

SOCIALIST

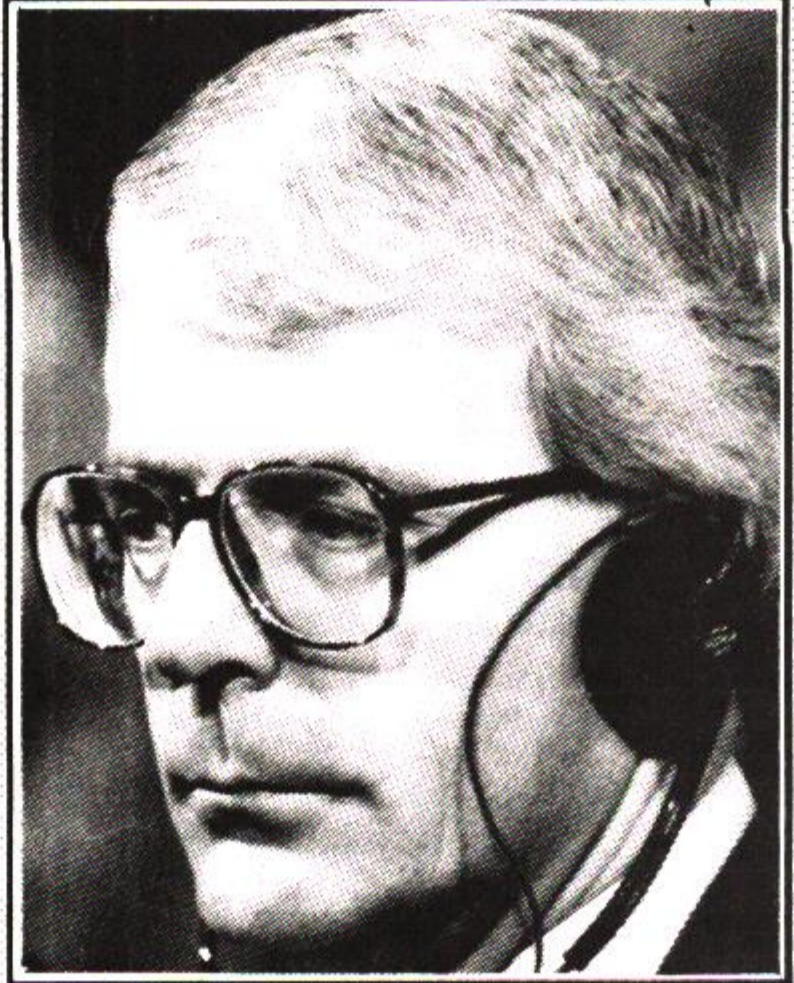
APPEAL

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The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Issue No.23 July/August 1994

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**Whose
side
are
they
on?**

**The state and the
labour movement**

**Tories
after
Europe:
*The Crisis
Deepens***

.....
**Where
is
China
Going?
A Marxist
Analysis**

**Science:
New
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For a mass, socialist Labour Party

The shattering defeat of the Tories in the elections for the European parliament on June 9th has set the scene for political developments in the coming period.

The Tories are now in absolute crisis. Despite the attempt to gloss over their defeat with talk of it "not being as bad as predicted," it was probably only the dismal showing of the Liberal Democrats in the South that saved them from a Canadian style wipeout. The Tory party got its lowest share of the vote in a national poll since 'democratic' politics began in 1832!

Swing to Labour

Labour swept through the Tory heartlands, winning seats in formerly safe Tory areas like Essex, Kent and East Anglia. A swing to Labour of this magnitude at a general election would give a Labour government a majority of about 200, even greater than in 1945. Of course an election could be up to three years away, but it now seems by far the most likely outcome that Labour will form the next government and with a reasonable majority at that. As the end of Tory rule draws closer there can be a growth in confidence within the labour and trade union movement and within the working class itself. What, in many ways, has been an anti-Tory mood will begin to turn more and more to a positive mood for a Labour government. The lowly vote for the Liberals in June was probably an early reflection of this. In the run up to the general election they may be squeezed even further. In London and the Midlands Labour topped 50% of the vote, in East Anglia they got 41% and in the South East, 30% - precisely the areas where Labour's chances were ruled out by the pundits, pollsters and even Labour's right wing itself in the wake of the 1992

general election. But they have been proved wrong. Prospects for the Tories are grim. Even in many of the seats that they were able to hold on to their majorities were reduced to a couple of thousand. With mass unemployment and the Tories tax hikes, opportunities for a recovery in their fortunes are



John Prescott - has won the support of many trade union activists

extremely limited. A cabinet reshuffle will achieve very little - the party is divided, the 'left' blaming the right, and the right blaming the 'left.' A leadership challenge to Major in the autumn is a real possibility. But a new leader will not be able to repeat Major's 'success' in distancing the Tories from the poisoned chalice of Thatcher and winning the 1992 general election. That victory represented the false hope of large sections of the middle class and even sections of the working class that it would be the Tories who could bring back the prosperity of the 1980's - that view has now evaporated completely.

Opportunity

Labour is now presented with a great opportunity. Millions of people now look to them for a solution to the problems of mass unemployment, low wages, terrible working conditions and an impoverished welfare state. We need policies and

a programme that can really tackle these issues.

The Labour leadership election should be used to argue the case for a mass, trade union based, socialist Labour Party. Unfortunately, none of the candidates for either leader or deputy leader stands clearly for this position. The unfair system where you need the

nomination of 34 MPs, disenfranchising the constituencies and the unions from the process, has meant a limited choice in the election.

Pro-big Business

Media front runner, Tony Blair is the candidate of the open right wing. Activists in the party and unions should do all that is possible to stop his election. Already, behind the backs of the whole labour and trade union movement, he is committing the next Labour government to pro-big business stance. The CBI, through its Director General, Howard Davies, has even endorsed him! Davies was quoted in the Independent (15.6.94) as saying, "*Gordon Brown (the shadow chancellor and Blair aide) has told us in no uncertain terms that there would be no manifesto commitments to large scale renationalisation. there will be no grand industrial strategies, national Enterprise Boards or what-*

have-you." It is quite clear that a government headed by Blair would not be able to begin to tackle any of the major problems facing working class people today. Blair is still clinging to the outmoded economic and social philosophies of 1980's Toryism. One thing is clear if the Tories cannot get their system to work then how can Labour?

Of the other candidates, Margaret Beckett and John Prescott, Prescott has been the most vociferous in his statements on full employment and a national minimum wage and, despite his role over OMOV at last year's conference, probably has the most support amongst ordinary union activists. Although neither of them puts forward anything like a serious socialist programme for Labour, activists should vote for Prescott for leader and deputy leader, giving a second preference vote to Beckett.

Despite there being no real candidate of the left, every opportunity must be used to argue for socialist policies and the strengthening of the links between party and unions.

Process of Change

No matter who wins the situation within the Labour Party and the trade unions is already in a process of change. The old hegemony of the right built up under Kinnock is breaking down, new moves to the left are already visible. What is happening in the GMB is a good example. The development of the left will continue. Under a Labour government headed by someone like Blair, this process will accelerate. We need a programme, and a party, capable of tackling the real problems facing working class people. We need a Labour Party committed to the socialist transformation of society - that is the best guarantee for a landslide victory in the coming general election.

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This issue of Socialist Appeal covers a two-month period. The next issue will be the September issue.

Call to Keep Fighting!

We reprint below, with the author's permission, extracts from an article that appeared in the programme for the Northumberland Miners' Picnic held on 10th June in Ashington, which I attended. Ken Livingstone and John Prescott made rousing speeches — lets hope they mean what they said, particularly on full employment. The TUC was attacked over the role it played in the 1984-5 strike along with the media. The rally was preceded by a march which showed the strong support of the community for the miners and the feeling of sadness at the ending of 800 years of tradition which the loss of the mines represents.

Pam Hearn (Monkseaton LP)

*"Comrades,
Who would have believed that in 1994 the Tories would have been allowed to decimate the mining industry to its current levels, casting many hard-working honest and sincere men onto the dole. Inflicting so much hardship on their families and whole communities as a part of their agenda to ensure that the working class people of this nation are denied an equal opportunity to those operating and supporting the corrupt capitalist system.
The mining communities are still reeling by the closure announcements of their respective collieries/units and the expedient despicable fashion in which the miners themselves were disposed of by the Tories and B.C.C.
One could be forgiven for assuming that the B.C.C. executive were embarking upon a sinister plot to close the peripheral collieries in order to capture the coal market within the central coalfield and hive off millions of pounds to line the pockets of the potential purchasers of the industry, which could possibly be lead by B.C.C. management buy-outs!
The vicious, vindictive attack on the miners and their union has escalated with the Tories setting their sights on retaining huge sums of surplus cash from the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme, cash which should benefit those who have toiled in the bowels of the earth ...
Attitudes must harden, political perspectives must change if we are to defeat the present government and serve the decent people of this country with their just reward! A Socialist*

manifesto built upon Socialist Principles with the Socialist ideology is the only answer.

Keep fighting!!!

**Ian Lavery
General Secretary (North East
Area NUM)**

On track for victory

As we go to press, the national rail system has been brought to a virtual standstill due to the first in a projected series of one-day rail strikes by signalling staff who are members of the RMT.

This follows the withdrawal of a 5.7% pay offer by the bosses under orders from the Tory government and the success of the first strike reflects the anger of the workforce at this action. They could be joined on strike by Aslef members who have voted to overturn their leadership and reject a pay deal of 2.5% at their conference.

Rail union activists will be arguing for the need to stand together with the other unions.

If one-day strikes do not bring forward a satisfactory result then the union must move towards all-out strike action rather than accepting a sub-standard settlement that would give the green light to the bosses and their Tory masters to further attack conditions and the rights of the workforce.

● A fringe meeting was due to be held at the GMB conference in Blackpool on the subject of 'Towards Industrial Partnership' arranged by a organisation interested in benefiting business by bringing together 'employees, their representatives and management'. All very cosy! But the meeting never happened—all the speakers couldn't make it because of the rail strike.

We're On the Move

Socialist Appeal is all set to move into its new offices - and that means a new phone number. From July 1st our phone number will be:

071-251-1094

The old number will still be obtainable until July 8th in case you have any difficulties

Editor: Alan Woods

Business manager: Steve Jones

Fire fighters renew opposition to safety deregulation as..

Tory cuts put lives at risk

The Fire Brigades Union has renewed its pledge to fight the proposed deregulation of fire safety and has pledged to continue its campaign in opposition to the Deregulation Bill.

The fire service is one of a large number of public services which will be effected by this Bill which was introduced to Parliament in January, and which has led to the current review of 7,000 pieces of legislation, many of which are likely to be abolished.

Lord Sainsbury

Most interestingly, the 'Task Force' which has been set up by Heseltine to oversee the process is made up of a large number of big business men — those most likely to benefit if standards are allowed to drop. The most prominent member is Lord Sainsbury, the man responsible for removing sprinklers from his supermarkets supposedly because they cause dampness in sugar but in reality a blatant attempt to cut costs thereby putting large numbers of workers and shoppers at risk. If the



Deregulation Bill is allowed to go through it will destroy decades of safety legislation, hard fought for by trade unionists. Safety legislation—in particular fire legislation—has never been brought in through the foresight of big business but rather as a reaction to one disaster or another and then only with a lot of pressure and campaigning by trade unions together with fire and safety experts who have often had to view the grim results of their warnings going unheeded. The particular effect of deregulation on the Fire Service is to remove from their control the issuing of the certificate of safety which all public areas and businesses must possess. At present

these certificates are issued by experienced operational fire fighters, who visit commercial and public premises, inspect and issue certificates. They are also responsible for visiting schools and hospitals and explaining safety protection.

Tender

The Deregulation Bill proposes that this role is put out to tender, the responsibility being placed on local authorities. It means that the fire service could lose up to 20% of its staff, although the cuts in March mean that it has already been cut to the bone.

The West Yorkshire Fire service (which is Labour controlled) has already reduced the number of fire fighters by 17%, yet the number of incidents have increased by 30% in the last period and the number of calls by 55%.

In many cases the number of fire fighters sent to an incident has been only 8 when the number required is 10.

In other areas cuts are even greater, risking the lives of the public and fire fighters themselves.

Behind this 'spirit of free enterprise' put forward by the government lurks, as always, a more sinister motive. The purpose is likely to be the wholesale privatisation of the Fire Service by piece-meal means.

Beginning with the inspection and issuing of safety certificates, it is probable that the Fire Service will then be broken up with firms putting in tenders and local authorities being forced by law to accept the lowest tender. wages and conditions will worsen and it will probably mean a huge reduction in staff levels and

Fight for decent pay

The Transport and Salaried Staff Association (TSSA) annual conference overwhelmingly endorsed a call for "public control of natural resources", writes Mick Murphy.

The conference also heard how members had been offered a 2% rise on the underground which has been turned down and it is important now we continue to oppose such a rise and link up with the RMT and Aslef to fight for decent pay in the light of the strike by signal staff.

Left delegates also exposed the level of salary of the general secretary and compared it to what members are earning which brought home to many people how the leadership of a union can get out of touch with the problems facing its members.

However, there were also some setbacks for the left. A motion on seeking merger with the other transport unions was defeated and a motion scrapping the annual election of president and treasurer and making it biennial was carried. Socialist Appeal produced a special newsletter for all delegates which received an excellent response.

quality of equipment. In the coming months there is likely to be a surge of activity from the FBU and we must ensure that this action is supported by all sections of the Labour movement to ensure victory.

If their fight is lost then the result could be lives lost to the altar of profit in proportions not seen since the formation of the national fire service.

Ruth Fallon
Halifax



Turn anger on privatisation into action

UCW Conference

UCW were in angry mood at their annual conference in Bournemouth over the threats of privatisation.

Delegates representing counter staff voted to ballot for national strike action over the question of the sell-off of post offices. The full conference called for a

national campaign involving leaflets, petitions and so on. Strike action may also be 'considered' —left activists will feel that it should be more than just considered. A half-hearted campaign that does not bring out the full strength of the union will not be good enough. Such a campaign will need (and should involve) the whole of the Labour and trade union movement. The fact that Major is showing signs of concern over whether

to proceed with Post Office privatisation is a sign that victory can be won. Delegates also reacted strongly to intimidation threats against union officials. This centred around the victimisation of 2 officials in Bristol who are threatened with the sack.

Fighting mood

The mood on the conference floor was such that the union leadership was forced to first accept for discussion and then support a resolution from the floor which called for strike ballots to be organised if any union member or officer was sacked over involvement in industrial action. This showed that when it comes to the crunch, union members will fight to protect their

organisations—Tory laws or not— if a strong lead is given. The role of Post Office management and their 'union' the CMA was also the subject of a heated session at conference. Delegate after delegate attacked the scab role which CMA members had played and called for this organisation to be chucked out of the TUC. The resolution was remitted on the basis of technicalities but the leadership had to promise that a formal complaint to the TUC about the CMA would be made. Union activists will need to consider the question of the role of management in general and the need to bring them under genuine union discipline.

Missed Opportunity in Full Employment Campaign

Around 300 people attended the Campaign Group conference on full employment.

They came to hear how we could take the fight to the Tories and to draw up a clear strategy for full employment. Unfortunately the majority of them will have left believing that a major opportunity had been missed. Whilst the attendance was better than last year's and whilst the issue is undoubtedly the key one for the labour movement at the present time no clear strategy was advocated that could point a way forward for the movement. In his opening address Seamus Milne, author of *The Enemy Within*, castigated the Tories incompetence and the media for trying to hijack the debate within the labour movement. However, when it came to putting forward a clear alternative to the ideas of Labour's right wing the policy simply echoed Ken Livingstone's "realism and radicalism" programme of raising the top rate of taxation to 55 percent on incomes over £50,000 a year, reintroducing controls on dividend

Campaign Group Conference

payments, exchange controls, massive regulation, limited public ownership and encouraging added investment in British industry. Whilst Marxists would support the idea of finding extra income for the welfare state, to properly fund the health service and so on what is clear is that this programme lacks both "realism" and the genuine "radicalism" that is necessary to create the millions of jobs necessary to achieve full employment. In the workshop on public ownership Bryan Beckinham made the point that far from nationalising twenty per cent of the economy a future Labour government needed to take control of the top 200 or so firms who control over 80% of the economy in order to be able to plan investment and create the jobs necessary to get workers back to work. Despite the radical speeches about the horrors of the market

economy speakers limited themselves to calling for economic and democratic reforms of the system. And yet, as Socialist Appeal explained last month in the article *Jobs for All*, unemployment is a problem of the chaos and anarchy of capitalism itself. A plan to achieve full employment needs first and foremost the abolition of the unplanned capitalist system - in other words the nationalisation of the big monopolies, the finance houses, and major banks. No amount of regulation will force the capitalists to invest in what they don't want to and no amount of pleading will make a profit-making concern act in society's interest when a quick buck can be made somewhere else. The organisers of the conference should be congratulated for opening the debate on the left on the policies needed to achieve full employment but it will be necessary for the labour movement to approach this question with much more clarity and "realism" if we are to turn our debates into reality.

In the News

● A one-day conference entitled **The Defence of the Welfare State** will take place in Scotland on June 25. Campbell Christie (Scottish TUC), Labour MP Dawn Primarolo, MEP Alex Falconer and Rosina McCrae will be among those speaking at the event organised by The Campaign to Defend the Welfare State and sponsored by Edinburgh and District trades council. The meeting will take place from 10am to 4pm at Lothian Regional Chambers, Edinburgh. For further details contact The Welfare State Campaign, c/o LTUCRC, 12a Picardy Place, Edinburgh EH1 3JT.

● The head of the Institute of Directors Peter Morgan has renewed his call for the banning of strikes in essential services. He said on the eve of the planned strike by RMT signal workers: "There is a loophole which permits strikes which inflict disruption and cost to business." Of course what he is really worried about is not decent wages, jobs and so on but his profits which could be hit by workers taking action to defend their rights. Any attempt to ban strikes in any area must be firmly resisted by the whole labour movement.

Full employment tops agenda as delegates celebrate Tories' "bloody nose"

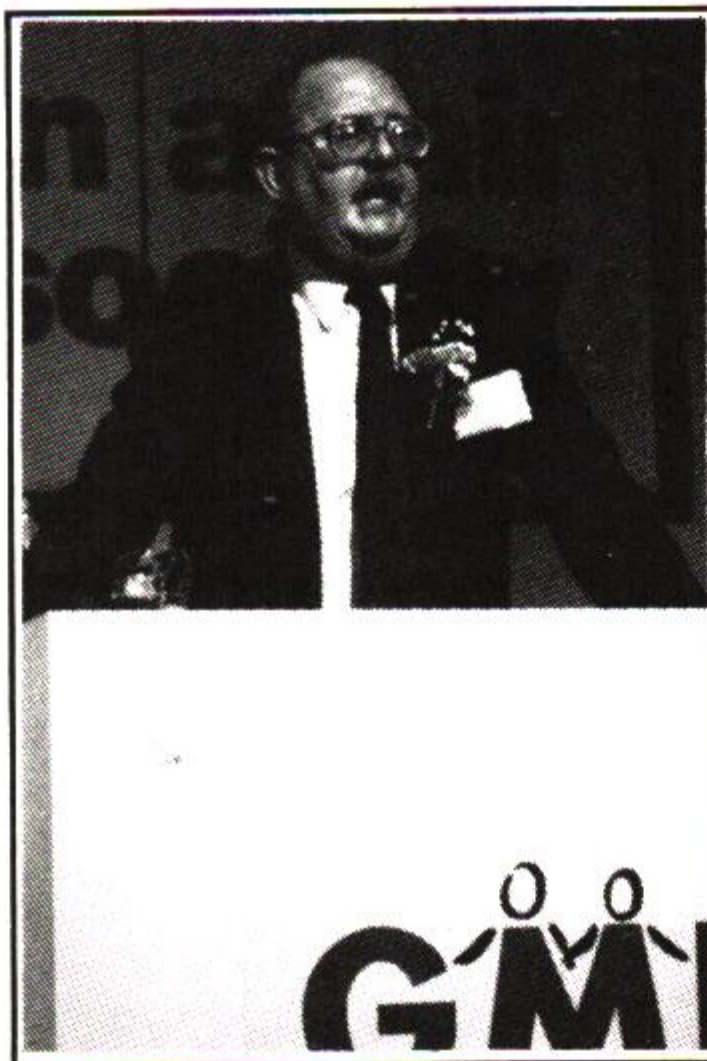
GMB Conference

"Absolutely brilliant! It's great to give the Tories a bloody nose", was the view from delegates at this year's GMB conference as they celebrated the results from the Euro elections. It brought back the mood of confidence after years of retreat and employers' attacks.

The key issues which dominated the opening of the conference in Blackpool were full employment (which was the theme of the conference) and the Labour leadership election.

Attack

However, the Congress opened with an attack by delegates on the 'new realism' of the TUC. This was all the more surprising since the union has traditionally been considered to be on the right of the trade union movement. Delegates, backed by the executive, lambasted the TUC General Council, and in particular John Monks, for inviting Tory ministers to address labour movement meetings. This position was overwhelmingly endorsed by conference.



John Edmonds

John Edmonds, GMB general secretary, set the opening tone in explaining to delegates: *"I have heard people say that the Labour Party needs some big new idea to carry it forward into the next election. Let us do ourselves a favour. There is no political idea which is bigger and no political slogan which is more compelling than full employment. Full employment is our distinctive message, the basis of our conviction politics, the issue that is make or break for the labour movement."*

This view was backed up by an opinion poll conducted by the union which revealed that among those who had switched their vote since the general election, 66% said policies that reduced unemployment were important in this decision.

Debate

The congress passed by overwhelming majorities resolutions backing full employment. After Margaret Beckett addressed the congress as acting Labour leader, delegates took part in a 'fringe' debate between Tony Blair and John Prescott. The GMB, which is balloting its 749,000 levy payers for the Labour leadership is a key union. The sympathies of the bulk of delegates are undoubtedly for Prescott who received a standing ovation after a forceful speech tailored to his union audience. He concentrated on his links with the unions and his commitment to "traditional socialist values", particularly full employment and the minimum wage. Some delegates, nevertheless were not uncritical of both speakers who tended to keep to generalisations. For instance, a direct question from London delegate Justin Bowden on their attitude to repealing all the anti-trade union legislation since 1979 was largely avoided. The buoyant mood amongst



This year's GMB conference

delegates, reflecting the debates around full employment, the humiliation of the Tories in the European elections and the debate on the party leadership has pushed a layer of trade union activists to join the labour Party and become involved politically. It is an indicator of what will happen to a greater extent in the future, particularly with the prospects of a Labour government and is an indication of the umbilical cord which links

the political and industrial wings. The ranks of trade unionists are expecting a great deal from a Labour government. They will fight for it, sustain it but without doubt they will also demand it carries out socialist policies in favour of working people.

**Keith Dunn, delegate,
London Region
(personal capacity)**

Pit Fight Goes On

Despite their recent eviction from the pit camp site at Parkside Colliery, Lancashire, Women Against Pit Closures have vowed to step up their campaign to save the last deep coal mine in the county.

At the time of going to press, plans were well underway for action to try to prevent the filling in of the pit shaft with thousands of tonnes of limestone, including the organising of a mass picket. The pit camp was physically evicted after 16 months by British Coal and police and a new camp has now been established across the road from the pit to "provide a focus for the fight." Sylvia Pye, national chair of Women Against Pit Closures told the recent Campaign Group conference: *"Our struggle goes on. We intend to stop them filling in the pit shaft and capping it off. We need your support."*

Among the ways you can support the fight is to raise the issue at your union/Labour Party meeting and invite a speaker from the camp and organise to visit the picket line. Contact the camp on 0925-291799 for further details.

Sylvia herself is now facing huge legal bills as a result of the pit camp and a fund has been set up to help pay her costs. Contact Sylvia Pye National Appeal Fund c/o Berni Cavanagh, Common Road Nurseries, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside WA12 8JJ Tel: 0925-291799)

We Must Fight BT's Sell-Off Plans

NCU Conference

At the NCU's conference in Blackpool, one of the main issues was BT's proposals on new attendance patterns. Management had called an emergency meeting with the union a couple of days prior to the conference to put revised proposals to them, however

these proposals are still totally unacceptable to the membership. At the present time although negotiations are continuing, BT is briefing members at home stating that they are going ahead with these proposals. This is typical of the way BT treats the NCU these days - they go through the motions of negotiations whilst at the same time trying to implement changes through the

back door.

Another major issue was BT's proposals to sell off its Repair service to Fujitsu. They intend to cynically sell the workers along with the buildings and equipment. In response to this the members in the branch concerned were balloted for a one day strike with 81.8% of members voting in favour. The strike is due to take place (as we go to press) on 23 June. It is vital

that the union campaigns among all the membership to support the factories members. This proposed sell-off is just the beginning. If the management are successful they will almost certainly attempt to parcel off other parts of the company. In the long run the only way to stop this is to return BT to public ownership.

Unfortunately, the proposition on re-nationalisation of BT was not reached during conference although a proposition opposing Post Office privatisation was carried.

The conference also endorsed the merger with the UCW which is due to take place at the end of this year. The new union will be called the Communication Workers Union (CWU). It is important that activists on the left of both unions get together to begin to build a joint Broad Left capable of taking the membership forward.

Performance Pay - No Way!

BBC Dispute

BBC workers were back on the picket line today (June 7th) after overwhelmingly rejecting the BBC's final offer.

A meeting of NUJ F/MoCs in London rejected the proposals as "unacceptable" by a massive majority and in a branch consultation only one Bectu branch voted to accept the proposals.

Thousands of BBC workers struck ten days earlier for 24 hours in protest at management attempts to introduce performance pay and other changes to working conditions. The strike was the first shot in the joint NUJ - Bectu - AEEU battle against the changes which would mean:

- removal of payments for unsocial hours
- introduction of performance related pay
- scrapping of rate-for-the job
- other changes to working conditions which could mean longer hours

The first two days of strike action were solid. Reports from around the country show the strength of the action. Anyone who tried to tune in to their favourite programmes would have found they were missing. Among those shows affected were Breakfast News which was replaced by the 1960s film Colossus of Rhodes

(about slavery!) and Radio 4's flagship news programme Today was cut to five minutes. The one o'clock news was slashed by 20 minutes and regional news bulletins were either scrapped or drastically reduced and using old footage and stories. Radio Five Live faced a total walkout and live programmes were replaced by tapes

And the strike has shown one thing very clearly. Industrial action is not unpopular. Already the NUJ has recruited over 600 new members at the BBC and Bectu reports a similar recruitment.

At Broadcasting House in London membership is now 100% and every single one was out. NUJ members in Scotland report that the strike was 100%.

Negotiations

The first strike brought the BBC back to the negotiating table and an "improved" offer was tabled which was decisively rejected. The second strike showed our continued strength of feeling. Now (at the time of going to press) new talks are taking place at ACAS.

But alongside the talks the BBC management are threatening to get tough - even threatening our right to strike by getting us to sign "loyalty pledges" not to take part in any other actions.

This is totally unacceptable and raises the stakes.

We need to build on the tremendous support and determination there has been so far and explain clearly to every member in an active campaign what is at stake.

That way the action will remain solid and we can force the BBC

to back down.

The BBC workers have shown their clear determination. The NUJ leadership must now show equal determination and refuse to accept any deal which includes performance related pay.

by an NUJ member

Mary Hanson



The BBC strike in the Midlands has been solid. Picketing at the main centre - BBC Pebble Mill - has resulted in mail and many deliveries being turned away as well as encouraging those who were unsure about taking action to sign up to the union and join the strike. NUJ FoC at Midlands Today, Andy Newman described the strike as "solid" and Lindsay Doyle MoC at Radio WM said she had been pleasantly surprised at how determined members were to fight for their rights. She said "the message from here is very clear and very solid. We don't want performance pay and we won't accept changes for the worse in our conditions." We are ready as a local branch to pull out all the stops to support this very important struggle. Already we have produced newsletters in support and raised the issue at the local trades council and have a list of other trades unionists willing to help us. And on the back of the dispute we are recruiting many new members. In Radio WM membership jumped from around 25% to 100% among reporters and on the picket line yesterday we recruited two more people who joined the strike immediately. During the first day of the action one person managed to get out the Midlands Today show (even though it was only five minutes instead of 30) By the time of the second day of action he had joined Bectu and was on strike. This is a dispute we can win.

Jeremy Dear, secretary Birmingham NUJ



Marxism and the State

One of the key questions which differentiates Marxist ideas from those of the reformists is on the role of the state. And it is a vital question for the labour movement. Over the next nine pages *Socialist Appeal* contributors look at some of the key issues in this important debate and draw out the lessons for activists.

The State: Can it be Reformed?

According to John Major, we are living in a "classless society". Notwithstanding his recent comments about beggars, the constantly increasing interference in our lives by the machinery of the state demonstrates that, on the contrary, the division of society into classes has reached its highest expression.

The task of socialism is to put an end once and for all to this senseless division. The role of Marxist theory is to act as a guide to action, to provide the means to solve this task.

State Machine

Standing between the working class and the socialist transformation of society is a colossal state machine. Where did it come from? What purpose does it serve? can it be reformed, or must it be done away with altogether? What should replace it, indeed should it be replaced at all? In the first place what is "it"?

In their writings on the state, Marx and Engels set themselves the task of demystifying it, of conquering the idea that the state is some kind of eternal being, in order to strip away the magical shroud in which capitalism has cloaked it. Today the bosses dress up their attacks on workers rights, the right to strike etc., in the name of the Law with a capital "L", or Democracy with a capital "D". When the police and the government defend the "right" of

a scab to break a strike, they do it in the name of his "democratic right to work". When a million and one obstacles are placed in the path of workers taking action, it is in the name of legality. When huge sums were confiscated from the printers and the miners, it was all dressed up as obedience to the Law. As if the law or democracy, the courts or the police, are all independent entities removed from the issues and conflicts involved.

Surely, they say, the Law is a set of fair rules which everyone must obey. In reality we all know there is one law for the rich and another for the rest of us. In the crudest way, with judges dressing up in wigs and robes (and isn't it the same in Parliament) they perform absurd

rituals to draw a mystical veil over their real purpose.

By dressing up in costumes, spouting a few Latin phrases and calling it the law, the ruling class believe we will all stand in awe, fearing to break the natural order of things, God's word or some such mystical nonsense.

Yet the law wasn't written in heaven it was written on earth and to serve a purpose. In whose interest is it to limit the number of pickets allowed at a factory gate, or to deny workers the right to join a union as at GCHQ, to make it illegal for whole sections of workers to go on strike, or to rewrite laws which previously gave workers at least some health and safety protection.

The law isn't a system of "fair

rules", it's just like any other aspect of the state - a means of coercion by which one class in society, the ruling class, the minority, maintains its rule over the majority, the working class. To sweep away this supernatural fog which surrounds the state, we must first deal with the idea that this machinery has always existed. In fact, for nine-tenths of mankind's existence on the planet there was no state.

Historical Stage

There is a vulgar view of history which states that things are as they always have been and always will be. Capitalism has always existed, and so has the state, the impartial observer and referee in society.

In truth, capitalism is an historically recent stage in our development, and the state, although older, was certainly unknown in early tribal society. In order for society to advance from its primitive communist, tribal beginnings, to the rational and harmonious self organisation of society which would be socialism, it has already been necessary to pass through all kinds of convulsions and revolutions, and we aren't there yet. We have had to pass from one form of class rule to another, one form of property ownership to another, one kind of state suppression to another, in order to lay the economic, cultural and scientific basis for a genuinely classless society. In those earlier classless societies, which make up 9/10ths of mankind's existence to date,

The Speaker and Black Rod - so-called symbols of "Law" and "Democracy"



there could not be a state, there couldn't even be "civilisation" because man lived on a nomadic basis. They were an armed people with no need for special groups of armed men, no need of a special coercive force or state to keep one section of the population oppressed. This was not lawless anarchy, crimes and misdemeanours were dealt with democratically by the community, and of course there were "leaders" as in all human societies, people with authority, respected by the community, but no special force to impose their will, only a voluntary respect for the elders. As Engels wrote in his *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, "*The shabbiest police servant of the civilised state has more "authority" than all the organs of gentile society put together; but the mightiest prince and the greatest statesman or general of civilisation might envy the humblest of the gentile chiefs the unforced and unquestioned respect accorded to him. The one stands in the midst of society; the other is forced to pose as something outside and above it.*"

Accumulation

When man began to settle in specific territories it was possible to develop the productivity of his labour, not just by hunting or taking what nature provided, but by planning, the sowing of seed, the development of tools and technique. As a consequence they began to develop a surplus above their own immediate needs. For the first time a section of the population was freed from the day-to-day struggle for existence, a class was created which could "employ" the labour of others to sustain it. Now there could be accumulation, the manufacture of tools could be developed, as could primitive agricultural techniques, and of course the military means for defending the settled areas against incursion from nomadic tribes.

For the first time society was divided into classes, and there developed the "haves" and the "have nots", which in the first instance were the slaveowners and the slaves.

The new ruling class of slaveowners was free to devote its time to an enormous flourishing of human achievement in art, science,

architecture, philosophy and mathematics. This was the basis for the development of the ancient societies of Greece and Rome which we associate with great cultural and scientific advance.

These slaveowners were, of course, a minority and as such required special bodies of armed men to keep their slaves in chains, and so the state was born of the division of society into classes.

The new state was distinguished from the old gentile order in that it was no longer held together by blood ties but divided its subjects on a territorial basis. Citizens were now required to carry out their public rights and duties according to where they lived regardless of their tribe or gens. The other distinguishing feature of this new state was the creation of a public power which no longer coincided with the population organising itself as an armed force. "Special bodies of armed men" came into being because an armed population divided into opposing classes, would have led to interminable conflict.

Engels in his *Origin of the Family*, describes the state as "*a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable opposites which it is powerless to exorcise. But in order that*

With each succeeding form of class society the state machine was taken over and perfected as the instrument of the new ruling class

these opposites, classes with conflicting economic interests, shall not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power seemingly standing above society that would moderate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of "order"."

In his masterpiece on this subject, *State and Revolution*, Lenin summarises the origins of the state as follows, "*The state is a product and manifestation of*



Police attack anti-racist demonstrators in Germany. They form part of the armoury of the state

the irreconcilability of class contradictions. The state arises where, when, and to the extent that class contradictions objectively cannot be reconciled. And conversely, the existence of the state proves that class contradictions are irreconcilable." So this system of police, courts, army, civil service and so on aren't eternal protections against anti-social and criminal behaviour, but were created in their basic, crude, initial form as a special machine for the suppression of the majority by the minority - the slaves by the slaveowners.

France 1789, the new ruling class took over the old state apparatus and perfected it as an instrument for the suppression of the new exploited class, the working class.

Surely the bosses cry, this is all socialist paranoia. Do we really believe the bankers and directors of big monopolies sit around in their gentlemen's clubs inventing this great apparatus to keep us in check. Leaving aside the question of what these gentlemen discuss in their clubs, they certainly could not have dreamed up, such a scheme as the modern state, they wouldn't have the imagination. No, it devolved through revolutions and changing social conditions over centuries.

Paris Commune

In all these earlier revolutions, this state machine was seen as the principal spoils of the victor. Marx and Engels, however, explained that the task of socialism would be entirely different. And here we see, as in all the works of Marx, there is not one ounce of utopianism. He didn't dream up the tasks of the workers in relation to the state, but drew instead on the practical conclusions of the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871. Whilst praising the heroism of the Communards "storming heaven", Marx re-examined his theory in the light of their defeat. In fact the only correction Marx felt it necessary to make to the Communist Manifesto was on the basis of that revolutionary



experience.

In the preface to the June 1872 edition Marx and Engels say that the programme "has in places become antiquated" and go on to quote from Marx's book *The Civil War in France*, "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for their own purposes."

Reformists

Amazingly, this came to be crudely misinterpreted by many leaders of the labour movement as an argument in favour of slow gradual change, piecemeal reforms, by which the state could be improved in the interests of the workers. The leaders of the German labour movement, for example, demanded a "free people's state". Marx ridiculed this idea "What do you mean a free people's state - the state is an instrument for the suppression of the working class nothing else!"

The state in so far as it is a state will be there to suppress the people, and in so far as it becomes an instrument of the people it ceases to be a state. Lenin took up this idea when the leaders of the European socialist

and Labour parties held up their hands in horror at the Russian Revolution, prattling on about abstract democracy, democracy with a capital D. "There is no such thing as 'democracy'," he said "there is bourgeois democracy or there is workers' democracy...Bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with mediaevalism, always remains...restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical and a snare and a deception for the exploited and the poor."

Even our own Parliament is just such a snare of course, where we choose every few years which members of the ruling class will represent (read repress) us for the next few years.

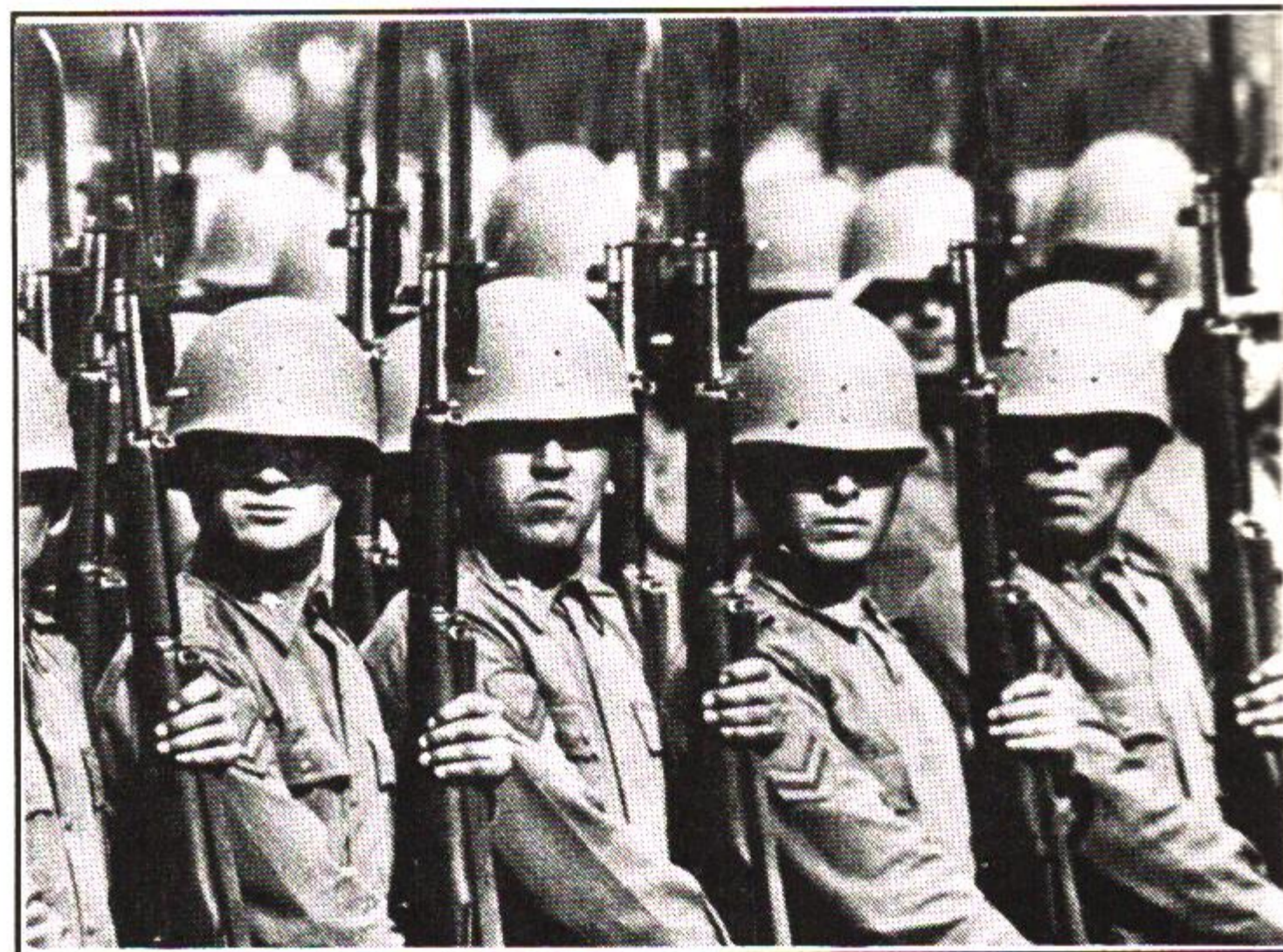
What Marx actually meant in saying "the workers can't simply lay hold of the ready made state machine" he clarified on many occasions. In a letter to Kugelman, for example, he writes, "If you look at the last chapter of my *Eighteenth Brumaire*, you will find that I declare that the next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to the other, but to smash it and this is the preliminary precondition for every real people's revolution on the continent."

In Britain today, where Parliamentary traditions go back furthest, who really makes the decisions? Not the government or the cabinet, but the bosses of the banks and the big monopolies, the currency speculators and the stockbrokers

- and who elected them? For that matter who elected the judges, to whom are the police commissioners accountable? Who elected the press barons, who, not content with telling us who to vote for in the general election, are now telling us who to elect as Labour leader. Of course Marxists are the first to defend all the democratic rights which the workers have conquered through struggle, and fight to extend them - the right to

stock exchange."

The capitalists themselves prefer democracy as a cheaper and more malleable system, but as the ex-Tory MP Ian Gilmour once explained, for the bosses too this is only a means to an end, if it threatened the continuation of capitalism the ruling class would not hesitate to end it. In the early 1970s Brigadier Kitson and co. prepared a coup in case the Labour government attempted to



Pinochet's Chilean guards - the "armed bodies of men" protecting the state.

strike, to organise, to free speech, many rights which even now are being eaten away. More than that, Marxists would argue to use Parliament, the council chamber, even the courts where possible to defend or advance our rights - but these elements of the state machine are not the goal itself, they are a means to an end.

Engels

In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels explain that the democratic gains of the workers are "just a certain amount of rights, for the exploited class to go some way towards the goal of fighting for a change in the class system for a new society, but that is all."

"The state" Engels added later "is a machine for the oppression of one class by another and indeed in a democratic republic no less than in a monarchy...In a democratic republic wealth exercises its power indirectly, but all the more surely, by means of the direct corruption of officials; second by means of an alliance between the government and the

implement the socialist measures in their programme. More recently we have the Gladio conspiracy of the security forces throughout Europe preparing for future military takeovers.

Look at the way the South African state aided and abetted the reactionary Inkatha movement, or the military coups throughout Latin America and Africa in the 70s and 80s. Look at the way every tentacle of the state machine was employed against the miners in the strike of 84-85, the courts sequestering funds, the police and the army on picket lines and demonstrations, the blatant lies and distortions of the media. How could the workers possibly "lay hold of" and use this state machine. Surely this nails the arguments of reformism, the idea that society can be changed gradually, slowly but surely over generations. Capitalism hasn't perfected this colossal machine in order to allow itself to be reformed out of existence. The task of Marxism is to lay bare the truth about the state

Marxism and the State

In the clash between capitalist development and the interests of the dominant class, the State takes a position alongside of the latter. Its policy, like that of the bourgeoisie, comes into conflict with social development...The State, that is to say the political organisation of capitalism, and the property relations, that is to say the juridical organisation of capitalism, become more capitalist and not more socialist, opposing to the theory of the progressive introduction of socialism two insurmountable obstacles...

Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*

and the danger it represents to the working class, but also to explain what should replace it and how.

Marxism has nothing in common with anarchism which preaches that all authority and organisation is inherently evil - this is just mysticism.

Without some form of state how could the trains run on time, how could the harmonious development of the economy, of society that socialism represents be planned.

Workers' Democracy

While the capitalists need a state to maintain class rule, the workers need one precisely to end it. (On the basis of modern science such a period could be shortlived as the workers lead the whole of society towards socialism.) Since any state only exists for the suppression of one class by another, the workers state, workers democracy, would be the rule of the majority over the minority, just as bourgeois democracy is the rule of the minority over the majority. What else do we mean when we say we want a Labour government that represents our class the way the Tories have represented their class for the last 15 years. The first task of such a regime would be to appeal to workers throughout Europe and internationally to join forces in putting an end to the anarchy of capitalism and begin building a socialist society. Its first act should be the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy, taking the ownership of the means of production out of private hands and converting them into state property, under the democratic control and

Before Marxism can conquer the state, however, it must first conquer the labour movement. To grasp the nature of the state, to bring its history, its character, its role to the attention of the workers is the duty of Marxism.

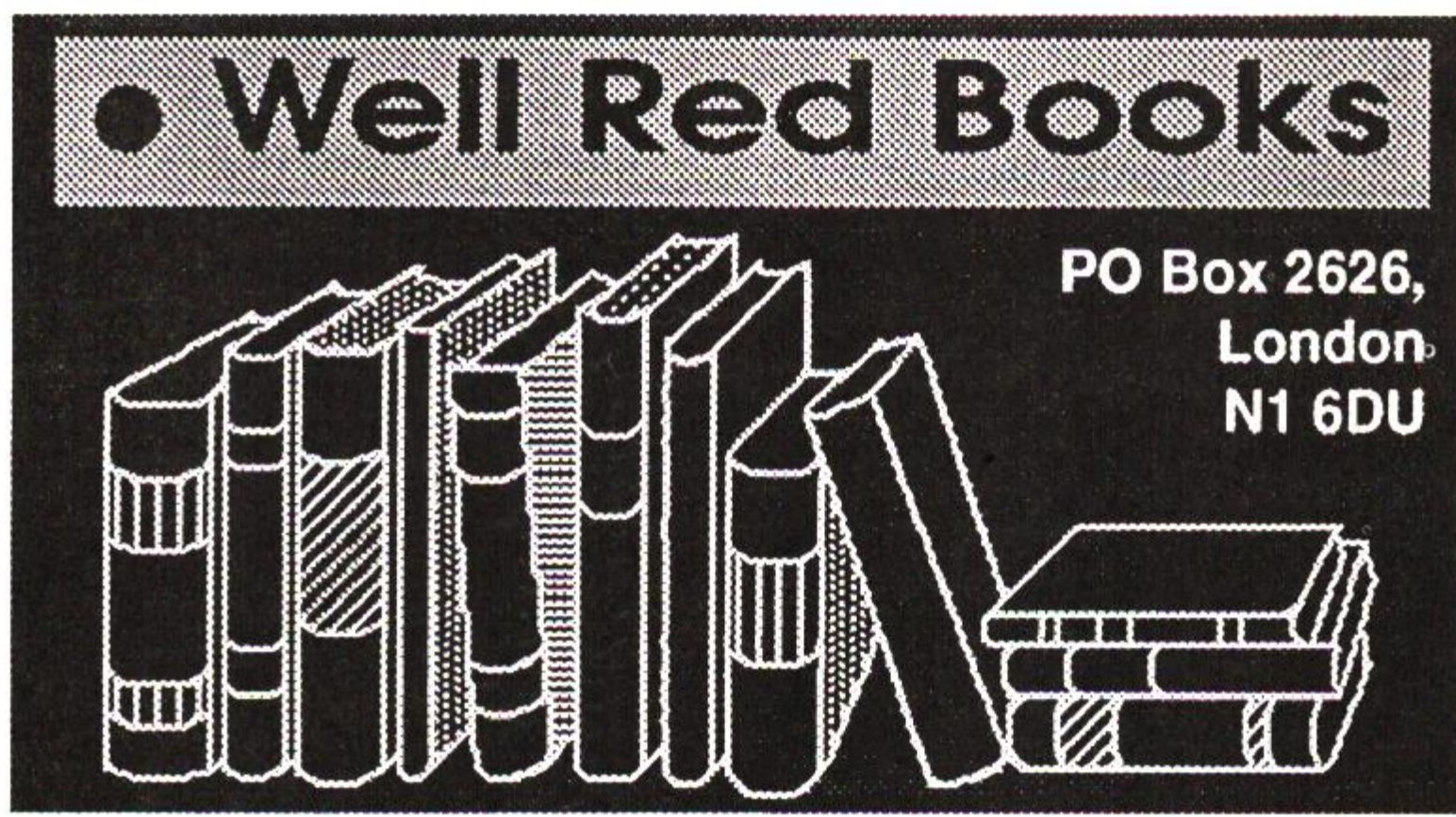
Recommended Reading on the State:

Marx - The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte £0.80
Engels - Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State £1.20
Lenin - State and Revolution £1.00
Lenin - The State £0.25
Milliband - Parliamentary Socialism £5.00
Serge - What Everyone Should Know About State Repression £2.50

Other Titles:
Engels - Conditions of the Working Class in England £4.95
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management of the workers themselves.

A Labour government with such a programme would of course be sabotaged from the beginning by the state. Equally such a programme could inspire millions of workers to come to its defence and carry its programme out in practice, taking over the factories and the banks.

In so doing, the workers begin to do away with themselves as a class, to do away with all class division in society, to do away with the state as a state. As Engels wrote, "The first act in which the state really comes

forward as the representative of the whole of society - the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society - is at the same time its last independent act as a state. The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then dies away of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production."

Superabundance

Again there is not a single ounce of utopianism here. Marx didn't invent some new perfect social order in his head, but studied the birth of a new society from within the old. The aim of the socialist transformation is to put an end to class divisions, to create a society where Marx's aphorism "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" could become a reality. That requires the development of an economy of superabundance, entirely possible on the basis of modern science and technique, once we've done away with the anarchy of the market. The building of such an economy requires conscious planning and organisation of "production, distribution and exchange" as

Labour's Clause 4 puts it. The government of people must be replaced by the administration of things. This would be the remit of the new workers state, which from the beginning would be only a semi-state, withering away of its own accord in one sphere after another. All administration might not be abolished over night, but bureaucracy could be. The working week could be cut immediately to 32 hours, without loss of pay and then to four 6 hour days and beyond, not only eradicating unemployment, but providing everyone with the necessary time to participate in the running of all aspects of society. In Lenin's words "when everyone is a bureaucrat, no-one is a bureaucrat." The old liberal dream of cheap government would become a reality by doing away with the two most greatest expenditures. Firstly, state functionarism - such administrative tasks would be reduced to what they really are, stripped of power and prestige, they would be bookkeepers and technicians paid workers wages. All officials would be elected and moreover subject to an immediate recall. All parties, except the fascists, would be allowed to organise. The enormous waste of resources on



the "special bodies of armed men" to keep us in our place would also become unnecessary. Crime, security and so on could be dealt with by society without this colossal state machine.

The state, then, has not existed for all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no need of it. At a certain stage of economic development which necessarily involved the split of society into classes, the state arose because of this split. Today this class division in society is not only no longer a necessity, but is now a hindrance to the further development of humanity. The task of the socialist transformation of society, is to free us from this ball and chain. Then as Engels explained, "*Society, which will reorganise production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole state machinery where it will then belong - into the museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning wheel and the bronze axe.*"

Before Marxism can conquer the state, however, it must first conquer the labour movement. To grasp the nature of the state, to bring its history, its character, its role to the attention of the workers is the duty of Marxism, the theoretical expression of the workers movement, the guide to action.

Phil Mitchinson

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Send comments to: Socialist Appeal Readers' Survey, PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

Bloody Tuesday and Beyond..

It is now ten years since the beginning of the miners' strike, perhaps the most important movement since the 1926 General Strike.

As with 1926, the 1984-5 strike still has many lessons for the trade union movement. Also the role of the Labour Party during the strike showed in living terms the link between the unions and the party but also showed the differences between the party leadership and the rank and file.

Strike Unfolds

At the start of the strike I was living in a small mining village, Hatfield, where I had lived most of my life. The local pit was the main employer in the village as it was for the other villages in the area. When the dispute began, our local LP branch had an attendance of about 14 to 20 people at meetings - most of whom worked at the pit. As the strike began to unfold, it was amazing to see the rapid politicisation of the village. Our LP branch doubled in size during the first 2 months of the strike. This shows in a real way how when the class enters into struggle it first moves through its traditional organisations - first the union then the LP.

An important lesson for me, as it was for many touched by the strike, was the question of the role of the state. Marxists often state that in the final analysis the state is armed bodies of men. During the strike it was easy to see the role the police played particularly when the Tory government sent them into the mining villages around the country.

The strike was nearly six months old when they sent the police into our village. First they had contacted people who had raised some doubts about the strike. At Hatfield 3 people had gone back to work and scabbed. This had been

The police and the miners' strike

used by the bosses to back their argument that the strike was crumbling. The police moved to attack the pickets outside the pit in Hatfield as a massive police escort was brought in to protect the scabs going in. On Tuesday 21 August, pickets were attacked at the pit lane end of the pit club. One chap, Adrian Simpson, was passing in his car and stopped when he saw what was happening. The police grabbed him, took around the back of the pit club and beat him until he was unconscious and nearly dead. When they realised what they had done, he was rushed to Doncaster Hospital for emergency treatment. On the way he was suffering from convulsions and he was in such a bad state that his wife was not allowed to see him for several hours. During the day the news spread around the village of what had happened

and that scabs had got into the pit. The 21st of August was a beautiful sunny day but it was to go down in local history as 'Bloody Tuesday'. It was a day we would never forget.

As the morning progressed, myself and many others from the village went down to the end of the pit lane. By about 12.00 there were about 2000 people there. All the village has turned out. Rumours were flying around as to who had scabbed and that the village had been cut off by the police with road blocks to prevent other miners from getting to the pit from the other villages.

Reinforcements

When the extra police reinforcements turned up they were in police vans and wore blue uniforms but they had no identifying numbers on those uniforms. About 8 or 9 buses arrived in total. Shortly after this all the national media present packed up and left, including Kate Adie. We called the media the State Propaganda Service with good reason. Before the media had made their excuses and left the police were just standing in a line across the pit lane. Afterwards was to be a different story. Peter Curran, the branch

Over-zealous policing or a concerted campaign of intimidation?



President, went over to the police and asked to talk to the scabs inside. This was agreed too and one of them came back out and agreed to rejoin the strike. The others did not. After this the police told people to clear the road as they were going to take the scabs back home. At this the branch Vice-Chair, Dave, urged the miners to block the road with a sit-down demo.

When the road was blocked full of seated miners, the police who had been standing across the lane were removed and replaced by police in boiler suits and riot shields.

Up to this point there had been no violence on behalf of the miners or their supporters, only some light banter. One miner called for the police to join with the miners as he explained that if the Tories won the strike they would have a go at the rank and file police at a later stage (a prediction of the Sheehy report perhaps?).

Gladiators

The head of the new police forces, the one who appeared to be in charge (well he was wearing a flat cap anyway) told the seated miners to move and clear the road. The reply was to speak up as they couldn't hear him! At this point the front row of the police parted and a wave of blue came rushing through. These police had small round shields like Roman gladiators. I was standing on the pavement on one side of the pit lane where a lot of the youngsters were standing. The police started hitting everybody. I saw the miners on the floor being attacked with truncheons. I was knocked over and then kicked and jumped on by the police. This didn't last long as I was



The miners' strike as seen by cartoonist Brick.

then picked up, marched across the road and pinned to a lamp post by 2 policemen who hit me on the back while at the same time telling me that I should not be there. I told the police, in between blows, that I actually lived here - which is more than could be said for them - and said that what they were doing was wrong. At this they let me go and told me to eff off and not come back again.

It was only when I got out of the crush of police that I realised why they had let me go. There was a pitched battle going on between the police and everybody else. The village was sickened by the police attack and was fighting back. I was feeling quite groggy and started to stagger away when 3 more police came charging through someone's garden straight at me. I tried to run away but they caught up with me and started to strike my head with their truncheons. After a few blows I fell down but they were in such a frenzy that they continued to rain blows down on me even whilst I lay on the floor. I am thankful for

some women who were screaming at the police to stop as they would surely have killed me at this point. The leader of the three police told the others to stop as he felt that I had had enough. He was right as I then blacked out.

I next remember being dragged along the road by 3 other policemen. When they got me to the top of the pit lane they did not know what to do with me. So they stood me up, stuffed some keys and other bit and pieces which had scattered across the road back into my pockets and as I started to walk away again gave me another beating for good measure. At first I could not understand peoples stares and look of horror as they saw me. Then Pat Collins, a local LP member came over and helped me to walk away. At the local pub, the Peacock, one of my mates from the steelworks was coming out in his car and Pat asked if he would mind giving me a lift to the doctors and said that if I made a mess in the car she would wipe up the blood. At the doctors, I was stitched up

and walked back home. Still the police were rampaging through the village. After half an hour at home I was still trying to clean up when our local councillor turned up with a reporter from the Doncaster local paper. I told her my story but no of this was reported in the paper. The press knew where its loyalties lay. I later reported a complaint with the Police Complaints Authority and they actually found in my favour and apologised for the actions of the police but not one officer was disciplined.

LPYS Organise

The Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) organised a public meeting around what had happened on the 21st. A lot of people turned up and several joined the Labour Party. During the miners strike we saw clearly how the supposedly impartial forces of the state were used in the interests of the bosses and the Tories. What happened in our village was repeated up and down the country with road-blocks, attacks on pickets and demonstrators and the largely unreported attacks on mining communities. All our so called rights under the law were pushed rudely to one side as the state sought to crush the will of the miners and the working class. We must learn to have no faith in the protection of the state forces but understand how they will be used against us when the crunch comes and rely instead on the power of our own class forces. For a generation of now mainly ex-miners and their families and supporters that lesson has been learned all too well.

Alan Peterson

Law and Order? - The Miners' Strike and the State

Many miners quickly drew lessons about the nature of the state. They saw in practice its real role "On the first day of the strike Ernie Way, a lodge official from Gwent, received instructions to send 50 pickets to the Midlands.

When he hired a bus, the company called back within minutes and said the police had restricted it. He arranged cars. The police called almost immediately and said they would be confiscated on the M4. So he rang

British Rail and booked 50 seats. Within half an hour the police were screening the passengers at Newport station. He said: "within 10 days of the strike we realised that the agents of the government had abandoned their

impartiality - the DHSS, the police, the magistrates, the judges" (The Observer,) And a miner at Oakdale made it clear how they were prevented from carrying out effective picketing by the "impartial police": "While they were

going into work there was no problem. We started to have a bit of success, turned a few around. Then the police altered their tactics. To say they were impartial and just doing their jobs was ridiculous."

And freedom of movement was another casualty: "We were on the M1 coming back from Nottingham. A squad car pulled us over and he said, 'If I see this van in this area again you will be automatically arrested.'"



Nixon and the Watergate conspiracy

White House whitewash

August sees the 20th anniversary of the climax of the so-called 'Watergate' scandal which rocked the American political scene for over a year and led to the resignation of an American President.

The recent death of that President, Richard Nixon (AKA 'Tricky Dicky'), has only helped to focus interest on those events of 1972-4.

In the middle of all the books, memoirs, films and TV series one question remains ignored. Not the question of whether Nixon was guilty or not—everybody has confirmed that apart from Nixon himself who managed to avoid that question both in the Nixon/Frost interviews and his own 1000 page plus memoirs— but the question of why Nixon was destroyed when other Presidents who were far less cunning and durable survived similar and potential scandals.

1972 Election

Nixon had come back from political oblivion on several occasions and had won the 1972 election with a decisive 60.8% of the popular vote, yet within 2 years he was out. What happened and why is a question that all socialists should consider in understanding how the ruling class acts under crisis. We should first consider the events themselves. On June 17, 1972, 5 men were caught inside the Democrats' HQ at the Watergate hotel. There seemed little reason for a burglary attempt since few 'secrets' would have been kept there and the event attracted little publicity (in fact this would remain the case for nearly nine months) or seeming interest. However some things were of immediate note. The burglars pockets were stuffed with \$100 dollar notes.

One of the burglars, James McCord was employed as a 'security aid' at the offices of the Committee To Re-elect The President (CREEP). All the burglars had either direct or indirect links to the CIA. An address book in their possession was found to contain the name and White House phone number of E. Howard Hunt, an assistant to Charles Colson, presidential special Council. This was clearly no ordinary burglary!

Behind the scenes those at the very top of Nixon's administration were discussing what could be done about the case. They knew what no one else yet knew that this operation was part of a wider operation involving many senior Nixon officials. Two meetings would come back to haunt Nixon at a later stage.

Arrests

On June 20, Nixon and his chief of staff, Haldeman, discussed the arrests—what they said was recorded but mysteriously erased—and on June 23, Nixon and Haldeman discussed a plan to have the CIA impede the official FBI investigation into the break in. This was recorded. CREEP official G. Gordon Liddy was identified as being in charge of the burglary team and both CREEP treasurer, Sloan, and CREEP director, Mitchell, resigned as it became clear that CREEP would be seen as the source of the finance of the burglary team.

It was also now the source of payments to buy the silence of the men involved. The Washington Post reported on October 10 that undercover acts of sabotage against the Democrats had been financed by a "secret fluctuating \$350,000—\$700,000 campaign fund that was controlled by ... Mitchell". The report showed that the burglary was part of a larger operation by a team run from CREEP by Hunt and Liddy. The unit, called the 'plumbers', was exposed in December as

reporting directly to John Ehrlichman, Nixon's domestic adviser.

The 5 burglars together with Hunt and Liddy were tried and convicted in January 1973 without talking. Nixon and his counsel, John Dean, who had been given responsibility for publicly 'investigating' Watergate by Nixon, met in February and again in March to discuss how the burglars silence could be maintained. The March 21

Watergate:

20
years
on



meeting discussed Hush money. Dean talked about 'a cancer close to the Presidency' and the continued threat of blackmail by the seven convicted men. When Dean raised the question of a possible bill of over a million dollars over the next two years, Nixon reviewed how that could be handled and by whom. The situation was starting to get out of control.

The sentences passed on the seven had been tough and on March 23 it had the intended effect. One of the five burglars, McCord, broke ranks and sent a note to the judge saying that he had been 'under political pressure to plead guilty and remain silent'.

From then on things started to unravel as more and more evidence came out. The burglars had been paid to keep quiet and the money had come from the same sources in Nixon's machine that had employed them in the first place.

Slowly all those involved were

'cut loose' by the President as they came under scrutiny. John Dean cut and run and accused Nixon of being directly involved. The Watergate select committee established by Senate met from May onwards and started to compile evidence. It was clear that the 'plumbers' had perjured themselves and been paid by Nixon's men to do so. Evidence showed that the break-in had been planned as far back as the beginning of 1972 as part of a whole strategy of illegal campaign activities carried out by the administration. The phrase 'dirty tricks' became part of daily usage.

Nixon repeatedly denied involvement but less and less was he believed. By July 1973 a poll was stating that 67% of those questioned thought that Nixon was involved either in the planning of the break-in or the cover up. On July 13 a bombshell struck. Alexander Butterfield, a Haldeman assistant, revealed the existence of a White House taping system—all the meetings which had been talked about during the previous months hearings were recorded on tape!

So began the long fight to get access to these tapes. Nixon fought every step of the way, citing 'executive privilege' and so on. Slowly Nixon was forced to release the tapes under subpoena with each batch raising more questions.

Aides Indicted

By the summer of 1974 all the leading Nixon aides had been indicted by the grand jury over the cover up. Nixon stalled for time by releasing his own transcripts which were edited to remove anything supposedly not relevant. Where someone swore the phrase 'expletive deleted' was edited in, a phrase that was to be come a national joke. On July 24 the Supreme Court ruled 8-0 that all the tapes must be handed over. Nixon's fate was sealed. His few remaining friends deserted him in the

corridors of power and on July 27, the House Judiciary Committee passed the first article of impeachment by a 27-11 majority charging the President with obstruction of justice. By July 30 the other articles of impeachment had been passed. Once the tape of the June 23 1972 tape - the famous 'smoking gun' - was out for all to hear then impeachment was inevitable. Nixon decided not to go through that and on August 8 he announced his resignation to take effect the following day.

Those then are the bare facts but what was the background to them that was to leave Nixon so vulnerable?. He had done nothing that had not been done by previous Presidents, such as Kennedy, and indeed would be done again (for example the Iran/Contra scandal under Reagan).

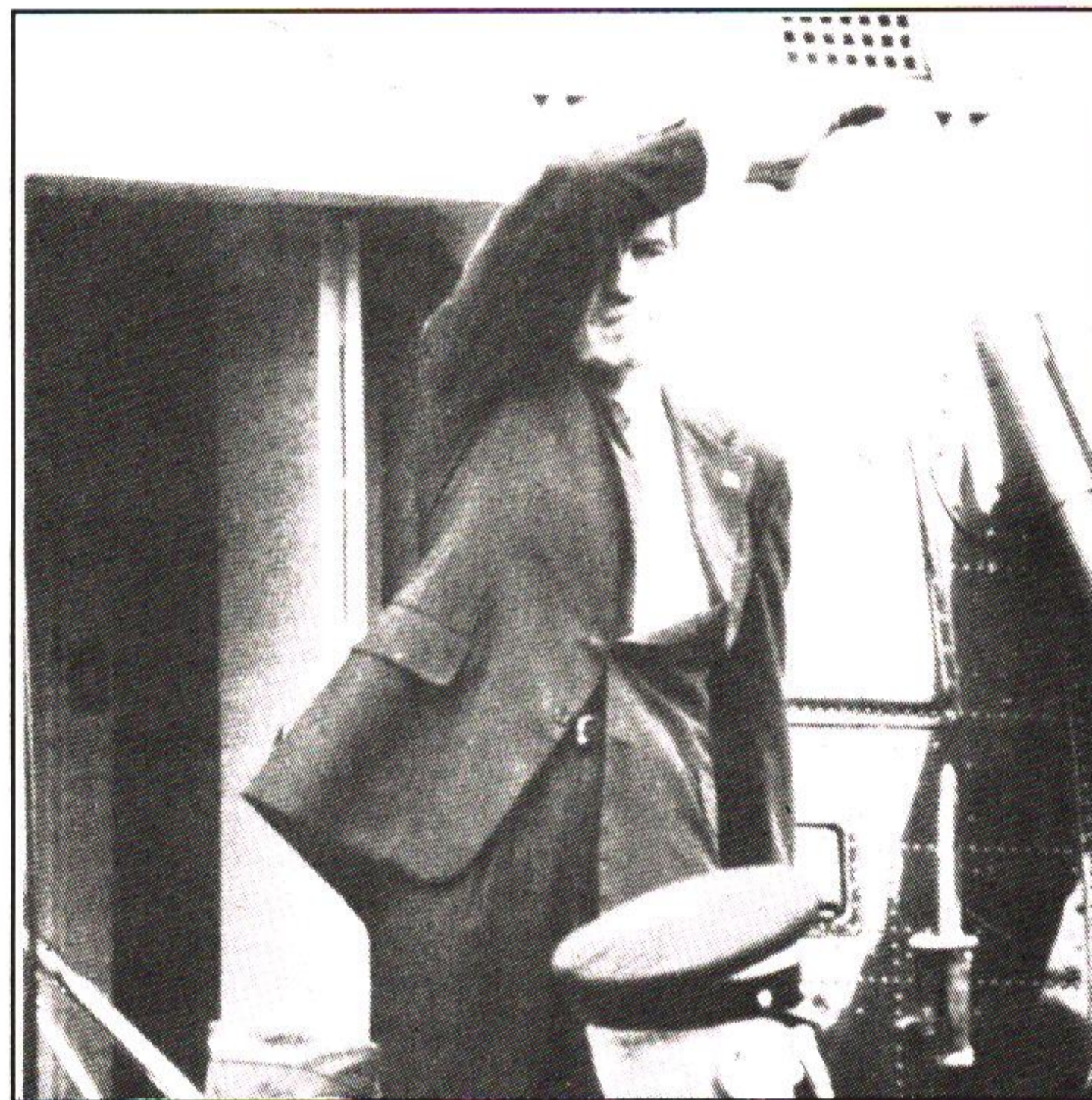
Political Crisis

It was the political crisis in American that was to prove crucial. During the Sixties America had been drawn into a war in South East Asia (Vietnam and Cambodia) that had become unwinnable, too expensive and the source of major political divisions and movements at home.

Rather than getting out of the war, Nixon had plugged ahead at ever greater cost. Indeed he had illegally authorised the bombing of Cambodia without even telling anyone at first.

He was not the first to act illegally in this war (Kennedy had authorised under-cover military action in Vietnam as far back as 1961 and Johnson had obtained authorisation for unlimited powers to act after announcing that American ships had been attacked in the gulf of Tonkin whilst neglecting to mention that US forces had attacked sites in

North Vietnam the night before hand) but he was the first to be seen by the people to do so. The Vietnam war had become a major crisis for the ruling class. Nixon had also accelerated the flow of power away from the other branches of government into the executive (Presidential) hands. This was the culmination



The fall guy - Richard Nixon

of the process that had started under previous Presidents but was to be most clearly exposed under Nixon. Already since 1950 over 80% of all major laws passed by congress had originated in the executive branch.

After the 1972 election victory he intended to move policy making out of the government departments and into the White House.

The government heads were to be 'his men' not the

departments. He talked about reducing the size and power of the other wings of government and even talked about a 'new American revolution'. Such an approach was to isolate Nixon more and more from the representatives of capital. They feared his movements towards Bonapartism.

(e.g. the exposure of the role of the CIA) but that was the price they had to pay.

Nixon was given a pardon (unlike his men who went to prison for carrying out his orders) by his successor, Ford, who in turn lost the 1976 election. After Watergate no President would be allowed to have the same powers as before particularly in the field of foreign affairs.

The ruling class would take care not to make the same mistake again.

It would be wrong to see Nixon's fate as purely the result of a 'conspiracy' by the ruling class—they would have far rather clipped his wings by other less drastic means— but given the incompetence of the actions of him and his men over the break in and the cover up it was clearly a case of, as he later put it, 'giving them a sword'. However powerful a political leader may be seen to be (especially by themselves e.g. Thatcher), when they have outlived their usefulness, the ruling class will not hesitate to take action, however ruthless, against them to protect their vested interests.

Corruption

Watergate remains today as a symbol of corruption in public life, indeed it is now common place when identifying a new scandal in government to add 'gate' to a name or place to indicate the seriousness of that scandal (e.g. Irangate, WhiteWaterGate, and so on). Nixon's biographer, Stephen Ambrose, in the third of his three volume work on Nixon summed up Nixon's administration —and this from a man who is quite sympathetic towards him— as follows: '*... despite the deplorable record of some of Nixon's Democratic predecessors, no administration in American history was more ruthless, more partisan, more personal, or more reckless in its disregard not only for the law but for the decent opinion of mankind as that of Richard Nixon.*

His methods in striving for and achieving and using power had created countless enemies and given his foes the ammunition to ruin him.'

(Ruin and Recovery 1973-1990 page 27).

Steve Jones

By getting rid of him they had someone to take the blame for all the economic crises of the last period ... and so be able to restore faith in the 'American way of life' i.e. capitalist democracy.

As Watergate revealed Nixon to be a crook in the eyes of increasing numbers of the American public it was felt that he had to be sacrificed to preserve the 'dignity' of the state and restore stability. They could no longer afford a President of whom a Senator would be quoted as saying; "*I don't think the American people would believe the President now if he was questioned under truth serum*".

By getting rid of him they could have someone to take the blame for all the political and economic crises of the last period, restore the 'balance of power' more in favour of the Houses of Congress and away from the executive branch, and restore faith in the 'American Way Of Life' i.e. Capitalist democracy. It was not a step that they took lightly but they knew that the alternative was a crisis that could prove disastrous to them. Some of the resulting fallout from Watergate was to prove unpleasant for the ruling class



Bound and Gagged

There is no such thing as a free press in this country. All of the major newspapers and broadcast stations are owned by multi-national corporations.

Eight big businesses control all of the UK's national newspapers and their tentacles spread out to most of the local and regional newspapers alongside substantial holdings in the country's radio and TV stations.

The Pearson Group for example owns the Financial Times. It also owns North of England Newspapers group including the Northern Echo; Westminster Press which controls 100 titles including the Yorkshire Evening Press; the Longman publishing group (Ladybird, Penguin etc.); the Economist; has a 59% stake in Thames TV, 17% stake in BSkyB, 14.2% stake in Yorkshire Tyne Tees TV, and a 4.5% stake in Essex Radio. In turn, Murdoch's multi-billion pound empire has a 8.49% stake in Pearson - he's obviously not content with owning five national newspapers and having monopoly control of satellite TV.

Anti-Labour

Being part of big business, they are anti-Labour. The few publications that do give support do so in a half-hearted manner - the "pro-Labour" Mirror for example, came bottom of the league in front page coverage during the 1992 general election period. It gave only 11.6%, the Sunday Mirror 3.3% and the People (part of the Mirror Group) nothing. Compare this to front page support for the Tories from the Express (41.9%) and the Mail (48.1%)

And of course where papers like the Mirror and Guardian do give support, it is for the pro-capitalist, right-wing of the Party. They are as vehement in their condemnation of left wing, socialist policies as the Times or Telegraph.

This rigid control has been compounded by the continuous attacks on the employment rights of journalists since the early 1980s. Short term contracts, personal contracts, performance pay and the end of collective bargaining all make a journalist less idealistic in searching out the

"truth" and more worried about writing what the editor wants so he or she can hang on to their job. But the British ruling class don't take any chances. If the wholesale domination of the media by safe multinationals isn't enough they have a whole arsenal of laws to censor and limit the press.

They are:

D Notice: This gives the State powers to effectively do what it likes in the name of "national security". Nowadays however, it does not have to serve these D notices on newspapers, but instead relies on the more subtle control of the flow of information, as witnessed in the Falkland and Gulf Wars.

Official Secrets Act: This paranoid piece of legislation is still with us even if the Cold War isn't. Such is the blanket coverage of this law that it is illegal to report what is on the menu at the Ministry of Defence canteen, or to publish a photo of the Post Office Tower in London.

Libel Laws: The laws of defamation are a rich man's game. As the libel laws rest on the debate about whether someone has been defamed in the eyes of a "right thinking member of society", they take a lot of time to be proven in court and therefore are an extremely expensive business. That's OK for multi-millionaires like Robert Maxwell who showered writs like confetti on any prying journalists who dared to suggest he was a crook but for the mass of society such actions are out of reach - and surprise, surprise, you can't get Legal Aid for a libel action.

Law of Contempt: In court cases a judge can make a ruling on what can and cannot be reported. Journalists who break this ruling, even though it may be in the public interest are then either fined or imprisoned for contempt of court. Journalist Bill Goodwin recently received a hefty fine after refusing to reveal his sources in court.

Northern Ireland Broadcasting Ban: This act means you cannot broadcast the words of members of Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA and some Loyalist terror groups. TV companies get around this by using the voice of actors.

Ludicrous as the act may seem it still needs to be opposed - it should not be forgotten that many of the methods now used against the labour movement were tried and tested in Northern Ireland first. Indeed, the BBC last year refused to broadcast the words of Bernadette McAliskey, the former Derry MP, even though she was neither a member of Sinn Fein or the IRA.

Criminal Evidence Act: This gives the police powers to seize the film and material of journalists if they think it can be used in evidence to prove a criminal act (e.g. pictures of a "riot"). Besides exposing journalists to danger, it can be used to seize material embarrassing to the state (e.g. Zircon film), using the "criminal evidence" tag as a cover.

Local Government Act 1988: This law puts severe restrictions on the publicity and newspapers produced by local authorities; basically it must not be 'party political' and should give a 'balance' (i.e. put the Tories' case). So even though they are democratically elected, Councils cannot reflect the views they were elected on in any publicity material. Unelected, multi-millionaire press barons can say what they like of course.

'Local Television' rules: The new medium of the next decade will be Cable, micro-wave and satellite TV - or 'local television'. The Cable Authority which controls Cable TV in the UK, under government pressure, has adopted a 'Code of Conduct' which demands 'balance' on political issues - which in reality means staying 'non-political'. At the same time, a clause in the 1990 Broadcasting Act said that organisations could no longer sponsor news programmes on the Cable network. Although supposedly directed at commercial sponsors, its immediate effect was to ban the news programmes being produced by Labour councils in Coventry and Camden on local TV networks.

**By an NUJ member
(banned from political
activity under the 1989
Local Government and
Housing Act.)**

The gulf between fact and fiction

Since when was one out of 25 a representative point of view?

An NUJ member who returned from Jordan during the Gulf War gave the lie to the idea it is only the Iraqis who sought to disinform.

A Jordanian TV crew followed a British TV crew around the streets of Egypt as they carried out a "vox pop" about "Egyptian support for the allied forces" The British crew had interviewed 25 people before they found one who "supported the allies". Guess which interview was shown later on British TV?

During the Gulf War the MoD banned reporters from mentioning certain subjects and those journalists working in the Gulf were not allowed out unless accompanied by military minders. ITN's Peter Sharpe was threatened with deportation from Saudi Arabia after he escaped from his minder and went to film in Khafji and a French crew had their film confiscated after revealing the lie that Khafji had fallen. The BBC censored a vicar in Wales because he referred to peace during his broadcast and Jazz FM DJ Gilles Peterson had his contract terminated after a complaint about his pro-peace programme.

Right's victory provokes movement on the left

This year saw the biggest 25th April demonstrations since 1945! (The 25th April is the anniversary of the fall of Fascism in Italy). Between 300.000 and 500.000 took part in the national demonstration in Milan.

As Marx explained, sometimes "the whip of the counter-revolution" has the effect of awakening the workers and pushing them forward. Fini, leader of the neo-fascist Msi, had declared before the demonstration that the 25th April holiday should be abolished. Significantly a large number of youth were on the demonstration.

Polarisation

There is an increasing polarisation taking place between the left and right. The middle ground, which the Popular party (ex-Christian democrats), tried to occupy has been whittled away especially among the youth. At this stage given the weakness of the leadership of the left (Occhetto has just been forced to resign as leader of the PDS) Berlusconi's promises to create jobs and cut taxes has pulled in the votes. However something is beginning to move on the left...

In the weeks following the victory of the right in some areas groups of young people got together to form "Progressive youth groups", in others they set up new branches of the PDS youth (the Sinistra Giovanile), while another, more radicalised, layer has turned to the PRC, so much so that whereas previously the party had no youth organisation it now that one will be created by the end of the year.

This turn to the left on the part of a layer of the youth has been accompanied by an intensification of fascist attacks. In Rome branches of the PDS and the PRC have been burned down. Three members of the PRC were

knifed and seriously injured. There is an urgent need to co-ordinate the branches of the PDS and the PRC to fight the fascists, but so far the leadership of both parties have done very little. The PRC in Rome has organised several demonstrations when the attacks have been particularly brutal, but the day after the demonstrations we are back to square one, with small groups of comrades trying to carry out political activity under constant threat of being attacked. Sooner or later these attacks will provoke a backlash on the part of left youth in the same way that it did in the 1970s. That will most likely develop together with a mass reaction to the policies of the Berlusconi government. The right-wing parties that make up the government got a combined vote that increased in the European elections to more than 50%. They deliberately played for time before these elections in order not to lose votes. Now they feel confident and will go on to the offensive.

The capitalists may feel confident at the moment with the left in disarray and with a very low level of strikes, but a very clear shift to the left is taking place among the industrial working class. A new system of elections for the Factory Councils (the equivalent of the British shop-stewards committees) has been introduced called the RSU (United Trade-Union

Representation). Any trade union can stand a list of candidates and gets a number of shop stewards proportional to the votes obtained, but then a further 33% of the total number of shop stewards on the RSU are directly nominated by the three official unions, CGIL, CISL and UIL. This is an undemocratic safety mechanism to guarantee the official unions a majority.

FIAT Workers

In spite of this there has been an 80% turnout of the engineering workers in the RSU elections. 95% voted for the official unions, with the remaining 5% going to the various Cobas (split offs from the official unions, mainly from the CGIL) and autonomous unions. The CGIL obtained 49%, with the CISL and UIL obtaining 31.3% and 14.8% respectively. The CGIL historically was the union federation dominated by the Communist Party and Socialist Party, whereas the CISL was the Catholic Union and the UIL was Republican and Social Democratic. What is taking place at FIAT is particularly important. In the '70s the FIAT workers were in the vanguard, in the '80s they hardly moved at all after the demoralising defeat of 1980. In the Turin plant the CGIL got over 46%. In the Fiat group as a whole the CGIL got 41%, while the Cobas got 16%. That means that the FIAT workers are beginning to

move to the left. All this is taking place while there has been a new drop in strikes. The recession had the effect of dampening down the mood of militancy. Workers were afraid of losing their jobs: last year alone 650,000 jobs were destroyed in industry! However the leadership of the trade unions also played a role. Last year we saw important struggles such as the almost insurrectionary movement at the Enichem plant in Crotone in the South, and this year there was the big movement at FIAT (50,000 workers on a demonstration in Turin!). The union leaders did everything to reach some form of compromise.

In spite of all this the workers are voting massively for the official trade unions. The Cobas have some influence in a few big factories, but overall they are a small force that cannot substitute the official unions. Something very similar happened prior to the big movement in the "Hot Autumn" of 1969. Committees similar to the Cobas developed in a few factories, such as Pirelli in Milan, but when the movement really developed the mass of workers turned to the official unions.

In spite of the low number of strikes the workers are preparing to move. Brutal attacks on the part of the government together with an uptum in the economy by the end of the year or early in 1995 is an explosive combination. The elements of a new "Hot Autumn" are in the making. When the workers move the youth will join them and the capitalist class will regret the day the right-wing won the elections.

Fernando D'Alessandro, Rome

Red Los Angeles Gets the Blue Flu!

During the recent Memorial Day Holiday weekend, Los Angeles experienced what amounted to a police strike as over 60% of police officers phoned in sick in an outbreak of what has been dubbed 'blue flu' as a form of industrial action in support of their contract (wage) negotiations. This action is one example that gives the lie to the myth that unions are almost non-existent in the USA. Whilst it is true that some sections of manufacturing have moved away from highly organised northeastern states to largely non-unionised areas of the south, other areas of the USA are very highly unionised. At the Los Angeles Convention Centre, exhibition organisers are not allowed to carry more than a single box into the hall without employing union labour. The same weekend, LA saw its largest demonstration for several years as an estimated 25,000 Mexicans took to the streets in a protest march against proposed new laws that would bar 'illegal' immigrants from using all state services such as education, health services etc. with the sole exception of emergency health care.

"Quand le Chine s'éveillera, le monde tremblera,"
Napoleon (When China awakes, the world will tremble.)

Five years ago, the heroic movement of Chinese students and workers was bloodily suppressed by the Bureaucracy.

After decades of totalitarian rule, the youth of China revolted against Stalinist tyranny.

These young people were not fighting to restore capitalism, but were groping in the direction of political revolution. In the massive pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, the students deliberately sang the Internationale, in order to make it clear to the world that they were in favour of socialism. This was precisely what filled the ruling elite with panic, expressed in the ruthless suppression of the movement. Deng had to use backward peasant troops, brought to Beijing from the provinces to crush the students.

Student Movement

Even so, according to official sources, 110 officers and 1,400 soldiers refused to participate in the slaughter, an absolutely unprecedented phenomena. The tragedy of Tiananmen is that the student movement occurred before the Chinese workers had begun to move. Nevertheless, the student demonstrations did find an echo among the workers, who were experiencing the effects of inflation, inequality and corruption connected with the headlong rush towards a "market economy." The representatives of the workers appeared late on the scene, by which time the terrified regime had recovered its nerve enough to send in the army.

After a period of brutal repression, with mass arrests, beatings, torture and executions, the spirit of revolt has begun to revive. This year has seen a revival of dissident activity. The authorities feared that the anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre would be marked by a new wave of protests. But this time it is likely that the protagonist will be the working class.

In the period leading up to the

Where is China Going?

A Marxist Analysis

fourth of June, offices and factories were told to keep three members of staff on duty 24 hours a day, ready to deal with strikes or disruptions.

In the event, the anniversary passed off quietly. But the ferment of discontent is still building up, and sooner or later must find an outlet.

The students learned a harsh lesson in 1989. The best of them have correctly drawn the conclusion that the only force in society capable of overthrowing the Bureaucracy is the working class, and have begun to try to organise in the factories:

"The first protesters in 1989 were students and university-educated professionals. They showed little interest in stirring up the workers, who joined the protests spontaneously and late. These days, although the dissident organisations are still run by educated people, their strategy is to mobilise workers in fields and factories." (The Economist, 28/5/94)

The imperialists shed crocodile

tears over Tiananmen and hypocritically declare their support for "human rights" in China. But the record shows that these people are quite prepared to back repressive and dictatorial regimes, provided they stand for private property, and do not threaten the profits of the banks and monopolies.

Privatisation

At first sight, the movement towards capitalism in China appears to have acquired an unstoppable momentum. Land reform, the setting up of a stock exchange, the abolition of price controls, the special enterprise zones, etc. Eagerly following the advice of the leader, sections of the Bureaucracy have proceeded to enrich themselves at the expense of the state. Members of the ruling families are building business empires in Hong Kong, beyond the reach of the Chinese taxman. The number of state-owned Chinese companies listed in Hong Kong has risen from seven to 47 in the

past two years. They now account for 7% of market capitalisation, and the number of Hong Kong companies owned by Chinese state-owned companies has risen from 400 two years ago to 1,000 now.

Some of this involves actual theft of state assets, which is achieved by all manner of fraud and sharp practices. Among the worst offenders are relatives of the ruling circle, including Deng Zhifang, the youngest son of Deng Xiaoping. Thus, a section of the Bureaucracy is in the process of transforming themselves into capitalists. The exact amount of the economy that has been privatised is not entirely clear.

Market

The figures reproduced in the West are confusing, frequently referring to the part of the economy that is "market-oriented," whatever that might mean. This is said to account for half the industrial output and as much as 75% of total output, on some estimates. However, these figures should be treated with caution. Carried away with enthusiasm for prospects in China, the bourgeois is inclined to present the movement towards capitalism in too rosy a light, and with a less than scrupulous regard for the facts. Thus, in the figure mentioned here is included, along with private companies, a large number of "collective" firms, which are not privately-owned, and which may, or may not, end up as such.

In 1979 there were officially no Chinese working in privately-owned businesses. This reflects the Stalinist madness of nationalising everything, which

Right: Chairman Mao addresses a meeting following the revolution



does not make sense, least of all in a backward economy like China. Small businesses, corner shops, small cafes, bars, hairdressers and the like are better left in private hands, until the development of a more advanced service sector renders them redundant. Yet in Bulgaria they even nationalised the boot-blacks!

At present the official figure for those working in the private sector is 30 million. "Township and village enterprises" (TVEs)—light industrial groups with "shared and often informal ownership"—employ another 90 million and account for over a third of China's industrial output. It is clear that many of these enterprises are small, and in many cases would probably be in private hands even in a healthy workers' state. It is also clear, even on these figures, which probably overstate the relative weight of the private sector, that the state still controls the dominant part of the economy, and that the movement towards capitalism, while it has gone quite far in China, is still far from completed.

Shareholders

There are said to be ten million share-holders, which seems to be a lot of people. But in a population of 1.2 billion it is an infinitesimally small number. To give a clearer idea, the present membership of the Chinese Communist Party is put at 52 million, or 4.3% of the population. Of these, 30 million are "cadres" i.e. full-time officials or managers of state-owned firms. This means that only a third of the officials, at most, have any stake in the private sector whatever, and less than a fifth of Party members. As far as the general population is concerned, over 99% have no shares. The overwhelming majority thus have nothing to gain from privatisation, while a tiny minority are becoming millionaires. This is not a very broad base for the implantation of a stable capitalist regime in China.

The development of capitalist tendencies has been accompanied by a rapid increase of inequalities between town and country, between poor peasants and kulaks, between workers in the new zones and the nationalised sector, between workers and the nascent

bourgeois. The rapid pace of industrial growth, far from lessening these contradictions, serves to exacerbate them enormously. The period before 1989 was also characterised by rapid growth and inflation. That led to the explosion of Tiananmen Square. That is why the Bureaucracy is trying to put the brakes on the economy. Already last year Beijing was attempting to rein in the overheated economy. Credit has been squeezed. The speculative boom is collapsing and the pace of industrial growth has moderated somewhat. However, the credit squeeze has hit mainly the big state owned firms, while the non-state collectives, which have accounted for most of the recent growth, have continued to borrow. As a result, the inequality between different sections of industry has grown even bigger, further aggravating the contradictions. In addition, the relative economic slow-down has still not been reflected in a fall in the consumer price index—the decisive factor for the masses in town and countryside. A year ago, producer price inflation stood at 50%, a colossally high figure for a country which for 40 years had virtually no inflation. Since then the increase in prices has lessened, but inflation has hit the mass of the population, and only a small minority is in a position to make up for it through increased wages.

Inequalities

This also has the effect of increasing inequalities between town and country, and between different regions and sections of society. The state-owned sector, which grew by 14% in the last quarter of 1993, had a growth of only 2.2% in the first quarter of 1994. Millions of state workers have not been paid for months. Unemployment is rising. Despite this, it is not likely that the government will reach its target of 10% inflation for this year. At the same time, the need to prevent the collapse of large state-owned enterprises will lead to an increase of the budget deficit, aggravated by the general tendency to withhold payment of taxes, corruption and theft.

While at one extreme a minority is making fabulous fortunes, at the other living standards are falling fast. A key question, as

always in China, is the fate of the countryside. Mao came to power on the backs of a peasant army, and the vast majority of society, unlike Russia, consists of peasants. Potentially, the existence of a huge peasantry of 800 million provides a broad social base for capitalist restoration. However, above all for the peasant, the question of the social regime is a concrete one.

The peasant does not understand the intricacies of "town" politics, or care much about them as a rule, insofar as

peasant's hard-earned produce in IOUs which he knows will never be paid. The industrial slowdown and increasing unemployment means that the flow of remittances from his brothers who have emigrated to the cities to work in factories, in booming Guangdong and Fujian provinces are drying up. In addition, corruption and crime mean that a lot of this money disappears before it gets to its destination.

The smouldering anger in the villages is already beginning to boil over. There are reports of



Begging on the streets of Beijing - inequalities have grown in China since the move towards the market was begun

they do not put in an appearance in the person of the tax collector. But if political changes in the urban centres do not allow him to live, the peasant's customary long-suffering passivity can rapidly become transformed into the most violent and elemental revolt.

Rural Incomes

Rural incomes, which rose rapidly in the 1980s, are now, at best, stagnant. In a desperate attempt to stem inflation, the central government has capped farm prices. At the same time, the prices of factory goods sold to the rural population continue to rise. The peasant watches with gritted teeth how the rich idlers in the cities get richer, while the villages sink ever deeper into poverty. To add insult to injury, corrupt local officials pay for the

protests and riots. In June 1993, there were many reports of uprisings in the Sichuan region, where large numbers of peasants protested against high taxes and prices, and above all against the corruption of the leaders.

Contemporary, a Hong Kong China-watching journal, reports that 44 rural post offices have been ransacked in the past year by angry farmers. But the most serious threat to stability in the countryside comes from the ever increasing process of class polarisation in the villages. A minority of peasants have done well out of the reform, but the vast majority have seen their living standards brutally cut. The only alternatives facing millions of poor peasants are to remain in the village and face actual hunger, or to flee to the towns in the hope of finding work and a

bowl of rice. Frequently, even this proves to be an illusion. According to the World Bank, between 100 and 150 million displaced rural workers are on the move in China.

The possibility of a revolutionary upheaval in the countryside does not escape the Western China-watchers, as the following extract shows: "*The great past challenges to authority in China—the Taiping rebellion of 1850-64, the communist revolution itself—came from the countryside. To judge from the urgency with which the Communist Party has been calling for rural "stability" this past year, it appears to be seriously worried that rural dissatisfaction might once again boil over into insurrection.*" (The Economist, 4/6/94).

Growing Unrest

The growing unrest in the villages is accompanied by the first stirrings of a movement among the workers. It is difficult to get accurate information about strikes, but there have been persistent reports of industrial unrest. The movement in 1989 was dominated by students. The workers came on the scene very late. But in the recent period the regime seems more concerned about the activity of dissidents in the industrial sphere. The independent union movement is very small at this stage. But trade union dissidents are ruthlessly persecuted and gaoled, indicating that the authorities fear their potential. In the previous period, the workers had reasonable legal guarantees for health and security. Now all that has been eliminated, in the rush for profit. According to official statistics, which undoubtedly underestimate real situation, there were a record 12,358 industrial disputes and nearly 20,000 deaths related to work incidents in 1993.

The Financial Times of 21/3/94 reported: "*Increasing government concern over labour unrest; restless workers in loss-making state enterprises facing closure are seen as a threat to public order.*" Conditions in privately owned foreign enterprises were, if anything, worse still. A Chinese union official accused foreign employers of "*randomly and openly*" violating workers' rights: "*They prolong workers' hours,*

cut or deduct their wages arbitrarily, neglect safety and sanitary requirements and even humiliate workers. One employer even locked his worker in a dog cage."

The Beijing-based *China Electronic News* reported recently that there were more than 10,000 labour disputes last year. Many occurred in the Shenzhen special economic zone, adjacent to Hong Kong, which has attracted a flood of peasant labour to work in small processing concerns.

On May 21st, the People's Daily quoted Ren Jianxin, director of the Party's committee on public order, as saying that "*since the beginning of the year, the public-order situation has become extremely grim.*" Zhiang Lin, an activist of the clandestine Labour Alliance, claims that Shenzhen is "*ripe for revolution.*" He is quoted in The Economist of 28th of May as follows:

"The speed of economic development has brought about severe social contradictions. Shenzhen has the most corrupt government in the country. So far, there are plenty of opportunities to make money. If those opportunities diminish, people will take up political opposition."

Fearful of an uncontrolled movement of the workers, the official state-controlled All China Federation of Trades Unions began a drive in February to double union membership this year in foreign-run factories and joint ventures. Less than 30% of companies in which foreigners are involved are unionised.

Despite the very small numbers of people involved in opposition trade union groups, the government is worried about the possibility that they will begin to get an echo among the workers. The Financial Times of 11/4/94 quoted a western official in Beijing as saying that "*the thing that worries the*



Li Peng

government at the moment is that conditions are ripe for recruiting new people."

The report continues: "*These concerns appear to be especially acute where the labour movement is concerned.... The authorities showed little tolerance recently when labour activists petitioned them to be allowed to establish a non-government group known as the "Association for the Protection of Labour Rights". The organisers were summarily detained and their request dismissed. The last thing Beijing wants at this traumatic moment for state industries, with thousands of workers being laid off or placed on subsistence wages, is the emergence of an overtly political organisation like Poland's Solidarity.*"

The conditions of the workers, especially in the booming new areas of the special economic zones are strikingly similar to those of the Russian workers at the turn of the century, when a big influx of foreign capital caused a stormy growth of industry in a few centres, and a mass of raw peasants were thrown from the land into the

seething melting-pot of large-scale industry. The language of the leaders of the Labour Alliance is also reminiscent of the early socialist pioneers, as even the above-named Economist article points out: "*The Communist Party, which itself came to power (* see footnote -ed) through a similar strategy, may have observed this change with consternation—particularly since the slogans of the Labour Alliance, the main dissident organisation, are strangely reminiscent of those of the party in its early and genuinely socialist days: an end to special privilege, a limit to excessive powers, protection for human rights, and a fair distribution of wealth.*"

Despite their somewhat vague formulation, and the apparently modest nature of these demands, what this shows is that the most advanced elements of the Chinese workers and youth are groping in the direction of the programme of political revolution. There is little doubt that if even a relatively small tendency existed, that stood on the basis of genuine Marxism, together with the best traditions of the Chinese proletariat, its ideas would find a ready audience in China even now.

Illusions

Contrary to the illusion, carefully fostered in the West, that the process of capitalist restoration is all but complete, and that everything is proceeding smoothly, that is far from the case. The old regime was notoriously corrupt. But the present situation is far worse. There is rampant corruption at all levels, from the Party leaders, and more especially their children—the "princelings"—down to the smallest local Party secretary. Hence the demand for a "*limit to excessive powers, an end to privilege and a fair distribution of wealth.*"

Unconsciously, the Chinese labour dissidents echo Lenin's four points. The attack on privilege is an attack on the foundations of the bureaucratic system itself.

Like Mao and Stalin in the past, Deng is desperately trying to stamp out corruption by repression. There are anti-corruption drives, with mass public trials and summary executions, sometimes involving "cadres." Official papers

The illusion fostered in the West that capitalist restoration is all but complete and everything is proceeding smoothly is far from the real case.

occasionally rant against the "big monkeys." But, since the fountainhead of all corruption is the Bureaucracy itself, it solves absolutely nothing.

This is an inevitable consequence of the movement towards a "market economy." Capitalism means corruption. This can have a profound effect on the attitude of the masses.

Corruption

The corruption of the old Stalinist regime was one of the reasons for its loss of support. But now the situation is even worse. This will inevitably provoke a reaction. There have been reports of people ostentatiously wearing Mao badges. This is a reflection of a reaction against the present state of affairs, and an anticipation of future developments.

The Bureaucracy will not agree to democratisation, because they understand—especially after the experience of Eastern Europe—that any move to loosen the bonds of authoritarianism will lead to an explosion. They would face the anger not only of the workers and peasants, but also of the oppressed national minorities. Because of the overwhelming domination of the Han, the national question does not occupy such a prominent place as in the former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it remains an important element in the calculations of Beijing. After the death of Mao, they came very close to open civil war, which would have had the most terrible consequences. Now, the enormous growth of inequality between the different provinces has seriously aggravated all the contradictions. We must not forget that there is a tradition of local warlordism in China, which virtually led to the break-up of China between the Wars.

The ruling elite fears, not without reason, that any weakening of central state control would produce a disaster. This is one of the main reasons that they reject out of hand all the proposals and pressures of imperialism to "respect human rights." In any case, these pressures are entirely hypocritical, and more related to protectionism than to any concern for the plight of Chinese political prisoners. State repression has been stepped up. In 1989, there were 370 death

sentences, of which two thirds were carried out. In 1992, there were 1,891 death sentences of which at least 1,079 were carried out.

At present, the old gang of Stalinist geriatrics still maintain a tight control over the situation. However, after Deng's death, the whole equation can rapidly alter. Capitalist tendencies are most powerful among the younger layer of bureaucrats, the children and grandchildren of the elite, who have no relation whatever to the traditions of the past. However, not all the bureaucrats want capitalism. One section which has done well out of the reforms is in favour, but others yearn for the security of the past and are worried about the growing contradictions which threaten their system. Capitalist industry is mainly new industry.

Inflation

The need to hold inflation in check has forced the authorities to restrict credit and attempt to freeze prices. This threatens big state-owned firms with bankruptcy, which would mean mass unemployment for the workers and loss of power and privileges for the factory managers:

"Officials have been under enormous pressure on prices. Painful reforms of state enterprises—a number are simply being allowed to wither on the vine—are causing hardship for thousands of workers who have lost jobs or are working part-time on reduced wages." (Financial Times, 17/3/94).

This will undoubtedly cause a fierce reaction on the part not only of the workers but a section of the bureaucracy whose interests are affected.

The old guard have grudgingly accepted Deng's reforms, but look with suspicion at the growing power and independence of the nascent bourgeois elements. However, many of these people are, like Deng, old and infirm. The pro-capitalist elements are stronger in the lower echelons of the Party hierarchy and in the provinces, where the local bureaucrats are growing increasingly restive at central state controls and taxes, and jealous at the success of the wealthier "special zones." Given the enormous intensification of contradictions at all levels of Chinese society,

the death of Deng will immediately sharpen the conflicts between the different wings of the bureaucracy. This could be the signal for social upheavals, which could put political revolution on the order of the day. It tends to be forgotten that the Chinese proletariat is one of the most powerful in the world.

Revolutionary Party

Theoretically, it is not excluded that the Chinese workers could come to power under these circumstances, even before a mass revolutionary party was formed. Such a development would transform the entire world situation placing socialist revolution on the order of the day internationally.

The process of capitalist restoration is not at all fixed, but extremely fluid, and full of contradictions. They can go so far, and then provoke a massive reaction, a combination of strikes, peasant revolts and upheavals of the oppressed nationalities. With a correct programme and perspective, China even now would be on the eve of a political revolution. However, if the Chinese workers do not succeed in taking power, the perspective would be one of frightful chaos and anarchy, and possibly even the break-up of China. More probably, it would end in bloody civil war, and the establishment of an even more monstrous Bonapartist military police state of either a neo-Stalinist or bourgeois variety. It will be necessary to follow the process closely, through all its stages, paying attention to the concrete peculiarities of the situation in China, with its special traditions, which must be taken into account. Above all, it is necessary to find some way of

reaching the advanced Chinese workers and youth. China now stands in the vanguard of the world revolutionary process. A hundred and fifty years ago, Karl Marx predicted that a revolution in China—by which he meant a bourgeois revolution—would mean the end of capitalism in the West.

The monstrously deformed regime that emerged after the 1949 revolution could have no appeal to the workers of Europe, Japan and the United States. But the experience of the last 45 years has completely changed the situation.

The powerful Chinese proletariat, once it took power, would never tolerate the re-establishment of a corrupt, bureaucratic totalitarian regime. A modern, democratic healthy workers' state in China, which would make an appeal to the workers of the world, as the students of Tiananmen attempted to do in a confused way, would transform the entire situation internationally. It would signify the end of the nightmare of Stalinism, and open a new and glorious chapter in the history of China, Asia and all humanity.

**Ted Grant and
Alan Woods**

* In point of fact this assertion is incorrect. Mao did not come to power on the basis of the working class, but on the backs of a peasant army, and subsequently manoeuvring between the classes to establish a deformed workers' state, on the lines of Stalinist Russia. However, in its early period, as the article shows, the Chinese Communists did carry out a Marxist policy.

Where is China Going: A Marxist Analysis by Alan Woods and Ted Grant

The article above forms part of a longer pamphlet available soon from Well Red Books. To order your copy write to PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

Following the trend of much of eastern Europe Hungary has placed back in power the leaders and parties it rejected just a few years ago. John Gandy explains the background to the Socialists' victory.

5 years after the fall of the old regime, the former 'Communists' are back in office. Gyula Horn, the last foreign minister of the Stalinist regime, is set to become the new prime minister, after his party's overwhelming victory in the May elections. What lies behind this incredible turn of fortunes for these once hated leaders?

Most of the key sectors of industry remain in state hands, yet the counter-revolution has already gone far enough. Unemployment has soared to around 700,000, over 10% of the working population. For those lucky enough to keep their job, the pressure for higher productivity is becoming unbearable. In the month before the election, prices rose 1.2%, pushing the annual inflation figure up to 17.3%, and wages are not keeping pace. To make matters worse the biggest price rises were for water and heating which hit the poorest sections of society hardest. This mounting economic hardship is a direct result of the decimation of industry in the name of free-trade and profit-making. Contemporary Hungarian economists are keen on quoting their classical predecessor Joseph Schumpeter, who described the cutting away of inefficient industry as 'creative destruction'. He was referring to a recession in capitalist society,

Hungary turns to former 'Communists'

when the destruction of the livelihood of workers is bad enough. In the context of contemporary Hungary it has succeeded in creating only inequality and poverty. There is no doubt that for capitalism to succeed it must cut away non profit making industry, what could this mean if not that workers must pay with their jobs, wages and conditions, at work and at home, for the prosperity of a profiteering minority? What kind of society has Hungary become? Ask its richest businessman! Gabor Varszegi, chairman of the Fotex retailing group, is said to be worth \$100 million, or less than a carrot, depending on your point of view. He says that for a business to be successful, and he should know, it must cater for the wealthiest tenth of the population who now control half of its disposable income. This section of society is well catered for, as are foreigners, by all the trappings of prosperity on display in

Budapest. Most workers do not share in this, it serves merely to remind them how poor they are. Varszegi shares another secret of his success, always hire young people, he says, because they are uncontaminated by communism. He appeals for foreign capital for his businesses, "Its a once in a lifetime opportunity. Part of the world is on sale. It never happened before and it will never happen again."

Right-wing Coalition

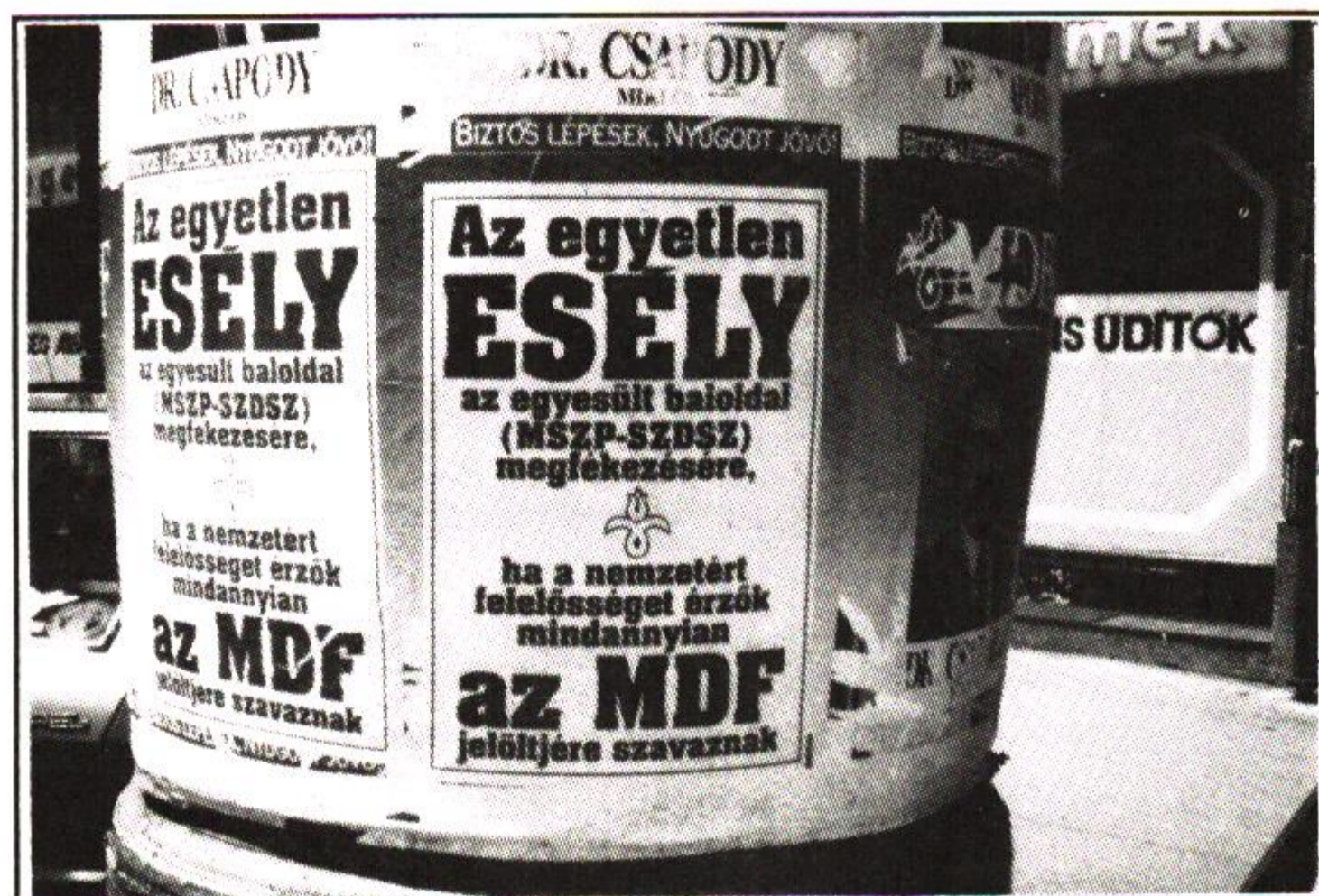
For 5 years Hungary has been governed by a Right-wing coalition lead by the open representatives of the nascent bourgeoisie and foreign capital, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF). It swept to power on a wave of anti-Stalinism, posing as its leading opponent and expropriating the memory of 1956. Naturally saying nothing of the role of the working class in the revolution of that year. It profited from practical, behind the scenes, support in the elections from the French government, among others, and boasted of its connections with Western leaders. Westernisation and privatisation has been the cornerstone of its program. The vision of a 'share owning democracy' briefly mesmerises some of the middle layers in society, before it evaporates in the light of day. But not before it has won a few votes. In their efforts to promote widespread share ownership, governments throughout the world have stretched their ingenuity to its limits.

The Hungarian government came up with the 'Preferential share purchase program', giving

interest-free loans for individuals to buy shares. As economic conditions for the masses deteriorates small investors are finding it harder to pay these loans back, while wealthy entrepreneurs have cashed in on cheap credit. All this is costing the government a fortune. To make matters worse there was the scandal of Pal Teleki, the chief executive of the state holdings company, responsible for the privatisation program. He was forced to resign when it was revealed that his salary was being topped up by \$130 000 a year by the US government. Then there was the scandalous sacking of 129 journalists from the state TV channel, only months before the election. At first the government said it was for financial reasons but later admitted it was because they were 'Bolshevik cadres' In 1992 the government took offense at one particular news program. The news editor was sacked and in response the journalists went on strike. Far from being Stalinists, as the government implied, many were dissidents under the old regime. Their real crime was defending independent journalism from government attacks.

Minorities

As the MDF's popularity slumped its propaganda changed tack, passing references were made to assisting the Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries and the defence of the nation from resurgent pro-Russian 'Communists' became its main theme. These desperate efforts however, failed to halt its decline. Economic realities are inescapable. The *Budapest Sun* explained that the MDF was, "hurt by public dissatisfaction with the economy and a nostalgia for the late communist period when Hungarians enjoyed a higher standard of living and more social security." Thus the principal organ of the foreign business community in Budapest admits that living standards have fallen since the so-called reforms began. Fighting to protect living standards is dismissed as 'nostalgia'. It admits that



MDF election poster appeals to those "who feel responsible for the nation to save it from the left."

bearable conditions of life, and they were little more than that under Stalinism, are quite definitely a thing of the past. Despite the MDF's occasional lapses into demagogy, the bulk of the election material was banal. Billboards featured candidates sporting identical statesman-like expressions, sitting beneath near identical vacuous slogans. What was there to choose between? An independent observer may be tempted to think the contest was between those pro- or anti-moustache. Is this what the struggle for democracy was for, the destiny of a nation determined by its opinion of facial hair?

As a general rule, workers do not read the fine print of election

manifestoes. If they are not empty words they are empty promises. Living experience decides, and the experience of the last 5 years points to only one verdict on the MDF and what it stands for. The working class voted for the Socialists because they do not 'stand' for capitalism, even if in practice the party's program is unquestionably pro-capitalist. The 'Communists' dropped the Hammer and Sickle in favour of the Red Rose in 1990. The new 'Socialist party' leader Gyula Horn, was once a member of the 'Communist' militia, who ruthlessly hunted down revolutionaries after the 1956 uprising. He now blames the failings of the old regime on 'Russian influences'.

Despite winning an overall majority, they are looking to form a coalition with the Centre-right, Free Democrats (SZDSZ). This is the classic method of a party looking to share the blame for unpopular measures it feels compelled to take. It has already signalled a desire to speed up privatisation and cut corporate taxes.

Expectations

The Socialists have only fooled themselves into thinking that they have promised nothing. The contradiction between the new governments intentions and the expectations of those who voted for it could hardly be sharper. It must be resolved, and will be, over the next few years. The scene is set for a social

explosion. A blow has been struck against the open representatives of counter-revolution. Stalinism and now capitalism has been rejected. Only a Socialist program can now halt Hungary's decline into a poor satellite of European capitalism. Hungarians are said to be a pessimistic race. The nation is renowned for its extraordinarily high suicide rate. Perhaps this is in part the product of a history of raised and dashed hopes, of liberation struggle and national oppression, of promises and betrayal. But history has a habit of turning things into their opposite. Despair and resignation can turn rapidly into the determination to fight, just as it did in 1956.

Get the Marxist Voice of the Labour Movement

A Socialist Appeal to Workers

Socialist Appeal was launched in April 1992 to provide trade unionists, labour activists and youth with a Marxist analysis of events. Given the complexity of the political situation in Britain and internationally there has never been a greater need.

The boast of the capitalists of a "new world order" after the collapse of Stalinism have turned to dust with the crisis in Russia, the bloody civil war in the former Yugoslavia and the continuing economic recession in Europe and Japan.

As the employers continue their offensive against wages and conditions, governments everywhere are attempting to push through austerity measures against the working class. In Europe these attacks have pushed workers into militant action. The ideas of class collaboration are more and more threadbare as the ills of capitalism re-emerge with a vengeance: mass unemployment, wage

cuts, squalid working conditions, and so on.

The task of Socialist Appeal is to arm the new generation of class-conscious workers and youth with a strategy and programme to put an end to this nightmare.

Marxism provides a scientific understanding of the problems and issues that face the working class. Socialist Appeal believes it is essential for the labour movement to adopt a class approach and a socialist programme to transform the lives of ordinary working people.

Socialist Appeal is indispensable reading for every worker wanting to understand and help prepare the workers movement for the battles that lie ahead. Subscribe today!

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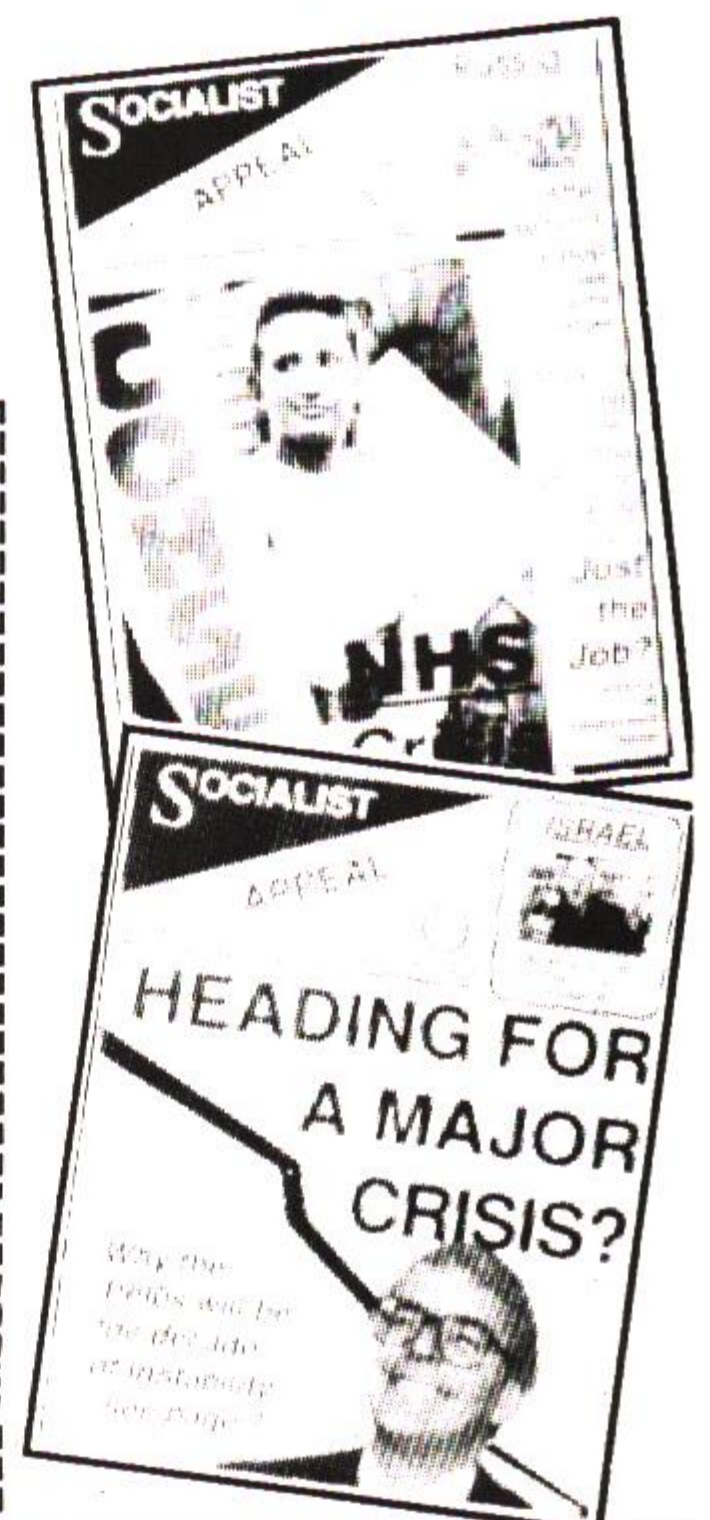
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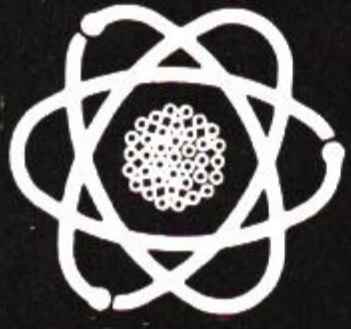
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New Technology and Society

Back in 1926, Leon Trotsky posed the question of the relationship "between radio technique and the social system." He asked, "Is it socialist or capitalist?"

His conclusions were quite clear, socialism and technology are inseparable. "We cannot seriously talk about socialism without having in mind the transformation of the country into a single whole, linked together by means of all kinds of communications."

Today, the bourgeois declare a revolution in technology that will change all our lives. US Vice President Al Gore has called for the establishment of a "digital superhighway" linking every school, workplace and home in America. Every day we can read of new technologies in computers, fibre optics, communications and robotics. But what is the real significance of these technologies and what difference will it make to the lives of working class people? Science and technology can never be something separate and above the social system. The Romans were quite aware of the possibilities of steam power, but it was nearly two thousand years later before steam technology was really developed to its fullest potential. The Roman social system was based on slavery and plunder - there was little need for the development of industrial production. However, under the infant capitalist system that need was very much there. "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production," said Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto. The purpose in employing machinery is to cheapen the product by economising on labour. Competition and the need to break into new markets and get an advantage over others are factors which compel the capitalists to constantly re-invest in new machinery. During the period of capitalist upswing from 1948 to 1974, we saw a staggering increase in the

productive forces, fuelled and stimulated by an unprecedented expansion of world trade. The capitalists, above all in Japan, the USA and Western Europe, were prepared to invest colossal sums in expanding the productive forces in pursuit of profit. The productivity of labour increased enormously as a result of a constant revolutionising of the means of production. This was an historically progressive development, creating the basis for a future socialist society. The working class was strengthened immeasurably and the peasantry all but abolished in all the main capitalist countries.

Steam

Capitalism began with the introduction of what Marx called 'manufacture', where the production process was concentrated under one roof rather than scattered around in 'cottage' industries. This period gave way to full scale industrial production with the utilisation of new technologies, particularly steam. This was also linked to a revolution in communications - canals, railways, steamships etc., which expanded the market and aided a full national development of capitalism.

In the twentieth century, with the utilisation of electronics, a true mass industrial production was developed. 'Fordism', as it has been called, gave us the giant production lines of the car and other modern industries.

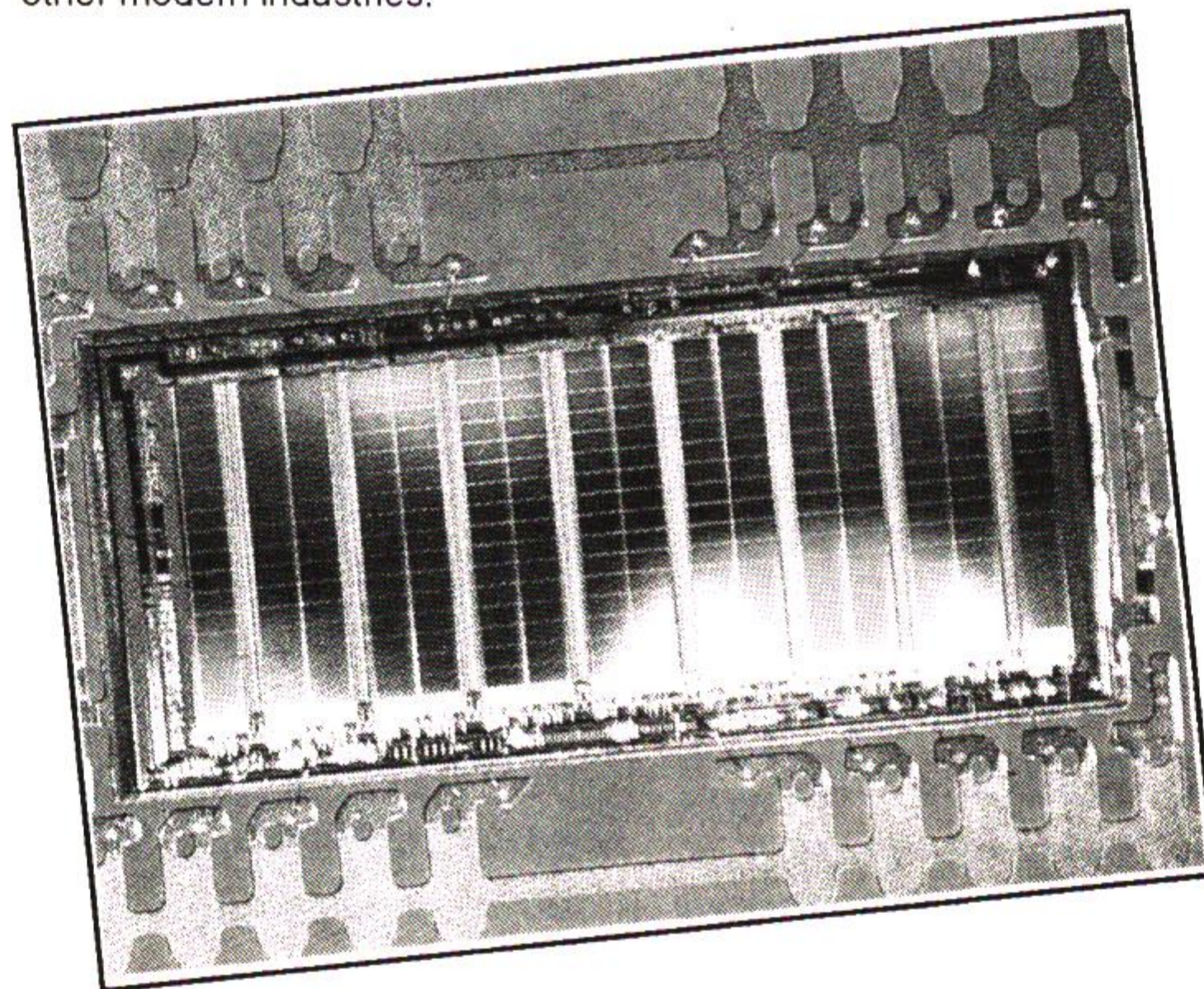
These new electronic technologies were also applied to communications through the telephone and radio. In fact, when Trotsky gave his famous lecture 'Radio, Science, Technique and Society' in 1926, he was probably speaking in a more technologically exciting age than we do today.

So capitalism has always strived to revolutionise technology and the production process. But one thing has changed. In the 'industrial revolution' of last century capitalism developed an insatiable thirst for labour - it was then that we saw the horrors of long hours, child labour etc. There was massive investment in new machinery but these machines had to be run 24 hours a day and at full speed. The fact was that the world market was developing, capitalism as a system was still in its relatively progressive phase, despite the reactionary nature of how it carried out the production process itself. This century, too, new technologies were used as part of an enormous development of capitalism and the world market. The development of the giant production lines in the US led to a massive population shift from the

southern states to the north to meet the enormous demand for labour. The application of technology took millions of workers and their families from lives of rural poverty to lives of relative prosperity. Compare this with the introduction of new technology today. Rather than enriching and developing the prospects of workers, technology has gone hand in hand with the impoverishment of wide sections of the working class. This reflects the fact that despite the continuing development of science and technology, capitalism itself has reached an impasse. It can no longer utilise the enormous potential that exists in the rapid development of technology.

Leisure Society

In the past, various experts declared that a future based on new technology would be one of abundance, where the burden of work would be done away with, working hours reduced and our main problem would be how to spend our leisure time. But this so-called 'leisure society' has turned into a nightmare. New technology has meant an erosion of decent working conditions, longer working hours, short term contracts, increased home working, casualisation, deskilling and unemployment. With a greatly reduced workforce in the manufacturing sector workers now produce more than ever before - with higher output and higher productivity. Throughout the 80's, despite the boom, the capitalists continued to shed jobs at an alarming rate. Unemployment is now qualitatively different to anything we have seen since 1945. It is not cyclical unemployment rising and falling with the normal trade cycle of capitalism. It is not even the 'reserve army of unemployed' which, as Marx explained, is a necessary feature of capitalism. Mass unemployment is now a



Right: A 4 Megabyte chip. An element of the 'information technology revolution'

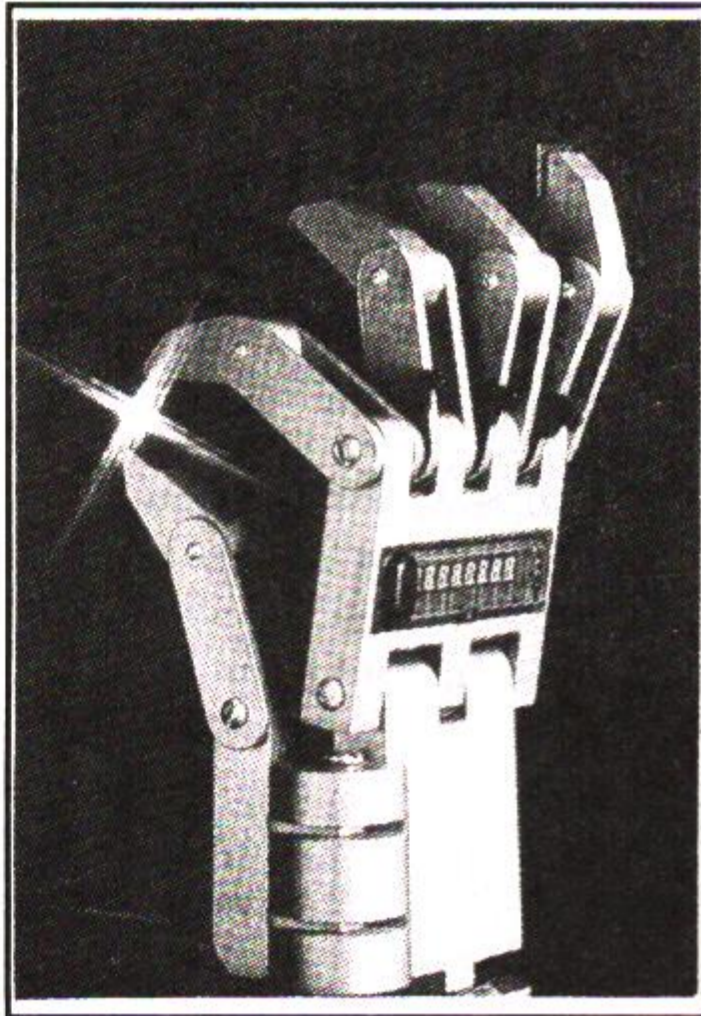
permanent and organic feature of capitalism.

New technology is being used to undermine and alter the working conditions of millions of workers throughout Britain. We do not face a future of some kind of 'leisure society' but a society more unequal and divided than at any time since the Victorian age. Computers and the 'information revolution' should provide a tremendous leap forward for society. But in the hands of the capitalists the reality will be far different. The same promises were made with the advent of electricity, of radio and of television - these things have radically altered the lives of millions in the advanced capitalist countries. But society is still in an impasse and the latest technologies cannot overcome this.

Industry

Labour shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown, has announced plans for the setting up of a University For Industry under the next Labour government. This scheme will harness the latest interactive computer technology, cable and satellite links to connect up to two million workplaces and homes, in an attempt to revolutionise education and skills training. But the scheme, if it gets off the ground, will rely heavily on private finance. Of course, private industry is drawing up its own plans for these new technologies. The revolution in cable technology will

mean that very soon 500 television stations could be piped into every home - that's a lot of potential. But one company is already drawing up plans for a 24 hour 'pets channel' - no not a channel about pets, a channel for pets. In the hands of the capitalists the enormous possibilities that these new



technologies could unleash will be squandered in the name of profit! Of course this technology can be harnessed by individuals and by those in the labour movement. The production of "Socialist Appeal" being an example. But overall, technology will be introduced and controlled by the capitalist class - and it will be used ruthlessly in order to boost their profits. Virtually every home has a television and video - a tremendous step forward, but the

technology is used in the main for large companies to make big profits through advertising revenues and so on. One in three homes in the US now has a computer, one in ten a modem - and Britain is not far behind. But this technology is more likely to be used in the future to order your shopping than to take part in the running of society!

Internet

Much publicity has been given to the "Internet", the global network that links 20 million computers. You can join for a few pounds and communicate with millions of others, dip into libraries, read research papers, get real information (and do your shopping), all for the price of your time spent on the phone. But as the technology moves out of its infancy it will come under more and more control, higher and higher subscriptions will be charged and more and more potential users excluded. The potential of something like the "Internet" is very clear, but for it to have any real significance it needs to be planned and available to all. That is why socialism and new technology are inseparable. Computers, the 'information revolution' and interactive technology can only really be developed under a socialist society. The capitalists do not want the working class to have access to unlimited information, they do not want them to 'interact' either. So despite the very 'social' and 'communal'

nature of this technology, capitalism will wield it against the interests of the working class. Computers and the other advances in science and technique are laying the technological basis for a genuine and healthy socialist society. A vastly reduced working week through the introduction of industrial robots, more automation and so on would provide the time necessary for workers to play an active part in running industry and the state at every level, and computer technology will be one of the ways of doing this. Information, education, communication, decision making - all these things could be at our fingertips if technology is developed as part of a socialist plan drawn up in the interests of the majority. The computers can even help in drawing up the plan! Capitalism is in a blind alley. Despite the revolution in science and technique, nearly five million people are unemployed, poverty and homelessness are on the increase and workers living standards and working conditions are under attack. The only way to tackle these problems, and to harness the full potential of the technological revolution is through the socialist transformation of society. Then the whole of society can really move forward. In the words of Leon Trotsky, "liberated humanity will draw itself up to its full height."

Alastair Wilson

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An Engineer's Tale

In the first of a two-part account of life as an apprentice engineer in the 1930s and 40s, Jim Dallas looks back at the young workers' fight to win their union rights...

I left school in 1937 keen to get into the printing industry. It wasn't easy. After 3 or 4 interviews it appeared to me that the industry was not taking on any apprentices so I chose what seemed like the next best thing: printing machine engineers, George Manns of Hunslet.

The company started me in an office where employees were clocked on to job cards which gave the description of machine and of parts for assembly. This system, they said, would familiarise me with different machines and parts for when I was to be thrown in at the deep end on the shop floor. In addition, on Wednesday and Friday I was delegated "fish and chip lad"! Prior to me starting work, there was growing concern on the apprenticeship question alongside negotiations for wage increases and better conditions. The claim for a 40 hour week with no reduction in wages was approached in a manner different from previous claims. Before, claims had been made on the grounds a shorter working week would reduce unemployment. The demand in 1933 was made on the grounds of the workers right to share in the fruits of increased technical efficiency. In earlier years the unions demand had been for the limitation of apprentices but it now included a demand to negotiate on wages and conditions for this section of workers. The employers had always maintained that they had special responsibilities for apprentices and that during their training, no outside interference

with their wages and conditions could be tolerated. The union claimed that since apprentices worked alongside its members and relied on them for the practical side of their training and the problems of junior and adult workers were closely related, they should be allowed to negotiate for all workers including apprentices. When the question was put to the employers in 1936, they refused to discuss the matter and dismissed the claim on all counts.

40 Hour Week

After campaigning again on the 40 hour week, with the co-operation of practically all the unions in the engineering trades, a committee of seven was appointed to arrange meetings and propaganda in all engineering towns. The campaign gained wide support through meetings held up and down the country, mostly organised by trades councils and sometimes by AEU district committees. It was responsible for widespread recruitment to the unions, and while the employees refused to concede the demand, the movement spread and it

"The strikers were so angry they seized one of the timekeepers, carried him to the packing bay and nailed him inside one of the cases. Even this didn't change the employers mind to meet us!"

became official TUC policy. In the meantime the apprentices had taken matters into their own hands and were striking for their demands all over the country. It was at this stage that I was drawn into the strike. Apprentices from all over Leeds assembled outside their factories demanding the union be given the right to negotiate wages and conditions on their behalf. While all this was going on, apprentices from local companies, John Fowlers, Hunslet Engine Co., James Kitsons and Hawthorn Davy had assembled on Hunslet Moor and decided to march round the engineering factories to draw out the remainder of the apprentices in the district. The march was led by Jim Mullany from John Fowlers. They arrived at George Manns while we were protesting to two timekeeper clerks on the gates for our right to be included in negotiations with adult workers. Our request to be allowed to see the management was not agreed to.

After this the strikers were so angry they seized one of the timekeepers, carried him to the packing bay and nailed him inside one of the cases. Even this didn't change the employers mind to meet us!

Strike Escalates

We assembled again and the march continued up to Henry Berry Hydraulic Engineers. They were all outside waiting, obviously news had travelled fast about the timekeeper. The same happened at Clayton's Engineers. We all joined forces at Hunslet Carr and marched to Hunslet Moor. The strike continued, escalating on the Clyde, the movement

spread to Lancashire, Yorkshire, Coventry, London and other industrial centres—in all involving nearly 32 000 lads. It had the effect of forcing the employers to ask for a re-opening of the negotiations which had broken down and, after continued insistence by the union, a conference was called early in 1937 with negotiations continuing intermittently throughout the year. At the end of December, the union was able to secure an agreement which gave it the right to negotiate for Apprentices, Boys and Youths.

Agreement

Apprentices serving under indentures or written agreements between parents and employers were not covered by the agreement, but the federation undertook to recommend to its members that such apprentices should be placed in a not less favourable position than those covered by the agreement. It was agreed that the wages of junior male workers would fluctuate on a national basis as, and in a fixed proportion to, those of adult workers. The importance of the victory and the part played by the apprentices and the Glasgow engineers, 30,000 of whom struck on the 16 April in support of apprentices demands, was stressed by the union President in his address to the National Council in 1938: *"I am not unmindful of the part that Glasgow played in this accomplishment. I believe that had not the demonstration taken place, we would have been exactly where we were in connection with this matter. This is an achievement which I regard as an epic in the history of trade unionism. Apprentices, Boys and Youths for the first time in our very long experience are, effectively linked with the workmen inside the factory. This invests a union with a great power, indeed the wise use of which will enable us to play a very important part in the training and education of these young men and fit them to maintain the traditions of our own organisation."*

TO BE CONTINUED.....

Get Ready for Summer Sales Drive

At the first sign of sun in Glasgow Socialist Appeal sellers took to the streets. Sellers in Coatbridge reported success in their first public sales in the area and they are set to make it a regular date. Sellers in all areas should follow their

lead and where there is not yet a public sale organise one and where there is find anew pitch and organise a second sale. Once again this month's sales have been boosted by our sellers at the union conferences. At the time of going

to press reports from the conferences showed we had sold over 20 at the UCW conference, over 20 at the Bifu conference and topped 30 at the NCU's annual meeting. Five copies were sold at a meeting on Europe in the Midlands and our feature on full employment went down well at the Campaign Group conference in Manchester with 19 being sold. On top of that new regular readers are being won at all the union conferences. Why not take out a subscription or a regular order for your union or Labour Party branch. Simply phone our sales office and we will organise the rest. Among the new subscribers this month are two in south London, one in west London and one in Hackney as well as one in Birmingham, East Kilbride and Lancashire. Keep those subscriptions coming in!

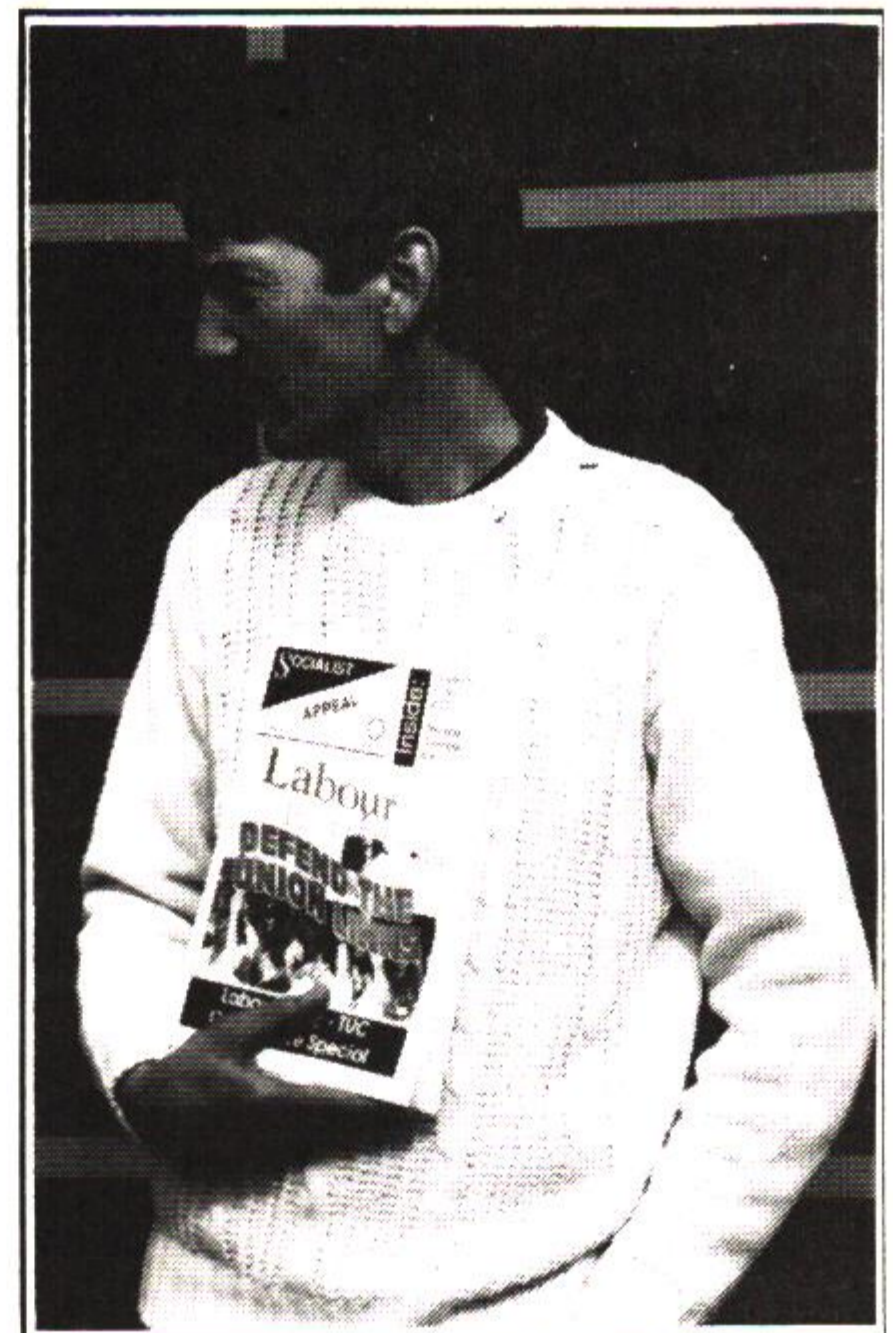
● Press Fund

On the Move and on the Up

A big thank you goes out to all the delegates at the trade union conferences who have made a donation to our press fund campaign. It is thanks to your spirit of sacrifice that following on from our announcement last month that we were negotiating to move into new premises we can now confirm that by the time you read this we will be installed in our new offices. The new offices are a necessity for our continued growth and are far more suited to the setting up of our printshop which is the next stage in our expansion campaign.

Every pound and penny donated will go towards improving and expanding Socialist Appeal in order that the Marxist flame may burn yet more brightly in the labour movement. Thanks to sellers in Woolwich who organised a barbecue to raise funds and reported it "a success". Why not organise a similar event in your area? Perhaps you could organise an event around the World Cup.

Special thanks this month to: A McGarry £50; Pam Woods/R. O'Brien £28; Veronica from Hackney £5; London Mayday demonstrator £20; Michael Carroll £20; Rick from Upminster £10; £100+ at a London meeting; Paul, Midlands £10 and everyone else who has made a donation.



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Bringing Down the Curtain on Democracy

The election of a new Labour Government in October 1964, after thirteen years of Toryism, was greeted once again with great enthusiasm by working people. The promises of Harold Wilson, the Labour Prime Minister, to harness the scientific revolution and transform people's lives, caught the imagination of wide layers, especially the youth.

However, the attempt of the new Government to work within the confines of capitalism, gave rise to grave problems.

Soon after the election, Wilson was approached by the Governor of the Bank of England who told him that the country could not afford Labour's programme, and if he persisted with it the government would face a financial crisis and a 'strike of capital'. Wilson long afterwards revealed in his Memoirs how "We had now reached the situation where a newly elected government was

being told by international speculators that the policy on which we had fought the election could not be implemented: that the government was to be forced into adoption of Tory policies to which it was fundamentally opposed... The Queen's First Minister was being asked to bring down the curtain on parliamentary democracy by accepting the doctrine that an election in Britain was a farce, that the British people could not make a choice between policies."

Instead of rallying the Labour Movement against this conspiracy, it was kept in ignorance, and the Labour Government bowed to the pressure of Big Business. In the face of a serious balance of payments crisis inherited from the Tories, the government acted to curb the purchasing power of the workers through the adoption of 'orthodox' economic policies and the introduction of a 'Prices and Incomes Policy'. It was

combined with a Government attack on 'unofficial' strikes and the need for workers to increase productivity. In February 1965, the Government established a Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, under Lord Donovan, to investigate industrial relations and make suitable recommendations.

Wage Restraint

By April, the National Board for Prices and Incomes was established, under the chairmanship of former Tory MP, Aubrey Jones, which provided a first voluntary stage of wage restraint enforcement. Wilson, however, was able to sell the incomes policy to the trade unions "as a planned growth of wages". There was much talk of economic planning and George Brown, the Minister for Economic Affairs, came forward with his short-lived 'National Plan'. The TUC, opposed to any statutory enforcement, backed this voluntary approach to wage restraint. But, as with all incomes policies under capitalism, it is simply a means of boosting profits at the expense of wages, to the particular disadvantage of the low paid. The second stage, which lasted six months from July 1966, took the form of a government imposed wage freeze, followed by harsh deflationary measures. This then gave way to a ceiling on wages of 3.5%, coupled with increases in productivity.

In April 1966, given Labour's slim parliamentary majority, Wilson called another General Election and won a landslide victory. Under these circumstances, the trade union leaders put their full weight behind the government's 'Prices and Incomes Policy'. This went hand in hand with a remorseless drive by employers and government to push up profit

levels at the expense of wages and conditions through the introduction of so-called productivity deals.

In the years since 1960, such deals, according to the Prices and Incomes Board, "probably affected no more than half a million workers." By June 1969, the mushrooming of 'productivity' (more accurately, 'profitability') deals covered some six million workers, or 25% of the total workforce.

Seafarers Strike

A month after the 1966 General Election, the Government was faced with a seafarers strike against miserable wages and conditions. The bosses position was made crystal clear by the right-wing 'Economist' (5th June 1965): "The price of securing an incomes policy in Britain will be a willingness to stand up to strikes". Immediately, Wilson came out against the strike on the grounds "this would be a strike against the State - against the Community. But this isn't all. What is at issue here is our national Prices and Incomes Policy". The Government announced a State of Emergency on 23rd May. Wilson went so far as to use the 'red scare' against the strikers, accusing the NUS Executive of being in the control of a "tightly knit group of politically motivated men".

Despite these attacks, the seafarers were successful in getting a wage rise above the norm and a 42 hour week. It nevertheless expressed clearly the attitude of the Labour Government towards militant action by the trade unions. The policy of wage restraint became deeply unpopular. A docks strike was quickly followed by the TGWU coming out against the Government's pay policy. At this time, a bitter strike at Roberts Arundel in Stockport over union recognition drew national attention. On 7th November, a dramatic shift took place at the top of one of Britain's biggest unions, the AEU, where the left-wing Hugh Scanlon was elected as President to succeed the arch right-winger, Lord Carron. It reflected the discontent in the union membership of years of right-wing domination and the lack of a fight back. Within a few years, left-winger, Jack Jones, came to the head of the TGWU. These changes were to have a profound effect in the following 7 or 8 years.

The Wilson Government was

Harold Wilson



experiencing severe economic difficulties that had been largely masked by the post war economic upswing. The lack of investment by British industry had resulted in a loss of world and home markets. In a desperate bid to overcome the balance of payments crisis and restore industry's competitiveness, the Government devalued the pound in 1967. British bosses, however, instead of using their competitive advantage simply jacked up their prices. As a result, their share of world exports fell from 14.4% in 1964 to 10.8% in 1970. Import penetration rose from 11.9% in 1964 to 14.8% in 1970. Although profits increased, average profit margins fell from 14.5% to 10% between 1964 and 1969. The Government, operating on the basis of capitalism, attempted to reverse this decline at the expense of workers' living standards.

Economic Crisis

The Labour Government, in the face of growing economic difficulties, introduced a series of counter-reforms in these years: free school milk for secondary pupils was abolished, prescription charges were reimposed, National Assistance rules were tightened up, and wage restraint was imposed as profits boomed. In terms of foreign policy, which is a continuation of home policy, the Wilson Government gave full backing to American imperialism in waging its war in Vietnam. This served to demoralise activists in the Labour Movement and its supporters throughout the country. As a by-product, a few ultra-left 'revolutionary' grouplets, largely composed of students, walked out of the Labour Party in disgust and set themselves up as the socialist 'alternative' to Labour. It was as ridiculous as a flea challenging an elephant! In June 1968, after three years of deliberation, the Donovan Commission delivered its report on British trade unions. It saw the central problem as the spread of unofficial strike action, estimated to make up 90% of strikes between 1960 and 1968. Its recommendations therefore centred around this question. It wanted the semi-official shop stewards' movement (recorded at 175,000 by Donovan) integrated into the union machine. Above all, it wanted to make the trade union leadership police their own rank and file membership. To the dismay of the Tory press, the Commission came out against legal sanctions on the trade union movement. The Tory Party had come out

with its own report - innocently called 'Fair Deal at Work' - arguing for anti-union laws. To the total astonishment of the Labour Movement, seven months later, the Labour



Barbara Castle - author of *In Place of Strife*

Minister, Barbara Castle, produced a white paper entitled 'In Place of Strife', which went far beyond Donovan's recommendations, and largely embraced the 'Fair Deal at Work' proposals! It recommended the creation of a Registrar of Trade Unions and Employers' Associations and the setting up of Industrial Courts. It would "enable the Secretary of State by order to require those involved to desist for up to 28 days from a strike or lock-out which is unconstitutional..." (In Place of Strife, page 37). "The Board will have the power to impose financial penalties on an employer, union or individual striker as it found appropriate". (ibid, p21).

These proposals created a massive backlash throughout the Labour Movement. Protests were raised in all quarters. Miners' lodges threatened to disaffiliate from the Labour Party if the Bill became law. Under pressure from its ranks, the AEU and the TGWU demanded a recall conference of the TUC to discuss the question. Under the initiative of the 'Communist' Party, a new adhoc body was established to campaign against the proposals: the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU). This body drew behind it a wide layer of trade union activists and militants across industry. The

LCDTU conference in November 1969 called for a national Day of Action on 8th December, to which over one million workers responded. This political strike, the first since the General Strike, opened a new period for trade unionism.

Under this growing pressure from below, the TUC came out in opposition to the Bill. On 1st May, 1969, some one and quarter million workers took strike action, combined with mass protests and marches. A recalled TUC in June - the first such special Congress for over 50 years - met to draw up plans for action. By April 1970 the anti-trade union Bill was eventually carried in the Commons with an astonishing 55 Labour MPs voting against and around 40 MPs abstaining. However, the pressure on the Labour Government from trade unions, Trades Councils, shop stewards committees, local Labour Parties was such that the Government was forced to back down and abandon the legislation. This struggle against 'In Place of Strife' resulted in a profound change in the Labour Movement that was to characterise the following five years in particular. In 1967-68, the NCB had closed 62 pits, the largest number in any one year. The workforce had now shrunk from 692,700 in 1959 to 365,000. From almost a thousand pits at the time of nationalisation, they had been reduced to 317 collieries. Between 1964 and 1968 the number of pits fell by 40% and the work force was cut by almost the same percentage. This state of affairs came about as oil replaced coal as a source of power and the rapid introduction of mechanisation. The miners were simply told that 'uneconomic' pits would be closed.

Butchery

The key factor in this butchery of miner's jobs was the total compliance of the NUM leadership. This policy not only represented the views of the right-wing but also those of the so-called Communists. "Communist Party members, such as Will Paynter, the General Secretary from 1959, Bill Whitehead, who succeeded Paynter as the President of the South Wales miners, Abe Moffat the President of the Scottish miners and his brother Alex who succeeded him as well as others in official positions around the coalfields continued to advocate continuity in the Union's policy of co-operation with the NCB", writes V.I. Allen (The Militancy of British Miners, p63-4). He

continues: "They were in agreement on this issue with those who were their political antagonists, such as Sidney Ford, the Union President, Sam Bullough, the President of the Yorkshire Area and Jack Lally, President of the Midlands Area. The Union revealed no significant sectional differences over the important issues which faced it. On the question of contradiction it insisted that the decisions to close which pits, when and where, were the prerogative of the management. The Union intervened only to facilitate the closures by assisting to alleviate the hardships which might result from them."

From 1962 there had been virtually no collective protests against closures, despite the lack of alternative work. Strikes in the industry were at an all-time low. The NCB Report in 1967-68 recorded a 'sharp reduction in output lost through disputes.' There was not one recorded dispute about redundancy. A consequence of this collaboration over decades had pushed miners from the top of the wages league table after the war to twelfth place in 1970.

Discontent

Discontent began to surface in the Yorkshire coalfield, where an unofficial left (the 'Forum') began to challenge for the leadership. In Bamsley, a young faceworker, Arthur Scargill, played a key role in the Forum. In December 1968, with the retirement of Paynter, the election for national secretary was won by ex-Stalinist Lawrence Daly. It coincided with a change within the union, not over redundancies, but the plight of surface workers, who worked longer hours than those underground. The South Wales miners, in May 1969, had demanded a reduction in hours for surface workers, by striking if necessary. Miners from all over lobbied the National Conference as pressure built up for action. Unofficial action first broke out in Yorkshire, when on 13th October every pit bar one took action. The next day all pits were out. Despite threats from the NCB, and the call of even Daly for miners to return to work, the strike spread to Scotland, South Wales, Derbyshire, Kent, Nottingham and the Midlands, involving 130,000 miners. While the strike was going on, national negotiations over pay were underway. Although the NCB refused to give way over hours, fearing this spontaneous movement from below, they granted the NUM wage demand in full! The 1969 unofficial strike

was a turning point for the NUM, as the future would show. By the 1968-69 period, the 'stop-go' policies and the price rises following the devaluation of the Wilson Government, provoked a number of strikes. In 1968, women machinists went on strike in Fords for equal pay. Fords workers went on official strike over wages the following year. Dustmen engaged in a prolonged battle over wages in September, securing a wage of £20 per week. These strikes reflected a new militancy, after years of restraint, wage freeze and growing inflation. In fact, more days were lost in strikes in 1970 than in any year since 1926. In April 1970, a bitter strike broke out at the Pilkington Glass Factory in St Helens, Lancashire. The workers were members of the General and Municipal Workers (GMWU, or today's GMB), which was bureaucratically controlled and stood on the right of the movement. The general secretary, Lord Cooper, had also other outside interests, such as governor of the London School of Business Studies, director of Telefusion Yorkshire, and director of the National Ports Council. He ruled the union with a firm grip and a heavy hand. The Pilkington GMWU branch of 7,400 members was the largest in the country. However, it's branch meetings were not open to ordinary members, but only to shop stewards. Negotiations were conducted within a Joint Industrial Council, heavily influenced by union full-time officials.

A spontaneous unofficial walkout over bonus pay quickly spread to the other factories, which called for a £10 wage rise. At first the shop stewards called for a return to work, but under intense

pressure they declared the strike official at branch level'. The strike rapidly spread to other Pilkington factories throughout Britain. Within a week, the national officials intervened to get the strike called off, but were met with determined opposition. The JIC was hastily convened and recommended a £3 rise — but was rejected out of hand by the strikers.

RFSC

The old stewards, who had acted as a break on the struggle, were pushed aside and replaced by the Rank and File Strike Committee (RFSC), which assumed charge of the strike. The GMWU leaders, in league with management, used every device to get the action called off, but failed. However, on 16th May, with a poll organised by the local church, a small majority favoured a return. With pressure from the TUC itself, the RFSC saw no alternative but to call off the strike on 22nd May. The workers were extremely bitter at the action of the union officials. The task facing the RFSC was to conduct a serious struggle to transform the union on democratic lines, as a genuine instrument of the members. Unfortunately, instead of answering the feelings of a layer of workers to split from the union and create their own, the leaders of the RFSC were tragically egged on by many on the left, particularly the Socialist Workers Party (formerly the International Socialists), to break from the GMWU. This ultra-left group produced leaflets entitled 'NUGMWU SCAB UNION', and a pamphlet which argued: "Can the GMWU be reformed from within? The obvious answer is to say no, since the right-wing bureaucracy has so many safe guards built

into the constitution to prevent militants getting into influential positions, since the rules prohibit organisation between branches, and since history shows how the NEC can chop off and re-organise any sections whose policies, etc. it does not like." ('The Pilkington Dispute'). Such criminal advice, so typical of those who seek short-cuts where none exist, simply serves to break away the most militant and class conscious workers away from their less militant brothers and sisters. Such actions serve to reinforce the position of the right wing and the union bureaucracy, which in one fell swoop has got rid of any potential challenge to its authority. As Leon Trotsky explained: "Impatient leftists sometimes say that it is absolutely impossible to win over the trade unions because the bureaucracy uses the organisation's internal regimes for preserving its own interests, resorting to the basest machinations, repressions and plain crookedness... Why then waste time and energy? This argument reduces itself in reality to giving up the actual struggle to win the masses, using the corrupt character of the trade union bureaucracy as a pretext." The RFSC changed its name to the Pilkington Provisional Trade Union Committee, and around 3,500 handed in their resignation from the GMWU. As a result of the Bridlington Agreement they were refused membership of the TGWU. By the end of June, the Committee established the 'Glass and General Workers' Union' (GGWU). Pilkingtons and the GMWU nationally were determined to break the new union. In August, the GGWU imposed an overtime ban which led to suspensions and a short

strike at the Cowley Hill plant. This led to 480 workers being sacked. Some were re-employed, but 130 remained sacked, including the leaders of the GGWU, Gerry Caughey and John Potter. Within weeks, the breakaway union was wound up. It proved a bitter experience. The events forced the GMWU leaders to shift tack. The official union branch was divided into six factory branches, with the right of every member to attend. Lord Cooper retired early, with David Basnett becoming general secretary, taking the union more towards the centre-left. Strikes in other industries were being increasingly made official — in contrast to the past. From £27,000 strike pay in 1967, the GMWU's strike pay rose to £700,000 in 1971. Unfortunately, those who could have acted to push the union further to the left were outside of the union.

Heath

1970 also marked the year when the Wilson government went to the polls and was defeated by the Tories under the parvenu leadership of Edward Heath. The period of counter-reform under Labour had disillusioned its supporters, resulting in large abstentions in the July General Election. The coming to power of the Tory Government saw a sharp change in the political situation. This Big Business Government, determined to reverse the decline of British capitalism, set out to tame the trade unions and carry through a programme of deep cuts in living standards. It was to unleash the biggest movement of the British working class not seen since the early 1920s.

Rob Sewell



Trotsky: On the General Strike

Finally, there remains a general strike which, as Engels put it, "leads directly to the barricades." A strike of this sort can result in either complete victory or in defeat. But to shy away from battle, when the battle is forced by the objective situation, is to lead inevitably to the most fatal and demoralising of all defeats.

The outcome of a revolutionary insurrectionary general strike depends, of course, upon the relationship of forces, covering a great number of factors: the class differentiation of society, the specific

weight of the proletariat, the mood of the lower layers of the petty bourgeoisie, the social composition and the political mood of the army, etc.

However, among the conditions for victory, far from the last place is occupied by the correct revolutionary leadership and its clear understanding of the conditions and methods of the general strike and of its transition to open revolutionary struggle.

- Leon Trotsky, *The ILP and the Fourth International: In the Middle of the Road*
September 1935

The Great British Tradition

By Beatrice Windsor

Pilgrimages for justice

The long march of protest - from Jarrow to the People's March for Jobs - is not a phenomenon of the 20th century.

In 1497, the King's Collectors arrived in Cornwall to demand more taxes which were needed for Henry VII's invasion of Scotland. The Cornish - cut off from the rest of England by distance and language, speaking their own variant of Celtic - did not see why they should finance a distant war against their brother Celts. A blacksmith, Michael Joseph, called out his parish to chase the collectors off.

Soon an army of 15,000 Cornish rebels mustered and decided to march on the King. And so they set off. 350 miles later they arrived at Deptford, hoping the Kentish masses - the 'NUM' of medieval times - would join them to storm London.

But the peasants of Kent were still licking their wounds after the failure of Jack Cade's rebellion (see issue 20) and thought better of it. Isolated - and no doubt exhausted after their long trek - the Cornish rebels were soon pulverised by the King's modern army, with its armoured knights and new fangled cannons.

The failure of the Cornish rebellion marked the death knell of Cornish separatism. Revolutionary though their actions were, the Cornish had tried to stem the tide of history which was seeing the unification of the British isles into a nation state.

Up in alms

The same fate befell the 'Pilgrimage of Grace' in 1536, which also attempted to stand in the way of 'progress'.

Henry VIII's dissolution of the Monasteries was ridding England of the influence of Rome. The Pilgrimage of Grace rebellion took a religious form, with the Nobles that led attempting to defend Catholicism against Henry's imposed Church of England. But for the peasant and artisan masses that made up the rebel army, there were more materialistic motives.

The dissolution of the Monasteries saw the end of the few 'welfare' services that existed - the giving of alms to the poor, the work provided on the huge Monastic estates, and the hospitality offered to the new breed of travelling artisan and worker. What's more, the miseries of the new Church of England banned the many Saints Day public holidays demanded by the Catholic faith.

The rebellion gripped mainly the north of England, from Hull to Carlisle, spreading as far south as Lincolnshire. Sadly, the uprising followed the now familiar pattern of Medieval revolts. The 30,000 strong peasant army forced the King into a corner; he bought time with promises of reform and pardons; and then reneged on the deal as the peasants dispersed, using his mobile, disciplined army to smash any resistance when the masses became separated as they returned to their towns and villages.

However, after 200 years of fighting back, the masses were beginning to learn. The next great struggle - the last of Medieval times - was to take on the characteristics of class war...

Next month: *Feed the poor, eat the sheep!*

The Upper Crust



It never did me any 'arm guv...

The caning of Michael Fay in Singapore has brought with it a nauseating array of hypocrisy and reaction. First there are the politicians and commentators who wrinkle their nose up at the incident, pointing to the 'barbarity' of the Third World. What they forget to mention is that Singapore inherited its legal system from the British empire. Under colonial rule however, it was the Cat 'o' Nine Tails that was used - the introduction of the cane came with independence and was seen as a reform. Meanwhile, the thought of a supple cane thrashing a firm young buttock has brought a gleam to the eye of the Hang 'Em and Flog 'Em Brigade. They have bombarded letters' pages with calls to bring back the birch as a solution to the crime problem. They should remember Eric Mason, the last man in Britain to receive the Cat O' Nine Tails. Far from deterring him from his wicked ways he went on to become a safecracker in the 1960s and 70s, an armed bankrobber and leading member of the Krays Twins' firm, serving a further total of 17 years in jail.

There'll always be an England...

Conservative election broadcast on April 6 howled with indignation at Coventry City Council's town twinning arrangements. They were outraged that money should be spent on links with foreigners. Such "Little Englander" patriotism does not extend to the "British" industries in Coventry though. Not a word was said over the US take-over of the Massey Ferguson tractor firm or the BMW take-over (displacing Honda) of Rover. Or that Coventry's main manufacturer, Peugeot Talbot, is French owned. Or that Jaguar is now part of Ford (US). Or that Rolls Royce - the pinnacle of 'British excellence' - is part owned by the Swedish Alfa Laval company. Other major employers in Coventry include Sandvik (Swedish), Reinshagen (German), Brose (German), Toys R Us (American), Equity and Law (French), SIV (Italian) and Nipondensa (Japanese). Internationalism is OK for capitalism but not it would appear for Labour councils.

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Get the Tories Out General Election Now!

First we had Tory ministers complaining about tripping over people sleeping rough on their way home from the opera now we have John Major calling beggars an eyesore and urging people to report them to the police.

by Jeremy Dear

John Major has frequently set new record lows in opinion poll ratings and his latest attack is yet another sign that he will try to do anything to deflect attention from the economic chaos, misery and poverty he and his government have wrought. First he tried back to basics which was launched amidst a blaze of publicity and collapsed around his ears as scandal after scandal rocked the Conservative Party.

Now he is attacking those in our society the least able to help themselves. At the time of going to press the outcome of the Labour leadership contest was unclear but one thing is blatantly clear - the new leader must lead a vigorous and

active campaign to force the Tories from government and the election of a Labour government.

We cannot tackle begging and homelessness by attacking the victims of Tory economics but only by attacking the root causes.

We have to tackle unemployment, putting people back to work. We have to tackle the erosion of the welfare state and the cutting of benefits, especially for young people, we have to tackle the run-down of the health service and the failure of Care in the Community and the lack of decent affordable housing, low wages and a host of other problems faced by society.

Clause Four

But we cannot tackle these problems by goodwill alone. We need a clear economic strategy and a leadership prepared to fight tooth and nail against the vested interests of big business to deliver real and significant change. What that means is that an incoming Labour government must pledge itself to a programme based on the needs of the working class not the greed of the City of London. That means implementing Clause Four Part Four of the party constitution - the nationalisation under democratic workers' control and management of the commanding heights of the economy.



With such a programme Labour could sweep to power and begin the real task of transforming society to meet the needs of working people.

Fight for Socialist Policies