

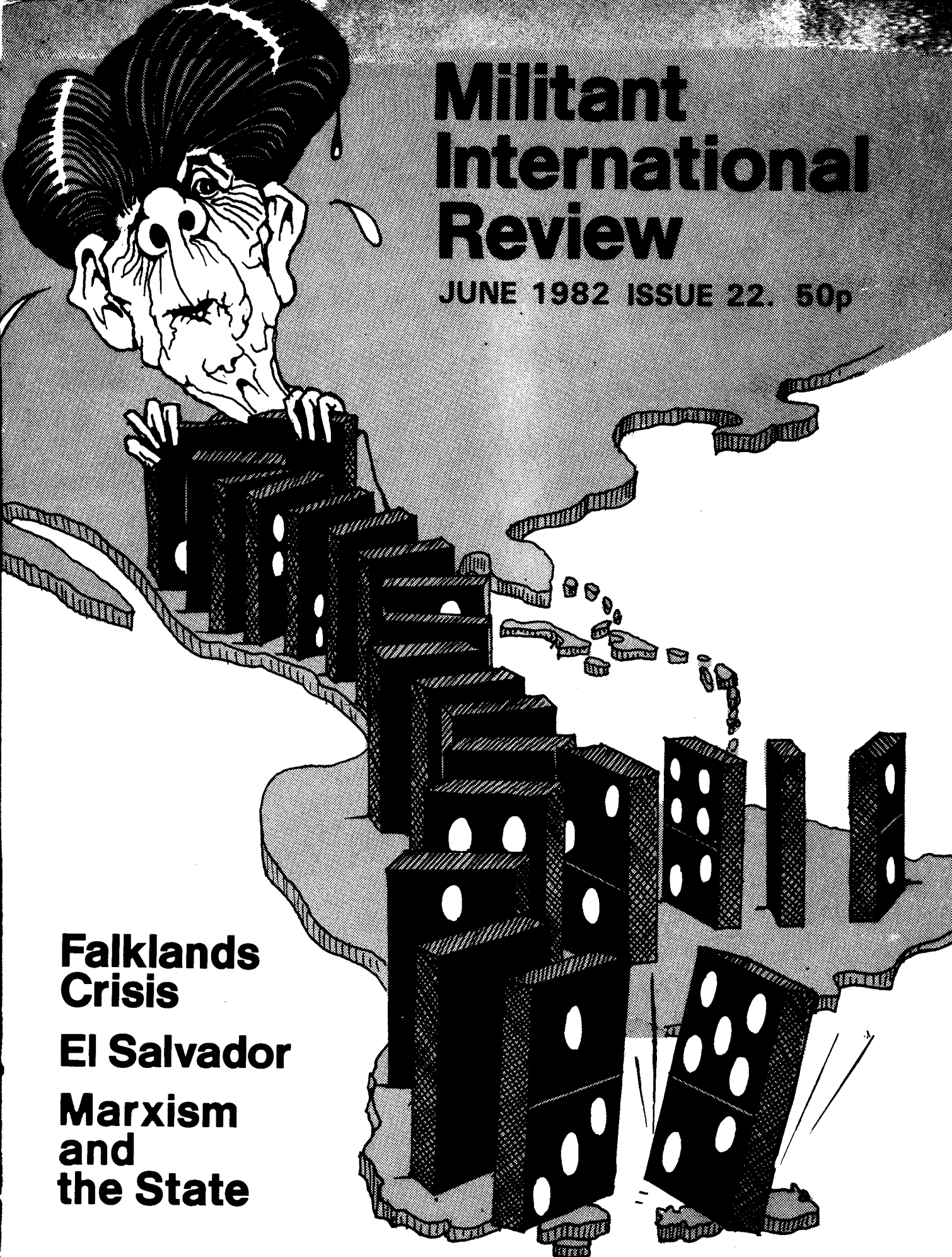
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**Falklands
Crisis**

El Salvador

**Marxism
and
the State**



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EL SALVADOR **Which way** **forward for the** **revolution?**

By **Pedro Montalvez**,
from the *Latin American*
Supplement No 1 (March
1982) of *Nuevo Claridad*,
journal of the Spanish
Marxists

Page 11

Postscript on the March
elections,

Page 22



MARXISM AND **THE STATE**

Who really **threatens** **democracy?**

By **Peter Taaffe**, Editor of
Militant, who takes up this
important issue after the
press furore about *Militant*
supporter Pat Wall's speech
Page 25

FALKLANDS **WAR**

By **Lynn Walsh**



Photo: Press Association

What lessons for the **labour movement?**

War is raging in the South Atlantic. By the time this journal appears, the outcome of the conflict will probably be decided. Most likely, the Junta's forces will suffer a defeat, given the superior military and economic resources of British imperialism. This would open up a new revolutionary crisis in Argentina, which could trigger movements of the working class through the crisis-ridden states of Latin America. But whether or not the military conflict is as yet resolved, the war has important lessons for the labour movement. What were the real causes of the war? All the political, economic and class forces must be analysed concretely. And what policy and tactics should Marxists adopt in opposition to capitalist war? In the next period of intensified class conflict and national antagonisms this, even after the Falklands war, will remain a vital question for the labour movement.

Galtieri seized the islands in a desperate attempt to save his dictatorship from the threat of revolution. Success would extend the Junta's lease of life, reinforcing temporarily the totalitarian oppression of the Argentinian people. Success for Galtieri would also mean that the Falkland Islanders would be brought under the jackboot of the dictatorship, which socialists cannot condone.

But what confidence can we have, from the point of view of the interests of the working class, in the Tory government's moves to solve the crisis? For the Tories and for their big-business pay-masters the Islanders are just pawns in the game. Thatcher has sent the Task Force to war to defend the prestige, power, and ultimately the world-wide profits of British capitalism.

The first casualties of the war are the workers in uniform. In Argentina, the young conscripts of the army and navy have been pressed into service by a military police dictatorship. The sailors and soldiers of the British Task Force are 'volunteers', but volunteers who have mostly been pushed into the forces by mass unemployment and poor prospects in 'Civvy Street,' a form of 'economic conscription.' The fighting has already claimed many lives, and thousands more may be slaughtered or wounded in the battle for the Islands.

Whatever the outcome, the arms dealers, the merchants of death who equip both sides (10% of Argentina's arms purchases are from Britain), will increase their profits. On both sides, it is the power, prestige and profits of the capitalist class which are at stake. The survival of Galtieri's junta and Thatcher's government also hangs on the outcome. Once Galtieri embarked on the Falklands adventure and once Thatcher embarked on massive retaliation, neither could back down without losing power.

Reagan viewed with dismay the conflict between the two allies, in reality two client states. Ultimately, it was inevitable that US imperialism would side with British imperialism, a major ally and the lynchpin of the NATO alliance. However, it was with great regret that Reagan abandoned support for Galtieri, once the futility of Haig's shuttle-diplomacy became clear. Not only has a southern picket of American imperialism been thrown off balance, but the Junta's role as surrogate policeman in Central America—vital for Reagan after Congress's refusal to sanction direct intervention in El Salvador—has been put in question.

Above all, however, the representatives of US imperialism fear that the Falklands adventure will lead to Galtieri's fall—opening the door to a new revolutionary crisis in Argentina, with all the consequences that would have for Latin America.

The irony of the situation is, however, that Galtieri embarked on the invasion of the Falklands precisely to head off the imminent threat of revolution. A few days before the invasion, on March 30, thousands of workers and youth defied the military on the streets of Buenos Aires, protesting against massive impoverishment and unemployment and against the brutal suppression of the trade unions and all democratic rights.

The 'strong state' of Videla, Viola and Galtieri has failed to solve the country's deep economic crisis. On the contrary, production has slumped while the wealth of this potentially rich nation has been shamelessly squandered in an orgy of speculation. Under the mismanagement of her voracious financiers and businessmen, Argentina, with a population 9 million smaller than Poland, has run up \$5,000 million more in foreign debts, which now total \$30,000 million (£18,000 million). The working class, together with the unemployed, the rural labourers, and sections of the petit-bourgeoisie, have been devastated by wage freezes

and soaring prices. The monetarist policies of Galtieri's finance minister, Alemann, far from curing inflation, gave a new twist to Argentina's notorious hyper-inflation.

On top of this, amplifying all the economic grievances, is the workers' burning anger at the suppression of democratic rights and the military's brutal policy of kidnappings, assassinations, and torture. Over 20,000 people have 'disappeared,' murdered or jailed by the junta's official murderers and torturers. After six years of a bonapartist regime which uses fascist methods against its opponents, a new generation of class fighters were beginning to lead the workers into action. This is why Galtieri activated the state's 150-year-old claim to the 'Malvinas', using this national talisman to whip up all the most reactionary, chauvinist sentiments among the petit-bourgeois and sections of the working class.

Despite their bloody hands, the junta—temporarily—have managed to divert the anger of the masses away from the dictatorship and turn it against British imperialism. Nevertheless, even the demonstrations of support for the seizure of the Islands have manifested opposition to the repressive policies of the Junta.

The Junta's war over the Falklands is not a war of national liberation against imperialism—it reflects the imperialistic aims of the Argentinian capitalists

The working class has nothing to gain from the taking of Falklands. If the Junta succeeds in holding them and its adventure appears a success, the dictatorship would be reinforced, prolonging the military-police oppression of the Argentinian people, at least for a time.

Moreover, if Argentinian big business were to try to develop the Islands, and from there the wealth of Antarctica, the financiers and speculators would be the only real beneficiaries. Far from 'strengthening the nation,' the development of the Falklands, if Argentina's profligate capitalists were to attempt it, would only increase the country's dependence on foreign capital. Possession of the Islands will not halt Argentina's catastrophic economic degeneration. Only a socialist Argentina, with planned production under the control of the working class and links with the rest of Latin America through a Socialist Federation, could develop the plentiful natural resources of Antarctica. Then, too, the problem of the Falklands could be resolved. The Islanders would have no fears about a Socialist Federation which guaranteed their democratic rights and autonomy, and assured them comfortable conditions of life.



Annexation by the Argentinian dictatorship, however, is an entirely different question. Marxists cannot be indifferent to the fate of the Falklanders. Although they have dwindled to about 1,800—hardly a nation in the classical sense—they have the right to enjoy their own language, culture, and autonomy. We cannot condone their subjection by the dictatorship, represented on the Islands by the new military governor, General Menendez, veteran of the Junta's 'dirty war' of extermination against the guerrilla groups who took up arms against the regime.

But what confidence can we have in the Tory government's moves to resolve the crisis? The Task Force has been sent, if we are to believe Thatcher, to safeguard the Falkland Islanders' rights and defend British democracy against 'fascist' Argentina. Yet before, the Tories were quite happy to sanction arms sales to the Junta, and were silent about repression.

Thatcher's, moreover, is a Tory government which at home has declared war on the living standards and rights of the working class. If the Tories are prepared to dispatch a mighty war fleet—boasting that it is 'regardless of cost'—it is not to defend the rights of Falklanders, but to defend the power and prestige of British capitalism.

Before, they had little regard for the Islanders. Britain's refusal to develop the Islands' services had already made the Falklanders more and more dependent on Argentina, for the air service, supplies, education and medical treatment. The Islanders had their own way of life, but the place was run more like a feudal fiefdom than a modern democracy. Most of the Islands' economy is dominated by a single company, the Falklands Islands Co, recently bought by Coalite Ltd, no doubt with an eye on the region's mineral resources.

Neglect of a dependency is one thing. But when it was seized by armed force the power and prestige of British imperialism was put on the line.

At least one letter to *The Times* (14 April) cut through the hypocrisy. "Sir," wrote a certain Hedley Bull, "It is not the case, as is now so widely asserted, that Britain's chief interest in the present crisis is to

safeguard the rights of Falklanders, important as these rights are. Britain's paramount interest is to show that, contrary to what the Argentine government has believed to be the case, she is able and willing to defend British territory when it is attacked." Any negotiated settlement, he concluded, "which...involves a derogation from British sovereignty...will demonstrate...that Britain is no longer a power whom anyone need take seriously." The real standpoint of British capitalism—usually concealed beneath hypocritical expression of concern about democratic rights—could hardly be put more clearly.

The point was reinforced, perhaps more diplomatically, by David Watt, director of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. "The trouble," he wrote in *The Times*, "is that we, a supposedly major power, have been outwitted by a tinpot regime...Mrs Thatcher is right in saying that Britain's reputation is at stake." It was not simply Thatcher's credibility but the country's that was at stake. "Credibility," Watt conceded, "is of course a hard concept to pin down...But the fact remains that the protection of British interests in a very uncertain and unstable world depends considerably on exploiting our past reputation for (a) relative honesty; (b) skill and resolution in protecting our interests; and (c) possession of real, though limited power."

As far as the representatives of British imperialism are concerned "honesty" has indeed always been highly "relative." The Tory and Foreign Office blunders which encouraged Galtieri to invade the Falklands, moreover, indicate an undermining of their "skill and resolution," reflecting the decline of British capitalism's world power. But, of course, ultimately the ability to uphold its interest through armed force is vital to British imperialism, to preserve the vestiges of its world power.

If it had simply relinquished the Falklands, bowing to "irresistible force," British imperialism would, in the next period, have suffered a drastic undermining of its economic influence. This is why the Tories sent the Task Force, and why the representatives of British capitalism are prepared to commit enormous resources,

and, if necessary, to sacrifice the lives of thousands of workers to recover the Islands.

The task of Marxists is to explain the real reasons for the war, laying bare the class motives of both the Junta and the Tories, exposing the real war-aims of both Argentine capitalism and British capitalism. We are against this capitalist war. But it is a question of how to oppose the war, how to appeal to the majority of workers in order to mobilise effective mass opposition to the war. Mere denunciation of the war and calls to withdraw the Task Force will neither be listened to by the capitalists nor will they get a response from the majority of workers.

Socialists cannot support Galtieri's seizure of the Islands, which was a desperate attempt to save his dictatorship from the threat of revolution

The representatives of British capitalism will not abandon the armed defence of their vital interests on the world arena. They are just as ready to sacrifice workers in war as they are to exploit them in peacetime. Thatcher will brush aside calls to withdraw the fleet. Nor will the Tories be prepared to accept the arbitration of the United Nations. The inability of the UN to act on the Falklands crisis in any case confirms the impotence of the dis-United Nations. Any diplomatic compromise which threatened to cut across the interests of British imperialism would be vetoed by Britain in the Security Council.

To force the withdrawal of the Task Force would require a general strike, with the workers taking power into their own hands. While the capitalists retain the power, they will use it to defend their class interests, whether at home or abroad. But in the present situation a call for a general strike to end the war would get no support, even from the advanced sections of the working class. Even the ultra-left sects who, all forlorn, cry 'Stop the war!' have not had the temerity to call for a general strike. Such a slogan would be hollow through and through. It would immediately be shown to be completely unrealistic. Nor could the call to stop the war or withdraw the Fleet provide a basis even for a mass campaign of demonstrations, meetings, and agitation—because it leaves unanswered, in the eyes of workers, the vital question of the rights of the Falkland Islanders and the question of opposing a vicious military-police dictatorship in Argentina.

Only the bringing down of the Tory government can clear the way for ending the war and a solution to the Falklands crisis.

At the moment, the Tories have the backing of the right-wing leaders of the Labour Party and the trade

unions. Without it, they could not have gone to war. The opposition of Michael Foot, the Labour Party leader, and some of the other Parliamentary lefts has been completely inconsistent and ineffectual. Foot supported the sending of the Task Force—but on the eve of the first engagement argued that it should not be used! As if the Tories sent a war fleet 8,000 miles across the Atlantic merely as a diplomatic display!

Their refusal to criticise the class aims of the Tories make the opposition of the Labour Party leaders seem like inconsistent, carping criticism. Labour's ranks must therefore demand an end to the bi-partisan policy on the Falklands, an end to the unofficial coalition that exists between Labour's right wing and the Tories on this issue.

The Falklands war is not a reason for calling off the struggle against the Tories—on the contrary, the slaughter of the war and the additional drain on British capitalism, for which big business will try to make the workers pay, underlines the urgency of stepping up the struggle to bring down the Tory government.

The labour movement should be mobilised to force a general election to open the way for the return of a Labour government to implement socialist policies at home and abroad. Victory of a socialist government in Britain would immediately transform the situation in relation to the Falklands. The Junta would no longer be able to claim to be fighting British imperialism.

A socialist government would make a class appeal to the Argentinian workers. A Labour government could not just abandon the Falklanders and let Galtieri get on with it. But it would continue the war on socialist lines. First, a socialist government would carry through the democratisation of the British armed forces, introducing trade union rights and the election of officers. Working class interests cannot be defended under the direction of an authoritarian officer caste, which is tied to the capitalist class by education, income and family and class loyalties. The use of force against the Junta, however, would be combined with a class appeal to the workers in uniform. British capitalism will probably defeat the Junta, but only through a bloody battle and at an enormous cost in lives. Using socialist methods, a Labour government could rapidly defeat the dictatorship, which was already facing a threat from the Argentinian working class when Galtieri embarked on his diversionary battle with British imperialism.

A Labour government would give support to a struggle to overturn the Junta and end the rule of capitalism in Argentina. A socialist government in Britain would make it clear that, while defending the rights of the Falkland Islanders, it entirely repudiated the neo-imperialist interests and aims of British capitalism. It would support the expropriation of British banks and businesses in the Argentina, along with the nationalisation of Argentinian big business and finance capital.

A Labour government would propose a Socialist Federation of Britain and Argentina, including the Falkland Islands. Under capitalism, the two countries have been linked to a considerable extent by investment and trade. A Socialist Federation, which would have world-wide ramifications, would end neo-colonial exploitation and open up planned development of the economies, which would have enormous advantages for



Photo: Press Association

the workers of Britain, Argentina, and the Falklands.

It is vital to oppose the capitalist war with a clear policy on these lines. Such a policy can win the support of the advanced workers, and also wider layers of the working class, countering the lying propaganda of the capitalist class. In the course of the crisis, the television and especially the press have sunk to new depths, attempting to whip up vile chauvinist and war-mongering sentiments. In attacking its sleazy rival, the *Sun*, the *Daily Mirror* said that it had sunk from the gutter to the sewer—a description which also fits the *Mirror* and the rest of the capitalist press!

The Tories are hypocritically exploiting the workers' instinctive hatred of the Junta, which they see as a blood-stained fascist regime. The Tories are also attempting to exploit the workers' feelings of solidarity with their brothers and sisters in the army, the navy, and the merchant navy. Only a clear Marxist policy, which takes all the factors of the situation into account, can win mass support and mobilise effective opposition to this war of rival capitalist classes.

The position taken by some of the ultra-left sects, who actually came out in support of the Junta, could only play into the hands of the Tories and British imperialism. Fearful that they would be diverted by the pressure of patriotic, bourgeois sentiments, they tried to insure themselves against opportunism by subscribing to an inflexible policy. The only way consistently to oppose the British bourgeoisie, they claim, is to support the enemy of the British bourgeoisie—even if this happens to be Argentina's military-police dictatorship! From the correct starting point of opposition to capitalist war, the ultra-left sects (who claim to Marxists) hared off down a dead-end street.

In support of this crazy logic, which has led the sects

Tory Defence Secretary, John Nott, waves to troops on the QE II as it sets off for the Falklands, Southampton (12 May). Above, marine commandoes prepare for action on HMS Hermes en route to the South Atlantic (18 April).

Photo: POPPERFOTO



into giving uncritical support to the Junta, they claim Marxists must always adopt a 'defeatist' position. They cite Lenin's revolutionary defeatism of 1914, when the Bolshevik leader said that, for Russian Marxists, the defeat of the Tsarist autocracy would be the most favourable outcome of the imperialist war and when Lenin put forward the slogan of 'civil war.' The sects, however, have picked up Lenin's slogan of 1914 without bothering to examine the circumstances and without understanding Lenin's thinking.

Every situation must be analysed concretely, and there are enormous differences between the imperialist war of 1914-18 and the present armed conflict between Britain and Argentina. But the sects have not even understood Lenin's position in 1914-18. If we were to accept their view, the leader of the Russian revolution would appear as little more than a dogmatic fool. In a discussion at the third congress of the Communist International in 1921, in answer to ultra-left ideas being put forward by some of the German Communists, Lenin explained his tactics during the war. "At the beginning of the war we Bolsheviks adhered to a single slogan—that of civil war, and a ruthless one at that... But when we came back to Russia in March 1917 we changed our position entirely." At the start of the war, Lenin explained, because of the depths of the betrayal by the Social Democratic and Labour leaders, who patriotically fell in behind their own capitalists, it was necessary to inoculate the advanced layers of workers against patriotic, capitalist 'defencism.' "It was important then to form a definite and resolute core."

However, in 1917 Lenin rejected the slogan of civil war and an immediate move to overthrow the Provisional government of Kerensky. "Our subsequent stand was correct too. It proceeded from the assumption that the masses had to be won over." In 1917 the Bolsheviks had to take into account the "honest defencism" of the workers and peasants, not support for the Russian ruling class, but solidarity with their class brothers in the army and defence of a homeland identified with the interests of ordinary workers and peasants.

Not for a moment did Lenin abandon opposition to the imperialist war. The Bolsheviks opposed the new offensive in 1917, when the Russian armies, under the direction of the Provisional government, renewed the war effort on behalf of the ruling class. But crude anti-war slogans and the call for civil war could not have won the support of a majority of workers.

Lenin's opposition to war "proceeded from the assumption that the masses had to be won over"

Never did Lenin doubt the need to overthrow the Provisional government, which was incapable of ending the war and, despite depending on the support of

the workers' soviets, was attempting to save the rule of the capitalists and landlords. But unless the Bolsheviks were to attempt to overthrow the Provisional government through the action of only a minority of the working class—an idea Lenin rejected as 'Blanquist' (putschist)—they had to campaign to win over the majority of the working class. Would the sects of today say that Lenin was 'opportunist'?

The October revolution, which overthrew the Provisional government and put power in the hands of the workers' and peasants' soviets, demonstrated the correctness of Lenin's strategy and tactics. Arguing against ultra-left ideas in 1921, Lenin said: "Our sole strategy now is to become stronger, hence cleverer, more sensible, more 'opportunistic'." Lenin was using "opportunistic" ironically, to underline his rejection of an ultra-left approach based on the mechanical repetition of "left" slogans regardless of their effect on the majority of workers.

Lenin's speech on this question is printed in his *Collected Works*, volume 42 pp 324-328.

Leon Trotsky also took up the Marxists who, on the eve of the Second World War, wanted to repeat Lenin's slogans of 1914.

The Second World War, Trotsky explained, was a continuation of the first imperialist world war—but not a repetition. Similarly, the slogans of the Marxists were a continuation, but not a repetition. They had to be worked out and deepened in relation to the concrete situation in the Second World War. Trotsky explained this in his article 'Bonapatism, Fascism and War,' (*Writings 1939-40*, page 411).

"During the last war not only the proletariat as a whole but also its vanguard and, in a certain sense, the vanguard of the vanguard was caught unawares. The elaboration of the principles of revolutionary policy toward the war began at a time when the war was already in full blaze and the military machine exercised unlimited rule. One year after the outbreak of the war, the small revolutionary minority was still compelled to accommodate itself to a centrist majority at the Zimmerwald Conference [the 1915 meeting of internationalists in Switzerland—Ed].

"Prior to the February revolution and even afterwards the revolutionary elements felt themselves to be not contenders for power but the extreme left opposition. Even Lenin relegated the socialist revolution to a more or less distant future... If that is how Lenin viewed the situation, then there is hardly any need of talking about the others.

"This political position of the extreme left wing expressed itself most graphically on the question of the defence of the fatherland.

"In 1915 Lenin referred in his writings to revolutionary wars which the victorious proletariat would have to wage. But was a question of an indefinite historical perspective and not of tomorrow's task. The attention of the revolutionary wing was centred on the question of the defence of the capitalist fatherland. The revolutionists naturally replied to this question in the negative. This was entirely correct. But while this purely negative answer served as the basis for propaganda and for training the cadres, **it could not win the masses, who did not want a foreign conquerer.**

"In Russia prior to the war the Bolsheviks constituted four-fifths of the proletarian vanguard, that is, of the workers participating in political life (newspapers, election, etc.). Following the February revolution the unlimited rule passed into the hands of the defensists, the Mensheviks and the SRs [the Social Revolutionary Party, based on the peasantry—Ed]. True enough, the Bolsheviks in the space of eight months conquered the overwhelming majority of the workers. But the decisive role in this conquest was played **not** by the refusal to defend the bourgeois fatherland **but** by the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets.' And only by this revolutionary slogan! **The criticism of imperialism, its militarism, the renunciation of the defence of bourgeois democracy and so on could have never conquered the overwhelming majority of the people to the side of the Bolsheviks...**" [Our emphasis added—Ed]

In 1940 Leon Trotsky answered those who wanted just to repeat the crude anti-war slogans of 1914

Yet the ultra-left sects of today, determined to demonstrate their intransigent 'Marxist' approach, continue to advance slogans based on their misconception of 'defeatism'. Even they—confused as they are—do not claim that they have the support of a majority of the working class. But how do they think they can win a majority to oppose the war aims of British capitalism, to force the Tories to abandon their military adventure? Apparently, they believe it can be done by support for the Junta, when most workers have an instinctive hatred for what they see as a 'fascist' regime, and an understandable desire to see it defeated. The Tories, of course, are cynically exploiting the workers' anti-fascist feelings; but support for the Junta would put Marxists beyond the pale in the eyes of workers, leaving the Tories free hypocritically to capitalise on the 'fight against fascism.'

The pseudo-Marxists also believe, it seems, that support for a socialist opposition to the war can be won through a policy which abandons the Falkland Islanders to the tender mercies of the Junta, writing off their rights in favour of the Junta's legalistic claim to the land under their feet.

The most monstrous absurdity of the sects' position, however, is the idea that workers can be won to a socialist position on the basis of calling for the defeat of the Task Force, calling literally—as representatives of the sects have stated in public—for "the sinking of the fleet"! They are in favour of the slaughter of workers in the ranks of the navy and army, and on this basis they will win mass support from the working class! This is a travesty of Marxism which, in so far as it has any effect

at all, can only play into the hands of the Tories and Labour's right, allowing them to portray 'Marxists' as idiots who support the Argentinian junta.

This is not all, however.

Not content with distorting Lenin, the sects also drag Trotsky in to support their ludicrous position. Did not Trotsky say just before the Second World War—the sects argue—that, in the event of war between Britain and Brazil, "in this case I will be on the side of 'fascist' Brazil against 'democratic' Great Britain." Trotsky made this remark in 1938 in an interview with Mateo Fossa, the leader of Trotsky's supporters in (as it happens) Argentina. (The interview is published in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1938-39*, pages 31-36.)

Again, the pseudo-Marxists have taken Trotsky's remarks completely out of context, without analysing the situation or Trotsky's reasoning. He was obviously dealing with a hypothetical case. But he formulated his position sharply in this way in order to counter the idea, then being peddled by the Stalinist leadership of the Comintern and the world's 'Communist' Parties, that the struggle of 'democracy' against 'fascism' should take priority over a revolutionary struggle against imperialism. In the interests of the Russian bureaucracy's diplomatic deals with the ruling classes of the capitalist democracies, the revolutionary struggle internationally was postponed indefinitely.

Trotsky explained that in the coming world war—which he clearly predicted from the middle of the 1930s—the capitalist class, if faced with an aggravated crisis and mounting opposition to their rule, could easily throw off its democratic mask and resort to totalitarian, fascist forms of rule. On the other hand, in colonial or semi-colonial countries, the war could stimulate revolutionary movements of the workers and exploited peasantry which could topple fascist regimes.

Marxists could not be indifferent to the fate of the Falklanders, who have the right to enjoy their own language, culture and autonomy

In the case of war between Britain and Brazil, "If England should be victorious, she will put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro, and will place double chains on Brazil. If Brazil, on the contrary, should be victorious, it would give a mighty impulse to national and democratic consciousness of the country and will lead to the overthrow of the Vargas dictatorship. The defeat of England will at the same time deliver a blow to British imperialism and will give an impulse to the revolutionary movement of the British proletariat." (Page 34) Even in this hypothetical case, Trotsky clearly analysed the probable processes and the alternative perspectives which would be opened up. Yet faced

with a real war in the South Atlantic at the present time, the pseudo-Marxist sects are incapable of analysing the actual class interests or processes involved.

The Junta launched its Falkland adventure under the social crisis—to head off pressure of imminent revolution. If they were successfully to hold on to the Falklands—which now seems unlikely—it could temporarily strengthen the military dictatorship, prolonging the totalitarian oppression of the Argentinian working class. Faced with the prospect of being overthrown, the Junta, by its military action, has brought dramatically to the fore the issue of the Falklands, a “national grievance” fostered by Argentina’s rulers for generations precisely to divert the attention of the people from economic and political grievances at home.

Far from awakening the national and democratic consciousness of the country, the seizure of the Falklands has allowed the Junta to whip up all the worst nationalistic, patriotic prejudices of the middle class and sections of the workers. If it were a national war against an attempt of British imperialism to subjugate Argentina and its people—as in Trotsky’s theoretical example—it would be entirely different.

Marxists have always given support to national struggles against imperialism. Trotsky advocated support for China against Japan (after the seizure of Manchuria in 1931 and in the war that broke out in 1937), even under the bonapartist leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. A national struggle, despite bourgeois leadership, inevitably arouses the working class and exploited peasantry.

Similarly, in 1935-36 Trotsky supported Abyssinia against fascist Italy. A defeat for Mussolini’s army of invasion would have led to the overthrow of his fascist regime in Italy. Even so, Trotsky never recommended uncritical support for bonapartist, national-capitalist leaders. He always stood for the independent mobilisation of the working class on a socialist programme. In the course of a national struggle, Marxists should demand a radical land reform and the nationalisation of industry and finance, together with the formation of soviets and a struggle to take the power into their hands. This is the only basis on which genuine liberation from imperialism can be achieved.

But the Argentinian Junta’s war over the Falklands is not a war of national liberation against imperialism. On the contrary, in seizing the Falklands the Argentine Junta is pursuing imperialistic aims on the part of Argentinian capitalism.

Galtieri invaded the Islands for political reasons, to head off revolution and save his regime. But in the background are the Argentinian financiers and capitalists who are eager to get their hands on the profits potentially to be drawn from Antarctic oil and other natural resources. Such a development of Antarctica, it is true, would almost certainly be in conjunction with the American multi-nationals, to whom the Argentinian capitalists would be junior partners. Argentinian capitalism is still subordinate to international big business, especially American capitalism, as its massive foreign debts testify.

Nevertheless, in the past period of world economic upswing, Argentinian capitalism developed a semi-industrialised basis of its own. It is ludicrous to portray

Argentinian capitalism as a completely dependent, ‘comprador’ capitalism, dominated by the agents of foreign capital. This is the analysis offered by some of the sects in an attempt to justify their support for the Junta.

A few crucial statistics reveal the absurdity of this position. In 1979, industry accounted for 45% of GNP, compared to 13% for agriculture (and 42% for services). Manufactured goods, it is true, account for only 22.7% of the country’s exports, compared to 65.5% for food and agriculture, thus reflecting the weakness of Argentine industry on world markets. But the urban population now accounts for over 82% of the total population. Twenty-nine per cent of the active population work in industry, as compared to only 14% in agriculture (57% work in the enormous service sector). In other words, Argentina, despite its continued neo-colonialist subservience to American, West European and Japanese big business, nevertheless has all the characteristics of a semi-industrialised capitalist economy.

If there were an Argentinian population on the Islands, subjected to British rule against their will, the situation would be different. Then there might be a case for the “national liberation” of the Islands. But this is not the case. Apart from one or two Argentines married to Islanders, there have been no Argentinians on the Islands for 150 years.

British capitalism will defeat the Junta, but only at an enormous cost in lives. Using socialist methods, a Labour government could have rapidly defeated the dictatorship, which was already threatened by the Argentinian working class

Argentina’s dictators are following a well-trodden path. Mussolini, for instance, attempted to whip up nationalistic, reactionary fervour over “Irredenta,” so-called “unredeemed national territory,” calling for the return of Trieste to Italy. Hitler, similarly, mounted a nationalistic agitation campaign for the return of the Saar from France and the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia. In these cases, however, the majority of the population had linguistic and cultural ties. In the Saarland and the Sudetenland the majority were German speaking. In these cases, however, Trotsky did not support the claim of ‘fascist’ Germany against ‘democratic’ France or ‘democratic’ Czechoslovakia.

Under the Versailles Treaty which followed Germany's defeat in the First World War, the Saar was placed under League of Nations administration (with its valuable coal mines in the hands of France). Under the Treaty, there was to be a referendum in 1935 to decide whether the Saarland should be autonomous, come under French control or be handed back to Germany. Trotsky's position was unequivocal: despite the historical and cultural links of the Saar population with Germany, he advocated that the Marxists should demand autonomy and fight the incorporation of the Saarland into Germany and oppose the bringing of the Saarland's population under the heel of the Nazi jackboot. Initially, the Stalinist leaders of the German Communist Party favoured German annexation—a position denounced by Trotsky as “the cowardice of pseud-radicalism.”

Answering the idea that Germany's national claim should take precedence over the political interests of the Saarland's population, Trotsky wrote: “to rally to Hitlerite Germany in practice, i.e. through the referendum, means, theoretically speaking, to put national mysticism above the class interests and psychologically to conduct a really cur-like policy. Naturally, only traitors can demand annexation at present, for that means to sacrifice the most concrete and vital questions of the German workers in the Saar territory to the

abstract, national factor.”

In the event, Hitler managed to gain a big majority for incorporation into Germany—a Nazi success which Trotsky bluntly attributed to the bankruptcy and cowardice of the leaders of both the Communist Party and the Social Democracy, who, despite coming out in favour of autonomy, failed to win the support of the Saarland workers for a policy of opposition to the Nazis.

The Junta's “abstract” national claim to the Falkland Islands does not even have the “justification”—in any case rejected by Trotsky—of an Argentinian population on the Islands.

There is not a grain of genuine Marxism in the position of the ultra-left sects. They have come out in support of the Junta. They are indifferent to the rights of the Falkland Islanders. They are indifferent to the fate of the workers in the ranks of the British forces, even welcoming their defeat at the hands of the Junta. Not only will this position fail to win the support of workers, but it will play into the hands of the Tories and British capitalism.

Only a campaign based on a clear, concrete analysis of all the factors involved in the Falklands crisis and based on the clear policies we have outlined, will be effective in mobilising opposition to the Tories and British imperialism.

Falklands Crisis

A SOCIALIST ANSWER



15p

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EL SALVADOR

Photo: POPPERFOTO



After stopping a bus, a guerrilla speaks to rural workers and appeals for "war taxes," January 1982.

Which way forward for the revolution?

By Pedro Montalvez

The heroic struggle against the El Salvador Junta has captured the attention of the workers' movement on a world scale, giving rise to a broad solidarity movement. Every conscious worker, every socialist or communist activist, every trade union activist wants to see the bloody regime in El Salvador defeated and the workers and peasants of that country victorious. The urgent need for the despatch of all kinds of material aid to the El Salvador guerrillas is more than evident. It is an expression of elementary solidarity, which the readers of this journal must do everything in their power to encourage and support.

Nevertheless, solidarity does not end with practical considerations, however important these may be. The revolutionary movement in El Salvador raises a series

Chronology of events in El Salvador

1526 Land, inhabited by Aztec Indians, conquered by Spain

1823 After separating from Spanish Guatemala in 1821, El Salvador joins Central American Federation.

1839 El Salvador becomes independent state.

1930 Following political ferment and growth of trade unions in 1920s, formation of Salvadorean Communist Party (PCS) led by Farabundo Martí, recently back from fighting US marines in Nicaragua alongside Sandino. Mass march of workers and peasants on San Salvador.

1931 Brutal coup d'état consolidates first of long succession of military Juntas.

1932 President Hernandez Martinez refuses to recognise PCS gains in municipal and legislative elections. Abortive uprising met with savage repression, 30,000 killed in the 'matanza'. Military consolidate control of state apparatus through National Guard and Police.

1944 Hernandez dictatorship brought down by general strike.

1950 Colonel Oscar Osario becomes president, attempting, under conditions of world upswing, to modernise and industrialise the economy.

1960 Formation of Christian Democratic Party (PDC) advocating 'national development' and reforms; under Duarte made gains in 1960s in local and national elections.

1961 Central American Common Market (CACM) set up, promoted by US and fostering industrial development, especially through injection of US capital. Rivalry develops within oligarchy between traditional planters and capitalists favouring industrialisation, the latter more inclined to some 'modernisation.' United States also sets up the 'Alliance for Progress' to foster reform from above in Latin America to prevent revolution from below.

1964 United States sponsored establishment of Central American Defence Council (CONDECA) to co-ordinate action against social unrest, channelling military support to right-wing military leaders in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras.

1968 Emergence of social-democratic party, the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) based on intellectuals and professionals, followed by formation of National Democratic Union (UDN), legal front for banned PCS. General strike shakes 'liberal' Sanchez regime. Ultra-right vigilante group, ORDEN, linked to army, formed to counter rural workers' organisations like Federation of Christian Peasants (FECCAS) which grew in 1960s.

1970 Cayetano Carpio, general-secretary of the PCS splits from Communist Party to form Farabundo Martí People's Liberation Front (FPL), based on strategy of 'people's war.'

1971 Formation of Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP) by former members of Christian Democrats (PDC).

1972 Election successes of National Opposition Union (UNO), alliance of MNR and UDN, blocked by electoral fraud.

1974 Formation of United Popular Action (FAPU) based on students and urban workers, with some trade union support.

1975 Military-orientated ERP split, with formation of Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN) calling for preparation for mass insurrection. Also formation of Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR) following June massacre of peasants and students; one of biggest organisations with support of peasants' organisations, FECCAS & Farm Workers Union (UTC), and some newer industrial unions.

1976 Government of general Molina attempted mild land reform, provoking reaction from oligarchy organising through National Association of Private Enterprise (ANEP) and Eastern Region Farmers' Front (FARO).

1977 Oligarchy's candidate, general Humberto Romero, installed as president; reforms shelved.

1978 ERP, attempting to link up with mass movement (throughout this period: strikes, factory occupations, demonstrations and land seizures, etc), set up Popular Leagues—28 February (LP-28). Repression stepped up through death squads like Armed Forces of Liberation—War of Elimination (FALANGE) and White Warriors Union (UGB).

1979 July: fall of Somoza and victory of Sandinistas in Nicaragua, also success of New Jewel Movement in Granada.

October: young officers overthrow Romero and proclaim programme of reforms, but behind the scenes right-wing reassert control of Permanent Council of Armed Forces (COPEFA).

1980 January: after military repudiate reforms and intensification of repression, reformist politicians (from MNR, PDC and UDN) who joined the Junta after the coup resign en bloc. Revolutionary Co-ordinating Council of the Masses (CRM) formed by all popular organisations, now including PCS.

March: new Junta with Duarte and Christian Democrats providing civilian front for military. Liberal archbishop Romero assassinated, military and death squads step up mass killings, and the country slides into full-scale civil war.

April: CRM included in new Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), with MNR, Popular Social Christian Movement (split-off from PDC), and Democratic Front of TUs, professional and small-business groups.

June: Massive general strike, followed by less successful general strike in August.

July: US government (Carter and then Reagan) steps up military aid to Junta. October: five main guerrilla groups come together in Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMNL) under FDR's broad 'anti-imperialist, anti-oligarchy' programme.

1981 January: FMNL launches major offensive, military step up mass assassinations, torture and kidnappings; by mid-1981 guerrillas control about a third of the country in 'liberated zones.' Country gripped by economic crisis, US again increase aid.

1982 March: elections for constituent assembly called under pressure from Reagan to bolster Duarte, but resulting in victory for ultra-right d'Aubuisson and oligarchy's recently formed Arena party.

of vitally important political issues, not only for the workers and peasants of that country, but for the workers' movement throughout Latin America. In particular, ever since the recent experience of Nicaragua and El Salvador we have witnessed a certain resurgence of guerrillaist or terrorist tendencies in other Latin American countries, including Chile. Without putting in question for a single moment the honest intentions of these comrades, we consider it our duty to warn them that the ideas and solutions which they are advocating (which in point of fact, had absolutely disastrous consequences in the previous period) represent a fundamentally false interpretation of the ideas and methods of Marxism and also of the experience of the revolution in Central America. Were this tactic to become generalised once again throughout the continent of South America, it would not represent, as these comrades imagine, a short-cut to the socialist revolution, but a recipe for a new series of bloody defeats.

For this reason, it is an opportune moment to work out a critical analysis of the revolutionary process in El Salvador and, specifically, of the theory of a 'people's war'. It is hoped that this analysis will provide a serious contribution to the debate on the strategy and tactics of the revolution in Latin America.

El Salvador, like the other countries of Central America, is an artificial nation. Under the Spanish crown, Central America was governed as a single nation, and in 1821, it attained independence also as a single nation. Later on, the process of 'Balkanisation' of Central America led to its division into five tiny republics, formed under the rule of the dominant caste of creole aristocracy. This division of the living body of Central America into a string of small, and more or less unviable, countries was the pre-condition of their collective subordination to imperialism. The revolutionary aspiration of the oppressed peoples of the zone towards reunification and the setting-up of one great Central American nation runs, like a red thread, through the historical struggles of the Central American revolution.

The interdependent nature of the revolutionary struggles throughout the zone is evident today from the effects which the Nicaraguan Revolution has had in El Salvador and Guatemala. At a more or less accelerated rhythm, the process will spread sooner or later to Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama. The "domino theory" is applicable not only to Asia, but also to Central America, one of the most vital points of American Imperialism. From the first moment, therefore, the destiny of the revolution in El Salvador is intimately bound up with the revolution throughout Central America and the rest of the Latin American continent, and the situation in the USA itself.

The importance of Central America for the economic interests of the USA is clear. Four countries in this region (Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador) are in third place in the South American league in terms of exports of sugar and coffee; second in terms of export of meat; and in first place in the export of bananas to the US market. Nevertheless, their population have the lowest living standards in Latin America in terms of life expectancy (56 years); illiteracy (70%); access to education (42%); child mortality (more

than 100 for every 1,000 births) and malnutrition (70% of children under five years old).

The region's social and political instability has been reflected in an interminable series of coups, military dictatorships and popular insurrections throughout its history. That of El Salvador is particularly bloody. Suffice it to recall how general Maximilius Hernández Martínez rose to power after the massacre of 30,000 peasants in 1931. The country's economy is dominated by an oligarchy of fourteen families. Ten per cent of the population owns 90% of the wealth of the country, and 2% owns 60% of the cultivatable land. Even before the civil war, 50% of the population was unemployed. Three quarters of children under five years old suffer from serious malnutrition. Ninety per cent of the population earns less than \$100 a year.

Since 1927 the "Fourteen families" have ruled the country through the agency of military dictatorships. However, one of the features of the El Salvador oligarchy was the ability to combine the bloodiest repression with trickery, fraud and deception. There have been elections many times in the history of El Salvador, but elections in which the military always announced the results and in which their candidate always won, and the leaders of the Opposition were obliged to flee into exile.

The division of Central America into a string of small, more or less unviable countries was a precondition of their collective subordination to imperialism

The El Salvador working class has great revolutionary traditions. The first workers' organisations sprang up in the 1920s as a result of the enormous impact of the Russian revolution. The shoe-makers' strike of 1921 initiated a period of great strikes and workers' struggles. The first permanent trade unions were formed in 1923 and had to fight from the very first moment against the savage repression carried out by the National Guard.

In 1931 the falling price of coffee sparked off a wave of trade union agitation in the countryside. Some 80,000 agricultural labourers, centred mainly in the coffee plantations, became organised in militant unions. The oligarchy responded to the wave of strikes and demonstrations with the brutal coup d'état of general Martínez on 2 December 1931. The attempt on the part of the Communist leader, Agustín Farabundo Martí, to organise a heroic but ill-prepared insurrection, lacking clear perspective, led to a terrible massacre in which 30,000 peasants were executed in a war of extermination against the rebels.

Nevertheless, the workers had their revenge in 1944, when the Hernández Martínez dictatorship was brought to an end by a general strike which turned into a popular uprising. In recent years, prior to 1980, the workers' movement in El Salvador had clearly entered once more into a period of upswing, with yet another general strike in 1968 which had great repercussions.

The enormous potential power of the El Salvador proletariat has been one of the most important factors in the situation. In spite of the backward nature of the economy, there is quite a strong working class in El Salvador. One third of the Gross National Product stems from industry, mining and construction as against only 26% from agriculture. Slightly more than half the active population is accounted for by agriculture. In other words, the specific gravity of the El Salvador proletariat is far greater than that of the Russian working class in 1917.

El Salvador is a far more industrialised country than the majority in Central America, with factories devoted to the production of cotton, canning of food and drink, bricks, cement, chemical products, leather, tobacco and footwear. According to the official figures for 1968, there were 34,712 industrial workers. But this figure, apart from being incomplete in itself, does not give an accurate idea of the strength of the working class in El Salvador. To this figure must be added the workers in transport and the building industry, mining, commerce and fishing, as well as a very numerous class of artisans and other semi-proletarian elements which play a very important role in the economy and society of a country such as El Salvador. On the other hand, this figure excludes the workers of the coffee plantations, one of the key sectors of the economy who quite clearly form part of the working class.

At the beginning of the 1970s there were clear symptoms of a reactivation of the workers' movement, such as the strikes in the biggest shoe factories of the country. The terrible living conditions of the masses in the towns and villages helped to swell the support for opposition to the regime. The growing gulf which separated the Catholic Church from the government was another symptom of the self-same process. There were increasingly evident divisions within the ruling class itself and even within the ranks of the army officer caste. The most intelligent wing of the bourgeoisie, represented by the Christian Democrats, were advocating a reform from above, to forestall a revolutionary explosion from below.

Nevertheless, the most reactionary wing of the ruling class, represented by general Humberto Roberto, refused to accept the idea of change. The end result of this was the coup d'état of 1980 which was backed by Washington at the time. Undoubtedly, the victory of the Sandanistas in Nicaragua was the decisive factor in these events. US imperialism came down in favour of a "controlled reform" in order to avoid a repetition of a Nicaragua type situation in El Salvador.

At the bottom of the crisis in El Salvador, as in the other countries of the region, is the problem of agrarian reform and the disastrous living conditions of the peasantry, both the 'colonos' (sharecroppers) and the 'peones' (farm-labourers). Thus, one of the first issues to come to the forefront was the question of land-

reform. This was a fraud in the finest traditions of the El Salvador ruling-class. More than 500 hectares were 'expropriated' but with lavish over-compensation paid out to the 'hacendados' (big landowners). The most profitable land belonging to the coffee producers was untouched by this 'reform'. And despite all this, the oligarchy set its face squarely against it, and put pressure upon the government, utilising the services of the most reactionary wing of the military caste, whose representatives in the Junta was colonel Gutiérrez.

The self-styled "Revolutionary junta" which formed the government after the coup, dissolved Congress, promising new elections. It also suspended the Supreme Tribunal and promised amnesty for political prisoners and exiles and freedom for the political parties. However, within the junta itself, contradictory elements were at work. In theory, it was a coalition of "social democrats" and bourgeois "liberals" with representatives of the armed forces. In practice, it was nothing more than a government suspended in mid-air, trapped between the revolutionary movement of the masses and the resistance and sabotage of the "fourteen families".

The fall of the hated dictator Humberto Roberto opened the flood gates of the mass movement. All the discontent and frustrations accumulated for decades surged to the surface overnight. In the maelstrom of social ferment, the junta's "reformist" projects were doomed to failure beforehand. The contradictions between the classes were too strong. The gulf between rich and poor, too deep to allow a "half-way" solution. The divisions within the ruling class found their reflection in the tensions inside the junta between colonel Gutiérrez and colonel Majano. Aware of the danger of a social explosion, the spokesmen of the "progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie headed by Majano, advocated the drawing-in of the left-wing parties into the government. This was turned down by the reactionary tendency represented by Gutiérrez. The oligarchy and the officer caste launched a counter-offensive from the right. The Land Reform served as a pretext for a new wave of murders in the countryside carried out by members of the Armed Forces and right-wing gunmen.

The situation at this point in time bore a clearly pre-revolutionary character. The government, hard-pressed from the left and the right, found itself paralysed. The ruling class was deeply divided and demoralised. The rifts in the ranks of the ruling class had affected those of the Army, where an important section of the officers and junior officers were in open conflict with the oligarchy and the right. The middle class had turned against the oligarchy. Under pressure of the masses, a split opened up within the Christian Democracy. The mass of the working class and the peasantry were clearly willing to fight for power. Even US imperialism was vacillating. Cyrus Vance warned the most reactionary generals against staging a coup, not for any humanitarian sentiments on Carter's part, but for fear of provoking a revolutionary movement of the masses.

In this situation, a revolutionary offensive of the proletariat, mobilising the peasantry and the semi-proletariat and petit-bourgeois masses behind it for the seizure of power, would undoubtedly have led to a split in the ranks of the army, whose internal cohesion

had been seriously undermined, preparing the ground for the passing-over of the most progressive soldiers and officers to the side of the working class.

Nobody can assert that, at this juncture the working class was not ready to fight. In the months after the coup, the workers took part in one general strike after another, in spite of all the difficulties and dangers which this supposed. Throughout 1980 there was a wave of working class mobilisations unprecedented in the history of the country. In June, for example, there was a general strike, called by the "Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses" which, despite being declared illegal by the Junta, brought about the closure of the majority of businesses in the capital, the schools and the Administration.

The extreme weakness of the government at that time is shown by the concessions made by it to the mass movement (at least on paper). Among other things, the Junta announced the nationalisation of the banks, including foreign banks, and credit in general. This was a clear expression of the ruling class's fear and desperation in the face of the revolutionary movement of the masses. A general strike poses the question of power: "Who is master of the house, you or us?" If the leaders of the movement in El Salvador had linked the slogan of the general strike to the idea of workers' councils or 'soviets', generalised and extended to include the elected representatives of the housewives, the tenants' associations, the students, peasants and soldiers, the revolutionary movement could have acquired an irresistible strength. The decisive confrontation between the forces of the revolution and the counter-revolution would have taken place in an entirely favourable situation for the working class.

In point of fact, the elements of soviets already existed within the tenants' associations and trade union committees which had been set up in El Salvador with the encouragement of different groups on the left. But these committees never succeeded in transforming themselves into soviets for one reason. Almost the whole of the groups and political parties with a serious mass presence in El Salvador, under the influence of Castroite ideas and with the example of Nicaragua at their back, had opted in favour of the tactics and strategy of guerrillaism. This fact determined their attitude towards the working class and the strike movement, which was seen by them fundamentally as an auxiliary arm of the guerrilla struggle.

Although the different guerrilla groups took an active part in the general strikes, at no time did they explain the role of the working class as the protagonist. In practice, the heroic struggles of the working class were subordinated to "a guerrilla offensive." They spoke confusedly about the creation of a "people's state," but as a perspective after the victory of the guerrillas.

Without the shadow of a doubt, in a situation like that of El Salvador, guerrillarist tendencies are the product of decades of the most brutal and ferocious oppression. Advanced layers of the youth drew the conclusion that the only possible way of fighting against the oligarchy was to take to arms and follow the example of Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua.

Compared to the alternative of a tardy and laborious work of organisation in the factories and workers'

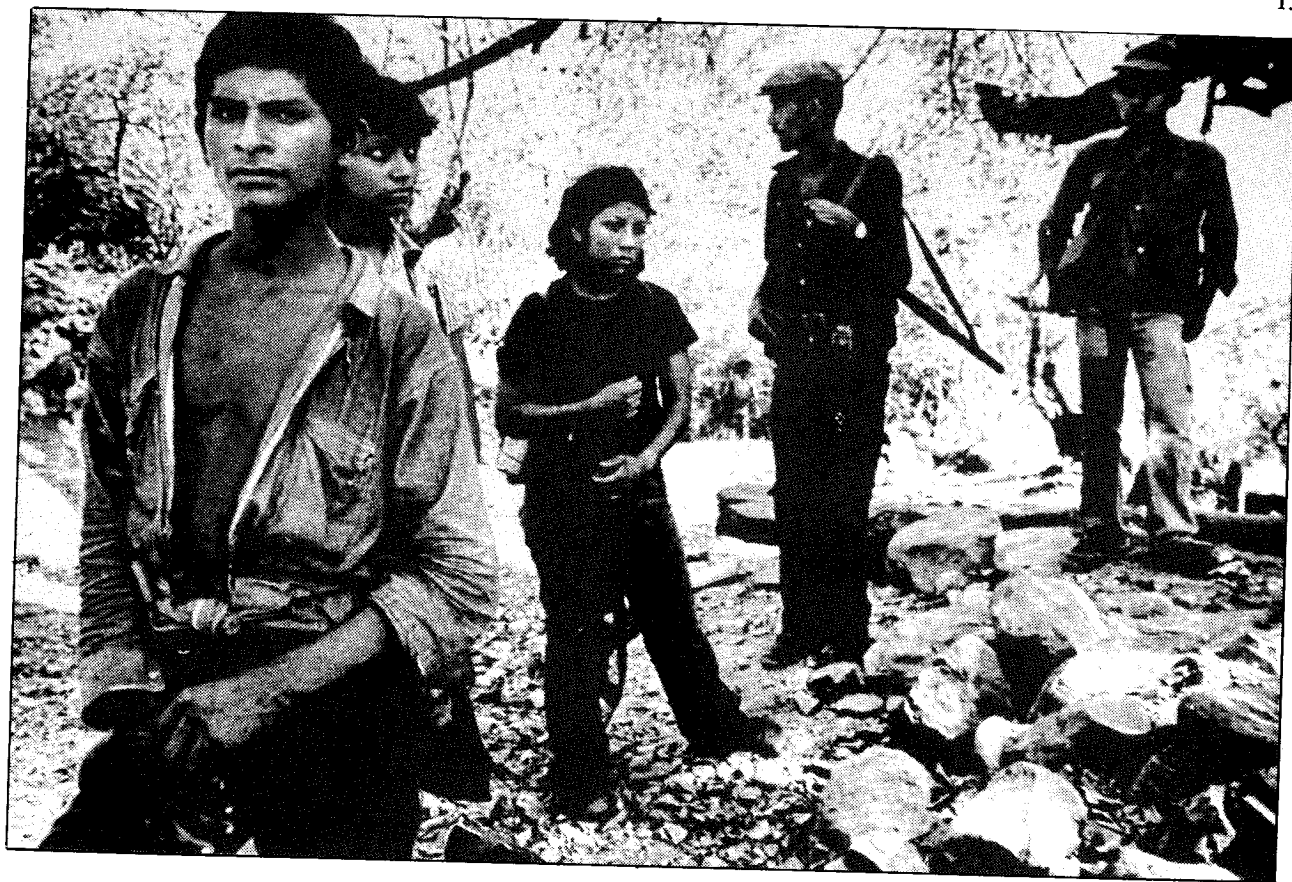
districts—educating worker-cadres and grouping together the forces capable of carrying out the seizure of power in the cities by means of the conscious movement of the proletariat which would gather to its side the peasant, semi-proletarian and petty-bourgeois masses, on the basis of the programme of socialist revolution—the guerrilla solution seemed more immediate, more practical and more rapid. Nevertheless, there are times when the search for short-cuts has caused the shipwreck of the revolutionary process. The conscious workers of the world actively support the heroic fighters of the El Salvador guerrilla war, and will do everything in their power to facilitate their victory and the defeat of the murderous junta. But this solidarity cannot, and must not, serve as an excuse for the encouragement and extension of a servile imitation of the methods of guerrillaism in other countries where they do not have the slightest justification from the point of view of objective conditions and the needs of the working class.

It was inevitable that decades of repression, murders and tortures would give rise to a burning desire for vengeance on the part of the youth. Long before the collapse of the Humberto Roberto dictatorship there existed a whole series of guerrilla groups, some of which enjoyed a certain support among workers and peasants. The main reason for this situation was the vacuum produced by the reformist degeneration of the PCS (the El Salvador Communist Party) which did not offer a revolutionary perspective to the youth and the working class.

The enormous potential power of the El Salvador working class has been one of the most important factors in the situation

The fraudulent nature of the elections held in El Salvador was exposed once again by the general elections of 1977 which were manipulated by the government party, the PCN. The reply of the working class was a general strike which was brutally repressed with the murder of 80 workers. In this situation, and in the absence of a revolutionary alternative on the part of the "Communist" Party, the guerrillaist tendencies were multiplied tenfold. The kidnaps and assassinations of the gunmen and torturers of "ORDEN" (an ultra-right wing vigilante organisation, organising death-squads linked to right-wing officers) were stepped up. A number of spectacular actions were staged, such as the occupation of the Mexican Embassy in January, 1979.

Undoubtedly, these actions reflected the unbearable tensions which existed at all levels of society. But, in and of themselves, they were incapable of presenting a serious threat to the regime. The overthrow of Humberto Romero on 15 October, 1979, was not a consequence of guerrilla actions, but of the pressure



A guerrilla patrol (above) rests after an engagement with the Army, February 1982. This was near Jucuaran, where an estimated 400 civilians had recently been massacred by the Junta's forces. Below: Two guerrilla soldiers stand guard (February 1982) after stopping and burning a government truck used to transport harvested cotton on a major El Salvador highway outside of Usulután.





from Washington, which feared the extension of the Nicaraguan revolution to El Salvador, if there was no change from above (Somoza had been overthrown in July of the same year).

The wave of radicalisation which surged up and became rapidly intensified after the fall of Humberto Romero offered enormous possibilities for a revolutionary party based on the proletariat. The slogans of "workers, councils" and "general arming of the working class" against the attacks of the repressive forces of the state were on the order of the day. The actions carried out by the working class showed an increasingly advanced level of revolutionary consciousness.

Under the pressure of the irresistible mass movement, there took place a process of unification of different opposition groups BRP [Popular Revolutionary Bloc]; PL-28 [Popular Leagues, 28 February]; FAPU [United Popular Action Front]; etc) to which the CP added its name in January, 1980. Initially, a revolutionary programme was adopted based on the overthrow of the Junta and the formation of a "revolutionary democratic government, based on the nationalisation of the means of production, the banks and credit, foreign trade, the creation of a new army and the investigation of 'missing persons'."

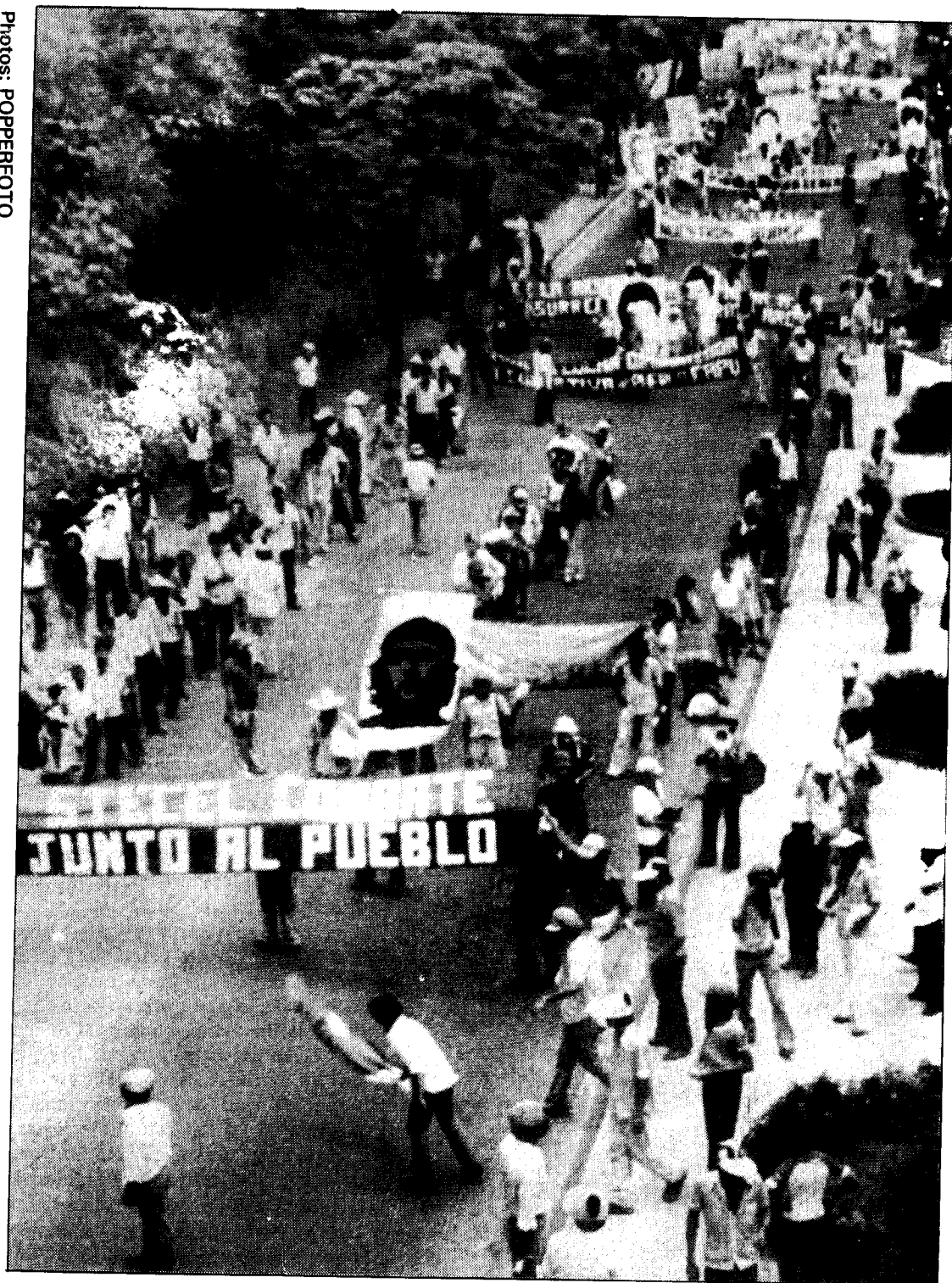
This programme, in a general sense, reflected the most pressing needs of the situation. The economy was in ruins. The oligarchy was resorting to massive outflow of capital. Only the seizure of power by the proletariat, in alliance with the oppressed masses of town and country, could save society from total disintegration. What was lacking was the organisation and generalisation of the organisations of workers' power, the workers' council or "soviets" organised around the programme of the seizure of power. In reality, in the workers districts and the factories, commit-

Instead of basing themselves on the leading role of the working class, the guerrilla leaders treated the workers' movement as an auxiliary arm of the central tactic of guerrilla warfare

Photos: POPPERFOTO



The Junta's soldiers (above left) armed and trained by the US, but easily demoralised. Right: Mass left wing protest, December 1979, against government murders and kidnappings.



tees existed, but the guerrilla leaders did not concern themselves with the task of uniting them, on the basis of elected representatives, with a view to creating the basis of an alternative power to the Junta.

All the power to decide, all the initiative remained in the hands of the guerrilla leaders who, instead of basing themselves on the leading role of the working class, treated the workers' movement as **an auxiliary arm of the central tactic of guerrilla warfare**. Instead of organising the working class for a decisive assault on the government, they once more limited themselves to the tactic of occupations of embassies and ministries,

kidnaps and isolated short-cuts.

The crisis of the Junta rapidly concretised in a split. On the 2 and 3 January, all the civilians in the Cabinet resigned from the government. On the 15 January a new cabinet was formed, with a Christian Democrat majority. On 24 March, the counter-offensive of the reaction found its expression in the assassination of Archbishop Romero, which increased the radicalisation of the petit-bourgeois masses. Colonel Majano, hard-pressed by the reactionary wing of the Army, fled abroad.

In April, the Democratic Front (Frente Democrático

Salvadoré) was set up, composed of the representative of the "progressive" bourgeois (the National Revolutionary Movement) and the "popular" fraction of the Christian Democracy, including people who had participated in the first government of the Junta. Later on, these bourgeois sections were included in the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) which nominated the ex-Minister Enrique Alvarez Córdova as general secretary.

The formation of an alliance with these bourgeois "liberals" meant a drastic change in the programme defended by the left parties. To the guerrillaist tactic was added a new programme which did not transcend the limitations of bourgeois society. Hitherto, there was confused talk about a "people's state" after a guerrilla victory. Now they defended the formation of a "revolutionary democratic government" representing a "broad coalition of forces" with representative nominated by the guerrillaist organisation, the FMLN (The Farabundo Marti Forces of National Revolution), and its political expression, the FDR. Instead of the previous programme of the nationalisation of the means of production, the programme of the "revolutionary democratic government" consisted of peace, national sovereignty and independence, a non-aligned foreign policy, the creation of an army based on the FMLN forces and "honest officers and soldiers of the present army", the democratic representation of "all popular, revolutionary and democratic sectors" who contributed to the overthrow of the military dictatorship and "support for all private businessmen who collaborate and promote the economic development of the country and the programme of the revolutionary government."

The fall of the hated dictator Humberto Roberto in October 1979 opened the flood gates of the mass movement

The revolutionary enthusiasm of the working class was clearly manifested in the magnificent general strike of 24 and 25 June. In the workers' districts, committees and even self-defence groups were set up. In the ranks of the guerrillaist organisations there were undoubtedly many militants who believed in the seizure of power by the working class.

Nevertheless, after months of partial struggles, with no clear perspectives for the seizure of power, came the first symptoms of tiredness on the part of the workers. The second general strike, called by the FDR for 13-15 Of August had much less support than the first one. The strike movement had clearly gone further than a phase of protest strikes of one or two days. The threat of reprisals by the Junta and its hired killers against any worker who participated in political strikes was un-

doubtedly an important factor in the minds of many workers. But, precisely for this reason, a new general strike "of protest" would inevitably have less success than an open struggle for power. The moment for political actions had already passed into history. The basic problem was that the "guerrillaist" leaders did not believe in the general strike as an efficient weapon for the seizure of power and had already decided in favour of the strategy of "people's war" after the style of Nicaragua and Vietnam.

On 16 August, the leaders of the FDR affirmed that the strike had been very effective, and that the people had shown that "insurrectional measures to be daily more feasible." In practice, the Junta, interpreting the lack of response for the strike as a symptom of weakness, went over to the offensive with the declaration of a state of emergency on 23 August, using as a pretext the **political strike** of 1,500 workers of the electrical industry which caused a 24-hour blackout in the capital.

The barest analysis of the events from the fall of Humberto Romero in October 1979 until September 1980 shows clearly how the guerrilla leaders had never conceived of the workers' movement as the leading force in the insurrection, but as an auxiliary arm of the guerrilla war, subordinated to the central strategy of "people's war" based in the countryside. The function of strikes was not the preparation of the proletariat for the seizure of power, but the disorganisation of the Junta. In a word, they acted as though the general strike were simply an extension of the "propaganda of the deed" of the previous period.

The working class cannot remain in a situation of permanent ferment. If the strike movement at a given moment in time does not become transformed into an indefinite general strike and an open struggle for power, the movement inevitably begins to decline and the initiative passes temporarily to the reaction. After nearly one year of struggles which did not show a way out via decisive showdown with the Junta, the movement in the towns found itself momentarily in an impasse. At that moment the leaders put forward the idea (which they had never actually given up) of launching a "people's war" against the Junta, concentrating the forces of the revolution in the countryside.

The perspectives of these leaders were based on a mistaken perspective, both politically and militarily.

In spite of subsequent declarations made by the spokesmen of the FDR which imply that the guerrilla offensive towards the end of 1980 had relatively modest objectives (the setting up of a series of "liberated zones" as guerrilla bases in the countryside), it is clear that they expected to obtain a more or less swift victory. Fernan Cienfuegos, a leader of the FARN (Armed Forces of National Resistance) guerrilla organisation, stated that the guerrilla offensive counted with sufficient forces to impose an "irreversible political and military situation in El Salvador" before the confirmation of Reagan as President of the USA—that is to say, before 20 January, 1981!

The guerrilla leaders took as their models the ideas of Castro, Mao and Giap, of conquering the rural areas and later the cities. However, if there is a countryside in the whole of Latin America less suitable for guerrilla



Photo: POPPERFOTO

A young woman fights with the guerrillas. Brutal repression has increased support for the guerrilla organisations, especially among the youth and peasantry.

warfare, that country is El Salvador. Here there are no great tracts of jungle, as in Vietnam, or enormous expanses, as in China. The only neighbouring countries are hostile to the revolution, and bases of counter-revolution: Guatemala in the North and Honduras in the North-East. The density of the population creates enormous difficulties for the application of the classical theories of guerrilla warfare. The smallest country in Central America, El Salvador has, at the same time the densest population (307.5 per square metre, according to the census of 1961). For all these reasons, it was more than evident that a guerrilla war, if it were not immediately successful, would be particularly bloody, with enormous loss of life, and would mean a colossal drain on the most heroic and self-sacrificing forces of the Revolution.

The guerrilla offensive, which succeeded in liberating a series of provinces, was very costly in lives and did not succeed in inflicting a decisive defeat on the government forces.

From that time, the El Salvador conflict has resolved itself into bloody war of extermination, backed up by the murderous gangs of the "death squads" of ORDEN. The government's air force is using bombs made of pesticides, defoliants, and white phosphorus in a diabolical repetition of the methods of US imperialism in Vietnam. The brutal repression unleashed by the Junta will undoubtedly serve to increase the support for the guerrillas among the masses, above all among the peasantry, the principal victim of these indiscriminate massacres and tortures.

This will be a long drawn-out conflict. After the defeat of the first offensive, the guerrillas were capable of renewing their attacks by the beginning of March, 1981, although on a lesser scale. The airforce and artillery of the Junta has not been able to eliminate the guerrillas who continue to control a series of areas of the country, in the Northern provinces of Morazan, in the province of Cabranas, in the North of Santa Ana, in San Vicente, Usulután and in the area of Guazapa, 60 kilometres from the capital. The USA has carried out a complete rearmament of the Army. Nevertheless, the Junta's military campaign has not been very brilliant, despite the presence of US "military advisors." The Junta's troops are demoralised. According to sources of the FMLR-FDR "after three days' fighting, the morale and fighting capabilities of the Junta's forces tend to deteriorate rapidly, which means that they have to be relieved by fresh troops more or less every week." This army is only "effective" in the massacre of defenceless civilians. It is a mixture of conscripts, forced to fight against their will, mercenaries and gangsters.

It was more than evident that a guerrilla war, if it were not immediately successful, would be particularly bloody, involving a colossal drain on the most heroic and self-sacrificing forces of the revolution

Nevertheless, the Junta continues to control the cities and nerve-centres of the country. Backed by the USA, the Junta could last much longer, so that there exists the danger of a deadlock in the conflict, which might last years, with a ghastly waste of life and a total dislocation of the economic and social life of the country. There have already been more than 30,000 victims, most of them at the hands of the repressive forces of the government.

Conscious of the danger, the representatives of the FDR-FMLN have raised the possibility of "mediation" and "a negotiated solution to the conflict." The

problem is: negotiation on what basis? The army generals will not accept negotiations which might imply recognition of the guerrillas as a political force in equality of conditions. In response to the proffered negotiations, the Junta is pressing ahead with its plans for elections in March. These elections will be open also to oppositional elements. They will only have to hand over their arms and embrace "legality" in order to qualify. Under present conditions, this would be tantamount to signing your own death warrant! And to underline the fact, the Junta has published a list of 138 "traitors to the Fatherland" which includes the names of all the leaders of the FDR.

It is clear that "negotiations" in this situation have no sense. The Junta has published a document supposedly written by the FDR-FMLN in which it is stated that the mediation offer is a tactical manoeuvre to gain time and win international support. This is a possibility. The conditions made by the guerrillas for negotiation are, among others, an end to repression, the ending of wartime legislation, complete freedom of expression and the substitution of the army High Command! Mao Tse Tung also made similar offers more than once during the Civil War in China as a manoeuvre to gain time and win support away from the enemy. The manoeuvre of the "elections" called by the Junta has the same significance. But the issue at stake now is not one of elections but **state power**.

Only the USA could force a negotiated settlement. But Reagan continues to believe in the possibility of the military victory of the Junta. After the loss of Nicaragua, he does not want to lose El Salvador. According to a study carried out by Cynthia Anderson in 1981, the Junta had received \$107 million from the USA as against only \$9.8 million in the two previous years. In terms of military aid, it received \$5.9m in 1980 and \$35.4m in the first four months of 1981, as well as 14 'Huey' helicopters (most of them subsequently destroyed by the guerrillas) and 56 "military advisers." However, the real amount of aid is much higher. If we include the money channelled to El Salvador via the international Banks in Washington, the real figure is \$532m.

Without this support, the government would not be able to continue the war. According to Napoleon Duarte himself, the war is costing \$15m a month. In addition to the very high figures of dead and wounded, the government itself recognises that 157,000 persons have been left homeless or been obliged to move to other areas. A further 150,000 have fled abroad. In a small country of five million inhabitants, this represents an enormous movement of population.

The effects in the economic sphere have been disastrous: "The Gross National Product suffered a decline of more than 10% in 1980, according to figures of the Planning Ministry, arriving at a level lower than that of 1976. The per capita income was only slightly more than \$250. The director of Social Security has stated that **at least 34,000 industrial workers in San Salvador (20% of the total for the sector) lost their job as a result of factory closures.**" (*El Pais* 17 July 1981, emphasis added)

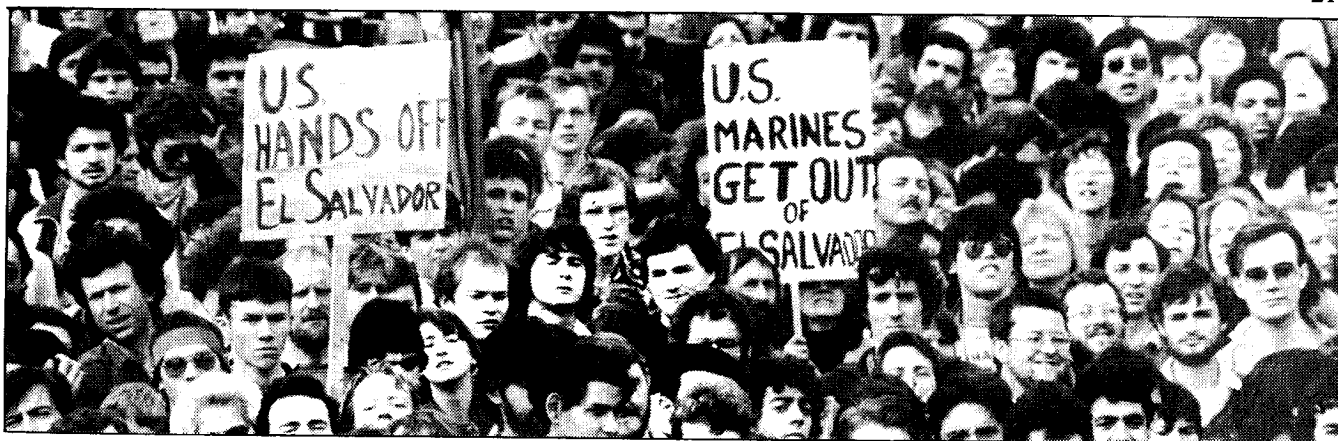
The danger exists of a process of disintegration and atomisation of the working class and of a growing

lumpenization and demoralisation of the proletariat with very negative consequences for the future of the socialist revolution. The working class no longer sees itself as the protagonist of the revolutionary process, but as the passive object of forces outside itself. There will undoubtedly be a widespread sympathy towards the "guerrillaism" and hatred towards the Junta amongst the workers. But it is the relation between an oppressed class and an army of "saviours." Behind this lies a feeling of impotence and passivity in the face of the oppressors which did not exist before. This is the direct consequence of the theory and practice of the "prolonged revolutionary war." **The socialist revolution demands as its prior condition of existence the conscious self-movement of the working class.** Without this, even a revolutionary war with a base among the masses in the countryside (and, without doubt, the guerrilla movement in El Salvador enjoys mass support) even in the event of victory, could not lead to the establishment of socialism, in spite of the good intentions, the heroism and sincerity of its leaders.

Isolated from the working class in the towns, the ex-workers, ex-peasants and ex-students of the guerrilla army will have a tendency to become turned into declassified elements under the control of a military bureaucracy. The exigencies of war will serve to augment the tendencies in the direction of **bureaucratic command**. This is the experience of all guerrilla movements in China, Cuba, Argentina, Yugoslavia, etc. The more prolonged the conflict, the deeper will be the bureaucratic tendencies, which will have their most negative effects in the event of a guerrilla victory. "The task of the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself." Any attempt to substitute the leading role of the proletariat with other social forces will inevitably result in the creation of a privileged bureaucratic caste from the word go.

The working class of the entire world desires and fights for the victory of the guerrillas of El Salvador against the rotten reactionary regime of Napoleon Durte. A guerrilla victory would mean an enormous step forward and would have very important repercussions in all the other countries of the region and throughout South America.

On the basis of their experiences, at times painful ones, the working class of Central America will come to understand the need for a Marxist programme as the only means of changing society



El Salvador solidarity demonstration, London, 28 March 1982

Under capitalism there is no future for the peoples of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, etc.

The rise to power of the FMLN-FDR would mean the beginning of the end for landlordism and capitalism in El Salvador. In spite of the limited character of the Front's programme, in practice it would be impossible to keep the revolution within the limits of the capitalist system. An FMLN-FDR government would have to nationalise the key points of the economy or suffer a complete debacle. The stupidity and short-sightedness of US imperialism, with its unconditional defence of reaction in El Salvador will only serve to accelerate the process.

American imperialism is in difficulties. The wave of chauvinism which accompanied the triumph of Reagan has subsided to the degree that the working class has realised the consequences of his economic policies and the youth has understood the danger of armed intervention in Central America. The protests by certain bourgeois politicians against growing participation of US "military advisers" in El Salvador reflects the fears of a section of the bourgeoisie of "a new Vietnam" in Central America.

Given the desperation of the strategists of capital in the USA the possibility of a military adventure in Central America or the Caribbean cannot be altogether excluded. But such an adventure would be totally counter-productive and would spark off a wave of protests in the USA, radicalising the opposition to the Reagan government. Therefore, it is possible that the Pentagon might limit itself to a presence of "military advisers" on a relatively small scale, mercenaries, with indirect intervention through Honduras or, possibly, Venezuela.

At this moment in time, all Central America has become a powder-keg. The revolutionary movements of the workers and peasants might suffer this or that setback, but after each defeat, it will arise again with still greater strength, like the giant of Greek mythology who arose, each time he was hurled to the ground, having drawn new strength from his Mother, the Earth. The contradictions of capitalism in these countries are insoluble. We have definitely entered into a period of revolution throughout the region. **The Central American Revolution will triumph under the forms of the socialism revolution, or it will never triumph at all.**

On the basis of their experiences, at times painful

ones, the working class of Central America will come to understand the need for a **Marxist programme as the only means of changing society**. It will learn the need for a policy of complete class independence from this "progressive" bourgeoisie in order to forge the alliance of the working class with all the other oppressed sections of the town and village. It will also learn the futility of the methods of individual terrorism and guerrillaism and the need to have confidence in its own strength, its own organisations and its own class consciousness.

The conscious workers of El Salvador are fighting for the overthrow of the bloodstained regime of Napoleon Duarte-Goutierrez. They are enthusiastic about the successes of the guerrilla army in its war against the forces of the Junta. With all their heart and soul they desire the victory of the FMLN. But the working class can never renounce its historic mission, or entrust it to other social forces. If the revolution is carried out by forces other than the proletariat itself, this fact will necessarily have very serious consequences for the future, as is shown by the experience of those countries where the revolution has taken place as the result of a guerrilla war or so-called "people's war."

Socialism means the conscious participation of the working class at all levels on the tasks of running the state, industry and society. It means the administration of society as a whole by the councils of workers and poor peasants and the creation of a workers' democracy, like the state which existed in Russia under Lenin and Trotsky. A bureaucratic state, dominated by a privileged caste, even though it is based on a nationalised, planned economy can never lead to socialism, and will eventually tend to degenerate into a totalitarian system and a new kind of slavery for the working class, as we see clearly in the Stalinist states in the East.

In order to avoid the possibility of such deformations of the revolutionary process, the working class, beginning with its most conscious and revolutionary elements, must base itself on the principles and programme of Marxism: the ideas worked out by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, the only ideas capable of leading the working class to the socialist transformation of society and a classless society.

Once the workers and poor peasants of Central America are organised and armed with the revolu-



**GOOD AFTERNOON SIR. WE'RE CANVASSING ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT...
CAN WE RELY ON YOUR SUPPORT ON SUNDAY?**

tionary programme of Marxism, they will become an invincible force. The revolution will spread throughout the region. The revolution will spread throughout the region, imposing its iron logic across the artificial frontiers set up by the oligarchy and imperialism in order to subjugate and enslave the peoples. Fighting under the banner of the Socialist Federation of Central America, the revolution will have profound repercussions in the whole of Latin America, preparing the way for the overthrow of the military-police dictatorships of the southern half of the continent and initiating a new revolutionary process under the hegemony of the proletariat, whose sacred objective is the total uprooting of the humiliating lordship of imperialism by means of the establishment of the Socialist United States of Latin America as the first step towards the socialist world federation.

POSTSCRIPT

Instead of bolstering Duarte and the Christian Democrats, the 28 March elections for a constituent assembly in El Salvador have strengthened the parties of the right. The historical background to recent events, and the key issues of Marxist strategy and tactics, are dealt with in Pedro Montalve's article. This postscript deals with the subsequent elections and their immediate outcome.

Reagan was relying on Duarte to provide "democratic", "reformist" respectability for the defence of the country's rotten ruling class. Without a democratic facade, Reagan cannot be sure of maintaining congressional support for continued military and economic aid to the El Salvador regime.

However, while Reagan claimed the elections as a success, because 75% voted in spite of the boycott called by the opposition parties and guerrilla forces, the result is far from favourable as far as his policies are concerned. The election has given the four-party right-

wing alliance, dominated by Major Bob d'Aubuisson and his new Arena Party, 36 seats in the 60 seat assembly, leaving Duarte's right-wing Christian Democrats only 24.

The recently formed Arena Party is the direct representatives of the country's ruling oligarchy, which is based on the "fourteen families." Incensed by even Duarte's mild reforms, and disillusioned with their old party, the PCN (Partido de Conciliacion Nacional) the oligarchy, many members of which live in luxurious exile in Miami, have heavily financed the Arena Party.

The Arena is dominated by d'Aubuisson, who has close personal ties with the oligarchy and bloody connections with the right-wing death squads. He was

Once the workers and poor peasants of Central America are organised and armed with the revolutionary programme of Marxism, they will become an invincible force

formerly head of military intelligence, and even a former US Ambassador described him as "a pathological killer".

Having pushed for the elections, Reagan's administration, when faced with the result, has had to exert new pressure to prevent the Arena Party from appointing an ultra-right government. Army leaders, anxious to secure continued US support, have also backed a moderate figurehead. Alvaro Nagana has therefore

been pushed forward as head of the government. He is an economist, a banker, and, more to the point, comes from one of the "fourteen families". But he also has support from some of the Christian Democrats, while his appointment has dismayed the hard right.

Nevertheless, d'Aubuisson, as President of the Constituent Assembly, still remains the real power in the new government.

The question is, how did the right wing alliance manage to achieve its victory in the elections? Most EEC countries refuse to send observers. Thatcher, however, sent two observers, as a token of support for Reagan's policy.

On 7 May they published their report, saying that in organising the elections the armed forces "behaved in a commendable fashion". They say they found no evidence of fiddling or ballot rigging, but their report displays an almost incredible failure to assess the real conditions under which the elections were held. It is only in one or two passing comments and footnotes that they point to highly significant facts, which in

Undoubtedly, many people also feared that there could be checks on the way they had actually cast their votes. The elections clearly took place in an atmosphere of intimidation and terror, a reign of violence upheld by the National Guard and the death squads—known by everyone to be in the hands of the oligarchy and known to favour d'Aubuisson's victory.

Apart from the intimidation, the right-wing parties also gained from Duarte's bankruptcy. His backing by Washington, "*Yanqui imperialism*", was far from being an advantage. His partial reforms had infuriated the oligarchy, but the resulting inflation and economic chaos has begun to ruin the petit-bourgeois layers, the very people on whom the Christian Democrats depended for support.

D'Aubuisson's rallies brought out the frenzied petit-bourgeois, with the chanting being led by the sons and daughters of the propertied and business classes. Some workers, however, may also be swayed by d'Aubuisson's demagogic promise of more or less instant "peace and work".



Major Bob D'Aubuisson, leader of the oligarchy's Arena party and the ultra-right alliance, addresses a meeting during the March election campaign. D'Aubuisson's victory and defeat of Duarte has upset Reagan's plans.

themselves call into question the validity of the elections.

Many were excluded from voting: for a start, the estimated 50,000 dead as a result of action by the death squads, the army, and the ultra-right National Guard. Sixty per cent of the population are under 18—and excluded from voting. On top of this, many women in country areas do not have ID cards, and therefore cannot vote. The British observers report does, it is true, mention that it is **illegal not to vote**. ID cards are stamped as proof of voting and as a precaution against double voting.

The observers, however, fail to link this to the high turn-out. Other reports show that many people were afraid that failure to vote could result in severe retribution, not an unimportant fact in a country where the security forces habitually mete out instant "justice" on the street.

The failure of the boycott called by the FDR (Frente Democratica Revolucionaria, a group of former Christian and social democrats) as well as the FMLF guerrilla front, despite the continuation of the war in many parts of the country, underlines the inability of the guerrillas to organise and mobilise the working class and rural proletariat for political action.

The "success" of the elections will solve nothing. After opening the kennel door, US imperialism has to face the fact that it has unleashed a mad dog in the form of d'Aubuisson and his Arena allies. What the more intelligent representatives of US imperialism feared is now in danger of coming about.

The uninhibited defence of the oligarchy's wealth and power by d'Aubuisson's forces, with the intensification of brutal repression, will not save El Salvador's ruling class—on the contrary, it can only speed the rot.

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This is a tax on wages and salaries, which means that the average worker pays almost 30% of his or her income in tax. The average wage earner will have to pay an extra £500 million in tax. This is a tax on wages and salaries, which means that the average worker pays almost 30% of his or her income in tax.

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War in the Falklands p7

Support Health workers

HEALTH SERVICE workers are showing the way in fight back against privatisation. Thatcher's Government is offering a miserable 4% for secondary staff and 6.4% for primary. This would mean a rise of £1.44 per week for a secondary teacher and £1.28 for a primary teacher. The health service is a public service and should be treated as such. It is a service for the people and should be run for the people. It is a service for the people and should be run for the people.

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Details page 5

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By Roger Strives
Most income per head is taken from the working class. The average wage earner is left with only 40% of the purchasing power of the average 1979. The average wage earner is left with only 40% of the purchasing power of the average 1979.

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REST GET POORER



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MARXISM and the STATE

By Peter Taaffe

"Marxism equals totalitarianism and violence." This is the persistent theme of the capitalists and their media in their campaign against 'Militant'. All the notes on the political keyboards, from the ultra-right *Daily Mail* to the august *Times* and the alleged 'Labour' papers the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Star*, are struck in a campaign to drive the Marxists out of the Labour Party. This campaign reached new heights, or depths, with the frenzied reaction of the press to the recent speech of Pat Wall, a well known *Militant* supporter.

In a speech in which he argued against the ultra-left ideas of the Socialist



Photo: POPPERFOTO

Who really threatens democracy?

Workers Party, Pat Wall warned the labour movement that, unless it used its power to effect the socialist transformation of society in the decade or so that is opening up, the capitalist will seek to destroy the democratic rights of the working class. He showed that the ruling class would not hesitate to declare 'civil war' against the labour movement if they

considered their power, prestige and income, that is their domination of society, to be threatened. The press branded Pat Wall as an advocate of violence and civil war. It is as if a health inspector, or doctor, having warned about the danger of bubonic plague, unless certain preventive measures were taken, were to find himself pilloried in the media as an advocate of plague!

Violence and civil war are as welcome to Marxists as the plague. Our policies, if taken up and implemented by the labour movement, could precisely avoid this catastrophe. We have proclaimed hundreds if not thousands of times that we believe that, armed with a clear programme and perspective, the labour movement in Britain could effect a peaceful socialist transformation.

Why should Marxism threaten democracy? From its inception, Marxism, beginning with Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, was the foremost champion of 'democracy'. At one stage the Marxists went under the title 'Social Democrats'. This term has now been stolen by the Liberals and Tories-in-disguise, the traitors who have spilt from the Labour Party and formed the Social Democratic Party in Britain. The term 'Social Democrat' implied that the Marxists stood for socialism and democracy: they stood for the extension of democracy to the economy and society as a whole.

Not one of the democratic rights of the working class has been benevolently granted by the British bourgeoisie

In Russia, under the Tsarist autocracy, the Russian Marxists also called themselves at one stage 'consistent democrats'. The liberal capitalists were 'inconsistent' in their support for democracy. They proclaimed their support for the struggle for democratic and political rights and the overthrow of Tsarism. However, they implacably opposed giving the land to the peasants and freedom to the oppressed nationalities. No consistent democrat, argued the Marxists, could support the ownership of the land and the factories by a tiny minority, a handful of landlords and capitalists. The Marxists were the only 'consistent democrats' in Russia, and the Russian revolution was itself a vindication of this fact.

In supporting and defending 'democracy', the Marxists reject the hypocritical ideas of 'democracy' propounded by the spokesmen of capitalism. Democracy is not just a 'nice idea'. Capitalist democracy is distinguished from other forms of rule by the bourgeoisie by the rights which the working class have conquered for itself: the right to strike; freedom of assembly and the press; the right to form political parties, cultural and sports organisations; and of course the right to vote. These are the elements of the new society—that is, of a democratic workers' state—which are maturing in the womb of the outmoded and decay-

ing capitalist society. By using these rights effectively, the working class can strengthen itself, extend its power and its organisations. This in turn can prepare the way for compelling capitalism to vacate the stage of history for a new socialist society. Rather than threatening democratic rights, Marxism advocates the retention and enormous extension of these rights as a pre-condition for the movement towards socialism.

Not one of the rights of the working class has been benevolently granted by the British bourgeoisie. Indeed, the birth of the labour movement witnessed a ferocious, violent and often bloody resistance of the ruling class to the slightest concession to the working class. Imprisonment, transportation, starvation, conspiracies and the use of agents provocateurs, and not 'democratic' argument, were the methods employed by the British capitalists to combat the emerging trade unions. The first anti-trade union legislation, the Combination Acts, which were introduced in 1799 and 1800 and specified imprisonment for attempts to increase wages or achieve shorter hours, were only repealed in 1824. Even then, constant harassment, imprisonment, transportation, fines, and all the other refined measures of the bourgeoisie to combat the trade unions were employed. Today, Tebbit—the 'Chingford skinhead'—is continuing in a more refined fashion the methods which his class have used for a century and a half to hamper and sabotage trade union rights.

The history of the struggles of the workers for the vote shows the heroic endeavours of the workers, and the deceit, violence and repression used by the ruling class. The British workers formed the first independent workers' movement, the Chartists, in the struggle for the right to vote. This movement went to the lengths of threatening revolution before the British bourgeoisie was forced to make partial concessions. Indeed, contrary to the mythology of 'democratic evolution' in Britain, every concession in the last 150 years made by the British ruling class has been because of the threat of revolution, either abroad or in Britain. Thus the revolution in France in 1830 led to the first electoral Reform Bill, introduced in 1831 and only passed, after mass demonstrations, in 1832. The revolutionary Chartist movement in 1844-47 led to the 10-hour working day and to the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. At the same time, the break-up of the revolutionary movement following the defeat of the European revolutions of 1848 delayed the democratisation of the British parliament.

The Second Reform Act of 1867 came in the wake of the civil war the U.S.A. with the defeat of the slave states, which the treacherous British ruling class had supported. The 1905 revolution in Russia strengthened the British working class and was a factor in the success of the Labour Party in the general election of 1906, when Labour Representation Committee candidates gained for the first time 29 seats (alongside 25 Lib-Lab MPs).

In 1918, following the Russian revolution and the colossal revolutionary wave which swept throughout the whole of Europe, including Britain, the ruling class enlarged the franchise, and for the first time some women were permitted to vote in elections. The traditional response of the British ruling class has been to

introduce reforms from the top in order to prevent revolutions from below. However, women under 30 were denied the right to vote in 'democratic Britain' right up to 1928. The youth, moreover, between 18 and 21, were denied the right to vote right up until 1969. The same picture emerges in any analysis of the struggle for a 'free press' and the right of assembly.

The British bourgeoisie and its apologists have presented the evolution of British democracy as an example of the 'British genius', the ability to compromise. But as Leon Trotsky pointed out in his still very modern book, *Where is Britain going?*, the British

ruling class were able to tolerate democratic rights in Britain only on the basis of its enormous wealth. But to a significant extent, this wealth and power was founded on the enslavement of the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America. In other words, the granting of democratic rights by the British bourgeoisie to the working class of Britain was founded on the denial of those very same rights to the masses in the colonial and semi-colonial world.

The so-called British tranquility and 'social peace' in large measure was in inverse proportions to the violence that was employed against the peoples under the British capitalist domination. Thus a previous Tory leader, Lord Salisbury, summed up the policy of the British governing classes in relation to India: "India must be bled". Britain has never been the democratic arcadia claimed by the ideologists of capitalism and their right-wing echoes within the British labour movement. It is an incomplete democracy, if democracy is understood to mean the rule of the majority. How can a state be described as really democratic, when it tolerates the existence of the hereditary House of Lords and a Monarchy? These remnants of feudalism are not maintained by the bourgeoisie for purely decorative purposes, or for the benefit of the tourist industry. They are a reserve weapon in the armoury of the ruling class to be used to check, sabotage and, if necessary, bring down a left Labour government.

The law and the judiciary have been used to repress and hamstring the labour movement right from its inception

The demand of *Militant* for the abolition of the Monarchy as well as the House of Lords—this latter demand is official Labour Party policy—has met with a frenzied reaction from the capitalist press and, predictably, from Labour's right wing. Compared to the pioneers of the labour movement, the present right-wing leaders are—on this, as on most issues—pygmies. Keir Hardie, the father of the British Labour Party, never hesitated to denounce the monarchy or hereditary rule. He once stated, "The throne represents the power of caste, class rule. The workers can but have one feeling in the matter—contempt for thrones. It is inconsistent with the dignity of manhood to stick to hereditary rule. Never have a monarch or House of Lords." On another occasion, Hardie stated: "We all marched and cheered to the watchword 'Down with the Lords'."

The monarchy can be used in Britain in the future against a left Labour government in the same way as the Governor General of Australia, Sir John Kerr, was used to bring down the Australian Labour government of Gough Whitlam in November 1975. Articles in the capitalist press underline the role of the monarchy to



frustrate and hamper the wishes of working people. Norman Crowther-Hunt writing in the *Guardian* (11 January 1982) warned: "Labour governments would find it virtually impossible to abolish the Lords without their own consent; this is because Her Majesty the Queen would almost certainly spring to their defence.... [there are] ample reasons for the Queen to believe that if she approved the Abolition Bill she would be falling down in her duty of being the ultimate guardian of our rights and liberties—a duty specifically imposed by her coronation oath where she promised to govern the people of the United Kingdom."

Pat Wall's attacks on the judiciary also brought howls of outrage. The capitalist press were naturally indignant that these alleged impartial arbiters of 'justice' could be attacked in such a fashion. What was particularly outrageous for the bourgeoisie was the mere suggestion that the labour movement should 'interfere' with the judiciary. However, contrary to the impression given by the Hattersleys and Healeys, the labour movement has never recognised the "impartiality" of capitalist law.

The law and the judiciary have been used to repress and hamstring the labour movement right from its inception. This law, as the experience of the five dockers imprisoned under the Heath government's anti-trade union legislation demonstrated, is class law. As the socialist French writer, Anatole France once wrote: "The law in all its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to steal bread, to sleep under bridges and to beg for food."

The great majority of judges are died-in-the-wool reactionaries, and unelected at that. Thus, in 1956, 76% of judges were shown to have been educated at public schools. In their outlook, training, habits and education they are biased against the working class and the labour movement and in favour of the ruling class. One Judge, Lord Justice Scrutton, was honest enough to state in 1922: "the habits you are trained in, the people with whom you mix, lead to your having a certain class of ideas of such a nature that when you have to deal with other ideas you do not give as round and accurate a judgement as you wish....it is very difficult sometimes to be sure that you have put yourself into a thoroughly impartial position between two disputants, one of your own class and one not of your own class."

This is substantiated by many examples from history; from the Tolpuddle martyrs in 1834, to the legal murder of Sacco and Vanzetti in America in 1927, to the gross bias shown by the German judges under the Weimar Republic in favour of fascist assassins, on the one hand, and against the left on the other.

One eminent legal writer, A.B. Dyson, has stated that: "the judges are the heads of the legal profession. They have acquired the intellectual and moral tone of English lawyers. They are men advanced in life. They are for the most part men of a Conservative disposition." No truly democratic society could tolerate such a situation. Even in capitalist America the judges are elected. In the light of the gross bias of Lord Denning and his four colleagues in his judgement against London Transport, can the British Labour movement in the struggle for socialism tolerate the maintenance of the power of the unelected men "advanced in life,"

who are of a "conservative disposition", in authoritative positions such as judges? A far better and more democratic system would be the election of judges who have demonstrated their lack of bias and impartiality in relation to the majority, i.e. working people.

In their desperate attempt to cast the left, and particularly the Marxists, in the role of 'Totalitarians', the bourgeoisie have continually sought to present us as 'anti-parliamentarian'. However, in the pages of *Militant*, in pamphlets, and in speeches, we have shown that the struggle to establish a socialist Britain can be carried through in Parliament, backed up by the colossal power of the labour movement outside. This, however, will only be possible on one condition: that the trade unions and the Labour Party are won to a clear Marxist programme and perspective, and the full power of the movement is used to effect the rapid and complete socialist transformation of society.

The struggle to enhance the position of labour in parliament has always been supplemented by the struggle outside parliament both by the trade unions and the Labour Party

It is for this reason that *Militant*, in opposition to the programme of piecemeal reforms of the supporters of the Alternative Economic Strategy, have demanded that a Labour government introduce enabling legislation into the House of Commons to nationalise the 200 monopolies, with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need. Should the movement be restricted purely to a Parliamentary struggle, as the right-wing have argued in the past? The rank and file of the labour movement has never evinced a tendency towards what Marx called "parliamentary cretinism". The struggle to enhance the position of Labour in Parliament has always been supplemented by the struggle outside Parliament, both of the trade unions and of the Labour Party. This has recently taken the form, for instance, of the organising of mass demonstrations on unemployment in Liverpool, Newcastle, Cardiff, and elsewhere. There is a difference between traditional extra-parliamentary activity and the infantile "anti-parliamentarianism" of the tiny ultra-left sects on the outskirts of the labour movement.

The bourgeoisie has never restricted itself to the Parliamentary field. In 1976, the International Monetary Fund, backed by the capitalists in this country, compelled a Labour government to abandon its

radical manifesto, on which it was elected on in 1974. Denis Healey, who is now loudly denouncing the alleged proponents of "extra-parliamentary" activity, capitulated to the extra-parliamentary pressure of the I.M.F. in carrying through ruthless cuts in government expenditure. The present Tory government has built on the cuts which Healey himself carried out. However, this parliamentary cretinism is not restricted to those on the right. In an obvious aside against the programme of *Militant*, Jeff Rooker, a member of the parliamentary Tribune Group denounced the call for enabling legislation to be used by a Labour government. It seems that this wiseacre considers that this is 'undemocratic'. Yet there was not a murmur from Jeff Rooker when the Tory government under Heath used enabling legislation in February 1971 to nationalise Rolls Royce in 24 hours! Not even Labour MPs such as Rooker objected to this measure, which was determined by the 'emergency' situation in Rolls Royce and the threat to its workers. An equally devastating 'emergency' situation faces the whole of the working class in Britain at the present time.

Even before the economic upswing had exhausted itself a section of the ruling class was contemplating extra-parliamentary action to bring down a Labour government

In the 1930s, in a situation similar to today, John Strachey and Clement Attlee came out for enabling legislation to be used by a future Labour government. It would be entirely democratic for the labour movement to clearly outline its programme, and then give due warning that its programme would be implemented swiftly by means of enabling legislation. The necessary scrutiny of its measures can be undertaken in the election campaign and in the drawing up of a socialist plan of production which would be possible on the basis of such measures being implemented by a Labour government. Without taking such emergency measures the power will be left in the hands of the ruling class to frustrate and sabotage any attempts to introduce socialist plan of production.

This is underlined by the experience of the present Socialist-Communist government in France. Within days of that government coming to power, the ruling class had organised a run on the franc. It is using inflation as a means of whipping up opposition to the government. Without the immediate implementation of the nationalisation of the banks and the insurance companies, and the state monopoly of foreign trade, the power of the capitalists to undermine a Labour government would remain intact. The big monopolies would

move heaven and earth in order to stir up the middle class against the government. Is this not the lesson of Chile, written in the blood of 50,000 murdered workers? Because the Allende government prevaricated and nationalised only 40% of industry the capitalists, by using inflation, were able to mobilise the support of the middle class and prepare the ground for the September 1973 coup.

Of course, the situation in Britain today is not identical to Chile. The working class and the labour movement in Britain are immeasurably stronger than their Chilean counterparts. However, no thinking member of the labour movement would for one moment accept that the British ruling class and the Tories would not act in Britain in a similar fashion to Pinochet and Frei, the Christian Democratic leader, if they faced a similar threat from the labour movement. If they were prepared to deploy their full military might over the Falkland Islands issue, which mainly involves the restoration of their prestige in the world arena, how much more violent will be their reaction to the prospect of completely losing their wealth and control of society? Not for nothing did Leon Trotsky refer to the "cold cruelty" of the British ruling class. They were merciless in carving out their empire and in holding in subjugation the masses of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Faced with the danger to their rule, the present generation of capitalists would not hesitate to act just as ferociously in relation to the British workers as they did to their colonial slaves in the past.

In 1914, the leader of the Tory Party, Bonar Law, said in relation to the proposals for Home Rule for Ireland: "I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster can go in which I should not be prepared to support them and in which in my belief they would not be supported by the overwhelming majority of British people... in our opposition to them [the Liberal government of the time] we shall not be guided by the consideration, we shall not be restrained by the bonds, which would influence us in an ordinary political struggle. We shall use any means—whatever seems to us likely to be the most effective". The Tory Party leaders supported the mutiny of the officer caste at the Curragh which effectively sabotaged the implementation of the Irish Home Rule Bill, passed by the Commons in 1912 but held up by the Lords until 1914.

"Yes, but that was all in the past," the apologists of capitalism will say. But a Tory Party theoretician, an ex-Cabinet Minister in Thatcher's government, Ian Gilmour, stated in his book *Inside Right*: "conservatives do not worship democracy. For them majority rule is a device....democracy is not an ultimate or absolute value and must be judged by what it will achieve. And if it is leading to an end that is undesirable or is inconsistent with itself, then there is a theoretical case for ending it". This book was written in 1977. It was widely reviewed in the capitalist press, yet the great majority of reviewers glossed over Gilmour's admission. There were no banner headlines denouncing Gilmour as a 'totalitarian'.

A similar cover-up was organised in relation to the conspiracies of Cecil King and the late Lord Mountbatten to topple the Wilson government in 1968. Lady Falkender, Wilson's political assistant at the time, was

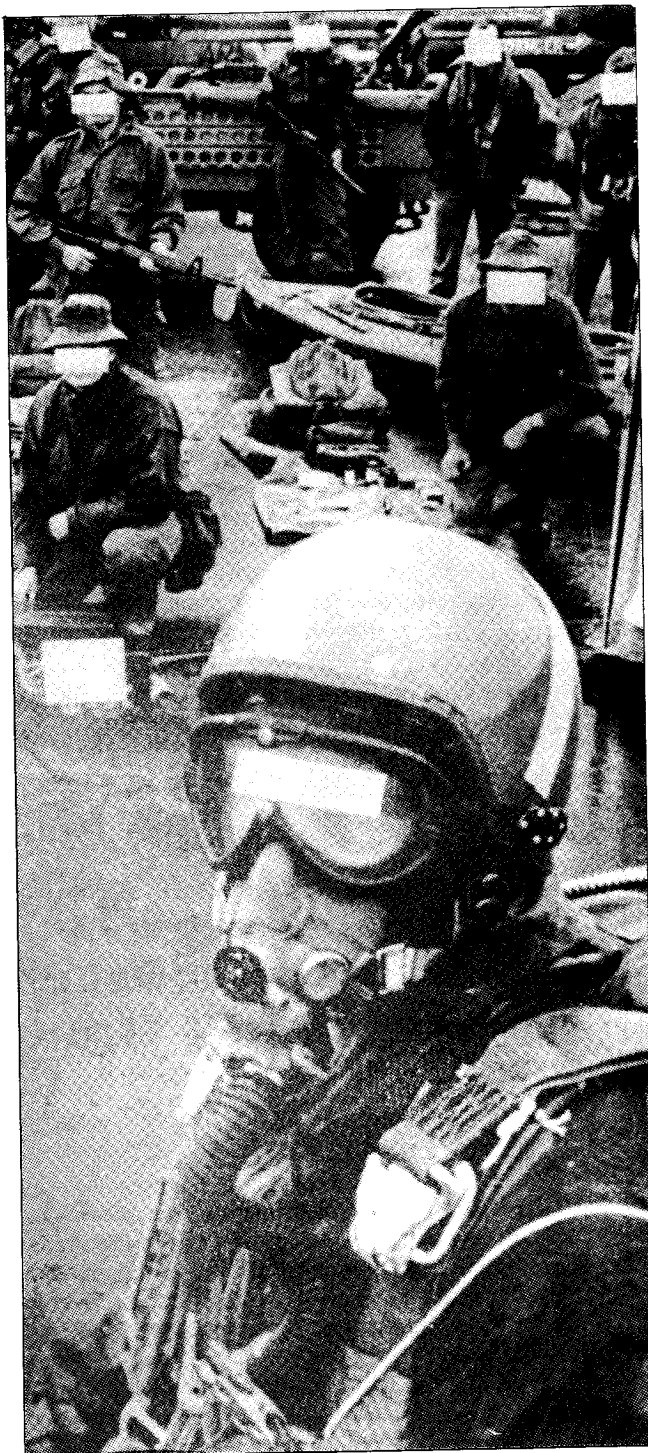
quoted in the *Sunday Times* (29 February, 1981) as saying in relation to the incident: "Harold and I used to stand in the state room in Number 10 and work out where they would put the guns. We reckoned they would site them in the Horseguards". Lord Zuckerman, whom the conspirators attempted to draw into the plot, walked out of the meeting shouting, "This is rank treachery! I'll have nothing to do with this". There was an element of comic opera about the whole affair, but what it does demonstrate is that a section of the ruling class, even at that stage, when the economic upswing of capitalism had not exhausted itself, were contemplating extra-parliamentary measures to bring down a right-wing Labour government. In 1974, too, as the former leader of the Transport and General Workers Union, Jack Jones revealed, there were discussions within bourgeois circles about the possibility of a coup to prevent what the capitalist considered was a "unacceptable drift to the left".

Again, there were no shrieking headlines of a threat to democracy or the possibility of 'civil war'. Nor was there any extensive press comment about the recent revelations that before the last election Airey Neave—who at the time was Thatcher's right-hand man, subsequently murdered by the IRA—actually approached MI6 agents to discuss possible 'action' against Tony Benn. Lee Tracy, a former MI6 electronics expert, stated in an interview for *Panorama*—an interview which was suppressed by the B.B.C. hierarchy—that "violent action to stop Tony Benn ever becoming a Labour prime minister was secretly discussed between former MI6 employees, and the late Airey Neave, MP, just before the election". (These allegations were published in the *New Statesman*, 20 February 1981). It seems that the Tory leadership had concluded, wrongly as it happens, that if Labour won the election and Callaghan retired, then Tony Benn would be elected as the leader of the Labour Party. Such a development, they considered, would be dangerous for them and their system.

All of this proves conclusively that the danger to democracy, the threat of violence and civil war comes from the bourgeoisie and its political agents, not from the labour movement. Of course, the labour movement and Marxists are not pacifists. We would be prepared to take up arms in defence of the right to strike, freedom of assembly, and the right to vote, if they were ever challenged by the ruling class.

As Tony Benn recently pointed out, "if the labour movement and the left were ever to resort to force in Britain, it would not be to overthrow an elected government but to prevent the overthrow of an elected government, that is, in defence of and not in defiance of Parliamentary democracy. There is clearly an inherent right to take up arms against tyranny or dictatorship, to establish or uphold democracy, on exactly the same basis, and for the same reasons, that the nation will respond to a call to arms to defeat a foreign invasion."

The bourgeoisie and their political echoes within the Labour Party, the right-wing 'Solidarity' leaders, counter these arguments by pointing to the "inevitability of violence" where a socialist revolution has occurred. In particular, they point to the Russian revolution. They are facilitated in their task of equating



The SAS kitted out with all their weaponry. Lauded by the capitalist press for their exploits against terrorists, special forces like the SAS and SBS are undoubtedly assigned an important role in the "counter-insurgency" plans of generals like Kitson—and could pose a serious threat to the labour movement in the event of capitalist reaction against the working class.

Marxism with violence by the ultra-left sects. Both use quotations from Trotsky and Lenin, completely torn out of their historical context, in an attempt to show that Marxists today favour "revolutionary violence". Yet, again and again, in the course of the Russian revolution, Lenin advocated the peaceful transformation of Russian society. In May 1917 he declared:

"Agitators and speakers must refute the despicable lie of the capitalist papers and of the papers supporting the capitalists to the effect that we threaten with civil war. This is a despicable lie. There must be full compliance with the will of the majority of the population and free criticism of this will by the dissatisfied minority; should violence be resorted to, the responsibility will fall on the Provisional government."

Later, one month before the October Revolution, Lenin pressed the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries to form a government based on the Soviets. Such a government, he said, could "in all probability secure a peaceful forward march of the whole Russian Revolution." On the very eve of the Revolution, 10 October 1917, he again declared, "Having seized power, the Soviets could still at present—and this is probably their last chance—secure a peaceful development of the revolution, peaceful elections of deputies by the people, a peaceful struggle of parties inside of the Soviets, a testing of the various programmes of the various parties in practice, a peaceful passing of power from one party to another."

The threat of violence and civil war comes from the bourgeoisie and its political agents, not from the labour movement

The revolution itself was relatively peaceful, particularly when set against the horrors of the First World War, which the revolution effectively terminated as far as Russia was concerned. Five million Russians were either killed or maimed in the War between 1914 and 1917. During the February revolution, 1,443 were killed in Petrograd. The October revolution was "almost bloodless". The loss of life was entirely due to the armed resistance of the landlords and capitalists and their representatives, to the democratic election, through the Congress of Soviets, of a Bolshevik government. The bourgeois today deliberately conjure up the image of bloodthirsty Bolsheviks during the October revolution. On the contrary, the Bolsheviks took power through a democratic vote of the Congress of Soviets convened on 25 October, 1917. Moreover, in the initial period the Russian workers and the Bolsheviks were incredibly generous (over-generous, in fact) to their defeated rivals. Thus General Krassnov, a reactionary 'white' general, was released by the Bolsheviks shortly after they came to power, on an assurance of 'good behaviour' from Krassnov himself. He subsequently went on to organise a white army which resulted in the

murder of thousands of Russian workers and peasants. All parties continued to exist after the October overturn, with the single exception of the Black Hundreds, the Russian equivalent to Fascists, who were banned. The Russian equivalent of the Liberals maintained their existence in the first period after the revolution.

The Bolsheviks only banned a Party after it was shown that they had resorted to force of arms in an attempt to overthrow the Russian workers' state. The terrible violence, famine and suffering experienced by the Russian workers emanated not from the Russian revolution, but from the attempt of the dispossessed propertied classes, with the backing of the 21 armies of imperialism, to overthrow the revolution.

However, the analogies, so laboriously and painfully drawn by the ideologists of capitalism, between the perspectives and programme of *Militant* for Britain and the Russian revolution are entirely false. The Russian revolution constituted the greatest single event in the history of mankind. It was the most democratic form of government experienced up to that time, with the management and control of society and the state vested in workers' and peasants' councils. But it took place in a backward country where the great majority of the population were peasants, scratching out a bare existence from the land and with mass illiteracy. It was this cultural backwardness and the isolation of the Russian revolution which led to its degeneration, the growth of the bureaucratic privileged elite, and the usurpation of power, by this elite, personified by Stalin.

The situation in Britain today is entirely different. The relationship of forces are crushingly in favour of the working class. Former sections of the middle strata have been drawn more and more into the ranks of the working class. We only have to compare the situation today in Britain to the time of the 1926 General Strike. Then teachers, civil servants, students were either directly opposed to the strike and its aims or participated in blacklegging. Now these layers have been more and more proletarianised. Under the guise of incomes policies, their formerly privileged status has been undermined and they have been compelled to move into action. There has been a growing radicalisation of unions such as the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA), NALGO, the NUT, and many other white collar unions who have been compelled to struggle, at least in the trade union field. Even the 'First Division' of Civil Servants, representing top Whitehall officials and the Colliery Managers Association, refused to collaborate in Tebbit's Bill. Moreover, there is a growing trend, albeit a minority, within these unions in the direction of seeing the need for political action, specifically through the Labour Party. The power of the working class expressed through trade union membership is immeasurably stronger than in the inter-war period. The recent drop in trade union membership because of the recession in no way parallels the drop of almost 50% of union membership which followed the ebbing of the first revolutionary wave after the First World War. Union membership dropped from 8 million to just over 4 million in the period from 1921 to just before the General Strike. Today, the union membership is 55% of the labour force. Such is the power of the labour movement in Britain

today, its cultural level and its powerful democratic traditions, that nine tenths of the task of the socialist transformation of society is to make the working class conscious of its power. Once it is conscious and understands the almost limitless possibilities which exist on the basis of socialism, no power on earth would be able to withstand it.

Any attempt by the capitalists, for instance, to use the armed forces will result in the army splitting in their hands. It is of course vital, as part of the democratisation of society, that soldiers should be given basic democratic rights, including the right to form trade unions. If in Iran a much more powerful army was shattered by a movement of the working class, how much more so would the hands of reactionary army generals be tied by a similar movement of the British working class? For this to be realised, however, the labour movement would need to embrace the programme and perspectives of Marxism. The strategists of capital are quite conscious of this. This accounts for their ferocious campaign against the Marxists.

In contradistinction to the present capitalist democracy, a democratic socialist Britain would open up colossal opportunities for all those denied a voice in the management and control of society

It is precisely the leaders of the right-wing who virulently denounce *Militant* and its supporters who stand in the way of the peaceful socialist transformation of society. Their programme of piece-meal reforms—which in the modern epoch, as experience has shown, is in effect a programme for counter reforms, i.e. cuts in the living standards of the working class—will not satisfy the working class, but will irritate the bourgeoisie. Even if a left Labour government comes to power and does not take out of the hands of the capitalists the levers of economic and political power, an opportunity would be given to the ruling class to organise a violent counter stroke against the labour movement and the working class. They will organise their extra parliamentary forces in an attempt to topple the government. In particular, there is the threat, at a certain stage, of a Royalist Bonapartist coup—that is, the imposing of a military-police dictatorship—to crush the labour movement.

Such measures are ruled out at the present time. The

relationship of forces are against the capitalists at the moment. However, the experience of the attempted coup in Spain is the music of the future, not just for Spain, but for Britain too (and indeed for all the capitalist world). Even in a period of economic upswing, there has been three or four attempts in Italy to organise a coup. The generals and secret service chiefs only drew back at the last minute because of the fear of an uprising by the Italian workers, which could have resulted in the complete overthrow of Italian capitalism. The British ruling class will hesitate many times before proceeding down this road. However, the writings of people like Brigadier Kitson are an indication that they are preparing for a trial of strength with the labour movement in the future. Therefore the horror of a military police dictatorship, buttressed by the monarchy and a section of the Tory Party, is not ruled out in Britain if the labour movement fails to effect the socialist transformation of society. But the conspiracies of the capitalists can be completely cancelled out if the labour movement is armed with a clear Marxist programme and perspective for a change in society.

In contradistinction to the present capitalist democracy, a democratic socialist Britain would open up colossal opportunities for all those denied a voice in the management and control of society. Thus the press, presently muzzled by the millionaires, would become truly democratic. Unlike the present situation where the labour movement, with 11 to 12 million votes in elections, does not have a single daily newspaper supporting its point of view, in a socialist Britain all parties will have access to the media.

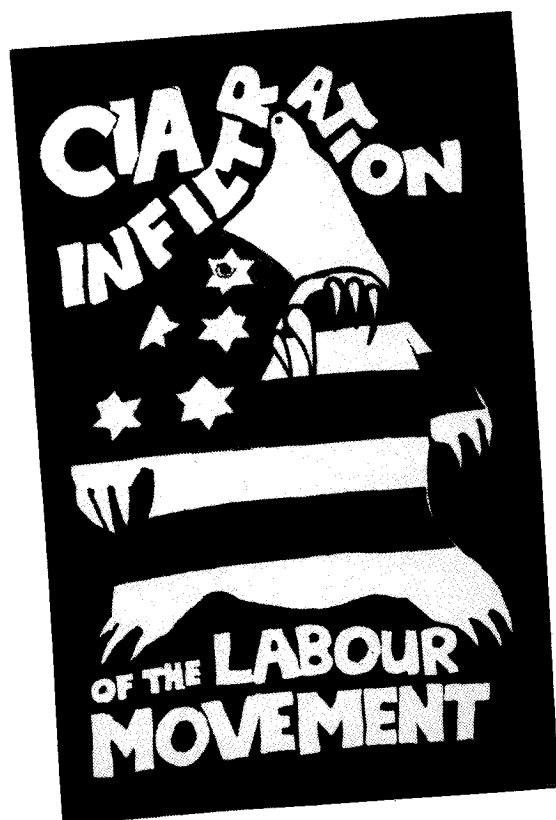
The media facilities—the printing presses, and radio and television—will be nationalised under democratic workers' control and management. This would not create a "totalitarian, government-controlled press". On the contrary, all parties, in proportion to their votes in elections, would have access to the media, including the pro-capitalist parties such as the Liberals, Tories, etc. The cutting of the working day would for the first time allow the majority, the working class, to participate in the management and control of industry, the state, and society in general.

Democracy is not some kind of optional extra for Marxism. Without the massive extension of democratic rights, which is only possible on the basis of a socialist plan, there can be no movement towards socialism. The aim of a democratic workers' state would be to begin to put art, music, science and government, hitherto the preserve of the privileged governing classes, into the hands of the mass of the people.

A Stalinist degeneration would be impossible in a socialist Britain. With all the means of modern technology at its disposal, particularly computers, the micro chip, etc, a socialist Britain would be able to cut the working day not just to 35 hours but very rapidly to 30 hours, 20 hours, and even less. Then the working class would have the necessary time to gather into its hands the control and management of society and the state. Real democracy, rule by the majority, would then become a reality.



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