

weekly worker

Thursday December 15 1994

British Gas threatens wage cuts and redundancies

While the Tories still smart at having their plans to double Vat on fuel thwarted and British Gas boss Cedric Brown gives himself a 75% pay rise, his company threatens sackings and wage cuts.

What a comment on capitalist Britain as we enter 1995

Unemployed told to work or starve

Christmas is supposed to be a time of relaxation with the family. But for most workers the drudgery and stress of everyday life is never far away. As the unemployed and low paid try to make ends meet, the rest wonder how long they will be able to hold on to their jobs

THE PATHETIC Tories are in disarray. It is now not a question of *if*, but *when* they will be swept away by Labour in a general election. But before you heave a sigh of relief, you should consider just what is on offer: you can choose between the Conservatives' 'Jobseekers' or Labour's 'Jet' - Jobs, education and training.

Tories: Bribe the bosses with national insurance cuts to take on more workers, *so long as they are paid less than £205 a week.*

Labour: Give the bosses *bigger* handouts of £75 a week for each worker taken on at minimum wage level - £140 a week!

Tories: Cut off unemployment benefit after six months.

Labour: Make workers take out private insurance and cut out benefit altogether.

Tories: Force the unemployed onto useless 'training' schemes.
Labour: Encourage them to 'volunteer' for 'community work' - *for £50 a week!*

Tories: Stop paying benefits to single mothers by forcing the cash out of low paid fathers through the Child Support Agency.

Labour: Withhold payments to unemployed single mothers unless they are 'available for work'.

Tories: Tighten up the rules against people who give up looking for jobs that are either non-existent or too badly paid to cover the bills.

Labour: Make sure such 'scroungers' report to the Job Centre *every day.*

Tories: Prevent workers fighting for better pay and conditions through anti-union laws.
Labour: Don't look at us to repeal them!

The truth is that neither party can offer a way out from poverty and insecurity because they are both committed to running this

rotten capitalist system.

The Communist Party says that workers should fight for what we need, not what *they* say they can afford. If the system can't deliver, then it must go! That is why communists fight with the Unemployed Workers Charter against unemployment and for workers' rights.

- Jobs not Jobseekers
- Work or full benefit
- No cheap labour training schemes
- No harassment of the unemployed
- For unity between employed and unemployed workers

UWC welcomes new president



Vic Turner, right, pictured with Ernie Roberts and Kathy Gander at last year's Jack Dash commemoration

The Unemployed Workers Charter announced at the beginning of December that its new honorary president is to be Vic Turner, the former dockers' leader, following the sad death of Ernie Roberts.

Vic held many trade union posts as a dockers' representative and in 1972 was jailed for five days as one of the Pentonville Five.

Joining the Communist Party in

1953, he led rent strikes in London's East End in the mid-fifties. With the destruction of the Party three decades later, Vic joined Labour and was elected onto Newham council in May 1994.

"I am delighted to be following in the footsteps of such working class leaders as Jack Dash and Ernie Roberts as UWC president," said Vic. "Unemployment has been with us so

long that it has almost become 'acceptable'. Our job is to end that way of thinking.

"The way to defeat unemployment is for employed and unemployed workers to unite in one mighty force against the bosses and their system."

Vic this week has become a supporter of the CPGB (see inside).

Ramble round Chequers

THE COALITION against the Criminal Justice Act organised a successful ramble of 500 people to Chequers, the prime minister's official residence, early in December.

Debbie, speaking for the Coalition, told me, "We intend to defend our life style and are continuing to organise regular raves. So far the police have not troubled us since the act was passed. This Christmas we are planning a party outside London at a travellers' site on December 22, and on New Year's Eve we will be holding a number of huge raves. Everyone is welcome." For information ring 071-652 4602.

The M11 protesters are far from dead. They organised action against Wimpeys the builders today, who are due to start work on the M77 extension through the Pollock estate in Glasgow in January.

As we went to press news came in that the police's laid back approach had come to an end. They stormed into protestors and injured many, as they threw them off the site.

It is clear that future actions will have to be prepared for this sort of response. Many of those involved in the campaign who are pacifists, will find as others have done before them, that peacefully sitting down does not stop the state's bully boys using violence.

Phil Kent

The Scottish Alliance against the CJA is organising an All Scottish conference. This will be an excellent opportunity for all campaigners against the act to come together to discuss a strategy for future actions. Glasgow City Chambers, January 21 1995. Anti-CJA social and fundraiser: Students' Union, Dundee College, January 27

Inside - Party, non-ideology and faction

Letters

Splitting the vote?

I enjoy reading the *Weekly Worker* and have been following the debates, particularly in the letters column. But I think we spend far too much time slagging off other comrades on the left instead of concentrating our fire on the real enemy - the Tories.

For example, there has been a lot of talk about lack of democracy in the SWP. I am a member and have not attended branch meetings for some time now, but I have never been stopped from putting forward my point of view. I strongly disagree with SWP policy on Israel and have said so, but no one has tried to shut me up.

When it comes to supporting Labour in elections, there is a real danger of splitting the anti-Tory vote by standing yourself. I know that Labour won't do a single thing for ordinary workers. The only time these bastards give you something is if you kick them in the teeth and then stand on their neck, but at least a Labour victory would give workers a boost in confidence - the belief that they can fight back.

Having said that, if I had the opportunity to vote for a communist candidate, I would do so.

Geoff Southern
Stockport

Narrow greed

Frank Lore (Letters, December 8) is too narrow in his approach to the struggle for democracy within the Socialist Workers Party. When I make the point that communists should "add their weight" to a fight for genuine democratic centralism in that organisation, I am not attempting to sow illusions in the leadership, antecedents or current nature of this sect.

Hardly. The fight for genuine democratic centralism within the SWP would inexorably *pose* the question of reforging the Communist Party, I believe. SWPers won to this perspective should fight in an honest and principled way to lead *their comrades* to this conclusion. The autocratic nature of the leadership is certainly something to be taken into account, but it should be a factor that determines particular organisational *tactics*, not the *principle*.

If we agree that a sizeable section of the reformed Communist Party of the future is contained within the ranks of an organisation such as the SWP (an idea I put forward in my original article of November 17), our approach as the nucleus of that reformed party should not be characterised by some narrow organisational greed for members. This is nothing to do with advocating that SWPers "waste their energies", as Frank suggests. It simply recognises that they - like our own organisation - must learn through struggle.

Ian Mahoney
London

Majority decisions

On the question of factions I share Julie Hart's concern in posing the question of where we draw the line in the freedom to organise and express views publicly (Letters December 8).

If we mean by factions groups of members antagonistic to and free to struggle against both the leadership and majority decisions, then the

organisation would wind up being worse than the Labour Party with members doing their own thing.

There would surely have to be acknowledged parameters within which they could operate. If not they could become a party within a party, particularly if they were allowed their own press.

There should be no restrictions on what can and cannot be debated within the party, but surely it must be incumbent upon the whole membership to fight publicly for majority decisions at all times.

As for members of the SWP or any other party, as long as they continue to support the Labour Party as it exists at present, they becoming members of a reformed Communist Party would be a negation of *What we fight for* as published each week in the paper.

I definitely support factions being allowed to express themselves and having the right to become the majority, provided they accept and fight for majority decisions as above.

Democratic centralism in itself does not make a communist party. It must be linked to our ultimate aim: communism, whose first stage is proletarian - or, as some prefer to say, working class - dictatorship. In fact I suppose that even the Tories could operate under such organisational forms.

So if the SWP wish to fight for more democracy in their party - good luck to them. But in the meantime we must seek the best recruits we can find, if necessary from the SWP and elsewhere, for the reforging of the CPGB.

On the question of the resignation of the comrades in 1993, I would suggest Julie reads *Problems of communist organisation*.

Ted Rowlands
Bishop Aukland

Final nail

The one thing you can say about the Labour Party's clause four is that it is surprising it has lasted so long. It never expressed a genuine desire for socialism, but was taken up as a reaction to working class pressure after the Russian Revolution. "Securing for the workers ..." is of course very much a Labour position. It would never enter their heads that the workers must fight *themselves* for socialism.

The one thing that could be said in favour of a campaign to keep clause four is that it has the possibility of identifying the best people still in the Labour Party. But such a campaign today has no chance of success - not like in Gaitskill's day, when the left could mobilise substantial forces.

In any case the real campaign should be built around the need to produce a party genuinely capable of leading the working class. Unfortunately, there is no sign of even the beginnings of that at the moment. Groups like the CPGB are so small as to be insignificant.

The rewriting of clause four should be seen by the left as the final nail in the coffin of the Labour Party as a vehicle for any sort of workers' advance: they are even dropping the *pretence* of fighting for the interests of the working class. Comrades who previously saw it as such a vehicle should now rethink their position.

Richard Tisdell
South East London

Clause four sop

So much has been said in the past few months about the battle inside the Labour Party over clause four.

Blair and his cronies call it

outdated, and say that it needs modernising. The Labour left claims its roots are deep in the history of the Labour Party and its 'socialist' traditions. This just goes to illustrate that it is Blair and his 'modernisers' within the Labour Party who understand its background and traditions far more than the 'traditionalists'.

The plain fact is that, since the inception of the Labour Party from 1906, the leaders have always shown themselves time after time to be deeply committed to capitalism. Clause four itself was adopted in 1918 as a sop to the militants in Britain, who saw in the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 the way forward for workers and were seeking a revolutionary change in society. It was precisely because of the threat this represented to the new cosy lifestyle of the Labour Party leaders that they sought a 'safety valve' for the new revolutionary aspirations of working class militants.

The working class in Britain needs a real political voice in their struggle for emancipation - a party that won't simply pay lip service to the need for public ownership and production for need, but will fight for it.

All militants need to break from a party that is showing itself in its true colours more brazenly than ever before, and join in the struggle to reforge the only true working class party - the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Cliff Owen
South Wales

Thin *Weekly Worker*

Congratulations to the new supporter mentioned in Lee-Anne's interesting article in the *Weekly Worker* (December 1). She had the advantage of joining in with discussion at the Party school.

Some time ago a student read copies of *The Leninist* I lent him, and now receives the *Weekly Worker* from you. Like many others today he is looking for a way forward and for access to analyses and discussions which are intellectually satisfying and a rallying cause for action. He feels that the form of the paper is rather 'thin' and would prefer a theoretical journal or pamphlet even. There is much that he wants to learn.

One has to support the absolute need for a paper to represent the working class, and the costs and difficulties to be overcome are appreciated, but I think he has a point.

Mary Carter
Devon

Young pioneers

Young comrades who were at the CPGB summer school in Catalonia decided that they would like to reforge the Young Communist League.

We would like to hear from any young communist anywhere who would like to join with us in the task of creating the YCL. We have already started work and have produced stickers and badges.

All those interested should contact Nicholas Ward or Dave Taylor at the CPGB box number. It is important that young people join the fight for the Party because we are the future.

Nicholas Ward (age 8)
Dundee

Note: Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed.

Labour reformism a dead end for women workers



Barbara Follet, an image-maker for Labour, celebrates the passing of a resolution on all-female shortlists

IMAGE IS as important to the trade unions as it is to Blair's modernising Labour Party. In the last 20 years both have worked hard to convince workers that although society may be riddled with sexism and inequality, equal representation for women and black workers is just around the corner.

Equal opportunities and women's committees may have raised awareness in some areas. They may have even benefited some articulate, middle class, professional women who know how to use them, but they have made no real difference to the plight of women workers in Britain today. They can also divert workers into competing against one another, rather than against the boss.

Harriet Harman, shadow employment secretary, in her new book *The century gap* may rejoice that there are more women working today than ever before, but the reality of their working lives is a far cry from her vision of women having "shorter shared working hours" tuned into their careers and families. Many working women's 'careers' consist of several part time jobs fitted around childcare and domestic drudgery.

The next Labour government may be able to deliver improved prospects to Ms Harman and other female career politicians who have made their names on the equal opportunities bandwagon, but capitalism

cannot deliver a decent life to the hundreds of thousands of women workers who struggle to provide for themselves and their families on poverty wages.

In the *Morning Star* (November 29) Susan Michie argues that getting rid of clause four will result in a worse deal for women. She correctly identifies the tokenism of equal opportunity committees and the paternalism of trade union bureaucracy, but obviously this 'hard line communist' believes that a Labour government could stop the exploitation of workers - and particularly of working women.

The next Labour government - with or without clause four - will not give full rights to part time workers. It will *not* provide free 24 hour childcare. It will *not* provide a minimum income of £250 per week. These measures would do more to ensure 'women's empowerment' than any amount of institutionalised equality replacing bureaucratic men with quotas of bureaucratic women.

Women workers have shown the way on many occasions from Grunwick to Timex. the fight for women's equality is an important and integral part of the class struggle. Working class women should not be ghettoised by the right *or* the so called left.

Mary Ward

Forward to state capitalist Britain?

According to *Socialist Worker* (December 19), "It would have been much more logical to have kept BT under public ownership avoiding sackings all round, and to have relied on the initiative of BT's workers to improve services".

It is nice to think that the SWP could run capitalism better than the capitalists, but another point puzzles me. Why does state ownership in Britain give the workers greater control over their lives while, according to the SWP, in the ex-Soviet Union it had the opposite effect? After all state capitalist theory postulates that the more power that lies directly in the hands of the capitalist state the more ruthlessly it can exploit the working class.

What made the cosy class collaboration

between the unions and the nation-state - which the article would have us believe was a feature of nationalisation - was the post-war boom, which lasted throughout the fifties and sixties. Since then, spurred by the falling rate of profit, capitalism has created a new, more international division of labour which concentrates its capital in ever larger regional blocs.

The duty of a revolutionary party is not to appease the workers with illusions that you can have workers' control under capitalism or that their problems can be solved within the boundaries of the nation-state, but to arm them with a revolutionary programme based on understanding reality.

Arthur Lawrence

One bloody conflict after another

Steve Kay looks back on a year when imperialism, using its Nato and UN surrogates, continued to impose its New World Order

January

Mexico: A peasant rebellion broke out in the poverty-stricken southern state of Chiapas on New Year's Day. The Mexican authorities used first repression and later negotiations to deal with the insurgency. It has not sent the red flag flying exactly, but it reminded a few bourgeois pundits that popular insurgency is not a museum exhibit.

Afghanistan: At least 1,000 Afghans were killed during faction fighting between rival bands of anti-communist 'freedom fighters'. Hekmatyar, one of the muslim fundamentalist leaders involved, called on Saudi Arabia to stop interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs. You need a long spoon to sup with the obscurantist devil.

Ukraine: A leaked CIA report this month warned that economic chaos and tension between Ukrainians and ethnic Russians could cause civil war in this ex-Soviet republic. Perhaps an agreement by Ukraine to have its nuclear weapons removed came just in time.

February

Vietnam: The US trade embargo was finally lifted.

Indonesia: A "rare eruption of labour unrest" occurred. The rarity is explained by this Western ally's habit of killing people who go on strike.

Russia: President Boris Yeltsin declared an amnesty for opponents detained after the October 1993 violence in Moscow, when the world learned that in a democracy it is actually possible to fire tank shells at your own parliament building.

Georgia: A commission established that the former president of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was indeed dead. He had been ousted in January 1992 not too long after pulling Georgia out of the Soviet Union. His death may or may not have been suicide.

West Bank: The Hebron massacre took place when as many as 48 Arabs were killed in a mosque by a single Israeli settler armed with an automatic rifle. The PLO suspended its involvement in peace negotiations - but not for long.

Mach

Cuba: Armed forces spending was reduced by half because of the country's economic crisis, resulting from US imperialist blockade.

North Korea: The dispute between North Korea and the International Atomic Energy Agency ground on over the North's refusal to allow full inspection of its nuclear facilities. The USA and South Korea decided to deploy Patriot missiles. Note how the USA never does this kind of thing to Pakistan or Israel, which are less than totally open about their nuclear programmes.

Italy: a rightwing coalition including fascists won the Italian elections. Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian Rupert Murdoch, became prime minister in April. The bourgeois media decided that the fascists in his government could not possibly be fascists, as ministerial power itself is proof of respectability.

April

Rwanda: The death of the president, Juvenal Habyarimana, triggered off a massive wave of killings. They were partly ethnic, but also political - supporters of a military regime sought to end all opposition by slaughtering all opponents. By the end of the month, aid agencies estimated that 200,000 had been killed.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: The Gorazde enclave in the east was attacked by Serbs. US Nato planes dropped bombs on them. Later a British Harrier jet was shot down. The UN approved the sending of extra troops to Bosnia.

Iraq: The Gulf War looked like restarting for half an hour when a US military helicopter was shot down. Then it became clear that it was, in football terms, an own goal. You can lead a warhead to a target but you can't make it think.

May

South Africa: The ANC won the South African elections, with 252 seats out of 400. However, bourgeois democratic reform is one thing, and a transformation of class relationships quite another.

Hungary: The very ex-communist Hungarian Socialist Party won a majority in the parliamentary elections in spite of hostility in much of the state media. The party announced its willingness to work with liberals for full market restoration.

Israel-Palestine: An agreement was reached by the PLO and Israel on Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho. A Palestine National Authority was set up with very limited powers. The muslim group Hamas opposed the deal.

June

Rwanda: The killing continued. The Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Front made gains in fighting. A French 'humanitarian' force was deployed, even though France had supported the people responsible for most of the killing.

USA: A White House reshuffle took place as a result of President Clinton's long-running Whitewater financial scandal. Democrat or Republican, they sure like the colour of them greenbacks...

Europe: European parliament elections. In general, the right did better than the left, but the elections were characterised by voting against the governments in power. A noticeable amount of anti-Maastricht sentiment showed in some countries.

Turkey: The pro-Kurdish DEP party was banned and its parliamentary deputies were expelled, with some of them being arrested. A European Union official expressed concern among "Turkey's friends" about the "deterioration" of certain freedoms there.

July

North Korea: Death of Kim Il Sung, the 'Great Leader', at the age of 82. The country's news reported that even "the birds were crying". His son, Kim Jong Il, took over.

China: A new labour law was

approved which created a minimum wage but also moved away from guaranteeing a job for life to the country's workers.

Russia: The country's best-known investment company MMM came close to collapse, triggering off a political crisis - the new Russian capitalism stretched its legs and then ran off with the dinner money.

August

Cuba: Castro indicated in a speech that Cubans could leave if they wanted to. Thousands did, straining the freedom-loving nature of Uncle Sam's immigration officials to breaking point. From encouraging illegal departures the USA swung round to detaining Cubans who went off in search of 'freedom'.

Afghanistan: One of the most under-reported conflicts in the world raged on during August, as 'freedom fighters' killed each other and anyone who got in the way. Sandy Gall, why no more up-to-the-minute reports from "just outside Kabul"?

September

Haiti: US troops entered the country. A formula was worked out for the resignation of the military junta which had been in control of Haiti after overthrowing the elected president, Jean-Baptiste Aristide. There was some violence in the streets, especially when US soldiers killed Haitian military police under rather obscure circumstances.

France: President François Mitterrand, ill with cancer, made details available of his early life, before and during the war. These showed that this pillar of the Socialist International had more to do with the collaborationist Vichy regime than he had admitted earlier. Perhaps he only gave them critical support.

October

Middle East: US President Clinton came to the region this month to broker deals in support of the 'peace process', with talks between Israel and Syria. Israel and Jordan concluded a peace treaty, ending 46 years in which the two countries were officially at war.

The Palestinian muslim group Hamas rejected peace overtures which left the Palestinians second-class citizens in their own country. A Hamas suicide bomber killed more than 20 people in the centre of Tel Aviv.

Momentarily it looked like the Gulf War might start yet again when Iraq was accused of moving troops close to the Kuwait border. However, Kuwait's ruling al-Sabah dynasty did not have to flee into luxurious exile again.

Russia: A member of the Russian parliament came down with diphtheria this month. Hundreds have died from this and other such illnesses in the former Soviet Union, as the health services continue to crumble under market conditions. I believe processes like these are known in some leftwing quarters as the political revolution.

China: State radio reported that in an 18 month period ending this June, 140,000 members of the 40 million-strong Chinese Communist Party were

found to have broken party rules, and 20,000 became the subject of court proceedings.

Cuba: On a more edifying note, a founder member and leading activist in the Cuban Communist Party died this month at the age of 89. Fabio Grobart was born in Poland and emigrated to Cuba at the age of 19. At his funeral, it was said that "his homeland was the workers of humanity", and "the struggle continues".

France: Two anarchists were arrested after the killing of policemen. Material about the film *Natural born killers* was found in their flat, thereby raising the spectre of violent films inducing violence. This cannot be ruled out. For example, I only became fond of cats after watching TV advertisements for Whiskas.

November

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Bosnian army and Bosnian Croat forces took the town of Kupres in the south west from the Serbs. Later in the month a Serb offensive made ground against the UN 'safe haven' of Bihac amid grave doubts about the role of Nato and the UN in the area. Cracks emerged in the fragile imperialist alliance.

Nepal: The local 'communists' won the parliamentary elections, though without capitalism's position being dented to any perceptible degree.

Russia: Tension rose as Yeltsin tried to bring the rebel republic of Chechnya back into line inside the Russian Federation. The capital, Grozny, was bombed by Russian planes and Russian troops were killed in a half-hearted and abortive attack on the city.

Israel-Palestine: Palestinian militants opposed to the deal with Israel were killed in Gaza by Palestinian police loyal to Yasser Arafat.

December

Europe: At a session of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Russian President Boris Yeltsin expressed concern at the idea of Nato recruiting countries on Russia's border. Polish president Lech Walesa, the workers' champion, decided Nato was even more wonderful after hearing of Yeltsin's worries, and he said Poland definitely had to become a Nato member.

Russian Federation: In Chechnya, a Caucasian stand-off was in force at the time of going to print. Yeltsin was stuck between the rock of possible war and the hard place of the Russian Federation's break-up.

South Africa: State action against workers continued with the brutal eviction of homeless squatters from a vacant building in Johannesburg. Disaffection with the ANC government from poor workers is increasingly reported.

Nobel Peace Prize: Yasser Arafat, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres were awarded this prize. Extreme Zionists demonstrated outside complaining that Yasser Arafat had 'blood on his hands'. Generally the prize goes to those who have fought wars for imperialism, like Henry Kissinger; or to those, once reviled as 'terrorists', who are being promoted for a pro-capitalist role, like Nelson Mandela.

Ireland's new challenge

AS DISCUSSIONS with government representatives at last got under way, Sinn Féin was adopting a distinctly 'harder' attitude, epitomised by its symbolic protest at the Belfast investment conference. This particularly applies on the question of self-determination.

At the time of the ceasefire declaration, leaders of the organisation were stressing that there were differing understandings of the term. "There are possibly other ways to achieve self-determination than through a united Ireland immediately," one supporter told us (see *Weekly Worker* September 22). Now the call is for an end to British jurisdiction "in the shortest possible time consistent with obtaining maximum consent to the process".

The change in emphasis is not only related to the opening of negotiations. There is also a real need to retain the support of republican activists. While the mass of the nationalist population in the Six Counties is relieved that the killing has stopped and is in support of the 'peace process', discontent among the more politically aware is growing as a result of continuing harassment by both the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the British army.

In Belfast the First Paras, the battalion responsible for the Bloody Sunday massacre in 1972, has been let loose on the streets again, much to the fury of the local population. Last month John Hillick, a young man on his way to work, was severely beaten by these thugs in the worst such incident.

The RUC has also been intensifying its harassment. Community activist Kevin McQuillan describes their position as "Jekyll and Hyde": "On the one hand they have been told to 'be nice' as part of imperialism's 'hearts and minds' campaign, but on the other they fear for their own jobs if 'security' improves."

Kevin himself was arrested in November and detained for two hours under the Prevention of Terrorism Act on his return to Ireland from a visit to Britain. "My exclusion order was lifted out of the blue in October, but this did not stop the RUC grilling me in a most abusive manner in an attempt to get my views on the 'peace process'. I told them I had no opinion I wished to share with them."

The RUC's situation is a reflection of the quandary of much of the protestant population. With such a large percentage of workers employed directly or indirectly by the 'security' forces, their winding down will add another layer to the Six Counties' already sky-high unemployment levels.

Protestant discontent will provide new opportunities to campaign on class issues. While workers have traditionally been won to unionism and even to support the paramilitary terrorists of the UVF and UDA, it is not inevitable that this will continue.

The greatest challenge facing communists in the Six Counties in their coming fight will be to transform a situation where catholics dare not set foot in protestant areas to one where workers can be won to a united Communist Party embracing the whole working class.

Alan Fox

Bloody Sunday commemoration

Demonstrate for peace through British withdrawal from Ireland
Saturday January 28
1995

Assemble at Platt Field,
Platt Lane, Manchester;
rally at Albert Square.
Contact the Bloody Sunday
march organising committee
on 071-609 1743

Communist Party perspective

THE COMING YEAR will see the 75th anniversary of the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Naturally, the bourgeois press will try to 'celebrate' this milestone in their own fashion - by writing the umpteenth 'obituary' for our Party and for communism itself.

The Communist Party will be celebrating in rather a different way. Our perspectives for the coming year are still to be finalised by the membership, but in broad terms our plans are agreed. We will make 1995 the *year of the Communist Party*.

This has nothing to do with 'sectarianism' or 'self-obsession', as some may foolishly claim. The state of the class struggle in contemporary Britain, and the world context in which it takes place, demands that our class be equipped once again with combat organisations - genuine mass communist parties. That is what our organisation is in business to do in Britain and why we categorically demand of all communists that their place is in the CPGB, fighting alongside the Leninists to reforge our Party.

Of course, our plans are not drawn up in a vacuum. We formulate our perspectives against a background of five interrelated phenomena.

1. First and foremost, the world period of profound political reaction

In contrast to the petty bourgeois left - Socialist Workers Party, Militant Labour *et al* - our organisation recognised that the defeat of bureaucratic socialism in eastern Europe and the USSR would not usher in a wave of revolutions and victorious liberation struggles.

Undoubtedly, this reactionary period is fragile and contradictory. The victory of capitalism comes at a time when its world economy has nothing to offer the peoples of the former socialist countries. Nevertheless, the counterrevolutions were a world historic defeat for the international proletariat. The period remains one where progressive politics in general are at a low ebb.

The recent events in Ireland confirm this overall picture. While Sinn Fein has not been defeated militarily, the fact is that it has been forced to sue for peace on imperialism's terms. The settlement in Ireland represents the same sort of negative resolution of revolutionary

'hot-spots' (as Gorbachev dubbed them) as we have seen in Afghanistan, South Africa and Palestine.

Similarly the intense problems faced by bureaucratic socialism in Cuba indicate that the *general* tenor of the period remains one of defeat, disintegration and decline of working class politics.

The harsh realities of capitalist restoration have provoked discontent from the masses, but nothing in eastern Europe or the ex-USSR yet smacks of being *the answer*.

In a number of countries the old 'official communists' are making a comeback, transformed into modern social democrats. All these parties are looking to make the transition to capitalism more bearable by combining it with social elements of the past. But they have no ability to carry out such a utopian programme - and are well aware of this fact.

Therefore we see these as developments which reflect the discontent of the working class with the capitalist restoration. The proletariat will inevitably express this discontent in the form of a yearning for the past, in the absence of a political programme that can make sense of the present and point the way to the future - that is, a programme of genuine revolutionary communism.

Yet while the working class does not enter the stage as an independently organised political force, social explosions in the former socialist countries actually pose the danger of fascism - of things getting worse before they get any better. We cannot passively rely on the period of reaction being lightened by revolutionary developments in the east - by some contemporary form of the *ex Orienta lux* (light from the East).

2. The exhaustion of the governing party

Domestically, the scene is dominated by two interrelated factors. First, the revival of the Labour Party not simply as a viable alternative bourgeois party of government, but effectively as the government in waiting. Secondly, by the palpable exhaustion of the Tory agenda.

The extent of Tory disarray has recently been illustrated by two



Mary Ward with new communist voters in the Hilltown by-election, Dundee

disastrous votes in the Commons - the first on post office privatisation and the second on vat on fuel.

Significantly, the government defeats were inflicted by the elements of the left and then right wing respectively. This starkly underlines the utter political exhaustion of the Tory programme and the electorate's disillusionment with it. Once, Tory voters were prepared to put up with the pain of the Thatcher years and keep giving the government a mandate to push through measures that disturbed the equilibrium of society. But that was when there appeared to be a *purpose* to it all.

When the Tories seemed to have a viable programme for society - *all* of it, it must be emphasised - their winning slogan might have been 'no pain, no gain'. For fifteen years people have put up with the pain, but still have no or very little gain. Tory backbenchers from both wings of the Party therefore are starting to reflect the discontent of constituents who no longer *believe* in the government.

Party divisions effectively rule out bold initiatives for the rest of the tenure of this government ... how ever long that is. The response of Major and leading figures in his party to the proposals from Labour for constitutional reform illustrates that the Tories are now in the position of being conservatively reactive to the initiatives of Blair's party, of trying to preach the merits of a status quo that millions are manifestly discontented with.

The government's recent humiliating defeat at the hands of its own recalcitrant backbenchers illustrates not so much the staggering ineptitude of the Major government's *apparatchiki* and the man himself - although it certainly does that as well. It underlines just how out of control the Tories are. They now seem incapable of formulating policies and being able to discipline their MPs to vote for them. If this continues, it is hard to see how this government can carry on running society: it is unable to command consensus in its own ranks, let alone in the country generally.

So, the current orientation of the Tories - which is not winning them wider

support in society - is far more to do with internal Tory Party power balances and appealing to their traditional base.

Amazingly, the crisis paralysing the government party takes place against a backdrop of very low levels of working class struggle. If there were an upsurge of struggle, the effect would not be to unite Tory ranks - far from it. It would on the contrary act to further prise the Tories apart. This is a weak, fragile bourgeois government which objectively offers excellent opportunities for working class struggle to burst through and really rock society.

3. The rightward shift of Labour and disappearance of the working class as an independent political factor

Yet despite the objectively excellent conditions for struggle, we have pointed to the fact that in many senses *the working class has disappeared as an independent political factor*.

The dumping of clause four is interesting in this context. As we have shown, the central motivation for the introduction of this constitutional sop was to frame a conscious alternative to Bolshevism at a time when the influence and prestige of the Russian revolution was huge amongst workers in this country.

Since then, clause four has been the justification for generations of leftwingers to deliver the votes of the militant working class to this bourgeois workers' party. The fact that Labour will now dump even this sop to the proletariat illustrates the extent to which our class has lost its independent presence. Labour's potential new 'big idea' - constitutional reform - is a programme formulated with an establishment audience in mind. Although it will undoubtedly assume a populist form of some sort, it is not a sop to the working class, but an *approach to the bourgeoisie* (see Ian Mahoney's article in this issue).

Also, the irony of the campaign to defend clause four that has recently cohered and will continue on a low level in 1995 should not escape us. It is largely composed of individuals and organisations who voted for Prescott as the 'lesser of two evils'. Prescott of course

was heavily implicated in the behind-the-scenes plotting to kill the clause. He is now regarded as the trusted 'left hand' man of Blair and is charged with - as the *Sunday Times* put it - "delivering" the left.

Despite the claims of some leftwingers that the extinction of clause four is the 'last straw', the left in its contemporary form is unlikely to make a break from Labour until a viable alternative begins to compete more seriously for the allegiance of the working class. This is why our organisation has placed an emphasis on the electoral tactic in the current situation.

4. The low level of struggle of the organised workers' movement

In contrast to the semi-hysterical posturing of the SWP, the trade union struggle in Britain is currently at a very low ebb. The official figures for strikes - which are at the lowest level since records began - undoubtedly do not reveal the

Books for revolution

In the enemy camp, £4.95, gives a fuller explanation of how communists can use bourgeois elections for our propaganda.

Written after our 1992 election campaign it draws on that experience as well as those of Russia's Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and our Party's history.

In 1995 we plan to publish our draft programme as explained in the article above. *Which Road*, £6.95, deals with the reformist programmes of various strands of opportunism in Britain. The book explains the importance of a communist programme and prepares the groundwork for drafting it.

In 1993 members of the CPGB were involved in a fierce battle over the question of democratic centralism.

This year the debate has continued

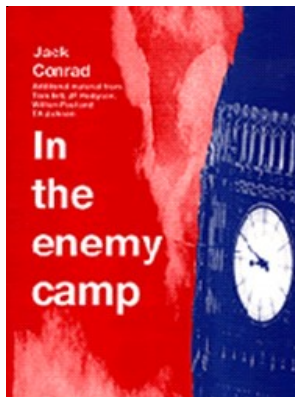
in meetings and in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*. The supplement in this issue raises the call for all communists to be united through democratic centralism in one Party. In

Problems of Communist Organisation

£4.95, we publish the views of both sides - the majority and the minority - in the controversy because the struggle contains lessons for all class conscious workers.

This year the Party has been involved in a series of seminars to deepen our analysis of the former USSR.

From October to August, £6.95, contains writings and speeches on the Soviet Union from 1983 to 1991. It demonstrates our attempts to analyse every twist and turn of events. As such it is an important contribution to the fight to build a Party capable of leading new Octobers.



All books can be ordered from the CPGB address

atives for 1995

true picture. But then they never did, even when they were showing high levels of strike days lost.

The struggles that are taking place are overwhelmingly defensive and offer few opportunities for the intervention of the Communist Party. Some end in defeat; some end in stand-off semi-victories, such as the recent signal workers' fight. None are seeing sections of the working class go beyond low levels of trade union struggle, to start to learn *political lessons* in a fuller sense.

It is hard to say when this gloom in the trade unions will lift. In the meantime our organisation will certainly intervene as effectively as we can where and when struggle breaks out. But we must understand, if conditions remain as they are, the main arena for the work of the Party will be outside the unions at present.

From everything we have described above, there is clearly far more fluidity and flux in the field of what could be classified as 'mainstream politics' than on the industrial front. At the moment, this is the arena in which workers' anger and discontent will be most graphically expressed, not through the medium of the unions. This is where our Party will concentrate its intervention for the coming period.

5.Vacuum at the heart of British politics

Sections of the left have no doubt been overly excited by the electoral successes of the fascist British National Party. Our Party has pointed out that in fact the success of the fascists represents not so much a positive vote *for* nazism, but rather the *absence of something* - ie, a political vacuum.

The BNP in its current form has certainly established some sort of electoral base among certain sections of the white working class electorate in the east end of London. It has used the publicity and momentum of this base to score impressive votes in some other parts of the country.

Yet there is little chance that the BNP will make a national breakthrough. It is too tainted with its nazi past (and present).

The success of this odd group reflects working class disenchantment with the Labour Party and the lack of a viable alternative. The majority of the left studiously refuse to provide this alternative and treacherously insist that the working class must return to its 'traditional' role as voting fodder for the

Labour Party. They thus constitute themselves as part of the problem rather than part of the answer.

While the Labour Party can perhaps now partially fill this vacuum with its 'big idea' of constitutional modernisation, the objective conditions remain ripe in Britain for the emergence of a mass radical-right movement, or on the left a revolutionary one.

The inevitable disenchantment that will follow the Labour Party's failure in government to arrest decline, to give anything to the working class, will mean these conditions will become all the more acute. Indeed, looking forward to perhaps the Labour government after the next, we should remember that fascism in this country in the 1930s was headed by a disillusioned moderniser from the centre left of the Labour Party, Sir Oswald Mosley.

Obviously, we are not suggesting that history will repeat itself in some automatic way. We are simply underlining the fact that the objective conditions for the breakthrough of either the extreme right or the extreme left are present in Britain. And that rightist challenge can come from many different quarters, not simply from the born again Hitler lovers of the BNP.

This poses tasks not simply to our organisation, but to the revolutionary left in Britain as a whole.

Our plans

Obviously, the two main opportunities for intervention that our Party will be taking up over the coming year are the local elections outside London in April and May and the build-up to the next general election. The fact that 1995 sees the 75th anniversary of the Party also allows us to complement our work with a sharp propaganda weapon about the need for the reforging of the CPGB today and we will utilise every opportunity we can to gain publicity for that message.

The year of the Party

We will include a series of special articles and supplements in our paper to mark this anniversary and to educate readers on both the need for a Communist Party and the history of our organisation - good, bad and indifferent. Obviously, the annual Party rally to celebrate our foundation this year assumes special significance for us. We will use this opportunity to launch the Communist Party's draft programme, to be agreed at our organisation's 7th Conference (see below).

Local elections

We aim to stand 20 candidates at least in the elections outside London. The campaigns for these candidates will be part of our ongoing battle to build national organisation around the country, for our Party to become truly locally implanted.

The fact that these local elections are 'staggered' through April and May will be an advantage for us. However they are outside London - by far the strongest area of Party organisation - and that is a big problem.

We will have to bolster the campaigns around the country with London comrades. We urge readers of the *Weekly Worker* to keep an eye out for their nearest candidate and come along to help.

Party draft programme

Our organisation has already completed a great deal of work around the draft Party programme, centrally through a year's extended study in our London seminars. In a sense, *all* the work of our organisation - polemically and practically - has been work towards the production of this draft programme.

In Jack Conrad's *Which Road?* - itself a pre-programmatic document - we make clear that **"the need for a communist programme arises from the needs of the movement itself ... The communist programme ... represents the crystallisation of the Communist Party's principles and overall strategic approach to the conquest of state power ... The programme is the foundation for the building of the Communist Party and developing its strategy and tactics. It firmly links our continuous and all encompassing agitational work with the ultimate aim of communism ..."** (*Which Road?* p235).

The production of the CPGB's draft programme in the 75th year of its existence - the first truly revolutionary programme of the Party - and its presentation to the workers' movement for discussion and dialogue, will be a powerful weapon in the fight for a reformed Party.

The general election

Clearly, the next general election will be a watershed contest for British society. The Labour Party is almost certain to win and its election will significantly change the context in which British politics are fought out.

Our organisation will strain every sinew to intervene as effectively and comprehensively as we can in this important election. Where we stand candidates will largely (but not perhaps exclusively) be dictated by where we have succeeded in building local organisation. We will fight to fill the political vacuum with a communist alternative.

We must also pose the challenge to the rest of the left, however. As we have pointed out, if revolutionary organisations were able to stand independently of Labour this would be a major step forward for our class. Depending on the size and effectiveness of the challenge, it could perhaps shift the whole centre of political debate onto a working class rather than explicitly bourgeois agenda.

This is why we will be approaching other revolutionary groups - at all levels of their organisations - and individuals in the Labour Party to agree with us a minimum platform for working class defence.

Our organisation would certainly fight for a vote for any individual or organisation standing on a platform of what the workers need, not what the system can afford.

Conclusion

No set of Party perspectives are set in stone. If Marx could write that "every step of the real movement is more important than a dozen programmes", our paper plans for 1995 would certainly have to be discarded in the event of a powerful forward surge of our class. Our emphasis on the electoral tactic - an emphasis that has proved very fruitful, we believe - is formulated in the context of the low levels of working class struggle in general.

However, whatever precise form the activity of communists takes over the coming year, whatever our main arenas of intervention, the coming 12 months will continue to be *the year of Party*. Whether in the field of electoral work, industrial struggle or mass movement, the reforging of this vital weapon is the key question facing our class. With a Communist Party, our proletariat will be everything.

We call on all readers, all partisans of the working class to join us in this battle. Make 1995 the year of the Party! Forward to a reformed CPGB!

Mark Fischer
National Organiser, CPGB

Back to the Party

THE CPGB is very pleased to welcome two new supporters *back* to the Party. Vic Turner, one of the Pentonville five dockers who was locked up by Edward Heath and released by the mass movement in 1972, and Frank Shilling, leader of the Tilbury dockers' dispute and one of the sacked shop stewards fighting against union derecognition in 1989. Both have become supporters of the CPGB this week.

Vic and Frank have both been long-term members of the CPGB but, as Vic told me, "I really felt the lack of the Party when the old leadership liquidated it. I felt a sense of personal loss as well as a loss for the whole working class movement. I felt myself in a political void". Frank added that "the disintegration of the Party has left a huge gap in working class politics".

Having refused to accept the liquidation of our Party, they are now welcomed back to a Leninist organisation rather than the opportunist one that left them.

Frank said: "I have always taken copies of the *Weekly Worker* and circulated it. I've formalised my support now because I think there is a great need for a paper that counters the lies in the popular press.

I hope the *Weekly Worker* will keep up the good work."

Since being sacked from the docks, Frank has remained as chairman of the Tilbury TGWU branch. Vic is now a Labour Party councillor in Newham.

In becoming a supporter Vic has become our organisation's first communist Labour councillor, but not the first for our Party which had both communist Labour councillors and MPs right from the 1920s.

We do not want Vic to resign his position, but to use it to the full to agitate for working class demands. Vic told me: "The Communist Party is key in linking workers up to discuss the real issues in society and being able to change it. I am glad to be able to join again and be part of the reforging of the Party. We really have to start from scratch and there is a lot of work to do. All those links have to be rebuilt. Organisation is the one thing that gives us strength. Without it we are nothing, just individuals. Organisation has to be built in all fields and I will be doing my bit as a councillor, using my position as a platform to talk class politics to workers."

Lee-Anne Bates

Good reasons not to vote Labour

Steven David, who lives in Newham, looks at the local Labour council's cutting budget and the challenge this poses to the left

NEWHAM council is exclusively Labour. Therefore the decisions made by this council are a taster of what is to come under a modernised Blairite Labour government and are a warning to all those leftist groups who use various varieties of the slogan, 'Vote Labour, but with no illusions'.

The council plans to cut £5.2 million from its budget. This is despite the fact that it has £14 million in reserve in its bank account. A vote at a recent Labour group meeting (read the whole council) decided by a 2:1 majority not to use the reserves but to go ahead with the proposed cuts.

The local Unison branch has been fed a diet of disinformation. It has been told that children's and old age homes are to close and that the local refuge for Asian women is under threat. This might be construed as an invitation to the union to launch a campaign and for the council then to 'compromise' by making 'less vicious' cuts in other areas, such as the voluntary sector. This would mean many job losses and the closing or running down of youth clubs in a severely

deprived area which already has a high rate of youth crime.

Perhaps most worrying is the fact that shortly after these cuts are implemented an election is to be held in South ward due to the death of councillor Tom Jenkinson (a well known Freemason). The fascist BNP undoubtedly will stand a candidate to build on the support that it has received in South Newham. Labour's bankruptcy could lead to a repeat of the Beakon scenario in the Isle of Dogs. Undoubtedly the left will once again rally to the Labour banner, completely ignoring the fact that people want an alternative to an openly capitalist and corrupt Labour Party.

We harbour no illusions in parliamentarianism, but by standing candidates we aim to spread propaganda and to organise workers.

I was pleased to hear this week that Vic Turner, a councillor in Newham, has become a supporter of the CPGB. I hope he will be a voice for the class on a council otherwise committed, it seems, to attacking workers.

Monthly fund launched

The Communist Party's 1995 Summer Offensive - our two month annual fund-raising drive - will be set at £25,000. This will provide an essential boost to the coffers of the Party, but what is essential for our work is the consistent money-making our organisation engages in month in, month out.

In the year of the Party, this systematic work must really be taken to a higher level.

Through the pages of the *Weekly Worker*, we are with this issue launching a £3,000 monthly fighting fund to facilitate our work.

All Party organisations must take a full part in this vital task and ensure that:

- All supporters and sympathisers are approached for regular donations.
- All Party activities - public meetings, paper sales or special events - have a financial element consciously integrated into them.
- They keep an eye open for local events which can be used to boost Party funds - car boot sales, badge selling opportunities, etc.
- Special events such as socials, jumble sales or raffles are regularly organised.

The fight for Party finances is an essential element of the success of making 1995 the year of the Party! We look forward to regularly reporting comrades' successes (and hopefully not too many failures...) in this column.

Phil Kent

Ditch this archaic system

SHADOW HOME secretary Jack Straw's much-hyped *Panorama* interview on December 5 was a bit of a damp squid. It was hardly the sensational attack on the "very fabric of our political constitution" we were warned of by some Tories. Obviously, any chance to divert attention from their own troubles is a godsend to them at the moment.

In fact, Straw's proposals have been heard before and by themselves do not really amount to very much. Prince Charles himself has mused on the possibility of pruning the number of his relatives on state hand-outs. Not much new and, as *The Guardian* put it, "not much of a threat" (December 5).

Readers of the *Weekly Worker* can be forgiven for being underwhelmed at Labour's proposals, detailed in last week's paper. However, we must look in some detail at this 'big idea' that the Labour Party may potentially take up. The modernisation of British society and its political institutions by a 'modernised' Labour Party under the thoroughly modern Tony Blair is no doubt a seductive package for the party's campaign managers. But there is far more substance to the idea than a slick image overhaul in time for the next election.

As Raymond Plant, the Labour spokesperson on home affairs in the House of Lords, wrote, Labour is trying to highlight a "link between policy failures and the political system" (*The Guardian* December 7). In other words, constitutional reform is not simply tinsel: it is the key question in rationalising British society as a whole.

There is an enormous and extraordinarily influential body of theoretical work, journalistic comment and academic teaching which explicitly links Britain's long term structural decline to the archaic and irrational nature of its political institutions. The most influential exponents of this theory are two academic 'Marxists' - Tom Nairn and the editor of *New Left Review*, Perry Anderson. While Labour's version of the thesis will be a comparatively tame affair, it nevertheless comes with an impressive pedigree of thought and academic weight behind it.

All of which makes it dangerous, and important that we deal with it. If Labour does indeed take up its own version of the Nairn-Anderson thesis, we must be ready to counter the arguments in both their popular and more theoretically rigorous forms.

Immature

The Nairn-Anderson theory sets out to explain why British political and social life is characterised by irrational and archaic political institutions such as a still powerful monarchy, by snobbishness and class rigidity and by long term, seemingly inexorable, economic decline.

More than that however, it purports to explain the problems of the working class movement. In fact, it offers us a consciously worked out alternative to the programme of revolutionary communism, a rigorous justification for contemporary reformism. It suggests that before the working class movement in this country can even think about putting socialism or revolution on the agenda, there is an alternative programme of deep going constitutional reform that we must first undertake.

Around the *New Left Review* journal in the early 1960s - at a time when anxieties about the decline of Britain were becoming more pronounced in mainstream society - Nairn and Anderson developed their ideas in a



It's not just the funny wigs that need to go but the whole rotten system

series of articles. Britain's decline, they argued, was an organic product of the way capitalism had been born in this country in the first place. The bourgeois revolution in England was *incomplete*.

The transition from feudalism to capitalism had been made at a time when the bourgeoisie was still economically, culturally and politically subordinate to the aristocracy. Therefore the institutions of British capitalism were never fully revolutionised as on the continent and, more than that, British social life and social classes were characterised by anaemia, by being stunted.

They point for example to the lack of any independent British intellectual tradition. Whereas the continental intellectuals - whatever their particular political outlook - were generally characterised by militant opposition to the existing order, in Britain their counterparts were essentially toadies.

Common law in Britain has had an uninterrupted history from 1066. It is unwritten and complex. It is set by precedent. It was absorbed rather than revolutionised by the bourgeoisie and survives with many irrational feudal hangovers.

Again in contrast to the continent, industry in Britain developed in a piecemeal, unplanned type of way. The state did not create interventionist agencies in order to coordinate its development.

Squatting across this mess of a society is a monarchy with real political powers. This crusty old institution, they

suggested, sets the tone for class relations in the country as whole.

This is the price society pays for the fact that the bourgeoisie never was an aggressive, bold and innovative group. It was incapable, because of its subordinate position to the aristocracy, of establishing its hegemony over society, of remoulding Britain in its own likeness. As a mirror image of this anaemic bourgeoisie, we have been cursed with an anaemic workers' movement.

The revolutionary traditions of the French bourgeoisie help shape the workers' movement in France. The price we paid for a bourgeoisie with water in its veins was the British Labour Party - an organisation that was not simply never committed to Marxism as the mass social democratic parties on the continent were, but was not even in favour of any version of 'socialism' until external events thrust clause four on to it as a hastily adopted sop.

This - Nairn and Anderson argue - is a direct result of the lack of completeness, the immaturity of the bourgeois revolution in this country. The operative conclusion of the thesis is important for us. Taking all these features of Britain, they advance a radical programme of reform, a rationalisation, a completion of the bourgeois revolution.

Until this historical equivalent of sweeping away the cobwebs is undertaken, they say, it is not possible for socialism to come onto the agenda. There is an organic, structural impasse

that the working class movement must deal with before it can advance under its own true banner.

Truth

The theory is a very strong one because it actually looks at reality; undoubtedly there is *something there to explain*.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 was far more like a counterrevolutionary coup than a 'revolution'. It had nothing to do with the masses and was actually an agreement between different ruling classes. In contrast to Europe, 1688 was not followed by a 'revolution within the revolution'. There were no upheavals in the institutions of society as the new ruling class moulded society in its image.

Nairn and Anderson see this as representing the immature bourgeoisie selling itself, cementing itself in a subordinate position in relation to the aristocracy and the crown. Therefore the normal pattern of bourgeois revolution - with features such as a rational, interventionist state, written constitutions, etc - simply never developed in Britain.

Certainly the 'archaic' classes in Britain were retained. Post 1688, the wealth and influence of the landed aristocracy dwarfed that of the bourgeoisie. Indeed, the industrial revolution and the course of the whole 19th century is actually characterised by greater and greater concentrations of *aristocratic* wealth, in contrast to its impoverished counterpart on the continent. This wealth was complemented by political influence: the old aristocratic parties were never challenged by a new, explicitly bourgeois party competing in a direct way for power. Instead, the industrial bourgeoisie actually lined up with the Whigs after its enfranchisement in 1832. The aristocracy retained this political influence well into the 20th century.

Yet rather than these features representing the weakness of the British bourgeoisie, they in fact were a symptom of its *strength*. If we view Britain as a mature capitalist society, in which a strong bourgeoisie has grown old on the historical stage, then the peculiarities of Britain Nairn and Anderson highlight become truly explicable.

Mature

From the 17th century onwards, England actually displays advanced features, rather than backwardness. Its capitalist dynamic was released. Thus while Britain did not impose its model

of industrial development on the rest of the world, the rest of the world had to catch up *artificially*. This accounts for different, more interventionist, patterns of development in other countries, such as France, Prussia, Russia and later places like Turkey.

Yet how do we explain the evident continuity in institutions and classes that Britain displays?

In fact, exploitative classes will generally draw ideological veils over their own rule. They will attempt to appropriate the past, to present a continuity in institutions which may appear archaic from the outside, but which are actually filled with a *new content* which corresponds more closely with the new social relations.

Britain certainly has a monarchy - but it is a bourgeois monarchy, an institution which plays an important part in contemporary capitalist society. It is something that the bourgeoisie has subordinated to itself.

The reason is simple. A ruling class that has come to power through revolution is hardly likely to *celebrate* the fact: after all, you can start giving ideas to other groups in society, in particular the popular classes. Far better that society is presented as unchanging, continuous and unsusceptible to revolutionary transformation.

The French bourgeoisie celebrates the French Revolution not because of its strength, but because of its weakness. It cannot be in the interests of the ruling class in that country to remind the masses of Jacobin terror - by implication of the Paris Commune ... even of Paris '68.

Conversely, British society is characterised by many institutions that appear timeless because of the *strength* of the British capitalist class.

Similarly, the caricature that the bourgeoisie faced an old feudal class, clinging to old out-moded forms of production and society, is simply not true. The basis of aristocratic wealth by the 17th century was not feudal tithes and military conquest, but was capitalistic - this class had transformed itself into a *monied* class. It prospered hugely under the new society; it was not obliterated by it.

Moribund

The sweep of this thesis is quite huge and has a very impressive body of writing and theorising behind it. By absorbing a version of the theory, the Labour Party can achieve a huge advantage over the Tories. It can appear to have an agenda that transcends the everyday political agenda and which demands - with 'legitimacy' - patience, hard work and even a little pain.

The fact that the Tories appear to want to cast themselves as the staid defenders of a status quo that millions of people are manifestly tired of will do them no good at all electorally.

The response of the workers' movement should be clear. We should have no truck with theories which tell us that socialism is off the agenda until we have tidied up the bourgeois revolution. In fact, the real features of modern capitalism that Nairn, Anderson and their co-thinkers point to are products of the moribund, senile nature of capitalism in this country, not its 'immaturity'.

The job of the workers' movement is to consign the system to the waste-bin of history, not be diverted into hopeless schemes to 'modernise' a society suffocated by an archaic *class* - the British imperialist bourgeoisie.

Ian Mahoney

Student rent strike continues

NO RENTS have been paid this year by Bradford University students since the senior warden tried to put the rents up by between 7% and 12% in the halls of residence. Grants have been cut by 10% for the last two years, so students cannot afford even last year's rents of between £285 to £541, let alone the increases.

The senate refused to negotiate till early December, but the students have refused to accept the chancellor's miserable offer of a 1.5% reduction. The strike continues and new negotiations are planned, but it may be too late to resolve the issue before

the end of this term.

Students from other universities have been in touch with Bradford over the possibility of taking similar action and Leeds University has just voted to withhold rents.

Bradford's strike has shown that confrontation can work. The more organised, the more united the action is, the more successful it can be. Now that the government has forced colleges to compete with one another on the open market, students as consumers can subject them to market pressures.

Phil Kent

Bob on the box

Bob Paul reviews this year's Christmas offerings on the TV

FOR THE next couple of weeks the absurdly dubbed 'season of goodwill' will be dominated by carol-singers and stories about that little baby Jesus. Keep an eye open for the rare worthwhile features. They go something like this:

Monday December 19

- BBC2 7pm *The World at War*. An episode in the series documenting World War II. Hardly a Marxist view of 1939-1945, but has some interesting historical footage - this time on the Reich.

Tuesday 20

- BBC2 7.30pm *Open Space, Look back in anger*. Profile of Sheila Mackenzie as she leaves the director's post at the housing charity Shelter. The programme is an excellent exposé of Tory housing policy, or rather the lack of it.
- ITV 10.40pm *Network First, Talking to the enemy*. Straight from the horse's mouth - IRA activists give personal accounts of the armed struggle and comment on the ceasefire.

Wednesday 21

- BBC1 9.30pm *Between the lines*. The second episode of a two part story. Intelligent drama about three ex-coppers from the Police Complaints Authority and their futile attempts to purge the boys in blue.
- C4 10.25pm *NYPD Blue*. This well-packaged drama is the USA's attempt to prove that coppers do actually have the ability to talk, listen and sort out society's problems.

Thursday 22

- BBC2 7.30pm *First Sight, The booze runners*. The British state in action again - this time in the form of HM Customs' officers on the 'booze run' chasing all those naughty men and women illegally selling and drinking alcohol in Britain. However, Kenneth Clarke's mini budget will put them in the same situation as their recent victims. They too will be looking for something to do with their redundancy money.

Saturday 24

- BBC1 10pm *Dead again*. Kenneth Branagh, Emma Thompson and Derek Jacobi star in this thriller. Lots of plot twists and turns but a slightly predictable ending.

Sunday 25

- BBC1 6.45pm *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*. Just when you thought you heard the last of that song ... Macho star Kevin Costner plays the gallant Robin Hood, who is more concerned with wooing his damsel in distress than robbing from the rich.

Monday 26

- ITV 10.30pm *Dave Allen*. Catholicism gets the sharp end of Allen's tongue again. If you appreciate the occasional poke at religion, let this comedian lead the way.
- BBC1 12.30pm *Spellbound*. Classic Hitchcock thriller to end a generally boring day on the box. Bergman and Peck provide two hours of suspense.

Tuesday 27

- C4 9pm *Baby fathers*. Continuing C4's short series of Black Christmas, this documentary provides an interesting insight into the lack of welfare support for the 86% of children born outside marriage in Jamaica.

Wednesday 28

- C4 8.30pm *Equinox, Incredible evidence*. Apparently, it is hard enough for the British bobby to get a conviction in their favour even after distorting the evidence. Miscarriages of justice occur, according to this documentary, "despite the best efforts of forensic scientists".
- BBC2 9.25pm *JFK*. It's that man again. Costner plays the attorney out to prove that 'progressive' Kennedy just went a bit too far for the CIA and the powers that be. Conspiracy theories are fun but should be taken with a pinch of salt. Personally I prefer to think that Castro did it.
- ITV 10.20pm *The fly*. This seems to be enjoying an annual Christmas showing. Sick, gory but entertaining horror about bits dropping off Jeff Goldblum's body as he gradually changes from man to fly.

Thursday 29

- BBC1 11.30pm *Review of the Year*. All your favourite and least favourite bits of 1994. Try not to be too sick when D-Day commemorations are highlighted, but have a laugh at the Tories trying to escape sleaze allegations.

Friday 30

- BBC1 9.30pm *French and Saunders Christmas Special*. For those of us who are mad but not

A fact of the 1990s culture

Quentin Tarantino, *Pulp Fiction*, 1994

AS WE come up to the middle of the 1990s, I have no doubt that *Pulp Fiction* will be remembered as one of the best films of the decade.

Like Tarantino's first film, the now legendary *Reservoir Dogs*, this is violent, but then so is the reality of many lives. This is not to say that *Pulp Fiction* is an example of realism. Most of the characters in its complex plot are outlaws of one kind, at one level hovering somewhere above ordinary concerns. Yet, on another level - and this is one of the film's charms - its main characters are just like us. For example, the ruthless hitman Vincent (played by John Travolta) is actually tongue-tied and nervous on a date, and whenever something important is happening he is always to be found sitting on the toilet reading *Modesty Blaise*.

The larger-than-life characters are constantly reverting to human level. Before carrying out a hit, Vincent and his partner Jules (Samuel Jackson) discuss the vitally important issue of the foot massage. Later on, there is the problem of disposing of a dead body but there is still time for the intricacies of a good cup of coffee.

What distinguishes this film above all is that watching it is like taking a steam bath in 20th century popular culture, at least the popular culture of the Western world. This is clear not only from the screenplay, but also from the musical soundtrack,



Uma Thurman plays gangland moll, Mia Wallace

which has converted this reviewer, at the ripe age of 31, into a lover of at least some pop music.

This is to some extent a callous film, yet odd touches of humanity keep showing through all the ills of modern capitalist society.

Steve Kay

Faction in exile

British and German IS Groups, *Democracy and the SWP*, Assassin Press, 1994, pp40

THIS IS the first publication of the newly formed International Socialist Group and the Group for International Socialism in Germany. The ISG consists of ex-Socialist Workers Party members and is led by Andy Wilson who was expelled from the SWP.

The pamphlet is critical of the SWP's internal regime, citing the fact that it bullies its members into following its line through what is described as Tony Cliff's 'stick-bending'. They say this top-down method of organisation has been responsible for many of the leadership's mistakes of late. The disastrous underestimation of community-based campaigns against the poll tax is just one of the examples given.

Many of the inner struggles

described here have been hidden from the SWP's rank and file.

The International Socialist Group however does not really differ much politically from the SWP. It retains a loyalty to the theories of state capitalism, deflected permanent revolution and the permanent arms economy. The only qualitative difference is over the theory of what it calls 'party and class'.

Unfortunately this leaves the ISG as nothing more than a faction of the SWP in exile. Unless the ISG is able to draw a link between the inadequacies of SWP politics and the bureaucratic centralist party regime, then it will not get very far.

Just as 'official communists' built bureaucratic centralism in the CPGB with each twist and turn of the Soviet leadership, a bureaucratic

centralism was built in the SWP, with the aim of spreading misinformation to members just in case it lost them to a rival group.

While I was a member of the SWP the *Party Notes* described the CPGB as Stalinist leftovers and similar untruths are used against others, including no doubt the ISG.

So where next for the ISG and for that matter the SWP? The SWP will inevitably 'Carry on recruiting!' (Did they make that film yet?). But a future for the ISG is harder. Either it becomes a sect continually firing salvos at the SWP in a futile attempt to win it to its point of view. Or it takes the step that I and other ex-SWPers have taken recently in joining the fight to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain.

This pamphlet is recommended to all comrades, especially SWP members.

Gary Salisbury
Former branch secretary,
Stevenage SWP

Politics and poetics

Tony Kushner, *Slavs!*, director Matthew Lloyd, Hampstead Theatre NW3, annual membership £5, ticket prices £8-£13.50 (£4.50 limited concessions bookable in advance) to January 14

TONY Kushner is a truly remarkable playwright. An American who describes himself as a "left socialist", he achieves with *Slavs!* in a mere 80 minutes, what few playwrights in this period can or will dare - he assumes an audience of disorientated anti-capitalists and asks them, "What sense are we to make of the wreckage?"

What makes this project truly great, however, is not only Kushner's deeply human and expansive personal vision, but his extraordinary ability as a writer to interweave poetics and politics, with a deliciously witty theatricality, both

hilarious and moving.

The play opens with two snow-sweeping 'grandmothers' debating the need for a vanguard party. It ends with the same debate, reiterated at a higher level, between dead politbureau 'grandfathers' and Vodya, a mute child. In response to the child's innocent "perhaps" to 'end of history' capitalism, a story about Lenin and his brother is told, ending with the dead characters repeating the title of the book about building the vanguard party - the famous question/answer, *What is to be done?*

Linguistic and visual metaphors

about, often to great comic effect. The anarchist lesbian Katherina guards the pickled brains of great Soviet leaders. Her lover, the children's doctor Bonfiala, believes in socialism and miracles and prays to an icon of Saint Sergius with Lenin's face. "Your brain is in a jar next door: Your body is across town. Pull yourself together."

Slavs! is a profound and funny play about people and socialism that engages both heart and mind. As the characters constantly remind us, people make history, though not in conditions of their own choosing. Other playwrights may still be scrambling at the foothills when it comes to this issue, but in posing the right questions Kushner finds his first step on the long climb we all face ahead.

Lisa Stein

What we fight for

- Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.
- The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers' movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.
- Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.
- We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.
- The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.
- Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs, ie communism.
- We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.
- Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.
- War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world's problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

We urge all who accept these principles to join us. A Communist Party Supporter reads and fights to build the circulation of the Party's publications; contributes regularly to the Party's funds and encourages others to do the same; where possible, builds and participates in the work of a Communist Party Supporters Group.

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Apocalyptic revolutionary

REVOLUTIONARY class politics are about more than strikes, street demonstrations and subversive leaflets. A prerequisite for anything decisive is the fight to secure ideological hegemony. By definition that involves as much the past as the present. History, therefore, is a weapon, either for revolution or reaction.

Where we need the unvarnished truth about history with all its contradictions, popular movements and violent change, our rulers need mystification and seamless apologetics. To maintain domination in the realm of ideas the bourgeoisie employs historians, theologians and political theorists. These dons and doctors of philosophy manufacture and propagate a history which downplays or denies those below. Continuity and the royal line is their narrative totem; progress comes gloved and lordly from high. Revolutions and revolutionaries are with equal disingenuousness demonised or sanitised.

Hence the *revolutionary* past of their *own* bourgeois ancestors is insulted. Cavaliers are the dashing heroes of biography, film and novel; Roundheads, dour proto-Stalinists. What of our dead leaders? Where not judged directly responsible for the gulags, they are transformed into safe reformists. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Luxemburg all suffered such treatment.

Of course, taming such intellectual lions as these is difficult. Deceased they may be, but their thoughts live, and not only in Progress Publishers volumes. For millions of working class partisans Marxism is the science of liberation. That *material threat* explains why the ruling class and their academic servants churn out, each year, hundreds of books which all 'finally disprove' Marxism.

We must, and will, defend our own. We must also, being part of a class uniquely interested in the truth, seek to turn the personalities of 'official' history back on to their feet. In the great tinselled and commercial, pious and mystical run-up to Christmas that especially applies to Jesus - who was, or so the *Latin* story goes - born 1,994 years ago on December 25 in the little town of Bethlehem.

Interestingly there are some 'honest' Christians who refuse to recognise Christmas. Under the Commonwealth, a god-fearing Oliver Cromwell banned the festival as devil-born heathenism. Today in Scotland, the Free Presbyterians, the 'wee-frees', also consider Christmas pagan. Quite right too. Christmas originated as a communistic celebration of the winter solstice (eg, the Roman Saturnalia). Only in the early 4th century did the western church decide that December 25 was the "date for the nativity" (H Chadwick *The early church*, 1975, p126). Of course, the Christians who condemn Christmas imagine that each and every word of the bible comes from an almighty god.

For us it is a very human document. Each book of the Hebrew canon is a palimpsest. Over many years, successive generations revised and modified the accumulated myths, taboos and *many deities* of the wandering Hebrew tribes. Like the Zoroastrian Persians and later the Islamic Arabs, the monotheism of the Hebrews was the result, not of philosophical sophistication, but of sudden contact with and adoption of

urban culture. The idol which Jacob stole from his brother-in-law Laban became the god of Jerusalem after the Hebrew community took "definite form" in Palestine and left behind the stage of "nomadic instability" (K Kautsky *Foundations of Christianity*, 1972, p190).

That does not mean the Old Testament was crude falsehood. On the contrary. As Marx succinctly explained in his fourth thesis on Feuerbach, the "secular basis lifts off from itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm", because of "the inner-self and intrinsic contradictions" of the secular base (K Marx *CW* Vol 5, 1976, p7). Religion is a social product. The evolution of *yahweh* was bound up with the Hebrew tribes, and in their god we can gain an insight into them and the evolution of their real life process. The same applies to Christianity and Jesus; only with the proviso that besides the New Testament (written between 70 and 100AD), we have relatively abundant literary records, not least those of the Romans.

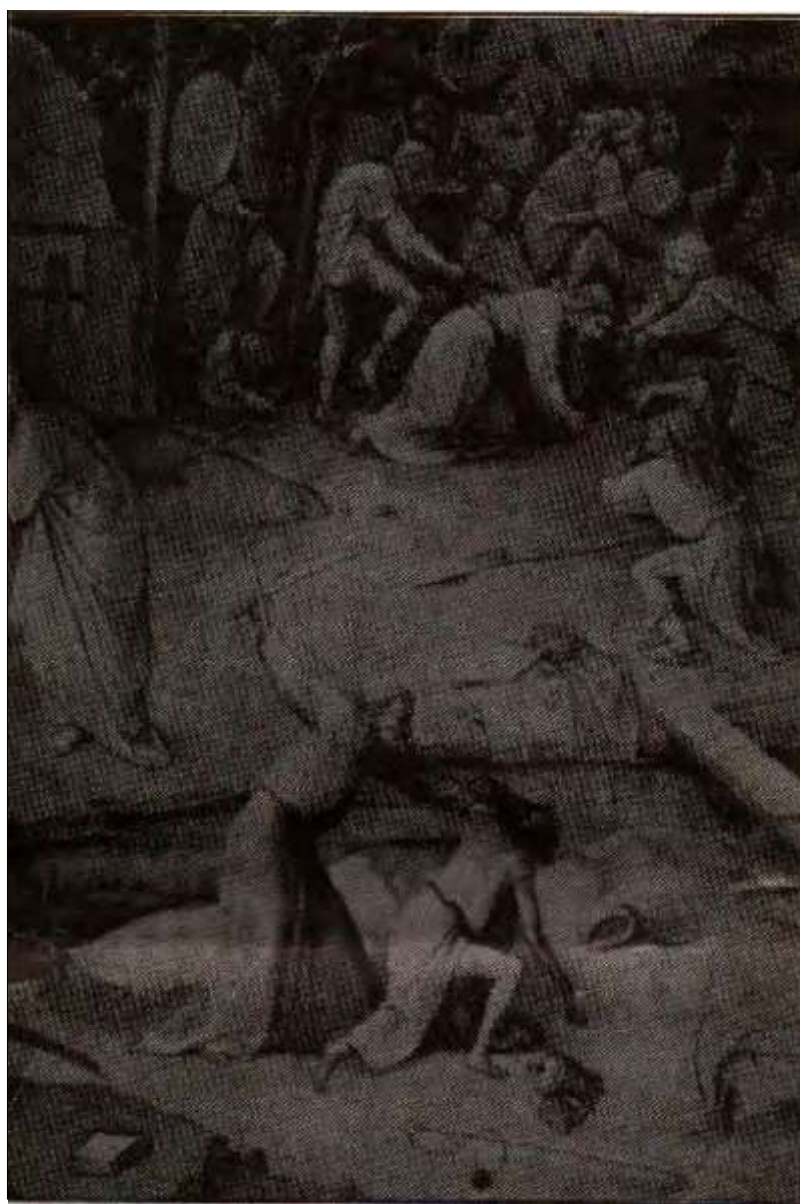
Jesus, in the New Testament, is credited with supernatural powers. Even the most 'progressive' Church of England bishop claims he worked wonders and roused the minds of millions. Nevertheless, even before the end of the 18th century, Edward Gibbon pointed out in his *Decline and fall*, with what Kautsky called "delicate irony", that - though the "laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the church" - the sages of Greece and Rome "appeared unconscious of any alteration in the moral or physical government of the world" (quoted in K Kautsky *Foundations of Christianity*, 1972, p23). Indeed no contemporary pagan or Jewish observer devoted even *one word* to Jesus.

The first non-Christian to mention him was said to have been Josephus Flavius, in the eighteenth and twentieth books of the *Jewish antiquities*. Though the words of this pro-Roman aristocratic Jew were much valued by Christians, all serious scholars now admit that they were a 3rd century interpolation.

One of two conclusions presents itself. Either Jesus did not exist - John Allegro, fantastically in my opinion, says the whole Jesus story was a "fictional" cover for a secret drug-using cult (see JM Allegro *The sacred mushroom and the cross*, 1970). Or, as is the case, there were so many messiahs (ie, christs) that, while others were given passing reference, including by Josephus, he did not rate a mention.

Palestine was at the crossroads of Middle Eastern civilisations. That is what made it a land of milk and honey for the Hebrew conquerors. Once settled, they turned from herding and banditry to agriculture and trade. Israel emerged as a powerful kingdom, its merchants spreading across the known world (coherence was maintained by the Jerusalem-centred religious cult and obligatory pilgrimages).

However, from the 9th century BC one wave of new invaders followed another. Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Greeks and finally in the 1st century BC the Romans. During power vacuums there were brief interludes of independence. But the Jews - after the tribe of Judah - became an oppressed nationality, which in turn bred "national fanaticism to the highest



Peter, in the foreground, hacks off Malchus' ear as Jesus is surrounded by his captors

degree" (K Kautsky *Foundations of Christianity*, 1972, p227). This was particularly so as Roman exploitation became absolute. The mass of the population viewed the Romans much as the Czechs and Poles viewed the Nazis.

Naturally dreams of liberation were mediated through the prism of class and religion. Herodians were high class, and almost alone in being pro-Roman; Sadducees, reluctant priestly collaborators; Pharisees, middling types who defended orthodox Judaism; Essenes, apocalyptic revolutionaries; and Zealots, practical revolutionaries. Albeit sketchy, that was the religious-political spectrum.

For 200 years Palestine was the hotbed of revolt within the Roman empire - the Zealot uprisings of 6AD and 66-73AD being outstanding examples. If Palestine was the Romans' Northern Ireland, Galilee, where Jesus grew from childhood, was its Derry.

The New Testament Jesus is a very strange person. Nowhere does he challenge or even question Roman occupation. Instead he appears to positively love the Roman tyrant. It is the Pharisees who earn his rebukes. Jesus even urges his fellow Jews to dutifully pay their Roman taxes (that would have been akin to preaching to the people of Liverpool the virtue of paying the poll tax under Thatcher). And yet he manages to gain a mass following.

His birth and childhood are even harder to swallow. A Roman census in what is now year zero - there was one in 6AD - unbelievably requires subjects of

the empire to travel to the places of their birth! If such a stipulation had been made, the movement of people would surely have caused complete chaos. Anyway, or so the story goes, Joseph, the 'father' of Jesus, and his pregnant, but virgin, wife trek all the way from Nazareth to distant Bethlehem in Judaea. There guided by a wondrous star, shepherds and wise men shower the infant with gifts, just before Herod, the pro-Roman king, orders the massacre of the innocents. Joseph and Mary flee towards Egypt. All pure invention, as was the ability of the young Jesus to outwit the temple priests in theology when he visits Jerusalem.

Here, as with much else, we have the heavy hand of later myth-making and later Greek rewriters. In general it has to be said that the four gospels display profound ignorance of the elementary facts of Jewish life and become successively more anti-Jewish; in John, Jesus becomes a pro-Roman Mithras-like god who was put to death by Pontius Pilate, solely due to the collective guilt of the Jewish people.

Yet by drawing on what we know of the Jews at the time and removing obvious fabrication, we can arrive at a much more probable version of events. Charismatic and well educated, Jesus was certainly a rabbi and Pharisee (teacher and preacher). Gospel passages which show enmity to Pharisees, such as over Sabbath-healing, have "clearly been inserted where the original story had 'Sadducees'" (H Maccoby *Revolution in Judaea*, 1973, p139).

Like many another he came to believe, during the course of his ministry, that he was not only a prophet but the messiah (christ, or anointed one) who would deliver the Jewish people from Rome (the beast). He therefore called himself 'Son of David', not 'Son of God' - an incomprehensible concept for the Jews. That is why two of the gospels go to great lengths to show that *through Joseph* he was related to David - ie, the last great king of Israel. Jesus' claim to be 'king of the Jews' was his claim to be leader of a revolution that would bring forth a communistic 'kingdom of god' ... "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of god! Woe unto ye that are rich! Woe unto ye that are full for ye shall hunger. Woe unto ye that laugh for ye shall mourn and weep!" (Luke). This imminent class vengeance was not to be in heaven but on earth. From Jerusalem a new "world theocracy", with Jesus at its head, would redeem "all nations" (H Schonfield *The passover plot*, 1977, p24).

Jesus was no Zealot. Often republican, they were committed to a realistic long term guerrilla war against the Romans. Jesus was an apocalyptic revolutionary who "believed in the miraculous character of the coming salvation, as described in the writings of the scriptural prophets" (H Maccoby *Revolution in Judaea*, 1973, pp157-8). Nevertheless though Jesus did not train his followers in the use of arms, five of his 12 disciples came from the ranks of the Zealots and retained their guerrilla nicknames (including Judas Iscariot - the 'knife man'). This is not surprising. Jesus was not a pacifist: "I come not to send peace but a sword" (Matthew).

So how did the revolutionary career of Jesus culminate? After rallying a large following in the Judaeen countryside he entered Jerusalem during the autumn festival of the Tabernacles "riding upon an ass" (thus fulfilling the prophesy of Zechariah). He was greeted by a joyous population with symbolic palm branches as messiah, the king. "Hosanna, save us!" they cried. With the help of the masses Jesus and his lightly armed band forced their way to the temple and dispersed the few guards. He rededicated it, drove out the venal Sadducean priesthood and had himself crowned.

In possession of the temple area and protected by popular support, he waited seven days for the apocalyptic coming of god's kingdom. It was meant to come on the eighth. At the last supper he expectantly says: "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day I drink it in the new kingdom of god." Yet though he prayed his heart out in Gethsemane it did not come. A cohort of Roman soldiers (300-600 men), and officers of the Jewish high priest, did.

Jesus was easily captured: his disciples only had two swords. Interrogated by the high priest, Jesus was quickly handed over to Pilate, who without fuss or bother found him guilty of sedition and, certainly with no reference to the mob, sent him, just one more rebel, to an agonising death on the cross. The last words of Jesus are heart-rending: "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani?" (My god, my god, why hast thou forsaken me?) Jesus was no sacrificial lamb. He was a brave revolutionary who staked all on divine intervention. Not a mistake our class will make.

Jack Conrad