

Libertarian Communist

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IT'S THE THICK END OF THE WEDGE!



Brixton Employment Exchange

Photo John Sturrock (Report)

May saw a change in government which went well with the vagaries of the British Spring weather. Labour was replaced by the Tories. When it stops raining on the working-class it starts to snow!

The new Conservative administration is adopting a viciously reactionary policy for economic management, based on 'monetarist' ideas. This policy had nevertheless already been to a large extent accepted by Chancellor Healy in his later months in office, albeit grudgingly and with some differences in detail.

We therefore feel that it is vitally necessary that we provide a 'workers' guide' to the economic ideas that are now being put into practice. They will affect the lives of all of us very deeply.

A significant milestone for British capitalism in 1978 was the achievement of a stronger and more stable exchange rate for sterling. This new position of moderate strength will be a crucial reference

The Labour government had begun to place a growing reliance upon the fixing of monetary and fiscal targets as a basic point of departure for economic policy. To some extent Mr Healy still attempted to balance his efforts in this direction with appeals to workers to observe pay guidelines.

Under the Conservatives, however, we shall see monetary and fiscal policy placed firmly at the centre of the government's handling of the economy.

point for the Tories. They intend to maintain it.

The Conservatives believe strongly in an unhampered free market economy. They believe in bringing employers eyeball to eyeball with the

'realities' of such an economy, where firms are spurred on to proficiency by the cut and thrust of international competition, and if they fail they go bankrupt.

In the past this exchange rate has

been allowed to drift downwards, devaluation, to give British industries a breathing-space from foreign competition in the domestic and export markets. Thatcher will not let that happen.

Devaluation makes British goods cheaper abroad and foreign goods dearer in Britain. British firms can compensate for rising costs by raising their prices without losing out. However, the disadvantages are that the cost of repaying foreign loans rises and, more importantly, the cost of all imports, including raw materials, rises, thus causing inflation.

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A strong exchange rate has the advantage of restraining import costs. Its main virtue in Conservative eyes, however, is that it forces British employers to compete head-on with foreign firms. In 1978 average earnings rose by some 13.4% while price rises were kept down to 8%. Coupled with the strong exchange rate and resulting competition this meant a decline in profits despite continuing subsidies from the government. The Conservatives feel that this sort of environment is necessary. It will mean that employers have to increase productivity and cut labour costs. It will mean that they have to take on their work-force to survive.

Before examining that confrontation in any detail, it is necessary to explain the proposed Tory strategy for maintaining exchange rate stability, for it is here that the importance of monetary and fiscal policy emerges.

In 1975 to 1976 the Labour government responded to the massive wage offensive of the working-class which accompanied the overthrow of Heath by allowing the pound to fall on international markets. Linked with successive rounds of wage restraint which prevented workers from recouping the new price rises, tax relief and government aid, this resulted in a long-term increase in profitability.

This success, alongside the growing impact of North Sea oil on the balance of payments, was a foundation for strengthening the exchange rate. The process was accompanied, particularly after growing working-class resistance to wage restraint, by attempts to operate a direct link between the exchange rate and the rate of growth of the money supply.

Restriction of the money supply will be the Conservatives' principal tool in their attempt to preserve an acceptable exchange rate. To allow a substantial growth would mean an effective devaluation, the more pound notes you print, the less they

The policy of making private industries face up to foreign competition requires, then, an assault on the public sector. In order to maintain exchange rate disciplines on the private sector the Conservatives are prepared to make the reduction of the public sector borrowing requirement a central part of their policy. They will make what the Labour government did to the public sector look like chicken-feed.

This is the crux of monetary and fiscal restraint. It is the operative keystone of Conservative policy. It is the basis for public sector cuts and wage restraint.

There are a number of reasons for thinking that the government's policy will result in severe upheaval.

In the first place the limits on sectoral expenditure laid down by Chancellor Healy (which were themselves considered too generous by the Tories) were not designed to include the substantial pay rises won by workers in the public sector over the last few months. If the planned cash limits are to be maintained, as representatives of both major parties have argued, then substantial cuts will have to be made in other areas. If the cash limits are exceeded, then the only option to public sector borrowing would be rises in rates or taxes.

Secondly, public sector borrowing for 1978/9 has in fact turned out to be higher than the £8.5 billion planned by Labour. It reached a total of £9.2 billion. This is another reason why the Cabinet are cutting public sector spending so enthusiastically.

Thirdly, the Conservatives have won the election partly as a result of their pledge to cut taxes. If you cut taxes you either have to raise the money another way, for instance by an increase in indirect taxation (VAT) which would be inflationary, or do without the money which results in more cuts. Also the Tories are sticking by their election promise to pay the police and army massive rises (you could say that they know

some 24%. They built few hospitals or schools, undertook few repairs. This sort of solution only ever works in the short-term. Pretty soon some fairly alarming cracks are literally going to appear in the fabric of our modern industrial society. This is going to place further strains on the Tory policy of cutting public spending.

Freeze

The Conservatives intend their strategy to take effect gradually. They are now laying down a set of priorities and a basic strategy for the country. An assault on staffing levels in the Civil Service and in local government is already under way. The present temporary recruitment and promotion freeze in these areas is only the prelude to a sterner attack. For example, Geoffrey Howe, the man since appointed Chancellor, is reported in the *Guardian* of April 16th as saying "Almost 50,000 of the non-industrial Civil Service, nearly 7%, leave each year. Not every one needs to be replaced." Already understaffed services are to be worsened. Doesn't he realise a lot of people leave because the pay in such jobs is so low?

What do the Tories plan to do about housing? They plan to sell council houses. This is partly because this gives local councils more liquidity. Admittedly many sales will not produce cash, rather they will mean the councils receive mortgage repayments rather than rents. However, the councils will free themselves of the burden of having to repair and maintain council housing. This, coupled with the Tories' unwillingness to build new council houses, means that Direct Labour Organisations, the councils' directly employed building forces, will be under considerable attack.

The various employment subsidy schemes brought in under Labour are also under attack. These are all of a temporary nature and so can be conveniently not renewed at the end of their present period. Even the Tories are unwilling to be seen to be deliberately creating unemployment!

Apart from cuts there are two other ways in which the Conservatives hope to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement.

The first of these is through price rises in public services and industries. Prices for gas, electricity, public transport, even prescriptions, have either gone up or will go up. The problem is that price rises will result in strong pressures towards inflation.

The second is through the sale of public assets. Possible candidates are the National Freight Corporation, British Airways, British Aerospace and the British shipbuilding industry. One problem with this will be finding buyers. Shipbuilding, for instance, is a real turkey which private capitalists are unlikely to want to take on. There are also only a set number of industries and assets owned by the government. Once these are sold they are gone, so this method will not solve the government's problems indefinitely. Besides, by 'hiving off' the profit-making ventures which are at present owned by the state, which are the only ones likely to attract buyers, there is less money around at the end of the year to make up the deficits of the remaining, loss-making ventures.

Whatever may be done in the way of a rising prices and selling off assets, it seems certain that massive spending cuts will still be necessary.

Let us now return to the question of the private sector. Short of adopting the authoritarianism of fascism a modern capitalist government cannot attempt to 'command' commercial success from private industry. It can merely attempt to manipulate existing market pressures so as to affect companies.

Despite the high profits of 1957-1977, British industry remains in a feeble state. In 1978 manufacturing output was still some 4½% lower than in 1973. Even with the loss of some 500,000 jobs, the average

growth of productivity (defined as output per person) over the years 1973-1978 slowed to about ½% per year. Domestic producers continue to lose ground against foreign competitors in the home market as well as the foreign markets.

Their problems are likely to be intensified by rises in the prices of raw materials imported from abroad. That such prices have remained fairly stable over the last couple of years has been one cause for the growth in profits. Indeed the current round of rises in the prices of goods also includes many household necessities. This will mean that the cost of living



The Tories say that inefficient nationalised firms would benefit from free market discipline — but the City only wants to buy the profitable ones like British Airways. Photo Andrew Wiard (Report)

of the workers will also rise.

The result of all this is that British bosses under the Tories find themselves faced with a rise in the cost of raw materials, have their backs to the currency wall, and face a working-class impelled to seek substantial wage rises to compensate for years of wage restraint and rising prices.

Stage

The stage is set for an intensification of class struggle in the factories. Companies will try to resist wage demands, improve productivity and engage in 'rationalisations' and lay-offs. If they fail in this they face the Tory 'discipline' of bankruptcy. If they are to succeed they will have to smash working-class assumptions and aspirations.

In both the public and private sectors, then, workers will be facing similar problems under the Conservatives. There will be resistance to wage rises, pressure to work harder and to do more overtime to make up for unfilled vacancies, re-organisations and redundancies, a new wave of scarcities in employment opportunities, rising prices and declining standards of social services. No wonder the Tory programme is designed to strengthen the police force and the army and to attack basic trades union rights!

Much of this upheaval will be explained and justified in convincing terms. The talk will be of 'efficiency', of 'living within our means'. Well, as communists we don't have any intrinsic objections to efficiency, or to making the best possible use of the best available technology and work methods. We don't even have any principled objections to hard work, if it's in a good cause. What we do object to is the way these 'commonsense' prescriptions are rendered callous and inhuman by the present social system.

Ticket

The point is that it is not simply a question of efficiency/inefficiency, work/idleness, it is a question of efficiency towards what end, in what context? By all means let's have a rational organisation of our work, but not at the expense of the complete disruption of peoples' lives, nor for the sake of massive inequalities in the overall distribution of work and wealth.

Far more pressing problems than the inefficiency of our industry according to capitalist terms of reference are the waste, disruption, irrationalities and conflict thrown up by those terms of reference themselves.

Socialism is not an easy panacea. It is no free ticket to an abundance of the good things of life. It has

more often been associated with dictatorship than with an increase in individual freedom. Yet it still stands as the only real alternative to the present state of things.

As socialists we believe in opposing the present system, which enforces on us its own 'realities' rather than acts as the organiser of our common approach to reality.

We don't believe that either Parliament, or rural co-operatives or a career in management will bring us any closer to the sort of social self-control we advocate. Our path lies in mass mobilisation around current grievances, only through

such mobilisations can we lay the basis for a new structure for society.

Too often, though, revolutionaries appear as the prophets of social irresponsibility. Too often our movement is reduced to a set of megaphones, producing a din of apparently naive and selfish sectoral demands. Whenever socialists support or advocate any movement, the whole context must be explained, otherwise we simply spread confusion.

Under a Conservative government particularly, we tend to merge into the reformist bureaucrats. Our opposition to the Tories needs to be distinguished from the reformists by its quality and context rather than just its volume.

Libertarian Communists believe that it is possible for us to develop a capacity to run society according to a common and agreed assessment of our needs and objectives, rather than via the haphazard processes of the market. We advocate a unified and democratic planning of work and the distribution of resources. We think that the way for workers to enter upon such a project is to lay down now objectives for the whole of the working-class and by fighting for these through thick and thin.

Among these objectives we propose the following:—

1. Fighting reductions in real income, fighting for inflation-proof clauses to protect wages against rises in the cost of living, fighting for a national minimum wage for all adults.

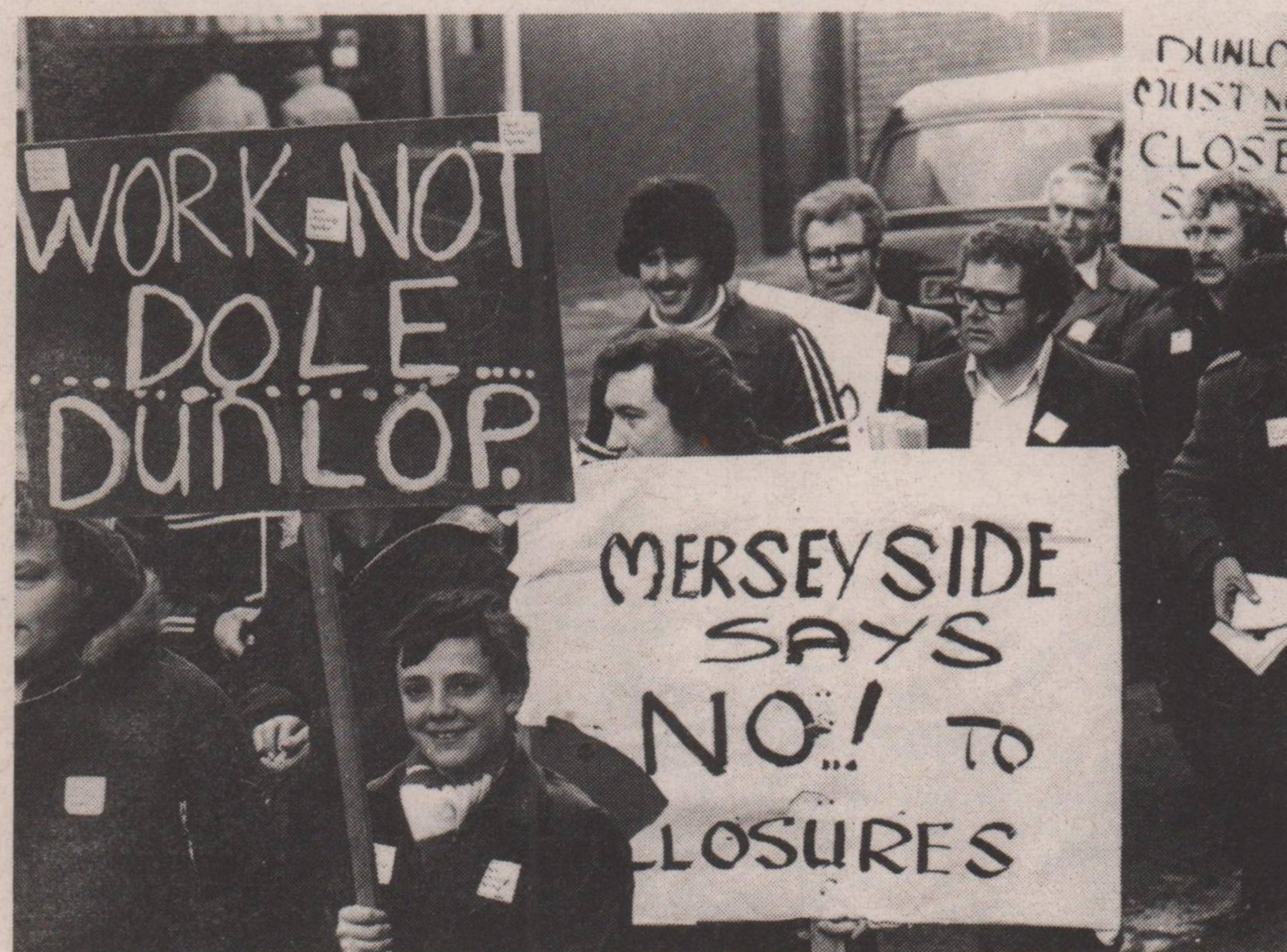
2. Fighting redundancies and unemployment, fighting for a policy of work-sharing with no loss of pay. For control over staffing levels, production speeds, work-hours and working conditions by the shop-floor. For all information to be available to the workers.

3. Fighting cuts in the 'social wage'. Fighting for the restoration of services and their extension where necessary e.g. facilities for abortion, child care, care of the aged and handicapped, adult and ethnic minority education.

4. Fighting divisions of the working-class based on race or sex. For equal pay and job opportunities. For an end to immigration laws. For 24 hour nurseries. For guaranteed job security during pregnancy. For equal social and legal rights for all.

Under capitalism these objectives will indeed prove disruptive of the social mechanism. They form, however, what we believe should be the basic first objectives of a socialist society. Socialism cannot guarantee this programme any more than it guarantees an extension of democracy. We believe it to be the essential foundation for both.

Editorial Board.



Dunlop Speke workers demonstrate against closures

Photo John Sturrock (Report)

are worth in relation to foreign currencies. How will they go about preventing this?

Apart from bank credit, which can be to some extent controlled by manipulation of the interest rates, the main influence on the supply of 'new' money is seen to be public sector spending or, to be more precise, that part of it which is funded by borrowing. The finance markets of London and abroad now see restriction of the British government's borrowing requirement as being a necessity for maintaining a stable exchange rate.

who their friends are). This will mean them getting an increased share of a much reduced public sector spending cake.

Fourthly, as Conservative plans begin to bite over the coming months, unemployment will begin to rise. Cutting the public sector means losing jobs and that results in more people claiming benefits and so puts more pressure on limited public sector cash.

Finally, one of Labour's methods of making cuts in the public sector fairly 'painless' was to reduce capital investment in the public sector by

Public Sector

The following interview took place with a woman member of the National Union of Public Employees, who was a delegate from her branch to the NUPE Conference in Scarborough.

Libertarian Communist: What was the most constructive thing about the conference?

Delegate: Undoubtedly, the decision to fight for the abolition of pay beds in the NHS hospitals. As regards the debate over wages and the way the strike was conducted, this degenerated when some left-wingers put a motion calling for Fisher (General Secretary) and Keating (Assistant General Secretary) to resign. The majority of the conference sprang to Fisher's defence when there might otherwise have been much criticism of the leadership and the methods of the strike. There was also the question of who Fisher could be replaced by, when there was no alternative leader.

LC: What about the fight against the cuts?

D: The problem is that cuts and wages were taken as separate issues; cuts will be the biggest battle over the coming period. Cuts are particularly important to women, not just as regards jobs and staffing levels, but also as regards the social wage and the time lost by women to look after kids and relatives. One resolution calling for all out official area wide action in support of hospitals facing closure was defeated because Fisher spoke against it.

The debate on pay beds was very positive. NUPE intends to take action against them by January 1980.

LC: What about the position of women?

D: Two-thirds of the membership are women who achieved virtually nothing from the last wage rise — that fact was glossed over by the resignation amendment. There appeared to be more women at this year's conference than previously, and there was a creche for the first time although this was badly run.

LC: How was the conference run?

D: This year full conference only took up two days. On the third day conference broke up into sectional meetings: health, local government, water and universities, which made full conference very short. Some of the more contentious motions — on immigration, Ireland, emergency cover and code of conduct — were remitted for the Executive to deal with, which usually means they will be quietly forgotten.

The resolution for withdrawal from the National Abortion Campaign and against NUPE holding any position on abortion was roundly defeated. Similarly the motion on women's rights and nurseries when opposed by people who said a woman's place is in the home was passed with its opponents being booed by delegates.

At the local government sectional meeting, it was mainly women who spoke on working conditions. As few women spoke at the main conference, perhaps this was an advantage of the sectional meetings, in that they allow women to speak who feel less intimidated by smaller meetings.

At the Welsh Divisional Social there was a stripper. This raised the issue of the exploitation of women and of the double standard of some male delegates, who would have done their nut if it had been their wives and daughters. A woman delegate got up and complained that it was disgusting, but got an unsympathetic response. Many women delegates seemed threatened by the protest. The arguments raised to allow the strip to continue were to be expected, that it was the stripper's job, that she chose to do it, and that if one didn't like it one could walk out. The danger in fighting sexism in NUPE is that one

Interview with a NUPE militant

may fall into the trap of arrogantly bashing the working class which some feminists unfortunately do. The discussion around the role of women in the union will continue, within branches and at coming conferences.

LC: What about the effect of passing motions concerning women?

D: Last year the idea of a National Women's Advisory Committee was dropped as the Executive said they would prepare a report. This was not done. The amount of manipulation on the Standing Orders Committee, especially allowing motions to be remitted, is very dangerous. One use of motions about women's issues is that women do speak on them. In the long term these issues only become reality in the union if they are taken up by women. Discussion around socials, and women's practice within the union do a lot more than pious resolutions at conference; women have to struggle at the local level at present. The left seems unable to approach that problem at present and there are few women "left-wingers".

LC: What is the balance of power in the union?

D: Very recently NUPE has grown enormously. It is very much run like a family affair, often paternalistic. Conference delegates tend to be branch secretaries, not elected as delegates, who are father figures of NUPE, respected long-standing activists. They speak well and represent members up to a point. Reorganisation has only been going for a few years, since the Warwick

report, so although we have a democratic structure in theory, it is only slowly coming about in practice.

There are three new women members elected to the Executive on open seats i.e. not "women's" seats. The union has created women's seats at national and divisional level but it's good to see women winning ordinary seats.

The only identifiable left-wingers are the IMG and the SWP, who are very isolated. They work in the Campaign for Action in NUPE (CAN). The Communist Party has many full timers, but they keep their heads down and back Fisher. The majority of NUPE activists are self-styled socialists usually seeing themselves as Left Labour.

LC: What about the future?

D: At national level, as there are more women members, things may be a bit better. The importance of passing motions means that local women activists have a peg to hang their own struggles on.

LC: How much are members involved?

D: The problem is men can get involved, but women don't, partly because of their dual workload. Also because of structure, for example, male schoolkeepers represent women cleaners but also act as their foremen. There is also the problem of geographical isolation i.e. in rural areas.

LC: Disaffiliation from the Labour Party was brought up at conference wasn't it?

D: 5 or 6 resolution calling for disaffiliation were put, by people who had been Labour supporters not Tories. They were sent when Labour was in power. As the Tories are now in, it wasn't an issue, and there was a chorus against them.

There was a debate to make NUPE sponsored MPs responsive to union policies. The Executive will decide whether MPs have gone against union policies.

LC: How did the union organise the national strike?

D: The Executive left the strike up to the branches. The strike, though, was a training-ground, and seen as such. It was our first ever national strike covering all sections. The problem of the wages debate was that it revolved around attacking Fisher, not around learning from the strike. Even a Left Executive in the long run cannot really lead a strike. People might now realise that it is up to local activists, not the

Executive to solve the problem. Each strike seems important at the time, but really it is future local lessons and militancy that count.

Because the wages debate was so feeble the Exec was allowed to get away with attacks on other unions in the public sector. Of course members are furious, and other union leaders have been bad but we should have had a position that although we are very critical of the other leaderships, we do not condemn their members totally.

LC: You seem highly critical of CAN. What can left-wingers do in NUPE?

D: The paper Hospital Worker is fairly successful in that it has a readership and a certain amount of support. The joint CAN/Hospital Worker meeting at the conference attracted only 20 people, most of whom were from Hospital Worker. Perhaps at this stage we need a paper for local government workers. CAN at this conference did not represent very much. The theory is that one can create a left/right "line of divide" within the union, but they have done that prematurely, isolating themselves from activists in the union. They lack realism and an understanding of the membership. Perhaps space for a left united front like CAN can only exist if there is already a left/right split of some sort. It is really a question of uniting activists around specific objectives, not necessarily one of having an entire platform. NUPE is a manual workers union predominantly and does not have the same political divisions as for instance CPSA or NUT. CAN attempted to reproduce the same kind of left grouping as CPSA "Socialist Caucus" or the "Socialist Teachers Alliance" in the NUT — this is rather a mechanical approach that doesn't involve any analysis of existing conditions. An indication of leftist isolation? Vanguardist arrogance?



Photo Ian McIntosh (IFL)



BUILD A PUBLIC SECTOR ALLIANCE

Every issue of Libertarian Communist has contained a piece on activity in the public sector. During the Labour government we pointed to the attacks they were making on the public sector. Now it is clear that the Tory government intends to intensify the assault on the social wage (see editorial).

We now know that the loss of 100,000 jobs amongst council workers is just one of the grisly things lined up for us. There is also a concerted flow of lies and distortion from the media, depicting as callous thugs those public sector workers who try to protect their own interests and those of the rest of the working class. Those who behave responsibly and

try to defend services are portrayed in lurid colours as totally irresponsible. Who is more irresponsible, the governments that axe services or the workers that defend them? The governments that shut hospitals or the workers that try to keep them open?

A realisation of the common interests of the working class and of how the current crisis is an attack on the working class as a whole can provide a basis for the unity and solidarity necessary for successful resistance.

Such unity will not be built easily. Nor will it be the result of any single, simple process. Two elements

will, however, be of special importance. First, the growth of unified action amongst public sector workers themselves, and their creation of a common strategy for the public sector as a whole. Second, the support of the wider labour movement for this process, and also its contribution to the advancement of a workers plan for the services involved.

In the next issue we hope to have an article on nurseries. If you have anything on this, or on anything else concerning the public sector, please send it to our contact address.

RICH GET RICHER - IT'S OFFICIAL!

Here are the results of a few recent publications which reflect the pattern of how our "national effort" is harvested and shared out.

Figures released by the Central Statistical Office on 10/1/79 showed rises in personal disposable income in 1978.

Measured according to 1975 prices this was 2.6% higher in the first quarter of 1978 (£18,633m) than in the first quarter of 1977 (£18,183m). In the second quarter it was 8.3% higher and in the third quarter it was again 8.3% higher.

A report in the *Financial Times* of 31/1/79 quoted Treasury figures for Real Weekly Net Incomes, that is inflation-adjusted figures for earnings accommodating child tax allowances and child benefits.

According to these, the RWN for single people on average earnings was 9% higher in September '78 than in the autumn of 1977. It was still, however, 4.5% lower than at the end of 1974. A married couple with two children under 11 earned on average a RWN of £73.80 last September. This was 8.4% higher than a year earlier, but 3.5% down on their peak at the end of 1974.

Lump

One difficulty with average income surveys is that they lump rich and poor together. Separating them is difficult and involves looking beyond incomes to other measures of wealth.

The Central Statistical Office claimed in a report published in "Economic Trends" of 1/2/79 that the difference between rich and poor households in the UK narrowed in 1972-1977, if taxes paid and benefits received are analysed alongside income and price trends. This report was based on the Family Expenditure Survey, which is a sample survey of households in ten income brackets, from virtually nothing to £11,080 p.a.

It is therefore only a rough guide. It showed that the richest tenth of households were 7% times better off than the poorest in 1975. By 1977 they were "only" 6% times better off.

On the other hand the "Inland Revenue Statistics 1978" showed that on a wider definition of wealth the rich have been getting relatively richer under Labour. The Inland Revenue define wealth as all marketable assets. They exclude things such as equity held in life assurance companies which are more often held by the rich. Their figures are also based on wills, so fail to take account of wealth transferred before death. Their findings still show, however, that since 1974 the wealthiest 1% of the country have been increasing the percentage of national wealth they own. By 1976 it had risen to approximately 24%. The top 10% has increased their share from 57.5% in 1974 to approximately 60% in 1976.

How come the rich are getting richer whilst the gap between rich and poor households is narrowing in terms of incomes, taxes, and wealth?

The importance of wealth can be seen by comparing it to income. The top 2% of income earners (over £10,000 p.a.) shared between them only 9% of all personal incomes, while the top 2% of wealth owners roped in 32% of all wealth.

In general, the very rich benefit from aspects of wealth which are independent of income. They deal in assets which are likely to keep in line with, or outstrip, inflation, which are initially expensive and which it requires specialist knowledge to buy. They deal in shares, property and land.

Those whose wealth amounts to at least £50,000 own nearly 60% of all government securities, 2/3 of all ordinary shares and 70% of all land.

It is also true, moreover, that differentials in the £10,000 p.a. plus bracket are so large as to make it an unwieldy unit. More than a score of top company directors are being paid salaries of more than £55,000 p.a. from single appointments, whilst many others hold several directorships which must bring them into a similar bracket.

"These highly paid directors do, of course, suffer to some extent from the high rates of income tax with the marginal rate of 83% on taxable income over £23,000. However, the very efficient tax avoidance industry comes to their help and their average tax rate should not normally exceed about 50%, according to Kay and King in their recent book *The British Tax System*."

In addition there are a variety of fringe benefits such as top hat pension schemes, company cars, private medical insurance, low-interest loans, aid with childrens education etc. The Royal Commission on the Distribution of Wealth and Income estimated in its report no. 3 that fringe benefits for top company executives are worth about 30% of salary: such benefits are tax free or taxed at much less than their full value." (*Labour Research*, January 1979).

International

The E.E.C. has made possible for the ruling classes a trans-national response to the world recession. Throughout Europe the same plan has been adopted to save the ailing rate of profit: an offensive on the living standards of the working class through cuts in public spending and real wages, and the restructuring of key industries.

The most radical plan for industrial restructuring so far undertaken is the Davignon Plan for the steel industry, whose objective is the loss of 140,000 jobs in Europe by 1980.

The Steelworkers reply to this plan in the Lorraine region of France has become one of the most violent struggles of the 70's. Already the number of steelworkers has been halved in the last ten years in the Lorraine, a region highly dependant on steel. Phil Green was there.

As with many other industries, the steel barons are finding it more profitable to export capital, and invest in third world industry, than to continue to invest in European industry. Thirty iron ore mines have closed in Lorraine in the last 15 years; now the ore comes by sea from Brasil and Mauritania, where the workers are paid £1.00 to £2.50 per day. They work in far worse conditions than Franch mines, and are unable to organise. Unemployed French miners are told that their industry is no longer competitive.

More steelworks are being built in the third world, particularly in the profitable special steels sector. Finding steel production in Europe less and less profitable, the furnace masters are re-investing the millions of pounds granted by the state in other sectors of the economy (electronics, petrol-chemicals) or in third world steel plants in South Korea, Thailand, South America and Brazil.

Naturally, the consequence is a decline in steel production in industrialised countries, from which few have escaped: W. Germany 53 million tons in 1974 to 42 million tonnes in 1977, Japan 170 to 107, and USA 132 to 105 and France from 27 to a projected 24 million tonnes for 1980.

In order to maintain rates of profit on European production drastic measures are deemed necessary by the steel barons: wholesale closures of steel plants and 140,000 redundancies by 1980. Determined to attack European steel workers and replace them with workers in third world countries whose governments are only too happy to use their armed forces to break strikes, and turn a blind eye to unhealthy and unsafe working conditions, they have even stopped the construction of the ultra-modern Neuves-Maisons steel plant, at a cost of millions of pounds.

The provisions of the Giraud Plan for French steel are:

- * the loss of 20,000 jobs in all categories by 1980, of which 14,000 in

Lorraine, including the closure of Usinor plants in Denain and Longwy at a cost of 6,000 jobs each.

- * £6,000 redundancy payments (1,200 for immigrant workers)
- * retirement at 55 for some steelworkers (50 for handicapped workers and furnace workers)
- * 15% increase in productivity, giving a 1.7 million tonne increase in the amount of steel produced, despite the redundancies.

The other prong of this attack is on pensions and the social wage. Having reduced its labour force from 21,000 to 6,000 in the last 17 years, the iron ore mining industry finds itself paying 10-40% of the selling price of its ore in pensions, and has threatened that unless it is relieved of these costs, it will not guarantee to maintain the remaining 6,000 jobs. Raymond Barre, French finance minister, has declared 'the wages and social costs are too great for the steel industry'.

The steel mills of Lorraine lie in three basins: Longwy, Frensch et Orne and South Basin. They present an awesome spectacle, monstrous beings striding across the valleys, discharging vast clouds of yellow-brown vapours. Some send huge flames leaping skywards, like cities on fire.

Around them cluster the steel towns - Longwy, Denain, Pont-a-Mousson, Thionville, Briey, Valenciennes.

The people of Longwy are largely descendants of Italian immigrants, many of whom fled from Mussolini. The town is a Communist Party stronghold, a community with a rich working class social life. Everyone depends on the steel mills. They own most of the houses in the town, and for every steel job lost in Lorraine, at least three others dependant on it in the region must go, in teaching,

In France the organisation of the steel industry follows a different pattern from the nationalised British Steel Corporation. French steel is privately owned with employers organised into regional and national federations.

Being individual, privately owned companies does not fragment their attack on the workers. Along with the BSC they are members of the European steel cartel Eurofer, to which all the EEC steel producers belong.

One of the steel companies recently made some concessions to the unions' demands on redundancies. The French government stepped in and tore up the agreement, and told the employers to renegotiate it — without the concessions.

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Steelworkers demonstrate in Paris on March 23

Photo John Sturrock (Report)

transport, engineering and the lime kilns. To close the steel mills is to liquidate a region, a way of life.

Previous closures in the industry have been marked by the lack of opposition. The communist-led CGT, to which most of the steelworkers in Lorraine belong, placed all its eggs in the basket of the 1978 elections, and systematically smashed all protest actions. The social-democratic CFDT talked of occupations, remained passive, even in the plants where they were in a majority.

The announcement last December of 14,000 redundancies however was a thunderclap, and a week later 25,000 people from the entire community demonstrated in Longwy. Over Christmas, and throughout January and February, militant actions, often extremely violent, were taking place almost every day.

Two strategies soon emerged. The CGT once again puts its hopes on the next elections, four years away.

This means:

- symbolic rather than effective actions and a nationalist analysis of the crisis. The Communist Party blames competition from foreign, particularly German, steel and ore, and demands tariff barriers to make French steel more competitive.
- denouncement of the more militant actions, such as the attacks on the police station
- denouncement of the social democrats at every opportunity.

For the PCF the struggle is lost in advance, since it believes that the only way forward for the struggle is through its sharing of the reins of power in 1983, and the introduction of a programme of nationalisation.

By contrast, the CFDT branch in Longwy, which is remarkable for its

CNT -AN ASSESSMENT

The CNT today is not a monolithic organisation. On the contrary an intense debate is going on which is leading up to a new CNT Congress, to be held in October. Besides the problems of relationships between very different generations of militants (those from the pre-war CNT, and the majority of the new CNT (90% of whom are under 30), there are problems of relationships between exiles and the CNT in Spain itself.

Since the legalisation of the CNT, there have been bitter polemics over the political adherence of CNT members; over the trade union elections; over collective contracts, and specific tendencies have arisen with different perspectives on working in the CNT.

Double membership?

Could members of political parties and religious groups belong and represent the CNT? The national Plenum of autumn 1977 agreed that such people could hold no responsible positions in the CNT. This decision fell on militants of the Libertarian Communist Movement

(MCL); the syndicalists and traditionalists rejected the MCL as 'Marxists', although it was not applied against the renascent Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI).

Union elections — unions and assemblies

At the same Plenum in 1977, the decision was taken to boycott the approaching union elections. The big unions altogether represented only 20% of the workers, and the CNT decided to reinforce the existing assemblies in order to promote working class autonomy. The Valencian regional committee however followed up this plenum

by denouncing this agreement as 'councillist' and 'marxist'. At Fords near Valencia, certain CNT members had been elected by the workers assembly to works committees in the union elections. The Local Federation (50 members) decided to expel the Ford Works Union section (200 members) — for violating the decisions of the plenum (although the Ford unionists were carrying out the wishes of the assembly which wanted representation in the committee). Meanwhile the Valencian CNT maintained its campaign against assemblies

Since then the 'councillists' have suffered verbal (sometimes physical) attacks and expulsions. A purist syndicalist position emerged arguing that the CNT should take part in union negotiations like the other bigger unions — this position was linked to the position that inter-union activity was important rather than assembly work. On the other hand some of the assembleists began

to advocate that the CNT should become a more 'global' organisation — fighting in *all* areas of struggle. These differences can be summed up as:

- * On the level of *content*: global alternative against trade union alternative or in other words — social struggle against economic struggle.
- * On the *strategic and tactical* level: assembleism against syndicalism, or perhaps workers autonomy vs. union leadership.
- * On the *organisational* level: integral/global organisation vs. the syndicalist center.

Collective contracts

Since the summer of 1978 a debate on pacts and contracts has gone on. The building union in Barcelona denounced the contracts as an instrument invented by the bourgeoisie to integrate the working class into the system by negotiating social peace for the length of the agreements. They also denounced the

divisions imposed by trade and plant destroying any common platform of demands. A second tendency has argued that the time when the contracts are made is one of large scale mobilisation in which workers defend their interests. To refuse to take part in the negotiations is not only to abandon the workers when they most need support, but is also in the short term accepting marginalisation in relation to the workers struggle. A third intermediary tendency has also appeared. They recognise the building syndicate's criticisms and that the pacts run against the basic CNT principle of direct action. But for them the problem today is the existence of the Moncloa pact (a social contract) and the limitations on wage rises that flow therefrom. It is crucial to break these agreements and if the workers fight for higher wage rises then the pacts can become an opportunity to *break* with capital. Thus contracts become an instrument of rupture.

ART OF STEEL!

democracy and the richness of its debates, says that the steel plan will only be scrapped by the strength of workers struggles.

This involves:

- replacement of traditional protest, 'calm and dignified demonstrations', by militant actions and 'coups de poings' (fist blows). Some of the more imaginative of these were the occupation of the slag-heap at Longwy, a huge mountain of the waste products of steel production, and the erection of an SOS sign at the summit visible for miles around; a festival by the slag-heap, including skiing on the slag-heap itself; and the establishment of a pirate radio station 'SOS Emploi'. The CGT followed this in March with their own radio station.

- since the CFDT has fewer members inside the steel works, it decided to take the struggle onto the streets, involving the local population. It organised the blocking of railways and motorways to create a 'rupture with the central power', and to hit the purse of the state, held responsible for unemployment.

- organisation of regional demonstrations and one-day general strikes.
- occupation of public places they considered accomplices in the dismantling of the steel industry, like the railway stations, post offices, banks, tax offices etc.

This strategy has given the CFDT many gains in union elections in the steelworks.

The workers most militant actions

have been in reaction to the police and the employers: when the CFDT occupied a TV transmitter and interposed slides about the steelworkers struggle, armed 'gardes mobiles' ejected the occupiers, unleashing a day of violence in which the police station was attacked twice and the office of the employers association was smashed up; and when the CGT radio station was jammed in May, more attacks on the police resulted.

However militant these actions, few perspectives have emerged. The attacks on the police the demonstrations and the one-day strikes, while demonstrating a formidable combativity, do not offer a means of stopping the European steel plan and inflicting a defeat on the employers. As a consequence, militant actions have diminished since February, although they still take place. Many steel workers have accepted redundancy payments or early retirement.

Few attempts have been made to build the vital links with other steelworkers. The CGT has said nothing about the redundancies in other European steelworks, and the defeat of the W. German steelworkers' struggle for a 35-hour week. Here again, symbolic actions are the order of the day: occupations of frontier posts and a demonstration outside the headquarters of the European steel bosses.

And in France regionalism rules. The Lorraine unions demand changes in the steel plan that will mean

closures in the coastal steelworks instead of Lorraine, and attempts to create links between steelworkers in the two regions have resulted in the suspension of the Dunkerque section by the national leadership.

Throughout Europe, steelworkers are at the front of the bourgeoisie's strategy for the crisis: new technology, restructuring of industry to take account of a new world division of production and the declining profitability of some sectors, and attacks on employment and living standards. To stop this strategy in its tracks, and prevent a defeat new perspectives are needed:

- * a new level of militant action against institutions implicated in the steel plan — employers, ministries, banks, communications etc.
- * effective links between workers at an international level, *including* the third world miners and steelworkers through solidarity actions,
- * a campaign for democracy in the labour movement, to prevent reformist trade union leaderships selling out workers in struggle,
- * building a general strike to impose a radical reduction in the hours of work without loss of earnings, no redundancies, and a guaranteed minimum wage for all including the unemployed, youth and retired people.

union, in the politics of culture, anti-militarism, ecology, etc.

Critical anarcho-syndicalists and some libertarian communists. Press: Bicicleta, c/o Nave no 12, 20 Valencia 2. They support self-organisation by workers in assemblies and their unity in action at the base. They see the CNT as a class organisation, but don't see it as 'global' organisation as this would entail a centralisation of the libertarian movement of which the CNT is only a part. They are opposed to political groupings within the CNT, as they fear that these would turn into Leninist parties using the union as a 'transmission belt' within the working class.

The anarcho-communist group Askatasuna, some anarchists and libertarian communists. Press: Askatasuna, Apartado de Correos 1.628, Bilbao. They believe in the importance of the assemblies. They believe that the CNT can go beyond a purely union role, can unite all

libertarian tendencies and fight in all areas of social struggle. They see scope for political organisations within the CNT, adding to its development of theory.

Other libertarian communists. Press: Palante, Apartado de Correos 42.025, Madrid. Very similar to Askatasuna, but are opposed to political tendencies in the CNT, following the line that they can only lead to Leninism.

Critical and non-orthodox anarchists. No press. Similar ideas to the followers of Askatasuna and Palante, but believe that while tendencies should produce revues and debate theory within CNT, they should not go beyond this and organise.

Finally, there are two groups outside the CNT, but which are sympathetic and take part in debates with Bicicleta and Palante:—

Libertarian and autonomous Marxists. Press: Emancipacion, c/o Guipuzcoa No 11, 1 Oizqda, Madrid 20. They support the assem-

blies, and they believe that the CNT, the Organisation of Workers Autonomy and a number of other groups should fuse to form one political union organisation, allowing tendencies.

Spontaneist libertarians. They believe only in the importance of the workers assemblies, there is no need to organise at any other level.

Is the CNT in crisis? It is obvious that all the political and union organisations are going through some sort of crisis, in part as a reaction to the euphoria of 1976/7. The CNT's is perhaps more acute and fundamental, revealing greater differences of opinion. Only the CNT has held no congress since the death of Franco. The congress in October will be the first for 43 years.

This article is a translation and adaptation by T.Z. of an article in *Tout le Pouvoir Aux Travailleurs*, paper of our French sister-organisation, the Union of des Travailleurs Communistes Libertaires.



Glasgow — Clyde iron works closed last year

Photo Andrew Wiard (Report)



The March 23 demonstration erupted into violence, which went on all through the night. Photo John Sturrock (Report)



Photo 'Tout le Pouvoir aux Travailleurs'

Apart from the Barcelonan building syndicate no positions have been taken by other unions — so the debate continues (although in fact they take part in negotiations and mobilisations).

TENDENCIES & ORGANISATION

In order to attempt to catalogue these tendencies it seems useful to look at three different levels of organisation.

In examining the various tendencies that exist within the CNT it is necessary to examine their attitude to three main questions. First, what attitude should one take to the assemblies in the factories? Second, what importance should one place on the CNT itself, what should be its role? Third, to what extent should the CNT allow political tendencies to operate within it and how much importance should one attach to them? In considering the various tendencies and their attitudes to these questions, it should be born in

mind that any such analysis is necessarily schematic, and that it would be difficult to pigeon-hole many members of the CNT so neatly.

There are 8 main tendencies: Pure of revolutionary syndicalists. Press organ: the Valencian Fragua Social, c/o Gabriel Marti, Apartado de Correos 1.337, Valencia. They do not recognise the workers assemblies, denouncing them as 'councillist' and a camouflage for 'Marxist' activity, and are bitterly opposed to political groupings active within the CNT. They place all their faith in the CNT leadership and believe that the CNT by itself can produce the revolution.

The FAI, some non-FAI anarchists, and the 'historical anarcho-syndicalists'. Press: Tierra y Libertad, illegal, so no fixed address. They follow roughly the same line in that they oppose 'councillism' and support the CNT leadership. However, they see a role for the FAI in struggles outside the

Review

BEYOND THE FRAGMENTS

'Beyond the Fragments' by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright. Newcastle Socialist Centre and Islington Community Press, £1.00.

Three women with a long history of involvement in left-wing organisations and the women's movement have written a book that tackles one of the key problems facing socialists today — what sort of organisations do we need, and in particular what changes do socialists need to make to their ideas about organising to take account of the criticisms and insights of feminism.

The years since 1968 have shown us that a single revolutionary party that would become a mass party of the working class is unlikely to emerge from the present situation through any political process — although mergers on the basis of 'unity now — politics later' remain on the cards. So what went wrong? Is there yet a true party to be discovered among the competing correctnesses available; or is there possibly more to it than that, could there be something wrong with the basic approach? Can we modify the 1905 texts, or do we need to write new ones?

In *Beyond the Fragments*, Sheila Rowbotham makes a formidable critique of Leninism, and its expressions in Trotskyism and Eurocommunism, questioning the very roots of its assumptions about the role of the party and its relationship to the class.

One of the fundamental features of a revolutionary organisation, as opposed to a campaign or a reformist structure, is its ability to link together the different aspects of oppression and struggle within capitalism. Rowbotham challenges the Leninist dialectic whereby the Party automatically transcends the limitations of its members. She says that the hierarchical structure of such a party both hinders equal participation and development of people's potential, and reproduces the power of advantaged groups within capitalism (white middle class men).

Thus without a *theory* of how inequalities can be overcome, and a *conscious* acknowledgement of the need to do this, it is simply idealism to assume that the limitations present within an organisation will automatically be transcended. In addition, feminism has criticised the categories of struggle in the analysis of Leninist organisations, since the division of oppression into categories of significance does not reach the roots of oppression, and the complex power relationships within capitalism, and consequently prevents the links being made.

This problem, says Rowbotham, of unity between socialist organisations and autonomous organisations, is a long way from being solved, but it is essential to develop ways of organising that allow political conflict, and help to develop and share the understandings of

different groups.

Bourgeois history has been written by men, but the history of workers' struggles and the concerns of the socialist movement have also been male. Some aspects of this are: the pre-occupation of both Trotskyists and anarchists (and libertarian communists for that matter!) with the high points of confrontation to pin their analyses of history on; their reluctance to admit mistakes (John Ross wrote in *Socialist Challenge* recently that 'the Fourth International has been right on every



Chiswick Women's Aid Centre
Photo Angela Phillips (IFL)

major question'); the Leninist concept of 'professional revolutionaries' and the placing of organising skills, and organisers, on a pedestal; and the competitive game of labels that is played, hiding complex political realities behind the jargon of 'centrist', 'ultra-leftist' and so on.

By their insistence on the universal validity of their ideas, and the identification of 'advanced consciousness' with the party, Leninists have elevated theory above experienced reality, so that it 'hangs above us in ahistorical space'.

The purpose of theory, Rowbotham argues, is to help communication of ideas, experiences and feelings, and to facilitate action. To do this it must constantly be re-examined. The value of feminism is in its openness: 'As women encounter feminism they can make their own kind of organising according to their needs'.

In *Beyond the Fragments* Rowbotham decisively rejects the ability of a Leninist structure to respond to the needs of the socialist movement. The demands of feminism cannot be incorporated by existing organisations by simply tacking bits on to the programme or giving more space to 'women's issues' in the newspaper. The challenge is to the very assumptions about the ways in which the left organises, and the kind of socialism it is making.

Socialists have a great deal to learn from the utopian socialist communities of the nineteenth century, and from the concerns of the women's movement. In particular, feminists have emphasised collective working, skill-sharing, self-help and a commitment to open, supportive structures.

This means *pre-figurative* political forms: ways of organising that actually reflect the kinds of socialism we want.

However, she says little about the problems of pre-figurative politics, which seem to me to be in two main areas.

In common with the co-operative movement, the 'alternative society' of the sixties and seventies, and the syndicalist ideal of 'building the new society in the shell of the old', these politics propose structures that simply need to grow and grow until they have replaced the decayed worn-out capitalist system. This model of change ignores the contradictions of existing within capitalism, as many workers' co-operatives have discovered, and contains no strategy for the overthrow of existing power relations.

Furthermore, it is somewhat elitist to make a lot of assumptions about the sort of socialism that is possible, since a socialist society will arise out of the needs and struggles of a great deal more people than are currently part of the left.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of elaboration of the sort of democratic structures pre-figurative politics would entail — and the authors of *Beyond the Fragments* say they are not prescribing perfect structures — this book successfully opens up the debate around the sort of socialism we need, and the lessons the left must learn from feminism. These ideas cannot be ignored if the marginality of the revolutionary left is to be overcome.

It is interesting to look at the development of the LCG in the light of the questions raised by the authors of *Beyond the Fragments*.

The ORA/AWA was born out of an understanding of the failures of the post-68 anarchist movement.



Hackney Nursery demonstration

Photo Michael Ann Mullen (Hackney Flashers)

DAY SCHOOL

In the second half of September, the Libertarian Communist Group plans to hold a day-school in London.

This will be a one-day event, taking place on a Saturday. Registration fee will be £1, and those who register in advance will be sent documents relating to topics to be discussed at the day-school.

The morning session will be devoted to introducing the Libertarian Communist Group and to a discussion on the present situation, in Britain and abroad, and dealing with, for example, the article on the public services and the need for a public sector alliance. Sessions in the afternoon will be based on workshops around the LC supplements that has been produced so far. The day-school will end with a plenary session on future developments in this country, and the fight ahead.

Full details will appear at a later date in both *Libertarian Communist* and the left press. Anyone wishing for further details should write to: LCG, c/o 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

Libertarian Spain

The revolution and civil war in Spain in 1936-1939 contained some of the greatest moments in the history of the European working class. The largest single organisation of the working class in Spain was the CNT, the anarcho-syndicalist trade union.

Today, forty years on, does the libertarian tradition have any importance in Spain?

The answer to that question must be yes. Despite being ignored by most of the revolutionary left in Britain, the libertarian movement has grown rapidly since Franco's death.

The CNT now has perhaps as many as 500,000 members.

The Libertarian Spain Committee believes that solidarity work with Spanish libertarians is vital for us in Britain, and sees Spain as the "weak link in European capitalism".

Libertarian Spain, bulletin of the LSC is available for 20p inc. postage, bundles of 5 from LSC, Box 3, 73 Walmgate, York YO1 2TZ. Make cheques payable to York Community Bookshop. Donations towards the work of the LSC would also be gratefully appreciated.

York Community Bookshop

Gombin *The Radical Tradition*, a study in modern revolutionary thought. Two good chapters on the revolutions of 1917-21 in Russia and Germany. £2.95.

Mattick *Anti-Bolshevik Communism* essays on the KAPD, Kautsky, Russia etc. £2.50.

Paz Durrutti — *The People Armed* A classic account of the role of Durrutti in the CNT up to 1936. £3.40

Peirats *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution* Peirats' view of the Civil War in which he opposed the CNT leadership as a member of the FIJL in Barcelona. £2.95.

D'Agostino *Marxism and the Russian Anarchists* This book has 3 valuable chapters on the ideas of Arshinov, Maximoff and Makhno. £2.95

Maximoff *The Guillotine at Work* a classic. £3.40

*Dolhoff *Cuba-A Critical Perspective* contains original documents from Cuban anarcho-syndicalists. £3.40

*Mett *Kronstadt Uprising* 80p

*Schechter *The Politics of Urban Liberation*. £3.40

*Rubin *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*. £2.30

Brinton *Bolsheviks and Workers Control*. £1.00

*Dolhoff *Anarchist Collectives* £2.25

* trade terms on these titles only to shops.

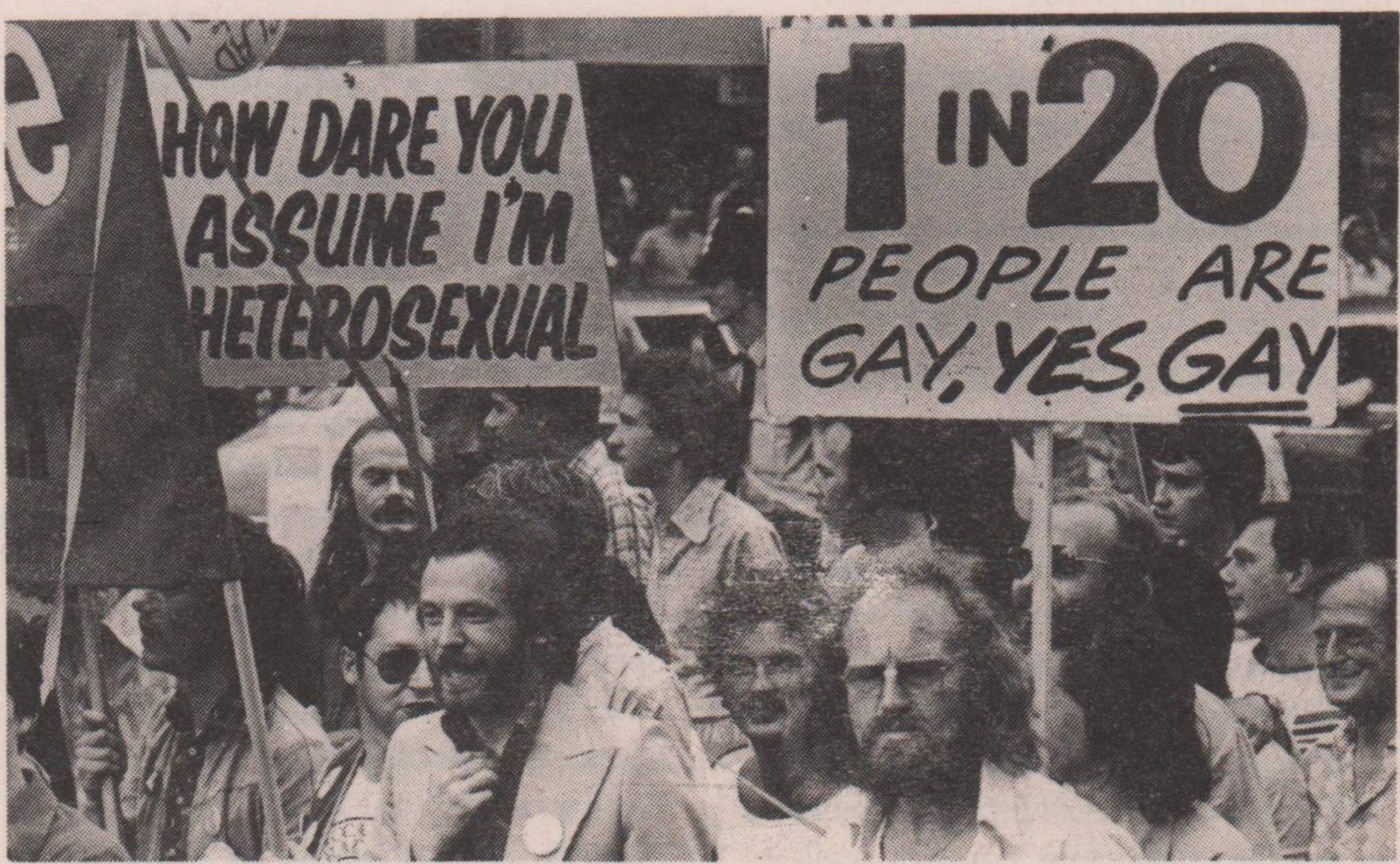
AND IN FRENCH
Castoriadis (P. Cardan) *La Societe Bureaucratique* vols 1 and 2 £2.60 each. *L'Experience de la Mouvement Ouvriere* vols 1 & 2 £2.70 each.
D. Guerin *Ni Dieu, Ni Maitre* 4 vols £2.70 each;
Korsch, Mattick, Pannekoek, Ruhle, Wagner *La Contre-Revolution Bureaucratique* £2.50. *Arguments* 1-4 £2.40 each.

Please write for other lists: Red and Black Books, gay books, poetry, badges etc. Mail order. Please add postage. Orders below £5 20%; orders £5-£10 15%; orders over £10 10% — we'll refund you if you sent too much, promise!

All orders to: York Community Bookshop, 73 Walmgate, York, YO1 2TZ. Tel: 0904-37355.

Gay Pride Week this year looks set to be a massive and joyful celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in New York, which were against police harassment of a gay bar, and also the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality and the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group.

Events range from gay drama and lectures through to a mammoth festival in Hyde Park on June 30th. Most events take place between June 23rd and July 1st. For full details contact BARRY JACKSON ON 01-278-5670.



We eventually developed a more marxist understanding of politics, and began to question both the apolitical way we had supported self-activity, and our self-image as an organisation that was a mass revolutionary organisation in embryo, that simply needed to recruit more people.

After a great deal of turmoil emerged the LCG that saw itself fundamentally as a leadership of ideas — not *the* leadership, correct on every issue, but a group of people with certain insights, ideas and ana-

lyses that could be of use to the left; we didn't have 'the answers', but we certainly had some of the questions.

We continued to consistently support the autonomy of people struggling against specific oppressions, but have so far failed to integrate the insights of these movements into our politics, or to actively support their struggles, largely because of an absence of any serious internal debate contributed to by gays and women, within the organisation.

Phil Green

International

Postcard
from Italy (1)



On April 7th the Digos (the Italian equivalent of the Special Branch) swooped down on the towns of Padua, Milan and Rome, arresting the leading ideologues of the growing mass movement Autonomia Operaia (Autop - Workers' Autonomy), Toni Negri, Rector of the University of Padua, Oreste Scalzone and Franco Piperno, both leaders of May '68 and of Potere Operaio (Potop - Workers' Power) until its dissolution in 1974, and at present theorists of Autop. Over twenty arrests and dozens of court subpoenas; workers, journalists and university professors, all accused of conspiring to: "overthrow the democratic order of the Italian state through the Brigate Rosse

(BR - Red Brigades)".

In short the Police made it known that they had "overwhelming proof" that the Autop leaders and the BR are one and the same. Links with the kidnapping and execution of Aldo Moro, were vented. The accusations went as far as to suggest that it was Toni Negri himself that telephoned Moro's widow before the Christian Democratic leader was killed.

Eight days later, all the arrested are still in jail. The interrogations of Negri haven't brought out one single grain of proof, and the police haven't produced any concrete evidence whatsoever to support their early ardour. In the meantime Negri has been transferred to Rome, and there starts to be a smell of Piazza

Fontana in the air (1969, the bomb explosion in a bank that killed 13 people, Pinelli and Valpreda, two anarchists were accused. Pinelli was "suicided" while being interrogated at police headquarters, and Valpreda spent over four years in jail without trial. The verdict was only pronounced a couple of months ago, condemning a director of the Italian Secret Service, Giannetini, to life, and two Nazi-Fascists, Freda and Ventura, likewise ... only the latter two neatly "left" Italy before the verdict!).

Why this sudden activity by the state, which up to now has only provoked astonishment on the Revolutionary Left, and division amongst the judiciary for lack of proof? Well, in Italy, like Britain, we are entering into early elections after the collapse of the umpteenth Andreotti government, and the definite failure of the Communist Party's (PCI) three-year courtship of the Christian Democrats (DC), for a "Historic Compromise" government together with the DC. The political picture is tragic to say the least. All the indicators point to a hefty decline in the PCI votes, whilst the DC should increase slightly. The "catch-all" Socialist Party (PSI), desperately trying to reposition itself as the alternative, has little or no credibility.

Italy seems ungovernable. There seems no viable solution that these

new elections could give to the mess. On the other hand the Guerilla groups of the BR, Prima Linea (Front Line) and the Libertarian (Azione Rivoluzionaria), have stepped up their activity. The police for their part are with their nerves on edge. Shootings are the order of the day; motorists who "fail to stop" at road blocks, or who simply are passing in a suspect car (Florence ten days ago), are the innocent victims of a machine gun burst that "accidentally" is fired by a Police squad!

Over 300 innocent victims of the trigger-happy police in three years, since the special powers to the police (the Reale Law) was passed in parliament (and has full PCI backing), giving the police power to shoot at will.

Anyone stopped by the police in Italy today (you've a 50/50 chance if you are out after midnight) are greeted with pistols in hand, and fingers on the trigger. The state is powerless against the Guerrillas, and the masses know it. The arrests are perhaps a last desperate effort to assure public opinion that everything is under control, prior to the elections. But up to now the proof isn't forthcoming, and public opinion is beginning to think that it doesn't exist!

The Revolutionary Left is, as usual, in disarray. The mini-parties

are still arguing between themselves, and as yet can't come to any agreement on the presentation of a single electoral list. Their failure to offer any viable alternative to the PCI's hegemony in the workers' movement since the last elections in 1976 has resulted in mass defections from the group. The only area to grow is Autonomia. Autonomia's refusal of institutional forms of struggle also attracts many Libertarian Revolutionaries. Today the Autop collectives probably can count on between 60,000 and 70,000 militants and sympathizers.

Autonomia's verbal, theoretical and active adherence to forms of proletarian violence (although they have always been critical of the vanguardist-party tactics of the BR and company), has singled them out as prime targets of the establishment (DC and PCI).

What about the Libertarian currents in this Revolutionary set-up?

There is a resurgence of Libertarian theory and praxis, not only amongst areas of Autop, but also in the imminent refoundation of the Revolutionary Syndicalist USI (Italian Syndicalist Union), which when disbanded by the fascists, after playing a leading role in the "Red Two-years" 1919-20, counted over 300,000 militants. Also "Libertarian Worker" publications

Continued on back page

Torness gathering

On May day weekend nearly 10,000 people took part in the anti-nuclear 'gathering' at Torness in Scotland. Since plans were announced for an Advanced Gas Cooler Reactor (AGR) at Torness there has been a growing campaign to stop the project. Last year SCRAM (Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace) called a 4,000 strong protest at Torness which brought in people from all over Britain and abroad. It was at last year's protest that the Torness Alliance - the organisation that called May's 'gathering' - was formed.

The Torness Alliance is an alliance of local anti-nuclear groups and individuals opposed to the construction of a nuclear power station at Torness. It is organised on a decentralised basis - there is no 'leadership body' - with a regular delegate meeting deciding overall policy. To date the Alliance has tried to encourage the active involvement of its membership rather than just aiming for mass turnouts on the scale of the Anti-Nazi League. The Alliance believes in taking whatever

non-violent steps necessary to oppose nuclear power - though as we shall see there is no general agreement as to what non-violent means. One of the most positive aspects of the Alliance is the strong involvement of feminists in all aspects of the organisation.

The weekend started on Saturday with the gathering. There was music from a local folk band, the Women's Street Band from York, anti-nuclear stalls and exhibits, and non-violent training for the occupation the following day. Everyone who wanted to participate in the occupation was asked to join an affinity group - many of the affinity groups had been formed and worked together before the weekend. Each group sent a 'spokesperson' to decision-making meetings and also had a number of support people whose job it was to keep in contact with members of their group throughout the occupation, follow them if they were arrested, and so on.

On Saturday night a large meeting of spokespersons met for hours to decide on tactics for the next day. There was a big debate about whether a commitment of non-violence ex-

tended to damaging property, especially the perimeter fence around the reactor site. In the end it was decided that if possible entry onto the site should be made without damaging the fence.

In the event, on Sunday over 2,000 managed to occupy the site by crossing the fence of straw bales supplied by a friendly farmer or clambering through holes dug under it. Most people spent the next two days painting slogans on the fence or on rocks on the large perimeter mound, building acroft, planting trees, and looking around the acres of devastated land that had been bulldozed over the past 6 months. One enterprising group managed to divert a number of streams in such a way as to flood a large section of the site and undermine the access roads.

The question of damage to property was however continually raised during the occupation, mostly as a result of the actions of 'self-confessed individual anarchists' (as the press called them). On Sunday some people broke into the compound housing the plant and machinery and smashed a few machines up. They also damaged a couple of landrovers and site huts. Their action was strongly opposed by most people in the occupation for a number of reasons. Some opposed it because they felt that any damage to property would provoke a violent confrontation with the police and/or because they were opposed to damaging property under any circumstances. But most opposed it primarily because it went against the decisions that had been made democratically by the Alliance as a whole.

Anyone who wanted to could participate in the decision-making process of the Alliance, but most of those who did damage property chose not to do so. My own impression is that most people at Torness were not opposed to damaging property per se, but merely felt that on that occasion no useful purpose could be served by doing so.

I would say that on the whole the weekend was a success. I was particularly impressed at how well the affinity group structure worked. It meant that everyone involved in the direct action had some say in how it was organised, that everyone knew what was happening, and that during the occupation people worked together in an organised way. The left as a whole could learn much from the way affinity groups worked at Torness and it might help to avoid the confusion and disorganisation that happens on many demonstrations.

Equally the left would do well to learn from the constructive use of non-violent tactics by the Alliance and the anti-nuclear movement in other countries. You don't have to be a pacifist to support the use of non-violent tactics and from the evidence of Torness they allow a much wider range of people (women, children, elderly, white, protestant sexist men and others not capable of taking direct action) to participate in direct action than the more violent actions organised by the left.

One problem, or potential problem, is that the Alliance structure has no mass meetings, and this could mean that minority and dissident views are effectively excluded from discussion in the movement as a whole. For instance there was no real discussion of the proposal by the SWP for a greater orientation to the trade union movement, though it is fair to say that the SWP have hardly been actively involved in the Alliance in any case.

There now seems to be some uncertainty on the way forward for the Alliance. Plans for a permanent occupation have been suspended and there is not yet a worked out strategy for stopping building once and for all. Even so the anti-nuclear movement is here to stay and I would urge everyone who can to get involved in the Torness Alliance. It may not be perfect but it's the nearest thing we have to a mass libertarian organisation.

A PARTICIPANT FROM YORK

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Now to a very important question, the question of money. It will not have escaped your attention that we live under a system called capitalism, where things are not distributed to those in need but instead cost money. Paper, postage, typesetting, printing etc all cost money. The Libertarian Communist Group is very small and its members are all very poor. Like all Left papers, this one runs at a loss, even with our impoverished members subsidising it. So, we need money to keep on coming out.

We are therefore asking you for £1,000. It really is a very small sum. You could only buy a tiny part of a Rolls Royce with it. It would only pay for a few weeks in a private hospital or a 'public' school. Giving money to us is one of the few ways in which you can help to change the world!

All contributions are gratefully received. The next paper should be out by the middle of September, so all contributions would reach us by the beginning of that month. We will give you details then of how much money you have sent us.

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Demonstration against transporting nuclear waste on the North London line
Photo Eamonn O'Dwyer (IFL)

Libertarian Communist

Postcard from Italy (1)

such as 'Primo Maggio', 'Autogestione' and the very new 'An. Archos' (with Naom Chomsky, Daniel Guerin, Claude Lefort and Paul Mattick as collaborators), testify to the increase in Libertarian ideas in the mass movement.

The bankruptcy of all Bolshevik models, and the "fraternal" wars between Vietnam and Cambodia, and then China and Vietnam, for many "wavering" Italian revolutionary comrades, was the last straw. The Libertarian current has never been so strong and so non-sectarian. The FAI (Italian Anarchist Federation) and other Anarchist collectives are getting further and further out of touch with the mass movement, just as are the Bolshevik tendencies. The growth of a strong "autonomous" anti-party anti-statist tendency is a fact, in the largest Revolutionary movement in Europe.

As a recent article in a Libertarian magazine stated: "... Anarcho-communists, anarcho-syndicalists, libertarian communists, situationists, libertarian marxists, councillists, autonomist workerists ... there's more that we have in common than divides us, most of our differences are a question of semantics ..." When we refer to this growing Libertarian Revolutionary tendency it is in the above terms that we think of it in Italy.

No amount of criminalization will deter the Italian proletariat from struggling against the monstrous design to "kill" all opposition to the state regime, as envisaged by the DC and PCI. Acts like the recent arrests, and the constant "shelving" of court cases against fascists and state lackeys, are intimidatory, and in the long run will only push more and more desperate alienated, unemployed or deluded revolutionaries to opt for clandestine Guerrilla warfare. Or perhaps that is what the state wants

Nissim,
Milan, Italy, April 1979

Over 200,000 demonstrators behind a sea of red banners and placards marched through the streets of Milan chanting various slogans, which has the air of pre-election propaganda, rather than the annual solidarity fiesta against capitalism.

The bulk of the marchers were the well-disciplined, and usually agitated, PCI. Chanting for a government that includes them. Obviously the dream of the "Historic Compromise" hasn't faded. The PCI militants and supporters, as I said, were particularly vociferous and aggressive in their demands; that without the PCI Italy is ungovernable. The PSI followed on, rather sheepishly, behind an ocean of red carnations, chanting vague slogans for a national unity government.

The "revolutionary left" groups fresh from their failure to create a single united list, followed the two historical left parties chanting the unanimous slogan: "Uniti si, ma contro la DC!" ("United yes, but against the DC"). Rather comical, remembering the in-fighting between the groups which left them un-united in front of the elections!

The PDUP-MLS front (they will present a single list together) were in around 2000, but there were glaring differences between the intellectual PCI-dissenters that make up the bulk of the PDUP, and the young rough hard-line Stalinist-Maoists of the MLS, who continued to add Stalin's name in the "Internationale" that was being sung. A very strange alliance indeed. The result is that the MLS has lost over a third of its militants through this alliance with the PDUP; voices have it that after the elections there will be a complete merger between the two organizations.

Behind the PDUP-MLS were DP with 2000 odd marchers shouting slogans for a united left against the DC (as the reader can see, variety was the keynote). The DP under the banner "United New Left", which will include the Left Unionists, and a few MLS and Manifesto mavericks, is going it alone in June.

May '79. Police with armoured cars, sub-machine guns and bullet-proof vests attacking leftist militants who tried to break up a neo-fascist (MSI) pre-election meeting in Milan.



Postcard from Italy (2)

The tail end of the manifestation was brought up by the two Trotskyist groups (GCR of the Fourth International and the Revolutionary Socialist League) who are also in the process of merging. The Italian Trotskyists are much smaller numerically than the UK counterparts; they had around 200 marchers.

The orthodox Maoist Marxist-Leninist Communist Party brought up the rear with around 100 marchers, screaming pro-Albanian slogans!

The notable "absences" were Lotta Continua and Autonomia Operaia. The Autonomia declared that they would not participate in the May Day farce as their leaders (Toni Negri, Oreste Scalzone, etc) after one month, are still in jail for allegedly being leaders of the Red Brigades, without one ounce of proof being given by the police.

Lotta Continua, on the other hand, just doesn't exist any more. And this May 1st was the final irrevocable proof. About 40 hard-liners (close to some areas of Autonomia) marched sloganizing: "Neither with the state, or the Red Brigades!" But the rest of what is termed the LC "area" were smugly at home preparing their electoral campaign in favour of the Radical Party.

Most of the smaller groups used the massive demonstration to leaflet the marchers, and the passers-by. The Bordighist parties (the International Communist Party and the Internationalist CP), the Ecologists and smaller Maoist and Trotskyist groups handed out tens of thousands of leaflets.

The Libertarians?

The SUI militants (the writer amongst them) handed out one of two different leaflets expounding the two different currents that are forming in the USI project. The Anarcho-Syndicalists, with their constant problems of form and anti-organizationalism that's "too" centralist, sold their magazine (the

excellent) "Autogestione" (Self-Management) and distributed a rather nebulous call for "self-managed communism" without going into how they proposed to go about implementing it.

The "majority" current of Revolutionary Syndicalists, who are pushing forward for the Autumn Foundation Congress of USI without the Anarcho-Syndicalists (who see it as premature), leafleted their organizational programme, and an invitation to all workers fed up with the Political Unions' sell-outs to contact us. For the first time in years Red and Black Syndicalist USI banners were seen on May Day in Italy.

In "glorious" isolation about 100 orthodox FAI Anarchists held their own march, a mile away, completely cut off from the mass event. Another indication of their escapism.

The demonstration ended with the three Union leaders usual demagogic rhetoric in Piazza del Duomo, to the hysterical ovations of the PCI and PSI faithful.

Three days later another component of the proletarian forces celebrated pre-election May Day a little late. A very well disciplined and well organized Red Brigade guerrilla commando broke into the DC Rome HQ in broad daylight, planted three time-bombs in the offices, bound the guards, shot three police who attacked them (one died and the other two are critical), and escaped without a trace into the crowds of central Rome as the bombs exploded behind them destroying the Christian Democratic HQ.



MAY 1st MILAN: "Destroy that which destroys us" says a Revolutionary Libertarian placard.

The competence of this latest exploit of the Red Brigades, has left the state rather worried. With only 30 days into the elections, apathy is rife, and the state can't afford to be ridiculed any further. The guerrillas responsible for Moro's execution are still free, whilst the state is trying everything to hang the whole guerrilla movement on the Autonomia professor Toni Negri, with no proof up to now legitimising his arrest or their accusations.

This latest Red Brigades action just rubs the salt into the wound. The state is seemingly powerless to defend its cherished institutions, the the Red Brigades are proving, to many Italians, that they are not the "criminal band of assassins", "isolated and scattered", with no real strength, as the state, would have us believe. not after the meticulousness of the latest Rome raid.

Italy is the hub of revolutionary activity in Europe, and the lead up to the June elections has probably many other surprises in store for the Bourgeoisie and their lackeys in the PCI.

NISSIM, Milano 4 May 1979



Jim Partial

My heart leaps within me as I survey the state of this great nation of ours, writes Jim Partial, our man in Finch's Wine Bar. This new Conservative government are making Britain great again!

It's great for all the go-ahead sectors of our economy, the private hospitals, the private schools, the private industries. Lets have more of them!

Maggie Thatcher, that visionary, should de-nationalise all such loss-making sectors as the state education system, state health care, and above all, supplementary benefits, and sell them all back into private hands.

It has been scientifically proved by such intellectual giants as Sir Keith Joseph that private goods are intrinsically better than public goods. Large private houses, large private cars, private yachts, private clubs are all good for the nation. Sir Keith and I have all of these things, and we know that they are good! Also, unlike the so-called 'low-paid', he and I are proud to be British!

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the arguments of the 'bureaucratic collectivists', "the further decay of monopoly capitalism, its further fusion with the state and the replacement of democracy wherever it still remained by a totalitarian regime. The inability of the proletariat to take into its hands the leadership of society could actually lead under these conditions to the growth of a new exploiting class from the Bonapartist fascist bureaucracy". (p. 18 has a similar view). Trotsky adopts this simple dichotomy workers state/revolution or decay/a new class society as a means to undermine the arguments of the 'bureaucratic collectivists' (principally Rizzi). But his posing of simple choices as in this case and in the latter view that the war could only mean revolution or the restoration of capitalism act only to obscure any real discussion on the nature of the bureaucracy which for him is purely a transitory, parasitic growth produced by the backwardness of the Russian economy and the failure of the world's working class. At such a level of generalisation the specific nature of the bureaucracy is a small question.

Trotsky's generalisations stand in the way of more precise considerations of the formations and categories he considers. This applies to his central concept that socialism is nationalised property relations. The concept is totally ahistorical, corporate/state forms of property abound throughout history (Roman Armoury manufactories; the properties of the medieval church or the 'colonising' military orders eg. Teutonic Knights in East Prussia, Lithuania, Poland; to the present 'mixed economies' with varying 'nationalised' contents.) What distinguishes the various examples are specific social relations and relations of production proper to each.

Trotsky's emphasis on the legal relations and on the 'transitory' nature of the bureaucratic superstructure of the Soviet Union ignores the totality of its class relations; the lack of self-management of the producers; the system of hierarchy, one man management; the contrast between privilege and piece rate (see Harazti, A Worker in a Workers State. Penguin). It is simply to turn historical materialism on its head to seek an explanation at the level of legal relations or in the functioning of the state superstructure alone.

The limits of Trotsky's critique of the USSR are today being demonstrated by their reappearance in the work of modern 'eurocommunists' where they serve to separate the authors from the bureaucracy without fundamentally challenging it as anything more than a deviation or 'degeneration' forced by circumstances. Mandel's criticisms of this school, particularly Ellenstein, in From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, can be applied quite closely to Trotsky himself (see espec. Ch.4 A New Approach to Stalinism.)

In order to maintain its position as a revolutionary opponent of the soviet bureaucracy Trotskyism has had to create distance between itself and Trotsky. This is nowhere clearer than in the Theses on Socialist Democracy (which if anything tends too far towards pluralism) of the

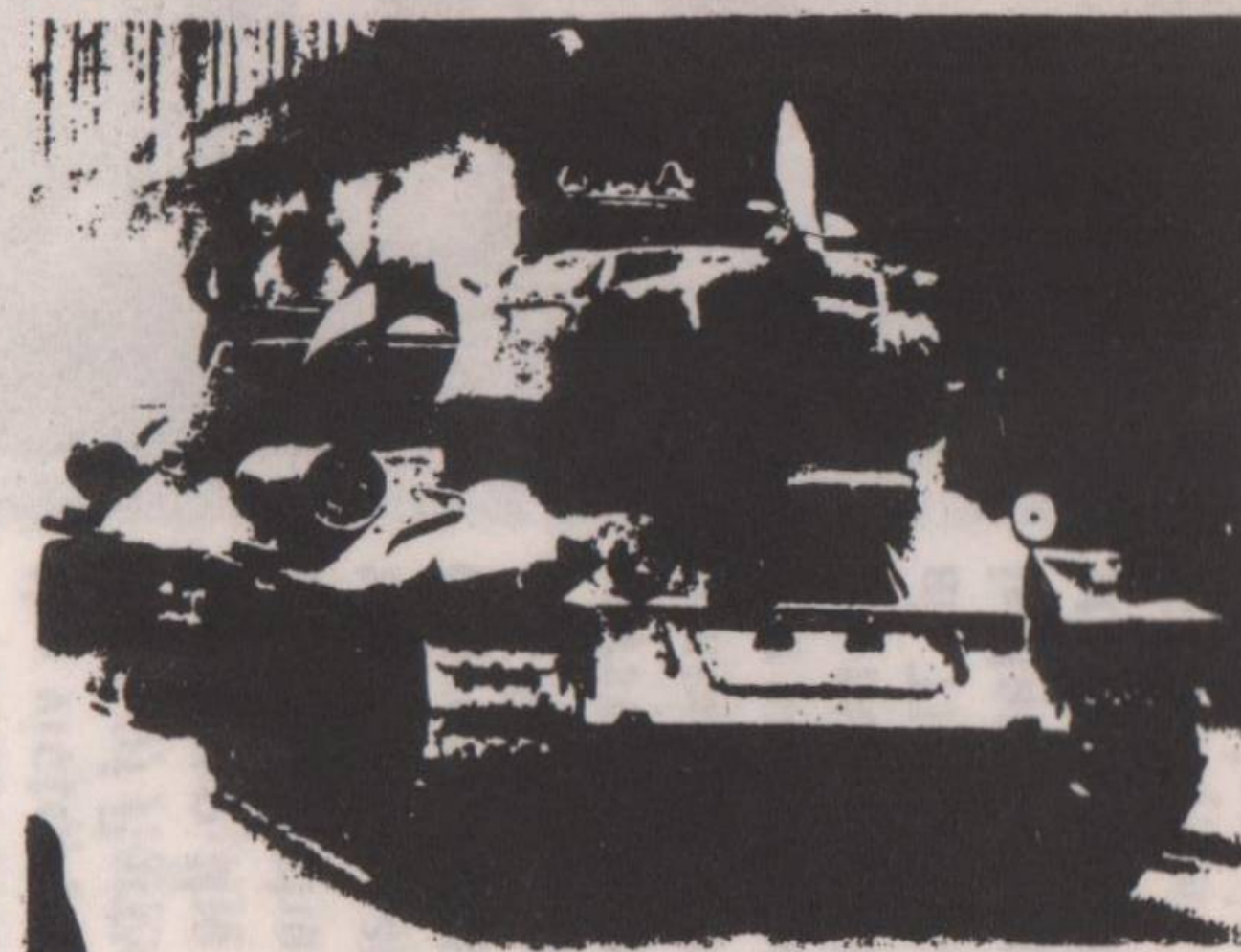
USFI, and in Mandel's substitution of the phrase 'society in transition' for 'workers state' (particularly marked in From Stalinism . . .) This evolution is a symptom of Trotsky's weakness on the problems of Party and class and on Stalinism and the class nature of the USSR.

Footnotes.

1. Third International After Lenin p.19 "Capitalism structures the entire world economy and it 'operates by its own methods', that is to say by anarchistic methods which constantly undermine its own work, set one country against another, and one branch of industry against another, developing some parts of the world economy while throwing back the development of others."
2. Revolution Betrayed. p.5. "In the conditions of capitalist decline, backward countries are unable to attain that level which the old centres of capitalism have attained. Having themselves arrived in a blind alley, the highly civilised nations block the road to those in the process of civilisation. Russia took the road of proletarian revolution not because her economy was the first to become ripe for a socialist change, but because she could not develop further on a capitalist basis."
3. Revolution Betrayed p.11. "Socialisation of the means of production had become a necessary condition for bringing the country out of barbarism."
4. Deutscher Prophet Armed. p.96. E.H.Carr Foundations of a Planned Economy Vol.1 p.283.
5. Standard in marxist-leninist work but also common in Trotskyists eg. Livio Maitan, Party, Army and Masses in China. NLB.
6. Plekhanov. In Defence of Materialism (titled for the censors On the Question of the development of the Monist View of History) 1892/3; P.B.Struve, Critical Notes on the Problems of the Economic Development of Russia. 1894; Lenin. Development of Capitalism in Russia (written 1896 published 1899).
7. Penguin. The Young Lenin. p.85.
- 7a. The Spanish Revolution (1931-39). Pathfinder 1973. pp.251, 252, 321.
8. Gaston Leval. Collectives in the Spanish Revolution; Sam Dolgoff, The Anarchist Collectives; F.Mintz, Autogestion dans l'Espagne Revolutionnaire.
9. Carr, The Interregnum p.23-4, 317.
10. Carr, FPE vol.1 p.29.
11. Writings of Leon Trotsky 1937-38. Pathfinder. Letter to Wendelin Thomas.
12. Arshinov. History of the Makhnovist Movt. Black and Red. Detroit. 1975. p.265-275, Makhnovist proclamations.
13. Arshinov, see above. Voline. The Unknown Revolution. Black and Red. Detroit. 1974. Avrich. Kronstadt 1921, and also The Russian Anarchists.
14. Voline. p.473-5.

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Sketching the limits of
Trotsky



Sketching the limits of Trotsky

This supplement is by no means an attempt to draw a balance sheet of either Trotsky's or 'Trotskyism's' contribution to Marxist theory and to the international workers movement. It is an attempt to provide a basis for such a balance sheet by considering three areas of problems experienced by the socialist movement in the course of the revolutions of this century and placing Trotsky's views and contributions within them to give some indication of the limits of this contribution.

The areas examined are only schematically separated, they are: the role of the peasantry in the transition to socialism; the question of the relationship of socialist politics and organisation to class struggle in pre- and post-revolutionary situations, ie "Party and Class"; and the nature and significance of Stalinism, leading to the question of the class nature of the Soviet Union.

The absence of discussion concerning the theory of 'permanent revolution' stems not from a ready dismissal such as Gramsci's "nothing but a generic forecast presented as a dogma and which demolishes itself by not coming true" (Prison Notebooks p 241), but from the view that the examination of the role of the peasantry undermines shared assumptions of the theory and of its rival - 'national democratic revolution' in its various, Menshevik and Stalinist incarnations (though arguably not Lenin's discarded theory of the

In universal history, the actions of men have results which differ from what they plan and achieve, from their immediate knowledge and intentions. They achieve their aims, but there is produced at the same time something hidden within them, which their consciousness was not aware of and which was not included in their calculations.

(quoted in Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, Penguin, 1975)

'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry').

Trotsky's sketch of the combined and uneven development of capitalism in Russia (1) of the impossibilities for a colonial bourgeoisie to create an economy capable of competing in the world market (2), and therefore of the only possible route to economic development (3) are very graphic and persuasive. The usefulness of the theory is considerably affected by his view that the peasantry could only act as the subordinate ally of the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. From this position Trotsky argued that only from an advanced technological base could collectivisation be accomplished (4).

The Chinese experience, in the middle 50's, of collectivisation achieving higher productivity without the existence of a technological basis proper to it (whether this is attributed to 'unutilised labour', 'mutual aid' or less prosaically the introduction of further division of labour) and on the basis of a seemingly voluntary mass movement of the

peasantry, has forced theories based upon such assumptions into contortions - the CPC 'substitutes' for a proletariat denied a central role from 1927 to 1967. (5) The alternative is a more scientific task - the re-examination of the role of the peasantry.

It was in the light of the concept of combined and uneven development that Vera Zasulich questioned Marx in 1881 on "the future of (Russian) rural communities, and on the theory that insists that all the people of the world should be forced by historical necessity to go through all the stages of social production." Marx answered, "The historical inevitability of this tendency is expressly restricted to the countries of Western Europe." In 1882, in a new preface to Plekhanov's new translation of the 'Manifesto', Marx and Engels said "We say that Russia today forms the vanguard of revolutionary action in Europe.....and what happens ON and TO the land may serve as the starting point for a communist development". Even a few years later, in a letter to Zasulich, Engels gave a cool reception to Plekhanov's

anti-Populist "Our Differences".

There was, therefore, some support from Marx and Engels for the Populist view that the rural commune might provide the basis for a transition to socialism avoiding capitalism altogether. The founding struggle of the current which was to become Russian Social Democracy was to establish the reality and inevitability of capitalist development in Russia (6). By 1894 Engels had accepted that the pace of capitalist development in Russia made developments based on the rural commune impossible as that institution was rapidly becoming unviable.

However, the limited duration of the possibility Marx and Engels saw is not the main point of interest but rather (a) the implicit assumption that the peasantry could be more than a primitive mass from which petit bourgeois and subsequently bourgeois evolutions would inevitably arise, and (b) that social democracy was founded in opposition to this peasant heresy [rather than on the question of terrorism (see Trotsky. *The Young Lenin* (7))].

The general premise of all social democrats in Russia prior to 1917 was that a bourgeois revolution was necessary and inevitable - the questions debated were whether it was to be led by the bourgeoisie and whether its limits were prescribed by a period of inevitable bourgeois democratic rule. As Trotsky



says 'the mere characterisation of the (Russian) Revolution as bourgeois tells us nothing about the type of its internal development' (The Permanent Revolution. Pathfinder. 1969 p 59).

Whatever the differences between the social democrats they were united in their estimation of the auxiliary role of the peasantry to more modern classes. This shared assumption also unites the factional positions within Bolshevik social democracy during the 1920s.

That Trotsky's attitude to the peasantry was consistent and largely deprecating is not difficult to establish by a brief survey of his views of a number of revolutionary movements.

'In order to realise the soviet state, there was required the drawing together and mutual penetration of two factors belonging to completely different historical species: a peasant war — that is a movement characteristic of the dawn of bourgeois development — and a proletarian insurrection, the movement signalling its decline.'

On the Chinese peasantry Trotsky notes (The Third International After Lenin, 1936): *'(its) role will be neither leading nor independent. The poor peasants of Hupei, Kwantung or Bengal can play a role, not only on a national but on an international scale, but only if they support the workers of Shanghai, Canton, Hankow and Calcutta'* (p. 226). Further to this, the Chinese peasantry was *'even less capable of playing a leading role than the Russian'* (p. 184).

Discussing the Spanish Revolution Trotsky hardly mentions the peasantry. When he does his programme is limited to that of the first stage of 1917, 'the land to the tillers' (7). As we know the revolution in the countryside had already extended far beyond this (8).

These points are more than a repetition of the factional accusations of 1923 that 'Trotsky underestimates the peasantry' (9) or of 1926 that 'Trotsky proposed to plunder the peasantry' (10). Despite the irregular propagandist appeals to poor peasants (a sure sign of grain crisis throughout the period), all factions in the Bolshevik party leadership were united in viewing the peasantry as incapable of independent mobilisation — they disagreed on the differentiation amongst the peasants, on the strength of the petit-bourgeois tendencies in the countryside and therefore the reality and extent of the 'Kulak mine under the socialist position' (Joint Opposition Platform Summer 1927). It is hardly surprising therefore that in Trotsky's discussions of the period 'peasant' and 'counterrevolutionary' become interchangeable.

The alliance with, and subsequent betrayal and suppression of, the Makhnovist peasant movement in the Ukraine was explained by Trotsky in 1937 (11) as being due to the Makhnovists being 'Kulak cavalry', i.e. they were peasants, they were mounted, therefore they were counterrevolutionary cavalry. There is a fine irony in this, that goes to the heart of the Bolshevik view of the peasantry. In 1920/21, when the Red Army Southern Front commanded by Frunze was to turn overnight against its allies in the previous days struggle against Wrangel (Trotsky also manages to insinuate that the Makhnovists aided Wrangel instead of spearheading his downfall) the pro-

clamations 'Forward against Makhnovism' denounced the 'anarchist bandits' for 'attacking the property of soviet citizens', i.e. the 'kulak cavalry' were encouraging land requisition and collectivisation (12). As in Spain during the period of Trotsky's writing on this subject, the opponents of such 'petit-bourgeois' tendencies had to ally themselves with the landowners to secure a social base in the countryside (see Bolloten, Grand Camouflage, et al). For a full discussion of the Makhnovist movement see Avrich, Voline, Arshinov (13).

The suppression of the rebellion of the Baltic garrison at Kronstadt in 1921 is explained by Trotsky, *'they reflected the hostility of the backward peasantry to the worker the hatred of the petit bourgeois for revolutionary discipline'* (11). Again the use of 'peasant' is considered the supreme argument as to the counterrevolutionary nature of the revolt. Actually Trotsky missed a lot out in his 1937 'explanation'. He missed the 'white general in command at Kronstadt' — who turned out to be an 'expert' employed under Trotsky's policy and playing no role in the rebellion. He does argue that the sailors who Lenin called 'the flower of the revolution' during 1917 had been dispersed and replaced by 'peasants' by 1921 — although Ida Mett had blown this legend sky high by 1927 when her 'Kronstadt Commune' detailed the histories of those involved and established the continuity Trotsky seeks to abolish.

Of course the peasant movement of the Ukraine was just that, a peasant movement. Yes, there were peasants involved in the Baltic fleet — both as 'the flower of the revolution' and as 'white guard conspirators' and 'backward peasants' (as Mett established, they were the same people in each case). An examination of the Makhnovist proclamations (12) and the demands of the Kronstadt Soviet as printed in the Kronstadt *Izvestia* (14) shows that in relation to the countryside even the most confused and backward of them were in advance of any raised inside the Bolshevik Party. Where the Kronstadters demanded socialist democracy — freedom to the soviets, and tied this to a move away from War Communism designed to encourage the self-mobilisation of the peasantry and its self-differentiation by means of freeing peasant labour from expropriation but denying it the right to employ others (i.e. to strengthen the poor and middle peasants) as in demands 8, 11, 13 of the Kronstadt Soviet resolution (14); the Bolshevik Party at its Tenth Party Congress, meeting at the same time as the rebellion and its crushing, began its move towards the New Economic Policy which meant a free hand for the real petit-bourgeois elements in the countryside, the Kulaks, and which expressly freed them to employ labour and develop agriculture through capitalistic advances. That the Party was to spend the next seven years arguing about the limits of the forces it unleashed by NEP is undeniable. Also irrefutable is that the policy of crushing the peasantry as a whole, inevitable in 1928, was a result of the prior destruction of all the tendencies towards the socialist mobilisation of the peasantry.

The real poverty of the inner party debates

in the 1920s is obvious in the light of latter developments. This is particularly so on the question of the peasantry. Whatever the nature of the 'kulak danger' or its counterpart 'riding to socialism on a peasant nag' both ignored the basic fact of soviet agriculture — as Medvedev (Let History Judge) and Nove (Economic History of the USSR) illustrate, the basic problem was a huge subsistence economy which grew throughout the period. Only between 13% (Stalin) and 21% (Moshkov and Karz) of all grain in 1927 was marketed. This proportion (a source of bitter argument over the importance or otherwise of the kulaks) changed very little over the period whilst the number of peasants' holdings steadily grew from 23 million in 1924 to 25 million in 1927 (Nove p. 106, 110; Medvedev p. 73).

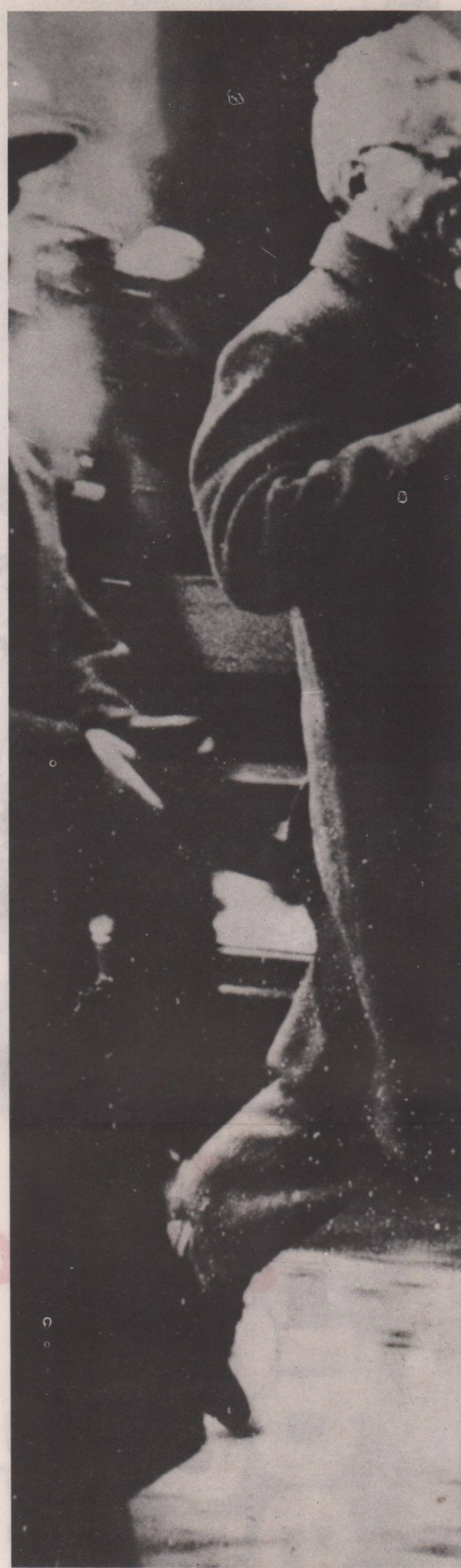
That the Chinese revolution and the subsequent success of collectivisation in China shows the possibility of other estimations of the peasantry and its capacity does not merely mean that hindsight gives us advantages. Such hindsight was not available to the Makhnovists or the Kronstadt revolutionaries. It was not available to earlier generations of Russian revolutionaries either, yet in 'Letters to a Frenchman' (in Maximoff — Political Thought of Michael Bakunin) we find outlined a programme of mobilisation through mutual aid teams, radicalisation through peasant self-government, propaganda by advantageous trade from the towns to the country, and careful strictures against encouraging the individualism of the peasantry and pushing them into the arms of reaction. It is not only in the light of the peasant based national liberation struggles since the Chinese revolution (Vietnam, Angola etc.) that Bolshevik attitudes to the peasantry are found to be profoundly reactionary.

Confused in the suppression of the peasant and peasant-linked revolutionary movements (anarchist and left SR) is not just the mistaken estimation of the potential of these movements but the fear that they represented a threat to the Bolshevik monopoly of power (this is the core of Serge's defence of the Party during this period — see Memoirs). At the centre of this fear was the Bolshevik conception of Party and class.

Lenin had argued the need for a democratic centralist Party because of the uneven development of the masses; the conditions of Tsarist repression; and the origins of revolutionary theory outside the working class, among the intelligentsia. Trotsky had originally sided with the Mensheviks in opposition to Lenin's views as expounded in 'What is to be Done' and fought for at the Second Congress in 1903. His attack 'Our Political Tasks' (1904) argued that the logic of Lenin's conception was that the Party tends to take the place of the class, the Central Committee that of the Party and the leader that of the Central Committee. This view echoed that of Plekhanov (Coll. Wks. Vol. 13 p. 317, cited in Carr: The Bolshevik Revolution Vol. 1, Penguin, p. 45), *'everything will in the last resort revolve around one man who "ex providentia" will unite all the powers in himself'*.

That Trotsky regarded his opposition to Lenin on this as the greatest mistake of his life is evidenced not only by his later admission but also by the fact that during his lifetime he never gave permission for 'Our Political Tasks' to be reprinted. Whatever the subtleties and changed emphases of Lenin's subsequent works, in practice Lenin, and the Bolshevik tradition of his successors, tended to conflate the Party and the proletariat, e.g. On Compromises. *'Our Party, like any political party, is striving after political domination for itself. Our aim is the dictatorship of the revolutionary proletariat'*. Left Wing Communism: *The mere presentation of the question "dictatorship of the Party or dictatorship of the class" testifies to the most incredibly and hopelessly muddled thinking It is common knowledge that as a rule and in most cases. . . . classes are led by political parties'*.

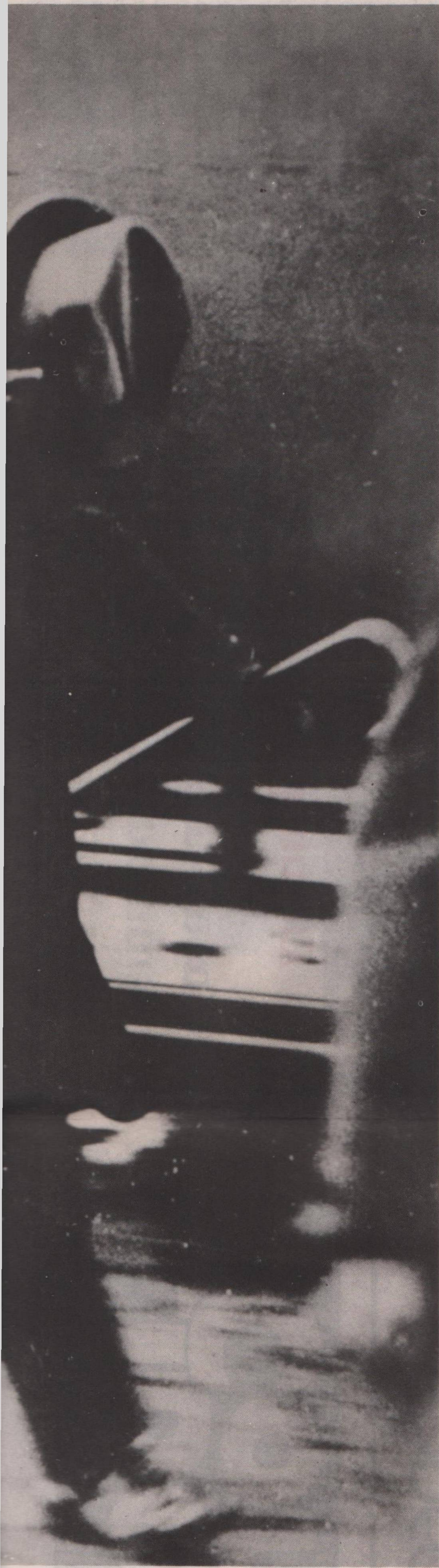
In dealing with the movements we have earlier mentioned (Makhno, Kronstadt) the twin conceptions of peasant incapacity for action as a socialist force and the exercise of power by the Bolshevik Party as actually being the dictatorship of the proletariat are dominant. The conflation further from class to Party to Central Committee is clearly outlined in Trotsky's report to the Second Congress of the Comintern. *'Today we have received from the Polish Government proposals for the conclusion of peace. Who decides this question? We have Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars, i.e. the government supposedly drawing its legitimacy from the Soviets) but it must be subject to a certain control. What control? The control of the working class as a formless chaotic mass? No. The central committee of the Party has been called together to discuss the proposal and to decide whether to answer it'*. Brinton's short book (The Bolsheviks and



Workers Control 86 pp.) details the reason why the working class had become 'a formless chaotic mass' — all its organs of democratic power had atrophied (soviets) or had actually been obstructed in their attempts at federation and national organisation (factory committee movement).

Lenin was fond of likening anyone breaking Party discipline to 'strikebreaking'. Trotsky's position throughout his fight against Stalin and Bukharin (earlier allied with Zinoviev and Kamenev) was crippled tactically by this assumption. He not only accepted the suppression of Lenin's 'Testament' by the 13th Congress but was forced to denounce as a lie Eastman's publication of the document — a move on his behalf (see Carr: The Interregnum, pp. 266-7, 271; Socialism in One Country, Vol. 2, pp. 74-76; Foundations of a Planned Economy, Vol. 2, p. 17). He maintained this attitude throughout the debates of the 20s. 'The Real Situation in Russia' 1928, p. 129. *'It goes without saying that, after the adoption of a decision, it is carried out with iron Bolshevik discipline'*. Many of the favoured quotations of Trotskyist journals used for the inflation of their own organisations date from the period before exile ('Red Flag' is a mine of such gems). *'Without the Party we are nothing, with the Party we are everything'*. *'It is impossible to be right against the Party'* (Shades of Serge's 'Case of Comrade Tulayev' and Koestler's 'Darkness at Noon!').

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Trotsky's central concern throughout the period of his opposition inside the Party was the danger from the Right, from Bukharin and the forces which represented the 'kulak danger'. This led to his serious underestimation of the danger of Stalin and his late criticisms of the regime inside the Party. Trotsky began his attack on 'bureaucratism' (in dubious alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev) at the same point that previous oppositions (Workers Truth, Workers Opposition, Democratic Centralists), whose suppression he had supported at the Tenth Congress, had started five years earlier (when Trotsky was second only to Lenin). For the Democratic Centralists, Victor Smirnov concluded at this time *'The Party is a stinking corpse'*.

Only after six years of exile, and shortly before he concluded that the entire Comintern was lost to the cause of socialism, did he turn to questions of socialist democracy — Bulletin of the Opposition, Oct. 1933, cited in Carr: F. P. E. Vol. 2, p. 469. *'What Marx and Lenin meant by a proletarian revolution, and what the Russian Revolution failed to achieve, was a process of human emancipation which would abolish exploitation, not a revolution which would expose the masses to new forms of inequality and new forms of bureaucratic organisation and oppression.'* Whether Lenin's views were such is difficult to determine. Among the measures he proposed (Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government, April 1918) were the introduction of piece work, 'Taylor' systems of

work study and organisation, a card system for registering each worker's productivity, productivity bonuses and strict discipline, *'Unquestioning submission to a single will is absolutely necessary for the success of labour processes that are based on large-scale machine industry. . . . today the Revolution demands, in the interests of socialism, that the masses unquestioningly obey the single will of the leaders of the labour process.'*

Throughout Lenin's and Trotsky's works the proletariat appears as the object in the struggle between Marxists and bourgeois ideologists (this is no better summarised than in 'The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International', the Transitional Programme, *'the crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership'*). Since this conception means that the class cannot be a revolutionary class without such leadership it follows that it is necessary for the Party to establish its control and to maintain it. The substitution is then complete. Other organs of class organisation, from unions to soviets, are useful only to allow the Party to 'base itself', 'establish links' or 'place (the working class) under the leadership of the Party'. In all this the relation is subject to object.

Claudin is a better source than Trotsky on the extent to which these views were transmitted to the Comintern and to its international oppositions of expelled dissidents (see his Epilogue to The Communist Movement).

Even the orthodox Trotskyist explanation of the victory of Stalinism assumes the substitution of Party for class. Given the 'mystic link' between the two we have the mechanism whereby the 'isolation of the revolution' and the 'backwardness of Russia' permeate from the object to the subject and lo! Degeneration of the Party/State/Revolution/Class. A less mystical explanation might begin by citing precisely the objective separation assumed by the subjective identification — this is the method sketched out by Arshinov, Brinton et al. Then the effects of the developments and isolation are seen to be acting on a concrete structure rather than a rambling and mystical unity.

In looking at 'backwardness' as the main source of degeneration (e.g. Lenin's strictures on the 'lack of culture' at the Eleventh Congress) or the 'degeneration' of the working class, the real historical developments that broke the links between the revolution and the bureaucracy which followed it are ignored. Trotsky himself (History of the Russian Revolution) gives instances of the sudden ceasing of elections to soviets after October (p. 199). Brinton details the deliberate prevention of factory committee congresses. The result, the apologists tell us, *'the working class itself no longer existed as an agency collectively organised so as to be able to determine its own interests'* (Harman, How the Revolution was Lost, p. 7). We have briefly discussed how examples of such 'determination of interests' were dealt with in our consideration of Kronstadt and the Ukraine. In his works on Germany and on Spain Trotsky repeatedly takes to task the Social Democrats, Stalinists and Anarchists for their failures which they excuse by 'blaming the working class' for their own false policies, the 'explanations' for the loss/failure/degeneration of the Russian Revolution are but giant examples of this method. In each case they are an attempt to avoid an estimation of the politics involved.

The most telling point against the thesis of slow degeneration through isolation of the revolution and backwardness of the country is that all the measures which prevented the 'determination of interests' were early features of the revolution as Brinton's chronology demonstrates. The Makhnovist and Kronstadt movements were aimed precisely at the blocks to such 'determinations'. From this view 1921, which also saw Trotsky at the height of his power, saw the end of the revolution as a 'process of human emancipation'. The masses were already exposed to 'new forms of inequality and new forms of bureaucratic organisation and oppression'.

In 1904 Trotsky argued against substitution with the words *'The tasks of the new regime will be so complex that they cannot be solved otherwise than by way of competition between various methods of economic and political construction, by way of long "disputes", by way of a systematic struggle not only between the socialist and capitalist worlds, but also many trends inside socialism, trends which will inevitably emerge as soon as the proletarian dictatorship poses tens and hundreds of new . . . problems. No strong "domineering" organisation . . . will be able to suppress these trends and controversies . . . A proletariat capable of exercising its dictatorship over society will not tolerate any dictatorship over itself. . . . The working class . . . will undoubtedly have in its ranks quite a few political in-*

valids . . . and much ballast of obsolescent ideas which it will have to jettison. In the epoch of dictatorship, as now, it will have to cleanse its mind of false theories and bourgeois experience and to purge its ranks from political phrasemongers and backward-looking revolutionaries . . . But this intricate task cannot be solved by placing above the proletariat a few well-picked people. . . . or one person invested with the power to liquidate and degrade' (Quoted in Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, pp. 92-3).

Once begun the substitution of Party for class and apparatus for Party undoubtedly found favourable conditions in the Russia of the 1920s. Each step in the development of the bureaucracy was premised on the elimination of opposition outside the Party but before this was completed 'liquidation and degradation' from on high were introduced into the Party itself.

At the Ninth Congress (April 1920) Yurenev protested at the methods used by the Central Committee to suppress criticism from the Democratic Centralists and Workers Opposition, *'one goes to Christiana, another sent to the Urals, a third — to Siberia'*. Maximovsky attacked the 'bureaucratic centralism' of the apparatus: *'It is said that a fish begins to rot from the head. The party begins to suffer at the top from the influence of bureaucratic centralism'*. Sapronov argued, *'However much you talk about electoral rights, about the dictatorship of the proletariat, about the yearning of the Central Committee for the party dictatorship, in fact this leads to the dictatorship of the party bureaucracy.'*

At the Tenth Congress, in the shadow of Kronstadt, Trotsky attacked the Workers Opposition. *'They have come out with dangerous slogans. They have made a fetish of democratic principles. They have placed the workers' right to elect representatives above the Party. As if the Party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers' democracy!'* Trotsky spoke of *'the revolutionary historical birthright of the Party'*. *'The Party is obliged to maintain its dictatorship . . . regardless of the passing moods of the workers' democracy, regardless of the temporary vacillations even in the working class The dictatorship does not base itself at every given moment on the formal principle of a workers' democracy.'*

Lenin attacked the Workers Opposition (which represented the proletarian base of the Party) as 'petit-bourgeois', 'syndicalist' and 'anarchist'. The demands of the opposition were very similar to those of the Kronstadt rebellion (Q.E.D.?). The danger was that instead of centring on small areas — 'lack of culture', 'bureaucratism in x department', they questioned the class nature of the State. Criticism at this level raised the same danger to the monopoly of power as the rebels in Kronstadt. Bogdanov of the Workers Truth group argued that the revolution had ended *'in a complete defeat for the working class. . . . the bureaucracy, along with the NEPmen had become a new bourgeoisie, depending on the exploitation of the workers and taking advantage of their disorganisation. . . . With the Trade Unions in the hands of the bureaucracy the workers were more helpless than ever The Communist Party . . . after becoming the ruling Party, the Party of the organisers and leaders of the state apparatus and of the capitalist based economic life . . . had irrevocably lost its tie and community with the proletariat'*. Lenin's argument went to the heart of the matter, *'Marxism teaches us that only the political party of the working class, i.e. the Communist Party, is in a position to unite, educate, organise. . . . and direct all sides of the proletarian movement and hence all the working masses. Without this the dictatorship of the proletariat is meaningless.'*

The Tenth Party Congress agreed to further draconian restrictions on the membership of the Party. Factional rights were abolished and a secret provision gave the Central Committee unlimited disciplinary powers including expulsion from the Party and even from the Central Committee itself (for which a two thirds majority was required). In the aftermath of such events the proposals for NEP took very little time! Only 20 of the 330 pages of the Report deal with it!

The finishing touches had been made on the mechanism of bureaucratic rule and Lenin and Trotsky had provided its ideological justification.

There is a certain irony in Trotsky's statement, written in 1939, that *'Stalinism had first to exterminate politically and then physically the leading cadres of Bolshevism in order to become that which it is now: an apparatus of the privileged, a brake upon historical progress, an agency of world imperialism'*.

In the same vein Trotsky stated (Revolution Betrayed p. 279) *'From the first days of*

the Soviet regime the counterweight to bureaucracy was the Party. If the bureaucracy managed the state, still the Party controlled the bureaucracy. Keenly vigilant lest inequality transcend the limit of what was necessary, the Party was always in a state of open or disguised struggle with the bureaucracy. The historic role of Stalin's faction was to destroy this duplication, subjecting the Party to its own officialdom and merging the latter in the officialdom of the state (which body considered the Polish government's proposals for peace?). Thus was created the present totalitarian state.' Exactly.

For the first ten years of its existence Trotsky's opposition was a 'reform' group explicitly rejecting the idea of the need for a new revolution in the USSR and the related idea of a new revolutionary international. Trotsky's view was that the danger during the 20s was chiefly from the Bukharin-Rykov group whose encouragement of rural petit bourgeois production and limiting the pace of industrialisation to this rural development threatened the resurrection of capitalism through the growth of the kulaks (rich peasants) and the various private trading structures that grew up from their production. The Stalinist faction, based on the Party and state bureaucracies, was seen as a vacillating, inconsistent centrist group. The main attacks against this centre were that they opened the road for the right. Under the pressure from the left and right Trotsky expected this centre to break up (see the first section of 'The Workers State, Thermidor and Bonapartism'). As late as 1931 Trotsky argued (Problems of the Development of the USSR) *'The recognition of the present Soviet State as a workers' state not only signifies that the bourgeoisie can conquer power in no other way than by armed uprising but also that the proletariat of the USSR has not forfeited the possibility of submitting the bureaucracy to it (a curious phrasing, reminiscent of "blaming the working class"?), or reviving the Party again and of mending the regime of the dictatorship — without a new revolution, with the methods and on the road of reform.'*

Clarifying his definition of socialism further, and establishing a view he was to hold to, Trotsky explained in 'The Revolution Betrayed': *'The nationalisation of the land, the means of industrial production, transport and exchange, together with the monopoly of foreign trade, constitutes the basis of the Soviet social structure. Through these relations, established by the proletarian revolution, the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined'* (p. 235). The centre of the Trotskyist view of the USSR as a workers' state is exactly the nationalised property. All other questions of analysis are secondary to this if not subsumed into it in the course of argument. If one actually considers the necessary course of any proletarian rising the question becomes much clearer. What will be necessary with regard to the apparatus of management, to the police, KGB, and military establishment in the event of revolution? It will have to be smashed. Will it be possible for a proletarian revolution to make use of the same methods of decision making as to the needs and priorities of production or will new and democratic organs have to be created? They undoubtedly will. What does this mean? A proletarian revolution in the USSR will have to smash the state apparatus and establish new means of ruling. On the other hand can the apparatus of the soviet state be used by any group controlling it to exploit the labour of the working people? Is the apparatus well constructed to that end? It can. It is. Trotsky moved towards extending his definition of the 'political revolution', which he saw as necessary once he had left the path of reforming the state apparatus in 1934, to precisely such a smashing of the existing state, *'The goal to be attained by the overthrow of the bureaucracy is the re-establishment of the rule of the soviets'*. There is no longer any idea that the central task is to 'revive the Party' but there is a confusion in that Trotsky's next phrase is *'expelling from them the present bureaucracy'* (In Defence of Marxism p. 4). The effect of this sleight of hand is to suggest that soviets still rule but are controlled by the bureaucracy, we are led away again from facing up to the fact that the bureaucracy ruled through a specific state apparatus not through the purely ornamental soviets, and through this Trotsky manages to avoid the simple truth that the overthrow of the bureaucracy by the proletariat means smashing the existing state apparatus.

Although Trotsky's often-quoted predictions as to the likely outcome of the Second World War open the way for going beyond the 'workers stage' idea he never himself faced up to the fact that it meant reviving the marxist theory of the state as a tool to analyse the bureaucracy. In 'The USSR in War' (In Defence of Marxism p.10) he accepts that the failure of the proletarian revolution will prove