

ITALY: WOMEN, THE LEFT, THE COMMUNISTS

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Italian Women's Guerrilla Theater

BRITISH LABOUR VS THE WORKERS

Cover: Italian women organize street theater, "Teatro del NO!", for the 1974 Divorce Referendum, photo by Daniela Colombo.

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Italian abortion demonstration, photo by Daniela Colombo

Introduction

This issue of **RADICAL AMERICA** is largely devoted to recent European politics. The development of an internationalist perspective requires that socialists understand developments in other nations without expecting them to translate into easy lessons to apply at home.

The situation of the working classes in those countries has changed substantially since the last time **RADICAL AMERICA** devoted articles to European problems. In the late 1960s and early 1970s in both Italy and Great Britain working-class militancy and the influence of the revolutionary left within the working class were both growing. Now both appear to be in decline, with the important exception of a strong women's movement in Italy (which is discussed below). This decline has been accompanied by the increased power of the parties that "represent" the working class, and to some extent those parties have helped enforce the decline in working-class and left power. In June 1974 the Labour Party became the government in Great Britain and it has worked to discipline the working class and to impose austerity programs on it. In Italy the capitalists have been forced, since the election of June 1976, to concede more governmental power to the Communist Party (PCI). In both cases the party "of" labor plays the role of disciplining it. (There are some similarities here with the role of the Democratic Party and the trade unions in this country.) This is not, of course, a new

strategy; but the increasingly systematic way that it is happening, and the growing likelihood that the PCI will actually form or help form a government in the next few years suggest that this political strategy is taking on greater significance.

With the decline of their power, the working classes in Britain and Italy have had to accept lower standards of living in the last few years. They have experienced growing unemployment and decreased ability to bargain for wage increases. They have suffered inflation beyond wage increases and a deterioration of public social services in terms of quantity, cost, and quality. But while the gross outlines of the economic dynamic may be the same, there are also great differences between the two countries.

In Great Britain the situation is simultaneously more retarded and more advanced than it is in Italy. It is more retarded in that the working class is not as strong and its union structures have been more willing and able to contain working-class militancy. The revolutionary left as a whole is smaller in Britain than in Italy, and the British women's movement is not growing as rapidly as the Italian.

It is also of great significance that the main labor party is the Labour Party, a social democratic formation with no revolutionary pretensions. On the whole the British working class, both in its institutionalized and in its more independent political expressions, is more conservative than the Italian. The Labour Party has long ago adjusted itself to the machinations of bourgeois parliamentary democracy; it no longer holds out a vision of socialism of any sort.

The British situation is more advanced than the Italian in that its party of labor actually runs the government. Thus in Britain we already see a version of what will likely be in store for the Italians before long: austerity imposed by a working-class party in order to create the conditions for renewed capitalist expansion. All this and the consequences of this for the working class and the revolutionary left are documented in Ian Birchall's article. His analysis reminds us that the contours of class struggle and the prospects for revolution have to be investigated in relationship to the short-term fluctuations of the business cycle as well as the long-term trends of capitalism.

In Italy the recession has hurt the working class economically, but its political effects have been mixed. On the one hand, the long-term growth of the Communist Party's strength has continued in the last few years. The fact that it is a Communist, not a Labour, Party that dominates the Italian working class is important for understanding the greater radicalism and strength of that class. Whatever measures the PCI may take as it comes to share power in the government, the very fact that millions vote for a Communist Party is crucial for any assessment of the political situation. On the other hand, independent action by workers, and revolutionary influence among them, are weaker now than several years ago. After a crest in the early 1970s, both militancy and a revolutionary perspective have lessened. Parties and organizations to the left of the PCI remain important, but they are not the most advanced and articulate segments of a class movement as it could be argued they were six and seven years ago. And while working-class militancy and the strength of a revolutionary left are different phenomena, they have historically been closely correlated. Groups to the

left of the CPs frequently gain influence as the working class' own energy and confidence rise, and must be expected to lose influence as the class' efforts are frustrated — at least until the next wave of struggle.

Related to questions of organization and strategy on the revolutionary left are questions about the forms of organization that develop in different periods of struggle. For instance, the factory councils that were created in the height of the class struggle in Italy as autonomous forms of workers' power — that is, outside the control of the unions or political parties — have devolved into adjuncts of the unions and are now instruments controlled from above the working class. What remains to be seen is how these organs, now that they have been captured by the unions, will function when there is another upsurge of workplace activity. Will they provide more successful forms of controlling the working class, or will they be seized and used, or thrown aside, by the workers? These are open questions.

In his article on the events surrounding the recent Italian elections, Carl Boggs discusses crucial problems facing both the PCI and the revolutionary left.

What, for example, are the groups and parties of the revolutionary left to do during periods, like the current one in Italy, when working-class activity is in decline? While the PCI's further alienation from the Soviet Union must be seen as progressive, and while its growing strength in Italy is an indication of left-wing consciousness among the voters, it is also true that both long-term strategic considerations and the specifics of the current political and economic situation are driving the PCI to the right. It moves to the right both in the alliances it seeks and in the programs it assents to, and even proposes, for solving Italy's economic crisis. The revolutionary left must function in the space opened up between the PCI and the working class. If in its entry into power the PCI loses its hold over the working class, then the potential for the revolutionary left is tremendous. But Boggs also points to some of the problems of the revolutionary left itself, and makes it clear that there is no guarantee that today's left will be able to rise to the opportunity.

Ellen Cantarow's article on the abortion movement in Italy is at once more optimistic and more guarded about the future of working-class politics in Italy. It is more optimistic in reporting on the growth of a mass women's movement rooted in campaigns about vital issues for millions of Italian working-class women. It is more guarded in that it raises questions as to whether or not men in the left parties can accept and change in response to the demands and criticisms of the women's movement.

While the future of the women's movement in Italy is unpredictable, there are exciting possibilities in the abortion movement. It reveals the potential power and depth of anti-clericalism, and the social and political importance of an attack on the Church as a radicalizing, liberating, and mobilizing force. The movement makes it definitively clear that divorce, abortion and other family and non-workplace issues ARE working-class issues. The movement in Italy shows how different a women's movement is when there is a strong working-class left. (It suggests that the hegemony of bourgeois feminism in the US is not inherent in feminism, but is more a result of the lack of a working-class socialist movement here.)

The abortion issue has helped organize and stimulate the Italian women's movement, or more precisely, movements. Furthermore, the rise of autonomous women's organizations has created the conditions in which the left will be challenged to address the needs of the working class as a whole, not just the working males; and to broaden the socialist vision itself. It seems likely that the left will not meet that challenge easily, and that the process of thoroughly integrating a feminist theory and practice into the revolutionary movement will take a long time. Thus it is a step forward that organizations are developing that can autonomously politicize women.

While she was in Italy Ellen Cantarow collected the photographs by Daniele Colombo. We are also pleased to publish a series of portraits of workers by Steve Cagan of Cleveland. We are always eager for good photographs, about the same kinds of things that we publish articles about — working people, political struggles, social movements. We cannot pay for photographs, but we will handle them carefully and return them promptly.

The poems are by Tom Wayman, a Canadian socialist poet of growing reputation. He is one of the few North American poets who is writing about work and the working-class experience. As a friend of his described him to us, "his partisanship with workers has something between a Wobbly and an Anarchist distrust of the Unions, but it is distrust of the organization and not of the men who benefit by it." We are eager to publish more good socialist poetry, and not necessarily exclusively about oppression or work either. We would like to encourage our readers to send us poetry about all aspects of life.

As always we want to encourage our readers to send us articles they think we'd be interested in. We publish pieces up to 8000 words in length, and are especially eager for socialist analyses of current political problems in the U.S. and other parts of the industrial world.

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Italian women speaking for abortion in "Iniziativa Populare,"
photo by Daniela Colombo

Abortion and Feminism in Italy: Women against Church and State

Ellen Cantarow

Aborto, sì, ma non finisce qui!

(Abortion — yes: but the struggle won't end there!)

Donne, donne, donne, ci dobbiamo organizzare:

La nostra lotta autonoma il mondo può cambiare.

(Women, women, women, we must get organized:

Our independent struggle new worlds will realize).

—slogans shouted during abortion demonstrations in Rome, December, 1975, and April, 1976.

1. THE CONDITIONS BEHIND THE MOVEMENT.

Last June, in Sessa Arunca, a small town in the hills twenty-five or thirty miles north of Naples, Elisabetta Pastore, 32 and mother of four, drank parsley extract in order to miscarry, and died. Her last child had been born by Caesarian section seven months earlier. Not only did she fear bearing a fifth; the family couldn't afford another on the wages her husband earned as a factory worker.

A crowd of women from the town filed after Elisabetta's coffin in a funeral procession, and they whispered that a bungled abortion had caused the death—not the parsley potion.

Working-class and peasant women in Italy continue to abort today as they have for hundreds of years. For them abortion is routine, a biological hazard that goes along with maternity. Recently, two feminists interviewed women from families that have been "squatting" in a public housing project in Turin. They asked the women questions about their experience of sex, contraception, abortion, and childbirth, and they got answers like the following:

"The first day of my marriage I got pregnant with the two kids you see here. I'd had these two for thirteen months and then the little boy was born. What, I said to myself, I've only been married for two years and I already have three kids, what are things coming to? And so I began having the first abortions and I've continued to have them ... seeing that I was having an abortion every year, maybe even two a year, the doctor wanted me to take the pill, but after five of them I started vomiting and getting nauseous and so the doctor says, 'Listen, I guess you can't take the pill,' and since then I haven't found any other way."

Q.: Can you talk about your experience of childbirth?

A.: When we had the twins we didn't have any money, no insurance either. The midwife told me, you absolutely have to have a doctor, and I say, 'Listen Signora, if you can help me, help me... I don't have a cent and I can't go to the hospital.' And so the lady helped me. The first was born half-dead, the other with only one foot... My little boy, on the other hand, took two days being born, he had big shoulders and he weighed ten pounds, he couldn't get out and I was all torn up down there. I was still at home so the midwife sewed me up outside but inside I was ruined. I was in bed for 15 days with an inflammation of the uterus; I nearly died... As for the abortions, I had them all done at two and a half months... because I couldn't stand the nausea and vomiting anymore. (1)

When you feel another child will drag your family under financially, the solution is abortion. When you discover pregnancy will ruin your health, the solution is abortion. The doctor prescribes the pill, but it makes you vomit and you become terrified, so the next solution will be... abortion.

In 1975 Mauro Mellini, a lawyer and member of a national civil

rights party of socialist persuasion, the Radical Party, wrote, "The great population equalizer in our country is abortion. Clandestine abortion; mass abortion; class abortion." (Mellini means that abortion is most common in the working class.) (2) In Sessa Arunca alone, about 2000 women have abortions every year. In the country as a whole, between 750,000 and 3 million women do. (3) It has been estimated that 20,000 women die every year because of badly performed, unsterile abortions. (4)

The law is the most immediate source of the situation I have just described. Under Fascism, legislation passed in 1930 made abortion "a crime against the sanctity of the race." This law remains in force today. A decision made in 1975 by the Constitutional Court (like our Supreme Court but not equal to it in power) allows for therapeutic abortion when the mother's life is in danger. This is progress: for example the ruling class has made it theoretically possible for women to have abortions in Seveso, near Milan, where fumes escaped from a chemical factory that manufactures a defoliant used in Vietnam, and known to produce birth deformities. At the same time, American women who lived for years with such laws know how restrictive they are: better to seek an underground abortionist than to run a gauntlet of examinations and inquisitions by "physicians competent to judge." In the United States black market abortions flourished under such legislation and they continue to flourish in Italy.

Some Italian physicians will perform abortions, but only at great cost, the dubious privilege of the rich and well-to-do. The wives and daughters of workers and farmers rely on folk remedies, some of them extremely dangerous — parsley, anise and other vegetable extracts, phosphorous potions made out of the ground-up heads of matches. And then there is a kind of local midwife called the *mammana*. Always available through the female grapevine, she charges little and she will never betray your secret. Often she is sympathetic, a poor woman helping out other poor women. Her operating room is often her kitchen. Her usual method is to insert into the uterus a probe a little larger than a needle. The probe is left in the uterus, after which miscarriage follows — sometimes accompanied by infection, sometimes attended by death. Some Italian feminists have seen in the *mammana* the ancient workings of solidarity among women in the healing arts. In her techniques "could be the embryo of a new form of self-help," writes the feminist journalist Maria Adele Teodori. But as yet such mutual aid "exists outside of any guarantees of personal safety, and therefore the risk is much too high." (5)

Another Fascist law, which made contraceptives illegal, was nullified in 1971. But abortion still remains Italy's leading form of birth control because the silent masses of Italian women simply don't use contraceptives, however little the devices may cost. For one thing public health insurance neither pays for nor publicizes

them. "To get them," a friend wrote me recently, "you have to go to a private physician, and this working-class people just don't do." Working-class people "just don't" go to a private doctor because, for one thing, an office visit can cost as much as \$50. But apart from economic reasons, psychological ones weigh just as heavily — sexual repression, fear, the pressures of Catholicism. "I would be willing to use the different methods," said a rural Southern woman in a recent interview, "but I'm ashamed, and then the doctor is Catholic, and there are even people who would snigger and call me a woman of the streets." (6)

Before one can pick oneself up and visit a doctor about sexual matters, one must have some sexual knowledge and self-confidence. These are still very new, especially among working-class and poor women. Taken to the extreme, shame is at one with ignorance:

"When I got married," said another squatter at La Falchera, "I was almost twenty-five, but I knew nothing about sex ... you know how it is in the country, more closed than in the city ... they don't let you find out about anything, you're in the dark about everything. So when I got married the old women in my town told me, listen Daughter, be careful: honor is like an onion skin. Once it's torn you can say goodbye to the onion skin. But as for me I didn't know what 'onion skin' meant. The morning after the wedding I woke up and began looking around the bed and my husband said, 'What are you looking for?' 'I want the skin.' 'What skin?' 'Why,' I go, 'isn't honor like an onion skin, and when your mother comes to visit us today ... if she doesn't see the skin, God knows what she'll think.'" (7)

It is true that the ways of the countryside and the provinces aren't those of the great Northern cities — Turin, Milan. It is also true that the woman telling the story I've just quoted is 38, and that young women in their teens have begun to be more knowledgeable. But conversations about sexuality often have all the tremulous expectancy of novelty. Last year I went to a five-day conference of union women. The third evening, expectant, excited laughter exploded among a group of women when one said, "O.K., girls, now for some real stuff. Let's talk about sex!"

2. THE ABORTION MOVEMENT'S IDEAS

Listening to such conversations among women, one has the sense that a momentous consciousness is gathering steam. The very newness is explosive, as if, over the past six years, long-festered grievances had suddenly burst out all at once. But birth control and abortion aren't entirely new concerns in Italy. For example in the fifties AIED, the Association of Italians for Demographic

Education, sent volunteers into working-class neighborhoods to spread birth control information. Luigi De Marchi, head of the group, campaigned for twenty years for the free distribution of contraceptives. He read *THE SECOND SEX* and his imagination was fired by Simone de Beauvoir's comment that "woman's freedom begins with her uterus." By this she meant, De Marchi said, "that in patriarchal society women are reduced to being machines for reproduction and to sexual objects." But De Marchi's convictions have also been shaped by Malthus: "Women's continual exclusion from birth control technology has historically accounted for a surplus fertility in our country, and thus for an overabundance of the labor force with regard to the country's resources." (8)

In the drive for abortion and contraceptives, the contemporary women's movement has outstripped AIED. Few Italian women who call themselves feminists would subscribe to the view that the aim of abortion and contraception is "to control population." They are fighting to emancipate women from the tyranny of unwanted pregnancies and to separate sexual pleasure from procreation. The terms in which these aims are articulated are peculiarly Italian — that is, tinged by the awareness that the Church is a presence in nearly every Italian woman's life, and by a class-consciousness that is a prominent feature of Italian feminism. In matters of contraception, abortion, and sexual emancipation, the rage of an Italian woman may be the keener for her Catholic upbringing. But she must also live with lacerated feelings, for Catholicism leaves one with a peculiar dread of abortion that can't be simply dismissed. Because of this, in its philosophy the Italian abortion movement is as much against abortion as it is for the measure. A common slogan goes,

Anticoncezionali per non abortire;
Aborto libero per non morire.

Contraceptives so that we may avoid abortion;
Free abortion on demand so that we may avoid death.

"Abortion is always a violent measure to which women are forced to resort in place of real alternatives." So begins the statement of principle of the Coalition of Roman women for Abortion and Contraception (CRAC), formed in 1975. While a much earlier document by the leader of a group in Padua, *Lotta Femminista* (Feminist Struggle), declares: "The problem isn't abortion. The problem is being able to be mothers only when we wish to do so." (9)

Orietta Avenati, a feminist lawyer, spoke on abortion in 1972 at the Association for Young Italian Lawyers. She called her talk not simply, "Abortion," but "Abortion and the Right to Birth." With delicate sarcasm and a sense of fine juridical distinction she anticipated the arguments of her listeners who, while "young," were

still male, and Catholic :

I want to make clear from the start that we women consider ourselves part of the human species, even if for thousands of years we have been treated by law, by custom, and by the very companions of our lives as sub-human. Since we claim membership in the human species, we have no interest in its extinction. And it is precisely because of this that we demand the right of women to control their own maternity. (10)

Thus the Italian abortion movement has not denied the anguish abortion raises in the souls of women bound by a Catholic patrimony. Nor does it forget that millions of women are also bound through their families and often through strong personal memories to a peasant past. One mustn't forget that even many working-class women living in Northern cities came there only recently, during the waves of migration from the South that happened during the fifties, when Italy was tooling up for an explosion of industrial development. Speaking of her past in the rural South, a young woman in the North described to me with bitterness her family's feelings about her aunt, married but childless: "She was thought to be a senseless thing, like ground that gives forth no seed, like a tree that produces no fruit." The angry rejection of such a family is the bitterer because that family remains part of one. It lives on in one's very language, and one can't totally abandon it. So at its beginning the Italian abortion movement has hewed to a delicate philosophy of its own, often putting before all else woman's autonomy in the matter of her own maternity.

There is another reason for the abortion movement's stress on a freely-chosen maternity. Most working-class women fear openly discussing abortion, so it is best to begin with other issues. I spoke with a young working-class woman who has been organizing her co-workers in a textile factory near Turin. "I really put my foot in it the first time," she told me. "I began with abortion. You can't imagine how mad they got. They called me all kinds of names — whore, and so on. The next time we discussed health and safety on the job, and it turned out that several of the women had had miscarriages while they were working." Industrial miscarriages, which are called "white abortions," have been a major theme in the abortion movement. Industrial health and safety conditions in Italy are ruinously bad. Anecdotes like the following, by a woman who works at the Siemens factory in Milan, show just how bad they are for women :

There is a shop within the Siemens plant where most of the women become sterile, or, if they've succeeded in becoming pregnant, they generally have miscarriages. In

this shop the women work standing on the machines, with a sort of wheel around their waists. To make the machine run, they have to move their hips continuously, for eight hours. In such conditions the more fortunate ones ruin their kidneys, but most lose their babies. (11)

In the context of the abortion movement, which has turned feminist ideas into mass concerns in Italy, the theme of industrial miscarriages has proved one way that the movement, until now largely composed of students and professionals, can reach working-class women.

3. HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT

The abortion movement began modestly. A small, national civil rights party called the Partito Radicale (PR), the Radical Party, more American than Italian in its interests and tactics, had been agitating for libertarian reforms for some time. For example in the mid-sixties the PR had spearheaded a drive for divorce reform, which was finally accomplished in 1970 when Italian parliament passed a liberalized divorce law. Defining itself as a socialist organization whose emphases on personal liberties distinguish it from the rest of the left, the PR has staged hunger strikes and other acts of nonviolent civil disobedience to publicize its goals. When one of its officers returned from the U.S. bearing a mass of women's liberation literature, a small group of women gathered in 1970 to discuss the material, then formed Movimento di liberazione della donna (MLD), Women's Liberation Movement. The MLD immediately drafted a simple program for a liberalized abortion law, for legal contraceptives, and for widespread education about the latter.

For reasons I will explain later, for nearly two years the MLD was virtually alone in its campaign. In 1972, news came from France and Germany that figures like Simone de Beauvoir and the actress Romy Schneider had publicly announced their own past abortions in violations of their countries' laws. Inspired by the dramatic effect "self-denunciations" were having outside Italy, the MLD and other feminist groups collected and published self-denunciations within the country. The Italian movement for abortion reform also drew inspiration from publicity that women's movements in other countries were giving to abortion trials. The most famous of these took place in France in 1972, when Marie Claire Chevalier, a minor, was indicted for having had an abortion after being raped. Together with her mother, the abortionist, and two friends, she was successfully defended by the feminist lawyer Gisele Halimy. In Italy, Gigliola Pierobon, a factory worker, was indicted for having had an abortion years earlier when she was sixteen. Women gathered at her trial in June, 1973, shouting,

"We've all had abortions!" The object of tactics like self-denunciation, and the transforming of abortion trials into political acts, was to force a showdown with the Italian legal system. Acts of this sort built up an extremely successful propaganda campaign that served to push the idea of abortion out of the netherworld of private, shamed anxiety, into the realm of public discussion.

The abortion campaign took a new turn when Socialist Party deputy Loris Fortuna, father of the divorce reform bill, presented an abortion proposal to Parliament. Fortuna's was a compromise measure that proposed therapeutic abortions. (Later, in 1975, the Socialist deputy would change his proposal to one that was much more radical, giving women exclusive freedom to choose abortion in the first three months of pregnancy.) There was now a government position around (or against) which to rally. At this time, the several large and influential parties of Italy's new left — parties whose relationship to the women's movement I will describe later — got involved in the abortion campaign. For example Il Manifesto, a national party formed by Communist Party (PCI) dissidents expelled from the PCI's central committee, and by ex-Socialist Party members, sponsored debates on abortion in various cities. At the same time as the new left entered the abortion struggle, the Catholic Church and the party that heads Italian government, the Christian Democrats, began a counterattack. The Bishops' Council published denunciations of legal abortion. Catholic conservatives began a drive for a referendum to repeal the 1970 liberalized divorce law.



Women's Liberation Movement (MLD) demonstration in front of Parliament, photo by Daniela Colombo

The divorce referendum turned out to be extremely important for the course the abortion movement would take. But to understand exactly how it was important, one must first understand why sexual and family issues can have the explosive impact they have had on Italian government and society. In Italy, Church and state are intertwined through law, political party and social organizations. The Italian constitution gives the Vatican certain guarantees that ensure it a visible and permanent role in public life. For example, the constitution makes Catholicism the state religion. The Christian Democrats (*Democrazia Christiana*, DC) have led Italian parliament since 1948. As their name implies, they are a religious party. Before Mussolini set up Fascism in 1922 and abolished all political parties but his own, there existed the Popular Party, led by Don Luigi Sturzo, a Sicilian priest. The Popular Party produced men who would later become major figures in the DC. The fingers of the Vatican and the DC reach into the grass roots through a myriad of social organizations. For example ONMI — *Opera nazionale per la maternità e l'infanzia*, National Project for Maternity and Infancy — is supposed to develop and supervise private institutions like nursery schools and well-baby clinics. Like the rest of the gigantic DC bureaucracy, which is built on patronage, ONMI has bred inefficiency and corruption and has been the focus of frequent attacks by the women's movement. In this country, where Catholicism and politics are so intimately bound up with one another, the family is considered the foundation of the state. Thus any challenge to Catholic tradition becomes not just an attack on private life as people have experienced it hitherto, but an attack on public institutions.

This, then, was the context in which the 1974 divorce referendum took place. The Catholic conservatives took care to have the ballot confusingly worded. If you voted "yes," this meant that you were for repealing the liberalized divorce law, not, as you might have supposed, that you were for divorce itself. In order to show that you favored retaining the law, you had to vote "No." Together with other women's groups the MLD took up an educational campaign around the divorce referendum. On May 12, 1974, the referendum was held. The Catholic conservatives had been confident of an easy victory: contrary to all their expectations, 60% of the voters cast their ballots in favor of the law's retention. Both the Church and the DC felt the vote as a tremendous blow. The women's movement saw it as a victory.

During the period of the divorce referendum, PR members and others had been working less dramatically behind the scenes to set up an organization called the Italian Center for Sterilization and Abortion — CISA. CISA did political work. It ran two underground clinics, one in Milan and one in Florence. It also organized trips to London so women could have abortions there. Students, office-workers, storeworkers, and housewives married to professionals

and officeworkers, have come to CISA for abortions since the organization's inception. Very few factory workers have come, and still fewer farm women, for the same reasons that these women by and large don't use contraceptives — sexual shame, intimidation, and ignorance. The women who staff CISA are doctors, nurses and other professionals, students, and a scattering of officeworkers. CISA's head is Adele Faccio, professor of philology, anarchist socialist, and ex-fighter in the ranks of the Partisans — Italy's underground resistance in World War II against Mussolini's Fascism.

On January 8, 1975, police invaded CISA's Florence office. Brutally, they arrested both CISA staff members and women in the recovery room who had had abortions only minutes before. On January 13, the head of the Radical Party, Gianfranco Spadaccia, was also arrested, and a warrant was issued for Adele Faccio's arrest. The warrant charged her with procuring abortions and causing the delinquency of those who had aborted, crimes for which she could have been punished with up to 15 years' imprisonment. Faccio went underground. On January 26 she reappeared publicly to address a national abortion rally that the MLD had called in Rome in response to the clinic shutdown. A crowd of five thousand people packed Rome's huge Adriano Theater, while outside, thousands of police agents and carabinieri, Italy's federal police, stood with shields and tear gas bombs. At the end of the rally Faccio turned and waited. Sheepishly, two men mounted the stage and presented her with the arrest warrant, which she read over the microphone. She was then taken into custody. (Both she and Spadaccia were later released).

The Florence episode galvanized the energies of the entire women's movement and the new left around the issue of abortion. Around the same time that the rally took place in the Adriano Theater in Rome, demonstrations protesting the police attack occurred in major cities throughout the country. Staged by new left parties, these were made up of both men and women. The marchers carried posters calling for free abortion on demand; the women, in particular, carried posters that read, "D'ora in poi decido io," "From now on, I decide."

Realizing their increasing power, women in the MLD and other groups, together with the Radical Party, began a petition drive towards a national abortion referendum. By October, 1975, they had collected some 700,000 signatures — well over the number the constitution requires before a referendum can be called. According to the Italian constitution, two months must elapse between the close of a petition drive and the referendum for which the signatures have been collected. During this period the referendum can be canceled if members of parliament can agree on modifying the law in question. Even the most minor change will suffice to cancel the referendum, and if the referendum's backers still want it to



take place they must begin a completely new signature campaign for another referendum to repeal the changed law.

This tedious parliamentary procedure set the stage for the next episodes in the abortion campaign. The DC feared the referendum. In regional elections in June, 1975, a year after the divorce referendum, they had suffered severe losses, while the Communist Party had made surprising gains. It is generally agreed that the DC's defeat in the 1975 regional elections was prompted by a growing disillusionment that voters had begun to register in the divorce referendum. Clearly, the abortion referendum might prove yet another blow to the DC, whose corruption, coverups of coup plots, and incapacity to deal with a catastrophic economic situation were by now matters that not only the new left publicized, but Italy's largest daily newspapers and magazines as well. The DC therefore tried to stave off the abortion referendum by arriving at a compromise law with the other parties in parliament. While the parliamentarians dickered over ways to change the existing abortion law, women decided to move the question into the streets.

The Coalition of Roman Women to Liberalize Abortion and Contraception, CRAC, had been formed in June 1975 by women from autonomous women's groups and new left parties. CRAC planned two abortion marches in Rome. The first march, in December, attracted a crowd of some 20,000 women, including women from

France and England. For the second, in April, 1976, 50,000 women streamed to the capitol from all over Italy. In both marches the women called for free abortion on demand, shouting, "Aborto libero, gratuito, assistito, SUBITO!" — "We want cost-free abortion on demand, supported by insurance, NOW!" They proclaimed, "L'utero e mio, e lo gestisco io!" — "My uterus is mine, and it's up to me to look after it!" They sang,

Come mai, come mai, non decidiamo mai?
D'ora in poi, d'ora in poi, decidiamo solo noi.

How come, how come, we're never the ones to decide?
From now on, from now on, only we will decide.

And for hours they chanted,

Donne, donne, donne, ci dobbiamo organizzare:
La nostra lotta autonoma il mondo puo cambiare.

Women, women, women, we must get organized:
Our independent struggle new worlds will realize.

To slogans of autonomous liberation the women joined political attacks on the Christian Democrats and on the PCI: the latter had been equivocating on the abortion issue in its fear of "alienating the Catholic masses," and in an effort at conciliating the DC. In the December march one banner showed DC prime minister Aldo Moro shaking hands with PCI secretary Enrico Berlinguer, both men seated astride a uterus. And a delegation of women from Sicily bore a banner that carried the legend,

Preti, padroni e governo
Non fermeranno piu le donne di Palermo.

Priests, bosses and government
Won't halt the women from Palermo anymore.

Both marches were extraordinary for their effect on national consciousness and the government. Of the march in April one woman said to me,

At one point we marched by the offices of the Christian Democratic Party — fifty-thousand women, imagine! We took up the Algerian women's cry: you know, that high-pitched 'la-la-la-la-la.' We could see the men peeping out of the DC office windows, and they looked — scared. Our power was fantastic!

Shortly after the march happened, Aldo Moro resigned and premature national elections were called. It is widely agreed that the patchwork coalition that had kept the DC in power had come apart over the abortion question.

While the abortion movement astonished even its participants with its stunning effect on national politics, the power of the movement to unify the Italian women's movement was no less striking. The history of Italian feminism in the late sixties and very early seventies had been one of scattered groups with often sharp disagreements and little unity. Abortion turned out to be the issue around which the groups could come together. The formation of CRAC, which united in a single organization women from mixed groups with autonomous feminists, was a particular victory.

As a direct outgrowth of the abortion movement, in 1975 a larger women's health and self-help movement began flourishing. The most immediate expression of this movement has been a drive for women's health clinics. Italian feminists, like their American sisters, see women's health clinics not as a service purely and simply, but as part of a general program for changing women's ideas about themselves and about their social possibilities.

CRAC's position statement of June, 1975, pledged the organization to set up

clinics controlled by women and recognized by the state, in order to develop a full program of sex education that does not see procreation as the sole function of sexuality; and in order that maternity and children's education no longer be more important for women than any other social and political activity.

Like the women who have made up the bulk of the abortion movement, the women in the clinic movement are students, teachers and other professionals, and office workers. Very few factory workers are involved. An exception that seems to me extremely important is a small but growing movement of union women who are at once feminist, socialist and working-class. Some women have gotten elected to shopfloor representative bodies called factory councils, which exist in every workplace in Italy and which have considerably more autonomy than any workplace organizations in the U.S. The councils may call workers' assemblies during work hours; representatives elected directly by the workers discuss political as well as economic issues. It is through the factory council delegates that the union women have been trying to reach working women. Since 1975 they have held meetings for the delegates, meetings that have combined discussion of feminist ideas with discussion of job-related issues. In these conversations, health, sexual and family questions have been the most important topics. The union women with whom I have spoken about the growth

of their movement agree that it couldn't have happened without the abortion campaign and the larger burgeoning of Italian feminism.

But most women in the health movement work outside unions and workplaces, and in the community. For example in Rome, women have set up a few experimental clinics. One of these, recently shut down by the police, was in the working-class neighborhood, Magliana. A neighborhood group made up of women members of one of the major new left parties — PDUP, the Party of Proletarian Unity for Communism — seized a vacant apartment and set up the clinic. Months of work preceded the squat. The PDUP group had contacts with tenant organizers and political workers of long standing in the community. On the strength of such friendships they began with an exhibit in the piazza, displaying a montage of pictures, slogans, and written explanations — an activity called the *mostra*, a word that simply means exhibition. The *mostra* is widely used by the Italian left as a means of involving bypassers and curious onlookers in discussion of particular political issues. After the *mostra* in the piazza in Magliana, the neighborhood committee contacted Magliana women who had had abortions with CRAC. Finally the committee did a door-to-door fundraising for the clinic; after this the occupation began.

Similar occupations have occurred in other cities. The self-help clinics don't practice abortions. They do gynecological exams, provide and give information about contraceptives, and make women's health and liberation literature available. In the few working-class neighborhoods where such clinics exist, local women do visit. But by and large, working-class women aren't on the clinic staffs, for they are still family-bound and very few have either the time or the psychological freedom to devote to political causes.

Last year a national law was drafted that permits municipalities to set up family clinics. Feminists intend to demand of city governments that these clinics be strictly for women, not for couples or families. For once men become involved in the consultations it is they who will tend to speak for the family; the women will be subordinate, once more frightened into passivity.

4. ABORTION, FEMINISM, AND THE LEFT

On the one hand the Italian abortion movement and feminism have come out of a social situation dominated by extremely conservative institutions — the Catholic Church, the DC. On the other they come out of Italy's long tradition of revolutionary socialism. The Italian women's movement as a whole — not just the abortion movement — is much more left-wing than its American counterpart, and many more Italian feminists than Americans would call themselves socialists. When Adele Faccio was arrested at the MLD's rally in 1975, the speaker on the platform beside her rose

and led the crowd in an Anarchist Socialist song, "Bourgeois republic, one day you will be ashamed..." When MLD member Maria Adele Teodori wrote her book on the abortion movement, she entitled it AGAINST CLASS-BIASSED ABORTION. These things seem even more striking if one realizes that the MLD and the Radical Party are considered moderate by the rest of the Italian new left.

By and large, the middle-class women who have made up the greater part of the Italian women's movement have not just been concerned about extending the movement to working-class women, but about extending the movement's aims beyond reform, towards a revolution against capitalism. Realizing the means by which a revolution at once feminist and socialist will be achieved, though, has proved a sticking point. On the whole, traditional socialist philosophy has described only the emancipation of working-class men. Italian machismo has proved no different on the left than in the rest of the society.

I think there are a number of reasons that Italian feminists haven't been able massively to reject anticapitalist and socialist ideas as so many American feminists have done. For one thing, theories of justice and equality are more often than not bound up in Italy with ideas of working-class emancipation. Thus the terms in which women have articulated their own repression have been based not just on an analysis of women's position in "society," but on women in capitalism. For another thing, in Italy there is no political refuge for the women's movement but the left. While American feminists can find supporters for their ideas among, say, members of the Democratic party, there is no analogous, strong capitalist party in Italy. Wedded as it is to the Catholic Church, the DC has been so consistently reactionary about the most important feminist issues in Italy — divorce and abortion — that it would be ludicrous to see it as anything but an enemy force.

To understand the relationship between the abortion movement, feminism and the left, one must know something about the nature of the left itself. Specifically, one must understand something about the differences between Italy's new, or revolutionary, left, and the Communist Party.

During the fifties technologically advanced industries like steel, petrochemicals, automobiles and consumer goods for export displaced less advanced industries like foodstuffs, textiles and clothing. While profits soared and a small ruling class prospered, working-class and small tradespeople had hard times. Southerners who had migrated North in the hope of a better life were doubly embittered because of the prejudice, much like race prejudice in the United States, which they met there. In their resentment neither these nor other workers who joined them turned to the unions or the PCI. After World War II the PCI had abandoned revolutionary ideas for a politics of gradual reform. (12) It cooperated with the

DC and the Italian ruling class in what it declared was a necessary postwar economic buildup. In this effort it acted as an essentially conservative force in regard to working-class struggles, for example helping to guarantee "labor peace" during the fifties by sharply curtailing the freedom of the unions. (13)

In 1968 and 1969 a wave of wildcat strikes gave birth to a radically democratic drive for workers' self-government. (14) The name given to this movement was "autonomia operaia," "workers' autonomy," which made clear that the movement was independent of the unions and political parties alike. At the same time as the workers' rebellions burst out, students raised grievances against an archaic and outmoded educational system, and occupied their universities; high-school and junior high school students also joined the insurgencies. The movement spread to communities, where "squats" and other tenant actions happened. The organizations born of this resurgence of revolutionary activity came to be called the "extraparlimentary" left. Unlike the PCI and the Socialist Party, they held no seats in Italian parliament until last spring, when a coalition of extraparlimentary parties elected six deputies to the lower chamber. People also refer to the extraparlimentary left as the revolutionary left, to distinguish it from the PCI.

The first women's groups were formed in reaction to the student movement. Italian women, like their American sisters, found that they were the movement's stenographers and service-workers, that they had little if any power to discuss female concerns in the often heavy theorizing that went on about working-class revolution. But when such women formed autonomous groups they did not abandon socialist ideas. Instead, much of the first two years of the existence of such groups was spent trying to sort out the specifics of women's oppression both in patriarchy and in capitalism; trying, too, to sort out how the groups might work in relation to the larger movements of the working-class and student left. It was during this very early period (1970-1972) that the MLD was beginning its abortion campaign. For the most part, women in the autonomous groups didn't join that campaign. On the one hand this was because the personal and ideological discussion that engaged them didn't leave them time. On the other, they felt the MLD campaign was simply "a civil rights struggle." By this they meant that the MLD and the PR felt that whether or not abortion reform led to other, more revolutionary changes, it would still benefit individual women in the here-and-now, and the acquisition of such a benefit for individual women was therefore sufficient in itself. Women from revolutionary left backgrounds later participated in the abortion campaign because by then it had become clear that the abortion issue did arouse discussion about many other aspects of women's oppression, that it was giving rise to a larger women's health movement, and that it had tremendous potential influence on Italian

politics.

At the same time that some women were forming autonomous women's groups in reaction to the sexism of male radicals, there were many others in the early seventies who remained in the revolutionary left parties, denying that a specific women's oppression existed at all. It was only in the course of the abortion movement that these women began reacting angrily to male radicals' definitions of their roles. They formed women's commissions where they could discuss their position within the parties, and the work that they, as women, might undertake there. In January, 1975, when the new left organized rallies to protest the police attack on the Florence abortion center, the women carried banners whose slogans were signed, "Women's Commission of... (ex-new left party)." This apparently innocent subscript had come out of much previous debate. Many men argued that the banners ought to have been signed by the parties, not by the women's commissions within them. The notion behind this seemingly hairsplitting distinction is that concerns that are specifically female don't exist. Abortion — in the words of two writers giving the male revolutionary perspective on the issue — is "a class battle," "a matter for struggle." In such phrasing any specifically feminist consciousness is subordinated to a theory of class emancipation pure and simple. In the course of debates over such matters, women also forced the men to agree that women, not men, should march at the head of the January, 1975 rallies. In this they made a great step forward both in their feelings about themselves, and in their relations with the men.

The struggle between men and women on the revolutionary left grew. In the abortion march on Rome in December, 1975, some men from Lotta Continua (The Struggle Continues), one of the revolutionary parties, invaded the rear of the demonstration. The women planning the December and April marches had declared that these should consist only of women. Formally the men in the parties had agreed. As it has been described to me, the invasion wasn't a matter of policy. It came out of the deep feelings of personal resentment some men felt on seeing the power that women were proving capable of wielding. In the skirmish that attended the invasion, some women were beaten. Marshals had to stave off the men during the course of the rest of the rally. The incident touched off a wave of rage among women in this and other groups on the left. The women began questioning both their personal relationships with the men, and what they saw as a long-male-defined tradition of militancy and political activity that could no longer be viable if feminists were to remain in the parties. Some women have in fact dropped out of Lotta Continua. Others have stayed. But implacably, and with searing emotion, the women who remain have begun raising concerns that male-defined socialism had hitherto thought "private," and irrelevant to political activity.

What will be the outcome of the clash between feminism and socialism in Italy? The future direction of the women's movement, out of which this clash has emerged, will most immediately depend on the course the abortion and health movements will take. This past September police again closed the CISA clinic in Florence (which reopened not long after its shutdown in 1975). Another clinic in Bologna was also closed last September. Again, demonstrations were staged in reaction to the attacks. As I write the last paragraphs of this article, pregnant women from Seveso are undergoing harrowing experiences. As late as the first weeks in October, several months after the disastrous chemical leak, women were still having to prove to skeptical doctors and psychiatrists that they would suffer severe physical damage or go insane should they not have abortions. The abortion issue should be taken up in parliament very soon. Ten new left deputies (four from the Radical Party, six from a coalition of revolutionary left parties) will introduce a proposal that women be completely free to choose abortion in the first six months of pregnancy, without the intervention of doctors or psychiatrists. Most observers agree that the course of the parliamentary battle will depend on what stand the PCI — Italy's second most powerful party — will take. If the PCI takes a moderate-to-conservative stand, the parliamentary struggle that will ensue will surely have repercussions in the streets, as feminists push for a radical abortion law or for a referendum.

If a radical law were to pass despite the objections of DC deputies and despite PCI equivocation, the future impetus of the women's movement would depend on the drive for health clinics. The latter has already proved a refuge for feminists who have seen fit to break entirely with the new left parties, as well as for others who retain formal party membership but who in practice devote all their energies to the women's health movement. Such women have not rejected their commitment to the vision of a socialist society. But in conversations among them one quickly picks up on undercurrents of the sort of anger, irony, and cynicism about a male way of conducting political activity, that in the U.S. we associate with separatism. My own belief is that a complete break with the left would be disastrous for Italian feminism. The left — both old and new — has such weight that it would rapidly fill the vacuum left if a majority of Italian feminists were simply to turn their backs on all party activity. But at the same time it is extremely important that the angry reaction of the women to male-defined politics persist. Such feeling shaped the triumphant course of the abortion and health movements in late 1975 and early 1976. Only such feeling, and the confrontations that emerge from it between feminists and the left, will keep alive women's insistence that all aspects of men's and women's lives together, on the left and in Italian society as a whole, must change.

FOOTNOTES

1. Re, Derossi, L'OCCUPAZIONE FU BELLISSIMA: 600 FAMIGLIE OCCUPANO LA FALCHERA (The Occupation Was Terrific: 600 families occupy Falchera), edizioni delle donne, 1976.
2. Maria Adele Teodori, CONTRO L'ABORTO DI CLASSE (Against Class-Biased Abortion) Savelli, 1975, p. 46.
3. The lower figure is that of the Ministry of Health; the higher, that of the National Congress of Obstetrics. Another estimate, by a demographic institute, calculates that in Milan alone, 500-550 abortions occur daily. The national figure given by Malcolm Potts of International Planned Parenthood is 800,000.
4. COMPAGNA magazine, February, 1972, p. 8.
5. Teodori, Op. cit., p. 121.
6. EFFE magazine, March/April, 1976, p. 37.
7. L'OCCUPAZIONE FU BELLISSIMA, pp. 39, 40.
8. Both quotes are from Teodori, Op. cit., p. 144.
9. Maria Rossa della Costa, WOMAN'S POWER AND SOCIAL SUBVERSION, Padua, 1972.
10. "Lanostraposizione sull'aborto," in Biancamaria Frabotta, FEMMINISMO E LOTTA DI CLASSE IN ITALIA, Savelli, 1973.
11. "Women in Italy," New England Free Press, 1972.
12. This stance was prompted on the one hand by pressure from the Soviet Union, which at Yalta had agreed that the U.S. and its allies should have free rein in Western Europe in exchange for Soviet autonomy in the countries on its perimeter. On the other hand the PCI's stance was a reaction to threats by the U.S. For example the Marshall Plan precluded economic aid to any country voting communism into power, much less to a country where socialist revolution actually occurred.
13. For an excellent overview of postwar economic development in Italy, see J. B. and R. Proctor, "Capitalist Development, Class Struggle and Crisis in Italy, 1945-1975," MONTHLY REVIEW, January, 1976.
14. It was during this brief period that the factory councils I mentioned earlier emerged. Such councils had existed earlier, in 1920-1921, during a revolutionary strike wave then. They were repressed when Mussolini seized power.

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The first women's demonstration in Rome, March 1972. The banner reads: "There can be no revolution without women's liberation — There can be no women's liberation without revolution." Photo by Daniela Colombo.

The Historic Compromise: The Communist Party and Working Class Politics in Italy

Carl Boggs

While the June elections in Italy did not bring about the governmental shift to the left many had predicted, they did signal an irreversible erosion of the old political structures and formulas that have dominated the country since World War II. The situation today is best described as an interregnum, with the established forces weakened and decaying but still powerful and the emergent forces advancing but not yet ready to assume hegemony. On the one side, the position of the traditional bourgeoisie, the right wing of the Christian Democratic (DC) party, and the Catholic Church has seriously declined, making obsolete the clerical state, a system that rested on reactionary social policies and the ideology of anti-communism, and a "Center-Left" coalition that was always in fact a Center-Right alliance controlled by the DC. On the other side, the Communist Party (PCI) has achieved a run of dramatic national and local electoral successes that has brought it very close to political equality with the DC and solidified its status as the largest and most prestigious "Marxist" party in any advanced capitalist society.

While the PCI won an unprecedented 34.4% of the vote (an increase of 7.2% over 1972), the DC managed to hold on at 38.8%, but

only by siphoning off votes from small parties such as the Social Democrats, the Liberals, and even the fascist Italian Social Movement. This produced a new configuration of political forces — two-party competition, replacing a chronically fragmented multi-party system — which on the surface appeared to reproduce the old patterns of immobilism and “ingovernability” in a new framework, but which in reality created the basis of a new kind of trasformismo: the traditional Italian practice of containing class polarization through elite collaboration. The fact is that the current economic crisis, instead of widening the ideological-political space between the DC and the PCI, has actually moderated their differences and pushed their leaderships closer to the “historic compromise” envisaged by the PCI.

The art of trasformismo goes back to the regime of Agostino Depretis, a Left-Liberal premier during the decade 1876 to 1887 whose pragmatic Realpolitik and shrewd machinations smoothed over Left-Right antagonisms and integrated the bulk of Depretis' own Left-Liberal popular following into the ruling structure. What Depretis sought to establish was a stable, pluralistic framework for settling differences and encouraging a unity of interests; in the process he facilitated a coalition that preserved the nascent bourgeois order at a time of crisis and challenge. Trasformismo evolved into an even more sophisticated technique during the rule of Giovanni Giolitti (1903-1914), who manipulated it to assimilate the rising Socialist Party into the established liberal institutions. Year after year of give-and-take with Giolitti sapped the Socialists' militancy, undermined their grassroots activity, and ultimately destroyed their identity as a revolutionary party. Socialist theorist Antonio Labriola was correct: trasformismo, which would give the party a share of institutional power, was bound to convert it into just another parliamentarist bourgeois party.

The new trasformismo has been unfolding for some time, even though it has not yet reached full political expression. Most of the PCI's important advances — in parliament, the trade unions, local government — have been achieved through patient and effective application of the Via Italiana strategy outlined by Palmiro Togliatti after the Resistance (during 1944-1947). Togliatti's idea was to build institutional power within the framework of the Republican Constitution, through broad social and electoral alliances; given the PCI's increasingly narrow objectives, it has worked perhaps even better than the Via Italiana architects anticipated. The logical extension of these successes, the compromesso storico (“Historical Compromise”) foresees a governing coalition of “national unity” that would combine all “popular, democratic and anti-fascist” forces (notably the DC, PCI, and Socialists) and give the PCI leverage over the central state bureaucracy. A variant of the Compromise strategy has actually been evolving for many years in local politics, where the PCI — in alliance with the Socialists

and sometimes even with the DC itself — controls thousands of communal governments, every large city except Palermo, and 43 out of 96 provinces. The recent elections gave the PCI such immense parliamentary power (229 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, 116 seats in the Senate) that it was able to elect the chairpersons of 7 out of 15 parliamentary commissions (the conduit of all significant legislation) and, for the first time, the president of the Chamber of Deputies (Pietro Ingrao). All of this coincides with the DC's loss of hegemony, its factionalism, and its isolation reflected in its inability to form anything beyond a single-party government with PSI and PCI abstentions. True, the PCI's bid has fallen short of formal executive power. But in the summer post-electoral maneuvering, PCI strength was such that it could demand veto power over ministerial nominations and a nearly equal voice in formulating economic policies. Lotta Continua's daily newspaper only slightly exaggerated, then, when its headlines proclaimed that "The Historical Compromise Has Been Made."

Yet the new *trasformismo* appears to differ from the old, which was more mechanical and therefore short-lived. The present version is the outgrowth of a lengthy, organic process that is producing a confluence of influence among the reformist, "modernizing" wing of the bourgeoisie, the politically weakened Socialists and the PCI, with its own drive towards "modernization" which it sees as the culmination of *Via Italiana*. In the midst of electoral stalemate, neither the DC nor the PCI can assert its own hegemony or even mobilize an effective majority behind its program, so the Compromise is virtually imposed. The PCI, of course, seeks such a compromise as the way out of years of frustrating opposition and, ultimately, as the springboard to political domination. For its part, the DC is badly divided between "modernizing" (large financial and industrial interests) and traditional (Church, rural interests, and patronage-laden public bureaucracy) forces, but for the moment the party organization as a whole — some loud protests to the contrary notwithstanding — is begrudgingly and cautiously following the logic of trasformismo. It has no choice.

This emergence of a moderated two-party system — of an elite consensus that might finally produce a strong bourgeois government in Italy — places the revolutionary left in a predicament, even though in the long run it may open up new opportunities. If the PCI enters the cabinet and pushes the government leftward, a stabilized capitalism might be better prepared to resist attacks; but this in turn would depend on the PCI's capacity to maintain its working-class base as the party leadership moves rightward. Should the PCI succeed in splitting off the left wing of the DC, its position in any ruling coalition will surely be consolidated, thus creating new obstacles for the revolutionary left, which after winning a disappointing 1.5% of the vote is already divided and demoralized. But one crucial factor remains: no DC-PCI coalition, no

attempt to "Social Democratize" Italian politics, can fully resolve the deep and explosive crises of Italian capitalism or quell the popular resistance to these crises.

THE CRISIS

The current political interregnum is rooted in the general crisis of Italian capitalism, which has deepened since the late 1960s, spurring a revitalization of class struggle and an overall radicalization that underlies the PCI's electoral gains. The "economic miracle" that enabled Italy to rationalize its monopoly sector and build high levels of industrial output in the late 1950s and early 1960s long ago gave way to a phase of economic instability and decay. In recent years growth rates have slowed dramatically, with GNP declining by 3.7% in 1975. Agricultural productivity remains very low because of the survival of a fragmented and technologically backward agrarian economy, which is aggravated by the continued uneven development between North and South and by the failure of Center-Left projects such as the Cassa del Mezzogiorno (project for the economic development of the South) to carry out thoroughgoing reforms. This is one of the problems that distinguishes Italy from other advanced capitalist economies.

The public sector, which accounts for about 50% of Italy's GNP, is colonized by a corrupt and inefficient DC patronage network. Public funds allocated to new industrial and social-welfare programs often do not reach their destination; moreover, state projects are sabotaged by widespread tax evasion among the wealthy (which some have estimated to amount to \$19 billion annually). The total public deficit for 1976 is projected at \$30 billion, while debts for past loans (e.g., from the West German Bundesbank) are now falling due. State-owned enterprises such as Alfa Sud and Alitalia have been losing money at record levels. Predictably, fiscal crisis has paralyzed many municipal governments, including those administered by the PCI: Rome is \$5.4 billion in debt, Naples \$2 billion, and other cities have run up so much deficit that new social programs had to be abandoned and many old ones discontinued.

What has cut most deeply into the living standards of working-class Italians is an inflation rate of almost 30% and unemployment levels rapidly reaching 8%. From January 1975 until this spring the number of jobs in private industry declined by roughly 350,000. Unemployment rates were 18.3% in Sardinia, 13.6% in Campania, 13% in Lazio (Rome), and 11.4% in Sicily, according to official figures. The increased flight of capital abroad in search of more stable investment opportunities only exacerbates these problems. Meanwhile, the balance-of-payments deficit soars (\$1.5 billion for the first quarter of 1976), the lira declines (by nearly 20% during the past year), and the living standards of the great majority of

Italians worsen even after the dramatic gains achieved by the militant working-class struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS

The leftist advances of the past decade have sharply reduced the DC's space to maneuver in Italian politics and have put it on the defensive for the first time. Still, its capacity to temporarily survive internal divisions, the economic crisis, scandals, and the challenge of the PCI has rendered predictions of "the death of the DC" too hasty. Such predictions did contain a certain logic. Years of economic chaos and planlessness were finally being translated into a widespread sense of political malaise. The ideological power of the Church seemed to be weakened — the result of a secularizing trend reflected by the DC-Church defeat on the divorce referendum in the spring of 1974 and by rapidly changing attitudes on the issues of abortion, sexuality, and the role of women. Corruption reached new scandalous heights with revelations that leading DC politicians accepted financial support from the CIA; bribes from Shell, British Petroleum, and other oil companies; and illegal payoffs from Lockheed in negotiating a contract for Hercules cargo planes. (Simultaneously it was revealed that the U.S. has contributed more than \$75 million to the DC and other "anti-Communist parties" in Italy since 1948.) Signals of a DC electoral collapse seemed apparent from its poor showing (35.3% to the PCI's 33.4%) in the June 1975 regional elections. An aging, unimaginative leadership committed to the conflicting goals of economic development and traditionalism, moreover, did not seem prepared to steer the party through its most difficult challenge.

Only by papering over its strong internal differences and by pulling away support from the small parties was the DC able to gain a temporary reprieve. What united the "modernizing" and traditional elements during the election campaign was the pressure to stave off the PCI; this licensed the DC right wing (Amintore Fanfani, Aldo Moro, et al.) to return to old cold-war rhetoric that conjured up a contest between "freedom" and "Communist dictatorship". This helped the DC win over a broad range of conservative elements: the small parties combined lost 6.7% of the vote and 51 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The Italian Social Movement was hardest hit, dropping from 8.7 to 6.1% and from 56 to 35 deputies, which reveals the success of the DC right's desperate appeals to the fascist electorate. In a sense, the campaign was a referendum on Communist participation in the government, and the DC mobilized still widespread fears concerning the PCI's relationship to the Soviet Union, its willingness to respect liberal democracy, and its attitude toward traditional values associated with Catholicism and the family. Much of the DC's popular support — among professionals and civil servants, the petty bourgeoisie, and small farmers — no doubt stems from such fears.

But the DC remains too organizationally and ideologically amorphous to contain its growing contradictions. The dogmatic conservatism of the old guard, agrarian interests, and the Church was to some extent undercut by calls for "renewal" and growth by a dynamic stratum of forward-looking candidates that has no ties with the Church or clientele systems. One such "new man" was Umberto Agnelli, board chairman of Fiat, who was elected to a DC seat in the Senate from Rome on the basis of his demand for "fresh solutions", greater economic planning, and less ideological rigidity in dealing with the PCI. (After the elections, Umberto's father, Giovanni Agnelli, who has controlling ownership of Fiat, proposed a joint DC-PCI "emergency" economic plan that would include austerity measures, reduction of public spending, and tax reforms.) Hence the formal unity contrived by the DC leadership — Benigno Zaccagnini became party secretary just for this task — barely concealed the real internal conflicts lying just beneath the surface. There is no way that the DC could have advanced any coherent ideas or programs for meeting the economic crisis; its "solutions" went little beyond the same platitudes that had returned it to power for three decades, but which now appear to have exhausted their ideological hold.

The DC thus increasingly emerges as a patchwork organization, hardly an effective instrument of capitalist rule. Weakened by loss of flexibility rooted in its dual character, it has no choice but to accept a working relationship with the PCI; even now, the DC finds itself in opposition within the sphere of local politics and, in certain respects, within the national parliament. Either the DC leadership bows to the logic of trasformismo and accepts the Historic Compromise, or it risks further decline and loses its legitimacy as a bourgeois party. Both paths are likely to reinforce factionalization in different ways. The PCI's political successes and overtures to the DC have hastened the development of antagonisms between the "reformists" who want to rationalize and "restructure" capitalism and the traditionalists who want to preserve the old (pre-monopoly capitalist) structures and lifestyles. These antagonisms correspond above all to disagreements as to how to approach the PCI: the former see a growing "convergence of interests", the latter no basis of compromise whatsoever. They are also translated into power struggles within many local DC machines — for example, in Naples, where 30 functionaries have resigned as part of the struggle to oust the traditionalist local boss, Antonio Gava.

In fact, the DC has been moving rightward only in appearance, at the level of campaign rhetoric; not only the PCI gains, but the economic crisis itself, has strengthened the hands of the "reformists", as the pragmatic post-election bargaining between the two parties has clearly shown. Once Fanfani's followers faded into the background after their rounds of anti-Communist speeches, secretary Zaccagnini and his deputy Giovanni Galloni (along with pre-

mier Giulio Andreotti) began their long days of political bargaining with PCI delegates. Presumably, some kind of modus operandi has already been established. At the very least, the DC did accept equal PCI participation in certain areas of domestic policy-making (e.g., economic) in exchange for a PCI abstention on votes of confidence. Zaccagnini stressed that the PCI, as a "great historical force", could no longer be denied a major political role.

THE COMMUNISTS

The PCI's long, gradual advance toward political hegemony, which it could realistically achieve in the 1980s, can be explained by a number of factors: the inability of the Center-Left coalition to stem the economic crisis; the ideological erosion of traditional forces and the resultant generational shift to the left; the PCI's capacity to siphon off energy from the extra-parliamentary struggles of the past decade; and a very adaptable electoral and alliance strategy shaped by the Via Italiana. Today, the PCI is supported by more than one-third of the population and has an effective, disciplined leadership; the most cohesive political organization in Italy (with a membership of 1.7 million); and an extensive institutional and cultural foundation throughout the country that generates an aura of trust and respectability. In the June elections, the PCI consolidated its industrial working-class base (now more than 55% of its total), greatly increased its turnout among youth and women, and, most important, so dramatically improved its historically weak position in the South that it can now compete on equal terms with the DC in most areas. It advanced significantly in every region of Italy, including the "white" (that is, conservative) areas such as Veneto, and actually won a majority of votes in many cities in central Italy (Florence, Bologna, Livorno, Pisa, Siena, etc.). What this means is that, for the first time, the PCI has emerged as a truly national party with a broadly representative social and geographical base.

This "national" character of the PCI, however, should not be confused with Gramsci's original conception of a national-popular "revolutionary historical bloc" rooted primarily outside of the electoral process. Whatever the intentions of the Via Italiana strategists, it is clear that in the three decades since Togliatti first spelled out the theory of "structural reforms" the PCI has become completely enmeshed in elections, parliamentary structures, and local administration. This is no mere tactical manipulation of bourgeois institutions; it reflects a strategic involvement. The PCI defends the established structures because it was central in building them after the demise of fascism and the Resistance struggle. In this sense it is meaningless to speak of PCI adaptation to the system, despite the vague obeisance the party leadership continues to pay to the Marxist tradition and even to "Marx-

ism-Leninism" or to Gramsci. Its much-praised political flexibility — its adeptness at bargaining and mediating, its approaches to the ceti medi ("middle strata") and Catholicism, its openness to Italian cultural traditions — ultimately comes down to a Realpolitik that suppresses the goals of social and cultural transformation.

As an extension of the Via Italiana, the "historic compromise" suggests a return to the Popular Frontism of the 1930s with its emphasis on a broad anti-fascist alliance of bourgeois parties united in the midst of serious challenge from the right. But there is a difference: the Berlinguerist leadership does not view the Historic Compromise as a limited tactical maneuver designed to neutralize the right, but sees it as a major step toward realizing socialism. It argues that the failure of Allende's Popular Unity government in Chile demonstrated the need for leftist coalitions to broaden their popular base and break down the polarization between the working class and middle strata. Thus, the left must rely on alliances with "democratic" bourgeois forces until it can mobilize majority support on its own. What frontism and the Compromise strategy do have in common, however, is the search for stable, elite alliances with bourgeois parties and a consuming pre-occupation with electoral politics.

The PCI's programmatic approach flows from the logic of the Via Italiana and the Compromise, and can be reduced to three broad objectives: (1) "renewal" or democratization of Republican political institutions; (2) rationalization of large-scale industry; and (3) modernization of the South. The international dimension of these policies, which Berlinguer pushed consistently during the electoral campaign and at the June meeting of European Communist Parties in Berlin, stresses Italian (and of course PCI) autonomy vis-a-vis existing Soviet and U.S. political-military blocs, democratization of the Common Market through greater trade-union participation, and development of a uniquely European road to socialism that would differ from the Russian and Chinese models (above all, in its rejection of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and its utilization of bourgeois structures).

The PCI leadership believes that it must first resolve the "institutional crisis" before any other goals can be achieved. This means that the instrument for combating the economic crisis — an efficient administration capable of carrying out political directives — must be created through governmental renovation: uprooting of the DC clientele network, professionalization of the public bureaucracies, elimination of corruption and parasitism, and enhancement of parliamentary power. Until this is done, the most far-reaching programs and reforms will be obstructed by an outmoded, incompetent, foot-dragging bureaucracy. The importance of the PCI's demand for greater decentralization — the transferring of more power to the regional and provincial governments, where the PCI organization already possesses vast power — lies

precisely here. A major thrust of local PCI administration has been to generate a model of political governance that would be visibly superior to that of the DC. Where the PCI has been able to institutionalize its rule over a period of many years, as in Bologna, it has built administrations that are beacons of efficiency, honesty, and social progress in comparison with typical DC fiefdoms. But where the PCI has only recently come to power or has less political leverage, as in Naples, Venice, and Turin, it has moved very cautiously and achieved little. And of course in most cases the PCI has merely substituted its own, more efficient and disciplined, patronage system for the old.

To the extent that "political renewal" can be carried out, the PCI presumably will be in a position to undertake (in alliance with other forces) "modernization" of industry, agriculture, and the South generally. This means, above all, implementing a long-range plan for co-ordinating different sectors of production, increasing social investments, facilitating scientific research and technological development, rationalizing management, and specifying a bargaining framework for contractual negotiations between workers and capital. The PCI's objective is a stable, productive, planned economy with roughly equal state and private ownership (the state now owns about 45% of industrial enterprises), flourishing small and medium-sized businesses (assisted by tax credits where necessary), elimination of rentiers (those with income derived from ownership of land, stocks, etc.) and other parasitic elements, overhaul of the tax structure, and implementation of progressive social reforms including urban redevelopment and free health care. To overcome the unevenness between North and South, the PCI wants a program of industrialization of the South and more rapid technological improvements in agriculture.

This two-pronged strategy requires not the overturning of the political and economic structures of Italian capitalism, but their rationalization. The PCI appears as the agency of a state capitalism that strives to destroy the backward, wasteful, and irrational features of bourgeois production (survivals which are more pervasive in Italy than in other developed capitalist systems), that seeks to streamline bureaucracy, that attempts to mediate the conflicting forces of capitalist society—all of which the party leadership advertises as a new "European" road to socialism. The PCI's increasing reluctance to raise the issues of mass mobilization except when defined in electoral terms, its fear of taking up controversial issues, its rejection of popular self-management and workers' control as "utopian", and its uncritical attitude toward U.S. imperialism, NATO, and the Common Market inevitably derive from its strategy and its present structural position in Italian society.

Future electoral advances may enable the PCI to perform the same tasks historically carried out by the Social Democratic par-

ties of Northern Europe — those of crisis-management, technocratic planning, legitimation, and welfare reform in a capitalist system whose contradictions can no longer be contained by the Bourgeoisie acting alone. For various historical reasons, Social Democracy has never really politically matured in Italy, and the PCI is now stepping into the breach. Its success will depend upon the further strengthening of reformist-modernizing tendencies within the bourgeoisie and the DC and their willingness to facilitate the new trasformismo already taking place. To a much lesser extent, it will depend upon cooperation from the increasingly marginal Socialists. Whether trasformismo itself will provide the framework for Social Democratization, or whether it will be only the first stage of a more elaborate process, is difficult to say. But one thing is certain: the DC as it is now constructed, with its factionalism and compromise with tradition, cannot be the agency of such transformation. The PCI will be the indispensable, perhaps dominant, force since it possesses exactly what the DC lacks — unified and efficient organization, commitment to "modernity", and a greater capacity to discipline the working class.

THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

Aside from the fascists and the DC traditionalists on the right, the only serious resistance to trasformismo is the revolutionary left. No longer really an "extra-parliamentary opposition", yet still committed to social transformation outside the electoral-parliamentary framework, groups of the revolutionary left united under the banner of Democrazia Proletaria for the June elections; they won only 550,000 votes (1.5%) and elected 6 deputies. While the revolutionary left has diminished in numbers and militancy since the upsurges of the late 1960s and early 1970s — having lost much of its following to the PCI — it remains politically alive and shows no signs of being completely integrated by the PCI. A product of the great popular and working-class struggles of the past decade, but now more confined to student-intellectual communities, these groups — the most important being the Party of Proletarian Unity (PdUP),* Lotta Continua (LC), and Avanguardia Operaia (AO) — still involve tens of thousands of activists and now possess even more stable organizational forms.

The revolutionary left maintains a theoretical and political influence outside the PCI far beyond its numerical strength, which in any case is much greater than its electoral showing because of widespread abstentionism and temporary ballot-box defections to the PCI. Rallies and demonstrations by revolutionary left groups, particularly in the North and in urban centers such as Milan and Genoa, not uncommonly draw tens of thousands. The feminist movement, though unhappy with the revolutionary left because of its failure to articulate a developed feminist perspective, nonethe-

less feels more comfortable with it and the small Radical Party than with the PCI, which runs more women candidates than any other party but never takes any initiative on issues like abortion. Italy is one of the few places where the spirit of the new left has been kept alive, or at least flickering. The PCI actually does as much to perpetuate these groups as to squelch them, for despite their differences they all unite around a single goal: creating a revolutionary alternative to the Communist Party. They equally share Il Manifesto's mocking of PCI electoral strategy as the "Ideological Compromise".

At the same time, it has been fashionable to speak of a "crisis" of the revolutionary left since at least 1974, and more emphatically after the June elections. The reason is obvious: decline of the student movement and, more crucially, of the mass working-class struggles since the "hot autumn" of 1969. The base committees which mushroomed during the 1968-1973 period have virtually disappeared; the faculty councils and community assemblies that grew out of them either have become bureaucratized (absorbed into the trade-union structures) or have atrophied; and the PCI, which seemed to have lost its workplace presence ten years ago, is now re-emerging in strength. As the movements built around the projects of direct democracy, workers' control, and cultural transformation have ebbed, the revolutionary left has become detached from its previous (or potential) base. Local struggles of the last few years — with the exception of the feminist movement — consequently lack the sustaining character and impact of the previous period.

This impasse prompted the decision, over the objection of some determined abstentionists, to enter the electoral campaign and form a coalition called Democrazia Proletaria. The DP's amorphousness and its ambivalence toward electoral politics, as well as its limited financial resources, contributed to its poor showing — Milan was the only major area where it received as much as 2.5% of the vote. While sharp disagreements evolved within the DC over how seriously to approach the elections, the consensus was that electoral-parliamentary activity can be no more than tactical, that it must be secondary to workplace and community struggles that are closely linked to people's everyday lives. The DP refused to accept the PCI's narrow equation of "democracy" with bourgeois representative institutions; instead, it continued to stress the vital role of local organs such as the councils, but with less enthusiasm than in the pre-1974 period.

Lotta Continua, as it turned out, was much less committed to electoral politics than either PdUP or AO, and — not surprisingly — mounted the harshest attack on the PCI leadership's strategy. As Gianni Sofri of LC put it: "We did not delude ourselves about the election results. Certainly it was a serious defeat, but then elections are not really our terrain." This is a sphere of crucial

theoretical and political differences within the DP. On the one side, LC sees the revolutionary process unfolding outside the established political arena: in the factories, offices, schools, and communities as primarily a local and prefigurative movement. On the other side, PdUP holds to a more two-pronged focus that looks to the state (including elections and parliament) as well as local spheres to advance socialism. The decision to permit LC to join the electoral coalition was accompanied by much debate in PdUP and AO around this issue, with PdUP secretary (and IL MANIFESTO editor) Luigi Pintor arguing against LC entry because of its presumed adventurist and spontaneist tendencies. This debate intensified after the elections.

But what distinguished the DP alliance from the PCI was not so much the question of electoral participation (though of course the DP strongly rejects the PCI's strategic obsession with it) as the question of electoral goals. DP leaders (for example, general secretary Lucio Magri, Luciana Castellina, and Vittorio Foa, all of whom were elected to parliament) insisted that the PCI, because of its attachment to the dominant structures, could no longer advance anti-capitalist struggles. To counter the Historic Compromise, they argued for a "government of the left" that would include the Socialist Party, PCI, and revolutionary left; they called for a "program of struggle" rather than a "list of promises". They criticized the PCI's fixation on elite coalitions that would incorporate the DC. In opposition to an instrumentalist strategy that raises no vision beyond the present, the DP conducted an open dialogue around its goal of an entirely new system of production characterized by full public ownership, workers' control ("power to those who work"), and the overturning of all forms of domination. The PCI, in response, attacked the DP as a "hybrid electoral formation" composed of "theoretically purist" petty-bourgeois intellectuals with no responsibility to any mass constituency. An editorial in the PCI daily, L'UNITA, stated that "There neither exists nor can exist any rapport between these groups and us."

In the wake of its electoral failure, the DP was compelled to reassess some of its basic premises. Vittorio Foa suggested that the DP's problems stem not from isolated errors or tactical mistakes, but from an inability to establish roots in Italian social reality. Magri asked "Why, after so many years, have the new-left forces not succeeded in linking themselves with the masses to a greater extent?" He added: "Evidently we have not succeeded in finding the right language and political forms to influence reality." The predicament of the revolutionary left here, as elsewhere, revolves around the PCI. Years of extra-parliamentary struggles have produced broad support among students, youth, and intellectuals (these groups constituting about 70% of the DP's electoral support), but the PCI retains solid hegemony among the workers. This sense of isolation has yet to generate any cohesive strategic response with-

in the revolutionary-left leadership, which has typically oscillated from vanguardism to spontaneism and which now appears divided and demoralized. One position favors critical support of the PCI with the hope of arresting its rightward drift and obstructing the trend toward trasformismo; another looks to an intensification of the economic crisis, which would undermine the PCI's reformist appeals and open up new political space for the revolutionary left; still another seeks a new Leninist party through a permanent merging of PdUP and AO.

How long the PCI can sustain its dominant role without the contradictions between its socialist image and bourgeois reformist politics exploding is unclear. Meanwhile, the revolutionary left — fragmented and lacking in direction as it is — confronts the difficult task of expanding the socialist tradition in Italy at a time when the PCI is more “successful” than ever.

CONCLUSION

Since the Italian economy is an integral part of the global capitalist system, there can be no isolated domestic “solution” to the crisis — with or without trasformismo. What sets Italy apart from other advanced capitalist societies, however, is the existence of a weakened and tradition-bound ruling-class party struggling to retain hegemony alongside a massive Communist Party that stands ready to intervene within the rules and norms of bourgeois politics. While the DC was able to recuperate its electoral strength, it lacks the program, popular support, and “modernizing” thrust necessary to stave off further crisis, let alone pursue significant social reforms. And with no Center-Left allies to fall back on, the DC suddenly finds itself staring directly at the PCI.

As the Socialists try to work through their own confusion in the context of a two-party system, the PCI keeps looking to the right with hopes of extricating itself from long years of opposition. Full realization of trasformismo, however, may have to await further breakdown of the traditional DC-PCI ideological antagonisms; so far, both party leaderships have moved very cautiously and pragmatically beneath a veil of rhetoric. The PCI has already indicated that it could live with the emergency austerity program, including wage freezes, outlined by Giovanni Agnelli, but has demanded more formal government participation in return. Frightened by the implications of a worsening crisis, Agnelli has concluded that the only alternative to PCI entry and a cooperative DC-PCI interim plan would be massive economic intervention by wealthier nations like the U.S. and Germany. In June, meanwhile, the Common Market suggested a “Marshall Plan” for bailing Italy out of the crisis on the condition of refusing the PCI a formal role in the Cabinet. The Puerto Rican economic summit of capitalist nations later recommended extensive support for the feeble lira — with the same

stipulation.

None of these "solutions", agreements, or compromises will resolve the economic contradictions or keep the PCI out of power. Even U.S. political and economic intervention seems to have exhausted its limits. Trasformismo, and perhaps ultimately PCI political hegemony, seems inevitable. If, however, Spanish CP leader Santiago Carrillo is right in his claim that "Southern Europe will become a new point of reference for the entire international workers' movement", the PCI will probably emerge as more of a retarding than a catalyzing force in this development.

* The main revolutionary left groups today are the Party of Proletarian Unity (PdUP), Lotta Continua (LC), and Avanguardia Operaia (AO), each with memberships that oscillate from 10,000 to 30,000. There are also a number of other "Marxist-Leninist" groups which are small and politically insignificant.

Of the three major forces, PdUP has the largest following and exerts the greatest influence. Founded in 1974, it evolved out of a merging of the Manifesto group, which had broken with the PCI in 1969, and the left wing of PSIUP, the Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity. PdUP has diverse elements, some of which remain theoretically and politically close to the PCI. With a fairly strong presence in the trade-union movement, PdUP advances two lines of struggle: social and cultural transformation rooted in local structures, and electoral-parliamentary politics. It publishes a daily newspaper, IL MANIFESTO, with a circulation of 30,000, and a theoretical journal, UNITA PROLETARIA.

Lotta Continua was formed in 1968 out of a loose network of local groups such as the base committees and various student organizations. Less theoretically inclined than PdUP, LC has tended to vacillate between spontaneism and vanguardism, though it has consistently struggled against reformism on the left and has been the force most strongly behind the politics of cultural transformation. LC's daily newspaper, also called LOTTA CONTINUA, sells between 20,000 and 25,000 an issue.

Avanguardia Operaia emerged in 1968 as the organization of dissident Trotskyists who broke from the Italian section of the 4th International. Though more self-consciously vanguardist than either PdUP or LC, its main early focus was on building rank-and-file working-class structures, in which its militants often worked alongside those from the other groups. Today, AO seeks to merge with PdUP in order to form a stronger and more autonomous revolutionary party; but PdUP, with its own internal problems, has so far not been willing to make the leap. AO's daily newspaper, QUOTIDIANO DEI LAVORATORI, has a circulation roughly equal to that of LOTTA CONTINUA.

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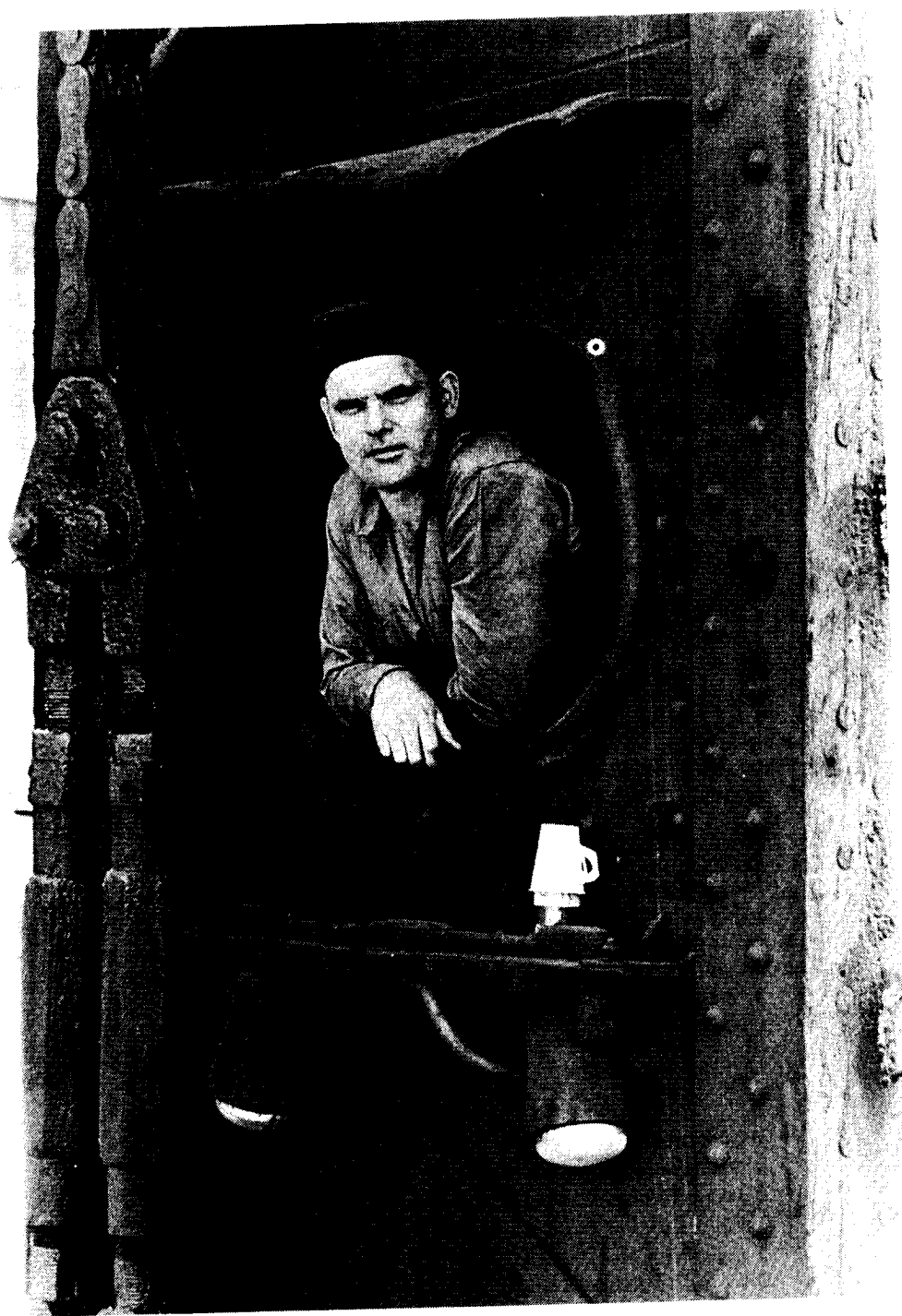


Photo by Steve Cagan

Poetry

Tom Wayman

The Country of Everyday: Workplace

The defeat of any jobshop: dusty windows
and a long scrape down the cement of one wall.
These will not be restored unless the company collapses
or moves, and the new owner decides to paint.
Each day, now, the same smudged interior.

This is the inside of a building no one will ever love.
It is like a mine shaft thousands of feet under the earth:
a place we only descend into for labour.
The broom misses the corners. Dirt
grows on the tops of the baseboard heaters.

The place fills with the sadness of anything
herded together, with a weariness
like the sound of the noon hooter
or the foreman's whistle, pushing us back on the site after lunch.
The room is tired of being kept awake all night.
One shift is the same as another.
Even if the fluorescent lamps are shut down
this room in the darkness holds only work.
That is all it has known: nothing else
will ever be brought out of this mine.

Even the demolition crews will be sweating
as their crowbars start to pull the wiring from the walls.

Routines

After a while the body doesn't want to work.
When the alarm clock rings in the morning
the body refuses to get up. "You go to work if you're so keen,"
it says. "Me, I'm going back to sleep."
I have to nudge it in the ribs to get it out of bed.
If I had my way I'd just leave you here, I tell it
as it stands blinking. *But I need you to carry your end of the load.*
I take the body into the bathroom
intending to start the day as usual with a healthy dump.
But the body refuses to perform.
Come on, come on, I say between my teeth.
Produce, damn you. It's getting late.
"Listen, this is all your idea," the body says.
"If you want some turds so badly you provide 'em.
I'd just as soon be back in bed."
I give up, flush, wash, and go make breakfast.
Pretty soon I'm at work. All goes smoothly enough
until the first break. I open my lunchpail
and start to munch on some cookies and milk.
"Cut that out," the body says, burping loudly.
"It's only a couple of hours since breakfast.
And two hours from this will be lunch, and two hours after that
will be the afternoon break. I'm not a machine
you can force-feed every two hours.
And it was the same yesterday, too..."
I hurriedly stuff an apple in its mouth to shut it up.

By four o'clock the body is tired
and even more surly. It will hardly speak to me
as I drive home. I bathe it, let it lounge around.
After supper it regains some of its good spirits.
But as soon as I get ready for bed it starts to make trouble.
Look, I tell it, I've explained this over and over.
I know it's only ten o'clock but we have to be up in eight hours.
If you don't get enough rest, you'll be dragging around all day
tomorrow again, cranky and irritable.

"I don't care," the body says. "It's too early.
When do I get to have any fun? If you want to sleep
go right ahead. I'm going to lie here wide awake
until I feel good and ready to pass out."

It is hours before I manage to convince it to fall asleep.
And only a few hours after that the alarm clock sounds again.
"Must be for you," the body murmurs. "You answer it."
The body rolls over. Furious, and without saying a word,
I grab one of its feet and begin to yank it toward the edge of the bed.

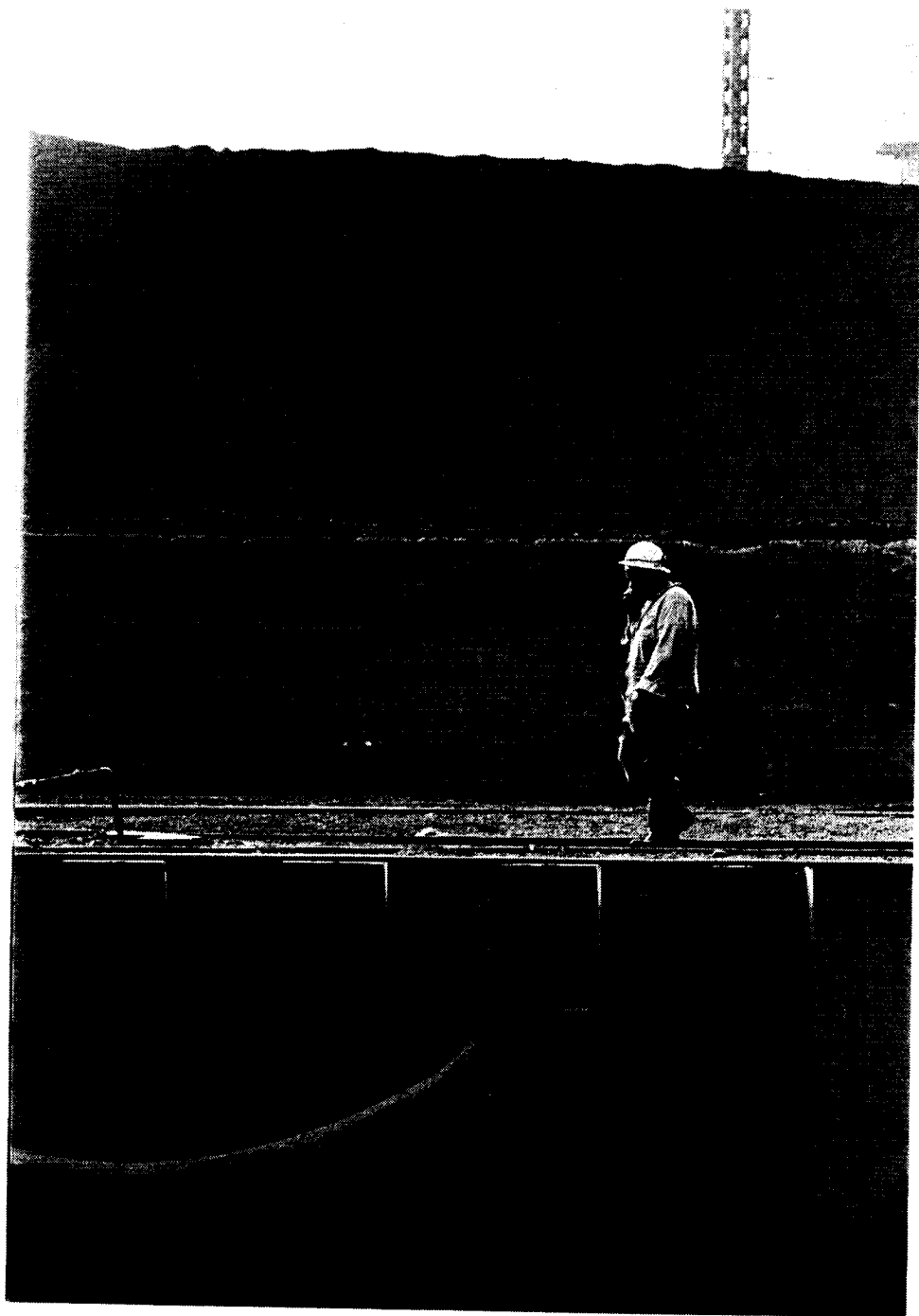


Photo by Steve Cagan

The Country of Everyday: 12

About the second day, the foreman told us
he wanted one corner of the site cleared.
So we started moving a huge pile of beams
blackened with dirt, that had been ripped down
when the building's interior was gutted.
Mark and I worked almost two hours
carrying the beams across the width of the site.

There is a terrible fatigue that begins in the body.
This is not the abrupt refusal of legs
that are new at the job to keep unloading lumber.
Nor when hands still soft suddenly uncurl
from around a board that can no longer be lifted.
This is a heaviness like a deep grief
a weariness that slowly works up from under the earth
passing through the soles of the boots into all the body.
This is Newson at the end of his shift
too tired to take off his plywood mill shoes:
falling asleep dressed on the bed, or in a chair
or with one boot off, the heavy leather of the other
dropping out of his hand onto the floor.

The beams were rough-edged, splintered. The foreman
had us move them back across the site a week later, when he
wanted

the further corner. This time we stacked them properly:
a row of them, then two-by-fours crossways, then another row.

And out of the continual weight of the work, a stone
presses inside the body. It is like a piston
rising in the great cylinder of the rib-cage
squeezing the breath, so you gasp and strain for more air.

But when the air already in is compressed enough
a spark ignites, and a tiny flame
begins to burn in the brain like the pilot light of a stove.

This is the flame of hate, of the madness of labour.

This is why there is such rage when our cheques are delayed.

Why we crash the metal scaffolding down as we disassemble it
like a garbageman tossing empty cans back onto the driveway.

This is why some of us retreat into doing very intricate work:

skilled finishing lace-like carpentry

a hand cupped carefully around the flame so that no one will see.

Mark and I moved the thick beams a day after that.

The foreman wanted the first corner again, so we piled them outside
at the rear in the lane.

But the light always burns. It waits
for a new gust of fuel so it can roar into fire.
That is why one shrieks with the nail that bends as he drives it.
Why even the foreman tosses his hammer through a pane of glass
when the owner leaves the site after his daily tour.

That is why there is so much drunk.
But the flame singes the edge of the beer, and sometimes
the fluid ignites: fire burns along the surface
black smoke pouring into the brain. Fists
fly into faces, connect, the tables turn and the cheap glasses
smash into chips and foam. The bouncers move into the centre of it
and then the door looms up, and outside
are all the indifferent faces of the street.

After the rains began, Mark and I brought the soaked beams inside;
the foreman said he didn't want them to get any wetter.

Always the low flame. When it has burned long enough
the cavity where it flickers in the mind hardens.
Without saying a word, without a single electrical nerve
passing from the back of the brain down to the belly
every part of the body knows it is scum

The knowledge is a wind that shakes the body, a wind
blowing continually like breath
brings the fire of oxygen to the furnaces of the cells.
You are scum. An object
owned by the company
like a crummy or a shovel. You are worse than that:
you are replaceable. You are not so necessary to the project
as paint. That is what the body knows.

And when the job ended, the owner thought
it would be useful to salvage the beams. Mark and I
spent an afternoon hauling them outside again
and carrying them down the lane to the other building.
We stacked each beam inside there.

This is the madness: a young man crouched over like a child
his head between his knees, only breathing. The body
at last treated by you as any chalk-line or broom
so even off the job the body is driven like a car
whose payments you can't meet: use it
get your money's worth, run the fucking thing
before it is repossessed once more and taken away.

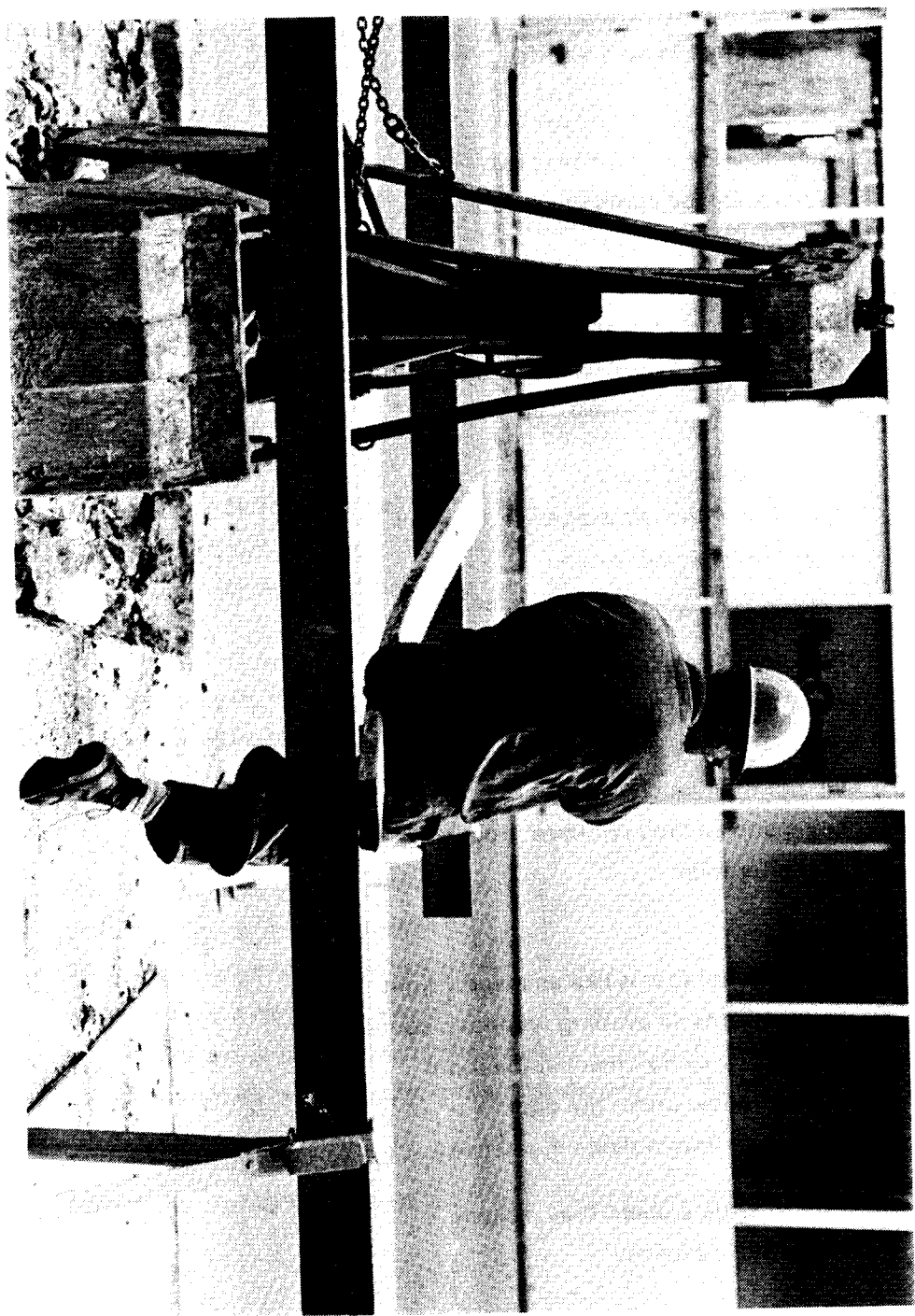


Photo by Steve Cagan

Things That Won't Work

I

There are gas stations that fail.
Because the oil company insists
on a fifteen-hour day.
On an exclusive contract for parts.
Because the manager grew weary
when another garage went up across the road.

Now the caretaker help arrives.
The co-signer of loans
and those with claims against the stock.
A cash register salesman
wanting the name of the new lessee.

There are also tailor shops
where the husband and wife both sit
and look out the window. Each morning
they put their lunches under the counter.
They mend all their relatives' trousers
in the afternoon.

II

I want a poem that is like an electric light.
One that burns all evening without a sound
and lights up every object in the room
but the shadow under the door.
That is seen from outside the house.

I want to write a poem that is silent.
That contains silence.

Where the stillness says it.

III

You are right to hate youth.
Your children will betray you.
You help the children into life
and yet they will let you die.
They will do nothing.

In the dream, my father dives
into the cool thick water.
I hear his cry of delight.
Then, in an undertow, his frantic demand.
A hand shoots up, he is bent downwards
and gone, under the lip of the shore. So.

IV

On the other side of love
a stone is a stone again.
At last she is almost another face,
another body.

My car is repaired for very little money
and runs smoothly and powerfully.
The rug salesman waits for customers
while reading a novel. His swatches are on his desk.
Secretaries move quickly along the street in twos and threes.
They are on their break, hugging themselves and talking.

Mountains reappear over the city.
Only in my stomach has there been months of heavy rain.

A Cursing Poem

This poem wants to hurt another person.
This poem wants another person to die.
It wants him to suddenly stumble
feel a sharp pain just under the belly
a harsh pain, one that rips him so hard inside that he shits himself.
The poem wants him to become dizzy
feel a rush of sweat on the face
to begin to shiver, and have to be helped into bed.
The poem wants his teeth to chatter, wants him to throw up
gasping for air, want mucus to pour from his nose and mouth.
It wants him to die in the night.

This poem wants Gordon Shum to die.
First because despite all his company's rules and tariffs
despite every regulation they tell the press they apply
his company turned off the heat and light in the house.
They did this without warning, when the temperature was forty
degrees by day
and the nights begin at four o'clock.
So that after working all day, the body could come home
to a room of black ice.

So that after straining all day at the jobsite, with the fingers
numb at the hammer and slipping under the weight of the heavy
boards
after the back was twisted trying to hoist the load of a wheelbarrow
the rest of the body could return to darkness and cold.

First appeared in Minnesota Review, Spring, 1975. Reprinted by permission.

This poem also wants Gordon Shum to die
because his company charges twenty-five cents every day
for the bus to carry you to work. And because you must
pay the same every evening to wait in the cold
to be jerked and stopped and jerked and stopped
all the way back to the house. Fifty cents a day
taken out of the dollars squeezed from the body's labor
so at the end of the day, the body can be hauled to where it stays overnight
can enter the black bedrooms, be lit by a candle
and eat bread and cold milk.

Lastly the poem wants Gordon Shrum to die
because at a meeting he reached over to my friend Mark Warrior
and smacked him in the mouth.
He was duly charged and duly acquitted
because Mark was shouting out at the time how the French
were finally getting off their knees
and striking back at the bullies that push them, at the men like
Shrum
—whom Mark didn't name.

But whom I name, with his bureaucrats and service devisions
his credit office and transportation system. Him, and
every other animal who is gnawing away at our lives.
May before they die
they know what it is like to be cold, may the cold eat into them
may they live so they cough all night and can't sleep
and have to get up the next morning for work just the same
so they can have food and a fire.

May the joints of their bodies swell with their labor
and their backs ache. And before they die
may they know deeply, to the inside of their stomachs
the meaning of a single word:
unemployment. May they understand it
as the nourishment a man gets by scraping the calendar
over a pan for a meal. May they have a future with nothing in it
but unemployment: may they end on welfare.
May they have to travel by bus
to get their welfare. May they wake in the night and realize
that for the rest of their lives they will never eat together
all the things they love: steak and wine and hot corn.
They will never have these things together again until they die.
May they die on welfare.
And may the Lord God *Jesus* have mercy on their souls.

Amen.

*TOM WAYMAN has had a variety of blue- and white-collar jobs. He has published several books of poems: **Waiting for Wayman** (McClelland & Stewart, 1973), **For and Against the Moon** (MacMillan of Canada, 1975), and **Money and Rain: Tom Wayman Live** (MacMillan of Canada, 1975). Most recently he has edited **A Government Job at Last**, an extensive collection of work poems, published by McLeod Books, 1976.*

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*Autoworker at Chrysler U. K. assembly plant near Coventry.
photo by Jim Green*

Labour vs Labor: Keeping the Working Class Down in Britain

Ian Birchall

Not quite three years ago, a head-on confrontation between the British trade unions, spearheaded by the miners, and the Tory Government led to the collapse of the Heath administration. The Labour Party returned to power. (1) In ruling-class circles prophecies of "anarchy" and the end of "society as we know it" were heard; on the left there was a feeling that the Labour Government would offer at most a breathing space before a renewal of intense struggle.

Few would have predicted the situation that has prevailed in 1976. Wage controls, unemployment, and public-expenditure cuts have significantly reduced workers' living standards. Real disposable income actually fell by between 5 and 10 per cent in one year under Labour, while unemployment has been at its highest level since the Thirties. Cutbacks in social services have been drastic.

As one observer summarized, Labour has effected "a real and substantial redistribution of income away from the working class; an incomparably greater gain in this respect for the capitalist class than was achieved by the combined efforts of the Churchill, Eden, Macmillan and Heath Tory administrations between 1951 and 1974." (2)

Moreover, the attacks on living standards have been made with the acquiescence of the organized labor movement. In 1975 and again this year the Trades Union Congress agreed to a "voluntary" incomes policy which meant a reduction in real wages for most workers. On both occasions, membership ballots conducted in a number of unions (including the mineworkers) showed that in the absence of strong alternative leadership the majority of union members were ready to support the incomes policy. (3)

British capitalism is, of course, going through its worst period of crisis since the Second World War. It is suffering from the general ills of Western capitalism: recession plus inflation. These conditions are especially severe in Britain because of many years of underinvestment and failure to produce competitive exports. As a result Britain has a serious balance-of-payments deficit, and higher inflation than most of its rivals. The value of the British pound, historically a symbol of stability in the international money market, has fallen steadily in recent years as a result of inflation and Britain's inability to sell as many goods abroad as it needs to import. The weakness of the pound puts any British government in a bind. A falling pound means rising prices for imported goods, and hence greater difficulty in holding down wages. Yet at the same time it puts Britain under greater pressure to gain "confidence" by imposing wage controls and cutting public spending.

But economic problems alone do not make a crisis. Capitalism can always solve its economic problems if it has the political means to do so. Thus the working-class response is the key variable in the course of future events. Most of the strictly economic analyses being peddled are not worth the paper they are printed on. Their function is in any case ideological rather than predictive, and they can be roughly divided into two categories: "Disaster is coming — tighten your belts", and "Good times are coming — provided you tighten your belts".

In what follows, I shall outline the experience of the first two and a half years of the Labour Government, in an attempt to show the nature of its hold on the British working class. I shall also describe the ways in which working-class resistance has continued despite the powerful grip of reformism.

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT

The limits within which Harold Wilson's Labour Government — which won only a plurality of seats in Parliament in the February

1974 elections and then a tiny majority in October 1974 — had to operate were very narrow ones. The economic situation offered no possibility of any significant reforms; indeed, some of the achievements of earlier Labour Governments would have to be dismantled. But the circumstances which had catapulted Labour to power made any openly repressive policy unthinkable. The task facing Wilson required above all pragmatism. The one asset he had was the traditional links between the Labour Party and the trade-union bureaucracy. He needed to build on these links, while at the same time making verbal concessions to the small but significant left within the Party and the trade unions.

This pragmatism was expressed in the Labour Government's attitude toward the hangovers of Tory policy. The Industrial Relations Court, regarded with hostility by even the right-wing union leaders, was soon dispatched to oblivion. But Tory measures against rank-and-file militancy were allowed to stand. For example, two building workers, imprisoned for picketing at a time when "violent picketing" was under attack as part of a campaign to weaken the miners' resolve, were left to rot in jail. Here Labour could be seen to stand on the side of "law and order"; the trade-union leaders did not object, for such firmness on the Government side could help them to make excuses to a militant rank and file.

Early in 1975 there were persistent rumors that Labour would form a coalition with the Tories in order to form a "National Government". This was, quite simply, a piece of pernicious bluff. For while in parliamentary terms the Tories have to offer resistance to Labour policies, in class terms they support all of Labour's main policies. All they could attack was the leftist rhetoric, and this in turn strengthened Wilson's hand with his own left, who were encouraged to believe that the rhetoric had some meaning. The Tories meanwhile had their own faction fights to sort out, with Edward Heath being replaced by the more right-wing Margaret Thatcher. As the sophisticated ruling-class magazine *ECONOMIST* put it, "This government of Labour men and consensus measures could prove to be the least bad government Britain could have for this bad year of 1975." (4)

As a party of working-class activists, the Labour Party is in irremediable decline. Its local sections are either moribund or manned by white-collar and middle-class members. (5) In the February 1974 election Labour got fewer votes in absolute terms and a smaller percentage of the poll than at any election since 1935. In other words, Wilson's party came to power, not through pro-Labour enthusiasm, but through a diffuse anti-Tory sentiment which gave votes to Liberals and Scottish and Welsh Nationalists as well.

Labour's strength lies, not in its membership, but in its relationship to a trade-union bureaucracy that is willing to cooperate with a Labour government, even on unfavorable terms, rather than

face another Tory government. This is not just a question of a few dozen top union leaders. In every union branch there will be members — full-time officials or rank-and-file workers, Labour Party supporters or even Communist Party members — who argue for “giving the Labour Government a chance”, or for backing up the “left-wing” union leaders such as Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon in their cooperation with the government.

It is this layer which is crucial for implementing Labour’s policies, and in order to keep its support, Labour has to show a certain left face. It is in these terms that the role of the Labour Left has to be understood.

In parliamentary terms the Labour Left claims to have unprecedented strength. But this is measured by membership of the TRIBUNE group, those Labour MPs who declare general support for the unofficial weekly paper TRIBUNE. And on all vital issues — wage control, cuts, etc. — the TRIBUNE group has been split down the middle. In the 1976 election for the leadership after Wilson’s resignation, Michael Foot got a surprisingly high vote before losing to the centrist James Callaghan. (6) But Foot’s “leftism” is symbolic (he is a former editor of TRIBUNE, and biographer of the Left’s folk-hero Aneurin Bevan) rather than programmatic. Not only has he served in the Labour Government since March 1974 (7), but he was the main architect of the wage-limitation agreement with the union leaders.

A figure in many ways more significant than Foot is Anthony Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for Industry until June 1975. Benn is a man with some considerable sensitivity to the political crisis. While the traditional left as typified by Foot is incorrigibly parliamentarist, Benn is well aware that nowadays workers look to industrial struggle rather than Parliament in order to achieve reforms; and he has mastered the rhetoric of workers’ control and the art of seeming to approve factory occupations.

Benn’s ministerial responsibility put him in charge of the National Enterprise Board, an instrument of state intervention in industry, aiming to promote efficiency and profitability by reorganizing and developing industries. As a source of investment capital for industry, it could at best increase state holdings in industry toward levels already existing in France and Italy. Despite the window-dressing of “workers’ participation”, it was in no way a challenge to capitalism. But many workers came to take Benn at his face value; those occupying the Imperial Typewriters factory in 1975 displayed the slogan: “We’ll occupy until Benn says when.” And in turn a hostile press, anxious to remind the Labour Government of its terms of reference, built Benn up into a bogeyman. In the summer of 1975, Benn was moved to the less sensitive post of Minister of Energy.

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT: MARK ONE

The cornerstone of Labour's policy for winning support from the trade-union bureaucracy was the so-called "Social Contract". Heath's incomes policy had fallen because of its inflexibility; it laid precise limits on the size of wage increases. The "Social Contract" aimed to keep the issues as blurred as possible. It represented a voluntary agreement between the Labour Government and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) not to let wages rise faster than prices. A number of exceptions — for lower-paid workers, for women moving toward equal pay, for productivity agreements — were written in. Above all, the terms were so vague that after most wage settlements there was public disagreement between participants and commentators as to whether the "contract" had or had not been breached.

Economically, this was not very effective, and after little more than a year, Wilson was compelled to introduce tougher measures. But ideologically the contract served its purpose well.

First, it helped persuade the trade-union leaders that the Government wanted to work with them rather than weaken them. The Social Contract produced what Arthur Scargill, the Yorkshire miners' leader, called "the remarkable spectacle of... union leaders saying: 'We want to operate the Social Contract to help keep the Labour Party in and not the Tories.' In other words we want the Labour Government to impose a wage freeze after we've thrown out the Tories for imposing a wage freeze. What a contradiction!" (8)

Second, because of the bureaucracy's acceptance of the Social Contract, the pattern of strikes changed sharply. From large, officially-led strikes during the Heath regime, there was a return to small, fragmented, and largely unofficial strikes under Wilson. The number of working days "lost" by strikes declined, and the percentage of strikes that were union-sanctioned fell even more markedly. In 1971 and 1972 over 75 per cent of days "lost" in strikes had been through official action. That figure had gone over 88 per cent in the first two months of 1974, but once Labour took over the percentage fell to 11.5 per cent for the remaining ten months of 1974.

By far the highest level of struggle was that reached in Scotland in the autumn of 1974, when so many workers were out that the situation began to approach an uncoordinated general strike. Scotland had long suffered worse unemployment than the rest of Britain, and discontent had found expression in the rise of Scottish Nationalism. Although the petty-bourgeois Scottish Nationalist Party played no role in the strikes the disaffection with English politics doubtless helped to make Scottish workers particularly impervious to the Social Contract ideology.

A widespread lorry-drivers' strike, with effective use of flying

pickets, caused serious shortages in Scottish industry. In Glasgow sewage workers and garbagemen struck, leaving ten thousand tons of rubbish rotting on the streets. Train drivers, busmen, tugboatmen, teachers and slaughterhouse workers all took industrial action. And this was despite the active opposition of trade-union officials; James Jack, leader of the Scottish TUC, appealed publicly for a return to work, saying the strikes were unfair to the Labour Government.

Wilson rode out the autumn strikes, but it was in Glasgow, a few months later, in March 1975, that the Labour Government had to show its true face of repression. Alleging that garbage truck drivers, striking because the Labour council was refusing a wage increase, were causing a "health hazard" by allowing rubbish to pile up, the Labour Government sent troops in to break the strike. From the lower ranks of the trade-union apparatus there was a certain amount of rhetorical protest; from the top bureaucrats and the left Members of Parliament, not even that. (9)

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT: MARK TWO

Before a really effective wage policy could be installed, Wilson had to remind the left of its weakness. Hence the elaborate charade of the referendum on the Common Market in June 1975, which was in effect a vote of confidence for the Government's pro-capitalist policies rather than what it purported to be. The whole Tory Party (minus a few token eccentrics) plus the Labour Right called for a "Yes" vote, the policy of the majority sector of British capitalism. The Labour Left provided the bulk of the opposition. The electorate, sensing quite rightly that the Common Market had little or nothing to do with their real problems, were not enthused by largely nationalist propaganda put out by the Left, and gave the Government the majority it needed.

With the Left thus put in its place, the Labour Government moved rapidly to announce a limit of six pounds per week on all wage increases over the coming year. It was not — largely to spare the susceptibilities of Michael Foot — a legally enforced incomes policy, but it had the same effect.

The inspirer of the policy was Jack Jones, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, a massive union organizing such key sectors as dockers and carmen. Jones had generally been regarded as a man of the left (10), and still uses left rhetoric on issues like Spain and the Common Market which do not require him to use his industrial strength. But in July 1975, speaking as the main ideological defender of the six-pound limit at the annual Trades Union Congress, he declared: "Socialist ideals are fine. But that is not on the agenda for today We should always remember that our movement could be crushed under the falling edifice of capitalism." (11)

The ruling class promptly acclaimed Wilson's policy in the most sincere way it knew of — by producing what was described as "the most spectacular one-day leap in the stock market that most people can remember." (12) This confidence was justified. Not only did the TUC accept the policy, but rank-and-file resistance was limited to a few small strikes, mainly of engineering workers.

One of the main opponents of the policy had been Hugh Scanlon, leader of the Engineering Union (AUEW) and, like Jones, identified with the Labour left. But Scanlon's opposition was largely verbal, and did not extend to any attempt to mobilize his members against the policy. This meant that Scanlon and the AUEW leadership, though left in policy, relied increasingly on bureaucratic means to maintain their position. Their vulnerability and remoteness from the base became obvious in the autumn AUEW elections, when left-wing candidates, including such well-known figures as Jimmy Reid, one of the leaders of the Upper Clyde Shipyards occupation in 1971, were decisively beaten. The right were aided by a massive propaganda campaign in the bourgeois press and on television, but the left had no political response to this.

By early 1976 it was clear that the policy was working, and take-home pay after taxes was rising less rapidly than retail prices. But the ruling class wanted blood, and the Labour Government was happy to fetch it. In April, Chancellor Denis Healey announced that he would give certain tax concessions if the Trade Unions would accept his new terms on incomes policy. While this brought some hostile reaction from the right-wing press as being an unconstitutional involvement of the trade unions in Government, in fact it simply recognized the brute fact that Labour governs by courtesy of the trade-union bureaucracy.

Healey's new package provided for increases smaller than the year before. It gave some concessions to those worried by lessening differentials: It allowed an annual increase rise of 5%, with a flat rate of two and a half pounds a week for those on less than fifty pounds a week, and a maximum of four pounds a week. Only five members of the 30-member TUC General Council voted against, and this time Scanlon supported the policy. Several unions put the policy to convention votes or to membership ballots; in the absence of anyone to give a powerful lead against the policy, there was massive support for it. The Social Contract had lived rather longer than either its friends or enemies had expected.

UNEMPLOYMENT

One reason for the relative lack of militancy over wages has been the steady rise in unemployment under Labour. This has certainly provided an excuse for the union bureaucrats. As Jack Jones told a conference, just after the October 1974 election: "The growth of unemployment is the main danger, and we in the unions

must play our part in fighting it.... A wonderful wage agreement is of no value if the firm with whom we have negotiated the agreement doesn't employ people any more."

Not that the trade-union leaders have shown any determination in fighting unemployment. The union leadership have never actively encouraged the only effective tactic against sackings and closures — occupations. As a result, although there were many occupations in the first year of the Labour Government, most of them fizzled out because workers had too much faith in Government help, or else got sidetracked into the dead end of workers' cooperatives.

The real test came with the Government's decision just before Christmas 1975 to bail out the British factories of the Chrysler group with a "rescue plan" which meant Government money to Chrysler and an agreement that several thousand Chrysler workers would be sacked. Union leaders, including left-winger Bob Wright of the AUEW executive board, actively endorsed this plan to keep Chrysler U.K. in business at all costs.

Despite passivity at the top, there has been a strong response from the ranks to actions around the jobs issue. In November 1975 a number of trade-union bodies called for a demonstration and lobby of Parliament against unemployment. The general secretary of the TUC, Len Murray, wrote to all affiliated organizations urging them not to take part, as the demonstration "will undoubtedly have an anti-government character". Despite this attempt at sabotage, about twenty thousand workers demonstrated.

It has been possible for even a small initiative to get a considerable response. In March 1976 the National Right to Work Campaign (13) organized a march by some eighty unemployed workers from Manchester to London. The March was not simply a passive propaganda gesture; throughout its route the marchers not only held meetings, but attempted to support and initiate struggles. They joined picket lines and occupations, and repeatedly entered factories in order to urge workers to take a more militant attitude against sackings. The degree of annoyance caused by the marchers to the authorities can be judged by the fact that on the day before the march ended, police attacked the marchers, beat them up, and arrested 44.

The Right to Work March got very widespread support from trade-union bodies. About four hundred trade-union organizations gave sponsorship and financial support to the March. While only a small action in terms of the overall balance of forces, the March showed the possibility for an initiative that campaigns within the labor movement yet intervenes independently of it.

THE CUTS

Parallel to wage control and unemployment, there has been a third attack on working-class living standards. Each time the

pound has faced difficulty on the international money markets, the Labour Government has responded with further cuts in public expenditure. The Tories and the right-wing press have not been satisfied by these, but have demanded even more cuts, alleging that the root of Britain's problems is too much public expenditure (subsidies to "parasites" and "spongers") and not enough resources for "productive" industry.

Labour has thus begun to attack the fragile edifice of social services — pensions, education, welfare, health, housing. Yet such cuts strike at the very heart of the ideological foundations of the Labour Party. For many people, the creation of the National Health Service was the one indisputable reform produced by the 1945 Labour Government. Yet this living testimony that reformism can sometimes deliver something is in danger of disintegration through starvation of funds. Almost half of Britain's hospital buildings are over eighty years old, and it is estimated that the Health Service has a shortage of seventy thousand nurses. Still, Labour proceeds to cancel building plans and introduce cuts that will mean further loss of jobs and curtailing of services. Education likewise is a pillar of social-democratic ideology; the development of education is crucial to the myth of the equality of opportunity. Yet Labour is forced to cut back the training of teachers, abandon school-building plans, and introduce cheese-paring cuts in educational facilities.

Because the cuts challenge the minimal reformism that Labour claims to stand for, there has been considerable opposition to the cuts from the Labour Left. But such opposition remains at the level of lobbying. Likewise the main unions with employees in the public sector have waged a propaganda campaign against the cuts. (14) But the same unions all supported the Social Contract, and thereby the logic of the Government's economic policy. However, within a fairly short period the cuts will lead to substantial redundancies in the public sector, and at this point these unions will face enormous pressure from their members to take a harder anti-government line.

A growing struggle against the cuts, though still highly fragmented, has spread trade-union consciousness to employees who have previously seen themselves as "professionals". Thus there has been militant action — in the form of a restriction on hours of duty — by junior hospital doctors, who work up to a hundred hours a week for relatively low pay. And in May and June 1976 there was a wave of college occupations by trainee teachers (a group almost untouched by previous phases of student militancy) in protest against cuts which will mean that large numbers of trained teachers won't find jobs.

As in the case of the unemployment issue, there are also signs that resistance to the cuts can gain a response from the labor movement as a whole. In the summer of 1974 there were various token strikes, often of one hour, but sometimes of up to 24 hours,

by local groups of miners, dockers, busmen, carworkers and others in support of higher pay for hospital nurses. And in March 1976, thirty thousand workers in the Scottish town of Dundee struck for one day in opposition to the cuts.

RACIALISM AND REPRESSION

But in the absence of any substantial opposition to Government policies, it is natural that some workers look for scapegoats, and this helps to explain the upsurge in racist activity in the summer of 1976. Racism is endemic in British society, and in a climate of demoralization fairly small causes — an inflammatory speech by demagogue Enoch Powell, a press campaign alleging that immigrants were being housed in luxury hotels at public expense — were enough to spark off a wave of racial incidents. (15)

The labor movement has run away from the question of racism, refusing to challenge the prejudices of its white supporters. Despite the militancy of immigrant workers, the trade-union machine has done little to help them. (16) The fruits of this cowardice were seen clearly in the northern town of Blackburn, where the Labour Council succumbed to a fascist campaign, and refused to allow a mosque to be built in the town. When fascists circulated a forged leaflet headed "Don't feel left out if you are an immigrant. Join the Labour Party", Labour officials simply urged people to ignore the leaflet. This capitulation led to heavy Labour defeats in the May Council elections, with two Council seats being won by members of the fascist National Party. Yet Labour politicians still urge their supporters not to take part in anti-fascist activities; presumably they hope that if racism is ignored, it will simply evaporate.

Of course, the fascist organizations are not at present a major threat. But their activities can do enormous damage in weakening working-class organization and diverting militancy. The extreme right has undoubtedly grown in support quite considerably over the last two years; though it has also paid the price of success by a split (with the "populist" National Party seceding from the more orthodox "fascist" National Front). This growth has been reflected in electoral success. Apart from the victories at Blackburn, the National Front has achieved up to 6% of the vote in Parliamentary by-elections. The rise in racist propaganda has given a green light to racist thugs; in May and June 1976 three black youths were killed in London, and there were many other cases of beating up and attacks on property.

But the fascist upsurge has not gone unchallenged. Every time the fascists have attempted to mobilize on the streets, they have met physical harassment. While reformists have argued against such tactics as "provocative", the revolutionaries, in particular the International Socialists, who have taken the lead in such ac-

tions, have a clear perspective. The hard core of fascist agitators must be shown to be what they are, and not the respectable populist patriots they would like to pass as. They must be isolated from the broader layer of supporters, who may sympathize with them but are not ready to take to the streets. Inasmuch as the fascists have failed to mobilize more than two thousand for a demonstration even at the height of their popularity, the harassment tactics must be accounted a success.

One particularly encouraging feature of the anti-fascist demonstrations of June and July 1976 has been the significant participation of black youth. In a number of areas black youth have set up youth organization and defense squads, sometimes in cooperation with white revolutionaries. As Ali Dasso, one of the leaders of the Asian Youth Organisation in Blackburn, put it: "We are building an organisation of our own because we are tired of the defensive policies of our elders. Everything we put forward was met with 'Have patience, have patience'. We could no longer console ourselves with patience while our people were being beaten up on the streets." (17)

PERSPECTIVES

The period since Labour came to power has been a bad time for the Left. The so-called "moves to the Left" inside the Labour Party are, in the last resort, a confirmation of this. A decline in active involvement in the Party makes it easier to pass militant resolutions, but these resolutions never lead to mobilization. The Communist Party, too, has suffered from a decline in support. To some extent that can be explained by its ambiguous attitude toward the trade-union bureaucracy. At the 1974 Trades Union Congress, the first Communist for some years was elected to the TUC General Council — draughtsmen's leader Ken Gill. Within hours of his election he had withdrawn his union's resolution against the Social Contract "in the interests of the broadest unity". The CP's paper THE MORNING STAR criticized Gill for this; but the Party could not discipline him effectively — they needed him more than he needed them. Although the Party has subsequently opposed Labour's incomes policies, it has not brought itself to make full-blooded criticism of its erstwhile favorites Scanlon and Jones.

It would be pleasing to be able to report that this rightward trend in the reformist organizations has brought a mass influx of support to the revolutionary left. Such, alas, has not been the case. The revolutionary left also has gone through a period of stagnation and even demoralization. (18) Some groups have responded to the general rightward move by themselves moving rightward toward a position of placing demands on the Labour Government or even entering the Labour Party. But there are hopeful signs too, and certain general indications may be given of the potential for revo-

lutionaries over the next couple of years.

The real crisis in the British working class is one of confidence. It is not that most Labour supporters expect major social transformation from a Labour Government. At best they hope for something limited in the way of reforms and pro-working-class policies. As a result, the process of disillusionment is unlikely to be either rapid or explosive; but with the abdication of the traditional leaderships, even a modest initiative — such as the Right to Work March — is able to win a positive response.

The overall trend in the labor movement is rightward. It is the responsibility of revolutionaries to swim against the tide, and to offer a clear alternative pole of attraction to the reformist organizations.

In the coming period the key battles will be in the trade unions; it is the trade-union leaders who hold the key to any successful policies on the part of the Labour Government. No revolutionary can turn his back on the battle within the unions. At the Conservative Party Conference in 1975 Alastair Burnet (shrewd editor of the right-wing DAILY EXPRESS) told a meeting: "Just as the Conservative party went reluctantly into local government elections, which were a major element in the party's recovery in the late 1960s, so now it must go into union elections — which are more important in modern Britain than any parliamentary by-election, and more important than most elections for the control of a city or a county. Where there is a postal ballot then Tory trade unionists and their wives can be decisive in returning social democrats at the least." (19) Revolutionaries have to be present in this battle, where necessary contesting elections, but above all seeking to build a rank-and-file movement that offers a real alternative to the bureaucrats. (20)

The struggle is still uneven and fragmented. Sections with no traditions of struggle and no longstanding loyalties to the Labour Party may be the first to move. The job of revolutionaries is not to predict, but to be present wherever the struggle erupts. (21)

The crisis will be long and deep. The much-heralded economic boom, if it comes, can mean only a sharpening of inflation. There is no reformist solution; if the Left does not gain ground over the next couple of years, then the extreme Right will certainly do so. That is the threat and the challenge that confronts us.

NOTES

1. For an account of the events leading up to the 1974 crisis, see my article "Class Struggle in Britain" in RADICAL AMERICA, Vol. 8, No. 5.

2. Editorial in INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM 86, February 1976.

3. The figures were: August '75 — 116,076 (60.5%) for; 75,743 (39.5%) against. June '76 — 103,506 (53.4%) for; 90,387 (46.6%) against.

4. 11 January 1975.
5. Party membership figures are totally meaningless, since in order to gain Conference delegates, local sections are obliged to pay affiliation fees on quite fictitious numbers.
6. All Labour MPs vote in the leadership election. In the first ballot, with six candidates, Foot led with 90 votes to Callaghan's 84 though Wedgwood Benn took 37 left votes that subsequently went to Foot. In the third and final ballot Callaghan beat Foot by the relatively narrow margin of 176 to 137.
7. By British convention, members of the Cabinet take collective responsibility and do not criticize Government policy in public.
8. Interview in NEW LEFT REVIEW 92.
9. Everyone, that is, who had the muscle to deliver. The International Socialists attempted to fight for these policies, and gave out a leaflet to troops saying: "Would you have to act like this if you had your own trade union?" The Communist Party secretary of Glasgow Trades Council told the bourgeois press that IS were "fleas in a bed who turn up at other people's picketing".
10. Despite, for example, his conduct in 1972, when he remained silent while five dockers were imprisoned for picketing and then went on to make an agreement with the former deputy chairman of the Tory Party, Lord Aldington, which led to the loss of thousands of jobs in the docks.
11. Reported in SOCIALIST WORKER, 6 September 1975.
12. THE ECONOMIST, 5 July 1975.
13. The Campaign was a creation of the National Rank and File Organising Committee, established by a trade-union delegate conference in 1974. The original initiative in fact came from the International Socialists, but the support spread far wider than IS membership, and included many members of the Labour Party and Communist Party.
14. National Association of Local Government Officers, National Union of Public Employees, National Union of Teachers.
15. The deeper causes have to be seen in the whole rightward trend of Labour over the last two years. The most viciously repressive act has been the Prevention of Terrorism Act, introduced in November 1974 after twenty people were killed by bomb explosions — allegedly caused by IRA terrorists — in Birmingham. The Act allows suspected "terrorists" to be held for seven days without contacting families or lawyers, and without any charge being made. Prisoners can also be deported to Ireland. It is being used as a systematic means of harassing Irish working-class militants.
16. Thus when 500 Asians at the Imperial Typewriters factory in Leicester struck in the summer of 1974, they got no help from the unions. One woman told SOCIALIST WORKER (20 July 1974): "When I joined this factory, I never knew what a union was, nor a shop steward."
17. SOCIALIST WORKER, 3 July 1976.
18. The present writer is a member of the International Socialists and writes from the general standpoint of their perspectives.
19. THE ECONOMIST, 11 October 1975.
20. Over the last year members of the International Socialists have run in a number of trade-union elections — AUEW, electricians and several white-collar unions. In the election for National Organiser of the AUEW, IS member Willie Lee got 10 000 votes, about one third of the total obtained by the "Broad Left" candidate.
21. At the time of writing (mid-October 1976) the Government is still holding the line of the wages front. The threat of a seamen's strike in September was averted primarily by direct and brutal intervention of the TUC leaders, who used threats to make the seamen's leaders call the action off. But the seamen did win a few small concessions, and this in turn has led to new demands from the miners. As inflation continues unchecked (with the falling value of the pound the Government has abandoned its intention of reducing the annual inflation rate

to below 10% this year) it will be increasingly hard to prevent a new outbreak of wage struggles. Another potentially destabilizing factor (which there is no space to deal with here) is the debate about devolution of governmental powers for Scotland and Wales. This issue cuts across party lines, and could cause problems for Labour, which now has no overall majority in Parliament.

*IAN BIRCHALL is a member of the International Socialists (GB). He is the author of **Workers Against the Monolith: The Communist Party Since 1943**, published by Urizen Press, 1974.*

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Books Received

- William Adelman: HAYMARKET REVISITED, Chicago: Illinois Labor History Society, 136 pages, illustrated, \$2.95.
- Michael Albert: WHAT IS TO BE UNDONE: A MODERN REVOLUTIONARY DISCUSSION OF CLASSICAL LEFT IDEOLOGIES, Boston: Porter Sargent, 1975, 352 pages, \$8.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper.
- Carolyn Ashbaugh: LUCY PARSONS, AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1976, 288 pages, \$10 cloth, \$3.95 paper.
- Jo Ann Ashley: HOSPITALS, PATERNALISM, AND THE ROLE OF THE NURSE, New York: Columbia University Teachers College Press, 1976, \$9.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper.
- Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon, and Susan Reverby: AMERICA'S WORKING WOMEN: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY — 1600 TO THE PRESENT, New York: Random House/Vintage, 1976, 408 pages, illustrated, \$15 cloth, \$6.95 paper.
- Charles Bettelheim: ECONOMIC CALCULATION AND FORMS OF PROPERTY, New York: Monthly Review, 1976.
- Harry Braverman et al.: TECHNOLOGY, THE LABOR PROCESS AND THE WORKING CLASS. ESSAYS BY BAXANDALL ET AL., New York: Monthly Review, 1976, 124 pages, \$8.95.
- Peter Camejo: RACISM, REVOLUTION, REACTION (1861-1877), THE RISE AND FALL OF RADICAL RECONSTRUCTION, ed. Jon Britton & George Weissman, New York: Pathfinder, 1976, 256 pages, \$12 cloth, \$3.45 paper.
- David Cortright: SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: THE AMERICAN MILITARY TODAY, Garden City: Doubleday, 1975, 317 pages, \$7.95.
- Alan Dawley: CLASS AND COMMUNITY, THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1976, 301 pages, \$17.50.
- Janice Delaney, Mary Jane Lupton, and Emily Toth: THE CURSE, A CULTURAL HISTORY OF MENSTRUATION, New York: Dutton, 1976, 276 pages, \$9.95.
- Richard and Anna Maria Drinnon, eds.: NOWHERE AT HOME: LETTERS FROM EXILE OF EMMA GOLDMAN AND ALEXANDER BERKMAN, New York: Schocken, 1975, 282 pages, \$12.95.
- Gary M. Fink and Milton Cantor, eds.: BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY OF AMERICAN LABOR LEADERS, Westport Conn.: Greenwood, 1974, 559 pages, \$19.95.
- Dan Georgakas: DETROIT: I DO MIND DYING, New York: St. Martin's, 1975, 250 pages, \$3.95 paper.
- Linda Gordon: WOMAN'S BODY, WOMAN'S RIGHT: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF BIRTH CONTROL IN AMERICA, New York: Grossman-Viking, 1976, 479 pages, \$12.50.
- Herbert Gutman: WORK, CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN INDUSTRIALIZING AMERICA, New York: Knopf, 1976, 343 pages, \$12.50.

- Branko Horvat, Mihailo Markovic and Rudi Supek: **SELF-GOVERNING SOCIALISM: A READER**, White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1975, Vol. I: 490 pages, \$21.50 cloth, \$9.95 paper; Vol. II: 327 pages, \$18.50 cloth, \$8.95 paper.
- Betty Lanier Jenkins and Susan Phillis: **BLACK SEPARATISM: A BIBLIOGRAPHY**, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1976, 163 pages, \$11.
- Sabri Jiryis: **THE ARABS IN ISRAEL**, New York: Monthly Review, 1976, 314 pages, \$12.50.
- Gabriel Kolko: **MAIN CURRENTS IN MODERN AMERICAN HISTORY**, New York: Harper & Row, 1976, 433 pages, \$15.
- Theodore Kornweibel, Jr.: "NO CRYSTAL STAIR," **BLACK LIFE AND THE MESSENGER 1917-1928**, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1976, 306 pages, \$13.50.
- Sydelle Kramer and Jenny Masur, eds.: **JEWISH GRANDMOTHERS**, Boston: Beacon, 1976, 174 pages, \$7.95.
- Paul Lafargue: **THE RIGHT TO BE LAZY**, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1975 (orig. 1907), 79 pages, \$1.25.
- Helen B. Lamb: **STUDIES ON INDIA AND VIETNAM**, ed. Corliss Lamont, New York: Monthly Review, 1976, 216 pages, \$16.50.
- Jesse Lemisch: **ON ACTIVE SERVICE IN WAR AND PEACE: POLITICS AND IDEOLOGY IN THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL PROFESSION**, Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1976, 150 pages, \$3.
- Moshe Lewin: **POLITICAL UNDERCURRENTS IN SOVIET ECONOMIC DEBATES: FROM BUKHARIN TO THE MODERN REFORMERS**, Princeton: Princeton University, 1975, 373 pages, \$16.50.
- Mahmood Mamdani: **POLITICS AND CLASS FORMATION IN UGANDA**, New York: Monthly Review, 1976, 339 pages, \$16.50.
- Betty Reid Mandell, ed.: **WELFARE IN AMERICA**, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975, 185 pages, \$8.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper.
- Frank Marquart: **AN AUTO WORKER'S JOURNAL**, University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University, 1975, 200 pages, \$10.
- Ronald L. Meek: **STUDIES IN THE LABOR THEORY OF VALUE**, New York: Monthly Review, 1976, 332 pages, \$17.50.
- Trevor Pateman: **LANGUAGE, TRUTH AND POLITICS: TOWARDS A RADICAL THEORY FOR COMMUNICATION**, Sidmouth, Devon, Britain: Jean Stroud and Trevor Pateman (1 Church Green, Newton Poppleford, Sidmouth, Devon), \$4.
- Ronald Radosh: **PROPHETS ON THE RIGHT: CONSERVATIVE CRITICS OF AMERICAN GLOBALISM**, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975, 351 pages, \$9.95.
- Rayna Reiter, ed.: **TOWARDS AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF WOMEN**, New York: Monthly Review, 1975, 416 pages, \$15.
- Robert Rosenstone: **ROMANTIC REVOLUTIONARY, A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN REED**, New York: Knopf, 1975, 430 pages, \$15.
- Issa G. Shivji: **CLASS STRUGGLES IN TANZANIA**, New York: Monthly Review, 1976, 182 pages, \$9.50.
- Paolo Spriano: **THE OCCUPATION OF THE FACTORIES**, London: Pluto Press, 1975, 212 pages, 2 pounds.
- Josef Steindl: **MATURITY AND STAGNATION IN AMERICAN CAPITALISM**, New York: Monthly Review, 1976, 246 pages, \$16.50.
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- Alfred Young, ed.: **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**, Dekalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University, 1976, 481 pages, \$15 cloth, \$5 paper.

Letters

(Editors' Note: We would like to encourage our readers to send us brief (maximum: 1000 words) responses to our articles and comments on important political issues for publication in this section. We will print as many as we can of those which seem of general interest to our readers.)

Dear Radical America:

Possibly the most important contribution that *RA* has made to our understanding of the working class experience are accounts and analyses of specific moments of ordinary people's self-activity. The more these accounts deal with the ambiguity of that experience, and the more honest they are in their reporting, the more valuable they become to your readers. Dodee Fennell's "The Life of a Factory" (*RA*, X, 5) is a beautiful example of this genre.

There is one part of the essay that raises some important questions about radicals' conceptions of the elements of a self-conscious working class culture. It is generally agreed by most radicals that the development of revolutionary class consciousness is a process that is at base cultural as well as political. People's development of expanded conceptions of their self-worth and historic power involves of necessity significant redefinitions of what is considered normatively appropriate. The most important expression of this is the development of a world-view in which the worker sees his or her class as the necessary coordinator of the historic process. As Dodee Fennell points out in her section on the social network of workers this takes place through discussions, debates, reading, and so on. Sometimes this is explicitly political and at other times it is far more unfocused. At all times it is a deeply personal process, and because it invariably involves other people and language it is cultural as well. It is a process that radicals, no matter what their conception of their own role may be participate in as equals, and as Dodee puts it: "Rather than a one-way flow of information from young to old or old to young, there were real exchanges of opinions, knowledge and experience in both directions."

Much of this involves exhibiting and exchanging artifacts — you know, books, hair-styles, modes of speech, etc. Traditionally, radicals have all kinds of goodies they want to turn people on to as part of this process and usually these are their favorite books and articles. Also traditionally, radicals assume that the literature they possess is one of the most important contributions they can make to developing an appropriate working-class culture. A common experience, however, is to find that the people to whom you have given your treasures aren't particularly interested in them, or at least don't find them as crucially significant as you do. They may be "relevant to a particular shop discussion, issue, or argument" but I am sure that Dodee would agree they seldom generate the same excitement that they do to the radical. What does

seem to generate excitement are the "more popular reading material... (like) farming magazines and "futures" farm reports, *Popular Mechanics*, astrology magazines, and train-yourself engineering and electrical publications." It is my impression that radicals don't take this literature seriously enough, or what is more to the point, don't take the intellectual concerns that lead to reading this literature seriously enough.

This is unfortunate because this literature is all about power and competence. It's about the material basis of the world and how it can be consciously manipulated for personal enhancement. Although much of this literature is imbued with the ethos of the individual craftsman, what is of importance is that it provides concrete information about the technical division of labor that goes far beyond what workers learn at the point of production.

What is also of importance is that there is nothing within the radical tradition that effectively speaks to these concerns. The most important political question raised in serious discussions of the sort that Dodee describes are those that take the form: "How would we run the world differently?" Radicals traditionally beg the question by postponing it to after the revolutionary seizure of power (which everybody knows anyway). In so doing, they tend to banalize and degrade the cultural dialogue they have entered, and reduce very important political questions to matters of the administration of morality. And, even worse, they tend to unsittingly fetishize the norms that maintain the existing division of labor as natural.

What I'm saying is that I think there are some lessons we should learn from the experiences we have had that are like Dodee's. We spend too much time exhibiting the artifacts we have been given, or we spend too much time trying to find more popular ways of re-expressing them. What we should be doing is creating new ones that will provide us and our fellow workers with the tools we need to realize our desires for emancipation. If we don't develop even rudimentary notions of what we need to know to run the new society, then the logic of the political process will be that of a force external to ourselves. Social networks of the sort that Dodee describes are a dialogue that provides the basis for collectively developing the questions that can lead to the rudimentary knowledge we need to develop a rational confidence in ourselves as a class.

Fraternally,

John Grady
Roxbury, Mass.
Nov. 1, 1976

ERRATUM

We regret that in the last issue, there was an error in Russell Jacoby's reply to letter commenting on his previously published "Stalinism and China." The sentence in question read: "Moreover, this article was an extract from a longer essay, 'Stalin, Marxism-Leninism and the Left' (currently in press by the New England Free Press); once available this should lay to rest any suspicion that I am promoting unalloyed Marxism for western socialists or Marxists." The phrase "unalloyed Marxism" should have read "unalloyed Maoism."

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Summer, 1975

Portugal: A Blaze of Freedom, from Big Flame (Britain); *Unions and Hospitals: A Working Paper*, by Transfusion (Boston); *Taxi at the Crossroads: Which Way to Turn?*, from the Taxi Rank and File Coalition (New York); and the first issue of *Cultural Correspondence*, edited by Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner.

Autumn, 1975

Southern Populism and Black Labor, by Vince Copeland; *Lip and the Self-Managed Counter-Revolution*, by Black and Red; *The IWW in Canada*, by George Jewell; and an issue of *Theaters*, with *Marxism and Popular Culture*, by Paul Buhle.

Spring, 1976

Radical Perspectives on the Economic Crisis of Monopoly Capitalism, by the Union for Radical Political Economics; and *Angola: The Struggle for Liberation*, by the International Socialists.

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Common Sense for Hard Times, a new book by Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello.

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