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## FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

No.13

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1980

20p

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# FREE TO CHOOSE

One of the features of the last ten years has been the consistent efforts made by politicians and the media alike to put across to ordinary people 'a few simple economic facts of life'. Wilson explained to us patiently that 'one man's wage increase is another man's price increase', Callaghan the need for moderation in wage settlements and Thatcher is currently preaching the dangers of resorting to the printing press as a way out of our problems. Yet often it seems that the politicians themselves have not understood the most basic economic theory and after each new administration the prospects look no better. Something is clearly going wrong but neither bourgeois nor Marxist economics seems to offer us an adequate explanation for what is happening. Marxist economics can explain the current slump but finds it exceedingly difficult to explain the sustained period of economic growth which preceded it, the failure of profits to fall and the failure of capitalism to collapse. Keynesian economics can explain the boom of the 50s and 60s but finds difficulties explaining the problems of the 1970s. Monetarism can explain the problems of the 1970s (or thinks it can) but the solution it offers is one of free market capitalism - a solution which was dumped everywhere because an economy without government control is an economy which will fail to provide many non-profitable but vital services and which will spiral into boom and slump without control. In other words, the monetarists have ignored the experience of the effective implementation of Keynesian ideas for two decades.

Faced with this widespread failure to explain the economic history of the last 30 years it is way past time that we got down to the task of trying to understand for ourselves what is happening to the Western economies and why. It seems to me that the basic problem is to explain the existence of the two most widely disliked phenomena of the last ten years - inflation and unemployment. To do this it is necessary to go right back to basics.

Let's start with inflation. Inflation is, as a surprising number of people seem to be forgetting, about a rise in the cost of living. This can be caused in a huge variety of ways. The one most frequently mentioned is wage rises causing price rises. The argument goes that in the 1950s and 60s workers gradually got used to full employment and began to expect regular rises in their wages. Skilled workers were in short supply and could name their price and other workers simply pushed for parity with such workers. Pressure from an increasingly confident and militant workforce eventually began to push up wages beyond levels where they could be clawed back by productivity increases. Consequently firms raised their prices to keep up their profits. Once workers saw that prices were going up every year they increased their wage demands and added on a bit to 'be on the safe side'. Firms expecting inflation then increased prices (not having to worry about competition because of the existence of near monopolies in most branches of industry) and the whole thing spiralled.

## WAGES

For the bourgeois economist this argument is very convenient. The whole fault falls on the unions and the cure is simple in theory if difficult in practice. You find some means (prices and incomes policy, social contract, etc.) of stopping or slowing wage increases and then you can expand the economy without worrying too much about inflation. Things didn't work out

that way though. In Britain we were sold wage restraint very effectively by the last Labour government and we were able to see very clearly the degree of impact of wages on inflation. There was a clear and definite eventual reduction in the rate of inflation a year or two after the effective wage cuts imposed by Labour. Thus wages must be, in part at least, one cause of inflation. However, inflation still continued despite real wage cuts, unemployment rose dramatically and the unpopularity of making workers bear the sole responsibility for fighting inflation got the Labour government kicked out.

The evidence suggests then that wages do influence inflation but they are not by any means the only influence. Wages are, after all, only one part of industry's costs and so price rises can take place as a result of rises in the costs of a whole number of other things (e.g. rent). One of the most obvious is the increase in oil prices which took place around 1972-3. When OPEC finally achieved a near monopoly of international supply and began to charge a realistic price for oil it definitely had an impact on inflation. However in real terms oil prices actually declined after 1973 (that is until the Iranian revolution reduced supplies) yet inflation continued. Moreover certain economies which were very heavily dependent on OPEC oil (e.g. Japan) do not have high inflation rates while Britain's inflation rate has picked up at the same time as its dependence on imported oil has declined. The evidence suggests therefore that whilst raw material prices in general and oil prices in particular have contributed to the inflationary spiral they are, like wages, only part of the picture.

Other costs have also contributed to causing inflation. Interest rates are for instance a major component in the cost of living to most home buyers (through mortgages). These have steadily climbed throughout the 70s. What tends to happen is as follows. The U.K. gets in difficulties because the £ is falling and Arab oil money is leaving the country. It therefore puts up the interest rate to say 15%. As a consequence the Arabs move oil money back to London,



the dollar falls and the Americans have to increase their interest rates. Now the money moves back to the States and the process goes on ad infinitum. Of course it's much more complex than that but competitive interest rate raising (along with refusals to lower interest rates when the chance occurs) to attract footloose money is one major contributory cause of inflation which cannot be blamed on working class militancy. Ask anyone with a large mortgage what hit their living standards hardest this year and they will very probably point in this direction. Yet the current government is following monetarist policies which call for an increase in interest rates to discourage excessive borrowing.

The current government has also contributed to causing inflation in other more obvious ways. One of the main planks of monetarism is a call for tax cuts and reduced government spending. With classic stupidity Thatcher in her first budget cut income tax and raised V.A.T. The psychology of almost all of us is that we accept the tax cut without really noticing it but we do notice the increases in V.A.T. When you are deciding on this year's wage claim you normally look at how retail prices have gone up compared with wages. Thatcher put up retail prices in the name of cutting inflation!! She then appeared surprised when large wage demands came in.

In response to the inflation, which she herself bears great responsibility for, she is implementing two policies. The first is cuts and the second is severe controls on money supply. Cuts in government expenditure reduce the sales which many firms can expect to make (since they lose government contracts). If they reduce their sales they must reduce their output. They will normally lay off part of the productive workforce whilst keeping the same size of factory,



"Oh no, it's another Thatcher budget."

# OR FREE TO LOSE

the same debts to pay interest on and the same number of office workers (after all, laying-off office workers is getting a bit near to home!). A smaller productive workforce therefore carries the same bureaucracy and the same expenses. Costs per unit of output therefore rise and so the firm finds it necessary to increase prices. In other words cuts cause falling output, falling output causes a loss of economies of scale, a loss of economies of scale causes price rises. Cuts actually cause inflation - and the cure for inflation? - why, more cuts of course!

The second plank of the government's policy is to reduce the money supply. Strictly speaking there cannot be any significant increase in inflation without an increase in the money supply. But this is a truism not a causal explanation. To actually try and cure inflation by holding down the money supply is a different matter. It can possibly be done, but only at an exceptionally high price. Most of the money supply consists of extra lending made by the banks. If this is stopped then the following things will happen. Banks will no longer lend money to customers to buy things like cars, washing machines etc. People with an overdraft will find themselves being asked to cut down their spending and pay it off. Small firms who want to establish new premises and take on workers will not be lent the money to do so. Other firms will be pressed to pay back their debts quickly and may go bankrupt. It does not take a genius to assess the likely result. If people are spending less money and firms are not expanding there will be far fewer jobs around. Unemployment will rocket. The monetarists themselves admit this. As Milton and Rose Friedman put it in their book 'Free to Choose':

'The initial side effects of a slower rate of monetary growth are painful: lower economic growth, temporarily high unemployment, without, for a time, much reduction of inflation. The benefits appear only after one or two years or so,

in the form of lower inflation, a healthier economy, the potential for rapid noninflationary growth' (1)

In one respect the Friedmans are quite right - unemployment will certainly result. In another they are quite wrong. There is no convincing evidence to suggest that anything other than a full scale slump will take place once monetarist policies are applied. In the 1930s the cycle worked like this: reduced spending led to reduced sales which caused reduced production which led to higher unemployment and consequently a further reduction in spending. Nothing that has been written by the monetarists can convince anyone but the most short-sighted bigot that this will not happen again. If monetarist policies are applied in the USA or throughout the E.E.C. then we can expect a recession of 1930s proportions with unemployment booming.

## VANISHING WORK ?

We come now to the problem of unemployment about which equal nonsense has been written over the last few years. There would of course be nothing wrong with unemployment if we got paid a decent wage for being unemployed. The reaction of South Wales steel miners to the offer of redundancy money has been thoroughly sensible - take as much as you can for giving up a lousy job and see if you can't sit back and enjoy life. Unfortunately for most of the unemployed there is no redundancy money only a pitifully small giro and useless and unpleasant as most work is most of us, as things are, prefer work to the dole. It makes sense therefore to try to understand why the latter choice is being forced on an increasing number of us.

One of the most widely held beliefs about unemployment is that it is caused by technical innovation which

# FREE TO LOSE Cont.

enables machines to replace workers. Microprocessors, it is argued, are throwing women and men out of work and causing unemployment. Similar arguments have been used since the time of the Luddites and have to date always proved wrong. What has always happened in the past is that whilst jobs have disappeared in one area new jobs have been created in other areas and unemployment has eventually been overcome. If it worked in the past it ought to work today. There is absolutely no reason to expect that in a healthy economy microprocessors would cause excessive unemployment. Jobs like making calculators, video T.V. games and chess challengers were unheard of a few years ago. With an expansion in jobs in fields such as computer programming the job loss problems of microprocessors can be overcome. What cannot be overcome by capitalism is the social problems of the new technology. The people who lose

jobs and the places where they are lost and the type of uses that microprocessors are put to will be dependent upon the decisions of the free market and of governments, not upon the conscious choices of people. Microprocessors could therefore cause widespread hardship to certain people in certain areas but are most unlikely to cause unemployment other things being equal. Indeed if every office in the world invests in the new equipment made possible by the chip unemployment will go down dramatically. The problem of curing unemployment in a capitalist economy is one of providing the economic environment in which the money is there and the optimism is there which will enable business to expand.

In this respect it is of importance to point out the detrimental effects which the combination of fluctuating

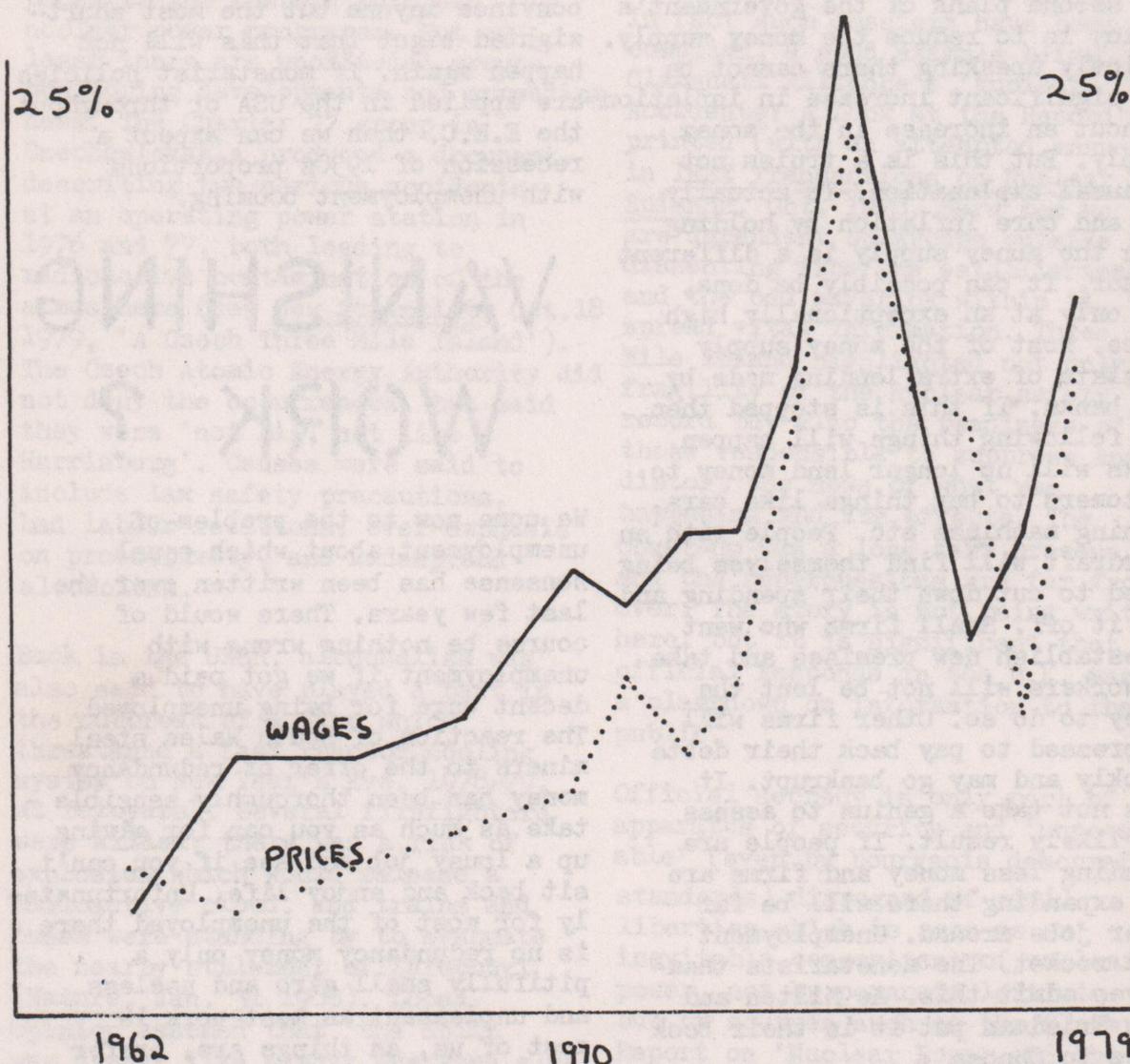
high interest rates and inflation have on an economy. It might seem at first sight that it does not matter if the interest rate on money is at 17% so long as inflation is at an even higher rate. In such circumstances it is on paper quite possible for the directors of a company to borrow money to expand their business and repay the loan out of the proceeds of sales made at the new inflated price. But there is an element of risk in the calculation. If for some reason the sales cannot be made at the new price or if the inflation rate drops and the company cannot raise its prices as far as it expected then it will be committed to pay back a loan with a hefty interest charge from inadequate revenue. In other words, high interest charges and high inflation rates act to make investment more risky. The response of those with money is to invest it in what seem to be less risky places such as buildings, gold, and antiques.

What this means is that throughout the 70s money was sucked out of the productive areas of the economy into non-productive uses such as property and commodity speculation. There is therefore in a very real sense a shortage of money in productive areas of the economy. Britain and most of the rest of the world is suffering from an inadequate supply of money in certain vital sectors of the economy caused partly by high interest rates; the government is responding by trying to reduce the supply of money and by raising interest rates! Small wonder then that unemployment rises steadily.

Faced with the problems of rising unemployment and falling investment in industry a lot of trade unionists are currently arguing that the way out is to protect British industry and to cut down on imports from abroad. As a policy this is both short-sighted and ineffective. In Japan - the country usually blamed for causing all our problems by those who think in purely nationalistic terms - they have a high unemployment rate despite extensive protection for their home industries. Unemployment is an international problem and will require an international solution. To expect to cure the problem in Britain by forbidding foreigners to sell products here is naive in the extreme. Clearly the foreigners will respond by erecting their own tariff walls as the experience of the 1930s shows.

International unemployment has only one major cause and that is lack of spending power. If people cannot afford to buy things then factories

## INFLATION and WAGES



The above graph shows how drastic the effects of the Labour government's attempts to control working class militancy were. In 1974 there were almost 15 million days spent on strike in Britain whereas in 1975, with the introduction of the social contract, only 6 million days were spent on strike and wages fell way behind prices. The graph also shows how ineffective the Conservatives' economic policies have been. Their main objective is supposed to be to reduce prices. From the day they took office prices have steadily and very rapidly climbed.

are bound to close. If large amounts of money are being spent then firms will expand and take on labour. This has been the accepted wisdom since Keynes tore apart the economic orthodoxy of the 1930s. The traditional solution to unemployment is therefore to increase spending either by building prestigious new projects (e.g. a nuclear bomb, an unnecessary motorway network or the highly useful NHS) or by allowing the banks to lend out more. However in Britain whenever this has been tried recently (e.g. by the Heath government) the government quickly ran into problems. Some of the increased spending power was used to buy things from abroad, balance of payments difficulties were met with and very quickly the policy was put into reverse. Equally the expansion in the economy enabled people to put up their prices for shortage goods or labour and inflation picked up in speed.

We therefore seem to be faced with a depressing picture. Governments are deliberately putting up with high unemployment because they fear that if they try to apply the only cure known to work then they will get into balance of payments difficulties and inflation will get worse. At the same time no government seems to have found (or indeed to have wanted to find) any cure for inflation that does not involve cutting real wages and thereby reducing spending power with all the consequent impact on unemployment. The picture is indeed depressing but we are not faced with an inevitable crisis (much less one described and predicted by a certain K. Marx one hundred years ago). Solutions to the current problems of capitalist economies do exist though these solutions are, to say the least, none too pleasant to contemplate.

## POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

One solution is that which certain sections of the Labour party seem to be groping towards. It might involve the following components: 1.) Permanent prices and incomes controls; 2.) International regulation of interest rates; 3.) An internationally agreed decision to expand all economies at the same time (to avoid balance of payments deficits); 4.) International efforts on ecology (e.g. to cut down on energy consumption and imports and therefore to cut out any inflationary pressure from this

sector - action on this in the U.S.A. alone would be sufficient because of the size of their share of world consumption); 5.) Taxes on non-productive investment (buying office blocks, etc.), incentives on productive investment.

These policies would work to bring the Western economies back to growth without inflation. The trouble is that to get them implemented would require massive international co-operation and an acceptance of the inevitability of a move one step nearer to the creation of full state capitalism in the West. This would be to go against very widely accepted Western ideology in that it would involve the virtual cessation of the nation state as an independent entity and also of large areas of the 'free' market. However the measures outlined are in keeping with the general direction of 20th century

which follows the advice of a man who can write:

'Most of the present welfare programmes should never have been enacted. If they had not been, many of the people now dependent upon them would have become self-reliant individuals instead of wards of state.' (2)

No unemployment pay, no pensions, no hospitals, no postal service outside the big towns, no public transport (unless of course some private firm can make a profit out of supplying them - and what firm will ever make a profit out of supplying health insurance to someone with a family history of disease, or out of unemployment insurance to young blacks) - that is the future which the monetarists offer us to accompany massive unemployment. We are faced with two appalling prospects. On the



CHOOSING THE BEST CUTS

history in that they would involve a growth in the extent of government control over the economy and an increase in the amount of co-operation between the various capitalist governments. They represent what the logic of much of the modern left would bring us to - a massively powerful state providing economic stability together with an ever-expanding bureaucracy and a complete lack of personal freedom.

The alternative that is currently being followed is even worse. Monetarism represents a fear of the potentially state capitalist future and is therefore a genuinely reactionary philosophy which sees the future, doesn't like it, and wants to scuttle back to the good old days of free market capitalism. If it is followed the consequences can only be dire. There is something disturbing in having a government

of which one hand is the left, large sections of which want to take us into a world something akin to what the Czechs tried in 1968 - a paternal state exercising vigorous control over a newly resurgent capitalism. On the other hand we have the right, which sees the solution in doing away with most government and letting the profit motive reign unchecked. And the libertarians? Can we be blamed for saying that if these are the futures capitalism can offer us then the time has come to see it overthrown?

Andy Brown.

### FOOTNOTES

1. Milton and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose*, (Secker and Warburg, London, 1980), p. 271
2. *Ibid.* p. 119

# BRAZIL

Metalworkers in Brazil have just completed a 41-day strike which has left the military regime wondering what to do next. This is the third year running that the metalworkers have brought the ABC region in São Paulo, Latin America's largest industrial suburb, to a halt; this time it so frightened the government that, in spite of its policy of liberalisation, it resorted to traditionally repressive measures not only to smash the strike, but also to break the power of the movement.

Strange as it may seem, liberalisation is the name of the game in Brazil, a situation that has come about partly in response to a gathering economic crisis. The much-vaunted 'economic miracle' did not survive the rise in oil prices since 1973; this year oil imports are likely to cost more than half of export earnings, while export earnings themselves will be equivalent to little more than one third of the country's huge foreign debt (which will reach some US\$60 billion by the end of the year. For the first time, foreign bankers are concerned that they may not get their money back.

The crisis is also political; 16 years of military rule have not proved sufficient to either batter or persuade a sufficient consensus of support into existence. Brazil has the necessary resources to become a world power, and the military are among those who would like it to become so. But a new political model is needed, and the ruling clique behind the last president (General Ernesto Geisel, 1974/79) and the present president (General João Baptista Figueiredo, 1979/85, if all goes according to plan) decided that a return to bourgeois democracy could provide the political solution. Although hard-line sectors opposed the plan, an eventual strategic withdrawal of the military from the seat of government to a less visible though still influential position was planned. Naturally enough, it was presented to the nation as an abertura (opening), or liberalisation. But naturally enough again, the return to civilian government had to be closely supervised and controlled.

## State & workers

The Brazilian working class has never managed to break out of the framework imposed on it in 1943 by the code of laws known as the CLT,

the inspiration for which came from Mussolini's corporatist trade union model. This made a number of concessions such as restricting the working day, providing limited job security and compensation for unfair dismissal. These concessions, which often enough were simply ignored by employers, amounted in any case to much less than the price exacted for them. This included not only restrictions on the right to strike, but the subordination of the whole trade union structure to the labour ministry. A hierarchical structure was set up, with local unions at the bottom, regional federations of unions in the middle, and national confederations at the top. Labour tribunals were also established to administer the law and settle worker/employer disputes. Union funds were largely controlled by the labour ministry. And emergency powers were created for handling unions which, despite all the other controls, proved too bolshy. These basically consist of the power to 'intervene' in a union, removing its elected officials from office, and replacing them with government nominees.

The structure functioned so well for the state that when the military came to power, they kept the basics intact and merely tightened up in some respects. The powers of intervention proved quite adequate to 'pacify' some 500 unions. On

## LEADERS FACE JAIL

Earlier this year, the military regime in Brazil released the last political prisoner left over from the era of guerrilla warfare. But before long it had acquired others: faced with 300,000 striking metalworkers in São Paulo, the government took over the trade unions and arrested over 30 people.

All have now been released, but 17 union officials have been charged under the national security law with 'inciting to disobedience of the law', an offence punishable by 2-12 years' jail. Five teachers' leaders face similar charges following a recent strike in Minas Gerais. An appeal has been sent out for help with legal expenses; contributions should be sent to Patricia Feeney, International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 10 Southampton St, London WC2.

the other hand, they did away with free collective bargaining, and replaced it with a 'technical' system of wage 'adjustments', calculated according to a complicated mathematical formula, whereby wages in general lost some 30 per cent of their real value by 1970.

During this period, unions were reduced to no more than health and welfare bodies. Since any kind of opposition or criticism was swiftly jumped upon, they tended to fall into the hands of pelegos - sympathisers of the regime, fanatical anti-communists, who were allowed to practice the most blatant kinds of corruption, perpetuating their stay in office and enjoying a standard of living far above that of their members.

And when all the legal powers of coercion proved unsuccessful, there was always the army. Popular resistance slowly rebuilt after the coup, and culminated in 1968 with a factory occupation in Osasco, another industrial suburb of São Paulo. The occupation ended when the workers were marched out between lines of troops. In the following 10 years there were no more strikes.

## Strikes reappear

The easing in the climate of repression which followed the adoption of the abertura policy in 1977 made possible the expression of working class discontent and frustration. In São Bernardo, one of the towns in the ABC region (the others being Santo André and São Caetano), it was the enormous metalworkers union itself, under its president Luis Inácio da Silva, popularly known as Lula, which led the agitation, proclaiming the need to resurrect the strike weapon if workers were to regain something of what they had lost during the previous 14 years.

In May 1978 the inevitable happened. Toolmakers in Saab Scania switched off their machines; spontaneous stoppages spread like wildfire through the hundreds of firms in the region, including Ford, General Motors, Volkswagen, Chrysler, Mercedes Benz, Massey Ferguson, Caterpillar, Brown-Bovery, Philips, General Electric, Pirelli, Otis, Toshiba, etc., etc.

Managements seemed to be taken by surprise. Settlements negotiated at plant level were quickly reached, usually of the order of 10-15%. But it wasn't the money in itself that was so important; the impotence of the last 10 years had suddenly been broken. The example having been given, others were not slow to follow, and strikes swiftly spread to other regions.

# WORKERS UNDERMINE MILITARY REGIME'S MASTERPLAN

March 1979 came around and it was time for General Figueiredo, billed as the president of conciliation and democracy, to take office. The metalworkers in ABC, however, greeted him with a strike. Well, perhaps it was coincidental that their wages were due for their annual 'adjustment' at about that time anyway, but it was certainly indicative of what workers thought about the regime. They were also giving it a chance to show just how liberal it really was.

The demand, which was to be negotiated directly with the employers' association, was for a 78% wage increase - 43% for inflation, plus 35% 'real' increase. It also included demands relating to the right to organise on the shop floor, which do not exist in Brazil. The strike, involving some 200,000 metalworkers, was soon referred to the local labour tribunal, which ruled it illegal. It carried on. The union leaders decided that a good wage settlement would represent a victory, and accordingly scaled down their wage demand to 68% and said they were prepared to forgo the other demands.

The employers, however, were intransigent, and in an attempt to break the strike, the labour minister 'intervened' the unions and removed the three presidents from office. The strike nevertheless continued, and only ended when Lula used his prestige to persuade workers to go back pending further negotiations. These were not entirely satisfactory, with settlements ranging from 63% for the lowest paid to 57% for the others. But the outcome was considered by workers to be positive, a feeling that was strengthened when the government, whose 'liberal' image had been badly dented by its resort to the traditional arbitrary methods, withdrew its 'intervention' in the unions and restored the three union presidents to office.

## New wage policy

As it turned out, 1979 was a record year for strikes, affecting virtually all categories of workers, teachers, transport workers, refuse collectors, doctors, tobacco factory workers, miners, textile workers, and so on. To try and take the heat out of the movement, the government decided on a new wage strategy. Wages were to be adjusted for inflation every 6 months, and employer/employee negotiations were only to be allowed to decide small increases, of the order of 5%, based on productivity. Even these negotiations, it was hoped, would be limited to technical discussions of how much productivity had increased.

The strategy, introduced towards

the end of last year, seemed at first to be working well. Relative peace was reigning on the labour front by the end of the year.

The calm, however, proved to be that which precedes a storm. The first drops fell in March, when Santos, Brazil's largest port, and a national security area in which strikes are completely banned, was paralysed by a strike of dockers, stevedores, crane drivers and office staff, who demanded a 15% wage increase for productivity. The strike was 100% solid, and the arrival of marines from Rio de Janeiro made no difference. In the end it was the pelegos in the unions involved who manipulated an end to the strike; but not before the strikers had secured a 10% deal.

Then on 1 April, the metalworkers in ABC came out again. This time their demands included a 15% increase for productivity, recognition for shop stewards, a 40 hour week, no dismissals for a year (not only to prevent victimisation, but also to counter the bosses' traditional ploy of sacking large numbers of workers and rehiring them at lower rates), and the adjustment of wages for inflation every 3 months.

All 450,000 metalworkers in São Paulo state were involved in negotiating a wage rise at the same time; for the first time ever, a majority (300,000) decided to come out on strike with the ABC unions. Only a minority followed the traditional path of allowing their claim to be handled by the pelego-controlled metalworkers federation.

The government adopted a much more aggressive approach than in the previous year. The strike was immediately referred to the labour tribunal, which to everyone's amazement and the government's consternation, declared itself incompetent to rule whether the strike was legal or not. Previously the government had always been able to count on the automatic collaboration of labour tribunals. The tribunal also offered a 7% increase for productivity.

Within a week the government asked the tribunal to reconsider its decision; under pressure from Brasilia, it toed the line

and declared the strike illegal. At this point the workers in Sao Caetano decided to take the 7% and let the other demands drop. In São Bernardo and Santo André, however, the feeling was that the money was a secondary issue - until workers increased their powers of organisation, until they smashed the whole fascist trade union structure, they would only be able to make limited and temporary gains.

The government also felt that more than a pay claim was at stake - its very authority was at stake. And maybe its very legitimacy was at stake, for as a military regime, what is its 'legitimacy' other than its ability to hold power by force? So it ordered employers not to negotiate any further with the workers. The two unions were 'intervened'; not only were their leading officers removed from office, they were also arrested. So were several non-strikers whose only 'crime' was to be active in the solidarity and fund-raising bodies that had blossomed around the strike. And while the union offices were taken over by military police, the two towns were virtually put under military occupation. Bypassing the state governor and his administration, control of the region was taken over by the local army commander.

The strike carried on. The possibility of arrests had been catered for, and the arrest of the union leaders made no apparent difference to its organisation. Nor did the authorities' ban on the use of public premises for strike meetings have much effect - they were held instead in local churches (even though there was no church big enough to hold the 80,000 or so who had previously filled the local football stadium). The Church in fact played an important role in supporting the strike, from the archbishop of Sao Paulo down. A government leader even called the Church the 'country's number one political problem'. Following the arrests, the Church took over responsibility for providing food supplies for strikers. But the day-to-day running of the strike was in the hands of the 400-strong wages committee, made up of factory delegates.

As May Day approached, the strikers, indeed, the whole population of the two towns, were determined

to hold a march. The local military commander, a well-known hardliner, was determined to suppress it. But at the last moment, President Figueiredo, fearing the consequences of the bloodbath that was likely to ensue, ordered the troops to be called off. In the end, thousands marched through the streets, a great psychological victory.

It was clear, however, that the strike could not continue indefinitely. Soon after May Day, Santo André decided to call it off. On 11 May, São Bernardo followed suit. They went back to work, however, promising to carry the struggle into the factories by means of sabotage. The arrested leaders were soon released, pending trial. Then followed the reprisals. About 2,500 workers have since been sacked without any compensation, in many cases without even receiving the wages due to them. It leaked out that Volkswagen had filmed pickets at its factory gates in order to identify the 'militants' (a category which would seem to include most of the strikers). The government

is planning to split up at least the São Bernardo metalworkers union, in the hope of avoiding a similar strike, or worse, in the future.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The strike has had two main effects. It has shown that the abertura was never intended for the workers - the old legislative straitjacket has been maintained, and when that proved inadequate there followed the traditional resort to physical intimidation and armed repression.

The confrontation also served to demonstrate what a narrow basis of support the regime still has in the population as a whole. Indeed it was remarkable how the strike seemed to focus the hostility of all the various sectors opposed to the regime, not only workers, but also the opposition political parties, the liberal middle classes, the Church, students, and so on. Hence, though excluded from the abertura, the working class has done

much to undermine it. Whether or not such an achievement will prove advantageous is another question, but it certainly says something for the workers' importance in Brazilian society.

It should be clear from what is written above that the ABC metalworkers see their struggle as centred around the question of, what kind of trade union? corporatist or free? The more important question from a Solidarity point of view, are trade unions part of the solution or part of the problem?, is not really being raised. After 40 years of fascist labour laws, 16 years of military dictatorship, and a high degree of isolation from what is happening to workers in other countries, this situation is hardly surprising. On the other hand, it cannot be doubted that the mobilisation and militancy of the past two years have greatly increased the confidence and autonomy of the working class.

N.T.

## LETTER: IN DEFENCE OF SOVIET FREE TRADE UNIONS

On June 6, in response to a call from Soviet dissidents, the Campaign for Solidarity with the Soviet Working Class held a picket of the Soviet Embassy in remembrance of the events at Novochoerkassk in 1962, when troops killed over 80 strikers, and in support of today's struggles of Soviet workers. Despite the small number on the picket line it was well received by the public.

Of late, certain sectarian Left Communists have seen fit to attack the CSSWC, and the Solidarity members active in it, for supporting the free trade union movement in the USSR and Eastern Europe. While the rhetoric of Marxist left-overs from the twenties leaves us cold, in view of Solidarity's criticisms of the bureaucratized structure of British trade unions, we feel that we owe it to Solidarity members to explain our support for the Soviet free trade unions.

The free trade unions are not, and can not, be the same kind of organisation as the TUC and its affiliates. What they are is an attempt by groups of workers to organise in defence of their common class interests independently of the Communist Party and the state. Solidarity has defined meaningful revolutionary action as "...whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists

in their demystification." The free trade unions in the USSR and Eastern Europe, we feel, fall within the scope of this definition. That our critics cannot see this is a reflection of their determinist philosophy which holds that if the facts do not fit in with the theory then there must be something wrong with the facts. Until they take part in the building of a movement of solidarity with the struggle of soviet workers as they take place (rather than as they would like them to take place) their protestations of support for the victims of repression in the USSR aren't worth the paper they're printed on!

We are accused of counterposing support for the free trade unions and other independent workers' groups to support for violent illegal struggles such as the Hungarian uprising of 1956 and the Polish riots of 1970 and 1976. A reading of the Solidarity pamphlet Hungary 56 and of numerous articles in Solidarity and Social Revolution will show just how false this accusation is. Our critics should also note that the free trade unions in Poland and the samizdat paper Robotnik were the product of the 1976 riots.

While our critics have attacked the workers in the free trade unions in language strangely reminiscent of the editorial columns of Pravda, "openly bourgeois", "pro-western liberalism", "reactionary nationalism", are some of the all too

familiar phrases used, we allow the free trade unionists to speak for themselves. A declaration of the Free Inter Trade Union Association of Workers (SMOT) states: "In most of the disputes known to us, the official trade union functionaries take a stand on the side of management (contrary to their statutes) betraying the interests of workers and appearing to be, in effect, appendages of the state apparatus." There are many in Britain, Solidarity included, who would make similar criticisms of official trade unions and seek to build autonomous workers' groups as a revolutionary alternative. In the USSR and Eastern Europe, the free trade unions represent the first strivings towards such autonomous organisation by the working class.

The SMOT statement concludes: "SMOT is not a political organisation and does not turn to government for support. It counts on support from workers both inside and outside the country." The Campaign for Solidarity with the Soviet Working Class, with the active participation of Solidarity members and other libertarian revolutionaries, exists to win such support in Britain. If you want to help build a movement of solidarity with the struggles of our Soviet brothers and sisters contact: CSSWC, c/o 83, Gregory Crescent, Eltham, London, SE9 5RZ.

A.A. Raskolnikov.

# REVIEW

The State in Northern Ireland, 1921-72. P.A.F. Bew, P.J. Gibbon, H.H. Patterson. Manchester Univ. Press 1979 £7.95.

This book attempts to analyse the social character of the Northern Irish state from its violent founding to its violent abolition in 1972 with the imposition of direct rule. Its Irish Marxist authors view the state as an equilibrium of compromise (cf. Gramsci) maintained by the sharing out of different segments of state structure amongst the ruling bloc (cf. N. Polantz, Political Power and Social Class). That patron saint of Irish Marxism, James Connolly, is dismissed as having a pre-Marxist concept of ideology, a latter-day saint, Althusser, being regarded more favourably in this respect.

For the first time the state is examined in all its aspects - internal divisions, extravagant fiscal policies (notably in security spending and industrial subsidies), and in particular the authors concentrate on the

development and maintenance of the Protestant class alliance which gave the state its distinctive features.

The theory of a united ruling class cynically dividing the working class by any means possible - sectarianism, nationalism, racism - is deflated because there are always subdivisions and differences within the ruling class about how to divide and weaken working class solidarity and how to unify and strengthen its own class interests.

Inevitably numerous republican and socialist myths are exposed. For instance, even in the 1960s the annual subvention by the British treasury to run state services was more than the total of British investments in Ulster. One wonders precisely what British Imperialist interests are being defended against the Provos and their leftist apologists.

Similarly, the notion of the Protestant working class as a labour aristocracy takes some hard knocks. Both trade unionist militancy and sectarian violence were strong at various times among the skilled Protestant

workers in the Belfast shipyards and engineering factories, depending on the economic pressures and the strategies devised by the local Unionist elite to keep them loyal to the cause. The Northern Irish Labour Party made significant headway in Protestant areas in the late fifties and O'Neill made "stealing the NILP's thunder" a cornerstone of his policies.

The history of the relationship between the British state and the Northern Irish state is also analysed in some depth with useful documentation to show how both sides wanted to isolate the Irish question from the mainstream of British political thinking and how this was successful until it was too late for reforms to be introduced.

To many readers the style of the book will appear dogmatic and in places obscure, but anyone interested in the subject will find it worth reading. Besides being useful as a contribution to social and political history the arguments are useful "ammunition" against your local lefties who support conditionally or unconditionally (or whatever) deluded "anti-imperialist struggle" in Ireland.

Thomas James.

## SOLIDARITY FOR SEXIST CARTOONS ?

Any group which hopes to contribute to the social movement towards revolution must endeavour to understand the nature and role of sexism in society. The revolving editorship of "Solidarity" has thrown up several interesting articles in this area, but these in no way compensate for the appearance of sexist cartoons etc. which have also been thrown up.

In the last issue (no. 12) for instance, the insertion of a cartoon of a man with a leaf pegged to his prick, in the middle of Linda M.'s letter is both a personal and general insult. Are we to take it to mean that when a woman dares to criticise John Q.'s views she is sexually repressing (castrating) men? She is identified with John Q.'s phantom mother trying to go through the private cupboards of his mind that he tries to hold shut. (See Solidarity No. 11).

But this is mythology. Linda's criticisms are neutralised by appealing to traditional mythic stereotypes. If John has phantom mothers in his head, he must sort this out with the people he trusts. If it is a generalised social phenomenon it needs to be discussed. But when this phantom is taken for reality, when a real person is subordinated to the phantom, "Solidarity" is perpetuating the mythic tradition, on the one hand validating phantom mothers, and on the other using a pernicious technique to undermine valid argument.

The cover of issue 12 again represents the use of mythic sexism, and is echoed by some of the chants on the recent TUC day of action (e.g. "Maggie's got one, Jim Prior is one"). The election of a woman Prime Minister has in no way lessened the continual attacks that women suffer, but it has given leftists an opportunity to show how stupidly sexist they are. The relationship between sex and power is important.

But cartoons such as this do not examine it but reinforce it. Is monetarism particularly male? Does Thatcher need to borrow a bloke's balls to become a strong leader? Certainly it is a fact that because she has no balls she would not have been able to gain her present position if she did not have a strong character. But "Solidarity" likes the myth - "Behind every great woman, there is a man cradling his rocks".

Thatcher must be condemned for what she is - spokeswoman and leader of a capitalist faction - not for what sordid phantoms she represents for "Solidarity" or trade unionists. Only through distinguishing reality from phantasy can we understand how the real world works and how our phantasies cripple our lives.

Issue 12 completes its hattrick on the last page, where a couple of gay policemen are depicted. What relationship this has to the Bristol riot is not clear, but so far it is Solidarity's only comment on the event! The cartoon is disgusting in the way it depicts gaysex as being disgusting (only fit for the police because nobody else will love them?). Again Solidarity is tapping mythic tradition, in this case social abhorrence of homosexuality to make a cheap jibe at the police. Condemn them as the murdering thugs they are, not as gays which is irrelevant.

If Solidarity wants to criticise certain currents in feminism, or if they wish to criticise the function of the women's movement, this only has value if they make it clear that they are prepared to fight for the abolition of all the particular constraints that women suffer under. This fight must include the suppression of sexist ideology in their magazine, and all sexist tendencies within Solidarity. This is not a question of suppressing critical discussion, as critical discussion can only take place to the extent that phantasy is not mistaken for reality.

RISING FREE.

# ZIMBABWE

## NOW

The night before independence, Lord Soames, the governor of Zimbabwe, told the British TV audience, ".... Mr. Mugabe wishes to make the economy flourish. He recognises the importance of private enterprise, the entrepreneurial spirit. But there are many others, down to the grass-roots level, who naively expect their living standards to greatly improve...There will be a crisis of expectations."

Even before he had spoken his prediction had been fulfilled. The victory of Mugabe's ZANU-PF party in the March elections had been the signal for a wave of strikes through the country. More than 40 plants were affected and over 3000 strikers had been sacked before the end of March. By May 9000 sugar-cane workers were striking for rises of £25 per month, and public transport workers and the Wankie coal miners were also out, while on 14 May it was reported that security guards had fired on a crowd of nickel miners at the Gatooma mine who were stoning them. Most of these strikes were unofficial. The black trade unions have suffered in the past under restrictive legislation such as the Masters and Servants Act which the International Labour Organisation found to contravene conventions on forced labour, and the Industrial Conciliation Act which under the Smith regime virtually made strikes impossible. This gives the government the power of 'reasonable limitation of strikes and lockouts in the national interest involving prohibition of strikes in essential services'. The Act remains in force today. The trade union movement has also been divided along political lines. Revealingly, both the government and the union bureaucrats have seen the absence of a strong trade union structure as a key factor in the strike wave. The director of the Commonwealth TUC, founded in March "to promote the interests of 25 million workers in the Commonwealth", was nevertheless able to comment, "Divisions in the trade union movement in Zimbabwe have certainly contributed to the recent unrest and demonstrate that sound industrial relations cannot be developed in the absence of strong, representative and unified workers' organisations which are able to articulate grievances and to represent their members in collective negotiations". Meanwhile Mugabe was telling industrialists that he thought the British trade unions were a good example of the strong bodies Zimbabwe's workers needed. Apparently this did not go down too well, being described as "a particularly unfortun-

ate example". More to the point, the government has been talking of the need to establish "workers' committees" to negotiate directly with management, somewhat along the lines of "worker participation" in this country.

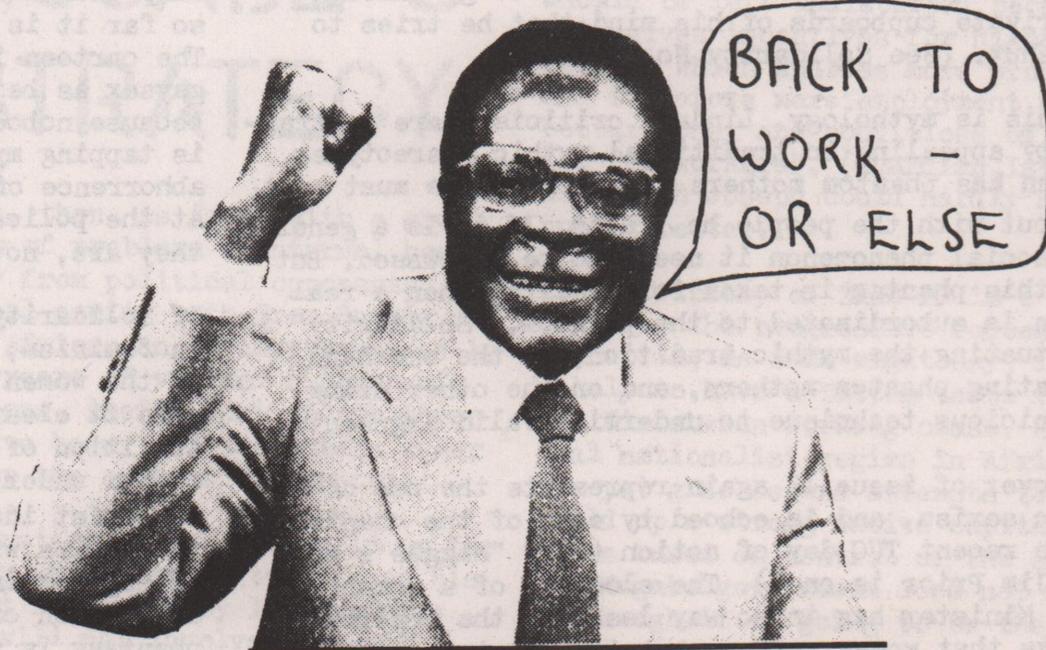
## DISTURBING TRENDS

In an effort to maintain its support among the workers the government announced at the end of May minimum wage levels of £20 per month for agricultural and domestic workers, £29 p.m. for miners receiving food and housing allowances, and £47 p.m. for urban workers. These were described by Kumbirai Kingai, the Minister of Labour, as an interim measure to give the government a breathing space in which to examine the prices and incomes structure while bringing relief to the low paid. Legislation to prevent lay-offs by employers is also supposed to be introduced. But most workers have not been impressed by this, claiming that most of them earn more than they have been offered anyway. Previously Kingai had tried personal appeals to strikers to return to work, arguing that they were damaging. Mugabe described the

wildcat strikes as a disturbing trend" and said that while he sympathised with the aspirations of lower paid workers he "must make it clear that the action they have taken recently will not advance their cause". But the government gave away its real thoughts recently when on May 28th Kingai stated, "To push wages too high at this stage, before Zimbabwe's economic recovery has barely begun, could place that recovery in jeopardy....If this appeal is not heeded and the workers persist in continuing with strikes, the Government...will take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the country as a whole does not suffer". Two days later he threatened that if strikers did not immediately return to work the government would take legal action against them.

That all sounds remarkably familiar. Mugabe's government, however, faces a very real dilemma. It came to power with a manifesto which was the most radical of those on offer, and benefited accordingly. ZANU-PF gained 62.9% of the votes cast, and even though the Daily Telegraph, with all the grace of a bad loser, suggested that people, intimidated, had voted for the party they thought would win instead of the one they really wanted, it is clear that Mugabe genuinely has popular support. He cannot afford to lose this by failing too obviously to come up with the goods, for if he does he will lay himself open to a coup.

There are two potential sources for this. The Popular Front party led by Joshua Nkomo is bitter at the way it has been shut out of power. Although Nkomo himself was given



MUGABE EXPLAINING THE NEED FOR MODERATION TO HIS SUPPORTERS

# ZIMBABWE

## NOW

the Ministry of Home Affairs, which carries responsibility for the 53 administrative districts and much of the development of the tribal trust lands, internal security is now appropriated to the Prime Minister's office. Only three other Popular Front politicians have been given ministries, none with special influence. Nkomo was said to "feel he has been cheated", and although his own loyalty to the regime does not seem to be in question the same cannot be said of many others lower in his party. Much political violence has been reported since Independence, with almost nightly shooting and abduction. Many followers of the former prime minister Abel Muzorewa, running scared, are said to have joined Popular Front and are participating in attacks on ZANU-PF supporters, while accusations have been made, in a pamphlet called "Death of Democracy", that ZANU-PF is attempting to prevent free local government elections, scheduled for the autumn, by manipulation of the supply of information and coercion. Meanwhile about 850 guerrillas belonging to ZIPRA (the military wing of the Popular Front) are thought to have stayed in the bush, and Mugabe is threatening to use the regular army, including the troops formerly loyal to the Smith regime, against them.

Behind Nkomo is the Soviet Union, which supported him throughout the war but ignored Mugabe, refusing to supply his troops with arms unless he subordinated himself to Nkomo. Now he is in power Mugabe has reciprocated this coolness to the Russians and East Germans, and has been far from ready to allow the establishment of the usual diplomatic presence. Our very own Sir Ian Gilmour told the Commons after Independence that "I have no evidence that Mr. Mugabe is under Soviet influence; quite the contrary".

## THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTION

Mugabe also faces the hostility of South Africa., which has been offering an open door to those whites who have been leaving Zimbabwe, due to prejudice, loss of privileges, and general uncertainty as to their future. Although the numbers who

have left is less than expected, it is thought that as many as half the present white population of 220,000 will leave in the next year. Although Mugabe has been at pains to encourage them to stay, others in his party have been perhaps less inclined to worry about white feelings; for example, Ian Smith has accused militants in the State Broadcasting System of "taking calculated measures to drive the whites away". For its part South Africa is making efforts to attract former army personnel both black and white, perhaps with a view to intervening in the event of civil war breaking out between the government and Popular Front forces. The South Africans convinced themselves right up to the elections that Muzorewa was going to win, and when his support collapsed their thinking shifted to Nkomo, supposedly more conservative than Mugabe. The Rhodesian intelligence forces, who were previously closely linked to South Africa in the fight against majority rule, have apparently accepted the fait accompli; they are ironically now concerned about the dangers of destabilisation by South Africa. A white civil servant was quoted in the Guardian of 25th April as saying, "South Africa's policy towards Zimbabwe seems to be to encourage the departure of whites, whatever their profession. They should be doing exactly the opposite if they want to see stability here. We have come to terms with Mugabe and they have got to do so too". All the indications, however, are that white South Africans do not intend to get the message. The violent suppression of the recent riots among the hitherto passive Coloured population has made even the most moderate non-white realise that the apparent easing of the petty restrictions of apartheid is merely cosmetic and that the rulers of South Africa have no intention of doing away with the system. At the same time, ZANU-PF's triumph has strengthened the hand of those who advocate open guerrilla warfare, as the recent attack on oil refineries indicates. Although a leading Afrikaner professor recently denounced apartheid as a "theological evil" and said that the younger generation is sympathetic to those views, white

South Africans are running rapidly out of time. The African National Congress was recently reported to be looking for guerrilla recruits in Zimbabwe. It looks increasingly likely that the for white South Africans the sins of the fathers will be visited upon the children in blood.

## PRAGMATISM

From the point of view of those capitalists who are finding that apartheid is affecting their ability to make profits, the South African government's hostility towards Mugabe is particularly pointless. Mugabe, far from being the bloodthirsty Marxist that Smith's propagandists made him out to be, is hardly more radical than, say our own Tony Benn. The election was fought on a manifesto stripped of all references to revolution or Marxism, and they have been noticeable by their absence in his post-victory speeches. "Pragmatic" is a word which has been much used to describe Mugabe. Shortly before Independence he gave an interview to the Sunday Times in which he said:

"I never said I was going to impose socialist principles upon society... In some cases you have traditions and principles of socialism converging. In some cases tradition cuts across socialist thinking; then you also have principles derived from Christian thinking. You have to blend these to produce a blueprint, taking into account the actual environment in which you find yourself. And the starting-point is the recognition that the socio-economic system here is essentially capitalistic. If you start by getting control of these capitalist enterprises, where do you go? You are only disrupting the infrastructure which has been built up over years. You can't maintain it. You haven't got the skills, you haven't got the know-how, you haven't got the capital. So for a start you accept the phenomenon of capitalism. But there are areas where we believe we can make a start. We are going to re-settle people on the land and we will want to try our ideas here - by re-settling them on a collective basis, but again on a basis which is acceptable to them. In the private sector there is little we can do for now. We don't want to disrupt the economy. But of course we are interested in the role of the worker,

# ZIMBABWE NOW

in his being organised so that he becomes more efficient as a producer, and in facilities for the development of his skills. Worker participation is the most we can do for now".

So the new government in Zimbabwe is not advocating self-management. Its ideas seem to be confined to a kind of industrial "democracy" similar to that proposed by some sections of the Labour Party in this country - nothing more radical. Workers who ask for more are likely to find themselves subjected to the same laws as Smith used against them. Mugabe's emphasis is to be on increased production, not increased democracy.

In order to build the economy, the government will be applying one common nationalist solution to a lack of capital. "We welcome investment, but it must be Zimbabwe-orientated - in other words, the majority shareholding must remain inside the country and profits be re-invested". Another common solution - nationalisation without compensation - has been ruled out. It would arouse too much hostility from foreign governments on which aid depends, and would also accelerate the white exodus. Despite pleas to the educated Zimbabweans still overseas to return home (for example, there was a large advert in the Guardian on 5th June), there are not yet enough skilled non-whites to operate the State machine, upon which the government's grip is by no means established. Despite support from the army commander Lt. Gen. Peter Walls, Mugabe cannot yet move against any opposition except of the most overt kind (i.e. the Popular Front guerrillas who refuse to lay down their arms).

To a certain extent the problem of maintaining the support of the peasants can be overcome, by settling them on unused land without alienating the white farmers by land confiscation. The (white) Commercial Farmers Union is keen to show the government where it can find almost a million acres which could be taken over by peasant co-operatives, and so allow land reform to get off to a relatively painless start. It is proposed that collective systems of marketing will be set up, and the peasants will be allowed to keep what they earn from their produce. Land held under absentee ownership may also be taken over, but Mugabe has made it clear that he does not intend to interfere with the "efficiently-run" white-owned farms which provide a good deal of foreign exchange. The appointment of the white Denis Norman as Minister of Agriculture was obviously designed to reassure the white farmers, but such an appointment clearly bodes ill for a radical land policy.

At present, however, because of the fact that the black population (with about 675,000 farmers) is farming only one million more acres than 6682 whites, the blacks are reduced to subsistence farming. This means that a large proportion of the population in fact works under a migrant labour system, moving between the Tribal Trust Lands and the mines factories and white homes for longer or shorter periods. It may not prove possible to satisfy the aspirations of the ZANU-PF supporters simply by using unoccupied land. In addition, there are about 333,000 refugees to be catered for, putting further pressure on the government to provide homes, schools, medical services, and so on. The war has caused the virtual collapse of rural medical services, while the destruction of schools has aggravated the difficulties caused by population increase. There has also been an agricultural decline - loss of cattle, failure to plant crops, and a drought - which means that a large number of people will almost certainly need emergency food supplies for this year. With this background it is clear that there is a lot to be done if the country is to recover from the effects of war. Not only cash is required. The government does not have the technicians to run services, and is particularly looking to Britain to provide training for potential civil servants. The Zimbabwean civil service is almost entirely white. A further problem is that the new government is legally liable for the debts of the Smith regime, estimated in 1972 at £79m, and now surely much higher. But this problem is likely to be solved by being ignored. Mugabe no doubt regards it as impracticable for his government to attempt repayments.

## MUGABE'S STRATEGY

Mugabe, then, is faced with a great number of problems - internal hostility from political opponents, and external enmity both from Russia and South Africa; an economy weakened by seven years of war and fifteen of sanctions, ineffectual though these may have been; and supporters eager to reap the rewards of support.

His strategy will be to build up the economy while hoping to appease his peasant followers by land reforms which will not involve alienating the major white landowners, until such time as his government can

establish a sufficiently strong grip on the state to use it against his political opponents. He is no black racist, and if he can maintain his grasp on power the new Zimbabwe has a fair chance of becoming a land of equal opportunity. But it will be an equal opportunity for blacks to become capitalists. Under Muzorewa many African businessmen obtained only minor improvements in their position. A real transformation in their favour will involve the use of state power.

Mugabe is not keen to become over-involved in South Africa. He has said that "We can assist the South African nationalist movements physically, diplomatically, and materially.... That is the best we can do in the circumstances. It would be disastrous to our own system if we were drawn into the conflict..." He does not intend Zimbabwe to be a 'front-line' state in the struggle against apartheid.

Mugabe's policies were well described by the former Labour Foreign Secretary David Owen when he said, "Mugabe's vision of Zimbabwe is wholly nationalistic; he has a clear view of which way the country should go. He may absorb some aspects of Marxism-Leninism. He has also absorbed the mistakes of other African leaders. He knows he can't run Zimbabwe like Tanzania. When he talks about participation, it sounds like what we mean by "industrial democracy". He understands that he has to move at a pace his country can accept. But there's no doubt about his determination to change things".

Maybe not. Those changes, however, are unlikely to affect the place of the working class in Zimbabwean industry. The government's attitude is made clear in a speech by the Mines Minister, Maurice Nyagumbo:

"We believe that free enterprise should be left undisturbed because this gives incentives for higher production which enables more profits and therefore more employment and better money and conditions of service for workers". (Guardian, 1st May) Sir Keith Joseph could hardly have put it better.

If the victory of ZANU-PF is a triumph for the progressive forces of the world, as some might say, it is likely to have a bitter taste for the Zimbabwean working class. No radical nationalist regime in Africa has yet gone beyond attempts to build up a strong native capitalist class based on control of the state. The Mugabe government does not look as though it is going to be the first.

S.H.

# REVIEW

WAR AND AN IRISH TOWN. Eamonn McCann, Pluto Press, 1980, £1.95.

This new edition of "War and an Irish Town" differs considerably from the first one. It keeps the first hundred-odd pages - McCann's personal account of "The Troubles" up to the removal of the Republican no-go areas in 1972 - and adds new sections covering the story to date and an analysis of the Provisionals and the ideology of Republicanism, but dumps the original section on the origins and history of the Six Counties, for which the reader is referred to Mike Farrell's "Northern Ireland: the Orange State". The book is well-written, never failing to hold the attention, and in particular the analysis of Republicanism is excellent. McCann traces it from the ideas of Wolfe Tone, the leader of the United Irishmen's rising of 1798, whose call for Irish independence was aimed at the "developing Irish class of mainly Presbyterian manufacturing and professional men who began to realise towards the end of the eighteenth century that they would have to break the power of the Protestant Ascendancy in order to make political and economic progress". His references to the "men of no property" were warnings to the Irish bourgeoisie that the peasant masses would act if they did not.

Tone's own efforts, of course, failed. McCann points out that when Republicanism was reborn before the First World War it remained largely rural in character and had little contact, despite James Connolly, with the developing Irish labour movement. Nationalism's "theory, tactics and organisational forms were not forged in the course of open mass struggle, but, bit by conspiratorial bit, in kitchens and cottages on the hillside... The movement so formed has always seen itself as acting for the people. If the people approved what was done on their behalf, so much the better; but their approval was never considered absolutely necessary".

Furthermore, the present movement thinks of itself as the heir of the Sinn Fein which was the majority in

the Second Dail, "the only parliament ever elected by vote of all Ireland, and thus, so the theory runs, still the only legitimate authority the nation has known". This concept of themselves as an alternative government has left the Republicans, in the guise of the Provos, both resistant to compromise with Loyalists or Brits, and largely indifferent to approaches from the Irish left.

Realising this, McCann has altered his perspective on the Irish road to socialism, from the building of the independent revolutionary party for which he called in the first edition to the hope of a leftward swing in the Provos themselves. He points out that they are the first Republicans to be based predominantly on the working class, and quotes at length Belfast leader Gerry Adams' call for "an economic resistance movement, linking up Republicans with other sections of the working class". But he himself realises that "given the structure and traditions of the Republican movement it would be damnably difficult to put into effect. It would mean making a fundamental break from the politics of the founding fathers". It would mean the end of the Provos as they are and have been. Where is the evidence that this is the clear perspective of the Provo left?

The failure of the Irish left leaves McCann with no alternative but to call for unconditional support for the Provos. The final sentence of the book is "There is no such thing as an anti-imperialist who does not support the Provos and no such thing as a socialist who is not anti-imperialist". Solidarity readers are unlikely to find that message acceptable.

In view of his observations on the undemocratic nature of Republican ideology it is hard to believe that McCann could seriously expect even the left victory inside the Provos that he hopes for to produce a force for socialism. If he does then he ought to read "As We See It", especially point 7, at once. But if he doesn't - if he thinks that the Six Counties must go through a stage of nationalist capitalism (or even state capitalism, as he writes for Socialist Worker) before socialism for Ireland is possible - then he shouldn't call himself a Bolshevik.

Is a group whose ideology reflects the interests of the nationalist bourgeoisie "progressive" simply because it is opposed to international capital? Is the British presence in Ireland still imperialist when Britain spends more on Ulster's economy than it actually gets back? Wouldn't a genuine left movement inside the Provos result in yet another "red/green" split, with the financial support going to the "greens"? What is to be the role of the Protestant working class in building a socialist Ireland? None of these questions is answered by this book. Indeed, McCann hardly seems aware that most of them exist.

## EDITORS' NOTE

For libertarian readers there is no definitive work on Irish history and present day politics as far as we are aware, and little prospect of one that we can foresee. Perhaps the best we can do is to use conflicting viewpoints to balance each other without expecting to agree fully with any. Such are the books reviewed here and on page 9.

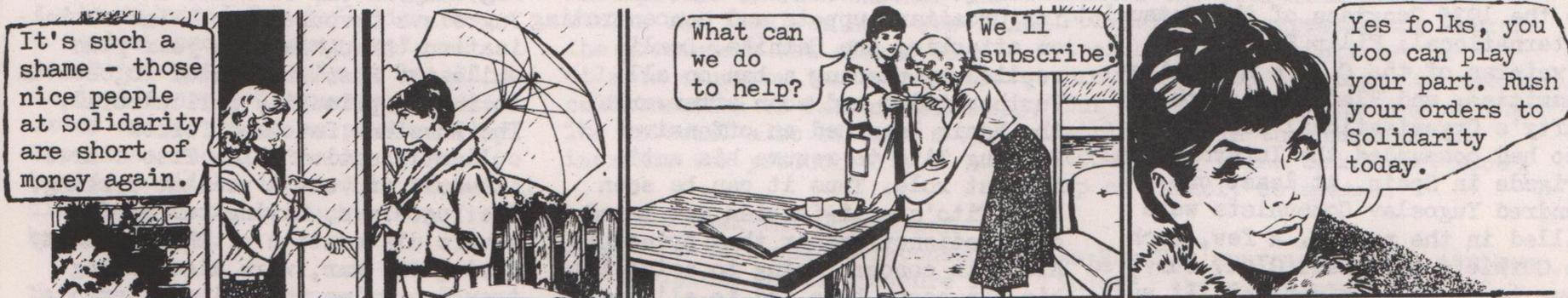
## LETTER

The French O.C.L. (Organisation Communiste Libertaire) is organising a camp this summer in south west Brittany from July 12 until Aug. 17. The site is in St. Tugen, not far from the sea, between Audierne and Plogoff where the French state intends to build a nuclear power station. You may have heard of the strong opposition to nuclear power in the area. We think the presence of the international libertarian movement would be very good; invitations have been sent all over Europe.

Cost: about £2 per day, including food, according to one's salary, and free for kids.

To get there go to Audierne, take the road towards La Pointe du Raz, then the way will be signposted. It is possible to get the train to Quimper then a bus to Audierne. Usually it is easy to hitch-hike (it says here - Eds.)

For more details, write to: Dieudonne MOISAN, BP 82, 22200 GUINGAMP, France.



# NO TEARS FOR TITO

International power politics is a sickening business. Perhaps most sickening of all are the tributes showered upon the dead by those who abused them when they lived. A prime example of such exercises in hypocrisy was the recent funeral of Yugoslavia's dictator Josip Tito. Present at this revolting spectacle were the leaders of all three power blocs - the West, the Warsaw Pact and China. It is not so long since the Russians and the Chinese were attacking Tito and his regime as "Trotskyite-Fascists", "revisionists" and "American agents." The West, on the other hand has never really made up its mind, seeing Tito both as an ally against Russia and as a dangerous Communist. Despite all this, politicians, capitalist and communist alike, flocked en masse to Yugoslavia each one to pay his or her tribute; not out of respect for the dead but as another move in the deadly game of power politics.

This article sheds no tears, crocodile or otherwise, for Tito, nor does it pay any tributes. Rather it seeks to expose the reality of the man and the regime he created which lies behind the myths. And when it comes to Tito and the Yugoslavia he dominated for so long myths there are in plenty.

Tito has been portrayed in the West as an anti-Stalinist. It is forgotten by those who do so that Tito rose to power in the Yugoslav Communist Party at the time when Stalin's purge trials were reaching their bloody zenith. These trials, it must be remembered, not only wiped out most of the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party but also claimed the lives of the leaders of foreign Communist parties who had found refuge in Moscow. The Yugoslav Communist Party was no exception. Amongst those who perished were Gorkic and Parovic, delegates from the Yugoslav Central Committee to the 1935 Congress of the Communist International; Filip Filipovic, a veteran of the C.I.'s Executive Committee; and Vlada Copic, the Party's Organisational Secretary who had commanded the International Brigade in Spain. At least one hundred Yugoslav Communists were killed in the purges. A few, such as Gorkic's wife Beti Glan, survived long terms of imprisonment. It was

Tito who succeeded Copic as Organisational Secretary and Gorkic as General Secretary of the YCP. There was only one way he could have achieved this - by unquestioning loyalty and total obedience to Stalin! It has been suggested that another reason for Tito's survival was his betrayal of his comrades to the NKVD.

One of the strongest images of Tito is that of the anti-Nazi resistance hero. Yet it was not until the Nazi invasion of the USSR that Tito started operations against the German and Italian Fascists. Until then, under the terms of the Hitler-Stalin pact, the Communists had seen the Nazis as allies. The royalist Cetniks, on the other hand, had been fighting the Nazis since their invasion of Yugoslavia in April, 1941. It was only the invasion of the USSR, which overnight transformed the Nazis from allies into enemies, which led Tito to play his anti-Fascist role. After the war, the Communists would execute and imprison many of the Cetniks on false charges of collaboration. Amongst those who so perished was the Cetnik leader Mihailovic who was shot after a show trial in 1947. Yet, if anyone can justifiably be accused of collaboration it is Tito!

In March 1943 there took place a meeting between Lieutenant-General Benignus and three leading Titoists - Djillas, Velebit and Popvic. The Titoists stated that they had no reason for fighting the Germans and proposed a halt to hostilities to enable them to settle accounts with the Cetniks. They also claimed that they would fight the British should they land in Yugoslavia.

A few days later Kasche, the German Minister in Zagreb, sent a message to Berlin in which he reported the possibility of the Titoists ceasing hostilities against the Axis and its Croatian puppets and concentrating on attacking the Cetniks. Berlin replied by placing a ban on all further talks and soon afterwards the Nazis launched an offensive forcing Tito to resume his anti-fascist role. Thus it can be seen that Tito's anti-fascism was based on expediency rather than principle, his main concern being to establish his own power base and to eliminate

his rivals. The Western allies supported Tito not because they considered him a better anti-fascist than Mihailovic, but because the necessity of their continuing, at all costs, their alliance with Stalin demanded that they do so.

Winston Churchill, who would make much political capital out of anti-Communism, summoned Yugoslavia's King Peter and demanded that he make a radio broadcast denouncing Mihailovic. When Peter demurred, Churchill replied that he knew better than Peter what was good for Yugoslavia. The broadcast was duly made.

Taking a leaf from Stalin's book, Tito used the war as an opportunity to rid himself of his enemies. Even before his entry into Belgrade in 1944 he made it clear that supporters of the Serbian quisling Nedic would be shot on the spot. Many of these together with other anti-Tito Yugoslavs, Cetniks, Ustasi and Croat and Slovene Home Guards fled into Austria in the hope that the allies would treat them as prisoners of war. Some of these, the Ustasi in particular, were undoubtedly fascists guilty of terrible atrocities. Yet many others were anti-fascists or simple peasants who had organised Home Guard units to defend their villages. Under the terms of the Yalta agreement, which sought to preserve the wartime Western-Soviet alliance, all were returned to face Communist "justice". Some were shot on entering Yugoslavia others were subjected to long forced marches, those who could not keep up being bayoneted by the roadside. The survivors were executed after show trials.

Until 1948, the new Yugoslavia was built on the Soviet model. That year saw Yugoslavia split from Moscow. This split was not a struggle between "liberal" and Stalinist varieties of Communism, nor was it a struggle between the advocates of "self-management" and of a Soviet-type command economy. The Belgrade-Moscow split was a struggle between rival bureaucracies over who would dominate Yugoslavia and the Balkans. The Yugoslavs had been advocating a federation in which Yugoslavia would absorb Bulgaria and Albania. The Russians opposed this fearing that a strengthened Yugoslavia would rival their hegemony in the Balkans. The Yugoslavs favoured rapid industrialisation through a five year plan while the Russians wanted Yugoslavia to remain primarily agricultural. The Russians favoured forced collectivisation while Tito feared it would provoke a peasant uprising. The Yugoslavs, having suffered severe dislocation of their economy during the war, were also having trouble paying the tribute demanded

by Moscow of its vassals. It was these factors which resulted in the split. A valuable contemporary account and analysis of this split was given by Castoriadis in his article "The Yugoslav Bureaucracy" in Socialisme ou Barbarie Nos 5-6, March 1950.

After the split, Tito and his supporters dealt with Moscow sympathisers in the same way that Stalin dealt with alleged Titoists - they were imprisoned or shot. Two pro-Moscow members of the Political Bureau of the YCP, Andrija Hebrang and Arso Jovanovic, were shot and at least 8,500 others imprisoned. The task of purging the pro-Moscow element went to Rankovic, the then head of the UDBA (secret police), a man who had once been loud in his praise of the USSR. In the 1960s Rankovic was himself purged.

## THE GREATEST MYTH

The greatest myth of all about Tito's Yugoslavia is that of workers' self-management, a myth spread in the West not only by state-capitalist Fabians but also by some self-styled libertarians. This "self-management" is not generalised, but exists in a formalistic fashion only at plant level. In reality power is firmly in the hands of a bureaucratically centralised state machine controlled by a clique of leading members of the League of Yugoslav Communists (as the CP is called nowadays). Wage differentials remain wide, in 1966 factory managers received 10 times the wages of workers while leading Communist officials got as much as 1 million dinars a month compared to the workers' 35,000. The lie of this "self-management" has been exposed by the increasing number of strikes by Yugoslav workers such as the Zagreb transport workers who struck in 1972. Between 1958 and 1966 there were 1,365 strikes. If Yugoslav

workers really self-managed all their own affairs against whom would they be striking?

Another myth is that of Yugoslavia's independence from the power blocs. In fact Yugoslavia has come to depend to a great extent on Western aid. From 1945 to 1963 the Western powers had given to Yugoslavia aid valued at 5,460 million dollars, over half of it coming from America.

Tito has tried to gag not only his critics on the Right using such methods as the assassination of emigres by the UDBA, but also those on the Left. In 1968, students demonstrating with the slogan, down

"down with the red bourgeoisie" were beaten up by the police. The following year, Zoran Glusevic, editor of Knjizeevne Novine was imprisoned for "harming the reputation of a friendly power" i.e. attacking the invasion of Czechoslovakia. In 1972, three Belgrade students, Milan Nikoloc, .

Pavlusho Imsirovic and Jelka Kljajic were imprisoned for forming an alleged Trotskyist group. Nikolic revealed the true nature of Yugoslav society when he wrote:

"socialist democracy and self-management cannot be built at the same time as the repressive role of the state grows ... workers' self-management is meaningless without workers taking part in all important decision making and with a ruling party completely outside the workers' control..."

This is the reality of Yugoslavia today, a Yugoslavia built by Tito and his fellow bureaucrats on the Leninist model with a few cosmetic disguises, a Yugoslavia ruled by a privileged bureaucratic elite. It is because this reality is not the realisation but the negation of socialist self-management that it must be destroyed by the revolutionary action of the workers along with all other capitalist states.

Terry Liddle.



"Now, in our party programme Yugoslavia is defined as a degenerate workers' state"

## LETTER

From Compendium Bookshop:

Comrades,

Please find enclosed the remaining issues of 'Solidarity' no.12. I'm returning them, in disgust, because of the offensive anti-gay cartoon on the back cover.

Your by-line is "for social revolution" but you would seem to ignore the most important social movements of the seventies - feminism and gay

liberation, and by printing that cartoon you ally yourselves with reactionary bigots like Whitehouse, putting yourselves firmly on the side of our oppressors.

As a gay man I find it hard to take your revolutionary pretensions seriously, and as a bookseller I refuse to sell such heterosexist crap. I will not be taking any more copies of 'Solidarity' until you publish an apology. If you want to carry on publishing homophobic material you'd better find another outlet.

In struggle,  
Philip D.

BLOCKED OUTLETS: London Editorial Group's Comment

This letter is not the only outraged reaction to 'Solidarity for Social Revolution', nor the only instance of consequent suppression of the magazine.

We regret any genuine offence caused to readers by the graphics in the last (Leeds) issue. But we regret still more the growing tendency to declare taboo any frivolous or unorthodox reference to sexuality, and to apply blanket censorship to any group daring to produce such an item.

London Editorial Group,  
SfSR 13.

The gaff was blown on the Soviet nuclear disaster in the Urals almost inadvertently in an article entitled 'Two Decades of Dissidence' (*New Scientist*, Nov. 4, 1976). Describing the growth of the dissident movement among Soviet scientists, Zhores Medvedev, a biochemist now working in London, referred to a 'tragic catastrophe' which occurred in 1958 as a result of the burial of nuclear reactor waste.

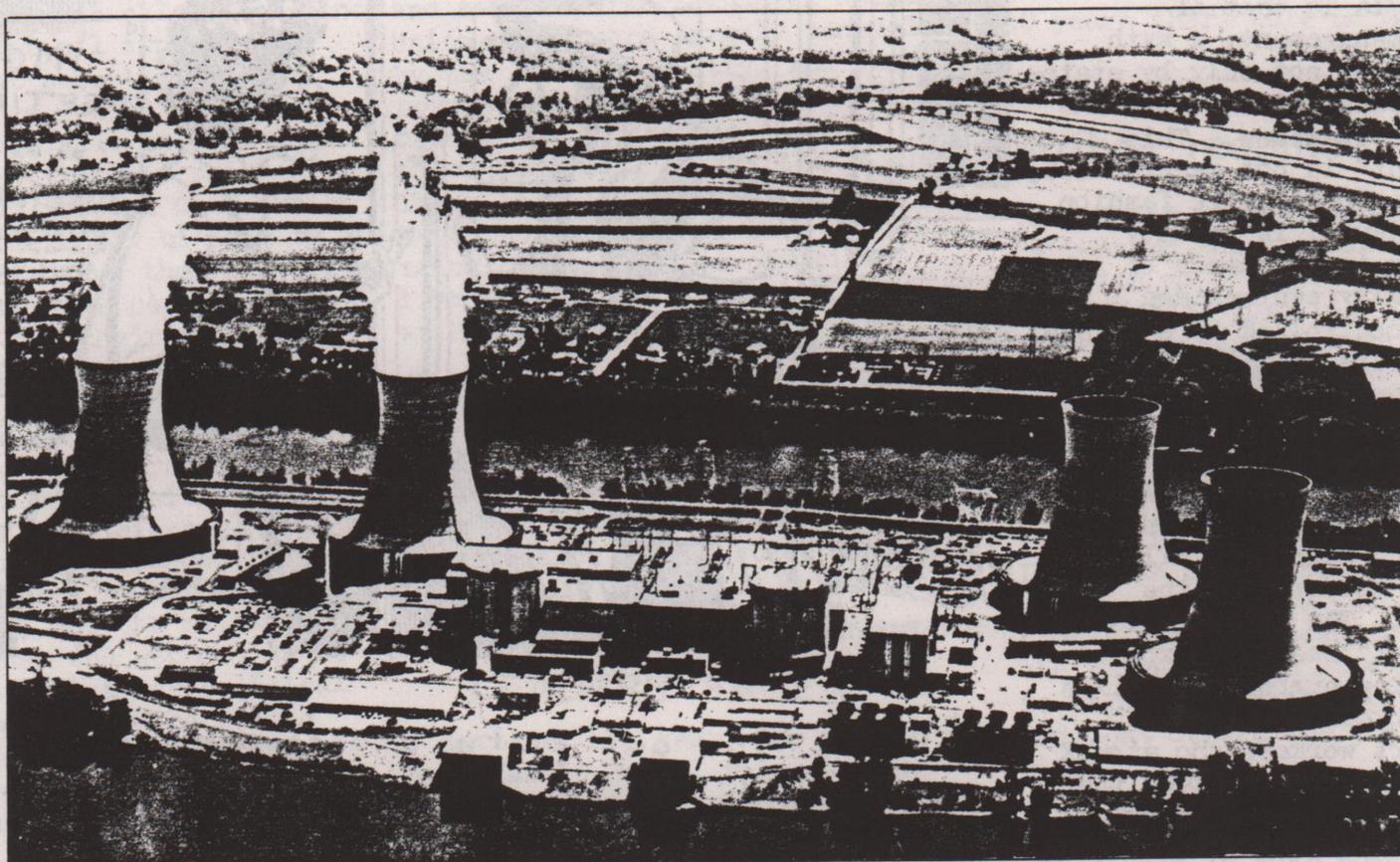
According to this account, a sudden enormous explosion led to

The large contaminated area was considered dangerous and kept closed to the public. As 'the largest gamma (radiation) field in the world' it became a focus for the study of radiation effects and the resulting publications eventually provided corroborative evidence for the disaster.

Following the 'unexpected sensation' caused by this article, Medvedev supplied more details (*New Scientist*, June 30, 1977, 'Facts Behind the Soviet Nuclear Disaster'). The affected area was described as being

Medvedev reported that since 1958 more than 100 works on the effects of the long-lived radioactive isotopes strontium-90 and caesium-137 on natural plant and animal life had been published. The time span of observations - 10 years in 1968, etc. - relates to the date of the accident, and the scale of research indicated a much larger field than could conceivably have been created deliberately for experimental purposes. Despite general cageyness about the causes and location of the contamination, indications pointed to the Urals

# THE WHOLE WORLD OVER



## THE WHOLE WORLD - OVER!

the scattering of radioactive dust and materials over a wide area, affecting tens of thousands of people and killing hundreds. The figures were, of course, never made public. Many villages and towns were evacuated only after the appearance of radiation sickness, and others, with high or moderate but not lethal levels of radioactivity, were not evacuated at all. The stifling of certain branches of science, under Stalin, was a serious handicap in treating the victims.

near Kyshtym, between the Urals cities of Cheliabinsk and Sverdlovsk, and the accident is said to have happened in the winter of 1957-58. It was pointed out that confirmation had been received from another emigre, Lev Tumerman, and detailed reference was made to Soviet scientific journals. Tumerman's eye-witness account described hundreds of square miles of heavily contaminated 'forbidden territory' in which all the villages and small towns had been destroyed to prevent the return of evacuees.

region, and Cheliabinsk was mentioned once. The early work had all been classified, but publication became possible after the death of Khrushchev.

The revelations were not only greeted with comprehensible shock/horror; there was also a strong defensive reaction from the nuclear establishment in the West. Scoring points off the USSR appeared less important than whitewashing the nuclear industry and its safety

Map showing the approximate area contaminated by the nuclear disaster in Russia.



record world-wide. Sir John Hill, chairman of the UKAEA (well-known manufacturers of such white-wash) 'tried to dismiss (Medvedev's) story as "science-fiction", "rubbish" or a "figment of the imagination".'

More seriously, experts in the field queried whether such an event could have occurred in the way described. Some of Medvedev's contentions were open to challenge and raised controversies which are not yet fully resolved. His own speciality lying in a different, though not unrelated, branch of science, he had had to study the subject in order to prove that what he knew had happened was not impossible or imaginary.

### THE EVIDENCE

Further confirmation of the event, though not of all the details, was forthcoming when CIA files revealed contamination emanating apparently from military nuclear facilities near the city of Kasli, north-east of Kyshtym. This evidence is discussed in Nuclear Safety Vol. 20, No.2, March-April 1979 (J.R. Trebalka et al., 'Another Perspective of the 1958 Soviet Nuclear Accident'), and compared with the other versions. According to this, the nuclear-related incident(s) occurred around 1957-8, resulting from an explosion in a high-level-waste storage area or experimental airborne nuclear weapons test, and leading to loss of life, evacuation of civilians from a large area, and the establishing of a restricted radiation-contamination zone near the Kasli site.

There were, however, inconsistencies in some of the CIA reports regarding dates and location of fall-out, and the authors of the 'Nuclear Safety' article comment on the absence of first- or second-hand reports or confirmed authoritative information, as well as on differences between the various accounts and internal anomalies

within them. They nonetheless conclude that radiology studies had evidently been designed to take advantage of a large, inadvertently contaminated area of which the total minimum area could reasonably be estimated at well over 25 square kilometres. The most credible case for the cause of the incident appeared to them to be some sort of accidental airborne release, but they considered the range of possible explanations to be broader than suggested by Medvedev or his critics.

The lad himself returned to the fray with a book: Zh.A. Medvedev, Nuclear Disaster in the Urals, 1979. An excerpt published in New Scientist, Oct. 11 1979, shows a readiness to re-assess the possibilities without any inclination to deny it ever happened. He goes into the history of reactor construction in the USSR, in a context of great urgency to catch up with the USA, and the ad-hoc working out of storage methods for waste.

He also makes the point that the USSR by no means has a monopoly of nuclear hazards, citing the near disaster, by all indications apparently analogous to the one in the Urals, which was 'barely averted' at Hanford Nuclear Centre in the USA. The location of this 'near-miss' was one of the trenches into which the less active waste was poured. Plutonium was adsorbed and accumulated in a relatively thin upper layer of soil, and a chain reaction resulting in an explosion could have been set off if water soaked into the plutonium-rich soil.

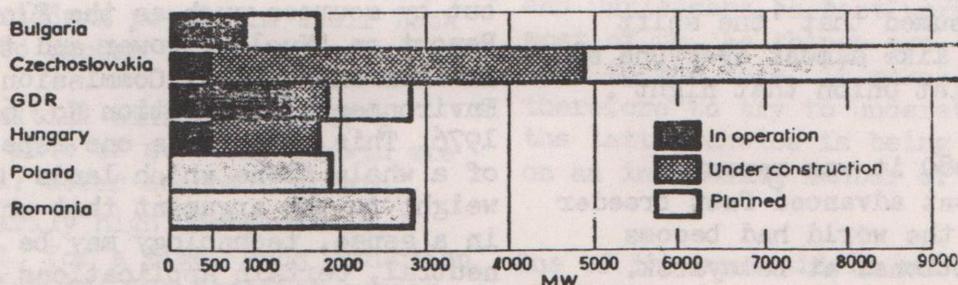
In Chelyabinsk, this scenario could have been a reality, with snow in the region and the water table closer to the surface. Alternative hypotheses are: an explosion in an insufficiently cooled tank, e.g. one with a single cooling system which failed, or with none at all; an explosion occurring during the pumping of high-level liquid wastes under high pressure into 'authorised' geological formations; residual plutonium in the processing solutions disposed of underground becoming concentrated by selective adsorption and, in the presence of abundant water, constituting a critical assembly which eventually exploded.

'But', the article concludes, 'that the explosion actually occurred, causing a great many casualties and contaminating a vast territory, and that it resulted from the improper storage of reactor products cannot be doubted'. The plethora of possible ways in which such a serious accident could have happened is in any case far from reassuring.

While we are on the subject of Medvedev, it is worth mentioning another book of his, Soviet Science, Oxford University Press 1979, £5.95. An extract in New Scientist, May 17 1979, touches on some of the differences between the scientific environments east and west. Science in the Soviet Union, financed exclusively through the state budget and state industrial systems, is not subject to public pressures, which are anyway strongly inhibited by the lack of freedom of the press and of association, preventing the spread of knowledge and organisation.

Russians, it would appear, live near nuclear installations 'either without any protest or without any knowledge of them'. The example is given of Obninsk, with 10 nuclear reactors operational within the town limits or 2-3 kilometres outside. Yet Medvedev 'never heard a single complaint about these "environmental" problems' during the 11 years he lived there. 'The logic was simple - if you come to live and work here, don't worry'. The scientific community is also, of course, subject to strict controls. In the context of a system where the first small reactors were tested in 'half-institutes, half-prisons, with much of the work being done by prisoners, according to the custom of the time', and where dissent draws the penalties we know of, the lack of direct evidence when things do disastrously wrong is perhaps less surprising than the fact that these things do come to light eventually.

Even among safety-conscious scientists, however, it would seem that concern does not lead to rejection of the state's nuclear programme. A writer in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Feb. 1980, interviewed several dissenting scientists on the subject, and found at most a readiness to comment unfavourably on aspects



Eastern Europe's ambitious nuclear power programme

# THE WHOLE WORLD OVER

of safety policy, e.g. the fact that no-one knew those directly responsible for the safety of power reactors, and the absence of outside checks. Evidently some attempts at improvement have been made: experimental reactors at Leningrad, Moscow and Dubna were started with no safety rules and no safety committees; now there are 5 separate supervisory safety committees in Leningrad. Cynics may wonder whether this is an improvement, but we are told that although these first needed to be educated, they are 'now even helpful'. Incidentally, no information was requested or volunteered about the accident in the Urals.

Little prospect, then, of Torness-style occupations, Brittany-style barricades and mass demos., or even Windscale-type enquiries to give pause to the Eastern European nuclear power programme. But at least there are unofficial groups monitoring developments and spreading news. The Charter 77 group in Czechoslovakia produced a document describing two serious accidents at an operating power station in 1976 and 77, both leading to radioactive contamination of the atmosphere (see *New Scientist*, Oct. 18 1979, 'A Czech Three Mile Island'). The Czech Atomic Energy Authority did not deny the occurrences, but said they were 'not big, not like Harrisburg'. Causes were said to include lax safety precautions, bad labour relations, over-emphasis on productivity, and widespread alcoholism.

Back in the USSR, alcoholism was also said to have played a part in the outbreak of a fire which threatened a fast reactor cooling system on New Year's Eve, 1978-79, at Beloyarsk. Several firefighters were killed; there was a risk of explosion which would release a radioactive cloud, and trains and buses were standing by to evacuate the nearby settlement of Zarechnyi (*Nature*, Jan. 31 1980). Local opinion assumed that 'the shift was drunk, like almost everyone else in the Soviet Union that night'.

In April 1980 it was reported that the most advanced fast breeder reactor in the world had become fully operational at Beloyarsk. Cheers, comrades.

## EAST AND WEST

None of this means that the West has any grounds for complacency, either in the matter of safety or that of 'open government' and civil liberties. That nothing has happened - yet - to compare with Kyshtym/Kasli is due more to good luck than good management (the latter is a paradoxical expression anyway). An extensive dossier could be compiled on things that have happened already: the fire at Windscale in 1957; a recent electricity breakdown in France that would have been disastrous if the reactor concerned had been fully operational; cracks in reactor turbine blades; leaks of radioactivity all over the place.

In fact such dossiers have been compiled, a good example being Clamshell Alliance's 'Nuclear Accidents: A Look at the Record', printed (with an attempted answer) in *IEEE Transactions on Nuclear Science*, Oct. 1978. Here too we are dependent on groups outside and dissenting from the establishment, and the odd maverick within it, to spread vital information. Three Mile Island highlighted not only the fragility of the nuclear safety record but also the readiness of those responsible to suppress and distort the news of what was happening and its effects. The cover-up was a long term process, and the repercussions are far from over. The story is not being written here, but it is significant that the official response in the U.K. was a clampdown on information to the public.

Official secrecy is only part of the apparatus of security and 'unacceptable' (even by bourgeois democratic standards) disregard of civil liberties which is seen as an inevitable concomitant of nuclear power, not by paranoid leftists but by sources such as the Flowers Report on 'Nuclear Power and the Environment', Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution No. 6, 1976. This in turn is one aspect of a whole scene which lends weight to the argument that while, in a sense, technology may be neutral, certain applications and developments of it are manifestly

more suited to an authoritarian society than a libertarian one. Clearly, too, the energy programme is based on the presumed requirements of advanced capitalist societies.

## ANTI NUCLEAR

Because of this, and because detailed discussion of the subject involves difficult and even intractable problems, there may be a tendency to think that it is futile for us to intervene, especially if what we have to say is already being said by others. But the anti-nuclear movement includes a number of elements, some of whom more or less explicitly recognise that the question raised is one of decisions vitally affecting ordinary people, and over which they have no control. Any capitalist - or state- benefiting energy system is going to involve an alienated, exploited and physically endangered work force, as well as damage to the environment for all of us. You couldn't trust them to run a windmill decently. Opposing an outstandingly harmful course of action does not oblige us to come up with an alternative acceptable to the ruling class, or to support another faction of it. What they decide to do, if nuclear power production is obstructed, is their problem; that they have the power to decide is ours. Our only 'advice' can be that they abdicate that power.

Even those who consider that nuclear energy might have a place in a different type of society will agree that it is bloody dangerous in the hands of any ruling elite - and what they do with it now may pre-empt some options for the future. Although the doomwatch sub-title of this article is still more appropriate to the discussion of nuclear weapons than to the 'peaceful uses' of atomic energy, the latter is affecting increasingly large chunks of the globe here and now, whether spectacularly as in the Urals or insidiously with the seeping of caesium-137 from Windscale into the Irish Sea.

Even if they leave us with a world to win, radioactive waste will not disappear, come the glorious dawn.

L.W.

# TORNNESS



A massive state security operation involving 500-800 police confronted the 200 of us attempting to occupy the Torness nuclear power station construction site near Edinburgh in May. The overwhelming odds made impossible our original aim of occupying the site and transforming it into a public park! But we caused the authorities plenty of problems and came out of the action with a strong feeling of solidarity.

## what all happened

Friday evening, May 2nd, and we all meet to discuss what action to take. Considerably outnumbered, we decide to limit ourselves to fence cutting that night, in the hope that enough people arrive next day to make occupying possible.

Unlike the May 1979 occupation, there are no 'alternative Police Officers' among us giving out orders. We are organised in autonomous groups without leaders. The meetings, though, sometimes tend to ramble and be

rather inconclusive. But we all need practice in taking responsibility without being dominating.

Saturday morning, and the 7th Cavalry fail to show! Occupying seems impossible. Some people go into nearby Dunbar to leaflet and talk to people. Saturday afternoon, and we gather at the site's main gate. Facing us, row upon row of police.

After some time a black football-shaped float with attached string 'fuse' and bearing the painted word BOMB soars gracefully over the main gate. Her Majesty's Constabulary display their customary lack of a sense of humour, and charge to grab the guy they think threw the float. Many go to rescue him. Scuffles break out. The police punch and kick demonstrators and arrest 19 of us.

Eight more are arrested in subsequent protests and in other incidents. 'Breach of the Peace' and 'Attempting to rescue a prisoner' are the most common charges.

The spirit of resistance shown in the efforts to rescue people being arrested is really good, and this continues throughout an inspiring 2-day struggle in Edinburgh's top Cop Shop. We constantly protest against the appalling food and the generally lousy conditions and demand our release, eventually threatening to wreck our cells.

We reject a police deal whereby they promise to release us if we ask the demonstrators to leave Torness. We win improved conditions, and though the police stated we'd be detained till a Tuesday court appearance, we are released on Monday morning.

The support we got from fellow demonstrators and others outside was invaluable. But unfortunately after the arrests there was little action against the site. In future we need to be able both to support any people arrested and to continue the action.

## what does it all mean?

That only 200 people were involved was disappointing - because only mass direct action has any chance of stopping nuclear power.

A conventional pressure group campaign is doomed to be ineffective, because of the important advantages the ruling class gains from nuclear power (see *Solidarity for Social Revolution*, No.9). This is illustrated by the leaked minutes of the Cabinet meeting of 23rd October 1979. Showing the Government's total commitment to nuclear power, the minutes state that a major factor in its favour is that "a nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity production from the dangers of disruption by industrial action by coal miners or transport workers."

Direct action is more than an effective tactic. A major potential of the anti-nuclear movement is the opening it gives for more and more people in practice to put human health and safety before capitalist property rights, and in practice to take vital decisions about society's development into our own hands and out of the control of the state.

Without direct action the anti-nuclear movement is just another single-issue reformist campaign, offering no challenge to state and corporate control of society's resources. In fact the reformists' aim of capitalism without nuclear power is probably unrealisable. And even if it was attainable, I'm not interested in being a wage slave in a windmill factory.

Over the last year, since the

# TORNESS

Continued from page 19.

controversy over the property damage at Torness in May '79, a widening split has developed in the anti-nuclear movement in Britain between 'direct-actionists' and 'pressure group campaigners'. We've seen the creation of the 'respectable', big-name dominated, centralised Anti-Nuclear Campaign. Some sections of the movement, such as Edinburgh SCRAM, openly opposed this May's occupation, while most ignored it. We should try and convince genuine anti-nuclear people of the futility of spending the next ten years marching up and down High Streets, while realising that the 'leaders' of the respectable movement are our political enemies.

This split is one reason for the relatively small numbers at Torness this May. But, in addition, the groups organising the occupation could have done much more publicity - surprisingly some seemed opposed to mass leafleting, poster distribution, etc. ...

Particularly noticeable was the lack of people from the area around Torness. Those of us already committed to direct action need to develop much closer contact with the local people, the majority of whom are against Torness but are not yet prepared to take direct action. This is vital if occupations with the potential of permanently stopping construction are ever to be possible.

It's obvious now the state is prepared to defend its nuclear power stations by turning them into virtual fortresses. So future actions must either be secretly planned small group operations, OR real mass occupations, aiming at involving thousands (but still based on organising in autonomous groups). Both can be valuable. But May 2-5 fell between the two. They got the guns, so we need the numbers!

## contact address

Contact address for support group for those arrested:

Torness Public Parks Department,  
c/o Box 23, 163 King St., Aberdeen.

For a more detailed description of the action (3 pages) send s.a.e. to Solidarity Aberdeen. (Well worth it - Eds.)

Most of the groups involved in the action participate on a continuing basis in the Torness Alliance - newsletter available, c/o Acorn Bookshop, The Emporium, Merchant Place, Reading.

# EDITORIAL

On the face of it the leaders of the world are deeply divided. Since the beginning of this year, when the Russian invasion of Afghanistan was paranoia-inducing hot news, the press and politicians of the West have been reviving the propaganda of the Cold War, with the evident aim of conditioning us to accept what has hitherto seemed to many of us an unthinkable eventuality - that of nuclear war. The 'enemy' is seen as being outside, and like every ruling class throughout history the present incumbents project themselves as our allies and defenders. The gang in the Kremlin of course work the same trick. It is made not too difficult in both cases by the obvious fact that there is a hell of a lot to hate and fear about both sets of rulers and their policies.

When it comes to splits between the elites of the world it is relatively easy to see them for what they are - artificial squabbles between leaders who have far more in common with each other than with the rest of us. East and west, they are interested in one thing only: clinging on to power, at literally all costs.

Yet when we turn to the domestic political scene, even those who could see the international situation clearly often have trouble with their eyesight. They perceive from a distance how similar are Brezhnev, Carter and Hua, but from close up they fail to notice that Thatcher, Callaghan and Benn are three varieties of the same unsavoury concoction. (The number of varieties increases, of course, when we consider the larger political cauldron with its brew-up of alternative leaderships).

The leaders of the various factions struggle with all their might to sound different but underneath they share the same objectives: they wish the system to continue and have ambitions to run it in their own way. Not long ago it was the Labour government asking us to tighten our belts and reduce pay demands, now it is the Conservatives, and, who knows, in a

year or two it could be Benn requiring restraint (now isn't that a change worth working for!)

When Thatcher talks of freedom we should all know she means the freedom for her to go on enjoying the spoils of office. When Callaghan condemns her policies as "a vicious attack on working people" we should all know he regrets that the attack is being launched clumsily and directly and would much rather be launching it himself in his own subtle way. When Benn talks of socialism, we should all know that for him this means nothing more than increased state control with - guess who - at the helm. Not one of them is remotely interested in letting ordinary people take any control over their lives, in fact for each and every one the prime objective is to exercise maximum control over a passive and acquisitive working class.

In such an environment it is difficult to draw optimistic conclusions (with a projection of continuing capitalism it would be impossible to draw optimistic conclusions). But certain grounds for hope can and do exist. Throughout the country, and throughout the world, there is a persistent groundswell of distrust and scepticism about not only the political leaders but all types of authority, and of collective resistance, from strikes in Brazil to toy bombs in Torness.

The depression of the '70s may have proved a setback; sections of those who reject present society may be driven into more pernicious channels such as racism and Fascism; other sections may seem doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past, such as the resuscitated ban-the-bomb movement. The various elements of resistance must not be seen as forming an inchoate mass, all equally good and useful (part of our job may be to help sort them out). But at no time do the positive elements vanish out of existence; and while they exist, they have the potential for combining and breaking out of the systems which oppress all of us.

The national secretary can be contacted via the Manchester address and the international secretary by writing to 83 Gregory Crescent, London SE9 5RZ.

This issue of the magazine was edited and produced by the London group. Contributions to the next issue, which will be produced by group members in the Midlands, should be sent to the Oxford address.

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