

Chartist

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Marxism and Gay Liberation

Post-election perspectives

Also
inside

- LOW PAY
- WOMEN AND ARCHITECTURE
- RACISM
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- REVIEWS

CHARTIST NO. 75 May/June 1979

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Editorial :

Beyond the pendulum's swing

The calling of a general election after the Labour Government's defeat by one vote in the House of Commons vote of confidence follows hard on the high point of industrial struggles this winter. The tide was beginning to ebb having peaked in February and early March, in what was certainly the most widespread and deep-going expression of discontent with the wage policies of the Labour Government since 1974.

This poses a real and intractable problem for Marxists. On one hand: a welcome return to industrial militancy; on the other a turn away from political solutions just at the time that the general election places these on the agenda.

Despite the series of blows which finally brought the Labour Government down the election result is not wholly a foregone conclusion and Labour may do better than, on the basis of the Government's record and the Cabinet's manifesto, they have any right to expect. In this situation the question of how to pose an alternative to the policies of the Labour leadership within the general framework of working class unity against the Tories is crucial.

Whilst a number of small groups have called for abstention in the election this is not a policy which can be taken very seriously.

Others will have stood candidates in various areas. The Communist Party

have traditionally done this and are even standing against Ernie Roberts in Hackney North. The election results will strike a further blow at the pretensions of the Socialist Unity to offer any meaningful alternative to Labour in any area and must cast serious doubts on the future viability of this form of electoral intervention by the far left.

The Socialist Workers Party having abandoned electoral intervention but having no perspective to change Labour policies or representatives had to argue that the Tories were a greater evil, thus presenting an essentially passive position on the election.

In this context the work of the

SCLV in a small way indicates the only possible way of combining both a militant and determined fight for a socialist alternative with an active determination to secure the return of a Labour Government. In this sense we believe that it indicates the way out of the intractable dilemmas faced by the left in this country at election time.

In the rest of this editorial we look at the prospects ahead after the stormy period of the last few months.

THE EFFECTS OF THE LOW PAY DISPUTES

In the trade unions — despite the inherently political character of the public sector dispute, the fact that they were a direct clash with the state, both as *employer* and as *mediator*, through incomes policy, there has been a certain anti-political character about the struggles. This has been shown for instance in the moves for NUPE disaffiliation from the Labour Party and by the widespread attitude of 'we don't care where the money comes from'. The immediate roots of this depoliticisation of the struggle are in the way the public sector had been made the whipping boy for high settlements (e.g. Ford's) in the private sector. Given this, and the system of cash limits it would be difficult for the struggle to have been fought on any other basis than the general move for a drive towards free collective bargaining after the fashion of private industry. One can hardly expect local government workers to sing the praises of statisation and municipalisation of services (Social democracy's 'socialism') when it means poverty level wages for them. Of course, union leaders like Fisher added to this sort of approach by talking of the 'exploitation of dedication' in the public sector in a variant of special case arguments.

In fact, as we have previously noted, free collective bargaining does not and cannot exist in the public sector on the model of private industry. Action in these services is inherently political — a challenge to prevailing Government policy and priorities. The hysteria of the press over the threat to the public of the withdrawal of services in the hospitals, in refuse disposal and in the schools, make it very clear that struggles of this nature need to move beyond the bounds of mere withdrawal of labour to pose issues of control, especially over emergency services. Militant trade unionism alone is not a sufficient answer. The tendency to wage the strikes along the lines of workers vs. employers on the classic model also tended to exaggerate the centrifugal tendency towards local settlements, which while in some places limited victories e.g. Camden, also weakened the thrust of the action as a political offensive against central government policies.

As well as the specific pressures towards a syndicalist approach in the



Low paid workers in the public sector — strikes need political awareness.

public sector struggles there is an underlying trend of rather more significance. Recent pronouncements of Moss Evans for example indicate that the mood of disentangling the unions from the 'social contract' — type role of 'behind the scenes' influence to a more traditional trade union approach is rather more widespread than the feelings of low paid local government workers that they were the penurious relations of workers in private industry. In fact, this pattern is not new. The 'do it-yourself' reformism which the IS (now Socialist Workers Party) noticed in the shop stewards movement of the late '60s, and on which they predicated their whole strategy of a new workers' party based on a rank and file movement in the unions, is with us once again. The mistake the IS/SWP made was two fold: firstly they mistook a short-term pendulum swing for a long term trend and secondly they estimated this oscillation in a one-sidedly positive way failing to see its weaknesses.

DIRECT ACTION

Despite the obviously welcome return to direct action and militant struggle this do-it-yourself reformism entails and which is a tremendous step forward from the quiescence of recent years, nevertheless, it also constitutes a turning away from the more generalised and political solutions to problems which the professional reformists of class-collaborationist social contract style policies offer. In this sense, it is merely 'the other side' of the same process, its necessary antithesis and can only, at its highest point, as in 1974, succeed in hoisting the 'professional' reformist politickers into office. The same pattern which we have observed from gut militancy to reformist politics and back can be observed in the history of the working class movement,

for instance, in the 20's. The task of revolutionary strategy is to show the way out of this eternal recurrence of these two options for the working class movement. Generalised political answers are needed which are based on the militancy and struggles of the class rather than in antithesis to them.

For us the focus for breaking this deadlock must be the struggle in the Labour Party. How have the Labour left fared in the new wave of struggles?

In the Labour Party — If there has been some confusion in the unions over the low pay disputes, it has been as nothing to the problems they have posed for the best elements of the Labour left — those on Labour councils who have faced these disputes in some sense as employers and in a general sense, as bankrupt employers.

The problems of finance, of tactics concerning whether local settlements would constitute a step forward or weaken the strike, these and a thousand and one other related issues have left the Labour left in a state of utter confusion. Now it may well be that very different tactics are required in different areas. For instance, the much-heralded Camden settlement — see *Socialist Challenge* and *Socialist Press* — was possible while rate increases still only rose to 26% because Camden includes many central London office blocks and relatively poor council housing so that 75% of rates revenue comes from commercial properties. What was therefore involved in granting the low pay settlement was a massive redistribution of wealth. Yet in many other London boroughs not only have percentage rate increases needed to pay the claim reached up to 50% (Hackney) but many of these are levied from working class people, whether directly to owner occupiers, or indirectly to tenants. The whole system means robbing Peter to pay Paul. In such areas rate increases as a

matter of tactics are *indefensible*. They can only be defended as part of a strategy aimed at strengthening the situation of the working class through all the means at the disposal of a local council in preparation of a *united* assault on central government, the state and the financial institutions. Only in this context, can we see in the wide range of different options pursued by local councils according to particular circumstances anything more than a patchwork of improvisations. An underlying unifying strategy is vital to avoid demoralisation and to take the whole movement forward.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

Elements for such a strategy must be along the following lines:

1. Critical support for rate increase where progressive manifesto commitment are at stake, rents are frozen, and the fight with central government goes on.
2. The fight with central government cannot be restricted to demands for aid, through urban aid and rate support grant which inevitably result in competition in the 'greatest need' stakes. It must take up political demands for the Nationalisation of banks and finance houses cash grants and interest-free loans and must be a public fight.
3. Interest charges — the facile notion that cancellation of interest charges would suddenly increase a local authority's income (see Hugh Richards *Socialist Challenge* No. 83) is a dangerous nonsense. In fact, such an act would be a declaration of war on the whole system (i.e. finance capital) and would only be a realistic option in a dual power situation when workers were opening the banks' books etc. Such an act today would mean bankruptcy in weeks for any council that tried it.
4. Bankruptcy of course could not be ruled out as an expedient at some stage — but clearly at present there is no way that the necessary unity can be forged between the trade unions and a local council, if the policies of that council, for whatever reason, place it in a situation where it cannot pay its workers. A commitment to joint or reciprocal action between unions and a local council should be an essential ingredient of a strategy for the labour movement. So too should the forging of links and a common policy for action between councils' in a particular area, for example London. The Local Government conference on June 16th sponsored by SCLV aims to begin this process. (Lastly, C.V Gelderen's proposal in letter to *Socialist Challenge* for a locally-raised income tax seems a dubious advance over the rating system and does not seem to take account of business premises. It still has the same disadvantages as rates as well given the regional distribution of wealth and poverty. Once again, most resources would be needed where they

are scarcest.)

The central dilemma for any socialist strategy at the local level seems to be that on one hand only central government can make the funds available to tackle inner-city problems and redistribute wealth geographically as well as socially. On the other hand, if local authorities are to become outposts of working class power and foci of working class resistance and opposition to central government policies, especially with the prospect of a Tory Government in the near future, then it becomes essential to defend whatever autonomy in fund-raising local government might have.

THE ELECTION AND PROSPECT OF A TORY GOVERNMENT

What are the prospects for the working class movement under a Tory Government which may well be what we have by the time this article appears?

What future will the SCLV have after a month of hectic election work?

This will depend on just how successful the SCLV has been in the course of the election, how severe the defeat which a Tory Government would mean is, and, consequently, the sort of fightback from Labour and the unions we could expect.

What Sort of Fightback? Despite the recent upsurge, it would be a mistake to underestimate the demobilising effect of the last three years. This compounded with an electoral defeat for the working class, could well mean a very slow fightback on the industrial front. To some extent this would depend on the Tories' majority and whether they felt sufficiently strong to take on the unions head-on. This seems unlikely; Heath's big mistake was the alienation of the great bulk of the union bureaucracy which had shifted left in the '60s through the Industrial Relations Act. Today, we have the most right wing union leadership for more than a decade; their inhibiting effects on strike struggles against a future Tory Government should not be underestimated. The only glimmer of light on the union scene as far as leaderships go, since the destruction of the Civil and Public Services Association Executive lies with the National Union of Miners' (NUM) leadership, Gormley's possible retirement leaves the field wide-open to McGahey or Scargill. Age restrictions prevent right wingers like Lancashire's Sid Vincent and Midlander Len Weaver contesting the position and it is unlikely that the right wing can find any significant new figure within a year. It will be interesting to see who they regard as the lesser evil.

However, whatever the result the NUM cannot go it alone against the Tories. Having been bought off this year with a productivity offer it may be two years before a pay movement breaks out along the '72 or '74 pattern.

The new mood of syndicalism and rank-and-file action which we have seen over recent months could well mean sporadic strikes and a number of defeats in the early period of a Tory Government. Though, of course, we argue for support for such actions and attempt to unify the movement around its most advanced elements, it may well be the case that we will find ourselves warning against premature strike action rather than watching isolated groups going down to defeat. This may seem very hypothetical at the moment but nothing can be more dangerous than adventurism in the aftermath of a defeat and the far left in this country still subscribe for the most part to 'the theory of the offensive'. Once again, the key is the development of a strategy which can give some indication of when it is time to strike and when to refrain from striking.

The Left confined to tactical, episodic approaches have not with some honourable exceptions, even begun to pose this problem. Many still regard a failure to strike when the possibility exists as tantamount to betrayal.

In the Labour Party — What will be the consequences of electoral defeat in the Labour Party? Both in general and in its relevance to our work? Certainly, it would be simplistic to say that defeat would mean a swing to the left or the right. In fact, to say the result would be contradictory still does not get us far. Amidst anti-Tory rhetoric and a formal leftism from the party's leaders, almost certainly the right will gain from defeat, both through the demand for unity and through being let off the Governmental hook. It may even be that they will go onto the offensive looking for scapegoats for the party's defeat. Sections of the left will also grow — especially the Labour Co-ordinating Committee — a very definite pro-Benn lobby for leadership and the Independent Labour Publications forces. Thus a broad left-wing, just left of centre will exist in a loose and amorphous form and the new 'centrism' of the LP will provide a certain ideological pole for the more thoughtful disillusioned Tribunate. The possibility of witch-hunts against those who place themselves to the left of this configuration should not be ruled out or exaggerated.

In the event of the Party leadership becoming vacant after the General Election the left will rally around Benn but a right winger will almost certainly get in on the votes of the Parliamentary Labour Party which will have swung right in the event of an election defeat due to the large number of Tribunitians in key Labour marginals. This would certainly heighten conflict between the CLPs, Conference and the leadership of the party. This would keep the issue of LP leader alive after an election had taken place and we are likely to see a far more overt period of

the struggle of different tendencies inside the LP.

In this context how do we rate the importance of the SCLV and its future?

SCLV AND THE LABOUR PARTY

The election of six SCLV supporters to the Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party and a very successful fringe meeting were all signs of the possibilities of the SCLV. The SCLV's ability to focus on the key debate for local councillors at a meeting with two Housing Chairpersons, a Council Leader and various other councillors from at least four councils showed that the SCLV is capable of establishing its credentials as a legitimate part of the mainstream of the Labour movement taking up relevant issues.

Yet nevertheless it highlighted the problem. The committed active base of the SCLV is composed to a large extent of Chartist and Workers' Action supporters. The support of well-known councillors, prospective parliamentary candidates and other leading figures is important. As yet, though, there is not an adequate organisational framework for decision-making, for the involvement of the non-aligned, for some accountability of the sponsors.

Another problem is this: the platform of the SCLV places itself on the far left of the Labour Party. Certainly, the farthest left of any grouping in the party since the expulsion of the SLL in the early '60s. Whereas particular formulations can be changed or dropped such as the incorrect call for a 'rate freeze' from the SCLV platform it is

difficult to see how most of it can be substantially altered without undue concessions.

This heightens rather than obviates the need for a dialogue and unity in action with forces to our right in the Labour Party (in fact there are no other kind of forces) — Coates, Hodgson, *Voice* etc. Without this there is a danger of splits and isolation for the solid core of the SCLV's supporters. We must even attempt a dialogue with the *Militant*, which will require some patience. Debates in LPYS branches would be a start. We must have the perspective of building a more solid and organised core of the SCLV without running foul of Transport House rule. Local groups are important and an internal communication network from the bottom up as well as from the top down.

The projected local government conference, though primarily a London initiative should provide a useful opportunity for debate and dialogue between the SCLV's name' supporters and rank and file. It should be a working conference, with no hint of a stirring rally without political content. After the election the SCLV must hold a conference on which way forward but should also fight for the left in general — Labour Co-ordinating Committee, Independent Labour Publications, *Tribune* etc to hold a joint conference for the entire labour left.

SCLV and the far left — If the SCLV is on the far left amongst LP activists then with the far left it is still seen as a prop to the LP. After a brief flirtation with the LP in 1974/5 the mood on the far left is distinctly anti-Labour

and anti-'entrism'. Whilst the approach of the election will bring a grudging recognition once again from the SWP and the International Marxist Group that they have no alternative to voting Labour and calling on their supporters to do likewise both have turned away from any interest in internal LP matters. The Workers Socialist League are if anything worse, whilst having supporters in the LP they seem intent on reliving down to the last dot and comma the SLL's (Workers Revolutionary Party's predecessor)'s expulsion in the early '60s.

Nevertheless, things are not as bleak as all that. The SWP after one of its periodic rethinks and substantial internal upheavals decided that electoral intervention is not for them. Socialist Unity isolated by this sudden volte-face felt themselves incredibly exposed. The IMG has only persuaded the ISA — International Socialist Alliance — a group of ex-SWPs to sign their unity appeal (vintage '79) whilst Socialist Unity partners Big Flame are moving away from unity moves with the IMG. The latest SU campaign in BF's home territory of Edge Hill had been described by Pennington as a last chance (they scored a derisory 127 votes) and their general election plans are to contest only a dozen or so seats.

It is up to the SCLV to demonstrate the effectiveness of building a base in the Labour Party to the rest of the left currently outside it. The opening up of possibilities for revolutionary work in the LP will attract many of the currently unaffiliated revolutionaries as well as exert an increasing pull over the ranks of the organisations of the far left.

ROOTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

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SURVEY

Anti-racists face the test

The last three years have submitted the anti-fascist and anti-racist movements in this country to a considerable test. In one way and another almost all the problems of revolutionary politics have emerged in the course of the developments of the anti-fascist, anti-racist movement.

While few, if any, of them have been solved, the right questions have been posed, large numbers of people mobilised and a tremendous diversity of opportunities opened up. At the heart of the anti-racist movement — its solid core — has been the organisations of the far left. In this way, the debates to which the anti-racist movement have been subject can also be seen aspects of differing conceptions of the road to, and the meaning of socialism itself.

TURNING POINT

The crucial turning point in the struggle against fascist mobilisation was for many the Lewisham events of August 13th 1977. After two years of escalating fascist activity, a summer of racist attacks (1976) and a series of inconclusive encounters, 4000 anti-fascists with the aid of local black youths were able to disrupt and all but destroy a fascist march and hold at bay a quarter of the Metropolitan Police Force. Of course, the way for victory at Lewisham had been paved by the earlier success at Wood Green that April and by the patient, and, at times impatient, work of the left in anti-fascist and anti-racist committees, arguing the case for 'no platform' and for driving the NF off the streets by direct physical action rather than restricting the fight to propaganda and demands for state bans. Important too, in the events of Lewisham was the readiness of the anti-fascists and the local youth to take on the police.

It had after all been a campaign against the racism of the Lewisham police under the command of the notorious Commander Randall which was responsible for bringing both the NF and counter-NF mobilisations about. The simmering discontent of West Indian youth in the area exploded alongside the frustration of the anti-fascists.

Yet the success of Lewisham brought its own problems. After similar events in Ladywood, Birmingham, police tactics were changed. The Public Order Act was brought into use to ban all marches for a three month

GEOFF BENDER

period and Martin Webster was allowed to march through Manchester solo, with 5000-strong police escort. The use of bans led to further confusions and demobilisations in Ilford in early 1978. The direct confrontation policy, reaching its height, also reached its limits.

STATE POLICY

Not only the switch in state policy was responsible for this, though confrontation with the state was an inevitable consequence of the policy and the full implications of such confrontation seldom discussed. Various forces on the left themselves drew back from the policy after the success at Lewisham and Ladywood. There had always been the anti-confrontationists such as the Communist Party whose Lewisham branch called on people not to attend the anti-NF picket and whose paper, the *Morning Star* denounced those, including many of their own members, who had stopped the fascists. After Lewisham, however, new voices were raised questioning the 'militarism' of the confrontation strategy.

The Socialist Workers Party, chief architects of this approach, after a piece of bravado in their September 1977 journal, *International Socialism* entitled *In Defence of Violence*, themselves drew back. Within two months of this appearing they were to launch together with Labour lefts, the Anti-Nazi League. Some of their new allies in this, such as Bedwelty MP, Neil Kinnock, declared it the healthy alternative to street-fighting. Certainly, a new approach was needed. There could be no possibilities of defying state bans and taking on the police with the limited forces available. The press reaction to Lewisham did bring dangers of isolation of the anti-fascists from the working class as a whole and the political message being lost in a 'law and order' debate where the enemy was defined as 'political extremists of both sides'. Other problems existed too. If a new emphasis on propaganda was required, at this time, then what was to be said.

Issues about the nature of fascism and fascist ideology at the present time were posed. To what extent was it important to stress the *ultimate aim* of fascism as the smashing of the organised working class rather than the way in which fascism — particularly in

its NF populist guise — exploited, developed and built on already existing divisions and prejudices in the population as a whole, including in the working class movement. To what extent, therefore, ought anti-fascist groups to tackle issues of racism, sexism and national chauvinism outside their fascist manifestations.

SHAMBLES

The raising of these sort of issues produced the chaos which characterised the Anti-racist, Anti-fascist Co-ordinating Committee conference held in June last year. Whilst the importance of understanding the sexual-political and other ideological dimensions of the NF's appeal was correctly brought out in the contributions, verbal and written of the Women Against Racism and Fascism and Gay Activist Alliance delegates the way in which their contributions were *counterposed* to, and not *integrated* with the existing anti-fascist and anti-racist struggle led to a situation where the potential synthesis of aspects of the anti-racist struggle turned into a shambles.

Arguments advanced against 'confrontation' came very near the pacifist positions put forward for example by the feminist magazine *Shrew*. Certainly, the militarism of the preceding period had had an element of 'machismo' about it and the use of anti-homosexual taunts against NF leader Webster was not unknown. Nevertheless, socialists should reject the 'machismo' element precisely because it leads to a light-minded, un-serious approach to the use of force which is always a necessary, but subordinate part of an anti-fascist strategy.

Worse still, the alternate agenda adopted on the second day *excluded* an effective debate on the cornerstone of state racism, immigration controls. This resulted, eventually into a walkout of black delegates present.

In reality, the conflicts which tore apart the ARAFCC Conference had been heightened and brought to the fore by the staggering success of the ANL which had brought 80,000 people onto the streets, little more than a month before for Carnival 1. This had created a situation where the older, more seasoned anti-racist activists and organisations were forced to attempt to re-define their role. The conference was clearly unable to do this. An alternative, or at least a complement was needed to the lowest common denominator approach of the ANL.

Since then, the various sections of the anti-racist movement have found a range of different ways of tackling these problems. WARF Groups have continued to develop as a part of the broader Socialist/feminist milieu; anti-racist campaigns have worked with or fused with local ANL groups, separate campaigns have taken up issues of police harassment, sus, immigration laws and the various aspects of state racism. Some local campaigns have also addressed themselves to the various problems posed by racism in education, whether in textbooks, the classification of black kids as ESN, or in the so-called ethnic studies programme. The Teachers Against the Nazis. Others have addressed themselves to questions of how positive discrimination can be achieved in areas such as housing and employment and how the general conception can be fought for against trade union resistance to monitoring.

SPECIALISATION

Certainly, the existence of a mass anti-fascist movement has made this outgrowth of specialisation necessary and possible which it was not when the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement merely survived by responding to the initiatives of the 'enemy'. However, amidst this range of activities how can priorities be established? How can the fascists be effectively defeated in the presence of police bans? More importantly, doesn't this

problem highlight what many black activists have consistently argued: that what lies at the heart of institutionalised racism in Britain is not the NF or their fellow travellers but the state?

Whether in the form of rows of police protecting fascists, immigration officials harassing Asians on arrival with humiliating medical checks and unsafe X rays and raids for illegal immigrants, or the 'sus' laws directed at the West Indian population, such a view should be indisputable on the evidence which is available. In these circumstances, anti-Nazism can by some be seen as the 'soft option'. . . until serious anti-NF activity brings them directly up against the law.

STRENGTH OF NUMBERS

The possibilities created by the strength of numbers brought into activity by the ANL and Rock Against Racism are of great importance for the future of genuinely anti-racist work.

But for this to get under way, it is vital that the pervasiveness of racism in our society is clearly brought home to anti-fascists. While the ANL was gathering strength in the month preceding Carnival 1 the finishing touches, as well as the signature of ANL sponsor, Sid Bidwell, was being put to the Report of the Select Committee on Race Relations. A document racist to the core. While Carnival 2 was being prepared Thatcher was making her 'swamping' remarks. In British politics immigration has become the

codeword for race. The other codeword in relation to urban issues has been law and order.

With the likelihood of a Tory Government coming to office the role of the state as the agent of racism in British society will become more and more blatant. Firm action against overstayers and illegal immigrants and a register of dependents has been promised. Yet another licence for further attacks on the Asian community. Increased police powers, as requested by David McNee will mean that 'sus' in one form or another will continue and increase. Once again, the West Indian community will be at risk.

The ethnic communities themselves are beginning to resist. The Black Socialist Alliance and Blacks Against State Harassment offer possible ways forward after various abortive starts. The Black Parents 'Sus' campaign has real roots in the West Indian community. The ability of the white left to mobilise the subjectively anti-racist people who attend Carnivals and RAR gigs to the real job of work which is at hand will be a greater test than any the anti-racist movement has yet faced.

There is no way that the issue of confronting the Government can continue to be sidestepped if the anti-racist movement wishes to be taken seriously. There is no way that the left can win the respect and co-operation of ethnic communities and their organisations unless that fight is taken up. And soon.

Low pay in the private sector – the next trade union advance ?

The recent revolt of workers employed by local authorities and the health service has brought the plight of the low paid squarely to the centre of public attention. The idea that a traditionally low paid job, such as that of a refuse worker or a hospital porter, is also an essential job has ominous overtones for the establishment. From the standpoint of capital the old clichés about the awesome power of the miners or the power-station workers is becoming more and more a question of the organised working class full-stop.

The expansion of trade unionism into formerly hard-to-organise groups, particularly in the public sector, has in

DON FLYNN

movement during the post-war decades. The startling, three-fold growth of unions like NUPE, the newly-emergent militancy of sections of the Municipal workers' union, the Health workers', Local Government Officers and the clerical and executive grades of the civil service have played a crucial part in the working class radicalisation which is now beginning to flow over from the trade union movement and into the sphere of political activity. Concentration in issues like the eradication of low pay, and, because of the predominance of female labour in the public sector, the

many ways been *the* major development inside the British working class importance of equal rights, has created a new political mood. This mood has produced an effective challenge to the old-fashioned trade unionism of the traditional 'big guns'.

But there are still plenty of unexplored areas for the modern enquiring trade union mind to turn to which in their own right could produce an even bigger boost to the growth of radical, class conscious thinking in the movement. The most important of these unexplored areas at the present time is undoubtedly that of low paid workers in small, private manufacturing and service industry, particularly those industries covered by the Wages Councils. A full discussion of the problems of the private low paid workers must start with a description of the Wages Council system and its implications for trade unionism.

WAGES COUNCILS

Wages Councils are statutory bodies which are responsible for determining basic wage rates and holiday entitlements in industries which, in the opinion of the Secretary of State for Employment, are not covered by

effective negotiating machinery. By definition Wages Council industries are industries in which trade union organisation is very weak.

A Wages Council is a national body and it consists of an equal number of members representing employers and workers plus not more than three 'independent' persons, unconnected with either side of the industry, one of whom acts as the chairperson.

The Wages Council system is very firmly entrenched in the minds of successive governments as being the best way to deal with the rights and entitlements of the lowest paid in the ghetto-areas of private industry. As bodies they have their roots in the Trades Board Act of 1909, with further legislation in 1945 (renaming the Trades Boards as Wages Councils), and in 1959, the last major piece of Wage Council legislation.

Whatever else they do Wages Councils do not cover an insignificant sector of workers. Some three million people, equal to one-quarter of the size of the entire trade union movement, are dependent for the size of their wages and their rights to paid holidays on the deliberations of these bodies. A brief look at the results of their procedures and regulations illustrates beyond any shadow of a doubt that seventy years of the existence of Wages Councils has done nothing to ease the problems of starvation wage levels in the industries they cover.

CRITICISM OF WAGES COUNCILS

The first criticism of Wages Council procedures must be levelled against their sheer complexity. If we take the examples of one industry which is traditionally associated with low pay and appalling working conditions, clothing manufacture or the ragtrade, we find ourselves in an absolute jungle of complex rules and procedures with no less than ten different national Wages Councils, balkanising ragtrade workers and preventing the development of effective solidarity across the industry.

There are approximately 350,000 people working in the ragtrade, about 1.5 per cent of the working population of the UK. But the regulations of the Wages Councils succeed in breaking down this sizeable body of people into the following units:—

Name of Wages Council	Approx no. employed
1. Dressmaking (England & Wales)	125,000
2. Ready-made & Wholesale tailoring	120,000
3. Wholesale mantle & costume	64,000
4. Shirtmaking	25,000
5. Corset manufacture	16,000
6. Dressmaking (Scotland)	9,000

7. Retail bespoke tailoring (England & Wales)	7,000
8. Hat, cap & millinery	7,000
9. Rubber-proofed garment making	1,000
10. Retail bespoke tailoring (Scotland)	500

The Low Pay Unit, in its Low Pay Paper no. 4, has raised the need to amalgamate these ten separate bodies into one unit. No doubt this should be strongly supported as a minimum measure designed to create a degree more protection for the low paid ragtrade workers.

The point is made from many quarters that there are far too many Wages Councils covering comparable groups of workers; but what are the wage rates like when fixed by these bodies? This is the second, and most important criticism of the Wages Council system.

With equal representation between employers and employees, together with the fact that the Councils are not based on actual factories or places but in the rarified atmosphere of abstract discussion about national conditions, then the employers are at an advantage over their weakened trade union counterparts. Discussion about the appropriate wage rate is rooted in the supposed need to take into account what sort of rate the industry can afford. The Councils are inevitably dealing with industries in which the price of labour has been depressed for decades. The consequent availability of cheap labour has not encouraged employers to invest in more productive plant and machinery. Therefore labour productivity within the industry is low, the firms uncompetitive and profit margins squeezed to a minimum. Under these circumstances the employers' side of the Wages Council machinery can justifiably claim that their industries can only afford the barest minimum wages rates. The three 'independent' members invariably concur with this tedious logic and tip the weight against the standpoint of the employees' representatives.

Without exception the wage rates in all the covered industries are scandalously low. Prior to January 1979 the regulations across the various branches of the ragtrade, public house employees and the catering trade were fixed in the region of £34 for a 40 hour week. Even with increases which took effect in January of this year many workers are still left with a gross wage of under £40.00 for the full 40 hour week. When one considers that the current TUC demand is for a minimum wage of £60 for a 35 hour week then it becomes apparent just how far these workers are from contact with the more realistic world of trade union free collective bargaining.

But perhaps the greatest scandal with the Wages Councils is that even

with the shockingly low wage rates fixed as a minimum within the covered industries many workers find that they do not even get these meagre entitlements because of the problem of enforcement of the Council's regulations.

Responsibility for the policing of low wage industries lies with a part of the Department of Employment known as the Wages Inspectorate. This body has to ensure, at least in theory, that the 460,000 establishments in the Wages Council sector are paying the rates ordered by their respective Council. It is standard comment to say that the Inspectorate is hopelessly ill-equipped for this task. Between 1970 and 1976 it was able to recover less than one-sixth of an estimated underpayment of £8.6 million.

This deplorable position has undoubtedly been getting worse throughout the 1970s. The pressure placed on small businesses by their lack of competitiveness in a period of economic decline in manufacturing industry has produced an epidemic of bankruptcies and closures. A measure of this process is to be found in the figures illustrating job-loss in the inner-London area — traditionally an area where small manufacturing industry has, in the past, flourished as the norm. Between 1971 and 1974, the London Borough of Islington lost 900 firms, nearly 12 per cent of the total number of private firms. The trend towards future job loss in small, private manufacturing firms is generally held to be irreversible. Estimates have been discussed in the London Local Authorities which indicate that the Inner North-East and Central London area will lose 100,000 between now and the mid-1980s.

As we noted earlier, a constant feature of the small private firm is its low capital, labour intensive base, making it universally inefficient and prone to exist on only the smallest of profit margins. As an adverse economic climate comes to place more pressure on their precarious existence then the greater is the temptation to bolster their position by reducing the total wages bill. With the knowledge that the presently inefficient Wages Inspectorate is most unlikely to catch them out with what often become illegally low underpayments, then the incidence of paying wages below the official Wages Council rate is quite certain to grow. Indeed, a recent article in the weekly magazine *New Society* reported estimates that underpayment has more than doubled since 1974 and that over one-third of employers nowadays visited by wages inspectors has resulted in the discovery of underpayment of at least part of their staff.

There are today 132 wages inspectors overseeing the interests of the 3 million workers in the low pay private industries. In the 1950s the Government and the trades unions



agreed on a routine inspections rate of 7.5 per cent a year. From the standpoint of an individual employer this would mean a visit on average of once every thirteen years. But in 1975 the inspection rate had dropped to 6.8 per cent and now it is being trimmed to 5.5 per cent — an average visit of once every 20 years. In order to supplement these more and more infrequent spot checks the Inspectorate has now devised a scheme to supplement its staff shortage. Once every six years a questionnaire is to be sent to employers asking them if they are illegally underpaying their staff. In his description of these developments in the Wages Inspectorate the man from *New Society* acidly comments that there is no truth in the rumour that the Metropolitan Police intend to make up their shortage in staff by circulating the citizens of London with a questionnaire asking them if they intend to commit any crimes in the near future.

THE BATTLE FOR THE LOW PAID

The only way in which the interests of the workers in the low paid private sector can be adequately represented is through the existence of powerful trade unions. Strong trade unions in the Wages Council industries would actually serve to end the Wages Councils as, according to the Department of Employment, these bodies are only supposed to exist in the absence of effective negotiating machinery.

But can we proceed from the anarchy of the present situation straight towards an extra 3 million members for the TUC unions? This seems most unlikely. The history of recent struggles, at Grunwick, Garner's Steak Houses and others, shows only too clearly that the leaderships of even the most powerful unions have little aptitude for conducting the hard battle to win union recognition in the sweatshops. It seems more likely that rank-and-file activists in the labour movement will have to proceed through at least three stages before they can begin to win ground for effective trade unionism in this area. These three stages are: —

1. The need to reform the Wages Councils and make their orders properly effective.

2. The need to get the full involvement of trades councils and regional TUCs in localised battles for recognition.

3. The need to get the involvement of local Labour-controlled Councils in the fight for trade union rights.

These stages are not separated in time. They must be fought for simultaneously. However they do mark out different areas in which the interests of the workers in the sweatshop industries can be raised with the prospect of making real progress.

1. The need to reform the Wages Councils: Here the TUC, the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour party should be involved in the fight to rationalise the Wages Council structure and to strengthen the policing powers of the Wages Inspectorate. More support should be lent to the call raised by the Low Pay Unit for Wages Councils on an industry, rather than a trade or other subdivision, basis. This would mean far fewer Councils and more unity between workers in comparable-type jobs. We should also call for an expansion of the numbers of wages inspectors into a body of thousands, rather than the 130-odd at present, with real powers to pursue and prosecute illegally-low paying employers. Fines for low paying offences should be stiffened up and the procedures by which employees bring their employers to book should also be improved through simplification.

2 The greater involvement of trades councils and the regional TUCs:

Experience has shown that once the existence of definite rights to minimum wages has been brought to the attention of workers then the demand for effective trade unions to implement these rights has always quickly followed. At the moment the struggles for recognition are few and they are frequently isolated (Grunwicks and Garners being only partial exceptions). Labour movement activists need to ensure that their trades councils and regional TUCs are involved, from the onset, in campaigns aimed at winning recognition. An example of the way in which these campaigns can develop will hopefully emerge over the coming months with

the proposed South East Region of the TUC campaign in the East End of London. Some nine unions will be involved in the fight to establish trade unionism amongst the mainly Bengali/Asian ethnic communities in the Boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets.

3. The involvement of local Labour-controlled Councils: In many ways this will be the most problematic of the three areas. One thing is certain — any success in establishing trade unions in the low pay private sector will have the effect of increasing the flight of capital from the areas where low pay industry is concentrated. This should not be allowed to become a reason for avoiding the fight for trade unions in these areas.

The job-loss from the inner-city areas has led many Labour Councils to experiment with the setting-up of purpose-built, low-rented, Council-owned factory accommodation in an effort to lure jobs back into their areas. While it is extremely unlikely that these measures will, by themselves make a serious inroad into the rate of job loss trade unionists and socialists should be prepared to use the opportunity to insist that these Councils implement 'Good Employer' clauses for those firms taking up their factory accommodation. The 'Good Employer' clause should require such employers to: —

- a) recognise trade unions
- b) pay the rate for the job
- c) offer full skill training opportunities
- d) outlaw discrimination on grounds of sex, creed or colour.

The above measures would not eliminate low pay in the private sector over night. But they do hold out the hope that the protection and strength of the trade union movement can be extended to the 3 million workers in the sweatshop industries. Socialists must have confidence that real gains for trade unionism into these layers' of the most oppressed workers can only mean a greater impetus to the process of radicalisation of the whole of the labour movement in Britain.

Further Reading

Are Low Wages Inevitable? Ed. Frank Field. Nottingham 1976.
Wages Councils Frank Field & Steve Winyard. Spokesman Pamphlet No.49.
The Wages of Uncertainty: A critique of Wages Council Orders, David Jordan, Low Pay Pamphlet No.6.
From Rags to Rags: low pay in the clothing industry, Steve Winyard, Low Pay Pamphlet No.7.
 The *Low Pay Unit* has done a vast amount of research into low pay in the private sector. They publish regular *Low Pay Papers* as well as pamphlets and books. A full publications list is available from Low Pay Unit, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.
 Tel: (01-437-1780)

FEATURES

MARXISM AND GAY LIBERATION

MIKE DAVIS

THE AIM of this article is to examine the nature and development of homosexuality and homosexual oppression. It will look at the treatment (or lack of it) of homosexual oppression by the Marxist movement since Marx, and finish with an attempt to outline the problems in developing a theory of sexuality. The article makes no claim to be particularly original and borrows heavily from the existing writings of the gay movement, from which have come the most advanced contributions towards a Marxist understanding and homosexual oppression. The paper will focus on male homosexuality (so as not to confuse the complex questions involved in understanding lesbianism and the different, though in many ways overlapping forms of oppression). We will not examine trans-sexualism and transvestism, which are again different questions in many respects.

THE COMMON-SENSE VIEW OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Most people consider homosexuality to be a disease or sickness. As many jokes abound about homosexuals as women or the Irish. Homosexuals are often seen as a threat either to a rigidly defined and practiced gender sexual identity and heterosexuality, to the family, to children (the child-molestor myth) and generally pretty abnormal. These prejudices lie deep in class society and infect even the ostensibly revolutionary socialist groups. The World Health Organisation accepts the classification of homosexuality as a disease, number 302.0 in fact, as Tom Robinson pointed out in the introduction to the 'live' record of "Glad to be Gay" — a song that has done more than a hundred liberal reforms to expand an awareness and acceptance of the right to be gay.

The growth of the modern Gay Liberation Movement, starting effectively in 1969 with the spontaneous resistance of gays to a police invasion of a gay bar in Christopher Street, New York and the mushrooming of gay liberation groups throughout Western Europe, has begun the process of challenging the oppression and self-oppression of perhaps one in ten of the population. The gay liberation movement arising from changed conditions of post war late capitalism (we will examine the reasons in a later section) and the shaking of the social relations of capitalist society took both the state and more importantly the far left, by surprise. In fact to some of the orthodox Trotskyist groups the movement has yet to register in their skulls. For the *Militant* tendency in Britain, homosexuality and gay liberation is a peripheral issue, "a middle class perversion", one *Militant* supporter at a Labour Party Young Socialist conference called it. If we are to believe the *Militant* there are no "working class" gays. It was rumoured at one time, that homosexual membership of the Workers Revolutionary Party (Socialist Labour League as it was) was treated with great disdain. Even the healthier Trotskyist groups like

the Socialist Workers Party treated gay liberation as a diversion from the class struggle in classic economistic fashion. Jeffrey Weeks relates in his short introduction to the republished pamphlet by Don Milligan, "*The Politics of Homosexuality*", that "in June 1973, at a time when Milligan was struggling (with a small gay group) in the International Socialist (now the SWP) to get them to adopt a modern attitude towards gay liberation" Pluto Press published the pamphlet. "The pamphlet was ignored by the IS Press (a review by David Widgery for one of their journals was refused publication, and was eventually published in *Gay Left*, no.1) and Milligan along with many of his gay comrades eventually left the group in disgust." Bob Cant provides more of a detailed examination of the unsuccessful attempts to form an SWP gay group in an economistic climate during the years 1972-75.

Although the less ossified Trotskyist groups (USec Fourth International groups like the International Marxist Group) have responded to the development of an autonomous gay liberation movement in a supportive way over the last five years, it has at best been an eclectic approach. With the British SWP gay liberation is treated very much in the same economistic method as the feminist movement (crudely: "organise gays at the point of production") although positions have developed significantly from treating the issue as a diversion. The International Communist League see no "anti-capitalist dynamic" in gay liberation and hence tend to deny the importance of the cultural/ideological dimension of the class struggle. Our own tendency too can claim no spurs as champions of gay liberation or as having an integrated theoretical approach, despite other pioneering work in publishing *Sex and the Class Struggle*. Although the pamphlet on Reich and Chris Knight's introduction make some valuable contributions in understanding and combatting sexual oppression, the position on homosexuality advanced by Reich (that is, his homophobia) goes uncriticised.

THE POSITION OF THE DEGENERATED/ DEFORMED WORKERS STATES

The social pathological character of homosexual deviations was recognised. It was resolved that all manifestations of homosexual deviations are to be firmly rejected and prevented from spreading. It was resolved that it is not to be tolerated for notorious homosexuals to have influence in the formation of our youth on the basis of their 'artistic merits'. Consequently, a study is called for to determine how best to tackle the problems of the presence of homosexuals in the various institutions of our cultural sector. It was proposed that a study should be made to find a way of applying measures with a view to transferring to other

organisations those who, as homosexuals, should not have any direct influence on our youth through artistic and cultural activities. It was resolved that those whose morals do not correspond to the prestige of our revolution should be barred from any group of performers representing our country abroad.

Finally, it is agreed to demand that severe penalties be applied to those who corrupt the morals of minors, deprived repeat offenders and irredeemable anti-social elements.¹

The reactionary, sexist and oppressive injunctions against homosexuality quoted above come from the First National Congress on Education and Culture convened in Havana, Cuba. In fact, the prudish, homophobic morality of the Cuban bureaucracy — which recently imposed the sentence of life imprisonment for the crime of homosexuality — is not untypical of all the Stalinist states. In China homosexuality “does not exist”. Even discos, dancing together (males and females) and holding hands is illegal. In China where you are not allowed to date until age 24 and two-child families are ‘in’, homosexual relations are definitely beyond the pale. Li Pao Yi, vice chairman of the Revolutionary Committee in Peking’s Peace District, said. “We have eliminated teenage sex”. “Sex before marriages is not accepted in our society. Abstinence is not only beneficial to the state, it is good for young people themselves — and they know it and act accordingly.” In fact, the Chinese bureaucracy has all but denied the existence of sex itself!²

The Soviet Union and East European stalinist states are no different, though punishments may not be as harsh as in Cuba. Between 1917 and 1934 homosexuality in Russia was legal, though frowned upon. The law introduced by Stalin changed all that. Homosexual men — though not women — can now be jailed for up to five years; eight years if one of the partners is under 18. Gay people are typically seen as sick and deviant. A male homosexual living in Moscow described general social attitudes regarding homosexuality as seeing it “at best as a sickness or a psychological disorder, and at worst as a symptom of bourgeois degeneracy or as a ‘crime’ ”.³

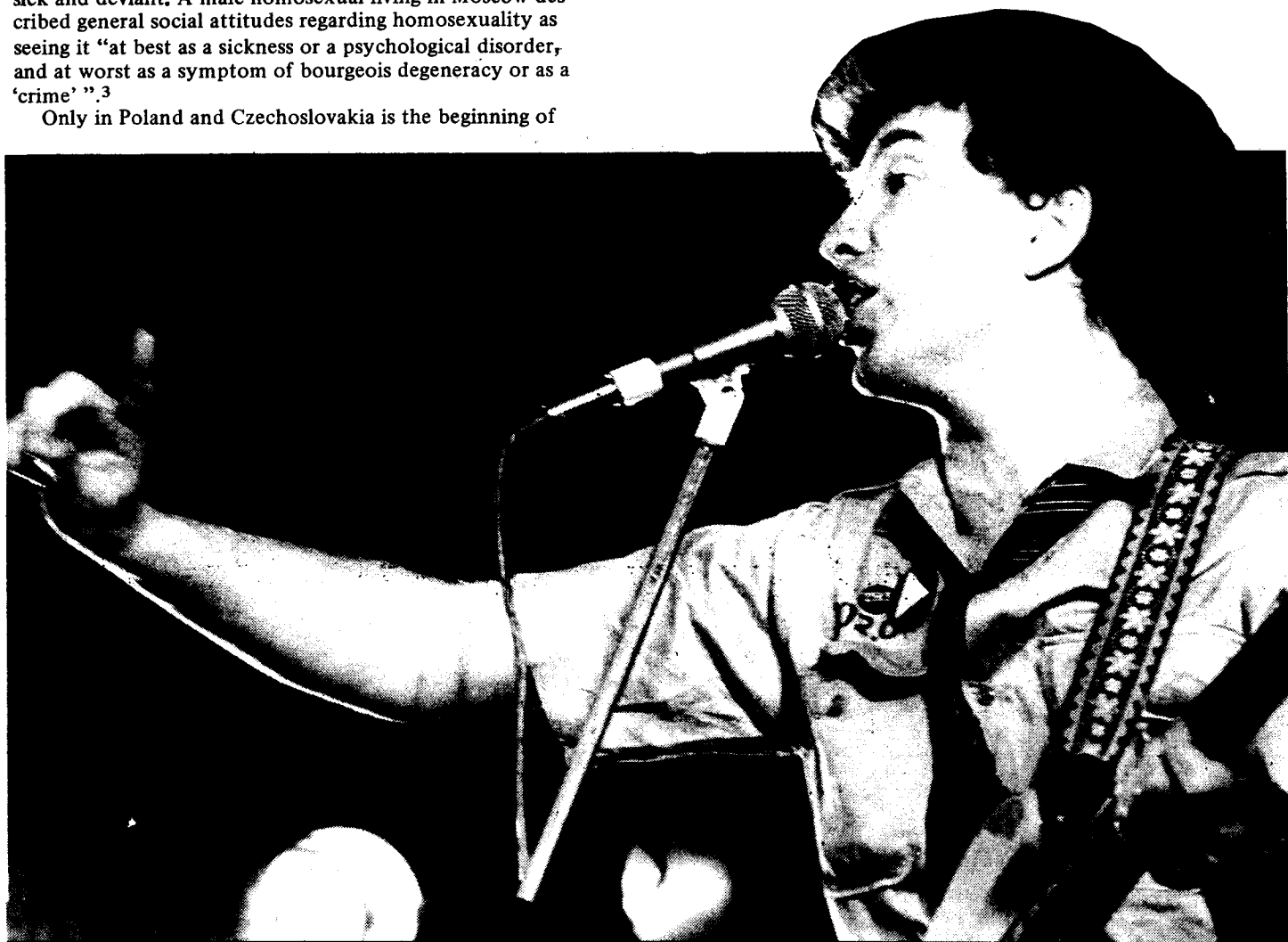
Only in Poland and Czechoslovakia is the beginning of

a small gay community coming out and developing. Certainly the attitudes of the 1930s which saw homosexuality as “that fascist perversion” are beginning to break. But clearly an horrific Victorian bourgeois mentality still pervades.

One obvious explanation for this reactionary attitude to homosexuality in the Stalinist states is that it stems from the bureaucratic degeneration of all the workers’ states, the smashing of workers democracy and the development of a philistinism in all social and cultural matters, the Chinese Cultural Revolution notwithstanding. But this is an insufficient explanation. In examining the glaring weakness of a sexual-political dimension in the Marxist tradition we can find the seeds both of the rapid reversion to repressive bourgeois morality in the Stalinist states and the blind-spot existing in the political attitudes and theory of the post-war revolutionary left.

THE NEGATIVE MARXIST TRADITION ON GAY LIBERATION

To sum up the position from the outset we can say that there is no tradition on gay liberation/oppression in the Marxist movement from Marx onwards, apart from individual gay socialists here and there. Look in Bukharin and Preobrazensky’s “*ABC of Communism*”; not a reference to gay oppression. Not a reference I could discover in any of Trotsky’s writings, even in the collection entitled “*Problems of Everyday Life*”. You really have to go back to Marx and Engels to find references to homosexuality. Immediately striking is both Marx and Engel’s commitment to heterosexual monogamy. In correspondence homosexuality was referred to as “gross, unnatural vices”. In Engels’ *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* we find none but reactionary comments. For example, in discussing the family



Tom Robinson — expanding awareness of gay rights

in Ancient Greece and the oppression of women, Engels tells us that

the degradation of the women recoiled on the men themselves and degraded them too, until they sank in into the perversion of boy-love, degrading both themselves and their gods by the myth of Ganymede.⁴

Jeffrey Weeks in his introduction to the book by himself and Sheila Rowbotham on Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter, draws from his article in *Gay Left* No.1 (August 1975) to explain this abhorrence of homosexuality on the part of Marx and Engels. He argues that the universal ignorance concerning homosexuality should make it not that extraordinary that Engels particularly should hold these attitudes. But this is not to exonerate Engels. As Weeks argues, Engels' view reveal a failure to explore the *social* and *historical* determinants of sexual and emotional behaviour and character which underlie assumptions about sexuality. Engels provides a purely economic-exploitation theory for the causes of sexual oppression – revealed in his view that the oppression of women will disappear with the socialisation of domestic labour – and completely neglects the historical, cultural and psychological dimensions of the formation of behaviour and attitudes towards sexuality. As Weeks stresses, "Engels has no concept of the need for conscious struggle to transform inter-personal relations". For this reason he falls into an ahistorical, one-sided view located firmly in the camp of heterosexual chauvinism.

The Second International, far from treating Engels' introductory work on the family and private property as a starting point, considered it the last word, as have most Marxists (with notable exceptions like Alexander Kollontai) until the post war period and the emergence of the women's movement.

It is perhaps outside the mainstream Marxist tradition that we can find a clearer, less jaundiced view of homosexuality and gay liberation. I did not have the time to explore the work of Freud, but surely we could expect a more liberated attitude in Wilhelm Reich, one of the pioneers of the sexual revolution. Not so.

THE VIEWS OF WILHELM REICH

Reich believed all human beings were basically bi-sexual (a view we will explore when examining the origins of homo/heterosexuality). But at best, in writings such as the "*Sexual Struggle of Youth*", he comes across as a patronising liberal, at worst a dangerous homophobe.⁵

People have become homosexual not for physical reasons but for some defective sexual development in early childhood, arising from some profound deception in connection with the opposite sex.

Again, we are told that male homosexuality arises out of "deceptions in love by a severe, hard mother". Lesbians are the product of a similarly unrewarded love from the father. These experiences are then repressed from consciousness. For Reich

Both sorts of homosexuality, then, present abnormal forms of sexual development which should be called illness, because the people concerned almost always suffer.

Thus for Reich homosexuality was essentially the product of social/sexual and psychological neurosis produced either by an imbalanced child/parent emotional relationship or a later confinement of women or men in closed sexual communities: single sex boarding schools, the army/navy, priests etc.

Reich attempts to justify his views by reference to his theory of sexual economy:

Young people must be kept from turning to homosexuality, not on moral grounds, but for reasons of sexual economy only; it can be established that sexual satisfaction for a healthy heterosexual is more intense than sexual satisfaction for a homosexual.

What this spurious view of homosexual relationships denies is that an equally satisfying orgasm may be achieved by two lovers of the same sex, and, particularly in lesbians,



Wilhelm Reich

because of the non-penetration method of sexual interaction with the emphasis placed on clitoral stimulation, a much greater, longer and extensive orgasm can be attained.⁶

What stands out a mile in Reich's treatment of homosexuality is a grossly inadequate theory of sexuality. This can only partially be explained by the quality of knowledge and research available to Reich on sexual matters. A clincher argument for Reich is that when a homosexual is subjected to "a very exact psychological treatment" he/she may cease to feel their inclinations; "whereas a normally developed individual never becomes homosexual under the same treatment". C.A. Tripp in his book "*The Homosexual Matrix*" reveals in an extensive study that even of these homosexuals who are convinced they desire to be heterosexual no amount of psycho-therapy (even of the most barbarous kind using electric shock treatment) produces anything more than a short-term change, and in most cases, has no sexually metamorphosing effect at all. Of course, when we consider the reverse of Reich's argument, it is little wonder that the generations of cultural, psycho-sexual conditions in heterosexuality make it much less likely that any "course" of psychological treatment could produce a change of sexual orientation. The whole nature of sexuality is much more profound and complex than such simple methods suggest.

Besides the voluntary 'cure' through psychoanalytic treatment ("causing regression to defective infantile sexual development") Reich proffers that homosexuality can be eradicated through education and proper sexual development involving the commencement of relations (assumed to be heterosexual) when they are first desired. With sexual freedom for young people Reich firmly believed homosexuality would disappear. He further tried to reinforce his fallacious arguments by reference to primitive societies. He claimed that in those societies where there were no restrictions on sexual development, we find no homosexuality. For Reich, it only exists where Christian missionaries have introduced their moral double-standards!

In fact, numerous anthropological studies offer contrary evidence. C.A. Tripp provides many examples of which the following are a sample.⁷ "Among the Peruvian natives (a totally isolated branch of the Amarakaeri visited by Tobias Schneebaum in 1956-7, homosexuality was dominant to the point of heterosexual contacts being relegated to only two or three ceremonial occasions a year". The Kiwai of New Guinea require their young men to be sodomised during puberty rites "to make them strong". The Papuans and Keraki do the same "because the juices of manhood are

necessary for the growing boy". In a number of tribes, the standard greeting is to reach out and gently grasp a stranger's penis, or to cup his testicles in hand. In others, (e.g. the Cashinahua) friends lie together in hammocks during the day casually fondling each other's genitalia while talking; though Tripp adds it is embarrassing if a friend or the anthropologist, gets an erection.

Again, the practice of *berdache* (man-woman) in various North American tribes, where effeminate appearing young boys are treated and trained as female, behaving as a woman sexually and otherwise, with men who could win his-her favour. A shortage of *berdache* would lead to considerable numbers being chosen at birth.

The route through which childhood, pre-pubertal sexuality develops into adult sexuality is as varied as it is complex. Without entering into a detailed examination here it is clear from studies of child sexuality that it is equally likely, given conditions of sexual freedom, for a pre-pubertal homosexuality to continue into adulthood as it is to be transformed into heterosexuality.⁸ The massive research of the Kinsey team amply bears out the high correlation between child sexuality and homosexual encounters and experiments. Thus Reich falsely extrapolates from his heterosexual assumptions that sexual freedom leads to the disappearance of homosexuality. In fact, it could be quite the contrary.

The reasons for Reich's rejection of homosexuality are only partly explained by the inadequate level of sexual knowledge/research of his times. Juliet Mitchell in her book *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* suggests that Reich's values were a reaction to the bourgeois decadence, the mass unemployment and working class wretchedness that meant many people had little left to sell but their bodies in pre-Nazi Berlin.⁹ This is a similar explanation to that Denis Altman offers for the opposition to homosexuals by many black writers, such as Eldridge Cleaver. The experience of prison homosexuality and its coincidence with prostitution, Altman argues, is similar to the symbiosis of homosexual sub-cultures with prostitution in the large cities of the colonial/ex-colonial world and could also help explain the antipathy to homosexuals by many western revolutionaries.¹⁰ That is, the equation: imperialism-prostitution-homosexuality.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOMOSEXUALITY

In our treatment of the negative Marxist tradition on homosexuality and homosexuals one area of Marxist writings has been omitted from close scrutiny: namely Marx's early writings. Future work needs to look more closely at this area of Marx's work and the extent to which it aids us in the development of a theory of sexuality. Now we must look more closely at the question of the origins and nature of homosexuality. Dennis Altman argues that given the centrality of the taboo on homosexuality it is precisely the *failure* to suppress homosexuality that contains its significance. C.A. Tripp pose a similar question:

Given this heterosexual success of the mores, the exceptions are what need to be accounted for: By what manner of individual psychology does a person in our society become predominantly or entirely homosexual? — is something the matter with his background, with his personality, with both, or with neither?

Tripp argues that the early attempts to answer these questions by Freud and others, although working in an atmosphere of greater awareness of homosexuality, failed to understand the extent and variations of it or the learning processes through which it developed. This situation increasingly led to theories which "viewed homosexuality as a result of a damaged or blocked heterosexuality (a kind of choice-by-default), the whole thrust of the inquiry became focussed on the real or imagined negations in a person's life. It was a pointless effort at best, since all sexual attractions are based on positive motives. . ."

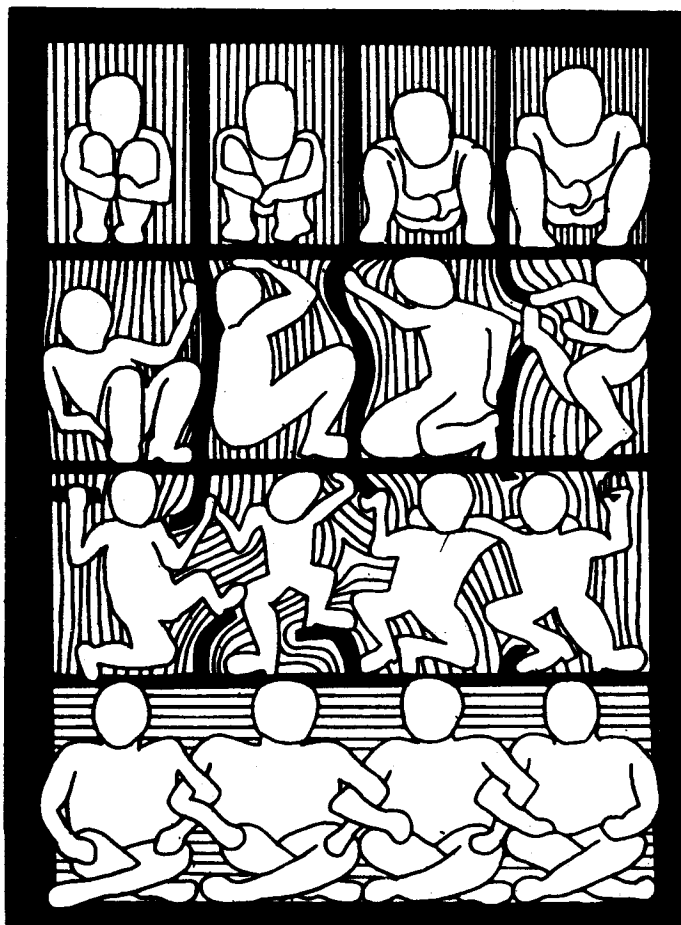
By way of further guidance for answering the previous

questions Denis Altman makes the important point on the necessity to distinguish between homosexual *behaviour* and homosexual *identity* and of homosexuality and homosexuals (in the latter case between males and females). Where throughout human history homosexual behaviour may have been extremely prevalent — for example, the berdache phenomena in primitive societies or the extensive homosexual activity in Arabic countries estimated by numerous sex researchers from Havelock Ellis to Kinsey to outweigh heterosexual activity — it nonetheless co-exists with a non-recognition of homosexuals or a ban on homosexuals. Even in Ancient Greece where homosexual activity was relatively acceptable it was only on *condition* of adherence to the codes on heterosexual marriage and reproduction. In other words homosexual behaviour could exist alongside a heterosexual self-identity and dominant heterosexual value system, but not be the dominant sexual identity or preference.¹¹

HOMOSEXUALITY, HOMOSEXUALS AND HETEROSEXUALITY

Dennis Altman argues that it is only in conditions of modern urban capitalist society that considerable numbers of men and women whose self-definition is homosexual can arise. Prior to the breakdown of the ascriptive family, the organisation of traditional pre-capitalist societies prevented a child choosing a way of life other than that prescribed by tradition. Thus exclusive homosexuals only exist as great exceptions or taken on particular roles (the American berdache) or become outcasts (like some north-west Indian Hindus).

Tripp, argues, in explaining the origins of heterosexuality, that an "array of directives fills the vacancy left by the evolutionary disappearance of sexual "instinct", and that an infinite variety of means exist by which individuals come to find each other attractive. For Tripp the construction of this 'sexual value system' is a complex matrix. Rightly he comments that "every society encourages its members to see particular modes of behaviour and particular bodily features, and not other, as sexual." He cautions against treating the conditioning effect of early sexual experiences as final, stressing that often little correlation exists between early and



later sexual encounters. He stressed that the *context* of each early sexual experience is crucial. Tripp's theory of heterosexual attraction is basically that at the heart of these sexual relationships exists the phenomena of "distance-resistance" or "complementation". For Tripp heterosexual attraction "thrives on a degree of tension and distance between partners". This phenomenon also exists at the root of homosexual attraction. Homosexuals eroticise same-sex attributes in essentially the same ways heterosexuals eroticise different sex-attributes. The complementation of the differences in eroticised attributes fills out "the illusion of completeness". For Tripp it is largely *accidental* that some individuals develop a preference for their own sex and others the opposite sex and yet others for both (bisexuality). Unfortunately this theory leaves a lot of questions unanswered. As far as it goes it provides some useful concepts for explaining sexual relations. But one of the most important questions Tripp poses goes inadequately answered. He says,

If the secret of heterosexual compatibility lies in a certain *natural* dominance-difference between the sexes, then why has nearly every society *widened the breach* and increased the stress between men and women to the point of threatening their communications with each other?¹²

His answers lack any historical materialist dimension. For Tripp it could be i) that the sexual psychology of man requires a higher level of stress than biology supplies; or ii) the existence of socially separate groups of spouses and its complement, the male bond. This universal institution which in primitive societies produced a situation where three-quarters of the peoples slept intertwined with their own sex and today is manifest in such diverse gatherings as Freemasons and Buffaloes, the Ku Klux Klan, Rotarians, Rosicrucians, the rugby club and pub meets etc, eventually bolsters rather than competes with heterosexuality for Tripp. Because of the one-sided, sexual-social conditions — ego-modelling he calls it — the male bond recharges the batteries of alienated sexuality. This refueling of gas in the tank refreshes a man's

appetite for heterosexual contacts. The reason it does not turn into fully-fledged homosexual preferences is because the personal closeness of the bond prevents "the gap across which the spark of sex can jump".

The concept of *alienation*, which Tripp touches on, I believe provides a key to understanding heterosexuality. But in Tripp, the need for society to increase the apparently natural division of the sexes is not fully explained. Questions of the family, reproduction and production are omitted.

So we have the pathological/sickness model of homosexuality, which at least attempts to provide a theory, but starts from thoroughly reactionary and mechanical premises and the Tripp model which explains homosexuality as virtually accidental arising from a complex matrix of influences. This really amounts to no theory at all.

Another view is that of many libertarians and feminists. Namely that there is an essential sexual identity, a natural sexuality, which if freed from restraint will express itself. In political terms this theory translates into the policy "for the right to determine one's own sexuality" — one of the most frequent demands of the Women's Liberation Movement. The problem with this view is that it also avoids an attempt at explanation, at a theory. It is a "live and let live" view, which while progressive is hardly a scientific or Marxist explanation.

To arrive at a sound historical materialist theory of homosexuality we need a model which sees sexuality as socially constructed, arising out of our total environment and socio-economic structure. Such a model must reject a view of sexuality based on inherent basic drives. Because sex is a socially-defined phenomenon biology versus socialisation explanations are redundant.

In a sense to talk about a theory of sexuality is narrow and sectionalist. What we are really talking about is a theory of being. Nonetheless it is legitimate to examine the abstraction of sexuality providing it is seen *in relation* to the concrete, whole social being. Because in capitalist, and patriarchal society sex is compartmentalised for very real material reasons we are always in danger of accepting that separation. For example, the distinction between sex and other social behaviour is incorrect. But until we understand fully the reasons for that separation it will not be possible to transcend it and achieve an integration of our selves as whole human beings, in theory and in practice through social revolution.

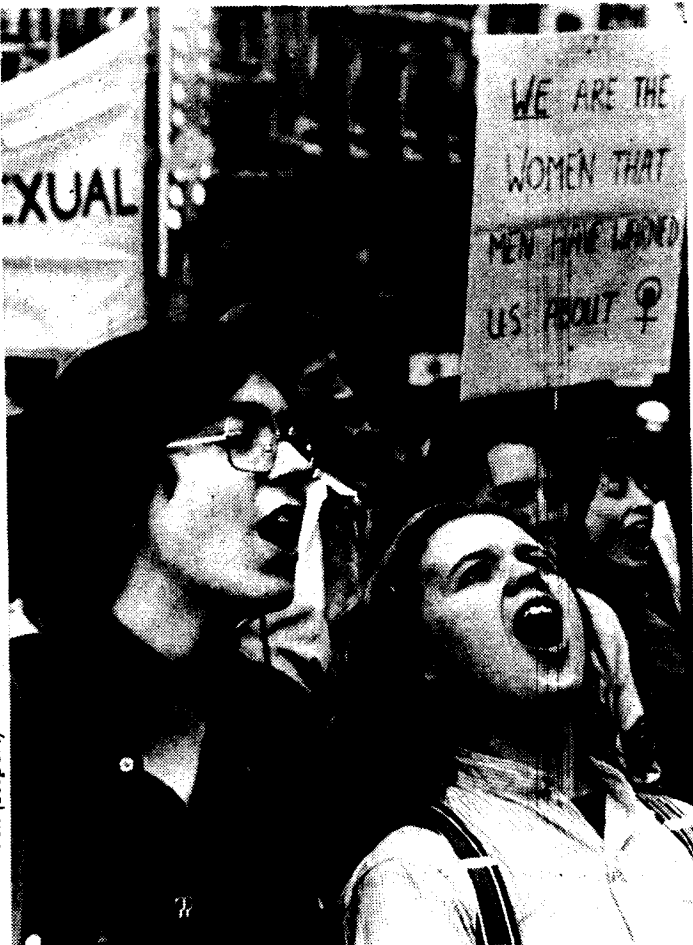
Tripp does however provide a good description of the development of repressive laws and codes against homosexuality and sexuality generally, which provides a useful introduction to the fundamental question we have been asking; why the hostility to homosexuals (and to a lesser extent homosexuality)? A hostility, which as the Thorpe case illustrates, evokes more social opprobrium, than murder, grafts, rape or robbery.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESSIVE LAWS ON SEXUALITY

Sex laws and customs derive from early Jewish codes found in Hittite, Chaldean and Egyptian ideas. Jewish sex law gained most of its punitive, highly restrictive character from the moral arguments advanced in the Talmud, (written just prior to and during the time of the early Christians). The first Christians were living under Roman rule. Their ideas on sexual behaviour were derived from a combination of Jewish sex law and tenets held by certain ascetic Roman cults. Tripp comments perceptively,

Our mores gained their direction from Jewish history and their harshness from Christian elaborations.

Very early Jewish mores alternated several times between sexual and anti-sexual forms. For example, at one time there were forms of sacred prostitution, with young men being introduced to sexual-religious exaltations of orgasm within the Temple and ceremonial mouth-genital contacts between priests and worshippers (still surviving in some orthodox circumcision ceremonies). After the Babylonian exile all this



John Sturrock (Report)

The women's movement demands the right to sexual self-determination

ended. Ascetism ruled. Sex was strictly for reproduction. All other uses were proclaimed against God, nature and the human spirit. Sexual behaviour outside the magic circle of reproduction was the way of the flesh, of the pagans.

As we have already mentioned, the Ancient Greeks had codes for demanding marriage and reproduction. But as long as these conditions were met, other sexual expressions were permitted, even lauded.

With the expansion of the social and political power of the early Church, sex law and custom came to be rigorously enforced by religion. But since the 12th Century administration of civil and criminal law was gradually wrested from religious hands. Tripp makes the observation that the lawmakers' embarrassment at formulating sexual and moral law is revealed in the wording which is often vague and imprecise. What are the "unnatural sexual practices" so proscribed? "Sodomy" is sometimes taken to mean a variety of sexual contacts, or only anal and not oral contacts, or any and all homosexual acts. Despite the fact that yesterday's ecclesiastical law has become today's common law it is an oversimplification to think that the taboos against homosexuality are simply derived from religious dogma. Today there are many non-religious people opposed to homosexuality and a Gay Christian movement amongst the religious.

For Tripp, the derogatory views on homosexuality owe their consistency to the mutually reinforcing overlap of moral, legal and psychiatric viewpoints. Nonetheless the moral assumptions have remained unchanged. These are: i) homosexuality equals an aberration and a perversion of nature's intent; ii) Many people are disturbed by the idea that homosexual component in themselves or others may indicate a kind of impaired sexual identity — in men a lowered masculinity or even effeminacy; iii) every mature person would be heterosexual but for various fears and neurosis developed from parental and social misfortunes. Tripp calls this the "most troublesome of assumptions". It is perhaps one that many Marxists and socialists have shared.

HOSTILITY TO HOMOSEXUALITY/ HOMOSEXUALS

The problem with Tripp's analysis, is as we have suggested, the omission of a socio-economic explanation for the homosexual taboo. He mentions the existence of social and religious traditions which directly support family life and argues that this does not support the intense interest in the opposite sex. He talks of reproduction but fails to satisfactorily develop the points.

Don Milligan in his pioneering little pamphlet *The Politics of Homosexuality* argues that opposition to homosexuality "is founded upon the belief that procreation is the fundamental objective of sexual activity." . . . "Consequently, heterosexual fucking is thought of as vital to any sexual relationship. Homosexuality is condemned as unnatural simply because it cannot produce children."

The ascription of strong sex roles to males and females is similarly threatened by homosexuality. "Homosexual relationships generally parody those of heterosexuals with 'butch' and 'fem', active and passive. But implicit in homosexuality there is the challenge to this division between man and women, and consequently to male supremacy." Because homosexuality defies the 'natural' share-out of male and female characteristics it challenged the view that male supremacy is based on biology, revealing the mythological basis of gender socialisation. "Gay relationships imply that the adoption of male and female roles is arbitrary."

By rejecting in practice the idea that the core of human sexuality is the sexual subordination of women, to men, homosexuality poses a real threat to the sex sexual 'balance of forces'. This is particularly true of homosexual women. . . Women who are masculine by reason of their independence or their mannerisms and personality are feared and resented because they question the biological basis of the social roles and status awarded to either sex. Similarly, men whose behaviour, either socially or sexually, is considered

female are savagely ridiculed and oppressed because they break the 'natural' rules. *They threaten the status and position of all men by indicating that masculinity is not natural at all, but is instead strictly learned and rigidly enforced.*

(My emphasis, Milligan p6.)

These reasons for the centrality of the homosexual taboo suggest that it is the threat to social and political stability of class and patriarchal rule that lie at the base of hostility. As Milligan stresses: "The family is not economically necessary for capitalism but it is vital as a mechanism of social control". In this sense it is the ideological challenge to the existing order that homosexuality presents which evokes the repressive response.

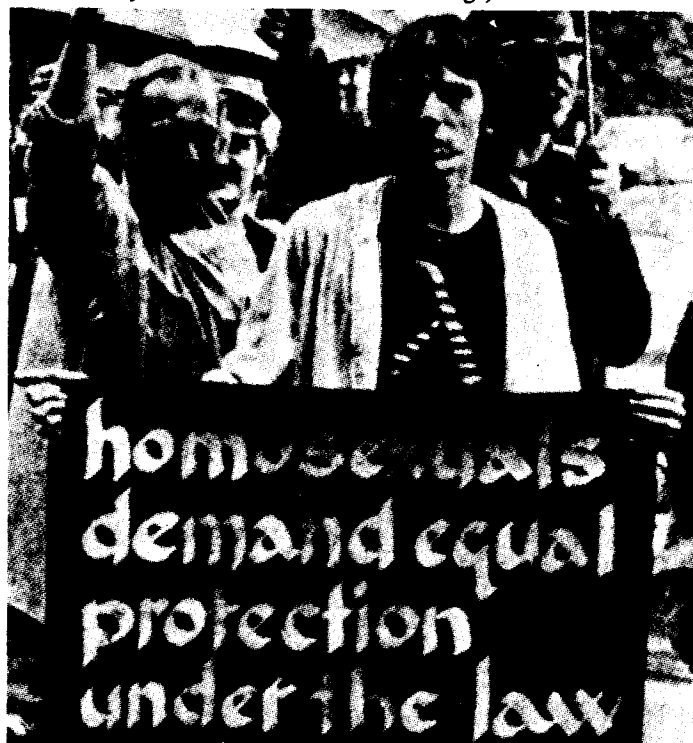
John Burnett, in his equally lucid and succinct pamphlet, *The Meaning of Gay Liberation*, summarises the three "ideological control systems" that directly affect lesbians and gay men. "They are,

- 1) dominant/submissive sex roles; 2) the sexual divisions of labour; 3) the authoritarian, male dominated nuclear family.¹³

While these systems of control originated in earlier class societies they have been adapted and strengthened to meet the needs of modern capitalist society. Burnett points out that this is not some great conspiracy, but simply that it is in the interests of the bourgeoisie to maintain the oppression of women, the sexual division of labour and most importantly, the family. This similarly applies to the rule of Stalinist bureaucracies where sexual divisions and repressive social conditions, motherhood and the family provide the social fabric for the status quo.

We can summarise the threat posed to the existence of capitalist society and its social relations by homosexuals as the following:

- 1) Undermining the bourgeois family and its function of social control.
- 2) Challenging monogamous marriage.
- 3) Revealing sexual relations to be unconnected with reproduction: ie. sex for its own sake and enjoyment.
- 4) Challenging the homosexual capacity in us all.
- 5) Confronting the notions and lived experience of male domination, masculinity, aggression and authoritarianism.
- 6) Challenging the idea of necessary sexual codes and a sexual division of labour.
- 7) Challenging repressive sexual conditioning and the terrible alienation of man from woman and men from men and women from women. (In other words the sexual relations become objectified relations between things).



Clearly the anti-capitalist potential of a growing and proud gay movement appears to be tremendous. But Dennis Altman in his paper *The State, Repression and Sexuality*, poses some important weaknesses in this view. It is to the phenomenal growth of a gay liberation movement in advanced western capitalist countries and its revolutionary potential we now turn.

THE GROWTH OF THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Why has the movement encouraging homosexuals to come out grown in the past ten years? We can delineate three areas of explanation to answer this question. 1) Changes in the social relations of capitalism, corresponding to the changing productive needs of the system. With the increase in the organic composition of capital (increase in capital labour ratio) an enormous state bureaucracy has developed to manage, regulate and sustain a highly complex, specialised division of labour. This has permitted the move to smaller families, the extension and improvement of methods of birth control, increases in the number of women working, and the consequent changes in family life and attitudes. The rise of the so-called 'permissive' society is real enough in so far as sex is not seen purely for procreation of the species. As social attitudes and productive needs have changed, so too has the law. 2) Liberalisation of the law has made divorce easier to obtain, improved the rights of women at work, in limited ways introduced protective laws for women (maintenance payments for children, right to marital home etc). The Wolfenden Report and the 1967 Sexual Offences Act have similarly liberalised the climate and partially reduced the legal repression which in the pre war years and 1950s prevented many homosexuals being open about their sexual preferences. (However, such liberalisation must be treated extremely cautiously: the age of consent is still 21, and homosexuals suffer discrimination at work, in society and in law which is on a par with the treatment of black people and women, see *The Law and Sexuality*). 3) Radicalisation of the specially oppressed and working class. The post-war years have seen the rise of successful national liberation movements around the world and in the 1960s the growth of black and women's liberation movements. The sharpening of capitalism's contradictions whilst having economic determinants has also been influenced by these movements. In these conditions of social unrest the political radicalisation has contributed greatly to the emergence of a gay liberation movement, which makes sexual oppression the basis of its political activity.

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF THE GAY MOVEMENT

Earlier we argued that gay liberation contained an anti-capitalist potential of revolutionary dimensions. But this is a simplistic view. Dennis Altman, in his article on state and sexuality advances a controversial argument but one which needs consideration. It raises a fundamental problem. Essentially he argues that the gay movement could only arise under certain conditions and was both a product and cause of change. Only modern urban societies provide the "relative freedom" for a homosexual sub-culture to develop. Altman argues that the limited aim of the gay movement has been, in a nutshell, campaigning "so the ghetto can come out". Gay rights will come, like abortion and contraception because

the capitalist order no longer demands that sexuality be bent to the needs of the reproduction of labour power.

Borrowing from Herbert Marcuse, he argues that the lifting of official prohibitions over the last ten years in liberal capitalist societies is . . .

equivalent to the triumph of the demands of a consumer-oriented capitalism over one based on production and hence represents a more efficient and modern but not necessarily less repressive — role for the state.

"Sex", Altman stresses, "is now technologically 'freed' to become a commodity". He challenges the assumption of gay liberators that capitalism could not grant equality. The evidence does not add up. He cites the growth of big business gays in New York with their gay bars, swimming pools and saunas exploiting an attractive homosexual market which constitutes no social threat. Privatised hedonism maintains consumerism. Correctly Altman argues that those homosexuals who are socialists and have made their sexuality the basis for their political action is very small in comparison to the gay movement and population as a whole. Many gays have internalised the pejorative judgement of themselves and seek "treatments" for their sickness. Others reject the gay liberation movement because they don't see themselves as repressed.

Now there is a deal of truth in saying that capitalism can accept a gay sub-culture, which itself accepts overall bourgeois values, including marriage (gay marriages), and thus acts as a prop to capitalist institutions. The idea that gays want integration and acceptance rather than "a revolutionary restructuring of 'sexuality' and sexual relations, is probably true of most gays.

Altman's most challenging point is that the aims of gay liberation would mean the end of homosexuality itself. In much the same ways that a successful socialist revolution would ultimately mean the end of the state. The oppression and furtiveness of the gay world are an *essential* part of a gay identity. In this sense, Altman argues, gays would have something to lose if the aims of gay liberation were realised. What this point indicates to me is that in much the same way as trade unions are a necessary but containable response to the exploitation of the working class, and in turn create a kind of trade union fetishism and consciousness, a similar phenomena arises with gays. As socialists we must state that ultimately we are for the elimination of trade unions, but at present they are relatively progressive organisations. Just as they are based on the trade and craft divisions created by capitalism and ultimately obstruct the unity and solidarity of humankind as a whole they are a necessary step towards the abolition of the sources of those divisions. Socialists too, in a sense, could favour the abolition of a separate concept of homosexuality, and indeed heterosexuality, masculinity and femininity to be replaced by a higher notion and experience of free and human sexuality. But for the concepts to die we need also to remove the well-springs from which they arise in the real world.

To the extent that a *certain form* of homosexuality is accepted in capitalist society, and so far as the gay movement works within this framework, Altman is correct and the gay movement presents no real threat. We can also agree with Altman that today much greater emphasis is placed on consumption rather than production but it is incorrect to assume from the appearance that productive capitalism has taken a back seat. Capitalism is at root a system of production and reproduction. It can change the methods by which surplus value is produced and adapt social institutions, but it cannot cease to rely on production. Hence the equation of consumerist capitalism with "free" sex and production-based capitalism with "unfree" sex can be a confusing and misleading definition.

Certainly if capitalism can contain gay liberation to a few legal reforms and an isolated sub-culture, it contains the threat. But the minute gays break out of the ghetto, demand to live their lives free from sexual oppression, and prejudice, they undermine both the sexual division of labour, sexual roles and the entire social edifice upon which people currently live their lives and understand their sexuality.

Jeffrey Weeks in *Coming Out*, acknowledges the "real gains" that have been made by and for homosexuals over the last ten years, enabling gays "to begin to transform their own consciousness and the circumstances of their lives".¹⁵ He also recognises the limitations of the gay rights movements, and the tendency for it to be absorbed into modern consumer-oriented capitalism. But paradoxically, Weeks points out, "Sexuality had been set free, but everywhere

it was in chains." Hence the need to develop a more thoroughgoing and radical critique of contemporary sexual mores. Weeks summarised the problem and points his finger to the future:

At the heart of most gay activism was an assumption that homosexuals were a separate, minority group, participating in the general value systems of the wider society but simultaneously struggling for the right to a separate if equal existence. Most concepts of homosexual oppression began (and ended) with this belief, and it dictated the sort of accommodation that inevitably resulted. But implicit in and necessary to gay liberation was a wider theory: that what oppressed homosexuals was not so much a dominant heterosexual majority as the supremacy of an exclusive heterosexual norm, enshrined in custom and ideology, perpetuated in the family, upheld by Church and State, which stunted everyone's (and particularly the majority's) sexual possibilities. If this were true, then a much more radical approach was both desirable and necessary, for it suggested that a real 'liberation' — which would end not only sexual oppression, but also the commercial exploitation of sex — could not be achieved by an act of will here and now, but could only be realised in a long, and necessarily complex and revolutionary, process of social change.

Dennis Altman in concluding his article proposes similar far-reaching tasks and objectives. He identifies the radical potential of the de-repression of homosexuality in the realm of the relationship of sexual repression and sex roles. His argument is worth reading in full. In brief he argues that we all repress a large part of our sexual energy during our individual development, which persists in a transformed guise, in everyone's behaviour. The *possibility* of choosing a homosexual orientation (or heterosexual), we all experience but most repress. The repression of homosexuality is essential in

the formation of male bonding, itself the psychological basis for authoritarianism and competitive relations in virtually all societies. Drawing heavily on Freud's work, Altman speculates that the male bond indicates the homosexual capacities of all men.

In a society which maintains heterosexuality as the norm (even were it to grant full rights to 'deviants'), the generalised de-repression of homosexuality would, according to speculation of this sort, begin a process of far more radical sexual release. Freed from guilt, the discovery by men of sexual feelings for each other could make it easier to break down hostility and aggression between each other — and, by extension, make it easier for them to relate as equals with women against whom aggression is also often directed — but to do so homosexuality would have to move beyond its current emphasis on genitility, often of an extremely aggressive sort, to an exploration of the tender dimensions of eroticism, the transformation, perhaps, of male bonding into a sisterhood of men.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have barely scratched out an introduction to the question of gay liberation. One thing is clear though. It will continue to be the case that for the next few years the real political and theoretical advances in the realm of sexual politics will continue to be made by the specially oppressed developing a consciousness of their own oppression. In so far as "straight", male revolutionaries identify the personal in the political, are capable of making the links between gay liberation and socialist revolution, then progress will undoubtedly be made and can be made within smaller groups such as our own. Even the larger far left groups like SWP and IMG will have gay comrades participating in the vital discussions on homosexual oppression. But as Jeffrey



Paul Hosefros/New York Times

Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators have marched throughout the USA against the attempts of Anita Bryant [inset] and the US Right to clamp down on homosexuals and the rights that have been won

Weeks has pointed out, the struggle many gay socialists have had in the larger orthodox trotskyst tendencies simply for basic rights and a recognition of the centrality of the question raised by gay oppression "exhausted the possibilities for widening the debate". In other words so much time was spent fighting for recognition, that gays in Trotskyist groups began despairing. (A similar process has occurred with women's oppression). The positions adopted by groups like the SWP (British and US) and IMG, have tended to stop at support for basic democratic rights and law reform.

In fact, it is instructive to look briefly at the twists and turns which lie behind adoption of even this limited position in the SWP (US), supporter of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The experience has been well documented by David Thorstad, an ex-SWPer and former staff writer of the SWP paper *The Militant*. His article, "Gays vs. the SWP", was published by the *Detroit Gay Liberator* shortly after his resignation in 1973. The article records leading SWP member, Ed Shaw stating to New York members that the party was not a "hospital" for people needing therapy. According to Thorstad gay liberation was an almost zero priority issue and anti-gay membership policies were implemented in several branches in the late 1960s. This climate of hostility led the Young Socialist Alliance (SWP youth) to adopt an explicit policy of banning gays from membership in August, 1970, for alleged security reasons, ie, vulnerability to blackmail, etc.

According to Thorstad, the SWP leadership did an abrupt about face in November 1970 and abolished the policy, not because it was wrong but because enforcement wasn't practical. With no small significance, it was about this time that Gay Liberation Fronts were expanding rapidly throughout the US. But it took until May, 1972, for the internal discussion to get started. Numerous documents and articles appeared on the history of gay oppression and policy. Most notable contributors were John Lauri tsen and David Thorstad. Apparently the leadership took a position of aloof abstention, writing not a single document of the issue. Nat Weinstein of San Francisco, advanced the position later promoted by the leadership and accepted by the majority: 1) Workers, women and oppressed nationalities are more subjugated than gays because they have no closet to escape into, away from "overt" oppression; 2) Gays are a *behavioral* minority struggling against "psychological oppression."; 3) Too close association with Gay Liberation would give the party an "exotic image".¹⁶

The debate culminated at the August 1973 National Conference where the proposal by Thorstad and Lauritsen for active intervention in the gay movement was defeated.

The essence of the section on gays in the majority Political Resolution was to give unconditional support to the struggle for gay civil rights, and reject bourgeois prejudice against gays, but to stop short of a strong stand in public work because 1) it might jeopardize the effectiveness of the SWP and alienate it from the masses, and 2) the party still didn't know enough about the question to take a position — after thirty documents written by serious gay Marxists devoted to the issue.¹⁷ It was a few months after this that Lauri tsen and Thorstad left the SWP.

Missing from the SWPs and most other orthodox Trotskyist groups attitude to gays is an explanation of the historical basis of gay oppression and the sexual dimension in class society. Rather, gay oppression is seen as a product of reactionary ideas and sexual taboos "encouraged by the rulers to promote faith in the corrupt institutions of capitalist society", and to "keep people in their place". (*Gay Liberation: A Socialist Perspective*, SWP 1974).

As Weeks remarks in commenting on these inadequacies of the lefts "there was no real debate on sexual division within capitalism and the arbitrariness of sexual norms. One of the most difficult and neglected areas of socialist theory precisely concerns the complex relationship between the personal and the political. Socialist theory is based on the assumption that the personality is moulded by social forces, but it has assumed rather than explored this belief. The result is that socialist orthodoxies have concentrated on the external factors and underplayed ways in which these have affected

the more individual aspects."

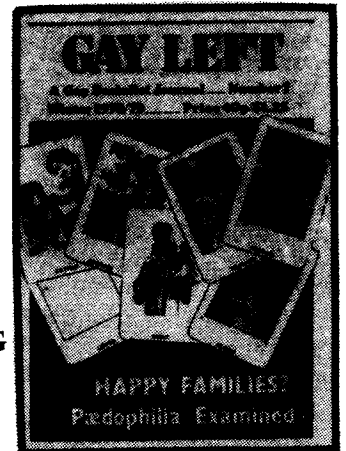
John Burnett has also put his finger on the problem,

Many "Marxists" accept capitalist society's artificial, idealist separation between our personal lives and "politics"; they will only deal with purely economic issues. The right wing appeals to people emotional needs; Marxism has fallen short in this area, needlessly weakening its effectiveness. . . Marxism is a practical tool and a living science that has to grow and develop. Many Marxists have proved themselves incapable of using it effectively; their idea of Marxism is quoting scripture like Anita Bryant. Since nice Marx and Lenin quotes on gay liberation are hard to find, these leftists are unable to deal with it. If Marx and Lenin had thought like that, they would never have made their contributions to the worker's movement. 18

Traditionally Marxists have believed the attack on male supremacy would come during and after socialist revolution. Already the autonomous gay and feminist movements are setting it in motion before the revolution. Our task is to assist and aid this process by supporting these autonomous movements and with them contributing to the cultural revolution which more than ever is now a necessary component of a successful and thoroughgoing transformation of social and political relations.

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18. John Burnett op cit pp 24,25.



RECOMMENDED READING

- Gay Left* — all issues
 Jeffrey Weeks — *Coming Out*
 CA Tripp *The Homosexual Matrix*
Gay Liberation Today Pathfinder Press
 John F Burnett *The Meaning of Gay Liberation*.
 Don Milligan *The Politics of Homosexuality*.
The Law and Sexuality (A Guide to the Law for Lesbians, Gay men, transvestites and transexuals) Grass Roots Books and Manchester Law Centre,
 Dennis Altman *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation*
Achilles Heel Summer 1978 No.1

DEBATE

Whats new about Euro-communism?

ROS TYRRELL

This article is written in response to statements made in the editorial of *Chartist International 2* in which it was implied that Eurocommunism is a new and progressive development within the Communist Parties (CPs) of western capitalist countries and that "There is a definite development away from the old Stalinist project of holding back the working class from revolution". (*Chartist International 2*)

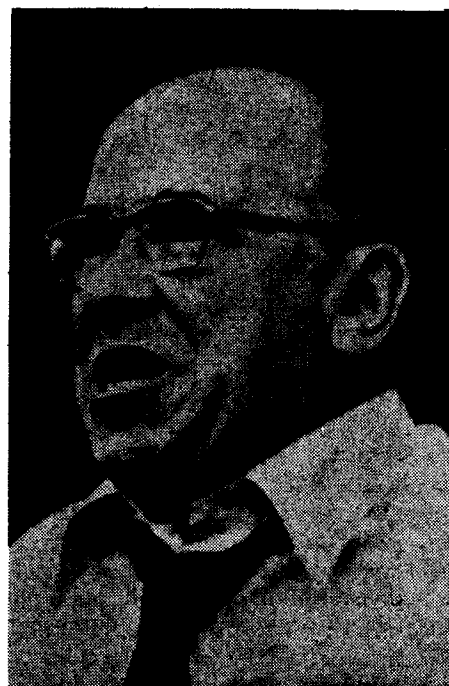
I hope to go some way to disproving the above statement, and much of the material I have used has been gleaned from other publications which I have found useful. I do not in any way pretend to provide a complete answer to the question "Is Eurocommunism the same old stalinist formula dressed up in a disguised form?" – merely to contribute a few ideas of other people's, as well as my own, and hope that what emerges will be a good basis for discussion in future issues of the *Chartist*.

What is Eurocommunism?

Eurocommunism, as I remember, is a word, that first found general use about ten years ago. It was used to denote the supposed new development in theory adopted by the major CPs of western Europe, particularly the Italian, French and Spanish CPs. It was also supposed to mark a 'break' from the traditional links with the Soviet Union, and a word that was first coined by the bourgeois press, but taken up into general use by the left as well. The so-called Eurocommunist development dates roughly back to the period after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 (the significance of which will be dealt with later). The prefix "euro-" however, is quite illusory since the particular orientation in theory can be found in the programmes of CPs outside Europe, particularly the Australian and Japanese parties.

According to Ernest Mandel there are seven principle theses of Eurocommunism:

1. That it is impossible to achieve socialism in industrialised countries without a consensus of a large majority of the population.
2. In order to achieve this consensus, bourgeois parliamentary institutions have to be preserved.
3. These institutions can be emptied of their class content and cease to be a prop for the bourgeoisie.
4. A head-on confrontation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat must be avoided at all costs as this would lead to a defeat of the working class and the destruction of bourgeois parliamentary institutions.
5. In order to win the parliamentary majority, the working class must, and can, fight for structural reforms which will transform the nature of the capitalist system by stages, eventually altering its very nature.



Santiago Carrillo

Informations Ouvrieres

6. The main concentration of activity at the present time is with the anti-monopoly alliance – weakening and then abolishing the power of the monopolies, enabling the power of the working class to grow, and eventually abolishing capitalism.
7. The anti-monopoly alliance must also include the peasantry, and small and middle bourgeoisie (hence the inappropriateness of advocating the abolishment of private property in the initial stage.)

The above seven theses have all been given general approval by the Kremlin:

"There can be no success unless the working class, all the toiling masses, transform parliament from an instrument of domination of the bourgeoisie into a representative of the interests of the working people . . . The programmes for profound transformation of the economic structure of society, the construction of a state of democratic alliance, a government of a bloc of left forces, an anti-monopoly democracy, and others, which have been

proposed by several communist parties in Europe, and in other parts of the world today, are intermediary stages and transitional forms on the road to socialism, which take account of the conditions in each country." (*Pravda*, 1 March 1977) (Note that the "concrete conditions" are supposed to be the same in all countries whose CPs adopt the Eurocommunist strategy!)

Perhaps the first point to be tackled is, is there anything new in the "7 theses" that distinguishes the Eurocommunist strategy of today from the practice adopted by the same parties in the late Comintern period of the 1930s? Mandel asserts the Eurocommunist strategy was first formulated in a coherent form by Karl Kautsky in 1910, who advocated, in a debate with Rosa Luxemburg, the encirclement and gradual undermining of capitalism until it could be taken at a low cost. Kautsky was at least a little more progressive than the CPs of today, in that his programme did not entirely rule out force (!), but even with the element of force in it, the illusion that international capitalism will allow such a process of 'transition to socialism' to take place without a head-on confrontation, has led to serious defeats for the working class, which have been repeated several times, the most notable example in recent years being, of course, that of Chile.

Despite these historical lessons, however, the Eurocommunists deny any defects in theory and continue a process of the revision of marxism initiated by the Social Democrats at the beginning of this century. They have merely, at last, put their practice into theory.

The British Road to Socialism

All the Eurocommunist parties of today, fall over backwards to stress that their own "roads to socialism" were devised independently and free from Moscow influence. Let us take the appearance of *The British Road to Socialism* as an example, since it is the most relevant to our work within the labour movement in Britain.

There is an interesting and well-researched book called *Stalinism in Britain* by Robert Black (New Park Publications, 1970), which if you ignore the occasional Socialist Labour League sloganising, gives a useful account of the theoretical history of the CPGB.

When Harry Pollitt addressed the Seventh Congress of the Comintern Congress in 1935, he said the following: "The Communist Party does not believe that socialism can be achieved through parliament, and will always state this standpoint in its agitation and propaganda . . . In fact the establishment of fascism in Germany, and in other countries, together with the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union, is convincing more and more workers in Britain that the revolutionary way is the only one."

Twelve years later, in 1947, he was saying the following: "The progress of democratic and socialist forces throughout the world has opened up new possibilities of transition to socialism by other paths than those followed by the Russian Revolution . . . It is possible to see how the people will move towards socialism without further revolution, without the dictatorship of the proletariat . . . Thus there exists today new possibilities of advance to socialism in Britain also, new ways in which power can be removed from the hands of the capitalist class." (Pollitt, "Looking Ahead" pp88-89)

And in line with the development of Soviet Foreign policy (as shall be seen later), the first draft of the *British Road* in January 1951 said:

" . . . British Communists declare that the people of Britain can transform capitalist democracy into a real People's Democracy, transforming Parliament, the product of Britain's historic struggle for democracy, into the democratic instrument of the will of the vast majority of people."

and:

"The enemies of Communism accuse the Communist Party of aiming to introduce Soviet Power in Britain and abolish Parliament. This is a slanderous misrepresentation of our policy. Experience has shown that in present

conditions the advance to socialism can be made just as well by a different road."

What can have given rise to such a switch in official policy of the CPGB (if not its practice) in such a short period? Was it a genuine response to changing conditions within Britain in the post war period or was it the consequence of a more sinister global development relating to Soviet influence on the policies of CPs outside the eastern bloc? The point will be developed in the next section, but it was always suspected that Stalin had engineered the *British Road*. The proof developed in later years:

"We must say this for the edification of these admirers of the cult of Stalin that it was none other than Stalin who, in an interview with British Communists after the Second World War, spoke of using the peaceful, parliamentary way to bring about socialism and this is recorded in the programme of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The leaders of the British Communist Party know that this wording was proposed by Stalin." (Kruschev, Speech to the Sixth Congress of the East German Socialist Unity Party, Berlin, 16 January 1963, in *Soviet News*, 18.1.63)

And later on in 1963, in a reply to attacks on the CPGB's parliamentary reformism by the Chinese Communist Party John Gollan made a speech to the Executive of the CPGB which contained the following:

"We should note that the "British Road" was published in 1951 – before the 20th Congress and while Stalin was still alive. The Chinese comrades by implication suggest that Stalin was against the concept of the possible peaceful transition to socialism. The *British Road to Socialism* was published in full in *Pravda*, with Stalin's full approval" (*Daily Worker*, Sept 18 1963)

Pollitt may have been the pioneer of the British Road to Socialism, but the idea had come from Stalin.

Historical Background

The Eurocommunist phenomena cannot be understood fully without a painstaking analysis of the history of the Communist Movement and of its direction by the needs of Soviet foreign policy since the October Revolution of 1917. A detailed and very readable account of this particular aspect is contained in F. Claudin, *The Communist Movement – From Comintern to Cominform*. The most relevant period in so far as Eurocommunism is concerned is that of the period immediately after 1943, when Stalin dissolved the Comintern. (Communist International)

The Comintern was dissolved by Stalin in June 1943 to facilitate negotiations with Roosevelt and Churchill and the partition of the world between the "Big Three" upon the impending victory of the anti-Hitler alliance. The establishment of a second front was needed urgently for a decisive victory over Hitler, and the western capitalist countries wanted guarantees from Stalin against a European revolution (which the Comintern was, on paper, still committed to). The resistance movements in Europe were armed and becoming increasingly radicalised and the western capitalists feared a post war revolution.

Stalin traded off an impending revolution in western Europe for the strengthening of Soviet Power and the abolishment of capitalism in the poorest countries of Europe. A policy of non-intervention was established between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union: The Soviet Union would not intervene in Western Europe and the Anglo/US forces likewise in the East. In Italy and France there were revolutionary situations immediately post-war, and the CPs of those countries gave up their arms under direction from the Kremlin. In Greece, (an area designated to Anglo/US Forces) the Communists refused to toe the line and were crushed by the Allies with the Soviet Union refusing to come to their aid. Hangovers of this policy were to be seen in later years – Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968.

The Comintern was dissolved with an admission of bankruptcy. According to the Praesidium of the ECCI (Executive Committee of the Communist International)



Tensions in Czechoslovakia Scenes like these haunt the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe

there had been two stages in the Comintern: the first, when an international centre (Moscow) of direction was possible for the needs of the working class movement, and the second, when the Comintern became a hindrance to the development of the national working class parties. Somehow it was suddenly admitted that in different countries, there existed different situations and different levels of consciousness – a situation of course which had existed all along but which had apparently only developed in the mid-1930s!

No replacement for the Comintern was offered, but a directive was issued, which contained the following:

“the general national upsurge and mobilization of the people for the speediest victory over the enemy can best of all and most fruitfully be carried out by the vanguard of the working class movement of each separate country working within the framework of its own country”

and

“the widest masses of people, and in the first place the foremost workers, consists in aiding by every means the military efforts of the governments of those (anti-Hitlerite coalition) countries, aimed at the speediest defeat of the Hitlerite bloc”.

The socialist revolution was tactically dropped, along with the prime aim of the Comintern at its founding – the maintenance of international links between CPs during imperialist wars, striving for the end of war and arousing the masses to hasten and bring about the downfall of capitalism.

Stalin's attempts to reach a permanent global agreement with the United States, dominated the policies of CPs in the immediate post-war period. The Yalta and Potsdam Agreements and the UN Charter required Stalin to observe formal democracy in those countries newly under Soviet control. Stalin therefore took measures against capitalism and private enterprise in the subtlest possible form and in the Peoples Democracies, the actual power of the Communists was concealed behind a facade of fake parliamentarianism. The Soviet regime and the leading groups of CPs which had been formed in the ‘old Stalinist’ period, by their very nature, were not capable of carrying out a process of genuine socialist revolution which would have provided the Soviet Union with its strongest defence genuine socialism – and built a solid barrier against imperialism.

The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat was seen as unnecessary now as,

“In many countries the problem of achievement of socialism presents itself as a problem of collaboration between the working class, and the peasants, artisans

and intellectuals and other progressive sectors of the people”

This was the dominant view in the years 1945-6 when hope lasted for a global agreement between the USSR and the USA. When the Cold War period began, the position was reversed and the dictatorship of the proletariat became a ‘necessity’ again. The only remaining difference between a ‘Peoples Democracy’ and the Soviet system was a retention of a parody of pluralism of parties in the former – a caricature of the parliamentary system. This view in its initial form, says Claudin, was used as a doctrinal justification by the CPs of France and Italy for their entry into bourgeois governments after the war. Governments of national unity were regarded as the first step towards ‘Peoples Democracies’. The Yalta Agreement guaranteed that the capitalist powers would be forced to respect communist governments elected by means of universal suffrage – the entry into governments of national unity was an attempt at this.

The model of development in the East was therefore transferred to the west without any analysis of post-war capitalist society, but merely on the establishment of a ‘new world relation of forces’ – soon to be proved wrong in the actual course of events. The CPs of France and Italy were removed from government of their countries without any resistance and instead of moving towards ‘peoples democracies’, Western Europe moved towards a new development of capitalism.

The permanent global agreement that Stalin had hoped for never happened – and when in 1947, Washington began to once more develop a distinct anti-Soviet line, Stalin's answer was to entrench Soviet Power. The invulnerability of the Eastern bloc had to be ensured and was brought under monolithic control by the Soviet Union. Stalin summoned representatives of the nine most ‘useful’ CPs and formed the Cominform. Zhdanov's report to its founding conference was to lay down strategy for the next 5 years, just as the 1943 resolution after the dissolution of the Comintern was to lay down ‘the line’ for the years after that. The world, said the report, was divided into two camps, the imperialist camp and the anti-imperialist camp. The aims of the imperialist camp were to strengthen itself in preparation for a new world war and to struggle against socialism and democracy, and the aims of the anti-imperialist camp was against the expansion of imperialism, strengthening of the democratic elements and the elimination of all traces of fascism. The ‘fundamental task’ of the anti-imperialist camp was to “ensure a lasting democratic peace” (No mention of the struggle for socialism – even in the long term). The Chinese and Greek

uprisings were in full force at the time but did not get a mention. Zhdanov's report stressed the role for the Italian and French CPs: "they must take up the banner of the defence of the national independence and sovereignty of their countries".

Claudin quite rightly states of this document:

'With the exception of the 1944 resolution which dissolved the Comintern and marked the abandonment of the struggle to find a socialist solution to the European catastrophe, there are a few documents in the history of the communist movement which so clearly reflect the sub-ordination of the world revolutionary struggle to the demands of Soviet foreign policy . . .'

Thus the strategy of CPs after 1947 was that of collaboration with national bourgeoisies to strive for a lasting peace – Stalin's best defence (in his opinion) against American expansionism in Europe. During the Cominform period (1947-53) the fight against Titoism became as important as the fight against Trotskyism had been previously. This was a period of the greater bureaucratisation of communist parties and the development of an ideological uniformity based on the wishes of Soviet foreign policy. This uniformity still exists today in the programmes of the Eurocommunist parties and was developed during this period. There is little change in the British Road to Socialism as it exists today than when it was first formulated in 1951.

I have given this, very condensed account of Soviet foreign policy and its influence on CPs outside the Eastern bloc because it is relevant to an understanding of the nature of those Communist parties today. The so-called 'independent roads' stem from this period, as already stated, and most modifications to this policy have been condoned by the Soviet Union.

Democracy

There is however one 'modification' of policy or rather a change in attitude that the Kremlin is not so happy about and that is the critical attitude that has developed of internal democracy in the Soviet bloc countries, and especially the Soviet Union itself. Mandel omits this in his '7 theses', and quite rightly, since it is a point of contention within the Communist parties themselves. In 1970, Santiago Carillo published his book *Eurocommunism and the State*. Mandel calls the book a "bombshell" – but how much is Carillo unique in terms of leading Eurocommunists of today?

What was so important about Carillo's book was that it levelled some profound criticisms against the Soviet Union (recognising the leadership as a bureaucratic caste, etc.), more or less rehabilitated Trotsky, and admitted mistakes that had been committed in the past by Communist parties. The book no doubt has had significant influence on "grass roots" CP members and may have accounted for some recruitment into the CPs of different countries, but its permeation into the entrenched bureaucracies of the same parties is questionable. The nature of the bureaucracies of the Eurocommunist parties has not changed significantly since the 20s and 30s. Their policies are based on political and material self-interest, and links with the Soviet Union are still as strong as they ever were.

The scapegoat for the "degeneration" of the Soviet Union in Eurocommunist thinking today, is Stalin. Criticisms of the 'Stalinist phenomena' enables Eurocommunists to still designate the USSR as a socialist country and to explain its "degeneration" as something other than structural defects. They can therefore criticise "stalinism" and at the same time maintain links with the USSR and its present leadership. It is even increasingly common amongst the Eurocommunist parties to explain the degeneration of the USSR as having its origins in the October revolution – "Lenin made mistakes" etc. This peculiar hotch-potch of thinking indicates a serious theoretical starvation, where thousands of rank-and-file CP members throughout the world are denied the opportunity for independent political expression of thought, marxist education, and are taught that a good party member is one

that sells copies of the *Morning Star* every Saturday, organises Bazaars dutifully, raises funds ardently for the leadership and takes the line that is passed down from above.

But still, the 'new democratic' line and a critical attitude towards the Soviet Union has fascinated the left since it first appeared. It has been said above that political and material self interest dominates the attitudes of the Eurocommunist bureaucracies, and if we trace the origins of the 'anti-Sovietism' of the Eurocommunist parties we can see that they stem from the period shortly after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, in 1968, when the credibility of Communist Parties outside the Soviet bloc was once again at stake (as it had been in 1956). The Czech 1968 situation could not be explained away as a "fascist uprising" as Hungary 1956 had been and a stand against the invasion had to be made to prevent a repeat of the mass resignations of 1956. Whether this critical attitude would have developed if the invasion had never taken place is questionable, and we must seriously ask ourselves if this criticism really was a principled stand, or merely opportunist.

Eurocommunist practice has been to adapt theory to contemporary working class attitudes rather than to try to win over the working class to revolutionary politics. The criticisms of the Soviet Union, while valid in themselves, have been necessary to maintain acceptability and membership but the Eurocommunist parties cannot make the complete break, as the basis for their separate existence from the social democratic parties would disappear. Tradition, material links, historical identity in the eyes of the combative sections of the working class, and the danger of many members joining organisations to the left of the CPs is the mainstay of the Eurocommunist bureaucracies.

The process of social democratisation has confirmed a right turn and not a progressive development within the Eurocommunist parties. A prime example of this is the Italian CP's support for austerity measures in 1977 in order to avoid the ultimate test of strength. The Kremlin is not perturbed at these developments, since it suits 'peaceful coexistence' and 'detente'. What may worry them however, is whether this class collaboration with national bourgeoisies will cause the Eurocommunists to oppose the Soviet Union in the event of a European war.

Conclusion

I have attempted to show that the so called 'Eurocommunist' strategy is nothing new – the "old project of holding back the working class from revolution" is maintained in Eurocommunist practice and theory – this stemming from the needs of Soviet foreign policy in the immediate post war period and continuing today.

The democratic element in Eurocommunist thought is illusionary and hypocritical. How can a party that advocates pluralism and freedom of thought continue to ban factions and stifle democracy where it holds real power?

One final word concerning Carillo's 'great confession' of the crimes of stalinism. Mandel hails Carillo's statement that the murder of Andres Nin was "an abominable and unjustifiable act" the whole sentence from which this is obtained reads as follows:

'Nin's death was an abomable and unjustifiable act, but one committed against a background of a putsch, of an act of high treason that could not be justified in the midst of a revolutionary anti-fascist war'. (my emphasis). (Carrillo, *'Euro Communism' and the State* p.120)

The whole book is full of such devious double-talk. In one sentence Carrillo condemns the murder and justifies it. The moral of this tale is to penetrate the camouflage.

READING

Black. R. *Stalinism in Britain*
Carrillo. S. *'Eurocommunism' and the State*
Claudin. F. *The Communist Movement*
Mandel. E. *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism*.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

ANN BLISS

Over the weekend of 10-11 March, the New Architecture Movement, Feminist Group organised a very successful conference of about 200 women – and a few men. The idea was to discuss how modern forms of planning and architecture isolate and oppress women in the home.

This is a transcript of the lead-off I gave to the "Women and Space" conference.

I'm not an architect, not an anthropologist and in fact not an academic at all. I don't know how many others of you here are in the same sort of position, but really I hope that quite a lot of you are. Of course I want to hear from the academics this weekend, but I also want to hear from those who are on the receiving end of our system of housing and planning, and who get all too few chances to confront the architects, planners, councillors and others who often seem to be planning our lives for us. To me that's the whole point of this conference – that hopefully we've brought together people who wouldn't otherwise be here in the same room.

I know what I think as a woman with two children, trying to care for them, trying to have my own life as well, keeping up a full-time job and at the same time playing as active a role as I can politically and socially. Like most women, I am oppressed by the system in a spatial way which is so pervasive that we've only just begun to recognise it.

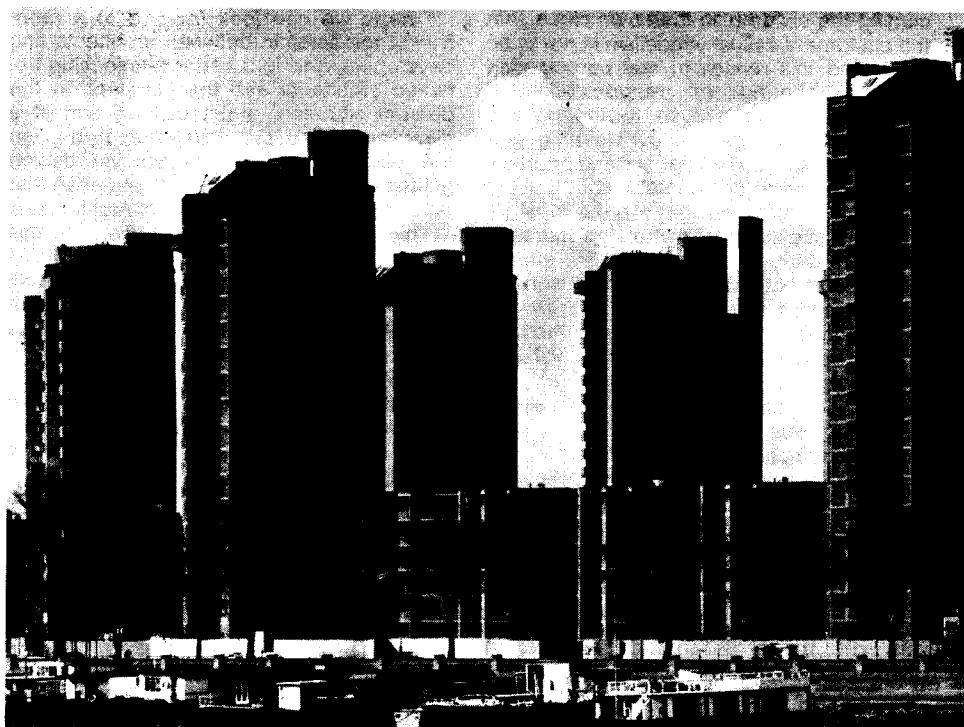
We've been so brainwashed that we've just never questioned that houses or flats should be built as little boxes "away from it all", cooping us up as individuals with our children. We've never questioned that buildings and flats should be surrounded by as much quiet and empty space as possible. Ever since the old London "rookeries" were pulled down and slum-clearance began around the turn of the century, we've almost taken it for granted that what we want is to get away from the neighbours, to surround ourselves with empty, quiet streets or gardens, to put lace curtains over the windows (even if we are on the eighteenth floor of a tower block where no-

one could possibly look in!) hedges all around the gardens, and walls with no doors in to shut the neighbours and their children out. Never mind the fact that women in tower blocks are often on valium and anti-depressants because the loneliness is driving them mad – we still cling to the same crazy assumptions about space.

"IT'S ALL IN THE MIND!"

The most I can claim to specialised knowledge is the fact that I am (when I'm not on strike!) a social work assistant in a psychiatric hospital in Southwark. In the hospital we social workers have an almost continual battle with the medics whose only answer to the so-called "psychiatric" problems of our clients is to give them pills, ECT or injections. But to us it's perfectly

obvious as we go round to the places where the patients live, that the main problem lies here. People are all lumped together, but at the same time they are lumped together in such a way as to maximise the divisions between them. In these places you really get the worst of all possible worlds: you can hear the neighbours shouting and screaming and the kids bawling all around you through the thin walls – and yet the walls mean that you are supposed to be absolutely cut off and indifferent, and unable to do anything to help. To me it's perfectly obvious that men wouldn't abuse, oppress or batter their wives so much if they weren't able to do it within the privacy of their own four walls. If women had a real community of neighbours – for example through helping with each other's children – men might think twice be-



Housing that oppresses and alienates women

fore throwing their weight around quite so much. If it was taken for granted that children could run into their neighbours' homes a bit more, and if responsibilities for child minding were more shared, we wouldn't have so many children battered by parents in the privacy of their homes. I'm sure we can all think of examples where women are oppressed mainly because they are so isolated in the home.

BUILDINGS IN THE MIND

This is the real problem: when the housing and planning system and the capitalist system generally drives us to seeing a psychiatrist or to taking antidepressants or whatever, we feel that we ourselves as individuals are to blame. We should understand: it's all been designed this way deliberately. I've talked to Julienne Hanson about this and I know that she is going to say more about this when I've finished. But I just want to say that I find her ideas and the ideas of her research unit at the Bartlett School really clarifying: Buildings and neighbourhood patterns aren't just objects out there – external things. They are US. They are where we live, where we eat, where we meet the neighbours and *whether* we meet them or don't meet them at all. They are where the children are, where the school is and where work is, and they are whether these things are in the same place or miles apart. These things are our daily lives. Architects have been trained to imagine that buildings are like sculptures or works of art—things you look at and put around the place to improve the scenery. Buildings have to look good on paper and in photographs – particularly from the air. But what I'm interested in is how they feel from the inside, and the real question is whether we can find one another through the buildings or street patterns we live in. If you take an old complex of terraced back-to-back "slum" houses and bulldoze them down to put up a modern block of flats you're not just changing the environment of the community which used to live there. If mums are no longer meeting each other over the back garden fences or on the front door step, if they are no longer bumping into each other as they cross the road to the corner shop, if there's no longer an arrangement of streets and street corners allowing for a criss-crossing of social networks and relationships – then it's not just that you've changed the community's environment. You have destroyed the community from within.

Architects aren't just creating buildings when they change whole patterns of spatial organisation. They are tampering with our relationships, our everyday lives and even our psychology. To me the horrifying thing is that they've been doing this without having any inkling that this is what they were doing – they've gone on imagining that all they were doing was producing

external things: buildings as works of art and that then you just add the people!

PUBS

Until a few years ago, about as far as the planners had gone in recognising the value of the old buildings was recognising the function of the pubs. I can vividly remember being on the train from New Cross to London Bridge when everything had been flattened all around. But dotted over the landscape were all the old pubs, still standing upright all alone with everything in between just flattened. This meant that at least the centres of male community life had been recognised. But no such recognition of the needs of a female community had been given any thought at all.

"DIVIDE AND RULE"

I am sure that if architects had really known the social consequences of what they were doing many of them would have refused to do the things they've done. In this sense it has been inevitable and necessary to those who rule us that architects should have been made unconscious. In all times and in all places ruling groups have oppressed other groups by creating boundaries to separate people from each other. In a sense that is what frontiers, walls and fences have always been for. If you want to dominate another group of people you divide them up with spatial boundaries, but make sure that you are much more mobile yourself and can easily cross through the barriers that you have set up.

Before and during the First World War in Britain there was a real fear of revolution and in later years planners – inspired by people such as Le Corbusier consciously set about smashing up working class communities in inner city areas. They didn't want a repetition of what had happened in Petrograd in 1917 when women started the revolution and when workers and housewives massed on what was called the "Vyborg Side" of the city in one great industrial and residential community. From here the workers stormed across the bridges to take the Winter Palace and the main buildings later in October. In Britain and Western Europe the planners resolved to smash up this kind of neighbourhood solidarity by creating huge avenues of empty space for road systems, parks, car-parks and concrete wastelands where once had been thriving communities. As Le Corbusier himself put it, the choice was between "Architecture or Revolution".

But while many people have today recognised this, what they have failed to recognise is that the real victims of these planning schemes have been women. We are the ones who have been most isolated, and who have had almost all forms of kinship solidarity

and community stripped away from us.

UNUSUAL

Now I think that what we've got to understand is how extremely unusual, untypical and I might almost say unnatural the modern isolation of women really is. We imagine it is natural to be at home alone with our children, but actually what we are doing is something which almost no women in the whole of human history have had to do before. Let me just show you a picture of the ground plan of a dwelling built some 20,000 years ago by some Upper Palaeolithic mammoth-hunters in the Ukraine. The main thing to notice is all the hearths running down the centre. Quite clearly a line of women probably sisters, mothers and daughters would have formed the nucleus of this dwelling, each woman with her fire but all of them sharing the food and other resources of the dwelling. It must have been quite a job carving up and cooking a mammoth, and women would have needed their solidarity to ensure that the men handed over the meat and that it got cooked and shared out properly amongst everyone including the children.

WHY ANTHROPOLOGY?

I'm not going on for much longer on this, but I do think it's important to avoid restricting our scope only to the possibilities which we see around us in our society. I think we should be prepared to get some ideas about living arrangements from anywhere and everywhere in the world past or present. Obviously there will be some things we might adapt and use and others that we can't – we won't be able to build with mammoth bones! – but what I like is the fact that in virtually all tribal or traditional cultures, kinship solidarity exists and forms a network of relationships between women at some level, and that children have not one mother but many "mothers" who care for them to varying degrees. The very fact that in all tribal cultures a woman will call her sisters' children "my children" without distinction indicates how strongly this sharing of children is felt to be the norm. It might sound like an exaggeration to say that in "all tribal cultures" this is the case, but I think it is true – perhaps an anthropologist will correct me if I'm wrong – that this is what the classificatory principles of kinship terminology involves, and that in virtually all tribal cultures people use some variant of the classificatory system. My sister's children are my children, and mine are hers, in principle if not always in practice.

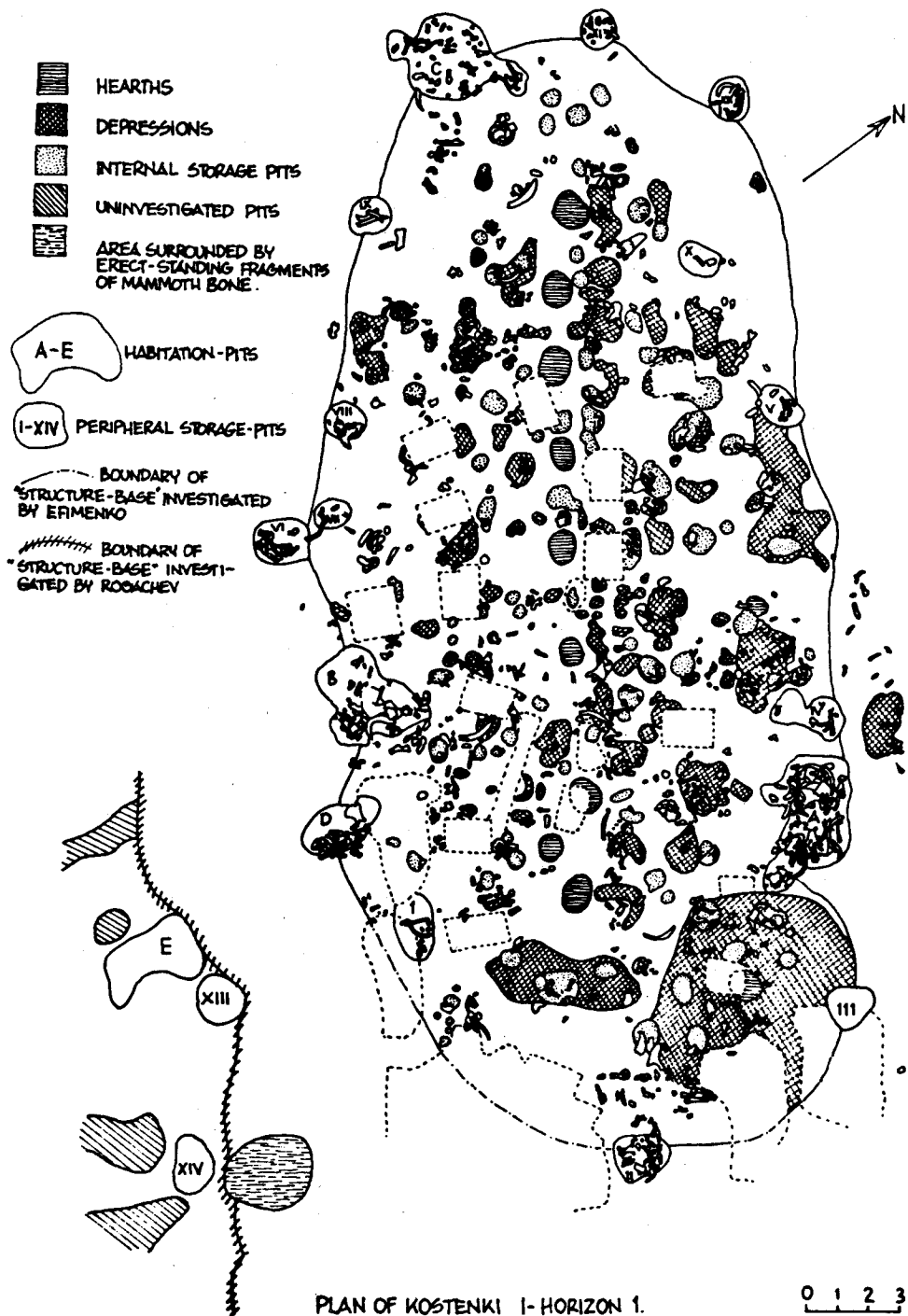
BACK TO THE HOME?

However, in contrast, in our society, my children are absolutely my children my neighbour's are absolutely hers. The sexual and political pressures

which produce these barriers are complex but it is because we are separated in this way that we feel so weak. The usual message from the women's movement to mothers and housewives is "Get out of the home". Obviously with things as they are, this is the only form of escape! We can only discover strength by going to work, meeting people, joining a trade union and so on. Consequently at the moment it seems that the strongest lever for change lies here. But leaving the home means that the home itself still remains a problem. Not all women can leave the home. And in a way it doesn't make much sense to call for more and more of our time to be spent at work when the trade unions themselves are calling for a 35-hour week or even shorter hours as an answer to the unemployment which silicon chips and other technological developments are threatening. The more successful the trade unions are in winning a shorter working week, the more time will be spent by most people — men and women — at home. Obviously we women must fight for the right to work and fight against unemployment on equal terms with men, but it is also important that the barriers between women at home are broken down.

The places where people live must be made once again into real centres of community life and power. With technological progress, fewer and fewer people will need to be in factories and offices — which could even become very lonely places eventually, in comparison with the places where people live. It seems quite possible that in future the relationships between production and consumption, between work and home, and between work and home, and between so-called "men's work" and "women's work" could all be reversed. Consumption will become the primary motive force, which will mean production for need, not profit. Things should be produced because the consuming units — the community of families, children and people generally in the places where they live — want these things and demand that they are produced. But for these units to be strong and to become the centre of gravity for the whole community, they have got to be quite different from what they are now. Instead of being fragmented, isolated and powerless, they have got to be bound together by tight links of solidarity.

As long as women's primary loyalties are to their individual husbands and children, such solidarity will remain out of the question. This is why I say the sisterhood of the women's movement must have a sexual cutting edge (and I think this follows wherever spatial arrangements allow a real community of women to form). We must be able to tell our male partners that we belong to ourselves first, and to them second. Individual pair relation-



PLAN OF KOSTENKI I- HORIZON 1.

Plan of upper Paleolithic communal dwelling or longhouse, made of mammoth bones [see p.24]

ships are fine, but we can't afford to allow these kinds of bonds to break up our own solidarity as women.

CONCLUSION

What I shall conclude by saying is that there's nothing wrong with motherhood, nothing wrong with looking after children and even (dare I say it?) nothing wrong with centering life on the home. But not in our present social system. As long as home life and domestic work are peripheral to the life of the community, we must escape as best

we can. But to me, one of the main objectives of the socialist revolution and of the women's movement is to resolve this dilemma for women by revolutionising the home itself. Everything will be able to centre on the home once the places where people live are real centres of power at the heart of the whole social and economic system. Our communal living spaces should be the places where "everything happens" — where we enjoy ourselves socially, where we help with each other's children, where we organise production and so on. This is what happened in the earliest periods of

human history, although of course on a different level and in a different way.

Despite all the differences of scale and conditions, I don't think it is unrealistic to think of the future as promising a re-establishment on a higher level of some of the principles of social organisation of our distant kinship-based evolutionary past. Home life will be collective and will be the heart and centre of the economic and social system as a whole. Perhaps this thought can't help me much with my own immediate problems of combining work with looking after my children. But at least it gives me something to fight for and makes me feel stronger as a result.

Other speakers included Bill Hillier (from the Bartlett School of Architecture) who used slides to show how people in streets with real street-life (i.e. where their front doors face directly on to the street) can live quite differently from people in quiet cul-de-sacs. "They can use their homes not as a means of escaping from social life, but as a means of participating in it", he said. Julienne Hanson, who is a research assistant at the same architectural school, then gave us some more pictures and descriptions, showing how spatial patterns weaken or strengthen women's solidarity in different cultures. It seems that where women have strong local groups they are also in a better position to make strong links with women in other areas. Julienne gave an example of a small village in central Spain where the women not only have a sense of community in their own village, but have many kin and friends in neighbouring villages which they often visit. This was in contrast to a village in Southern Italy, where although the village was larger, it was also more self-contained, while within it the women's movements were much more easily controlled by the men.

TWO KINDS OF WOMEN

The main point Julienne made in her second contribution on Sunday, was that there are in Britain today "two kinds of women: those who are forced to stay put, who depend on their neighbours, and who are permitted very little wider solidarity or power; and those who don't mind too much where they live or who their neighbours are because they pick and choose their friends from everywhere, forming wide social networks and orienting their lives upon their jobs or professional careers". This dichotomy, Julienne insisted correlated with class. This rather shocked some women, and in an all-women's workshop afterwards I had to say I knew that Julienne was right from my own personal experience. Before I became involved in revolutionary politics I had been in the first category. I had left school early, had no friends who had been to university, and belonged basically in

Catford or the neighbourhood where my school friends still lived. Then when I became involved in the women's movement I found myself mixing with kinds of people I had never been with before, who had degrees, who had friends and contacts all over London and in other parts of Britain, and who didn't really mind where they lived, or who the neighbours were in the way it had mattered to me. "But now", I said, "in me exist both the kinds of women that Julienne has talked about, and sometimes I'm not sure where I am or where I belong". I think that then most of the women understood that we had a point.

Julienne argued that precisely the women who needed neighbours and street-life most — particularly working class mothers — had been most deprived of it by the planners and architects. They had been boxed up in tower blocks and council estates where they often had virtually no friends or neighbours to help them at all. Meanwhile, the more "liberated" middle-class women had started turning away from lonely suburbia and buying up what had formerly been regarded as "working class" little houses in streets in places like Kentish Town. These women had the best of both worlds: they lived in houses which faced directly on to streets, where they felt in the middle of things locally, and also had their wider, "transpatial" professional, social and political networks. The working class former inhabitants had been squeezed out and now had little hope of returning because of the soaring prices of these kinds of small houses.

RECLAIM THE STREETS

The ruling classes have always divided people up by means of spatial boundaries — walls, frontiers, fences and cul-de-sacs. Women have felt forced to retreat into their homes. But the answer isn't to try and make our individual homes ("prisons" according to Julienne) larger or more comfortable at the expense of life outside the home. Some women seem to want to exclude other women by withdrawing into ideal homes or communes with a selected group of other women. Great idea! But that still leaves the problem for women who don't have the choice. Women who want exclusive communes are in fact putting boundaries around themselves and retreating from the world instead of trying to change the world. We can't all get into these communes. The answer is to win back some real street-life so that we can all be participating in "the main theatres of life" (Bill Hillier's words). The "reclaim the night" movement should become also a "reclaim the streets" movement. You don't get raped in streets where there is street-life — only in those concrete wastelands and empty spaces which the planners have designated as "community areas" around tower

blocks and along the desolate balconies, landings and other dead-ends around our homes.

ENCLAVES

Claire Cooper spoke at the last session on Saturday. She talked about a small multi-racial estate recently built in San Francisco. This estate was completely self-contained, having 300 residents. She showed lots of slides, and announced that they would show that our ideas were wrong — that you could design on the conventional twentieth-century lines and make it work. We saw nice, low-rise flats and lots of green open spaces, children running about safely. But we noticed one thing: no adults or women were ever seen in the green spaces, despite the benches put out. There was absolutely no "street life", and the children were in effect segregated in a world of their own. One other tendency towards segregation was noticed. The only building which had been preserved from demolition within the area designated for the estate was an old building housing the local YMCA. Claire Cooper, who had herself been a resident on the estate, said casually: "Most of us rather resented the intrusion of people of a lower social class into our estate as they came into the youth and sports club making a noise in the evenings".

This just summed up the whole point about enclaves of whatever kind. Admittedly, the people on Claire Cooper's estate all "worked". But then, it was a co-operative, the residents having clubbed together and sunk their money into building it. They were determined to make it work. They had selected themselves off from the wider community in an ideal enclave of their own. They wanted to exclude everyone else. This means that they were just putting boundaries around themselves, reproducing the oppression of the ruling class by themselves. What we were saying was that we should break down the walls and boundaries which divide us, not build more of them on a different level or scale. We need walls around our individual rooms or houses, simply because we need walls somewhere to keep out the weather and have privacy when we want it. But apart from that, we don't want any large-scale boundaries or containing walls. With a proper street-life (or, as Julienne said, something like street-life, preferably without cars), we can use our rooms and spaces not to escape from the main theatres of life, but to participate in the centre of things, I'm sure that is the answer — not large institutions or "communes" in big buildings where everything gets hierarchical and bureaucratised or just doesn't work at all.

NOTES

Mammoth-house picture: from Richard G. Klein, "Man and Culture in the late Pleistocene". Chandler Publishing Co., San Francisco, 1969.

REVIEWS

Coming to the aid of the party

Marxism and the Party
by John Molyneux.
Pluto Press £2.95 paperback.

The most significant aspect of contemporary life is the emergence of a Marxist current that is attempting to come to terms with the past of the socialist and communist movement and to provide some answers to the problems of today. A significant section of that movement of minds claims allegiance to the Russian revolution of 1917. A section of those claiming that heritage state openly that the model for Britain in 1979 is the Russian Bolshevik Party of 1917. Very clearly in that tradition is the book 'Marxism and the Party' by John Molyneux.

In being a summation of the analysis of the party from the perspective of the IS/SWP tradition it is significant that the selection of those ideas to be dealt with are severely limited. Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and Gramsci are the total theoretical tradition presented though Lukacs, Cliff and Harman are touched on.

The book therefore is a summary of the received wisdom of the party. Indeed John Molyneux concludes on the need for a 'vanguard' party along the lines of the Bolshevik party. He clearly started the work with the intention of arriving at that conclusion. One cannot blame him for that. However the method of arriving at that conclusion can be criticised since it lacks the proper Marxist method of critical analysis of the concrete reality. He traces through the works of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky the road to Bolshevism and stands squarely on its success in the Bolshevik revolution. The lessons of history have shown the efficacy of that method.

62 YEARS

Perhaps the most damning criticism of the book is that Molyneux fails to apply an analysis of the operation of vanguardism to places outside of Russia at times other than 1917. Perhaps the last 62 years has given others more cause for reflection and study. One can applaud the author's

moral courage and intransigence but perhaps a more critical method will yield better results. Lenin said of the 1905 Bolshevik-led uprising in Moscow that one could learn more from unsuccessful revolutions than from successful ones. Indeed both Lenin and Marx drew a whole series of conclusions and lessons from the Paris Commune which was spectacularly unsuccessful, was isolated and defeated.

It may be argued that learning lessons is not the aim of the work. As John writes in his introduction the intention was,

"... to present as coherently as possible, the main ideas of the outstanding Marxist theoreticians on the nature and tasks of the revolutionary party." (p.10).

However as he concludes with a summation of the theory of the party and its application today he must think it sufficient to restate these past theoretical positions. However for the vast majority of workers vanguardism is not a proven method and indeed it is necessary to examine why this is. John seems to blame the lack of any development of marxism on the long boom since the war:

"They lacked the practical experience of revolutionary struggle to make further developments of the marxist theory of the party ... either possible or urgent."

One wonders therefore what all that violence was about in Asia and South America or indeed Europe of 1956, 1968, 1975. Indeed what was going on in the world at all. If one needs a revolution before one can develop a revolutionary theory why do you need marxists at all. So John in his book demonstrates a much more fundamental problem for marxist theory than lack of practical experience of revolutions. That problem is a lack of critical analysis of orthodox theories. Wherever this conservatism stems from it seems to dominate many of those who call themselves Leninists.

LENINISM

I would urge John Molyneux to read Gerratana's piece in *New Left Review*

no. 103 on 'Leninism' as a system. The leninist theory of the party that John expounds is the very one systematised as part of the inner party fight that led to the domination of Stalin and all that resulted. John gives one view of Bolshevism. He discusses the split in 1903 and makes of it a big issue. He ignores the fact that both the Bolshevik and Menshevik wings of the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party followed the same centralist practice after 1903. Both wings accepted '*What is to be Done?*'. Indeed John's whole treatment of the history of Bolshevism deals with the ideas within the systematised and mythologised 'Leninism'.

In dealing within the parameters of the myth John fails to deal with a concrete analysis of the concrete situation. Lenin's views on the party changed dramatically, of necessity, depending on the situation.

SPLITS AND FUSIONS:

The RSDLP was the labour movement in Russia. The split that occurred in 1903 was only the first of many splits and fusions of subsequent years. Even after 1905 Lenin and Plekhanov briefly co-operated in opposition to Martov. By 1917 Plekhanov was neither Menshevik nor Bolshevik but instead a social-chauvinist. The final split among the socialists was the actual revolutionary period of 1917 and the breakdown of forces bore little relation to 1903 except Lenin was on one side and Martov was on another. Many of the Bolsheviks of 1903 were in the anti-Bolshevik camp. Indeed the Bolshevik party underwent its most radical transformation in 1917. For a fuller exposition of this readers to go to one of the best books on Leninism in print at present, *Leninism under Lenin* by Marcel Liebman (trans. B. Pearce, published by Cape). In this book we are shown that the Bolshevik party in 1917 was the confluence of many different tendencies as well as workers not previously involved in politics. Before 1917 indeed the Bolsheviks had the wrong programme on the revolution and once again recent publications have elicited a Leninism transformed by 1917 from its pre-1914 ideas by

Lenin, Trotsky, Kamenev



the experience of the betrayals of the Second International and by a reading of Hegel (see Lowy in *Critique* 6).

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM:

One could go on forever discussing the misconceptions, false history and illusions contained in this book. However on Lenin's model of the vanguard party is pinned one of the least understood concepts. It is best to conclude this attack on John Molyneux's conception of Leninism by discussing that concept, democratic centralism.

One of the lessons that the book draws from history is the need for democratic centralism. Democratic centralism (DC) is defined on page 165 as a key characteristic of a revolutionary party. Now there is lot to be said for discipline but one wonders from whence comes John's acceptance of DC. Certainly Trotsky advocated DC. However nothing in the actual practice of the Bolshevik organisation could be said to demonstrate DC in practice. The RSDLP both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks practised very firm centralism. During the times of illegality both organisations appointed district and regional committees as well as factory committees from *above*. No elections took place. One would assume socialists would adopt the same practice today in South Africa or Chile. Membership of the organisations was on the voluntary principle. The competition for such offices was restricted by the benefits that went with the job. Democracy was instituted in periods of legality, 1905 and 1917. Even so this could not be described as DC since in 1905 very little centralism existed and the same is true of 1917. Only briefly while the Bolsheviks were in power was *formal* DC in existence. I stress *formal* as the civil war prevented discussion or made discussion difficult in most cases. By 1921 factions were banned. That is opposition factions were banned. The leadership faction continued and the Bolsheviks discovered that you can ban all factions but the leadership faction. We are entitled to ask when DC was actually put into practice.

Molyneux has not learned that very important lesson that one can ban all factions but the leadership faction. He writes on page 166:

"The second is the danger . . . of . . . discussing all questions endlessly." That attitude is precisely anti-democratic in that it says to dissidents that once a decision is made by the majority not only has it to be carried out (which is fair enough) but that one must not question the decision or attempt to alter it later. By all means act in a united fashion but people's right to criticise and question must be maintained.

TROTSKY:

It is instructive to read the documents of the 1923 and 1927 Opposition. John Molyneux in his analysis of them is extremely uncritical. The fact that the 1927 Opposition was defending the one party dictatorship and identifying the workers state with the Bolsheviks alone should be criticised. We should be learning from what went on not repeating the mistakes. Indeed Molyneux's analysis fails once again to answer the question posed by the bureaucratisation of the Soviet State. Could it have been avoided? Were the Trotskyists trapped in the Leninist parameters created by the leadership?

GRAMSCI AND LUXEBURG:

In the chapters on Gramsci and Luxemburg one might have hoped that the book would have dealt with the relation of Bolshevism and vanguardism to the different terrain of parliamentary democracy and highly developed civil institutions.

In failing to deal with this problem Molyneux quite in passing insults Rosa Luxemburg grossly. Rosa was involved in an insurrection in Germany in 1919 against her wishes but she went along with the majority view of her organisation. She got killed. The clever Bolsheviks in Russia were able to avoid this in July 1917. In saying this John Molyneux peddles another myth. The Bolsheviks had a very equivocal attitude to the July days. They were in the main responsible for creating the situation. Far from avoiding problems

the July days were an adventure. On page 115 Molyneux writes:

"... the Bolsheviks were able to clearly oppose the adventure, prevent it from doing much damage, . . ."

After July 1917 Trotsky was arrested and Lenin went into hiding. The mass of Bolshevik arrestees were only released when Kornilov threatened the Provisional Government. If the Russian government had been in a position to be as ruthless as the German then Trotsky as well as many of the Bolshevik leadership and cadre could have been killed. It is an insult to say that if Rosa had been as clever as the Bolsheviks she would not have got herself killed.

Gramsci is dealt with very quickly. However the only conclusion Molyneux comes to is that Gramsci pre-supposed the existence of a Leninist Party and that his war of position poses the problem of the disciplining of ones forces even more acutely. Molyneux in criticising Gramsci fails to draw out how the vanguard party deals with ultra-left adventurism. We know that adventurism has been a problem in two recent revolutionary crises. In Portugal the adventurism of an inexperienced grouping of soldiers provided the room for the clamp-down of November 1975. In Chile a combination of ultra-leftism and right wing trade unionism were important factors in the "destabilisation" of the Allende government. In fact, the July days of 1917 demonstrated that the vanguard party is not able to provide the necessary restraint.

CONCLUSIONS:

Before summarising the book Molyneux writes that he has attempted a "systematisation" of "studies disinterring the marxist tradition". That in a nutshell is the problem of the book. It presents us with a finished system rather than a living, developing reality. In his final paragraph he writes: "When capitalism is stable and the working class presents no open challenge to the system, theory and practice are inevitably divorced." (p.169).

Of course this is utterly wrong. Apart from the fact that the workers have not stopped challenging the system everywhere the attitude itself is wrong. The role of theory is a very practical one. It should arm us for the struggle to change what is. Our theory should therefore be directed to the current tasks. If that current task is re-awakening the working class then so be it. Nothing should be 'academic', a word used later in the paragraph. By seeing reality in this way Molyneux is able in this book to accept that from 1979 we can reach back and apply uncritically the lessons learnt in 1917 as though the theory has been waiting in a drawer for our use ever since.

AL CRISP

WALLRAFF - THE INSIDE STORY

Wallraff: The Undesirable Journalist

by Günther Wallraff.
Pluto Press £2.50.

Common-sense outlooks on life, everyday views of what reality is are shaped by the nature of the society in which an individual lives. What "stands to reason" in one age becomes very illogical in another.

In contemporary capitalist society the journalist - the media workers - occupies a central area of society's image-making machinery. The individual's "common-sense" view is reinforced by the day-to-day stereotypes of "greedy workers", "mindless militants", "strike chaos" etc.

Pre-existing sexist, racist, authoritarian and anti-socialist conceptions are filtered through to individuals in civil society through church, school, family, and state to provide mental furniture amenable to the ruling class's world view.

This complex of ideas is not totally dominant in contemporary capitalism otherwise there would be no basis for mass Socialist and Communist Parties. They are also qualified by the objective need of the working class to struggle with capital over the organisation of production and the distribution of 'the cake'.

Within this framework the news product is shaped by media workers carrying around this same ideological baggage. For the most part these workers faithfully follow the 'style' of their particular medium and produce a news product within guidelines which, by definition, reproduce and reinforce the values permeated through church, family etc.

GOOD STORY

For example journalists in Britain attending courses run by the National Council for the Training of Journalists over the last decade have been told that "Pretty 23 year old housewife in love tangle" is a good story while "Ugly 52 year old bachelor alienated by boring work under capitalism" is no story.

For the most part journalists pursue the pre-shaped concept of the good story without malice aforethought. That is not to say that there are no "Zinoviev-letter" conspiracies. There obviously are fabrications - but these

JIM BARROW

have been a tiny proportion of the everyday production of news.

Despite the protestations of journalists in such a position it should be obvious that they have a political role to play.

The reinforcement of the ruling class view of the world - common sense - is an important political task.

The monopolisation and increasing standardisation of the Western media (commercial and state-financed) is the context within which the journalists work. To step outside this context in a conscious manner and to adopt an approach hostile to the 'natural order' and common-sense is difficult.

There is an existing Left press but publications such as this one tend to propagate ideas amongst the various groups challenging the status quo. They for the most part do not carry a radical or revolutionary view of the world beyond the confines of those groups.

In the commercial and state media radical comment is heard but infrequently and at off-peak times. For the most part the press carries any alternative views peripherally intermittently and in the small circulation 'quality' press.

Gunter Wallraff has attempted to escape from this ghetto. He writes not from the point of view which the bourgeois journalist is told will please the 'man in the street' but from the radical, anti-capitalist stance of the working class.

STANDARDS ON THEIR HEAD

He turns normal journalistic standards on their head and uses the method of the hidden taperecorder, false identity and plausible manner not on the sexual preferences of individuals (c.f. *News of the World*) but on some of the mystified and oppressive relationships of capitalist society.

In *'The Undesirable Journalist'* (Published by Pluto Press £2.50), a series of his writings from 1966 to 1977, Wallraff shoots holes through the common-sense view of life in West Germany.

Wallraff's Germany is the 'Totalitarian Democracy' of capitalism. His world view is dramatically different to that of the journalist bound by traditi-

onal framework.

He goes inside the Melitta coffee apparatus factory as a worker with another identity and exposes the factory regime of instant dismissal, tame works council, ever-present loudspeakers and an owner with his training in the SS.

The language is crisp, clear and simple. It was not a matter of his exposé simply producing shocked noises and tut-tutting from radicals either.

Workers at the factory, seeing their situation 'from the outside' discussed the article, organised, won recognition for their Union (bitterly opposed by the owner) and began the flickerings of a fight-back.

Alternative journalistic style had become a political weapon.

In another role Wallraff touted his services as a spy on Right-wing organisations in Universities to the Secret Police. Once his manufacture credentials had been checked the Secret Police showed acute interest in the Left and little in the Right.

The personal details of method of approach are interesting, especially in the foiling of a Right-Wing coup in Portugal.

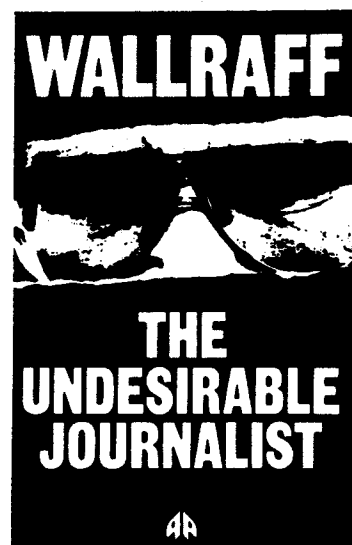
Wallraff poses as a go-between appointed by Christian Social Union leader, Franz Joseph Strauss, and the Portuguese Right. From the outer edges of the fascist paramilitaries Wallraff moves in to an eventual meeting with Rightist General-in-exile, Spínola.

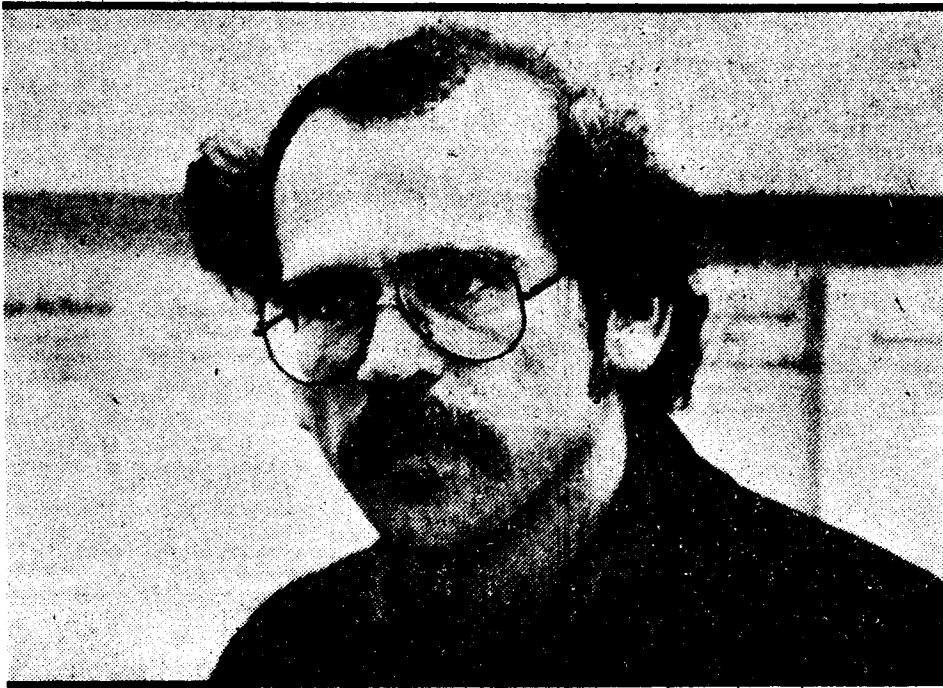
BILD

The coup is foiled in almost story-book fashion but the political connections between fascism and European Conservatism is well drawn as are the fine details of the fascists' plan for dealing with the Left in Portugal.

The fascists' ultimate assessment of the inability of Social Democracy to deal with them effectively is instructive.

For a time Wallraff worked for *Bild* - a twelve million readership cross between *Sun*, *Express* and *Mail* - and managed to expose the physical manu-





Gunter Wallraff

facture of propaganda.

Raymond Williams has drawn a distinction between internalised values (the training of journalists mentioned before) shaping a journalist's conception of what is right and what should be presented as new and actual conspiracies and physical (as opposed to self) censorship.

Certainly there are conspiracies and there is censorship. But in the production and management of news these are not the most important factors. For the most media workers run the product through without the conscious intervention of owners and editors.

Within these parameters the media is also sensitive to the requirements of the bourgeois market system in a way in which a rigidly managed system of censorship and conspiracy could not be.

Desires and aspirations of the individual are also catered for — albeit in a distorted fashion with material on sex, crime, scandal, sport etc.

When the media and the journalist intervene to distort the formation of working class consciousness they do so in an almost pre-programmed fashion. The conspiracies and censorship are the icing on the cake.

DISTINCTION

Wallraff does not discuss this distinction in his article on *Bild*.

He deals solely with the manufacture of lies. He quotes from a memo in a reporters file sent out from the hub of the Springer Press empire;

"One of our objectives must be to launch a strong attack on any attempts either at home or abroad to extend worker participation. . ."

With that intention in mind Wallraff details exactly how journalist and photographer manufacture a story-human interest to back up in detail how stupid the working class is seen to

be by the management of Springer Press.

In this case a worker is supposed to have failed hopelessly at his bosses' job just for one day. It turned out that the day was a twenty minute photo-session in the bosses' office and the rest pure invention.

Another manufactured attack on an unemployed youth contains two sentences of allegations that are simply invented only the boys age and name are correct.

After Wallraff's counter-information on *Bild* was published the President of the West German Journalists Union said;

'Perhaps one day even *Bild* reporter B. will stop saying 'us' when he is talking of Axel Springer and his power. And when people talk of defeating the centralised lie and agitation machine maybe he will stop saying 'never'. It is about time he started thinking about these things. It is about time that together with his colleagues and the the democrats in our country — he started to act.'

Counter-information seems to be at the core of Wallraff's style. He notes with approval that the circulation of *Bild* among the workers at a factory had been reduced by the chairman of the works council issuing a truth behind *Bild* sheet.

In dealing with the way in which the news machine can be used to manufacture propaganda Wallraff does not discuss the problem of internalised values but this is not his task.

AUTOMATIC PILOT

It is not the journalist under the instruction of a management editor that is the day-to-day problem it is the one flying on the automatic pilot of 'common sense' assumptions built up dur-

ing training and career.

A recent *New Statesman* exposure of the *Daily Mail's* manufacture of a story designed to present pickets as mindless thugs may indicate along with the recent method of presenting industrial struggles that the British media is moving into a more firmly direct propaganda offensive (particularly in a pre-election period).

The hysterical style adopted by a number of major periodicals and broadcasting units can also have a knock-on effect as each reporter or pundit thinks it necessary to ask pickets how many deaths they have caused today.

Forgetting to ask an intransigent management the same question is part of the same learning curve.

These are periods in which internal mechanisms of journalistic control are insufficient. Conscious decisions are taken at executive level to provide special 'crisis teams' with special briefs (or election teams) to move beyond the press's role as a mediator to become an amplifier and projector of anti-working class propaganda.

In this situation the balance between conspiracy/propaganda and style/common-sense is shifted in favour of the former. Yet still it is important to understand that the majority of news/comment remains produced through the latter.

The problem presented by work of Wallraff's type is how to project it beyond the confines of the Left/radical ghetto. In Germany he has used a part-satirical, part-political, part-sex magazine for which there is no direct equivalent in Britain.

Here outside the house-journals of the Left and newer developments such as *The Leveller*, *Wedge* etc. there is no medium through which this type of journalism could be produced on a mass scale.

FERTILE GROUND

That there is a fertile ground for radical, anti-state, anti-capitalist journalism in Britain should be understood from the cowardly response of the establishment media (for the most part) and hostile response of the state to Agee, Hosenball, Aubrey, Berry, Campbell, etc.

Wallraff's counter-information does have a political role to play but the means of projection and distribution of that information are few and far between in a British media being more and more concentrated and monopolised.

Over the next few years — if print technology does cheapen and an alternative distribution system is built up to reach the beginnings of a mass audience then the work of many Wallraff's may find a market.

In the meantime some journalists will continue to discuss the media from within and attempt to challenge it from within. Others will build — or attempt to build alternatives which try to breach the Left/Radical ghetto.

Grunwick – Writing a chapter in worker's history

Grunwick: The Workers' Story
by Jack Dromey & Graham Taylor
Lawrence & Wishart £2.95.

Approved by the Grunwick Strike Committee as reflecting "our experience during an epic struggle that we so nearly won", this book is a thorough and well-written account of a small strike, which started almost by accident in August 1976, and mushroomed into the most important issue in British politics during the summer of 1977. It was an issue which tested the politics of the entire spectrum of the labour movement, from the revolutionary left to the most right wing labour ministers, and that brought forth a massive display of working class solidarity so powerful that it terrified the Callaghan Cabinet and the leaders of the TUC as well as splitting the ruling class between those who counselled for conciliation and those like the National Association for Freedom (NAFF) and Keith Joseph who urged outright confrontation.

Yet that movement was disarmed and defused and its most active elements were eventually isolated and subject to the unbridled power of the state on the November 7th 'Day of Reckoning' when the police injured 243 pickets and arrested 113 – with the approval of a Labour Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees. The Grunwick strike petered out and was eventually wound up in May 1978, with many of the strikers still left without jobs.

RICH IN LESSONS

Although the strike was unquestionably a defeat for our movement, nevertheless, it is rich in lessons which must be assimilated and learned if we are to advance the struggle for socialism and workers power. Written from a 'broad left' political standpoint by those – particularly Jack Dromey, (Secretary Brent Trades Council and SE Region TUC), who played a leading role in the strike, this book as well as providing inside information on the strike, also attempts to draw these lessons and to discuss the many important issues thrown up by the strike. It also seeks to justify and defend – and to some extent criticise the policies and tactics of the Trades Council and the Strike Committee.

The first half of the book analyses how and why the strike broke out, the intransigent attitude of the management, the role of the local police, the strategy of the striker's union



APEX and the strike committee, and the intervention of the NAFF in response to postal blacking. While the strike achieved some national prominence – particularly in November 1976 it was still essentially local in character. These chapters provide valuable information for those who are unclear about the early part of the struggle, and are a testimony to the Strike Committee and the local Labour movement in Brent, organised around the Trades Council, for sustained and developing the strike throughout a difficult period. Without this organisation and determination there would have been no "Grunwick Crisis" in the Summer of 1977.

The second part concerns itself with the summer mass pickets, the Court of Inquiry and the role of the media, the Labour Government, the trade union leaders, the courts etc in the events that brought the strike to the brink of victory only to throw it back into demoralisation and defeat. Most importantly it seeks to answer the question of why the mass movement and the strike were defeated.

According to the authors the main blame lies either the "right wing of the labour movement" and the Labour Government who "snatched defeat out of the jaws of victory", by derailing and sabotaging the mass movement. In-

deed, the whole book is a damning indictment of the policies of the APEX, Union of Post Office Workers (UPW) and TUC leadership – even if at times certain leaders, particularly APEX Secretary Grantham, are given rather mild treatment.

Certainly there can be little doubt of the treacherous role these leaders played, combining fine speeches of solidarity with out and out sabotage of the strike. Quite early on in the strike it became obvious that George Ward and Co, backed up by the NAFF, were not prepared to concede anything. Only by paralysing the firm through industrial action, particularly postal blacking, could the strikers hope to win the twin aims of reinstatement and union recognition. The APEX leadership however, viewed such action merely as a means of pressurising Ward into ACAS conciliation. This 'strategy', which was supported by the TUC was utterly disastrous – indeed it prevented the strike from being won in the early months.

On Monday November 1st 1976 the UPW leaders finally blacked the firm, Ward was on his knees and victory seemed imminent. True, Grunwick was bolstered by the NAFF, who threatened legal action and by Tory MPs who forced a Parliamentary debate, but had the UPW and TUC leadership stood

firm then the whole issue could have been brought to a head then instead of eight months later and Ward would have had to live up to his famous words about "liquidating rather than capitulating". Jackson, UPW chief however, backed down under a legal threat and removed the blacking in return for a worthless promise from Ward to cooperate with ACAS—the government arbitration service. Ward was off the hook and the dispute became stuck in an endless legal morass. Instead of challenging a reactionary law which said the postal workers couldn't even strike, let alone undertake solidarity action, the union leaders placed their faith in the worthless ACAS process which the NAFF were to thoroughly expose. As a result the strike was derailed away from industrial action.

During the crucial summer months these leaders performed an even more perfidious and scabbing role. For APEX the mass picket was a weapon of the last resort — a despairing attempt to get some movement on the 'conciliation front' and perhaps even bring about a Court of Inquiry to show, in Grantham's words "what a rotter" Ward was and to force the company to cave in. APEX were absolutely astounded by the success of the picket in fact it was largely a result of police brutality with 84 arrests out of 200 pickets that the dispute attracted instant widespread solidarity. As the picket escalated, thus strengthening the UPW Cricklewood branch's resolved to impose an unofficial blacking and once again bringing the company to its knees, so the union leaders became terrified of the movement they had unleashed. As the book points out, the Labour Cabinet, fearful of its respectability, set up a special sub-committee with Merlyn Rees as its head to cool down the mass action. Daily reports were given to Callaghan.

From then on the whole gamut of bureaucratic trickery was employed to defuse the situation. Grantham began to suggest limitations on the number of pickets and 'official armbands'. Albert Booth, Employment Secretary, suggested an 'independent mediator' and when Ward refused to co-operate, introduced the Scarman Inquiry. Meanwhile Rees allowed Commissioner McNee to unleash the Special Patrol Group (SPG) on the pickets and carry out whatever tactics he thought fit.

BLACK FRIDAY

This derailing strategy while unsuccessful at first, began to bear fruit, once the Court of Inquiry was called: the July 11th Day of Action was sabotaged by APEX and the TUC into a harmless, if impressive, demonstration instead of an all-day mass picket; on 'Black Friday' July 29th APEX convinced the majority of strikers that the August 8th mass picket should be called off to allow Scarman to report and the Cricklewood postal workers



Lord Scarman

were driven back to work by intimidation from UPW assistant secretary Norman Stagg. The turning point had been reached. While the strikers fought back later with a lobby of the TUC two unofficial mass pickets which the police viciously attacked and even a hunger strike outside Congress House, the tide could not be turned. Moreover, the Company had survived the critical summer period. The Court of Inquiry might have given the strikers a paper victory, but, as the book points out, "the Court of Inquiry did precisely what the Government set it up to achieve and what suited the majority of the TUC General Council: the battle was moved off the streets, the mass picket was brought under control and the 'illegal' blacking of Grunwick's mail was ended."

One can of course agree with the fierce attacks that the book launches against the APEX, UPW and TUC leaders. It's a pity that the authors don't comment on the failure of some of the 'lefts' to actually challenge this treachery. Neither Benn, Scanlon or Jack Jones were exactly prominent in their opposition to the sell out.

MISTAKE ON MASS PICKETING

Another issue the book does not really face up to is whether the right wing sell-out of July '77 could have been thwarted. When interviewed in the final chapter the strikers do concede that it was a mistake to end the mass picketing on July 29th — a decision which the Trades Council strongly argued against.

However, the account of the July 11th 'Day of Action' is inadequate. It was the TUC's ability to sabotage one of the largest mass pickets in trade union history and divert it into a much lower level of class struggle a protest march which helped pave the way for Black Friday July 29th. Of course it is easy to say this in retrospect, but on July 11th the Grunwick strike was on a knife edge. Certainly the events on that day seemed very impressive, an enormous mass picket that totally outnumbered the police and blocked off the factory from 5am to 11am, followed by a march of 20,000. Never-

theless, the majority of the pickets only left the picket line out of loyalty to the Strike Committee and the Yorkshire miner's leader Arthur Scargill who who appealed to them to go to the march. True the strike committee had been forced to compromise on the issue by APEX and the TUC and had agreed to allow the march to go ahead. But the *vital issue* was whether the march would come to the picket or the picket would go to the march? When Scargill spoke earlier in the morning he certainly said that the TUC could have its march but the Yorkshire miners were there to picket. Whatever the cause, it was undoubtedly a big mistake to call off the picket. The book points out that many delegations would have to leave at 2pm — but it is unlikely that many would actually have deserted such a major class battle until they knew the scab bus would not get in. It has also been argued that stopping the bus for one day would not win the strike. This is obviously true, but achieving something that had eluded us — actually stopping the scab bus — would have immeasurably strengthened the mass movement and been a symbolic defeat for Ward, and the police who mounted an operation thousands-strong with horses and helicopters.

Trade unionists having been tricked by the TUC left Willesden with a bitter taste in their mouths, which did little to strengthen the strike. Most importantly, the TUC leaders had succeeded in discrediting one of the most powerful weapons of our movement by turning it into a march. In this context July 11th and the confusion it created helped Grantham and APEX to convince some strikers that mass picketing was primarily a form of 'protest' and since Scarman was doing his job the 'protest' was no longer needed.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF STRIKE

Grunwick: The worker's story contains many issues not reviewed here: the law on picketing, racialism, women's oppression, the NAFF etc, and while one may disagree with some of its conclusions, it is nevertheless invaluable reading for all socialists and trade unionists who want to learn from the experience of the working class in struggle. The book makes a correct assessment of the positive achievement of the strike: how the struggle and determination of a small group of predominantly Asian workers helped turn the tide of retreat in the British labour movement during a period of downturn and rising racialism, and how the most militant sections of the white working class rallied to their side producing a tremendous blow against the racialists. Certainly the lessons of *Grunwick's* will not be lost on the tens of thousands of workers from all over Britain who attended the picket and gave solidarity.

FRANK HANSEN