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Bosnia's Killing Fields

Italy's crisis ●

Nature or Nurture? ●

Israel/Palestine ●

Militant International Review 51 May/June 1993 £1

Militant International Review

MIR

Issue 51, May/June 1993

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Bosnia's Killing Fields

Should the labour movement back military intervention? Or sanctions against Serbia? Peter Taaffe examines the Bosnian nightmare.

THE BOSNIAN CRISIS is now at a turning point. The harrowing accounts of mutilated children in Srebrenica, the photographs of injured soldiers like scenes from the first world war, combined with the daily outpourings of TV, have meant that the clamour for action, that 'something must be done', has reached fever pitch.

Public opinion in Europe and the USA in particular is inflamed at the two years of vicious ethnic civil war. In this period 150,000 people have perished, thousands more have been maimed in body and mind.

The break up along national/ethnic lines of the old Yugoslavia has resulted in the greatest population displacement, of two to three million people, seen in Europe since 1945. On top of this has been vicious 'ethnic cleansing'. This is not restricted to the Serbs alone but also involves the Croats. And now the clashes between Muslims and Croats around the town of Vitez shows that all sides are capable of atrocities. An estimated 30,000 to 70,000 women have also been raped.

If nothing else Yugoslavia has demonstrated that Nazi-like actions do not arise from racial or national characteristics but that in the pores of all societies riven with class contradictions there are potentially fascist-like elements who are as every bit as bestial as their Nazi forebears. Strip away the veneer of capitalist civilisation, unleash the dogs of nationalism and ethnic conflict, and, as Bosnia demonstrates, free rein is given to the most degenerate elements in society.

Only a unified movement of workers, cutting across ethnic and national lines, could have prevented the horrors which have unfolded in Bosnia. The elements of such a movement did indeed exist in the first period of the Bosnian conflict. Muslim, Serbian and Croat workers instinctively came together. But this could only have been cemented with a powerful labour movement and a Marxist leadership.

An armed workers' defence force, with mixed membership of all the nationalities, would have been able to have protected all vulnerable ethnic communities, particularly in the rural areas. The

absence of such a force has allowed the murder gangs, such as the notorious Serb militia 'commander' Arkan and his Croat counterparts, to re-inforce murderous divisions within the Bosnian population.

It was against this background of the seeming complacency of all the main capitalist governments, including Major's, that Thatcher dropped her bomb-shell in an emotional statement to BBC television. She demanded the lifting of the arms embargo to allow the Muslims to arm themselves and implied support for air strikes against the Serbs. Noticeably, however, she ruled out the deployment of ground troops.

A chorus of Tory backbenchers, sections of the capitalist press, and even several Labour MPs, came to her support. Prominent among the Labour supporters of Thatcher were, incredibly, those claiming to stand on the left, such as Tony Banks and Clare Short. *Tribune*, organ of Labour's 'soft left', had been demanding similar action as that proposed by Thatcher for months previously.

There is no doubt that Thatcher did catch the popular mood.

There is, however, no doubt that Thatcher did catch the popular mood. The majority of the population would have had to have been blocks of stone to have sat in front of television screens for weeks and months and not react to the horror they witnessed.

In the first poll for *The Daily Telegraph*, 61% supported Thatcher's statement. Yet as Denis Healey, Labour's former shadow foreign secretary pointed out, it is sheer hypocrisy for Thatcher to now demand action against the Serbs: "She is as responsible as anyone for the mess there. She, right at the beginning of the troubles in Yugoslavia, pressed us to support Serbia against Croatia, which is what the Germans wanted us to do.

Lord Carrington's advice was that it would lead to the splitting of the country and a disaster. So she carries a large part of the guilt." (*The Independent*).

These Labour lefts who have rushed into the arms of Thatcher on this issue forget that foreign policy is merely a continuation of home policy. No conscious worker would support the bosses at home. Why then offer support for the bosses representatives abroad? The Bosnian Muslims are so much small change for the various imperialist powers, including Britain. Their policies are calculated purely on the basis of what advantage will accrue to themselves, at the expense of their rivals.

YUGOSLAVIA HAS BEEN a cockpit of the various capitalist powers who have jostled to establish their own influence, prestige and future markets. German imperialism has attempted to establish a dominating presence and in the process has clashed with its erstwhile European allies, Britain and France. Emerging Russian capitalism, represented by Yeltsin, sees the Balkans as one of its spheres of influence and has backed its 'brother Slavs', the Serbs.

The impression given is that the Bosnian people have always been at each other's throats and always will be. Germany, Britain, France and the USA, if not yet Russia, are pictured as a 'civilising influence' heroically struggling to contain inflamed national and ethnic tensions.

It is true, as Trotsky pointed out in the 1930s, that the Balkans, prior to the first world war and subsequently, were a byword for one nationality being at the throat of another. This is one of the reasons why the pre-first world war Social Democracy put forward the idea of a federation of the Balkans. Trotsky pointed out in the inter-war period that such a concept retained its validity although it could not be realised except on a socialist basis. Balkan Stalinism, which reflected the national interests of each separate bureaucracy, was incapable of cementing such a union of the peoples of the Balkan states.

Yet Yugoslavia under Tito, while not overcoming national and ethnic divisions, contained them for a period. This was possible because the planned economy opened up a greater scope for the development of the productive forces and thereby of the living standards of the mass of the people. To some extent, national and ethnic divisions softened.

On the other hand, the ruthless repression by Tito's Stalinist regime of the slightest national 'deviation', was bound to stoke up national resentment. A planned economy, combined with workers' democracy, could have created the conditions for an integrated plan for the benefit of all the peoples and the full satisfaction of the national rights of the different nationalities.

A balance between the needs of an integrated plan across national or ethnic boundaries, and



Muslim refugees in Bosnia.

the rights of the different nationalities, could only be established on the basis of open, free, democratic discussion and debate. Control and management of industry and society would be vested in the workers and their organs of power, democratically elected committees. On this basis a real commingling of the population of Yugoslavia would have ensued. A similar process would have unfolded in the other Balkan states, leading to the establishment of a democratic socialist Balkan federation.

Under Tito's Stalinism the trappings of a 'federation' existed, with careful checks and balances, on paper. However this concealed the fact that the Serb bureaucracy dominated the 'federation'. Tito, himself a Croat, was the glue which kept it together. His regime, in the first period, played a relatively progressive role in developing production, industry, and to some extent the living standards of the masses, despite a one-party totalitarian rule.

However, this process had reached its limits even before his death. Society and industry began to stagnate, which would only have been avoided through the establishment of workers' democracy. All the national tensions which now have exploded began to come to the surface.

Under collapsing Stalinism, rival national bureaucracies began to develop. Leaning on the discontent of the masses at economic stagnation and a drop in living standards, they articulated the resentment against the dominant Serb bureaucracy. Opposition came alike from the most backward regions such as Kosovo, with an average income of one-sixth of that of Serbia, as well as the more economically developed republics such as Slovenia and Croatia.

The national bureaucracies deliberately fanned the flames of national and ethnic divisions in order to secure their positions. Not the least in their calculations was that this could cut across the huge workers opposition that was developing on social issues, mass unemployment, rising inflation etc.

Contained in this movement at the outset, as with the movements in East Germany and the Soviet Union in 1989, were the elements of a political revolution against the bureaucracy. However, the absence of the 'subjective factor', a conscious Marxist organisation capable of providing the necessary leadership to such a movement, left this movement directionless. As a consequence the bureaucracy, in common with its counterparts in the rest of the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, moved in the direction of the capitalist market. Behind the national conflict which then followed is the attempt of an emerging capitalist class in the various states which once made up Yugoslavia to establish for itself a favourable place in the sun.

They are as impervious as the imperialist powers to the suffering and the fate of their own peoples. Only the working class in the first instance, particularly in the urban areas like Sarajevo, attempted to cut across ethnic and national divisions. The reactionary nationalist gangs, some with semi-fascist and outright fascist features, who have undoubtedly resorted to atrocities to reinforce ethnic divisions, would have been rendered completely impotent by a united workers' movement on an all-Bosnian scale. Such a movement however, would have posed as much a danger to the emerging rival national capitalists as to the imperialist powers themselves.

The imperialist powers and the former Stalinists are responsible for the present bloodbath in Bosnia.

Imperialism egged on one side against another, often switching sides. At one moment various powers like the US supported the Serbs, then condemned them as 'war-criminals'. They and the former Stalinists are responsible for the present bloodbath in Bosnia. The overcoming of national divisions was not possible on the basis of Stalinism. The situation is however even more intractable on the basis of capitalism.

THE SATISFACTION OF the legitimate national rights of the different peoples of Bosnia is the last concern of Milosevic, the Serbian



Owen and Vance, UN negotiators.

leader, Tudjman, the Croatian leader, or even Izetbegovic, the leader of the largest ethnic group in Bosnia, the Muslims. In anticipation of a looming conflict in Bosnia, the representatives of Tudjman and Milosevic, met and drew up a secret agreement to carve up Bosnia between themselves.

They had only recently been at each others' throats in the Serb-Croat war. Yet they could calmly sit down to determine which parts of Bosnia were to be incorporated into a 'Greater Serbia', and which parts into a 'Greater Croatia'. The Muslims were to be left with a minority of territory, largely land-locked, and with the most uneconomic bits. This agreement between Milosevic and Tudjman is the rock upon which has been dashed all the schemas to solve the Bosnian problem. The latest is the Vance-Owen plan. Their proposals suggest a new decentralised Bosnian state, with ten areas or 'cantons', a patchwork quilt in which one nationality or another would predominate in designated areas with a minority in 'mixed' areas.

United Nations troops, estimated at between 50,000 and 75,000, would be needed to police 'corridors' from Serbian-held territory to Serbia itself, with the same in relation to Croatian areas. This new decentralised Bosnian state, it is envisaged by Owen and Vance, would allow autonomy to the different 'cantons', but forbid them to conduct foreign policy or make alliances abroad. This was perceived by Owen and Vance as a means of preventing the Serbian areas in Bosnia linking up later on with Serbia itself in a Greater Serbia, and likewise for the Croatian areas.

By the same token, Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic, whilst making suitable approving noises, in practice rejected the plan. The same applied to Croatia although they were more satisfied with the Vance-Owen proposals as they have established a mini-state in any case, Herzeg-Bosnia, in western Bosnia. The recent military action of the Serbs in Srebrenica is designed to take control of territory in defiance of the Vance-Owen plan, which will allow a linking up with Serbia in a *de facto* Greater Serbia.

Sanctions, the dropping of food to besieged Muslim

areas, and now the threat of air strikes, have found the Serbs unmoved. They intend to continue military activity in Bosnia until they have achieved their strategic aims.

On the other hand imperialism is now terrified that if the Serbs achieve their aims, they will then be encouraged to pursue similar methods in Kosovo, Macedonia, and in Vojvodina. This in turn could be the trigger for a new Balkan war. All the horrors witnessed in Bosnia would be repeated, the only difference being that it would be on a much larger scale. In desperation to be seen to be 'doing something', the US, Britain and the other powers could take some kind of military action. This could already have taken place as we go to print.

But the opponents of Thatcher, and others who are demanding action such as air strikes, are far more realistic in describing the difficulties facing the capitalist powers in launching effective military action against the Serbs.

SUCH MEASURES FAILED to dislodge Iraq from Kuwait. In the more mountainous terrain of Bosnia they would be completely ineffective. Huge 'collateral' damage - in plain words, massive civilian deaths, this time of Serbs - would inevitably result from an air bombardment. In the war against Iraq all the paraphernalia of 'smart bombs', laser guided missiles which could allegedly be

for 'humanitarian' purposes (the real purpose of the intervention was the fear of Somalia falling into the grip of Islamic fundamentalism and its effect on the Gulf states) was for a limited duration.

While there is big public support in the US for some kind of action to be taken against Serbia, this would turn into its opposite once the body bags began to come home following large-scale military intervention. The same applies to the European powers. For historical reasons neither German nor Italian capitalism would be able to send big forces. The memory remains of German and Italian troops being deployed against Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia during world war two. Britain and France however, already stretched financially and militarily, would find it impossible to sustain the main brunt of any military intervention.

What is more, if over 20 German and Italian divisions were incapable of defeating Tito's guerillas, that task would be no easier for European or US troops today. Conor Cruise O'Brien, writing in *The Guardian*, warned in February "if the security council approves Vance-Owen Mark II, I have no doubt that we are headed towards a new Vietnam, this time with British participation".

At the same time a head-on collision with Russia would more than likely follow a military intervention. The UN security council resolution to step up sanctions against Serbia for the attacks on Srebrenica in April found the Russian delegate abstaining. The Serbian leadership has openly appealed to their Slav 'brothers' in Russia. The growing nationalist opposition within Russia towards Yeltsin (if he manages to retain control after the 25 April referendum) has compelled Yeltsin to tread a very uneasy path between supporting in words the Milosevic regime and at the same time attempting to keep 'on side' with the imperialist powers, for their financial and other support.

Even massive air bombardment would not inflict serious military damage on the Serbian forces in Bosnia. Under Tito massive underground bunkers were built, capable of holding 600 tanks. Nor will any decision in London or Washington to supply the Muslims with increased arms solve the problem. On the contrary it will inflame, aggravate and widen the conflict, with Russia compelled to supply the Serbs with the most up-to-date weapons. Stepped up sanctions will do nothing to crack the resolve of the Serbian regime to secure its strategic ends in Bosnia. Sanctions did not work in Rhodesia or against Iraq and nor will they succeed in bringing Serbia to its knees. Owen was brutally realistic on this when he stated on British TV that by themselves sanctions were 'ineffective'.

In all this the complete paralysis of the UN is clearly evident. It can act as an agency of humanitarian aid and can sometimes act as a buffer between two forces who agree to this role being ascribed to it. But it cannot overcome



Victims in Sarajevo.

guided down air vents, did not prevent 200,000 Iraqis, many of them civilians, perishing under the ferocious allied air bombardment.

For air strikes to be effective ground troops on a massive scale would have to be deployed. But Thatcher, and not the least Colin Powell, the US chief of staff, oppose the use of ground troops. The psyche of the American people is still weighed down by Vietnam. Limited police operations along the lines of Panama or Grenada could be tolerated. Even the temporary incursion into Somalia allegedly

fundamental differences between two mutually antagonistic powers. The experience of the UN in Cyprus, the Lebanon and now the Bosnian tragedy, demonstrates this clearly.

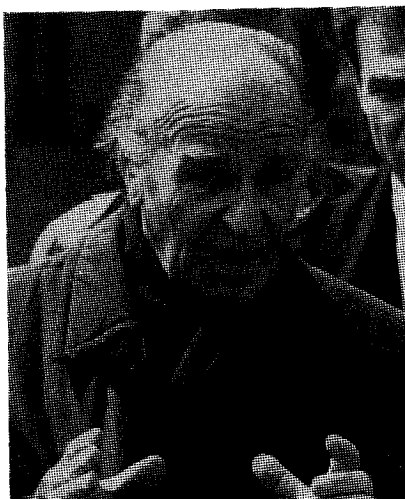
IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY in the interests of imperialism to seek to contain the Bosnian conflict. But it is not certain that they will be able to succeed in this. Despite the crocodile tears presently wept over the fate of the Bosnian Muslims, the conclusion that imperialism appears to have drawn is to allow the three-sided division of Bosnia to go ahead. This is why they have acquiesced to the Serbs taking Srebrenica. Despite assurances a few months earlier by the commander of the UN forces in Bosnia, General Morrillon, in April they in effect negotiated the surrender of the town. This could be quickly followed by Serbian forces taking the southern Muslim enclaves of Gorazde and Zepa. This would effectively secure the strategic aims of the Serbs in Bosnia. Then they would be quite happy to negotiate, on the basis of established 'facts', some kind of peace deal.

*In all this the complete
paralysis of the UN is
clearly evident.*

The losers in all this will be the Muslims who could now become the Palestinians of the Balkans, a constant running sore guaranteeing ethnic and national conflict for generations to come. Yet all the nationalities which made up the former Yugoslavia, not least the Serbs themselves, have paid a terrible price for the present conflict.

The Serbian economy has lost an annual £10bn, industrial production has dropped by at least 40% and it faces hyper-inflation with prices rising at 250% per month. More than 800,000 workers have been sent on compulsory 'holidays' as state enterprises have cut production, and 65% of the workforce is either laid off or unemployed: 70% of Serbia's 9.8m inhabitants are earning less than \$370 a year. But sanctions have produced a 'siege mentality' with support temporarily consolidating behind the Milosevic regime. His victory over Panic in last year's elections, although secured with a heavy dose of electoral fraud, undoubtedly reflected this mood.

Even relatively prosperous Slovenia has faced a drop in living standards, a plummeting of industrial output by 10% in 1991, and unemployment of 11.5%. GNP declined by a massive 9% in 1991. At the same time the flames of national and ethnic tensions are being whipped up by ultra-nationalists such as the Slovene National Party which captured 9.8% of the vote in last years election. They call for the expulsion of the 100,000



President Izetbegovic.

'guestworkers', that is, the refugees from the Bosnian nightmare.

It is the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, whose markets represented an outlet for Slovene goods, which has contributed to the problems of the region. Neither German, Italian nor Austrian capitalism, which have inter-

vened in Slovenia, have been able to plug the gap left by the markets which have been lost.

But it is in Montenegro and Kosovo where the heaviest price has been paid (apart from Bosnia-Herzegovina itself) and which represents potential new flashpoints in the Balkan tragedy. Kosovo is very near to an explosion. The ethnic Albanians, who account for 90% of the Kosovo population, have seen the treatment meted out to their co-religionists in Bosnia. Their province, which was granted autonomy under Tito, saw this eliminated by Milosevic in 1991. This led to the formation of a 'parallel state' and a declaration of 'independence'.

The Serb regime has attempted to eliminate all manifestations of Albanian culture. More than 85% of the Albanian Kosovars have lost their jobs and have been forced to rely on community help, family solidarity, and the fertile land which provides 70% of their food. At the same time the remittances of the 250,000 Kosovars working mainly in Germany and Switzerland has acted as a safety net.

The elections called by the Serb regime were boycotted by the majority. Consequently, 'commander' Arkan, notorious for 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia, was 'elected' to the Belgrade parliament from the region. The fact that this persecutor of the Muslims of Bosnia is now installed in the Serbian parliament is taken as a signal to the Kosovars of the treatment they can expect to face once the Bosnian conflict ended.

Already the policy of driving the Kosovars out of the province into Albania has begun. If this is stepped up and becomes a programme of mass expulsions, or a reign of terror is unleashed against the Kosovars, neighbouring Albania could be drawn into a military clash. This could develop into a prolonged war, along the lines of that between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the former Soviet Union. This would inevitably spill over into Macedonia, where 25% of the population is of ethnic Albanian origin.

Macedonia is already a cauldron waiting to

erupt. It has also experienced a 14% drop in production with unemployment rising to over 20% of the workforce. The very existence of a 'Macedonian state' has been a bone of contention with Greece. Until recently it has stubbornly refused to refer to this state as 'Macedonia', insisting that it be referred to as Skopje. It has taken its opposition to Macedonia to the extent of offering aid and succour to the Serbian regime: 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'.

If war should break out between Albania and Serbia then Greece could be drawn in. This in turn could lead to the intervention of Turkey in support of its co-religionists in Albania and Macedonia. This could then lead to clashes between Greece and Turkey.

Nor is this the end of the matter. Serbia itself could be wracked by ethnic clashes, with one third of its population made up of Albanians, Hungarians and Muslims. In Vojvodina Serbian discrimination against the 400,000 Hungarian minority could also lead to a conflict with Hungary. Thus the seeds of a future bloody conflagration engulfing the Balkans as a whole could be in preparation in Bosnia at the present time.

THIS TRAGEDY HOWEVER is only 'inevitable' given the incapacity of capitalism to solve the accumulated ethnic and national problems of the region. New Lebanons on a gigantic scale could engulf the area. But this is as nothing compared to the nationalist nightmare that could rip apart Russia and the states which made up the former USSR. The only way of avoiding this catastrophe is for the creation of powerful organisations of the working class, armed with a clear Marxist programme capable of showing a way out of this impasse.

Many workers in Britain and elsewhere, for entirely commendable reasons, see the need for action to be taken to prevent the slaughter of the Bosnian Muslims at the moment. Some even lean towards support for troops to be sent in or at least sanctions to be deployed against the Serbs. However we have demonstrated above that it is not just the Serbs but the Croat and Muslim incipient capitalist elements, together with imperialism, who bear the responsibility for this situation.

The analogy which has been drawn by some of Labour's left with Spain in 1936 is entirely erroneous. That was a civil war involving the overwhelming majority of the working class who attempted to make a revolution on the one side, pitted against the Franco fascists and their Italian and German cohorts. There, the call for workers' sanctions - boycott of goods, for dockers to refuse to load arms etc - against Franco's fascist forces was entirely legitimate. This was an expression of international working class solidarity.

Equally the demand for material aid including arms for the workers of Spain was entirely justified. So also in the case of fascist Italy's intervention

against Abyssinia in the 1930s, the call for a workers' boycott of Italian goods was justified. The call for sanctions against Serbia in this instance, however, would be entirely inappropriate for the labour movement in Britain or elsewhere. Serbian workers would see this as British workers supporting British bosses to attack Serbia. It would only cement the support of the besieged population of Belgrade and elsewhere in Serbia behind the Milosevic regime.

The call for sanctions against Serbia in this instance, would be entirely inappropriate for the labour movement.

The leadership of the labour movement in Britain, as with their counterparts internationally, completely failed at the beginning of this tragedy to put forward a socialist and class solution. A call for the formation of a party of the working class across national and ethnic lines, backed up with material support to organise trade unions, would have found an echo. Now the workers of the region will pay a terrible price for the absence of socialist and Marxist ideas and solutions.

Nevertheless an inevitable recoil will take place at a certain stage in opposition to the national and ethnic madness which has gripped the area. Paradoxically it is recent events in the Lebanon which could be a hopeful pointer to the future of the workers of the Balkan region.

Lebanon, and particularly Beirut, have in the past been a byword for murderous religious and national conflict. Last year however, in the teeth of a devastating economic crisis, Muslim and Christian militiamen threw down their arms, came together and participated in a massive general strike. If a conscious Marxist leadership with mass influence had existed this could have provided a lasting solution for the area. It could have become the starting point for completely transforming not just the situation in the Lebanon, but created a mood for class unity and independent class action throughout the Middle East.

One thing is certain. Capitalism can offer no future other than economic crisis, mass unemployment, huge social deprivation, and murderous religious, ethnic and nationalist conflict to the peoples of Bosnia, the other states of the former Yugoslavia and the Balkan region as a whole. Salvation for them lies along the road of independent class action culminating in a socialist Balkan federation, with full guaranteed cultural and other rights for all minorities, as a step towards a socialist united states of Europe. □

International Notes

By David Kaplan



Butros Butros Ghali, Secretary General UN.

THE DEVASTATION WROUGHT by civil war in Bosnia and Somalia has highlighted the limited 'peacekeeping' capabilities of the United Nations.

The benefits promised by the ending of the cold war and the new era of 'free market co-operation' have not materialised. While the number of civil wars around the world has not changed over the last ten years, there has been a virtual explosion of UN peacekeeping operations.

Two years ago, the UN had 15,000 peacekeepers around the world; today it has nearly 55,000 deployed in 14 different operations. In the two-year budget period 1990-91, the cost of UN peacekeeping operations was \$819 million; last year the cost of peacekeeping rose to \$1.5 billion and this year's budget is expected to reach \$2.5 billion. Peacekeeping is now by far the organisation's biggest activity, costing 50 per cent more than the UN's non-peacekeeping budget.

The cost of operating under the cover of 'international legitimacy' is a price which imperialist governments have been prepared to pay. While the 1990-91 Gulf war, for example, was sanctioned

by the United Nations, the military action remained under US command and control.

But the UN provided the US ruling class with an invaluable political shield. Without it, Bush would have faced far more opposition from the US Congress and capitalist governments abroad. When the Labour leaders in Britain voted for war, for example, they claimed that they were not supporting the Tory government, but voting for the United Nations' intervention.

Consequently, the US, which had previously withheld its UN contributions as a token of its reservations about many UN resolutions and pronouncements, promptly paid off its \$600 million arrears. This was a very small overhead to pay to minimise domestic and international opposition to an operation the overall costs of which ran upwards of \$70 billion.

But the unity of the UN Security Council during the Gulf crisis was unprecedented. It had been made possible by the willingness of the Gorbachev leadership in the former Soviet Union to reach an accommodation with the interests of US imperialism

in its war for oil. By its very nature, the UN is prone to deliberation: the contending national interests of its members will block collective action, robbing it of a coherent strategy when approaching intervention.

The situation facing the UN peace force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) is just one indication of the inadequacy of 'international co-operation' under the auspices of the United Nations. After Turkey's invasion and annexation of the northern province in 1974, 225,000 people, predominantly ethnic Greeks, were removed from their homes. UNFICYP forces were sent but were financed through voluntary contributions, some of which were never paid: the current arrears total £135 million and any attempt to place the Cyprus operation under general financing of the UN has been blocked by Russia, France and China. With no lasting solution and restricted domestic budgets, every contributing government is withdrawing its presence. The number of troops committed to Cyprus has dwindled from 6,000 to just 1,000. Denmark pulled out in 1992; Canada is leaving this September.

In the case of former Yugoslavia, the International Institute for Strategic Studies envisages the commitment of 500,000 'peacekeeping' troops for ten years, again, with no guarantee of a lasting solution.

Nonetheless, despite the problems of raising finance and unifying a dis-United Nations, imperialist governments will seek to include in its remit intervention in domestic conflicts for the sake of 'international security'. The 'new interventionists', as they have been dubbed, will continue to use the United Nations as a legal cover to safeguard their national interests. □

Italy's corruption crisis

Things will never be the same again in Italian politics, argues Soraya Lawrence.

THE ITALIAN CORRUPTION scandal has devastated the political order that dominated the country for fifty years. Bribery cases involving £70bn, the equivalent of nearly two-thirds of the budget deficit, are under scrutiny from investigating judges. Every one of the established political parties has been tainted - three party secretaries have been forced to resign - over 100 MPs are under investigation. More recently, formal inquiries have been opened into the judiciary itself. And now the apparently untouchable Giulio Andreotti, seven times prime minister, life senator, the central pillar of Italian bourgeois politics for half a century, stalwart of the Christian Democracy (DC), faces investigation for conniving with the Mafia.

The collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe has had drastic consequences for Italian politics. From the end of World War Two and the fall of fascism, the Italian ruling class organised their political system to keep the Italian Communist Party (PCI) out of power, with the DC as their bulwark. The bourgeois were terrified by the revolutionary movements of the workers in Italy and particularly by the PCI, which had 2.2 million members at its height and was the biggest Communist Party in the West.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the revolutionary struggles of the Italian working class struck fear into the hearts of Italian big business - indeed they were only saved by the betrayal of the labour movement leadership. Nevertheless, as a result of their struggles, the Italian workers gained amongst the highest wages and lowest working hours in Eu-



Andreotti, charged with Mafia links.

rope, together with the victory of the 'scala mobile' sliding scale, which automatically raised wages to compensate for inflation.

Unfortunately for Italian capitalism it did not have a strong, coherent organisation through which to rule. The DC was not a homogeneous group but an amalgam of factions drawn together to ward off 'communism'. It developed a 'clientelare' apparatus which sustained its power on the basis of kickbacks and

bribes. The bourgeois cultivated the Mafia, and manipulated its links with the party to undermine further the labour movement.

The lack of confidence of the ruling class to control the Italian workers through parliamentary democracy is reflected in the preparations for coups, revealed with the discovery of 'Gladio' and the 'P2' masonic lodge plot. Gladio was a covert operation set up in Europe by Nato with the encouragement of the CIA

after the war. Secret armies were trained in preparation against 'communist take-over'. Many of the operation's members were fascists, some ex-SS, and they helped organise terrorist attacks by extreme-right groups. In Italy the CIA, the DC and the intelligence services plotted to instal a military dictatorship if the PCI came into the government.

The P2 masonic lodge was a further arm in this struggle, linking politicians, big business, right-wing terrorists and financed by the CIA to 'control communist influence'. Investigation into Gladio revealed the extent of the fear of the bourgeois of the PCI entering the government. When DC MP Aldo Moro was discussing inviting the PCI into coalition, his kidnapping and murder were arranged. At the time blame was laid at the door of the Red Brigade left-wing terrorists.

Recently alarms have been raised concerning the danger of an authoritarian takeover or coup. Former president Francesco Cossiga sparked off conjecture with a hypothetical scenario of the carabinieri being forced to 'drown revolt in blood'. This was the very man who drew up the plans for Gladio when he was defence minister. Whilst such action would be premature from the standpoint of the ruling class and is being raised more for scaremongering, it could not be ruled out in future. At the moment the former PCI, the PDS, is encouraging the rumours to justify its support for and possible entry into a bourgeois coalition.

WHY IS THE ruling class now using a section of the magistrates (who in the past were told to look the other way) to rid itself of an entire layer of politicians who have served it for so many years?

Throughout the years of economic boom the bourgeois could afford to maintain the bribes and kickback system upon which DC politics depended. The collapse of Stalinism, as explained above, together with the onset of the international economic crisis, meant a change in priorities.

Faced with a massive national debt (106% of GDP), falling profits and an increased struggle for competitiveness (Fiat, the powerhouse of Italian industry, once challenging VW for leadership of the West European car market, is now in fourth place with its uncontested dominance of the domestic market shrunk from 60% to 44%), the capitalists were obliged to deal with this enormous drain on the economy.

Furthermore, they had to be seen to be attacking corruption when they were demanding enormous financial sacrifices from workers, with lay-offs, redundancies, the end of the scala mobile and other attacks. At the same time they are less afraid of the PDS which has already undergone a split. In 1991 150,000 members left to form Communist Refoundation (RC). Electorally too the party's support has diminished. In recent elections it has only achieved 15% of the vote, compared to the 37% the PCI won at its peak.

Undoubtedly, the revelations of corruption have gone much further than the bourgeois desired, as individuals scrambling to save themselves drag more and more figures into the mire. Now confidence in the political system is at an all-time low. Significantly the politicians themselves share this lack of confidence: 20% of MPs will not even stand again.

HOW WILL THE ruling class try and restore confidence in the government? Great emphasis was laid by politicians on the 18 April referendum to end state funding of parties and proportional representation, which would end the system of revolving coalitions set up to ensure the exclusion of the Communists. With this system no party was able to gain an absolute majority. Although the vote here applies to the Senate, this would eventually lead to changes in the Commons.

At the same time, with the established parties tainted, the bourgeois urgently need the creation of a new political organisation. The recent resignation

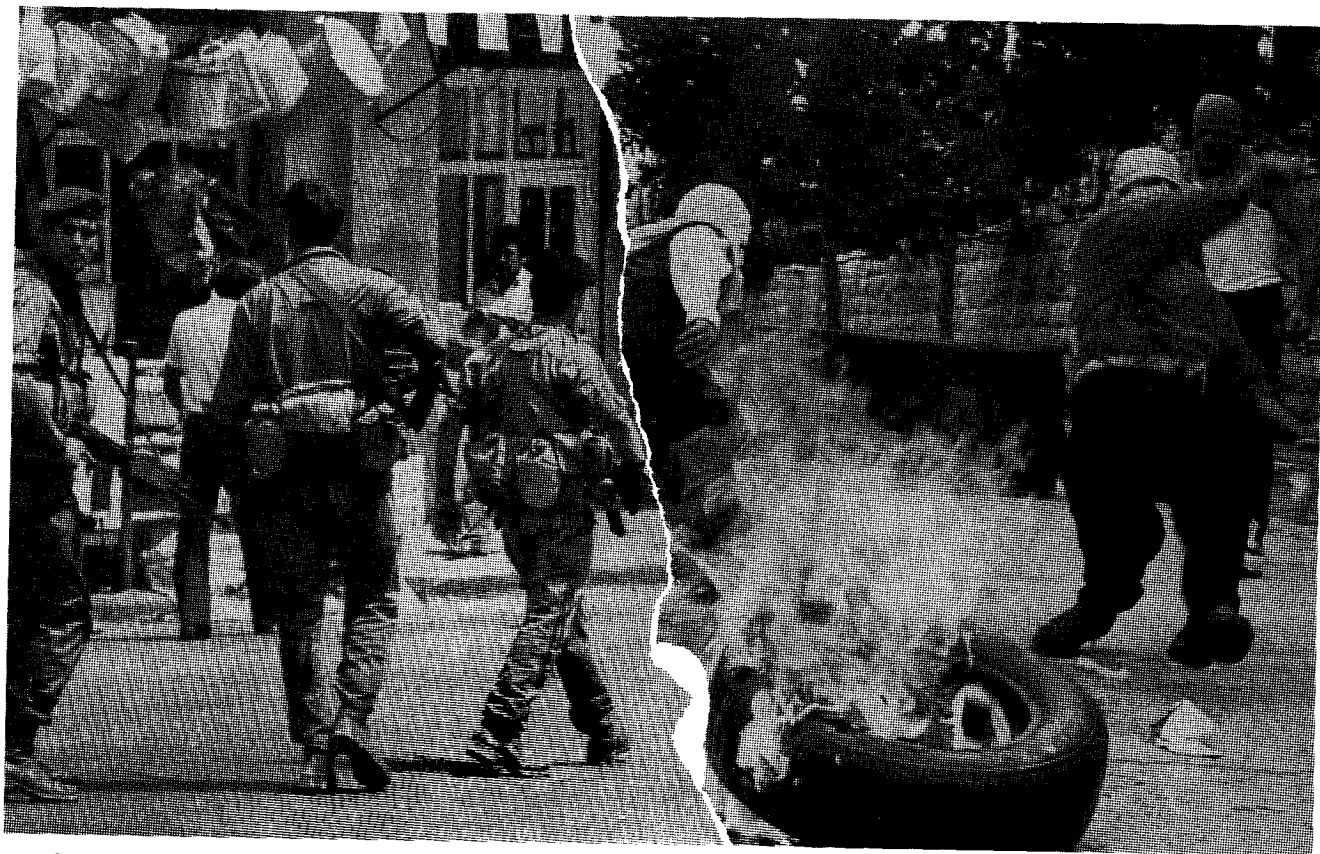
from the DC of Mario Segni, an MP leading the movement for electoral reform, following months of distancing himself from the political scandal, could be a move in this direction. The basis of this new formation would probably originate from a wing of the DC but could later draw from other parties, particularly with the long-term implications of a YES win in the referendum for the smaller parties, which would lose out in a 'first past the post' system.

A revolutionary situation could have developed had there been a mass Marxist organisation in Italy.

The entry of the PDS into some sort of coalition is another card to play. But this too could have undesirable long-term effects for the capitalist class. The role of the PDS in government, supporting a savage austerity programme, would not only lose it votes but could provoke a further split in the party to the advantage of the RC.

A revolutionary situation could have developed from the corruption scandals had there been a mass Marxist organisation in Italy: to hammer home that corruption is an organic feature of the capitalist system, to co-ordinate and organise action, including a general strike against corruption, to bring down the government and demand a workers' administration. Nevertheless, things will never be the same again in Italian politics. The ruling class is correct to fear the mighty Italian proletariat - the demonstrations of hundreds and thousands against the corruption scandals are just a glimpse of days to come. □

'Peace strategy' disrupted



Recent visitor Vincent Caprani looks at the latest developments in Israel/Palestine.

WHEN ISRAEL'S PRIME minister and Labour Party leader, Yitzhak Rabin, came to power in last June's Israeli elections, his coalition government declared an aim of Palestinian autonomy 'within nine months'. This gestation period expired in March, a particularly violent month dubbed 'Black March' by Israeli Jews. Instead of the birth of 'peace and security' as promised by Rabin, there has been a bloody breach, the violent rage of the Intifada and vicious Israeli repression.

During March, Rabin cut short a visit to the US due to a sharp escalation of violence. Thirteen Jews were killed and many more injured in a wave of surprise attacks, usually carried out by

Who are Hamas?

PROBABLY ABOUT 50% to 60% of Gazans now support either Hamas or other Islamic fundamentalist groups, in that they would vote for them in local elections etc, although many of them are not religious. Much of the Hamas support is based on its implacable opposition to the talks, its resolve to destroy Israel, its acts of individual terrorism, and that, at this stage at least, it is not corrupt.

Hamas is an acronym for the Arabic 'Islamic resistance movement', and the word itself means courage or zeal. It emerged from the Islamic Brotherhood in early 1988, during the first few months of the Intifada.

At that stage the Israelis encouraged it as a counterweight to the PLO, a strategy that has dramatically backfired. Iran gives it \$30 million a year and it receives large

sums of money from around the world.

Over the first two years of its existence, its founder, Yassin, conducted a struggle against the method of individual terror. But an influx of Intifada-hardened youth into the Hamas ranks compelled Yassin and his elderly supporters to acquiesce.

Two years ago I was brought to a splendid house in Gaza city. It belonged to a PLO chief. About one mile from its gate was Jabalya refugee camp - squalor and stench, its 80,000 inhabitants packed into two square kilometres - a hotbed of the Intifada.

In contrast, Yassin is a disabled old man who has lived a life of poverty and squalor. In the years before he was imprisoned, he rarely left his shack in the impoverished Zaitoun quarter of Gaza city. His organisation uses its cash

not only to buy arms, but primarily to build Mosques, schools, give out welfare to the most impoverished Palestinians, and give financial aid to the families of political prisoners, often of prisoners who are opposed to Islamic fundamentalism. Mosques, by the way, are not simply places of prayer. They are also social and sports centres, often they are the only facilities in a wide area.

Hamas though is bitterly anti-'left'. Its emergence saw many violent clashes with PLO supporters. The worst of these was in Rafah, southern Gaza strip, when last October 2,000 PLO and Hamas adherents battled it out. One person was killed and dozens seriously injured. The rioting started after Hamas supporters stoned a bus carrying PLO members as two women on board were not wearing veils. □

lone Palestinians. In one incident, a Palestinian stabbed six schoolgirls and their teacher.

Virtual hysteria gripped the Jewish population. National police commander, Yaacov Terner, publicly called on Jews to arm themselves, and the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, approved the expansion of the police force by 3,000 to 21,000.

On 30 March, Rabin announced the 'sealing off' of the West Bank and introduced a new phrase, 'Sovereign Israel', into the diplomatic vocabulary.

Over the first nine months of the Labour-led coalition, the Middle East peace talks, for the Jewish population, were increasingly discredited; whilst a veritable dichotomy developed among the Palestinians, supporters and opponents of the talks. This question became particularly sharp in the Gaza strip. Hostility to the peace talks by Palestinians became deeper and more widespread as the Palestinian delegation to the talks showed their willingness to make more and greater concessions to the Israelis.

One of the delegates, Faisal Husseini, in an interview with the *Jerusalem Report*, (30 July 1992), said that he was prepared to stop the stone throwing in return for confidence-building measures by Rabin. Days later his car was stoned by youth in the West Bank. He jumped out and proclaimed, 'I am a representative of the Pales-

tinians'. One of the youth held up a stone and said, 'this is a representative of the Palestinians in the West Bank'.

Last year another delegate, Hanan Ashrawi, implored Palestinians in the US to vote for Bush during the presidential elections. Earlier, when the talks were in Washington, the Palestinian delegates bragged that they had written their speeches in conjunction with the US state department.

*From early autumn there
was an intensification of
the Intifada.*

When the Israelis tried to capture the student leadership of El-Najah University in the West Bank, the students defended them and a week long siege ensued. The siege ended when the Palestinian delegation intervened and arranged for the student leaders to be deported to Jordan.

Their original position on the question of those deported to Lebanon was that they would stay outside the talks until Israel promises not to

deport *any more* Palestinians'. Under pressure from the Palestinian masses, they then said that they would not take part in the talks until all of the deportees were returned.

From early autumn there was an intensification of the Intifada. In Gaza there were daily clashes with the state with increasingly wider layers of the population involved. The fifth anniversary of the Intifada was on 9 December. It was marked by a sharp upturn of struggle. Five years of Intifada saw the deaths of 19 Israeli soldiers in the occupied territories. But in the first five days of its sixth year, five more were killed. During December and January alone, the Israelis killed 27 Palestinians and wounded 911, including 355 children under 16 years old.

THIS WAS THE backdrop to Rabin's order, on 16 December, to round up 2,000 alleged supporters of Hamas and other Islamic fundamentalist groups. Over 400 were deported, more than the total of deportations since the 1967 war. The rest were put in prison, where they remain. Lebanon refused to admit the deportees and Israel faced international outcry. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), who had publicly attacked Hamas in the weeks before the expulsion, suspended the peace talks in protest.

*Rabin thought he could
deal a blow not just to the
Islamic fundamentalists,
but to the Intifada itself.*

Rabin acted almost single-handedly in ordering the expulsions. He thought he could deal a blow not just to the Islamic fundamentalists, but to the Intifada itself. Instead, the expulsions sparked a general strike of Arabs inside Israel, the majority of the Palestinians now oppose the talks, and Hamas has been elevated to hero status.

Among the 396 deportees still in Lebanon, a split has developed between the Hamas and the Islamic Jihad who, of the deportees, number about 50. Two points of divergence have emerged so far. Hamas welcomes Egypt's support of the deportees whilst Jihad refuses its support on the grounds of Egypt's heavy repression of its own Islamic fundamentalists.

Jihad have also refused an offer to the deportees by Saudi Arabia of a pilgrimage to Mecca at the Saudi's expense. The pilgrimage, timed to coincide with this next round of the peace talks, was designed to take the deportees out of the political picture at that time so as to make it easier for the Palestinian delegation to attend.

When in February Rabin announced a major climbdown on the deportation question, with one

hundred to be allowed to return and the rest within one year, the US and the UN backed away from their threats to Israel. The Arab states, who fear the development of Hamas (in announcing Lebanon's refusal to admit the deportees, prime minister Harari referred to them as Israel's garbage), quickly indicated their willingness to continue the talks.

Only the PLO, under enormous pressure from the Palestinian masses, refused at that stage to re-enter the talks. But they also greatly fear Hamas and would no doubt ditch the deportees for the resumption of talks if at all possible. They have continued anyway with 'behind the scenes' talks.

RABIN'S CLOSURE OF the West Bank and Gaza, effectively sacking over 150,000 Palestinian workers who cross the Green Line daily to work in Israel, was initially welcomed by the majority of Israeli Jews. But very quickly, opposition grew to the policy from Israeli farmers and businesspeople who rely on the Palestinians for cheap labour.



Israeli Prime Minister Rabin.

Israel's economic difficulties are causing hardship for many Jewish workers. 150,000 are unemployed. Thousands more are threatened as a number of state owned, large employers are in financial crisis. During the past two years there have been many strikes against government privatisation plans, which have subsequently become 'rationalisation' programmes. That 20,000 Russian Jews returned home in 1992 is an indictment of Israeli capitalism. Regular strikes, some involving thousands of workers, will continue in Israel over the next period.

The Israeli army plays a central role in Jewish life. Every male must serve three years and every female two, from the age of 18. They do not get paid for this. In addition, every Jew may be



Daily harassment in the West Bank.

called up for service for up to 30 days a year until they are 55 years old. Great esteem has been attached to those who qualify for the elite regiments. But the Intifada has been central in changing the outlook of the Jewish population to the army.

The Middle East peace talks are now 18 months old.

At the start of the Israel/Lebanon war, an organisation of soldiers called Yesh Gvul (there is a limit/border) was formed. It campaigned against that war and now campaigns for soldiers to refuse to serve in the occupied territories whilst stating that they are prepared to fight for Israel if attacked by external forces. Punishment for refusal is severe - imprisonment, career ruination and ostracization at home. One hundred and fifty Yesh Gvul members were imprisoned for refusing service in the war with Lebanon and a further 171 (including 42 officers) have been gaoled for refusing to serve in the occupied territories since the Intifada began.

A few weeks ago Yesh Gvul members leafleted schools asking youth not to volunteer for undercover (death) squads. There was uproar from the right. Some members of the Knesset called for them to be tried for mutiny. Support by youth for Yesh Gvul shot up after a right-winger tore up their leaflet on national television. They had to reprint this leaflet three times to satisfy demand.

Increasingly, sections of the army are becoming demoralised, with many soldiers realising that they cannot control the territories. Most Jews think Gaza is not worth holding on to and many soldiers therefore do not see any point in risking their lives in Gaza, a risk that has increased as more and more arms are being used by the Palestinians.

Just after December's deportations, two Jewish youth produced a leaflet and gave it out on a demonstration. The leaflet was entitled *Mery* (Rebellion). It called for the setting up of an anti-Zionist youth organisation. Its main demands were for the estab-

lishment of a Palestinian state and the overthrow of Zionism, with other demands such as ending the right of return, no deportations etc.

Within three days 22 Jewish youth joined them and now they have at least 35 members with a branch in Haifa, two hours north of Tel Aviv. This is a highly significant development among Jewish youth.

THE MIDDLE EAST peace talks are now 18 months old. As the talks have wound on, the situation in Israel/Palestine has become increasingly unstable, contrary to the aims of the talks participants.

After the closure of the West Bank, the Israeli cabinet began meeting to discuss ways to 'formalise segregation'. It wants to reduce its massive costs of repressing the Palestinians, to delegate to the Palestinians aspects of government such as health care, education, refuse collection, civil policing etc, whilst maintaining control over its own security and important resources such as West Bank water supplies on which it depends.

Palestinian aspirations cannot ultimately be satisfied within these perimeters. The process of revolution that is the Intifada is not being fought so that the Palestinians can fly their flag whilst remaining in abject poverty or so that their repression can be subcontracted out.

The settlers, especially those reactionary settlers on the Gaza Strip, are a stumbling block to the (now very violent) 'peace process'. The Hamas has become a 'destablising' factor. It is very unlikely that the status of East Jerusalem will be resolved in the near future. Whatever the outcome of the talks, the situation will remain at least as unstable and volatile as it is at present. □

The Korean miracle ends

IN THE FOLLOWING article received by the MIR, Kim, a Korean activist, explains the situation of the working class in South Korea and its history of recent struggle. This includes an important account of developments within the working class, hidden beneath the surface, both prior to and following the revolutionary upsurge of 1987.

SOUTH KOREA, WHICH was one of the poorest countries in the world, has now become an industrialised nation. The Korean economy developed very quickly as the dictatorial governments that held power since the end of the 1950-53 civil war carried through, with the help of the United States, an economic policy directed at expanding exports on the basis of cheap labour. Korean cars can be seen throughout the US and Samsung is well known the world over.

From the mid-1960s the economy grew by 10%, even 15%, a year. They call it a miracle - the Korean wonder. At that time most people were very happy about the achievements because the ideology of industrialisation had been so powerful. Our government did everything for exports, to get foreign currency. Korea became a country for tourists. Everything was available for them at bargain prices.

Our workers were working without a break - no Sundays and 12, even 16 hours a day. The working week in Korea was the longest in the world. In



the 1970s, nearly half a million people died at work. All health and safety rules were ignored and compensation for loss of life or injury laughable. The management at 'Kitchen Art', for example, did away with the protective guards on the presses, reckoning that at \$80 a finger, the increased speed of working gave them more profit. But workers remained patient. The government had promised a bright future, when everyone would begin to live like workers in the West. And workers believed it. The first signal of discontent was in 1970, following the arrest of clothing worker Jon Te Il. He committed suicide, pouring petrol on himself and setting himself on fire. As he burnt, he shouted defiantly for workers' unity and for the eight hour working day. His death had a big effect on workers and especially on the students.

The workers' movement was extremely young. At that time, without any trade union organisation, workers at a shipyard rebelled and came out on strike. All strikes were spontaneous, simply bursting out from below. An organised movement did not begin until after 1980.

The committee felt that armed insurrection was the only way forward.

ON 17 MAY, 1980, general Chun Doo-hwan imposed martial law throughout the country, closing the universities and banning strikes and all political activity. The students immediately came out in opposition and began organising demonstrations of defiance, most notably in Kwangju. The army opened fire and began shooting down the students. This caused a wave of protest among the ordinary citizens and they came onto the streets in force against the coup.

The citizens, especially the workers, took up arms and established a 'citizens' army'. Its leader was a teacher, Yun Sang Won, who perished in the course of these events but whose memory lives to this day as a great hero. For ten days the citizens' army held the city in what became known as the 'Kwangju commune'. But they had only primitive arms, dynamite, grenades and a few guns. The armed forces on the side of the coup had tanks, airplanes and helicopters.

When it became obvious that we were going to be defeated, Yun Sang Won called on the youth to go home. "You must survive and be witnesses to what happened. We are the older generation. We will stand the ground and fight and we will die". Nobody knows how many victims there were. The government announced that it was 300. Some say 4,000 and the CIA 2,000, which is the most likely figure.

This event had a huge influence on the movement.

At that time our movement was very primitive but a revolutionary organisation arose calling itself the 'Committee of Democratic Struggle'. Its members, including 'radical democrats', 'socialists' and 'communists', had drawn the conclusion first of all that the Kwangju uprising was defeated because there was no revolutionary organisation.

Secondly, they believed that Korean capitalism, as distinct from in the West, was developing not from below but from above, and the Korean bourgeois was not capable of even carrying out the 'democratic' revolution; for that reason, this task fell to the proletariat. The committee felt that an association of workers and students must be established and that armed insurrection would be the only way forward.

A programme was worked out: first to establish a 'Peoples' Council for a Constitution' as an organ of power and later a provisional government and then, through general elections, to set up a democratic regime. But before calling together a Peoples' Council, strikes should be built up. Students' and workers' committees were therefore organised. Committees of students existed in all colleges and universities. But committees of workers in effect existed only in Seoul.

In 1985 a general strike began which involved 20,000 workers, the biggest strike since the civil war. Ostensibly, the reason for the strike was the suicide of a young woman worker who had been raped by her boss. He had done the same thing many times but the women workers concerned had stayed silent.

But the main reason for the strike was the situation of the working class. They were ready to strike and the girl's suicide was the match that lit the fire. Two thousand strikers were arrested, but in spite of this, the committee had great authority and strength not only in Seoul, but in all the main cities. At the end of 1985, however, a raid was made on a secret meeting of the leadership of the committee and everyone of them arrested.

Undeterred, other members established a new leadership. A committee was formed also for participation in the 'free' presidential elections promised by the army for 1988. Until then, free elections had virtually never been held in South Korea.

The committee planned for important events for 1988 - possibly revolution. That meant preparing cells in the universities and in the factories and collecting arms. They bought arms on the black market and wherever they could.

BUT IN 1986, a huge ideological battle opened up. The Chuje philosophical current appeared on the scene, coming in from the North. The North Korean regime of Kim Il Sung was interested in the movement in South Korea, and a Korean National Democratic Front (KNDF) was set up. Members of the KNDF held that the most important conflict was not that of class but nationality and it was therefore necessary to unite

all Koreans in a struggle against US imperialism.

These ideas were based on the Chuje philosophy which maintains that what plays the main role in the development of society is not class but man in general and that Marxism is an outdated idea. This is a doctrine worked out by Kim Il Sung for 21st century man. Paradoxically, not only in South Korea but also in the North, it was forbidden to read Marx and Lenin; you could only read Kim Il Sung! Unfortunately, most of the students fell for the Chuje philosophy. But the workers didn't - they couldn't accept that there was no need to fight the bourgeoisie.

In 1986, a huge ideological battle opened up.

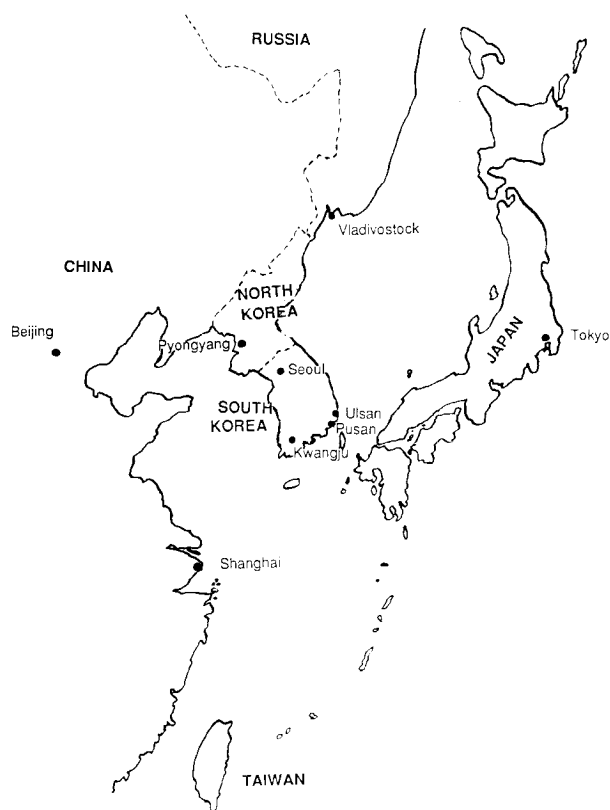
In 1987, an activist was tortured to death in jail. At first the government announced that he had died of an illness but there was an audacious doctor working in the prison at the time who supplied evidence that the man's death had been due to vicious torture.

This caused demonstrations that even the middle class supported. In June 1987 there were demonstrations in Seoul and other cities. Even the farmers in the countryside came out. I remember how they set on fire the headquarters of the political corporation and the editorial offices of the yellow press. The government could not keep the population under control. This went on for a whole month; it was real war. More than a million people would take part in mass demonstrations at any one time.

The government and the ruling class had two alternatives - the army or compromise. At the time I assumed that the government would choose the army. We made hand-grenades and brought arms. But the wily government went for compromise and announced that there would be free presidential elections.

The petty bourgeois forces, the student movement, the movement of the intellectuals, were satisfied. But our workers' movement was not satisfied with this victory. A mass general strike broke out, especially in the city of Ulsan. The strikes involved large numbers but the middle class did not support them. A temporary lull in the movement began and a split ensued. But there was a single aim - the overthrow of the government.

The middle class thought that first of all it was necessary to win presidential elections, which meant voting for the democratic candidate. But even in the bourgeois opposition there were splits. Consequently, the ruling party candidate, ex-general Roh Tae-woo, won with 36% of the votes while the opposition was unco-ordinated and lost, their two candidates, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung,



winning 28% and 27% respectively. The workers' movement could not even put up its own candidate and declared the elections to be a fraud since socialist forces were banned under the anti-communist law.

SUBSEQUENTLY A NEW movement began which differed from previous ones. Earlier there had not been a clear socialist movement. The new movement was socialist. Earlier, representatives of different classes were in the movement; this time predominantly workers. The movement got a president and set up a committee for strikes. It was called the 'United Union of Korean Trade Unions', but in fact it was not a trade union as such. We had decided to set up a workers' front which we called a trade union. The character of this was reminiscent of Polish Solidarity, though the programme was completely different. Our programme was orientated towards socialism, you could even say to the USSR model, and Solidarity was nearer to capitalism.

The 1988 Korean Olympics also had a big effect on our movement. It forced us to review our evaluation of socialism. Up until then we thought that the USSR was our reliable and loyal support. But Gorbachev had started 'perestroika' and that set off a heated discussion about socialism amongst the activists in our country. It was the cause of another split in our movement.

Now, many currents exist but the majority of them don't have a particular ideology. Many regard themselves as socialists but in view of the collapse of Stalinism in the ex-USSR, they don't know what to do and sit with folded arms. It has become clear that they are totally confused. What



Slum conditions in Pusan.

to do and how to act remains a closed book to them. Workers say the USSR had already broken up and that although capitalism is very bad, the USSR was even worse and they don't want to live as people lived in the USSR.

But what is the perspective for Korean capitalism? In spite of the huge growth in production of recent decades, Korea and the 'newly industrialised countries' cannot forever escape the contradictions of capitalism - internal or external. A crisis of overproduction has already started. Korea produces two million cars a year. But the USA has announced the cutting back in imports of foreign cars and Korean workers themselves do not receive enough pay to buy the necessities of life, let alone a car.

Nike have found a cheaper labour force in Indonesia.

Thanks to strikes and other actions, they have increased the price of their labour. At the *Nike* shoe factory, for example, the workers have had rises and now receive between 160,000 and 250,000 Won. Before they earned 80,000 to 120,000 Won. But nevertheless, they still don't have the possibility of buying these shoes that sell at 56,000 to 64,000 Won (there are 800 Won to the dollar). Now this firm has found a cheaper labour force in Indonesia and 50,000 workers in Pusan will probably find themselves on the streets. Mass sackings have already started.

When Yeltsin recently went to Korea he said that socialism was dead and gone. Many workers think the same at present, but, by an irony of history, thanks to this propaganda and the events in the USSR, with the government convinced that their ideas are no longer dangerous, the works

of Marx and Lenin are now being published! But the workers' movement is growing.

The December presidential elections will solve none of the workers' problems. Once again, workers didn't have the chance to put forward their own candidate. Just to register a candidate you have to find one billion Won!

Korean workers and students have already shown their readiness to make sacrifices. They have begun to appreciate the international nature of their struggle and the need for a movement not just in one country. In the future they will show they can win. □

Postscript

LAST DECEMBER SAW saw the election of Kim Young-sam as the first civilian president of South Korea since 1961. He succeeded former general Roh Tae Woo, who was elected following the revolutionary upsurge of 1987.

In his inaugural speech this February Kim Young-sam promised a 'new Korea'. Three weeks later, however, he introduced his 'programme for a new economy' with the rallying call, "the time has come for sweat and tears... everybody should work harder, conserve more and save more". (*The Independent*, 22 March, 1993).

The Korean workers have used the democratic 'interlude' of the last six years to enhance their position in society. The *Financial Times* reports that between 1988 and 1991 wages increased by an average annual rate of 20%, "eliminating Korea's advantage as a source of cheap labour". With record bankruptcies, declining profits and economic growth falling to 4.2% in 1992, it is clear that the new president is set on a collision course with the Korean working class.

An unnatural system

What are the causes of today's social problems? Margaret Creear examines the 'nature or nurture' debate.



Angry scenes outside the Jamie Bulger court hearing.

THE MURDER OF Jamie Bulger in Bootle became the occasion for a national offensive by the Tories, and academics linked to them, to put the blame for violence, juvenile crime, and other social problems, onto the shoulders of single parents. The Tories were trying to tap into the widespread concern about crime and other social problems.

Some of our increased awareness of crime comes from media reporting. When presenters of *Crime-*

watch tell you not to worry after 30 minutes of reports of, usually, violent crime, you do not necessarily feel reassured. To argue statistically that there is not really more crime than in the past, or that some types of crime have not increased at all, does not really help when there is a general perception that life is becoming more brutal.

Concern about crime, however, also has its progressive side, one which is not entirely in the

Tories' interests. There is a greater intolerance of some social crimes such as rape, domestic violence and sexual abuse. This is in line, in spite of the Tories' offensive, with an increased rejection of authoritarian attitudes.

However, the 'moral right' and the Tories can get an echo because people do feel threatened. They want their children to be safe. They would like to live in happy personal relationships and a supportive community. The real question is, can the ideas being put forward by the right help them achieve any of this?

In these arguments the right gets very much a free hand. The Labour Party's shadow Home Secretary, Tony Blair, said in a recent article in *The New Statesman* that, "we should be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime... Our approach is rooted in our belief that society needs to act to advance the interests of individuals. Crime ultimately is a problem that arises from our disintegration as a community, with standards of conduct necessary to sustain a community". However, Tony Blair sees the 'disintegration of community' as an abstract moral question and puts forwards no policies which would relieve the social conditions which can lead to some crime.

In these arguments the right gets very much a free hand.

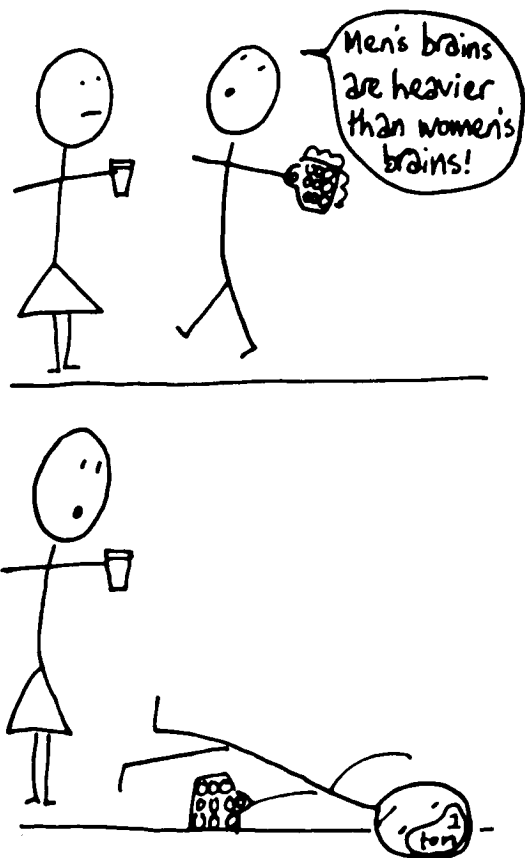
In the past, in the course of struggle, when many of the working class people who built the movement had a belief that they were involved in creating a totally different society, the labour movement had its own morality which emphasised collective strength and collective solutions to individual problems. Now the leaders just cow tow to the Tories' idea of 'individual responsibility'.

WHAT LIES BEHIND the current Tory propaganda campaign against single parents and youth is not a concern for the victims of crime, but an attempt to blame other people for the social degeneration which is their responsibility. At the same time they are trying to justify their social policies.

They are doing this not from a position of strength but of weakness, to try to turn the tide of opinion which is surging away from them. Basically they've got a problem very much exacerbated by the Thatcher years.

For example, the economic policy of the Tories demanded a restructuring of the workforce based on low pay, poor conditions and casualisation. Women, especially married women, were drawn into the workforce in large numbers. In spite of the conditions that they faced at work and the low pay that they received, this led generally to

Credit: Annie Lawson.



greater confidence and broke down the isolation of women. This was inevitably accompanied by a re-examining of the idea that a woman's place was in the home.

At the same time, the Tories were forced by Britain's declining economic position to cut back on social services and other services such as childcare which working mothers would rely on, antagonising women workers. They try to justify these cuts by reference to the role the family should play but this is changing because of their economic policy.

In addition, the economic decline of capitalism inevitably shakes the faith of the working class in their rulers. The customary rottenness, the behaviour of the monarchy, the hypocrisy of the church, the corruption and self-seeking of politicians, which is always there to some degree, becomes an issue.

Their ideological offensives are attempts to persuade us that, in spite of the fact that they run and control society, they are not responsible. They find scapegoats in the population such as the currently fashionable theory of the 'underclass' - the long-term unemployed, those on benefits and single parents. Those, in other words, who suffer most from the economic decline of capitalism, and on whose shoulders it has placed the greatest burdens, are blamed for all the problems of society.

This is nothing new for capitalism. Propaganda offensives are necessary because of the contradictory nature of capitalism itself. But before explaining why they happen, it is worth looking at how they happen.

JUST AS THE capitalist class as a whole controls the means of producing goods through ownership of factories etc, they also control the means of producing ideas through the press and their dominance of the boards of the media.

Of course it is not as simple and straight forward as that. For example, there are disagreements amongst the Tories themselves. Some are more constrained than others by how far social attitudes will allow them to go and also by the practicalities of what is being proposed. As part of the review of social security in the mid-1980s, for example, the then Tory cabinet minister, Norman Fowler, floated the idea of paying all benefits, including child benefit, to the father. It was argued that not to do so undermined the fathers control of the family budget and thereby his authority. However, it produced such an outcry that it was immediately abandoned.

Similarly the Tories' opinions on young offenders were openly contradicted by senior police officers and prison governors who have the job of carrying out their policies and who realised their impracticality.

Propaganda offensives are not accidental. In the past they were organised through the church, education and so on. Now there are 'think tanks' made up of academics and 'experts' with close links to the media, who, by and large, share the basic assumptions of the politicians who appoint them.

Nowadays science, and increasingly some schools of sociology, have replaced religion as the authority hauled in to obligingly convince people of all sorts of eccentric but politically useful ideas. Science has authority, of course, because many people recognise its benefits. But scientists are not 'objective'. Their work is not just a question of the unbiased interpretation of facts. One example is that of Konrad Lorenz, who developed theories about the role of aggression and territoriality in animals, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for his work. His ideas have been popularised and crudely applied to humans by Raymond Dart and Desmond Morris. Lorenz himself gave a scientific talk on animal behaviour in 1940 in Germany during the Nazi extermination campaign, saying that: "The selection of toughness, heroism, social utility... must be accomplished by some human institutions if mankind, in default of selective factors, is not to be ruined by domestication induced degeneracy. The racial idea as the basis of the state has already accomplished much in this respect".

What he is arguing is that we have built societies which enable people to survive who left to nature would have perished. 'Inferior' types or races can now survive, requiring social action to 'cull' them.

Even the approach to crime demonstrates a class bias. The discussion has been on juvenile crime in working class areas. Yet the social policy of the Tories in relation to the NHS, benefits

etc, probably causes more premature death through perinatal mortality, breast and cervical cancer and hyperthermia, than murder does. Does the extensive breaking of health and safety laws, wages councils' minimum wage rates, and the flouting of pollution regulations, mean that most capitalists, not to mention the Tory cabinet, are the product of single parent families?

So why are these propaganda offensives necessary? The reason lies in the contradictory character of capitalism itself.

So why are these propaganda offensives necessary?

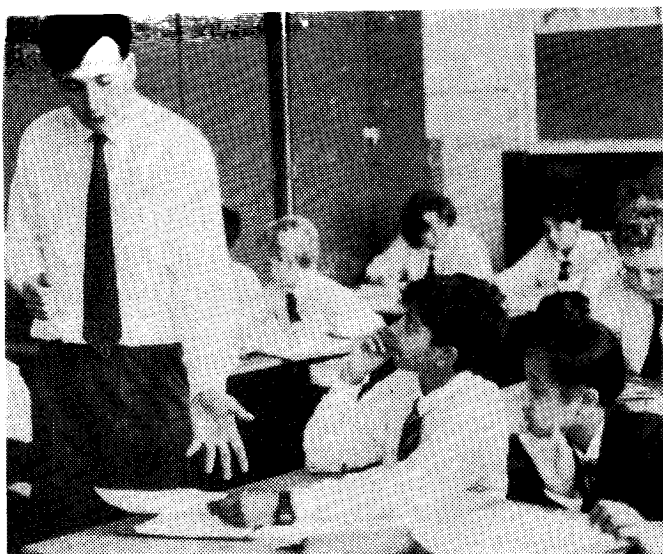
IN SPITE OF their condemnation of revolutions, that is how the capitalist class came to power. To establish the conditions for the development of capitalism, they had to overthrow the aristocracy, the landlords, and the material power of the church as major land owners. They needed workers to be 'free' to move off the land and sell their labour to the capitalists. They challenged the 'superiority' and 'natural right to rule' of the feudal lords and church in the name of freedom and equality, so they could have access to political power.

Having carried through their revolution, they constructed a society which for the vast majority was unequal and oppressive. Since everyone could not be equal or free, they had to explain inequality between the classes but also between the races and sexes. They did so by constructing a theory of human nature. They argued that anyone in capitalist society could become rich. If you did not, then it was not because the system had stacked things against you. It was because 'abilities' are not 'naturally' equally shared out.

Science, of course, was very important to the capitalists in undermining the old order and in revolutionising technique. It was pressed into service in the cause of explaining inequality.

The explanations have changed over the centuries. Some seem laughable today. Today's rationalisations will seem ludicrous tomorrow. For example, inequality between men and women and between whites and blacks was explained by trying to prove differences in brain size. Of course, brain size is related to body size. Theories were put forward to justify imperialist policies by emphasising the more prominent brows and jaws of some Africans, depicting them as being closer to the apes.

There were also theories that criminals were born and had identifiable physical characteristics. And it wasn't just criminals. In a book by Agatha Christie, *The Secret Adversary*, the upper class hero is watching the arrival of a trade unionist:



Class has always affected testing.

"The man who came up the staircase with a soft-footed tread was quite unknown to Tommy. He was obviously the very dregs of society. The low beetling brows, and the criminal jaw, the bestiality of the whole countenance, were new to the young man, though he was a type that Scotland Yard would have recognised at a glance".

THERE ARE REALLY two main strands to the arguments today. Firstly the claim that people are unequal in society because they have different abilities. These abilities are part of genetic make-up. They are passed on from generation to generation. So, although education and a stimulating environment, for example, could influence the extent to which people developed their abilities, it would obviously be better to spend more time and effort on people who came from good genetic stock (the wealthy) rather than poor genetic stock (working class children). If you fully developed someone from good genetic stock you would end up with a genius. The best the working class would achieve would be mediocrity.

These arguments were given credence by the so-called 'research' of Sir Cyril Burt, who perpetrated one of the biggest intellectual frauds of all time. He claimed he had done a study to show that identical twins who were separated at birth, and therefore brought up in different environments, had very similar intellectual ability. Because they had been brought up in different environments the similarity must be accounted for by inherited features. This provided the basis for IQ tests.

Leaving aside the fact that the environments of those separated twins who could be traced were not all that different - for example, they were brought up next door to one another, played together, went to school together - it turned out that the research assistants he said he had employed never existed and that he himself had never carried out the research. In fact he made the whole thing up.

More important than his faking research is the fact that he was unchallenged for so long. He produced results which fitted contemporary prejudices which he unswervingly shared.

For example, in 1937 he wrote a book called *The Backward Child*, a study of backward London school children so classified because they were one year behind their schoolwork. Looking at their environment, he found a 73% correlation with living below the poverty line; with overcrowding, 89%; unemployment, 68%; and with juvenile mortality, 93%. The case would seem to be made for the influence of social conditions on educational attainment. But what did Cyril Burt conclude? That the innately poorest 'stock' create and then gravitate to the worst boroughs and that the degree of poverty is a general measure of 'genetic worthlessness'. This is just an earlier version of today's fashionable 'underclass' theory, even though that is now being presented as something new.

Originally IQ tests were developed in France by Binet, who was trying to identify differences in achievement to introduce special courses to develop those who had learning difficulties. He did not suggest that intelligence was an innate, fixed characteristic, arguing that "we must protest and react against this brutal pessimism".

However, IQ tests were used to justify consigning working class children into inferior education under the old selection system that the Tories are now surreptitiously reintroducing. Significantly, there is also now a campaign underway to re-habilitate Sir Cyril Burt.

IQ tests were used to justify consigning working class children into inferior education.

The second strand of argument was that not only were differences between individuals decided by biology, and were therefore unchangeable, but that the way in which society was organised, ie the capitalist way, was also natural and based on human characteristics that had been 'selected' through evolution and were therefore 'innate'.

Writers such as Dart and Morris, who wrote *The Naked Ape*, argued that, to some extent, humans are aggressive, territorial and naturally male-dominated. They drew their examples from the animal world where there is a sense of territory, although not universally so. It is linked to particular situations, for example, protecting a nest, young or a food source. It can vary depending on available resources. It is also very weak in chimpanzees and gorillas who range widely and who are considered our closest relatives.

Confrontations over territory, food supplies etc,

are very ritualised amongst animals. They boil down to displays of aggression rather than actual physical violence. In other words, aggression and territoriality are not universal instincts but behaviour tuned to a particular life style and to changes in the availability of resources in the environment.

No one has been able to relate social behaviour to genes.

Such writers argue that hunting, which they characterise as an aggressive activity, was fundamental to the development of human society and this characteristic is now built into humans. But hunting also involves a range of skills, co-operation, patience and a knowledge of the movements and habits of animals. Singling out aggression merely reveals an attempt to justify a pre-conceived conclusion.

Such arguments have also been used to justify arms expenditure. After all, if aggression and therefore war are naturally built into society, it is best to be successfully aggressive and armed to the teeth. Whatever may be the case concerning territoriality and aggression amongst animals, wars in modern society are not 'spontaneous eruptions of innate aggression'. They are planned and calculated by the ruling class for gain. The state and ideology play an important role in mobilising a population for war. Even so it can come up against resistance and armies can collapse, as in the 1917 Russian revolution and the US army in Vietnam.

Such ideas are merely speculation. Even if we accept the link, it is difficult to think of any behaviour which is solely biologically determined. Even the most basic functions such as eating, sleeping and sex, are affected by culture and the environment as well as biological factors. What strikes anyone looking around the world is not its uniformity, the automatic working out of biological imperatives, but the enormously rich diversity of cultural expression and life styles.

THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN has highlighted the role of the family. Not only is aggression a built-in feature of human society, so, according to the dominant ideology of the capitalists, is the nuclear family, ie a husband, wife (usually financially dependent) and dependent children. Their argument is that this form of the family is natural and any deviation from it will produce dire social consequences.

AH Halsey, described by the newspapers as 'an old-style socialist', is one of many 'experts' who has been recently wheeled out to pin the responsibility for social problems on 'the breakdown

of the family'. He attacks the left's refusal to accept that the nuclear family is "the best model so far devised for individuals and society".

The Sunday Times, in an editorial on 28 February, said: "For communities to function successfully they need families with fathers. In communities without fathers, the overwhelming evidence is that youngsters begin by running wild, and end up running foul of the law".

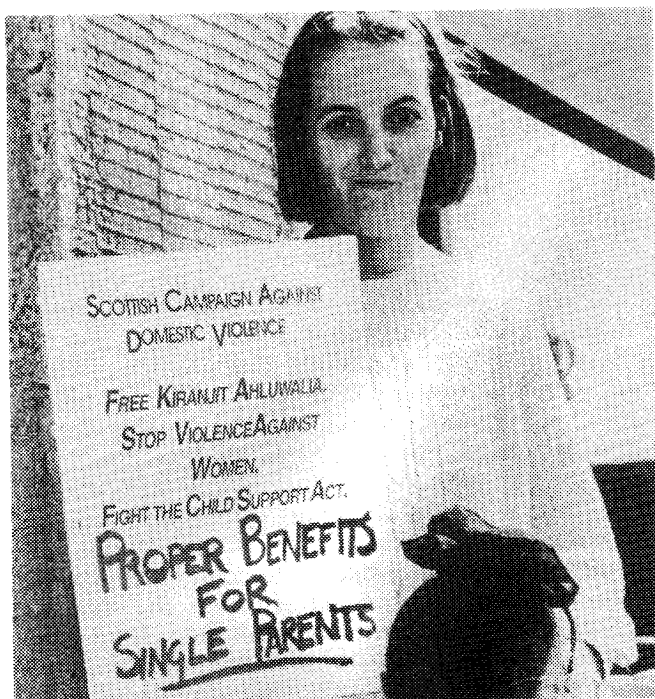
These ideas were a constant theme of the Tories under Thatcher. Ferdinand Mount, who was an adviser to Thatcher, believed that the nuclear family had always existed and was universal. In fact, there have been many ways in which people have organised their personal relationships. The family as a social institution, which is what the right are really talking about, has only existed relatively recently and can be traced to the development of private property. Even so such families were extended families, as is often the case in agricultural based communities today. It is part of the inherent racism of the 'moral right' that they ignore this.

The family as a social institution has changed along with society. The supplanting of agriculture by industry as the dominant form of production was accompanied by a shift from the extended family to the nuclear family. People have always rebelled against their personal relationships being hemmed in by a social institution which serves not just personal but economic needs. Otherwise, why the plethora of laws punishing adultery (for women) and the divorce laws concerned mainly with property?

Why does such a 'natural' institution require religion, ideology and state laws to hold it together?

Why does such a 'natural' institution require the full force of religion, ideology and state laws to hold it together? The answer is that it is not natural that everyone should live in exactly the same sort of household but it is important to capitalism because it serves their interests. Behind the talk about the responsibility of parents which accompanied the introduction of the Child Support Act, is the naked intention of cutting public expenditure.

The growth in single parenthood is not a symptom of moral decline. It is a social process brought about in the main by the increased confidence of women who will not tolerate abusive behaviour and who prefer to try to survive by themselves, although many will hope to form other, better, personal relations. They are able to survive economically because in the past the capitalists were



Campaigning against the Child Support Act.

forced by fear of the working class to provide benefits to ensure people did not starve. The provision of local authority housing also had a big effect.

A third of marriages end in divorce because of a breakdown in the relationship. This happens for a variety of reasons, including the pressures of government policy and of living in a capitalist society. It can also be because many people develop throughout their lives and relationships can weaken as a result. People no longer feel forced to tolerate an inadequate or destructive situation. Although relationships are clearly affected by society, in the end, to continue a relationship or not, is a personal decision.

Halsey, and many others, have recently claimed that there is evidence that 'children of single parents are relatively disadvantaged in every area of life'. In the US and Britain the implication is that children live in poverty, and have worse housing and education, not because of the economic system under which we live denies their parent the right to work, childcare or decent benefits, but because of the irresponsibility of their mother and/or father and the absence of a male role model. The provision of benefits merely encourages 'irresponsibility', hence cuts in benefit and the Child Support Act.

US social scientist Charles Murray, who has many supporters in the Tory cabinet, has developed the idea of the 'underclass'; of the unemployed who are simply workshy, and of single parents who produce children because 'sex is fun and children are endearing' and the state will pay their benefits. Crime has risen because illegitimacy has risen.

He further argues that poverty is the lifestyle

of the underclass. There is no point in throwing government money at poor areas. He points out that poverty grew in the US as public expenditure grew. In fact, this had nothing to do with benefits encouraging more people to adopt 'deviant' lifestyles, as he argues, but had a lot to do with the weak state of the economy, the replacement of full-time, better paid work with part-time, casual, low paid work, (which amongst other things meant that people on benefits could be worse off if they took a job because of the 'poverty trap'), the growth of the elderly population and so on.

There is not a shred of evidence for any of the right's assertions. The children of single parents are no more likely to commit crime than any others in their area. Many of the genuine problems children do suffer are a consequence of conflict between their parents before their mother became a single parent, and of the poverty single parents experience as a product of Tory policy. Of course many children in two-parent families also suffer from conflict between parents, from abuse and poverty.

Murray and others are quoted as authorities and feted, because what they say coincides with what the capitalists want to hear. Murray and others provide the arguments for governments who want to portray social degeneration as the result of the behaviour of the poor, those capitalism has failed, and not the result of government policy and the capitalist system.

WHERE DO WE stand in this argument about what is natural? Capitalism, as a class-based society, has always had a tendency to try to cram everything and everyone into hierarchies. Even if we accept the argument that abilities were unequally given out naturally, why should that lead to inequality? Why should people who play one role in society be worse off than those who play a different role, especially if there's nothing they can do about it?

If we accept that the role of women in giving birth to and rearing children led to a differentiation in the role of men and women, why should those who play such an important role in the production and well-being of future generations be classed as inferior and treated accordingly? It reflects a society based on commodities and wage labour. It reflects capitalist values.

Even if it were true that childbearing and childrearing resulted in disadvantages for women in early Roman and Greek society, for example, why should that still be the case now? There is nothing biological which prevents maternity leave, benefits, a shorter working week and community childcare, enabling both men and women to participate in bringing up children and being part of the workforce. That is decided by government policy and what is in the interest of capitalism.

On the other hand, human beings are not just like plasticine moulded by their environment. One of the reasons for the success of humanity has



Militant on a Campaign Against Domestic Violence demonstration.

been its ability to affect and shape its environment. Human beings have a biology which allows for a vast range of activity, cultural expression and life styles. But through the purposeful banding together of humanity they increased their chances of survival and achieved advances through the development of technique which would have been impossible as individuals. Biology, for example, has determined that no matter how hard we wave our arms up and down we are not likely to develop wings and fly. But by banding together, through invention and social production, aeroplanes have been produced which mean that potentially everybody can fly.

Our biology means that at some point everyone dies but how we organise society can influence the quality of life and within limits can increase the average lifespan.

A 19th century German philosopher, Feuerbach, tried to show how all social processes were a reflection of our biology. At the time this was revolutionary. It was a blow against the mystical ideas of religion. But Marx produced an account of his own ideas which challenged this crude approach. He put forward instead the idea of 'dialectical materialism', of the active relationship between humanity, biology and society, constantly changing and being changed by one another.

In his *Theses on Feuerbach* he wrote: "The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstance and upbringing, and that therefore changed men are a product of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances".

Ideas are important to the ruling class to mislead

the working class in its struggle for a better society. In the end capitalist ideology is challenged by the working class because it serves the interests of the ruling class and not its own. By understanding their use of ideology we can explain what they are up to and direct our energies and our programme more effectively in the struggle for a socialist society. As Marx said, "philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it". □

Further reading.

Not in Our Genes: Biology, Ideology and Human Nature, by Steven Rose, RC Lewontin and Leon Kamin. £6-99.

The Family and the New Right, by Pamela Abbotts and Claire Wallace. £10-95.

The Mismeasure of Man, by Stephen Jay Gould. £7-99.

The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English culture, 1830-1980, by Elaine Showalter. £8-99.

All titles available from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB. For orders under £10, add 10% for postage and packing. Cheques payable to World Socialist Books.

Letters

Send your views, comments or criticisms to:
MIR, 3/13 Hepscoth Road, London E9 5HB.

Dear Comrades,

Could we have an update on the colonial revolution for a future MIR? I would envisage material which looked back to the revolutions in the 1970s, in the era of the oil crisis and the first post-war world slump, and those in the early 1980s such as the Philippines, with an analysis of the different kinds of struggle that took place (guerilla wars, army coups and so on) and what the situation is now in those countries.

Bringing it up to date, I would like an explanation of why the 'Asian Tigers' have developed and why certain Latin American countries have been booming. What do these say about the possibility of capitalism 'developing' the ex-colonial world?

I know it is a big subject but I think we need a world view of the colonial revolution. Has



Poverty in Manila.

it developed again? After all the theory of the colonial revolution was an extension of the permanent revolution in the post-war environment with the existence of a strong degenerated workers' state, the USSR. It is necessary

to make a further development of the theory in the post-Stalinist climate.

Yours comradely,
Sue Wilkie,
Birmingham

Dear Friends,

Thank you for including a review of *Strike Across the Empire: The 1925 Seamen's Strike* by Baruch Hirson and Lorraine Vivian in MIR 50. We are obviously pleased that you included the review but would like to make one comment.

In the final paragraph, Richard Knights states that the strike "was eventually broken by the use of 12,000 scabs, some of them foreign seamen", and he continues "this fuelled racist overtones laid by the refusal of the National Sailors and Firemen's Union (NSFU) to organise foreign seamen in the UK fleet".

I wondered, as I read this, whether the reviewer had perhaps read another text. The strike collapsed because the seamen in

Durban, South Africa finally found that they could not continue, and there was no possibility of getting the wage cut restored. This had little or nothing to do with the scabbing that was being organised.

The splinter union, the Amalgamated Marine Workers, which supported the strike in Britain, was consulted and agreed. A week later they called off the strike (p70). The strike in Australia continued for another month. It was the foreign support for the strike that was so crucial in its continued action, after it had all but collapsed in Britain.

On the matter of racism and the seamen, an entire chapter is devoted to this subject. Unfortunately, racism was endemic among seamen, including the

most radical section (p36) since the earlier part of the century in Britain (and for much longer in South Africa and Australia).

This had its effect on the strike, and must be condemned, but not always as claimed in the above passage. In South Africa racism (anti-Indian) even won the strikers support from whites because of the threat of scabs being recruited from India.

Nor was there much evidence during the strike of foreign scabs being employed in Britain. In those days of depression scabs were two-a-penny, and the NSFU recruited them for the shipowners.

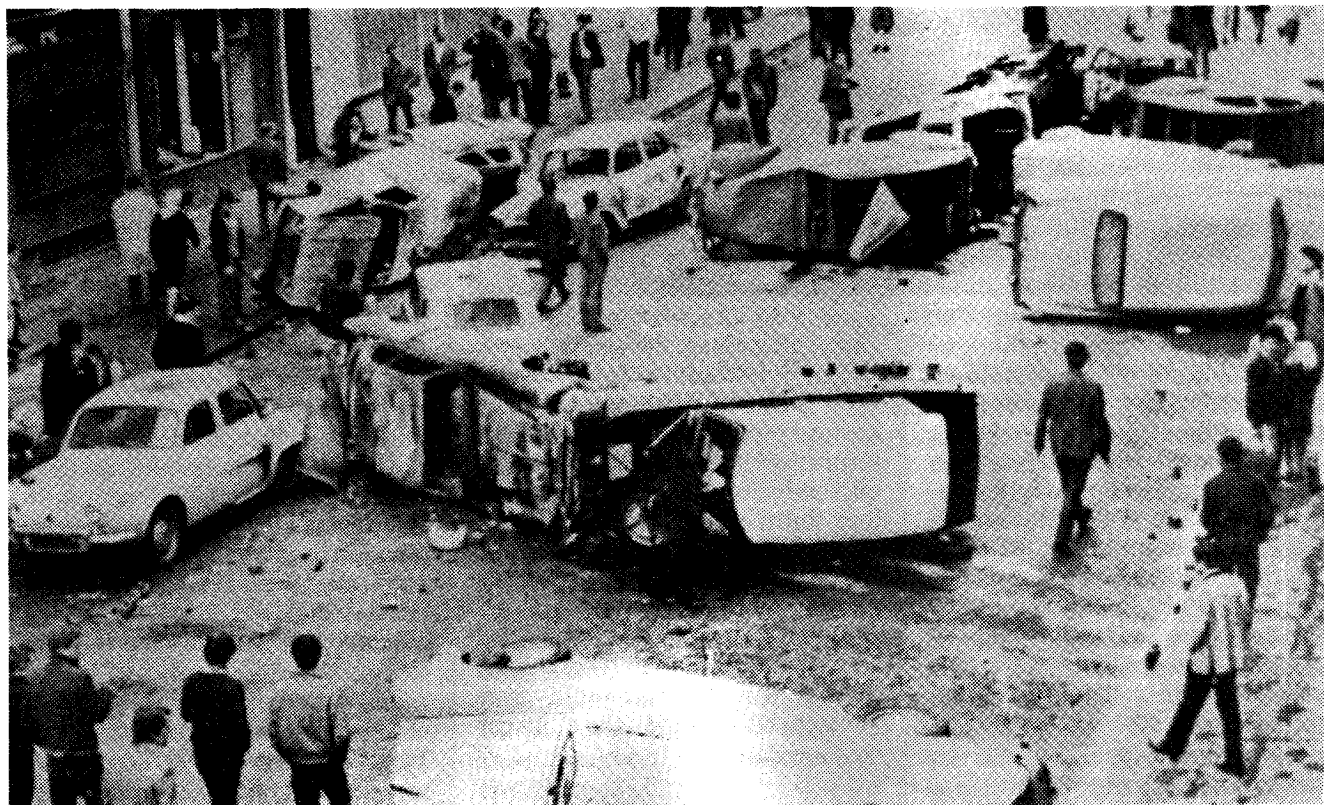
Yours sincerely,
Baruch Hirson,
London

□

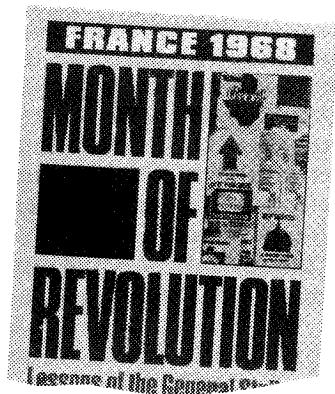
FRANCE '68

Off
the
Shelf

*On the 25th anniversary of France '68 Ruth Gordon looks at
Clare Doyle's Month of Revolution.*



The morning after the 'Night of the Barricades.'



France 1968: Month of Revolution,
by Clare Doyle. £2-50. Available,
post free, from **World Socialist
Books**, 3/13 Hepscott Road, London
E9 5HB.

ONE BLACK YOUTH who had been walking normally when he was put in the 'Salad Basket' (Black Maria) emerged fifteen minutes later with his face covered in blood. He staggered and collapsed. They laid him out on a stretcher and took him away. I suppose the colour of his skin had warranted him being 'taken care of' inside the van".

This could have been a description of scenes this April when riots erupted in Parisian streets after the death of three young people in French police custody. But it is not. It is the horrified

voice of a doctor watching as the CRS, the hated French riot police, waded into student demonstrators on 6 May 1968. It was the 'Night of the Barricades'.

It is with descriptions such as this that Clare Doyle's book, *Month of Revolution*, vividly describes the revolution that took place in France 25 years ago.

Using newspaper cuttings, radio and television reports from 1968, we are treated to a day-by-day account of how the barricades were built on the Paris boulevards; how student demonstrations were filled out with workers who brought along their pneu-



A mass demonstration in Paris.

matic drills; it made digging up cobble stones for barricades easier!

By 13 May 1968 one million were marching in Paris in response to the 24-hour general strike call from the CGT (the Communist-led trade union federation). The next day just 200 workers were on strike but by 19 May two million were out and two days later ten million workers had downed tools. The one-day general strike had given workers and students their first taste of their own strength and their appetite grew with the eating. Signboards were posted on factory gates: 'En greve, usine occupée', 'On strike, factory occupied'.

In Corsica agriculture workers begin an occupation. Weather forecasters join the strike; iron ore miners block the Route Nationale (motorway) for an hour as part of their action; women take over a clothing factory for a week. In the west of France, electricity, transport, engineering and building workers, fishermen, post office workers, even clergy and nuns, stop work. Shops shut in solidarity.

The CGT and the CFDT (the

Catholic trade union federation) hope in vain that the 24-hour strike would release sufficient steam to let the workers' leaders off the hook. Instead the workers feel the power of their collective steam.

By 16 May all six Renault plants were under workers' occupation. They locked their factory managers in offices and played the *Internationale* over loudspeakers until they learnt the words!

BUT MONTH OF REVOLUTION is more than just a commentary. Not in the dry language of an academic, but colourfully, Clare Doyle analyses how these events broke onto the apparently calm waters of a capitalist world basking in economic boom. Most importantly, she explains how the workers' leaders, particularly the Communist Party and CGT leaders, failed to acknowledge the revolution taking place.

The mood had shifted from workers' individual grievances to the chants that echoed around the demonstrations: 'Students, teachers, workers, together', 'De Gaulle: resign', 'Farewell Charlie'.

Strikes were spreading. There was no doubting the strength of the movement, nor the aspirations of the workers. The national organisation of young farmers called for a general strike on farms and for 'real economic and social democracy'.

What failed the workers' aspirations was the absence of a backbone amongst the leadership of the workers' organisations. At every point they shied away from taking power. When it was offered on a plate, they politely replied: 'Non, merci'.

In the south of France the markets were under the control of the unions. The Berliet lorry workers changed their company's name to read *Liberte*. Posters and placards read: 'On strike - indefinitely' and 'We are the power'. One young worker from the SNECMA Aero Engine factory is quoted: "We are fully ourselves, owning ourselves... we feel we are living socialism".

Even the professors from the universities began to see life differently: 'All of a sudden my thesis at the Sorbonne on The Verbal Joke in the Middle Ages seems ridiculous to me'. In Nantes workers controlled the flow of traffic, organised the distribution of food and welfare; trade union officials checked the prices in the shops.

But according to those grandees of revolution - the Communist Party leaders - these struggles were merely economic not political! Their leading theoretician, Andre Gorz, had predicted in January, 1968 that "there will be no crisis of European capitalism so dramatic as to drive the mass of workers to revolutionary general strikes". Proved so dramatically wrong just months later, the Communist Party leaders fell over each other to deny the revolutionary movement shaking French capitalism.

MILITANT, IN THOSE days a monthly paper, called for a parliament of the masses. Workers' councils in every factory and workshop could combine as district and national bodies to form a workers' gov-



De Gaulle plots with Massau.

ernment.

But the CP warned workers off attending student demonstrations: 'The students want to come in and smash up the machines', they told Renault workers. The general secretary of the CGT tried to frighten workers into restricting their demands: 'Any slogan calling for insurrection would change the character of your strike'. Precisely so! The CGT, he said, must be perceived as the great tranquil force!

The transformation of society along socialist lines was posed as being far into the future. A stage after the establishment of democracy. This was simply a struggle over wages and conditions, they maintained.

Meanwhile, the French constitutional committee was told to prepare for De Gaulle's resignation. But the union leaders merely entered talks, and for two days and nights negotiated with a government which had no power base left in France.

As Clare Doyle puts it: "A class facing its own destruction will summon up every last ounce from its reserves to placate the enemy. It will buy time and then devise a way of clawing back what it has given". What was required was workers leaders who, seeing the enemy paralysed, were able to deal the final blow.

Instead, a deal was accepted. Under other circumstances it would have been a very good deal: 7% pay increases; the minimum wage up by one-third - 56% in agriculture; some shop assistants to get 72% increases; strikers to receive half their normal wage for the period of the occupations! But this was just a slice of cake that was offered when the whole bakery was for the taking.

The Renault workers turned down the deal chanting, 'people's government'. In plant after plant the offer was rejected. The ruling class thought the game was up. The price of gold shot up. Traffic jams were reported on the road to Switzerland. The regime was paralysed.

Posters and placards read:
"We are the power".

On 29 May a cabinet meeting was scheduled. It did not take place. De Gaulle had disappeared. He had fled to Baden-Baden for talks with General Massu, who commanded 70,000 French troops in Germany. In the event of

revolution De Gaulle told the general he would form a government on the West bank of the Rhine.

The troops informed the Communist Party of the plans but they did nothing. Twenty-four hours later De Gaulle was able to return to Paris, his power unchallenged.

The total armed force of 300,000 could not compel 10 million people to work, especially when the majority of soldiers were conscripts and would have brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles on strike. In the Fifth Army soldiers committees erupted, prepared to move against the officers if necessary. In truth the French government could rely on nobody but a handful of nationalist right-wing paramilitaries.

The press speculated how France was on the verge of civil war. Civil servants discussed how to transfer power to the workers' committees. But as *Month of Revolution* shows, the Communist Party leaders: "put their hands across their eyes and maintain that they see no revolutionary situation". Huge concessions had been wrung from the bosses but power was back in the hands of the old rulers.

Militant in June 1968 stated: "If ever there was time when the working class could take power peacefully, that time is now". But the CP and the CGT ran away from power and in so doing led the workers to defeat.

A genuine workers' democracy in France would have been followed by revolution across Europe - East and West. It would have led to the overthrow of capitalist and Stalinist regimes alike across Europe.

Whatever apparent independence from Moscow the French CP feigned, they operated in the interest of Stalinist foreign policy: appeasement of its capitalist allies. A great opportunity was lost. The face of Europe could have been changed beyond all imaginings. Workers' governments running society for need and not profit would have inspired the whole of Europe to rise up and follow the example. □

Book Reviews



Defeat from the Jaws of Victory: Inside Kinnock's Labour Party

By Richard Heffernan and Mike Marqusee

Published by Verso, 1992, £11.95

Reviewed by Geoff Jones

A FOUR-TIMES DEFEATED parliamentary leadership trying to out-Tory the Tories; councils scared to raise a whisper of opposition to the destruction of jobs and services; a shrinking membership with an average age nearing fifty; no national youth organisation, no womens' organisation, no party newspaper and no internal debate: this is the Labour Party today. How did it happen? Heffernan and Marqusee attempt an answer.

Their book falls into three roughly equal sections. The first, 'The fall and rise of the Labour right', outlines developments between the Tory victory of 1979 and the election of 1987.

The second, 'Kinnock in command', covers the way in which the party leadership, with the assistance of the 'Labour Co-ordinating Committee' (LCC), took over the party apparatus and set about 'reorganising', to ensure control from the top of all party activity. The third part discusses in more detail the party's about-face on unilateralism and the purges of left-wingers which formed a prelude to the debacle of 1992.

As someone involved in the

Labour Party at all levels during this period, I found the book generally factual and fair. One partial exception is the coverage of the struggles in the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) and the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) in the early 1980s. Heffernan and Marqusee do not emphasise strongly enough the 'police state' atmosphere which existed in NOLS, although they describe well the way in which these budding bureaucrats carried over into the trade unions and Labour Party the manipulative skills which they had developed in student politics.

Developments are almost always seen merely from a London perspective. Battles 'on the ground' outside London are ignored. The 1984-85 miners' strike receives less coverage than convulsions in Lambeth council chamber; the battles in Liverpool are hardly mentioned and, amazingly, for what was the greatest movement of mass revolt since the general strike, 'poll tax' does not even figure in the index.

One is left with a feeling of inadequacy. To the question, 'why did Labour lose in 1992?', one receives an answer compounded of the intellectual and psychological inadequacies of Neil Kin-



Inside Kinnock's Labour Party.

On the other hand they quote, apparently without irony, that these gangsters tried to "instil some democracy in the LPYS". (p172) One thing was certain about the LPYS. All regional and national bodies were run absolutely constitutionally and democratically. If they had not been, the party leadership, who had found the LPYS a thorn in their side since the 1970s, would have been very quick to close them down.

There are other weaknesses.

nock, the machinations of a few dozen members of the LCC, and the weaknesses of a handful of trade union leaders. Surely these cannot be adequate reasons for the implosion of a political party of a quarter of a million members, with social and political roots going back at least a century?

Why did the 'left-wingers' of the 1970s and early 1980s give up so easily? Heffernan and Marqusee quote numerous examples of left-wing firebrands such as Hewitt, Short, and Ruddock be-

coming tame right-wingers. But their implication that this was due to lust for power and the scent of patronage is inadequate. Those individuals were only the leaders of a stampede to the right up and down the country, in Town Halls and Labour Party GCs, where squatters' leaders transmuted into the fiercest employers of bailiffs, and longtime CND members gave support to 'our boys' in the Gulf.

Why did the 'left-wingers' of the 1970s and early 1980s give up so easily?

Obviously, part of the answer lies in the objective political situation of the late 1980s and early 1990s: the defeat of the miners; the failure of Labour councils, with the exception of Liverpool, to stand up against central government; a background of an economic boom, however shaky; and the ideological assault against 'socialism' as Stalinism

collapsed.

But the answer has to go deeper. On what programme did the majority of the left fight in the 1970s and 1980s? It is hard now to remember. Those impassioned arguments on 'indicative management' and 'pump-priming', on import controls and the 'alternative economic strategy', on local empowerment and municipal socialism, on 'creative accounting' and 'broad-based resistance', all seem from another epoch. The reason, of course, is that each of these in turn was found empty when a fighting strategy of opposition to the capitalism of the 1980s was required. All the various 'left' alternatives trumpeted in the pages of *New Statesman*, *Tribune* and *Labour Briefing*, were shown to be wanting.

For the whole period there was only one real alternative. In the Labour Party and trade unions, only *Militant* consistently pushed forward the unpalatable truth that to bring down the Tories would involve confronting them on the industrial plane, legally if possible but illegally where necessary.

To confront the ideological offensive which underpinned Tory policies meant confronting capi-

talism with a programme of nationalisation, state planning and democratic control of trade and industry. Putting forward such a programme based on Marxist ideas might have seemed visionary in the high noon of the Tory boom. Now, with the ruins of British capitalism even apparent to the Tories, it represents the only programme on offer for the working class. No wonder that, more than any other group in the labour movement, *Militant* supporters have been the subject of hatred and loathing by the right-wing, and, it must be added, dislike by many remaining left-wingers.

History is a guide for the future. *Defeat from the Jaws of Victory* provides a good picture of the types who are now in control of the Labour Party and a useful record of their background. But it provides only a limited perspective for the future development of the Labour Party. The present leadership will continue the destruction of the party rather than give up power. A process of regeneration can only begin from a return to the socialist values and perspective that inspired the founders of the labour movement. □

*The Welfare State in Britain
since 1945*

By Rodney Lowe

Published by Macmillan,
1993, £10.99

Reviewed by
Mike Waddington

OVER THE WEEKEND of 24-25 April, social services minister Peter Lilley and his team retreated to Chevening in Kent. This private country residence is where ideas to 'shake up' the social security system were to be 'brainstormed'. These included whether benefits should be withdrawn if private insurance was available for the claimant and the question of universal child benefit being 'targeted' to those who 'really need it' - despite the fact that it has been frozen in value for many years. 'Tar-

geting' usually involves means tests, which are generally used to prevent people claiming when they find out that a benefit is available. In the 1970s 50% of those entitled didn't claim supplementary benefit and 60% didn't claim FIS or even rent rebates.

The Labour Party's Commission on Social Justice, set up by John Smith, is itself looking at the benefit system and apparently considering diverting child benefit into child care to 'allow' mothers to work. David Blunkett's proposals on workfare are now well known. A new 'we can't afford the welfare state' consensus between the parties is thus being created.

Rodney Lowe's book analyses the history of the welfare state. He concentrates on its heyday (up to 1975), when another 'con-

sensus' existed in favour of welfare reforms: on Labour's part as apparent steps to equality (the Labour leader Gaitskell said in 1956, "If you don't feel strongly about equality, then I think it is very hard to be a genuine socialist, and if we were to abandon this, then I think there would be very little to distinguish us from the Tories"), and on the Tory side, the minimum necessary measures to maintain social stability.

This consensus was always underpinned by economic growth, so when growth slowed, counter reforms were brought in. In 1951, for example, Labour brought in charges for glasses and false teeth. Just after the 1951 general election the new Tory government proposed raising the school entry age and lowering the leaving



Gaitskell

age, to save money.

However, there can be no doubt at all that the welfare state benefited millions of working class people by suspending the operation of the unfettered market, particularly in areas such as health, housing, education and jobs. In fact the Beveridge report (produced during world war two) specifically said, "Experience has shown... that under modern conditions this process of self recovery (of the economy - MW), if effective at all, is likely to be extremely prolonged and to be accompanied by widespread distress, particularly in a complex society like our own".

There is a slightly daft section to this book where there is a thankfully brief discussion about 'Marxism' and whether 'the revolution' was helped or hindered by the welfare state, tending towards the caricature of the worse for everyone the better for the Marxists, a nonsense pedalled by academics or right wing Labour politicians to damage the Marxists.

The welfare state, however, did not bring about fundamental change. The bottom 50% of people had 23.7% of income in 1949 and this increased to 24.3% in 1975-76. I discovered from the book something known as the 'Gini Coefficient', which denotes greater equality as it declines towards zero, which only fell from 41.1 to 36.6 over the same period. More importantly, the number of people in poverty increased on the minimum measurements from 600,000 in 1953 to at least two million by 1964. Brian Abel-Smith and Peter

Townsend produced a report in 1965 that showed that 40% of the poor (nearly three million then) were the working poor - and up to 1976 the rule was that if you lost your job you had to wait for a time and when benefit was paid it had to be no more than your last wage even where that was below the poverty line! The Child Poverty Action Group and Shelter were formed in response to this report.

This consensus was always underpinned by economic growth.

In 1941 social security was adopted in the Atlantic Charter by the Allies as a war aim. Copies of the Beveridge Report were dropped by bombers on British troops to bolster morale. The confidence of the capitalists had also been severely battered by the depression of the 1930s.

IT WAS THE economic crisis of 1974 which broke the growth of the welfare state. It was the last Labour prime minister James Callaghan who abandoned full employment as a policy and further cut deeply into social spending. This was primarily aimed at saving money.

Thatcher and the 'new right'

however, whilst wanting to save money, also wanted to shift resources to the better off. It sounds incredible but even in the 1970s the top 20% of earners used more of the free facilities in the education sector and NHS than the bottom 20% (respectively three times and two thirds as much). This was developed further by Thatcher not only with tax cuts but through mortgage relief; some £5bn a year now of which £3bn goes to people who earn more than £20,000 a year. It's worth remembering that the Council of Europe's Decency Threshold is £5-52 an hour or £11,500 a year for a 40 hour week: 46% of all employees earn less than that. The Low Pay Unit recently took up the case of a group who earned 67 pence an hour.

This book is a very good description of what happened. In particular it graphically demonstrates the break of 1975 and the development of the 'new right'. The poll tax gets a brief mention (twenty words actually) which Lowe says contributed to Thatcher's fall. He follows this up with the comment "the public appeared uninterested" over unemployment, failing to see that it is the inadequacies of the official 'opposition' to the new right that fails to address the real concerns of people. Or as Harry S Truman said to his own party, if you put up a republican to defeat a republican don't be surprised if the republican wins. □

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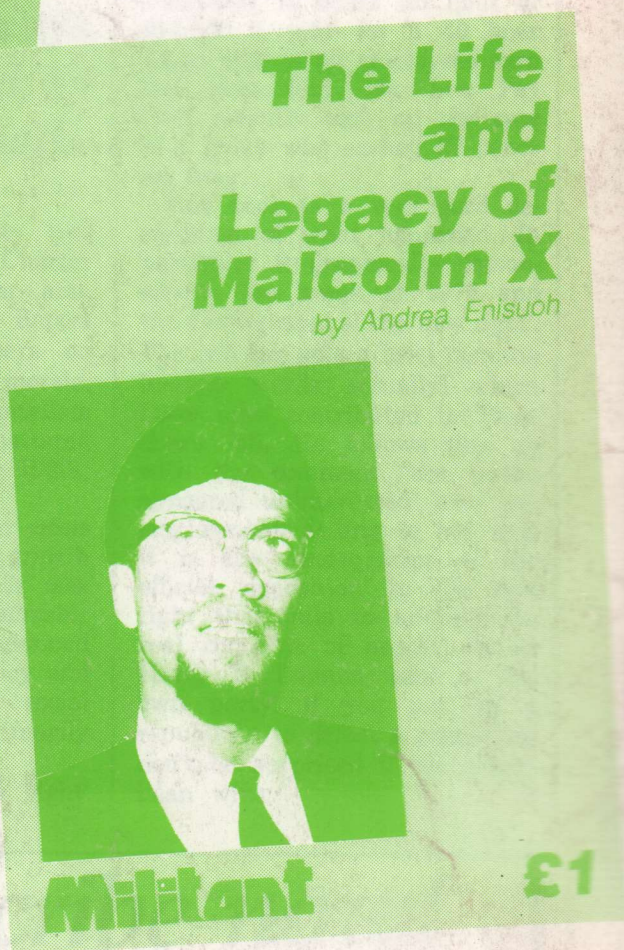
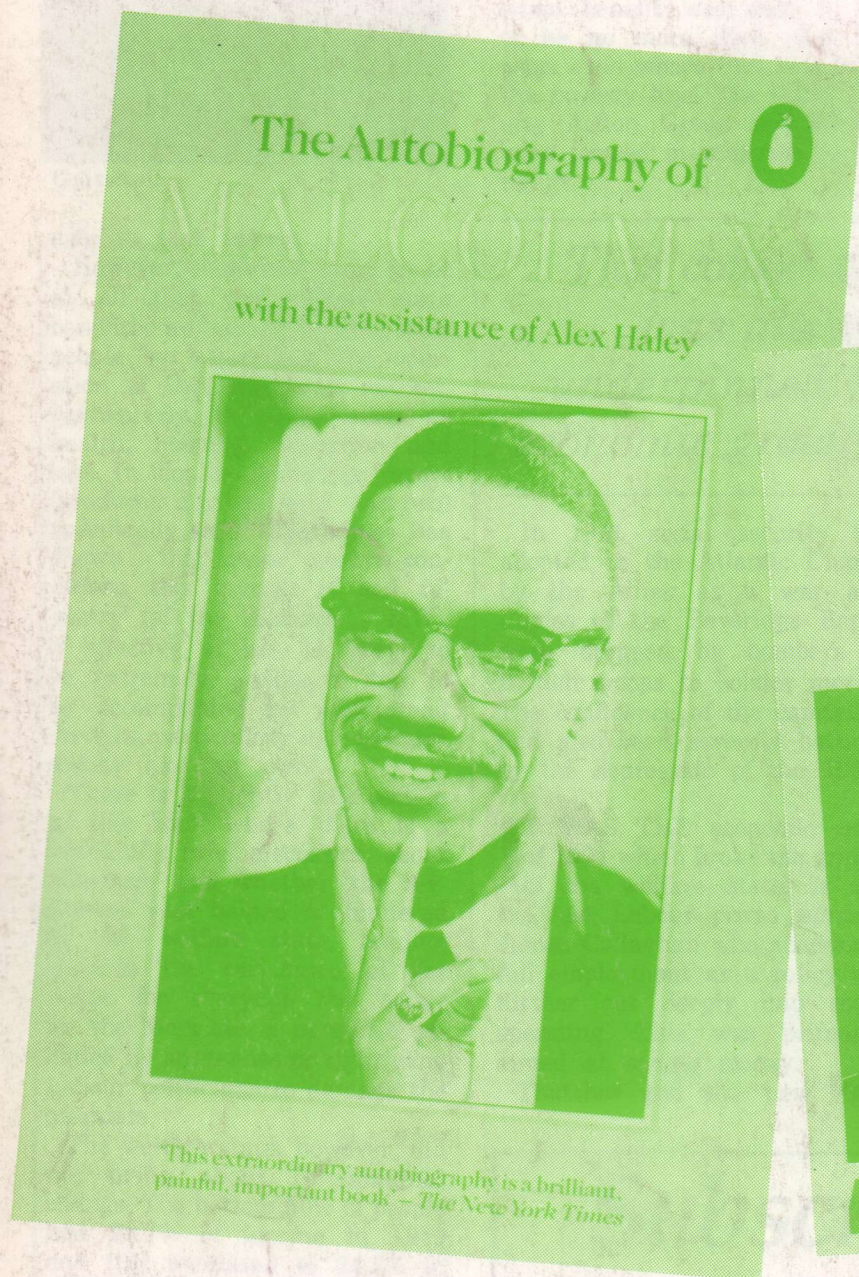
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