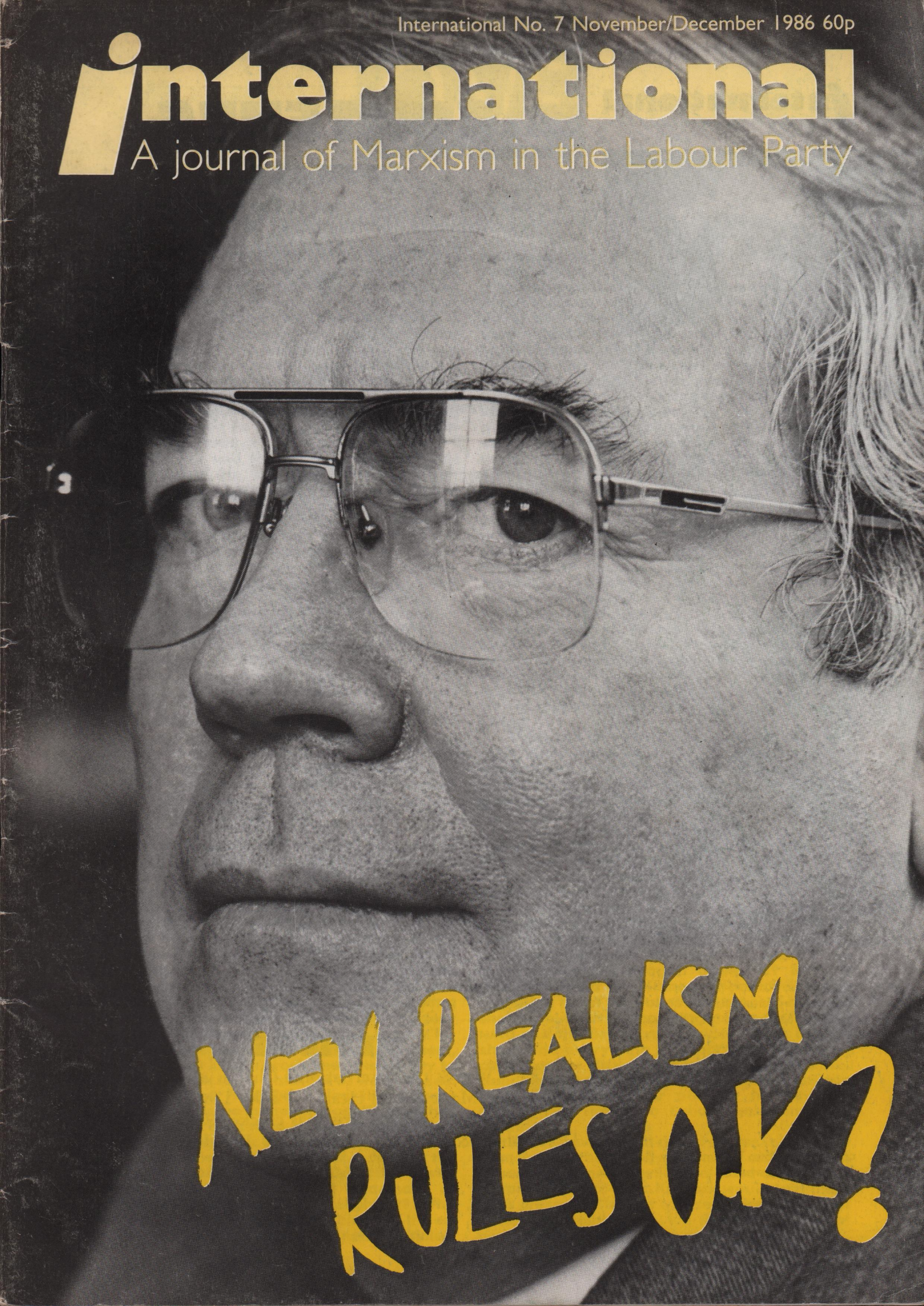


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# **international**

A journal of Marxism in the Labour Party



**NEW REALISM  
RULES O.K.?**

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## *Labour and US militarism*

**DURING THE** Labour Party conference all the normal rules of 'protocol' went out the window as senior figures in the us administration attacked the Labour Party. When us defence advisor Richard Perle warned that the election of a Labour government would be a disaster for the Atlantic alliance, Denis Healey dismissed him as a 'middle ranking pipsqueak'. Actually Perle is one of the most influential cold warriors in the United States, but no matter. When Defence Secretary Casper Weinberger said exactly the same thing, Neil Kinnock said he was sure that this did not represent the views of the us administration.

But Healey and Kinnock were further embarrassed when the us ambassador in London confirmed that this was indeed the us view. In fact no one should be in the least surprised that the United States views with alarm the prospect of the election of a government pledged to phase out British nuclear weapons and remove us nuclear bases; equally no one should be surprised that the us will resist such moves by every means at its disposal — the initial warnings by Weinberger and Perle were just the beginning of what could become an all-out fight.

Looked at from one angle, Labour Party policy could be accommodated quite easily by the United States. Kinnock made clear, in his conference speech, that non-nuclear us bases would stay — that key installations like Brawdy, which monitors Soviet submarines entering the Atlantic, and the early warning station at Fylingdales would not be affected. Moreover if there were 'non-nuclear' us airforce bases it would be extremely difficult to check whether nuclear weapons were being brought in from the USA. Why then the us concern?

For the Reaganite cold warriors politics is in command, not narrow military questions which are secondary. While a non-nuclear Britain would damage us war fighting capacities only marginally, the political dynamic it would set up inside NATO is a frightening one. The us cold war offensive has aimed to secure political military and economic domination of the West while sabotaging any attempts at European neutrality or independence vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. The sight of Britain dismantling its nuclear weapons and removing us nuclear bases would be seen in Europe as a victory for neutralist tendencies and the peace movement, even if Kinnock loudly proclaimed his loyalty to NATO. It is the last thing which the us wants to see.

Since Thatcher has made it clear that defence will be a major issue in the election, Kinnock has now embroiled himself in a host of contradictions. Why, if the basic assumptions of NATO and the Western alliance are accepted — namely the need for a nuclear alliance to confront the 'Soviet threat' — should Kinnock want to damage us warfighting capacities in the slightest? Why should he even be suspected of doing so? It is an illogical stance, born out of the need to simul-

taneously appease an overwhelmingly unilateralist British labour movement and at the same time convince the us and British establishments that there is no question of a Labour government going neutralist. Neil Kinnock risks being accused of bad faith by both sides. The only logical basis of wanting to get rid of both British and us nukes is that they are part of an aggressive imperialist alliance which makes nuclear war more likely, and indeed that real British political independence in creating a new social and political order in Europe means getting out of the us nuclear embrace. But in order to give his assurances to the British and us establishments, Kinnock is prevented from telling the truth about us militarism.

In the event that a Labour government were elected these contradictions in Kinnock's position would indeed become explosive. The United States would immediately step up its blackmail, threaten all kinds of dire consequences and retaliation if Kinnock kept to his promises to remove the nukes and bases. The campaign would be ably backed up by the British media and establishment. There would be strong pressure from the right in the Labour Party to renege on these promises. Healey's *faux pas* during party conference — his statement that Britain might in certain circumstances keep Polaris — shows that there would be plenty of room to fudge.

There can be no doubt that this would be the most likely outcome. If on the other hand the government actually proceeded with its plans, it would set in train the biggest political crisis in post-war British history. During such a crisis Labour would find itself disarmed in face of NATO accusations of disloyalty. The only adequate answer would be to point out the real character of NATO, and mobilise the labour movement in support of an anti-NATO stance. The truth of the matter is that British membership of NATO, and loyalty to its nuclear policies, is deeply ingrained in the British capitalist order. Getting out of NATO is a task of almost revolutionary proportions.

How should the left then respond to the Weinberger-Perle-Reagan offensive? First, it should demand that Kinnock sticks to his policy of getting rid of the nukes and bases. Second, it should point out that so doing means confronting NATO and the British ruling class. Third, the left should do everything to support the emerging campaign for British withdrawal from NATO. By campaigning on this basis the left can create the best preconditions for pushing forward the anti-nuclear fight if a Labour government is elected.

The us government can of course take solace from the fact that it is by no means certain that a Labour government will be elected and almost certain that a pro-NATO Kinnock would capitulate to us pressure. That, of course, is precisely what Perle and Weinberger, via their warning shot across Labour's bows, are preparing for.

# Syrian terrorism and the Hindawi affair

THE severing of diplomatic relations between Britain and Syria was the dramatic culmination of the El Al bomb plot affair. The prosecution case during the Hindawi trial was that Hindawi had been in the pay of the Syrians, and that the bomb, given to Hindawi's hapless girlfriend, had been provided by the Syrian embassy.

The guilty verdict gave Thatcher the opportunity she wanted to break off diplomatic relations with Syria, an action gleefully supported by the Reagan administration. How should socialists see this affair?

The Hindawi affair fits perfectly with Reagan's political offensive which posits terrorism as the major enemy of the West, and which legitimises the US cold war posture. Thatcher has toddled along meekly behind this offensive, oblivious to its main intention of bringing Europe to heel behind US political, economic and military leadership.

It might be tempting, to see Hindawi as a victim of crude political calculation, with the British courts simply helping Thatcher to create a new 'terrorism' scare, any 'frame up' thesis is a long shot in this particular case. Hindawi's defence was exceedingly weak, being based simply on the assertion that he had thought he was smuggling drugs, not planting a bomb on the El Al plane.

Even if the facts are at this stage unknown it would be entirely characteristic of the Syrian security service to use a Palestinian like Hindawi to carry out its dirty work.

Terrorist actions, like random bombings, air hijackings, and attacks on Jewish restaurants and synagogues, are not a symptom of the strength of the Palestinian movement, but of its weakness. Even when carried out by sincere Palestinian militants, driven to desperation by the successive blows the Palestinian population has suffered at the hands of Israel, Shi'ite fundamentalists and others, many of these actions cannot possibly be supported from

either a political or *moral* point of view.

Bombing a synagogue in Istanbul is simply a reactionary act, based on a confusion between Zionism, the Zionist state and the Jewish people. Apart from being an attack on innocents, such activity only strengthens the Zionist equation between anti-Zionism and anti-semitism.

And if Hindawi was planting a bomb on the El Al plane, how can it possibly be justified that anyone travelling to the state of Israel on an El Al plane is a legitimate target for assassination? To argue that they are, would be to begin to adopt the morality of the Palestinians' oppressors.

To state these facts bluntly is not to adopt the hypocritical morality of Thatcher and Reagan who keep quiet about the hundreds of deaths among the Palestinians over the past five years at the hands of the Israelis; and the Shi'ite movement Amal in Lebanon, which is keeping the refugee camps under constant siege. Random terrorist attacks, however, are no solution to the problems of the Palestinian people, and in certain cases even set their struggle back.

There is another problem with the adoption of terrorist tactics. By their very nature they require utter secrecy and are carried out by groups not under any kind of democratic control. This renders them open to manipulation and provocation by state security agencies utilising them for their own ends.

The Abu Nidal group, responsible for many terrorist actions, is based in Damascus, and kept under tight Syrian control. It seems clear that his actions are at least sanctioned by the Syrian regime, who may even supply him with resources and logistical support.

Terrorist groups, especially those under the control of reactionary governments, very easily degenerate from having clear political-military objectives, to simply trying to carry off 'successful' operations generally measured by the degree of

international publicity, and not by whether they actually succeed in promoting the struggle of the oppressed.

Those Palestinian militants who are caught up in the vicious circle of apolitical terrorism, and who have come under the control of the Syrians face an insuperable political contradiction. Everyday the Palestinian camps in Lebanon are under attack from Amal, the Shi'ite-led movement, and who is behind these attacks? None other than Assad, the Syrian leader, who is Amal's main political and financial backer. Assad does not want a strong independent Palestinian movement. On the contrary, he sees it as a threat to his own control of Lebanon and Syria's international position. It is a sad commentary on the Palestinian resistance that desperate militants now align themselves with a mortal enemy like Assad.

Terrorist actions pose a particular problem for socialists in the imperialist countries. They are magnified out of all proportion by the imperialist politicians to justify the cold war, repressive laws and police actions, and to

attack civil liberties and create a climate of reaction.

Moreover, socialists have generally supported — and rightly so — armed struggle by oppressed peoples against imperialism. But we have to face the fact that many terrorist groups, from the Red army faction and its successors in West Germany, to the red brigades in Italy to the Palestinian splinter groups, have nothing whatever to do with popular armed struggle based on mass mobilisation, in the fight for national liberation.

Abu Nidal is a million miles away from the original fedayeen fighters or the active service units of the Irish republican movement. If that is true for small terrorist formations, it is doubly true for the ruthless state security agencies of countries like Syria and Libya.

Our enemy's enemy is not always our friend. We should be wary about giving credence or support to reactionary terrorist activities, just because their perpetrators carry them out in the name of 'anti-imperialism'.

**\* There will be a major article on terrorism in our next issue.**

## Privatisation: fightback in jeopardy

The Queens speech at the state opening of parliament in November unveiled a new stage in the government's privatisation programme — a plan to force local authorities to put many services out to private tender. The first stage of this includes maintenance, catering and other services. None of this is a great surprise — already enthusiastic privatisers in local government have made experiments towards this goal — Southend, Wandsworth and Ealing before it went Labour, are notable examples.

We know already from these experiences that it leads to a radically reduced level of service and an all-round attack on local authority workers, through redundancy

and a drop in earnings. There have been cases, for example, in direct works departments, of local authority workers putting in their own tenders for a particular service, which necessarily involve reduction of wages to ensure a competitive bid. In other cases, local authority workers have been re-employed by private contractors at drastically reduced rates of pay.

So bad have privately tendered services been, both in the health service and local government that some local authorities have been forced to cancel contracts and bring services back in-house. But now environment secretary Nicholas Ridley intends to tighten up regulations about

Philip Gordon/Reflex



## Privatisation of council services has frequently been a disaster

awarding contracts in health and local government to ensure that the cheapest tender is accepted.

In response to local government privatisation, NALGO and NUPE, who have a total of over one quarter of a million members, are launching a joint anti-privatisation campaign. The problem is that it is almost certainly bound to fail. To see why, it is necessary to look at previous attempts to fight privatisation in the public services and health.

British Gas, about to be floated on the stock exchange, is a good example. When Gas privatisation was announced the unions, mainly NALGO and GMBATU, launched an anti-privatisation campaign

called 'GUARD'. Its strategy was to make anti-privatisation publicity by lobbying opposition MPs, and generally making as much noise as possible. All this did not impress the Tories with their 140-plus majority in parliament. They calculated that the unions could not, or rather would not, respond with industrial action to defeat the privatisation moves. Their calculation was correct.

Belatedly NALGO did hold a ballot on industrial action which was defeated. The question on the ballot paper asked whether gas workers were prepared to one-day strike action — which of course they were not, knowing full well that it would lose them a day's wages without

affecting privatisation in the slightest!

Once NALGO's ballot on industrial action had gone down, the defeat of the GUARD campaign was inevitable. Now, the joint NALGO-NUPE campaign on local

government privatisation has all the hallmarks of the GUARD campaign. It will rely on publicity and protest. There is no recognition at all that, as with any attack on workers, in the last analysis only industrial action will defeat it.

The local government unions do not have an inspiring recent record behind them. They were defeated on abolition of the GLC and Met., counties and rate capping, again because, in the end, they used the tactics of protest rather than using their muscle, and were prepared to get out of the firing line, leaving the main campaigning to be done by left-wing local authorities. Of course, there were many rank and file members of NALGO and NUPE who did want a serious fight, but their leaderships never did.

The prevailing wisdom in the bureaucracy is that 'we cannot deliver our members' for industrial action. And on the surface of things it seems very difficult to get any serious strike action against privatisation going. But the reason for that is not simply demoralisation and apathy, but the failure of the union leaderships to mobilise their members; their failure to give serious and sustained support to those who have taken action — for example NUPE's effective abandonment of the Barking women hospital cleaners; and the accumulated effect of defeats on the preparedness of the rank and file to fight.

NALGO has prepared a long 'campaign strategy' document on local government privatisation, which fails to mention industrial action. It has designated 1987 'Public Services Year', heralding another expensive publicity



campaign, like 'Put People First' in 1982. Among some local authority workers this approach is leading them to ask whether the best preparation for privatisation is not to work out how to tender, to ensure an in-house bid wins. This will certainly be pushed by the right wing.

Behind the prevarications of the bureaucracy in confronting privatisation is the fact that they are 'waiting for Kinnock', and have been for several years. The irony is that Neil Kinnock has made it crystal clear that re-nationalisation of privatised industries is very low down on his list of priorities for a future Labour government.

Militants in NALGO and NUPE need to popularise the examples of where privatisation has been defeated, as in Bury, and begin to fight for an alternative strategy to defeat privatisation. The likes of Bickerstaffe and Daly are not interested in a struggle. If the left does not lead it, then no one will.

### Young voters outside Divis, West Belfast



Andrew Moore/Reflex

## Sinn Fein Steps Forward

In keeping the split about abstaining from participation in the Dail at this year's Ard Fheis to a minimum, Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams demonstrated his authority within a politically mature, collective leadership.

Adams spoke publicly on abstentionism for the first time in a year in his presidential address, but clearly the whole leadership had spent much time within the republican movement campaigning to break out of its isolation, particularly in the 26 Counties, to reach broader anti-imperialist forces and wider republican support.

They brought with them backing from the army council and support from famous long-standing supporters of abstention, John Joe McGirl and Joe Cahill. Seconding the Ard Chomhairle motion, McGirl received a massive standing ovation. Support from among the old guard was significant; they have the most bitter experiences of the civil war in the South following partition, when many of their

comrades were murdered by Free State forces.

Over 100 delegates queued to speak in the debate. Not all could be taken. The main themes referred to by supporters of the Ard Chomhairle were the need for political means to confront the struggle in the South, to win popular support for continued armed struggle, and for unity inside the movement following the vote. In a hard-hitting speech Martin McGuinness argued that the old leadership had never accepted criticism from the new leaders over the truce in the 1970s, and has never given them full support.

The two-thirds majority required was won by a mere nine votes. While the pro-abstentionists lost only narrowly, they were overwhelmed politically. They relied on emotive arguments and had scant political alternative. As one speaker put it: 'we were right in 1970 (the last time the movement split) and if we were right then, we're right today'.

The ending of the abstention

policy after 65 years removes a major barrier to Adams' long-term strategy. 'The central issue is not abstentionism', he explained, 'it is merely a problematic, deeply-rooted and emotive symptom of the lack of republican politics and the failure of successive

generations of republicans to grasp the centrality, the primacy and the fundamental need for republican politics.'

Adams' seriousness in his attempt to avoid a split was clearly visible. As Ruairi O'Bradaigh stepped up to the rostrum to argue for continued abstentionism Adams



### Sinn Fein poised to enter the Dail

deliberately shook his hand and stood up, forcing an ovation from conference. Before the result was announced, Adams delivered a powerful speech again calling on supporters of abstentionism not to walk out and divide the movement, and calling on other delegates not to indulge in triumphalism. The effect was that the walk-out — of no more than 20 — failed to disrupt the conference, which resumed in seconds.

The other main debate — on abortion rights — showed, however, that the leadership are not always the most advanced supporters of progressive ideas. Arguing a more consistent political line, women delegates led a strong defence of the advance made last year on a woman's right to choose. Moving the resolution, Dodie McGuinness, Derry councillor, explained she was attempting to end confusion by presenting a more rounded policy on a woman's right to choose, consistent with Sinn Fein's demand for self-determination and a secular state.

The leadership had failed to campaign and organise support for last year's conference decision. Adams criticised comrades for going 'too far, too fast' last year, although he described the debate as the most educational and thought-provoking discussion of 1985 conference. Criticising the policy as a fudge Adams argued, along with Rita O'Hare, for a return to the pre-1985 position which is a 'compassionate, progressive policy'. In summary, Dodie McGuinness conceded that though the policy of a woman's right to choose policy may fall the debate is now in the open.

This is surely the point. Discussion has definitely changed people's opinions, and the most significant show of hands was the minuscule vote against any progressive policy on abortion at all. This is a victory for the women and men who have raised this issue in the republican movement in their attempt to make Sinn Fein a more progressive party.

**Stephanie Grant & Jean Reilly**

## Is this the way the world ends?

MOST PEOPLE have, by now, some idea of what the 'Big Bang' means. Either they have read the endless 'guides' in the bourgeois press — in which case they know that the 'Big Bang' means deregulation, healthy competition and a gateway to a share-owning democracy — or they have seen Steve Bell's 'If' cartoon in the *Guardian*, in which case they know that the Jack-the-Lad jobbers with the flat-top haircuts are merging with the Sloane stock-brokers to become even more efficient at acquiring huge quantities of money.

What most people won't have seen in their daily papers is any indication of the possible effects this 'revolution' is going to have on jobs. *Labour Research* in its October issue raised this question in relation to changes in attitudes in pension fund managers, who in going for short-term risky profits will collude in takeover bids and asset-stripping exercises rather than sticking with firms with long-term profit (and employment) prospects.

The new deregulatory City makes the likelihood of these types of takeover bids greater and calls into question the ability of the City regulation institutions, and more importantly, the government to police these operations.

One of the changes introduced on 27 October is the removal of the restrictions on who can deal on the floor of the stock exchange.

Huge financial conglomerates have been established combining the functions of stock-brokers, jobbers, merchant bankers and so on which have traditionally been performed by separate firms. So, for instance, the people who advise people or companies on what shares they should buy or sell (brokers) are now working for the same firm as those who actually sell shares or buy them (jobbers).



Piers Cavenish/Reflex

In addition, these conglomerates are investing on their own account as well as advising and carrying out investments for clients. The conflict of interest is clear. Information which could have an effect on share prices is more likely to be passed between interested parties who all happen to work for the same parent company.

A Campaign Group pamphlet *The City Big Bank 2000* by Brian Sedgmore and Dennis Skinner outlines the kind of thing which might happen. Companies with the opportunity of taking over firms with undervalued assets, component parts or subsidiaries can maximise their 'earnings per share' by carrying out the takeover and simply selling the various bits off. The fact that share prices bear very little relation to the long-term profitability and efficiency of a company means that this kind of thing can happen to firms which could realistically have expected to provide employment well into the future.

The new deregulated City means that, in the course of advising a client company, a merchant banker, for instance, may obtain some price-sensitive information. S/he may then pass this information on illegally to brokers who work for the same parent company as

her/himself. The broker may use the information to advise other companies that a takeover bid might be possible.

The buying and selling of the shares might also be handled by the same firm, and the banker might earn a huge commission for helping to fight the ensuing takeover bid. Therefore, this multi-functional financial institution makes money all the way down the line and a perfectly viable firm is taken over and perhaps broken up with consequent mass redundancies.

So as well as the huge amount of investment funds (and therefore jobs) which are expected to go abroad as foreign firms gain access to the Stock Exchange we might also see a stepping up of the takeover binge of the last few years and yet more job losses.

One other, more immediate, source of job losses might be the bloodbath expected in the gilts market which will almost certainly result in some 20 firms being pushed out. The staff of the large research departments taken on by many firms in expectation of operating in this market — many of whom were given very large 'golden hellos' — will probably now be made redundant. Anybody interested in setting up a support committee?

**JEAN REILLY**



## Mozambican workers' appeal

THE STATE-SPONSORED Mozambican trade union movement, the OTM, has appealed to workers throughout the world to step up their solidarity with Mozambican workers in the face of growing South African threats. In a statement from the organisation's secretariat, the OTM points to the possibility of an imminent South African attack against Mozambique, and accuses the Pretoria regime of trying to strangle the Mozambican economy.

The statement refers particularly to last week's South African government decision to cease the movement of Mozambican migrant workers into South Africa, and to expel those already in South Africa at the end of their current contracts. The OTM notes that there are about 61,000 Mozambicans working South African mines.

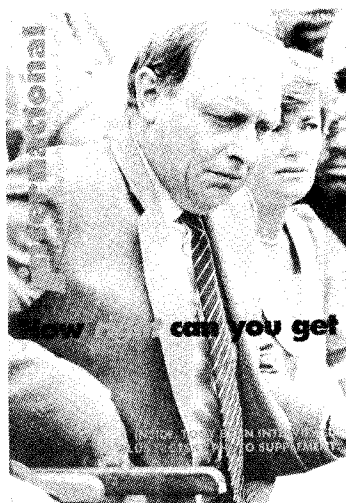
The OTM statement thanks the South African National Union of Miners (NUM) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) for their expressions of solidarity with the Mozambican miners. It pledges the OTM's continued support to South African workers in their struggle against apartheid.

The OTM also calls on Mozambican workers 'to organise ourselves in the defence of our country threatened by racist barbarism. In all workplaces let us prepare to defend our economy and our sovereignty.' The Pretoria regime, says the OTM statement, wants to export the conflict between itself and the South African people to the neighbouring states and, to this end, Pretoria 'finances and infiltrates bandit gangs to destabilise our country and to sow destruction and death.'

**(from MOZAMBIQUE INFORMATION AGENCY)**



Carlos Guarina/Reflex



## 300 at *International* Symposium

Three hundred readers of *International* packed into London's Kingsway Princeton College on 17-19 October for our first symposium. The theme, 'A socialist strategy in Europe', succeeded in locating the tasks of British socialists firmly within an international context.

Speaking at a well-attended opening plenary session, Ernest Mandel, Marxist economist and leading member of the Fourth International, set the theme for much that followed with an examination of what he called the 'restructuration and recomposition' of the European working class and its labour movements.

For Mandel these changes had not significantly weakened the role of the working class, but posed the urgent necessity of a political strategy to meet the new realities. From this point of view it was necessary to critically evaluate those currents that have emerged within the working class in the last period, in particular, not taking a sectarian stand towards developments within the peace movement and the movements of the oppressed.

Subsequent speakers including Steffi Engert from the Socialist Left of the West German Green Party, Tariq Ali, Quentin Hoare, Branka Magas, Oliver MacDonald, John Palmer, Graham Bash, Margaret Coulson, Kum-Kum Bavani, Veronica Beechey, Alan Thorne and members of *International's* editorial board, addressed these themes in 30 workshops over the weekend.

A notable feature of the symposium was the attendance of socialists from Sweden, West Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, France, and Italy and Ireland, who contributed their experiences to the debate.

Welcome too was the contribution of representatives from organisations such as the Socialist Society and the Socialist Workers Party who provided their own distinctive answers to the problems raised in the discussion. In particular the Symposium marked the growing convergence between the politics of *International* and *Socialist Viewpoint* magazine.

At the closing session of the event Jeremy Corbyn MP and Narendra Makenji of the Labour Party Black Sections outlined the necessity of an agenda for the left of the party which resisted the charge to the right not only of Kinnoch, but many erst-while lefts. Jane Kelly from the editorial board of *International* agreed, pointing to the disastrous failure of those on the left who had tried to influence the direction of the party through an accommodation with the Kinnoch leadership and the dangers of any new 'realignment Mark 2'.

The alternative for the left was to base itself on mass action against the policies of the Tory government and employers. Fittingly therefore it was strikers from the Silent Night and Hangar disputes who received a standing ovation as the symposium came to a close.

See you all next year!



The September 1986 Trades Union Congress, followed closely by a stage-managed annual Labour Party conference, firmly established the 'new realists' as the dominant current within the labour bureaucracy.

**GRAHAM TOPLEY** examines the growth of the new consensus politics and proposes the outline of a strategy to combat its influence in the trade union movement.

# New realism rules

OK?

THE GROWTH OF new realism in the trade unions is bound up with the rise of the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership inside the Labour Party. The most powerful allies of Kinnock and Hattersley are not actually the rightward-moving thinkers of the LCC (Labour Coordinating Committee) and *Marxism Today*, but the trade union bureaucrats who have the power to influence the outcome of struggles, most notably the miners' strike and the fight against rate-capping.

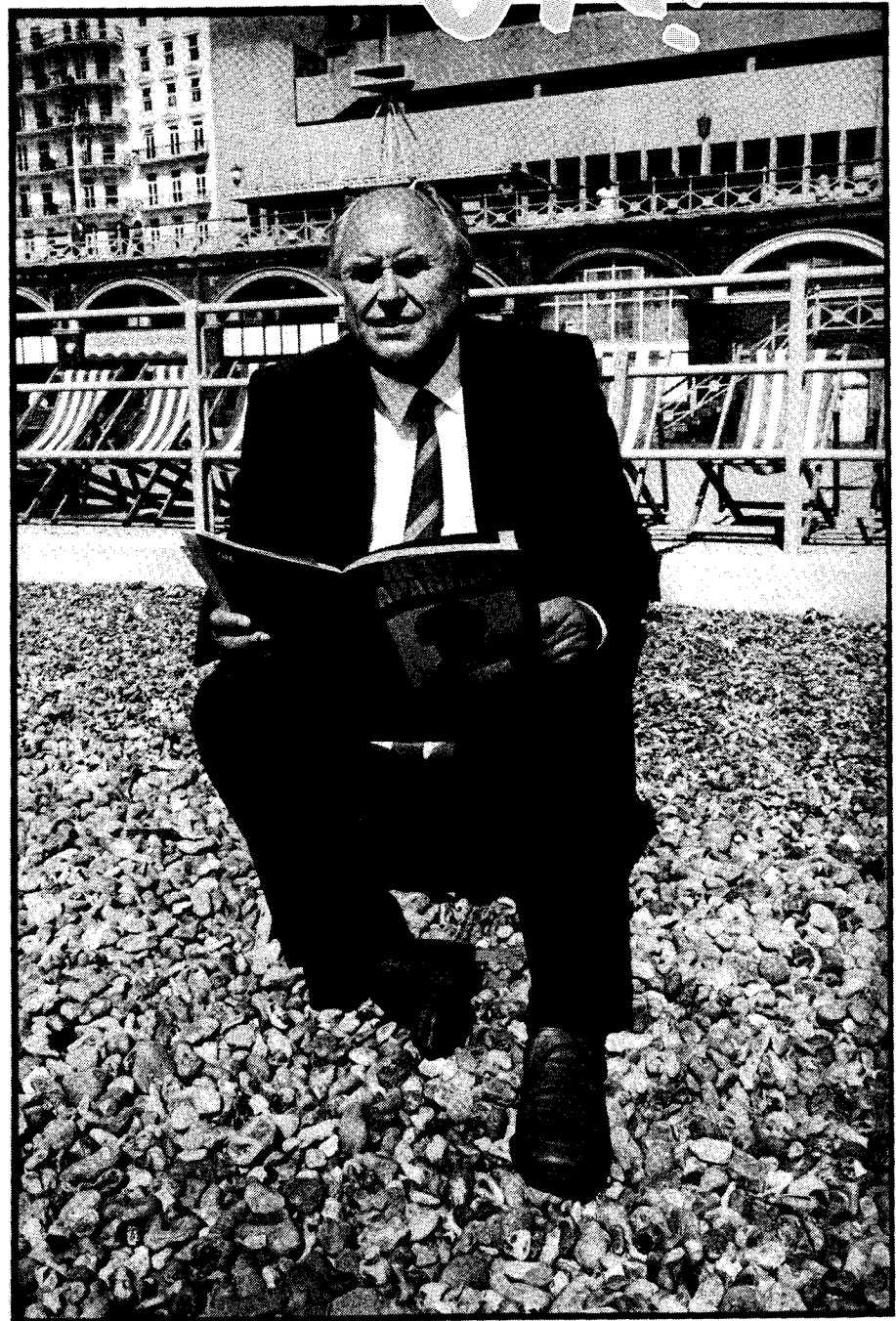
Inside the party, Kinnock has constructed an alliance with the right-wing trade union leaders on the National Executive and pulled Ron Todd's TGWU into line with NUPE's soft left leadership trailing behind. The goal is to persuade the trade union bureaucracy to collude with a right-wing Labour government who will control the trade unions by making use of key aspects of Thatcher's anti-union legislation such as pre-strike ballots.

This new realism has three main aspects. First, it is a strategic response by sections of the bureaucracy to the new relationship of class forces under the Tories. The starting point of the philosophy is to avoid the class struggle and any independent action by the working class against either the Tories or the state. In fact it relies heavily on the notion of 'benign neutrality' of the state in order to impose its version of Thatcher's anti-trade union laws by laying out a framework of legal rights for the individual which militate against collective action.

As John Edmonds of GMBATU put it with almost touching naivety, 'the law should be on the side of the kitchen porter and the chambermaid and not Murdoch'. Such a strategy will hold the working class back from struggle and, in the context of mass unemployment and weakening trade unionism, lay the basis for the creation of an incomes policy with a statutory minimum wage as the baseline.

The second goal of the so-called new realism is to unite the trade union bureaucracy behind Kinnock and the Labour leaders on the grounds that it is the only alternative to Thatcher. This strategy involves sabotaging and isolating any struggles that break out in the interest of 'unity': witness the miners', railworkers' and printworkers' disputes. Such a strategy is designed to present the Labour/trade union alliance as a real alternative for the bourgeoisie.

The third aspect of new realism, and this is also its Achilles heel, is that it is based on defeats and setbacks for the working class.



Andrew Moore/Reflex

August conference, 1986

The advance of the Labour left through the Bennite struggle and the increased radicalisation among important sections of the trade unions in the period after 1979 was a significant

development. The miners' strike in particular opened up tremendous possibilities for the development of a stable class-struggle current across the labour movement.



The defeat of the Benn-for-deputy campaign, however, followed by the defeat of some of the combative sections of the class by the Thatcher government, in particular the defeat of the miners, has led to the growth instead of a 'soft left'/right wing alliance behind Kinnock. This represents a rejection of class struggle methods (that is, Scargillism) in favour of class collaboration.

The essential utopianism of the new realist project resides in its being based on defeats and unemployment, since it cannot therefore deliver anything to the working class. In the context of the economic crisis the room for material reforms is increasingly squeezed. A strategy which accepts the legitimacy of the bourgeois state to determine what resources are available and which

shackles the working class to the state could be rapidly shaken by an upsurge of militancy which would bypass it completely.

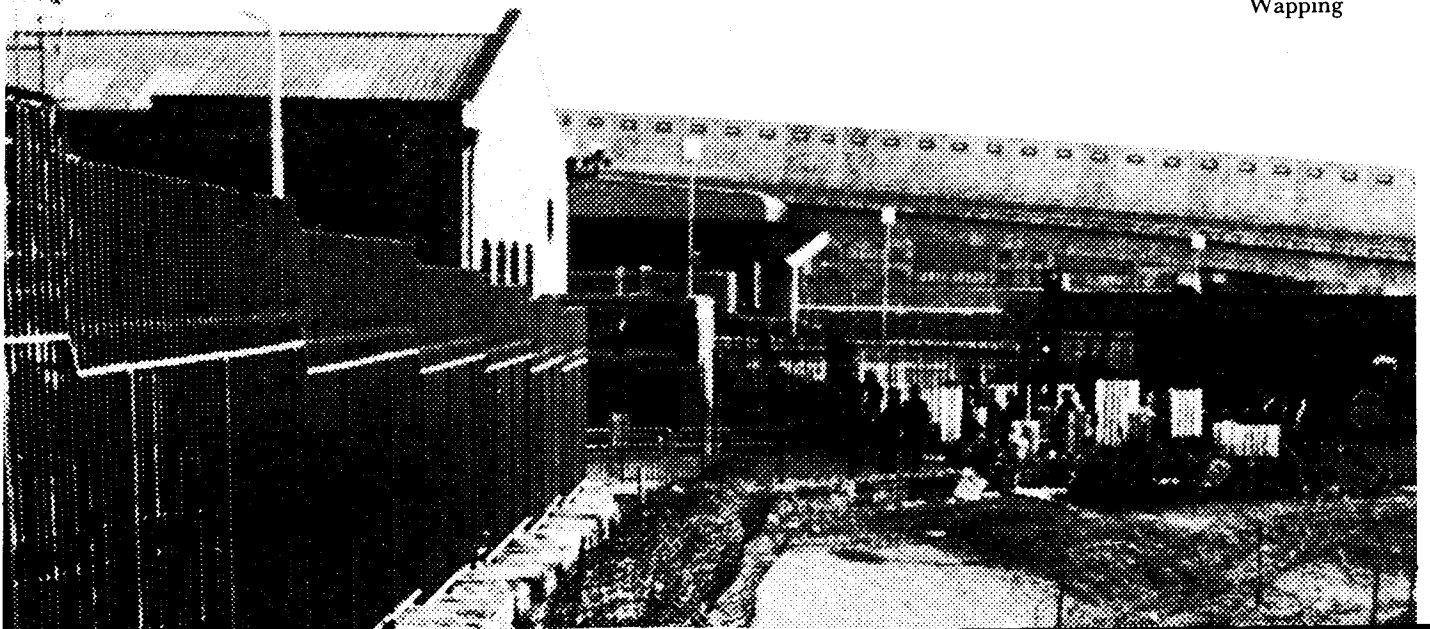
It is ironic that the supporters of such policies make so much noise on behalf of the so-called 'new servant class' and the 'lost millions'. While accepting the need to seriously analyse the restructuring of the workforce and the question of non-unionisation, the growth of part-time and low paid work, we must reject the framework offered by the new realists and the sometimes thin ideological cover given for this by the LCC/*Marxism Today* current.

As capitalism moves deeper into crisis full-time jobs are being replaced by part-time and temporary jobs. Employment in manufacturing continues to decline relative to jobs in the service sector. Blue collars are

being displaced by white collars. Women, particularly part-time workers, are more likely than men to take new jobs that are going. The electricians union, the EETPU was the first to come up with a coherent response to the new trends, with its strike-free package offered mainly to electronic companies.

Now GMBATU under John Edmonds purports to take up the challenge of developing a new strategy for the changing labour movement. The unions are being advertised as offering help to individuals such as advice with mortgages, cheap holidays and so on. Edmonds is clear that the unions should not promise what they can't deliver, that is: an end to low pay and the prevention of job losses.

Wapping



For the realists like him struggle through collective action should be abandoned in favour of some nebulous concept of the needs of the individual. What is emerging is a strategy of individual rights backed up in law as a clear alternative to collective trade union action. The mass meeting and participation would be replaced by pre-strike ballots arbitrated by management and the state. Not very reassuring for the security of the 'new servant class'.

Although there are differences of perspective between the new realists and out-and-out right wingers such as Hammond and, to a lesser extent, Bill Jordan of the AEU, there are moves in Hammond's direction. Edmonds accepts that much of the approach of the EETPU towards more clearly defined 'business unionism' cannot be ignored. His own white collar section, MATSA, has adopted a package of services to attract potential recruits to the high-tech sector. While Edmonds refuses to concede that deals should contain any so-called 'no-strike' clauses, he does accept binding arbitration, flexibility of labour and single status for workers. He is quoted as saying that 'The EETPU has set an example and we have to follow them' (*Financial Times* 22/3/86). A recent agreement by GMBATU at National Panasonic in South Wales is an example.

Edmonds is not alone or even particularly original in identifying structural changes in the workforce, but he is alone in taking his perceptions to such rigorous lengths. He plays on the fact that the movement is, in his view, male, craft and activist (*sic*) based and recommends new forms of organisation. Clearly the organisation, structure and internal democracy of the unions would have to change in order to accommodate, for example, the influx of part-time women workers. But the new realists' only meaningful step in this direction appears to be the adoption of key aspects of the Tories' anti-union legislation!

In fact, Hammond's role as the right-wing battering ram of the new policy of consensus cannot be underestimated. He rejects class-based industrial conflict in favour of mutually beneficial cooperation, pragmatically embracing social and technological change. The problem for the left is that the EETPU, along with the AEU is no longer alone. Edmonds, as we have seen, is prepared to launch glossy single union agreements to complement the individual rights angle; and even Todd and Morris at the TGWU are talking about the union adjusting to a changing labour market—new realist speak for rejecting the class struggle in favour of class collaboration.

In the 1970s Barbara Castle and Harold Wilson had to withdraw the then Labour government's proposal for trade union 'reform', *In place of strife*, on the grounds that it threatened the independence of the trade unions. Callaghan, a decade later rounded on the 1980 TUC Congress to ask 'What can you offer? Can you offer anything to a new partnership?' Kinnock now realises that he does not have to offer a real partnership to organisations which don't have the power or the ability to deliver on it. Unemployment and structural change have



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weakened the union movement. It has already accepted the leadership's belief that it must proceed with 'respectable caution'. Ron Todd as leader of the biggest union and formerly on the left, summed it up; 'You cannot put the clock back. We are at another part of our history.' (quoted in *New Statesman*, 29/8/86.)

The crucial question, however, is whether the new realists are correct in their assessment of the plight of the labour movement, and the short answer is that they are not. Of course, over the last ten years there has been a decline in employment in industry as opposed to the service sector — although it is

### 'Hammond's role as the right-wing battering ram of the new policy cannot be underestimated'

less pronounced than is usually assumed. In Britain there has been a cumulative decline of 17% over 11 years from 1972-83 (See *International Viewpoint* No 96). But does this inevitably mean a weakening of the organised workers' movement? There is a relative increase in the weight of wage earners and unions in the public sector, but why should this automatically mean a weakening of working class militancy or strength?

The paralyzing of telecommunications centres, big transport companies or electrical stations can hit the capitalist economy just as hard as shutting down the mines, the steelworks or even the car industry. Obviously some working class bastions have been weakened, but many still remain. There has been no fundamental weakening of the trade union movement as a whole. There has been a decline in the rate of unionisation,

but it is less than the drop in employment. In comparison with the 1930s the weakening of the trade unions is nowhere near as severe.

We reject any idea that nothing can be done in the unions except battering down the hatches while waiting for an upturn. The left today, while not abandoning the fight inside the Labour Party itself, must engage in the fight for leadership inside the trade unions. We cannot rely on a policy of fighting inside the party while relying on the friendly support for some left allies in the unions. Serious consideration needs to be given to the project of building real roots inside the trade unions, to the creation of a class struggle current across the labour movement, prepared to fight the reformist bureaucracies all the way.

To combat the drift towards new realism the left needs to develop a programme to resolve the crisis in capitalist society through demands for workers' control of industry and by mobilising the interests of the working class which are independent of the bourgeoisie. There is a clear need for revolutionary socialists to develop a long-term strategy towards the trade unions and not short-term projects with no permanent basis in the movement.

★ We should reject the division between the Labour Party and the trade unions. Struggles inside the trade unions confront the same politics as those in the Labour Party.

★ We should be building support at the base; campaigning for rank-and-file democratic control must be at the centre of any programme for the unions. We should advance a programme of democratic reform based on the right to mass meetings, workplace branches and the right of women and Black workers to organise autonomously within the union.

★ The demands of women as workers and trade unionists should become more central in campaigns and activities. Such a programme would include demands for women relating to questions of discrimination, equal pay, unionisation, nursery facilities and defence of the NHS.

★ We must develop demands for a shorter working week with no loss of pay, work sharing, a genuine programme of job creation and a minimum wage at a realistic level, not tied to an incomes policy. In short a programme of anti-capitalist demands which meet the needs of the working class and begin to resolve the crisis in its favour.

★ Any strategy for socialists has to be based on workers' control as opposed to 'social ownership' and 'freedom and fairness'. The new realists have addressed themselves to some fundamental problems within the labour movement today. However their solutions are dangerous and provide cover for a drift to the right. Our starting point must be the independent interests and activity of the working class and the need to act collectively. New realism goes in the opposite direction — towards an industrial strategy in the interests of the ruling class.



# South Africa's dirty hands

South Africa still refuses to release the black box flight recorder recovered from the wreckage of Samora Machel's fateful last flight. The evidence of the guilt of the apartheid regime is mounting. JOANA FERREIRA examines the impact of Machel's death on Mozambican society and suggests that our solidarity needs to be stepped up.

THE DEATH OF Mozambique's president Samora Machel on October 19 in a plane crash on South African soil raised an immediate question: was this another of the outrages carried out by South Africa against Mozambique, (and country after country in southern Africa) over the past decade and more. The conviction of South Africa's guilt in this latest tragedy was echoed in declarations and demonstrations in the region, including from among the oppressed population within South Africa itself and — unprecedentedly — in a violent demonstration by Mozambican youth against the South African trade mission building in Maputo. Whether the international commission of inquiry into the crash will be able to prove South Africa's culpability or not, however, is actually secondary to more fundamental considerations.

South Africa has been waging a large-scale war of economic and military destabilisation of Mozambique for years. This has included direct military attacks — South African Defence Force (SADF) bombings and commando raids — as well as economic pressure such as the strangulation of the railways and harbour system that had been a major earner of foreign currency for the Frelimo government. Most damaging, however, has been the war waged by South Africa through the so-called 'Mozambique National Resistance' (MNR). Trained, supplied and organised from South Africa, the MNR have been attacking Mozambique's transport and communication networks, energy supply lines, agricultural and mineral production units, and the rural population itself, with terrible effects.

Even after Frelimo was forced into signing the mis-named 'non-aggression' Nkomati Accord with Pretoria, in March 1984, South Africa's war of destabilisation has not let up. The capture of documents and other material evidence at the MNR's Gorongose headquarters, in central Mozambique, in August 1985, provided incontrovertible proof of the continuing direct involvement with the MNR of top-level South African political and military figures.

The South African response was to shift the main rear base of its MNR operations into Malawi in an attempt to mask its own conti-

nuing role in the devastation being wrought in Mozambique. More, importantly, this shift enabled the MNR bands to build up their attacks on some of the most populated and richest areas of the country in Zambezia and Nampula provinces, and along the Zambezi valley in northern Sofala and southern Tete provinces. The gravity of Mozambique's situation now is reflected in the figures of almost four million people officially at risk of starvation, one and a half million of these displaced by the war; of mines, tea, cotton, coco-nut and sugar plantations and mills paralysed or destroyed, and Mozambique's

**'the gravity of  
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annual foreign exchange earnings plummeting from a meagre US \$250 million to a miserable \$90 million over the past three years.

The intensification of South Africa's campaign against Mozambique is also reflected in the escalation of the propaganda war from Pretoria in the weeks prior to the Mozambique president's death — threatening Mozambique, and Machel himself, with dire consequences for purportedly having broken the non-aggression pact by allowing the ANC to allegedly set up land-mine attacks in South Africa near the Mozambique border. More significantly, the South African government stepped up its economic pressures on Maputo by forbidding further migration of Mozambican workers into the South African mines, with serious consequences for Mozambique's shrinking foreign exchange earnings and its general economic crisis.

South Africa is now making Mozambique the prime target of its aggression as the struggle of the oppressed population within South Africa deepens, and the international campaign for effective sanctions grows. An important part of South Africa's counter-

strategy is to hold the countries around it in the firm grip of economic dependence...or force them into compliance. Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana are already in this situation. Namibia is being held captive for the same purpose.

Mozambique, carrying an oil pipe line, roads and, above all, railway lines to its Indian Ocean ports, could enable Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, and even distant Zaire to end their dependence on South Africa's transport system and harbours. Angola's Benguela railway could similarly play this role, which is why it too is a major target of direct aggression by South Africa, and destabilisation through its UNITA surrogates.

It is Mozambique, however, that is both strategically crucial as well as the *most vulnerable* of the front lines states facing South Africa, owing to geographical proximity as well as the particularly distorted way in which it was 'developed' under Portuguese colonialism linked into the South African economy.

However much Frelimo's own socialist development strategies failed to break Mozambique out of that dependence; and however much its current survival measures are deepening Mozambique's dependence on Western emergency food aid and government 'development' aid (and even 'partnership' deals with capitalist investors such as Tiny Rowlands); and even as we witness Mozambique's impending surrender to the IMF's economic strictures to qualify for international loans — anti-apartheid campaigners and socialists have an important responsibility to Mozambique.

The world must recognise that the Mozambican people are fighting and dying in their tens of thousands in the struggle against the South African regime, side by side with the oppressed people of South Africa itself. We have to do all we can to ensure that Mozambique (and indeed the other countries in the region) can survive and fight back in the deepening crisis in southern Africa, and that the hopes — and forces — for a socialist future for Mozambique — and South Africa itself — are secured in the coming years of struggle against the apartheid-capitalist system dominating the entire region.



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Confronting the police at Wapping

## WAC backtracks on leadership's attacks

THIS YEAR'S Labour Party conference debated a series of resolutions affecting women's organisation in the party. Some — like those calling for at least one woman to be included on every parliamentary shortlist, and for a Ministry for Women (with, against the NEC's wishes, cabinet status accorded to the women's minister) — were passed. They represent great progress for women in the party, and for Labour's policies affecting women.

Predictably though, the proposal that the national Conference of Labour Women should elect the five women representatives on the NEC was rejected. Predictably, because this proposal has come to conference year after year — and year after year it has been rejected, largely due to the overwhelming opposition of the trade unions.

Two points are really at issue here. First, there are those (including many trade unions, like APEX) who argue that all NEC members must be elected by annual party conference in order to be properly accountable. They therefore oppose any moves to allow the women's conference, like the Young Socialists' annual conference, the right to elect their own representative on the NEC. Secondly, there are those who support women's right *in principle* to elect their own representatives, but argue that women's con-

The women's debate at this year's Labour Party conference witnessed an unholy alliance between members of the WAC executive and the NEC on the question of reorganising women's conference. JANE WELLS argues that — whatever the intention, and whatever the flaws in the existing structure — giving the task of reorganising the conference to the NEC was seriously mistaken.

ference, as presently constituted, is not sufficiently authoritative or representative, and is therefore not ready to bear this responsibility.

There has been discussion for some time among many in the party — including women in the trade unions *and* in the constituencies — about the problems with the system of voting and representation at Labour Women's conference. Whilst each wo-

men's section, women's council and so on may have two delegates to women's conference, a *maximum* of twenty delegates per trade union are allowed. So a delegate from a constituency might represent, say, 50 or 100 women, whereas a trade union delegate could be representing tens of thousands of women with her single vote.

Women throughout the party have been concerned to see proposals developed which would give a fair weight to the trade union votes at Labour Women's conference, reserved seats on the National Labour Women's Committee and so forth, so that the strength and authority of the women's organisations in the party might be increased, and the full participation of women in all sections of the party ensured. But what emerged at this year's Labour Party conference was a new consensus of concerns, which came together to effectively turn over the women's organisations in the party to the NEC — propelled by the hope of finding new responsibilities, granted in return for handing over old and long-fought-for rights, and with the constant threat and fear that if they didn't, the trade union women would simply walk out.

Women's conference — and its policies (way to the left of Labour Party policy and of annual conference decisions), its National Labour Women's Committee and its sha-

dow NEC elections, are an embarrassment to the Labour Party leadership with its softly-softly policies and soft focus images — insofar as it notices the women's conference at all, that is.

So the women's conference is one of the few remaining policy for, or power bases, which remain outside of the control of the rightward-moving Labour leadership. While the conference itself has no power (it cannot implement its own decisions and it has no budget), this is not a major problem. But as the clear and irresistible demand that women should have the right to elect their own representatives from the conference gathers steam and the support of more and more sections of the party, the problem of control over the women's conference becomes crucial for the party leadership. This,

Mann (ex-NOLS Chair) and Phil Woolas (ex-NUS President), a resolution from Glasgow Hillhead CLP outlined the main elements expressed in the NEC proposals: to reduce a YS already undermined by substantial cuts in its budget and attacks on its politics and membership, to a 'consultative' rather than decision-making body. It was passed overwhelmingly.

Glasgow Hillhead CLP, so successful in setting the YS onto this safe course towards its transformation into regional networks of cultural/ discussion/campaigning/Kinnock support groups, cropped up again at conference. This time it was in the debate on women's organisation.

A resolution by APEX (not known for its progressive policies on women) was substantially amended by the Labour Co-

youth organisation debates. (their emphasis)

They were joined by key Kinnock supporters on the NEC and in positions of influence in the labour movement (Morrell et al) — and by most of the trade unions.

Some of the trade union delegations at conference were openly talking about introducing the block vote into the women's conference, although it is clear that many women trade unionists would prefer to see a 'weighted vote' — representative and accountable to women members in the trade unions.

In fact this question of exactly how the trade union vote will operate at women's conference and how it will reflect the interests of women in the trade unions is crucial. Clearly, it will not be the main concern of the NEC, nor of the trade union leaderships (male of course) to see that rank and file women members, or their interests, are genuinely represented. It is, of course, in the interests of the people who presently control the labour movement to keep it that way. So the introduction of whatever form of block vote into the women's conference is far more likely to mean that the effective political control of that body will be passed into the hands of the bureaucrats in the trade unions and Labour Party than where it belongs with women in the movement.

The problem now facing women activists in the party and trade unions (which is in fact the same one facing socialists throughout the movement — and which has been consistently neglected) is how to fight for socialist policies and accountability in the trade unions. Only by doing this, can the block vote in any labour movement body be used in the fight for socialist policies to represent working class interests, and not used as a weapon against them.

So it came as no surprise that the LCC — effectively the constituency organiser for Kinnock's policies and strategy — rallied its

### 'the decision of the WAC executive was a major retreat from their principles'

ordinating Committee (LCC)-dominated constituency, Glasgow Hillhead.

The resolution was carried with a large majority, and won the support of the National Labour Women's Committee, the executive of the Women's Action Committee (WAC), and some of the hard left working through Labour Left Liaison, including *Socialist Action*.

Conference agreed that the NEC, in conjunction with the National Labour Women's Committee, should 'consult' throughout the movement, and look into producing a fairer, more representative system of voting at women's conference, and should 'review the system of electing the five reserved women's seats on the National Executive Committee'. The NEC is then asked to report with proposals for change to next year's Labour Party conference.

The effect of carrying these proposals is to hand over the re-organisation of women's conference to the NEC. The NEC has an open mandate from conference: to look at the women's organisation in the party right across the board, how they elect their representatives, how their decisions should be made, how they should be put into effect, and how they fit into the overall structures of the party.

A realistic appraisal of the forces at work lobbying and organising to push these proposals through conference gives us a broad idea of the kind of 'consulting' and proposals we can expect from the NEC.

First, on the constituency level, as the LCC stated in *Labour Activist*, their daily bulletin at conference, under the title 'Reshaping the Party':

The LCC believe that just as equality, democracy and participation are fundamental socialist principles, so they must be integral to a mass, campaigning and progressive Party. *That is the underlying reason why it was LCC supporters who played the crucial role in putting forward the key motions and amendments in the women and*

### 'the effect of these proposals is to turn over the reorganisation to the NEC'

support to these proposals. What was more difficult to understand for the many ordinary WAC members present at conference was why the executive of the Women's Action Committee (for so long the sole body campaigning for women's rights in the party) should be going along with them.

Putting their case at conference, the representatives of the WAC executive argued that women were being offered a great opportunity — to campaign for our right to elect our own representatives on the NEC, and to involve trade union women more centrally in the women's conference.

*Briefing Women*, who alongside *Socialist Organiser* and CLPD opposed these proposals argued against the resolution and amendment at conference, and organised — through a wide caucus of constituency delegates — an effective intervention on the conference floor to speak against it. The

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of course, is felt all the more acutely in the run up to a general election as policies and presentation are trimmed to fit political marketing profiles drawn up by the smart young men at Walworth Road.

A useful and instructive comparison might be made with the youth section in the Labour Party. This organisation is, in some ways (partly because it does have access to its own budget, and is able to elect its own representative onto the NEC), more embarrassing to the Labour leadership. The influence of the politics of the *Militant* has meant that the activities of the LPYS have attracted a great deal of attention from the media, and very little support from the progressive currents in the party — making it an obvious, and more immediate target for the leadership's attempts to pull the membership smartly into line.

This year the NEC brought proposals to conference to 'democratise' and increase the authority of the party's youth organisation, and to 'popularise' its politics. Shadowing the ideas published recently in the Fabian Society pamphlet *Labour and Youth* by John

central point argued by *Briefing* supporters was that the principle of the right of women to organise autonomously inside the Labour Party was threatened by the resolution.

Standing up for the right of *women to decide* how they want to run their own organisation is about principles because these principles have an immediate and real effect on the practice and participation of women in the movement. Only when women can see that the Labour Party offers a real forum for women to organise themselves, to discuss and campaign on the issues that concern them — and to be responsible for exercising and developing democracy in their own organisations, will women support, join and build the Labour Party in anything like the numbers needed to effect Labour's recovery.

Only when women — like other oppressed sections of society — have real control over their own organisations within the movement, will that movement be able to take on their demands, and fight for genuine socialist policies.

The decision of the WAC executive to join the LCC and the trade union delegations in supporting these proposals was a major retreat from their previously firmly held principles about the right of women to organise themselves — and contributed to a major defeat for women in the party.

They effectively joined with those bureaucrats who, like Margaret Prosser (women's officer for the TGWC), would rather trust the men in the movement to look after their organisations and interests, than the women at the women's conference — which is, she says 'dominated by women who want change yesterday, jam today and heaven tomorrow. Ordinary working women, women trade unionists, don't get much look in...' and where discussion is 'hogged by those who shout the loudest'.

The power in the labour movement rests with the people who occupy the top positions in it and not with its rank and file: and clearly that power will be used now to attack the autonomy, and the policies of the women's conference. We can and will, as the Women's Action Committee advise, campaign for *our* demands about the reorganisation of the women's conference. But it's not defeatism — just realism — to recognise that we won't win them against the present Labour leadership.

The questions posed at conference for women and for the left as a whole were about principles, about tactics and about alliances. It was always the case that there was another — more principled, practical and ultimately more effective strategy to win what we wanted for women's conference. And that was for the *women* in the movement, through the National Labour Women's Committee and the women's conference to decide — possibly through a specially convened revision conference. Of course, any proposals would have eventually to go to the NEC for ratification — but they could then have gone from a position of strength rather than weakness — and they could, with real consultation, have represented what the women in the movement wanted. We could also have won.

# Labour's nuclear future



THE RECENT Labour Party annual conference voted by a large majority to phase out nuclear power within 20 years. A proposal, supported by the National Union of Mineworkers, to close down all nuclear power stations within the term of a labour government was passed, but failed by 24,000 votes to achieve the two-thirds majority necessary to make it Labour Party policy for fighting the next election.

The Labour leadership's proposal for a 20 year phased shutdown of nuclear power in Britain needs to be seriously discussed by all socialists. The proposal to close down all nuclear power stations within the term of a Labour government would have been a clearer commitment to end nuclear power in Britain, although to implement the proposal would require planning of industrial resources on a scale similar to that of a socialist planned economy. Even the phased shut down over 20 years, if it is seriously intended for implementation by the Labour leadership, and let's assume that it is for a moment, would represent a major attack on both capitalist energy policy and the nuclear policy of the NATO alliance.

The phased shutdown over 20 years includes a commitment not to fuel up the

Torness and Heysham advanced gas cooled reactor and to use the new Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (Thorp) at Sellafield (Windscale) for waste disposal from decommissioned nuclear power stations. The resources necessary to implement this proposal will require major planning, research and mobilisation of the trade unions involved in the energy industry.

If the Labour leadership is serious in its commitment to phase out nuclear power it must establish now a working party, to include representatives of all energy industry workers, to start the detailed planning required and to ensure that workers in the nuclear industry will be fully employed, with their agreement on policy, wages and working conditions, in the decommissioning operations and in the development of alternative energy resources. Only on the basis of an agreed and published plan for phasing out nuclear power can the future Labour government be kept to its policy commitment.

A future Labour government will also have to face the military establishment as the civil nuclear power programme in Britain is the route by which weapons-grade uranium and plutonium is made for nuclear weapons, and also sold to the American military to make up the shortfall in America's massive nuclear weapons programme. There will be tremendous pressure, 'if the planned phase out of nuclear power does, in fact, see the light of day, for the weapons programme to be entirely handed over to the military. This policy therefore presents Labour with a contradiction as there is as yet no commitment to cease nuclear weapon production, but without transferring weapons-grade plutonium and uranium production to the military, no nuclear weapons production can take place.

The labour movement must demand that no sections of the Sellafield plant or existing nuclear power plants are transferred to military control in order to continue nuclear weapon production.

Crucially, the campaign to close nuclear power stations must win the support of the workers in the industry who are in the main in the pro-nuclear unions — GMBATU, the AEU and the EETPU. To achieve this, the Labour leadership must campaign in the wider trade union movement for its anti-nuclear policy. In this way popular support can be mobilised for a non-nuclear energy policy and for unilateral disarmament.

# A socialist view from the inside

## How Red are the Greens?

THE GREENS HAVE adopted the most left wing positions of any major political party in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) on a range of issues. Our programme now calls for the lifting of restrictions on abortion — a difficult decision for a party founded on the principle of protecting life. We operate a policy of placing women in at least 50 per cent of all our leading posts. We have campaigned for a 35-hour working week more consistently than the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). And we continue to fight for our policies opposing nuclear weapons, NATO and nuclear energy.

The existence of the Greens with their radical positions challenges a number of traditionally held socialist ideas such as the progressive nature of technological and industrial growth. Can we still have industrial growth when industry destroys the environment? How are the earth's resources to be rationally and equitably used? This is a very difficult debate between the Greens and the ecology movement on the one hand and the trade unions — who see industrial expansion as the way to boost employment — on the other.

With positions to the left of social democracy on all the key political questions the Greens have come to act as a left wing pressure group on the SPD to debate issues such as the withdrawal of cruise and Pershing missiles, the risks of nuclear power after Chernobyl and the need for an open attitude towards the peace movement.

The Greens are obviously the product of the process of radicalisation going on in the FRG for the last 15 years. For several reasons this has not taken the form of a radicalisation through the mass party of the working class, the SPD, as it has, for instance, in Britain through the Labour Party.

The first factor explaining the rise of the Greens was the level of working class struggle up to the beginning of the 1980s which was much lower than in Britain and other countries but which has obviously changed very much since 1980. The political scene was one of partnership between the trade union bureaucracy and the employers. There were some workplace struggles but not, in general, mass working class action. So the trade unions represented a very conservative force and the bureaucracy was very insensitive to the issues raised by those mass movements that did exist like the women's movement and the peace movement.

Added to all this was the great hostility of labour movement leaders to the ecology movement and a strong sense of identity with the Atlantic Alliance. Thus a whole political generation grew up distanced from the labour movement because the radical issues it was concerned about found no echo there. From 1966 the SPD entered government coalitions with other parties and, apart from a brief period in the early 1970s under Willy Brandt, there was no period when the

The Greens have given the West German peace movement a voice in parliament and raised important new questions for the left.

Now they face crucial decisions about what stance to take towards the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions. STEFFI ENGERT discusses the Greens' origins, conflicts, and prospects for survival.

SPD was seen to be allied in any way to the mass social movements.

Neither had the revolutionary left, which until the mid-1970s was predominantly Maoist, been able to relate to these movements. Even if it had remained in better shape with a more subtle political analysis of the mass movements, it is doubtful if the far left could have changed very much, except perhaps by being closer to the Greens when they emerged.

A further factor was the extent to which the whole idea of socialism had become discredited inside the Federal Republic because of the existence of East Germany and the negative impression of 'socialism' which the GDR gives. GDR socialism, for most people in West Germany that kind of 'socialism' is very real while ours is just a collection of nice ideas. It is against this background that the mass movements in the FRG crystallised into the Greens.

It would be wrong to assume that the Greens will simply evolve to the left and become a large left wing socialist party. They are in fact a coalition of a number of very different, often conflicting, currents. What keeps them together and forces them to compromise with one another is the fact that they are a parliamentary party. If the Greens no longer held seats in parliament there would be a real danger of the party falling apart.

When the party was born there were even very right wing tendencies within it. These still exist. For instance, we have a current which argues that the Greens should make a governmental alliance with either the SPD or the Christian Democrats (CDU) whichever enables them to elaborate a governmental policy in favour of ecology. So this current would be prepared to be in government with the German Tories if they thought they could get concessions on ecology.

The big division in the Greens, however, is between the people who argue for a governmental alliance with the SPD (and who

have actually formed a coalition with the SPD in the state of Essen) and the 'fundamentalists' and 'eco-socialists'. Those in favour of an SPD coalition believe that the Greens must be a consistent party of reform. The only way to achieve that, they insist, is by being a party allied with the reformism of the SPD — in government. The 'fundamentalists' and the 'eco-socialists', who have big differences among themselves, are agreed on one thing: the Greens must be a party of opposition, even of opposition opposed to the capitalist system. The eco-socialists in particular do not equate the SPD and the CDU. They stress that the CDU government of Kohl must go but they are not prepared to make a coalition with the SPD. If there was a 'hung parliament' they would be in favour of adopting exposure tactics. That means they would give critical support in parliament to a minority SPD government while putting demands on such a government in order to expose it.

The decision on what to do about the SPD at a governmental level raises the question of what stance the Greens should take towards the SPD. This discussion, together with the party's reassessment of its relationship with the trade unions, has now reached a crucial stage.

The mutual hostility between the Green party and the trade unions is gradually changing because the Greens have recognised that the unions constitute another 'mass movement' like all the others. So we supported the 1984 battle for a 35-hour week, seeing it as the progressive demand of a mass movement.

The left inside the Greens favours a more strategic link-up with the left of the trade unions who are breaking with the old-style notion of 'social partnership' held by the SPD and the union bureaucracy. After the 35-hour week strike there was another conflict with the bosses over the question of lock-outs, in which the social security paid to people affected by lay-offs was reduced. The Greens' trade union commission started to campaign jointly with militant trade unionists against this attack on social security rights.

More cooperation generally is now developing between these workers and some sections of the Greens. And as trade unionists start to ask who best represents politically the demands they are fighting for, some are casting at least half an eye towards the Greens. There is a real possibility, therefore, that we will start to attract some militant workers.

A great deal depends on the Greens' future attitude towards the trade unions and the SPD and on what kind of initiatives we take for continued mass mobilisations. Will we go on as a junior partner of the SPD for which there is no space in the long run? Or will we go forward as a radical reformist party with a strong, revolutionary, left wing?



THE YOUNGEST of five children in a fairly well-to-do and cultured middle-class Jewish family, Rosa Luxemburg grew up in Warsaw.<sup>1</sup> She was an intelligent and academically successful girl of independent spirit and, rebelling against the restrictive regime then prevalent in the schools of Russian Poland, she became involved in socialist political activity from early youth. In 1889 she had in consequence to leave Poland to avoid arrest and went to Zurich. Here she enrolled in the university, studying first mathematics and natural sciences, then political economy; and at length completed a doctoral dissertation on Poland's industrial development.

Active at the same time in the political life of the revolutionary emigrés from the Russian Empire and opposing the nationalism of the Polish Socialist Party, in 1894 she took the lead with Leo Jogiches, a comrade similarly engaged, in creating the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland: he was its main organizer, she its ablest intellect and voice.

The two of them had formed what was to be a long and intense relationship, the close political tie between them surviving a later personal estrangement. In 1896, wanting a wider political stage for her energies, Rosa Luxemburg moved to Germany.

Henceforth she was prominent in the important debates within European socialism. She made her mark at once during the revisionist controversy with her *Social Reform or Revolution*, still perhaps the best general Marxist riposte to reformism. While capitalism endured, she contended, its crises and contradictions could not be subdued and to suggest otherwise, as Bernstein had, was to cut the very heart out of Marxism, denying the objective foundations of the socialist project and turning it into an abstract ethical utopia. The workers' movement had indeed to struggle for reforms through trade union and parliamentary activity. But as these would never suffice to abolish capitalist relations of production, it must not lose sight of its ultimate goal: the conquest of power for revolution.

In 1904, in *Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy*, Luxemburg intervened in the dispute between Lenin and the Mensheviks, criticizing the former for his conception of a tightly centralized vanguard party; an attempt, as she saw it, to play guardian to the working class. Her themes here — characteristic of all her work — were the independent

initiative, the self-activity of the workers, their capacity to learn through their own experience and their own mistakes, the need accordingly for a broadly based democratic organization.

She had other disagreements with Lenin in these years. Although she deplored national as every other kind of oppression, she did not support, as he did, either the independence of Poland or, more generally, the slogan of a *right* of nations to self-determination.

However, their common response

sway of capitalist relations and inevitable collapse of the system.

Luxemburg led the opposition to the First World War in Germany. Intellectual standard-bearer of the revolutionary internationalists gathered in the Spartacus League, in her *Junius Pamphlet* and other writings she denounced Social Democracy's patriotic stance as a betrayal. She had to spend most of the war in prison and there she wrote *The Russian Revolution*, in solidarity and sympathy with Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks, endorsing their attempt at socialist revolution; yet critical of their land and nationalities policy, above all of their curtailment of socialist democracy, and of their tendency in this connection to make a virtue out of unfortunate necessities. Freed in late 1918 to participate in the German revolution, she was brutally murdered by right-wing officers after the crushing of an abortive rising in Berlin.

Rosa Luxemburg's work has sometimes been interpreted as a species of political fatalism, on account of her theory of inevitable capitalist breakdown; and as displaying a boundless faith in the spontaneity of the masses. However this is to misunderstand or caricature her. The collapse of capitalism presented the proletariat with alternatives: on the one side, crisis, reaction, war, finally catastrophe and barbarism; on the other side, socialism.

Active struggle for socialism was therefore necessary and urgent. For her, true to a central Marxist theme, the substance of this struggle was indeed provided by the spontaneous, self-emancipatory efforts of the working class. But she did not deny the need for organization, nor the importance of Marxist theory and able leadership. The division between her and Lenin has often been exaggerated. They were united by as much. Luxemburg's lifelong concern for democracy and liberty was unambiguously that of a revolutionary Marxist and should not be confused with the criticisms of this tradition by other traditions — liberal, reformist, or anarchist — completely alien to her.<sup>2</sup>

R O S A L U X E M B U R G

## Hid from view

From Norman Geras

*Literature of Revolution*

to the 1905 revolution drew them closer; they both envisaged for Russia a bourgeois revolution, to be carried through under the leadership, and by the methods of struggle, of the proletariat. In the mass actions of the Russian workers Luxemburg thought to have discovered, in addition, a strategic idea of international relevance and began to urge it upon German Social Democracy, speaking in this as in other things for the left of the organization.

In her *Mass Strike, Party and Trade Unions*, she proposed the mass strike as the form *par excellence* of proletarian revolution. Spontaneous expression of the creative power of the broadest masses and antidote to bureaucratic inertia, it linked political with economic struggles, and immediate with far-reaching demands, in what was potentially a global challenge to the capitalist order.

In 1910 this view led to her break with Kautsky, when he rallied to the cautious, purely electoralist policy of the party leadership. Another of her preoccupations was imperialism, with its threat of war, and in 1913 in her major theoretical work, *The Accumulation of Capital*, she set out to explain its underlying cause. A closed capitalist economy, she argued, without access to non-capitalist social formations, must break down through inability to absorb all the surplus-value produced by it.

Imperialism was a competitive struggle between capitalist nations for what remained of the non-capitalist environment but, by eroding the latter, it led towards the universal

### Footnotes

1 Born 5 March 1871, Zamość, Poland; died 15 January 1919, Berlin.

2 For Luxemburg's works directly referred to here, see Mary-Alice Waters (ed.), *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York 1970, and Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, London 1963.

Pictures from *Rosa Luxemburg and Karl  
Leibknecht: revolution, remembrance,  
representation* John A. Walker Pentonville  
Gallery, 1986.



R.B. Kitaj *The murder of Rosa Luxemburg* 1960



A. Raderscheidt (a Rhenish artist)  
*Rosa Luxemburg* woodcut 1919

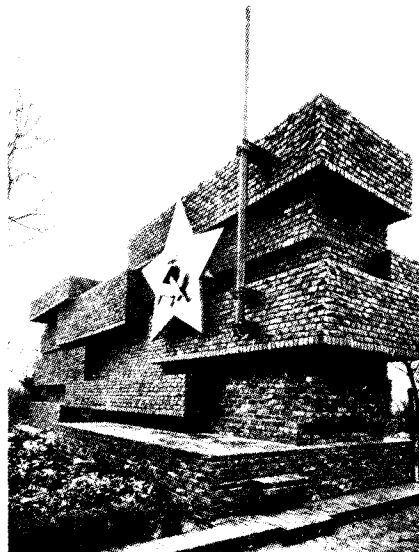


George Grosz  
*Cheers Noske! The workers have been  
disarmed pen and ink* 1919

### Epitaph 1919

Red Rosa now has vanished too.  
Where she lives is hid from view  
She told the poor what life is about  
And so the rich have rubbed her out.

BRECHT



L. Mies van der Rohe *Monument to Karl Leibknecht and  
other Spartacists* Berlin 1926. Destroyed by the Nazis in  
1933.



Rosa Luxemburg c. 1907

The campaign in the Labour Party against British participation in NATO is gaining strength. But, argues OLIVER MACDONALD, the Labour left and the peace movement must advance its own alternative to the Atlantic Alliance. This alternative must be the fight to overcome the division of Europe — and for a United Socialist States of Europe. MacDonald concludes with a thought-provoking and controversial series of objectives for the left to fight for. We welcome readers' comments on these proposals.



# What alternative to the Atlantic Alliance?

RONALD REAGAN and the United States government have their own programme for Western Europe. Stated simply, it is that Europe should accept US political hegemony, under pro-US right wing governments. Such a programme leaves no room for collaboration with old-style social democratic governments, committed to the welfare state and political consensus. On the contrary, it involves full acceptance of the United States' cold war ideology, a fundamental weakening of the labour movement, and full participation by Western Europe in the US's militarisation drive. Denis Healey's desperate hope that someone powerful in Washington will take him and a right-wing Labour government seriously as collaborators is the purest utopianism — as the very public attack on the Labour Party by administration officials during the Labour Party conference showed.

In this connection, Mr E Willens provides some interesting information about official thinking in Washington (in an article in the summer 1986 issue of *Foreign Policy*). He informs us that administration officials are worried about the new obstacle — the welfare state — to good relations between Washington and Western Europe. 'American officials', says Mr Willens, 'blame the welfare state for Western Europe's lack of seriousness about building up military strength.' It is possible that Mr Willens is ill-informed, but since he was senior European affairs specialist at the state department until 1984 this seems unlikely. In which case, Labour Atlanticism these days sounds a good deal more way-out and exotic than the moonies.

Yet what are the alternatives? We are offered, by the Labour leadership, the policy of 'reforming NATO from within', but this would only make sense if it meant reforming American policy towards the world from Western Europe, and nobody has been able to tell us how that is to be done in the absence of a significant ally in mainstream American politics. In short, it is an empty phrase that either means quietly subverting US policy objectives on fundamental issues, or it means quietly following US objectives while making demagogic anti-American noises.

The left within the Labour Party, of course, argues for the

policy of withdrawal from NATO and argues for it honestly as part of a general effort to reduce American power in Europe and thereby undermine its global militarist efforts. But in fact this is only half a programme — the negative part. What the left has not yet started to seriously discuss is its positive programme for Europe — with what are we seeking to replace NATO and the Warsaw Pact?

On the economic issues in such a discussion, the left generally argues for a national programme of measures to break the power of the City and the multinationals on the road to a planned economy. This is attacked by right wing Labour opinion on grounds of economic internationalism — the impossibility of national solutions to economic problems and the need for a European recovery programme. The truth of the matter surely is that the left's economic programme is justified on *political* grounds: any socialist breakthrough is politically conceivable first only on a *national* level. The right wing labour line uses the reality of an international economic interdependence in order to escape the political necessity for a socialist programme in Britain. But at the same time the left must advance its own international economic programme.

Mainstream Labour's European economic programme involves the idea of a neo-Keynesian West European revival hinged on the strength of West German industrial capital and the continuing links between West European christian democracy and the welfare state and trade unionism. The idea is that these forces would resist anglo-saxon finance capital — New York and the City — develop an industrial strategy behind the protection of the European Monetary System and preserve and even extend the welfare state through reviving detente and thus resisting pressure from the US for a big shift to increased military spending. At the same time all this would be pursued within the framework of a liberal world economy and thus under the sway of the dollar and US global power. The whole edifice depends upon US acquiescence, if not enthusiasm.

The real attractiveness for the right wing of this vision of a new Keynesian class alliance between labour and industrial



Andrew Moore/Reflex

**Police patrol of US airforce base at Molesworth**

capital in Europe lies in the fact that it offers the prospect of a revival of economic security and some prosperity for working people without the need for a struggle for socialism. But it hinges on two crucial assumptions. First, that West European industrial capitalists and their political representatives will prefer an alliance with labour to a struggle against labour alongside the rentiers and financial speculators. And secondly it depends upon the idea that there will be a renewal of harmony between Western Europe and the USA in the field of international economics. Both these assumptions are threadbare.

The alternative economic programme of the left should be both socialist and pan-European. It should accept the inevitability of the class struggle between labour and capital and thus be geared to forcing through measures for the 30 hour week, for the right to work, for nationalisation of industry across frontiers and so forth. And it should be pan-European in the sense that it should seek to unite the West with the 300 million people in Eastern Europe including the Soviet Union in a new international economic co-operation and division of labour, taking full advantage of the complementarity of, for example, the Soviet and West German economies. Such a socialist, internationalist programme of economic co-operation would both free the working class in the West of dependence on the dollar area and at the same time provide a genuine leap forward in the productive forces in the entire Eurasian territories.

Too often, the Left discusses the question of how to get a Europe free from the threat of war in superficial or purely negative terms: all missiles out, all American bases out, for an end to NATO (and the Warsaw Pact) and so on.

The superficial ideas on peace include such notions as simply getting rid of weapons. This is a positive development of course, when it occurs along with conversion schemes for military industries, but as a way of ending the war threat it is

### 'states with socialised economies can also behave as military bullies'

naive. How many Labour governments would it take to convert British Aerospace and GEC from tigers into lambs? More radical is the idea of removing US power from Western Europe. Yet the idea that without us power in the region, the states of Western Europe would show themselves in their true, peace-loving colours is an absurdity.

It is surely evident that these states are bureaucratic war machines sitting on top of a capitalist system with voracious appetites for power and profits. We have the precious right to grumble against this set up, but the idea that the people in the form of voters will keep the militarist ambitions of these states in check is an absurdity. We need a programme for building authentic democratic systems of popular power in Western Europe, based on a socialist economic system. That social basis already exists in Eastern Europe, but democratic structures of popular power do not, nor even liberal structures allowing people to grumble openly.

Some currents of opinion in the peace movement wish to avoid any discussion of the social basis of a peaceful Europe, while seemingly being very concerned to gain the right democratic political structures. Thus they present a vision of peacefully co-operating states in Eastern and Western Europe, some socialist and some capitalist, once the US and the USSR have been removed from the scene. All that is needed to ensure this



peace, they believe, is Western-style democracy in the East. This overlooks the little fact that the West European 'democratic' — notably France and Britain — states have a track record second to none for engaging in bloody wars in the third world, not to speak about their 20th century liking for savaging each other in two world wars. And what do they do about the possibility of a militarist West European super-state?

On the other side, some argue that all that matters will be sorted out provided only that the West goes 'socialist'. Yet experience has demonstrated that states with socialised economies can also behave as military bullies using brutal power politics: the Sino-Soviet rivalry, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, relations between China, Vietnam and Cambodia, for example. This raises the need not only for both authentic popular democratic control in socialised states but also the need for big nations to be brought under higher authority.

When considering what this higher authority must be, we must return to the traditional slogan of the socialist movement: the United Socialist States of Europe. A federal, pan-European state, socialist and democratic, would comprise two great national groups — the Russians and the united Germans — balancing each other. So much of the seemingly insoluble problems discussed in the peace movement come from the fear of being dominated, under new arrangements either by the Russians — if the US is pushed out — or by the Germans — if the Russians no longer dominate Eastern Europe. The simple solution is to accept the reality of a Europe embracing both. But this can be a progressive development only on the basis of socialism and democratic power.

But what then of the slogan of national independence? For understandable reasons this slogan retains great appeal in countries like Poland. Yet in a world of such great economic, (and



Carlos Guarita/Reflex

**CND organised protests against the US bombing of Libya. The peace movement should commit itself to the socialist reunification of Europe as the precondition for peace**

ecological) interdependence, the slogan of national independence retains its progressive character *only as a historical safety clause*: the right of any nation to secede from a federation as a last resort. The idea that European economic development, European relations with the third world or other regions and internal European peace can be best served by a myriad of independent small and medium-sized states across the continent cannot be taken seriously. The ultimate breakthrough to an anchored peace in Europe will come from the nations voluntarily ceding their increasingly bogus pretensions to total sovereignty in a voluntary socialist union. This alone will bring politics into harmony with economics across the continent.

This may seem a wildly ambitious programme. If a new stable revival of the world economy is on the way, if relations between the West and the third world are about to switch to genuine co-operation based upon a born-again change of character by the banks and multi-nationals, and if the Soviet-American rivalry is about to dissipate, while the Thatcherites and their equivalents disappear from the scene — then this programme for a socialist united Europe will prove a great red herring! But if we are in the first phase of a pre-war world, this programme will be the minimum 'peace' programme. Only fools and utopians can believe we are entering a period of capitalist stability and prosperity. In the real world, the fight for peace must be linked to an international socialist perspective.

Supporters of the programme for a United Socialist States of Europe from Reykjavik to the Urals, should pick up that wizened acorn which nevertheless offers a tiny glimmer of a united Europe — the Helsinki agreements with their three baskets of economics and technology, military matters and people's rights and we should advance our own programme of

objectives for transforming Helsinki into an engine of progress: a trade package for the planned growth of East-West European trade by £10 billion a year, to slash unemployment in the West and to boost growth in the East, coupled with the scrapping of technology controls and a plan for free scientific exchanges and a disarmament programme including the well-rehearsed anti-

**'the alternative economic programme of the left should be both socialist and pan-European'**

nuclear demands of the peace movement. In the field of rights we must demand two basic clauses: that the people of western Europe have the same right to work and basic economic security as the peoples of the East and that the peoples of the East have the same rights to freely grumble as the peoples of the West: the mass media and the key levers of power may not be under popular control anywhere in Europe, but the peoples of the East must be able to curse their governments at meetings or in print just as vigorously as we should be cursing ours.

But what about the Americans (and the Canadians) who are involved in Helsinki. It may be discourteous to boot them out — though the us' role was to use human rights to sabotage any agreement, albeit without success. But let them stay, if they wish, with the same voting power as anybody else, such as Iceland. This is perfectly fair. After all, if they don't like progress towards European unity social and democratic progress, they can always suggest something better via the usual diplomatic channels.

THE NEW ECONOMIC reforms ushered in by the leadership, concentrated in part on radically transforming the communes in the countryside by introducing a market economy.

A new 'responsibility system' was introduced in 1981, designed to displace forms of payment, and calculated on labour points equal for all but bearing no relation to the work actually done. This led rapidly to a large degree of decollectivisation, a de facto distribution of the land, and a return to the family farm. A social differentiation of the peasantry began to emerge, whilst at the same time, peasant incomes doubled from their 1978 levels. But who was paying for this change?

### Women in China

After 1949, the Chinese Communist Party adopted a four-pronged strategy to redefine the roles of women. They undertook to legislate for equality, introduce women into social production alongside a new ideology of sexual liberation and organise women to forward their demands, through the National Women's Federation.

In 1949, the participation of women in social production had been identified as the precondition for women's liberation and the crucial factor in winning equality for women: 'It is necessary to begin with production, for both economic property and economic independence promote the political status of women, their cultural level, and improve their livelihood, thereby leading the way to emancipation.'<sup>1</sup>

During the early 1950s, the government took decisive steps against the most extreme forms of female subordination and exploitation. It abolished the centuries old barbaric practice of binding and crippling women's feet, introduced new marriage laws, labour and land legislation, thereby reducing the power of men in the family to control the movement of women in marriage and divorce.

This was followed by massively expanding women's economic roles, combined with the establishment of a new ideology of equality for women.

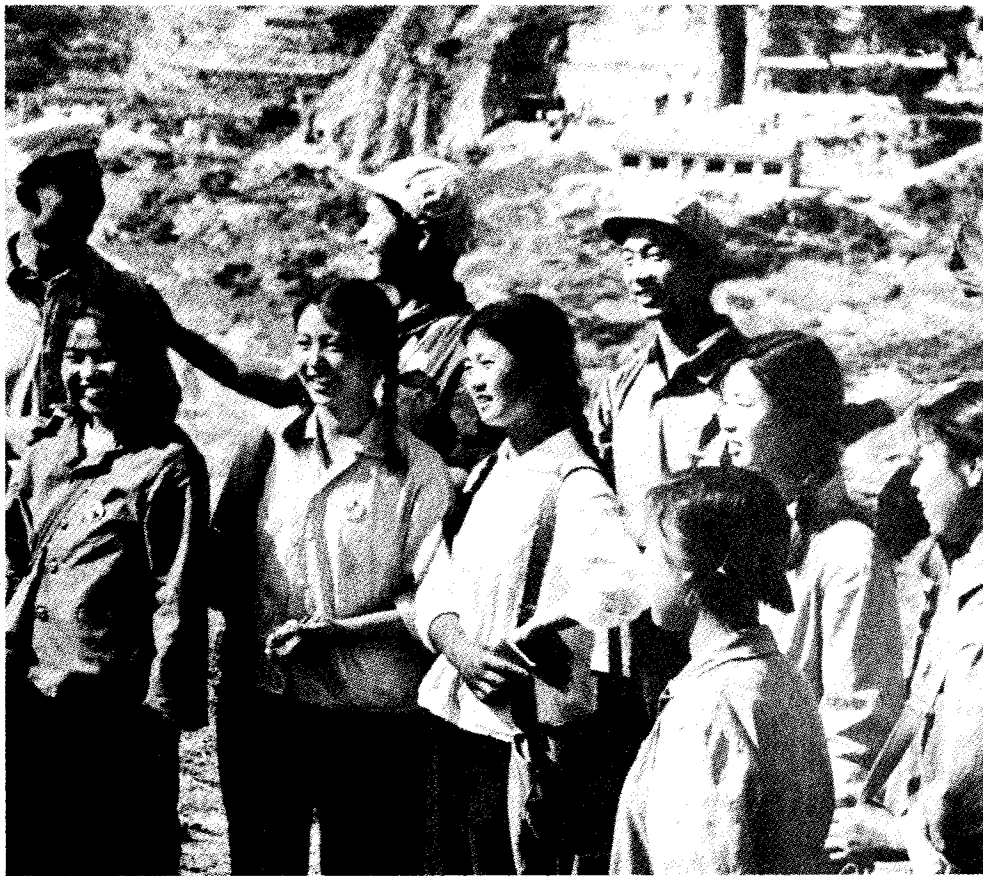
By the end of the 1950s, 90% of women were earning a wage of some kind. In most rural communes, villages, urban neighbourhoods and factories, women's organisations were established which aimed to help women acquire new skills and represent them in the local community.

### Women as producers and reproducers

Yet despite official campaigns, women were informally expected to enter the waged labour force on the same basis as men but simultaneously service the nuclear family. This produced a dramatic intensification of female labour.

In addition, the limited investment in and development of, the service sector made worse the bureaucracy's diversion of resources away from rural development. A consequent reliance upon unpaid female labour to subsidise economic development programmes resulted.

# The new 'responsible' woman in rural China



Since Mao died in September 1976 his successors have faced a society in which the usual ills of rigid social and economic regimentation have been compounded by reckless attempts to alleviate these problems. An economic reform was necessary but what sort of reform and in what stages?

**RONNIE HELD** looks at one aspect of the economic reform being carried out under the present leadership of Deng Xiaoping: decollectivisation of agriculture and its effects on peasant women.

The assumption was that if policies benefitted China's development they were bound to be good for women too.

The question posed in 1978, at the onset of the reform programme was, therefore, how far would the *new* policies lead to changes in women's roles as producers and reproducers?

### Women pushed out of work

Surveys of peasant household incomes show that these rose substantially as the reform measures took hold.<sup>2</sup> But how far were *women* benefitting from these overall economic improvements?

Calculations showed that surplus labour, (ie unemployment), rose by one third and it was forecast that during the 1980s the number of people engaged in agricultural production would be further reduced by two thirds.<sup>3</sup> It became evident that the reforms

were forcing a new sexual division of labour between agriculture and non-agricultural occupations. In some of the counties in Zhejiang province, for example, it was established that 90% of the female labour force had no regular work assignment.

By 1980, the situation had become so serious that the president of the National Women's Federation identified the lack of employment opportunities as *the* major problem facing women over the next decade. In addition, the ideological climate was changing:

'The future of the revolution and the hopes of the motherland rest with the children... The bringing up of such a mammoth new force is a great undertaking for the whole of society and primarily for women.'<sup>4</sup> Equality through participation in paid social labour was out. 'Socialist Motherhood' was in.





### A one child family policy — women's wombs and the economy

Of all the policies introduced since Mao's death, the most far-reaching in its implications for women is the one-child family policy. On the basis that providing material resources for a population of one billion are formidable, and will continue to be so for the next 20 years, the Chinese government penalises families that decide to have more than one child. Couples exceeding the quota can have 5-10% of their total income levied for 10-16 years. All medical and educational fees have to be paid for. Grain rations for the 'excess child' are reduced. Promotion prospects and bonuses for the parents rejecting the policy are waived aside.

In the rural areas, where women move away from their village upon marriage, boys are seen as more likely to provide for aged parents than girls. The resultant desire for boys is so great in the single-child rural family, that it has led to the reappearance of female infanticide and violence against women who bear daughters.<sup>5</sup> The reforms that have forced women out of the workforce, back into domestic forms of unpaid labour and the traditional role of child bearer are threatening to turn into a full scale backlash against the concept of women's equality.

Even papers like the *Worker's Daily* have dared to publish letters which have openly attacked sexual equality and have included arguments that men are innately superior to

women. The editor defended having allowed such a debate by saying: 'It is a matter for serious consideration now that the question of having boys or girls is a common social problem that at present faces most families.'

Girls are now apparently seen as a 'social problem', since within the new market-oriented peasant economy, boys are seen as a greater economic asset. Within the nuclear family this has given rise to renewed patriarchal attitudes.

### The need for real autonomous organisation

The National Women's Federation has an uneasy alliance with the bureaucracy, acting both as a pressure group in defence of women's interests and as a mechanism for soliciting support for the party and government. It is forced to implement the general party policies first and only draw conclusions about their implications for women, later.

Therefore, women have been encouraged by their own organisations to support the 'responsibility system', expand unpaid domestic work, agree to the single-child policy and ask questions afterwards.

Marxists do not understand the ending of women's oppression solely in terms of liberating women from feudal and capitalist modes of production. In China, where peasant women still follow a system of patrilocality — whereby women move to the husband's kin group at marriage — men are

still able to have special access to both the labour and reproductive powers of women. Patriarchal attitudes are still deeply ingrained in China's overwhelmingly peasant society.

Mao once said that 'women hold up half the sky'. Under the present economic reforms, women are increasingly holding up more than half of the burdens of domestic labour and bearing the brunt of the reactionary social policies and attitudes such reforms are generating. Even in post-capitalist economies there is an obvious need for women to demand their own autonomous organisations. Separate from the party and truly independent of the state, these organisations could campaign for the economic, social and political demands of women.

Internationalists and socialists understand the need to raise the living standards of the Chinese masses, but this can not be achieved by driving women out of full time production and extolling the virtues of 'socialist motherhood'. Indeed, this can only add another twist to the tensions that the bureaucracy is hoping to alleviate.

### Footnotes

- 1 All China Women's Federation, *Documents of Women's Movement in China*. Peking, 1949.
- 2 *New China News*, 29/6/81.
- 3 *Peking Review*, 2/2/79.
- 4 *ibid.*, 29/9/78.
- 5 E. Cross, *Chinese Women since Mao*.

STUART PIPER'S ARTICLE in the last issue of *International* entitled 'Land Reform and the Nicaraguan Revolution' was interesting and informative.<sup>1</sup> But we cannot agree with the main thrust of his analysis, nor with his political conclusions which sanction the Sandinista strategy of the 'mixed economy'.

We agree with comrade Piper that it is easy for armchair theorists to take potshots at a revolution confronted with practical difficulties which affect the lives and future of millions. Yet we should be careful how we employ this argument, for it has been utilised against all critics of 'actually existing revolutions' — that they are sectarian nit-pickers sniping from the sidelines. For Marxists, unconditional solidarity with developing revolutions does not mean abandoning debate and criticism.

#### The context: a revolution under seige

Daily, the Reagan administration increases its counter-revolutionary offensive against Nicaragua, with the aim of overthrowing the FSLN. The US-backed contra war and trade embargo have wreaked havoc on the Nicaraguan economy. Inside tiny Nicaragua 250,000 have been displaced and at least 12,000 killed. The contra war has forced the FSLN to allocate 50 per cent of the federal budget to defence and shift 20 per cent of the country's labour force to defence-related activities.

But the revolution has not been toppled and the FSLN has taken important steps forward. The workers and peasants have been armed — 300,000 rifles have been distributed. The Sandinistas have encouraged the organisation of the masses, organised free elections, carried out a literacy campaign and made improvements in health and welfare provision. The government took further measures at the beginning of 1986 to deepen the land reform. These advances have given the Nicaraguan workers and peasants the courage to endure and fight on.

Nonetheless, the US policy of wearing down the revolution has resulted in an acute economic crisis. Although the majority of people are still enthusiastic for the revolution, the living standards of the masses are falling. History shows us that enthusiasm cannot be maintained by mobilisation and education alone. As the Nicaraguan economy deteriorates signs of fatigue and apathy have surfaced among significant sections of the population. Some have taken a neutral stance towards the government and search for individual solutions: the so-called 'informal' economy now represents some 20 per cent of economic activity. Others have begun to take their own class and sectoral demands onto the streets. The growing discontent in the countryside has led, as Piper indicates, to peasant mobilisations against government policy.

The deterioration of the economy is not simply due to outside factors. Certain political choices made by the FSLN have contributed to this situation: most importantly the FSLN's commitment to the 'mixed economy' and the alliance with the so-called 'patriotic' bourgeoisie.

In his article, Piper minimises the economic sacrifices made by the Nicaraguan masses for this alliance. Neither does he explore the very dangerous consequences of continuing it. Moreover, he argues on the basis of his analysis of the land reform that 'the property relations in Nicaragua have been transformed'. We disagree.

# Nicaragua Contradictions of the mixed economy



Harvesting maize on a privately-owned farm

The analysis of post-revolutionary states has often been the occasion for dispute among Marxists. The last issue of *International* carried an article by Stuart Piper on the progress of the Nicaraguan revolution. In a detailed response, PHIL HEARSE and DAVE PACKER put an alternative view of the Sandinista strategy.

#### 'The property relations have been transformed'?

To examine the idea that property relations have been transformed, our analysis should start from the structure of ownership and control of the Nicaraguan economy. Our assertion is that while important changes have taken place since the revolution — especially in the creation of a strong state sector — Nicaragua remains a dependent capitalist economy dominated by the bourgeoisie. The facts and figures on this are widely available and flatly contradict Stuart Piper's assertion that 'the "revolutionary bloc" provides three quarters of the country's output'.

In an excellent and detailed book on the Nicaraguan revolution Carlos Vilas and Richard Harris conclude:

'If large, medium and small producers are combined, the private sector today accounts for approximately 60 per cent of the GDP. And in agriculture and manufacturing — the two main

productive sectors of the economy — private producers generate 79 and 69 per cent respectively of the GDP. Thus the importance of private producers in Nicaragua's mixed economy is much greater than is generally considered to be the case outside the country. Actually the structure of property in Nicaragua is not very different from that in various countries in Latin America (for example the Dominican Republic). In fact, revolutionary Nicaragua has a much smaller state sector than Peru did under the reformist military regime of General Velasco, Argentina under the populist regime of Peron or Chile under Allende.<sup>2</sup>

The key indicators of the Nicaraguan economy are the structure of land ownership; the pattern of ownership and production inside manufacturing; and ownership and control in 'agribusiness' and agriculture for export. Each of these sectors show a strong domination of the private owners and producers.

In land ownership, despite the various land reforms, private capital predominates. In agri-

culture, 54 per cent of production is by large and medium land owners. It is important to grasp what the terms 'large' and 'medium' mean. Harris and Vilas explain:

'In Nicaragua the large producer is the coffee grower who cultivates more than 500 manzanas (one manzana = 1.72 acres) of land, the cotton grower with more than 65 manzanas of land, the rancher with more than 1000 manzanas dedicated to livestock or the manufacturer who employs more than 100 workers. Medium producers are agriculturalists who possess from 50 to 500 manzanas, of cotton or food crops, ranchers with 200 to 1000 manzanas dedicated to livestock, finca (estate owners) with 15 to 65 manzanas of coffee or manufacturers who employ between 30 and 50 people. Small producers are members of the economically active population who produce their own means of production but fall below the minimum given for medium producers.'<sup>3</sup>

By these definitions the 'medium' producer therefore can be someone who owns 860 acres of cattle-rearing land. Forgive us if we don't put them in the 'revolutionary bloc'! By and large they are small capitalists (but *not* the petty-bourgeoisie).

21 per cent of farming produce is produced by the state sector, and 25 per cent by small individual producers, who, of course, also consume part of what they produce. It is clear from these figures that agricultural production for sale, and especially for export, is dominated by large privately-owned farms and ranches.

In January 1985 the Nicaraguan government made important changes in the 1981 Agrarian Reform Law, making access to the land easier for the poor peasants. This was partly a response to the land occupations in Masaya province referred to by Piper. The government also hopes, by these measures, to stem the rural exodus to the cities. However, this reform mainly affects unutilised or underutilised land held by private owners and the redistribution of some of the less efficient state-owned farms originally expropriated from Somoza. It is a real step forward, but it does not overcome the dominant form of agriculture in Nicaragua — large capitalist farming. The Sandinistas still oppose the breaking up of the lands of the large capitalist producers. Up to half the 200,000 acres designated for redistribution have come from the state sector.

The capitalist structure of farming is compounded and reinforced by the structure of agri-business. A huge majority of the coffee mills, slaughter houses and cotton mills are in private hands — this sector produces a quarter of the value of all agri-business production.

In Nicaragua's small manufacturing sector, while the state sector produces something like 32 per cent of manufactured goods and there are many small privately-owned workshops, a clear majority of the production is in enterprises employing over 30 workers, and private enterprises employing over 100 workers themselves produce more manufacturing goods than the entire state sector.<sup>4</sup>

To summarise this point: private capitalist production dominates agriculture, agri-business and manufacturing. Moreover, this is not just proven by statistics, but is a question of weight in overall production, and proportion of production for distribution and sale. Indeed the figures for private production in many countries which everyone calls 'capitalist' are smaller than in Nicaragua.

### Priority to financing the bourgeoisie

Nicaragua is in an acute economic crisis, primarily because of the counter-revolutionary contra war, and the economic blockade operated by US imperialism. The support and enthusiasm of the masses for the revolution will be maintained mainly through the material gains which the revolution brings and an understanding that the hardships of the war are being shared fairly among the population. There are two obstacles to such an understanding: the fact that distribution is in private hands, and that traders and entrepreneurs are making big profits by hoarding at the expense of the masses is one. The second is the priority in the state subventions and financing given the



**Free market fruit and vegetables in Matagalpa**

private sector. The question is *why*, and on this hangs the whole economic-political strategy of the FSLN.

The basic strategy of the FSLN is to cement a bloc with the so-called 'patriotic' bourgeoisie. This involves giving certain economic guarantees to this class at the expense of the state sector and the masses.

The rationale for this has been to stop the bourgeoisie going over to the counter-revolution and to ensure that the bourgeoisie continues to

### 'private capitalist production dominates agriculture, agri-business and manufacturing'

invest and produce. The results have been, forgive the pun, mixed. The bourgeoisie has not actively gone over to the counter-revolution. On the other hand the 'patriotic' bourgeoisie has not fulfilled its part of the bargain regarding investment and production. It has only been concerned with immediate profits, rather than long-term investment, and has thus adopted a wait-and-see attitude towards the revolution. There are decreasing returns from

the 'alliance' with the 'patriotic' bourgeoisie.

In an article quoted approvingly by Piper, Carlos Vilas puts the question in the following way:

'In the final analysis, it is appropriate to look at the political and economic cost, in this class war, of the policy of subsidising a class, or elements of it, which by failing to play their part in the productive sphere are preparing the ground on which the enemies of the revolution operate ... The period shows the reluctance of most fractions of capital to undertake commitments that guarantee their integration in the construction stage, at considerable cost to economic growth and the well-being of the masses.'<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, genuine national planning of the economy is made very difficult and also the material basis of the country's national defence is undermined. Many comrades in the Marxist movement internationally argue that the national war of defence against the contras and imperialism must be waged before the class war internally can be waged. But this forgets a basic lesson, which the Marxist movement certainly knew at the time of the Spanish revolution, that the 'national' war against counter-revolution can be lost if the material interests of the workers are sacrificed to unity with the bourgeoisie.

### A long-term mixed economy?

There is no way of knowing to what extent the contradictions of the mixed economy are the subject of debate within the FSLN leadership itself, or viewed by the workers of Nicaragua. Tomas Borgé has made reference in his speeches to the fact that sections of the workers think that the bourgeoisie should be frontally attacked, and that the project of the FSLN is ill-understood by many sections of the popular masses. But the overall line of the FSLN is clear and unambiguous — for a long-term mixed economy as the strategic way forward. This has been explained dozens of times; the following quote from Jaime Wheelock, one of the nine-person FSLN directorate, is typical:

'Here what has to be posed theoretically is whether it is possible that the bourgeoisie simply produce, without power, that they limit themselves as a class to a productive role. That is, that they limit themselves to exploiting their means of production to live, not as instruments of power, of imposition. I think it is possible in Nicaragua ... we have not abandoned the search for forms in which we can integrate the more or less big individual producers who live in Nicaragua today into a social formation dominated by revolutionaries.'

This is the essence of the mixed economy theory boldly explained. We have to say frankly that theoretically this position is nonsense. Over any long period of time the bourgeoisie is bound to try to transform its economic strength into political strength and challenge the political domination of the revolutionaries. The dangers were accurately sketched in the early days of the revolution by Charles-Andre Udry:

'A "slow transition" combining a "mixed" (ie capitalist) economy with the strengthening of the mass organisations (trade unions, CDSS, militia) can certainly be sketched on paper. But it will not stand up to the clash of social forces. It will be necessary to cut the Gordian knot and break the alliance with the bourgeoisie — a course that, given the shortage of technical skills, does not

involve abandonment of the integration of technical staff. If the break is not eventually made the bourgeoisie will settle comfortably into its position and even find 'independent thinkers' within the FSLN.<sup>7</sup>

But how does expropriating the bourgeoisie work itself out in practice? What are the real practical problems involved? The dilemma of the FSLN can be sketched as follows. The present situation combines the contra war and the offensive of US imperialism, with a disloyal 'patriotic' bourgeoisie, and falling living standards of the masses. Given Nicaragua's dependence on the world market for its agricultural exports and the lack of investment by the bourgeoisie, neither prices nor investment can be planned. Discontent, and a drop in the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses are threatening dangers. The advantages of breaking with the bourgeoisie are that real economic planning will be easier, and the real revolutionary mobilisation of the masses can be enormously deepened, especially in the countryside. The case of those who oppose a break with the bourgeoisie can be summarised as follows. First, it will disrupt the economy, they say, because only the bourgeoisie have the skills to run it. Second, it will isolate Nicaragua internationally and leave it more open to imperialist attack. Third, it will increase the dangers of bureaucratic degeneration through increasing the directive role of the state in a period of economic scarcity.

### 'the US-backed contra war has wreaked havoc on the Nicaraguan economy'

An argument often used by the FSLN themselves, explained in detail by Borgé, is that the geo-political situation of the revolution excludes new measures against the bourgeoisie. In other words, Nicaragua is dependent on the goodwill of international social democracy, 'friendly' imperialist states and so on to ward off US imperialism. This is a very weak argument, because the brute fact of the matter is that Nicaragua's international friends have little influence with the US in this matter. The main obstacle to an all-out US attack is domestic opposition to the US in getting involved in a very bloody counter-revolutionary war. In the last analysis, European imperialism and social democracy will not, and is not now, capable of preventing the US conducting the contra war and exercising whatever counter-revolutionary options it thinks it can get away with inside the US. Moreover, the FSLN cannot allow their internal policies to be dictated by international 'friends' because to do so, ultimately, means to accept the indefinite maintenance of a capitalist economy — with terrible consequences: either an increased base in Nicaragua for counter-revolution, or a sharpening of the internal class struggle as the masses mobilise against the bourgeoisie and the speculators. In the latter case, to accept the blackmail of international imperialism will involve the necessity of suppressing the masses, to defend the bourgeoisie and the mixed economy.

#### Workers democracy?

Another problem with comrade Piper's article is its tendency to minimise the problems of

workers democracy in Nicaragua. The danger of bureaucratic degeneration if the big bourgeoisie is expropriated certainly exists, of course. A bureaucratic workers' state could be the result. This depends on the degree of the self-organisation of the masses, and whether there exists genuine popular sovereignty, workers' control and the self-government of the masses. From this point of view, it has to be said that in Nicaragua today all power is concentrated in the FSLN (a small party of just a few hundred members) and its nine-person directorate. The Committees for the Defence of the Revolution have been withering away, precisely because they have no real decision-making powers. Decision-making is essentially top-down. The answer to the danger of



**Queueing for gas. Shortages are a feature of everyday life**

Piers Carendishi/Reflex

bureaucratism is not to maintain capitalist economic power, but to extend workers' self-organisation. We cannot accept that 'only the bourgeoisie' have the skills to run the economy. Of course, all other things being equal, it might be better to have a long period of transition to train the masses in technical skills. But, the economy is being sabotaged here and now by the bourgeoisie. Neither can it be accepted that only the bourgeoisie have the skills to run the ranches, the plantations and the coffee mills. This, of course is exactly the argument of the bourgeoisie itself.

What is true, is that it is very difficult to find a purely Nicaraguan solution to the problems of the Nicaraguan economy and the advancement of the revolution. Stuart Piper rightly notes, that, in the end, only the extension of the revolution provides a strategic way out. Outside economic aid will be a crucial component of economic advance, and in this the USSR is crucial. The USSR is dishing out its aid with an eye-dropper, however, and this is unlikely to change in the short term.

#### The basic dilemma

The Nicaraguan revolution is seven years old. Because of the relative weakness of the bourgeoisie, it has been able to continue without expropriating the bourgeoisie for a long pe-

riod. It is now clear, however, that the limits of the mixed economy are being reached. It is our contention that the mixed economy cannot be prolonged indefinitely, and the 'empirical' skills of the FSLN are incapable of indefinitely evading the contradictions which it brings. If the FSLN tie themselves to permanent defence of the mixed economy then they will more and more openly have to defend the economic power of the bourgeoisie against the Nicaraguan masses. This is the implacable logic of the situation. Those who say that expropriating the bourgeoisie is impossible are really saying that a socialist solution is impossible in a small, economically backward country like Nicaragua. If you openly say that, then you say that the Nicaraguan state is destined to become the defender of continued capitalist relations, to become a semi-colonial bourgeois state, with a bourgeois nationalist leadership, like Angola or Mozambique. This would be a truly tragic outcome to the Nicaraguan revolution. In our view, however, there is another alternative for Nicaragua and the FSLN, and that is to take the road of the Cuban revolution in breaking with the bourgeoisie — even though the Cubans themselves advise against it. Doing what the Cubans did will be better than doing what the Cubans say.

Many comrades in the Marxist movement internationally have pointed out, with some justice, that the workers and peasants can take power in a particular country without imme-

### 'We cannot accept that only the bourgeoisie has the skills to run the economy'

diately socialising the means of production. Indeed, there is no automatic timescale for breaking the economic, as opposed to the political, power of the bourgeoisie. But every state is a state which, in a historical sense, defends given relations of production. Paradoxically, therefore, the Bolsheviks who took power in 1917 but did not socialise the major means of production until 1918, in a 'historical' sense defended collective property right from the time they took power. Despite the perfectly correct disavowal of artificial timescales, it is impossible to 'historically' defend socialised property relations while maintaining a schema for the indefinite maintenance of a mixed economy. This is the 'Gordian knot' which the Sandinistas have to cut.

#### Footnotes

- 1 Stuart Piper, Land reform and the Nicaraguan Revolution, *International*, No 6 (September/October 1986).
- 2 Richard Harris and Carlos Vilas, Editors. *Nicaragua — a revolution under seige*. Zed Press 1985, p 43.
- 3 *Ibid*.
- 4 *Ibid*.
- 5 Carlos Vilas, 'Nicaragua: the fifth year — transformations and tensions in the economy', *Capital and Class* number 28, Spring 1986.
- 6 Jaime Wheelock, in *Nicaragua — the Sandinista Peoples Revolution*, Pathfinder Press 1985, pp 134-135.
- 7 Charles-Andre Udry, 'Aquis et contradictions de la revolution', *Inprecor* no 72/73, March 1980, quoted in Henri Weber, *The Sandinista Revolution*, Verso 1981, p 70.



Neath by-election, 1945

## The view from Mount Olympus

**CHARLIE VAN Gelderen**

Sam Bornstein & Al Richardson, *War and the International*, Housmans, £5.95.

TO MANY READERS who found Bornstein and Richardson's first volume of the history of the Trotskyist movement in Britain (*Against the Stream*) a valuable contribution, this second volume will prove somewhat disappointing.

In *Against the Stream*, the authors confined their criticisms of the current movements within the broad Trotskyist spectrum to the preface. The main text was almost a model of non-sectarian objectivity. Alas, this cannot be said of the new book.

Although it contains much valuable material not easily found in other sources, *War and the International* is a polemic as much as it is a history. Overall it is a consistent and carping criticism of nearly everyone who considers herself or himself a Trotskyist and the main target throughout is the Fourth International (FI) itself. This is particularly true of the last two chapters 'Back to Stalinism' and 'Trotskyism's Legacy'.

It is as if the two authors are sitting on Mount Olympus, far away from the real

world, looking down on the pygmy humans below who dare to assume that they are Trotskyists. The pure gold of Trotskyism exists only in the minds of Messrs. Bornstein and Richardson and is not to be found in the realities of the class struggle as it exists.

This is not a Marxist approach to history but an idealistic one. Hegel's dialectics has been put back on its head.

For Bornstein and Richardson the golden age of British Trotskyism was the years of the Workers International League (WIL) and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), when one of the authors was an active participant in the movement. In their hostility to the International they reflect traditional British isolationism. The British leadership always knew best. Intervention from the International was, at best, tolerated, at worst, resented. This was true almost from the day British Trotskyism was formed, when Reg Groves and his comrades refused to heed Trotsky's advice to enter the Independent Labour Party and is still evident today in the proliferation of grouplets who consider themselves Trotskyists, but will have nothing to do with the Fourth International, Trotsky's lasting legacy to the world's working class.

Having said that, we must compliment the authors on their diligent research and in bringing to a new generation of revolutionary socialists a view of the past. The study of history, for revolutionaries, is not an academic exercise. We have to learn from it, to take from history what we can use in the present conjuncture and learn how to avoid the mistakes of the past.

The main section of the book deals with the war years. There can be no doubt that in that historic period it was the WIL which came to the fore as the authentic bearer of the Trotskyist banner. Unlike the official section, the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), WIL managed to keep most of its leading cadres out of the armed forces. Starkey Jackson, the outstanding organiser and publicist of the RSL was conscripted early in the war and just at the time when he and the reviewer were discussing approaches to WIL for joint work. Under Harber's leadership the RSL remained inside the Labour Party even though the Labour Party had become completely moribund for the duration of the war. With no real roots in the living movement of the working class, the membership turned in on itself, with almost continuous sectarian fissures, splits and expulsions.

With the Communist Party acting as the leading strike breaker after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union the field was wide open for revolutionary socialist internationalists. The WIL leadership saw this opportunity clearly. It turned the organisation toward the industrial sector. These activities are well-chronicled in the book.

One cannot help wondering, however, how much stronger the movement would have been if WIL and the Groves Group had not rejected the attempt to unify the movement prior to the founding conference of the FI in 1938. Looking back one can say that the more dynamic leadership of WIL, its turn to the working class and its organisational abilities would have ensured for itself the effective leadership of the new organisation. It is hard to understand why it could not accept the draft Transitional Programme as an adequate basis for unification.

During the war years, WIL grew in membership and established real roots in the working class. It actively supported every manifestation of militancy. *Socialist Appeal* became the authentic voice of socialist internationalism amidst a chorus of social patriotism headed by the Stalinist Communist Party. But this growth also sowed illusions. The WIL leadership saw itself as *the* revolutionary party. This is best illustrated by Ted Grant's speech at the second national conference of WIL on 2-4 October, 1943. He said:



**Mayday demonstration, 1946**

Wonderful day. Wonderful possibilities open up in front of us. You can feel revolution in the air. That attitude must permeate our conference. The correctness of our viewpoint should give us confidence in preparing ourselves for our role in the coming revolution. Whatever its fate may be, it is certain that we can, we must, we will play our part, and stamp our tendency as an influence, as a serious factor in the situation, as an organisation that will play its part in the revolution. When, twelve months ago, we called our thesis 'Preparing for Power', this was not a mad gesture. That is the serious problem with which we are faced.

There was also a dent in WIL's internationalism when Ted Grant made his notorious 'OUR Eighth Army' speech. The reviewer was in Italy at the time, attached to the Eighth Army. I recall my shock when I read this speech and wrote to John Goffe about it. In no way was this army 'being hammered and tested and ... organised for the purpose of changing the face of the world'. This passage, believe it or not, concluded with the sentence 'This applies equally to all our forces'.

By 1945, the remnants of the RSL, including the tendencies arbitrarily expelled by Harber, had come together to form the Revolutionary Communist Party, British Section of the Fourth International. Almost from the start there was friction between the British leadership and the newly emerging European leadership. Here again is an illustration of the tragedy of WIL's organisational absence from the FI during the war years. With the relatively greater freedom which existed in war-time Britain compared to occupied Europe, it should have been the natural home for the regroupment of a European leadership acting in close liaison with the International Secretariat in New York.

Because of its continued and uninter-

rupted existence with the opportunities for open debate and discussion, the WIL leadership could have played a much more decisive role in building an international leadership. Much of the bitterness which subsequently developed could have been avoided.

It is not the purpose of this review to express an opinion on the various issues which arose in the aftermath of the war. With hindsight we can now say that if the British section had heeded the advice of the International and sent its major forces into the Labour Party we might have been spared the emergence of Healyism and the *Militant* tendency. Readers should compare the issues as portrayed in the book, heavily biased against the International leadership, with the original documents.

A typical example of this bias is the way in which it deals with the allegedly sinister role of Pierre Frank during that period, failing to mention that Pierre took his case to an International Control Commission (December 5, 1945). While most of Frank's traducers were soon to find themselves outside the FI, Pierre devoted the remaining years of his life to building the International.

The authors underestimate the difficulties which confronted the FI in the immediate period after the war. The world was not the one they had been led to expect. Stalinism emerged apparently more entrenched and stronger than ever; the expected slump turned out to be a boom making the debate on 'first in, last out' and 'nons — out' nothing more than a theoretical exercise. There were no copy-book instructions in the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Trotsky on how to deal with the real problems which arose. Many

of the new generation of leaders came fresh to Trotskyism. Under these conditions undoubtedly errors were made. As George Breitman put it, the road to the Fourth International was a 'rocky road'.

The authors have nothing but scorn for all the present groups who call themselves Trotskyists. Presumably they and they alone are the keepers of the true gospel. They still see issues in terms of the 1930s. The emergence of autonomous movements (women, blacks, gays, and so forth) mean nothing to them.

To them, as I note above, Trotskyism in its 'pure' form ceased to exist with the passing of the WIL and the RCP. They claim that 'nine out of ten members of the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1946 were blue collar working class' whilst 'nine out of ten members of modern Trotskyist organisations are white collar employees, civil service clerks, teachers or even film actors and television critics'. One wonders what are the bases for this statement. As one who served on the RCP Central Committee and Political Bureau from 1946 until its collapse I can vouch that this was certainly not true of its leadership. I would doubt, too, if their analysis of its membership is correct. Many of the 'blue collar workers' only entered the ranks of the working class as an alternative to conscription (the 'Bevin Boys' etc).

This book should certainly be on the shelf of every Trotskyist but it should be read with some skepticism and bearing in mind that it is written by two people who have long ago placed themselves outside the Trotskyist movement. It is typical of their attitude that they asked Fred Jackson, who opted out in 1948, to write the introduction.

# SDP Mark 2?

GRAHAM RICHARDS

Eric Heffer, *Labour's future — socialist or SDP 2?* Verso £5.95

ERIC HEFFER was defeated in this year's election for the Labour NEC, and if they didn't know already, readers of this book will quickly discover why the LCC hit squads responsible for his defeat went gunning for him. For *Labour's Future* is an all-round denunciation of Kinnockism and all its works. Eric Heffer exposes the shift to the right inside the party, the witch hunt, the leadership's attacks on Liverpool and its failure to adequately support the miners. All this is very refreshing from a member of the PLP, as is Eric Heffer's straightforward and comradely attitude towards the revolutionary left.

Truth to tell, there is not a lot of enthusiasm for socialism in the PLP. Labour MP genuinely committed to fighting for socialism must find it all demoralising. Today's PLP is made up of long-term and hardened rightwingers; Tribune old stagers gone sour and cynical over the years, putting their faith in Kinnock; those disgusting young men with shiny shoes and filofaxes using the labour movement for a leg up the careerist ladder, eyes gleaming at the prospect of a junior ministerial post if they keep their noses clean; and a few, a very few, genuinely committed to socialism.

For all his intransigence, Eric Heffer has had governmental experience, although not at cabinet level, and his account of his short period as a junior industry minister under Wilson is a fascinating one. During the 1970-74 Heath government Labour elaborated a new industrial strategy based on 'planning agreements'. Planning agreements, as opposed to widespread nationalisation, were a cornerstone of the 'alternative economic strategy'.

Supporters of the politics of this magazine never had any confidence in this strategy because we saw planning agreements, and indeed the whole AES, as a substitute for the mobilisation of the working class needed to fight for such a socialist policy. In any case, as it turned out, Wilson and the majority of the cabinet were not in the least interested in even the kind of radical interventionism implied by planning agreements, and proceeded to sabotage the proposals from industry minister Tony Benn and his associates.

Benn was removed, and the national enterprise board became a lame supplier of government cash to industry. Eric Heffer's account of this process is a



Carlos Guarita/Reflex

graphic and timely one — an almost textbook account of how even inadequate but apparently 'left wing' policies get chopped up by the Labour right in power, in co-operation with the civil service.

The strength of *Labour's Future* is that it combines a review of the shift to the right inside the party and the contemporary political situation, with an overall discussion of political strategy for the left and for the future of socialism. Such an overall vision and level of discussion, informed in Eric Heffer's case by an obvious wide knowledge of the international labour movement and an equally wide study of classical and contemporary socialist theory, is very welcome — and very unusual among Labour MPs! In recording agreement with much of what Eric Heffer says, we also have to record some disagreements.

First, Heffer pillories the eurocommunists for their shift to the right and capitulation to pro-capitalist policies. He accurately identifies the dangers in this not so much in the very limited organisational strength of the CP, but in their growing influence in the Labour Party and the wider labour movement. Secondly, we have to record agreement with his argument against leaving the Labour Party and abandoning the fight against Kinnockism and the right. But his polemic against the SWP on this score is marred by his overall strategic conception of how socialism can be achieved.

This is summed up in the question which he poses of whether socialism can be achieved by constitutional means. He quotes Stafford Cripps' 1932 statement

that 'socialism can be achieved by constitutional means... but only just' with approval. It will not surprise Eric Heffer or anyone else that we disagree with this statement. It is vacuous. Either it can be achieved by constitutional means or it can't. 'But only just' merely serves to introduce some doubt into the situation. If there is doubt then the answer should be more logically 'possibly, but not certainly'. I suspect that this is really Eric Heffer's position.

In Britain the notion that socialism can be achieved constitutionally suffers from the problem that there is no written constitution and what there is is changed daily — by the whim of geriatric judges. Another way of posing the question is whether socialism can be achieved legally, through the election of a radical socialist government, without substantial extra-parliamentary opposition from the bourgeoisie, and without revolutionary mass action to defeat that resistance.

Only frenzied ultra-lefts deny that during the fight for socialism we might well experience the election of a left wing Labour government which might sincerely try to legislate important anti-capitalist measures. Then what? Answers of the order 'we'll see' or 'who knows' are inadequate. Tony Benn generally replies by stating that he is not opposed to mass action to defend a Labour government — followed by sarcastic references to tin helmets and Lee Enfield rifles. Such answers are evasive and won't do.

I would pose the reform/revolution problem in the following way. Unless you are absolutely certain, both from first principles and an analysis of British institutions, including the police and the army, that the ruling class and its agents will not resist a socialist government by extra-parliamentary, extra-legal and violent sabotaging means, then you have to prepare the working class, through education, propaganda and agitation, to mobilise to defeat such resistance. Such propaganda and agitation, if followed through to its logical conclusion, makes you a partisan of workers' control and workers' self-organisation. It makes you a partisan of the notion that the self-activity of the working class will be decisive in the transition to socialism. It excludes the 'parliamentary road', but not of course parliamentary action *tout court*.

This particular debate, as they say, will run and run. Our disagreement on this point should not diminish our appreciation for Eric Heffer's determined stand against the shift to the right and his championing of socialism and working class struggle. Only when socialists stand up and refuse to go along with Kinnock will the basis of a resurgence of the left be created. Eric Heffer, at least, has stood up to be counted.

# Liberal shibboleths of the cuddly left

**CHRIS BERTRAM**

Peter Hain, *Proportional Misrepresentation: the case against PR in Britain*, Wildwood House, £5.95.

PETER Hain, the former Young Liberal, has become the foremost theoretician of the 'cuddly left' (whatever that may be). This is a thoughtful book with arguments that deserve consideration, it is also highly revealing for many of its stated and unstated assumptions reveal the limits to Hain's radicalism.

After explaining how the present British electoral system is *unfair*, Hain argues that none of the various systems of proportional representation on offer is more *democratic*. Instead he favours the non-proportional 'alternative vote' (AV) which, he argues would remedy some of the worst defects of the Westminster system whilst retaining many of its virtues (such as the constituency system).

So what is wrong with PR? First, all conceivable systems would mean that MPs would either have no constituency or would represent vastly enlarged ones, this would reduce the opportunities that local people have to influence a parliamentary representative, would greatly weaken local political organisation, and the accountability of MPs to the electorate and to local parties would be undermined. This would be worst under a national list system which might invest all power in the central party bureaucracies.

Secondly, any notion of the electorate being able to choose between clearly defined party platforms would be abandoned in favour of wheeling and dealing behind the scenes after an election to produce a coalition government based on policies that nobody voted for. Such a system might distribute seats in proportion to votes but power might rest in the hands of small and unpopular centre parties.

Hain also suggests, using a series of comparisons with other countries, that PR might not bring the stability in government that the Alliance hopes for. He further argues, against supporters of PR on the left, that PR would not necessarily increase the numbers of women and black people in the House of Commons and that small parties, like the Greens and the Communist Party, would fail to secure representation under the single transferable vote (STV) system they both favour.



Hain concludes by making some familiar — but nonetheless important — criticisms of the British constitution. He calls for a much greater decentralisation of effective power, a sort of 'Americanisation' of the central state involving more resources for MPs and parliamentary approval of top public appointments, and structures to encourage more popular participation in government at all levels. Finally he recommends introducing the alternative vote system for parliamentary elections (the system would resemble an eliminating ballot system of election whereby voters placed candidates in order of preference with the losers being eliminated and their votes distributed until a winner emerged having over 50 per cent of vote). This would have the advantage that an MP would need majority support within a constituency and yet would retain the element of accountability and local representation that presently exists.

There are many possible responses to Hain's arguments. Perhaps it is unfortunate, given his stress on local accountability and his dislike of national party bureaucracies, that his book appeared in the run-up to the Knowsley North by-election. However, the solution that he finally plumps for — AV — must be untenable. As he himself admits, it would probably have the same effects as PR on

the formation of governments, in which case all that he says about the electorate choosing between rival manifestos would go out of the window.

Secondly, Hain fails to consider the homogenising effect that AV would have on party representation in the Commons. In most constituencies the result would depend on the transfers of Alliance voters who would probably plump for the Tory or Labour candidate who was closest to their own views. Even if this did not in fact happen (and Alliance supporters instead transferred their votes fairly uniformly across the country) the suspicion is that it would cause many parties to select a 'safe' candidate. Instead of a House of Commons containing every shade of opinion from Jeremy Corbyn to Harvey Proctor, most MPs would be clones of either Roy Hattersley or Kenneth Baker.

The real problem with Hain's book emerges when he discusses the possibility that PR would lead to a stronger representation of black people in parliament? 'Is the argument that we need to move towards a system of "functional representation" of political interests?', asks Hain. 'This would short-circuit the idea of "general" representation, which seeks to aggregate various interests under a common programme where political priorities can be ordered coherently in relation to each other, rather than left to the vagaries of interest-group bargaining and special pleading.'

Hain's pejorative reference to the 'vagaries of interest-group bargaining' serves to camouflage the fact that his idea of 'general' representation is a nonsense — a liberal-democratic fairy story. It is quite impossible for someone to represent me in all circumstances and for all purposes rather than for some well-defined purpose. That is not to say that the principle of *territorial* representation that Hain argues for is invalid, but it must be complemented by other types of representation of people as producers, as women and so on. Such a system, coupled with the right of electors to recall and dismiss their representative, would form the basis for a genuine system of participatory democracy. This much should be common ground between reformist and revolutionary socialists, and it is a measure of how far social-democratic thought has fallen since the time of, for example, guild socialism, that Hain finds himself imprisoned by such liberal shibboleths.



# international REVIEWS

## Christmas crackers

THE CHRISTMAS season may be a bourgeois hype, but there's no getting round it — guilt or gifts, it's your choice! Books have been a favourite recourse for leftish gift-givers ever since Marx's children presented their dad with a specially-bound edition of Shakespeare, one not-so-Dickensian Christmas long ago. To help its readers through the traditionally desperate last-minute search for appropriate presents for comrades and friends, *International* offers the following suggestions. A good read remains the best antidote to the (transitional?) demands of the holiday season.

*Trotsky*, David King, Basil Blackwell, £19.50.

OK so it's pricey, but David King's pictorial biography of that notorious Russian trouble-maker (previewed exclusively in our last issue) is our recommended Christmas gift for that special someone! With an introduction by Tamara Deutscher and an excellent commentary by James Ryan, this magnificent 340 page book assembles the largest photographic record of Trotsky's life yet. For those with a sense of history ... and of graphic design.

*Scarlet Song*, Mariamma Ba, Longman African Classics, £2.95 (paperback).

The last work of the late author, now translated from the French, portrays one woman's struggle with tradition and chauvinism in Senegal. Proof that the novel is alive and well — at least in Africa!

*The Chaneyville Incident*, David Bradley, Serpent's Tail, £5.95 (paperback).

Highly-praised in the States, this novel tells the story of a Black history professor's investigation into his father's mysterious death — a quest which precipitates an exploration of his enslaved ancestors with surprising results.

*Prisoners of the American Dream*, Mike Davis, Verso, £7.95 (paperback).

Not an easy read, but a landmark in the historiography of the American working-class and its search for an



independent politics. If you want to know the whys and hows of Reaganism and the answer to the vexed question of American exceptionalism, then Davis is required reading.

*Hungarian Tragedy*, Peter Fryer, New Park, £2.95 (paperback).

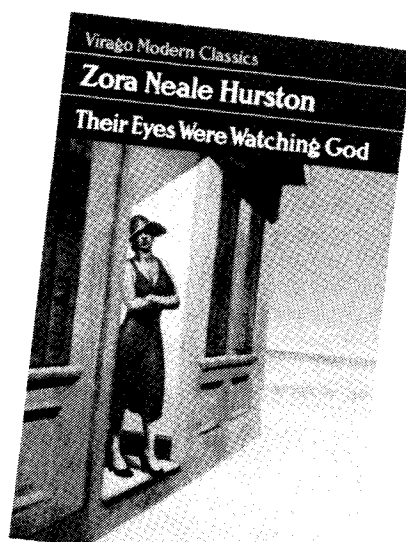
Fryer was *Morning Star* correspondent in Budapest during the 1956 uprising and subsequent Soviet repression. His brilliantly written, first-hand account of the events — reprinted on their thirtieth anniversary — split the British CP.

*Zeynep: That Really Happened To Me*, Zeynep Hasbudak and Brian Simons, ALTARF, £2.50 (paperback).

Nine-year-old's account of life in Hackney and her fight against deportation to Turkey — a fight which she finally lost. Excellent campaigning book for children.

*Solik, Life in the Soviet Union 1939-1946*, by KS Karol, Pluto, £7.95, (paperback).

Autobiographical account of young Pole's extraordinary adventures during World War Two. Escape from the Nazis to the Soviets led to arrest by the NKVD, subsequent escape, enlistment in Soviet airforce, promotion to rank of Junior Commissar in the Caucasus, a second arrest and unexpected release. Exciting, readable, sympathetic account of the Soviet people by an anti-Stalinist socialist.



*Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston, Virago, £3.95. Reprint of classic 1937 novel by Black America's premiere woman story-teller, recently rediscovered by Walker, Morison, Angelou, et al.

*Cricket*, CLR James, Allison and Busby, £14.95 (hardback). Nearly forty years of cricket correspondence, journalism, history and analysis, from the greatest of the small band of Marxist cricketing cogitators. Ideal gift for the leftish sports nut.

*Where Sixpence Lives*, Norma Kitson, Chatto and Windus, £9.95. (Hardback). Finely-written autobiography: from Durban childhood through years of bitter struggle with the apartheid state to recent conflicts with London-based ANC bureaucracy.

*A Long Way Home*, Claude MacKay, Liberation Classics, Pluto, £4.95 (paperback). First published in 1937, this autobiography of the Jamaican-born poet and novelist spans his years as a leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance and his off-and-on involvement in left politics. Features his trips through between-the-wars Britain, France, Soviet Union, and Africa, as well as encounters with Shaw, Wells, DuBois, Trotsky, Chaplin, and others.

**ERNEST MANDEL  
THE MEANING OF THE  
SECOND WORLD WAR**

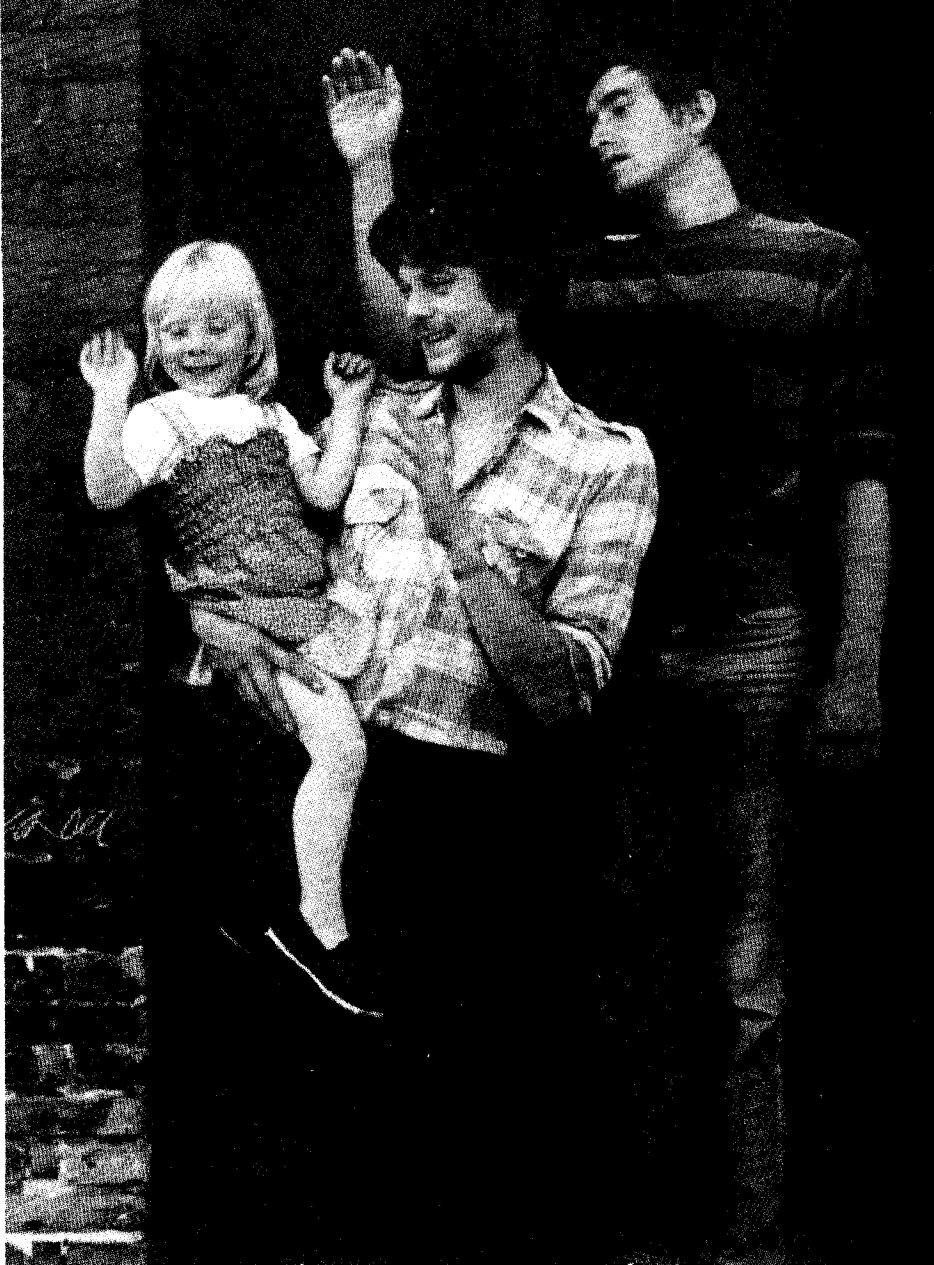


*The Meaning of the Second World War*, by Ernest Mandel, Verso, £6.95 (paperback).

Synoptic, readable account of the global clash — a war of conflicts within conflicts within conflicts — whose outcome is the world we live in.

*Error of Judgement: The Truth About the Birmingham Bombings*, by Chris Mullin, Chatto and Windus, £10.95 (hardback).

The story of the casual victims of mid-seventies anti-Irish hysteria who are still seeking justice.



**Book-burners delight — or Danish fashion show. See Jenny lives with ...**

*Black American Politics, from the Washington Marches to Jesse Jackson*, Manning Marable, Verso, £6.95 (paperback).

Fine-grained historical study by independent Marxist. Excellent on detail as well as long-range analysis, with a fascinating and well-balanced account of the Jackson campaign and the strengths and weaknesses of the 'Rainbow Coalition'.

*Dvorak in Love*, Josef Skvorecky, Chatto and Windus, £10.95 (hardback).

Bourgeois reviewers greeted Skvorecky's latest warm and witty fiction with less enthusiasm than his previous efforts. Perhaps the change in scenery from Stalinised central Europe to racist turn-of-the-century USA had something to do with this. A fantastic yet deeply researched historical novel tracing, among other things, the surprising links between the Czech composer and the development of Black American music.

*Four Novels: The Getaway, The Killer Inside Me, The Grifters, Pop. 1280*, Jim Thompson, Black Box Thrillers, Zomba Books, £5.95 (paperback).

Deranged, psychopathic prose from a master of the American thriller. Not for the ideologically squeamish.

*She Came Too Late*, Mary Wings, Women's Press, £3.95 (paperback).

Original piece of crime fiction with lesbian heroine whose work on 'Women's Hotline' leads her into very heated waters.

*Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin*, Gay Men's Press, £2.95 (paperback).

The book-burner's delight! Buy now before it becomes a collector's item! Photo-montage of late seventies Denmark (complete with flares).

This list was selected by **CAROLINE RAULT** and **DAVE PALMER** of Reading Matters Bookshop, 10 Lymington Ave., London N22 and **MIKE MARQUESE**, author of the recently-published thriller, *Slow Turn* (Michael Joseph, £9.95).

# Blood Red Roses

**JEAN REILLY & DAVID GRANT**

Blood Red Roses: the life and times of a fighting woman. A film by John McGrath.

'When have the Communist Party ever betrayed the working class?' asks an indignant Bessie McGuigan, central character of this compelling and inspiring film. 'China 1927, Germany 1933, Greece 1945, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968 . . .', retorts her eldest daughter, festooned as she is with Anti-Nazi League badges to hint that she may be somewhat sympathetic to the SWP.

The 'fighting woman' of the title is Bessie and she simply can not understand her daughter's criticism.

Through 'the party' she has conducted the most bitterly fought struggles for a better life for herself, her class and, of course, the very daughter who now accuses her of complicity in these betrayals through her membership of the Communist Party.

This is only one of many closely observed moments in this very enjoyable film. The character of Bessie is based on a real woman, one of three women militants who became renowned for leading strikes against multi-national companies intent on imposing redundancies in the west of Scotland in the 1970s.

At another level Bessie could have been any one of thousands of women, strong women, women who fight all their lives for a decent life for themselves and their children. Women who know without being told that they have the right to enjoy

such a life, but who continue to have to play second fiddle to pompous and arrogant men like Alex, Bessie's husband in the film.

Quick to use her fists and possessing a fearsome tongue from her earliest years, Bessie pursues the cause of the working class with a vengeance. Especially so after her cousin (also her closest friend), dies a premature death from industrial cancer. Through these struggles she discovers real independence and the confidence that allows her to feel that she is capable of anything that needs to be done to achieve the better life that she wants to see for all.

She learns quickly about the nature of the trade union bureaucracy, dominated as it is by the CP in Scotland, and remains with the rank-and-file even when her husband enters the lower levels of full time officialdom in the engineering union. The subsequent tension this leads to, her euphoric victories and devastating defeats, political as well as intensely personal experiences, are not only thoroughly entertaining, they are also completely believable. Even the exchange with her daughter, while having an air of being a set-piece confrontation with a 'heavy' political message, is dealt with in a sufficiently sharp and economic way as to make it hit the mark.

For it is true, that for women like Bessie the CP was the 'natural' place to be in the sixties and seventies. The Tories were in retreat and Harold Wilson's white heat of technological revolution smacked too much of the industrial 'progress' that had

killed her cousin and brought precious little change to the lives of millions of Bessie McGuigans. Accusations of guilt by association do little to change experiences and convictions built up through bitter struggle and sacrifice.

These days, with money for radical film projects hard to come by, it is a pleasure to find a film that explores the life and times of a woman worker militant with such sympathy and commitment to her cause. It is also heartening to note that despite all her defeats she is not treated as a loser or in any way pitiful.

Moving into the maelstrom of the Thatcher years, the film contrasts Bessie's optimism in the face of all the odds — her love affair with a young man of 22 (the same age as her eldest daughter), her struggle to build a new home and find work, her sisterly and comradely relationship with her adult daughters — with the pathetic whinings and guilt-ridden misgivings of her one-time mentor, Alex. Bessie's *personal* politics retain their integrity and are believable.

What is inexplicable is her loyalty to the CP. Not because she does not decide to up and join the far left, rather because it is odd that a woman like Bessie does not join and even lead the struggles that wracked the Labour Party in the 1980s.

This failure says something about the political bias of the authors of the playscript that the film is based on. Unfortunately, it means that the film tends to just tail off, rather than end with the vitality that punctuates the rest of the story.

Blood Red Roses will be screened in three parts by Channel 4 on December 4, 11 and 18 at 9.30pm.

## IF YOU SEE KARL, TELL HIM

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## Tribute to the Hungarian revolution

ON THE anniversary of the Hungarian uprising, October 23, the following statement was issued simultaneously in Berlin, Budapest, Prague and Warsaw by oppositionists in East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

“Thirty years ago, on October 23, 1956, workers, students and soldiers stormed the radio station in Budapest because they had had enough of official lies and wanted to hear the truth and to voice their demands. They destroyed Stalin’s statue and the credibility of a regime that claimed to be a dictatorship of the proletariat and a people’s republic. Their struggle showed clearly that what the Hungarian people really wanted was independence, democracy and neutrality. They wanted to live in peace in a free and honest society.

The Hungarian revolution, like the uprising in East Berlin, the Prague Spring, and the social movement of the free union Solidarnosc in Poland, have been suppressed, either by Soviet intervention or by the intervention of local armed forces. Over the last 30 years, life has become easier for many people. Some people can express themselves without being thrown into prison. But the essential demands of the revolutionists have not been met.

On this anniversary, we appeal to all our friends throughout the world to join with us in commemorating the Hungarian revolution of 1956. We proclaim our common determination to fight for political democracy in our countries, for their independence, for pluralism based on the principles of self-management, for the peaceful reunification of a divided Europe and for the rights of all national minorities. We stress our reciprocal support for all efforts underway to achieve a better, free and honest life in our countries and throughout the world. The tradition and experience of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 remain our common heritage and our inspiration.”