

Militant

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A WARNING TO LABOUR

Plus . . .
Lessons of Liverpool
Blacks in Britain
History of Bolshevism

Militant

International Review

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Editorial

The writing on the wall

*"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley" (Robert Burns)*

The resignations of Heseltine and Brittan gave formal notice to the world that the Thatcher government was on the rocks. The awesome speed with which the authority of the Tory leader has been demolished is typical of the kind of sharp turns and sudden changes which characterise the historical period in which we live.

Yet only a few weeks earlier, the future of this administration seemed assured. The bourgeois economists were confident that inflation would fall, while the economy continued to improve and the pound remained strong. A "sunshine budget" with tax-cuts and moderate reflation would set the stage for a snap election either later this year or early in 1987. With the Labour Party plunged into internecine warfare over the witch-hunt, the Tory leadership had reasonable grounds for optimism about the result.

Now all these carefully laid plans lie in ashes. Brittan's forced resignation under the most unsavoury circumstances, and the whiff of scandal

which now surrounds Thatcher and her administration, have caused irreconcilable damage. Despite the hypocritical display of "uniting behind the Leader", the knives are out in the Carlton Club and the 1922 Committee. It would not be unexpected if the present incumbent of No. 10 falls victim to a mysterious ailment which will lead to her premature retirement too.

Britain now a US satellite

The Brittan-Heseltine affair, under normal circumstances, would have been a mere incident, forgotten in a matter of weeks. The fact that it wrought such havoc indicates that there were more significant forces at work.

The righteous indignation of Labour's right wing about Thatcher having "lied to Parliament" entirely misses the point. Hypocrisy is a fundamental ingredient of the life of the bourgeoisie, especially in the four walls of "the

most exclusive club in the world". Lying, deceit and evasion are the stock in trade of bourgeois parliamentarianism. As Trotsky once put it: "When the British bourgeoisie start talking about morals, reach for your wallet!"

The fracas at Westminster is only the froth thrown up by far deeper political, social and economic undercurrents. The collapse of the pound revealed the abyss opening up at the feet of British capitalism. The Westland crisis itself showed how a section of the ruling class and the Tory Party have begun to be rattled by the wholesale ruin of British industry and the fact that Britain has now become little more than a minor satellite of US imperialism.

The disastrous effect of falling oil prices on the pound underlines the fact that no national economy can escape from the vagaries of the world market. The virtual dismantling of British industry means that Britain is far more vulnerable than even her competitors. The Thatcher clique, representing above all the interests of the spivs and speculators of the City of London, looked on complacently while the base of Britain's economic might was eroded.

Now the chickens have come home to roost. The weakness of the pound will inevitably spell increased interest rates. The prospect of tax cuts in the budget has flown out of the window. Unemployment, having reached the



Thatcher and Heseltine: an unprecedented public split in the Tory party.

3,400,000 mark, continues to advance inexorably. The outlook for the future is bleak indeed.

Politics, said Lenin, is concentrated economics. The convulsions of the economy have destroyed the confidence of the ruling class in Thatcher's monetarist mumbo-jumbo. One of the most amazing features of the Heseltine-Brittan affair was the way in which practically all of the press was prepared to "have a go" not just against the unfortunate Leon Brittan but also, by implication, against Thatcher. This after seven years of crawling on their bellies before the allegedly invincible "Iron Lady".

Undercurrents of discontent

The ferment within the middle class is revealed by the violent swings of "public opinion" as manifested in the polls. This social volatility must fill the ruling class with dread. **The strategists of capital fear—with good reason—that under Thatcher's leadership the Tory party is facing an unparalleled disaster. That is the principal explanation of the split in the Tory party and the conspiracies in the Carlton Club and 1922 Committee.**

All this has come to a head with breath-taking speed, in a blaze of unprecedented publicity. yet not so long ago the leaders of the Labour Party and the TUC, not to speak of the cowardly ex-Lefts of *Tribune* and *Marxism Today* were all assuring us that this government was a strong government, which could not be defeated by working class action, that the Labour Party would be out of power for 50 years, that the only way to bring Thatcher down would be by seeking alliances with "progressive forces" (ie the traitors and renegades of the SDP) etc etc.

Only the Marxist tendency represented by *Militant* and the *M.I.R.* stood firmly against the tide of defeatism and capitulation. Ours was the only voice which predicted in advance the present crisis of the government and the possibility of Thatcher being removed even before the next general election.

The historic miners' strike, the magnificent movement organised by Liverpool Council, and now the struggle of the printworkers show clearly that the working class is prepared to fight. They bear witness to the existence of a profound undercurrent of social discontent. **In the last analysis the class struggle is the decisive factor that conditions all the other manifestations of political behaviour, provoking ferment in the middle layers of society, unsettling the nerves of ministers and causing a deep crisis of confidence among the strategists of capital. This is what ultimately lies behind the crisis of government and the split in the Tory party.**

The miners' strike was a decisive turning point. Like a heavy stone dropped in a pool of water, it has sent shock waves through every layer of society, profoundly modifying the psychology of all classes. The repercussions of this are still being felt at the present time.

The right wing leaders of the TUC and Labour Party have drawn all the wrong conclusions from the miners' strike and Liverpool. They imagined that the Thatcher government was a "strong" government which could not be challenged, let alone beaten.

Yet all their attempts to arrive at a 'reasonable' compromise with Thatcher and the ruling class are doomed to break down. Murdoch's actions were quite logical: weakness invites aggression. Against all their intentions the TUC have been forced into giving

at least verbal support to the printworkers' actions.

The monstrous behaviour of the EEP-TU leadership will get its just deserts. Neanderthal men like Hammond imagine they can have a union without activists, a bureaucratic machine based upon an inert membership and paid functionaries. But this will not work in practice.

If the EEP-TU is expelled from the TUC, sections of the most advanced workers will break away to join other unions. Such a development will not be welcomed by conscious trade unionists. It would represent the separation of the most militant and conscious elements from the mass of EEP-TU members. While defending the expulsion from the TUC of the right wing mafia which controls the EEP-TU, *Militant* and *MIR* appeals to all EEP-TU militants not to split, but to conduct a struggle inside the union to win over the majority and fight to kick out Hammond and his clique, for democracy and a return to the TUC.

EETPU

All past experience shows the disastrous results which occur when the active workers split away from a right wing union. In the late 1950's when the T&G was controlled by the right wing, a disastrous attempt was made to set up an allegedly more radical alternative by splitting away the more militant workers to join the "blue" union. The result was that for the first time in decades, non-union labour appeared on the Liverpool docks, with a significant number of workers refusing to join either union.

The claim was made at the time by the "lefts", aided and abetted by the sectarians that the T&G "could not be changed". Yet a few years later, the

T&G swung to the left. The later move in the 1970's to split the G&M after the sell-out of the Pilkington's strike with an attempt to set up an independent glassworkers' union, likewise ended in a fiasco.

The right wing leadership of the EEP-TU will not be able to maintain control indefinitely. Events will push the majority of electricians to the left. The "honeymoon" deals with the likes of Murdoch will inevitably break down, preparing the way for big battles and the transformation of the union in the future.

Labour can defeat the Tories

The process of transformation in the unions was already shown by the result of the political ballots which, to the astonishment and chagrin of the Tories and their hired hacks in Fleet Street, registered big majorities in favour of retaining affiliation to the Labour Party.

In the period leading up to the general election, large numbers of trade unionists, starting with the activists, will begin to turn back to the Labour Party, with the idea of bringing down Thatcher and beginning to change society.

With the Tories in disarray, the Labour Party ought now to be gaining ground rapidly. Unfortunately, the disastrous witch-hunt unleashed by Neil Kinnock has had an extremely damaging effect on Labour, which is

now widely perceived as a house divided against itself. If Kinnock and the right persist in this lunacy, then Labour's chances of winning the next election will be placed in serious jeopardy.

The truth is that the Labour right has no policy to offer. Hattersley's disgraceful comments which, in effect, amount to the acceptance of mass unemployment and Kinnock's virtual renunciation of re-nationalization indicate the real reason behind the witch-hunt of *Militant* supporters. If the right wing have their way, everything that Labour's rank and file have won in recent years, both on policy and internal party democracy, will be destroyed.

A Labour government with the policies of Hattersley would act no differently to the socialist governments in France, Spain and Greece, all of which have abandoned reforms in favour of a vicious policy of cuts and unemployment, essentially no different to the policies of Thatcher in Britain.

Supporters of *MIR* and *Militant* will fight for the return of a Labour government. But we will also fight within the Labour Party and the unions for genuine socialist policies and internal democracy, for the defeat of the witch-hunt and for the accountability of the Parliamentary Labour Party to the rank and file. On this road, and on this road alone, the Tories can be defeated, Labour can sweep to power, and a real socialist transformation of society can be carried out.

Business Manager's Report

Year of growth for Marxist press

1985 saw a significant growth in the influence of Marxist ideas in Britain and internationally, not least in the role of *Militant* supporters in the struggle of the Liverpool City Council and working class. As the article in this edition of the *MIR* explains, "there will be many more 'Liverpools' throughout Britain, only on a more gigantic scale." Liverpool, in all its aspects, provides a glimpse of how future struggles will unfold.

In this respect, the launching of the *Mersey Militant* in October 1985 was a portent of the future development of the Marxist press. Here was the first ever regional Marxist paper aimed at a mass audience which, in lieu of a national daily *Militant*, tried to provide a concise explanation of the rapid changes in the local situation and the immediate tactics and policies that were necessary to advance the movement. This is a pointer to the future role of a more frequent *Militant* itself—as well as highlighting the important supplementary role of the *Militant International Review*.

Price rise

For as the increased influence of Marxism at the head of workers struggles will require the development of a more frequent *Militant*, aimed at a wider and wider audience; so there will be an ever increasing need for a regularly produced theoretical journal to explain the general processes behind the immediate events and the broad conclusions to be drawn from them.

But every step in building the Marxist press requires cash: from donations to the *Militant* Fighting Fund, to increasing the circulation of the *Militant*, to building the sales of the *MIR*.

Along with the launching of the *Mersey Militant*, 1985 also saw the expansion and more frequent production of the *MIR*. *MIR* sales increased consistently throughout the year but, unfortunately, not quickly enough. Consequently, to secure the financial base of the expanded *MIR* the Editors have been obliged to raise the price to 90p from this issue. But the real solution lies in your hands—to sell the *MIR* in all your activities; to get your friends and comrades in the labour movement to take out a subscription; and to help us build the resources for a daily *Militant* and a monthly *MIR*!

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In studying and analysing the Liverpool experience all workers can prepare themselves for similar movements in their own areas. There will be many 'Liverpools' throughout Britain, only on a more gigantic scale.

Liverpool's struggle—Lessons for the movement



"BY THE mid-1980s the Conservatives saw Liverpool as the power base of the Militant Tendency. And they wanted to defeat it. The scene was set for a political confrontation... the government recognised it had lost the propaganda battle in 1984 and failed to get the arguments across to the electorate. The government now decided to shift the argument and attack the Labour council directly in the future, portraying the conflict not as a technical dispute about money, and the grant system, but as a Militant plot against the government" (*Liverpool On The Brink*, by Michael Parkinson).

The British ruling class have been shaken to their foundations by the magnificent struggle of the Liverpool City Council and working class. In the miners' strike and in Liverpool are to be found the germs of the future mass conflicts which will convulse Britain on a national scale in the next decade. There can be no other explanation for the vile and unprecedented campaign of slander and of personal vilification of the leaders of the City Council and District Labour Party. A new Tower

"When it comes to a threat against their material interests, the educated classes set in motion all the prejudices and confusion which humanity is dragging in its wagon train behind it... The struggles of the other parties among themselves is almost like a family spat, in comparison with their common baiting of the Bolsheviks. In conflict with one another they were, so to speak, only getting in training for a further conflict, a decisive one" ("The Month Of The Great Slander" from *Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution*).

of Babel, of lies, mis-information and half-truths has been constructed by the hirelings of capital in Fleet Street and the media.

Roots of crisis

The ruling class have concentrated in their hands enormous powers to mould "public opinion". Of course, Britain's monopolised press, the TV and radio have always been used to denigrate and attack all those leaders of the labour movement who in any way threaten the capitalist system.

By Peter Taaffe, Editor of the *Militant*

Thus both Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill have been compared to Hitler in the yellow press. But a new low was struck by the *ITV World in Action* programme in December in its persecution of Derek Hatton, who has earned the hatred of the ruling class and their echoes in the labour movement, for his role in Liverpool. His full replies to the dirty questions put by an ex-reporter of the *Sun* were edited out by the "unbiased" producers of this programme. Never again will any serious worker involved in struggle and the labour movement trust *World in Action* as a programme from which they can expect any sympathy whatsoever.

However *World in Action* has only repeated on a national scale what the local *Liverpool Echo* and *Daily Post* has belched out daily on Merseyside. All pretence of "objectivity" has been abandoned by these filthy organs of capitalism. A hate campaign, which has been unrelenting in its fury, has been conducted by the editors of these newspapers. Both nationally and locally the ruling class and their organs are determined to smash Liverpool as a

symbol for workers everywhere moving into struggle. Like with the miners, Thatcher wanted to ensure that "militancy does not pay". She described the miners as "the enemy within". She reserved the same venomous class hatred for the working class of Liverpool: "They do not have enough respect for my office... these people must be put down" (from *Liverpool On The Brink* by Michael Parkinson).

At each stage their fury has been increased. Just as they seemed to have Liverpool on the ropes, the victim managed to effect a miraculous escape. With the support of the national and local official trade union leadership together with the Labour Party front bench, the ruling class thought that in December they were in a position to rub the councillors' noses in the mud. They were determined to force the council to carry through draconian cuts in the living standards of the working class. The council was forced into a partial but orderly retreat. But the main gains of the struggle of the past three years were retained.

What terrifies the spokesmen of capital in relation to Liverpool, even more than in the case of the miners' strike, is that the strategy and tactics of the Marxists have proved more than a match for them, even though this battle has been limited to one city. A plethora of academics and wisecracks have sought to explain the "Liverpool phenomena", in terms of the alleged "uniqueness" of the population, its "special geographical and social structure". But Liverpool has all the same characteristics as Glasgow, Newcastle, South Wales, the West Midlands ie. of mass unemployment, poverty and deprivation. There is nothing "unique" about these conditions for most working class areas of Britain.

Economic collapse

And yet at the same time, Liverpool is "unique". The Liverpool working class is fortunate to have at its head a leadership within which the Marxist supporters of *Militant* have played a crucial, and at certain stages, a decisive role. It is also "unique" in the scale of the movement and the mass participation of the working class in demonstrations, strikes and within the labour movement. Without a doubt, at this stage, it is the most politicised city in Britain. The ideas and slogans of *Militant* have penetrated wide layers of the proletariat. Even the opponents of the *Militant* such as the Merseyside 'Communist' Party grudgingly admit: "... The belligerent fighting stance of Labour councillors touched a popular nerve. There is no doubt whatever that the politics of the financial crisis elec-

trified the people in a way that was simply never there before. Everyone knew about it, everyone had an opinion." Tony Lane in *Marxism Today*, January 1986. In studying and analysing the Liverpool experience all workers can prepare themselves for similar movements in their own areas. There will be many "Liverpools" throughout Britain, only on a more gigantic scale. What then are the main lessons to be drawn from the struggle?

In an enormous cover-up operation the ruling class and its organs have sought to hide the real situation which faced the Labour administration when it took power in 1983. They have been aided and abetted in this task by the labour and trade union leadership who were unprepared to follow their members into battle. They have fostered the legend that *Militant* had deliberately exaggerated the scale of the problem.

The impression has been given that it is the "wicked Marxists" who are responsible for the social plight of Liverpool rather than the government. Some argue that if only a more "moderate tone" would have been struck in negotiations with the government, then in some way the colossal social problems of Liverpool could have been conjured away. However Michael Parkinson in *Liverpool On The Brink* gives just a hint of the catastrophe, economically and socially which confronted the Labour administration in 1983 and determined that they would have to confront the Tory government at some stage if they were to remain true to the policies upon which they came to power.

Parkinson points out: "The story began with the ports. They made the city great and in the late 19th century gave it more millionaires than any other provincial city in Britain". But for most of the 20th century unemployment, economic decline and poverty have been endemic in the area. In the early 1930s unemployment throughout Liverpool reached a peak of 28 per cent and throughout that decade was at least one and a half times the national average. Between 1966 and 1976 350 plants closed or transferred production elsewhere with the loss of 40,000 jobs. Thus even during the post-war boom Liverpool and Merseyside was faced with a haemorrhage of jobs from the area. A handful of firms have exercised an iron grip over the economic and thereby the social life of the city. At the beginning of the 1980s, 57 per cent of manufacturing jobs were in plants employing over a thousand workers! The national figure for workers in this size of plant was only 29 per cent.

In 1979 less than one per cent of the city's firms provided nearly 40 per

cent of total employment and by 1985 seven large firms controlled almost half of all the 47,000 manufacturing jobs in the city. At the same time between 1981 and 1985 these seven firms had shed 30 per cent of their jobs. Between 1979 and 1984 almost half of Liverpool's manufacturing jobs were lost in this way. Liverpool became known as "The Bermuda Triangle of British capitalism". Parkinson comments: "In the mid-1980s the city had lost control of its economic destiny".

Capitalism has completely failed the people of Liverpool and Merseyside. The only viable alternative for thousands of youngsters looking for hope and a job lay in employment by the city council. The scale of Liverpool's crisis is indicated by the special report commissioned by the town planners for economic and employment prospects in the next decade. This report predicted that there would be a devastating 30 per cent unemployment by 1990/1991 "which would provide all the ingredients for a social explosion". Tony Mulhearn, President of the District Labour Party, commented at the time on the report: "This shows the failure of private enterprise. We have in Britain the most corrupt, effete and degenerate capitalist class in the history of the world. If the trend continues there will be no manufacturing jobs left in Liverpool by 1990/91. The only alternative is a socialist alternative".

Previous Tory/Liberal administrations have facilitated the frightful collapse and decline of the city. Thus, by 1981 the total income of the city had fallen by 18 per cent, rate income by 25 per cent and total real net expenditure fell by 14 per cent from its peak level of 75/76. When Thatcher took power the national government was providing 62 per cent of the city's net income and the rates provided 37 per cent. But by 1983 the government's contribution had dropped to 44 per cent and the rates had risen to over 55 per cent!

1984 council victory

The Tory/Liberal administration had cut back savagely on jobs and services. Parkinson and many other commentators have fully documented this in detail. It is these horrendous economic and social conditions which have fuelled the revolt of the Liverpool proletariat. They have provided the fertile soil upon which the policies and programme, strategy and tactics of the Marxists have taken root. From the first day that the city council came to power the campaign for more resources for the city was unique in its involvement of the organisations of

the working class and of mass participation. Like no other city in Britain over the last three years, Liverpool has seen a series of magnificent one-day strikes and mass demonstrations.

In a conversation with Arthur Ransome, the English writer, in 1919, Lenin commented: "When I was in England I zealously attended everything I could and with a country with so large an industrial population public meetings were pitiable, a handful at a street corner... a meeting in the drawing room... the school class... pitiable". No such comment could be made about the events in Liverpool over the last three years.

Faced with the first onslaught of this mass movement the bourgeoisie decided to buy time and retreat. Thus in 1984 concessions were given by the Environment Minister Patrick Jenkin. Many attempts were made to dispute the scale of the victory both by bourgeois commentators and by their echoes in the sectarian organisations on the outskirts of the labour movement. However, the serious representatives of capital were in no doubt as to what Liverpool had achieved. Tory MP Teddy Taylor, who has the ear of Thatcher, in a private conversation with a Marxist, mentioned that Liverpool had undoubtedly won a big victory in 1984. But, he argued, the policy of the government during the miners' strike was to avoid any 'second front'. According to this vicious representative of capital the government "hoped to get Scargill". These people always personalise the struggles of the working class. To the ruling class "Scargillism" merely signifies a fighting, militant class struggle policy for the trade unions and labour movement. In the well-worn traditions of British capitalism the ruling class were prepared to give concessions to Liverpool, bide their time, and prepare to take revenge at a later stage. However the hapless Patrick Jenkin who had given these concessions was a casualty of Liverpool and was unceremoniously thrown overboard by Thatcher in a Cabinet re-shuffle last year.

There were many who supported, at least in words, the Liverpool City Council in 1984 who have subsequently criticised the "immoderate" statements of Derek Hatton and other Liverpool council leaders in the aftermath of the 1984 budget victory. Thus the Bishops of Liverpool, both Catholic and Protestant, have lamented the fact that Liverpool council spoke in "terms of victory" over the government. Such criticisms have been repeated by the opponents of Marxism in the labour movement. If only a "different tone" would have been struck by the spokesmen of the

city council, is their lament! If only the council had gone in for "quiet negotiation" with the government then everything would have been for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

It is entirely shallow to imagine that in great social conflicts the tone adopted by the combatants will determine whether a struggle takes place or not. In a war, and we are involved in a most vicious class war against the British bourgeoisie and its government, it is the struggle for fundamental social interests which determines whether a battle commences or not. Moreover the more serious the struggle became, the more the fair-weather friends of Liverpool City Council peeled off, some into outright opposition to the council.

Thus the Bishops, who had at least given verbal support to the council in 1983, came into outright opposition on a whole series of questions in the period leading up to the battle last year. Certain gangster elements who were around the self-proclaimed Black Caucus organisation opposed the appointment of Sam Bond as the city's principal Race Relations Advisor. This had nothing to do with the fact that

If the resources of the national movement had been placed fully behind Liverpool then the Tory government would have been compelled to beat a retreat. Instead the national Labour and trade union leadership did everything to frustrate, hamper and prevent the campaign focusing on the Tory government as the main architect of Liverpool's calamity.

he was not a "Liverpool-born black", as they claimed. But it had everything to do with the fact that they knew that searching questions would be asked about money provided by the council which has not at all benefitted the people of Liverpool 8 but certain elements around the "Black Caucus".

The Bishops supported these charlatans and opposed the Liverpool Labour Party and City Council. This of course is in the nature of things. After all as one Liverpool worker put it "They (the priests) crucified Jimmy Christ 2,000 years ago because he was a champion of the poor". They preferred Barabas the thief, rather than the champion of the poor, Jesus Christ. Now the Bishops side with those who have been involved in all kinds of nefarious activities in Liverpool 8 as opposed to the Liverpool proletariat and their representatives. As the class struggle heated up they went over to the side of the enemy. It was their open letter to the *Times* during the Bournemouth Labour Party conference which encouraged Neil Kinnock to make his vitriolic and abusive attack on the city councillors.

And yet the prospects for a successful outcome of the council's struggle could not have been more favourable at the beginning of 1985. Liverpool had inspired other councils to take a stand against the draconian attacks on local government expenditure in the financial year of 1984/85. Twenty councils came together in a common 'no rate', or 'non-compliance' policy.

Liverpool also deferred making a rate through it did not agree with the tactics proposed. The deficit budget proposed by Liverpool council in 1984 made it absolutely clear to the people of Liverpool exactly how much had been stolen from them by the Tory government. The 'no rate' policy clouded the issue, and confused workers. Some were duped into believing that perhaps the council were deliberately courting confrontation with the government in refusing to set a rate. But many of the leaders of the twenty councils such as Livingstone at the GLC and David Blunkett at Sheffield had criticised Liverpool for allegedly 'going it alone' in 1984. Therefore in the interests of a united front against the government Liverpool joined in

with these councils notwithstanding their misgivings on the 'no rate' policy.

The stand of these 20 councils initially engendered an enthusiastic and combative mood amongst local authority workers throughout the country. These workers showed a high level of consciousness and understanding about the need to stand together or face quite frightful cuts in the future. Even in councils which were not faced with immediate cuts in 1984 there was a preparedness to join in with their brothers and sisters in other parts of the country in a common local authority workers' fight. They indicated support for councillors who it seemed were prepared to risk everything to defend jobs and services. For the first time ever these workers, not the most militant or responsive to calls for action in the past, showed a willingness to fight.

An enormous gain from this battle was undoubtedly the organisation for the first time of a national local authority shop stewards' committee (NLACC). The stand of the local authority workers demonstrated that if the 20 councils had stood together then the government would have been

compelled to beat a retreat. But luminaries of the 'left' like Ken Livingstone and David Blunkett proved to be no more than what Lenin called "heroes of the phrase". When the hour arrived of moving from verbal opposition into action, then their Parliamentary ambitions loomed larger than any determination to defend the jobs and services of the workers and communities that they represented. All the usual phrases about the need for a "tactical retreat" were trotted out by Livingstone. Kinnock eagerly embraced his new recruit to the philosophy of the 'dented shield'. However the knights of old at least went into battle in order to receive a dented shield. Livingstone, Margaret Hodge of Islington council etc retreated at the first whiff of grapeshot. Lambeth had originally voted to accept a no-rate policy. But their stand was undermined by defectors from the Labour Group. Liverpool alone was left in the frame to confront the Tory government.

All the powers of 'official society', that is capitalist society, have been marshalled against Liverpool in the last six months. Notwithstanding all the evidence to the contrary, the ruling class, and some in the labour movement, still argue that Liverpool could have found a way out, could have balanced the books much earlier. Liverpool council, had, it seems, "deliberately chosen" a policy of confrontation with the government. This is entirely false. No Marxist would deliberately cause confrontation and conceal a solution which would avoid suffering and deprivation for working people—if it were available. But as subsequent events demonstrated, the government was determined to compel Liverpool to carry through savage cuts in jobs and services, combined with massive rate increases.

No choice but to fight

To have gone down that road would have meant undermining the colossal fund of credit and support that the council had built up amongst the working class population of Liverpool. It also became abundantly clear that if the resources of the national movement had been placed fully behind Liverpool then the Tory government would have been compelled to beat a retreat. Instead the national Labour and trade union leadership did everything to frustrate, hamper and prevent the campaign focusing on the Tory government as the main architect of Liverpool's calamity.

In the last six months the national leadership of the movement, rather than basing themselves on the mass movement, have used their power and



The Liverpool City Council Labour Group left alone to confront the Tory government.

prestige to exert remorseless pressure on the councillors to carry through cuts and increase rates. Neil Kinnock's position towards Liverpool has at least the merit of consistency. Before the 1984 budget he had advocated a policy of increasing rates by 60 per cent! The infamous Stonefrost Report advocated a minimum of 15 per cent increase in rates together with various measures aimed at cutting expenditure. And yet the history of the labour movement on Merseyside demonstrates one thing: to seek a way out of the crisis through massive rate increases would have a negative electoral effect, which Kinnock's policy is allegedly designed to prevent.

In 1981 when the Labour Group was controlled by the right-wing a rate increase of 50 per cent was carried through in Liverpool. Those councillors like Derek Hatton who supported *Militant* were in a minority, but ferociously resisted these rate increases in the Labour Group. In the elections of May of that year Labour lost six seats, the largest loss ever sustained by the two major parties at that time. But in the 1983 council elections Labour got 46 per cent of the vote, the highest-ever Labour vote in the city. There was a 51 per cent turn-out in the 1984 council election. In a recent Parliamentary by-election in Tyne Bridge, there was a mere 38 per cent turn-out! The contrast between the mass involvement and participation of Liverpool workers in the struggle and the situation in other parts of Britain could not be greater. Moreover 72 per cent of council employees voted Labour in 1983 and 1984. Labour had become identified in the eyes of the masses with a policy of defending jobs and services and thereby the future employment prospects of the working class and particularly the youth of the city.

To squander this capital through capitulation to the government and

massive rate increases would have been criminal. The councillors had no alternative but to go into battle. The landmarks of this struggle have been well documented in the pages of the *Militant* newspaper and there is no need to repeat them here. But the defeat of the strike call on 25 September last year undoubtedly represented a turning point. The ruling class and their shadows in the labour movement were absolutely terrified by the prospect of a council workforce engaging in all-out strike action which would have then undoubtedly spread to the private sector. Every dirty weapon in the armoury of capitalism was employed in order to defeat the strike vote.

Given the situation it was remarkable that the council workforce came so close to voting for a majority to come out. The miners had been defeated. The other 19 councils that had started out in the battle at the beginning of the year had thrown in the towel. There was a clear understanding that Liverpool alone was still confronting the government. The local and national leaders of the white-collar unions—some of them paying lip service to the call for strike action—in practice worked ferociously to defeat the strike.

Not a normal boss-worker situation

The leadership of NALGO pursued a cynical campaign of attacks on the council leaders while at the same time allegedly supporting the campaign. Derek Hatton was lampooned in NALGO newsheets which were supposed to be in support of the campaign against the Tory government. The leaflet which the NALGO leaders put out to their members in preparation for the ballot on strike action stated: "Tuesday's *Echo* carried the story

headed 'strike was our idea said NALGO leader', quoting branch chairperson, Graham Burgess as saying the strike was 'all our idea'. The leaflet goes on to say: "It is not, however, the case that the idea for the strike was 'NALGO's idea'. In fact we initially suggested that no action be taken till the money ran out, but the majority of the trade unions voted for the strike". It then goes on to boldly assert: "There can be no doubt that a strike, if NALGO members vote for one, will be long and difficult". If this is support for strike action what would opposition look like!

The NUPE leadership opposed the strike action and refused to give their members the right to vote! In the leaflet they put out they quoted the witch-hunting resolution against *Militant* that was passed at the NUPE national conference! The NUT took the most shameful position of all. They dragged the council before the capitalist courts and yet the option for solving the budget crisis was 'legally' there in the form of cuts in the education budget. The Department of Education had demanded that Liverpool sack 400 teachers, who according to them, were 'surplus' to the educational needs of the city. This would have given an extra £25 million to the council, which would have immediately solved the budget problem. Quite correctly, the councillors saw this as an attack, not just on the teachers, but on the educational needs of the working class of Liverpool as a whole. But the NUT leadership, led by the so-called 'Communist' Party, were in no way motivated by the needs of the working people of Liverpool, but what they perceived were the narrow selfish interests of their own members.

In the days leading up to 25 September, Liverpool witnessed a series of unprecedented mass meetings. The only indoor arena big enough to take the numbers was the Liverpool stadium. Here took place meetings of 6,000, 4,000 and 5,000 workers balloting and discussing the issues involved in the strike. The most remarkable feature of these events was that so many workers voted in favour of the strike action. In the teeth of a ferocious campaign of opposition, 58 per cent of the General and Municipal workers voted in favour of strike action. A majority in the TGWU also voted in favour as did UCATT. Almost 50 per cent of the manual workers voted in favour of strike action. Also important minorities in NALGO and other white-collar unions voted in favour despite the shameful campaign of passive resistance conducted by their own leadership.

The white collar union leaders, both locally and nationally, sought to pre-

sent the relationship between the council and local authority unions as the normal boss-worker relationship. In a Tory Council, or one controlled by right wing reformists this would undoubtedly be the case. But Liverpool was a socialist council. No other council has accorded greater power or involved the unions more.

The position of the council in this situation is analogous to the relationship that would exist between a democratic workers state and the trade unions. The unions would still be independent of the state, "their state" as Lenin put it, with the right to strike etc. They would also be the main props of a democratic workers state. Indeed the management of the state would be drawn from the trade unions. At the same time they would be a defence of the working class against the bureaucratic excesses of "their state".

In Liverpool the unions should at one and the same time be the main supporters of the council and at the same time defend the workers against arbitrary actions, particularly by the capitalist management, which has been inherited from the previous Tory/Liberal regime. Yet in the budget crisis the national union leaders pretended that the unions should act entirely independently of the council, taking no account whatsoever of its financial plight.

The 'Redundancy notice' controversy

Undoubtedly one of the complicating factors in the campaign for a strike vote was the issuing of the so-called 'redundancy notices' in the period prior to the stewards deciding to call for all-out strike action. The question has been asked many times, then and since: was it correct for the council to issue these notices? Without doubt, this provided the bourgeois and the reformists with a weapon to completely distort what the council stood for. It was eagerly seized upon by Neil Kinnock in his shameful and infamous attack on the council at Bournemouth.

Marxism believes in telling workers the truth. Any serious tendency in the movement which is seeking to win majority support also has a responsibility to record any mistakes in strategy and tactics, in order that the working-class and the labour movement can learn from these mistakes.

It is impossible to comprehend the decision of the city council, without at the same time understanding all the circumstances in which the decision was made. The Labour Group had been informed by the City Treasurer that legally he would need to place £23 million aside for redundancy pay when the cash ran out. If the notices did not

go out then the councillors, both collectively and individually would face a bill for £23 million. The councillors had already put themselves out on a limb and faced a threat of a £100,000 surcharge, banning from office, possible jailing, seizure of homes, etc. In this situation it was felt by the majority of the councillors, particularly given the reluctance of the white-collar union leaders to back them in their stand against the Tory government, that they were not prepared to risk another £½ million surcharge each. But Napoleon once said: "Military warfare needs the kind of mathematics of an Euclid or a Newton". In politics also it is necessary to understand political algebra, to visualise the way things will develop, to understand in particular how the class enemy will utilise any action you take in order to undermine the struggle and discredit the labour movement.

There was no question of the Liverpool City Council sacking anybody. This is a vile slander, and subsequent events demonstrated this. The 'redundancy notices' were merely a tactic for gaining time to pursue the campaign to the end of 1985. When fully explained this was accepted and supported by the workers. Thus when the issue was put to branch number five of the GMBATU, in which *Militant* supporters play a decisive role, by 1,000 to two the workers voted to send the notices out.

The opposition of the white collar unions led by NALGO to the so-called 'redundancy tactics' was hypocritical and contradictory. According to the City Treasurer if the notices had not been issued then the money lenders would not have lent money to the council. This would have meant the non-payment of wages in September and the collapse of the council. If this course would have been adopted then the NALGO leaders would have been the first ones to denounce the council. Instead of the crisis coming at the end of 1985 it would have existed in September.

However, it was not possible to explain the rather complicated tactical reasons why the notices were sent out, either to all local authority workers, to the mass of the population of Liverpool, and particularly to the workers outside of Liverpool. The mass of the workers gain their impression of what is going on through the grossly distorted image on the TV and radio, the press and so on.

Therefore great care has to be exercised in mass work by the Marxists to ensure that issues are presented in such a fashion that they do not allow the bourgeois and the reformists to distort them and sow confusion amongst the working-class. The finer

points of 'tactics' were lost and the false impression was given that 31,000 workers were to be made redundant.

Given these factors it was a mistake, we believe, for these redundancy notices to be sent out. *Militant* is in a minority both on the council and in the labour force as a whole. If every councillor was a committed Marxist and was prepared to go to the end, the issue would have been simple. The guiding philosophy would have been "in for £2,000 in for £½ million". The Marxists would have refused to have become entangled in the legal web which has been carefully constructed by the bourgeois when it comes to local authority finance. If then the City of London and the bankers would have refused to lend cash because the notices had not been sent out then it would have been crystal clear that Liverpool was being blackmailed and threatened with bankruptcy by capitalism.

However this tactical mistake was eagerly seized on by all the opponents of Marxism, particularly by Neil Kinnock in his speech at Bournemouth. Not a word was uttered about the heroic struggle of Liverpool in defence of the workers in the city. The vilification outdid the Tories in its viciousness. Moreover no mention was made of those Labour councils such as Rhondda 'Labour council' which had provoked strikes of their workforce because of the threat of privatisation. Nor was there a word about the cut-backs carried through by Newcastle council, by Wakefield where nurseries had been closed, and many other councils dominated by the right wing.

Right-wing leaders attack council

Kinnock's attack provoked widespread indignation throughout Liverpool. In the weeks and months leading up to the Labour Party conference the bourgeois press had pilloried Liverpool as "smack city", inhabited mainly by "mindless football hooligans", of the unemployed and unemployable, of layabouts and, in the immortal and shameful phrase of the *Sunday Times*, "a majority of lumpens".

Leon Trotsky pointed out that in the past, the British ruling class had demonstrated a 'cold cruelty' towards the colonial masses. The same class hatred and viciousness has now been displayed towards Liverpool. The city was to be considered almost as an insubordinate colony by Thatcher. In the words of Baker at the Tory party conference the people of Liverpool were to be left to "twist in the wind". The sick, the old, the sufferings of the



Photo: John Smith (IFL)

A Liverpool Council public meeting. The campaign has been unique in the mass participation of the Liverpool working class.

disabled were to be used to bring the council to heel.

Now the leader of the Labour Party appeared to be joining in and putting the knife into Liverpool. His attack also opened the door to the Tories and Liberals together with the *Liverpool Echo* and *Post* to arouse what Engels called the "enraged petty bourgeois". An organisation called "Liverpool against the *Militant*" tried to organise reactionary demonstrations against the city council. The 'LAM' slogan was "Kick *Militant* out of the Labour Party". Unlike the demonstrations organised by the council where 20, 30, 40 and 50 thousand workers came out on the streets of Liverpool, this organisation of small businessmen, nightclub owners and other riff raff managed to organise 3,000 old-age pensioners on a Sunday afternoon outing at the Pier Head. Their numbers were grossly exaggerated by the press in order to frighten and intimidate the Labour council into capitulating. But the councillors remained absolutely firm. This in turn provoked the fury of the leaders of the labour and trade union movement.

Kinnock wanted to commit the councillors to "a psychiatric couch". Even those who had formerly given at least lukewarm support to the council, such as David Blunkett, condemned the councillors' refusal to carry through cuts as "inexplicable", "insane" and also as "an act of sabotage". Margaret Hodge of Islington council condemned Liverpool for "letting down the left". Cutting jobs and services it seems, has now become the new totem of the left. In fact it is those such as Blunkett, Hodge and Livingstone, etc who have let down the left and local government workers.

As the city began to be starved of

funds, the press then began to use the inevitable cut-backs as a stick with which to beat the council. The first fiddle in this chorus was taken by Sarah Cullen, a TV commentator for *ITV's News at Ten*, a programme now commonly known by workers as "Lies at Ten". The sick, the old, and the infirm, whose facilities were threatened by the Tory government's cuts were presented on the TV as victims of the council's policies. A barrage of filth and poison was spewed out by the organs of capitalism in the period of October and November.

'An orderly retreat'

Militant not only dominated the Labour Party conference, but also the Liberal, Tory and SDP conferences. Four Cabinet ministers at the Tory Party conference, led by Tebbit and Thatcher, denounced *Militant* and Liverpool City Council and demanded that Neil Kinnock carry through the expulsion of *Militant* from the Labour Party. The real instigators of the witch-hunt are in the Tory Cabinet. However, despite the attacks of the Tory government the bourgeois would have been compelled to beat a retreat in the face of the mass offensive of the Liverpool workers. This would have been particularly the case if the council would have had the support of Labour's front bench and the national trade union leaders.

But the Labour and trade union leaders were as afraid of Liverpool succeeding as the Tory government itself. There is plenty of evidence to show that the leaders of the movement were actually encouraging Baker and the bourgeois behind the scenes in their refusal to give any concessions. One

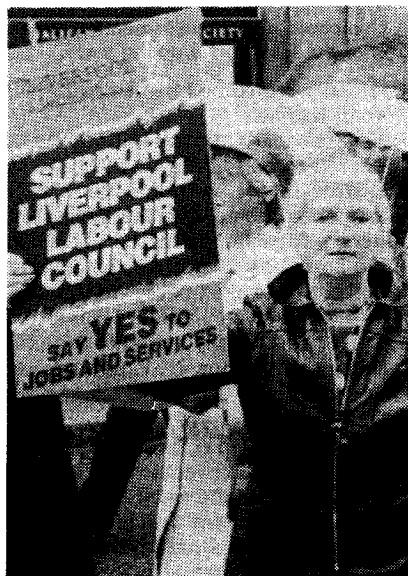
honest Kinnock supporter, a Labour MP, has admitted in private that his contacts in the Tory Party indicated that the government would not be able to stand by and see a major city go into bankruptcy. They would have come up with some kind of deal but for the fact that the Labour front bench were urging them to remain firm. As much as the government, the Labour right-wing, and their supporters in the trade union officialdom, are afraid of any "victory for militancy".

If the miners' strike would have succeeded that would have undermined the right-wing. So too with the struggle of Liverpool City Council. Their fear was expressed in the shameful support of Kinnock for the government's threat to use commissioners and even troops against the Liverpool working class in the event of the city going bankrupt. The Tories could not have even contemplated the sending-in of troops without the open approval of the Labour leaders. This statement of Kinnock, Cunningham, Straw and others during the Liverpool crisis provoked a wave of revulsion throughout the labour movement. It brought back the memory of the Callaghan government using troops against the firemen in 1977. This will raise a question in the eyes of many workers about the role of a Labour government with Neil Kinnock at its head. Does it mean that the next Labour government will be prepared to use troops against workers in struggle?

Both the Labour front bench and trade union leaders presented the Stonefrost Report as a 'painless' solution to the problems of Liverpool. We have documented elsewhere (*Militant*, etc) that the Stonefrost Report in effect meant massive increased burdens for the working class of Liverpool. The council refused to implement the report. However the campaign of the Labour and trade union officialdom had its effect in confusing and dividing the workforce. Therefore at the end of November the council was faced with a difficult choice. The first alternative was to engage in battle with only a minority of the workforce clearly understanding the issues and prepared to fight. The other alternative of an orderly retreat was chosen and we have explained in full in our statement in *Militant* the tactical reasons why this was done. But the Liverpool proletariat has been spared the big cuts which would have otherwise taken place, because of their magnificent struggle. Marxists have always argued that reforms are a by-product of militant and socialist struggle. In this case the marvellous struggle of the Liverpool proletariat has undoubtedly mitigated the effects of the cuts demanded by big business and the

Tories. But some cuts such as the non-filling of vacancies etc were inevitable.

The £60 million loan that was given by the Swiss banks would have been impossible but for the preparedness of the council to go to the end in the struggle against the government. Pressure was undoubtedly used behind the scenes by big business in Liverpool and by the Tory government, not withstanding its subsequent claims to 'non-involvement'. The *Guardian* and other bourgeois papers jeered about the "Gnomes of Zurich bailing out the Trotskyites in Liverpool". The House of exhumed Lords devoted nearly a whole day to denouncing *Militant*, Liverpool council and particularly the Swiss bankers for seemingly bailing out the council. Beside himself with rage, Tory peer Lord Beloff even delved into history: "He thought



Lenin's remarks about the capitalist classes applied particularly to the bankers: "They would sell the rope by which they would themselves be hanged." (*Financial Times*, 12 December 1985).

But then, hinted the ignoble Lord, perhaps the £60 million loan was some fiendish plot hatched 70 years ago and just coming to fruition: "He reminded us Lenin had spent a considerable time in Zurich".

But the fact remains that the loan only came through at one minute to midnight when it appeared as though the city was going to go to the brink and over. This loan coupled with some "unallocated cuts" means that the basic gains of the proletariat of Liverpool have been safeguarded for the next period.

But nothing is permanent under capitalism. These gains will be taken back unless there is the socialist transformation of society. In the event of a new Labour government coming

to power the ball will be in the court of Kinnock, Hattersley, Straw and Co to maintain through government action what has been built up by the struggle of the Liverpool working class.

What are the prospects for the battle in the next period? Liverpool has been a shining example to workers everywhere. The battle has been followed by workers throughout the world even through the distorted reports in the press and the overseas service of the BBC. Liverpool is a model to workers everywhere who want to see a victory over capitalism. The whole labour movement must salute the 48 Labour councillors who remained implacable and unwavering to the end.

The role of *Militant* supporters in the council workforce has been absolutely decisive. In the aftermath of the defeat of the strike vote on 25 September, Baker, the Tory Environment Minister was gloating in the *Liverpool Echo*: "The morale of the *Militant* must be very low on Merseyside this morning". However on the very day this statement appeared we saw a one-day strike and a magnificent demonstration of 20,000 workers in defiance of Baker and his government. The morale of the Marxists is extremely high. At each stage of the struggle one thing has been brought out: where the influence of Marxism, with a clear programme and clear perspectives is strong, then the support of the workers has been forthcoming. But when, for instance, as on 25 September, there was a defeat amongst some workers of the recommendation to strike, there you will find the Marxists weak.

The best workers have already drawn all the necessary conclusions from what has been achieved in the GMBATU. Other unions must be similarly transformed into fighting organisations of the working class. The role of the leadership, of what Marxists call the subjective factor, has been starkly emphasised at each stage of the struggle in Liverpool.

The most pernicious tactics of deliberate confusion and dust-blowing together with outright lies came from the local supporters of the rapidly-dwindling 'Communist Party'. They acted scandalously as a mouthpiece of the right-wing Labour and even Tory ministers. If they had consciously set out to sabotage the struggle they would hardly have done better. Fortunately their influence has been marginalised. They have been discredited in the eyes of the more conscious working-class fighters, and will play no significant part in future struggles on Merseyside.

The battle in Liverpool and *Mili-*

tant's campaign for a socialist policy within the labour movement has earned us the venomous condemnation of the capitalists. They have pursued a campaign of pressure and of baiting to try and force Labour's leadership to carry through a purge of socialists from the Labour Party, beginning with *Militant* and then going on to purge Tony Benn and the Campaign Group of Labour MPs. This is the first step in eliminating all the gains achieved in recent party conferences on party democracy and radical policies.

This in turn led to the enquiry into the Liverpool District Labour Party. Ex-leftwingers gathered together in the misnamed Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC), now universally known as the 'Labour Careerist Committee', joined in the chorus of condemnation of *Militant* and the Liverpool DLP. Entirely unsubstantiated claims of 'corruption' were made by these and others in the labour movement and in so doing they merely echoed the slanders of the capitalists. It is now a crime, according to these wiseacres for Labour Parties to have mass participation of trade unions in their meetings, to have 700 workers enthusiastically attending District Labour Party meetings.

Capitalists pushing for purge

Not so long ago the right-wing and their left-wing shadows were accusing *Militant* of "preferring small and unrepresentative cliques in constituencies", and of "boring people away from meetings". Our critics are strangely silent today when confronted with the spectacle of mass participation of workers in the Liverpool Labour Party. We have the unedifying spectacle of the so-called left-wing "Labour Co-ordinating Committee" demanding that the participation of the trade unions in the DLP should be cut down. In the past these worthies enthusiastically supported rank and file control over the Parliamentary Labour Party through the re-selection of MPs, through the election of the cabinet by the Labour Party conference, etc. They are now the most vehement in demanding that control of the council by the DLP should be eliminated.

Scandalously the national Labour Party leaders have publicly supported the expulsion of Derek Hatton and Tony Mulhearn. If such a step is taken, which will be the beginning of a wide-scale purge in Liverpool and throughout the country, it will split the Labour Party from top to bottom. The capitalists are urging on the Labour leadership to take such a measure because they are alarmed by



If the 'Communist' Party had consciously set out to sabotage the struggle they could hardly have done better.

the results of the Tyne Bridge by-election with an absolute collapse of the Tory vote and the current split in their ranks. The way to prevent a stunning Labour victory is to present the spectacle of a divided and hopelessly disorganised Labour Party.

To expel Derek Hatton and Tony Mulhearn would be like trying to expel Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield during the miners' strike. It would not be possible to expel them without at the same time attempting to disband the Liverpool District Labour Party and the Labour Parties throughout Liverpool. Any attempt to move in this direction would in all probability mean open defiance of the National Executive Committee with these parties continuing to recognise these comrades as members. If the right-wing then moved in to try and close these parties, in all probability they would carry on with the mass support of all the workers in the area.

If such a step were taken, *Militant* together with others on the left would take the campaign to every section of the labour movement throughout the country. A campaign of explanation would be taken into the factories and onto the council estates. We would of course much prefer to concentrate on the battle against the class enemy, the Tory government. But in expelling Marxists, the right-wing are attempting to eliminate all the gains on policy, programme and democracy which the rank and file have achieved within the Labour Party. The leaders of the labour movement have a choice; they can have unity in the battle against the Tories—or they can have a purge. They cannot have both. What is absolutely scandalous is that these measures against the leaders of the

Liverpool working class are being proposed when the bourgeois state is prosecuting them in the courts and threatening to fine them and ban them from office.

But there are stronger forces at work in society than the bureaucratic whims of a few right-wing leaders of the labour and trade union movement. The struggle in Liverpool was borne out of the social conditions in that city. Marxism has become a powerful lever for the Liverpool proletariat, not because of any alleged conspiracy, manoeuvre or intrigues as our bourgeois opponents imagine.

More 'Liverpools' ahead

The Tory government intends to cut a further £1.3 billion from the block grants to local authorities—putting "all councils in Liverpool's position" as David Blunkett said recently. This will mean a further massive battle to avoid even bigger cuts. The Tory government, in concert with Tory councils throughout the country are attempting to compel councils to carry through a massive privatisation programme. It is these facts together with the long-term and endemic crisis of British capitalism that will undermine all attempts of the right-wing leaders of the labour movement to drive Marxism and its influence from the labour movement. The main lesson of Liverpool for any class conscious worker who attentively studies the events of the past three years is that only the policies, methods, programme, strategy and tactics of Marxism can guarantee a victory against capitalism in Britain and indeed on an international scale.

Eighty per cent of blacks who vote support Labour. But this instinctive class solidarity could ultimately give way to despair if the Labour leaders fail to offer a way forward.

The Inner cities erupt—what lies ahead for blacks in Britain?

By Bob Lee

LAST SUMMER'S inner-city upheavals highlighted the plight of the oppressed minorities. They also provided a fresh focus for the debate within the labour movement on its attitude towards Britain's blacks.

For the last two years, the leaders of the Labour Party have largely preoccupied themselves with the constitutional wrangling over the formation of separate black sections. But this controversy is only a symptom of a much deeper problem. How can the labour movement win the active support of blacks?

The labour leaders have vehemently opposed the setting up of black sections, but their failure to offer any alternative will not have helped to overcome the scepticism with which many blacks look towards them. They could have seized on the disturbances as an opportunity to expose the bankruptcy of Thatcherism and point a real way forward.

But predictably, this was not done. Instead, Labour's leaders, both left and right, confined their response to a call for yet another Scamman style public enquiry into the underlying 'causes' of the upheavals. The problem however has never been one of identifying the 'causes', alone but of explaining the solutions.

The right-wing Labour leaders, in effect, give credence to Thatcher's racist jibes by allowing her to get away with the argument that the appalling social conditions created by the decline of capitalism and made worse by her government's policies are not to blame. The Tories skillfully portrayed the riots as a purely "black problem". According to Lord Hailsham, the riots were the result of "human wickedness. It is no more the result of unemployment or urban deprivation than was Hitler's anti-semitism or Goebbels lies."

But such slurs are only intended as a smokescreen to conceal the real effects of racial oppression. Despite their claims about pumping millions of pounds into the inner-city areas, the reality is that the policies of the present government have created virtual nightmare conditions for many of Britain's blacks.

The authoritative Policy Studies Institute has carried out detailed research into the problems of Britain's black minorities since 1966. Its most recent survey, published in 1984, showed that in many respects, the con-

ditions under which black people live today are now much worse than in the 1960s.

While it is true to say that rising unemployment affects all sections of the working class, it is still black people who continue to suffer most.

During the 1985 disturbances, it came to light that as many as nine out of ten young blacks in Handsworth, Birmingham were jobless. Moreover, most of them had never had a proper job and are not likely to ever find one under this system.

A similar situation exists in other areas of high black concentration. On the Broad Water Farm estate in Tottenham and in the Granby area of Liverpool 8, it is estimated that up to 80% of blacks under the age of 24 are unemployed. They too are never likely to find a job.

The misery and despair created by mass unemployment alone would probably be enough to account for the explosive anger which has been steadily accumulating among Britain's young blacks. Yet, unemployment is only one of the problems contributing to the nightmare confronting the black population.

Systematic harassment

When black people first came to this country, they were forced to live in the most squalid, run down housing. Poverty and racism ensured that they were kept out of the more prosperous areas. Today, that position has remained virtually unchanged. Inner city areas like Brixton and Moss Side where blacks were initially forced to settle have now become ghettos. Like the notorious black ghettos of America, these areas are rife with despair, poverty, petty crime and drug-abuse. And, for most blacks, there is no escape. Even those blacks lucky enough to find employment invariably end up in the dirtiest, low paid jobs. The average male white worker in the north west, for instance, earns almost a third more than his black counterpart.

The prospect of a good "British education" for their children was one of the considerations which motivated many blacks to emigrate to this country. Yet, it is black children who benefit least from the education system. Less than 0.5% of black pupils enter higher education, compared to 4% of whites. And 35% of blacks leave

school with no qualifications whatsoever, compared to 27% of whites.

The problems of mass unemployment, poverty, slum housing and inadequate education, are merely the tip of the iceberg. Blacks have to contend with degrading racist abuse, insults and massive discrimination in the provision of social services and health care. Moreover the steadily worsening social conditions facing blacks has inevitably given rise to an unprecedented use of repressive measures designed to keep them in check.

The immigration laws are used to systematically terrorise the Asian community. Thousands of families remain permanently divided and many Asians live in constant fear of being 'visited' by police and immigration officials. Many Asians are reluctant to claim the social benefits to which they are entitled because of a genuine fear that their names may get passed on to the police. A record number of blacks are now being deported, or arbitrarily "removed".

Many Asian communities face the constant threat of racial violence from white mobs and they can hardly turn to the police because they, not their attackers, are the ones who invariably get thrown into police cells.

Despite the introduction of so-called "community policing", black people, especially the youth, continue to suffer daily harassment on the streets and in their homes. It is virtually impossible to find a black family in Britain that has not had a direct experience of arbitrary police action.

It is estimated that almost a half of Britain's blacks spend time in prison before they reach the age of 25. At present, 25 per cent of those committed to life sentences in prison are black; 40 per cent of inmates in borstals and detention centres are black, and though blacks account for less than three per cent of the population, 23 per cent of all British prisoners are black.

These figures graphically illustrate the extent of the repression directed against the most exploited sections of society. But it is precisely this repression, combined with the appalling social conditions which have significantly worsened over the last six years, that has prepared the way for

the explosive anger and militancy of black people.

Virtually every section of the black population has entered into struggle at one time or another over the last 15 years. In the mid 1970s, Asian women, who are perhaps the most oppressed of all, went into action against the appalling conditions in the sweat shops. Asian and West Indian youth at that time responded in their thousands in the battle to drive the fascists off the streets. And now even black school children have entered the fray in a series of battles against racism in schools.

The upheavals of 1981 and again in 1985 reflect the rage of the most despairing sections of black youth. In the absence of any lead from the labour movement, those sections of the blacks who find themselves at the sharp end of the Tory attacks have vented their fury on a society which has condemned them.

But it would be a mistake to conclude that the industrial militancy of black workers or the political combativity of the youth has now given way to a mood of blind despair. Quite the contrary, black workers today are probably the most politically conscious section of the British working class.

Sections of the ruling class have, of course, been alarmed by the developing instability within the inner cities. Repeated outbursts of rioting and disorder can damage their international standing and prestige.

Real meaning of Scarman 'reforms'

But their greatest fear does not come from the riots. If anything, rioting and looting provides them with a useful pretext for the introduction of para-military style policing methods which can be used against class militants. A far more serious problem for the ruling class is the potential threat which is posed by an active and politically conscious black working class. The dramatic impact of looting and burning has tended to overshadow the rising militancy of a growing section of black workers who have entered into struggle. This militancy, and the struggle of blacks generally, can exercise a powerful influence on the rest of the working class. Oppressed minorities in capitalist society have always tended to play a disproportionate role in the class struggle. This was the case in Russia where Jews and other oppressed groups played a leading role in the revolution. And to some extent this process was partly demonstrated in the United States in the 1960s where the inchoate Black Power movement acted as the catalyst



It is virtually impossible to find a black family in Britain that has not had direct experience of arbitrary police action.

which triggered the anti-war rebellion among youth generally and the subsequent movement of women.

The same situation could apply to Britain, only more so. Here black workers are already closely aligned to the labour movement. Proportionately more blacks than whites are members of trade unions and a massive 80 per cent of blacks who vote support Labour. There are now more black shop stewards than at any time during the post war period. Black workers have played a key role in many of the most important industrial battles during the post-war period, particularly in the car industry, transport and the health service. The enormous affinity between blacks and the mineworkers during their year-long strike will not have gone unnoticed. Hence, Enoch Powell's reference to blacks as a "disaffected" section of society who have no allegiance to "Queen and country". In other words, the ruling class are fully conscious of the potentially revolutionary role blacks can play.

Even within the spontaneous uprisings, which are not in any sense *organised* movements, there has existed an instinctive desire for unity between the black and white youth who have taken part in those events. At no time in any of the riots, was there any serious racial conflict within the areas concerned, although this position could change in the future.

Partly in response to the riots, but more specifically out of a fear of the influence black workers can have on the movement of the working class, a section of the ruling class have from time to time toyed with the idea of finding a solution through a strategy of creating a black middle class as a way of heading off a black revolt which could quickly embrace a wider movement of the workers. This idea was first raised in a serious way in 1981 by

Scarman and others who advocated the idea of giving blacks "a stake in society" through a form of positive discrimination. The hope was that Britain could repeat the strategy that was developed in America in the aftermath of the race riots in the 1960s.

'Community leaders'

Affirmative action or positive discrimination has led to the creation of a black middle class in America. However, these measures have meant little or nothing for the mass of American black workers and youth. A large proportion of American blacks still live in abject poverty and the levels of black unemployment are much higher today than in the 1960's. And, in any case, it would be virtually impossible to repeat this strategy in Britain. For a start, affirmative action was carried through in the United States at a time when the economy was booming, with relatively full employment. This is not the position in Britain today, and, apart from a lack of resources, a strategy of positive discrimination could backfire and open up the prospect of serious racial conflict, giving rise to even greater instability within the inner-cities.

Of course the Tories made great play of the so-called reforms that were introduced in the post-Scarman period. But these were purely cosmetic, resulting in hardly any benefits for blacks, except for a small minority who have been given top positions as race relations officials and 'community leaders'. The overwhelming majority of blacks now face even more desperate conditions than in 1981. In Liverpool 8, the number of unemployed young blacks has doubled since 1981 while in Brixton the number has trebled.

The lack of any real changes to the conditions of blacks after 1981 in-

evitably paved the way for a continuing growth of militancy and the almost unavoidable repetition of street disturbances. Unlike the USA there is no black middle class to absorb black discontent or to divert blacks away from the kind of militant struggles seen in Newham and Bradford.

Nevertheless, the Tories have pumped millions into supporting a network of black 'community leaders' to 'police' the black communities, in the same way as the right wing Labour leaders' attempt to police the labour movement. It was noticeable that Thatcher and co were to quick to call on the so-called 'community leaders' to 'restore order' during the 1985 disturbances.

But these leaders lack credibility. They do not have the authority to prevent spontaneous movements on the streets. In fact after the Cherry Groce shooting in Brixton, the first stone was actually thrown when black 'leaders' went onto the steps of Brixton police station to appeal for 'calm'.

However, the idea of creating a black middle class has come to the fore once more. The Church of England and

the Tory wets have joined the chorus for 'reform' in the inner cities. The Home Office has raised the idea of combatting racial discrimination in private sector employment through the introduction of a system of contracts compliance for firms who win government contracts.

State prepared for future conflicts

This proposal could have some limited effect, though it would not stem the tide of black unemployment. Yet, even a small measure such as this has already run into serious opposition from elements within the Tory party.

While the ruling class are prepared to entertain the idea of introducing token reforms, they also recognise the realities of the capitalist crisis, which compels them to maintain the attacks on the living standards of the working class. The Tories cannot offer a solution to the problems of working class whites, let alone blacks.

This is why the main strategy of the Thatcher government has been to

prepare the state apparatus for dealing with those sections of the working class who are forced into struggle. And, as one of the most militant detachments of the working class, black workers inevitably find themselves in the frontline of the Tory fire. Since coming to power, the Thatcher government has consciously strengthened the immigration and nationality laws which are used to cow the black population. The new police powers were partly designed for immediate use against blacks, and at a later stage against all workers who enter into struggle, as in the case of the miners.

Plastic bullets, CS gas, water cannon and specially equipped vehicles—these are the weapons the police are now preparing to unleash in the future.

The crisis of capitalism will lead to a worsening of the conditions facing blacks, and this in turn will open up the prospect in the long term of major street conflicts. Rising unemployment and poverty could drive an ever-increasing number of blacks towards blind despair. Areas like Liverpool 8 and parts of Brixton could develop in-

Black Sections—Constitutional substitute for socialist policies

AT THE 1985 Labour Party conference a resolution calling for the setting up of black sections in the Party was defeated with 1,169,000 votes in favour and 5,358,000 against.

Prior to the conference the Labour Party NEC had set up a "Working Group on positive discrimination" to discuss the participation of blacks in the Party.

In July 1985, the group produced its report which favored the setting up of "black sections"—despite the opposition shown to this idea in the decisions taken at national Labour Party conference 1984, and also at the 1985 London Labour Party conference.

The Working Group's support for setting up black sections, however, came as no surprise as black section campaigners were in a majority on the group.

The report is an example of the mistaken and confused ideas circulating among some sections of the labour movement on this issue.

While paying lip service to the need to campaign against racism and improve Labour's policies, the arguments of the black sections campaigners centre around organisational questions, changes in the constitution, and structures, of the Labour Party—as if some how these were a short cut solution to fundamental political problems.

Kevin Fernandes

No amount of juggling with structures, reserved "token" appointments or nominations for committees, can reverse the disillusionment caused by the failure of past Labour governments to end racism, and solve the problems facing working class people.

The mass of black people themselves do not support the idea of a "black section". The Channel 4 TV network commissioned a poll, which interviewed 2,500 Afro-Caribbeans, and 2,600 Asians in 50 constituencies with more than 10 per cent black voters; the poll result was that 63 per cent opposed creating black sections and 18 per cent were in favour. Opinion polls are not always totally correct, but they nevertheless can reflect a general mood or opinion.

US Democratic Party

The authors of the Group Report drag in the Democratic Party of the United States in their defence, commenting that that Party has black caucuses, and reserved places for women, Hispanics etc. But the US Democratic Party is a capitalist party—which upholds a system using racism and discrimination as a weapon to divide working people. It's not correct to compare it to the British Labour Party. The Labour Party, despite its leadership, historically

represents the aspirations of the working class, and stands opposed to capitalism.

There is in fact no reason to believe that black sections will transform disillusionment, build a bridge between blacks and whites, or draw black workers towards the labour movement.

The Group Report cites Vauxhall CLP and its "Black Section" as a "particular success story". A number of completely exaggerated claims are made which bear no resemblance to the situation in the constituency. There is little or no outward campaigning activity by the "Vauxhall Black Section", and it has shown a complete inability to address itself to the problems of the black working class.

A case in point is the police shooting of an innocent black woman, Cherry Groce, in Brixton on 28 September, which provoked clashes with police throughout the Lambeth area. The Vauxhall Black Section sat on the sidelines, and played no role in the campaign around these events.

Rather than involve themselves with the local community in the protest against police brutality, members of the Black Section at one stage attended private meetings with black media owners and other self-appointed leaders, who were trying to cut across the genuine campaigns in Brixton and Tottenham. Unfortunately, the role of Vauxhall Black Section and of the CLP, in those events in Brixton, was far from a "success story".

to no-go areas in the event of serious racial conflict.

Of course, any development in this direction would be disastrous. Yet, the only way this prospect for the future can be avoided is through the intervention of the labour movement. The overwhelming majority of blacks now look towards the labour movement. But if, during the course of future battles, *the Labour leaders fail to offer a way out* then this instinctive class solidarity could ultimately give way to cynicism and despair.

Prospects under Labour

The role of the next Labour government will be crucial. By mobilising the working class to carry through a thoroughgoing programme of socialist measures to tackle poverty and mass unemployment the basis would be laid for eradicating racism through united class action to change society.

If on the other hand, the next Labour government fails to show a way forward, then the inevitable disillusionment and demoralisation which would follow would open the

way for the growth of racist tendencies such as that which faced the last Labour government in the mid 1970s—only much worse. A position could open up similar to the present situation in France, where the Mitterand government has capitulated under the pressure of an orchestrated racist campaign waged by the French right.

The extent of the retreat by the French government was recently demonstrated when the Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius, suggested that he and the right wing Gaullist leader, Chirac, held roughly the same views on immigration. According to the *Times* (2 December 1985) Fabius then "recounted with pride how the government had expelled 12,000 illegal immigrants and turned back a further 40,000 from France's frontiers; this year, he went on, it had induced some 45,000 immigrants to leave France by offering them generous repatriation grants."

Without a clear programme of socialist action, a future Labour government under Kinnock could well go down the same road. The disastrous

experience of the Labour governments of the 1960's and 1970's could be repeated all over again. By failing to act decisively to change society, these Labour governments bowed to the pressure of the monopolies, reneged on their manifesto commitments and ended up carrying through a programme of counter-reforms.

In the process of retreating, Labour created a climate of disillusion and despair which opened the way for the growth of reactionary moods and the temporary rise of groups like the National Front.

The Mitterand Government

While the formation of a mass Fascist party on the lines of the 1930's is now ruled out an openly racist movement would probably develop around the bonapartist wing of the Tory Party. Such a movement would represent a far more serious threat to the labour movement because it would give racist ideas a new respectability. A pro-monarchist and openly racist wing of the Tory Party would not necessarily

Moreover, no attempt has ever been made to initiate a discussion amongst the black party members as to whether they wanted a "black section". It was just presumed (by those who "knew better") that blacks would want one! The Vauxhall Black Section has a pitiful membership and meeting attendance, not reflecting the local Party's black membership, let alone the black working class in Vauxhall.

Vauxhall Black Section

However, it is not just the organisational methods and tactics of the black section campaigners in Vauxhall that are at fault—but their whole political approach. If they achieved the impossible and gained support amongst the working class for their ideas, then it would jeopardise the building of unity amongst blacks and whites. Fortunately, their ideas have little chance of achieving this. Nevertheless, it is useful to look at some of their views, as a means of clearly illustrating what **should** be the socialist position on these questions.

A pamphlet produced a year ago by the officers of the Vauxhall CLP "Black Sections—Here to stay" showed a haughty contempt for working people. (It is interesting to note also that, despite the rhetoric, this pamphlet was written without consultation at any meeting of even the Vauxhall Black Section!).

In the first few paragraphs the pamphlet claims: "... the history of the

labour movement is placed firmly within the framework of British imperialism. Most of the gains won by the British working class have been at the expense of the working class in other countries—and this is not just a historical phenomenon, it continues today. Just compare the wages of British workers with those of black miners in South Africa or tea-pickers in India or Sri Lanka."

If this rotten argument were followed then surely it could be said that higher paid workers in Britain, technicians etc were responsible for low-paid workers—hospital ancillary workers for example having an abysmal standard of living?

The gains of the British working class have been achieved through struggle and not benevolently handed down by the capitalists, who, if they could, would pay British workers as low wages as those in the Third World. This has obviously been lost on the authors of the pamphlet.

The pamphlet goes on to say "the organisational form and practices of the Labour Party reflect the divisions within our class. The majority of Party members and supporters are excluded from access to power within the Party—women, the unemployed, those with disabilities, pensioners, tenants, and black people, being the most obvious examples."

Presumably, then, the solution to gaining "power" is for every "group" not adequately represented to form a section, class becomes just another

category, along with race, sex, disability, age etc. The idea of building the unity of the working class is thrown out of the window.

But the contemptuous attitude in the pamphlet is not reserved only for white workers. Apparently, according to the Vauxhall pamphlet—"Immigrant Black people joined the Labour Party in many instances as a show of gratitude and solidarity with the host community. They did not expect to get anything out of membership..." (1)

Labour's representatives must reflect the composition of the working class as a whole, which must mean more black councillors and black MP's—but these representatives must first and foremost be chosen on the basis of their policies.

It is not enough, as is the practice in the NEC Working Group's Report to cheer on the selections of a number of black councillors. What will count, in the eyes of black workers, will be the concrete results achieved, in terms of housing, employment, social services, and so on.

The report itself states that membership of the Labour Party is irrelevant "for most black people, who face disproportionately high levels of unemployment, unequal job opportunities, poor housing, racial harassment, and other disadvantages."

The task now for the labour movement is to initiate a bold campaign against racism, as part of an overall programme to end the social and economic ills facing working people.

be tarnished with the Hitlerite image of the fascist splinter groups.

Under conditions which could give rise to this kind of grouping, the ruling class, seizing on the opportunity of a Labour government in retreat, could unleash a racist campaign aimed at dividing the working class. The press could whip-up a hysterical campaign blaming blacks for the rising crime rate, and for unemployment, poor housing and inadequate welfare services for whites. This in turn would generate a significant rise in racial discrimination and violence, and inevitably a Labour government would once again bow under pressure for action against the so-called "immigrants".

Far from repealing the immigration and nationality laws, a future Labour government which failed to break with capitalism, like its predecessors, would be forced to tighten these laws. It should not be forgotten that it was right wing ministers in previous Labour governments who prepared the way for the various immigration and nationality acts which were subsequently passed by the Tories.

During the period of the last Labour government, for instance, a number of Labour MPs, including Sid Bidwell, supported a Select Committee report which called for a tough crack down on so-called "illegal" immigrants, including the possible introduction of identity cards for blacks.

The French government under Mitterand has been forced to retreat on its commitments to blacks and the working class generally, even though it has operated under far more favourable economic conditions than will be the case for the next Labour government

in Britain. The choice for Labour in Britain will be even more stark. The virtual collapse of the country's manufacturing base means that the next Labour government will have the choice of either implementing socialist measures, or of capitulating to the monopolies and retreating once again.

But retreat would lead to disillusion among workers generally and, in particular, would open up the danger of a layer of blacks being repelled from the labour movement. A climb down on immigration, for example, would drive sections of blacks away from the Labour Party.

Socialist measures to fight racism

The present Black Sections movement has found virtually no support among black workers because the overwhelming majority of blacks, including the youth, understand the need for class unity. But this could change. The incipient development of black separatism within the Labour Party in advance of Labour coming to power should serve as a warning to the Labour leaders of the dangers for the future.

The weakness of the labour movement in the USA has led to a partial revival of black separatism, mainly grouped around the pro-capitalist black muslim leader, Louis Farakhan.

A similar situation could develop here, albeit in a different form. The failure of the Labour leaders to offer a way forward could reinforce the semi-nationalist tendencies which are apparent within the Black Sections movement. If the Black Sections became a constituent part of the

Labour Party, then they would almost certainly split away in a period when a Labour government was in retreat.

The labour movement cannot afford to be complacent. While opposing the setting up of separate sections for blacks, the Marxists have always explained the need for the labour movement to champion the cause of the most oppressed sections of the working class. The Labour Party cannot take the electoral support of blacks for granted. The Labour leaders must take an unequivocal stand against all forms of racism. There must be a clear commitment to tackle the special problems which black people face. Labour must take special measures to recruit blacks, including the formation of anti-racist committees which could spearhead the fight against racism in every area.

These measures must be linked to a wider programme of socialist action to tackle the root causes of racism which breeds on the despair created by mass unemployment and poverty. The ideas of Marxism and a genuine commitment for socialist change will win the whole-hearted support of every section of the black community. Once they become convinced that Labour has a serious commitment to change society, black workers will rally to the banner of socialism.

The building of class unity around a socialist programme is one of the most urgent tasks for Marxists within the labour movement. By winning black workers to the banner of Marxism, it will be possible to lay the basis for the building of a movement that can cut across racial divisions and really open up the way to change society.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement – A Warning to Labour

THE ANGLO-IRISH Agreement is a bosses' accord. It has been designed by the Westminster and Dublin governments to serve the interests of big business in Ireland. For the working class, Catholic and Protestant, it offers nothing. It will not alleviate the poverty which is now endemic, north and south. It will not reduce, let alone end, unemployment, now over 20 per cent in the north and 17 per cent in the south.

Hardly was the ink dry on this agreement when the Thatcher government showed the true face of Toryism

and announced a drastic cut in housing expenditure coupled with further cuts in the Health Service in Northern Ireland. The real solution of the Tories to the problems of Catholic and Protestant workers is to make them worse!

Bipartisanship revived

This agreement will, however, have one effect. It will produce instability, upheaval and violence. Because it will have solved nothing its final net effect will, at best, be to increase sec-

By Peter Hadden

tarianism. At worst, if the Tories try to hold this unworkable agreement together and greet Protestant resistance with bayonets, they could precipitate a full-scale sectarian bloodbath.

Clearly this is a very dangerous moment in the history of the Irish labour movement, and of the labour movement in Britain also. Open sectarian



Photo: Derek Speirs (Report)

The massive 23 November Unionist demonstration against the agreement. Between 10 – 20 per cent of the Protestant population attended.

conflict in Ireland would threaten the very existence of the trade unions, north and south. It would be a setback of a quite serious character for the working class of Britain also.

If ever there was a time when the entire labour movement of Ireland and Britain should be moving into action to avert potential disaster that time is now. Yet the leadership of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions have maintained a deafening silence on the whole issue. In Britain and in the South the respective Labour Party leaderships have acted as the shadows of Thatcher and Fitzgerald on the question.

'No hint of class stand'

From the leaderships of the movement there has been not so much as a hint of an independent class position. If the labour movement emerges intact from the present crisis it will not be as a result of the actions of Neil Kinnock, Dick Spring or the ICTU leaders, or at least of their actions to date. It will be despite the damaging and dangerous policies of bipartizanship and silence.

The standpoint of these leaders is based on an illusion. It is the illusion that, on the basis of capitalism, there can be a solution to the national conflict in Ireland.

One of the greatest accomplishments of capitalism in the past was the creation of nation states through the breaking down of feudal barriers and the assimilation or part assimilation of peoples and cultures. This was possible in the period of

capitalist expansion when the system still played a hugely progressive role in developing the productive forces.

Now we live in the epoch of the death agony of capitalism. The productive forces now strain at the limitations of private property and the nation state. The system can no longer satisfy the appetites of the gigantic monopolies and consortiums for expansion. Far from developing production, existing productive potential can no longer be used. Now, even in periods of boom, only 80 per cent of the productive capacity of Europe and America is utilised. In the underdeveloped world capacity utilisation of 50 per cent and even 30 per cent is the norm.

Modern day representatives of capitalism look to the destruction of the existing productive forces, and not to the creation of new wealth. This is the rationality behind the madhouse economics of monetarism.

One of the distinguishing features of this period is the tendency for national conflicts and antagonisms to emerge and re-emerge with ever more ferocity. Already in the colonial and ex-colonial worlds, where the states which exist are, at best, caricatures of the nation states of the West, wars, national, tribal and religious conflicts are on the order of the day. Capitalism, in these areas, means ultimate Lebanonisation and barbaric disintegration. Only the working class, fighting for a socialist solution, can draw behind itself and unite all sections of the oppressed.

Also, in the advanced capitalist

states national differences, even some which have been apparently resolved, have now the capacity to appear or reappear. In the long-run failure by the working class to overthrow capitalism in Italy, France, Belgium, Britain, etc could be punished by the breakup of these states, a development which would be entirely retrogressive and reactionary.

The National Question in Ireland

Where a national problem exists it cannot be resolved on the basis of capitalism, or of Stalinism for that matter. So the conflict between India and Pakistan, or the conflicts within India and within Pakistan, are permanent features of capitalism in this area. As the world crisis of capitalism deepens so these antagonisms will sharpen unless and until the working class shows a way out. Only a socialist federation of the sub-continent can provide an answer. So also in Sri Lanka, in Zimbabwe, in the Middle East, in Cyprus, Spain and in deformed workers' states such as Yugoslavia, where the issue is already acute.

Capitalism, and now Stalinism, are reactionary impediments to economic development. Their contribution on the national question is also negative and reactionary. This general conclusion holds true for the national problem in Ireland and will be reconfirmed by the failure of the latest attempt at a capitalist solution—the Anglo-

Irish Agreement.

The roots of the national problem in Ireland lie in the partition of the country. Partition created an artificial statelet in the North with a Protestant majority, but with a large Catholic minority which cannot be permanently reconciled to the state's existence. On the other side the one million Protestants are totally opposed to any link-up with the state they see in the South. So long as the alternatives appear as either a poverty-stricken capitalist North, or the merging of the two poverty-ridden states, north and south, into a capitalist united Ireland, so long will there be an irreconcilable gulf between the Catholic and Protestant working class. In a nutshell capitalism means conflict in Ireland.

Most ironical about the present situation is the fact the British ruling class would now prefer a united Ireland. When this same class imposed partition in 1920 their prime purpose was to avert the danger of revolution in Ireland by splitting the working class along religious lines. It was a classic example of the age-old tactic of divide and rule. There were other factors, the retention of control over Irish ports for military purposes, the fact that they could still directly control the northern industrial region of Ireland, but first and foremost it was to derail the movement of the working class.

Thanks to the failures of the leaders of the Irish trade unions and the Labour Party this tactic was successful at the time. But the dialectic of history has turned the tables on the ruling class.

By the 1950s and '60s partition was an anachronism from the point of view of British capitalism. Socialist revolution, in Europe at least, seemed off the agenda. Advances in military technique and the long-term decline of Britain as a military power, rendered the matter of bases in Ireland unimportant. Economically the southern part of Ireland was developing into an important market. By 1968 it was the fifth largest importer of British goods. Two-thirds of British companies had subsidiaries there.

Under such conditions the border was of no purpose to imperialism. Just the reverse. The northern statelet had become a permanent drain on the British exchequer while the division of the island had created a source of permanent instability. The problem for imperialism is that capitalist reunification is completely impossible. Standing in the way are the million Protestants who were given a state in 1920 and for whom a capitalist united Ireland can never be attractive or acceptable. Despite its partial development over the past two decades, the

South remains a relatively backward economy, especially in terms of infrastructure and social services. It is in deep economic crisis with a national debt equal to 130 per cent of GNP. Its working class are probably the most highly taxed in Europe and yet the total tax intake in 1985 will be less than the interest on the debt.

The crisis of world capitalism, and of sickly Irish capitalism, plus the austerity measures of the present right wing Fine Gael dominated coalition government, have led to a 20 per cent fall in the living standards of the working class in recent years. 17 per cent of the workforce are unemployed and 35 per cent of the population are dependent on state benefits for all or part of their income.

On top of all this Protestants see a state dominated by the Catholic church, with restrictions on divorce and on contraception. They fear that in a debt-ridden, poverty-stricken capitalist united Ireland, they would be made the scapegoats and would end up as a discriminated-against minority.

Unionist reaction no bluff

Militant has consistently explained that an attempt to coerce the million Protestants into a capitalist united Ireland would be resisted by force. At times this idea has been derided by individuals like John Hume, by some republicans and by sections of the left of the British Labour Party among others. "It is all a bluff" they would say. Given the reaction of the Protestants to even the smell of a united Ireland which they detect in the Anglo-Irish Agreement there can be no more argument on the question.

A serious step to capitalist reunification would provoke civil war. The Protestants, because of their strength of arms, with 20,000 in the UDR and RUC, with the legally held firearms in the Territorial Army, with the paramilitaries, with their access to aircraft, munitions and even missiles through defence industries like Shorts, and because they would be fighting with their backs to the sea, would emerge as victors. There would be wholesale slaughter, a massive movement of populations leading to the repartition of Ireland and the retrenchment of the sectarian division.

As an aside, this is the crushing answer to the strategy and tactics of the Provisionals. Their methods of individual terrorism can never succeed in defeating the British army. All that fifteen years of these methods have achieved is increased repression plus greater sectarian division. By dividing and disorientating the working class they serve only to reinforce the hold

of imperialism in Ireland.

The ultimate logic of the Provos' strategy is military confrontation with the Protestants. There are those within their ranks who see salvation as lying on the other side of a sectarian holocaust. They believe that civil war would force the South to intervene and seize the North.

All advocates of such sectarian lunacy deserve only the contempt of the working class in these islands and internationally. James Connolly predicted that partition would bring a 'carnival of reaction'. The same can be said of civil war and repartition—except a hundred times more so.

British imperialism, while its hands are tied, would still prefer reunification. Not so the weak and effete southern bourgeoisie. This class has completely abandoned its original mission; to capture the national territory of Ireland and develop a unified nation state. For its political representatives in both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael the removal of the border is a vote getting slogan with absolutely no content.

The very document adopted by these parties at the end of the New Ireland Forum discussions, supposedly a justification for reunification, is in reality a convincing argument against. It points out that the British subvention to the north is now a staggering 27 per cent of the Provinces' GNP. It projects that a United Ireland which had to pay out such a sum would end up with 32 per cent unemployment by the 1990's. This is hardly a prospect to fire the imagination of northern Catholics let alone Protestants. And then there is the cost of security, now £400 billion per year which the Forum report assumes would simply become unnecessary!

The Southern ruling class and the capitalist parties all accept partition. They do not seek the inheritance of the economic desert of the north with its half a million disaffected Catholics let alone its million embittered Protestants.

But just as a capitalist united Ireland is impossible so any solution based on the existing statelet is likewise unworkable. The 1970's saw the ending of Stormont and brought direct rule. Then came the power sharing executive and the Sunningdale Agreement. These were shattered by Protestant resistance in the form of the 1974 Ulster Workers Council stoppage. Within two years the next initiative, the Constitutional Convention, had come and gone. One year after that new constitutional talks were set up and ran into the sand. In 1980 the Constitutional Conference of Humphrey Atkins was put on ice. The following year saw the launching of a new set of proposals which ultimately

led to the formation of the Northern Ireland Assembly, now on the verge of collapse.

This litany of failures is not accidental. There can never be a lasting solution within the north. To the Catholics this state has meant 50 years of unionist discrimination followed by a decade and a half of British military repression. Alongside the discrimination goes the poverty. Male unemployment among Catholics is now estimated at 38-40 per cent. The British ruling class now largely accept that they have 'lost' the Catholic working class who are completely disaffected. Their initiatives, including this latest agreement, are designed mainly to win hearts and minds in the 'leafy Catholic suburbs'. Because such deals can do no more than paper over the fundamental divisions within society they are bound sooner or later, to fall to pieces. The ultimate fact is that the Catholic minority cannot be reconciled with the existence of the present impoverished state. The aspiration for a united Ireland, which to the Catholic working class means taking control of their own destiny and changing things north and south, will not be relinquished.

Thatcher's miscalculation

So the latest deal, like its predecessors, is a reflection, not of the strength and foresight but of the impasse of the British ruling class in Ireland. Despite the furore of the Protestants the new agreement has nothing to do with reunification. It is a cosmetic exercise designed to bolster the SDLP by giving a few paltry concessions to the Catholics. At the same time it aims to step up cross border co-operation on security to allow greater north-south co-ordination of repression. Thatcher's hope was that this pact would woo the SDLP, deal a blow to Sinn Fein, split the Unionists and thereby lay the basis for devolved government and some form of internal settlement. On all accounts she has been sadly mistaken. The entire episode is fated to prove a gross miscalculation on the part of two governments, a miscalculation with potentially disastrous consequences.

The agreement cannot succeed. Its most fundamental proposal, the establishment of an intergovernmental conference through which the Dublin Government is to be granted a consultative role in the running of the north, is unworkable from start to finish. Those 'concessions' to the minority which might emerge from this new body, for example the repeal of the Flags and Emblems Act, RUC men patrolling along with the UDR, would make no real difference to



Fitzgerald and Thatcher sign the Anglo-Irish accord.

Catholics. To remove the Flags and Emblems Act would simply make it legal for Catholics to do what they do anyway, fly the Tricolour and have street names in Irish. And one Catholic youth in Derry aptly summed up the cynicism with which Catholics would greet the appearance of the RUC alongside the UDR: "All it means is that when the UDR beat you up at a checkpoint you'll be charged with disorderly behaviour for your troubles" *Fortnight*, 2 December 1985.

Yet even these mealy-mouthed changes would inflame the Protestants. Paisley's response would be predictable—"They tell us that our sovereignty is unchanged. Why then do we now have two national flags?" etc.

On the other hand, if Thatcher were to try to make the deal palatable to Protestants by presenting it as a recipe for increased security and nothing more, she would soon run into Catholic opposition. Eventually even the SDLP would be forced to withdraw their support or lose credibility. In truth the agreement is an unsustainable attempt to face in all directions at the same time. Most likely by offering only worthless sops to the Catholics mixed with larger measures of repression, with the Protestants seeing only the sops and the Catholics feeling only the repression, the end result would be to alienate both Catholics and Protestants. The ruling classes will discover that the circle of Northern Ireland politics cannot be so neatly squared.

Were it simply a matter of another initiative which must eventually run into the sand the question would not be so serious for the labour movement. But, because this agreement attempts to go further in the sense of the showpiece involvement of the Dublin government, its consequences will be all the more serious. The danger is that

it may not so much fall apart as be blown to bits in the furious sectarian backlash it will provoke.

Thatcher's most serious miscalculation has been to underestimate the extent of Protestant reaction. The scale of Protestant opposition was brought home in two events almost as soon as the deal was signed.

First there was the demonstration in Belfast called one week later. This was not so much organised as announced. No special posters or leaflets were issued, it was simply called for by the Unionist leaders using the organisation of the Orange Order in particular. In the event the turnout was larger than that achieved by Carson during the mass resistance to Home Rule in 1912. Estimates vary from 100,000 to 200,000, or between 10-20 per cent of the Protestant population. Translated onto a British scale it would mean a turnout of between 5.5 and 11 million.

Agreement cannot succeed

Second was the strike and demonstration of Protestant workers on 11 December, the day of the first meeting of the intergovernmental conference. Significantly not only did the shipyard and Shorts workers come out, so too did workers at the key Ballylumford power station. When Paisley tried to organise a stoppage in May 1977 the refusal of the Ballylumford workers to give their support was a decisive factor in ensuring his defeat.

This anger is because of the open ended nature of the agreement which to Protestants seems to accord the Dublin government a say in virtually every aspect of life in the north. While the agreement stresses that this is only a consultative role the Protestants see it as joint sovereignty. It is regarded as a foot in the door, the first opening to a united Ireland.

Also both the manner in which the agreement was reached and its present implementation could not have been better designed to make Protestants suspicious and arouse their anger. All negotiations were held in secret. The intergovernmental conference will discuss in secret. It all appears to have been done above the heads and behind the backs of the Unionists.

From a socialist point of view the whole thing is entirely undemocratic. The right-wing Tories in both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail are no guardians of the rights of either Catholic or Protestant workers. They are elected by no one and accountable to no one in the north.

Playing on the anti-democratic character of the deal Paisley and co have struck a deep chord among the Protestant working class. On the part of these leaders the howls of protest about consultation and democracy are sickening hypocrisy and nothing more. These latter-day converts to democratic principles and their forebears, are the same politicians and parties who for 50 years withheld democratic rights from the Catholic minority and who in 1968-9 took to the streets to physically counter the mass campaign for civil rights!

The tragedy of the present situation is that these people have been given an enormous boost. Far from splitting the Unionists and isolating the Democratic Unionist Party Thatcher has provided Paisley with a pedestal around which to draw mass Protestant support. It is those who dare dissent, and they are few, who are isolated. In the coming weeks and months, provided the agreement remains, this Protestant opposition seems certain to intensify. Protestant opposition will harden not relent. The stage has been set for a massive increase in sectarianism.

The January by-elections were one of the most sectarian elections for decades. Now back in Parliament the Unionists threaten to present a motion opposing the agreement. If this is lost they have stated that they will withdraw from Westminster and from all institutions of local government in the North. Pressure will now come on to the MP's to abide by their commitment to resign.

Paisley is coy as to what will be the next move. But strong hints have been given of a rent and rate strike, of advice to UDR and RUC members to resign. Although not yet widely talked about, a repeat of the 1974 Loyalist stoppage might be attempted at a certain stage. If things were to go this far events could then begin to have a logic of their own.

Paisley may be guarded in his comments as to where all this might lead. Not so some of his lieutenants in the

DUP. Their words are a warning to the labour movement which it will choose to ignore at its peril. So Gregory Campbell, DUP Assemblyman for Derry, states: "We must form ourselves into a provisional government, that provisional government must have a defence; and that defence must be armed. The Protestant people must be armed". *Magill*, 14 November 1985.

DUP Chief Whip Jim Allister described his own role if the agreement is not endorsed: "I would act in concert with hundreds of thousands of other Loyalists in arming ourselves. No self respecting individual is going to do anything but resist. In those circumstances there are no lengths to which Ulstermen would not be prepared to go to stop it. None." *Magill* 14 November 1985.

In the same article Sammy Wilson, DUP Assemblyman for East Belfast openly threatens violence in the South. But the final word must go to the Rev Ivan Foster of Fermanagh DUP: "I wouldn't be joining the army of Ulster as a chaplain. I would be joining as Joe Bloggs, an ordinary footsoldier... I know how to use a gun. There's no use carrying a gun if you don't know how to use it. There's no use carrying a gun if you don't intend to use it. And if I am ambushed I have one prayer, 'Lord let him miss the first time'."

An independent Ulster?

Inherent in these statements is the final option of UDI. Among the mass of Protestants there is little or no support for this at present. But if it appeared that the choice was independence or rule from Dublin the Protestants *en masse* would feel no choice but to support the former. There is a certain logic in the Unionist's campaign of resistance which, at the very least, points them in this direction.

To advocate UDI is merely a more polite way of advocating civil war. The development of armed Protestant reaction seeking control of the state would prompt a corresponding move in the Catholic areas to defence. Just as the Protestants will never accept capitalist reunification, so the Catholics would fight before they would place themselves under the iron heel of a Protestant state. An attempt to engineer a UDI would inevitably spark a civil war and end up with repartition. It would be a disaster for all workers, Protestants included.

Even if things do not go so far the situation which will open up if the Unionist MPs withdraw from Parliament will be fraught with dangers. Standing in the wings are the paramilitaries. Both the Ulster

Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force have been reduced to a semi-activity in recent years. This agreement has given them the opportunity to begin to reorganise, using the recently formed 'Ulster Loyalist Front' as a cover. Within a few days of the massive Belfast demonstration UDA posters started to appear in some towns. UVF leaflets and posters have been openly circulated in key factories such as Shorts and the shipyards. While the mass of Protestant workers will not turn again to these vicious murder machines they can recruit among the lumpen strata and are capable of acts of extreme sectarian provocation designed to inflame the situation. So too are the Irish National Liberation Army and the Provos, or sections of the Provos. Likewise sections of the RUC and UDR are capable of carrying out atrocities to shipwreck the agreement.

In such an atmosphere one incident could conceivably overspill into fullscale bloodletting spiralling towards a Lebanon 1975. Rather than bring about stability and reconciliation this capitalist 'solution' will most likely lead to a situation in which a civil war will become a possibility. The longer the British government attempt to enforce the pact, the greater will be the possibility of such a horrendous result.

The British ruling class do not want civil war. It would mean upheaval in Britain. Far from sorting things out in Ireland it would bring about Middle East-style instability with Catholic refugees driven into the south, with a perpetual guerrilla offensive against the new northern state, with attacks on British property and with international repercussions such as possible action against British goods in America. It is therefore most likely that Thatcher will be forced to back down at a certain stage.

For years the military strategy of the British bourgeois has been the 'Ulsterisation' of the security forces. This has been in part accomplished, not in the sense that British control on security has been lessened, but through the greater reliance upon locally recruited footsoldiers to implement the will of the British Chiefs of Staff.

In 1973 there were 16,000 British soldiers out of a total security force of 30,000. Now out of a total of 28,000, only 9,000 are from Britain. There are almost 20,000 UDR and RUC, both full and part time.

If these forces were to begin to crumble in the hands of the British generals, alarm bells would start to ring which would be heard all the way to Downing Street and Westminster. This, and/or the possibility of massive

sectarian violence, even civil war, would leave the government no alternative but to extricate themselves from the mess by one way or another scrapping the agreement.

For the present there are no obvious signs of a shift on the part of the government. Thatcher is busy comforting herself with a massive 426 Parliamentary majority. For the most part the capitalist press are still proclaiming the myth of Thatcher's invincibility. After all, she defeated Galtieri, the hunger strikers and the miners! Why not the Protestants also! *The Times*, now descended to the level of the yellow press, in an editorial (2 December 1985) accepts, "That a year from now the Cabinet may still be facing widespread disobedience from many of Northern Ireland's one million Protestants. The government therefore needs to prepare psychologically, as well as physically, for a seige".

Despite such defiant noises it is most likely that reality will strike home among the ruling class in Britain and even in the dense skulls of Thatcher's cabinet at a certain stage. The government are in a no win situation. There seems no prospect that they can gain the acceptance of any substantial section of Protestants for this agreement. Nor will it satisfy the Catholics and lead to an ending of the IRA campaign. Alienating both communities and creating disaffection in the RUC and UDR they would need to commit 50,000 troops just to hold the situation and then with no guarantee that events would not at any moment spin out of their control. So, trapped in a blind alley of her own construction, there seems little doubt but that the 'Iron Lady' will have to beat a hasty retreat.

The response of the trade union and labour leaderships can only be measured against this background of a very real danger of sectarian reaction. In Britain the right wing Labour leaders have given unqualified support to the Agreement. By doing so they have squandered a marvellous opportunity to open up class divisions among the Protestant population in the north.

Protestant workers often comment that they support Labour on social questions; but the Tories on the constitution. Now it is the Tories who they see as selling them out on the national question. Class opposition from Labour would have struck a chord among working class Protestants. But Kinnock's support for Thatcher only serves to bolster Paisley and like bigots and, in the end, could be the factor which will save Thatcher's bacon when the agreement crumbles. Similarly Labour's role in coalition in the



Photo: Derek Speirs (Report)

South of Ireland has reduced them to a faint echo of Fine Gael. This subversion to right wing nationalism also helps cement the all class alliance of Unionism. It confirms the fears of many Protestant workers that the working class movement in a united Ireland would be overwhelmed by the church and by a green Tory state.

Worst of all has been the position of the trade union leadership in Ireland. The sum total of their response has been a statement of a few lines declaring that as this is a 'constitutional question' they can make no comment.

This is the old and worthless tactic of reacting to danger by "rolling over and playing dead". Better, say the ICTU leaders, to lower our heads and keep quiet than to expose ourselves to sectarian attack. There is not a shred of justification for this argument.

'Ulster TUC' danger

Silence by the leaders will not protect the movement from attack. It will be seen by the enemies of the movement for what it is—a profession of weakness and irresolution and will be a signal to these people to move onto the offensive. Nor will silence at the top stop the Anglo Irish Agreement being discussed within the unions. It will merely assure that it is the bigots who have the first opportunity to raise the issue and that the discussion takes a sectarian form.

The situation is too serious by far to allow this cowardly response by the leadership to go unchallenged. On the worst scenario the very existence of trade unions would be at stake. Civil war would result most likely in military police dictatorships coming to power in both states following repartition. In the north Protestant military reaction would be of a particularly vicious character.

A new northern statelet would be an economic catastrophe. 75% of Northern Ireland's imports come from Britain. For exports the figure is 85% to

Britain. Of the rest of its trade 45% of imports and 57% of exports are with the South. This would all be disrupted. The huge British subvention would be gone. 75% of the workforce are in the public sector, mainly in services. These would be devastated. The survival of the state would mean the pauperisation of the mass of the population. Such a regime would be compelled to use fascist methods to achieve this smashing down of the living standards of the working class. In a general sense civil war would create a Middle East situation. For the working class of the north, in particular, it would be more like a Chile solution.

This is not the most likely outcome, but even in events short of civil war there are dangers. Far from being excluded, it is now likely that some loyalist bigots will at some stage raise the question of an Ulster TUC, as was last seriously put forward after the 1974 Stoppage. Campaigning against the involvement of Dublin politicians and civil servants in the north, it is a short step to also campaign against the presence of Dublin based trade unions.

Things must be called by their right names. An Ulster TUC would mean a Protestant TUC. It would mean sectarian division in the trade unions. And if it were to take flesh it would not stop there. Accompanying its establishment would be a campaign to drive Catholics, and with them socialists and genuine trade unionists, from the workplaces. Northern Ireland's history gives ample precedence for this.

This would not be the first attempt by bigots, north, south, orange and green, to split the trade unions. To date all have failed. Even partition did not break the all Ireland unity of the then Irish Trade Union Congress. There can be no greater tribute to the resistivity of the working class and particularly the class consciousness and courage of its advanced layer of trade union activists than this. Every

sectarian offensive to date has been beaten off. Catholics and Protestants still organise together and fight together through their class organisations.

However, if the situation does seriously deteriorate, the silence of the trade union leaders will, at the very least, put this unity in jeopardy. Within the North the Labour and Trade Union Group and supporters of the *Irish Militant* have mounted an offensive within the trade unions to challenge the position of the leadership. They have demanded that the Northern Ireland Committee of ICTU produce a socialist response to the Anglo Irish Agreement, that this be circulated in the working class movement and that a special rank and file delegate conference be called to discuss this and also to consider how the movement can defend itself and its membership from the dangers of sectarian attack, both political and physical.

What is the basis of a socialist solution to the national problem and a socialist reply to this agreement? First, it is the understanding that only the working class, by overthrowing capitalism in Ireland, can resolve the national problem. Capitalist solutions are various roads to disaster. The national question and the class questions are inseparably linked. Socialism in Ireland not only would mean the removal of the border, it is the only way the border will ever be removed. Socialism in Ireland and in Britain would allow the present bond of imperialist exploitation to be replaced by the voluntary federation of equals. A socialist reply to the agreement must therefore centre on the slogan, 'a socialist united Ireland and a socialist federation of Britain and Ireland'.

Only by putting forward, carefully explaining and then campaigning on this slogan can the labour movements of these islands satisfy the aspirations and allay the fears of all workers, Irish and British, Catholic and Protestant.

Given a bold leadership the potential for the emergence of a mighty class movement is enormous. A greater percentage of workers in Northern Ireland are organised in the unions than in Britain.

Strikes are solid and have never, in recent decades, been cut across by sectarianism. By putting forward socialist solutions to the class problems and to the national problem, by taking action to protect workers against sectarianism, by opposing all forms of repression and by building a mass Labour Party, the trade unions could become the decisive force in the north.

That this prospect has suffered a setback and that sectarian reaction is

now capable of developing is the responsibility of the trade union leaders who have failed to take advantage of past opportunities to overcome sectarianism.

During the past decade and a half there have been ample opportunities for the labour movement to establish itself as the authoritative voice of all sections of the working class. Fighting trade unions and a fighting socialist Labour Party could have done to the bigots in Ireland what the labour movement in Liverpool has done to their co-thinkers there.

In 1968/9 the revolt of the Catholic working class and the sympathy which at first existed among Protestant workers, provided one such opportunity. Anyone who doubts what then was possible has only to listen to what the same DUP leader, Gregory Campbell, who now advocates a Protestant provisional government, has to say about those times: "I saw nationalists were campaigning for better living conditions, jobs, voting rights, and yet everything they were campaigning for, I hadn't got either. I hadn't got hot running water. I had to go outside to the toilet...Maybe in the early days there was a socialist ideology in the Civil Rights movement, but it was always couched in terms of republicanism which obviously distanced me and people like me from it" *Magill* 14 November 1985.

International perspective needed

Instead of seizing the opportunity the trade union leaders, as now, made the mistake of burying their heads in the sand. The working class paid the price in the form of half a decade of sectarian reaction. Again in 1975-76 at the time of the 'Better Life for All Campaign' and the Peace Movement the mass of the working class could have been mobilised to deal a crushing blow to the bigots. And again in 1977 when the demise of the Ulster Unionist Action Council stoppage created such an opening. Or in 1982 when the massive campaign around the Health Strike would have been a sufficient springboard for the building of a Labour Party in the North. Even in recent months there has been a quite significant movement of workers with strikes by health workers, barmen, meat workers, teachers, civil servants among others.

If the movement emerges unscathed from the present difficult situation the lessons must be learnt. There have been and, under that circumstance, there will again be opportunities to defeat sectarianism. But these are not unlimited. Ultimately the movement must either adopt a class position on

the national question, or it will be engulfed by it.

The sectarian polarisation since the Hillsborough accord already represents a setback for the working class. Further setbacks are likely unless this agreement is very speedily done away with. In such a volatile climate it is not possible to foresee the scale of the setback which will have been suffered. Most likely it will be of a partial character, a blow from which the movement will recover.

1912-14 was also a dangerous period for the younger and weaker Irish labour movement, faced with armed Unionist reaction, an armed nationalist movement and possible civil war. Yet four years later, due to the international factors of war and revolution, the experience of the mass slaughter of 1914-18 and the inspiration of the Russian Revolution, this was turned into its opposite. 1918-20 were years of revolution in Ireland. Had there existed a revolutionary leadership the working class could have taken power.

One feature of the present period of world economic crisis is a tendency for the aggravation of national antagonisms. But it is not the only or the most fundamental feature. The primary characteristic of the epoch is the movement of the working class to struggle. In the colonial countries we have movements to revolution, as with the revolution of a continental character developing in Latin America. In the Stalinist states we have and will have movements such as that in Poland. In the advanced countries the beginnings of the process of revolution are particularly to be seen in the countries of Southern Europe.

Those in Northern Ireland who lack an international perspective will be unable to keep their heads. It is these great events which shape and will shape the character of the period. Against this background, a partial setback in Ireland will quickly give rise to new opportunities. But the fundamental precondition of success, in Ireland and in all these countries, is a leadership which understands the lessons of history, which will not abandon its independent class position and which will fight unflinchingly for a socialist solution to the economic crisis and to the national problem.

In the class struggle no experience, of victory or defeat, or even the most bitter defeat, is wasted—provided that its lessons are assimilated by the working-class. If the advanced workers learn from this setback and act upon their conclusions, in other words if a Marxist leadership is built within the workers organisations in Ireland, the way for victory will be prepared.

Economic Notes

By Bob McKee

THE RECENT struggle of Liverpool Council has not led bankers to reconsider their willingness to lend money to local authorities—at least not on economic grounds alone. Dick Turpin, director of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance, is quoted as saying: "Every bank in the City would love to lend to local government; there is a

desperate desire for this".

And this view was backed up by Charles Dobson, the head of an important local authority money broker, who said that Liverpool had serviced its debts "impeccably" throughout its dispute with the government.

Their view was that the refusal of the Public Works

Loans Board, which acts as a government broking agency for local authority loans, to lend money to Liverpool was not based on any financial grounds but on political considerations only.

One of the money brokers, Charles Packshaw, saw the need to get authorities to agree to pay the bankers

first before the council workforce, before making any future loan agreements. His was very much a minority view—but he did predict that "1986-7 was likely to be a much more difficult year than 1985-6 for local authorities". As a main money lender, he ought to know.

US borrowing bubble

THE REAGAN administration continues to make optimistic noises about growth in the US economy. The latest indicators for growth in the third quarter of 1985 did show some upturn after the abysmal growth of the first six months, but every economic commentator still predicts that real GNP will only rise 3 per cent over the whole year, down from 7 per cent in 1984 and below the Reagan forecast of 4 per cent.

And all this growth is still founded on a massive consumer boom financed by government borrowing and supplied by foreign imports. The dollar as predicted could not remain at its artificially high levels indefinitely, and it continues to drop against European currencies and the yen.

The huge budget deficit run up by the Reagan

government is a borrowing bubble as banks and financial institutions fall over themselves to lend money both at home and abroad. Both the collapse of growth in Third World countries and the continuing recession in Europe poses severe problems for banks to ensure a return for their lending, or at least the avoidance of default.

The high dollar has also placed an impossible burden on US industry and farming to compete in world markets. The result is that the bubble is beginning to burst and there will be worse to come.

During 1985 83 US banks folded and including this year's failures over 430 financial institutions in the USA have failed since 1980—exceeding the total in the previous 40 years!

And it not just small mid-



US farming crisis has put pressure on banks.

Western banks that depend on the property of farmers that are in trouble. Some are very large indeed, including the Continental Bank of Illinois, the Chicago First National Bank, and until recently the world's largest bank, the Bank of America.

Bank America has suffered severely from its loan losses in farming and made an overall loss in just three months in 1985 of \$338m. Other banks too are facing difficulties and all the leading US banks have heavy loan commitments to the poten-

tial defaulting Latin American nations.

They are all relying on the Reagan government to bail them out of any difficulties, as they did for Continental Illinois with \$11bn, or as the Thatcher government did for Johnson Matthey on a much smaller scale in the UK.

But the size of the losses in the future could be too great for the government to handle unless there are massive rises in the taxation of working people in the USA to pay for the bankers loans.

Unemployment rate now higher than great depression

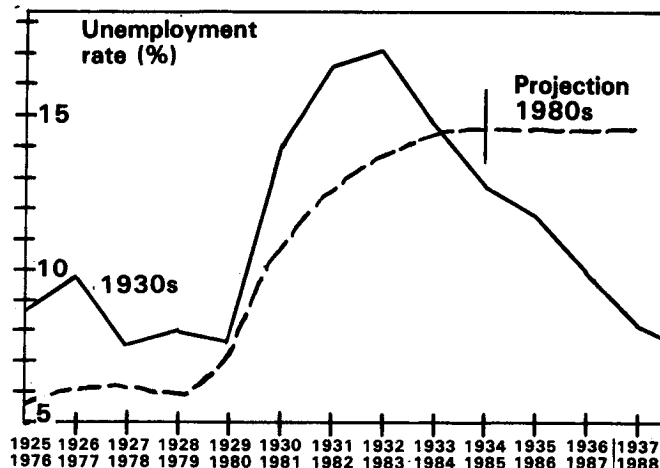
A RECENT survey by Gavyn Davies of the Employment Institute shows that the UK unemployment rate is now higher than in the 1930s at the equivalent point in the years of recession.

As the graph right illustrates, although the rate was higher between 1929 and 1933 than between 1980 and 1984, that position has been reversed now. After 1933 the rate of unemployment gradually declined, while there is no prospect of such a decline in the UK for the rest of the

decade.

And the Confederation of British Industry is predicting a further fall in employment of 120,000 over the next two years up to the General Election.

Although the government keep claiming that employment is rising, this is entirely based on the rise in the numbers in part-time work and self-employment. Real full time jobs actually fell by a further 30,000 in the first six months of 1985, even taking into account part-time work.



For those aged between 25 and 54, the "bread winners", there are now 11 per cent out of work, twice as high as in the rest of the in-

dustrial world. That is the real measure of Britain's relative decay, and of the consequences of this Tory government.

LETTERS

Send letters to *MIR*, 3 - 13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the ideas of the Editorial Board. We reserve the right to shorten excessively long letters.

Austria 1934—workers' uprising paralysed by 'leaders'

Dear Comrades,

Following on from the article by comrades Robert Schiffler and Steve Morgan in the last issue of the *Militant International Review*, on the crushing of the Austrian Socialists by the Fascists in 1934, I thought that some of the comments and ideas of some of the participants in the short 1934 civil war would underline further the analysis made in the article.

In G E R Gedye's book, *Fallen Bastions* (Left Book Club, now out of print) which is about the victory of Dollfuss and then the Nazis the bankruptcy of the socialist leaders is shown quite sharply.

The ruling class made clear in advance their hatred of, and their determination to destroy the Austrian workers and their party. For instance Gedye talks of the comments of a retired General "One day we are going to stop the business in Vienna by fair means or foul. Parquet floors and shower baths for workers indeed—you might as well put Persian carpets in a pigsty and feed the sow on caviare".

This is just one example of the general opinions of the Austrian rulers at that time, an opinion which was later to be underlined with Howitzers and mortars. As if these were not enough warning of the horror for workers to come there were other ominous signs, for instance, the collapse of the Boden Credit Anstalt bank which caused the 1929 world slump. Credit Anstalts collapse was caused

in part by its pouring of money into the reactionary clerical party and the arming of the counter-revolutionary and fascist Heimwehr legions which together with the day to day killing and terrorism by the right was giving clear warning for the future.

So given this evidence of the ruling classes determination to destroy the labour movement where did the labour leaders stand: to fight against the capitalists on the ground of revolution, to expropriate the economy and power of the obvious threat to the Austrian working class?

No, it would seem not! The leaders of the Austrian socialists instead were looking for compromise with Dollfuss. Of course they were 'for a fight' but only if they were attacked first by the Heimwehr and only to defend Austrian democracy.

The position of the socialist leaders is born out in a discussion between G E R Gedye and Oscar Pollak, editor of the socialists paper the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, as to what the socialists should do to fight Dollfuss. Pollak says:

"The point is this, we have definite proof that Dollfuss and the Heimwehr have decided to make a counter revolutionary push by force of arms within the next four weeks. We shall fight in the defence of the republic—that is decided. But if we wait for the government we shall be at a grave disadvantage. We want to know from you what sort of press we shall get in the

capitalist papers generally (apart from the extreme reactionary organs) of Great Britain and America, if we decide to strike before the government have completed their plans. You know the situation well enough to realise that even if we do, not we but the fascists will be the aggressors—it will be a purely defensive measure on our part. Will the Anglo-Saxon press understand this?"

Gedye's advice to Pollak was... "That whatever the provocation and whatever the facts, except for the socialist press and one or two liberal and moderate conservative organs, you will be depicted as 'bloodthirsty revolutionaries' who are stabbing in the back Austria's 'gallant little chancellor' at the moment of his fight to preserve Austrian liberty. Of course I may be wrong and the judgement given on such action will naturally vary in different newspaper offices".

"That is very sad news" replied Pollak "but it only corresponds to what I felt myself. Thank you, I shall report to the party. You must not ask me to tell you later what decision has been taken and you must forget this talk."

So the socialists it seems were more worried as to how they would be portrayed by the capitalist press than by the perilous situation confronting the Austrian socialists at that time. A first class strategy... for defeat.

Had the socialist leaders prepared their ranks for full scale battle with the Heimwehr they would not have stood alone. In France the workers

were lining up to take on the fascist Croix de Feu Kamelots de Roi. In Spain there was the socialist insurrection against Gil Robles and the Asturian commune. The wider population in Austria too would have rallied to a bold lead by the socialists. In 1934 Hitler had not fully consolidated his power. A successful revolution in Austria would have totally undermined the Nazis and opened up new revolutionary unrest in Germany.

But even during the civil war these alledged Marxists' paralysed their followers in the final struggle against Dollfuss. So concerned was Otto Bauer and other SPD leaders for respectability that they called upon the ranks to respect private property. Despite this the workers responded heroically and fought the Heimwehr to a standstill.

But whereas the SPD leaders looked to keeping property intact Dollfuss and the Heimwehr had no such "manners" and levelled all the workers houses with Howitzers and bombs.

Given that the workers fought in 1934 against the fascists it layed the basis later on for the workers resistance the 05 which fought against the Nazis.

But the failure of the socialists to take power in 1934 resulted in the strengthening of Hitler and in 1938 Austria became a province of Nazi Germany. Reformists always have the desire to avoid conflicts but they always come off the worst—with the working class paying the price.

Yours fraternally
T P White
Hackney South LPYS

Weakening the forces of the state

Dear Comrades,

I've just received the latest *MIR*, and several things that I think are worthy of note occurred to me.

First, I have to thank Clive Heemskerk for the review of *The Soldiers Strikes of 1919*. The thing that drew my attention to this was the mention of Folkestone (where I live) and its central place in the 'military

strikes' that followed the first imperialist world war. I stated in a contribution at the September Marxist Weekend School in London that Folkestone was hardly the most socialist or revolutionary of towns, but this review comes as a timely reminder to me that I was really being too quick to dismiss the history of my home town.

The most recent examples are of course covered up. Still, a few do filter out, such as near mutinies on ships in the Solent upon return from the Falklands war, the reason being that the vessels were made to 'queue up', allowing the Tories the maximum glory when each vessel returned, one-by-one.

In Britain, even if only ten per cent of troops were won over in this way, then such gains would still be of the greatest significance. Locally, I live a few hundred yards from Shorncliffe Army Camp, where during the miners'

To say a few words on the recent changes to the *MIR*. The increase in the number of pages indicates the growing support for the ideas of Marxism, and also must act as a spur to comrades to sell the *MIR*. The editors have constantly stressed the importance of sales of the *MIR* as the key to further improvements in the quality of the *MIR*. A local discussion by supporters of the *MIR* has given me the confidence to ask regular paper sales to buy the *International Review*, and to raise in this way the question both of the

So comrades, we have the best theoretical journal and the ideas that are capable of changing society. To fall behind, to lose ground, or to fail in our tasks simply through lack of finance will be a criminal betrayal of future generations. I send my thanks to the editorial staff of the *MIR* for the production of the journal and for the recent improvements and look forward to a more regular *Militant International Review*.

MIR 29 famine article controversy

Yours fraternally
Richard Wheatley
Castle Donnington LPYS

A number of technologies were dealt with in the article

The new feature, 'Science and Socialism' in the *MIR* is to be welcomed. However, technological advances have to be viewed in context. Articles

Soil fertility has become a major problem in many parts of the world because of poor soil, intensive cultivation and

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day solve these problems but it is still a long way off. These biological initiatives have been forced by environmental, economic and political constraints and should not be seen as the only solution. Increasing use of legumes such as soya for humans and lupins for cattle, along with crop rotation and a re-distribution of existing fertiliser production could solve many problems.

Research by private industry and, increasingly, public laboratories is motivated by the promise of quick profits. The accelerating crisis of world capitalism has brought the micro-electronic boom to an end, and the promised boom in bio-technology seems to be faltering. We cannot afford to leave the responsibility for researching answers for problems such as famine to big business interests. Despite the obvious problems of the Soviet bureaucratic caste, central planning of resources in Russian biotechnological research can be seen as being a more serious approach even to many Western scientists, than the anarchy of Western capitalism. Research programmes and goals have been planned a decade in advance and the bureaucracy "has to provide effective conditions for the rapid development of the modern field of biological sciences and for the wide use of the respective achievements in agriculture, medicine and industry for the benefit of the Soviet people".*

Comrade Hensman in his article is correct in saying that science can solve many of humanity's problems but it will not do so under capitalism. New advances will be used to extract greater profits from the people of all countries. Socialist planned economies could free existing resources, redistribute them and plan their use for the benefit of all, not the greedy few. Science is used by capitalists as a panacea to solve the world's problems. We must not fall into their trap, instead we must realise that to solve the world crisis we must consciously work for the socialist transformation of society. Science will then come

into its own freed from the fetters of big business interests and play a full role in releasing workers from the horrors of famine and the drudgery of their work.

Yours fraternally
Gwyn P Morris
Biotechnology Centre
Cranfield Institute
of Technology

* See Pete Dickinson's article (pp 30-32) on Science and Stalinism—Editors.

Dear Comrades,

May I congratulate Jim Hensman on an excellent article on famine in the summer edition of the *MIR*, no 29. Jim precisely showed that famines are caused by the capitalist system and the possibilities that exist on the basis of a planned socialist economy. The profit system cannot support the human race, yet research and production for need would enable the world to be released from the chains of starvation.

However, I was disturbed by one passage in the article which appeared to advocate the 'factory farming' of animals. This was all the more surprising since the author had set out before (and after) this passage, the facts which show it to be totally unnecessary, never mind barbaric and inhumane. For example:

"Levels of five times this current... (level of production per acre) have already been achieved and theoretically yields over ten times present western levels are possible." p17.

"Ninety per cent of grain produced in the US goes to feed livestock—enough to feed Africa and South America" p18 (my emphasis).

"Meat substitute... has even been preferred to real meat" and it is possible to "produce food out of everything from wood-pulp and chicken feathers to cow manure!" p18.

"Eighty-six per cent of the world's undernourished live in countries where food production kept pace with population" p18.

There are endless quotes I could use from Jim's own ar-

ticle in which he shows exactly why such barbaric treatment of animals need only be a symptom of capitalism. Of particular interest are the figures on land use (or lack of it).

"0.23 per cent of landowners, one in every 400, control over half the land in the Third World. This land, nearly always the most fertile, is often kept unused or grossly underexploited by these large landowners... the best land is used for export crops." p18.

"The over 200,000 square

miles of cropland in the US deliberately kept idle could have fed the whole of Africa on its own." p19.

With these facts staring him in the face why does Comrade Hensman spend time gloating that "a typical high output poultry farm... can produce 200,000 chickens annually per person employed", the farming of fish (also very cruel) and such like?

Forward to Socialism
Yours fraternally
David Winfield
Cambridge

PS I'm not a vegetarian either.

spects are really only limited by the imagination".

I wonder by this do you mean the oppression of animals under a socialist society would be even greater than in our present day evil capitalist societies where animals are executed and tortured for profit. I think that piece of the article can be very misleading and easily misinterpreted.

Yours fraternally
Mark Murphy
Huddersfield LPYS

PS. I would also like to congratulate you on the summer issue of the *MIR*.

Dear Comrades,

In reference to the article Famine: "The divine hand of providence?" in the summer issue (no 29) of the *MIR*; from paragraph one on page 18 I think this is very misleading. It was as if you actually advocate the torture, slaughter and exploitation of animals even more so under a socialist society with expansion in factory farming and vivisection. The article says there are: "All sorts of fascinating possibilities such as cows the size of elephants. The pro-

JIM HENSMAN REPLIES:

The article certainly did not intend to condone the methods used in factory farming. My apologies to anyone who got the impression that it did. The aim of the parts of the article concerned was to illustrate the fact that dramatic increases have taken place in productivity of meat as well as plant crops. However, as was pointed out in relation to the over-intensive use of fertilisers in grain production, some of the methods used to achieve this increased productivity have had disastrous effects and certainly cannot be supported.

With regard to meat production, improvements caused by selective breeding, better nutrition and disease control have substantially increased pro-

ductivity without being detrimental to the animals and poultry concerned. The argument put forward by sections of the food industry that factory farming methods are necessary to keep productivity high and provide cheap food is in fact a myth. As the BBC TV programme "Down on the Factory Farm" shown in 1979 demonstrated, livestock and poultry farming can be carried out competitively without using these methods. But under the present profit system where the welfare of human beings let alone animals is not an important consideration, farming methods that are cruel to animals will inevitably be used. As David Winfield rightly says, the mistreatment of animals is a symptom of capitalism.

Science Report

By Pete Dickenson

Fears for air safety

THE RECENT spate of crashes arouses fears that the rigorous application of safety standards may be slipping in air transport. Pressure to cut costs is increased against a background of recession causing cut throat competition between the two big monopolies in civil aviation, Boeing and Airbus Industries.

Shortcomings in the design and repair of aircraft were revealed by the Boeing 747 crash in Japan in August, in which 520 people died. The plane crashed after part of the tail section broke off causing it to go out of con-

trol and crash into a mountainside.

Theoretically, the loss of the tail should not cause the pilot to lose control, but in the 747 all the hydraulic lines which control the aircraft run together near the tail. When it broke off all the hydraulics were ruptured because of this clustering. The Civil Aviation Authority is re-examining the design of the 747 to pinpoint other weak spots where clustering may be a problem.

The most worrying aspect of the crash is the reason for the initial structural failure. Boeing has admitted that the jet was not properly repaired after scraping the tail on landing in 1978.

When a new section of the body was rivetted on, a plate, linking the new and old part was not positioned correctly so that only two rows of rivets, instead of three, passed through it. This puts increased loading on the remaining rivets which greatly speeds up the formation of minute cracks which result from repeated loading, eventually causing fatigue failure. Increased stress on a component can also accelerate corrosion, compounding the danger.

The final conclusion on the reasons for the crash will have to wait until the official report is published, but Boeing has already asked airlines to check on previous structural repairs.

Collapse in industrial research

THE DEGENERATION of the technological base of British capitalism is confirmed graphically by a recent government report. Spending on key areas of industrial research has declined dramatically since 1966. In 1983, over 50 per cent less was spent on electrical engineering—a vital industry in a modern society—compared to 1966 (see table).

Spending on research and development needs to be increased massively if the capitalists hope to make products to compete on the world market. Yet in the last 20 years there has been a collapse in spending, not a boom.

The one apparent bright spot in the table is electronics, which shows an 83 per cent increase. Most of this spending however, is by military contractors, such as Racal and Marconi. The 83 per cent rise reflects the growth in the 'defence' budget under Thatcher, where money has been 'diverted' to develop missile guidance systems etc.

As far as society as a whole is concerned even including many capitalists, money spent on military research—which now represents nearly one third of all spending—goes straight down the drain. Defenders of the military research budget claim that technical spin offs benefit society generally, but a recent study by the New York based Council on Economic Priorities directly contradicts this. They conclude that the Star Wars programme (see previous Science Report) will have few commercial spin offs and may divert scientific and engineering resources away from civilian applications.

One of the reasons for the success of Japanese big business compared to the British is that 99.7 per cent of their £17 billion research budget in 1983

was spent on civilian applications, whereas nearly one third of Britain's already paltry £7 billion went on 'defence'.

Per cent change in industrial research and development spending 1966–83*. Selected industries.

Mechanical engineering	–36
Electronics	+83
Electrical engineering	–52
Motor vehicles	–24
Aerospace	–18
Other manufacturing	–45

(according to 1968 standard classification)

* Economic Trends, August 1985.

Profiteering in health

THE MULTINATIONAL drug corporations have made fortunes overcharging and exploiting people who need tranquillisers to cope with the anxiety and despair of modern capitalist society. The Swiss based firm, Hoffman-La-Roche, which produces the leading brands of tranquillisers Librium and Valium, was fined 1.1 million DM (about £300,000) in 1976 by the EEC for abusing its dominant market position. The EEC competition office found that Roche made its customers sign 'fidelity contracts', which, in effect, prevented them from buying drugs from any other manufacturer.

The information which led to the conviction of Roche came from a former employee Stanley Adams.

In 1974, while on a visit to Switzerland after he had left the company, Adams was arrested and charged with economic espionage. He was kept in 'close confinement' (isolation) for three months, and was subsequently convicted and sentenced to one year in prison suspended for three years, and fined 25,000 Swiss francs. In the meantime his wife, in despair, commit-

ted suicide and his family was broken up. He was not allowed out of prison to attend the funeral.

How the Swiss police came to know the identity of the person who leaked the information is not clear, but there can be little doubt that Adams was betrayed by an official in the Common Market bureaucracy. 'Justice' was finally done in November 1985, however, when the European Court ordered the European Commission to award Stanley Adams compensation, only 11 years after his life was ruined and his wife driven to her death.

Hoffman La Roche is now making its own workers suffer. Its patents on Librium and Valium have run out and the company has sacked 10 per cent of its workforce in the USA. It is also threatening to close a new vitamins plant in Scotland if the DHSS does not include Roche brand names on its approved list of drugs.

The profits of all the big drug corporations are being hit by the move to use 'generic' (ie. non brand name) drugs. Roche will have to cut its prices in half to match those of generic drugs. The drug multinationals will probably respond to this threat by switching their resources away from developing new drugs to more profitable areas. This will mean that progress in medical research will be hit, and new breakthroughs in drug treatment could become a thing of the past.

Militant's policy of nationalising the drug corporations is the only way to ensure progress in developing new drugs, to secure jobs in the pharmaceutical industries and to prevent exploitation and over-charging of sick people.

CORRECTION: In the last issue of Science Report it was incorrectly stated that the aircraft involved in the Munich air crash in 1958 was a Comet. The aircraft involved was in fact a De Havilland Elizabethan.

In the first article in what will become a regular section on science in the *MIR* Pete Dickenson writes on the development of science and technology in Russia from the October revolution to today.

Science and Stalinism

THE LAUNCHING of Vostok 1 in 1957 ushered in a new era of space exploration for mankind. The fact that the Soviet Union had beaten America in the race into space was proof of the massive strides Soviet science had taken since the October revolution. Linked to a planned economy, it showed the potential of technology to help transform society, in a country whose technical achievements were pitifully small before 1917.

Today, though, the prestige of the space programme must be wearing thin for the working class. They can see that the advanced technology exists, but they don't feel the benefit. It is much easier for the bureaucracy to arrange one-off prestige projects than it is for them to organise efficient mass production in new high technology fields. The question they face is how to transform advances in research into raising the general material level of society. As industry and technology have become more complex, the problems and failures of the Stalinist system have got worse.

Lenin—'Specialists under workers control'

Before the revolution, technology was imported lock, stock and barrel from other capitalist countries, mainly France and Germany. Most engineers were from abroad, who fled after 1917. In 1914 there were less than 7,000 engineers in all the tsarist technical institutions put together, to serve a population of about 150 millions. Some leading engineers, such as Krasin, realised the impossibility of developing society under capitalism and joined the Bolsheviks.

After the October revolution, Lenin's attitude to the technical specialists and scientists was clear. He did not advocate some abstract 'socialist science', which would have been utopian in the devastation of the civil war, but ad-

vised that the knowledge of the existing bourgeois specialists should be used, even if this meant paying them much higher wages than industrial workers.

The Bolsheviks, however, insisted that they would, in Lenin's words: "...surround the specialists with workers' control and...enforce the rule: 'He who does not work neither shall he eat'."

This meant that the engineers, although inevitably a privileged group, were nevertheless accountable to the working class. The policy of the government was to use the latest 'Western' technology to begin to raise Soviet Russia to the level of the imperialist powers.

Lenin supported the introduction of the Taylor system of time and motion study to try to raise efficiency in industry, even though he had condemned it as oppressive in capitalist countries. This was done with the perspective of buying time while the revolution remained isolated. If the revolution in Germany had been successful, the latest technical expertise would have been available to Soviet industry.

Trotsky rejected the ideas of the 'Proletarian Culture' movement who thought that science could be divided into 'socialist' and 'bourgeois' categories. At the time this controversy was part of a lively and healthy debate about the extent to which technology developed in capitalist countries was appropriate to be used in a workers' state. It was later that Stalin personally championed the idea of a separate and superior 'workers' science', which he put into practice with disastrous consequences.

As the bureaucracy consolidated its grip on society in the late 1920s, Stalin adopted the reactionary theory of 'socialism in one country'. This theory was inevitably extended into the fields of science and technology. The first

show trials of the Stalinist era, in 1928, were of German engineers brought in to develop the coal mines in the Donets region, who were accused of sabotage. The trial was used by Stalin to foster a mood of isolationism and a need for self-sufficiency in developing technology.

Despite the ideology of the bureaucracy, the technology used in the industrialisation demanded by the first five year plan was very largely imported from capitalist countries. The development of the basic industries in the 1930s, such as coal, steel and electric power generation, showed the potential of using a plan of production to harness scientific knowledge to develop society. Growth rates of 20 per cent or 30 per cent per annum were common, unprecedented in the capitalist world even in boom periods. But these colossal advances were achieved at a price. Trotsky estimated that up to three-quarters of production was lost because of bungling and mismanagement.

Scientific elite develops

The basic industries such as steel and electric power generation were capital intensive, using established technology and where the quality of the finished product was not the over-riding factor. This meant that big advances were made, even though there was no democratic control of production. In mass production however, democratic accountability is vital to ensure quality control and the correct allocation of resources. Because this didn't exist in Stalinist Russia, up to 80 per cent of consumer goods produced were unusable because of poor quality.

The imposition of ridiculously high production quotas, regardless of the quality of the finished product, resulted in one plant producing tractors without engines for several years. The production engineer was put in an impossible

position. On the one hand, facing the hostility of the workers who were suffering great hardship, and on the other hand, having the pressure from the party officials and the secret police to fulfill the quotas. The result was that the most conscientious engineers looked for jobs outside production, in teaching or research, while those remaining were absorbed into the 'Communist' Party machine. Between 1939 and 1941 approximately 70 per cent of new Party members were from this group.

The quandary many engineers faced was summed up by one specialist who said: "You were afraid to introduce innovations and rationalisation. We often thought that certain methods must be introduced. But usually we did not do it. If an experiment should fail we could be charged with sabotage. This had a bad effect on the creative ability of many engineers".

There were two main effects. First, the best engineers were lost to one of the most important areas in industry. Second, a gulf opened up between pure research and production. One of the aims of the early Bolsheviks was to have a unity of theory and practice, so that a scientific elite wouldn't develop who were divorced from day to day reality. This is exactly what began to happen in the 1930s and the tendency has continued and deepened since.

Scientific controversy and debate was often settled by Stalin's personal intervention, sometimes with disastrous consequences. During the late '30s and '40s, new theories were formulated in Britain and America on plant genetics. These discoveries were eventually used to increase the yield of crops many times over. At the 1948 session of the Agricultural Academy, the President, Lysenko, declared that in future biology was to be divided into two camps, the 'Proletarian' and the 'Bourgeois'. The genetic theory of plant heredity was put in the bourgeois camp and those scientists who supported it were killed or imprisoned. At Stalin's personal instigation, the so-called

'grassland' theory of crop rotation was adopted as a 'Proletarian' way of increasing crop yields. This was a disaster which set-back agriculture for a generation.

Stalin also intervened in the field of aircraft design. He insisted that top priority be given to the construction of heavy bombers. At the same time the leading designers, such as Tupolev, were pursued as saboteurs etc. Only very reluctantly did Stalin agree to the production of lighter planes for tactical defence. This was too late to be useful against the Nazi attack in the Summer of 1941. In the first few days over 2,000 of the heavy bombers were destroyed due to lack of fighter support and obsolete design, a blow which nearly led to total defeat at the hands of the invading fascist armies.

Gulf between research and production

Despite the fetter of the bureaucracy restricting the development of science and technology, the Soviet Union has emerged since the Second World War as an industrial super power rivalling the USA. Technological developments in **basic industries such as iron and steel**, machine tools and electric power transmission have led all the capitalist countries. The 5,000 cubic metre blast furnace for iron smelting, completed in 1974, is the largest in the world. Here size is a good indicator of technical level, since it can reduce costs and improve the quality of the product. Since 1970 the rate of introduction of numerically controlled machine tools has outstripped other industrial countries, and the design of circuit breakers for the 750 kilovolt power transmission line was a major technical achievement.

However a critical factor in the successful development of new technology is how long it takes to



A cartoon from a 1930 engineering journal. From tsarist times engineers had worn uniforms as a symbol of professional rank. With the rise of Stalinism, without democratic workers' control of the specialists, the ruling caste had to use bureaucratic control to force them to achieve production plans. The bureaucracy periodically organised 'specialist-baiting', including a campaign against uniforms and insigna. The engineer in the cartoon is explaining, "they want to separate us".

move from the initial prototype stage to the final stage where the technique is widely used in industry. It has proved to be easier to get to the final stage for a hydroelectric power scheme, where only a few plants will ever be made, than it has for the mass production of clothing using synthetic fibres, for example. The first synthetic fibres polyester and nylon were made in a prototype plant in 1948. Yet it took until 1973 for production to reach one-third of total fibre output.

Fundamentally, this lag is not due to technical reasons but to political ones. To develop modern 'science' based industries needs close collaboration between research, development and production. There must also be a method to control the allocation of resources between different areas and to establish accountability for what is produced. In the capitalist system, this is done by the whip of market forces, at least to an extent. In the Stalinist states there is no mechanism of accountability or control, only arbitrary dictatorial decrees. Democratic control by the working class of all stages of the production process is the only

solution.

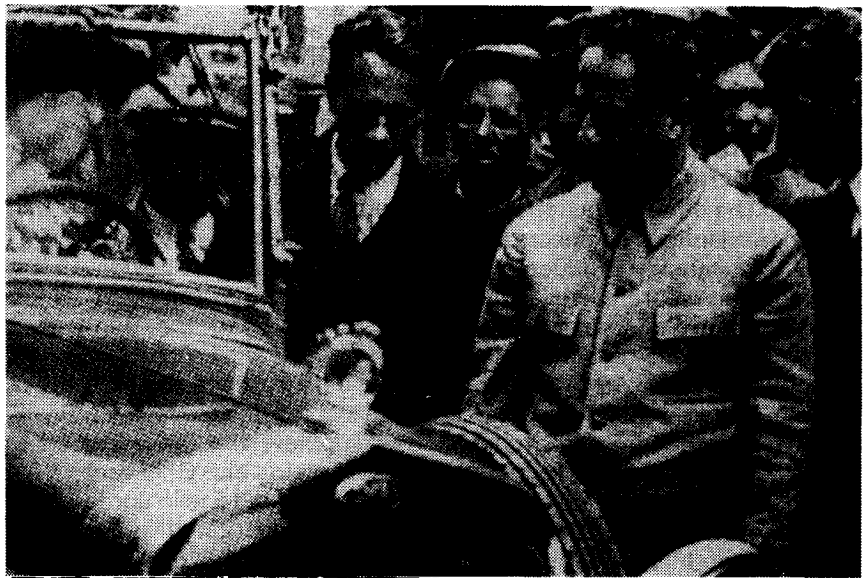
The separation of research from production, and the flight of the best engineers from industry, was an inevitable consequence of the repression and the purges in the 1930s. The result was to hold back the development of the full potential of the planned economy. As the importance of industry based on advanced science and technology has increased, so the problems caused by the gulf between research and production have become a bigger and bigger obstacle to developing industry.

Computer technology

Advances in electronics and computer technology have raised the possibility, for the first time, of eliminating dangerous and soul-destroying work and freeing people to do creative work. The bureaucracy realise the potential of computers and have started a massive programme to install 100,000 by 1987. They see the main benefits in making more advanced weapons. The computers are being imported from the Western countries or copies are being made from American designs. This, in itself, is an indictment of the Stalinist system which has been unable to organise an efficient, modern, electronics industry, despite it having more engineers and technicians at its disposal than the USA.

Nevertheless, the American government is afraid of the potential of a planned economy, however distorted. They have started a boycott of nearly all electronic and computer equipment bound for the East. This will prove to be a very difficult task, since the latest, very powerful, 32 bit micro-computers can fit in a briefcase, and can be bought over the counter in dozens of countries. There is also a campaign to stop scientists and engineers from coming to study electronics and micro-processor technology at colleges and research institutions in the West.

Even if the drive in the Soviet Union to install the new computers is successful, this will not solve the



Gregory Ordzhonikidze, Commissar of Heavy Industry during the five year plan, at the Gorky Automotive works, 1935. Although a faithful Stalinist since the early 1920's, he died in mysterious circumstances in 1937, possibly poisoned by the GPU for his rumoured opposition to the purges which had set back scientific advances in Russian industry.

contradictions in the economy. Computer control can never be a substitute for workers' control. Applied to production, the computer can more efficiently co-ordinate and control processes which in themselves are already functioning properly. If an attempt is made to use them it will expose, to an even greater extent, the true reason for the failure in the economy, the corruption and bungling of the 'Managers' and 'Communist' Party officials. The most likely outcome, therefore, is that the computers will be left to rust away in corners of factories.

Recent articles in the technical press in the West tend to confirm this analysis. A report from Prague in *Electronics Weekly* says that the new robotic equipment is proving to be extremely unpopular in the USSR. The Cultivator Works at Rostov on Don has three programmeable manipulators (robots) hanging around because no one knows what to do with them, the need for an instruction manual was overlooked! Many robots have been produced to do pressing and stamping of metal operations which can be more efficiently done by conventional means. At engineering factories in Voroshilovsk, Baku, Ulyanovsk and Dzhanik managers have simply disconnected the robots.

The potential of a planned

economy has been shown by the development of techniques in iron and steel production, and in power generation, which are the most advanced in the world. This was achieved at a cost however, due to several factors: the arbitrary intervention of the bureaucracy in technical fields, repression, stifling creative work and general bungling and mismanagement. As society has become more complex, and industry more science-based, the bureaucrats have become a dead-weight. The gulf between research work and production, caused by Stalinism, has meant that a huge lag has occurred after a new idea has emerged, before it has been eventually deployed in industry.

Bureaucracy stifles scientific advances

In the scientific field, as in production, the ruling caste has now become a complete fetter on society. The only way to ensure that scientific and technical knowledge is fully harnessed to the needs of the people in the Stalinist countries, is to overthrow the bureaucracies and establish a system of democratic workers' control of industry. This will lay the way open, on a world scale, for the full harmonisation of scientific work and production which will be vital in building socialism.

Economism, Revisionism and “Legal Marxism”

THROUGHOUT THE decade of the 1890s the graph of the strike movement continued on the upturn. And at the heart of the movement stood St Petersburg. Here were the heavy battalions of Russian labour—the metal workers, 80 per cent of whom were concentrated in big factories like the Putilov works. A relatively high proportion of the Petersburg proletarians were literate—74 per cent against 60 per cent for the rest of Russia.

Lenin had arrived in Petersburg late in the autumn of 1893 and began to play a leading role in the small group of Petersburg Social Democrats, which was only just recovering from the arrest of its leader, Mikhail Ivanovich Brusnyev. The orientation of the group can be seen from Brusnyev's own words: “Our main and fundamental role (was to) turn the participants . . . in the workers' circles into fully developed and conscious social democrats, who could in many ways replace the intellectual propagandists.”¹

The turn to agitation

Thus, the basis was laid for a genuinely working-class Marxist organisation in the capital. Already by 1891, the group was able to mobilise 100 people at the funeral of the old revolutionary NV Shelgunov. There were contacts in the big factories and all the main workers' districts. The work had been started by young students, but gradually the class composition of the group underwent a change. The students painstakingly set about the task of creating working-class cadres or “Russian Bebeles”, as they expressed it.

After the wave of arrests which carried off Brusnyev and many others in 1892, the group had been reorganised by SI Radchenko. It included a group of students from the Technical Institute, some of whom were destined to play a significant role in the development of the party, including Krupskaya and Krzhizhanovskiy.

The basic method of the group was to organise study circles of workers from the main factories. Through individual worker contacts, others were drawn into the circle. The original contacts developed theoretically and themselves became organisers of other circles. In this way an ever-wider network of worker study circles was

established. Lenin participated as a lecturer in these circles under the pseudonym, Nikolai Petrovich.

The transition from propaganda in small groups to mass agitation was not carried out painlessly or without internal strains and tensions. For many, the underground had become a way of life. It had a certain routine to which one became accustomed. A prolonged period of existence in small, underground circles fostered a certain narrow “circle-mentality”. Paradoxically, despite the difficulties and dangers, it had a certain “cozy” side. The conditions of circle life did not demand much outward-going activity. One moved exclusively among comrades or advanced workers, in circles where everyone knew practically everyone else. On the contrary, agitation among the masses seemed like a leap in the dark. Routine habit would be disrupted, ideas and methods radically altered. No wonder the proposal was met with mistrust and hostility on the part of a layer of the “old men”. Krasin and SI Radchenko warned of dire consequences if the new tactic were pursued: it would undermine the underground work, cause mass arrests, put comrades in danger, disorganise the work, etc.

The question of the “new turn” was thrashed out, first of all in the narrow circles of the veterans, and then presented for discussion at broader gatherings of workers, where extracts from Kremer's pamphlet *On Agitation* were read out and debated.

The changed conditions brought about by the strike wave provided the small forces of Marxism with colossal opportunities to spread their influence. Yet in the initial period, opportunities were frequently missed because of the resistance of the more conservative layers to the new methods. Thus, during the important strike of 2,000 weavers in Ivanovno-Voznesensk in October 1895, the leaders of the local Workers' League initially opposed the proposal that they should send agitators to contact the strikers, and approach other factories to organise support for the strike. Eventually a compromise solution was reached that the League would accept no responsibility for the strike but that individual members would be allowed to participate at their own risk! Similar disputes arose in practically every Social Democratic circle. But gradual-



ly the new methods were accepted, and obtained striking results.

In the absence of a large, organised legal trade union movement, the small forces of Marxism were able to play a role out of all proportion to their size. The small hectographed leaflets met a ready response. Often the mere appearance of these leaflets would suffice to plunge a whole factory into a ferment and discussion, exercising a major influence on the course of a dispute.

‘Legal Marxism’

Precisely the success of this agitation soon attracted the attention of the tsarist police. Well aware of the explosive mood of the workers in Petersburg, the authorities developed a healthy respect for what these leaflets could achieve. When, in February and April of 1896 a leaflet appeared voicing the demands of the workers in the shipbuilding yards in Petersburg, the Minister of the Interior, fearing a strike, ordered an investigation, which advised the port commander to concede the workers' demands.

However, the Marxists did not limit themselves to agitation on economic questions, but also tried to place political ideas before the workers. After the arrests of December 1895, the Petersburg group published the leaflet: “What is a socialist and a political criminal?” In the first period of agitation, while setting out from the

immediate grievances of the workers, every attempt was made to raise the workers' horizons to broad political questions, linking the struggle for immediate demands to the central objective of the overthrow of the autocracy.

The growing influence of Marxist ideas among the intelligentsia produced a peculiar phenomenon. The young bourgeoisie was striving to find a voice of its own, to assert its own interests and provide a theoretical justification for the inevitability of capitalist development in Russia. Certain of the ideas put forward by Marxism in the struggle against Narodism were eagerly grasped by a section of the intellectual spokesmen of the bourgeoisie. For a short time, "Marxism" in a bowdlerised, academic form, enjoyed a certain vogue among "left" liberal professors.

This situation offered certain possibilities for the Marxists, who were permitted to write in the pages of legal bourgeois journals like *Novoe Slovo*, *Nachalo* and *Samarsky Vestnik*—always provided they did not "go too far", of course. In this way there arose the strange hybrid monstrosity of "legal Marxism", the main representatives of which were PB Struve, MI Tugan-Baranovsky, SN Bulgakov and NA Berdyayev.

In the initial stages, when the forces of Marxism were small and lacking in influence, and the socialist revolution was as yet the music of an apparently distant future, these well-to-do intellectual dilettantes seemed actually to represent a definite trend in Russian Marxism. Given the appalling difficulties of the illegal revolutionary movement, their services were readily accepted. They gave money, collaborated in the publication of Marxist literature and, in the absence of a real Marxist press, facilitated the appearance of Marxist views, albeit in a watered-down form, in the pages of all-Russian legal journals.

Given the immense difficulties of illegality, it was clearly necessary to exploit each and every legal opening to spread the ideas of Marxism. What could not be said openly in legal publications could be supplemented by the underground party press. Thus, for many years, the Russian Marxists could not call themselves 'Social Democrats', but had to use phrases like 'Consistent Democrats' instead. As Trotsky pointed out many years later, they did not get off scot-free from this. A number of people associated with the party turned out to be precisely 'consistent democrats'—and some not so consistent—but not at all Marxists! For the development of a healthy Marxist current it is necessary above all to be able to say what is. Only the

development of a genuine illegal Marxist journal could serve to mend the damage done by the 'Legal Marxists' and their shadow, the Economists. This was the great achievement of Lenin's *Iskra*.

Nevertheless, despite all the problems and overheads, the collaboration with the 'Legal Marxists' was a useful and, in any case, unavoidable stage in the development of the movement in the early days. The great majority of those who flirted with Marxism in their youth later broke with the movement and passed over to the side of reaction. But at the time they played an indispensable role.

In point of fact, some, at least of the "legal Marxists" appeared to have undergone a genuine conversion. It was all too easy to explain away shortcomings in their mode of expression by the exigencies of legal work, the need to escape detection, arrest and so on. Their services were extremely useful. So long as the main tasks of the movement were of a more or less theoretical character, and directed mainly against the Narodnik enemies of the bourgeoisie, this collaboration, in fact, proceeded on a more or less satisfactory basis. It was a "legal Marxist"—Struve—who wrote the manifesto of the first congress of the RSDLP!

'Fellow travellers'

In reality, these people were merely what later became known as "fellow travellers". Despite their intellectual flirtation with Marxism, in their lifestyle and psychology they remained firmly rooted in an alien class. Many years later Struve was to sum up the mentality of the "legal Marxists" in the following passage:

"Socialism, to tell the truth, never aroused the slightest emotion in me, still less attraction. . . . Socialism interested me mainly as an ideological force—which . . . could be directed either to the conquest of civil and political freedoms or against them".¹ Theirs was an anaemic and emasculated view of Marxism, a "decaffeinated" Marxism, lacking life, struggle and revolutionary vitality. Not accidentally, the "legal Marxists" rejected dialectics, in favour of Neo-Kantian philosophy. Despite its appearance of uniqueness, and the somewhat special role it played in the early days of the movement in Russia, the same kind of abstract, undialectical and essentially non-revolutionary "Marxism" regularly re-appears in the rarified atmosphere of the universities of all countries, at every stage in the development of the movement.

On the face of it, the ideas of the 'Legal Marxists' may now appear to be of merely historical interest. Yet,

upon closer examination, one can already discern the outline of future and more portentous disputes.

The basic idea underlying the argument of Struve and co consisted in the following: the material conditions for socialism are absent in Russia, a backward, semi-feudal country. The struggle against Tsarism is a struggle for bourgeois democracy, not socialism. The workers' party should therefore set aside all 'impossibilist' illusions and realistically rely upon the good offices of 'progressive' bourgeois liberals to usher in the new order. Such, in essence, is the future theory of Menshevism and Stalinism (including its latest and most repulsive variant represented by Professor Hobsbawm and friends).

The problem of the real nature of the Russian revolution was solved by Leon Trotsky in 1904–5 in his writings on the Permanent Revolution. But in an embryonic form the two fundamentally opposing conceptions of the revolution—reform or revolution, class collaboration or an independent proletarian policy—had already made their appearance in the polemics of Lenin and Plekhanov against the Legal Marxist and Economist trends in the second half of the 1890s.

At this time, no-one who considered himself a Marxist questioned the idea that Russia was on the eve of a *bourgeois-democratic* revolution. This idea flowed from the entire objective, socio-economic and historical situation. The main struggle was against the autocracy, against feudal barbarism and the heritage of "bureaucratic and serf culture", as Lenin was later to describe it. The central plank of the Marxists' argument against the Narodniks was precisely the inevitability of a capitalist phase of development and the impossibility of a special independent path of "peasant socialism" in Russia.

From the standpoint of the "legal Marxists" there was nothing to object to in all this. The prospect of a socialist revolution was reduced to a hazy theoretical prospect sometime in the dim and distant future. For the intellectual travelling companions of Marxism, such a "perspective" was quite safe, and basically committed them to nothing. To them, the revolutionary aspect of Marxism seemed quite unreal, whereas the economic arguments about the inevitable victory of capitalism in Russia seemed pre-eminently 'practical'.

With every fibre of his being, Lenin distrusted the dry, academic caricatures which turned Marxism into something lifeless, passive and essentially anti-revolutionary. As early as the autumn of 1895 there was a heated controversy among the

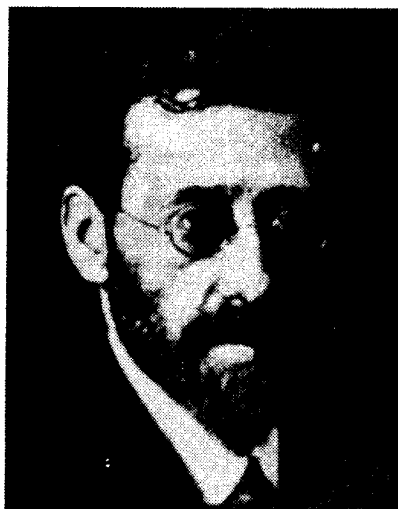
Petersburg Marxists, with Lenin, Stakov and Radchenko on one side and Struve, Potresov and Klassov on the other.

In April of that year, Struve had written his *Critical Comments on the Question of Russia's Economic Development*. Taking as his starting-point an undeniable fact—ie. the backward and primitive level of Russian society in comparison to developed capitalism—Struve's one-sided method—more akin to sophism than Marxist dialectics—in the given historical context, undoubtedly expressed a trend (albeit unconscious) which, carried to its logical conclusion, spelled the subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. Such phrases as "Let us admit our lack of culture and take lessons from capitalism" provoked Lenin to reply in his work: *The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of it in Mr Struve's book*,³ written under the name of K Tulin, in an anthology which was burned by the censor.

Lenin and Struve

In her memoirs, Krupskaya recalls that Struve "was himself a Social-Democrat of a sort at that time" but adds that "he was quite incapable of doing any work in the organisation, leave alone underground work, but it flattered him, no doubt, to be called on for advice."⁴ These few lines faithfully convey the essence of this layer of bourgeois and middle class intellectuals who "travelled" with the party, considering themselves to be of it, but never really being in it, and always with one foot in another camp. Through the medium of this layer the pressure of alien classes were, unconsciously or half-consciously, brought to bear with dire results upon the young and immature forces of Marxism.

Yet for all his instinctive distrust of Struve, Lenin was prepared to collaborate with him. One of the hallmarks of Lenin's genius as a revolutionary leader and organiser was precisely his ability to work patiently with people of all kinds, and to draw the best from them in the interests of building the movement. While making no concessions to political mistakes, and striving to correct them, Lenin recognised Struve's ability and did his best to make use of his talent. Under the pressure of relentless criticism, Struve, for a time, veered to the left. Some of his writings of this period, including the Manifesto of the First Congress, bear striking witness to this fact. There is little doubt that the withering criticism of the Russian bourgeoisie in these lines echoed the fierce controversies with Lenin a cou-



Yulius Martov, above. Lenin in 1897, right.

ple of years earlier:

"And what does the Russian working class not need? It is completely deprived of what its comrades abroad freely and peacefully make use of: participation in the running of the state, freedom of the written and spoken word, freedom of association and assembly—in a word, all those weapons and means by which the West European and American proletariat is improving its position while struggling for its ultimate emancipation, against private ownership and capitalism—for socialism.

"But the Russian proletariat can only conquer the political freedom it needs by itself alone.

"The further you go to the East of Europe, the weaker, more cowardly and baser the bourgeoisie becomes in the political field, and the greater the cultural and political tasks which fall to the lot of the proletariat. On its own strong shoulders the Russian working class must and does bear the cause of winning political freedom. This is an indispensable, though only a first, step towards the realisation of the great historical mission of the proletariat, towards the creation of a social order in which there will be no room for the exploitation of man by man."⁵

Struve's evolution to the left was partly the result of the general movement of the intelligentsia, under the pressure of the working class in the stormy period of the 'nineties, in the direction of Marxism, and partly of the pressure of ideological criticism from Lenin and, to some extent, Plekhanov. There is no doubt that Lenin initially hoped to win him over, recognising the role such a capable intellectual could play. But it may be doubted that such an outcome was ever likely. Marx once said about the poet, Goethe, whom he greatly admired, that he had "the Philistine's tail hanging down behind him". The same was



true of Struve, even in his best period.

Like many of the intellectual fellow travellers of Marxism, Struve never came to terms with dialectics. This fundamental theoretical weakness, alongside the usual middle-class hankering after the flesh-pots, the liking for an easy existence and an organic incapacity for personal sacrifice, serve to explain his subsequent development.

Struve broke with Marxism. In 1905 he joined the bourgeois Cadet Party and ended his days as a White emigré. Berdyayev ended up as an apologist for religious mysticism. The others underwent a similar transformation. Struve's 1898 Manifesto, with its harsh condemnation of the Russian bourgeoisie thus constitutes an ironically appropriate epitaph on the phenomenon of "Legal Marxism".

The St Petersburg League

By 1895, Lenin's group had built a fairly solid organisation. There was a committee of 10-16, which organised the work of between 20 and 30 workers' study circles, with about 100-150 contacts.⁶ The group was connected to the workers' circles through area organisers. By the end of the year, it was active in practically all the workers' districts. In November, a decisive step was taken when a newly established Social Democratic group, including Yulius Martov, fused with the "veterans" to form the St Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of Labour—a name which was adopted in solidarity with Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour Group. A division of labour was established in the group's activities. SI and LN Radchenko were in charge of finance and contact with groups of revolutionary-minded intellectuals. Ponamaryov attended to the technical side—printing leaflets, etc. AA

Vanyeyev maintained contact with the underground printshops run by a group of Petersburg Narodniks, and so on. Gradually, a leadership crystallised around Lenin, Martov, Krzhizhanovsky, Starkov and Vanyeyev.

The more or less rapid growth of the Petersburg League reflected a change in the objective situation.

The young people, mostly new recruits with little understanding of Marxist theory, threw themselves enthusiastically into the work of factory agitation, mostly on "bread and butter" issues. This had spectacular results, meeting with instant success among even the most benighted, illiterate and oppressed layers of the class.

A major strike wave gripped the capital, especially in the textile sector. In just one strike, according to Fyodr Dan, the League put out more than 30 leaflets.⁷ Agitation was conducted as a dialogue with the workers. The League would carefully listen to workers' grievances, take note of their demands and collect reports of the struggles in different factories. They would then "return" this information to the workers in an agitational form, together with organizational directives, exposures of the manoeuvres of management and the authorities, and appeals for support. Thus, the strike movement of the '90's became a gigantic preparatory school of struggle, serving to educate a whole generation of workers and Marxists.

The striking success of the strike movement exercised a powerful influence upon the minds of the youth and the intelligentsia, which was moving away from the discredited ideas of Narodism and terrorism. New recruits entered the movement. But the general theoretical level was lowered.

The battle against the old narrow, propaganda-circle mentality had been won. But in their eagerness to extend the mass influence of the Social Democracy through the vehicle of economic agitation, a section of the more impressionable students were inclined to present the issue in a one-sided way.

Thus, in 1895-6 there appeared in Petersburg a group in the Technological Institute led by the energetic medical student KM Takhtarev who began to argue that the Social Democrats should not see themselves as 'leading' the workers but only as 'serving' them by helping out in strikes.

The practical successes of agitation seduced these 'activists' seeking an easy way out of the complex problem of building a revolutionary Party. At first, almost imperceptibly, they began to adapt themselves to the prejudices

of the most backward layers of the working class, arguing that political ideas were "too difficult" for the masses, and that, anyway, politics was of no concern to the workers interested in improving their economic conditions.

How many times have these same arguments been used by right wing trade union leaders to justify the policies of class collaboration? "The workers are not interested in politics!" "No politics here, please!" The fact that there never has been, and never can be, such a thing as an "apolitical" trade union, is of no concern to them. Behind the attempts to "keep politics out" of the unions is the idea of subordinating them to the political enemies of Labour. As Lenin was later to explain, 'non-political' trade unionism is yellow trade unionism, a device by which the bourgeoisie infiltrate, corrupt and manipulate the organisations of the working class. The only way to prevent this from happening is by fighting for working-class politics within the unions, the highest expression of which is scientific socialism, Marxism.

The proletariat is the most homogeneous class in society. Yet it is not wholly homogeneous. There are different layers which draw different

make them realise through their own experience of struggle the necessity for a complete social overturn.

Local agitational leaflets were too limited in their scope to do this. What was needed was a Marxist paper which would not only reflect the life and struggles of the proletariat but would also present the workers with a generalization of that experience, in other words, a revolutionary political organ which would serve to unite the strike movement with the revolutionary movement against the autocracy.

In the winter of 1894-95, at a meeting in Petersburg of representatives of Social Democratic groups from various parts of Russia, a resolution was passed in favour of a more popular literature for workers to be published abroad. Lenin and EI Sponti from the Moscow Workers' Union were made responsible for negotiating this question with Plekhanov's Group for the Emancipation of Labour.

In the spring of 1895, first Sponti and then Lenin went to Switzerland to establish contact with the Group. The impact caused among the emigrés by this breakthrough is conveyed in the correspondence of Plekhanov and Axelrod:

"The arrival of EI Sponti and then.

... The practical successes of agitation seduced these 'activists' seeking an easy way out of the complex problems of building a revolutionary party... arguing that political ideas were 'too difficult' for the masses and that politics was of no concern to workers... For Marxists, however, the central task is first to win over the most advanced layers of the workers in order through them to win over the masses. There are no short cuts.

conclusions at different times. It is a common trick of reformists to try to play off the more backward and politically inert layers of the working class against the most active and conscious sections. For Marxists, however, the central task is first to win over the most advanced layers of the workers, in order through them to win over the masses. There are no short cuts. It is a question of patiently working and patiently explaining to win over a majority, beginning with the advanced workers.

For the first generation of Russian Marxists economic agitation was only one part of the work, which always linked agitation with propaganda and tried to draw out the broader issues. The League had succeeded in winning over members from the old Narodnik movement by arguing a political case. On the other hand, the main task in relation to the strike movement was, while setting out from existing levels of consciousness, to raise the level of understanding of the workers and to

to a much greater degree, of VI Lenin-Ulyanov, were a great event in the life of the Group for the Emancipation of Labour; they were practically the first Social Democrats who had arrived abroad with a request from those who were carrying out the active work of the Social Democratic circles for businesslike negotiations with the Group".⁸

Up till this moment, the members of the exiled Emancipation of Labour Group had been reduced to the role of helpless onlookers and commentators on the great struggles taking place in Russia. The experience of past failures with people coming from the interior had also made them wary. But the newcomers soon convinced them that there now existed a real basis for the spread of Marxist ideas in Russia. The forces of the young generation joined hands with the exiled veterans. The two emissaries returned to Russia with a commitment on the part of the Group to begin the publication of a Marxist journal—*Rabotnik* ('The

Worker'). The future of Russian Marxism seemed assured.

However, shortly after his return to Russia in early December 1895, the Petersburg League was hit by mass arrests which eliminated nearly half the leadership, including Lenin himself. In a courageous attempt to deceive the police into thinking they had arrested the wrong people, the remaining leaders, with Martov at their head, issued a mimeographed proclamation to the workers: "The League of Struggle... will carry on its work. The police have failed. The workers' movement will not be smashed by arrests and exile: the strikes and struggles will not end until the complete liberation of the working class from the capitalist yoke is achieved." The ruse failed, and on 5 January 1896, Martov and the others were arrested.

Beginnings of Economism

Such was the growth in the influence of the Marxists, that the arrested leaders were very quickly replaced. Furthermore, by skilful use of conspiratorial methods, Lenin was able to retain some contact with the League even from inside prison. But the quality of the leadership had suffered a severe blow.

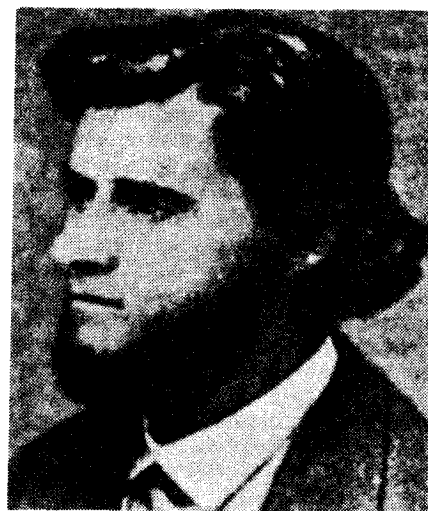
The arrest of the most experienced and theoretically trained members meant that the leadership of the group tended to fall now to young and inexperienced members. The tendency led by the student Takhtarev swiftly gained the ascendancy over the "old timers", who everywhere were pushed to one side.

As frequently happens, a serious political difference first expressed itself on a seemingly accidental secondary issue. Before being sent into Siberian exile, in February 1897 Lenin and several other leaders were allowed three days in Petersburg to put their affairs in order. They used the time to hold a discussion with leading members of the League, at which a sharp disagreement emerged on the question of a "workers' fund" organised on non-political lines. Without denying the possibility of work in such areas, Lenin, supported by Martov and others, placed the main stress on the need to build up the League of Struggle as a revolutionary organisation.

What lay behind the attitudes of the "youngsters" was an opportunist desire to find a "short cut" to the masses, an impatient desire to reap where they had not sown, together with a barely-concealed contempt for theory. Such, in broad outline, were the common features of all the different varieties of "Economism", a phenomenon which, more than a



Zaslulich and Axelrod.



worked-out theory or policy, represented an ill-defined mood among certain layers of, particularly, the student youth which had entered the Social Democracy in the '90s, and who lacked the same solid theoretical grounding that had characterised the earlier generation of Russian Marxists.

The phenomenon was not confined to Russia. The same controversies began to surface in the emigration towards the end of 1897, when SN Prokovich, who up till then had been collaborating with the Emancipation of Labour Group, began to raise similar differences. This must have been a painful blow to the Group, at a moment when at last it looked as though their collaboration with the youth inside Russia was proceeding on a sound basis. Anxious to avoid a break, at first Plekhanov adopted an unusually conciliatory tone. In a letter to Axelrod dated the 1 January 1898, he wrote: "... We must publish his work on agitation: in my view it's not bad, and we must encourage 'young talents' otherwise you know they'll be complaining that we keep them down."¹⁰

Possibly, the "economist" deviations of a part of the Russian youth could have been put down to a case of ideological measles, were it not for the fact that they coincided with a far more serious international phenomenon. Within days of writing these lines to Axelrod, Plekhanov was horrified to read an article by Bernstein, the prominent German Social Democratic leader, on the 50th anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto* which questioned the basic ideas of Marxism. "Why, this is a complete denial both of revolutionary tactics and of communism," wrote Plekhanov, "Those articles nearly made me ill".

But this was only the opening shot in a sustained campaign which Bernstein waged in the German party press

in favour of "revising" Marxism. Just like the Hattersleys, Kinnocks and Gonzalezes of today, Bernstein argued that Marxism was "out of date"; the concentration of industrial production, he alleged, was taking place at a much slower pace than had been foreseen by Marx; the great number of small businesses showed the vitality of private enterprise ("small is beautiful", as they say nowadays!); instead of polarization between workers and capitalists, the presence of numerous intermediate strata means that society is much more complex ("the new middle classes"); in place of "the anarchy of production", capitalism was capable of being controlled to the extent that crises were less frequent and less severe (Keynesianism and "managed capitalism"); and the working class, apart from being a minority of society was only interested in the immediate improvement of its material conditions of existence ("upwardly mobile").

Bernstein's revisionism

From these few examples of Bernstein's thoughts, it is perfectly plain how pathetically unoriginal are the supposedly "modern" theories of the present-day Labour leaders. They are not even remotely aware that their "new" ideas are clumsy plagiarisms of notions (far more ably) expressed by Bernstein 88 years ago.

Of course, these ideas did not drop from the sky. They reflected the pressure of a prolonged period of capitalist economic upswing which lasted for nearly two decades, coming to an end with the First World War. This period of relative social calm and also of relative improvements in the living standards of at least the upper layers of the proletariat in Germany, Britain, France and Belgium gave rise to the illusion that capitalism was well

on the way to solving its fundamental contradictions. The rapid growth in power and influence of the workers' parties and trade unions also spawned a new caste of union officials, parliamentarians, town councillors and party bureaucrats who, in their living conditions and outlook, became progressively removed from the people they were supposed to represent. This stratum, reasonably well-off and lulled by the apparent success of capitalism, provided the social base for revisionism, a petit-bourgeois reaction against the storm and stress of the class struggle, a yearning for the creature comforts and the desire for a peaceful and harmonious transition to 'socialism' in a suitably dim and distant future.

Axelrod's reaction to Bernstein's articles in *Die Neue Zeit* was initially more tolerant than Plekhanov, who was outraged by them.

In fact, both Axelrod and Zasulich were shaken to the point of demoralisation by the controversy. These people had sterling qualities, but theoretical depth was not among them. They were stunned by Bernstein's renegacy. The impressionable Vera Zasulich, in particular, was tormented by doubts. Only Plekhanov remained absolutely firm, rallying his colleagues and launching himself into the affray. His articles against Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt (on philosophy, in defence of dialectical materialism) show Plekhanov at his finest: an indefatigable fighter in defence of the fundamental ideas of Marxism.

The most prominent representatives of the left-wing of the SPD, Rosa Luxemburg and Parvus, launched a fierce counter-attack. But what shocked Plekhanov more than anything else was the reaction of Kautsky. Generally regarded as the guardian of Marxist orthodoxy *par excellence* Kautsky was also a personal friend of Plekhanov. But now he not only permitted the use of the journal of which he was editor for this anti-Marxist diatribe, but also he initially refrained from criticising Bernstein in print. In the light of subsequent history, Kautsky's silence was significant. For all his scholarly theses on revolution and the class struggle, Kautsky's Marxism had an abstract, scholastic character. Whereas Plekhanov regarded Bernstein as an enemy to be attacked, unmasked and, if necessary, driven out, Kautsky still saw him as an erring companion, whose theoretical eccentricities ought not to spoil an agreeably friendly relationship.

Kautsky's attitude is clearly revealed in a letter he wrote to Axelrod on the 9 March 1898, congratulating him on his articles against Bernstein in the

following terms: "I am most interested in your opinion of Eddie. Indeed, I'm afraid we're losing him. . . . However, I have still not given him up as a bad job and I hope that when he enters into personal—if only written—contact with us, then something of the old fighter will return to our Hamlet (sic), and he will once again direct his criticism against the enemy and not against us".¹¹

When finally pushed and prodded by Plekhanov to make a public reply, Kautsky was careful to invest this with the softest possible tone, almost apologising for taking him up: "Bernstein has obliged us to re-consider things and, for that, we should thank him."¹² Enraged by this, Plekhanov wrote an open letter to Kautsky with the title: *Why should we thank him?* in which, among other things, he sharply posed the question: "Who will bury whom? Will Bernstein bury the Social Democracy, or the Social Democracy, Bernstein?"¹³

While the members of the Emancipation of Labour Group reacted sharply to Bernstein's attempt to water down the revolutionary teachings of Marx, he had his admirers among the Russians. Before this, the 'Economist' deviations lacked a coherent theoretical content. Now, beginning with the exiles, they eagerly seized on Bernstein's ideas as a justification for their opportunist tendencies.

Economist controversy

The problem arose in the Union of Russian Social Democrats, an emigré organisation set up in 1894, mainly composed of students who had recently joined the Marxist movement. The Union was organisationally independent of the Emancipation of Labour Group, and had effective control of contacts with Russia. They were responsible for collecting funds, the print shop, organising the transportation of clandestine literature and maintaining contacts with the interior. However, in order to preserve its control of the ideological field, the Emancipation of Labour Group insisted on the right to edit the Union's publications, including the journal *Rabotnik*.

The difficult problem of striking the correct balance between experience and youth is a recurrent one in the history of revolutionary movements. A large part of the initial friction between the two groups undoubtedly sprang from the resentment of the 'youth' at the political protagonism of Plekhanov. They felt slighted and 'put down' by the 'old timers', and resented the rigorous ideological control exercised over them. Despite Plekhanov's attempts to be conciliatory, the con-

flicts became more frequent.

The students soon seized on what was, admittedly, the weak side of the Emancipation of Labour Group's activities: organisation. They began to pick holes on organisational questions, demanding to see the accounts which were certainly in a chaotic state.

Having scored a point here, the 'youth' went on to other issues. In his biography of Plekhanov, SH Baron sums up their criticisms of the Emancipation of Labour Group: "Was not the dedication of the Group's principal figure, Plekhanov, to abstract theoretical and philosophical works a patent demonstration of his alienation from Russian reality? . . . Arguing that they had lost contact with the situation in Russia and were ill-informed concerning its needs, the veteran Marxists were disqualified from leading the movement. Even if the Group had a more realistic vision of the demands of the time, their slowness and inefficiency rendered them incapable of fulfilling the leading role to which it laid claim. While the reins continued in its hands, essential tasks could not be attended to. Those who had founded and given a great initial impetus to the movement had become converted into an obstacle. Yet they refused to make way for those who were better qualified, and who had both a clear awareness of the necessities, and the energies essential for dealing with them. Another similar accusation they made towards them was that the hypercritical attitude of the Group and its intolerance towards divergent opinions impeded the development of new literary minds urgently needed by the movement. . . . Organising the opposition to the veterans, attacking their prerogatives, showing scant respect for their authority, the critics unleashed a kind of guerrilla war against the Group. What they clearly intended was to reduce the power of the veterans, and maybe they even thought about displacing them completely and themselves taking over the leadership of the movement."¹⁴

To some extent, the tensions between the Emancipation of Labour Group and the newer generation of young people from Russia were comprehensible. Having conducted a stubborn struggle for Marxist theory, Plekhanov was reluctant to take a chance on allowing the newcomers to participate in literary and theoretical work. The subsequent political evolution of the latter showed that Plekhanov had good grounds for apprehension. On the other hand, Plekhanov was not the easiest individual to work with. His aristocratic aloofness and lack of sensitivity rankled and gave cause for resentment.

especially among younger colleagues whose feathers he systematically ruffled. Not for nothing did the young Trotsky, who later also fell foul of the old man, characterise him as "maitre de toutes les nuances de froideur" master of frostiness in all its shadings.

However, what lay behind this campaign was the egotism of the intelligentia, aggravated by the usual frustrations, personal conflicts and exaggerations of exile life. On the other hand, the contempt for theory, and demagogic appeals for 'practical politics' and 'activity' flowed from the arrogance of the intellectuals, which serves for a fig-leaf to cover up their profound ignorance. Baron summarises thus Plekhanov's views on these people: "Their preoccupation with matters of practical administration characterises them as mere bureaucrats, men lacking in revolutionary passion, and with too narrow a spirit to be able to respond to the grandiose perspectives of the movement."¹⁵

As usual, Vera Zasulich attempted to conciliate between Plekhanov and "the youth". But by the end of 1897, things took a serious turn, with the arrival in Switzerland of SN Prokopovich and his wife YD Kushova. Until then, the conflicts between the Union and the Emancipation of Labour Group had been mainly confined to organisational, rather than political questions. But the recent appearance of the journal *Rabochaya Mysl* (Workers' Thought) brought about a radical change in the situation.

Plekhanov and the youth

The first issue of the journal, which came out in Petersburg in October 1897, expressed the ideas of the new tendency in the most open and crudest fashion: "As long as the movement was no more than a means to soothe the conscience-stricken intellectual (!) it was alien to the worker himself... the economic base of the movement was obscured by the constant attempt to remember the political ideal... The average worker stood outside the movement... The struggle for economic interests was the most stubborn struggle, the most powerful in terms of the numbers of people it was understandable to, and in terms of the heroism with which the ordinary person would defend his rights to existence. Such is the law of nature. Politics always docily follows economics, and as a general result political shackles are snapped 'en route'. The struggle for economic status, (?) the struggle against capital in the field of everyday vital interests and of strikes as a method of this struggle—such is the motto of the

workers' movement."¹⁶

The basic idea expressed in these lines is that workers cannot understand and do not need 'politics'. The logic of this is that the revolutionary party is an irrelevance. Behind the demagogic advocacy of the independence of the workers from the 'intellectual' leadership is really the independence of the workers from Marxism. The danger implicit in this idea was clear. If the Economists' arguments were accepted, the party would be dissolved into the politically untutored mass of workers. Already at the meeting between the new leaders of the Petersburg League and Lenin and Martov, when they were released on parole in February 1897, Takhtarev had proposed that delegates of the trade union (Central Workers' Group) be automatically allowed to participate in the League. Lenin defended the recruiting of workers into the party, but opposed blurring the distinction between the party, representing the most advanced section of the workers, and the broad organisations of the class, particularly at a moment when the party was fighting for its existence under the difficult and dangerous conditions of illegality.

It is ironic that many bourgeois commentators try to present Economism as the reaction of the workers against Lenin's allegedly 'intellectual' or 'political' trend. In reality, the ideologues of *Rabochaya Mysl* were students and intellectuals through whom the pressure of the bourgeois-liberals was brought to bear upon the workers' movement. Their open admiration for Bernstein was no accident. They represented a specific Russian variant of the international phenomenon of revisionism, which in turn was an expression of the interests of the middle-class "progressives" in the West who had drawn close to the workers' movement when it was clear that the latter had definitely established itself as a powerful social agency and therefore a potential source of jobs, prestige and income. Indeed, from the very earliest days of the German Social Democracy, Engels had continually warned against the pernicious influence of the university 'Kathedersozialisten', people like Dühring who graciously deigned to offer their services to the labour movement with a view to prodding it along the road of reformist class collaboration.

However, the parallel holds good only within certain limits. The social context in which Economism arose was very different to that in which German revisionism was born and prospered. Just as the Russian bourgeoisie represented a feeble and anaemic growth in comparison to mighty Ger-



man, French and British capitalism, so the Russian Bernsteinists were very much the poor relations of international opportunism. They had no ideas of their own, other than the shifting fads, moods and prejudices of the intellectual. What ideological baggage they possessed was lifted from the Germans and British.

Reformism has a material base. Capitalism in Britain, Germany and France still had a progressive role to play in the development of the productive forces. The period of economic upswing which preceded the First World War, the amelioration of the lot of a section of the masses, and the consequent softening of relations between the classes was the social and economic premise for the rise of Bernsteinite revisionism. But the seeds which prospered in the soil of economic progress in the West proved virtually barren in the harsh and rocky terrain of Russia. Here there was no large labour aristocracy, but a mass of pauperised proletarians, slaving in large-scale industry. Only in one area did the ideas of Economism find the necessary raw material to get an echo in the working class.

The Bund

The Jewish workers' movement in Western Russia, Poland and Lithuania already had a long history behind it. The strike wave which swept through these regions beginning in 1892 produced a ferment among all oppressed nationalities, especially the Jews, who suffered the most extreme national oppression. Cultural life began to stir in a kind of national renaissance. Breaking free from the deadweight of a culture fossilised for 2,000 years, the Jewish intelligentsia became open to the most radical and revolutionary

ideas. In place of the old exclusivism and isolationism, they eagerly sought contact with other cultures, particularly Russian culture. As early as 1885, a section of the poor 'yesivah' students, training to become Rabbis, helped to launch the Narodnik revolutionary organisation in Vilna. Now Jewish workers joined the struggle, eagerly learning Russian in order to read books and discover the new ideas for themselves.

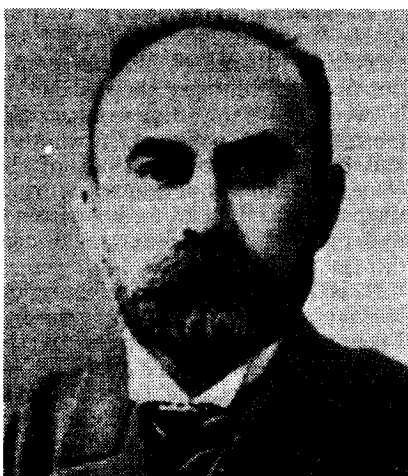
Jewish workers had organised friendly societies or 'kassy' which collected funds for labour disputes for as long as anyone remembered—possibly ever since Jews were expelled from the guilds in Germany and Poland. The structure of these societies recalled that of the medieval guilds themselves, or the early British craft unions, with their solemn initiation rituals, annual guild holidays and strict secrecy concerning all their affairs. The artisans and workers organised in these 'kassy' were conservative in outlook, hostile to socialist ideas and usually connected with the synagogue. The narrow craft traditions, and the small-scale and artisan character of much of the industry in this area, was the social base upon which the Jewish Social Democratic organisation, the Bund, grew up. The jewellers, cobblers, tailors, engravers, typesetters and tanners of Vilna proved more amenable than the Petersburg textile and metal workers to the ideas of 'Economism'.

Even here, however, the real reason for the phenomenon lay with the ideological confusion and 'tail-endism' of the leadership. Vladimir Akimov, the extreme Economist, in his book on the early history of the Russian Social Democracy, is obliged to admit that the Vilna Social Democratic workers complained that the party was "not political enough":

"It was the workers themselves," he writes, "who demanded the introduction of a 'political' element into the Social Democratic agitation. It was they who were determined to expose the wrongs of the political system, to bring out the people's lack of rights, to formulate the interests of the workers as a citizen. But the revolutionary organisation, which hoped to guide (!) the labour movement towards Social Democratic ideas, was afraid that it would not be understood by the working masses (!), that it would lose its influence if it now raised its own demands for 'political' rights as the demands of the proletariat. Was the working class already well enough educated politically to appraise, to recognise its own interests? The leaders were not certain of this and hesitated to act."¹⁷

These few lines convey, better than

anything else, the contemptuous attitude of the Economists towards the very workers in whose name they purported to speak. The underlying idea is a complete lack of confidence in the ability of ordinary working people to understand the need for political struggle. Yet the necessity for social and political change confronts the workers at every stage in the struggle. Arising out of the economic struggle against individual employers, the workers inevitably draw the conclusion at a certain moment in time of the need to effect a thoroughgoing transformation of society. And long before that, as the entire history of the working class movement from Chartist times onwards demonstrates, the proletariat understands the need to fight for every



Plekhanov.

partial political and democratic demand which serves to strengthen its position, develop its class organisations and create the most favourable conditions for a successful struggle against its oppressors.

Economists' contempt for theory

There is no unbreachable barrier between the economic struggle for better wages and conditions and the political struggle to change society. The history of British trade unionism itself shows how closely bound up the two are. From the very beginnings the unions were forced to fight against reactionary laws, to conquer democratic rights in the teeth of ruling class opposition. The fact that the unions created the Labour Party, which in 1918, under the direct influence of the Russian revolution, inscribed on its banner the nationalisation of the means of production, further underlines the point made by Marx that every economic struggle, in essence, is a political struggle.

In Kremer's famous pamphlet *On Agitation*, the relation between

economic agitation and the political struggle is spelt out fairly clearly, when it states that;

"No matter how broad the workers' movement is, its success will not be assured until the working class stands solidly on the basis of political struggle", and that "the attainment of political power is the principal task of the fighting proletariat... Thus the task of the Social Democrats consists of constant agitation among the factory workers on the basis of existing petty needs and demands. The struggle provoked by this agitation will train the workers to defend their own interests, heighten their courage, give them assurance of their own powers and an awareness of the necessity for union, and, in the final analysis ultimately confront them with more serious questions demanding a solution. Prepared in this way for a more serious struggle, the working class will move on to the solution of its most pressing questions."¹⁸

However, the Economists interpreted this in an entirely one-sided manner. Economic agitation and crude 'activism' were elevated into a panacea. Revolutionary theory was effectively relegated to an unimportant secondary role. In this way, a correct idea was turned into its opposite, giving rise to the anti-Marxist 'theory of stages', which was later to have such a disastrous effect in the hands of the Mensheviks and Stalinists.

"Political demands", wrote the Economist Krichevsky, "which in their nature are common to all Russia, must correspond initially to the experience extracted from the economic struggle by a given stratum of workers. It is only on the grounds of this experience that it is possible and necessary to move on to political agitation."¹⁹

These lines express very clearly the opportunist nature of Economism, which flows from the desire to find a 'short cut' to the masses by watering down the programme of Marxism and abandoning political demands on the grounds that the "masses are not ready for them". At bottom, this phenomenon was analogous to the politics of 'small deeds' advocated by the Liberal Narodniks. It fitted in perfectly with the cowardly opportunism of the 'Legal Marxists', who themselves really represented the left-wing of bourgeois Liberalism.*

Implicit in the ideas of the Economists was the fear of confron-

* Incidentally, it also anticipates nearly a century in advance all the allegedly 'new' theories advocated by Professor Hobsbawm and Marxism Today, which ideally should be re-baptised: "Reformism the Day Before Yesterday". Nothing new under the sun, as the saying goes.

ting the tsarist authorities, by avoiding political demands and attempting to present the activity of the Social Democrats as a 'private affair' between workers and employers on the labour front, leaving the question of the state to others.

In reality, the meaning of all the arguments of the Economists was that the Social Democrats should passively adapt themselves to the narrow limits of legality or semi-legality offered to them by the tsarist state. By confining themselves to economic demands they hoped to avoid the wrath of the authorities. In this sense, Economism was the mirror image of the position adopted by Legal Marxism. It was tantamount to abandoning the revolutionary struggle and handing over the leadership of the movement to the liberals.

Such a scheme, however, flew in the face of the facts. If the Economists were willing to adopt a 'hands off' policy in the revolutionary democratic struggle against tsarism, the tsarist state was by no means prepared to stand aloof from the struggle between workers and capitalists. Strike after strike was broken up by police and Cossacks. Wave after wave of arrests carried off the most active and conscious sections of the workers' movement.

'Tail-endism'

According to the report of the Bolshevik delegation to the 1904 Amsterdam Congress of the Second International, the average life of a Social Democratic group in Russia at this time was no more than three to four months. The constant wave of arrests carried off the older, more theoretically trained and experienced members, who were replaced by raw, half-prepared youth. This fact was an important element in the rapid rise of the Economist current during the latter half of the '90s.

A party which has such a high turnover, and is obliged to replenish its leadership with a constant influx of inexperienced and theoretically untutored young people inevitably suffers from a certain ideological dilution and a general lowering of its political level. Particularly when the majority of these young people are students and intellectuals, the risk of political degeneration and the influx of alien ideas becomes magnified a thousandfold. A revolutionary party which loses its cadres loses its backbone. Losing its theoretical 'magnetic North', it is inevitably blown off course. Instead of intervening in the movement of the class in order to provide it with a conscious political direction, such a party is capable only of tail-ending the

movement. The Russian Marxists had a graphic word for this tendency: 'khvostism' ('tail-ism'). Whereas revolutionary Marxism represents the most conscious thinking part of the working class, 'Economism' and all the other schools of reformism personify a different and opposite part of its anatomy.

'Economism' was never a homogenous ideological trend. At its inception, as we have seen, it partly reflected a certain resentment of a layer of the younger members at what they saw as the irksome ideological control of the 'old timers'. In part, too, it flowed from impatience and a tendency to regard 'mass work' as a panacea for all the problems facing the organisation.

Yet despite all the problems and setbacks, the new movement was growing rapidly. Social Democratic groups sprang up in Tver, Arkhangelsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Saratov, Kharkov, Kiev, Yekaterinoslav, Odessa, Tiflis, Batum, Baku, Warsaw, Minsk, Riga and many other important centres. For the first time one could speak of a genuinely all-Russian Marxist organisation.

The situation in which these groups were forced to function was, however, not conducive to ideological clarity and organisational cohesion. Contacts between them were difficult, irregular and constantly being disrupted. Arrests frequently led to the disruption of some groups and the emergence of new ones. Under the circumstances the task of establishing a firm and authoritative leadership inside Russia proved well-nigh impossible.

Inevitably the local Social Democratic groups tended to have a somewhat limited outlook. The absence of stable links with a national centre, the problems created by illegal conditions and the immaturity and inexperience of the majority of the



membership, meant that much of the work had a rather localist and amateurish character. The 'Economists' lack of concern with theory and their narrow insistence on the practical tasks of mass work and agitation was only the other side of the same coin.

In order to place the movement in Russia on a firm footing, it was necessary to put an end to this state of affairs. The pressing need for a united party with a stable leadership and, above all, an all-Russian Marxist newspaper, was felt by everyone. Only with the launching of Lenin's *Iskra* did the unification of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party become a viable proposition.

Part four of Alan Woods' series of articles on the history of Bolshevism will deal with the history of *Iskra*, the first all-Russian Marxist newspaper, up to the Second Congress of the RSDLP.

Footnotes

1. Quoted in *Istoriya KPSS*, Volume One, p159.
2. See 'Slavonic and East European Review', April 1934, Volume 12, No 34.
3. Lenin's 'Collected Works', Volume One, p333.
4. Krupskaya, 'Memories of Lenin', pp29-30.
5. *KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s'yezdov, konferentsii y plenumov tsk*, p15.
6. *Istoriya KPSS*, Volume One, p222.
7. F Dan 'The Origins of Bolshevism', p205.
8. *Perepiska GV Plekhanova i PB Aksel'roda*, p127.
9. *Istoriya KPSS*, Volume One, p228.
10. *Perepiska GV Plekhanova i PB Aksel'roda*, p182.
11. *Ibid*, p208-9.
12. SH Baron, 'Plekhanov—The Father of Russian Marxism' (Spanish edition), p238.
13. *Ibid*.
14. *Ibid*, pp254-5.
15. *Ibid*, p255.
16. Quoted in F Dan, 'The Origins of Bolshevism', p217.
17. V Akimov, 'On the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism (1895-1903)', p215 (My emphasis—AW).
18. Quoted in F Dan, 'The Origins of Bolshevism', p216.
19. *Ibid*, p218 (My emphasis—AW).

Book Reviews

"THE DAY when international socialism will judge the crimes committed in the past ten years is not far off. Nothing will be forgotten and nothing will be forgiven. History is harsh. 'The leader of genius' (Stalin), 'the Father of the people', 'the Sun of Socialism' will have to account for what he has done".

So wrote Ignace Reiss, a leading member of the Stalinist secret police who broke with Stalinism in 1937, declared himself a Trotskyist and was subsequently murdered by the GPU. But, unfortunately, Branson's book is not an honest account of the betrayals of the working class by Stalin in the 1930's. Her book, which would have been better entitled "A selected history of the Communist Party of Great Britain" ignores, covers up and distorts most, if not all, of the key issues of the thirties and shows Branson and today's Communist Parties as inheritors of the Stalinist traditions of falsification.

A Marxist history of the C.P.G.B. would have explained the role of Stalinism, the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and its effects on the Communist Party. Branson, however, merely relates selected details, ignores the worst aspects of Stalinist policies and dismisses Stalinism as being caused by:

"flaws in the system which permitted terrible injustices to occur".

In the late twenties the swing to the right in the Soviet Union caused by Stalin's policy of building up the position of the Kulaks, the rich peasantry, and the alliances formed internationally between Communists and pro-capitalist Parties as in China or with right wing Trade Union leaders as in Britain, had become a threat to the continued existence of Stalin and his bureaucratic regime. To preserve its position the bureaucracy was forced to turn against the Kulaks.

Stalin moved, forcing the different Communist Parties to follow, from a position of opportunism to ultra-leftism. Capitalism was deemed to be in its final stage before collapse, the 'Third Period', and Social Democrats were to be treated as traitors, as 'social fascists'.

What did this policy mean in practice? Branson dismisses it as an ultra-left phase in the Party's history without even explaining the lengths to which the policy was carried. She forgets to mention, for example, that the tiny British Communist Party was solemnly instructed to physically break-up meetings of the Labour Party.

As Harry Pollitt, then General

History of the Communist Party of Great Britain

By Noreen Branson,
Published by
Lawrence and
Wishart, 1985, £6.95

Reviewed by
Dave Campbell

Secretary, wrote in the *Daily Worker* on the 29th January 1930:

"There should not be a Labour meeting held anywhere, but that the revolutionary workers in that district attend such meetings and fight against the speakers, whoever they are, so-called left, right or centre. They should never be allowed to address meetings. This will bring us into conflict with the authorities but this must be done. The fight can no longer be conducted in a passive manner".

In the unions too, this policy led to the isolation of the Communist Party. In South Wales, the Miner's Federation was openly condemned in the pages of the *Daily Worker* as Social Fascist.

Ultra-leftism

Branson relates how this period, "class against class" as it was called, had a devastating effect on the CPGB. In the first 18 months, Party membership dropped from 7,000 to under 3,000. By 1930, it reached an all time low of 2,555.

Branson, however, excuses this 'little detail' of lunatic ultra-leftism when she argues:

"The fact is that a line of extreme sectarianism is one to which Marxists have been prone ever since Karl Marx himself fought against it. When under pressure, an isolationist and ultra-left posture has often been the outcome."

In fact, this new policy was a result of the ditching of the aim of international socialist revolution and its conscious betrayal by Stalin. Branson cannot explain it herself because she, and her Party, have also relegated the aim of socialism to the distant future.

The 'class against class' policy was not to continue indefinitely. Lenin pointed out that it was necessary "to condemn a false policy in order to pave

HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN



1927-1941

the way for a correct policy". But Branson, while discarding the "third period" policies as "a disaster" merely embraces the same criminal policies that Lenin had condemned Stalin for in 1917: the policy of class collaboration and Popular Frontism.

The entire history of the inter-war years was one of a struggle between the classes to dominate society. Having allowed the rise of Fascism in Germany and the defeat of the General Strike in Britain, the Communist International had relinquished its claim to be the organisation that would achieve the world revolution. After turning its back on the inherent strength of the international Labour movement, Stalinism more and more sought aid and succour from other groups in society. As Branson puts it:

"The object must be to transform and democratise the state machine, and to change the Parliamentary system, not to 'replace' it. So began work on a different concept: that of a British Road to socialism".

Having condemned Trotsky's policy of the United Front during the "class against class" period, the Communist International, now realising that Hitler was a serious threat did a complete about-turn by introducing the Popular Front policy. Lenin had consistently opposed collaboration with capitalists of any shade but in Branson's own words:

"Not only must Communists seek to establish unity with Social Democratic organisations but they must try to bring out a wide anti-Fascist peoples front involving classes other than the proletariat, namely the peasantry and middle class".

The Popular Front tactic meant watering down policies and expectations in order to "attract" middle class support.

No mistakes were acknowledged or explanations given by the Communist International with this dramatic change of policy. In fact, no Congress of the International even took place

between the sixth, in 1928 and the seventh in late 1935. Despite this, the British Communist Party, no longer having a Marxist leadership, blindly followed the dictates of Stalin and the bureaucracy in Russia and took up the new line with enthusiasm.

In Spain, this policy led directly to the defeat of the working class and forty years of fascist rule because, as Branson puts it:

"the Communists believed that if you wanted to achieve the socialist revolution, you must first defeat the fascists and that meant uniting with non socialists and the preservation of the present republican government".

What Branson doesn't explain is, if the Popular Front policy was correct, why wasn't Franco defeated? Unfortunately, Stalin's criminal policies in Spain were repeated in France in the 1930's, with horrific consequences in Chile in the 1970s and are still adhered to today by communists of all shades.

The logic of this policy in Spain was that any independent action by the workers to win the war was opposed by the Communists often at the point of a gun. Whilst the Communist Parties in Spain and Britain collaborated with capitalism, socialist parties were not let off so lightly.

CP supports show trials

Victor Serge, who witnessed the Russian Revolution and the Spanish Civil War as a Bolshevik sympathiser described how the Stalinists attacked the POUM, a socialist party created by former supporters of Trotsky such as Nin and Andrade which, despite its entry into the capitalist government in Barcelona, had attracted thousands of the best militants looking for a revolutionary struggle to defeat Franco. In March 1937, Serge:

"met a young woman whose eyes were wide open with terror. I am afraid, she said, to believe what I've just heard. A prominent Communist from Spain has been to see my husband. I heard him say that in Barcelona, they're getting ready to liquidate thousands of anarchists and POUM militants, and that its going along very nicely..."

Indeed thousands of anti fascists were murdered by Stalin's agents in Spain, and Nin, the leader of the POUM 'disappeared' and was never seen again.

Of course, Branson attempts to justify this, and the attacks made by the CPGB on the Independent Labour Party (the nearest British equivalent to the POUM) by sneering:

"it was hardly surprising that the POUM should be regarded as traitors, and the behaviour of the ILP in supporting the POUM should be looked

on in disgust".

The chapters in Branson's book on Trotskyism, the 1930's show trials and the war in Spain are so full of inaccuracies and half truths that it is impossible to correct them all in a short review. In them, she shows her true colours as an honoured inheritor of the traditions of Stalin. As she puts it:

"The trials and mass arrests were, of course, an outward manifestation of Stalin's determination to eliminate anyone who might offer a challenge to his personal supremacy. But, in Britain at the time, Communist Party members as a whole accepted the confessions made by those accused at their face value, firmly believed the charges made and thought that those executed had met with their just desserts. Later generations were to find this attitude incredible and accusations were made, both inside and outside the party suggesting that the leaders of the British Communist Party were fully aware of the terrible injustices perpetrated by the Stalin regime but connived at a cover up.

Those who made such accusations fail to understand the situation at the time". (My emphasis—DC).

Acting as an apologist for Stalin and the leaders of the British Communist Party, nowhere does Branson explain how such horrific crimes could be carried out in the name of socialism. Nor does Branson anywhere condemn Stalin's purges. On the contrary, by the cynical manipulation of dates, she creates the impression that the attacks on Trotsky were merely political differences that may at times have got a bit 'out of hand'.

"But it was the issue of the POUM that caused the greatest anger against Trotskyism amongst the Communists... In his closing speech at the 1937 British Party Congress, Pollitt called on members to give 'careful and painstaking explanations' about the POUM to the ILP comrades they met. Every argument had to be countered, he said, with clear answers; not with labels or phrases, so that they could see that what they had thought of as revolutionary was in fact counter-revolutionary.

"Everything said from the platform during this Congress was careful and objective. But shortly afterwards, allegations that the POUM leaders were conscious traitors acting on behalf of the fascist Franco began to receive credence... anger at the splitting tactics of the POUM was to lead to the acceptance of totally false allegations concerning Trotskyists".

The 1937 Congress took place in May. According to Branson: "Nobody in Britain had paid much attention to the POUM until May 1937 when news came of fighting in Catalonia behind

the Spanish Republican lines".

Yet, the *Daily Worker* had been slavishly reporting the show trials taking place in the Soviet Union as accomplished fact since December 1934 as the following extracts show:

"It is now revealed that the terrorist group composed of Zinoviev-Trotskyist elements who planned and carried out Kirov's murder were connected with a certain foreign consulate in Leningrad, received financial help from it, and were relying on the help of military intervention by certain foreign powers." (28 December 1934)

"Crowning infamy of all this is the evidence showing how they (Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev) were linked with the Nazi Secret Police which provided false passports for their agents. So they stand revealed as tools of a world fascist attack". (17 August 1936)

"Shoot the Reptiles" (24 August 1936)

"It is for the working class of Britain to deal with those who in this country constitute themselves the defenders of the Trotskyists and thereby assist fascism and strike a blow at socialism all over the world" (25 January 1937).

The CP and the war

The material interests, in other words, the continuation of the privileged position of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union was at stake. No lie, no slander, no action was too much to defeat the only force capable of overthrowing Stalinism, that is international socialism as advocated by Trotsky. Stalin's loyal agents in Britain, the CPGB slavishly obeyed the whims of the Soviet bureaucracy in their task.

But the main fear in the eyes of the workers in the late thirties was the build up to the second world war. The First Congress of the Communist International, when Lenin still guided its policies explained that:

"The continued rule of finance capital will lead either to the complete destruction of civilised society or to an unprecedented increase in the level of exploitation and enslavement, to political reaction and a policy of armament, and eventually to new destructive wars".

So, in apportioning the blame for the war, a significant proportion has to be placed on the shoulders of the Communist Parties for their betrayal of the socialist revolution in Europe.

Having betrayed the international working class, Stalinism was forced more and more to rely on alliances with the capitalists to avoid the threat of invasion of the Soviet Union. Branson explains how:

"Communists believed that the

fascist powers could be restrained by means of collective security through the 'League of Nations', which meant that governments should combine to impose sanctions on any nation that attacked another".

How ironic! The First Congress of the Communist International had declared:

"The 'League of Nations', should it come into formal existence, will only have the significance of a holy alliance of capitalists bent on crushing the workers' revolution. Propaganda for the 'League of Nations' though, is the best way of confusing the revolutionary consciousness of the working class. It replaces the idea of an International of revolutionary workers republics with the idea of an International association of sham democracies, attainable through a coalition between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie."

"The revolutionary proletariats of all countries of the world must wage a resolute struggle against the 'Wilsonian' notion of a 'League of Nations' and protest against entry into this union of plunder, exploitation and imperialist counter-revolution."

British imperialism had no interest in signing pacts to defend the Soviet Union. After accusing and executing his opponents on trumped up charges of being agents of Fascism, Stalin turned to Hitler and signed the Hitler-Stalin pact. Branson excuses this by saying:

"the truth was that the refusal of the British to come to an agreement with the Soviet Union had left the latter with little alternative".

Branson's excuse contradicts that given at the time. The *"World News and Views"*, published from the CPGB headquarters, one year after the pact on 31st August 1940 stated:

"Another thing that should not be forgotten is that for a number of months before the conclusion of the pact, Britain and France had made persistent attempts to harness the Soviet Union for their imperialist aims".

Whatever the excuse, the real truth was that Stalin now considered the workers' movements in the different countries as bargaining counters to be used and discarded as he felt fit in his wheeling and dealing with imperialism and Fascism.

Attempting to justify the pact, Branson explains that:

"It was not a mutual assistance pact or an alliance".

But the *World News and Views* told the truth in August 1940:

"Just as there was no doubt that collaboration between the Soviet Union and Germany in the sphere of foreign policy fully corresponds with the in-

Death of an International Spy

Last week Leon Trotsky died of wounds in Mexico City after he had been attacked by one of his associates.

Commenting upon his death, PRAVDA, central daily paper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, wrote:

"Trotsky, who organised the villainous murder of Kirov, Kuibyshev and Maxim Gorky, fell prey to his own intrigues, treachery and crimes. This was the inglorious end to the life of this despicable individual, who went down to the grave branded with the stamp of the international spy and murderer."

Here is the paper's full comment:

uling classes of the capitalist world have lost a faithful ally. The foreign intelligence have lost an agent of long standing.

war, phrases calculated to deceive the working class.

He opposed Lenin and the Bolshevik Party on all the most im-

weakened in every way of resistance of the Red because of this, Lenin failed to visit the Eastern and

From *World News and Views*, 31 August 1940, published at the CPGB HQ.

terests of both sides, so, too, it is indisputable that successfully developing Soviet-German economic relations completely corresponds to these interests".

The Hitler-Stalin pact was not a purely economic-military alliance. Part of the deal was for Stalin to stop financing the different Communist Parties in those countries under Hitler's jackboot. Khrushchev, Stalin's successor in his famous speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU revealed how:

"When Hitler was preparing to attack Poland, Stalin helped him. He shot all the Polish Communists in the USSR and outlawed the Polish Communist Party".

So, too, in Germany, Stalin connived with Hitler to destroy the base and support of the German Communist Party. Branson explains in her book that many records and minutes of the Communist Party from that period were destroyed for security reasons. But much of this material is still in existence. Why does Branson not bother to mention any of it?

In turn, the CPGB stepped up its campaign for peace. Supposed opposition to war was cloaked in terms of class collaboration with talk of a 'Peoples Government' and excuses for Hitler. On the 1st February, 1940, for example, the *Daily Worker* editorial read:

"Hitler repeated once again that war was thrust on him by Britain. Against this historical fact there was no reply. Britain declared war, not Germany".

But, behind the smokescreen of the Hitler-Stalin pact, Hitler had prepared for, and, in June 1941 carried out, the invasion of the Soviet Union.

By now, the CPGB was well practised, as able executor of Russian foreign policy, of completely reversing its position. From peace at any cost, the CP now changed its position to uncritical support of the British government's

war efforts. Churchill, who in 1918-1919 had been the key organiser in the British military intervention to try and put down the new Soviet state, became the hero of the Communist Party. As Branson put it:

"If Churchill was prepared to show solidarity with the Soviet Union, and to take a stand against the known views of the 'appeasers' both in and outside his government, then surely the Party must stop campaigning for his downfall".

On 4th July 1941, the Central Committee agreed to:

"Support every measure of the government designed to secure victory in the common cause for the complete defeat and destruction of Hitlerism".

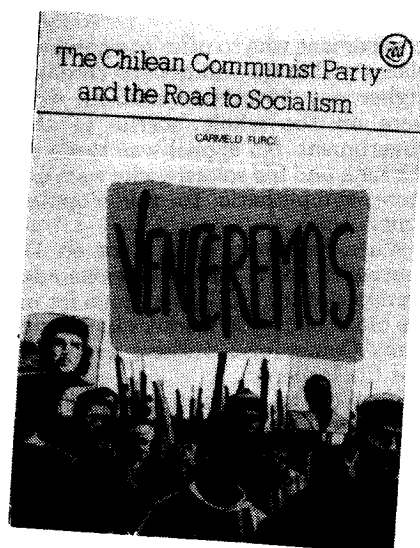
For Communists in Britain, this meant becoming open agents of the imperialist war machine. In the name of 'increased production' the Communist Party sabotaged strikes and made no-strike deals with the employers. They even opposed Independent Labour candidates standing in by-elections during the course of the war. In return for their loyal support, the government allowed the *Daily Worker* to resume publication in September 1941 (it had been banned in January).

In one paragraph, Branson passes over the abolition by Stalin of the Communist International in 1943. Throughout the book she pours scorn on Trotsky for predicting that the rise of Stalin and the bureaucracy in Russia and their theory of 'Socialism in one country' would turn the different Communist Parties into "border guards of the Soviet state". However, even the selected facts that she relates unintentionally confirm Trotsky's brilliant prediction. But unfortunately, the true and complete history of the Communist Party of Great Britain still remains to be written.

The Chilean Communist Party and the road to socialism

By Carmelo Furci
Published by Zed
Books 1984 £6.50

Reviewed by
Martin Gonzalez



THE CHILEAN Communist Party is unique within Latin America in that it was the first workers party to be set up, and because of the enormous strength that the party has had since it's foundation. In fact the PCCh is the biggest CP on the South American mainland.

This loyalty towards the traditional organisations is both a testament to the workers sense of unity within their ranks and to the thousands of young workers, many of whom have given their lives to strengthen the struggle for socialism through the CP.

However in reading through Carmelo Furci's book it is incredible to see how many opportunities the PCCh has had, and lost, for the socialist transformation of society, given it's strength within the workers movement. The book actually is an indictment of the leaders of the PCCh for their total inability to take the opportunities presented to them by the enormous working class movements that have developed over the past decades.

The job of Marxists is to draw out the lessons from a history such as that of the Chilean workers and to analyse

the events and mistakes made by the leaders of the movement. Although Furci provides some very good information with facts and figures, much of the time he seems to give the impression that defeats were inevitable, thereby laying the blame on the workers, rather than on the leaders.

What is apparent from the whole of the period from the adoption of the Popular Front strategy by the PCCh in 1935 up until 1973, and in its basic analysis at the present time, is the underlying theory that the Chilean national capitalist class still has a role to play within society and can develop the economy. This is despite the whole history of the Chilean class struggle where the Chilean capitalist class has been shown to be a totally weak and parasitical class, never hesitating to ally itself with US imperialism to attempt to crush the workers movement.

The Chilean Communist Party was originally founded by Luis Emilio Recabarren, who understood the need to create a separate working class party standing under it's own banner, independent of the capitalist parties. Recabarren proposed that the POS, as it was called then, join the Communist International after a visit to the Soviet Union in 1920.

Popular Frontism

The PCCh soon became affected however by the struggle that was taking place in the Comintern between Stalin and Trotsky. In Chile this was reflected by the attempt of an emerging bureaucracy to impose an undemocratic structure on the party and by the adoption of the Stalinist theory of 'social fascism'. By 1933, the differences between the two wings of the party climaxed, with the setting up of the 'Communist Left', a group which split from the official CP and applied to join Trotsky's Fourth International. Recabarren in fact committed suicide in 1924 over, some say, the attempt at a takeover of the PCCh by this new bureaucratic wing. The split off from the Communist party eventually went on to form the Chilean Socialist Party precisely as a result of the struggle against Stalinist ideas and methods.

Following the lead of the Stalinist Comintern, in 1935 the Chilean Communist Party adopted the idea of the Popular Front. The basic "theoretical" foundation for Popular Frontism was the belief that the national bourgeoisie could develop production and independence from US imperialism. Therefore, the so-called theoreticians of the Comintern adopted the idea that all the CP's should support and make pacts and alliances with parties representing the interests of the na-

tional bourgeoisie.

As the 7th Congress of the PCCh stated:

"... the victories of the Popular Front in Spain and France, opened the way in our party towards the idea that the National Bourgeoisie had a place in the National Liberation movement...". The programme of the Popular Front was that of defending the interests of the Chilean bosses as well as supporting basic reforms within the existing system.

However, once the Popular Front actually won the elections the so-called progressive sector of the bourgeoisie inevitably turned out to be totally against the interests of the workers, particularly when the country found itself affected with economic problems. By 1946 President Videla broke openly with the CP, arrested the leaders and passed the 'Ley Maldita' which banned the PCCh.

Furci argues that the PCCh was strengthened as a result of the Popular Front experience, mainly because the vote for the PCCh reached an all time high of 17% in the August 1947 elections, and that it was only the intervention of US imperialism that caused the break up of the Popular Front government.

In reality however, the PCCh threw away an opportunity to destroy the illusions of sections of the masses with the main representative of the Chilean bourgeoisie who needed no pressure from US imperialism to attack the workers movement. The PCCh could have fought the election on the basis of a united front with the Socialist Party, calling for the socialist transformation of society.

The conclusion however that the CP leadership drew from this defeat, was that there were sectors of the bourgeoisie that were 'closer to imperialism' and could therefore play no progressive role. Therefore, the theoreticians of the party concluded that the workers parties must form an alliance, which would include some representatives of the 'national manufacturing' bourgeoisie. This came to be known as the 'Frente de Liberación Nacional'. This new strategy of the PCCh formally recognised that the workers parties must form the leadership of this alliance, but it still accepted the progressive role of sectors of the bourgeoisie that could develop society. The policy was argued along the following lines "... the idea that the bourgeoisie is an ally of imperialism and the oligarchy is wrong. In certain situations the bourgeoisie is inclined towards them, but this situation is transitional and not permanent, and we could modify it if we polarize the contradictions."

This "analysis" has shown itself to

be totally incorrect. And even the PCCh had to face up to the fact that the national bourgeoisie was totally at one with imperialism with regard to the need to exploit and attack the working class.

The PCCh and the SP went on to form the FRAP coalition as an electoral alliance in the 1958 presidential elections. Salvador Allende polled an incredible 28.9 per cent of the vote, only 2.9 per cent behind the Conservatives who won the elections. This showed the possibility of a victory for a workers' party coalition, without the inclusion of bosses parties.

During the sixties, the PCCh adopted the idea of the 'Peaceful Road to Socialism'. This was based upon the belief that the forces of the state were neutral, simply there to protect the homeland and the constitution. This meant in effect that socialism could be introduced peacefully, through parliament, without using arms as a defensive or offensive measure against the army, police or other forces. This theory was based upon the relatively stable political history of Chile compared to other Latin American countries. However, Chilean history had not been free of army intervention, and the belief that the army would never intervene in politics was to prove fatal in the 1973 coup d'état where the government and the workers were left defenceless.

Lessons of 1970-73

In the 1964 elections the FRAP polled 38.5% of the vote. Only a coalition of the major bourgeois parties managed to keep the workers parties out of government. The conclusion of the PCCh was "... the country refused us victory because we were the sole leaders. We have to build a popular movement aimed at a government with a broader social and political basis," ie alliances have to be made with non-working class parties.

By 1970, the Chilean capitalist class was totally demoralized and split in the face of a working class offensive. The Christian Democrats were totally discredited. The PCCh looked around desperately for pacts and alliances with the centre. Because of the general left shift within the masses, the Radical Party had also changed it's stance and found its way into the newly formed Popular Unity coalition as well as some other small bourgeois parties. The author regards the inclusion of the Radicals as a historic victory for the Popular Unity because it split the right and allowed the PU government to come to power.

Certain agreements with parties such as the Radicals or MAPU (a split-off from the Christian Democrats)

were not necessarily incorrect. But the key consideration should have been that the workers' parties within the Popular Unity maintain and act on the programme of the socialist transformation of society.

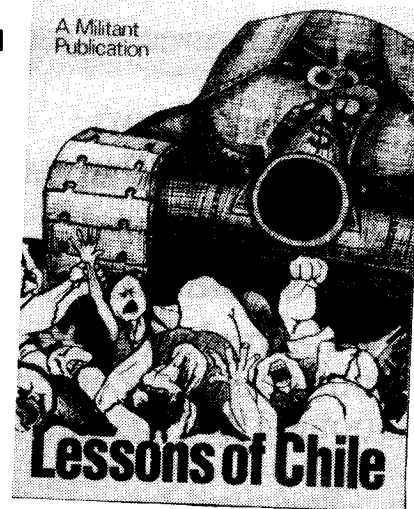
The Bolsheviks in Russia were at times prepared to make blocs with the Mensheviks or Social Revolutionaries on practical matters and even, on certain occasions, to organise common electoral lists. But at no time did they form any programmatic bloc or subordinate themselves politically or organisationally to the Mensheviks or to the Russian equivalents of the Chilean Radicals. However as was to be seen, the inclusion of the Radicals was used countless times by both the PCCh and Socialist leaders as an excuse to limit the reforms of the Popular Unity government.

In the 1970 Presidential elections, the PU coalition, seen as the workers alternative, won the elections. Furci raises two major issues which were to be crucial to the government, relations with the Christian Democrats and the question of the army.

The author, and the PCCh, saw the main task of the PU to ensure good relations with the Christian Democrats to stop it moving to the right. Furci draws parallels with the "ideal" situation in Italy where the PCI and the Christian Democrats enjoy a healthy co-habitation as 'constructive critics' of each other. Therefore from the first day of the PU Allende, supported by the PCCh, attempted to make alliances with the Christian Democrats in parliament to ensure their support.

The problem however that the PCCh faced was that as the economic situation worsened society began to polarize with the workers demanding attacks upon capitalist property and with the bosses, including the Christian Democrats, eventually adopting a pro-coup position keeping in line with their true class interests. The determination of the PCCh to keep the support of the Christian Democrats proved fruitless and the Popular Unity government was eventually drowned in blood without a murmur of protest from the so-called 'progressive bourgeoisie'.

Because of the insistence of the PCCh on the 'Peaceful Road to Socialism' no defensive plans for the government were drawn up and no attempt was made to alter the composition of the armed forces. As Furci himself states "Popular Unity was a Constitutional government duly elected to govern, and it was assumed that the armed forces would not only not defy the government, but would also be 'neutral' in any political and social conflict." The only attempt made to win the army to the side of the



Lessons of Chile by Jorge Martinez. 70p including postage from: World Socialist Books, 3 - 13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB.

government was to offer the generals places within the cabinet and through higher pay awards to officers, who were on the whole hostile to the government. No appeal was made to the rank and file soldiers who were far more sympathetic to the Popular Unity.

When the coup took place on 11 September 1973, all the illusions and blunders of the PCCh were paid for in the blood of 50,000 workers including many Communist workers and rank and file leaders.

Some of the conclusions that Furci reaches when analysing the Popular Unity period are incredible. The author makes statements such as "the Chilean experiment showed the importance of the PDC (Christian Democrats) as a political force that could form part of a progressive government". The author also blames the fact that there was no agreement within the Popular Unity about policy, ie that there was not agreement on the PCCh policy of alliances and retreat on reforms.

Today the PCCh, as well as Furci have reached totally wrong conclusions about the period between 1970 and 1973. Although the PCCh has now accepted the use of arms to defend the movement, it has not learnt one lesson about the character of the state and the armed forces being instruments of the ruling class, or of the role of the national bourgeoisie represented by their parties. Incredibly the PCCh is repeating the same basic slogans of alliances with the Christian Democrats. Unfortunately the Chilean workers will have to re-learn through their experiences the role of the Christian Democrats and of reformism. This time however they will have the recent experience of the period of 1970 to 1973 to draw upon, which will eventually bury Stalinism and the traitorous policies of class alliances.

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