

Militant

International Review

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THE COMING SLUMP

Plus.....Trade Unions.....South Africa.....Spycatcher.....Bolshevism.....

Militant

International Review

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A new chapter opens

A turning point has been reached in the post-war history of world capitalism. A new epoch of storm and stress now opens up before mankind. In three days in October, 2 trillion dollars of share-values were wiped out worldwide—that is, a quarter of all share values in the world. The Wall Street crash of 1929 really affected the USA alone, and only after a considerable delay spread to the other stock exchanges. This time it was a simultaneous slump in stock exchanges worldwide—a graphic illustration of the colossal increase in the interdependence of the world economy and world market created in the post-war period. Peter Wilmot-Sitwell, joint chairman of Warburg Securities, gave voice to the alarm of the capitalists: "It is not our problem. It is America's. But we are interlinked. Each market looked over its shoulder at the other. Governments can take actions to stabilise their national markets. But no one can stop this global momentum. This is the frightening aspect of last week's fall," *Observer*, 28 October 1987.

It is extremely unlikely that the capitalists can postpone a slump for another year or two, though that re-

Editorial

mains theoretically possible. The fall on the stock exchange in New York could have taken place six months before or six months after the time it did. But once it started, it marked a new decisive phase in the development of world capitalism. Although it was triggered off accidentally by the US Treasury Secretary's attack on the Germans for not 'reflating', and by the raising of interest rates in Germany at that time, it was prepared, as in 1929, by massive share price rises—largely fictitious capital—in the 'boom' of 1981-87.

US arms boom over

The post world War II upswing took place, among other reasons, because of the development of world trade at the rate of 12.5% per annum. A subsidiary factor in the 1950s and 1960s was the Keynesian methods of deficit financing. The latter inevitably brought its nemesis in the development of

inflation, and it was as a recoil against the failures of Keynesianism that the ideas of 'monetarism' were put forward. However, in reality, both in Britain and in the United States, deficit financing still continued. In the case of Reagan, who came to power on the programme of a balanced budget, it was 'negative' Keynesianism, an enormous development of arms production resulting in a big fall in unemployment.

Reagan's arms expenditure of \$375 bn per year—which makes Hitler's rearmament programme seem lilliputian by comparison—created a market and the illusions of 'boom' for world capitalism during the past eight years. The laws of capitalism were stood on their head. In order to plug the yawning gap created by the budget and trade deficits, the Americans were forced to raise interest rates to attract foreign capital. Vast sums of money poured in from the entire capitalist world because the US was regarded as a 'safe-haven', and to take advantage of the bloated interest rates. The resulting appreciation of the dollar rendered US goods on the world market uncompetitive, with the home market also affected by imports. The

US economy boosted the world market by its demand for imports. In the last few years, growth in Japan, the EEC and the other countries of western Europe was increased by 1% by this massive market alone.

Another 1% increase in the growth of these economies was provided by a \$750,000 million per annum bonus from the underdeveloped world due to the fall in the price of food and raw materials. The growth of the developed economies during the last two or three years was roughly 2% per annum. In other words, there would have been a slump in America and in the world two or three years ago if it had not been for the above factors.

However, even given this favourable position, the rate of growth was very sluggish in comparison with the economic upswing of 1950-75. Such a situation could not last indefinitely—either it would break out into a genuine boom, or else it would have to collapse. A new boom was ruled out, and therefore the present collapse was inevitable.

The shadow of the impending slump has been shown by the impasse of the productive forces. The fact that the productive capacity of the economy cannot be used to the full and that productive forces are destroyed are indications of the impasse of world capitalism. The productive forces have clearly outgrown the barriers of the nation state and private ownership of the means of production.

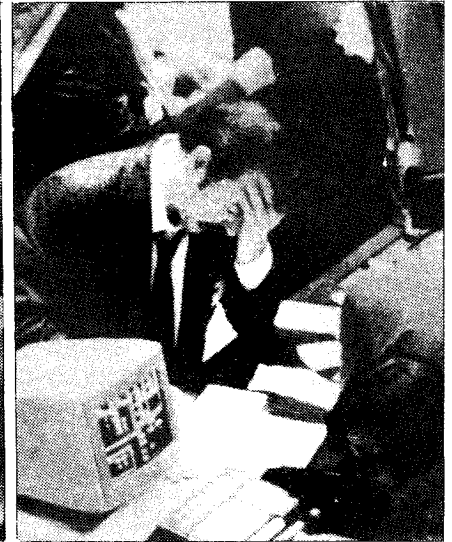
Capitalist crisis

The crisis is caused by the fundamental Achilles heel of capitalism. The fatal weakness of the whole system is that the working class—the only producer of real wealth—cannot buy back the whole product of its labour. The system can work, provided that the surplus extracted from the labour of the working class is being ploughed back into industry. The problem for capitalism is that, at a certain point, this must result in more wealth being produced—through the productivity of labour, the introduction of machinery etc—than can be absorbed by the limited market of the masses. They then are confronted with a dilemma: either to cut the share of the capitalist class, which means a limitation of investment, or to cut the share of the working class, which further reduces the market.

This point is reached at varying times in the history of capitalism. There are factors which can counter-act it for a period. But inevitably the crisis point is reached, and a collapse follows. The fact that even during the 'boom' the capitalists were already dimly aware of



The New York Stock Exchange, Black Monday.



this process is revealed by the deliberate destruction of productive forces that went on uninterruptedly in the last 8 years. **There is no such thing as a 'final crisis of capitalism'. Unless capitalism is overthrown, the mechanism of economic recovery eventually comes into play again.**

The partly conscious, partly unconscious destruction of the means of production, through the simple process of decay, rusting, and the development of new and more advanced machinery to replace the old, prepares a revival at a certain stage. However, whereas the period of capitalist ascent was marked by a strong rhythm of growth, the present epoch of capitalist decay which opens up is characterised by deeper slumps and more feeble periods of recovery and 'boom'.

In spite of the urgency of the economic crisis with which they are faced, and in spite of the collapse on the stock exchanges, there has been no meeting of the seven big capitalist powers because there is no possibility of an agreement. There may be a meeting in a few months, but this will only be after the Americans have succeeded in forcing down the dollar to a level which would make the goods of other countries uncompetitive on the American market and make American goods cheaper in the European and Japanese markets.

The situation has now been reached where the US, having already put the colonial countries on 'hunger and starvation rations' in the last few years through the IMF and World Bank, intends to put the economies of Europe and Japan on rations. US financial politicians and bankers are constantly attacking West Germany and Japan for not playing the role which was played by the US as the 'locomotive' of the

world economy. But they do so in vain. America, via policies of rearmament, accidentally acted as a temporary boost not only for its own, but for the world economy. They did not do it for the benefit of their rivals, but to increase the power of American imperialism vis-a-vis the colonial revolution and their mighty rival, the bureaucracy in Russia.

Dollar Falls

In spite of its weaknesses, American imperialism remains the dominant power on the globe and in world economy. As JK Galbraith stated in the *Sunday Times*, 25 October 1987, "if we have a recession here in the United States, the world effect will be more prompt and greater than it was in the 1930s. Then the United States was a relatively small player on the international trade scene. Now, it is a much greater factor." But all the capitalist powers are helpless in the face of the impending crisis.

In reality, the US has no intention of fundamentally redressing its budget deficit. The dilemma before the US imperialists is that if they do cut heavily into the budget deficit, by cutting demand they would produce a deep slump in the US. The deficit cut which they have carried out so far—\$30 billion in 1988 and \$45 billion in 1989—is mainly cosmetic. In fact, even if the cuts were carried out to the full it would still leave a deficit of more than \$150 billion, bigger than in 1986 (\$148 billion). On the other hand the huge budget deficits and trade deficits, bigger than anything ever seen in any country in history before, cannot be continued indefinitely.

The solution that the strategists of US imperialism have decided on as the



A mass rally in the Philippines. The years ahead will see a tidal wave of revolt, general strikes, uprisings and guerilla wars throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Photo: Piers Cavendish (Reflex).

'lesser evil' is to deliberately allow the dollar to fall. After the last meeting of the 'group of seven' the dollar was stabilised for a temporary period, but that policy has now been abandoned, particularly after the collapse of the stock market. If the dollar falls far enough it will increase the competitiveness of US goods, so long as they can avoid the inevitable inflation which would follow from devaluation.

The central banks of other countries have spent massive sums trying to prop up the dollar to shore up the competitiveness of their own currencies and economies. The US participated in this only to a token extent and has now virtually abandoned any attempt to keep up the value of the dollar. The Americans have determined that if a slump comes they will unload the burdens of it onto the shoulders of the European countries and Japan. But though they want to avoid the effects of a '1929' catastrophe by unloading a deep slump onto Western Europe first, it would undoubtedly react on them later. The EEC and Japan will not just accept the slump once it begins to affect their economies. It will result in veiled and then open trade conflicts between the powers; competitive devaluations and even open tariff and non-tariff wars.

It is impossible to say in advance exactly what the depth of the new

slump will be. However, even a small slump will have profound political and social consequences. A fall in production in the OECD countries from 1974-75 of less than 1% was followed by revolutionary developments in Portugal, Greece, Spain and throughout the ex-colonial world. But one thing is absolutely clear—the new downturn will be of a greater depth and intensity than any of the post-war slumps. Of course, within a few years there will be a new 'boom'. But this will be of an extremely fragile nature, preparing the way for an even steeper collapse a few years later.

Debt defaults

We are now in a period of organic crisis, with booms and slumps succeeding each other in rapid succession. This, by its very nature, will be a revolutionary epoch which will far exceed anything seen in the post-war years. It is a return to the period of the 1920s and 1930s, but on an infinitely higher level. The years ahead will see the greatest radicalisation of the world working class since 1917-20, with ferment among the intellectuals and ongoing crises in the mass organisations of the class. The swing to the right in the advanced capitalist countries in recent years will be compensated by an even greater swing of the

pendulum to the left. The youth, the students and the working class will draw the most radical conclusions from the situation.

If this will be the case in the advanced capitalist countries, then there will be a tidal wave of revolt, general strikes, uprisings, and guerrilla wars throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the last period these countries have amassed total debts of more than a trillion dollars (\$1 million millions) which can never be repaid. In the general catastrophe, they will be swept away in a series of defaults. The burden of the repudiated debts will then be transferred by the Western governments in collusion with the banks onto the shoulders of the workers and middle class in the developed world. The banks of course, will be part bailed out by the governments to avoid a financial disaster. In Britain and America the big banks have already made preparations for this, setting aside funds to deal with 'bad debts'. This comes out of taxes on profits, which effectively comes out of the pockets of the workers and middle class. The banks, as always, lose nothing.

All the efforts of the capitalist powers to reach an agreement to find a way out of the crisis are foredoomed to failure. The ever increasing disagreements between the powers, as well as

increasing conflict between the different sections of the ruling class within each country—as in the conflict between Reagan and Congress—are a symptom of the crisis.

While one could not theoretically rule out the possibility of a temporary agreement which would only serve to postpone the slump a year or two, while making it more severe when it finally arrives, at the present time, all the signs point in the opposite direction. The deal between Reagan and Congress for a small cut in the deficit has not served to strengthen business 'confidence'. Meanwhile, all the leaders of the Western world are falling over each other to place the blame for the crisis on the shoulders of their rivals. Thus the British Chancellor Lawson reads sermons to the Japanese and West Germans, advocating that they use their surpluses to re-float the world economy, while the latter, quite naturally, do nothing of the sort. They are not willing to pull the chestnuts out

of the fire for US imperialism, preferring to husband their resources in anticipation of a slump.

When world capitalism was going forward, it was possible for the rival groups temporarily to sink their differences and reach agreement on tariffs and trade. But now they all feel the fire under their backsides, it is a case of 'every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost'.

The enormous intensification of the world division of labour since World War Two has created a situation of unparalleled interdependence between all the capitalist powers—and partly the Stalinist states also. All the factors which made for boom in the past have now been dialectically transformed into their opposite. The USA, as the strongest capitalist power, far from being the locomotive of the world economy, is now fast sliding into recession and is pulling all the others down with it. Thus, as Trotsky prophetically wrote in 1938, all the capitalist



US Treasury Secretary, James Baker.

governments are tobogganing to disaster with their eyes closed. A new and convulsive chapter in human history has now opened, in which the future of mankind will be decided.

Business Manager's Report

Opportunities ahead to build the *MIR*

As explained elsewhere in this edition of the *MIR*, October 1987 will go down in the pages of history as heralding a decisive turning point in the development of world capitalism. It will also be recorded, in the footnotes, as the month when the 'theoretical' journal of the British 'Communist' Party, *Marxism Today*, launched a financial supplement for 'socialist investors' on the stock exchange—demonstrating once again that, for workers seeking a way forward, the 'Communist' Party has nothing to offer.

Last year also saw the temporary demise of *New Socialist*, the Labour Party's theoretical magazine. Its financial position had steadily deteriorated since 1984. Despite the installation of professional editors and sales personnel, and a new rule to boost its 'mass appeal' that no article should exceed three picture-filled pages, sales fell to nearly half their 1982-83 level and by 1987 the magazine was losing £8,000 per issue.

The decline of *New Socialist* from the early 1980s shows the importance of a theoretical journal having a firm anchor in the ideas of Marxism. Marxism is indispensable for preparing individuals and the movement as a whole for future events—for setbacks as well as victories. It was precisely this lack of Marxist theory and perspectives that led to the collapse of the largely middle class lefts who were the moving force behind *New Socialist*.

Clubbed on the head by events they could not explain—Labour's election defeats, the so-called 'economic success' of Thatcher, the defeat of the miners, the counter-reforms of the Mitterand government—they became demoralised, either dropping out of activity or moving to the right. Attendance at the New Socialist Editorial Advisory Panel fell to as low as two out of 39! Indeed, how could a journal survive when its perspective, as in the post-election analysis of 'left' academic Jeremy Seabrook, was that "the most likely development in the next four years is the consolidation of the present situation—a permanently minoritised poor, with the rest maintaining or improving their living standards"? "Of course," this far-sighted professor added, the "crisis of capitalism could always supervene, but it would be unwise to place too much faith in that rather remote possibility."

Certainly, a theoretical journal must continually examine new developments—including the actual prospects for the world economy—acting. In the words of Trotsky, as "a laboratory where all questions, even the most complex, are analysed and sharply focused." But only by starting out from the standpoint of Marxism—the systematisation of the collective experience of workers over generations—can current developments be appraised and the correct perspectives, programme, strategy and tactics be drawn to ad-

vance the movement.

Now *New Socialist* is being relaunched as a bi-monthly on a 12 month trial basis. However, it is clear that the Labour NEC's right wing majority are not committed to developing a journal of genuine debate and analysis. Their approach was summed up in the election 'theory' of EPTU Official John Spellar, that Labour could only win in London if constituency Labour Parties are "faced with clear alternatives, conformity or closure." Who needs tiresome discussion when bureaucratic command will do? Yet this verbal tuggery was singled out as a "thought-provoking contribution" by *New Socialist* editor Nigel Williamson, formerly the editor of *Tribune*!

Of course, the *MIR* must not be judged against the 'theoretical' contributions of the 'Communist' Party or the Labour leaders, right or left. But the move to the right of the Labour leaders—just as great events impend which will produce profound shifts in the consciousness of wide sections of the population—opens up enormous opportunities for a journal of genuine Marxism. Sales are there for the asking in trade union meetings, the Labour Parties, Womens Sections, LPYS branches and student Labour Clubs. Wherever the *Militant* is on sale, the *MIR* should be sold as well. 1988 must be the year all our readers help us to move forward to the bi-monthly *MIR*!

An MIR interview with Peter Taaffe, Editor of *Militant* and co-author, with surcharged Liverpool councillor Tony Mulhearn, of an important new book on the historic struggle of Liverpool council from 1983-87.

Liverpool—A City That Dared to Fight

MIR: Why write a book on Liverpool Council?

PT: Well, there have been two major struggles of the British working class since 1979: the miners strike and the struggle of Liverpool City Council. The miners strike has been the subject of much analysis and comment, although mostly superficial. But not one book has dealt with Liverpool from an all-sided approach. Michael Parkinson's book deals with the economic aspect from a financial and largely academic angle only. Liverpool is a city with half a million people, formerly the major sea port of the British empire. The city succeeded in humbling the 'Iron Lady' herself and forced her to retreat in 1984—something only the miners had achieved, in 1981. I wanted to rescue the truth of that story from under heaps of lies and slanders that have poured down on the heads of the leaders of the Liverpool struggle.

MIR: So your book is more than a factual account?

PT: A narrative account would have been interesting in itself but the hidden processes beneath the events have been glossed over by most commentators. Liverpool was not a 'fiendish plot' by Marxists but the product of a number of factors. Firstly there is the collapse of capitalism manifested in a striking fashion in the state of Liverpool in the 1980s. And secondly there was the presence of a powerful Marxist tendency gathered around *Militant* which invested the Liverpool labour movement with a unique fighting capacity. Those are the key underlying factors to the story.

MIR: You have written this book in collaboration with Tony Mulhearn—what were the features of this cooperation?

PT: I have had a long association with Tony going back more than 20 years. Tony has played and is playing a key role in the development of the labour movement. He won wide respect as President of the Liverpool District Labour Party and as a councillor during the Liverpool events. I have closely

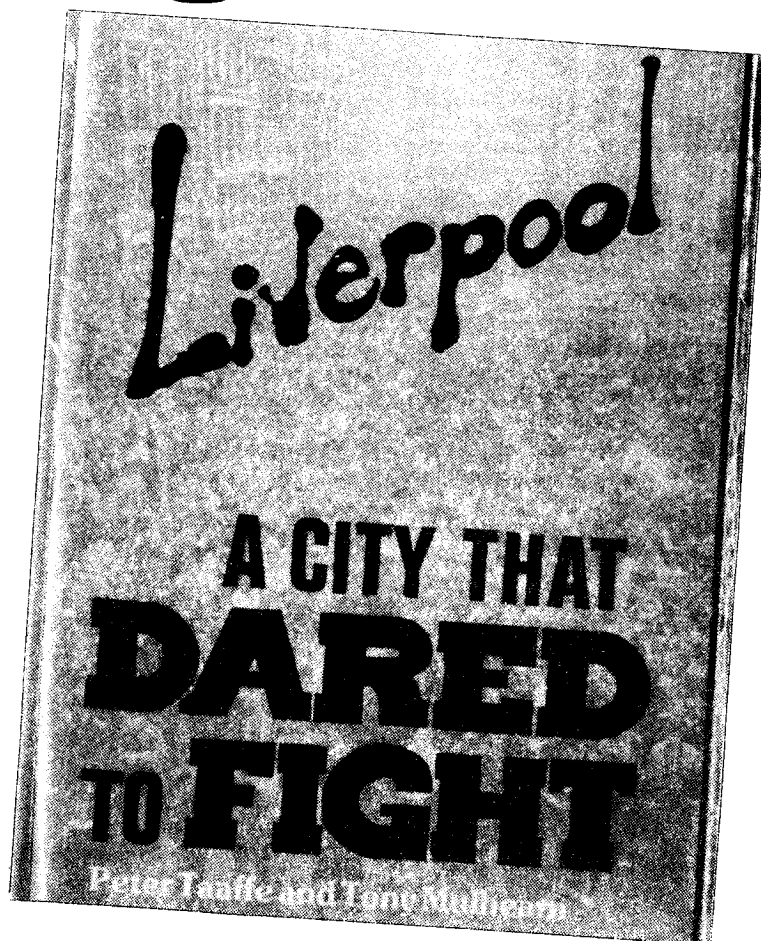
followed events in Liverpool, visited the city on many occasions, and discussed with Tony and others on the major strategical and tactical problems confronting the leaders of the struggle as they happened. I think we realised that it was a natural alliance to write a book on Liverpool's story.

MIR: What were the key events in the Liverpool story that your book deals with?

PT: The story of Liverpool's fight can be divided into two phases: the ascendant or offensive period from the elections of 1983 up to September 1985; and the defensive period from September 1985 to now when the gains of

the first period have had to be defended.

The 1983 election campaign stands out for its completely different character compared to other Labour Party election campaigns. Liverpool did not just rely on an 'opinion poll' recording the preferences of voters on the doorstep. Liverpool canvassers set out to convince voters as well, through argument in lengthy discussions. That election revealed what Marxists have always claimed. The working class is not stupid. They wanted to know whether Labour could do any better than other parties, and just presenting an anti-Tory case was not enough to convince them. Voters even discussed with canvassers the failure of the



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Socialist government in France. They wanted to know why there was unemployment and how to change the situation.

That experience in 1983 was applied in all subsequent elections in Liverpool with brilliant results for Labour. It shows that Labour can win in the teeth of ferocious anti-Labour media attacks. In Liverpool Labour created its own 'public opinion' by action and by a huge volume of socialist propaganda that counteracted the poison of the press. Apart from the mass demonstrations, the other moments that stand out were the exciting council meeting in 1984 when the council set a rate below that needed to finance expenditure and demanded the government provide more resources, and the jubilation following the victory over the government in July 1984. And of course there was the dramatic September 1985 days when the call for strike action was narrowly defeated. After that Liverpool under its Marxist leadership managed to avoid a rout and conducted an orderly retreat which allowed them to consolidate the gains made in previous years through victories in the local and general elections of 1986 and 1987.

MIR: Would you say that Liverpool was defeated in the end?

PT: Eventually there was a setback in the sense that the councillors were surcharged, banned from office and some were expelled from the Labour Party. But there were enormous achievements that had lasting effect. The gains in jobs, housing and education are spelt out in our book but also the Liverpool experience was a monument to working class struggle heightening the political awareness of Liverpool people. The struggle of the 47 is now a tremendous obstacle to the right wing temporarily in control of the council and trying to make cuts. The 47 surcharged councillors are like Banquo's ghost in Macbeth coming back to haunt him by occupying his seat. Whenever the present leadership try to make cuts they are confronted with the achievements of the 47.

MIR: Why was Liverpool eventually defeated?

PT: Well, it was not because of the policies or strategy adopted by the council. There were mistakes, of course, what mass struggle can be conducted without making some mistakes? But when mistakes were made they were openly admitted and corrected before the working class which helped to raise everybody's understanding. The most famous mistake

was the issuing of 'redundancy notices' in September 1985 as a legal manoeuvre, a tactic to gain time to pursue the campaign to the end of 1985. Of course there was no question of the council sacking anybody but the council's opponents used the question to obscure the real issues at stake. This was openly recognised by the Liverpool leaders. Compare that to the national Labour leaders who have no comment to make on their role in the general election defeat last year. Because they admit no mistakes, they are preparing even greater blunders.

The main reason for the defeat was the policies and action of the national trade union and Labour leaders. They were a prop for the Tory government. Without their connivance the Thatcher, Jenkin and Baker combination would never have been able to fine or drive from office the 47. Also the former 'soft left' when they ditched their own rate-capping campaign gave renewed strength to the national Labour leaders to attack Liverpool.

MIR: What are the main lessons of the Liverpool experience?

PT: Some superficial commentators suggest that Liverpool is in some way peculiar. The pollster Professor Anthony King said the election results showed that Liverpool had declared 'political UDI' from the rest of the 'normal' country; while others have talked mystically about the special 'character' of scousers. But Liverpool is not unique in that sense—the same economic and social problems are faced by Glasgow, the North East and parts of inner London. But Liverpool was and is unique in the sense that the working class there had developed a Marxist leadership and consequently powerful strategy and tactics. It is not the objective conditions in Liverpool that are unique but the subjective factor of its leadership. And the truth is that what happened in Liverpool between 1983-87 will apply to the rest of the country in the future—there will be many more 'Liverpools' in the next five to ten years. The struggle will not unfold in the same way—at the moment industrial struggles are more likely—but the same fighting capabilities that the miners and Liverpool working people showed will be repeated.

But the key factor was a tried and tested Marxist leadership. Foreexample, in Liverpool in the June 1987 election the swing to Labour was so great that if it had been repeated country wide Neil Kinnock would have got 116 more Labour MPs beside him, which would have meant a Labour government. And

I repeat that there is nothing unique about the economic and social conditions in Liverpool. That swing was only achieved because of the leadership and role of Liverpool council.

MIR: Finally, your book is the first venture of the newly founded publishers, *Fortress Books*. What significance is the establishment of *Fortress Books* for the development of Marxism?

PT: It is of historic importance. Trotsky emphasised in the 1930s that the establishment of a Marxist publishing house in America represented a decisive turning point. He stressed that the labour movement and particularly the Marxists could not rely on bourgeois publishers. They would occasionally publish works of Marxism, particularly if they could profit by this, but this could not counter the deluge of books whose purpose was to ideologically reinforce capitalism. He also pointed out that with the onset of capitalist economic crisis from 1929 bourgeois publishing houses, "which from time to time printed radical works in the firm belief that the US was immune to the actions of 'destructive' ideas, will in the coming years become more cautious, ie reactionary, and will completely ostracize revolutionary theoretical thought." The crude and hooligan efforts of the Stalinists in the publishing field, with their horrible perversion of Marxism, only reinforced the bourgeois.

Trotsky's hopes in his American followers, however, were to be dashed. Their heirs have today completely abandoned Marxism. Trotsky advocated "a revolutionary publishing house, independent both from capital and from the Soviet bureaucracy" which would "from the very beginning set itself the task of bringing out a serious library of revolutionary thought for advanced workers and radical intelligentsia.... Under the blows of the crisis and social shake-ups there will here arise a generation of revolutionary theoreticians capable of saying a new word. All the more necessary is it to create for this awakening social criticism a stable base in the form of a publishing house not bound by any other considerations and obligations outside of the objective to open to humanity a new road of development." How delighted would he then be, if he were alive today, to see the establishment of *Fortress Books*. The publication of this book is only the first of a stream of books which will be produced which will play a vital role in the building of Marxism in Britain and internationally.

What can be learnt from the 1929 Wall Street crash which can tell us about what might happen in 1988?

The Crash: 1929 and today

On Monday 19 October 1987, there was pandemonium and panic on the stock exchange in Wall Street, New York. Just before the market closed, dealers came to blows as they fought to make last minute sales of stocks and shares. The market had just suffered an unprecedented 22% fall in share prices from previous levels in just one day. Black Monday of 1987 easily outstripped the notorious terrible Tuesday in October 1929 which started the Wall Street Crash. The fall in 1929 was just a mere 13% drop in value in a day. And yet that crash in prices of Tuesday 29 October 1929 has always been regarded as the beginning of the Great Slump in capitalist production, investment and trade which ensued from 1930-32 and carried on in some countries for the rest of that terrible decade until the Second World War.

So does the crash of 1987 mean that capitalism is heading into another major slump, with all that means for employment, wages, and the rights and conditions of working people? If so, in what ways, if any, will it be different this time?

Worldwide crash

The stock market crash of 1987 was even more extensive and severe than that of 1929 in two principal ways. Firstly, the magnitude of the fall was much greater this time. In the fortnight ending on 26 October, Wall Street saw the value of shares plunge by over 30%, in London the fall was similar, in Hong Kong it was even larger, and in Tokyo it was still nearly 20%. In 1929, the severest fall was in New York. Other exchanges did not experience such quick and steep declines. This time, while New York triggered off the crash, it quickly spread to every other market for shares in the capitalist world. No one was spared—with the exception of Sri Lanka, where investors were obviously hoping that the Indian troops' crushing of the Tamil Tigers would herald a new era of peace!

This international chain reaction is another graphic demonstration of the inextricable links among modern capitalist national economies. No one capitalist nation can avoid the effects of a crisis in another; they stand and fall together. The British government and the employers federation, the CBI, wailed that the crash did not reflect the 'underlying strength' of British industry and claimed they could not understand

By Bob McKee

why a crash in New York should affect London's stock exchange. Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether the British economy is really strong, in saying what they did, the spokesmen for British capitalism were not prepared to recognise that while most shares quoted on stock exchanges were those of nationally based companies, the funds used to buy and sell them were not. Much of the purchasing power for speculation in stock markets comes from funds held by big international banks and multinationals, which shoot around from one country to another in search of the biggest return. Also buyers and sellers of stocks in London are very quickly going to take into account what speculators in New York think of the future of share prices and act accordingly.

What can we learn from the Great Crash on Wall Street in 1929 which can tell us about what might happen in 1988? Just as in 1987, the stock market had been rising fast in a charging 'bull market' from about 1925 up to 1929. Wall Street reached a record high on 3rd September 1929 of 381.17 on the Dow Jones Industrial Share Index. Most share analysts were confident of further rises, and there were very few voices expressing doubts. And yet production and investment had just begun to fall in the summer of 1929, and interest rates had reached their highest level since 1921. There was a definite downward drift in prices during October. Just as in 1987, the slump really began on Monday 21 October, with panic selling on the Thursday which was only stopped when the leaders of the big institutions declared that they would 'support' the market prices. But by Monday 28 October the slump recommenced, this time with no recovery, culminating in Black Tuesday, when the fall in one day equalled the gains of the previous 12 months.

The slump continued right through to 13 November reaching a low of 198.69 on the index, nearly 50% below the high of 3 September. What was the reaction of the political leaders and economic advisers to the crash? Throughout that four weeks from Black Tuesday to mid-November, they all claimed there was no reason for panic. The leading economist, Irving Fisher, called the crash 'a great accident' caused by a

'psychology of panic'. There would be no recession in the real economy, he claimed. President Hoover announced that "the fundamental business of the country, ie the production and distribution of commodities, is on a sound and prosperous basis". Eugene Stevens, the President of Continental Illinois Bank claimed that "there is nothing in the business situation to justify nervousness". Charles Schwab of US Steel said that industry was in a 'fundamentally sound condition', a claim repeated by all the other industrial barons. These claims have been echoed, even down to the last word, by Reagan, Thatcher, Lawson and the CBI leaders now after the crash of 1987.

And the capitalist leaders of 1929 also took action to reassure markets. The day after Black Tuesday, banks cut interest rates. And in November Hoover cut taxes, and there was a further fall in interest rates. These are similar to the measures carried out by the banks and governments of 1987 to stem the falls in the market for shares and restore confidence.

1924-29

In 1929 it appeared at first that the words of confidence and measures to provide more and cheaper funds had worked. The market began to recover. From New Year 1930 until April the market rose back to 294.07 on the index, 100 points above the low of November 1929, but still 90 points below the peak of September 1929. It was a bigger recovery than so far achieved in 1987. But after a short lull, in June 1930 prices resumed their fall reaching a new low in December 1930 well below the low of 1929. The fall continued, with a only a brief limited recovery, in 1931 and on through 1932 to reach rock bottom in July with the index at only 41.22! While a rise began in early 1933, the bull market was so weak for the rest of the decade that Wall Street did not reach the November low of 1929 until 1937 and then suffered a further collapse that was not retrieved until after the war. It is clear why, after seeming to recover its nerve between November 1929 and Spring 1930, the stock market then began slipping into a bottomless pit. Because by Spring 1930, a major decline in production and investment had begun to bite into the US economy, and the prospects for profits were clearly dismal.

Why did the Great Crash come in

October 1929 and why could it not be avoided? The answer to these questions depends on understanding what happened in the boom of 1924-29. Capitalism is a system of production based on competition among owners of capital to obtain the greatest share of profit created by exploiting the labour of the working-class who own no capital. Capital will not be invested and production will not commence unless the return in profits on that capital is sufficiently high to justify its advancement. Thus the key to expansion of production, investment and trade under capitalism is profit. The whole of the Marxist analysis of capitalist production aims to show that profits and therefore investment and production do not move steadily forward under capitalism. On the contrary capitalist production moves in cycles of boom and slump or recession, as Trotsky once described, like a human being breathes in and out.

Moreover there are clearly distinguished epochs of capitalist production when that inhaling and exhaling is easy and healthy, and others when it grows increasingly painful and bronchitic. Thus the period 1896-1914 was generally an epoch of boom, when growth in production and profitability was high, and any downturns were shortlived and confined. However, the period 1918-39 was entirely different, with production and investment sluggish, culminating in a long lasting and extensive slump beginning at the end of 1929. As Trotsky described the post 1919 period: "In the decades preceding the war, crises had the character of short and not too profound interruptions, while each new upswing left the peak of the previous one far below. But now we must expect the opposite: profound, long and painful crises, while the upward movements are weak and short lived," *Writings* 1932. p173.

The boom of 1924-29 was relatively weak compared to the pre-war period. This was confirmed by the slow expansion of investment; only 3% a year compared to 5% prior to 1919. The productive sectors of the economy did not grow as much as the financial and service sectors. There were less workers employed in US manufacturing in 1929 than in 1919. Spare capacity unused by capitalist enterprises was up to 20% even during the boom of 1924-29. All the factors for a slump in investment and production existed but were only delayed by the speculative credit-financed dealing in fictitious capital that drove the capitalist economies of the 1920s onward temporarily, while still preparing the way for the Great Crash and Great Depression of the 1930s.

The boom of 1924-29 shows great

"The US economy is fundamentally sound", President Reagan, 22 October 1987.

"The US economy is fundamentally sound", Andrew Mellon, US Treasury Secretary, 29 October 1929.

similarities with the boom of 1982-87. In 1974-5 capitalism suffered the first simultaneous world-wide recession in production, investment and trade since world war two. This marked a new turning point. Capitalism now entered a new era of relatively sluggish growth. Between 1964 and 1973 output in Japan had increased by 9% per year; in Europe by 4.5%; and in the USA by 3.7%. But despite a short upturn between 1976-9, capitalism went into another recession between 1979-81. In the mid-1970s Japan's growth rate fell to 3.6%; Europe to 2.4% and the USA to 2.6%. By 1980 profitability had declined to one-third on average of its 1960s peak. That is why a recession was inevitable to capitalism in 1979-81—in order to write off capital values of old plant and reduce wage costs to try and restore profits.

The stock market

That recession has been succeeded by what Reagan has boasted of as 60 uninterrupted months of expansion of output, at least in the USA. But the boom of 1982-7 has been the weakest of all those since 1949. Since 1979 output has moved forward in Japan by just 3.8%; in Europe by under 2% and in the USA by about 2%. While profitability did recover somewhat through the cutbacks in the recession of 1981 and the subsequent boom, it only rose to half the levels achieved in the 1960s. And in order to achieve that, major sectors of industrial capacity, particularly in Europe, had to be closed down and unemployment shot up to over 30 million, two-thirds in Europe alone. Capitalism was much leaner but only a little fitter.

And despite being leaner, excess

Alan Greenspan, Chairman US Federal Reserve Bank, "I detect none of the excesses that could cause the expansion to turn brittle or self-destruct", two days before 'Black Monday', 22 October 1987.

capacity in industry has continued to grow, just as in the 1920s. Each inhalation and exhalation of the organism of capitalism is becoming more painful. The new slump or recession now in prospect will only restore a basis for a further limited spurt forward. There can be no return to the long boom of the 1950s and 1960s. The post-war boom is clearly at an end and capitalism is well into an epoch similar to that between the two world wars, of shallow booms and painful slumps.

The 1982-7 years were just such a shallow boom. Profits and profit rates recovered somewhat from the all time lows reached just prior to the world recession of 1979-81. Production has made some limited steps forward. This improvement in the world economy was expressed in a bull market in all the major stock exchanges for nearly five years. But because the stock market has increasingly become a market for fictitious capital, rather than for raising funds for investment in production as it originally was, prices have wildly outstripped the expansion in real capital values ie the growth of commodities, factories, machinery and profits.

One way of measuring this variance is to compare the average price of shares with the average dividend that can be received in the world's stock markets. Historically, in London this price/earnings ratio has been around 10/1 to 12/1. In other words it took approximately ten to twelve years of dividends or company profits to pay back the value of the share price. Prior to the crash this ratio was over 18/1. The New York figure was similar, while in Tokyo the price/earnings ratio had reached nearly 70/1 with ratios for some companies meaning that it would take 150 to 200 years to pay back from profits. Clearly the speculative bubble was stretching share prices to sky-high levels when compared to the real state of the economy. In the first half of 1987 share values rose on most markets by anything between 25-50%. This pace of growth could not be maintained.

This explains why the crash was so severe when it came. Stock markets were so overstretched compared to the growth of real values. That is why the comments of government and the CBI about the share crash being unreal and unrelated to real economic strength are so ridiculous. On the contrary what was unreal was the previous high share price level. The crash has established some semblance of reality.

The stock crash of 1929 similarly reduced fictitious capital values to levels more appropriate with real capital values, but also heralded a massive contraction of real values which was also necessary. And the collapse in real

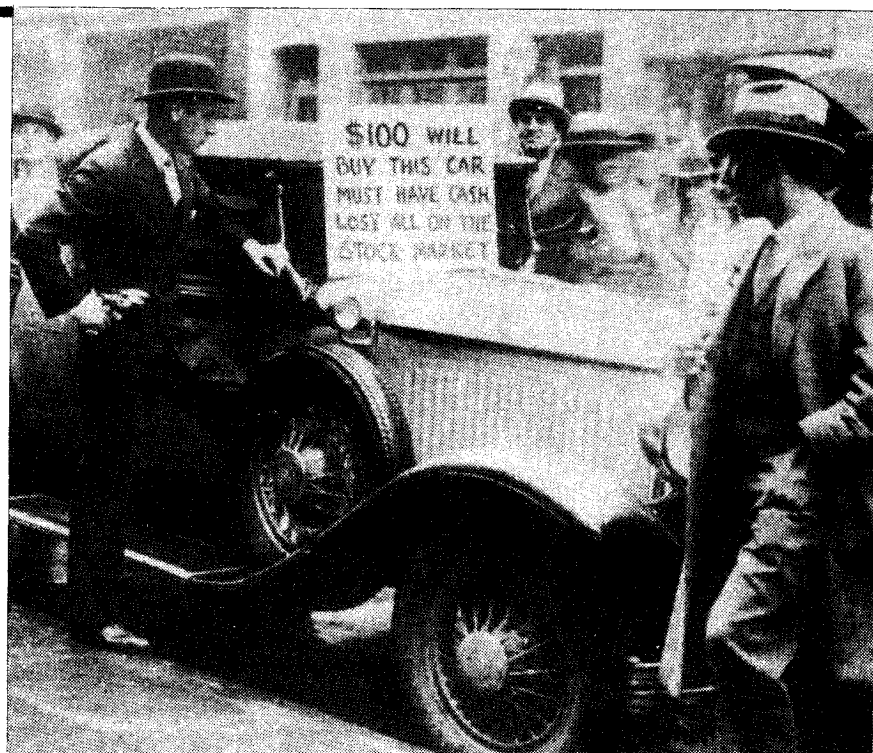
"There have been eight recessions in the post-war period and the stock market has entered sustained declines, signalling their approach, by lead times averaging just under eight months", National Bureau of Economic Research, USA as reported in the Wall Street Journal, 19 October 1987.

values was severe, although the degree of severity varied among the four capitalist nations who contributed up to 70% of world capitalist production in 1929: the USA, Britain, Germany and France. The USA, the key capitalist economy with 40% of production alone, had seen a 15% growth in overall production from 1924-29 and a 26% growth in industrial production. But it then suffered a fall in national product of 29% in the four years to the end of 1933, while industrial production fell by 36%!

Protectionism

The collapse started in the USA and soon spread to the other capitalist nations. Germany had experienced a frenetic growth of production in just three years from 1926 but its more vulnerable position on world markets led to a massive contraction of national output of nearly 40%. France had expanded by 14% in national output and by 20% in industrial production from 1924-29. Because of its colonial markets the Great Depression only led to a fall of 7% in overall output and 15% in industry between 1930-3. Britain had experienced particularly sluggish growth after 1919, never recovering its leading role in world capitalism. Growth in national output between 1924-9 was only 10% and industrial production rose even less. But again because of protected colonial markets, the fall in output overall between 1930-3 was only 4%, although industry declined by 12%.

Unemployment rose from 10 million in 1929 to 40 million by 1932, with the USA reaching 30% and Britain 25%. National product in the USA rose by 34% from 1933 to 1937, and industrial production recovered by nearly 30% to reach the levels of 1929. But then the US economy experienced a new slump and slipped back. Production did not again reach the levels of 1929 until the USA entered the war in 1941 when unemployment was still over 17%. In Europe, the recovery was sharp in



Germany, output rising by over 45% to 1937 as Hitler put the economy on a war footing. But in France there was little respite, as industrial production stagnated at depression levels. Britain surged back with 15% more output and 24% more industrial production than in 1929 by 1937, but this revival had only been possible after nearly 12 years of recession. The inter-war period was clearly one of shallow and short lived growth and lengthy and extensive slumps for Britain.

Many capitalist commentators rule out the possibility of a slump of 1930s proportions because they argue that governments have learnt from those years of depression and will not commit the same mistakes of policy made then. The mistakes that are referred to are that: governments then did not expand money supply and so lower interest rates and make it easier to invest; they did not cut taxes and expand government spending to boost demand for goods and services in the economy; they actually cut markets for capitalist production when each government imposed tariffs and quotas on imports to protect home markets and devalued their currencies to make their own national commodities cheaper on world markets. Rather than cooperate internationally in keeping markets open and supporting each others currencies, the governments of the 1930s engaged in an economic war which drove them all into slump. This time it will be different, the commentators claim. Already governments are cutting interest rates and expanding the money supply and central bankers are cooperating in stabilising the value of national currencies,

particularly the dollar. But was it really true that the governments of the 1930s were so stupid and selfish that they created a huge slump when there would probably have been just a small recession otherwise? And is it true that the policies adopted now by the governments of 1987 will be any different?

US economy

Firstly, it is not true that governments and bankers in the depression of the 1930s restricted money supply and kept interest rates high, thus driving the financial system and consequently industry into bankruptcy. In the USA, interest rates fell from nearly 6% to under 2% between 1929-33. And as explained above, from the first day after the Great Crash, interest rates were lowered. While prices had actually fallen by 3% between 1924-9 and then fell by over 30% to 1933, money supply rose by 11% up to 1929 and then declined by only 25%. So during the depression, real money supply or purchasing power was much higher than in the boom period and much cheaper, but it still did not revive the economy. A similar trend is revealed in each of the other capitalist nations. Money was plentiful and cheap but it made no difference, because the market for profitable production and investment was so poor, there was no demand for money. As the proverb goes, you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink.

It is true that the major capitalist governments tried to cut back government expenditure, thus reducing the market for commodities and employ-

ment further. Even in the New Deal era, President Roosevelt was calling for 'balanced' government budgets where expenditure did not exceed tax revenues. But this policy, which was also applied between 1924-9, could hardly be blamed for the collapse of 1930-2.

During the Great Depression, there were several attempts at international cooperation but they all collapsed, because each government made decisions to protect its own capitalist economy rather than be dictated to by other governments. When the US government introduced the Smoot Hawley Tariff Act in June 1930, mainly to protect American agricultural capitalists, the slump in industry had already begun. US restrictions on imports of agricultural goods had a devastating effect on the agricultural economies of Central Europe whose main market was now closed to it. They had borrowed heavily from French and British banks, as had German industry. They began to default on their debts, driving Britain and France into financial crisis, and causing wholesale bankruptcies in US banking. Eventually Britain was forced to end the pound sterling's connection to the value of gold ie the Gold Standard, and devalue its currency. Soon every national government followed suit and tried to maintain its share of dwindling world markets by competitive devaluations, and tariff and quota trade barriers. The collapse of world trade and financial cooperation was a consequence of the unavoidable slump in production and investment. Policies of protection and devaluation were inevitable despite the initial good intentions of the capitalist powers. There is no reason to expect that if the slump in production sets in, that capitalist governments will react any differently now in trying to protect their national economies.

In 1929, what triggered off the Great Depression worldwide was the slump in production and investment in the USA. In 1987 the USA is still the most important and largest capitalist economy. It contributes 38% of world production. It is the most important market for commodities produced by many of the other capitalist nations. Therefore, if the USA is expanding, world capitalism goes forward and if it goes into recession, the world follows.

In the post-war period, the US economy has lost ground relatively to West Germany and Japan. Investment has been lower, growth has been slower and profitability smaller. As a result its share of world manufacturing production and trade has declined. In the recessions of 1974-5 and 1979-81 the US

economy suffered losses of production, capital and employment. The productive sectors of the US economy appeared to be stagnant. Yet the US capitalists had to continue to provide the war machine to protect the interests of imperialism worldwide. Reagan came into office in 1980 at the start of the recession, committed to higher employment, less taxes and less government expenditure to relieve the burdens of the capitalist class and win support of working people alike. But Reagan was also committed to a rearmament programme to grow by 7.5% a year over inflation. This had the accidental by-product of fuelling the recovery from recession. The arms programme increased profits for the 'military industrial complex' and their spending on other commodities filtered through to the productive sectors of the US economy. It was 'war Keynesianism' or 'negative Keynesianism'.

Plaza accord

But how could this extra government spending be financed? Reagan at first claimed he could fund it by cutting welfare spending on the poor. But even his savage measures in this area were not enough. As he was reducing taxes for the rich, there was only one other solution: to borrow the money capital. So after having bitterly attacked the previous Carter administration for driving up the total national debt to \$8,000bn, the Reagan regime proceeded to raise that to over \$25,000bn in five years. The deficit of government expenditure over revenue reached \$220bn in 1987. The US government borrowed the money by issuing US Treasury bonds which paid interest to lenders. Who were the lenders? They were the major commercial banks and multinational companies around the world, particularly those in Japan and West Germany who were flush with dollars received from their successful sales of exports to the USA.

The US government had to offer high rates of interest to attract buyers of their bonds. This had two important consequences. High US rates of interest made it very attractive for banks and multinationals not only to buy US government bonds but also to buy more dollars with other currencies to receive the high rate of interest. This extra demand for dollars over supply drove up the value of the dollar compared to other currencies. As a result, US manufacturers found that their commodities for sale were more expensive because buyers had to pay more dollars to buy a US product. On the other hand US consumers at home found that they had to pay less dollars to buy imports.

The result was that US manufacturers, already weaker on world markets, now lost even more ground and also found that they were driven out of their own domestic market by cheaper European and Japanese imports. On top of this US manufacturers could not improve their costs by investment in better machinery and techniques because the cost of borrowing money to invest was so high due to the high interest rates created by the US government's need to borrow! Now for the first time in 100 years the US was importing more commodities than it was exporting and its borrowing had made it the world's largest debtor.

So while the US budget deficit at first appeared to start off a boom in production, trade and employment, this was mainly centred in arms, financial services, and general service sectors. Industrial production stagnated and manufacturing employment continued to fall. While arms production may create some employment and purchasing power in the market, arms in themselves add nothing to real production values. Workers cannot eat tanks in order to produce more value and capitalists cannot use missiles to make more commodities for sale. So the resources devoted to arms production are entirely wasted and eventually must reduce the overall surplus-value available to the productive sectors of capitalist economy. Production growth must eventually come to a standstill.

The US government tried to avoid the coming slump in US production and restore the fortunes of US industry by reversing its policies in 1985. It called a conference of the seven major capitalist powers. Under the terms of the so-called Plaza agreement, these nations agreed that they would allow the US government to lower interest rates on their dollar borrowings while the US government attempted to reduce its spending deficit and therefore its borrowing requirement. This meant that it would be less attractive to hold dollars and the value of the dollar would decline compared to other currencies. Thus US industrial goods would be cheaper on home and overseas markets making it possible for the trade deficit to be reduced.

In the last two years the US dollar has fallen dramatically in value, by over 40% against an average of other currencies, with an even larger drop against West Germany and Japan, the two main exporters into the US market. But there has been no real improvement in the trade deficit. On the contrary it has got worse, approaching \$170bn in 1987. US industry has so far failed to regain its lost markets. And the US government had not cut its deficit at all as it

continued the arms race and also tried to maintain the market for its artificially created boom.

This failure of the Plaza agreement seriously troubled the West German and Japanese capitalists. They were now receiving less value for sales of their commodities to US buyers because the dollar had been devalued, and they were receiving less interest on the dollars they lent back to the US government to pay for Reagan's budget deficit. There was growing disquiet which led to a further meeting in Paris in February 1987 where the 'Louvre Accord' of the seven top capitalist powers was signed. Under this agreement, the value of the dollar was to be supported, in return for which the US government would cut its deficit and Japan and West Germany would gradually expand their economies to allow the USA to reduce their trade deficit by increased exports.

Third World debts

The Louvre Accord is now in tatters. Following the stock market crash, governments have lowered interest rates to restore investment. But the lowering of interest rates has made holding dollars less attractive. The result has been downward pressure on the value of the dollar. Europe and Japan cannot continue to allow the dollar to fall, making their goods more expensive on world markets, while the USA fails to correct its budget deficit. If there is no action by the USA, Europe and Japan will be forced to protect their markets and/or devalue their currencies. On the other hand if the US government significantly raises taxation or appreciably cuts government expenditure to reduce the deficit it could lower further the profitability of US industry and push it into a deeper recession, while cutting markets for Japanese and European exports.

Already the dangers of protectionism have grown as the rivalry between Japan and Europe, Europe and the USA, and the USA and Japan has increased with slowing world trade. These three trading blocs already impose considerable non-tariff barriers to imports from each other, and even tariff rates have been raised on specific commodities. If the world economy moves into stagnation, then the pressures for protectionist measures may be overwhelming despite the fine words about cooperation.

Any recession in production and trade will be disastrous for the economies of the Third World, with huge debts owed to the international banks, and vitally dependent on exports to the markets of the USA, Europe and Japan. Defaults on payment of these debts could become an epidemic in any

"All the contradictions that make for a devastating slump are piling up. The price of stocks and shares is not in proportion to the economy. It is fictitious capital... The bankers and the stock brokers are under the illusion that the increase in stocks and shares will lead to an increase in production to match it. In fact they will have to come down with a bump as they came down in the past. Stocks and shares will have to come into line with the real economy." Ted Grant, July 1987, MIR No 35, Summer 1987.

recession, forcing the governments of the advanced world to protect the international banks from collapse through government funds. More government spending to help the banks will mean extra taxation and less social spending.

The 1929 Great Crash was followed in less than six months by a major slump in production, investment and trade. The post first world war period was one of weak booms and severe recessions for capitalism, and the weak boom of 1924-29 was followed by the Great Depression of 1930-32. The period since 1975 seems to be similar. The boom of 1924-29 was healthier than that of 1982-7. It raised production in the 16 major capitalist nations by nearly 4%

Militant International Review No 35, Summer 1987 is available at 90p plus 20p postage, from World Socialist Books, 3/13 Hepscoot Road, London E9 5HB. This edition includes Ted Grant's major article, written before the stock market crash, outlining the fundamental processes at work in the world capitalist economy. Undeclared trade wars through currency devaluations; the end of the 'hegemonic' position of US capitalism on a world scale, especially in relation to Japan; the advanced overcapacity; the stock market speculation; the explosion of consumer credit; even the world trend for tax cuts—all are explained as factors preparing a world slump. All readers should make sure that they have a copy of this back issue of the MIR to study alongside the present material. Cheques etc to be made payable to World Socialist Books.

per year on average. The 1982-7 boom is weaker. Unemployment between 1924-9 was only 4-5% on average, although it was much higher in the USA and Germany. Now it is higher on average.

The coming slump

The Great Crash of 1987 is making way for the most serious economic decline in capitalism since the early 1930s. Whether it will be as severe as 1930-32 is difficult to judge at this early stage. But it is likely that the inevitable downturn will surpass anything experienced in the post-war period, with significant absolute falls in production and investment. The crash and the slump that will follow illustrate how completely reactionary modern capitalism is, in its increasing inability to develop a sufficient quantity of products for human need. The long upswing of 1949-73 developed the productive forces enormously, but even then not as much as a world federation of workers democracies could have achieved, cooperating internationally to develop the resources of technique, labour and natural materials available.

Private ownership of the means of production and the national state have acted as barriers to economic development during the 20th century. These restrictions, specific to the capitalist mode of production for profit, were partially overcome and temporarily hidden by the long post-war upswing. Now in this period of downswing, these key contradictions in capitalism will exert themselves with renewed force with drastic consequences for the livelihoods of the people of the world.



'Historically, there have always been two strains within the British trade unions; the conservative, deferential, friendly society tradition, and the unconquerable, fighting, revolutionary side'.

The future of the trade unions

In 1983, after Labour's second general election defeat in succession, *Militant* alone kept faith in the ability of the working class to fight. The June 1983 election was followed by the TUC Conference. There the Alistair Graham/Len Murray axis of 'New Realism' was in the ascendant, with talk of how objectively the power of the working class had been undermined, how the workers would not struggle and how, if they did, they would lose. The best that could be done, they said, was to throw aside talk of confrontation and, in effect, to go statesmanlike to the employers and government asking them to be 'fair'.

The Tories answered this grovelling with GCHQ and the snatching away of trade union rights. The more these 'leaders' bent down at Thatcher's feet, the more she kicked them in the teeth. The most crushing answer came, though, from the miners with their magnificent year long strike. In the course of that strike Len Murray retired to read poetry and smell flowers, and, with a little help from *Militant* supporters, Alistair Graham soon followed.

'New Realism'

Now, following Labour's third consecutive election defeat, 'New Realism' is back in an even more degenerate form. The higher echelons of the trade union movement are gripped by a sense of utter helplessness. Their message to shop stewards, convenors, branch officials and other rank and file trade union members is: 'Nothing can be done.'

Fundamentally, the union leaders fail to grasp the irreconcilable gulf that exists between the classes in capitalist society. Marx explained 140 years ago that the class struggle is sometimes nakedly clear, while at other times—times of relative capitalist stability—it is more hidden. Class relations were softened in the period after the second world war during the protracted economic upswing. Then a material basis existed for the privileged, parasitic existence of the trade union bureaucracy. Capitalism was expanding, certain reforms could be granted to the working class. The union leaders imagined that it was their deft negotiating skills which secured all the reforms of those years. In reality, even at this time, reforms were secured by the pressure of ordinary workers, by trade union action

By Brian Ingham

or by the threat of action, often in the teeth of harsh repressive action by the union leaders.

Now we are in an entirely different epoch. The engine of world capitalism has been thrown into reverse. Rather than leading to some great new revival of British capitalism, the present weak boomlet is already proving to be ephemeral. Capitalism has pulled the rug from under the feet of the union leaders. Their 'realism' is totally removed from reality.

The 1987 TUC Congress revealed where trade union leaders can end up without perspectives, without theory. It was clear that the trade union leaders had absorbed lock, stock and barrel all the talk of the Tory press that the unions were 'marginalised'. Moreover, as the Labour Party Conference one month later again demonstrated, they had also swallowed wholesale the idea that Thatcher had found a formula for the rescue of British capitalism.

Marxist theory is absolutely indispensable for any union leader at any level who is striving to give adequate fighting leadership. In navigation, if the soundings are miscalculated, a pilot's chart can be dangerously wrong, leading the pilot to steer the ship into disaster. So it is in the unions for those leaders who are not armed with the chart of Marxist theory and perspectives. Without an understanding of the real problems that are developing for trade union members, it is impossible to point the correct way forward strategically or tactically. In the last few years they have stumbled from one disaster to another, one incorrect analysis has paved the way to set-backs which have then led to further wrong conclusions being drawn. In the process they have imperilled the material well-being of millions of ordinary union members.

In his writings on the unions in the 1930s, Trotsky brilliantly answered, in advance, these supposedly modern 'New Realists'. He explained that capitalist crisis absolutely exhausts any reforming role for the trade union leaders. They are faced ultimately with one of two alternatives: either to turn to the ideas of Marxism, to link together the day-to-day struggles with the need to change society, to try to raise the level of understanding of workers when they are in struggle, when they are

thinking, questioning, looking for a way forward. Or they can attempt to reconcile themselves with the existence of capitalism in decline, ending up as policemen of their own class. With the House of Lords, the courts, the press, they become another institution of capitalism, in fact a decisive institution, holding back the working class.

Attempts to moderate the movement, to find a middle road, are being made today by leaders in all the unions. Open business trade unionism is being practiced by the EETPU leaders and to some extent also by the leaders of the AEU. The EETPU leaders organised a strike breaking force at Wapping and, scandalously, got away scot free. Their punishment was a polite tap on the knuckles from the TUC leaders. They have also hawked around no-strike deals, attempting to make their tender for membership rights irresistible to employers. They have sold historic trade union rights sometimes even before one worker has entered the factory gate.

The AEU

The AEU leaders have done their best to emulate the class collaboration deals of the EETPU. Bill Jordan, the president of the AEU, became the darling of the media at this year's TUC. He effectively said that it is not the employers who are the enemy, but Germany and Japan. In other words, British workers have to collaborate with their employers to smash the German and Japanese workers. New technology has opened up the possibility for a far shorter, far less intense working week. Jordan's response was to negotiate for a certain reduction in hours, but, in return, to help the engineering bosses to intensify exploitation, get rid of conditions which have been won over generations, and gain greatly enhanced flexibility, including flexibility over the number of hours worked at different times of the year. This agreement would have brought about a rapid deterioration in shop floor conditions and in the quality of life for engineering workers and their families.

'Is there no limit to the fall?' 'Are there no depths to which the trade union leaders will not sink?' In recent years these questions have been asked repeatedly by active workers within the unions. Engineering workers have recently given the answer. How far the union leaders go in their collaboration



The NCU gives a glimpse of what is to come. Having been bloodied in battle, many NCU members, particularly among the leading active layers, understand far more sharply the crucial role of leadership. As a result, John Golding, right, narrowly avoided being called on to resign at their annual conference.



with capitalist management depends entirely on the pressure they feel from below and whether this is sufficient to overcome the pressure from above of the capitalist class. It was the merciless pressure from below, involving many convenors and shop stewards formerly associated with the right, which forced the AEU leaders, at least for the moment, to abandon their efforts to conclude this deal.

At the 1987 TUC Congress the right displayed a complete smugness and arrogance. As Trotsky explained, they feel that they have got capitalist society behind them. They are lauded by the capitalists' press, slipped ready-made solutions. Every time they take one step against the working class they are praised to the skies. They think they know where they are going. Insulated from the daily uncertainties and worries of the mass of their members, cocooned in their own privileged world, they are hard and ruthless only when it comes to the struggle against the left, particularly the Marxists.

The left themselves swing from one position to another, responding at each stage to those class forces bearing down upon them most. With the situation in front of them today, the total formlessness of the left in the Labour movement is becoming more and more transparent. They launched a verbal assault on

the right at this year's TUC, but then ceded the ground to the right on one fundamental issue after another. There was a new panacea. If a fundamental problem existed, if there was an issue of principle on which there were irreconcilable differences, the answer was not 'resolve it' but, 'review it'.

Privatisation

On the no-strike deals of the EET-PU, Ron Todd spoke from the rostrum, saying that these deals were questions of principle, fundamental human rights were involved, it was not a question on the margins. But then he advocated shelving the issue to a review body, to come back to the General Council of the TUC. At the TUC Congress the pressures of ordinary trade union members are—to say the least—extremely remote, having been sieved first through different procedural stages in the individual unions. However, Congress remains far closer to rank and file workers than the rarified inner sanctums of the General Council. The General Council has been undemocratically reconstructed to favour the right, it contains only a handful of lay members and it is removed from the public glare. Hammond is confident that on the General Council he will be exonerated.

The pressure bearing down on the trade union leaders is producing, as was seen at the TUC, deep antagonisms, including intense personal bitterness, between the left and the right. But, with honourable exceptions—and here, at the 1987 TUC, John Macreadie and Arthur Scargill stood out in bold relief—all the union leaders are travelling to the right. In local government, with videos and masses of special literature, NUPE, the GMB, and the TGWU all went to extraordinary lengths to convince their members to sign an agreement that, in reality, is no different from that which Jordan and Laird of the AEU hoped to sign. It involved a certain rise in pay. But it signed away enhanced payment for working weekends, etc. Some of these leaders have used left credentials in order to convince thousands of workers to conclude this deal.

Why? The unwritten idea behind this agreement is that at both national and local level the battle against privatisation is over. The union leaders hope that this deal will make local in-house tendering easier. The national agreement is an impediment to local deals. So, they 'safeguard' the national agreement while at the same time facilitating local in-house tenders with worse conditions. In other words, the national agreement can be broken within the agreement! Logic is made to do somer-

saults.

If all the campaigning time, effort, finance and energy used to persuade local authority workers to conclude this agreement had been harnessed instead to carry out the NUPE Conference policy of a national fightback against privatisation, by now an unstoppable movement in defence of local services could have developed among local authority workers, with the full active support from millions of other workers who rely on the services which local authority workers provide. Instead, for the moment, this struggle has been undermined. The union leaders have dissipated the pressure underneath them. The isolation of every individual group of workers confronted by the privatisation leeches has been legitimised. But this agreement will satisfy no-one. It will only whet the appetites of those Tory employers who want the national agreement totally abolished and local authority workers will find they are even more vulnerable to attacks, not only from Tory authorities but also from those Labour councillors who—like the union leaders—have abandoned any idea of a serious struggle against the onslaught of the Tories on local services.

TU numbers fall

The union leaders face the future with utter resignation. All the trade unions have lost members including the EETPU. More members mean more contributions. Any drop in membership threatens their bureaucratic position. Trade union membership has fallen from the dizzy heights of 1979 when more than 50% of the workforce were in unions. Now 44% of employed workers are in unions, just 37% of the potential workforce including the unemployed. Being slaves to only the most dark facts which they see right in front of their noses, the leaders are convinced that these declining membership figures prove conclusively that trade union power has been irreversibly broken.

But these facts are only one side of the situation. Given the events of the last 8 years, with no real leadership, with mass unemployment in the background, what is striking is the marvellous resilience of the unions. Initially, when they came to power, the Tories were frightened of taking on the unions. They had their blueprint, the Ridley plan. But, although they had the measure of the trade union leaders, they understood that behind the leaders was assembled the enormous latent power of the trade unions. They took on one group at a time. When it came to the miners strike, despite all their assi-

duous preparation and their low regard for the general staff of the trade unions, they still did not relish the idea of fighting on more than one front. When they stumbled into simultaneous strikes of dockers and miners in the summer of 1984, they were in absolute panic. The trade union leaders came to the rescue, refusing to stand firm and mobilise wider solidarity to turn the government's panic into a shambolic retreat.

At each stage, the Tories have moved gingerly forward, testing and probing, seeing what they could get away with. Thatcher's attitude during the Falklands war was 'weakness invites aggression'. That has been her attitude consistently in the fight against those she dubbed 'the enemy within', the organised trade union movement. The Tories contempt for the trade union leaders has grown at each stage, feeding their aggression against the hard won rights and conditions of the working class. Each attack by the Tories has seen the union leaders hesitant, fumbling, running for cover, and, of course, blaming the workers who 'wouldn't fight'.

Despite the role of the union leaders, however, despite the drop in union membership numbers, despite the serious encroachments into rights and conditions, Marxists remain confident that soon the real power of the unions will be re-asserted. This optimism is based on a sober analysis of all the potentially explosive processes now coming together in British society. It is also based on a realistic assessment of the current position of the trade unions.

A comparison, for instance, with the 1920s is extremely instructive. Conditions today are, of course, very different but valuable conclusions can still be drawn. At that time, with the impetus behind them of the Russian revolution, as well as the experience of the horrors of the war, workers were determined to struggle for a better life. In the immediate aftermath of world war one there was a doubling of union membership. But after the defeat of 'Black Friday' in 1921, the engineers lockout, the defeat of the cotton workers, trade union membership halved. There was an actual march out of the unions because of the fear of victimisation. Shop floor organisation was atomised. Yet within a matter of years the general strike took place. Today trade union numbers are stronger than at any time in British history aside from that exceptional period from the mid 1970s to the early 1980s. Any drop in trade union membership is due almost exclusively to the destruction of manufacturing industry, the coal industry, the docks: all those areas where the unions traditionally

have been strong and most well organised.

There has been a whelter of academic research in the past year, most designed to show that the unions are 'marginal', but which grudgingly, instead, has had to show that the underlying, potential power of the trade unions remains. There has been no atomisation of shop floor organisation, rather the reverse. A drop has occurred in the number of shop stewards in manufacturing industry, again where the unions were most organised. But the number of shop stewards in industry as a whole from 1980 to 1984 went up from 317,000 to 385,000. The working class has strengthened its organisational bonds, drawing in more shop stewards from those social layers which had entered the trade unions for the first time in the 1970s and 1980s. Objectively, the working class is becoming stronger, not weaker.

The first movement of workers acting consciously together as a class is always in the direction of trade union activity. In the future, as in the period after the first world war, or the growth of the CIO in America, or with the explosion of union membership in the 1970s, millions of workers will once again flood into the trade unions.

Part-time workers

Mainly because of the growth of service industries, there are now about five million part-timers in British industry. This is a huge proportion of the workforce, the majority of whom are not organised. But they will join the unions. In the 1970s part-time workers, mainly the supposedly unorganisable women workers in the public services, spilt into NUPE, COHSE, the G&MWU and the TGWU. In the not too distant future millions of other unorganised workers will follow.

In an effort to bolster their flagging membership, the union leaders are attempting to recruit the army of unorganised workers. They will have scant success, however, if they relied solely upon the attitude of John Edmonds, GMB General Secretary and, supposedly, the new intellectual guru of the unions. In an interview during the TUC, he posed the question: 'what does solidarity mean to a shopworker?' That approach reveals an utter contempt for ordinary working people. Ironically, it was being answered around the time of the TUC in a newly released film, *Business as Usual* which depicted a real life struggle of —yes— a shopworker against sexual harassment in which it was the solidarity and support of other workers which were the critical factors in securing victory. These layers, shop-

workers, factory workers, fastfood workers will join the unions when life becomes absolutely intolerable, when they are driven beyond breaking point. And in the so-called no-go areas for the trade unions in the south, once the coming economic collapse begins to make itself felt, when today's seeming hope and stability is turned inside out, they also will turn towards trade union struggle.

The union leaders are relying on gimmicks to build up membership, such as cheap cars and cheap insurance. In one union cheap divorce is available, in another, a marriage guidance counselor! FTAT have given free toothbrushes to new members and offered cheap funerals. There has always been two strains within the history of the British trade unions, the conservative, deferential side and the unconquerable, fighting, revolutionary side. The trade union leaders have dug back into the friendly society tradition, the worst side of British trade unionism. The real impetus for growth will not come about because of any clever gimmicks. It will come when the heavy battalions move back into action, flexing their muscles, re-discovering their power, demonstrating, in the process, to every unorganised worker that it is precisely through trade union action and solidarity that there is a way to resist management pressure and exploitation.

The 'New Realists' dismiss the idea of a resurgence of industrial activity; they cannot imagine the unions once again demonstrating their latent power. They see temporary strike figures, reflecting a temporary mood of the working class, and imagine that this reflects a new, permanent rejection of strikes and industrial action by the working class. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the months and years ahead will show. Certainly, last year saw a 50 year low in strike activity. A combination of factors brought this about including the knowledge that disputes could be long, difficult and fought to a bitter conclusion, and also the understanding, at least among a layer of the more active trade union members, of the weakness of their leadership at a time when bold, decisive leadership was vital. The number of strikes this year is still very low, although there was already more strike activity in the first six months of 1987 than in the whole of 1986. Strikes have been shorter and sharper; a wide range of activity has taken place that has not yet got to the level of strikes.

With no central lead, inevitably there have been different layers of workers travelling in different directions with many complexities and difficulties developing. But generally, the mood has

been one of taking stock, weighing up the way forward. This is a very important phase. There might have been relative quiet on the surface. Underneath the surface of events, however, is anger, frustration, resentment and a deep politicisation, waiting to erupt to the surface.

When, how and among what group of workers the decisive break will come can not be predicted. All that can be indicated is the combustible material now beginning to build up in all the different sectors of industry. We argued that perhaps when the economic situation improved even slightly, then in private industry offensive, not defensive, struggles would begin to take place. This process has been slow to develop, partly because of the understanding of workers, knowing what struggle means, but also because wages in manufacturing industry have outstripped prices over the last few years. To keep industry moving the employers have been giving wages over and above the rate of inflation. Workers do not go out on strike for the sake of it, they go on strike when they feel they have little or no alternative, and, unless they are driven by sheer desperation, they will ask: 'can we win?'

Recession looms

In the last few years a savage managerial counter-revolution has been unleashed in the mines, in engineering and in industry generally. On the whole workers have met this onslaught with gritted teeth, biding their time, waiting for a favourable opportunity to strike back. Managers have tried to re-establish their position on the shop-floor. There has been an intensification of work. Such pressure is bound to bring a reaction, especially from the new, younger workers who, in the interests of maximum efficiency, have been made to endure the most backbreaking and arduous jobs. To be 24 on a car assembly line these days is considered old! The Nissan factory in Sunderland opened with intensive work practises. It has had a significant turn over of labour. It has also experienced at least one strike even despite, in effect, a no-strike agreement, and 25% of the workers being unorganised.

The strikes that are taking place at Vauxhalls and Fords—as we go to press—are both of enormous symptomatic importance. While there is not yet a general offensive, here we have graphic confirmation of a changing mood. Workers in manufacturing industry feel firmer ground under their feet. They are beginning to move to reclaim some of the ground lost in the last few years. One or two significant victories could

open the flood gates.

Just at this time, though, as confidence is lifting, on the horizon the economic stormclouds are assembling. How will this affect industrial workers? There was a stunned response to the slump of 1979-81. Then, economic devastation and mass redundancies caught the working class unaware. Everyone had been led to believe that such evils had gone forever. The organised resistance which occurred was muted.

This time the reaction is likely to be explosive. It is the rapid movement from slump to boom and back again, the total instability of life, the crushing of any morsel of hope for the future, which drives workers to draw the most revolutionary conclusions. This will be the case in the years ahead. There will be leaps on the industrial plane and leaps in political understanding. Millions who voted in the past for the Tories or SDP will come to embrace the ideas of Marxism. When mass redundancies are threatened they are likely to be met by widespread defensive movements, strikes, sit-ins, and demands for nationalisation. Not one stone of society will be left unturned.

In the public sector already there is combustible material everywhere. Conditions which workers have enjoyed for decades on the buses, in local authorities, the post office, the NHS etc, are being snatched away. The current defensive struggles in the public sector will have enormous repercussions on the outlook of millions of workers. Among busworkers there have been strikes in every area of the country, with the first all London bus strikes since 1958. In the local authorities, while some councillors may have thrown in the towel, the pressure will build up underneath the union leaders, especially from among the new, younger, harder shop stewards thrown forward in the last few years, who will be searching for ways to take the fight forward. In the Post Office there have been strikes in almost every area of the country against management plans to bring in casual and part time labour. Since April there have been over 90 strikes nationally by Post Office workers, 61 in London alone. Now they are attempting to push their leaders onto the offensive in a battle for a shorter working week.

Alongside all of these possibilities, the miners are now coming back onto the scene of history. What is happening in the pits is an absolute vindication of the methods and perspectives of the *Militant*. After the strike *Militant* explained that there had been a defeat. We disagreed with those who tried to gloss over what had happened. Workers must

prepare for the future by a realistic assessment of things as they are, including anything that is distasteful. There was a defeat, and defeats have consequences. There has been a halving of the workers in mining in the last three years. But the consequences were not all one way. *Militant* said that there would be a war of attrition in the pits. That is exactly what has taken place, with a spate of 'rag-outs', sudden short sharp action, in and out over this issue or that. Sometimes the management stepped back, sometimes the workers, but with the trend increasingly going in the direction of the miners. In 1986 there were 35 times more strikes per worker in the mining industry than in the economy as a whole. On average miners lost 8 times more hours in industrial disputes than other workers.

Miners prepare

Once again the miners were beginning openly to talk about revenge. The mood was building up over six day production, with the South Wales leaders cut off from their own rank and file. Alongside was the issue of the disciplinary code. Then, with the sacking of Ted Scott and the disciplinary measures against other Yorkshire miners, the temperature reached boiling point. A potential all out strike in Yorkshire would have taken place, which then could have developed more widely, but for the leadership of the Yorkshire coalfield. In the immediate aftermath of these developments a crushing 77.8% majority was achieved for industrial action on the issue of the disciplinary code, the first majority in the pits in a ballot for industrial action for some years. Since then the mood slipped back, not least due to certain ex-lefts in the leadership of the NUM publicly waging a campaign against any intensification of the action, giving encouragement to the coal industry management and showing the miners that they had a divided and largely hesitant leadership. This undoubtedly undermined the will of the miners to enter any new trial of strength, at least for the moment.

The 1984/5 strike cost the government over £7 billion. They thought it was worthwhile. They allowed themselves to believe that they had crushed the miners and taught an unforgettable lesson to the wider working class. Now—even with the backsliding among sections of the NUM leaders—the Tories are wary of pushing the miners too far and being forced to face them again in all-out action. The young miners who were steeled in the fire of a year long fight have scores with the government

'It is the rapid movement from slump to boom and back again, the total instability of life, the crushing of any morsel of hope for the future, which drives workers to draw the most revolutionary conclusions'.

which they are determined to settle. With the mood that is developing in the mining industry, even in the next 12 or 18 months, a new miners' strike is entirely possible.

With the perspective before us of storm and stress in the unions and on the industrial plane, enormous opportunities will open up for the development of Marxism in the trade union movement. With the election of John Macreadie to the General Council, for the first time ever the ideas of genuine Marxism are represented on the general staff of the trade unions. John Macreadie has already made his mark arguing for the TUC to give fighting campaigning leadership, to mobilise the mighty army which potentially they have at their disposal, to ensure the defeat of Alton's Bill attacking the abortion rights of working class women, and to defeat the government's anti-union legislation.

The trade union leaders right and left have resorted to desperate bureaucratic disciplinary measures to try, vainly, to limit the growth in influence of Marxism. The bureaucracy feel themselves isolated, suspended in the air, the material basis for their existence eroded. They have contempt for the rank and file and yet at the same time they feel the hot breath of the rank and file upon them. They know that *Militant* supporters can effectively articulate and organise the rank and file. That is why *Militant* supporters have faced victimisation: because they strike a chord among ordinary workers! But this is also why victimisations can be defeated, and have been. Where right wing

bureaucrats appear secure one moment, they will shake with insecurity the next.

The NCU gives a glimpse of what is to come. John Golding had beaten Phil Holt to become the elected NCU general secretary. The executive had gone to the right. But this general secretary and this executive were forced to 'lead' a fight on pay. When the Post Office Engineers went into action, they had not had the experience of testing their leaders fully in action. Now that they have been bloodied in battle many NCU members, particularly among the leading active layers, understand far more sharply the crucial role of leadership. As a result, Golding narrowly avoided being called on to resign at the annual conference.

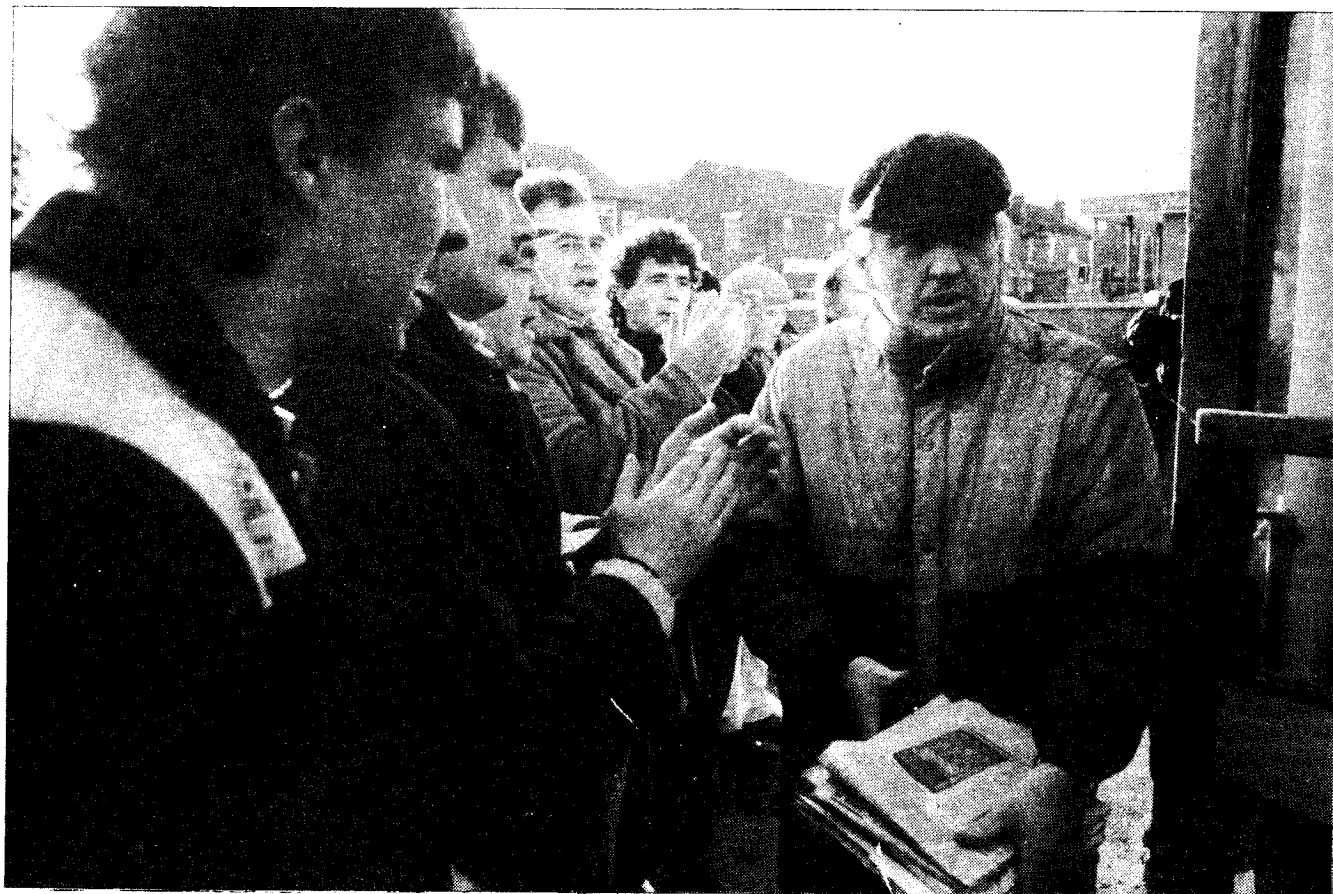
Broad Lefts

As the rank and file of all unions go into action, in ever increasing numbers they will come to see the importance of fighting socialist leadership. The ranks of the unions will attempt in one way and then another to organise to force their leaders to fight and, if this proves impossible, to try to change their leaders. All kinds of unofficial organisations, ad hoc bodies, Broad Lefts, city wide action committees, will spring up. Marxists will play a full and active part in these developments, attempting whenever possible to help give a lead when new initiatives are called for.

The opportunity exists to build on the rich lessons of the 1920s, particularly the experiences of the Communist Party in building the National Minority Movement. The national Broad Left Organis-

As this material was being prepared for our printers Arthur Scargill's decision to stand for re-election as president of the National Union of Mineworkers was announced. *Militant* supporters have had differences with Arthur Scargill on certain questions of programme and, at times, on tactics. Nevertheless, in this election, supporters of *Militant* in the coalfields will work tirelessly to help secure his re-election. All the forces of the establishment immediately began to try and find a candidate with some credibility who could be put forward in an attempt to defeat him. The Tories, the capitalist media and right wing Labour leaders are all afraid of the

impact of a renewed mandate from the miners for Arthur Scargill. A Niagara of lies, slander and abuse will be unleashed by the media against Arthur Scargill, even surpassing the filth they hurled at him during the 1984/85 strike. No effort will be spared in an attempt to stampede miners against him. Despite all their efforts, we are confident that Arthur Scargill will be returned as President of the NUM with a resounding majority. This will be a crushing answer to the idea that militancy and socialist ideas are unpopular. It will give a huge impetus to the developing militancy of the miners and lift the confidence of workers generally throughout the whole of industry.



Striking miners lobby a meeting of the South Yorkshire Area panel NUM, called to discuss the dispute earlier this year at Bentley colliery.

ing Committee (BLOC) conference in February 1988 is timely. It can help chart the course for the battle ahead to re-arm the unions with fighting leadership. *Militant* supporters are proud of the role they have played in recent years helping to build in many unions a nucleus of future powerful Broad Lefts. As yet this work is still in its early stages. The CPSA Broad Left was built over many years with *Militant* supporters playing a leading role throughout. What took perhaps 10 years and more in the CPSA can be completed far quicker in all other unions given the events ahead. If the Broad Lefts are campaigning bodies then they will thrive. They must fight consistently alongside workers in struggle doing all they can to help and assist, developing a firm programme which at each stage of the struggle meets the needs and aspirations of ordinary workers. They must tell the truth to the working class: that on the basis of capitalism there is no way out. Broad Lefts must champion the ideas of socialism. The Broad Lefts also must remain the foremost advocates of trade union democracy, demanding: no secret negotiations, no deals behind the backs of workers, regular elections of all officials under democratic rank and file scrutiny and control, no official to receive more than the average wage of a skilled worker, plus legitimate expenses.

But even the best trade union or Broad Left activity is insufficient if it is not linked at all times to the building of a powerful Marxist tendency in the unions. Marxists must appeal to the 385,000 shop stewards, especially to the new younger, fresher, layers, to the activists in the Broad Lefts and to young workers generally to join with the *Militant* and fight for socialism.

Socialist leadership

We are in the period of capitalism's terminal decline. Crisis in the economy is leading to crisis in all the organisations of the working class. Significant gains can still be won, but only through mass resolute action. We are in the period of counter-reforms where what they are forced to concede today, the employers will prepare even more brutally to snatch back tomorrow. Events will shake society to its foundations, not once but many times. The tendency of the union leaders to police their ranks will be cut across. We will even see right wing trade union leaders feeling compelled to put themselves at the front of mighty movements in order to try and keep some semblance of control and authority. Some ex-lefts will for a time under pressure move back to the left, even to the extreme left. In the charged period ahead ideas and demands that seem remote from the pres-

ent mood of the working class, rapidly will come back onto the agenda. During the course of the miners strike, on one or two occasions the general strike was inherent in the situation. Now it is not on the agenda. But one incident, one accidental miscalculation by the government, one provocation too many, and all that will change.

Marxists in the unions must prepare carefully for the opportunities and great responsibilities which will come before them. Tireless work and patient explanation of Marxist ideas will be necessary. In the words of Lenin, "Marxists... are not stray visitors in the working class movement. They know that sooner or later all the unions will take their stand on the basis of Marxism. They are convinced that the future belongs to their ideas and, therefore, do not force events, do not goad the unions on, and do not... split them. Steadily and confidently they carry on their Marxist propaganda... drawing on the lessons of life, and no deals between unprincipled groups will divert them from that path." Today, working in this way in the British trade unions, Marxists will play the leading part in helping the working class reclaim fully their trade union organisations, to use them as mighty levers for the ending of capitalist exploitation and for the building instead of a healthy socialist democracy.

Trotsky: Discussion with a US union organiser

We reprint below the transcript of a discussion between Trotsky and an official of the American Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO), who visited Trotsky in Mexico in September 1938.

The CIO had burst onto the scene of history out of the explosive movement of American workers in the mid 1930's. As the economy emerged from the collapse of 1929-33, workers flooded into the unions. Between 1933 and 1934, 300,000 joined the miners union, the steel workers union grew from 3,000 to 100,000 and the textile workers from 50,000 to 300,000. To answer the ruthless response of the American bosses, who used all the arms of the state to try and crush this movement, the workers pioneered their own successful methods of struggle, including factory occupations, or as they were known in the 1930's, sit-down strikes. With their power to improve workers' conditions demonstrated, union membership tripled to 10 million by 1937. It was in the heat of this movement that the CIO developed, from a committee within the mainly craft-based American Federation of Labour to a mass organisation of industrial unions.

But 1938 saw the beginnings of a new slump in the American economy which threatened to rival that of 1929-33. In fact it was not until the USA entered the war in 1941

that production again reached the pre-slump levels of 1929. Faced with a new downturn, the CIO, as Trotsky explained, had "two possibilities: either to manoeuvre, tack back and forth, retreat, close their eyes and capitulate bit by bit..." or "to understand the inexorable character of the present social crisis and to lead the masses to the offensive."

Of course, there are important differences in the situation now to that which existed in the late 1930's when fascism had triumphed in Germany, Italy, Austria and Spain. In contrast the balance of class forces today lies overwhelmingly with the working class. The labour and trade union movement in the advanced capitalist countries, potentially, has an enormously powerful position. But it is precisely the disparity between the potential power of organised labour and the failure of the trade union leaders to mobilise that power that makes the central thrust of Trotsky's argument, as society once again stands on the eve of momentous developments across the globe, even more relevant today: "The masses are better, more daring, more resolute than the leaders. The masses wish to struggle. Putting the brakes on the struggle are the leaders who have lagged behind the masses.... Such is the true state of affairs at present."

CIO Official: Our union's policies are aimed at preventing complete unemployment. We have got the work spread out among all members of the union with no reduction in the hourly rate of pay.

Trotsky: And what percentage of their former total wages do your workers now get?

CIO Official: About 40 per cent.

Trotsky: Why that's monstrous! You've won a sliding scale of working hours, with no change in the hourly rate of pay? But that only means that the full burden of unemployment falls with all its weight on the workers themselves. You free the bourgeoisie from the need of spending its resources on the unemployed by having each worker sacrifice three-fifths of his total wages.

CIO Official: There's a grain of truth in that. But what can be done?

Trotsky: Not a grain, but the whole truth! American capitalism is sick with a chronic and incurable disease. Can you console your workers with the hope that the present crisis will have a transitory character and that a new era of prosperity will open in the near future?

CIO Official: Personally, I don't al-

low myself such illusions. Many in our circles understand that capitalism has entered its era of decline.

Trotsky: But of course this means that tomorrow your workers will get 30 per cent of their former wages; the day after, 25 per cent, and so on. Episodic improvements, it is true, are possible, even inevitable; but the overall curve is towards decline, degradation, impoverishment. Marx and Engels predicted this even in the *Communist Manifesto*. What is the programme of your union and the CIO as a whole?

CIO Official: Unfortunately, you don't know the psychology of the American workers. They are not used to thinking about the future. They are interested in only one thing: what can be done now, immediately. Among the leaders of the trade union movement there are, of course, those who take into account the dangers that threaten. But they can't change the psychology of the masses all at once. The habits, traditions, and views of the American workers tie them down and limit what they can do. All this can't be changed in a day.

Trotsky: Are you sure that history will provide you with years enough in which to prepare? The crisis of American capitalism has 'American' tempos and proportions. A sturdy organism that has not known sickness before begins

to deteriorate very rapidly at a certain point. The disintegration of capitalism means, at the same time, a direct and immediate threat to democracy, without which the trade unions cannot exist. Do you think, for example, that Mayor Hague 1. is just an accident?

CIO Official: Oh, no, I don't think so at all. I have had quite a few meetings in the recent period with trade union officials on this subject. My opinion is that in every state there is already—under one banner or another—a ready-made reactionary organisation that can become a support for fascism on the national level. We don't have to wait fifteen or twenty years. Fascism can conquer among us in three or four.

Trotsky: In that case what is.....?

CIO Official: Our programme? I understand your question. It is a difficult situation; some major steps are necessary. But I don't see the necessary forces or necessary leaders for this.

Trotsky: Then does that mean capitulation without a fight?

CIO Official: It's a difficult situation. I have to admit that the majority of union activists don't see, or don't want

to see, the danger. Our unions, as you know, have had an extraordinary growth in a short time. It is natural for the CIO chiefs to have a honeymoon psychology. They are inclined to view difficulties lightly. The government not only has them figured out, but even plays with them. They are not used to this from past experience. It is natural that their heads spin a little. This pleasant dizziness is not conducive to critical thinking. They are tasting the joys of today without worrying about tomorrow.

Trotsky: Well said! On this I agree with you completely. But the success of the CIO is temporary. It is merely a symptom of the fact that the working class of the United States has begun to move, has broken out of its routine, is hunting for new ways to save itself from the threatening abyss. If your unions do not find new ways, they will be ground to dust. Hague is already stronger than Lewis; 2. because Hague, despite his limited situation, knows exactly what he wants, while Lewis doesn't. Things may end up with your chiefs waking from their 'pleasant dizziness' to find themselves—in concentration camps.

CIO Official: Unfortunately, the past history of the United States with its unlimited opportunities, its individualism, has not taught our workers to think socially. It is enough to tell you that at best 15 per cent of the organised workers come to union meetings. That's something to think about.

Trotsky: But perhaps the reason for the absenteeism of 85 per cent is that the speakers have nothing to say to the ranks?

CIO Official: Hmm. That's true to a certain extent. The economic situation is such that we are forced to hold back the workers, to put brakes on the movement, to retreat. This is not to the workers' liking, of course.

Trotsky: Here we have the heart of the matter. It is not the ranks that are to blame but the leaders. In the classical epoch of capitalism the trade unions also got into difficult situations during crises and were forced to retreat, lost part of their membership, spent their reserve funds. But then there was at least the assurance that the next upturn would allow the losses to be made up, and more besides. Today there isn't the slightest hope for such a thing. The unions will go down step by step. Your organisation, the CIO, may collapse as quickly as it arose.



Leon Trotsky

CIO Official: What can be done?

Trotsky: Above all, one must tell the masses what's what. It's inadmissible to play hide-and-seek. You, of course, know the American workers better than I. Nevertheless, let me assure you that you are looking at them through old eyeglasses. The masses are immeasurably better, more daring and resolute than the leaders. The very fact of the rapid rise of the CIO shows that the American worker has changed radically under the impact of the terrible economic jolts of the post-war period, especially of the past decade. When you showed a little initiative in building more combative unions, the workers immediately responded and gave you extraordinary, unprecedented support. You have no right to complain about the masses. And what about the so-called sit-down strikes? It wasn't the leaders who thought them up, but the workers themselves. Isn't this an unmistakable sign that the American workers are ready to go over to more decisive methods of combat? Mayor Hague is a direct product of the sit-down strikes. Unfortunately, no one in the top layer of the trade unions has yet dared to deduce from the sharpening of the social struggle such daring conclusions as capitalist reaction has. This is the key to the situation. The leaders of capital think and act immeasurably more firmly, consistently, daringly, than do the leaders of the proletariat—these sceptics, routinists, bureaucrats, who are smothering the fighting spirit of the masses. It is from this that grows the danger of a victory for fascism, even in a very short time.

The workers don't come to your meetings because they instinctively feel the insufficiency, the lack of substance, the lifelessness, the outright falsity of your programme. The trade union leaders give out with platitudes at the very moment when every worker senses catastrophe overhead. One must find the language that corresponds to the real conditions of decaying capitalism and not to bureaucratic illusions.

CIO Official: I have already said that I see no leaders. There are separate groups, sects, but I see no one who could unite the worker masses, even if I agree with you that the masses are ready for struggle.

Trotsky: The problem is not leaders, but programme. The correct programme not only arouses and consolidates the masses, but also trains the leaders.

CIO Official: What do you consider a correct programme?

Trotsky: You know that I am a Marxist; more precisely, a Bolshevik. My programme has a very short and simple name: socialist revolution. But I don't ask that the leaders of the union movement immediately adopt the programme of Marxism. What I do ask is that they draw conclusions from their work, from their own situation; that for themselves and for the masses they answer just these two questions: 1) How to save the CIO from bankruptcy and destruction? 2) How to save the United States from fascism?

CIO Official: What would you yourself do in the United States today if you were a trade union organiser?

Trotsky: First of all, the trade unions should stand the question of unemployment and wages on its head. The sliding scale of wages, such as you have, is correct: everyone should have work. But the sliding scale of hours should be supplemented by a sliding scale of wages. The working class cannot permit a continuous lowering of its living standards, for this would be equivalent to the destruction of human culture. The highest weekly pay rates on the eve of the 1929 crisis must be taken as the point of departure. The mighty productive forces created by the workers have not disappeared nor been destroyed; they are there at hand. Those who own and control these productive forces are responsible for unemployment. The workers know how to work and want to work. The work should be divided up among all the workers. The weekly pay for

each worker should be no less than the maximum attained in the past. Such is the natural, the necessary, the unpostponable demand of the trade unions. Otherwise they will be swept away like trash by historical developments.

CIO Official: Is this programme realisable? It means the certain ruin of the capitalists. This very programme might hasten the growth of fascism.

Trotsky: Of course this programme means a struggle and not prostration. The trade unions have two possibilities: either to manoeuvre, tack back and forth, retreat, close their eyes and capitulate bit by bit in order not to 'anger' the owners or 'provoke' reaction. It was by this road that the German and Austrian social democrats and trade union officials tried to save themselves from fascism. The result is known to you: they cut their own throats. The other road is to understand the inexorable character of the present social crisis and to lead the masses to the offensive.

CIO Official: But you still haven't answered the question about fascism, that is, the immediate danger that the trade unions draw down upon themselves by radical demands.

Trotsky: I have not forgotten that for a moment. The fascist danger is already at hand, even before the appearance of radical demands. It flows from the decline and disintegration of capitalism. Granted that it might be strengthened for a while by the pressure of a radical trade union programme. One must openly warn the workers of this. One must set about creating special defense organisations in a practical way right now. There is no other road! You can no more save yourself from fascism with the help of democratic laws, resolutions or proclamations than you can from a cavalry unit with the help of diplomatic notes. One must teach the workers to defend their lives and their future, arms in hand, from the gangsters and bandits of capital. Fascism grows swiftly in an atmosphere of immunity from punishment. One cannot doubt for a moment that the fascist heroes will turn with their tails between their legs when they realise that for each of their squadrons the workers are ready to send two, three or four squadrons of their own. The only way to save not only the workers' organisations, but also to keep casualties to the minimum, is to create a powerful organisation of workers' self-defense in time. This is the trade unions' most important responsibility, if they do not wish to perish

ingloriously. The working class needs a workers militia!

CIO Official: But what is the further perspective? Where will such methods of struggle get the trade unions in the last analysis?

Trotsky: It is obvious that the sliding scale and workers' self-defense are not sufficient. These are just the first steps, necessary in order to protect the workers from death by starvation or the fascists' knives. These are urgent and necessary means of self-defense. But by themselves they will not resolve the problem. The basic task consists in laying the foundation for a better economic system, for a more just, rational and decent utilisation of the productive forces in the interests of all the people. This can't be attained by the ordinary, 'normal', routine methods of the trade unions. You cannot disagree with this, for in the conditions of capitalist decline isolated unions turn out to be incapable of halting even the further deterioration of the workers' conditions. More decisive and deep-going methods are necessary. The bourgeoisie, who hold sway over the means of production and who have state power, have brought the economy to a state of total and hopeless disarray. It is necessary to declare the bourgeoisie incompetent and to transfer the economy into fresh and honest hands, that is, into the hands of the workers themselves. How to do this? The first step is clear: all the trade unions should unite and form their own labour party. Not the party of Roosevelt 3. or La Guardia, 4. not a 'labour' party in name only, but a truly independent political organisation of the working class. Only such a party is capable of gathering around itself the ruined farmers, the small artisans, the shopkeepers. But for this it would have to wage an uncompromising struggle against the banks, trusts, monopolies, and their political agents, that is, the Republican and Democratic parties. The task of the labour party should consist in taking power into its own hands, all the power, and then putting the economy in order. This means: to organise the entire national economy according to a single rational plan, whose aim is not the profit of a small bunch of exploiters, but the material

and spiritual interests of a population of 130 million.

CIO Official: Many of our activists are beginning to understand that the course of political development is moving towards a labour party. But Roosevelt's popularity is still too great. If he agrees to run for president a third time, the question of a labour party will have to be postponed for another four years.

Trotsky: There precisely is the tragedy resulting from the fact that Messrs Leaders look to those above them instead of those below. The coming war, the decay of American capitalism, the growth of unemployment and poverty, all these basic processes, which directly determine the fate of dozens and hundreds of millions of people, do not depend on the candidacy or 'popularity' of Roosevelt. I assure you that he is far more popular among the well-paid CIO officials than among the unemployed. Incidentally, the trade unions exist for the workers, not the officials. If the idea of the CIO inspired millions of workers for a certain period, the idea of an independent, militant labour party that aims to put an end to economic anarchy, unemployment and misery, to save the people and its culture, the idea of such a party is capable of inspiring tens of millions. Of course, the agitators of the labour party would immediately have to show the masses, by word and by deed, that they were not electoral agents of Roosevelt, La Guardia and company, but true fighters for the interests of the exploited masses. When the speakers talk in the language of workers' leaders and not of White House agents, the 85 per cent of the members will come to the meetings, while the 15 per cent of conservative oldsters, worker-aristocrats and careerists will stay away. The masses are better, more daring, more resolute than the leaders. The masses wish to struggle. Putting the brakes on the struggle are the leaders who have lagged behind the masses. Their own indecisiveness, their own conservatism, their own bourgeois prejudices are disguised by the leaders with allusions to the backwardness of the masses. Such is the true state of affairs at present.

Notes

1. Mayor Hague—Democratic mayor of Jersey City who used New Jersey state forces, in cooperation with company-hired thugs, to prevent the CIO from organising. Picketing was banned and union organisers were jailed or run out of town.

2. John Lewis (1880-1969)—President of

the United Mine Workers, 1920-60. A right wing Republican who, seeing the ground shift beneath him, moved to link with the left and other activists to lead the CIO.

3. Franklin Roosevelt (1882-1945)—Democratic President, 1933-45.

4. Fiorello La Guardia (1882-1947)—Mayor of New York City, 1934-45.

Unable to quell the movement of workers and youth with its white forces of repression alone, the South African ruling class is increasingly compelled to unleash auxiliary forces of reaction in the townships and workplaces. To the fore of these stands Buthelezi's Inkatha. Printed below is an Editorial Board statement by *Inqaba Ya Basebenzi*, Journal of the Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC, followed by a chilling account, published exclusively in the *MIR*, of Inkatha's barbarous war against UDF and COSATU activists in Natal.

For an effective national fightback to defeat Inkatha!

On 10 December Gatsha Buthelezi broke off 'peace talks' with COSATU and the UDF, declaring that "the only reconciliation there will ever be in this country is the reconciliation of the most powerful with those who pay homage to the powerful." Against COSATU and the UDF, he boasts, "we are talking about a life and death struggle... We are talking of all or nothing victories."

It is true that Inkatha and our movement cannot be reconciled. Inkatha is the instrument of gangsters, serving counter-revolution. Buthelezi is vigilante-in-chief. COSATU and the UDF are organs of the rising revolutionary movement of the working class. For his political survival, the 'non-violent' Buthelezi is compelled to fight our movement to the death.

Reign of terror

It seems to many that Inkatha is invincible. But the truth is the opposite. Both Buthelezi's entry into 'peace talks' and his warlike bragging are signs of desperation. The grip of his murderous mafia in Natal is slipping because of the heroic fightback by Congress youth over the last months. The COSATU and UDF leadership must now mobilise an effective national fightback to bury Inkatha once and for all! Let us show that there is no power stronger than the power of the working class united in action!

Buthelezi and his collaborators have hidden behind the claim that Inkatha is a 'liberation movement'. That has always been a pretence. Inkatha could not, and cannot, do anything for the masses in Natal. It defends capitalism, using the Bantustan state of KwaZulu. Together with the government and the bosses, Inkatha is responsible for mass unemployment, homelessness and poverty wages.

Inkatha was built to its claimed million members only by forcing people to join it, and by mis-leading Zulu people that their freedom could be achieved through tribal organisation and negotiations with the apartheid state. Now the lie is exposed. Even to

their own followers Buthelezi and his thugs reveal themselves as state agents supported by the big bosses to try to divide the revolutionary movement. Inkatha corruption extends to manipulating flood relief funds, earning them the hatred of the masses.

Buthelezi has resorted to the barbarous reign of terror of the last months because, more and more, the working people in Natal are joining the revolution and taking the side of Congress. The launch of COSATU, the massive participation of Natal workers in the May 5-6 national general strike, the prolonged resistance of the BTR workers and its profound effect in the Maritzburg area—all have been decisive in beginning to break the grip of Inkatha. In the tradition of 1973, the Natal working class is again moving to the forefront.

Terror alone cannot hold down a rising class. Despite the casualties suffered, the courageous organisation of self-defence against the Impis by Natal youth and workers has begun to turn the tide against Inkatha. Many of its former supporters are coming over to the side of Congress. There are even instances of policemen and prison warders turning against Gatsha.

The bosses are desperate for peace in Natal. The Chamber of Commerce, supported by the police, has tried to make itself 'peacebroker' in the civil war. They see that Inkatha's terror tactics, instead of cowing the working class, are now arousing its militancy. But Buthelezi is in a dilemma. On the one hand, continuing his reign of terror is rebounding against him. But if he agrees to peace and calls off his Impis, he will end up losing Natal to Congress.

Of course people want to live in peace. But we have to be realistic. The UDF and COSATU leaders who engage in peace talks fail to see that Inkatha cannot abide by peace. It uses peace talks in the hope of paralysing the Congress youth and workers. Buthelezi will return again and again to war, although a war policy cannot save him. Nor can the occupation of Natal town-

ships by the SADF secure Inkatha. Gatsha is destined to be reduced to a pathetic puppet.

Congress policy must be to carry through the political and physical destruction of Inkatha. The conditions for this are there. But, because the big bosses and the state will continue to back their most reliable ally, it will require the mobilisation of the full forces at the disposal of our movement if Inkatha terror is to be eliminated. The defeat of Inkatha would be a huge victory. It would show that vigilantes everywhere in the country can be defeated. It would raise the confidence of millions of working people in the prospects for defeating the main enemy: the vicious apartheid state.

Defence committees

The Congress leaders policy of 'peace talks' with Gatsha has failed. Since the October 'truce' more than 70 people have been killed. Now another attempt at 'peace' has broken down, and the killings continue. Conciliation cannot end Inkatha terror, nor strip away Buthelezi's remaining base of support. As youth in Natal are saying, the organisation of defence committees is the only way we can stop them killing us. *Inqaba* salutes the fighting youth and workers of Natal. With them we say, what is required is a policy for action on the part of the whole movement. If the COSATU and UDF leadership has such a policy, they must spell it out now. The leadership must lead.

The following measures are urgently needed on the part of the national and regional leadership. Activists must win support for this policy in every local body of the movement and ensure immediate implementation by the leadership.

* COSATU, the UDF and SAYCO must organise throughout Natal self-defence committees linking the youth with the organised workers.

* COSATU, the UDF and SAYCO must jointly organise nation-wide action around basic social demands. This would strip away Inkatha's remaining

base of support by convincing working people throughout Natal that the only solution to their problems lies in joining Congress in a fight to the finish against the bosses and the state. Name a specific figure for a national minimum wage to rally the widest sections of the working class in action! Extend the struggle against rents to all parts of the country!

* COSATU, the UDF and SAYCO must campaign in every workplace, school and community to win political and financial support for comrades fighting against Inkatha. Joint COSATU-UDF-SAYCO meetings should be organised.

* COSATU, the UDF and SAYCO must ensure the building of locals based in every industrial area of the country, as a powerful instrument for linking the organised workers and fighting youth to carry this campaign forward.

* Every possible initiative must be taken to procure arms for self-defence. At the same time we call on the ANC leadership to supply arms urgently to the fighting youth and workers of Natal.

No truce with Inkatha!

For workers and youth armed self-defence!

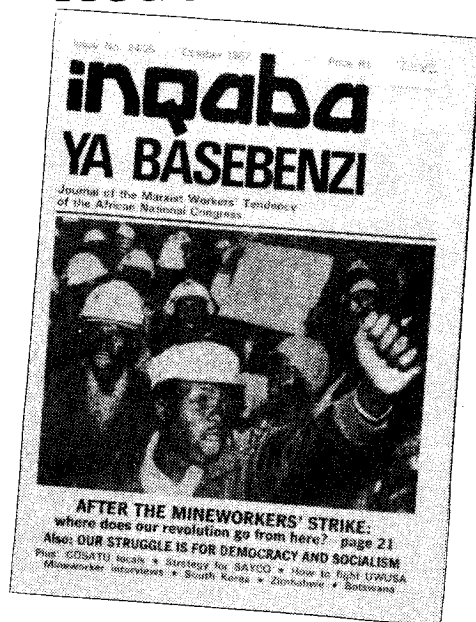
For joint COSATU-UDF-SAYCO action on social demands!

For workers' power, democracy, and socialism!

16 December 1987.

The current issue of *Inqaba Ya Basebenzi*, No 24/25, includes important material on the fight against Inkatha and its workplace based thugs of UWUSA. Also available is a back issue, No 18/19, February 1986, with a major eight page article, 'Inkatha—this spear of counter-revolution must be broken', including an account of the formation of Inkatha and the role of the

Read



ANC leaders. These are available for £1 each plus 20p postage from: *Inqaba Ya Basebenzi*, BM Box 1719, London WC1N 3XX, Britain.

The Killing Fields of Natal

Patricia Mkhize is 12 years old. She lives in a hut in her family kraal near Zondi's store in the rural township of Maswazini, in the rolling hills to the north of Pietermaritzburg in Natal. Patricia attends Zweliyazuza primary school and hoped to follow her senior studies at school in Kwamncane which is close to Maswazini. But since the night of October 9th 1987 nothing is sure in Patricia's life.

That was the night the murder squads of Inkatha came to the kraal. And what happened then has left an indelible stain, a blood stain, on Patricia's memory which no passage of time will ever erase. Think now of what children you know of Patricia's 12 years and ponder on the gaping horror of all that follows. Her story is simply told, in a child's words, but it reveals all the gruesome reality of the counter revolution in South Africa. This is the killing fields of Natal where the youth who support Congress and COSATU are being hunted down by the gangster butchers of Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha.

"On Friday night 9th October 1987 I was awakened by the sound of knocking on the door. My mother got up to open the door and a group of men entered the hut. I recognised most of them. I know one of them very well because he is the induna, the local chief, in our area and I

By David Johnson

see him all the time. I also know him to be the leader of Inkatha in our area. He recently started a campaign to get school children to join Inkatha. He does this by holding Inkatha meetings at our school. We have often been told that the school is only for Inkatha supporters."

Patricia recognised one of the other men as her local shopkeeper from the store near her kraal and of him she said: "He comes regularly to our school to give Inkatha lectures. These lectures deal with what Inkatha has done for the people and why we should all join Inkatha. He has often said to us, in the standard 5 class, that if we do not like Inkatha we should get out of the school and out of the community or he would burn our homes and will shoot us as the induna will supply him with guns."

Gunned down

Patricia recognised the rest of the group, or most of them, as coming from her local area. "The induna demanded to know where the maqabane (comrades) were. When my mother said she did not know what he meant, the induna asked for my brothers Mangethe and Mntu by

name. They searched the hut but did not find my brothers. The induna demanded that my mother open all the huts in the kraal. As she went out my brother's girlfriend and my sister Petronella followed her. I stayed behind. My mother and the men were gone for a short while. I heard talking and the opening of doors in the other huts. I watched some of what was happening through the window.

"My mother returned to our hut and the men seemed to be going to the gate to leave. My mother said she wanted to go outside to relieve herself and then we would all go to sleep. When she went outside the hut she shut the door. I heard the induna say to her that she should not move and lean against the wall. Then I heard gunfire. I heard a body fall and my mother say she was dying. Then they told my mother to open the door because we want the children inside as they will point at us. My mother replied that she could not open the door as they had shot her."

Patricia's brother Khatula, who is 13, speaks of what happened then. "After they shot my mother I heard someone tell her to get up and open the door. I did not hear her answer as I hid under my bed. A short while later they entered the room. I saw one of them aim his gun at my sister, Petronella, and fire one shot. She fell to the floor and I heard more shots. I re-



A clash between 'the comrades' and 'the witdoeke', backed by the police and army. The use of vigilantes is an open and conscious part of the policies of the ruling class.

member her crying out, 'Awu we Ma!' She lay bleeding on the floor. She was moaning. I closed my eyes and after a while the men went outside. I heard the induna say that they should burn down the house. One of the men argued against this, saying that they already had two of us. A few minutes later my sister Patricia came into the room. We fled from the hut and ran into the bush far from the house where we spent the night. It was cold and as we were only wearing light clothes we piled grass on top of us and hugged each other to keep warm."

Assailants released

Patricia and Khatula's eldest brother Mandla works at a food factory in Pietermaritzburg. He is a union member. He lives in Pietermaritzburg during the week and returns to the family home at weekends. He came to Maswazini on Saturday 10th October around 10am to find his family and neighbours in a state of hysterical shock. It is impossible to comprehend what he must have felt like when given the news of the deaths of his mother and sister. Mandla has absolutely no doubt as to why these brutal slayings took place. He says "I am a member of the Food and Allied Workers Union which is an affiliate of COSATU. My brother's Mangethe and Mntu are both members of an informal youth group that allies itself broadly with the UDF. Their youth grouping was formed for the purpose of

addressing community problems and in particular the actions of the induna which have become oppressive and a burden upon our community.

"It is apparent that my membership of a COSATU union and my brothers' membership of a UDF affiliate, precipitated the murders of my mother and sister and explains why these people continue to hound me and my family. The object of the search at my family's kraal on the night of the murders was to find my brothers. The fact that when this purpose was defeated they turned upon my mother and sister illustrates their savagery."

On Saturday 10th October Mandla and his family members went to the police station to lay charges. The accused, as identified, were arrested on that weekend. But on Monday 12th October Mandla was astonished to see the induna standing talking to another man at a road junction he drove past. Subsequently he learned that all the other accused had been released. He went to the police station to protest at this but was told by the investigating police officer that the whole matter had nothing to do with him. The officer concerned then promptly left the charge office.

In a report in the *Weekly Mail*, Mandla continues: "I spoke to another detective..... He told me that if he were in my position he would immediately move his family to a place where they would be safer. He said that there were some

members of the police force who did not regard the chief as a criminal. He said that, in his experience, when members of Inkatha committed atrocities, they were arrested but subsequently released and almost never charged or prosecuted."

All the family's fears of what would become of them were confirmed on the evening of that day when a schoolboy visited the Mkhize home. He told Mandla that he had seen the chief with other men at the local store and that he had heard them planning a raid on the kraal that evening. The family packed their clothes and left to spend the night with a neighbour. They left not a moment too soon. As Mandla says, "while we were on our way to Mncwabe's house we looked back towards our kraal and saw, in the gathering darkness, a number of torches moving around the garden and through the huts."

Inkatha—The Black Hundreds of the SA Revolution

Patricia speaks for all the Mkhize family when she says, "I am very frightened and do not feel safe. I am an eyewitness to the murders. The induna knows that my brother and I have given statements to the police and identified him. My life is in danger. He must believe that he can do anything without fear of being arrested because the police are on

his side. I am currently living in a safe place far from home although I can not continue to live like this. My home, relatives, and friends are in Maswazini and unless these people are stopped I will never be able to resume a normal life."

This is the killing fields of Natal where fear stalks the hills carrying guns, knives and pangas.

Inkatha is mainly based on the state apparatus of the KwaZulu homeland and the eroded remnants of Zulu tribal structures in Natal. Gatsha Buthelezi, the leader of Inkatha, claims a membership of one million to one and a half million. But it would be wrong to interpret these figures as depicting massive strength without making important qualifications. Firstly the vast majority of these members are forced conscripts, coerced to join Inkatha by the gangsters at the head of the organisation. Secondly, in words, Buthelezi has consistently and consciously fostered the idea that Inkatha is part of the movement for national liberation, bitterly opposed to apartheid. Foreexample, Inkatha's flag carries the same green, black and gold colours as that of the ANC. But actions speak louder than words and in practice Inkatha has operated as a reactionary gang, winning a large element of its support because of a chauvinistic appeal based on Zulu tribalism combined with armed intimidation.

The leaders of the ANC mistakenly conceived of Inkatha as an ally in the liberation struggle and supported its formation. They mistakenly thought that Inkatha could be used as a surrogate leadership because the ANC was banned. They believed that subsequently Inkatha could form an alliance with the ANC in the struggle against apartheid which would force a negotiated settlement of the 'democratic stage', in the so-called two stage revolution. This is a utopian dream. The South African bosses will never concede democracy. Even today there is an ambivalence in the approach to Inkatha amongst the leaders of the movement which gives it a legitimacy it does not deserve. The COSATU leaders, for example, still refer to Inkatha's workplace based murder squads in UWUSA as a "tribally based union".

The bosses eagerly supported the early development of Inkatha from its formation in 1975, because so doing conformed to their historical use of tribal-ethnic divide and rule tactics in the class struggle. This liberal bourgeois support for Inkatha was typified by a statement made by Gavin Relly, the head of Anglo American, to *Business Day* in June 1986: "I've been told that Buthelezi plays a rough game in Natal. But South Africa is not for the fainthearted.... You can't expect us to run away from the one black leader who says exactly what we think."

Inkatha is Buthelezi's power base and it has made him an influential figure in the national politics of South Africa. At a local level Inkatha operates as little more than a crude extortion racket run by gangster cliques around many of the local chiefs. Mandla Mkhize spoke of some of the 'customs' introduced by Inkatha in his area: "... if any member of the community who is not a member of Inkatha wants to slaughter a cow, then he or she has to pay a R5.00 Inkatha membership to the induna. If any body should refuse to pay that fee then he or she is taken by the induna to Chief Zondi. Such persons are then fined R150.00 by Chief Zondi. Another custom that the induna has introduced is that if a member of Inkatha has a wedding it is obligatory that the wedding be reported to the induna who then allocates an Inkatha observer to the wedding at a fee. Anybody who is not an Inkatha member and has a wedding, then the wedding proceedings are frequently disrupted."

Mxolisi Hadebe

Mxolisi Hadebe is fifteen years old. He joined Inkatha in the Harewood township near Pietermaritzburg in July 1987. He has made a full statement on his involvement in Inkatha which has been carried in parts of the South African press. His statement exposes the forced recruitment used to build Inkatha and the vicious thuggery and brutality of its leaders.

"In or about July or August 1987, I became a member of Inkatha. I joined the organisation against my will in the circumstances described below. One morning a group of about 50 Inkatha followers went through Harewood, from door to door, recruiting members. There were two leaders of this group. Their names were Mlungise Mthembu and Maqhawe Goba, both of whom live in the same house as Christopher Zuma who is the local Inkatha leader.

"I was sitting on the verandah of the house when this group arrived. I was told that they were recruiting members for Inkatha and that those who did not join would be assaulted. I was also told that if I did not join my house would be burnt. I was instructed to get R1.00 to pay Inkatha as a joining fee, to arm myself and to accompany the group. I did as I was told, arming myself with a stick... Later that afternoon I took R1.00 and my stick and went to Zuma's house. When I arrived many people had already gathered whilst others were still arriving. The meeting took place in the yard. We were addressed at the meeting and told that where Inkatha operates, there is no crime, that Inkatha would get us jobs and ensure that all of us who wanted to attend school could do so.

We were instructed to go home and tell those who had not attended the meeting to join Inkatha. We were also told that if we see a person's house burning we must not lend assistance if the occupants were not members of Inkatha.

"On the following day I went to Zuma's house. This time Zuma addressed the meeting. He sketched the background to the formation of Inkatha in the area. He said that after he decided to recruit members in Harewood he approached the local indunas who gave their approval. He said that he believed it was sometimes necessary to kill a person to make it clear to people that Inkatha should be obeyed. He then said that when we come to meetings at his house, we should be armed because we might be instructed to attack UDF members. He warned that one day we would be put to the test. We would be instructed to bind and stab a captive when he ordered us to do so. This would be a test of loyalty to him.

"I attended a third meeting the following day. At this meeting Zuma warned us against being seen associating with UDF members, saying that if we did so we faced the prospect of being killed. He also told us that he was on good terms with the police and subsequently, on several occasions, said he would never be arrested as the police knew him."

A few weeks after this Hadebe was part of an Inkatha raiding party on UDF members in the neighbouring township of Sinathing. He explains how the Inkatha brigade was assembled at the sound of gunshots, was armed with sticks and knives and burned down the house of known UDF members. After this raid Hadebe took part in a number of similar assaults. However, he became disenchanted with Inkatha after one particular assault on a friend of his and left the organisation. He says: "The reason I have decided to disclose this is that I do not want to participate in the violence which is part of life in Harewood. I was constantly afraid when I lived there that I would fall foul of Inkatha's violence, even when I was a member. I was also shocked by the violence which was directed at innocent people, whether it was aimed at coercing them to join Inkatha or to punish them for their real or imaginary sympathies with the UDF."

Godfrey Madala used to reside in Sinathing township until he was burned out for non membership of Inkatha. His story has the same quality of horror as that of the Mkhize family. When he relates it in a matter of fact way you feel your stomach tighten and you can almost sense the sheer panic which grips people caught in this mayhem. From

what he says it is clear that it is not necessary to be involved in the UDF or COSATU to provoke Inkatha. Simply not being an Inkatha member can be sufficient to provoke beatings, burnings and murder.

"In or about the first week of September I was at home with my family. There was my wife and three other members of our family who were guests at our house and my brother Ephraim Madala. Late at night I heard a knock at the door. I got out of bed and went to answer. I asked who was there, but there was no reply. Soon after stones began to hit the house. The stone attack was severe and soon most of the windows were broken. I ran back to my bedroom to ensure the safety of my wife and child. My wife and I left the room with our child. We went into the passage which links the rooms in the house. The other people in the house left their rooms at about the same time and were also in the passage. Everyone was terrified. Two of the rooms were set on fire and the blaze was spreading. I went to the kitchen to see if we could escape from the house through the kitchen door. I opened the door and saw four or five men armed with spears and sticks standing outside the doorway.

Inkatha's civil war

"I slammed the door, locked it and informed my wife that we could not exit the house through the kitchen. The attackers then set fire to the dining room. At the same time, I heard people trying to force their way through the front door. We had little choice but to go through the kitchen door. I again went to the kitchen door and opened it. I saw a larger group of heavily armed men just outside. I decided it was preferable to leave the house and face our attackers, rather than be burnt to death inside. I stepped through the door, closely followed by my wife, child and niece, Mphumulelo. One of the group asked me if I had any weapons in the house. Suddenly a member of the group rushed towards me with a knife. He stabbed me in the right side. I tried to run but as I turned another person stabbed me in the chest. Despite these wounds I carried on running and managed to get away. I ran to the home of an acquaintance who arranged transport to take me to Edendale Hospital.

"While I was in hospital I was informed that the body of my nephew Mduduzi Madala was found on the day after the attack. He had been stabbed and hacked to death. The attack on my house, my stabbing and the murder of Mduduzi are, to me, inexplicable other than that our family are not members of

Inkatha. While my family and I are not members of Inkatha neither are we members of any rival organisation. We are simple people who want to lead peaceful lives."

The statements of Patricia Mkhize, her brother, of Mxolisi Hadebe and Godfrey Madala paint a vivid picture of what is happening in the Pietermaritzburg area of Natal. Unfortunately their stories are only a very small part of the carnage of Inkatha's forced recruitment drive which began in July/August 1987. Since then almost 200 people have been killed in the Pietermaritzburg area, the vast majority of them non members of Inkatha. In the last eight weeks alone 80 people have perished. To date there have been no police prosecutions for murder taken to court for any of the deaths of non Inkatha members. It is estimated that nearly 300 people have died in Natal in this civil war in 1987.

It is clear that Inkatha sees its influence in Natal being seriously undermined by the growth of the UDF and COSATU and this explains the forced recruitment drive. Inkatha is being built through a reign of terror based on search and destroy missions. The response of the leaders of Inkatha to the charges laid against it of murder and mayhem, incredibly, is to insist that Inkatha is a non violent organisation. Oscar Dhlomo, the general secretary of Inkatha, said recently in an interview with the *New Nation* newspaper that there were no genuine political differences between the ANC and Inkatha! He added, "However, there are clear differences in strategy between the two movements... The ANC has chosen violence as a strategy whereas Inkatha has chosen non-violence. Inkatha's uncompromising stand on non-violence is a source of great political frustration for the ANC."

Buthelezi issues similar routine denials of Alice in Wonderland quality when confronted with accusations of Inkatha's murder and pillage. When questioned at a recent press conference he replied: "The kind of coercion alleged here is strictly contrary to the dictates of the movement. Inkatha's leadership would not tolerate such behaviour. The allegations are typical of the propaganda aimed at Inkatha. Inkatha is a voluntary organisation. It is well disciplined and disciplinary procedures exist and are used against members when warranted."

However, Velaphi Ndlovu, the regional chairman of Inkatha in the Pietermaritzburg area, believes that if an Inkatha member is killed by a member of the UDF it is acceptable to take revenge by killing relatives of the UDF member. He told the *Weekly Mail*

recently, "It's defence, because if there was no attacker there would be no revenge. Revenge killing is not acceptable in policy, but what can you do if your house is burnt down and the law won't do anything about that? You revenge yourself so that he won't come back. Inkatha members are on the defending side." This is a camouflage of lies.

The truth is that Inkatha is about as non violent as the hoodlums of Al Capone's organisation in Chicago in the 1930s. Whenever questioned about violence in public Capone asserted that he was opposed to violence and no member of his organisation could be accused of such conduct, in much the same way as Buthelezi and company do now. In this respect, Gatsha is the Al Capone of Natal. The township youth know the facts in any case. 'Theleweni' is the township slang for an Inkatha thug. The word means "killer" in Zulu.

The response of the leaders of the UDF to this savagery has been to give priority to attempting to negotiate a truce with the leaders of Inkatha. Of course, ordinary people want to live in peace but can an end to the conflict with Inkatha be reached at the negotiating table? It is simply not possible. Marxism teaches that where there are two rights, force decides and this is the case in Natal now.

No truce with Inkatha!

Archie Gumede, one of the leaders of the UDF in Natal, actually signed a truce agreement with Inkatha early in October. He is dealing with leaders who speak fine words, dress in fine suits like gentlemen, and sing lullabies of compromise at the same time as the goon squads under their command are extorting, burning, and killing in the townships. People have to be judged by their deeds not by their words. The leaders of Inkatha play a clever game on occasion. By being seen as willing and even keen to negotiate an end to the conflict they provide a smokescreen of respectability behind which dirty deeds are planned and carried out on a day to day basis. A genuine truce with these thugs is about as likely as being able to nail a raindrop to the wall. This is war and there will be a victor and the vanquished as in all wars.

The call for defence committees spoken about by the leaders of COSATU and the UDF on countless occasions actually has to be made a reality. Every township, every village throughout the province should have its own defence committee, organised by its own marshalls and properly armed to do battle

with the Inkatha thugs.

It is true that this is not easily achieved in the prevailing circumstances but the glorious revolutionary youth in some of the townships have shown what can be done without the leaders of the UDF and COSATU seriously mobilising for battle. The truth is that we are many and they are few but the many have to be organised and welded together to feel their own power.

For it would be wrong to give the impression, despite its savagery, that Inkatha is sweeping all before it in its forced recruitment drive. In several areas around Pietermaritzburg the youth, many of them 12 and 13 years of age, have organised defence of their own areas. Inkatha has been on the rampage but in many areas the tide has been turned. There are now several places where defence committees organised by the youth have created 'no go' areas for Inkatha murder squads. In Kwadambuzi township, which incidentally has been renamed Angola, the youth have organised and repulsed the assault of Inkatha. In Kwasange, in early October, the forces of the UDF waged battle with those of Inkatha after which Inkatha was left to bury thirteen of its number and retreat in defeat.

On 1 November, the Johannesburg *Sunday Star* gave a glimpse of the combative spirit with which the youth of Natal organise self defence in an article which can be quoted directly: "They (ie Inkatha thugs) usually attack in the morning when we start to feel drowsy and sleepy when we have been up on guard all night. These days we are ready. I'm not scared. It is my duty..." The speaker is a 15 year old boy. Should he and his ten battle ready colleagues hear a secret alarm call they will spring into action. In an instant they will be outside and ready to meet the enemy...

"These are a new breed of soldier children. They are members of 'defence units'-armed guard groups, born of a necessity to survive as the township war in Maritzburg continues... Scores of these cell-like structures have sprung up in recent weeks... The group sat in a small stuffy room... They meet at dusk



Vigilante-in-chief, Gatscha Buthelezi.

and stay awake until sun rise every day. Should one of the 50-odd houses under their jurisdiction sound the alarm they will react instantly... 'I do this so my parents and older brothers who have to work do not have to stay up all night... No, we are not scared. We are ready.'"

These examples are typical of many strongholds of the UDF where ordinary people have come together to say that enough is enough. In some cases local policemen have fought on the side of the UDF youth because they have become so disgusted by the brutality of Inkatha. With resolute leadership, the UDF and COSATU could mobilise tens of thousands against Inkatha into properly organised defence committees, democratically controlled by local people.

A socialist vision

Whilst the vast majority of those killed have been non Inkatha members, this should not create the impression that sets of armed hoodlums constitute an invincible army. Ndlovu, the regional chairman of Inkatha, claims 53 functioning branches of Inkatha in the Pietermaritzburg area. With 40 to 100 people in each that would give Inkatha

5,000 members, many of whom were forced to join, in an area where half a million live. The potential for ordinary workers and youth to unite and drive back Inkatha is clearly evident. In fact, the tremendous retaliation that there has been against Inkatha to date shows that it is not wishful thinking to suggest that proper organisation, clear strategy and tactics could see Inkatha routed.

However, a strategy to defeat Inkatha has to link the necessity of organisational measures to defend communities to a political campaign. There is no material base in South Africa to support black reaction. Inkatha cannot promise a vision of the future where there are democratic rights, houses, jobs and an end to poverty for all. Only a socialist vision of society can promise that and so the battle against Inkatha has to be politically linked to the need to build the ANC as a movement to bring about a socialist South Africa.

The march of the vigilantes of reaction has taken a terrible toll in the lives of those fighting for a new society in the townships of South Africa. It began in June 1986 with the use of the witdoeke in Crossroads. Since then almost every township has been engulfed in a tide of vigilante reaction, aided and abetted by the forces of the state. The march of Inkatha in Natal is probably the high-point of this tide of reaction.

It may seem daunting to contemplate struggle against the butchers of Inkatha but things are never what they seem. The processes leading to socialist revolution are not straightforward. Rather there is always the dialectical interplay of revolution and counter-revolution. The victorious revolution in Russia in October 1917 could never have taken place without the bloody defeat of 1905, nor indeed the July days of reaction and counter revolution in 1917. Defeat hardens the proletariat and burns away all illusions in capitalism and in an easy victory. In this context, the march of Buthelezi's butchers in Natal is actually forcing workers and youth to come together to build the organisations necessary to develop the fightback against Inkatha which in turn will lay the basis for an enormous growth in the forces of the revolution in Natal. Today Gatscha should take the opportunity to ring his bells for tomorrow he will be wringing his hands. The warlords, the death squads, the whole reactionary crew of Inkatha, represent the past. The revolutionary youth and militant workers, who in the fullness of time will vanquish them, represent the future. To use the words of the Irish poet Yeats, from all of this 'a terrible beauty will be born'.

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Spycatcher, Thatcher and the state

THATCHER'S PROLONGED battle to suppress *Spycatcher*, the memoirs of former MI5 officer Peter Wright, have once again focussed attention on the role of the secret security and intelligence services. Enormous resources have been used to prevent Wright's disclosures reaching a mass audience. At least £1 million was spent on the civil action in the Australian courts—which led only to humiliating defeat for the government.

In Britain no attempt, so far, has been made to use the discredited Official Secrets Act against newspapers reporting Wright's allegations. But with the support of an obliging, executive-minded judiciary the government has been able to curb comment on the issues he raises. Using 'contempt of court' rulings, the government, on this issue, has gagged the press to an extent unknown outside wartime conditions.

Despite these measures, however, *Spycatcher* had by the Autumn of 1987 been published in the United States, Australia, and Ireland. One result is that Wright is now a very rich man, and the prospects of the government seizing his profits are slim. Moreover, the government was undoubtedly forced to the conclusion that any attempt to prevent importation of the book would be doomed to failure, however much they would have liked to have done so. But the Tories are still determined to prevent the mass circulation of Wright's material. Why?

'Domestic targets'

There is really nothing that is very new in *Spycatcher*. Many readers excited by the idea of reading a 'banned' book, especially if they are unfamiliar with the esoteric history of post-war espionage, will be disappointed. Most of the allegations have been aired before, some in more detail, by authors with 'inside' sources and also by more reliable investigative journalists. Nevertheless, in his memoirs Wright confirms many of these allegations with the authority of a serving intelligence officer, supplying detail that could only come from an insider. Above all, Wright confirms the attempts, particularly in 1973-74, to discredit Harold Wilson, and subsequently to undermine or bring down the Labour government over which he presided.

If the government simply allowed Wright to publish, where would it end?

By Lynn Walsh

Other recently retired officers might go into print. Those subject to criticism might reply with their own version of events. This would open up the spectre of comprehensive exposure, from the inside, of a string of monumental failures in the field of intelligence and counter-espionage. It would unravel the systematic cover-up of successive spy scandals, revealing the intelligence chiefs' main priority to be the protection of their organisations from public scrutiny and criticism.

Above all, further public exposure would bring home the enormous scale of the security services' operations against 'domestic targets', the Labour leaders, the Labour left, socialist newspapers and groups, trade unionists, and other organisations like the National Council For Civil Liberties and CND.

The security services are now a vast arm of the capitalist state machine, which in general has grown to monstrous proportions. In 1986 the official expenditure on MI5 (the home security service) and SIS (the overseas Secret Intelligence Service, formerly MI6) was £92 million. Informed commentators, however, estimate the real cost to be in the region of £300 million, with another £300 million being spent on GCHQ which carries out surveillance of telephone and other electronic communications.

Over this secret apparatus there is not even the semblance of democratic control. *Spycatcher* testifies to the contempt with which intelligence officers view the procedures of parliamentary government. They regard themselves as the ultimate guardians of the system, who, unlike civil servants and politicians, do not have to bother about the normal rules. If the cloak of secrecy slips, 'national security' can be invoked to justify their actions.

Like the police and the army, the secret services have received enormous additional resources under Thatcher—in order to combat 'the enemy within', primarily the organisations of the working class which stand in the way of policies of capitalist crisis. The link was made clear with the banning of trade unions at GCHQ, which is also part of the world-wide intelligence apparatus of the United States.



The desperate moves to suppress *Spycatcher*, however, have been hampered by the government's inability to use the Official Secrets Act against the author once he had taken Australian citizenship. This in turn has also constrained the government's action against the press in Britain. The difficulties of trying to utilise the civil law to enforce official secrecy has resulted in a long-drawn-out battle—during which even more information about the security services has come out into the open.

Wright's motives

Under their 'positive vetting' procedures, for instance, MI5 and MI6 veto the appointment of homosexuals to 'sensitive' jobs on the grounds that they are a security risk. Yet Thatcher was recently obliged to admit that the former head of SIS, Sir Maurice Oldfield, had been a homosexual! He had never been 'positively vetted' either, as until very recently this was not considered necessary for MI5 and SIS recruits! It has also been revealed that MI5 tried to establish 'positive vetting' for senior BBC staff, and it is not clear to what extent this was implemented. At the same time, many examples have come to light of attempts by MI5 and SIS to recruit journalists and broadcasters, and clearly these are only the unsuccessful cases!

To some extent, Thatcher's moves against *Spycatcher* have already

rebounded on the government and the security services. The Tories have temporarily cowed the capitalist press, which could easily have undermined judicial censorship if serious journals had the minimum determination to defend their freedom to publish the truth. But the ineptly conducted legal action against Wright, and the furor in the British parliament and press over the allegations involved, have aroused the attention of much wider layers of the population than ever before. Thatcher may delay things, but it will be impossible for the ruling class to prevent indefinitely a much fuller exposure of the reactionary role of the security services. While some on the Labour left have taken up the issue in parliament and helped to expose some more of the facts, the Labour leadership has as far as possible avoided the issue. They have made token protests, but made no attempt to explain its importance to the ranks of the labour movement.

It is not a question of 'national security', which is short-hand for the interests of the ruling class, or of arcane recriminations between rival spycatchers. It is a question of the threat posed to the labour movement by the security services, which is why we must examine what really lies behind the *Spycatcher* affair.

Why was Wright so determined to publish his memoirs? It would be a mistake to think that he has progressive motives, or favours democratic control of the intelligence services. All the indications are that Wright is as reactionary, as anti-socialist, as anti-labour movement as his former colleagues. When the right-wing faction engaged in illegal activities against the labour government, Wright participated in the cover-up. When he first told his story to Chapman Pincher in 1980, Wright expressed—according to Pincher—no regrets about his former activities.

Wright's most obvious motive was a grievance about his pension. When, in 1954, he transferred from the Admiralty to the 'non-existent' MI5, where salaries and pensions are all discretionary, he asked what would happen to his pension rights. 'Don't worry, Old Boy, we'll sort it all out,' he was assured. Twenty-five years later it was not sorted out, and he retired on a minimal pension. This particular act of Whitehall parsimony was to prove very costly! It reinforced Wright's feeling of lower-middle-class resentment at the upper-class types who dominated the MI5 establishment. He left a bitter man, convinced that his bosses had not repaid his loyalty.

After retiring to Tasmania to start a stud farm, Wright met with financial difficulties. With the continuing boom

in spy books, he evidently decided to market his story—which he did, to the right-wing journalist Chapman Pincher. Although his contribution remained a secret until the recent legal battle, Wright received half (£30,000) of the royalties from Pincher's *Their Trade Is Treachery*. But why stop half way? Beyond the reach of the Official Secrets Act, he subsequently decided to publish his own memoirs. As an 'inside story', they could hardly fail to arouse interest. When the government tried to suppress them, Wright hit the jackpot. But Wright clearly has another motive, too: self-justification. Although he had started as a technical officer specialising in planting electronic listening devices, Wright spent his later years as a counter-intelligence officer investigating his colleagues. He became obsessed by the search to identify the Soviet agent or agents he was convinced were still working within British intelligence at the highest level.

This did not endear him to the colleagues he put under suspicion. It eventually brought him into collision with his bosses, moreover, who after years of chasing their own tails, wanted to bury the whole issue. Unpopular with his colleagues and repudiated by his masters, an embittered Wright clearly felt the need to vindicate his mole-hunting career.

The Philby affair

His literary bombshell, *Spycatcher*, may be seen as the latest product of the crisis provoked by the Philby affair and its long-drawn-out aftermath of inter-service suspicion and recrimination. In 1963 British intelligence chiefs were forced to recognise that Kim Philby, formerly head of counter-espionage in SIS, had been the so-called 'third man' in the Burgess/Maclean spy ring. Tipped off by Philby in 1951, they had been able to escape to the Soviet Union. Although under suspicion himself, Philby still worked for MI6 as an agent, until he too—under threat of renewed investigation—fled to Russia in 1963. The Philby scandal was a shattering blow to British intelligence, revealing to the world a devastating level of incompetence. But the main concern of the chiefs was to cover up the real extent of the penetration and manipulation achieved by the Soviet intelligence services. Other spies were given immunity from prosecution, like Sir Anthony Blunt who went on to become Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures. A section of intelligence officers, dubbed the 'Young Turks' believed, however, that the service would remain fatally compromised unless there was a thorough clean-out of the old-guard and a

complete reorganisation. Some of them began to leak material to sympathetic journalists, like Andrew Boyle, for instance, whose book *The Climate of Treason* (1979) brought about the exposure of Blunt—provoking a public scandal and leading to a new round of allegations in the press and parliament. Thatcher admitted that Blunt had been granted immunity, in return for "co-operation in the continuing investigations... into Soviet penetration of the security and intelligence services..." This was the first official admission of any such 'penetration'. But Thatcher rejected any suggestion that there should be an enquiry or any further debate on the issue.

The official stonewalling at the top failed to satisfy the Young Turks. As far as they were concerned, the top-level 'Soviet penetration agent/s' had still to be exposed. Over a period of years, three separate enquiries—and 16 out of the 22 internal mole-hunters—were convinced that there was still an undetected soviet spy at the very top of their organisation. The problem was that they could not agree on who it was! Most of the mole-hunters divided into two factions: those who pointed the finger at Sir Roger Hollis, former Director-General, and those who accused the former Deputy Director General, Graham Mitchell—either way, a crippling handicap for a counter-espionage organisation! The suspicions of the mole-hunters were periodically fed, moreover, by new stories of traitors and moles from a series of high-ranking soviet defectors, who each aroused more suspicion and provoked a new round of witch-hunting.

MI5 was torn apart by internecine struggle. There was mutual recrimination between MI5 and MI6, and there were periodic crises of confidence between the British and US intelligence agencies. Both factions within MI5 strove to prove their own case as the vital prerequisite to cleaning up the organisation from within. Wright, however, claims that they were ultimately blocked by their Whitehall masters. The tops of the state machine, though always ready in public to invoke 'national security' as the highest imperative, preferred to cover up the real situation rather than expose the secret security services to further scandals and public scrutiny and criticism.

Both factions of mole-hunters therefore resorted to leaking selected information to friendly journalists and authors. Andrew Boyle was used to flush out Blunt and other spies who had been quietly pensioned off. Rupert Allason, now a Tory MP who writes under the pen-name Nigel West, was used to publish semi-official histories of MI5

and MI6, celebrating the heroic role of various officers. He was also the vehicle for leaking material to the press which pointed to the guilt of Graham Mitchell. Wright, who was convinced that it was Hollis, provided detailed inside material to Chapman Pincher, used in *Their Trade Is Treachery* and *Too Secret Too Long*, the detailed case against Hollis (for which an aggrieved Wright got no royalties).

When the exposure of Blunt and other revelations produced no real results, Wright decided to publish his own book. After agreeing to appear on a *World In Action* Programme, Wright subsequently arranged with one of the journalists involved, Paul Greengrass, *Spycatcher's* unacknowledged ghost writer, to prepare his memoirs for publication.

Spycatcher thus arose out of the long, bitter factional struggle within the security services. Wright's decision to publish in his own name, with the authority of an 'insider', was the culmination of the literary campaign previously pursued indirectly through journalists and authors. For Wright, *Spycatcher* is the continuation of mole-hunting by other, more public, means.

Anti-Wilson plot

However, it is the section about the plot against Wilson, almost certainly inserted at a late stage to heighten interest in the book, which is most sensitive as far as Thatcher and the security chiefs are concerned. The memoirs provide new confirmation, from the inside, of the intelligence services' plot to undermine the Labour leadership around Wilson in the early 1970s. Only a few pages are devoted to this. And while he gives a lot of detail about intelligence and counter-intelligence operations (with codes names, the individuals involved, etc), Wright conspicuously avoids naming names when it comes to the illegal, subversive activity against the labour leaders. Probably, Wright added these passages when he realised he faced a legal battle with the British government. If he calculated that stirring up the controversy about the anti-Wilson plot would heighten the interest in his book, he was not wrong. If only half what Wright alleges is true, the British secret service has long been an open book for the Kremlin. It is the facts about the intelligence services' operations against the labour movement and other campaigning organisations which the government are desperate to conceal—not from their Soviet rivals, but from the British public.

Details of the attempts to undermine the Wilson government and other ac-



Harold Wilson and right, his successor, James Callaghan, whose 1977 'enquiry' into allegations of an anti-Wilson MI5 plot was used to try and bury the whole issue.

tion against the labour movement have been reported in detail in numerous articles in *Militant*, many of them reprinted in the pamphlets *CIA Infiltration of the Labour Movement* and *The State: A Warning to the Labour Movement*. There is not space to deal with this again in this article, though many new details have emerged. In fact, during the government's desperate battle to suppress *Spycatcher* other 'insiders' have come out with more information. Colin Wallace, for instance, a former captain in the army's 'psychological operations' unit in Northern Ireland, has revealed how the military intelligence waged a campaign of black propaganda and dirty tricks against 'political targets', including Wilson and other labour ministers. Cathy Massiter, a former MI5 officer, has shown the extent to which 'covert operations' against the trade unions and organisations like CND have continued right up to the present time.

The Wright affair has once again highlighted the role of the judiciary in Britain. The top judges, with only a few exceptions, have demonstrated that their so-called 'independence' consists of indifference to democratic rights and a determination to back up a Tory executive at all costs.

The government could not use the Official Secrets Act against Wright in Australia and has not, so far, tried to use it against newspapers in Britain reporting Wright's allegations. The acquittal in 1985 of Clive Ponting, the senior civil servant who revealed to MPs details of the sinking of the Belgrano during the Falklands war, has made the Tories extremely reluctant to use Sec-

tion 2 of the Official Secrets Act, which involves trial by jury.

Instead, in both Britain and Australia they have pursued civil actions for 'breach of confidence'. According to a recent report of the Law Commission, this type of action, usually arising from business disputes, "has a somewhat obscure legal basis". The government, moreover, through the Attorney-General, has conducted these actions as if they were criminal prosecutions. Their action in the Australian courts led to ignominious failure. But in Britain, with the help of a more compliant judiciary, the Tories have succeeded in enforcing a series of bonapartist bans on media reporting of the issues raised by *Spycatcher*.

The judiciary

Through 'contempt of court' actions, in which the law has been dramatically extended by the Court of Appeal and the Lords, the government has been able to construct a new system of media censorship. Created entirely by judges, the *ad hoc* banning system has no basis in any parliamentary statute. At the same time, ministers are relieved of any necessity to account to parliament for their actions. Parliament has been blocked from discussing the judges' rulings, either on grounds of 'national security' or because the issues are *sub-judice* (ie under consideration by the courts).

Some of the injunctions granted have been draconian, banning newspapers not merely from reporting Wright's allegations but from discussing anything relating to the secret security services.

Until modified by other, less executive-minded judges, some of the orders granted to the Attorney-General even banned the reporting of court and parliamentary proceedings—unprecedented steps in recent times.

The judgement of Mr Justice Scott, 21 December 1987, in which he lifted the injunctions banning the *Observer* and *The Guardian* from reporting on *Spycatcher* issues, forcefully demolishes the legitimacy of this *ad hoc* censorship mechanism. This is far from being the end of the story, however. The government is once again appealing to the Court of Appeal, where senior judges have several times reversed the more liberal decisions given on occasions by judges in the high court.

In Australia, however, as the Tories found to their cost, the Attorney-General could not rely on the unquestioning support of the judiciary. In the Australian courts, the judges have taken a more independent line, refusing to accept the Tories' view of Britain's 'national security' as a decisive argument.

At the action to get a permanent injunction banning Wright's memoirs, the government's lawyers declared that they would be accepting "for the purposes of the trial" that Wright's material was true. This, it was claimed, was a technical, legal device to avoid argument in court over Wright's allegations. The issue was simply one of 'breach of confidence between an employer and their former employee'. To most people this legalistic manoeuvre simply underlined the bankruptcy of the government's case. They were trying to ban memoirs of enormous public interest while denying the court an opportunity of examining the real issues.

Wright's defence was that the government had allowed the publication of several books, like those of Pincher, Boyle and West, when they knew them to be based on information from intelligence officers and had been given advanced information about their publication. Was not the government's policy inconsistent? In one of his many notorious statements in court, Sir Robert Armstrong, Thatcher's cabinet secretary and chief witness, replied: "The policy is consistent, only its application varies"! On another point, Armstrong was forced to retract, with an apology, his statement that it had been the independent decision of the Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers, not to prosecute over Pincher's book (when aware that it was based on Wright's material). Havers had protested at the attempt to make him the scapegoat, the long-distance telephones buzzed, and Armstrong was forced to change his story. Again, obliged to produce documents which he had tried to withhold

from the court, Armstrong was challenged about the truth of a letter. His reply will long be remembered: "It contains a misleading impression," he said, "not a lie. It was being economical with the truth." Armstrong's performance in the witness box was a rare—and chilling—public exposure of the habits of secrecy, deception and official lying cultivated by Whitehall's top mandarins.

The government might have got away with it in the British courts, but the presiding judge, Mr Justice Powell, was clearly not prepared to do Thatcher's dirty work. He expressed outrage at the government's tactics and subjected their "labrynthine weavings" to scathing criticism. In his judgement, Powell ruled against the British government, upholding a previous opinion of the present Australian Chief Justice, Mason, that the publication of information should not be suppressed when the only real objection is that "it enables the public to discuss, review and criticise government actions."

Law Lords' judgement

The government appealed to the New South Wales Court of Appeal, but its three judges refused to reverse Powell's judgement. One of them commented that "Although in form (the action) is merely a claim in contract or based on the equitable duties of confidence... that is the form only. The substance is the duty of secrecy spelt out in the Official Secrets Act"—UK public law which it was not the business of the Australian courts to enforce. Once again the British government decided to appeal, to the final Court of Appeal in Canberra. This is still pending. But they failed to persuade the Australian courts to continue the ban on publication, and Wright's book appeared in the Summer. Within weeks, Wright had netted a fortune from the Australian sales.

In Britain, meanwhile, the *Independent* and two London papers decided, after the government's defeat in Australia, to publish some of Wright's material. The government immediately took action against them for contempt of court, claiming they were undermining the outstanding injunctions against the papers which had previously tried to publish the *Spycatcher* material.

The senior judge who heard this case, however, Sir Nicolas Browne-Wilkinson, ruled against the government. The existing injunctions had not been imposed on the *Independent* etc, and as the law stood, they therefore could not be in contempt. The Attorney General, he said, "was seeking to widen application of the law of criminal contempt."

Here at least, one judge declined to endorse the Tory government's strong-arm tactics in the civil courts: "private rights (in civil law) should not be bolstered by a distortion of the law of contempt, in an attempt to produce a judge-made public law protecting official secrets." This spark of judicial liberalism was short-lived, however: the Court of Appeal, under Sir John Donaldson, rapidly reversed Browne-Wilkinson's decision, claiming that they were simply "declaring what the law had always been."

When it reach the House of Lords, however, the issue of the right of newspapers to publish Wright's allegations produced a sharp divergence between the Lords of Appeal, who decided 3-2 in the government's favour. Split judgements are not unusual, but the minority's criticism of the majority ruling must be unprecedented in modern legal history.

Lord Bridges, himself a former member of the Security Commission, a toothless watchdog over the security services, started from the obvious point that after the publication of *Spycatcher* in Australia, the United States and elsewhere, the information was available and "it is nonsensical to talk about preventing its disclosure." When any intelligence service in the world could get the book, how could a blanket ban on discussion of Wright's allegations protect national security?

The majority not only banned newspapers from discussing Wright's allegations, but barred them from reporting proceedings in the Australian courts—and even moved to ban the reporting of Parliamentary debate about *Spycatcher*, an unprecedented suggestion from which they retreated under Bridge's criticism. Nevertheless, Bridges declared that "my confidence in the common law (ie the interpretation of legal precedent by the judges) to safeguard the fundamental freedoms essential to a free society, such as freedom of speech, is undermined."

"Freedom of speech," said Lord Bridges, "is always the first casualty under a totalitarian regime. Such a regime cannot afford to allow the free circulation of information and ideas among its citizens... The present attempt to insulate the public in this country from information which is freely available elsewhere is a significant step down that very dangerous road." He warned the government to take note that "their wafer thin majority in this litigation has been gained at a price which no government committed to upholding the values of a free society could afford to pay."

This stinging criticism from a Law Lord only underlines the feebleness of

the criticism of the Labour leaders in relation to the Tories' moves to suppress all public debate about the activities of the security services.

The three judges in the majority were quite blatant in spelling out why they favoured a ban. Yes, *Spycatcher* was published and could be imported freely into Britain, but they still had a duty to preserve the "morale of the intelligence services" and maintain "public confidence in the security service." In other words, the truth about intelligence operations, particularly those directed against the labour movement, should be kept from the majority of the public. They also want to reassure members of the intelligence services that, come what may, they will be shielded from public criticism. "There is a great difference," said Lord Templeman, "between the power of the press operating through mass circulation and the power of Mr Wright confined to the export to this country of individual copies of *Spycatcher*."

Ironically, justifying his decision, Lord Templeman pronounced: "...there is nothing to prevent the press investigating all the allegations made by Mr Wright and reporting the results of their investigations to the public. It is only unlawful for the press to publish information unlawfully disclosed by Mr Wright."

Media censorship

Yet when journalists working for BBC Radio 4 attempted to do exactly what Templeman suggested, producing a series entitled *My Country Right or Wrong*, they were hit with another injunction. This was in spite of the fact that the BBC journalists had carried out their own independent research, interviewing a number of former intelligence officers, including some who are critical of Wright. The producer had also submitted the programme plans to the so-called 'D-Notice' Committee, a voluntary board of censors consisting of both government appointees and media nominees who vet material deemed to be 'sensitive' from a security point of view. Far from 'Denying' permission to broadcast, the committee had cleared the programme.

This did not prevent the high court granting the government an injunction against the BBC which went far beyond any of the previous orders produced by the *Spycatcher* saga. Until the terms of the order were relaxed in mid-December, the BBC was banned from mentioning Wright, or the names of any other former or serving members of the intelligence services, however well known some of them are. This ban also covered the reporting of court proceed-

ings and even of parliamentary debates! MPs are protected by absolute 'privilege' (ie immunity from libel or other legal action) while speaking in the Commons—but because of 'contempt of court' rulings the media is not allowed to report what they say!

The Labour Party leadership has allowed the Tories to get away with these bonapartist measures against the media. Kinnock and Co have repeatedly opposed effective action, in relation to the miners' and the print-workers' strikes and the struggle in Liverpool, on the grounds that "we must remain within the law." But the failure to mobilise the labour movement in defence of workers' interests has allowed the Tory government to bend the law even further in the service of the capitalists' interests. As a result, the freedom of the press, achieved historically through working-class struggles, has now been 'legally' curtailed by the Tories.

As the House of Lords' judgment showed, there are differences between the judges over the issues raised by *Spycatcher*. Some clearly feel that the law is being stretched too far in defence of Tory secrecy. On 21 December, Mr Justice Scott explained why he was refusing to grant the government permanent injunctions against the *Observer* and the *Guardian*. His judgment shatters the government's case.

Scott ruled that Wright would be breaching confidentiality imposed on him as an intelligence officer, and *The Times* would be wrong to continue publishing excerpts from his memoirs. However, it is different for newspapers attempting to report the issues. Scott pointed once again to the obvious fact: that over a million copies of *Spycatcher* have been printed in English, and the book is currently being prepared for publication in twelve languages. The government took no steps to ban importation, and tens of thousands have entered the country. The information was no longer secret and any duty of confidentiality which might have been binding on newspapers had 'evaporated'.

But the judgment also criticised the government's inconsistency. Scott lists 15 sources—books, articles, and programmes, all relying on various 'insider' information—which, before the publication of *Spycatcher*, publicised various allegations taken up by Wright. The government's failure to take action against any of them was clearly the result of a deliberate policy decision. So why should newspapers be banned from publishing the allegations?

Scott's defence of the press's "legitimate role in disclosing scandals in government" implicitly attacked the doctrine of secrecy which both Thatcher

and senior judges have been trying to establish. He attacked the idea, advanced by the three Law Lords, that the courts should uphold "a duty of confidence that operates to keep away from the mass of people information which is freely available to the more sophisticated or better off." A liberal view, but almost 'subversive' in the Thatcherite state.

Scott also ruled that in the case of illegal activities by members of the intelligence services any normal duty of the press to preserve confidentiality would be over-ridden by "the ability of the press freely to report allegations of scandals in government," in spite of any 'embarrassment' this might cause. This, in his view, applied to the allegations of "routine burglary and bugging by MI5 officers," to the alleged plot to assassinate president Nasser of Egypt, to the plot to destabilise the Wilson government, and to allegations of Soviet penetration of MI5.

LP leaders' response

Apart from their right, in Scott's judgement, to ban publication in Britain of Wright's actual memoirs, it is hard to see what is left of the government's case. "I found myself unable to escape the reflection," said the judge, "that the absolute protection of the Security Service that Sir Robert (Armstrong) was contending for could not be achieved this side of the Iron Curtain." Purely from the standpoint of liberal democracy and existing law—with, no doubt, an underlying fear that the judiciary may be discredited by slavish support for Tory policy—the learned judge, in the circumspect language of the courtroom, has made an attack on the government's action far more trenchant than anything coming from Labour's front bench.

Whether Scott's judgment will be upheld or overturned in the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords, of course, remains to be seen.

Despite all the evidence of internecine struggle and illegal activities on the part of the intelligence services, Thatcher has intransigently opposed all calls for an enquiry. When Labour eventually forced a parliamentary debate, and James Callaghan at last came out for an enquiry, Thatcher announced that there had already been an investigation—carried out by MI5 which, surprise, surprise, had acquitted itself of any irregularity. MI5's Director-General had assured the prime minister that there was no truth in Wright's allegations, there had been no plot against Wilson, and Wilson had never been investigated by the security

services. Thatcher threw back at the Labour leaders the conclusion of the 1977 enquiry instigated by Callaghan, which found that there had been no plot. At the time Callaghan had used it to try to bury the whole issue. Now former ministers lamely complain that it investigated only the allegation of the bugging of Harold Wilson! A few days after Thatcher's latest absolution of MI5, a former officer named in the press as one of the plotters told the press that he had never been interviewed about the allegations.

The government's latest stance was viewed with incredulity and even dismay by the serious press. The staunchly Tory *Telegraph* is the only 'quality' paper which has not been hit with an injunction in the *Spycatcher* case. Increasing calls for a full enquiry, including from Murdoch's usually pro-Thatcher *Times*, undoubtedly reflect serious disquiet among the more farsighted representatives of the ruling class. Even from the point of view of the security and intelligence interests of the British ruling class, the post-war record of the secret service has hardly been one of conspicuous success. Leaving that aside, however, they fear that unless a degree of control is established, with at least the semblance of accountability, there is the danger of a massive reaction against the undemocratic activities that most people used to believe only occurred in police-states. Even the arch-Tory commentator, Ferdinand Mount writing in the *Telegraph*, 30 April 1987, conceded that "the operations of the secret service do not seem to be under effective control."

Serious commentators have pointed to the experience of Australia, where in the past the intelligence service engaged in activities similar to those described by Wright (and Massiter). The Labour government under Gough Whitlam (1972-75), however, took drastic action. When the secret service refused to allow ministers access to files on Labour activists, the attorney general mounted a police raid and seized the political files, which were subsequently destroyed. After an enquiry by a Royal Commission, a parliamentary 'oversight' committee and an Inspector General of Intelligence and Security were introduced. It would be a mistake to think that this would prevent the security services from working against the labour movement. In fact, Whitlam's government was arbitrarily dismissed by the Governor General, Kerr, and active pressure from the US in relation to their fears about the 'security' of the Labour government undoubtedly played a part. Nevertheless, a limited degree of accountability was introduced which could be used by Labour, provided the

pressure of the labour movement were to be mobilised, to check the activities of the security services.

Compared with the British Labour leaders, however, the leaders of the Australian Labour Party appear like lions. Throughout the whole *Spycatcher* affair Thatcher's hand has been strengthened by the Opposition's reluctance to take up the issue. "The demands for a new enquiry from people in the Labour Party who are in a position to know something about the subject (Wilson, Callaghan, Merlyn Rees—who was both Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Home Secretary) have been, so far, somewhere between muted and non-existent," *Financial Times*, 1 May 1987. Mount noted that "Mr Kinnock and the Labour front bench have steered fairly clear of the whole business, for fear of being accused of being soft on security," *Telegraph*, 30 April 1987. He comments, with justification, that "an enquiry can only demonstrate how abysmally feeble Mrs Thatcher's Labour predecessors were in keeping the security services in their proper place."

The Tories and MI5

Given that Wilson and other former Labour ministers were the target of hostile security operations, and especially in view of Wilson's bitter complaints in 1976, their present complacency seems almost incredible. Wilson even denies that there was a plot, now. Yet even while MI5, after a token internal enquiry, was officially clearing itself, "we have MI5 sources saying that, yes, there was an operation but it was legitimate and necessary..." (Peter Jenkins, writing in the *Independent*, 3 May 1987). This line, conveyed to the press, contains the unmistakable threat that if the labour leaders push for an enquiry the intelligence services will fight back by reviving their dirty propaganda campaign.

Unfortunately, the labour leaders have provided them, over the years, with plenty of ammunition. For a start, in the late 1950s the right wing around George Brown themselves called in MI5 to help them in the struggle with the left. Under successive Labour governments, as Barbara Castle reveals in her diaries, Labour ministers used daily intelligence reports on the trade unions during disputes over pay and incomes policy. Above all, Wilson himself had personal and business links with a group of businessmen who had nothing in common with the labour movement. A number of them provided secret finance for his private office, and were later ennobled by Wilson—only in several cases

to end up in jail or committing suicide under a cloud of criminal scandal. Although the MI5 claim that Wilson was a 'Communist agent' or 'sympathiser' is ludicrous, exposure of the full details of Wilson's shadowy entourage could not but discredit him even further.

But the already tarnished reputations of former labour leaders should not be allowed to stand in the way of a full exposure of the security services' role. It is the interests of the movement which are at stake. The labour leaders should uncover the extensive and much more dangerous links between the intelligence services, shadowy big business organisations, private security firms—and the Tory Party.

Without giving a lot of detail, for instance, Wright has repeated the story of the plot against Wilson. But there is other evidence that in 1974 Wright himself was involved in discussions with Tory MP Airey Neave, a close associate of Thatcher (Neave was later assassinated by the NILA with a car bomb in 1979). Together with other intelligence officers, they discussed plans to oust Wilson. There is also evidence that Neave approached Collin Wallace, who was then still working for the army's propaganda organisation in Northern Ireland, asking for intelligence information to discredit Wilson and his allegedly left-wing associates.

A whole series of reports in the *Guardian*, *Observer*, and even the right-wing *Times*, based on a variety of sources, bear out these allegations. It is also significant that several of the former MI5 officers named in parliamentary questions as being linked with the anti-Wilson plot are long-standing supporters of the Tory Party, belong to the exclusive Carlton Club, and have business links with MPs on the right of the Tory Party.

There exists, at the same time, a whole network of shadowy organisations linked in various ways to the Tory Party. They include the Institute of Foreign Affairs, which produces 'red-scare' material on the Labour left, *Militant*, etc; the mis-named Freedom Association, which backed the Grunwick boss in victimising Asian trade unionists and financed the infiltration of two provocateurs into Newham NE Labour Party to defend Tory-renegade Prentice; and the Institute For the Study of Conflict, a kind of private Tory intelligence organisation. All these organisations, and others, secretly financed by big business, are run by people drawn from various branches of the secret service. They are well documented, though there is not space to give all the details here.

From the point of view of the labour movement, the case for a thorough

enquiry is clear. But it must be an enquiry carried out by the movement itself. Previous 'enquiries' by the Security Commission or by judges (like Lord Denning on the Profumo scandal) were clearly farcical. Their real purpose was to reassure the public on the basis of a cover-up. In Britain, though it would be better than anything so far, a Royal Commission composed of the 'great and the good' is not likely to get very far.

Labour movement enquiry

The labour movement, however, has both the authority and the resources to set up an effective enquiry. There is now a mass of documentary evidence which could be collated and evaluated. There would be no shortage of experts, both in Britain and internationally, willing to give evidence. If Tory ministers, Whitehall mandarins and intelligence officers are concerned about the bias of such a tribunal, they would be welcome to give their own evidence.

Above all, the trade unionists, left-

wing activists, CND members, students, and other people who have suffered directly from secret service surveillance, burglaries, black-listing, secret reports, or provocation, would be invited to give first-hand evidence.

The results of such an enquiry should be transmitted to the ranks of the labour movement, to provide the basis of a real campaign against the undemocratic, reactionary activities of the security services.

In the USA, the Congressional enquiries (Church and Pike Committees) set up after the Watergate scandal, brought home to the American public the sinister role of the CIA and other secret agencies (including sections of the FBI). For a time, the Freedom of Information Act allowed organisations and individuals to expose some of their sinister activities. Unfortunately, the labour movement did not seize on this opportunity to demand the disbanding of these undemocratic organisations, and democratic control over police agencies like the FBI. In many cases, corrupt trade union leaders were themselves implicated in the intelligence apparatus.

Nevertheless, that period showed the effect that massive public exposure can have, in this case very temporarily, in limiting the activities of the secret service.

Future threat

The secret security apparatus, however strong, does not in the last analysis alter the balance of class forces in society. Our spies should perhaps reflect on the fall of the Tsar, the Shah, Marcos, and other dictators. It was not for the want of spies that they were overthrown. Nevertheless, the secret security services are a significant part of the capitalist state apparatus, another reserve weapon which, as the experience of Ireland shows, will attempt to play a much more active role against the working class in a period of intensified struggle.

That is why their real role must be brought out, and the labour movement mobilised to counter both their present activities and the threat they may pose in the future.

Science Report By Pete Dickenson

Computer Surveillance of the Labour Movement.

By 1980 MI5 had built up the largest 'on line' computer installation in Europe. The storage capacity of the system, known as the Joint Computer Bureau, was 20 gigabytes in 1978, equivalent to the information stored in 50,000 paperback books. Yet, according to a recently published book by Duncan Campbell and Steve Connor, *On the Record—Surveillance, Computers and Privacy*, in 1984 they began a major upgrade and expansion.

Computerisation of MI5 records began in 1971 with the purchase of an ICL 1907 machine, small by modern standards but the largest British built computer at the time. In the late 1970's a much more powerful system was installed, based on dual ICL 2980 processors.

Like the ICL 1907, this was the most powerful British built machine of its day. Only three were ever built, the other two going abroad. In 1972, the computer manufacturer ICL was asked to begin to write a program, called MOD-mult, to link together the MI5 machine with several other large government computers. The largest installations, apart from MI5's, are those for car registrations at Swansea, National Insurance at Newcastle and the VAT computer.

MI5

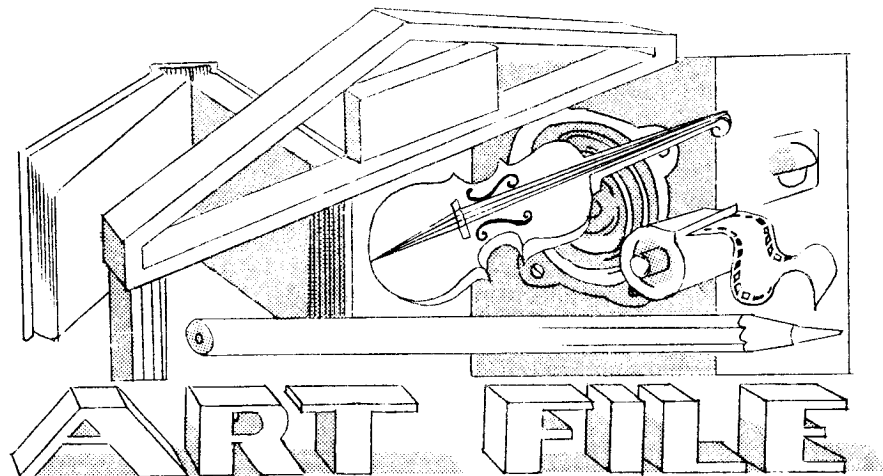
There is mounting evidence that MI5 use the National Insurance computer to monitor activists in the labour movement. A Special Branch detective sent a report on a shop steward at the Carnation food factory at Dumfries to MI5 in London. It arrived by mistake at the offices of the magazine 'Time Out'. The report quoted the steward's MI5 file number and revealed



that individuals are identified by their National Insurance number.

It is obvious that the computer run by MI5, which can store information on up to 20 million people, is not

needed to catch spies, but to monitor not only left wing activists but large sections of the general population. This shows the true face of the capitalist state behind the democratic facade.



Shostakovitch: Stalinism and art

LAST MAY saw the British stage premiere of Shostakovitch's music-drama 'Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk'. The production, by the English National Opera, was also shown recently on BBC TV.

Shostakovitch, who died in 1975, was the most talented composer to come to prominence in Russia since the 1917 revolution. His music consistently attempted to express the aspirations and suffering of the Russian people. His themes of war, revolution, an attack on bureaucracy and careerism, and freedom of the individual, led to a series of clashes with the bureaucracy under Stalin and, later, Khrushchev.

He completed 'Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk' in 1932 and the work received its first performance in Leningrad two years later. It was initially hailed as a masterpiece in the Soviet Union and performed an unprecedented number of times for a modern work. It was also acclaimed in the West.

Set in the Mtsensk district of provincial Russia the opera tells the story, to use Shostakovitch's own words, of the struggle of a "clever gifted woman in the nightmarish conditions of pre-revolutionary Russia." The main character Katerina, despite committing two murders, is portrayed as the **victim** of the oppressive "cruel, greedy, petty merchant environment" she lives in. In fact Shostakovitch's detestation of the exploitation of women permeates the whole work. This is no traditional opera, with set-piece arias, escapist and sugary stories, prima donnas 'et al' but powerful drama. The suffering and rebellion of Katerina is vividly brought to life on the stage and in the music in a way not seen before (or since) in a

By John Bulaitis

work by a Russian composer.

'Lady Macbeth' was to be the first in a series of works dealing with the position of women at different stages in Russian history. Shostakovitch planned next an opera about Sofia Perofskaya, a leader of the 'Peoples Will' movement who was hanged for her part in the assassination of tsar Alexander II. He was to follow that with a work expounding women's role in the building of a socialist society. However these plans were never to be brought to fruition. In January 1936 Stalin and his entourage paid a visit to a production of 'Lady Macbeth' in Moscow. He left the theatre in a fury. A few days later a major unsigned article attacking the work, written as if an editorial, appeared in *Pravda*. It was headlined "Chaos instead of Music."

Attacked by Stalin

"From the first minute the listener is shocked by a deliberately discordant, confused flood of sounds. Snatches of melody, embryos of musical phrases appear, only to disappear again in the din, grinding and screeching. To follow this 'music' is difficult, to remember it impossible." And further on appeared a not very veiled threat: "This is playing at abstruse things which could end badly." In the atmosphere of Stalin's purges this was a remark not to be taken lightly. The article was probably penned by one David Zaslavsky. Lenin had once described this hack as a "notorious slanderer" and a "blackmailing pen for hire." Stalin had appointed him to the editorial board of *Pravda*.



Zaslavsky may well have written the article but the instigator of it was undoubtedly Stalin himself. A week later another *Pravda* article attacked Shostakovitch's music.

All further performances of 'Lady Macbeth' were scrapped. In effect it was to become a proscribed work for the rest of Stalin's lifetime. The plans for the other operas in the series were abandoned. 'Lady Macbeth' was not to be produced again until the end of 1962, but now in a revised version and under a new name 'Katerina Ismailova'. This new version, however, smoothed some of the sharper language and images.

What was behind Stalin's attack? Certainly the subject matter must have touched a raw nerve. While Shostakovitch was portraying the oppression of women under the tsar, Stalin was busy preparing legislation reversing all the advances in this area made after 1917. Neither would the scene where the tsarist police torture a socialist, nor the conclusion of the opera set in a Siberian labour camp where the prisoners are seen as victims of injustice, have gone down too well! 1936 was not a time to remind people of such things! In these same police cells it was now Stalin's police extorting 'confessions' from life-long revolutionaries, while the same labour camps were being filled with supporters of the Left Opposition and anyone else daring to question his authority.

By this time, Stalin had effectively

throttled the revolutionary advances of October with the exception of the planned economy itself. He had also snuffed out the 'cultural revolution' it had ushered in. Socialism means for the first time the freeing of the whole population, not just a privileged minority, from the drudgery, poverty and degradations of life in class society. The harmonious planning of the world's resources, the harnessing of the most advanced techniques and the abolition of waste (particularly spending on weapons of destruction) would mean the possibility of satisfying all human needs while cutting the working week to a few hours. Everyone with the talent and inclination would have the **time** and opportunity to devote themselves to science, philosophy and the arts. Human intellect would develop to unimaginable levels.

This, of course, was not an immediate prospect in Russia. The world revolution had begun in a backward country. The cultural level of the masses was far below that of the advanced capitalist countries. Yet the smashing of the tsarist yoke unleashed a flourish of invention and initiatives in all fields of art. The films of Eisenstein, 'Battleship Potemkin', 'Strike' and others, were way ahead of their time and brought the reality of the struggles of the masses alive on the screen. In the theatre new and revolutionary ideas were pioneered by Meyerhold. The poet Mayakovsky and others produced some outstanding pieces of revolutionary literature. There were strides forward in sculpture, architecture and painting. It was similar in the field of music. Up to the mid 1920's Leningrad was to become a centre of innovation. There was a stream of performances of new music by European composers, such as Krenek, Milhaud, Berg and Hindemith. Into this atmosphere stepped the young Shostakovich. His early music was full of experimentation. His second symphony entitled 'October' includes a part for a factory whistle. His first opera 'The Nose', based on Gogol's story, is a sharp satire aimed against the establishment. It is awash with provocative, new musical methods. The singer of the part of the nose even has to sing while holding his own!

As Trotsky was to explain, while the regime was one of workers' democracy with a "seething mass-basis and a prospect of world revolution, it had no fear of experiments... for it understood that only in this way could a new cultural epoch be prepared." **Yet after Stalin's bureaucratic counter-revolution free expression of any kind could not be tolerated.**

In 1926, alongside the reactionary

Art was to be created by decree. For the bureaucracy this meant art that worshipped their monstrous distortion of 'socialism'. Trotsky took up this nonsense: 'An old engineer can perhaps build a turbine reluctantly. It will not be first rate, precisely because it has been built reluctantly, but it would serve its purpose. But one cannot, however, write a poem reluctantly'.

idea of building 'socialism in one country', Stalin espoused the theory of 'Proletarian culture'. This theory was fundamentally false. Whilst the bourgeois developed a culture and art that permeated society there are essential differences as far as the proletariat is concerned. Unlike the bourgeoisie, which was to rule for a whole series of generations, the period of workers' democracy is relatively short. On the basis of the development of the productive forces, the state withers away and the proletariat itself dissolves into a classless society. (Of course in Russia, because of the isolation of the revolution, the opposite took place with the state becoming a monstrous growth on society.)

Workers' democracy is therefore a transitional period. The task was not to create a 'new' proletarian culture but to absorb all that was best in 'bourgeois culture'. This was particularly so in Russia because of the cultural backwardness. The possibility of a new culture and art would open up only under a socialist society.

Yet in 1932 Stalin was to announce that because this socialist society had been achieved (!) it was necessary, therefore, to create no longer a proletarian but a "socialist art and culture." Stalin's hatchet man in implementing this policy of 'socialist realism' in art was Zhdanov. Speaking to a congress of writers he spelled out what had to be done: "Your congress meets at a time when the socialist way of life has incontrovertibly and finally triumphed (!) thanks to the leadership of the Communist Party guided by Comrade Stalin, that genius (!) and leader and teacher... Comrade Stalin has called our writers 'engineers of the human soul.' What does he mean? (A good question!—JB) What obligations does such an appellation put upon you? Create works of great craftsmanship, of profound ideological and artistic content."

In other words art was to be created by decree. For the bureaucracy this meant art that worshipped their monstrous distortion of 'socialism' and in particular heaped praise on 'Comrade Stalin' himself. Trotsky took up this nonsense about 'engineers of the human soul': "An old engineer can

perhaps build a turbine reluctantly. It will not be first rate, precisely because it has been built reluctantly, but it would serve its purpose. But one cannot, however, write a poem reluctantly."

Stalin's policy was a mirror image of that of the Nazis. In Germany any progressive artists such as the writer Brecht and composers Weill and Eisler were forced to flee. The Nazis tried with predictably pathetic results to create a National-Socialist brand of music and other art. Likewise in the Soviet Union all sorts of mediocrity that served the bureaucracy's interests were to be proclaimed masterpieces. In the field of music everything had to be written in the 'Russian tradition' and beaming with optimism. Works by composers like Dzerzhinsky, written strictly to formulae of the past, were proclaimed as model socialist compositions. Today this music is of no importance. On the other hand anything new, different or smacking with the reality of life was denounced.

The attack on 'Lady Macbeth' was just one part of the crackdown on all progressive thought in all fields of the arts. The *Pravda* article itself pointed out: "The ugly distortions of the opera spring from the same source as similar distortions in painting, poetry, education and science." For many, 'things did end badly'. Many writers 'disappeared' in the purges. Shostakovich himself expected to be arrested. This did not happen although many of his friends and associates, including Meyerhold and the military genius Tukhachevsky, were to perish on orders from Stalin. However, Shostakovich and others were attacked again in 1948 and as late as 1962 his anti-Stalinist 13th Symphony was banned.

Trotsky once pointed out that "The development of art is the highest test of the vitality and significance of each epoch." In the 70 years since the revolution the achievements in Russia in literature, poetry, painting, music etc have in general been miserable. The achievements of note have always come from artists who have been forced into conflict with the bureaucracy.

The Ninth of January, 1905

"Sire! We workers, our children and wives, the helpless old people who are our parents, we have come to you, Sire, to seek justice and protection. We are in great poverty, we are oppressed and weighed down with labours beyond our strength; we are insulted, we are not recognised as human beings, we are treated like slaves who must bear their lot in silence. And we have suffered it, but we are being driven ever deeper into beggary, lawlessness and ignorance. Despotism and arbitrary rule are strangling us, and we are suffocating. Sire, our strength is at an end! The limit of our patience has been reached: the terrible moment has come for us when it is better to die than to continue suffering intolerable torment."

With these words, the working class of Russia made its first decisive entrance upon the stage of history, appealing to the clemency of the tsar, the "little father", with a petition in its hands and a priest at its head. Eleven months later, the same working class rose against the autocracy, arms in hand, under the leadership of a Marxist party. In the intervening months, the first Russian Revolution unfolded on an epic scale, involving every layer of the proletariat and all other oppressed layers of society, passing through every imaginable phase of struggle and utilizing every conceivable fighting method, from economic strikes and petitions to the authorities through the political general strike and mass demonstrations, to an armed insurrection. The 1905 revolution already revealed, albeit in an embryonic fashion, all the basic processes which were to be repeated on a higher scale twelve years later. It was a dress rehearsal, without which the final victory of the proletariat in October 1917 would have been impossible. In the course of 1905, all ideas, programmes, parties and leaders were put to the test. The experience of the first revolution was decisive for the future evolution of all the tendencies in Russian Social Democracy.

Yet the truth is that the beginning of the revolution found the party in a lamentable state. The split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had, in effect, thrown it right back. The internal faction fight had virtually paralysed its activities for many months. The

activists inside Russia were confused and disorientated. Having lost control of the Party centre abroad, the Bolsheviks were deprived of an organ, until the first issue of *Vperyod* came out in December 1904. An acute shortage of funds meant that even *Vperyod* led a precarious existence. The Mensheviks had more resources, but were relatively weaker on the ground in the interior, with the exception of certain areas such as the South and the Caucasus.

The weakness of the Party coincided with a new upswing in the workers' movement, which was therefore obliged to express itself through other channels. In an effort to check the growth of Marxist influence among the workers, as we have seen*, the authorities encouraged the setting up of legal trade unions, under the vigilant eye of the police. Typical of these 'Zubatov' unions was the St Petersburg 'Assembly of Russian Factory and Workshop Workers', set up by Father Grigory Gapon with police permission, on condition of its maintaining a strictly non-political character.

Father Gapon

Gapon's 'union' was in reality a friendly society which organised insurance schemes, libraries and social activities, such as musical evenings which the workers attended with their families. It was intended as a safety-valve where workers, to some extent, could give voice to their grievances, but where all mention of politics was rigorously prohibited. Since the Assembly's leaders did everything in their power to exclude revolutionaries, it is not surprising that the revolutionary workers and intellectuals looked upon the new organisation with extreme suspicion and hostility.

However the efforts of the police and their union stooges to clamp the workers' movement into a straitjacket of legal constraints was doomed to failure. The rising tide of discontent which affected all layers of society in the course of the Russo-Japanese War, began to affect even the most backward strata of the working class. Up to this moment, the opposition to tsarism had mainly come from the liberal intelligentsia and the students. The big battalions of the working class seemed to have stood aside from the struggle. But, despite the appearance of calm, the factories and workers' districts were seething with discontent. All that was required was some focal point which

would enable this subterranean process to find a voice and a conscious, organised expression.

After the assassination of Plehve, the regime, hopelessly compromised by military defeats and feeling the ground tremble beneath its feet, tried to forestall revolution from below by making concessions from the top. The 'Spring' of Autumn 1904 gave the workers more room to breathe. From September 1904 a series of mass meetings were held in the Petersburg factories, under the auspices of Gapon's 'Assembly' which became increasingly popular with the workers. Fresh layers of workers, with no experience of struggle, were becoming organised. Gapon's organisation now had 8,000 members and branches in at least eleven districts of the city. This was a far larger number of workers than had ever participated in the Social Democratic organisations.

Gradually, the advanced Social Democratic workers overcame their instinctive aversion and began cautiously to explore work in this union. On the face of it, the prospects were not at all promising. The workers who joined Gapon's union were not like the old, conscious Social Democratic workers, but completely raw, politically untutored masses, who brought with them all the prejudices imbibed for a thousand years from a backward peasant milieu, soaked in religion, superstition and a slavish worship of the tsar, the 'batyushka' the 'little father'. Insofar as injustice existed, the Russian peasant reasoned, this was the fault of the 'tsar's servants', not the monarch who was the 'people's protector'. It was no accident that the union was headed by a priest. Father Gapon, an able organiser and a natural leader, spoke a language which the workers could understand. With its curious mixture of militancy and religion, class struggle and monarchism, it corresponded to the first, confused gropings towards consciousness of millions of the most down-trodden layers of society.

The figure of Gapon himself is shrouded in an enigma. The prevailing opinion in Marxist circles at the time was that he was a simple police agent, who in all probability had deliberately planned the massacre of the 9 January 1905 with the authorities. The notorious Stalinist Short Course states baldly that "In 1904, prior to the Putilov strike, the police had used the services of an agent

* See *Militant International Review* No 33, Autumn 1986

provocateur, a priest by the name of Gapon.... Gapon undertook to assist the tsarist Okhrana (secret police, AW) by providing a pretext for firing on the workers and drowning the working class movement in blood." 1.

Gapon was undoubtedly mixed up with the police prior to the 9th January and later, after the defeat of the revolution, was accused by the Social Revolutionaries of doing the same thing, for which he was assassinated. Nevertheless, the idea that Gapon consciously led the workers to be slaughtered is clearly false. All along he gives the impression of being carried along by events beyond his control or understanding. On the eve of the massacre, this 'leader of men' gave voice to his perplexity: "What would come of it? Good heavens, I don't know. Something big, but what exactly, I can't say. Who can make head or tail of all this?" 2. After the massacre, Gapon recoiled in horror, denouncing the tsar and appealing for an armed uprising. For a time he swung left, even gravitating close to the Bolsheviks before relapsing and finally ending up as the victim of a terrorist's bullet.

The Putilov strike

The accumulated rage and bitterness of the factory workers finally exploded in a strike at the Putilov arms works—a strategic centre of the St Petersburg proletariat—in December. The spark which ignited the powder-keg was the dismissal of four activists of Gapon's union. Starting in September 1904, there had been mass workers meetings in the factories under the auspices of the union, which gave the workers a chance to express their grievances and begin to acquire an idea of their own strength. The employers became alarmed and decided to crack down. On the 28 December, a mass meeting of workers from eleven factories was convened by Gapon's organisation. The increasingly radicalised mood of the workers was slowly pushing even the Gaponite leaders to more militant positions, at least in words. An indication of the sea-change was the fact that representatives of the Social Democrats and Social Revolutionaries were invited to attend.

At this meeting it was decided to send a delegation with a petition to the management, the factory inspectors and the authorities in St Petersburg, setting forth the workers' grievances. The idea of a petition was probably conceived by Gapon as a way of diverting the movement into safe channels. Possibly Gapon really believed he could act as a mediator between the 'little father' and his 'children'. But once put forward, in



Father Gapon, second from right, with the St. Petersburg Chief of Police.

a situation of ferment among the masses, even this apparently innocuous idea had a logic of its own.

The idea of an appeal to the tsar and a petition of demands immediately caught the imagination of the masses, corresponding to their first gropings in the direction of revolutionary consciousness. Mass meetings were held all over the capital, which indicated a swift process of radicalisation among the workers. Gapon dashed from one meeting to another, delivering increasingly radical speeches under the impact of the mood of the masses, who revered him. An eye-witness account gives a vivid impression of the electric atmosphere at these meetings, with their quasi-evangelical character, Gapon calling upon the Almighty to lead the workers in struggle, urging the workers to stand together and, if necessary, die together: "All those present were in a state of rapture—many were weeping, stamping their feet, banging chairs, beating with their fists against the walls and raising their hands on high, they swore to remain firm to the end." 3.

Gapon's authority appeared to be unassailable. By contrast, the revolutionary Social Democrats were at first regarded with suspicion by the workers. The report of the St Petersburg Bolsheviks to the Third Congress in April shows that they had been very slow to intervene in what they saw as a reactionary police union, only beginning to pay it serious attention when the strike was well underway. In some parts of the city, notably the Vyborg district, they got a sympathetic hearing. But elsewhere in the city, they were given a rough ride. Often the chairman would

not even allow them to speak. "Up to the ninth of January," the Petersburg delegate reported, "the attitude of the workers towards the (Bolshevik) committee was extremely hostile. Our agitators were beaten up, leaflets were destroyed, and the first 500 roubles sent to the Putilov workers by the students were accepted grudgingly." 4. A Menshevik writer bears this out: "In the Narva district, where the movement had originated, as late as the eighth of January, the workers enthusiastically welcomed the political content of Gapon's petition. When a lone Social Democrat attempted to deliver a political speech, a howl went up from the assembled workers: 'Down with him!' 'Throw him out!' " 5.

Marxists isolated

Yet despite the hypnotic effect exercised by Gapon on the workers at the time, he was merely an accidental figure thrown up by the movement of the masses, like a fleck of foam on the crest of a mighty wave, which flashes brightly for a moment before vanishing forever. His very success consisted in the fact that he was the personification of the first incoherent, spontaneous, instinctive movement of the working class, the first stirrings of consciousness of the masses. Inevitably, such a movement tends to seek out the line of least resistance, the well-worn paths, familiar sounding phrases and famous leaders. As always, the watchword of the movement of the masses is 'unity'. At one mass meeting, Gapon chided a Social Democratic speaker with the words: "Do not introduce discord: let us march towards

our sacred goal under a single peaceful banner, common to one and all." 6.

The numerical weakness and isolation of the Social Democracy at the beginning of the revolution was revealed in the words of Livshits, giving voice to the frustration of the party activists in Petersburg at their inability to exercise a decisive influence before the 9 January: "We Party workers", he wrote, "knew very well that the forthcoming peaceful procession would not lead to anything worthwhile and would involve the masses in terrible bloodshed. But where was the force that could have forestalled this terrible misdeed, for which tsarism and clericalism was responsible? Such a force did not exist." 7. (My emphasis, AW)

Martov, in his history of the Russian Social Democracy, written only a few years later, confirms that "...the Social Democracy of both factions could not but notice that the stormy events in Petersburg in January 1905 took place not only outside the immediate leadership of the Social Democracy, but even without a significant participation by it as an organised whole." 8.

This is confirmed from the Bolshevik side by the minutes of the Third Congress which state that: "The January events found the Petersburg committee in an extremely deplorable state. Its links with the working masses had been utterly disorganised by the Mensheviks. Only with great difficulty did they manage to maintain themselves in the City, Vasily Island and the Vyborg district." 9.

Yet in 24 hours the whole situation was transformed. Marx once wrote that the revolution at times needs the whip of counter-revolution to drive it forward. It took the massacre of Bloody Sunday to knock out of the heads of the masses the century-old illusions in tsarism. In a revolutionary situation, the workers' consciousness grows by leaps and bounds. Indeed, sudden and sharp shifts in the mood of the masses constitutes the essential element of a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary period. By the end of the year, the revolutionary Social Democracy had definitely established itself as the hegemonic force within the working class, striving to place itself at the head of the revolutionary nation.

In point of fact, the rapid growth of the forces of Russian Marxism in 1905 was not at all accidental. The terrain had been prepared over a long period through decades of Social Democratic agitation, propaganda and organisation. A considerable number of advanced workers had been in contact, to a greater or lesser extent, with the Social Democratic propaganda circles. A far larger number had been touched by the

mass agitation carried out systematically by the Social Democrats for at least ten years prior to the 9 January. That the basic slogans of the Marxists had left their mark on the consciousness of the working class was demonstrated by the fact that a number of key Social Democratic demands found their way into Gapon's famous petition—from the eight-hour day to the demand for a Constituent Assembly. Gapon's movement, designed to build a solid wall between the mass of the workers and the Marxists, in the end served as a bridge.

Bloody Sunday

In reality, Gapon was stirring up forces neither he nor anyone else could control. While the revolutionaries branded him an agent provocateur, the authorities cursed him as a dangerous agent of the revolution. Irrespective of his subjective intentions, the latter description was far nearer the truth. The petition aroused tremendous enthusiasm when it was read out in mass workers' assemblies where it was everywhere approved with acclamation. With breathtaking naivety, Gapon wrote to the Minister of the Interior on the eve of Bloody Sunday, requesting legal permission for a peaceful demonstration in front of the Winter Palace: "The tsar has nothing to fear," he wrote, "I, as the representative of the Assembly of Russian Workers, my colleagues, and the worker comrades—and even the so-called revolutionary groups of different trends—guarantee the inviolability of his person. Let him come forth like a true tsar, with courage in his heart, to meet his People and take unto his hands our petition." Signed: "The Priest Gapon and Eleven Workers' Deputies, Petersburg, 8th January." 10.

In an attempt to underline their peaceful intentions, the organisers banned the display of red flags. The Social Democrats, despite their grave misgivings about the demonstration, decided, correctly, to participate alongside the rest of their class. This the organisers agreed to only on condition that they marched at the rear of the demonstration, a measure which, in the event, saved the lives of many of them.

While the leaders of the union were straining every nerve to convince the government of their peaceful intentions, the latter, in a state of near panic, was preparing to teach the masses a bloody lesson.

At two o'clock in the afternoon of Sunday January 9, the workers began to assemble before the Winter Palace. The square was soon packed with a huge multitude not only of workers but stu-

dents, socialist groups, women, children and old people—in all about 140,000 people. "As agreed, the march to the palace was a peaceful one, without songs, banners or speeches. People wore their Sunday clothes. In some parts of the city they carried icons and church banners. Everywhere the petitioners encountered troops. They begged to be allowed to pass. They wept, they tried to go around the barrier, they tried to break through it. The soldiers fired all day long, the dead were counted in by the hundreds, the wounded in the thousands. An exact count was impossible since the police carted away and secretly buried the bodies of the dead at night." 11. At least 4,600 people were killed and wounded, that day.

The massacre of the Ninth of January reveals 'Nicolas the Bloody', as he justly became known, not only as a cruel and contemptible man, but also as an exceedingly stupid monarch. "The shots fired on the 22 January* 1905," recalls Eva Broïdo, "woke echoes all over Russia. Everywhere the masses were stirred out of their complacency: the old belief in the goodness of the 'little father' the tsar was dead. Even the most backward workers understood that much." 12.

At an emotional meeting held on the night of Bloody Sunday, Gapon announced to the assembled workers "We no longer have a tsar." Crowds of workers roamed the streets, angry and desperate but without leadership. And suddenly, the same revolutionaries who had been rejected, shouted down and even beaten up, became the focal point of intense interest. The Petersburg delegate at the Third Congress related how on the evening of the Ninth the Bolshevik agitators took to the streets looking for groups of workers to address, but found that things had already gone beyond that stage. The workers had learnt in a matter of hours more than decades of agitation and propaganda could ever teach them. "We were passed by carriages carrying away the dead, behind which ran crowds of people 'Down with the tsar!' You only had to throw arms at a crowd like this and they would have gone anywhere you wanted. On Vasily Island a scrap iron shop was broken into and the crowd armed themselves with old swords. This created a pathetic impression. Everywhere you could hear the cry: 'Arms! Arms!' By evening the attitude towards the organisation underwent a radical transformation. Our agitators were listened to with

* The Old Style pre-revolutionary calendar, retained in Russia until 1918, was thirteen days behind the New Style.

enthusiasm. The organisers could go wherever they pleased. On each of the successive days the same mood could be observed." 13.

From exile in Switzerland, Lenin immediately hailed the January events as **the beginning of the revolution in Russia**: "The working class," he wrote, "has received a momentous lesson in civil war: **the revolutionary education of the proletariat made more progress in one day than it could have made in months and years of drab, humdrum, wretched existence.** The slogan of the heroic St Petersburg proletariat, 'Death or Freedom!' is reverberating throughout Russia." 14. (My emphasis, AW)

The spontaneous mass movement in solidarity with the Petersburg workers which swept across the whole country was the final answer to all the Doubting Thomases who questioned the willingness of the workers to fight. Only two days before Bloody Sunday, the ex-Marxist Liberal, Struve, wrote in his journal *Osvobozhdenie*, "There is not yet such a thing as a revolutionary people in Russia," to which Trotsky replied scathingly, speaking of the Liberals: "They did not believe in the revolutionary role of the proletariat; instead, they believed in the force of the zemsty's petition*, in Witte, in Svyatopolk Mirsky, in jars of dynamite. There was no political prejudice in which they did not believe. Our belief in the proletariat was the only thing they regarded as prejudice." 15.

Revolution begins

On the 10 January, barricades appeared in St Petersburg. By the 17 January, 160,000 workers were on strike in 650 factories in the capital. From 14-20 January a general strike gripped Warsaw which resembled an armed camp. A demonstration called by the Social Democrats and nationalists led to bloody clashes with the troops who fired up to 60,000 rounds in three days leaving, officially, 64 dead and 69 wounded of which 29 died later. But despite the repression, the strike movement swept like wildfire through Poland and the Baltic states. A similar situation existed in the Caucasus where a political general strike broke out. The movement cut across all national lines: Polish, Armenian, Georgian, Lithuanian and Jewish workers expressed their solidarity with their Russian class brothers in the most practical way—by fighting against the hated Russian autocracy. Most seriously of all, from the government's point of view, a railway strike began in Saratov, in Central Russia, on January 12, which quickly spread to the other railway lines, ex-

tending the revolutionary wave outwards to the most backward provinces.

This movement of the working class provoked panic in government circles. After Bloody Sunday, the ruling clique intended to move quickly towards reaction, as indicated by the dismissal of the Liberal Svyatopolk Mirsky in favour of the conservative bureaucrat Bulygin, and the granting of almost unlimited dictatorial powers to General Trepov. Now all its calculations were thrown into disarray. Under the pressure of the growing strike movement, on the 18 February, the tsar issued his first Manifesto in which he hinted at a constitution and popular representation. **By its united action, the working class had achieved more in one week than all the years of speechifying and petitions and banquets by the liberal bourgeois.**

The movement of the workers had an electrifying effect on all classes in society. The public retreat of the regime encouraged not only the workers, but also the middle class, the bourgeois liberals and the students. "The worker's action strengthened the position of the radical elements within the intelligentsia just as the zemsty's conference had earlier put a trump card in the hands of the opportunist elements." 16.

The shock-waves that flowed from the Ninth of January pushed the whole movement to the left. The tide began to flow strongly in favour of revolutionary action, and the revolutionary Social Democracy. Social Democratic workers, Bolshevik and Menshevik now came to the fore in every factory. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the role of these conscious worker agitators in the unfolding strike wave, despite its apparently 'spontaneous' character. The activities of the revolutionaries was greatly assisted by General Trepov who obligingly exiled large numbers of 'trouble makers' from St Petersburg to the provinces where they acted as a necessary 'leaven' to the revolutionary movement.

The possibilities which now unfolded before the Russian Marxists were now immense. But the Party, still reeling from the effects of the split, was in very poor shape to take advantage of the opportunities. Given the nature of underground work, it is very difficult to estimate the exact strength of the Bolsheviks at this time. The St Petersburg Party organisation did not formally split until December 1904, when the Mensheviks broke away. Up to that time, Lenin's supporters had been in the ascendant. But the internal struggle had had a damaging effect on the Party's work, turning it inwards. This is reflected in the number of Bolshevik leaflets issued in Petersburg in 1904:

only eleven for the whole year, as against 55 in 1903 and 117 in 1905. 17.

A recent detailed study reveals the crisis in the organisation in St Petersburg on the eve of the revolution: "The Social Democratic organisation in St Petersburg prior to January 1905, by almost any criteria, was weak. In December 1903, the joint Social Democratic organisation had about eighteen circles in the factories, and membership of circles was from seven to ten, which would give a total worker membership of not more than 180. If the students and intelligentsia had about the same, as seems likely, total membership would have been 360. During the winter of 1904 the Committee's membership and activities declined, and the links with abroad were weak or non-existent... The same correspondent says that the Mensheviks too were losing support: in one region where they had fifteen to twenty circles, by December 1904 they had only four or five". 18

Lenin

After Bloody Sunday, this situation experienced a complete turn-about. But a cursory glance at Lenin's correspondence at this time reveals the deficient state of the organisation, particularly with regard to contact between the Bolshevik activists inside Russia and the leading centre abroad: "A nice business: we talk of organisation, of centralism, while actually there is such disunity, such amateurism among even the closest comrades in the centre, that one feels like chucking it all in in disgust. Just look at the Bundists: they do not prate about centralism, but **every one** of them writes to the centre weekly and contacts are thus **actually** maintained... Really, I sometimes think that nine-tenths of the Bolsheviks are actually formalists. Either we shall rally all who are out to fight into a really iron strong organisation and with this small but strong party quash that sprawling monster, the new *Iskra* (ie Mensheviks, AW) motley elements, or we shall prove by our conduct that we deserve to go under for being contemptible formalists..."

"The Mensheviks have more money, more literature, more transportation facilities, more agents and more 'names', and a larger staff of contributors. It would be unpardonable childishness not to see that." 19. (My emphasis, AW)

* A reference to the campaign of banquets and petitions launched the previous Autumn by the Liberals organised around the 'zemstvos'. See *Militant International Review*, Number 35, Summer 1987.

While some element of exaggeration may be put down to Lenin's natural feelings of frustration and impatience, the accusation of 'formalism' directed against a layer of the Bolshevik professionals inside Russia was not at all accidental. Starting out from a position of clear superiority among the Party activists in Russia, the Bolshevik committeemen, when unexpectedly confronted with the explosive movement of the masses failed to react with the necessary flexibility, and consequently made mistakes and frequently lost the initiative.

In a situation where hundreds of thousands of workers and youth were entering the arena of politics, seeking the revolutionary road, the most pressing need was to **open up the party, and let in at least the best elements among the masses**. But the committeemen, steeped in the habit of clandestine, small circle work, proved reluctant to move over and make way for the new, fresh layers. They found a hundred and one excuses for not 'opening up'—the workers were 'not ready' to join, the need to safeguard security, and so on and so forth. After all, they reasoned, wasn't the basic difference between Lenin and Martov at the Second Congress the need to safeguard the purity of the revolutionary vanguard by not swamping it with too many raw and untutored elements? We must not 'dilute' the membership!

Yet that very Lenin who argued in favour of restricting Party membership in 1903, now argued even more vehemently in favour of opening the doors and windows and letting in the largest possible number of workers and youth: "We need young forces," he thundered, "I am for shooting on the spot anyone who presumes to say that there are no people to be had. The people in Russia are legion: all we have to do is to recruit young people more widely and boldly, more boldly and widely, and again more boldly **without fearing them**. This is a time of war. The youth—the students and still more the young workers—will decide the issue of the whole struggle. Get rid of all the old habits of immobility, of respect for rank and so on. Form **hundreds** of circles of Vperyodists (ie Bolsheviks, AW) from among the youth and encourage them to work at full blast. Enlarge the Committee **threefold** by accepting young people onto it, set up half a dozen subcommittees, 'co-opt' any and every honest and energetic person. Allow every subcommittee to write and publish leaflets and without any red tape (there is no harm if they do make a mistake: we on Vperyod will 'gently' correct them.) We must, with desperate speed, unite all people with revolutionary initiative and set them to

work. Do not fear their lack of training, do not tremble at their inexperience and lack of development.... (because) events themselves will teach them in **our spirit**. Events are already teaching everyone precisely in the Vperyod spirit.

"Only you must be sure to organise, organise, and organise **hundreds** of circles, completely pushing into the background the customary, well-meant committee (hierarchical) stupidities. This is a time of war. Either you create **new**, young, fresh, energetic battle organisations everywhere for revolutionary Social Democratic work of all varieties among all strata, or you will go under, wearing the aureole of 'committee' bureaucrats." 20.

These lines strikingly reveal the whole essence of Lenin's method, particularly on organisational questions. While stressing the need for a strong, centralised revolutionary organisation, Lenin's attitude to organisational questions was always extremely flexible. After the Second Congress, the Mensheviks attempted to caricature Lenin as a hidebound bureaucrat, striving to create a party composed of an elite of intellectual professional revolutionaries which would exclude 'ordinary workers' who would have to submit to the commands of an 'all-powerful centre.' This caricature, which has been maliciously repeated and exaggerated by bourgeois historians, is the opposite of the truth, as the above passage—very typical of the period with which we are dealing—irrefutably demonstrates.

Revolution or reaction?

Unfortunately, a layer of Bolshevik organisers inside Russia, the so-called 'committee-men', on occasion acted like the very caricature invented by the Mensheviks. They interpreted Lenin's organisational ideas as fixed and immutable formulas, to be applied mechanically, irrespective of the needs of the moment. Even the most correct idea, when carried beyond a certain limit, becomes transformed into its opposite. By making a fetish of organisational forms, and overlooking the dialectical method of applying these ideas in a rapidly changing situation, despite their undoubted capacity for self-sacrifice and hard work, the 'committee-men' frequently played a negative role in the development of the Party, until corrected by the intervention of Lenin.

The essence of the problem facing the Party was: **how to establish firm links between the relatively small forces of the revolutionary vanguard and the mass of the workers and youth who were moving into struggle?** The revolution does not

unfold in an orderly and pre-determined fashion, like an orchestra responding to the flourishes of a conductor's baton. It is a living play of forces, an equation even more complex than war between nations. The events of Bloody Sunday and afterwards, to pursue the military analogy, represented a general mobilisation of the working class. But that class, only just recovering from its naive illusions and striving to find the road to a complete overhaul of society, continually stumbling over the innumerable obstacles placed in its path, as yet lacked a general staff able to point the way forward to victory. Even the most courageous army never won a war without good generals. But the best of generals without an army do not count for much.

Lenin understood clearly that all the Manifestos and promises of reform were only a smoke-screen to deceive the masses, behind which the reaction was playing for time and preparing its revenge. Time was therefore of the essence. In an uninterrupted stream of articles, he poured scorn on the Liberals with their illusions in peaceful constitutional reform, and flayed the Mensheviks for their illusions in the Liberals. One of the facets of Lenin's political genius was his ability to separate the essential from the inessential and grasp the essence of a problem. He quickly realised that it was now a question of 'either... or'. The time for playing games was past. Either the working class, under a conscious revolutionary leadership, would succeed in gathering together all the oppressed masses under its leadership, above all the poor peasants and the oppressed nationalities, and smash the power of tsarism by an armed uprising, or, inevitably, the forces of black reaction would destroy the revolution, exacting a bloody revenge on the working class. There was no 'middle way'.

Everything, therefore, hinged on the Marxists' ability to win over a decisive majority of the working class and as quickly as possible make the necessary political, organisational and material preparation for a national armed uprising. This idea was at the kernel of all Lenin's pronouncements throughout 1905 and partly explains the urgent and at times uncharacteristically sharp tone of his correspondence with the interior.

Under the pressure of the mass movement, the Mensheviks, particularly the ones 'on the ground' in Russia, began to move left. Not only the Bolshevik Vperyod, but also the Menshevik *Iskra* published articles and diagrams on street fighting. However, the opportunistic tendencies which were already appa-

rent before the Ninth of January were revealed in the exaggerated role attributed by the Mensheviks to the liberal bourgeoisie and in Martov's insistence upon political, rather than technical preparation of the masses for armed uprising, of which Lenin tersely commented: "The separation of the 'technical' side of the revolution from the political side of the revolution is the greatest twaddle." 21.

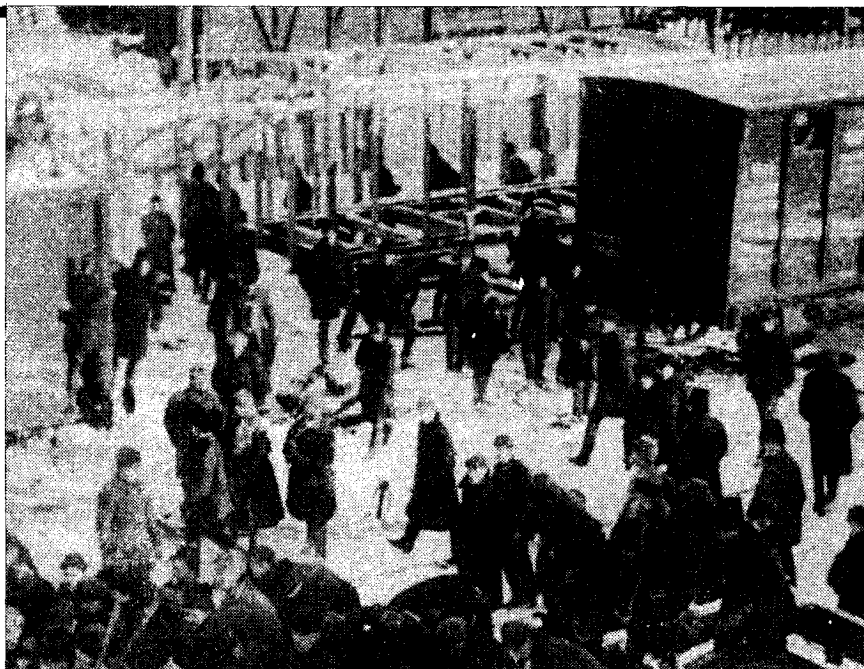
Early in February, Gapon himself, having been pushed temporarily to the left by his experiences, issued an Open Letter to the Socialist Parties of all Russia, which included an appeal for an armed uprising: "I call upon all the socialist parties of Russia to enter immediately into an agreement among themselves and to proceed to the armed uprising against tsarism. All the forces of every party should be mobilised. All should have a single plan of action... The immediate aim is the overthrow of the autocracy, a provisional revolutionary government which will at once amnesty all fighters for political and religious liberties, at once arm the people, and at once convoke a Constituent Assembly on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot." 22.

United Front

This was given a warm welcome by Lenin, who, in his article, *A Militant Agreement for the Uprising*, 23, stressed the need for a united front of all revolutionary forces to prepare the uprising, on the basis of the old slogan 'march separately and strike together'. However, here, and in all his other articles, Lenin is emphatic on the absolute necessity of **maintaining the complete political independence of the working class and its party**: "We see in the independent, uncompromisingly Marxist party of the revolutionary proletariat the sole pledge of socialism's victory and the sole road to victory that is most free from vacillation. We shall never, therefore, not even at the most revolutionary moments, forego the complete independence of the Social Democratic Party or the complete intransigence of our ideology." 24.

Trotsky's position at this time was very close to that of Lenin. Despite this well-known fact, the Stalinist historians persist in describing Trotsky in 1905 as a 'Menshevik', as we read in the following, fairly typical, extract: "Trotsky's denial of a revolutionary democracy (?) was in effect defence of the Menshevik idea of the bourgeoisie's hegemony (!) in the forthcoming revolution." 25.

Yet the differences which separated Trotsky from the Mensheviks as early as February 1904 are attested to unambi-



Three days after Bloody Sunday a rail strike began in Central Russia, extending the revolutionary wave to the most backward provinces.

guously by the Menshevik leaders themselves. From late 1904 onwards, Trotsky and the German Left Social Democrat Parvus (Alexander Gelfand), worked out a body of ideas which were later to provide the basis for Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. We will deal with the nature of this theory and the position of Lenin and the Mensheviks later. But first, let us put the record straight.

"Trotsky, too, had a basic divergence of views with *Iskra* (the Menshevik organ, AW) on the political conclusions to be drawn from the situation created by the 9 January. Trotsky wrote that after 9 January the working class movement 'slipped into an uprising'. Hence the Constituent Assembly in and for itself could no longer be the fundamental and generalising slogan of the party. **After the 9 January it was necessary to prepare for an armed uprising and the replacement of the tsarist government by a Revolutionary Provisional Government that alone could convoke a Constituent Assembly.**" 26. These are the words of the Menshevik leader Theodor Dan, written at a time when he and Trotsky were bitter political enemies. The basic ideas contained here, based on Trotsky's pamphlet, *Till the Ninth of January*, are in complete agreement with the general position defended by Lenin. In his history of the Russian Social Democracy, Martov polemicalises not only against Lenin's position, but also against the theories of Trotsky and Parvus. 27.

The question of arming the workers, which Lenin persistently raised, flowed from the needs of the moment. While making conciliatory noises, the government was systematically preparing the

forces of reaction. Shaken by the show of solidarity between the workers of different nationalities, the authorities set about trying to break this unity by organising bloody pogroms. As early as February, the agents of the regime incited the Tartars in Baku to launch a murderous assault on the Armenians in that city. Throughout the year 1905, all over Russia, lumpen gangs were bribed with money and vodka by the police to beat up and murder Jews, Socialists and students. In organising workers' defence the different party organisations co-operated in action. For practical purposes, agreements were arrived at involving Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Bundists, the socialists from other nationalities, and even petit-bourgeois organisations like the nationalist Polish Socialist Party, and the Social Revolutionaries (SR's).

The Shidlovsky Commission

In theory, there would have been nothing wrong, under these conditions, with arriving at practical, episodic agreements even with the bourgeois Liberals, whilst maintaining complete organisational and political independence. But in reality, such agreements with the Liberals were virtually non-existent. The latter were striving, not for an armed insurrection, but for a deal with tsarism, leaning for a time on the mass movement in order to frighten the regime into granting a constitution. Lenin's articles in this period were full of the sharpest attacks on the Liberals, warning against their treachery and combatting the Mensheviks' attempts to blur the dividing line between the work-

ing class and the bourgeois Liberals and foment illusions in the latter.

In search of allies for the revolutionary proletariat, Lenin's attention was focused elsewhere. While the Mensheviks looked towards the Zemstvo Liberals, Lenin became increasingly convinced that the only possible ally for the workers in their struggle to overthrow the autocracy consisted in the peasantry, particularly the poor peasants. His vision of the revolution was that of the broadest possible movement of the workers and peasants, to overthrow tsarism, establish a provisional revolutionary government ('democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry') which, without going beyond the limits of capitalism, would carry through the most radical and far-reaching democratic programme, first and foremost the confiscation of the big estates and the handing over of land to the peasants.

Up till 1905, the party's agrarian programme consisted of a series of limited demands which would alleviate the burdens on the peasantry, particularly the recovery of the 'otrezki', or 'cut-off lands', that is, the land which had been withheld from the peasants under the terms of the Emancipation of the Serfs Act of 1861. But now, the revolution in the urban centres was rapidly spreading to the villages. The old party programme was hopelessly antiquated, in a situation where the general sentiment among the peasants was in favour of seizing the landlords' estates.

Conscious of the danger facing it from all sides, the regime acted with a mixture of ruthlessness and cunning. While attempting to crush the movement by new arrests, deportations, martial law and pogroms, the government simultaneously attempted to woo the Liberal bourgeoisie with the Manifesto of February 18 and set in motion a manoeuvre designed to split and disorient the working class. Utilising the time-honoured trick of the ruling class in all countries when it feels its back to the wall, the tsarist government set up a commission headed by Senator Shidlovsky "to enquire into the causes of the discontent among the workers".

The aim of this strategem was clearly an attempt to defuse the situation, diverting the workers away from revolutionary action and prevent them from moving in the direction of Marxism. In an unprecedented move, the government announced that the workers would be represented on the commission by means of elected delegates.

This manoeuvre presented the Marxists with a tactical problem. On the one hand, the reactionary aims of the government were quite clear. On the other

hand, to refuse to participate would be to renounce a splendid opportunity to carry the ideas of revolutionary socialism to the mass of workers. For the Menshevik leaders, with their opportunistic leanings, there was no particular problem. They immediately advocated using the Commission as a 'tribune' from which to address the workers of all Russia. Among the Bolsheviks in Petersburg, however, the prevailing mood was initially in favour of a boycott. Similar moods existed also among the Menshevik workers who were far to the left of the leaders in exile. At the Third Congress, Rumyantsev ('Filipov' in the minutes) stated that "There were no differences over the need to boycott the (Shidlovsky) Commission." 28. However, the general mood of the workers was overwhelmingly in favour of participation, and the Bolsheviks soon modified their position in favour of participating, at least in the election of delegates, taking full advantage of the legal opportunities for agitation among a wider layer of workers than would normally be possible.

Congress convened

The correctness of this decision was shown by subsequent events. On February 14, 400 candidates stood in the elections, of whom 20 per cent were Social Democrats, 40 per cent 'radicalised workers' and the remainder 'economist' workers and others. But despite being in a minority, the Bolshevik delegates managed to set the tone of the meeting. The arrest of a number of delegates created a mood of angry militancy in which the Bolsheviks succeeded in delivering what amounted to an ultimatum to Senator Shidlovsky, demanding freedom of speech and assembly, the right of delegates to conduct their activities without let or hindrance, the right to meet and discuss freely with their 'electorate' and the freeing of their arrested comrades. But when, on the following day, the votes were due to be taken, the government decided that things were getting out of hand and refused to accept the workers' demands, whereupon the boycott campaign now went ahead in earnest. Having been through the experience of the Commission, shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the class, it was now relatively easy to expose the fraudulent nature of the entire manoeuvre, while simultaneously agitating for the 8-hour working day, a state insurance policy, democratic elections and an end to the war. Three days later the authorities hastened to put an end to the one and only attempt to solve the 'labour problem' by legal means. The workers, meanwhile, had learned a great deal

from the experience which set an important precedent for the election of **workers deputies** which played a role in the establishment of the Soviet later on. 29.

At this time, none of the main leaders of either the Bolsheviks or Mensheviks had yet returned to Russia, with the exception of Trotsky who arrived in Kiev in February where he established close contact with the key Bolshevik figure in Russia at that time, Leonid Krassin. Krassin was in charge of a large and well-equipped secret printing press 'somewhere in the Caucasus'. But his role went far beyond that. A highly capable young engineer, Krassin was in many ways the prototype of a Bolshevik organiser.

"The party, like the revolution, was still young at that time," Trotsky recalls in his autobiography, "and one was struck by the inexperience and lack of finish revealed both by the members and their actions in general. Krassin likewise was not wholly free from this fault. But there was something firm, resolute and 'administrative' about him. He was an engineer of some experience, he held a paying job and filled it well; he was valued by his employers, and had a circle of acquaintances that was much larger and more varied than that of any of the young revolutionaries of the day. In workers' rooms, in engineers' apartments, in the mansions of the liberal Moscow industrialists, in literary circles—everywhere, Krassin had connections. He managed them all with great skill and, consequently, practical possibilities that were quite closed to the others were opened to him. In 1905, in addition to participating in the general work of the party, Krassin had charge of the most dangerous fields of the work, such as armed units, the purchase of arms, the preparing of stocks of explosives, and the like. In spite of his broad outlook, he was primarily a man of immediate achievement, in politics as well as in life. That was his strength but it was also his heel of Achilles." 30.

Lenin greatly appreciated people like Krassin who got on with the work quietly, efficiently and without fuss. Krassin's work went on in secret, but played an invaluable role in building the party in this stormy period. Politically, Krassin was a conciliator. But conciliationist moods were common among party activists in Russia, and still more among the workers, as was clearly reflected in the report of the Petersburg delegation to the party congress: "In the recent period the demand for an end to the split is becoming widespread. Worker Bolsheviks and Mensheviks are holding joint meetings, either with or without the intellectuals, and every-

where the demand for unification is pushed to the fore.” 31. One way or the other, the split in the party had to be resolved.

The obvious solution was the convening of a party congress. The Bolsheviks had been agitating for the convening of the Third Congress for months, but the Mensheviks, fearing they would be in a minority, continually stonewalled. Early in February, a police raid on the Moscow apartment of the writer Leonid Andreyev led to the arrest of all members of the Central Committee (mainly Mensheviks and conciliators). Those still at liberty contacted the Bolshevik ‘Bureau of Majority Committees’ with the intention of reaching agreement to convene a Congress.

Though formally this was the responsibility of the Party Council, a majority of the party organisations inside Russia were clearly in favour. If two-thirds of the committees requested a congress, the Council was obliged by the rules to call one. By the beginning of April the Bolsheviks were able to prove conclusively that a total of 21 organisations inside Russia, including the CC, were in favour of a Congress. (These figures were accepted as correct by Martov. 32.) This represented 52 votes out of a total of 75 that would represent the whole party at a congress—many more than what would be required by the rules. An *Open Letter to Plekhanov*, as chairman of the Party Council, written by Lenin in the name of the CC was published early in April. Yet the Council, openly flouting the rules and in contempt of democratic procedure, refused to call the congress.

Given the irresponsible and illegal behaviour of the Council, the Bolsheviks had no alternative but to convene a Congress themselves, in the name of the Central Committee and the majority of party organisations in Russia. The Mensheviks, although invited to attend, stayed away and organised their own conference in Geneva.

On April 12 1905, delegates assembled in London for over two weeks of intense discussions on the fundamental problems of the revolution. The first genuinely Bolshevik Congress had been convened.

Part Eight of Alan Woods’ series of articles on the history of Bolshevism, dealing with the Third Congress and the further development of the 1905 revolution, will appear in the next edition of the *MIR*. Back issues of the *MIR* containing parts 1 to 6 are available for 90p each, postage included, from World Socialist Books, 3-13 Hepscott Road, London E9 5HB. Cheques payable to World Socialist Books.



January 9th, 1905.



Footnotes

1. Stalin (and others?), ‘History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)’, p94.
2. Quoted in Martov et al, ‘Obshestvennoe Dvizhenie v Rossii’, volume 2, p43.
3. *ibid* p45.
4. *ibid* p44.
5. Quoted in JLH Keep, ‘The Rise of the Social Democracy in Russia’, p157.
6. *ibid* p158.
7. Martov, *op cit*, volume 3, p540.
8. *ibid*, volume 2, p45.
9. Tretiy s’yezd RSDRP (Protokoly), p544.
10. Martov, *op cit*, volume 2, p45.
11. Trotsky, ‘1905’, p92.
12. Eva Broido, ‘Memoirs of a Revolutionary’, p116.
13. Tretiy s’yezd, p545.
14. Lenin, ‘Collected Works’, volume 9, p97.
15. Trotsky, *op cit*, p95.
16. *ibid* p96.
17. See David Lane, ‘The Roots of Russian Communism’, p71.

18. *ibid* p72.
19. Lenin, ‘Collected Works’, volume 8, pp143-45.
20. *ibid* p146.
21. See Lenin, ‘Collected Works’, volume 8, p163.
22. Quoted in Dan, ‘Origins of Bolshevism’, p305.
23. Lenin, ‘Collected Works’, volume 8, pp158-166.
24. *ibid* p159.
25. VA Grinko (and others), ‘The Bolshevik Party’s Struggle Against Trotskyism’, p58.
26. Dan, *op cit*, p305.
27. Martov, *op cit*, volume 3, pp553-54.
28. Tretiy s’yezd, p179.
29. See Oskar Anweiler, ‘Los Soviets’, p43-44.
30. Trotsky, ‘My Life’, pp169-170.
31. Tretiy s’yezd, p549.
32. Martov, *op cit*, volume 3, p557.

Book Reviews

Acid Rain.

By Fred Pearce.

Published by Penguin Books, 1987, £3.95.

Fred Pearce, news editor of the *New Scientist*, makes a devastating case for urgent action to end the nightmare of pollution that has accumulated throughout the world, but particularly in Europe. In a slim, 162 page volume this book presents in an easily readable way, even to the most unscientifically trained mind, a convincing catalogue of facts, figures and theories.

"The skies of Europe are poisoned," Pearce argues. "Toxins are carried on breezes from power stations and autobahns across the most polluted continent on earth. When the poison falls to the ground it chokes the pores of leaves on trees from the Alps to the Urals; it eats away at stone, brick, paper and rubber; it destroys soil and flows into rivers where it kills fish by disrupting the operation of their gills. It kills humans too." In the London smog of 1952 it is now known that 4,000 people were killed. That smog was acid fog with acid droplets like the water in a car battery. Today scientists are finding mists almost as acid on Scottish hillsides.

Sulphur

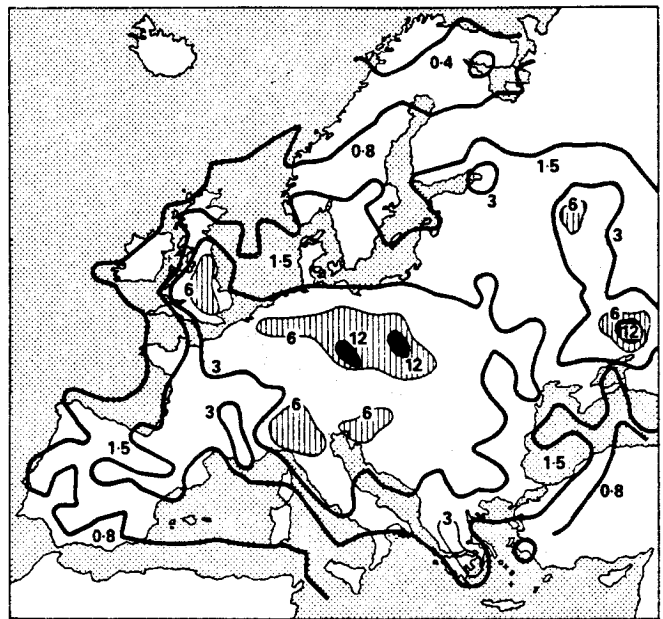
The processes of chemical reactions are explained clearly: sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides are slowly converted in the air and especially in clouds, to sulphuric and nitric acids. This is called oxidation and is speeded up in the presence of other pollutants. Ammonia is one such pollutant, which is being given off in ever larger quantities from intensive and factory farming. Ammonia emission has increased by 55% in the past

30 years in Britain.

In Britain Central Electricity Generating Board power stations have been responsible for two thirds of total acid emissions. The CEGB recently admitted part responsibility for the disappearance of fish from Norwegian lakes. Yet in September 1987 Britain and the USA refused to sign the treaty agreed by 21 nations under the aegis of the United Nations, to cut emissions of sulphur dioxide, mainly from power stations, by 30% by 1993. Talks on reducing nitrogen oxide emissions (Nox) have broken down even though it is as destructive as sulphur dioxide.

Control of emissions of smoke have largely ended the old winter smogs of the 1952 type but they are being replaced by other pollution agents as deadly in their effects. Even the controls in the power stations of Britain are not effective; they merely built taller chimneys to transfer pollution to other places. Three power stations, Drax, Eggborough and Ferrybridge pump out 800,000 tonnes of gaseous pollutants a year, including 600,000 tonnes of sulphur dioxide. The CEGB agreed in late 1986 that Drax B will be fitted with clean-up equipment by the early 1990's but the other three will continue to pump out the pollutants. However today, as regards smoke pollution, it is the Stalinist states of Eastern Europe that lead the world: "There are few controls on air pollution in most of Eastern Europe. Most of the smoke and sulphur comes from fuel burned in heavy industry, rather than power stations. There is so much gas pollution in the air that nobody worries about acid rain or ozone. Eastern Europe contains three of the most polluted zones on earth."

Significantly Pearce gives most information about Poland because when Solidarity was emerging it investigated and published pollution data



Sulphur fallout over Europe. The figures show grams per square metre per year. From *Acid Rain*, by Fred Pearce, p23.

on Poland. He reveals that "twenty per cent of Polish people live in areas where average amounts of sulphur dioxide in the air exceed the governments permitted levels (these are 4 times those set in the USA)... In the last 20 years life expectancy of Polish men has fallen... the average amount of sunshine in the city (of Cracow) has fallen from almost 5 hours per day to around 3 hours per day today." In every one of the Stalinist countries people's health and the environment is sacrificed to production levels. In East Germany emissions of sulphur dioxide now exceed those of Britain, a country more than double its size.

Ozone

Car emissions are another major source of pollution. The number of cars in the world has increased from 38 million to 350 million in the last 40 years. Strict controls in the USA from 1975 have forced car manufacturers to fit pollution control devices in new cars. As a result between 1970 and 1983 the emission of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons from new cars fell 90% and nitrogen oxides 75%. But in Europe no agreement is in sight.

Car pollutants, particularly Nox and hydrocarbons,

are a key element in the formation of ozone at ground level, Europe's latest killer. There is a lot of natural ozone around—in a protective shield high in the stratosphere. This has been in the news recently because other pollution, possibly from aerosols, has caused 'holes' in this protective layer. Unlike this layer, ozone at ground level is largely man made and is dangerous. It is created by sunlight acting on a range of pollutants, especially from car exhausts. It causes attacks of asthma in humans; it irritates the throat and lungs, causes catarrh, headaches, and a reduced resistance to infections and can be mistaken as hay fever. Symptoms are likely to occur when ozone levels go above 80 ppb for an hour or more—a level found on sunny days all over urban and rural Europe. At the height of the worst ozone episode in Britain—the 1976 hot summer—deaths rose by 20% in London. Everybody assumed heat was the cause but it might well have been ozone. Ozone also eats at every kind of material; from rubber tyres to textiles as well as being a likely cause of the decline in European forests.

Pollution of the air leads on in the book to pollution of the water, with once again a startling catalogue of facts

and analysis. Throughout Britain water supplies are becoming more acid. Loch Fleet has experienced a hundred fold increase in acidity with fish dying as a result. Even the Royals may soon have to look elsewhere than Balmoral for their fishing—perhaps that's why Prince Charles has a 'green' tinge! In Wales salmon are dying out, and the Lake District is badly affected also.

Rivers

Water authorities were established with the express aim of a massive clean up of the country's rivers and estuaries. After 20 years of improvement, since 1980 the process has reversed. A recent HMSO report states that the main factor has been overloaded sewerage works.

Investment by the water authorities in sewerage works has for the past 5 years been half the peak reached in the 1970s.

From water to trees. In Germany and Switzerland more than half the trees are damaged by pollution. And despite denials by the British Forestry Commission evidence is accumulating that British trees are also being badly affected by pollution.

So what can be done? The science and technology exists or can be developed to solve the problems. For example Britain invented a process called flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) back in the nineteenth century, but failed to apply it. Leslie Reed, former head of the government's air pollution inspectorate said in 1983, "When it came to the post war expansion and

rebuilding of the UK power industry, the inspectorate considered it was impracticable to require sulphur dioxide removal from the very much larger boilers being built." Since 1948 all new British power plants have been required to set aside land for FGD equipment but until 1986 this requirement had never been drawn on.

Privatisation

The clear cut conclusion of the scientific evidence, states Pearce, is to start cutting all pollution straight away. Yet with the threatened privatisation of the electricity and water industries, pollution controls will become an even lower order of priority for the new owners. Billions of pounds are needed for investment in the water industry but it is not profitable to

invest in controls and safeguards.

This very readable book shows the ravages of capitalism, including the bureaucratic nationalised industries, and Stalinism, providing clear scientific evidence of the urgency for the working class to own and control society while there remains anything worth controlling. The removal of one more contradiction—that between man and the environment—will be the task of socialism, the rational planning of resources to bring into harmony the needs of mankind and our planet's ecology.

By Bryan Beckingham

Booknotes

Books received for review since the last edition of the *MIR* include *The Great Tin Crash: Bolivia and the World Tin Market*, published by the **Latin America Bureau** at £2.95. The world stock market crash of 1987 was preceded in 1986 by an equally stunning collapse of the International Tin Council, a 22 nation body which administered the world market prices for tin. A more than 50% drop in prices led to the end of the ITC which had been designed to maintain stable prices. Around the world, poor tin producing nations like Bolivia suffered as thousands of miners lost their jobs.

This short booklet attempts to explain what happened and why, and the consequences for working people in countries like Bolivia—it is a prophetic warning of the tragedy ahead for the people of the Third World as prices collapse in the coming world recession. The booklet graphically reveals the way in which the raw material producing poor nations have been exploited by the con-

sumer states of the advanced capitalist world, and how even the limited protection that a commodity agreement on tin provided places like Bolivia can be swept away when the forces of the 'free market' exert themselves. The book concludes: "although they have an important role to play, commodity agreements cannot substitute for a planned world economy geared to ensuring a minimum standard of living for all, in which costs as well as benefits of change are shared".

Life and Death in Shanghai by Nien Cheng, published by **Grafton** at £3.95, is an autobiographical account of how the wife of the general manager of the Shell Oil Company, who subsequently became a senior executive herself in the company after the 1949 revolution, was accused of being a British spy, locked up in solitary confinement for over six years, and cruelly humiliated by her captors during the so-called Cultural Revolution introduced by the Maoist bureaucracy in 1966.

The book graphically exposes the Stalinist methods of terror and intimidation imposed on individuals innocent of any crime during that period. Unfortunately some of its power is lost, as Nien Cheng clearly seems to take for granted her privileged status of servants, money and luxury living, and appears unaware that this would make her an obvious scapegoat for Maoist propaganda. Her life style prior to her arrest seemed very similar to Mao's own wife—except that Nien Cheng was subjected to lengthy imprisonment and her daughter was murdered. Mao's wife simply organised these brutalities.

Finally 1987 was the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Paine, the Englishman who wrote some of the seminal works of the American and French bourgeois revolutions. *The Thomas Paine Reader*, edited by Isaac Kramnick and published by **Penguin** at £5.95, allows the reader to dip into the ideas of Paine, but is less successful in placing them in the context of what Paine actually did during the French revolution and the American War of Indepen-

dence. In particular, Michael Foot's introduction to this volume concentrates more on Paine's thoughts and even literary style than on how this important fighter for freedom from feudalism and absolute monarchy tried to implement his ideas.

Paine opposed the colonisation of India by the British state; he fought in the revolutionary army under Washington against the British; he participated in the French revolution; he even proposed a form of social security in his most famous work 'The Rights of Man' to help those without work or property. Inevitably he was forced to flee Britain and those who published his books were prosecuted by the British monarchy after the Napoleonic Wars when the government feared his ideas may be taken up by the growing movement of an emerging working-class. Unfortunately much of this is not dealt with adequately in this reader, and *MIR* readers may find a good biography of Paine of more value.

By Bob McKee

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