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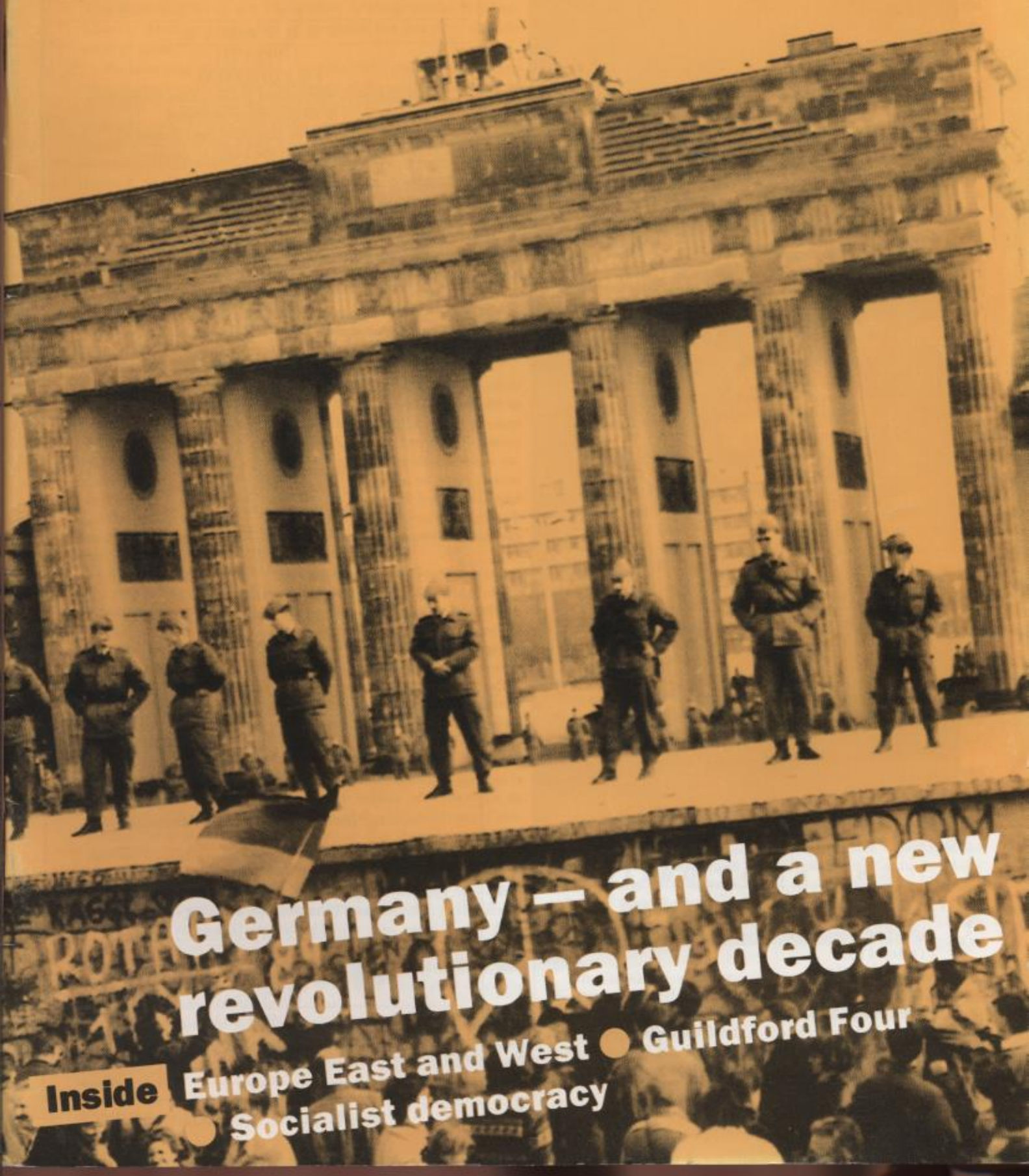

Germany — and a new revolutionary decade

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- Europe East and West
- Guildford Four
- Socialist democracy

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Will Germany herald a revolutionary decade?

The final months of the 1980s have brought some exciting, historic developments, full of promise for the new decade soon to open.

We have seen the Brazilian Workers Party poll over 12 million votes to come second in the first round of the general election; we have seen the insurgent liberation forces of El Salvador step up their offensive, striking new blows against the ARENA regime; we see the strength of the black working class force political concessions – including the liberation of veteran ANC leaders – from the isolated apartheid regime in South Africa, and the victory of SWAPO in the Namibian elections.

The unbroken resistance of the Palestinian movement continues to thwart their zionist oppressors. Even at home there is bright news, with the resurgence of working class militancy, flying in the face of the 'new realism' which still dominates the labour movement.

But perhaps the most dramatic and unexpected of the movements, and the most promising for socialists, is the mass mobilisation of the working class against stalinist rule in eastern Europe and within the Soviet Union itself.

During 1989 we have editorialised time and again on the crisis of Stalinism: on the struggles of the Chinese masses, brought to such a tragic, if temporary halt by the slaughter of Tienanmen Square; on the Soviet miners' strikes and the contradictory developments in Hungary: but the pace of events has been accelerated beyond all predictions by the explosion of mass protest in East Germany, the ousting of the old Honecker leadership, and leading to the breaching of the Berlin Wall. The working class is reaching more clearly than any other not for capitalist solutions but for socialist democracy.

Taking advantage of the opening created by Gorbachevism – the refusal of the Kremlin to intervene militarily on behalf of the East German stalinists or sanction a Tienanmen-style bloodbath in Europe – the East German workers have demonstrated a political commitment to socialist values and internationalism that offers an implicitly *revolutionary* lead to the whole European workers' movement, east and west. Mass rallies in Leipzig called overwhelmingly not only for the ousting of the old bureaucrats at home, but also for solidarity with the African National Congress and the Nicaraguan revolution.

It is plainly ridiculous to regard the East German workers as in any way rejecting or breaking from 'socialism'. To argue this is to suggest that the stone-age stalinist regime of Ceaucescu in Romania or the unyielding elements of the Czechoslovak Communist Party are somehow 'socialist', or that there is something innately 'bourgeois' in workers seeking the right to elect – and remove – their leaders and decide policy for themselves.

In fact, the distaste of many East German workers at the inequalities and ruthless exploitation of West German capitalism – resulting in all but a handful of those who crossed the Wall returning to East Berlin – showed their real longing for socialist, collectivist values, at the same time as their recognition that socialism is far from having been built, after decades of austerity and repression in East Germany.

In this respect the East German movement, in which there is little evidence of pro-capitalist tendencies, appears much more politically developed and class conscious than the Solidarnosc leaders in Poland (who are now openly talking of privatising the economy) and the rightward moving official leadership in Hungary, with their plans for a stock exchange and wholesale privatisation. In a sense the higher living standards and greater level of industrialisation and proletarianisation in East Germany than much of eastern Europe (as well as a more radical left wing political tradition) appear to provide a material basis for a greater commitment to the idea of a planned economy and a more advanced political level, while the weakness of the influence of the church has also proved a major asset.

Of course there is a real danger that if the momentum of the mass movement – that has in a few short weeks changed the political landscape of Europe and the world – is lost, there could be space created for the emergence of forces favouring capitalist restoration. However at present opinion polls show 78 per cent of East Germans *against* immediate reunification with West Germany- which could in today's circumstances only lead to a capitalist Germany.

Of course there are many – not least in the 'perestroika' wing of the East German stalinist party – who see extensive loans from western banks and even direct investment by imperialist multinationals as a solution to the economic stagnation which has arisen from four decades of bureaucratic 'planning': but this is a long way short of a restoration of capitalism, which would require the wholesale demolition of collectivised property relations, the destruction of the workers' movement, and the creation of a new repressive state apparatus based upon the defence of private profit and private property. Were this to happen in any of the eastern European countries it would represent a historic catastrophe, a wholesale defeat allowing imperialist bankers to run riot: yet as the caution of Thatcher, Bush and West German Chancellor Kohl all confirm, even the imperialists themselves do not believe they are ready to restore capitalism in eastern Europe.

Which way will the East German workers turn for political leadership? There are would-be reform elements being put forward by the stalinist party; there is a reemergence of the old social democratic party, offering an unclear reformist package which could yet fall into the trap encountered by the Solidarnosc leaders in the Polish government. The New Forum movement, while calling for socialist renewal, has held back from forming a political party.

The vacuum of leadership must be filled, and a leadership developed based on the programme and politics of revolutionary marxism. In this context the Trotskyist movement can offer the legacy of sixty years' struggle against stalinist bureaucracy, and a consistent struggle for internationalism, which is essential in the fight to complete and spread the political revolution in East Germany, throughout eastern Europe, into the Soviet Union itself, and raise high the banner of socialist democracy to lead the workers of the world. Trotskyists will be keen to see a new section of the Fourth International built in the heart of the struggles to come.

The East German workers can reawaken and add new dimensions to the revolutionary traditions of Marx, Engels, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Seldom has a new decade opened with such promise – and so much to fight for. The first step is to build solidarity with the East German workers.

Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference

Giving a lead against new realism

In battle after a long pause: engineers striking for the 35-hour week

Over 550 trade unionists, the overwhelming majority of them non-aligned activists, attended the Socialist Movement's Trade Union Conference in Sheffield on November 11-12.

Organised around the theme 'The Way Forward for the Left in the Unions', the conference represented an important development of the fight-back against 'new realism'. The comprehensive policy document adopted by the conference pointed to the contradictions between the rise of class struggle and the continued dominance of the 'new realist' right wing at the top of the unions

It was 'new realism' which allowed the dockers to be defeated and which has pushed the policy review through the Labour Party conference. Under the policy review a future Labour government would set out to keep the bulk of the anti-union laws adopted by the Tories.

This is why such a conference for the trade union left was long overdue and why the Socialist Movement, which grew out of opposition to 'new realism' was best placed to organise it. Although the Socialist Movement has been weak in the trade unions since it began in Chesterfield three years ago it has established a record as a consistent hard left current which has supported every dispute which has taken place.

The conference was sponsored by over 40 labour movement organisations – trade unions, Labour Party branches, Trades Councils and political organisations (including the Communist Party of Britain [*Morning Star*] and its industrial wing, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions). 160 trade union branches and nine Trades Councils sent 250 official delegates. There were 57 members of NALGO, 16 CPSA, 23 MSF, 22 NUJ, 18 NUM, 16 NUPE, 18 NUR, 33 NUT and 22 TGWU plus individual members of most other unions affiliated to the TUC.

Although the Comunist Party of Britain sponsored the conference and had a stall at it they had no serious political intervention and proposed no amendments to the policy statement – which is far to the left of the line they support in the unions. Nor were the biggest British organisations of the far left there. *Militant* does not support the Socialist Movement and was completely absent, while the Socialist Workers Party, which does support the Socialist Movement, was only there in small numbers – possibly because they had a national conference. The largest organised far left force was *Labour Briefing*.

The opening plenary was chaired by Jeremy Corbyn MP, and was addressed by Tony Benn MP, Micky Fenn (victimised Tilbury docks steward), Anne Speed (Irish TGWU), Anne Henderson (NUR Broad Left), Debbie Epstein (Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights and Socialist Teachers Alliance), Kim Moody (from the American magazine *Labor Notes*), Raulon Corriz (General Motors Barcelona) and an ambulance crew member involved in the current industrial action. The Sunday plenary included four other current disputes – Pergamon Press, Essex Chronicle, Sheffield CPSA and Islington NALGO childcare workers.

It was the biggest unofficial conference of trade unionists for over 10 years, which debated in 2

John Harris (IFL)

Where's the lunch? TUC leader Willis wobbles into 'action'

plenaries and 36 workshops every issue facing the British labour movement today – showing that despite the damage done by Thatcherism there is still a reservoir of support for this kind of initiative – and a desire to organise against the right. Many of those attending represented a new generation of trade unionists brought forward by the new mood of militancy at the base – most clearly represented at the present time by the ambulance workers' dispute.

It was it not just the size and scope of the representation which made the conference important – but the democratic basis on which it was organised. It represented a sharp break from past initiatives such as *Militant's* Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) and the LCDTU – which in any case have ceased to be effective. Those previous initiatives were rigidly controlled, and discussed short, unamendable statements made available only on the day. The Sheffield conference was organised by a committee elected by the Socialist Movement, and discussed a comprehensive policy document which was circulated in advance and open to amendment through discussion in the workshops.

The scope of the conference was unusual, addressing not only traditional 'trade union issues' such as the employers' offensive, the anti-union laws, the fight for higher wages and the defence of working conditions, but also issues such as ecology, the poll tax and international issues. It attempted to make the issue of women in the unions, black people in the unions and lesbian and gay workers in the unions central.

The central themes of the conference were: building a fightback against 'new realism'; clear opposition to all anti-union laws; support for all those sections in struggle; and democratisation of the unions. In general, the conference was successful in clarifying that these were the key lines of divide to be drawn in the trade union movement – between those fighting for class struggle policies in the unions and those who collaborate with the employers and the government.

There were many important discussions in workshops. In particular, many of the workshops for members of particular unions were inspiring for militants who had felt isolated in the fight against 'new realism'.

John Harris (IFL)

Thatcher is trying a Falklands on the ambulance workers: they have stepped up the fight

In the workshop on the Single European Market in 1992 a debate developed between those supporting the policy document, which saw 1992 as the reorganisation of capital on a European scale, and which would have a devastating effect on the working class as the big corporations reorganised and rationalised to meet the new conditions, and on the other hand those who argued that:

'...the concentration and socialisation of capital symbolised by the market represents a move forward in the organisation of production, creating new structures and links across national boundaries which can only be to the ultimate benefit of workers sharing a common class interest.'

This key sentence in the relevant amendment was defeated. The discussion made an important contribution to a debate which is as yet under-developed in the British trade union movement. In particular there was discussion about building international links to resist this onslaught and the fight for a workers' Europe East and West.

The vast majority of amendments to the statement proposed from the workshops were accepted by the platform and put into the policy statement – which was added to but not changed in character.

A debate which did go to the floor of conference was on an amendment from the workshop on broad lefts which set out how left formations in the unions should be organised. No one disagreed with the principles if they were seen as objectives to be fought for inside union lefts, but the extent to which they should be 'preconditions' for supporting broad left formations *was* controversial.

It was pointed out from the platform that most of the broad lefts which had sponsored the conference do not meet all the criteria concerned. The amendment was carried against the platform and the ambiguity was not resolved.

The conference took several important practical initiatives designed to strengthen the work of the Socialist Movement in the unions. A new Steering Committee was elected from regional meetings of delegates and from caucuses of members of individual unions. This will work to implement the practical proposals that came out of the conference such as a trade union conference on the poll tax, a possible meeting of trade unionists across Europe, and an approach to BLOC and the LCDTU to organise an even more representative gathering of British trade union militants.

The amended policy statement, agreed overwhelmingly by the conference, will be published shortly as a pamphlet. It will serve as a useful tool to all trade union militants fighting against 'new realism' in their workplaces and trade unions.

Alan Thornett

Conference discussed trade union action against Poll Tax

El Salvador

Offensive prepares ground for revolutionary overthrow

It's war in San Salvador: and the casualties are mounting

By bombing of the FENASTRAS trade union offices on October 31, the ruling clique and military command signalled clearly to the labour movement and to the liberation fighters of the FMLN that, having been unable to repress the popular organisations through 'amending' the constitution in July, they were now prepared to launch a repression through extra-legal means.

The resort to tactics of physical liquidation of leading trade union members indicates that the far-right ARENA government clearly understands the threat it faces from the pincer of mass guerilla insurrection combined with mass urban popular movements. It is not only the FMLN that has learned lessons from the Nicaraguan Revolution. ARENA set out to decapitate the popular organisations before the FMLN was in a position to overwhelm the armed forces.

The necessary features for a decisive class battle have been ripening in El Salvador for some time. The collapse of the American scheme of stabilising the situation through land reform and a consolidation of the political centre was exploited by both the ultra-right and the forces of the revolutionary left.

The FMLN's demand for free elections in which all could take part – provided there was a six month postponement to allow for campaigning – won to them significent layers of the population who had previously been in the political centre. At the same time ARENA has grouped around it all those who were committed to 'stabilising' the situation through mass repression and 'total war' against the guerillas, as well as those who have an interest in seeing the preservation of the present social formation and can see no other option but ARENA.

The position of both sides has been quite similar to the extent that both had to win wavering elements of their social base over to an understanding that it was not possible to negotiate with the other. The protracted negotiations which have been taking place have been serious attempts by both sides to explain the legitimacy of their position at a mass level and to expose the intractability of the opposition.

At the same time the FMLN did publicly attempt to come to a negotiated solution, to explore every possible avenue that was open to them. This attempt was made for two reasons. Firstly, because there are undoubtedly layers of political opinion within the FMLN that *want* a negotiated solution to the social crisis and are prepared to go a long way in securing one. Secondly, because even those who see no hope for such a solution understand that if they are to have the sustained involvement of the workers and peasants in a bloody and violent insurrection that may last months and cost tens of thousands of lives, then it has to be clear that there was no other alternative. In addition, such a process can be used to win what remains of the middle layers and the petit bourgeoisie to the side of the FMLN.

The offensive launched by the FMLN was not the first declaration of total class war against the government. This had come from the trade unions UNTS and FENESTRAS. In invoking such language the unions issued a challenge bothto the government and to the FMLN. On the one side they were demanding that the old conditions should end, and claiming that they were not prepared to live in the old way: and on the other they were demanding defence from civil repression by the armed forces of the people – the FMLN.

It should be understood that, by all accounts, the offensive that the FMLN launched was not at first aimed at seizing power. The FMLN wanted to force the regime to a the negotiating table in a very public manner to express the nature of dual power that exists in the country. The result of the offensive quite possibly took the FMLN by surprise with the level of mass support that it engendered.

The response of the popular organisations was to take to the streets, build barricades, take up arms and to join the military and political offensive. The general strike call by the unions added to the creation of the revolutionary conjuncture that now faces El Salvador. As the offensive developed and the cadres of the FMLN and the population grew in confidence, the ambiguity of the FMLN's position became apparent. While battalion leaders in the the suburbs of San Salvador were being interviewed by the BBC World Service and claiming that they were all out to sieze power, the FMLN were issuing official statements claiming that they wanted to force the regime to the negotiating table.

This hope was definitively quashed by the actions of the Salvadoran military in reply to the popular insurrection. The heavy bombing of working class areas by the Salvadoran planes flown by US pilots, the use of anti-tank weapons and helicopter gunships, and the ferocity of the counter-offensive on the ground show that the oligarchy understands that it is now in a do or die situation.

This was underlined by the torture and murder of the Jesuit priests, their cook and her daughter. That such an open act could be taken by the Salvadoran military, who have since followed up with a barely veiled threat to the progressive bishops through the good offices of the Salvadorean Attorney-General, shows that the normal rules of the game have been dumped for the 'total war' strategy by the majority of ARENA and the oligarchy.

The question for the FMLN is: who is there now to negotiate with that the population can take seriously?

The response of the United States has been as predictable as it has been bizarre. Pointing the

finger of blame at the Soviet Union – while Gorbachev and co. are heading in the opposite direction as fast as possible – is a knee-jerk reaction that cannot carry much weight at an international level. It is surely now clear to all but those who do not want to see that the USSR has now publicly junked any intention to defend any revolution and is intent on forcing revolutionary movements to the negotiating table under any circumstances. This indeed may be a key factor in the FMLN's desire to negotiate at all costs.

With one eye on the scenario after a seizure of power, the FMLN understands that it will not have any Soviet backers to sustain its reconstruction programmes, or to limit the role that the USA might play in creating yet another long-running contra war in Central America if the workers and peasants do take the leadership of the reconstruction of Salvadoran society.

At the same time as this miserable performance by the USSR the Guatemalan military has sent regiments into El Salvador to fight the guerrillas, and the Honduran armed forces have been mobilising. On the plus side, however, the Guatemalan liberation guerrilla army, the URNG, has pledged to step up the war within Guatemala as an act of solidarity with the Salvadoran insurrection. The public position of the Nicaraguan government has been to keep silent but it does not take a great intellect to understand the reason why or to imagine what result they hope for.

At the time of going to press, the FMLN are withdrawing from some positions within the capital whilst fighting is still going on in other areas of the country. This withdrawal of forces should not be seen as a step back or a stabilisation of situation. The FMLN, as did the FSLN in the first series of battles in 1978, appears to have recruited a large number of the urban population and is in a process of rapidly consolidating them and organising them before launching a fresh offensive.This fresh push must come soon enough to prevent the mass repression that will surely follow any withdrawal from urban areas, and well planned enough to show to the population that there is a realistic chance of overwhelming the heavily armed Salvadoran military.

Yet at the same time the FMLN leadership is still insisting that all it is attempting to do is 'to remove the present high military command from its position of absolute power'. Politically, it is arguing for an interim government made up of moderate sectors, not necessarily including the FMLN, to pave the way for elections in which the FMLN can take part.

Taken at face value, this can seem somewhat odd, given the intensity of the situation. To imagine that simply removing the army leadership will resolve questions that go to the heart of the Salvadoran social-formation appears a little naive: but the deeper purpose of the FMLN may be to maintain its leading position both politically and militarily, and to prevent the middle ground from seizing the initiative on the democratic question. Time will test out whether this is really the case, provided the present insurrection succeeds in toppling the present regime.

It is usual to end articles such as this with a ritualistic call for solidarity with the revolution. But a note on the role of the British left should also be made. Since the victory of the Nicaraguan Revolution the question of El Salvador has been seen as a subsidiary issue; yet it has always been the extension of the revolution in Central America that has been key to breaking the isolation of the Sandinistas and the fragmentation of the Nicaraguan revolution in the grip of the USA and USSR. There is now a real opportunity to extend and defend the revolution in one.

The whole of the left in the labour movement must now begin seriously to provide resources for the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign and build an anti-intervention movement in Britain against the role of the USA, and against the complicity of the British government in US strategy.

This includes the simple task of affiliation to the campaign as well as labour movement bodies taking up the question and supporting the insurrection. If there was ever a time to shake of routinism and to build a substantial solidarity movement it is now.

Will McMahon

Gorbachev: keeping out of the way

Milos Jakes – next stalinist domino to fall?

With hundreds of thousands on the streets, Czechoslovakia looks to be the next bastion on unreconstructed stalinism set to fall. Glasnost has not been adopted as governmental policy yet – but the signs of retreat are clearly there.

In a demonstration of tens of thousands on 17 November, there were calls for the resignation of Stalinist leader Milos Jakes and for democratic elections. In the brutal repression that followed, at least one student, Martin Schmid, was beaten to death; quite possibly others were too.

Then, on the Sunday, veteran oppositionist Petr Uhl, a leader of Charter 77 activist and marxist writer, was arrested for 'spreading false rumours' of the death. Anna Svoboda, another leading opposition figure, was arrested on similar charges.

If Jakes' regime thought that such repression would silence the opposition, they did not have to wait long to see how badly they had misestimated the situation – the following day 300,000 were to take to the streets in the largest opposition activity since 1968. On this occasion the riot police could only stand back and watch.

On the same day Vaclav Havel, prominent opposition leader and playwright, announced the launch of a new opposition umbrella organisation, the Citizens Initiative, along the lines of E.Germany's New Forum; and widespread strikes took place, particularly in the colleges. The General Strike called by Charter 77 in response to government repression is likely to bring out even greater numbers on the streets on 27 November.

Czechoslovakia has a long history of opposition activity – but since the days of the 'normalisation' in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion in 1968, this has generally been confined to a handful of individuals around the human rights organisation Charter 77, who have served long terms of imprisonment as a result. Only a few weeks ago, some of its leaders were predicting a much slower process of building an opposition in Czechoslovakia.

The events of the past few days spell the end of the period of intense repression following 1968. While it is the working class of Czechoslovakia, and Eastern Europe more generally, that will brush aside Jakes and his cronies, socialists in the West must voice their solidarity with the movement, particularly at a time when activists such as Petr Uhl continue to suffer from state repression.

Patrick Baker

A woman's right to choose?

Reproductive rights campaigners are facing attacks on several different levels this autumn.

Firstly the government's Bill on the National Health Service published in November, will have wide reaching effects on women's already limited choice in their health care generally. For instance hospitals which have 'opted out' will not be under any obligation to provide gynaecological services. The closure of Family Planning clinics means that more and more soon-to-be 'cash-limited' family doctors are taking on provision of contraception.

When it comes to medical advances that could benefit women, the control exercised by the multi-national drug companies is used to restrict our choice. RU486 has been under trial for about 7 years and is widely used by women in France . There can be no doubt that this treatment represents the biggest advance in abortion technology since the introduction of vacuum aspiration.

In France, the Socialist government overrode the decision by Roussel-Uclaf not to produce it in that country. Anti-abortionists have threatened a boycott of all that company's products if it is introduced in this country. The company are worried by this and are also influenced by the fact that the chair of the Bonn-based parent company is *him*self anti-abortion.

Vigilante groups from the USA such as the Guardian Angels seem to be all the rage nowadays and the most recent 'ministering angels' to come over call themselves Operation Rescue. This is an outfit who call themselves 'urban terrorists' and who make it their business to terrorise women outside the abortion clinics.

Run by five men in the United States, this organisation indulges in what it calls 'pavement counselling' – harassment of women seeking abortions in private clinics up and down the country. Officially the anti-abortion organisations in this country don't support them, but in practice individuals have been participating in these activities.

Pro-choice campaigners in Manchester and London have tried to organise other activites to show solidarity for women victimised by these fundamentalists. In the US itself, women have been organising through the National Organisation of Women (NOW) in massive, sucessful demonstrations against the organisation that they label 'Operation oppress you'.

As if all this wasn't enough to contend with, there is likely to be attempts to further restrict our abortion rights through parliament, following the Queen's Speech. It is likely that this speech will make mention of the proposed Embryo Research Bill, based on the 1984 Warnock Committee report.

Graeme Cookson

Fundamentalists don't give up easily: the battle to defend abortion rights continues

In this Bill, MPs will be given a straight choice between

- Allowing *in vitro* fertilisation to continue, but banning use of the remaining embryos for research.
- Allowing IVF and embryo experimentation, but under the guidance of a Statutory Licensing Authority and for only up to 14 days.

Any medical advance which can help infertile women should be supported by feminists. The problem with the second proposal going before parliament is that the 14 day limit tends to give embryos some special status compared to other areas of research and could be used to enshrine 'foetus' rights' in law. Whilst there may be a need for a Licensing Authority, the Labour Party and the Pro-choice lobby have pointed out that it all depends who would sit on such a body.

It is ironic but not surprising that a bill which should benefit women by enhancing their choice over whether or not to have children should have brought in its wake so may ideas and proposals which run counter to that. Ann Winterton MP, for example, is putting an Early Day Motion to restrict access to artificial insemination for lesbians and single women, and it is thought that such a proposal might be included in the bill.

There have also been rumours in the press that the government would consider allowing an amendment to the bill which would restrict women's aborion rights to a 24-week limit. These are only rumours and according to NAC (National Abortion Campaign) they may even have been put about by the anti-abortionists to up the ante in the debate. However the anti-abortionists are almost certainly planning amendments to the Embryo Bill along these lines – except that they will attempt to lower the limit still further, to 20 or 18 weeks.

The anti-abortionists are cynically using the debate around the Embryo Bill to raise the issue of 'foetus' rights' and the issue of viability as a way of restricting women's control over their own fertility. The viability of the foetus to survive with medical help outside the mother's uterus should not be used as a way of measuring the limits of women's choice. Her control over her body should be absolute. They must be halted in their tracks by the liveliest campaign that we can muster to oppose, these amendments – whether they are for 24, 20 or 18 week limits.

At its conference on 28/29 October NAC agreed to do this by setting up a special campaign dedicated to drawing attention to these points and defeating the anti abortion amendments in the first instance , whilst also opposing any other anti-woman amendments and proposals. The campaign will be launched on November 25.

The campaign against the anti-abortion amendments will undoubtedly be the major focus at the moment. But the conference also agreed to campaign on all the other many fronts on which our abortion rights are under attack. After almost fifteen years of campaigning for women's abortion rights and seeing off most attempts to restrict them even further, NAC's membership is currently on the increase and its conference was a pointer to the determination of thousands of women up and down the country who are prepared to fight for a woman's right to choose.

Judith Arkwright

Graeme Cookson

Gagging Sinn Fein representatives in the broadcasting media is one way of trying to keep the lid on

Lessons from the Guildford Four case

Lifting the lid on British 'justice'

The significance of the release of the Guildford Four represents a watershed regarding the criminalisation of the Irish and black communities, 20 years of British policy on Ireland, and public confidence in the criminal justice system. The hard work of the relatives of the Four and a few other activists finally forced their innocence clearly to the centre stage and the British state was compelled to concede.

Immediately exposed was the cynical defence of the British state propagated by the likes of Lord Denning. Denning stated of the Birmingham Six, 'If the six men win, it will mean that the police were guilty of perjury, that they were guilty of violence and threats, that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence and that the convictions were erroneous... This is such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say: it cannot be right that these actions [ie the appeal] go any further.'

This was the hurdle the Guildford Four campaign had to overcome. British justice now stands completely exposed as an institutionalised system of injustice, a system under which both the black and Irish communities have been framed and intimidated in an attempt to destroy their resistance.

The case raises many questions that have barely been aired in the mainstream media. Take the stifling of alibi evidence to that showed that Conlon, the supposed ringleader, could not have been in Guildford when the bombs were planted. Considering that Michael Havers, later Attorney General, was the person in charge of the prosecution case, any inquiry that simply condemns a few low ranking Surrey officers can only be seen as, at best, a second rate damage-limitation exercise. Similar questions apply to Peter Imbert, now chief constable of the Met, who is bleating about a 'witch hunt'.

Given the senior positions occupied by these and other central figures and the seriousness of the issues, how can Irish people and the labour movement have any confidence that judges investigating judges (the judicial inquiry) and police investigating the police (the criminal investigation) will yield anything but a whitewash?

Frantic attempts are being made to shore up the eroded credibility of the judicial system, through the promotion of reforms in the hope that the 'appalling vista' opened by the Guildford case will rapidly close. New appeal procedures; a hailing of the virtues of the 'independent' prosecution service and the procedures of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act; a 'warning' to juries to take care with confession-only convictions – all are repeated like a mantra by the liberal media. In addition they are attempting to explain away Guildford by systematically narrowing the problem to the specific details of the case: the particular officers, the particular time of hysteria, the particular procedures in force, and so on.

But these efforts are hardly adequate to dispel the problems raised. It isn't just that Guildford could happen again in the same form. It could happen in a thousand *different* ways. It is *already* happening in a thousand different ways. Hence the state's need for a major damage limitation exercise – with the DPP admitting delaying announcing the new Guildford evidence for 5 months; Thatcher and even the press being informed of the release before the prisoners themselves; the preparation of the appeal hearing as a news management exericise; the reluctance to admit any miscarriage of justice or error by the *system*. The state is desperate to hold the line.

The whole post-1974 policy of terrorising the Irish community through combining the Prevention of Terrorism Act with major show trials such as the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six must now be open to challenge. The Guildford Four were the first victims of the PTA, highlighting its underlying purpose – to intimidate the Irish community. To date less than one per cent of those arrested under the Act are convicted of 'terrorist' offences. And given the confessions forced out of these four people, the question if posed: how many

others have made false confessions due to police violence and threats to their families?

The role of British press hysteria and the media ban on Ireland are also clearly ripe for examination. The *Evening Standard* headline when the Guildford Four were convicted was 'In Gaol Until You Rot'. Throughout the trial national papers attempted to outbid each other in baying for the Four's blood. This situation has been repeated countless times since – with the gutter press attacking the Birmingham Six campaign for holding a meeting in Birmingham before the last appeal, screaming 'What about the victims?'; and claims that there were pictures of PC Blakelock's head being held aloft in triumph on Broadwater Farm which, unsurprisingly, turned out to be a myth. And on national news it was proudly proclaimed that names had been found on Rizla papers 'a well known IRA tactic', as the Winchester Three were added to a long list of innocent political hostages.

Graeme Cookson

The National Union of Journalists has taken up the fight against censorship

An interview with Errol Smalley, uncle of Paul Hill, on County Sound – Guildford's local radio station – was banned, an example of the way that the media ban is intended to silence any questioning of British policy on Ireland.

Where were Labour's front bench – now so keen to pat themselves on the back for their 'support' of the Guildford Four – when this happened? Certainly not helping the campaign. Their efforts went into organising an abstention on the PTA when it became permanent, opposing the use of private security guards at army barracks and other civil liberties issues.

The decision has had major repercussions for the Irish community and on the campaigns for the Birmingham Six and Winchester Three. It was noticeable that after it, people who were second or third generation Irish were prepared to speak for the first time of their being Irish and on what *they* thought of the Irish situation. They felt that, at last, the British state and its supporters in the media were in retreat. This attitude should not be allowed to simply subside – as the establishment attempts to put the lid on the situation again. It is a major boost of confidence for the Irish community which shows the importance of solidarity work orienting to and mobilising it.

Neither should this victory be looked at simply in terms of Ireland – obviously its importance applies equally to the black community and organisations like the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign and the Newham Monitoring Project. The victory must act as a green light for the left to throw its weight behind all the campaigns for the release of political prisoners in British gaols. The time is ideal to have combined events around these campaigns and to expose British injustice.

That Britain's policy on Ireland has been put under the spotlight is reinforced by Amnesty International's recent indictment of the treatment of the Birmingham Six and the 'shoot to kill' policy: 'A refusal to publish the findings of the Stalker/Sampson investigation and the decision not to prosecute police officers who had allegedly committed offences would contribute to allegations of official involvement in deliberate planned killings.'

With the revelation that RUC 'death lists' of republican sympathisers are being passed to loyalist paramilitary groups, there is conclusive proof to back up Amnesty's worries. In addition there is the collapse of confidence in the police force, so essential in confession-only evidence. It is difficult to find a force that is not subject to conspiracy, corruption and thuggery scandals – with investigations into the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad, Kent, Hampshire, Surrey, the Metropolitan Police at Wapping, the Broadwater Farm riot investigation squad, the RUC and more.

Wider political ramifications of the release bring into question inherent aspects of the criminal justice system and its strategic role in bolstering British rule in Ireland.

The police and the judicial system in this country have evolved gradually in a way that has helped cloak them in an aura of class neutrality and independence. Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – in the absence of a revolutionary overthrow of the monarchy and the aristocracy – the courts, along with parliament, were an important focus in the fight for basic bourgeois reforms and rights.

Each stage in the development of the police force – from its establishment, through the formation of a plainclothes detective branch and its explicit extension into political activity through the Special Branch – was carried out reluctantly and often much later than in other countries. The development was seen as an encroachment on traditional individual liberties by an increasingly powerful central state. The 'British tradition' on this was contrasted to 'continental' policing which was seen as an openly political arm of the state.

Both police and courts always acted as brutal instruments of class oppression throughout – that is a matter of historical fact. But a powerful ideology of 'The Rule of Law', based on the fairness of the criminal justice system as a neutral arbiter emanating from an 'independent' state, was developed in the context of a broader economic and political liberalism. The labour movement's bureaucracy that grew in the late 19th and early 20th century was ingrained with this perspective, particularly with the formation of the TUC and the Labour Party.

However, the influence of this ideology has been dependent on a relative class peace, the predominance of 'consensus' politics and an avoidance of the open involvement of these institutions in class warfare. This potential fragility was exposed in the 1980s – not just by Thatcherism, but two decades of war in the north of Ireland, the black inner city uprisings and the miners' strike.

In particular Britain's policy on Ireland has involved a counter-insurgency strategy in which the police, the courts and the prisons are explicitly subordinated to the political requirements of the military-security apparatus to smash militant nationalism. This was articulated by Brigadier Frank Kitson – the first military ruler during 'the troubles' – and then implemented through the Diplock Courts, 'anti-terrorist' legislation and the criminalisation policy of the late 1970s.

The Guildford affair has a potential for seriously undermining this set-up by threatening the ideological veil that has underpinned a criminal justice system so heavily geared around police credibility. Progress was made in the early 1980s, through black defence campaigns and bodies like the GLC, in developing greater awareness on similar questions. But this was squandered by a combination of a 'new realism', which has led to wholesale collaboration between 'left' Labour representatives and the police, and a systematic attempt to divide and bureaucratically to co-opt black community activists.

Guildford provides a much-needed opportunity to resurrect earlier debates on policing and the courts; to fight for a principle of class independence and the right of self organisation and self defence of the oppressed. A good starting point would be for London Labour authorities to stop their cosy monthly chats with Commissioner Peter Imbert, given his central involvement in the Guildford convictions. These issues must also be linked to a campaign against the erosion of minimum rights to a 'fair' trial and against arbitrary detention, as reflected by the attack on jury trials, the abolition of the right to silence and the right not to be held incommunicado, and the reliance on uncorroborated confessions.

The public debate about the credibility of the system poses the government with a dilemma. The debate is a pandora's box that must be firmly sat upon in defence of the sanctity of the law. At the same time, the longer there is inaction over other cases like the Birmingham Six and the Broadwater Farm Three – the greater the alienation and erosion of credibility and the greater the ultimate disgrace when further crises develop.

All the same issues arise, but to a far greater degree, in respect of the British police and judicial apparatus in Ireland. The context is one of juryless courts; a majority of political prisoners being convicted solely on the basis of confessions; the use of torture; widespread loyalist paramilitary collusion with the police – all in a highly polarised society. The criminalisation policy in Ireland had already been kicked in the teeth by the mass mobilisations around the hunger strikes of 1981. After Guildford it is more discredited than at any time since the early 1970s.

Given that Guildford came in the wake of a series of scandals regarding British policy in Ireland – the Stalker Affair, Gibraltar, the UDR/RUC leaks, evidence in all of which existed for 15 years or more – why is it all coming out now?

The prospect of a British military victory in the medium term in the North had been discounted as early as the late 1970s. Instead faith was placed in 'containment' as the only realisable objective. This was coupled with a process of drawing in Dublin and allowing the Labour Party to canvass a safe pro-imperialist alternative – unity by consent – promoted by the 26 counties' rulers. At the same time the Tories have done their best to distance themselves from their erstwhile loyalist allies – going so far, at their last conference, as to allow the affiliation of party branches in the six counties.

All this, institutionalised through the Hillsborough Accord, has helped buy time and allies in the context of the disintegrating international credibility of British rule. It has also helped to mask growing divisions and fractures within the formerly unified power bloc that the British subjugation of Ireland rested upon.

From underneath this mask a basic contradiction is emerging. British rule has been justified by a law and order ideology since the early 1970s, when the usefulness of overtly supporting the Unionists began to be questioned. But the propagation of this ideology has been accompanied by a subversion, over 20 years, of even the oppressive laws and procedures of the British state itself – through torture, kangaroo courts, death squads, conspiracies, and mass repression.

This contradiction has been a consistent feature of all the scandals and particularly Guildford. It was sustainable without being exposed only so long as the political forces and institutions involved were united in their purpose. The panicky debate over Peter Brooke's comment that he would talk to Republicans if they eschewed violence (official policy for a long time) is another sympton that this unity of purpose may not be so iron clad.

That the ruling class is in a bit of a mess in its attempt to match theory and practice on the Irish question shouldn't hide the broader unity in defence of imperialism's strategic interests and the need to crush any resistance – nationalist or working class – that threatens to destabilise this in Ireland. It would also be foolish to predict the outcome of these fundamental debates or even presume that they will continue for long. The British ruling class has enormous resources and a long, rich history of successfully managing such problems – a supreme example being the 'home rule' crisis over its Irish policy at the turn of the century.

But defeats for imperialism, like Guildford, present tremendous opportunities. The Labour and trade union leaderships are deeply implicated in the Guildford scandal and the whole process of upholding this system and will steadfastly refuse to use the opening to intervene themselves. Unfortunately this may give the Tories the space and time to cover over the cracks, introduce cosmetic reforms and once again shut down the discussion.

This presents socialists with an urgent task of organising at a grass roots level, intervening in labour movement bodies, opening a debate and demanding that the bureaucrats take a stand or pay a price for their collaboration.

We must fight for working class organisations to campaign for the release of the Birmingham Six, the Broadwater Farm Three and the Winchester Three; expose the conspiracy that Guildford was based upon and the ongoing cover-up; defend democratic rights against the police and the courts and expose the rank injustice upon which British rule in Ireland is so dependent.

Piers Mostyn and Ian McLarty

Poll Tax:

The case of the missing 300,000

In September, Labour-dominated Strathclyde Regional Council sent out 293,000 first warnings against those who had failed to pay their poll tax. This figure represents 20.4% of the 1.45 million bill issue base calculated by the Council's finance department.

However the actual number of people eligible to pay the poll tax in Strathclyde is 1.75 million. The missing 300,000 are those who avoided registration and those who were either late or failed to apply for rebates. Playing down the level of resistance, regional finance chair John Mullin said at the time the warnings were issued, 'it was no real surprise' and added, 'we feel that once the reminders are sent out we might get a firmer picture of exactly what the non-payment situation is.'

On 26 October it was revealed that only 4% had responded to threatening reminder notices, leaving 16.4% or 236,415 non-payers. The figure for Glasgow (part of Strathclyde) is a massive 27.3%. All these non-payers have now been sent final warnings, demanding they stump up the full year's payment within 14 days or have their cases processed by the Sheriff Court, where a 10% surcharge will be added. In the whole of Scotland there are only 200 sheriff officers; to date they have tried to carry out only a handful of warrant sales against poll tax non-payers, and all of these have been successfully blocked by anti-poll tax activists. In the two cases where they did carry out a poinding (first stage of a warrant sale), one in Macduff outside Aberdeen the other in Paisley, outside Glasgow, anti-poll tax demonstrators occupied the sheriff officers premises and successfully halted the warrant sale process. At this rate it would be well into the next century before sheriff officers catch up with the 1989 non-payers!

What is now beyond dispute is that mass non-payment is a fact. This level of resistance completely shatters the right wing line, repeated by Dewar at Labour Party conference that: "Those who were boasting about the numbers who had not yet paid their poll tax in Strathclyde should note that it was about the same percentage of those who at this stage had not paid their rates.'

Comrade Dewar and Co should note firstly that there are 1,750,000 who are supposed to pay the poll tax in Strathclyde which compares to only 900,000 under the system of domestic rates. This means even if the percentages were comparable to the level of non-rates payment the actual number of people involved would still be almost doubled. Second, as mentioned above the latest figure of 16.4%, 236,415 leaves out the 300,000 missing persons, so the actual figure for non-payment at this time is certainly over 20% and may be almost 30%. This compares with a figure of 10% for non-rates payment at this point last year, forcing Strathclyde Leader Charles Gray to comment 'this is very disquieting.'

Indeed it is. Having failed to lead any meaningful opposition to the poll tax, Labour now face the stark reality of trying to enforce Thatcher's hated law or using mass resistance to say enough and no further. This tax, quite simply, is a total failure.

While the right-wing revel in their post-unilateralist support from sections of the bourgeois media there seems little chance of them supporting mass non-payment. Quite the reverse is likely. From the Campaign Group, and above all Benn, we expect better.

The launch of the Socialist Movement at this year's conference in Chesterfield potentially represents a major step forward, bridging the gulf between socialists inside and outside the Labour Party. However, the skeleton must develop flesh and muscle. In Strathclyde region alone hundreds of thousands have said 'stuff Thatcher's poll tax' and are now looking for a clear political lead. This represents the largest disobedience movement in British politics for over 50 years. Where will the Socialist Movement stand?

Jim Niblock

Tories in turmoil

Every week seems to bring more bad news for the Tories. JANE WELLS tries to catch up with the crises and find out what's up.

The anniversary of Thatcher's decade in power earlier this year marked what is starting to feel like the beginning of the end for Conservative rule. A month later in June, the Tories lost their first national election since 1979, winning only 34.7% of the vote against Labour's 40.1% in the European election and losing 13 of their 45 seats. It's been downhill for them ever since.

Now, 'old' ideas, long discounted by the right and happily discarded by even some of the fashionable 'left' in the labour movement as outmoded romantic notions, are coming back in favour again. Examples include strikes (the summer of discontent has led even the AEU to call out members), and now troops are on the streets running ambulances for the first time in 10 years. Another unfashionable item has also reappeared – the working class – plenty of them in the streets of eastern Europe; and even the possibility of a Labour government in Britain.

Clearly, Labour's new-look electability is in a large part due to the poor performance of the Tories. Problems have been piling up for Thatcher: not just the electoral defeats, resignations, internal rows and public sniping. It goes deeper than that.

At the root of Tory troubles is the crisis in the economy. The Government's ability to buy off, sell off and mortgage bits of it, and to ride public opinion with a confident (if not coherent) ideology, determination and short-term bribes, has been key to their success. The Conservatives' shaky economic strategy enabled them to build a sound political base; the most important element of which was the employed skilled workers who became (or felt) better off as a result of tax cuts and sales of council houses and shares, along with lower inflation.

The Tories are now very close to losing that base as the problems stored up by their own policies are unfolding. The options for the government are suddenly much narrower – witness not only the sharp rise in interest rates as inflation and unemployment start creeping up and the balance of payments deficit worsens, but also the veiled hint made in John Major's first Autumn Statement that taxes will be held or raised next spring. With the realisation that the money's run out and the game's up, panic is beginning to set in.

The crisis in confidence has already cost the government £5.5bn in extra public spending for next year: the first real increase for 6 years in the share of national output taken by public expenditure. The alternative, of doing nothing and waiting for an upturn to bring the voters back, is much more risky. An upturn isn't likely to come before the next election. Even the government have admitted that at least for next year, the economy will get worse. Lawson clearly anticipated as much and got out before more of the blame came his way.

Significantly, Major's Autumn Statement proposals included a £2.4bn increase for the health service in 1990-91 (that is not enough to maintain existing levels of service, but just a bit less than the Labour Party called for and

John Harris (IFL)

Bitterly unpopular: the Tories' new NHS 'reform' Bill

promised if elected). That price they're clearly prepared to pay to defuse opposition while they push through their NHS Bill – a fundamental political attack on the NHS.

With such virulently unpopular measures as the NHS 'reforms', water and electricity privatisation and the poll tax still to push through, many Conservatives in parliament are depressed and worried about hanging on to their own seats, even if their party manages to retain an overall majority at the next election. It's in that context that the question of Thatcher's leadership takes centre stage.

The polls tell us many contradictory things about public opinion in Britain. We hear, for example, that concern about unemployment is still high (second on most people's lists), and that they have no confidence in the government's policies for reducing it – but 57% still think that 'most unemployed people could get jobs if they tried.' Most people favour higher taxes over cuts in public spending, whilst at the same time the polls tell us that a majority agree with Thatcher's diagnosis of the problems of the welfare 'dependency culture'.

But one of the clearest conclusions to be drawn from recent polls is about attitudes to Mrs Thatcher herself. She is massively unpopular – even more unpopular than her party. The Tories know that and seem reluctantly to be gearing up to do something about it.

Following Lawson's resignation, a telephone poll found that only 24% of voters were satisfied with Mrs Thatcher's performance as PM. That gives her the lowest popularity rating of any prime minister since polling began in 1945. The only rival to her all-time low was Harold Wilson, who held the previous record: a mere 27% satisfaction with his performance in the heady days of May 1968. Increasingly, Thatcher is seen to be out of touch and contemptuous of ordinary people. That, of course, she always has been.

Graeme Cookson

Bidding for the leadership? Heseltine

What's more important is that she is now seen to be 'losing control' – a weak spot indeed for a leader whose strength and decisiveness has been her main, if not only, selling point.

In that context her 'post-Lawson' promise to resign if elected for a fourth term is understandable: it underwrites her fundamental unpopularity with a guarantee that she will be going soon (promise) in the hope of reaping the dividends of her three-times tested voter appeal just one more time. But it's a risky move. Not only are other problems in the economy overshadowing any advantage her leadership style once gave her, but overnight she is now seen as a political has-been. Her Tory rivals, as well as Labour, are keen to step into the breach.

Some Conservatives are well-placed to do that. The 'succession' is already the object of much coded competition and jockeying for position. As we go to press Michael Heseltine is openly revealing his ambition to step into Thatcher's shoes, while the possibility of a 'stalking horse' challenge for leader is still being debated – if only a volunteer could be found. With a leadership challenge will go a political challenge.

This is where it could really begin to get interesting. Waiting in the wings in the Tory Party are the silent majority: the non-Thatcherite, 'one nation', party loyal Tories. A recent academic study of the Conservative Party, which for the first time examined and grouped the political position of each Conservative MP, found that less than 20% of them could be described as Thatcherites. Around the same number are fully fledged wets, whilst the biggest grouping – over half of all the Conservatives in parliament – are just party faithful.

Politically, what kind of successor emerges is at the moment up for grabs, since among the obvious contenders there are candidates of each category, and some of the wetter, like Heseltine, are the more popular electorally (22% of voters who express a preference favour Heseltine to take over after Thatcher.) Whether or not Heseltine himself is the chosen sucessor, the outcome of the issue at the heart of his difference with Thatcher – advocating a German/European economic and defence alliance for Britain in place of the current 'special relationship' with the USA – will be key for the prospects of British big business.

Who is chosen will depend in a large part on what are the circumstances of Thatcher's departure, and who, ideologically and individually, is best placed to take advantage of those circumstances.

All this makes the prospects for the Thatcher revolution after Thatcher shaky. Ultimately the test of the project is in the perfor-

John Harris (IFL)

'Unaccustomed as I am' – Engineers' leader Jordan addresses a mass meeting, calling for strike action!

mance of the economy and the satisfaction of capital with that performance. More monetarism, uncomfortably combined with public spending sops to the wets and the voters doesn't look too convincing if you're a big business mogul worried about interest rates, wage demands and inflation, and getting frozen out of European markets because Thatcher thinks there are more votes in banging on about British sovereignty.

Unless the Conservatives find solutions to the current crises (and the even bigger ones looming over the horizon) and deal with those problems – and deliver the votes – then capital will be forced to begin to look elsewhere. If Thatcher, even with her promise to go, has rendered the Tories as a whole unelectable, the net will have to be thrown further than the Tory wets for a safe bet.

During the 1980s, of course, the centre parties have been bolstered as a fall-back. But plans in politics don't always go like clockwork and other, unpredictable factors like personalities and party members have stepped in to almost wipe the centre off the map.

Enter Labour. Whilst capital is a long way from seeing Labour as a potential partner, it is wary enough to look on it a little more kindly these days. At the very least Labour could serve if not as a fall-back, then as a fall-guy for the impending economic collapse stored up by the Tories and the recession that must inevitably follow. The political options are not so desperate as to drive the capitalists into the hands of our obligingly moderate Labour Party, but they could certainly live with watching Labour struggle with their crisis and watching it fail for five years – as it inevitably must – giving capital's forces time to regroup and recoup.

Sadly, although Labour might find itself as a hapless beneficiary of Conservative decline and capitalist crisis, it is not so well prepared in its own bid for power.

So far, it has made very little political capital out of the Tories' bankrupt policies and politicians.

Although Labour now leads the Tories by an average of 10 points in the polls, a closer examination reveals that this has been almost exclusively as a result of a drop in the vote for the Democrats and lately the Greens – with little inroad into the solid core of Conservative support. This remains around the 35% mark – poor enough for a party of government, but substantially better than in 1981 when they were down around the 28-30% mark, and in 1985 after the end of the miners' strike when they dropped to a low of 24%.

On the brighter side, Labour's lead has been steady since the summer – giving it a longer-term advantage, a feature new to the pattern of its previous mid-term leads. But unless the party manages to chip away at core Conservative support, especially in a time when interest rates are high, and inflation and unemployment rising, then its prospects don't look too good.

Labour's new package of policies makes it less, not more, electable. It is simply not up to the challenge of what is a real shift in the mood and political temper of the electorate – which is decisively away from the values and economics of Thatcherism, but not yet distinctively pro anything else identifiable.

Labour has saddled itself with policies which take on board the more 'acceptable' abstracts of Thatcherism, propose little else by way of policy framework or specifics, and leave the rest well alone.

In the middle of all the turmoil that may yet bring more seventies revivals, one feature of the Thatcherite eighties – the art of selling – remains. How else does Labour, so easily written off not so long ago, suddenly become this week's best buy? It's the way you sell 'em.

We do – and to some extent, think – what we're told. Sadly politics works a bit like that too. And just as capital tends to accumulate and centralise, so too does political opinion. At least, that is, 'informed', 'authoritative' – establishment – political opinion. They all say more or less the same thing. If they say it often enough, then other people say it too. It starts to sound like fact.

It's a handy thesis, and it serves Labour's leaders well. It gives them the justification for a series of revisions which gut the movement of its momentum and potential for power. It offers a self-fulfilling vision of a party whose essence is a nondescript, calculated lowest common denominator rhetoric, just a lot of hot air to fill a vacuum with. Its immediate benefit for the likes of Kinnock is that such a strategy serves to shore up their own personal standing and security in the party. The trouble is they also take themselves at face value and in fact seem to buy the whole line that it will get them into Number 10.

Not so. Unfortunately they don't seem to have noticed that the Alliance, the last party to take hold in the centre (with 50.5% support in its heyday) sunk there and disappeared almost without trace. That's not to argue, of course, that Labour doesn't need to win over a majority to its policies. Clearly it does but the only way to do that, and to hold support for any length of time, is with a series of policies which can deal with economic problems convincingly, and which don't penalise the working class in the process. Those policies aren't available off the peg from the centre. If Labour is to be more than a passive, short-term beneficiary of Thatcher's unpopularity, then it must have something more substantial to offer.

Even tired old *Marxism Today* is waking up to that fact. There is some satisfaction, even if petty, to seeing Eric Hobsbawm struggling through an article in its pages describing Labour as the alternative to the Tories now that his beloved friends in the centre are out of the race. 'The Thatcher spell', he announces pretentiously, 'has been broken.' Many, but unfortunately not most, in the labour movement were never under it. The likes of *Marxism Today* succumbed all too quickly and grabbed too desperately at the centre as a way out – and dragged too many along with them as well.

Hobsbawm announces that at least Labour will not now frighten the voters off with the likes of Benn and Scargill, but asks, plaintively, if Labour can manage to inspire them enough to win their votes. Sadly, the answer is probably 'no'. Some of the responsibility for that lies with the likes of him, for acting as a block on attempts to do that very thing, and for peddling old compromises under the guise of 'new times'.

John Harris (IFL)

Labour Party Conference 1989: elsewhere in Europe votes for social democrats are holding firm

The Future of the Left in Europe

With the advent of the 1992 'Single Europe' Act in a situation of growing capitalist crisis and the turmoil in eastern Europe, the Left faces complex issues of analysis and strategy. Phil Hearse talked about these questions to PATRICK CAMILLER, an editor of *New Left Review*, who is compiling a collection of writings about the European Left soon to be published by Verso.

• What is the motivation behind the proposal for a 'single Europe' in 1992?

• There are two interconnected motivations. The first is an attempt by the Social Democrat and Christian Democrat political leaderships to adapt to a new form of capital accumulation and social regulation.

Since the late 1970s, probably starting in California, there has been a search for a new mode of regulation to replace the old 'Fordist' model of labour relations and capital accumulation. This has involved the neo-liberal view of the economy with attempts at deregulation of the operations of capital and de-unionisation. I don't think that a new model has been found – so called 'Post-Fordism' – we are very much in a transitional stage. But clearly the crucial aspect of '1992' is the attempt by capital to facilitate the movement and concentration of capital, and to circumvent traditional centres of labour movement resistance.

The second connected aspect, although how this will work out is not clear yet, is the preparation by European capital to face the possibility of a triangular trade war with the USA and Japan. In particular, the US is trying aggressively to reconquer lost economic ground, and this could set off a fierce competitive struggle. But it is complicated by the presence of the US and increasingly Japanese multinationals inside Europe; there are obvious differences of approach to the 1992 idea among different factions of US capital, for example. Nonetheless, 1992 can also be seen as a rather belated attempt to build a relatively compact and integrated trading bloc is preparation for every eventuality.

• How do you explain the proposal for a 'Social Europe'? What should be the attitude of socialists towards it?

• Well the idea of a 'Social Europe' really stems from the need to sell '1992' to the peoples of Europe; after all the prospect of the reorganisation and strengthening of capital is not a very attractive idea in itself – another dimension was needed to try to capture people's imagination.

But perhaps it also represents a slight change in the attitude of sections of capital – spurred on by the defeat of the Chirac government in France in 1988. This major turning

"the US is trying aggressively to reconquer lost economic ground, and this could set off a fierce competitive struggle. But it is complicated by the presence of the US and increasingly Japanese multinationals inside Europe"

"...in Spain, half the membership of the trade union movement was lost – a process which accelerated after Gonzalez's Socialist Party came to power"

point put an end to the reactionary dreams of the 'Thatcherisation' or 'Reaganisation' of Europe.

It is important to remember that the 'Social Europe' proposals, such as worker participation, do not have any statutory force in the respective individual countries of the EC. Therefore its impact will probably be limited.

As far as the attitude of socialists is concerned, while keeping in mind the limitations of the Social Europe proposals, I think our attitude should be roughly the same as towards the 19th century factory legislation – to support any moves towards equalisation of labour conditions on the basis of 'levelling up'. But the key thing will continue to be struggle, especially as the Social Europe proposals in part are contrary to the whole deregulation thrust which is the core of '1992'.

• Since the capitalist crisis of 1974-5 the workers' movement has been fighting mainly defensive struggles. Has the labour movement maintained its basic strength, or has it been seriously eroded?

• I think its basic strength is still intact, although this varies considerably from country to country. The inability of the labour movement to respond *immediately* to the onset of the crisis in 1974-5 allowed austerity to be imposed and unemployment to grow.

"the combined electoral strength of the social democratic and communist parties is probably as strong as ever ... but the militant participation and activism in these parties has undoubtedly declined"

It is always necessary to respond immediately to capitalist austerity attacks if their effects are to be combated; but the labour leaders, including the Social Democratic and Communist party leaders, were in the main complicit in the austerity attack. There can be no question that this meant an erosion of labour movement strength, especially as a result of growing unemployment.

The worst effects were felt in Spain, where half the membership of the trade union movement was lost – a process which accelerated after Gonzalez's Socialist Party came to power. But it's also in Spain that the biggest fightback has begun, with the December 1988 general strike, and the heartening moves towards a unification in action of the trade union movement (1).

West Germany: East Germans queue for consumer goods: West Germans queue for housing

However if we look at the heartlands of social democratic trade unionism in West Germany and Sweden, although some sections of West German industry have been devastated by capitalist restructuring, the self-confidence and membership of the union movement has largely held up. In my view there are signs of the possibility of resurgence of trade union struggle in many parts of Europe.

As far as the social democratic and Communist parties are concerned, their combined electoral strength is probably as strong as ever – although there has been a redistribution of strength between them, in favour of the social democrats. But the militant participation and activism in these parties has undoubtedly declined.

I would say the most acute political crisis in Europe today is affecting the parties of the capitalist right – most evident in Spain, but now apparent even in Britain. But clearly the decline in the active participation of the masses in the working class parties does reflect a certain kind of crisis which these organisations face – a crisis of their overall project, of a lack of a 'civilisational vision', of a clear model of an overall alternative future capable of capturing the imagination of the working masses. Without such a vision it is impossible to involve larger sections of the masses in activism in these parties.

This is the real crisis of the Left – a crisis of perspectives, an ideological crisis. But maybe the developments in Spain are the harbinger of a new mass re-politicisation.

• Is the decline of the Communist parties a defeat for the socialist left? For example, is the decline of the French CP a defeat for the most militant workers?

• Yes, I do think it can be seen as a kind of defeat, because it's part of the withdrawal of sections of the working class from active politics – a function of the lack of a convincing anti-capitalist project.

In France, the CP in the post-war years attracted tens of thousands of the most militant and class conscious workers who thought this party could be a vehicle of self-defence and, perhaps, of an alternative future. But much of the responsibility for this defeat must be placed at the door of the leaderships of the CPs themselves.

For example, in Spain in the late seventies the support given by the CP leadership to the Moncloa austerity pact led to the withdrawal of tens of thousands of its militants from active support, and even active politics. The retreat of the French CP into the sectarian ghetto after the break-up of the Union of the Left – reflecting its ideological sectarianism and undemocratic internal regime – ensured that party's decline. The same story is repeated elsewhere: it has resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of young people from left wing politics.

• How do you explain, apart from Britain, the relative lack of left-wing opposition in the social democratic parties to their almost universal move to the right?

• The fundamental element in

these parties has been the decline in membership, and for example in France, the consequent decline of local and regional internal political life.

In Spain of course there has been left opposition to Gonzalez's austerity measures, but this has usually ended in widespread resignations and expulsions – for example the resignation of 100 members in Barcelona(2) on the eve of the recent elections, but also many expulsions in the south of the country – and sharp conflict with the trade unions.

In West Germany, the leadership of the SPD, despite its lack of an overall alternative vision, has been much more successful in negotiating the 'rapids' of the crisis of the 1980s – partly because it hasn't been in power, and has thus tended to avoid the blame for capitalist austerity measures. Neither should we forget the radicalisation inside the SPD at the time of the crisis over Cruise and Pershing missiles, and the growth of currents which were opposed to NATO and the new militarism.

The SPD leadership has been flexible enough to make an opening towards sections of the Green Party leadership on the basis of ecological policies; it has also floated its own scheme for the reduction of the working week on the basis of a consequent reduction in pay – a proposal started by Lafontaine(3). This has caused conflict with the leadership of the engineering union IG-Metal(4), and these tensions show the continued existence of a current in the West German trade union movement and the SPD which in new circumstances could be the core of a radical left wing.

• What about the Italian CP? Are its structures open enough to allow the formation of a left opposition?

• In terms of structures, I don't see a basic obstacle to the growth of a class struggle current – but then I don't see any signs of it either!

The last Congress of the PCI, which renounced the Russian October Revolution and the Communist tradition – and instead turned towards an ideological rapprochement with the West German SPD – marks a major turning point.

Striking Belgian beer workers support calls for a n EC Social Charter

The traditionalists around Cosutta have shown no signs of being able to develop a coherent alternative. In fact the radical trends at the base have been more structured by the current around Ingrao, which looks to a synthesis of the 'new social movements' as a way of renewing the Communist tradition. This of course reflects the weight of the ecological, feminist and other social movements in Italian radical politics.

• Do you think that the 'new social movements' – especially those based on womens liberation and ecology – can provide a realistic alternative route for those opposing capitalist restructuring?

• I don't think so, no. It's difficult to overestimate the importance of the emergence of the ecological movement, and especially the Greens in Germany at the time of the rise of the peace movement. But the internal fissures in the Greens since then show the limitations of these movements.

However important these movements are in raising vital issues for a socialist alternative at a national and international level, they cannot – either separately or together – on their own provide a social agency capable of forging and implementing an alternative social project.

The Greens in Germany have always faced the choice between ghettoisation in some sort of fundamentalist ecological stance, thus setting themselves in opposition to the concrete struggles and aspirations of the working class, and on the other hand forging an alliance with the workers' movement – and even integration into it.

• How do you assess the European revolutionary left? Since the 1970s most of the biggest organisations have just disappeared – with perhaps the exception of the Communist Movement (MC) in Spain and Democrazia Proletaria (DP) in Italy. The largest organisations remaining, like the LCR in France and the Militant in Britain tend to be from the Trotskyist tradition.

• Most of the revolutionary left was hard-hit by the decline in spontaneous struggles after the 1974-5 capitalist crisis.

In general it was not able to find a common language with, or a secure route towards, sections of the working class movement. The 'post-'68' revolutionary left, often almost engulfing older and more stable traditions, was driven by a subjectivist radicalism which didn't really engage with the life and struggles of

"the last Congress of the Italian Communist Party renounced the Russian October Revolution and the Communist tradition – and instead turned towards an ideological rapprochement with the West German SPD"

"it's difficult to overestimate the importance of the emergence of the ecological movement, and especially the Greens in Germany at the time of the rise of the peace movement. But the internal fissures in the Greens since then show the limitations of these movements"

"none of the central problems facing the peoples of Europe – economic security, environmental protection, freedom from war, to name but three – can be solved except at a continental, and indeed wider, level"

the mass labour movement.

This radicalism took varied political forms ranging from anarcho-spontaneism to council communism – ideological and strategic forms which had been thrown up at various stages in the 150-year history of the socialist movement. Almost without exception these movements counterposed themselves to the existing labour movement and looked towards political and workplace structures which would simply bypass the structures of the labour movement to which the working class, including its socialist core, remained attached. Almost without exception this kind of thing eventually leads to widespread demoralisation and withdrawal from politics.

The worst effects were experienced in Spain and Italy – in Spain the collapse of organisations up to 30,000 strong, and much the same thing in Italy. This first crystallised around the Portuguese revolution in 1974-5, where most sections of the far left either looked towards the emergence of soviets, when this was not an objective possiblity, or started playing around with putschism. This represented a real impatience, in seeking to foist schemas on history before the left had established the necessary strength and legitimacy.

These failings revealed themselves precisely at the time when the labour movement was facing its sternest test in the mid-1970s austerity offensive, and when in general the leaders of the mass labour movement were capitulating before it. This of course sharpened a process of disappointment and disillusionment, which the subjective radicalism of the far left was unable to combat.

• With the crisis in the Eastern bloc, is it useful to raise the demand for a united Socialist Europe? Or is it unrealistic to expect the overcoming of the bloc system? Should socialists support a united Germany?

• There can be no question that the goal of socialists should be a socialist reunification of the continent – a United Socialist States of Europe.

It's possible to make the economic, political and cultural case for this in theoretical argument, but I'm sceptical whether it can be put forward today as a political *slogan*. The most obvious reason is that capitalist Europe is still the bastion of economic strength in the continent, and that a great deal needs to be done before the population of capitalist Europe consciously embraces socialism as a meaningful and realistic alternative.

However this is a rather different question from the overcoming of the existing antagonistic blocs. None of the central problems facing the peoples of Europe – economic security, environmental protection, freedom from war, to name but three – can be solved except at a continental, and indeed wider, level. In the coming decade, socialists will need to go beyond text-books and find ways of acting in the pan-European terrain which is developing around us. Obviously, the framework of national states will continue to be important for a long time to come but the struggle for a socialist Europe should increasingly take the form of struggles and demands at a directly all-European level.

Much the same could be said about Germany itself, which in one sense is a kind of concentration of these questions. It seems clear, for example, that strong economic and other links between the GDR and the Federal Republic are necessary and desirable *today*, and that the continental struggle between capitalism and socialism will also be posed at the level of *relations* – contradictory, but relations nevertheless – between actually existing capitalist and post-capitalist countries.

The gigantic events which have occurred in East Germany place an enormous responsibility on reform communists and other socialists in the GDR. In the coming days and weeks we shall see just how successful Honecker and the Stalinist old guard were in destroying the socialist tradition in that country. Despite the repressive and undemocratic record, I believe there are social gains and collectivist values which could provide the basis for a renewed democratic and socialist GDR. This would be a tremendously positive factor in European politics. Socialism with democracy – that is the line many of the opposition leaders in the GDR are taking, and its a long time since we heard that from oppositionists in the Eastern bloc.

• What should be the basis of our proposals on this; what should be our alternative 'civilisational' project?

•Obviously a great deal of collective though has to be given to this, but I think the following things are key.

First, the proposal that we want public control and planning of economic activity, just as we want public health, social services etc. A socialist alternative has to be aimed at destroying the neo-liberal 'two-thirds society', and enshrining the *right to work* as a fundamental social right, as well as establishing basic economic welfare and security.

But a socialist alternative 'civilisational' project has to go way beyond that. In capitalist society, new technology continually threatens to devalue human lives through deskilling and mass unemployment. But this should not blind us to the enormous potential of the electronic revolution to shrink what Marx once called the 'realm of necessity' and to expand the realm of culture and freedom beyond the workplace.

At the heart of a socialist programme today should be the objective of a steady and planned reduction in the working week for *all* participants in the labour force, and a corresponding enrichment of all other dimensions of individual and collective life. I need hardly add that such a process of social and cultural change, stretching across and between continents, would create the conditions for a much higher development of progressive feminism and other movements that look toward a reconstruction of personal relations.

The question of ecologically sound economic growth must be built in as an absolutely central part of our alternative. Indeed it's hard to believe that so many people today, both in the West and the East, seem prepared to write off social planning and espouse the virtues of a free market. For after Chernobyl, it is surely obvious that democratic public control of productive activity has never been more crucial to the present and future well-being of the human race. Ecological protection is also the area in which the most immediate steps could be taken at an international level for the coordination of research, the sharing of new technological forms and the introduction of statutory norms.

Finally I'd like to stress that a pan-European programme for social advance, from the Atlantic to the Urals, cannot be aimed at other parts of the world, particularly the third world. A European super-state, with its own brand of nationalism and ethnocentrism, has nothing to do with the sort of project we are discussing.

New relations between Europe and the rest of the world must also be part of the project as must the right of real social and political equality for all who live in Europe, including the mil-

"in the coming days and weeks we shall see just how successful Honecker and the Stalinist old guard were in destroying the socialist tradition in that country"

lions of people from non-European backgrounds. The socialist Europe that has to be built will be a common home not just for British, French or Germans but for all who live and work here.

Notes

1. The two trade union federations in Spain are the Workers Commissions and the UGT, traditionally linked to the Communist and Socialist parties respectively.
2. The Barcelona Socialists who resigned declared for the Izquierda Unida (United Left) initiated by the Communist Party which won 9.5% of the vote.
3. Oskar Lafontaine was long regarded as the leading left-winger in the SPD.
4. I-G Metal is the largest union in West Germany

Who's afraid of a united Germany?

By John Lister

The uneasy 'settlement' in Europe between the Soviet Union and the Western capitalist powers was arrived at through a combination of negotiations and the new balance of forces following the end of World War Two. It has always seen its sharpest expression in the division of Germany.

In the initial period after the defeat of German imperialism, neither the allied powers nor Stalin could contemplate the prospect of a resurgent German nation: the country was divided by mutual consent into zones of occupation, leaving Berlin, the capital, 210 kilometres inside the Soviet zone, itself divided between four occupying powers, and with no Germans in control.

Events did not fulfil the aspirations of either side. Illusions that the Communists might occupy a strong position in both east and west sectors of Germany were dashed, not least by the reemergence of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which in the east was quickly forced into an unpopular merger with the Communists. On the other hand allied hopes of persuading or pressurising Stalin into an arrangement that would ensure the reconstruction of capitalism in the eastern sector and much of eastern Europe also came to nothing.

Striking a pose:US President Kennedy in Berlin, 1963

In 1947 the Americans began to force the pace, announcing what amounted to a recognition that Germany was to be permanently divided: in June 1948 they secured the agreement of the British and French to the formation of a West German government. This move ran alongside the formation of a new anti-soviet military alliance, the Brussels Union, a forerunner to NATO. Stalin correctly saw that the USA wanted its new capitalist West Germany to be integrated into this alliance as a counter to Soviet influence.

The Kremlin leaders felt threatened – the more so because the Americans wanted to retain their foothold and listening post in West Berlin, in the heart of the Soviet post-war 'buffer zone'. They hit back by imposing a total blockade on West Berlin, cutting road, rail and water routes, and stopping food, electricity, gas and other supplies from East Germany.

The USA and Britain responded with a huge airlift which between June 1948 and May 1949 transported over 1.5 million tons of supplies to keep West Berlin going and symbolise western determination to stand up to communism.

After 318 days, Stalin was forced into a humiliating climbdown. A few months later the first West German government was elected, with Dr Konrad Adenauer as Chancellor, and with a new capital, Bonn. The NATO alliance – based from the beginning upon a willingness of European capitalists to allow the USA to threaten nuclear war in Europe in their 'defence' – had been established in the

"the Kremlin leaders hit back by imposing a total blockade on West Berlin, cutting road, rail and water routes, and stopping food, electricity, gas and other supplies from East Germany"

1955: West German Chancellor Adenauer confirms the end of occupation and the start of NATO membership

summer of 1949. Though it has remained as a pretext for keeping large standing armies in Europe, there was never any notion that the NATO powers would seek to repel the hypothetical threat of a Soviet invasion by conventional arms: it has always been a cover for allowing US nuclear bases on European soil.

The Stalinist East German state, the German Democratic Republic, was not formed until after West Germany: and the Soviet response to NATO, the Warsaw Pact, imposed on sattelite regimes in Eastern Europe and based on a similar 'license to kill' using nuclear weapons, was not set up until after West Germany became a formal member of NATO in 1955.

The Cold War continued to be fought out over the two Germanies, and with special vigour in Berlin, where the Americans funnelled a massive $600 billion by 1960, matched by an equal investment from the Bonn government, to turn the western half of the city into the greatest manufacturing powerhouse of Germany, with an output of $2 billion a year, more than the gross national product of most member states of the United Nations. This propaganda showcase of capitalist investment stood in stark contrast with the austere conditions in East Germany which, though more industrialised than many east European states, took years to recover from Stalin's systematic post-war looting of industrial plant, and which lacked any external input of capital.

The result by the end of the 1950s was a steady stream of skilled, talented East german workers and intellectuals crossing over to West germany – some 300,000 a year, with over 3 million having deserted since 1949. Antagonised by this, and fearful of the growing rearmament of West Germany, together with its likely entry into the Common Market, Soviet leader Nikita Khruschev began to raise the stakes once more on Berlin. He threatened to hand control of the Soviet zone to East Germany, a government which none of the western powers would recognise. The problem rumbled on in the background to other world events, not least the Cuban revolution of 1959, followe by the arrival in the White House of the arch cold warrior John F. Kennedy, whose administration unleashed to most rapid escalation of the arms race the world had yet seen.

"Kennedy was prepared to live with the Wall so long as the west kept its hold in Berlin. Khruschev could think of no other way of retaining vital skilled workers in the east. As a symbol of the uneasy balance of forces in Europe and the blunt, brutal methods of the Stalinist bureaucracy, the Wall survived for 28 years"

Khruschev pressed for negotiations over Berlin designed to stem the exodus of East Germans, who were already restricted from crossing the border elsewhere: Kennedy refused the slightest concession. Instead western propaganda continued to gloat at the exodus. On August 13 1961, Khruschev ordered the Berlin Wall to be built, permanently dividing the city, closing the border, and dashing any dreams of a reunited Germany.

Kennedy was prepared to live with the Wall so long as the west kept its hold in Berlin. Khruschev could think of no other way of retaining vital skilled workers in the east. As a symbol of the uneasy balance of forces in Europe and the blunt, brutal methods of the Stalinist bureaucracy, the Wall survived for 28 years. Now as workers stream through in both directions to catch up on a generation of missed visits and lost friendships, it symbolises not only the ambiguity of the Gorbachev leadership in the USSR and the new regimes in eastern Europe which he has helped create, but also a glaring contradiction in the imperialist stance.

For the USA, Britain and France, the spectre of a reunified Germany – 80 million strong, and potentially the world's third largest military power – is possibly more daunting than it is for the Soviet bureaucracy who cherish bitter memories of 20 million dead repulsing Hitler's armies. Were the new united Germany to be a capitalist power, it would dwarf the other countries in the European Community, challenge US economic and political domination in the western world, and further marginalise British capitalism.

For the Soviet bureaucracy the military alignment of a united Germany would give the greatest concern. Gorbachev might well settle for a united *neutral* Germany, if this offered the compensatory advantage of breaking up NATO and allowing the USSR to dissolve the obviously fractured and ineffective Warsaw Pact (in which so many signatories are clearly unreliable allies in almost any Soviet military effort).

The imperialist powers plainly regard this as a real problem, not least because even before the latest developments the West German government had for some time shown itself to be responsive to the prospect of exploiting profitable trade and technology deals with the USSR and Eastern Europe even where this runs counter to US policy. Any break from the imperialist military alliance could, they fear, see even a capitalist Germany drawn closer politically and economically to the east.

Hence the note of caution among the anti-communist propaganda ballyhoo over the East German events. Thatcher has hurriedly written to Gorbachev to reassure him the Britain has no intention of separating East Germany from the Warsaw Pact. It would be more accurate to say that she has no desire to lose West Germany from the NATO alliance, and no short-term expectation that capitalism can be restored in East Germany.

All the running in the cold War has been made by the imperialists seeking to force the pace and create openings to reconquer – economically or politically, if not militarily – the lost markets and labour force in Eastern Europe. Now glasnost and the mass mobilisations in the east have demolished the basis of much western anti-communist demonology, and undermined the bedrock of the arguments for NATO's existence.

In doing so, the workers of East Germany are not only liberating themselves from Stalinist repression, but giving a lead for workers in the west, who must now follow through with an offensive against the imperialist alliances and reactionary policies of their 'own' capitalist rulers.

East Berlin workers battle against Soviet tanks, June 1953

How Eastern Europe fell to Stalinism

Events in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria and now, dramatically, Czechoslovakia, show that the stranglehold of Stalinism on eastern Europe is beginning to weaken in the same uneven, pragmatic way it first took its grip after World War Two.

Just as in the post-war period, the decisive factor that has triggered developments is the attitude of the Kremlin. But while Stalin's influence consisted in containing and suppressing every independent movement of the working class in eastern Europe, Gorbachev's policies of glasnost have served to undercut the monolithic character and dictatorial powers of ruling Stalinist parties throughout the eastern bloc, opening up the possibility of swift and militant radicalisation by the working class.

This has been further compounded by Gorbachev's insistence – most dramatically in the sensitive case of East Germany – that there could be no question of Soviet troops being sent in to prop up bureaucratic leaders beseiged by their own working class (and his warning against any European re-run of the bloodshed of Tienanmen Square. This about-face on intervention has most obviously pulled the rug on East German leader Erich Honecker, but may yet (as we go to press) serve to destabilise the regime in Czechoslovakia.

How was it, then that such a ring of Stalinist states came to be erected around the western flank of the Soviet Union after the War? The process through which the reactionary – sometimes almost feudal – regimes were overturned, capitalist property nationalised and deformed caricatures of 'workers' states' created was from the start uneven in scale and tempo.

The last thing on Josef Stalin's mind as the Red Army fought its way westwards towards Berlin after routing Hitler's armies at Stalingrad, and confronting unaided the vast bulk of the Nazis' military strength, was a revolutionary extension of socialism.

He was first and foremost concerned to ensure that never again would the Soviet Union be brought to the edge of defeat by another invasion: he wanted to safeguard Soviet borders against any renewed imperialist offensive.

He was also concerned to rebuild the devastated Soviet economy and industrial base through extracting massive reparations and where necessary wholesale looting of plant and equipment from the conquered Axis powers. But Stalin also hoped to secure substantial economic assistance in reconstruction from his imperialist 'allies': and to this end he was quite prepared to strike deals on the division of the world into rigid '-spheres of influence' in which capitalist spheres would remain undisturbed by Communist Parties.

Lastly, but by no means least, Stalin was concerned to stamp out any revolutionary fires that had been ignited among the working classes of eastern Europe by the military defeat of their repressive bourgeois rulers, and fanned by the arrival of the conquering Red Army with its historic link to the October Revolution.

This is one key reason why as the Red Army moved into eastern Europe they simultaneously acted to disband and disarm the spontaneous committees formed by anti-fascist workers (often old CP members) which greeted their approach by raising red flags, seizing control of their factories, arresting and even executing local fascists and Nazi collaborators.

Stalin's fear of such revolutionary movements on the borders of the USSR was reinforced by his interest in seeking a deal with the allied imperialists: the result was a policy of establishing new *bourgeois* coalition governments throughout eastern

"the last thing on Josef Stalin's mind as the Red Army fought its way westwards towards Berlin after routing Hitler's armies at Stalingrad, and confronting unaided the vast bulk of the Nazis' military strength, was a revolutionary extension of socialism"

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Workers' councils crushed – Hungary 1956

Europe, in which Communist Party members would take only a few key ministries, even where the Red Army was the only armed body of men capable of sustaining the feeble remnants of a capitalist state. Old, discredited bourgeois and peasant parties and capitalist politicians were resurrected for this purpose – sometimes (as in Hungary) with the aid of the Red Army itself.

Stalin's initial scheme was to retain a ring of such weakened bourgeois regimes as a bargaining chip in his dealings with imperialism as as a 'buffer zone' around the borders of the USSR.

However in some cases the bourgeois state and capitalist class itself had been smashed by the war period to such an extent that it was virtually impossible to reconstruct the economy without rapid and wholesale nationalisations. In others, the bourgeois parties, backed by eager western imperialists, proved to be more active and vigorous a threat to stalinist control than Stalin had bargained for, especially as the Cold War began to take hold after Chuchill's warmongering 'Iron Curtain' speech at Fulton, Missouri in 1946.

When the ideological offensive, coupled with the economic blandishments of the Marshall Plan and its attempt to draw the pro-capitalist parties in the buffer states into an expanded European capitalism, Stalin began to recognise that imperialism would yield no significant economic aid without unacceptable political strings attached.

As the Cold War chill intensified, Stalin made a turn from propping up bourgeois coalitions to organising a full-scale structural transformation of the east European economies and their state apparatus, following the model of the degenerated Soviet Union. In 1947 the Cominform was established to link the east European Communist Parties with those of France and Italy to spur on and coordinate the transforma - tions. It is significant to note that this was two years after the liberation, and long after the revolutionary wave of militancy had been repressed or contained in eastern Europe: the move was based on the calculations of the Kremlin and its global interests, not at all on the aspirations or movement of the working class.

The process of transformation involved:

- the removal, by open or covert pressure, of bourgeois leaders and parties from the government coalitions;
- the nationalisation of major industry and private capital (from above by state decree, not by working class action);
- the consolidation and expansion of monolithic, bureaucratic stalinist parties, generally involving a forced merger with social democratic parties;
- the interpenetration of this party at all levels with the state machinery, especially the police and armed forces, ensuring total control.

This process took place at different times and tempos across the buffer states, but with remarkable similarities. It is important to remember that the 'model' to which these stalinist states aspired was not the revolutionary workers state established under the Bolsheviks in October 1917 – in which a mobilised working class held power in its hands through *soviets* (workers' councils) – but the bureaucratised USSR under Stalin, in which the Bolshevik traditions had been all but exterminated, and soviet power long extinguished. The east European regimes were *never* healthy workers' states, but only ever *deformed workers' states* in which power was seized by bureaucratic formations 'in the name of' or 'on behalf of' the working class, whose independent organisations remained brutally suppressed.

In the aftermath of the nationalisation of the economies, centralised state planning was introduced, and the vastly expanded Communist Party apparatus took control of a remodelled state machine. The changes took place over the heads of the proletariat but under the eyes and guns of the Red Army which stood ready to crush any resistance from the bourgeois parties: the imperialists, whose abstention from the eastern front war against Hitler had left them powerless observers of the subsequent changes implemented by Stalin, could only huff and puff their propaganda complaints.

A new form of state apparatus had made its appearance in history, based not on a gegenerated revolution, but yet on nationalised property and collective (but bureaucratic) planning, in which the working class was held prisoner by a parasitic stalinist bureaucracy: it was a curious hybrid state, spawned by the balance of class forces, the revolutionary strength and political weakness of the post-war working class.

These states inherited from Stalin not only their bureaucratic methods of internal repression, but the nationalistic policies of seeking to build 'socialism in a single country'. However since they rested on a much narrower and weaker economic and social base than the Soviet bureaucracy, the contradictions and instability they have encountered has created repeated crises in eastern Europe, resulting in class battles and clashes in East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and bringing various nationalistic rifts between the various component parties of the Warsaw Pact and the wider stalinist movement.

Now, as the whole rotten, unstable edifice is shaken (not only from the top by Gorbachev's lead on glasnost and perestroika, but also from the base by the workers and students of Warsaw, Leipzig, Berlin and now Prague) the urgent need is for a wholesale *political revolution* – in which the working class organises to defend the nationalised economy by driving out the stalinist bureaucracy and taking power in its own hands. This central feature of the Trotskyist political programme since the 1930s is now not only posed as a general truth but emerging as a material possibility in what promises to be an exciting new decade.

John Lister

"a new form of state apparatus had made its appearance in history, based not on a degenerated revolution, but yet on nationalised property and collective (but bureaucratic) planning, in which the working class was held prisoner by a parasitic stalinist bureaucracy"

Comparative facts at a glance

BULGARIA

Wartime regime:
'Friendly neutral' towards Nazi Germany.

Wartime CP strength:
Serious CP-led resistance to Nazism and Bulgarian right wing: 15,000 CP members in 1944

Date of liberation:
Bloodless coup, September 1944 by CP-led Fatherland Front and section of officer corps.

Post-liberation regime:
In Fatherland Front government CP held only three ministries, including Justice and Interior. Monarchy retained.

Growth of CP:
250,000 members by January 1945

Main nationalisations completed:
1947-48: early industrialisation run by state.

Forced merger of CP with Social Democrats:
August 1948

Purge of CP:
90,000 expelled, including General Secretary Kostov in November 1949 show trial.

New constitution :
November 1947

First Five-Year Plan:
1949-53

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Wartime regime:
Invaded by Nazis, 1938

Wartime CP strength:
Mass CP since launch in 1921, consistent 10-15 per cent of vote. Never dropped below 24,000 members. Slovak CP led premature uprising to welcome Red Army in August 1944. Mass uprising forced Germans from Prague.

Date of liberation:
1945 by Red Army

Post-liberation regime:
CP in minority in bourgeois coalition.

Growth of CP:
from 37,000 before liberation to over 1 million by April 1946 (38 per cent of vote).

Main nationalisations completed:
July 1945 to defuse militant workers' councils: nationalisation welcomed by bourgeois press. 90 per cent of industry nationalised in first year of liberation.

Forced merger of CP with Social Democrats:
June 1948

Purge of CP:
550,000 expelled, including General Secretary Slansky in 1952 show trial.

New constitution :
May 1948

First Five-Year Plan:
1949-53

Merger of CP and SPD in East Germany was met by huge protests

HUNGARY

Wartime regime:
Horthy dictatorship in anti-Soviet alliance with Hitler; later Nazi occupation.

Wartime CP strength:
10-12 party members in 1942.

Date of liberation:
February-April 1945 by Red Army.

Post-liberation regime:
Coalition of CP with Smallholders and Socialist parties, headed by Horthyite General Bela Miklos.

Growth of CP:
from a few thousand to 500,000 by the end of 1945.

Main nationalisations completed:
Spring 1948

Forced merger of CP with Social Democrats:
June 1948

Purge of CP:
200,000 expelled, including former Foreign Secretary Laszlo Rajk in 1949 show trial.

New constitution :
August 1949

First Five-Year Plan:
1950-54

POLAND

Wartime regime:
Invaded by Nazis 1939

Wartime CP strength:
Polish CP disbanded on Stalin's orders in 1938 and leadership almost exterminated. Most wartime resistance led by nationalists

Date of liberation:
January 1945 by Red Army

Post-liberation regime:
Stalin's chosen stooge 'Lublin Committee', with inclusion of Peasant Party leader Mikolajczyk.

Main nationalisations completed:
January 1946

Forced merger of CP with Social Democrats:
December 1948

Purge of CP:
370,000 expelled, and General Secretary Gomulka ousted in September 1948.

New constitution :
July 1952

First Five-Year Plan:
1950-55

ROMANIA

Wartime regime:
Axis power until coup led by King ousted Marshall Antonescu's dictatorship. New regime sided with Red Army against Nazis.

Wartime Communist Party strength:
Less than 1,000 in 1944

Date of liberation:
August 1944

Post-liberation regime:
Initially led by anti-semite Radescu, then replaced by regime under pro-CP Groza, but with fascist vice-premier Tatarescu and riddled with Iron Guard elements.

Growth of CP:
800,000 by October 1945

Main nationalisations completed:
None until 1948

Forced merger of CP with Social Democrats:
February 1948

Purge of CP:
200,000 expelled

New constitution :
April 1948

First Five-Year Plan:
1951-55

EAST GERMANY

Wartime regime:
Nazi dictatorship since 1933

Wartime Communist Party strength:
further decimated by purges from Moscow during the war (not least of German Communists opposed to the 1939-41 Stalin-Hitler Pact)

Date of liberation:
1945, by Red Army from east and allied armies from west.

Post-liberation regime:
Initially under occupying powers. Workers' anti-fascist committees forcibly dissolved

Main nationalisations completed:
Summer 1948

Forced merger of CP with Social Democrats:
April 1946, to form SED (Socialist United Party of Germany)

Purge of CP:
300,000 expelled from late 1948

New constitution:
Autumn 1949

First Five-Year Plan:
1951-55.

Socialist democracy: the Trotskyist view

The historic events in East Germany, following on the upheavals elsewhere in eastern Europe, in the Soviet Union and the movement against the Chinese bureaucracy which was so ruthlessly cut down in the Tienanmen Square massacre all raise the issue of *political revolution*.

What is the Trotskyist view of the type of democracy we should be fighting for in a political revolution? A major resolution on just this question was adopted by the 12th World Congress of the main Trotskyist international organisation, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in January 1985.

Here we reprint relevant extracts, taken from section 4 and section 12 of the resolution which is entitled *Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*

Lenin : no call for one-party state

One Party and Multi-Party Systems

"Revolutionary marxists reject the substitutionist, paternalistic, elitist and bureaucratic deviation from Marxism that sees the socialist revolution and the conquest of state power under the dictatorship of the proletariat, as a task of the revolutionary party acting 'in the name' of the class or, in the best of cases, 'with the support of' the class.

If the dictatorship of the proletariat is to mean what the very words say, and what the theoretical tradition of both Marx and Lenin explicitly contain, i.e. *the rule of the working class as a class* (of the 'associated producers'); if the emancipation of the proletariat can be achieved only through the activity of the proletariat itself and not through a passive proletariat being 'educated' for emancipation by benevolent and enlightened revolutionary administrators, then it is obvious that the leading role of the revolutionary party both in the conquest of power and in the building of a classless society can only consist of leading the mass activity of the class politically, of winning political hegemony in a class that is increasingly engaged in independent activity, of struggling within the class for majority support for its proposals, through political and not administrative or repressive means.

Under the dictatorship of the proletariat in its complete form, state power is exercised by democratically elected *workers' councils*. The revolutionary party fights for a correct political line within these workers' councils, not to substitute itself for them. Party and state remain entirely separate and distinct entities.

But genuinely representative, democratically elected workers' councils can exist only if the masses have the right to elect whoever they want without distinction, and without restrictive preconditions as to the ideological or political convictions of the elected delegates. (This does not apply, of course, to parties engaged in armed struggle against the workers' state, ie, to conditions of civil war, or to the conditions of the revolutionary crisis and armed insurrection itself, to which this resolution refers in a later point). Likewise, workers' councils can function democratically only if all the elected delegates enjoy the right to form groups, tendencies, and parties, to have access to the mass media, to present their different platforms before the masses, and to have them debated and tested by experience. Any restriction of party affiliation restricts the freedom of the proletariat to exercise political power, i.e., restricts workers' democracy, which would be contrary to the historical interests of the working class, to the need to consolidate workers' power, to the interests of world revolution and of building socialism.

Obviously such rights will not be recognised for parties, groups or individuals involved in a civil war or armed actions against the workers' state. Neither do such freedoms include the right to organise actions or demonstrations of a racist character or in favour of national or ethnic oppression.

In no way does the Marxist theory of the state entail the concept that a one-party system is a necessary precondition or feature of the workers' power, a workers' state, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. In no theoretical document of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Trotsky, and in no programmatic document of the Third International under Lenin, did such a proposal of a one-party system ever appear. The theories

developed later on, such as the crude Stalinist theory that throughout history social classes have always been represented by a single party, are historically wrong and serve only as apologies for the monopoly of political power usurped by the Soviet bureaucracy and its ideological heirs in other bureaucratised workers' states, a monopoly based upon the political expropriation of the working class."

The bureaucratised workers' states, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the rise of political and anti-bureaucratic revolution.

"From a theoretical point of view, the USSR and the other bureaucratised workers' states are extremely distorted and degenerated forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat, inasmuch as the economic foundations created by the socialist October revolution have not been destroyed by the bureaucracy. In that sense, the necessity of the defence of the Soviet Union and workers' states against any attempts to restore capitalism - which would represent a giant historical step backwards - flows from the fact that these are still degenerated or deformed workers' states ie degenerated forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But it does not flow from this that there are various historical forms of dictatorship of the proletariat which we consider all more or less equivalent, with socialist workers' democracy as described by our programme being only the 'ideal norm', from which reality has deviated and will strongly deviate in the future.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is not a goal in and of itself: it is only a means to realise the goal, which is the emancipatation of labour, of all the exploited and oppressed, by the creation of a worldwide classless society, the only way to solve the burning problems facing humanity, the only way to avoid its relapse into barbarism. But under its extremely degenerated form of the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, the 'bureaucratic' dictatorship of the proletariat not only does not allow workers to advance towards that goal, it holds back the transition between capitalism and socialism. It becomes a major obstacle on the road towards socialism, an obstacle which has to be removed by the proletariat through a political revolution. So it follows that far from being only one amongst different variants of the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialist democracy, the rule of the toiling masses through democratically elected workers' and peoples' councils, is the only form of the dictatorship of the proletariat compatible with our socialist goal, the only form which will make it an efficient weapon for advancing toward world revolution and world socialism. *We fight for that form of the dictatorship of the proletariat and for that form alone*, not for reasons of morality, humanitarianism, or historical idealism (the attempt to impose certain 'ideal' processes upon the historical process), but for reasons of political efficiency and realism, for reasons of programmatic principles, for reasons of immediate and historical necessity from the point of view of the interests of the world proletariat and world socialism.

Furthermore the 'bureaucratic' dictatorship of the proletariat can only arise, – as it did in the Soviet Union – as the result of a disastrous and lasting *political defeat* of the working class at the hands of the bureaucracy. It is not accidental that Trotsky uses in that context the formula 'political appropriation of the proletariat by the bureaucracy'. As proletarian revolutionists we are not neutral or indifferent in front of the question of political victory or defeat of *our* class. We try to assure its victory. We try to avoid its defeat by all means possible. Again it follows that we can only fight for the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat which enables such a victory and avoids such a defeat. Only the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat exercised through political power in the hands of democratically elected workers' councils assures that.


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HUNGARY ASKS SOVIET ARMY TO HELP PUT DOWN REVOLT

Khruschev sends in the tanks: Hungary 1956

Politically, the question is by no means purely academic. It is a burning issue in all those countries – not only the imperialist ones – where the working class has by and large assimilated the crimes and the real nature of Stalinism and of labour bureaucracies in general. Any identification of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' with nationalised property only, irrespective of concrete conditions of exercise of power by the working class in the state and the economy, becomes in all these countries a formidable obstacle on the road towards victorious socialist revolution and the realisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It objectively helps the bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie, the social democrats, and the CPs to maintain the working class in a straightjacket of the bourgeois democratic state.

It is an even more burning question in all the bureaucratised workers' states themselves, where the political revolution is on the agenda. In these countries, any attempt to present the present variants other than workers' democracy as goals for that revolution, would condemn those who make such attempts to extreme isolation from the rising masses. Indeed it would risk involving them in the same hatred with which the proletariat view the bureaucracy, 'the new masters'.

The concrete experiences of the Hungarian Revolution of October-November 1956 and the Polish revolution of August 1980-December 1981, which went furthest on the road to a full-blown anti-bureaucratic political revolution, as well as of the 'Prague Spring' of 1968-69 has already permitted the drawing of highly significant lessons on the dynamic of the political revolution. The 'Prague Spring' and the political revolution in Poland also benefitted from taking place in the social, economic and political conditions of countries where the working class represented the vast majority of the active population and could base itself on an old tradition of socialist, communist and trade union mass organisations, as well as in Poland, on a rich experience of anti-bureaucratic workers' revolts and struggles for workers' self-management.

These three experiences of the beginning of political revolutions confirm that the contents of socialist democracy as set forth in our programme and further explained in these theses are but the conscious expression of what millions of workers and toilers fight for when they rise against the totalitarian rule of the bureaucracy.

The struggle against its secret police, for the liberation of political prisoners, against repression of political and trade union activities which undermines the power monopoly of the ruling bureaucracy, against press censorship, against juridical arbitrariness (i.e. for written law and the right of defendants to be judged and defended in line with the law), against the one-party system, and against the bureaucracy's

control over the economic system, against the exorbitant material privileges of the bureaucracy and in favour of substantial progress in socio-economic equality – all these planks were the key motives which brought the Hungarian and the Czechoslovak masses onto the streets against the bureaucracy. It will be the same tomorrow in the USSR and the People's Republic of China too.

They have nothing to do with the restoration of private property, or the restoration of capitalism, as the Stalinist slanders falsely alleged in order to justify the counter-revolutionary suppression of these anti-bureaucratic mass uprisings with the use of the Soviet army in Hungary or Czechoslovakia or the imposition of martial law in Poland. In that sense they have nothing to do with the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat either.

Brezhnev's crackdown: Czecoslovakia 1968

In Hungary in 1956 the workers' councils and the Central Workers' Council of Budapest, after long debates, declared themselves in favour of a defence of nationalised property and of the freedom for all political parties except the fascists. In Czechoslovakia, during the Prague Spring, the demands for unrestricted freedom of political organisation, of political clubs, tendencies and parties, first defended by the most radical protagonists of the movement, was taken up by large tendencies inside the Communist Party itself, and supported by the great majority of trade unions and workers' councils that sprang up in the final part of that movement. The working class was energetically in favour of a free press – while, significantly, the Stalinist spokesmen of the bureaucracy, those who prepared, facilitated and collaborated with the Soviet bureaucracy's counter-revolutionary military intervention, concentrated their fire on the so-called 'iresponsible', 'pro-bourgeois' writers whose freedom to express themselves they wanted to crush at all costs – with the working class, in its overwhelming majority, supporting the freedom of the writers.

In Poland 1980-81, the working class drove forward the broadest experience of struggle for political democracy in a workers' state, for sixteen months. The internal democracy which the ten million organised Polish workers adopted within the Solidarnosc union demonstrated the attachment of the working class to the principles of proletarian democracy. The slogans of 'socialisation of the means of production and of planning' and of 'construction of a self-managed republic', put forward by the mass movement, clearly expressed its aspiration to wrest the control of the economy as well as of the state from the bureaucracy, and to subject them to the collective democratic management of the workers, an aspiration which materialised in the struggle for workers' self-management and the building of workers' councils and their coordination. The programme adopted by the national congress of Solidarnosc, stating that 'ideological, social, political and cultural pluralism must constitute the basis of democracy in the self-managed republic' also added that:

'Public life in Poland requires a deep reform that should lead to the final institution of self-management, democracy and pluralism. That is why we struggle both for a change in the structures of the state and for the creation and development of independent self-managed institutions in all walks of social life'.

In defence of 'the citizens' total freedom of association', the programme said:

'We believe that the principles of pluralism must apply to political life. Our union will aid and protect initiatives that aim to propose different social-political and economic programmes to society'.

It is most likely that similar confrontations will occur during every future political revolution, especially in the USSR and the People's Republic of China. Revolutionary marxists cannot hesitate or sit on the fence. Neither can they present them as purely tactical choices. They must align with the overwhelming majority of the toiling masses in defence of unrestricted democratic freedoms, against the censorship and repression of the bureaucracy.

In the beginning of the actual political revolution, the toiling masses make the distinction between those sectors of the bureaucracy which strenuously, including by the use of violence, try to oppose mass mobilisations and organisation, and those sectors which, for whatever motivation, yield to and seem to go along with the mass movement. The former they will pitilessly exclude from all renascent genuine organs of workers' and popular power. The latter they will tolerate and even conclude tactical alliances with, especially when they are under attack by the most hated representatives of the bureaucratic dictatorship.

In the final institutionalisation of workers-council power, the toiling masses will, most probably, however, take all appropriate measures to ensure their numerical, social and political preponderance inside the reborn soviets, in order to prevent them from falling under the sway of technocrats and 'liberal' bureaucrats.

This is also possible by specific electoral rules and does not require any banning of specific parties or ideological tendencies ..."

Beth Ridgell

The traditional 'nuclear' family may be in decline, but women still wind up with the work!

Is the family in crisis?

As thousands of socialists join the mass pilgrimages back to parental homes, run up overdrafts buying presents for seldom-seen relatives, and prepare to put on paper hats and participate in the ritual dismemberment of turkeys in the Christmas holidays, VALERIE COULTAS pauses to examine the position of 'family life' at the turn of a new decade.

As I read my Dulwich Labour Party minutes, inviting me to a Christmas 'family party' – part of the new ultra-respectable face of the Labour Party – watch socialists reproduce autumn babies at the rate of knots, and realise that I will, once again, return to my family of origin for Chistmas, I cannot deny that in the Thatcher decade and at this time of year it has become harder to live outside the family and to resist the influence of family ideology.

This is something of a surprise to those of us who expected the children of 1968 to create new styles of living. But after all it is not so surprising because everyone needs close, personal long-term relationships in their lives: and many people want to have children. In our society – whatever our ideals – the pressure is on us to structure those relationships through marriage, romantic love and the patriarchal, heterosexual, 'nuclear' family unit.

But what is the reality of most people's family life today? Is traditional family life in decline? Is the family changing? Were we very unrealistic in our youthful idealism when we argued against marriage and for different forms of living? How should socialists and feminists approach the debate on the family today?

Late capitalism has brought with it many changes in family life. Engels a hundred years ago argued that drawing women into industrial production would undermine the economic basis of the family, because it would no longer be a site for production as it had been in feudal societies. It would also give women greater equality with men as they gained financial independence.

This general process has been confirmed as many more married women join the waged labour force. But the state, acting for the capitalist class as a whole, did not allow the working class family to disintegate in the way Engels suggested it might do. Instead the bourgeoisie used the development on the welfare state to shore up the family unit, and to institutionalise gender divisions. This ensured that female labour remained cheaper and more flexible than male labour; continued to force women to do domestic labour in the home without payment; and deepened the process of sex segregation of the workforce. The capitalist state ensured that women were drawn into the workforce only on the capitalists' terms, so that the biggest profits could be made.

As a result of this underlying economic process, we have witnessed many social changes in women's lives. Access to higher education, to abortion and contraception, and some limited childcare provision have made it possible for many women – especially those from the middle classes – dramatically to reduce the period of their lives spent on bringing up young children and lengthen the period at work. Women's increased social and economic status has led to liberalisation of laws concerning divorce and homosexuality, and improved some of the rights of women and children in the family. Women have far more choice about how they live their lives today than even two decades ago.

The divorce rate has shot up, and studies show that the majority of petitions are filed by women, a significant number of whom cite 'unacceptable behaviour of spouse' as their main reason. Increasingly young people decide to live together as a prelude or as an alternative to marriage. In Britain 20% of live

births are now classified as 'illegitimate'. Single-parent families are no longer the challenge to respectability they were in the early sixties. The lesbian and gay liberation movement has made it possible for some men and women to express their sexual preferences openly and bring up children on the basis of these relationships.

These changes in the way people live their lives are important. They explain why, even after a sustained campaign to re-mould public opinion against abortion rights, the right-wing are being given such a slap in the face in America right now by the hundreds of thousands of women marching to defend women's rights, following the Supreme Court ruling which attacked abortion rights.

To assess these changes effectively, however, we need to be aware both of the political framework that different governments and political parties adopt, and of the overall limits to the process of change within the family in capitalist society.

The right-wing have been very busy in America trying to regain the initiative in defence of 'foetus rights' and 'fathers' rights', against homosexual rights and in defence of traditional 'family life'. As the Webster anti-abortion ruling in July demonstrates, they have been able to convince leading politicians of the popularity of their case, including Reagan and Bush.

In Britain the Tory party has taken a slightly more ambivalent stand in practice, for example on abortion rights. Although the rhetoric of Thatcher has been clearly pro-family (Section 28 was a direct attempt to turn the clock back) many of the policies that the Tories have pursued have been explicitly pro-market and anti-welfare state and have, paradoxically, undermined the quality of working class family life. This has created the basis for deepening conflict within working class families.

Cuts in social security, the imposition of forced-labour YTS schemes and other reductions in wage levels especially for young workers, and now the imposition of Poll Tax on all those over 18 living in a household have forced young people into a state of greater dependence on their families, increasing the burden on women within the family. This, coupled with low levels of child benefit and cuts in the NHS, social services and allowances for dependent elderly relatives, has made many more women critical of Thatcher's market philosophy (over 1.2 million are caring for elderly dependents in the home, over 80 percent of them receiving little assistance from the state). This creates a radical base for the socialist case if the Labour Party ever dared to make it.

More and more women are seeking divorce – or the right to divorce

In Britain the right-wing fanatics are much more prominent than ever but they are still not part of the mainstream. The coming fightback in Britain over abortion will show how far they have managed to shift political thinking towards their agenda.

The limits to the changes in the family are clearly based on the fact that while capitalism can accomodate some changes, it is dependent on the family system and the inequality within it for the free reproduction of labour power, for which it is not prepared to pay. The increase in women's employment has reflected these inequalities between male and female labour. Over the last decade the increase has been in part-time employment in the service sector, where pay is low and conditions of employment poor. Women's domestic burden increases if they move from full-time to part-time work because men do less.

Domestic labour doesn't disappear in single parent families either, and even the minority of single mothers who choose to have children alone are locked into a system which is structured so that the female sex does a disproportionate amount of reproductive work in comparison to the male sex. Many single mothers bring up their children alone

ecause they have no other choice, and many women experience low standards of living in doing so. Lesbian mothers face a constant battle to have and keep their children and the new Embryo Rights Bill to be debated in Parliament will try and restrict their access and to the new reproductive techniques, making it difficult for women to have children on their own.

What the right wing have grasped about this situation is that there is a considerable disjuncture between the family life that people aspire to and the one they actually lead. Particularly at a time of austerity this makes people feel insecure. By harping back to a long-gone semi-Victorian 'golden age' (which was never golden for women) they pretend that everything would sort itself out if the clock could just be turned back.

Yet the really dynamic factor in the changes that have taken place is the willingness of women to alter their lives – and their partners – if married life fails to live up to their expectations. Because so many women feel they have the thin end of the wedge in marriage (and of course they do) the break-up of marriage is a common feature of the lives of many adults and children today. Statistics show that divorce rates are even higher in re-marriages. Tensions and inequalities that were hidden and suppressed in previous generations have exploded into the public arena.

Society is also much more aware of the emotional irresponsibility of men. We now know that some men beat or rape their wives, and that some men commit child sex abuse.

It is now recognised that men and women may seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere when their sexual relationship goes through a bad patch. It is this situation which creates the crisis within the family, the breakdown of the publicly-accepted 'norm' of marriage as 'till death us do part'. The right wing are finding it difficult to persuade women to put back on the chains however, because they know the tensions and inequalities were always there in the family, and they are not going to give up their sexual freedom easily, especially when they know what they will return to.

Ironically the crisis is not only produced by the economic contradictions but also by the social and ideological contradictions of late capitalism. The high expectations women have of men, and men of women, are themselves partly a creation of the capitalist media, and these high standards are often completely unfulfillable.

The individualistic standards we have of romantic love and the perfect man or woman are inculcated into our heads from a young age in ever more powerful and sophisticated ways. Capitalism can take on board the 'new man' and the 'new woman', and still reproduce a sexist product. The capitalist machine takes people's real feelings of excitement, warmth, affection, and love for one another, and turns them into selfishness, egoism, exploitation, status, and competition. It tries to create human beings with distorted judgement of products and of one another. The crisis in social relationships is endemic to late capitalism.

Graeme Cookson

Socialist and feminist solutions seek not to cover up these tensions and conflicts but to analyse their basis – the unequal power relationships within the family and society – and to eradicate them through fundamental political changes both in the social system and in the underlying values of society.

In complete contrast to the right wing, socialists would seek to give *real* equality to women by giving social recognition to the unpaid and undervalued work that women do in society. Because the god of profit and privilege would no longer rule, *use value* would be the basis for judging people's contribution to society. This re-evaluation of everyone's skills would place emotional and domestic labour, that is currently women's sphere both inside the family and at work, much higher up the scale.

The welfare of the community would be the paramount basis for re-organising society and promoting social policy. Once you abolish the artificial goals of profit, that serve the interests of the few, you begin to see what is really important in society. And much of what women do is really important; in many cases it is the very basis of 'society'. Once the values of society change, men will also want to do what women do, because they will understand what they have been missing.

Given developments in technology, work could be re-organised to give women and men far more leisure in which to educate themslves, discover and develop new talents, retrain and participate in areas of life previously closed to them.

Alexandra Kollontai in *Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle* argued that socialism would 'increase humanity's potential for loving' in a wider area of human relationships. This would not mean that 'free love' should be pursued without a sense of duty. Society must 'learn to accept all forms of human relationship, however unusual they seem, provided they comply with two conditions. Provided they do not affect the physical health of the human race and provided they are not determined by the economic factor.' Discussing the psychological aspects of women's need for love, she argued that a woman should 'treat love as a step, as a way of finding her true self, and not as her whole existence'.

Looking at the complexity of social relationships today within the family it is clear that many women have, in practice, begun to take Kollontai's advice, but they have not been able to draw political and ideological conclusions from their own experience because of the all-pervasive hold of traditional family ideology.

Nevertheless, the family's crisis is our opportunity to explain many of the things that are wrong with capitalism. The rapid changes in social life and the way in which women challenge male domination in their lives has in practice weakened the influence of traditional family ideology, but not put any worked-out alternative ideology in its place. The right-wing are searching for fresh opportunities in this situation. Socialists, too, must be alert to their opportunities to build on people's everyday experience to develop and popularise the argument for a completely different form of society.

Nothing 'natural' about women's oppression

The assertion that women's oppression has origins is itself controversial. For the majority of people, the current position of men and women is a universal and 'natural' phenomenon; and this view is reinforced by any number of anthropological text books and learned historical studies.

The marxist tradition stands in sharp contrast with this prevailing line of thought. Friederich Engels in his pioneering work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, (1884) clearly contradicts the view that women's subordination is a constant unbroken thread stretching back to the dawn of humankind.

Drawing on the work of the early American anthropologist Lewis Morgan, Engels traces the changing position of women from the matriarchy of 'primitive communism' to the patriarchy of class societies and the potential for liberation created by the advent of capitalism. He ties these developments to the changes in the family form as the economic basis of society shifted.

Who says women aren't cut out to be building workers?

Thus Engels locates the origins of women's oppression (his words describe it as 'the world-historic defeat of the female sex') in the period of economic expansion ushered in by the developments of agriculture, stock-raising and metallurgy. The sexual division of labour which had always existed, whereby men hunted and women looked after the home and children, meant that the wealth created by these advances in production was controlled by men, who then enslaved women. So the subordination of women is the product of the beginnings of private property and the genesis of the state.

There have always been those who have expressed reservations about the implications and analysis of *The Origin*. Engels' critics, however, divide into two main groups: on the one side those who agree with his materialist method and accept the central theses of his work – that women's oppression is not an eternal truth, that the family is not an unchanging institution, and that the oppression of women is inextricably linked to the beginnings of class society; and on the other side those who reject Marxist methodology altogether.

The former approach began with the leaders of the (then officially still 'marxist') German Social Democratic Party (SPD) at the turn of the century, who rejected as 'too redolent of bourgeois psychology the high value Engels reluctantly placed on monogamy', and the Russian socialists of the same period who took issue with *The Origin* as mistakenly treating the family as autonomous from society, and continues today among many marxist feminists such as Stephanie Coontz and Frederique Vinteuil.

Indeed it is true that Engels was dependent on the intellectual and social context of his time. His work is shot through with patriarchal assumptions and an inability to break with bourgeois ideology on certain key points. The idea of a natural and universal sexual division of labour and the assertion that heterosexual, monogamous 'sex-love' is the natural and optimum state of sexual relations are just two examples of this. Much of his anthropological evidence, particularly on the existence of the matriarchy and the fact that male dominance has been found in some pre-class, pre-state societies lacking true private property, has since been brought into question or superceded in such a way as to require a substantial reworking of his conclusions.

However, Engels provides the solid foundations for any marxist analysis of the origins of women's oppression.

While all the anthropological evidence militates against the existence of a matriarchy even in the most dim and distant past, it clearly shows that whereas in the first class societies (for example slave societies) patriarchy was already established, there is no evidence for it in primitive communistic societies. These societies were based on egalitarianism and interdependence, and were organised in very loose and extended kinship groups that traced descent through the mother's line.

It was in those social formations existing before the first class societies but after primitive communism that male dominance first arose. Specifically, it was the combination of 'kin corporate property' (where property was owned collectively by a kinship group) which emerged with the series of transformations known as the neolithic revolution, and the growth of patrilocality (a kinship system where the wife goes to live with the husband's kin group after marriage) that created the preconditions for the development of male dominance.

Patrilocality came to be the predominant form of social organisation, supplanting matrilocal and other kinship systems, for several reasons. The determining factor, however, was that because of the greater value of women's labour and reproduction in pre-plough agricultural systems, patrilocal societies had a greater potential for expansion, were more economically dynamic, and so came to be the predominant form of social organisation.

It was indeed this economic dimension, in tandem with the very practical effects of a woman leaving her own kinship group and moving to live in the kinship group of her husband, that meant that patrilocality led to male domination. And once patrilocality was widely established, the old matrilineal method of descent and inheritance become unsustainable and incompatible with the emerging forms of social organisation. Instead a patrilineal sytem of inheritance was introduced and fed still further the dynamic towards patriarchy and private property that had produced it.

In this way the subordination of women

laid the foundation for the emergence of private property and so social classes. However, although the oppression of women precedes the development of private property, once set in motion the dynamics of gender oppression and other social differentiations are entwined. The oppression of women provided a means of differential appropriation among men, which in turn gave some men special access to the labour and reproductive power of women, as well as to the services of other men.

The privatisation of property ran alongside an alteration in the form of the family unit. The loose associations that existed within the collectivist environment of patrilocality were stabilised and broken up into smaller, tighter units as property became increasingly private property.

Patrilocality eventually gave way to patriarchy, institutionalised through the family. Male dominance became structurally embedded in society. It is a gradual, but powerful process by which such changes are formalised and ideologised in a systematic way.

Clearly then women's labour provided the material basis for a complex of interrelated processes that ended in their subordination to men and the cleavage of society into social classes. Ruling classes emerged that controlled the production of society as a whole. The exploitation of women gave way to class exploitation as the primary motor of social development. But this change did not suddenly free women from their oppression but dragged it deeper and deeper into a complex and ever shifting pattern of subordination and domination.

The search for origins begun by Engels and pursued with such ardour by successive generations of socialists and feminists is not merely an academic exercise, or intellectual self-indulgence. It is a crucial part of understanding the situation facing women today and formulating a realistic strategy for liberation.

For, as Stephanie Coontz and Peta Henderson say in their contribution to the book *Women's Work, Men's Property*, 'Anthropology and history offer no justification for the opposition some political activists make between the struggle against class and the struggle against patriarchy.' Rather, they underline the fact that class and gender inequalities are historically and materially inseparable.

However, the factor that *is* omitted from a discussion about origins and which is overlooked by Marx and Engels in their works concerning women – in a way that is *not* overlooked in their other writings – is the *subjective* factor. The central importance of women's struggle for their own liberation has been clearly demonstrated by more recent events, and central to the programme and political activity of revolutionary marxists today.

Rebecca Flemming

German Greens: no roots in the working class?

Issues 18 and 19 of Socialist Outlook have carried discussion articles on the emergence of green politics and its significance for socialists. Continuing the debate, HANS-JURGEN SCHULZ presents a critique of the politics and organisation of the longest-running and strongest of the Green parties.

Many people think that the Green Party in West Germany is a socialist or at least a radical party with a strong socialist current and influence in the working class. However this is not the view of the Greens themselves.

All of the currents of the Greens point out that their party does not belong to the workers' movement, because 'left socialism and the workers' movement have failed' (declaration of the former 'left' central leadership).

According to Rudolf Bahro, when he was the main theoretician of the party, the Greens do not represent 'special social interests', but are the 'organ of all common interests'. Even radical eco-socialists in the party agreed. According to Jutta Difurth, the Greens are 'not a left party, but a party which tolerates left politics'. Ebermann argues that 'It is absurd to transform the Greens into a socialist party'.

To understand the rise and the political character of this party we have to understand its class base.

Rise of the intelligentsia

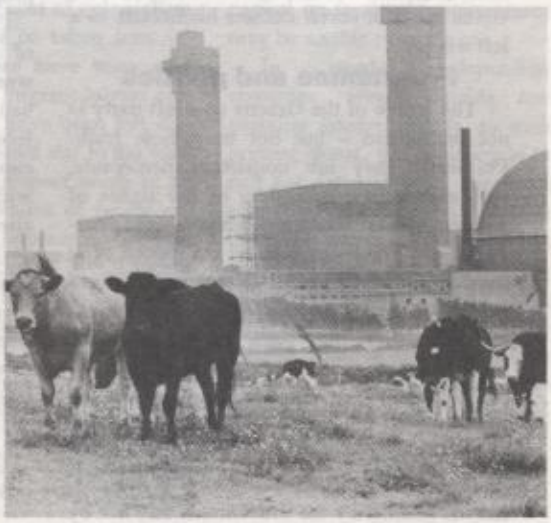
In the last thirty years the intelligentsia has become an important sector of society. 2.4 million attend colleges (Oberschulen) or universities, and 4 million have academic degrees. Those with formal education do not constitute a class or even a single layer: among them are capitalists (owners of important companies) and the bourgeois intelligentsia (leading personnel of companies and the state apparatus, and the self-employed, like lawyers or physicians) numbering 800,000; there is a salaried intelligentsia of some 1.5 million, composed of the leading and lower echelons of companies and the state apparatus and specialists (engineers, architects, teachers).

These are privileged, earning more than double the income of a worker, and their working conditions are far better. In ideological terms many of them adhere to elitist and corporatist views, while others are democrats or reformists. But the chances of a career in these sectors are very limited.

The crisis since the 1970s hit not this established sector of the intelligentsia but the young. Many of them did not get these privileged positions but had to take what jobs were offered to them. Others were for a long time unemployed, and set up 'alternative' individual projects, running pubs, craft shops or other services. These all formed a new proletarianised intelligentsia, which is usually oppositional-minded and progressive. These people, including social service workers (hospitals, kindergardens, etc, altogether some 800,000) and many teachers and students make up the social base of the Greens.

Unlike workers, who collectively experience daily conflict with capital, and develop a nearly instinctive collective and trade unionist consciousness, the proletarianised intelligentsia thinks in extremely individualistic terms. They have no common social interests. Their criticisms may be very sharp, but are usually without serious conclusions. They have no idea of an alternative society, and no coherent programme other than a bundle of often very fine proposals on this or that.

Sometimes they take the road of radical struggle, even bloody clashes with the police; some caucuses even call for armed struggle in the big cities. But soon their hopes are dashed and they relapse into sub-cultural associations. Not only conservative, but even mystical and magical ideas are spreading. All but a few show an individualistic scorn for



organisations, or reject discipline in the organisations they have formed. This proletarianised progressive intelligentsia was the base of the so-called social movements (ecology, peace, women) from which the Green Party has sprouted.

Members and voters

The Green Party was founded in 1979 as a bloc between conservatives, nationalists and even reactionaries on the one side and independent left wingers, socialists and communists on the other. They agreed on a radical-sounding but in reality flexible programme. The result of this compromise was brutal faction-fighting, which ended with the majority of the conservatives and reactionaries splitting off, while the majority of the left moved towards liberal positions.

Today the party has at most 45,000 members (compared to Social Democrats and Christian Democrats with around 1 million each); most Green Party members are teachers, social workers or proletarianised intellectuals, with very few workers or trade unionists. Only 10,000 members are active – of whom more than 3,000 are as members of parliaments of all levels, while most of the rest are active in giving them assistance. This is why at the rank and file level there is a complete lack of political discussion, with debates concentrated around special technical and tactical questions.

'It is a culture of specialists and intellectuals', complains one of the Green leaders, a culture which excludes all others. There are now 1,500 full-timers, either as parliamentarians or party employees; these constitute an informal but decisive and uncontrolled apparatus. It is they, and not the few active members, who make Green Party policy.

A look at the social base of the Green vote is very instructive. Nearly 60 per cent of supporters are under 30, and 70 per cent come from the intelligentsia (including students). Only a tenth of the votes come from workers, and in working class districts the Greens usually get less than 5 per cent. Only one Green voter in seven defines his/herself as a left winger.

Programme and politics

The image of the Greens as a left party is not unfounded – but not the whole truth. Politically they are consistent democrats, anti-imperialists, defenders of the rights of women (their leading positions and parliamentary fractions must be composed of at least 50 per cent women; their representatives in the Hamburg parliament are all women) and minorities; they back the peace movement, ecologists and anti-fascists. But because of their lack of active members and the low level to which Green activists identify with their party, they are not visibly present in all these movements. Radical consciousness is formed by the movements and not by the Greens; most activists from the movements do not join the Green Party.

Green theoretician Rudolf Bahro

Of course there are socialists among the Greens. But there are also eco-liberals who are conservative or reactionary. They deny the necessity of a programme of mass activism. To save the environment they call for a lowering of living standards and the break-up of the 'state monopoly of welfare'. Their main support is in southern Germany.

Dominant are the so-called 'realos' (realistic politicians), who define their position as a party of the centre, and their aim as an ecological capitalism. They are reformists only in the sense that they are for a better functioning of the present system. They argue that the social and ecological problems are not due to capitalism or bureaucratic 'socialism' but modern technology and industrialisation. They are ideal parliamentarians: in the last session of the federal Bundestag they had five percent of the seats but made a third of all proposals for new legislation, and put 50 per cent of the demands on the government for information. This was very admirable: but not one of their proposals was accepted.

They are interested in the contamination of milk, but not poisonous gases at the workplace; in the death of the forests, but not battles for the 35-hour week or defence of jobs in the steel industry. They are not anti-capitalists, and not interested in any alliance with the workers' movement, which is quite alien to them.

If Greens are accepted as partners in a coalition they become very 'responsible', and in reality a junior partner with no real influence. Some years ago in Hessia they dropped all their ecological proposals; now it is the same in West Berlin.

Declining socialist current

The majority of German maoists and centrists took part in the foundation of the Green Party or quickly joined it. Their aim was to form a socialist wing, to radicalise the Greens and transform them into a socialist or even a revolutionary party. They failed completely, because they could not develop a socialist policy, only a series of radical demands in green clothing. For a long time this enabled them to swarm into the leading bodies of the new party; but the real policy was being formulated in the parliamentary fractions, and here the socialists were in a declining minority.

As a radical, democratic, but bourgeois party, the Greens attracted radical (and often not-so-radical) democratic non-socialists, so the old left cadres were swamped by the newcomers, who were not educated in the socialist way. This was compounded by the pressures from the 'realism' of parliamentary life and personal ambitions. Last year the socialists lost their majority in all leading party bodies, except for their last stronghold in Hamburg.

A survey in 1987 showed that of the 300 leaders (members of parliament in Bonn and in the states, and the central and state leaderships of the party) only one in six was a former member of a revolutionary organisation, while at least half were now 'realos'.

This year the socialist remnants in the Green Party split. The radical wing (Jutta Ditfurth, Ebermann, Trampert) lost their last hopes for a radical policy with the Greens. Formally they still remain in the party, but they are calling publicly for the founding of a new one, and are engaging in discussions with revolutionaries and former stalinists.

The other wing is the 'left forum', a loosely organised group which includes the former trotskyists of the 'Horizonte' group, which dissolved itself last August. This forum may have more than 100 activists and 300 sympathisers: but it is too small and too diverse to change the character of the Green Party.

Namibia forced to walk the tightrope

A tremendous turn-out in the Namibian UN-supervised elections this month led to jubilation when SWAPO took a majority of 57 per cent. This was not the two-thirds they were aiming for, but was a victory nonetheless given the circumstances of the election (They have a larger majority than the Thatcher government!).

SWAPO was bounced into agreeing to the UN independence plan, after the interests of South Africa and the Soviet Union to end the war in Angola co-incided. The pressure on SWAPO was enormous, particularly the weariness of Namibia after 23 years of war. Organising the return of 40,000 members in exile left very little time for the election campaign, which would have been a problem anyway, given their lack of resources and the vastness of the country.

This was the first democratic election since the country became a colony, but it was characterised by widespread intimidation against SWAPO supporters by pro-South African forces such as the South West Africa police and the counterinsurgency unit, Koevoet. The South Africans were also heavily financing SWAPO's main rival, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) and flying in large numbers of South Africans entitled to vote under the very lax residency rules imposed by the UN.

The press have made much of SWAPO's failure to gain a two-thirds majority.

Nevertheless, people queued in their thousands, many having walked for miles to polling stations, to register a pro-SWAPO vote as the only credible alternative to South African occupation. Namibia is now on the road to formal independence, which is scheduled to be declared in April 1990. Until then the Constituent Assembly, made up of representatives of the parties who gained enough votes, will meet to draft the future constitution.

A two-thirds majority is needed to pass the constitution, which leaves SWAPO in a difficult position. They will be sitting in the assembly with their old enemies, the pro-South African DTA and a number of smaller parties who will hold a veto over the policies SWAPO has stated it is committed to (notably the redistribution of land). SWAPO will need to make alliances with some of them and may well be forced into compromises on a whole number of issues.

The country will be walking a tightrope. Conflicting interests between what the mass of black Namibians expect and want out of independence and what South Africa, the transnational corporations (mainly British-based) and the majority of white Namibians want (little or no change) may threaten to tear the country apart.

South Africa holds several trump cards. They are still occupying the Walvis Bay enclave, Namibia's only deep water port (and using it as a military base); the majority of Namibia's foodstuffs and consumer goods are imported from South Africa, and the South African government is threatening to land the new government with an enormous debt. SWAPO may opt for caution to avoid any threat of a South African invasion or destabilisation campaign.

The task of the future SWAPO-led government is an unenviable one. Namibia, according to Oxfam reports, is one of the most poverty stricken countries in Africa, with most of its wealth (uranium, copper, fish, karakul fur) being plundered by foreign companies. Gross inequalities exist between the majority of black Namibians and the white settler population. Poverty is the main cause of ill health, with diseases like tuberculosis rampant. Infant mortality amongst black people is a staggering 167 per 1,000 births.

Enormous public expenditure will be needed to begin to address the sheer misery in which most black people live – new affordable housing (with electricity and toilets, not to mention more than one room in them!); preventive and primary health care programmes, particularly in the rural areas; public transport (which is non-existent); creches and so on. The Namibian townships are chronically overcrowded, unemployment is high and social problems such as alcoholism and prostitution rife (made worse by the recent influx of UN troops into the country).

The whole education system will need to be overhauled as it is based on the imported racist South African 'Bantu education' system. And wages need to be drastically increased – at present a black miner earns on average around 50p a day.

The social cost of colonialism and war must be taken into account. Families have been split up due to the migrant labour system, children have been left disabled or orphaned due to the war. People's self respect needs to be built after decades of being exploited and oppressed because they are black. And it will take a long time for the returning exiled Namibians to integrate into a Namibia many left years ago or have never seen in their lives.

These seem insurmountable obstacles to establishing independence and rebuilding the country. Key to SWAPO's success in leading Namibia through this process will be its ability to promote democracy and grass roots participation in all aspects of life. This will include safeguarding the autonomy of the National Union of Namibia Workers (NUNW), and their affiliated unions.

In order to counteract the years of South African propaganda against SWAPO (that it is an 'Ovambo' organisation) SWAPO will need to show it is not favouring particular 'ethnic' groups against others. SWAPO's election manifesto pledges its commitment to women's rights and to take forward the struggle for women's equality – support for a national autonomous women's movement is key. Workers, women and youth movements have the potential to further educate and politicise people, build on some of the excellent work started by SWAPO in exile (such as primary and preventive health and literacy programmes, skill training etc) and not least to campaign against the manoeuvers of South Africa and international capital on issues the government may be unable to move on.

In newly independent countries, where outside imperialist intervention is an ever present threat, the tendency is to call for national unity above all else while the situation stabilises itself. However, if SWAPO has the confidence, and can take the people with them, then South Africa will have a much more difficult task in trying to wreck Namibia's independence to postpone the inevitable overthrow of apartheid at home.

ROS YOUNG

Kurds fight back against British deportations

On Sunday 15th October over 5000 people marched through Hackney protesting against the effective murder of Kurdish refugee Siho Iyiguven by the British state. On Saturday 28th October, more than 3000 people marched from Hackney to the South Bank carring Siho's body.

Siho was 26 years old, a Kurdish political refugee who came to Britain, leaving behind his wife and child, and hoping to be re-united with them in the future. After holding him in detention, the Home Office decided to deport him. He had been tortured in Turkey, and the authorities cynically ignored his statement that only his dead body would return to Turkey. He and his friend Dogan Arolan decided to commit suicide by setting themselves alight rather than be tortured and murdered in Turkey. Dogan is now in hospital fighting for his life.

Over 3000 Kurdish refugees have come to Britain since May 1989, and have been subjected to barbaric treatment here. Some of them have been interviewed on the plane and sent straight back, others have been harassed and beaten up by racist police and immigration officers. Supporters of the Turkish government have been used as interpreters in immigration interviews. Kurdish detainees have risen in resistance to this inhuman treatment; taking part in a series of hunger strikes and sit-down protests in prisons and detention centres. Some have tried to commit suicide rather than be sent back.

The first response of the Thatcher government to the influx of Kurdish refugees was to introduce a visa restriction for Turkish citizens. Hundreds of refugees were locked up as if they were criminals. Home Secretary Douglas Hurd decreed that as the Kurds were 'economic' not 'political' refugees then they should be deported. In doing this, he was not only ignoring the statements of the refugees but also reports by the Medical Foundation for the care of torture victims and Amnesty International.

Kurdistan is the homeland of 20 million Kurds, divided between Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Around 10 million Kurds live in the Turkish area which is the least developed part of the Turkish state.

In North Kurdistan, the Turkish state has stationed a huge military force but does not provide state services. A feudal mode of production exists in this area and the Turkish state has good relations with the landlords. Not only has there been no agrarian reform but Turkish troops have ensured the survival of extreme exploitation.

The existence of a Kurdish minority has never been officially recognised and the right to a separate cultural identity is denied. It is a criminal offence to speak Kurdish: it cannot be taught ins schools, spoken it public or reproduced in print. Prisoners at Diyarbakir Military prison, after the 1981 coup, were forbidden to speak to their visiting families in Kurdish even though they knew no other language, until a hunger strike in 1988 won them that right.

The funeral of Siho Iyiguven

Many popular uprisings in Northern Kurdistan have been brutally suppressed. After the Durrim uprising in 1938, during which many were massacred, the majority of the surviving population were forcibly resettled all over Anatolia.

As a result of this and migration to the industrial centres, today the Kurdish population lives in all parts of Turkey. In the cities, Kurds are at the bottom of the social ladder. They live in the slums and ghettoes, which are frequently bulldozed by the authorities and lack even the most basic services. Almost daily there are reports of clashes between security forces and the Kurdish people resisting the destruction of their homes which usually result in victory for the security forces.

In the 1970s, when the general level of political activity in Turkey was high, many Kurds became involved in socialist struggle as members of trade unions, socialist parties and revolutionary organisations. Some cultural associations and illegal Kurdish political parties and organisation were formed fighting for self-determination for the Kurds and for civil rights.

In September 1980, Turkey's military leaders seized power under General Kenan Evren. Tens of thousands of men and women were taken into custody immediately after the coup. Trade unionists were arrested en masse. Amnesty International estimates that over a quarter of a million have been arrested in Turkey since 1980 on political grounds, and almost all of them have been tortured. More than 30,000 were jailed in the first four months after the coup. Some 700 political prisoners are now under sentence of death. 50 people have been executed.

Another General, Turgut Sunalp, claimed that 'It is only human nature to torture people' and added 'There was torture in Turkey, there is torture in Turkey, and there will be torture in Turkey'. The results of the coup were even worse in North Kurdistan. Diyarbakir prison became one of the most infamous centres of mass torture.

Kurdish political prisoners have suffered additional repression because of their nationality along with the 'normal' ill-treatment which is applied to all political prisoners. Some were tortured to death, others faced firing squads without being tried. Political prisoners have been fighting against unfair trials, continuous torture and ill treatment, by taking part in hunger strikes and riots in prisons ever since. Diyarbakir prison along with many others is one of the centres of this heroic resistance.

LETTERS

In August 1984 the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) launched an armed struggle against the Turkish troops. Since the the security forces have been engaged in counter-insurgency operations. In fact their operations involve harassment and intimidation of civilians; every Kurdish village has been raided by the troops and houses searched. They beat up the inhabitants, claiming that 'they help Kurdish guerillas or may do because they are Kurds'. The government has attempted to arm members of particular tribes and villages in order to create a anti-PKK paramilitary force called 'Village Protectors'. People who refuse to get involved are tortured and killed.

A Turkish weekly review recently claimed that 100 people who had supposedly died in armed conflict with the military had in fact faced firing squads following torture. A Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* estimates that over 9500 Kurdish people were detained between August 1984 and July 1987 in the south eastern provinces. There are no clear records of the results of this persecution since there is a strict media ban on news covering East Anatolia; sometimes opposition MPs uncover corpses in the area but details cannot be published.

It has been openly admitted that the security forces intend to use chemical weapons in SE Anatolia, in the same way as the genocidal attack by the Iraqi government in Halabja. As a consequence thousands of Kurds are being forced to leave the area.

On September 17 1989, six young people were killed by the military . Official reports claimed that they were PKK guerillas. Almost the whole population of the area rose up to demand the punishment of the murderers. The protest was brutally put down; but it was a turning point, as the first mass response to the massacres. On the other hand, it is possible that the uprising was provoked to justify future use of chemical weapons.

All this proves that any Kurd should qualify as a political refugee. Even to claim one's national identity as a Kurd is political, given that it is punishable under the Turkish Penal Code. Most Kurdish refugees or their close relatives are political activists, and were thus subjected to torture in Turkey.

An Amnesty International report refers to a Kurdish socialist, Mehmet Kalkan, who was taken to Diyarbakir police station in June 1987. His girl friend, who was there as a relative, said after her release 'Mehmet and I were both suspended in the air. They asked whether he knew me or not. They asked this several times. After repeatedly getting the same answer they demanded that Mehmet rape me. He refused to do so, but 2 torturers did what they had not been able to make him do. They raped me. Mehmet could not bear their laughter and swore at them. They forced him to drink urine. In the meantime they took me out of the room.

From my cell I could hear his voice. Later the voice fell silent. On the same day they told me that Mehmet Kalkan had not come here in order to go out as a human being but that he preferred to die like a dog.'

The death of Mehmet Kalkan during interrogation in Diyarbakir police station was officially declared a suicide.

We do not expect the British government to care about the repression of the Kurdish people in Turkey since it is guilty of the same crimes in Ireland. But we have a right to expect the government to uphold international conventions on refugees. We do not expect it to condemn the Turkish government for its fascist brutality against Kurds, but we will not accept the British government's treatment of Kurdish refugees.

We are well aware of Thatcher's support for the repressive Turkish regime for the sake of contract opportunities for British capital. We know that the US, British, and other imperialist powers of NATO would not break relations with a regime that is a useful watchdog in the Middle East. However, this has started to bear bitter fruits within the British state: Siho preferred to commit suicide rather than be delivered into the hands of the Turkish butchers. If the Home Office continues to treat Kurdish refugees as criminals and deport them, we will consider the Tory government directly involved in the Turkish government's genocidal policies.

Siho is only one; thousands of 'Sihos' have been systematically tortured and killed in the mountains of Kurdistan solely because they are part of a nation in revolt.

Shain Gengiz

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

ILP hits back!

Anyone hoping to understand developments in the anti-poll tax movement would do well to take Theresa Conway's confused and contradictory report in SO (12 February 1989) with a large dose of salt.

She accused the ILP of being a 'pernicious' right wing influence which wants to impose undemocratic structures on the movement. She claimed that we wish to exclude trade unionists and the hard left from the campaign. She asserted that the ILP wants to turn the national federation of anti-poll tax groups into something 'grandiose and bureaucratic'. Nothing could be further from the truth.

All she has demonstrated by these bizarre and unsubstantiated remarks is that she does not begin to understand the political arguments of those who she is so keen to denounce. So instead of comradely disagreements we get sectarian abuse.

The fact that SO could publish such an article suggests that on this occasion at least the political quality and integrity of its approach leave something to be desired.

On one point Theresa is correct. The ILP did think that the Newcastle conference, which she helped to organise and is so keen to defend, was a shambles.

Not only was it a section of the left debating with itself, which was unfortunate, but tragically it was a left acting as though a mass anti-poll tax movement already existed.

Wide-ranging demands were adopted which few were particularly happy about (including Theresa herself), to which few people if any felt committed and which therefore carried no authority even with those groups who voted for them. Whatever happened to the steering committee which was elected to enact this programme?

Our interventions were designed to save the credibility of the event which we had been instrumental at the Chesterfield conference in bringing about. We sought to ensure that we had effective unity round the need for a mass demonstration to bring an effective campaign into being. Had the left channelled its efforts into pressing the Labour Party and the TUC for such an event then we could have done something tangible.

Our argument has been that we need to construct a mass, broad based movement and our experience of campaigning tells us that this has not yet happened in spite of the efforts of many committed activists. out of that broad movement we could then build an autonomous civil disobedience campaign which would provide the sharp edge of the struggle.

Can I suggest that Theresa at least tries to understand the ILP's political arguments on the poll tax before she attacks them?

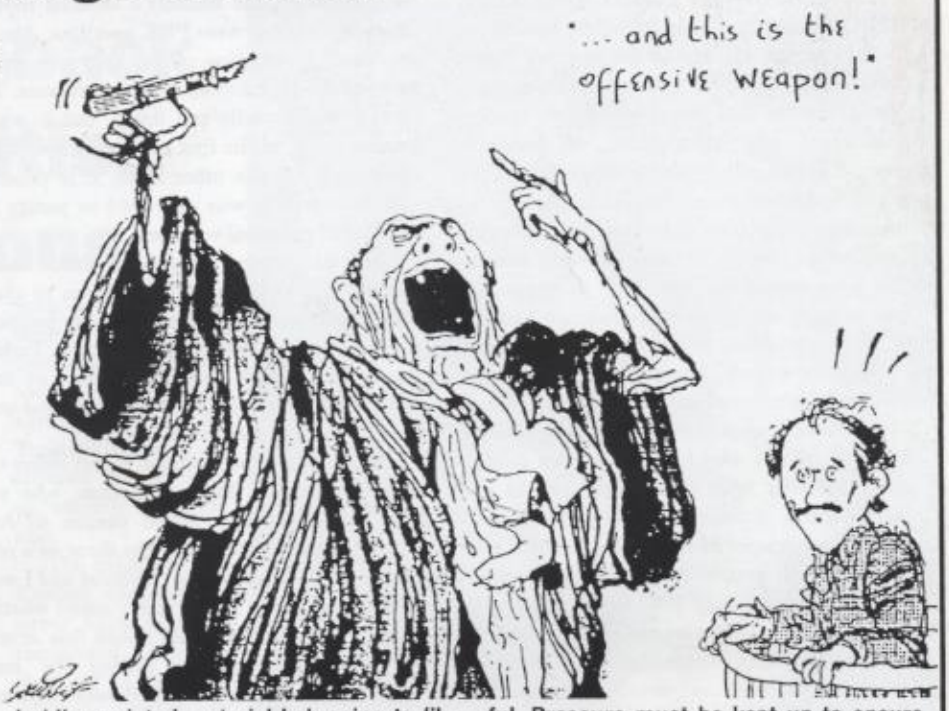
Perhaps she could review our current literature on the poll tax for SO? Of course she may well continue to disagree with us. But at least then there is a chance that we may have something substantial to debate, instead of the hot air that she appears to think passes for argument.

Gary Kent, for the ILP.

We welcome letters up to 400 words. Write to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Jail threat faces leading anti-zionist

Drop the charges against Michel Warshawsky!



Michel Warshawsky, well-known Israeli activist and director of the Alternative Information Centre (AIC) in Jerusalem, was sentenced to 30 months imprisonment (10 suspended) on 7 November in Jerusalem.

His crime? – 'Providing services for a forbidden organisation', because he typeset a booklet for a West Bank Palestinian organisation and refused to supply the names of those who gave the booklet to the AIC. The booklet, written by former Palestinian political prisoners, explained the interrogation methods of the Israeli intelligence services. The prosecution claimed it was written by and for members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The AIC was fined £3,500 and also faces legal costs of £10,000.

Michel's sentence came after he spent nearly two years waiting for the case to be heard. In February 1987 the (AIC) was raided by police and security and closed for six months. Michel, its director, was imprisoned for one month then released on bail and banned from working in the AIC.

Twenty charges were brought against Michel and the AIC under the 1945 Emergency Defence Regulations and the 1948 Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance, under three main categories: providing typesetting services to 'illegal organisations', holding printed material belonging to 'illegal organisations' and 'support for a terrorist organisation'.

The trial was political, an attack by the Israeli state on cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis, and on democratic rights and freedom of expression. The sentence meted out to Michel was extremely severe given that only one charge was upheld by the court.

The AIC has sent out a warning: 'We have to wake up in time. All of us in the Israeli peace movement are now in the same boat'. Due to the widespread support and publicity, Michel's prison sentence has been postponed until his appeal comes up in January. There is no guarantee, however, that the appeal will be successful. Pressure must be kept up to ensure that the state's attack on Palestinian-Israeli cooperation in the struggle against the occupation does not succeed.

Donations can be sent to: Alternative Information Centre, First International Bank, 015 Shlomzion Branch, Nr. 105183598.

Please send messages of support to: Michel Warshawsky, AIC, PO Box 24278, Jerusalem, Israel.

Please send letters of protest to: Dan Meridor, Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, Salah el Din 29, East Jerusalem, via Israel.

For more information: Committee for the Freedom of Expression of Palestinians and Israelis, BM 9585, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 01-226 7050.