

**Militant
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How Labour can win

THE END of the miners' strike has ushered in a new period for British society. Thatcher and her cronies had imagined that a defeat of the miners would result in a period of peace and harmony between the classes.

However, before the dust of the 12 month struggle has settled, these pipe-dreams have evaporated. The Tory "victory" over the miners vividly recalls the words of the general who greeted news of a similar success with the celebrated remark: "one more victory like that and we're done for!"

In her swell-headed stupidity, Thatcher thought that this strike would be an action-replay of the Falklands War, which would furnish her with a new popularity and unite the Tory Party behind her unquestioned leadership.

Unfortunately, things did not quite turn out as foreseen. The collapse of the government's fortunes are now reflected even in the rigged opinion polls. Labour, which according to all the pundits (not excluding members of the Shadow Cabinet and the "Red Professor" Hobsbawm of the "Communist" Party) was not supposed to have a cat's chance in hell of winning the next election because of the alleged damage to its "image" caused by the miners' strike, is now in front.

The nose-dive of the Tories in the moment of their supposed "triumph" has put the cat among the pigeons on the Conservative back-benches. In an atmosphere halfway between Rasputin and the Ides of March, plots are being hatched as respectable gentlemen from the Shires and the City cast lots for the role of Cassius and Brutus. Thatcherism is out of vogue even with the hired hacks of the Tory press: "A rotten carcass of a butt, not rigged. Nor tackle, sail nor mast; the very rats instinctively have quit it".

How are we to explain this volte-face?

After all, it was not so long ago that Thatcher's position seemed assured. Let us recall that, before the miners strike, the only tendency in the entire labour movement—indeed in the whole of society—which explained the extremely fragile basis of this phenomenon was the Marxist tendency represented by *Militant* and the *MIR*.

We explained that, on the basis of the crisis of British capitalism, Thatcherism would rapidly reveal its bankruptcy. Under the pressure of relentless economic decline, Thatcher is driven to impose cuts in wages and pensions, driving down the living standards of the weakest, most defenceless sections of society. Even the Wage Councils, set up by Churchill before World War One, are now threatened by the Tory axe.

Nobody now believes the Tory lie that all this will lead the ailing British economy back to health. Lawson and his friends have spent the past six years mumbling that "everything will be all right in the long run". In the long run, as old Keynes used to say, we are all dead!

The restlessness and unease among the middle class is reflected, at least temporarily in the increased vote of the Alliance. Faced with the prospect of a big swing away from the Tories and towards Labour, Fleet Street hurriedly bundles out the Liberals and SDP as a safety net to halt the movement of disenchanted middle-class voters to the left.

However, in the nightmare conditions of the decaying inner-city areas, in the mining villages of Yorkshire, and in the devastated industrial regions of Wales, Scotland and the North, there is a seething anger and a hatred towards this government which surpasses anything seen since before the war.

Not since the 1920s have relations between the classes had such an embittered character. The burning sense of indignation and discontent which seeths in the poorest layers of society has now spread to sections of skilled workers in the Midlands and the South who voted for Thatcher in the last election.

The effect of the miners' strike was to act as a catalyst to express all the accumulated discontent which has built up within the working class. Far from harming Labour's electoral prospects, the courageous fightback of the miners has helped to re-awaken the class-consciousness and fighting spirits of large sections of society. This has played a major part in the revival of Labour's electoral fortunes.

Despite the sullen silence of the millionaire press, there has been an upturn in the number of strikes at local level, up and down the country. **The magnificent movement of the school students against industrial conscription showed the profound effects of the miners' strike on the minds of the youth. That fact alone must have caused the ruling class to tremble for the future.** Worst of all, despite a bitter 12 months struggle, and the expenditure



Photo: D. Sinclair

Labour's right-wing are responding to the prospect of a Labour government resulting from the next election by stepping up the witch-hunt — as a prelude to jettisoning party policy.

of five billion pounds, Thatcher has not succeeded in her fundamental aim of crushing the NUM. The miners are not cowed. Their union is not broken.

Order and harmony has still not been restored in the industry (witness the continuing dispute with NACODS, the campaign for amnesty, local strikes and walk-outs). It is not hard to predict that in two or three years, perhaps less, a new miners' strike will again be on the order of the day.

If the Labour Party wins the next election, that will have been in no small measure thanks to the miners. Yet the Neanderthal men of the right wing and their "soft left" allies persist in maintaining that so-called "Scargillism" has been an electoral liability.

These ladies and gentlemen are completely overawed by the lies of the Tory press. They imagine that by pandering to the press barons, playing at "responsible statesmen" and ditching Labour's programme they will curry favour with Fleet Street and thus become "popular".

The situation is no better with the leaders of the trade union movement. The same people who proved utterly unable (and in some cases downright unwilling) to organise effective assistance to the miners are now trying to ward off the attacks of the Tories and employers by "lying down and playing dead".

With three million unemployed, vicious attacks on wages and conditions, the wholesale privatisation of the public sector and the demolition of the

welfare state, there is no sign of any leadership from the heads of the major unions.

Right wingers like Hammond and Duffy have come out in their true colours long ago. But, sad to say, the erstwhile leaders of the trade union left, such as in NUPE, in practice have offered no alternative.

The "official" Labour and trade union leadership has drawn all the wrong conclusions from the miners' strike. They are like blind men who cannot see the elemental process of polarisation between the classes which is opening up at their feet.

Neil Kinnock has shown that he has no understanding of the real situation which would face a future Labour government. The frightful collapse of British industry and the likelihood of a new world recession in the next period means that such a government would be faced with a stark choice: either, or! Either take drastic action to put an end to the stranglehold of the parasites of the City and big business, or passively accept the role of the tool of the bankers and capitalists, continuing the policy of vicious cuts and attacks upon living standards and leading the Labour Party into a catastrophe along the lines of 1929–31.

The policy documents, speeches and articles of the labour and trade union leaders, leave the reader struck by a sense of hopeless unreality. It appears that they would like to go back to the discredited old ideas of an incomes policy (first "voluntary", of course,

then statutory) in the hope of encouraging the capitalists to invest. They forgot that in 1974-79 the self-same policy was tried and failed. The moneybags merely said: "thank you very much", pocketed the loot and sent it abroad, or frittered it away on speculation, property, office blocks, gold and silver, or the odd Picasso. The workers footed the bill and when finally their patience ran out, we had the winter of discontent, the collapse of the Labour vote and the victory of Thatcher. We have been paying the consequences ever since.

Defeated armies learn well, they say. As a result of the debacle of the Callaghan government, the rank-and-file of the trade unions and the Labour Party moved to the left. The renegades of the extreme right wing split away to form the SDP. The rank-and-file—the real Labour Party—began to impose its will, pressing for socialist policies, conquering democratic rights such as the selection of the Leader, control of the manifesto and, above all, re-selection as a concrete means of abolishing the repulsive "divine right of MPs".

Now all these democratic gains are being threatened. Those right wingers who remained like a Trojan Horse within the party—the Hattersleys, the Healeys, the Frank Fields, etc—have never reconciled themselves to the democratic control of the Labour Party by the rank-and-file. They are bitter and implacable foes of socialist ideas. In reality, they stand far nearer the ideas of the Liberals and the SDP traitors than to socialism. And behind these people stands the might of the Tory mass media, which openly supports them against the left, constantly egging them on to organise witch-hunts and expel the "extremists" (ie. the socialists).

Over the recent period there has been a major split in the balance of forces at the top of the Labour Party. The main reason for this has been the going over in droves of former "lefts" to the camp of the right wing. The so-called "soft left" is now virtually indistinguishable from the right.

At meetings of the NEC the tail now wags the dog. Formally in a minority, Hattersley and the right can get their way on most questions. This was revealed most scandalously on two key issues: the new Labour-TUC economic document and the witch-hunt against *Militant*.

Tony Benn has described this document as 'violently anti-socialist'. That is, perhaps, the most adequate description. Nevertheless, at the NEC, Neil Kinnock not only sprang to its defence in person, but also launched a scurrilous personal attack upon Benn.

Despite the fact that the last party

conference was assured that there would be "no witch-hunt" after the expulsion of the *Militant* Editorial Board, there have been a spate of expulsions up and down the country, as well as a spiteful attack upon the LPYS-sponsored Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign and the Further Education Labour Students.

The only people who can draw aid and comfort from this disgraceful persecution of socialists are the Tory and Liberal enemies of Labour. **The systematic undermining of party unity by the right's witch-hunting activities is causing incalculable damage to Labour's chances of winning the next election. So why do they do it?**

There is absolutely no doubt that the attempt to organise a witch-hunt against *Militant* is directly linked to the right-wing's campaign to reverse all the gains made by the rank-and-file in recent years, not only on organisational questions but above all on policy.

The programme which is being touted by these people is the most right wing since the war. It implies the wholesale abandonment of socialist policies. The sale of council houses is accepted at the very moment when that policy is less popular than ever. The best property has mainly been sold off already. With interest rates soaring, many people who bought their homes now want to sell them back to the council! In this climate, the selling of council houses is not the vote-catcher the right wing imagines.

So far has the backsliding gone that there is now a question over Labour's commitment to re-nationalise the priceless assets looted from the public sector by the Tory spivs and their friends in the City. Even the Tory anti-trade union laws it now appears, are not to be revoked in their entirety!

It is an absolute scandal that a minority of discredited right wing leaders should be able to ride roughshod over the aims and aspirations of the majority of the Labour Party. They have only managed this by means of the active connivance of the so-called "soft left" and also, unfortunately, because of the silence of the Lefts.

In previous *MIR* editorials, we predicted that the majority of the middle-class "trendy lefts" would move to the right. Temporarily halted by the pressure of the miners' strike, this process has re-commenced with a vengeance in the past few months. The open capitulation of Ken Livingstone over the issue of rate-capping is only the most glaring example.

The flight of the "lefts" has acquired the character of a shameful rout. Yet, paradoxically, the further they go to the right, the more vociferous and spiteful

they become in their attacks upon the genuine socialists, especially the Marxist tendency represented by the *Militant*. Some of these erstwhile middle-class "lefts" have taken it upon themselves to openly support and advocate the witch-hunting of *Militant*. Typical of these specimens is the Labour Co-ordinating Committee which has now openly reneged and gone over to the Kinnockites.

Of course, there are many honest Labour Party members who in the past have had illusions in these people, imagining them to be genuine lefts who will have nothing to do either with the desertion of socialist policies or with the hounding and expulsion of socialists.

The great majority of Labour Party activists want unity, not witch-hunts which play into the hands of the Tories. The great majority want to defend and extend the democratic gains of recent years. And the great majority want a fighting socialist policy which alone can lead to a crushing defeat of Thatcher and a massive Labour victory at the next election.

The same is true of the trade unions where similar tendencies may be observed. It is truly ironic that, just when the mood for struggle is building up within the unions, we have the disgraceful spectacle of a witch-hunting anti-*Militant* resolution being smuggled through the NUPE conference by a typical Stalinist manoeuvre.

Theoretically, the leadership of NUPE are supposed to be on the left. Nevertheless, people like Sawyer and Bickerstaff cannot be absolved of their responsibility. If the leadership of NUPE had lifted their little finger, this manoeuvre would have collapsed. The platform behaved like Pontius Pilate, in effect allowing the witch-hunters a free hand to get on with their dirty business before the majority of delegates knew what was going on.

Such shameful behaviour will not halt the process of radicalisation in the unions. The spectacular success of BLOC within the unions shows how the rank and file are looking for a real fighting left alternative. No amount of witch-hunting resolutions will put a stop to that. Instead, they will incense the rank-and-file who will redouble their efforts to build the left.

Within the working class, there exists a powerful feeling in favour of unity: that precious unity which is needed to defeat the Tories and return a Labour government with real socialist policies. Those who set about disrupting unity and organising witch-hunts with a view to getting cheap praise from the Tory press will not be kindly regarded by the overwhelming majority.

ty of Labour workers.

The tide has turned, but we have a big job in front of us. The rank-and-file must be mobilised to defeat the Tories, in the constituencies and YS branches, in the trade union branches and shop stewards' committees, in the factories and on the estates, in the Women's Sections and Co-ops.

The faint-hearts tell us that Labour needs a swing of 1945 proportions in order to get a majority. They do not see the colossal build-up of anger and resentment within broad layers of the population which is preparing the way precisely for violent swings of public opinion.

A big part of the reason for the Tory landslide in 1979 was disillusionment with the policies of right wing Labour and paradoxically the desire for a "radical change" which Thatcher demagogically put forward.

Whatever else can be said about the present incumbent of Number Ten, she has shown great strength and determination in militantly defending the interests of her class. If only the leaders of the trade unions and labour movement had shown equal force in defending the interests of the working class, mobilising the might of the movement, the reactionary Tory crew could have been brought to its knees long ago.

The way to win mass support and gather the forces necessary to sweep away the Tory government is to reaffirm the Labour Party's commitment to a bold socialist change.

To this end, the rank-and-file of the Labour Party and the trade unions must demand an end to the backsliding and temporising and insist that the leadership defend the kind of fighting socialist policies which are needed to put an end to the nightmare of unemployment, poverty wages and bad housing forever.

The road to the victory of Labour and socialism lies, not in the swamp of class collaborationism, compromise and surrender, but in rallying the entire movement around genuine socialist policies, the policies defended by the pioneers of our movement, the policies of Clause IV, part four of the party's constitution, of nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy under democratic workers' control and management.

The genuine Labour left will fight for these ideas. And, come what may, the Marxist supporters of *Militant* and *MIR* will be to the forefront of the struggle for a Labour government with a socialist programme.

Business Manager's Report

MIR expansion—a significant step

THE EXPANSION of the *MIR* from 32 to 44 pages is a major step in the development of the journal. The extra 12 pages will allow more feature articles, the possibility of regular articles on science and literature and the establishment of a letters page to which the Editors would encourage all readers to submit their comments, questions and criticisms about the *MIR*.

The editors recognise that this expansion is long overdue given the gathering tempo of events both in Britain and internationally. In the months since the last issue, for example, there has been a 16 day General Strike in Bolivia and a strike wave in Denmark that mobilised on demonstrations 250,000 of the 5 million population of that country. Elections have taken place inaugurating a new period of crisis in Brazil while the famine in East Africa brought to a head discontent with Numeiri and the overthrow of his regime.

In Britain, despite the end of the miners strike, the teachers battle has continued and lightening strikes showed the combative mood of postal workers. The second BLOC Conference represented another milestone for the Broad Lefts in the Trade Unions and the formation of the National Local Authority Co-ordinating Committee will be a lasting gain from the battle against rate-capping. The Tories proposals for 'conscripting' 16 and 17 year olds on to YTS provoked the 5,000 strong YTURC Lobby of Parliament in February and on April 25 the historic strike by 250,000 school students—the largest ever *organised* movement of youth in Britain. This was a symptom of the burning hatred that exists towards the Tories which was further revealed in the May County Council elections—raising the clear prospect of a Labour Government resulting from the next election.

Of course, the *Militant* has reported these events and endeavoured, within the confines of a 16 page weekly, to draw out the most salient lessons for the movement. But, as Trotsky explained, the experience provided by such events will lead many active workers to look for further theoretical material, for a "Journal (which) unfolds for its readers *all the steps of the Marxist analysis*" enabling the correct lessons



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a Marxist Quarterly

MIR, Autumn 1970. The MIR has improved considerably in appearance, frequency and range of content.

for the future to be drawn from current and past events. This is the indispensable role performed by the *MIR*.

However not even a quarterly 44 page *MIR* will provide sufficient space to adequately deal with all the questions that will be raised by the events that will unfold. It is the aim of the Editors to restore as soon as possible the coloured covers that have appeared on the last five issues. These attractive covers by Alan Hardman have been well received and have undoubtedly improved the appearance of the *MIR*. To restore them would immediately create an extra four pages. But any further expansion depends on you, the reader.

The Editors were only able to expand to 44 pages because of the efforts of the readers in some areas to improve the paid sales of the *MIR*. Sales in London, for example, for Issue 28 rose by 28% over sales for Issue 27 and 52% over Issue 26. The *MIR* in London has been sold at Labour Party meetings, in bookshops and at Trade Union meetings—one UCW member in central London sold six *MIR*'s at work. Also in London *MIR* Public Debates are being planned which will raise the stature of the *MIR* in the London labour movement.

Such an effort by some readers has allowed us to move to 44 pages while only raising the price by 5p to 80p. But to meet the new expense of a 44 page journal the money sent in for the paid sales of the *MIR* must be increased in every area by the same amount as that managed in London. Only then will the necessary expansion and more frequent publication of the *MIR* be possible. The editors renew our appeal to all readers to double their efforts to support and develop the *MIR*.

Arms race, war in the 1980s—

'Politics by other means'

FOR MARXISTS, war and revolution are fundamental questions. The basic positions on these issues were brilliantly worked out by the great Marxist thinkers of the past: Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Over a period of 40 years, these ideas have been added to and developed by the genuine tendency of modern Marxism represented by *Militant* and *Militant International Review*.

It is necessary to continually restate the fundamental conceptions of Marxism at each stage, in order not to be completely pushed off course by events.

Nowhere is this more true than in the great question of differences which arise between the nations. Clausewitz, the great German military historian explained that war is the most serious question because, ultimately, all the great problems are resolved in this way. Not only war between nations, but also the war between the classes, is what decides issues.

From their own point of view, the strategists of capital understand the nature of war, as do the Marxists. By contrast the so-called "theoreticians" of the Communist Party as well as the Labour right and left have forgotten all the most elementary teachings of Marx.

The ideological decay of all the leaderships of the workers' movements internationally—whether "Communist" or socialist—is clear from their position on war and peace.

The clear, precise formulations of Marx and Lenin have been pushed aside in favour of all kinds of middle class and pacifist ideas.

This is particularly clear in the case of the "Communist" Party, which imagines that "pressure" can prevent the rise of world war, and talks about the "unity of all Progressive Forces" to persuade the ruling class to politely renounce nuclear armaments!

These sorry reformist know-nothings now regard the teachings of Marx and Lenin as "old fashioned". They have long ago abandoned the class point of view whether in domestic or international politics. And, as old Clausewitz explained, "War is the continuation of policy (ie. politics—EG) by other means".

For the benefit of these ladies and gentlemen, it is necessary to repeat the ABCs of Marxism which explained

By Ted Grant

long ago the economic basis of society and politics. As Lenin concisely put it: "Politics is concentrated economics."

On the basis of existing property relations, there arises the national and international superstructure, upon which politics are based.

The politics of the ruling class in the West, and the ruling bureaucracies of the Stalinist states, are determined by the need to defend their material power, incomes, prestige and privileges and, in the case of the capitalists, what is decisive, their profits. This is what determines their actions both at home and abroad.

Incidentally, the serious strategists of the bourgeoisie always tend to arrive at similar conclusions to the Marxists. In reality, many of them are influenced by the ideas of Marxism without acknowledging the fact.

They understand perfectly well the material basis of world politics. Their attitude is a million times more serious than all the petit-bourgeois froth of the pacifists and reformists.

The central contradiction

The central contradiction of our epoch on a world scale is the contradiction between mighty Stalinist Russia, on the one hand, and the giant of American imperialism, on the other. This fundamental antagonism existed before the Second World War, but has now been magnified a thousandfold.

In 1939, the German and British imperialists could allow themselves the luxury of going to war because they imagined that this basic antagonism—between world capitalism and the deformed workers' state in Russia—would be removed either during or after the war.

In view of the fact that this year marks the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War Two, it is perhaps fitting that we should deal with what that war really represented.

The Second World War was the biggest single miscalculation in the history of world capitalism. The British, German and American im-

perialists all paid a heavy price for their mistake. Because the crimes of Stalin and the bureaucracy had gravely weakened the Soviet army and economy, Hitler imagined that he would have an easy victory in Russia.

For their part, the war plans of the alleged "democratic" bourgeoisie of Britain were based on the idea that Germany and Russia would fight themselves to a standstill, and then, when they were both exhausted, Britain could "mop them both up."

But the calculations of all the imperialist powers came undone. The Second World War in Europe really resolved itself into a titanic struggle between Stalinist Russia, based on a nationalised planned economy, and Nazi Germany, with the resources of most of Europe behind it.

Despite the crimes of Stalinism, the Russian workers and peasants defeated the Nazis at Stalingrad, Kursk, Leningrad and Moscow and carried out the greatest military advance in the whole of human history.

This was a catastrophe for European and American capitalism. By 1945, they had lost half of Europe. The German capitalists lost most, with their country cut in two. The dropping of the atom-bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was meant as a warning to Russia as Japan was already defeated. However it did not achieve its intended aim of preventing the Red Army from marching into Manchuria, and defeating the Japanese army in ten days.

Stalinism strengthened

The victory of Russian Stalinism in the war, and the subsequent victory of Mao in China created a new world balance of forces which has set its stamp decisively on the modern epoch.

The peculiar development of the war itself could not have been foreseen even by the greatest genius. All the imperialists had miscalculated—not to speak of Stalin and the Moscow bureaucracy whose false and criminal policies were, together with the imperialists, also responsible for the war.

Before his assassination at the hands of a Stalinist agent, Leon Trotsky had predicted that the war would end either in the world socialist revolution, or the military defeat of the USSR. (Although in his last work,

Stalin, left unfinished at his death, Trotsky had already put forward the idea that the Stalinist regime could survive for a whole historical period.)

In fact, the Stalinist regime emerged from the war strengthened by its military victory over Hitler. The establishment in occupied Eastern Europe of regimes of Proletarian Bonapartism—one-party, totalitarian bureaucratic police-states in the image of Moscow—did not weaken the bureaucracy but strengthened it, as did the Chinese revolution of 1945–1949.

The social base in Eastern Europe and China was transformed. Capitalism and landlordism were eliminated. This was an enormous step forward despite the step backwards taken by the establishment of military-police regimes rather than proletarian or socialist democracy. At the same time we had the mighty movement of the masses in the colonial and semi-colonial countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, which compelled the former colonial powers gradually to relinquish direct military rule, in favour of more indirect domination through the mechanism of the world market, the terms of trade, interest rates and "aid".

All this established an entirely new situation on a world scale, which could not have been foreseen in advance. Under the pressure of the expansion of Stalinism, the colonial revolution and the threat of revolution in Western Europe and Japan, US imperialism was compelled to underwrite the losses of capitalism in the advanced capitalist countries, while simultaneously trying to prop up the rotten and degenerated capitalist regimes of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Postwar boom

The reasons for the post-war world economic boom have been explained in other articles and documents. The prior condition for this was the derailment of the revolution in Europe after the war by the false policies of the Social Democratic and Stalinist leaderships.

The division of the entire world between the two giant superpowers—the USA and the Soviet Union—compelled the other, smaller, powers to gather together on pain of extinction. For strategic, political and economic reasons, US imperialism launched the Marshall plan which assisted economic recovery in Western Europe and Japan.

The devastation caused by the war itself opened up new markets and avenues for investment. On the other



Nixon, Brezhnev and Kissinger, Moscow 1974. While the central contradiction of our time is the antagonism between Russian Stalinism and US imperialism, at the same time, they need each other and lean upon each other. Both sides dread the possibility of the working class coming to power in any country.

hand, the crushing dominance of US imperialism as the dominant world power, meant that the all-powerful dollar, directly linked to gold, could play the role of a world currency (to a lesser extent with the pound), and a medium of trade.

The USA was compelled to keep the world economy moving on pain of extinction. The main motor force for the unprecedented economic upswing which took place from 1950 to the mid-1970's was an unparalleled intensification of the world division of labour, world trade and world economy, to a far greater degree than in the past.

This was the main reason for the boom, although there were other contributory factors. The general application of Keynesian policies of deficit financing and increased state expenditure, especially arms expenditure, served to fuel the boom, but only at an enormous cost of stoking up the fires of inflation. Vast quantities of fictitious capital were produced in this period, including the million million Euro-dollars which are floating around Western Europe today.

This brilliant fire-works display which lit up the decline of capitalism generated tremendous illusions in the possibilities of a new era of peace and plenty. The bourgeoisie talked of a "Pax Americana" and "the American Century". Compared to the conditions of the 1920s and 30s, all the advanced capitalist countries were passing through a period of full employment and relative plenty for the masses.

Naturally, the reformist and Stalinist "ideologists" fell for all this. They did not understand that the bourgeoisie had partially and temporarily overcome the fundamental contradiction (ie. the contradiction between the development of the productive forces within the strait-jacket of private ownership and the national state) through this unparalleled

development of world trade and the world division of labour.

In a brilliant confirmation of what Marx and Engels had written in 1847, the world became one single, interdependent economic unit, one single market, to which every national state is subordinate.

Even the Stalinist states were drawn into the world market, forced by the economic crisis of the bureaucratic regimes, to abandon the reactionary dream of "autarchy" and the madness of trying to build up "independent" economies in Russia, China, Czechoslovakia, Poland etc under the banner of "socialism in one country".

The development of atomic weapons is the final and crushing answer to the reactionary utopia of Stalin's "theory" of 'Socialism in One Country'. Everything built up in decades of labour and sacrifice can be destroyed in minutes. The fate of the workers of all countries is bound together by the ties of the world economy. It is also tied together too by the world-wide class struggle. Only victory in the most important countries can guarantee a march forward to democratic workers' power and then socialism.

Throughout the long period of boom after World War Two, the main contradiction between the capitalist and non-capitalist states has not been eliminated. But for reasons which we will explain below, it has not led to a new World War. Instead, it finds its expression in the insane arms race involving the most diabolical weapons on land, underground, on the sea-bed and now in outer space also.

Nevertheless, the changed balance of forces internationally has meant that the so-called "small wars" which have taken place every year since 1945 have not led to an all-out conflict between Russia and America. To some extent, the economic upswing temporarily mitigated the antagonisms.

In spite of the bureaucracy, the advantage of a nationalised planned economy was shown by the achievements of the Soviet Union since the war. The Soviet economy increased about 10% per annum as late as the 1950's. These tremendous achievements of the USSR must be set against the terrible destruction of the war, when Russia suffered more than any other country, with more than 20 million dead.

Marx and Engels long ago explained that no social system ever ceases to exist before it has exhausted all the potential for the development of the productive forces inherent within it.

The secret of the relative stability of the bureaucratic regimes in Russia and Eastern Europe since the war, as Trotsky explained, was due partly to the fear of imperialist intervention on the part of the masses, but mainly because the bureaucracy was still capable of playing a relatively progressive role in developing the economy, although at a cost several times higher than under capitalism.

And here we have a new and striking contradiction. On the one hand, the antagonism between the Russian bureaucracy and US imperialism has enormously intensified since 1939. On the other hand, the existence of totalitarian regimes of proletarian bonapartism makes it far easier to get temporary agreements than was possible during the lifetime of Lenin and Trotsky, on the basis of a healthy workers' state, led by a revolutionary internationalist Bolshevik Party.

"Peaceful co-existence"

The reason for this is that not only the bourgeois, but also the bureaucratic Stalinist regimes are opposed to the Socialist revolution. This is especially true for the advanced capitalist countries, but also in the colonial world, where the danger would exist of these revolutions leading to the establishment of a healthy workers' state. In fact, the bureaucracy is even more terrified than the bourgeois of the victory of the working class and the setting up of regimes of proletarian democracy which would directly challenge its power and privileges.

This explains the possibility, at least for temporary periods, of arriving at a "modus vivendi" in an attempt to safeguard the interests of the imperialists and the bureaucracy, on the basis of the status quo.

Despite all the threats, insults and fist-waving, the strategists of capital know that the Stalinist bureaucracies are merely a new variant of reformism. They represent no threat as far as their

subjective intentions go. In fact, insofar as there can exist a social stability under capitalism, the Social Democratic and "Stalinist" leaders contribute to this. The so-called "Communist" Parties in Western Europe, the USA and Japan for decades have "done their bit" to help to shore up capitalism.

Moscow's counter-revolutionary role

The new and repulsive degeneration known as "Eurocommunism" is an historical punishment and a just reward for those bankrupt "theoreticians" of Stalinism who haughtily dismissed the idea put forward by Trotsky in 1928 that the acceptance of socialism in one country would mark the beginning of the national-reformist degeneration of all the Communist Parties in the world, whether in or out of power.

Only the stupidity of US imperialism prevents the entry of the Italian CP into the government—for the moment at least. The example of France shows how these ladies and gentlemen behave when "in office"—like good "respectable" reformists, eager to do the dirty work of the capitalists until they are unceremoniously ejected with a kick in the pants!

The crisis of capitalism spells internal convulsions for all the "Communist" Parties, as we see in Britain, Spain, Greece, Finland etc.

These people represent no threat to the ruling class in the West. The more astute bourgeois have understood this and are prepared, when faced with a movement of the workers, to arrive at a deal with the "Communists". So why is it not possible to have a similar arrangements with the "reasonable" men in the Kremlin?

For their part, the Russian bureaucracy would be only too willing to reach an agreement. They have no interest in world revolution. All they want is to preserve their power, incomes, prestige and privilege and get on with the job of organising "their" countries.

The laws which govern a nationalised planned economy are not the same as those which operate under capitalism. The Stalinist bureaucracy does not need to expand, to conquer foreign territory and markets.

The Moscow bureaucracy has played a counter-revolutionary role for decades. Even in the colonial world, the revolutions that have taken place did so, not because of the bureaucracy, but in spite of it. In Iraq and Sudan, the CP held rallies of more than a

million people. They could have taken power peacefully without civil war and bloodshed. Instead, they knowingly handed over power to allegedly "progressive" army officers who thanked them by carrying out a massacre of Communists, workers and peasants.

In Indonesia, exactly the same role was played by the CP which claimed 3 million members, of whom probably a million were murdered by the reactionary army officers. In this case, the responsibility lies at the door of the Chinese bureaucracy which controlled the Indonesian Party and encouraged it not to take power, although they had behind them 10 million organised workers and 40% of the army—far more than Lenin dreamed of in 1917!

The Russian bureaucracy originally opposed the Chinese revolution of 1945–1949. Stalin recommended to Mao that he should enter a coalition government with Chiang Kai Shek! The fact that Mao disregarded this invitation to suicide was no thanks to Moscow.

In Cuba, the corrupt and utterly degenerate "Communist" Party supported the dictator Batista, and denounced Castro. Only after Castro took power after the general strike in Havana, and broke with US imperialism, did the Kremlin finally give aid. If it would have depended on the Stalinists, the Cuban revolution would never have taken place.

In the Philippines the Moscow orientated Communist Party, the PKP, has been legalised and tolerated by Marcos since 1974. Today it is desperately trying to split the opposition Communist Party, the CPP, and its guerrilla forces, formerly Maoist but now independent. The so-called hard-line *Morning Star* has given its approval to these counter-revolutionary reformist "Communists" who have tacitly tolerated the Marcos regime, like their brother party tolerated Batista. So the *Morning Star* gives support to "Communists" who are worse than the Euro-Communists—but then Moscow supports the PKP and therefore they must be supported! The *Morning Star*, ironically in its 1985 May Day issue, published a completely uncritical interview with the leader of the pro-Moscow Philippine "Communist" Party where he openly explained these counter-revolutionary plans. The rotten CP's in Asia, Africa and Latin America have nowhere carried out the socialist revolution except, as explained, in a caricatured and distorted form in China and Indo-China. Not accidentally, the *Times* recommended the CP to be taken into the new government in Sudan. They did a good job last time round, with Numeiri!

Despite the reactionary raving of

Reagan, Moscow was not responsible for the Nicaraguan revolution. On the contrary, the Russian and Cuban bureaucracies have put pressure on the Sandinistas not to carry through the revolution to the end, to do a deal with the (in reality, non-existent) "progressive" Nicaraguan bourgeoisie and come to a compromise with US imperialism.

The bureaucracy is striving for a deal with Washington. The last thing it wants is trouble in Central America which might "embarrass" Reagan and upset the chance of an "understanding".

No 'Russian threat'

However, the dreams of Gorbachov overlook the fundamental question: the basic contradiction between a regime based on nationalisation of the economy and a plan, and decaying capitalism.

The bureaucracy strives time and time again to reach an agreement with US imperialism, based upon "peaceful co-existence" between different social systems. They cynically distort Lenin's teachings on the subject of war to justify their twists and turns. In vain! The very existence of deformed workers' states undermines capitalism—irrespective of the subjective intentions of the bureaucracy.

It is true that the monstrous regimes of totalitarian one-party states no longer exercise a power of attraction over the masses in the advanced capitalist countries of Japan, Western Europe and the United States.

However, in the ex-colonial and semi-colonial world the question is posed entirely differently. Under conditions of mass starvation, with the impasse of capitalism, the masses would still look towards Russia and China for a way out.

Therefore, the existence of mighty nationalised, planned economies, in spite of the bureaucracy, constitutes a pole of attraction for the masses in the underdeveloped countries and a powerful stimulant for the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movements of the masses.

It is this, and not the alleged "Russian threat" which most worries the strategists of capital. Russia's economic system does not require expansion. Although the Red Army could easily win a conventional (ie non-nuclear) war in Europe, Moscow has, in reality, no intention of attacking.

Apart from anything else, they could not hold down the workers of France, Italy, Germany, Britain etc. They have their hands full, as it is, trying to keep down the Poles! In reali-

ty, a military occupation of Western Europe would be the end of the bureaucracy. The present day Red Army, mainly composed of young workers in uniform, is not the same as the Red Army in 1945. They would rapidly be infected by the germs of revolution.

Every serious military analyst now agrees that, in a conventional war in Europe, nothing could stop the Warsaw Pact forces. Within a week or so they would be in complete control of Europe. Germany would probably not last 24 or, at most 48 hours.

The German army with Prussian military discipline set out to conquer the world twice this century. Now this is ruled out by the changed relationship of forces. The forces of the NATO pact would be brushed aside by the immeasurably superior forces of the Warsaw Pact.

The changed situation is clearly recognised by the ruling class of West Germany who are reduced to the status of a virtual satellite of the United States. That the capitalist rulers understand this clearly is shown by the position of the former mighty German army. Its Prussian military discipline has been so diluted that most of the army is on leave at weekends! This would give apoplexy to the former Prussian officer caste! Incidentally it is also a crushing confirmation of how seriously they take their own propaganda about the much vaunted 'threat' of a Russian or Warsaw Pact invasion!

The conclusion is clear. A major war between the two great super-powers would necessarily be a nuclear war. It would mean the destruction of humanity and probably the termination of all life on the planet.

Class standpoint needed

The threat of nuclear war has caught the imagination of many, particularly of the youth. In recent years we have seen big movements in many countries against nuclear armaments, against NATO and against the scandalous waste of resources represented by the staggering sums spent on arms manufacture.

Marxists have every sympathy with the burning indignation of the youth against these abominations which threaten the very existence of life itself. The desire to fight against militarism, imperialist alliances like NATO, and the monstrous bleeding of society by the "military-industrial complex" contains a fundamentally progressive aspect, which must be supported.

However, it is the duty of Marxists to explain the processes taking place

within society, not just to weep and rail against the arms race and "war in general". As Lenin tirelessly explained, nothing is so futile as empty and sentimental pacifist rhetoric.

War is not a question of morality. It is a class question. It is precisely "the continuation of politics by other means", as Clausewitz said and Lenin often repeated. The complete degeneration of the reformists and particularly the latest variety of "Euro-Communist" reformism is shown in their attitude towards war.

They have completely capitulated to vulgar, middle-class pacifism of the most empty and superficial kind. They seriously imagine that it is possible to avoid war by "putting pressure" on the bourgeois, by means of "public opinion" and "uniting all progressive forces", appeals to the church, the United Nations, etc.

The first question a Marxist would ask about war, as anything else, is: What class is behind it? Whose interests are involved? Does it benefit or prejudice the interests of the working class?

In the time of Marx and Engels, it was still possible to speak of progressive wars in Europe, for example the wars of Italian unification and German unification. In the present epoch the wars of colonial liberation too have a progressive character and must be supported.

The war of Nicaragua against the "Contras" is in reality, a class war against imperialism and capitalism which is being distorted by the Sandinista leadership in order to conceal the real nature of the class struggle.

Marxists do not have a position on war "in general", but support the progressive struggles of the oppressed masses to liberate themselves from national and class slavery.

Mass pressure and "public opinion" can sometimes have a certain effect obliging the ruling class to modify its position on secondary questions. But it can never force the bourgeoisie to change course on important questions which affect its fundamental interests. And that includes fundamental questions of military policy, ie the ability of the ruling class to defend its power and influence, if necessary by force.

The futility of these petit-bourgeois illusions is shown by the role of the (dis) United Nations. In reality the UN is a forum in which the smaller powers—like Nicaragua—can vent their spleen against the bigger imperialist powers.

The limitations of this talking-shop however, is shown by the position of the Security Council, where each of the major powers has a veto. The decisions are taken by the mighty economic and

military powers. Anything which affects the fundamental interests of the super-powers is, therefore, automatically vetoed.

The UN has been a farce from the very beginning. As a "peacekeeping force" its record has been really brilliant: four or five wars every year since 1945! In other words, it is as impotent as the League of Nations was before the war.

This is hardly surprising since it represents a "forum" for fundamentally opposed forces. It is like the reformist idea of "getting the workers and bosses together over a table". Nothing fundamental is resolved, and the real struggle is decided elsewhere and by other means.

If there has been no war—in the sense of world war between Russia and America—that has been due neither to the UN nor the pacifist anti-war movements in the West, but because of the class balance of forces nationally and internationally.

Nuclear winter

The pacifists and their reformist and Stalinist co-thinkers have no real understanding of the mechanics of war in the modern epoch. The capitalists do not make war to amuse themselves, for patriotism or for moral considerations. They make war to obtain material benefits: markets, territory, spheres of influence, raw materials and profit.

In 1939, they could permit themselves the luxury of going to war, for reasons explained above. But now they are in an entirely new ball game. To take on Russia in Europe would be to invite a crushing defeat in a conventional war. What, then, is the likelihood of a nuclear war?

In the recent period, scientists have uncovered the full extent of the catastrophe that a nuclear war would represent. If only a small percentage of the nuclear arsenal of one of the super powers were exploded, it would cause a "nuclear winter". Large amounts of debris would be thrown up into the atmosphere, blotting out the sunlight. For many months the Northern hemisphere would live in perpetual darkness, with Siberian temperatures. All plant and animal life not already destroyed by heat, blast and radiation would perish. The same effect would spread to the southern hemisphere, transforming the earth into a dead planet.

Under these conditions a major war between the super powers of Russia and US imperialism, either nuclear or conventional, is ruled out. Neither side would have the slightest interest in such a war.

However, the central antagonism between the USSR and US imperialism does not exhaust the question of international relations. There are also contradictions between the imperialist powers. Thus, we have the growing tensions between the USA, Japan and Western Europe, which surfaced in the recent world economic summit.

In fact, in the past, the degree of antagonism which now exists between Japan, the EEC and the USA would undoubtedly have led to war between them. However, this is also ruled out under modern conditions.

Germany, the strongest member of the European "rich man's club", suffered a crippling blow in 1945, when the country was cut in two. With the powerful forces of the Warsaw Pact parked on its doorstep, German capitalism knows it is in no position to indulge in military adventures in Europe, or anywhere else.

The case of Japan is even more striking. In the past, the Japanese militarists always expanded via Korea and Manchuria in the direction of North China and the mineral wealth of Siberia. Geographically speaking Japan itself is a continuation of the Manchurian Peninsula. But now the idea of Japan invading Korea, or taking on the military might of Chinese or Russian Stalinism is just laughable.

Both the Japanese and German capitalists have drawn the inevitable conclusion. Part of the reason for the outstanding successes of the Japanese economic "miracle" is the fact that they have been spending only a minuscule amount on arms, less than one per cent of GNP, at least up to the recent period, and have ploughed back the money thus saved into productive investment, machinery and technology.

Colossal waste

Vast amounts of money are being squandered every year on arms expenditure, which under modern conditions is mainly the production of expensive scrap metal. The great majority of this, especially of the gigantic arsenals of the super-powers, will never be used. The madness of the arms race is shown by Reagan's Star Wars, which will cost the staggering sum of 26 billion dollars, just for research! To deploy these weapons, in turn, would cost a million million dollars.

The main reason for this is the pressure of the voracious arms monopolies which have a powerful lobby in Washington. This was strikingly revealed in the recent scandal involving corruption in General Dynamics, the third largest US

defence contractor, which was fined \$676,283 for giving gifts to an admiral to secure orders with the Pentagon. The latter has paid \$9,600 for an ordinary spanner and \$640 for a lavatory seat!

The Times recently pointed out that: "The jobs of one out of every 10 Americans depend directly or indirectly on defence spending. The Pentagon is the largest single purchaser of goods and services in the nation. Defence industries account for 10 per cent of all US manufacturing. In some states, notably California, defence-related employment is the largest single source of personal income. Defence employs 25 per cent of the nation's scientists and engineers. There are twice as many defence workers as there are farmers."

"The influence of this vast military-industrial complex has been greatly expanded by Reagan's unprecedented \$2.3 trillion defence build-up. The Pentagon is now spending an average of \$28 million every hour—24 hours a day, seven days a week." (*The Times*, 23, May 1985, my emphasis, EG).

One of the features of the recent boom in the US has been an increase in public spending, mainly on arms expenditure, while the money for the old, the sick and the unemployed has been ruthlessly cut back.

This is a peculiar variant of Goering's celebrated phrase: "Guns instead of butter!" Before the war, Hitler's rearmament programme did help the German economy to get out of recession. But by 1939 the effects of rearmament had been exhausted. The arms had to be used!

Now, however, the arms accumulated cannot be used, except in bloody forays in the colonial world. And arms expenditure is inherently inflationary. It is the production of fictitious capital. At a certain stage, from being a stimulus to the economy, it will turn into the opposite. Probably next year, the boom will enter into a new recession, aggravated by the stored-up inflation of the previous period.

Similarly the Stalinist bureaucracies are compelled to spend vast amounts on arms expenditure. The Russian workers' state under Lenin and Trotsky spent a relatively small amount on defence, because the main basis of their foreign policy was the Communist International and the extension of the world revolution.

Today the Russian bureaucracy is unwilling and unable to base itself on the support of the international working class. Yet the only real defence of the USSR consists, in the last analysis, in the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of world socialism.

The lavish expenditure of the bureaucracy on costly toys for the military, big parades, rockets etc is intended to frighten the Russian workers with the spectre of a new world war and the horrors of imperialist intervention. On the other hand, it is meant to pander to the military wing of the bureaucracy, ever jealous of their prestige and perks.

Not long ago, a large-scale "nuclear air-raid alert" was staged in Moscow. Western military analysts commented on the worthlessness of this exercise from a purely practical point of view. However, the real intention was to intensify the fear of war among the mass of Soviet workers, and divert their attention from the unbearable rule of the bureaucracy.

As far as world relations are concerned, we are confronted with a dialectical contradiction. The central contradiction of our epoch on a world scale is the antagonism between Russian Stalinism and US imperialism. But while they stand implacably opposed to each other, at the same time, they need each other and lean upon each other.

In reality, the existence of hideously deformed, bureaucratic totalitarian states in the East is just as useful to the Western capitalists as the imperialist war threat and all the horrors of capitalism—mass unemployment, poverty, racialism—are for the bureaucracy.

The welding together of the world economy provides the material base for the unfolding world revolution. For the first time, the spectre of revolution is haunting the three major areas of the world simultaneously: the advanced capitalist countries, the underdeveloped countries of the "Third World", and the Stalinist states.

The period we are now entering will be the most explosive in human history.

On the basis of capitalism and the nation state there is no way out for the working class of the West, or for the workers and peasants of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Similarly, the impasse of the economies of Russia and Eastern Europe indicate that the regime of bureaucratic planning has now reached its limits.

In the last ten years Russian production has been lower than that of the United States! This is the first decade since the Five Year Plans have been adopted that this has happened. But Marxism teaches that socialism will be victorious over capitalism because it furnishes a higher productivity of labour and higher output. What this means is that the Stalinist bureaucracy is choking up the

economy and that bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, dictatorship and nepotism is preventing the advantages of state ownership and a plan from being realised. The economy is seizing up. From being relatively progressive, bureaucratic rule has become absolutely reactionary.

But capitalism and imperialism are in an even worse plight. New economic and political convulsions are inevitable. The last 10 years will seem like a prosperous golden era compared to the grim reality of the next 10 years. This will be a decade of storm and stress.

The only solution for humanity is the socialist revolution in the West and the political revolution in the deformed workers' states. That is the only way to avoid the horrors of unemployment and war in the future.

Bureaucracy's narrow nationalism

The question of war in the modern epoch, as in the past, is a function of the class struggle. The reason why there has been no world war in the past period, despite the existence of conflicts which in the past would have inevitably led to a general conflagration, is not that the imperialists and capitalists have suddenly become converted to pacifism.

It is due to cold calculation and material interest. The overwhelming superiority of the Soviet Union in conventional weapons, as we have explained, means that any war between Russia and America would necessarily be a nuclear war. But this would be to "kill the goose that lays the golden egg". It would also be the end of the capitalists themselves. Therefore, in the immediate or short term, there is no question of a world war or a nuclear war.

So long as the bourgeoisie remains in control of the state, such an eventuality is ruled out. However, this state of affairs will not last forever.

If the working class fails to overthrow capitalism and imperialism within the next ten or twenty years, then the ruling class will begin to seek a way out on the basis of the establishment of monstrous Bonapartist military-police states. Such a regime in the United States would have an extremely unstable character. But for this very reason, an American Pinochet would look to the possibility of "solving" the problem by means of a nuclear "first strike" against the Soviet Union.

Thus, the question of the survival of the human race is bound up with the struggle for socialism internationally.

Under modern conditions, war is not a national question. Nuclear weapons know no frontiers. Radiation, fall-out and the nuclear winter are no respectors of neutrality.

The narrow, reactionary nationalism of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which imagines it can "defend" the Soviet Union by reaching an agreement with imperialism, in reality represents the greatest threat to the Soviet Union and the future of mankind.

Likewise, the petit-bourgeois illusions in pacifism and "neutralism" will be impotent to prevent war, despite the positive side of mobilising large numbers of youth, women and workers against the threat of nuclear annihilation. Only if these movements are linked to the struggle for the socialist transformation of society can they really play a role in solving the problems of war.

Lenin pointed out that, unless the working class took power, there would be a second, a third and a tenth world war until civilisation would be destroyed. Despite the fact that there has been no world war since 1945, this idea remains correct today. Except that a nuclear war would mean the destruction not only of civilisation but of all life on the planet.

The coming period will be a period of wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions. It will be a prolonged and protracted period of the death agony of capitalism.

In this period, while a world war between Russia and America is ruled out, there will be many "small" wars in the colonial world. The war of Iran and Iraq, which already is similar to World War One in terms of casualties, shows that, under modern conditions, conventional war can be almost as horrific as nuclear war. All kinds of devilish weapons are now available: not only fragmentation bombs and exploding bullets, but napalm, poison gas, chemical and bacteriological warfare.

In Vietnam, more bombs were dropped than in the whole course of World War Two. The Americans bombed Cambodia back into the stone-age—which was an important reason for the murderous frenzy of the Khmer Rouge peasant troops when they entered the cities. Similar abominations are inevitable unless the working class takes power in the ex-colonial countries and the advanced capitalist countries.

Because of the enormous intensification of the world division of labour, the revolutionary process has a more international character than in the whole of history. One success of the revolution in any major country will have an electrifying effect upon all the other countries.

For decades, despite the underlying

antagonism, the Russian Bureaucracy and US imperialism have leaned on each other. Both sides look with dread upon the possibility of the working class coming to power in any country. The victory of the workers in Spain, Greece, France, Britain or the USA would completely undermine the basis of the Bureaucracy.

On the other hand, the victory of the political revolution and the establishment of a genuine workers' democracy in the USSR would spell the end of capitalism and imperialism internationally.

The unparalleled development of industry, science and technique, particularly in the course of the last few decades, means that for the first time the material conditions for socialism now exist on a world scale.

At the end of the 1970s, in every four years, £1 million millions was wasted on arms expenditure throughout the world. Now that figure is £1 million million in less than two years. This sum of money alone could transform the lives of every man, woman and child on the planet if it were used for productive purposes.

On the basis of the planned and harmonious application of the new technique—industrial robots, computers, micro-electronics, satellite—the resources of the whole planet could be utilised to the full to provide a better life for all. Contrary to the pessimistic assertions of the bourgeois, there are ample resources potentially to guarantee a full and happy life for every human being on the planet.

The only thing which stands in the way of the attainment of these things is the outmoded ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange by a privileged handful, and the narrow limitations of the national state which has now become transformed into an absolute fetter on the development of the productive forces.

A World Socialist Federation would usher in a new and qualitatively higher phase of human civilization. Mankind would stand a head taller in a world freed from the horrors of war, unemployment, illiteracy and disease.

Additional reading

- *MIR* Spring 1984, "Andropov and After—the crisis of Stalinism" by Peter Taaffe.
- Cuba: Analysis of the revolution by Peter Taaffe, 20p.
- The coming world revolution by Ted Grant, 30p
- Bureaucratism or workers' power by R Silverman and T Grant, 60p.

Sinn Fein blocks workers' unity— A reply to Ken Livingstone

DURING THE 1970's the Labour leadership in Britain maintained a disastrous policy of bipartizanship with the Tories on the question of Northern Ireland.

This meant Labour support for the repressive methods of the state. It meant a Labour administration from 1974-1979 which intensified this repression. Under Secretary of State Roy Mason and his henchman Don Concannon, both MP's who represent mining communities in Britain, draconian methods were practiced and perfected by the state in readiness for later use against the British miners, among others.

Since 1979 a discussion on Northern Ireland has opened up within the British labour movement. The rejection of bipartizanship by the Labour Party conference in 1981 was a huge step forward. How can the Tories who have created four million jobless in Britain be expected to solve the problems of Northern Ireland? Through this discussion Labour now has the opportunity to work out an independent class position on Ireland.

Unfortunately a number of prominent figures on the non-Marxist left of the Labour Party, most notably Ken Livingstone, have abandoned the policy of the right in favour of a no less disastrous policy of their own.

Ken Livingstone has rejected bipartizanship with the Tories—and instead advocates a policy of bipartizanship with the nationalists of Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA. In this article Peter Hadden explains how Ken Livingstone's stance on N. Ireland in recent years has done a disservice to the cause of socialism in Ireland and thereby to the movement in Britain also.

During the 1981 hunger strike Bobby Sands won a Westminster seat in Fermanagh/South Tyrone. After his death the seat was won by Owen Carron of Sinn Fein. Following this success Sinn Fein went on to contest a number of elections and have managed to win about 40% of the Catholic

By Peter Hadden

vote. In the recent local government elections they won 59 seats and 11.8% of the total vote.

Ken Livingstone, and those who until the recent split in its Editorial Board were his co-thinkers around the journal, *Labour Herald*, were completely mesmerised by Sinn Fein's initial success. Livingstone himself predicted (*Labour Herald* 4/3/83) that Sinn Fein "is likely to emerge as the main voice of the Catholic minority at the next General election."

Such projections have proved wildly optimistic. Today Sinn Fein leaders are careful not to raise the expectations of their supporters as they did at first. So Danny Morrison has more soberly acknowledged that "it could well be that we will not overtake the SDLP in the foreseeable future". (*Magill* Sept '84)

All criticism absent

That Sinn Fein's success has been more modest than he (and they) first foresaw has in no way dulled Livingstone's enthusiasm. He has visited Belfast (26/2/83) at their invitation and was shown Catholic areas. He did not contact or attempt to meet any trade union or Labour organisation while here.

In Britain he has shared platforms with Sinn Fein, (and with the Young Liberals) on the issue of Troops out. More recently he has been a mover behind the decision to invite a 'representative of Republican opinion', in other words a Sinn Fein representative, to address the next London Labour Party Conference.

Labour Herald has carried a number of articles and interviews with Sinn Fein personnel, each one published without comment or criticism. In fact this journal, of which Ken Livingstone has been one of three Co-editors from its foundation in 1981 until May this

year, has acted as a platform for Sinn Fein and as an apologist for the IRA.

The entire effect of Livingstone's activity and of such propaganda, has been, on the one side, to discredit Labour in the minds of many workers, Catholic and Protestant, in Northern Ireland, and, on the other, to allow Sinn Fein a veneer of credibility they do not deserve. Small wonder Adams, Morrison and co. have been grateful for his efforts: "Ken Livingstone's visit here in Feb 83, Gerry Adams going to London after the exclusion order was lifted in July '83, all these things have been very important in terms of the struggle." (Morrison *Magill* Sept '84).

To justify his support Livingstone has to present Sinn Fein as something its leaders do not even claim it to be. Flattening their image in Britain a little to match the sets about embellishing it with a socialist tinge: "Most people have a conception of the IRA and Sinn Fein as a predominantly Nationalist organisation... how much of this was true in the past I do not know, but over the last four years a new leadership of Sinn Fein has broken out of the simple Nationalist mould." (*Labour Herald* 4/3/83).

It would come as news to the present Sinn Fein leadership that they are not a predominantly Nationalist organisation! But no matter. Their ally in the GLC has even greater praise for them. "Sinn Fein is also developing a full programme of social and economic reform akin to the Labour Party." (*Labour Herald* 4/3/83.)

It would be difficult to depart further from reality than these statements. Sinn Fein is not a socialist organisation. Nor will it evolve in that direction. True, some of its recent propaganda is embroidered with radical sounding phrases, references to democratic socialism etc. But so also was the material produced by Sinn Fein and the IRA in the early 1970's, when it was under the leadership of right wing Nationalists and sectarians like Ruairi O'Bradaigh.

The basis of Sinn Fein whether led by O'Bradaigh or Gerry Adams is Nationalism not Socialism. It's election material has been nationalist in content and crudely sectarian in appeal. So Owen Carron defended his Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat in 1982 with material which did not mention socialism and with the slogan 'save this Nationalist Seat'. Danny Morrison in Mid Ulster stressed that with increased Sinn Fein support, "Mid Ulster will be returned to the Nationalist people."

In the urban areas class issues have been taken up but always in a purely sectarian manner. Take for example



Healey, Owen and Roy Mason, NI Secretary of State in the last Labour government. Under Mason, a South Yorkshire MP, draconian measures were practised by the state in readiness for later use against the British miners, amongst others.

Gerry Adams' 1983 election manifesto—Under UNEMPLOYMENT it begin "Nationalist unemployment figures in West Belfast..."; Under HOUSING "The worst housing figures in Western Europe, particularly so in case of nationalist areas..."; Under EDUCATION; "There is no provision for nationalist aspiration or culture..."; Under REPRESSION "...the nationalist population have not only had to suffer..."; Under DISCRIMINATION "discrimination in favour of Protestants".

Of the low wages, bad housing (equally as bad in the protestant Shankill areas of this constituency as in the Falls) of the education cuts, school closures, of all the problems which affect protestant workers, not a word. Of socialism, in this particular leaflet, not a mention either.

Radical phrases

Sinn Fein's vote is in part a traditional nationalist vote which previously went to the right wing Irish Independence Party (IIP). They also have won the support of an important section of the Catholic working class, especially the youth. To these people Sinn Fein is an anti-establishment, anti-Tory party. Many vote for it because it is the only body which has taken up the issue of repression. In this sense part of this vote is a distorted class vote which has gone to Sinn Fein because of the absence of any alternative.

Does this not confirm Livingstone's argument that this is a potentially socialist party? On the contrary! Sinn Fein represents a dead end for these youth. Even if they were to emerge as

the major force among the Catholic community it would matter not one jot. So long as the working class vote along sectarian lines the Tories and the bigots will come out on top. The real victors in the May 1985 Council elections were not Sinn Fein but the Unionists. The Official Unionists won 190 seats and Paisleys Democratic Unionist Party, 142.

Against this the combined total of the Social Democratic and Labour Party and Sinn Fein seats was 160. Sectarianism means permanent Unionist rule. Only on a class basis can the stranglehold of the local Tories and bigots be ended.

Sinn Fein's success reinforces rather than weakens Unionism. It has also reinforced the SDLP by driving behind it a solid anti-Sinn Fein, anti-IRA vote. It can offer no way out to those who support it.

In any case the Sinn Fein leaders do not claim that electoral success can ever bring victory. Following the local government election results *AN Phoblach* (23/5/85) on its front page states: "Tragically and unfortunately it is landmines and ambushes and the sustaining of an armed struggle—the cutting edge—which will eventually inflict upon British thinking the conclusion that they have to withdraw."

In applauding the strategy of Sinn Fein, Livingstone is also applauding and legitimising the campaign of the Provisional IRA. In his articles in *Labour Herald* criticism of the Provo's methods is absent. Rather Livingstone, weighing up the campaign, states: "The IRA know they cannot win a military victory over the British army. But equally they know they cannot be defeated" Does he then conclude that the campaign should be end-

ed? No! He goes on "there is no doubt there could be an immediate ceasefire if the government were prepared to commit itself to a complete withdrawal from Ireland within two years" *Labour Herald* 4/3/83. In other words, until such a guarantee is given the campaign is justified. In the early 1970s the Provisionals gained a mass support among the Catholic youth. Mass unemployment, poverty and discrimination, together with events such as the introduction of internment and the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry, and above all the silence of the Labour Movement on these questions, drove these youth en masse towards their ranks.

Then there were vast illusions among the youth in the ability of the Provo's methods of individual terrorism to quickly succeed. The bomb and the bullet seemed a quick and effective way of hitting back. So the Provo's paper *An Phoblach/Republican News* could confidently carry headlines such as "English withdrawal any week now" 24/9/74.

Fifteen years of military activity have largely worn out these illusions. There is no longer any talk of a quick victory but of a long war of attrition. Danny Morrison talks of a campaign wearing down the will of the British to remain in Ireland. The IRA he states will "be successful in inflicting a political defeat, not a military defeat on the British army, but a political defeat on the British government" *Magill* Sept '84. The time scale he projects is not 'any week now' but 'five to ten years'.

No military victory

The reality is that not in ten, twenty or 100 years could the Provos succeed in inflicting either a political or a military defeat on British Imperialism.

The Provo's methods of individual terrorism are entirely counterproductive. The working class is the only force capable of overthrowing capitalism. In Ireland only the working class can resolve the remnants of the national question by overcoming sectarianism, forcing the withdrawal of the troops and reuniting the country.

The key to the entire situation is class unity and the development of the mass struggles of the working class. The Provo's campaign is a handicap to both.

Individual terrorism runs counter to mass action. It allows no role to the mass movement other than to gaze on and spectate. Rather than develop the consciousness of workers of their own power it teaches only helplessness and



Ken Livingstone with Gerry Adams and Joe Austin, Belfast Sinn Fein, during their visit to Britain, at Livingstone's invitation, in 1983.

sows confusion.

Setting out to weaken the state it does the opposite. In Northern Ireland the Provos methods have provided the state with the excuse to step up repression and to equip itself with a plethora of repressive laws. Such is the consequence of this misnamed 'urban guerrillaism' everywhere.

The Provos also deepen and reinforce sectarianism. By dividing and weakening the working class they actually set back the struggle to end imperialist domination.

The responsibility of socialists is to state things as they are. Ken Livingstone is doing no favours to the Catholic youth who look to Sinn Fein and the IRA. Rather than embracing and bolstering the Sinn Fein leaders he would be better trying to win these youth away from the blind alley of nationalism and individual terrorism and to a socialist solution.

His excuse for not doing so is that it is not the business of British socialists to 'tell the Irish what to do'. Instead the movement in Britain should offer only 'self determination'. The rest is up to the Irish.

This is not internationalism but its opposite. Socialists in one country have not only a right, but a duty, to assist, advise and comment on the class struggle and the struggle against national oppression elsewhere. Livingstone's attempt to hide his analysis behind empty phrases about 'self determination' is not only wrong it is completely dishonest. While saying it is not his role to advocate a position he in effect puts one forward, basically that workers should support Sinn Fein and support the IRA. Word for word his programme and analysis is identical to that of Adams and co. Like

them he rejects the possibilities for socialism and advocates a capitalist solution.

Sinn Fein are adamant that there is no room at present for class unity or for socialist objectives. Far from pressing social and economic demands "akin to the Labour Party" Gerry Adams is quite explicit: "We must be mindful of the dangers of ultra-leftism and remember at all times that while our struggle has a major social and economic content, the securing of Irish independence is a pre-requisite for the advance to a socialist republican society", 1983 Ard Fheis address.

Owen Carron writing in *Labour Herald* has stated: "You have to remove the British connection and then you'll get unity in the working class. It won't work the other way round", 2 October, 1981.

A new Lebanon

Gerry Adams, again in *Labour Herald*, asked if Tory cuts would create conditions for class unity, replies: "Unfortunately no... The British presence is the key factor in preventing communities from coming together and sustains sectarianism... in theory there is the basis for unity but in practice, when you are dealing with religious-political philosophy's they will always play the orange card" 17 June, 1983.

Put in plain language what these statements mean is that the class struggle must be postponed. First a capitalist united Ireland. Until then the sectarian division is legitimate. Only when partition is ended can there be the possibility of socialism. As Adams puts it: "Sinn Fein would have a preference for a democratic socialist

society but in a post-withdrawal situation we will be bound by the democratic wishes of the Irish people". Socialism is not something to be fought for—but a mere private 'preference'!

In 1918 De Valera appealed to the labour movement to take a back seat with his insistence that "Labour must wait". First remove the British presence and then conduct the class struggle. The Labour leadership heeded his call, the struggle for independence fell into the hands of the petty bourgeois nationalists of Sinn Féin and the terrible set-back of partition was the result.

"Labour must wait" is again the position of the Sinn Féin leaders and in effect also of Ken Livingstone. For the moment all parties representing all classes must come together to arrange a settlement. "A future Labour government", according to Livingstone, "must refuse to be bound by the Unionist veto, announce a planned withdrawal and convene a conference of all Northern and Southern Irish parties to agree the constitutional guarantees that the Northern Protestants will require". *Labour Herald*, 4 March, 1983.

This is to be effected within two years of a Labour victory. "It's the time you would need to organise the finances necessary to maintain the welfare state provisions in the North, which the South couldn't fund at this stage". (Ken Livingstone in an interview with Tariq Ali in June 1983 published in *Who's Afraid of Margaret Thatcher*, pp 59-60).

All this is the purest fantasy. In the first place the weak Southern capitalist class and their political representatives in Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have no interest in ending partition. When the leaders of these parties make noises about reunification it is in part holiday speechifying and in part an effort to divert attention from the social and economic problems at home.

Not "at this stage" or at any stage could Southern capitalism afford to fund the North. The Northern state is an artificial creation maintained by the huge subvention, now equivalent to 29 per cent of its GDP handed out by the British government.

The Southern economy already faces chronic problems. Unemployment is over 17 per cent. Its foreign debt is equal to 128 per cent of GNP, the worst figure in the OECD area.

With a budget deficit equal to 7½ per cent of GNP the government is attempting to introduce Thatcherite austerity measures, cutting the already low level of state services. Yet the New Ireland Forum report, sup-

posedly an argument in favour of reunification, projected that the budget deficit in a united Ireland would rise to 17 per cent of GDP, and this on the assumption that the violence would end!!

Even if the Southern bourgeois did wish it, capitalist reunification would still be impossible. When the British ruling class divided Ireland they did so primarily to cut across the class struggle. By the 1950s and 1960s, especially with the opening up of the Southern economy through the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement, the British bosses would actually have preferred to do away with the border. Today they would like to be able to withdraw their troops and to see the country reunited—on the basis of capitalism and dominated by British and world capital.

However the chickens of imperialism have come home to roost. The very state which they created and maintained, and the million protestants within it, present an insurmountable barrier to capitalist reunification. The ruling class have been forced to recognise that, no matter how much they would wish otherwise, they have no alternative but to retain the troops and hold onto the North.

'Half an idea'

The wishes of the British ruling class have run up against the 'loyalist veto' which Ken Livingstone states must be abolished. This veto is not a scrap of paper or a mere constitutional guarantee. It is the fact that the protestants would fight rather than accept a capitalist united Ireland. Despite the poverty of the North, the Protestants see worse not better in the South. They fear, quite correctly, that in a poverty-stricken united Ireland which on today's figures would have 400,000 out of work, more than the total manufacturing workforce, they would be made the scapegoats and would become a discriminated against minority.

On a capitalist basis and if no alternative means of defence were provided by the labour movement the removal of the troops would mean civil war. So also would capitalist reunification.

Fighting with their backs to the sea the protestants would not be defeated. Civil war would not lead to reunification. Out of the ashes of such a conflict and on the bones of thousands of workers who would be killed would emerge at best a Lebanon, with the cantonisation of the North, and at worst the repartition of the country and the emergence of a small, entirely protestant state in the North East.

Nothing would be resolved and the seeds of future conflict would be sown, just as they were in the Middle East after the formation of the Israeli state in 1948.

This is the reality which has dictated the policy of every British government since 1969. The same reality will confront the next Labour government. No matter what Ken Livingstone now imagines, that government would not be able to impose a capitalist reunification on Ireland. The choice is simple. Either it moves to a socialist solution in Britain and thereby allows the Irish working class to follow suit or else it will be forced to continue with policies basically no different from its predecessors.

It is not possible to get away with half an idea or half an argument. There is a certain logic to a line of thought which must be followed through. Sinn Féin and Ken Livingstone accept that protestants will not be won over to their nationalist viewpoint. Class unity to these people is impossible. No other conclusion is open to them other than that protestant resistance to a united Ireland must be faced up to and smashed. The logic of Ken Livingstone's position, although he will not admit it, is that a civil war is necessary.

At least the Provos do more than *Labour Herald* and from time to time think their position through to its conclusion: "There is always, and it is endemic in the situation which exists in Ireland, a threat of direct confrontation with loyalist forces, which is perhaps inevitable in a post or directly pre-withdrawal situation. In that sort of situation we are not simply talking about the UDA and UVF. We are talking about the RUC and UDR". (IRA spokesman Iris, 1981). Or again, "It is very possible that people with this mentality (Protestants) would try to repartition the North as Harold McCusker has already suggested. And they have about 19,000 armed men in the RUC and UDR to help them do it. We don't know how many of the loyalists would take that line, but everyone who opposes Irish self-determination with force will have to be met with force." (IRA statement Magill, 1983, our emphasis.)

These statements express the ugly reality of what Ken Livingstone's position really amounts to—a recipe for a sectarian bloodbath in which the workers' movement in Ireland and Britain would be the main loser.

It is totally false to say that the working class cannot be united. The miseries inflicted by a diseased capitalist economy on both catholic and protestant workers are the basis for united struggle.

Northern Ireland is the most poverty-stricken region governed by Westminster. In 1983 GDP per head averaged £4,329 throughout the UK. In the South East it was £5,155. For Northern Ireland, where prices of consumer goods and fuels are highest, the figure was £3,156.

Unemployment is 21 per cent overall and 50 per cent in some areas. The true figure for jobless is almost twice as much as the numbers employed by manufacturing industry.

Ken Livingstone on his return from Belfast reported that he was stunned by the social conditions of the catholic areas of West Belfast. Of conditions in protestant areas he had not a word to say; not surprising since he never visited any.

If he had bothered to look he would have found exactly the same slums in protestant as in catholic working class areas.

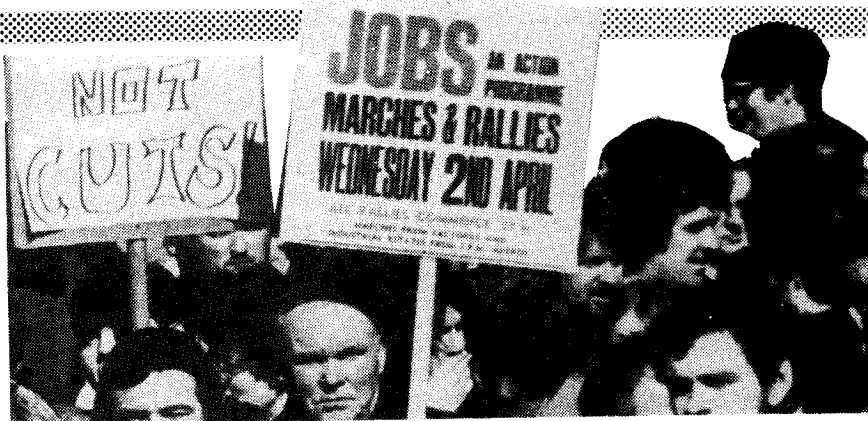
Mass unemployment is now a feature of many protestant areas, bringing them to a position not much better than the traditional and mainly catholic unemployment blackspots like Derry, Strabane and West Belfast. Coleraine for example now has 34 per cent male unemployment, Ballymena has over 3,000 unemployed. For both protestant and catholic youth capitalism offers nothing except the YTPs and other cheap labour schemes.

Even during the 50 years of Unionist rule, when there was the most blatant discrimination against the catholics, the misery also endured by protestants time after time acted as the yeast of a united class movement. Today in the context of Tory cuts and falling living standards all round, the conditions exist to bring catholic and protestant workers together.

Class unity is not just a nice idea. It is both a necessity and a practical reality. Workers are already united—in the 250,000 strong trade union movement, in strikes, in demonstrations and in community struggles. Arthur Scargill, when visiting Belfast recently, pointed out that per head of population Northern Ireland workers contributed more money to the miners than any other region. This is just one example of the class solidarity which exists.

Another was provided on 25 April of this year when thousands of school students, Catholic and Protestant, went on strike, marched and demonstrated against YTP conscription. 3,000 marched in Belfast, 2,000 in Derry. During the day not a single sectarian incident was reported.

And what lead does Ken Livingstone offer to these and many other examples of workers united in strug-



Belfast anti-cuts demonstration, 1980 organised by the Northern Irish Committee of the ICTU. What lead does Livingstone offer to Protestant workers participating in such examples of united struggle?

gle? Absolutely none! All his analysis would allow him to say to workers who struggle together is that they are wasting their time, class unity is not possible and the class struggle must wait! In the meantime support Sinn Fein and the IRA! In a nutshell this is what his position reduces itself to. It is not only incorrect, it is thoroughly reactionary in that it directs the class movement backwards.

Socialist re-unification

The only way forward for the working class in NI is through class unity around socialist policies. Already unity exists on the industrial plane. This should be extended into the political field. The trade unions must build a mass party of labour to challenge the Tories and the bigots. The working class are the true political majority in the North. With a political arm of their own and a clear socialist programme they and they alone can break the stranglehold of the existing major parties. In the past the potential for Labour has been shown. The old Northern Ireland Labour Party at its high-point in 1962 won 26 per cent of the vote and took four Stormont seats. That election was the one time in the history of the state when the Unionist vote fell below 50 per cent, confirming that it is only Labour who can defeat the Unionists because only Labour can take away their protestant working class support.

In the South the right wing labour leaders have buried their heads in coalition with Fine Gael. This policy is an obstacle to the class struggle throughout the country. Coalition must be ended and Labour returned to the independent socialist traditions of its founder, James Connolly.

Fighting socialist Labour Parties North and South would allow the coming together of workers in both parts of Ireland.

Through this united struggle and by changing society North and South

Labour could reunify the country on the only possible basis, a socialist one.

Whether the working class take power and establish socialism first in Britain or Ireland is neither here nor there. In practice the class movement will interact. The socialist transformation either of Britain or Ireland would be a spur to the working class in the other country to follow. A genuine fraternal unity of the people of these islands through a socialist federation of Britain and Ireland would finally resolve the centuries-old conflict created by imperialist conquest in the past.

Socialists must also advocate the withdrawal of the troops, the disbandment of the sectarian RUC and UDR—but not in the way this is done by Ken Livingstone. To say 'we will pull out and let them fight it out among themselves' is not a socialist or internationalist but a chauvinistic position. An alternative means of preventing sectarianism must be put forward: A defence force controlled by the trade union movement which could mobilise workers to take whatever steps necessary to prevent sectarianism.

For 15 years the voice of the bigots has been the only voice heard in Northern Ireland. The result is sectarian deadlock. It is now time for the united voice of the working class to be raised—against state repression, against all sectarian and paramilitary groups, for class unity and socialism. The labour movement in Britain can assist socialists in Northern Ireland, like those in the Labour and Trade Union Group and around the *Irish Militant*, who are struggling for class unity, by rejecting all forms of bipartitanship and advocating a socialist solution. If Ken Livingstone has nothing to say on the question other than to continue to embrace nationalism and sectarianism the labour movement in Ireland and Britain would be better off if he were to say nothing.

Famine: "The divine hand of providence"?

By Jim Hensman

The article by Jim Hensman explores the scientific possibilities that exist for food production to eliminate famine, and goes on to explain why these possibilities remain unrealised under capitalism.

TELEVISION AND press coverage of the famine in Ethiopia has graphically highlighted the desperate situation facing millions in the Third World today. Every year 40 million people—more than one every second—die from hunger or hunger related diseases according to the United Nations figures. And the situation is getting worse. The gap between what is available and what is required is projected to more than double in the next ten years.

World food potential

Is this inevitable—an unavoidable consequence of population outrunning available resources? Take the case of Africa, the continent worst affected by food shortages. A study last year by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis concluded that just a moderate upgrading of agriculture would be sufficient to feed not just the present but future population. Ethiopia is fixed in the minds of the world as a country of shortage and starvation. Yet it was once estimated by an American economist, Mennon Williams, that the Ethiopian Highlands alone could feed the whole of Western Europe besides Ethiopia itself. FAO calculations in fact show that even on the basis of grain yields of half those currently achieved in some Western countries, Africa could support about 10 billion people—more than twice the present population of the whole world.

Assessments of the potential of the rest of the world show a similar picture. The US Presidential Science Advisory Council, for example, estimated that the world could support 35 billion people. An even more optimistic forecast was made in a study by the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands. Using detailed soil maps of the world they examined what could happen if food production was plann-



Famines

THE IRISH potato famine in the 1840s in which over a million people died was ascribed by the Tories to the "divine hand of providence". Although they may be triggered by natural events, famines then and now are very much the result of human intervention. During the Bengal famine of 1942/43 in which 3.5 million Indians starved to death, the price of rice soared 1,000 per cent and grain speculators made 1.5 billion rupees profit. In the Bangladesh famine which followed severe floods in 1974, four million tons of rice—enough for four months—was in fact available. In this case, as in the case of the Bengal famine and 1973 Ethiopian famine, food was actually exported while millions starved. In the light of this, the writer Bertold Brecht's assertion, that "famines do not occur, they are organised by the grain trade" does not seem too far-fetched.

ed and optimised globally. On this basis the study concluded that world grain production could be increased to 25 times its present amount, enough for any conceivable increase in population.

Increasing cultivated land

How would these increases be brought about? Two means to do this are available—increasing the area of land under cultivation and improving crop yields. Of the earth's land surface, only about 7 per cent is under permanent cultivation at the present time. Although a considerable part of the total land area is unsuitable for growing food, studies indicate that the cultivated area could be trebled. South America, for instance, has only 15 per cent and Africa 20 per cent of its potentially fertile land under cultivation.

Irrigation, particularly, can be used to extend agriculture to normally unsuitable locations: 50 years ago, for example, California's Imperial Valley was part of the barren Colorado desert. Today, by means of irrigation, it contains half a million acres of some of the most intensely cultivated land in the world. Perhaps most spectacular of all is a project now underway in the Soviet Union. Kazakhstan in Soviet Central Asia has more potentially cultivatable land

than the total area of Britain. However, inadequate rainfall has precluded cultivation in much of this territory. Now a mammoth engineering enterprise, equivalent in magnitude to constructing 100 Suez canals, aims to change this. The idea is to divert two rivers, the Ob and the Yenisey which flow into the Arctic Ocean to provide the required water. Although projects like this have to be weighed up carefully in advance, because of possible environmental effects, they show what could be done.

In areas such as North Africa and the Middle East where water is not easily accessible a number of possibilities exist. Under consideration for instance has been a water pipeline under the Mediterranean Sea using the waters of the Rhone in France to irrigate North Africa. Even the creation of a lake in the Sahara using water from the sea is thought possible. Also now considered feasible is the towing of icebergs from the Antarctic to places like Namibia and Australia to provide water. Desalination plants currently produce over 2 billion tons of fresh water a day from the sea, and methods utilising solar energy in particular, hold out considerable potential. More in the long term is the possibility of altering the weather itself. Although some methods, for instance to clear fog from airports, have proved effective, larger scale tests have not been conclusive. Nevertheless, for some areas at least, favourable modification of the weather will undoubtedly become a reality.

New agricultural techniques have also been developed to take fullest advantage of limited water in arid areas. Methods such as drip irrigation developed in Israel where precise amounts of water are fed directly to a plant's roots, and hydroponic techniques in which plants are grown without any soil at all in special nutrient solutions, have been used to grow fruit and vegetables particularly in the Middle East. Although currently confined to more expensive agricultural products, these techniques indeed show that with the necessary investment even the desert could be made to bloom.

Increasing productivity

The best prospect for increasing food production lies with intensifying cultivation methods. If we take wheat production for instance, the amount of wheat produced on an acre of land has increased in Western countries to about five times its level in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, levels of five times this current average have already been achieved and theoretically yields over 10 times present Western levels are possible. Of course the increases possible in the Third World starting from a lower level would be proportionately greater. Food produced per person working on the land has also shot up, mainly due to mechanisation. Serfs in feudal times produced enough to feed themselves and perhaps one other person. The average American farmworker today produces enough to feed about 60 people.

Some of the improvement in crop yields that has occurred has been due to the increased use of fertilisers and better pest control. In addition improvements have taken place through developing new crop strains. Plant breeders have long applied the techniques of selective breeding to breed better plants. Plants with particular characteristics occurring naturally such as high yield, shorter growth period or disease resistance are chosen and cross bred to produce varieties with the desired features. Recent developments have allowed this process to be extended, to allow species of plant that would not normally interbreed to be crossed for example. In the case of genetic engineering techniques the blueprint of a particular life form at the molecular level can itself be altered or combined with those from some other form of life.

To take an extreme example of the kind of work taking place, human and carrot cells have been successfully combined at a cellular level! Despite rumours that some members of the Tory Cabinet are in fact results of such experiments, this work is still in its early stages but holds out many intriguing possibilities. One particular research goal provides a good example.

A major drawback to conventional ways of increasing food production is the high level of fertiliser necessary. Some types of food plants, such as peas and beans, have the property of using certain bacteria in the soil to provide them with nitrogen from the air—effectively a free supply of fertiliser. If food crops such as wheat and rice could be given this ability, or as some scientists believe crops created that absorb nitrogen directly from the air, a new era in agriculture would certainly be opened up. Results in related areas of work are encouraging. For instance Belgian scientists have developed a tobacco plant that makes its own pesticide. Even if one forecast, that "we're going to make pork chops grow on trees" may have been a trifle over-enthusiastic there is no doubt that real prospects exist to revolutionise agriculture.

Although plant crops provide the bulk of the world's food needs, meat and fish make up an important component of our diet. Considerable potential exists to develop these areas as well. The world's catch of sea fish could be increased by 50 per cent to 100 per cent without depleting stocks of fish according to most estimates, for instance by the FAO. However, if we consider less conventional resources wider possibilities are opened up. Krill is a kind of shrimp found in the South Atlantic. The fishing of Krill will have to be done with care because of its role as a food for whales and other sea creatures. Nevertheless the feasible catch of Krill has been estimated as anything from the total of the conventional fish catch to 10 times this amount. Significant also in terms of potential fish resources are the possibilities of aquaculture or fish farming. China, for instance, produces more than twice Britain's total sea fish catch by this means. This on its own on a worldwide

scale, it is estimated, could double fish supplies. Beyond this lie proposals for the farming of sea fish in vast underwater farms—with possibilities difficult to measure.

Livestock and poultry production have seen increases in productivity paralleling that for other food. Improved feed, selective breeding and factory farming techniques have combined to dramatically change this area. A typical high output poultry farm, for instance, can produce 200,000 chickens annually per person employed. Advanced breeding techniques such as cloning and embryo transplanting methods which have received considerable publicity through actual or claimed use with humans, are now in increasing use. An example of the type of development which is becoming increasingly common is the so-called "beefalo" a cross between a cow and a buffalo. Recently giant mice have been bred in laboratories using direct genetic manipulation, and all sorts of fascinating possibilities such as "cows the size of elephants" have been predicted by some scientists. The prospects are really only limited by the imagination!

New food sources

The production of meat can provide an efficient use of resources by allowing land such as grassland too poor for growing crops to still produce food. However, much meat production in the West, which feeds animals on grains like corn or wheat is very inefficient. A cow needs about 10 pounds of grain to produce one pound of meat, for example. 90 per cent of grain produced in the US goes to feed livestock—enough to feed Africa and South America. If grain was more rationally used to feed humans, even where conventional animal fodder was not available, technology provides a number of alternatives. Food now can be manufactured from the most unlikely of materials. One prominent development over recent years for instance have been so-called single cell proteins. These are micro-organisms which can produce food from sugar-cane waste and oil among other materials. Annually about two million tons of these products for use as animal feed are made by companies like British Petroleum. Now Rank-Hovis-McDougall among others is introducing similar products for human consumption. The meat substitute mycoprotein has even been preferred to real meat by people in recent consumer tests. These and other techniques have been used to produce food out of everything from wood-pulp and chicken feathers to cow manure! The potential in terms of expanding and rationalising food resources is clearly immense.

Why the crisis?

Given the available resources and the exciting prospects for the future, why then the food crisis? Taking the world as a whole, food production is more than adequate to meet nutritional requirements. In fact even within most Third World countries, enough



One person dies every second from hunger or hunger related diseases.

food is produced. Consider Bangladesh, for example, one of the poorest countries in the world. More than half the population eat less than what is considered the minimum survival level of 1,500 calories a day. Yet statistics show that enough food is produced in the country to provide the approximately 2,300 calories sufficient for a healthy diet for every man, woman and child. A World Bank survey taken over 20 years in fact showed that 86 per cent of the world's undernourished lived in countries where food production kept pace with population.

Any number of figures could be used to show that in fact no actual shortage of food exists. But as it was once said: "You can't feed the hungry on statistics". Where then does the problem lie? The obstacles to a well-fed world are in fact not technical but economic and political. It is not the unavailability of food; but the inability of people to buy it, caused by inequality and economic crisis which is the prime cause of starvation. According to a FAO worldwide survey some years ago, 0.23 per cent of landowners, one in every 400, control over half the land in the Third World. This land, nearly always the most fertile, is often kept unused or grossly underexploited by these large landowners. Production statistics in Brazil, for instance, show that the smallest farms are on average six times as productive as the very large ones.

Often, as a legacy of colonialism or because of imperialist domination, the best land is used for export crops, to benefit local or foreign capitalists. The so-called Green Revolution while increasing crop yields has ironically made the problem worse. Reports of its effects from South Asia to Central America all show the same pattern. The new grain types that were introduced require more fertiliser and pesticides and have benefited richer farmers—who have the money for the investment required—

disproportionately. These farmers in turn with their profits have bought up land dispossessing many small farmers and creating widespread landlessness. It is millions of these peasants, landless or working in semi-feudal servitude who have no opportunity to improve their conditions who are completely passed by in the onward march of agricultural progress and are subject to scarcity and starvation.

The anarchy of production

The production of food illustrates, perhaps better than any other issue, the anarchy of capitalism on a global scale. While half the world hasn't enough food, the developed countries spend enormous sums of money effectively destroying or stopping the production of food. Within the EEC this is most apparent in the form of grain and butter mountains and wine and milk lakes. In the US it commonly takes the form of massive payments—in some cases millions of dollars to individual farmers—to stop food being produced. If we add up the cost of this, just for the EEC countries and the US we come to the astronomical total of over \$90 billion, according to estimates by the *Economist* magazine. We can judge the hypocritical concern of the Tories and other Western governments over Ethiopia by noting that this sum would be sufficient not just to feed the starving there but to fly them all to London or New York and feed them in restaurants for a year! Indeed the over 200,000 square miles of cropland in the US deliberately kept idle could have fed the whole of Africa on its own. The \$90 billion wasted is the amount the UN estimated some years ago would be necessary to extend the world's agricultural land by 20 per cent.

Capitalism threatens new developments

Biologists often draw food chains, showing how different forms of life are dependent on each other. Nature however could not have conceived of anything as incredible as what world capitalism has constructed. Consider the case of countries like Senegal in Africa which in recent years have cut back food production to produce more export crops such as peanuts. These peanuts are made into groundnut cake which is used as animal feed for EEC cattle. These cattle in turn produce a milk 'surplus'—annually greater in weight than the entire EEC population. Some of this milk is converted into dried milk products, a marginal amount of which comes back as food aid to feed the starving people of countries like Senegal. A considerable amount of the dried milk, however, is in fact fed back to the cows in an attempt to destroy it. This of course helps to produce even more milk and an even bigger surplus—and so on! It would be hard to find a better indication of not just the unacceptable but the insane face of capitalism than this bizarre merry-go-round.

Soviet agriculture

SOVIET AGRICULTURE demonstrates the enormous damage that a Stalinist bureaucracy can cause, despite the advantages of a planned economy. The policy of forced collectivisation of the peasantry, instituted in 1929, led to a fall in agricultural production that the country did not recover from 'till the 1950s. But it was not only in food production, but also in scientific developments in agriculture that the regime had a disastrous effect. After the Russian revolution, actively promoted by Lenin, the Soviet Union led the world in plant genetics and the development of new crops. Then in the 1930s for political reasons, the unscientific theories of the now discredited Lysenko were accepted and this work effectively destroyed. Tragically, the pioneer of this research Nikolai Vavilov, the foremost agricultural scientist of his time, was persecuted as a "Trotskyist bandit", sentenced to death as a "British spy" in a trial lasting all of five minutes, and died of starvation in a labour camp. *Future editions of the MIR will carry more detailed analysis on the "Lysenkoist movement" and the development of science under Stalinism.*

It is not only in food production but also in the development and introduction of some of the exciting possibilities described earlier, that private profit holds back society. The food and associated industries are dominated by a handful of giant monopolies which influence and control new developments to their own advantage. Thus, for instance, five companies effectively control the grain trade in the West. Through investment and interlocking directorships companies like these are closely linked to every aspect of food production, including the manufacture of fertiliser. Over the last few years, fertiliser manufacturers have moved in a big way to take over the companies that develop and market crop seeds. These companies in turn carry out or can directly influence research and development into new crop strains. For instance the world's largest seed producer, Pioneer Hi-Bred, funds part of the development of the new 'Green Revolution' crop varieties being carried out in Mexico. Now consider the possibilities mentioned earlier of developing plants that could absorb nitrogen from the air and thus minimise the need for chemical fertilisers and dramatically assist Third World agriculture. It doesn't require too much imagination to see that a development of this sort, which could affect the profits of the fertiliser manufacturers and the control of the grain monopolies, could easily be jeopardised through the chain of influence these companies command over such research.

The environmental crisis

The present system is not only a threat to the development of new food resources. Even existing food supplies are threatened by the environmental



Uncontrolled use of pesticides and chemicals in search of quick profits poses a grave threat to the environment.

effects of present food production. In the middle of the Sahara Desert, in the part of Algeria known as the Tassili N'Ajjer, a remarkable series of prehistoric rock and cave paintings, which show cattle, elephants, giraffes and other animals are evidence of the fertile land that once existed there. Although long-term climatic changes have had their effect, it is the destructive effects of man that have played a major part in the advancing of deserts—which now claim 60 square miles of land every day throughout the world. The desperate situation in Ethiopia and Sudan and the countries of the Sahel to the south of the Sahara show the process taking place. Nomadic herdsmen, sometimes driven from better land by governments expanding export crops or for political or military reasons, overgraze the marginal agricultural lands on the fringes of the desert where they live. With the soil unable to replenish its fertility the vegetation cover is reduced making the area easy prey to the encroachment of the desert sands. This creates even more pressure on the remaining land and the vicious circle is intensified.

Can this tragic process be halted? Evidence that it can was vividly demonstrated by special photographs taken by the Landsat space satellite. These detected a fenced-in area of the Sahel with controlled grazing, which had markedly better soil conservation to the surrounding area. A generalisation of such a policy together with the planting of tree barriers and similar measures could reverse the desertification process at an estimated cost of £2 billion a year, compared to the cost of ten times that in lost food production every year, and the incalculable human cost. This neither the weak capitalist governments of the area or the Stalinist bureaucracies of Ethiopia and Somalia have proved capable of doing. For instance, of the aid to the Sahel in recent years only about five per cent has gone to agricultural schemes at all and only one per cent to programmes to halt the desert. Meanwhile Ethiopia with its colossal military expenditure has spent virtually nothing in this area either.

Agriculture in the US demonstrates a parallel process at the opposite end of the affluence scale. In the

1930s in the US, 150,000 square miles of farmland were turned into the dust bowl of the South West Great Plains through overfarming and the consequent depletion of the soil. Today American farmers, heavily indebted and dependent on permanently maximising production in the short-term have intensified agriculture to the point where the fertility of the soil of over one-third of American cropland is seriously threatened. In addition uncontrolled use of fertilisers has caused catastrophic pollution effects through drainage of chemicals into the water supply and is responsible for half of all water pollution in the country.

A socialist future

On a world scale the unplanned use of resources is a serious threat to food supplies in the future. Every year close on one per cent of the world's arable land is lost to food production. In other areas of food production such as fishing, international bodies have been largely impotent in preventing species like the whale being hunted virtually to extinction. As another example the existing variety of wild plant species that form the raw material for new crops is under threat from the wholesale destruction of forests in areas such as Amazonia in South America. The choice between socialism or barbarism is as starkly presented with regard to food as anywhere else.

Despite the lack of workers' democracy in China, the planned economy displays a marked contrast to the rest of Third World agriculture. Before the revolution, millions died every year in the regular famines that swept the country. Now China, the world's largest rice producer by a large margin with a yield per area twice India's, has doubled wheat production in seven years to become the world's largest wheat producer as well. Particularly significant in Chinese agriculture is the careful use of all available resources such as local manure for fertiliser and energy supplies. This resource alone it is estimated, could increase fertiliser supplies in the Third World six to eight fold, but remains largely unutilised.

The achievement of China which feeds almost a quarter of the world's population while having only seven per cent of the world's arable land is an indisputable demonstration of the advantages of a planned economy. Some years ago, the AUEW fighting redundancies at the Massey Ferguson tractor plants in this country worked out that it would be more economic to give tractors away free to the Third World rather than make workers redundant—a graphic demonstration of the irrationality of the present world system and the benefits to both developed and underdeveloped countries that could be provided. All the resources exist to satisfy the food needs of present and future world populations. A planned socialist agricultural policy is not only vital to preserve the food resources of the world but would open up the vast potential that science and technology have made available.

Part one in a series by Alan Woods on the history of Bolshevism

The birth of Russian Marxism

THE ARTICLE, The Birth of Russian Marxism, is the first in a series by ALAN WOODS on the history of the Bolshevik Party. It explains how Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour Group, "the embryo of a mighty mass revolutionary party... which, within the comparatively brief span of 34 years, was destined to lead the Russian workers and peasants to the conquest of power" was conceived and developed in the unfavourable conditions of backward Russia of the 1870s and 1880s. Future articles on the development of Bolshevism from these origins will appear in subsequent editions of the MIR.

ON THE 1 March 1881 the carriage of Tsar Alexander II was passing along the Catherine Canal in St Petersburg, when a young man suddenly threw what looked like a snowball. The explosion that followed missed its mark, and the Tsar dismounted, unharmed to speak to some wounded Cossacks. At that moment, a second terrorist, Grinevetsky, rushed forward and with the words "It is too early to thank God", threw another bomb at his feet. An hour and a half later, the Emperor of all the Russians was dead.

This act marked the culmination of one of the most remarkable periods in revolutionary history—a period in which a handful of dedicated and heroic young men and women took on the combined might of the Russian Tsarist state. Yet the very success of the terrorists in eliminating the figure at the apex of the hated autocracy simultaneously dealt the death-blow to the so-called party of the People's Will which had organised it.

The Narodniks

Trotsky explained the phenomenon of the Russian Narodniks ("populists", men of the people) as a consequence of the extreme belatedness of Russian capitalism. The decay of feudal society proceeded faster than the formation of the bourgeoisie.

Under these conditions, sections of the intelligentsia, especially the youth, broke away from the nobility,

bureaucracy and clergy and began to look for a way out of the social impasse. However, when they looked around for a point of support within society, they could not be attracted by the crude, backward and underdeveloped bourgeoisie, whilst the proletariat was still in its infancy, unorganised, politically untutored and small in numbers, particularly in comparison to the many millions of peasants who made up the dumb, oppressed and crushing majority of Russian society.

It was therefore understandable that the revolutionary intelligentsia should look to the "people" in the person of the peasantry as the main potential revolutionary force within society.

In the history of human ideas, there is an ascending line, but also a line of descent. Particularly in a period of economic, social and cultural crisis such as the period in which we live, ideas which long ago should have been consigned to the rubbish-bin of the past make their reappearance, inevitably under the disguise of something entirely novel. "Le mort saisit le vivant"—the dead lay their hands upon the living!

Thus, the "modern" theories of guerrillaism repeat in caricatured form the antiquated ideas of the Russian Narodniks and terrorists. Like the latter, they try to find a base in the peasantry of the third world, in the lumpenproletariat, in fact, any class except the proletariat. Yet Marx and Engels explained that the only class capable of carrying through the socialist revolution and establishing a healthy workers' state leading to a classless society was the working class. And this is no accident. Only the working class, by virtue of its role in society and in production, especially large scale industrial production, possesses an instinctive socialist class consciousness. By contrast, the first principle of every other social class is the individualism of the property owner and exploiter of labour, both big and small.

Leaving aside the bourgeoisie, whose hostility to socialism is the first

condition of its existence, we have the middle class, including the peasantry. The latter is the social class least able to acquire a socialist consciousness. Its upper reaches, the wealthy peasant, lawyer, doctor, parliamentarian, stand close to the bourgeoisie. However, even the poor landless peasant in Russia, although formally a rural proletariat, had a consciousness very far removed from his brothers in the cities. The one desire of the landless peasant was to possess land, ie to become transformed into a small proprietor.

Under certain conditions—particularly in the present epoch—the mass of the poor peasants can be won over to the idea of collective ownership, as we saw in Spain in 1936, or as we see today in certain parts of India. But the prior condition for such a development is the revolutionary movement of the working class in the towns. However, in Russia, the working class came to power by mobilizing the poor peasants, not on the basis of socialist slogans, but on the basis of "land to the tillers!" This fact, in itself, shows how far the mass of Russian peasants stood from a socialist consciousness even in 1917.

Not accidentally, the classical methods of struggle of the proletariat are based upon collective mass action: strikes, demonstrations, picket lines, the general strike. On the other hand, individual terrorism and "guerrillaism" in all its multiplicity of forms, are the methods of the petty bourgeois, particularly the peasantry, but also the students, intellectuals and lumpen proletariat.

To the Narodniks, lacking in a sound theoretical basis, and setting out with a confused and amorphous concept of class relations ("the people"), the Marxist argument of the leading role of the proletariat sounded like so much hair-splitting. What did the working class have to do with it? Clearly Marx and Engels had not understood the special situation in Russia!

The Narodniks, in as much as they considered the role of the workers in the towns, regarded them as an aberration—as "peasants in factories"

capable of playing only the role of auxiliaries to the peasantry in the revolution—precisely the opposite to the real relationship of revolutionary class forces, as subsequent events demonstrated.

"Going to the people"

The Narodniks swore by "the people" in every other sentence. Yet they remained completely isolated from the peasant masses they idolised. In reality, the entire movement was concentrated into the hands of the intelligentsia: "The Populists' worship of the peasant and his commune was but the mirror image," wrote Trotsky, "of the grandiose pretensions of the 'intellectual proletariat' to the role of chief, if not indeed sole, instrument of progress. The whole history of the Russian intelligentsia develops between these two poles of pride and self-abnegation—which are the short and long shadows of its social weakness." (*The Young Lenin* p. 25, my emphasis, A.W.)

But this social weakness of the intelligentsia merely reflected the underdeveloped state of class relations in Russian society. The rapid development of industry and the creation of a powerful urban working class which was to be brought about by a massive influx of foreign capital in the 1890s was still the music of an apparently remote future. Thrust back upon their own resources, the revolutionary intelligentsia sought salvation in the theory of a special "Russian road to socialism", based upon the element of common ownership which existed in the village commune or "mir".

The emancipation of the serf in 1861 had been brought about by the fear of a social explosion after the disastrous Crimean War (1853-56), which like the later war with Japan, revealed the bankruptcy of the Tsarist regime in the form of a humiliating military defeat. But the Edict of Emancipation solved none of the problems and, indeed, made the lot of the mass of the peasants considerably worse.

The landlords naturally made off with the best plots of land, leaving the most barren areas to the peasants. Strategic points such as water and mills were usually in the hands of the landlords who forced the peasants to pay for access. Worse still, the "free" peasants were legally tied to the "mir" which had collective responsibility for collecting taxes. No peasant could leave the "mir" without permission. Freedom of movement was hampered by the system of internal passports. The village commune, in effect, was transformed into "the lowest rung of the local police system." (see Pares: A

History of Russia p 404).

In the years after 1861, the peasantry, hemmed in by repressive legislation on "poverty lots" and impoverished by the weight of debt, staged a series of desperate local uprisings. But the peasantry, throughout history, has always been incapable of playing an independent role in society. Capable of great revolutionary courage and sacrifice, its efforts to shake off the rule of the oppressor have only succeeded where leadership of the revolutionary movement has been taken up by a stronger, more homogeneous and conscious class based in the towns. In the absence of this factor, the peasant "jacqueries", from the middle ages onwards, have inevitably suffered the cruellest defeats, as a result of the scattered nature of the peasantry, its lack of social cohesion and class consciousness.

In Russia, where capitalist forms of production were still at the embryonic phase, no such revolutionary class existed in the towns. Yet the class, or more accurately caste, of largely impoverished students and intellectuals, the "raznochintsy" ("those without rank") or "intellectual proletariat" proved exceptionally sensitive to the subterranean mood of discontent which lay deep within the recesses of Russian life. Years later, the terrorist Myshkin declared at his trial that: "The movement of the intelligentsia was not artificially created, but was the echo of popular unrest." (quoted in Trotsky's *The Young Lenin*). As always, the intelligentsia, whose ability to play an independent social role is no greater than the peasantry, nevertheless can act as quite an accurate barometer of the moods and tensions developing within society.

In 1861, the very year of the Emancipation, the great Russian democratic writer Alexander Herzen wrote from exile in London urging the youth of Russia in the pages of his journal *Kolokol* (The Bell) to go "to the people!" The arrest of prominent publicists like Chernyshevsky (whose writings were influenced by Marx and who had a big impact on Lenin and his generation) and Dimitri Pisarev demonstrated the impossibility of peaceful liberal reform. By the end of the decade of the 1860's, the basis of a mass revolutionary movement of populist youth had been laid.

"Land and freedom"

With the wisdom of hindsight it is a simple task to expose the theoretical weakness of Narodism. Yet this was an inevitable stage in the historically progressive movement of the youth, breaking away from liberalism and

striving with might and main to find a road to the socialist revolution. How superior were these courageous attempts to transform society compared to all the wisdom of the "modern" reformist pharisees who have long ago given up all ideas of fighting to change society!

In a striking passage, Trotsky graphically recaptures the spirit of these youthful pioneers:

"Young men and women, most of them former students numbering about a thousand in all, carried socialist propaganda to all corners of the country, especially to the lower reaches of the Volga, where they sought the legacy of Pugachov* and Razin*. This movement, remarkable in its scope and youthful idealism, the true cradle of the Russian revolution, was distinguished—as is proper to a cradle—by extreme naivete. The propagandists had neither a guiding organisation nor a clear programme; they had no conspiratorial experience. And why should they have? These young people, having broken with their families and schools, without profession, personal ties, or obligations, and without fear either of earthly or heavenly powers, seemed to themselves the living crystallisation of a popular uprising. A constitution? Parliamentarianism? Political liberty? No, they would not be swerved from the path by these western decoys. What they wanted was a complete revolution, without abridgement or intermediate stages".

(Trotsky op cit, Page 28)

* **Emilian Pugachov:** A Don Cossack, Pugachov led a great uprising of the Cossacks and serfs against the gentry in 1773, in the reign of Catherine the Great. The rebellion initially met with success, with the mass seizure of land and the capture of a string of imperial fortresses. The rebels took Kazan and could have taken Moscow but, despite riots which broke out in a number of towns, the peasant rebellion proved incapable of linking up with the urban masses against the common enemy—the gentry and the autocracy. Although the rebels proclaimed the abolition of serfdom, they lacked a coherent political programme capable of creating a broad revolutionary movement of the masses. This fatal weakness, plus localist tendencies, lack of organisation and discipline, eventually undermined the revolt. The rebellion disintegrated and Pugachov was executed in Moscow in January 1775.

* **Stepan Razin:** Another Cossack rebel who sailed up the Volga at the head of a pirate fleet in 1670 calling on the peasants to rise. Betrayed by the Ataman of the Don Cossacks, Razin was captured and sent to Moscow where he was executed on 6 June. 1671.

To these courageous and dedicated youth, the words uttered by Herzen made an indelible impression: "Go to the people... That is our place... Demonstrate... that from among you will emerge not new bureaucrats, but soldiers of the Russian people".

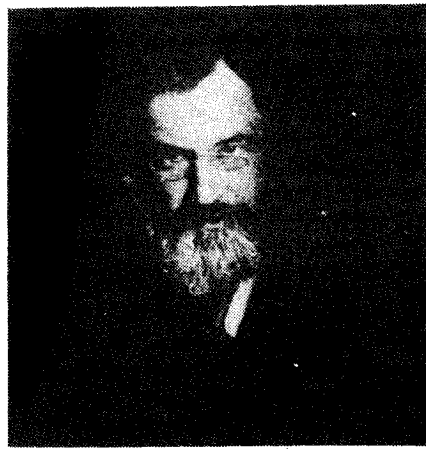
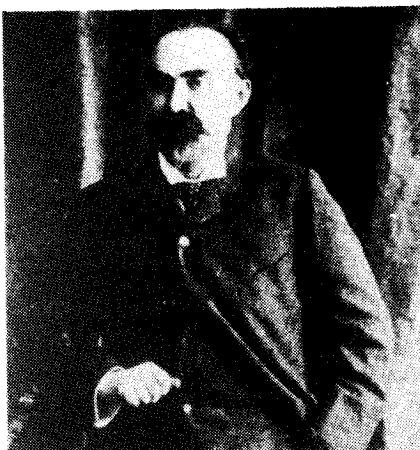
In the summer of 1874, hundreds of young people from upper or middle-class backgrounds went out to the villages, burning with the idea of rousing the peasantry to revolution. Pavel Axelrod, one of the future founders of Russian Marxism, recalls the radical break which these young revolutionaries had made with their class:

"Whoever wished to work for the people had to give up university, renounce his privileged condition, and his family, turn his back even upon science and art. They had to cut all the bonds which linked them to the highest social classes, burn their bridges behind them. In one word, they had to voluntarily forget about any possible road of retreat. The propagandist, so to speak, had to effect a complete transformation of his inner essence, so that he would feel at one with the lower strata of the people, not only ideologically, but also in his habitual everyday behaviour". (From Axelrod: *The Working Class and the Revolutionary Movement in Russia*).

Unfortunately, this admirable revolutionary spirit was founded upon theories which were fundamentally unsound. The mystical idea of a "special Russian road to socialism" which could somehow leap from feudal barbarism to a classless society, skipping the phase of capitalism, was the source of an endless series of errors and tragedies.

A false theory inevitably leads to a disaster in practice. In reality, the Narodniks were motivated by revolutionary voluntarism—the idea that the success of the revolution can be guaranteed by the iron will and determination of a small group of dedicated men and women. The subjective factor, of course, is decisive in human history. Karl Marx explained that men and women make their own history, but added that "they do not make it outside of the context of social and economic relationships established independently of their will".

The attempts of the Narodnik theoreticians to establish a "special historical path" for Russia, different from that of Western Europe inevitably led them down the road of philosophical idealism and a mystical view of the peasantry. The theoretical confusion of Bakunin—a reflection of the very underdeveloped and inchoate class relations in Russia—found a ready audience among the Narodniks, seeking an ideological justification for



George Plekhanov and Pavel Axelrod—two of the founders of the Emancipation of Labour Group.

their vague revolutionary aspirations.

Standing reality on its head, Bakunin portrayed the "mir"—the basic unit of the Tsarist regime in the village—as the enemy of the state. All that was necessary was for the revolutionaries to go to the village and rouse the "instinctively revolutionary" Russian peasants against the state and the problem would be solved, without recourse to "politics" or any particular form of party organisation. The task was not to fight for democratic demands (since democracy also represented a form of state and therefore another expression of tyranny) but to overthrow the state "in general" and replace it with a voluntary federation of local communities, based on the "mir", purged of its reactionary features.

Unfortunately, the contradictory elements of this theory rapidly became evident when the Narodnik youth attempted to put it into practice. The revolutionary exhortations of the students were met with sullen suspicion or outright hostility by the peasants, who frequently handed over the newcomers to the authorities. The movement of "going to the people" was swiftly broken by a wave of arrests—more than 700 in 1874 alone. It was an expensive defeat. But the heroic and spirited speeches of defiance hurled from the dock by the arrested revolutionists served to kindle a new movement which began almost immediately.

As a crowning paradox, despite all the prejudice of the Narodnik theoreticians, almost the only area where the revolutionary appeals got an echo was among the despised "town peasants" as they called the factory workers. Like the modern guerillas, the supporters of Zemlya y Volya ("Land and Freedom") adopted the policy of taking revolutionary workers out of the factories and sending them to the countryside. Plekhanov, before he

became a Marxist, participated in this kind of activity and was able to see the consequences:

"The factory worker who has worked in the city for several years," he wrote, "feels ill at ease in the country and goes back to it reluctantly... Rural customs and institutions become unendurable for a person whose personality has begun evolving a little". (Quoted in Dan's *Origins of Bolshevism*, page 162).

"These were experienced people, sincerely devoted to and profoundly imbued with Populist views. But their attempts to set themselves up in the countryside led to nothing. After roving about the villages with the intention of looking for a suitable place to settle down (at which some of them were taken to be foreigners), they shrugged their shoulders at the whole business and finished by returning to Saratov where they established contacts among the local workers. No matter how astounded we were by this alienation from the 'people' of its urban children, the fact was evident, and we had to abandon the idea of involving workers in a purely peasant business." (Ibid p 162–163).

Thus, by the pressure of reality, sections of the Narodniks were forced to come face to face for the first time with the "worker question" which, expelled by Bakuninist theories by the front door, persistently flew back through the window. Even at this very early period, the Russian working class, despite the extreme smallness of its numbers, was beginning to set its stamp upon the revolutionary movement.

Beginnings of the workers' movement

While the Narodnik intelligentsia wrestled with the theoretical problems of the future revolution, the first stir-

rings of class consciousness were emerging in the urban centres. Zaslavsky's Southern Russian Workers' Union arose out of a small workers' discussion circle and gradually spread from Odessa to other industrial centres in the south. The union, which was influenced by the ideas of the First International, was broken up by arrests in December 1875 after only a brief existence and its founder, Zaslavsky ended his life in prison.

A more substantial development was the Northern Union of Russian Workers set up illegally in the Autumn of 1877 under the leadership of Stepan Nikolaevich Khalturin, the son of a peasant and a joiner by trade. This group had about 200 hard-core members and had followers in almost every key working class district of Saint Petersburg, mainly among the most advanced sections of the metalworkers. But within a month of the appearance of the first issue of its illegal journal *Rabochaya Zarya* (The Workers' Dawn) the police had smashed the printshop and the bulk of the membership was swept away by a wave of arrests, hard labour, imprisonment and exile.

Significant though these attempts were, they really only represented an anticipation of things to come. Ideologically the worker revolutionaries were still predominately under the influence of Narodism. The numbers these early organisations embraced were very small, involving only handfuls of the most advanced workers. Nevertheless, they showed the way, establishing a tradition of the independent organisation of the working class upon which later generations could build. They count among the many "nameless heroes"—courageous and self-sacrificing men and women by whose tireless and anonymous labour a firm base was laid for the future mighty achievements of their class.

In the meantime, the remnants of the Narodnik movement were attempting to regroup their forces in the towns under the banner of *Zemlya y Volya*.

On the 6 December 1876, an illegal demonstration of anything up to 500—mainly students—assembled on the steps of Kazan Cathedral, with cries of "land and freedom" and "long live the socialist revolution!" The demonstration was addressed by a young student called George Plekhanov whose revolutionary appeal led to the beginning of years of exile and underground life.

The following year, a young girl, Vera Zasulich, who had been involved in the revolutionary movement since she was 16, fired a shot at the notorious Petersburg police chief,

Trepov which seriously wounded him, and then handed herself over to the police. Surprisingly, the jury issued a verdict of not guilty in March 1878. The assassination attempt was a clear indication of the way in which after the failure of "going to the people", a section of the Narodniks was turning in the direction of individual terrorism.

"The People's Will"

The frustrated attempts to provoke a mass movement of the peasantry by means of propaganda gave rise to a new theory whereby Bakuninism was stood upon its head. From "denying politics" and especially political organisation, a section of the narodniks effected a 180° turn and set up a secret, highly centralised terrorist organisation—the Narodnaya Volya, or "People's Will"—designed to provoke a revolutionary movement of the masses by means of "propaganda of the deed".

The latest military humiliation of Tsarist Russia in the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78) revealed anew the bankruptcy of the regime and gave fresh heart to the opposition. The leaders of Narodnaya Volya were determined to wage a war against the autocracy in a kind of terrorist single combat which would encourage "from above" the flame of revolt.

The adoption of the new tactics caused an open split in the movement, between the terrorists and the followers of Lavrov who argued in favour of a prolonged period of preparation and propaganda among the masses. In practice, the latter trend was moving away from revolutionism, advocating the politics of "small deeds" and a "little by little" gradualist approach. The right-wing of Narodism was becoming indistinguishable from Liberalism, while its more radical section prepared to stake everything on the force of the bullet and the "revolutionary chemistry" of nitro-glycerine.

Towards the end of 1878 and the beginning of 1879, a wave of labour unrest swept through St Petersburg. The workers went to ask help from "the students". The possibility of linking the revolutionary movement with the working class was staring the Narodniks in the face. In point of fact, a "workers' section" of *Zemlya y Volya* was set up, with Plekhanov at its head. But the attentions of the main currents were elsewhere—concentrated upon the feverish attempt to bring down the autocracy by means of an organised campaign of terror.

In the recent period, attempts have been made by the modern terrorists to

distinguish themselves from their Russian forebears. The Narodnik terrorists, it is asserted, believed in individual terrorism, substituting themselves for the movement of the masses, whereas the modern proponents of "armed struggle" or "urban guerrillaism" see themselves only as an armed wing of the mass struggle, whose purpose is to detonate the masses into action.

Yet the supporters of *Norodnaya Volya* never claimed to be acting as a self-sufficient movement. Their stated objective was to initiate a mass movement, based on the peasantry, which would overthrow the state and institute socialism. Their aim was also supposed to be the "detonation" of the mass movement by giving a courageous example.

Yet politics has a logic of its own. All the appeals of the *Narodnaya Volya* in the name of the masses, merely served as a smokescreen to reveal a deep-seated distrust in the revolutionary capacity of those same masses. The arguments advanced more than a century ago in Russia to justify terrorism have a strikingly similar ring to the arguments of "urban guerrilla" groups in Ireland, the Middle East and South Africa: "we are in favour of the mass movement, but the state is too strong," and so on and so forth. Thus, the terrorist Morozov affirmed:

"Observing contemporary social life in Russia the conclusion is reached that, because of the arbitrary conduct and violence of the government, no activity at all is possible on behalf of the people. Neither freedom of expression, nor freedom of the press exists to work by means of persuasion. In consequence, for every vanguard activist it is necessary, first and foremost, to put an end to the present system of government, and to struggle against it there is no other means than to do it with arms in hand. As a consequence, we will fight against it in the style of William Tell, until we reach the moment when we win free institutions under which it will be possible for us to discuss without obstacles in the press and in public meetings all the political and social questions, and decide upon them by means of the free representation of the people." (My emphasis A Woods).

The allegedly "new" and "modern" theories of urban guerrillaism only repeat in caricature form the old pre-Marxist ideas of the Russian terrorists. It is quite ironic that these people, who frequently lay claim to be "Marxist-Leninists", have not the vaguest idea that Russian Marxism was born out of an implacable struggle against individual terrorism.

The Russian Marxists scornfully

described the terrorist as "a Liberal with a bomb." The Liberal fathers spoke in the name of "the People", but considered the latter too ignorant to be trusted with the responsible work of reforming society. Their role was to be reduced to passively casting a vote every few years and looking on while the Liberals in Parliament got on with their business.

The sons and daughters of the Liberals had nothing but contempt for Parliament. They stood for the Revolution, and, of course, "the People." Except that the latter, in their ignorance, were unable to understand them. Therefore, they would resort to the "revolutionary chemistry" of the bomb and the revolver. But, just as before, the role of the masses was reduced to that of passive spectators.

The worst thing about the terrorist policy is that it is most harmful to the cause of the masses precisely when it succeeds. Marxism sees the revolutionary transformation of society as a conscious act carried out by the working class. That which is progressive is that which serves to raise the consciousness of the workers of their own strength. That which is reactionary is that which tends to lower the workers' own opinion of their role. From this point of view, the role of individual terrorism is a wholly reactionary one.

What conclusions are the workers supposed to draw from a spectacularly successful act of individual terrorism? Only this: that it is possible to attain their ends without any necessity for the long and arduous preparatory work of organising trade unions, participating in strikes and other mass actions, of agitation, propaganda and educational work. All that would be seen as an unnecessary diversion, when all that is needed is to get hold of a bomb and a gun and "head for the hills".

The experience of terrorism and guerrillaism in Latin America over the period of the sixties and seventies merely repeats, with a delay of nearly a century, the mistakes of the Russian Narodniks.

A section of the old Zemlya y Volya movement attempted to resist the trend towards terrorism, but was swept aside. An attempt to reach a compromise at the Voronezh congress of June 1879 failed to stop the split which finally took place in October of that year with a formal agreement of both sides to dissolve the organisation. The funds were divided and both sides agreed not to use the old name. The terrorist faction adopted the name of Narodnaya Volya ("The People's Will"), while the remnants of the old-school "village" Narodniks took the name of the Cherny Peredel ("Black

Redistribution"), echoing the old Narodnik idea of an agrarian revolution. It was from this latter organisation, led by Plekhanov, that the first forces of Russian Marxism were to emerge.

Liberals recoil

The prospects for Plekhanov's tendency could hardly have been more bleak. The old tactic of "going to the people" was played out. The peasants were no more receptive to the blandishments of the Narodniks than before. Many old Narodniks finally gave up hope and "voted with their feet", returning to a more convivial existence in the towns.

Probably influenced by his earlier experience as head of the "workers' sections", Plekhanov proposed to the members of the Cherny Peredel that they should conduct agitation among the factory workers. Plekhanov sought links with his former worker contacts, among them Stepan Khalturin of the Northern Union of Russian Workers. But the tide was running strongly in favour of terrorism even among the advanced workers. Khalturin himself participated, in February 1880, in an attempt against the life of the Tsar. The supporters of Cherny Peredel were utterly isolated. The final blow came in January 1880 when, shortly after the appearance of the first issue of the group's journal, the police descended on the underground printshop and mopped up practically the whole organisation in Russia. The future of the non-terrorist trend in Narodism, as Trotsky later observed, could not be an independent phenomenon, but only a brief and shadowy transition towards Marxism.

On the other side of the divide, the supporters of Narodnaya Volya appeared to be making spectacular gains. It seems incredible how an organisation of no more than a few hundred men and women could keep the Tsar a virtual prisoner in his own palace.

The very successes of the terrorists, however, contained the seeds of their own disintegration. The assassination of the Tsar in 1881 unleashed a reign of repression in which the terror of the individual against ministers and policemen gave way to the terror of the entire state apparatus against the revolutionary movement in general.

The new Procurator General, the minister Pobedonostsev promised a reign of "iron and blood" to wipe out the terrorists." A series of draconic laws gave the government sweeping new powers of arrest, censorship and deportation, which affected not only the revolutionaries, but even the most moderate Liberal tendencies. National

oppression was stepped up, with the suppression of all publications in non-Russian languages. Laws were passed to strengthen the grip of the landlord on his peasants. A wave of reaction swept through the schools and universities, designed to crush all forms of independent thought and break the rebellious spirit of the youth.

Yet contrary to the expectations of the terrorists, there was no mass uprising, no general movement of opposition. Very soon, all the hopes born of a generation of self-sacrificing heroism were reduced to ashes.

The new period of reaction intensified the crisis of Narodism. A whole stratum of educated and well-to-do Narodnik leaders reacted to the violence of the reaction by hastily repudiating the revolutionary fight against autocracy. In place of this, the "Hannibals of Liberalism" as Lenin scornfully styled them, argued in favour of peaceful reform: the establishment of village co-operatives and cultural activities "among the people", or "community politics", as the present-day Liberals have it. This mean-spirited policy of "small deeds"—which closely resembles the "little by little" gradualism of the Fabians—was championed by such prominent Narodnik theorists as VP Vorontsev (pen-name VV) and NF Danielson ("Nikolaya") against whom many of Plekhanov's earliest (and best) polemics were written.

The terrorist wing of Narodism was swiftly decimated by a wave of arrests. By 1882, its centre liquidated and its leaders in gaol, the Narodnik movement broke up into a thousand fragments.

Yet in the hour when the death-knell of the old Narodism was sounding, a new movement was rapidly gaining ground in the rest of Europe, and a new class balance of forces was emerging in backward Russia itself.

Crisis of Narodnik ideology

The 1880s saw the decisive victory of the ideas of Marxism in the European labour movement. The present-day Labour leaders would like to forget the fact that the Socialist International at its inception inscribed upon its banner the programme of Marxism.

For years, the ideas of Marx and Engels (albeit in an incomplete and vulgarised form) had been familiar to Russian revolutionaries. Marx, and especially Engels, had engaged in polemics with the theoreticians of Narodism. But Marxism had never had a sizable following. Its denial of individual terrorism, its rejection of a

special "Russian road to Socialism" and of the alledged leading role of the peasantry in the revolution was too much for revolutionary youth to swallow. In comparison with Bakunin's "propaganda of the deed", the idea that Russia would have to pass through the painful school of capitalism smacked of passivity and defeatism.

Like the modern day "guerillaists", the Narodniks did not understand Marx and Engels insistence on the central role of the proletariat in the socialist transformation of society. There was, however, at least good reason for the theoretical confusion of the Russian Narodniks. Capitalist industry was only just in its infancy. The industrial working class was numerically weak and immature, with one foot still in the village. Above all, the problem of carrying out the socialist revolution in a backward, semi-colonial peasant country was a new one. They had no October revolution behind them, no model and no precedent to fall back on. Despite the marvellous insights in the writings of Marx and Engels, particularly in the writings of Engels' old age, such as the brilliant article "On Social Relations in Russia", the question had not been completely worked out from a theoretical point of view. Not until the period of 1904-1905, did Trotsky finally solve the problem by his epoch-making theory of the Permanent Revolution.

The tragedy of Narodism was that it had set itself the task of bringing about the Socialist Revolution before the objective social and economic conditions for it had matured. But no effort of the will, no amount of courage and determination can make any difference where historical conditions are unfavourable. The subjective factor—even in the person of a single individual—can sometimes be decisive. Such was the case with Lenin and Trotsky in 1917. But long before this favourable juncture came to pass, the leaders of Russian Marxism had spent many long and fruitless years and decades in tiny groups, isolated from the mainstream of society, with no immediate prospect for success.

The "voluntarist" methods of Narodism were an attempt to short circuit the historical process. If history was too slow, then it had to be given a shove by the subjective factor. If the masses were too steeped in ignorance to realise what was good for them, then their backwardness must be made up for by the shining example of a small, highly organised, tightly disciplined group of revolutionaries. From every point of view, the young members of the Narodnaya Volya

organisation were exemplary fighters. Courageous, disciplined and highly moral in their personal lives, they were like knights in shining armour come to rescue the benighted masses from their oppressors. Despite the utopian nature of their theories, these self-sacrificing men and women contrast favourably with the modern school of terrorism whose degenerate, cynical and barbarous methods stink in the nostrils of the working class.

Alas! The way to Hell is paved with good intentions. The attempt to cheat history by means of the "subjective factor" led to the destruction of a generation of dedicated revolutionary youth. Narodism had ended in a complete impasse. The way out was shown by the Marxist tendency, led by George Valentinovich Plekhanov, who later formed the group for the Emancipation of Russian Labour.

The old generation of Narodniks had a barely concealed disdain for theory. Insofar as they resorted to ideological argument, it was really as an afterthought, to justify the practical twists and turns of the movement. In turn they had put forward the idea of the central role of the peasantry, of Russia's alleged "special historical mission", Pan Slavism, and terrorism. Having broken their heads against a solid wall, the ideologists of Narodism, instead of honestly admitting their mistakes and attempting to work out an alternative strategy and tactic, proceeded to re-affirm the old bankrupt ideas, and, in so doing, sank ever deeper into a morass of confusion.

The first act of the new trend represented by Plekhanov and a tiny handful of collaborators, was to build firm foundations for the future on the basis of correct ideas, theory, tactics and strategy. This was the great contribution of Plekhanov, without which the future development of Bolshevism would have been unthinkable.

The birth of Russian Marxism

Though still, in his own words, "a Narodnik to the fingertips", Plekhanov sought an answer to the problems posed by the crisis of Narodnik ideology in a serious study of the works of Marx and Engels. Forced to flee abroad in January 1880, he had met and discussed with French and German Marxists then engaged in a fierce ideological struggle with the anarchists. This encounter with the European labour movement was a decisive turning-point in Plekhanov's development.

In the Russian underground, only a few works of Marx and Engels had

been available, mainly on economic questions. Like others of his generation, Plekhanov was acquainted with the Marx of *Capital*, which the Tsarist censors regarded as too difficult and "academic" to be dangerous. It is doubtful whether the censors themselves could understand it, so how, they thought, could the workers make head or tail of it? Now, at last, Plekhanov had access to the arsenal of Marxist thought, its living method, the philosophy of dialectical materialism. It was a revelation to him.

Plekhanov's study of Marxist philosophy, the writings on the class struggle and the materialist conception of history cast a whole new light on the perspectives for the revolution in Russia. One by one, the old ideas of terrorism, anarchism and Narodism crumbled under the onslaught of Marxist criticism. He later summed up the experience:

"Anyone who did not live through those times with us can hardly imagine the eagerness with which we threw ourselves into the study of Social Democratic literature, amidst which the works of the German theoreticians naturally occupied the first place. And the more closely we became acquainted with Social Democratic literature, the more we became aware of the weak points of our earlier views. The more we became convinced of the correctness of our own revolutionary development. . . The theories of Marx, like Ariadne's thread, led us forth from the labyrinth of contradictions with which our minds were stuffed, under the influence of Bakunin."

Freed, for a time, from the pressures of direct participation in the revolutionary struggle in Russia, Plekhanov and the others, had the enormous advantage of access to literature which was unobtainable there. Plekhanov recalls:

"Personally, I can say of myself that the reading of the *Communist Manifesto* marks an epoch in my life. I was inspired by the *Manifesto* and there and then decided to translate it into Russian."

Thus began the Herculean work of translating, popularising and generally broadcasting the works of Marx and Engels within the Russian revolutionary movement. This was the embryonic phase of Russian Marxism. But before striking out decisively towards the creation of a new party, they first had to settle accounts with the old.

Naturally enough for men and women who had only recently broken with Narodism, Plekhanov's group at first looked back towards the old Narodnaya Volya Party in the hope of

convincing their former comrades. No doubt there was an element in the group which still entertained illusions on this score. People like Vera Zasulich, whose history has already been mentioned; Axelrod, who had been one of the organisers of the Narodnik organisation in Kiev; Lev G. Deitch who had been an active Narodnik propagandist in the South since the late seventies, and had made a daring escape from Kiev prison in 1878. Such people as these would not lightly break with the movement to which they had dedicated their lives.

The experience had to be gone through. But in any event, Plekhanov understood that the cadres of the future Russian Marxist workers' party could not drop from the clouds. *Narodnaya Volya* represented the tradition of a whole generation of struggle against Tsarism. Such a movement, steeped in the blood of countless revolutionary martyrs, could not be light-mindedly written off.

Precisely because of its traditions, the Narodnik movement, even in the period of its degeneration, still attracted many of the young men and women, confusedly seeking a road to social revolution. Such a man was Alexander Ulyanov, Lenin's brother, executed for his part in a plot against the life of Alexander III in 1887. Lenin himself had Narodnik sympathies and almost certainly began his political life as a *Narodnaya Volya* supporter. To save such people as this from futile terrorist gestures was the first duty of the Russian Marxists.

The group's attempts to find a road to the revolutionary youth in Russia soon came up against a stone wall of obstacles erected by the right-wing Narodnik leaders who controlled the party press. The editors of *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* refused even to print Plekhanov's work *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, his pioneering work directed against anarchism.

Despite the smallness of its forces, Plekhanov's group caused alarm in the leading Narodnik circles, which immediately tried to stifle the voice of Marxism by bureaucratic means. The impossibility of a reconciliation was now clear to everyone, and in September 1883 the Marxists formed the Group for the Emancipation of Russian Labour. The break with the past was now complete.

The Emancipation of Labour group

In changing their programme now to be based on a struggle against anarchism and the organisation of the working class as a separate

party with a definitely Social Democratic programme, the former members of the 'Black Redistribution' group will now form a new group—the 'Emancipation of Labour' and finally break with the old anarchist trends."

These words at the end of the announcement of the establishment of a "Library of Contemporary Socialism" marks the end of one historical period and the commencement of a new era. The handful of members of the new group must have experienced a fateful sense of finality on reading them. It was a courageous and irrevocable step, which initially spelled complete isolation from the rest of the revolutionary movement, from which they were now self-proclaimed outcasts.

Ahead of them lay many years of hard and lonely struggle in the shadow of tedious anonymity. It takes a peculiar kind of courage for a small minority to take a conscious decision to struggle against the stream, isolated from the masses, in harsh conditions of exile, with only the slenderest resources and against apparently overwhelming odds. Not for the last time, the forces of Russian Marxism were reduced to the role of "a voice crying in the wilderness".

The only thing that sustained them was their confidence in the ideas, theory and perspectives. This, in spite of the fact that their ideas appeared to fly in the face of reality. The workers' movement in Russia was still in its early stages. True, there was the beginnings of a strike movement, but that fell quite outside the scope of the socialists. Such workers' groups that existed were still dominated by Narodnik ideas. The still feeble voice of the "Emancipation of Labour Group" was not heard in the factories. Even the students, still under the spell of anarchist and terrorist tendencies, proved difficult enough to reach.

In a letter to Axelrod written as late as March 1889, Plekhanov wrote: "Everyone (both 'liberals' and 'socialists') unanimously say that the young people will not even listen to those who speak out against terrorism. In view of this we will have to be careful".

As soon as it was formed, the Emancipation of Labour Group was faced with sharp attacks from all sides for its alleged 'betrayal' of "revolutionary" Narodism. On the other hand, they derived moral comfort from the solid achievements of European Social Democracy. The forces of Russian Marxism were small, but they formed a detachment of a mighty proletarian army, numbering millions in Germany, France, Belgium. Here was a living proof of the superiority of Marxism, not in the language of

Capital but in the statistics of trade union memberships, party branches votes and Parliamentary factions.

In their isolation from the movement in Russia, the Emancipation of Labour Group members instinctively drew closer to the mighty parties of the Socialist International. Plekhanov and his comrades wrote for its press, spoke at its congresses—especially those of the German party, the party of Marx, Engels, Liebknecht and Bebel.

Even the support of the European Social Democracy was, however, less than wholehearted. For years its leaders had entertained friendly relations with Narodnik leaders like Lavrov. Privately, the Social Democratic leaders looked askance at what appeared to be no more than an eccentric sectarian splinter group. The sharpness of Plekhanov's polemics against internationally known figures of the Narodnik establishment caused consternation.

"To tell the truth", wrote Plekhanov, "our struggle against the Bakunists sometimes gave rise to fears even among the Western Social Democrats. They considered it inopportune. They were afraid that our propaganda, by causing a split in the revolutionary party, would weaken the energy of the struggle against the government."

Already based on powerful parties with mass support, in their hearts the Western labour leaders were sceptical about the possibilities for creating a revolutionary Marxist workers' party in Russia. Outwardly respectful of Plekhanov and his group, they privately scratched their heads in bewilderment. What was the point of all these endless disputes about obscure points of theory? Was it really necessary to split over such questions? Why can't these Russians get their act together?

Their sceptical attitude seemed to be justified by the smallness of the group and the slowness of its progress. By comparison, the Narodniks had a much bigger organisation, more resources and infinitely greater influence inside and outside Russia.

Yet, in reality, the seemingly insignificant group of Plekhanov represented the embryo of a mighty mass revolutionary party—a party which, within the comparatively brief span of 34 years, was destined to lead the Russian workers and peasants to the conquest of power and the establishment of the first democratic workers' state in history.

To be continued in future editions of the MIR

The American chickens come home to roost

THIS COLUMN in the last issue of *MIR* (Winter 1985) predicted that the economic boom in the USA would come to a shuddering stop. The 1984 growth rate of nearly seven per cent had been entirely based on ever expanding military expenditure, financed by borrowing from abroad and an unprecedented budget deficit.

While service industries had mushroomed from the resulting consumer boom, employing mostly part-time labour at poverty wage levels, US manufacturing had not been able to take advantage of demand. Manufacturing production had only risen by a paltry two per cent in 1984 while foreign imports, mainly from Japan, had surged in. Therefore this column argued that the US boom was a fictitious one, not based on real increases in the output and employment of the productive sectors of the economy. No economy can continue to grow indefinitely when financed just by paper dollars. A sharp downturn could only be a short time away.

However, the Reagan administration and its economic supporters, both in the USA and Europe, continued to claim that economic prosperity was here to stay. Reagan even had the nerve to chide the European political leaders for the failure of their economies to expand at the same rate as the 'free market' of the USA.

But the truth will out, as they say. The Reagan government had forecast a substantial four per cent rise in Gross National Product for 1985. But the trend at the end of the first quarter of 1985 shows only a rise of 1.3 per cent per annum. Manufacturing, agriculture and mining are in complete stagnation, while imports continue to rise—Japan had a trade surplus with the USA of a staggering \$44 billion in 1984.

The American government and big business has borrowed so much to pay for these imports that the US nation became a net debtor ie. it borrowed more than it lent for the first time in its history.

The USA had only been able to borrow so much because it was willing to pay high interest for borrowing dollars to pay for imports. This had held up the value of the dollar and made it possible to pay for imports with greenbacks. But a high value dollar made it impossible for US manufacturers to compete with foreign importers or sell goods abroad. And high interest rates stifled investment. The boom could not last.

Now that overall production has slumped, the US economic situation is

Economic notes by Bob McKee

dramatically reversing. The dollar is falling back against other currencies. This will drive up the domestic price of imports. The government will either have to borrow even more money to pay for goods or more likely make savage cuts in government spending and raise taxes. The USA is heading for low growth, rising unemployment as well as inflation in 1985–6.

The strength of a modern capitalist economy depends on the health of its industrial base. And the truth is that, relatively, the USA has declined as an industrial power over the past 25 years. In the early 1950s the USA produced one-third of the world's total manufacturing output—it was truly the workshop and laboratory of the world. Its output was greater than the whole of Europe combined, generating a large manufacturing trade surplus and monopolising new technology.

However in the ensuing two and a half decades, US output declined as a proportion of world manufacturing production to 20 per cent—making the USA still the market leader but no longer predominant. The trade surplus has been converted into a deficit and in the last four years the total value of the deficit on overseas payments has exceeded the combined amount of surpluses in the previous 70 years! And for the first time, in 1984, there was a deficit in the US trade of high technology (\$5 billion and rising).

This is the underlying condition of the US economy which could only be temporarily hidden by the Reaganite illusion of growth, based on arms expenditure and government borrowing. Now the chickens have come home to roost. And with a downturn in the US economy, the rest of the capitalist world will feel the chill winds of recession again. In the UK it never seems to have warmed up!

Real manual wages fall under Thatcher

AGAIN IN the last issue of the *MIR*, this column presented conclusive evidence not widely published that wage rises have not been a cause of rising unemployment. The government and Tory economists have insisted that unemployment could be lowered if wage rises and even wage levels were reduced. Yet the wage statistics show

that since the Tories came to power in 1979, manual workers' real wages have actually declined while unemployment among these workers has risen the most. (See Economic Notes, *MIR*, Winter 1985).

Now further evidence has been published by Christopher Huhne of *The Guardian* newspaper. Taking the government's own New Earnings Survey, he finds that the top ten per cent of adult male earners (the best paid managers, etc) increased their real gross hourly earnings by 19 per cent from April 1979 to April 1984. In the same period the bottom 10 per cent of earners (low-paid manual workers) had a cut in real wages of 0.2 per cent and the poorest of them suffered a cut of 1.5 per cent. That means that some of the poorest paid workers in Britain in 1979 are even worse off in absolute terms in 1985. And these workers have suffered the sharpest increases in unemployment. If capitalism and the 'free market' can knock you down, then they put the boot in.

Britain at the bottom of the profits league

A NEW survey by DRI Europe confirms the widely held view that manufacturing profitability has steadily declined in most industrialised capitalist economies over the last 30 years.

DRI estimated that for the period 1955–82, the rate of return on capital invested in manufacturing fell in the USA from 22 per cent to 11 per cent. In Japan, it rose to 40 per cent in the mid-sixties and then fell back to 22 per cent by 1982. In West Germany there was a similar rise in the sixties to 26 per cent before the decline set in to 12 per cent by 1982.

But the most startling fall was in the UK. From a 17 per cent level in 1955, the rate of profit dropped to five per cent in 1982. In the last two years total profits in manufacturing have jumped up by over 20 per cent per annum. But this boost is still way short of restoring rates of return in manufacturing to levels enjoyed by even West German or US capitalists. As a result, when British capitalists have money to invest in manufacturing, they are still likely to send it abroad where returns are greater. Or keep it in the bank where interest rates are higher.

Letters

WITH THE expansion of the *MIR* the editors hope to regularly reserve these pages for correspondence from our readers expressing their comments or criticism about the journal or general developments in society or the labour movement. We would also welcome reports on how the *MIR* has been received in Labour Parties, trade union branches, LPYS branches or women's sections.

Consequently, of course, the views expressed in these pages do not necessarily reflect the ideas of the Editorial Board.

Letters should be sent to the *MIR*, Letters, 3-13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB. The editors reserve the right to shorten letters which are excessively long.

Dear *MIR*,

I've wanted to write to you for some time. The article on Poland: "A regime on trial" in the January *MIR* was most interesting, accepting that against terrible odds there is a very high level of activity in the underground making the situation more favourable than in your previous analysis.

Unlike the movement of intellectuals in Czechoslovakia in 1968, easily snuffed out by the Russian invasion, *Solidarnosc* was and is fundamentally a workers movement which arises inevitably from the day-to-day experiences of Polish workers.

Elsewhere the article describes two apparently contradictory sides of the Polish enigma. On the one hand, the political level of the movement is in some ways lower than in 1956. Yet the movement itself is far broader. The system still had remnants of support in 1956, and was able to play off different sections of the bureaucracy against each other. The oppositionists of the late '40's were rehabilitated and enjoyed temporary popularity. No-one can be rehabilitated today. No government leaders past or present have an unstained record. All have the same bloody hands after martial law, the shot miners, and tortured internees. Indeed, the widespread contempt felt for the state media and their representatives encourages an apathy which dampens down the political level of the movement. This is the only hope of the government spokesmen like Jerzy Urban, quoted in your article. They hope to force the Poles into grudging accep-

tance of the realities of Stalinism in the 1980's.

Yet on the other hand there is an acceptance in your article of a very high level of political awareness amongst the masses in comparison to the West. I am reminded here of the astonishment shown in Poland at the low figure of party membership in the west. "If we had real parties here, everyone would join the party of their choice." Thus we see how a little slice of freedom in the East is eagerly swallowed up, while such freedoms as voting and joining parties are treated so apathetically in the West.

Today as in previous years, *Solidarnosc* marchers have infiltrated and upstaged the May Day parades. The government has solved few of the economic contradictions, and hardly broadened its support since 1981. Your article also correctly pointed to the hostility felt towards the term "socialism" by many and their illusions in "capitalism" because of the liberal reforms it seems to provide. The Stalinist media fails to point out how the labour movement in the west fights for every reform. Yet there are still many people and organisations discussing aspects of "Western socialism" especially CND, the German Greens and the Mitterrand Government in France. The differences between Stalinism and Eurocommunism, the British Labour Party and the SDP, are also discussed.

There was sadly one embarrassing mistake in your article. You mistook the name of Edmund Buluka for Zbigniew Bujak, a leader in the Ursus Tractor plant. Bujak has been leader of the underground since martial law, and is indeed a hero. Buluka on the other hand led the workers in 1970, came to England and returned to Poland in 1981. He is, I believe, still interned. He is greatly feared because of his experience in the west, and his political orientation. He formed the "Polish Socialist Workers Party" one of the many small left groups in Poland today. (See *Voice of Solidarnosc*, issue no 102 Feb 1985, pages 8-15 for further information).

A *Solidarnosc* supporter

Dear Comrades,

I was recently in Poland on holiday, and I got the chance to talk to many ordinary Poles about the political situation. On my return I read the article in *MIR* No 28 which sums up very well the stage through which Polish society is passing.

Despite the fact that it is 3½ years since Jaruselski's coup plunged Poland into a state of emergency, there are no underlying reasons to suggest

that the regime has consolidated its position. In fact after an inevitable period of demoralisation following the events of December 1981, all indications point to the beginning of a new upturn in the workers movement. Against the background of falling living standards and economic chaos, no amount of terror, imprisonment and murder has succeeded in holding back the opposition to Jaruselski's regime.

The murder by the hated secret police of pro *Solidarity* priest Father Popieluszko has created a national martyr. Tapes of the priests' sermons, photo's and souvenirs circulate amongst millions of Poles. Since the regime has no authority to impose itself within the grounds of the church, many churches have displays accompanied by *Solidarity* banners in the memory of Popieluszko. Amongst the masses Popieluszko has earned a place by the side of Walesa as a figurehead opposed to Stalinist tyranny.

Despite the size of Poland's state machine, its network of secret police and informats, most Poles feel free to openly criticise their 'Communist Party' leaders. Often workers feel confident, within reason, to argue with managers at work who are inevitably party members. In fact, despite the difficulties, many Poles feel 'at least its not as bad here as in the Soviet Union'. Numerous workers have no fear of displaying *Solidarity* calendars and souvenirs within their homes.

Despite having a free hand Jaruselski's military government, has made hardly any inroads into the country's massive economic crisis. 'The crisis' means that today Poles live in wartime-like conditions. Ration cards effecting the purchase of items from meat and butter to petrol dominate everyday life. There is much anger at the fact that despite price increases of often 50 per cent, 100 per cent or more, there is still no sign of the end of rationing. Shortages are as widespread as ever. Daily life revolves around joining a queue and then asking what the queue is for. Shortages effect just about everything, lightbulbs, towels, alarm clocks, toilet rolls, the list is endless. Most children under the age of 10 have never eaten a banana or an orange.

As a means of proping up the bankrupt state economy, the regime in recent years has been lenient towards a thriving private sector. Small private shops and kiosks are springing up everywhere. These often sell Western goods, usually clothing. Although prices are very high, at least Poles can dress a little more fashionably than they did 10 years ago. The future of these small private businesses is always uncertain. Will the regime at

a certain stage clamp down on them? At the time of Solidarity the ranks of the privateers were split. Should they back Solidarity (many did) or would some kind of revolutionary change mean the abolition of the private sector altogether?

The quality of the goods available in the shops, as in other East European countries are often atrocious. These 'Buble' as they are nicknamed include books which have numerous pages missing and kettles with plastic handles which begin to melt once the water reaches boiling point.

Despite daily official propaganda to the contrary, few Poles have any confidence at all in the prospects of an economic recovery. Their attitude is that the West will have to wait forever in order to get its loaned money back. As a result of past bureaucratic mismanagement over 1,000 building and industrial projects have been shelved due to a lack of funds. Partly built shells of factories litter Poland's industrial estates. While these monuments to economic mismanagement are there for everyone to see it is no wonder that many workers feel no incentive to do their bit for the good of economic recovery.

Bearing in mind the problems of everyday life, there is still one grievance which particularly young Poles put above all else. This is the housing problem. There is usually a 15-20 year waiting list for a home. A couple getting married in their mid 20s can expect to get their flat by the time they reach their 40s. Meanwhile it is usually a question of living in one room at the inlaws. These cramped conditions, even if living with inlaws is acceptable to all concerned, often make life unbearable. As a result the number of divorces and single parent families is very high.

The bureaucracy's failure to make any headway with the country's economic prospects has strengthened the thriving underground opposition in Poland. There is no shortage of underground material and publications circulating factories and workers' homes. It is estimated that up to one million Poles are in some way connected with the underground. In some factories subs are still collected by Solidarity activists.

A new generation of activists has been created, mainly youth who are skilled in the methods of underground activity unlike their predecessors who had the luxury of relative liberalism through the Solidarity period.

Such is the extent of the opposition that presently the bureaucracy is passing new laws through parliament to give the police and the courts even more powers to try and combat the

Dear *Militant*,

Congratulations on the best issue (No 28) of the *MIR* I have read to date.

To help put the publication on a firmer financial footing—a suggestion: Why not offer a year's subscription for the magazine? I think it would be worth the extra administration time as it would mean that anyone who buys one issue has the chance to subscribe for a whole year.

Best wishes,
Pauline Maniscalco
Leicester

See page 44

underground. Attending an unofficial demonstration or placing a leaflet or poster in a public place is to become punishable by a prison sentence.

The underground, however, is dominated by the 'intelligentsia'. Many who make up this strata of society are former graduates who were promised the earth during the ambitious Gierek days, only to find the unfolding economic crisis resulting in qualified students earning a half or one-third of that of industrial workers. For example, teachers are counted as low-paid workers earning on average only half of what a manual worker in industry would earn.

Some within the intelligentsia could be won to the ideas of genuine Marxism and Trotskyism, however many are an absolute obstacle to progressive change in Poland. A large layer of intellectuals have blind contempt for Polish workers, describing them as "cattle" and "dim". They write off with ease a section of the world's most courageous and self-sacrificing workers who time and time again have paid for their courage with their lives. That section of Poland's intelligentsia who pressurised the Solidarity leadership to pursue a moderate line bear a big responsibility for Poland's present predicament.

Without doubt the most prominent legal opposition within Poland today is the church. Ironically the blundering bureaucracy itself is responsible for elevating the standing of the church within society. In recent years the regime's attempts to remove crosses from classrooms and public buildings have provoked mass opposition. The murder of Father Popieluszko has also enormously strengthened the prominence of the church as a focal point of opposition. However what is clear is that the bulk of the church's following is based on political and not just religious sen-

timents. For example, before Popieluszko's death workers would travel hundreds of kilometers, often on workplace organised coaches, to Warsaw to listen to the priest's pro-Solidarity sermons. The attendance at any particular church is often influenced by how radical the sermons are likely to be. Many churches sell Solidarity souvenirs at inflated prices and donate profits to Solidarity's cause.

Despite the high level of political consciousness amongst Poles, ideas are very often confused, particularly amongst the intellectuals, dominated sometimes by a pathological hatred of anything Soviet. Even though the country's economy is grossly mismanaged the mass of Polish workers have no wish to return to capitalism. As one worker put it: "And anyway capitalism in Poland is a hypothetical point. What would we do, pick out 10,000 Poles and give them all a factory?"

However a number of confused and contradictory ideas do exist. A section of workers who see economic chaos all around them toy with the idea that private ownership would create incentives and therefore take the economy forward. But the paradox is that these same workers would never tolerate their factory being taken over by a capitalist. The fact is that such confused ideas are all groping for the answer to the question: "How should the economy be run?" The dilemma for the bureaucracy is that they don't own the factories but are for the present time at least, managing them (or more correctly mismanaging them).

The Polish workers have so much latent power, management have been forced so tightly into a corner, with little room for manoeuvre, that it would only be a relatively small step for the workers to take over the control and management of industry. This is why the regime is so terrified of independent political thought and activity.

Whatever the tempo of Polish events to come, further conflict and class actions are inevitable. The thought that another opportunity to strike back at the regime is not far away, makes daily life bearable for millions of Poles. The tragedy is that every Pole has a different answer to the reason why the Solidarity era was hurriedly brought to an end. Even the most politically aware are not clear on the way forward and have not learned all the lessons of the past. Poland today is yet another glaring example of the importance of the subjective factor, that is to say a clear leadership in the unfolding world revolution.

Yours fraternally,
A recent visitor to Poland

How India won independence

THE END of the second world war 40 years ago inaugurated a global movement towards revolution particularly in the colonies of the "victorious" imperial powers of Britain and France. Not least in this revolutionary wave was the mass movement that developed in India. In his article ROGER SILVERMAN explodes the myths that have surrounded the winning of India's independence.

THE DECAY of capitalism has plunged humanity into the most unstable epoch of its history. It is hardly surprising then that the most populous country of capitalism, in which its failure to develop society is most spectacular—India—is also at present probably the most volatile in the world. The last one year has witnessed enough cataclysms to last a "normal" society decades: communal and caste massacres, coups, general strikes, assassinations, mutinies, untold social upheavals in every state. The prospect opens up of the very disintegration of India, after four decades of independence. In particular, the Punjab crisis could start a chain reaction leading to the creation of a dozen statelets, each with its own national questions. What would be left would be, not a "Greater India", but a Lesser Hindustan, encompassing the poorest and most wretched Northern states of the "Hindi belt", a Hindu theocratic state in which Muslims, Sikhs and other religious minorities would be plunged into an inferno of pogroms, counter-terror and repression. If capitalism is not overthrown, India will explode into bleeding fragments. If the workers and peasants take power and thus avert this catastrophe, it will be in unity with those of the neighbouring countries, to create a Socialist United States of the Indian Sub-Continent.

These tortured convulsions are a direct result of the failure of the bourgeoisie to solve a single one of its tasks. The theory of Permanent Revolution explains that in the modern epoch the bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped countries is incapable of repeating the pioneering and revolutionary role played at the dawn of capitalism by the bourgeoisie of the West: that the tasks of the bourgeois-

democratic revolution, national unification, industrialisation, division of the landed estates, etc., can only be solved along with the tasks of the socialist revolution: nationalisation of the means of production, state monopoly of foreign trade, etc.

The emergence of a national consciousness, the vision of a united, secular, democratic Indian nation, was one of the products of the elemental movement for national liberation that was to transform the face of the planet. Some have misunderstood the fact that Congress assumed power in 1947 as a refutation of the Permanent Revolution, or at least as a sign that the Indian bourgeoisie was in some way an exception: that it was fit at least to begin tackling the tasks of establishing a modern capitalist nation. But the Indian bourgeoisie never led a national-liberation struggle. The power was not won by Congress; it dropped into its lap due to the exhaustion and senility of imperialism, amid the revolutionary ferment that gripped the world following the end of the world war.

Gandhi's role

The mantle of revolutionary democrats lies especially uneasily on the shoulders of Congress. As befitted a weak and dependent bourgeoisie, its whimpering plea for greater political responsibilities was slavish and cowardly and it huddled with imperialism at every turn in fear of the masses. The crafty lawyer Gandhi with his messianic delusions went a little further than his urbane colleagues in transcending the cramped barriers of local particularism, caste superstition and communal bigotry, an indispensable condition if concessions were to be wrested from imperialism. But at all costs the downtrodden hordes must be kept in a subordinate and passive role: they must be pacified, hence quite literally the "pacifism" of Congress—which once in power proved to be among the most bloodthirsty of capitalist regimes in repressing the workers and peasants. The Indian National Congress was paralysed from the beginning by fear of the masses, and squirmed a tortuous middle path between the needs

of imperialism, to which it swore loyalty, and the aspirations of the masses for freedom, in the interests of leveraging a more favourable bargaining position for itself. It devised the tactics of "non-violence"—the hunger strike, civil disobedience and passive resistance—as a means of syphoning off the fury of the masses while exploiting them as a bargaining counter.

Churchill mocked the "naked fakir" Gandhi, but the obese, rapacious and parasitical Indian bourgeoisie needed as its mascot the caricatured saint with his sackcloth, his fasting and his pacifism. The writings of Gandhi, once the prisoner of the British imperialists and now their darling, express with breathtaking frankness the striving of the Indian bourgeoisie to subdue the storm of mass revolt.

"I think the growing generation will not be satisfied with petitions, etc," he advised. "We must give them something effective. Satyagraha (passive resistance) is the only way, it seems to me, to stop terrorism." (ie. direct action including mass uprisings).

Gandhi's first priority was to safeguard the rights of private property. He expressed horror at finding in his native state of Gujarat "utter lawlessness bordering on Bolshevism."

"I shall be no party to dispossessing the propertied classes of their private property without just cause," he assured the landlords and capitalists. "You may be sure that I shall throw the whole weight of my influence in preventing a class war... Supposing there is an attempt unjustly to deprive you of your property, you will find me fighting on your side."

He understood all too clearly that once the masses were on the move, the struggle would inevitably go far beyond the formal political goal of independence, to sweep capitalism and landlordism aside: "I hope I am not expected knowingly to undertake a fight that must end in anarchy and red ruin", he replied to the suggestion of a general strike. He consciously used the "socialist" wing of Congress to confuse them: "It is all well as long as you hold the peasants in check. But Nehru's presence must now ease the situation. He has no difficulty in deal-

ing with the peasants and restraining them."

There were strict limits to his advocacy even of civil disobedience. "I cannot ask officials and soldiers to disobey," he explained frankly (and prophetically), "for when I am in power I shall in all likelihood make use of these same officials and those same soldiers. If I taught them to disobey I shall be afraid that they might do the same when I am in power."

Gandhi's servile posture towards the British raj can be indicated, quite apart from his frequent and toadying protestations of loyalty and "love" for the British Empire, by the fact that two entire volumes of his collected works are devoted to his correspondence with the Viceroy! One or two extracts will be as much as our readers will be able to stomach:-

"It would be unwise on my part not to listen to the warning given by the Government... A civil resister never seeks to embarrass the Government. I feel that I shall better serve the country and the Government by suspension of civil resistance for the time being."

And again: "I confess that it is a delicate situation. I need hardly assure you that the whole of my weight will be thrown absolutely on the side of preserving internal peace. The Viceroy has the right to rely upon my doing nothing less."

Dismayed that the dialectic of events had prompted a breach in relations, Gandhi did not hesitate to crawl back into favour by writing to the Viceroy: "I do not know whether... friendly relations between us are closed, or whether you expect me still to see you and receive guidance from you as to the course I am to pursue in advising the Congress."

"I wish I could convince all the British public men, the British Ministers," he complained, "that Congress is capable of delivering the goods."

Trotsky summed up the delicate and complex task that faced the Indian bourgeoisie:-

"Millions of people have begun to stir. They demonstrated such spontaneous power that the national bourgeoisie was forced into action in order to blunt its revolutionary edge. Gandhi's passive resistance movement is the tactical knot that ties the naive and self-denying blindness of the dispersed petty-bourgeois masses to the treacherous manoeuvres of the liberal bourgeoisie... The Tolstoyan formulas of passive resistance were in a sense the first stage of the revolutionary awakening of the Russian peasant masses. Gandhism represents the

same thing in regard to the masses of the Indian people. The more "sincere" Gandhi is personally, the more useful he is to the masters as an instrument for the disciplining of the masses." (*The Revolution in India, its Tasks and Dangers*, 1930).

"We denounce before the colonial masses the treacherous aspects of Gandhism, whose mission is to retard the fight of the revolutionary masses and to exploit it in the interest of the 'national' bourgeoisie." (1934).

The natural leadership of the independence struggle belonged with the party of the proletariat. But the Communist Party of India displayed an even greater degree of treachery than Congress.

"Communist" collaboration

It was a historical betrayal by world Stalinism that led the CPI in 1942 to denounce as treason the massive 'Quit India' campaign, half-heartedly launched by Congress, which had an ambiguous and inconsistent attitude to the war. In accordance with its role as puppet of the Kremlin bureaucracy and frontier-guard of the USSR, rather than vanguard of the workers and peasants or even of the national-liberation movement, the CPI put Stalin's alliance with Churchill before the cause of India's freedom. The only sure defence of the Russian revolution was to advance the struggle against imperialism everywhere.

But CPI leaders entered into a prolonged and increasingly servile secret correspondence and even held secret meetings with the British authorities, volunteering their collaboration in fighting against the Congress "fifth column" (see facsimile letter for one example). In April 1942 the CPI submitted a memorandum to the government declaring: "Today all the Indian Communists are burning with an ardent desire to co-operate with the existing war efforts, even under the present government", and requesting official help to "enable us to resist the Japs... We have no doubt that the government will find our organ the most effective war propaganda newspaper that has yet been introduced in India". The party offered "our wholehearted co-operation" in sending its released leaders on countrywide tours "to rouse the patriotic instincts of the people in defence of our country", "undertake recruitment for all branches of the fighting forces", "do all we can to build fraternal relations between the army and the people", "work out schemes for speeding up production", etc. The government

"will have no need to fear strikes as far as we Communists can help it".

The party continually bragged about its successes at breaking strikes preventing food riots and discouraging desertions, gloating that even the pro-imperialist newspapers "have not written so consistently and strongly against sabotage as our weekly organs".

British bureaucrats overcame official scepticism with cynical arguments: "When your house is on fire, the important thing is that someone is helping you put it out, not what he was doing previously... It is easy to give a dog a bad name and hang him. It is more difficult, but far more worthwhile, to recognise and seize the moment at which it may be possible to convert a rebel into a useful citizen... The change is in tactics only, but if they change their tactics, their ideology does not matter... We can accept these people as short-term allies... The Communists might provide something of a makeweight against the pernicious activities of Congress".

As a result, while Congress leaders were imprisoned between 1942 and 1945, and an estimated 10,000 youth, workers and peasants were killed fighting British imperialism and tens of thousands jailed or flogged, the CPI was legalised, its activists freed from the jails, and its newspapers subsidised by the British government! Such was the anger of the masses at this sickening treachery that CPI offices and printshops were bombed and CPI activists attacked. It took years for the CPI to recover any credibility and to this day Congress leaders demagogically exploit this criminal record at election hustings, etc.

The masses showed an unrelenting and growing determination to achieve freedom. Trotsky warned that under such a leadership their efforts were doomed. "The Indian bourgeoisie is incapable of leading a revolutionary struggle. They are closely bound up with and dependent on British capitalism. They tremble for their own property. They stand in fear of the masses. They seek compromises with British imperialism no matter what the price, and lull the Indian masses with hopes of reforms from above. The leader and prophet of this bourgeoisie is Gandhi. A fake leader and a false prophet!... Double chains of slavery—that will be the inevitable consequence of the war if the masses of India follow the politics of Gandhi, the Stalinists and their friends." (*India Faced with Imperialist War*, 1939).

It was inconceivable that an effete, snivelling party like Congress could wrest the power from the hands of im-

perialism. How then did the party of the "fake leader and false prophet" come to inherit the power?

The winning of Indian independence was due neither to the saintliness of Gandhi nor the benevolence of Mountbatten, but to the revolutionary wave that rocked the planet following the Second World War, a wave that also launched the global movement towards colonial revolution, swept to power workers' parties or Popular Fronts in Western Europe, and brought an end to landlordism and capitalism in China and a number of countries in Eastern Europe. In India, the masses tore control of the national liberation struggle out of the quavering hands of Congress.

Revolution

1946 was a year of revolution. It began with the mass movement which forced the British to release from jail the leaders of the Indian National Army (a decidedly non-pacifist nationalist movement which had taken up arms, in collaboration with the Japanese) who had been convicted of treason. On 19 February there began the great naval mutiny, in which the thousands of ratings of the Royal Indian Navy in Bombay—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs together—threw overboard their British officers, trained the guns of their battleships on the centre of Bombay (another very non-Gandhian gesture) and hoisted on their masts the red flag, together with those of Congress and the Muslim League. Immediate sympathy strikes were launched by Royal Indian Air Force men in Bombay and Madras in their thousands. General strikes broke out in several cities. On 1st March the sepcoys (troops) in Jabalpur barracks mutinied. On 15th March, the imprisoned RIN mutineers began a hunger strike. On the 18th, Gurkha soldiers based in Dehra Dun mutinied. The following day, the movement spread from the navy, air force and army to the police force: in Allahabad, police staged a mutiny and hunger strike. By 22nd March the police of Delhi had also mutinied. On 3rd April, 10,000 Bihar police went on strike. Soon the workers had joined the movement. On 2 May, North-West railway workers struck, and on 11th July, there began the all-India strike of 100,000 postal workers. On 23 July, 400,000 industrial workers came out in their support.

What was the attitude to this magnificent movement of the Congress so-called "leaders" of the independence campaign? One of consternation. Sardar Patel successfully urged the Bombay naval ratings to surrender, promising to use his influence

to avoid victimisation—following which they were jailed. Gandhi and Nehru denounced the strikes, and Congress President Maulana Azad said "strikes, hartals and defiance of temporary authority are out of place."

India was ablaze with strikes, mutinies, uprisings. The Empire was without an Army. Lord Mountbatten was rushed out to organise a hurried withdrawal from India, working in the classic 'divide and rule' method of imperialism. Partitioning the living body of the country, by giving power to Congress in India and the Muslim League in Pakistan, they thought they would dominate by playing one section against the other. Later he explained: "India in March 1947 was a ship on fire in mid-ocean with ammunition in the hold... It seemed that the only possible alternative to a quick transfer of power was... to bring in a large number of British Army divisions to hold down the country."

But how many divisions would it need to hold down an angry population of over 500 million? It would take an army of occupation and conquest bigger than the entire British Army to saturate India... And then? In Napoleon's famous epigram, you can do anything with bayonets except sit on them. And where, in the conditions of that post-war dawn of hope, were the forces for such an army to be found? War-weary, radicalised and determined to go home and build a new world, the British troops were in no mood to play the role of an imperialist occupation army, fighting a dirty war and a lost cause. If US imperialism had to stand by gritting its teeth while China, the biggest nation on earth, abolished landlordism and capitalism, then how much less could the mangy toothless British lion prevent the political transfer of power to the Indian bourgeoisie? In fact the radical temper of the British soldiers had already compelled the British Government to demobilise them in haste and take the guns out of their hands. No wonder that General Auchinleck, faced with this forest fire of revolt, cabled back to Whitehall that unless independence were conceded, India could not be held for three days!

In the whole history of British rule, imperialism had never needed a full-scale occupation army in India. Britain conquered India with Indian troops, cunningly intriguing and playing off the rival Maharajahs of the feuding principalities. Even the rebellion of 1857 was localised in character. It took the tidal wave of national consciousness that engulfed India in 1945-7 to sweep the raj away.

Compare the situation in 1853, the heyday of British imperialism, when

Marx wrote: "While all were struggling against all, the Briton rushed in and was enabled to subdue them all. A country not only divided between Mohammedan and Hindu, but between tribe and tribe, between caste and caste, a society whose framework was based on a sort of equilibrium, resulting from a general repulsion and constitutional exclusiveness between all its members. Such a country and such a society, were they not the predestined prey of conquest? If we knew nothing of the past history of Hindustan, would there not be the one great and incontestable fact, that even at this moment India is held in English thralldom by an Indian army maintained at the cost of India?"

India gained its political freedom, thanks neither to Congress nor the CPI, but to the revolutionary mood of both the Indian masses and the British troops, and the pressure on the new Labour Government by the British working class. By 1947, the police, army, navy and air force had melted away, and there was no prospect of finding a new occupation army. The cynical right-wing Congress leader Rajagopalachari commented: "If Mountbatten had not transferred power when he did, there might have been no power to transfer."

Communal partition

Despite recent attempts to build up a cult of Mountbatten, his role was one not of "brilliant diplomacy" but of rat panic. He negotiated a rapid withdrawal in collusion with the British stooge Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, which exploited the fears of the Muslim minority of persecution at the hands of a Hindu-dominated Congress government by insisting that Hindus and Muslims constituted "two nations" and demanding partition. British imperialism, with Congress connivance, was responsible for the bloody dismemberment and communal vivisection of India, the slaughter of millions of Hindu and Muslim hostages and the transmigration of tens of millions into refugee camps.

The legacy of British imperialism in India, as in Ireland, the Middle East, Cyprus, etc, was a festering communal poison which can never be eradicated while capitalism remains. Having done their utmost to damp down the masses' struggle, the Congress leaders—like their Irish counterparts 25 years previously—meekly accepted communal partition as the price for the trappings of power.

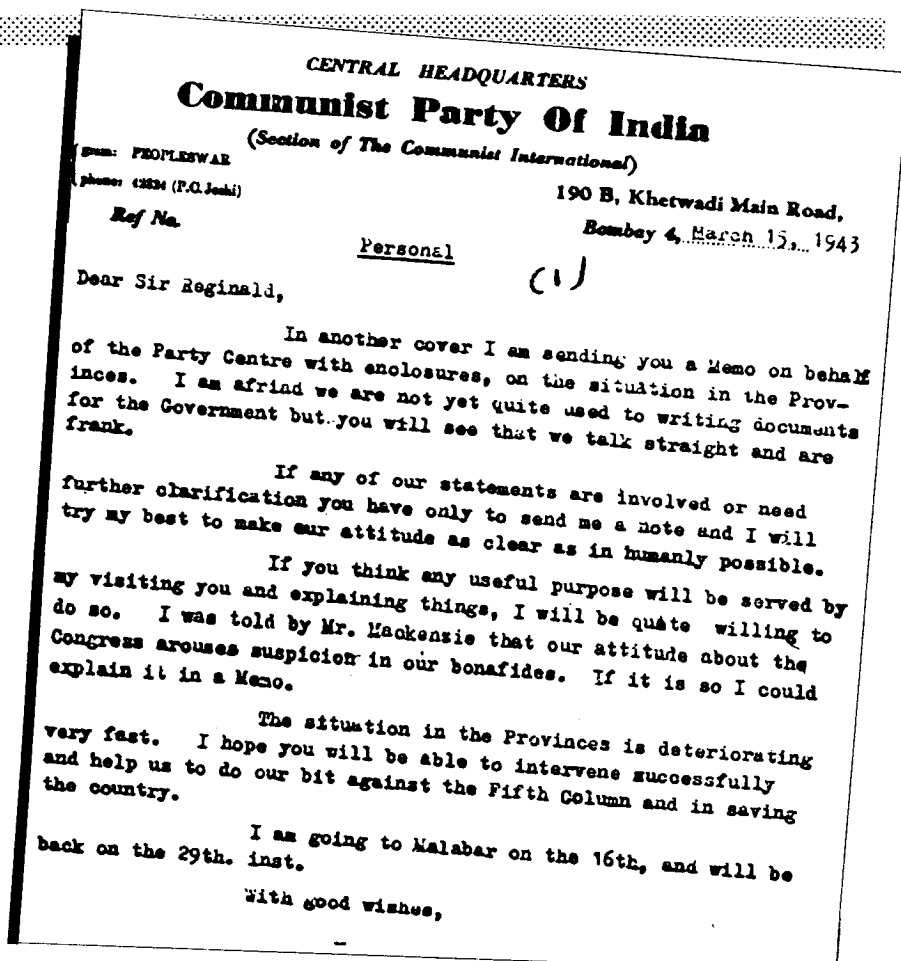
If the bourgeoisie had been capable of playing even the feeblest role in a developing society, here was the ideal test of its potential. It could not have

dreamed of more favourable conditions. It took hold of the destiny of the most populous capitalist country on Earth, commanding a gigantic potential home market (its population is now as great as those of the USA, the EEC countries and the USSR put together), at the outset of the biggest world economic upswing in the history of capitalism! India is rich in untapped mineral and agricultural reserves, and above all in the most precious and productive resource of all: human labour power. If the Indian bourgeoisie could have arrived on the scene and come to power two or three centuries earlier, India could have been a USA. Its pitiful condition today proves graphically the historical redundancy of capitalism.

Failure of capitalism

It is ironic that apologists for capitalism blame India's poverty on one of the very factors that fuelled the economic "miracles" in Germany, Japan, Italy, Brazil, etc., at the very time that Indian capitalism was hardly hobbling along: "overpopulation", the availability of surplus manpower, which allowed an influx of fresh reserves of labour into industry in those countries. America's wealth was founded upon successive waves of immigration which provided a rare combination of both cheap labour and a booming market. Conversely, the declining populations of Ireland in the 19th century, or India's neighbour Nepal today, bled by mass emigration, have hardly been beneficial to their economies! Socialism could proudly harness the energies and creative talent of humanity.

The law of permanent revolution has been brilliantly vindicated in reverse by the negative history of Indian capitalism. Not a single task of the bourgeois-democratic revolution has been fulfilled. Capitalism has failed to develop a home market—on the contrary the already appallingly impoverished masses have been utterly pauperised since independence. The percentage of Indians eking out a brutish existence below starvation level has grown to 60 per cent. This is the material basis for the constant eruptions of rioting, blind despair and communal slaughter in all the cities, and conditions nearing civil war in large areas of the countryside. Indian capitalism's unseemly scramble to cash in on foreign booms instead has ended in disaster, with the Indian share of world trade steadily declining throughout the post-war Western boom from its highest point, achieved in 1938! Even in absolute terms, it has now lost its earlier toe-hold on world



CPI treachery: A letter from PC Joshi, General Secretary of the PCI, to Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Viceroy's Home Affairs Chief in 1943.

markets, and is now, at the insistence of the IMF, demolishing its tariff walls and opening up its limited internal market to a flood of cheap imports threatening the destruction of the bulk of Indian industry. After a feeble flutter, Indian capitalism is now decisively beaten by the monopolies of the West and Japan, which use India as a dumping-ground.

A tiny class of vulgar parvenus has India by the throat, a parasitic bourgeoisie that straddles a shadowy border-line with gangsterism and feeds its gross appetites by sordid speculation, black-marketeering, usury bribery, smuggling, above all by downright cheating. A huge volume of "black money" is swelling and lurching throughout the economy making a mockery of bureaucratic regulation and "controls".

If there has been a marginal growth in the industrial proletariat in India since 1947, there is no question that the social class which has swollen into monstrous proportions during the same period, due to land hunger and unemployment, is the lumpen-proletariat of the teeming shanty towns.

In terms of land reform, Congress

only broke the stranglehold of the feudal landowners in a few areas, notably Punjab (hardly a paragon of stability today!). Landlessness has swollen to half the rural population, and five per cent of landlords own 45 per cent of the land.

Congress has failed to wipe out the surviving antiquated and even pre-capitalist forms of production. In fact, there survive primitive communist tribal societies (the 'adivasis' of Madhya Pradesh, the North-East, etc.); a widespread system of slavery ('bonded labour' in the stone quarries, plantations, etc.); feudal serfdom, sharecropping and absentee landlordism over the majority of the land; large scale primitive cottage-industry manufacture; and the economically dominant capitalist monopolies. India thus resembles a huge living museum of historical materialism. This is the clearest token of capitalism's impotence to decisively put its own imprint on society. Another is the fact that capitalism can only totter along on the crutches of the state, hence two-thirds of labour in the 'organised sector' is employed by the state.

Congress has failed to shake off the horrible medieval legacy of the Dark

Ages—caste and untouchability, communal bigotry, ignorance and superstition. The economic collapse has led to a resurgence of all that is most vile and barbarous in India's cultural heritage: communal and caste massacres, witchcraft, astrology, ritual child slaughter, dowry murders, widows' self-immolation, etc. Rajiv Gandhi boasts of leading India into the 21st century. Most of the country would be grateful to be dragged into the 17th century!

Balkanisation

Above all, by betraying the hopes of the independence movement Congress has allowed the flame of national consciousness which set India alight in 1947 to flicker and dim almost to extinction. This represents its most shameful humiliation, its ultimate historical failure. The Indian bourgeoisie needs a united India which can provide it both with at least some home market (if in practical terms this amounts to only five per cent of the population, this still means nearly 40 million people), and especially with the lavish public funds of which it milks the state exchequer. The Balkanisation of India would mark its final demise as a class. But it has utterly discredited itself. It can no more hold India together than it can solve any other of its tasks. It has lost all faith in its own future. Thus, just as Indian businessmen will cheat their way around their own laws to make a fast buck out of smuggling and black-money transactions, making a mockery of their own tariff and tax systems, so too their political agents will freely spit upon the sacred cows of Gandhism and nationalism and in-

dulge instead in unscrupulous conspiracies with the dark forces of communal gangsterism for the sake of their personal careers. Congress has finally, and inevitably, turned full circle into the party of Northern Hindu communal chauvinism and bigotry. All the more reason for it to cling desperately to the Nehru/Gandhi family dynasty, a monarchy in all but name, to resuscitate the flagging myth of Congress' role in 1947. At every time of political crisis when it was faced with a choice—in 1966, 1969-71, 1975, 1979-80, 1982 and again in 1984—it had no alternative but to entrust its fate to succeeding generations of the Nehru family—to his daughter Indira and grandsons Sanjay and Rajiv. History has thus played a cruel joke on Congress. A mass movement for Indian national unity overthrew an Emperor and swept an unwilling Congress into power; one generation later, Congress needs a new Royal dynasty to try in vain to keep India from crumbling to pieces.

The Indian bourgeoisie aped the imperialists by adopting a bullying posture towards the weaker nations of the sub-continent, especially in its national oppression of the Nagas and Mizos in the North-East, its refusal of a plebiscite in Kashmir, its annexation of Sikkim, etc. It periodically stages local coups by dismissing elected state governments (recently in Kashmir, Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Punjab, etc.) and imposing direct rule. But disillusion and disgust at the antics of the ruling class has soiled the vision of a united India and led to a resurgence of regional and secessionist movements. Most dangerous of all are the complex tensions that have arisen between the overlapping communities,

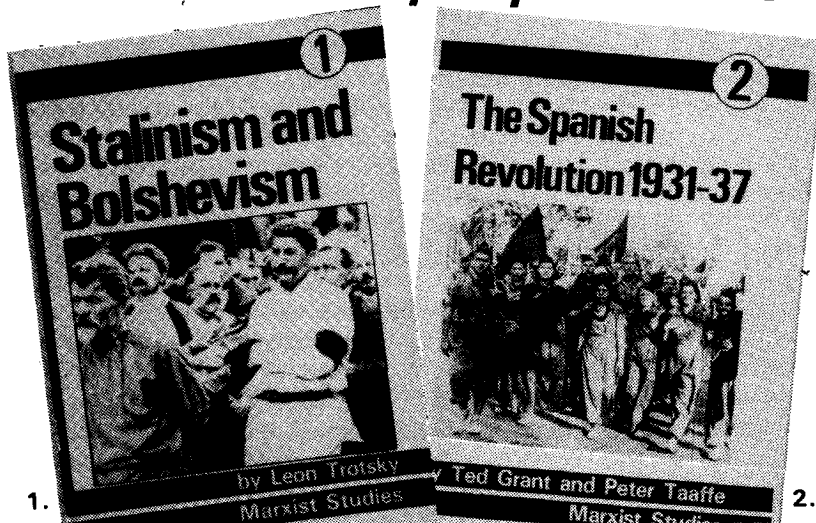
especially within the urban lumpen-proletariat, leading to an ugly eruption of communal pogroms against Muslims, Sikhs, etc. But a national consciousness does not drop from the sky, it is founded on a material base. The fragmentation and eclipse of an Indian national consciousness today is rooted in the actual material failure of the bourgeoisie to fulfil its historic mission, and the criminal refusal of the proletarian parties to assume even that responsibility, let alone that of the socialist revolution.

The only class that can "save India" is the Indian proletariat, which by its magnificent record of struggle, especially over the last decade, has staked an irrefutable claim to be literally the most militant and combative in the world, and whose proven heroism, tenacity, and internationalism testify to the decisive revolutionary role it can play once it finds a worthy political expression.

The decadence of capitalism is nowhere better illustrated than in India. The workers, peasants, youth and unemployed face ever more excruciating agonies in terms of economic hardship and national oppression alike. But Marxists can have no illusions about it: there is no section of the bourgeoisie in any country, rich or poor, that can solve these problems. More than ever, the task of historical progress falls on the shoulders of the proletariat with the overthrow of capitalism on a world scale.

Additional Reading on India:
India—The Gathering Storm
 Roger Silverman, 60p
MIR No.21, Winter 1980-81—Article
 on India by Roger Silverman

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When Spencer ruled . . .

Memories of a Notts miner, 1926-39

THE FOLLOWING article has been received by the MIR from a retired Notts miner, SID RICHMOND. It recounts his experiences working in the Notts coalfield when management had the upper hand following the miners' defeat in 1926. It gives incidences which highlight the harsh working conditions imposed on the Notts miners during this period and how the union was painfully rebuilt in the teeth of ferocious opposition from management, aided by Spencer's company union. In this respect, as Sid Richmond points out, it is pertinent reminder to those who flirt with the idea of breaking from the National Union today. And, not least, the article shows the impact the great struggle of 1926 had on the author as a 12 year old boy—in the same way as the recent miners' strike has radicalised a whole generation of youth so graphically demonstrated in the magnificent movement of the school students.

POOLSBROOK, a village belonging to Staveley Coal & Iron Co, of about 800 houses.

I was twelve years old. Two years previously the company were bringing people with big families from various parts of the country free of charge, or to pay later out of their earnings.

Men and boys over 14 years old were given jobs at the various pits, Ireland Colliery and Markham No 1, 2, and 3 pits.

Duckmanton pit village was built about the same time, as the new part of Poolsbrook—round about 1923-24. This was also filled by people and families on poor relief from all over the country—Scotland, Wales, Staffordshire, Lincolnshire and so forth.

Before the strike started, lots of these people were up to their ears in debt and there was no wonder that they didn't want to stop work.

However, most of them did, but as you may guess a minority carried on working. Next thing we knew 240 police from Manchester were billeted in the 2 villages, mainly to escort the scabs to work and back. Scuffles used to break out, if a scabs wife hung washing out someone would dash out and cut the line.

Then there would be a crowd gather, chanting SCAB, SCAB. Soon they would be surrounded by 50 or 60 Police, who would take the first 12 they got hold of from the outside of the crowd and lock them up. More often than not they were just onlookers.

One day in the new village in the Crescent at Poolsbrook a scuffle was taking place, about 100 men, women and children shouting and cat-calling. I was one of them.

In the meantime an old man, a retired miner (a preacher at the local chapel) was walking home from

nearby town of Staveley. He couldn't get past, so he sat on a garden wall to rest. Up charged the police, whistles blowing, truncheons waving and grabbed at least a dozen—yes, of course old Mr Holden, one of the most respected men in the village, was one of them. He was the first they got to. Because he protested he was rough-handled, handcuffed and charged with resisting arrest.

Later he was sentenced to three months in jail.

I know the women are seen to be actively supporting their men in the current strike but more behind the scenes the women played a big part in 1926. There was a lot more poverty and misery, but somehow raffles and collections provided us school children with our only meal of the day—4 o'clock in the Church Hall each afternoon, three slices of bread and potted meat and a mug of tea each. Of course, we were well versed in the art of looking after ourselves around the countryside as well, weather permitting.

Those were in the days when all cooking in the home was done by coal fires, oven one side, water boiler the other. Coal, of course, was scarce. Many frozen fingers and feet I had digging on the old pit tips, sometimes to have a barrow full when 2 or 3 police would come and tip the barrow up and chase us off. Under the ground around Poolsbrook there is a seam of coal about 4 feet thick and about 8 feet deep. This was well known because all the allotments had wells sunk down to it.

As the coal shortage grew men were digging down through the floor of pig pens, chicken sheds etc., to get to the coal seam.

When discovered the police would fill them in and knock the shed down, then other holes would be dug somewhere else.

A near neighbour of ours used to go out at night and throw lumps of coal off the coal trucks moving out of the sidings at Seymour. The stationary ones were well watched by the police. He would then collect it up and hide it in a pre-arranged place at the side of a footpath. Next day I would go with a pram as if I was taking a baby for a walk. Off would come the pram cover, in would go the coal, back with the cover.

Then I would walk, pushing the pram loaded with coal, through the village and past dozens of police (the saps.).

One Saturday morning, together with my mother, we were walking back from Staveley. We reached the bottom of the village. It was early morning, not a soul in sight, then round a corner comes a woman, she was on the other side of the road from us. My mother said,

as if to me "There's one of the bloody scab's wives, she ought to be ashamed". Nothing else was said, nobody else in sight or hearing. The next thing we knew, on the Monday following, a policeman delivered five summonses against my mother for various alleged offences. When my mother appeared at Chesterfield Court and pleaded 'Not Guilty' the Magistrate just said "We must believe our officers, fined £1 on each charge".

First Monday in April 1928 I started work at Markham No. 2 pit—3 feet high at one side of the pit, two feet three inches at the other side—pony driving, and after a couple of runs to show me the ropes, I was on my own.

On the district I was on, the return airway to the actual working face was too low and dangerous to take the ponies along. So we had to travel half a mile along the main tub road where empty tubs travelled one side and full tubs the opposite side, fastened in sets of eight to a haulage endless rope. Going into work "Alright" the rope was stood. Winding time up the pit at the end of the shift on days was 2.15 pm, coal turning resumed at 2.45 pm for afternoon shift. So the pony drivers had to wait until the rope stopped at 2.15pm, take their pony to the underground stable, unharness it and travel another 1¼ miles to the pit bottom, all in 30 minutes.

The pony drivers asked for the rope to be stopped 10 minutes earlier but this the management would not do. The following day, at the end of the shift, the bigger boys took my pony, tied it up and said "Get off home Sid, we'll look after it". I didn't know until later that all the ponies had been left up the workings and not taken to the stables.

Now you SCABS be warned what happens when there is no union to protect you. All the pony drivers were prosecuted at Chesterfield court and fined 30 shillings each—approximately three weeks wages. The *Derbyshire Times* newspaper called it an illegal strike. No action was taken against me because I didn't know what was happening and had only been working less than a week.

During my schooldays and after I left to start work I played about with a lad named Billy Cain. He was a nice lad and a very good boxer. An uncle of his, I think his name was Mick Cain, was agitating and trying to get the union on its feet again. He started selling a single sheet foolscap newspaper called *Spark* (probably the forerunner of today's *Miner*) in the pit yard at Markham. When it started to get popular after a few weeks the management sent for the police and had him forcibly removed from the premises. Because of this activity he was sacked at the pit and within a week evicted from his house. Furniture, bedding, pots, the lot put out on the street. Because my friend Billy was his nephew he was sacked as well. He went off with Billy Woods Boxing Booth which came with the fairground, three years later he came back punchdrunk.

In the meantime at 15½ years old I had my first shift on the face, in a tub stall. It was a Friday night

shift. There was little or no work for the pony drivers because the face had come between two gate's and until this had been headed out again the coal cutter couldn't get through. One man in these two faces hadn't come to work so the deputy asked if any of us wanted to take his place.

I jumped at the chance to earn 9 shillings and 8 pence (new money 46p) instead of 3 shillings and 9 pence (18½p).

It was well earned, hard hot work because of lack of ventilation in a dead end, with just a small amount of air getting through.

Soon after this I got the sack for fighting with an overman in the pit bottom. It was at the end of Friday night shift (Saturday morning) when we arrived to go up the pit late because of putting the ponies away. We were told we had to go round to 'B' shaft and although the distance between the two shafts on the surface was 200 yards, underground it was a mile and a half.

I refused to go and sat on the tub controls and stopped any more tubs being run on to the cage.

Soon this big Overman came, his name I remember was Arthur Brown. We had a set to and I thumped him. Myself and the other drivers still had to go to the other shaft but I felt a bit of satisfaction. Of course, I had to appear before the 'Big Chief' the Undermanager. Cards in my hand, I went down the passage to the 'Black Shale Seam' Undermanager for a job.

I got started there and had been there a month and just settled in when this Overman, Brown, was transferred. He saw me and his eyes nearly popped out of his head. He phoned up the pit offices and my cards were waiting for me when I got up the shaft at shift end.

I then got a job at Bolsover pit and after a few months, at 16 years and 8 months (I was big for my age and gave a wrong date of birth) I got on to the face for regular stinting. After a couple of years I got itchy feet and I got a job at Harworth pit. My Uncle was the Spencer Union Secretary there but he didn't know I was going. I like to do things for myself. Anyway, giving my age as 21 (I was just turned 19) I was set on as stallman. I was in charge of 12 fillers (less money than me) some of them old enough to be my grandad.

Soon I got fed up and moved back home and to Markham Black Shale again stinting (The overman was out of the pit having had a leg taken off in an accident). Soon after I left Harworth pit I heard that Mick Cain had started there. I used to motor cycle over to Harworth to visit my Aunt and Uncle. Soon I heard news of unrest and the system of checkweigh was the chief cause.

Under Spencer's Union Rules only one man, the Manager's choice, was in the checkweigh office. In all other areas apart from where Spencer's Union ruled, there were two. The Checkweigh was where the tubs were weighed and should have been booked to the men whose number or tally was on the tub. With

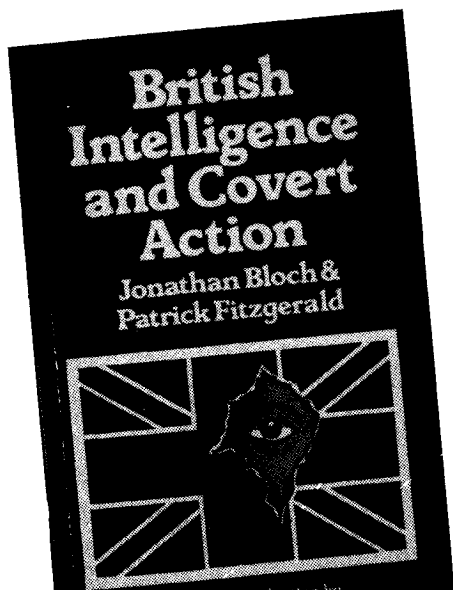
just a Manager's man in you can guess what was happening.

Mick Cain realised this and agitated enough to get the men out on strike. The strike lasted for about 14 weeks, if I remember rightly. The Spencer Union was broken at Harworth and soon crumbled at other pits but I have a hazy recollection that Mick Cain was sent to jail.

Anyway, I'm still on the coal face, stinting at Markham Black Shale. I was also in the Territorial Army. In May 1938 I was fetched out of the pit on afternoons because of general mobilisation. This lasted 15 days and it was my 'first holiday' paid for at army rates by the government.

During 1938 we had two explosions and fires at our pit, the Black Shale. The first explosion was a local

small one but 7 men were killed. The fire was a small affair, caught in time. The second explosion happened at the end of the night shift and killed 78 men, most of them as they were making their way to the pit bottom. Some of them were within a few yards of safety. I was on afternoons and my mother woke me about 6 am saying that something had happened at the pit. I ran up to the pit and volunteered to go down on rescue. There was no-one to rescue, they were all dead that were still in. After about two hours working in the poisoned atmosphere carrying bodies of men we knew and had worked with, six of us were overcome and had to be revived with oxygen. A few months later I joined the regular army, just in time for the outbreak of the war.



British Intelligence and Covert Action

By Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald
(Brendon 1983, £6.95)

Reviewed by Jim Chrystie

BURRIED AWAY in the Defence estimates, out of sight or control of

Parliament are the budgets for the intelligence services. According to the *Financial Times* they comprise about 10% of the defence budget; about £1,700m this year.

The recent Channel Four documentary showed that they were virtually a law unto themselves. Ex-MI5 officers told of widespread telephone tapping, burglaries and surveillance of labour movement and CND activists. Officially the intelligence services are under Ministerial and thus parliamentary control. But as the recent controversy showed, reality is different.

Historically, as formal democracy was gained by workers, the ruling class took precautions to ensure that their power and influence was not affected by ordinary people having the vote. Key decisions were removed from Parliamentary control. They created new institutions to combat "sedition", and took care that they did not fall under any democratic check. They hid this with talk of not revealing secrets to the Russians, which is quite ironic as it now seems that some of the best informed people about British intelligence were the Russians as they virtually ran it.

But whilst the media has concentrated on this aspect (was Roger Hollis, head of MI5, a Russian agent?), they have paid little attention to what British intelligence has actually been doing in much of the world.

This book attempts to rectify the gap. It gives a guide to all the different arms of British intelligence and charts the history of its foreign network, MI6. It closes with a special look at current intelligence activities in Ireland and in an appendix gives the names of 131 suspected intelligence agents.

Some of the information will be of surprise even to activists in the labour movement. Despite denials by leaders of the Labour Party, British troops fought in Vietnam. SAS troops went

as sections of Australian and New Zealand SAS forces. So keen were right-wing Labour leaders to act as agents for the Americans that even after US troops left Vietnam, British intelligence, through a GCHQ listening post in Hong-Kong, kept the Americans informed about what was happening.

Even some of the Labour Lefts ideas were deceived by the intelligence services. After Rhodesia declared UDI the British navy put ships off the coast of Mozambique ostensibly to stop oil reaching the illegal regime. (All the time of course British companies were shipping oil through S. Africa, with Civil Servant assistance.) But after 1972 there were no more interceptions. So the navy monitored the communications signals of the FRELIMO liberation movement and presumably passed them on to the colonial power, their NATO ally, the military regime in Portugal. *Officially Joan Lestor was in charge of Labour government policy towards Southern Africa after 1974, but she was too close to the liberation movements and therefore some of the intelligence reports from Southern Africa were kept secret from her and other Labour ministers.*

In its public propaganda the British ruling-class talks of commitment to democracy. But when its interests are threatened it is one of the most vicious in the world. It has a long, bloody and ruthless history. Torture, military coups, terrorism, assassination, bombing campaigns and hijacking are all part and parcel of its trade. In the post-war period it has helped to install bloody dictators such as Amin or the Shah of Iran.

Sometimes it has even had to be restrained by the CIA. After the Suez debacle of 1956 British intelligence stalked the Middle East like a crazed wounded animal. The CIA man in the region complained that listening to the plan of George Young, then MI6

Deputy Director (now leader of the extreme right-wing Tory Action) made him think "I'd entered a madhouse". Young had outlined plans to assassinate the Egyptian leader Nasser and then as "Saudi Arabia and Syria threatened Britain's survival their governments would have to be subverted or overthrown".

If anyone thinks this is all just of historical interest then the chapter on current operations in Ireland should dissuade them. It details MI6 operations both in Northern and Southern Ireland, with agents involved in bombing, bank robbery and killings. There can be little doubt that such actions will be used against the labour movement in future, if the forces of organised labour do not succeed in carrying through a fundamental change in society.

Many of the people named with connections with the intelligence services have moved onto other things. One is now editor of *The Times*. Charles Douglas Home wrote a 'background book' on the 'Arabs and Israel', though he claims he did not know that the publishers were in effect the government's shadowy propaganda outfit, the Information Research Department. IRD was wound up by Owen, then Labour's Foreign Minister, and replaced by the Overseas Intelligence Department; its first head was Ray Whitney, now a Tory MP.

Coup in Iran

Perhaps one of the notable features of this history of MI6 is how it charts the decline of British imperialism. When in 1951 the Iranian government nationalised BP's oilfields, Atlee the Labour prime minister, asked the Chiefs of Staff to draw up a military plan to seize the oilfields. But the Americans would not support a major military action. Nevertheless Britain still had the greatest number of agents in Iran and throughout 1952 they planned a coup. Britain did not have the funds for the project so the, by now, Conservative government had to call in the USA for a joint operation. Day to day liaison was through George Young. The Americans demanded a heavy price. In return for help the CIA took over MI6 agents in Iran and after the successful coup BP lost its monopoly and had share out oil with the US companies. Then the UK helped to train the Shah's brutal secret police, SAVAK, and even allowed them to monitor anti-Shah Labour MPs in Britain.

The following decades were ones of increasing decline. A personal anecdote

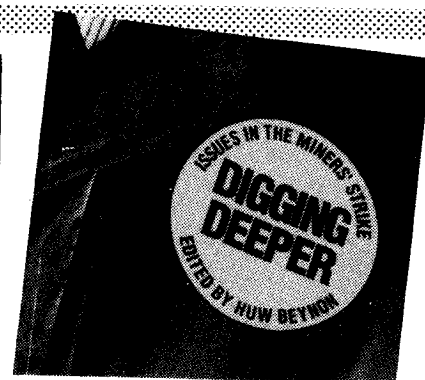
will illustrate the point. In 1978, twenty-five years after British participation in the coup which established the Shah on his throne, I attended a private meeting with David Owen, then Labour Foreign Secretary and a strong supporter of the Shah. He was clearly astonished to hear, through Iranian exile sources, of bitter discontent within the Iranian army towards the monarchy. This was long before there were any public demonstrations of protest against the regime, but clearly British intelligence sources in Iran were totally dependent upon the Americans and they had no idea what was happening.

Author harassed

But whilst the British ruling class is not the most efficient in collecting secrets, its power should not be underestimated. It is still fairly effective in preventing British people from finding out their activities. The government warned this book's British publishers that they should not print the book, as it, "constitutes an extensive and serious breach of D-notice no 6 in publishing detailed information about the activities and methods of the security and intelligence services". Since its publication over a year ago only *Tribune* and *The Observer* have reviewed it. Jonathan Bloch, one of its authors and a South African political refugee, has had his permission to live here withdrawn and faces expulsion. And finally the government is reported to be considering legislation to prevent such a book ever being published in Britain again.

This book is not the definitive account of British intelligence services. And it is not particularly easy to read. But it is a useful contribution. It is one of the few which actually addresses itself to what the intelligence services were doing. And the evidence is a damning exposure of those that claim that British governments are protecting 'liberty'. There is no greater proof of the ruling class' hypocrisy than its bloody covert operations, operations which are kept in their hands, outside any Parliamentary control, and which pose a real threat to the labour movement.

This book is a good beginning. But there should now be a thorough investigation by the labour movement into all the activities of British and foreign intelligence networks. Their past and present activities show what a massive danger they are to all activists in the labour movement both in Britain and overseas.



Digging Deeper— Issues in the Miners' Strike

Edited by Huw Beynon,
Published by Verso, £3.95

**Reviewed by
Chris Herriot**

(Sacked miner,
Monktonhall NUM)

AS AN in-depth analysis of the most important struggle between capital and labour since 1926 *Digging Deeper* only manages to scratch the surface. In the introduction, the editor, Huw Beynon, describes the book as a work of "social and political research" and as such it fulfills its function to a degree. In parts, the excitement, enthusiasm, hopes and aspirations expressed in the dispute are conveyed in such a way as to give life to the events or instances described. However, the authors admit to having hurriedly put the work together at the turn of the year which goes some way to explaining its seeming lack of form.

All aspects of the dispute are mentioned but not always developed. So much has been attempted to be discussed that some important points are missed altogether or are skimmed over as the numerous co-authors attempt to develop themes of particular interest to each of them. And, it is very easy indeed to pick up on particular themes from an all-encompassing event such as this and to use living, exciting examples to further a political case.

For instance, Loretta Loach of *Spare Rib* attempts to use the experiences of two miners' wives to build up a picture of women in the mining communities not only moving into action against Thatcher but also against the wishes of and, in some way, in opposition to the men. The Women's Support Groups are seen as being held back

and stifled by the male-dominated NUM. The men in the mining communities are supposed to have seen the development of the women's groups as a threat to their manhood or male ego.

No doubt such prejudices did exist in individual cases. But, the main source of resentment that built up as far as the Women's Support Groups were concerned was not in relation to male chauvinistic attitudes in the NUM but rather because of the attempts of some trade union functionaries to impose bureaucratic practices and constraints on ALL the support groups and organisations that sprang up in the course of the strike. Indeed, this stifling of local initiative in favour of bureaucratic control is one of the major failings in terms of strike organisation that is not touched upon at all in the book.

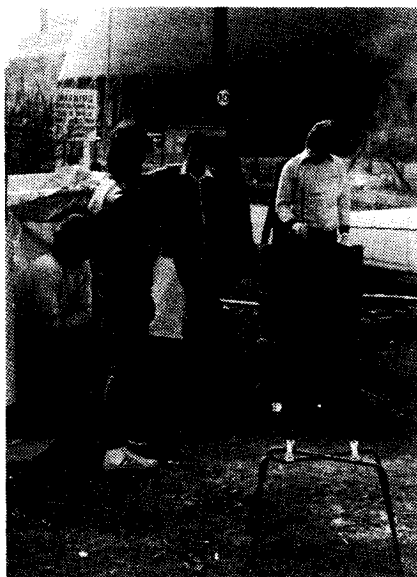
The structure and procedures of the NUM stem from the historical development of the union itself from the old Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB). The essentially 'federal' structure of the union leaves the constituent Areas a certain measure of autonomy. Full-time Agents are employed by the Areas to oversee the 'districts' or 'panels' and, at a lower level, is the lodge committee and branch itself which is normally based on an individual workplace. The complicated workings of the NUM may generally suit the needs of the membership in 'peace-time' but are not at all geared for the swift actions and decisions required in the day to day pandemonium of a national dispute. With the prospect of continuing local disputes in the future, the question of reviewing established practices and implementing fundamental changes is of crucial importance.

Formal alliances

The union has to abandon its practice of only developing links with other unions at area and national level and begin to encourage such activities at rank and file level. This was a major failing in the organisation of solidarity from other workers during the dispute.

Beynon deals with this issue by arguing: "For the NUM to place a tourniquet on the flow of coal, it needed something better than the Triple Alliance. Best of all, of course, would have been an Energy Alliance which linked miners with workers in the oil and gas industries and in the power stations."

However, Beynon is not precise enough here although he is near the mark. Of course, an "Energy Alliance"



NUM pickets at Eggborough power station. Beynon argues for an 'Engery Alliance' with power workers—but paper agreements amongst union leaders are no substitute for rank and file organisation. Photo: R. Clarkson

could have been of tremendous benefit but not if it took the same form as the "alliance" of union leaders in steel, rail and coal. Formal "alliances" are no substitute for rank and file organisation—in some ways they appear about as effective as the multitude of peace pacts and promises made between the world powers before the Second World War!

In fact, Beynon would appear to have something of a fetish for "alliances" of one kind or another. He talks of "the possibility of a new kind of radical alliance around energy, peace and urban decay". These apparently were the issues the NUM should have pushed because "no simple form of words was going to unlock the dispute". But nowhere is a strategy outlined nor an explanation given as to how the strike could have been won on the basis of an "alliance" around the "green politics which are of growing significance in Europe". Nor even how the "alliance" would be composed and what functions it would carry out.

Kim Howells, the South Wales NUM Research Officer, advances his ideas about a 'broad democratic alliance' although it is very difficult to establish what is exactly meant by "...a new collective spirit which revived community life and re-awoke in ordinary people the understanding that it was possible to take the first, concrete steps towards creating a more humanitarian and socialist society now, in the dreary midst of Thatcherism, and that it was idiotic to assume that such steps were only

possible after some special kind of electoral victory or a triumph on the barricades" and "with no prompting from *Marxism Today*, *New Left Review* or *Labour Weekly*, the people of the coalfields created the basis for a new politics..."

'Planning agreements'

Bill Schwarz, a lecturer at North East London Polytechnic in Cultural Studies, develops his own brand of fanciful theories in relation to the role of the media during the strike. Miners and trade unionists in general will be only too glad to learn that "media practitioners" are not, in fact, deliberately biased against the workers' movement. It is their conception of "balance" that is wrong. Further, it is argued that the movement should not simply describe the media as a "lie machine" because that "obstructs attempts to utilise whatever openings for sympathetic coverage that are available".

Such openings were few and far between for the 12 months the miners battled against the full force and brutality of the capitalist state. It is the height of naivety to suggest that the media would be more sympathetic if spoken to or about in a 'nicer' fashion. Nor is it a question of redefining "balance" or the "general or national interest". The media, as Alan Fountain and Schwarz himself explain, is controlled by big business. Real and genuine "balance" can only be achieved by wresting control from the ruling class and putting it into the hands of the labour movement.

The miners suffered at the hands of the media. Other workers have and will be treated in the same way when they are forced to struggle. There can be no compromise with any instrument of big business because the capitalist crisis means polarisation and intensified class struggle or poverty and misery.

Indeed the depth of the economic crisis renders any class collaboration impossible except at the expense of working class living standards and conditions. This is clearly indicated in the later chapters on the future of the coal industry although the authors seek to promote 'planning agreements' as an alternative to the crisis.

But the 'Plan for Coal' can be seen as a clear example of the viability of 'planning agreements' on the basis of a capitalist economy. This document, agreed by both Labour and Tory governments, has been cast aside at the whim of the ruling class. What prospect is there for enforcing 'planning

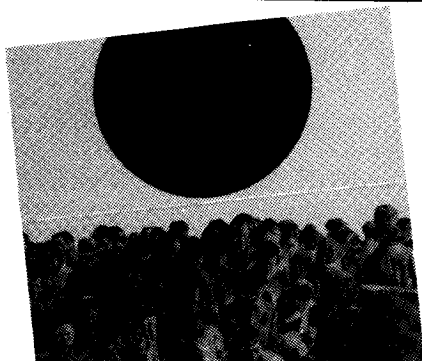
agreements' on private enterprise when they are shown to be worthless in the public sector?

A 'New Plan for Coal' is advocated. One which would look to the interests of working people and not to profits for big business. But, such a 'Plan' could only be introduced and enforced on the basis of a socialist, planned economy. It is utopian to think that

the bosses will be 'nice' and co-operate with a plan if it affects their profits.

Digging Deeper builds up an excellent case for the mining industry and illustrates clearly the tremendous support and solidarity that existed for the miners. The solutions it advances, however, are a hotch-potch of Hobsbawmian ideas of the 'Alternative Economic Strategy' and 'Broad

Alliances'. Some of the chapters, such as "Welfare Against the Workers", are worth reading and have value for the trade union activist. Of course, no book written during the dispute could fail to capture some of the mood and general excitement of the dispute. *Digging Deeper* is one of the first books published on the strike. That just shows that first isn't necessarily best.



A political history of Japanese capitalism

By John Halliday,
Published by
Pantheon Books,
£10.00

**Reviewed by
Mike Waddington**

IN A recent report by the Japanese Fair Trade Commission it was discovered that during 1976-81 only two imported products increased their share of the Japanese market: spaghetti up 1,974 per cent and biscuits 111 per cent! Cars on the other hand declined by 21 per cent. These figures illustrate Japan's superiority as a capitalist nation. In 1970 Britain had a small trade surplus with Japan; by 1982 that had become a £1,000 million deficit. In 1930 Japan accounted for 2.5 per cent of world GNP whereas in 1982 it was 12.5 per cent.

The reasons for this are clear. It is not due to "unfair trading" by Japan. As the World Business Editor of the *Economist* wrote in the *Times* (13 September 1982) "Britain and other European countries have little in fact to gain from the abolition of the few remaining tariffs and obstructions to imports into Japan. Twice this year

the Japanese have made a long list of concessions on obscure import procedures, but Trade Officials still pressing for fairer trade admit that the deficit in Europe's trade with Japan will widen further".

Japan's superiority is due to investment. Japan has been the biggest investor in the capitalist world—now leading the world in new technology. For example, of all the programmable robots in industry throughout the world 14,000 or 60 per cent are in Japan!

The massive investment in Japan is not due to more "forward looking" or "industrious" Japanese capitalists but to the political conditions established in Japan in 1945-52. Halliday's book describes, amongst other things, how these conditions were created.

One historian has written "Japan was to emerge in 1952, after six and a half years of American occupation, as one of the worlds least revolutionary societies" (Post War World Vol 1 Pg67).

In World War II 44 Japanese cities were destroyed leaving 260,000 dead, 412,000 wounded and 9 million homeless. 60 per cent of Hiroshima, 51 per cent of Tokyo, 56 per cent of Kobe and 44 per cent of Yokohama were destroyed. Industrial production was down to 10 per cent of its pre-war level. Food was in very short supply with rations set at 1,000 calories per day. An estimated 22 per cent of the 74 million Japanese population were suffering from tuberculosis.

The end of World War I had seen the 1918 'Rice Riots'—when 10 million Japanese took part in 636 uprisings which were only put down by the army. The Americans occupying Japan in 1945 were determined that such "Bolshevism" would not recur. However, the American GI's were not too keen on being kept in the army. When the War Department slowed down demobilisation to strengthen the American armies of occupation there were many demonstrations and near mutinies like at Fort Shafer in Hawaii on January 13 1946.

The allies appointed General MacArthur to run Japan and he got off to an unexpectedly good start. Nosaka, General Secretary of the Communist

Party, christened MacArthur "the liberator—the man who was coming to carry out the revolution!"

The real situation however was summed up by a businessman (and later foreign secretary) Aii Chiro, "When it was learned that the occupying power would be the US many industrialists uncorked their champagne bottles and toasted the coming of a new industrialists era".

MacArthur began with a few radical steps: October 1945 saw the repeal of all laws restricting freedom of thought, speech, religion and assembly. 2,511 political prisoners were released in December 1945 and the trade unions were legalised. Within a year their membership soared from 126,000 to nearly 4.5 million (6.7 million by 1948). Trade union membership pre war had peaked in 1936 at 420,589. These liberal measures were merely MacArthur letting out a little slack—riding out the storm until he would be strong enough to put his foot down—on the necks of the working class.

Jon Halliday writes "In spite of a meagre documentation, it is clear that the Japanese working class staged a major challenge to capitalist rule in the months immediately after the surrender, and that this challenge was staved off only by the joint action of SCAP (MacArthur's administration) and the Japanese Conservative regime".

US keep Emperor

Yoshida, who formed one of the first post 1945 right wing governments, puts it more vividly in his memoirs; he was "forming a government with the revolution raging outside his window."

Halliday writes: "Tokyo responded by making clear its determination to collaborate in blocking any attempt at revolutionary upheavals and signalled back that the key element in ensuring such a policy was retention of the Emperor, the linch-pin of the class system".

The Emperor was kept. Sections of the ruling class argued that even the army should be kept—thus wrote the British Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1945: "Not withstan-

ding the insubordination and terrorism for which the military and naval officers were responsible between 1932 and 1936, it remains true that in internal emergencies, the armed forces have shown themselves to be a stable element of the state".

An American civil servant, Talcott Parsons, had before the end of 1945 written to the President identifying a potential Japanese revolution as predominantly rural. Land reform was therefore essential. This sacrificing of a section of the Japanese ruling class had great benefits for America because the gap in agricultural production created was neatly filled by American agricultural surplus (even today around 70 per cent of Japan's agricultural imports come from America).

The land reform was as could be expected, stunted. Two-thirds of land was actually excluded. The net effect was to depopulate the countryside and build up the working class. 1950-60 saw four million people leave the land, 1960-70 a further five million.

The working class however, provided most of the sleepless nights for capitalism and the years immediately after the war represent one of the most heroic periods (and effectively suppressed episodes) in the history of the otherwise denigrated Japanese working class.

The working class's response to defeat—which meant inflation, unemployment, starvation and illness—was to take to the streets. May Day 1946 saw the first workers' demonstration for decades. There were virtually continuous demonstrations against the right wing Yoshida government which had granted massive licence to the police to attack workers' gatherings.

By far the most worrying development for capitalism was the "work-in" or "production control" movement—when workers took over and ran a company. It started at the Yomiuri newspaper where the workers took the paper over in retaliation to the owners' anti-working class attitudes and editorials.

At Mitsui's coal mine in Hokkaido the workers took it over, cut working hours from 12 to eight hours per day and boosted production from 250 to 650 tons a day. They also established a people's court to try war criminals.

On the Keisei electric railway the workers speeded up repair work three and a half times, worked holidays and weekends and let the public travel free! On May Day 1946 the railway workers let all demonstrators against Yoshida travel free!

A historian of this movement has described the "production control"

movement in a massive understatement: "It challenges the traditional concepts of industrial relations and the institution of private property"!!

The socialist revolution was breaking out.

The trade unions split into a right wing federation, the Sedomei, and a militant left wing federation, the Sanbetsu Kaigi (with 1.5 million members).

19 May 1946 saw a quarter of a million workers on a food rally in Tokyo invade the Emperors' kitchens (clearly the workers had gone too far)!

MacArthur responded the next day: "If minor elements of Japanese society are unable to exercise... self restraint... I shall be forced to take the necessary steps to control and remedy such a deplorable situation".

Unions repressed

Laws were brought in to ban strikes and police brutality increased. The Sanbetsu called a general strike for 1 February 1947. MacArthur banned it on 31 January and called new elections. The Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) emerged as the biggest party but lacked an overall majority.

Incredibly Katayama, the JSP leader, formed a government, promising not to include any left wingers in the cabinet, not to nationalise anything nor give any "state secrets" away—no doubt a reference to the strike breaking activity of the state.

Halliday again: "By lumbering the socialists with responsibility for a new government they could not really control, SCAP ensured that the working class pressure would be eased temporarily and that a large segment of the political representatives of the working class would be discredited in the long run."

Under Katayama inflation reached its peak, wages were only one-third of 1935, taxes and unemployment increased and massive subsidies were given to big business. In the government's words, to give "industrial management and capital a breathing spell and also restrain the demands and pressures of trade unions."

The JCP we should remember still supported MacArthur—thus the working class was totally beheaded by its leaders. Katayama fell after eight months but his government clearly got the ruling class over the most critical period.

March 1948 saw the Sanbetsu organise another general strike, which was again banned with concessions.

This period saw the growth of more state repression with another general election called for January 1949.



Starving Japanese sift through the refuse of the US Eighth Army HQ in search for food. Under the American occupation there were mass sackings of workers for trade union activity.

"One Japanese official is quoted to the effect that it was more difficult in 1948 to hold a meeting than it was under Tojo". Canvassing from house to house was banned for the election in 1949.

The results brought Yoshida back to power. The JSP representatives fell from 143 to 48 and the JCP increased its representation from four to 35 (with ten per cent of the vote—its highest ever)!

Yoshida began with massive attacks on the Sanbetsu. 1949 saw 435,465 workers sacked for trade union activities, 1950 a further 260,000. 100,000 workers were sacked for being in the National Railway Workers' Union. All the gains of the Sanbetsu were taken back, wages cut, and "temporary status" for workers returned. Goon squads and gangsters were employed on the shop floor to terrorise the workers. The Sanbetsu was smashed.

However, with the expansion of the economy there was a revival in the fortunes of the labour movement: by 1955 the "Shunto" or "Spring offensive" was created—whereby one union "leads off" a struggle for everybody's wage increase. (The strikes lasted an average two to three days). Since that time the latent power of the working class has grown and the vital ingredient missing in 1945-52, the revolutionary leadership, will be forged in the class struggle now opening up in Japan.

74 per cent of companies in Japan have ex-trade union leaders on their boards of directors: the time will come when the workers will challenge the capitalist system and when not even the collaborators who have dogged the Japanese labour movement will be able to save capitalism.

The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution

By Harold R Isaacs
3rd edition,
Published by
Stanford University
Press, \$8.95

**Reviewed by
Dudley Edwards**

THIS THIRD edition of *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* makes valuable reading for anyone wishing to understand Chinese history in the 20th Century and also to know why the long drawn out revolution in that country culminated in a Stalinist dictatorship.

However this third revised edition is inferior to the first edition published in 1938 which is now unfortunately out of print and very difficult to come by. This revised edition is inferior because in 1938 the author wrote from a genuinely Marxist and revolutionary standpoint but abandoned this position in the period between the publication of the first edition in 1938 and the second edition in 1951.

It is for this reason that in the second and third editions the author eliminated the original introduction by Leon Trotsky in which the original work was warmly endorsed. The author endeavours to explain this in his new prefaces to the second and third editions, but only succeeds in explaining his own confusion.

Although by 1951 the author has forsaken the basic Marxist position of Trotsky, the book still gives an extraordinary factual account of the false and opportunist policies foisted on the Chinese communists between 1925 and 1927. The fatal nature of these Stalinist policies for the Chinese workers is clearly demonstrated in the numerous quotations given from the official documents of the Communist International and from statements made by Stalin himself.

Despite his loss of faith in Marxist theory the author does not deny the truth of Trotsky's analysis and indeed is compelled to say in his preface to the revised editions: "He (Trotsky) predicted with startling precision every turn of events as it took place. His analysis and criticisms of the official course were confirmed again and again by the evidence which this work examines in detail. This is a fact that is not altered by the passage of time,

DUDLEY EDWARDS has been active in the labour movement for over 50 years. He joined the Independent Labour Party Guild of Youth at 17 and in the 1930s organised branches of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement in London, Brighton and Oxford. In 1932 he joined the Communist Party. He was secretary of the Oxford CP just before and during World War Two, and a member of the AEU District Committee during these years. In the 1950s and 1960s he was a convenor at an engineering factory in West London. He broke with the Communist Party after realising that Stalinism could never bring any kind of democratic socialism. He has been a Labour Party member for 16 years defending the principles of Marxism expressed in the pages of Militant and MIR.

or again by shifts in a writers outlook."

The value of this book for socialists therefore lies in the enormous accumulation of factual evidence therein. It clearly shows that the young Chinese working class movement which sprang up with enormous speed and power after the First World War was torpedoed by the opportunist tactics of Stalin, who through the Executive Committee of the Communist International succeeded in dominating the very new and inexperienced Chinese Communist Party.

Kuomintang slaughter workers

The tactics put forward by Stalin, Bukharin and other Stalinist functionaries were based on the idea of dissolving the organisational independence and political programme of the Chinese Communist Party into a bloc with the Kuomintang, the political organisation of the Chinese national bourgeoisie. This meant that by keeping their "heads down" and soft-peddling on any kind of socialist programme—by discouraging the peasants from taking over the land and refraining from any action which would antagonise the landlords or the capitalists—the workers would be able to come out on top when the Nationalist revolution, led by the native capitalists, was completed.

As a matter of fact the Kuomintang under Chiang Kai Chek was totally incapable of completing the National

Bourgeois Revolution because it remained under the financial domination of the Western Powers even after they handed over to Chiang Kai Chek the territorial concessions they had previously wrung out of China by military force. The only way that the National revolution would be completed was by the rapid carrying through of radical land reform which handed over to the peasants the vast areas owned by the Chinese landlords. This the landlords and the weak Chinese capitalists were unwilling to do. They were dependant on the huge loans provided by the western bankers and financiers. And as soon as they saw that Chiang Kai Chek intended to destroy the great movement of the workers and peasants, the British, American, French and Belgian capitalists gave him their support in return for being allowed to maintain their financial domination in Shanghai, Hankow, Canton and other trading cities.

The tactics of appeasing the native bourgeois, who were in the pockets of Western Imperialism, was therefore the exact opposite of the Bolshevik strategy worked out by Lenin on the eve of the October Revolution in 1917. It amounted to a switch over to the policy advocated by the right wing Mensheviks who said that the Russian labour movement should trail along behind the Liberals and make no bid for power until a capitalist "democracy" had been established in Russia; to which proposition they added the proviso that at some indefinite period in the future the labour movement would then be able to enter into a contest with the capitalist ruling class through Western style parliamentary democracy. This policy recommended to the Chinese Communists in 1927 by the Stalinist Executive of the Communist International was a repudiation of Lenin's tactics which for the first time in history had brought the working class to power.

This confused "Two Stage" theory, manufactured by the Stalinists for China in 1927, subsequently became the official doctrine of the Communist Parties throughout the world, with disastrous results for the organised working class as well as the peasants. The Left Opposition took a completely opposite point of view, warning that such a policy of class collaboration would lead the working class of China to disaster and result in the massacre of all the best cadres of the working class, which although still a minority was, in 1927 growing and fighting with immense vitality.

Once Chiang Kai Chek entered the

great city of Shanghai he did indeed turn on the workers; the very same workers who had already taken over the city and who had greeted Chiang Kai Chek's troops. Within 48-hours he ordered his troops to massacre many thousands of militant workers in the streets.

As a young man at the time I well remember the photographs brought back to Britain by merchant seamen and others. These pictures depicted the numerous summary decapitations carried out by axemen in the streets of Shanghai.

On 21 April 1927, scarcely a month after the coup in Shanghai, the Russian *Pravda* published Stalin's Thesis to the Executive Committee of the Communist International. This was entitled: "The Questions of the Chinese Revolution". Stalin began by saying: "... the line laid down was the correct line. ... This was the line of the close co-operation of the left wingers and Communists within the Kuomintang, of consolidation of the unity of the Kuomintang... of making use of the Right, of their connections and their experience so far as they submitted to the discipline of the Kuomintang..." This, scarcely a month after the lower grade CP officials and trade unionists in Shanghai were murdered in the streets by the forces of this very same Kuomintang!

Trotsky replied to Stalin in *The Chinese Revolution and the Thesis of Comrade Stalin* in May (his answers were never printed in *Pravda* nor anywhere else): "We know very well how the bourgeoisie submitted to 'discipline' and how the proletariat utilised the Right's, that is the big and middle bourgeoisie, their 'connections' (with the imperialists) and their 'experience' (in strangling and shooting the workers). The story of this 'utilisation' is written in the book of the Chinese revolution with letters of blood. But this does not prevent the theses (Stalin's theses—DE) from saying: 'The subsequent events fully confirmed the correctness of this line.' Further than this no one can go!"

Stalin went on to say that the slogan of the soviets was therefore inadmissible because it would mean "issuing the slogan of a fight against the existing power in this territory (in Wuhan, where the government was in the hands of the 'left' Kuomintang—DE)... of the fight against the power of the revolutionary Kuomintang for in this territory there is at present no power other than the power of the revolutionary Kuomintang."

Trotsky replied to this: "These words fairly reek with the apparatus-like, bureaucratic conception of revolutionary authority... The government

is not regarded as the expression and consolidation of the developing struggle of the classes, but as the same self-sufficient expression of the will of the kuomintang... The provincial kuomintang of Chiang Kai Chek has an old, reactionary, mercenary bureaucracy at its disposal. What has the Left Kuomintang? For the time being nothing, or almost nothing. The slogan of soviets is a call for the creation of real organs of the new state right through the transitional regime of a dual government".

But despite the slaughter of the militant workers in Shanghai the Chinese Communist Party continued with this fatal policy of class collaboration. Trotsky summed it up, saying that this policy was "to bring one's head voluntarily to the slaughter. The bloody lesson of Shanghai passed without leaving a trace. The Communists, as before, were being transformed into cattle herders for the bourgeois executioners". Other massacres followed at Changsha, Wuhan and other cities, towns and villages but the official line continued for another two years leading to the slaughter of the best

worker and peasant cadres in all the big cities.

At last in the early 1930's there was a sudden and typical Stalinist reversal after the damage had been done. But this is another story. It included the setting up of abortive 'Soviet Republics' in relatively small areas of rural China between 1929 and 1934. These were eventually overrun by Chiang Kai Chek's armies backed by the Western powers. This defeat led on to the famous Long March and the setting up of a peasant army which eventually took power in 1949, without any significant contribution by the urban proletariat, leading to the establishment of a Stalinist dictatorship.

Editors Note: Unfortunately, although the Stanford University Press have published a third edition of Isaac's book it has not been widely distributed outside the USA and is therefore still not easy to obtain. However most libraries and some larger bookshops would order the book. For Trotsky's writings including *The Chinese Revolution and the Thesis of Comrade Stalin*, Trotsky's *On China* is available at £7.50.

To accompany the articles on the history of Bolshevism, a series of cassette tapes are being prepared in the form of an interview with Alan Woods. The first C90 tape, covering the earliest foundations of Russian Marxism up to the 1890s is now available for £1.25 (£1.50 by post) from: World Socialist Books, 3-13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB.

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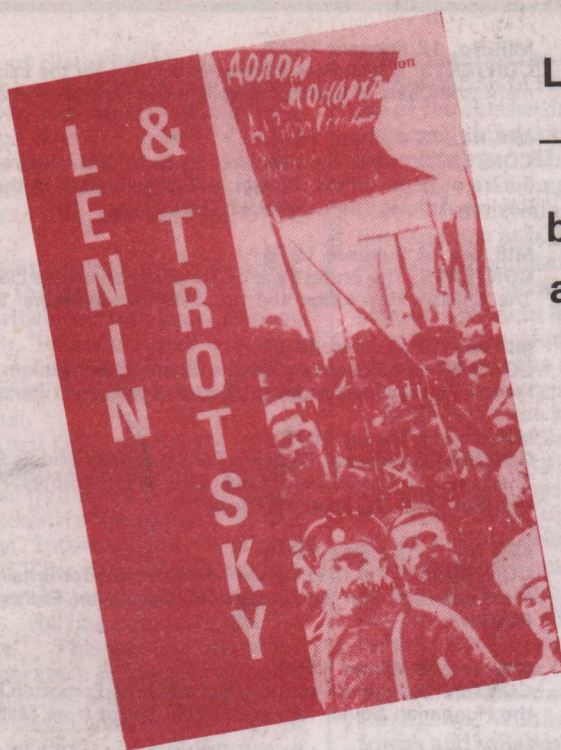
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