

An abstract sculpture made of red geometric shapes, including a large 'S' at the top, a 'T' below it, and a 'K' at the bottom. A stylized human figure is integrated into the structure, with a circular head and rectangular torso. The sculpture is set against a black background.

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Feature
**Andropov
and after**

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Editor: Alan Woods

Cover design: Alan Hardman

Contents

Editorial

The crisis of leadership 1

Lenin's last struggle

60 years since the death of Lenin—we republish
an article first published in 1970 by Alan Woods . . . 4

Andropov and after . . .

Peter Taaffe analyses the crisis of Stalinism 11



The lessons of the Belgian general strike

By Philippe Rolande 20

George Grosz

The artist and revolution

By Steve Amor 25

Economic notes 28

Book Reviews 29

Editorial

The crisis of leadership

*"Today they are ringing
their bells. Tomorrow they
will be wringing their
hands."*

—Horace Walpole

BARELY NINE months have passed since the landslide victory of the Tories last June. Yet the present situation seems separated from that event by an abyss.

On the face of it, Thatcher and her haughty entourage appear safely entrenched behind their formidable majority of seats. And yet, the more far-sighted Tory leaders can already sense the ground shifting threateningly beneath their well-heeled shoes.

By the time this issue of the journal goes to print, it seems likely that the war of nerves between this government and the local authorities will be coming to a head.

Over the recent months, the eyes of the entire labour movement have been fixed on Liverpool where a mass movement has been building up to fight against the brutal policy of cuts in jobs and social services which the erstwhile Tory "guardians of local government" are seeking to impose by diktat from Westminster.

Without anticipating the likely course of events, we can affirm with confidence in these columns that the supporters of *Militant* on Liverpool council will not run away from their duty, regardless of the consequences to them themselves and their families. Whatever other councils may do, and however any other councillors may vote, the supporters of *Militant* on Liverpool council will not run away from their duty, regardless of the consequences to themselves and their families. Whatever other councils may do, and however any other councillors may vote, the supporters of *Mili-*

tant will refuse to vote for the cuts.

This is an example which, if followed by other sections of the labour movement, would soon bring this government to its knees. The mass response to this courageous lead in Liverpool is a clear answer to all the faint-hearts who claimed; that the working class had "gone to the right": that Labour had to "come to terms" with triumphant Thatcherism.

The Mr. Micwbers of the CP and the right wing of the Labour Party and the TUC, privately or even in public, swallowed the argument that Labour could not regain power for fifty years without a so-called "alliance of 'progressive' forces" that is to say, without uniting with the Liberals and the SDP traitors.

Yet the latest polls demonstrate conclusively the existence of a swing to Labour only months after the Tory election victory.

Even this is a very pale reflection of the enormous transformation which has taken place in the psychology of the working class, the unemployed, the housewives, and even a considerable section of the middle class in the last few months.

The willingness of the workers to struggle is indicated by the movement of the miners, and the shipyard workers in Leith and, in particular, the splendid fight back of the workers in Scott Lithgow. What is more significant about Scott Lithgow, however, is the mood of anger and bitterness which is directed not only against the Tories and the Liberals but also against the trade union leaders.

The impression has come across very clearly that the official leadership is afraid to fight. And who can blame the workers from drawing this conclusion? The conduct of the right wing leaders of the TUC in recent months has been nothing short of scandalous.

The NGA dispute in December was defeated, not because the workers were unwilling to struggle, but because of the shamful betrayal of Len Murray and the TUC leadership. That defeat cost the NGA fines and costs which

finally may reach a million pounds. But the blow to the cohesion and morale of the trade union movement was even more costly.

The reason for this situation is that the TUC leaders ran away from their responsibility; because they were not prepared to mobilise the might of the unions in defence of the printers and the elementary rights of trade unionism; because they were more concerned to prove how "statesmanlike" and "moderate" they were to Thatcher and Co than to defend the interests of those who elected them.

This so-called "realism" will have the opposite effect to that envisaged by Murray and Graham. "Weakness invites aggression," as the saying goes. Their attempts to curry favour will merely heighten the arrogance and hostility of the Tories, who feel themselves to be beyond retribution. Along this road lies only defeat and despair.

The most striking aspect of the present situation is the complete lack of leadership on the part of both the political and industrial aims of the movement.

Yet Liverpool has consistently shown that there is an alternative for Labour. The patient work of the Marxist tendency represented by the *Militant* newspaper was a key factor in the outstanding victory of the Labour Party in Broadgreen, in effect capturing what should have been a Tory seat against the national trend in the last election.

If the example of Liverpool Council were to be followed by all other Labour-controlled local authorities, the Thatcher government would be in an impossible position.

This fact has been understood



NGA pickets on duty outside Stockport Messenger offices during the dispute in November 1983.

by the most serious political representative of the ruling class, if not by the leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC.

An article which appeared in the *Sunday Times* on the 12 February compared the difficulties of the Tory Government on the local government front to the conflict of the Heath government with the unions in 1970-74.

The key to the situation is undoubtedly the generalization of the struggle with the involvement of the whole labour and trade union movement.

To the degree to which the present leadership refuses to do the job, the rank and file will inevitably begin to look for an alternative. Initiatives such as the Broad Left Organising Committee will find an increasingly wide echo among layers of workers tired of the prevarications and sell-outs of the old leaders.

That the support for a clear socialist alternative is growing was indicated recently by the splendid result won by Alan Quinn in the elections to the T&GWU

Executive. This contrasts with the result of even a Left trade union leader such as Peter Heathfield of the NUM, where no serious campaign was conducted.

Gone are the days when the support of the rank and file could be taken for granted. The Left will win a majority of the unions and the Labour Party only if it is prepared to conduct a serious campaign for socialist policies.

The Tories and their big business backers on the one hand, the Labour right, the TUC and even the large number of Labour Lefts, on the other, have allowed themselves to be hypnotised by the apparent lull in the class struggle. They cannot see the enormous, seething instability which exists beneath the surface manifestations of calm and stability.

The Tories, acting at the behest of big business, are preparing all the conditions for a social and economic cataclysm. Their policies of naked asset stripping, de-industrialisation the plunder of the nationalised industries and the dismantling of local government and the health service is undermining the historic foundations upon which British capitalism was built.

Even sections of the Tory Party have been alarmed by Thatcher's mad rush towards the bureaucratic centralization of the state. This from the Party of "liberty" and the right of local government! The doubts and vacillations of part of the Tory leadership are only the first symptom of a fundamental rift which, in the long run, will serve to undermine the Tory Party completely.

The much-vaunted "boom" of Britain's economy has meant only a three percent rise in manufacturing production last year and possibly a similar figure for 1984. This is still 13% lower than the equivocal figure for 1979. Not enough to cure unemployment or to throw into reverse the inexorable downward slide of British capitalism. But quite sufficient to provide a new impulse to the movement on the factory floor to the fight back against cuts in living standards, the moment that the evidence of rising orders and

increased profits becomes evident.

The accumulated rage and bitterness will inevitably burst out in a new wave of industrial disputes, which neither the Tories nor the right wing trade union leaders will be able to prevent.

The present rightward shift of the TUC leadership is preparing the way for a major movement to the left at rank and file level.

The workers will see in practice that the right wing has nothing to offer except abject surrender, defeat and further cuts in living standards. The whole psychology of the class will become transform-

ed in the course of struggle. This, in turn, will lay the basis for the transformation of the organisations of the labour movement.

Never before has the need for a fighting alternative been more manifest. The capitulation of the TUC shows the necessity for Marxist ideas and policies as a guide for the labour movement. The supporters of Marxism grouped around the *Militant* and the MIR will fight to transform the trade unions and Labour Party and turn them into instruments adequate to the needs of changing society.

GCHQ Crisis

THE CRISIS over the government's attempt to ban trade unions at GCHQ exploded just as this issue of the journal was being laid out.

The speed with which events have moved over the last week in itself demonstrates the enormous instability which underlies British Society. In a matter of days, the whole situation has been stood upon its head.

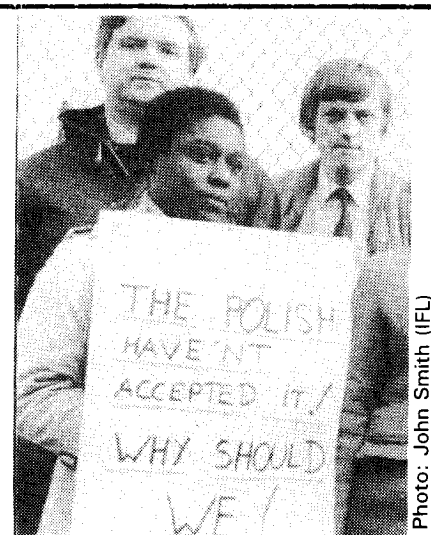
Those same right wing trade union leaders who threw up their hands in holy horror at the prospect of "illegal" movements in defence of the printers are now talking openly about defying the law over GCHQ.

This fact strikingly bears out the prediction made by the Marxists months ago that, in spite of themselves, the leaders of the TUC would, at a certain moment, be pushed into opposition, or semi-opposition, to the Thatcher government.

Such a situation has come along far more rapidly than even we anticipated. The reason for this turn-about is not hard to find. As we stated in the editorial of the present issue, the self-styled "moderates" of the General Council, by their actions over the NGA conflict and their repeated attempt to do a deal with the Tories, have made a confrontation inevitable. "Weakness invites aggression," as we said. And the aggression was not long in coming. At the same time, there can be no doubt that Thatcher's success in the NGA affair has gone to her head. She has pushed the TUC too far, compelling even people like Len Murray in effect to do a 180° somersault on the issue of the anti-union laws.

Despite our criticism of the behavior of these leaders, the supporters of *Militant* and *MIR* welcome the call for action in defence of the GCHQ workers.

The magnificent response of an important section of the class on the 28th



February, given the extremely short time available for preparation, and the complete lack of a prior campaign on the part of the TUC, shows what we have consistently maintained in these columns: that the working class is ready and willing to fight when a lead—or even, as in this case, half a lead—comes from their official organisations.

Given the way in which the day of action was called, it can only be seen as an outstanding success. Nevertheless, if it is left at that, it will be completely insufficient. *A decisive show of strength is necessary to persuade this government it cannot trample over hard-won rights of working people.*

The leaders of the TUC should abandon once and for all the unrealistic and counterproductive strategy of a "dialogue" with Thatcher and start serious preparation for an all-out 24 hour strike to demonstrate who has the real power in society, and thus prepare the way for a successful counteroffensive of the whole labour movement against this brutal and reactionary government.

Lenin's last struggle

THIS YEAR marks the 60th anniversary of the death of the man who, together with Trotsky, made a decisive contribution to the cause of socialism and the working class in this century, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. mark the occasion we republish an article, long out of print, written originally to commemorate the Lenin centenary in 1970, as an introduction to a collection of Lenin's last letters. The early symptoms of bureaucratic degeneration in Russia were already noted by Lenin in the last two years of his politically

IN THE last active period of his life, Lenin was chiefly absorbed by the problems of the Soviet economy under the New Economic Policy. In 1921, under the pressure of the millions of peasant small proprietors, the workers' state had been forced to retreat from the path of Socialist planning and industrialisation, in order to procure grain for the starving workers in the cities. The old Civil War practice of requisitioning grain had to be abandoned to placate the peasants, whose support was necessary if the workers' state was not to succumb to the reaction. A free market in grain was re-established, and concessions were made to the peasants and small traders, while the main levers of economic power (nationalised banks and heavy industries, state monopoly of foreign trade) remained in the hands of the workers' state.

This retreat which had been forced upon the Bolsheviks was not to create a Socialist, classless society but to save millions from starving to death, to re-build a shattered economy and to provide houses and elementary schools—ie. to drag Russia into the twentieth century.

The triumph of socialism demands a development of the productive forces to a level unheard of in any previously existing society. Only when the conditions of general want and poverty are obliterated can the thoughts of man be raised to loftier horizons than the grinding, day-to-day struggle to live. The conditions for such a transformation already exist in the world today. For the first time in human history we can say truthfully that there is no longer any need for anyone to starve, to be homeless, to be illiterate. The poten-

tial is there—in the science, technique and industry created by the development of capitalism itself, which draws upon all the resources of the planet albeit in an incomplete, anarchic and undeveloped way. Only on the basis of an integrated, harmonious plan of production can this potential be realised. But this can only be carried out on the basis of common ownership of the means of production and a democratic socialist plan.

These elementary truths of marxism were taken for granted by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. They did not lead the workers to victory in October 1917 with a view to "building Socialism" within the frontiers of the former tsarist Empire, but to strike the first blow for the international Socialist revolution:

"We have made the start", wrote Lenin on the fourth anniversary of the October Revolution.

"When, at what date and time, and the proletarians of which nations will complete this process is not important. The important thing is that the ice has

been broken; the road is open, the way has been shown."

For Lenin, the first significance of the Russian Revolution was the example it provided in the eyes of the workers of the world. The failure of the revolutionary wave which swept across Europe in the period 1918-21 was the decisive factor in the subsequent development. On the basis of a victorious European revolution, the enormous potential mineral wealth of Russia, its vast labour force, could have been linked to the science, technique and industry of Germany, Britain and France. A Socialist United States of Europe could have transformed the lives



Lenin convalescing after his serious illness in 1922.

4

of the peoples of Europe and Asia and opened the way for a Socialist World Federation. Instead, as a result of the cowardice and ineptitude of the labour leaders, the European working classes faced decades of hardship, unemployment, Fascism and a new World War. On the other hand, the isolation of the only workers' state in the world in a backward, peasant country, opened the door to bureaucratic degeneration and Stalinist reaction.

The defeat of the German working class in March 1921 forced the Soviet Republic to look to its own resources in order to survive. In a speech on October 17 1921 Lenin spelt out the consequences:

"You must remember that our Soviet land is impoverished after many years of trial and suffering and has no socialist France or Socialist England as neighbours to keep us with their highly developed technology and highly developed industry. Bear that in mind! We must remember that at present all their highly developed technology and industry belong to the capitalists who are fighting us."

In order to survive, it was necessary to conciliate the desire of the peasant to make profit, even at the expense of the working class and the building up of industry—the only real basis for a transition to socialism.

The concessions given to the peasants, small businessmen and speculators ('nepmen') staved off economic collapse in 1921-22. The trade between town and countryside was restored, but on terms greatly disadvantageous to the former. The reduction of taxes on the peasant cut into the funds necessary for investment in industry. Heavy industry stagnated, while much of light industry was in private hands. Even the revival in agriculture strengthened the capitalist, not the socialist element in Soviet society. Huge profits were made by the 'kulaks' (wealthy peasants), with the largest and most fertile farms and the capital necessary for equipment, horses and fertilizer. In fact, it soon became clear that under NEP, the difference between the rich and poor in the villages was growing at an alarming rate. The kulaks took to hoarding grain to push up prices, even buying up the grain of the poor peasants to sell it back to them at a later date when prices rose.

These tendencies were watched with anxiety by Lenin, who repeatedly warned of the need for the working class to keep a tight rein on the levers of the economy. At the 4th Congress of the Communist International, in November 1922, Lenin put the matter in a nutshell:

"The salvation of Russia lies not only in a good harvest on the peasant farms—that is not enough; and not only in the good condition of light industry, which provides the peasantry with consumer goods—this, too, is not enough; we also need heavy industry. And to put it in good condition will require several years of work. Heavy industry needs state subsidies. If we are not able to provide them, we shall be doomed as a civilised state, let alone a Socialist state."

At this period Lenin grappled with the problem of electrification as a possible area where a breach could

be made in the solid wall of Russian backwardness. Trotsky, on the other hand, was preoccupied with the overall state planning of industry, which had been practically lost sight of under NEP. All along he stressed the need to strengthen 'Gosplan', the state Planning Agency, as a means of encouraging a general planned revival of industry. Lenin, at first, was distrustful of the idea—not because he rejected planning but because of the prevailing scourge of bureaucracy in Soviet institutions, which, he feared, would turn an enlarged and strengthened Gosplan into a paper game.

However different their approaches to this question, Lenin and Trotsky were in complete agreement about the urgent need to strengthen the Socialist elements in the economy and to end backsliding in the direction of 'peasant capitalism'. However, such was the pressure of the kulak interest that even a section of the Bolshevik leadership began to bend. The question of which road the Soviet power would take was posed point-blank by the controversy over the monopoly of foreign trade which broke out in March 1922.

The monopoly of foreign trade, established in April 1918, was a vital measure for ensuring the socialist economy against the threat of penetration and domination by foreign capital. Under NEP the monopoly became even more important as a bulwark against the growing capitalist tendencies. Early in 1922, at Lenin's request, AM Lezhava drafted Theses on Foreign Trade which emphasised the need to strengthen the monopoly and strictly supervise exports and imports. Despite this, the Party Central Committee was split. Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev opposed Lenin's proposals and advocated the relaxation of the monopoly, while Sokolnikov, Bukharin and Pyatakov actually went so far as to call for its abolition.

On May 15, Lenin wrote the following letter to Stalin:

"Comrade Stalin,

In view of this, please get a directive passed through the Politbureau by collecting the votes of the members that 'The CC reaffirms the monopoly of foreign trade and resolves that a stop be put everywhere to the working up of the question of merging the Supreme Economic Council with the Commissariat for Foreign Trade. All People's Commissars to sign confidentially and return the original to Stalin. No copies to be made.'

Lenin"

At the same time he wrote to Stalin and to Frumkin (Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Trade) stressing that "A formal ban should be put on all talk and negotiations, commissions etc concerning the relaxation of the foreign trade monopoly".

Stalin's reply was evasive: "I have no objections to a 'formal ban' on measures to mitigate the foreign trade monopoly at the present stage. All the same, I think that mitigation is becoming indispensable."

On 26 May, Lenin suffered the first onslaught of his illness, which put him out of activity until September. In the meantime, in spite of Lenin's re-

quest, the question of "mitigating" the monopoly was raised again. On 12 October, Sokolnikov moved a resolution at the plenary session of the Central Committee, for the relaxation of the foreign trade monopoly. Lenin and Trotsky were absent, and the resolution was carried overwhelmingly.

On 13 October, Lenin wrote to the Central Committee through Stalin, with whom he had already discussed the matter. Lenin protested against the decision and demanded that the question should be raised again at the next plenum in December. Subsequently, Stalin wrote to members of the CC: "Comrade Lenin's letter has not persuaded me that the decision of the CC was wrong... Nevertheless, in view of Comrade Lenin's insistence that fulfilment of the CC Plenary Meeting decision be delayed, I shall vote for a postponement so that the question may be again raised for discussion at the next Plenary Meeting which Comrade Lenin will attend."

On the 16 October it was agreed to postpone the matter till the next Plenum. However, as the date of the Plenum approached, Lenin became increasingly worried that the state of his health would not permit him to speak. On 12 December, he wrote his first letter to Trotsky asking him to take upon himself "the defence of our common opinion of the unconditional necessity of preserving and reinforcing the monopoly of foreign trade." The letters written by Lenin clearly indicate the political bloc that existed between Lenin and Trotsky at this time. They demonstrate Lenin's implicit faith in Trotsky's political judgements, a faith born of years of common work at the head of the Soviet state. And it is not accidental that at this time Lenin would turn to no one else to defend his views on the Central Committee. Even his other confidants, Frumkin and Stomoniakov, were non-members of the Central Committee.

Learning of Lenin's preparations for a struggle and his bloc with Trotsky, the Central Committee backed down without a fight. On 18 December, the October resolution was unconditionally rescinded. The first round in the battle against the pro-kulak element in the party leadership was won by the Leninist faction. The battle was continued after Lenin's death by Trotsky and the Left Opposition, who alone held high the banner and programme of Lenin in the teeth of the Stalinist political counter-revolution.

Friedrich Engels long ago explained that in any society in which art, science and government are the preserve of a minority, that minority will use and abuse its position in its own interests. Because of the isolation of the revolution in a backward country the Bolsheviks were obliged to call on the services of a host of former tsarist officials to keep the state and society running. These elements, who had held the workers' government to ransom in the first days of the revolution gradually realised that the Soviet power was not going to be crushed by armed force. After the dangers of the Civil War had passed, many former enemies of Bolshevism began to infiltrate the state, the trade unions, and even the party.

The first "purge", in 1921, had nothing in common

with the later grotesque frame-up trials of Stalin, in which the entire Old Bolshevik leadership were murdered. No one was tried, killed or imprisoned. But special party commissions were set up to expel from the party the thousands of careerists and bourgeois who had joined in order to further their own interests. The offences for which people were expelled were "bureaucratism, careerism, abuse by party members of their party or Soviet status, violation of comradely relations within the party, dissemination of unfounded and unverified rumours, insinuations or other reports reflecting on the party or individual members of it, and destructive of the unity and authority of the party."

In order to carry out a struggle against bureaucracy, Lenin advocated the setting up of a 'Commission on Workers and Peasants Inspection' (RABKRIN), as the highest arbiter and guardian of party morality, and as a weapon against alien elements in the Soviet state apparatus. At the centre of RABKRIN Lenin placed a man whom he respected for his organisational abilities and strong character—Stalin.

Amongst other important functions, RABKRIN scrutinised the selection and appointment of responsible workers in the state and party. Whoever had the power to hold up the promotion of some and advance others obviously held a weapon which could serve their own interests. Stalin did not scruple to use it for his. RABKRIN turned from a weapon against bureaucracy into a hotbed of careerist intrigue. Stalin cynically used his position in RABKRIN, and later his control of the party Secretariat, to gather around himself a bloc of yes-men—nonentities whose only allegiance was to the man who helped them climb into comfortable positions. From the highest arbiter of party morality, RABKRIN sank to the lowest depths of bureaucratic cynicism.

Trotsky noticed what was going on before Lenin, whose illness prevented his close supervision of party work. Trotsky pointed out that "those working in RABKRIN are chiefly workers who have to come to grief in other fields" and drew attention to the "extreme prevalence of intrigue in the organs of RABKRIN which has become a by-word throughout the country."

Lenin continued to defend RABKRIN against Trotsky's criticisms. Yet in his last works we see that his eyes were opened to the threat of bureaucracy from this quarter and the role of Stalin who guided it. In his article *How we should reorganise the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate* Lenin connected the question to the bureaucratic deformation of the workers' state apparatus:

"With the exception the Peoples Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, our state apparatus is to a considerable extent a survival of the past and has undergone hardly any serious change. It has only been slightly touched up on the surface, but in all other respects it is a most typical relic of our old state machine."

However, in *Better Fewer but Better*, Lenin's last

article, written on 2 March, 1923, he delivered the most scathing attack on RABRIN:

"Let us say frankly that the Peoples Commissariat of the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate does not at present enjoy the slightest authority. Everybody knows that no other institutions are worse organised than those of our Workers and Peasants Inspection, and that under present conditions nothing can be expected from this Peoples Commissariat."

In the same article, Lenin included a remark directed straight at Stalin:

"Let it be said in parentheses that we have bureaucrats in our party offices as well as in other Soviet offices."

That Lenin singled out Stalin as the potential ring-leader of a bureaucrats faction in the party is an example of his far-sightedness. At this particular time, Stalin's power in the 'apparatus' was invisible to the majority even of party members, while most of the leaders did not believe him capable of using it, in view of his notoriously mediocre grasp of politics and theory. Even after Lenin's death, it was not Stalin, but Zinoviev who headed the 'troika' (Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin) which pushed the party on the first, fateful steps away from the traditions of October under the guise of an attack on "Trotskyism".

It was no accident that Lenin's last advice to the party was to warn it against Stalin's "disloyal" and "intolerant" abuse of power and to advocate his removal from the post of General Secretary.

The defeat of the European workers' revolution gave even more importance to the work of the Communist International for a revolution of the enslaved peoples of the East. The October Revolution gave a mighty impetus to the struggle of the colonies against their imperialist oppressors. In particular, the proud slogan of "The rights of nations to self-determination" emblazoned on the banner of Bolshevism gave heart to the downtrodden millions of Asia and Africa.

Almost the first act of the workers' government was to recognise the independence of Finland, although that inevitably meant granting independence to a hostile capitalist government. Naturally, Marxists stand firmly for the uniting of all peoples in a World Socialist Federation. But such unity cannot be brought about by force, but only by the free consent of the workers and peasants of the various countries. Above all, when the workers of a former imperialist nation take power, it is their



Lenin, Trotsky and Kamenev during the 2nd Congress of the 3rd International.

bounden duty to respect the wishes of the peoples in the former colonies—even if they wish to secede. Unification can be brought about later, on the basis of example and persuasion.

In 1921, the Red Army was forced to intervene in Georgia, where the government had been consistently intriguing with Britain and other capitalist powers against the Soviet State. Lenin was extremely anxious that this military action should not be seen as the annexation of Georgia by Russia, thus identifying the Soviet state with the tsarist oppressors. He wrote letter after letter instructing the Orzhonikidze, the representative of the Central Committee in Georgia, to pursue "a policy of concessions in relation to the Georgian intelligentsia and small traders" and advocating the setting up of "a coalition with Jordania or similar Georgian Mensheviks". On the tenth of March, he sent a telegram urging the need to "observe particular respect for the sovereign bodies of Georgia; to display particular attention and caution in regard to the Georgian population."

However, the activities of Orzhonikidze in Georgia were connected with the Stalin clique in the party. Stalin was working on proposals for the unification of the Russian Soviet Socialist Federation with the other, non-Russian Soviet Republics. In August, 1922, while Lenin was out of action, a commission in which Stalin was the leading figure, was set up to work out the terms of unification.

When Stalin's theses appeared, they were firmly rejected by the Central Committee of the Georgian party. On 22 September, the Georgian Bolshevik leaders passed the following motion:

"The union in the form of the autonomisation of the independent republics, proposed on the basis of Stalin's theses is premature. A union of economic efforts and a common policy are necessary, but all attributes of independence should be preserved."

The protests of the Georgians went unheeded. Stalin was bent upon bulldozing through his proposals. The commission met on 23 and 24 September, under the chairmanship of Stalin's stooge Molotov. It rejected the Georgian resolution with one vote against (Mdivani the Georgian representative). On 25 September, the materials of the Commission were sent to Lenin, who was convalescing at Gorki. Without waiting for Lenin's views, and without even a discussion in the Politburo, the Secretariat (Stalin's centre in the party) sent the Commission's decision to all CC members in preparation for the October Plenum.

On 26 September, Lenin wrote to the Central Committee via Kamenev urging caution on this question and warning against Stalin's attempt to rush the business through ("Stalin tends to be somewhat hasty"). Lenin had arranged to meet him the following day. He did not yet suspect the lengths to which Stalin had gone to force unification through. However, even this letter indicates his opposition to any affront to the national aspirations of a small people and thus strengthen the hold of nationalism.

"The important thing is not to provide material for the 'pro-independence' people, not to destroy their independence, but to create another new storey, a federation of equal republics."

Lenin's amendments were aimed to soften the tone of Stalin's original draft to make allowance for the "pro-independence" people, whom he considered, at this point, to be in the wrong. In answer to Lenin's mild comments, Stalin wrote to members of the Politburo on 27 September a number of abrupt and surly rejoinders, including the following:

"On the subject of paragraph four, in my opinion Comrade Lenin himself 'hurried' a little . . . There is hardly a doubt that his 'hurriedness' will supply fuel to the advocates of 'independence', to the detriment of the national liberalism of Lenin."

Stalin's rude reply was the expression of his unconcealed annoyance at Lenin's "interference" in what he considered his private domain, accentuated by fear at the outcome of Lenin's intervention.

Stalin's fears were well-grounded. Following his discussion with Mdivani, Lenin became convinced that the Georgian business was being mishandled by Stalin, and set to work accumulating evidence. On 6 October, Lenin wrote a memo to the Politburo: "On Combatting Dominant National Chauvinism":

"I declare war to the death on dominant nation chauvinism. I shall eat it with all my healthy teeth as soon as I get rid of this accursed bad tooth."

The full significance of what had happened in Georgia had not yet come home to Lenin. He did not know that Stalin, in order to strengthen his hand had actually carried out a purge of the finest cadres of Georgian Bolshevism, replacing the old central committee with new and more "pliant" elements.

What he did know was sufficient to arouse Lenin's suspicions. In the following week he began quietly to collect information on the Georgian "affair", and got the Central Committee to send Rykov and Dzherzhinsky to Tiflis to investigate the complaints of the Georgian Bolsheviks.

On 23 and 24 December, Lenin began to dictate his famous letters to the Congress to his secretary. He stressed that this was to be secret. Lenin's work proceeded slowly, painfully, interrupted by bouts of illness. But through it all, the idea becomes increasingly clear that the central enemy lay within the bureaucratic "apparatus" of the state and party, and the man who stood at its head, Stalin.

In "The Real Situation in Russia" Trotsky records his last conversation he had with Lenin shortly before his second stroke. In reply to Lenin's suggestion that Trotsky should participate in a new commission to fight against bureaucracy (see "How to Reorganise the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate"). Trotsky replied as follows:

"Vladimir Ilych, according to my conviction, in the present struggle with bureaucratism in the Soviet apparatus, we must not forget that there is going on, both in the provinces and in the centre, a special selection of officials and specialists, party, non-party, and half-party, around certain ruling party personalities and groups—in the provinces, in the districts, in the party locals and in the centre—that is, the Central Committee, etc. Attacking the Soviet officials you run into the party leader. The specialist is a member of his suite. In such circumstances I could not undertake this work."

Then Vladimir Ilyich reflected for a moment and—here I quote him practically verbatim—said: "That is, I propose a struggle with Soviet bureaucratism, and you want to add to that the bureaucratism of the Organisation Bureau of the party." I laughed at the unexpectedness of this, because no such finished formulation of the idea was in my head. I answered, "I suppose that's it."

Then Vladimir Ilyich said: "Well, all right, I propose a bloc." and I said: "I'm always ready to form a bloc with a good man."

This conversation is important for the light it sheds on the content of Lenin's last works, especially the famous "Testament", the letters on the national question and "Better Fewer but Better". The tone of his letters gets increasingly sharp, his targets more clearly defined, with every day. No matter what question he deals with, the central thought is the same, the need to combat the pressure of alien class forces in state and party, the rooting out of bureaucracy, the fight against Great-Russian chauvinism, the fight against the Stalin clique in the party.

Despite Lenin's insistent requests that his notes be kept strictly secret, the first part of the "Testament" found its way into the hands of the Secretariat and Stalin, who immediately realised the danger of Lenin's intervention and took measures to prevent it from taking place. Severe pressure was put upon Lenin's secretaries to prevent Lenin from discovering any news which might 'upset' him.

Nevertheless, Lenin found out from Dzherzhinsky that, among other outrages perpetrated by the Stalin faction, Orhonikidze had gone so far as to hit one of the Georgian oppositionists. This may seem a small thing when compared to the later Stalinist terror, but it shocked Lenin profoundly. His secretary noted in her diary for 30 January, 1923 the words of Lenin: "Just before I got ill Dzherzhinsky told me about the work of the Commission and about the 'incident' and this had a very painful effect on me."

To understand the enormity of this crime, it is necessary to know about the relations between the Russian (more correctly Great-Russian) national and the national minorities who, under the Tsars, were treated with the same contempt and the same barbarous artibrariness as the negroes and Indians were under the British Empire. The historic task of the Russian Revolution was to raise these despised minorities to the stature of full men, with their own rights and dignity. The idea of a representative of the Great Russian nation abusing or striking a Georgian was a crime against proletarian internationalism, a Tsarist monstrosity which would have been punished in the most drastic matter—by expulsion from the party at the very least. That is why Lenin poured out his wrath against Stalin and Orzhonikidze, demanding "exemplary punishment for those responsible".

Stalin placed every obstacle in the way of Lenin's receiving information from Georgia. Numerous passages from the diaries of Lenin's secretaries give a clear picture of this bureaucratic harassment:

"On Thursday 25 January, he (Lenin) asked whether the materials (of the Georgian committee) had been received. I answered that Dzerzhinski would not be arriving until Saturday. Therefore I had not been able to ask him."

"On Saturday I asked Dzerzhinski, he said Stalin had the materials. I sent Stalin a letter, but he was out of town. Yesterday, 29 January, Stalin phoned, saying he could not give the materials without the Politburo. Asked whether I had not been telling Vladimir Ilyich things he was not to be told—how was it he was posted about current affairs? For instance, his article about the WPI (RABKRIN) showed that certain circumstances were known to him, I answered that I had not been telling anything and had no reason to believe he was posted about affairs. Today Vladimir Ilyich sent for me to learn the answer and said that he would fight to get the materials." (emphasis, AW)

These few lines starkly reveal the bullying, bureaucratic manner with which Stalin attempted to defend his position against Lenin, whom he mortally feared, even on his death-bed. There can be no clearer illustration of Stalin's 'rudeness' and 'disloyalty' to which Lenin refers in his "Testament".

Lenin's distrustful attitude to the commission of Dzherzhinsky and the behaviour of the Central Committee is reflected in his instructions to his secretaries:

"1) Why was the old CC of the CP of Georgia accused of deviationism?

2) What breach of discipline were they blamed for?

3) Why the Transcaucasian Committee is accused of suppressing the CC of the CP of Georgia?

4) The physical means of suppression 'biomechanics'.

5) The line of the C.C. of the CP (of the RCP(B)) in Vladimir Ilyich's absence and in his presence.

6) Attitude of the Commission. Did it examine only the accusations against the C.C. of the C.P. of Georgia or also against the Transcaucasian Committee? Did examine the 'biomechanics' incident?

7) The present situation (the election campaign, the Mensheviks, suppression, national discord)."

But Lenin's growing realisation of the disloyal and dishonest methods of elements in the party leadership made him also distrustful of his own secretariat. Were they not also being gagged by Stalin?

"On January 24th Vladimir Ilych said: "First of all about this 'secret' job of ours. I know that you are deceiving me." To my assurances on the contrary, he answered "I have my own opinion about that."

With difficulty, the sick Lenin managed to learn that the Politbureau had accepted the conclusions of Dzerzhinsky's Commission. It was at this time (Feb 2nd-6th.) that Lenin dictated 'Better Fewer But Better', the most outspoken attack on Stalin and the party bureaucracy yet. The Georgian events had convinced Lenin that the rotten chauvinism of the state was the most dangerous indication of pressure from alien classes:

"Our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say wretched, that we must first think very carefully how to combat its defects, bearing in mind that these defects are rooted in the past, which, although it has been overthrown, has not yet been overcome."

In his last public appearance at a political gathering, the Eleventh Congress of the RCP (B), Lenin had warned that the state machine was escaping from the control of the Communists: "The machine refused to obey the hand that guided it. It was like a car that is not responding to the steering, but going in the direction someone else desired as if it were being driven by some mysterious, lawless hand, God knows whose, perhaps of a profiteer, or of a private capitalist, or of both. Be that as it may, the car is not going quite in the direction the man at the wheel imagines, and often it goes in an altogether different direction."

The poison of nationalism, the most characteristic feature of all forms of Stalinism, had its roots in the reaction of the petty-bourgeois, the kulak, the "nep-man" and the Soviet official against the revolutionary internationalism of October.

Lenin proposed to fight against this reaction at the forthcoming Congress, in alliance with Trotsky—the



Sketch of Lenin in 1920.

only member of the Central Committee he could trust to uphold his point of view.

He proposed to deal personally with the question of RABKRIN and was "preparing a bombshell" for Stalin. His conviction that the Party "apparat" was plotting to keep him out at all costs is illustrated by the remark of his secretary that "Apparently, furthermore, Vladimir Ilyich has the impression that it was not the doctors who gave instructions to the Central Committee, but the Central Committee that gave instructions to the doctors."

Lenin's suspicions were only too well grounded. One of the ideas seriously canvassed on the Central Committee at this time was the printing of a special, single number of *Pravda*, especially for Lenin's consumption, in order to deceive him about the Georgian affair!

The argument that this was all for the good of Lenin's health does not hold water. As he himself explained, nothing agitated and upset him so much as the disloyal actions of CC members and the tissue of lies with which they were camouflaged. The real attitude of Stalin towards the dying Lenin was revealed in a truly monstrous incident involving Krupskaya. Lenin's wife, attempting to defend her sick husband from the rude importunings of Stalin was rewarded by crude abuse from the "loyal disciple". Krupskaya describes the incident in a letter to Kamenev dated 23 December 1922:

"Lev Borisovich,

Concerning the brief letter written by me at Vladimir Ilyich's dictation with the doctors' permission, Stalin phoned me yesterday and addressed himself to me in the crudest fashion. I have not been in the party for just a day. In the whole 30 years I have never heard a single rude word from one comrade. The interests of the Party and Ilyich are not less dear to me than to Stalin. Now I need the maximum self-control. I know better than any doctor what can or cannot be said to Ilyich, because I know what upsets him and what doesn't, in any case better than Stalin."

Krupskaya begged Kamenev, a personal friend, to protect her "from rude interference in my personal life, unworthy brawling and threats", adding that as far as Stalin's threat of bringing her before a control commission was concerned: "I have no strength and no time to waste on such stupid squabbles. I am also a human being and my nerves are stretched to breaking point."

Lenin's threat to break off all comradely relations with Stalin and his accusations of 'rudeness' in the 'testament' are often explained away by vague references to this incident. But in the first place, what Stalin did was not a 'personal' matter but a grave political offence, punishable by expulsion from the party. The offence is magnified by the fact that Stalin's position in the party made it incumbent on him to root out such behaviour, not to champion it. However, this 'little incident' must be seen in its proper context. It is only the most distasteful and obvious of the manifestations of Stalin's disloyalty.

Lenin's last active days were spent organising his



Lenin addresses delegates at the 3rd Congress of the 3rd International.

fight against the Stalin faction at the Congress. He wrote a letter to Trotsky asking him to take up the defence of the Georgian comrades, and to the Georgian leaders warmly committing himself to their cause. It should be noted that such emphatic expressions as "with all my heart" and "with very best comradely greetings" are very rarely met in the letters of Lenin, who preferred a more restrained style of writing. It was a measure of his commitment to the struggle. It should also be pointed out that Lenin's bloc constituted a political faction—what was later known by the Stalinists as an 'anti-party bloc'. The Stalinists had already organised their faction which controlled the party machine.

Fotieva, Lenin's secretary, took down Lenin's last notes on the Georgian question, evidently preparation for a speech at the Congress:

"Vladimir Ilyich's instructions that a hint be given to Stoltz that he (Lenin) was on the side of the injured party. Some one or other of the the injured party to be given to understand that he was on their side. Three moments: 1. One should not fight. 2. Concessions should be made. 3. One cannot compare a large state with a small one. Did Stalin know? Why didn't he react? The name 'deviationist' for a deviation towards chauvinism and Menshevism proves the same deviation with the dominant nation chauvinists.

Collected printed matter for Vladimir Ilyich."

On March 9, Lenin suffered his third stroke which left him paralysed and helpless. The struggle against bureaucratic degeneration passed to Trotsky and the Left Opposition. But Lenin laid the foundation of the programme of the Opposition, against bureaucracy, against the 'kulak' menace, for industrialisation and Socialist planning, for Socialist Internationalism and workers' democracy.

Andropov and after...

By Peter Taaffe

JUST BEFORE he died Moscow wags had already passed verdict on Andropov's brief fifteen months in power. A variation on an old joke read as follows:

Stalin, Krushchev, Brezhnev and Andropov are travelling on a red train. The train breaks down. "Fix it" orders Stalin. They repair it but the train still doesn't move. "Shoot everyone" orders Stalin. They shoot everyone, but the train still won't budge. Stalin dies. "Rehabilitate everyone!" orders Krushchev. They are rehabilitated, but the train remains motionless. Krushchev is removed. "Close the curtains" orders Brezhnev, "and pretend we are moving." Brezhnev dies, Andropov gets out, kicks the wheel and breaks his toe."

Before long the same tale will be told with as much force about Chernenko, successor to Andropov and the oldest at 72 to hold power in the Kremlin since the foundation of the state. He inherits a regime beset by crises. Indeed all the conditions for the overthrow of the Russian and the East European Stalinists have now ripened and are rotten ripe.

It was Marx who pointed out that the key to the development of society was the development of the productive forces, science, technique and the organisation of labour. He wrote with regard to the incapacity of capitalism to fully develop the potential latent in the productive forces which it has itself built up. However, Marx's aphorism now applies with equal force to the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe and Russia. In the past the advantages of nationalisation and a plan of production, the main conquest of the Russian Revolution, were evident in the colossal development of the productive forces and the increased living standards of the Russian proletariat and peasantry.

The productive forces developed at two and, sometimes, three times the rate of capitalism in the West. Thus despite all the horrors of Stalin's regime—the purge trials, the slave labour camps, the "gulag"—Stalinism, given the lag of the world revolution, played a relatively progressive role. It fulfilled in Russia the tasks which capitalism was incapable of carrying out, developing industry, borrowing technique from the West and constructing the infrastructure, through the development of heavy industry, of a modern industrial country.

It is true, as Trotsky pointed out, that this was achieved at two or even three times the cost under capitalism. Nevertheless, no economy in history has managed to increase the productive forces on such a scale as the Russian economy since 1917. Even the Japanese economy over a similar period of time has not had the rate of growth of the Russian economy.

This fact was underlined in an article in the journal *Scientific American*, which doesn't usually discuss economic trends. Even in the post-war period we saw



Yuri Andropov in 1983.

the enormous advantages of nationalisation and a plan of production in Russia's rapid economic recovery from the terrible destruction of the war.

The economy increased in general at twice the rate of capitalism in the 1950s. Russia's overall industrial production increas-

ed in the decade of the 1950s by 230%. Consumer goods doubled while the production of the means of production increased approximately 2½ times. Capital investment in industry more than doubled and the productivity of labour rose during the decade of the 1960s by 66%. Roy Medvedev, a representative of the liberal trend within the bureaucracy, estimated that overall industrial production reached 75% of the USA in 1970. During the 1950s Krushchev had boasted Russia would catch up and outstrip the capitalist West, including capitalist America by the 1970s.

Brezhnev postponed the "catching up" date but maintained that Krushchev's boast would be reached in the 1970s or the 1980s. Yet recent estimates of Russia's national output puts it at only 60% of America. (Roy Medvedev, a Russian historian, puts it at only 55% of America's output.) In heavy industry—steel, cement, etc—Russia outstrips most of the capitalist powers. But also now in the most modern industries such as micro-processors Russia is only two to three years behind America in the design and development in this key field. It is planned that 100,000 computers will be introduced into Russian industry by 1985–86. Thus the productive potential, if not the actual productivity of labour, is similar to the most advanced capitalist countries of the West.

This represents a huge development in comparison to the Russia at the time of the revolution of 1917. The material conditions for socialism did not exist in Russia at that time but only on a world scale. The leaders of the Russian Revolution, Lenin, Trotsky

and the other Bolshevik leaders saw the Russian Revolution as the spark which would ignite the world revolution and lay the basis for a socialist world federation. Not one leader of the revolution, including Stalin himself at the time, conceived that it was possible with the meagre economic and cultural resources of Russia to construct socialism in that country. But the lag of the world revolution—in its turn the product of the betrayal of the Social Democratic leaders in the West—the civil war, together with the extreme backwardness of Russia led to the elbowing aside of the working class the usurpation of power by the bureaucratic elite in the state, the army and the party.

The development of the productive forces in Russia over the last sixty six years, under the supervision of the bureaucracy, has for the first time furnished the material base for the construction of socialism. Yet with the same amount of machinery as in capitalist America at the elbow of the working class the output of Russia is 60 or 70% of the USA. That fact alone would condemn the rule of the bureaucracy. For it was Marx who pointed out that "all economy comes down in the last analysis to an economy of time". Trotsky expanded on this profound statement by explaining that this meant that all human struggle with nature at all stages of civilisation, reduced to its primary basis, meant that history is nothing but a struggle for an economy of working-time. "Socialism could not be justified by the abolition of exploitation alone; it must guarantee to society a higher economy of time than what is guaranteed by capitalism". Fifty years ago Trotsky could write "Soviet economy is still far from learning to make use of time, that most precious raw material of culture."

Yet the waste of the bureaucracy then was a mere trifle compared to the squandermania, inefficiency and wastage today. The bureaucracy has vitiated the gigantic advantages of the planned economy. When set against the background of the world economic crisis of 1930s with its attendant mass unemployment, poverty and hunger the economic development of Russia attracted support from the workers in the capitalist states and also from a layer of intellectuals. But now Russia's rate of development is the same and even less than some of the major capitalist powers of the West. Even in the 1960s and '70s we saw the slowing down in the development of the Russian economy.

It increased by an average of 12% during the 1950s. Yet only in the single year of 1967 did the economy increase by 10% in the following decade. In the 1970s the rate of growth was only half the rate of the previous decade. And in the two of the last four years there has been a catastrophic decline in the rate of growth in the Russian economy. In 1981 and 1982 there was a yearly increase of 2½%. This is the lowest since the Second World War. In 1983 it probably increased by about 4%. Agriculture grew by 4% in the same period after four years of decline. But despite an enormous investment in agriculture this figure is still below the 1970 level.

What these figures mean is that all the advantages enjoyed by Russia and the other Stalinist states in the past which resulted from nationalisation and a plan of production are now almost completely cancelled out by the monstrous incubus of Stalinism. The rate of development of the Russian economy is hardly different to the measly growth rate of the capitalist countries in the West. America grew at 3½% in 1983. The Stalinist bureaucracy is now an absolute fetter on the further development of the Russian economy and of Russian society. It is a monstrous historical road block which can only be removed by the political revolution of the Russian working class acting in consort with the working class throughout the whole of Eastern Europe.

The events in Poland between 1980 and '81 were a harbinger of the coming political revolution in the East. But even those mighty events will be put in the shade by the grandiose movements of the Russian proletariat in the next period. Indeed it is a race against time as to which will come first—the socialist revolution in the capitalist West or the political revolution in the Stalinist states of Russia and Eastern Europe.

The strategists of capital in their serious publications recognised the dangers to them as well as to Stalinism posed by the Polish events. The *Economist* journal, for instance, in September 1981 in an article on Poland had a headline "Solidarity Whoa!". They went on to warn that "the possibility of workers in other East European countries imitating the Poles is far from remote. In the tighter economic climate that now prevails one incident (like the miners' strike in Romania in 1977) could touch off a union revolution in any Communist state including the Soviet Union itself". Thus while the capitalists are prepared to use the crimes of Stalinism as a scarecrow against socialism in the West, at the same time they recognise the mortal dangers which are posed to them and their system by political revolution in the East.

In fact, Stalinism and capitalism feed off one another and lean on each other against the threat of social revolution in the West and political revolution in the East.

One of the factors in the past which restrained the Russian proletariat in moving to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy was the fear of military intervention by the imperialist powers and the consequent wiping out of the gains of the October revolution. On the other hand, imperialism uses Stalinism to ward off the threat posed to them by the movement of the proletariat in the capitalist West. In the 1930s Fascism and the threat of military intervention was used by Stalinism as a means of checking the movement of the Russian working class. Trotsky pointed out that Stalinism and Fascism were symmetrical. Although they rested on fundamentally different and antagonistic social systems they both arose from the same cause—the lag of the world revolution.

There are of course no Mussolinis, Francos or Hitlers on the horizon which the Stalinist

bureaucracy can now use. However, the bellicose threats of Reagan and Thatcher are used in an attempt to check any movement of the Russian working class. The bureaucracy feels and fears the power of the Russian working class today. Like the capitalists in the West they have presided over the mighty development of industry. They have therefore given a gigantic impulse to the growth of their own grave-digger the Russian proletariat. Without doubt the Russian working class is now the most powerful on the planet. Russia is no longer a backward society with a predominantly rural population. Agriculture now employs only 20% of the labour force. The increased power and social weight of the working class is shown in the following figures. There are now 18 cities of more than one million people: there were only five in 1970! 270 cities now have a population of 100,000 or more. This is fifty more than in 1970. Twenty new towns are created each year in Russia alone.

There are huge concentrations of the proletariat in individual factories which dwarf those in the capitalist West. For instance, in the Gorky automotive factory there is a total of 200,000 workers in the factory complex! In the Togliati factory there are 170,000 workers! A strike in protest against rationing in 1980 in these two factories alone assumed almost the character of a general strike!

The incapacity of the regime to develop the productive forces has in its turn meant the failure to satisfy the demands of an increasingly confident and cultured working class. In the past, it is true, there was an appreciable rise in the average wages of most categories of workers. During the 1950's and the 1960's there was a also a corresponding growth in the fields of education and science which far outstripped the capitalist West. There were 4.6 million students in Russia in 1970. 257,000 graduated in engineering alone. Yet only 50,000 graduated in the same year in America. The real living standards of the proletariat in all the countries of Eastern Europe have increased during the post-war period. The living standards of the East German working class, in most respects—with the exception perhaps of ownership of cars—is higher than the British working class at the present time.

In these societies culture is no longer monopolised by the bureaucratic elite. Engels pointed out that throughout history where an elite or class control art, government and science, they use and abuse their position to enhance thier position. We now have a very educated proletariat in all the countries of Eastern Europe, but particularly in Russia itself. Russia is now an advanced industrial country, the second industrial country in the World. But at best Russian and Eastern European Stalinist States can now only inch ahead. Only East Germany had the rate of development of 5% in 1982 which exceeded most of the capitalist countries. These figures show, like the diminishing heartbeats of a sick organism, the coming collapse of Russian Stalinism.

As with capitalism the Stalinist autocracy is no longer capable of presiding over the further develop-

ment of industry and society. It lurches from one expedient to another; each economic zig-zag is less effective than the previous one. Thus Andropov launched his reforms with an "anti-corruption" drive in the early part of 1983. Like Stalin, Krushchev and Brezhnev before him Andropov, while representing

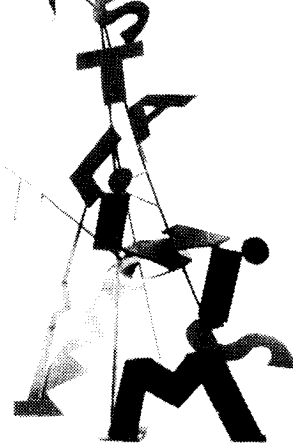
the privileged bureaucratic stratum nevertheless was alarmed at the mismanagement, the waste and the enormous part of the surplus consumed by this elite.

In an attempt to cut down the swollen privileges of the bureaucracy special brigades swooped on fashionable cafes, raided saunas and the other luxury palaces of the bureaucracy, in Leningrad, Moscow and other cities. For a very short period this seemed to have some effect. In the early part of the year the economy seemed set to increase by 5% or 6% but by May or June the economy dropped back and the same problems only in a more aggravated form which beset Brezhnev and Krushchev confronted the feeble and ailing Andropov and now Chernenko. The history of the Stalinist regimes has been a history of one economic zig-zag, of one economic adventure, piled upon another. In a dizzying change of policy the Stalinist regimes have moved from centralisation to de-centralisation and back to re-centralisation.

No modern economy could work with the rigid centralised control exercised by the privileged stratum in Moscow. Even 10,000 Lenin's, Trotsky's, Marx's and Engels', would not be capable alone of running a highly sophisticated economy like that of Russia. Capitalism has at least the check of the market. In a planned economy only the conscious control and management of the state and society by the working class can exploit its full potential. Only workers' control and management could eliminate the monstrous wastage which blights Russian society and economy at the present time. The untrammelled rule of the Kremlin elite has led to the absurdity of the central ministries in Moscow trying to determine the plans of thousands of individual factories sometimes situated thousands of miles away.

These plans, moreover, were determined with the crudest methods; by targets of weight and output. Thus in one factory the plan was set in volume per output and bonuses were awarded on the basis of the total output of the factory. Huge nails were therefore produced which sometimes were bigger than the wood they were supposed to go into! The plan was then changed to the number of products turned out. Tiny nails were then produced which were equally useless! The centralised control exercised was equivalent to the British Treasury attempting to determine the output of a small factory in Rochdale.

The Brezhnev regime attempted in the 1960's to escape from its impasse with experiment in "controll-





sword from the leader of the Azerbaijanian Republic just before he died. The Minister of Fisheries was shot for "economic crimes". This involved the smuggling of vast amounts of caviar to the West in boxes which were labelled as herrings! Similarly, the Airways Minister has been executed for similar crimes which caught up in the web of corruption thousands of people in his Ministry. No matter which way they turn the bureaucracy cannot solve the insurmountable problems which now beset their regime.

The attempt to ape some features of the capitalist market in the so called Lieberman reforms in the 1960's were only partially applied in Russia itself. The Hungarian regime of

ed" de-centralisation and the introduction of the "profit motive" together with one man management in individual factories. As we predicted at the time, this merely duplicated the deficiencies of the centralised bureaucracy many times over. Limited control was ceded to the different "nationalities" which created 16 mini-bureaucracies in the national republics which added to the inefficiency and waste of the centralised Moscow bureaucracy. At the same time, bribery and corruption have reached monumental proportions. In 1936 Trotsky pointed out that the bureaucracy swallowed a considerable part of the surplus value created by the labour of the working class. The bureaucracy in the trade apparatus consumed one tenth of the total production of Russia at that time. He estimated that the bureaucracy as a whole numbered 5 to 6 million out of a total population of 170 million.

Yet the privileges enjoyed by the Stalinist apparatus of 1936 seems almost like the "kick backs" to a village policeman compared to the monstrous corruption and squandermania of the latter day Stalinist grandees. The so-called "Russian Communist Party" is in effect the party of the bureaucracy. This has swollen to a nominal membership figure of 18 million out of a population of 270 million. Of course this privileged officialdom stretches from the lords in the Kremlin down to the village and town official. The bribery and corruption has reached such a monumental scale that not even Trotsky could have anticipated. It is now estimated that 50% of the total output of Russia's economy is wasted either through inefficiency, mismanagement or outright corruption.

Andropov revealed the extent of corruption amongst Brezhnev's immediate entourage. He criticised Brezhnev himself only after the latter was incapable of answering back from beyond the grave. Brezhnev had been awarded a diamond encrusted

Kadar, on the other hand, took up some aspects of Lieberman's proposals and implemented them in Hungary. Andropov now has been toying with the idea of imitating the so-called "Hungarian model". Thus the Russian bureaucracy seek to imitate their own imitators in an attempt to extricate themselves from their difficulties. The much-vaunted Hungarian reforms gave a certain independence to factory managers.

It also represented an attempt on the part of the bureaucracy to draw a section of the Hungarian working class into sharing out the privileges enjoyed by the elite. It was coupled with an attempt to introduce into Hungarian conditions a kind of Stakhanovite movement like that in Russia in the 1930's. Trotsky pointed out that this represented an attempt by Stalin to involve a section of workers in sharing out the privileges of the bureaucracy. Stalinist regimes are incapable of inspiring the proletariat to develop industry and society. Instead the Kadar bureaucracy sought to buy the support of a section of the Hungarian proletariat through bribery. The outcome of the "Hungarian reforms" has been the huge growth of disparities within Hungarian society.

Certain theoreticians imagined in the past that the growth of industry in the Stalinist States would narrow the differentials which existed between the Soviet aristocracy and the working class. Now even a former Hungarian Prime Minister Hegedis has estimated that the income of the top 5% in Hungary was 80 times that of the bottom 5%! Corruption is now so widespread that every layer of Hungarian society, even including Hungarian football teams, have been drawn into an enormous web of corruption. Throughout all the States of Eastern Europe and not just in Poland there is enormous simmering discontent that could easily boil over in the next period. Hungary experienced a growth in its economy follow

ing the revolution of 1956. This arose partially from the participation of the Hungarian economy on the World Market. But in 1983 the Hungarian national income was expected to drop by 2%.

However, the weakest link in the chain of Stalinism next to Poland is perhaps Yugoslavia. Inflation is already exceeding 40% a year. This is mostly imported inflation from the West arising from the trade of Yugoslavia with the capitalist bloc. Unemployment has now reached 10% of the labour force; at least 1 million emigrants work abroad, mostly in West Germany. This "unemployment" does not arise from the same causes as capitalism, i.e. economic crisis and over production. In fact in some of the Stalinist States there is a big labour shortage at the present time in contrast to the West.

In Russia and East Germany it is estimated that they have a labour shortage of millions at the present time. The 10% "unemployed" rate in Yugoslavia is itself a product of the complete snarling up of production because of Stalinist corruption and mismanagement. One report has actually revealed that there are more chauffeurs driving "Communist" functionaries in Yugoslavia than there are miners! Even the lower layers of the bureaucracy have not escaped from the effects of their misrule. Thus a recent report has revealed that there are actually 73,000 members of the Yugoslav "Communist" Party who are presently out of work.

Moreover, all the regimes of Eastern Europe and Russia itself are incapable of satisfying the aroused expectations of a more and more assertive working class. Thus practically every regime in Eastern Europe and Russia is beset by big shortages of food and consumer goods. It is not generally realised that rationing was only introduced in the '70s in Russia. But now rationing is widespread in European Russia quite apart from Central Asia and Southern Russia. The working class of Russia is restricted to two kilos of meat per person. Yet the Polish working class consumes 3 kilos of meat per person and is discontented. The meat ration was one of the factors in the upheavals in Poland itself. Riots and upheavals have affected every one of the Stalinist regimes in the past three years. In Yugoslavia there were riots over washing powder in the recent period.

Also Yugoslavia shows in a particularly sharp fashion the incapacity of Stalinism to solve the national problem. Without Lenin's programme and extreme sensitivity on the issue on the National question the Russian Revolution itself would not have been possible. When the Bolsheviks took power they gave the right of self-determination, including the right to secede from the Russian Socialist Federation. The Bolsheviks were even compelled to invent alphabets and further the development of national groupings so backward were some of the peoples of Russia. And yet we saw the fusing together of the different nationalities of Russia into one democratic socialist federation. Through workers' democracy in Russia and internationally and through the World revolution there is no question that the national question would be in the process of being solved

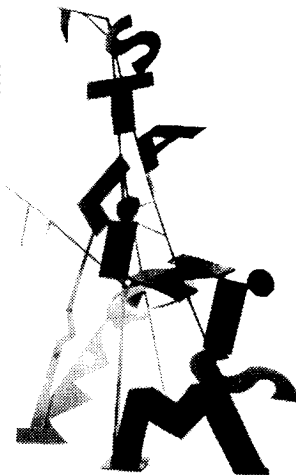
throughout the globe at the present time. The resurgence of the national question is the price the working class is forced to pay for the crimes of reformism on the one side and Stalinism on the other. It is a product, once again, of the lag of the world revolution.

It should never be forgotten that the first battle that Lenin took up against Stalin and the growing bureaucracy in Russia was precisely on the national question. The great Russian chauvinism and nationalism which Stalin displayed and Lenin came out against has developed to enormous proportions in Russia itself. Events have shown the incapacity of Stalinism to solve the national problem either in Russia or in Eastern Europe. the Balkans remain Balkanised. Such are the tensions involved in the sharpening of the national problem now that it is not excluded that we could see the break up of Yugoslavia if the bureaucracy maintains its rule.

This tendency is already evident in Kosovo which is populated by people of Albanian extraction and is close to Albania itself. A movement has developed there for links with Albania. This is despite the fact that Albania is on a lower economic and cultural level than Yugoslavia itself. The nationalist movement in Kosovo has been fuelled by the backwardness and economic disparity between the region and the rest of Yugoslavia. Kosovo has only one sixth of the income of Slovenia. Kosovo is demanding the status of a Republic which is supposed to be guaranteed under the Yugoslav constitution for all national minorities. But the dominant Serb/Slovene bureaucracy fear that the granting of this right would lead to the demand for secession from Yugoslavia.

Throughout Eastern Europe and Russia the national question is a powder keg for these states. In Russia for instance by the end of the century it is possible that the Slavs will form a minority of the Federation. They are now 55% of the population. But the Muslim and other populations in the south, it is estimated, will reach 100 million by the end of the century. The Russian bureaucracy feared that the Iranian revolution would have a big effect on the Muslim population of Russia itself. The recent murder of the Prime Minister of the Kirgiz Republic which borders China is linked to the resurgence of Muslim nationalism in this area.

In the Baltic States too we have a tremendous movement for national rights and against Russification. In Estonia there was a wide-spread revolt of the youth in 1981. In Lithuania similar movements have taken place. Only a genuine socialist federation would be able to unify the nationalities of Eastern Europe and of Russia. Such a regime would replace the crazy duplication of one economy by another which exists in Eastern Europe and Russia at the present time with a harmonious democratic socialist plan.



Thus each of these states has developed a separate steel industry, a machine tool industry and so on. This arose in part because of the ruthless domination of Stalin of the countries of Eastern Europe in the immediate post-war period. Comicon was used as a means of ensuring the domination by the Russian bureaucracy of the countries of Eastern Europe. Rumania was the bread basket of Russia, Bulgaria the fruit market etc.

Following Stalin's death and the break up of the monolith we saw the development of national Stalinist regimes in the countries of Eastern Europe. Certain "theoreticians" used this domination by the Russian Stalinist regime of Eastern Europe as a vindication of their characterisation of Russia as "State capitalist" because of its alleged "imperialist tendencies". At this time Russia sold goods above the world market prices to Eastern Europe and bought goods from these countries at below world market prices.

This situation has now been completely reversed. Russia subsidises the countries of Eastern Europe: it sells below world market prices and buys back above world market prices. What kind of "imperialist" regime subsidises its "colonies" in this fashion?

The situation that now obtains in Eastern Europe and Russia is qualitatively different to what existed in the past. All the objective political pre-requisites for a successful political revolution against the bureaucracy have matured in all the states of Eastern Europe and in Russia itself. The bureaucracy itself is riven into different factions with one section seeing the need for reform from above in order to prevent revolution from below. Another section insists on "harsh measures" to prevent the coming revolt of the workers and peasants of these states. It feels itself as an excrescence, as an impediment to the further development of society.

Some of the most visible signs of opposition have come precisely from within the ruling stratum itself, from their sons and daughters. In January 1982 we had such an example with the arrest and trial of a discussion group of 40, mostly young people who came together to discuss Trotsky's ideas because, in their own words, he described the "the betrayal of the Russian Revolution". Stalinism is utterly rotted and decomposing before our eyes.

In Poland the complete collapse of the so-called Communist Party, the organ and vehicle of the bureaucracy, reflected the evaporation of the last

vestiges of the authority of Stalinism in the eyes of the overwhelming majority of the population. In one year its membership dropped from a nominal three million to 2.3 million, an indication that even the lower layers of the bureaucracy, completely disillusioned with the regime, were being drawn behind the Polish workers' movement. In contrast Solidarity reached a membership of ten million in the cities and four million in the rural areas.

It should be noted in passing that the Polish workers, on the issues of the "Communist Party", gravitated towards one of the demands that Trotsky predicted would form the platform of a political revolution in Russia itself. Trotsky advocated that the "bureaucracy should be driven from the Soviets". In August 1980 the Gdansk workers' councils specifically prevented any member of the committee from being a member of the "Communist Party". Like the Hungarian proletariat of 1956 the Polish working class instinctively embraced many of the demands that Trotsky had theoretically worked out for the political revolution against the Russian Stalinist autocracy.

The crucial factor missing in the Polish events is the most decisive for the successful outcome of any revolution, whether it be social or political revolution: that is the role of a bold Marxist leadership and mass party. And one of the ironies in the Polish situation was the fact that it was precisely the leaders of the opposition around KOR—the workers' self-defence group—who proved to be the main stumbling block for the formation of such a leadership and party.

In the August events of 1980 and the following months the Stalinist bureaucracy were suspended in mid-air. When Jaruzelski was asked to use the army against the Polish workers at this stage his reply to his boss Gierek was: "what army?" Jaruzelski, coming from an old aristocratic Polish family, represents the more intelligent wing of the bureaucracy. He realised that any attempt to use the army would result in its complete dissolution. And yet 18 months later the army could be safely used by Jaruzelski to crush the revolution. The explanation for this is to be found in the failure of the Polish workers to find the necessary leadership and a party capable of seizing power in good season.

There was the beginnings of the political revolution in Poland in the August events. Yet the working class cannot be kept at fever pitch indefinitely. The laws of political revolution as with social revolu-



tion mean that unless a favourable opportunity is utilised to take power the forces of the old order can re-establish themselves. A half revolution will always allow the ruling class or caste to re-establish its position by utilizing the inevitable chaos and mismanagement which results from such a situation.

We have seen this many times in the case of incomplete social revolutions in the west. For example in the Portuguese revolution, 70% of industry was taken over, yet the failure to establish a planned economy with workers' control, management and democracy and a workers' state, allowed the forces and the state of Portuguese landlordism and capitalism to be re-established.

The Polish workers were pushing mightily in the direction of the political revolution. Because the regime was allegedly based on "Marxism", and because of the powerful elements of Polish nationalism which historically were reflected through the church, the opposition of the workers were channelled through the church. Trotsky himself anticipated that some opposition to the Nazi regime would be reflected first through the Catholic church. To a much greater extent was this the case in Poland. However, the grip of the Catholic religion on the Polish population, while having important historical roots, nevertheless would not have been decisive in preventing the political revolution. The Catholic church has authority in terms of religion in the eyes of the Polish masses. However, as even the bourgeois press has recently commented, for most of the youth the teachings of the church on abortion and divorce were conspicuously ignored.

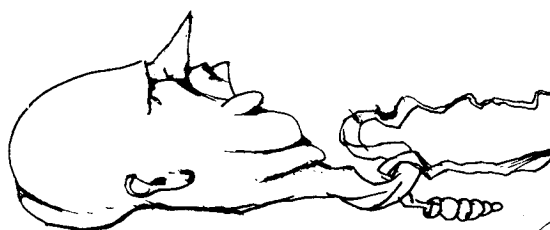
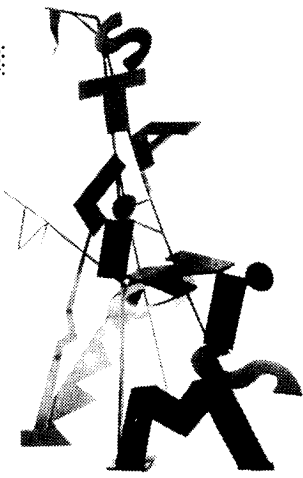
We saw in the Polish events an anticipation of what will happen in the coming political revolution in Russia itself. One of the most striking features was the speed with which the consciousness of the proletariat developed in the course of the revolution. The Polish workers, like some sections of the Russian proletariat today, started off on a primitive level by demanding democratic and trade union rights. However, this movement took place in a different social system to capitalism and therefore the consciousness of the working class developed differently and almost daily.

All the ideas of Trotsky for the political revolution with one important addition were perfectly fitted for the situation that developed in Poland. We saw the demand for the complete abolition of the privileges of the bureaucracy, bribes to managers and the

removal of corrupt governors, etc. The corruption of the whole governing elite was typified for the Polish working class by the revelations of the ex-head of Polish TV Szczeponski. This worthy had instituted a system of corruption on a Byzantine scale. This involved the employment of call girls, special villas, ski chalets for favoured clients, use of a yacht owned technically by Polish TV, a massive personal fortune, a private helicopter and many other "perks".

Demands for the removal of corrupt and privileged officials would not be to the fore in the demands of striking workers in individual enterprises or even in whole industries in the capitalist West at this stage. For instance we do not get in Britain, or in most other countries, demands for the removal of the manager of the factory or the director of a company at national level because they have unjustified privileges. However, once the working class in the Stalinist states obtains independent organisations the removal of the stolen privileges of the ruling stratum is automatically raised by the working class. This indicates the difference in the character of the revolution in these countries as opposed to the social revolution in the West. However, the Polish events have demonstrated once again that the crucial importance for the success of the political revolution is the existence of a leadership and a party with authority amongst the masses.

Such was the situation in Poland that a small number of Marxists numbering hundreds with a clear programme and perspective could have rapidly become a mass tendency. The enormous development of the most advanced elements of the Polish proletariat was indicated in the historical Solidarity conference in September 1981 just before the declaration of martial law. Not only did the working class demand election of officials, with right of recall against the privileges of the bureaucracy but at the September congress the issue of workers' power in Poland, throughout Eastern Europe and in Russia itself was raised in a very confused but nevertheless unmistakable fashion.



Alan Harker

Thus one of the demands raised was for "another Parliament of the workers" to replace the official Stalinist parliament. Lech Walesa, who became more and more a brake on the movement, was compelled to denounce those who in his own words "wanted to smash the totalitarian system". Speeches and declarations which unequivocally stated that there was no question of going back to capitalism got automatic standing ovations. But what is of decisive importance was the international appeal which was made in that congress, not only to the East European working class but to the mighty Russian proletariat, to emulate their Polish brothers and sisters. There were also calls to abandon support for the so-called "leading role" of the Communist Party. Solidarity had only agreed in the first place to support this under pressure from the KOR leaders following the 1980 August events. Speeches were also made which correctly said that Solidarity was not just a Trade Union but a Party or a potential Party, and called upon the leaders of Solidarity to take power. The 1981 September Solidarity Congress set alarm bells ringing in the Kremlin and throughout Eastern Europe. Unfortunately these conclusions of the more advanced workers came when the mood of the overwhelming majority of Polish working class and peasants was beginning to ebb. It was in this situation that the Polish bureaucracy, in consort with their Russian counter parts, struck. It is a measure of the complete collapse of the so-called "Communist Party" that it was the military wing of the bureaucracy which alone had even the semblance of authority to carry through the bureaucratic counter-revolution. Stalin was very careful to curb the power of the military, involving the slaughter of the officer corps during the purges, for fear of action against his regime and his personal position coming from this quarter in the event of a crisis. But so utterly rotten was the Polish "Communist" Party that only the army tops who had some semblance of authority were capable of assuming power. The intervention of the army in December 1981 marked the termination for a period of the Polish revolution.

Marxists, as the most realistic tendency in the labour movement, recognise that it is fatal to mix up counter revolution with revolution. It is fundamentally false to compare the present opposition of the Polish workers to Jaruzelski's regime to the events of August 1980 and subsequently. This latter period was a period of revolution, to be more precise the

beginning of the political revolution. The capitalist press in the West for their own reasons have fed the impression that the movement has continued at the same level as 1980. But even the big demonstrations in support of the Pope were only a pale echo of the movement of August 1980 and afterwards.

December 81 represented the ebbing for a time of the movement in Poland and a defeat of the working class. A mood of despair and even demoralisation now affects widespread sections of the Polish proletariat at the



present time. For instance the use of vodka, drunkenness and drug addiction have appeared

on a widespread scale. Yet in August 1980 in the Gdansk soviet, alcohol was banned. Poland is the largest producer of morphine in the world, and now there are 300,000 heroin addicts in Poland as a whole with 30,000 in Warsaw.

However, the Polish events were a dress rehearsal for the coming revolution in Russia. The Russian bureaucracy were terrified of the repercussions of the Polish events within Russia itself. That is why they castigated the official "trade unions" for allegedly not doing their job in Russia. In fact, the state and party bureaucracy threatened to prosecute the trade union bureaucracy, if they did not act as a more accurate sounding-board of the mood of the masses.

They feel the colossal subterranean revolt of the Russian proletariat.

But of course the sectarian wiseacres have argued that if the subjective factor (i.e. a mass party with a Marxist leadership) is crucial, then there is no possibility of a political revolution in Russia without this subjective factor, being created first. This idea is false. A mass party with a clear-sighted and authoritative leadership is vital for the success of the political revolution. But it is virtually impossible to construct such a party before the process of political revolution begins in Russia.

It is true that sections of the liberal bureaucracy like Roy Medvedev imagine that you could have a similar situation in Russia as exists with bourgeois democracy in the West. But the capitalists in the West can switch from Bonapartism, i.e. military police dictatorship, to democracy and back to Bonapartism. They can allow bourgeois democracy—the rights of the workers and their organisations—because the capitalists are a class which has roots in bourgeois society. They are necessary for the development of capitalist society. As Marx pointed out they are the “trustees” of capitalist society. They play a role in the development of industry and society. They can tolerate at least for certain historical periods the independent rights of the workers’ organisations.

But the situation is entirely different in the Stalinist states. Once the proletariat has its own organisations, has freedom to criticise and so on, the whole position of the bureaucracy comes into question. The call for the immediate removal of privileges would be made. Therefore long periods, with the working class having their own independent organisations and rights, without political revolution, is ruled out in the Stalinist states. We can have a period of dual power, as we had in Poland for a period of 14 months, but unless it leads to the political revolution we will inevitably see the triumph of a new version of the bureaucratic counter-revolution.

Therefore what conclusion can be drawn in relation to the process of the political revolution in the Stalinist States? How can a party and leadership be formed which will lead the proletariat to victory?

Under the regimes of bureaucratic absolutism, even small organisations of the proletariat face repression. For instance, Roy Medvedev has revealed that innocent organisations of cactus growers have been banned in Russia. Ceaucescu in Rumania has recently banned transcendental medicine, yoga. Therefore powerful underground organisations with mass influence are virtually ruled out in these states. But what the Hungarian revolution and now the Polish events have demonstrated, is that very quickly a mass party of the proletariat can be created and improvised by the working class in these states. The Hungarian revolution started off with all kinds of illusions in the United Nations, and even in the capitalist states in the West. But it lasted for six weeks, was based on the creation of soviets throughout the country, and it ended up with an appeal to the proletariat of the world; “workers of the

world unite.” If it had been allowed to develop, there is no doubt the Hungarian workers would have created a mass Party in the process of the revolution.

In Poland the main obstacle to such a development was the existence of the so-called Workers’ Defence Group led by Jacek Kuron which acted as a brake on the movement to the Polish proletariat.

Another factor in the Polish situation, which was crucial, was the fear of Russian intervention. This is undoubtedly an important factor in the whole of Eastern Europe. But once a movement takes place in Russia, the bureaucracy will be powerless to stop it. Particularly if the revolution began in Moscow or Leningrad. Where will the forces for the bureaucratic counter-revolution come from? The population of Moscow now is 20 million. Once the proletariat in one of the major centres of Russia begins this will be the beginning of the end of the bureaucracy. Moreover, with correct leadership, a peaceful political revolution is entirely possible. Trotsky pointed out that despite the enormous size of the bureaucracy, it is more heterogeneous than the peasantry. It reaches from the humblest policeman in the town and village right up to the lords in the Kremlin. Once there is a movement of the Russian proletariat, the bureaucratic elite at the top will be suspended in mid air. Therefore the present situation in Russia and Eastern Europe points towards the coming political revolution in Russia and throughout the whole area.

Both in the advanced capitalist and the underdeveloped world there is hardly one country untouched by an economic and social crisis. This now exists to the same extent in the Stalinist states. There is not one regime which is now stable, which does not face opposition from the proletariat. There is growing opposition in Czechoslovakia and in East Germany, where 100,000 youth gathered to protest under the banner of the Lutheran church in early 1983, in Hungary. It is also visible in Hungary, and in Rumania, where the miners actually stoned Ceaucescu’s helicopter in the Jiului valley and he was forced to flee. The crew on his private yacht have recently fled to the West!

To a much greater extent than 1956, 1968, or even 1980, all the conditions for a continental political revolution are being prepared in Russia and Eastern Europe. The present regimes in these countries are doomed but their demise might assume a more drawn out character, because of the absence of the subjective factor. The process could be similar to the death agony of capitalism in the West. But the first spark for the coming world revolution can come from Eastern Europe and Russia. Once it begins it will be one of the greatest dramas in the whole of human history. It will put in the shade even the mighty October revolution itself, and begin the transformation of the globe through revolution.

The Belgian general strike

EDITOR'S NOTE

THE BIGGEST class conflict in Belgium for 23 years was sparked off by the attempt to the Liberal (PRL)—Social Christian (PSC) to push through an austerity programme, against a background of serious economic crisis. The reac-

tion of the workers to the cuts was immediate.

The Belgian public sector strike of September is an event of enormous interest to the British working class. The present article constitutes a graphic account of the struggle as it unfolded and an analysis of the lessons of the movement.

By Philippe Rolande

"What is happening in Belgium should attract the attention... of the governments of Europe. The strike of the public service workers... has revealed a situation which could soon develop in other countries."

Le Matin, Paris
21 September, 1983.

"Whether the strike spreads or not, the movement will serve as a case study in other capitals. The reaction of the Belgian trade unions has shown the limitations of policies which hold down wages."

Libération, Paris
21 September, 1983

AT 10.00 am on 9 September workers began to walk off the job at Charleroi railway station. They did not wait for the advice of their union officials, nor even of their shop stewards. The first to strike were members of the traditionally conservative CSC (Confédération des Syndicats Christien).

As news of the government proposals spread, so did the strike. Railway workers in Liège, Namur, Brussels, and a number of Flemish towns came out.

Within four days all public transport throughout Belgium was at a halt. Workers in telecommunications, postal services, local government ministries and education joined the movement.

Workers in the private sector were only waiting for the word. Many factories, growing impatient, joined the strike against the advice of the national trade union leaders. The strike appeared unstoppable. Police refused to blackleg in the prisons, despite the escape of 38 prisoners who took advantage of the warders' absence.

In the caterpillar factory near Liège, workers went in to work but refused to do anything, as a sign of solidarity. Workers at Cockerills struck, joined by civilian arsenal staff, workers from



Sept 1983. Belgium protest against cuts.

a medical supplies factory and many others. The numbers on strike steadily rose. Already over 800,000, they seemed likely to pass the million mark in a matter of days.

By Monday 19 September, it was clear that an unequivocal call to strike by the national trade union leadership would have met with a massive response in the private sector, and the government would have been faced with an all-out national strike.

Even though the strike remained largely confined to the public sector, the entire economy was slowly grinding to a halt. In economic terms, the strike of the public sector workers had the effect of a general strike.

The rapid sweep of the movement showed how quickly the working class can move into action. Activists were visibly astonished to see how easily their fellow workers shrugged off the weight of daily routine and worry. In this strike, all the accumulated anger, the frustration, the feeling that it was impossible to carry on in the old way, suddenly broke out onto the surface.

From apparent resignation and despair, the mood of the working class can change very rapidly indeed. In

Belgium, once the workers saw the possibility of a decisive victory, they showed enormous energy, determination and capacity to struggle.

In particular, it was the young people who really came to the forefront during the strike. It was they who adopted the most radical methods and ideas.

The government was taken completely by surprise by the movement. The Liberal—Social Christian coalition showed itself to be struck by a sort of paralysis. It had no proposals to make. It could suggest nothing. Foolish utterances by individual ministers were met with derision. Liberals denounced Social Christians and Social Christians denounced Liberals. An early attempt at using force, 'requisitioning' workers in Antwerp (arresting of workers in their homes by police and soldiers and taking them to work) backfired, giving a further impulse to the strike and further splitting the parties of government. The police did not want to be involved. To use the army was too dangerous. If no concessions were made, a general strike was inevitable. If concessions were given, would that not only encourage the movement?

Even in the media, normally the reliable servant of government, the chairman of the Liberal Party could detect a "socialist" bias!

Behind the confident facade, panic reigned. In truth, the government felt itself about to fall. The foreign press was already discussing alternatives, the end of the Martens-Gol regime being considered inevitable. The Belgian press itself saw no hope for maintaining the government in power. The strike was growing. Its character was becoming openly political. Something had to give.

The coalition power was suspended in mid-air. Despite the considerable inconvenience to the population caused by their action, the strikers enjoyed very widespread public sympathy. The MOC (Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien), the traditional point of support for the Social Christians (which includes the catholic trade union federation), openly

dissociated itself from the PSC as "no longer representing our interests."

Even for those in society who remained hostile to the strike, the government's indecision and inepititude was clear. How could it solve the social crisis when a senior minister could declare as the strike was entering its second week, "I am ignorant of the reason for the strike"?

Support for the government was falling away on all sides.

Yet this magnificent strike movement ended in defeat. On Monday, 26 September, the strikers returned to work facing wage cuts of around 7%, on top of the 14% lost over last year.

The fundamental question for the international labour movement is this: How could such a strike, which paralysed economy and government, which led the press to speak openly of a threat to the established order, end so disastrously? The answer is to be found in the role of the leaders of the trade unions, and of the Belgian Socialist Party.

"The leaders of our union did not want this strike. They supported it because they had no choice. They knew very well that whatever they said, the strike would go on. The workers' minds were made up."

These words of a 24 year old railway worker and CSC member, sum up the situation exactly.

In this strike, the rank and file was very often more militant than its shop stewards. The regional apparatus trailed reluctantly behind with the national leadership in last position.

The structure of the CSC is very undemocratic. The conservative leadership provided a vital point of support to the Parti Social Chrétien, the capitalist party. The leaders had stood by passively whilst their members suffered redundancies, wage cuts, and the gradual erosion of their hard won rights and working conditions. Never has the leadership of this union taken the initiative in launching militant action in defence of living standards.

The union grew up on the basis of first generation workers, the sons and daughters of peasants in formerly backward Flanders.

In Wallonia, the industrial heartland of Belgium, the CSC is much weaker. The influence of the church, their inexperience of the class struggle, and the failure of the Socialist movement to win over the new Flanders working class, enabled the CSC to develop as a mass organisation.

During the struggle in Wallonia and in all the main Flemish towns (except Antwerp) the CSC was drawn into the strike. The members, particularly the youth, were every bit as militant as their socialist counterparts, with whom they insisted on common

meetings, common decision making, and demonstrations.

At regional level, the CSC officials were forced to adopt a language to which they were little accustomed. In Liège, at the mass meetings in the railway station, these officials went so far as to echo the call of the workers for an indefinite general strike. In Charleroi, similarly radical speeches could be heard from CSC leaders.

But at national level, the leaders were consciously working against the strike, together with their friends in the Social Christian Party. As the strike began to extend to the private sector, the government was in a desperate position. Gol offered negotiations "on a plate". He expected that only major concessions to the workers would offer a way out. On Wednesday 21, negotiations with the government opened.

The Christian union leaders, together with the PSC, had worked out a "compromise". 6,900 million francs worth of cuts would be made. Workers would lose a month's pay, the gap being filled by using up next year's summer and 'end of year' bonuses. After 30 hours of negotiation (undoubtedly spent trying to get the agreement of the socialist union, the FGTB) the CSC signed the so-called "pre-agreement" on these cuts. The CSC leaders undertook to defend this pre-agreement before their members.

The following morning, the crowd in front of the Liège station was three or four times its size the day before. The red and green flags of the two union federations still flew together. The workers were agitated. Their families had come with them on this day. As the CSC regional secretary took the loudspeaker he was jeered by the crowd. The workers knew what was coming. Before he could speak they shouted up at the balcony: "The strike goes on, Joseph!" The speaker nervously told the gathering of the discussions of the preceding day.

"We are a responsible trade union. We do not want to make any recommendations before carefully studying the government proposals." (In fact the proposals came from the CSC itself.) "We have therefore set up an information committee to analyse the dossiers..." The workers were hostile. "Get down!" "Take the loudspeaker off him!" "We've already analysed the dossier!"

Seeing the reaction of his audience, 'Joseph' became more militant towards the end of his little speech.

After the demonstration which followed, during which the main slogan of both Christian and Socialist workers was for a general strike going "to the end" against the government, the CSC rep spoke again. This time he dropped the first part of his speech

completely and confined himself to denouncing the government.

The strikers felt they had been betrayed. As with the British general strike of 1926, on the day of the agreement, the number of strikers was on the increase. At Liège and Charleroi, the speeches were interrupted by news of new factories joining the strike.

The massive march and rally in Charleroi that afternoon also declared itself for continuing the strike. The rally was asked to disperse. Several groups of twenty or thirty workers took shape.

"The CSC in Flanders will break the strike!" one worker was shouting. "Let's all go to the union HQ now!"

"We must demand that the strike goes on!"

Mass meetings in Antwerp, Ostend, Ghent, Namur and Brussels also declared in favour of carrying on the strike in overwhelming majorities.

Nonetheless, the pre-agreement proved to be a fatal blow to the morale of the mass of the strikers. For many vacillating elements, the pre-agreement was the signal to return to work. Ministry workers, teachers and local government workers started to drift back to work in Flanders. The trams started up in Antwerp.

The workers knew a hard struggle was ahead, and that it could not be waged with unreliable leadership.

The CSC leaders stabbed the movement in the back, withdrawing support for their membership at a critical moment in the struggle. However, they would never have been able to diffuse the movement so easily had it not been for the conduct of the leadership of the Fédération Générale des Travailleurs de Belgique (FGTB).

Throughout the struggle, the socialist union stood to the left of the CSC. Nonetheless, in their policy, outlook and methods, the FGTB leaders showed themselves to be hopelessly out of step with the rank and file of the movement.

One day after the walk-out in Charleroi, the railway section of the FGTB actually recommended a return to work, but branch meetings taking place the same weekend decided to pursue the action.

The FGTB played with the slogan of a general strike. They brandished their sword but struck no blows. No serious preparations whatsoever were made for a general strike.

Like their counterparts, the FGTB leaders trailed behind the membership. At each step, they only extended the strike for two or three days at a time, testing the mood of the workers in this way. They were afraid of the effect that a declaration of an indefinite strike would have upon the movement. In all respects, the FGTB tried to limit the action in its aims.

No attempt was made to link up the struggle in the different towns. In Charleroi, for instance, the day after the signing of the pre-accord, the FGFB did not inform the assembly that workers in Liège had earlier that day decisively rejected the accord.

As the pressure grew for an all-out general strike the FGFB gave the impression that they would in fact call a general strike, but that workers should "wait for the signal".

With every new day, they stalled for time, hoping "something would turn up".

The very power of the public service workers was used as an argument for not going ahead with a general strike immediately. In the Liège region, the FGFB secretary explained to the assembled workers: "Some say we must launch a general strike (applause) I agree (applause). But the strike has already stopped almost the whole economy, and thousands of workers have been laid off because of the strike. A general strike? We already have it!"

Of course, being thrown out of work because of the strike of other workers is an entirely different thing to going on strike together with these workers.

The direction of the movement of the trade union membership, in both the public and the private sector, was towards an unlimited general strike.

Had it not been for the CSC signing the pre-accord, it is not at all certain that the FGFB leaders would have been able to prevent this development.

Perhaps the clearest indication that the FGFB leadership was completely unprepared for the prospect of a general strike is the extremely limited programme (if we can call it a programme at all) which they put forward.

In the revolutionary strike movement in France in 1968, the Communist Party and CGT leaders prevented the French workers from coming to power by limiting the programme of the movement to one of purely economic reforms.

In Belgium, however, the leadership demanded no reforms at all. From the first day of the strike to the last, the demands of the FGFB leaders never went further than that the Tory coalition in power should "reconsider the budget", bringing about a "fairer sharing out of sacrifices". The FGFB accepted that there should be cuts, but called, in effect for smaller wage cuts!

Did the FGFB leaders seriously consider launching a general strike, arousing the whole people against the government, completely arresting all economic and social life, in order to achieve... a review of the budget?

True, the workers, for their part, did not enter the struggle with clear aims. Mainly the initial strikes were a protest action against the vicious budget, which came just after the shameful

THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

LIKE BRITAIN, Belgium has been hit hard by the world recession. Unemployment is at 13.5%, about 500,000 are youth. Since 1980, the average real wage had declined by 22%. Except for Italy, Belgium has the biggest state deficit in Europe, relative to the GNP in Europe. This crisis is what pushed the Belgian ruling class into conflict with the unions in the public sector, where in 1982 the workers lost up to 14% of their wage by various devices.

provocation of the 'fiscal amnesty' offered to the millionaire tax-dodgers.

But the first strikers could have had no idea of the scale the strike movement was to assume. As the strikers felt their own power, saw the government in panic, felt the warm encouragement given to them by the working class as a whole, and the readiness of the private sector to join the struggle, they raised their sights.

The question of the budget was becoming increasingly pushed into the background, and other, more far-reaching objectives were coming to the fore. The scores of trade union demands on hours, wages etc, which it seemed, had remained on paper, now came to be seen as realisable objectives. The private sector should be brought out, and the government should be chased from office. Such was the main idea of the strikers, above all in Wallonia, but also in Flanders. The ideas and programme of the rank and file went way beyond the pre-occupation of the FGFB leaders.

The pre-agreement between the Catholic union leaders and the government provided a way out for the FGFB leadership. The socialist union itself did not sign the agreement, but its leaders breathed a sigh of relief when the Catholic union abandoned the strike. The line of march of the two confederations was fundamentally identical, but the fact that the CSC leaders sold out when they did enabled the FGFB leaders to emerge from the conflict with a little more credibility.

On Monday 19 September, as factories in the private sector were joining the strike, the FGFB headquarters issued a statement acknowledging the mood of the Belgian workers:

"It is clear that the will of the workers is for a national general strike of the public and private sector, going 'to the end' against the government, until it agrees to reconsider the budget."

In reality, an unlimited general

strike would have implications far, far beyond the mere question of the fiscal policy of the Martens-Gol government.

A general strike means the mobilisation of millions of workers in a decisive conflict with the ruling class. Nothing can operate without the consent of labour. The wheels of industry would stop dead. All commerce, all social and economic life, would only take place to the degree that the workers allowed it.

In order to feed themselves and carry out the vital functions of the social organism, the working class is obliged, in a general strike, to take over society, to organise it, to establish itself as a contender for power.

The general strike deprives the capitalists of any role or function in society. Two states, not one, exist in the country during a full-scale general strike. There is the old capitalist state, paralysed by the movement of the working class, and also, in embryonic form, the new workers' state in the shape of the unions, the strike committees, the mobilised millions.

The two classes stand face to face. The fundamental antagonism between these classes, less clearly discernable in 'normal' times, now becomes starkly exposed.

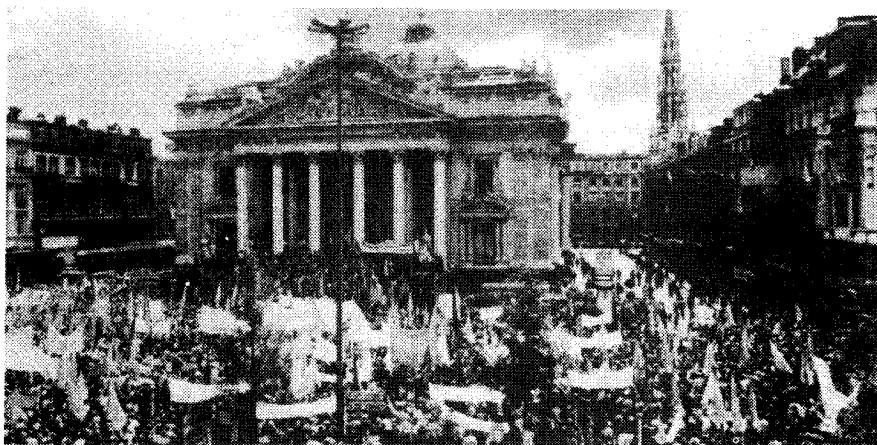
The question is posed: Who will have the power? The workers or the capitalists?

In the recent Belgian strike, although it remained only partial, the movement was heading in the direction of a general strike, and consequently the main features of a general strike situation as just described were already discernible in outline.

Had the movement developed further, the Belgian working class would have been within reach of power.

With different leadership, that is, with a Marxist leadership having an understanding of the situation and of the tasks before the movement, the September strike could have been the point of departure for a socialist transformation of society.

Now working class militants in



Belgium strike showed solidarity of Walloon and Flemish workers.

Belgium and elsewhere must ask themselves: What would have happened if the general strike of which the FGTB leaders spoke had become a reality?

The trade union leaders clearly had no perspective of transforming society. They did not even advocate social reform.

Either these leaders would have to launch a struggle for power, or else capitulate to the ruling class.

If we take the ridiculous formula of the FGTB official statement quoted above, it would seem that the Martens-Gol government would only have had to agree to "reconsider the budget" for the strike to be called off!

In reality, things would not be so simple. The millions of workers mobilised in the general strike would never accept this. The matter would be taken out of the hands of the trade union bureaucracy.

The brake of the conservative bureaucracy upon the movement would prevent the passing over from a general strike to a seizure of power by the working class, but nonetheless a return to work could only be bought at the expense of major concessions, major gains, forced from the capitalists.

Because of the increased power, cohesion, and numbers of the proletariat, and the shrinking of the peasantry and urban middle class, a general strike in modern times need not necessarily, as was the case in the past, lead to either decisive victory or decisive defeat. The mighty development of the productive forces in the post-war period has resulted in a new relationship of forces in favour of the working class.

Such an outcome, with the workers wresting major concessions from the ruling class, would represent a partial victory, because of the concessions, and because the working class would gain invaluable experience, becoming conscious of its own organised power. But it would also be a partial defeat,

because it would have been possible to come to power. With the collapse of the strike, so the 'embryonic state' of the workers also collapses. The workers lose the immediate prospect of power, of transforming society.

Thus, at the end of the French general strike of May and June of 1968, despite considerable concessions, there was great bitterness, with workers often weeping as they returned to work for a time. One report tells of a woman factory worker telling reporters "Yes, we have the agreement! But that's nothing to what we had last month."

Workers who had sworn never to return to work under the old conditions were reluctantly forced back by the functionaries of the PCF and CGT apparatus.

In the September strike in Belgium, where the great majority of the participants were going through their first experience of mass struggle, the full implications of the general strike they were demanding were but dimly conceived. We can safely say the question never entered the heads of the leaders!

That is why they would have eventually failed the movement, even if the CSC union had not come to an agreement with the government when it did.

Leon Trotsky wrote that "...betrayal is inherent in reformism." He meant by this that in the final analysis those leaders, however sincere, who are not prepared to struggle for the overthrow of capitalism, must sooner or later betray the movement, especially when the working class has the immediate possibility of taking power.

Although the CGSP (the Public Service section of the FGTB) did not sign the shameful pre-accord on the 21st of the month, the socialist union leadership immediately decided in favour of ending the strike. Two days later, at the meeting of the national committee, the leaders opposed two motions coming from Wallonia calling for 48 and

24 hour general strikes. In place of this they proposed ... nothing.

The following Monday, workers went back to work feeling bitter. At the meeting of the Charleroi railway workers which formally called off the action, the speaker broke down weeping. The mood was one of bitter disappointment.

After the meeting broke up, one railwayman said. "We didn't want to call off the strike, but we had no alternative. We've been let down by the CSC and by our own leaders (FGTB). Now we just have to wait and see what the government is going to throw at us next, and wait for when the time is right to fight again. There will always be a next time."

Despite the opposition of both socialist and catholic trade union members in all the main towns to ending the strike, once the leaders of the two federations withdrew their support, the strike movement melted away.

The apparent ease with which the leadership succeeded in getting people back to work is partly explained by the extremely poor level of organisation at rank and file level.

In a strike, and above all in a mass strike, the question of organisation is by no means a secondary one.

In order to properly conduct a struggle such as the September strike, it required the setting up of strike committees based on the trade unions, drawing into the active running of the strike the largest possible number of workers. It required a national structure, with local committees electing representatives to regional and national bodies.

Only in this way would it have been possible to involve the mass of the strikers in the work of strengthening and spreading the strike. Such a democratic form of organisation would be most sensitive to the mood of the workers in struggle, and would provide a means for the movement as a whole to reappraise the situation at each stage, changing the demands, methods and aims of the movement accordingly.

But unfortunately the running of the strike was solely in the hands of the regional and national union officers, except for one or two exceptions where 'strike committees' (organising pickets etc.) played a certain role.

In most areas, the mass meetings were held on the initiative of the regional office of the unions. With a few exceptions, rank and file workers, and even shop stewards, were not allowed to speak. Holding the reins of the movement in their hands, the trade union officialdom proved itself capable of disorganising the strike despite the feelings of the strikers themselves, who lacked any local or national ap-

paratus through which their own demands could find expression.

The strike demonstrated, if any further demonstration was necessary, the complete degeneration of the Socialist Party leadership. From a party which held about 42% of the vote in the period following the Second World War, the SP has now barely 25%. This is the fruit of decades of collaboration and coalition with the capitalist parties. The leaders, for lack of any real alternative, even went so far as to play with nationalism, splitting the party in two.

The present programme of the leaders offers nothing but a life of hardship and sacrifices to the Belgian workers.

For the leader of the Wallonian SP, the explosion of the public sector strike was the occasion to offer participation in the government. For Van Miert, the Chairman of the Flemish SP, if the PSC would "make an offer", he would be willing also to discuss coalition. Just when the Belgian workers are locked in a bitter conflict with the Martens-Gol regime, the SP leaders offer their helping hand, not to the strikers, but to the government!

It is essential that the rank and file of the trade unions, and the SP wage a struggle to rebuild and reunite the party on the basis of a fighting socialist policy, and bring about a break with the disastrous coalition policies of the right-wing.

The government emerged from the conflict very badly shaken and discredited. It had hung onto power by a thread. It was saved, in the end, not by its own resources but by the trade union leadership.

Nevertheless, with the strike now over, the government can regain the offensive. Significantly, the day after the return to work, the Liberal Party advocated the introduction of anti-trade union legislation to "prevent the same thing from happening again."

Whatever legislation may eventually be passed however, the government will not succeed in chaining down the giant of Belgian labour, which despite mass unemployment is 73% organised into trade unions.

The ruling class will now try to play the nationalist card to divide and weaken the movement. The recent announcement that the deficits of the Wallonian steel industry must be paid for by the Wallonian population alone is clearly a step in this direction. At the same time the bitterness of many Wallonian workers against the role of the CSC, with its stronghold in Flanders, may serve to exacerbate the national question, especially against the background of demoralisation and despair which can set in following the strike.

In the meantime, the Belgian



Sept. strikes revealed strength of working class in action.

workers will face further and more severe cuts in their living standards in the months and years to come. On the basis of these attacks, new movements of the Belgian workers are inevitable.

In the short term, above all in the public sector, a certain demoralisation is inevitable. The workers are exhausted by the struggle. At the same time, many activists will be drawing the lessons from the struggle.

In the private sector, the same demoralisation will not be felt, as these workers did not eventually join the struggle. Nonetheless, the defeat of the public sector workers will not be without effect amongst private sector workers, and will tend to act as a dampener upon the whole movement.

Within both the trade union federations, the experience of the strike will lead to severe criticism of the leadership.

Particularly within the CSC, the leaders came out of the strike greatly discredited. Splits in the organisation cannot be ruled out, and the CSC could well undergo an evolution similar to that of the formerly catholic CFDT in France, which under the impact of 1968 moved sharply to the left and even outgrew for a time the main French confederation, the Communist-led CGT.

The dissociation of the MOC from the Christian Social Party raises the possibility of a new political party being formed. However, the precise nature of the projected "Christian Workers Party"—if it appears at all—remains an open question. It could be nothing more than a new edition of the PSC. On the other hand, given the bankruptcy of the Belgian Socialist Party, it is possible that it could develop as a genuine party of the catholic working class.

The FGTB is likely to gain members at the expense of the CSC, but within the socialist union too, a very critical mood has developed in relation to the leadership. At local level, there are already signs of a move to clear out those stewards and lower officials who failed to support the movement. Their place will be taken by fresh, young workers, many of whom will have been blooded for the first time in the course of the recent strike.

This strike was a defeat but not a rout. The mighty organisations of Belgian labour remain intact.

In every defeat, there is an element of victory. If the lessons of the battle now behind us are learnt by the movement in Belgium and internationally the September strike will prepare the way for great victories in the future.

Grosz: An artist and revolution

GEORGE GROSS was born in July 1893 in Berlin. His father was a caretaker, his mother worked in a military club. He received his first drawing lessons at grammar school, but was expelled at 15 for retaliating when a master boxed his ears.

This did not stop him entering the Dresden Academy at 16. When he left in 1912 he went on to further study in Berlin. It was here he first drew pictures of unemployed men. But not yet political drawings. He saw them as on the edges of society not as victims within it.

"I clearly remember the huge demonstrations for universal suffrage... We all came from more or less lower middle class backgrounds and did not carry membership cards of any of the workers associations. And yet we were instinctively on the side of the demonstrators."

Grosz, Autobiography.

When World War One broke out Gross produced large numbers of hasty sketches trying to catch the mood of his surroundings. A world gone to pieces. Street fighting was common. Again he made no political comment. "That I was completely 'non-political' goes without saying", he commented.

Gross then served as a volunteer for 6 months in the army. He was utterly shocked by his experiences. His drawings from this period are vivid, violent and disarming. He was discharged on medical grounds, and lived in fear of being recalled.

"The time I spent in the stranglehold of militarism was a period of constant resistance... I have one dream: perhaps there will, after all, be changes, rebellions, perhaps one day international socialism, which has lost its backbone, will gather its strength for an open uprising."

Grosz, letter, September 1915

His despair in this period was reflected in his drawings, full of corpses and ruins.

Perhaps because the "New World" legend had permeated Europe through emigration and the search for a new life, he had developed a liking for the dream of

By Steve Amor

America. He changed the spelling of his name from Gross to Grosz.

But his worst fears were realised. He was called up a second time. 4 January 1917 and immediately admitted to a military hospital. The horror of war pre-occupied him in this period. He said, much later, he realised the war had led to, "the collapse of the bourgeois world."

On May 20 he was discharged from the army as permanently unfit for service.

The drawing style Grosz had developed during his mentally unstable period of war service became the basis for his whole future. Exaggerated and abbreviated line drawings. The pictures were violent, crude and even obscene. In the chaos of war the street became a grotesque theatre of reality.

In the 1915-18 period he attacked the profiteers from the war in satirical sketches.

"I know that new ideas will only be implemented by the Hungry and Discontented."

Grosz, letter 1916

The sordid side of life came to the surface in Berlin in the post-war period. Prostitutes, pimps and profiteers were rampant in the streets.

Grosz became increasingly obsessed with the USA, which was linked in his mind with the ideal of Freedom and Democracy. In this period he met John Heartfield. Together they worked on original ideas for collage and typography. They instigated the basis for the German Dada movement, a challenge to bourgeois dominance of art movement, based on anarchic revolutionary ideas of abstraction and fantasy.

"For me in those days my art was a kind of safety valve... When I had the time I got rid of my burning hatred in drawings... I sketched anything I disliked in my environment."

Grosz, Autobiography.



Grosz self portrait.

He returned again and again in his work to the street scenes, exposing the evils of decaying society.

Grosz was interested in the 'social artists' before him, such as Hogarth, Goya and Daumier. He painted his first, and one of the original 20th Century examples of, social criticisms in this period. 'Germany, a Winters Tale' painted between 1917 and 1919 is now tragically lost, but the pictures of it leave no doubts as to who Grosz blames for the chaos of German and indeed society in general.

"My mood was turned into a large political picture... In the centre sat the eternal German bourgeois, fat and fearful, complete with cigar and morning paper. Below I painted the three pillars of society; army, church and school. The bourgeois was clinging desperately to his knife and fork; the world reeling around him, the sailor is a symbol of revolution and a prostitute, completed my picture at that time."

Grosz, Autobiography.

Dada was born in many places, Zurich, Berlin and others. But it soon developed a political emphasis. It attacked bourgeois art, but criticised everything.

In Germany the revolution of 1918 led many artists and intellectuals to politics. Especially the Dadaists, many of whom joined the

KPD (Communist Party). Many of the ideas of this current were incorporated into magazines and journals aimed at promoting anti-bourgeois criticism. Most were banned. Grosz contributed illustrations and cartoons to almost all of them.

An example being the comment in *Der Blutige Ernst*, a magazine in 1919 which says, "*Der Blutige Ernst* prints sharply drawn posters of our time in pictures and words. We address ourselves to the broad mass of the people."

In 1920 Grosz and Heartfield organised an exhibition in Berlin of Dadaists. The comment that accompanies each piece was really a political statement. The exhibits shocked. Grosz and Heartfield were fined for one particular exhibit which was "Grossly insulting to the German army."

Grosz deliberately made the magazine covers into political agitation. They were aimed at the military (for personal reasons) and the Social Democrat leaders, who were party to the suppression of the revolution.

One of his pictures was of workers and soldiers sitting in judgement over military leaders, under a portrait of Karl Liebknecht.

"Come out of your rooms, even if you find it an effort, pull down your individual barriers, let yourselves be caught up by the ideas of working people and help them in the struggle against a corrupt society."

Grosz 1920-1

Grosz was again fined in 1920 for the publication of a portfolio of drawings, "The Communists are dying and the foreign exchange rate goes up." They were drawings linking military action against the workers with ruling class economic interests. The title comes from the Junius pamphlet of Rosa Luxemburg. They are brilliant Barbarous in content, clear and condemning in execution.

"The movement in which I got involved influenced me strongly, so that I considered as futile any art which did not offer itself as a weapon in the political struggle...My drawing pens I declared to be empty straws as long as they did not take part in the fight for freedom."

Grosz, *Autobiography*.

"We saw our great new task; committed art in the service of the revolutionary cause."

Grosz, *Autobiography*

In 1921 Grosz published *The Face of Ruling Class*, a portfolio of 55 drawings capturing the arrogance of the bourgeois, is debauchery and decadence.



At 5 o'clock in the morning . . . 1921.

Grosz's strength lay in his hatred of the ruling class, going back to his military experiences. In a series of drawings called "In the Shadows" Grosz paid tribute to the workers, their class and socialism. He was trying to find different ways of using the pen and brush to express his imagery.

He began to use a heavy brush to draw the outlines adding a greater dimension of depth to the subject, tone and shadow. He also felt at this stage that a more serious commitment to socialist expression in art was necessary.

"Expressionist anarchism must stop. Today willy-nilly, painters indulge in it—because they are unenlightened and not in contact with working people. A time will

come when the artist will no longer be a bloated bohemian anarchist—but a bright and healthy worker in a collectivist society."

Grosz 1920-1.

It was the outstanding work that Grosz produced in this period that has helped more than anything else to establish his fame as a political caricaturist and commentator. His drawings are studious articulations of his emotion and response. Each simple line was etched with care and deliberation, calculated to produce a desired effect.

But it must be reiterated that at times Grosz' motivation was not primarily political, but only personal hatred of philistinism and militarism. That is not to say that Grosz did not feel the mood of the working-class. But the impulse of



The Radio General, 1937. Caricature of General Franco foaming at the mouth.

the German Revolution and the depression following the counter-revolution affected him. He was to become a moralist with a conscience towards the oppressed masses. In spite of this, he represented left ideas better than most of his contemporaries.

The KPD used his drawings in *Die Rote Fahne* (The Red Flag), their paper. He was fined several times for 'obscene' pictures, which were in fact critiques of bourgeois decline. He was prepared to state the reality through visual imagery.

"Let the German intellectuals at last get their heads out of the bourgeois cultural dungheaps—and side by side with the workers labour for a more meaningful com-

munist organisation of life."

Grosz, article in Red Flag 1924.

But his political strengths, gained through his personal hatreds, did not outlive his ideals. As an artist. He became introspective, superficial, recording images rather than explaining them. He is assumed to have left the Communist Party in 1923. He had just become famous, holding exhibitions honoured by the art cliques.

By 1930 Grosz had changed his attitude. He no longer saw socialism as a solution. He was depressed and resigned to the coming of fascism.

"I raise my hand and salute the eternal human law... and the jolly contemptible inevitability of life"

Grosz 1930

"Soon letters arrived from which I

learnt that they had been looking for me in my empty flat in Berlin, and also in my studio. I venture to doubt whether I should have got away with my life."

Grosz, autobiography.

Grosz however, did not entirely abandon his brilliant earlier style and on the subject of the 'National Socialists', Nazis in Germany, and anti-Semitism, he kept a keen wit about his drawings.

He emigrated permanently to the USA in 1933, fleeing from Germany to realise his boyhood dream of living in the freedom he believed was there.

A freedom only in his imagination. In reality the USA was in a period of depression, and political conflict among sections of organised workers was in evidence.

Instead as the years went by Grosz became further disillusioned. The Spanish Civil War again raised memories of earlier struggles, as he drew the famed flowing lines of damning caricature. But it too ended in tragedy and the following period of second world war reinforced his despair. The use of the atom bomb added a new dimension to this.

He created a symbol to represent his feeling—the stickman. It was, as Grosz said, a symbol of no hope or meaning. He said in 1958, that he would rather be poor in America than in Germany despite all the ugliness of consumer society and nuclear development in weaponry.

Grosz for most of his life created his own personal prison. His later and last works showed that he was still independent. He chose his own interpretation of life in the consumer continent of the 1950s.

George Grosz died in July 1959. The irony is that the place and the period of his final artistic contributions were light years away from the violent, revolutionary turmoil of the post World War period in Germany.

He was probably an outcast in the country he had always believed was democratic and free and where he had fled for sanctuary.

But for many hard, dangerous years, he was supreme in his field of work. A revolutionary in the role of political caricaturist.

It is without question the work that George Grosz produced for the workers movement that he will be remembered for. He must not be forgotten. Workers should study his political pictures, for they will surely recognise the same patterns and characters in the situation today.

1983 WAS a bad year for the international bankers. They have spent most of their time trying tortuously to find ways to save their loans to government's of the third world, as one country after another has announced that it could not pay back the money it borrowed when repayment became due.

The size of the debt problem is truly astounding. Third World and Eastern European debtors now owe the bankers of the advanced industrial world, as one country after another has announced that it would not pay back the money it borrowed when repayment became due.

The bankers are being forced to fork out more loans in order to tide over these debtors so that they can pay existing debts and the interest on them. For example Brazil is just negotiating a \$6.5bn loan from a group of American and European banks so that they do not default on their debt repayments for 1983. For the bankers this is just like throwing bad money after good and they are searching desperately for other ways of recouping their loans.

The growth of these large debts cannot be considered as just bad management by the bankers or the respective governments. They are a necessary accompaniment to the expansion of capitalism on a world scale since 1945. The large deposits of currency, particularly the dollar, deposited with the bankers by the oil-rich and export surplus countries, provided a large supply of unused credit which had to earn some interest. With the expansion of world production and trade, the Third World could use this money to finance growth of domestic industry and commerce. The size of this credit mountain was further boosted by the massive military expenditure of the United States and other NATO countries which sharply devalued the main trading currencies.

This recycling of credit did allow some expansion of production and trade in some which became entitled Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) and in the sixties there was much talk of the Brazilian, Mexican, or Korean growth 'miracle'.

But with the oil crisis of the early seventies and the ending of the long term world boom, these big borrowing nations have now found it impossible to meet their payment debts as the prices of imports for industry have rocketed and the markets for exports have stagnated. It is estimated that the oil price explosion from 1974-82 has cost \$260bn to the non-oil Third World, and the excessively high bank interest rates and export losses caused by the world recessions in that period has cost another \$140bn. These factors have led to a total increase in debt of over \$500bn since 1973 and in 1983 \$100bn of this was due to be repaid. This payments crisis has been further exacerbated by the recent rise in the value of the dollar, making it even more costly to

import necessary goods and reducing the dollar value of exports. As most debts are in dollars, the cost of repayment and interest charges have also been raised.

There is now every possibility that some nations may default on their payments. But does this mean that the world banking system will collapse with the sort of domino effect that many banks suffered during the world slump of the thirties?

Certainly with the size of the debts in some countries, particularly Latin America, there is a real danger that some banks may be bankrupted if any debtor government decides to default on repayment. As it is, the nine largest banks in the USA have 280% of their total capital in loans to the Third World and Eastern Europe, and two have 75% of all their capital loaned to Brazil alone. If just one year's debts and interest owed by Argentina, Brazil and Mexico was written off by these nine US banks, it would entirely exhaust their annual profits.

That is why there is some urgency in the attempts of the International Monetary Fund to arrange the rescheduling of debts to avoid default. Gone are the traditional views of good banking that people must pay their debts on time.

Mexico \$90bn	Yugoslavia \$20bn
Costa Rica \$3bn	Turkey \$23bn
Venezuela \$32bn	Iraq \$30bn
Ecuador \$6bn	Morocco \$11bn
Peru \$11bn	Nigeria \$13bn
Brazil \$100bn	Sudan \$8bn
Uruguay \$4bn	Zaire \$6bn
Argentina \$42bn	Zambia \$4bn
Poland \$27bn	Philippines \$21bn
Romania \$10bn	

But even rescheduling means that some banks will not receive the returns on their loans that they previously expected. Rescheduling will reduce their liquid assets and profitability, and place the viability of some smaller banks at risk.

Nevertheless it is unlikely that there would be widespread collapse of international banks in the wake of any delay or default in debt and interest payments. The international monetary authorities are aware of the danger and are already considering methods of alleviating any financial crisis, even if it means that some banks may have to be sacrificed in the process. As Samuel Brittan put it in the *Financial Times* recently (10 October 1983): "There is the clear possibility that a debt write-off will wipe out all the net worth of some individual banks. But we must not fall for the line that identifies world financial stability with the continued existence of every individual bank and the prosperity of its shareholders and management."

Before there is any domino effect on banks from the collapse of smaller banks, the central bank in each country would be bound to intervene to shore the banking community with reserve funds, just as the Bank of England did during the na-

tional 'secondary banking' collapse in the early seventies.

The real question is that whatever policy is adopted to save the bankers and their borrowers from default, who will pay? Up to now the world capitalist community is persisting with a policy of rescheduling debts in return for the debtor government agreeing to stringent austerity measures i.e. wage and public expenditure cuts. Clearly the aim here is to avoid any losses to Western finance capital by boosting the profits and production of the Third World nation's industrial sector at the expense of its workers and peasants.

Such a policy is risking major social upheaval and revolution. But it is also dependent on the equally risky assumption that world recession is ending and will therefore allow a growth of markets for the debtor country's goods, so that they can pay off their debts. For an oil-rich country like Mexico this may be possible, but for the oil-importing nations the continuing and deepening world recession rules out this course of escape for their ruling classes.

That is why other proposals to solve the repayment crisis are being suggested. One suggestion is that national governments, perhaps through an international authority, should intervene by offering to subsidise the interest cost of loans to debtor countries and so relieve the burden of repayments. Another more radical suggestion is that an international body should buy all the debts from the banks at a discount. Then it would reschedule or write-off the debts accordingly. The banks would lose some of their profits because they would sell their debts at below 'market value', but at least they would receive payment with some security.

The question is who would pay for these interest-rate subsidies or for the nationalising (or internationalising) of the debts? The *Financial Times* makes it clear "governments will have to accept their share of the financial burden, if only by allowing banks substantially larger tax-deductible loss reserves." (FT—24 November 1983).

If the advanced countries are to finance bank losses and to bail out the ruling classes of the Third World to avoid revolution, then their capitalist classes are saying that governments must find extra money. And that can only mean that workers in the advanced nations must; either pay more in taxes, or in inflation, or suffer further cuts in public services, or all three.

Thus the most likely development of the present international debt crisis is not a widespread collapse of the financial system, but further austerity and cuts in living standards for workers and peasants of the oil-importing Third World, and for the workers of the advanced industrial creditor nations.

Fascists and the Tory Party

Review by Bob Wade

THE RECENT hysteria of the Tory Party leadership after BBC's *Panorama* exposure of racist infiltration into the Tory ranks, gives an interesting insight into the Tories' attitude towards fascism.

Disregarding the extreme right of the Conservatives who see the fascists as merely ideological bedfellows with an unfortunate past, the more serious representatives of the capitalist class have looked on with apologetic embarrassment.

While they presently have no wish to be associated with fascism in the eyes of the population, they understand the fascists can be a vital weapon in their arsenal. It can be thrown against the working class when the capitalist system is under threat from an advancing labour movement. Also, to seriously take up the threat of fascism would be to attack the economic system in which it breeds—capitalism.

However, one Tory party member—Paul Wilkinson, who appeared on the *Panorama* programme—has attempted to take on this task. He has written a book entitled *The New Fascists*, which attempts to analyse the resurgence of fascist groups in

Western Europe. The subsequent twists and turns he achieves will be of interest to socialists, giving an indication of capitalism's understanding of society.

Wilkinson describes fascism in the abstract, bordering on mysticism. He cannot grasp the class nature of society and therefore does not understand fascism. The growth of fascist groups internationally is a direct result of capitalism in crisis. They have gained their recruits—varying from the miniscule groups in Britain and Germany to the larger parties and groups of Italy and Spain—from the demoralised and frustrated layers of society, chiefly the middle classes along with sections of the lumpen proletariat and (in Europe) the peasant class. With the failure of the labour movements in these countries to advance these despairing sections can sometimes turn to reaction.

As a Tory, Wilkinson has a set view of the world. "Moderates" like himself along with Tory "wets", Liberals and Social Democrats (including those still in the Labour Party) are at the centre of the political spectrum. Any deviation from this is interpreted as "extremism", the "far left" and the Nazis being allegedly both sides of the same coin. This of course is nonsense. It is not a question of "left and right" but of "forwards and backwards". Fascism threatens to force society backwards into a period of dark reaction. The Marxists want to take society forward to a higher level of existence. Wilkinson's analysis is like someone in Feudal times denouncing Cromwell and the bourgeois revolutionaries as no better as those who wanted to return to slave society.

Indeed, a press release accompanying Wilkinson's book hysterically likened fascist infiltration of the Tory Party with that of the role of *Militant* in the Labour Party. The *Panorama* broadcast itself lifted this idea, titling its programme "Maggie's Militant Tendency". This is a grotesque insult to the Marxists in the British labour movement, who have arrived at their ideas not through any conspiracies but their experience as workers faced with an ailing capitalist system spiralling into crisis. To link socialists with the genocidal reaction and violence of the Nazis is a disgrace.

Wilkinson cannot break from the

capitalist concept that anything that does not match up to their understanding is therefore a conspiracy. His book thus explains away the riots in Britain of 1981 as the result of provocation by the NF and British Movement. Certainly this was an ingredient, but the chief causes were the Tory government's policies of mass unemployment, slum housing and police harassment. Rather than offend his party leadership, Wilkinson skates over these issues.

Similarly, Wilkinson's solution to combatting fascism is utopian. He has distaste for counter-demonstrations and confrontations, arguing that this "benefits the extreme left". He puts forward liberal arguments of better "community relations", using the education system and the media. But to demoralised sections of the population this would have little effect—they are looking for answers to the problems they face, not lectures on morality. It is only the labour movement that can halt the march of fascism. Firstly, through mobilisations to counter the fascists. Events such as Lewisham in 1977, the campaign within the trade union movement, the mass Anti-Nazi League marches and the special Labour Party television broadcast against fascism were the main actions that cut away support for the NF. The "be nice to one another" attitudes of the likes of the church and the liberals achieved very little.

Secondly, the socialist ideas of the labour movement can counter fascist propaganda and show the way out of the miseries of capitalism. But to Wilkinson of course, this means a threat to capitalism and is therefore "extreme"—and we're back to conspiracies once again!

Socialists may find the statistical and descriptive information contained in this book of use. But even then Wilkinson lets slip errors of hair raising proportions. The booksleeve preamble, describing the rise of "ultra-right movements", talks of "... the succession to power of the Christian Phalange in Lebanon, the split in the South African nationalists, the Bulldog trial in Britain, and the resurgence of the Peronists in Argentina...".

The chapter dealing with fascism in Germany and Italy in the 1930's speaks volumes about Wilkinson's



refusal to accept how capitalism in crisis can prepare the ground for fascism or that a threatened capitalist class can give succour to the fascists. Thus the massive financial backing given to Hitler by the German industrialists—which even Wilkinson admits was a “very important element” in the Nazi’s rise to power—warrants only a paragraph. And here too he makes very conspicuous mistakes. He writes: “The absence of any such (financial backing) to contemporary European fascist parties must be taken as a healthy and reassuring sign.”

Yet as recently as the mid-1970’s, the then National Front leader John Tyndall boasted to the press how he had been approached by “business interests” with promises of donations. Although big business did not seriously believe the NF could take power, their donations indicated their desire to keep the fascist gangs in existence. Far from being “healthy and reassuring”, it shows that sections of the capitalist class, even in a period of relative calm, are quite prepared to use the fascists as an auxiliary to their main design of defeating the labour movement.

What will be the attitude of the millionaires when their profits system slumps even deeper into crisis with the subsequent social consequences, and they are faced with a growing left labour movement? This fact of life is something too horrible for Wilkinson to contemplate, and while he remains in the party of the capitalist class, it is something he will never understand.

The New Fascists by Paul Wilkinson, Pan Books, price £2.50.

Chinese revolutionary

Review by Mick Brooks

WANG FAN-HSI was one of a generation of the Chinese students swept up by the revolution of 1925–27. The revolution was aborted by the Chinese Communist Party mis-directed by the Communist International, under the leadership of Stalin and Bukharin. The Chinese party was instructed to support and join the Kuomintang, the bourgeois nationalist party of Chiang Kai-Shek, who was to become their executioner.

Wang recalls being ordered to at-



Reaction in Shanghai 1927; execution of workers by Chiang Kai-Shek's troops.

tend the completely phony Kuomintang meetings where the members, every one of them Communists, began by bowing in front of the portrait of Sun Yat-Sen.

Moving from the ivory tower of Peking University where he had been won to Communism, Wang plunged into the revolutionary centre of Canton. There the Canton-Hong Kong strike committee ran canteens for the strikers, workers’ tribunals and even a workers’ militia. Dual power existed between the workers and the Kuomintang government.

These revolutionary resources were recklessly frittered away by the leadership. Moving to Wuhan, the first sight that met his eyes was a fleet of rickshaws piled high with rifles. To show their loyalty to the Kuomintang the workers were being induced to give up their weapons—arms that would be used to butcher them!

Trotsky and the Left Opposition were fiercely arguing against this policy, but no word of their opposition was allowed to filter through to rank and file Chinese Communists. Wang only found out the truth when he was sent to Russia for training.

Things in Russia were not as he had supposed. As they sailed into Vladivostok harbour, they were greeted by crowds of tramps and unemployed. But the workers were fighting back. Practising their Russian on the guard on the long train journey “one of us gave him the thumbs up sign and said ‘Stalin! Stalin! Khorosho! (good).’ The worker’s reply was ‘Trotsky! Trotsky! Khorosho!’”

The opposition was already under heavy persecution. Discontent showed itself in devious ways. The keen young Chinese went to see a film of the

October revolution. The Russian audience responded by cheering loudly every time Trotsky appeared on the screen. “Since the lights were out, there was little chance of detection. It was almost as safe as casting a vote in a secret ballot”.

While Wang was in Russia the Chinese revolution went to its shipwreck. Chiang Kai-Shek inflicted massacre after massacre upon the unsuspecting workers up and down China.

After these major defeats the Communist International demanded a left about-turn. The workers rose in heroic struggle in the Canton Commune and as a result the party’s influence in the big cities was completely destroyed.

For Wang, the defeat of the revolution gave the possibility of a reappraisal. Copies of Trotsky’s predictions and warnings were smuggled from hand to hand among the Chinese students at the Communist Sun Yat-Sen University. He got in contact with the Russian Trotskyists and movingly describes the suffering of the worker Poliakov, first dismissed from his job, then arrested and disappeared.

The Chinese Trotskyists were next. Half the students at Sun Yat-Sen University had been won over. A spy wormed his way into their midst and one night two hundred were arrested and carted off to Siberia.

By this time, Wang had opted to go back to Shanghai. For a genuine Marxist, China under the White Terror was no more dangerous a place than “socialist” Russia.

By this time, the opportunist policy of the Comintern of doing deals with “progressive” forces such as Chiang Kai-Shek was replaced by a crazy ultra-leftism. After the Chinese revolu-

tion had been destroyed it was announced that it was reaching "high tide". Wang had to organise Communist "mass demonstrations".

"Having decided on a time and place, we would mobilise as many party members as we could—never more than a few hundred—and gather furtively on either side of the Nanking Road. At a pre-arranged signal a handful of comrades would rush out into the middle of the street, shout a few slogans and scatter some leaflets around. If the red-painted lorries of the International Settlement police had still failed to turn up, the rest of us would gather round to swell the numbers and march raggedly down the road for a hundred yards or so shouting slogans until the police arrived, when we scattered in all directions and pretended to be ordinary passers-by. Some of the less fortunate ones would be arrested and dragged into the red lorries, and afterwards handed over to the Kuomintang to be imprisoned or shot".

After a year of such activity, Wang was expelled from the Communist Party. The Chinese Communists suffered terribly in the next twenty years, persecuted by the imperialists, particularly the Japanese, the "bourgeois democratic" Kuomintang, and by the Stalinists.

In a postscript dated 1980 Wang looks forward with confidence to the growing workers' movement in both East and West. It falls to our generation to carry to completion the ideals for which Wang Fan-Hsi and many others sacrificed so much.

Chinese Revolutionary
by Wang Fan Hsi
Oxford University Press,
Price: £15

Revolutionary traditions of Chartism

Review by Dave Cotterill

THIS BOOK traces the revolutionary traditions of Chartism, the links with Marx and Engels and the subsequent degeneration of the labour and trade union leaders together with the adoption of a philosophy of accommodation to the capitalist system and the fruits of such policies.

The emergence of Chartism indicated the first political awakenings of the working class in the direction of independent activity. Up to 1832 the workers had been

used as cannon-fodder by the middle class in their agitation for Parliamentary reform. The Chartist movement was not a socialist movement, but its demands did constitute a revolutionary challenge to the capitalists. The left wing of the Chartists—the Democratic Association and individuals such as Brontere O'Brien foreshadowed some of the ideas later developed by Marx and Engels.

The reasons for its decline lie in the incorrect tactics adopted by its leaders who in most cases were at variance with one another. In some cases this reflected the differing class interests, in other cases it was simply a result of the immaturity of the working class. An insufficient understanding of the nature of capitalism resulted in incorrect tactics.

The rise of the Chartists also coincided with the expansion of British capitalism and the opening up of emigration to the New World, which drained the Chartist movement. From the 1840s onwards sections of the workers' movement turned to trade unions and co-operative societies.

The revolutionary elements continued the traditions throughout this dark period, but their numbers were small and isolated from the masses. Many of the leaders of Chartism had links with Marx and Engels and in 1845 appeared the first international organisation of the working class—the Society of Fraternal Democrats—the precursor of the First International formed in 1867.

In this regard many of the infant organisations of the workers' movement were influenced by men who stood on revolutionary ideas, how then in the period from the 1850s onwards could so much influence be exerted by the ideas of compromise and accommodation to the capitalist system.

The explanation lies in the expansion of capitalism together with the astute tactics of the bourgeois who consciously tried to mould and form the attitudes of the trade unions. "The bourgeoisie of that period also began to court trade unions and the co-operatives, endeavouring by fostering Mechanics Institutes and popular libraries... to wrest the working people from the intellectual influence of the still-active agitators."

Even in periods of crisis such as in the 1880s the opportunist leaders held onto the leadership of the workers because of the lack of any real alternative.

The fruits of this were felt in the terrible conditions suffered by the working class in terms of unemployment, wages and social conditions.

The policy of compromise undermined the strength of the trade unions and left the workers prey to the capitalist class.

Rothstein shows in this sense that the "practical" and "sensible" policies of the leadership did not lead to a betterment of the workers' conditions. Only militant action, later on, achieved this.



Feargus O'Connor, Chartist leader who founded the Leeds Northern Star to spread news of Trade Unions and Co-operative societies.

This opportunism was reflected in the emerging labour movement. Ramsey MacDonald, for example, wrote that, "The future of the Labour Party is to be determined by its success in making its principles clear to itself and the country. If it narrows itself to a class movement, or a manual workers' movement... it will weaken and finally disappear."

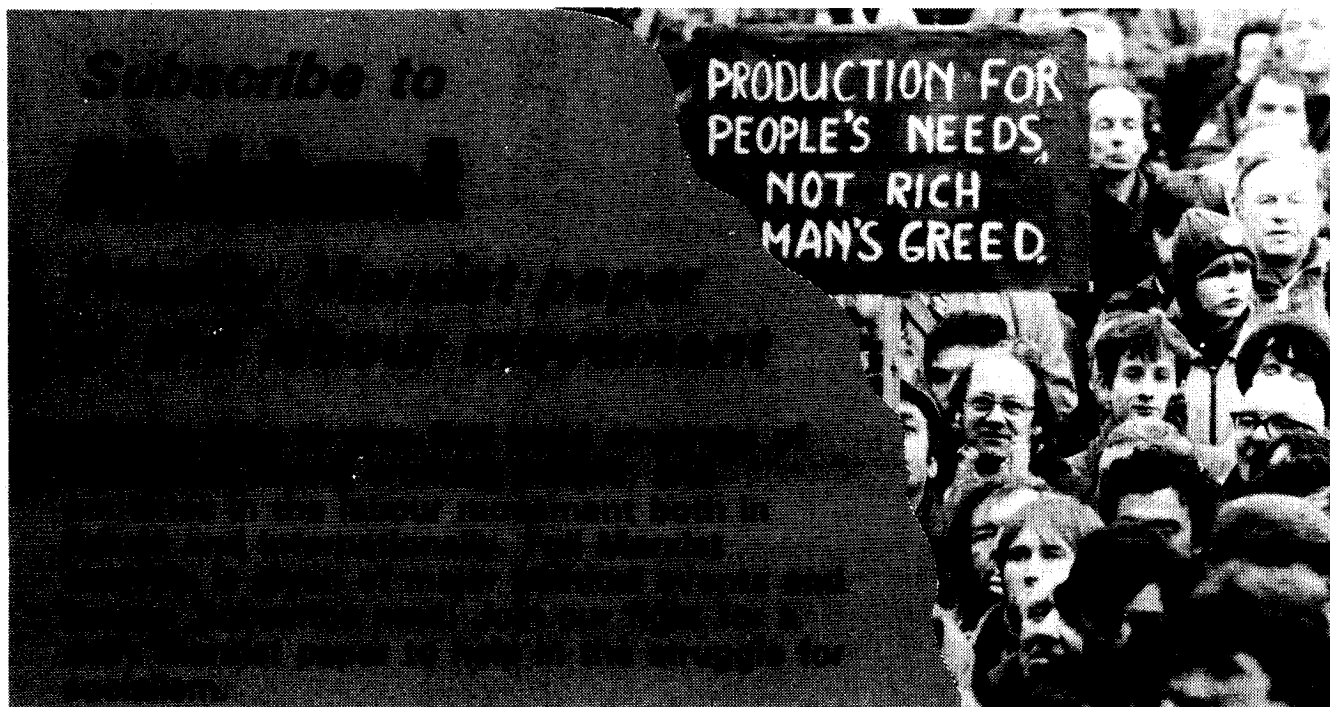
Such ideas were responsible for trying the infant Labour Party to the coat-tails of the Liberal Party and held back its development.

Incidentally it may strike the reader how familiar the sentiments of MacDonald are compared to the recent announcements of Professor Hobsbawm. For the working class their history is a thing hidden or distorted. The dominant ideas of any period are those of the ruling class who interpret history from their point of view. Much of the history of the working class remains hidden. Workers either simply did not have the time or contemporary activists were too busy trying to change the world than sit down and interpret events.

But for the current generation an understanding of history is a vital necessity—many of the ideas are arguments of the past remain today.

Despite the defects of particularly the latter part of this book—which will have to be dealt with at length in a further issue—this is nonetheless a useful contribution to the history of the British labour movement.

From Chartism to Labourism
by Theodore Rothstein
Lawrence and Wishart,
Price: £6.95



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