

SOLIDARITY

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Religion

the reviving fortunes of the end of the world

Nicaragua

revolution without a libertarian complexion?

Striking miners

were they pushed? does it matter?

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About ourselves

Throughout the world, the vast majority of people have no control whatsoever over the decisions that most deeply and directly affect their lives. During the last century the living standards of working people have improved. But improved living standards, nationalisation of the means of production, 'national liberation', and the coming to power of parties claiming to represent the working class, have not basically altered the status of the worker as worker. East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work and manipulated in consumption and leisure.

The trade unions and political parties cannot be reformed or converted into instruments of working class emancipation. The workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggles, and the control and organisation of these struggles should remain firmly in their own hands. The forms which this self-activity of the working class will take may vary considerably from country to country and from industry to industry; its basic content will not. Socialism is not just common ownership and distribution: it means equality, real freedom, the end of oppression based on restrictive male/female social roles, reciprocal recognition and a radical transformation of all human relationships. It is people's understanding of their environment and themselves, their domination over their work and such social institutions as they may need to create. These are not secondary aspects, which will automatically follow the expropriation of the old ruling class. On the contrary, they are essential parts of the whole process of social transformation, for without them no genuine social transformation will have taken place. A socialist society can

therefore only be built from below. Genuine freedom will only be possible when our lives are no longer the object of economic, cultural and political forces which we experience as external to ourselves, and which constantly tend to regenerate capitalist or authoritarian social relations. A socialist society would therefore abolish not only social classes, hierarchies and other structures of domination, but also wage-labour and production for the purpose of sale or exchange on the market.

On the Ponting affair

From a legal point of view, R-v-Ponting will no doubt prove to be a basic case of constitutional law, on the relationship between government and the state machine. Much perfectly sound comment has been made in the mass media about the general ramifications of the case, but as radicals we would make the following observations:

1. Who decided that Ponting should be prosecuted is basically irrelevant. Mrs. Thatcher had made it quite clear that she wished to be informed in all cases involving leaks, and in any case it is inconceivable that the Attorney General, a politician, should not have consulted with his political colleagues over such a sensitive issue, particularly one following so closely upon the Tisdall case. In such a climate the law officers would have known what they were expected to do without being given direct orders.

2. The cornerstone of socialist politics must be an overriding commitment to democracy. The essential point about the case is that the government did all it could, short of actually lying, to mislead parliament. Whatever

parliament's shortcomings as a truly democratic institution, nevertheless it remains the closest we have to a representative body; and it is impossible to make a reasoned choice about electing those who will form a government if it is against the law to tell anyone what skullduggery they have been up to. The government should not be allowed to hide the fact they were trying, on a small scale, to subvert democracy, and Ponging must be congratulated for refusing to go along with it.

3. We should not expect too many Pongings, however. In MOD terms he was not 'one of the boys'; a high-flyer, but not one who had absorbed the Oxbridge ethos that gentlemen don't sneak. He was an early recruit to the SDP from those middle class 'political virgins' who were attracted by its 'clean' image. Finally, rumour has it that after the cost-cutting exploits which brought him to Thatcher's notice, no one would work with him (no-one loves a smartarse), and he was shoved sideways. So in many ways he was a maverick in the MOD, with less than the average institution-alisation, and in Whitehall such people are not that common.

4. Many liberals are saying that this is the ideal time to 'reform'

the Official Secrets Act. What we want, however, is not the "Armalite in place of the blunderbuss", as the by now aged cliché has it, but freedom of information. There is a great risk that the government, having had its fingers badly burned, might be happy to amend the Act, with a great deal of support from those who naively think the law is being liberalised. We cannot seriously expect this government, of all governments, to introduce a Freedom of Information Bill. Rather than helping our enemies give us what we don't want, we would do better to rely on the jury, 'the safeguard of English liberty' as it has proved once again (using another old saw), and defend that against the judges and politicians who want to reform it out of existence.

5. Those who live by their image die by it, too, and the resolute, indomitable, 'Iron Lady' easily turns into the shrill, hectoring bully, never a popular figure in British political life. Perhaps the jury was more representative of popular feeling in Britain than Mrs. Thatcher cares to realise. If so, her days as leader of the party may be numbered. Could this be the beginning of the beginning of the end? Let's hope so.

S.K. FRENCH

INDUSTRY

Notes on the miners's strike

Solidarity has until now held back from commenting directly on the miner's strike. We could not have anticipated such a protracted conflict. Below two members explain the group's attitude.

No comment for comment's sake

Criticism has been levelled at us by some of our correspondents for our failure hitherto to comment on the miners' strike. An explanation

of this lack of comment until now is therefore in order.

No one imagined when the strike first started that it could possibly go on as long as it has done. Consequently, we felt it advisable to wait until the end of



Life on strike — Striking miners from Easington Colliery pick up their children from their local school. Pickets, union organization and the national negotiations are only one aspect of the miners' strike. Away from these widely publicized events the daily life of the miners' families has been adapted, even transformed, in order to maintain the strike.

the strike before making general comments and seeing what lessons could be drawn. We saw no advantage in 'tailending' the numerous leninist groups in commenting in general terms on matters which we knew only through the mass media. Because of the regrettably large gaps between issues of the magazine we were not in a position to make topical comment, and we had no 'inside information' with which to astound our readers.

Over the months the issues have now clarified themselves considerably. Several of us have spoken to miners and their families, and while at this stage we do not see much point in printing our own 'Interview with a Striking Miner', we are better able to put forward the substance of the numerous discussions which we have had within our group during the months of the strike.

Inevitably, this remains fairly general.

We hope, however, that none of our readers thought that because Solidarity had not talked about the strike therefore the group was not keenly concerned about it. Uninformed comment produced out of ignorance impresses no-one.

S.K. French

Autonomy wagged by its tail

The ten-month-long struggle of the miners has been a staggering expression of combativity, solidarity, and sheer bloodymindedness. The battles on the picket lines have been reminiscent of medieval warfare, particularly in respect of police tactics. The government has taken on far more than the NUM; it is

fighting a whole subculture. There have been thousands of injuries and thousands more people arrested, of whom substantial numbers have been victimised by the NCB.

A notable feature of the dispute has been the emergence of powerful autonomous forces, organising flying pickets and other more informal and very effective methods of resistance. There has also been the growth of networks of women's groups playing an essential role in the 'infrastructures' of the local strikes. It is an ironic fact that the legal offensive against the NUM, by handicapping the national leadership, has had the effect of strengthening these forces and their capacity for independent action. In the pit villages today the true spirit of socialism is alive and well.

Our admiration for the miners should not blind us to a number of less positive features of this dispute - for example, the way in which NUM officials initiated the strike, and many of the methods and tactics they have used. We are not at all interested in constitutional niceties, but we are in favour of the direct domination by workers of their own struggles, even if they do not do things the way we would like. Nevertheless, the bouncing of the men into the strike has, in our view, contributed significantly to both the divisions between miners and the isolation of the strikers from other workers; while the remarkable sight of a trade union leadership taking a fighting stance has mesmerised many radicals into taking a completely uncritical position of their actions. Arthur Scargill has become their new pope, criticism of whom is heresy. In their inability to distinguish between the living face of a movement and its bureaucratic tail the 'left' has at least one thing in common with Mrs. Thatcher. Moreover, we do not share the willingness of

the macho left to fight to the last drop of other people's blood. An industrial dispute is not waged with the gonads; a rational assessment of timing, tactics, and a recognition of the need to create unity are all important parts of the equation for winning struggles.

Radical bureaucracies fighting for their own interests are in fact nothing new (for example, the CIO in the USA during the 1930s was very militant). They behave in fundamentally the same manipulative way as their less militant brethren, but instead of perceiving their role as labour brokers for the existing order, these trade unions radicals see themselves as a sort of government in exile on the Eastern European pattern. For our part, support for the miners in no way implies any sympathy for the junta running the NUM.

The miners' fight is entering a critical stage. It may yet last for many more months. A defeat could be catastrophic, with the workforce divided and many militants victimised. Such a defeat could set back job organisation for many years to come. But all is not necessarily as it appears. While defeat could be snatched from the jaws of an apparent victory - by the miners wringing further concessions from the NCB but returning to work so divided that the balance of power is returned to the hands of management - yet conversely, even if the men are defeated, a determination to heal the wounds opened up by the long struggle could deny the government the full fruits of success. There will still be life after the strike.

We hope the miners will win a total victory, and that they will use the fighting organisation they have created to continue the fight for complete rank and file domination of their own future.

KEN WELLER

LATIN AMERICA

The Sandinistas and the working class: a suitable case for demystification?

In this, the first of a series of articles on Latin America,

L CAMPESINO takes a sharply critical look at the achievements of the Sandinistas. IAN PIRIE adds a dissenting tailpiece.

Deep within the tortured psyches of traditional leftists lurks an awesome yearning for heroic revolutionary idols to worship and for 'workers' paradises' in distant lands, to be held up as models to be emulated. As idols are toppled and exposed as tyrants, and the paradises turn

out to be new circles in the hell of exploitation and class rule, fresh ones arise to take their place. The USSR, China, Cuba, and Albania have all been cast in this latter role; each has now been demystified for everyone save tiny groups of the fanatical faithful. Now it is Nicaragua's turn to be



Consolidating the revolution? — This collective is working land owned before the revolution by President Somoza, who left it fallow. Somoza owned 25% of the land.

Mike Goldwater / Network

cast in the role of socialist paradise. It is, says an article in a recent issue of London Labour Briefing "...a popular democratic socialist society" which "works very well". Middle class leftists flock there in droves to pick coffee as twenty years ago they went to cut sugar cane in Cuba. Even the Labour Party journal New Socialist organises trips to "experience at first hand what the revolution has achieved". But the true concrete reality is vastly different from the idealised image, the organisation of appearances.

With the fall of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, the clandestine workers' committees and the national Union of Office Workers together formed the Sandinista Workers' Confederation (CST). In Nicaragua, as in most of Latin America, the basic union organisational structure is the sindicato de base which organises all workers in a particular workplace regardless of trade or status. These are not branches of national unions, but, in theory at least, autonomous organisations which can join or quit regional, national and industrial federations as they please. The CST, which organises the majority of workers, has set out to organise its affiliated unions into industry-wide federations and regional structures based on the country's twelve departments.

From its beginning, the CST made it clear that its function was more than defending and extending pay and conditions. Its General Secretary stated that its role was "to work hard to consolidate the revolution". In practice this means that workers' participation in decision making at factory level is based on a top-down set-up created by the Sandinistas. Workers elect representatives who sit on committees at production unit level. Besides the workers, management and the head manager (who is nearly always a Sandinista militant) are represented on these committees. However, final

decisions still rest largely with the administrators. On strikes the CST echoes the familiar leninist line: 'For workers to conduct a strike against the state is to conduct a strike against themselves'.

Despite attempts to impose 'union unity', there are five union federations outside Sandinista control. Four of these have fallen foul of the state's efforts at subjecting the working class to its interests.

The General Confederation of Labour - Independent (CGT-I) is organised by the small pro-Soviet Socialist Party of Nicaragua (SPN). It is affiliated to the Communist World Federation of Trade Unions. During the revolution it co-operated with the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Despite this co-operation, the Sandinistas have attempted to discredit the construction union, SCAAS, which is affiliated to the CGT-I and led by SPN militant Solorzano. When building workers tried to improve pay and conditions they were denounced as privileged. (State bureaucrats' wages are ten times those of farm labourers.)

The Confederation for Union Action and Unity (CAUS) is linked with the Nicaraguan Communist Party (CPN), a split from the SPN. Its strength is among factory workers, particularly in the Managua textile trade. In February 1980, led by CAUS, workers in eighteen Managua factories struck for a 100 per cent wage rise. (Inflation was running at 130 per cent). The FSLN mobilised its militants to besiege the struck factories, declared the strike illegal, and forced the strikers back to work. Having been given a ten per cent rise, the 2000 strikers went back. CAUS was then accused of being disruptive and being involved in a CIA destabilisation plot. There followed an anti-CIA demonstration during which Sandinistas seized the CAUS offices in Leon, and a number of CAUS members were imprisoned.

Following their release, the CAUS leaders did their best to improve relations with the FSLN. However, in September 1980 the government issued an emergency decree which included a ban on strikes, which were lumped together with 'crimes' such as hoarding, speculation, and sabotage. Factory occupations and takeovers were made punishable by three years' imprisonment. The state claimed that because of the state of emergency it could handle no more businesses. CAUS responded by publishing a leaflet attacking this move; the Sandinistas' answer was to imprison one hundred CAUS and CPN members. Twenty-seven trade unionists including the CPN leader Ali Altamirano were given a year behind bars for distributing the leaflet and organising a strike in a nationalised plastics factory.

Many Managua workers, however, particularly at the Fabritex textile factory, continued to support the CAUS, which the FSLN attacked as 'provocative', and accused of encouraging labour indiscipline, poor workmanship, and go-slows. To teach these 'confused' workers a lesson, the government, using the non-payment of a debt to the state cotton monopoly as an excuse, closed the factory on 1st November 1980. Police carted away the raw materials in the factory. Three and a half months later the factory was reopened under a new name. Twelve-hour shifts are now not uncommon.

The small Workers' Front (FO) is closely connected to the People's Action Movement (MAP), which is nowadays pro-Albanian. It takes the position that the USSR, China and Cuba are state-capitalist and Nicaragua is 'bourgeois'. The MAP was originally a Maoist split from the FSLN and maintained warm relations with the FSLN's Proletarian Tendency. Most Sandinistas, however, saw the MAP/FO as ultra-left and counter-revolutionary, particularly when it called for strike action to "bring power back

into the hands of the people". To back up this demand it organised strikes in sugar factories. The FSLN claimed that workers had been intimidated by the MAP's armed wing. The MAP/FO also attacked the FSLN for restricting the takeover of urban land by slum dwellers and the slow pace of agrarian reform. (By July 1982 14,300 hectares of land had been distributed to 6,500 families). The MAP's daily, El Pueblo, accused the FSLN of selling out to the local bourgeoisie. The FSLN's answer was to close down El Pueblo, hand over its press to the literacy campaign, and imprison 37 MAP/FO members. Even under Somoza El Pueblo had managed to survive state censorship.

The CST's main trade union rival is the 65,000-strong Nicaraguan Confederation of Workers (CTN). The CTN has 105 affiliates and is itself affiliated to the World Labour Confederation and the opposition Co-Ordinadora Democratica. Its support comes from communication, transport and sugar workers. The CTN's origins lie in the efforts of the Catholic Church to organise labour in opposition to marxism and syndicalism. Today it occupies a leftist position similar to the French CFDT. Its Manifesto states:

"The CTN reiterates the need to guarantee the development of a union movement that is democratic, independent, unified, revolutionary and class conscious...so as to rebuff every effort to impose a single union hierarchy that would be totally subordinate to the party in power".

The FSLN has resorted to several repressive measures against the CTN, including "coercive acts to induce workers to disaffiliate from our federation; organised campaigns of defamation on the part of the official press; the surveillance of our local offices and the houses of our leaders; the destruction of our vehicles; the prohibition, under threat of

imprisonment, from freely visiting centres of work controlled by the state". This campaign paid off when the health workers' union FETSALUD quit the CTN in 1982. CTN members have been sacked from their jobs in the state sector. Three hundred were dismissed from a nationalised sugar plantation in Nandaime. Many more were sacked at a banana plantation for refusing to join the ATC, the Sandinista agricultural union. The police then evicted these workers from their homes.

In an interview with an American visitor, CTN General Secretary Antonio Jarquin, whose office is covered in pictures of Sandino and Solidarnosc posters, stated that the FSLN leaders Tomas Borge and Dora Maria Telles had assaulted an assembly of FETSALUD and forcibly expelled the CTN on a charge of opposing union unity. Jarquin said that the CTN was not out to change Nicaragua's government but was critical of its dependence on the Soviet bloc. He further accused the FSLN of mismanaging the economy and creating artificial scarcity by hoarding, to create discontent, which provides it with a excuse for repression. This was confirmed by a Canadian visitor, who reported malnutrition in the countryside due to mismanagement of the food supply and difficulties in obtaining ration cards.

The CTN feels that the type of society that the FSLN wants to build is "a model of oppression and new privileges; this model violates the most elementary rights of workers, as has been demonstrated in Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and most recently Poland, where our brothers have organised Solidarnosc to confront the bureaucracy and corruption of that regime". This stands in stark contrast to the praise lavished on the Soviet bloc and its ideology by the Sandinistas. For example, defence minister Humberto Ortega has stated that "marxism-leninism is the scientific doctrine which

guides our revolution". The FSLN sent a fraternal delegation to the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The CTN states that it is committed "to the construction of a society which is truly democratic and pluralist, and founded on economic, cultural and social democracy". It says that this requires "the active participation of the organised working class in the form of self-management both within the national economy and the individual enterprise".

Workers who have tried to leave the CST have found themselves in trouble. The New York Times of 13 July 1983 reported the arrest of six leaders of the dockers' union in Puerto Corinto, the country's main port, because their union wanted to leave the CST. Two of them, Alejandro Armero and Denis Maltes Lugo, were released in Spring 1984. There has also been friction between the CST and its miners' affiliate on the Atlantic coast over low wages. Faceworkers earn only 63 US cents an hour. Almost all of these workers are Miskito or Sumo Indians.

The CST claims that it is independent of state control. Interior minister Borge has stated: "If it happens that in order to satisfy its genuine demands a workers' group has to confront the government then it is the duty of trade union leaders to put themselves at the vanguard of that fight". In fact, the CST is part of the Sandinista state machine. When trade unionists outside the CST attempt to carry out their activities they are answered with sackings, imprisonment or, as in the case of the Bluefields fishermen who staged a general strike against Cubans taking their jobs, the use of troops.

Not surprisingly, a number of British unions have given their support to the CST. For example, when a CST delegation visited

Britain in 1982 it attended the Scottish TUC and visited a mine as the guest of Northumberland area NUM. Offers of help to design and transport equipment for Nicaraguan factories came from AUEW, TASS, and the NUS. A number of unions, including ACTT, COHSE, GMWU, and NUPE, are affiliated to the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign. The NSC, together with the charity War on Want and the unions NUPE, NALGO and ACTT, is raising funds to send a container of commodities to Nicaragua. So far as I know not one British union has raised the question of fundamental rights denied to unionists outside the CST. It took the rise of Solidarnosc to make the trade union bureaucracy in Britain break its links with the Soviet bloc puppet unions. What will it take to make British trade unionists and socialists wake up to the truth about Nicaragua?

L. CAMPESINO

Nicaragua: a comment

This article (written before the recent elections in Nicaragua) raises important questions, and we are printing it in the hope that it will prompt debate. Unlike many on the 'left', Solidarity is not prepared to hold back on criticisms of revolutionary movements in the interests of a spurious 'unity', or to 'protect' the movement concerned when it is faced with difficulties. Open debate among the widest possible range of people can only strengthen tendencies to real democracy and self-management, and these questions are raised, not in the spirit of those sophisticated leninists who seek to explain away the development of the Soviet Union in terms of the 'objective circumstances', but as genuine enquiries into the nature of the revolutionary process.

We are also prepared to print views

with which we do not necessarily agree - and we have certain reservations about the overall tone of this article, especially the way in which it implies that very complex practical difficulties can be resolved by the application of a simple formula. We feel that a lot more could be said about the actual situation of Nicaragua - in



Waiting for the revolution — Nicaraguans queue for enrolment on adult literacy schemes.

particular, the material and cultural constraints on revolutionary change. It might even be argued that it is wrong to expect socialism from the Sandinistas, who have retained a mixed economy, and talk less of socialism than of national independence.

Nevertheless, the assumption seems to be that there is a potential for socialism in Nicaragua, and this article raises questions which will always be important for revolutionaries. For example:

1. Once political power has been obtained by a revolutionary movement, how soon is it possible to destroy the private ownership of land and capital? How is the pace and degree of change to be determined, and by whom? Is the answer that the people themselves can do it over-simple? Put another way, how does bureaucratisation occur? If it is partly, as Solidarity has maintained, the result of a line being drawn between 'order-givers' and 'order-takers', then isn't it (as one marxist has put it, in the context of Nicaragua) a danger that arises when a vanguard tries to promote revolutionary change too fast for the mass of the people?

Clearly the Sandinistas are in no hurry to abolish capitalism, but is this because they have a realistic assessment of the backwardness of the economy, or because they simply want to hold onto power by determining the rate of change?

2. Given a situation like that of Nicaragua, where a coalition of left-wing groups has gained control and is faced with a coalition of right-wing groups, does any group among those on the left have any right to restrict the activities of any other? As libertarian socialists we would say that there should be no restriction on discussion, and we would oppose censorship of a

minority by the majority. But what should our attitude be if the minority concerned wanted to retain its own armed wing, as did the F.O.? How important is the willingness to compromise and work together? And behind this again is the question of whether the economic needs of a country have to lead to austerity and hard work in the short term, with only the promise of better to come; for this is the 'pill' that the far left is always told that it has to swallow in these situations.

The answer to all these questions surely depends very much on one's assessment of the economic and social actualities of the situation.

3. In our anxiety to ensure that revolutions are libertarian and self-managed, are we in danger of applying an abstract formula to a wide variety of significantly different situations without considering whether it is realistic in the actual political, economic or social context? Conversely, do we have good enough reason to anticipate the same negative developments (subordination to vanguards, bureaucratisation) in all situations? Does the Latin American revolutionary movement have (as some of its supporters argue) distinctive characteristics, such as a desire for pluralism and avoidance of the excesses of Cuba, which will save it from stagnation? We probably cannot answer this yet, but shouldn't the aim of our warnings and criticism be not simply to demystify, but to give support to all who are aware of the dangers, and to emphasize whatever is distinctive and progressive about the the revolutionary process in, for example, Nicaragua? This way, we can hope to support the Nicaraguan people in their attempts to produce changes which are genuinely for their own benefit, and not for that of any particular group of ideologues.

IAN PIRIE

FUNDAMENTALISM

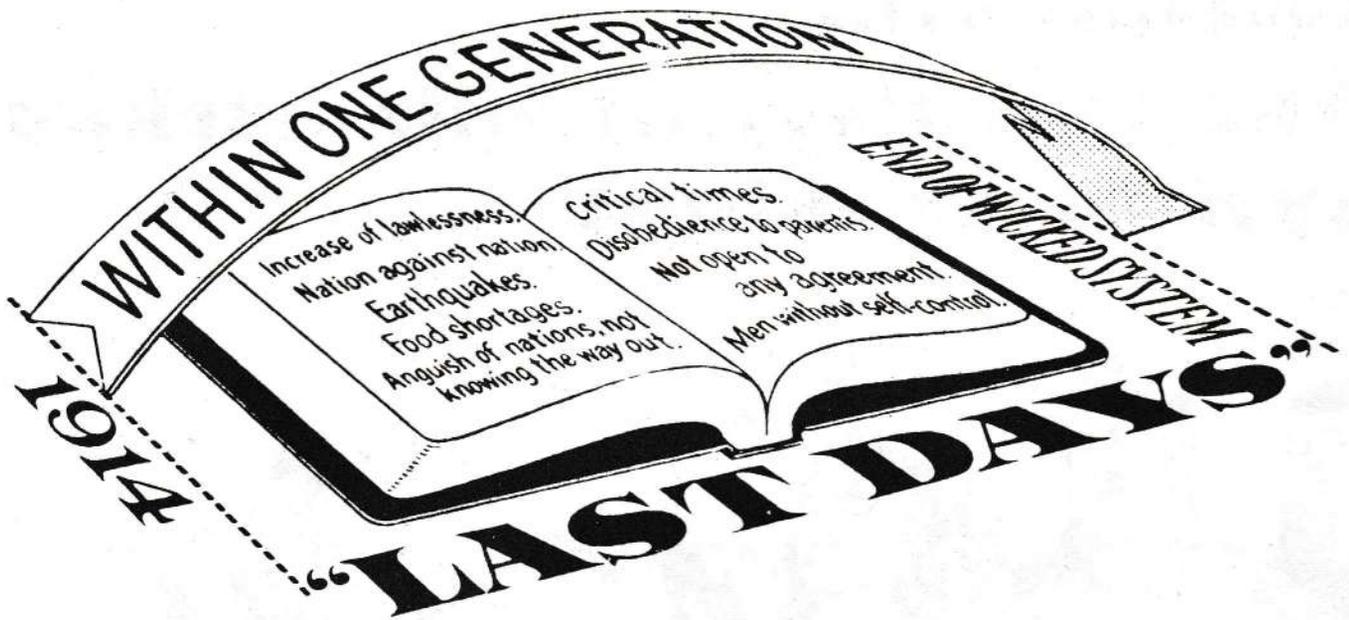
The last days of this wicked system of things



Fundamentalist Christianity has made a comeback in recent years. BOB POTTER has been researching into the psychology of fundamentalism: here he summarises his findings and puts them into the context of theories of the 'authoritarian personality'.

In contrast to the situation a century ago, the overwhelming majority of people in the UK show little interest in religion. At best about 9 per cent of the population ever attend a church (and that includes those who turn up for the odd wedding or funeral). During the last half-century, mainstream Christianity has been in a state

of decline; as an example, if you look at the last twenty years an average of nine Methodist churches were closed each week - though perhaps this is a 'disintegration' rather than a 'decline'. The degree of membership changes of the last decade reflect this general tendency. The most interesting category detailed in the table below is



that labelled 'others'. It consist of a large variety of religious communities, the majority of which (Spiritualists, Christadelphians, Christian Scientists, Salvation Army, and Unitarians) have diminished during the decade by between 8 and 27 per cent. However, this 'other' category also includes a number of fundamentalist groupings that, in striking contrast to the general religious decline, have shown steady expansion for more than half a century.

Indeed, the difference in growth rates between mainstream and fundamentalist communities is much greater than the figures suggest, for within the 'established' churches it is those congregations which contend for a literal interpretation of Scripture that

MEMBERSHIP OF U.K. CHURCHES 1970 -80

	Percentage change:
Anglican Church	-16
Roman Catholic	- 7
Methodist Church	-20
Bapist Church	-14
Presbyterian and Congregationalists	-17
Others	+16

Source: Bible Society, 1983

SOME U.K. FUNDAMENTALIST GROUPINGS

Percent expansion rates 1970 - 1980

Seventh Day Adventists	+ 15
Jehovah's Witnesses	+ 7
Pentecostals	+ 6
Mormons	+ 14
House Churches	+300

Source: Bible Society, 1983

are thriving. If the flourishing fundamentalist groupings embedded within the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches were removed from the overall statistics, the decline in membership registered by these two mainstreams would obviously be much greater.

It seems a paradoxical state of affairs that in this 'secular' age, where religion is viewed by the majority as an obsolete and inadequate attempt at explaining the world, that it is precisely the most irrational groupings that are an impressive growth point. T.S. Eliot is credited with the remark that "Christianity is always adapting itself into something which can be believed", and it is true that the apologists for traditional Christianity, the Rudolf Bultmanns, John Robinsons and Don Cupitts, have attempted to

'rationalise' their faith by advocating, in effect, atheism in the language of theology. But it is the adherents of these spokesmen that are faced with today's collapse.

The roots of fundamentalism

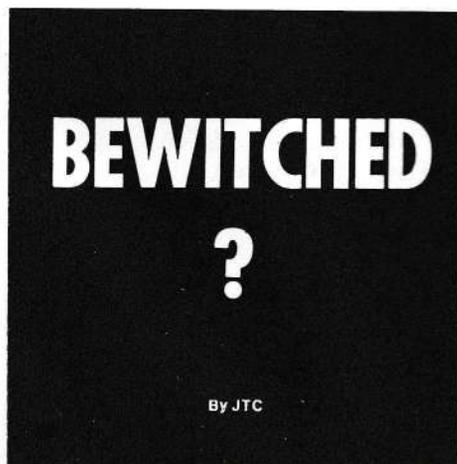
There are two dimensions to fundamentalist Christianity. First is the insistence that the Bible is the literal 'word of God'; second, the insistence that mankind is living in the 'last days', that God will soon intervene to 'cleanse the world'. There has been no period of history lacking a millenarian movement - those choosing to believe literally the words attributed to Jesus describing the calamities to accompany this future 'second coming' have always found plenty of 'evidence' in the world about them to support their belief in the imminence of that advent. It could be argued that this is more true today than it ever has been in the past - the Jehovah's Witness who appears on the doorstep telling of an imminent end to civilisation as we know it is almost certainly speaking to householders who have already reached that conclusion by themselves, by reading the daily newspapers. One can appreciate the very strong appeal to the (quite

justifiably) frightened householder of the confident evangeliser, who adds that today's crisis was all predicted by those who wrote the Bible centuries ago, and assures the listener that the same book details God's plan for the salvation of mankind. In a frightening world religion can offer a 'rare security' far beyond anything proposed by science.

Today's fundamentalism can be traced to the intense millennial expectations of William Miller, a Baptist preacher from New York, who in 1818 declared that Bible study had convinced him that Christ would return sometime between March 1843 and March 1844. At their peak the Millerites numbered a hardcore following of 50,000. The failure of Miller's expectations to materialise did not lead to demoralisation; rather, enthusiasm increased. The date of Christ's return was postponed until the following October - thousands gave up work, closed their workshops and stores, last goodbyes were said and the faithful remained at home waiting for the Lord. The second disappointment destroyed the Millerites in their original form.

The movement shattered into three factions. The largest group, with Miller, carried out yet another date revision, arguing now that

The comic strip beginning below and all the other illustrations in these pages are taken from the literature of the organisations mentioned in the article.



Christ would come in 1849. This faction, now called the 'Advent Christian Movement', is still active in the USA. The second faction, the Spiritualisers, declared Miller was correct, Christ had returned in 1844, but in spiritual form. This approach, albeit with a later 'fulfilment' date, is carried out by today's Jehovah's Witnesses. The third faction developed into today's Seventh Day Adventists - arguing that Miller's date was correct but that it referred to Christ's activities in heaven. Only when he has cleansed heaven will he return to earth.

Virtually all of today's fundamentalist sects originated in the disruption of the Millerite movement - and their 'headquarters' remains in the area of New York State (the Mormons later emigrating to Utah).

Interestingly, religion is accorded considerably more support in the USA than in the UK; a fact of increasing truth with the passing of time. Church membership

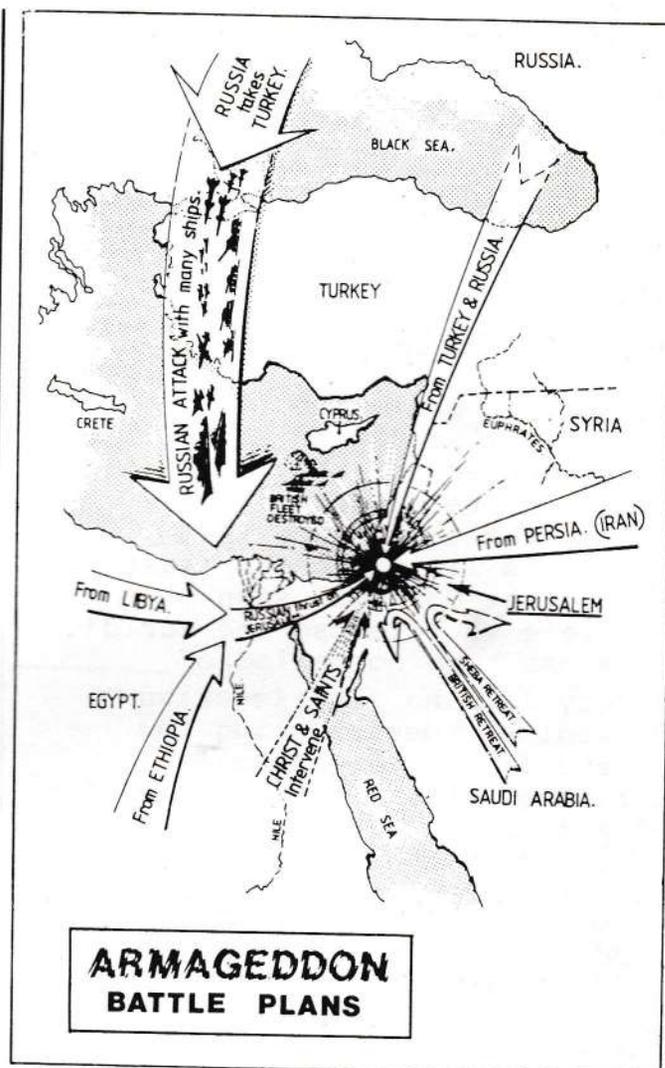
AMERICAN CHURCHGOERS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE WHOLE AMERICAN POPULATION

1900	36 %
1930	47 %
1950	57 %
1970	63 %

Source: Michael Argyle, 1975

has almost doubled, as a proportion of the American population, since the turn of the century.

In press coverage of the Carter/Reagan presidential election, all three candidates described themselves as 'born again' Christians. Since Ronald Reagan assumed power, people believing in an imminent Armageddon are to be found at every level of government and



legislature. In October 1982, Secretary of the Interior James Watt told a Senate Committee that although Jesus would soon return, "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns", while in December of the same year Ronald Reagan himself declared his belief in imminent apocalypse: "You know, I turn back to your ancient prophets in the Old Testament, and the signs foretelling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering...if we're the generation that going to see that come about...believe me those prophecies certainly describe the times we're going through".

As Bible literalists are agreed that the final holocaust will originate from a Russian-inspired aggression in the Middle East (Light on a New World, Sept/Oct 1984, published by the

Christadelphians, actually provides a campaign map of Armageddon Battle Plans, showing this in detail!) you can appreciate the dangers of a world situation where decision-making is often the task of American officers who would perceive a nuclear war in terms of God's means of carrying out his divine purpose.

Viewed in this light, researching the structure of fundamentalist thought is no dilettante project. The question that interests me is whether the appeal of fundamentalist Christianity can be explained purely in terms of the 'state of the world' in which we live, or whether deeper psychological factors are involved. Could it be that an individual's decision to join an extreme religious community really has nothing to do with theology; rather, that it is based on the way the individual looks at the world?

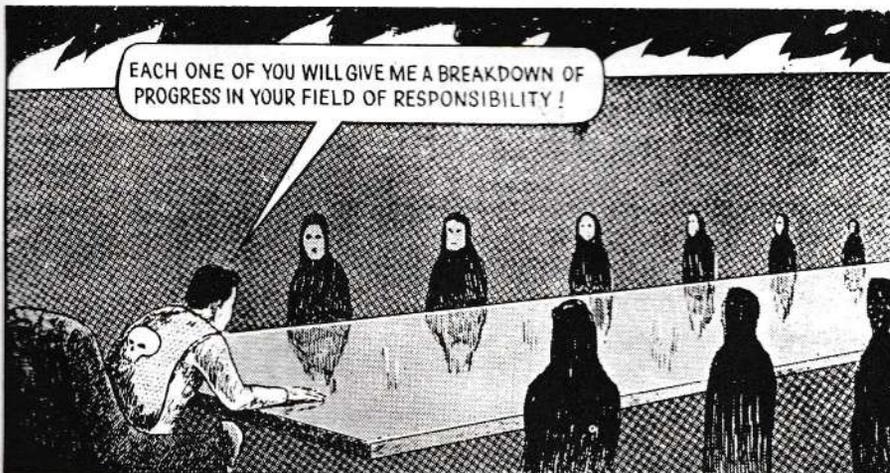
The authoritarian personality

In an attempt to explain how it had been possible for the horrendous crimes of Nazi Germany to have been perpetrated in a so-called 'civilised' society, in 1943 a number of psychologists (some of them refugees from Hitler) began research into the 'fascist personality'. Their work

culminated in The Authoritarian Personality (1950) by Theodor Adorno and others. These researchers believed that the fascist personality consists of a number of 'symptoms' or attitudes which hang together in a cluster. If one attitude is present, so are the others. Anti-semitism, for example, has little to do with Jews; the prejudiced mind is made up of a rigid adherence to authority, an uncritical endorsement of institutionalised morality, aggression towards outsiders and a fear of reflective thought. (Other characteristics are a belief in fate and superstition and an exaggerated concern with sexual 'goings-on').

This work was criticised because the scale devised to measure the 'fascist personality' identified only right-wing authoritarians. Our everyday experience tells us that there are many persons who are intolerant of others and other viewpoints, yet are themselves neither fascist, anti-semitic nor politically conservative.

Milton Rokeach's work The Open and Closed Mind (1960) was a continuation of that begun by Adorno, but was concerned with the more general relationship between personality and 'belief systems'; Rokeach is interested in the structure of beliefs rather than their content, i.e. the way in which people believe rather than what they believe. Two individuals may have opposing



belief systems, one may be a communist, another a fascist, but the manner of thought may be similar. Overall, he argues, people lie on a continuum dividing 'open-mindedness' and 'dogmatism', the latter being those not prepared to consider ideas different from their own.

Dogmatic individuals are found to have a number of characteristics. They are resistant to change, and simultaneously endorse contradictory beliefs. They view the world in simplified 'black and white' categories. They see humanity in impotent and pathetic terms; they have a paranoid outlook on life and feel it essential to convert others to their point of view - this is their way of supporting their 'insecure' belief systems. They find the present unhappy and unimportant - they concentrate on the 'glorious' past or the 'promised' future.

To measure dogmatism, Rokeach and his colleagues devised a questionnaire of 40 statements to which participants were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a six-point scale. The questionnaire was administered to various groups and checked for reliability over a number of conditions; English samples included university students, motor workers and members of political parties - interestingly the 'high scorers' proved to be members of the Communist Party.

Anyone associating with fundamentalist Christianity experiences a sense of déjà vu when reading through the items making up each of Rokeach's dogmatism dimensions. Indeed a number of recent studies have found a close association between literal belief in the Bible and high scores for dogmatism. Early in my research I administered the scale to samples of Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, Methodists and a representative sample of neighbours in my own street - interestingly, the first

two groups, especially the Witnesses, scored high, the street sample provided a 'median' score, while the Methodists indicated a high degree of open-mindedness! The 'similarity' between membership of the Communist Party and of the Jehovah's Witnesses may seem bizarre on first acquaintance, but a little reflection on the findings soon obviates the 'strangeness' of this discovery.

Ideology or personality: why do people join ?

Psychological investigations into 'dogmatism' force the questions of whether people join political and religious bodies because of the ideology of the chosen group or whether they select groups that accord with their personality characteristics. In order to obtain some data that might elucidate this question, I 'joined' a number of Bible groups in the Brighton area - attending, over an 18-month period, nearly 200 Bible classes. Throughout this period I was always strictly honest, being careful not to behave in any way contrary to my non-religious convictions. Eventually I settled on four communities as being of particular interest - the Jehovah's Witnesses, as a fundamentalist group in a state of rapid expansion; the Christadelphians, who share many of the attitudes of Witnesses, but are in a state of decline; the Methodists, representative of mainstream Christianity, in a state of rapid disintegration, and the Quakers, who in many respects are 'outside' the traditional religious spectrum and are historically more 'in the world'. My involvement with the many religious groups in Brighton (in all I had attended the Bible classes of fifteen different religious communities) had led me to postulate that there were

probably eight essential characteristics of the fundamentalist. In general terms these eight features were:

1. A deep fear of uncertainty and chaos - a psychological 'security' based on 'positive certainty' that life has a meaning.
2. An obsessional sense of personal inadequacy.
3. An essential 'self-centredness' and selfishness.
4. A world perceived in dualistic (schizophrenic) terms.
5. Exclusive possession of a restricted truth.
6. Perceived 'separation' from 'worldly' things.
7. Anti-intellectualism.
8. An obsessive sense of urgency.

I feel that although every fundamentalist may not have each of these characteristics, the majority would have most of them. (Obviously there is a considerable overlapping between these items). Overall, fundamentalists would be more likely to be associated with these characteristics, and indeed the differences between communities

would be reflected in the different degrees of salience accorded to each of them.

Testing the hypothesis

I devised an extensive questionnaire for distribution to representative samples of each of the four selected groups. The questionnaire was quite massive by normal research standards, consisting of 180 questions - a third of them being of a sociological rather than a psychological nature (family involvement and socio-economic status, etc.). Earlier experiences in administering the dogmatism scale (and the hostility its non-religious stance had aroused with many fundamentalist individuals) inspired me to phrase many of the queries in religious terminology.

Among the questions were 31 distinctly psychological statements - respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement, on a six-point scale, with suggestions such as:

It can be dangerous to 'think things out' - far safer to leave it to trusted experts. A community that wants to survive should not tolerate great differences of opinion among its members.

I rarely have feelings of guilt. No lasting good ever comes from breaking the law.



HER PARENTS DIVORCED WHEN SHE WAS 7	
MOTHER DIED 1 YEAR AGO — WITHOUT CHRIST	
DEBBIE HAS BEEN ON DRUGS SINCE SHE WAS 14	
RAN AWAY FROM HOME AT AGE 15	
DEBBIE WILSON age 16	
FATHER AN EXECUTIVE AND AN ALCOHOLIC	

Man on his own can never achieve anything worthwhile.
I alone am responsible for all my actions.
I often feel I don't quite fit in.
It can be dangerous to know too much.
One should mix socially with people of all beliefs.
I could never be happy if the future was uncertain.

The 31 questions had been designed to search for the degree of importance attached to each of the eight hypothesised components of fundamentalism. The results of the investigation were impressively confirmatory. Completed questionnaires were received from 262 subjects - 152 fundamentalists and 110 'liberal' Christians. Fundamentalists were significantly more likely to respond with extreme scores, were much more likely to emphatically agree or disagree than were Methodists (M) and Quakers (Q), confirming the 'dogmatism' of the Witnesses (W) and Christadelphians (C).

The responses to the 31 psychological statements were fed into the Sussex University computer, and the program built up an internal 'model' of the type of person comprising each group. Then, individually, the 262 subjects' responses were presented to the computer, which was asked to classify each subject. The table that follows shows the impressive accuracy of this classification.

COMPUTER PREDICTION OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP BASED ON PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSE (PERCENTAGE ACCURATE)

Predicted group:	Actual group:			
	W	C	M	Q
Witnesses	84	17	0	0
Christadelphians	16	75	8	0
Methodists	0	6	68	14
Quakers	0	2	24	86

Overall, 76% of the 262 subjects are correctly classified.

The implication is clearly that the reasons for joining religious communities are not theological, but psychological - that how a person responds to statements about 'fitting in' and the need for 'certainty about the future' is all that is needed to predict community membership with such accuracy. Note that on these personality differentiations, no Witness is 'mistaken' for a Methodist or Quaker; no Quaker is 'mistaken' for a Witness or Christadelphian.

That the 31 psychological questions were directly related to the 'structure of fundamentalism', rather than to Christianity in general, found confirmation in the fact that responses to 21 of these questions differed significantly (using the term in its statistical sense) between Witnesses and Christadelphians; these differences were only significant for 9 of the statements when Methodists were compared with Quakers.

Wider implications

The research so briefly described above is, to my knowledge, the first ever psychological study of Witnesses or Christadelphians. It began as an attempt to extend the Rokeachian work on 'dogmatism', which as I have already stated, began more in the political field. As I mingled with the many religious communities I was constantly reminded of the attitudes I was experiencing which are so familiar in form, if not in content, with those found among political groupings - arguments 'settled' not by encouraging 'free' enquiry, but by reference to sacred texts (Matthew, Marx, Lenin and John). Reliance upon the 'authority' of the organisation (priest or elder, central committee). The inter-faction fighting - if you think Stalinists and Trotskyists hate one another,

you should tell the next Witness who knocks on your door that you are thinking of joining the Christadelphians!

Clearly the personality factors uncovered by my research extend far beyond the little groups I investigated. Given that we live in a dangerous age, and given that the source of this danger is often the person who finds their 'security' within a fundamentalist Christianity or Marxism, it is to totally misread the situation to believe we can change it by political argument. (It's like imagining you can successfully 'enlighten' Jehovah's Witnesses by engaging them, on their terms, in theological discussion).

The strength of any 'religious' body (secular or otherwise) is the 'security' it offers the person feeling inadequate in a truly horrific world. During the decades following the second world war, Viktor Frankl developed his theory of the central role of 'purpose in life'. A survivor of Auschwitz, he argued that the primary human motivational force is the striving to give life meaning. "There is nothing in the world...that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions, as the knowledge that there is a meaning in his life" (1962). He described his experiences in a Nazi death camp, pointed out that those without 'belief' in something were usually

the first to succumb, and referred particularly to the resilience of the interned Jehovah's Witnesses. Frankl insisted his findings extended far beyond extreme situations such as Auschwitz; an enormous number of people only manage to survive in the world by evolving a 'purpose' which acts as an 'escape pattern' security. Of course, the 'dialectic' of the 'religious' body is that it exists not only to offer 'security', but to perpetuate the ideology of imminent catastrophe. Herein lies the positive danger posed by the very existence of these bodies.

The destruction of these groups, 'religious' and 'political', will not be engendered by enlightened theological and political discussions. So long as people feel the need to escape to the protection of a secure 'fortress', where they are assured the care and wisdom of the 'father', 'leader', 'priest', and 'general secretary', the existence of these communities is assured.

The answer, obviously, must be the re-building of people's self-confidence. Only when individuals learn to take control of their own lives, to make their own decisions, will the fundamentalists become irrelevant.

As I recall, this is the point from which Solidarity began...

BOB POTTER

WE'VE LOST HER, DO YOU HEAR? -SHE WAS RIGHT IN OUR HANDS AND YOU COULDN'T GET HER MIND OFF THE GOSPEL. YOU'LL PAY DEARLY FOR THIS!



I'M SORRY, MASTER!

I HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU REALLY SORRY-I'LL MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF YOU IN FRONT OF THE OTHERS!

THANK YOU, LORD, THAT HER NAME IS IN THE BOOK OF LIFE!



"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Rev. 20:12

"AND WHOSOEVER WAS NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE WAS CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE." Rev. 20:15

GOD LOVES YOU AND WANTS YOU TO EXP

WHAT YOU MUST DO:

1. Admit your need (I am a sinner).
2. Be willing to turn from sin (repent).
3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you (on the Cross) and rose from the dead.
4. Through prayer, invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life. (Receive Him as Savior and Lord.)

WHAT TO PRAY:

DEAR FATHER, I KNOW THAT I AM A SINNER AND NEED FORGIVENESS. I BELIEVE THAT CHRIST DIED FOR MY SIN. I AM WILLING TO TURN FROM SIN. I NOW INVITE JESUS CHRIST TO COME INTO MY HEART AND LIVE AS MY PERSONAL SAVIOR. I AM WILLING, BY GOD'S GRACE TO FOLLOW AND OBEY CHRIST AS THE LORD OF MY LIFE.

DID YOU ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR OWN PERSONAL SAVIOR? YES NO

date _____

IRAN**Holy hell**

The Wrath of Allah: Islamic Revolution and Reaction in Iran.

Ramy Nima

Pluto Press, £3.95

Iran is seldom out of the news for long, with stories oscillating from the bizarre to the horrific, and successive television documentaries trying to examine and explain at least part of what goes on. And even if it might be more comfortable to forget about it, it matters for those interested in politics in the modern world, in social movements, in possibilities for change.

So how did it get to be that way: whatever happened to the Iranian revolution? The answer might be given as 'Ayatollah Khomeini', but of course, as this book makes clear, there is much more to be said, and a much wider distribution of responsibility. The (understandably pseudonymous) author, an Iranian socialist and historical researcher, provides us with a competently presented and readable briefing on the background, from the period of overt foreign domination, through the rise of the Pahlavi dynasty, and the consolidation of the dictatorship under the late Shah, to the growth of effective opposition and the events of 1978-1979. The potency of the Islamic element in the equation is explained with reference to social and economic factors: the influx of workers from disrupted village communities to the towns, the lack of an organised labour movement with traditions of collective struggle, the very effective and persuasive propaganda network of the clergy, repression blocking any other outlet for dissent, and so on.

All this makes sense, even erring somewhat on the side of the sensible in the light (or gloom)

of subsequent developments. We could do with a little attention being paid to the psychological dimension, the reasons why large numbers of people seem positively ready to insist that their personal freedom should be outrageously restricted and an ultra-authoritarian system imposed upon them - not to mention the fixation on the grotesque grandfather-figure. Was it the early conditioning in Islam - the word means 'submission' - that made the flight from rationality so precipitate? Or was it rather the country's history? Or 'human nature'? For connoisseurs of the irrational, Iran certainly has plenty to offer; for instance, the institutionalised aversion to logical thought emblazoned in the celebrated slogan, "Britain is worse than the USA; the USA is worse than Britain; the USSR is worse than both of them; each of them is worse than the others" writ large in Tehran.

Back in 1979, however, other things were happening, and submission was not the prevalent mood, even if the subjugator was already at the centre of the political stage. On the ground the situation had some of the aspects of a proper revolution, with the springing up of popular councils and committees based on the workplace, and the flourishing of assorted groups and associations during the temporary absence of repressive forces on the streets. Only temporary, because "While the intellectuals and the masses were intoxicated by the spirit of revolutionary action and the joy of victory, the men of God were busy with the mundane task of consolidating their control over society". In its early stages, the description of the process has a familiar ring: takeover of workers' committees, removal of dissident workers, liquidation of resistance; and later the use of the "imposed" war as justification for requisitioning all human and material resources in the service of the state and its ideology.

Review

It was apparent from the start that the Islamic Republic was going to make life unpleasant in many and varied ways. "Music was banned by Khomeini in the summer of 1979" and even earlier, "In one week alone during early March 1979, 12 people were summarily tried and put to death for alleged sexual crimes such as prostitution and homosexuality" (p.102). The only immediate protests at enforced Islamicisation seem to have come from women, who had been very prominent in bringing about the downfall of the Shah. That they were now left largely isolated to face attacks and intimidation is part of the author's indictment of radical and leftist organisations in Iran. But if women had to struggle alone, they were not alone in suffering: the defeat of their cause, the suppression of any vestige of liberation, went along with the denial of anyone's right to be in opposition to the regime, and a consequent crackdown first on secular allies and then on those with a different interpretation of Islam, notably the Mojahedin. The details of how "the Islamic republic has transformed itself from a repressive regime into a liquidationist state" (p.114) are depressing in the extreme. Ramy Nima gives us enough to remind us how appalling things are, without attempting to recount all the horrors that have been catalogued elsewhere (*), and proceeds with an attempt to analyse the problems and prospects which is useful and interesting, if not entirely convincing on all points.

That resistance should continue under the circumstances may be considered - as it were - miraculous; at the same time, such circumstances inevitably foment resistance, and the authorities can't liquidate everybody, although they seem to be having a good try. Perhaps it requires an element of the irrational to participate in organised resistance like that of the Mojahedin, who are fervently

Islamic and have their own martyr fixation (although they manage on the whole to present Islam with a human face). They are the ones we are most likely to encounter, and to be asked or tempted to support as the 'only viable alternative'. The book agrees that this is what they may be, but reinforces the misgivings we are likely to have: "...if successful the Mojahedin could easily be a repressive force pushing Iran towards a fully regimented society". This is a clearer warning than many leftists were prepared to give about Khomeini when he was seen as representing an alternative to the Shah. So perhaps one 'lesson' of the Iranian revolution, apart from the obvious one of not letting geriatric religious maniacs get hold of power, is that we should think twice about dishing out 'support' left, right and centre (occasionally simultaneously).

The author's conclusion is that "The struggle against Khomeini's regime, the struggle for democracy, is inseparable from the struggle against Islam as a political, social, legal and ideological system". We may agree with his characterisation of Islam as inherently "anti-democratic". It is not, however, the only such system, and the type of activity he seems to view positively, such as building an organised labour movement and bringing political education to the workers, is not without similar dangers of facilitating the imposition of totalitarianism. Nevertheless, the book is to be recommended for anyone who wants to know about Iran and its implications for revolutionary perspectives.

L.W.

* Most comprehensively in At War With Humanity: The Human Rights Record of The Khomeini Regime, published by the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran, 1982 (326pp., £5). Obtainable from M.I.S.S., BM Box 9270, London WC1N 3XX.

LABOUR HISTORY

ILP as institution

British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1888-1906

David Howell

(Manchester University Press, £9.50)

The Independent Labour Party has been badly treated by labour historians. This is a pity; not only was it by far the largest British socialist organisation until the First World War, and still substantially larger than the Communist Party until the 1939-1945 conflict, it was also far from being the trendy 'gas and water' politicking organisation of popular myth.

From the beginning the ILP was a very broad church with a huge range of differing currents. In this it was very different from the narrow and economistic Social Democratic Federation. Side by side and sometimes overlapping with the parliamentary wing there were significant libertarian and even anarchist currents. For example, a large number of ex-members of the Socialist League turned up within its ranks. The party was also notable for the large part women played within it and its rank and file's receptiveness to the issues they raised. These are just a couple of areas where more information would be welcome.

For these reasons I was looking forward to reading David Howell's book. But I was disappointed, for, while it is based on monumental research, it deals primarily with the ILP as an institution rather than a social-political milieu. Even the book's title is thus in my view a misnomer. One illustration of the author's approach is the way in which he deals with the ILP women, of whom there were many, and not just the big names who went on to



Labour's Choice - Co-operative socialism or imperialist capitalism.

enrich the struggle for the emancipation for years to come. For example, the Women's Labour Party of Glasgow, affiliated to the ILP, was formed in 1893 - which must make it the earliest socialist organisation for women - and built up a network of over twenty branches in succeeding years. But Howell has virtually nothing on this, and limits himself to an analysis of the ratio of women attending ILP National Conferences.

Howell's book is a useful contribution to the history of the ILP's organisation, and is well worth reading, but like so much other labour history it is appallingly weak in its appreciation of the real flesh and bones of the movements on which formal organisations rest.

K.W.

SYNDICALISM

Watching Spain

Vision on Fire: Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution

David Porter (ed.),
(Commonground Press, distributed by
Housman's Bookshop, £5.95p).

Late nineteenth century anarchists usually saw the European labour movement as the instrument which would create a new society; late twentieth century anarchists and libertarian socialists have been involved in a far broader spectrum of issues and projects. Emma Goldman stands mid-way between these two waves of libertarian movements. As a feminist she was hostile to the overwhelmingly workerist logic of anarcho-syndicalism; yet she supported syndicalist organisations and she criticised feminists who failed to ally their cause with the industrial struggle of the labour movements.

Goldman could have been a perceptive analyst of both the Spanish Revolution and the Spanish mass anarcho-syndicalist organisation, the CNT. She was at once critical of and sympathetic to the CNT, and her activities in Russia, America and Europe had given her a wealth of experience by which to judge Spain. In My Disillusionment in Russia (published in 1926) she brilliantly described the death of a revolution and the birth of Communist rule. Unfortunately she was unable to write so perceptively about Spain. Only weeks before the outbreak of the Spanish Revolution her lifelong friend, comrade and lover, Alexander Berkman, committed suicide - despair had captured another activist. His death forced Goldman to face hard questions about the worth of political activism. As the Spanish Revolution erupted, Goldman was caught between hope and resignation. She looked for a

self-justification in Spain.

Aside from these particular personal pressures, there were also practical factors which prevented Goldman producing work on the Spanish Revolution comparable with My Disillusionment in Russia. She spoke no Spanish and had only visited Spain once before 1936. Her direct knowledge of the Revolution came from three visits which lasted, in total, only seven months. Goldman cannot therefore be considered as a 'participant' in the revolution; she was a sympathetic and involved observer. The real subject of this book is not the Spanish Revolution but Goldman herself.

In a word, Goldman's writings on Spain are disappointing. Her letters, articles and short essays defended the Revolution from hostile critics; they were often polemical, even journalistic in style. To her credit, she did not idealise the CNT as a faultless instrument of popular self-management, nor did she sink into a rigid and purist rejection of its activities. However, the position she eventually took was, in Porter's words, 'immensely uncomfortable (and) ultimately ambiguous' (p.86). The following passage, written by Goldman in September 1937, seems a fair summary of her position.

"The situation here is overwhelming. So much greatness, so many confusing and agonising sides. Above everything looms an optimism and faith in the triumph of the struggle, one is filled with awe. Having come close to the insurmountable difficulties confronting the CNT-FAI I can understand better the concessions my comrades have made and are making. I cannot reconcile myself to some of them but I realise that when one is in a burning house one does not consider one's possessions, one tries to jump to safety even if it means death". (p.110).

Goldman accepted that the CNT had been forced to make some compromises with Republican and Communist forces, but argued that some of its agreements were naive and self-defeating. In her discussions of the CNT's position, she did make one vital point which many ignored at the time and have forgotten since; while she was strongly critical of some of the CNT's actions, she never accused its leaders of 'selling out'. She respected their honesty and integrity, even if she could not share their views.

Goldman's observations are certainly valid, and may even be of some limited historical value. But they hold no great insights into the Spanish Revolution. Page after page reiterates the same tense, contradictory pulls of compromise and purism. It quickly becomes clear that Goldman's main efforts went into writing brief, polemical pieces rather than in-depth analysis. What else can be gained from this book? There are some journalistic descriptions of revolutionary Catalonia (but nothing which equals the best passages of Orwell's Homage to Catalonia). There are some sketches of peasants' and workers' co-operatives (but more detailed sketches can be found in the works of Dolgoff and Leval). There are some efforts to analyse the CNT's mistakes, but these degenerate too easily into a wistful 'if only...'. One would expect Goldman to be at her best in commenting upon women's roles in the Revolution. But the chapter on women and the Revolution is only twelve pages long: three pages are taken up by Porter's introduction, and another three by a letter from Goldman to Max Nettlau, written before the Revolution. The simple truth appears to be that Goldman wrote little about women's experiences of the Revolution.

Surprisingly, Porter's introductions comments and references often have

a logic and provocativeness which Goldman's writings lack. His footnotes, if a little over-generous, are faultless, and allow any reader without prior knowledge of anarchism, Spain or Emma Goldman to follow Goldman's writings without difficulty. A map and a basic chronological outline of events - two essential features of any work on the Spanish Revolution - are also included.

Readers interested in Emma Goldman's biography and development will find some interesting material in this work. Readers interested in the Spanish Revolution are likely to be a little disappointed. The ultimate lesson to be gained from the book is that after nearly fifty years we still lack an adequate social history of the Spanish revolution. The starting point of such a work would not be one particular political or industrial organisation but the mass popular movement of the Spanish peasants and workers which attempted to break down the artificial barriers of political groups in order to establish direct popular control over all areas of society. These revolutionaries rapidly understood that the CNT was an instrument which they would either have to direct or to bypass in order to implement their revolution. Regretfully, Goldman remained convinced that the CNT had a kind of mission to fulfill; in her eyes the decline of the CNT inevitably meant the decline of the Revolution. In Spain she watched rather than acted.

Further reading:

The best academic histories are Gerald Brenan's The Spanish Labyrinth and Ronald Fraser's more exciting and more recent The Blood of Spain (reviewed in No. 17 of the last series of Solidarity for Social Revolution). Both these works are mildly sympathetic to the CNT. Anarchist and libertarian socialist works include Murray Bookchin's

works include Murray Bookchin's The Spanish Anarchists (on the rise of the CNT), Sam Dolgoff's The Anarchist Collectives, Gaston Leval's Collectives in the Spanish Revolution, and Liz Willis' Women in the Spanish Revolution. Lastly, Sinews, published by the Spanish Information Network (49a South Terrace, Esh Winning, Co.

Durham at £0.40p, including postage) attempts to provide news and insights about the myriad currents within today's CNTs in an open and genuinely informative manner. Readers of Freedom will know that Sinews has recently been attacked by groups within DAM (Direct Action Movement). DAM seem to be acting in a most dogmatic and heavy-handed manner.

S.G.

ON SOCIALISM

Analysis of despair

Dear Solidarity,

L. Erizo's article in the last edition of Solidarity presented some predictable arguments. After Andy Brown's 'On Socialism', it was almost inevitable that someone would write in to present a warning against 'vanguardist' tendencies. Brown proposed some form of organisational initiative; Erizo replies by pointing out the dangers of relying upon an organisation to replace spontaneous popular movements. So far so good.

Yet Erizo takes his argument further. Despair seems to haunt his analyses: conscious politically aware radicalism seems to have been removed from the agenda, and we move from the issue of changing societies into a state of mind in which political activity is a sort of 'supplementary extra' which can be picked up or

left. In Erizo's words, socialists "can 'fight where they are'... The revolution might happen tomorrow, it might never happen...". Erizo contemplates socialism in the same way that a Calvinist contemplates heaven: it exists far away: it is a desirable ideal which cannot be grasped. Erizo abdicates, and ignores one of the fundamental points which Brown made: socialism implies a constant personal commitment in everyday life.

In place of conscious action, Erizo presents a glamourised interpretation of blind acts of resistance and futile non-conformity. He/she makes no distinction between genuinely combative activities, and reflex actions which amount to no more than a game played within a framework of established authority relations. For example, what attitude would Erizo take to dope-smokers who willingly devote their lives to a game of cops and robbers with the drugs squad? Are they, in Erizo's terms, engaged in 'contestation'?

On reflection, Brown's arguments do not seem to have been seriously challenged. Resistance and non-conformity can only become contestation when informed by a clear, conscious political perspective. The role of a socialist organisation is not to create that perspective, but to transmit it and to generalise it.

John Cobbet

P.S. One point which Erizo made was useful-I fully share the doubt about the term 'socialist'. Readers should feel free to read their own terms into the above letter.

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