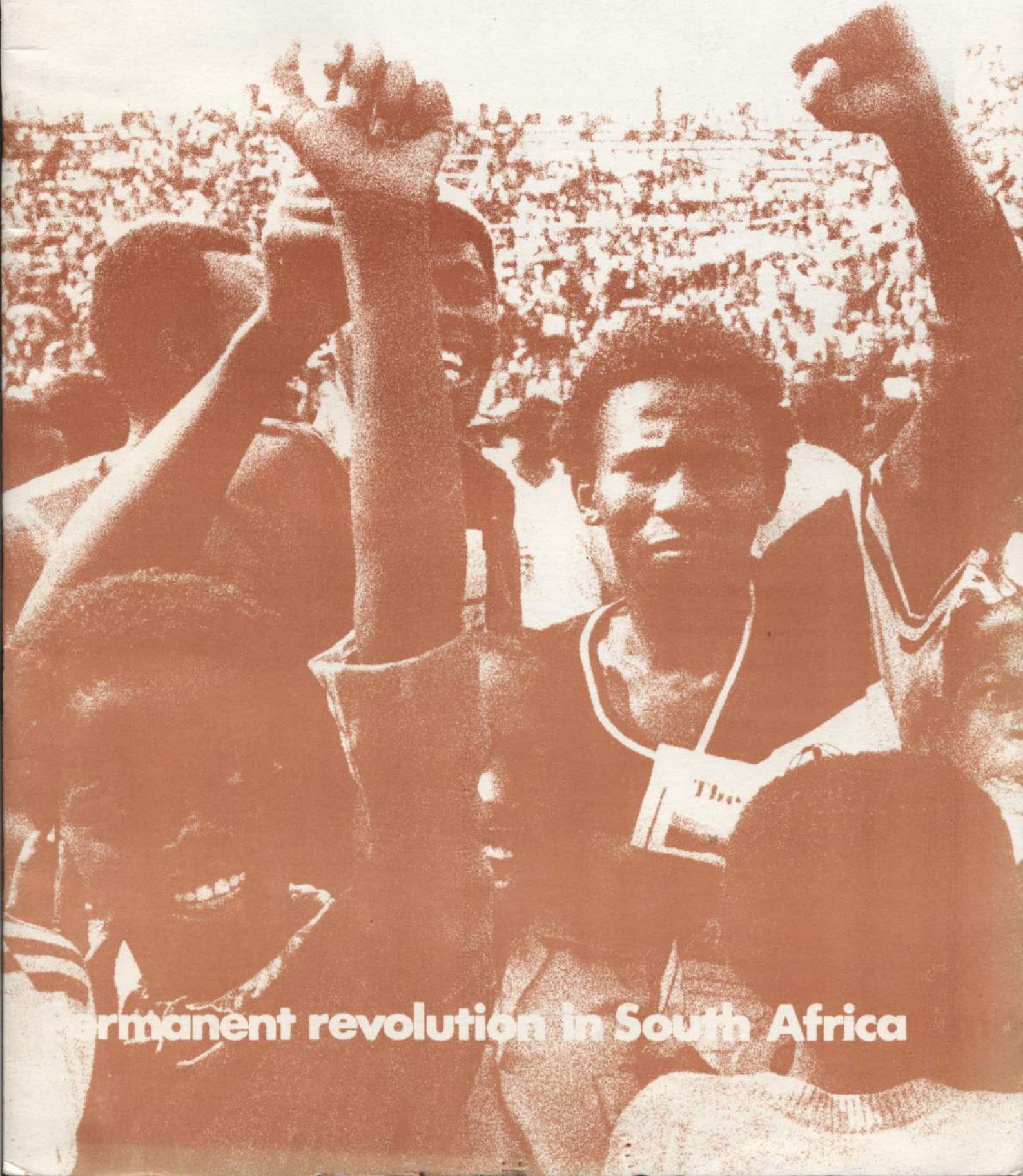


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international

A journal of Marxism in the Labour Party



Permanent revolution in South Africa



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Kinnock's right turn

IF LAST YEAR'S Labour Party conference was dominated by the miners' strike, this year's was the conference of the defeat of the miners' strike. In 1984 the hard left of the Party was riding high on the flood tide of the miners' struggle. Scargill, not Kinnock, was the 'star'. This year the 'Benn-Scargill' left was relatively isolated as Kinnock made full use of the opportunity to launch his own particular brand of 'new realism'.

The essence of Kinnock's strategy was to appeal over the heads of the conference to the ruling class, the establishment and sections of the middle class. He aimed to convince them, or rather to *begin* the task of convincing them, that Labour was now fit to govern.

It was certainly a 'realistic' electoral strategy, but one which denied that there was any realism in what the left of the party was doing. Contained in it was a stark and simple message: defence of jobs and services, opposition to Tory policies and, above all, struggle, do not pay on the electoral front. The left has to answer Kinnock on this terrain as well.

Kinnock's intervention in the miners' debate and against Liverpool City Council was nothing if not calculated and stage-managed. In the miners' debate no less than *three* general secretaries were called — Eric Hammond, David Basnett and Gavin Laird. This debate was designed not so much to win the vote against the NUM — defeat on this had already been conceded by the Kinnock camp — but to give the impression of a strong leader who would defy the Party and union activists.

In the Liverpool debate Kinnock was able to use the left's weak point — the absurd decision by the *Militant*-led City Council to sack its workforce — to ram home his attack. But if some left-wing delegates enjoyed the attack on *Militant* they were foolish and mistaken: Kinnock was attacking the left as a whole. And it has to be said that despite the errors of judgement and leadership by Liverpool City Council, the very fact that it is now in confrontation with the government is due to the determination of the *Militant* councillors to refuse to back down on jobs and services — something achieved nowhere else except in Lambeth. When Kinnock attacked Liverpool he was attacking the very notion of militant struggle against Toryism.

While Kinnock was giving notice of his intention to sanitise the party by isolating and defeating the left, his right-wing offensive has of course not yet been able to sweep all before it: we are still in the very early stages of open right-wing domination. Thus Kinnock lost on the miners' motion and the motion on lesbian and gay rights was carried. Although the motion on women's representation inside the party was lost, the motion on women's reproductive rights succeeded. And again, although the motion on black sections was defeated by the trade union block vote, it won three times as many votes this year as last year. Equally, there was no right-wing breakthrough at NEC level, although David Blunkett replaced Tony Benn at the top of the constituency section, which reflected the mood in the constituencies.

There should be no illusions that Kinnock did not enjoy massive support, even among the constituencies. Although



Carlos Augusto Guarita/Reflex

Willis and Kinnock — a partnership for capital

many constituency delegates joined Eric Heffer's walkout, more stood to give Kinnock a standing ovation. His shift to the right has dragged important parts of the 'soft left' with it. Thus the relaunched *Tribune*, soft left 'stars' like Blunkett and Livingstone, and after an initial hiccup the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, all went to the right with Kinnock.

However, far from having captured Kinnock politically, the soft left are now in his pocket. In a previous phase the soft left were able to have influence by acting as a bridge between Kinnock and the left, adjudicating in the middle. Now the bridge has been kicked away. They have had to go with one side or the other and they have made their choice.

As noted above, the 'hard left', represented by the Campaign Group of MPs, the NUM, black sections and the Labour Left Co-ordination, found themselves relatively isolated this year. While some victories were achieved, they were in the main on the defensive.

It seems certain that the right wing will utilise this situation to deepen the witch hunt against the left, starting with the *Militant*. *Militant* have had nearly 20 supporters expelled over the last year. There will be more to come. Despite all our differences with *Militant* and its sectarian stance, defence of their democratic rights must be high on the agenda of the left.

It was perhaps inevitable that the defeat of the miners should produce a shift to the right in the labour movement. But how should the 'Benn-Scargill' left respond? Certainly not by taking the advice given in the SWP's second 'Open Letter' to the *Militant* where the whole left is invited to evacuate the Labour Party forthwith. That, whatever the comrades' intentions, would be doing Kinnock's work for him.

Certainly the hard left still has large reserves of support, as the large amnesty meeting organised by *Trade Union Briefing* and the Campaign Group, and the *Labour Herald* and Labour Left Co-ordination meetings showed. Even if the drift to the right is continued between now and the general election, the hard left can show that an alternative exists and prepare for the breaking of the logjam which the election will certainly bring.

First and foremost, the hard left must challenge the notion that only Kinnock's strategy can be electorally successful. A campaign on socialist policies, backed by a united party, and reaching out to all those hit by Toryism — including the black population, women, sections of the middle class as well as the mass of industrial workers — could win massive support. The election result of 1983, a freak caused in part by the Falklands war, would not be repeated.

At the same time the hard left has to stand its ground politically. It has to reach out to other forces in the labour movement and beyond in order to organise joint campaigns in support of every group of workers and every other oppressed group in struggle against the Tories. It also has to link up with those fighting on particular issues and policies.

Those on the hard left must strengthen, too, their own stand on policy and take their own campaign initiatives. This is particularly true on economic policy, where nationalisation of

the banks and monopolies is under tremendous ideological attack. The Campaign Group pamphlet by Andrew Glyn, reviewed in this issue, is an excellent initiative in this regard. Equally, we need to build a gigantic campaign against NATO to confront the backsliders on unilateralism in both the Party leadership and CND. Above all, the campaign for amnesty for the sacked and imprisoned miners must be redoubled.

The bills introduced into parliament on such things as amnesty and NATO by the Campaign Group are excellent initiatives which the whole left should support.

Being clearer and more determined on policy questions goes hand in hand with strengthening the organisation of the left. *International* supporters give full support to *Labour Briefing* and to initiatives like the Labour Left Co-ordination. Without organisation the left is going to be chopped to pieces in the next period. This means building co-operation between left currents, black sections and the Women's Action Committee — a policy which goes hand in hand with organising the left in the unions.

Above all, we have to remember that if we do get a Labour government under Kinnock, it will in all probability turn out to be a repeat of the right wing policies of the Wilson era. But there will be two differences. First, the economic crisis is much deeper, and the attacks on the working class would be that much harsher. Second, the left in the party, despite all the setbacks, is infinitely stronger. Whether or not it could exert itself in such a situation would make a tremendous difference. The future of British politics depends on whether the Labour left (what the Campaign Group MPs were privately calling the 'real' left) can strengthen itself politically and organisationally. That is the challenge that we face.

DAVY JONES & THERESA CONWAY

After the skyjacking what future for the Palestinians?

IT IS A MEASURE of US imperialism's low level of self-esteem that such a puny 'victory' as Reagan's October skyjacking can be hailed from the rooftops by the American media. It took the mobilisation of the entire US Seventh Fleet, of the world's fastest fighter plane, AWACS surveillance aircraft and aerial tankers, not to mention the co-operation of several governments for the US to capture four fighters of the Palestine Liberation Front — or rather to capture them for Italy.

The mechanics of the military operation are less interesting than the effect it will have on, and what it shows about, the situation in the Middle East. First, it shows that the United States is prepared to stamp all over its allies whenever it feels it necessary.

Egypt's President Mubarak, deeply dependent on the US for military and economic aid, was in a very embarrassing position once Egypt had custody of the four Palestinians who had hijacked the Italian cruise liner. To hand over the PLF fighters would have brought him condemnation throughout the Arab world, so he granted them safe passage to Tunisia in PLO custody. It seems certain that Reagan told him in advance that the United States was going to seize the four, and make him look an idiot in Arab opinion — but he was powerless to stop it.

The whole business has struck a fearful blow at the already faltering 'peace process' launched by King Hussein of Jordan and the Arafat wing of the PLO. Ever since the PLO



withdrawal from Beirut in 1982, the main force of PLO fighters has been scattered throughout the Arab world, with no significant presence on Israel's borders. Arafat is now relying almost totally on diplomatic moves to gain Palestinian advance.

The Jordan-Arafat peace plan for the Middle East is for a West Bank Palestinian statelet under Jordanian control. The traditional demands of the PLO — for a 'democratic, secular Palestine' — have been in effect abandoned. Most of the Western European powers have been prepared to discuss this proposal — including Italy which was forced in to complicity with the Reagan skyjack. But the whole strategy has run into the insuperable problem of total opposition by Israel to ceding an inch of West Bank territory, and total refusal to have any dealings with the PLO or Arafat.

While the Hussein-Arafat plan has many similarities to the 1982 'Reagan plan', in reality the United States invariably goes back on the more subtle ideas of its foreign affairs establishment, and capitulates to Israel.

The United States feels itself under pressure from revolutionary and nationalist movements world wide, and has suffered bitter defeats at their hands in the last ten years. So strong and reliable allies are at a premium, none more so than in the Middle East. Thus the United States closely collaborated with Israel in the recent air raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunis, despite the fact that Tunisia is another 'moderate' ally of the US. The need to give strong backing to thuggish allies has caught the US apparently facing both ways at once. Formally in favour of the Middle East peace process, it is nonetheless quite prepared to kick its Arab allies in the face if backing up Israel proves necessary.

A similar process can be seen in relation to South Africa. Ostensibly the US deplores apartheid, but in practice South Africa is a stalwart ally against 'communism'. The golden rule in all these situations is that the operative US policy is always announced by Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger, and not the wet 'liberals' at the State Department.

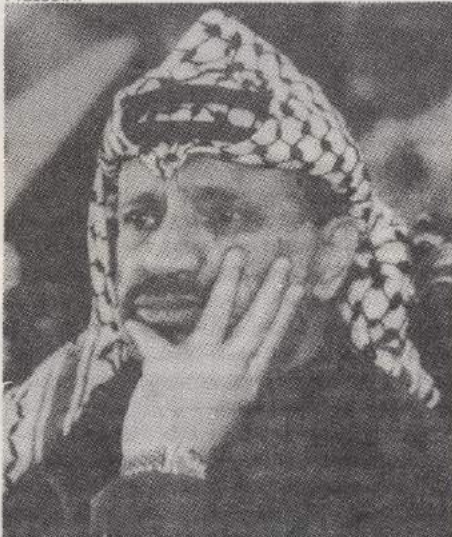
In a conscious attempt to overcome the 'post-Vietnam syndrome', the use of American firepower has become more and more frequent. The most obvious examples are the huge build up of US military forces in Central America, with considerable US aerial logistic support to the counter-revolutionary war in El Salvador and aid for the Nicaraguan contras. Other examples include the US invasion of Grenada, the ill-fated intervention in Lebanon to back the Gemayel Phalangist regime, and the shooting down of the Libyan fighters over the Mediterranean.

The plight of the Palestinians is now a desperate one. In Lebanon, war against the Palestinian community has been declared by both the Phalangists and the Shi'ite Amal militia, which occupies the destitute camps at Sabra and Chatila, scene of the Israeli-Phalangist massacre in 1982, and the more recent butchery by Amal itself. Syrian President Assad has been only too happy to give Amal support in their murderous onslaught against the Palestinians (he gave them 50 Russian tanks as a reward for their 'heroic' exploits at Sabra and Chatila) in order to destroy any force in Lebanon not under his control, or dependent on his patronage.

A US F-14A Tomcat

In Israel itself the Palestinians are increasingly victims of the utmost brutality on the West Bank, as Arab lands are seized and Arab homes blown up to make way for Israeli 'settlers'. There is no sign whatever of Israel ceding a single inch of the occupied territories where many Palestinians live.

If Arafat's peace process is running up against head-on opposition from the Israelis and in practice the Americans, it suffers from another fatal flaw — the fact that it simply ignores the claims of Syrian President Assad. Assad controls Lebanon, and is thus in the front line against Israel. He has it in his power to disrupt any peace process which does not cut him in, and he is a deadly enemy of Jordan's Hussein.



Yasser Arafat, a lot to think about

The PLO is now at an impasse. With the abandonment of Beirut, and the subsequent split in the PLO, the use of the PLO fighters as an effective military force collapsed as a realistic option. Now that the Arafat PLO is allied with Hussein and the Abu Musa wing totally allied to Syria's Assad, Arafat's diplomatic game is getting nowhere, and the Palestinian people themselves are suffering terrible blows at the hands of the Israelis and Arab reaction. There is no group in the PLO with any sizeable forces which has a credible strategy for the Palestinian national liberation struggle.

The working out of such a strategy has to start with a serious assessment of the history of the PLO, and the whole course that it has adopted since its formation. In reality, the 'armed struggle' as practised by the Palestinian Fedayeen was never going to be victorious, even before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon which struck it such a fearful blow. It faced massive military odds, with the Israelis armed

to the hilt by the US. But that was not the central reason for the failure of the armed struggle strategy. For any kind of success the PLO fighters needed to build an alliance with much broader Arab forces. Each attempt to build an alliance with reactionary Arab governments ended in disaster. Indeed, until 1982, the main military blows against the PLO had been struck by Arab reaction, most notably by Hussein's army in Jordan in 1970.

This revealed that any attempt to win the national and democratic demands of the Palestinian people cannot but be part of a wider social and political upheaval in the Middle East and aimed at the reactionary bourgeois nationalist regimes in the region as well as Israel. The allies of the Palestinians in such a project could only be the Arab workers and peasants, and not reactionary politicians like Assad or Hussein.

The irony of the situation is that while the PLO has suffered defeat after defeat, Israel is in a deeper crisis than at any time since its foundation. Decades of huge military spending have undermined its economy so much that inflation and austerity dominate the economic scene. Only massive subventions from the United States prevent complete catastrophe.

But nowhere is there a revolutionary force of any strength among the Palestinians and the Arab masses as a whole capable of taking advantage of the crisis both of Israel and of the reactionary Arab regimes. Arab nationalism itself is in a crisis, having neither successfully confronted Israel, nor eased the burden of the working masses. It is being challenged on a wide front by Islamic fundamentalism of various kinds and nowhere is this ideological confection in the least bit progressive. The labour movement in the region is weak, and the local Communist parties have a long history of utter capitulation to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism.

The left-wing forces in the PLO — and they exist not in the form of a single organisation but scattered throughout the different groups and organisation — can only advance by beginning a critical balance sheet of the history of their movement, and by hammering out a new strategy based on combining the Palestine national struggle with the struggle of the workers and peasants of the whole Middle East.

For socialists in Britain, total support for the Palestinian people and solidarity with their fighters, whatever our disagreements with their tactics and methods, is obligatory. Reagan can capture four individual fighters, and Israel and Arab reaction can carry out murderous deeds against the Palestinians, but the Palestinian people will not go away or give up the struggle. New generations of fighters will find the path to victory.



Community policing in Brixton, September 1985.

Piers Cavendish/Reflex



6 Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham

Philip Gordon/Reflex

Behind the Tottenham riot

The uprising against the police on the Broadwater Farm Estate in Tottenham has been given widespread and sensationalised coverage in the media. But few of the real facts have been publicised. The following is an abridged account written and distributed in leaflet form by Haringey *Briefing*, under the title 'Defend Bernie Grant, Fight Racism!'

THE EVENTS leading up to the riot are clear and need to be publicised. Tension on Broadwater Farm (BWF) has been increasing in recent weeks as police hardened tactics against black youth and because of the shooting of Cherry Groce in Brixton. There has been an increase in police harassment and several reports of black youths being beaten up. Against this background the riot was sparked off by the death of Mrs Jarrett — it was a result of the anger of the black community and their determination to defend themselves.

On Saturday 5 October, Floyd Jarrett, a well known activist in the BWF Youth Association was stopped by the police in Tottenham High Road because his tax disc had expired. The police accused him of stealing the car (which he in fact owned) and Floyd gave a false name. He was then arrested for assaulting a police officer, handcuffed by Detective Constable Randall, taken to Tottenham Police Station at 1.25pm and according to Floyd, punched and kicked. At 4.30pm Randall and four other police officers went to Mrs Jarrett's house to look for stolen goods, even though Floyd had not been charged with any theft offense, had not lived with his mother for some time and had told the police his own address.

The police gained entry to Mrs Jarrett's house by using a key taken from Floyd at the police station — an illegal act. Although the police claimed they had a search warrant this was not produced. The family of Mrs Jarrett has stated that while he was searching the house, the family witnessed Randall forcefully pushing their mother.

She fell to the ground gasping for breath. However Randall jumped over Mrs Jarrett and still continued with the search, ignoring the family's plea for help and their request for the police to radio for an ambulance. Consequently the youngest son ran across the road to a public phone box to ring for one. It took 45 minutes for it to come. By the time Mrs Jarrett reached the North Middlesex Hospital she had died.



Piers Cavendish/Reflex

A small demonstration of relatives outside Tottenham Police Station followed on Saturday afternoon and Floyd was released. Tension did increase on BWF that evening, but there were no incidents.

Black Self Defence — Police Riot

On Sunday morning there was another demonstration outside the Police Station and the road was blocked temporarily by a sit-down protest. This was followed by a meeting of the black community with Bernie Grant and other councillors in the BWF Youth Association office from 2pm onwards. At about 6.30 a group of youths came into a meeting saying that the time for talk was over. The councillors left; a demonstration of black youth set off to march to the police station; but as they entered Willan Road they were met by a large squad of riot police; in fact massive reserves of riot police had been building up in Tottenham all day and by 6.30 police cordons had been set up at all the exits to the estate.

The blocking of the estate in this way meant that if any violence came it would be highly localised and intense; but police quotes show that they were determined to prevent the youth leaving the estate and were quite prepared to see this result in violence as long as it did not spread out of the Farm.

Kenneth Newman now had exactly what he wanted — a set piece confrontation with the black youth. The death of PC Blakelock in the ensuing vicious fighting gave him the ideal pretext to deploy plastic bullets and tear gas.

Conditions on Broadwater Farm

About 4,000 people live in the high-rise slum that is the Broadwater Farm Estate. Built in 1971 it almost immediately became a hard-to-let estate; three-quarters of the lettings were to families with no choice and a high proportion to single parents. Social and economic conditions are severe — 70% of

the population is on Supplementary Benefit and over two-thirds of the people are black.

Over 50% of the residents are in single parent households. However, there have been very positive developments on the estate. By the early 1980s crime was high and black people were being harassed by police and attacked by fascists. In response to this, the black community began to organise and take control over their own lives.

An active tenant, Dolly Kiffin, took the initiative of establishing the BWF Youth Association and with her supporters took control of the tenants' association. The Council too declared BWF a priority estate, putting in resources and de-centralising services. A vital role was played by Bernie Grant in this. In fact so successful was this self-organisation the estate became a model for tackling inner city problems.

This has now been smashed by the police action. Since 1981/2 the police role in BWF has been limited largely to 'community policing'. The self-organisation of the local community has been successful in cutting crime without a police presence or Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. In order for police power to be restored and for the use of tougher police measures to become politically acceptable, this black self organisation had to be wrecked by the police — hence their provocation of the riot.

Furthermore, Roy Hattersley has been quick to distance the Labour Party leadership from any criticism of the Metropolitan Police. Not content with condemning miners' 'violence' or undermining the fight of Liverpool and Lambeth Councils the Party leadership now feels strong enough to attack a Labour Council taking a stand on the issues of police violence, racism and accountability. These attacks on Bernie Grant are leading to demands for him to be removed as Tottenham's Labour candidate — a witch-hunt which must be resisted.

Brixton, Toxteth and Tottenham — another round of riots in the inner city areas led by the Black youth. *International* spoke to Haringey councillor **Narendra Makanji**, national secretary of Labour Party Black Sections, about the significance of the riots.

International: *What do you think is the significance of the latest round of riots in the inner city areas?*

Narendra Makanji: It's an expression of frustration and anger caused by insensitive policing, increasing unemployment and social deprivation. The riots that have occurred have happened in Liverpool, Lambeth, Haringey and Leicester — all of which are Labour areas with a high level of social deprivation, and all of which are in the front line against Government policies on public spending and local government.

We have ten thousand people unemployed here in Tottenham. We are the fourth most needy education authority and even by the Government's own statistics we are the sixth poorest area in the country. All this forms a tinder box which can be sparked off by a single event, such as the raid on Mrs Jarrett's house which caused her to collapse and tragically to die.

International: *What has been the impact of these riots in the Black and Asian communities in these areas?*

Narendra Makanji: The impact is difficult to gauge at this stage. On the one hand amongst the youth it has led to an understanding of the political processes which are taking place and the way in which the media operates. Many of the youth are now engaged in a level of political discussion which is much higher than I have ever known before. They are talking about their rights, unemployment, education, training, housing and social security. We have also seen an impact among the older people in the communities who are now totally convinced of the necessity of police accountability.

Up until now there had been a lot of doubts about police accountability and many people were prepared to accept consultative arrangements as an alternative. Now all this has changed since the events in Lambeth. Accountability of the police is now a major political issue again. It has also had an impact within the Tory Party. We have seen Peter Walker's open challenge to the Government to carry out new policies to restore levels of employment, at the recent Tory Party Conference.

International: *What about the response of the Labour leadership?*

Narendra Makanji: The public response from the Labour leadership has been mixed. Roy Hattersley for example called for even



Philip Gordon (Reflex)

Interview with Narendra Makenji

greater and stronger policing. However other shadow cabinet and front bench spokespersons have been much more understanding about the situation that the cities face. Alf Dubs and Clive Soley visited the Broadwater Farm Estate the day after the riots there and have been very helpful since then. The attitude of Neil Kinnock is nearer to that of Alf Dubs in my view, than that of Roy Hattersley.

International: *Not everything about the riots can be condoned by socialists. For example a number of women were raped during the Brixton riot. What is your response to that?*

Narendra Makanji: These riots take place within a prevailing culture and values — hence there is looting of items that are commercially most desirable. There are other acts which take place such as rape and other violence. We have to have a serious debate about this within the labour movement, because we have to create a climate and set of values that run against such acts, so that if people do feel pressed to

make a protest, the means of their protest reflect those new and socialist values. The rapes, the looting, the muggings that happen are a reflection of capitalist values and nineteenth century attitudes which have long existed and which this government assiduously reinforces. We have to change all that.

International: *As national secretary of Labour Party Black Sections how do you think Black Sections should relate to this development?*

Narendra Makanji: Black Sections should act as a bridge between the alienated Black people and the Labour Party and labour movement. We have to keep our lines of communication open despite the fact that there might be minor disagreements with Black people and Black people's organisations that are not totally committed to the Labour Party. We have to ensure in particular that the people who do not have a political voice see in the Labour Party Black Sections a means by which they can obtain that voice.



International Defence and Aid Fund

Funeral of Andries Raditsela, FOSATU trade unionist killed by police, June 1985.

Crisis in South Africa

Statement of the Fourth International

THE NEW RISE in struggles in South Africa falls into the framework of the general crisis of imperialist domination, opening a new front which could increase the difficulties of the imperialist counter offensive including in Central America. The South African mass movement had already been stimulated by the defeat of Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique. Today the struggles against apartheid constitute the most advanced form of the anti-imperialist struggles in the whole of Black Africa. The new wave of popular mobilisations in South Africa constitute an element of first importance for all anti-imperialist struggles throughout the world. The imperialist governments and big capital have all recognised the danger and are each seeking to close the breach that is opening in South Africa.

The place of South Africa in the counter-revolutionary system of imperialism is considerable, as are imperialism's economic interests in this country. The South African regime remains the strong arm of imperialism in Southern Africa, and has even contributed to arming the dictatorships in Latin America. The important place that a revolutionary upsurge in South Africa could hold in the future is the product of all these factors.

There has been an important change in the political situation in South Africa with the explosion of the present revolt. The process began over a year ago, with first the education boycotts by highschool and university students, the boycott of the sham elections proposed by Botha for the Indian and Coloured communities, the miners' strike in September 1984, and then the stayaway (general strike) in the Transvaal in November 1984.

This period has been marked by many workplace conflicts, the workers going into struggle on wage demands, demands for improvement in working conditions or in defence of trade union rights or against sackings.

The present upsurge of activity and radicalisation is marked by a more and more direct link between a series of struggles that each involve different social sectors of the oppressed masses: youth, workers, township dwellers.

This same tendency towards unity is also noted at the level to which the struggle has broken through the ethnic compartmentalisation that the regime has striven to establish through the apartheid laws, introducing divisions among the oppressed by classifying them into distinct racial categories.

This desire for unity on the part of the oppressed population is not yet however sufficient to overcome all the racial and ethnic prejudices that the apartheid system has succeeded in introducing among the masses. This situation remains the product of a division of the population in social and working life, and in their place of residence.

But the process underway represents a considerable political advance and seriously destabilises the organisation of racial segregation, the basis of the present regime. In the framework of the new relationship of forces, the reform proposals put forward by Botha in the end satisfied neither the masses nor imperialism.

One of the key moments of this tendency towards unity in action was the stayaway in the Transvaal in November 1984, where among other things a united front was established including the independent trade unions and the United Democratic Front (UDF). This strike particularly showed up the growing importance of the workers' movement through its trade unions, without which no action of such scale would be possible. The imminent formation of a unitary federation bringing together the majority of the independent unions will be an event of considerable importance which can only encourage the activity of the Black working class.

All this illustrates the level of development already attained by the mass movement. Two main forms of organisation have particularly developed since 1980 on complementary fronts: community associations organising people in their place of residence; and non-racial independent trade unions which now organise a substantial section of the Black (non-white) working class. It is the problem of combining these two forms of organisation of the movement that must be resolved in order to pass to a higher stage in the confrontation with the regime. The



Soweto, 1976

real and effective unification of the different forms of organisation in the popular movement has not been able to be realised either in the UDF or the African National Congress (ANC).

The present level of popular struggle poses urgently the question of self-defence of the masses, and initiatives taken on this question, so that the potential for offensive combat by the mass movement can emerge. The present lack of response to these questions is already a problem for the development of mass mobilisations.

The struggle for emancipation, which has just experienced a new upsurge, will therefore be a long and complex struggle. Its outcome will depend, among other things, on the result of the political orientations on tactical and strategic questions which will be adopted on the basis of the present experiences.

In fact, the radicalisation of the mass movement and the political objectives that it is taking on have brought to the forefront the political differences and strategic debates that divide the different currents and organisations within it. On tactical questions, as on the long-term objectives, there are different orientations within the mass movement.

Among the currents existing, there is first of all the ANC which has mass support in certain sectors of the mass movement, particularly in the civic associations, and which enjoys a wide audience beyond its organisational network. There is also the Black Consciousness, and particularly the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO). Among the main organised currents one should also include certain churches, members of the World Council of Reformed Churches, that have a specific political practice and have an active, militant base. Finally, the leaderships of certain of the principal unions act independently in the mobilisations by following their own perspectives and appear as political forces in their own right in the present political diversity.

The South African workers' movement is the product of modifications in the social structure of the country following the industrialisation process of the 1960s. The importance of the industrial proletariat in the struggles ahead is thus first of all the product of its numerical reality and its degree of concentration, that is its social weight in South African society. During the last period the Black working class has proved its capacity to introduce its own methods of action and organisation into the struggle against the apartheid system, having forged its first weapons in the struggle around economic demands and for trade union rights.

The present struggle in many ways started on democratic and national demands, but not exclusively. The oppressed masses want to get out from under the yoke of the racist state, they want an egalitarian, democratic and non-racial state. They demand universal suffrage, without discrimination of any sort, under the slogan 'one person, one vote'. The immense majority of the layers of the oppressed Black population is interested in the realisation of these democratic and national demands. But

already, at this stage of the mobilisation, demands have come forward in the workers' struggles directed to the bosses and the state that clearly link the question of apartheid to that of capitalist domination.

The reason for this combination lies in the interwoven history of capitalism and racist institutions in this country. Apartheid is an instrument of racial domination but it is also a way of guaranteeing a specific exploitation of the workforce. Apartheid is the specific form that capitalist exploitation has taken in this country. And that has immediate consequences in the way in which the workers' movement identifies its class enemies, including in the democratic and national struggles.

It is true that from a certain point of view apartheid is full of contradictions for certain sectors of capitalism (limited domestic market, lack of qualified workforces, etc.). But today it is the direct danger of revolutionary exploitation that has forced a section of the South African ruling class to try to introduce reforms. The liberals, who are essentially supported by a section of South African finance and industrial capital, have thus embarked on the course of trying to find a political solution by meeting the ANC or trying to moderate the UDF. But precisely because of the link between capitalism and apartheid they are incapable of proposing the abolition of all discriminatory laws and the introduction of universal suffrage. Their attempt at reform will not for the moment go beyond the federative proposals that deliberately ignore the popular hope for a single non-racial nation. In the last instance, the real compromise that the liberals will have to make will be that they will make with the rest of their class, that is, the reactionary sectors today represented by the National Party.

The new situation in South Africa has a world wide importance, given the strategic importance of this country for imperialism and the scope of the economic interest. Up until now, imperialism had unflinchingly supported the racist regime. The new situation requires certain political rectifications in order to find a solution to the present crisis. Certain sectors of the banks and multinationals have undertaken to put pressure on the South African regime through a number of financial and commercial mechanisms. The immediate scope of these sanctions should not hide the fact that the imperialist countries fundamentally seek the stability of the capitalist regime in South Africa, and want to avoid a radicalisation of the present movement. To achieve this, they rely more and more on the liberal currents and South African big capital.

For all these reasons, the South African revolutionary process will be in line with the social, economic and political reality of the country, that is, the reality of its class structure, which gives the industrial proletariat a central role in unifying the oppressed masses in the struggle against apartheid. The popular movement strives above everything else to liquidate the apartheid regime through the formation of a single non-racial nation, through the question of equal civil and political rights, and through the land question.

While we must pay the greatest attention to the immediate struggle for these demands which are in the interests of all the oppressed, it is nevertheless decisive that the workers' movement should furnish the mass movement with its leadership. The strengthening of the workers' movement and the construction of a recognised revolutionary proletarian leadership are thus necessary tasks to prevent the present struggles ending in stalemate or dead end, without even having been able to meet the main democratic demands. A proletarian leadership will be the only guarantee that the democratic and national questions are fully resolved. The real, complete solution to these questions can only be carried out by the dictatorship of the proletariat as the decisive point in a process of permanent revolution. Even if certain socialist tasks must wait for later, only the dictatorship of the proletariat is capable of fulfilling and defending the demands of the national democratic revolution. This is possible in South Africa because the social and political relations existing in the country are ready to bring the proletariat to power at the head of the oppressed and exploited masses.

October 1985



Solomon Mahlangu, ANC Fighter, executed by the apartheid state.



Hector Peterson, aged 13, the first to die in the Soweto uprising



Bishop Desmond Tutu, spokesperson for the United Democratic Front

Slander!

CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN

THERE CAN be no dispute about the fact that the African National Congress (ANC) is today the most important organisation in the liberation struggle in South Africa. But the impression which one gathers from the media coverage of the turbulent events in South Africa is that it is the *only* organisation engaged in the fight against the apartheid regime. This is far from being the case.

Undoubtedly the great mass of the people fighting the repressive apparatus of the state in the townships identify with the ANC and especially with its imprisoned leader, Nelson Mandela. But the ANC itself, and its close ally the South African Communist Party (SACP), are fully aware that it has to win the hegemony of the struggle in ideological battle with other tendencies, especially the National Forum (NF), the Azanian Peoples Organisation (Azapo) and the community organisations. These have sprung up spontaneously in the townships and, in practice, give a daily lead to the resistance movement which often has its immediate origins in opposition to increased rents, fuel charges, transport costs, etc.

Both *Secheba*, the official organ of the ANC, and *African Communist*, the quarterly journal of the SACP, have been carrying on an 'ideological' battle against Black Consciousness (BC), the National Forum and Azapo. If these organisations were without influence one can be sure that these journals would not be wasting so much space in refuting their views.

The ANC and SACP have also been casting wary eyes on the growth of the independent trade union movement in South Africa. The leaderships of these unions, which were born out of the strikes in Durban and the Rand in the 1970s, have generally come from outside the ANC and SACP, or the ANC-affiliated South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu), which was never banned, having gone into voluntary exile alongside the banned ANC and CP in the 1960s.

The thirty six main independent unions are set on a course which will lead to the launching of a 'super-federation' at the end of November. While cautiously welcoming this move toward trade union unity in words, the ANC, and more especially the SACP leadership have some misgivings. They fear that this powerful movement of the organised working class could generate a pole of attraction outside their control and so diminish their influence in the resistance movement.

The campaign to denigrate the independent trade union leadership took off in 1983 with an attack by 'Toussaint' (South African Communist No. 93) on the address of Joe Foster, General Secretary of the

Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) at that organisation's 1982 Conference. 'Toussaint' tried to show, with the help of liberal quotations from Lenin torn out of context, that Foster's approach is 'workerist', that he wants to substitute the trade unions for the political organisations of the working class. In fact, the whole tenor of Foster's address, as the following quotation shows, is just the opposite:

'...worker activities such as strikes and protests do not in themselves mean that a working class movement or working class politics exist. These later are more than that...'

'Toussaint's attacks have been followed by others in *African Communist* and *Secheba* but it reaches a new low in the most recent issue of the SACP quarterly, *African Communist* No. 103 (Fourth Quarter 1985 pp9-10). This time the assault comes in the Editorial Notes and it tries to establish a link between the growing effectiveness of the trade unions with the ruling class 'reforms' — and this on the very eve of the unification conference?

Resorting to the well-tried Stalinist method of the 'amalgam' (mixing up two unrelated sets of fact and drawing false conclusions from them), the Notes refer to an appeal by a 'verligte' Professor Blackie Swart of Stellenbosch University to employers and the government not to use strong arm tactics against independent trade unions because this could have disastrous long-term consequences and could lead to unmanageable industrial unrest '... which will result in a shift towards more politically motivated organisations...

'In other words,' write our SACP hacks, 'he is appealing to the bosses to let the unions succeed in negotiations for higher wages and better conditions because failure at the negotiating table would throw the workers into the arms of the ANC and SACP.' And now comes the amalgam: 'This explains why so many employers recognised the relevant trade union and allowed it to function. This explains why millions of rand are being channelled by the CIFTU, AFL-CIO and other bodies towards South African unions which it is hoped will develop into a "third force" drawing workers away from the ANC.' So according to the CP, the bosses are supporting the unions in order to win support away from the ANC!

This does not explain, of course, the fierce struggles of the unions for recognition nor does it explain, as stated in the ANC journal *Secheba* (March, 1985 p. 21) the arrest of 'over a thousand trade unionists' under the emergency regulations. These slanderous remarks in *African Communist* can only serve to undermine the strength and influence of the trade unions and the vital part which the organised working class will have to play if South Africa is to achieve freedom.

The achievement of the women in WAPC, says JANE KELLY, is to begin to break with the traditional political practice of the labour movement in Britain. The women not only supported the most militant sections of the NUM during the strike, but are continuing to organise. Their struggle has stimulated new discussion of all the familiar questions about the relationship between women's liberation and the fight for socialism.

THE CONFERENCE of the Women Against Pit Closures held in Sheffield, on 17 August, with over seven hundred women present, proves once again the durability and persistence of women who have radicalised during the course of a struggle. Six months after the end of the year-long strike, rebuffed by the NUM conference which voted narrowly against their affiliation to the national union, the women who sustained the strike in a way never seen before, are continuing to organise both at a local and a national level.

Much has been written about the historic nature of the miners' strike, the most important trade union struggle in Britain for sixty years, but perhaps the most significant development is the continuing existence of the WAPC movement. The achievement of these women is to begin to break with the political practice of the traditional labour movement in Britain. The history of British imperialism produced the contradictory elements in the labour movement of a very well-organised trade union movement alongside very right-wing politics. This is most clearly the case on issues of gender and

The Women Against Pit Closures movement

race. In a labour movement which based itself on Britain's imperialist past, sexism and racism are both endemic and structural. As a result the demands for women's liberation and black liberation are seen as a real threat to the status quo (as of course they are!), and even groups on the left, like the Militant, cover up for the bureaucracy by describing these demands as 'divisive' or a 'diversion'. Thus the links made during the

shoulder to shoulder with the men, not all their demands have been met. Nor in the long term have the problems thrown up by their role in the strike, the fight against sexism and the contradictions produced by the double oppression of women, been resolved.

In the first place the narrow vote against their right to affiliate to the NUM is a real setback. In order to change this, the women will have to confront the political situation within the NUM itself. Since the end of the strike it has become clear that the influential role played by the Communist Party (CP) within the NUM affected not only many of the events during the strike itself, but is continuing to influence the way forward in the difficult period after the defeat, for example the resolutions on amnesty to the TUC and LP Conferences. In their refusal to sever any links with the trade union bureaucracy, the CP are using the cry of 'unity' to water down the demands the NUM need to make on any future Labour government. In many areas the women's support groups have lined up with the most militant sections in the union and as a result are engaged in a fight with the CP and its supporters, often in the leadership of lodges, over the question of amnesty itself, but also over the right of the women to continue to organise independently, to maintain their own bank accounts and to further their links with other women's groups.

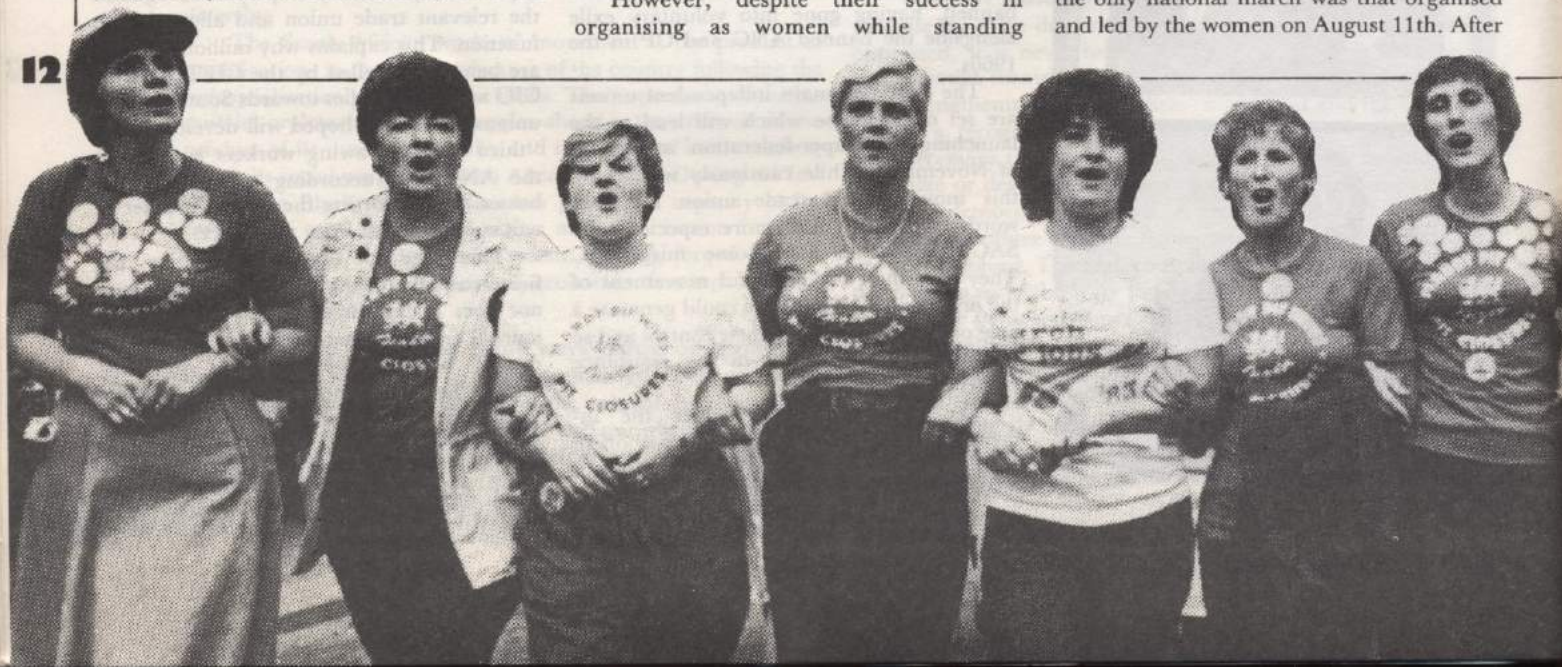
The right wing in the union, and the CP too, know that the WAPC rank and file is on the militant left of the union. For example during the strike, until the national demonstration called by the Liaison Committee for Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU), at the very end of the struggle, the only national march was that organised and led by the women on August 11th. After

"In their effectiveness during the strike the women have proved the importance of autonomous organisation."

strike with black groups and the self organisation of the women themselves, are in the long term truly progressive.

In their effectiveness during the strike the women have proved the importance of autonomous organisation. Far from this autonomy reinforcing already existing divisions, it allowed the women to fight simultaneously for their own independence and for the struggle as a whole. As was said more than once during the strike, you could tell which pits had active women's support groups by the state of the men's morale. Contrary to the beliefs of some groups on the left, the fight for women's liberation is not a diversion from the fight for socialism, nor on the other hand, will it be achieved by turning away from the working class and the traditional, if inadequate, organisations of the labour movement.

However, despite their success in organising as women while standing



the end of the strike it was the women who led and continue to lead the demand for amnesty, while the national union was very late in starting an effective campaign. The resistance of the NUM to push the full demands on the grounds that they might jeopardise the election of a future Labour government, is not accepted by many of the women.

What the right have not perhaps yet fully grasped is the reason for the women's inflexibility. This is based on their daily experience of the effects of the sackings and imprisonment, for it is inevitably the women who have to deal with these effects. With men in prison, it is the women who have to cope alone with domestic, family and financial problems: with men unemployed, it falls to the women to sustain the family both economically and emotionally.

In order to make their voice better heard the women are faced with several tasks. First those who are critical of the way the WAPC is at present organised will have to fight to make it more democratic and accountable to the grass roots of the movement. The next conference will be a real test of this. Secondly the 'offer' by Mick McGahey that the Scottish area WAPC could affiliate to the Scottish area NUM, should be pressed and the demand put in other sympathetic areas. Thirdly the links made between the women's support groups and other women organised around other demands, such as the women at Greenham, at Barking hospital, women in the Women's Action Committee, should be built on. The slogan 'Your Fight is Our Fight' should be practically applied.

But there is another, more fundamental area which was highlighted by the development of the movement, an area which has been dealt with inadequately in all the articles and books on the strike. That is the question of the double oppression of women and the role of the family in that oppression. The problems produced by playing a significant political role in the strike, while conti-

nuing to fulfill the demands placed upon them by society as wife and mother, have been experienced by many women during the strike;

'A lot of tension has been created by the strike, it's opened up a lot of questions about living in a family, for women it brings it all out. I think we're very lucky in the fact that we have husbands who understand women having independence, but at the same time they still fall back on old-fashioned ideas and say, "You should spend more time with the children." And we do tend to neglect things for what's going on.'

From a taped interview with women in the support group in Aylesham, Kent. Dec, 1984.

The immense solidarity shown during the strike in the mining communities, has led many on the left to ignore the question of the role of women in the family and the sexism that the role engenders. And those that have raised the issue have either done so in a way that fails to link the struggles for women's liberation and socialism, or have concentrated on the issue of sexism alone, which is inadequate to deal with the problem. But the question of the ultimately reactionary role of the family has to be confronted sooner or later, in order to explain, even if it cannot alleviate, the contradictions which women face.

In his book on the question of women and the family, Engels wrote:

'...the first condition for the liberation of women is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry, and ... this in turn demands the abolition of the monogamous family's attribute of being the economic unit of society.'

Despite the over-optimistic and causal link between paid work outside the home with the liberation of women, Engels made the important point that the move of women into the paid workforce, which would encourage collective organisation and trade union consciousness, would be a precondition for the

development of a women's liberation movement. At the same time it would mean that the woman would not be able to fulfill the role of housewife and mother, a role expected of her by society. This led him to believe it would be necessary to abolish the present form of the family.¹

The importance of these ideas, and others like them, for the development of an autonomous women's liberation movement is clear. The full liberation of women requires a socialist transformation of society. At the same time women now must raise and fight for a combination of social, economic and democratic demands. Not only for equal rights and against all forms of discrimination in jobs, pay and the law, for control over fertility and reproduction and for equal representation, but also we must formulate demands and fight for socialised childcare and towards the socialisation of domestic labour.

The women in the mining communities have experienced what these ideas mean in everyday life, even if that experience has not been fully articulated. The material need for collective childcare, food distribution, preparation and cooking while only one side of their experience, has contributed to their radicalisation. It has given them a foretaste of what a socialist society might achieve. These experiences should be made conscious in order to develop practical demands based on them.

The first steps towards the rebuilding of a mass, autonomous women's liberation movement, but now with strong roots in the working class, have been taken by the formation of the WAPC organisation. It is up to us all to make sure these gains are consolidated.

Footnote

¹ Trotsky, too, thought that the liberation of women was not possible while the present form of the family remained: "Genuine emancipation of women is inconceivable without a general rise of economy and culture, without the destruction of the petty-bourgeois family unit, without the introduction of socialised food preparation and education." *Writings 1937-8. Pathfinder Press.*



The European peace movement has suffered a downturn since its heyday in 1983. **GUNTER MINNERUP** argues that it now faces a crisis of political leadership and perspective. In Britain, the CND leadership has professionalised the politics of moral protest, but the membership must choose between the political programme of Labour's defence document or withdrawal from NATO and total opposition to all nuclear strategies.

THE DECEMBER 1979 decision to 'modernise' NATO's nuclear arsenal in Western Europe through the deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles spawned the largest and most important political mass movement on an international scale since the second world war: the peace movement. The largest because no other single issue has mobilised so many demonstrators virtually simultaneously on the streets of Western Europe's capital cities and caused so many people to involve themselves in sustained political activity in countless towns and villages from Comiso to Reykjavik, from Ankara to Aberdeen (not to mention both the official and unofficial peace activists in the states of the Warsaw Pact). The most important because it represents the first real challenge to the Pax Americana which has held Western Europe in its grip over the past four decades. A challenge with lasting and probably irreversible effects on the political landscape of Europe: above all, the beginnings of the break-up of the pro-Atlanticist consensus in 'public opinion' and the decisive shifts in the foreign and strategic policies of West European social democracy, particularly in Britain and West Germany where the Labour Party and the SPD are no longer the uncritical pillars of the NATO establishment they were only a decade ago.

There is no doubt, however, that today this peace movement finds itself in a deep crisis. Its failure to prevent the installation of cruise and Pershing has spread some demoralisation in its ranks, and while it has clearly not simply gone away as Heseltine and others have predicted, the downturn in the level of activity and mobilisation since autumn 1983 is unmistakable. The British and West German elections of that year seem to have turned the political tide against it. But that is not all. A temporary lull after a tactical set-back was only to be expected and would give little cause for concern if all one

had to do was to continue campaigning and wait for new issues and another turn of the tide to revitalise things again. As we shall argue, however, the crisis of the peace movement goes deeper than that. It is a crisis of political perspective and political leadership.

The very concepts of having political perspectives and a political leadership are, of course, anathema to many sections of the peace movement. Peace is seen as primarily a moral issue, and mistrust of politics and politicians is deep-seated. Much of the rapid growth of the movement and many of its successes, moreover, were clearly owed to the persuasive morality of its basic case as against the glaring immorality of the nuclear overkill merchants, and the spontaneity and informality of activities and organisations which often caught the authorities and their propaganda machine on the hop. Apart from being large, it is also an extremely broad movement in which political controversies are often seen as intrusive threats to its unity.

"...the less open discussion of politics by the many the greater the danger of their political manipulation by the few..."

Yet by its very nature the peace movement is a political movement, and experience shows that the less open discussion of politics by the many the greater the danger of their political manipulation by the few. As long as the main task appeared to be the articulation of a voice of protest against the new cold war line emanating from Washington and NATO headquarters, and to assemble the broadest possible coalition of forces in opposition to the planned deployment of cruise and Pershing, this may not have seemed to matter a great deal. But the



Greenham Common, US air base

CND cross

missiles are in place now (most of them, anyway) and will not be removed again through mere protest, however loud; and the success of the peace movement in forcing nuclear disarmament onto the agenda of mainstream politics and wrenching important political parties away from the Atlanticist consensus has complicated the strategic and tactical choices confronting it.

The British peace movement, organised as it is under the umbrella of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, can face these problems in a better shape than many of its continental counterparts. The internal structures of CND offer a forum for democratic debate and decision-making and thus a measure of control of the rank-and-file over the leadership. Yet anybody familiar with the workings of CND Council, for example, knows that its degree of politicisation barely exceeds that of one of the sleeper Labour Party wards or trade union branches. Local groups are rarely better in this respect, and if they send any delegates at all to CND conference, their choice is all too often a question of who has the time and inclination to spend a long weekend in Sheffield. Among those delegates, complaints about the stage-managed nature of the event and the practical meaninglessness of conference decisions are commonplace.

This state of affairs is the result of a number of factors — the widespread mistrust of organised politics already mentioned, the





John Harris

at the roads

general decline in activism since 1983, the withdrawal of many left-wing militants from CND during the miners' strike — and by no means merely of the bureaucratic machinations of a leadership clique. But it does provide this leadership with the opportunity to use CND's organisation as an instrument for foisting its political project upon the peace movement.

What is this project? It is the professionalisation of the politics of moral protest into an efficient propaganda machine which can extend CND's influence into the so-called 'middle ground' of public opinion and play an active pressurising and lobbying role in the formulation of non-nuclear defence policies. The political perspective is that of the eventual fall of the Tory government and its replacement by a Kinnock cabinet (with or without Alliance ministers) committed to returning cruise, cancelling Trident, and a new era of detente and arms control. Its political programme is that of Labour's defence document, outlining a conventional military role for Britain within the NATO alliance.

The practical consequences of this orientation are increasingly clear for all to see. They include a general shift away from direct mass action towards more 'respectable' lobbying, a wooing of the churches and other 'acceptable' allies, a watering down of CND's unilateralist case in favour of gradualist concepts such as the Freeze or

the new 'British defence charter' (a project which, while enthusiastically pursued by the CND leadership, it is evidently too scared to submit to a democratic debate and possible defeat inside the movement), and an obsessive preoccupation with opinion polls and the PR aspects of presenting its case. Above all, however, the scramble for respectability and the desire for a deal with Kinnock and possibly Steel demand that a large taboo be placed over any discussion of, let alone campaigning against, Britain's membership of NATO.

"...nothing less than the construction of a coherent political alternative to the project of the CND leadership..."

Here we have the crunch issue in the political choice confronting the peace movement today. The alternatives are clear: either the road to the salvation of humanity from the threat of nuclear holocaust lies through gradual detente on the basis of the status quo, through reform of NATO into a non-nuclear alliance or greater strategic independence for Western Europe within it, in which case the subordination of the peace movement to the 'political realism' of the reformist leaderships is only logical; or it lies through a determined assault on that status quo with Britain's unilateral abandonment not only of all nuclear weapons, but also of all nuclear warfighting strategies and alliances and therefore withdrawal from NATO the principal immediate target. In the latter case, the peace movement will have to be prepared for conflict with Kinnock, Healey and Steel, will occasionally have to alienate the bishops, and begin to map out a campaigning strategy aimed at winning over the majority to what is now still a minority position.

Socialists in the peace movement have always maintained that nuclear disarmament and NATO membership were incompatible. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is not an alliance of equals but an instrument of United States hegemony over the 'free world' in which the West European tail cannot wag the North American dog. It is, moreover, embedded into a network of economic, ideological and cultural links which provide imperialism with plenty of leverage over any British government seeking to alter the military rules — links which can only be broken if capitalism is replaced by socialism. But for too long socialists have been content to go along uncritically with the prevailing politics of protest in the peace movement, hoping that a commitment to direct action would somehow resolve its political ambiguities.

Cruise and Pershing, however, were little more than focal points for what really fuelled the mass mobilisations of the early 1980s: the widespread anxieties and fears over the eruption of a new cold war, the popular perception of a changed political climate in which the outbreak of nuclear war, with or without the new missiles, suddenly appeared a real possibility again.

The revolt against the NATO 'dual track' realisation that the weapons they had learnt to live with might actually be used. Their natural response was to demand a return to the re-assuring days of 'peaceful coexistence', to insist that the cold war genie be forced back into the bottle of arms control diplomacy. To this broad layer of peace activists, the attractions of the package presently being cobbled together between the CND leadership and Kinnock/Healey/Steel are obvious.

For the socialist left to successfully counter this project, more is needed than routine nuclear pacifism and a commitment to direct action. The requirement is for nothing less than the construction of a coherent political alternative to the project of the CND leadership and to the perspective of Kinnock's defence document, centred around a campaign for British withdrawal from NATO. This means the active and organised involvement of the left in CND structures and activities, and the building of links with the left in the Labour Party and the trade unions on the basis of common opposition to Kinnock's pro-NATO policies. The initiative taken by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer in presenting a discussion document on NATO membership to the Labour Party NEC, the small but significant progress that was made in this year's defence debate at the Bournemouth conference, and the healthy hostility of many peace movement activists towards any accommodation with NATO provide a basis to proceed from and build upon. The time to do so is now.



Upper Heyford, US air base

Building a marxist movement in Britain

Britain faces its most severe economic and social crisis, but a Marxist movement committed to the fight for socialism has yet to be built. It is the duty of Marxists, says **PAUL LAWSON**, to link up with the left in the Labour Party and the

trade unions in the struggles ahead. If the Tories are voted out at the next election, the organisation and political clarity of the hard left of the labour movement will be at a premium.

THE MINERS' STRIKE, the struggle over the cities culminating with the crisis in Liverpool, and the urban riots of dispossessed youth, are all symptoms of an economic and social crisis qualitatively worse than in any other major capitalist country, with the possible exception of Italy.

Despite the depth of the crisis, the building of a Marxist movement committed to the revolutionary reconstruction of society is not very far advanced. Among the pretenders to the role of 'revolutionary leadership' the situation is one of either stalemate or disarray. Whatever the actual size of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), its political influence is less than it was 10 years ago, its sectarian stance towards the Labour left having cut it off from any kind of breakthrough.

The Militant tendency, despite its leadership of Liverpool City Council and the Labour Party Young Socialists, has grown at the expense of increasingly rightist politics and ritualistic propaganda practice. This has separated it from the rest of the Labour left and mass social movements and stymied the potential of the LPYS.

The demoralising effects of long-term unemployment, the defeat of the miners' strike, and the failure of the bulk of the trade union and Labour Party leaderships to mount a counter-attack against the tide of anti-working class austerity, have produced a shift to the right inside the labour movement.

But despite all the defeats, immense reserves of working class combativity still exist. There are tens of thousands of militants, battling away in the Labour Party and the trade unions, in the women's movement, in the mining communities, in the black liberation movement, in the anti-nuclear movement and on many other fronts. Many can be won to build a Marxist movement which will fight for a working class solution to the crisis.

A spontaneist faith in the resilience of the mass movement will, however, solve nothing. History is top heavy with examples in which the working class movement was immensely strong but utterly defeated because there existed no Marxist leadership capable of fusing the diverse fronts of struggle into a powerful struggle for socialism.

The building of a strong Marxist movement in Britain is something yet to be accomplished. No one can pretend to foresee all the steps by which this will be achieved. What we can say is that unless a working class leadership is built, the ruling class will inflict massive defeats on the British workers. It must do so if the profitability of the chronically sick British capitalism is to be restored.

Here and now we can indicate some of the major political steps necessary to build a mass Marxist movement in Britain — some of the essentials of analysis, programme and strategy, without which we cannot go forward.

Thatcher's offensive...

Since 1979 the Thatcher government has had some success in changing the relationship of class forces in favour of the ruling class. In order to understand why, it is worth looking back at the 1970-4 Heath government and the lessons which Thatcher learned from Heath's failure.

In the early stages of the Heath government an attempt was made both to boost the profitability of manufacturing industry by allowing ailing firms to go to the wall (the famous 'lame duck' policy), and to inflict a major defeat on the trade unions through the Industrial Relations Act. The 'lame duck' policy floundered when the government lost its nerve and reflated the economy in 1972-3.



But the basic reason for the failure of Heath to inflict major defeats on the working class was the huge surge of working class militancy, from the struggle to free the Pentonville 5 dockers — which effectively broke the Industrial Relations Act — to the two miners' strikes, the second of which actually brought the Heath government down. The 1970–74 Tory government failed to grasp the necessity to *materially* weaken the working class and its organisations through mass unemployment.

Thatcher learned this lesson well. When the Tories came to power in 1979 unemployment was already much higher than in 1974. However, between 1980–1 Thatcher deliberately engineered a massive deflation, crashing the economy and sending unemployment skyrocketing. The plan was to boost profitability and attack the working class through a coherent strategy. This combined attacks on workplace and union organisation, anti-union legislation, plus a wholesale attack on the public sector and the welfare state. Key to the whole strategy was the insecurity created by mass unemployment and the dampening effect it had on workers willingness to struggle.

Thatcher utilised government-run industries as the front line for this attack. The steel workforce was chopped in half. In British Leyland, long a symbol of working class shop floor militancy, the Edwardes 'corporate plan' involved both a savage reduction in the workforce, and direct assault on shop floor organisation and union rights symbolised by the sacking of militants like Derek Robinson at Longbridge and Alan Thornett at Cowley. The whole strategy culminated, of course, with the attack on the miners, and the deliberate provocation of sending MacGregor, who had butchered the steel industry, to do the same with the pits.

At each stage these attacks were met with determined resistance, at least by a minority of the workforce, and in the case of the miners by the overwhelming majority. In the steel industry the whole workforce fought a bitter battle in 1980, although with little long-term result for jobs. And in 1982 there

was a quite unprecedented mobilisation of health workers in pursuit of a living wage, a struggle which was in the end defeated. In the print industry over the NGA, and in both the rail disputes over one-person operation of trains and 'flexible rostering', there have been at least big minorities determined to wage a fight.

The national struggles like those of miners and ASLEF have been interspersed with hundreds of small-scale fights symbolised by events like the redundancy struggle at Laurence Scott in Manchester, the women's strike at Barking hospital and the Silentnight struggle. Still, at both national and local level the results have been the same. Struggles have occurred on a wide scale: victories have been few and far between.

If Thatcher has not succeeded in doing much to boost British capitalism, this is a result of the depth of the British crisis and the huge scale of the defeat of the working class which is needed to really boost profits again. Despite all the defeats, 9½ million workers remain in trade unions and the basics of working class organisation are intact. It would be foolish, nonetheless, to believe that the working class is on the offensive. It is waging defensive battles, and more often than not losing them.

...and the response of the labour movement leaders

It is of course simplistic and foolish to put every working class defeat down to 'betrayal' by the leadership of the working class. Certainly, the miners were not betrayed by their leaders. On the contrary the Scargill leadership was the most militant and determined of any union since the 1920s. But neither can the chain of working class defeats simply be explained by 'objective' circumstances — the failure of the membership to fight because of the difficult economic conditions.

The Thatcher government strategy of combining frontal attacks on the working class in a situation of mass unemployment,

with the savage use of the courts, the police, the social security system and a sympathetic media, has upped the stakes in every major struggle to a level of confrontation which has sent the trade union bureaucracy running for cover. Where the majority has wanted to fight, defeat has been engineered. Where a minority which wanted to fight could have been turned into a majority by a firm lead from the top, the bureaucrats have played to the most backward and cautious sections of the membership. And as the government upped the stakes, it has become clear in struggle after struggle that only class-wide action led by the TUC or several unions was sufficient to win a victory.

There is no room here to go through each major struggle, but the main examples of the TUC and leaderships conceding defeat without a serious fight are well known. The Bill Sirs leadership of the ISTC lifted not a finger to stop the butchery of the steel industry. The health workers were sold out by the TUC Health Service Committee's refusal to take any sustained long-term strike action. Unions at British Leyland actually supported the Edwardes corporate plan. ASLEF were ordered off the field of play before the match began while the NGA were stiched up by the right of the TUC General Council. And the miners were the victims of the failure of the TUC and Labour Party leaders to fight from day one of the strike for all-out solidarity action.

The explanation for all this which argues that, after all, trade union bureaucrats betray, is only part of the truth. During the Pentonville 5 struggle in 1972 the TUC actually called for a one-day general strike. Trade union bureaucrats are quite capable, in certain conditions, of putting themselves at the head of struggles. But in the current situation, for them to put themselves at the head of struggles to seek partial victories is impossible.

The whole role of the trade union bureaucracy is to mediate between the struggles of the working class and the bosses. Negotiation and compromise — not determined struggle — is their role. However, when the labour movement is faced with an intransigent government intent on inflicting massive defeats, this role is systematically undermined. Faced with a choice between attempting to mobilise their members in mass struggles to defeat the government, and simply organising defeat and surrender, the trade union leaders inevitably chose the latter course.

The miners strike was the classic illustration of this. Only the scale of struggle which would have actually brought the government down was possible to win the strike. Because for the bureaucrats this risked far too much, they opted for pure and simple defeat.

The ultimate rationalisation of this whole process is the emergence of the 'new realism', pioneered by the likes of Eric Hammond and Gavin Laird. The essence of the 'new realism' is a simple acceptance that struggle has no role to play, and that therefore the union chiefs had better accept single-union sweetheart deals, no strike agreements and the few crumbs that the bosses are prepared to offer, in return for acting as simple policemen of their memberships.

The move to the right in the unions is both cause and effect of the defeats. But it goes well beyond the 'new realist' leaders.

The shift to the right

The long series of struggles against the Tories produced a significant radicalisation in the whole labour movement. Union militancy intersected with the political struggle inside the Labour Party, linking up with the 'Bennite' left. During the miners' strike there was a strong mood of tying together the clash over ratecapping and abolition in local government with the miners strike itself. Politically the crystallisation of this mood was the emergence of a 'Benn-Scargill' left wing.

But throughout the period of Tory government this has been one side of a *polarisation*; the alleged 'dominance' of the labour movement by the left has been a product of either imagination of the tabloid press or of wishful thinking. The Labour left, and its base inside the unions, has always been a *minority*, albeit the strongest left wing minority to emerge in Britain since the 1920s.

Clearly this left wing has not been strong enough to shift the balance of forces during the crucial struggles. The miners strike itself was, in a sense, a clash of two counterposed perspectives for the labour movement. Now the defeat of the strike is working its way through the whole movement.

As in any defeat the predominant effect is not to show up the betrayals. For the majority the outcome is always to cast doubts on the advisability of the struggle itself, to make workers more hesitant, to cast doubt on the political viability of the 'Benn-Scargill' left.

It is into this situation that Kinnock and *Kinnockism* has stepped. Whatever its formal rhetoric, Kinnockism is the clearest statement of 'new realism' in the realm of national politics. Kinnock's personal support for state funded trade union ballots is merely symbolic of this. The aim of the Labour leadership is to utilise the miners defeat, and the collapse of the ratecapping struggle, to push ahead with their project of 're-centering' the Labour Party, to jettison radical policies and make Labour 'fit to govern' - in the eyes of the ruling class. In the realities of British politics today, making Labour 'fit to govern' includes preparing, as a last resort, for the possibility of a coalition with the Liberal-SDP alliance.

No doubt the shift to the right has mass support both in the unions and the Labour Party. But it would be quite wrong to assume, as for example do some comments by the British SWP that this shows that the surge of the Labour left and union radicalism after 1979 were an illusion, with little or no strategic significance for revolutionary socialists.¹

Even if the polarisation today is to the right it is still a polarisation. There is still a mass left wing minority in both the unions and the Labour Party. And on it much of the immediate future of British socialism depends.



Miroslav Milbojevic/Reflex



Kinnock — moving rightwards accompanied by sections of the left

'Bennism' and the Labour Left

Given the organic links between the Labour Party and the trade unions, and the emergence of the 'Benn-Scargill' wing of the labour movement, it is vital for Marxists to get right the precise significance of this development, both its potential and its limitations.

During the struggle against the Heath government in the early 'seventies working class radicalisation essentially took the form of militant trade union struggle, by-passing the Labour Party. More precisely, the working class struggle only produced a weak echo in the Labour Party, which culminated in the 1973 election manifesto which promised the famous 'fundamental shift in wealth and power to working people and their families.' During this period it was possible for an organisation like the International Socialists (now SWP) to grow rapidly among working class militants without the least concern for what was happening inside the Labour Party.

This period of relative quiescence inside the Labour Party continued through the 1974-9 Labour government. While the trade union leaders engineered the 'social contract', the far left concentrated its activity on struggles outside the Labour Party,

like the Grunwick struggle, the firefighters strike, and anti-racist and anti-fascist activity including the highly successful Anti-Nazi League. Both the SWP and the IMG stood candidates against Labour in by-elections.

After Labour's defeat in 1979 however the situation inside the Labour Party exploded, and a mass left wing emerged. How is it possible to explain this development? The emergence of the post-'79 Labour left, 'Bennism' represented something very fundamental about British politics. By 1979, two Labour governments, with a total of 11 years in power since 1964, had shown the utter bankruptcy of the Labour right wing in dealing with the crisis of British capitalism. Traditional social democratic consensus politics had both failed to make any steps towards socialism, or even succeed in defending the employment and living standards of the working class. Both Labour governments had carried out incomes policy, and indeed part of the reason for the defeat of the Callaghan government in '79 was its clash with the public sector unions in the preceding winter.

Two things need to be noted here. First, given the depth of the crisis of British capitalism, and Labour's status as the only mass party of the working class, it was absolutely inevitable that a profound crisis of Labourist politics would develop sooner or later. Left wing militants in the 'sixties and 'seventies had taken surface appearances of little internal resistance to the Labour right and Labour governments as signs of the 'death' of the Labour left, or indeed, in more excited analyses, even for a 'vacuum on the left'. Post-1979 developments showed however that the dominant form of the political crisis inside the working class movement would not be a rapid and sudden outflanking of social democracy, with mass left wing splits, but a bitter crisis inside social democracy and a struggle to re-fashion it to serve the interests of socialism and the working class.

Moreover, this phenomenon was an illustration of a more general feature of working class radicalisation when mass working class parties already exist. When sections of the masses, as opposed to small vanguards, become radicalised, they first turn to their own mass organisations. In the first instance it may well be to the trade unions, rather than the working class political parties that they turn, but ultimately union radicalisation is certain to reproduce itself inside the mass parties themselves. Of course, the precise forms and rhythms of this process will differ

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in countries where there is more than one mass party, and where there is a tradition of political trade unionism — of the type practised by the major union federations in France.² But in Britain it was quite inevitable that an alternative left leadership of one sort or another should arise inside the Labour Party, which tens of thousands of workers would look to.

Such a process, far from being an 'obstacle' or 'diversion' for Marxists, is an essential stage in the breaking of the logjam of right-wing domination of working class politics.

Two points must be made here. Tony Benn, or indeed Eric Heffer, Dennis Skinner or any other of the left leaders in the Labour Party, never claimed to stand for revolutionary socialism. Indeed it would be quite extraordinary if a *revolutionary* current were the first expression of major political differentiation inside a reformist party. As always happens in such cases it is either left reformism or centrism which is the first development. Second, since the period 1979 the central leadership of the Labour left, including importantly Tony Benn himself, has evolved quite sharply to the *left*, as part of a process of differentiation which has seen other leaders like Livingstone go over to Kinnock.

Instead of standing pat and criticising from the sidelines, it was the absolute duty of Marxists to link up with and become part of this major development in British working class politics, and within the limited means which Marxists have at their disposal to help give organisation and leadership to this left wing. As Trotsky once put it, the job of Marxists, when faced with left developments inside the working class, was to 'share the struggle and not the illusions'. This involved giving critical support to the fight for Benn's programme against the right wing, and for example championing Benn's deputy leadership campaign.

"After Labour's defeat in 1979 the situation inside the Labour Party exploded, and a mass left wing emerged."

The Benn-Scargill wing of the labour movement, the real Labour left, is the crystallisation at a political level of a whole cycle of working class struggle, including the experience of two right wing Labour governments. If this left is defeated, its consequences will not be the establishment of a mass left outside the Labour Party, but a defeat for the whole left and the marginalisation of socialist politics in Britain for a long period. Whether this left is defeated will not just be a by-product of a mass trade union struggle and its outcome, but also of direct political struggle inside the Labour Party itself. The job of Marxists is to be part of that struggle, and not shadow box while the contestants get on with it in the ring.

This stance must in any case be informed by a historical understanding of how mass revolutionary currents emerge. All the experience we have where Marxists were faced with a labour movement already dominated by mass reformist parties — for example the emergence of the USDP and KPD in Germany, and the birth of the French and Italian Communist parties in their revolutionary phase — shows that such developments can only be the product of the political fight inside the already existing labour movement, including its political parties, and not of the attempt to counterpose a 'pure' movement to the real, existing, workers movement.

Our conclusion must be therefore that a central task for Marxists will be to be part of the organisation and strengthening of the Labour left, to fully participate in left developments like Labour Briefing and the Labour Left Co-ordination, while fighting at all times for a Marxist understanding of the crisis of British society and British politics.

Obviously, the injunction that revolutionaries must attempt to link up with and become part of the mass left wing of the labour movement, is not an argument against the organisation of revolutionaries as such. Reformism in Britain has enormous absorptive powers. Its institutions and ideology provide numerous mechanisms for turning yesterday's left wing rebel into today's aspiring young trade union bureaucrat or Kinnockite hack. The fate of dozens of militant opponents of ratecapping, including some illustrious leaders, is enough to show how this process works.

But what has happened to someone like Livingstone can be seen day-in, day-out in the ranks of the labour movement. In the last analysis only the *organisation* of the left, and within that the organisation of a Marxist nucleus, can prevent this from occurring. Thus building a Marxist movement is a process, yes of intervening to build and link up with the trade union and Labour Party left, but also the process of winning individual militants to Marxist politics and organisation.

It has to be said, that the existing 'far left' organisations and currents, while in general exhibiting the greatest sectarianism towards the left of the labour movement, are neither particularly adept at winning and training militants in principled Marxist politics. All too often we see people pass through two or three years of frenetic activity in one or other Marxist group, and then leave, burned out and demoralised, having perhaps read a couple of pamphlets by Lenin and Trotsky, but hardly having become educated and trained Marxist cadres.

If a Marxist movement is to be built in Britain, then war has to be declared against the chronic sectarianism and fly-by-night stunt politics of the self-proclaimed 'parties' of the far left. Only long-term serious work in the unions and Labour Party will begin to give results.

'Marxism Today' ideology

Part of the shift to the right in the labour movement is the now widespread adherence to the popular front ideology of *Marxism Today*, the theoretical journal of the Eurocommunist wing of the CP. Marxists in the labour movement must pay special attention to combatting this pernicious concoction. The essence of this right wing attack on the left is a particular analysis of Thatcherism, most consistently theorised by Stuart Hall. According to Hall Thatcherism is an 'exceptional state' bolstered by a reactionary ideological mobilisation called 'authoritarian populism'. The term 'exceptional state' is borrowed from Poulantzas' writings on fascism and military dictatorship. The complement to this analysis is the political strategy worked out by Eric Hobsbawm. Despite his occasional and significant references to anti-Thatcher coalitionism with the SDP, Hobsbawm's main thrust has been to argue against the 'sectarianism' of the Benite left and for a *recentering of the Labour Party*, a return to the 'broad church' of right wing domination.

The error of analysis here is twofold. First the idea that Thatcherism represents an 'exceptional state' — in the sense of something akin to military dictatorship or Bonapartism — is far-fetched and dangerous. Britain under Thatcher, despite the very real and growing authoritarianism which has been a development over nearly 20 years, remains a bourgeois democracy, with central working class rights and freedoms intact, despite all the attacks. Moreover, the notion of 'authoritarian populism' is itself a dangerous and over-exaggerated one. All the statistics suggest that consistently since 1979 support for the Tories has declined, especially in the working class. While ruling class, and some middle class, opinion has polarised sharply to the right, to imagine that this is a general feature of society is not supported by the evidence.

The general thrust of *Marxism Today's* attack is to suggest that the struggle for socialism is not on the agenda; we have instead to prepare a 'popular front' to defeat Thatcherism.



Newham 7 demonstration, 1985

Philip Gordon (Reflex)

This is to misunderstand something very fundamental about Thatcherism itself. Its very success is based on an understanding of the *depth* of the crisis, and hence the *radicalism* of the solutions which it proposes. It was this feature which won it ruling class support — an understanding that a return to the old, social welfare Keynesian consensus was hopeless to solve the crisis. To hark back, as does Hobsbawm, to the good old days of the '50s and '60s and seek an alternative to Thatcherism in the policies of yesteryear is to propound a fatal illusion.

It misunderstands something else. Given the depth of the crisis, even those allegedly committed to the consensus policies of the past will be incapable of carrying them out once in government. Indeed, the likes of Healey and Callaghan when in government began the first round of monetarist welfare cuts after 1976, despite their professed faith in social democratic welfare politics.

Despite its claim to "new" thinking, *Marxism Today* proposes in fact very old and clapped-out solutions. And this acts as an obstacle to the adoption of radical socialist solutions to the capitalist crisis which is the only effective answer which the working class has to the shift to the right in the ruling class.³

A new minority movement

After the 1926 General Strike the TUC lost nearly half its membership. Despite four million unemployed, nothing of the kind has happened in the 1980s. Whole new layers of workers, including women workers and white collar workers, have become unionised for the first time. But to actually win struggles new networks of solidarity and organisation are needed. The miners strike itself, with the emergence of the womens support groups and the grid of local support groups, showed the kind of thing that was needed. But it all had to be improvised on the spot. Something more permanent is needed.

Trotsky spoke of the trade union bureaucracy as 'the main support pillar of British imperialism'. That characterisation is still true; the bureaucracy is the main force of reaction in the labour movement, and given the organic links between the Labour Party and the unions, plays the key role in ensuring the domination of the Labour right.

One of the main factors of the success of the Bennite left was that, unlike the Bevanites in the 1950s, who had their strength in the constituencies and the parliamentary caucus, it

had strong roots in the unions. But the militancy in the unions needs to be *organised*. At trade union conference after trade union conference this year we have seen the right wing have a walkover because of lack of left-wing organisation.

To turn this situation around revolutionaries have to set themselves the objective of creating a network based on consistent class struggle, like the old Minority Movement in the 1920s. The emergence of such a movement is clearly at an embryonic stage and presupposes a higher level of class conflict than currently exists. The task here and now is to get on with the creation and building of minority currents in the trade unions based on a class struggle perspective. In some unions this will take the form of building the already existing 'Broad Lefts'; indeed where they exist this will be a normal form of trade union activity by Marxists. In union it will mean the building of variety of left-wing caucuses at local and national level. The task everywhere is to organise the left to challenge the right and the 'new realists'.

Internationalism

There can be no Marxist movement without internationalism. Building material and political solidarity, especially with the peoples of Central America and South Africa is a vital task in the construction of a movement which breaks with pro-capitalist politics.

Since the mid-1970s there has been a sharp change in the world political situation. Following the USA's defeat in Vietnam and a series of conflicts in the 'third world' where US interests were defeated (Iran, Ethiopia, Angola and Nicaragua) the United States launched a massive counter-offensive to re-establish its world position. This offensive has been a political, economic and military offensive, leading to the new 'cold war'. With the US economic domination of the capitalist world declining, it has sought to use its military might to re-establish its domination of the capitalist world and launch an offensive against revolutionary movements world-wide. Since 1979 Thatcher has been the most loyal ally of the United States in this process.

The missiles offensive in Western Europe, the stationing of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Britain, Germany, Sicily, Belgium and Holland, plays a dual role. On the one hand it ties the ruling classes in Western Europe closer to the US global counter-revolutionary crusade, on the other it puts military and



Women in the FSLN militia

especially economic pressure on the Soviet Union. The 'Star Wars' obscenity plays the same role.

For the first time since the Vietnam war US troops have been in combat against the workers and peasants of oppressed countries — during the invasion of Grenada and in the Lebanon. With the formation of the 'Rapid Deployment Force' and the new 'Central Command' the United States has announced its intention of intervening massively wherever it feels its interests threatened.

Most immediately threatened by United States imperialism are the peoples of Nicaragua and El Salvador. Both the Sandinista government and the forces of the FDR-FMLN in El Salvador are facing escalating US intervention against their revolutions.

If imperialism, led by the United States, is launching a massive counter-revolutionary offensive then it has been unable to stem the revolt of people in the semi-colonial countries. The whole of Latin America is rumbling with revolt against the austerity imposed by the debt crisis. But most crucially and symbolically, ten years after the crushing of the Soweto uprising, the black people of South Africa are in open revolt, threatening to bring down the whole edifice of the apartheid state.

“There can be no Marxist movement without internationalism.”

A revolutionary movement which wants to become part of an international struggle to defeat the imperialism world system has also to fight all those forces which maintain and bolster the imperialist world order. That means intransigent revolutionary opposition not only to US imperialism, but to reactionary ruling class forces in the semi-colonial world, even if those forces — like Khomeini in Iran, like the PRI government in Mexico, like the reactionary governments in Syria and Iraq — themselves come into conflict with the United States.

It also means opposition to the strongest counter-revolutionary force in the world working class movement — Stalinism. Stalinism, whether represented by a bureaucracy in power or a mass party in the capitalist countries, crushes and demobilises every mass struggle which threatens its bureaucratic privileges. The events in Poland after 1980, the role of Stalinist parties like the Italian PCI, show only too clearly that the Stalinist bureaucracies are not 'progressive' friends of the working class, they are not in 'our camp', they are deadly enemies, organisers of repression, defeat and betrayal.

In the British labour movement, alas, Stalinism, thanks to its international links, has a disproportionate influence on international questions. Marxists raising support for Solidarnosc in the unions and the Labour Party have experienced this first hand. To build support in the working class Marxists must always champion the struggles of the working class not only

against the United States, but also against each and every act of repression against the working class of Eastern Europe.

Despite the rightward drift of the CND leadership, the peace movement in Britain and indeed the whole of Europe, represents a tremendous force against the imperialist war plans. That's why Marxists will build CND, especially in the labour movement and among youth. But at every stage they will fight to show the connection between nuclear weapons and the imperialist war drive, fight to connect the fight for unilateral nuclear disarmament with the struggles of the working class, and fight for an unequivocal commitment that a future Labour government will scrap all nuclear weapons, throw out American bases and withdraw from NATO.

The struggle to break with imperialism must put at its centre the fight against NATO. Those who say they want a 'non-nuclear' defence policy within NATO are preparing to keep the US bases, and to tie Britain to an imperialist alliance which has as its central strategy the use of nuclear weapons against Eastern Europe.

Finally, there can be no internationalist movement in Britain without a consistent struggle in defence of the freedom struggle of the Irish people. Nothing tells more clearly about the real attitude of any party, movement or current towards British imperialism than its attitude towards the demand for Irish unity and the struggle of the Republican movement. Concretely this takes the form of the demand in the labour movement for British withdrawal from Ireland, for an end to the Unionist veto, and for solidarity with the struggle — including the armed struggle — of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland.

Mass social movements and the working class

In Britain, the struggle of women, black people and of the lesbian and gay community will play a massive role in the struggle against capitalism. The women's movement in particular, but also the lesbian and gay movement, black liberation movements and the developing movement of people with disabilities, have crystallised questions and demands which have not beforehand been an integral part of the Marxist programme. They have challenged, too, the organisation and style of functioning of the working class movement itself.

An anti-capitalist dynamic, whether implicit or explicit, is evident among those minorities (or majorities) fighting for liberation on specific fronts. It means that there is an indissoluble community of interests between their struggles and the battle for socialism. Revolutionaries, therefore, strive to build the mass social movements — to draw out this community of interests in action.

But it is not difficult for such efforts to be thrown off-course. One common error is the economistic attempt to *subsume* the struggles of particular liberation movements in the struggle for socialism. This approach is perhaps most vividly illustrated by the Militant Tendency who are content to repeat, for example, that women's liberation will come automatically through socialism.

This kind of approach bases itself on a theoretical premise that socialism is both the necessary and sufficient condition for the liberation of oppressed groups. Not only is this manifestly false, it amounts to asserting that liberation movements' struggles are a diversion from the struggle of the working class for socialism. Thus the Militant are happy to dismiss the women's movement as 'petty bourgeois'. Some elements of the same approach also inform the Socialist Workers Party.

On the other hand, there are members of the social movements who argue that the oppression they suffer is the defining criterion of their social being, denying that this social being is also crucially shaped by the fact that they are workers.

Among the Eurocommunist theoreticians Bea Campbell has moved rapidly in this direction while others, like Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, now deny any connection at all between the struggle for socialism and the fight for the liberation of oppressed groups.⁴ For Laclau and Mouffe, each movement has its own independent 'discourse'. Any attempt to ally it to the struggle for socialism is 'classism' — a heinous crime!

This later error is no doubt encouraged by the still considerable racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination which are directed by workers against workers. On many occasions these are being at least partially overcome in struggle. Nonetheless there is a long way to go and this makes it essential that members of the mass social movements are free to organise autonomously.

“Revolutionaries strive to build the mass social movements — to draw out this community of interests in action.”

For Marxists the overthrow of capitalism remains the precondition for oppressed groups to be able to carry through the liberation process that they have begun. But it is only the precondition. The winning of socialism, clearly, will not at a stroke result in the abolition of various oppressive attitudes and forms of behaviour which have been nourished by the capitalist system over centuries. That is why, just as the role of the oppressed in the overthrow of capitalism is indispensable, so will be their continued contribution, from their own awareness and experience, to shaping and renewing the programme for a socialist society.

Role of Youth

Under Thatcher's government, as indeed during any capitalist crisis, youth have been particularly badly hit. Mass youth unemployment, the driving down of youth wages through YTS and benefit changes; the attempt to turn young claimants into impoverished itinerants; the repression against black youth; and the assault on the abortion and contraception rights of young women are all facets of the generalised attack on working class youth.

Out of this attack there is a massive potential to build a socialist movement of youth, which can not only fight back against Thatcher but become an important factor in shifting the balance of the labour movement to the left. The organisation best placed to do so is evidently the Labour Party Young Socialists. Alas, the stranglehold on the LPYS exercised by the Militant has prevented that potential from being realised. Not only has the LPYS suffered from the general propaganda routinism which characterises all of the Militant's activity, but its leadership has failed to turn the LPYS towards a strong socialist lead in YCND and other mass campaigns of youth, has attempted to cut off the LPYS from the Labour left and generally suffocated the LPYS in a blanket of autocratic sectarianism.



Philip Gordon/Reflex

Arthur Scargill, President of the NUM

Only in the mobilisation of school students, briefly, has the LPYS gone beyond Militant's sterile routinism. And questions of international solidarity like Central America, sexual oppression and the struggle against it, and clear support for black liberation inside and outside the Labour Party — all questions capable of mobilising tens of thousands of youth — have been either downplayed or ignored altogether.

The question of building a mass socialist youth movement is an urgent one. Marxists must strike to build the LPYS, but against the line of Militant and its rotten right wing sectarianism, to bring new forces into it and attempt to wrench control from its misleaders.

The way forward

British politics is moving towards a new and decisive turning point. As the toll of mass unemployment rises, so the popularity of Thatcher's government sinks. There seems little likelihood now of a return of a Tory government after the general election. Of course the precise outcome cannot be predicted: but whether it is a Kinnock government or a coalition involving the SDP-Liberal Alliance, it is likely to be a government which mounts new and forceful attacks on the working class. In this situation the organisation and political clarity of the hard left of the labour movement will be at a premium. And that in turn depends in large measure on the building of a Marxist nucleus at the heart.

International sets itself the task of contributing to the building of a current which combines fighting for the organisation of the Labour Party and trade union left; fighting for internationalism and opposition to British imperialism; fighting for a campaigning LPYS on a class struggle basis; full support for the self organisation of the oppressed and the building of an alliance for socialism between the mass movements and the labour movement; and the struggle to build a Marxist cadre rooted in the labour movement. We invite our readers to join us in this task.

Footnotes

- 1 See for example the article by Chris Harman '1984 and the shape of things to come' in *International Socialism* Autumn 1985.
- 2 The CFDT has developed its own particular brand of 'political syndicalism', linked to currents in the SP. The CGT, of course, dominated by the Communist Party's fraction.
- 3 On this topic see Ralph Miliband 'The new revisionism in Britain' *NLR* 150.
- 4 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe 'Hegemony and Socialist Strategy' Verso 1985.

THE LONG WAR is undoubtedly one of the best Marxist accounts of the history and political economy of El Salvador. It is very different in character to *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution*, which anthologises the writings and speeches of the leaders of the revolution, many of them available in English for the first time. The Sandinistas explain, in a powerful language born out of struggle, why the overwhelming majority of Nicaraguans are prepared to fight and die to defend their revolution. They tell us how they achieved victory over the US-backed Somoza tyranny in 1979, and what they have tried to accomplish since then in the face of an American inspired counter-revolutionary war.

US intervention in El Salvador is the subject of detailed study in *The Long War*. The new edition of this now classic work (first published in 1982) includes a lengthy postscript, which brings the analysis up to date. Dunkerley gives us a perceptive analysis of the social and political forces engaged in this bitter and protracted struggle.

He unravels the contradictory and inept nature of Reagan's 'dual track' policy (an impossible strategy of 'repression with reform'), which has so far failed to establish a stable ruling class bloc, despite Washington's enthusiasm for Jose Napoleon Duarte.

Despite imperialism's problems the regime has deeper roots in society than the Somoza regime in Nicaragua had. 'The liberal opposition is bourgeois in its ideology and programme rather than its social base; there are no Salvadorean counterparts to Robelo and Chamorro.' The system of alliances pursued by the Sandinistas would be difficult to emulate in El Salvador. It does, however, remain the case that the revolutionary movement in El Salvador draws considerable inspiration from the Nicaraguan and Cuban revolutions.

In the book published by Pathfinder, Tomas Borge sets out the points of Sandinista strategy that are, in their essentials, also held by the Salvadorean movement: 'Only the workers and peasants are capable of struggling to the end against imperialism and its local political representatives. With this notion, Sandino's intuition grasped above all the class character of the revolutionary movement, the class struggle as the motor of history... Sandino also grasped the form the revolutionary movement had to take. In the economic, social and political conditions of Nicaragua, the armed struggle was the only road that could lead to the revolutionary transformation of society.'

To those who think that this is 'all too obvious a notion' today, Borge explains that in the formative years of the Sandinistas 'a schematic interpretation of the Cuban revolution had been propagated, one that isolated the guerilla warfare from the mass movement.' From its inception the FSLN made a critical analysis of the guerilla foco. 'The foco had aroused great enthusiasm among fighters for national liberation in Latin America, but Carlos Fonseca and all the rest of us viewed it with something more than distrust. Our critical analysis of the notion was of great value in fin-

Revolutionary strategy in Central America

DAVE PACKER

ding an adequate strategic road.'

Of course, these ideas, which formed the core of Sandinista strategy had to be enriched and developed in the course of the struggle itself. How were the guerillas to become the people and the people an army? What is the relationship between the urban mobilisation and the guerilla in the mountains: between proletarian insurrection and people's war? All of these questions (and many more) are discussed in the Pathfinder collection. Indeed, they are the focus of argument in El Salvador and the other countries of the region today.

In his conclusion to *The Long War*, James Dunkerley focuses on the principal strategic problem that revolutionaries confront in dependent countries during the epoch of imperialism: 'The national liberation movement in El Salvador,' he writes, 'is similar to all other post-war anti-imperialist mobilisations in that it incubates two revolutions: the bourgeois-democratic and the socialist.' Drawing on Michael Löwy's book, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development*, Dunkerley explores the relation between these two revolutions.

There are no real disagreements between the left and the bourgeois opposition on the priority and objectives of the national and democratic revolution. These objectives, Dunkerley tells us, can be summarised in three main points: 1) a solution to the agrarian question through the abolition of pre-capitalist modes of exploitation; 2) national liberation in the 'unification of the nation and its economic emancipation from foreign domination'; and 3) democracy 'in a secular republic based on democratic freedoms'. However, Dunkerley explains that considerable differences do exist over their adequacy 'to develop El Salvador or, indeed, be sustained at all within the capitalist mode of production.' He goes on to state that 'the one irrefutable lesson of history is that there do not exist in backward capitalist states the social conditions for the full realisation of a bourgeois democratic programme.'

This difference — in reality a difference over the class character of the unfolding revolution — does not revolve around the question of armed struggle as such, but rather around which class leads the revolution and the problem of class alliances. The anti-government

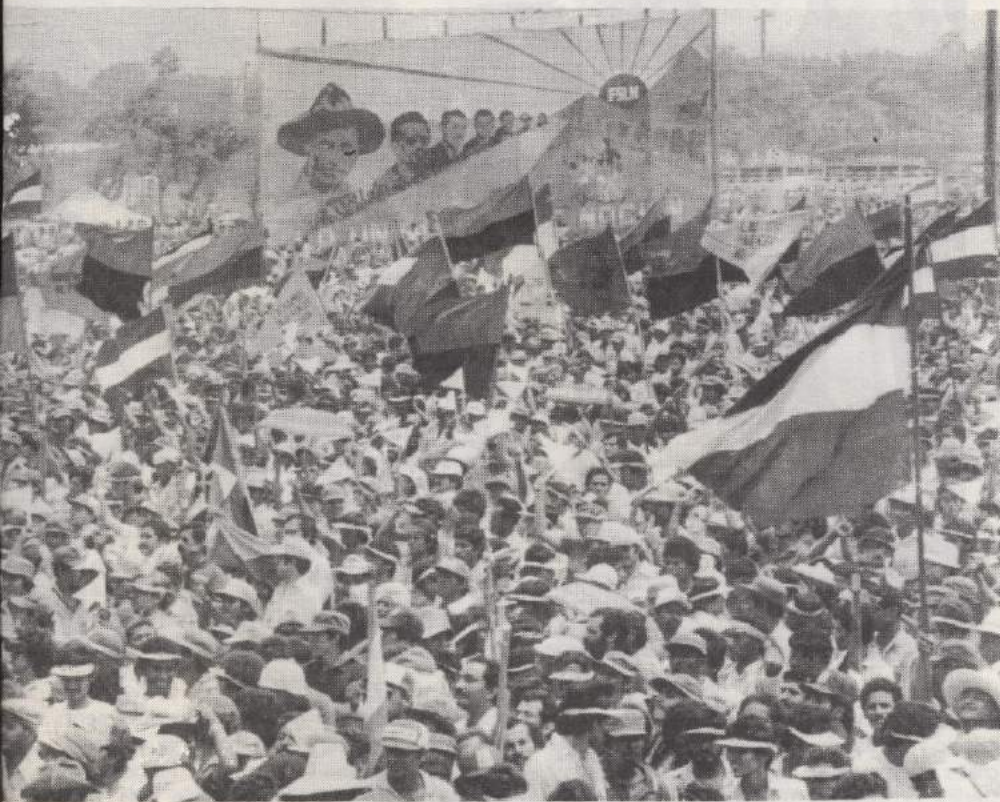


Jenny Matthews/Format

forces in El Salvador differ over whether the revolution will be bourgeois or proletarian (with the bourgeois-democratic tasks accomplished 'in passing'). The aim of the reformist wing of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR), represented by Ungo and Zamora, is one of 'a strong reforming state capitalism that will take over the bulk of the economic infrastructure and mediate competition between capitals in an economically and socially more rational manner than has hitherto obtained.' For these forces within the FDR (together with the Salvadorean Communist Party), the maintenance of an alliance with the liberal bourgeois parties is of strategic rather than tactical importance for the establishment of a distinct capitalist stage of development.

Dunkerley argues that the 1980 Programmatic Platform of the FDR/FMLN is a classical radical populist programme, a minimum programme that, at best, leaves open the class character of the revolution. It is designed to unite the broadest sections of the popular masses in struggle against the regime and its imperialist backers.

This, of course, has parallels with Nicaragua, where the victorious revolution against the hated Somoza dictatorship was made in the name of a multi-class popular alliance. However, Jaime Wheelock explains in an interview in the Pathfinder collection entitled 'The Great Challenge', what the context of their broad policy of alliances was: 'The axis of our policy of alliances was not the bourgeoisie but the people. This is not demagoguery; that's exactly how it was... it was an anti-imperialist, anti-dictatorial, popular and revolutionary alliance... The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, was ter-



rified by the fact that the two extremes in the conflict were the people, with the Sandinista Front as their vanguard, on the one hand; and on the other, the Somozista dictatorship as the vanguard of the Yankees.'

Belatedly, the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie attempted to gain political space and form their own party: 'When the FSLN called for participation in the FAO (Broad Opposition Front made up of pro-bourgeois parties), it was not for tail-ending the bourgeoisie or granting them concessions. It was trying to prevent (them) taking advantage of the crisis of the dictatorship to convert themselves into an alternative to Somoza for imperialism. ...We could have taken power without this alliance, but we made an effort to draw these forces closer when we called for the formation of a national patriotic front. Because of this approach, one wing of the FAO withdrew and joined the patriotic front; the other remained in the FAO.'

Later in the interview Wheelock comments on the subsequent desertion of most of these forces: 'I don't think you can say that we lost support we never had. If these people, at a given moment, participated in the revolutionary process it was first of all because they had lost their battle, and secondly to influence the revolutionary process, to derail it. But when they saw the firmness of our determination they left. It's not that they stopped supporting the revolutionary programme but rather that they returned to work against the programme.'

It is possible to agree or to disagree with the tactics of the FSLN in dividing the bourgeoisie and in the subsequent establishment of a

revolutionary government with bourgeois participation, but one thing that emerges is the tactical nature of the alliance and its subordination to the FSLN's strategic priorities. Such an approach contrasts sharply to that of the reformist and Stalinist wings of the Salvadorean FDR. This has been brought into sharp relief by events since the March 1982 elections in El Salvador.

Dunkerley explains that in this period 'the policies of the FDR/FMLN underwent significant alteration', and that this shift 'did also correspond to a shift in the balance of forces within the popular bloc.' It was the reformist wing that benefited from this. In this period increased attention was given to the possibility of reaching a negotiated settlement with the regime. Dunkerley writes that this 'should cause little surprise in itself; such an option was not clearly proscribed by the 1980 Programmatic Platform.' It is also correct and necessary to employ every tactical option, in a difficult situation, that can give advantage to the popular forces.

On the other hand, the approach to these negotiations marked a significant change in policy objectives. The new programme for a Government of Broad Participation (GAP) 'suppressed many of the radical objectives of the FDR's Programmatic Platform of 1980 and, for the first time, outlined terms for ceasefire, negotiation and the establishment of a government that would include but not be dominated by the popular forces. The document guaranteed the survival of the existing regular army under such a regime... This policy came fully to the fore in the La Palma talks.'

Throughout 1983 it was becoming clear that the social democratic current led by Ungo and Zamora had gained political support from the PCS (Communist Party) and forces in the FPL (a left-wing split from the PCS which based itself on the Prolonged Popular War strategy). The FPL became the eye of the storm. 'For the outside world this crisis, hitherto unknown or only vaguely perceived, came to a head in April 1983 with the murder of the organisation's second-in-command 'Ana Maria' (Melida Anaya Montes, in Managua on the 6th, and the suicide of its commander 'Marcial' (Salvador Cyetano Carpio).'

Dunkerley makes a qualified and guarded attempt to disentangle these tragic events, based on personal discussions with Adolfo Gilly and others. He situates the events in the political context of the time, in particular the revision of the 1980 Programmatic Platform. He quotes approvingly from an article by Gilly in the Mexican periodical *Nexos*, which describes the FDR/FMLN's proposal for a 'Government of Broad Participation' as: 'A programme of a revolutionary and democratic government, of radical reforms and the transition to socialism has been substituted by a programme of class collaboration over a long period, of moderate reforms that do not exceed the proposals of christian democracy and of the reformist military junta of 1979 or indeed the limits of the bourgeois republic.'

Least surprising, perhaps, is the role of the PCS in the change in policy. 'The party had not ditched its popular front policies in the spring of 1980 but had simply been obliged to reformulate them within the strategy of armed struggle. (Its) contacts with Cuba and the Soviet Union as well as its historic ties through the UDN to the social democrats and christian democratic dissidents gave it a unique position within the popular bloc. Radicalised in terms of methods, it had not significantly altered its long term strategy.' The FSLN, unlike the FDR/FMLN, did not contain within its ranks a powerful and influential Communist Party. This is an important difference between the two movements, which should not be underestimated.

These two books, taken together, point to many other differences of a political, social and historical nature, suggesting that caution is required in generalising from the experience of the Sandinistas. If this is true in relation to El Salvador, then a schematic application of the Nicaraguan experience to countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Chile or Peru could prove disastrous. Nevertheless, the Central American revolutions are not only crucial centres of struggle against imperialism and capitalism, they also have much to contribute to the programme of revolutionary Marxism. Both these books make an important contribution to the discussion and are essential reading for socialists.

Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution, *Pathfinder* £6.95. James Dunkerley, *The Long War* (second edition), Verso £6.95.

A socialist economic policy

PHIL HEARSE

LAST MONTH, with much fanfare the Labour NEC introduced its 'new' economic plan 'A new Britain, a new partnership'. It was a timid and muddled statement of Keynesian nostrums. But this month the Campaign Group have brought out an excellent counter-blast, 'A million jobs a year' by Andrew Glyn — in effect the socialist answer to the NEC.

Glyn calculates that in order to reduce unemployment to its 1950s level of around 500,000 it would require the creation of 4½ million new jobs, or roughly a million jobs a year during the lifetime of a Labour government. This is a very bold project compared with the timid plans of the NEC.

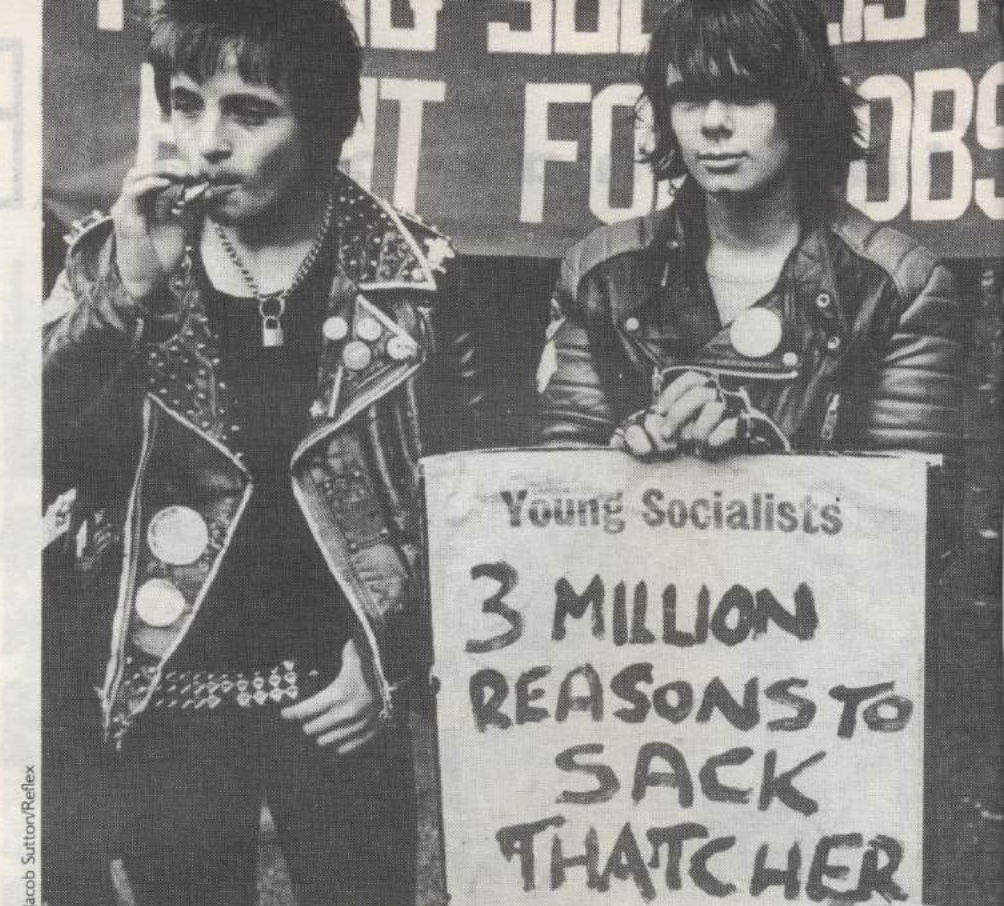
Glyn's first merit is to debunk the myths of the impossibility of such a plan on technical or physical grounds. One myth I find particularly irksome, and one which Andrew Glyn effectively knocks on the head is the 'new technology' argument, peddled in such books as 'The Collapse of Work' by Barrie Sherman and Clive Jenkins.

The huge level of modern unemployment is not fundamentally caused by new technology — in fact its introduction is relatively slow compared with previous new technologies, and productivity is stagnant, not rising, as would be the case if new technology were the main cause of driving millions out of the workforce. But leave that to one side.

Glyn's central argument is that given that the resources are available, especially the huge resource of millions of currently unemployed workers, a huge expansion of the economy is possible, provided that a socialist government is prepared to take all the necessary measures to see it happen.

A plan for the expansion of the economy would require huge amounts of investment capital. Where would it come from? The first argument put forward is that financial institutions would have to be compelled to deposit vast sums of money with the government, rather than sending them abroad.

This indeed might be the approach that a socialist government would at first take. But ultimately, says Glyn:



Jacob Sutton/Reflex

'The major financial institutions are capitalism's nerve centre, with a dense web of links to industry, and capable of causing financial chaos in a matter of minutes by moving out of sterling or away from lending to the government. Taking them into immediate public ownership seems absolutely indispensable if a Labour Government is to prevent a financial crisis and be enabled to use the credit system as part of planning for full employment.'

So this is the first conclusion. A plan for expanding the economy needs the nationalisation of the financial sector, with adequate provision for pensions and small savers.

How could the major firms be compelled to co-operate with a plan for full employment and economic expansion? Maybe, says Glyn, by compulsory planning agreements. But this would also require a restructuring of boards of directors, to ensure worker-directors who would keep to the plan. But as Glyn points out, once you nationalise the financial sector, you already have a large chunk of industry in effective public ownership, so great is the control of finance capital. And once you make planning agreements compulsory — take away the rights of big companies to make their own investment and production decisions — and change their boards of directors, then private ownership would become increasingly a legal fiction. The process taking place is really nationalisation of the monopolies.

What would be the other major steps that would need to be taken? First, moves to stem inflation, in particular price controls. Secondly exchange controls to prevent the flight of capital, and maintain the financial resources needed for investment. Third, planning of trade, including import controls, would be required to re-orientate trade in the face of a possible boycott. Incidentally, it is quite wrong in my view to argue against a socialist government utilising import controls as a weapon to protect the domestic economy.

Andrew Glyn's pamphlet is a valuable resource for the left of the labour movement and deserves to be ordered in large numbers by trade union and Labour Party branches. It gradually builds up an irrefutable case that sweeping measures need to be taken against the preserves of capital if unemployment is to be broken. Or to put it another way, capitalism in crisis is incompatible with full employment, and only what the *Militant* comrades call 'bold socialist measures' can restore it.

If Glyn's argument is a little tentative and guarded at times, then this is perhaps explained by the necessities of Campaign Group sponsorship, and the entirely laudible aim of addressing people with rational argument and not with slogans.

But there is one dimension which is a (perhaps consciously) suppressed aspect to Glyn's proposals: politics. For if just one measure proposed — the nationalisation of the banks and financial institutions — were about to be implemented by a Labour government, mayhem would be let loose in British politics as the ruling class tried every means to bring the government down. For, unlike the NEC's statement, 'A million jobs a year' is not a recipe for cosy discussion with the barons of industry and finance, but a recipe for all-out class war. That of course is why no one on the right of the party will take it in the least bit seriously.

During his speech in the economic debate at party conference David Blunkett attacked those in the party who argue for 'simple' solutions like nationalising the monopolies. But despite all the limitations with the way that some comrades present these arguments, actually a massive attack on capital and capitalism is the bedrock of any plan for full employment — or socialism.

Andrew Glyn, 'A million jobs a year', a Campaign Group of Labour MPs pamphlet, published by Verso at £1.

International VIEWPOINT

ISSUE No 47

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for the
miners' strike**

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the coalfields

● Labour and
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nationalism

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of Zionism

Grenada's
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ISSUE No 48

17 February 1985

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