



Militant

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THE TITANIC
STRUGGLE TO RAISE
BRITISH CAPITALISM

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Militant

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Editor: Alan Woods
Cover Design: Alan Hardman

Editorial

Expulsions jeopardise Labour victory prospects

AS THIS issue of the *MIR* goes to print, the struggle between the Tory government and Liverpool and Lambeth councils is coming to a head. The hatred of the ruling class towards those in the labour movement with the courage to stand up against the Thatcherite bully-boys was strikingly revealed in a *Times* editorial, dripping with venom, entitled "On their own heads be it," which gloated over the prospect of Labour councillors having their homes taken away, being bankrupted and stripped of their office.

The battle lines are clearly drawn. It is the duty of all sections of the labour movement to come to the aid of socialists whose only 'crime' is to fight for jobs, homes and services.

The depredations of Toryism have unleashed destructive forces which have decimated Britain's industrial base, condemned an entire generation to the living death of unemployment and undermined the very fabric of a civilised existence.

Thatcher and Hurd rant about the criminal excesses caused by rioters. But what is really criminal is the system which breeds inner-city ghettos, slums and deprivation, the breeding ground for demoralisation, drug addiction, crime and all the attendant evils of a society which is terminally sick.

The entire situation demands a bold socialist alternative from the leadership of the movement, which would immediately have the effect of rallying millions to the cause of Labour.

Ever since the end of the miners' strike, an insidious campaign has been waged in the Tory press to claim that the miners' strike was 'harmful' to Labour's electoral chances.

The opposite is the case. These ladies and gentlemen forget the little 'trifle' that the Labour Party's recovery in the opinion polls took place during the strike. That was no accident.

The miners showed by their actions that it was possible to fight back against Thatcherism. If, at the end of the day, they did not succeed in win-

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Expanded MIR well received— Now back us with cash

THERE HAS been an overwhelmingly favourable response to the expansion of the *MIR*. The possibilities opened up for the journal by the extra 12 pages have been warmly welcomed.

The reaction received has confirmed the contention of the Editors that many active workers keenly appreciate a journal which provides in-depth answers to all the complex questions raised by the events which are unfolding in Britain and internationally. One reader in Bristol, for example, sold over 20 copies of the last issue including five on an anti-fascist demonstration. Another reader, Colin O'Callaghan, Branch chairman, Overseas Telegraphs, National Communications Union, sent us a report on the response he has received to the *MIR* and how it has been used in NCU workplace Marxist discussion groups: "More and more workers want to know about Marxism . . . They want to know what the Marxists have to say on the issues of the day. There is, of course, no substitute for a regular paper but neither should we forget to use the *MIR* . . . What workshop, canteen or factory hasn't discussed the banning of the documentary on Ireland,

Liveaid or the anniversary of Hiroshima in the last few weeks? Well all those subjects were covered in the last *MIR* (No. 29) . . . In my union, the NCU, we have established a tradition of Marxist Discussion Groups. We have discussed all manner of subjects—yet the most successful was a series of three on dialectical materialism; Historical materialism and marxist economics. Communication workers aren't afraid of ideas (although some of the terminology needed explanation). Neither are your workmates. The speed with which workers embraced those ideas as their own was both astonishing and encouraging. I sold seven of the last issue of the *MIR* to people at work and in the union. I challenge you to match that." That is the way to secure the future of the *MIR*! But such examples, of individual readers taking copies of the *MIR* to sell in the Labour Parties, trade unions, Women's Sections, LPYS branches and student Labour Clubs *must be repeated in every area* if we are to meet the extra costs incurred in producing a 44 page journal.

Every reader can help to build the *MIR*—we appeal to you for your support.

ing their objectives, that was no fault of theirs. A heavy responsibility falls on the shoulders of those Pontius Pilates at the head of the trade union movement who refused to organise in support of the miners.

In spite of everything, the effects of the miners' strike upon the consciousness of all classes in society has been dramatic, as was shown by the magnificent movement of the school students.

The Tory press had a field day when the NUR guards voted against strike action. But what that vote showed more than anything else is that the workers, when they are checked on the industrial front, turn to politics. The narrow vote against strike action was only one side of the coin. **The other side of the coin will be a massive turn back to the Labour Party in the next period.**

It was noticeable that the same papers which headlined the guards' ballot, maintained a sullen silence about the massive majorities in favour of the link with the Labour Party in the ballots on the political levy.

The right wing leaders of the TUC hoped that, after the miners' strike, all would quickly be forgotten. The waters would "return to their normal course." That explains the smug confidence with which Fleet Street predicted the "inevitable" defeat of the NUM's resolution on the re-imbursement of confiscated funds, and a review of the cases of sacked and gaoled miners.

A Labour government

Everything was said to be neatly tied up by a handful of general secretaries. Yet the pundits got the shock of their life when the TUC's recommendation was overturned by the delegates.

This government has in effect robbed millions of pounds from the trade unions. Any trade union leadership worth its salt would have had the guts to denounce the vicious class nature of the Tory laws and that would have got an enthusiastic response from millions of workers.

The ordinary delegates who overturned the recommendation of the General Council saved the honour of the TUC.

By contrast, the declaration of Neil Kinnock will have caused profound disquiet in the ranks of the unions and the Labour Party. His refusal to support the miners, and his insistence that **he alone** would have the right to decide what was in Labour's election manifesto, regardless of the opinions of the Labour and TUC conferences, was a slap in the face to the rank-and-file and an open challenge to all the democratic gains of the movement in recent years.

If as is now quite likely, Labour wins the next election, that will be due, in

no small measure, to the miners' strike. But if Labour's right wing have their way, the chances of Labour winning will be seriously impaired.

At a time when all efforts should be concentrated on defeating the common Tory enemy, the backwoodsmen of the right—with the tacit compliance of Neil Kinnock—are organising a campaign against the left designed to split the party and wreck it from top to bottom in the decisive run-up to the election. Central to this wrecking tactic is the vitriolic abuse against "Scargillism" (ie working class militancy) and, above all, the vicious attack upon the **Militant**.

It is not accidental that the witch-hunt has accelerated in recent months. The right wing, led by Hattersley, with Neil Kinnock in tow, are engaged in a campaign of systematically re-writing and watering down the party programme to remove any socialist content (this is dealt with more fully in Rob Sewell's article elsewhere in this issue of the *MIR*), re-introducing the idea of a wages policy ("social compact"), sale of council houses, etc, etc. The right wing understand well that it is **Militant** supporters who will play a crucial role in rallying the party and trade union ranks in defence of the socialist aspects of the programme.

Indeed, one of the main reasons the right wing are desperate to re-write the party programme is that they now recognise that the Labour Party could well win the next election.

With the return of a Labour government, workers will rapidly press, as in France 1981, for the immediate introduction of reforms to reduce the working week, to raise living standards etc. Mitterrand's victory in May 1981 raised the expectations and aspirations of the French working class. Shortly after his victory an opinion poll recorded that 70 per cent of the population, 18 per cent more than had actually voted for Mitterrand, expected their living standards to rise under a socialist presidency. Similarly the 1981 electoral victory for PASOK boosted the morale and combativity of the Greek workers, despite Papandreou's imposition of a diluted electoral programme onto the party. The very day after the election Greek Electrical Corporation workers appealed to colleagues who had been sacked for Trade union activity under the previous right-wing government to report back for work! Workers sacked two years before the PASOK victory besieged the new Minister of Labour in his office for reinstatement in their old jobs.

With the chronic social conditions created by the crisis of British capitalism feeding the simmering discontent of the working class, the defeat of the hated Thatcher and the election of a Labour government, the

experience of 1974-79 notwithstanding, would arouse the hopes and expectations of millions of workers, unemployed, youth, housewives and even pensioners.

As in 1974-79 the government would be faced with a stark choice—change society along socialist lines or attempt to restore the vitality of capitalism. The logic of the right wing's policies would force them, faced with an economy even weaker than in 1974-79, to implement savage cuts as Denis Healey did then. This has been made clear, even while in opposition, in their strategy for Labour councils, who they have advised to make "humane cuts" rather than face the wrath of the Tory government and its commissioners.

But such a Labour government would come under far greater pressure from the working class, radicalised by the experience of the miners' strike, than even in 1974-79, with trade unions moving into open opposition. Such conditions could prepare the way, as the right wing toyed with in 1976, for a splitting away from the Labour Party to form a national government, linking up with the Tories, Liberals and Social Democrats. But one factor in 1976 which persuaded them against this was the role at that time that **Militant** supporters would have played in galvanising the rank and file of the party which would then have moved rapidly to the left. If that was their fear in 1976, it must be their nightmare today with the growing support for Marxist ideas throughout the labour movement.

Witch-hunt accelerates

Whatever the exact course of development of the next Labour government, the right wing understand that even if they succeed in watering down the manifesto, they will come under enormous pressure from the party rank and file rallied by the Marxists. Many of the right-wing probably remember that it was a young Marxist delegate from Merseyside who in 1978 moved the resolution which was carried at party conference, which for the first time unequivocally rejected incomes policy.

Unable to refute the arguments and explanations put forward by the Marxists of the need to transform society, they instead will, and are resorting, to organisational measures to attempt to empty out first the **Militant** supporters and then the rest of the left from the Labour Party.

In the last six to nine months, the witch-hunt against supporters of the **Militant** in the Labour Party has reached qualitatively new depths of lies, distortion and abuse of the party constitution.

A growing guerrilla campaign by right wing CLPs has resulted in 22 being expelled in kangaroo court style meetings, often with no previous warning of charges, sometimes no charges being laid, sham appeals, etc. The crimes for which long-standing socialists have been expelled, in complete contravention of the party constitution, range from "selling" to "organising meetings" in support of the *Militant*.

It would be a fatal mistake to see the recent spate of expulsions as isolated outbursts. Clearly behind the moves is an organised campaign, probably co-ordinated by members of the right wing, misnamed, "Solidarity" organisation with the encouragement of sections of Labour Party head office and regional staff.

Thus when the right wing in Wales unconstitutionally barred *Militant* supporter Chris Peace from the Welsh regional executive of the party, the response from the National Agent David Hughes, rather than admonishing the right wing for breaking party rules, outlined the 1983 "conference decision" against *Militant* and advised the right wing if they have evidence of Chris Peace being a "member of *Militant* tendency" they should bring it to the attention of his Labour Party! If you don't succeed the first time — try again!

All the left a target

With the increasing number of witch-hunts and expulsions on a local basis, and national attacks on the LPYS, some of the right wing are dreaming of turning the clock back to the 1950s, and embarking on a wholesale purge, beginning with the expulsion of *Militant* supporters and going on to remove all of the active left wing from the Labour Party.

This was made clear by the vitriolic attacks of the right wing on Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill after the campaign organised by the right wing had failed to win the Brecon and Radnor by-election. A similar view was blurted out by one right wing delegate at the Transport and General Workers Union conference: "Benn, Scargill, these people need to go". While this is the desire of the extreme right wing around 'Solidarity', others on the right are hesitant of a general purge, preferring to resort to attacks on a localised basis. But even this is meeting with ferocious opposition, such as in Sheffield Attercliffe, where local wards have refused to accept expulsions pushed through a packed management committee meeting.

Where the right wing have succeeded, temporarily, it has usually been in moribund Labour Parties, with a small membership, and above all where there

is not an active layer of young fresh workers in the party.

The movement of workers into the Labour Party will be a reflection of the struggles in society as a whole. It is an inevitable process, that when the working class is thwarted politically, as in 1983, it turns onto the plane of industrial action, but equally when a period of struggle on an industrial level fails to lead to a fundamental transformation of the situation, workers will draw political conclusions again, first of all in seeking the return of a Labour government but at a later stage in more actively participating in the party itself. From this point of view the right wing are already living on borrowed time.

In the past 10 years, in Spain, Greece, Sweden and other countries they have attempted to witch-hunt Marxism. But in each case, despite a whole series of expulsions, the ideas of Marxism are gaining a growing echo in the rank and file of the workers' parties.

The recently published agenda for Labour Party conference shows the real mood of the Party, with resolutions clearly opposing witch-hunts, and others expressing sentiments for unity. Even the General and Municipal Workers calls for a "shift in emphasis in regional offices away from 'policing' the party".

In the isolated cases where the right wing have expelled Marxists, they will find a different response to the lefts who were persecuted in the past such as the Bevanites of the 1950s. *Militant* supporters won't meekly lie down but will take the arguments out to the 'real left', in many areas workers in the trade unions and on the estates who have not yet joined the Labour Party, precisely because of the role of the right wing in past Labour governments.

Such a campaign is the only way that the democratic rights of all Labour Party members to express their views in free and open debate can be defended against the organisational attacks and restrictions on political debate which the right-wing are trying to impose.

One of the themes of the press campaign supporting the right-wing in the recent period has been that "*Militant* is on the run" and that increasing layers of the Party are in favour of measures against *Militant* supporters.

But if this is really the case then why the witch-hunt? Why the vehemence? The witch-hunt is being pushed ahead now with increasing vigour exactly because the right wing are fearful for the growing support and success of *Militant*.

Above all it is the growing influence of Marxist ideas in the broad labour and trade union movement which frightens the right wing; the development of BLOC into the embryonic organisation

of the left in the trade unions; the historic struggle of Liverpool City Council in which *Militant* supporters have played a leading role; and the magnificent school students strike. A further indication of the growing support for the *Militant* will undoubtedly be the 21st Anniversary Rally being held in the Royal Albert Hall (capacity about 5,000) on November 3rd this year, which will be a historic event dwarfing anything similar organised in the labour movement in the last period.

We will leave the right-wing to their delusions, re-assuring themselves, like a heroin-addict, with their daily fix of stories of *Militant*'s decline. We rest content that the march of events themselves will continue to confirm and thus strengthen support, for the ideas and analysis of *Militant*.

It is the combination of the correctness of the ideas of Marxism, explaining what has happened in the past, what is happening now, and what will happen in the future, together with the growth in the material resources of Marxism and the moves towards a more regular paper, which are driving the right wing mad and leading them to resort to organisational methods where they have been defeated politically. They could only separate Marxism from the Labour Party by destroying the Labour Party itself.

Marxism cannot be buried

The labour movement must be warned: some of the right wing, as was shown at the time of the defections to the SDP, are quite prepared to do this. But 1985 is not the 1950s, capitalism can offer no future to the working class, there is enormous potential support for socialist ideas both in the Labour Party and in the trade union movement as a whole. Once the issues behind the witch-hunt, the reasons for the witch-hunt, and the ideas which *Militant* is fighting for, of genuine socialism, are explained then the rank and file of the Party will rally round and the right wing will be defeated in their attempts to carry out a purge.

This edition of the *MIR* is being produced at the time of the 45th Anniversary of the murder of Leon Trotsky by Stalinist agents. Undoubtedly the Stalinists and the right-wing of the labour movement hoped at that time that with Trotsky's body, the ideas of genuine Marxism would be buried. The growth of support for *Militant* and Marxist ideas in the labour movement in the last period show once again that organisational methods of even the most brutal and foul kind can never succeed in burying ideas which correspond to the needs of the working class in the struggle to transform society.

Rob Sewell examines the prospects facing the next Labour government in the light of the much heralded policy statements arguing for a new agreement with big business.

A 'New Partnership'... or the Social Contract revived?

"IT IS improbable that a third Labour government would be guilty of the same follies as ruined its two predecessors...

"It must be prepared to live dangerously—it must on no account remain in power merely on sufferance... Either it means a decisive break with the whole policy of capitalist governments, or it means nothing at all."

RH Tawney quoted by Neil Kinnock
5 December 1980.

"I am prepared to work on the basis, the conventional basis, which has stood us in good stead in Britain..."

Neil Kinnock, 25 May 1985.

THE RESULT of the Brecon and Radnor by-election in July was a devastating blow for the Thatcher government. From a safe 9,000 Tory majority, the Conservative candidate was pushed into a humiliating third place. This confirms, as *Militant* and the *Militant International Review* has repeatedly explained, the hollow nature of Thatcher's victory over the miners. Her 'Industrial Falklands' strategy, far from boosting Thatcher's flagging image, has turned into its opposite.

Never has there been such a class polarisation in the post-war period. The unique 'consensus' of the 1950s and 1960s has completely vanished. Not since before the first world war has there been such a volatile situation, emanating from Britain's most protracted and embittered struggle. Prolonged mass unemployment has served to destroy the social fabric of society. Even Norman Willis has stated that divisions have been created "on a scale hardly seen since the English Civil War of the 1640s".

Without doubt, it is these social effects that has served to undermine the Thatcher government and prepared the ground for a Labour victory. Far from being an 'electoral liability' as portrayed by the Labour leaders, the strike has had positive results for Labour. It is out of fear for the social consequences of Thatcherism and the decay of British capitalism that gaping cracks have now appeared in the Tory Party. Regular revolts of the Tory backbenches—the latest on the issue of top pay awards—take place in Parliament. Splits have even opened up in the cabinet itself with suggestions being touted of Thatcher's

removal. It is the beginning of the end for the Thatcher regime.

Over the last six years, the Tory government has presided over an economic catastrophe for British capitalism unparalleled in its history. As the recent TUC-Labour Party liaison committee document correctly pointed out:

"Many sectors of industry have been weakened to the point of collapse... Britain's problems are now more acute than at any time in our history as an industrial nation..."

As *Militant* and the *MIR* has consistently maintained, British capitalism is experiencing an irreversible terminal decline. Just to put it on terms with its rivals, an immediate investment in manufacturing industry of an unprecedented £200,000 millions is required! This is absolutely ruled out. Investment has stagnated in real terms, and British capitalism is falling further behind its major rivals. Between 1979-82 there was a 'negative investment,' to use the language of the bourgeois economists, that is, investment insufficient even to meet the costs of the replacement of worn out plant and machinery! An accelerating deindustrialisation is taking place, while a partial recovery in profitability accrues to the parasites of finance capital: banks, insurance companies and service industries. The real wealth creating sector of the economy—manufacturing industry—has been allowed to go to the wall. Over 20 per cent of manufacturing has collapsed over the past six years with bankruptcies at an all time record.

Retreat from 1983 manifesto

In the correct observation of Neil Kinnock, "We are heading for a new economic disaster... the extent of the coming crisis could make the last four years of mass unemployment, destruction of industry, trade deficit, and investment slump look like a period of dazzling prosperity by comparison."

Given the growth in Labour's electoral support and a likely Labour victory in 1987 or 1988, what are the prospects for this new government? What are the lessons of previous Labour administrations?

Nobody could argue against the Liaison Committee's document when it states that "the crisis in the economy and society is now so deep seated that

radical measures are essential."

Working people elect a Labour government precisely in times of crisis to take direct action in their interests. As the Thatcher government has taken 'radical' measures in favour of the capitalist class, working people expect the same action but in their interests. But what are these 'essential radical measures' proposed by the leadership?

In the TUC-Labour Party Liaison document, in 'A Future That Works,' in the policy statement 'A New Partnership: A New Britain,' and in the 'Jobs and Industry' campaign as a whole, all previous talk of a socialist programme has been abandoned. Unfortunately these revised documents, issued since the 1983 defeat, are well to the right of all previous programmes and even manifesto commitments. All suggestions about socialist planning, even in words, have been dropped in favour of 'co-operation,' 'agreement' and 'national economic assessment' between the unions, bosses and government.

Labour's ranks will be disappointed to find that these revised updated policies are far from 'new' or 'radical'. They are a return to the old class collaboration ideas of 1920's Mondism. When the 1926 General Strike was defeated, the then 'new realists' of the TUC opened up discussions with leading capitalists headed by Sir Alfred Mond, to find out 'upon what terms co-operation is possible in a common endeavour to improve the efficiency of industry...' Such class collaboration broke down as the bosses reverted to more reliable weapons of mass unemployment to impose cuts in wages, increase hours and reduce living standards generally.

The Liaison Committee's document, however, is full of the same failed policies of 'new partnerships' through joint negotiations and agreement between workers, employers and government. 'Success' it confidently claims, 'will come from all of us working together as a movement and as a country.'

Again, while everyone would endorse the labour movement working together, the 'country' is divided into hostile social classes with their own class interests. To jumble up the unity of the movement and that of class interests is a fundamental mistake. What have the sacked Barking hospital cleaners in common with peo-

ple like Tiny Rowlands? Rowlands 'earns' £323,000 from the Lonrho company, but his 45 million shares (worth about £76m) in the company netted him well over £4 millions in dividends.

The richest 10 per cent of the population are increasing their proportion of the country's wealth, whereas the real take home pay of the poorest single workers fell by nearly 6 per cent in the three years to April 1982. In 1982 the richest 10 per cent held 47 per cent of the total personal wealth, up from 46 per cent the previous year and 45 per cent in 1980. Capitalism breeds inequality. It is based upon the exploitation of the labour of the workers by the capitalist class. Profit itself comes from the unpaid labour of working people, extracted from them by the banks and monopolies. The class interests of the workers and the capitalists are absolutely irreconcilable.

Despite the clear lessons of 17 years of post war Labour Government. the document repeatedly states that only through partnership will we 'find solutions to our problems. Unemployment, trade, inflation and income distribution must all be tackled on this basis'. Our leaders are living in a dream world and are totally blind to the class nature of society.

Capitalist 'economic realities'

What are the 'radical' policies proposed for a future Labour government? Firstly, a national economic summit made up of government, employers and unions will be convened to work out a planned agreement on the allocation of scarce resources!

According to Roy Hattersley, the Shadow Chancellor, who gets his advice from academic and big business circles, a future government cannot 'live in isolation from the laws of arithmetic...'. Any 'planned agreement' must take economic realities into account. What is this, if not the Tory idea that if capitalism in crisis cannot afford reforms then workers will have to be 'realistic,' make sacrifices and wait for better times.

The point now is that the economic crisis is 100 times more catastrophic than when Labour last came to power in 1974. A trade surplus in manufactured goods of £2,500 million in 1982 was turned into a trade deficit of £4,000 million last year. **This is the first time since the industrial revolution that this has happened!** The same is true in the new industries. In information technologies, Britain trade deficit has reached £2,300 million. Not one British company is in the top ten world producers and imports now take 58 per cent of the British market.

The idea of 'jam tomorrow' has been



Hattersley and the right wing are set to repeat the disastrous policies of the Callaghan government.

the argument of all right-wing Labour governments since the war. It has always led to disillusionment and to defeat.

Hattersley—reflecting the ideas of the CBI—lets the cat out of the bag when he says 'profits are an essential feature of a successful socialist economy.' What he means is capitalist economy. But how is this 'high profit economy' to be created? With an 'agreement on incomes' says Hattersley. He sees the need to cut the share of the national income going to wages to increase the profits of the monopolies. By such measures he hopes to boost investment and overcome the crisis. He wants a return to the old failed policies of wage restraint—of the 'Social Contract'. 'There has got to be a (wage) norm' he maintains, but it must be voluntary!

But what is the difference with the 'voluntary' social contract between 1974 and 1979? None whatsoever. Despite increased profits for big business, these were not invested in manufacturing industry, but put overseas or in the banks where a larger return was achieved. Will the TUC police its implementation? "I don't think there is going to be policing in the old way!" states Hattersley. So what is going to be different? He warns the trade unions—holding a pistol to their heads—"It may be that we can't get agreement and therefore we can't reduce unemployment as fast as we want". So for the right wing it will be those fighting for decent wages that will be the scape-goat for continuing mass unemployment, not the capitalist system of course.

In Neil Kinnock's categorical view, 'it is not a question of whether the Labour government will have an (incomes) policy. It goes with government, no more, no less.'

(Financial Times, 4 May 1985)

But what does the Liason document say? 'The last Labour government made progress in co-operation with trade unions. Inevitably there were weaknesses in some areas of action (sic), which provide lessons for the future.'

There are, however, none so blind as those who do not want to see. One clear lesson was the disastrous 'weakness' of introducing an anti-working class 'voluntary' incomes policy. Such capitalist policies have been tried under the 1945-51, 1964-70 and 1974-79 Labour governments and, as was their real intention, have boosted profits at the expense of workers' wages. After phase 1 and phase 2 of the 'Social Contract' under Wilson and Callaghan, real wages were at least 10 per cent lower than at the close of 1974. **That was the biggest fall in real wages in Britain in any comparable period for over 100 years!** Yet despite these sacrifices from the working class unemployment rocketed under the Labour government from 600,000 to nearly 1½ million.

'Miracle cures'?

It was the rejection of wage restraint by the TUC in 1977 and 1978 and the disillusionment created with the attempt by Callaghan to impose a Phase 3 and 4 that led to Labour's defeat in 1979.

At this year's COHSE conference, Kinnock stated that there were 'no miracle cures,' there can be no mirage or fantasy! 'We are not promising miracle cures... people want realistic answers to real problems.'

(Sunday Times, 31 March 1985)

But, ironically, the only people looking for miracles are those attempting to give answers on the basis of a diseased crisis-ridden capitalist system. What is needed are real solu-

tions to the real problems confronting working people: namely mass unemployment, poverty, slum housing, devastated social services, etc.

However, the 'real' solutions offered by the Labour leadership, have been tried and found wanting. While *Militant* supporters have consistently demanded increased spending on housing, education, hospitals, etc—the £5 billion reflation package is entirely inadequate and will not solve the terrible social problems which have arisen out of the present catastrophic position of British capitalism. No amount of patching up and tinkering with the system: selective import controls, a National Investment Bank, the strengthening of NEDC, planning agreements, government grants, or worker participation, will provide 'real solutions to real problems.' Given the near collapse of manufacturing industry, and with a new world slump on the horizon, such a programme—which has been tried by Labour governments in the past in one form or another—which leaves the economic levers of power in the hands of the major monopolies, is profoundly inadequate and will not succeed.

Jobs—a 'foolish pledge'?

Even the Labour leaders themselves in reality recognise this to be true. Kinnock in 1979, as the Shadow Education secretary, stated that Labour could not make easy promises to restore the cuts made by the Thatcher government. The retreat on policy commitments was on. In early 1984 he stated that we would be 'hard pushed' to reduce unemployment to below 2 million! All mention of 'socialist policies' has been abandoned, leaving Kinnock to openly praise the economic policies of the Reagan administration! 'They relinquished monetary targets, cut interest rates, expanded public spending and held taxes,' says Kinnock. Leaving aside Reagan's vicious attacks on the American working class, this 'realistic model' has collapsed with economic growth falling drastically and serious currency problems emerging.

The US 'boom' of 1984 was fueled by massive military spending, overseas borrowing and a colossal budget deficit. The core of the economy, manufacturing, has been practically stagnant. Such a situation could not last indefinitely. Now the chickens are coming home to roost as the US moves into recession and threatens to drag the world economy down with it.

Even the Party's longstanding commitment to 'full employment' has been challenged. In an attack on Benn, Kinnock stated 'that there was nothing unsocialist about... facing economic

realities. Most workers had to face economic realities every day.' But these are precisely the economic realities of the capitalist system that we are trying to do away with. By accepting these capitalist realities or, in other words, capitalism's limitations, the Labour leaders have had to invent a 'new concept of full employment... not the full employment of the 1950s, 1960s or even the early 1970s—we know its not coming back in that form. We want a policy for full employment which takes account of the realities of present and future technology, economic and cultural change....'

(Neil Kinnock, *Times* 25 June 1985)

The commitment is now dramatically altered by edged qualifications and limitations. Kinnock and Hattersley are intending not to change the capitalist system but to work within its confines. 'We are going to some extent to have to plan with the (capitalist-RS) market, rather than against the market. This is the fact of the matter....' says Kinnock pragmatically.

Marxism has always laid great stress on studying past events. Those who do not learn from the mistakes in history will be doomed to repeat them. However, different trends of opinion can draw opposite erroneous conclusions. In relation to the previous Labour government, right-winger Joel Barnett, former chief secretary to the Treasury, for instance, in his book, 'Inside the Treasury' states, 'The Labour government of 1974-79 had a financial task rendered impossible by pledges foolishly made without any serious thought as to where the money would come from... you name it, we were pledged to increase it.'

Roy Hattersley, Labour's Shadow Chancellor sees the answer to this 'foolishness'—don't pledge anything! That's where the Socialist government went wrong in France... it offered unredeemable promises to the electorate! At the 1984 Party conference he described two of his nightmares: The first was losing the election and the second was 'we win, and within two years appear to have failed to carry out the promises we made to the electorate, in part because we made promises which were not within the bounds of possibility....'

"I don't want to follow the French experience. I don't want to see the next Labour government start with two years of unreality and end with two years of deflation and despair for our members."

The 'unreality' that Hattersley talks about was the period of welfare reform by the Mitterand government: the extension of nationalisation, increased national minimum wages, increased

social security benefits, a wealth tax, a reflation programme, etc. However with the growing economic crisis, a series of counter-reforms were introduced including devaluations and cuts in public expenditure. The nationalised industries were 'rationalised' resulting in wide-spread redundancies and plant closures. By mid-1985 unemployment was 750,000 higher than when the socialists came to power. Not because they promised too much, but because they left the power of the monopolies intact, they were forced to do the bidding of big business and introduce 'monetarist' policies. From reforms to counter-reforms was the inevitable outcome on this road. What would be different in Britain with a third less industry and a third less wealth? Such a programme would be an absolute disaster.

The Marxists are accused of being utopian while the right wing are portrayed as realists. But the complete reverse is true. Such is the economic decline of British capitalism the material basis for lasting reforms has collapsed. The ruling class is demanding austerity. Out of fear of an explosion of inflation they abandoned Keynesianism and adopted monetarism. Callaghan, as early as the 1976 Labour Party conference, stated that keynesianism was dead.

However, the continuing crisis since has demonstrated that neither monetarism nor keynesianism offers a solution. The experience of the Socialist governments of France, Greece and Spain has underlined the point.

1974—crisis now a 100 times worse

Only by the taking over of the 'commanding heights of the economy', the 200 major monopolies, banks and insurance companies—Clause 4 Part 4 can all the reforms passed by conference be implemented in a lasting fashion.

The experience of the past has proven that, despite all the 'controls' and 'incentives' you can't plan what you don't control and you don't control what you don't own.

To remain on the basis of capitalism will be a horrific nightmare for working people. A future Labour Government will be pressured and blackmailed by Big business into dropping its reformist programme as was the case in 1964 and 1974. They will be threatened with a 'strike of capital' until Tory measures are adopted to pacify the ruling class.

It is an absolute law under capitalism that while 80% of the economy is in private hands and only 20% state owned, the majority private

sector will dictate to the minority and not vice-versa.

Let us remember that it was the Labour government of 1974-79, that introduced a watered-down "Thatcherism" or monetarism.

Despite the 1974 manifesto commitment to "bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families", the Government moved from reforms to counter-reforms. The rush to the IMF for a loan in 1976 resulted in cuts being imposed of £3 billion in public expenditure. A further £5 billion was slashed from the 1977-78 expenditure by cash limits. Such measures—demanded by the capitalist class—attempted to shift resources from private and public consumption towards private industry. This attempt to encourage investment was doomed to fail as it resulted in a drastic reduction in the market, which in turn was a disincentive for the capitalists to invest. These attacks led to demoralisation amongst Labour supporters and laid the path for the Thatcher victory of 1979.

It was the failure to break with capitalism that resulted in counter-reforms against working people. This did not emanate from a lack of sincerity on the part of the Labour leadership. As Lenin once explained, we don't possess a sincerometer and can't judge an individual's sincerity. But once a Labour government remains within the confines of capitalism, then it has to inevitably operate under its laws. No matter how 'sincere', honest or strong-willed a reformist leadership is, it is the laws of capitalism that decide in the end.

In this period of acute economic crisis for capitalism in Britain and internationally, measures will be demanded by the ruling class for the burden to be placed fully on the shoulders of the working class. Profit is the sole driving force of the system. To increase profitability is paramount for the capitalists who own the economy. They will through a thousand and one channels—directly and indirectly—sabotage any government that resists such plans.

Such blackmail was described by Harold Wilson in his book *The Labour Government, 1964-70*, when in November 1964, the Governor of the Bank of England, Lord Cromer demanded "all-round cuts in expenditure regardless of social or even economic priorities, and fundamental changes in some of the Chancellor's economic announcements.

"Not for the first time, I said that we had now reached the situation where a newly elected government with a mandate from the people was

Billy becomes a walking ad

UNEMPLOYED Billy Pickersgill is taking his search for a job on to the streets of Liverpool.

From today the 29-year-old Kirkby man will become a familiar figure to city centre workers as he makes his own "Gizza job" plea.

Billy, from Tower Hill, is so fed up with the lack of work being offered at the job centres he has decided to become a walking advert for himself.

And he intends to carry around his placard proclaiming "Please give me a job" every rush hour until someone takes him up on his offer.

"I've got to do something. I just cannot sit around and wait any more," said Billy, the father of a two-and-a-half year-old daughter Natalie.

Chance

"People give me some funny looks but I don't care. Hopefully someone will notice me and give me a chance."

By Val Woan

Billy has been unemployed for two years and his last job was an auxiliary nurse at Walton Hospital. Before that he was in the Army.

"I really will do anything," he added. "Some people are quite happy to laze around and collect their supplementary benefit, but not me. I have got a wife and a baby and I want to work to give them the standard of living they deserve."

Liverpool Echo, Monday, March 11, 1985 3

Will a "new concept of employment" end the misery of the jobless?

being told, not so much by the Governor of the Bank of England but by international speculators (as well as British big business—RS), that the policies on which we had fought the election could not be implemented; that the government was to be forced into the adoption of Tory policies to which it was fundamentally opposed. The Governor confirmed that this was, in fact, the case.

A government of crisis

I asked him if this meant that it was impossible for any government, whatever its party label, whatever its manifesto or the policies on which it fought an election, to continue, unless it immediately reverted to full-scale Tory policies. He had to admit that that was what his argument meant, because of the sheer compulsion of the economic dictation of those who exercised decisive economic power.

"To accept his argument would mean that the Queen's First Minister was being asked to ring down the curtain on parliamentary democracy, by accepting the doctrine that an election in Britain was a farce, that the British people could not make a choice between policies.

"In these circumstances, I concluded, there was nothing left for me to do except to appeal to the democracy I was being asked to repudiate, to go back to the electorate for a mandate giving me full powers to handle this crisis.

"The Governor recognised my constitutional right to do this. Not unfairly, he warned me that if I did so—and the process would occupy some four weeks—the run on sterling would continue and indeed intensify; that our



reserves, which had already fallen considerably, would have run out long before polling day, long before I had any mandate for any other action. I told him that I recognised the force of his arguments."

The Wilson government gave in to the pressure. Nobody in the labour movement heard a word about this conspiracy until after the defeat of the government in 1970. It graphically indicates where real power lies in Britain: not with Parliament, the Cabinet or even the Prime Minister, but the unelected boardrooms of the major monopolies and banks. That is the reality of present day life. That is the lesson of all Labour governments: 1924, 1929-31, 1945-51, 1964-1970 and 1974-1979.

The reformist idea that gradually and slowly—bit by bit salami fashion—capitalism can be changed into socialism is clearly not the case. After 17 years of post war Labour government we are now further away then when we started! As RH Tawney ("the greatest of all Labour teachers" according to Kinnock) once explained, "You can peel an onion leaf by leaf, but you can't skin a live tiger claw by claw."

A Labour government is always elected in times of crisis, when the desire for change is at its highest. Under these conditions the next Labour government too will be a government of crisis. It will be subject to pressure not only from the capitalist class but from the working class as well. Under the deepening economic crisis there will be no alternative for the ranks of the trade unions and labour organisations but to attempt to force the government to act as its representative. Militant supporters

will be to the forefront of this struggle.

The next Labour government will be entirely different to any of the post-war Labour governments. It will be the sum of pressure and counter-pressure that will decide the path it follows. Instead of bowing the knee to capital and hoping to run capitalism better than the Tories, it should immediately push through an emergency 'Enabling Act' through Parliament. This was originally a concept of Attlee's in the mid 1930s arising from the experience of the debacle of 1931. Such blanket powers would enable immediately the House of Lords and Monarchy to be abolished and the top 200 monopolies, banks and insurance companies to be nationalised, under democratic workers control and management. Compensation should only be paid on the basis of proven need.

The attempts by big business to prevent and sabotage these measures must be met by the full mobilisation of the labour movement. The Allende government in Chile only went half way and took over 40 per cent of industry: which failed to break the power of the capitalists. As a result big business, with economic power still in

its hands, was able to sabotage the economy, stoke up middle-class opposition and prepare the ground for the Pinochet military coup. If half-way measures provoke the ruling class, then the initiative should be taken to boldly carry through a rounded-out socialist programme. Why stop quarter or half-way in such circumstances which satisfies nobody?

Unused resources

Only by taking these emergency measures so that the 'commanding heights' are brought into common ownership will the laws of capitalism be ended and a proper planning of resources be instituted. That is the only realistic solution to the problems faced by the working class.

A socialist plan of production, harnessing all the resources of society, both human and material, will end unemployment and the waste of human talent and initiative, and lay the foundations for a massive expansion of the productive forces according to the needs of society as a whole. The colossal wastage of resources in capitalist Britain stands at over £50 billion each year. If these unused

resources alone were harnessed in a socialist plan of production it would be enough to give every man, woman and child an extra income of £20-£25 per week. This would be the bare minimum. A gigantic rise in production, through the rebuilding and modernisation of state industry, would usher in enormous prosperity for all.

By using the latest advances in science and technology, the introduction of a four-hour, four-day week throughout industry would allow working people to be involved in the democratic day to day running of society. It would allow the mass of people to enjoy expanding living standards and the time to appreciate culture to the full—which remains at the present time the privilege of a tiny parasitic minority.

A future of undreamed of plenty would become possible as the forces of nature become controlled and utilised by mankind. A democratic socialist Britain would stand out as a shining example to the rest of the crisis-ridden capitalist world, and would be a concrete step to the socialist transformation of Europe and the world.

PW Botha, Natal, 15 August—"I receive advice from some people who want to help me from the frying pan into the fire".

Apartheid regime shaken by mass revolt

THE COURAGE and determination displayed by the workers and youth of South Africa has been an inspiration to workers throughout the world. For an unprecedented twelve months the struggle has been maintained in the face of the most brutal repression. Despite the sickening tally of over 600 dead, thousands injured and over 2,000 arrested, the movement has not been quelled. Detainees are routinely tortured and beaten but still the youth flood onto the streets in defiance of the regime. The unrestrained savagery of the police and army, granted 'immunity' for every atrocity carried out under the State of Emergency, has failed completely to temper the heroic determination and bravery of the black workers and youth.

With even capitalist commentators talking freely about the 'road to revolution' many labour movement activists will be trying to understand the significance of the current events in South Africa. Can the murderous regime repeat the vicious wave of repression that followed the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, and similarly set the movement back for another decade?

Can new points of support for white supremacy be built amongst the Indian and coloured middle classes? Or amongst the Africans through constitutional manoeuvres involving figures such as Buthelezi or Bishop Tutu? While 'reform,' or proposals for reform, alternate or are combined with repression, how strong in fact is the regime?

Workers defy regime

Fundamentally the current movement reveals in vivid fashion the complete impasse that capitalism has reached in South Africa. The capitalist system in South Africa has rested for decades on the super profits extracted from the cheap black labour that has been provided by the apartheid regime. The racial classification and division of society; the denial of the vote or even citizenship to Africans; the 'resettlement' of black people from the urban areas or the 'white farming areas' to the so-called 'Homelands'; the pass laws—all these measures were used to achieve total state control over the mobility of black workers, the foundation of the system of cheap labour.

By Clive Heemskerk

But despite the apartheid apparatus, backed up by detention without trial, police brutality and massacres, over the past 12 years the capitalists have found it increasingly difficult to rule in the 'old' way. The controlled movement of black workers into 'white South Africa' is beginning to break down. In the face of forced removals, involving over 3.5 million people since 1960, and pass law arrests—163,862 last year alone—the families of black workers and unemployed blacks have continued to settle on the edges of 'white' urban areas. And above all, through tenacious struggle, black workers have started to build powerful independent trade unions in the key centres of industry. The capitalists have been increasingly unable to operate a system that is unbearable for the masses.

It was this which propelled Botha onto the path of 'reform.' The 'new Constitution' of 1984 aimed to create a new social base for the continuation of



The mass movement of the townships has shattered Botha's 'reform initiative' of 1983-84.

white supremacy amongst the Indian and Coloured middle classes, through a tricameral arrangement of 'racial parliaments', while excluding the African majority. This system also gave the President more ability to manoeuvre between the racial groups and classes without being as tightly constrained by the white parliament. These elements of Parliamentary Bonapartism allowed Botha, for example, to conduct repression under the State of Emergency without control by the white parliament, let alone the Coloured or Indian Chambers. At the same time the greater freedom, within limits, of the executive is necessary to allow the bourgeois to experiment with new methods in the political control and exploitation of black workers—changes which will inevitably erode the privileges, job reservations etc of the white workers and middle classes.

Collaborators

But all these plans, dealt hard blows by the successful boycott of the Indian and coloured 'elections' of 1984, have been irredeemably shattered by the mass movement in the black townships and in the industrial areas. The 'reforms' of 1984 created local 'community councils' in some black areas with a limited degree of local autonomy. But this mockery of representation has not satisfied the aspirations of the mass of black workers and youth. On the contrary, as they face growing poverty, unemployment and deprivation, the attempt to build points of support for the regime

has merely fuelled the anger of the townships. Since the mass movement began in September, around 120 councillors have been attacked and a mayor and two deputy-mayors killed. 147 councillors, including the entire councils of seven townships, have resigned. No one has offered to stand in the new elections. Of the 38 councils with the highest level of 'autonomy' under the new system, only two are still functioning.

A further graphic illustration of the anger of the masses at those who collaborate with the regime is shown in the fate of the black policemen. Half of South Africa's 45,000 strong police force is black. This was part of a deliberate strategy by the regime. But since September '84, hundreds have been expelled from the townships, forced by the anger of the masses to huddle together in tents and police station compounds in the safety of the white suburbs!

The collapse of the 'reform initiative' of 1983-84 in the face of mass opposition from black Africans has forced the regime to turn once again to repression, including the State of Emergency introduced on the 21 July. At the time of writing it seems as if this gamble by the regime—it was the first State of Emergency since the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960—has failed to significantly stem the tide of protest.

Particularly amongst the more sober representatives of capitalism in the South African government there is growing realisation that the regime cannot inflict a defeat like that suffered by the mass movement in the after-

math of Sharpeville. A decade of reaction followed then in which, for example, the trade unions of African workers that had been built through the 1950s were physically crushed. **It is ruled out that this could be repeated at this stage.**

Even commentators in the capitalist press have had to point to the deep roots developed in the townships by the different youth groups, community groups, student organisations etc which form the basis of the United Democratic Front, **not to mention the potentially decisive forces of the independent Trade Unions which have built a far more powerful position than the unions established in the struggles of the 1950's.** The *Sunday Times*, 28th July quoted the director of the South African Institute of Race Relations, reflecting the understanding of the bourgeoisie: "Sixteen years elapsed between Sharpeville and the Soweto riots, eight years between Soweto and the start of the present upheavals. Does this mean that the next state of emergency is but four years away?"

Crisis fuels revolt

Of course, it is not a question of mathematics. The current events are part of a long process of revolt. This has developed, with inevitable setbacks and periods of temporary retreat, during the past twelve years. It has been underlined by the developing crisis of South African capitalism. With its reliance on the super-exploitation of cheap black labour South African

capitalism is unable to expand the domestic market. This partially explains why, despite super profits, the South African capitalists are re-investing a smaller and smaller share of the surplus back into new technique in industry. In the last 13 years they have been unable to achieve the annual growth in productivity achieved even by the diseased economy of British capitalism. The backward nature of South African industry, relative to the major capitalist powers, increasingly limits its ability to compete on the world market. In the last eight years gold's share of South African exports has risen from less than one third to well over half. South African capitalism is in the throes of a terminal decline.

Influx control

According to the Governor of the Reserve Bank, South Africa, with a debt of over \$20 billion, is technically bankrupt. Unemployment has risen by 68% over the past year. The manufacturing centre of Port Elizabeth is now referred to as "the ghost on the coast". In his Natal speech Botha touchingly appealed to the private sector to "stand up and be counted" in this crisis. But Fords, General Motors, and Volkswagon, the major car producers, are operating at half capacity with sales figures for June 52% down on June 1984. It has been these factors that, in the words of the *Sunday Telegraph*, sent 'portfolio investors to the exit doors before the first whiff of gunsmoke.' The underlying crisis of South African capitalism meant that foreign capital was leaving South Africa before the current movement. It was not incidental that profits from Barclays National Bank had collapsed from £38 million in the first half of 1984 to £10 million in this first half year—which prompted Barclays Bank UK to reduce their holdings in South Africa. Of course the mass movement has added to the fears of foreign capitalists for their investments with Frost Sullivan, a New York 'Political Risk Consultancy' dropping South Africa to "a par with some of the higher risk Third World countries".

But while the system becomes more and more intolerable for the African masses the capitalists cannot break their dependence on cheap labour. Instead, like a heroin addict, they have become completely reliant on their last asset—apartheid, the system of super-exploitation. The main strength of the reaction of the 1960's lay in the long economic upswing—although the development of industry in this period healed many of the wounds of the reaction and strengthened the potential power of the working class. Now the developing crisis of capitalism in-

ternationally and in South Africa **undermines the regimes programme of reaction and, for that matter, 'reforms'.**

This is revealed in the controversy over the proposed 'improvement' of influx control. Botha's reference to influx control as being 'outdated and too costly' was heralded as a keynote in his speech to the Natal National Party Congress. The *Sunday Times* has referred to such proposals as the abolition of influx control as representing an 'extraordinary change'. But, as explained earlier, influx control has begun to be eroded despite the measures of the state. This has prompted some sections of the capitalist class such as Gavin Relly of the mining monopoly, Anglo-American, to urge abolition—to satisfy 'international opinion' and, more practically, to transfer some of the 24% unemployment of the 'Homelands' to the urban areas which could be used as a lever to weaken Trade Union organisation and drive down wages.

However, without the infrastructure and social reforms that would be needed in the urban areas to accommodate the families of black workers, the terrible social conditions of the 'homelands'—with for example infant mortality at 240 per thousand live births—would also be transferred to the cities, bringing new explosive conditions into the heart of 'white' South Africa. Botha's announcement of a R 1 billion programme of spending at the Natal NP Congress is a drop in the ocean—but with a debt of R50 billion as much as the regime could concede.

This gives a further insight into the impasse facing the regime. The business organisation, the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, opposes the abolition of influx controls "under the present depressing economic conditions." Nonetheless they criticised Botha's Natal speech as not being 'more specific in pointing the nation more positively in the direction of reforms'. On the other hand even limited increases in spending on social reforms for black people increases the reaction of the white workers and middle classes who are also being squeezed by the economic crisis. All this over an issue which would not introduce genuine freedom of movement of black people in South Africa and which would not satisfy the demands and aspirations of the African masses!

Precisely for these reasons the South African bourgeoisie are vacillating ever more desperately between 'reforms' and repression, or combining both, in an attempt to contain the mass movement of the black workers and youth.

The other so-called 'highlight' of the Natal National Party Congress was the partial endorsement of the proposal by Chief Buthelezi for a joint administra-

tion of 'white' Natal and Kwazulu, the 'homeland' of South Africa's five million Zulus.

But this 'reform' would in no way weaken the ruling classes' domination of central state power. And any support that Buthelezi has—and it is precisely his ability to keep the movement in check that makes him useful for the capitalists—would be rapidly lost if he accepted a place in the system through, for example a seat in the President's Council. That would be the fate ultimately of any black leader who abandoned the demand of 'one person, one vote in a unitary state', or who lent any semblance of support to the system. *The Observer*, 28 July 1985, for example, reported on the 'distinct coolness' which greeted Bishop Tutu's denunciation of the campaign against the collaborators and stooges of the regime: "His words are lost on the wind". Indeed in an unconscious admission of the impasse facing the regime—and therefore the impotence of his own ideas for a 'negotiated agreement'—Tutu lamented that "If Botha is unable to talk to some one like



Chief Buthelezi.

myself it seems unlikely he would be able to talk to someone more radical."

There is the essence of the 'problem' for the capitalists. So long as the black masses are excluded from shaping the central government through their vote they will blame their lack of the franchise for the miserable conditions they face. Universal adult suffrage in an undivided South Africa with a common citizenship is the non-negotiable demand of the masses. But precisely because the capitalists realise that the democratic transformation of South Africa would threaten the very existence not just of the cheap labour system but of the whole regime, they implacably oppose majority rule. And because anything short of majority rule will not meet the aspirations of the African masses but on the contrary, in the current situation, would inflame the mood in the townships, Botha, after days of vacillation and indecision in-

AS WE go to press the SA NUM strike has been suspended. The miners do not regard the suspension as a defeat. The strike threat had split the Chamber of Mines and forced huge concessions out of Anglo-American where the NUM is most organised. It was at the recalcitrant companies like Gencor and Anglovaal that intimidation, arrests and gun-toting police with teargas and rubber bullets were used against the union. Now the union will be fighting to fully organise the miners in every company. But the economic crisis and apartheid's political weakness could still push the regime and the ruling class to new depths of repression against the NUM.



cluding rumours of splits and resignations within the government, drew back from announcing any reforms in his Natal speech.

But it would be mistaken to believe that the outline of fundamental splits that are beginning to surface amongst the capitalists have, at this stage, fatally debilitated the forces of their state in the face of this impasse. The social base for the regime and for capitalism, the white workers and middle classes, have not been directly affected by the current mass movement. In the short term an escalation of repression may restrain the movement. On the other hand were the Chamber of Mines to provoke an all-out confrontation with the South African NUM, this **would** involve the white workers and middle classes through the large-scale mobilisation of army reservists, thus straining the social reserves of the regime.

An all-out conflict with the SANUM would be the most important industrial battle in the history of the regime. It would undoubtedly provoke new reserves of black workers and youth into struggle against the regime. But while the armed forces would be stretched as never before, the bloody conflict would reveal not only the potential strength of the South African working class but also the formidable power still vested in the apartheid regime. If the strike were to result in a defeat for the NUM it could act as a brake on the entire mass movement for a period. Nevertheless, in the present context, the setback would not be decisive or necessarily long-lasting. At the time of writing, with the government apparent-

ly distancing itself from the Chamber of Mines, it is not clear whether concessions may be made to the SA NUM, which itself would raise the tempo of the mass movement, or an all-out confrontation provoked.

But the miners strike decision has a significance wider than its immediate impact on the current movement. With 38% of the 542,000 miners, migrant workers from Lesotho, Mozambique, Botswana and other countries, Botha's threat to expell 'foreign' workers thrust the SA NUM into the 'political arena'. The *Guardian*, 6th August 1985 reported that the NUM had 'been subject to intense grassroots pressure to take a clear stand on political issues'. The SANUM congress took an historic decision in deciding to organise a national all-out strike should Botha repatriate migrant workers, and to support the UDF initiated boycott of white businesses.

Workers' decisive role

This drawing together of the unions with the movement in the townships is a significant development in the struggle in South Africa, building on the 800,000 strong Transvaal general strike of November 1984. Other indications of this important process have been the recent 'stayaway' in protest against the Emergency by thousands of black workers from the townships of Mamelodi and Soshanguwe, co-ordinated with the boycott of white owned shops in nearby Pretoria and a school boycott in the townships, and the general strike in Howick and Pietermaritzburg area organised by the BTR

workers to defeat the use of scab labour. Earlier in July 3500 Volkswagen workers struck against plans by the company to offer free transport for the now abandoned New Zealand rugby tour of South Africa, the workers striking in opposition to "international links which do not further the interests of the oppressed in South Africa".

These events completely vindicate the perspectives of the Marxists concerning the decisive role of the black working class: their trade unions must inevitably become instruments not just of 'economic' struggle but of struggle for liberation. They point the way forward to the development of a mass movement uniting the youth of the townships with the organised workers on an even higher level of struggle than the current movement.

The mass of the black population, because of historical traditions, is striving to unite its forces under the banner of the ANC. To make the revolutionary movement effective it will be necessary for the organised working class to give leadership to the whole movement by building the ANC on a clear socialist programme. The ANC with this class basis and with clear policies for socialism and workers democracy, could begin to open up the class divisions amongst whites, splitting or neutralising the social base of the regime. This would bring forward the hour of the revolutionary overthrow of the regime and the social transformation of South Africa which would become a fortress in the struggle for socialism throughout the world.

1 September 1985

The following statement has been received by the *MIR*. We reprint the statement here for the information of our readers.

Four ANC Marxists expelled— SA 'Communist' Party strikes factional blow

WITH THE flames of revolt sweeping through the townships and industrial areas of South Africa, all the forces of the liberation struggle should be concentrating their united efforts against the murderous apartheid regime and the capitalist exploiters. Yet the South African 'Communist' Party, which dominates the apparatus of the African National Congress in exile, has chosen this moment to turn its fire against Marxists in the ranks of the ANC itself.

(The SA 'Communist' Party, though claiming to be Marxist, stands for Stalinism—ie for bureaucratic dictatorship over society on the lines of the Soviet Union today—and opposes the Marxist idea that workers' democracy is necessary for socialism.)

Four comrades, who were suspended by the ANC in London in 1979 for putting forward their ideas on policy, strategy and tactics in SACTU and the ANC, have now been expelled. What have the Marxists argued for over the years? •

—That the working class movement in South Africa should be prepared politically and armed for insurrection against the racist, capitalist regime;

—That wholehearted support should be given to the growing independent trade union movement;

—That national liberation and democracy, together with the basic material needs of the working people, can only be achieved through the victory of the working class and the socialist transformation of South Africa.

Marxism proved by events

Precisely as the correctness of these ideas is being proved in the arena of living struggle—when the leadership can no longer avoid shifting, albeit partially and in words, closer to these positions—those comrades who have most consistently put them forward within the ranks of the ANC have been expelled. This was done without debate, and without the comrades being given a hearing—in blatant violation of the ANC constitution itself.

The expulsions have been carried out, not in the interests of the ANC, not as a serious step by ANC activists to protect the movement, but on the contrary in the narrow factional interests of the Stalinists.



The youth have shown tremendous reserves of courage and heroism. They will show the same energy in building a mass ANC within SA with a socialist programme.

The decision was made by the ANC's recent 'Consultative Conference' in Zambia (the first since 1969), where the vast majority of participants, being exiles dependent upon the official apparatus for their very existence, were effectively screened and controlled by the 'Communist' Party leadership. The Marxists were not allowed a voice in this conference.

The decision was announced on 23 July, in Britain, in the pages of the pro-Moscow *Morning Star*—days after Botha had announced the State of Emergency in South Africa. The British CP is disintegrating in the throes of a major split between Stalinism and liberal Reformism. This paper is the voice of the Stalinist faction, which openly supports the privileged bureaucratic dictatorship in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe against the masses' demands for a workers' democracy.

Writing on behalf of the ANC, comrade Francis Meli (a well-known SACP leader whose very name is constructed from the initials of the 'Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute' of Stalinist ideology in Moscow) describes the Consultative Conference.

'It is impossible,' he writes, 'to exhaust in a few paragraphs what was discussed in some days. But I need to mention a resolution which I think is important for the labour movement in this country. This is the text of the resolution:

'The Second National Consultative Conference of the ANC, held in Zambia June 16 to 23 1985, considered the decision of the Regional Political Committee in London to suspend the following:

1. Rob Petersen
2. Paula Ensor
3. Martin Legassick
4. David Hemson

'It found that, after having been suspended in 1979 by the London region of the ANC for their disruptive activities in SACTU, the group organised itself outside the ANC under the title, 'The Marxist Tendency within the ANC', and produced *Inqaba ya Basebenzi*, a journal claimed to be produced by a 'Marxist wing' of the ANC.

SACTU

'This group contacted trade unions and solidarity organisations in several countries using a mailing list stolen from SACTU...

'In violation of SACTU's policy, they have encouraged and maintained bilateral contacts with trade unions inside the country...

'Recently, some of them were arrested and expelled from Zimbabwe for activities contrary to the interests and independence of that country.

'Conference considers that the decision of the RPC in London to suspend this faction was correctly taken. It fur-

ther resolves to expel the above-mentioned from the ANC".

It must be stated first and foremost that the organisational charges against the expelled comrades are groundless. Far from "disrupting SACTU", we played an active role, from 1976 to 1979, in reviving SACTU and re-establishing its paper *Workers' Unity*, which under CP control had become defunct. We played an active and constructive part also in units of the ANC. What the Stalinists regard as "disruptive activities", in fact, is any democratic questioning of their policies and methods.

Far from organising "outside" the ANC, we continued the discussion of Marxist ideas only through the official channels controlled by the Stalinists themselves—until they stamped out discussion, using administrative measures, including the closing down of an entire committee, when they could not reply to our political arguments.

After we were unconstitutionally suspended, we maintained a clear and public position of loyalty to the ANC and commitment to the task of building the ANC on a mass basis of black workers and youth within South Africa. At the same time we had, of course, the revolutionary duty to continue to put forward our ideas within the movement and contribute as best we could to the clarification of programme, strategy and tasks.

In this context we certainly contacted trade unions and solidarity organisations in several countries, with which we maintain many fraternal links in a common cause. The claim, however, that we used "a mailing list stolen from SACTU" is a blatant lie which the leadership know to be a lie. The SACTU mailing list, created by our own efforts on metal addressograph plates, remained intact in the SACTU office when we were ejected. The addresses of "trade unions and solidarity organisations in several countries" are well known, not least to ourselves, and are a matter of public record. It requires no "stolen mailing list" to discover them.

This charge of a "stolen mailing list" is a classic example of Stalinist smear tactics, unscrupulously used to cloud the issues when they can offer no political answer to their opponents' case.

If the organisational charges against us are groundless, the political charges merely bring to light the bankruptcy of the Stalinists' ideas.

They persist in maintaining outright opposition to direct links between the labour movement abroad and trade unions inside South Africa. It is scandalous that this position is endorsed without a murmur by the ANC Con-



One success of the campaign for direct links between the unions abroad and the trade unions inside South Africa has been the recognition of the SA NUM by the British NUM.

sultative Conference as official "SACTU policy".

For our part, we are proud to plead "guilty" to "encouraging and maintaining bilateral contacts with trade unions inside the country". We are proud to be guilty of promoting direct support for the independent non-racial and black trade unions in SA and to have helped mount campaigns in support of strikes and boycotts called by these unions.

Our achievements in this regard have been all too modest—but among them has been the successful campaign (against the combined obstruction of the British and South African 'Communists') to secure recognition of the SA NUM by the British NUM.

Inqaba Ya Basebenzi

We deny that we are "organised... outside the ANC under the title 'The Marxist Tendency within the ANC.'" However, individually, we support the ideas put forward in *Inqaba ya Basebenzi*, the journal of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC.

A "tendency" is a current of opinion. There are many currents of opinion within the ANC—both in exile and in the broad mass movement which gathers under the ANC colours in the heat of the revolutionary struggle in South Africa.

There are, for example, tendencies which support compromise with the SA ruling class; which are prepared to accept less than "one person one vote" in an undivided South Africa; which are willing to water down the Freedom Charter and abandon the nationalisation clause; which are willing to negotiate even the maintenance of influx control. In the main, these represent the confusion and vacillation of

middle-class elements afraid of losing control to a working-class revolutionary movement.

On the other hand, there is the "tendency" of the great majority of the working class rank-and-file ANC members and supporters, some of whom are guerillas in the camps of the ANC outside South Africa, but most of whom are fighting in the mass battalions of the movement in the factories, mines, townships and schools inside South Africa.

Overwhelmingly these comrades are striving to bring about a thoroughgoing revolutionary transformation of South Africa, often at the cost of their own lives. They know that nothing less than the overthrow of the regime by the mass movement can bring genuine liberation. They know that for this purpose the movement must be powerfully organised, united, armed with clear policies, strategy and leadership, and ultimately equipped with the weapons necessary for a victorious insurrection. They demand to be free both of racist oppression and capitalist exploitation. They want a democratic and socialist South Africa.

Comrades of the Marxist tendency stand four-square together with the mass of ANC members and supporters in fighting for these goals. Fundamentally, Marxists explain that only through the conquest of power by the working class and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie can national liberation and democracy be achieved in South Africa, and the way opened to a socialist transformation. It is not through guerilla actions, but through the organisation and arming of the mass movement that this can be achieved. *Inqaba ya Basebenzi* sets out the policies, the perspectives, strategy and tactics which, from the standpoint of Marxist theory and the

international experience of the working class movement, offers a way forward to victory.

What, then, of the SA 'Communist' Party? The SACP is more than a "tendency", more than an organised faction in the ANC. It is a rigidly controlled bureaucratic apparatus, which leans for support upon workers in the ANC, but relies fundamentally on political and material aid from the ruling bureaucracy of the Soviet Union.

It proclaims "socialism" (Moscow-style) as its 'eventual' goal. In this way, and by the use of guerilla actions, it maintains its revolutionary credentials and holds on to its working-class supporters. But at the same time, within the ANC, it joins forces with and indeed props up the middle-class tendencies reinforcing their utopian idea that "democracy" can be achieved without a workers' revolution, by putting pressure for negotiations upon the ruling class.

Under the cover of the false "two-stage" theory—democracy "first", workers' rule and socialism only "later"—the CP leadership take their stand against the independent assertion of power by the black working class. In this they represent the policy of the Moscow bureaucracy, which fears the threat to its own dictatorial and privileged rule if revolutions in important industrial countries should bring to power regimes of genuine workers' democracy and socialism.

The clause in the expulsion resolution which refers to Zimbabwe makes the reactionary position of the Stalinists absolutely plain. Precisely what activities of any of the expelled comrades were "contrary to the interests and independence of that country"?

Zimbabwe

One of the four comrades (David Hemson) was arrested and deported from Zimbabwe for carrying on work of socialist education among black trade unionists and ZANU(PF) members. Using powers inherited from Smith, the white-led Zimbabwean CIO arrested him together with a number of leading black trade unionists and local militants of the ruling party with proven records of struggle.

What was their "crime"? They openly defended trade union rights in Zimbabwe against a new Labour Relations law which subjects the unions to total government control and wipes out their independence. They campaigned against corruption among trade union officials. They criticised the compromise of the Mugabe government with the capitalist class. They steadfastly maintained that only the socialist transformation of Zimbabwe

Inqaba ya Basebenzi

Journal of the Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC

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could guarantee the independence of Zimbabwe from IMF and SA imperialist pressures, and unite the workers and peasants across the tribal divide. While critically supporting ZANU(PF) against its bourgeois enemies, they posed this task before the workers' movement and the youth in Zimbabwe, urging the closest links of mutual support with the revolutionary working class movement in South Africa.

Yet the ANC leadership, under Stalinist influence, describe this as "contrary to the interests and independence" of Zimbabwe—and that is endorsed by the Consultative Conference without a peep of protest!

Comrades of the ANC leadership, are you now openly defending the policy of the Mugabe regime in consolidating capitalism, defending the white farmers' land, bulldozing urban squatters, taxing workers and promising not to nationalise the property of the South African companies and other imperialists who exploit Zimbabwe? To find favour with Mugabe, are you now prepared to support the imprisonment and torture of genuine trade unionists and socialists?

Have the comrades forgotten even their fellow-combatants from the 1968 Wankie campaign now serving indefinite detention without trial in Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison? We have always opposed the terrorist methods of the ex-ZIPRA 'dissidents' in Matabeleland, but have opposed no less the counter-terror of the Harare regime. Are you prepared to justify the national oppression of the Ndebele minority who suffer massacres, torture and detention? That is the consequence of bowing down uncritically to the present regime in Zimbabwe, and of failing to stand up for workers' unity, workers' power and socialism which are the only way forward in Southern Africa.

On the vital questions of the South African revolution, as well as on the international issues, the Stalinists represent an obstacle to liberation—within the ANC. Marxists in the ANC are duty-bound to oppose their ideas and their influence, and struggle for the building of the ANC on the basis of correct ideas. Neither we, nor any



class-conscious worker aware of the facts, could agree to submit and abandon our revolutionary ideas merely because the SACP presently holds effective control of the ANC apparatus in exile and is thus capable of "expelling" us.

In fact, these expulsions—six years after we were suspended and our ideas declared dead and buried by the leadership!—merely confirm the growing strength of Marxism within the movement. The expulsions are intended as a warning by the bureaucracy to the rank-and-file. That is why they have been carried out precisely at this time of enormous revolutionary ferment within South Africa.

Build ANC with socialist programme

Together with the many other comrades in the ranks of the ANC, the UDF, the trade unions and the youth movement in South Africa who support the ideas of *Inqaba ya Basebenzi*, we will not be deterred by these expulsions any more than we were by the suspensions in 1979. No administrative measure taken by the Stalinists in their own narrow factional interests can separate us from the movement. No amount of expulsions will halt the spread of Marxist ideas.

We remain determined to build the ANC as an effective vehicle for the unity of the revolutionary movement and the conquest of power by the working class. We are confident that we will be reinstated with honour to full formal membership of the ANC once substantial numbers of workers and youth become conscious of the issues and the facts, and take into their own hands the task of building and transforming the ANC.

FOR A MASS ANC WITH A SOCIALIST PROGRAMME! FORWARD TO WORKERS' POWER, DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM! Statement issued in London, 31 July, 1985, by expelled comrades.

In June 1982 Israeli tanks smashed into Lebanon to destroy PLO bases there and thereby intimidate the growing movement of the powerful West Bank Arab workers. It was a disastrous move. Three years later, with the Palestinians' national aspirations undimmed, crisis grips Israeli society . . .

Invasion of the Lebanon—Israel's Vietnam?

THE INVASION of the Lebanon by Israel on 6 June 1982 may prove to have been a significant turning point in Middle East developments. The ensuing war provoked the greatest foreign policy crisis for the United States in the whole Presidency of Ronald Reagan. It resulted in the heaviest casualties of US combat troops since Vietnam, it strengthened the general strategic position of Syria in the region and reinforced the 'de facto' partition of Lebanon. But it is probably in Israel that the greatest long term effect will be evident.

The war cost Israel 650 lives and \$1 million a day for three years and has provoked the most profound crisis, socially, economically and politically since the foundation of that state.

The invasion was launched ostensibly to prevent attacks by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation on towns and villages in the North of Israel—hence the name of the operation 'Peace in Galilee.' But in the course of the war Israel created for itself a new enemy more potent than the PLO, in the form of the Shi'ite Moslem militia, Amal.

War aimed to subdue West Bank

Since its army has withdrawn, the Lebanon-Israel border has now been marked by a fifteen foot ditch. The irony has not been lost on some Israelis themselves. "After losing all these young lives, all that money and our good international name", said one bitter resident of Metulla in Upper Galilee, "It is hard to believe we have now been reduced to defending ourselves with a medieval moat". "The war did not bring peace to Galilee", said another, "it has only brought us greater uncertainty".

In fact before the invasion Galilee had been peaceful. Since the summer of 1981 there was an unofficial cease fire between the PLO and Israel, negotiated by a special United States envoy, Phillip Habib. The attempt on the life of the Israeli ambassador in London in early 1982 was used by Jerusalem as a pretext for massive bombing raids on Palestinians in April 1982. The PLO did not respond and gave only a limited response to a second air attack on 9 May. But after a massive Israeli bombing raid in June in which more than 200 were killed, overwhelmingly civilians, the PLO responded with a full-scale barrage of Northern Israel, although even then it

By John Pickard

resulted in only one death, and that by heart failure. But this bombardment, in reality provoked by the bombing raid, was itself used as the pretext for the invasion of Lebanon.

As General Eitan, Israeli Chief of Staff admitted himself, the real motives of the invasion were political, to destroy the PLO base in Lebanon and thus destroy its political influence, in order the better to intimidate the Palestinian population of Gaza and the West Bank and force them to accept Israeli occupation. In March and April of that year there had been massive movements, strikes, demonstrations and protests by Arabs on the West Bank. Because of the mass character of these protest movements, and because of the brutality used by the Israeli occupation force to suppress them, these protests had a profound effect within Israel itself. It was largely to undermine the protests and opposition movements in the occupied areas, particularly the West Bank, that the Israeli government, particularly the Prime Minister Begin and Defence Minister Sharon, launched the invasion of Lebanon.

As long as the Israeli government could maintain the pretence that it was for "Peace in Galilee" the invasion had popular support in Israel. But as soon as it became clear that Begin and Sharon had more grandiose plans, opposition to them began to develop.

Rather than occupy a wide—40km—strip along the Lebanese border as Begin declared his original intentions to be, the Israeli army was driven further and further north. At the height of the invasion an Associated Press despatch from Beirut estimated that the Israeli army used nine armoured divisions with 90,000 troops, 1,300 tanks and an equal number of armoured personnel carriers. With such massive superiority in numbers, armour and air power, Israel quickly captured the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon and drove on north to Beirut.

The opposition to the war began to grow both in Israel and internationally as the civilian casualties mounted and as television sets around the world showed an Israeli blitzkrieg on Lebanese cities. Despite denials to the contrary, there was ample evidence of the use of anti-personnel bombs—commonly known as cluster bombs—and the use of phosphorous bombs

against civilian areas. Opposition began to develop, including, in a development without precedent in wartime, within the armed forces themselves.

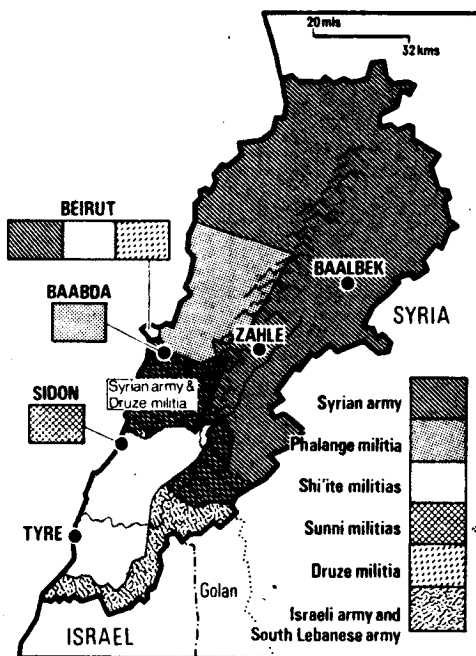
One soldier described how he organised a group against the war amongst Israeli reservists called up to fight, which was known as "There is a limit". "This group was organised very quickly in the first week of the war. We were surprised to find that instead of getting, like 10, 15, 20 people, the group suddenly managed to get several hundred very quickly."

Another reserve soldier, who served as a captain in the paratroopers, described how his opposition to the war began. "It started in Tyre. We prepared ourselves to fight, to conquer this Tyre, and suddenly we see ourselves surrounded with people, with citizens, with women and children, begging for water, and everything was changed—we were going to attack and suddenly we were attacked by citizens (they were very frightened)—the only thing they wanted was water". In Tyre nearly 500 Lebanese (not counting Palestinians) were killed and several hundred wounded; the toll for Sidon was even greater.

Protests in Army

Thirty-five soldiers of the elite commando unit that had carried out the raid on Entebbe in Uganda, signed a protest letter to Prime Minister Begin: "It is clear to me that I had been deceived and that I have been called to the first war in Israel's history that was not a war of defence but a dangerous gamble to achieve political goals". So wide was the opposition to the blanket bombing of civilians that at one point some Israeli airforce officers refused to take part in missions that involved bombing civilian areas. Colonel Geva, a young and celebrated Israeli war hero, even resigned his commission rather than lead his armoured unit into attack upon the sprawling and populous alleys of West Beirut to where the remnants of the PLO had retreated.

To have occupied West Beirut against the resistance of the PLO would have produced massive casualties all round, not least for the Israeli army. For a whole period therefore, Israel subjected Beirut to a terrifying siege. For nine weeks, Beirut was bombarded from land, sea and air.



It was starved of electricity, water and food. Between June and August an estimated 5,000 were killed and 15,000 injured, once again the vast majority being non-combatants. In the face of mounting opposition back home, and pressure from American imperialism, the Israeli government agreed to a ceasefire to allow 9,000 militia men of the PLO to be evacuated, escorted from Beirut by American, French and Italian troops and at sea by the United States fleet and units from several NATO countries.

Israel then imposed its own man in the Presidency in Beirut, Bashir Gemayel, the leader of the extreme right-wing Christian Maronite Phalangist militia. After the withdrawal of the multi-national (US, French and Italian) force from Beirut and the assassination of Gemayel, Israeli troops occupied West Beirut and it was under their control and orders that Phalangist units were sent into the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Chatilla to "clean them out."

The subsequent massacre of 3,000 camp residents, including women and children of all ages, evoked horror and revulsion around the world. Strikes and protest demonstrations took place in almost every Arab country. In Israel itself hundreds of thousands demonstrated in Tel Aviv, reaching a maximum when demands were made for an inquiry, of 400,000 demonstrators. The subsequent Israeli government commission of inquiry which was forced on them by the weight of the protests, condemned the Israeli army officers and government ministers for sending into the camps an organisation known to have been in-

volved in the massacre of Palestinians in the past and whose political leader had been assassinated only two days earlier. The Sabra and Chatilla slaughter was for Israel a turning point in the war.

International and domestic support reached an all-time low, with the government coming under enormous pressure because of the political and economic costs of the war and because of the mounting Israeli casualties.

Within the army itself there were increasing demands for a withdrawal. Anti-war leaflets and newspapers circulated freely among Israeli troops, who when on leave in Israel actively participated in anti-war demonstrations.

Lebanon shattered

From then on, the Israeli government has been forced into a series of withdrawals, leaving eventually only a strip of the Lebanese border controlled by Israeli-backed Christian units. The attempt to impose a Lebanese government amenable to Israeli interests was broken by the assassination of Bashir Gemayel and by the growth in power of the two main Lebanese muslim militias, Amal (the Shi'ite militia) and the Progressive Socialist Party (Druze militia). These two together effectively destroyed the Phalangist militias in the south as Israel withdrew. The Amal effectively forced the evacuation of the multi-national 'peace-keeping' force which had returned after the Sabra and Chatilla massacres.

Suicide bombers killed 269 at the United States embassy and at the United States Marine HQ, and 60

French soldiers at their HQ. The constant harrassment of the Israeli army in the South forced the Israeli government into an accelerated withdrawal rather than face a bloody guerrilla war to maintain the occupation.

What was once Beirut is now a wreckage; what was Lebanon is now a series of petty statelets each run by a separate army or militia. The once powerful Christian Maronite community is reduced to a small enclave to the east and north of Beirut, around the port of Jounieh. The Druze militia dominate the area immediately south and south east of Beirut, from the Chouf mountains to the sea. Amal, now the most powerful paramilitary force, controls West Beirut and almost the whole of Southern Lebanon. The North and East of the country remain occupied by Syria, but now with its strategic position greatly enhanced. It was by Syrian sponsorship and arming of both the Druze and Amal militias, that allowed these forces to harrass the Phalangists and Israeli armies so effectively. So great is Syrian influence now, that Damascus may be able to enforce at least a temporary ceasefire between the Muslim militias and the Phalangist Christians, even isolating the Maronite President Amin Gemayel, the brother of the late Bashir.

The President has virtually no real power outside his presidential palace. He has so little in fact, that during the Beirut hijack and hostage crisis a few months ago, it seemed that everyone was involved in negotiations—the Minister of Justice the Amal leader Nabih Berri, the Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, the Syrian government, and various other go betweens—but no one

bothered to consult the President of Lebanon in his palace in Beirut.

The military base of the PLO in Lebanon has been decisively broken by the war, not only by the Israeli induced evacuation of September 1982, but also by the hostility of the Syrian government and the Amal to the Palestinians. In the Beka valley controlled by Syria, those PLO units remaining mutinied against the leadership of Yasser Arafat. Syria encouraged and supported the mutinies because the Assad regime in Damascus, often at odds with Arafat, sought to establish a leadership prepared to pursue Syrian interests.

Syria wanted a Palestinian movement radical sounding enough to oppose any diplomatic initiatives by Arafat, but well enough under Syrian military control for Syria to prevent any Palestinian guerrilla raids into Israel which might get out of hand and embroil Syria in large-scale clashes with Israel.

The PLO split

But the Amal militia also has fought against the re-emergence of Palestinian military strength. When the invasion first began in 1982, some Shi'ite peasants in southern Lebanon were so alienated from the Palestinian militias—who they looked upon almost as an army of occupation—that many welcomed the arrival of the Israeli troops. Indeed, many Shi'ites consider the whole bloody affair as a product of Palestinian provocations rather than an internal Lebanese affair, and they were not overly impressed with the PLO's placement of anti-aircraft guns and artillery in heavily-occupied residential areas of Beirut, inviting the murderous Israeli air raids of June, July and August 1982.

Since the withdrawal of the Israeli army and the strengthening of the Amal, therefore, the latter are determined not to allow PLO units to re-establish themselves in the Palestinian camps, even being prepared to go to the lengths themselves, of storming and occupying the camps.

Yasser Arafat probably still retains a wide degree of political support from the Palestinian communities, in the camps in and around Beirut, in the West Bank and Gaza occupied by Israel, and among the large exiled Palestinian communities elsewhere. The Amal assault on the camps had the affect at least temporarily, of unifying the remnants of the PLO militias behind him. But in the long run it is likely that Arafat's influence in Lebanon is on the decline. As an independent military force, the PLO has been broken in Lebanon.

The Marxists in the labour move-

ment in Britain have always been opposed to the methods and policies of the leadership of the PLO. While supporting fully the aspirations of the Palestinian people for their national and social emancipation, socialists have explained that any policy based upon individual terrorism or guerrilla struggles were always doomed to failure. Mobilised as a mass force, the Palestinian population in Lebanon, on the West Bank and Gaza, could have been and could still be an enormous political lever. In the past, mass demonstrations, general strikes and popular mass movements on the West Bank have rocked the Israeli establishment. In April and May 1982, protests left 30 dead, 300 injured and 4,000 arrested and convicted. But because of the massive popular character of this movement, it produced a profound effect on Israel itself.

In Lebanon, the 500,000 Palestinians could have been welded to the most oppressed Lebanese, the Shi'ites, as well as poor Sunni Muslims and Christians, to build a mass movement to overthrow Lebanese capitalism.

But a perspective for a mass movement among Palestinians would have demanded a *programme and policy of class struggle, directed against capitalism and zionism in Israel and, no less, against capitalism and landlordism in the Arab states*. But this policy was one the PLO leadership never had.

From the beginning the PLO has always based itself on an armed minority—on individual terrorism, or militia men—rather than a mass movement of Palestinians.

Moreover there was not one iota of class content in all the radical sounding words of Arafat. The Palestinian struggle was always and everywhere a national issue, without class content.

In reality the reactionary Arab regimes in Jordan, the Gulf, Egypt and elsewhere are no less a barrier to the emancipation of the Palestinian working masses than is Zionism. A genuine revolutionary movement of the Palestinian masses always carries with it the threat of socialist revolution in the Arab countries, and therefore the Arab leaders have always supported the 'Palestinian cause'—but only to the extent that the movement avoided genuine revolutionary struggle. Therefore the *quid pro quo* for the financial and diplomatic patronage of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the other Arab states, was a PLO leadership that kept well clear of any revolutionary strategy that would upset the Arab apple cart.

The PLO leadership took the movement into one disaster after another. During the revolutionary crisis in Jordan in 1970, by not being prepared to

lead a revolutionary struggle to overthrow the weak and rotten regime of King Hussein, Arafat allowed the Jordanian monarch time and space to manoeuvre and prepare. The PLO leadership had sufficient political influence, and even military strength to have overthrown the Jordanian regime, where the majority of the population were in any case Palestinian. But the PLO policy as announced by Al-Fatah leader, Abu Omar (New York Times, 14 June 1970) was as follows: "Our policy is not to interfere in the affairs of Jordan. The only condition is that the government does not interfere in our affairs to organise and arm ourselves". Yasser Arafat himself had earlier said in an interview with a French newspaper that "there is no interference on our part in the internal affairs of the Arab countries". The PLO leadership thus created the illusion that the Jordanian government, in a period of crisis, could tolerate the existence of a state within a state, with impunity. By September 1970, 'Black September,' Hussein's position had recovered sufficiently for him to be able to batter and bombard the Palestinian refugee camps and drive the PLO out of Jordan and into Lebanon.

1975 Civil War

Five years later in Lebanon the PLO leadership made exactly the same mistake, turning their backs on the class struggle on the grounds that the PLO were only "guests" in Lebanon. The Lebanese civil war of 1975–76 began as a social conflict, as a struggle of the most downtrodden against the Lebanese capitalists.

The *Financial Times* correspondent referring to the sectarian character of the conflict, commented (12 September 1975), that "grafted to all this is a growing ideological struggle, spearheaded by the left, to level the power of the rich and produce a socialist solution. This has a powerful appeal among the huge numbers of deprived here who see the rich getting richer".

The *Economist* (26 January 1974) also commented: "The majority of the commercial firms are in Christian hands, but much of the real estate and the expanding industrial projects is held by Sunni Moslems. That wealthy Moslem class would normally tend to side with the conservative Christians were it not for the divisive outside issues. Similarly the poor Christians—and there are many—might side with the Shi'ite Moslems in Southern Lebanon and the Beka who make up the majority of the poorest sections of the population, were it not for the traditional Christian fear of Moslem

domination".

One Maronite liberal commented: "The struggle is between the underprivileged of both religions on the one hand, and the Christian and Moslem bourgeoisie on the other, who are flaunting their wealth. The Phalange is a fascist party which is helping to hem Christians in the ghetto and split them off from the Moslems with whom they have perforce to live".

The Palestine Liberation Organisation with a Marxist leadership, with a military apparatus, could have linked up the national struggle of the Palestinian masses with the class struggle of the Lebanese workers and peasants. The overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' state based upon workers' democracy and internationalism would have had a huge effect on Israel, Syria and Jordan. The whole region would have been transformed.

But the PLO leadership stood aloof from the developing revolution. Abdel Jawad Saleh, then a member of the executive, later said: "We did everything possible to steer clear of the Lebanese civil war. Many times Yasser Arafat tried to reach an understanding with Bashir Gemayel (the then Phalangist leader) even if it meant becoming alienated from the Lebanese Left". It was only because of the attacks by Phalangists, forcing the Palestinians to defend their areas, that the PLO, willy-nilly, became involved.

But what began as a revolutionary class conflict became more overlaid with sectarianism: a struggle between the Maronite Christians against Moslems, Druze and Palestinians. There was no labour movement alternative provided that would cut across the sectarianism with class policies.

The civil war continued until the Syrian army intervened on the side of the beleaguered Maronites, to impose its own enforced peace. Although occupying the north and east of the country, the Syrian presence has not stopped sectarian conflict re-igniting from time to time in other areas, and given the sectarian character of these conflicts, it was inevitable that a new bout of sectarian conflict would splinter Lebanon into separate statelets, each based on its own militia.

Lebanon today, at least in the south where the recent fighting took place after the Israeli invasion, is devastated. Beirut, once one of the most modern capitals in the Arab world, lies in ruins. Hardly a street exists without the pockmarks of bullets on the walls. During their aerial bombardments in 1982, the Israelis thought nothing of demolishing whole tower blocks, usually crushing hundreds of inhabitants sheltering in the basements.

In the first three months of the invasion, nearly 18,000 were killed and over 30,000 wounded, the vast majority civilians. Between 500,000 and 800,000 were made homeless. Sectarian fighting since then has produced even greater population shifts as thousands of Maronites, Druze or Shi'ite families have been forced to take refuge in safer areas, closer to their co-religionists.

For the Palestinian masses the war has been no less disastrous. Many were made refugees for the third or fourth time in a generation. Large areas of the refugee camps at Sabra, Chatilla and Bourj Barajueh were devastated in the 1982 fighting, further destroyed by the Israeli occupation, and then again in June 1985 when the Amal militia stormed the camps.

An independent West Bank?

The June fighting alone left over 650 dead and 2,500 injured, to add to the terrible toll of the Israeli invasion. 70 per cent of Sabra and Chatilla are partially or completely destroyed. Reconstruction has been held up because of Syrian and Shi'ite fears of a resurgence of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in any newly constructed camps. Compared to the position before 1982, therefore, Palestinians in Lebanon have an even more uncertain future and their great insecurity is now compounded by a lack of protection.

But the issue of the Palestinians and the struggle of its people is not dead. There still remain the two million or so Palestinians who live in Israel and the areas occupied after 1967, the West Bank and Gaza. One element in the coming economic convulsions in Israel will undoubtedly be increased unrest in the occupied territories. The war in Lebanon will have done nothing to dampen the struggle of these Palestinians for their rights. On the contrary the removal of the militias from Lebanon as an 'alternative' focus will force West Bankers to rely increasingly upon their own mass strength and organisation.

A huge revolutionary potential exists among West Bank Arabs, a threat of an explosion recognised if not by Israeli capitalists, then certainly by US imperialism and Israel's neighbour, King Hussein. The last thing the King of Jordan wants is a repeat of the revolutionary crisis of 1970. West Bank Arabs have close cultural and family ties to East Bankers and any revolutionary upheavals in Israeli occupied areas, such as the general strike and demonstrations of Spring 1982, inevitably have repercussions in Jordan

where a majority of the population are Palestinians.

The United States' moves to recognise the PLO or to sponsor PLO/Hussein negotiations with Israel—even if the PLO representatives are unofficial—ie. designated merely as "Palestinians" are dictated merely by their mutual fear of mass upheavals.

Even if it were possible for the USA to persuade Israel into giving up control of the West Bank, it would only be to impose military rule from Amman rather than from Jerusalem. For the same reason that Israel, the United States, Jordan and all the Arab states are afraid of social upheaval on the West Bank, they are also bitterly opposed—whatever their public rhetoric—to a genuinely independent Palestinian state in West Bank and Gaza. Tri-partite talks between Israel, the USA and a Jordanian/Palestinian delegation are a trap for the Palestinian masses and will not bring them an inch nearer to their national aspirations or their democratic rights. Palestinians will continue to fight for their rights on their own behalf, but the fortunes of the population of the West Bank and Gaza now are more and more indissolubly linked with those of workers in Israel, both Arabic and Jewish.

The Lebanese war has brought about a profound crisis in Israel. The state was an artificial creation from its very beginning, in the sense that it could only have survived initially and then developed because of the support, particularly financial support in the form of war reparations, grants and loans, from the imperialist powers.

But even with massive financial support, the Israeli economy is in crisis. The Israeli capitalist class have followed a policy of imperialist expansion, occupying the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, then the Golan Heights and Sinai in 1973 and, effectively, occupying parts of Southern Lebanon today. Scores of Jewish settlements have been built on the West Bank and Gaza, so far only housing between 30,000 and 40,000 settlers, but having confiscated the best half of the agricultural land formerly used by the much more populous Arabs.

The Arab economy and infrastructure in the occupied areas and in pre-1967 Israel have been strangled and the democratic rights of the population crushed by military rule—while lavish sums are invested in the Jewish settlements. Each settlement has become a focus of bitter opposition by the Arabs and a source of instability in the region. Two million Arabs in Israel and the occupied areas cannot be legislated out of existence and as long as the Israeli Zionist state denies

their rights they will move into struggle again and again.

Five major wars—in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982—are witness to the enormous instability created by the policy of Zionism. The insecurity of the state and the occupation of Arab areas has led to Israel almost taking on the form of a permanently armed camp with compulsory military service for all youth, massive mobilisations in time of war (proportionally greater than the Arab states) and a huge arms bill that now drags on the economy like a millstone.

The government budget deficit represents about 16 per cent of the Gross National Product. It has largely been financed by the printing press so inflation has been in three figures for the last six years and now stands at 260 per cent. The total foreign debt of Israel is about \$25 billion, the largest per capita debt of any country in the world, and co-incidentally, roughly equivalent to the amount invested in West Bank settlements.

Crisis in Israeli society

The burden of the economic crisis will increasingly be put onto the shoulders of Israeli workers. Despite vigorous protests by the Histadruth trade union federation, including a general strike in July of this year, the government will continue to press for large scale redundancies in the Civil Service (10,000 is the present proposal), cuts in index wage rises and cuts in subsidies on basic necessities.

The future for young Israelis therefore, is a bleak one indeed. The theory of Zionism was based upon the establishment of a homeland for Jews, a safe haven from worldwide harassment, pogroms and oppression. But Israel is turning out to be anything but a safe haven.

Zionism offers young Israelis little more than wars, economic sacrifices and upheavals. All the noble ideals which the official spokesmen claimed for Zionism have been blown away by the huge civilian casualties, the atrocities and devastation committed by Israelis in the Lebanese war, adding further to the social and psychological crisis in Israel, especially among the youth.

Israeli tradition is steeped in the history of the Holocaust, one of the most profound and horrifying traumas to effect any people. There is as a result a strong current of anti-fascism in large sections of the Israeli working class. Yet ironically, today, the most extreme forms of Zionism assume semi-fascist methods. Rabbi Kahane, leader of the Kach Party, has called for the expulsion of the two million Arabs from all of the area currently occupied



A massive Israeli anti-war protest against the Beirut massacres.

by Israel. Many Israeli liberals have been saddened and demoralised by the apparent success and popularity of the extreme racist propaganda of this party, particularly among the youth.

Many Israelis, especially those most able to pay the exorbitant 'exit tax' of \$300, have declared their lack of confidence in the future by leaving Israel. Since the foundation of the state, 400,000 have emigrated. Last year, the country set up as a 'safe homeland' for Jews saw 17,000 more emigrating than immigrating. This year the difference is likely to be 35,000.

Israeli society has always been divided on class lines, but the economic crisis and social instability will ensure that these divisions will grow. Oriental Jews (Sephardim), those whose origins are in Arab or African countries, have traditionally been more disadvantaged than the Ashkenazim Jews of European extraction. The Sephardim have generally the worst paid jobs, the poorest housing and education and are grossly under-represented in political influence.

Because of their own social position, their insecurity, their proximity to the Arabs, also well down on the social ladder, and not least, because their own family roots are often associated with anti-Jewish pogroms in Arab countries, the Sephardim are the main base of support for the right wing Likud. They are the most open to the rabid anti-Arab propaganda of the right wing Zionist parties.

The Labour Alignment was in continuous power for almost 30 years, and in that time the Sephardim, who had supported Labour, saw no change in their position in relation to Western Jews. As a result in 1977 they swung away from Labour to the Likud coalition led by Begin.

The even greater economic insecurity

of the last few years has made sections of Jewish workers, especially Oriental Jews, more prey to the vicious anti-Arab demagoguery of the right wing parties. After the murder of three Jews on the West Bank recently a wave of anti-Arab sentiment swept over large numbers of Jewish workers. Arabs were beaten by Jewish mobs and Arab workers were sacked from their jobs. An opinion poll indicated increased support for Rabbi Kahane.

So great has the social tension between the extreme right and the left become that many Israeli political commentators gloomily talk about a future Civil War of Jew fighting Jew.

The workers' organisations

During one anti-war demonstration in 1982 a Jewish member of the peace movement was killed by another Jew who threw a hand grenade.

Members of Jewish terrorist organisations, actively involved in bombings, killing and maiming Arabs, have recently been convicted and imprisoned. Right wing ministers in the government refer to them in glowing terms, and call for their release.

All these are indications of the growing crisis that effects all facets of Israeli society. National and sectarian issues play a prominent part in Israeli politics but as the economic 'sacrifices' begin to bite, it is inevitable that class issues will come to the fore, especially among Oriental Jews who will be the hardest hit. The recent strike wave against the government's emergency austerity measures are a pointer to developments in the future. Almost every section of workers was involved in one sort of protest strike or another and at its peak over 1 million were on strike in a country with a population of only 4 million.

Faced with a revolt on the shop floor the leadership of the Histadruth Federation were in danger of losing control. Large sections of workers threatened an indefinite general strike. In this situation the Histadruth were able to persuade the government to withdraw many of the proposed measures, at least temporarily, to head off more strikes. Faced for the first time with a daily struggle to survive and a constant battle for a job and decent living standards the basic economic issues must assume a far greater importance among Israeli workers.

These developments will also have an effect inside all the workers organisations—in the Labour Party (Mapai) the Labour Left (Mapam) and in the Histadruth. More than at any other time since the foundation of the state of Israel, the Jewish workers will be open to new ideas because of their disillusionment with official Zionism.

Under such conditions leftward moving workers in the Mapai, Mapam and in the Histadruth will be open to socialist arguments and ideas that offer a genuine alternative and a future for Jewish workers. Many young Jews have already broken with the more traditional parties, especially since the Lebanese war, and these, in the 'Civil Rights Party' and in the 'Peace Now' movement, will also be amenable to genuine Marxist ideas.

The basis of any programme put forward by Marxists in Israel would be the call for a Socialist Federation of Middle East States, which would include a socialist state of Israel, established within agreed borders, and guaranteeing full democratic rights for all national and religious minorities, including the right of return for the Palestinians displaced in 1948 and 1967. A Socialist Federation would also include a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza, or linked with Jordan, which ever the Palestinian peoples themselves wished.

It is clear that Israeli capitalism, even while heavily subsidised by American imperialism, is increasingly unable to provide the basic necessities of life for its Jewish people. Even less could it provide the means of existence for a population swollen by returning Palestinians.

But a socialist Israel, as part of a federation of socialist states, could harness the necessary resources, technique and manpower in a plan of production. The overthrow of capitalism would mean the state ownership of the majority of industries, commerce, finance and land both in Israel and the Arab states. Whereas at present millions of dollars are wasted on arms production, these enormous resources could be used for

beneficial social and economic development.

The struggle for socialist change would be directed towards a socialist revolution in the Arab countries as much as in Israel. The reactionary Arab regimes have interests diametrically opposed to their own masses, never mind Jews or Palestinians. They are barriers to social progress as much as the Zionist capitalist class in Israel. Indeed the Israeli ruling class and the Arab leaders lean upon each other. The Israeli leaders use the threat of Arab pogroms, and the destruction of the state of Israel, to stampede Israeli workers into supporting the policies and methods of the Israeli state.

Similarly the Arab leaders use the question of the Palestinians and the imperialist policy of Zionism, as a diversion from the revolutionary movement that always threatens them on their own doorstep. Without an implacable revolutionary opposition to the reactionary Arab regimes, it would be impossible to gain any influence among Jewish workers.

Jewish workers open to new ideas

It is absolutely clear that the fortunes of Palestinian and Jewish workers are inextricably linked to one another. They are involved in the same cycle of insecurity, wars, oppression and economic hardship. They live side by side in the same regions, often in the same area or town. They have the same basic aspirations held by all workers—for peace, security and democratic freedoms and reasonable standards of living. Marxists would therefore base themselves on the common interests of all workers and fight for the establishment of an organisation and a programme of common struggle. The day to day economic struggles of Jews and Arabs will tend to draw them together in the trade unions in Israel. Arab workers are involved in the Histadruth and in some sectors, like the building industry, form an absolute majority. Common needs will tend to develop common economic and trade union struggles among these workers and it is upon these foundations that Marxists would seek to build support for socialist unity.

The greater the alternative lead given the more quickly left wing currents will develop in the Histadruth and the workers organisations. The crisis of capitalism, that is the crisis of the private ownership of the means of production, and the crisis of the nation state are conspiring to create the conditions for huge political convulsions in Israel. The most important

element of all, is the subjective factor. The movement to provide a Marxist leadership has yet to be built.

Such a movement would have to be rooted in the daily lives, needs and economic struggles of the workers but it would also be based upon the most implacable opposition to the reactionary nationalist ideas of Zionism and Arab nationalism. In so far as this nationalism represents only the humble aspirations of workers to live their lives in peace and security, with no disadvantage deriving from their culture, language or religion, the Marxists would support and uphold it. But socialism must be inflexibly opposed to the nationalism of the ruling classes who seek to oppress other nations, all the easier to oppress their own working classes. Socialism, therefore, must stand in opposition to the Zionist imperialism of the Israeli capitalist class and the reactionary nationalism of the Arab regimes.

Capitalism and Stalinism are in crisis on a global scale. Upheavals, wars, revolutions and crises in all countries have international repercussions because of the greater interpenetration and interdependence created by the world market in the modern epoch.

In the advanced countries of Capitalism and in the under-developed world, the next two or three decades will be the most unstable in the whole of human history. Political parties, social institutions, and above all attitudes and consciousness will undergo huge changes, sometimes with lightening rapidity. Time after time after time workers will enter the path of struggle with the intent to overcome the contradictions and limitations of the old society by building a new one.

It will be impossible for Israel, Lebanon, or any other Arab or Middle East state to stand aside from these general world processes. International developments and events will reinforce the shake up in consciousness that is already beginning to develop in Israel among Jewish workers. For example the establishment of even one democratic workers state in an advanced country would immediately transform the whole world balance of forces. Basing themselves on workers democracy, on internationalism and on the common struggle of all workers in the Middle East, Marxists can be confident that genuine socialist ideas will find an echo in that part of the world.

The road out of the swamp of wars, bloodshed, pogroms, poverty, ignorance and misery lies in the socialist transformation of the Middle East. There are no half measures or short cuts. It is up to the labour movement, armed with Marxist ideas, to put its indelible stamp on events and launch society in that direction.

Science Report

Compiled by Pete Dickinson

Star Wars

REAGAN'S 'Star Wars' plans mark another twist in the nightmare of the arms race. Initial research costs will be \$26,000 million, with the final bill, if the plans are implemented, reaching anything up to £500,000 million, although, of course, this figure must be speculative. Does the 'Star Wars' plan, or Strategic Defence Initiative as it is formally known, represent a major new threat of nuclear war or is just a fantasy of Reagan which will never get off the ground?

The idea behind 'Star Wars' is to place 150 battle stations in orbit which will have devices on board to detect 'enemy' missiles when they are launched. A beam weapon, probably mounted on the battle station, will then be activated to shoot the missile down. It will have to perform the whole operation automatically and in a few seconds to be effective. The most 'promising' idea for a beam weapon with sufficient energy to shoot down a missile is an X-ray laser, which will harness the power of X-rays from a small, localised nuclear explosion in space.

X-ray lasers

The aim of the project is to provide a nuclear shield which will prevent any Russian missiles landing on America. If this is successful it would obviously fundamentally alter the so-called 'balance of terror' and would give American imperialism a free hand to 'deal' with the Soviet Union, including having the capability of a successful first strike. It would effectively throw out of the window the current arrangement between the US and the Stalinist bureaucrats, of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) in the event of either side starting a nuclear war.

However most serious strategists and technical analysts in the US Administration, in private, regard 'Star Wars' as a fantasy and agree that a 100% nuclear defence is impossible.

None of the technology for the detection of missiles or beam weapons exist at present, even in the most basic conceptual form. Even if it did, the destabilisation of the current balance of terror in the decades it would take to implement the scheme, would create profound dangers for US imperialism which it would not be in their interests to run, especially in view of the economic crises which

loom ahead.

The most likely outcome is that the project will be quietly scaled down and shelved after Reagan has gone. A much modified system may be developed just to protect missile silos which, although representing a new twist in the arms race, would not change the 'strategy' of Mutually Assured Destruction.

Steel stress could produce Sizewell nuclear disaster

THE INQUIRY into the building of the Sizewell B nuclear power station heard evidence about the serious dangers inherent in the project. The main steel pressure vessel at the heart of the system could fail, fracturing the surrounding concrete containment building and leading to radioactive discharge, according to Rodney Fordham, a leading nuclear engineer who resigned from the UK Atomic Energy Authority to publicise the risks in the proposed system. The source of the danger is cracks in the pressure vessel. They may be only one thousandth of an inch long, but under certain conditions, could increase in length at the rate of several hundred miles an hour causing the vessel to fracture without warning. Cracks of this size can be very difficult to detect.

All steel structures have imperfections of microscopic proportions. If there is a certain critical combination of size, shape and position of the imperfection or crack, a fracture can occur. This type of failure is due to very high stresses being set up in the region of the tip of the crack, even though the average stress in the whole structure is relatively small and presents no obvious danger.

A lack of understanding of this phenomenon caused the tragic Comet airline disaster in 1958 which killed many members of the Manchester United Football team.

The portholes in the Comets were of a rectangular shape with sharp corners. This meant that the stresses in the region of the tip of the corner were much higher than in the fuselage as a whole. These very high local stresses made it easy for cracks to enlarge very quickly, spreading out from the porthole and causing the fuselage to fracture. The highest stresses occur on landing and taking off which led to the tragedy. You will notice that the portholes on modern aircraft have smoothly rounded corners!

Airline disasters

There is an additional danger in the case of the proposed pressurised water reactor at Sizewell. The pressure vessel will operate at very high pressures and temperatures. Under these conditions what is known as 'creep' can occur. This means that the size of the vessel can gradually increase, even though there is no increase in the loads acting on it. It is the combination of the effects of cracks, known as stress concentrations, and creep that can have unpredictable and dangerous consequences.

A very good book which explains this subject in non-technical language is: *The New Science of Strong Materials* by J E Gordon and published by Penguin.

Economic Notes

The dollar slumps

By Bob McKee

AS WE predicted in this column in the last issue of *Militant International Review*, the bubble has finally burst for the American economy and the dollar. We argued that the US boom in output (which reached nearly 7 per cent) was falsely founded, not on an extension of productive investment in manufacturing machinery and labour, but on the demand created by huge expenditure on armaments.

The US government had financed this expenditure by running up a record budget deficit, funded by borrowing from foreign investors, particularly Japan. The government had raised this money by holding up US interest rates, thus attracting a flow of funds from overseas. At the same time this extra demand for goods and services was not met by American manufacturers but by the more competitive Japanese, and to a lesser extent, European companies. As a result the US trade deficit reached astronomical proportions—heading for over \$170 billion this year.

This situation could not continue indefinitely and the longer it did, the harder would be the fall afterwards. As we forecast, US growth has now been squeezed to a halt by the high interest rates and the strong dollar. They are destroying US manufacturers' production and investment plans at home and their markets abroad. By the end of June 1985, US output growth had slumped to an under two per cent per annum rate.

Pound overvalued

Eventually this situation would damage the value of the dollar on international foreign exchange markets, as overseas producers of goods for the American market began to wonder if their supplies would be paid for. However, even up to April 1985, just before the big fall in the dollar's value began, the Reagan administration went blithely on predicting further economic growth and a secure dollar. The Commerce Secretary commented as late as 29 April that he expected only a fall of 20 per cent in the value of the dollar over two years. James Baker, the Treasury Secretary, confidently stated "I don't think there is going to be a runaway from the dollar."

This easy confidence was not mirrored by the European financiers. Kit McMahon, the Deputy Governor of the



As US growth slows, unemployment rises. Jobless in Detroit.

Bank of England, was more worried. He predicted a substantial fall in the dollar in a series of steepish falls interspersed with periods of relative stability, over just a few months. As it was, by early July the dollar had fallen 26 per cent against the pound, 16 per cent against the French Franc, and most importantly 15 per cent against the German Mark since late March. The very thing that the Americans denied was going to happen had taken place in a very short time.

Now Paul Volcker from the US Reserve Bank, America's Bank of England, has commented that the dollar's fall was no problem so far but that a further collapse "posed the greatest threat to the progress we have made against inflation."

So how much further can it fall, and what effect can it have on the prospects for world capitalist production, trade, employment and inflation?

Recently, John Williamson of the Institute for International Economics worked out how much exchange rates would have to be realigned, if the distortions created by world money markets and trade barriers were taken into account, to preserve a harmonious balance in world trade and production between the different capitalist nations. He calculated that the dollar was overvalued against a weighted average of other currencies at the end of 1984 by 43 per cent—and the pound was

overvalued by 17 per cent. Against the German Mark, the dollar was overvalued by 50 per cent and the pound by 28 per cent.

That means that the pressure of real productive forces must be to drive the dollar (and the pound) downwards against other currencies—even now there is still a long way to go against the mark and the Japanese yen, which should be closer to DM2.0 or Y200 to the dollar respectively rather than DM3.0 or Y250 to the dollar as at present.

Financial Times' fears

Now the argument of the US economists is that if the fall is gradual then it can only benefit US manufacturers and also the world economy. It will make American goods more competitive, reduce the trade and budget deficit and thus lower interest rates allowing investment and production to pick up in the USA.

But if the fall is too quick and too sharp it could force up inflation, driving interest rates up further and so stifle any expansion in investment and production. And if the US economy continues to decline as it has in the first six months of 1985, then demand for Japanese and European goods will fall, causing a generalised slump in production and trade.

All the evidence points to the

likelihood of further sharp falls in the dollar, perhaps accompanied by a similar decline in the pound which is also overvalued. As a result the latest forecasts for economic growth in the USA predict only 3 per cent for 1985 and lower in 1986, while the UK will find growth in 1986 below 2 per cent (including the contribution of North Sea oil).

It could be that the fear expressed by the *Financial Times* at the end of May of a 1929 type crash may be unduly pessimistic but all the signs are that 1986 is going to see a new and even more extensive depression for world capitalism.

Accounting for coal

THE TRUE cost of the Tory government's attempt to crush the miners' union is now slowly being revealed by the accounts of the various nationalised industries, as they are published, to cover the period from April 1984 to March 1985. The total figure as a cost to these industries alone is reaching anything between £6bn and £8bn, much larger than the Tories claimed it would ever be—and these costs do not account for losses to the taxpayer from police expenditure and social security, or for the losses created by businesses in the mining areas going bankrupt etc.

And what did the Tories say it was all for—to smash Scargill or to make a loss-making industry profitable? During the dispute Peter Walker, the Energy Secretary told everybody that the coal industry had lost £1334 million in the year up to March 1984, according to the Coal Board's own accounts. According to Walker that meant paying £130 per week to each miner then in the industry.

However, a recent analysis of the Coal Board's accounts by a highly reputed accountant, Emile Woolf, a senior partner in Kingston Smith, shows that Walker's assertions were completely false. The so-called £1.3bn deficit was made up of: 1) £634m spent on the cost of closing pits, paying redundancies and early retirement schemes (in other words spending not to dig coal but to stop doing it!); 2) £245m of payments for subsidence claims, most of which MacGregor, the Coal Board Chairman, revealed to a House of Commons Committee were phoney, and 3) £402m in interest payments back to the government for loans in previous years used to lay off miners! The Board claimed an operating

deficit of £358m, ie a loss on actually digging coal. But this loss included £130 million for early retirement payments and the £245m for subsidence payments. If these were removed the deficit is turned into an operating surplus of £17m. In other words during 1983-4 the British Coal Board made a profit out of digging coal. But it had to make other payments nothing to do with coal mining, but to do with closing the industry down!

Woolf cannot understand why the NUM did not analyse and demonstrate the false basis of the Coal Board's accounts. But in fact they did, when Andrew Glyn published his paper on the *Case for Coal* which matched many of Woolf's findings. But just because you have the truth does not mean that it will be publicised by those who do not want it known—and the Tory press and media made sure the real position of coal mining was never exposed to the public.

The giants take a giant's share of the cake

IT USED to be argued by some economists that small businesses tend to be more profitable and grow more quickly than the lumbering giants who are not prepared to make innovations or take risks. Perhaps there is some truth in this argument when there is a general expansion of the market and there is 'room' for smaller companies to achieve higher profits by innovation and new techniques.

But in period of stagnation, crisis and recession when markets are shrinking, the smaller companies are quickly devoured by the larger, who begin to take a giant's share of the available profit.

A recent report entitled 'The strategy and performance of British Industry 1970-1980' sheds some light on this situation. In an analysis of 496 companies producing 80 per cent of Gross National Product, the report found that the top 100 companies in the UK accounted for over 80 per cent of manufacturing output.

And during the relatively stagnant 1970s it was the larger companies that performed better. Between 1970-80 the largest 25 British companies increased their rate of profit by 40 per cent and the next 75 by 23 per cent, while others suffered a fall in their rates of profit by an average of 3 per cent.

So while British industry as a whole saw a decline in profits expressed as a percentage of total capital costs, the giant companies increased their returns, squeezing the smaller ones even harder.

Peru's debt crisis



Poverty in Latin America.

THE DEBTS owed by Latin American governments to international banks continue to rise, now reaching £360bn. While many governments have agreed to make repayments under the severe terms imposed by the International Monetary Fund—even Argentina has made such an agreement—the problem remains: how can these debts be paid for without provoking a massive movement of the people in these countries which could end the rule of imperialism altogether.

Peru's new leader, Alan Garcia, is attempting another method of avoiding this crisis. He has announced that Peru is going to pay back its debts only at 10 per cent of annual export earnings, whatever the IMF or the international bankers say. He hopes that this will avoid too great a burden on Peru's people—where inflation is now at 200 per cent a year, unemployment is 30 per cent and real wages for workers are at the level of 20 years ago!

But Garcia will not avoid trouble. Peru owes \$14bn in foreign debt and has not paid any back for over a year, running up another \$500m in interest payments. 10 per cent of export earnings is equivalent to \$300m which is twice what the last Peruvian President paid. Clearly Garcia's statements are not so radical and Peru's workers and peasants are in for an even harder time if this 10 per cent commitment is to be met.

Part two in a series of articles by Alan Woods, editor of the *MIR*, on the history of the Bolshevik Party.

A decisive decade

IN 'THE Birth of Russian Marxism', published in *MIR* No 29 Alan Woods outlined how Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour Group was formed in 1883. In part two of a series of articles on the History of Bolshevism he explains how from these apparently insignificant beginnings, Marxists, including the young Lenin, began to establish firm points of support in the growing movement of the Russian workers of the 1880s and 1890s. The series will be continued in the next edition of the *MIR*.

"The revolutionary movement in Russia can triumph only as a revolutionary movement of the workers. For us there is no other way out, nor can there be."

—Plekhanov, speech to the International Socialist Congress, Paris, 1889.

HEGEL ONCE remarked that: "When we want to see an oak with all its vigour of trunk, its spreading branches, and mass of foliage, we are not satisfied to be shown an acorn instead". Yet within the embryo of a healthy plant or animal is contained all the genetic information necessary for its future development.

It is no different with the development of a revolutionary tendency. The "genetic information" here is represented by theory, which contains within itself a rich store of generalisations based upon past experience. **Theory is primary:** all subsequent development stems from this. Despite the smallness of its size, the primitiveness of its organisation and rather amateur methods, the Emancipation of Labour Group's great contribution was to lay down the theoretical roots of the movement.

Of necessity, the initial work of the Group was confined to winning the ones and twos, of educating and training cadres, of hammering home the fundamental principles of Marxism.

"With all our hearts", wrote Plekhanov, "we seek to work for the creation of a literature which is accessible to the understanding of the whole peasant-worker masses; we, nevertheless are obliged for the time being to confine our popular literary efforts to the narrow circle of more or less 'intellectual' leaders of the working class".

The writings of Plekhanov during this period served to lay the theoretical basis for the building of the party. Many of them remain classics to the present time, although they do not receive sufficient attention by students of Marxism. Not by chance, Lenin strongly recommended the republication of Plekhanov's philosophical writings after the revolution, when the two men had long been political enemies. *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, *Our Differences*, and, above all, Plekhanov's masterpiece, *On the Development of the Monist View of History* are masterly re-statements of the fundamental ideas of dialectical and historical materialism, for a Russian audience.

These works at once laid the foundation stone for the development of the new party and simultaneously carried out a devastating demolition job on the old theories of Narodism. Plekhanov challenged the most prestigious ideologists of Populism to a kind of theoretical single combat.

Theory is primary

His remorseless logic drove them into a corner. The brilliant cut and thrust of his polemical style was always accompanied with a razor-sharp wit, so that even a reader convinced by Plekhanov's arguments might reserve for his opponent a feeling akin to that which one might have for an unfortunate mouse being worried by a cat.

Plekhanov was not a man to harbour doubts about himself. Friend and foe alike recognised in him one of the most impressive intellects of his time. Such a man was necessary to nurture the still weak forces of Russian Marxism, to give them confidence in themselves, in the ideas and in the inevitability of their future triumphs.

Plekhanov's onslaught threw the Narodnik leaders into disarray. Unable to provide a coherent answer to the Marxist case, they resorted to bitter complaints and spiteful allegations about the new group. *Vestnik Narodnoy Voly* (no 2, 1884) alleged that "for them (the Marxists) the polemic with *Narodnaya Volya* is more topical than the struggle with the Russian government and with other exploiters of the Russian people."

How often have Marxists heard such allegations throughout our history! For the crime of insisting on theoretical clarity, for attempting to

draw a clear line of demarcation between itself and other political tendencies, Marxism is always accused of the hideous sin of "sectarianism", of being against "left unity" and so on and so forth. It is one of the great ironies of history that one of Plekhanov's main Narodnik critics, Tikhomirov ("NV") who accused the group of disrupting revolutionary unity and submissively accepting the yoke of capital, himself later went over to the camp of Monarchist reaction. Not for the first or last time, the advocate of unprincipled "unity" ended up by uniting with the enemies of the working class!

The real reason for the whimpering of the Narodniks about "sectarianism" and "splitters" was the effect which the ideas of Marxism were having on their own followers. It is difficult to overestimate the impact which works like *Our Differences* (1885) had on the young revolutionaries inside Russia who were avidly looking for a way out of the impasse of Narodism, which was now in a phase of self-evident decadence.

Exiled in Switzerland, the members of the Emancipation of Labour Group set about the Herculean labour of translating the works of Marx and Engels and attempting to get them into the interior. Among these numerous translations were: 'Ludwig Feuerbach,' 'On Social Relations in Russia,' 'The Poverty of Philosophy,' 'The Housing Question,' 'Wage, Labour and Capital,' 'The Civil War in France,' and 'The Communist Manifesto.'

The work of penetrating the movement in Russia, however, proceeded with painful difficulty. The illegal transportation of literature posed enormous problems. Professional people and students, studying abroad, were enlisted to carry illegal literature when going back home on holiday. At various times, members of the Group were sent into Russia to establish contacts. Such journeys were extremely hazardous and frequently ended in arrests.

People from the interior who managed to establish direct contact with the Group were few and far between, and regarded like gold. In 1887-8, there was an attempt to set up a Union of Russian Social Democrats abroad, headed by the student, Rafail Soloveichik who had left Russia in 1884. But he clashed with the Group,

went back to Russia, was arrested in 1889 and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, during which he became mentally deranged and committed suicide. Another member of the same group, Grigor Gukovsky, a young student in Zurich, was arrested in Aachen and handed over to the tsarist government. Sentenced to prison, he also committed suicide. There were many such cases.

The arm of the tsarist authorities was long. The Group constantly faced the danger of infiltration by police spies and provocateurs. One such spy was Christian Haupt, a worker who was engaged by the police to infiltrate the Russian Social Democratic organisations in exile. Unmasked by the German Social Democrats as a police spy, Haupt was expelled from Switzerland.

Worst of all was the sensation of complete political isolation, aggravated by the inevitable rows and squabbles of exile life. The emigre Narodniks, stung by Plekhanov's criticism, gave vent to their hurt feelings by heated protests at being called 'Bakuninists' and demands for public apologies. The overwhelming majority of the exiles were Narodniks, and implacably hostile to the new group which they regarded as traitors and splitters. Years later, Plekhanov's wife recalled that 'The *Narodnaya Volya* people and NK Mikhailovsky at that time controlled the hearts and minds of the Geneva emigres and the Russian students.'¹

Impasse of Narodism

These were difficult times. The old Narodnik trend was in a complete impasse. Having burnt their fingers with terrorism, the 'extreme revolutionaries' effected another 180° somersault and eventually ended up in the camp of the Liberal philistines, preaching a cowardly policy of 'small deeds' and harmless cultural-educational work. Commenting on the decay of Narodism Martov wrote: *"The fall of the revolutionary People's Freedom was at the same time the collapse of Populism as a whole. Broad circles of the democratic intelligentsia were profoundly demoralised and disappointed in 'politics' and their own heroic mission. A modest 'cultivation' in the service of the liberal segments of the possessing classes: this was the sign under which the part of the intelligentsia that had remained loyal to Populism entered the grey epoch of the '80s".*²

On all sides there was retreat, ideological backsliding and cowardly apostasy. In order to find a road to the young generation, Plekhanov was obliged to seek collaboration with all

kinds of confused and semi-Narodnik elements. One such group published a small journal *Svobodnaya Rossiya* which in the leading article of its first issue argued the impossibility of "Organising the workers and peasants around revolutionary action" and argued against putting forward ideas which might frighten liberal sympathisers.³

Fearful of alienating the youth which "believed in 'terror' as a god", Plekhanov against his better judgement, bent under pressure and included a reference to the 'terrorist struggle' in the first draft programme of the Group. It would be a simple thing now, with the wisdom of hindsight to reproach Plekhanov for opportunism. But one has to bear in mind the extremely difficult conditions and extreme isolation in which the Marxists were working at the time. Plekhanov—along with Lenin, Trotsky and all Russian Marxists, stood implacably opposed to individual terrorism. The unfortunate reference was dropped in the second (much improved) draft and never made a re-appearance in the whole history of the party.

Ironically, it was precisely at this time that the Narodnik leaders were hastily repudiating terrorism and moving over openly to the camp of bourgeois liberalism.

The advocacy of terrorism and the capitulation to bourgeois liberalism were head and tail of the same coin. At the bottom of the radical phrasemongering about individual terror lay the profound scepticism and pessimism of the petit-bourgeois revolutionary with his ingrained distrust of the masses. Under conditions of political reaction, such an animal can turn very quickly into its opposite. The rightward shift of the Narodnik leaders reached its culminating point with the open renegacy of Tikhomirov—the target of many of Plekhanov's polemics—who in 1888 published a pamphlet with the title: "Why I ceased to be a revolutionary".

The collapse of the old revolutionary Narodism had a profound effect among the youth inside Russia, producing a polarisation between the pro-liberal reformist elements and the best elements of the youth, striving to find a road to revolution. Towards the end of 1887, SN Ginsburg having recently returned from Russia, wrote in a worried tone to the Narodnik leader PL Lavrov: "*Our Political Differences and Socialism and the Political Struggle* have had their influence, and a strong one, which we must come to terms with... The importance of the individual, the importance of the intelligentsia in the revolution, are completely destroyed by them, and I have



personally seen people who have been crushed by his theories. And the main thing is his tone, bold as if he was convinced of his rightness, his negation of all that has gone before, the reduction of all predecessors to a nil—all this is definitely having an influence.⁴

Fighting against the stream

Ginsburg's letter shows how, unbeknown to the exiled Marxists, new groupings were crystalising in the interior, discussing the failures of the past, drawing up a balance sheet and seeking a new way. Here the ideas of Plekhanov fell upon fertile ground. Krupskaya, in her memoirs of Lenin gives a glimpse of the kind of discussion which must have been commonplace in underground circles:

"The conference was disguised as a pancake party... The question came up as to what ways we should take. Somehow general agreement was lacking. Someone (I believe it was Shevlyagin) said that work on the Illiteracy Committee was of great importance. Vladimir Ilyich laughed, and his laughter sounded rather harsh (I have never heard him laugh that way again).

"'Well if anyone wants to save the country by working in the Illiteracy Committee', he said, 'let him go ahead'.⁵

This incident took place in 1893, when the tide had already begun to turn in favour of Marxism. But for ten years previously, the Emancipation of Labour Group was forced to fight a weary battle against the stream. Contact with Russia resembled a game of blind man's bluff. The situation with the exiles could hardly have been worse. The frustrations of the Group are shown in the correspondence of Plekhanov with his closest

collaborators.

Even the literary activity of the Group was fraught with difficulties. The Emancipation of Labour Group lived in an atmosphere of continuous financial crisis. Being small in number, and with limited scope for raising cash, they usually depended on what are known in the American theatrical world as "angels", wealthy sympathisers prepared to finance their literary ventures, like V Ignatov, one of the Group's first adherents, who had provided the funds for the Group's initial work. Sometimes, these people were not even socialists, such as Guryev who put up the cash for the "three-monthly" *Sotsial Demokrat*. In general, the publications of the Group came out on a very irregular basis. Yet, in spite of everything, they managed, against all the odds, to keep the still weak voice of Marxism alive within Russia. Under the circumstances, that represented a formidable achievement.

At times, the task must have seemed well-nigh hopeless. In the summer of 1885, Plekhanov wrote to Axelrod in terms verging on desperation: "But really we are standing over an abyss of all sorts over debts, and don't know and cannot think what to catch hold of to stop ourselves falling in. It's bad".⁶

Throughout the dark days of the '80s Plekhanov and his family lived in extreme poverty. At times he gave private lessons in Russian literature for a small salary, living in the cheapest "pension" owned by a butcher who fed him exclusively on soup and boiled meat! Bad food and living conditions undermined his health. For a while he was dangerously ill with pleurisy, the effect of which lasted the rest of his life.

Working under enormous difficulties, suffering remorseless pressure from all sides, the Emancipation of Labour Group was held together by faith in its ideas, but also by the towering moral and political authority of Plekhanov.

Within the Group, Plekhanov reigned supreme. Their very isolation made the members rally round in a closely-knit circle, welded together by strong political and personal ties. Not for nothing did they later acquire the nickname of "The Family". And Plekhanov was the indisputable head of the "household"—intellectually, he towered above the others, and yet there existed between them a strong sense of mutual dependence born of years of struggle and sacrifice in a common cause. In such circumstances it was hardly surprising that personal and political questions should become intermixed. Plekhanov was a tower of strength to the others, giving them

moral support in times of doubt and personal crises.

For two decades, the membership of the Emancipation of Labour Group stayed virtually the same. Of its founders, VN Ignatov died too early to leave much of an imprint. Lev Deutsch was the heart and soul of the organisational side of the work, such as the arrangements for printing and distribution of literature. Pavel Axelrod was an extremely talented propagandist who made a big impression on the young Lenin and Trotsky. His name was for a long time inseparable from that of Plekhanov.

Vera Zasulich

The part played by Vera Zasulich in the Group deserves a mention apart. Her personal courage and dedication to the revolutionary cause was already shown when, as a young girl, she carried out her terrorist attempt on the notorious torturer Trepov. A sincere, warm-hearted and impulsive person, Vera Zasulich suffered more than most from the trauma of exile. Ever impatient to close the gap between the Emancipation of Labour Group and the new generation of revolutionaries in Russia, she was forever taking up the cudgels on behalf of the youth, overcoming the resistance of Plekhanov and encouraging new initiatives—usually unsuccessful—with the youth groups in exile. Her relationship with Plekhanov was paradoxical. Heavily dependent on him for moral and political support, she, more than any of the others, was not afraid to confront him with the sharpest criticism and make him aware of his shortcomings. Given the enormous intellectual gulf between Plekhanov and the rest of his small band of followers, such a role was of inestimable value. The fact that the tetchy Plekhanov was prepared to submit humbly to the rebukes of Zasulich on more than one occasion indicated that he, more than anyone, was aware of this fact.

The tragedy of people like Axelrod and Zasulich had a two-fold character. Under different historical conditions, these talented individuals could have played a far bigger role in the shaping of events. Long years of isolation in exile had a disastrous effect upon their psychological and intellectual development. Working under Plekhanov's shadow, their evolution became stultified to the extent that, when conditions changed, they were unable to adapt and were lost to the revolution.

In the conditions in which the Group was compelled to work for decades traces of a narrow propaganda circle mentality would almost inevitably tend to creep in. Such factors could not

have a fundamental significance in the early years, the long, slow period of theoretical preparation and tiny propaganda circles. Only at a later date, when the Russian Marxist movement was faced with the necessity of stepping over the limitation of the propaganda phase did the negative features of the Emancipation of Labour Group emerge. But throughout the 1890s, the group began to enjoy an enormous authority in the eyes of the increasing numbers of Marxist youth, and the name of Plekhanov was known in every underground propaganda circle and every police station in Russia.

Despite all the difficulties, the slow, patient work of the Marxists now began to bear fruit. Marxist groups were springing up all over Russia. In imitation of the ELG, they called themselves: "Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class". At the same time the movement of the workers was assuming a mass character.

The turn of the tide

*"Well, brother, I can't think what's gotten into them these days, sending us all these political 'muzhiks' all of a sudden! Before they used to bring us all upper class people and students, real gentlemen. But now in walk the likes of you—just a common 'muzhik'—a worker!"*⁷

With these words the prison warder of the Taganskaya prison greeted the arrival of MN Lyadov, one of the leaders of the Moscow Workers' League in the year 1895. In his own way, the old warder had grasped the profound change which had taken place in the Russian revolutionary movement in the 1890s.

The fierce arguments between the Marxists and Narodniks about the inevitability or otherwise of the development of capitalism in Russia were being resolved in practice by the rapid growth of industry and the increasingly apparent existence of class polarisation within the peasantry, with the crystallisation of a class of rich peasants or "kulaks" and a mass of landless rural poor who increasingly drifted to the towns in search of work.

By the end of the 1860s, there were only 1,600 kilometres of railway lines in the whole country. In the following two decades this figure had increased 15 times. In the ten years between 1892 and 1901, no fewer than 26,000 kilometres of railway lines were built.

Alongside the traditional industrial centres of Moscow and St Petersburg, new ones sprang up in areas such as the Baltic, Baku and Donbass. Bet-

ween 1893 and 1900, the production of oil experienced a two-fold increase and that of coal went up three times.

True, the development of industry did not have the organic character of the rise of capitalism in Britain, described by Marx in *Capital*. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 provided the material premise for the development of capitalism. But the Russian bourgeoisie came on the stage of history too late to take advantage of the opportunity. The puny and underdeveloped forces of Russian capitalism could not compete with the powerful developed bourgeoisie of Western Europe and America. In common with the ex-colonial countries today, Russian industry was heavily dependent upon foreign capital which exercised a crushing domination over the economy, principally through its control of the banking and financial system:

"The confluence of industry with bank capital," wrote Trotsky, "was also accomplished in Russia with a completeness you might not find in any other country. But the subjugation of the industries to the banks meant, for the same reasons, their subjugation to the Western European money market. Heavy industry (metal, coal, oil) was almost wholly under the control of foreign finance capital, which had created for itself an auxiliary and intermediate system of banks in Russia. Light industry was following the same road. Foreigners owned in general about 40 per cent of all the stock capital of Russia, but in the leading branches of industry that percentage was still higher. We can say without exaggeration that the controlling shares of stock in the Russian banks, plant and factories were to be found abroad, the amount held in England, France and Belgium being almost double that in Germany."

The penetration of Russian society by foreign capital gave a sharp impetus to economic development, shaking the giant out of 2,000 years of barbarism and into the modern era. But precisely this gave rise to an explosive social situation. Large numbers of peasants were torn from the changeless routine of village life and thrust into the inferno of large-scale capitalist industry.

The Marxist theory of combined and uneven development found its most perfect expression in the extremely complex social relations in Russia at the turn of the century. Side by side with feudal, semi-feudal and even pre-feudal modes of existence there sprang up the most modern factories, built with French and British capital on the latest models. This is precisely the phenomenon we now see in the whole of the so-called Third World, in Africa,

Asia and Latin America.

In just 33 years—from 1865 to 1898, the number of factories employing over 100 workers doubled—from 706,000 to 1,432,000. By 1914, more than half of all industrial workers were actually employed in plants with over 500 hands, and nearly one quarter in plants with over 1,000 hands—a far higher proportion than in any other country. Already in the 1890s, seven big factories in the Ukraine employed two-thirds of all the metal workers in Russia, while Baku had almost all the oil workers. Indeed, until 1900, Russia was the largest oil producer in the world. 9

Nevertheless, despite the tempestuous upsurge of industry, the general picture of Russian society remained one of extreme backwardness. The mass of the population still lived in the villages, where the rapid development of class differentiation was given a powerful impulse by the crisis in European agriculture in the 1880s and early 1890s.

The falling price of grain ruined whole layers of the peasantry, the appalling nature of whose existence is starkly portrayed in Chekhov's short stories, *In the Ravine* and *Muzhiks*. The rural semi-proletarian, deprived of land, hawking his labour around the villages, became a common sight. On



Development of Capitalism in Russia were written to settle accounts with the Narodniks. Not by accident, either, these works are based on the irrefutable language of facts, figures and arguments.

The development of capitalism in Russia also meant the development of the proletariat which soon served notice on the whole of society of its intention to place itself in the front rank

Table 1

	1880 - 84	1885 - 89	1890 - 94
No of strikes	101	221	181
No of workers	99	223	170
Participating (in 1,000s)			

From *Istoriya KPSS*, Volume one, p 96

the other end of the social spectrum the new class of emerging rural capitalists, the kulaks, growing rich at the expense of the village poor, could afford to buy land from the old landowners—a situation reflected with great wit and insight in Chekhov's famous play *The Cherry Orchard*.

In spite of all the attempts of the Tsarist regime to shore it up, the old village community, the "mir", which according to the Narodnik theoreticians was to provide the basis for peasant socialism, was rapidly breaking up along class lines. Those unable to find work in the village swarmed into the towns, providing an immense pool of cheap labour for the newly established capitalist enterprises.

The old debates between the Narodniks and Marxism were thus conclusively settled by the march of events. Not by accident, Lenin's earliest works, such as *New Economic Developments in Peasant Life*, *On the so-called Market Question* and *The*

of the struggle for change.

The highly concentrated character of Russian industry rapidly created industrial armies of workers, organised and disciplined, and placed at the strategic points of society and the economy. The graph of the strike movement (Table 1) clearly indicates the rising confidence and class consciousness of the Russian working class in this period.

The Morozov Strike

Starting in the Spring of 1880, industry was hit by a crisis which lasted several years. This was a period of mass unemployment, in which the employers ruthlessly pushed down the already miserable wages of the workers. In addition to all the other problems, the workers were continually oppressed with all kinds of petty restrictions and arbitrary rules designed to keep them in subservience. Chief among these was the custom of impos-

ing fines for a whole series of real or imagined offenses against the employers.

Lenin's masterly pamphlet *An Explanation of the Law on Fines* 10 shows how, before 1886, a worker could be fined as much as half of his wages. The indignation and accumulated discontent of the workers finally exploded in a wave of labour agitation in 1885–86 in Moscow, Vladimir and Yaroslavl, which culminated in the famous strike at the Nikolskoye Mill owned by TS Morozov.

The 11,000 workers at the Morozov works had their wages cut no fewer than five times in two years. At the same time, swingeing fines were imposed for singing, talking loudly, walking past the manager's office with a cap on, and so on. These fines frequently amounted to a quarter of a worker's wage, and sometimes one-half! Finally, the workers' patience ran out, and on the 7 December 1885, they staged a strike.

All the pent-up rage and frustration at the years of petty vexations, theft and arbitrariness burst forth with elemental force. The leader of the strikes, Pyotr Anisimovich Moiseyenko (1852–1923) was an experienced revolutionary, an ex-member of Khalturin's Northern Union, who had served a term in Siberian exile. A remarkable man, one of those natural leaders of the working class, Moiseyenko later wrote that: "I first learned to understand, then to act". Nevertheless, the spontaneous nature of the strike is revealed in Moiseyenko's own account in an anniversary speech delivered in 1923 (he joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917).

"We decided," he recalls, "that we had to go into the factory, and then we would see what else was to be done". 11

The enraged workers vented their anger by smashing up the factory foodstore, where the "truck" system operated compelling them to buy food at inflated prices, and the home of the hated foreman Shorin.

Alarmed by the violence of the outbreak, the governor of Vladimir province drafted in troops and Cossacks. The workers presented the governor with their demands, but were met with repression. 600 workers were arrested. Troops surrounded the factory and the workers were forced back to work at the point of a bayonet. Nevertheless, such was the mood of the workforce that the factory was not fully operational until one month later.

The Morozov strike thus ended in a defeat. Yet the effect it had on the minds of workers all over Russia transformed the whole situation. In the trial of the strikers held in Vladimir in May 1886, Moiseyenko and the other defendants put up a

spirited defence which turned into such a devastating indictment of factory conditions that the charges were quashed and the workers' case upheld!

The verdict of the Morozov trial sent a shock-wave throughout Russian society. Thoroughly alarmed, the reactionary *Moskovskiy Vedmosti* protested: "But it is dangerous to joke with the mass of the people. What must the workers think, following the not-guilty verdict of the Vladimir court? The news of this decision spread like lightning through the whole of this manufacturing area. Our correspondent, who left Vladimir immediately after the announcement of the verdict, heard of it at all the stations..." 12

For the first time, the Morozov strike showed the enormous potential power of the proletariat. The lesson was not lost on the Tsarist regime, which, for all its support for the factory-owners, decided that it would have to make concessions to the workers. This it did on 3 June 1886 when the Law on Fines was passed, limiting the amount which could be imposed and stipulating that the proceeds should not be appropriated by the employers, but be deposited in a special benefit fund for the workers.

The first propaganda circles

As always, reform is a by-product of the workers' revolutionary struggle to change society. Like the "10 hour bill" legislation passed in Britain in the last century, the Law on Fines was an attempt to pacify the workers and prevent them from moving in a revolutionary direction, while simultaneously trying to lean on the workers to curb the demands of the bourgeois liberals. Such "benevolent" legislation did not prevent the savage repression of strikes and the wholesale arrest and deportation of workers' leaders in the coming period.

Nor did the new law have the desired effect of dampening down the strike movement. The Morozov strike inspired the workers with fresh courage, while the concessions granted by the all-powerful autocracy showed what could be gained by boldly fighting for your interests. In 1887, the total number of strikes exceeded those of the two previous years put together. Two years later, police chief Plehve was forced to report to Alexander III that in turn 1889 was "richer than 1887 and 1888 in disorders called forth by factory conditions". 13

The elemental upsurge of the strike movement indicated the increasing awareness of the workers of themselves as a class and a force within society. The more advanced

strata, represented by people like Moiseyenko, were groping for ideas which could shed light upon their condition and show the way forward.

This movement had a two-fold significance. On the one hand, these spontaneous outbreaks, frequently accompanied by acts of Luddism which bore witness to its as yet unorganised and semi-conscious nature, announced to the world the emergence of the Russian working class on the stage of history. On the other hand, it furnished irrefutable proof of the correctness of the theoretical arguments of Plekhanov and the Emancipation of Labour Group. In the white-heat of the class struggle, the basis was now laid for the coming together of the still numerically weak forces of Marxism and the powerful, but as yet incoherent forces of the Russian proletariat.

From the Marxist point of view, the importance of a strike goes far beyond the fight for immediate demands over hours, wages and conditions. The real significance of strikes, even when lost, is that the workers learn. In the course of a strike—particularly a major strike—the mass of workers, their wives and families, inevitably become aware of their role as a class. They cease to think and act like slaves, or cogs in a machine, and begin to raise themselves up to the stature of real human beings with a mind and will of their own. That is the real lesson of the heroic strike of the British miners last year, which repeats with a delay of almost exactly one hundred years, many of the experiences of the Russian proletariat.

The stormy events of the class struggle in their external aspects readily capture the imagination long after they have passed into history. But the silent, subterranean process of the development of working class consciousness—what Trotsky described in that most memorable phrase, "the molecular process of the development of class consciousness"—is all too easily overlooked. Yet this is the most important fruit of the long and arduous history of the workers' movement.

Through their experience of life and of struggle—particularly of great events—the masses begin to transform themselves. Beginning with the most active and conscious layer, the workers become profoundly discontented with their lot, and keenly feel their own limitations. Defeats, still more than victories, force upon the worker-activist the burning need for a clear understanding of the workings of society, of the mysteries of economics and politics.

Throughout history, the ruling class has held firmly in its grasp a weapon far more potent than all its armies and

police forces for the subjugation of the majority: that weapon is none other than the monopoly of the means of culture.

Not by accident, every revolutionary class in history has begun its assault upon the powers-that-be by a thoroughgoing criticism of the ideas and culture of the old ruling class. Thus the bourgeoisie, prior to overthrowing the feudal monarchies, first dethroned the spiritual monarch by carrying out the Reformation.

Throughout history, of all the chains which bind the working class, one of the most powerful is ignorance. The first blow for the emancipation of the working class must be struck against this. Through its advanced guard first of all, the working class feels the need to conquer ideas and theory as an essential pre-requisite to the conquest of power and the re-construction of society on a new and higher foundation.

The growth of capitalist industry itself produces a mighty army of the proletariat. But even the best army will be defeated if it lacks generals, majors and captains well schooled in the business of war. The stormy strike battles of the 1880s proclaimed to the world that the heavy battalions of the Russian proletariat were ready and willing to fight. But they also revealed the weakness of the movement, its spontaneous, unorganised and unconscious nature, its lack of direction and leadership. The army was there. What was necessary was to prepare the future general staff. This conclusion now dawned irresistibly on the consciousness of the best workers. And with the serious and single-minded approach which characterises worker-activists the world over, they settled down to learn.

The struggle for theory

Despite all their efforts, the Narodniks were completely incapable of linking up with "the people", nor could they ever hope to do so, on the basis of false theories, programme and methods. Yet this seemingly intractable problem was now solved with complete ease by the Marxists. A solid bridgehead was rapidly constructed to link the latter with the workers.

In all the major centres of industry, study circles, educational classes and "Sunday schools" sprang up, providing the seed-bed for a whole new generation of working class revolutionary Marxists, the backbone of the future party of October.

Thus began the so-called period of propaganda or "kruzhovshchina" (based on the Russian word for study-circle). Here after an exhausting day's work under appalling conditions,



Revolutionaries in prison at Kara in Siberia.

many a horny-handed factory worker, fighting off mental and physical fatigue, spent long hours wrestling with the difficult chapters of Marx's *Capital*—that same book which the tsarist censor considered too dry and abstruse to represent a danger. Not for the last time, a dictatorial regime underestimated both the revolutionary significance of *Capital* and the intelligence of the working class! So great was the workers' desire to learn that many a volume of *Capital* was torn apart in order to distribute it, chapter by chapter, among the largest possible number of people.

When set beside mass strikes, battles with the police and speeches from the dock, this kind of slow, uninspiring educational work seems to pale into insignificance. Yet this painstaking, patient and arduous task of theoretical education was the solid bedrock upon which Russian Marxism was built. It represented enormous self-sacrifice on the part of the workers, whose achievements on the theoretical plane were every bit as important for the future of the revolution as the struggles in the workplace. From the cradle of the mass Russian workers' movement, the indissoluble link between theory and practice was being forged.

At the same time that Plekhanov and his collaborators were establishing the Group for the Emancipation of Russian Labour abroad, the first genuine Social Democratic (ie Marxist) circle appeared in St Petersburg, set up by a young Bulgarian student called Dimiter Blagoev—the future leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party (1856–1924). In 1884, his group took

the name "The Party of the Russian Social Democrats" and even began to publish a paper—*Rabochii* ("The Worker"). However, the group did not last long before it was smashed by the police.

But the process was now too far advanced to be halted by police action. The following year another Social Democratic group was formed in the capital, this time with closer links with the working class. The group of PV Tochissky included apprentices and craftsmen and styled itself the "Brotherhood of St Petersburg Artisans".

Poland and Lithuania

Further afield in the Volga area of Central Russia, another of the pioneers of Russian Marxism, Nickolai Fedoseyev (1871–98) organised a group of students in Kazan, one of the members of which was a young student by the name of Vladimir Ulyanov, later Lenin. This group disintegrated when Fedoseyev was arrested in the summer of 1889. 14. But the first seeds had been planted, and the first recruits had been won, albeit in tiny handfuls, in Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara, Saratov, Rostov-on-Don, and other towns in the region.

The development of industry took place very early on in the Western fringes of the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. More industrialised than the East, more literate, and with a strong German influence, these areas were quickly penetrated by the Social Democracy. However, the workers'

movement here was immensely complicated by the national question. Oppressed by tsarist Russia, the Polish workers and peasants had a double yoke to bear.

In addition, the sizeable Jewish population in these areas, with its numerous artisans and small businesses, lived permanently on the brink of the abyss. The most oppressed layer of society, the Jewish workers and artisans naturally provided fertile ground for the spread of revolutionary ideas. Not by accident, Jewish revolutionaries provided the Marxist movement with a number of leaders out of all proportion to their specific weight within society. Cosmopolitan Vilno, with its large concentration of Jewish workers and artisans, was one of the earliest strongholds of the Social Democracy in the Russian Empire.

The tsarist authorities, especially sensitive about unrest in the Polish provinces, cracked down ruthlessly on the first Polish Social Democratic groups with arrests, torture and long sentences of hard labour. But the movement, like a hydra-headed monster, reacted to the lopping off of one head by immediately sprouting two new heads. New groups sprang up in Minsk, Warsaw and Vilno, where Leo Jogiches (Jan Tyszkla) set-up a group in 1887. The Baltic soon became a focal point of Marxist agitation and propaganda, serving as the entry-point for illegal literature and correspondence between the emigre Emancipation of Labour Group and the Marxist underground in the interior.

This is a period of many names—mostly strange and unfamiliar to the modern reader. The small groups which sprang up in one town after another must have appeared to the Tsarist authorities as the result of some virulent and inexplicable virus. Through the pages of the police archives, the faces and numbers of arrested revolutionaries passed with monotonous regularity—just so many bacilli isolated and removed for the health of the body politic. Most of these men and women have long passed into obscurity. And yet upon the bones and nerves of these heroes and martyrs, the Russian workers' movement was painfully constructed.

Working against tremendous odds, under intolerable difficulties and always at personal risk, they stubbornly persevered in their task. The great majority of them never lived to see the result of their labour. They never fought in the final great battles, nor did they see the old, hated structures of society topple. Their role was the hardest task of all: the arduous task of beginning, of building the movement out of nothing, of patiently win-

ning over the ones and twos, of explaining, arguing, convincing, of attending to the thousand-and-one mundane, routine day-to-day tasks of building an organisation, which pass unobserved by historians, but which lay at the heart of a great historical enterprise.

From propaganda to agitation

Perhaps the most vivid account of how these early Marxist propaganda circles functioned is contained in Krupskaya's book about Lenin. Contact was made through a workers' study circle, where the teaching of the "3 Rs" would be skilfully combined with at least the elementary ideas of socialism:

"It was a kind of silent conspiracy. We were actually able to talk about anything in the school, although there was rarely a class without a spy; one had to refrain from using the terrible words 'tsar', 'strike', etc and the most fundamental problems could be referred to. But, officially, it was forbidden to discuss anything at all: on one occasion they closed down the so-called recapitulatory group, because an inspector who had put in an unexpected appearance discovered that the ten-times table was being taught there, whereas, according to the syllabus, only the four rules of arithmetic were allowed to be taught". 15

She goes on to describe how Lenin worked in the circle:

"Vladimir Ilyich was interested in the minutest detail describing the conditions and life of the workers. Taking the features separately he endeavoured to grasp the life of the worker as a whole—he tried to find what one could seize upon in order better to approach the worker with revolutionary propaganda. Most of the intellectuals of those days badly understood the workers. An intellectual would come to a circle and read the workers a kind of lecture. For a long time a manuscript translation of Engels' booklet, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, was passed round the circles. Vladimir Ilyich read with the workers from Marx's *Capital*, and explained it to them. The second half of the studies was devoted to workers' questions about their work and labour conditions. He showed them how their life was linked-up with the entire structure of society, and told them in what manner the existing order could be transformed. The combination of theory with practice was the particular feature of Vladimir Ilyich's work in the circles. Gradually other members of our circle also began to use this approach". 16.

In 1891 and 1892, a terrible famine

swept the country, causing widespread starvation in the villages and a steep rise in food prices. Hungry peasants flooded into the towns, willing to accept work at any price. The resulting hardship produced a wave of strikes, especially in the Centre and West of Russia, the centres of the textile industry, accompanied with clashes with police and Cossacks.

At this time, a nineteen-year old student called Yuri Martov, expelled from St Petersburg for revolutionary activity, arrived in Vilno, already a thriving centre of the Social Democracy.

Here, in Lithuania and Byelorussia, the Jewish workers and the wholly Russified Jewish intelligentsia was carrying on a kind of agitation which was far more broadly based than the limited propaganda circle activity common in Russia proper. They published leaflets written in the language of the mass of Jewish workers—Yiddish—which dealt with the immediate demands of the masses.

Watching the situation attentively from afar, Plekhanov immediately understood that a fundamental change was taking place which demanded a shift in the methods hitherto employed by the Russian Marxists. The famine had exposed the bankruptcy of the autocracy to an unparalleled degree. Its effects were felt by all sections of society—not just the workers and peasants, but even the bourgeois liberals, shaken out of the slough of despond, began to organise relief agencies to compensate for the complete paralysis of the state, using the local government "Zemstvo" organisations. The idea of a representative assembly, a "Zemsky Sobor" began to gain ground among the liberal intelligentsia. Plekhanov seized the opportunity with both hands.

In his pamphlet *All-Russian Ruin* published in *Sotsial Demokrat* no 4, Plekhanov explained that the causes of the famine were not natural but social. Setting out from the chaotic situation brought about by the corruption and ineptitude of the tsarist authorities, he showed the need to conduct widespread propaganda and agitation, linking the concrete demands of the masses to the central idea of the overthrow of the autocracy.

Of course, the slogan of a "Zemsky Sobor" in the hands of the liberals was given a completely reformist and therefore utopian character. But Plekhanov, displaying a keen revolutionary instinct, advanced this demand as a militant, fighting slogan, as a means of mobilising the masses and attracting the best sections of the democratic intelligentsia to the idea of an open struggle against Tsarism. "All those honest Russians", he wrote, "who do not belong to the world of

mere money-makers, kulaks, and Russian bureaucrats must at once begin to agitate for the Zemsky Sobor”.

Plekhanov's article represented the first concrete attempt to come to grips with the question of how to relate the workers' movement to the movement of other oppressed classes against the common enemy, tsarism. Under conditions of Tsarist enslavement, temporary and episodic blocs with the most radical elements of the petty bourgeoisie or even the bourgeois liberals were inevitable. Such agreements, however, in no sense presupposed the existence of programmatic agreement. On the contrary, the prior condition thereof was precisely that every party should march under its own banner: “march separately and strike together”.

Revolutionary use of democratic slogans

While defending the petty bourgeois democrats against tsarist persecution, and occasionally arriving at episodic agreements for practical questions such as the transportation of illegal literature, defence of arrested comrades etc, the Marxists simultaneously subjected them to a merciless and unrelenting criticism for their vacillations and confusions. Such a policy was designed to make use of each and every opportunity to push the movement forward whilst strengthening the position of Marxism and the independent class standpoint of the proletariat, in the same way that a mountain climber skilfully makes use of every chink and crevice in order to haul himself up to the summit.

This policy had nothing in common with the latterday policies of the Mensheviks and Stalinists who, under the guise of “uniting all progressive forces”, try to subordinate the working class movement to the so-called “progressive” bourgeoisie. Both Plekhanov and, especially, Lenin poured scorn on the idea of a “People's Front” which a section of the Narodniks were peddling even at this time. Before he became a Menshevik, when he still defended the ideas of revolutionary Marxism, Plekhanov answered those who accused him of frightening the liberals with the following rebuff:

“In any case, we consider that the most harmful kind of ‘frightening’ is the frightening of socialists with the spectre of frightening the liberals”. 17.

The main thrust of Plekhanov's argument was that the “total economic ruin of our country can be averted only by its complete political emancipation”. The appalling problems of the masses directly posed the question of revolutionary struggle against tsarism, in which the working

class would play the key role. While, at this stage, no-one yet spoke of the possibility of a socialist revolution in Russia, the skilful use of revolutionary-democratic demands, like the convening of a Zemsky Sobor, undoubtedly played an important agitational role in marshalling the revolutionary forces around the Marxist programme.

The new emphasis upon mass revolutionary agitation caught many by surprise. Future Economists like Boris Krichevsky were not slow to criticise the Emancipation of Labour Group for alleged “constitutionalism”, not understanding the need to advance democratic slogans alongside the elementary class demands of the proletariat. At the same time, many of the old hands even in Russia were reluctant to recognise the changed situation. The old habits of small propaganda circle activity died hard. In many cases, the transition to mass agitation was only accomplished after painful arguments and divisions.

Many years later, basing himself upon the experience of Russian Marxism, Trotsky wrote that: “Every working class party, every faction, during its initial stages, passes through a period of pure propaganda, ie the training of its cadres. The period of existence as a Marxist circle invariably grafts habits of an abstract approach onto the problems of the workers' movement. Whoever is unable to step in time over the confines of this circumscribed existence becomes transformed into a conservative sectarian”. 18.

In his article *On the Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats during the Famine in Russia* (1892) Plekhanov gave the classic Marxist definition of the difference between propaganda and agitation:

“A sect can be satisfied with propaganda in the narrow sense of the word: a political party never... A propagandist gives many ideas to one or a few people, while an agitator gives only one or only a few ideas but to the mass of people... Yet history is made by the masses... Thanks to agitation, the necessary link between the ‘heroes’ and the ‘crowd’, between ‘the masses’ and ‘their leaders’ is forged and tempered.” 19.

Plekhanov stressed the urgent necessity for the Marxists to penetrate the broadest layers of the masses with agitational slogans, beginning with the most immediate economic demands, such as the eight-hour day:

“Thus all—even the most backward—workers will be clearly convinced that the carrying out of at least some socialist measures is of value to the working class... Such economic reforms as the shortening of the working day are good if only because they



bring direct benefits to the workers”. 20.

This gives the lie to the reformist opponents of Marxism who argue that the Marxists are “not interested in reform”. On the contrary, throughout history, the Marxists have been in the forefront of the struggle for the improvement of the lot of the workers, fighting for better wages and conditions, shorter hours and democratic rights. The difference between Marxism and reformism does not consist in the “acceptance” or otherwise of reforms (you only have to pose the question to see its patent absurdity), but, on the one hand, in the fact that serious reforms can only be won by mobilising the strength of the working class in struggle against the capitalists and their state and, on the other, that the only way to consolidate the gains made by the workers and to guarantee all their needs, is to break the power of Capital and carry out the socialist transformation of society. The latter is, however, unthinkable without the day-to-day struggle for advance under capitalism which serves to organise, train and educate the working-class, preparing the ground for the final settling of accounts with its enemies.

The Vilno Programme

The idea of agitation immediately caught the imagination of the youth inside Russia. Already many of the youngsters were growing impatient with the limitations of work in the propaganda circles. The trial was blazed by the Social Democrats in the Western areas of Lithuania and Poland, where the Lodz strike and May Day demonstration of 1892 indicated the explosive nature of the situation.

The success of the Vilno group led

them to publish a pamphlet which caused quite a stir at the time: *On Agitation*, written by Arkady Kremer and Martov, became known as "The Vilno Programme". Despite traces of "spontaneism", the document, with its central idea that the task of the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the workers themselves aroused a lot of interest in the period 1893-97 when furious discussions were taking place everywhere on the turn to agitation. It basically represented a healthy reaction against the narrow "small circle" mentality and a desire to forge contacts with the masses.

In her *Memories of Lenin*, Krupskaya recalls that:

"When the Vilno pamphlet *On Agitation* appeared the following year, the ground was already fully prepared for the conducting of agitation by leaflets. It was only necessary to start work. The method of agitation on the basis of the workers' everyday needs became rooted deeply in our party work. I only fully understood how fruitful this method of work was some years later when, living as an emigre in France, I observed how, during the tremendous postal strike in Paris, the French Socialist Party stood completely aside and did not intervene in the strike. It was the business of the trade unions, they said. They thought the work of the party was simply the political struggle. They had not the remotest notion as to the necessity for connecting up the economic and industrial struggles". 21.

The success of the new approach is reflected in Trotsky's autobiography:

"We found the workers more susceptible to revolutionary propaganda than we had ever in our wildest dreams imagined. The amazing effectiveness of our work fairly intoxicated us. From revolutionary tales, we knew that the workers won over by propaganda were usually to be counted in single numbers. A revolutionary who converted two or three men to socialism thought he had done a good job of work, whereas with us, the number of workers who joined or wanted to join the groups seemed to be unlimited. The only shortage was in the matter of instruction and in literature. The teachers had to snatch from each other in turn the single soiled copy of the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels that had been translated by many hands in Odessa, with many gaps and mutilations of the text.

"Soon we began to produce a literature of our own: this was, properly speaking, the beginning of my revolutionary work, which almost coincided with the start of my revolutionary activities. I wrote proclama-



Members of the St Petersburg Union for the Liberation of the Working Class. In the centre is Lenin. To his left, seated, is Martov.

tions and articles and printed them all out in longhand for the hectograph. At that time we didn't even know of the existence of typewriters. I printed the letters with the utmost care, considering it a point of honour to make them clear enough so that even the less literate could read our proclamations without any trouble. It took me about two hours to a page. Sometimes I didn't unbend my back for a week, cutting my work short only for meetings and study in the groups.

"But what a satisfied feeling I had when I received the information from the mills and workshops that the workers read voraciously the mysterious sheets printed in purple ink, passing them about from hand to hand as they discussed them! They pictured the author as some strange and mighty person who in some mysterious way had penetrated into the mills and knew what was going on in the workshops, and twenty-four hours later passed his comment on events in newly-printed handbills". 22

By means of a bold participation in agitation, the influence of Marxism grew by leaps and bounds among ever wider layers of the working class. Despite the smallness of their forces and the tremendously difficult objective situation, the Marxists had at last broken down the barriers separating them from the masses. The road was now open for the creation of a strong united party of the Russian proletariat.

Part three of Alan Woods' series of articles on the History of Bolshevism will appear in the next edition of the MIR.

Footnotes

1. *Perepiska GV Plekhanova i PB Aksel'roda*, p87.
2. Quoted in T Dan's *The Origins of Bolshevism* p 141.
3. *Perepiska GV Plekhanova i PB Aksel'roda*, p66.
4. *Op cit* p61.
5. Krupskaya, *'Memories of Lenin'*, pp12-13.
6. *Perepiska GV Plekhanova i PB Aksel'roda*, p21.
7. *Bor'ba za Sozdanie Marksistskoi partii v Rossii (1894-1904)* p3.
8. Trotsky *'History of the Russian Revolution'*, p32.
9. Figures from T Dan *'The Origins of Bolshevism'*, p150 and BH Sumner *'Survey of Russian History'*, pp324-331.
10. Lenin, *'Collected Works, Volume 2'*, pp29-73.
11. Speech reprinted in *"Nachalo Rabochego Dvizheniya i Rasprostranenie Marksizma v Rossii (1883-1894)* p96.
12. Lenin, *'Collected Works, Volume 2'*, p38.
13. *Istoriya KPSS, Volume One*, p100.
14. Many years later, in December 1922, Lenin was to write a brief note on Fedoseyev to the Party History Commission in which he described his old mentor as "this exceptionally talented and exceptionally devoted revolutionary". Lenin, *'Collected Works, Volume 33'*, pp432-3.
15. Krupskaya, *'Memories of Lenin'*, p6.
16. Krupskaya, *Op cit* pp 6-7.
17. Plekhanov, *Sochineniya Volume 1*, p403.
18. Trotsky, *'Writings 1935-36'*, p153.
19. Quoted in V Akimov, *'On the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism'*, p17.
20. *Op cit*, p17.
21. Krupskaya, *'Memories of Lenin'*, p7.
22. Trotsky *'My Life'*, p110.

Letters

THE EDITORS welcome all reports, suggestions or criticisms from our readers about the journal, the response it receives from labour movement activists, or comments on general developments in society or the labour movement. We do, however, reserve the right to shorten letters which are excessively long.

Letters for inclusion in the next issue should be sent by 18 October to the *MIR*, Letters, 3-13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB. The views expressed on this page do not necessarily reflect the ideas of the Editorial Board.

Dear *MIR*,

May I congratulate the editors of the *MIR* for the exceptional improvements achieved in the latest issue (No 29) of the journal. There is still, of course, room for further developments both in terms of size and content. In that respect I have some suggestions for the editors to consider.

From reading the *Militant* pamphlet, 'Britain in Crisis' by Ted Grant, it is obvious that during the next decade or so the opportunities will arise for the working class to take power. This would confront the working class, and the Marxists within or at the head of the workers organisations, with the task of beginning the construction of a socialist society. Alas there is not a great deal of writing on the actual tasks involved in constructing such a society, especially on the problems an advanced industrial country would face.

There is a lot of theoretical literature by the great writers on the need for a Marxist leadership, its role and methods in bringing about a socialist transformation of society. Also most Marxists have an understanding of how a socialist society will be run after capitalist society is swept aside, the workers have consolidated themselves in power, and socialism has established itself. But the transformation from the old order to the new is rarely touched upon, although it is likely that in our lifetime we will experience such an event. I believe that this is a compelling reason why an article or series of articles

on the question of what would be called the transitional period from capitalism to socialism should appear in the *MIR* to bring this question into the minds of our readers.

Although specific problems obviously cannot be foreseen it should be possible in general terms to explain how society would be run in the transitional period from a theoretical understanding of the likely developments.

Although we have the Russian revolution of 1917 and the events that followed to draw upon, we still have never had a successful transformation in an advanced industrial country and hence the transitional period that would follow is in a lot of ways uncharted ground. For instance, some grey areas that would need attention would be the legal system, the courts, judges, police etc. What would they be replaced with and by what means? Because the coming to power of the workers is only the first step to socialism the evils generated through the system of capitalism will still be prevalent and unfortunately will not disappear overnight. To mind come crimes such as rape, child offences etc. Another question would be in relation to the defence of the revolution. Would there still be a need to keep a standing army trained in the sophisticated techniques of modern conventional warfare?

Finally I think that for socialists merely to say that to break with capitalism the state machine needs to be smashed, is not enough. Marxists have a duty to explain that much used statement to understand what is meant by it. I hope that the editors will be able to produce some articles on the transitional period for the reader of the *MIR* to discuss and understand.

Yours fraternally
Andy Price
London FBU member

Dear *Militant*,

Congratulations on the latest *MIR* and I keenly await the next issue, particularly because of the editorial which for me pulls together all the confusing events and changes that are going on in

Britain, giving a much clearer view of what is actually happening.

But I'm specifically writing to you about the article on famine and food production, which has caused some controversy among the comrades that I know.

This is particularly relevant in the light of the recent, well publicised, Live Aid for Africa concerts. Events in which largely working class people have given large sums of their hard earned money to feed the victims of famine and starvation in Africa. This, I believe destroys the reactionary myth about workers being inherently racist and also reflects the growing anger among youth about the things that are going on in the world around them and what can be done about it.

The arguments from the article ranged around the possibilities inherent in science. Some of the more bizarre examples quoted were given without any real explanation and the thrust of the article seemed to be that any developments in science were naturally an advantage and desirable.

One comrade (apparently following this to its conclusion) put it to me that if some people were concerned about the feelings of animals, all we would need to do was breed animals without brains. Apart from doubting the practicality of this I don't think that we'd want to be doing things like that.

Anyway I thought that some of the ideas in the article were put across in too bald a manner.

I believe that the point is, that only when the working people of the world establish a socialist society will they be able to use science and technology to feed the world and within that, they will decide what is necessary and desirable.

We might well decide that raising animals for food, the methods of factory farming, or even eating meat are unnecessary and undesirable.

Yours fraternally
Chris Parry
Postman/driver
Bristol

Without the correct political leadership the strongest Social Democratic Party in the world proved useless in the face of reaction.

The Fascist counter-revolution, Austria 1934

FROM THE end of the First World War until the victory of reaction in 1934, Austria faced one revolutionary onset after another. Austrian workers proved time after time their readiness for revolutionary struggle. However, despite having the best organised, largest and most proletarian Social Democratic Party in the World, with the most left-wing leadership of all the parties of the Second International, they were defeated just over 50 years ago by the fascist counter-revolution. Austria 1934 was the acid test of centrist leadership (ie. of a leadership which vacillates between reformism and Marxism—revolutionary in words, reformist in deeds). As left reformist and centrist leaders and currents now again begin to emerge in the parties of the Second International, and capitalism increasingly turns to reaction on a world scale, then the lessons of Austria are especially relevant for workers today.

In an anniversary article unfortunately held over due to lack of space from an earlier edition of the MIR, Steve Morgan and Robert Schifflé, a member of the Austrian SPO, examine the lessons of Austria 1934.

FOLLOWING THE end of the 1st World War and the overthrow of capitalism in Russia, revolutionary upheavals swept through Europe. There were massive strike waves in Britain, France and Italy, and the creation of Soviets in Germany in 1918.

Inspired by the overthrow of the Tsar and the socialist revolution in Tsarist Russia, the Austrian workers brought the edifice of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire crashing down.

On October 29th 1918 factories and workplaces throughout Vienna sent delegates to Parliament demanding that the Social Democratic leaders mobilise the working class and declare a republic. The Hapsburg monarchy was overthrown and Austria was gripped by a series of revolutionary crises. A movement for Soviets quickly developed. Workers councils were formed and armed workers militias established, called the Arbeiter Bataillone, later renamed the Schutzbund. The army collapsed and a situation of dual power developed in which the ruling class were paralysed, while effective power lay in the hands of the working class. In neighbouring

Bavaria and Hungary in 1919, Soviet republics were declared and a revolutionary strike wave swept through Austria. Capitalism dangled on a thin thread. As one Social Democratic leader admitted at the time, "the Austrian working class has had the power to establish a Soviet dictatorship every hour since November 1918".

Only one thing stood in their way—the workers own leaders. While capitalism tottered in Austria and one revolution fed off another throughout Europe, Otto Bauer, the leading 'theoretician' of the Social Democrats, turned reality on its head, and argued that the balance of class forces was not favourable for the working class to take power. He and other Social Democratic leaders did everything possible to confuse and demoralise the workers and derail the revolutionary movement.

They claimed that a socialist republic would lead to economic collapse and starvation as a result of sabotage and food blockades by British and American Imperialism. Therefore, the Austrian workers, they argued, should retreat and wait patiently until socialism was established in Britain, Germany and America.

In reality the socialist victory in Austria would have tremendously accelerated the victory of socialism throughout Europe, and if they had followed the example set by Lenin and Trotsky it could have been achieved with the minimum of effort and sacrifice.

1920s—Fascists grow

Instead "defeat was snatched from the jaws of victory". The treachery of the Austrian Social Democratic leaders and their European counterparts allowed capitalism to regain a temporary stability. The bourgeoisie breathed a deep sigh of relief, regrouped its forces and began to prepare the ground for a bloody revenge upon the working class.

During the 1920s the Austrian ruling class began to rebuild its army and fashion the Heimwehren (Home Guard) into a fascist auxiliary force. Although the largest single party in Parliament, the Social Democrats were kept from government, by a coalition of bourgeois and petit bourgeois parties headed by the reactionary Clerical Party. They represented the interests

**By Steve Morgan
and Robert Schifflé**

of the capitalists, landowners, and church and for years they secretly equipped the Heimwehren and turned a blind eye to its activities.

Ground down by the continuing capitalist crisis and disillusioned in the Social Democrats to whom they had initially turned, sections of the despairing middle classes, students, peasants and lumpen proletarians were increasingly attracted by the demagogy and determined manner of the fascists. Repelled by the hollow promises and spinelessness of the Social Democratic leaders this mass of 'human dust' as Trotsky described them, was gradually compressed into a battering ram which the capitalists utilised to destroy the workers' organisations in Germany and later Austria.

Financial aid to the fascist Heimwehren poured in from big business, the Bankers' Association, the Catholic Church, and from Hitler and Mussolini. Eventually it was estimated that the Heimwehren was equipped with sufficient rifles, machine guns and howitzers to arm a half million strong-army!

This, however, was nothing compared to the social and political power which lay at the finger tips of the Social Democrats. The Austrian party was the strongest Social Democratic Party in the world. It was more intertwined with the working class than any other party of the 2nd International. It had over 800,000 members accounting for 25 per cent of the male and 10 per cent of the female population, with flourishing sports and cultural clubs.

Furthermore, the Social Democracy had its own military organisation, the 'Schutzbund' which at its peak numbered 70,000 armed, trained workers with hundreds of thousands of rifles and machine guns at its disposal.

On the electoral front, the Social Democrats commanded 43% of the vote and controlled the Vienna municipal authority for more than a decade. The industrial centres throughout Austria were its bedrock. Mobilised it represented an invincible force.

In comparing the relative strengths of the German Nazis with the Austrian

Social Democracy in 1933, Trotsky explained that while both commanded similar electoral support, the social basis upon which they rested was decisive; "Whereas the Nazis lean upon the social by-products which play a secondary and to a major degree a parasitic role in the life of the country, there is behind the Austrian Social Democracy the flower of the nation. The actual relative weight of the Austrian Social Democracy exceeds over ten times the relative weight of all the German fascists". This was even more so when compared with the forces of Austrian fascism.

In the last Parliamentary election to be held in Austria in 1930, the fascist Heimwehren gained only eight seats out of 165 and the Nazis who stood separately failed to win one. The Social Democrats on the other hand won 72 seats, but were kept from government by a coalition of capitalist parties. Even in the city and parish elections of 1932 where the Nazis gained ground, it was entirely at the expense of the bourgeois parties, and not the Social Democrats.

In 1928 the Nazis were no bigger than 7,000 members. By 1931 it was estimated they had grown to 300,000. Even so when Goebbels visited Vienna in 1933, he addressed a rally of 15,000 compared to the millions who thronged in Germany.

Leadership the decisive factor

Furthermore the Austrian fascists were riven with divisions. The Styrian Heimwehren alone marched under three different banners—the green and white of Styrian reaction, the black, white and red of German imperialism and the swastika of the Nazis. Moreover, the semi-Bonapartist governments of the Austrian bourgeois vacillated between the German Nazis and Italian fascism, tending toward closer relations with Mussolini.

The balance of class forces weighed decisively in favour of the Austrian working class. However, in an epoch of revolution and counter-revolution, the subjective factor, the question of leadership, becomes the important question.

The fascists knew how to achieve power and were determined to do so. The leaders of the Social Democrats on the other hand, had no understanding of the nature of fascism and were terrified of taking power into their own hands. Despite the fact that a few of their leaders showed personal courage when they took up arms against the Nazis in 1934—too little and too late—in the last analysis the 'Austro-Marxist' leaders were no different than the leaders of the German Social



Trotsky with some of his supporters in the International Left Opposition. Trotsky described Austro-marxism as "a learned and pompous theory of passivity and capitulation."

Democrats who allowed Hitler to take power without a fight. The only thing which differentiated the Austro-Marxists from the rest of the Second International—and which made them even more dangerous—was their ability to cloak their treachery in the most left-sounding phrases and "revolutionary" speeches. When the May Day crowds had dispersed and they were faced with a concrete situation, however, they were always quick to find reasons why revolutionary action was untimely or counter-productive and to erect some theoretical justification in radical sounding terminology. In the words of Trotsky Austro-Marxism was "a learned and pompous theory of passivity and capitulation" distinguished by "its abhorrence of revolutionary action and its fear of it". Each successive crisis proved this over and over again.

In the '20s the fascist Heimwehren began a terrorist campaign against the labour movement. In July 1927 they opened fire on a peaceful Social Democratic demonstration killing a child and a war cripple. The killers were brought before the capitalist courts and acquitted. The next day when the Viennese workers read of their acquittal in the Social Democratic daily, the *Arbeiterzeitung*, a spontaneous protest movement developed. Mass meetings were held in the factories and workplaces and marches began to the city centre. Men, women and children flocked in tens of thousands from the workers' districts in a totally peaceful and unarmed demonstration against the class injustice of the courts.

Suddenly, without provocation, the commandant of the mounted police gave the signal to fire and the cavalry charged into the crowd, sabres bared.

Barricades were erected to halt the mounted police, and the workers drove those on foot back into the Palace of Justice.

From inside the police proceeded to empty their ammunition indiscriminately into the crowd. Around the city any gathering of the workers was fired upon by police using dum-dum bullets to cause maximum injury.

Incensed the workers burnt the Palace of Justice to the ground. Despite the police brutality, socialist ambulance crews attempted to rescue wounded officers and to rescue those inside from the inferno. For their efforts 11 of them were shot dead by the police.

Role of the general strike

Street fighting raged throughout the day. In all 86 workers, spouses and children were killed and 1,100 wounded. A general strike was called and Austria was gripped by a revolutionary crisis.

The class nature of the government and state machinery was illuminated in a brilliant light. Their readiness to defend the fascists and to use them with the police to slaughter workers and destroy democracy was clear. The duty of the Social Democrat leaders was to reply with an equally ruthless stand in defence of their class. However, instead of arming the workers and mobilising the Schutzbund to crush reaction and take power, the terrified Social Democratic leaders bellowed for the workers to cease fighting, condemned violence and called on the workers to return to their homes. Without the arming of the workers and mobilising for power, the general strike became a 'demonstra-

tion with folded arms'. Within three days it was defeated.

Centrists and their relations on the ultra-left are fond of propagating the slogan of a General Strike in a light-minded manner. It is portrayed as the ultimate weapon in the class struggle and raised from an important tactic to the level of a suprahistorical panacea for all ills. For Marxists, however, the employment of a general strike must first be preceded by a painstaking analysis of the concrete situation. Trotsky explained that under certain historical conditions a general strike can be used to force the enemy to retreat and to gain partial though temporary gains for the working class. However, in Austria the concrete situation meant that class tensions were reaching their highest pitch. The ruling class was preparing for civil war and the question of power was posed before the working class. In this situation, the general strike in itself is insufficient to guarantee democracy. The defence of democracy demanded that the task of the hour was the seizure of power by the proletariat. This in turn meant the arming of the workers and preparation for insurrection. The general strike in these circumstances provides the basis for mobilising the revolutionary forces for the decisive battle and not an act of defiant fist waving and shouting.

Trotsky explained that "in so far as the general strike remains only a strike it inevitably under these conditions, dooms itself to defeat. In order to snatch victory, the strategy of the strike must grow into the strategy of revolution, it must elevate itself to the level of resolute actions, replying to every blow with a double blow. . . The strike must be accompanied with and supplemented by the arming of the workers, the disarming of the fascists' bands, the removal of the Bonapartists from power, and the seizure of the material apparatus of the state".

Indeed, Trotsky went on to explain that; "if the leading workers' parties are not prepared to bring the struggle to its conclusion, then the general strike, by sharpening the situation, can only hasten the crushing of the proletariat".

The events of 1927 proved that the Austrian workers were prepared to take the most decisive measures and bring the struggle to its logical conclusion. For the ruling class it was evident that the Social Democracy could no longer be relied upon to keep the masses in check and guarantee the sanctity of capitalism. They turned instead to their second auxiliary, the fascists, and emboldened by the defeat of the general strike and the weakness of the Social Democratic leaders, they moved in the direction of reaction.

In 1929, the world banking crisis was triggered off by the collapse of the main Austrian bank the "Boden-Credit-Anstalt". With the economy in ruins, with mass unemployment and increasing poverty, the social basis of the bourgeois began to evaporate. Austria passed through a period of semi-Bonapartist dictatorship. The ruling class still hoped, at that stage, to solve their problems without an open break with legality and the dangerous and expensive overhead of civil war and fascist dictatorship. First and foremost it was necessary to emasculate and demoralise the workers' movement. Increasingly they used the military police apparatus against the workers' organisations. The 'Schutzbund' was banned and a campaign of persecution, house searches and the confiscation of weapons began. In order not to utilise the military and police too openly, and too frequently, the fascists were more and more allowed a free hand to carry out the bourgeois's dirty work. Social Democratic offices, workers' clubs and homes were burnt and socialists, communists and trade unionists murdered.

On the surface the government distanced itself from the Nazi terrorism. Decree laws were introduced and later a system of lightning courts with the power of the death penalty was established ostensibly to deal with the Nazis. Simultaneously, however, two Heinwehren Nazis were appointed to the posts of Minister of the Interior, with control of the Army and the Police, and another Chief of Police. The courts and laws, of course, were used against the workers' movement and not the Nazis.

State defends capitalism

The bourgeois still hoped to be able to neutralise the workers' movement through Bonapartist methods, and to keep the fascists in check with concessions and agreements. The rabid dog of fascism represented an unreliable and dangerous tool. Unchecked, it was possible they could provoke the workers into clashes which might escalate out of control. In preparing for war against the working class the bourgeois preferred to rely on their more reliable representatives rather than the middle-class meglomaniacs amongst the Nazis. Civil war, and a fascist dictatorship is a cost which the bourgeois will only pay when there is no other way out. In its frenzied striving for power, the fascists are even prepared to attack the traditional parties of the ruling class as in Italy and Poland. However, having assumed power they defend the interests of finance capital, while creating a fascist bureaucracy which takes its 'pound of

flesh' from capitalism for having destroyed the workers' movement. Trotsky explained that fascism has its own army, own interests and own logic of operation, which can also bring it into sharp conflict with the existing bourgeois parties. Fascism whips up the petit-bourgeois into a state of mass neurosis and to maintain itself it needs to move from one victory to another in a bloodthirsty drive for power. Thus in 1929 and 1931 the fascists attempted two aborted coups and a number of assassination attempts, one of which eventually succeeded in killing the Bonapartist Chancellor Dollfuss after the counter-revolution in 1934.

It was the duty of the workers' leaders to utilise the divisions and frictions between the different representatives of capitalism to defeat reaction and prepare the ground for socialist revolution. One decisive defeat for the fascists could break their momentum and roll back their advance. The only reason why the abortive fascist coup in Styria was defeated was because of the swift and decisive actions of the local Social Democratic leaders who armed the workers and prepared for civil war. Had the Social Democrats nationally used that opportunity to mobilise the Austrian workers the tables could have been turned and capitalist reaction crushed. Instead it was allowed to continue to arm itself and regroup its forces, while the Social Democrats chloroformed the workers with pacifist phrases.

In his famous Linzer programme Otto Bauer declared: "The Austrian workers established the democratic republic and forced the bourgeois to accept it. We are going to use this democratic republic in order to secure power by democratic means and spiritual weapons". He asserted that the bourgeoisie "will not dare to attack democracy so long as the police and the gendarmarie are not on the side of the fascists and the monarchists". While Otto Bauer wielded his "spiritual weapons" the fascists collected machine guns and howitzers, and off-duty police put on fascist uniforms and murdered workers.

As civil war approached and the bourgeois prepared to drown the workers in blood, the Austro-Marxists carried democracy to an absurdity. They argued that Parliamentary democracy was sacrosanct and they could not assume power until they received 51% of the vote. Using their social reforms in the Vienna municipality to maintain their left credentials they whined that although they were strong in Vienna they were still too weak in the countryside to take power.

While the Social Democrats waited for their magical 51%, the fascists

adopted their programme—the Kerneuturger Oath—“We grasp at power over the state. We reject democracy and Parliament. We stand for the principles of the Leadership State”. There was no middle road left. The semi-Bonapartist regime would either result in fascist dictatorship or socialist revolution.

The Austro-Marxists totally failed to understand what Engels long ago explained; that in the last analysis the state could be reduced to armed bodies of men with material appendages such as gaols, courts, etc. The state machinery represented the interests of the capitalists. During periods of boom the capitalists can afford the luxury of material reforms for the workers and a democratic parliamentary appendage which acts as a committee of conciliation between the classes. However, in periods of crisis, when reforms can no longer be afforded and the contradictions and conflicts between the classes threatens the profits and the very economic system of capitalism, conciliation becomes impossible and Parliament is rendered useless. The armed detachments are needed to defend capitalism and smash the working class.

Capitalists dispense with Parliament

The only choice facing the workers is to defend themselves with their own armed detachments, to smash the state machinery of the bourgeoisie and create a workers' state. The surest way to victory was to strike first.

To the Austro-Marxists, however this was illegal! Socialism had to wait until they achieved the 51% needed in the bourgeois constitution. As for violence, Bauer stated: “Only if we have to defend democracy against counter-revolution would we be left with no other choice than to fight with violent means”. In other words violence was only permissible in the defence of capitalist democracy i.e. in the interests of the bourgeois who no longer had any interest in democracy, and not the establishment of a socialist state. Moreover, they effectively argued violence could only be employed once a coup had taken place, but not the day before in order to prevent it.

Trotsky accused the Austro-Marxists “not of fighting for democracy, but of not fighting for it”. He explained that “democracy in Austria needs not to be defended, but to be built anew on a different basis. Democracy has to be revitalised, it has to be won, and that can only be done through the conquest of power by the working class”.

On 4 March, 1933, Chancellor



Both Hitler and Mussolini gave financial aid to the fascist Heimwehren, or Home Guard.

Dollfuss dissolved Parliament on a constitutional i.e. ‘democratic’ technicality. Command of the Army and police was placed in the hands of Major Fey—a Nazi. Dollfuss ruled by decree. Right of assembly was annulled and press censorship introduced. While Dollfuss negotiated with the Nazis and the Italian fascists, the Social Democrats demanded that he implement the democratic constitution and restore Parliament. They offered him a “democratic front” against the Nazis. The Social Democrats totally failed to understand that despite differences and sometimes fierce clashes between the bourgeois parties and the fascists, fundamentally they were united as one in their goal to destroy the workers’ movement and abolish democracy. The army armed the fascists, the capitalists paid their bills, the courts acquitted their murderers, the police turned a blind eye and the bourgeois government knew full well the situation and helped direct it. The ‘democratic’ government of Dollfuss was the driving force of reaction—to call for a ‘united democratic front’ against the Nazis was to hoodwink the working class, to miseducate them as to the real intentions of Dollfuss, and to prepare the ground for their defeat. The only democratic forces which could be relied upon were those of the workers’ organisations and parties in a ‘united front’ independent of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties who stood for reaction, as the only means of defending capitalism.

On 11 December Dollfuss declared, “The old Parliament with its leaders and members is gone—never to return. . . Socialist influence is dead—for ever. I announce the death of Parliament”. On 20 September

Dollfuss had taken personal control of the Army, police, gendarmerie, Foreign Affairs and Agriculture.

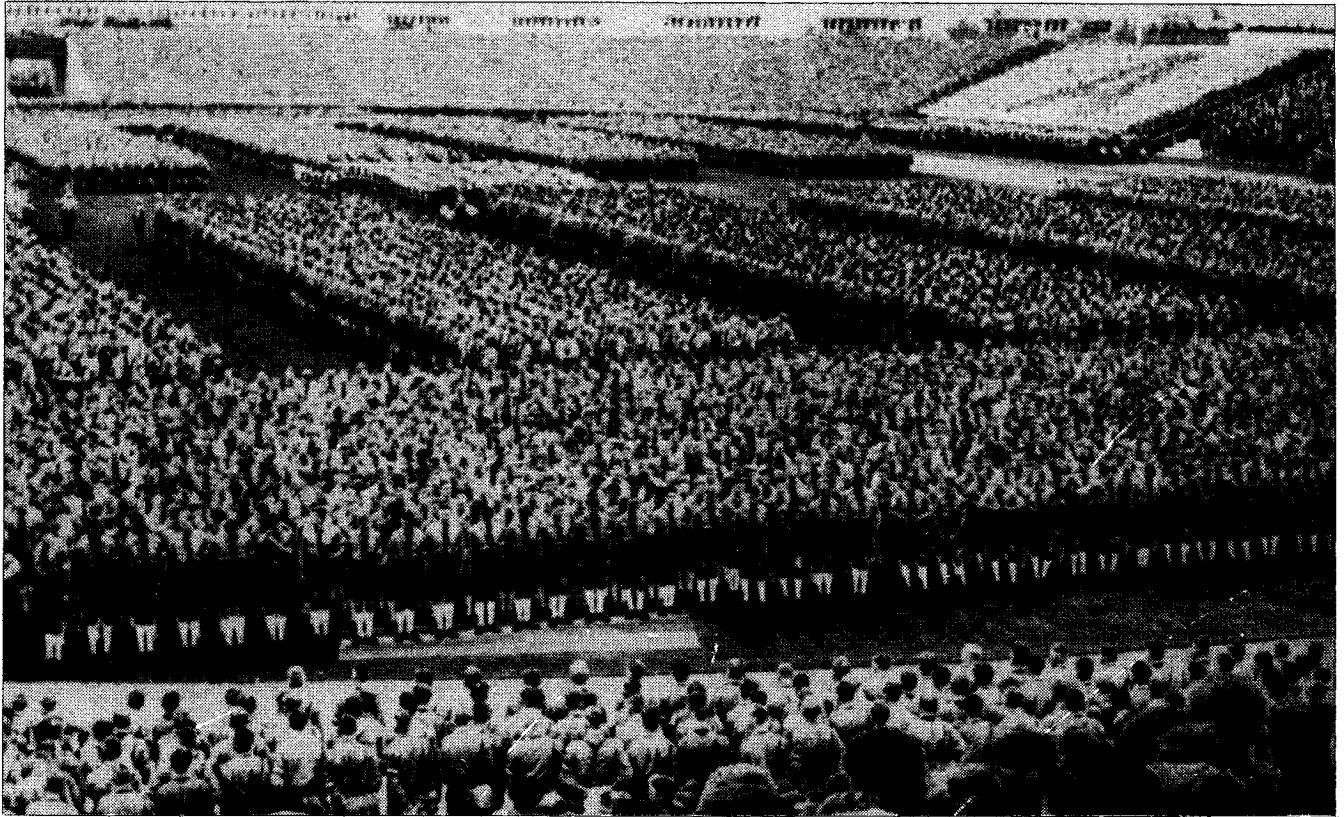
Even so on 19 January, 1934, the Social Democratic daily, the *Arbeiterzeitung*, declared, “The Social Democratic Party would not hesitate today to give the fullest support to a democratic government in suppressing Nazi terrorism. By rallying the democratic forces . . . the government could end the uncertainty of recent months.” Later that month Dollfuss banned the *Arbeiterzeitung*.

Fascist uprising

On 29 January the counter revolutionary uprising began in the Tyrole. Fierce fighting broke out in all the major towns of Austria. In Linz the Social Democratic headquarters was bombarded by artillery. Yet the Social Democratic Party Central Committee met in Vienna and called on the Linz workers to halt their resistance! The Social Democrats feared it would upset Dollfuss whom they call on to restore order by calling a conference of provisional governors!!

In Vienna the army, police and fascists occupied municipal buildings, cordoned off the city centre, surrounded the Social Democratic HQ and began to move in on the workers’ districts. Because of the past policies of the Social Democrats the workers were totally unprepared both politically and organisationally. A general strike was called which because of the confusion caused by the previous policies of the Social Democrats, received only a patchy response.

As the army and fascists surrounded the huge blocks of workers’ flats with machine guns, mortars and ar-



A massive Nazi rally at Nuremberg. The forces of Austrian fascism were far weaker than those of the German Nazis.

tillery, the workers tried desperately to arm themselves. The exact whereabouts of the stockpiles of 'Schutzbund' weapons hidden years before in the walls and grounds of the workers' blocks were only known to the 'Schutzbund' leaders and local organisers, many of whom had been arrested, killed or had fled, and failed to divulge their location. *The Times'* correspondent in Vienna at the time described the scenes:

"In one big block of flats 'Engels House' the workers and their families spent the whole night digging up the yard and probing the walls, the women with bloody hands ripped up the earth only to find nothing. In another block 'Karl Marx House'... they knew where the weapons were buried in the wall and they were furiously distributed."

"Everywhere where the members of the Schutzbund could find weapons they defended their homes until the ammunition ran out. In many places the police had to use armoured cars and tanks in order to break the resistance. Outside the Larer Hill, the Schutzbund erected a formidable defence system with barricades and proper bunkers which traversed the battle ground between the houses. These "graves" held 2,000 armed Schutzbund scantily clothed, in bad shoes and almost completely without nutrition or drinking water. These 2,000 men lasted three ice-cold February days and nights".

An estimated 2,000 were slaughtered and 5,000 wounded. Tens

of thousands were rounded up and put in concentration camps. The trade union and Social Democratic organisations of the workers were smashed. Remaining activists were murdered, driven underground or escaped abroad.

'Austro-Marxists'

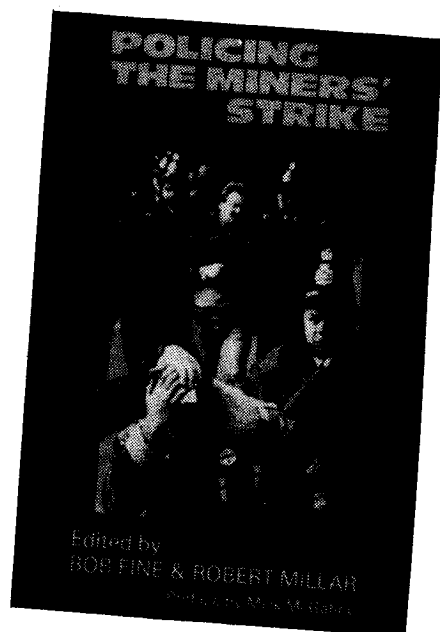
In exile some Social Democratic leaders whose policies had laid the basis for the victory of reaction, were quick to 'theorise' on the reasons for the defeat, and to recount stories of their armed resistance. No doubt some showed personal courage—but a clear understanding of the nature of capitalism and the tasks posed by history is necessary if the working class is to be victorious. Time and time again the Austrian workers proved they were prepared for revolutionary struggle, but every opportunity was thrown away by the Austro-Marxist leaders. Each time they recoiled from revolutionary action, fascism became bolder and more aggressive. Large sections of the working class fell into despair and became indifferent. Despite the courageous stand made by thousands of Austrian workers in 1934 the fact cannot be ignored that during the counter-revolution the mass of the proletariat remained passive and confused. The responsibility for that and the consequent defeat of the Austrian working class lies solely on the shoulders of the leaders of the Social Democrats and the false policies they pursued from 1918 onwards. To make

a successful revolution a whole period of careful preparation is necessary. The policies of the Social Democrats and their actions over the preceding 16 years did nothing but prepare the proletariat for defeat. Without the correct political leadership the strongest Social Democratic Party in the world proved useless in the face of reaction.

Trotsky summarised the lessons of the Austrian defeat when he wrote in 1934:

"The courageous struggles of the Austrian workers only prove that the proletariat can be bold and ready to struggle even under the most unfavourable conditions and with the worst leadership. The fact that a few Social Democratic leaders took part in the battles is at best only testimony to their personal valour. But the working class demands political insight and revolutionary courage from its leadership. Personal virtues, and moreover those that are induced by events, cannot substitute for a lack of these qualities... What is necessary, is systematic revolutionary education of the vanguard and winning the trust of the majority of the proletariat in the practical intelligence and daring of the proletarian general staff. Without this precondition victory is completely impossible... Only a leadership that recognises in advance that the revolution is unavoidable, that makes this the fundamental principle guiding its actions and draws all the practical conclusions flowing from this can measure up to the situation at the critical hour".

Book Reviews



Policing The Miners' Strike

Edited by Bob Fine
and Robert Millar
Published by
Lawrence and
Wishart, 1985 £4.95

Reviewed by Ken Smith

SINCE THE end of the miners' strike there has been an embarrassed reluctance to discuss the lessons of the dispute on the part of the right-wing leaders of the labour and trade union movement. Obviously this has been due in no small measure to the guilty consciences of some of the right wing leaders for their lack of support for the NUM.

However, this silence at the top will not be mirrored below—in the ranks of the trade union movement, for there are many important and urgent lessons to be learnt from the miners' strike, not least on the question of the use of the law.

Throughout the strike the "sanctity of the law" was thrown at the leaders and members of the NUM from every angle; including the leadership of the Labour Party and TUC. At certain points in the strike the condemnation of violence, allegedly attributable to the NUM, resonated from every avenue of central government, the police and the media as part of an orchestrated campaign to undermine the strike.

Now after the strike it has been shown that these allegations of violence were made to be more apparent than they were actually real. The acquittals of hundreds of miners on "Riot" and "Unlawful Assembly" charges arising from the Orgreave picket line, where the police prosecution fell to shreds due to inadequate evidence, amply demonstrates this to be the case.

Also there has been widespread revulsion and protest at the jailing of Dean Hancock and Russell Shanklin. This has particularly arisen from the arbitrary way in which they received life imprisonment for the death of taxi driver David Wilkie.

the so-called "impartial law" was used as an essential weapon as part of an overall strategy to break the strike.

One of the main conclusions any activist in the labour movement would draw from reading this book was how the British ruling class had systematically prepared for over a decade to inflict a major defeat on the unions and in particular the NUM. Part of the armoury of this strategy was of course the use of the law and the book more than adequately manages to show the different ways in which this was carried out.

The book is a collection of essays and articles mainly from academics and solicitors, which is in fact one of

Week Commencing	Demonstrators at Collieries	Numbers stopped by Police road-blocks	Total number of demonstrators who would have been in coalfield but for Intercept Policy
26 March	913	3,197	4,110
2 April	1,525	4,378	5,903
9 April	3,207	5,121	8,328
16 April	4,419	4,647	8,886
24 April	3,910	3,355	7,265
30 April	19,968	9,731	29,699
8 May	8,749	7,511	16,260
14 May	8,011	6,819	14,830
21 May	9,648	7,094	16,742
29 May	2,528	4,974	7,502
4 June	4,088	7,351	11,439
11 June	6,277	30,054	9,331
18 June	5,708	7,192	12,900
25 June	7,470	9,504	16,974
2 July	6,934	6,748	13,682
9 July	10,585	11,613	22,198
16 July	9,328	17,874	27,202
23 July	4,723	7,104	11,827
30 July	3,400	13,532	16,932
6 August	5,270	10,427	15,697
13 August	2,753	4,409	7,162
20 August	3,307	1,392	4,699
27 August	1,345	8	1,353
3 September	1,561	58	1,619
10 September	1,480	749	2,229
17 September	1,951	361	2,312
24 September	1,955	76	2,031

(From the affidavit of Chief Inspector Colin Sheppard⁹)

(Note: While the reliability of these figures cannot be guaranteed the numbers stopped were nevertheless very substantial)

It is to the credit of the book *Policing the Miners' Strike*, that it exposes in advance, (the book was written though not published before the end of the strike) the calculated way in which

its shortcomings in that it has a miniscule input from the miners and their wives and their experience of the use of the law in the strike.

Having said that, the book does give

a very good analysis and reasonably good commentary upon the different legal aspects of the strike. In addition it shows that although the law and the full weight of the police force could have been an enormous obstacle against a union in struggle, the effective use of the law was limited. At worst, from the government and police point of view, it fuelled up enormous social antagonisms and conflict.

Some parts of the book also show the inventiveness of the working class in overcoming such obstacles as police road blocks. This is shown by some miners from Treforgan NUM in South Wales who having been stopped at a road block produced a letter which the local Chief Officer signed and they managed to get all the way to Nottingham without being stopped. To quote from the book itself:

"The letter that the Treforgan members produced had been written in Treforgan inviting themselves to Oller-ton to address a fictional meeting of working miners! The driver of the car commented: 'If it wasn't for the forged letter, we wouldn't have got through the road block'." (page 142)

The article by John McIlroy shows how ineffective all the so-called "Civil" laws, ie anti-trade union legislation, of the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts were. He clearly illustrates that it was the strategy of the government to use "criminal law" instead, especially at the start of the strike. The use of the civil law through injunctions and sequestrations was only to be used later in the strike when the government was more confident due to the lack of effective solidarity action that had been up to that point delivered by the TUC.

Bail conditions—'legal' block on pickets

John McIlroy explains the reasoning behind this in a quote from the Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers. "The Conservative leadership have been enduringly haunted by the disasters of the early 1970s. Sensing the possibility of a working majority in Nottinghamshire, they feared that the use of the emotionally charged employment laws directly against their union might drive dissidents back into the welcoming arms of Arthur Scargill. One minister pertinently commented 'When we passed that legislation (the Employment Acts) it was not in contemplation that a union would be split'." (page 85)

The point is further exemplified by Louise Christian in her article, "Restriction without conviction", examining the saturation policing of the Nottingham coalfield in the first three months of the strike and the rough arbitrary justice that was handed out to

miners, along with some sophisticated methods more akin to those that have been employed in Northern Ireland.

The extent of the saturation policing is best illustrated by her through the table showing how many pickets were stopped by road blocks in Nottingham at certain key times throughout the strike.

Also, drawing from her own experience as a solicitor during the strike she shows how restrictive bail conditions were used to try and knock out large numbers of miners from picketing.

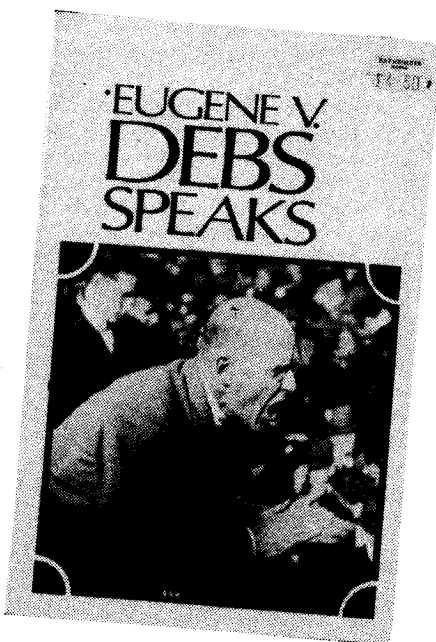
"Defendants were usually seen by their solicitor for only a few minutes in 'the cage' and were then shepherd-ed into the dock in groups of about 12 at a time. The charges against each of them were read out. A 'presenting police officer' (who was not the officer involved in arresting them, but one of the half dozen or so officers at the NUM Charge Centre solely engaged in court duties) read out a narrative which often contained extremely vague allegations. Many of the charges were for 'threatening behaviour' or 'abusive words' likely to cause a breach of the peace. Narratives read out at the first court hearing sometimes did not specify the words or threatening behaviour alleged to have been used by the defendant, stating only that all the striking

miners on the picket line concerned had behaved in a threatening manner, had been hostile to the police, been shouting and pushing, etc. Some narratives introduced irrelevant allegations of misbehavior by persons other than the defendant, including, for example, stone throwing, and assaults on the police."

Preparing for future battles

In conclusion it is inevitable that eventually there will be a whole plethora of books, documentaries and memoirs produced about the miners' strike. Their true merit and value will ultimately be judged in the assistance they can give to future generations of workers in struggle.

Policing The Miners' Strike is a book which has limitations—a lack of a clear, wider political analysis of the implications of the strike, (which in fairness the book does not have any pretensions of achieving) and the lack of any real input from the miners and their families. Despite that it may accomplish a positive role in alerting workers to prepare for the tactics of the police in future battles and in that respect it is worth buying provided it is viewed as part of a broader political analysis of the strike.



GIVEN THE conventional wisdom, it may come as something of a surprise to many readers that the American Socialist Party not only existed but successfully fought many elections. This book points out that in 1912 the Socialist Party had "one thousand of its members elected to political office

Eugene V Debs speaks

Published by
Pathfinder Press,
1970 £4.50

Reviewed by
Mike Waddington

in 337 towns and cities. These included 56 mayors, 305 officials, 155 school officials and four pound keepers". In 1911 Victor Berger became the first socialist elected to Congress on the Socialist Party ticket. Socialists occupied the mayoralties in Schenectady (New York) Berkley (California) and Milwaukee. Eugene Victor Debs (1855-1926), was the founder and inspirer of this party.

Debs was described by Lenin as "the American Bebel" after the founder of the German Marxist Party, the SPD. He was 5 times candidate for President, his vote steadily accumulating to

the nearly 1 million polled in 1920—when he campaigned as convict NO. 9653 in jail for making an anti-war, pro-Bolshevik speech.

Debs had come a long way. He was elected to the Indiana State Legislature in 1884 on the Democratic ticket but his experience of the class struggle won him to socialism.

"I was to be baptized in socialism in the roar of conflict. I thank the gods for reserving to this fitful occasion the fiat 'let there be light'—the light that streams in steady radiance upon the broad way to the socialist republic" (From *How I became a Socialist*). Debs organised the American Railway Union—in one year recruiting 150,000 members. He won a quick industrial victory but was immediately thrown into the Pullman strike of 1894 where defeat was occasioned by massive violence and intimidation from the bosses and unofficial strike breaking by Gompers the leader of the American Federation of Labour. Debs was thrown into jail for refusing to comply with an injunction.

"This was my first practical lesson in socialism, though wholly unaware that it was called by that name."

Whilst in jail Debs received Marxist literature from Victor Berger, including Volume 1 of *Capital*. "The writings of Kautsky were so clear and conclusive that I readily grasped not merely his argument, but also caught the spirit of his socialist utterance—and I thank him and all who helped me out of the darkness into light."

1901—Socialist Party formed

The ARU was dissolved in 1897 and reconstituted as the Social Democracy of America which itself became the Social Democratic Party in 1898. It was for this party that Debs first stood for president securing 91,000 votes in 1900. In his manifesto Debs declared, "It is therefore a question not of 'reform', the mask of fraud, but of revolution. The capitalist system must be overthrown, class rule abolished and wage slavery supplanted by Co-operative industry".

In 1901 the SDP merged with a split off from Daniel De Leon's sectarian Socialist Labour Party to form the Socialist Party (SP)

The 1904 Presidential campaign was launched with the SP members donating half a day's pay—with this money 22 full-time organisers were taken on.

Debs always feared disunity and splits so he always opposed internal disputes, taking it to the ridiculous extent of refusing to attend the SP's annual conference or stand for its EC.

As in the European labour move-

ment at the time there was an overwhelming pressure for unity at all costs which resulted not only in the cohabitation of revolutionaries with right wing reformists but also outright pro-capitalist supporters who sugar-coated themselves with a dusting of Deb's Marxism.

Indeed the success of the SP as a potential dispenser of "the spoils of office" led Debs to denounce careerism and remind the SP why they were fighting.

"All the votes of the people would do us no good if our party ceased to be a revolutionary party, or only incidentally so, while yielding more and more to the pressure to modify the principles and programme of the party for the sake of swelling the vote..." (*Danger Ahead*, 1911), adding, "Voting for socialism is not socialism anymore than a menu is a meal".

Again reflecting the processes of the European labour movement, the general upswing of capitalism led the leaders of the SP towards abandoning socialist objectives. In fact Debs only narrowly secured the nomination for president in 1912 (polling 897,000).

Debs opposed a witch-hunt launched by the right wing in 1912, "Let us waste as little time as possible of our militant spirit upon one another. We shall need it all for our capitalist friends".

The SP had a powerful press to which Debs regularly contributed—five dailies, 262 weeklies, 10 monthlies, 46 publications in foreign languages of which eight were dailies. Deb's own *Appeal to Reason* was the most popular weekly.

With the outbreak of World War One Debs took an internationalist line.

"I am not a capitalist soldier; I am a proletarian revolutionist... I am opposed to every war but one. I am for that war with heart and soul and that is the world-wide war of social revolution..."

Trotsky commented in the Dewey Commission hearings (p 479):

"It is quite well known that during the war every internationalist was declared to be an agent of the enemy government so it was in the case of... E Debs and others in the US".

The Canton, Ohio speech (1918) is probably Deb's most famous speech, taking up 35 pages in this book. We owe its existence to the government stenographers who recorded the "evidence". The speech made in June to 1,200 people came after Debs had visited three socialists who were in jail for their opposition to the war.

The speech is a brilliant example of Debs at his best. He reviews the Marxist position on war, and compares the role of the German socialists' opposi-

tion to the Kaiser before the war with Roosevelt's courting of the "beast". He refers to the socialists languishing in jail.

"They have come to realise, as many of us have, that it is extremely dangerous to exercise the constitutional right of free speech in a country fighting to make democracy safer in the world." Debs declared his support for the Bolshevik revolution.

"Here, in this alert and inspiring assemblage our hearts are with the Bolsheviks of Russia. These heroic men and women, those unconquerable comrades have by their incomparable valor and sacrifice added fresh lustre to the fame of the international movement... the Russian revolution proclaimed its glorious triumph in its ringing and inspiring appeal to the peoples of all the earth..."

'I am a Bolshevik'

Debs, nearly 63 years old, was rewarded with a 10 year jail sentence under the Espionage Act. Just before he went to jail he wrote:

"Lenin and Trotsky were the men of the hour and under their fearless, incorruptible and uncompromising leadership the Russian proletariat has held the fort against the combined assaults of all the ruling class powers of the earth. It is a magnificent spectacle. It stirs the blood and warms the heart of every revolutionist and it challenges the admiration of all the world... from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet I am Bolshevik and proud of it..."

It was whilst in jail that Debs, standing for the SP as convict 9653, received nearly one million votes (919,799) for the presidency.

The Russian revolution's impact resulted in the majority of the SP crystallising into an official "Left Wing", with its own paper, *The Age of Revolution*. The Left Wing split off, prematurely, in 1919 to form two Communist Parties eventually to unify in 1922. Debs remained within the SP. Debs was amnestied on Christmas Day 1921. He died on 20 October 1926.

Trotsky, who had known Debs in New York, wrote in *My Life* (p 284):

"Old Eugene Debs stood out prominently among the older generations because of the quenchless inner flame of his socialist idealism. Although he was a romantic and a preacher, and not at all a politician or a leader, he was a sincere revolutionary; yet he succumbed to the influence of people who were in every respect his inferiors".

Debs is worth the read, not as a nostalgic trip into the past but to rediscover the traditions of American struggles for today.



'The Soldiers' Strikes of 1919'

By Andrew Rothstein, Published by the Journeyman Press, 1985. £3.95.

**Reviewed by
Clive Heemskerk**

"...A REPRESENTATIVE of the soldiers threatened that, if (the armed harbour guard) remained, they would procure their arms from their quarters at the rest camp and forcibly remove the guard. The latter was consequently withdrawn, and the malcontents placed pickets at the approaches to the harbour to prevent British soldiers from entering..."

In this way the *Morning Post* of the 6 January reported one incident in the mutiny of 10,000 soldiers at the Folkestone Transit camp in 1919. The revolt started on the 3 January when 3,000 soldiers about to embark ship for duty in France instead held a mass meeting and decided to march to other rest camps in the area, and then onto Folkestone Town Hall to protest at their retention in uniform despite the conclusion of the armistice to end World War One eight weeks earlier in November 1918. After assurances from the Town Army Commandant that only those who wished to would have to return to France the soldiers marched backed to their camps.

However, the following day some of

the soldiers were ordered onto ships to France. They refused the orders and this time set up pickets at the railway station to meet other soldiers returning from leave and, as described in the newspaper report, effectively sealed off the harbour with their pickets. There was another march, 10,000 strong, to the Town Hall where it was announced that a 'Soldiers Union' had been formed to negotiate with the authorities. This time, with staff hurriedly sent down from the Ministry of Labour to defuse the situation, the soldiers demands were met.

The events at Folkestone were the first in a widespread movement which developed throughout the British Armed Forces during January and February 1919 against delays in demobilisation and the conditions in the army. In his book, 'The Soldiers Strikes of 1919', first published in 1980 but now reprinted in paperback, Andrew Rothstein documents over 50 incidences of soldiers and sailors involved in strikes, demonstrations and protest meetings. Drawing on local newspaper reports, War Cabinet papers, War Office records, memoirs of generals and ministers, and the recollections of the soldiers themselves, Rothstein describes events ranging from Stirling, where soldiers stormed the police station to release two arrested demonstrators, to Milford Haven where sailors on the HMS Kilbride went on strike over low pay and hoisted the Red Flag above their ship!

Of course, many of the details of this magnificent movement, which struck terror into the hearts of the ruling class, were suppressed both in the newspapers of the time—Rothstein reports a War Cabinet decision to censor press coverage—and undoubtedly in the military records made available since, especially where the movement took the form of a serious rebellion or where the authorities had to use violence to contain the movement.

The Russian Revolution

Rothstein, for example, quotes the biographer of Lord Trenchard who, using Trenchard's private records and his report to the War Office, describes how Trenchard led 250 armed soldiers backed by military police to secure the surrender of 5,000 soldiers who had taken over Southampton docks. However, Rothstein could find no hint of a mutiny in Southampton either in the Southampton press or in the War Office papers made available to him at the Public Record Office. Nonetheless, despite such obstacles, he has performed a service to all socialists in providing valuable historical evidence about a significant chapter in the

history of the labour movement.

The main theme of Rothstein's book is to show how the soldiers strikes of January and February 1919 prevented British imperialism from launching a large-scale intervention to overthrow the Bolsheviks and restore capitalism in Russia. The Russian Revolution acted as a tremendous inspiration to workers throughout Europe. No country was untouched in the months and years immediately following the revolution. In fact the revolutionary wave unleashed by the victory of the Bolsheviks hastened the end of the First World War. A revolt by the Bulgarian troops who occupied their army headquarters and proclaimed a republic on the 25 September 1918 forced the Bulgarian government to sue for peace. An insurrection by armed workers and soldiers in Budapest on the 30 October, a rising in Prague, and a revolution in Vienna on the 3 November heralded the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire. As late as 21 October 1918 Sir Douglas Haig, the British Commander-in-Chief, predicted that Germany could not be militarily defeated until well into 1919. And yet, just 21 days later on the 11 November, after the revolutionary intervention of the German workers, soldiers and sailors through a naval military at Kiel and a general strike in Berlin, the Kaiser had to flee to Holland and an armistice was signed. Many German towns and cities lay in the hands of the workers. In Bavaria, as in Hungary, a Soviet Republic was established in the spring of 1919.

The British ruling class watched aghast, terrified of the international movement of the workers and determined to crush what they saw as the centre of contagion, the young Russian workers state. As Rothstein records, Churchill even argued on the day before the armistice, that "we might have to build up the German Army, as it was important to get Germany on her legs again for the fear of the spread of Bolshevism," a policy actually carried out by the British ruling class. And the War Cabinet, as early as November 1917, had decided to aid the opposition to the Bolsheviks inside Russia. In February 1918 British troops were landed at Murmansk in North Russia. In June 1918 British and other forces occupied Vladivostok in the Far East. In July British troops seized Baku and the oilfields of the Caucasus. In August British, French and American troops occupied Archangel, the most important port in North Russia.

Immediately after the Armistice the British ruling class drew up plans to expand the intervention in support of the 'Whites', the pro-capitalist forces in Russia. A General Staff plan for

occupying Batum and Novorossiisk, for Regular Army volunteers to go to Transcaspia and for reinforcements in Murmansk and Archangel. On the 12 December the War Cabinet agreed to maintain 14 to 20 divisions in addition to the regular army—virtually a war footing! And, in fact, by the 31 December, a full seven weeks after the armistice, just 108,000 out of 6,000,000 soldiers had been demobilised!

But these plans were brought to a shuddering halt by the soldiers' movement. Not the least of the obstacles to the capitalist designs was a mutiny at the Archangel front itself when soldiers of the 13th Battalion Yorkshires organised a meeting and refused to advance. This incident was one reflection of the 'unreliable state of the troops' in North Russia who were 'inclined to be mutinous' and accessible to 'active and insidious Bolshevik propaganda', according to a report to the Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff, March 1919.

Strike wave in Britain

Such events had a sobering effect on the military strategists with their plans for increased intervention. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, who in November had argued that "Our real danger now is not the Boche, but Bolshevism" and in December had signed the document on 'Military Commitments After Peace is Signed', by the end of January was arguing that the army was a "mine which may go up at any minute" and reluctantly urging the Prime Minister, Lloyd George to get "ready to clear out of Murmansk and Archangel next summer".

These insights provided by Rothstein are a crushing argument against those who maintain that a move by the working class to socialism will always be defeated by a successful intervention by foreign capitalist powers—they give a glimpse of the enormous attractive powers a socialist transformation of society in Britain, based on workers' democracy and appealing to support from workers abroad, would have throughout the world. However, the main lesson that Rothstein draws from these events for the reader is that the soldiers' movement caused "a decisive change in British foreign policy: namely, in the policy of intervention in Russia" (my emphasis—CH). It is this which represents the main weakness of the book.

Through a one-sided emphasis of the effect of the soldiers' movement on the foreign policy of the British ruling class, Rothstein fails to show that 'foreign policy' is a reflection of 'domestic policy'. In other words, that

not only were the British capitalists unable to mobilise the necessary forces to defeat Bolshevism abroad but that, if there had been a tested, revolutionary leadership at the head of the working class, then the ruling class would have been unable to stop Bolshevism, ie. revolution, at home. As Trotsky explained about this period, "if the pressure of the proletariat in the first, most critical years of the Soviet Republic proved to be effective enough (in preventing large-scale intervention—CH) then it was only because at that time for the workers of Europe it was not a question of exerting pressure, but of struggling for power... The struggle against war is decided not by pressure upon the government but only by the revolutionary struggle for power. The 'pacifist' effects of the proletarian class struggle, like its reformist effects, are only by-products of the revolutionary struggle for power..." (From *The Permanent Revolution*, pp143–144).

This was the real situation throughout the countries of Europe at the end of the First World War, including Britain. As the strikes swept through the armed forces the struggles on the industrial plane, which had gathered pace even in the last months of the war, were building to a crescendo. From the 25 January 40,000 engineering, shipbuilding and municipal workers struck in Belfast for a 44-hour week without loss of pay. Electricity was cut off except to hospitals, the tramworkers came out and the city's gas supply was cut. Belfast was under the control of the working class through the Trades Council and the General Strike Committee. From 27 January over 100,000 dockers, engineers, electricians, steel workers, shipyard workers, builders and miners in Glasgow came out for a 40 hour week. The electricians and engineers in London agreed to strike from 6 February in support of Belfast and Glasgow. The National Administrative Council of Shop Stewards, which in January 1920 was to affiliate to the 3rd International, met and demanded the immediate implementation of the 40-hour week. A general strike was inherent in the situation. And at exactly the same time the most serious mutiny of soldiers was taking place in Calais.

Following the arrest of a single soldier "for making a seditious speech" thousands of soldiers from different camps in the Calais area struck and elected delegates to the 'Calais Area Soldiers and Sailors Association', the embryo of a Soviet in all but name. One of the participants in the strike, Alf Killick, in a pamphlet published by *Militant* in 1976, described how "In

the manner of organisation we were greatly influenced by the Soviet method... each hut or group of tents to the same number, elected a delegate to the camp committee, and these committees then likewise elected delegates to the central area committee... We issued the daily orders instead of camp officers, and in the Valdelievre camp occupied the headquarters offices".

The Army Command responded by sending the 5th Army Corps under General Byng to suppress the revolt. In the War Office records it was reported that two whole divisions of the 5th Army, three Guards machine-gun battalions and four battalions of the 1st and 3rd Army had to be deployed at Calais, St Omer, Etaples, Le Havre, Rouen, Abbeville and Cherbourg to deal with the situation. However, as Alf Killick recalls, "... the first thing the men of the 5th Army did on arriving was to ask us for information as to how we did it and for advice on organisation. They followed our advice and joined the revolt... A really revolutionary situation was developing for which we were not really prepared. We felt, however, that we could not go much further unless we had evidence of support from the workers at home".

Labour leaders isolate soldiers

But there was no revolutionary movement strong enough to grasp the opportunities presented by the situation. The small revolutionary groups that existed at the time, the forerunners of the Communist Party such as the Socialist Labour Party, the Workers' Socialist Federation and the British Socialist Party, of which Rothstein was a member, were too weak and, in particular, without a strong influence or standing in the workers' traditional organisations, the Labour Party and the official structures of the trade unions. Their past failures to build support for Marxism within the Labour Party weakened their ability to challenge the right-wing Labour leaders and decisively intervene in events. Their weakness left the field clear for the labour and trade union leaders, while verbally opposing the government, to use their authority to stabilise the situation for the capitalists.

Faced with an all-out strike of London electricians the government changed the wartime Defence of the Realm Act regulations to make it an offence for workers to cause power cuts. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers Executive bowed to the government's pressure and suspended the Glasgow, Belfast and London District Committees. The UK Federa-

'Military Commitments After Peace Signed' was agreed on December 6th 1918—it included provision for British warships entering the Black Sea and tion of Shipbuilding, Engineering and Allied Trades National Negotiating Body instructed all shipbuilding workers to return to work. With these body blows aimed at the strikes, the Glasgow workers went back on 11 February and the Belfast workers a week later.

In relation to the soldiers' strikes Alf Killick describes the attitude of the Labour leaders in his comment on the role of the Labour paper, the *Weekly Herald*, "It was a strange coincidence that paralleled with our strike a general strike was taking place on the Clyde... unfortunately there was no communication between the two centres of revolt. The only communication we had was with the *Weekly Herald*, and they were too scared to give any publicity to what was happening across the Channel..."

Unfortunately there is no hint of this wider perspective in Rothstein's book. He makes no mention whatsoever of the strikes in Belfast and Glasgow and, while he reports the bare facts of the Calais mutiny he fails to draw out the revolutionary implications of the movement—his only reference to Alf Killick's memoirs is a disparaging footnote saying that they add "no more than the 1929 account of Calais".

Rothstein's omissions

With these vital omissions Rothstein underplays the revolutionary potential of the soldiers' strikes against the turbulent background provided by the situation in British society, and in consequence lends support to the idea that 'anti-war pressure' alone is sufficient to cause a "decisive change in foreign policy", above all in questions of war and peace. This is in essence the argument of the 'Communist' Party who separate the struggle against war from the struggle for socialism, maintaining that the 'public opinion' of all classes can force the ruling class, despite their class interests, to politely disarm. Rothstein, who from 1921–44 was the Chief London Correspondent of the Moscow News Agency Tass, is a supporter of the pro-Moscow wing of the "Communist" Party.

Of course the plans of the British ruling class for war in Russia were paralysed by the events of 1919. But this was a by-product of the pre-revolutionary situation that faced British capitalism at the end of World War One. This could not be a permanent state of affairs—either the workers would take power or the movement would subside and the

capitalists would regain full control of society, including the army. The capitalists fear of revolution resolves nothing if the result of a pre-revolutionary situation, because of the lack of a sufficiently strong revolutionary leadership, leaves the ruling class in power.

In fact, resting on the labour and trade union leaders, the British capitalists were able to ride out the storm of the immediate post-war period—and subsequently use the army in Ireland, India and the rest of the British Empire. And, just 21 years after the revolt of the German sailors and soldiers overthrew the Kaiser and thereby brought about a "decisive change" in the foreign policy of German Imperialism—namely, the end of the war—after the catastrophic defeat of the German workers with the victory of Hitler, the German capitalists found themselves free from the

"pressure" of the workers to embroil their capitalist rivals in a new and terrible war with the slaughter of millions of workers throughout the world.

Correction:

In the last edition of the *MIR* the editors carried a brief biographical note on one of our regular contributors, Dudley Edwards, who has been active in the labour movement since the age of 17. Our note incorrectly stated that Dudley, who is 79 this year, had been a Labour Party member for 16 years. In fact he has been a member of the Labour Party, following his break with the Communist Party, for 24 years.

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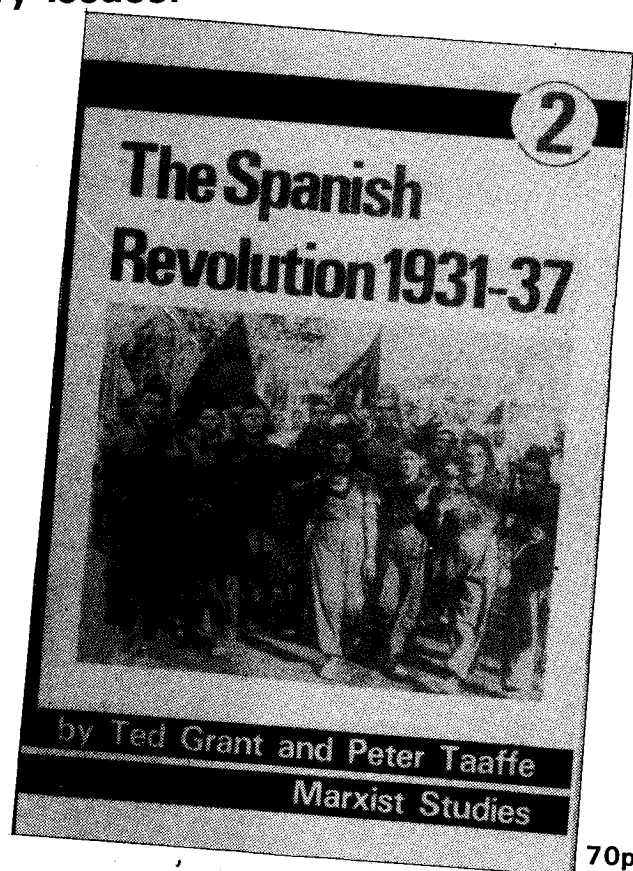
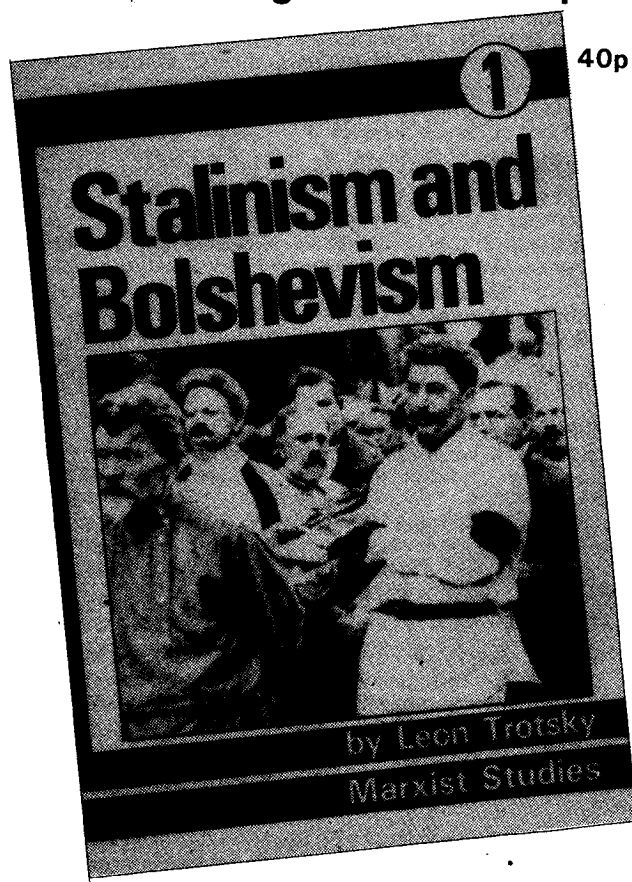
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