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Contents

Editorial: South Africa—storming Heaven . .	3
Witchhunts in the 1950's: The Bevanites—How they were framed	8
By Rob Sewell	
Problems of the Colonial Revolution	12
How the 'Third World' missed out on the post-war boom, by Jeremy Birch	
The Colonial Revolution and the recent civil war in South Yemen, by Ted Grant	
Two articles by Leon Trotsky on the 1926 General Strike and the Minority Movement	19

The Minority Movement and the early Communist Party	22
By Brian Norton	
Economic Notes	27
By Bob Mckee	
Letters to the <i>MIR</i>	28
Socialism and science: Nuclear power and a socialist energy programme	29
By Pete Dickenson	
Reprints from the archives: Nuremberg and the 1936 Moscow purge trials	32
History of Bolshevism, Part Four, What is to be done?	35
By Alan Woods	
Book Reviews	44

Editorial statement

South Africa—Storming Heaven

"After more than 18 months of persistent unrest, upheaval and killings, unprecedented in the country's history, the government believes that it can contain the situation indefinitely by the use of force. We were repeatedly told by ministers that the government had deployed only a fraction of the power at its disposal."

—Mission to Africa
Findings of the Eminent Persons Group on South Africa, Penguin, June 1986

"Five hundred and thirty-one people have been killed in the first four months of 1986 in incidents related to the 'unrest', according to the Government Bureau of Information. This brings to total unrest deaths to more than 1,700 since September 1984."

—Johannesburg Star, 5 June 1986

MAMELODI is an African township on the outskirts of Pretoria. It houses between one-third and one-half of a million people. Early this year, a Residents' Association meeting of a few hundred people took place on a Friday evening. The security forces arrived during the meeting and ordered everyone to disperse. In the struggle which follow-

ed a 70-year old woman was shot dead. On the following Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday a general strike—a stayaway—took place in Mamelodi and on the Friday following tens of thousands attended the mass funeral.

The general strike was organised by word of mouth through the street, zone and township committees. Not a poster nor a leaflet was printed. These events, which have had their reflection in every township, city and village in South Africa, are an indication of the heights of revolutionary struggle reached by the workers and youth in the last eighteen months.

'Too late to stop now'

The Everest of class battle assembled, the peaks which have been reached, the length of time in which battle has been rejoined again and again, and the audacity and courage demonstrated, have given the black workers and youth of South Africa a special place in history. **The socialist revolution in South Africa has begun.** Its early stirrings show that in scope and scale its final development will eclipse the mighty revolutions of the Russian, Chinese and Spanish proletariats.

In place of our normal editorial commentary on Britain we carry an important article by William Bright on the current developments in South Africa.

In 1905 the Russian workers and peasants carried out the dress rehearsal for the full stage production of the Russian revolution. The organisational form which these events took, the creation of the workers' and peasants' committees, was a harbinger of what was to follow in the deeper content of the revolution itself in 1917. We can say now that the South African workers have given similar indications of their future intentions. The South African revolution will be a socialist revolution, in which the youth in the townships and the organised proletariat in the factories will play the leading roles.

Each of these forces have shown the direction in which they will move in the future. The youth, literally with bare hands, have struggled against the most ferocious state in history to create elements of workers' control in the township committees. The workers, in bringing together the forces of organised labour in COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), have demonstrated that they will build a mighty trade union movement—which will tower above all of South African society irrespective of what obstacles are put in their way. It is too late to stop now.

When the revolutionary workers of

Paris took control of their city in the Paris Commune in 1871, Marx and Engels described their efforts as an attempt to "storm heaven". Similar descriptions can be applied to the movement in South Africa of the last two years. On May Day and 16 June 1986 (despite the State of Emergency), there were general strikes which surpassed any of the achievements of struggle in South Africa previously. It should be remembered that the "unrest" was spurred on by the regional strike in the Transvaal in November 1984. Since that time the confidence of the working class has grown to make national strikes, embracing 2 million workers as 16 June did, a possibility.

The force of the state

On 16 June, the streets of Johannesburg were deserted. An eerie quiet hung over what is the busiest city in all of Africa. The workers were giving notice of their power in society, a unity demonstrated in empty streets and silence. However the other side of the class equation was also present in these same streets on that day.

Troops in groups of two and three, machine-guns or rifles in hand, were stationed on every street corner in the centre of town. The suburbs were patrolled by troops in vans and lorries in two-hourly intervals. The townships, especially Soweto and Alexandra, were cordoned in steel, surrounded by armoured lorries, the Casspirs and Hippos, caged by hundreds of troops, literally dressed to kill.

The State of Emergency declared on Thursday 12 June should serve as a grim warning to the workers of South Africa. In a matter of days the police and army were capable of laying siege to all of the major townships throughout South Africa, restricting completely the flow of information nationally and internationally and detaining more than 3,000 leading activists from the trade unions and major political organisations. The cold, callous brutality of the ruling class of South Africa should never be underestimated. At this stage they do not have the strength or the political will to implement the "soccer stadium" liquidation of the revolution. The events leading to 16 June demonstrate that they do have the organisational means for such Pinochet-type "solutions".

What sets this State of Emergency apart is the attack on the trade unions. As many as 1,000 leading COSATU activists have been detained, many of whom will be charged with serious offences. Union offices have been ransacked and closed down, activists' homes turned over from top to bottom and undoubtedly, by now, many will have been interrogated with the usual

brutal methods of the political police.

In these circumstances, it is a matter of historic disgrace that the leadership of the TUC has remained passive and inactive. Even after meeting the President of the SA NUM James Motlatsi and the General Secretary of the NUM Cyril Ramaphosa all Norman Willis could say was, blithely, "we should do more". A crusade for worker solidarity should be mounted to implement sanctions through trade union action now, with the TUC giving the lead and declaring that any worker sacked for solidarity action will have the full force of the TUC behind them to force reinstatement. Instead, the workers languishing in Botha's jails have to wait for the next International Committee meeting at Congress House which will probably resolve to "do more" and little else.



"Up the wall" his interrogators would then command when his answers failed to satisfy. This was the signal for him to stand on a trunk so that he could be handcuffed to the bars on a window, with his face to the wall. Then, the trunk would be removed leaving him dangling. In that position he would be swung like a pendulum and beaten, not once but every day for three months."

Detail of the detention of a trade unionist from Joseph Lelyveld *Move Your Shadow*.

"I wish this were a police state. Then I would have more influence".

General Coetzee, commander in chief, South African police, quoted in *Move Your Shadow*.

The ideas, strategy and tactics of Marxism provide the labour movement with the ability to assess, at each decisive juncture, what stage the movement is passing through and, to use Lenin's phrase **what is to be done**. The State of Emergency, the deten-

tions, the confusion at the top of the labour movement mean that the balance of class forces has swung temporarily away from the workers towards Botha and the bosses.

Trade union rights of assembly and calling strike action have been legally restricted, leaders arrested, and access to the press and media severely curtailed. This represents a temporary setback to the workers' movement. This should not be overestimated however. Botha does not have the power at this stage to break the local and regional structures of the unions.

The present situation is a result of the previous battles. The struggles of 1985/86 were fought to a stalemate. The workers and youth did not break the power of the regime but neither were they defeated. The workers' movement may have been bloodied but it was unbowed even though the white state machine remained intact.

In the last months of 1985 the Marxists of the ANC suggested that the flow of the movement may turn to an ebb. In some parts of the country, especially the Western Cape, this turned out to be the case, but in general the tremendous capacity of the workers and youth to struggle was demonstrated by a renewed surge in the opening months of 1986. The key lay in the inspiration given to the masses by the founding of COSATU and the division and temporising of the ruling class at the top. Botha's promises of concessions on the Pass Laws were seen as a sign of weakness and the workers pushed ahead. By mid-April the youth and workers were working together in township and factory to ensure that on May Day a new peak was reached with 1½ to 2 million workers taking strike action in the stayaway called by COSATU.

Where there are two rights, force decides

Botha conceded the reforms on the Pass Laws because he was forced to make concessions by the movement of the youth and the unions. He was forced to give, lest COSATU, together with the youth, openly demonstrated their power, by taking. But reform is only a part of the general process of counter-reform as the regime is forced to zig zag its way from one crisis to the next. Botha has therefore been preparing the ground to exploit the shifting balance of class forces to his own advantage.

Reaction stalked its prey carefully. Botha manoeuvred between the workers and youth on his left and the extreme reactionaries of the AWB on his right. As a prelude to the declaration of the State of Emergency the AWB were allowed to run riot in Pietermaritzburg to show how difficult things were for the government and its reform

commitments. Botha allowed this, in a De Gaulle like gesture, to show "Après moi, le deluge". (After me, the deluge).

On the other hand reaction was prepared in the townships. The routing of the "comrades" by the "fathers" or "witdoeke" in Crossroads was part of a national plan in which the strength of the comrades and the unions was put to the test. In Crossroads the witdoeke were armed and aided openly by state forces. More than 50 comrades were killed and at least 50,000 former shack dwellers made homeless.

Crossroads was only the major set piece in a chain of state-sponsored reaction promoted over a period of weeks. Similar actions to Crossroads, on a smaller scale, took place in townships across the country, as vigilante gangs, armed by the state, took reprisals against the radical youth. Buthelezi's Inkatha gangs were used to mount a 'trade union' counter-revolution to the formation of COSATU, by the creation of UWUSA. In early June, armed Inkatha mobs were used to break an NUM strike at the Hlobane mine, where NUM members were driven out after between 30 and 40 NUM mineworkers were murdered.

These events were part of a deliberate chain of reaction which received no adequate check from the leadership of the trade union movement. Then, the COSATU leadership, misjudging the forces at their disposal, retreated on the commemoration of 16 June. This was to have been a three-day stayaway called in memory of Soweto 1976 when more than 500 youth were killed in three weeks. On 9 June, without explanation, it was announced by COSATU, the UDF, and the National Education Crisis Committee that the three-day stayaway had been called off in favour of a one-day strike on 16 June only.

This hesitation emboldened the forces of the state and a ban on all public meetings was announced. COSATU, the UDF and the NECC should then have responded by recalling a three-day strike but when this counter-move was not forthcoming the state pressed home its advantage by declaring the state of emergency.

Leon Trotsky, the leader of the Russian revolution along with Lenin, once defined Marxism as the advantage of foresight over astonishment. It should not have come as a surprise to the labour movement in South Africa that it would face repression, at some stage, from the Botha regime. In this regard some of the leaders of the trade unions who suffer from reformist misconceptions have made serious errors of judgement. They have cherished dreams that the trade unions would be allowed years and years of uninterrupted social democratic-type growth.



Photo: Morris Zwi (Reflex)

The writers of the South African Marxist journal, *Inqaba ya Basebenzi*, have suffered from no such illusions. They have consistently warned that because apartheid is essentially a system for cheap labour any attempts to breach it, in the formation of trade unions, would inevitably be challenged by the ruling class. These predictions have been starkly borne out. The arrests and detentions are not an attempt to smash the trade unions from top to bottom but to behead the movement and thus emasculate it. In the long term these actions will prove to be no more successful than beheading the Greek hydra.

Nonetheless it is imperative that all the necessary lessons are learned from this experience. Nothing can be taken for granted again. Preparations have to be made in every union, from top to bottom, to prepare for future assaults. Precautions must now be taken to ensure that structures can be preserved, underground if necessary.

Foresight and astonishment

In the future when the state moves on to the offensive the leaders of COSATU must show no hesitation in being prepared to counter attack. They must make preparations in advance, to ensure that they can undertake such action with complete confidence. Never again can it be the case that posing the question, "can we organise the workers to strike back?" has any substance. Serious points of detail need to be considered at the level of every shop stewards' committee—detail from safe houses with safe telephones to hidden printing machines, etc, etc. These lessons will be learned by all serious activists however. The dialectic of class struggle will have its way in all of this.

But it has to be recognised that at the present time the initiative has passed from the leaders of the workers' movement. Day by day the regime has grown more confident, arresting recently Elijah Barayi, the President of COSATU and Moses Mayekiso, the General Secretary of the Metal Workers' Union as testimony of this.

Into the current vacuum of bewilderment have stepped the bombers. If the bombs blasted in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town are the work of the official cells of the ANC then the leaders calling such actions deserve outright condemnation. These futile gestures can do nothing to alter the situation, add only further confusion to it and provide the regime with more excuses to take additional repressive action.

The real power capable of building a counter-offensive is the organised working class. When Moses Mayekiso was arrested during the last state of emergency the metal workers secured his release by rank and file action, which disrupted the industry for days and culminated in a one-day national strike.

It is wrong to suggest that the current detentions mean the demise of COSATU. The regional and local union structures remain intact and cannot be broken by the current level of assault. One COSATU national meeting on 1 July calling for action caused Botha to exhibit equivocation the next day. The actions of the rank and file shop-workers, from the first day of the emergency, and then later those of MAWU and NUM show that the spirit of the workers is far from being crushed.

The initiative taken by the leadership of the NUM to call for strikes and disruption on the mines, so building towards the national stoppage on 14 July, is the sort of action that needs to

be generalised in all unions, suited to the strength and capacities of different unions in different locations. The call for a one-day strike should be seen as part of an extended *campaign* of action, by workers and youth, to force the regime to retreat.

Botha will be seen to have miscalculated in unleashing the dogs of war on the unions. Although repression, the naked rule of the sword, has the appearance of strength, in essence, it is a sign of weakness. The ruling class can no longer guarantee its rule by the old methods.

Botha and the ruling class were petrified by the spectre of 16 June. These actions will succeed in strengthening and radicalising the ranks of the trade unions and firming the bonds between them and the youth as the remaining illusions in anything other than a fight to the finish are crushed by brutal realities. The regime now faces serious dilemmas. The state of emergency cannot be maintained forever. They will be forced to make concessions at a later stage. They are trapped in a vicious circle of 'reform' and repression from which there is no lasting escape because of the social and organic crisis of South African capitalism.

A negotiated settlement...

It is true that the state's offensive may lead to a certain period of ebb in the actions of the youth and the readiness of the mass of workers to fight politically—at least compared to the titanic struggle of the last two years. However, even if this is the case, lessons will be learned which will prepare the way for a new, even bigger forward movement at a later stage. The spirit of struggle can no longer be cordoned in the chains of apartheid. Canute did not succeed in turning back the tide, neither will Botha.

The leaders of the ANC who have suggested that apartheid would crumble by 1987 have made serious errors of theoretical judgement. There will be no Zimbabwe-type settlement in South Africa. The events of recent months should be ample testimony of that, for those with eyes to see. The truth is that this mountain of struggle would probably have broken any other capitalist regime on a world scale. But this state machine still remains. They still have the sjamboks, the tear gas, the helicopters, the Hippos, the Casspirs and... the guns.

This is not to say that there will not be many attempts to negotiate a settlement, many attempts to strike a deal. Botha would like to negotiate a compromise which preserves South African capitalism and the leaders of the ANC have not demonstrated

resolutely that they would never enter into such discussions. The problem is that the white government cannot give what the black majority seeks—one person, one vote, and the leaders of the blacks cannot settle for anything less and preserve their position as leaders.

Despite these facts, there are those who say a settlement is possible and point to Zimbabwe as proof. The argument runs that a negotiated settlement was reached there when that seemed impossible in the light of the circumstances existing before the Lancaster House deal was struck, so why not the same for South Africa?

There are critical material differences which need to be understood. In Zimbabwe, the whites were outnumbered by the blacks in a ratio of 20 to 1, a social factor which determined they had no hope of holding onto power by force once the floodgates of black revolt opened. In contrast, the five million whites in South African society constitute a much more powerful bulwark, being outnumbered only five or six to one. This factor, combined with the knowledge of the power of their police and army, means they will stay and fight. In any case, unlike Rhodesians, a large percentage of the whites in South Africa have nowhere else to go.

These realities cannot be underestimated in calculating long-term perspectives. The emergence of the reactionaries gathered in the paramilitary AWB, the HNP and CP is an indication of the nature of the Custer's last stand mentality which initially seizes a large section of the whites where no clear class alternative is posed.

Besides, the full force of the police state has yet to be unleashed in South Africa. Pinochet butchered 10,000 in two months between September and December 1973, to save Chilean capitalism. The South African ruling class, in desperation, will be capable of such heights of atrocity. The fact that Captain Astiz, of the Argentinian army, who masterminded the "disappearance" of tens of thousands of Argentinian militants from Buenos Aires during the dark years of the junta, is a current military adviser to Pretoria, should not be overlooked when contemplating the possible future course of events.

But, there are also issues about the strength of the working class in South Africa which have to be taken into account when contemplating a Zimbabwe-type settlement. The revolution in Zimbabwe was based largely on a guerrilla war waged in the countryside, which scarcely involved the relatively small working class. The leaders could call off the war and disarm the forces of ZAPU and ZANU at the agreed assembly points.

Things are less convenient in nature for the ruling class in South Africa. The South African revolution is based on the most powerful proletariat in Africa which has already demonstrated a disturbing propensity to disregard the soothing words of its leaders! No amount of pleading can persuade these masses to accept less than equal rights. Things are too far gone.

Further, a capitalist negotiated settlement carries with it the idea that the current white state machine would be preserved; that a black ANC government could rule using the current police and army forces, retained largely intact. This is a situation which could never be maintained—the brutal white reactionaries at the top of the police and army would never tolerate orders from a "kaffir" government and the mass of black workers and youth are not fighting for a revolution that maintains the same hated forces of law and order.

Lastly, all the arguments for a Zimbabwean negotiated settlement can be seen as the expression of a "two stage" theory for the South African revolution. This is the concept that a period of liberal capitalist democracy will replace the current military-police dictatorship before the ushering in of a socialist South Africa at some future stage. There is no material base in South African capitalism to provide for such an enlightened period of reform.

Or a fight to the finish?

All of history demonstrates that in the former colonial world, according to the principles of the permanent revolution, there can be no halfway revolution. In reality, the leaders of the Communist Parties across the globe who argue for two stages invariably play the role of braking and consequently aborting movements for socialist revolution. The two stage theory of revolution never passes the first capitalist stage in reality and therefore prepares the ground for counter-revolution. Revolutionary workers who are asked by their leaders to wait for the revolution generally do so in coffins prepared for them by reaction. That is the lesson of this theory put into practice, from China in 1927 to 1929 to Iran in 1979, Indonesia in 1964 to Sudan in 1969 to name only a very few examples.

Nevertheless, despite the hesitations and mistaken conceptions of the leaders of the ANC, international capitalism is desperately worried by the process of events in South Africa. This is what explains the pleadings of the members of the Commonwealth EPG. But the ladies and gentlemen of the EPG are not terrified by poverty and injustice. They are terrified by the prospect of socialist revolution.

The visit was an attempt to make

Botha see reason. Sanctions may now follow to increase pressure on the regime to compromise. But the words of the EPG themselves, show that a real solution is not up for negotiation. The democratic demands for national liberation embrace the ideas of equal rights for all, one person, one vote in a unitary South Africa. In their conclusions the Eminent Persons Group state, "In the government's thinking there were a number of non-negotiables; the concept of group rights—the very basis of apartheid—was sacrosanct; the homelands created in furtherance of that concept would not disappear, but be reinforced by Kwa Ndebele; the principle of one man one vote in a unitary state was beyond the realm of possibility; the Population Registration Act would continue; and the present Tri-Cameral Constitution which institutionalises racism must be the vehicle for constitutional reform" (EPG Report). These are their words not ours. Nothing fundamental can change.

The youth in the townships or the workers who have struggled to build COSATU did not need visits from Commonwealth dignitaries to explain this to them. In the first six weeks of its operation in 1893 the Johannesburg Mining Company made £13 million for the shareholders. Ninety-three years later night soil is still collected in the mornings in many of the African townships and the masses live in poverty. Who owns and controls the gold mines still determines how people live. 50,000 white farmers own 12 times as much cultivable land as 14 million rural Africans. Can these statistics of inequality be negotiated out of existence?

Since September 1984 nearly 1,800 have died fighting to break apartheid, 531 alone in the first four months of the year. Did these people give their lives for a capitalist South Africa where the whites still own all the land and the bosses all the gold? The stark reality is that the youth and workers of South Africa are not fighting to create better conditions for a capitalist settlement. They are not struggling to share power, but to take power.

The ANC leaders met the leaders of COSATU in Lusaka in March this year. They provided the union leaders with the argument—that there would come a time when they could negotiate a settlement. There will be many attempts to achieve this, many deals offered but no lasting solutions. The irreconcilable cannot be reconciled.

All the reforms offered are transparent in what they seek to achieve. On the same day that the pass law concessions were put before parliament a bill increasing the already draconian powers of the Minister of Law and Order and allowing detention without trial for 180 days was moved. The English and Afrikaner ruling class

will fight when it comes to it. The AWB and the forces of reaction will fight when it comes to it. So will the blacks.

Whilst the leaders of the ANC may dream of power being ceded the masses of workers assembled at the May Day rally in Orlando stadium, in Soweto, suffered no such illusions. 30,000 sang, danced and chanted—"Uyabaleka u Botha; Sizobashaya Nge-AK"—"Botha is on the run, we will get him with the machine guns." The Rubicon for revolution has been crossed.



Oliver Tambo.

"If you are telling me that some day Oliver (Tambo) will sit down with PW Botha and PW will say 'Oliver, here is the power', I'm telling you that will never happen. Power has to be taken not shared." Black youth, South Africa, 1986.

Build the ANC—for a socialist South Africa

The struggle for national liberation in South Africa is not an abstract struggle for the right to vote. The fight for one person, one vote in a unitary South Africa is a struggle for a black majority government. A government which will change the living conditions of the blacks of South Africa. A government which will give homes, jobs, decent wages and a future for all. The struggle for national liberation is thus a struggle for social liberation. These material needs cannot be met in a capitalist South Africa. They can only be provided in a socialist South Africa.

To achieve a socialist South Africa the power of the white state machine has to be broken on class lines. The workers' movement based overwhelmingly on the blacks has to develop a programme capable of appealing to the working class whites. This can only be a socialist programme explaining the benefits for all involved in the socialist transformation of society. This is a critical task in the long-term aims of the struggle for a socialist South Africa. It is an essential task because the white workers lead to the white soldiers.

Many will point to the racism of white workers and the pour scorn on these ideas; the AWB and the sharp move to the right of the white workers indicating the impossibility of such developments. But apartheid, as time goes by, will seem to be a cruel trap for white workers. They do not have a guaranteed future under capitalism either. They will change.

The intrinsic realisation of the importance of such class unity being developed in the advancing phases of the South African revolution can be seen in the COSATU constitution. There is not one shred of racism in it, not one restriction on any worker on the basis of colour.

Recent weeks have given an indication of the tensions developing in South African society; black reaction, black on black violence, white reaction, white on white violence. Events have begun to give a form to a future based on two stark alternatives—racial civil war or socialist revolution.

For the workers of South Africa to build the socialist revolution their organisations will have to be equipped with the weapon of argument but also the argument of weapons. The guns, tanks and armoured lorries of the state cannot be defeated with words and policies alone. The need to prepare the movement for a mass armed socialist revolution is the task of tasks facing the workers of South Africa.

Monumental advances have been made by the black workers and youth in the last years. The insurrection of the black youth and the formation of COSATU represent enormous steps forward. But they are not enough. The concentrated forces of the proletariat have to be fused politically into a single revolutionary whole. The ANC has to be built as a force for socialism in every township, every city and every village. A mass ANC pledged to the struggle for power, to mass armed insurrection, has to be created as a reality not in words but in deeds. This has to be done by the workers and the youth, no matter what it takes and no matter how long it takes.

Many years ago, Nelson Mandela warned, "No easy walk to freedom". The experience of the last two years makes these words ring in our ears again and again. However this Everest of struggle is an inspiration to workers across the world. The courage, sacrifice and unbreakable spirit that it represents can scarcely be contemplated without feelings of emotion.

There may be no easy walk to freedom but this glorious storming of heaven shows that a socialist South Africa will be created. Nothing can stop the will of the South African workers to change society now.

The Bevanites: How they were framed

"Bevanism is and only is a conspiracy to seize the leadership for Aneurin Bevan. It is a conspiracy because it has the three essentials of a conspiracy, a leader in Bevan, an organisation run by Mikardo, and a newspaper run by Foot."

—Hugh Gaitskell,
Labour Party Leader 1955-63

"If every organised effort to change Party policy is to be described as an organised attack on the Party itself then the rigidity imposed by Party discipline will soon change into *rigor mortis*"

—Nye Bevan MP,
at the time of his expulsion in 1939

THE PRESENT witch-hunt against *Militant* and the left in general is nothing new. The parallels with the attacks on the Bevanite left are striking. Every argument and slander thrown against the Bevanites are today vehemently used against *Militant* and its supporters. In the 1950's it was Bevan and his supporters who were denounced as "communists", "parasites" and "disrupters", etc. They were also directly accused, as is *Militant* today, of creating a "party within a party", undermining Labour's electoral chances, and devoid of any loyalty to the leadership of the party. With the full backing of the capitalist press, they were systematically hounded by the right wing trade union and parliamentary leaders.

1951 election defeat

Towards the end of the 1945-51 Labour government, the Labour leaders, after introducing a programme of reforms such as the Welfare State, the NHS, the nationalisation of some basic industries, began to carry through anti-working class policies under the pressure of deepening economic difficulties. As a result of the failure of the Labour government to use the massive 1945 victory to put an end to capitalism, they were forced to bend the knee to big business. By 1948, austerity measures were on the order of the day.

The ex-left, Stafford Cripps was appointed Chancellor by Attlee, who used his previous left credentials to carry through a policy of wage 'restraint'. The following year a financial crisis

brought a major devaluation of the pound. Labour also presided over an increase in arms spending. On foreign policy, the government toed the line of US imperialism by supporting their military intervention in Korea.

On a world scale, the deterioration in diplomatic relations between the superpowers of the USA and the USSR ushered in the period of "Cold War". The political spin-off was the development of the McCarthyite witch-hunt in America with the grotesque public show trials of the Un-American Activities Committee. Thousands of radicals, socialists and communists were hounded out of their jobs for their left-wing sympathies. In Britain, in the spring of 1948, the Attlee government took measures to remove communists and fascists from certain Civil Service posts. Arthur Deakin, right-wing leader of the TGWU, likewise introduced a ban on communists holding union office the following year.

The retreat over policy by the Attlee government gave rise to big opposition in the labour movement. The mounting discontent culminated in the resignation from the government by three lefts, Nye Bevan, John Freeman and the young Harold Wilson in April 1951. The resignation was sparked over the introduction of NHS charges by the new Labour Chancellor, Hugh Gaitskell. The effects of the revolt, however, were cut across by the announcement of a General Election in October of that year. Despite Labour gaining the biggest vote of any party in British history (48.8 per cent of the vote) Labour, due to unfair boundary changes, lost 21 seats allowing the Tories to return to power.

Issues were now posed point blank: What went wrong? The result was a growing radicalisation amongst the rank and file, particularly in the Constituencies. The very same process developed after the electoral defeat of 1931, 1970, and 1979 where party activists reviewed the record of Labour governments.

In 1951, however, the Party and unions were firmly in the grip of right-wing leaderships. The main trade unions were dominated by such right wingers as Arthur Deakin (TGWU), William Lawther (NUM) and Tom Williamson (NUGMW). These "Big Three", as they were known, sought to prop up the Morrison-Dalton-Attlee leadership in the Party by the undemocratic use of their bloc votes. They were the 1950's equivalent of to-

day's Eric Hammond of the EETPU, or Ken Cure of the AEU. Between them they ruthlessly controlled the twelve union seats and five women's places on Labour's National Executive Committee.

Fearful of the radicalisation developing from below, these conspirators met in October 1951 at the St Nicholas Hotel, Scarborough to decide on their bloc votes and organise an "Expel Bevan" movement. Nye Bevan, schooled in the working class movement of South Wales and influenced by Marxist ideas, became the figure-head of opposition to the policy of right wing reformism.

He had many weaknesses politically, as were shown towards the end of the 1950's, but nevertheless he stood out to all those who genuinely wanted socialist change. To the right wing he personified militant socialism and a direct threat to their privileged positions in the leadership of the movement.

Bevanites organise

Expelled in 1939 for supporting the Popular Front campaign of Cripps, Bevan was soon readmitted into the Party. First elected to the NEC in 1944, such was his popularity that ever since the 1945 conference he had topped the poll in the constituency section.

At the Scarborough Party Conference in 1951, Bevan once again secured first place with an increased vote. Other successful Bevanites—Barbara Castle, Ian Mikardo and Tom Driberg also increased their votes substantially. The shift to the left was unmistakable. The right wing were aghast. The Bevanites had to be exterminated at all costs.

To achieve their aim in transforming the party, the Bevanites began to organise themselves into a more effective opposition. By early 1952 they had established a parliamentary group. This however, was met with a massive campaign in the capitalist press: "Bevan crisis week-end. He has two plans to grab the Socialist leadership", screamed the *Sunday Express* on 3 February. The plot was traced to Bevan's home. Deakin denounced the Bevanites "who seek a short cut to the leadership". The *Tribune* newspaper, which became their organ, asked Deakin why he popularised the tittle-tattle of the Tory press. Not unexpectedly, he ignored the point and continued with his tirade.

In March, the issue of defence expenditure raised its head. Previously the Labour government had shamefully increased arms spending to such a degree that even the Tories found it necessary to reduce this planned expenditure. The PLP were on very thin ice to press for further reductions lest they look foolish. The constituency and trade union activists had no such inhibitions. Through rank and file pressure, 57 Labour MPs defied the Labour Whip in the Commons and, instead of abstaining as directed, voted against the Tory proposals.

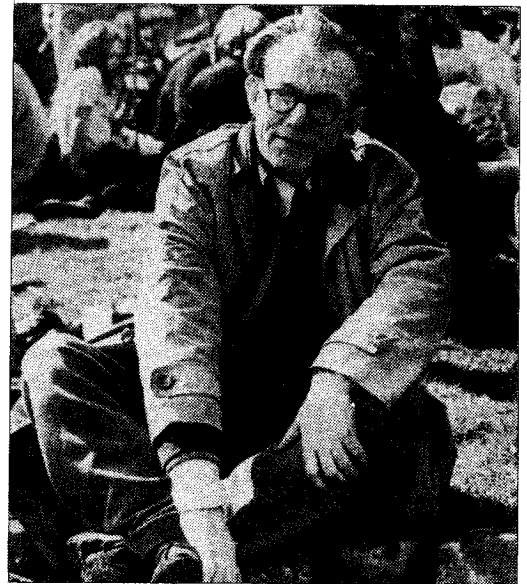
This was the last straw. The right wing sharpened their knives. It was reported that the party leaders were to demand that each rebel sign a "loyalty oath"—on pain of expulsion. Bevan replied head on: "If that means a recantation of what we did the answer is, we won't". And later, "Is a socialist in danger of being expelled from the Labour Party because he voted against the Tories?" No doubt the Liverpool councillors could ask the same today.

Yet under pressure the right backtracked. However, from now on the PLP Standing Orders would be rigorously applied. According to Michael Foot's biography, Deakin believed "to expel 57 would disrupt the party; to expel five or six might be its salvation".

The real intention of the reimposition of Standing Orders was made perfectly clear by Charles Pannell at the following PLP when he attacked the existence of "a special group within the party, organised, secret, and with their own whips on".

The Tory press took up the hue and cry over the Bevanites' secret organisation. The *News Chronicle* accused Bevan of operating "a party within a party" with whips, officers and secretaries. "Their ready-made propaganda organ is *Tribune*..." Other MPs joined in the witch-hunting atmosphere, including George Brown and Patrick Gordon Walker. "The Bevanites were accused of every form of machination" records Foot, "it was the nearest Britain of the 1950s got to a McCarthyite essay in character assassination".

Of course, the Bevanites were organised to get their views across to the rest of the party. In the words of Bevan, "It is not a new policy we want, we've got one. What we want is the victory of one tendency in the Party over another." There had been groups organised in the Party in the past. The Keep Left Group was one, but nobody suggested they be expelled or disciplined. It was the Bevanites' growing support amongst the rank and file that created panic amongst the right wing. Meetings were held up and down the country—the *Tribune*



Aneurin Bevan, and right, a younger Michael Foot at Aldermaston, 1959.

Brains Trusts—getting larger and larger audiences.

At the 1952 Party conference in Morcecombe, Deakin, the TUC fraternal(!) delegate created a storm by denouncing the "Tribune Organisation" and demanded: "Let them get rid of their whips, dismiss their business managers and conform to the party constitution..."

The onslaught begins

In the debate calling for industrial action to defeat the Tories, Deakin rushed to the platform and in effect announced "I call the tune because I hold the money bags"! When Lawther was interrupted by a heckler he made the immortal retort "shut your gob"!

However, when the votes for the NEC were announced, two more Bevanites were elected: Wilson and Crossman and the right wing Morrison and Dalton were off! To top it all the other Bevanites increased their votes substantially. The heavens broke. The gloves were off. On 5 October, Hugh Gaitskell—Deakin's chosen successor to the ailing Attlee—gave a speech stating that: "A most disturbing feature of the conference was the number of resolutions and speeches which were Communist-inspired, based not even on the *Tribune* so much as the *Daily Worker*... I was told by some observers that about one-sixth of the constituency party delegates appear to be Communist or Communist inspired. This figure may well be too if it should be one-tenth, or even one-twentieth, it is a most shocking state of affairs to which the National Executive should give immediate attention". And later: "It is time to end the attempt at mob rule..."

This McCarthyite slander was the signal for an onslaught on the left and the destruction of the Bevanites. Demands for the immediate "disband-

ment of privately organised factions" came from the Party Secretary Morgan Phillips. An orchestrated campaign demanding similar action began. Tom Williamson in his GMWU paper wrote how "a disgruntled group of ambitious individuals have been organising within the party and have succeeded in organising a recalcitrant faction... its ultimate objective is the usurpation of power". Attlee finally succumbed to the pressure and moved a resolution at the PLP for the abandonment of all organisations within the party other than those officially recognised. Of course the right wing still continued to meet and organise freely: the Deakinites in the St Ermin's Hotel and the Gaitskellites in their own clubs.

The whole atmosphere in the party became poisoned. The distasteful methods of McCarthyism were pursued with a vengeance by the party bureaucracy. Ian Mikardo in 1982 was to recall the situation:

"I find it difficult to describe the atmosphere at those appalling meetings of the NEC in the 1950s. Tom Driberg, a sensitive and fastidious man, who was revolted more by vulgarity than by crime, used to come out of those Wednesday morning sessions, wrung out like a dishrag and desperate for a large drink to get the taste of it out of his mouth..."

"On the NEC in those days we had a solid phalanx of world-class haters: Jim Matthews, Bessie Braddock, Alice Bacon, Jean Mann, Alice Horan, with Edith Summerskill as the undisputed Olympic gold-medallist. From 1951 onwards there was never a meeting without some violent attack against the left... and after 1951 Michael Foot was regularly attacked for denigrating the outgoing Labour government: how doth the whirligig of time bring in its revenges!"

The intentions of the right wing

were clear—they wanted to destroy freedom of speech and criticism within the party as a step to expelling the Bevanites completely. When in early 1953 the *Tribune* criticised the steelworkers' union leader, Lincoln Evans, for accepting a knighthood from the Churchill government which was pledged to denationalise steel, the TUC itself intervened and sent a protest letter to the NEC!

After a bitter shouting match at the NEC, Evans's deputy, Harry Douglas said, "the next logical thing to do is to examine the *Tribune* Brains Trusts and see if they are a party within a party". Edith Summerskill persisted that it didn't go far enough and what was wanted was "expelling those who are suspected of fellow travelling". Michael Foot later explained their intentions: "first suppress the left-wing press, then forbid us all to speak, and you will get the sort of monolithic party which some people want".

'MI5-style dossiers'

Shortly after the meeting, Sir William Lawther weighed in by accusing the Bevanites of attempted "to undermine the leadership in the same way as Hitler and the Communists did. There is no difference whatever between them".

However the attempted purge rebounded on the right wing as all the publicity helped to attract larger audiences—in fact bigger crowds than anyone else. This drove the right wing into a frenzy. One of their spokesmen the young Roy Jenkins, blurted out: "Well, they—I mean we—feel that every speech, every action must now be considered as part of the power fight within the party. That's why we hate Bevanism. Before it began, one could have free speech. Now one can't afford to".

The NEC minutes for 1953–54 are a long catalogue of investigation, enquiries, disciplinary hearings and expulsions at every level of the party. Ian Mikardo observed how the party machine was used to carry out the witch-hunt:

"No applicant for a job in Transport House or in the regional offices had any chance of being appointed if he were suspected of being anywhere left of centre. A large part of the work of the national agent's department, first under Len Williams and then even more under Sara Barker, was devoted to compiling exhaustive MI5-style dossiers on all the prominent left members of the party. Those dossiers contained clips of our articles and speeches, and McCarthy-like guilt-by-association information on our relations and friends and associates. Some of this material was put together in Transport House, and a lot of it was

fed in by the regional organisers...

"...Ron Haywood (LP General Secretary until 1982) has told me (and others) that on the day he took office as national agent he found a four-drawer filing cabinet full of these dossiers, and burned the lot of them."

Today, in the witch-hunt against *Militant* and the Liverpool councillors all the old policing methods have been revived. We have the return to the paraphernalia of inquisitions, dossiers, spying, disciplinary hearings and expulsions of the 1950s.

The NEC itself took legal advice in May 1954 to gag all members. The only course the lawyers could suggest was to amend the party constitution to make the NEC deliberations secret. It was felt that this was going too far for the moment so the right wing instead demanded adherence to "collective responsibility" to silence the Bevanites.

In this atmosphere the right wing took action against the left wing journal *Socialist Outlook*. At the May 1954 NEC the paper was proscribed by 14–9, with the Bevanites fighting a rearguard action. Michael Foot declared that those who had received letters from Transport House demanding loyalty oaths should refuse to sign them. "We cannot allow this to go on", he said, "and free controversy and free newspapers to be stamped out of existence... the great men who built this movement would be ashamed of documents such as this". Despite rank and file opposition the NEC proceeded to expel those who refused to repudiate the paper. *Tribune* and its Bevanite supporters were clearly next in line.

In mid 1954 Greenwood, the party treasurer died. Speculation about Gaitskell standing became rife. Despite being defeated repeatedly for the NEC constituency section, with the backing of Deakin and the bloc vote he could easily secure the treasurership.

Bevan had resigned from the Shadow Cabinet earlier, but now sought to challenge Gaitskell for Treasurer and take the left's case into the trade unions.

By the October conference the election had become a foregone conclusion: 4,338,000 for Gaitskell and 2,032,000 for Bevan. After his expected defeat Bevan pledged to campaign amongst the trade union rank and file to challenge their right wing leaders. "We are not going to be intimidated by individual trade union leaders..." he said. At the Scarborough conference, 2,000 filled the Floral Hall to hear him speak. When Deakin heard about it he was determined to have him expelled within 12 months.

In the new year 40,000 London dockers took unofficial strike action. Deakin denounced the strike as



George Brown, a leading figure on the right.

"Communist-inspired". When the *Tribune* criticised him and the TGWU leadership for not supporting the docks strike, the NEC passed a censure motion on the paper and sent the editorial board—Jennie Lee, JPW Mallalieu and Michael Foot—a letter demanding: "How do you reconcile your attacks on the leadership of the TGWU with your membership of the party?" The noose began to tighten.

In March 1955 the Tory government sought parliamentary approval to begin the manufacture of the hydrogen bomb. Labour's amendment to the Defence White Paper, while critical, approved the proposal in principle. Despite a three-line whip, 62 Labour MPs, including Bevan, abstained from voting for the opposition amendment. In the debate Bevan asked Attlee to make Labour's position absolutely clear. Such action was used as a pretext to point to the Labour leader's embarrassment and demand—with the notable support of Jim Callaghan—the expulsion of Bevan from the PLP. The right wing then looked to the NEC to expel the rebel from the party altogether. "If the party tolerates this behaviour any longer", stated George Brown, "it will connive at its own destruction".

Bevan faces expulsion

Despite protest resolutions and letters inundating Transport House, the bone-headed right however were determined to see the execution through to the end, no matter what the price. Against this conspiracy, Bevan thundered defiantly: "Very well, I am 57 years of age. I have devoted myself exclusively to the party for 45 years. My fundamental loyalties are with this party. Whatever you do now, I am not going out to form a new party. But nothing can deny my right and the right of others to help shape the future of the party and make it the instrument we want it to be".

On the eve of the NEC Gaitskell

stated sharply: "It's got to be cleaned up. There are extraordinary parallels between Nye and Adolf Hitler. They are demagogues of exactly the same sort".

At the Executive, Percy Knight of the Seamen's Union moved and Jack Cooper of the GMW seconded the motion for Bevan's expulsion from the party. Apart from others, Attlee moved a delaying amendment to establish an enquiry to interview Bevan and seek assurances for the future. After a long and bitter debate the amendment was passed 15 for and 13 against. Ian Mikardo returned from Israel especially for the meeting, and later recalled:

"Edith Summerskill was so ravingly angry with me for denying her a casting vote that she couldn't bring herself to pronounce my name, and when, later, she called me to speak, she called me as "that man over there in the brown suit". From then on, and for as long as Edith remained on the executive, I always wore a brown suit at every NEC meeting."

It was discovered however that Mrs Jean Mann had hesitatingly defected from the right's camp. Once found out, Deakin pronounced: "that's the end of that woman".

But Bevan was not in the clear. He still had to face the investigation which demanded answers to three alleged crimes: (a) the attacks made upon leaders of the party and trade unions; (b) the repeated refusal to accept majority decisions; and (c) the existence of an organised group within the party with its own press.

After the interrogation a report was delivered to the NEC. Under pressure from below the majority backed a motion condemning Bevan and warning of "drastic action against future violations of party discipline". The expulsion resolution was withdrawn. However the left—as today with Blunkett, Meacher, Sawyer—caved in under the attacks, with a "soft" ex-left around Crossman, Wilson and Freeman distancing themselves from Bevan. For instance, Crossman had invited Gaitskell for a secret drink to "build bridges" to the "Deakinites" before the NEC. Bevan pulled no punches with Crossman: "In moments of crisis when the knives are out, equivocation is tantamount to treachery".

In December—after Attlee's retirement—Gaitskell defeated Bevan for party leader by 157 to 70. Despite this consolidation of the right's control, some of the trade unions began to be more responsive to the rank and file. The death of Deakin gave rise to a left-winger Frank Cousins, becoming TGWU general secretary and NEC member. Nevertheless, the Party bureaucracy continued to hound the

left in the constituencies. According to Foot, "Everywhere he (Bevan) went he put the case against the expulsions and proscriptions which were taking place in so many local parties or the talk of fresh discipline against him—and for a new birth of freedom in the party".

Labour's defeat in the 1955 election together with Gaitskell's election as party leader signalled the attempt to revise the party's commitment to socialist policies.

A similar process has taken place since the 1983 defeat and the election of Neil Kinnock as party leader. The radical policies have been abandoned in favour of old discredited ideas of wage control, "New Dealism" and moderation.

Bevan—despite his disorientation and shift to the right politically in these years—remained at least in words on the left. "The Labour Party must have as its aim the establishment of a socialist society." Its centrepiece must be a massive extension of public ownership so that "the community should own the commanding heights of the economy".

Clause Four attacked

The right wing's attempt to silence the Left and crush all dissent within the party was put to the test after the 1959 election defeat. Gaitskell and others conspired to ditch Clause 4, erase the "working class" image of the party, and transform it into a Social Democratic-Liberal Party. The rank and file exploded. Protests rained down on Transport House and the Gaitskellites retreated.

The election of Bevan as Deputy Leader led him to propose that the PLP's Standing Orders should be abandoned, as a step in liberalising the party. Despite resistance from the right, the proposition was carried. However, according to Foot "both the spirit and the letter of the idea of abandoning Standing Orders were broken by Gaitskell, Brown and other leaders of the party". The right wing were prepared to bend, break and invent rules when it suited their interests. The same is true today. Together with a number of ex-lefts, around the LCC, Labour's right have conspired to frame-up *Militant* supporters in Liverpool. The Majority Report was cobbled together from gossip, malicious title tattle and pure fabrication, as the basis for expulsions. These base methods and foul means are the same as were used against the Bevanites.

Michael Foot himself had the whip withdrawn in 1961. However, as he says in 1964 and 1966 a more democratic regime was introduced "with the result that the parliamentary inquisitions, bannings and auto-

da-fés of the Gaitskell era now seem almost as distant as the Spanish Inquisition itself".

With the victory of the left on the NEC, in 1973 the hideous LP "proscribed list" was finally abolished. Even as late as April 1982 Ian Mikardo could write in *New Socialist*: "but we have no secret-police dossiers, we don't try to prevent members from writing or saying what they think, we don't withdraw the whip, and we don't witch-hunt and expel".

How things have changed in four years! The growth of Marxist ideas in the Labour Party and trade unions have alarmed the ruling class and their shadows within the labour movement. The struggle by Liverpool City Council, with its Marxist leadership, mobilised tens of thousands against the Thatcher government. Such a development terrified the bourgeois and its strategists. For them, the Labour Party and trade unions in reliable hands give stability to the capitalist system. The loss of these organisations to Marxism in the future would be unthinkable. Their strategy, therefore, is to witch-hunt and hopefully crush the forces of Marxism before it gains a mass influence.

The prospect of a Labour government—which is the most likely perspective—that is hoping to patch-up capitalism by orthodox measures will provoke a massive radicalisation of the labour organisations. The bourgeois fear that Marxism would become the focal point of the opposition like the ILP between 1929–31. Such a development is a nightmare for the serious strategists of capital. It is for that very reason that they are orchestrating a witch-hunt in the present period.

The difference with past purges of the left within the party is the tactics and approach of *Militant* with its iron determination not to be driven out under any circumstances. The attacks on Marxism, far from intimidating its supporters, have given them great courage and inspiration.

The crisis of capitalism, combined with a crisis of reformism, is providing the objective basis for a rapid growth of Marxism within the labour movement and working class generally. The attempts to suppress these ideas by organisational means are inevitable given the political bankruptcy of its reformist opponents. They will try to maintain their leading positions at all costs, including political repression of the opposition. However, ideas when they represent a material force are far stronger than any bureaucratic measures or apparatus. That is why *Militant* is confident of the future and in the ability of the working class to change society. That is why Marxism will triumph.

Problems of the Colonial Revolution

IN THIS edition of the *Militant International Review* we print two articles, by Ted Grant and Jeremy Birch on different aspects of the processes of the colonial revolution.

The first months of 1986 have witnessed a new wave in the development of the colonial revolution. Not one of the continents of Asia, Africa or Latin America has been spared from the advance tremors of the earthquake of revolt that impends throughout the ex-colonial world. The collapse of the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines, and the ignominious demise of the DuValier dynasty in Haiti, brilliantly illuminated how the crisis of capitalism in the ex-colonial countries has undermined what were seemingly the most impregnable and entrenched of regimes. And yet in reality these revolutions, an inspiration to workers throughout the world, represent merely the most dazzling highlights, the most acute sensoria of the coming turbulence, the upheaval and turmoil that will convulse the ex-colonial world in the period ahead.

Fundamentally there is no solution to the crisis of the ex-colonial world on the basis of capitalism. As Jeremy Birch explains, even in the conditions of the post war boom, the most favourable period for the development of capitalism, contrary to the propaganda of the bourgeois the countries of the 'Third World' continued to sink into a nightmare of brutal poverty, starvation and destitution: the explosive ingredients for revolution.

The present wave of struggle in the ex-colonial world is taking place against the background of a relative upturn in the economies of the advanced capitalist countries. This has partly been achieved at the expense of the underdeveloped world's earnings on commodity exports to the West. With a future downturn in the West the crisis in the ex-colonial world will intensify, the class struggle will reach a higher

stage than at any time in the past, and the opportunity will be present in a whole number of countries for the working class to lead the revolution on the classical lines of Russia 1917, with the establishment of healthy workers states based on real workers' democracy.

But with no solution on the basis of capitalism, with conditions completely unbearable, with the system overripe for overthrow, in some countries of the ex-colonial world where the influence of Marxism is weak, the revolution could develop in a caricatured form. This was the case in Cuba, Vietnam and other countries with the elimination of capitalism and landlordism but with the subsequent development of a bureaucracy on the same lines as in Russia today and China. These regimes are enormously progressive in the elimination of landlordism and capitalism but reactionary in that power is in the hands of the bureaucracy and not, as in a real workers democracy, in the hands of the workers and peasants.

It is against the background of this variant in the perspectives for the ex-colonial world that the *Militant International Review* is printing the second article on the Colonial Revolution. In this article Ted Grant analyses and explains the reactionary nature of bureaucratic rule in the ex-colonial countries which have eliminated landlordism and capitalism with reference to the recent civil war in South Yemen. This civil war between two bureaucratic factions of the Stalinist 'Yemeni Socialist Party', resulted in thousands of deaths and the destruction of millions of dollars worth of property. It revealed, as Ted Grant explains, how the bureaucratic self-interest and antagonisms that exist on a national Stalinist basis are a fetter on the development of society and a barrier to the genuine and full liberation of the peoples of the ex-colonial world—a task that will only be completed with the development of the socialist transformation on a world scale.

Third World living standards and the post-war boom . . . 'An unending nightmare of squalor and destitution'

By Jeremy Birch

DURING THE prolonged world economic upswing of 1950 to 1973 more was produced than in all the centuries of human endeavour combined up until then. This brought rising living standards compared to the inter-war years and virtual full employment to Europe and North America. Based upon this was a period of relative social peace in the industrialised countries.

But what of the world's impoverished millions? Did the benefits of world economic growth trickle down, did their living standards improve during the best possible period of capitalist growth?

Of course the third or developing world is not one homogeneous block. There is a deep disparity in wealth and income within third world countries, with an equally wide differentiation between the different countries.

The 'underdeveloped' countries include the poorest of the poor like Chad with an annual (1983) gross national product per head of 120 dollars, or Bangladesh with 110 dollars, but also

the middle income, semi-industrialised nations that appear to be in a different world. Argentina has a GNP per head of 2390 dollars a year. In Brazil, the capitalist world's eighth industrial power and manufacturer of more motor cars than Britain, GNP per head is 2050 dollars. By comparison in Britain and the United States it is 7,920 and 11,360 respectively.

World market dominates

Uninterruptedly since the end of the Second World War the most monumental struggle of the masses in the world's history has been fought out in the third world, against imperialist oppression and the rule of capital. The mighty struggles in India, Kenya, Algeria, Mozambique, Indo-China etc, compelled the major capitalist powers to renounce direct colonial rule.

It has exactly been the persistence of intolerable living conditions, and a burning land hunger that has fuelled the revolt of the colonial peoples over the last forty years particularly.

For the masses across the spectrum of the third world countries, poverty, squalor and hunger is still their daily experience.

According to the International Labour Office the number of seriously poor rose by 119 million, and the number of destitutes (those receiving less than half the poverty line income) rose by 43 million between 1963 and 1973. By 1976 1,210 million were seriously poor, 700 million of them destitute. The Brandt Report in 1980 talked of one billion in absolute poverty.

After all, the post-war economic boom for the developed nations was partly based on the super exploitation of the third world. Imperialist domination continued, but now through the major powers' control of the world market, through the terms of trade and additionally through interest rates



Village life in Belwan, Central Luzon province in the Philippines. The hunger for land was one of the motor forces of the struggle to overthrow Marcos.

and loans. All third world countries, the relative poor and the absolute poor, are in its thrall.

Three quarters of third world exports are still primary products—copper, rubber, tea, coffee etc. While two thirds of their imports are manufactured goods mainly from the industrialised world. The dominant economies of the USA, EEC and Japan determine the prices the third world will receive and the prices they will pay.

Economies distorted

This relationship has been stark since 1945. Between 1870 and 1950 the quantity of imports a third world country could purchase with a given quantity of exports rose 50%. By 1970 while there had been constant price fluctuations, for the non-oil producers the quantity of imports they could buy was 11% less than in 1950. By 1975 after the massive oil price increases the non-oil third world could buy 21% fewer imports than 1950, and for the poorest countries (per capita income below 200 dollars a year) it was 32% less.

Sri Lanka for example could have bought six tractors from the West with 25 tons of rubber exports in 1960. In 1975 it could only have bought two. Most third world countries are locked into this relationship. They cannot get off the treadmill. Two thirds of Ghana's exports are cocoa. Between 1954 and 1965 its volume of cocoa exports doubled but the earnings from

them fell 20%.

The need to repay loans, including 'aid' loans compels these countries to continue cash crop production for the essential export earnings, at the expense of domestic food consumption. Zaire was self-sufficient in food a quarter of a century ago, now it expends a third of its export earnings (300 million dollars) on food imports. In Nicaragua under the old Somoza regime cotton acreage increased five times in 25 years, while the area devoted to basic grains was halved. If families went hungry it was not for want of cotton!

An Inter American Development Bank in 1966 noted that "most of the increase in production recorded" throughout South America was in export crops while "per capita domestic output of nutritionally important products such as meat, milk and eggs seems to have actually declined."

70% of the third world's population still live in the 2 million rural villages, most of which have seen little improvement over centuries. In India the capitalist world's most populous developing nation where three-quarters of the people are on the land, half of the 572,000 villages still have no road link.

Was rural poverty eased during the decades of economic growth when landlessness, unemployment and the steady drift to the towns to escape rural deprivation increased? Was the crisis of hunger solved?

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation estimated in 1947 that

two thirds of the world's population existed on less than the minimum required number of calories. Twenty years later a report produced by American scientists considered 20% of the third world's population to be undernourished, and 60% to have diets inadequate in nutritional quality.

Or take Bangladesh (East Pakistan until 1971) where during the 1960s the proportion of absolute poor rose from 40 to 61%. In 1962 45% of rural families had daily less than the minimum recommended calorie intake. By 1977 59% had less.

"In Bangladesh a major feature of rural poverty is the high degree of landlessness, estimated at 26% of the total labour force in 1977. In addition to this group, another 11% is almost totally dependent on wage labour. Changes in the poverty level of this group can be charted through information on daily wages which, in real terms, were lower at the end of the 1970's than they had been 30 years earlier." (International Labour Office—*World Labour Report* 1984).

Land hunger

A 1977 ILO Report, *Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia* calculated that in seven South Asian countries (Philippines, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia) 70 per cent of the rural population were poorer than 10 or 20 years before. These countries alone account for over a third of the under-developed world's population, excluding China.

In many parts of the third world rural poverty is enforced by the continuation of feudal land distribution. It is most glaring in Latin America. There 1.4% of land holdings (105,000 of 7.5 million) account for 65% of the continent's 723.6 million hectares of agricultural land. This is equivalent to the population of a small city owning land mass greater than the total size of India.

Peru provides one of the most graphic examples of the extreme disparity of income, which is more severe in the third world than even among the developed countries. The Chilean economist Jacques Chonchol worked out in 1966 that one fifth of Peru's total income went to the 12,000 landlords and capitalists, out of a population of 12 million. That meant that, on the other hand any group of 12,000 peasants on average received 1/4,300 of the total income.

Of course it has been in Latin America that the migration to the towns has been most pronounced, and where industrialisation and economic growth have gone the furthest. But growth and urbanisation did not necessarily lead to a rise in living standards for the majority.

A third of the developing world's city dwellers live in slums. They have exchanged rural neglect for the urban squalor of the sprawling corrugated iron shanty towns that ring every third world city, lacking the basic amenities allowing for a civilised existence. The shanties of Lima housed 10 per cent of the city's population in 1940 and 29 per cent in 1961. The number of shanty-dwellings in Rio doubled over the same period. The UN estimates that worldwide shanty settlements are growing by 15% per year, four times faster than the overall city growth rate.

The post-war economic development of certain newly industrialised countries, saw what has been described as the 'theory of marginalisation.' For as much of the growth was based on the importation of capital intensive techniques, and food production was neglected, so along with it went the exclusion and expulsion from economic life of many millions of both rural and urban poor.

In Brazil for all its industrial development 40 per cent of its population (the third largest population amongst capitalist third world countries) are not in the market economy at all and gained nothing from the 'economic miracle'. An *Economist* report of 1979 includes the Sao Paulo car workers amongst the richest 20 per cent of the population. Yet only 4 per cent of Brazilians could afford to buy a car.

Between 1948 and 1961 industrial output in the developing countries

grew by 7.5 per cent per annum but industrial employment only by 3.5 per cent. Yet urbanisation raced ahead by 6 per cent per year. The ILO *World Labour Report* comments that "industrialisation is rarely a major employment generator in the developing countries".

The unstoppable tide sweeping the landless and rural poor into the cities' slums is in fact creating chronic urban unemployment and underemployment. The overcrowded third world cities are rife with beggars, street hawkers, even child prostitutes, sometimes encouraged by desperate and impoverished parents. These are the degrading conditions that greeted many of the rural migrants. 40 per cent of India's urban population lives in one-room dwellings housing on average 4.6 people.

Urban squalor

The poor have no choice but to live in these squalid conditions. They are poor because there are not enough paying jobs to go round. Industry in the third world was unable to even absorb the increase in the labour force, during the best period for the world economy. Now industrial output would have to grow by 20% per year in the developing world to absorb the extra workers coming onto the labour market.

"The experience of the 1950s and 1960s showed that high rates of industrial growth were consistent with rural and urban poverty." (ILO *World Labour Report*).

Industrialisation, urbanisation and economic growth did not in the main lead to any alleviation of third world poverty. In East Pakistan during the sixties gross national product doubled, while the real income of the labouring masses declined.

Impressive increases in GNP per head do not mean that the benefits were equally shared, or that the poor saw any improvement in their standards of life. Anyway in 10 per cent of third world countries even GNP per head declined between 1960 and 1980, including Chad, Angola, Mozambique, Sudan, Ghana and Uganda, scenes of some of the most prominent upheavals during this period. (*World Labour Report*).

The gross inequalities in income distribution in the third world make figures on GNP per head, or national disposable income per head, utterly inadequate as a gauge of the living standards of the majority. Statistics indicate that the average household in Western Malaysia was 14 per cent better off in 1970 compared with 1957. But in reality income for the bottom 60 per cent declined absolutely, for the bottom 20 per cent by one third.

In the boom period the UN considered that in Mexico the share of national income going to the bottom 50 per cent fell from 19.1 per cent to 15.6 per cent between 1950 and 1957. In Brazil the share of national income going to the poorest half of the population fell from 17 to 13%, while the share of the top 1% rose from 12 to 18% between 1960 and 1977. These figures do not necessarily mean that in those semi-industrialised countries that enjoyed the best growth rates, some lower income groups may not have benefited, though to nothing like the extent of the rich.

Perhaps in a country like South Korea, where GNP per head rose by 8.1 per cent per year (compared to a middle income average of 3.8 per cent), and where during the seventies real wages grew by 9.8 per cent a year, and where apparently income distribution is less unequal, some improvements will have been seen. In Brazil skilled workers, the minority of the working-class, may have seen an improvement.

Several countries however, including Nicaragua, El Salvador, Uruguay, Bolivia, Kenya, the Philippines and Zambia have experienced long term wage declines. (*World Labour Report*).

But as British workers know only too well, averages for wage increases have to be treated with caution. This is particularly necessary in the third world where the rural and urban poor, perhaps working in the massive black economy, are not included. "Generally," comments the *World Labour Report*, "the poor are the rural landless or land-poor and urban chronically underemployed and marginal workers." In many countries these make up the majority.

The Mexican economy grew by around 6 per cent during the sixties, yet the *Times* could report in 1969 that "millions of Mexican peasants are still waiting for a piece of land; land hunger is recognised by the government as a social problem... Excessive disparities between wealth and poverty have grown rather than been curbed of recent years. The peasant communities remain remote from the cities and powerless (more than half the population in all rural areas at the last census was unable to read and write); but the shanty town problem with its inhuman living conditions and heavy under-employment represents a growing, serious threat." And indeed it has been from the shanty towns of Latin America that some of the most heroic fighters that have recently helped remove a number of the dictatorships, have come.

It is unquestionably true that health and education have improved in the third world since the war. Clearly giant steps in medical knowledge and research, into immunisation and the

eradication of disease, have had an important effect. Smallpox was pronounced globally eradicated in 1977. Infant mortality rates have declined, and they have been the major factor in improving life expectancy. Yet still today 40,000 infants die in the third world each day, according to the World Health Organisation. Half of all third world deaths are under the age of five. Even in Sao Paulo, the most industrialised city of Latin America, more children than adults are buried each year.

Medical knowledge alone cannot prevent disease in the third world, where half the population do not have access to safe water supplies, and three quarters have no real means of disposing of human waste.

Health and education

"The great extermination campaigns and vaccination drives saved millions of children from an early death, but left them to face a life of debilitation, because the health of the majority of adults, and the diseases that weaken rather than kill, were neglected. The population increase that resulted from death control without birth control pushed up the incidence of poverty, malnutrition and disease." (Paul Harrison, *Inside the Third World*).

Large families and lack of 'birth control' of course are not primarily the result of ignorance or religious prejudice. They are more fundamental than that. To many rural families children are seen as more hands, not more mouths, and also as the only insurance for the time when the parents are too old to till the land.

The number of doctors per thousand, the number of children in educa-

tion and literacy rates have all improved over the last two decades or so. But higher general literacy does not improve employment, housing or overcrowding, nor does it feed hungry children. When child labour is endemic reported figures for school enrollments, do not indicate the high lack of attendance.

In all the post-war period only in a small number of cases of middle income countries was any increase in living standards registered for the masses, and then only for a minority. For the many millions of the third world conditions that were already dire, declined. For them international capitalism's best period offered no relief.

What prospects do they face now, when an era of permanent world economic instability has been ushered in? With the developing countries reneging on their loan repayments to Western bankers, and falling on the mercy of the IMF, they find its terms for loan rescheduling are based on domestic austerity, cutting what welfare and subsidies exist and hitting the poor again.

Constricting world trade and growing protectionism have damaged prospects for third world manufacturing exports, and as a consequence threatened employment. International over-capacity means slack demand for raw materials and falling prices on the commodity markets, slashing third world earnings.

"Not in a generation have expectations of world development and hopes for an end to life-denying mass poverty been at such a low ebb," reported UNICEF in 1981.

All projections for the end of the century are laden with doom. A world population of six billion, four-fifths of

them in the third world, where excepting Latin America "a calamitous drop in food per capita is projected". (Global 2000 Report to the US President). For Central Africa a 19.1 per cent fall in food consumption per head is anticipated. By the year 2000 "more of those surviving infancy may be mentally and physically handicapped by childhood malnutrition".

What sort of life will be possible in a Mexico City of 31 million cramped inhabitants within just 15 years, when already half the city's people live in shanties on the outskirts and a further 10-15 per cent are overcrowded in central city slum tenements?

What future?

Of course the world has known desperate poverty for centuries. But never before when the means for its rapid eradication for all lie at hand. Only 40 per cent of the world's cultivable land is utilised. It does not profit the big landowners to use more. The science and technique exist internationally literally to make the deserts bloom. Hunger, starvation-related disease, poverty and misery could be rapidly eliminated, with the abolition of capitalism world wide.

The Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922 proclaimed: "Under capitalism the backward countries cannot share in the achievements of modern technical knowledge and culture without paying an enormous price in the form of savage exploitation and oppression by Great Power capital... Only the victorious proletariat of the advanced countries will give them disinterested aid in the development of their productive forces". That is still the task before the international labour movement today.

The Colonial Revolution and Civil War in South Yemen

By Ted Grant

THE CIVIL war in South Yemen illustrated the processes that are taking place in the colonial countries today, the processes of the colonial revolution. At the same time it shows the degeneration of Stalinism and the peculiar character of proletarian bonapartism, ie. a move to military-police dictatorship on the basis of state ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

The processes were shown clearly during the course of the revolution in South Yemen since 1967. The overthrow of British imperialism, which was forced to retreat from Aden and South Yemen because of the movement of the masses, marked the beginning of the revolution in South Yemen. However on the basis of bourgeois democracy, with the crisis which exists

of world capitalism, a crisis above all in the colonial areas, it was clearly revealed that the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois democrats were incapable of taking action against landlordism and carrying the bourgeois democratic revolution to a conclusion.

Thus the most revolutionary wing of the revolutionary forces was compelled to take power into its own hands. But in order to eliminate feudalism and landlordism they were compelled to go further and eliminate capitalism or rather those elements of capitalism that existed in South Yemen at that time.

South Yemen declared itself a

"Marxist" state, ie. in reality it was a military-police-bonapartist dictatorship, basing itself on a nationalised economy but with the support of the overwhelming majority, especially of the active population. The Yemeni revolutionaries had as their model the revolution in Cuba, in Russia and of course in China.

But South Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world. Despite covering an area equal in size to Britain, it only has a tiny population of two million. It had few natural resources, although now apparently oil has been discovered straddling the border between South and North Yemen. Clearly on the basis of the Yemen economy alone it was not possible to solve the problems which faced the workers and peasants, ie. the peo-

ple of the Yemen.

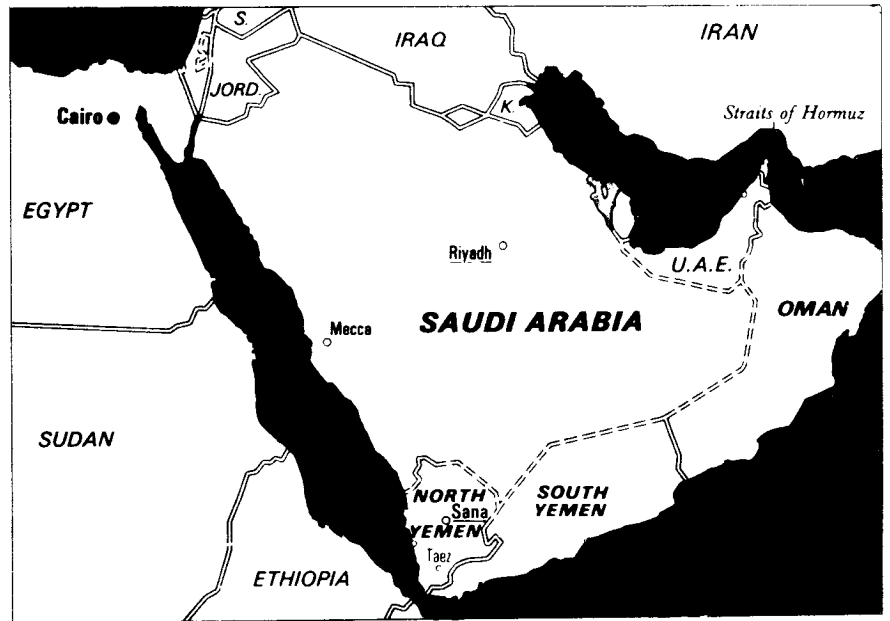
When the revolution began there were only 127 miles of paved roads in South Yemen, all but 14 in Aden. Even now the per capita income in South Yemen is little over £350 a year. Life expectancy averages around 46 years and even today in spite of the herculean efforts to abolish illiteracy more than 60 per cent of the population is still illiterate.

Another of the problems of the South Yemen revolution is that it is surrounded by semi-feudal states such as Saudi Arabia, Oman and the Gulf states. Previously it occupied an important strategic position when half of the oil of the non-Stalinist world flowed from the Gulf every day. In 1975, 17½ million barrels of oil, or 41 per cent of the oil of the non-Stalinist world, came through the Straits of Hormuz. Now it is only 15 per cent, or 6½ million barrels of oil every day. Nonetheless it is still a very important strategic area because 56 per cent of the world's oil reserves still remain in the region of the Gulf.

However even on the meagre economic basis of South Yemen, with hardly any industry at all, nevertheless big progress has been made on the basis of the elimination of landlordism and of capitalism. For example, half the food that is needed in South Yemen is now grown in the area in spite of the fact that a great part of South Yemen is desert. The difference that a revolution makes in an area such as this, is shown by the fact that in Djibouti, which has a population of 360,000, 80 per cent are unemployed, whereas in South Yemen unemployment has been completely eliminated.

Classical Stalinist purge

So how did it happen that a civil war should take place between two factions of the Yemeni Socialist Party, which is the name of the organisation of the Stalinist Communist Party in Yemen? The facts were that President Ali Nasser Mohammed, tried to eliminate members of the opposing faction at a specially convened meeting of the eleven-man politbureau on 13 January this year. A detachment of guards opened fire killing Ali Ahmed Nasser Antar, Vice-President and an open opponent of President Nasser Mohammed, Mr Salih Muslih Fassim, Defence Minister, and Mr Ali Shaiyia Hadi, Head of the Control Commission. Other opponents of the President were rounded-up and some were murdered. President Nasser Mohammed prepared for the purge of his opponents by issuing leaflets in advance of the politbureau meeting, claiming success in defeating an alleged attempted coup! But, on 15 and 16 January the middle ranks of the troops swung



over to the opposition thus sealing the fate of Nasser Mohammed. And on 25 January a new government led by Mr Haider Abubaker Al-Attas was formed.

The ruling elite in South Yemen imitates China, Russia, Cuba and the other deformed workers' states in carving out privileges for themselves. Fred Halliday who has written a book on the collapse of the Sultans in South Yemen, noted some changes during a visit in 1979. He reported that "top party officials in Aden have received increased material privileges in the form of access to restricted consumer goods shops, and the army has become much more prominent in Yemini life." President Nasser Mohammed, before his overthrow, was Head of State, Secretary General of the ruling Yemeni Socialist Party, and Chairman of the Presidium of the SPC, the Supreme People's Council.

On the road of capitalism there is no way out. Society in the Yemen, as in most of the colonial world at the present time, was at an impasse. Consequently, in a caricatured form, the process was that of the permanent revolution explained by Trotsky and supported by Lenin. The Yemen jumped from tribalism to "socialism". They established a so-called "Socialist Party" with a one-party totalitarian state. How then did the conflict break out? Like the process in Afghanistan, tribal and other cliques were jostling for control within the framework of the only legal party, the Socialist Party. In addition there were differences over policy. Ali Nasser Mohammed, the former President, tried to compromise with the reactionary state of North Yemen and the feudal capitalist states of the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. This was done with the full support of the Stalinists in Moscow.

The Stalinist regime in the Soviet

Union is trying to arrive at some sort of uneasy compromise with American imperialism and does not want any movement of the masses in the Middle East which could cause friction and complications with the US. Therefore they are opposed to the development of revolution in North Yemen, in Oman, in Saudi Arabia and in the other countries of the Middle East. Like all the other revolutions in colonial countries, the revolution in South Yemen took place *in spite of* and not because of the existence of Communist Parties and the Soviet bureaucracy.

So there was a struggle inside the Yemeni Socialist Party with one faction opposed to the attempts on the part of Ali Nasser Mohammed to come to an agreement with North Yemen and the other reactionary states of the region and to cease to support the revolutionary movement in these countries.

'Fraternal' clashes

Nasser Mohammed therefore tried the classical methods of Stalinism in launching a purge on Stalinist lines. No trial but executions, in reality murders of the top leadership of the Political Bureau. It was his failure to succeed completely with only a partial elimination of his rivals which led to the outbreak of civil war. Thus in Stalinist regimes a "fraternal discussion" is carried on with heavy machine-guns, tanks, rifles, armoured personnel carriers, 130 metres artillery, cannon, gunboats and planes! The deformed workers' states proceed on bonapartist lines rather than on the lines of workers' democracy. Like the bloody battles between Russia and China, like the bloody conflicts between China and Vietnam, Vietnam and Cambodia, they show the national and bureaucratic limitations of the

Stalinist regimes.

All these "socialist" countries are dominated by a bureaucratic elite. They are progressive in so far as capitalism and the feudal remnants of landlordism have been abolished but there is no real control by the workers and peasants. Only this control could guarantee the beginning of a transition in the direction of socialism.

Bureaucratic rule results in distortion, corruption and abuse of power. The classical example was the bloody and infamous terror of Joseph Stalin in Russia. Without the check of workers' democracy, control by the workers and peasants and now, in an area like South Yemen, of the tribesmen, the bureaucratic elite takes action against any threat to its hold by bloody purges. Thus Stalin long before conducted the extermination of the leaders of the revolution, of the Bolshevik party and of hundreds of thousands of workers who led the Bolshevik revolution, along with the massacre of the majority of the officer cadres of the Russian army. This prepared the way for the victories of Hitler in the first stages of the war of Nazi imperialism against Russia.

Now in South Yemen there is a new government of Mr Haider Abubaker Al-Attas with Salem Baleh as Secretary of the Socialist Party of Yemen. They are the new strongmen who are giving lip-service to collective leadership, but inevitably the new regime will also result in the domination of one new 'leader'. That is the method of proletarian bonapartism, the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual.

There has been an enormous mumbling and embarrassment at the events in Yemen, on the part of the British Communist Party and of the hardliners around the *Morning Star*. On 27 January the *Morning Star* contained an article saying that a meeting of the Yemeni Socialist Party Central Committee, following the appointment of the new government of Haider Abubaker Al-Attas had "declared 'the commitment of the Yemen Socialist Party to the ideas of scientific socialism (!?) and the principles of proletarian internationalism' and it further called upon the people to 'rally around the party in defence of the country's national independence and sovereignty'."

The British Stalinists in common with their mentors abroad, because Moscow in the beginning was backing Nasser Mohammed, initially succeeded in backing the wrong horse. However very quickly they changed over to support the winning side. But not a word of explanation of how it happened, how it could happen under "scientific socialism", has been given.

The *Morning Star* goes on: "The

Yemeni party's central committee accused Ali Nasser Mohammed of 'masterminding a criminal bloody plot to physically liquidate the party's collective leadership and establish a terrorist dictatorial regime'."

Wringing its hands in anguish at this 'disagreement' between 'comrades', the *Star* reproduced the comments of *Pravda* of 24 January:

"These events cannot but cause deep regret, especially considering that they are taking place in a friendly country with the Yemeni Socialist Party at the head". Noting democratic Yemen's 'considerable socio-economic successes', the Soviet CP daily attributes the present problems to 'the traditional existence of many socialist structures and the tribal disunity of society inherited from past epochs'. They were the result also of 'subversive action of foreign reactionary, imperialist forces.'" Although how these had their effect on the regime in Aden is not explained.

Two bureaucratic factions

As a commentary on the events the *Morning Star* 24 January, reviewed an article by Nasser Mohammed written well before the civil war in the October 1985 edition of *World Marxist Review*:

"In a detailed and frank article, published in World Marxist Review—Problems of Peace and Socialism, the President spoke of 'armchair administration' and attempts 'to belittle the role of the leadership of the party'."

"Writing as general secretary of the central committee of the Yemen Socialist Party and chairman of the presidium of the Supreme People's Council, the President pointed to clear conflicts in the run-up to the party's congress, which was being planned for the near future."

The *Morning Star* continues *"in the conflict... there has been confusion over the cause. Speculation has ranged from personal rivalries, to tribalism, centralism versus local autonomy, disputes over the relations between the party and state, as well as over relations with neighbouring Arab states... Democratic Yemen's embassy in London... said... 'the causes go back to the heritage of social backwardness', adding 'the situation exploded for purely internal reasons.'"*

"President Ali Nasser Mohammed's (the overthrown President—EG) article does confirm that in his view severe political differences were being debated in the country following the plenary meeting of the party's CC... Arguing that the status of the Yemen Socialist Party differs from any ruling bourgeois party the President said: 'Together with state authority it represents not a privileged minority

but all the working people!'"

This argument has been crushingly refuted by events. Workers' democracy contains the normal checks and balances whereby decisions will be taken on the basis of a majority through democratic discussion through the organisation of the revolutionary party itself. This was the case in Russia before the degeneration of the revolution. However, having seized power, Stalin declared as early as 1927 that: "these cadres (ie bureaucrats—EG) can be eliminated only by civil war...", a statement he then went on to verify by waging a one-sided civil war against Bolshevism. Now two bureaucratic factions in South Yemen have tried to crush each other. Certainly elements of the past, personal enmities, tribal groupings, do loom large in the conflict. But the model for both factions is the totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe and China, a one-party state with no real democracy. Backwardness of course made the development of industry and of the economy very difficult in South Yemen. In the Soviet Union the isolation of the genuine democratic socialists, of Marxism, arose from the isolation and backwardness of Russia with the failure of the revolution in other countries. That is why the Marxists, the real Bolsheviks who reflected the needs and the interests of the working class and the peasants and of world socialism, were defeated in the struggle in the Soviet Union.

Now in South Yemen it is a struggle between two bureaucratic cliques. In a poor country like South Yemen with a small population it is clear that they could not stand on their own without the support of the other deformed workers' states. In the economy and in cultural life backward elements still loom large. Low standards of living, cultural backwardness and actual illiteracy, all these have undoubtedly had an effect. But they are not the explanation of why the civil war took place in South Yemen.

The *Morning Star* continues in this long article: *"But although the building of the state apparatus had been completed during the past few years 'there were weaknesses and negative aspects'. He (the former President, Nasser Mohammed, now overthrown—EG) went on to talk of 'inflation of personnel (ie bureaucracy—EG), inadequate knowledge of the scientific principles of leadership, miscalculations in the placing of cadres, bureaucratic propensities in the actions of some executives and a low level of executive discipline.'"*

As Lenin would have observed, what a high-flying Stalinist formula to cover his own "bureaucratic propensities

MIR Summer 1986: Colonial Revolution

"solving" problems by machine-gunning opposition members of the political bureau!

"Some executives, he said, were promoted 'not on the basis of objective criteria but on family-tribal, parochial and other considerations'. These practices, he added, represented 'a burp of outworn social relations'."

In reality it was the classical nepotism of Stalinist regimes in all the deformed workers' states which has reached scandalous levels in the Soviet Union, China and the other bonapartist workers' states. In South Yemen Nasser Mohammed objected to other leaders behaving in this fashion while no doubt doing the same thing as far as his own tribe was concerned!

"In some cases party organisations acted instead of the state apparatus. Attempts were also made 'to use administrative measures in order to belittle the role of leadership by the party. Instead of harmony and efficiency there were conflicts, lack of co-ordination.'"

Moscow's role

These conflicts were settled by machine-guns precipitated by the writer of this article in *World Marxist Review*! No doubt had he been replaced the same process would have taken place for him and his clique of supporters in the Yemeni Socialist Party leadership and among the bureaucracy.

"The President also claimed that many of the Yemen Socialist Party members were 'still susceptible to influence of non-proletarian, often pre-capitalist ideas and notions'. In that context he made the point that the party's membership 'has grown visibly' in the past five years to some 30,000. But... in the state sector 'the most advanced and organised contingent of the proletariat—factory workers—remains numerically small.' He also argued that there was a danger of a breakdown between democracy and centralism—'not two different concepts but two sides of one and the same principle'. He went on to warn that disregard of either is 'fraught with serious consequences. A formal interpretation of party democracy may generate organisational and ideological looseness, negligence and a weakening of the party's militancy. On the other hand, excessive centralisation kills initiative, and gives party work the features of administration and turns party organisation into a purely executive authority.' Phenomena of this kind, says the President, 'formalism and armchair administration were to be observed in some Yemeni Socialist Party organisations'... Despite a new social consciousness taking shape 'old reac-

tionary customs and values still retain their influence, thus reflecting the social-economic and cultural backwardness inherited from the epoch of colonial slavery,' he argued".

The *Morning Star* then goes on to say: "The tragic events of the past two weeks indicate that the divisions behind some of these arguments have developed into deep and bitter chasms. (!) But to what extent the article reflects the reasons behind the conflict will only be known if and when Abdul Fattah Ismail (who was murdered in the first days of the struggle by the overthrown president!—EG) makes his position clear."

The mumbling and stammering of the *Morning Star* hardliners, taking their cue from Moscow who originally backed the wrong horse and then switched back to the people who were victorious, shows how far they are from a Marxist analysis of events. It echoes the old days of Stalin when the Moscow bureaucracy said 'turn' and they turned 180 degrees. This was because of the slavish dependence of the Communist Parties of the world on Moscow.

The *Morning Star* goes on to say "the conflict will delight only the imperialist camp". No explanation is given of how it could happen in a so-called democratic state moving in the direction of socialism. However the *Observer* 19 January had the comment: "The Soviet Union is pursuing a policy of conciliation in the Arab world. It has encouraged South Yemen to improve relations with all its neighbours and to ditch its image of a dangerous exporter of revolution."

Aden and South Yemen are important to the Soviet Union as a port and because of their strategic situation. The Soviet Union has largely replaced colonial Britain, with the difference that it is a voluntary arrangement between the South Yemeni and the Soviet bureaucracy. Nevertheless South Yemen is still completely dependent on the Soviet Union. This did not enable the Soviet Union to prevent civil war. In the beginning the Soviet bureaucracy was backing President Nasser Mohammed, who in reality was carrying out the policy of agreements with the other states in full collusion with Moscow.

The peculiar relationship between the super powers is such that while the USA is an exporter of counter-revolution, revolutions, even in a caricatured form, are carried out without the support of Moscow. The Kremlin then is compelled to accept the fait accompli as it did in the case of Cuba, China and Vietnam. Imperialism is well aware of this but at a time when relations with Moscow are estranged it conducts demagogic attacks that Moscow is trying to export

revolution. In reality the bureaucracy wants to arrive at a compromise with imperialism and therefore has no desire to "export revolution". But whatever the policy of the Moscow bureaucracy and of the Stalinist parties in the colonial countries they will not be able to prevent the enormous storms and stresses of revolution which opens up at the present time on three continents.

In Asia, Africa and in Latin America the coming decade will be a decade of revolution. In some cases where revolutionary Marxism has not got a basis it is possible that new deformed workers' states could be set up on the model of Cuba, South Yemen, Ethiopia, Syria, Burma, China and Vietnam. Such regimes would be relatively progressive in the sense that they were developing the productive forces at a far faster pace than would be possible under capitalism. In fact under capitalism now the productive forces in the under-developed world tend to stagnate or even go backward.

No stability in Middle East

The "new" government in South Yemen will in reality be compelled to pursue the same policy as the old government. It is possible that the leaders of the tendency who were assassinated by Nasser Mohammed wanted to extend the revolution to Oman, above all to North Yemen and even to Saudi Arabia. But now with the virtual destruction of Aden, following the street to street even window to window fighting, with according to the *Morning Star* itself, billions of dollars now needed in Aden for the purpose of reconstruction, it will be completely dependent on Moscow and therefore the foreign policy of the new government will be exactly the policy of the old. They will be compelled to try and conciliate North Yemen, Oman and Saudi Arabia. However this will only mean an uneasy "peace" between these countries. The inevitable development of the revolution in the Middle East and on the Arabian Peninsula will mean that all attempts of this sort will be in vain. As with Asia, Africa and Latin America, the Middle East also will be an area of enormous colonial revolution.

Despite the civil war and its destruction the South Yemen revolution will still be a beacon to the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula and even to the Middle East as well. The elimination of landlordism, of capitalism and of the power of the sultans and chiefs, will be an example which will have echoes throughout Arabia whatever the policy of the South Yemen government might be.

As a result the new rulers of South

Yemen will probably consolidate their rule and perfect a one party totalitarian state which would not allow for any further opposition to develop within the framework of the ruling party. Thus the fate of South Yemen is the fate of all the countries where deformed workers' states have been set up, progressive on the one hand with the abolition of landlordism and capitalism, but reactionary in the setting up of one-party dictatorships without democracy for the workers and peasants. The final fate of South Yemen will be decided during the course of the revolution in Asia, in Europe and in the industrialised countries of the world.

For further reading see the article by Ted Grant 'The Colonial Revolution and the deformed workers states', in *Militant International Review*, No 14, Summer 1978, 50p, postage included, from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB.



To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the 1926 general strike the *MIR* prints two articles by Leon Trotsky, the first a preface to *Where is Britain going?* (second German edition), written on 6 May 1926.

A General Strike... The sharpest form of class struggle

A YEAR ago the Conservative government was still on its honeymoon. Baldwin was preaching social peace. With nothing to oppose to Conservatism, MacDonald rivalled it in hatred of revolution, civil war and class struggle. The leaders of all three parties pronounced the institutions of Britain entirely adequate to ensuring peaceful collaboration between the classes. Naturally, the revolutionary prognosis for the future of the British Empire made in this book (*Where is Britain Going*—Ed) was declared by the whole of the British press—from the *Morning Post* to *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*—to be hopeless drivel and Moscow phantasmagoria.

Today the situation looks somewhat different. Britain is convulsed by a huge mass strike. The Conservative government is carrying on a policy of frantic onslaught. From the top, everything is being done to provoke open civil war. The contradiction between basic social facts and the fraud of an outlived Parliamentarianism has been revealed in Britain as never before.

The mass strike arose from the imbalance between the current position of the British economy on the world market and the traditional industrial and class relations within the country. Formally the question at issue was one of reducing miners' wages, lengthening their working day and throwing part of the sacrifices necessary for a serious reorganisation of the coal industry onto the workers' shoulders. Put in this way the question is insoluble. It is perfectly true that the coal industry, and indeed the British economy as a whole, cannot be reorganised without sacrifices on the part of the British proletariat, and

substantial ones at that. But only a wretched fool can imagine that the British proletariat will agree to shoulder these sacrifices on the old foundations of private property.

Capitalism has been portrayed as a system of continual progress and consistent improvement in the lot of the labouring masses. This used to be the case to a certain extent, at least in some countries during the nineteenth century. In Britain the religion of capitalist progress was more potent than anywhere else. And it was just this that formed the foundation of the conservative tendencies in the labour movement itself and especially in the trade unions. Britain's wartime illusions (1914–1918) were, more than anywhere else, the illusions of capitalist might and social 'progress'.

Roots of conflict

In the victory over Germany these hopes were supposed to find their highest fulfilment. Yet now bourgeois society says to the miners: 'If you want to secure for yourselves at least the kind of existence you had before the war, you must reconcile yourselves to a worsening of all your conditions of life over an indefinite period'. Instead of the perspective of uninterrupted social progress recently held out to them, the miners are invited to move down one step today so as to avoid tumbling down three or more steps tomorrow. This is a declaration of bankruptcy on the part of British capitalism. The general strike is the answer of the proletariat, which will not and cannot allow the bankruptcy of British capitalism to signify the bankruptcy of the British nation and of British culture.

This answer, however, has been dictated by the logic of the situation far more than by the logic of consciousness. The British working class had no other choice. The struggle, whatever its backstage mechanics, was thrust upon it by the mechanical pressure of the whole set of circumstances. The world position of the British economy did not leave the material basis for a voluntary compromise. The Thomases, MacDonalds and the rest ended up like windmills whose sails turn in a strong wind but fail to produce a single pound of flour because there is no corn for them to grind. The hopeless emptiness of present-day British reformism has found itself so convincingly unmasked that the reformists were left with no other recourse than to take part in the mass strike of the proletariat. This revealed the strength of the strike—but also its weakness.

A general strike is the sharpest form of class struggle. It is only one step from the general strike to armed insurrection. This is precisely why the general strike, more than any other form of class struggle, requires clear, distinct, resolute and therefore revolutionary leadership. In the current strike of the British proletariat there is not a ghost of such a leadership, and it is not to be expected that it can be conjured up out of the ground. The General Council of the Trades Union Congress set out with the ridiculous statement that the present general strike did not represent a political struggle and did not in any event constitute an assault upon the state power of the bankers, industrialists and landowners, or upon the sanctity of British parliamentarianism. This most loyal and submissive declaration of

war does not, however, appear the least bit convincing to the government, which feels the real instruments of rule slipping out of its hands under the effect of the strike. State power is not an 'idea' but a material apparatus. When the apparatus of government and suppression is paralysed the state power itself is thereby paralysed. In modern society no-one can hold power without controlling the railways, shipping posts, telegraphs, power stations, coal and so on. The fact that MacDonald and Thomas have sworn to renounce any political objectives may typify them personally but it in no way typifies the nature of the general strike which if carried through to the end sets the revolutionary class the task of organising a new state power. Fighting against this with all their might, however, are those very people who by the course of events have been placed 'at the head' of the general strike. And in this the main danger lies. Men who did not want the general strike, who deny the political nature of the general strike, and fear above all the consequences of a victorious strike, must inevitably direct all their efforts towards keeping it within the bounds of a semi-political semi-strike, that is to say, towards emasculating it.

Leadership decisive

We must look facts in the face: the principal efforts of the official Labour Party leaders and of a considerable number of official trade union leaders will be directed not towards paralysing the bourgeois state by means of the strike but towards paralysing the general strike by means of the bourgeois state. The government in the shape of its most die-hard Conservatives will without doubt want to provoke a small-scale civil war so as to gain the opportunity of applying measures of terror before the struggle has fully unfolded and so throw the movement back. By depriving the strike of a political programme, dissipating the revolutionary will of the proletariat and driving the movement up a blind alley the reformists are thereby pushing individual groups of workers on to the path of uncoordinated revolts. In this sense the reformists go towards meeting the most fascist elements in the Conservative Party. There lies the principal danger of the struggle now opening up.

Now is not the time to predict the duration, the course and still less the outcome of the struggle. Everything must be done on an international scale to aid the fighters and improve their chances of success. But it must be clearly recognised that such success is possible only to the extent that the British working class, in the process of the development and sharpening of

the general strike, realises the need to change its leadership, and measures up to that task. There is an American proverb which says that you cannot change horses in mid-stream. But this practical wisdom is true only within certain limits. The stream of revolution has never been crossed on the horse of reformism, and the class which has entered the struggle under opportunist leadership will be compelled to change it under enemy fire. The conduct of the really revolutionary elements in the British proletariat and above all the communists is predetermined by this. They will uphold the unity of mass action by every means; but they will not permit even the semblance of unity with the opportunist leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions. An implacable struggle against every act of treachery or attempted treachery and the ruthless exposure of the reformists' illusions are the main elements in the work of the genuine revolutionary participants in the general strike. In this they will not only aid the fundamental and protracted task of developing new cadres, without which the victory of the British proletariat is wholly impossible, but they will directly assist the success of this strike by deepening it, uncovering its revolutionary tendencies, thrusting the opportunists aside and strengthening the position of the revolutionaries. The results of the strike, both the immediate and the more remote, will be the more significant the more resolutely the revolutionary force of the masses sweeps away the barriers erected by the counter-revolutionary leadership.

The strike cannot of itself alter the position of British capitalism, and the coal industry in particular, on the world market. This requires the reorganisation of the whole British economy. The strike is only a sharp expression of this necessity. The programme for reorganising the British economy is the programme of a new power, a new state and a new class. The fundamental importance of the general strike is that it poses the question of power point-blank. A real victory for the general strike lies only in the winning of power by the proletariat and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In view of the insolvency of British capitalism, the general strike is less able than at any other time to be made a vehicle of reforms or partial gains. To be more precise, even if the mineowners or the government were to make this or that economic concession under pressure of the strike, such concessions could not, by virtue of the whole situation, be of a profound, still less of a lasting significance.

This in no way means, however, that the present strike faces the alter-

native: all or nothing. If the British proletariat had a leadership that came near to corresponding to its class strength and the ripeness of the conditions, power would pass out of the hands of the Conservatives and into the hands of the proletariat within a few weeks. But such an outcome cannot be relied upon. This again does not mean that the strike is futile. The more broadly it develops, the more powerfully it shakes the foundations of capitalism and the further back it thrusts the treacherous and opportunist leaders the harder it will be for bourgeois reaction to go over to the counter-offensive, the less proletarian organisations will suffer, and the sooner will follow the next, more decisive stage of the fight.

A tremendous lesson

The present collision of the classes will be a tremendous lesson and have immediate consequences, quite apart from its immediate results. It will become plain to every proletarian in Britain that Parliament is powerless to solve the basic and most vital tasks of the country. The question of the economic salvation of Britain will henceforth confront the proletariat as a question of the conquest of power. All the intervening, mediating, compromising pseudo-pacifist elements will be dealt a mortal blow. The Liberal Party, however much its leaders may twist and turn, will emerge from such an ordeal even more insignificant than it entered it. Within the Conservative Party the most die-hard elements will obtain a preponderance. Within the Labour Party the revolutionary wing will gain in organisation and influence. The Communists will advance decisively. The revolutionary development of Britain will take a gigantic stride towards its denouement.

In the light of the mighty strike wave now under way, the questions of evolution and revolution, of peaceful development and the use of force, of reforms and class dictatorship, will grip the consciousness of British workers in their hundreds of thousands and millions, with all their acuteness. Of this there can be no doubt. The British proletariat, kept by the bourgeoisie and its Fabian agents in a state of horrifying ideological backwardness, will now spring forward like a lion. Material conditions in Britain have long been ripe for socialism. The strike has placed on the agenda the replacement of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state. If the strike itself does not produce this change, it will bring it far closer. The exact date we cannot say. But we should be prepared for it to be early.

The general strike and the minority movement

Extract from *The mistakes of the right elements of the French Communist League on the trade union question* 4 January 1931.

THE DISASTROUS experience with the Anglo-Russian Committee was based entirely upon effacing the independence of the British Communist Party. In order that the Soviet trade unions might maintain the bloc with the strike-breakers of the General Council (allegedly in the state interests of the USSR!) the British Communist Party had to be deprived of all independence. This was obtained by the actual dissolution of the party into the so-called 'Minority Movement', that is, a 'left' opposition inside the trade unions.

Stalin, Bukharin, Zinoviev—in this question they were all in solidarity, at least in the first period—sought to replace the weak British Communist Party by a 'broader current' which had at its head, to be sure, not members of the party, but 'friends', almost Communists, at any rate, fine fellows and good acquaintances. The fine fellows, the solid 'leaders', did not, of course, want to submit themselves to the leadership of a small, weak Communist Party. That was their full right; the party cannot force anybody to submit himself to it. The agreements between the Communists and the 'Lefts' (Purcell, Hicks and Cook) on the basis of the partial tasks of the trade union movement were, of course, quite possible and in certain cases unavoidable. But on one condition: the Communist Party had to preserve its complete independence, even within the trade unions, act in its own name in all questions of principle, criticise its 'Left' allies whenever necessary, and in this way, win the confidence of the masses step by step.

The experience of the Anglo-Russian Committee was unfortunately the least understood and grasped even in the Left Opposition groups. The demands for a break with the strike-breakers appeared even to some within our ranks as . . . sectarianism. Yet, this question has a gigantic importance: without a clear understanding of what happened in Britain in 1925-26, neither communism as a whole nor the Left Opposition in particular will be able to find its way on the right road.

This only possible road, however, appeared too long and uncertain to the bureaucrats of the Communist International. They considered that by means of personal influence upon Purcell, Hicks, Cook and the others (conversations behind the scenes, correspondence, banquets, friendly back-



CP leaders Rust and Hannington, jailed in October 1925.

slapping, gentle exhortations), they would gradually and imperceptibly draw the 'Left' opposition ('the broad current') into the stream of the Communist International. To guarantee such a success with greater security, the dear friends (Purcell, Hicks and Cook) were not to be vexed, or exasperated, or displeased by petty chicanery, by inopportune criticism, by sectarian intransigence, and so forth . . . But since one of the tasks of the Communist Party consists precisely of upsetting the peace of and alarming all centrists and semi-centrists a radical measure had to be resorted to by actually subordinating the Communist Party to the 'Minority Movement'. On the trade union field there appeared only the leaders of this movement. The British Communist Party had practically ceased to exist for the masses.

Stalin's position

What did the Russian Left Opposition demand in this question? In the first place, to re-establish the complete independence of the British Communist Party towards the trade unions. We affirmed that it is only under the influence of the independent slogans of the party and of its open criticism that the Minority Movement could take form, appreciate its tasks more precisely, change its leaders, fortify itself in the trade unions while consolidating the position of communism.

What did Stalin, Bukharin, Lozovsky and company reply to our criticism? 'You want to push the British Communist Party on to the road of sectarianism. You want to drive Purcell, Hicks and Cook into the enemy's camp. You want to break with the Minority Movement'.

What did the Left Opposition reply? 'If Purcell and Hicks break with us, not because we demand of them that they transform themselves immediately into Communists—nobody

demands that!—but because we ourselves want to remain Communists, this means that Purcell and company are not friends but masked enemies. The quicker they show their nature, the better for the masses. We do not at all want to break with the Minority Movement. On the contrary, we must give the greatest attention to this movement. The smallest step forward with the masses or with a part of the masses is worth more than a dozen abstract programmes of circles of intellectuals, but the attention devoted to the masses has nothing in common with capitulation before their temporary leaders and semi-leaders. The masses need a correct orientation and correct slogans. This excludes all theoretical conciliation and the patronage of confusionists who exploit the backwardness of the masses'.

What were the results of the Stalinists' British experiment? The Minority Movement, embracing almost a million workers, seemed very promising, but it bore the germs of destruction within itself. The masses knew as the leaders of the movement only Purcell, Hicks and Cook, whom, moreover, Moscow vouched for. These 'left' friends, in a serious test, shamefully betrayed the proletariat. The revolutionary workers were thrown into confusion, sank into apathy and naturally extended their disappointment to the Communist Party itself which had only been the passive part of this whole mechanism of betrayal and perfidy. The Minority Movement was reduced to zero; the Communist Party returned to the existence of a negligible sect. In this way, thanks to a radically false conception of the party, the greatest movement of the English proletariat, which led to the general strike, not only did not shake the apparatus of the reactionary bureaucracy, but, on the contrary, reinforced it and compromised Communism in Great Britain for a long time.

BRIAN NORTON describes how the Minority Movement was formed against the turbulent background of 1920's Britain prior to the General Strike, and recounts the role of the young Communist Party in this significant period in the history of the British working class.

The Minority Movement and the early Communist Party

THE CAPITALIST crisis has reduced the lives of millions in 1986 to a bitter struggle for a decent life. Every day workers are faced with increasing pressures placed on them by employers attempting to maintain their profits.

In his book on *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*, Engels wrote that: "Strikes are the military school of the working man, in which they prepare themselves for the great struggle which cannot be avoided... As schools of war, the unions are unexcelled. In them is developed the peculiar courage of the English".

Those words written over 100 years ago remain remarkably fresh. In British society in the past 10 years many new layers of workers have been 'bloodied' in struggle. There is a hardness about working people's characters which was absent in the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s. Even the struggles against the Heath government of the 1970s now look like tame affairs in comparison to recent struggles.

Post war crisis

The miners' strike of 1984-85 marked a new era in the relations between the classes in Britain. Trotsky's words in March 1926 on the eve of the general strike take on an entirely relevant and up-to-date meaning:

"The economic blind alley of the country which is most sharply expressed in the coal industry thrusts the working class onto the path of seeking a solution, that is on to the path of an even sharper struggle..."

"...with regard to the miners' strike, it is not of course a question of an isolated strike, however big it may be, but the commencement of a whole series of social conflicts and crises".

Trotsky's *Where is Britain going?*, written in 1925, summed up the background to the period following the First World War:

"The displacement of Great Britain from the position of world domination occupied by her thus came to be openly revealed during the fourth quarter of the last century; and towards the beginning of the present century it produced a state of internal want of confidence and a ferment among the upper classes, and a profound molecular process of an essentially revolutionary character among the working class..."

"...The years 1911 to 1913 were

times of unparalleled class struggles of the miners, railwaymen and transport workers generally. In August 1911, a national, in other words a general, strike broke out on the railways. The vague shadow of revolution hovered over Britain in those days..."

"...In the years 1917 to 1920 the British labour movement again passed through an extremely strong period. Strikes were on the grand scale."

In January 1919 the Clydeside engineers, led by the Clyde Workers' Committee, came out on strike for a 40 hour week. The government responded by sending in tanks and troops to break the strike. A report of a January 1920 Cabinet meeting revealed the terror of the bourgeoisie at the prospect of a strike by the 'Triple Alliance' of the transport workers, the NUR and the Miners' Federation. Lloyd George even informed the Cabinet that: "The Air Force would attack with bombs and machine-guns, if, as Churchill feared, ground troops could not be relied upon to put down an insurrection".

Later in 1920 organised labour in Britain came to the aid of the young Soviet Russia. The London dockers inspired the whole movement when they struck and refused to load the *Jolly George* with munitions bound to aid the capitalist armies of intervention. In August 1920 a Council of Action was established by the TUC and Labour Party to stop the attack on Russia "by any and every form of withdrawal of labour". This action by workers in Britain and elsewhere in the capitalist world was decisive in forcing the capitalists to abandon their attempts at large-scale intervention against the young Russian workers' state.

This was the background to the foundation of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920. Militants like Willie Gallacher, Tom Mann and Jack Murphy were all founding members of the CP: Gallacher had been the leader of the mass movements on the Clyde and as Chairman of the Clyde Workers Committee was instrumental in building the early shop stewards movement.

To head-off the movement of the workers in the immediate post-war period the Coalition government under Lloyd George had been obliged to concede major reforms, including sickness and unemployment benefits, extended

subsidies to the coal industry etc on the basis of a speculative boom. But this came to an abrupt end in 1921.

Unemployment passed the million mark in February 1921 climbing to over two million by June. The post-war slump brought with it a determined onslaught by the employers on workers wages and conditions. At the end of March 1921 the miners were locked out—having rejected massive pay cuts. The miners appealed to the Triple Alliance for united strike action. But on April 15 1921 the right wing union leaders abandoned calls for a strike in defence of the miners. This day became known as "Black Friday".

From then on the employers pushed home their attack to cut the workers share of the wealth they had created in an attempt to restore profitability. By the end of 1921 wage cuts averaging 8/- a week had been suffered by six million workers. Between 1921 and 1923 membership of the TUC fell by two million.

But by 1923 there were signs of a growing confidence amongst sections of the workers. In January 1924 there was a national railway strike; in February 1924 a national dockers strike which won some wage increases and in March 1924 London's tramwaymen and busmen struck.

The founding of the Minority Movement

It was against this background of growing militancy that Willie Gallacher reported to the Communist Party Congress in May 1924 that:

"The growing opposition movements now springing up in the leading trade unions, industries and the Labour Party, are the first expression of the concrete raising of the demands of the workers and of a definite challenge to the existing leadership... The many streams of the rising forces of the workers must be gathered together into one powerful mass movement which will sweep away the old leadership and drive forward relentlessly to the struggle for power." Three months later on August 23 and 24 the first conference of the Minority Movement was convened. 270 delegates representing 200,000 workers took part.

The aims of the Minority Movement were spelt out at the Conference: "to organise the working masses of Great Britain for the overthrow of capitalism... to carry on a wide agitation and propaganda for the principles

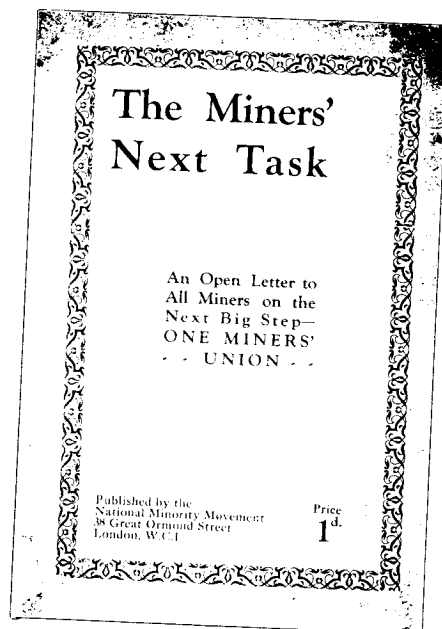
of the revolutionary class struggle, and work within existing organisations for the National Minority Movement programme and against the present tendency towards social peace and class collaboration and the delusion of the peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism; unite the workers in their everyday struggles against the exploiters; to maintain the closest relations with the Red International of Labour Unions (the industrial wing of the Comintern—Ed)."

The Communist Party had carefully considered its role in launching the Minority Movement. Lozovsky, a leader of the Red International of Labour Unions, had argued at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, then still under the guidance of Lenin and Trotsky, that: "As far as Britain is concerned we see clearly that it would be disastrous if the Party were content to organise its forces only within its little party nuclei... our aim must be that our communist groups should act as a point of crystallisation round which the opposition elements will concentrate. The aim must be to create, to marshal, to integrate the opposition forces, and the Communist Party will itself grow concurrently with the growth of the opposition."

The resolution on the Minority Movement agreed by the CPGB's 6th Congress in 1924 declared:

"In the actual fight to achieve their immediate demands the workers will be brought up against the whole organised power of capitalism—the state. Therefore, as the struggle develops, the importance and absolute necessity of the CP to the working class becomes more and more clearly revealed. The opposition movements can only go forward under the leadership of a powerful Communist Party. Out of the struggle of the opposition movements of today will be forged the CP of tomorrow... the CP, while working inside the Minority Movement, will on no account sacrifice its separate existence or limit its freedom of agitation and propaganda. By this means it will win the workers to the Party in ever increasing numbers, and prepare the working class for the real problem that confronts them, that of the conquest of power."

And JR Campbell writing in *Communist Review* in October 1924 was careful to spell out a policy on the left TU leaders: "It would be a suicidal policy, however for the CP and the Minority Movement to place too much reliance on what we have called the official left wing... It is the duty of the party and the MM to criticise its weakness relentlessly and endeavour to change the muddled and incomplete left wing viewpoint of the more progressive leaders into a real revolutionary viewpoint. But the revolu-



The covers of two Minority Movement pamphlets.

tionary workers must never forget that their main activity must be devoted to capturing the masses."

However this basically correct approach to the left union leaders came to be put to one side—with fatal consequences—in the period leading up to the general strike in May 1926.

It is not possible to look at the early CP and the Minority Movement without—at the same time—taking note of international developments. At the end of 1924 Stalin began to develop his policy of 'socialism in one country', reflecting the conservatism of a privileged bureaucracy that was beginning to crystallise in Russia. The corollary of this 'theory' was the abandonment of the perspective of international revolution. The Soviet leadership encouraged the formation of the Anglo-Soviet Joint TU Advisory Committee, on the basis of verbal support of the Soviet Union by Hicks, Swales and Purcell, who were elected by the TUC General Council as the British representatives.

The Anglo-Russian Committee

The support of the TUC General Council for the Anglo-Soviet Committee meant that the Communist Party was being pulled in two directions at once. On the one hand the June 1925 edition of the CP theoretical journal, *Communist Review*, wrote:

"The success of the Minority Movement is in reality a sign that the workers are coming to look upon the unions less and less as a means of improving their individual well-being within the framework of the capitalist system, and more and more as a weapon of struggle against the capitalist class..."

"...There can be no doubt

that... many reformist leaders would rather swim with the current than against it. Without pushing away anyone who will fight, the task of the Communists in the Minority Movement is to see that this does not obscure in the eyes of the workers the fact that their fight is a class fight against a class enemy, and not a fight for small reforms".

On the other hand the CP did not want to criticise either the TUC or the left leaders for fear of harming the Anglo-Soviet Committee on which the Stalinist-led Communist International was placing so much reliance. This was shown by the response of the Communist Party to the events in the months prior to the general strike.

In March 1925 the coal owners gave one month's notice of termination of the existing wages agreement, bringing a cut in wages and longer hours. Such was the rank and file pressure—in which the Minority Movement and the CP played an important part—the TUC General Council threatened massive sympathy action. Baldwin—the Tory Prime Minister—surrendered and on 31 July 1925 announced a nine-month £23 million subsidy to the coal industry thus averting any wage cuts. This victory for the miners became known as 'Red Friday'.

In reality, however, it merely represented a tactical retreat by the capitalists. Britain was heading into a mighty clash of the classes. The capitalist class for its part was making preparations for a general strike. But the labour movement was completely unprepared. The right wing tried desperately to find a way to head-off the inevitable collision. The left, which had gained an apparently dominant position on the TUC General Council through people like Cook, Purcell, Swales, Hicks and Bramley,

also failed to prepare the movement. Although Lon Swales of the AEU was chairman of the TUC 'Special Industrial Committee' which was responsible for strike preparations, nothing was done.

This incapacity bore out the warnings made by Trotsky in the months prior to the strike:

"Regarding international matters as a means of giving vent to the radical moods of the masses, these esteemed leaders are prepared to a certain extent even to bow to a revolution (in other countries). . . It should be understood that leftism of this kind remains left so long as it has no practical obligations. But as soon as the question of action arises, the left wingers respectfully concede the leadership to the right". The TUC strike organising committee first met just six days before the strike began!

The Minority Movement grows

The British Communist Party failed to heed these warnings. Jack Murphy, writing in *Communist Review* in September 1925 could correctly argue that:

"Let us be clear what a general strike means. It can only mean the throwing down of the gauntlet to the capitalist state, and all the powers at its disposal. Either that challenge is only a gesture, in which case the capitalist class will not worry about it, or it must develop its challenge into an actual fight for power, in which case we land into civil war. Any leaders who talk about a general strike without facing this obvious fact are bluffing both themselves and the workers".

But while the CP leaders took this formally correct position, under the pressure of the Comintern they failed to warn that the TUC lefts, without the perspective that a general strike poses the question, 'who rules?', would inevitably draw back from an all-out struggle against capitalism. Thus the party's paper *Workers' Weekly* (7 August, 1925) greeted 'Red Friday' with the words: "The leadership passed into the hands of good proletarians like Swales, Hicks, Cook and Purcell. And this proletarian leadership and the proletarian solidarity it was capable of organising and demonstrating was the real big thing that came out of the struggle."

The CP went on—uncritically—to support the left rhetoric at the September 1925 Trades Union Congress. *Workers' Weekly*, wrote on 18 September 1925 that: "When Swales delivered his opening speech the real temper of the Congress began to manifest itself. The more militant became the mood, the more delegates responded to this fighting challenge".

In fact, the failure of the CP leadership to offer a friendly but firm criticism of the TUC lefts, while giving them critical support in their fight against the right, began to come under criticism within the party. At the party congress in May 1925 a delegate from Sheffield drew attention to the fact that the miners' leader Arthur Cook had begun to drift away from some of the policies he had fought for in his election campaign. The Sheffield delegate pointed out that: "After we have praised and said nice things about these left wing leaders, what will the masses say about the Communist Party when these leaders fail them? We must give the necessary qualifications to our support of these left wingers". Prophetic words indeed!

But far from offering criticism of the left leaders their 'proletarian leadership' continued to be praised in the party press. This emphasis of policy was to prove fatal in the period leading up to and during the general strike.

The growing capitalist crisis continued to push the workers to the left. Support for the Minority Movement developed apace. At the second National Minority Movement conference held on 29 August 1925 there were 683 delegates representing some 750,000 workers. Two slogans dominated the conference: "Prepare for the coming fight" and "Solidarity spells success". The influence of the Minority Movement was shown in the breadth of the delegations: Trades Councils 40, Metal workers 126, Building workers 103, Transport workers 75, General workers 72, Miners 33, Co-operative organisations 16, Unemployed organisations 45. Seven district trade union organisations were represented but only two delegates from trade union national executives (NAFTA and the Chemical and Drug Workers).

In March 1926 the Minority Movement was at its peak. It called a special 'Conference of Action' of 883 delegates representing some 957,000 workers. Delegations included: Trades Councils 52, Mining unions 37, Metal workers 153, Transport workers 121.

The main resolution spelt out a policy of preparation for the general strike. It called upon all supporters of the Minority Movement and workers generally to: "1. Urge each Trades Council to constitute itself a Council of Action by mobilising all the forces of the working class movement in its locality—the TU branches, the organised unemployed, the Co-operative Guilds, and the workers' political organisations; by organising 100 per cent trade unionism; special attention be paid to the organisation of young workers, and a campaign to be commenced to organise the unorganised women workers; building up workshop organisations; by calling

special conferences of affiliated members; by holding continuous mass demonstrations in support of the sections attacked; by bringing pressure to bear on the local authorities to secure relief for those rendered destitute during the struggles; by establishing as far as means permit a commissariat department in conjunction with the local co-operatives; by using every means to bring all the workers, men and women, organised and unorganised into the struggle.

"2. Urge the General Council to immediately convene a National Congress of Action, at which plans shall be prepared for:

"(a) The complete scientific utilisation of the whole TU movement in the struggle.

"(b) Securing the co-operation of the co-operative organisations.

"(c) Securing the active participation of the Parliamentary and national Labour Parties in the organisation of the struggle by placing themselves at the disposal of the General Council of the TUC.

"(d) Urging the General Council of the TUC to take steps to ensure the full support of the international TU movement for the struggle of the British working class."

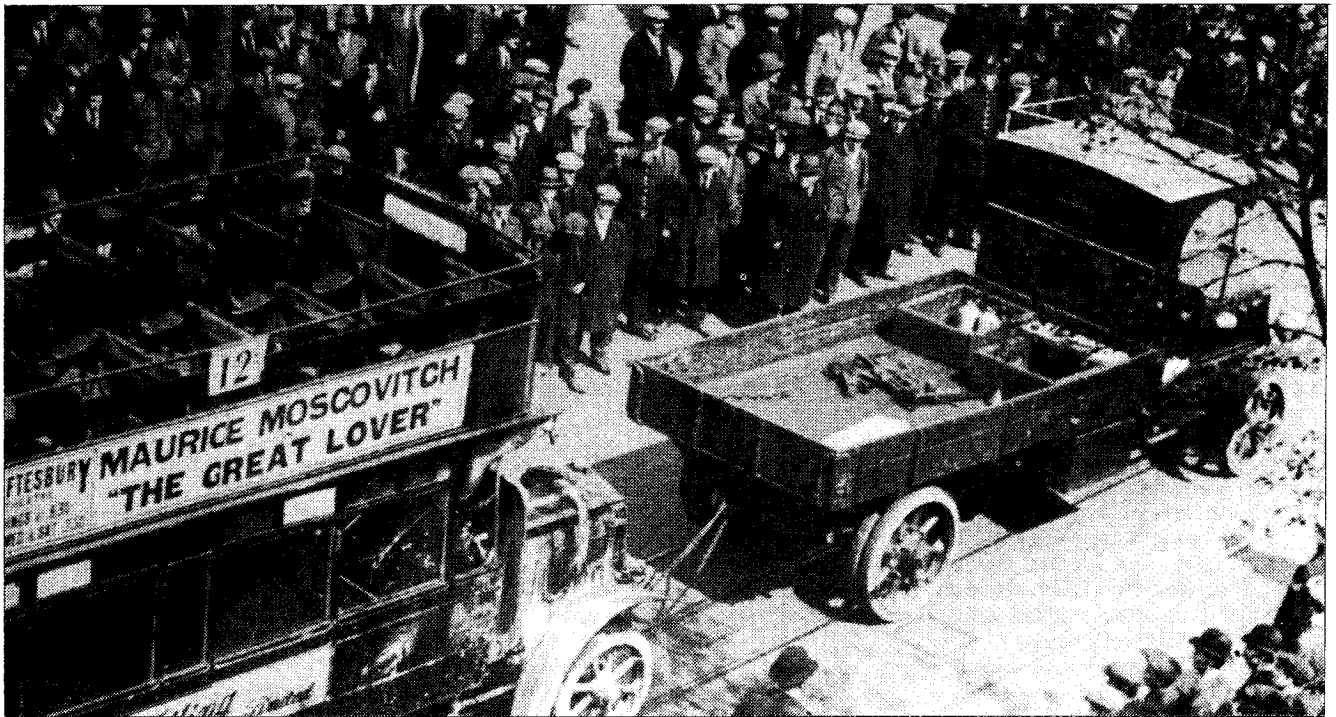
The General Strike

The attitude of the Communist Party to the TUC General Council was marked by confusion and a lack of clarity. For example, in his opening speech to the Minority Movement 1926 Conference of Action Tom Mann said: "Therefore, prepare at once. Let us perfect our relations with each other, let us have our industrial machinery ready for action. The real central body through which we must function is the General Council of the TUC. All unions should be loyal and co-operate loyally therewith".

And George Hardy, acting Minority Movement General Secretary wrote in *Workers' Weekly* on 9 April 1926 that members "should work for the establishment of Councils of Action in every area but that the Councils of Action were to see that all decisions of the General Council and the union executives were carried out".

Meanwhile the capitalists and coal owners were preparing to take on the working class. The coal owners demanded a 13 per cent wage cut and an eight hour day from 1 May. On 1 May—with the miners already locked out—the TUC voted by 3,653,527 to 49,911 votes for a general strike. Within a couple of days some four million out of 5½ million workers responded to the call and struck in a tremendous display of power.

Councils of Action were established in every part of the country and in



Southwark, London. A bus taken out of action is towed through a crowd of strikers.

many areas effectively became the organs of government. Every day more workers joined the strike.

CP members and Minority Movement supporters played a decisive role in the local Councils of Action. They produced local workers' bulletins and organised mass demonstrations and meetings. Despite police raids the circulation of Communist papers during the general strike was around 100,000. They were produced in impossible circumstances: party offices were closed by the police, CP organisers were arrested and imprisoned, including the Communist MP Saklatvala. The fear of the small Communist Party by the ruling class was shown by the imprisonment on seditious libel of 12 Communist leaders in the year before the general strike.

But it was not until 7 May that the CP's *Workers' Bulletin* contained the first criticism of the TUC: and even then it did not deal with a single question beyond the winning of the strike:

"According to Baldwin, in the Commons yesterday, the TUC delegates on the eve of the strike were prepared to discuss the following formula drafted by Birkenhead: 'We would urge the miners to authorise us to enter into discussions with the understanding that they accept the report as the basis of a settlement, and we approach it with the knowledge that it may involve some reduction in wages'.

"Since there has been no repudiation, this statement is probably true. We hope the leaders responsible will now frankly admit that they made a mistake in agreeing even to discuss such an outrageous proposal."

It is almost unbelievable to see the similarity between the TUC position

during the general strike and their role today in the NGA dispute at Warrington and the miners' strike of 1984-5. They use the same phraseology as the right wing Railwaymen's leader Thomas, who spoke on 19 April 1926 of "finding a solution honourable and satisfactory". They somehow believe that there can be a solution to problems, created by capitalism, which are "honourable", and "satisfactory to all sides". In reality they mean "satisfactory" to capitalism and the existing social relations. Their lifestyle has become removed and apart from the workers they represent. Their interest is in maintaining the *status quo* and not in overthrowing it.

Aftermath of the strike

On 7 May the workers of the USSR—who had collected £1,250,000—offered their support to the TUC through the Anglo-Soviet Committee. It was flatly rejected. Left union leader, Hicks, was reported as denouncing "this damned Russian gold". And while the TUC General Council continued to tell its members that the strike was "non political", Lord Balfour declared "that we are now threatened it seems with a revolution".

On 12 May the High Court declared that: "The so-called general strike called by the TUC committee is illegal". And on 12 May following an approach by Sir Herbert Samuel, the TUC General Council called off the general strike "in order that negotiations could be resumed to secure a settlement in the mining industry, free and unfettered from either strike or lock-

out". They surrendered—with absolutely nothing.

Not only the right but left leaders like Purcell had participated in the negotiations to end the strike. Despite the opposition of the Miners' Federation both right and left capitulated.

On 13 May the Communist Party issued an appeal to "Stand By The Miners": "The General Council's decision to call off the general strike is the greatest crime that has ever been permitted, not only against the miners, but against the working class of Great Britain and the whole world. The British workers had aroused the astonishment and admiration of the world by the enthusiasm with which they had entered upon the fight for the miners' standard of living . . .

"... And most of the so-called left wing have been no better than the right. By a policy of timid silence, by using the false pretext of loyalty to colleagues to cover-up breaches of loyalty to workers, they have left a free hand to the right wing and thus helped to play the employers' game".

By then, of course, such criticism was too late. The workers' movement was in shock. Many workers even thought that the telegrams calling off the strike were forgeries. As they tried to return to work they found employers who wished to victimise and smash trade union organisation.

The Communist Party issued a call for a "national conference of delegates from strike committees" to continue the struggle. But they were not able to turn it into a reality. The loyalty to the trade union organisations and the shock at the actions of the right and left, combined with the lack of preparedness of the Communist Party

ty to the betrayals of the left, meant that the CP calls for action did not meet with a ready response. Such a call came too late in the day. It appears that in the two weeks of struggle no call was made for the linking up of the Councils of Action. There was no really effective national opposition to the TUC General Council.

George Hardy himself admitted after the General Strike: "Although we knew what treachery the right wing leaders were capable of, we did not clearly understand the part played by the so-called 'left'. In the main... they turned out to be windbags... we were taught a major lesson... the main point in preparing for action must always be to develop a class conscious leadership amongst the rank and file".

Such lessons were learned too late for the Communist Party. In fact, despite the formal acknowledgement of their 'misunderstandings', their leaders never honestly attempted to analyse *how* they had come to follow such a mistaken policy. The Comintern must bear the major responsibility. Their support of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee was dictated by bureaucratic self-interest in place of the interests of the working class in Britain and internationally.

An opportunity lost

The publication of Trotsky's book *Where is Britain going?* in 1925 had, ironically, been greeted by the Communist Party in Britain. W Paul wrote in the *Sunday Worker*:

"In this new and virile book the famous revolutionary easily surpasses all his previous efforts. He raises a series of most important problems for our movement. He states his case so well and sustains it with such an array of facts, drawn from British history."

Trotsky himself wrote a preface to the second German edition of his book on 6 May 1926 (see pages 19-20). In it he argued that:

"Irreconcilable struggle against any act of treachery or sell out and merciless exposure of reformist illusions are the most important jobs for the truly revolutionary participants in the general strike".

Unfortunately the Communist Party in the crucial period leading to the general strike—and then during it—failed to apply the Marxist method. The opportunity for the British workers was lost. And the Communist Party could have played a much more significant role if it had been theoretically prepared for those nine days in 1926.

Nonetheless until the return of the miners in November 1926 the Communist Party continued to build. This is revealed in a report to the Com-

Report to the CP Executive on Party membership, August 1926

LONDON: 36 branches. 1,560 members (260 women). Increase in year 25%. 44 factory groups with 232 members (1 year ago less than 30). 24 factory papers with circulation of 8,000. *Workers' Weekly* sales in London: 15,000.

SOUTH WALES: 41 branches. 1,500 members (200 women). 66 pit or factory groups. 16 pit and factory papers.

MANCHESTER: 30 branches. 680 members (101 women). *Workers' Weekly* sales: 9,700.

FIFE: 8 branches. 502 members (124 women). Last year 79 members in 5 branches.

BIRMINGHAM: 18 branches. 326 members. Last year 10 branches, 200 members.

LIVERPOOL: 12 branches. 576

members. Last year 8 branches, 150 members. Circulation of *Workers' Weekly* doubled.

GLASGOW: 1,105 members (increase in past year 80%).

LANARKSHIRE: 433 members (increase in 3 months 309).

STIRLINGSHIRE: 120 members (last year 34 members). Contacts in 17 surrounding villages.

BRADFORD: 250 members. 5 pit groups. 3 textile industry groups.

TYNESIDE: 1,900 members (300 women). In this district we have witnessed the heaviest recruitment to the party.

SHEFFIELD: 1,200 members (trebled in past year). Sales of party papers doubled.

OTHER AREAS: Progress most marked in Dundee, Edinburgh and Lothians. Over 1,000 members in outlying areas.

munist Party executive in August 1926 (see table).

The treachery of the TUC leaders in abandoning the general strike clearly boosted recruitment efforts. By October 1926 the party had 10,730 members. It also underlines what could have been achieved by the Communist Party if they had acted effectively as a national force with the correct perspectives and policy.

The labour movement took a severe hammering as a result of the defeat of the general strike. The TUC General Council turned on the Minority Movement and the Communist Party and in 1927 instructed Trades Councils to disaffiliate from the Minority Movement.

But worse was to come. From 1927 onwards the Communist International dictated a change of policy which was to effectively destroy the Minority Movement. The Labour Party was described as a "third capitalist party" and the leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions characterised as 'social fascists'. The Minority Movement was counterposed to the trade unions themselves as the CP encouraged the establishment of new 'red' unions.

In 1927 and 1928 the number represented at Minority Movement conferences fell dramatically. By 1929 party membership had fallen to 2,500. The Minority Movement effectively died—although formally remaining in existence for several more years. Nevertheless the founding of the National Minority Movement represented a very significant development for militant workers. Its organisation and publications are worthy of study today.

On 9 February 1924, the *Worker* wrote: "A small minority of the rank and file are struggling against the

passivity and ignorance of the mass of the officials and the mass of the workers. Until the broad popular masses can be reached and quickened through the activity of the left wing, the enlightened union officials are weighted down and cannot move. That being the case, the struggle of the left wing for leadership is not merely an anti-official struggle...

'Tasks remain'

"It is a struggle to reach the ordinary worker, to convince him of the need for new policies and new methods of struggle. The business of the Minority Movement is not merely to wangle positions for those who support its policy. It is the more fundamental task of capturing the rank and file, of recreating the will to fight".

That remains our task today 60 years later. Time and again workers have demonstrated their willingness to make substantial sacrifices in pursuance of a strike. The miners and their families in 1984 and 1985 lived in poverty for months. The women hospital cleaners at Barking and Adenbrookes showed a quite remarkable strength. Isolated and few in number they fought on for months and months.

It is this resilience—coupled with Marxist leadership—which will enable British workers to transform society.

Engels captured the potential of the British working class when he wrote: "In this lasting determination which undergoes a hundred tests every day, the English working man develops that side of his character which commands most respect. People who endure so much to break one single bourgeois will be able to break the power of the whole bourgeoisie".

Economic Notes

By Bob McKee

Britain and the boom

IF THE boom is coming to an end as the evidence seems to suggest, then what the prospects for the British economy? The best way to judge that would be to see if the British capitalist system has improved during the current world expansion of 1982-6, making it ready, 'leaner and fitter', to cope with worsening trade and production conditions.

The years of world recession 1979-81 coincided with the election of a Tory government determined to boost the profitability of British industry at the expense of the wages and jobs of the workers in those industries. To begin with, sharp increases in productivity ie the amount of output per worker, were achieved the easy way. The collapse in the world market both forced and made it possible for employers to lay off labour, close down factories and shackle the ability of the trade unions to fight back.

Profits rise

As world markets picked up after 1982, the economy began to grow slowly, but the main result of the destruction of British industry was a sharp increase in profit levels for those companies that were left, particularly in manufacturing. There was a dramatic fall in raw material costs while prices of manufactures continued to rise, if at a slower rate of inflation than in the 1970's. (Table 1). The inevitable consequence of this was a substantial rise in the level of profits for British companies.

In the last four years, profits for the non-oil sector have risen by 70 per cent and now the rate of profit for industrial and commercial companies has reached 10 per cent from its all-time low of 3 per cent in 1981, restoring the levels achieved

in the early 1970's. (Table 2).

But how have the British capitalists used this surplus value squeezed out of their employers? They certainly have not invested it back into industry. Manufacturing investment is still over 17 per cent below what it was when the Tories took over in 1979. The so-called new 'leaner and fitter' British industry is much more lean than fit. Productivity was raised by cutting back the number of workers *not* by raising investment and production. And there is a limit to that process.

The dangers of this for British capitalism are now being revealed. Wages for those still in employment have been rising by an unchanged average over the last two years at about an annual rate of 7 per cent. But wage costs per unit of output have sharply risen from an annual rate of 3.9 per cent in 1984 to a current rate of 8.9 per cent now. This is over twice as much an increase in costs as British industry's main rivals. British industry is becoming more and more uncompetitive compared to its major trading rivals at a time when world markets are tightening up with a slowing of the current world boom. The situation could be particularly serious for the UK if there is major world recession in the next 18 months.

Clearly this relatively poor performance for costs has nothing to do with greedy workers demanding high wage increases as the Tories continually argue. Wage increases have been stable for two years. It is *unit wage costs* that have risen. What has happened is that, despite big profits and better profit rates, British capitalists have not raised productivity by introducing new machinery and new plant to industry. They have preferred to use those profits either to invest abroad or to buy up other companies and use their assets than invest in new ones. Merger activity is now at breakneck

Table One
Producer prices

% change on previous year

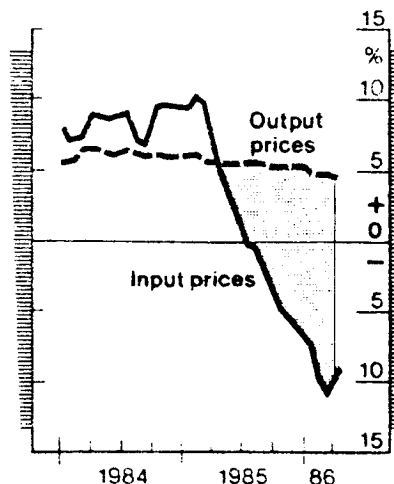
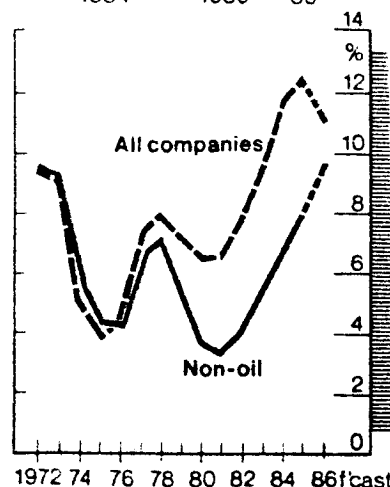


Table Two
Real rates of return
Industrial and commercial companies

Sources: Treasury, Dept of Trade and Industry



pace with bids for major UK companies announced in the city every day. In the first quarter of 1986 the value of merger deals has been equal to the total value of such takeovers in the whole of 1985, itself a record year.

British manufacturing industry, upon which much of expanding service industries depend for a market,

whatever the Tory government may say, is still in no fit state to compete, and any downturn on a world scale must leave Britain especially vulnerable to a catastrophic loss of their share of world trade, making the last recession of 1979-81 seem like a mild decline.

UK unemployment—more facts about the misery

LAST TIME in this column we reported the recent survey from the Employment Institute which showed that the UK unemployment rate was now higher than in the 1930s at an equivalent point in the years of the recession; and that for those aged between 25 and

54 years, the UK's 11 per cent jobless rate was twice as high as the average for the rest of the industrial world.

Now a new survey on unemployment from the London School of Economics shows that if you have been without a job for over three years your chances of getting one are now as low as 6 in 100. And it is even worse for unskilled workers whose unemployment rate is now five times greater than skilled workers.

LETTERS

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

Vivisection debate continued

Dear Comrades,

I was very interested to read Jim Hensmans' article on famine and the replies in the last issue of the *Militant International Review*.

The question of animal rights is one that should be taken seriously by all socialists. Animals should be given equal consideration of interests. The fact that we are more intelligent or have the capacity for 'abstract thought' is often used to justify the exploitation of animals. As socialists should we go along with this argument? The very fact that humans are more intelligent should be the reason why we don't exploit animals. We have the ability to survive without the abuse of animals.

Why is it then that animals are still exploited?

Animals, like humans, are a source of profit for the capitalists. The pharmaceutical industry is a good example. In 1982 the industry spent £81 million of its £1.4 billion UK sales on research involving animals (4,221,801 experiments were performed on animals in 1982). Animals are a cheap and convenient way of getting new products onto the market fast, with public confidence. The majority of these tests are carried out without anaesthetic and cause great suffering to the animals involved. Often they are duplications of experiments carried out by other companies producing a similar drug.

Animal tests have many times proven to be unreliable. Thalidomide, Oram, Chloramphenicol, Ibuprofen and Eraldim are good examples of drugs that were ful-

ly tested on animals and proven 'safe', yet turned out to be dangerous to humans. News often comes through of drugs that have been withdrawn from the market because of unforeseen side effects, but only months after being found to be dangerous. Many of these drugs are used in the third world after being taken off the shelf in the western world, or even before they are used in the west. The capitalists use the third world as human guinea pigs! It is also the case that some drugs, having been 'proved' dangerous in animal tests, such as penicillin and digitalis, have had their entry onto the market delayed.

Yet, while penicillin kills guinea pigs, and digitalis (used to treat heart patients) causes raised blood pressure in dogs (!) they have saved countless lives. There are many such examples where animal tests have been proved to be misleading (see *Slaughter of the Innocent* by Hans Ruesch). Scientists who support vivisection use the principle of what applies to animals applies to humans. This is just not the case for every animal, including humans, reacts differently to situations. All animals have developed differently. Dogs are often used for experiments on their lungs, yet they have a totally different lung structure to humans.

Even with the lack of investment, there are already alternatives available which are more reliable than animal tests such as chromatography, chemical analysis, cell and organ culture, theoretical techniques and clinical obser-

Northern Ireland

Dear Comrades,

I would like to congratulate Peter Hadden for presenting a very sober and realistic assessment of the dangers and effects of the Anglo-Irish agreement (Issue No 31 *MIR*).

Particularly important was the passage where he explained that not only is the agreement "a dangerous movement in the history of the Irish labour movement" but that open sectarian conflict "would be a setback of a serious character for the working class of Britain also."

In many areas of Britain, such as London, Liverpool and Scotland, there are large Irish communities of Catholic and Protestant working class families. Only 15 miles from where I live, in Luton, Bedfordshire over 50 per cent of the population are of Irish origin.

Imagine, therefore, what the net effects of a possible incipient civil war in the North could have for Irish workers living in Britain—as a result of the bosses so-called solution to the political and economic crisis in Northern Ireland.

A long term campaign of open assassinations, death squads and attacks similar to those carried out by the NF on Asians, but instead in the form of sectarian attacks between Catholics and Protestant workers, cannot be ruled out. In some cases we could also

witness a similar situation to the 1984-85 miners' strike, where instead of workers calling other workers "scabs", sectarian abuse would be banded about and all of the Orange Order bands could come crawling out from the woodwork.

It is my opinion that in the event of a civil war in Northern Ireland Catholic and Protestant communities in Britain and in Ireland will be torn apart and divided down the middle.

It is very necessary, when socialists discuss the situation in Northern Ireland in the British labour movement, to see that the sectarian tensions that could spill over in the North can escalate over the water and effect workers here.

But as Peter explained, there can never be a solution to the national question on the basis of capitalism. Only by adopting the slogan "of a socialist united Ireland and a socialist federation of Britain and Ireland" will the Catholic and Protestant working class of these islands be freed from sectarianism, repression, poverty and the capitalist system itself, which has directly allowed the political nightmare in Northern Ireland to exist.

Fraternally
Jackie Walsh
Stevenage CLP
and NALGO

ations with patients suffering from an illness (rather than trying to inflict it on an animal, in which it may develop in a totally different way) and the use of computers. The Polio vaccine used today was developed without the use of animals, and even the discoverer of the original vaccine says that it is better than his!

The capitalists do not use technology for the benefit of mankind, they use it to make profit. The struggle for animal liberation must be linked to the struggle to change society—for human liberation. While a handful of capitalists control the pharmaceutical industry with profit as their only motivation

animal abuse in the laboratory will go on and dangerous drugs will continue to be put onto the market for human use.

The pharmaceutical industry must be nationalised by the next Labour government, so technology can be used to benefit mankind and animals. With the profit motive removed more reliable, cruelty free methods could be found—in Russia 90 per cent of all drugs are produced without the use of animals. Animals are not an essential part of research they are just another source of profit for the capitalists.

Yours fraternally,
Jeff Walker,
Newham East LPYS

Socialism and Science: Nuclear power and a socialist energy programme

THE CHERNOBYL nuclear catastrophe has horrified workers throughout the world. Millions are looking for a socialist energy policy as an alternative to the nightmare offered by Stalinism and capitalism. Britain has enormous resources of oil, gas and coal yet every winter thousands of old people die of the cold and families, who are victims of economic crisis, have their gas or electricity cut off. This is despite the fact that the 'energy crisis' of the seventies has now turned into an energy glut due to the collapse of British industry.

Capitalists demand that the state should provide them with cheap energy regardless of the best interests of society or of the safety of workers in the energy industries. They are prepared to risk possible nuclear disasters because cheaper energy will lead to higher profits. As the crises of the capitalist system deepens the jobs of workers in 'safe' industries like gas and electricity will come under threat and valuable energy resources will be squandered in the bosses' short term interests.

Britain has enormous resources of the three main fossil fuels oil, gas and coal, but their precise extent is unknown. There is probably between 35 and 80 trillion cubic feet of gas, which at the 1979 rate of consumption would last for between twenty and forty five years. Total recoverable resources of oil are estimated to be within the range of 2,400 to 4,400 million tonnes, which at the 1979 rate of consumption would last between 30 and 50 years. Recoverable resources of coal are around 5,000 million tonnes, which would last 350 years at 1979 rates of consumption.

However in capitalist Britain technical predictions of how long energy resources will last such as the ones above, are almost completely speculative. The convulsive economic crises, which are inevitable in the near future, make it impossible to predict consumption rates in five years time, let alone into the next century.

The collapse of the oil producers' cartel OPEC has led to the price of oil being cut by two-thirds in a few months. This means that the "economically" recoverable reserves of oil in the North Sea have been slashed, since this oil is now prohibitively expensive to extract compared to that from the Gulf, and the capitalists will always demand energy at the lowest possible price.

OPEC is hoping that the fall in the oil price will force producers of marginal

By Pete Dickenson

high cost fields, such as Britain, out of business. This has begun to happen in the USA, in Oklahoma, where 23,000 high cost 'stripper' wells are threatened. For political and technical reasons the British ruling class cannot allow a similar devastation of the North Sea, even if this means paying huge subsidies to the oil companies to stay in production. Most of the big oilfields in the northern sector of the North Sea produce oil and gas together—for technical reasons one cannot be produced without the other. Unlike oil, gas cannot be imported in sufficient quantities by tanker to meet demand if the North Sea was shut down. It would take years to develop the facilities to do this, or conversely to convert back to oil and coal burning. The cost would be astronomical, and the billions of pounds spent on converting to North Sea gas would be wasted.

Tories nuclear power strategy

The cornerstone of the Tories' energy policy is to generate half of all electric power by nuclear means. They are prepared to ignore the terrible risks highlighted by the Chernobyl catastrophe and the disaster at Three Mile Island in the USA.

The exact cause of the accident at Chernobyl is still unclear, but the final death toll from cancer over a 20 year period could be as high as 100,000, according to the *New Scientist* magazine. If the wind had been blowing towards the nearby city of Kiev the casualty figures would have been much worse. What is clear is that there was an explosion blowing the roof of the reactor off and releasing a radioactive cloud which subsequently spread round the world. The initial cause of the explosion could have been a rupture in a huge drum containing the steam coming off the reactor, perhaps due to faulty construction. The core became uncovered, the graphite around it heated up and any water subsequently coming into contact with the graphite could have caused an explosion. What made Chernobyl worse than the Three Mile Island accident was that there was no containment structure around the reactor. This meant that an explosion immediately released huge quantities of radioactive gas into the atmosphere. The lack of containment also prevented water being pumped into the reactor



after the explosion to control the fire, because a further cloud of radioactive steam would have been released.

The nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island was a PWR (Pressurised Water Reactor), the same type the CEGB want to install at Sizewell. During the crisis at Three Mile Island the radioactive material at the core of the reactor came to within 700 degrees of its melting point of 5000 degrees F. If a "melt down" had occurred there would

MIR Summer 1986: Nuclear Power

have been a major disaster. Many engineers think the design of the PWRs is inherently unsafe and none have been ordered in the USA since 1978.

Thatcher's decision to press ahead with nuclear power is not even based on direct economic grounds, but is designed to weaken the labour movement. This was shown by a leaked Cabinet minute in 1979 which stated: "A nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity from disruption by industrial action of coal miners and transport workers." In other words, the Tories' energy plans reduce to a choice between spending billions of pounds on building up coal stocks to beat the miners or spending billions of pounds on uneconomic nuclear power plant to achieve the same end.

New uses for coal

The capitalists are unconcerned by the evidence from the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant in Cumbria, where the rates of incidence of leukemia are very high. For instance, in the town of Seascale just over a mile from the plant, children under the age of ten had an incidence of leukemia ten times the national average. Although the government sponsored Black Report said there was nothing to worry about, evidence to the contrary is mounting, especially from the USA. At a US Navy Shipyard in Maine the overall death rate of workers involved in nuclear related tasks was twice the national average and the incidence of leukemia was 45 per cent above average. These workers were exposed to very low levels of radiation well within 'safety limits', indicating that there is probably no safe dose of radiation in these circumstances.

There is a need now for big investments to implement technology based on new uses for coal. When coal is burnt in a power station only 35 per cent of the energy released produces electricity. The remainder is lost through the cooling towers in waste heat. By using this waste heat in domestic district heating systems, the efficiency of power generation can be increased from 35% to as high as 80%. Twenty average-sized district heating systems would use 10 to 15 million tonnes of coal a year.

The most dramatic recent development in coal technology has been the invention of fluidised bed combustion. Powdered coal and sand are mixed together and burnt in a moving bed, leading to greater efficiency by improving the rate at which heat is transferred from the coal. The result is that boilers can be made much smaller, increasing their possible range of applications. A major problem in burning coal in conventional boilers is the large

amount of the chemical sulphur dioxide which is produced. This causes 'acid rain' which can destroy vegetation. However burning coal in fluidised beds dramatically reduces sulphur dioxide pollution, as well as improving general efficiency.

The huge investment in converting the gas transmission system and gas appliances to burning North Sea gas over the past 20 years will be wasted, unless steps are now taken to step up research and development into producing natural gas from coal. North Sea production will rise to a peak this year and could be exhausted in 20 years. Gasification of coal would create a demand for another 120 million tonnes a year.

There is great potential for further automation in mining which could have the result of extending coal reserves to 1,000 years, drastically reducing the working week for miners and improving health and safety. Coal gasification 'in situ' ie. underground, would open up new coalfields which are at present too dangerous or difficult to mine. In this process a bore hole is sunk and oxygen and steam is injected and the gas produced drawn off. Another possibility, of introducing more remote computer control in mining, using the highly sophisticated handling systems developed in the nuclear industry, would also lead to shorter working hours and improved safety conditions.

There are a whole range of other possible sources of energy which need to be seriously considered. The most important ones are water power, wind energy and solar energy. Water power can be divided into hydroelectric, tidal and wave categories. Hydro-electric power is already generated in mountainous regions in Scotland but there is little further scope to develop this. Harnessing the energy of the tides is technically feasible but there are only a few suitable sites like the Severn estuary, and the capital cost would be very high indeed. The technical problems associated with wave power have so far been insurmountable, in particular how to move the electricity, in one form or another, ashore. Like tidal power, the capital cost to produce significant amounts of electricity would be prohibitive at the moment.

The technology to produce energy from the wind or the sun is now well established. Both still suffer from the problem of high costs to produce relatively small amounts of energy, but the main problem concerns storage of the electricity. Since the sun shines only a minority of the time and wind speeds are often zero, the energy produced on sunny or windy days must be stored for use in the future. This is notoriously difficult to achieve. Batteries cannot hold enough energy to be useful for heating purposes and other

methods like pumping water up hills and running it down again later are inefficient and expensive. At the moment, solar and wind energy would supplement power produced by conventional means on the national grid, but this is also inefficient since generating capacity has to be duplicated.

Theoretically, one of the most promising sources of energy is nuclear **fusion**. Nuclear power at present is based on **fission**; that is, using the energy that is produced when an atom of uranium is split into smaller particles. The problem is that radiation is released at the same time. In nuclear fusion an atomic nucleus is formed by fusing together atomic particles. At the same time a large quantity of energy is released but with virtually no radiation produced. To cause this reaction to happen needs a very high temperature and to control the energy when it is released is technically very difficult. At present, the method is still at the research stage and will need very big investments to bring it to the stage of providing electricity through the national grid. But, in a socialist planned economy, with resources for research determined by social need and not profit and, especially in relation to nuclear power the development of armaments, in the long term nuclear fusion could be a very important potential source of energy.

Nuclear fusion

Whatever the most rational development of energy resources is, workers in the oil, gas, coal and electricity industries in crisis ridden capitalist Britain face an uncertain future. The inevitable economic and political convulsions nationally and internationally can alter overnight the bosses' view of what energy resource it is in their best interests to exploit. Also, as was mentioned previously, the political calculations of the ruling class in their battle with the labour movement plays a big role in determining energy policy. Take, for example, the electricity industry where many workers think their jobs are safe. Current generating capacity in Britain is 66,000 Megawatts (MW). When the expansion at Drax power station is complete, another 1,300 MW will be added. The new nuclear stations at Dungeness, Hartlepool and Heysham will soon be fully operational, adding a further 5,000 MW to generating capacity, making a total of 72,000 MW. Peak demand however, even in arctic conditions, is about 50,000MW, an overcapacity of nearly 35 per cent. Since 1979, over 6,000 MW of non-coal generating capacity has been commissioned in power stations in England and Wales at unit fuel costs of between two and ten times that of coal.

This policy was adopted to weaken the position of the miners in a strike. Now the strike has been defeated the CEBG may suddenly discover it has 'uneconomic capacity'. The coal fired stations in Yorkshire and Notts will be threatened if the Tories press ahead with their plans to produce half of UK electricity from nuclear power stations.

The future for gas workers is uncertain. Supplies of North Sea gas could run out in twenty years' time and have passed their peak now. The future of the industry depends on a programme of gasification of coal starting immediately, but if the Tories do go ahead with massive investment in nuclear power the industry will probably be decimated in the next ten to twenty years.

Under capitalism, precious sources of gas are being squandered, workers health and safety is threatened by nuclear power and the coal industry could be crippled. The convulsive crises which will inevitably continue mean

that jobs in all the energy industries could be under threat, depending on how the ruling class see their short term interests. At the same time, in one of the most energy rich countries in the world thousands die of cold because they can't afford to heat their homes.

An integrated energy programme, within a socialist plan of production, would guarantee cheap and safe energy for all and the most harmonious development, in the long and short term, of the different energy resources, for the benefit of society as a whole.

The main points of a socialist energy programme based upon the public ownership of the entire energy industry should be:

- An end to the nuclear power programme and the closure of nuclear power stations with a guarantee to any displaced workers of local, alternative work with present wages and conditions maintained.
- A labour movement inquiry into health hazards and the safest method

of decommissioning nuclear power plants including the disposal of nuclear waste.

- Transfer of research and development effort in nuclear fission into technology for using coal.
- More investment into investigations of new sources of energy, particularly nuclear fusion.
- Large scale implementation of programmes in coal gasification and the fluidised bed combustion method of burning coal.
- An integrated plan to use oil, coal, gas and electricity in the best interests of society as a whole as part of a socialist plan of production.
- The expansion of the coal industry and an increase in automation to improve safety and increase recoverable reserves.
- A 35 hour week or shorter in all energy industries if jobs might be lost through new technology.
- Workers' control and management in energy industries.

What happened at Chernobyl?

THE DISASTER at Chernobyl was the world's worst nuclear accident. The exact cause is still unclear: the partial and selective information being released in Moscow certainly cannot be trusted to paint a true picture.

Indeed the scope of the catastrophe has been dramatically worsened by the bungling and callous indifference of the bureaucrats in charge. The disaster itself was partly due to inadequate safety features in the power station design and probably to poor standards of construction.

Moscow has admitted that it was 36 hours before the population in the immediate vicinity was evacuated, at a time when, as was later calculated, 20 times more radiation was released compared to Hiroshima. It was nearly two weeks before warnings were given not to eat certain types of vegetables.

The reactor at Chernobyl is called a boiling water, graphite moderated type. This means that the uranium fuel rods are surrounded by graphite which absorbs some of the heat of the nuclear reaction, a process essential to control its speed. Boiling water is pumped past the fuel rods and graphite to carry away more of the heat and the steam produced is used to drive turbines to make electricity. In addition, the graphite has to be surrounded by helium and nitrogen gas to stop it burning in the surrounding air. It is inherently unsafe to have high temperature graphite close to steam under pressure, because if the two

meet an explosion is possible, as actually happened.

It now appears that a sudden surge in power inside the reactor caused a rupture in the pipes holding the cooling water, bringing it into contact with the graphite and causing an explosion. Controlling power surges in this type of reactor was already known to be problem two years ago, according to the journal *Atomnaya Energiya*, which pointed out the need for improved control systems. The official reason given for the power surge was a mistake made by an operator during an experiment. Apart from ignoring the danger of doing experiments on reactors under power, this reason is a convenient one for the bureaucrats because it implies there is nothing inherently unsafe in the design, only operating safety procedures need to be looked at.

Nuclear programme continues

There is a crash programme in the USSR to build nuclear power stations. The plan is to have 70,000 MW capacity in operation by 1990, which will represent the largest generating capacity in the world. The ability of the Soviet Union to build at this rate is, in a distorted way, a testimony to the potential of a planned economy. Russia is now on a par with the USA in energy production, after being behind India in 1917.

However the reality of Stalinism to-

day means that the nuclear programme is not part of a rational energy plan, where production is geared to the best long term interests of society, including safety, but rather is an expedient dictated by the economic crisis of the system.

The reserves of coal, oil and gas in Siberia are the largest in the world making a non-nuclear energy policy entirely possible. The bureaucrats are unable to use this resource for two reasons: the Stalinist system can't develop modern industries, such as electronics and computers, without importing high technology from the advanced capitalist countries. This must be paid for with hard currency which is obtained by exporting oil and gas. The second reason is that because of the chaotic nature of the railway network it is very expensive to move coal from Siberia, and although modern means of mass transportation are being built, such as pipelines, they are only being used for exports.

Hence the urgent need for a large domestic nuclear power programme, where in the rush corners are being cut and adequate safety standards ignored. The central party bosses are now heaping the blame for Chernobyl on the local bureaucrats, in classical Stalinist fashion, and they in turn are blaming the workers at the plant. As the death toll mounts the hypocrisy of the local and national rulers will be exposed as workers begin to study the real causes of the disaster.

50 years since the Moscow Purge Trials

Reprints from the archives

THE *Militant International Review* is reprinting below a number of articles which were originally published in the Marxist paper *Socialist Appeal* in the first months of 1946. These articles outline the campaign conducted by *Socialist Appeal* to obtain support for the idea of checking, at the 1945–46 Nuremberg trial of Nazi war criminals, the grotesque allegations made in the 1936–37 Moscow purge trials that Trotsky, and the other old Bolsheviks murdered by Stalin in the 1930s, had been lifelong agents of imperialism, and the Nazis in particular.

Of course the Nuremberg trials were carefully tailored by the 'Allies' to, as *Socialist Appeal* explained, "divert the hatred for imperialist wars away from themselves and onto the shoulders of the defeated Nazis." Documents casting the Allies in an unfavourable light, especially those showing the substantial support rendered to the Nazis before and after they came to power by the 'democratic' capitalists of Britain, were not brought into the trial. The Nazis were refused permission to subpoena prominent British politicians as witnesses because of the "great international harm" that might be done if "Allied nationals of Cabinet rank were questioned concerning diplomatic secrets", i.e. if it were revealed that, in the words of *Socialist Appeal*, both "prosecutors and accused shared joint responsibility for the horrors of Nazism and the war". Nonetheless, the Nuremberg trials did provide a forum for the Marxists to devastatingly expose the central lie in the Moscow purge trials, namely that Trotsky was working with the Nazis against the Soviet Union.

Today the "Communists" of the pro-Moscow *Morning Star* are reduced to sly innuendo and insinuation in their attempts to smear the ideas of genuine Marxism. Recently, for example, they outrageously perverted the disturbing fact that a number of *Militant* supporters in Liverpool had received letters to their home addresses from the fascist National Front—an obvious threat to their safety—to imply instead an affinity between the ideas of *Militant* and the fascists (*Morning Star*, 17 May 1986). But, partly due to the deter-

"Workers of All Lands Unite"

SOCIALIST APPEAL

ENTIRE PRESS SILENT ON NUREMBERG

Stalinist Frame-Ups Exposed

STILL NO EVIDENCE AT NUREMBERG

mination of the pioneers of Marxism to defend the truth, including the Nuremberg campaign of *Socialist Appeal*, gone are the days when the British Stalinists could brazenly declare, as the *Daily Worker* did in 1936, that the Moscow purge trials proved that Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev "were linked with the Nazi secret police... as tools of a world fascist attack"! It is in tribute to those who perished at the hands of Stalin and the usurping bureaucracy, and to those who fought against the Stalinist lie machine to defend Marxism, that, in the year of the 50th anniversary of the Moscow trials, we reprint these extracts from the archives of the Marxist press.

Mid January 1946—*Socialist Appeal* supplement

Nuremberg exposes Moscow trials frame-up

THE NUREMBERG trial has served one useful purpose unforeseen by its sponsors. It has exposed once and for all the frame-up of the Moscow trials organised by Stalin against the old Bolsheviks. The entire old guard of the Russian revolution were wiped out on the basis of the so-called evidence produced by Vyshinsky in the Moscow trials that they, together with Leon Trotsky were directly working with the Nazis and the Gestapo against the Soviet Union. Why then has this evidence not been produced at the Nuremberg trial by the Russian prosecuting counsel? We have challenged them to produce their evidence that Trotsky was linked with the Nazis and the Gestapo during the Nuremberg proceedings. No acknowledgement has been received.

The trial is supposed to reveal all the evidence of the systematic preparations for war by the Nazis. Tens and even hundreds of thousands of documents have

been examined minutely for evidence. The archives of the German state and the Nazi Party have been ransacked. Thousands of people have been questioned and even the most trivial conversations have been recorded. In the case presented by the US prosecutor, the history of the Nazi Party was developed in detail right from its inception. The agreements and diplomatic manoeuvres of the Nazis have been systematically uncovered. The records of Hitler's discussions and plans of aggression, the conquest of each of the states which were invaded by the Nazis, including the Soviet Union, have been clearly documented. Yet not a single word, not a single hint of the supposed agreement with Trotsky and the revolutionaries executed after the Moscow trials has been mentioned.

It is significant that neither the Russian nor the world Stalinist press has had a single line on the subject. While at the

time of the Moscow trials, the world was deluged with propaganda by means of wireless, press and meetings to convince the workers of the genuineness of the charges. Now, as though by a signal, the mighty orchestra of the world Stalinist machine is deadly silent. This silence itself reveals that they are conscious of the fact that the charges in the Moscow trials could not stand the test of independent investigation.

In the Indictment of the trial of Pyatakov, Radek, Sokolnikov, Serebriakov, Muralov, and others, it states:

"The investigation has established that LD Trotsky entered into negotiations with one of the leaders of the German National Socialist Party with a view to waging a joint struggle against the Soviet Union.

"As testified by the accused Pyatakov,

LD Trotsky, in his conversation with the accused in December 1935, informed him that as a result of these negotiations he had concluded an agreement with the said leader of the National-Socialist Party in the following terms:

(1) 'To guarantee a generally favourable attitude towards the German government and the necessary collaboration with it in the most important questions of an international character;

(2) 'To agree to territorial concessions;

(3) 'To permit German industrialists, in the form of concessions (or some other forms), to exploit enterprises in the USSR which are essential auxiliaries to German economy (meaning iron ore, manganese, oil, gold, timber, etc);

(4) 'To create in the USSR favourable conditions for the activities of German private enterprises;

(5) 'In time of war to carry on extensive diversionist activities in war industry enterprises and at the front. These diversionist activities are to be carried out under Trotsky's instructions, in agreement with the German General Staff.

'The principles of this agreement, as Trotsky related, were finally elaborated and adopted during Trotsky's meeting with Hitler's deputy, Hess.

'Likewise, said Trotsky, he had well established connections with the... government'." (Vol 1, p 267 - 68). (Quoted from *International Press Correspondence*, p 128, No 6, February, 1937).

The Dewey Commission

These and other charges were investigated by the Commission of Enquiry into the Charges made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials. This commission was established under the chairmanship of the world famous Dr John Dewey and supported by sections of the labour movement and radical opinion throughout the world. An examination of the evidence, and the questioning of Trotsky and other witnesses, revealed that the charges at the Moscow trials could not be substantiated by evidence.

Using them as a cover, tens of thousands of Old Bolsheviks, those who carried through and organised the revolution were imprisoned or murdered, and in their place former White Guards and Mensheviks, such as Vyshinsky, Maisky, Koltzov, Troyanovsky and thousands of others of a similar calibre took their places.

Trotsky in dealing with the reasons for the trials and the change of personnel in the leading positions explained (in his speech *I Stake My Life*, p 12):

"These sweeping alterations in personnel, especially striking in the provinces, have profound social causes. What are they? It is time, my listeners, it is high time, to recognise, finally, that a new aristocracy has been formed in the Soviet Union. The October Revolution proceed-

ed under the banner of equality. The bureaucracy is the embodiment of monstrous inequality. The revolution destroyed the nobility. The bureaucracy creates a new gentry. The revolution destroyed titles and decorations. The new aristocracy produces marshals and generals. The new aristocracy absorbs an enormous part of the national income. Its position before the people is deceitful and false. Its leaders are forced to hide the reality, to deceive the masses, to cloak themselves, calling black white. The whole policy of the new aristocracy is a frame-up. The new constitution is nothing but a frame-up".

Socialist Appeal has issued a challenge to the Russian prosecuting counsel, the text of which reads as follows:

"Now, at the Nuremberg trial, the Russian representatives have the possibility of establishing the claim of the Stalinist government as to the alleged role of Trotsky as a Nazi agent. The archives of the Nazis are in the hands of the Allies. Before the Court of Nuremberg, with any possible suspicion attached to the Soviet courts removed, and with the press of the entire world represented to report on the evidence produced, it should be possible for you to produce, not only from the Nazi archives, but from the archives of the Russian government, the necessary evidence to establish the verdict that:

"The materials in the possession of the investigating authorities on the present case (Moscow trial) established that the connections between enemy of the people TROTSKY and the German political police and the intelligence services of other countries were established at a much earlier date. The investigation has definitely established that TROTSKY has been connected with the German Intelligence Service since 1921, and with the British Intelligence Service since 1926".

(Indictment, Verbatim Report of Court Proceedings in the case of the Anti-Soviet 'Bloc of Rights and Trotskyists'.)

We challenge you to produce the so-called 'evidence' at the Nuremberg trial, with which the cream of the Old Bolsheviks were shot and done to death. Here is an opportunity to prove to the sceptics of the Moscow trials, the truth of the Russian government's allegations that Trotsky collaborated and acted as an agent of the Nazis and the British against the Soviet Union.

The failure to produce such evidence at the Nuremberg trial will establish that the Stalinist government was guilty of a monstrous frame-up against the Old Bolsheviks and Leon Trotsky".

Every honest worker, every sincere member of the Communist Party rank and file must ask himself why the Stalinist government and the Communist Parties throughout the world are so silent on this question today; and must ask himself why they do not produce their so-called evidence against Leon Trotsky. Here is an opportunity to show the position of Trot-

skyism, and expose it to the contempt and anger of the world working class. **But they dare not raise the question because it would expose not Trotskyism but them.**

The Communist Party in Britain is waging a justified campaign demanding the publication of the lists of the names of the Nazi sympathisers in Britain discovered among the archives in Berlin. Thus the connections of the Nazis with sections of British big business, high society and court circles would be uncovered. But they have not even replied to a letter sent to the editor of the *Daily Worker*, asking that they raise an agitation on this question of the alleged relations between the Nazis, the German General Staff and the Trotskyists.

If the question were raised at Nuremberg it would not necessarily prove the correctness of the charges. **But the fact that it has not been raised and there is not even a whisper in the Stalinist press and publicity on the Nuremberg trial, is damning and irrefutable evidence that the Moscow trials were frame-ups.**

'Judicial murders'

The Moscow trials, according to the Commission of Enquiry "**violated Soviet law on criminal procedure on every important point**". And we see that the Stalinist bureaucrats dare not submit their fantastic charges to a tribunal over which they do not have complete control, even one so favourable to them as that at Nuremberg where their Allies sit on the same judges' bench, together with a Russian judge, and conduct the prosecution together with a Russian prosecutor. They have not been able to prime and drill the accused, witnesses, defence lawyers, prosecution and judges and thus the conditions for a frame-up which would be convincing to the world, are not present.

Thus the Nuremberg trial is serving one very valuable and important function for the world labour movement: it is demonstrating that not Trotsky made agreements with Hitler, but only Stalin, in the Stalin-Hitler Pact: that not the Trotskyists but the Stalinists betrayed socialism and the ideals of the labour movement; and **that the Moscow trials were monstrous frame-ups.**

In the light of the failure to bring out the alleged evidence, it can be understood why the Stalinist regime refused to allow the Second International (of which the British Labour Party was a section) to send independent lawyers to be present at the Moscow trials or to interview the accused. The findings of the Commission of Inquiry are confirmed to the hilt. **To every person of integrity, to the labour movement, to all those who aim at establishing the truth, there can no longer be even a shadow of doubt: once and for all the Moscow trials are condemned in their true role as the most sinister farces, and revolting judicial murders.**

Nuremberg Russian prosecution silent on Trotsky—why?

AS THE Nuremberg trial proceeds it becomes clearer and clearer that there is a conspiracy on the part of Allied imperialism to cover up the crimes of Stalinism in the Moscow trials.

The Russian prosecutor General Rudenko, has outlined the case he intends to prove against the Nazis. Amazing details of conversations, documents, and plans of the Nazi leaders and of the German High Command were presented by Rudenko. Preparations for the attack on the Soviet Union, the detailed plan of attack, and the agreement with the Finnish General Staff all came under review. But not a word of the so-called agreement with the Soviet Generals, Lenin's co-workers and the alleged arch-Traitor Trotsky.

At the time of the Moscow trials the entire world press blared forth the so-called "evidence". The Stalinist parties waged a hysterical campaign against Leon Trotsky and his followers. In the name of their alleged agreements with the Nazis and the German High Command, tens of thousands were murdered and the flower of the Soviet General Staff was done to death. After their deaths, it was announced that they had been tried secretly. The reasons given for this unprecedented secrecy, was that the evidence and the documents could not be disclosed for military reasons.

Secrets of General Staff

But there can be no excuse now. Yet not a word. Not a whisper. Not a mention.

The evidence relating to Hess was introduced by the British earlier in the trial. Full details of his conversations with the British were recorded. But in the case of Hess too, nothing was introduced to indicate the remotest connection with Trotsky.

The Russians brought in some star witnesses against the accused. Von Paulus who was created a Field Marshal by Hitler at the time of Stalingrad, gave evidence as to the plans of the German High Command. Their most intricate secrets were revealed. Von Paulus was familiarised with all the plans for the attack on the Soviet Union. He knew all the secrets of the now famous "Green Brief Case".

General Buschenhagen was another witness for the Russian prosecution. He detailed the plans for Finland's participation in the invasion of Russia. But curiously enough, he too, knew nothing apparently of the agreement with Trotsky.

There could be no greater indictment of Stalinism and its methods than this silence at Nuremberg. Stalinism stands condemned as guilty of the most monstrous frame-up and the worst travesty of justice ever recorded in trials on working class fighters. One would have to go back to the days of the Spanish Inquisition to find a like parallel.

But it is significant that not only the Stalinist press remains silent. The capitalist press throughout the world is shielding Stalin and the bureaucratic assassins from exposure to the world working class.

To add further shame to the labour movement, the Labour government and the Labour Party have become partners in this conspiracy of silence. Despite the fact that they condemned the Moscow trials as a frame-up, for reasons of agreement with the Stalinist bureaucracy they too are silent.

Thus we see all the forces of the old world lined up against the revolutionaries. In this new conspiracy of silence is mirrored the mockery of the phrases about "truth, honour, justice" etc. But history will pass its verdict. Nuremberg is making an unanswerable indictment against the Stalinists: traitors, murderers, fratricides!

In the words of Trotsky: "In the time of reaction it is more convenient to lean on the bureaucracy than on the truth. But all those for whom the word socialism is not a hollow sound but the content of their moral life—forward. Neither threats



Natalia Sedova, Trotsky's widow.

Mid March 1946, Socialist Appeal No 22

Nuremberg and Moscow Trials

Message from Natalia

"All that you have undertaken seems to me to be correct and even magnificent. We must really profit from it. It is an exceptional situation to illuminate all these questions definitively. I have been very touched by your action and I thank you greatly for having set this programme of action on foot with such energy".

nor persecutions, nor violations can stop us. Be it even over our bleaching bones, the truth will triumph! We will blaze the trail for it. It will conquer."

NUREMBERG AND THE MOSCOW TRIALS

Prosecution Asked: TO PRODUCE EVIDENCE OF MOSCOW TRIALS TO GIVE REPRESENTATION TO NATALIA TROTSKY

The following statement has been sent to the War Crimes Commission at Nuremberg and the British Prosecutor, also to the Prime Minister, the Russian Ambassador, the Labour Party, the Communist Party, the Revolutionary Communist Party and the whole of the Press.

"During the Moscow political trials of 1936 and 1937, many references were made to an alleged association between Leon Trotsky and other of the accused on the one hand and the Nazi Government and Gestapo on the other. For example, the indictment of the 'Trotskyist' activities in war industry enterprises and at the front. These diversionist activities are to be carried on under Trotsky's instructions, in agreement with the German General Staff."

As part of its campaign to get the 'evidence' of the Moscow Trials produced at Nuremberg, Socialist Appeal published 40,000 leaflets carrying a statement supporting the campaign signed by, amongst others, George Orwell, H G Wells (then in his eightieth year) and Arthur Koestler.

"The 'principles of this as Trotsky related, / elaborated and uring Trotsky's h Hitler's deputy, batim report of Moscow, 1937.)

or witnesses in the Moscow Trials to enter into agreements with foreign powers against the Soviet Union. On the contrary, he has always uncompromisingly advocated the defence of the U.S.S.R. He has been a most forthright ideological opponent of the fascism represented by the foreign powers with which he is accused of having conspired.

"On the basis of all the evidence, we find that Trotsky never recommended, plotted or attempted the restoration of capitalism in the U.S.S.R.

On the contrary, he has always uncompromisingly opposed the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and its existence anywhere

In 1936 and 1937, when the trials in Moscow took place and in 1937 when the Commission of Enquiry was held, it was not, of course, possible for either side to check the allegations of collusion between Trotsky and the Nazis by reference to Nazi sources. Now, however, the position is different. The whole of the Gestapo records are in the hands of the Allied Powers and Hess—the only Nazi named in the Moscow indictment—is available at Nuremberg for public questioning. The opportunity thus presented for an investigation aimed at the establishment of historical truth and integrity of figures and tendencies of international standing is invaluable.

We therefore suggest the following:—

1. That Hess be interrogated at Nuremberg in regard to his alleged meeting with Trotsky.
2. That an accredited representative

Part four of Alan Woods' series on the history of Bolshevism deals with the first steps in the formation of the RSDLP and the birth of *Iskra*.

What is to be done?

AT TEN o'clock in the morning of March 1st 1898, a group of nine people gathered together in the flat of the railwayworker Rumyantsev in the western town of Minsk. The purpose of the gathering was ostensibly the name-day of Rumyantsev's wife. In the next room a stove was kept burning, not because of the cold, but to burn compromising papers in the event of a police raid. With the close proximity of a mounted police barracks, and the fact that the nine persons concerned were the leaders of Social Democratic groups from Moscow, Kiev, Petersburg and Yekaterinoslav, as well as the *Rabochaya Gazeta* ("Workers' Journal") group and the Jewish Social Democratic organisation, the Bund, such precautions were clearly necessary. Under these conditions, the first and last congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party took place on Russian soil under Tsarism.

For some years the need for a congress to formalise the existence of the party, elect a leadership and unify the local groups had been evident. From his prison cell, Lenin had earlier managed to smuggle out a draft programme for the party, painstakingly written in milk between the lines of a book.

The first congress of the RSDLP

Some progress had already been made. The underground groups had agreed to rename themselves "Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class" and even to produce an illegal paper with the title *Rabochaya Dyelo* ("Workers' Cause"). A clandestine committee was set up in Kiev for the purpose of printing the journal, the first issue of which appeared in August 1897 (although for reasons of clandestinity, it was dated November).

The Kiev organisation was also entrusted with the arrangements of the congress, since it had escaped the worst of the arrests. Nevertheless, the idea of convening a congress inside Russia under these conditions was fraught with difficulties. Certain groups—such as the "young" group in Petersburg, the Odessa and Nikolaev groups, and the Union of Social Democrats Abroad—were not invited on the grounds of being security risks. The Kharkov group, on the other hand, declined to participate arguing

that the setting up of the party was premature.

From the very beginning, the task of building a unified workers' party in Russia was hampered by the national question. Tsarist Russia was—to use Lenin's celebrated phrase—a veritable prison-house of nations. In the period of rampant reaction following the assassination of Alexander II, national oppression was intensified. Under the grim surveillance of Pobedonostsev, the twin watch-dogs of autocracy—the police and the Orthodox Church—cracked down on everything which smacked of dissent: from independent thinkers like Leo Tolstoy to Polish Catholics, Baltic Lutherans, Jews and Moslems.

Marriages consecrated in Catholic churches were not recognised by the Russian government. Under Nicholas II, the church property of the Armenian Christians was confiscated by the state. The places of worship of the Kalmyks and Buryats were closed. Forced Russification was accompanied by what amounted to compulsory conversion to the Orthodox faith.

Bernard Pares comments on the state of affairs in Poland: "Warsaw University had been completely Russianised, and Poles were taught their own literature in Russian; in 1885 Russian was introduced into primary schools as the language of teaching; Polish railway servants were sent to serve in other parts of the empire; in 1885 Poles were forbidden to buy land in Lithuania or Volhynia, where they had constituted the majority of the gentry."

But the worst aspect of national oppression was the treatment of the Jews. The majority of Jews lived in Poland and the Western provinces, which were declared from 1881 to constitute the only place where Jews were allowed to live. Jews were dismissed en masse from all administrative posts and excluded from most professions in 1886. Only 10 per cent of Jews were allowed to go to university (5 per cent in Moscow and St Petersburg). From 1887, the same rule was applied to secondary schools. In 1888 all Jews in receipt of government scholarships were registered as Orthodox. Children were baptised against the wishes of their parents. Jews who became Orthodox were given a divorce with no questions asked. Special taxes were imposed on Synagogues and kosher meat. As a means of dividing and disorienting the workers, the



authorities organised bloody pogroms against the Jews; houses were sacked and men, women and children killed and maimed, by lumpy mobs in connivance with the police.

The national problem and the Bund

It was no accident, then, that the 1st Congress was held in Minsk. The Polish and Western areas were hotbeds of anti-tsarist revolutionary agitation where the two aspects of social and national oppression combined to create an explosive atmosphere. The strike movement of the '90s acted as a focal point for the accumulated rage, bitterness and hatred of the oppressed nationalities, particularly the Jews, as we have seen. (*MIR* No 31, Spring 1986).

The movement of Jewish workers and artisans led to the setting up of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia in 1897, a year before the first congress of the Russian party itself. The double burden which the Jewish workers had to bear, being oppressed as workers and as Jews, created exceptionally favourable conditions for the spread of revolutionary and socialist ideas. "A spontaneous movement", wrote Akimov, "swept like a strong wind through the lower depths of Jewish society, through strata which had seemed immobile and incapable of comprehending or guiding themselves by any conscious idea."² Precisely because of this, the Jewish socialist workers and intellectuals played a role in the Russian revolutionary move-

ment out of all proportion to their numbers.

For the first two or three years after its formation, as Zinoviev remarks, the Bund was "the strongest and most numerous organisation of our party."³ At the time of the 1st congress, the Bund enjoyed far greater resources and a larger membership than Social Democratic groups in the rest of Russia, with fourteen local organisations (or "committees" as they were then known) in Warsaw, Lodz, Belostok, Minsk, Gomel, Grodno, Vilna, Dvinsk, Kovno, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Berdichev, Zhitomir and Riga. Lesser committees also existed in many other areas, including Kiev, Odessa and Brest-Litovsk.

However, the Bund's organisation was always more akin to a trade union movement than a revolutionary party. Even Akimov had to admit that the political level of its leadership was low: "I regard this as an unquestionable shortcoming of the Bund: the Jewish proletariat lacks theoreticians."⁴ In reality, the bulk of its members were not proletarians but artisans and craftsmen. The chief authority consisted of a central committee of three elected at the biennial congress. At local level the Bund organised trade union groups (often misleadingly translated as "trade councils") propaganda committees and committees of intellectuals, discussion groups and agitation committees, all of which seem to have functioned more or less separately. The trade union groups gathered together 5-10 members of the Bund in a given trade. These were appointed by the CC and appear to have met regularly to discuss trade union matters. Only after August 1902 did the Bund, under the pressure of *Iskra*, set up revolutionary committees which grouped together the most advanced workers separate and apart from the trade union groups. The whole structure of the Bund was organised on a completely un-Marxist basis, with workers in trade union groups shut off in watertight compartments from intellectuals who worked autonomously in their own committees.

Despite the shortcomings of the Bund, the Jewish socialist workers and artisans played an important role in the early days of the movement. The fact that the first congress was held in Minsk was a recognition of that role. Only the Bund had the resources to organise such a congress under the very noses of the tsarist police. It is a tribute to their organisational skills that the congress successfully completed its course in six sessions which took place over three days.

As no minutes were taken, practically all that is known of the proceedings is contained in the resolutions. Under the pressure of the Bund, it was agreed

that "The General Workers' Union of Russia and Poland enters the party as an autonomous organisation, independent only in those questions especially relating to the Jewish proletariat."⁵

This concession to the national prejudices of the Bund was to give rise to a major polemic in the next period, when the national question occupied a central place in the deliberations of the Russian Marxists. While implacably opposing the oppression of national minorities in all its manifestations, and defending the rights of oppressed nationalities including the right to self-determination, Lenin insisted on the necessity to maintain the unity of the workers' organisations and fought against any tendency to divide them on national lines.

Resolutions of the congress

In view of the bloody history of Russian tsarism, the maintenance of a principled position on the national question undoubtedly posed colossal difficulties. It was a measure of the degree of mistrust and tension between the nationalities that the Lithuanian Social Democrats, after some hesitation, decided not to attend the congress of a "Russian" party, much to the chagrin of Dzerzhinsky who later wrote: "I was the severest enemy of nationalism and considered it the greatest sin that in 1898, whilst I was in prison, the Lithuanian Social Democracy did not enter the united Russian Social Democratic Labour Party."⁶

Similarly, the congress made some concessions to the pressures of the local committees, jealous of their local autonomy: "The local committees," says the resolution, "will carry out the depositions of the CC in the manner which they consider most suited to local conditions. In exceptional cases, the local committees reserve the right to refuse to carry out the demands of the CC, informing it of the reasons for the refusal. In all other matters, the local committees will function in a completely independent manner, being guided only by the party programme."⁷

A Central Committee of three was elected, it was agreed to issue a manifesto, the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad was recognised as the party's representative in the exterior and *Rabochaya Gazeta* was named as its official organ.

All this might seem quite a modest balance. Yet the symbolic importance of the congress was far greater than its actual content. The news that the first congress had actually met caused a wave of excited anticipation. The ice had been broken. The party had at last come into its own!

However, the hopes aroused by the congress were not destined to be fulfilled. One of the participants, Tuchapsky, recalls in his memoirs: "We left the Congress with a feeling of cheerful faith in our cause. Arriving in Kiev I gave a report back to the League and the Workers' Committee. The congress resolutions were fully approved. It looked as if the work would now go forward still better and more successfully than in the past. But only a week after my return the Kiev organisation was smashed."⁸

Before the month was out, five out of the nine participants had been arrested, including one CC member. The sole achievement of the CC was to publish the agreed Manifesto, written by Struve, who, while already moving to the right, made a surprisingly good job of it—his last service to the cause he was soon to betray.

The First Congress had achieved everything it was able to achieve. The party at least existed as a potential, a banner and a Manifesto. But conditions in Russia made it impossible to effect unification of the party on a principled basis. All the congress could do was to point the way. From 1898 until 1917, no further congress of the party was to be held on Russian soil. The experience had served to demonstrate the impossibility, under conditions of illegality, to build a viable political centre inside Russia. The centre of gravity of the organisation inevitably passed to the exterior, where the forces of revolutionary Marxism, under conditions of relative security, could regroup and prepare for the next stage: the translation into reality of what had been attempted in Minsk in 1898.

In practical terms, the congress had changed very little. Trotsky, who had heard about it in prison at Kherson, commented that "a few months afterwards, no-one talked about the congress anymore."⁹ After the initial wave of excitement, the local committees sank back into the routine of local work, producing endless leaflets and proclamations in connection with the strike movement, which continued to spread.

The political and theoretical education of the youth was neglected. With the most experienced leaders now almost all in gaol, the level of the average member fell to an extremely low point. The ideas of "economism" became widespread in the local committees. The practical consequences of this were seen as early as May Day 1899, when the "young" group in Petersburg put out a leaflet calling for a ten-hour working day, in contrast to the internationally accepted slogan of the eight-hour day, an action which was denounced in the first issue of *Zarya* as "a betrayal of international

Social Democracy".¹⁰

Everywhere the slogan was raised of "freedom of criticism," as a guise under which to smuggle alien and revisionist ideas into the party. With the majority of the leaders in Siberian exile, only the exile Group for the Emancipation of Labour remained to conduct a struggle against the Economist trend.

But the little circle around Plekhanov found itself increasingly beleaguered on all sides. Short of funds, and heavily dependent upon the "youngsters" in the Union of Russian SDs for contact with Russia, the group was now in serious difficulties. The effect of the strains upon the morale and nerves of its members began to show, with increasingly tense relations between Plekhanov and Axelrod. By April 1898, there were clear signs of demoralisation, with Axelrod asking himself whether the group had any reason to exist and Vera Zasulich, alleging illness, talking about dropping out of activity.

Crisis in the exterior

The isolation of the Group was underlined at the first congress of the Union of SDs Abroad in November 1898, when it became clear that the veterans were in a minority. In view of the now sharp differences of opinion within the Union, they had no choice but to resign from their editorial positions. It was decided to wind up *Rabotnik*, and start publication of a new journal, *Rabocheye Dyelo*, in line with the decision of the Minsk congress. The new editors, Krichevsky, Ivashin and Teplova cautiously leaned to the "Economist" position, the most extreme expression of which was the journal *Rabochaya Mysl* ("Workers' Thought"), represented in the Union by SN Prokopovich and his wife YD Kuskova.

This was the blackest moment in the life of the Emancipation of Labour Group. Particularly serious was the row between Axelrod and Plekhanov which now came to a head. Axelrod had reason for complaint. For years, he had had to carry the burden of the work with the Union, taking the brunt of the attacks of the "youth", while Plekhanov was absorbed in literary work, and of late had neglected even that.

For a long time Plekhanov ignored Axelrod's pleas to intervene against the new trend. The reasons for his attitude were probably varied: partly, he was tied up with the struggle against Bernstein, and begrudged the time and effort in getting involved in what seemed like pettifogging squabbles. Partly he underestimated the danger, attributing it to a transient phase and youthful fads. Most probably of all he

was afraid of a split with the youth which would cut their links with Russia and lay themselves open to the accusation that they were undermining the work of the comrades in the interior. The apparent lack of a point of support within Russia was a serious problem for Plekhanov and his colleagues.

But by early 1899, Plekhanov could hold back no longer. The last straw was when Bernstein boasted that the majority of Russian Social Democrats were closer to his ideas than to Plekhanov's. The "legal Marxists" Struve, Bulgakov and Berdayev also publicly lined up behind the revisionist tendency. Most alarmingly of all, from December 1898, the Economist "youth" dominated the Petersburg Social Democrats. Realising that the formerly amorphous trend of Economism now represented a specifically Russian variant of Bernstein's revisionism, Plekhanov set to work on a major counterblast, the famous *Vademecum for the Editors of Rabocheye Dyelo*, which appeared in 1900. True to form, Plekhanov threw himself into the struggle, regardless of whether it would cause a split. His new-found confidence received a powerful impulse as a result of events taking place thousands of miles away, in Siberia.

From the depths of the Siberian wilderness, Lenin and the other Social Democratic exiles followed with alarm the unfolding of events. Paradoxically, it was relatively easy for them to maintain at least a certain level of political activity. The era of Stalin's and Hitler's concentration camps had not yet dawned. The treatment of

meetings. Lenin, while working on his monumental *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, keenly followed the polemics of Plekhanov against Bernstein. News of the crisis in the Union, and the resignation of Plekhanov came as a painful blow. The victory of the Economist trend caused consternation among the exiles. Lenin began to write a series of polemics, such as *Our Immediate Task, A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social Democracy and Apropos of the 'Profession de Foi'*¹¹ in which the ideas of Economism are subjected to merciless criticism.

Protest of the exiles

An event which enraged the exiles was the appearance of the notorious *Credo* written by Kuskova early in 1899. The author of the document herself always protested that it was not meant for publication. However that may be there is no doubt that the *Credo* has the merit of expressing in a particularly clear way the fundamental ideas of Economism. Lenin drafted the famous *Protest of the Russian Social Democrats*¹² by way of reply and convened a meeting of 17 exiles which met in the Siberian village of Yermakovskoe late in the summer of 1899. The meeting unanimously adopted Lenin's text which was sent abroad where it was published by Plekhanov.

The words of the *Credo* itself could have come straight out of the pages of *Marxism Today*. It is worth quoting the relevant passages in full:

"The change (in the party—AW) will not only be towards a more energetic

The words of the notorious *Credo* could have come straight out of the pages of *Marxism Today*: 'Intolerant Marxism, negative Marxism, primitive Marxism, whose conception of the class division of society is too schematic, will give way to democratic Marxism . . . struggling to reform society.'

political exiles varied considerably, from extreme harshness to relatively "liberal" conditions. But in the main, the tsarist authorities were content to rely upon the vast distances which separated the urban centres from the isolated settlements on the banks of the Yenisey river as sufficient defence against the spread of revolutionary ideas. Political prisoners were not generally locked up. There was no need for it. They were kept under surveillance by local officials whose zealotry in the pursuit of duty was often conspicuous by its absence.

As a result, the exiled revolutionaries could follow events with relative ease, receiving books and newspapers, conducting correspondence, and even holding illegal

prosecution of the economic struggle and consolidation of the economic organisations, but also, and more importantly, towards a change in the party's attitude to other opposition parties. **Intolerant Marxism, negative Marxism, primitive Marxism (whose conception of the class division of society is too schematic) will give way to democratic Marxism, and the social position of the party within the modern society must undergo a sharp change. The party will recognise society: its narrow corporative and, in the majority of cases, sectarian tasks will be transformed into social tasks, and its striving to seize power will be transformed into a striving for change, a striving to reform present day society on democratic lines adapted to the**

present state of affairs, with the object of protecting the rights (all rights) of the labouring classes in the most effective and fullest way".¹³ (My emphasis—AW).

"The talk about an independent workers' political party merely results from the transplantation of alien aims and alien achievements to our soil... For the Russian Marxist there is only one course: participation in, ie. assistance to, the economic struggle of the proletariat, and participation in liberal opposition activity".

The logic of the *Credo* could not be clearer: the working class should not strive to create its own revolutionary party, but should confine itself to "practical" trade union work and leave the political task of reforming the present system to the bourgeois liberals.

Lenin's polemical writings against the Economists, beginning with the *Protest* are a classical re-statement of the basic ideas of Marx and Engels on the question of the proletariat and its party. The proletariat only gradually begins to realise its historical potential, become a real force as opposed to a mere undeveloped potential, to the degree to which it organises as a class, independent of other classes.

The history of the workers' movement begins with the unions, the basic organisation of the class which were "not only a natural, but also an essential phenomenon under capitalism and... an extremely important means for organising the working class in its daily struggle against capital and for the abolition of wage labour."¹⁴ But once established, the trade unions cannot confine their sphere of activity to economic demands, but inevitably tend to move into the political plane. Here what is involved is not the sporadic struggles of individual groups of workers against their employers, but the struggle of the proletariat as a whole against the bourgeoisie as a class, and its state. Of necessity, the proletariat and its party enters into contact with other classes, the peasantry and the middle class, and has to establish working relations with other groups, but it does so from the standpoint of its independent interest as a class. Indeed, its role is to place itself at the head of all other oppressed and exploited layers to carry out a fundamental transformation of society. "Only an independent working-class party", wrote Lenin, "can serve as a strong bulwark in the fight against the autocracy, and only in alliance with such a party, only by supporting it, can all the other fighters for political liberty play an effective part."¹⁵

Thus, at the very earliest beginnings of the movement in Russia, the dividing line was clearly drawn between two trends; the first, a revolu-



Vera Zasulich. Right, the front page of *Iskra* no 4, carrying Lenin's article, *Where to begin?*, 1901.

tionary Marxist trend, which based itself upon the working class and linked the perspective of a revolutionary overthrow of tsarism to the struggle for the hegemony of the working class in the camp of revolutionary democracy, implacably opposing all attempts to subordinate it to the liberals and "progressive" bourgeois; the second, a reformist current which, whilst paying lip-service to Marxism, effectively preached the policy of class collaboration and subservience to the Liberals. This, in essence, was the basis of the disagreement between Marxists and Economists. In different guises, the same struggle re-occurred many times in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, and with other names—although basically the same argument—continues to the present day.

The new turn

The entry into the struggle of the exiled Russian leaders tipped the balance decisively in favour of Plekhanov. Still in Siberia, Lenin formed the "troika" or "triple alliance" with Martov and Potresov which, on his insistence, took steps to link up with the Emancipation of Labour Group. His fundamental idea was to re-build the party around a genuine Marxist newspaper. Such a venture was clearly only possible if they joined Plekhanov in European exile.

Having served out his term of exile, in early 1900, Lenin travelled illegally to St. Petersburg where he met Vera Zasulich, who had been sent to establish contacts with the interior. The following months were taken up by preparations for the publication of the new journal *Iskra* ("The Spark"), involving a series of visits to Social

Democratic groups in different parts of European Russia, where Lenin and his co-thinkers were agreeably surprised by the favourable reception of their ideas by a significant section of the rank and file. Even Struve and Tugan-Baranovsky, when approached, assured the "troika" of their support for the venture, insisting that they still considered themselves Marxists. In view of the fact that the "Legal Marxists" were willing to put up the necessary cash to finance the publication, Lenin readily accepted their collaboration.

By the summer of 1900, everything was ready for direct contact to be established with Plekhanov's group. With high hopes, Lenin left for Switzerland in July. Lenin's high spirits did not last long. After the bitter experience of the split in the Union, Plekhanov's nerves were on edge. He was sullen, resentful and extremely suspicious of the newcomers.

The discussions between Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich on the one side and Lenin and Potresov on the other unfolded in an extremely tense atmosphere. Lenin and Potresov were shocked by Plekhanov's intolerant and abrasive manner. At times, the negotiations appeared to be near to a breakdown. In "*How the 'Spark' was nearly extinguished*"—an article written shortly after Lenin's return with the recent events still vivid in his mind—Lenin expresses the painful impression of Plekhanov's behaviour on him: "My 'infatuation' with Plekhanov disappeared as if by magic, and I felt offended and embittered to an unbelievable degree. Never, never in my life had I regarded any other man with such sincere respect and veneration, never had I stood before any man so 'humbly' and never before had I



been so brutally 'kicked.'"

In Plekhanov's defence, he had had a series of bad experiences with younger comrades coming from the interior, and was still smarting from the "coup" of the "youth" in the Union Abroad. On the other hand, in their anxiety to recuperate the maximum forces of the movement in Russia, Lenin and the others had made a number of concessions to Struve, including the statement in the original draft declaration that *Iskra* would be open to different political tendencies. This mistake was seized upon by Plekhanov, who vented his accumulated rage on the astonished newcomers. More than the political differences, however, Plekhanov's unreasonable behaviour reflected the psychological pressures of long years of exile which had begun to colour his outlook.

Plekhanov's strengths and weaknesses

This incident casts a significant light on the state of affairs within the Emancipation of Labour Group. The long period of isolation from the workers' movement in Russia had taken their toll. Many years later, in 1922, when the October Revolution was already five years old, and Plekhanov had been dead for four, Trotsky expressed both the strong and weak sides of the old man in the following words: "Plekhanov spoke as an observer and critic, as a publicist but not as a leader. All his destiny denied him the opportunity to address himself directly to the masses, to raise them to action and to guide them. His weak points derived from the same source from whence came his principal merits: he had been a pioneer, the first crusader of Marxism on Russian soil... he was not the leader of the active proletariat, but simply its theoretical herald; he polemically defended the methods of Marxism, but he had no opportunity to apply them in practice. Although he lived several decades in Switzerland, he was always a Russian exile. The opportunist socialism of the Swiss municipalities and cantons with its extremely low theoretical level scarcely aroused his interest. The Russian party did not exist and for Plekhanov its place was occupied by the Emancipation of Labour Group, which was a closed circle of sympathisers (Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich and Deutsch, who carried on an arduous task). The more he tried to strengthen the theoretical and philosophical roots of his position, the poorer seemed his political roots. As an observer of the European Labour movement, he overlooked the most colossal political manifestations of the cowardly socialist parties, compromis-

ed by their short-sighted perspectives; nevertheless, he was always on guard against any theoretical heresy in socialist literature... This violation of the unity between theory and practice, fruit of the global destiny of Plekhanov, was to be his downfall. He proved to be unprepared for great political events, in spite of his enormous political preparation."¹⁷

The meeting with Lenin and Potresov revealed just how much the members of the Emancipation of Labour Group were lagging behind the demands of the present stage of the movement. The informal methods, the organisational looseness, the mixing up of personal questions with political issues which are the hallmarks of the life of a small propaganda circle become intolerable obstacles once the organisation of a mass party and serious intervention in the mass movement are on the order of the day. Thanks mainly to Lenin's great patience—and also to the fact that the consequences of a split were clear to everyone—a break was avoided. But although reasonably good working relations were quickly restored, the deeper causes of the conflict remained unresolved and were destined to re-emerge with redoubled force in the future.

The compromise which was eventually reached between the two sides meant that *Iskra* would have an editorial board of six, consisting of the "troika"—Lenin, Martov and Potresov and the Emancipation of Labour Group—Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich, with Plekhanov having two votes. Control of the theoretical journal, *Zarya* ("The Dawn") would be effectively in Plekhanov's hands.

The declaration of the *Iskra* Editorial Board¹⁸ was published in September. It reads like a declaration of war on all other tendencies in the Russian workers' movement. Unlike the original draft drawn up by the "troika", it denounces by name not only Bernstein and *Rabochaya Mysl* but also *Rabochaya Dyelo* and Struve (Plekhanov was particularly insistent on this). Lenin's initial draft¹⁹, was written in a generally more conciliatory vein. The corrected version has a more implacable tone:

"Before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation. Otherwise, our unity will be purely fictitious, it will conceal the prevailing confusion, and hinder its radical elimination. It is understandable, therefore, that we do not intend to make our publication a mere storehouse of various views. On the contrary, we shall conduct it in the spirit of a strictly defined tendency. This tendency can be expressed by the word Marxism, and there is hardly



need to add that we stand for the consistent development of the ideas of Marx and Engels and emphatically reject the equivocating, vague and opportunist 'corrections' for which Edward Bernstein, P Struve and many others have set the fashion."²⁰ (my emphasis, AW)

The birth of *Iskra*

The explicit denunciation of "legal Marxism", mentioning its most prominent representative by name, was a turning point. Even so, Struve did not immediately effect an open break with Marxism, and even contributed one or two articles to the first issues of the paper. However, the first encounter of Struve with Lenin in exile towards the end of 1900 led to an open confrontation. Struve's arrogant demands for an increased say in the editorial line of the paper gave the game away. In effect, the relationship between the Marxists and the Left Liberal trend which went by the name of "Legal Marxism", as Lenin later explained, was the first example of an episodic agreement between the Russian Marxists and another political trend. Without making any principled concessions, and maintaining an implacable criticism of the political deviations of the "Legal Marxists", Lenin was prepared to enter into practical agreement with them for the sake of advancing the work in Russia, outwitting the police and censor and reaching a broader audience than would have been possible with the narrow limitations of illegal work.

To be realistic, there was an underlying contradiction from the beginning. The two trends were fundamentally incompatible, and, ultimately, the contradiction would have to be overcome

by the triumph of one over the other. At one stage it almost looked as if the supporters of Economism and revisionism had won. The Russian workers' movement would thus have found itself tied hand and foot to the chariot of Liberalism. And the agency through which this political subordination would have been effected was none other than "Legal Marxism".

The launching of *Iskra*, with its uncompromising stance on Economism and revisionism and its implacable defence of class independence and criticism of the Liberals completely transformed the situation. Now Struve and his allies found themselves on the defensive. Yet Struve still attempted to use his name and influence to dominate the new journal, to push and prod it into a rotten compromise with the old, discredited ideas.

Struve's complaint that Lenin was trying to "use" him could hardly cut any ice when in the previous period Struve himself had cynically used his considerable influence with the weak and immature forces of Russian Social Democracy to water down and distort its fundamental ideas and turn it into a mere appendage of liberalism.

Contrary to the impression created by bourgeois historians, there was nothing base or disloyal about Lenin's attitude to political opponents like Struve. Such practical agreements as were reached were freely entered into by both sides, and both sides had their eyes open. As a matter of fact, Lenin had come under severe criticism by Plekhanov who considered that he had made too many concessions to Struve. This was entirely in Lenin's character. Ever implacable on questions of political principle, he was always extremely flexible on organisational questions and in his dealings with people. Lenin knew how to value people with talent. Whatever their shortcomings, he endeavoured with admirable patience to make use of their abilities to build the movement. "Vladimir Il'yich", wrote Krupskaya, "was always being enthusiastic over somebody or other. On detecting in a person some valuable trait he would fairly pounce on him".²¹ That was one of the strongest points of this great organiser of men and women.

But there was also another side. Once Lenin had made his mind up that someone was an irreconcilable enemy of the ideas of Marxism, he did not hesitate to draw all the necessary conclusions and wage a relentless political struggle against them. In this, Lenin's approach was in stark contrast to the members of the Emancipation of Labour Group.

The members of the old group, especially Zasulich and Axelrod, could not bring themselves to burn the bridges that still connected them to

the layer of semi-liberal intellectual fellow travellers like Struve, even when, after 1902, their transition to the camp of bourgeois liberalism was clear to all. Yet it had been Plekhanov who demanded that Lenin insert a public attack on Struve in the editorial statement! This incident, too, shows the differences in the whole style and personality of the two men. Zasulich once expressed it graphically in the following terms: "George (Plekhanov) is a greyhound: he shakes his victim by the scruff of the neck and in the end lets him go; you (Lenin) are a bulldog: you don't let go."²²

A workers' newspaper

Plekhanov and Axelrod wanted the paper to be published in Switzerland, where they could keep an eye on it. Lenin, Martov and Potresov were determined to publish elsewhere, and moved to Munich. In point of fact, the members of the Emancipation of Labour Group did not fully grasp the significance of *Iskra* as a means of organising the party. They centred their attention on *Zarya*, which was published legally in Stuttgart between April 1901 (March-new style) and August 1902, when a total of four numbers, published in three issues, came out. The only member of the Emancipation of Labour Group who was keen to participate in *Iskra* was Vera Zasulich, who travelled to Munich on a false Bulgarian passport.

The bulk of the work of organising

pick out the tell-tale cases, which happened to be all the same style! After that, they began to use ordinary suitcases, with 100-150 copies of the paper hidden under a false bottom of strong cardboard. But the demand for *Iskra* continually outstripped supplies. New methods had to be found. Between 200 and 300 copies could be carried in specially stitched waistcoats and skirts. Even so, these methods had to be supplemented by the establishment of underground printshops inside Russia, which printed *Iskra* from the lay out sheets smuggled in from abroad. Printshops of this sort were eventually set up in Moscow, Odessa and Baku.

The endless details involved in such work absorbed a colossal amount of time and energy. It also took a lot of money, which was raised from sympathisers by *Iskra* agents in Berlin, Paris, Switzerland and Belgium who constantly sought funds and travellers prepared to carry literature, contacts, safe addresses and so on.

Iskra was so successful because it fulfilled a number of needs. As a workers' newspaper it was a model. Here, simply expressed in a language which, without any trace of condescension, could be understood by any intelligent worker, was the theoretical answer to the ideas of the Economists and their allies. After the years of ideological confusion, the reaction of the socialist workers inside Russia to the new journal must have been like that of Aristotle when he likened the

***Iskra* was so successful because it fulfilled a number of needs. As a workers newspaper it was a model... a collective propagandist, agitator and organiser.**

the journal fell to Lenin. His wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya played an invaluable role handling the extensive correspondence with Russia which reached them indirectly, via the addresses of German comrades, who forwarded them to Krupskaya.

The task of organising an illegal transportation network was full of difficulties. According to Osip Pyatnitsky, ("Freitag"), who was later made responsible for this work, the transportation of *Iskra* from Berlin to Riga, Vilna and Petersburg took several months. Nor was the work free from blunders of all sorts. In his autobiography,²³ Pyatnitsky relates how they would utilise the services of Russian students to carry literature in false-bottomed cases. These cases were manufactured by a small factory in Berlin. A large order was placed for the product. But the frontier guards soon got wind of the trick. They learnt to

philosopher Anaxagoras to "a sober man among drunkards."

Alongside the systematic exposure of the crimes of tsarism at home came detailed explanation of foreign policy, laying bare the intricacies and manoeuvres of bourgeois diplomacy. The life of the international workers' movement was closely followed. But above all *Iskra* was a paper which accurately reflected the life, the struggles and the aspirations of the working class. In every issue a large amount of space was taken up by quite short reports from the factories and workers' districts, painstakingly collected by *Iskra* agents inside Russia and smuggled out by clandestine means. In this way, often with a delay of months, the workers of different parts of Russia learned about the struggles of their brothers and sisters in other parts of the country and abroad. Small wonder that the paper

was an instant success in the interior. The number of local party "committees" adhering to the new journal rapidly increased, opening up daily new possibilities but also imposing severe burdens on the still inadequate apparatus at the disposal of the exile centre.

A revolutionary Marxist party is, first and foremost, ideas, methods, programme and tradition, and only in the second place an organisation for the purpose of carrying these ideas to the widest possible layers of the population. But without a strong disciplined and efficient organisation, the best ideas in the world will never succeed.

What Is To Be Done

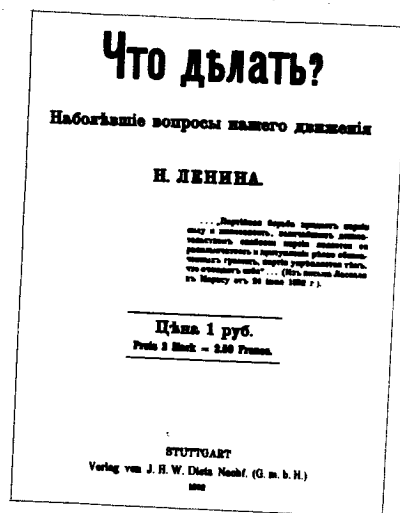
Lenin's writings on organisation produced at this time are masterpieces in their own right. The idea of the paper as a collective organiser is brilliantly set forth in such works as *Where to Begin* ²⁴, *Letter to a Comrade* ²⁵ and *What Is To Be Done?* ²⁶. In the first named of these works, the kernel of Lenin's ideas is already clear:

"The role of a newspaper, however, is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser... With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape that will engage, not only in local activities, but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political works carefully, appraise their significance and their effects on the various strata of the population and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence those events. The mere technical task of regularly supplying the newspaper with copy and of promoting regular distribution will necessitate a network of local agents of the united party, who will maintain constant contact with one another, know the general state of affairs, get accustomed to performing regularly their detailed functions in the All-Russian work, and test their strength in the organisation of various revolutionary actions." ²⁷

There is possibly no other work in the history of Marxist ideas which has been so ill-served as Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* Written between late 1901 and early 1902, this work was intended as a final settling of accounts with the Economists, and therefore has an extremely polemical slant throughout. Undoubtedly, there is a rich seam of ideas present in this work, which is, however, seriously flawed by a most unfortunate theoretical lapse.

Whilst correctly polemicising against the Economists' slavish worship of "spontaneity", Lenin allowed himself to fall into the error of exaggerating a correct idea and turning it into its opposite. In particular, he asserts that socialist consciousness "would have to be brought to them (the workers) from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, ie the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc." ²⁸

This one-sided and erroneous presentation of the relationship of the work-



Cover of *What is to be done?*, 1902.

ing class and socialist consciousness was not an original invention of Lenin, but was borrowed directly from Kautsky, whom he regarded at that time as the main defender of orthodox Marxism against Bernstein. Indeed, Lenin quotes approvingly the words of Kautsky that: "The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the *bourgeois intelligentia* (KK's italics): it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians, who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without (von Aussen Hineingetragen) and not something that arose within it spontaneously (urwüchsig)." ²⁹ (my emphasis, AW).

Here the one-sidedness of Kautsky's formulation stands out in all its crudity. It is true that Marxist theory, the highest expression of socialist consciousness was not thrown up by the working class, but is the product of the best that has been achieved by bourgeois thought, in the form of Ger-

man philosophy, English classical political economy and French socialism. However, it is not true that the proletariat, if left to itself, is only capable of rising to the level of trade union consciousness (ie the struggle for economic betterment within the confines of capitalism).

Over a decade before the *Communist Manifesto* saw the light of day, the British working class, through the medium of Chartism—which Lenin himself described as the first mass revolutionary workers' party in the world—had already gone far beyond the bounds of a mere trade union consciousness, passing from the idea of partial reforms and petitions to the idea of a general strike ("the grand national holiday") and even armed insurrection (the "physical force" men, the Newport uprising). Likewise, the working men and women of Paris actually succeeded—without the presence of a conscious Marxist party at their head—in taking power, if only for a few months in 1871. Let us recall that Marx himself learned from the experience of the Paris Commune, from which he extracted his idea of a workers' democracy ("dictatorship of the proletariat"). In the same way, the idea of Soviets was not the invention of Lenin or Trotsky, but the spontaneous creation of the Russian proletariat during the 1905 revolution.

Importance of the subjective factor

In the summer of 1936, the workers of Catalonia, once again without the benefit of a Marxist leadership, smashed the fascist army and, effectively, had power in their hands. If they did not succeed in organising a workers' state and consolidating their hold on power, spreading the revolution to the rest of Spain, that was not their fault but the responsibility of the anarchist and syndicalist leaders of the CNT, FAI and the POUM. The workers' leaders by refusing to finish off the remnants of the bourgeois state and to organise a new workers' state power on the basis of democratically elected soviets of factory and militia deputies, signed the death knell of the Spanish revolution. In any event, what happened in Catalonia and other parts of Spain in 1936 was far beyond "trade union consciousness". The same can be said of France 1938, Hungary 1956, Poland 1980, South Africa at the present time, and any case where the working class attempts to begin to take its destiny into its own hands.

Does this mean that Marxists deny the importance of leadership and the subjective factor? On the contrary. The whole history of the world working class movement shows that the proletariat needs a revolutionary par-

ty and leadership in order to take power. Such a party and leadership cannot be created by "spontaneous combustion". It cannot be thrown up by events or improvised when the need arises, but has to be prepared painstakingly in advance.

The question of the revolutionary leadership and the consciousness of the class, however, are two separate things. Time and time again the working class has proven in action that it tends to move towards power. The Spanish proletariat, as Trotsky explained, was capable of making ten revolutions. The same is true, at the moment of writing, of the magnificent black proletariat of South Africa.

In the present epoch more than at any other time, the problem of consciousness arises, not in the working class; but above all in its leadership which drags pitifully at the shirt-tails of history. Every time the masses come to revolutionary conclusions, they are faced with the most monstrous obstacles in the form of the very organisations and leaderships which were historically formed to effect the socialist transformation of society. Though we live in the midst of an organic crisis of capitalism no-one would guess such a thing from the writings and speeches of the leaders and "theoreticians" of the Socialist and "Communist" parties, trade union leaders or sectarian deadbeats. Yet they regard themselves as "educated" people who graciously condescend to lead the "ignorant" workers.

The idea of the workers as putty in the hands of intellectuals who "bring consciousness from without" has nothing to do with the theories of Lenin. It is the psychological hallmark of reformist and more particularly Stalinist bureaucrats who have lost all confidence in the working class and who, deep in their hearts, nurse a profound and overweening contempt for ordinary people. To these haughty misleaders of the masses can be added as a footnote the ignorant sectarian intellectuals, generals without an army, who preen themselves as "theoreticians" and treat like little children the few workers they very occasionally happen across.*

In reality, the relationship between the Marxists and the most advanced workers active in the unions, shop stewards committees and mass parties, and beyond them, the politically inactive mass, is an extremely complicated equation, which cannot be reduced—as the bureaucrats

imagine—to a simple question of "consciousness from outside" or "orders from the top". The working class is not a blank slate upon which you can write anything you like, or a water tap which can be turned on and off at will.

Ideas do not drop from the clouds, but are formed on the basis of experience. In the course of its experience, the proletariat inevitably draws certain general conclusions about its role in society. Under certain conditions, in the turmoil of great events, the learning process can be enormously speeded up. But even in "normal" periods of capitalist development, the old mole of history continues to burrow deep in the consciousness of the proletariat.

'Life itself teaches'

At decisive moments, events can burst over the head of the working class before the latter has had time to draw all the necessary conclusions. The role of the advanced guard is not at all to "teach the workers to suck eggs," but to make conscious the unconscious will of the working class to transform society. In this idea there is no hint of mysticism. Life itself teaches, as Lenin was fond of repeating. From a lifetime's experience of exploitation and oppression, the working class, beginning with the active layers which lead the class, acquires a socialist consciousness. That is precisely the basis of the historical process which led to the birth of the trade unions and the mighty parties of the Second and Third Internationals. The elements of a socialist consciousness and the idea of a radical transformation of the social order are present in the rule books and constitutions of countless unions, bearing mute testimony to the underlying desire for change. The class struggle itself inevitably creates not only a class consciousness, but a socialist consciousness. It is the duty of Marxists to bring out what is already there, to give a conscious expression to what is present in an unconscious or semi-conscious form.

Those who mechanically repeat the error of *What Is To Be Done?* nearly a century later do so without realising that Lenin himself later admitted that this incorrect formulation was merely a polemical exaggeration. When, at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, an attempt was made to use this against him, Lenin replied: "We all now know that the 'Economists' have gone to one

extreme. To straighten matters out somebody had to pull in the other direction—and that is what I have done." ³⁰ (my emphasis, AW). In his biography of Stalin, Trotsky comments on these words: "The author of *What To Do?* himself subsequently acknowledged the biased nature, and therewith the erroneousness, of his theory, which he had parenthetically interjected as a battery in the battle against 'Economism' and its deference to the elemental nature of the labour movement." ³¹

In spite of this defect, *What Is To Be Done?* was a major landmark in the history of Russian Marxism. In it, Lenin conclusively demonstrated the need for organisation, the need for professional revolutionaries whose main concern would be the building of the party, the need for a genuine mass all-Russian workers' party. This great historical task could not be accomplished "spontaneously" but only by the organised intervention of the forces of Marxism. In order for the proletariat to take power, it must be organised. Failure to achieve this task would mean, as Trotsky explained, that the potential force of the working class would be uselessly dissipated, like steam which is dispersed in the air, instead of being concentrated by a piston-box.

The essential idea which runs through *What Is To Be Done?*—is the need to train worker cadres, not just class conscious trade union militants, but workers with a clear grasp of the ideas of Marxism:

"Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of political activity." ³² (My emphasis—AW).

What Lenin was driving at here was not at all a belittling of the capacity of the workers to understand but quite the opposite. His main concern was to combat the petit-bourgeois prejudice that "workers cannot understand theory" and that the party literature must confine itself to economic slogans and immediate demands. On the contrary, Lenin insisted that "it is necessary that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of 'literature for workers' but that they learn to an increasing degree to master general literature. It would be even truer to say 'are not confined', instead of 'do not confine themselves' because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia, and only a few (bad) intellectuals believe that it is enough 'for workers' to be told a few things about factory conditions and to have

* Not accidentally, these young ladies and gents were to be found distributing unintelligible leaflets outside the factories occupied by ten million French workers in May 1968, quoting from *What Is To Be Done?* and explaining to the benighted masses that without the generous

assistance of the intelligentsia they—the ten million workers who had just brought the country to a standstill, directly challenging the capitalist state—could aspire to nothing greater in life than... a trade union consciousness!

repeated to them over and over again what has long been known." ³³

Starting from the immediate problems of the working class, fighting for all kinds of partial demands, it is necessary to go beyond the particular and establish the link with the general, from the struggle of groups of workers against individual employers to the struggle of the working class as a whole against the bourgeoisie and its state. In a brilliant line of argument, Lenin established the dialectical interrelation between agitation, propaganda and theory and explained the way in which the small forces of Marxism, by winning over the most advanced layers of the class can subsequently win over the mass of the proletariat, and through the latter, all other oppressed layers of society—the peasantry, the oppressed nationalities, the women.

The Economists were initially successful because they merely adapted to the prejudices of the most backward layers of the workers. But as Lenin argued: the workers are not children to be fed on such "thin gruel". They do not want to be told what they already know. The workers have a thirst for knowledge, which it is the duty of the Marxists to satisfy. Taking as the starting point the immediate problems of the working people, it is necessary to raise the level of consciousness to a full understanding of its role in society, pointing the way forward out of the impasse.

Attitude to the liberals

The launching of *Iskra* coincided with the beginning of a new revolutionary upsurge. The mass demonstrations of the workers of Kharkov on May Day 1900 was the signal for a stormy period of street demonstrations. "The Social Democracy" wrote the gendarme General Spiridovich, "understood the tremendous agitational significance of going forth into the streets. From then on it took upon itself the initiative for demonstrations, attracting to them an ever greater number of workers. Not infrequently the street demonstrations grew out of strikes." ³⁴

The revolutionary mood rapidly spread to the students. In the winter of 1901-2, some 30,000 students took part in a general strike against the government. In turn, the mass unrest gave heart to the liberals who began to make use of the limited powers of self-government afforded to them by the 'Zemstvo', a kind of county council with responsibilities for roads, hospitals, education and the like. By the turn of the century many Zemstvos were dominated by the liberals, who attempted to use them as a platform to press their demands on

the government. A section of the government, represented by the Finance Minister, Witte, attempted to lean on the Zemstvos for support. Early in 1901, Witte wrote a confidential memorandum entitled *The Autocracy and the Zemstvo* which was published illegally abroad with a preface by none other than Struve.

In his preface, Struve makes clear his complete break with Marxism, adopting instead the role of unpaid and unsolicited adviser to the government. Reading the words of this renegade one is forcefully reminded of the tearful pleas of the modern liberals, churchmen and "reformists" in Chile and South Africa who, unscrupulously basing themselves on the heroic sacrifices of the masses, try to appeal to the "enlightened self-interest" of the state to "reform itself before it is too late". In the same way Struve wrote: "No doubt there are men among the higher bureaucracy (!) who do not sympathise (!) with the reactionary policy... Perhaps it (the government) will realise, before it is too late, the fatal danger of protecting the aristocratic regime at all costs. Perhaps even before it has to face revolution, it will grow weary of its struggle against the natural and historically necessary development (!) of freedom, and will waver in its irreconcilable policy" and so on and so forth.

In his article the *Persecution of Zemstvo and the Hannibals of Liberalism* ³⁵ Lenin delivered a counterblast to all this nonsense:

"There is no place for submissiveness in politics, and the time-honoured police method of **divide et impera** (divide and rule); yield the unimportant in order to preserve the essential, give with one hand and take back with the other, can be mistaken for submission only out of unbounded simplicity (both sacred and sly simplicity)." ³⁶

The whole content of Lenin's article is a devastating indictment of liberalism. From the very dawn of the Russian workers' movement the attitude to the bourgeois parties was always the keystone of a revolutionary approach. On this question, Lenin always displayed the most implacable intransigence.

Significantly, this broadside against Struve and the liberals caused a disagreement within the Editorial Board of *Iskra*. Plekhanov and Axelrod were taken aback by the sharpness of the polemic, and pressurised him to tone it down. Reluctantly Lenin inserted a conciliatory paragraph at the end. Nevertheless, the general thrust of the article is quite clear: that the bourgeois liberals had amply demonstrated their cowardice and impotence, and lacking power themselves had to resort to pleading with the



autocracy for concessions, unscrupulously utilising the threat of revolution from below, that they would inevitably sell out for the sake of a rotten compromise with the government, which will then decoy them with false promises, "only to take them by the scruff of the neck and thrash them with the whip of reaction. And when that happens, gentlemen, we will not forget to say, serves you right!" ³⁷

Tensions on the Editorial Board

The argument over Lenin's article, with the wisdom of hindsight, was not an accident. Despite Plekhanov's criticisms of Struve, there was a tendency among the members of the Emancipation of Labour Group which did not see the need for a radical break with that layer of bourgeois intellectuals of the "Legal Marxist" trend which was now clearly travelling to the right, with one foot firmly in the camp of bourgeois liberalism. Half jokingly, Lenin and Krupskaya nicknamed Zasulich and Potresov the "Struve-freundliche Partei," which can be loosely translated as the "be-nice-to-Struve Tendency."

Old habits die hard. If we leave aside Plekhanov, who, for all his faults, was a giant, the other members of the old group found it increasingly difficult to adapt to the new situation. In general, it takes leaders of a very special type to be able to make the necessary transition from one historical epoch, with its particular demands, to another completely different period. Not accidentally, each period of transition tends to be accompanied by crisis and splits in which a certain layer, unable to adapt to the changed conditions, falls by the wayside. The creation of

a mass workers' party is incompatible with the amateurish and informal methods which characterise the initial period of propaganda activity. The need for a more professional approach was one of the central themes of Lenin's writings at this time. "Organising the work on a business-like footing without introducing any personal element into it, and thus ensuring that caprice or personal relations associated with the past would not influence decisions," wrote Krupskaya, "had now become an obvious need."³⁸

Footnotes

- ¹. B Pares, 'A History of Russia', p 465
- ². V Akimov, 'On the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism (1885-1903)' p 209
- ³. G Zinoviev, 'History of the Bolshevik

- Party', p 51
- ⁴. V Akimov, op cit p 223
- ⁵. KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh, volume 1, p 16
- ⁶. Quoted in Istoriya KPSS, volume 1, p 260
- ⁷. KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh, volume 1, p 17
- ⁸. Quoted in Istoriya KPSS, volume 1, p 265
- ⁹. Trotsky, 'My Life' p 117
- ¹⁰. V Akimov, op cit p 262
- ¹¹. See Lenin 'Collected Works, volume 4', pp 215-221, 255-296.
- ¹². Ibid pp 167-182.
- ¹³. The full text of the 'Credo' is reproduced in Lenin's 'Collected works, volume 4' pp 171-174.
- ¹⁴. Ibid p 176
- ¹⁵. Ibid p 181
- ¹⁶. Ibid pp 333-349
- ¹⁷. Trotsky, 'Political Profiles', Spanish edition, pp123-24
- ¹⁸. Lenin, 'Collected Works, volume 4' pp 351-356
- ¹⁹. Ibid pp 320-330

- ²⁰. Ibid pp 354-5
- ²¹. Krupskaya, 'Memories of Lenin', p 83
- ²². Trotsky, 'Lenin', Spanish edition, p 99
- ²³. O Pyatnitsky: Zapiski Bol'shevika, pp51-2
- ²⁴. Lenin's 'Collected Works', volume 5, pp 17-24
- ²⁵. Ibid, volume 6, pp 235-252
- ²⁶. Ibid, volume 5, pp 349-529
- ²⁷. Ibid, pp 22-23
- ²⁸. Ibid, p 375
- ²⁹. Ibid, pp 383-4
- ³⁰. Ibid, volume 6, p 491
- ³¹. Trotsky, 'Stalin' p 58
- ³². Lenin's 'Collected Works', volume 5, p 369
- ³³. Ibid, p 384 (footnote)
- ³⁴. Trotsky, 'Stalin', p 28
- ³⁵. Lenin, 'Collected Works', volume 5, pp 31-80
- ³⁶. Ibid, p 70
- ³⁷. Ibid, pp 75-76
- ³⁸. Krupskaya, 'Memories of Lenin', p 67

Book Reviews

THIS BOOK is in fact a selection of material and commentary based upon an exhibition of American artists of American labour history. It covers 150 years of painting, photographs, and poems most of which was hitherto unknown to Western Europe. The exhibition was sponsored by NGBK (New Society for Fine Arts), and also funded in West Germany. It opened on March 13 1983 in West Berlin, on the eve of the hundredth anniversary of Karl Marx's death. More than 2000 exhibits went on display and, subsequently, on tour throughout Europe.

The title of the exhibition was taken from a book called *The Other America*, published in 1962, about poverty and deprivation. There was revealed the world of unemployment, class struggle and racial oppression which is the real history of America. As the introduction to the book says the exhibition was a description of "all the Americans excluded from the opulence of life on 'Dynasty' and 'Dallas'."

It is a well documented book divided into sections each of which describes events and milestones which so often inspired artists in their work. The real surprise of the material is the width and variety of art that has come out of America, since the beginning of the organised labour movement early last century.

The Other America uses hundreds of examples to punctuate the commentary text, and shows the reader how little is recognised in Europe of material which deals with the class struggle as subject matter.

For example, the painting 'The Strike', by Robert Koehler is today generally considered to be the master-

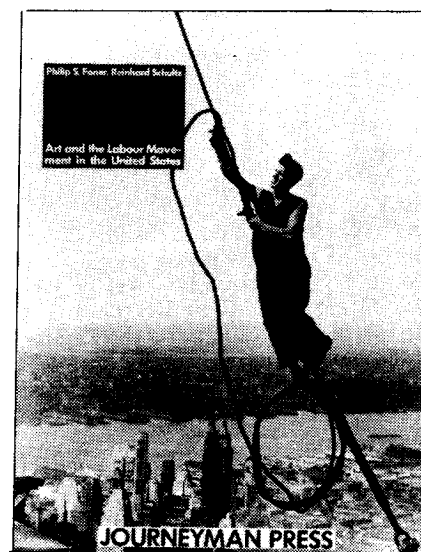
'The Other America-- Art and the labour movement in the United States'

By Philip Foner and R Schultz. Published by Journeyman Press, 1985. £7.95.

Reviewed by Steve Amor

piece of American labour painting, according to the books' authors. It is certainly a powerful piece of work. Painted in 1886, the picture is based on a strike in Pittsburg in 1877 that was called the Great Labour Uprising. It was lost to the public for 60 years and was only found again after extensive searches in the 1970's. Covered in dirt and seriously damaged it was sold to its present owner "for less than what most used cars cost".

But is was the historic period following the Russian Revolution in 1905, until the late 1930's that gave birth to more widespread 'Labour art' in America. The most well known names such as Upton Sinclair, Jack London and John Reed were only the tip of a layer of artists and writers who developed political consciousness in



that period. Journals and magazines were produced from within art groups which were circulated throughout the labour movement. One such journal was 'The Masses' which consistently carried socialist material from the end of the first world war and into the 1920's, with a series of notable contributors such as John Reed.

But art sponsored by workers in the labour movement, who also were participants, really took root in the 1930's. Roosevelt's 'New Deal' programme had many offshoots. 'Make-Work' projects were initiated, and among those who demanded jobs were artists. In December 1933 Public Works of Art Projects were started, known as PWAP. Nearly 4,000 artists were employed on weekly salaries, and by the time the projects finished in 1943 many thousands of public works of art had been completed. The majority of these works; murals; paintings; sculptures; print designs and silk

screens were concerned with the labour movement. Its history, industrial conditions and working class life were reflected.

The first president of the American artists movement worked for PWAP, and so, also, did Jackson Pollock. Pollock, now acknowledged as a modern master of abstract expressionism, worked as a stone carver for PWAP for 8 years.

But the nature of the projects by bringing socially conscious people together under 'collective' conditions led inevitably to political awareness. "There was a close comradeship among the artists, a respect for each other... Recognising our obligations we participated in all major social and economic struggles of the day", wrote one of the project artists. The Artists Union later became the United American Artists and affiliated to the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organisations). But the project was seen by right wingers in the Congress as left wing groups getting paid by the government, and as a result political witch-hunts on artists took place.

Demonstrations and sit-ins were used as a means of saving the projects from threats of destruction. It took a hatchet-man of the right wing to liquidate the art projects during the second world war, using a wartime quango called the War Services Programme. Thousands of works of art disappeared or were destroyed as a part of the purge.

In the post world war two period a strong current of anti-communism swept through America. In its extreme form Senator McCarthy, aided by a young lawyer named Richard M Nixon, used his Un-American Activities Committee to persecute artists and performers, film directors and writers. Famous figures like Charlie Chaplin and Paul Robeson suffered exile as a result.

In response to this witch-hunt politically conscious artists attempted to use their media, satire and graphic comment to counter smears. But the pressure was fierce. Ralph Fasanella, who describes himself as a 'Worker-painter', was forced into obscurity for 20 years due to persecution. He was 'rediscovered' by art critics in the 1970's working as a garage attendant in New York's Bronx.

But commenting on the artists movements of today, the book illustrates how the minority groups, sections of workers and community movements have sparked a renaissance of 'social' art and culture through street theatre, dance groups, community mural projects etc..

The UAW (United Auto Workers) have sponsored exhibitions and projects by their own members. As the book confirms however it is clear that



Alice Neel. Uneeda Bisquit strike, 1936, p 34 *The Other America*.

artists and progressive culture groups identifying with the labour movement are undesirable under the present Reagan regime. The funding for such projects has declined considerably over the past few years.

Sections of the book examine particular areas of American labour art that the authors feel needs highlighting. Black artists are given much space, as is the history of the organised artists movement. The fascinating material shows clearly how close the artists movement has come to the organised working class, particularly in the 1930's and 1940's. The Artists Union is still affiliated to the AFL-CIO today. -

Artists were, in the main, poor and only the very privileged few could rise out of the ordinary to achieve bourgeois reward and recognition. The mass of them remained in contact with the social and economic realities of their society. It is because they established that tradition that the 'Other America' exhibition was able to be collated.

The best expression of how the arts and the community are combined, can be seen in the largely American phenomena called Community Mural Art. This art form has been a feature in America since the 1930's, inspired in the main by the Mexican Mural Art of Diego Rivera, one time friend of Trotsky. Under the PWAP projects in the 1930's and 1940's, the government paid artists to paint large works on walls in public places. The murals were painted in post offices, schools, libraries, public buildings, etc. These were completed as part of a law which said that one per cent of the funds us-

ed to construct a building must be used towards "artistic enhancement" of the building.

Most major cities have numerous examples of mural art on show. In Detroit, the 'Motor City', Rivera himself painted a large wall mural summarising life in the great industrial conurbation. Rivera also achieved notoriety in the 1930's by having his mural for the Rockefeller Centre smashed on the orders of Rockefeller himself. Rivera had painted a portrait of Lenin among the faces. It was deemed as 'not tolerable in a bourgeois hall!'

Mural art revived in the 1960's but they reflected a different mood. The Civil Rights movements and the peace struggles were the themes of the period.

By far the most wide ranging section of the books' images are those of the camera in American social history. Glimpses of life captured for a lifetime. Almost one half of *The Other America* examines the progress of twentieth century events through the camera.

The overall effect of the material compiled for *The Other America* is interesting and certainly looks at America from an original angle. In this respect the book has a real value, and certainly gives the reader a feeling of hope for the success of the struggle of the American working class against the strongest capitalist power on earth. It also clearly shows up capitalism's weaknesses; the failure to equalise society; the inability to integrate the myriad strands of ethnic groups and communities; the huge class divisions: all sowing the seeds of revolution.

What is to be done?

By Nikolai Chernyshevsky

Published by Virago, 1982

Reviewed by
Bill Hopwood

What Is To Be Done? is a novel which influenced Russian revolutionaries. Written in 1863 it showed the early tremors of Russian society which culminated in the earthquake which shook the world in 1917.

Nikolai Chernyshevsky, the author, was himself imprisoned for his activities against Czarism. He wrote *What Is To Be Done?* from the Peter and Paul fortress before he was moved to Siberia where he was exiled for nearly 20 years.

Born in 1828 his outlook was shaped by the European revolution of 1848. In contrast to many of the great Russian novelists he considered himself a materialist, he was influenced by Feuerbach, and was more concerned about the town than the countryside.

Lenin described him as a 'great Russian socialist'. The title of one of Lenin's critical pamphlets in the building of the Bolsheviks *What Is To Be Done?* is a clear recognition of Chernyshevsky.

Although he died in 1889, before the founding of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, he was part of its pre-history.

Written from prison

His words on the future, "Love it and work for it, for the closer you bring it, the brighter, richer and happier life will be" express the optimistic outlook of revolutionaries through out the ages. This confidence sustained him while in prison and there is no pessimism in his novel.

The main theme of the novel is the struggle of Vera Pavlovna for independence and happiness.

Her father is a servant in a rich household, and her parents main concern is making money and arranging a good marriage for her.

There is little family affection and Vera's parents constantly remind her that she is indebted to them. She is told to marry for money and not to worry about love or affection.

Vera wants none of it. She says the "principal thing is independence". She struggles against her parents and leaves home.

She marries but not the man of her parents choice. Against their wishes her new husband is Dmitry Sergeich Lupukhov, a radical medical student.

They marry not for money or for sex. They marry as equals, with a platonic friendship, mainly to free Vera from her parents.

Chernyshevsky comments, as he often does through the book, that because most marriages are arranged and lack love "that is why so few really human men can be found".

Vera blossoms in her new environment of freedom and equality. She seeks the challenge of work and sets up a sewing business. It develops as a co-operative, the members learning as they progress.

All the women are involved in its running and the profits are divided equally. The co-operative goes beyond the work to include buying food, and social activities. The women regardless of their background work together. Those women without family ties live together in a large house.

They also organise readings, trips to the countryside and to the theatre so that there is a rounded development of the co-op members. Chernyshevsky uses this business to show the advantages of socialist co-operation. However this scheme, like the lives of the main characters, is an isolated island of the future in the grey sea of Czarist Russia. It was utopian to think that such examples, by reason alone, can change society. It required the struggles of millions, linked to a clear programme, in a revolution, to end Czarism.

Vera broadens herself through experience and struggle. Nonetheless she strives for more, in particular to include sexual satisfaction in her relationship.

She is drawn into friendship with Alexander Kirsanov, a colleague of Dmitry, who eventually leaves Vera out of respect for her feelings. Vera and Alexander get married.

The growth of this companionship is not described in a sentimental and slushy manner like a Mills and Boon story but with real doubt, guilt, sadness and upheaval before finding a new richer fulfilment.

Alexander is a doctor and Vera in a further break with convention decides to study medicine. The author dismisses the prejudices against women. He writes "Any person who pursues their goal, in a business like fashion, whether they are dressed in men's or women's attire makes no difference: that person is simply a hard-working human being—and there's an end to it."

Chernyshevsky further explains how their relationship grows, "a man loves a woman only if he is prepared to help his beloved rise up and be independent."

They discuss sensual love as well as their independence, in fact their love is strengthened by their independence.

In one passage Vera discusses the abandoning of wearing a corset. This is both a physical and mental freedom.

Vera has several dreams which mark the crises of her development. One is a powerful and vivid description of womens personal and sexual role through history. The dream culminates in a future where the "barren desert turned into fertile land". This is Chernyshevsky's socialist vision.

What Is To Be Done? is a powerful book of the struggle of a woman. The style in places is odd but the character and the experiences come through.

Vera's character unfolds through struggles with the tensions building to a crisis to inaugurate a new stage of her life.

Women's struggle for emancipation

Her experience is in the material world rather than the mystic world of many other Russian novelists of the 19th century.

Chernyshevsky has a deep understanding of woman's struggle for emancipation. Vera explains that "Everything rests on money, whoever has money has power and freedom. Then, as long as woman lives at man's expense, she will be dependent on him."

She rejects the stereotype role of women. "What is this feminine nature. Is it necessary to discuss the respective merits of contralto and baritone? We are always told to remain women. Isn't that nonsense? I am going to throw off this femininity and put forth utterly masculine ideas."

Her search for liberation does not include a battle against men. She seeks the way forward with some men. The barrier is social.

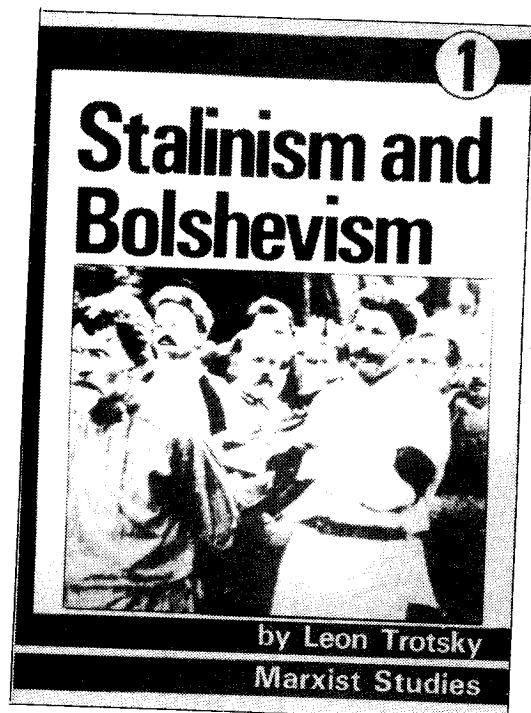
Chernyshevsky explains the need for those who struggle and would win to be conscious, confident and united.

"Women have always been told they are weak, and so they feel weak".

He explains how in war a smaller organised group can defeat larger numbers. "These did not share this fear and were not accustomed to surrendered without a struggle. They conquered everytime."

His book is full of confidence and that confidence is vital to victory. Marxists, women and men, have a key role to win the victory that will change the "barren desert" of capitalism into a "fertile land".

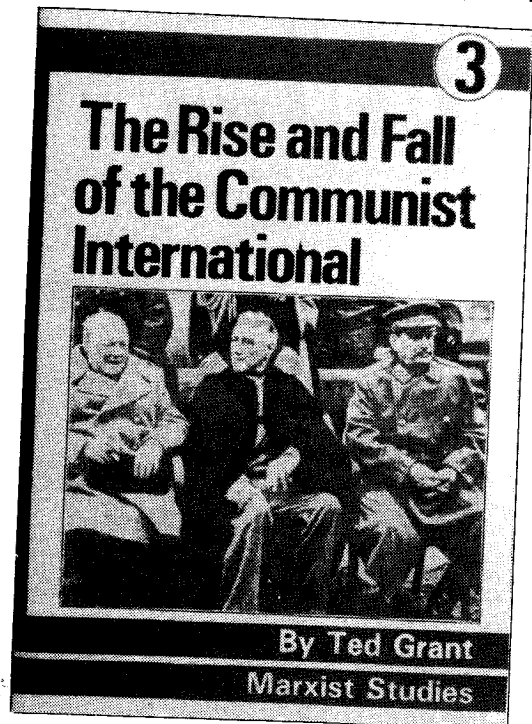
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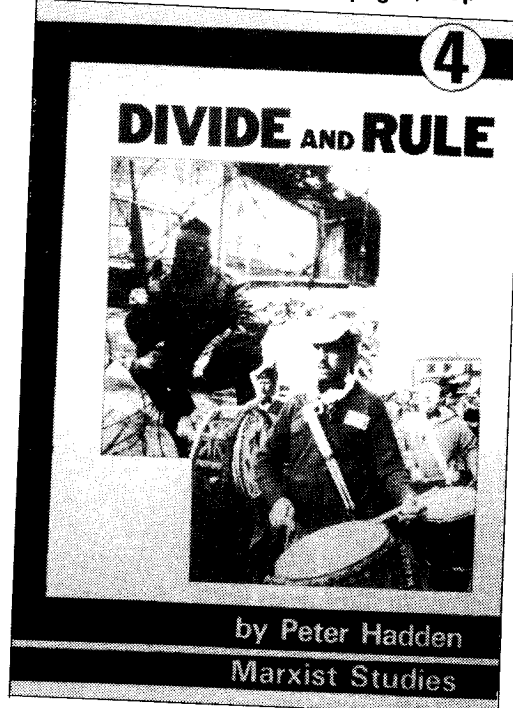
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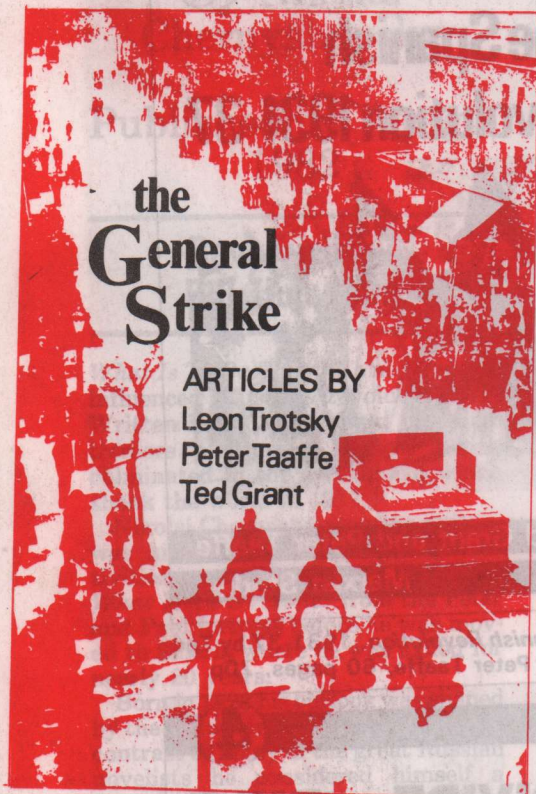
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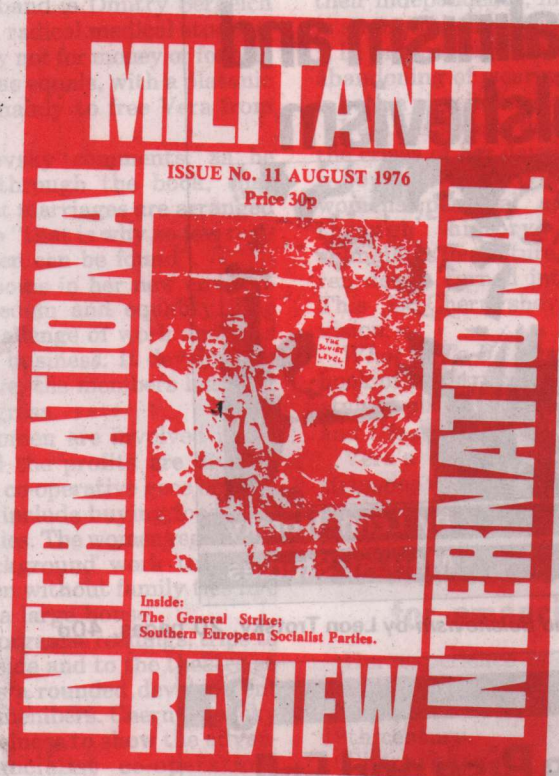
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