

isolated by their collaboration with the Germans, measures to put industry into the hands of the people and to tackle the economic, moral and social crisis of the nation had an implicit class content which was understood by all concerned.

Socialism was the goal, but the contention here is that the tactics of the 'Popular Front' phase (lasting till mid-1947) bore no relation to the Party's vision of that goal. The 'Czechoslovak road to socialism' of that period is described as a Stalinist tactic, merely a different road to Soviet-type one-party socialism. True, many Communists saw it in that way, which made their obedient response to the 1947-8 switch in Soviet policy all the easier. Nevertheless, things were not so clear cut, there were those who genuinely believed that

the road could lead to a democratic socialism of a new, Czechoslovak kind, but their gropings were cut short by the worsening international situation and the 'great February victory' when the 'socialist' phase of the revolution was carried through.

By then the Communist Party was able to rely on well-controlled mass support for a solution of the power crisis by constitutional means from above. A centralised trade union movement had brought the spontaneous works councils of the early days under its control, and the mass organisations in general were becoming 'the passive beneficiaries of party policy', ie 'transmission belts' on the Stalinist model. In this sense the revolution could, at this stage, be termed passive. Moreover, Bloomfield's argument that the seeds of

the monolithic system after 1948 were sown by this approach to working class organisation deserves serious study.

In those first three years, however, the process was still under way. There was a vast amount of independent activity, initiative and discussion in which the working class were certainly more than 'willing accomplices'; at the same time the alliance with the farmers and petit bourgeoisie, so rudely broken after 1948, was being strengthened. Although in 1968 there was a tendency to idealise the period, it contained much of value in the search for a democratic socialist order, as, in a more developed but still unfinished form, is the case with the experience of 1968.

Marian Slings

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE WELFARE STATE

Ian Gough

Macmillan 1979. 196pp. Paperback £3.95

The welfare state is a contradictory phenomenon, it simultaneously tends to enhance social welfare by meeting real needs of the working class, while at the same time it represses and controls those same people in order to adapt them to the requirements of the capitalist economy. The source of this contradiction is that the forms and goals of social policy are not subject to direct capitalist control but are determined by class struggle; yet they are necessary to the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production and subject to the structural constraints imposed by the capitalist economy. The consequence of the contradiction is that the welfare state itself becomes the source of further crises within capitalism. This contradiction, which makes the study of the state both interesting and difficult, is the focus of Gough's book.

The aim of the book is to provide an analysis of the welfare state under capitalism using the theory and methods of Marxist political economy. After an introduction which considers the ideological role of the term 'welfare state', Gough provides a short introduction to Marxist political economy and a review of the role of the state under capitalism. He then looks at the origins of social policy and the post-war growth of social expenditure across the advanced capitalist world; followed by an examination of the connection of the welfare state to the capitalist economy and to the current crisis. There is a political postscript, plus four technical appendices, three on Marxist theory of the state and one on the marketed and non-marketed sectors. The series in which the book is published is primarily addressed to practitioners in and students of social work

and the social services. This is reflected in the style of writing chosen and the structure of the argument, which may seem discursive to Marxist economists, and also the tendency to leave some of the theory implicit. This is unfortunate since central to any explanation of the topics he covers are a series of theoretical judgments on such highly controversial areas as the state, crisis, unproductive labour, etc. Although Gough's position has changed somewhat from that taken in some earlier work, no doubt his critics will obtain more fraternal amusement from writing impassioned attacks on the line he has taken here. But while there do seem to be serious questions about his treatment of some of these issues, this does not detract from the fact that this is a serious and useful book which draws together a range of politically important material on a difficult subject within a fairly coherent Marxist structure.

One strength of the book is that it extends the treatment of the crisis in the state from being merely a fiscal crisis to being a production crisis. State organisation of social services has two major roles for capital. It is a response to a realisation problem, providing markets for private firms either directly through state purchase or indirectly through transfer payments which enable the working class to purchase commodities from capital. At this level (of transfer of the surplus), there is a fiscal crisis associated with complaints about the burden of state expenditure and taxation. But more importantly, the state influences the production of surplus directly, by socialising the reproduction of the workforce and thus influencing the value of labour power. Since the state supplies a large range of necessities, either produced as commodities as in housing and the nationalised industries, or as use values, in the case of health and education, the labour process in the state sector is an important determinant of the

value of labour power, and thus the mass of surplus value. But the production is neither under direct capitalist control, nor in many cases is it even commodity production subject to the law of value. With the extension of state organisation of the reproduction of labour power, one source of the expansion of surplus value, the reduction of the value of labour power by cutting the abstract labour time required for the production of necessities, is increasingly removed from capitalist relations of production. Lack of control over the labour process in the state sector then becomes a major obstacle to the reduction of the value of labour power and the expansion of surplus value. Capital can only attempt to enforce the necessary restructuring through the political process, where it faces substantial opposition, from workers in the state sector.

Although Gough does not present the argument in the form given above, he provides much material central to an understanding of the role that capital and class struggle play in determining the character of state production. That understanding is an essential ingredient in the fight to stop capitalist rationality removing the last vestiges of a concern for welfare from the 'welfare state'.

Ron Smith

We would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution of Paul Marginson, David Triesman, Gill Jacobs, Anna Aubrey, Peter Hammarling, Paul Webster, Mike Jones, Helen Hewland, Jon Chadwick, and Colin Roberts amongst others, in helping to make this new-style *Marxism Today* possible. Ed.

Ruskin History Workshop 13:
'People's History and Socialist Theory'
Nov 30-Dec 2, 1979. Ruskin Hall,
Headington, Oxford.

Raphael Samuel writes: History is perhaps the one field in which Marxist work in Britain has shown a continuous, and many-sided, if often contradictory growth. Its strength lies as much outside the universities as inside.

The Ruskin History Workshop — which extends fraternal greetings to readers of *Marxism Today* — will be an occasion to take stock of the very different intellectual and political forces which have shaped the making of socialist historical work in the past 100 years; it will try to account for the different directions taken by work within different national traditions (a feature of the Workshop will be the participation of our close comrades from different countries in Europe); and it will try to set out the tasks to be accomplished — and the problematics which have arisen — in the wide variety of fields where Marxism is a growing force: Peasant Studies, Cultural Studies, for instance, as well as such more obvious fields as trade union and feminist history. The Workshop will be an occasion to debate some of the issues which have arisen around the publication of E P Thompson's *Poverty of*

Theory; and it will also discuss the rather longer-standing question of how history can be used as a weapon in class struggle. Finally the Workshop aims to give practical help to people working in local and community-based projects, with sessions on oral history, archives and sources, factory history, and (with the aid of Eddie and Ruth Frow) collecting labour history libraries. In all, participants have a choice of two of thirteen one day sessions, together with three plenary sessions. 'Position papers' will be circulated a month beforehand. The programme and tickets (£3 for the week-end plus £2 for position papers) are obtainable from Ruskin History Workshop Collective, Walton Street, Oxford. Free sleeping floor accommodation is offered to those who are prepared to rough it, and there are creche facilities.

Steve Iliffe writes: Opposition to the Tory government's cutback in spending on the NHS has begun to serve as a focus for reaction against its policies amongst a wide spectrum of the population. At the community level, the closure of local facilities is being resisted with some degree of success. Within the health service itself, there are welcome signs that staff from different sectors and levels are recognising the need for a common commitment to the extension and

development of existing facilities. The TUC has overwhelmingly demonstrated its concern about the threat of redundancies in the health service, and with the consequences these will have for the provision of adequate health care available to all sections of the population.

Opposition to Tory cuts is not in itself, sufficient. The recent Royal Commission revealed some of the inadequacies of the NHS as it existed before the present onslaught. To be successful, a campaign to defend the NHS must combine immediate demands with a clear vision of what kind of health service we want; such a campaign must find ways of integrating the struggles of all those who work to expand and democratise the NHS.

To this end, the Communist Party is convening a national aggregate conference for Communist health workers, labour movement and community activists. Speakers will include Dr M Rapoport, Dr R Wilson, Irene Swan, and Steve Iliffe, who will assess Tory policy on health, the kind of health service we should be fighting for, and what the CP's strategy should be. The conference will take place on Saturday 20 October, from 11 am to 4.30 pm at the Polytechnic of Central London (Regent St Building). Admission is by CP/YCL card only — creche facilities will be available.

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CRITIQUE

Defend Rudolf Bahro: a conference on the socialist alternative & in defence of Rudolf Bahro

12/13th OCTOBER, 1979

RED LION SQUARE, CONWAY HALL, LONDON.

FRIDAY OCT. 12

9.30 — 10.30 am. Registration
10.30 prompt Opening Address in Support
of Rudolf Bahro — *Zhores Medvedev*
11.30 The State in Late Capitalism:
Can the state be gradually
transformed? Has the essence
of the state changed?
*Tom Litterick — Ernest
Mandel — John Saville*
1.30 Lunch
3.00 Workshops
1) New Theories of the State
(*Convenor — Michael Cox*)
2) Economic & Political
Irrationality in the USSR
(*Convenor — Sandy Smith*)
3) Gramsci & Eurocommunism
(*Convenor — Quintin Hoare*)
4) Theories of the Present
Crisis (*Convenors — Paul
Walton & Andrew Gamble*)
5.30 Dinner
7.00 prompt The Relevance of Leninism
Today: Did Lenin make the
crucial undemocratic errors
which led to Stalinism?
*Monty Johnstone — Rudi
Dutschke — Chris Harman*
10.00 pm. Close

SATURDAY OCT. 13

10.00 am. prompt Is Market Socialism Possible
or Necessary: Is a market
required in the next stage in
Eastern Europe or in the
West, or is non-market social-
ism the only form of alterna-
tive socialist society?
*Wlodzimir Brus & Hillel
Ticktin*
Lunch
Workshops
(As on Friday)
Dinner
The Lessons & Consequences
of Chile: Is a new form of
organisation required? Is
Eurocommunism viable?
*Andre Gundar. Frank —
Ernesto Laclau — Michel
Raptis*
Close
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