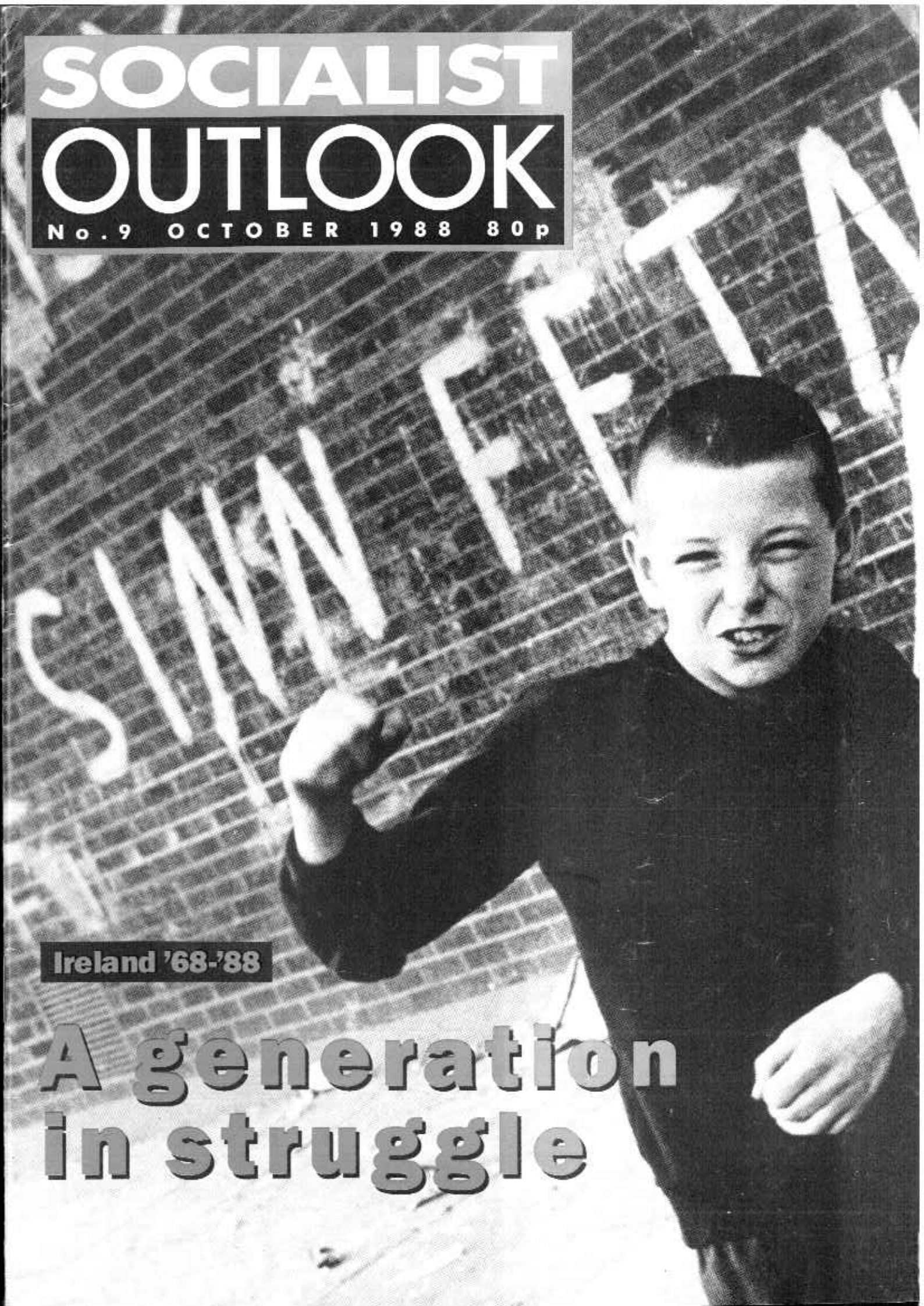


# **SOCIALIST OUTLOOK**

No. 9 OCTOBER 1988 80p

**Ireland '68-'88**

## **A generation in struggle**





# Socialist Outlook

No. 9 Monthly October 1988

## CONTENTS

### UPDATE

- 1 • Editorial: Left at the Crossroads
- 2 • Poland • Union solidarity network
- 3 • Ireland • 4 • Cowley jobs fight
- 5 • EETPU • Kurdistan
- 6 • Post strike • Todd under fire
- 7 • Poll tax • Scottish witch hunt 8 • NIIS

### 9

#### Labour Conference: Policy Review An individual road to socialism?

Theresa Conway  
Economic policy  
Jean Reilly

### 10

#### Bring out your Shibboleths!

Jane Wells

### 11

#### TUC 1988: right wing still in charge

John Lister

### 12

#### The Black Agenda

Dave Palmer

### 13-20

#### IRELAND SUPPLEMENT

##### A struggle undefeated

Michael Farrell

##### Irish women: fighting on two fronts

Sue Pentel

##### How to build a movement for withdrawal

Geoffrey Bell

### 21-23

#### IN DEPTH

##### Gorbachev's Gamble

Phil Hearse

### 24

#### The Case for Leon Trotsky

Charlie Van Gelderen

### 25

#### FRONT LINE FEATURE

##### PERU: death squads and general strikes

Hugo Blanco

### 26-27

#### BACK TO BASICS

##### Permanent Revolution

Richard Rozanski

### 28

#### Early battles for equal pay

Leonora Lloyd

### 29

#### CP's British Road to Capitalism

Phil Hearse

#### REVIEWS

30 Kagarlitsky, intellectuals and Glasnost - Jane Kelly

30 Bookends Nick Robin

31 A World Apart Erica Flegg

32 Tom Nairn on the monarchy - Mike Macnair

32 Gabriel Garcia Marquez - David Grant

#### 33 YOUR LETTERS

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# After Blackpool

## Left at the crossroads

EVEN BEFORE this year's Labour conference yields its crop of decisions, many on the left of the party are asking themselves 'what next'?

One thing is clear: a fresh turn to the struggles going on in the workers' movement is the key to any long-term fightback against the right wing. And fightback there must be.

There has been little mystery or suspense about the result of the leader and deputy leader elections. While some on the left may be dismayed at the size of the right wing majority – predictably bloated by block votes – they should instead draw some comfort from the fact that at least this year there *has* been a political challenge.

Only the Benn-Heffer campaign has stood out against the Kinnock drive to impose a new right wing package of policies and reduce the party itself to a apathetic docility. It was a key campaign. But there is no room for self-congratulation. It is now vital to go *beyond* simply 'campaigning for socialism', to an active involvement in mass action if new forces are to be enlisted in the fight against Kinnockite new realism.

Recent NEC proposals that Labour party organisations should meet less often and make less demands on members to become active spell out the kind of passive electoral fodder Kinnock would like as a rank and file.

This is no accident: nor is it simply a device to create the best conditions to force through right wing policies (though the savage new package of rule changes designed to focus ever-more power with Walworth Road certainly do head in this direction).

Breaking down the collective functioning of the Labour Party fits in with the very essence of the 'new realism' which represents above all a regression to individualism, abandoning any collective, class solutions or mass action. This shift in focus reflects a total collapse in front of the Thatcherite ideological offensive, the cardinal belief of which is that 'there is no such thing as society, just individuals and their families'.

Such a view can only flourish in a Labour party controlled by politicians and union leaders who are completely out of touch with the realities confronting the working class: indeed Bryan Gould now echoes the Communist Party in querying whether there still *is* such a thing as the working class!

In the reality of Thatcher's Britain, where millions face unemployment, tens of millions live in poverty,

facing low pay, speed-up in the workplaces, a huge housing crisis and attacks on the welfare state, the stark class divisions are all too obvious, and collective, class action the only serious answer.

Militant trade union struggles – most recently the postal workers and seafarers – repeatedly confirm the latent possibilities for a fightback, while showing the need to combat bureaucratic union leaders who regard the class struggle as an embarrassment.

For a Labour Party genuinely seeking votes, there is no shortage of popular issues around which working class electoral support could and should be rebuilt. Yet almost every issue has been missed by Labour's smug, well-heeled leaders, or (as with the poll tax) undermined by their timid refusal to confront the Tories and the law.

These same issues – social security cuts, the new ET schemes, the Housing Bill, the Education Bill, cuts and privatisation in local government, and attacks on the NHS – now confront Labour's left wing, emerging intact but somewhat bedraggled from Blackpool. The left's own record of involvement on many of these issues has been far from ideal. To change such old habits will be hard: it is easier to debate than to do.

Yet there is no way in which the left can drag itself up by its own bootstraps – or even defend itself against a new witch hunt through endless internal party activity and policy debates. Generalised propaganda for socialism – good in itself – is not enough either, whether this be the piecemeal abstentionist propaganda of the Socialist Workers Party, or the big rally propaganda of the Socialist Conference.

Crusading words must be turned into action on the streets and the fight for a new leadership to replace the present bureaucrats. The left must hit the campaign trail, linking up with strikes and struggles outside as well as inside the Labour Party, or face even bleaker times ahead.

A limited start has been made: the Chesterfield movement has called a December 10 conference on fighting the poll tax, which could help mobilise labour movement campaigns for non-registration, non-collection and non-payment. But there is much ground still to be covered.

Building a real fightback – long overdue – against the Thatcher onslaught offers the only real antidote to post-Blackpool depression and galloping Gouldite bureaucracy.



## Will they legalise Solidarnosc?

THE CRISIS of Poland's stalinist regime of General Jaruzelski has now been marked by a 'capitulation' of some significance – the agreement to include Lech Walesa, former leader of the Solidarnosc union federation, in negotiations.

Given their absolute refusal to contemplate anything of the kind in previous declarations, this has to be seen as a sign of the chronic instability of the regime, faced as it is by economic crisis and recurrent waves of working class militancy.

Strikes in the proletarian bastions of Gdansk, Silesia and Szczecin, in the mines, ports, steel-mills and shipyards, among others, were characterised by militant occupations led by a new generation of younger radical workers.

The Walesa leadership retains considerable prestige – hence his involvement in these talks. Yet though his prestige and symbolic significance undoubtedly remain considerable, his ability to carry forward the deep hostility of the Polish workers towards the bureaucracy, expressed, for example, in the recent plebiscite on the economy, is questionable.

Though the majority of the Walesa team recommended abstention, and some support, the result was a resounding rejection of Jaruzelski's demand for a Polish version of perestroika, with a high proportion of 'no' votes.

General Kiszczak's indication that the aim of the bureaucracy is to 'incorporate opposition leaders into official institutions' is an ominous warning of the potential of Walesa's strategy.

Walesa's leadership has been characterised by a strategy of reconciliation with the Jaruzelski government. Far from building on the waves of unrest which have forced the bureaucracy into negotiation, Walesa's response was to call for an end to the strikes, without having gained any concrete concessions.

Not surprisingly, the response from some of those layers involved in the action was hostile, though many strikers voted to call off their action in response.



D. Steart-Smith/Reflex

### Is Walesa convincing enough?

Though Walesa claimed to have 'raised the issue' of the unbanning of Solidarnosc, it is surely not through the politics of retreat and reconciliation that this will be forced from the regime. His words 'Poland does not need strikes... I

extinguished the strikes; and I will extinguish any others that happen' would seem more appropriate for the representatives of the bureaucracy than for those of the independent workers' movement.

It is clear that the regime is sitting on a powderkeg – but the question for the Polish workers is how to ignite it. Here the politics of glasnost being introduced from the USSR could play an important role.

While forces on the Polish independent left remain small, an expansion of the space for public debate could allow groups such as the Polish Socialist Party to become a significant factor. On the other side of the coin, the self-confidence and militancy of the Polish working class could have important repercussions on their neighbours in the Warsaw Pact.

Recent strikes in Yugoslavia and demonstrations in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union indicate the potential for the growth of political opposition in the stalinist states of eastern Europe.

*Patrick Baker*

## Building a Network of Union Solidarity

EVERY major long-running industrial dispute – such as the seafarers' and Vickers strikes has underlined the need for a network of activists building solidarity.

And in the year since the first steps were made at a conference in Leeds Trades Club to establish precisely such a Solidarity Network, the limited organisation that exists so far of ex-Silentnight strikers, printworkers and support groups has been able to do some useful work, particularly in support of the seafarers.

The task has not only involved raising cash and producing publicity, but also arguing politically that the lessons of previous struggles show the need to break the isolation of these strikes.

The Steering Committee has also been able to convince wider circles of the need for the Network, especially through its involvement in the summer Chesterfield conference.

Now the Socialist Conference is sponsoring this year's November 5 conference of the Solidarity Network in Leeds; this gives a

major opportunity to build support more widely.

The conference will spend the morning discussing the state of strike support work, followed by workshops on support work in different spheres including NHS struggles and engineering. There will be time for reports from the workshops and discussion on any constitutional changes and changes in the working of the network. The Steering Committee will put proposals for improving the Network's bi-monthly bulletin.

The August 13 planning meeting was attended by representatives of the Vickers strikers, who were keen to be involved in the conference and said that the Network was just what was needed for strikers.

While sectarian political currents like the Socialist Workers Party and Militant generally approach struggles of the working class simply as ways of trying to win supporters and make a few general propaganda points, *Socialist Outlook* supporters, some of whom are strongly involved in the Network, have a different attitude.

To us there is a continuity in the struggles of the working class, in which each major confrontation brings out all the problems of the class in facing up to the government.

By bringing those workers such as miners, printworkers, Women Against Pit Closures, and Silentnight strikers into involvement in present struggles we are constantly bringing in the lessons of their battles.

Fighting to break the isolation of sections in struggle and to develop working class leaders able to understand and combat the hold of bureaucratic union officials is essential work for socialists. Only in this way can we go beyond simple denunciation of betrayals to build the kind of fighting alternative we need in the unions.

*Anthony Johnson*

### Details:

Saturday November 5, 9.00 – 4.30, Leeds Trades Club, Saville Mount, LEEDS. Credentials: £2.00, £1.00, Strikers free.



Andrew Moore/Reflex

The Accord has brought no let-up in repression

# IRELAND: Thatcher admits "It's war"

THIS NOVEMBER sees the third anniversary of the signing of the Anglo-Irish Accord. For Britain the main expectation was that the Agreement would ensure the decline, if not outright defeat of the republican movement.

It was also hoped that it would initiate a process whereby the Unionists would agree to some minimal power sharing with constitutional Irish nationalists in a devolved parliament in the north of Ireland. Finally, it was hoped, the deal would further silence the nationalist rhetoric of the Dublin government.

Only in respect to this third aim has Britain made any progress, but even that victory has its qualifications for the British government and its loyal Labour opposition who supported the Agreement. For if the Dublin government is tied more to the apron strings of Britain than ever, then it is also the case that this collaboration is more obvious.

When the Haughey government extradited the political prisoner Robert Russell to the British at the end of August there were riots in Belfast, the first time in twenty years there has been such a response to actions in Dublin.

As far as the other two aims of the Accord are concerned, Britain has been even less successful. The Unionist intransigence remains, and Irish republicanism is an even more obdurate enemy of British imperialism than it was three years ago. So much is clear from the late August IRA attacks and the new British search for a 'military solution'. Responding to that search, Margaret Thatcher, in an interview with the *Daily Express*, said the British Army's 'rules of engagement' for the North of Ireland were the same as those for the Falklands War. That was an interesting slip-of-the-tongue.

It seems that the British prime minister is at last prepared to acknowledge that what is going on in Ireland is not a police action, not a campaign against 'godfathers' or 'criminals', but a plain and simple war. This, of course, is what Irish republicans have been saying for a very long time.

It is also obvious that the IRA have the capability and determination to be involved in this war for a further long time. Like all such struggles there are ebbs and flows, advances and setbacks; but Thatcher's boast that she is going to 'wipe out' the IRA is as much a fantasy as her claim at the time of

the hunger strikes that 'The IRA has played its last card'.

British policy, including the Anglo-Irish Accord, has failed ever to offer working class Catholics any evidence that the traditional British imperialist leopard has changed its spots. Even the minimal reforms offered by the supporters of the Accord – reform of the juryless courts, changes in the UDR, release of the Irish political hostages, the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four – have failed to materialise.

Instead, once more the talk in British policy circles is what further repressive measures are necessary. The discussion that has taken place on the reintroduction of internment centres simply on whether or not it would be effective.

There have been many attempts to reform the North of Ireland state, to make British presence there more acceptable to the Catholic working class. There have been just as many failures to do either.

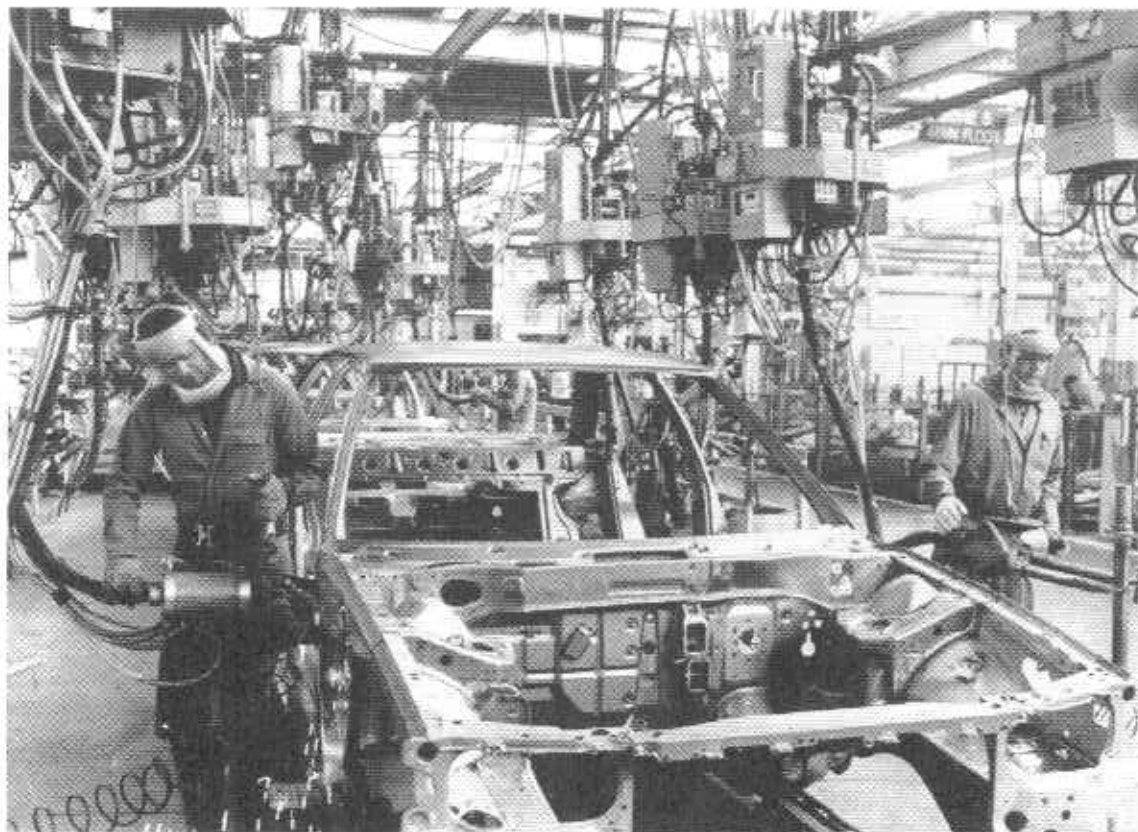
And usually these failures produce another round of repression. This will continue to be the pattern until Britain leaves and Irish national rights are, at last, secured.



Ana C. Gonzales/Reflex

Thatcher – applying Falklands' rules

Geoffrey Bell



P. Cavendish/Reflex

Cowley production line: small-scale operation would rule out latest technology

# Cowley:

## Fighting the forgotten closures

PICKING UP the papers or watching the television, you would not know huge job losses were going ahead at Austin Rover.

There are no statements from national Labour or trade union leaders: the only activity is 'local' talks at the threatened Llanelli and Cowley plants. This is no accident: the Cowley convenors, Ivor Braggins in the Assembly plant and Alec Morton in the Body plant have argued *against* a national fight. When Oxford Trades Council held a public meeting with TGWU deputy leader Bill Morris, the convenors condemned this 'outside interference'!

Quite the opposite approach is needed. The closures are both part of the Austin Rover Group's 5-year plan and the EEC agreement over the British Aerospace takeover. The EEC imposed certain conditions before agreeing to what was the most scandalous give-

away privatisation of any yet carried out by the Tories.

The conditions were that BAe/Austin Rover dispose permanently of their excess capacity, working to an upper limit of 500,000 cars a year. Only a specialist company could possibly survive with this scale of production. All the main manufacturers turn out over 2 million a year.

Large-scale production is needed to finance research, advertising and dealer networks; but most of all it is vital to utilise the latest technology.

Austin Rover is *not* a specialist producer. The replacements for the Maestro and Montego will be just normal mass production models. The more exclusive Rover 800 is already facing sales problems in its main target market, USA.

The fact is that the 5-year plan is just a stage in the process of closing Austin Rover. BAe cannot lose from this close-down. They have

picked up Land Rover and valuable sites (the Cowley site alone is worth the purchase price of the whole AR Group); they may even be able to sell off some surplus plant to Honda.

The only losers would be the Austin Rover workforce. The final steps towards Cowley's closure involve the transfer of models to Longbridge. Maestro production ends at Cowley next year; its replacement the AR8 is already being built at Longbridge. The Montego ends in around two years, and its replacement, if built, will also be at Longbridge. Around 7,000 Cowley workers stand to lose their jobs when these models finish.

Meanwhile virtually all present work at Llanelli is to be moved to Swindon at the end of next year, with the loss of 900 jobs.

All this shows that to fight such a national plan the unions need a national response. It is possible. AEU stewards at Swindon have said that they will not handle work from Llanelli unless the workforce there agree to it. Longbridge stewards have said they would lead a national campaign to get the AR9 built at Cowley.

However one problem is that the Austin Rover workforce has been so oppressed by years of dictatorial management imposing speed up, flexibility and mobility

of labour, and victimisation of stewards - from Derek Robinson (Longbridge) to Alan Thorne and Bob Cullen (Cowley) - that they lack confidence. The company have offered enhanced redundancy payments if the unions sign an agreement not to resist the job losses.

Under these conditions a strong lead is needed to build the resistance. Union leaders have offered nothing of the kind. There has not even been a union leaflet produced, and only one mass meeting in each of the Cowley plants; at the Assembly plant workers were not even allowed a vote on opposing the closure.

Though pressure in the Body plant forced a decision to oppose closure, senior steward Alec Morton complained mostly that redundancy payments were too low,

and suggesting a fight not against redundancy but for a 'last in, first out' policy.

The local talks are being stretched out and getting nowhere, while demoralised sections of the workforce, particularly older workers with the biggest offers in redundancy pay, have had a free hand to preach defeatism in the absence of any alternative from union leaders.

The only information available to the workforce has been coming from the Leyland Action Committee leaflets, which have been the subject of bitter attacks from union leaders of both plants.

These leaflets have argued for a build-up of the campaign, beginning with an overtime ban: all plants should refuse work from a threatened plant; and when any compulsory redundancy takes place, the plants should be occupied, combined with a national fight throughout Austin Rover.

Other car workers could also be won to a fight by Austin Rover workers. They are all threatened with 'Quality Circles', 'team leaders' and new shift patterns: in Germany the threat is Sunday working as management step up the offensive. A newly militant Cowley defending jobs could again become a beacon for car workers' struggles.

Anthony Johnson



## EETPU: the Outlook view

• Unlike several other currents on the left (*Socialist Worker, Militant, Socialist Organiser*) we do not think left wingers should stay in the Electricians' Union (EETPU) after its expulsion from the TUC: nor do we think this is the right lead to give to ordinary EETPU members. At a time when Eric Hammond is gloating at his success at grabbing the headlines and in getting out without losses, the fewer members that leave the EETPU, the greater his authority – and the more demoralising life will become for any militants trapped and isolated inside the EETPU's gerrymandered network of branches.

• While it is not wrong in principle to seek to form a new TUC-affiliated union, unlike some ultra-left sectarians (notably the Revolutionary Communist Party), we do not believe that the small

breakaway Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union (EPIU) should be built as a new 'left' union. Setting aside any assessment of the actual politics of the EPIU leaders, the new union will not be recognised by key employers, and lacks the numerical or industrial strength to force recognition. As such it is not viable – a gesture rather than a genuine trade union, unable to attract more than a relative handful of members.

• This is why we say that EETPU members who have not already done so should organise in their workplaces for a break *en bloc*, leading the biggest possible breakaway from Hammond's business union. They should join and become active in an appropriate TUC-affiliated manual union – preferably one already organised in the workplace and recognised by the employer.

P. Cavendish/Reflex



Willis and Kinnock hoping to reopen the door

• We say that TUC unions should be campaigning in every industry to recruit EETPU members to full membership – and put aside the pretence that former EETPU members in 'holding sections' will ever, in practice, be returned to the EETPU.

• We oppose the readmission of Hammond's scab union to the TUC – whether by the front door as a result of a new TUC capitulation to Hammond, or by the back door through an EETPU-AEU merger. The issue at stake is the defence of trade

unionism: only evidence that the EETPU has renounced its union-busting, business-union strategy could open the doors for its readmission.

• We call on unions and the labour movement to follow through the EETPU's expulsion by fighting to oust EETPU delegates from all trade union and Labour Party bodies, including Trades Councils, GMCs and stewards' committees as well as any joint meetings between unions and management.

John Lister

## Kurdistan slaughter

# Why Hussein is pushing his luck

AT THE end of the Iran-Iraq war it was the conventional wisdom that the belligerents could not afford to see their mighty armies return from the front and stick their noses into their regime's affairs.

In the case of Iraq's Saddam Hussein, no sooner had his most powerful divisions pushed the Iranian Revolutionary Guards from the Faw peninsula than he hurriedly sent them north to solve the 'Kurdish problem'.

Short of annihilating or displacing 4 million Kurds (20% of the Iraqi population) Hussein had to concentrate his wrath on their leadership, the Kurdish Democratic Party. Rather than engage the *pehmerga* Kurdish guerrillas, Hussein directed his army to sweep through the villages where the KDP is at its strongest, hoping to terrorise their population and forcing them to flee.

The KDP ordered large scale evacuation, and more than 100,000 walked into Turkey. Then, in hopes of accelerating this exodus, Hussein ordered his helicopter gunships to gas the fleeing families.

In a repeat of the gas attack on Halabja last spring, in which 5,000 Kurds died, another 1,000 Kurdish men, women and children were murdered.

Met by mealy-mouthed British shuffling or the more robust US condemnation, the latest genocide has created an international stir: why has Hussein had to take such a risky decision, which could yet prove costly?

Already his tough line on United Nations resolution 598, seeking to impose new conditions on Iran such as the return to Iraqi control of the Shatt al Arab waterway, has begun to lose him many allies who cannot understand his

stubbornness in bringing the war to a close.

These same allies are now increasingly keen to mend their relations with Iran: already Saudi Arabia has opened diplomatic bridges; most important, the 'Great Satan' itself, the USA, is on the point of renewing links with Iran.

In preparation for a reshaping of their Gulf policies, US imperialists are looking towards Iran rather than Iraq as the next theatre for superpower rivalry; and US chiefs are divided as to whether they need to maintain a costly foothold in Iraq.

A Bill passed last week through both the Senate and the House of Representatives called on the US president to enact 'military, economic and credit sanctions against Baghdad' (because of its genocide against the Kurds). This would reverse policies that have

allocated 1.2 billion dollars a year in loans to Iraq.

Hussein has been forced into his present high-risk course: the end of the war has opened a period of political challenge to his Ba'ath regime.

He knows that the working class will be waiting for major improvements to reward their 8-year sacrifices, which he can only hope to deliver if Iraq maintains and strengthens its position in the region.

In this context the attack on the Kurds serves several objectives: it punishes the KDP for supporting Iran and weakens the bargaining powers of the nationalists; it keeps the army busy and far away from internal politics; and it warns Hussein's paymasters – US, Saudi Arabia and the Soviet Union – that they had better not keep him out of any new arrangements for the region.

Jack Goldberg

# Bosses' bid to stamp on postal workers

IN THE 1987 General Election, Thatcher declared that because the mail service had the word 'Royal' in its name it could not be sold off. Instead the strategy, it seems, is to run the business down to a minimum service and allow the private sector to take up the slack.

Two things have to be done if this strategy is to be successful. Firstly the Union of Communication Workers (UCW) needs to be driven into the ground, and secondly the monopoly has to be lifted. So far the first has been reasonably successful and with the help of UCW General Secretary Alan Tuffin, management have been able to push through measures that have cut costs and massively increased productivity.

However over the last two years there has been a growing militancy and determination at the base of the union. This year there have already been 250 unofficial stoppages - the majority of which have resulted in victory for the postal workers involved. For many UCW members the sell-out over the shorter working week agreement last year was the last straw, and at the conference last May, Tuffin and the Executive had a rough ride

from motions put by normally conservative branches.

This determined mood has obviously worried management. Any threat to Tuffin is a threat to their overall plan. Clearly, they needed to inflict a large scale defeat at the

postal workers for refusing to handle mail from an office that was on strike.

Both sides were taken aback by the strength of the support and the solidity of the strike. Management clearly wanted a drift back to work

if an office received work from one on strike. UCW Headquarters would be contacted for instructions on moving it.

The green light was given for many local leaderships to organise a return to work, and despite a feeling of betrayal many workers felt they had little choice but to return. As more workers returned, the more militant offices stayed out, determined to gain something from the two week dispute.

Without the national support though it was inevitable that they would have to go back with little to show. Just days after the settlement was announced, five motions of no confidence were passed against Tuffin. As the casuals start to come in to clear the backlog (in some offices for the first time), many more such motions can be expected.

For the left in the union, there is a massive opportunity to build a fight against the collaborationist line of the union leadership, to challenge for positions at local and national level, to organise against casual and part time labour, to build support for offices that do take action, and to explain to members the strategy that lies behind management's actions.

*Ted Glenn*

**A union leader called Tuffin,  
Was given to huffin' and puffin',  
At the end of the day,  
The boss got his way,  
And Tuffin, the bastard, got nuffin!**

base of the union. The argument over the Difficult Areas Recruitment Supplement (DRAS) gave them an opportunity to attempt to achieve this.

The conference in May had thrown out this proposal and called for strike action to defeat it. Tuffin's main concern over DRAS however was not the agreement itself but that it had been imposed by management without consultation and negotiation with the union's executive.

He had little choice but to call for strike action in the hope that management would give him back his right to negotiate. Management quickly seized the opportunity to provoke a national strike through the use of casuals and suspending

earlier on, to isolate the more militant offices and hammer them.

As 100,000 postal workers downed letters and made preparations for a long dispute, Tuffin came up with an agreement which gave the bosses just what they wanted. He won his negotiation rights over DRAS - a very minor concession from management's point of view - and promptly washed his hands of the strike by telling local branches to negotiate a return to work on the basis of a 'back to work agreement' ratified by both sides.

Among other things, the agreement stated that casuals would be used to clear the backlog, that private contractors would be brought in to move mail, and that

## Hard right guns for soft Todd

THE UNANIMOUS vote of the Executive of the Transport and general Workers Union (TGWU) to support the Kinnock/Hattersley ticket for the Labour leadership has dealt a blow to the Benn/Heffer campaign and, by strengthening the new realists, to the labour movement as a whole.

A battle between the right and the left has been going on in the TGWU since Ron Todd beat George Wright for General Secretary five years ago, with bitter disputes at regional as well as national level over the appointment of Regional secretaries and complaints over balloting rigging. This was intensified when the

right lost their majority in January of this year.

With the TGWU Executive, however, the terms left and right are a bit misleading. The new 'left' majority includes the Ron Todd wing of the union who are within the political camp of new realism and have fought for the union to support the Kinnock/Hattersley ticket.

The left victory in the elections therefore was more a victory for the Todd leadership over the hard right, who have an organised grouping within the union with links into EEPFU business unionism, than a shift to the left against mainstream new realism.

The most serious blow for the right was the removal in the last elections of Executive Committee

chairman, and leader of the hard-right, Brian Nicholson, who was beaten by Steve Riley, a leftwinger from Fords.

Since his defeat Nicholson has fought to re-establish the hard right majority in the executive. His recent coup was to establish that Steve Riley was 48p in arrears of contributions when he stood against him in the election - a sign that the right are well connected, since they would need access to regional financial records to establish such a thing. The arrears are a technicality arising from the fact that Fords do not make check-off payments for union dues when an employee is off sick.

When the right wing raised this at the September meeting of the executive it resulted in what ap-

pears to have been a damaging 'quid pro quo'. Ron Todd upheld Steve Riley's union card and his position on the Executive, on the basis of past practice; but then, after the right wing had walked out in protest, the meeting, with only the 'left' in attendance, proceeded to vote *unanimously* for the Kinnock/Hattersley ticket.

There was never any possibility of the Executive voting for Benn/Heffer; but many had thought that a vote for Prescott was a possibility. Few, however, expected a unanimous vote for the 'dream ticket'. A real left alternative in the TGWU will have to be built on a much firmer basis.

*Alan Thornett*



## Poll tax: Scottish Labour bottles out

THE SCOTTISH Labour Party has failed to back a campaign for non-payment of the poll tax. So the campaign in Scotland moves into a new phase – while the Labour party has abdicated its responsibility to lead the movement.

In his address to the Scottish Recall Conference on September 17, Donald Dewar, Shadow Scottish Secretary, argued that 'a party which believes it will soon be in power and responsible for legislation cannot repudiate obligations under the law'.

It was clear however to the vast majority of participants that precisely by turning its back on a strategy which included non-payment the Labour party would undermine its own electoral support – not least in the forthcoming Govan by-election, where the Scottish National Party, standing on a non-payment ticket, are likely to win significant support.

Speaker after speaker arguing for non-payment demolished the arguments put forward by Dewar and the Executive. It was not a case of urging those already in financial hardship not to pay the tax, since many would not be able to do so anyway. The question was rather whether this would be a campaign of collective action led by the Labour and trade union movement, and therefore with a much stronger chance of success – or one which involved individual decisions – and individual penalties.

It is not a question that non-payment – or non collection – of the poll tax will result in local services being cut and local people suffering: rate-capping and other financial penalties imposed by the Tories have already led to the devastation of local government. Indeed the whole aim of the poll tax is to force local authorities into a cleft stick where they cut back services rather than allow the tax



John Harris/IFL

**Pole axed on the poll tax? Demonstrations are not enough!**

to reach a level which no one will be able to afford to pay.

Dennis Canavan, MP for Falkirk West, pointed out at an eve of conference rally that it was becoming increasingly clear that the Executive had no alternative to non-payment. The obstruction in Parliament had been tried to no avail. The Stop It Campaign had not succeeded in its objective. All that was being proposed now was to wait until the unpopularity of the tax ensured... yes you've guessed!... the return of a Labour government.

Neither the fact that such passivity would result in a loss of support, nor the fact that millions were suffering was taken on board by the Labour leadership.

But while the speakers arguing for non-payment – and in some cases different forms of non-collection as well – won the arguments, they did not win the votes. Although TGWU, NCU and a number of smaller unions supported a form of non-payment, the bulk of the block vote lined up with the Executive. By a two to one margin the Executive statement was carried and the demand for a non-payment campaign thrown out.

The mood amongst activists following the conference however was one of anger, not despair. Following the conference, the 'Committee of 100' individuals pledged

not to pay the tax was launched, involving MPs Maria Fyfe, Dick Douglas and Jim Mcallion and a whole swathe of local councillors, trade unionists and others.

It is clear that there is mass base of support, with hundreds of

households in Govan displaying anti-poll tax posters. The campaign in Scotland still has a strong possibility of success – but it is a tragedy that the Labour party is choosing not to lead it.

Theresa Conway

## Fight the poll tax – Fight the witch hunt!

*Militant* supporters in Scotland have been instrumental in building the fight against the poll tax, arguing correctly for non-registration, non-collection and non-payment.

But while these demands have gained resonance amongst many activists, the sectarian manoeuvres of *Militant* supporters in taking over the newly formed Strathclyde Federation of Anti-Poll Tax groups has eroded the possibility of united campaigning against the poll tax, and strengthened the hand of the witch hunters.

James Dunachie, Labour MP for Pollock has called in The NEC to investigate *Militant* supporter Tommy Sheridan. In Govan, *Militant* supporters have been removed from the by-election panel to make sure that a candidate who supports the leadership will be selected. Meanwhile *Militant* supporters refuse to take any initiative to oppose these attacks, confining themselves to chanting 'You can't expel us all'.

Sadly it looks as though *Militant* has learned little from nine years of Thatcherism. All the mistakes of the fight against rate-capping in Liverpool look set to be repeated. There, too, *Militant* supporters were in essence arguing around the right slogans, and had a mass base of support – but threw away potential for victory through their sectarianism which alienated so many allies.

The left in Pollock, through the embryonic Campaign Group are pressing the CLP to renounce the investigation and concentrate on building opposition to the poll tax. This must be supported by socialists throughout Scotland, in Wales and in England.

# NHS: Nurses on the road again

## When is 'A' grade not a grade?

EMPTY WORDS, broken promises, and the devaluation of the work of dedicated staff: these are the reasons why thousands of nurses across the country have been protesting since August.

Last spring, buffeted by strikes in February and March, the Thatcher government set out to win a breathing space by saying it accepted and would implement the findings of the nurses' Pay Review Body.

This included two elements: a basic pay increase, to be followed by further increases from a grading exercise to reward nurses more fairly for the work they actually do rather than simply for their paper qualifications.

This regrading was bound to be complicated: it involves assessing the work of 520,000 nurses for the first time since 1948. But despite real weaknesses in the formula, it could have been a step forward, if carried out honestly, compensating many overworked nurses for extra duties at present unpaid.

Instead, the grading exercise has been a farce. Management in many health authorities have tried to force nurses wholesale onto the lowest possible grades in order to hold down their wage bills. Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke has hinted darkly that in the name of 'fairness' he will intervene to push back any health authorities which he judges to have been too generous in grading their nursing staff.

Press attention and Clarke's comments have focussed solely on disputes affecting relatively few ward sisters and top grades: but thousands of nursing auxiliaries who shoulder unpaid extra daily responsibilities are being forced onto the bottom grade 'A'.

Grievances and appeals are being clocked up by the hundred, and the whole set-up is a recipe for chaos.

On September 22, angry nursing auxiliaries at Normansfield Hospital in Twickenham staged a one-day strike as a prelude to sustained 'work to grading' action in protest at being collectively

As the Maudsley strikers pointed out, none of the regrading can be fairly done if extra government money is not made available to pay nurses their increases. The £803m set aside for this in April is clearly insufficient - yet Clarke, Currie and Co. are now retreating from any commitment to fund the

ready other estimates are even higher - as much as £360m

If this money is not provided, health authorities will be forced to make more cuts and bed closures - creating a new autumn crisis: £200m is the equivalent of up to 20,000 beds closed across the country - four times the number axed in last autumn's crisis wave of closures that kept the NHS in national headlines throughout the winter.

Nurses don't want their pay increase paid for by cuts: neither do the general public, who consistently show their support for the NHS and for nurses who fight to defend it.

However the union response is weak and divided. While the 'new realist' NUPE is afraid above all of any industrial action and is seeking a common front with the no-strike Royal College of Nursing, COHSE leaders lack Tom Sawyer's ruthless NUPE bureaucratic strike crushing machine and have allowed their rank and file a little more leeway. Hence it has been COHSE members on the ground who have so far made the running in local protest stoppages.

The radicalisation of nurses around pay issues so closely connected to cuts in service gives new opportunities for those on the left who have missed previous chances to get involved in health campaign work. Now is the time to step up the

fight for unionisation of nurses, and arguing the case for industrial action wherever necessary to defeat cuts, closures and attempts to renege on the pay settlement.

A looming autumn of struggle must see links made with health unions and the building of an active fightback in each locality to defend our NHS.

Harry Sloan



lumped into grade 'A'.

Nurses at the Maudsley psychiatric hospital in South London have also staged a 12-day strike over the grading issue, complaining both over the slow and inadequate implementation of the deal and the fact that the government has not yet pledged to underwrite the full cost.

full cost of the pay awards, arguing there can be 'no blank cheque'. Regional health chairs have now estimated that they will need an extra £200m just to cover costs of the pay deal: their guess is certain to be too low, since it will include tens of thousands of gradings which are already contested by the unions and subject to appeals. Al-

## Labour' Policy Review: a reader's guide

# The individual road to socialism?

What have Labour's gurus been cooking up in their 'Policy Review' think tanks? THERESA CONWAY wades through the verbiage to give you a potted version.

Few readers of *Socialist Outlook* will have read the Labour Party Policy Review – and we certainly wouldn't recommend it to cheer you up.

However it is an important document; codifying and developing the ideology which Kinnoch and his cohorts have embraced. It will dominate this year's Labour Conference and discussions in the party over the next year.

It proposes to junk many of the party's more radical commitments – and prepares the ground for ditching the rest by next year. Since it is always easier to defeat an enemy when you know what their strategy is, we will try to give a round up of its most central points.

The first things that hits you about the document apart from its size and tedious language are the incessant references to the rights of individuals. Linguistically this is balanced by constant references to the community, but ideologically there is no balance at all. 'Community' is a very weak and ill-defined term under third term Thatcherism; 'individual' is not. So we are constantly told that Labour must be the party of individual choice – and while this should have certain limits, the docu-

ment is fairly vague as to what these should be.

We are told in the paper on Consumers' Rights that the market is the most efficient way of distributing many goods and services although the authors do concede that it restricts choice to those with resources. Here, as elsewhere, the report seeks to steal some of the Tories' political clothes, by proposing, for example, that NHS patients should have 'greater choice' – over GP's, consultants and the timetabling of operations. All this presumes an NHS able and resourced not only to cope with existing demand, but carrying surplus capacity to allow free choice for any patient. Like so many other ideas in the document, this is completely detached from any policy to finance such developments in the NHS. The Tory solution – offering a 'choice' of NHS queues or private treatment – is much more coherent than this half-baked 'alternative'.

Of course it is true that the public sector is not totally receptive to social needs, particularly of the most oppressed; but time and again the 'solutions' proposed are totally bankrupt. Improved service delivery can only develop as a result of discussion and co-operation between organisations of users and workers – not



P. Cavendish/Reflex

**Kinnoch: half baked alternatives**

through measures which relate to consumers as individuals and ignore workers completely.

We discover, in the section on Economic Equality, that the problem about the benefit system is that it was not devised to deal with the present level of unemployment – but we are told precious little about what Labour intends to do to create more jobs. Even the pathetic measures contained in the Manifesto for the last General Election are absent, and it is clear that 'full employment' has been subtly redefined by new realists shrinking from the scale of the problem to be confronted.

'People at Work' proposes that employees, whether in unions or not, should have the right

## New realism or old pipedreams?

### Throwing in the towel on the economy

**Just as Nigel Lawson's boom heads for bust, Labour's leaders have abandoned even the pretence of a radical alternative.**

The authors of the Policy Review section that deals with the economy come to the point pretty quickly:

'Economic success in the 1990s,' they claim 'requires a new approach to the central question of how best to help the companies, the entrepreneurs, the risk-takers, the managers, the workers ... to meet the challenges of the next decade'.

So there we have it – the working class comes fifth in line, after entrepreneurs and risk-takers. The only people to get a lower ranking than workers are scientists, technologists and trainers. These are the very people, presumably, who are going to have a major role to play in the new high technology, high investment economy which the authors envisage.

Labour's plan for the economy consists of a Medium Term Industrial Strategy made up

of a policy of 'steady expansion, competitive exchange rates, and low inflation' together with 'structural measures that ensure a modern supply response'.

This, coupled with measures to deal with regional imbalances, and the question of the EEC after 1992, makes up the response of the much-heralded policy review to the present crisis – unemployment, a rising balance of trade deficit, a much reduced industrial base and a level of manufacturing output which is not even as high the 1979 level.

Some of you may be thinking at this very moment that these measures sound a bit familiar. You would be dead right. This is nothing more than a mish-mash of Keynesian expansionism and a set of supply side policies which although inoffensive, perhaps even worthy, are hardly capable of dealing with the crisis. It is a recipe for another Wilson-style failure in government.

For instance the document correctly identifies one of Britain's major problems as a lack of investment. However instead of committing the next Labour Government to nationalise the

banks and finance houses to resource a full scale socialist investment programme, it makes vague references to 'establishing a sound balance between finance and industry', by some unspecified means.

Most telling of all, however, is the section on social ownership. Apart from the concept of 'public interest companies' which will be monitoring on the question of consumer affairs, investment and pricing policy, the rest of the section is familiar. It carefully avoids nationalisation. Perhaps it would be fairer to say it almost rules out sole state ownership and proposes instead a variety of measures such as minority and majority shareholdings, workers' collectives, share schemes and workers' co-operatives.

The document is a product of the acceptance by most of the Labour leadership of a Thatcherite view of the economy – an acceptance that is maintained despite all evidence of the daily worsening of the crisis. In this sense it fails even its own limited terms: it is neither new nor realistic.

Jean Reilly



to elect representatives who will participate in joint decision making. This, it says, will increase motivation and company efficiency. And of course as so many workplaces are non-unionised it is necessary, it claims, to involve non-union members. The authors claim that these moves will complement collective bargaining: in fact their effect, if not their aim, would be just the opposite – to undermine trade union strength, extending 'trade union'-type recognition and rights to non-union members.

On the question of legislation the document reiterates Labour intention to repeal only part of the Tory's anti-union laws. It condemns sequestration of assets, use of ex-parte injunctions and protection of scabs from disciplinary action by unions after they defy a ballot strike vote.

But it asserts that it will strengthen the role of ACAS, and enshrine in law the 'right' to a ballot before a strike as well as membership participation in the election of union executives. It wants to tinker with, but not throw out, the rules around secondary action, by making it harder for companies to win court orders banning such action by dividing up their firms artificially.

It is true that there has been some contention on these matters within the policy review group itself, and that there are a series of resolutions to party conference that would improve the review. However it is likely that the basic approach will be upheld. The most weighty resolution to conference, from the TGWU, certainly doesn't reject the current proposals. Its main worry seems to be on this question of worker/management forums and it proposes greater stress be given to securing union recognition rather than developing 'alternatives' to collective bargaining.

It is clear from this, as well as from the many resolutions to party conference on the question of reform of the block vote, that the left needs to go on the offensive on the question of trade union democracy. On the one hand, we cannot condone in any way proposals for the state to interfere in the internal running of the labour movement. But on the other hand, it is clear that there are major problems about the lack of involvement of trade union members in effectively determining policy or electing officials either within the unions themselves or in relationship to the Labour Party.

The section of the Policy Review which deals with international questions is at least open about its failure to deal with a whole array of key questions. On nuclear disarmament it is virtually silent, other than to say that the outcome of US-Soviet negotiations will have a profound effect on Labour's future policy.

Looking at the number of resolutions to party conference supporting unilateralism, it is clear that the leadership is correct to recognize that this will be one of the most difficult aspects of existing policy to overturn. But the backdrop is here in this report, which emphasises the place of defence in Labour's foreign policy and in particular upholds the role of NATO, which it claims improves 'relations East and West'!

The issues which are supposedly dealt with 'in depth' in this section of the Review are Aid, Development and Debt, Southern Africa and the EEC. On the first of these, the key section



Bryan Gould

talks about developing trade 'which will create jobs in Britain as it improves lives in Africa, Asia and Latin America. From such a neo-colonialist starting point, no socialist foreign policy could conceivably be developed!

On Southern Africa, while correctly supporting sanctions, nothing is said about the role of British capital in supporting the Botha regime, let alone any proposals for labour movement action now against apartheid. On the EEC, the document makes explicit what has been clear for some time: there is no longer a commitment to withdrawal. Instead we are told that 'Britain could not withdraw without huge damage to our economy and ruined relations with key trading partners'. It is critical of the unified market and other aspects of the Community's economic policy, but puts forward no clear alternative.

It is noticeable that a number of key political questions are completely missing from the

review. The question of Britain's occupation of the north of Ireland is absent – although the Labour party has just issued a separate document in which it upholds the Unionist veto.

On women's rights, while the commitment to the Women's Ministry is affirmed and some gestures are made in the direction of existing policy, the central issues of abortion and contraception are omitted.

On racism, the document has little to offer, other than to waffle about supposedly 'non-discriminatory immigration controls'!

While there is a commitment to repeal of Section 28, the review seems to draw back from existing party policy to end all legal discrimination against lesbians and gay men.

And the review offers no solutions to deal with the depth of the economic crisis or to alleviate the suffering imposed on the working class by Thatcher's policies over the last nine years.

There will be debate on a number of these key questions at Labour party conference. But the ability of the left to turn back the tide of new realism will not be decided on conference floor. Our ability to build mass campaigns, whether around defence of the NHS, opposition to the Poll Tax, against Section 28, or around the closure of Cowley will be more significant in determining the long term relationship of forces.

In particular, it is vital to build the Chesterfield movement as a force for both discussion and action, bringing together activists inside and outside the Labour Party and pose a real challenge for leadership, organisationally and politically, in the party, in the trade unions and in the single issue campaigns.

Wayne Edgington

## "Bring out your Shibboleths"

JANE WELLS tries to work out what is new about Labour's latest policy review

**SHIBBOLETHS are very important in the Labour Party these days, and every Labour Party member ought to know what they are.**

The dictionary says they are the 'old fashioned and generally abandoned doctrine or formula of a party or sect'.

So when the *New Statesman's* editorial recently urged Labour's policy revisionism in the Policy Review further, on to new heights, 'away from Labour's internal squabbles towards the concerns of the electorate: away from worn shibboleths towards fresh thinking about basic issues....' I decided to check out these shibboleths.

What first threw me was that the supporters of the Policy Review seemed to think that there were so many shibboleths about, I

couldn't find many doctrines or formulas which had been around long enough to get old fashioned.

Take the collective ownership of the means of production – 'Clause Four', always more fudged than fundamental to party policy and now under renewed attack from Kinnock's market forces socialism.

In 1961 Labour had just lost three elections in a row. There had been witch hunts of the left. The hierarchy were 're-examining' some of the party's founding principles, including links with the trade unions, and were asking themselves if the working class really existed any more. There was a Liberal revival and there were moves to form an electoral alliance with them.

# Hammond out – but TUC right wing rules

**EXPELLING the Electricians' union (EETPU) from the TUC for breach of the Bridlington Agreement is like kicking PW Botha out of a social club for poor table manners.**

Compared to the conscious strikebreaking actions of the EETPU at Wapping and its increasing role as a convenient tool of anti-union employers, the fact that Eric Hammond's men beat rival bureaucrats to a few single-union deals and 'poached' a few members of other unions is a total irrelevance.

By refusing to address the outrageous union-busting role now being played by the EETPU, and carrying through their expulsion purely on the most bureaucratic niceties of a widely-disregarded agreement, this year's TUC Congress ensured that even with the departure of the hard right's guru there would be no real political break from collaborationist politics.

Indeed Hammond's closest co-thinkers, the AEU leadership, remain key voices in the TUC hierarchy, while plotting their own merger with the EETPU.

Nor is there much substance to the mainstream 'left' alternative. While Ron Todd cast the TGWU's decisive block vote in favour of expelling the EETPU and later in favour of TUC withdrawal from collaboration with Norman Fowler's outrageous 'Employment Training' (ET) scheme, he was at

the same time manoeuvring behind the scenes to deliver the unanimous vote of the union's 'left' Executive members in favour of Kinnock-Hattersley for Labour's leadership.

And as Fowler aimed to exploit divisions in the TUC by promptly putting the boot in and closing down the Training Commission, on which some TUC bureaucrats liked to sit with employers and government, it was Todd himself who led the pack of union chiefs in the hunt

The party leadership then mounted an attack on two main fronts: Clause Four (they wanted to delete it from the constitution); and the unilateralist defence policy just passed by the Party Conference (they pledged to 'fight and fight again' to reverse it).

They were hampered by a temporarily unreliable block vote (the TGWU was left-led), so they compromised on the first with a fudge, but won the second. A new defence policy, 'Policy for Peace' was drawn up jointly by the NEC, TUC and PLP for 'consultation' in the party and the unions. The right began to organise around it, through the 'Campaign for Democratic Socialism'. Their policy document was accepted by the next party conference, and the witch hunt of the left continued apace.

But there had already been a good deal of revising – of the content of Clause Four – before it ever got onto the party membership cards.

In 1918, to be exact.

It was the first resolution to be debated at the first conference of the Labour Party proper, after it had adopted the constitution that survives almost intact today. It concerned the rebuilding of the economy after the war, and it proposed 'co-operation in production and distribution, the sympathetic approach to a healthy equality, the widest possible participation in power, both economic and politi-

cal, and the general consciousness of consent which characterises a true democracy.'

A left-wing delegate (already being referred to by the Fabians at the time variously as 'nonentities, fanatics, cranks or extremists') rose to object. He pointed out that the resolution failed to propose the control of the means of production by the working class.

Sidney Webb, founder of Fabianism, replied to him that since there was so much work to do and so many resolutions to be considered 'they did not want repeatedly, over and over again, to ring the changes on the old shibboleths'.

Old before their time and apparently failed – but never tried or tested; I reckon these shibboleths have just had a bad press!

Now, with Kinnock's team of bright young men listening to the media months before Labour Listened officially, it's not surprising that the series of policy documents published since the last Labour Party Conference (*Aims and Values* and above all the *Policy Review*) reflect policies for Labour advocated there.

Drop the unions. And unilateralism. Any vague notion you might have entertained about threatening capitalism. And package it properly too. Try calling it 'modernising' the party – that way perhaps nobody will notice it's the oldest trick in the book.



Strange kind of 'left': Ron Todd

C. Guanta/Reflex

for new 'trilateral' quango posts at European level after the new Single European Act in 1992.

Union leaders who seemed divided on some issues were largely agreed in ignoring the British class struggle, making no mention of fighting the huge job losses in Austin Rover, and giving only tokenistic support to the striking P&O seafarers. But they were most of all agreed that Euro quangos offer bigger and tastier free lunches, longer and more luxurious visits to fellow officials across the EEC: there were more motions tabled on the 1992 changes than any other issue on this year's Congress agenda!

The seal of new realism was securely affixed with the rejection of a resolution from the telecom engineers' union (NCU) calling for a policy of nationalisation. Instead a resolution from the acme of new realism, the GMB, was carried, which called for legislation to ensure 'consumer rights' from private corporations.

Despite a superficial 'left' garnish of resolutions reaffirming unilateralism, demanding a phasing-out of nuclear power, and as usual calling on Thatcher to impose sanctions against South Africa, there was no doubt that the hard right and new realists remain firmly at the helm, and long only for a chance to mend their bridges with the EETPU.

Two decisions however do offer campaigning openings for the left in the unions:

- The opposition to the ET programme should be used as a green light to build local and regional campaigns to expose the real nature of these schemes, keep them out of unionised workplaces, and fight to unionise those unemployed workers unlucky enough to be drafted into them.

- The decision to sponsor a national demonstration against the Poll Tax must also be followed up in every union and labour movement body in the fight for a serious campaign.

John Lister



# Black agenda for action

The *Black Agenda*, a detailed position document produced by the Labour Party Black Sections, is now available, adroitly timed to coincide with the run-up to Labour Party conference.

The *Black Agenda* aims, as the introduction outlines, 'to map out a policy framework which deals with the central issues of concern to our commitment like jobs, policing, immigration, Azania (South Africa), education and the inner cities.'

It has already been submitted formally to the Labour Policy Review. This is sure to please Roy and Neil no end. No doubt the document will be treated with the same sort of supercilious contempt one expects from Labour's ruling autocracy.

For those with more open minds, the main objective behind the *Black Agenda* is to revive a fruitful dialogue: 'It is not a comprehensive policy document written in stone. But we hope it will form the basis for debate among anti-racists inside and outside the Labour Party.'

Simply to have drafted it is no small achievement. The key thing about the *Black Agenda* is that it arises out of a practical and concrete movement with its own impact on the mainstream of the labour movement. It can only assist in promoting debate around the issue of black self-organisation and black caucuses.

The best way to review the *Agenda's* sections would be for people to read it themselves, so I will just highlight a few points and pose some questions on the role the *Black Agenda* plays in the current internal situation in the Labour Party.

In the early 1980s black and anti-racist activist politics tended to have their main emphasis on the most evident aspects of state racism – policing and immigration controls as well as racist attacks and employment discrimination. A negative spin-off from this largely healthy approach was the development of an over-simplified and sometimes demagogic 'anti-statism' amongst a significant layer of activists.

As a result, when Black Sections first emerged, they were regarded by some as being tainted not only by their involvement with the racist Labour party, but also by 'collaborating' with the chief enemy – the racist state, notably through local government.

The real world is rather more complex than this, even for revolutionaries. Indeed a major emphasis of Thatcher's third term has been seeking to end local government's redistributive role, forcing struggles to defend, extend and democratise state social provision. The particularly heavy impact of such attacks on the black working class makes the ultra-left 'anti-state' approach largely untenable, vindicating the Black Sections. Most black people cannot

afford to see local government the only area of the economy where significant shifts in employment patterns have taken place – disassembled.

The *Black Agenda* therefore concentrates in large part upon the implications of Thatcher's policies in the inner cities, where most black people live. It concentrates on building opposition to the next wave of Thatcherism, notably resistance to the poll tax (a colonial tax literally brought home), and calls for

'community based campaign groups linked with the labour and trade union movement and open to individuals, the churches and tenants' organisations.'

On education, the *Black Agenda* looks at the two major strategic options for black people – cultural nationalism or anti-racist coalition building.

In today's situation, where 'independent black' schools are sometimes practically posed as a solution to the racism of the state sector, the *Black Agenda* refuses to opt for this segregationist trap (the other side of the coin from Dewsbury school) deliberately set by the new right education lobby around the Freedom Association. It points out that:

- in practice independent black schools would be ethno-religious 'they mean Afro-Caribbean, Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh schools and not black in the political sense';
- private financed or opted-out religious schools would only cater for a better-off elite;
- and religious schools have a narrow curriculum which restricts children's development, notably girls.

The inegalitarian strategy of independent black schools, which would leave the majority of black children trapped in under-resourced 'sink' schools is explicitly rejected 'as being divisive along ethnic and class lines and as an inadequate solution to the shortfalls of the state education system'.

Instead the *Black Agenda* opts definitively for the much more difficult route of fighting to integrate an anti-racist and trans-cultural model into the education system by self-organised caucuses of black teachers, parents and pupils.

On the international front, the *Agenda* concentrates on the three key anti-imperialist struggles around which Black Sections have agreed



Narendra Makanji, chair of Black Sections

to concentrate solidarity activity – Azania, Palestine and Ireland. Unfortunately this section of the document is weaker than the rest in terms of practical proposals.

The section on Azania (South Africa) is imbued with a black consciousness approach, and is heavily critical of the Anti Apartheid Movement. It takes up the thorny question of which organisations to support, and takes the stance that 'ultimately it will be for the people of Azania to decide which movement is to be their legitimate representative in government. We must not be bullied, lectured or cajoled into supporting just one group [i.e. the ANC] at this juncture.'

Lastly, where does this leave the future for Black Sections? The increased marginalisation of the hard left has also seen receding chances of recognition for Black Sections. In this situation the proposals floated by TGWU Deputy General Secretary Bill Morris – for setting up a Black Socialist Society – have emerged as an apparently attractive 'intermediary' objective.

If granted, such a Black Socialist Society would be a real advance: but as the *Agenda* points out, it hasn't even yet been discussed by the Executive of Morris's own union! The proposals have little chance of acceptance by Labour's leadership unless backed up by real pressure from a strong left wing and powerful Black Sections.

In many ways it is the *Black Agenda* itself which implicitly maps out elements of an alternative 'strategic' option for Black Sections, not least as part of the Chesterfield process, in which Black Sections are also involved.

Black Sections themselves now need to concentrate upon some sustained campaign work around some of the proposals contained in the *Black Agenda*.

Dave Palmer





C. Gantia/Reflex

# A Struggle Undefeated

It may come as a surprise to some people to see the Irish struggle bracketed with the struggle in France in May 1968, the Prague Spring, or any of the other popular mass student and youth uprisings in that year of revolutions. And yet the radical student and youth left, influenced by marxism, played a vital role in the beginning of the struggle in Ireland.

At that time there was a tiny marxist, perhaps 'proto-marxist', movement in the north of Ireland. A small group of young socialists in the Young Socialists Alliance in Belfast and a small group around Eamonn McCann in the Derry Labour Party. We were influenced by a small trotskyst group, the Irish Workers Group, based in London. Our political background and culture was formed not by traditional Irish nationalism but by international struggles: by our interest in solidarity with the struggle of black people in the United States; by the anti-Vietnam War movement;

by the tremendous example of Che Guevara and by the events in Paris in May. What was our relevance and importance to the struggle that began in Ireland?

In 1968, as the culmination of a series of developments, a civil rights movement was born. It was made up of differing elements. Some of them were simply disgruntled middle class catholics or nationalists; lawyers, doctors, civil servants, who were aggrieved at the fact that they could not advance in their professions. It was a genuine grievance. But they were immensely bourgeois, immensely cautious and immensely conservative. Into that came our tiny leftist movement but it had a tremendous catalytic effect.

Just to give an example of the interchange of ideas: the first civil rights demonstration in the north of Ireland took place on a Saturday evening in August 1968 from Coalisland to Dungannon, in County Tyrone. Our group of young socialists in Belfast went to that demonstration straight from Belfast where we had been holding a

demonstration against the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

When we arrived in Coalisland, we had a fight with the stewards of the march who tried to force us to take down our red flags and the flags of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front - which we were carrying - because we had spent the rest of that Summer protesting and holding meetings about the war in Vietnam. And to us, going on the Coalisland-Dungannon march was just the same thing as fighting against the American aggression in Vietnam, as fighting against the Soviet aggression in Czechoslovakia. They were all the same thing.

Even to the bourgeois section of the civil rights movement there was an international dimension. Quite spontaneously on that first march when they were blocked by the police, they sang what was to become the anthem of the civil rights movement: 'We shall overcome'. They had picked that up from the struggle of the black people in the United States, even the more conservative sections identified with that.

*The following is a speech given by MICHAEL FARRELL, a leader of the civil rights movement in Ireland in 1968, at a rally organised by Socialist Outlook to commemorate the events of that year. Farrell, a journalist and author of several books on Ireland is, in 1988, still a leading figure in the anti-imperialist movement.*

**"Our political background and culture was formed not by traditional Irish nationalism but by international struggles"**

But the demonstration that really marked the beginning of the civil rights movement was in Derry on October 5th – which was batoned off the streets; was on the television screens; and created a wave of indignation and anger right throughout Ireland and Britain too.

Now that march would not have been held without the Young Socialists and the Derry Labour Party, because the march was banned by the Stormont government and the Civil Rights Association – the umbrella body led by the respectable leadership – was prepared to call it off until we in Belfast and the Derry Labour party said: 'we'll go ahead without you and we'll have the demonstration', and they were forced to call it back on again.

Even then when we arrived in Derry, late, from Belfast, the leaders of the demonstration which had been blocked in the streets were telling the protestors to go home, they had made their protests.

It was the Young Socialists who, believing at that stage in confrontational non-violence, rushed up to the police and made clear that we would only leave the streets when we were carried off. They proceeded not just to carry us off but to baton us off and wash us off with water cannon. And that had the required effect, that did electrify the political situation.

Another element of the international dimension: the People's Democracy (which was the movement with which I became particularly identified) began with students from Queen's University who were outraged at the events in Derry and decided to hold a march to the centre of Belfast. They were blocked by the RUC and the student union leadership accepted this. But the mass of the students were angry and they decided, instead of going home, to march back to the University. And they held a mass democratic meeting.

They decided to constitute themselves an ongoing popular assembly, and they took the title: People's Democracy. They were directly expressing the influence of what they had seen on television from the Sorbonne. That's what gave them the idea to set up that type of structure. And that's also what gave them the courage to go out and repeat that demonstration – day after day after day – until they got batoned off the streets as well.

One further example: in December 1968 the then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Captain O'Neill, introduced a paltry package of reforms. And the leadership of the civil rights movement decided to call a truce on demonstrations. And we felt that

those reforms were meaningless and that to stop then would be to lose the momentum and the impetus of the whole movement. So we in the People's Democracy, of which the hard core was the Young Socialist Alliance, decided that we would go ahead with a march from Belfast to Derry on New Year's Eve 1969, the march that became 'The Burntollet march'.

Again there was a clear international dimension, an international precedent for that. The march was consciously modelled on the Selma-Montgomery march in Alabama in 1965 – which went right across the racist state of Alabama; dredged to the surface all the racist scum of the southern states of America and forced the passing of the Voting Rights Act of the United States. We hoped that our demonstration would have a similar effect. And indeed it did have a similar effect, because it dredged to the surface all the bigoted, sectarian scum in the Six Counties – but it didn't lead to the passing of a Voting Rights Act. It just led to more repression. But nonetheless it had a tremendous effect in spreading solidarity both throughout Ireland and internationally.

Even within the civil rights movement we drew a lot of our tactics and parallels from comparing ourselves with the state of the black civil rights movement in America. We compared the leadership of the Civil Rights Association to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference – the conservative leadership led by Luther King who, in retrospect I would consider a more radical figure than I did then. But we compared *ourselves* with the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee – the young radical section of the civil rights movement in America which pushed the struggle on when the older conservative elements were prepared to rein it back.

There were theoretical considerations involved too. The leadership of the Civil Rights Association in the north of Ireland was an alliance between the conservative catholic elements and the Communist Party, operating on the 'stages theory' and believing that the correct tactics and strategy in Northern Ireland were to slowly and gradually democratise the Six Counties and then build a movement towards a united Ireland.

We didn't believe that that was possible, partly because of what little marxist and trotskyist theory we had gained out of our connections with the Irish Workers Group and partly because that theory was confirmed in practice when we concluded that the Six County state was irreformable and there was no point in this slow stagist

approach – but that you had to confront the reality of the state head on.

So there was also the same sort of struggle going on between the Communist Party leadership with the stagist theory and the radical left as went on in France with the Conservative influence of the French Communist Party and the radical influence of the May student movement.

I said that just to restate the beginnings of the movement and the fact that socialist internationalism was a real thing then. It had real importance. It was due, through and through, to socialist internationalism that our small group of marxist-influenced students and young people existed and that we adopted the tactics that we did. And those tactics led to a confrontation with the state which did prove what had been to us a fairly abstract formula.

They proved in practice that the Six-County statelet was irreformable, because they demonstrated that once a movement developed which was capable of challenging seriously the sectarian injustices within the Six Counties – then that movement would be resisted by force.

It is very important in dealing with the present day situation in the North (where the news about the place is dominated by violence), to bear that history in mind. The origin of the violence was that a completely non-violent movement for civil rights (militant, but non-violent) was crushed by violence when in 1969 the B Specials and armed loyalist gangs were sent in to attack the catholic ghettos of Belfast in a reprisal for the fact that the nationalists in Derry had beaten the RUC out of their area. The state was using reprisals to try and break the nationalist population at that time. That is what introduced violence into the north of Ireland. That's what led to the IRA campaign.

There were mistakes made on our side. I think one of the biggest mistakes made in the last 20 years in the north of Ireland was the unpreparedness of the leadership of the left at the time – both our segment of the left of the civil rights movement and the then leftist leadership of the republican movement – to defend the nationalist ghettos against this type of attack. We didn't foresee it coming, we weren't ready to defend them. That led to a demand by the people for physical defence which was met by a split in the republican movement.

And because it was a leftist leadership of the republican movement which had pushed that movement in the direction of political action and then failed to grapple with the problem of physical defence in August '69 – it meant that the other

**"The Burntollet march was consciously modelled on the Selma Montgomery march in Alabama in 1965"**



section of the republican movement which developed as a result (the Provisionals) began with a very deep-rooted distrust of political action, and of left ideology. It began with a marked bias towards militarism – which was always present in the Irish republican movement but which was accentuated by the particular circumstances in 1969.

We moved then, after August 1969 and after the introduction of internment in 1971, to a situation where the forces of the state – which by that time had become the British state quite openly – threw everything at the nationalist resistance in the north of Ireland. Torture, internment without trial, jailings, beatings in police stations, shooting down in the streets – everything they could think of – and murder gangs and death squads.

The mid-1970s was the period when the loyalist death squads stalked the streets of Belfast and the rest of the north of Ireland with complete collaboration by the security forces.

This led to a situation where the resistance movement was virtually forced underground; they were forced on the defensive and it was a question of fighting for survival. In that situation unfortunately, the type of mass politics that we tried to create in the earlier period of the struggle became impossible to sustain. Also, the broader perspective of politics which was not restricted simply to the grievances of the nationalist minority or to a united Ireland – but which was

for a socialist republic and fighting for class demands – became impossible to sustain.

Perhaps more could have been done. But it was very difficult in that period. So the struggle was forced in to a fairly narrow focus of a nationalist struggle against British imperialism in the north of Ireland, a struggle which had a predominantly military character.

Changing circumstances and to some degree the continuing influence of what was by then a tiny left wing movement gradually re-asserted the value of mass political action – at least on issues like repression and against the treatment of the prisoners in the H-Blocks. Eventually the hunger strikes in 1981 opened up the situation again and created again a mass movement. This time a mass movement concentrated only in the catholic ghettos, but a mass movement nonetheless, which – while it didn't win the immediate demands of the hunger strikers – gave Britain its greatest blow in the north of Ireland since the fall of Stormont in 1972. And that has brought us up to the situation where we are today.

What is the record of the last 20 years in the north of Ireland? In some ways I've said that the focus has narrowed a good deal – and that's true. But on the other side there are tremendous gains that have been made. We began with a situation in the early sixties and late fifties when I was growing up, in which this partitioned sec-

tarian state had been established and had totally crushed resistance to it. The nationalist minority was supine, apathetic, cowed, fearful.

As a result of the struggle of the last 20 years, the institution whereby the British were able to maintain their control of the north of Ireland for 50 years with very little trouble – the Stormont government – has been destroyed. And despite all their efforts, over the last 16 years to reconstitute some sort of an institution, a local government institution in the north of Ireland which would stabilise the situation there – they have found it totally impossible to do so. So that left an unstable situation that the British government is not able to control.

But probably a greater gain than that, is that the minority population which was cowed and broken is no longer so. They have come off their knees. A whole generation of people have gone through prison camps, shoot-to-kill policies and torture – and have come out the other end steeled by that process, more determined than ever to fight on, and determined to fight on with a wider horizon.

Because the ideas that were implanted in the 1968-71 period – the wider ideas of internationalism, though they were forced below the surface – were germinating and they have begun to sprout now. The republican movement has moved considerably to the left. There is a conscious internationalism now in the ghettos of the north of Ireland;

***“We didn't foresee it coming, we weren't ready to defend them”***

***“the continuing influence of what was then a tiny left wing movement gradually re-asserted the value of mass political action”***



Alongside that you can't really speak about 1968 in any of the places where there was a mass upsurge without saying that anyone who lived through that and fought through that would never forget the experience of mass popular struggle. People were prepared to sacrifice anything in that struggle. Anybody who has seen that happen can never again feel despair, because you will always know that when the situation comes again, when there is a mass upsurge again, the people have the courage, they have the determination, they have within them the capacity to fight. That was probably the greatest gain: the liberating experience of struggle. The giving to people of a sense of their own power.

Out of that struggle, no direct thanks to the leadership (particularly to the male leadership) at that time, came a lot of other developments. It was one of the things that gave an impetus to the development of the

women's movement. It also gave an impetus to the development of community politics.

Alongside the hardened politicised cadres of the republican movement today, you have a feminist movement and a community movement.

You have the capacity for building something broader again and widening the horizons that were forcibly narrowed by the aggression of the state in the mid-1970s.

I don't believe that the military struggle of the IRA alone can win this battle in the north of Ireland. I think increasingly they don't believe that either. I think it can only be won by a mass political struggle – not only in the north of Ireland, but by moving the mass of the working class in the south of Ireland and the mass of the working class here in Britain and, of course, in other countries as well, but Britain particularly since it is the immediate source of the aggression.

We have an enormous privilege – 20 years later we are still here, the

struggle in the north of Ireland has not been defeated. It is the first time in the history of that state that a struggle has been carried on for this length of time and has not been defeated. We have the privilege of being able to look back, to learn from our mistakes and to try to build again.

I believe that socialist internationalism played an important part in the beginnings of that struggle and it can play an important part in its conclusion, because the struggle will only be concluded with the support of the working class in Britain, in other countries in Europe and in the United States. At the same time, as and when that struggle is completed it will be a contribution, particularly, to the struggle of the working class in this country. Who could deny that a defeat for British imperialism in Ireland would shake the hegemony of the British ruling class to its foundations as well?

# Irish women: fighting on two fronts

*No account of the 20 year history of the Civil Rights movement in the six counties would be complete without recording the massive participation of women in the demonstrations, the creation of no-go areas, the prisoners' struggles, and issues such as housing, trade unions and the armed struggle itself.*

**The interaction between the Civil Rights Struggle and the activities of the organised feminist movement that exists in Ireland is the theme of this interview with SUE PENTEL, member of People's Democracy (Irish section of the Fourth International). Sue is a founder member of Women against Imperialism, and an activist in the feminist and trade union movement.**

*Q: Is the Irish Women's movement a new feature?*

**A:** Irish women have always played a prominent role in working class and anti-imperialist struggles. Individual names are well known:

Anna Pamell, Maud Gonne, Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, Constance Markiewicz. Less well known is the importance of their work to the struggle as a whole in organisations such as the Ladies' Land League, Inghinidhe na hEireann (daughters of Erin), and Cumann na mBan.

They were involved in such work as the revival of the Gaelic League, the organisation of the Patriotic Children's Treat (a protest against Queen Victoria's visit to Ireland at the turn of the century), the 1916 rising and the Civil War.

But there were also women's struggles in this period: the struggle for the vote carried out by the Irishwomen's Franchise League and Inghinidhe na hEireann produced the first-ever Irish

women's paper, *Bean na hEireann*. This group of women saw their battle cry as 'Freedom for our Nation and the removal of all disabilities to our Sex'.

There have been feminists active in Ireland in the past: what is new is the breadth and scope of the development of the women's movement that emerged in the late 1960s and which despite its weaknesses, has had a massive impact on Irish society.

*Q: Has partition created division in the women's movement?*

**A:** The short answer is yes. It is much more difficult to build unity in two different jurisdictions, particularly in a situation where women are under attack.

In the south, women have been attacked economically and socially because of the cutbacks of the Haughey administration, and have been defeated on issues of reproductive rights by the right wing - SPUC and their allies.

In the north, women living in the occupied six counties face a whole spectrum of problems - harassment, state violence, imprisonment, poverty, housing - which on the face of it are very different from the problems of women in the 26 counties.

All of these problems stem directly from problems exacerbated by partition: the weight of the churches north and south; the backwardness of the economy; poverty and backward social attitudes.

Despite containing different currents, including reformists who are content to work within the confines of the two statelets, Irish feminism has attempted to organise at a 32 county level since the early 1970s, with a series of national conferences, a national unity initiative in the late 1970s, and national campaigns right up to the present day such as Armagh and Defend the Clinics.

So politically Irish feminists have had no choice but to face up to the problem created by partition; the development of an anti-imperialist current shows their ability to transcend these and begin to fight to build a 32 county movement of women fighting for their liberation.

*Q: Historically, there has been a very uneasy relationship between women outside the republican movement and feminists within it. Could you explain this briefly?*

*A: The involvement of women in the national struggle is part and parcel of that struggle. Only when feminists have been active and built a relationship with anti-imperialist women has there been joint activity and the opening of debates.*

The debates can be seen as a very healthy part of the process of develop-

ment. Perhaps the tension is best understood as a conflict about priorities: for a republican the priority is the war of national liberation, while for a feminist the priority is the struggle for women's liberation.

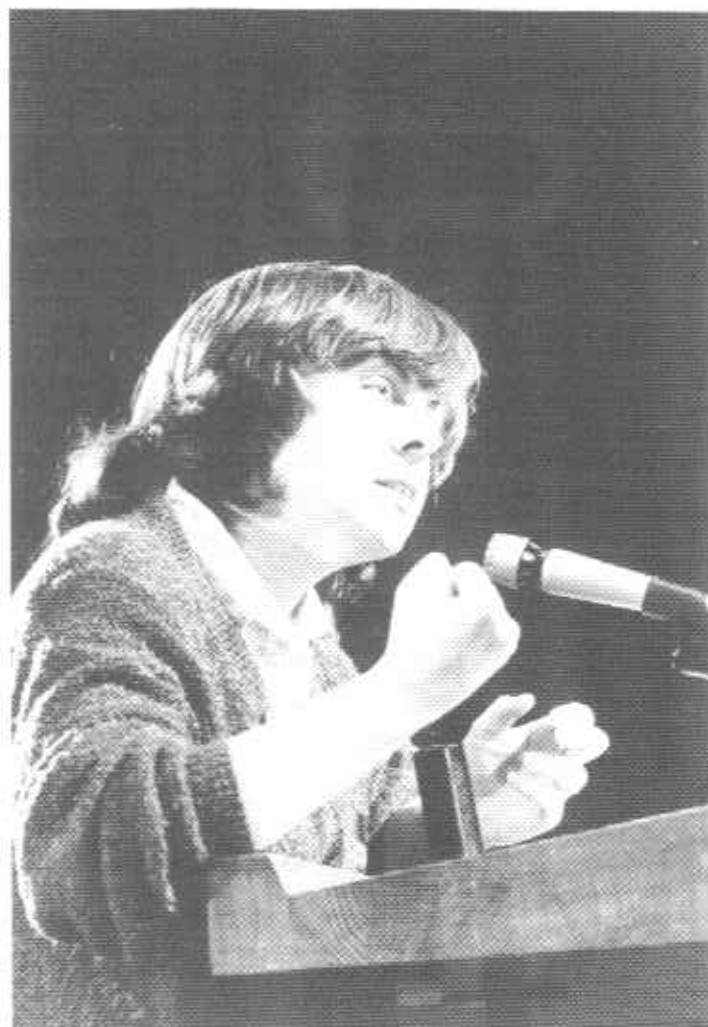
Historically these differences have emerged around different campaigns - the suffrage, the Armagh women, the Defend the Clinics campaign. Before the campaign around the Armagh women and the emergence of a 32 county anti-imperialist/feminist current, there was quite a high level of hostility in some sections of feminism against the idea of armed struggle. While this still exists among some small sections of 'feminists', many young activists of the 1980s have a general anti-partition perspective, and are interested in the political developments on women that have taken place in Sinn Fein.

The only way to resolve these tensions in a productive way is within an autonomous movement which openly debates how to build a 32 county movement of women. It cannot be resolved within one organisation or simply by asserting that socialists see the women's struggle as an integral part of the national struggle. The links between women's issue and the daily struggle must be made continually - and only a strong women's movement can do this effectively.

*Q: How did an anti-imperialist feminist movement develop?*

*A: The current developed on a 32 county scale out of the debate around the importance of the Armagh women political prisoners to Irish feminism.*

The debate was started by a group called Women Against Imperialism -



**Bernadette McAliskey**

a group founded by women who were both feminists and active anti-imperialists, and who recognised the importance of the leading role of women in support of the prisoners. When Women Against Imperialism started in the late 1970s most of the activists in the Relatives Action Committees were women. They marched, they picketed, they pushed the struggle forward - and yet their concerns as women were ignored, as were the women in Armagh jail.

Women Against Imperialism was directed at opening up the women's question inside the anti-imperialist movement as much as opening up the debate on anti-imperialism inside the women's movement.

In fact the campaign around the Armagh women had a profound effect on both movements. The debate on women in Sinn Fein and the creation of Sinn Fein's Women's Department, and the sympathy for the anti-imperialist struggle in the women's movement were the long term result.

*Q: How has the debate on feminism and nationalism developed?*

*A: The debate has gone beyond the question of armed struggle. In post-*

*People in Britain hear of individual women who hit the headlines, like Bernadette McAliskey or Mairead Farrell. They are only the outstanding examples of a whole generation of women who have thrown themselves into the struggle for their rights.*



J. Eickart/Reflex



Jo O'Brien/Format

Amendment Ireland, active feminists are concerned with survival and finding allies. Since its adoption of a progressive attitude to women in general, Sinn Fein is able to contribute to that debate and feminists within Sinn Fein need not feel so isolated.

Unfortunately because of the collapses of the organised anti-imperialist/feminist current in the women's movement during the hunger strikes the debate that started has not really developed very far.

We in People's Democracy see this debate as essentially about the strategy for building a 32 county movement and the need for this movement to be based on the working class and anti-imperialist movements.

*Q: What is the women's movement's attitude to Armagh (Magherry today)?*

A: There is still a small current in the women's movement that is hostile to republicanism. But the atmosphere in the women's movement has changed greatly in the last ten years. Most feminists now would be generally supportive of women political prisoners and concerned about issues such as strip-searching. When Mairead Farrell was assassinated in Gibraltar there was a wave of indignation inside the women's movement. The killing happened during International Women's Week in Belfast, when a large number of feminists from all over Ireland went to Magherry to picket in support of republican women in prison there.

On International Women's Day itself, a large meeting of feminists in Belfast's Queen's University unanimously observed a minute's silence for Mairead, who was also a student

at Queen's when she was killed; a public statement of outrage was signed by hundreds of feminists in Dublin the following week.

*Q: How do feminists relate to the war of national liberation?*

A: Aside from reformists and those who are sectarian towards republicanism, the right of the Irish people to take up arms would be generally accepted by feminist activists. Many of these women would recognise the need to fight against partition and to reunite Ireland.

There are differences on the type of actions that take place and the strategy that is necessary to defeat imperialism. But for many women the necessity for the armed struggle was illustrated during the hunger strikes, and thus the debate inside the women's movement of the early 1980s has moved on from the false 'feminism versus nationalism' polemics of the early 1970s.

The discussion now is much more about the role of women's questions inside the general anti-imperialist struggle; how women should organise; the importance of building an autonomous, independent women's movement; and the need for feminists to build progressive alliances.

This debate, vital for Irish feminists, is really only beginning. Interestingly, it is not only women who are discussing these questions, but these debates have also opened up inside other milieus such as Sinn Fein, the anti-imperialist movement as a whole, the trade unions where there is a strong group of feminists, and to a small extent the Irish language movement.

*Q: What sort of movement can be built compared to European or Latin American models?*

A: Because of the huge objective obstacles that Irish Feminism faces — the Church, the economy, partition, the struggle against British troops — there is a direct comparison with feminism in Latin America.

Irish feminism has much in common with small and scattered groups of feminists throughout Latin America, overshadowed as they are in many cases by massive social struggles involving women. Yet despite this the existence of Irish feminism is itself due to the strength and weight of the feminism movement in the advanced capitalist countries. There can be no 'model' for the development of Irish feminism: we must look at other experiences as a way of understanding our own problems.

There are no easy answers. Irish feminists face a unique combination of problems, some of the reminiscent of those of third world women, exacerbated by the ongoing British military presence; yet in a country which is in the heartland of Europe!

Our strategy must therefore be based on the realities of the situation in Ireland. We cannot afford to sit around and wait for a mass explosion of feminist consciousness as developed in Europe; nor can we simply expect that the fact of women's involvement in the armed struggle will *itself* bring automatic acceptance of the need for women's liberation. Only an independent movement of Irish women looking at their own concerns will be able to develop their own model of development, based on a 32 county anti-imperialist perspective.

**"the debate inside the women's movement has moved on from the false 'feminism versus nationalism' polemics of the early 1970s."**



# How to build a movement for withdrawal

In its capability to mobilise masses, in its success in raising political consciousness within its own constituency, in its ability to confuse and harass British imperialism, the Irish resistance has recorded many gains. But the twenty year struggle in Britain to 'make Ireland an issue' has, by and large, been a negative experience, recording no mass mobilisation, and very limited success in consciousness raising on the Irish issue, leaving a British political establishment which, despite opinion polls in favour of withdrawal, is unworried and untroubled by such sentiments.

Such a judgement is not an example of the dreaded 'new realism' of British socialism, it is an updating of an old realism. 'The English worker', wrote Karl Marx in 1870, 'in relation to the Irish worker, feels himself a member of the ruling nation', and few would deny that a similar sense of superiority, as well as an apathy as to what happens to the 'backward' Irish, remains a characteristic of British political and social culture.

With the exception of the British Labour Party for a few short weeks in the summer of 1920, no major British political party has ever supported unconditional Irish self-determination. Today this includes not just the major parties but smaller and more superficially radical ones like the Greens, and the Welsh and Scottish nationalists.

Both historically and contemporarily, even those which, on paper, have supported unconditional Irish self-determination, such the Communist Party in 1920-21, or the Socialist Workers' Party today, do so with an obvious lack of enthusiasm or low prioritisation in terms of day-to-day political activity.

The failure to build any semblance of a mass withdrawal movement in the last twenty years sees history repeating itself. Which makes the obvious

and most important point of all: that this is due to the enormous difficulties that have to be faced in trying to swim against a tide of chauvinist ideology and culture.

Nevertheless, it was not inevitable that things would turn out as disappointingly as they have.

An instant snapshot of the current stage of the withdrawal movement certainly does not show a lot to be proud of. The membership of the Troops Out Movement (TOM) remains small, the last three conferences of the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI) have seen a fall in attendance; and as we go into the 'Year of Action' those forces which are active on Ireland are, in some ways, more divided than they have been for five or six years.

This is most obviously illustrated by arguments about the 'Year', with the TOM and the Irish in Britain Representation group (IBRG) withdrawing from the organising committee for it, accusing the LCI leadership of undemocratic practices—among other reasons—and with justification.

The obvious truth is that twenty years on there is still not a united movement for British withdrawal. There is no Irish equivalent of the old Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, or the CND of today. There is not even an embryo of one. And that failure cannot be simply laid at the door of 'objective difficulties'.

There have been a whole series of false assumptions. Look at the examples of the Irish Solidarity Campaign of the early 1970s and its successor the early TOM.

The model for each was the anti Vietnam movement in the USA and the belief that Ireland would galvanise large sections of British society as the Vietnam War did in the United States. It was a simplistic parallel.

Perhaps if the British army had been a conscript one and perhaps if the body count of British soldiers in Ireland had been much greater, such a campaign could have built. But those circumstances were not and are not

likely to prevail, despite recent IRA successes. Therefore it was and is wrong to adopt a strategy based on building a movement on a 'Bring the Boys Home' sentiment, although such a sentiment could be a contributory factor.

The early 'solidarity' movement was also rather too obsessed at times with parading the purity of its slogans. The earliest one of the Irish Solidarity Campaign—'Victory to the IRA'—again copying the Vietnam model of 'Victory to the Vietcong' was used only to prove how 'revolutionary' those advancing it were.

The 'Troops Out Now' successor was also based on the Vietnam model, and was specifically advanced at the time to tie in with a projected 'Bring the Boys Home' sentiment. And yet, too often 'Troops Out Now' was erected as a barrier to the building of a movement. Anyone who did not agree with it, even to the extent of mildly qualifying it or adding to it could find her/himself denounced.

Many of those on the far left especially used 'Troops Out Now' not as a guide to building a movement but as a stick with which to beat those who did not agree with it. Which is not to say the demand in itself was wrong, especially when it was linked to Irish self-determination.

Certainly, those movements or campaigns on Ireland which did surface during the 1970s and were based on alternative slogans—such as pacifist campaigns for withdrawal or the 'Better Life for All' campaign achieved even less than TOM in terms of building a movement or mobilising public opinion. For, while Better Life For All attracted all sorts of paper support, receiving as it did the support of the TUC, it was heavily based on the lowest common political denominator, which is never likely to stimulate the active enthusiasm necessary to build a movement.

The death of Better Life For All coincided with the birth of the Labour Committee on Ireland. The LCI's most important achievements in the early and mid 1980s were those which

*A twenty year balance sheet of the current struggle for Ireland's liberation is positive. The same cannot be said of its 'support movement' within Britain.*

**GEOFFREY BELL** examines the history of Irish solidarity and outlines a strategy for building a movement for withdrawal which avoids the ultra left and sectarian errors of the past.

**"Unfortunately, over the last couple of years, the LCI leadership has neglected its grass-roots work"**

**"It should never be forgotten that in building a withdrawal movement we are taking on the material, political, and strategic interests of British imperialism"**

were based on support from within the rank and file of the party.

In 1984 an LCI resolution was passed at the party conference: the first (and, as yet, last) time this had happened to an Irish resolution opposed by the party leadership since 1920. This fact was in some ways more significant than the content of the resolution: a civil rights one including the demand for the end of the Diplock courts – which was the specific issue the party leadership opposed.

The victory at the 1984 conference was due to grass-roots campaigning of the LCI but also to growth of the left within the party – the Bennite movement – and the effect of the 1981 hunger strikes of republican prisoners and the mass mobilisation and the electoral support it produced in Ireland. All this helped to build a consciousness about Ireland within the rank and file of the party which the LCI and Labour Women for Ireland (LWI) have been able to utilise since.

The two most spectacular successes have been winning the regional conference of Greater London Labour Party to withdrawal and the national Labour Women's conference to withdrawal and opposition to the Anglo-Irish Accord. Such successes forced the leadership of the Labour Party to adopt a more radical approach to the north of Ireland than it practised when in government.

Unfortunately, over the last couple of years, the LCI leadership has neglected its grass roots work, certainly in terms of challenging the party leadership on Ireland, in favour of negotiating with sections of that leadership, albeit more junior sections.

What has been a recent positive development is the willingness of the LCI and the TOM to work together on specific ventures. There has been a third wing to this partnership: the Irish in Britain Representation Group, an organisation formed at the time of the hunger strikes, which campaigns for the rights of the Irish in Britain and which calls for British withdrawal from Ireland.

The birth and growth of the IBRG is significant. For if there is one ingredient to the withdrawal movement which has not been treated with the seriousness it has deserved it is the Irish in Britain. Only the Anti-Internment League (AIL) in the early 1970s made any sustained attempt to involve the Irish in Britain, and it is noteworthy that the biggest demonstration over the last 20 years was one called by the AIL, built through tours of building sites in London.

For this there are historical precedents. There have been many move-

ments and campaigns concerned with Ireland in this country since the Irish first came to Britain in significant numbers after the Famine, but those which have been by far the most successful – the campaign around the call for the release of the Fenian prisoners in the 1870s, the Irish Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain/Irish National League in the late 1870s and early 1880s, the Irish Self-Determination League (ISDL) of 1919-21 – were based either overwhelmingly or entirely on the Irish community in Britain. Each mobilised anything up to 100,000 working class Irish immigrants.

It would be silly to draw an exact historical parallel and say it is possible to build replica of the ISDL today, but both history and common sense suggests if a powerful, quantitatively impressive movement on British withdrawal is to built in Britain then the Irish in Britain will be a major component of it. This is all the more obvious given the growth of Irish immigration into Britain in the last few years, and a projected further growth of 500,000 by the end of the century.

What else can be said about the future shape of such a movement? The successes that have been achieved within the Labour Party underline the existence of widespread sympathy among the rank and file for British withdrawal from Ireland. That has yet to be utilised to its full potential.

And there are other parts of the labour movement which remain virgin territory for Irish work. For example, the annual conference of the Association of Cinematographic, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT), recently passed a Troops Out Now resolution. Although individuals within that union have done work on the Irish issue, the passing of this resolution was unexpected and was not really worked for.

There have been successes in other unions, most importantly in the National Union of Mineworkers, the National Union of Railwaymen and the National Union of Students, and in other sections of the Labour Party: the example of the women's conference has already been cited, and to that can be added Black Sections which have always in the past been very sympathetic.

To all of these can be added socialist organisations outside the Labour Party. The SWP and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) have principled positions on Ireland, and the RCP also has a record of activity. While many Irish activists are, quite rightly, critical of what they see as the sectarianism of these organisations, it would be answering sectarianism with sectarianism to

write them off or to try and exclude them from a withdrawal movement.

What all this argues is, that as well as sections of the Irish community, the other great muscle of a strong withdrawal movement of the future will be located within the labour and socialist movement. As far as the Labour Party is concerned it is probably possible to go further than that and suggest that it will be the left wing of the Labour Party which will be the most fruitful for Irish work.

Recently, for example, it has been the 'Bennite' wing of the party which has been the most receptive to the issue of Ireland. That can be contrasted with the much softer left/Kinnockite Labour Co-ordinating Committee which recently substantially overturned its previous position of calling for withdrawal.

Any worthwhile mass withdrawal movement must always seek to build beyond its traditional recruiting grounds of the Irish and the left. There has been some success in involving the leadership of the Young Liberals. More attention should be paid to the Welsh and Scottish nationalists, the Greens and various sections of the black and women's movements, but there is no material evidence to suggest that any of these, either separately or combined have the potential that the Irish community and labour movement have for building a withdrawal movement.

Accordingly, it seems safe to suggest that the majority of a future withdrawal movement, and its leadership, will come from these areas. For it should never be forgotten that in building a withdrawal movement we are taking on the material, political and strategic interests of British imperialism and its establishment.

This is why the vast majority of those within that establishment, including its members and servants within the Labour Party leadership and the labour bureaucracy, will never give such a movement the time of day.

And that, to return to the question of 'objective difficulties', is why the movement has been so difficult to build. But it is also why socialists need to take such a task a good deal more seriously than most have done over the past twenty years.

**"there are parts of the labour movement which remain virgin territory for Irish work"**

**Both Geoffrey Bell and Michael Farrell are contributors to an important new book on Ireland *Twenty years on*, published this October by Brandon at £4.95.**

★ Soviet Union ★

# GORBACHEV'S GAMBLE

What attitude should marxists take to the radical changes taking place in the Soviet Union? PHIL HEARSE offers some answers.

The emergence of a reforming wing of the Soviet bureaucracy, personified by Mikhail Gorbachev is one of the major events in world history since World War Two.

The stakes involved in the process which has been unleashed are enormous – for the Russian workers, for the Soviet bureaucracy and for world politics. It follows that the left has a responsibility to try to come to grips with what is going on, study events and eschew simplistic and partial explanations.

While not engaging in unreasoning condemnation, we also have to avoid cheap 'Gorbymania', which is sweeping sections of the left.

It is universally recognised that the Gorbachev project – perestroika and glasnost – is a response to the growing crisis of Soviet society; more precisely to the economic, political and cultural stagnation which has been more and more obvious throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s. What is the basic cause of this crisis?

The economic crisis is a crisis of the system of *bureaucratic central planning*, compounded by a budgetary crisis of the first magnitude. Economic growth rates have been declining, and the waste and inefficiency which this lumbering system gives rise to have become crippling. While the system evolved under Stalin and Khrushchev has guaranteed quantitative growth in heavy industry and the production of raw materials (in which the Soviet Union is especially rich) it has been unable to produce the innovative dynamism to maintain high growth rates and regularly to upgrade the *quality* of production. Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed* pointed out that bureaucratic rule inevitably produces economic inefficiency and inertia, and inevitably poor quality of production.

The Soviet crisis has been intensified by two factors. First, the United States has set out to deliberately financially cripple the Soviets through the arms race. The Soviet Union has devoted a much higher percentage of its GDP to defence than does the USA.

Second, the massive state subsidies on basic goods and services – housing, transport, food and so on – have also created a huge financial and budgetary burden. The latter was directly the product of the reforms of the Khrushchev era, which aimed at securing at least the grudging acquiescence of core sectors of the Soviet working class, through a combination of political repression and provision of cheap basic necessities.

Of course, the fact that the basics of life were provided cheaply did not make the bureaucratic regime after Khrushchev 'pro-

worker' – far from it. These concessions made to the working class on the economic front were a recognition of the enormous social weight of the Soviet working class, and were part of a strategy designed to secure the continued rule of the bureaucracy, by trying to avoid major outbursts of working class discontent. Nonetheless, the living standards of the Soviet workers remained far behind those in the west.

Gorbachev and the ruling wing of the political elite have now decided to make a break with the system as it evolved under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, although they are divided on the speed and extent of the reforms.

Their basic proposals are:

- To attempt a re-engagement of the Soviet economy with the world capitalist economy, in an attempt to develop trade, and to obtain advanced technology and economic assistance, on much better terms. This involves trying to obtain a new world-wide political arrangement with the capitalist west, a drastic shift in foreign policy.
- Perestroika – economic restructuring. This envisages the utilisation of market relations much more widely; the ending of job security and cheap basic goods for the working class; an attempt to assess the efficiency of enterprises through 'profit and loss' accounting; the establishment of a private sector of small and medium-sized businesses; the removal of a section of the *administrative* bureaucracy, although not of the *political* bureaucracy. Overall these proposals are aimed at shaking up





economic lethargy and the worst excesses of administrative inefficiency.

- Glasnost – the introduction of a limited political liberalisation, inside the party and outside, allowing more communication in society at large, and a degree – although strictly limited – of public political debate and argument. This also includes elections for some posts inside the party and state apparatus, and a limited term of office for some state officials.

Where Gorbachev's project has not created just mindless enthusiasm on the left, it has often generated perplexity. Is not Gorbachev's economic policy basically about the virtues of the market? And is not his foreign policy about more compromises with the imperialists? But then again, aren't his democratic reforms essentially progressive? How does all this fit together?

Before answering these questions, we should ponder exactly why Gorbachev and the team around him have introduced this particular combination of policies in the way they have. In our view the explanation is essentially the following.

First, Gorbachev's international policy, aimed at creating a new regime of international peaceful co-existence is premised on the idea that the only way to reverse the relationship of forces with imperialism on the political, military and economic fronts, is world-wide compromise – a new *modus vivendi* with imperialism. From the viewpoint of the bureaucracy this is quite logical: the only alternative would be to link themselves to broad currents in the international working class on the basis of anti-capitalist struggle. But after decades of stalinism there is not the basis of support and enthusiasm for the Soviet Union in the western working class; neither is the Soviet bureaucracy – which itself rests on containing the power of the Soviet working class – prepared to tie its fate to that of class struggle internationally, for obvious reasons.

Second, the introduction of perestroika and glasnost in one move, linking one to the other, is very significant. In other East European countries economic reforms have been tried without simultaneously making concessions to the working class, the intelligentsia and the technocrats on the front of democratic reforms. Gorbachev hopes to consolidate a social bloc which identifies his whole project with democratisation and supports it for that reason – despite the economic sacrifices which the working class is called upon to make. In addition, Gorbachev's advisors have correctly identified the crucial linkage between economic efficiency, technological dynamism and the free flow of information. It is impossible to have much scientific and technical dynamism in a country where most scientists are prohibited access to photocopiers for security reasons.

What, then should be the attitude of revolutionary socialists to the Gorbachev reforms, to perestroika and glasnost?

First, we should not go along with the basic thrust of Soviet foreign policy, even if it does put the cold war factions of the US government on the defensive, and show them much more obviously as the aggressors. It may be that there are aspects of the new Soviet foreign policy which lead to outcomes we can support – the INF deal for example, and perhaps other arms reduction deals.

Yet world-wide peaceful co-existence is certainly not socialist internationalism, championing of the oppressed or the international working class. In some ways it is the direct opposite – an even more narrow following of the state interests of the Soviet bureaucracy.

However, precisely because the new policy is based on a rigorous definition of Soviet bureaucratic interests, as opposed

to those of the international working class, it may in some instances collide with those of imperialism. For example, it is far from certain that the Soviet Union is prepared to give up all its military outposts and interests worldwide without very considerable concessions. Whereas they are quite *capable* of selling out the struggle in Angola or Nicaragua, there is no guarantee that they will do so.

As far as the economic reform is concerned, revolutionary socialists should note two things. First, of course Gorbachev's advisors do identify real and urgent problems – the crisis of bureaucratically centralised planning. But their solutions are not pro-working class, socialist solutions. The socialist answer is the democratisation of the planning process, the unleashing of the creative power of the masses, popular sovereignty over basic economic decisions – if you like, a national regime of workers' control.

Gorbachev's proposals are far from that. They are a reform of bureaucratic planning, which introduces some measures to end its over-centralisation, but above all introduces short and medium-term austerity for the working class. The implicit deal is that then economic rationalisation will create better economic conditions for the workers at some point in the future. Right now workers have to accept austerity. There is a good deal of conscious hypocrisy in the Gorbachevites' crusade against the 'bureaucrats'. Lower rank administrators may have to change jobs and be downgraded: but the bureaucratic political elite will be untouched. The people who suffer the real sacrifices will be the working class.

However much we reject perestroika as a real solution to the problems of bureaucratic planning, we should also note however it is not in any way whatsoever a restoration of capitalism, or going in the direction of restoring capitalism. Even the most extreme Gorbachevite economic theorists are talking about a marketisation of economic relations *within the framework of the plan*: that is to say, within the framework of a state-owned, planned, economy even if it has a smallish and subordinate private sector within it.

It is ludicrous to suggest, as do some extreme stalinists, that Gorbachev is taking the 'capitalist road'. It is true, however, that perestroika will deepen existing inequalities between workers and bureaucrats and among workers themselves.

'Glasnost' – political liberalisation – should not simply be rejected by socialists as a 'fraud'. It is true that a real *democratisation*, which gives sovereign power to the popular masses, is not what Gorbachev has in mind. Nonetheless political liberalisation and more official tolerance, however circumscribed, will give the masses the opportunity to overcome the long-term de-politicisation created by long decades of Stalinism.

Socialists always give critical support to democratic reforms which allow the working class, the popular masses and the political left more space to formulate and articulate their demands. The obvious parallel is political liberalisation under authoritarian capitalist regimes, which is never simply rejected by socialists. We support more democratic rights – but with one proviso: we think the democratisation process should go all the way.

Gorbachev's proposals for perestroika and glasnost have opened up the most important political ferment in the Soviet Union since 1956. This has taken several forms:

- The reawakening of the struggle of oppressed nationalities, especially that of the Armenian minority in Azerbaijan and in the Baltic states.

*“World-wide  
peaceful  
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in some ways it is  
the direct opposite”*

- The beginning of a political polarisation inside the working class over the question of the economic reforms.
- A struggle inside the party and the bureaucracy over the tempo and extent of the reforms – including the Politburo and the Secretariat.
- The emergence of independent political clubs, including a federation of socialist clubs which held its first conference last November with 600 people attending.

There is no doubt that a substantial section of the working class sees the perestroika reforms as a threat to their interests, and they are right about that. On the other hand, it seems that there are sections of industrial workers who are enthused by the Gorbachev project. For example, many workers, including party members, supported Boris Yeltsin when he was sacked as Moscow party chief for attacking bureaucratic privileges.

After the 19th conference, a demonstration of more than 100,000 people was held in Kaliningrad to support glasnost and perestroika. This was not simply an 'official' demonstration, although party members participated. So did supporters of the socialist clubs and thousands of ordinary workers.

It would perhaps be correct to say that there is a battle going on for the hearts and minds of the working class, with the Gorbachvites appealing to the possibility of long-term democratisation and a 'better life', while conservative opponents appeal to the workers' justified sense of their real, short term, material interests.

The national question is an explosive issue in the Soviet Union because stalinism trod under foot so many nationalities and national rights. Any political liberalisation is almost certain to throw up new national demands and movements: in certain instances – for example the Ukraine – national demands could be an important axis of political revolution.

However the basic programmatic position of revolutionary socialists to national demands should be support for the right of national self-determination, but not necessarily for national separation. Separation should be a *right*, if the majority want it, but is not necessarily a policy which socialists advocate. In general our position should be for *national rights within a socialist federation – a real union of Soviet republics!*

The disputes inside the bureaucratic elite are difficult to read precisely because we have so little to go on in terms of hard facts. The statements of the protagonists are often coded and ambiguous. Nonetheless, it is clear that a big majority of the bureaucratic political elite staunchly supports reform – although many bureaucrats at lower level, who risk losing their jobs and privileges, probably do not. But Gorbachev's 'number two', Ligachev, who chairs the meetings of the Politburo, is clearly unhappy about too much democracy and too much economic reform. While not exactly 'Brezhnevite', Ligachev certainly represents a faction which could challenge Gorbachev if he was seen to be failing.

On the other hand, Boris Yeltsin, who advocated an attack on bureaucratic privilege as such – for which he was sacked – represents a reform current within the bureaucracy which seems radical compared with Gorbachev – and certainly compared with Ligachev. The Yeltsin people seem to have links with some in the socialist clubs.

The socialist clubs themselves are a quite remarkable political development. The political orientation of key figures like Boris Kagarlitsky can be seen from the demonstration they held in Pushkin Square on the eve of the 19th Congress. Called by the 'Organising Committee for a Popular Front' (!) the rally was held under red flags – and portraits of Mikhail Gorbachev! It demanded 'All power to the Soviets' – but democratically elected, real Soviets. And it demanded that perestroika be speeded up.

These contradictory positions reveal much about the present viewpoint of the clubs. They are for socialist democracy and renewal, and are utilising the opportunities provided by glasnost to advance their demands. They see the Ligachev people as their biggest enemies in the short-term, and they are probably right about that. *It is among people like those in the socialist clubs that the nucleus of a real democratic socialist opposition can be built.*

Will the Gorbachev project succeed? Partly this depends on what happens internationally. Gorbachev has placed a lot on the imperialists doing a 'good' deal and being prepared to come up with the technology, trade and bank loans. If they don't he will be in some trouble. But in any case, Gorbachev has placed an awful lot on his own rhetoric being true – and it almost certainly isn't. Economic reforms, involving limited marketisation, have been tried in other Eastern European countries, without notable success. Gorbachev is going for simultaneous restructuring and large economic growth, and it is doubtful if he will get both.

Those workers who support Gorbachev will be very disappointed if they make economic sacrifices and relatively little comes their way in terms of democracy and higher living standards. But Gorbachev has a more immediate problem with the working class. He won a cheap victory at the 19th conference because the Ligachev people rolled with the punches – their time.

But lower down the apparatus, there are thousands of bureaucrats who want to disrupt reform, and there are thousands of party members who want to do the same. Gorbachev really to mobilise the workers in an active fight to defile the conservatives if he is to push his reforms through. There is a need to see Peru in solidarity with the workers.

To call on the workers to impose perestroika against conservative bureaucrats could lead to a ferment of working class ferment which would outflank the conservatives and an end to the struggle for real democracy. Gorbachev has been on a tightrope between the conservative bureaucracy and the working class. It won't take a fall off.





# The Case For Leon Trotsky



IN SPITE of the slow progress of glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union, much light has been shed on some of the murkiest corners of Soviet history. The monstrous crimes of Stalin are no longer 'counter-revolutionary garbage' purveyed by the Trotskyists, but on the contrary verifiable facts.

One after another the murdered victims of Stalin's show trials in the 1930s are being rehabilitated – Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rakovsky, Pyatakov and others whose names became world famous as leaders of the October revolution. It is now officially recognised that these Bolsheviks were not guilty of the heinous crimes for which they were convicted and executed on Stalin's orders.

But one name is still, officially, beyond the pale – Leon Trotsky, founder of the Red Army, first Soviet Foreign Commissar and the principal opponent of Stalin until murdered in 1940. From a logical point of view, of course, this just does not make sense. The connecting link in the three major Moscow trials was Leon Trotsky.

All the accused claimed in their abject forced confessions to be carrying out their treachery in association with and under direct orders from Leon Trotsky and his son, Leon Sedov. Pyatakov told the court of his secret flight to Oslo to meet Trotsky – a claim which was immediately disproved by the Norwegian paper *post*, which reported that no civil airliner landed at Oslo airport in the month of

First 1935. In fact, no aircraft at all used foreign air between September 1935 and May government

viously as 'confessed' to having received new Soviet offers from Trotsky, all of them port – the which had outlined his plans and tion deals. directives. Rakovsky confessed

Yet work 1926 Trotsky had told him that socialist intern for the British intelligence ser-

international w in the dock, Trotsky was the – an even more great trials, the spider who spun Soviet bureauc web of plots and intrigues; the

However, ik leaders on trial, Lenin's com- rigorous defin

rades-in-arms, were simply Trotsky's willing tools – all plotting to destroy the revolution which had been their lives' work.

Why then has Trotsky not been rehabilitated? Why is it that despite the de-Stalinisation campaign which was begun tentatively by Khrushchev and is now being carried through much more

***“the party could only be saved from bureaucratic degeneration and preserved as a revolutionary factor by a vigorous democracy within the party.”***

thoroughly by Gorbachev, Stalin's most consistent opponent, Leon Trotsky, remains a political pariah in the eyes of the Soviet bureaucracy?

Trotsky's opposition to Stalin was on a qualitatively higher plane than that of most of the accused who from time to time opposed aspects of Stalin's policies. Trotsky attacked the very basis of Stalin's domination – the growing bureaucratisation of the party and state machine.

In 1923 he wrote a series of articles in *Pravda*, later published as *The New Course*. In these he called on the rank and file of the party to rely on their own understanding and courage. The young should cease to regard the authority of the Old Guard as absolute; the party could only

be saved from bureaucratic degeneration and preserved as a revolutionary factor by a vigorous democracy within the party. It was time to free the party from the tyranny of the machine; to replace the 'mummified bureaucrats' with fresh elements; and most important of all to remove from their posts those who, at the first word of criticism, wielded their whips. It was imperative for the New Course to begin "by making everyone feel that from now on nobody will terrorise the party".

From that date on, until his death, Trotsky continued to assail not only Stalin but the whole bureaucratic machine which nurtured stalinism. And this is the original sin for which the ruling bureaucracy in the Soviet Union will find it hard to forgive him.

But as Ernest Mandel has pointed out, it was Trotsky, Sedov and the Left Opposition who by their fight against Stalinism 'saved the honour of communism... assured its continuity...'. Thanks to them, no one can say that communism leads inevitably to Stalinism, because Stalin's fiercest and most irreconcilable adversary, the one he considered his number one enemy was the communist Leon Trotsky (*International Viewpoint* no 143).

That is why we must continue the fight to clear all the victims of the Moscow Trials of the criminal charges, and first of all Leon Trotsky. As Mandel puts it: 'this fight is not essentially about the past, truth, honour and justice... the fight is over the crucial principles for straightening out the present situation of the USSR and the world workers movement, the principles indispensable for the emancipation of the workers'.

Charlie van Geldren



# Peru

## General strike, repression and death squads

A Report from Peru by  
HUGO BLANCO

**The social crisis has intensified in Peru in recent weeks. Inflation will hit 400% by the end of the year. There has been a two-day general strike against the government.**

President Garcia has spoken about the need for tougher repressive measures, and the lawyer defending the second-in-command of the Sendero Luminoso ('Shining Path') guerrillas has been assassinated.

Initially the Garcia government did have some success in holding down inflation which had been spiralling out of control in the last months of the previous Belaunde government. But it could not maintain this control, and now its record is as bad as any, with inflation rocketing upwards.

With this fall in living standards it is not surprising that the general strike, called on July 19-20 by many trade union federations, was a success. July 19 is a special date in the calendar of the Peruvian people because it was on July 19 1977 that massive illegal strikes put an end to the Bermudez military dictatorship and opened the present period of relative democracy.

That heroic strike kicked out a government which had wanted to stay at the helm for another ten years. It led to the constituent assembly, free elections, the end of special military powers and curfew laws, and the return of political exiles like myself.

So there was a conscious reference to this inspiring memory in the date chosen for this year's general strike. It was called by the CGTP (Confederation of Peruvian Workers), the main trade union confederation, and the ANP (the People's National Assembly). The latter brings together in a coordinating body the main peasant organisation the CCP (Peasant Confederation of Peru); SUTEP (the united teachers' trade union); CITE (public sector workers); FEB (the bank workers); FEP (students); the street vendors' association (this is an ever-growing sector in a country where unemployed people receive no state benefits); the poor *barrio* or neighbourhood associations (also increasing in number); and neglected regions of the country suffering from Peru's super-centralism.

Other forces could not avoid falling in with the strike, such as the CTP (the trade union confederation linked to APRA, the populist party now in government) and the private owner bus drivers who are part of the public transport system. Their pro-government leaderships left it

open to members to decide whether to go along with the strike.

The two-day stoppage was a success throughout Peru in spite of a huge government and right wing campaign and despite government financial inducements to those who broke the strike.

Each year the President gives a sort of 'state of the union' speech on July 28, which is National Independence Day in Peru – the biggest national holiday.

There were great expectations this year, because last year President Garcia dropped a political bombshell with his decree nationalising the banks, a measure which shook the whole country.

The most important capitalists broke with the government and the far right revitalised itself under the leadership of the famous writer Mario Vargas Llosa. These sectors managed to



García: privatisation and repression

develop such a campaign against the decree that the government was 'forced' to back down: the substance of the nationalisation has been totally gutted and the major consequence has only been the resurgence of the far right.

So this year both the capitalists and the far right organised an intense campaign in the weeks running up to the keynote address, warning the government against any 'nasty' surprises.

The country's business leaders listened to this year's televised speech in the CONFIEP (equivalent of CBI) offices. They all streamed out afterwards beaming approval, and the far right also applauded.

The main point of the speech had been to offer more legislation against 'subversion'. Not only would taking part in terrorist acts be punished, but also being a member of a 'subversive' organisation. The police practice of planting arms in the homes of accused per-

sons will now be condoned by the law as 'proof' against the accused.

García's speech went on to look at the Peruvian Institute of Social Security (IPSS) – a state body financed by the contributions of working people, which is supposed to provide finance for medical treatment and retirement. Riddled by corruption, it is in crisis. The remedy advanced by Garcia is not the reorganisation of a proper taxation and benefit system, but the progressive privatisation of this service!

Privatisation will also be extended to more publicly-owned industries and services that have been bankrupted by APRA corruption similar to that in the IPSS. The bosses certainly had something to be jubilant about.

A few weeks ago, the second most important leader of the Sendero Luminoso, Osman Morote, was captured. He has to face five separate charges. One one of these he was found innocent. He is still in prison, but the innocent verdict on even one charge was too much for the ultra-right, which cried 'scandal' in the mass media accusing the tribunal of cowardice, and claiming there was 'immunity' for the *senderistas*.

The President joined in the right wing chorus, and his highlighting of repressive measures in his speech was in part a product of this.

Morote's lawyer was Manuel Febres, a distinguished professional: he was assassinated just hours before the Presidential speech. A few hours after he left home, his body was found in a quiet street; there were signs of torture.

It appears the far right and sectors of APRA are already beginning to turn to death squad methods used in Central America. It is probable that this group is made up of policemen operating illegally but with official protection.

The death squads' communique stated that 'for each mayor, soldier or policeman assassinated, a leader of Sendero Luminoso or of the groups that protect or support them will be killed.' We know only too well that this language from the far right means the whole left wing movement is threatened.

If the country and international solidarity are not mobilised in time, then we will see Peru in the not too distant future converted into another Argentina under the generals.

Yet at the same time workers' struggles continue: the miners are marching on Lima demanding wage increases and an end to repression, while bank workers have been on strike since August 1.

August 1988.

# A permanent point of controversy

The theory of Permanent Revolution is much more than just a theory. It is a bedrock of the marxist programme and strategy for revolution in most of the underdeveloped countries today. It began as Trotsky's attempt to develop beyond the early writings of Marx and Engels, and come to terms with the changes brought about by the rise of imperialism. A few of the key ideas clashed with traditional 'orthodox marxism', and were only confirmed in the heat of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

The theory remained highly controversial, as Trotsky continued to develop it in the light of experiences of the Chinese revolutionary struggles of the 1920s and 1930s. Even today it remains a flashpoint of political conflict between trotskyism and stalinist currents in the living revolutionary struggles of Central America, Africa and Asia.

Trotsky's theory was based on the 'law of combined and uneven development'. Orthodox marxism held that all countries would undergo the same pattern of development as the advanced ones. Trotsky challenged this notion.

Economically 'backward' countries, he argued, were not only unequal, but developing in a combined way alongside more advanced economies. This meant they could appropriate, or have imposed on them, advanced forms of technology and economic production without the intermediate stages of development which the first capitalist countries had gone through. Backwardness and the most advanced productive technology would be combined in a variety of new social formations. Early twentieth century Czarist Russia was a classic case. Huge factories and advanced industry imposed by European finance capital (under whose control they remained) coexisted with a feudal state apparatus and agriculture.

He then went on to assess what this 'combined and uneven' development meant for the prospects for revolution.

As imperialism spread, it pulled country after country into the world capitalist market - countries which had not undergone the type of bourgeois revolutions that had swept away old feudal regimes and opened the door to capitalist development as had happened in

Britain, Holland and France. Trotsky recognised that even if the underdeveloped countries were to have bourgeois revolutions it was impossible for them to enter the market as equal competitors. Their small, weak national capitalist classes were totally subordinate to the bankers, politicians and military forces of the imperialist powers. They could merely struggle for a slightly larger slice of the cake, and this only through alliances with their peasant masses and the rising working classes. The 'backward' countries were developing capitalist economies, but the tasks of the bourgeois revolution still had to be carried out.

*"This was precisely the idea that was expressed by the very designation of the revolution as 'permanent', that is an uninterrupted one, a revolution passing over directly from the bourgeois stage into the socialist. To express the same idea Lenin later used the excellent expression of the bourgeois revolution growing over into the socialist."*

*Leon Trotsky, Introduction to Permanent Revolution*

Bourgeois revolution is a process of throwing off feudal restrictions which involves the key tasks of national liberation, democracy and agrarian reform. In practice this means a unified national market, with national sovereignty over imperialist controlled industries; a national assembly elected by universal suffrage, allowing political pluralism with the right to form independent parties and trades unions; and the breaking up of the huge estates of the big land owners, distributing land to the peasantry, and enabling the unfettered capitalist development of agriculture.

While the bourgeois revolution clears the way for capitalist development, it also creates important openings for the working class to organise itself to press its own independent

demands. But the question remained - who should carry out these tasks and to what end?

Some, like the Russian Mensheviks, argued that if the revolution was to be a bourgeois one then naturally the bourgeoisie should lead it. The workers should at best play a supporting role until such time in the indefinite future when capitalism had expanded the ranks of the working class and created conditions for the next 'stage' in the revolution - the fight for socialism. The Bolsheviks, and alongside them Trotsky, maintained that the inability of the national bourgeoisie to free itself from imperialism and Czarism made this impossible.

Instead, the workers would have to ally themselves with the peasantry to make this bourgeois revolution. In a country like Russia the peasants had the most to gain by throwing off the chains of feudalism. But the question about who would lead this bourgeois revolution remained unanswered.

The Bolsheviks led by Lenin still argued right up to April 1917 that the purpose of such a (bourgeois) revolution was to break free of imperialist domination and to herald the unrestrained development of capitalism, especially in the field of agriculture. They weren't sure which class - the workers or the peasants - would play the leading role and have the governmental majority. Therefore, they left their governmental slogan deliberately vague on this question.

Trotsky's novel idea was as follows.

First, Trotsky recognised that unfettered capitalist development could only come about if the economically backward countries had access to world markets as equal competitors. But, as stated earlier, the advent of imperialism had closed the age of market capitalism on a world scale and made this impossible. The imperialist powers were locked in a struggle for economic territory which ended in the carnage of two world wars. They would not allow a non-imperialist country to assume an imperialist role. The capitalism that had been violently imposed on the rest of the world was to be a subordinate one. Limits on this fundamental condition for the bourgeois revolution, then, in the developing countries, had already been set.

Second, he argued that the working class would have to play the leading role in the worker-peasant alliance and the revolutionary government.



Trotsky's conclusions were based on the view that the coming of capitalism had brought with it the final domination of the town over the countryside. The peasantry was incapable of pursuing an independent political course, unless to take human development backwards. Societies in which events on the land dominated social life were a thing of the past. The working class would have to take the leadership of the worker-peasant alliance because of its decisive social and political weight, regardless of its size compared to the peasantry.

But after agreeing with Lenin that only such a government would genuinely carry through the bourgeois revolution, he took a crucial step further.

The very act of implementing the tasks of the bourgeois revolution would fatally undermine the bourgeoisie itself. Not only would imperialism be affected, but also the national bourgeoisie would be threatened too, especially if their land holdings were broken up and distributed to the peasants. The bourgeoisie would then be forced to resist its own revolution with all its power. (To this day, there is not a bourgeois regime in the whole of the Third World that heads a country where all three major tasks of the bourgeois revolution - democracy, national liberation and land reform - have been genuinely carried out.)

If the working class were to pursue its class interests it would have to embark on the course of socialist revolution by breaking the economic power of the bourgeoisie. The completion of the tasks of the bourgeois revolution would therefore take place simultaneously with the beginning of the socialist revolution. There would be no gap between fixed 'stages'; instead the revolution, to be successful, had to be an *unbroken*, uninterrupted one, 'permanent' in the sense of 'permanent session', and culminating in a revolutionary workers' government, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Trotsky also therefore rejected the implied notion in the Bolshevik strategy that at some point the new revolutionary government would either have to give up its power or repress the working class. The bourgeoisie would oppose even those measures beneficial to the working class which are achievable under capitalism - an eight hour working day, wage rises, freedom to organise. When the workers responded with strikes, occupations and even expropriations, what should a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government do? Should it remain faithful to 'marxist orthodoxy' on the need for capitalism first, socialism later? Or should it promote and support such working class action and make inroads into bourgeois economic power, expropriating the factories, imposing a state



Marching against the contras — Managua 1987

monopoly on foreign trade and seizing control of the financial institutions?

Posed in this way the answer is obvious. But such measures are nothing less than the start of the socialist revolution. Carrying out the bourgeois revolution successfully in this context means carrying out a socialist revolution and vice versa.

There was another important dimension to

*"The permanent revolution, in the sense which Marx attached to this concept, means a revolution which makes no compromise with any single form of class rule, which does not stop at the democratic stage, which goes over to socialist measures and to war against reaction from without; that is, a revolution whose every successive stage is rooted in the preceding one, and which can end only in the complete liquidation of class society."*

*Leon Trotsky, Introduction to Permanent Revolution*

the successful socialist, permanent revolution which Trotsky identified.

He insisted that revolutions and counter-revolutions are not constrained within national boundaries. The class struggle, he argued, can have far-reaching effects right across the world, thus reinforcing the need for revolutionaries to organise on an international scale and fight to mobilise solidarity with struggles in countries other than their own.

Individual countries can make important steps along the road to a classless society - in-

deed, to survive, any revolution must march forward. But it is highly unlikely, to say the least, that any single country - even one as highly developed as the United States - has enough resources to bring about on its own a classless society. After all the imperialist countries are so advanced precisely because of their relation to and domination of the world market.

The conquest of proletarian power in any single country must be seen as the start of a revolution in that country. The absence of a favourable international climate cannot be used as an excuse for delaying progress in many areas - raising

the living standards of the working class and peasantry (if one exists), taking measures to combat racial and sexual oppression, and so on. The Nicaraguan revolution clearly shows the tremendous problems faced by a small underdeveloped country faced with the might of imperialism. International solidarity can help provide a crucial breathing space for such a revolution. But in the end the only guarantee of survival is an extension of the revolution to other countries.

The theory of Permanent Revolution is clearly based on analysis of the objective forces that shape revolutionary struggles; but there is no guarantee that any given revolution will evolve 'naturally' along the path of Permanent Revolution. Within any given struggle there will be other political currents with very different aims, policies and methods. If their influence predominates, revolutionary opportunities can be missed, or mass struggles led seriously astray, as has happened so often since World War Two.

All of this points to one fundamental conclusion above all others for revolutionary strategy in 'backward' countries: the necessity for the complete political independence of the working class and its parties. Many different alliances with all sorts of forces will be possible and necessary for the revolution to succeed - but the temptation for a working class revolutionary party to subsume itself or its independent identity into a national, anti-imperialist mass movement must be resisted.

Instead, the fight must be to build a political leadership which will combat the cross-class alliances and 'stages' theories proposed by stalinist and reformist currents, and struggle for a strategy and a tactical programme based upon the theory of Permanent Revolution. In every such movement there is an ongoing struggle to decide whether the leadership will be bourgeois or proletarian. It is on the outcome of this struggle that the future success of the revolution depends.

*Richard Rozanski*



# Early battles for equal pay

An otherwise perhaps forgotten anniversary is celebrated by LEONORA LLOYD

On May 29, 1968, women machinists at Fords Dagenham plant held a one-day token stoppage, in support of their claim for upgrading. They wanted to match those men who did the same job (sewing car-seat covers) at night, and other men using similar skills.

On June 6 they came out on strike again, this time until July 1. Rose Boland, a strike leader said of these actions: 'I think the Ford women have definitely shaken the women of this country.' She was right.

Barbara Castle was made Minister for the newly-created Department of Employment and Productivity in April the same year and from here she issued her famous invitation to the strike leaders to have tea with her! More seriously she set up a working party with her department and representatives from the CBI and TUC, to consider the introduction of equal pay for women.

However the women at Fords were not claiming equal pay, but upgrading to take account of their traditionally underestimated skills. It was a common grievance, and still is, that no allowance was made for the 'natural' skills of women, like 'nimble fingers', whereas male skills such as 'strength' were specifically rewarded in grading exercises.

The 187 women machinists at Fords were represented by the National Union of Vehicle Builders, later to be absorbed into the Transport Union. Their strike coincided with the NUVB's annual meeting and the strikers organised coachloads of women from Dagenham and other Ford factories to invade the conference, where there was not one woman delegate!

The Trade Union Congress that year passed a resolution calling for 'urgent progress towards equal pay', and this was amended as a result of the strike to include a commitment to take industrial action to obtain it. Four Labour MPs sponsored a new Equal Pay Bill and Joyce Butler launched an Anti-Discrimination Bill to end all forms of discrimination against women.

On July 1 the Ford strike was called off. The women had won a partial victory, getting 92% of the men's rate, an improvement of 7%, together with a phased agreement for the introduction of equal pay. (This was finally achieved only in 1987, after further strike action).

Conferences, lobbies of trade union conferences and of Parliament and many meetings during the strike led to the formation of the National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights. This snappy name was

shortened to the equally impossible acronym NJACCWER!

The campaign, without democratic mechanisms, worked through the setting up of local groups - thirty-seven were quickly established - and corresponding secretaries in twenty areas. Chris Norwood MP and Audrey Hunt, of the TUC, were 'Joint Chairmen' (sic) of the committee and Fred Blake, National Secretary of the NUVB, became the secretary.

That November, as a result of pressure from NJACCWER, the TUC organised a special women's conference, to discuss equal pay. Although the campaign had a five-point programme, it had agreed to concentrate on equal pay, and in May the next year it organised another lobby of Parliament and a demonstration. This was attended by 1000 women from all over Britain and speakers included Clive Jenkins, Jack

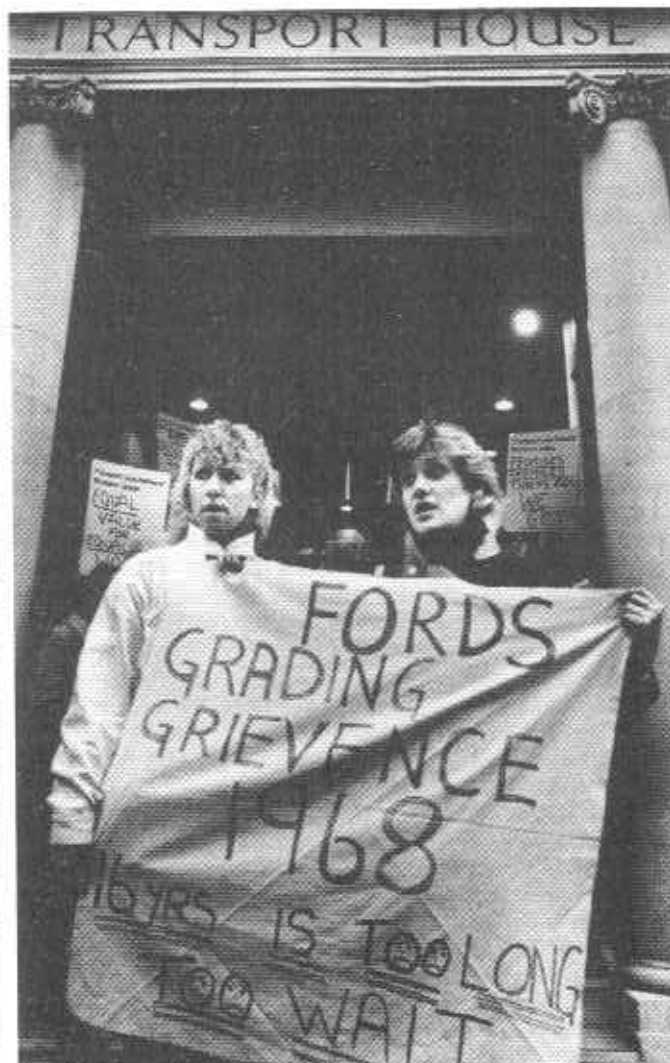
**"In 1969 every trade union conference passed resolutions supporting the principle of equal pay and it was the main topic at the Trades Union Congress."**

Jones, Audrey Wise and Rose Boland.

In 1969 every trade union conference passed resolutions supporting the principle of equal pay and it was the main topic at the Trades Union Congress.

The women's liberation movement in Britain was influenced by three major factors: the example and writings of the movement in the United States; the general politicisation of 1968 and the struggles of women workers.

NJACCWER was a key component of this last factor, which was much less important in the USA. It was able to gain affiliation from a



Ford women: 20 years to win equal pay!

C. Guanta/Reflex

number of unions including the TGWU, and many at local level. During its brief existence it gave support to several strikes involving women, including the Brampton thermometer Strike, which was geographically isolated.

But from a woman's point of view it was an extremely unsatisfactory organisation. Headed by two men, it had no democratic structure and refused to organise creches at its meetings. It was led by members of the Communist Party and their sympathisers, who were able to politically dominate the ex-Ford strikers on the committee. The basic lack of democracy led in the end to its destruction.

To all intents and purposes NJACCWER ceased to exist after October, just as the Women's Liberation Movement was getting under way. But it had two lasting results. It ensured that the subject of equal pay would never again be off the agenda and that legislation, however inadequate, would be passed.

It also brought into activity many women who were to become involved with the women's movement, and although some of them drew negative lessons from the campaign and were hostile to the organised labour movement as a result, it meant that in Britain the links between women in the labour movement and in the women's movement were stronger than anywhere else.

# The British Road to Capitalism

Marxism Today

## Facing Up To The Future

The Left has been in retreat for a decade. It has lost out badly in its contest with Thatcherism. Even more seriously, it has failed to address the new world of the 80s. Too often it has seemed more interested in the past than the future. The Labour Party is seeking to respond to this problem through its Policy Review for the 1990s. At its congress last November, the Communist Party decided to redraft its programme, *The British Road To Socialism*, which, when last published in 1977, was a pioneering document in the reconstruction of the Left. Earlier this year the Communist Party's executive committee appointed a group of eight to work, with a completely free hand, on a discussion document as a preliminary to the actual redrafting of *The British Road To Socialism* next year. The group took as its main brief, in preparing *Facing Up To The Future*, the need to confront the radically-changed world in which we now live, and how that requires us to rethink the Left's policies and perspectives.

The group that prepared the document were: Beatrix Campbell, Marian Darks, Bill Innes, Martin Jacques, Monty Johnstone, Paula Lanning, Charlie Leadbeater and Jeff Rodrigues, with Margaret Wadkins as secretary. *Facing Up To The Future*, which we publish here as a special Communist Party supplement, will also be carried together with subsequent discussion, in 7 Days, the Communist Party weekly.

THE BRITISH ROAD to Socialism has gone through several transformations since the original 1951 version of the CP's programme dropped onto the mat at King Street in an envelope from Stalin. The most drastic revision was the 'Eurocommunist' version produced in 1977. Now the Communist party is revising its programme once again, and a new draft appeared in the September issue of *Marxism Today*. PHIL HEARSE looks at its content.

This new programme is significant not so much in that it presents very right wing ideas about socialist strategy – that is hardly something new for the CP – but in that it presents a series of ideas about objectives – the kind of society we should be fighting for – which are not in any recognisable way socialist at all.

Indeed this current draft abandons many collectivist, let alone socialist, aims and values.

Of course, Mr Martin Jacques and his co-thinkers are not so stupid as to put up a sign saying 'we no longer believe in socialism'. Their sales pitch has always been that they are adapting socialism to modern conditions.

They argue that capitalism is changing, the working class is being recomposed, the economy is being restructured – and therefore the old social-democratic post-war consensus is useless – we need a new way forward. This line of argument always catches right-wing social democrats and *Morning Star* stalinists on the hop, because at a descriptive level it's true.

There are massive changes to capitalism and the working class in the Thatcher era: the question is, what conclusions should we draw from these changes. Do they lead to an abandonment of class politics and collectivist solutions? That of course is where revolutionary socialists differ from *Marxism Today*.

The new draft puts forward a series of inter-linked arguments which add up to a package for accepting capitalism. Each one of these arguments is either factually wrong, or a misinterpretation of developments.

Schematically, they are as follows:

- Economic and social restructuring means that the traditional demarcation lines – especially the division of society into two mutually hostile basic classes – are being eroded. The acquisition of skills and education means that many people are now in a 'contradictory class locations' and are both exploiters and exploited. 'Working class versus bourgeoisie' models are old-fashioned.

- Thus 'class cannot straightforwardly provide the collective interest for modern socialism'. Socialism is thus not the objective interests of the working class expressed at the political level, it has to be constructed through the forging of alliances between disparate groups, whose interests are contradictory. The economic struggle of the working class is just one among many such interests.

- This is especially so since there is no such thing as 'pure class'. 'Everyone comes to their sense of class through their sense of gender, ethnicity, as well as regional or religious attachments'.

Socialists should counterpose to Thatcher's modernisation programme their own modernisation programme. This involves recognising that most of the economy will remain in private hands, but requires democratic regulation and control.

- Internationalism. Britain's international role is crucial for socialism. The labour movement should support integration in the Common Market and 'Europeanisation' in general – through a fight to democratise the Common Market.

When the chips are down, it is evident that what *Marxism Today* is proposing is an alternative capitalist modernisation to that of Thatcher – one which attempts to be more democratic, and goes along with the capitalist 'European option' in international affairs. Underlying these arguments are a series of quite crucial arguments which are quite widespread on the left.

First, there is an implicit assumption that Thatcherism is basically successful and has overcome the crisis of British capitalism evident in the 1960s and 1970s. *Marxism Today* is starry-eyed about Thatcher – just at a time when the economy is going into a nose-dive.

Second, while it's true that there is a major reorganisation of the working class – a decline

of traditional industry, the rise of high tech and service industries – this does not at all mean that the working class as a collective subject or historical actor is being eliminated.

Third, it is just untrue that 'everybody' comes to their sense of class through their sense of gender, ethnicity, or religious faith. This is just an unproved and dogmatic assertion. *Marxism Today* sets up a false dichotomy between class on the one hand, and sex and race on the other, by confining 'class struggle' to the 'sphere of production' and the 'workplace' itself. Ironically, the idea that class struggle is confined to the 'workplace' and the 'economic struggle' is a typically economist notion, one denounced by Lenin in a pamphlet written 86 years ago! The new draft also takes it for granted that the only progressive alternative to a stalinist, totally nationalised, bureaucratically planned seige economy is a democratically regulated and controlled capitalist economy.

The new draft of the British Road, then, continues the unhappy story of the official CP's race to the right. The emphasis is on securing individual rights in a democratic capitalist society, and a rejection of collectivism as a thing of the past. This reaches its apogee in the notion of the 'enabling state' (an echo of Neil Kinnock's favoured formula) to replace today's oppressive state.

The departure here from traditional Marxist ideas couldn't be more radical. No wonder the authors have received enthusiastic backing in their endeavours from Bryan Gould. But the underlying assumptions are identical to those of David Owen. And when we find a proposal for 'consumer choice in the health service' the inspiration seems more right wing still.

# Intellectuals in the days of Glasnost

*The Thinking Reed: Intellectuals and the Soviet State from 1917 to the Present*

Boris Kagarlitsky, Translated by Brian Pearce, Verso, 1988, £17.95, hardback.

Reviewed by JANE KELLY

This book is a fascinating discussion by one of the leading radical intellectuals

in the Soviet Union, of the history of the relationship between intellectuals and the state from 1917 to the present day.

It is a powerful and vibrant book, which charts the situation after 1917, the rise of Stalin and the imposition of Soviet Socialist Realism, the partial 'thaw' under Khrushchev, and the disillusionment in the 1970s. It ends with an urgent plea to the present-day intellectuals to take up the challenge offered by glasnost; to move on from exposure of the horrors of Stalin to develop a positive way forward to

socialism. But it also contains some of the contradictions of the economic and political reform movement which gave birth to it.

Without glasnost this book is unlikely to have been written; but the effects of perestroika – speed-up, higher prices, attacks on the historic gains of the working class of cheap housing etc. – are not mentioned. Indeed Kagarlitsky uses the two words as though they were synonymous, and here we reach the other problem with the book. Alongside the history of the relationship of Soviet intellectuals to the state goes a theoretical discussion on the role of intel-

lectuals, their function in the party, and their class position. This discussion is more confused. If this review concentrates critically on this question, it should not be read as a sweeping condemnation of the book as a whole; which gives many insights on the process of change in the Soviet Union today, but as one example of the problems faced by writers (and others) in the Soviet Union, so long denied material and the right to open discussion to enable them to form a complete understanding of their history.

Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century the Russian intelligentsia played a central role in the struggle for bourgeois democratic freedoms, but only a small minority joined the Bolshevik party. Others aligned themselves to the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries or the Kadets.

The division of the intelligentsia between contending classes, was sharpened during the Civil War, when: 'Part of the intelligentsia adhered to the Bolsheviks; many joined the Whites; the majority tried to find some third way', that is a path that steered between bourgeois reaction and proletarian dictatorship. Kagarlitsky argues that the 'suppression of bourgeois-democratic freedoms' dealt a heavy blow to the intellectuals who had placed their hopes in a free Russia. 'The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, the terror and the introduction of censorship were actions that the left-wing intelligentsia could not excuse under any conditions.' Although the author accepts that the objective conditions of isolation, economic collapse, invasion etc. meant that censorship and attacks on democratic rights were probably inevitable, in order to save the revolution, he emphasises that it was tragedy for the intellectuals, and one which the Bolsheviks failed to understand. Indeed the implication is that it was this division between the intelligentsia and the Bolsheviks on the question of democracy, albeit a result of impossible circumstances, that led inexorably to increased bureaucracy and to the

## Bookends

New publications reviewed

Reviewed by NICK ROBIN

In 1982, the US warned the Micronesian people of the Marshall Islands not to eat food from the northern part of their atoll. It was not a timely warning.

It had been 28 years since the USA – uninvited – had exploded a bomb 1300 times more powerful than those they'd dropped on Hiroshima or Nagasaki on Bikini, also in Micronesia.

In that time, as Jane Dibblin recounts in *Day of Two Suns* (Virago, £6.95), the Micronesian people had realised themselves that things weren't quite right as they began dying of unknown cancerous diseases and giving birth to terribly mutated babies.

Dibblin's book – much of it in the words of the islanders themselves – explores the social and political realities of the US's nuclear testing in the Pacific in an account both analytical and humanistic. Highly recommended.

The bombings continue in the Pacific: Kwajalein, another island, is the US base where 'star wars' was dreamed up, and is host now to the major testing of SDI initiatives... It should, therefore, get a mention in *Reshaping the US Left*, edited by Mike Davis and Michael Sprinkler (Verso, £9.95) but it doesn't.

This points to a weakness in this otherwise praiseworthy volume of essays from the US far left – the insularity of its concerns (the opening essay on building solidarity with the Central American revolution being the exception).

*Reshaping the US Left* is the third annual collection of a very useful series called 'The Year Left', and takes as its subject what the American left like to call 'movement building'.

The book is eclectic, offering 12 participant-observer perspectives on key struggles and developments of the revitalised US left, but none the worse for that. If at times the essays seem a little local in their purview, this at least allows us to see the detail of some of the many real struggles which are the well-kept secret of the Reagan.

Besides, many are stimulating accounts, full of thought-

provoking and often novel ideas of organising which could be experimented with here. Perhaps next year's volume will bend the stick the other way and include ideas of an overall socialist perspective for the Dukakis years.

Another book which goes close-up on building coalitions is *Radical Records: thirty years of lesbian and gay history*, edited by Bob Cant and Susan Hemmings (Routledge, £7.95). This claims to be the first history book by lesbians and gay men, and takes a distinctly leftist editorial line.

Contributions are varied, but all concerned in one way or another with the political movement of lesbians and gay men, and the ways in which the dialectic of self-organisation and mass struggle has worked in practice.

Without exception the starting point for these essays is the lived experience of the writers; this confers personality on the writing which makes it both immediate and (usually) easy to read.

Coming out during the gay community's health crisis and the Clause 28 backlash, it is a timely book.



rise of Stalin. The problem that this raises, to which Kagarlitsky returns to throughout the book, is the role and function of intellectuals, their relationship to the working class to the party, and especially their class position. He argues that contrary to Stalin's definition of the intelligentsia as a 'stratum' rather than a class which is therefore unable to play an independent role in social life, the 'many-millioned intelligentsia' in the Soviet Union today 'has become an independent social stratum, capable not only of formulating its aims but often of achieving them.' Further he maintains that while in the nineteenth and early this century the intelligentsia, both East and West 'was bourgeois (or petty-bourgeois) in the way it got its income', in present circumstances (though for different reasons) the intelligentsia both East and West have been 'proletarianised'. The Soviet intelligentsia, feeling that they belong to the oppressed and exploited masses, 'increasingly claim the right to speak in their name'. He thus adopts a position whereby the intelligentsia are both an independent stratum and 'being turned into simple proletarians'.

The confusion stems partly, I feel, from his desire for the intelligentsia to play a leading role in the changes. But this desire, despite the rôle played by a few, very courageous individuals in the past, goes against the history of the intelligentsia, East and West. Marxists have traditionally argued they are an intermediate petty-bourgeois layer and can therefore align themselves with either the working class or the bourgeoisie) and insist upon the leading rôle of the working class. Indeed Kagarlitsky himself, as the Co-ordinator of the Federation of Socialist Clubs, gives an example of the divided nature of the intelligentsia when he points to intellectuals leading right wing clubs with anti-democratic and anti-semitic politics - *Pamyat* and *Rodina* (Memory and Homeland) - as well as left wing clubs.

The relation of the intelligentsia to the working class is not just an abstract question. Kagarlitsky in one or two passages accepts the centrality of the working masses in radical change; however, his position as an intellectual leads him to ignore the fact that while both intellectuals and the working class can gain from glasnost, the negative effects of perestroika - an attempt to resolve the crisis of bureaucratic planning at the expense of the workers and not the privileged bureaucracy and their hangers-on - will be primarily felt by the working class. To ignore that difference is to fall into the trap of the bureaucracy.



## Subversive stuff

*A World Apart*  
 Director Chris Menges  
 Screenplay by Shawn Slovo

Reviewed by ERICA FLEGG

**The final frame of *A World Apart* freezes a township youth hurling a stone at the South African police, in response to a tear-gas attack on the funeral of a black militant killed in detention.**

The image is a potent one, and has already been silk-screened onto T-shirts. As the titles come up, the fashionable audience of a West End cinema expressed its revulsion at the information that Ruth First (Molly's mother, Diana, in the film) had been assassinated in 1982; then they burst into applause.

In these jaded times, such spontaneous expression of feeling is not easily achieved, and is a tribute to the film's success in touching an audience's emotional as well as political sensibilities.

The film doesn't go into the politics of the struggle or the rôle played by the African National Congress or the Communist Party, to which Molly's (Shawn Slovo's) parents belonged.

Nevertheless, the township youth - a black David, on the side of 'right' against the Goliath

of the South African state - stands for the mass struggle that is the dynamic backdrop of the film. This is part of the film's success as a statement against apartheid: it neither sentimentalises the struggle nor romanticises the individuals involved in it, black or white.

*A World Apart* has been received to much critical acclaim as a joint debut by Chris Menges (cinematographer on *The Mission* and *The Killing Fields*) and Shawn Slovo (who wrote the autobiographical screenplay). The actors portraying the central two characters, 13-year old Molly and her mother Diana (Jodhi May and Barbara Hershey) are both first rate and sensitively cast.

Jodhi May convinces without being cute as the unhappy, confused daughter of her brilliant, committed but emotionally reserved mother. Barbara Hershey brings an impressive force to her rôle - although to my mind the character of First remains one-dimensional.

A singular triumph of the film, however is its African cast. The two leads are outstanding, but all the black actors - mostly Zimbabweans without any previous screen experience - bring tremendous energy, commitment and human warmth to the story.

The scene where Elsie (the maid, played by Linda Mvusi, who 'parents' Molly) is brought the news of her brother's fate in detention (Albee Lesotho) is a wrenching depiction of grief un-

like any familiar on the European screen.

The hospitality and acceptance shown to Molly by Elsie's family when Molly is at last introduced - not by her mother - to the reality of township life, is a memorable example. As the old blind grandfather at the end of the table is passed Molly's hand to feel in recognition and greeting, the humanity of African culture as opposed to the alienation of apartheid is, literally, palpable. Here Menges' achievement is to allow the black actors to make the scene, in what must have been an unusually creative interplay between writer, director and cast.

If you take the personal theme of the story - the experience of a daughter whose dominant but distant parent dedicates their life to the revolution but not to you - as being the central subject, rather than its South African setting, then this film most invites comparison with *Zina*, Ken McMullen's powerful study of Trotsky's daughter and her relationship with her father. While *A World Apart* cannot compete with the visionary scope of *Zina* (which nonetheless flopped at the box office) it shares with that film the ability to pose some questions that make revolutionaries feel uncomfortable, while avoiding the vices of lecturing on the one hand and liberalism on the other.

*Zina* never emerged from the tragedy of her childhood and her search for her father's love; she committed suicide as fascism took hold in Nazi Germany. Molly is also shown unsuccessfully trying to claim the place she wanted in her mother's life; with what consequences for her own development we are not told, since the film covers only the story of 1963, the year of the Rivonia arrests.

In an interview, Slovo said that writing the screenplay was like a form of therapy; her strength in the telling of her story is to do it with frankness naked of any self-indulgence.

Going for a wide appeal seems to have been a conscious option on Slovo's part - she said that was why she had called her mother 'Diana'. So it is much to her credit (and that of Menges' direction) that the film moves its audience without any of the devices of a Hollywood epic or tear-jerker.

Taking the cue, the South African authorities banned it after its first public screening; subversive stuff. They may have killed Ruth First, but they remain in awe of her and the struggle she espoused. Slovo's film now emerges as one of the hydra heads they unleashed.

# Reflections on the British monarchy

*The Enchanted Glass*  
Tom Nairn

Reviewed by MIKE  
MACNAIR

In *The Enchanted Glass* Tom Nairn has produced a scathing attack on British monarchism, packed with illuminating sidelights on the nature of the British social and political formation.

He insists that the British monarchy is central to the system of political authority and its various territories, and that it is intimately connected with 'British' national identity, the patriarchal family, and the political bankruptcy of the Labour and trade union leaderships.

His book should be required reading for all those socialists who think that the monarchy is an unimportant issue.

But *The Enchanted Glass* also contains a theoretical thesis which is false and wholly negative in its political implications.

Nairn sees 'British monarchism' as an exceptional and backward ideology as compared with the national-democratic ideologies of most states created since the French Revolution (1789). His explanation of this backwardness runs as follows.

He denies that the events of 1640-1714 in what is now 'Britain' were either a bourgeois revolution (as marxists think) or steps towards a liberal democracy (as liberals think).

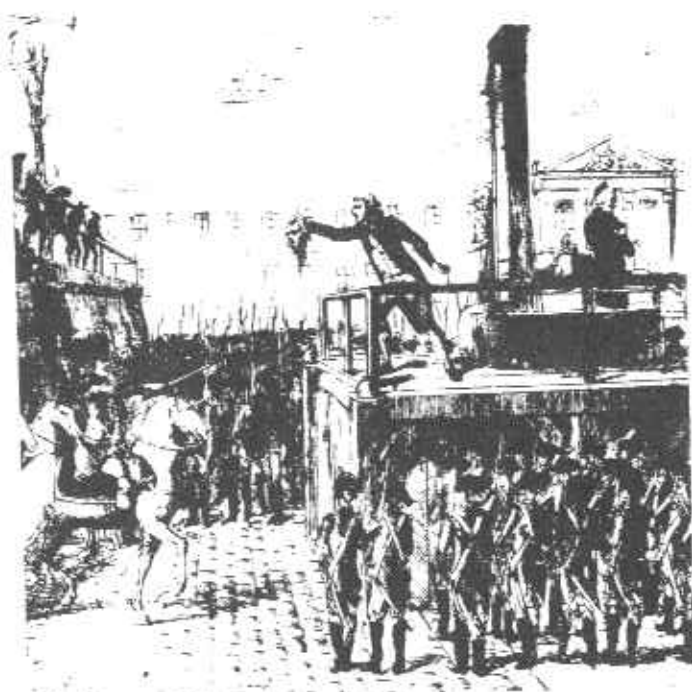
Rather, they created a pre-capitalist *ancien regime* of a special type, a late-mediaeval oligarchy based on merchants, financiers and landlords, like the Venetian and Dutch republics.

Really, Nairn claims, 'Britain' is simply the appendage of a London City-state. For this London oligarchy, the monarchy played a legitimising role, like the Venetian Doge or Dutch Stadhouder.

Modern 'British' national identity thus acquired an increasingly mediaeval character. In this framework republicanism, the only real threat to the regime, was defeated and marginalised, and the working class incorporated as a sort of mediaeval 'estate of the realm' through trade unionism and 'royal-distributive socialism' (Labourism). The bourgeoisie proper never succeeded in taking power.

Nairn explains this survival by making two criticisms of Marx. The first is that Marx overstated the power of industrial capital; there was space, in the world capitalist system, for a merchant-financier city state in London.

The second is that Marx was more generally premature: the feudal-absolutist *ancien regime* survived until 1914-18 and took its revenge for its fall in the shape of fascism up to 1939-45. The London oligarchy was still



The French execute Louis XVI

preferable to Hitler, the last child of feudal absolutism.

Only after 1945 was real bourgeois democracy established in Europe, and then the London regime became obviously a survival and an obstacle to real capitalist development. The task of radicals today, according to Nairn, is 'modernisation', the fight for a democratic republic like those in other European capitalist countries.

Nairn's thesis thus neatly coincides with some of the ideas of the 'Euro' wing of the Communist Party, including their

criticisms of the 'undemocratic' Scargill.

There are a great many criticisms that could be made of Nairn's argument. I will confine myself to one.

Nairn's argument begs the question: just how exceptional is the 'backward monarchist ideology in Britain, the foundation of the whole argument?

After all, in the USA the attention given here to the Royals is lavished on the 'First Family'; ideologies of 'small town' and 'frontier' America permeate social life; and protestant fundamen-

## A more compassionate Marquez

*Love in the Time of Cholera*  
Gabriel Garcia Marquez  
Jonathan Cape, £11.95

Reviewed by DAVID  
GRANT

Fans and first-time readers alike will not be disappointed with Marquez's latest novel.

*Love in the Time of Cholera* breaks somewhat from Marquez's magic realism and

finds him in a reflective mood, pondering the myth of Romantic Love, contrasting it with the Love that is built out of the more mundane raw material of everyday life.

The conclusion he arrives at is more ambiguous and surprising than you might anticipate from an author who regularly evokes sympathy for his characters by treating them so pitilessly.

Although the imagery is less fantastic and the novel less reliant upon this as a device, Marquez's mischievous use of the absurd is quite as good as anything in his previous work.

Dr Juvenal Urbino, respected physician, bourgeois moderniser and patron of the arts, dies early in the novel at the age of eighty-one and a-half while attempting to catch a rebellious parrot which is lodged defiantly in a tree hurling abuse at any and everybody.

Marquez weaves the thread of the story in and out of the lives of Urbino and the other two main characters in the novel, his widow Fermina Diaz and the all-time hero and victim of Romantic Love, Florentino Ariza.

Urbino's death is a pivotal point in the novel which is returned to several times, but

each time from a new angle. It gives an early indication of Marquez's proposition that tragedy is found not so much in the advent of death but in the wasted years that fill up whole lives searching for love which is either non-existent or unrequited.

Marquez does not make this proposal in an abstract way. Social conventions born out of the hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness of bourgeois society, and a comprador bourgeois morality at that, are the villains of this piece.

It is Marquez's ability to place the dilemma his characters face in an historical and social context

## Your Letters

talism, the ghost of seventeenth-century Puritanism, is on the rise. Italy and Germany are dominated by *Christian* parties linked to the catholic church. In Japan the cult of the Emperor is beginning to be revived (even if Hirohito himself is not! - Ed). And so on...

Marx argued that after 1848 the bourgeoisie's fear of the working class led it to retreat from its revolutionary-democratic past and to support reactionary regimes and ideologies. Lenin added that the development of imperialism reinforced this tendency, while the bourgeoisie was transformed by the rise of 'finance capital' and colonial exploitation allowed the imperialist regimes to win the support of sections of the working class through concessions.

This traditional marxist theory has the great advantage over Naim's theory of 'specific British backwardness' of explaining not only the 'British' case, but also the universal characteristics of imperialist capital.

It also predicts the evident fact, to which Naim seems blind, that the old republican alliance of national capital, petty bourgeois and working class cannot today be reconstructed.

The workers' movement vitally needs to become republican, to become disloyal to Queen and country, to pose alternatives to the monarchical order.

But it needs to do so not as part of a movement to 'modernise' 'backward' Britain, but with the aim of creating its own class power and its own socialist international order.

that allows him the space to comment so wryly upon their individual fates and generalise their experiences to be of relevance to the fate of whole social classes.

The particularly personal sense of the approach of death that pervades this novel may persuade some that Marquez is becoming more compassionate and less analytical. After all, Florentino is sentenced to a mere half-century of solitude!

Marquez proposes Love and Cholera are essentially similar (the symptoms exactly the same), and his novel is worth reading if only to find out if you are likely to be struck down.

**Socialist Outlook welcomes readers' letters on any topic, preferably of not more than 400 words in length.**

### 'No' to policy-making by referendum!

Dear comrades,

For some of the leading figures currently in charge of the party, the current policy review and Labour Listens campaigns do not go far enough in transforming Labour into a party fit for their prejudices to live in.

In this, they have been spurred on by a recent bit of 'private enterprise' indulged in by Sean Hughes, MP for Knowsley South.

He took advantage of the Parliamentary vacation to launch his own little survey on Labour's defence policy in his constituency, and vociferously claimed that the verdict recorded on that occasion amounted to a massive thumbs-down for the non-nuclear policy on which we fought the 1983 and 1987 elections.

In the aftermath of this rather insignificant event, the press have reported the Labour leader to favour the idea of settling the party's defence policy by means of a referendum held amongst its entire membership.

Superficially, of course, this idea has many attractions and may even tempt some sections of the Left which have become increasingly disenchanted with Labour's policy-making machinery as it operates at the annual conference.

One of the central objections which has al-

ways been raised against the process of decision-making by referendum is the power wielded by those who have charge of formulating the all-important question.

Here the 1975 EEC referendum can serve as a good example. Not only was the question loaded in such a way as to provoke a 'yes' vote ('Do you think that this country should stay in the European Community?'); it was also preceded by a government statement which was as manipulative as it was untrue.

Going back even further, it will be remembered that in France, De Gaulle was also an expert manipulator of the referendum question during his term of office.

But come to think of it, is there any guarantee that even a substantial minority of party members would bother to vote? A result based on a low turnout would cause a major credibility problem, not to mention new internal convulsions.

The policy-making techniques which currently apply within the Labour party are far from perfect. However it would be courting disaster if Labour were to saddle itself with the sham democracy and arm-twisting potential of one-off members' referenda.

Let us unite to defeat any proposal to that effect!

**Walter Cairns**

### Lesbians made invisible once more

Dear *Socialist Outlook*,  
Having just read Valerie Coultas' article 'British feminism ten years on' in *Outlook* No.9, I feel I must write to take issue with the blatant heterosexism that the article displays.

Yet again, patronising anti-lesbianism is paraded in the name of 'socialist feminism', thus playing into the hands of the largely classless politics of radical feminism.

I define myself as a socialist feminist and I am a lesbian (having finally decided that despite all of the evidence to the contrary the two are not mutually exclusive).

I see women's oppression as rooted in the capitalist order, and male violence against women as a symptom of the inequalities of power between men and women in our society, not the cause of that inequality.

However I completely fail to see what makes the demand for fertility control a vital 'social' demand and the extension of that demand to control over

our sexuality - surely a logical conclusion of the slogan 'Our bodies, our choice' - somehow *not* a social demand, and therefore of little importance. Such a distinction can only be based on ignorance and prejudice.

And for whom were 'socialist feminists' demanding equal pay, education and nursery provision? Straight women only?

Are the massive walls of hostility and prejudice faced by lesbian mothers to be ignored, and the discrimination all lesbians face in terms of employment to be discounted? This is what seems to be implied in your article.

As a socialist, lesbian feminist, I see the capitalist state as the enemy but without losing sight of the different institutionalised power relationships within that capitalist state.

All men benefit from patriarchy, and all straights benefit from heterosexism within capitalism; and to get these groups of people to relinquish the power they have is far from easy - but some people have to try.

Yours for a heterosexism-free socialism,

**Rebecca Fleming,**  
Oxford.

## Heffer: point taken

Eric Heffer has written to us following our article on the Benn-Heffer campaign in *Socialist Outlook* No.9, pointing out that a fringe meeting for the campaign did in fact

take place at the NUR conference on July 4.

We are pleased this was the case, and happy to correct the misunderstanding that might have been created by the article.

At the time of going to press, the original fringe meeting - scheduled for June 27 - had indeed been cancelled, and no new meeting had been arranged.





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**FOURTH INTERNATIONAL  
RALLY**

Saturday 12 November 1988, 7.30pm

Ernest Mandel  
Marxist economist

Heather Dashner  
Mexican PRT

Catherine Samary  
Paris University Institute of the Soviet  
World

Charlie van Gelderen  
Attended founding conference of FI

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1  
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There will be a creche. Book in advance to PO Box 705, London,  
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