already created an entirely new situation. The days of the white regime in Rhodesia are now clearly numbered, although the struggle may drag on for some time. There are also rumblings in the nationalist regimes, like Zaire, Ghana, Zambia and others. But it is South Africa, with its more developed industry and the biggest working class in Africa, which will be the key to developments in the coming years. The events in Soweto, as our article shows, are the unmistakable anticipation of impending, earth-shattering movements of the black proletariat, which has begun to feel its strength and is rapidly becoming conscious of its enormous power.

WHAT NEXT FOR THE TRADE UNIONS ?

**By Brian
Ingham**

worker directors or the struggle for socialism

In every major capitalist country the growth and consolidation of the trade unions has reached phenomenal proportions. This is particularly the case in Britain.

In 1946 6,671,000 workers were represented at the Trades Union Congress. Three decades later, in 1976, that figure had grown to over 11 million. More than 50% of the working population of Britain are today organised under the umbrella of the Trades Union Congress.

The trade unions are the single most powerful force in British society. Again and again in the years that have followed the Second World War—above all the explosive period under the Heath government—events vividly revealed the power of the unions.

The wounds of the past have healed. The scars of the 1920s and 1930s, the struggles and conflicts, the aspirations and hopes, the bitter and demoralising defeats, have been wiped clean. The capitalist class faces a new generation of workers.

The balance of class forces has swung away from the capitalists and in favour of the working class. Underlying this process has been developments within capitalism itself.

The division and redivision of labour has accelerated as a result of the increased specialisation of production accompanying technological advances. Nowadays, a mere handful of strategically-placed workers can have a devastating impact. They can shake the entire economy; as the miners showed, they can threaten the life of the government itself.

The accumulated power of the British trade unions is analysed and illustrated in some detail in the Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy. We will discuss later the ideas contained in that report, its talk of a "partnership" between labour and capital, its attempt to embroil workers in the running of capitalist firms by placing "worker directors" on the boards, its hope that workers would thereby be willing to make sacrifices on behalf of their firms, and its utopian dream of reconciling the irreconcilable interests of the working class and the bosses. For the moment, however, we limit ourselves to ten pages in the report packed with facts, figures and charts, outlining the recent progress of trade unionism in Britain.

The growth of white-collar and manual unionism in the United Kingdom, 1948-1974

	Union membership (000s)				% Increase	
	1948	1964	1970	1974	1948-74	1970-74
White-collar ...	1,964	2,684	3,592	4,263	+117.1	+18.7
Manual ...	7,398	7,534	7,587	7,491	+ 0.1	- 1.3

	Union density (%)				Increase	
	1948	1964	1970	1974	1948-74	1970-74
White-collar ...	30.2	29.6	35.2	39.4	+9.2	+4.2
Manual ...	50.7	52.9	56.0	57.9	+7.2	+1.9

Source: Price and Bain.

November 1976 issue of the *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, *Union Growth Revisited: 1948-1974 In Perspective*

Total Trade Union membership and density in the United Kingdom Selected years, 1948-74

Year	Labour force (000s)	Annual % change in Labour force	Total Union membership (000s)	Annual % change in Union membership	Density of Union membership (%)
1948	20,732	..	9,362	..	45.2
1958	22,290	n.a.	9,639	n.a.	43.2
1963	23,558	n.a.	10,067	n.a.	42.7
1968	23,667	n.a.	10,193	n.a.	43.1
1969	23,603	-0.3	10,472	+2.7	44.4
1970	23,446	-0.7	11,179	+6.8	47.7
1971	23,231	-0.9	11,127	-0.5	47.9
1972	22,959	+0.3	11,349	+2.0	49.4
1973	23,244	+1.2	11,444	+0.8	49.2
1974	23,339	+0.4	11,755	+2.7	50.4

Source: Price and Bain.

The figures produced by Bullock (some of which we reproduce here) highlight the special significance of the post-war growth of the British trade unions. In this period some areas of the economy which had a

long tradition of trade union organisation severely contracted. Mining, the textile industry and the railways, for example, all suffered a considerable decline. Also trade union membership was formerly

concentrated mainly among manual workers and there has been a steady and consistent shift away from manual work to white-collar employment.

"The proportion of the labour force in white-collar employment rose from 31% to 43% between 1951 and 1971, while manual employment declined commensurately from 64% to 55%."

Nevertheless, trade union strength has been maintained and reinforced. The transformation of work patterns has been matched by an expansion of trade unionism in sections where it was previously non-existent or extremely weak and among sections of workers who were once indifferent or hostile to the unions.

Total membership of the unions (both TUC and non-affiliated unions) increased in the post-war period by 2½ millions. Professional workers, insurance workers, workers in banking, finance and distribution, local government manual workers and health workers all made good the loss in membership elsewhere and added a bonus. As one fresh social layer turned to the trade unions, so another was preparing to follow.

The spectacular growth of both NUPE and COHSE is evidence of this "new unionism". These unions have been two of the main union recruiting agencies in recent years.

In 1939 COHSE (then the Mental and Institutional Workers' Union) had 20,000 members. By 1969 it still

Industry ⁽¹⁾	1948			1974		
	Labour force (000s)	Union membership (000s)	Density (%)	Labour force (000s)	Union membership (000s)	Density (%)
Agriculture and Forestry	783.9	215.7	27.4	415.5	92.3	22.2
Fishing	37.7	14.9	39.6	12.2	7.4	60.5
Coal mining	802.7	675.3	84.1	314.0	302.1	96.2
Other mining	81.4	37.0	45.5	50.6	26.2	51.8
Food and drink	597.4	227.4	38.1	783.9	401.1	51.2
Tobacco	49.1	26.1	53.1			
Chemicals	426.8	127.3	29.8	483.6	247.4	51.2
Metals and engineering	3,676.1	1,837.5	50.0	4,118.0	2,862.7	69.4
Cotton and man-made fibres	395.2	276.6	70.0	596.7	243.8	40.9
Other textiles	533.3	180.4	33.8			
Leather	79.0	24.7	31.2	44.0	20.5	46.6
Clothing	429.1	145.5	33.9	345.8	207.7	60.0
Footwear	139.5	92.8	66.6	87.1	68.8	79.0
Bricks and building materials	172.2	70.1	40.8	171.9	69.4	40.4
Pottery	75.3	31.3	41.5	60.5	56.8	93.8
Glass	68.1	28.2	41.3	74.5	58.5	78.5
Wood and furniture	279.8	122.0	43.6	289.6	102.0	35.2
Paper, printing and publishing	455.5	264.1	58.0	596.1	426.6	71.6
Rubber	97.9	48.5	49.6	127.2	71.1	55.9
Construction	1,353.7	613.2	45.3	1,428.8	388.1	27.2
Gas, electricity and water	322.9	218.3	67.6	352.3	324.0	92.0

Union membership and density by industry in the United Kingdom, 1948 and 1974

Industry ⁽¹⁾	1948			1974		
	Labour force (000s)	Union membership (000s)	Density (%)	Labour force (000s)	Union membership (000s)	Density (%)
Railways	694.9	612.1	88.1	224.0	217.0	96.9
Road transport	490.6	295.0 ⁽²⁾	60.1 ⁽²⁾	468.3	445.4 ⁽²⁾	95.1 ⁽²⁾
Sea transport	120.8	108.0	89.3	90.6	90.3	99.6
Port and inland water transport	155.7	123.2	79.1	81.5	77.2	94.7
Air transport	32.1	13.0	40.5	79.8	74.7	93.6
Post Office and telecommunications	353.2	283.4	80.2	509.7	448.1	87.9
Distribution	2,167.9	325.3	15.0	2,810.1	321.8	11.4
Insurance, banking and finance	425.9	137.1	32.2	680.5	305.1	44.8
Entertainment and media services	238.4	95.7	40.1	189.6	123.0	64.9
Health	525.9	204.6	38.9	1,175.2	715.8	60.9
Hotels and catering	708.1	n.a.	—	824.2	42.5	5.2
Other professional services	276.8	n.a.	—	470.2	17.6	3.7
Education and Local Government	1,280.5	792.2	61.9	2,752.4	2,356.0	85.6
National Government	724.1	480.6	66.4	623.7	564.5	90.5

Notes:
(1) The following industries are not included in this table: miscellaneous transport services, other manufacturing (see rubber), business services (property owning, advertising and market research, other business services, central office, is not allocable elsewhere), other miscellaneous services (betting and gambling, hairdressing and manicure, laundries, dry-cleaning, motor repairs, decorators, garage and filling stations, repair of boots and shoes, and other services). Union density in this heterogeneous group of industries was less than 5 per cent in 1974; total employment was 2.4 million.
(2) These figures are substantially overstated since it has not been possible to disaggregate the membership of the Commercial Transport Group of the Transport and General Workers' Union into those employed by haulage firms and those employed by manufacturing concerns. Union membership among the latter group should be classified in the relevant manufacturing industry.

Source: Price and Bain.

had only 67,000 members. But in 1974 alone COHSE membership grew by 22,000 and COHSE now has over 200,000 members. NUPE's membership figures have progressed at an even more remarkable pace. In September 1976, they reached 631,970; 112,980 of those members had joined in the period from January 1975 to June 1976—a staggering 22% increase in eighteen months!

But it is still the workers in the larger manufacturing establishments who lead the way, both by their militant example and by the degree

of organisation on which that militancy is based. These key battalions of the working class are compressed into relatively few places of work. In the private sector alone, a third of all workers are to be found working for one of the 738 companies which employ over 2,000 workers. The strategic economic position of these workers and their high degree of social cohesion have had their corollary in a high level of trade union organisation. "It is reasonable to assume a union density of around 70% for larger establishments (those in manufacturing employing over 2,000).... This gives a density for smaller enterprises of the order of 20%."

Above all it has been the manual workers in these larger establishment of manufacturing industry who have demonstrated to the rest of the working class the industrial (and already, at time, the political) benefits of trade union organisation. Clerical workers and service workers have often borne the brunt of the recent economic and political attacks. They have also faced the growth of factory-like conditions and concentration of labour. In increasing numbers, therefore, they have followed the industrial lead given by their manual worker brothers and sisters.

Episodic battles have taken place as fresh groups of workers, often in the smaller work places, have fought to establish the most elementary form of working class organisation, the trade union. The ignorance and fear which kept many of the weakest and most oppressed workers away from the trade unions in the past is being pushed aside. In many cases, these workers have had to struggle in the face of vicious intimidation. The combativity shown by the strikers at the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories is symptomatic of the transformation taking place in the outlook of whole new layers of workers.

It is to the non-unionised workers that the capitalists turn when they attempt to mobilise forces against the organised working class. The recent growth of the trade unions has therefore carried in its tail a double sting for the capitalists: the trade unions have become an increasingly formidable force, while the potential reserves of reaction have been whittled away.

But not only are a majority of workers now organised in unions. They are also being progressively compressed into fewer and fewer unions. As a result, the power of the

main unions has been enormously enhanced.

Because of the peculiar development over a long period of the British trade unions on trade and craft lines, the working class in Britain is still faced with a wide range of competing organisations. It is not unusual for up to twenty different unions to exist in any one factory, with some of them covering the same grades and occupations. Nevertheless, these complications have to some extent been overcome by the parallel processes of union amalgamations, on the one hand, and the growth of shop steward's committees across union perimeters, on the other.

At the beginning of this century there were 1,323 different trade unions. By 1960 this had shrunk to 664. By 1974 it had shrunk still further to 448. And within this overall process was the parallel rise of a few dominating giant unions.

"In 1960", the report points out, "the 17 unions with 100,000 members accounted for 67% of total unionisation; by 1974 there were 25 unions with a greatly increased membership which accounted for 77.5% of all union members. At the other end of the size spectrum.... 362 unions (existed) in 1960, accounting for only 0.9% of the total unionised workforce; by 1974 there were only 258 of these small unions accounting for 0.6% of the total unionised workforce."

Moreover, the majority of the organised forces of the British working class are now gathered under one central body, the TUC. "Data for 1975 indicates that TUC membership now accounts for over 93% of the total union membership." Since that time both the IPCS and NUBE (National Union of Bank Employees) have joined the TUC.

The British trade union leaders stand at the head of such an army as has never before been assembled throughout the entire preceding centuries of British history.

TRADE UNION POWER IN EUROPE

A similar story, moreover, can be told of the rise of the trade unions in most of the countries of Western Europe. This or that feature would be different. In this article we are mainly concerned with the trade unions in Northern Europe; but the essential message is the same even in those Southern European countries—including France—which have a strong tradition of spontaneity and volatility, and a relatively weak

TABLE 9
Numbers and size of Trade Unions in the United Kingdom
and affiliation to TUC

Number of trade unions	1960	1965	1970	1973	1974
Analysis by number of members					
Under 1,000 members	362	333	291	253	258
1,000- 10,000 „	209	193	152	157	142
10,000- 50,000 „	55	59	69	47	48
50,000-100,000 „	21	20	17	14	15
100,000-250,000 „	10	8	14	13	14
Over 250,000 „	7	10	9	11	11
Total all trade unions	664	623	552	495	488
Total organisations affiliated to TUC	183	170	142	109	111
Membership (thousands)					
Analysis by size of unions					
Under 1,000 members	91	86	76	70	74
1,000- 10,000 „	646	602	517	507	452
10,000- 50,000 „	1,102	1,306	1,037	1,088	1,120
50,000-100,000 „	1,405	1,394	1,202	997	1,045
100,000-250,000 „	1,742	1,189	2,188	1,810	1,995
Over 250,000 „	4,848	5,746	6,155	7,035	7,264
Total membership of all trade unions	9,834	10,323	11,175	11,507	11,950
Total membership of organisations affiliated to TUC	8,299	8,868	10,002	10,022	10,364

Source: Department of Employment Gazette, November 1976 and TUC.

tradition of mass trade union organisation. In not one of the West European countries is there a body with greater might than the trade union movement.

Altogether, in the different countries of Western Europe, more than 37 million workers swell the ranks of the trade unions.

But how has this power been turned to account by those who lead the movement? Proudly, many of these individuals would point to the host of weird and wonderful systems of workers' participation in capitalist management, which have spread throughout Europe. These systems, they would claim, are the finest possible tribute to the power of the unions. But what are these systems in reality? They are attempts by the capitalists to shackle the trade unions and undermine their power.

The trade unions are the first conscious line of defence for the working class acting as a class. It is always to the trade unions that the working class turn when they first move into activity against the system. This was borne out in Portugal in 1974 when the working class shook off the cloak of fascist oppression and immediately began a spontaneous drive to create trade unions. From nothing, the Portuguese trade unions have mushroomed to cover over 50% of the working population.

But the trade unions are much more than a defensive wall against unbridled exploitation. In creating trade unions the working class moves to establish some control over the arbitrary rule of capital. From weapons of defence, trade unions

Proportion of United Kingdom Trade Union membership in larger and smaller unions

Year	1960			1970			1974		
	No of unions	No of members (000s)	% of total membership	No of unions	No of members (000s)	% of total membership	No of unions	No of members (000s)	% of total membership
Unions with 100,000 members or more	17	6,590	67.0	23	8,343	74.7	25	9,259	77.5
Unions with 50,000 members or more	38	7,995	81.3	40	9,545	85.4	40	10,304	86.2
Unions with 10,000 members or more	93	9,097	92.5	109	10,582	94.7	88	11,424	95.6
Unions with less than 10,000 members	571	737	7.5	443	593	5.3	400	526	4.4
Unions with less than 1,000 members	362	91	0.9	291	76	0.7	258	74	0.6

Source: Department of Employment Gazette, November 1976.

have become, especially over the years since the war, weapons of attack. They have eaten into the formerly sacred territory of the capitalist managements' decision making. Examples of shop stewards moving to exercise a controlling check on the activities of management are widespread throughout British industry.

Again this process was telescoped in Portugal in the earth shattering days after 25th April, 1974. The working class in a multitude of factories threw up committees which in their turn stripped the old managers of practically all their rights to unilateral decision making.

Apart from episodic incidents in the midst of battle, the process elsewhere has yet to reach such a pitch. Nevertheless, such a process is revealed in other countries. In Britain, because of the strength of the unions in the factories, mines and mills etc., it has proceeded at a relatively fast pace. Again, these developments are drawn out in the Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy.

ism, the working class has a powerful, albeit unconscious, desire to end the rule of capital once and for all and to take the resources of society into their own hands. This instinctive feeling for social change was undoubtedly muted in the long boom period that we are now leaving behind us. But the fundamental aim of a change in the system remained

SHARE OF THE HUNDRED LARGEST ENTERPRISES IN MANUFACTURING NET OUTPUT, UK, 1909-70

	1909	1924	1935	1949	1953	1958	1963	1968	170
Share [%]	16*	22*	24	22	27	32	37*	41	40/41§

Sources:

* Approximate figures

★ Includes steel companies; reduced to 36.5% approximately if steel companies are excluded.

§ Provisional estimate: the higher figure includes steel and the lower one excludes it. This estimate is artificially low [perhaps by 1%] compared with previous years because of the increased Census coverage of smaller firms.

From: 'The Evolution of Giant Firms in Britain; by Professor s.j. Parais [Cambridge University Press,]

LOYALTY TO CAPITALISM CONTRACTED

Monopolisation and centralisation of production has shattered practically all of the last remaining parochial ties which held workers in subservient loyalty to their employer. The table above shows the rate at which British industry has fallen under the ownership of a few huge monopolies. From 16% in 1909, the share of the hundred largest enterprises in manufacturing net output had, by 1970, risen to 40-41%. It now stands around the 50% mark.

The capitalists have long since ceased to play any useful role in production. Their excursions to the shop floor are today merely brief appearances by visiting dignitaries. They are generally removed even from day-to-day management. They limit their "entrepreneurial" activities to keeping a watchful eye on the fortunes of the firms that they own, intervening rarely, usually only at crucial times when their share values are in danger.

Armies of bureaucrats run all the major concerns. A large proportion of these individuals have had no shop floor experience whatsoever. So in spite of all the new Business Schools and training courses for management, inefficiency, bottlenecks, wastage and mismanagement are rife. Bureaucracy jams the cog wheels of every major factory and industry.

And as this process has deepened, a corresponding qualitative change has taken place in the attitudes of the mass of workers. The whole of production depends on the activity of the working class. This is instinctively understood by the workers.

TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP OF SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN 1973

COUNTRY	MEMBERSHIP	% OF POPULATION
Belgium	1,800,000	70%
Denmark	900,000	75%
France	3,720,000	22%
W. Germany	8,000,000	39%
Ireland	550,000	49%
Luxembourg	500,000	52%
Italy	7,000,000	55%
Netherlands	595,000	42%
Austria	1,543,000	66%
Norway	595,000	70%
Sweden	1,800,000	70%
Switzerland	670,000	33%
Finland	650,000	—

Sources: Margaret Stewart; "Trade Unions in Europe" and "Employment conditions in Europe"; both Gower P.

There are now over 300,000 shop stewards in British industry. In manufacturing industry alone shop stewards doubled in number in the course of the last ten years. The shop steward system with its powerful shop stewards' committees and combine committees is a form of industrial unionism cutting across, as it does, formal union boundaries. It is also the main weapon by which workers attempt to exercise their control over capitalist management.

But the instinctive desire of the working class is to secure far more than a power of veto. Arising from their conditions of life under capital-

embodies the rule books of most of the major trade unions, representing a conscious aspiration handed down from the pioneers of the labour movement. In the period of economic convulsions and class conflicts that is now opening up, the demand for socialist change formally embodied in the rules will once again become the battle cry of the present generation of workers.

Profound as it is, the movement of workers' control will prove insufficient. The need for ownership and workers' management will be clearly posed before the movement and become the focus of struggle.

Therefore, as the productive efforts of the workers have increasingly been sabotaged by incompetence, respect for managerial skill and authority has at the same time receded.

Moreover, the contradictions of capitalism have become sharper in the eyes of the workers. All the latest inventions, scientific possibilities and up-to-date techniques are proudly displayed by the mass media. Television itself is a monument to the advance of human possibilities.

But these possibilities are fettered and curtailed by capitalist ownership and the market economy. To the worker this is manifested in dole queues alongside empty factories; in unemployment among builders while there is homelessness; and in boundless productive potential alongside want, uncertainty and fear about the future.

Neither at factory nor at national level is the working class willing any longer is the working class willing any longer to be the uncomplaining passive victim of capitalist property relations.

These new aspirations are not the pious wishes of scattered individuals, they are articulated and embodied in the trade unions. "The trade unions have harnessed the desire of employees both to be protected and to have strengthened the position of employees by expressing their hopes and fears collectively."

Bullock had this to say on the shop stewards system:

"In general the growth of shop stewards and equivalent trade union organisation has proceeded much further in the United Kingdom than in Europe. The number of shop stewards and the incidence of workplace bargaining in the United Kingdom have increased dramatically over the past 20 years and have resulted in a decline of consultative committees....even where the form of the old consultative system remains, for the great majority of large companies the employee representatives are always shop stewards.

"(Shop stewards) keep in close touch with those they represent; indeed the extent to which members are involved in the election of shop stewards and equivalent representatives and in the activities of those representatives on behalf of their constituents is probably greater than in most other bodies which are organised on democratic lines."

From this powerful democratic platform, the "traditional management prerogatives have come under attack."

The hesitancy and modesty of the working class in the face of their so-called superiors has evaporated: since the end of the Second World War "...we have seen the end of the deferential society, in which working people rarely aspired to positions of power or authority in local or national life." As Bullock points out: "employees are now in a position through the strength of trade union organisation and power to resist the implementation of changes that threaten their livelihood and security." With possibly unconscious irony it added: "Such resistance may appear shortsighted, but it is understandable that individual workers or groups may interpret the universally accepted goal of full employment as meaning job security for themselves."

Particularly at times of crisis, therefore, the power of the working class and its determination to exercise that power confronts the capitalists as a dangerous obstacle. The reorganisation of industries and individual firms is hampered, the shake out of labour or the driving down of living standards to boost profits margins is undermined. And always, hovering in the midst of trade unionism, the capitalists correctly see the spectre of social revolution. They have been forced for the moment, to reconcile themselves to the trade unions. But they are perpetually engaged in manoeuvres to contain trade union activity within relatively safe limits. In doing this they have attempted to recruit the trade union leaders to their service. They try to enmesh the union leadership in the workings of the capitalist state in the hope that the leaders will themselves police the workers on behalf of capitalism. And insofar as the trade union leaders have failed to understand the desperate position of world and British capitalism, and failed to face up to the need posed by this for the working class to transform society, then they have fallen under the sway of the capitalists.

In the last 30 years the working class of Britain has extracted much more generous concessions—in absolute terms—from the capitalists than ever before. This was as a result of the unprecedented upswing of production which allowed greater possibilities for concessions and which simultaneously produced strengthened and more confidently articulate working class organisations. Militancy at shop floor level has been a particularly important factor in the post-war economic

gains of the working class. For the trade union leaders, however, new benefits for the workers and record increases in wages built up illusions in both their personal skills as negotiators and also to the limitless possibilities of capitalist production. The reformism of the trade union leaders was thus strengthened.

The outlook of the trade union leadership is conditioned by the style of their life: they are cushioned, not only from the pressures of the shop floor, but also, because of their inflated salaries and "fringe benefits", from the terrible economic worries which face the majority of workers. In many cases, they are wined and dined by the bosses, who work assiduously to flatter individual trade union leaders and make them feel "part of the establishment". Honours, such as MBEs, OBEs, knighthoods and peerages are generously distributed among union leaders for this purpose.

Bound by their own interests as a leadership, the trade union tops fear independent struggle initiated and organised by the workers from below. They feel that their guiding hand is decisive, they consider it essential to keep the control of events in their own hands. Their approach is based on extracting reforms from the system, either by negotiation or pressure, because reforms depend on the ability of the bosses to make concessions, the trade union leaders are committed by this approach to attempting to maintain the stability and expansion of the capitalist economy.

It was not the big business representatives who put forward the elaborate proposals of the Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy. It was precisely the representatives of the trade union leadership and academics who identify with their position who imagine that lasting peace between the classes is possible, if only the necessary institutional reforms are carried through.

As a matter of fact, the controversy surrounding the publication of the Bullock Report itself gave the lie to those notions. The Bullock Committee itself split on class lines, with the industrialists who were members finally bringing out their own minority report as an emergency reserve—which they shelved almost at once.

The prognosis of Marxists in relation to the trade unions has been strikingly confirmed: at those times when capitalism is gripped by crisis, the room for balancing between the classes is limited. The trade union

leaders are faced with a straight choice: either they harness the power of the unions and use that power of lever for the socialist transformation of society; or they will be forced into working for the preservation of a diseased capitalism.

mistaken thinking that underlies many of their arguments in favour of an incomes policy and some form of "social contract".

But the idea that a new period of capitalist boom is just round the corner is a complete delusion. The

for the time when these tactics may be exhausted. Yet the leaders of the trade unions in Britain are blind to the fact that the class struggle will ultimately be fought out in earnest.

In Germany, worker-director schemes existed for over 25 years and German capitalism has been one of the strongest in the world. Some of the British trade union leaders therefore imagine that if similar schemes are now introduced in Britain they will lay the basis for the development of a comparable period of prosperity and industrial harmony in Britain.

"It is now 25 years since Mitbestimmung (co-determination) was introduced in the Federal Republic of Germany. This year has seen steps to increase the proportion of employee representatives on the supervisory boards of companies employing more than 2,000 people. In Sweden, 1976 has also seen the confirmation of the three-year experiment in putting employee representatives on company boards. The fact that the West German and Swedish economies, despite differences between the social philosophies of the two countries, have been among the most successful in the world—not least in avoiding industrial conflict which has cost Britain so dear—has not escaped notice."

Thus did they longingly remark in the Bullock Report. But the authors have completely failed to appreciate that there is now a fundamentally different situation in Britain from that which existed in Germany and Sweden when the schemes they refer to were introduced. The capitalists' room for manoeuvre has shrunk. That is why the Bullock Report, which based itself on these schemes, was met by a barrage of hostile criticism from the spokesmen of British capital.

They are afraid of the enormous power of the trade unions, emphasised once again in the factual sections of Bullock. In a distorted way, the ideas for worker-directors which the report outlines, also confirm trade union power. The working class is groping towards full ownership and control of society. All the elements of workers control that have been accumulated at factory level are evidence of this. The scheme elaborated by the Bullock Committee is designed to put workers onto capitalist boards with the express intention of diffusing the aspirations of the masses.

The trade union leaders are caught as if in a vice. On the one side they are pressed by the impasse of



Mass demonstration in support of Grunwick strikers, July 1977

Some right wing union leaders openly advocate the continuation of the rule of capital. They are agents of the capitalists within the ranks of the workers' movement. Apart from this, however, in recent years, some of the most anti-working class policies have been sold to the workers for a time not so much by right wing leaders as by left wing leaders who have more authority in the movement as a whole. These left wing leaders no doubt genuinely believe in a socialist society and sincerely stand for the betterment of workers' conditions. They adopt the position they do because they fail to see that the struggle for reforms is ultimately linked to the need to transform society, especially in a period of capitalist crisis.

THE PROTRACTED BOOM HAS ENDED

The days of the 1960s, when economic gains could be made with the minimum of struggle and largely without major clashes with big business, are gone. Not only is big business not long prepared to concede reforms, it is demanding back the concessions it granted in the past. Many of the trade union leaders, because they are unable, or not prepared, to see the alternative, believe that the present economic crisis is only temporary, a passing phase that can be overcome with the help of restraint and sacrifice by the workers. It is this completely

representatives of big business, for their part, are quite clear that his will not be the case. They are fully aware, as articles and editorials in the serious capitalist press daily testify, that we have entered a new period. The social and political climate has profoundly changed.

The world slump of 1974/5 marked decisively the end of the long post-war boom. Even before world production and trade has completely recovered from the downturn, the capitalist "experts" are predicting a new slump.

The world capitalist market is nervously fending off a trade war. And to one degree or another each capitalist nation has been affected by unprecedented inflation. The British capitalists face a particularly dire situation following the relative underinvestment for a period of 20 years or more. They are fully aware that an assault on workers' living standards and the "welfare state" is vital if they are to effect a recovery.

At the moment they are playing for time. Irrespective of the fact that the power of the unions is weighed down by the union bureaucracy, the capitalists still dread that power. They have not the confidence at this stage to mount a sudden, once and for all, attack on the working class to bring about the necessary shift in the allocation of social wealth. They fear the response that such an attack would provoke. Stealth is the method that they have therefore adopted for now. But they are already preparing

British capitalist society and, on the other, by the power of the trade unions. The trade union leaders have thus called for worker-directors. This, they believe, will allow the opposing forces of labour and capital to co-exist harmoniously. They have drawn their inspiration from the schemes that are operating in Western Europe. But like song writers mesmerised by drug-taking, they have produced a pattern of nonsense and imagine it to be profound.

What are the features of these European schemes, then, which the British trade union leaders set so much store by:

Germany is the classical country of worker-directors. There, these sociological experiments were pioneered.

In the disarray of German society after the Second World War the trade union movement was reformed into 16 industrial unions. Inside those 16 IG Metall, with over 2 million members, and the Union of Public Employees, with almost one million members, tower above the rest.

But all the German unions were turned immediately towards a system of deals with the capitalists. This applied especially to IG Metall. That union was more heavily involved than any other following the legal inauguration of worker-directors in the German coal and steel industries back in 1951.

British and American imperialism fearful of German rearmament and aware of the future potential of the German working class, believed that they had found a compromise. The workers would be sewn into the decision-making processes of their firms where they could also keep an eye on their masters. The energies of the masses as their confidence was restored would be channeled away from revolutionary strife and British and American imperialism would have a watchdog over the German capitalists.

These were the considerations that led to the workers having "equal" representation with the capitalists. Together all directors were to select an "independent" Chairman. But to ensure that capitalist management would be allowed to operate efficiently as a coordinated team, workers would only sit on a "top" supervisory board. That board would then appoint a "subservient" managerial board. The workers had the consolation that the Labour Directors could not be appointed or dismissed without their approval. In that way the Labour Director,

operating on behalf of the company, mixing with the other directors and living the lifestyle of the other directors, would nevertheless tend to achieve a far more compliant response from the shop floor worker than would be usual for a labour, or personnel director.

Also, to underwrite the efforts to achieve industrial tranquility, trade unions were excluded from factory negotiations. They could negotiate only at regional or national level. In the factory, works councils alone were to operate on behalf of the workers. But these works councils were not based strictly on the unions, and furthermore, they were denied the right to strike. Disputes had to be settled by arbitration boards or labour courts.

And on the "supervisory" boards, where workers were supposed to have influence, a complicated system of check and balances was introduced to insulate the elected representatives from each other and from the shop floor workers.

Two representatives were to be nominated by the works councils, one a wage earner and one a salaried employee. Two other work representatives were to come from the trade unions, one from the major union in the firm and the other from the national union centre. The fifth worker director to sit along side the five shareholder directors was to be an "independent" non-union member.

By the time the 1952 Act was passed, extending worker directors to the rest of German industry, the "generosity" of the capitalists had dwindled. The system remained essentially the same, but this time the workers were allowed only one-third of the seats on the supervisory boards. Since then, cosmetic changes have occurred with both schemes, but they remain essentially as they began.

What has been the result? In no substantial way has the German capitalist class suffered as a result of co-determination. On the contrary, its way has been smoothed. The stripes of the tiger may have been disguised; but it remains the jungle animal it always was. The leaders of the German labour movement who imagined that they were taming the capitalist tiger were merely themselves being tamed.

They were integrated closely with the running of capitalism. Herr Heinz Vetter, President of the DGB (the German TUC) became deputy Chairman of August Thyssen Huette, the country's leading steel

group; Herr Eugen Loderer, President of the metal workers, fulfills the same role on the board of the major steel and engineering concern, Mannesmann; and virtually all the other Presidents and/or General Secretaries of the German unions sit on the boards of leading companies or organisations.

The bureaucracy of the labour movement thus sits in the inner sanctuaries of the capitalists, where they advise the capitalists on how best to exploit their own union members!

An executive member of IG Metall, Heinz Kaiser, came to the 1975 EETPU Biennial Delegate Conference. He explained his admiration for "the realism of British leaders and their down-to-earth attitude to politics". It was a tradition that he hoped would be continued by the British workers emulating German co-determination. And "realism", he explained is even more vital after co-determination. Worker directors could not simply adopt negative attitudes: "Co-determination, of course means joint responsibility, too. It is to nobody's advantage if those 50% of labour representatives on the boards always say no". In Germany this "realistic attitude of taking responsibility for the problems of capitalist industry has meant collaboration in the massive run down of manpower and the stepping up of new capital-intensive equipment in the steel industry in the late 1950's. It meant that in the coal mining industry again labour was pruned with union assistance.

Adolf Schmidt, President of the mining and energy workers' union is also deputy chairman of Ruhrkohle, the group which accounts for three-quarters of German coal production.

In the manufacturing sector, a memorable recent example of collaboration being of benefit to the capitalists was at Volkswagen. Several leading trade unionists from different VW plants serve on the VW board alongside Eugen Loderer, of IG Metall. In 1975 they agreed to massive lay-offs at the time of a severe financial crisis for VW and last April they voted in favour of the management plans for building cars in the USA where among other advantages lower labour costs have attracted the German capitalists.

But in recent years events have shown that all the elaborate web of constraints will not in the last analysis suffice to contain the German working class. The unoffi-

cial strike wave in 1971 in Germany was a harbinger of developments to come. In 1972, under pressure from below, trade unions were given limited rights to enter and assist their members in the factories.

And vain moves were also set afoot by the labour leaders to forstall militancy by an expansion of co-determination. The labour leaders "demanded" that the pattern in the coal and steel industry be generalised throughout industry. The capitalists and their direct representatives in the coalition government, the Free Democrats, refused. They saw the menace of working class power beginning to stir. They felt that they must maintain the present relationship more or less intact.

GERMAN WORKERS AWAKENING

Board room decisions do not take place in a vacuum. The capitalists fear pressure building from outside the boardroom on worker-directors that will counteract the pressure of capitalist economics and company loyalty operating inside. Mass movements of workers to influence critical decisions might sway all the worker directors. And the capitalists envisage also the possibility that the man in the middle, the "independent" chairman might be swayed. However unlikely this may be, the German bosses are alive to the changed situation. They refuse to toy with the might of an awakening working class. They only conceded the demands of the labour leaders in a disguised form. The maximum number of worker-directors on company boards will be 10. Three out of ten are to be nominated by the trade unions. Six are to be nominated by at least 100 workers in the company and the tenth is to be the cuckoo in the nest—a senior executive of the company! All are to be elected by the entire workshop.

Co-determination as a weapon to stabilise capitalism will turn into its opposite. The Vertrauensleute (union representatives) already show signs of developing into a fully blooded shop stewards system as in Britain. In some companies works councils have fallen into disrepair but in others they have become controlled and they have been transformed by the vertrauensleute who often put up for works councils elections one list of union nominees thus turning councils into negotiating bodies for the unions, and at the

same time stripping down their corporate union character.

Mounting discontent will inevitably force its attention on some of these workers in the boardrooms. Again and again they will be forced to distance themselves from their capitalist counterparts.

German society, like the rest of the capitalist world, will be drained of all stability in the years that lie ahead. And precisely because such an exacting pattern has been embroidered around the working class, the possibilities for the anger and frustrations of the German workers to find relatively safe legal outlets are diminished. This has been concealed by the boom. But it will mean that future economic struggles will flare up as if from nowhere and proceed to shake German society to the core.

But Germany has not been alone in these schemes. In each of eight different European countries the leaders of the labour movement have called for and received some form of "partnership" with the owners of industry. In every case the "partnership" is even more apologetic than that operating in Germany.

In Holland this will be limited (following new legislation) to works councils being legally bound to attend consultative meetings with the capitalists.

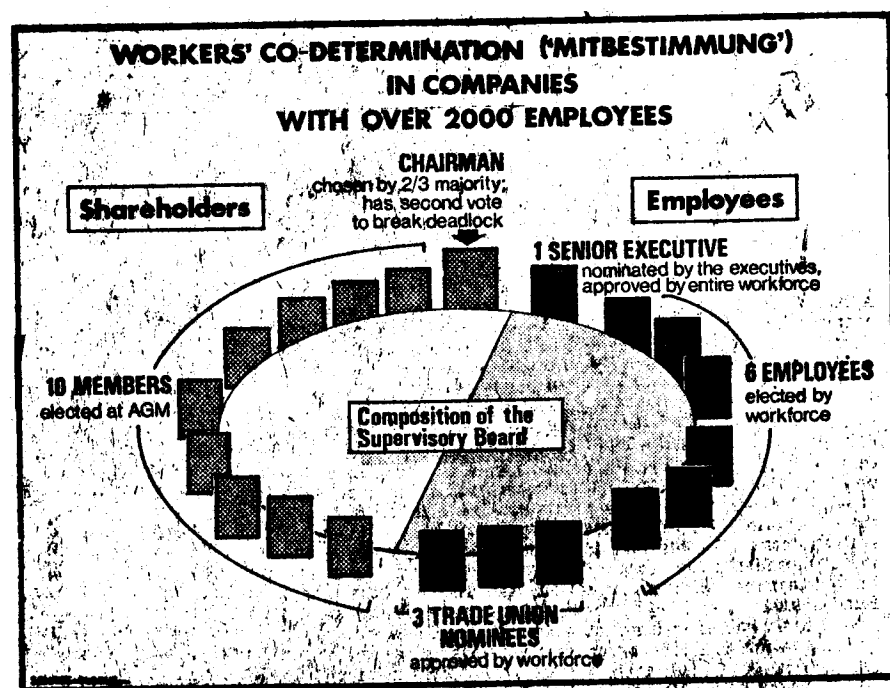
In Sweden, since 1973, workers have had two seats on the boards of capitalist firms where they sit opposite approximately 4 to 6 other directors. Two reserve worker-directors can be present but not with

voting rights. In Sweden the worker representatives sit on a single tier board. The relationship is epitomised by the fact that they are supposed to leave the room when industrial action or wage bargaining is being discussed! And at the end of the meeting all the directors decide which items of their business will be kept secret. Those decisions then carry the force of law.

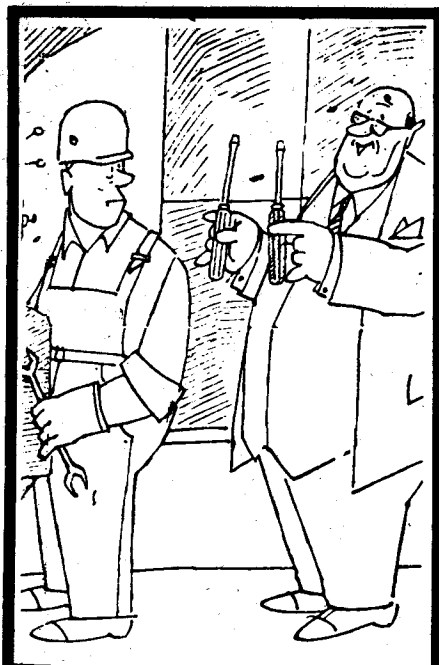
A new feature that has recently been introduced in Sweden is the economic committee where management teams explain the balance sheets to the workers in the hope of further involving them in the financial problems of the company to induce restraint in future wage claims.

In the Bullock Report the Swedish experience was referred to approvingly: "(Swedish) industrialists admitted that although they had initial doubts they would not now want to go back to a system where there were no employee representatives on the board. Employee representation had led to a better understanding of the board's activities and to more commitment from the trade unions to the policies adopted by the board."

The trade union leaders of Sweden believe that in winning this system they have scored a magnificent victory. Yet all they have done is to help build a snare for their members. In Norway, having built a similar snare and witnessed it trap shop floor representatives into dedication to their capitalist employers, the



Mitbestimmung: the grand plan



"Now's your chance to participate. Do you want the red one or the yellow one?"

(From *Quelle*, paper of the German equivalent of the TUC).

trade union leaders began to worry that the plan had backfired. They saw their base and their authority being eroded. Shop stewards and managing directors have made joint approaches to Ministries and parliament in search of loans and other forms of assistance. As a result, the Iron and Metal Workers' Union warned its members not to let solidarity with the management develop into opposition to the labour movement! They meant, of course, opposition to the "leaders" of the labour movement. In all Norwegian firms (with significant exemptions, such as banking and finance) a third of the directors are workers. Additionally, in companies with over 200 employees, a corporate assembly is set up which meets twice a year and where workers again make up one-third of the members. This body supposedly elects the main board of directors.

The 'Financial Times', commenting on the Norwegian scheme, noted that "Norwegian employers, like the British, were worried, before the new companies Act came into force, about the risk of company secrets being leaked by worker-directors to their fellow workers. They now agree that their fears were unfounded and disclosure is no longer a matter of concern. Only in one disputed instance has there been an alleged serious leakage. It took place during some company take-over negotiations and it is claimed to have led to

the closure of a paper mill."

So there we have it! The issue of company secrecy will be used to drive a wedge between the worker-director and the workers he is nominally representing. That worker-director has to choose between open and honest dealings with his fellow workers or confidentiality. The information workers receive is, in any event, carefully selected.

In Sweden, there exists a pattern of sub-committees appointed by the main boards as a device to have frank discussion away from the ear of the workers. Similar tricks are played in the other countries when necessary. But still the issue of confidentiality can always rebound on the workers—even on those who trustingly abide by it. The capitalists can always give a cunning leak and blame it on the workers as a prelude to a concerted attack on those workers.

In Norway tension over worker-directors has so far been minimal. The "marriage" of labour and capital in Norway, was started during a period of economic buoyancy and the Norwegian economy is still relatively healthy. A breakdown of the marriage is therefore not immediately on the order of the day. It will come. But not before these schemes have seriously delayed the regeneration of working class militancy and class consciousness.

THE MEIDNER PLAN

Events in Sweden indicate the way in which these fine theories of class-collaboration can rebound on the labour movement. All over Europe, union leaders jumped from thoughts of seats on capitalist boards, to thoughts of actually taking the shares of the capitalists. A magnificent two-pronged attack! In Sweden these plans advanced further than anywhere else. They then backfired.

A senior officer of the Landsorganisationen (LO), the Swedish trade union centre, devised a plan which bears his name, the Meidner plan. His idea was for 20% of all company profits to pass to the trade unions. This was made the official policy of the LO in 1976. It would have meant the gradual passing of capitalism by degrees into the hands of the trade unions! The leaders of the Swedish trade unions, intoxicated by reformism, made this an issue in the 1976 general election. Olaf Palme tried to play it down. Nevertheless it helped strengthen the determination of the capitalists to

bring down the Social Democratic government in Sweden. The scheme would have probably been killed off anyway; but the capitalists thought it better to be safe than sorry.

The British trade union leaders and the academics who wrote the Bullock Report studied all the models available throughout Western Europe. Apart from some minor details the system they devised is essentially the same as that operating in the German coal and steel industries. That should be warning enough to the British workers. The "independants" in the British scheme (the so-called "Y" directors) are more numerous than the German model and where stalemates arise in Britain over the choice of these "Y" directors, then yet other "independants" will adjudicate.

But independence between the forces of labour and capital is impossible. Time and again, that myth is exposed by so-called "independent" tribunals and courts. The labour leaders would like to believe that they are neutralising capitalism and making capitalism itself independent. The battle that the bosses in Britain have already waged to stop this scheme seeing the light of day should demonstrate the falacious nature of those dream.

In Germany, where the labour movement is beginning to be roused, the capitalists have contained the spread of worker-directors. They no longer see them as a foolproof method of quelling the independant mobilisation of the working class. They fear that the system of worker-directors may lead to the opposite of what they originally hoped. How much more, therefore, are the British capitalists determined to resist the kind of system for which the German labour leaders were arguing. The British labour leaders have begun their pleas for worker-directors too late.

At the beginning of the post-war period, the capitalists may have been more forthcoming. Now the situation has turned against such schemes. They have lasted in Germany only because of the protracted boom. In Sweden and Norway the capitalists hope to extend their relative economic stability through integrating the unions onto the company boards. In Britain the moment has passed.

A detail that irks the British capitalists is the idea of a unitary board. This they would have to avoid—as is done abroad in such cases—by complicated trickery to keep the essential discussions of

company matters closed from the worker representatives.

But far more weighty objections are raised by the capitalists in the form of company secrecy. This may have been more or less kept in tact abroad. And, as we have explained, it is a weapon they could use against the labour movement. They would also try and select safe information. Nevertheless, they fear an aroused movement placing class conscious stewards on company boards, who not only might receive, by accident information that the capitalists would like hidden, but who might also work to strip away the last thin veneer of esteem which some workers still have for capitalist management. If worker-directors work to expose the parasitic nature of the actual owners of capital and the cynical nature of the discussions on profitability then, particularly when they are under attack, workers would move and be determined firstly to defend their own positions and secondly to generalise their struggles to action against the private ownership throughout society as a whole.

In Britain, the capitalists cannot have even the benefit of building a counter-balance to the trade union structure into company management as a device to turn them against shop floor workers. The Bullock Report spelt out that the British working class would never tolerate such action.

It would be no good, they realised, attempting to build the British structure outside the shop stewards system. The stewards were too powerful: "...any attempt to bypass this structure would be seen as an attack on the trade unions and collective bargaining and would be fiercely resisted."

To the horror of the capitalists, therefore, they suggested building a structure around the shop stewards. Stewards would be brought together at company level to form an electoral college (a joint representation committee) which would choose the worker representatives.

Such a step would actually lead to further strengthening of the shop stewards! Certainly there would be cases of inter-union rivalry. But the tendency, particularly at times of a general attack, would be to facilitate the creation of combine committees and the overall building of unity amongst workers in the main enterprises.

Were the government and the union leaders vigorously to pursue

the Bullock proposals, then, this would undoubtedly provoke the capitalists into engineering the government's downfall.

Such an outcome is unlikely, however. The leading right wing Ministers have been at pains to explain that they are opposed to a shot-gun wedding. They seek the consent of both prospective partners for their legislation!

TRADE UNION INDEPENDENCE CRUCIAL

The Bullock Report will in all probability be dropped. It may re-emerge in a severely doctored form. But it would be a foolish mistake for the British labour movement to campaign for its implementation purely on the grounds that this would be a defeat for big business or that some of its features appear attractive. Poison blended into a tasty bowl of punch remains poison.

The British labour movement should reject the Bullock Report and any other similar ideas for worker-directors that may be concocted. Instead the labour movement should use and further develop all the power of which capitalists are so afraid. Why should we wait for the kind permission of the capitalists before setting out on the vital work of ensuring that effective joint shop stewards committees operate in every combine!

The important gains of the working class have only ever been achieved by independent organisation and struggle.

But both the wider political struggle for socialism and even the more immediate economic struggles are both severely damaged so long as the independence of the trade unions is compromised. We should build immediately on the elements of control that already exist in industry: For shop stewards' committees to cover all workers in all factories and combines! For hiring and firing to be in the hands of the shop stewards! No business secrets: open all the books to trade union inspection!

The capitalists, while opposing Bullock are nevertheless vigorously pursuing more muted patterns of collaboration which avoid worker-directors. And they continually attempt to drag the union leaders into the realm of government. This is so throughout the capitalist world. In this they have had more than a fair measure of achievement. They

have secured adherence for considerable periods of numerous incomes policies. In Britain they have enticed the union leaders into regular "planning" discussions alongside leading businessmen and Cabinet Ministers. Amidst some of the most bitter industrial conflicts, including the 1973/74 miners strike, these "civilised" meetings—the National Economic Development Corporation continued.

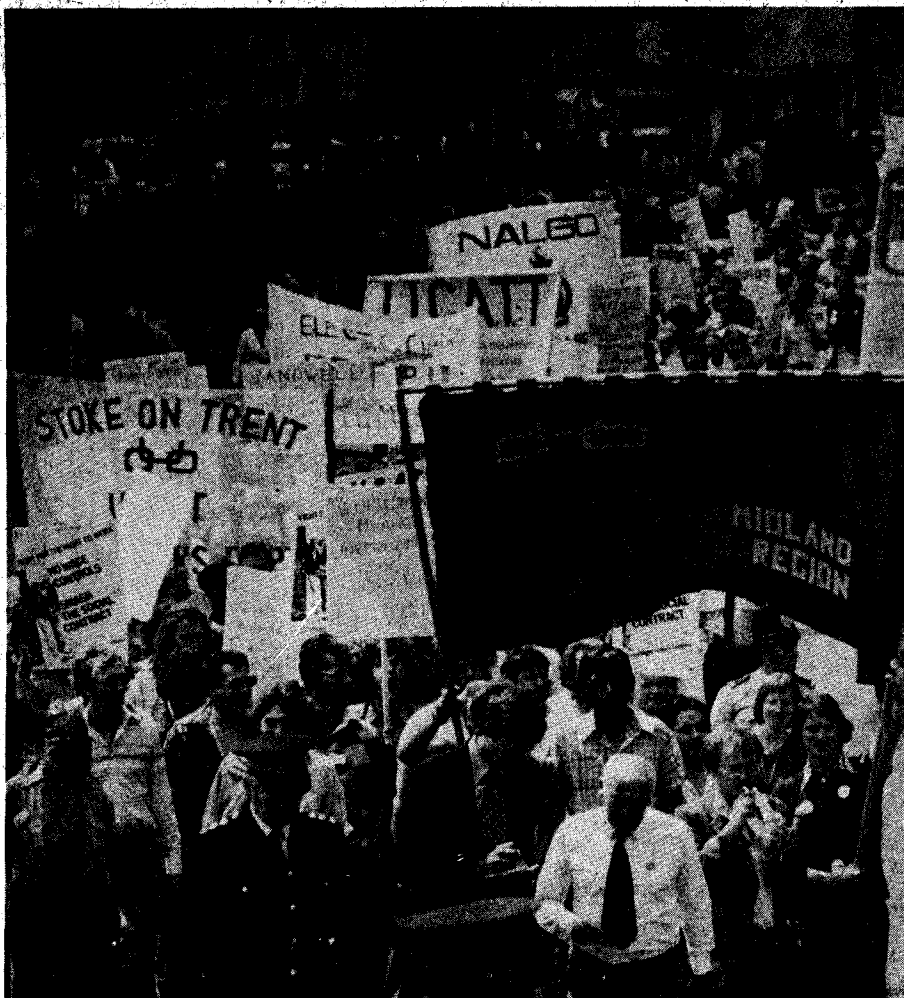
In Sweden, the unions and employers associations meet every one or two years to work out the boundaries of wage negotiations for the different industries. In Western Germany, the Social Democratic government proudly boasts of its ability to control the unions. The slogan used by the Social Democrats in the last election was "vote for peace". In Germany the centre of the industrial peace-making activities are the "concerted action" meetings where the union leaders sit down with the government and the representatives of the capitalists three or four times a year for discussions on the progress of German capitalism.

Because the union leaders have no confidence in the socialist alternative they are driven to imposing capitalist measures on their members and lending their authority to the capitalist state. But they are caught in a contradictory situation. Pulled into the net of government at one moment, the next moment they are forced to stand apart. They reconcile themselves to the state one day and the next they have to articulate the renewed anger and frustrations of their members. And each time they are forced to express opposition to the state they fan the flames of militancy below.

The impass of capitalism will find its reflection over and again in change and turmoil that will take place in the unions.

Already indicating a new round of struggle on a European scale, different union leaders have taken steps to dislodge themselves from their involvement with the state. And in other cases in spite of this involvement pitched battles have begun to open out. In Italy, Holland, Denmark, France and Belgium ferocious struggles have recently occurred. In Western Germany Heinz Vetter has been driven to say that "The honeymoon is over....our ability to compromise is exhausted. It is no longer possible."

These leaders will be driven in all directions in the period of storm and stress that we are entering. Trotsky



Demonstration of trade union strength

remarked in 1921: "were the machinery of the English trade unions to develop today half the amount of energy in the interests of socialism it has been expending in the interests of capitalism, the English proletariat could conquer power with a minimum of sacrifice and could start a systematic reconstruction of society." Those sentiments could now be applied justly to the trade union leaders all over the capitalist world.

The ability of these leaders to disorientate and demoralise their members is still potent. It will only be overcome ultimately when the union leadership is armed with the programme of Marxism. No matter how militant the industrial leaders may be, without the compass of the Marxist method they will inevitably drift under the alien sway of the capitalists.

Wishing away the crisis of capitalism will not get rid of it, however much the trade union leaders may hope that this crisis, and their assistance, is temporary they will be proved disastrously wrong.

Without the trade union leadership adopting the method of Marxism, severe and catastrophic setbacks and defeats could beset the

trade union movement. The trade unions must be won for the socialist transformation of society. This is not just a good idea; it is the only positive alternative.

It is imperative, therefore, that strong Marxist tendencies are developed in the trade unions around a viable programme which links the day-to-day needs of the working class with the overall historical task of securing the end of the rule of capital.

In Britain today such a programme should include:

- ★ **An end to wage restraint!**
- ★ **For a minimum wage of £60 a week for all workers!**
- ★ **Restore the lost living standards!**
- ★ **An end to mass unemployment!**
- ★ **For a programme of useful public works with payment to those working at the average industrial wage!**
- ★ **Work or full pay!**
- ★ **For a 35-hour week with no loss in pay!**
- ★ **No redundancies!**
- ★ **Share out the work with no loss of pay!**
- ★ **Nationalisation of all firms**

threatening redundancies or unable to pay a living wage!

- ★ **Compensation only on the basis of proven need!**
- ★ **Workers control and management of nationalised industries!**
- ★ **Nationalise the 200 major monopolies!**
- ★ **For a socialist plan of production!**

Armed with such a programme and with the necessary energy and audacity to do justice to that programme, the Marxist tendency will become increasingly a pole of attraction to the working class.

The working class will not lightly move away from one set of leaders and ideas to another. Marxists must show their consistency as class fighters and demonstrate the soundness of their ideas, and the strategy and tactics which flow from those ideas.

Only then will the majority of the workers in the trade unions be convinced of the need to turn to a Marxist leadership and to turn with that leadership to the final overthrow of the political and economic order of capital.

Then, having played their part in the destruction of capitalism, the trade unions will become the bedrock of the new social order. They will act as the central pillars of the meaningful economic planning and organisation which a workers' state will inaugurate at company, industry and, above all, national level.

SOWETO AND THE FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICA

The following article was written almost a year ago following the earth-shattering uprising of the youth of Soweto in which it is now known at least 600 people were killed. But the events of the last year, especially those connected with the first anniversary of the rising, have completely confirmed the article's basic analysis.

Since the Carter administration took over, US imperialism has begun to exert enormous diplomatic pressure on the South African government to relax their Apartheid policies, even threatening the possible use of economic sanctions. They are mortally afraid of the cataclysmic explosions that are being prepared by the Apartheid regime, with the possibility of an "Angolan" development throughout Southern Africa. But despite promises of change and a few cosmetic reforms, there has been no real improvement in the position of the African and Coloured population.

"The sense of anger, resentment and humiliation among the (Soweto) township's residents, which erupted after June 16th last year, has not been assuaged," wrote Nicholas Ashford in 'The Times' (17th June, 1977): "If anything, these feelings have been hardened and become deeply felt...." For while the Nationalist government of Vorster has refused to concede even the possibility of majority rule, the events of the last year have enormously raised the political consciousness of the black population of the towns, especially the black youth. They have begun to be made aware of the tremendous power that a united black working class could wield.

As a result of the student's action last year, the government was obliged to reverse its policy of enforcing compulsory Afrikaans teaching in the schools. This retreat, however, was accompanied by intensified repression against the student leaders and activists. The spokesmen of Apartheid have repeatedly claimed that the Soweto Students

Representative Council (SSRC) is nothing more than a gang of "agitators" and "tsotsis" (hooligans) with no support among the majority of black workers. But the events of the last two or three months clearly show that the students have growing sympathy and support.

To mark the anniversary of the rising, the SSRC called a two-day strike in all the high schools for 16th and 17th June. They also appealed to the township's quarter of a million employed workers to stay away from work. On June 10th, police arrested Sechaba Montsitsi and 25 other leaders of the SSRC. On June 15th, the para-military police force surrounded the township with armed vehicles and men. Yet despite this huge display of force, the high-school strike was completely successful, and at least half the township's employed workers stayed at home on the first day, with about a fifth staying out on the second day as well.

The SSRC called for a peaceful protest and commemoration rallies: they urged the youth not to respond to police provocation. The police had evidently been ordered to avoid the indiscriminate shooting of last year: but "by late afternoon the police appeared to become more aggressive and were using tear gas almost indiscriminately. They threw canisters into the Regina Mundi Roman Catholic Church, where the largest of the memorial services was being held, just as the congregation was leaving. They could also be seen firing tear gas from civilian cars into houses nearby...." (*The Times*, 17th June.)

The number of deaths and casualties in Soweto this June is not yet known. In the black townships of Kabah and Kwamobunhle outside Uitenhage near Port Elizabeth there were even more violent clashes when the police attacked peaceful demonstrators. At least six were killed and there were over 300 arrests. Many Africans were subsequently sentenced to public floggings.

An even greater testimony to the militancy and heroism of the black youth were the demonstrations on June 23rd demanding the release of those arrested as a result of the anniversary rallies. Thousands took part, and at least 500 African youth and students marched on the police headquarters in Johannesburg. These fearless demonstrators were attacked by police armed with batons and shotguns, and at least 146 young people were arrested. "Despite frequent attempts by the police to destroy the organisation (the SSRC)," wrote *The Times* correspondent, "it is clear from today's demonstration that it remains as influential as ever among the youth of Soweto." (24th June, 1977).

Far from being isolated from the

older generation of workers, the youth of Soweto and other African townships increasingly express the anger of the already super-exploited workers at the worsening economic situation. South Africa's worst economic recession for 30 years inevitably hits the oppressed black working class hardest. South Africa has not been able to escape the effects of the world recession. The price of gold has continued to fall, while the prices of imports, particularly oil, have risen considerably. Inflation has speeded up, and unemployment risen sharply. Currently over 30% of the black urban population is unemployed.

In April, the government tried to implement its decision to raise rents in Soweto by between 40% and 70%. A campaign initiated by the SSRC forced the government to "reconsider" the rises. The unusual restraint of the police in relation to the students' agitation on this issue indicates the government's extreme fear of an even greater upheaval arising from the desperate economic position of black families in the township.

Apart from the proposed rent increases, train fares to Johannesburg (to which most of the township commutes for work) had been put up, and basic food prices increased. The Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce estimated that by May 1st the minimum monthly cost of maintaining a household of five had risen to R151.92 (£101.28). With further food price increases and sales tax increases resulting from the Budget, they estimated it would be R157 (£104.66) by the end of May, a 14.5% increase in six months, more than twice the average inflation in South Africa. The *'Financial Times'* (28th April, 1977) gave the example of a Soweto woman with an unemployed husband. She paid R11 (£7.50) a month rent (which would have been R16 (£10.60) with the increase). Yet her monthly income was only R12 (£8) a month! "Before long," she commented, "people will say they are not going to pay rent."

The government's March Budget was strongly "deflationary"—that is, cut workers' living standards—on the grounds of the weakness of the South African economy. Yet the same Budget increased arms expenditure by 21% to Rand 1,654 million (£910 million). This followed a doubling of arms expenditure in last year's Budget! Nothing could be a greater testimony of the regime's fear of political explosions. However much Vorster and company talk

about the "Russian menace", there can be no doubt that the state's armed might is overwhelmingly intended to defend the Apartheid regime against the African masses.

Commenting on the government's claim that the adult workers of the townships are not behind the youth, the *'Financial Times'* recently commented: "There is no sign of their attempting to restrain their children." The *'New York Times'* correspondent made a similar comment on June 14th:

"Some, led by practitioners of the old style politics of amelioration, strongly oppose confrontation tactics, convinced that they bring bloodshed without tangible improvements. Others, taking their lead from the students, insist that only by challenging the government can blacks hope to gain freedom."

"Politically, the militants have gained the upper hand."

One indication of this, early in June, was the resignation of the Soweto Urban Bantu Council (UBC) a largely powerless body set up by the government but staffed by blacks. Under pressure from the SSRC, who denounced them as stooges and evidently reflected widespread feeling on this, all 33 members of the UBC resigned. The *'Washington Post'* (15th June) commented:

"The implications of this spreading discontent among the blacks of all ages brings the possibility of widescale trouble ever closer...."

"Dissidence among Soweto's adults could lead to what the government fears most: a labour boycott that would cripple this country's troubled economy."

It is precisely the fact that the movement of the students and youth in the African townships is preparing the way for the mobilisation of the black working class of South Africa, potentially the most powerful force on the whole continent, that gives events of the last year their enormous significance.

Editor

Soweto and the future of South Africa

**By David
Freemantle**

BEFORE SOWETO

Between June 16th and August 30th, 1976, police in South Africa fired 16,000 rounds of rifle, revolver, pistol, machine carbine and shotgun ammunition in their attempts to suppress demonstrations, riots and strikes by black students and workers. Since then they have fired a great many more. They have filled the streets with teargas; cleared them with baton charges, alsatian dogs and birdshot; they have banned gatherings, silenced individuals, surrounded townships, set up road-blocks, stopped trains, conducted mass house-to-house searches, and organised armed gangs of strike-breakers and vigilantes. They have killed more than 600, seriously wounded thousands, arrested and imprisoned thousands more.

even more savage police violence merely serves to harden their will. As the wave falls back, the tide moves forward, that is the dialectic of the present period, in which profound changes are taking place deep within the working class and in every aspect of the class struggle in Southern Africa.

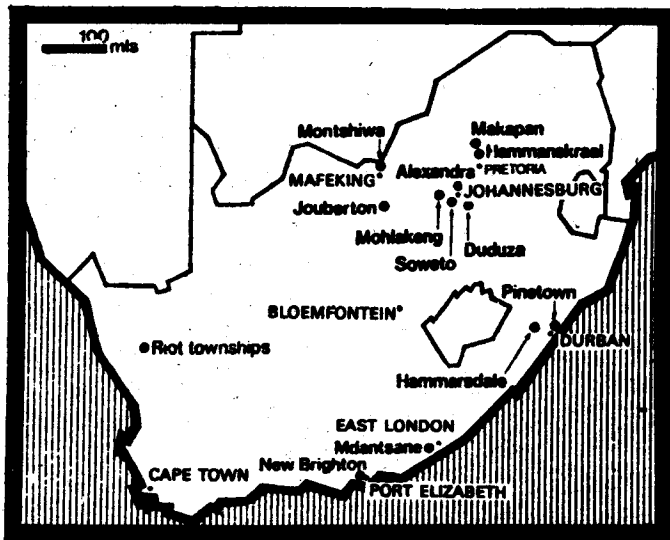
The purpose of this article is to review the broad course of the recent events and the context in which they developed. It is not possible here to deal historically with the emergence of the present-day pattern of class and race relations in South Africa; a basic grasp of South Africa's history and modern social political structure will have to be assumed.

Nor is there space to examine more than one side of what has taken

After the defeats inflicted on the African working class in the early 1960's, the blackest repression had set in. Not only were the political organisations of the Africans, Coloureds and Asians effectively suppressed and their leaders banned or imprisoned, but the government introduced measure after repressive measure, further tightening its security network, strengthening its military and police power, censoring publications, intensifying segregation, increasing its control of African labour and stepping up its efforts to root out all vestiges of organised popular opposition.

During the ensuing decade the workers seemed generally docile. The economy advanced in steady strides. Between 1960 and 1970, the gross domestic product increased in real terms (based on 1963 prices), from R5,551 million to R9,797 million. During the decade an average growth rate of 5.85% was achieved. During only three of those years did the increase fall below 5%; in 1963 it was over 8%, in 1967 and 1969 over 7%. Between 1965 and 1970 foreign capital poured into South Africa at a high rate—more than R500 million in 1970 alone.

Generally this was a period on which the bourgeoisie has cause to look back with confidence and satisfaction. Yet beneath the surface, physical changes were proceeding; all the more relentlessly in fact, the more the economy expanded.



Yet, despite this brutality, despite the use of the courts to inflict mass whippings on demonstrators (one who was so treated was eight years old), despite the use of every form of intimidation and repression they could muster, the South African ruling class has signally failed to inflict defeat upon the working people.

The present wave of struggle is by all accounts receding—but it has not been beaten back. It is possible to say with certainty that, whereas the violence employed by the police state at Sharpeville and on other occasions in the early 'sixties tended to demoralise the masses, the current

place—the movement into open struggle, of the black students and workers. We hope, in subsequent articles, to discuss:

(a) The ruling class; the divisions within it, and the alternatives open to it in the next period.

(b) The position of the white workers, upon whose support the **apartheid** system, and ultimately capitalism in South Africa, depends for its survival.

Before looking at the development of the recent phase of struggle in more detail, it is necessary to consider briefly the background against which it arose.

MORE BLACK THAN WHITE

Between 1960 and 1970, while the white population grew from 3.08 to 3.77 million, the African population grew from 10.93 to 15.28 million (the total population of all the black groups increasing from 12.9 to 19.97

million over the same period). By 1974 there were an estimated 4.16 million white South Africans and 17.71 million Africans (a total of 20.73 million blacks). Thus, between 1960 and 1974, the ratio of black to white in South Africa had increased from approximately 4:1 to approximately 5:1. This trend will accelerate in future years.

These increases in population have been particularly marked in relation to the urban areas and, therefore, as far as blacks are concerned, in relation to the growth of the **proletariat**. In the whole of South Africa, whereas the total population increase between 1946 and 1970 was 87.5%, the **urban** population increased by 146.6%. Between 1960 and 1970, total employment in manufacturing rose from 644,000 to 1,024,000. A conservative projection of the increase of the African population of the industrial city of Port Elizabeth, for example, is that it will grow from 194,000 in 1972 to 316,000 in 1980.

Underlying these figures is the rapid increase in the numerical predominance of black over white in South Africa, particularly in the form of the black urban proletariat i.e., in precisely the form which most seriously threatens the stability of the **apartheid** system and the power of the white ruling class. In South Africa as elsewhere, in this as in every respect, capitalism produces the very means for its own demise.

RESERVOIRS OF CHEAP LABOUR

As the flow of African workers to the cities increased, so the measures employed by the regime for their control were intensified. The African reserves, always a reservoir of cheap labour power for capitalist mining and industry, were by this time hopelessly overcrowded; yet by the ruthless enforcement of the pass laws, the government crowded them still further as it drove unwanted Africans from the urban areas to the destitution of these rural concentration camps. In 1968, 1969, and 1970 alone, more than 1,947,000 prosecution under the pass laws took place. Many of those convicted were "endorsed out" (deported) to the reserves, foremost among them being the wives and children, those "superfluous appendages", to quote one high official, of workers forced to pass their working lives as "bachelors" in the industrial towns.

Wage increases during this period were minimal. (Today African workers for the most part still earn wages below or barely equal to the "poverty datum line", the index of bare survival). Even in the urban areas malnutrition continued at an alarming rate. (This persists today: in a recent study at a Johannesburg hospital for blacks, 58% of patients under 10 years old were found to be significantly malnourished, while of children up to the age of two, 80% suffered from malnutrition.

Such were the benefits derived by the working masses in South Africa from the long capitalist boom!

ECONOMIC CRISES

Although the relationship between the economic cycle and mass political activity on the part of the working class is, in the conditions of South Africa, a particularly involved one, the link is illustrated in the fact that the last great popular stirrings—those commencing in the late 'fifties and culminating in the organised pass-burning, the widespread political strikes and the Sharpville and Langa shootings—accompanied a recessionary phase, lasting from 1958 to 1961, during which the rate of growth averaged only 3.1% **per annum**.

Now, once again, economic recession has provided the setting for revolutionary events.

By 1970 the prolonged period of rapid economic growth had come to an end. Between 1969 and 1972 there was a falling-off in trade. In 1970, 1971 and 1972 the annual growth rate **lowered** relatively to an average of 4%. Although the economy picked-up again in the last quarter of 1972, the up-swing continuing through 1973, this was quickly overtaken by the world recession and a down-swing which in South Africa, has not yet "bottomed out".

AFRICAN UNEMPLOYMENT

Meanwhile, unemployment among Africans has been growing apace. In a study reported recently by the Johannesburg 'Financial Mail' (16th July, 1976), it is estimated that, while unemployment among non-Africans totalled only about 13,000 in April 1976, African unemployment has been **rising** by 22,000 **per month**. At that rate, argued the researcher, it would reach

2 million (or 20% economically active Africans) by the end of this year. (No official figures of African unemployed are kept.)

South Africa stand in the second rank of the industrialised countries. In 1970 it accounted for 61% of the total railway freight of the entire continent of Africa; for 47% of the telephones in use; for 44% of the motor vehicles. Yet even here, and even during periods of economic **up-swing**, the capitalist economy has proved barely capable of achieving growth adequate to accommodate the natural increase in the population. In a period of **down-swing** it proves capable only of social disaster.

A NEW PERIOD OF STRUGGLE

It was against such a background, after the long lull of the middle and late 1960's, that the class struggle began to assert itself once again in unmistakable terms.

THE DURBAN STRIKES

In Durban, over short periods during January, February and March 1973, 160,000 African and Indian workers in 146 firms went on strike, in a display of remarkable political and tactical maturity. By skilful organisation, hidden even from the ubiquitous police spies these **non-unionised** workers avoided confrontation with the state apparatus, refused to expose their leaders or appoint spokesmen, and yet wrung significant concessions from their startled bosses.

Although this wave itself receded, the level of general consciousness, experience and morale has been raised, and now communicated itself throughout the country. In 1973, 1974 and 1975 major strikes by African workers were reported also in other industrial centres. In September 1973 and again in April 1974, police shot a number of African mineworkers dead at the Western Deep Levels gold mine, at Carltonville.

African trade unions, in Durban and other centres, made rapid progress and although action was soon taken against leaders, the organisations themselves were not (and have not been) suppressed. For a time the regime appeared to be reflecting, making its preparations carefully, and awaiting its moment.

MOZAMBIQUE AND ANGOLA

The capitulation of Portuguese colonialism to the anti-capitalist guerilla forces of Frelimo in Mozambique in 1974 undoubtedly had a tremendous effect in advancing black working class morale in South Africa, and in providing for the first time in more than a decade a vision of the future in which victory over the ruling class seemed possible. These workers followed the civil war in Angola in late 1975 with the keenest of interest, having little difficulty (despite the smothering bourgeois press and radio propaganda in favour of UNITA and the FNLA) in appreciating quietly that the MPLA was the progressive force among the three. Its victory had a profoundly bracing effect, reinforced as it was by the repulse of the South African invasion of Angola.

Throughout this period, hidden from the surface view, the regeneration of political vitality among the workers found echo among the veterans of battles past. The underground networks, virtually dormant during the long political winter, began quietly to revive. Arrests under the security laws provided some public hint of the extent of new recruitment.

THE REACTION PREPARES

Under cover of the Angolan war, the regime was systematically preparing its counter stroke. Into the unending war propaganda against Soviet and Cuban "imperialism" in Angola, the strategists of South African capitalism began to knit dire warnings of "communist" subversion" at home. Two principal enemies were identified: the organisations, chiefly of black students, pupils and older black middle-class elements, who were espousing "black power" ideology; and secondly, the rising African labour movement which "communists" were now said to be organising for their own political ends.

Thus the regime prepared simultaneously to deal, on the one hand, with the radical wing of the black middle class (which was sustaining the most uncompromising attack on the Bantustans and the other puppet institutions that apartheid has devised as a sop to the black elite and



Defiant Soweto children give black power salutes around burnt-out delivery van

and a means of dividing the oppressed); and, on the other hand, with the emerging forces of the proletarian vanguard.

New security legislation was introduced, empowering the government, *inter alia*, to imprison persons suspected of endangering state security for an indefinite term without recourse to the courts, and providing a permanent inquisition of politicians to summon, interrogate and report on the activities of individuals and organisations. The number of political arrests, reports of torture, deaths in detention, and ultimately political trials all increased. At first the activities of the security police seemed aimed particularly at the black nationalist organisations. Then the scale of interrogations and intimidations directed at the African workers' movement rose sharply. Early in 1976 and then again in May and early June, arrests of some leading African trade unionists were made. It was clear that the fist of the reaction had gathered for a major blow.

SOWETO ERUPTS

It was under these circumstances that the class struggle broke into the streets in the form of the June 16th demonstrations by 30,000 black school-going youths. This outbreak itself was preceded by some five weeks of mounting conflict between pupils at a number of African schools and the government educa-

tional authorities and police. As was soon to be explained in the sanctimonious liberal press, these preliminary clashes made the greater ones of June 16th etc., "predictable".

And so they did. But what was not so feadily foreseeable (nor was it in fact foreseen) was that a movement of pupils against the imposition of Afrikaans-medium instruction in the classroom—essentially a subsidiary aspect of their oppression—would become the focus for the greatest general upsurge in the proletarian struggle in more than twelve years.

Broadly two reasons account for this development. The first and most important is to be found in the processes at work within the ranks of the proletariat itself—processes which, under conditions of worsening exploitation, racial oppression and totalitarian restrictions, impel ever more sharply towards open struggle against the ruling class. Every partial demand, every particular issue, once the masses have begun to move, immediately threatens to pass over into the most general struggle against the entire condition of working class life.

In these circumstances, obviously, the ruling class faces a dilemma and any miscalculated state reaction to a movement of the working people tends at once to raise the tempo of the struggle and broaden it to an all-embracing form. In Soweto's June events the conduct of the state, expressed chiefly in the cold-blooded massacre of school-children, provides the second basic reason for the rapid development of the mass

struggle beyond the initial, limited demands.

A WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

From the beginning to end the new wave of struggle has been carried forward by the working class—not at every point by **workers**, but at every point by proletarian class forces. Because Soweto's June events began as a students' protest on the language issue, because it brought to the fore narrow nationalistic slogans such as "The Black Nation is not the place for impurities—Afrikaans stinks!", many on the "left" (particularly those whose conceptions approximate to "Marxism", but have no living link with the real movement of the classes) assessed this as a middle class phenomenon.

This view was, of course, mistaken—not merely because it was shortly **proved** mistaken by the unprecedented political strike action of more than 500,000 African and Coloured workers themselves, but because, right from the outset, it reflected a mistaken conception of the revolutionary process.

Regrettably, the class struggle does not proceed according to prescription, either in South Africa or anywhere else. Enormous combinations of forces, the criss-crossing of unruly and often contradictory currents, are required to bring events to that point where the masses take to the streets to declare or attempt to enforce their will. Nor do they enter the streets as one mass, all at one time, expressing one clear will.

Only by looking beneath the surface of events, as they have unfolded in South Africa during these past tumultuous months, can we understand the real shifts that have occurred in the relation of class forces and the enormous advance in proletarian consciousness that has taken place.

HOW THE CLASSES POLARISED

That the black students of Soweto, Alexandra and elsewhere confronted the police in those early June days with strong petit-bourgeois influences in their consciousness is indisputable. But they were and are the children of the working class, of the most oppressed, humiliated and

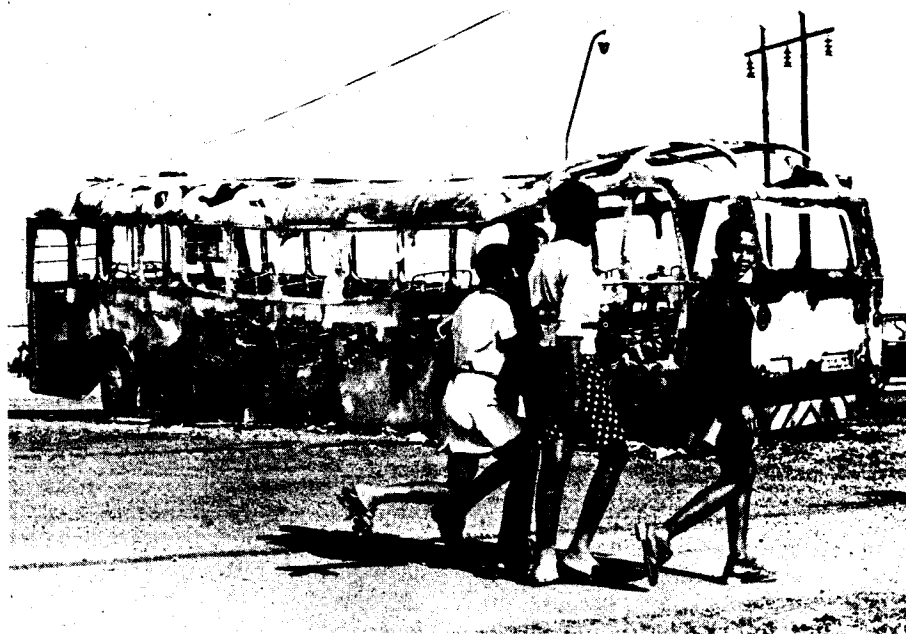
exploited section of the working class, perhaps anywhere in the world.

The black proletariat in South Africa is subject simultaneously to the most severe racial oppression and class exploitation. **Apartheid**, rising as it has on the foundations of **class rule**, is a system of racist laws and institutions designed essentially to hold the overwhelming mass of the South African proletariat in conditions of semi-slavery.

For African workers in particular, economic exploitation goes hand in glove with racial oppression. In the white oppressor, employing against them all the vicious powers of the **apartheid** state, they can see more and more clearly the capitalist exploiter. The fact that racial

it moved ~~at~~ the more surely along the road of class struggle, towards class confrontation. This reflected, not only the objective forces at work, but the rapidly developing experience and political awareness of the black students and workers as well.

The first shocks of the June 16th massacres set the future course of all the major participants. As we have said, however, we have space to examine here only one side of what has been taking place. The first reaction of the black classes was a show of solidarity, with even the right wing of the African petit-bourgeoisie declaring itself at one with the people by denouncing police brutality and calling for urgent reforms. But this "unity" was exclusively on the surface. Beneath



Burnt-out bus in Voslooros township outside Johannesburg, June 1976

antagonisms and class contradictions so closely coincide results in a curious dialectic which was vividly revealed in the past months. In periods of relative lull in the class struggle, the overlay of racial distinctions tends to obscure the class divisions—yet, during periods of tumult, that same racial overlay tends to throw the class divisions into the sharpest relief.

This was clearly to be seen in the initial closing of ranks on the part of the ruling class; the polarisation of the upper and lower strata of the black petit-bourgeoisie; the movement of the Coloured workers; and the development of the whole course of the struggle towards a confrontation with capitalist rule.

Although, in the early days especially, the mass struggle swept forward under the banners of black nationalism, in every step that it took

society was sorting itself out decisively on class lines.

The students, instead of shrinking back from the sacrifice of their own lives, returned on the following days to redouble their struggle. Seven-year-olds marched with teenagers, while the teenagers turned ever more insistently towards the **adult workers** for support. The first police gunfire cutting its way through the ranks of school children, had brought down also the initial slogans and partial demands. To the front came new demands, new slogans; before long they read: "For Freedom we will lay down our lives."

Soweto was no longer merely the scene of a dispute over school curricula; it was rapidly becoming a nation-wide focus of revolutionary mass struggle.

This fact alone, coming upon them with such startling alacrity, caused the upper layers of the

African middle class to spring sharply to the right. This move was at first shrouded in verbiage, but no mere words could conceal it for long. The more the masses poured into the streets, the more the African traders, puppet politicians, chiefs, etc., slid over to the side of repression, their fear of their "own people" outweighing at every decisive moment their dislike of the racial oppressor.

At the same time the left wing of the African middle class, comprising in the main its lower ranks, rallied all the more strongly to the side of the proletariat. Thus, far from the revolutionary upsurge bringing "the black people" together "as one", it has (as Marxism has always predicted) in fact polarised them fundamentally along class lines.

To see this more clearly, we must look briefly at the make-up of the African middle class and its positions in the class struggle as a whole. (These observations apply, of course, with appropriate modification, to the other black groups as well.)

BEHAVIOUR OF THE AFRICAN MIDDLE CLASS

The African petit-bourgeoisie exhibits all the classic symptoms of an intermediate class trapped in the historic clash between a rising proletariat and an entrenched capitalist ruling class. In the peculiarities of South Africa's development, in which the naked class relations of capitalism have become overlaid with racial and language divisions, the movement of the African petit-bourgeoisie reflects also its special condition as a class, or section of a class, suffering the oppression of **apartheid**.

Apartheid has the African middle class in a stranglehold, tightly restricting its economic and political development and subjecting it by and large to intense racial discrimination and humiliation. Its numerical weight is small—the South African Official Yearbook for 1974 put it at a mere 60,000 families. These are arranged in various strata, the lower predominating overwhelmingly, while the tiny handfuls in the upper strata, having been seized upon by the regime as representative of "their" people, in fact represent only themselves.

As with the petit-bourgeoisie everywhere, caught between the hammer and the anvil of the great classes, the African middle class in South Africa is subject to acutely contradictory pressures and tends to move, especially in times of crisis, in contradictory directions. The upper section, that tied by property or privilege to the ruling system, moves into ever more open alliance with the ruling class; the lower moves in varying degrees towards the only force capable of securing its liberation—the proletariat.

The reactionary section of the African petit-bourgeoisie in South Africa greedily accepts the concessions handed to it within the framework of **apartheid**. Among this section one finds the Bantustan politicians, Urban Bantu Councillors, the emergent business and trading elite, the chiefs and those who (ordinarily by hereditary tribal connections) have achieved significant land-holding in the reserves. One also finds the likes of those who man the urban **Makgotla** system, administering savage floggings, supposedly according to tribal custom, to youthful miscreants.

All these groups, in varying degrees, owe their creation—or at least their survival—to the institutions, special privileges, licences, etc., emanating directly from the **apartheid** system. All of them naturally enjoy the blessing of the government. In fact, for example, Kruger (the Minister of Justice and Police) is now proposing to afford legal recognition to the Matgotla groups so as to involve them formally in the restoration of "law and order to the townships".

Snippets appearing in the South African press have given a clear enough indication of the behaviour of the reactionary section of the African middle class during the recent revolutionary events. It has been reported that, at a meeting on August 8th at the home of T J Makhaya, Chairman of the Soweto Urban Bantu Council, it was decided that children who stopped any workers from going to work should be killed.

There is strong suspicion, stated in the press, that African petit-bourgeois elements, associated with the Urban Bantu Councils, and linked to Chief Buthelezi's Zulu "Inkatha" party, assisted the police in inflaming backward migrant workers in the Soweto barracks to go on a bloody rampage against students and strikers. (The influence of Inkatha is thought to account also for the

relative quietness of the Durban workers during the whole recent wave of unrest.)

Not surprisingly, this reactionary section of the African middle class received short shrift from the aroused working class. Urban Bantu Council members who met with government officials during the unrest refused to have their names published, for fear of retribution from below. Even Buthelezi, who during the years of calm had so skilfully managed to play the role of secret radical, artfully manipulating the Bantustan institutions in the cause of black advancement, now found it impossible to distinguish himself from the other discredited "homeland leaders"; all of a sudden he became extremely reluctant to enter his old stamping ground, Soweto, for fear of assassination.

On 13th August the Johannesburg "Star" reported that more than 200 companies had been asked by the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce (i.e. the organisation of African businessmen) to help raise R500,000 for the traders who suffered financial loss in the township riots. Next to Bantu Administration offices and beer halls (from which a major portion of revenue for government spending on Bantu administration is derived), these traders proved the prime targets for arson and looting.

Such has been the ferment that even the children of the reactionary section of the African middle class are turning against their parents. Bophuthatswana's Chief Minister, Lucas Magope, was doubtless distressed to find his 20 year-old son, Shimi, charged with sabotage—for having joined with others in burning down papa's Bantustan Legislative Assembly building in Montshiwa!

Far more significant among the tiny African middle class, however, are the elements who are drawn by the growing power of the black proletariat towards its side. Here one finds many of the teachers, and medical and social workers, as well as an assortment of radical individuals from many walks of life. There are, of course, various shades to their positions, into which we cannot enter here. An important section currently espouses a militant black power line, the influence of which, particularly in the early stages of the recent struggle was clearly apparent.

It is necessary to assess the nature of that influence and the extent to which black nationalism has secured a hold over the consciousness of the working class.

"BLACK POWER" AND THE WORKING CLASS

Because of the intense "national" or racial oppression suffered by the African working class in South Africa, it is inevitable that the slogans, etc., of black nationalism should find a certain echo among its ranks.

But it is important that we do not overstate the extent of the influence of black nationalism on the African proletariat, and that we distinguish clearly the "nationalism" of the workers from that of the radical petit-bourgeoisie.

From the standpoint of the African proletariat, their class exploitation is the primary fact of life. The very institutions of **apartheid** (foremost among them the hated pass laws) press upon the African workers essentially as **class measures**, designed to maintain the slave-conditions of their labour.

In years past, the mass mobilisation of the African working class in struggle against the **apartheid** regime has been achieved on the basis precisely of working class slogans and working class demands. Hence, for example, the heavy reliance on anti-pass law campaigns and wage demands ("pound a day" etc.) in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties. The African workers have not, in general, responded to the empty phrases of "pure" nationalism—nor have they done so in recent months. Their launching of political strike action in the aftermath of Soweto (after long weeks of slow, thoughtful stoking-up) does not signify any deep excitement among them over "black power" slogans. It signifies rather their half-conscious but absolutely decisive movement as a class, in the course of a near-revolutionary social crisis, into the role of the revolutionary force in society—the only force capable of achieving the national and the social liberation of the black masses.

Inevitably, a certain amount of racial feeling, a certain response to nationalist fervour, is current within the ranks of the black proletariat. But it is necessary to say of these workers what Trotsky wrote in another context: their nationalism is only the outer shell of an immature class consciousness.

On the whole, the racial feelings are stronger the less the worker's experience of factory life, i.e., the



Police fire on black pupils

less the worker has come face to face with the actual conditions of exploitation; has encountered state repression as an inseparable part of capitalist production; has experienced the connection between the economic life of society and its political forms. It is largely for this reason that (among the working class in South Africa) "black power" comes most readily to the lips of students—this and the fact that in the educational institutions radical petit-bourgeois influences are most directly encountered.

But when "black power" evokes response among workers it does so only in that **IN PART it reflects A PART OF the experience OF THE BLACK WORKERS THEMSELVES**. It is not taken in holus bolus. When workers respond to a nationalist slogan they do so as workers, not as petit-bourgeois nationalists. The worker interprets the slogan, gives it meaning, according to his proletarian perception of life. The less developed that perception the more adequate the slogan will seem. The more advanced and experienced the worker, the more clearly he perceives the makeshift character of "black power" as a weapon of the working class struggle—and the more insistently he demands an organisation, a programme, a leadership that goes beyond it.

For the radical African petit-bourgeois, on the other hand, black nationalism represents the finished articulation of his own striving for liberation from oppression—but to him, of course, as with "oppression", so too liberation ("freedom") means something other than it means to the working class. The oppressed petit-bourgeois conceives his liberation within the property

relations of capitalism; for the liberation of the worker the overthrow of those relations is indispensable, the central task.

"Black power" has no policy on the burning questions of the South African revolution: the control of the land, mines and factories; the organisation of production and distribution; the class character of the revolutionary state. For the working class, black power can serve as no more than a vehicle for the expression of rage and frustration. It does not show the way forward.

Despite its apparent gains in recent months, black power in the South African context will remain a force only as long as the black proletariat lack an independent leadership with a Marxist programme which proclaims clearly: "Our racial liberation, Yes!—fully and unconditionally—but our social liberation also!"

The "ideology" of black power does not arise within the working class itself, distilled out of the life-experience of black workers under capitalism. Black nationalism is, without a shadow of doubt, petit-bourgeois—no matter how "revolutionary"—the form of its expression.

As we have said, the numerical weight of the black middle class in South Africa is small—but its influence in the articulation of political attitudes emanating from the black communities is disproportionately heavy. This is not at all surprising in conditions where, for example, the African working class is subject to such intense deprivation and exploitation that few among its numbers are fully literate. Almost 70% of African children leave by Standard Two (i.e. the fourth year of schooling), while only 5% reach

Standard Six (the first year of post primary-school education). One finds among the African workers an understandable but unfortunate admiration for the educated elite and a confidence in them that only experience, gained at great cost in the white heat of revolutionary events, will finally dissolve.

Failing the development of a Marxist leadership and programme on the part of the proletariat, the black workers could well stagger forward behind the banners of black nationalism, a force capable of bringing society only to an impasse. Black racialism, under such conditions, could secure for itself a deeper hold. If so, the racial divisions within the South African working class will be reinforced and the stage set for a bloody denouement on a dreadful scale.

But the most fertile soil exists in South Africa today for the rapid advance of the working class beyond the confines of petit-bourgeois ideology and leadership. Already (we understand) the more advanced African workers are showing that they have little time for black nationalism. They are too tightly squeezed in the pincers of capitalism to be satisfied for any length of time with a leadership which fails to take up concretely the workers' exploitation as a class. Long sceptical of the exponents of "black power", these workers are beginning more and more confidently to challenge its formulations and to discern behind it the shadow of "capitalism in a black skin". In the development of these advanced workers we see the future development of the whole class.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE IS INTENSIFYING

The black proletariat in South Africa is the decisive force of the coming revolution. This fact, long understood and explained by Marxists, has been driven home with hammer-blows in the recent period. Needless to say, the black proletariat cannot conquer alone, except at the most appalling cost in blood and destruction. To the side of the proletariat, under its own banner, behind its own leadership and programme, must be rallied all the middle layers in society—not least among them the forces of the radical section of the black middle class. (In a similar way, and for the same

reasons, every effort will have to be made to draw the white workers to the side of the revolution: but that is a subject of its own to which justice cannot be done in this article.

In the past few months the struggle the black proletariat has put its enormous potential strength to the test.

Inevitably, under the viciously repressive conditions, the rising of the working people has been accompanied by a certain amount of destruction. But in that very destruction can be seen the groping of the masses towards action against the class enemy. In the direct action of the streets and townships, the popular rage rapidly turned to include capitalist property of all kinds. We have mentioned the burning of shops and bottle stores. Company trucks and vans, too, were set alight by the score. More than half of Putco's Transvaal fleet of African commuter buses suffered "riot damage". Nor did factory premises escape unscathed. At one point Kruger was compelled to tell businessmen: "The day is past when people can sit at home thinking the police will protect their property. There are not enough police." By the end of September, the Johannesburg 'Star' was estimating total damage stemming from the riots at between R100 and R200 million.

But by far the most important developments have been the two three-day general strikes by African and Coloured workers on the Witwatersrand and in the Cape. More than half a million of them, largely lacking trade unions and without recognised leadership or open organisation, united in directly political strike action that crippled industry and commerce in these two major industrial areas.

The struggle of the working class in South Africa has moved forward in giant strides. Enormous gains in confidence and collective experience have been achieved. When the mass action resumes, as it will do after only a relatively short lull, it will move forward from the outset at the higher level of organisation and consciousness.

A BLEAK FUTURE FOR CAPITALISM

Capitalism faces a future of deepening crisis and intensifying class struggle in South Africa. The

economic forecasts contain nothing but gloom: more unemployment, a real decline in gross domestic product, severe balance-of-payments problems. 'The Times' Annual Financial Review gives South Africa's outlook for 1977 as "probably stagnation at best".

The rising power of the black proletariat has become the decisive fact of political life. The changing relations of all other classes and strata from this point on will more and more clearly reflect this fact.

In the months and years ahead, the militant youth of the black working class will play an indispensable part in carrying forward the struggle. As they enter the factories, or join the ranks of the unemployed, their class-consciousness will deepen; at the same time with their militancy (already tested in the fire of an heroic struggle) they will infect the older generation of workers and prepare them for new battles.

The strategists of capitalism realise all this, and know that the class struggle in South Africa is entering a new and more intense phase. Their statements reveal acute nervousness and pessimism for the future.

The 'Financial Mail' of Johannesburg (10th September, 1976) reports a strike the previous week by African bus drivers in Durban. The management, as usual, called in the riot police. The bus drivers quickly called off their strike and returned to work, saying they were frightened of the policemen's guns. Said one worker: "We were told to go into a big workshop, and when we got in we were surrounded by policemen with guns. The policemen even wore steel helmets. We were told we could choose to go to work or to go to jail for five years. There was no negotiation. It is a sad day for us. We have no union to fight for us. What can we do?"

The 'Financial Mail', recalling the herosim of weeks past, asks plaintively: "When the youth of today have become the workers of tomorrow, are displays of force like this going to get them peacefully back to work....?"

POLAND: a regime in fear of the workers

The regime in Poland is one of extreme fear of the workers.

In the economic sphere, for example, despite the growing "imbalances" revealed by the government, the bureaucracy is now incapable of taking decisive action: "They can't do anything big without our say-so any more", one Gdansk shop-foreman told the 'New York Times', recently: "They try and we stop work."

In May, the Prime Minister admitted that, despite increased meat imports and increased investment in consumer goods, demand still exceeds supply. The reason is that workers' incomes have increased by 14% in the recent period instead of the 6.3% allowed for in the economic plan. Therefore the government needs to raise prices. But the explosive strikes that erupted when they attempted to raise prices last year paralysed them as far as moves in this direction are concerned.

It is not at all coincidental, of course, that a sustained campaign in the official Polish press to explain the necessity of price rises has been accompanied by an intensified campaign against political dissidents. At the beginning of May, the police arrested Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuron, and Jan Jozef Lipki, leaders of the Committee to Defend Workers Victims of the Repression Connected with the Events of 25th June, 1976 (KOR for short)—that is the massive strike wave that followed the announcement of 45% increases in food prices.

These, and other leaders of KOR, have been charged with "maintaining contacts with foreign organisations intent on damaging the interests of the People's Republic". Every kind of vilification, including anti-semitism, has been used against the students and intellectuals involved in KOR. But their real "crime" as far as the bureaucracy is

concerned, is their success in openly campaigning against the regime, collecting money and signatures in support of workers arrested or thrown out of work for expressing their opposition.

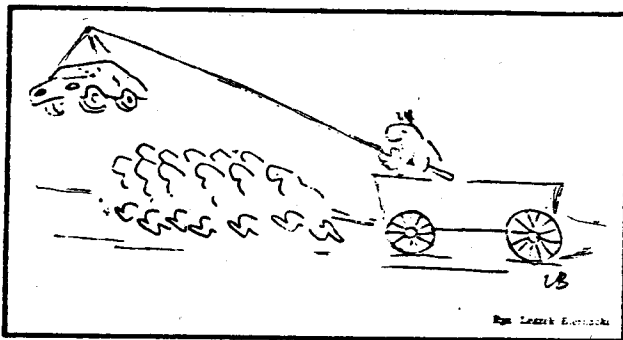
The wide support received by KOR is indicated by the fact that by May this year it had distributed 3 million zloties (\$90,000 at official rate) to the families of arrested or sacked workers, the equivalent of about 3,000 months of an average worker's wage. Most of it came from thousands of individual donations. They have also collected over 3,000 signatures to petitions protesting against repression, no small number given the risks involved in openly criticising the regime. KOR's campaign has undoubtedly played an important part in securing the release of most of the Ursus and Radom workers arrested after the strikes.

This year, however, the regime has increasingly turned its repression against the committee itself. Fearful of provoking a reaction from the workers, with whom the socialist intellectuals and writers have established close links, the police have resorted to cat-and-mouse persecution, arresting KOR activists, interrogating them, threatening them, and then releasing them.

The situation reached explosion point again, however, with the death of 25-year-old Stanislaw Pyjas, a leader of KOR who was found battered to death in an apartment block in Cracow on May 7th. Like other members of KOR he had been arrested several times, and shortly before his death had officially complained to the public prosecutor about anonymous letters and death threats that almost certainly came



Gierek discusses with plant engineers



From "Tygodnik powszechny", 1971

from the police themselves.

Over 5,000 attended Pyjas's memorial service in Cracow on May 11th, despite mass arrests aimed at preventing this protest. Two other leaders of KOR narrowly escaped death when their car was mysteriously forced off the road by a truck as they returned from the funeral demonstration in Cracow. On May 22nd, 60 workers were arrested in Ursus. At least six more leaders of KOR have also been arrested. Only the fear of triggering off new mass strikes restrains the regime from even more savage repression.

It now seems ironic that, following Gomulka's reforms after the 1956 strikes, Poland's regime was considered to be the most liberal and popular in Eastern Europe. But in 1970, Gomulka himself announced huge price increases which provoked mass uprisings in Gdansk and Czettin. The regime resorted to the only solution it has in a crisis: bloody repression. But Gierek, who replaced Gomulka, himself tried once again to "liberalise" and buy off the workers with promises of better conditions and more consumer

goods. Gierek, however, improved on Gomulka: whereas it took the latter fourteen years to exhaust his credit, Gierek managed to arrive at a new crisis in only seven.

What can the bureaucracy do? If it does not increase prices soon, it will pile up even worse economic problems. But the consequences of new price rises are clear. Intensified repression, the method always used in the past, will only stimulate opposition and revolt given the new mood among the workers. Gierek, unlike Gomulka, does not even have the comfort of a rival faction within the ruling clique prepared to relieve him of his miseries.

The Polish regime has exhausted the whole gamut of economic reforms and "liberalisation". They have demonstrated in practice that reforms are at best only temporary expedients. They cannot solve the fundamental contradiction: the fact that the bureaucracy is now a complete fetter on production, and the power and privileges of the higher echelons of the bureaucracy are a constant stimulus to opposition.

The Polish workers have already

demonstrated that they have the effective power of veto over the economic policy of the government. But discontent with the economy is only one side of the question. On the other, is the hatred of the bureaucracy, the lack of democratic expression, and national humiliation at the hands of the Russian bureaucracy. The workers of Poland have learned through bitter and bloody experience that the bureaucracy is sometimes prepared to make concessions to "liberalise", to shuffle the top leadership, but never to get off their backs.

Step by step, the most active and conscious workers—undoubtedly already organising in underground groups—are moving towards the idea of a political revolution based on the fundamental demands of workers' democracy put forward by Lenin in 1917 and again by the Hungarian workers in the 1956 Rising: for the right of election and recall of all officials; for the limitation of official's salaries to the average for skilled workers; for the abolition of the standing army and other organs of state repression; for the right to strike and form democratic trade unions; and for freedom of speech, publication, assembly, and political organisation.

THE CONTROL OF TECHNOLOGY

By David
And Ruth
Elliot

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Pollution and atomic bombs, automation and data banks—these and many other developments, point to the apparently contradictory character of technology. Science and technique offer the means by which humanity can dominate and control nature, and raise its own social relations to a high level of sophistication and rationality. Yet, in practice, new technology frequently has unforeseen results which become the cause of the unintended disruption and loss of control of natural processes, or is actually deliberately used to manipulate and control the majority of society.

'The Control of Technology' is concerned with this problem. Early on in the book, the Elliotts give two sorts of examples of the effects of technology on individuals and on society. One is the sort of technology which is out of the control of the working class through the "normal" democratic processes, but nevertheless an intentional development as far as the ruling class is concerned. The other is the sort of development that is an unintended consequence of technology and potentially out of any control by society.

Among examples of the first kind, the authors describe technological advances in industry which have meant the re-organisation and automation of jobs, increasing the intensity of work, making it less skilled and more boring, and increasing redundancies: "a frantic work-tempo for some and the dole queue for others", according to an AUEW-TASS pamphlet on computer-aided design. Figures are given which show the reduction in the labour forces in various industries as

a result of technological advance. For instance the introduction of numerical control of the turret lathe led to a 76.7% "saving" in labour. The Elliotts also give information about the reaction of workers to technology, such as the absentee rate in the motor industry, which is 20% at General Motors (in the USA) and 25% at Saab (in Sweden). The "intentional" effects of technology are used to increase profits but could, in a socialist society, be used to reduce the working day and free workers from dirty and dangerous jobs.

An example of the unintentional effects of technology is the ecological crisis, involving pollution, waste and depletion of resources. As Engels said long ago in 'The Dialectics of Nature': "In relation to nature, as to society, the present mode of production is predominantly concerned only about the immediate, the most tangible result; and then surprise is expressed that the more remote effects of actions directed to this end turn out to be quite different, are mostly quite the opposite in character."

The Elliotts discuss a number of technological and other "fixes". By "fix" they mean a purely technical solution to a problem. However, since most problems are not purely technical, technological "fixes" usually don't solve them. The idea is to overcome the unwanted side effects of science and technology (from the capitalists' point of view), such as absenteeism and pollution, without changing the class relations of society. Among the "fixes" discussed are: the "Green Revolution", birth control programmes, "zero growth",

participation. They show the limitations of the "fix" approach, and that in some cases—for example, the Green Revolution—social relations were such that the "fix", though perhaps technically sound, made things worse.

The authors discuss the relations between science, technology and society, and the works of other writers on the subject. The section tends to be rather schematic—for example, they talk about "models" such as the "economic determinist model" and the technological determinist model" so that although they rightly conclude that there is a complex interaction between economic forces, ideology, the political power of the ruling class, and technological change, they also call this a model, the "interactionist approach", and still do not explain the relationship.

The book also shows that the kind of research that is carried out, and hence the sciences and technologies that are developed, are also a reflection of our lack of control of technology. Figures are given showing how much money is spent on atomic, space and defence research compared with economically motivated research and research on health, welfare, "pure" science, etc.

In the UK in 1969-70 about 70% of total government spending on research had space, atomic or defence objectives, and half of that went in contracts to industry. 'The Control of Technology' has an interesting section on what research is done and contains quite a lot of information on the interpenetration of economic and military activity known as the "military-industrial complex", and in particular the research and development associated with it.

In the same year, 40% of economically oriented research, the largest single item, was funded by industry and carried out by industry, and of course was aimed at producing innovations that would be

profitable investments. In the last five years or so, against a background of cuts and depression, government reports have recommended that even the scientific research done in Universities should be justified by some future economic benefit and not the "mere" advancement of knowledge. It has been proposed that scientists and the government should have a "customer-contractor" relationship.

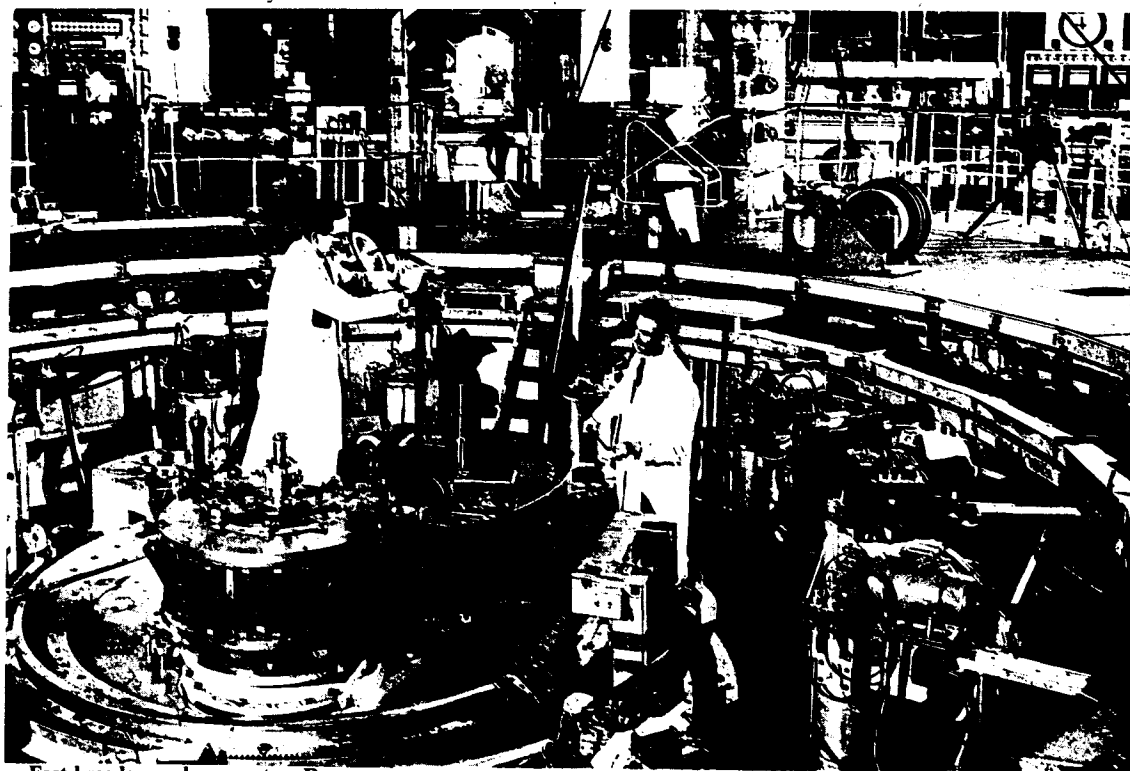
The existence or otherwise of certain branches of science may be

access to technological skills. It is very easy to get the feeling nowadays that groups of experts with access to technological knowledge, incomprehensible to most of us, control the direction and advance of technology, if not society itself. This is reflected in the impression many people have, that democratic control of society is

not really possible now that such a lot of technological and other knowledge seems to be necessary for

"technocrats". In a socialist society the agencies of scientific and technological development would necessarily be controlled by the working class. Specialised bodies would certainly still be necessary, but they would be rid of the narrow, "technocratic" character that the present institutions derive from their capitalist foundations.

This is not to say that under capitalism technologies may not



Fast-breeder nuclear reactor, Dounreay

directly related to profit. For example, the chemistry of compounds like DDT is fairly well understood, because the big chemical companies saw that there was money to be made from developing chemical methods of pest control; they invested accordingly, and many of the scientists with an interest in the appropriate branch of chemistry or physiology found suitable jobs. On the other hand, the branches of science associated with either the study of side effects of DDT and similar compounds on the environment, or the study of alternative, biological methods of pest control, since they did not appear to offer the prospect of any but long-term returns on investment, received very little funding (none from industry) and very few scientists went to work in those areas. Consequently, it took about 15 years, by which time the poisoning had become serious, for the effects of DDT to be widely recognised; and it will take still longer for an alternative approach to become available.

Chapter four, in the Elliotts' book, is about the "technocracy". The

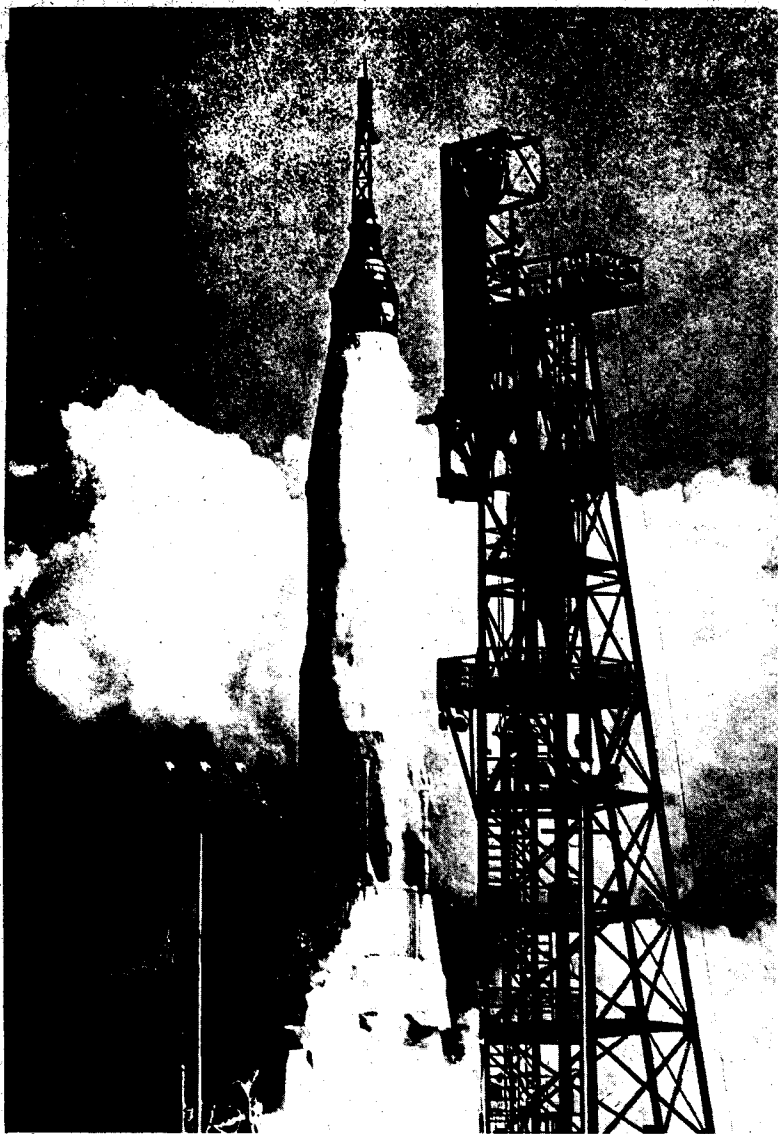
term suggests a bureaucracy with making decisions; or that if someone can mystify you with scientific jargon then they must be right.

The book surveys various views of the "technocracy", from those which blame all society's misfortunes on technological advance or suggest that a malevolent technocracy could control society for its own ends (if it doesn't do so already), to those whose utopia is a society run for the benefit of all according only to the rational principles of science. The authors rightly conclude, however, that "we are slaves to the inexorable laws of capitalism, rather than the inexorable laws of technique."

There can obviously be no such thing as an autonomous "technocracy", neutral in class terms. The scientific and technological apparatus of present society rests on capitalist production and is controlled, more or less directly as the case may be, by the capitalist class. This is undoubtedly reflected in the mental outlook, prejudices, political views, etc., of its top personnel, the

develop a logic and a momentum of their own, or that "technocrats" may not develop their own self interest as a group. Consequently, at certain periods of capitalist development, such as the post-war boom, it is possible for "discovery push" innovations to take place, in which the driving force is scientific discovery rather than the immediate needs of society reflected (more or less distorted) in marketing possibilities seen by companies.

At the same time, research and innovation may have unforeseen results, either positive "spin off" or negative side effects. Developments of this sort, because they cannot always be traced directly to the needs or aims of capitalism, give rise to the illusion that technology is the main, independent driving force of "modern society". This is a view particularly acceptable to those who don't want to recognise the class divisions of society, including those liberals who now regard science and technology as a pernicious force. But science and technology only consti-



An Atlas rocket launching John Glenn into space

tute a driving force for society in so far as the system of production can utilise them, and this is ultimately determined by social and economic, not purely technical, factors.

Increasing specialisation among the "experts" also reinforces the impression that we are increasingly dominated by "technocrats". Not only is science and technology mystifying to ordinary people, but even to the "experts" in different fields. Nature is a complete system in which nothing takes place in isolation. Living organisms are in ceaseless interaction with each other and the physical environment. Yet scientific activity is fragmented into "disciplines". Scientists specialise, and each specialism involves its own set of methods, theories, prejudices and preconceptions and, in particular, its own hierarchical career structure. Scientists then turn the real world into a refracted image of their own academic world with its separate compartments.

Clearly it is necessary to study small areas of science in depth, in order to have more than a superficial understanding. However, this has been done entirely at the expense of studying the interactions between

natural phenomena, or seeing one "field" in the context of others. Trotsky, writing at the time of the chemist Mendeleyev's centenary, showed that another result was an inability in most scientists to apply scientific methods to "real life", or "common sense" to science.

Technology is usually associated with "hardware", but it has now been applied to the methods of management, with the development of such subjects as "operational research". Our lack of control of technology is nowhere more apparent than in its development for the specific aim of improving the ability of the ruling class to "manage" the workers in its own interests. But even here, techniques have been developed which could be used, on the basis of democratically planned production, to the benefit of the working class in the future.

At the moment, the control of technology is chiefly the "control" exercised by market forces—that is, technology is developed to produce what will sell—modified by government intervention. The latter ranges from direction of resources to certain areas—for example to atomic, space and defence research—to modifica-

tions intended to protect society from undesirable effects of science and technology. For instance, there are various committees of experts which decide whether to allow things like new food additives and drugs onto the market. Laws exist to restrict the extent to which employers can pollute the environment or put the health of workers at risk. Royal Commissions are appointed from time to time to decide on things like where to have the third London Airport. In the United States, there is an Office of Technology Assessment which has the job of assessing the social, economic, political, environmental and other impacts of new technologies or new innovations. On limited issues, "pressure" groups can campaign and sometimes have some effect, especially if they are articulate and have funds. In some cases they have financed research—for example, the birth control movement contributed to the development of birth control technology by financing research as well as campaigning for acceptance.

In practice, however, these "normal" democratic channels for the control of technology are, from the point of view of the working class, very limited. How many workers have really changed things by joining pressure group or giving evidence to Royal Commissions? The sacking of a GMWU safety officer earlier this year for calling a factory inspector to an asbestos factory, and the infrequency with which companies used to be prosecuted by the Alkali Inspectorate for pollution, show that having a law on the statute books is not enough. The case of cyclamate artificial sweeteners and the fact that the ex-Chairman of the Safety of Medicines Committee is now a director of a pharmaceutical company, show how little expert committees represent the interests of the working class.

In practice, the extent to which we can control technology in our interests, especially where our interests conflict with those of big business or individual employers, depends on the organised strength of the labour movement. And even this control is usually limited to preventing damage from existing technological advances rather than promoting new developments. That will only be possible when the economy is in the hands of the working class. However, the growth in organisation and militancy of scientific and engineering workers, and campaigns by workers such as those in the aerospace industry to work on alternative, socially useful products, is an important step in this direction.

As capitalism moves into a new period of crisis and the successes of science and technology are increasingly overshadowed by problems and potential disasters, the study of

"Science and society", the "control of technology", ecology, etc., is becoming more respectable in academic circles. This undoubtedly reflects a recognition among the thinking representatives of capitalism of the need to try to unravel some of the contradictions produced by the system and limit some of the more dangerous side effects of advanced technology. It also reflects a reaction among scientists, technologists and academics against the haphazard development of technology and its misuse and outright abuse by capitalism, though this is mostly far from being understood or

expressed in conscious political terms. In many cases these two, apparently contradictory, motives for analysing the relationship of science and society are completely mixed up and confused. The Elliots' book is therefore a valuable contribution in that it sets out to analyse and criticise present-day technology from a socialist point of view. It contains a lot of interesting material, figures, examples and summaries of work by other authors, and is well worth reading on these counts. Clearly, however, the authors have produced a book intended more for those who wish seriously to study the

questions of science, technology and society rather than for readers with a more general interest in the subject. Even so the book is hard going in places, burdened by "academic" language. This is not just a question of style: a more serious criticism is that the authors unfortunately seem to lack confidence in their socialist ideas, appearing to be too concerned to justify themselves to academic readers, and allowing their own analysis and arguments to be obscured by a plethora of imperfectly digested quotations.

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