

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

N O 5 J A N / F E B 8 0 P

AFTER ENNISKILLEN

INSIDE

INSIDE

EUROPEAN LEFT

PRIVATISATION



FIGHT THE BIGOTS

INSIDE

FIGHTING ALTON'S BILL

INSIDE



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Socialist Outlook has moved to: PO Box
705, London SW19 1HA

Socialist Outlook

Issue number five

Published by **Socialist Outlook**

ISSN 0951-8657

Typesetting and design by Spencers Ltd.

(TU), London EC1

Printed by Blackrose Press (TU), London

EC1

Front cover photo —

Michael Cashman (EastEnders' Colin)

and Robin Tyler (American comedienne)

leading the Clause 27 demo.

Andrew Moore/Reflex

Towards peaceful coexistence?

DECEMBER'S Washington summit, resulting in the agreement for a limited reduction in intermediate nuclear missiles, has raised important questions about the future of superpower relations, and hence of world politics. Does the INF agreement mean that we are entering into a new era of major nuclear disarmament? Does this mean a new era of co-management of world crisis between the USA and Russia? Our answer to the first question is 'almost certainly not', and to the second 'probably not'. In our view, it has suited all sides involved in the INF deal to overplay its real significance. To see why the real change resulting from the deal will be minimal, we have to look at why Gorbachev and Reagan wanted the deal.

The Soviet Union desperately wants new moves towards a diminution of the arms race because Gorbachev's *perestroika* project desperately needs the economic leeway which would be provided by major reductions in arms spending. What particularly worries the Soviets is Reagan's Star Wars project, competing with which would potentially devastate economic reform. On the other hand the Soviet bureaucrats fear that if they did not compete with Star Wars, eventually US military superiority would be so great as to lead, at the very least, to US military and political pressure on the Soviet Union, and at the unthinkable worst, even to a pre-emptive strike against the 'socialist camp'. Would the Soviet Union be able to prevent an invasion of Cuba, for example, knowing that the US could shoot down most, if not all, of its nuclear missiles? Could US military pressure even on the 'central front' in Germany or Czechoslovakia be repelled if the Soviet Union were not sure of the effectiveness of its nuclear deterrent? These are real nightmares for the Soviet bureaucracy, which sees no way of defending itself, other than military parity with imperialism.

Gorbachev has responded to this situation by trying to develop a broad offensive towards nuclear disarmament, which will start with intermediate and short range weapons and then 'escalate' to strategic weapons. The Soviet Union wants a *new era of peaceful coexistence* as the only way to avoid the effects of competition on the Star Wars front. To get it, Gorbachev is prepared to make very bold moves on human rights — at least for the intelligentsia and the 'dissidents' — and to make major concessions on both international questions in general, and military matters in particular. This may mean reducing Soviet aid to Nicaragua, and even abandoning Soviet allies in Afghanistan to what would be a very nasty fate at the hands of the US-backed mujahadeen guerrillas.

In the INF deal itself the Soviet Union has given away a lot more than the US. Gorbachev will quite happily abandon Nicaragua if he thinks it will lead to a new arms deal. This is the logic of 'socialism in one country'; for the Soviet bureaucrats, and their supporters and sympathisers, the fate of socialism is coextensive with the state interests of the USSR.

Is the United States prepared to go along with a new phase of real peaceful coexistence, a new counter-revolutionary pact for international stability? There is precious little evidence to support such a theory. The INF pact was signed by Reagan for specific limited political reasons, which are to do mainly with Reagan's place in history, and the election needs of the US Republicans. Most influential capitalist opinion in the US is against giving 'concessions' to Gorbachev, and there was a howl of right-wing protest against the INF deal. While US imperialism is quite prepared to exploit the counter-revolutionary 'goodwill' of the USSR if necessary, just now it is *not* necessary. The US approach is much more that of the mailed fist than the velvet glove.

The Reagan-Gorbachev summit, and the INF deal, have led to great confusion in the peace movement and in the left. So what attitude should socialists take? If 'detente' between the superpowers means more contacts between the peoples of the east and west, some even limited concessions on human rights, and reductions in nuclear weapons — meaningful ones, by the USA as well — then much of that we can accept. After all, we are not for matching imperialism missile for missile, or against any disarmament by the Soviet Union as part of a more global disarmament process.

But it is quite wrong for people in the peace movement to believe that we are now on course for major nuclear disarmament, or that the threat of nuclear war is receding.

If we do not accept the illusions of many in the peace movement, we do accept the right of the Soviet Union to manoeuvre, to demand a real disarmament process and to mobilise international public opinion to that end. However, we do not accept their right, as part of that, to do dirty counter-revolutionary deals at the expense of the workers and peasants in central America or any other part of the world. If 'detente' means that — a counter-revolutionary co-management of world affairs, 'peaceful coexistence' — then socialists should be dead against it. And in reality it is this kind of 'detente' which Gorbachev is looking for.

Finally, there should be no illusions that we can in fact achieve a 'non-nuclear world' so long as imperialism exists. The USA is never, ever, going to give up its nuclear weaponry, which it sees as the ultimate guarantee of the survival of the imperialist world system. Only the workers taking power, a socialist world can guarantee against the threat of nuclear war. While supporting any real steps toward significant nuclear disarmament, the main tasks for socialists in the west are to fight against Star Wars and US military intervention world wide; against US intervention in central America; against US support for the counter-revolutionary guerrillas in Afghanistan and for the withdrawal of the US fleet from the Gulf. At the same time, we have to demand a real extension of *glasnost* to democratic rights for the Soviet working class, rights of trade union and political self-organisation, for political pluralism, for the end of bureaucratic rule ●

Israeli terror in Gaza

WITH THE kind of support the Palestinians have been receiving following the first two weeks of the uprisings in the occupied territories, their closest allies may soon be embarrassed to be associated with them. After all, twenty-two Palestinians shot dead in two weeks is really nothing remarkable, compared to the numbers killed by Israel in Lebanon six years ago, or indeed, to the numbers of Palestinians being killed in Israel's almost weekly so-called 'retaliation' bombing raids into south Lebanon. As for the conditions on the Gaza refugee camps, they really are no more of an 'affront to human civilisation' than they have always been.

So whence comes this emotional tirade against Israel delivered by none other than a British foreign office minister? What provoked the US condemnation of Israel's handling of the rebellion, and its almost unprecedented vote against Israel in the UN over its practice on deportations?

The reason for imperialism's reactions to the stones and tyres of the Palestinians is far removed from the streets of Gaza and the West Bank. It lies rather in the current extreme volatility of the entire middle east, where, historically the Palestinian struggle has always acted as a major focus for anti-imperialist sentiment.

For, despite appearances, the presence of the US and British navies patrolling the Gulf waters, far from being indicative of imperialist strength, is an indication of imperialism's extreme nervousness about the future of its control over the region. An Iranian victory, or even an Iranian offensive against Saudi Arabia or any of the Gulf countries is perhaps less of a worry to them than is the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism that they see threatening the stability of the whole region.

A Palestinian uprising against Israel under present conditions could well be the

spark that ignites the whole area. Already there have been reports of student and muslim fundamentalist-led demonstrations in Egypt resulting in violent confrontations with the police, and a substantial number of arrests.

For imperialism it is very important that Egypt in particular manages to ride out the storm — even if this means making tactical concessions to the Palestinians. Paradoxically perhaps, the right-wing anti-Iranian alliance cemented at the last Arab summit in September which included

paid in terms of imperialist interests in the rest of the middle east would not be worth while.

The Palestinians have been encouraged by the divisions among their enemies, and the demonstrations are still continuing a month later. For the first time the whole Palestinian population of Israel has united in a one day strike in support of their brothers and sisters in the occupied territories. They have seen Israel's threat of mass expulsions wither away to nine individuals and they have seen these nine become the focus of

This time, though certainly still commanding mass support among the Palestinians, he is weaker than ever before. His record, particularly since 1982 — his signing of the Arraban agreement giving King Hussein joint right to represent the Palestinians and agreeing in principle to ditch the goal of Palestinian self-determination for instance — understandably alienated many of his followers, though they themselves had no clear idea of how to achieve the aims they believed in.

The experience of the uprising in the occupied



January 1988 — Palestinians demonstrate against Israeli oppression

Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, could actually have further weakened the prospects of the Camp David accord. The provisions for fairly substantial funds to flow into Egypt from the oil rich states will weaken America's financial hold over Mubarak, which could possibly, in the future, tip the balance against Egypt's separate peace with Israel, given sufficient internal pressure.

These, then, are the reasons why Israel finds its immediate interests coming into conflict with the interests of imperialism. For even if Israel could quell the Palestinians by force, the price that would be

world-wide attention with the US spearheading the attack on Israel's 'illegal' practice of deportations. They have seen a British foreign minister declaring unequivocally in favour of Palestinian self-determination; who can now convince them that violence leads nowhere?

Imperialism appears now to be pinning its hopes on achieving the international conference on the middle east which Arafat has been pushing for the last few years and which Israel has opposed. Yet again Arafat has achieved the status of the 'moderate' to whom imperialism turns in times of trouble.

territories will have given them a clearer idea. Having witnessed Arafat gain nothing from his trading in the aims of the Palestinian liberation struggle, they have seen their mass action achieve what the 'diplomatic manoeuvring' favoured by the right in the PLO never did. The forces on the left of the PLO will have come out of this substantially strengthened and imperialism may well find that the moderation of Arafat will be insufficient, with or without an international conference, to win Palestinian acceptance of an imperialist backed solution ●

ANNA WAGSTAFF

Gorbachev's casualties in Eastern Europe

THE CURRENT policies of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) in the Soviet Union are beginning to create some intolerable strains within the ruling communist parties of other countries of the Warsaw Pact.

With economic stagnation and massive foreign debts at home, increasingly sharp Soviet criticism of the Brezhnev period when most east European leaders came to power, plus demands for economic and political democratisation, you have the ingredients for massive social crisis.

Gustav Husak, Kremlin stooge in Czechoslovakia for the past eighteen years, has been removed as general secretary of the Communist Party (KSC) without so much as a 'thank you' for all the hard work. In Poland, Jaruzelski has received a major rebuff in the recent referendum on economic reform and austerity where a majority either voted against or didn't vote.

Nicolae Ceausescu's personal dynasty in Romania is showing signs of falling apart at the seams. Even in Hungary, with the most innovative of economic reforms, major reshuffles of the government have taken place.

In Czechoslovakia, Husak, left with the ceremonial position of president, has become the first major east European victim of Gorbachev's ascendancy. Deeply resented amongst the Czech people for his role after the 1968 invasion, Husak was an opportunist indebted to Brezhnev for his power.

However, his replacement, Milos Jakes, while an apparent reformist on the economy, collaborated with other hardliners to prepare the Soviet invasion in 1968 and was instrumental in purging the party of Dubcek supporters afterwards.

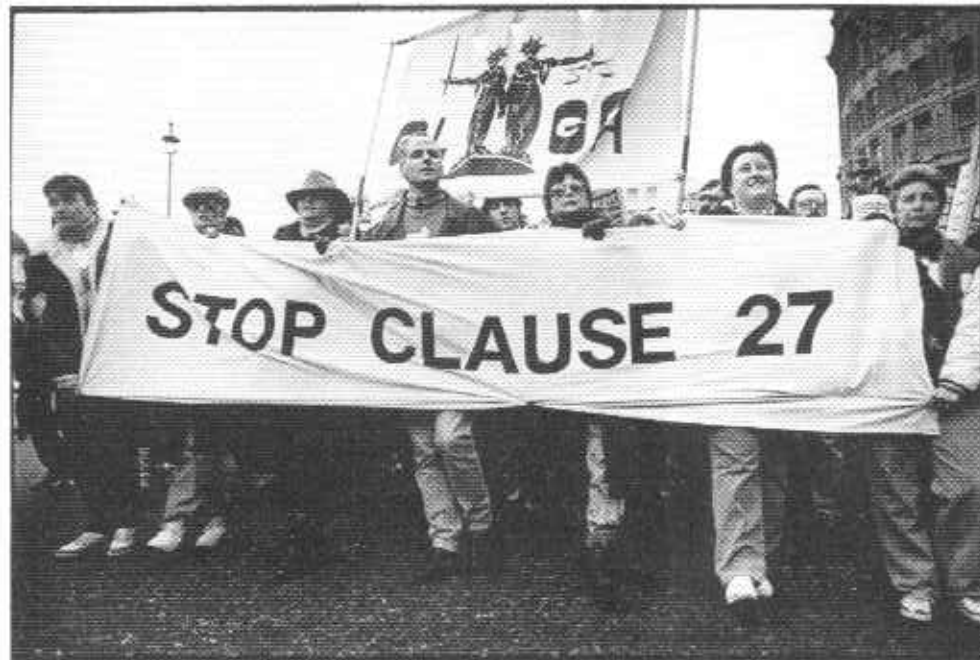
Solidarity's campaign for non participation in the Polish referendum appears to have

had results — only 68 per cent of those eligible voted. Of those voting, 66 per cent voted for the package of economic reforms and lower living

standards and 70 per cent for some 'democratisation' but there was no overall majority in the electorate. Planned price increases which might

have precipitated mass opposition have been put off but other aspects of reform will go ahead in accordance with the wishes of the International Monetary Fund.

Another country in enormous difficulties with its debt is Rumania. Nicolae Ceausescu has been having



Knight amendment attacks lesbian and gay rights

THE JILL KNIGHT amendment to the government's local government bill has brought the question of lesbian and gay rights back to the centre stage of British politics.

The Knight amendment would make it illegal for local authorities to do anything which 'promotes' homosexuality or to fund any organisation which allegedly does the same. The definition of 'promote' in the right wing Tory MP's amendment is so wide-ranging, that virtually any mention of homosexuality in schools can be outlawed. It will potentially provide the courts, and backward parents with a field day. The threat of court action will strike a major blow at those local authorities which have taken initiatives to support lesbian and gay rights, lesbian and gay centres and so

forth.

The amendment is part of a growing backlash against lesbian and gay rights. The London *Evening Standard* has been running a campaign for the sacking of openly lesbian and gay teachers, education advisors, social workers as well as those appointed specifically to work on lesbian and gay rights.

The Jill Knight amendment, and the support which it has received from the government, shows that sections of the Tory right have decided that the time is right for a frontal attack on lesbian and gay rights. This attack is serious in its legal implications, and in giving cover for bigotry and violence against lesbians and gays. It may well foreshadow moves to attack the provisions of the 1967 sexual offences act.

Predictably, the response of

the Labour front bench to the attack has been awful. Initially, in effect they supported the amendment, as a useful way of distancing themselves both from the issue of lesbian and gay rights in general and from left Labour councils who have actually done something about it.

But the 700-strong demonstration at the House of Commons on 14 December, by showing the strength of feelings of outrage among many lesbian, gay and labour movement activists has forced them to rethink their position.

It remains to be seen whether they will now effectively oppose the amendment. But in the labour movement the whole issue needs the strongest possible airing. Resistance to this new attack urgently needs to be built.

second thoughts about paying off the entire foreign debt at breakneck speed as internal opposition to his bleak regime continues to mount. In November 10,000 striking workers from a truck factory in Brasov rioted, destroying the regional party headquarters in the process. Although this does not appear to have been

repeated elsewhere, students have also taken to the streets and his image has taken a battering in the last few weeks and not just metaphorically!

Ceausescu's ill-concealed contempt for the new leadership in the Soviet Union was plain throughout Gorbachev's recent visit and they, in turn, are biding their

time while Ceausescu sinks ever deeper into the mire. A new opposition within the party and security organs which is more sympathetic to the Soviet Union seems certain to crystallise within the next few months.

All in all, the east European regimes appear in for a rough ride over the coming months

and years. Economic difficulties and the unwillingness and increasing inability of the Soviet Union to intervene to keep those states on an even keel seem certain to lead to social upheavals only paralleled in the recent past by the rise of Solidarity. ●
SEAN ROBERTS

Tories under pressure on NHS

AFTER SEVEN bitter years of uncompromising Tory government, came the unfamiliar sight of two swift and substantial retreats within a month — both on the NHS.

Nothing could more clearly show the potential strength and popular support of health workers and anti-cuts campaigns.

November and December had brought a growing media outcry over NHS cutbacks, running alongside increasingly vocal complaints from top doctors.

Early December saw this climax in an open letter from the presidents of three medical royal colleges, and then a 1,200-strong petition to Thatcher from consultants and doctors from over 160 hospitals across the country, including over 20 professors. Organised by London Health Emergency and the Hounslow-based Hospital Alert, the petition called for increased funding of the NHS — but also urged health authorities to resist pressure to make further cuts.

Within days of this petition came the first major Tory concession — an extra £70m to be shared between the health districts. The sum was totally inadequate, but the concession has merely encouraged doctors and campaigners to fight for more.

Concession number two came in the aftermath of the brilliantly-orchestrated token strike by 40 NUPE night nurses at North Manchester hospital — in protest against Tory



Cuts have put tremendous pressure on NHS staff and patients

plans to scrap their special duty payments for night shift working.

Seldom can any one-night strike by so few workers have received so much and such sympathetic national media coverage.

Even the rabid Tory press held back on its reserves of hysterical abuse — leaving the most vitriolic opposition to the strike to be voiced by the scab leadership of the Royal College of Nursing. In contrast, RCN members at several hospitals have been evading the RCN's 'no-strike' policy by tacitly assisting industrial action by health unions; or — as at St Thomas's hospital — calling disruptive mass meetings during working hours, which are tantamount to strike action.

The Manchester strike, organised by a section of the NUPE leadership willing to flout Tom Sawyer's defeatist 'new realist' line, hit the right

mood at the right time. Nurses had already begun to join or lead many anti-cuts campaigns, and had won a seven-week overtime ban in Edinburgh demanding extra staff.

Other union officials quickly jumped on the bandwagon, and threatened nurses' strikes elsewhere. Within days, the Tories had climbed down and dropped their wage-cutting scheme — though they will seek new ways to make nurses pay for their own wage restructuring.

The Manchester strike could yet prove a turning point, giving the hitherto passive unions a fresh opportunity to put themselves at the forefront of the fight to defend the NHS, and putting industrial action firmly back on the agenda.

Even before the Tory climbdown, low-paid blood transfusion service workers — again dominated by NUPE — had voted to take action to

defend their meal allowances.

The Tories have managed to provoke new militancy among health workers at the very point that their cash cuts are having most impact on hospitals, and while the media — reflecting public opinion — is still highly critical of government policy.

This gives room for hope, but none for complacency. Important partial victories can be won, but Thatcher will seek revenge in the protracted war on the NHS (see *Socialist Outlook* 4).

A labour movement leadership worth its salt would already have launched a major campaign on the NHS, including a national demonstration and a TUC day of action — which would get massive support. In this fortieth anniversary year of the NHS, it is still not too late — and essential we try to persuade them to do so. ●

HARRY SLOAN

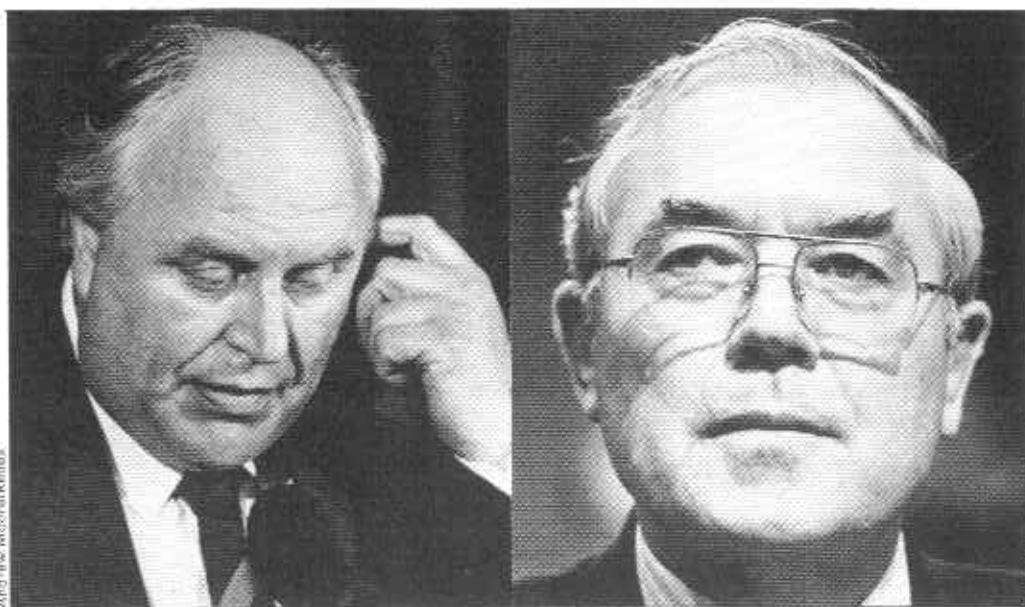
UPFRONT

Norman Willis — steering TUC policy towards that of new realist Eric Hammond

THE TUC is preparing a major move towards the open acceptance of single union deals in line with the requirements of the employers. This has come to light in TUC papers being examined by a special TUC policy review body set up to report on the future of trade unionism in Britain. The TUC papers argue that there need to be major changes in the strategy of the unions and that on single union deals unions should 'take account of employers' single union desires'.

These moves, which are contrary to existing TUC policy, run alongside the continuing refusal of the TUC to take any action against the EFTU over its scabbing role in Wapping. Last month the TUC finance and general purposes committee put the matter off again. Now, instead of challenging Hammond's union, and throwing them out the TUC as they deserve, they are preparing, behind the scenes, to cave in to their policies.

All this may also account for the double speak which characterises the TUC public stance on this issue. This came out clearly when the rest of the unions in Ford UK recently



And the Microfilm

Denis Donohoe

TUC accepts single union deals

forced a meeting with TUC general secretary Norman Willis on the attempts of the AEU to secure a single union deal in the proposed new Ford plant in Dundee, designed to manufacture high-tech car entertainment systems. At that meeting Willis was prepared to accept as good coin a cynical manoeuvre executed by Communist Party member and AEU executive council member Jimmy Airlie and the right-wing leadership of the AEU in their attempts to secure the deal.

The AEU delegation cynically said that they would drop the deal providing the other unions in Ford could persuade Ford management to do so. Both Airlie and AEU president Bill Jordan know very well that there is no chance that Ford management will drop such a deal when the second largest union in Ford UK still strongly agrees with it and remains ready and willing to sign it.

Like Eric Hammond at Wapping, the AEU stance at Dundee is an act of direct

collaboration with a major employer to undermine and weaken other trade unions. It is the clearest indication yet that the leadership of the AEU is moving towards the same kind of business-unionism which Hammond represents.

As for the Communist Party, its involvement in such a deal is a departure even for a party whose hands are stained with class collaboration and their recent pernicious role in the miners' strike and at Wapping.

ALAN THORNETT

Solidarity conference: an important beginning

ON NOVEMBER 7/8 a trade union solidarity conference was held in Leeds. Called by ex-strikers from Silentnight, together with Oxford and Tower Hamlets disputes support committees, the conference brought together 150 people interested in learning the political lessons of recent disputes and struggles, in overcoming isolation and frustration, in sharing experiences and in discussing the way forward for solidarity action and campaigning activity.

Support came from ex-strikers and victimised workers from Wapping, Hangars, the NUM and elsewhere; from the Campaign group of MPs; from

several trades councils, union branches, unemployed groups and disputes' support committees.

Speakers included representatives from GCHQ unions and Coalville NUR; Terry French (Kent NUM member, jailed in the miners' strike); and Dot Whitworth from North Yorkshire women against pit closures. Workshops were held on a wide range of topics, including sacked and victimised workers, building solidarity in the Labour Party and women in the unions.

Discussion in the final session centred on building a solidarity network and on challenging the betrayals of the

trade union leaderships. Hull dockers gave the conference an enormous boost by pledging boycott action in support of strikes being supported by the solidarity network.

The conference agreed to support in every possible way Terry French's call for a conference of sacked miners (which is NUM policy). The conference also pledged to reconvene annually and elected a 16 person steering committee to carry out work in the meantime. The committee will produce a bimonthly bulletin on current disputes and struggles and solidarity activity. There will also be quarterly open meetings.

The conference met a basic

need and made an important beginning. In the words of Janet Seymour from Silentnight: 'There are lots of lessons from our struggles, and they are parallel to a lot of other disputes.'

If we could get together with those who have been in and support disputes, we would find between us where the common things apply and what we could do to change things.'

'This conference has given me some hope for the first time in a long while', concluded Terry French. ●

For further information or to receive the bulletin contact: Janet Seymour, 3 Hill Street, Barnoldswick, Coln, Lancs (tel 0282 812861).

WORKERS AT Ford UK are heading for a possible major confrontation with management. On 7 January the Ford unions rejected management's response to their pay claim which tied a pay increase (of six and a half per cent for the first year and increases equal to the rate of inflation for the second two years) to a series of new, mostly Japanese-based, working practices which would create dangerous new precedents.

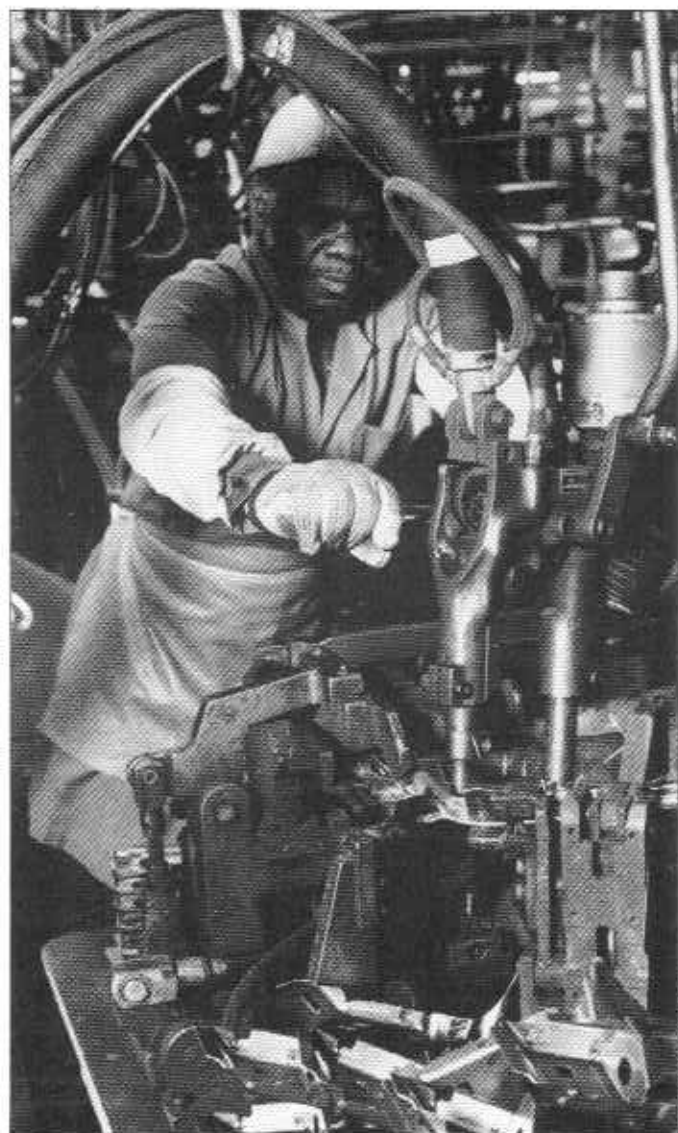
These include the introduction of short term contracts; the ending of all demarcation and the introduction of complete flexibility; the introduction of 'group leaders', creating a higher-paid force of company spies on the shop floor; and the creation of 'zone circles', another Japanese idea.

These proposals provoked a series of spontaneous strikes in the early stages of negotiations which cost Ford 13,000 vehicles at a value of £100 million. The negotiators tried to defuse this anger by stretching negotiations out over a long period — meeting the management once a month and allowing the November review date to go by without action.

On the face of it, the situation could lead to a strike. At the meeting on 7 January, however, the trade union side told management that they would be prepared to consider changes in working practices if management were prepared to accept a one year deal. Management rejected this 'out of hand'; but the signs are that a 'compromise' settlement on a two year basis is possible.

Such a settlement would be a serious blow to car workers, who, alongside engineering workers, have suffered more than most from the prolonged employers' offensive of the past ten years. Their shop floor organisations have been weakened and they have been repeatedly betrayed by the trade union leaders.

There have also been disputes in Austin Rover (ARG), in particular over the new quality bonus which was contained in the last wage review 14 months ago. In the



Ford assembly plant at Dagenham

Car workers under attack

main plants the quality bonus produced only minimal payments. In Longbridge workers have received a maximum of £1.50 a week and in Cowley workers have received a total of £1.50 for the whole 14 month period.

Some plants, such as Swindon, are actually worse off than they were before the wage review due to a fall in the production bonus. This has created great resentment among the workforce who remember the deal being pushed through with the strong recommendation of the national union leaders. TGWU chief negotiator Mick Murphy told the workers at the time that he was 'over the moon

with the deal'.

Despite Murphy's attitude, the workforce has responded with a series of strikes since last February. In the Cowley body plant, for example, an overtime ban spread throughout the plant after a fall in the production bonus. It took the local and national leaderships three months, a series of mass meetings and a promise of a ballot on the issue to get it called off. A mass meeting voted in favour of a call for stronger action which was then disallowed by the platform — causing the meeting to break up in confusion.

ARG's decision to suspend their employer's contributions

to the pension fund for three years (which is the same as reducing the wage bill by seven per cent or plundering £80m out of the pension fund) was kept secret from most workers until after the company had stopped paying in September. The official union response was slow.

Last October the national joint negotiating committee (JNC) eventually balloted the workforce for a one day strike on the issue. A majority of 800 came out in favour of a strike, although the AEU and the EETPU did not have individual majorities of their own. It was then said that those unions who did not have their own majorities could not be involved in the strike, thus splitting the unity of the workforce.

TGWU delegates then met to discuss the TGWU result — which was a 1300 majority in favour of a strike. They voted by a seven to six majority against implementing their own members' decision, with the Longbridge delegation against implementing the decision and the Cowley delegation in favour.

In Cowley, the body plant leadership decided to abide by the vote and take no further action on the issue. A mass meeting of the assembly plant, however, overwhelmingly demanded strike action on the issue. As a result Cowley was closed down for a day, but workers have not been given the opportunity for further action.

The willingness of the workforce to fight back is also shown in the recent ballot for convenors and branch officers in the Cowley body plant. Despite the fact that the right wing controlled the balloting procedures and many dubious things took place (which now seem to be the subject of complaints within the union) the left-wing candidate Tony Richardson received 936 votes against the existing right-wing candidate with 1171.

All this shows that car workers are likely to be a growing force in the class struggle in the coming period. ●

MATT BAKER

Socialist Outlook wants your letters! If you feel moved to write — and we hope you will — please try and keep to a maximum of 300 words. Send to: PO Box 705, London SW19 1HA.

Share nonsense?

Dear comrades,
Jamie Gough's article, 'Share-owning democracy?' (*Socialist Outlook* 4) was to the point and — in the light of the crash — timely.

But what is the real effect of the huge increase since 1979 (three-fold, according to Gough) in the number of people in Britain holding shares?

On Gough's own figures, 20 per cent of the adult population now own shares. That sounds like quite a lot of shareowners to me.

Of course, share ownership

doesn't require a conversion to 'Thatcherite' values (a point on which I agree with Gough) but it does encourage it (the point on which we disagree). People who own shares have a stake, and interest, in the well-being of capitalism, and in the profitability of the companies in which they have those shares. It's wishful-thinking to equate the share owner's investment with that of the building society book holder: building society and bank deposit accounts are surely about a guaranteed, modest and stable return (and

a necessity in many cases for salaried workers); shares a much higher-risk, higher-return gamble directly on somebody else's livelihood. And as long as the Tories can convince people that they can run capitalism more efficiently and profitably than Labour (which of course they can) then 20 per cent of the electorate have an immediate financial interest in returning them to number 10. That, for the Tories, is the point of the policy.

Not every share holder immediately becomes a Tory

voter, and extending share ownership to the working class does not fundamentally restructure its relationship to capital. But in the absence of an attractive alternative economic role model, and without even a convincing counter argument, the relatively minor economic 'benefits' brought by share ownership can open the door to a fundamental restructuring of values (if not class) which will take years to redress.

Jane Wells



The incredible shrinking opposition

THE ANTICS of Bill and Ben the flowerpot men seem to have inspired the tactics of Neil and Bryan the 'frontbench team'.

Yesteryear's kiddies' tv heroes used to wait until the 'man who works in the garden' went to lunch, before emerging to cavort harmlessly in the potting shed, mouthing amiable gobbledegook.

When the gardener returned, he found only little tell-tale signs of the strange activity that had taken place: Bill and Ben — warned by the ever-nervous Little Weed — had returned to their pots.

Today's trendy Labour leaders have hardly varied the formula. Since June the Tory 'gardeners', intent upon their work of pruning, uprooting and restructuring, have been able to toil almost undisturbed.

Who would believe that there is an opposition, when there has been so little popular campaigning by Labour on such savage attacks on local government, union rights, social security, the unemployed, the NHS, the poll tax, press freedom, council housing, education, abortion rights, gay and lesbian rights, the black communities and civil liberties?

Instead, Neil and Bryan come out occasionally to play stupidly with some of the tools and materials left lying around by the Tories.

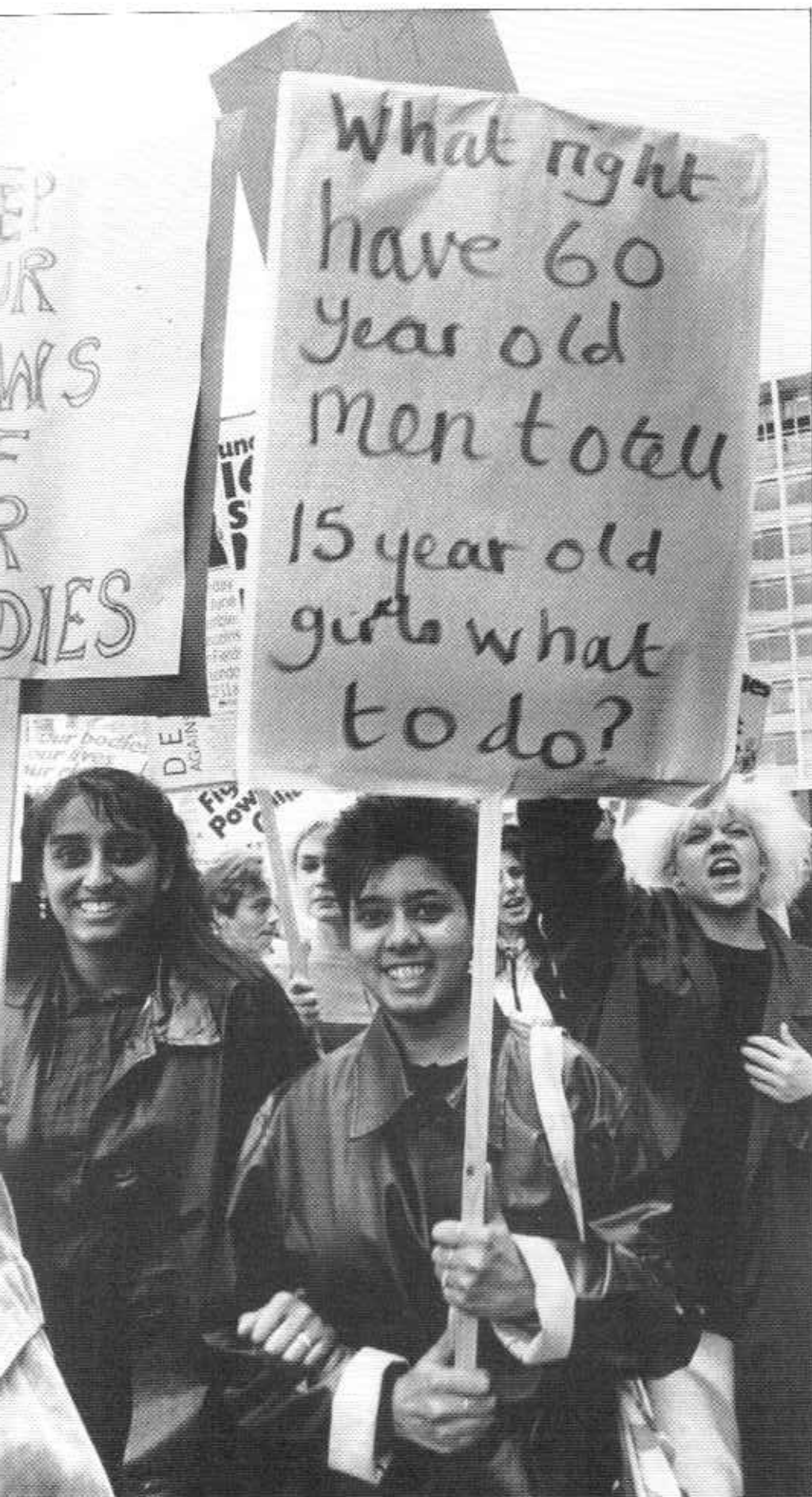
Silly Bryan picks up share ownership, gurgles and clowns around. Neil finds a few Tory voters to play with. Then both of them spot the labels used by the Tories to attack the left, and try to use them too — with whacky results!

When the Tory gardeners come back, they find just a few mysterious clues to what has happened — suspended CLPs, policy reviews, surcharged Labour councillors, and demoralised Labour voters.

Despite featuring *Marxism Today* in the role of Little Weed and the TUC as Slowcoach the Tortoise, 'Flowerpot 2' has little to offer any audience.

Unlike the original show, the BBC is unlikely to be deluged with demands for a video. But unless we are careful, 'The Frontbench Men' could run and run. ●

JOHN LISTER



Young women march against the Gillick ruling 1985 — they will be especially hard-hit if Alton's bill succeeds

THE JAMES WHITE bill fell at the end of October 1975 following the establishment of a select committee to look at the proposals. Among other things, White, a Labour MP, wanted to amend the social clause in the 1967 act, to introduce licensing for referral agencies and reduce the upper time limit from 28 to 20 weeks. The White bill was defeated for several reasons: it was very long and complicated and the overwhelming bulk of the evidence presented to the select committee was against it. During its rather long passage through parliament the anti-abortionists scored an important own goal with the publication of a book called *Babies for Burning*, a typical piece of anti-abortion propaganda which was exposed as a pack of lies and did them a lot of damage.

Of course finally the bill was defeated by mass action coordinated by the newly formed National Abortion Campaign (NAC) which organised a 20,000-strong demonstration in June 1975 and which forced the TUC and the national Labour women's advisory committee to take a position against the bill. This in turn put massive pressure on Labour MPs as the following extract from Issue No 38 of the feminist journal *Spine Rib* demonstrates: 'Mr Ian Wrigglesworth, the Labour and Co-operative MP for Thornaby, voted for James White on February 7, but, like an increasing number of other MPs with majorities of less than 5,000, he is unlikely to vote for him again. Mr Wrigglesworth said, "the situation had changed since the bill was drafted".'

William Benyon, the ill-fated Conservative MP for Buckingham, was the next to be tempted into a major challenge to women's rights. His bill, which got its second and final reading on 25 February 1977, sought to make it more difficult for doctors to recommend abortion, to give police access to medical files and to reduce the time limit to 20 weeks. As with the White bill, it never got to a third reading, largely through filibustering by pro-choice MPs. The anti-abortionists were also greatly divided over the Benyon bill. NAC, ALRA and a group of women within it (Feminists Against Benyon—FAB) organised various activities and were simultaneously centering on fighting the effects of cuts in the health service on abortion provision.

When in 1979 women again took to the streets in defiance of abortion rights and against the latest bill being proposed by John Corrie MP, the situation seemed a lot less auspicious for an out and out victory. A Tory government was in

Henry Matthews/Forum

David Alton's bill currently going through parliament is the fourteenth attempt to amend the abortion act since it was passed in 1967. The attack, aimed at reducing the upper time limit for abortions to 18 weeks, has touched a raw nerve for thousands and thousands of women who have seen so many basic rights eroded under this Tory government. Abortion is fundamental to women's struggle for liberation. If we do not control our own bodies then what control do we have left over our lives at all?

But as we dust off the old placards and leaf through the old pamphlets to prepare ourselves to send Alton packing as we sent White and Benyon and Corrie before him, it is important to bear in mind the differences and the similarities in the situation. **JUDITH ARKWRIGHT** reports.

Fighting Alton's bill



A protest against the Powell bill



David Alton

power which made it more difficult to exploit some of the contradictions which the government found itself in under Labour. Norman St John Stevas, a catholic and anti-abortionist, was the leader of the house and the bill was introduced at a different time which meant that the filibuster tactic would not be feasible.

In fact, Margaret Thatcher imposed a one-line whip for the second reading and this bill got the biggest vote yet: 242 to 98. This time, the anti-abortionists played up the proposal to reduce the time limit to 20 weeks as the major function of the bill. Behind this were included other proposals to restrict the grounds for abortion and restrict the charity clinics.

But if the anti-abortionists were slightly better prepared for this attack (although in fact this was not to last), those supporting a woman's choice were by this time extremely well-organised. By this time the Labour Party and the TUC had policy on abortion. Instead of doing everything through NAC, the 'Campaign Against Corrie' was set up in order to involve the maximum number of people around the limited aim of defeating the bill. This tactic proved successful and on 28 October 1979, the TUC led a 60,000 strong demonstration against the bill. Here, no one could be in any doubt that the defence of women's rights had been achieved outside parliament and

through mass action, led by women and organised through the labour movement. It is this self-same strategy which we need to defeat Alton today.

The first thing we have to do in preparing ourselves to defeat Alton is to reject fashionable 'new realist' arguments within the labour movement which shy away from such mass action. There are those in the movement who are seeking to make a compromise with David Alton for a 24-week limit, thus flying in the face of positions within the labour movement to defend the 1967 act or for abortion on request. This is because they have lost any faith they ever had in the mass movement and seek instead to rely on parliamentarist strategies like winning over Tory wets or the House of Lords.

Such notions unfortunately play right into David Alton's hands. It appears that he has learnt more than them in the last thirteen years and he has made it clear that this bill is only one step in a campaign to dismantle the '67 act entirely. He is presenting a one line bill because he has learned from previous mistakes that this goal must be undertaken step by step. In this he seems to have united the anti-abortionists behind him. This is important, since in previous campaigns anti-abortionists like those organised in 'Life' did not favour such compromises. Whether the bill is for an 18 or 24 week limit, if it is passed it will still be a defeat for women and give tremendous confidence to the anti-abortionists to go forward.

Furthermore, in an article in *Marxism Today*, Wendy Savage points out that although a foetus is viable at 24 weeks only ten per cent actually survive and even then only with tremendous medical back-up and resources. She states that "we should not be led down this road of "if the child can be kept alive we should bring down the limit". What women need is easy access to abortion facilities which would reduce most late abortions, but we have to have the facilities for some late ones because there are some hard cases."

As with the campaign against Corrie, mass action with labour movement support is our only option. We have no other choice — compromise is defeat and the bill is unlikely to run out of time because it is more simple and straightforward than in the past. The anti-abortionists, for the moment at any rate appear united. This is not to say that a mass mobilisation will be easy to generate. The political climate under Thatcher

cher's third term is not favourable and Thatcher herself supports a 21-week compromise. With cuts in the health service, 50 per cent of abortions are now done privately and there are the elements of a moral crusade, perhaps more confident than on previous occasions, being built up by the popular press:

Notwithstanding all this, the response to the campaign set up to fight Alton has been unprecedented in its breadth and scope. There are more FAB groups than there were CAC groups and the TUC has already agreed to co-sponsor the national lobby on 21 January and the national demonstration on 19 March.

Trade unions supporting the campaign are GMB, NALGO, NUPE, NATFHE, NUM and others. The NUM has taken a position for the first time and this is not a little to do with the women against pit closures movement who are also supporting the campaign.

Despite the divisions among the left and within the women's movement people are rallying to defend this the most basic of human rights.

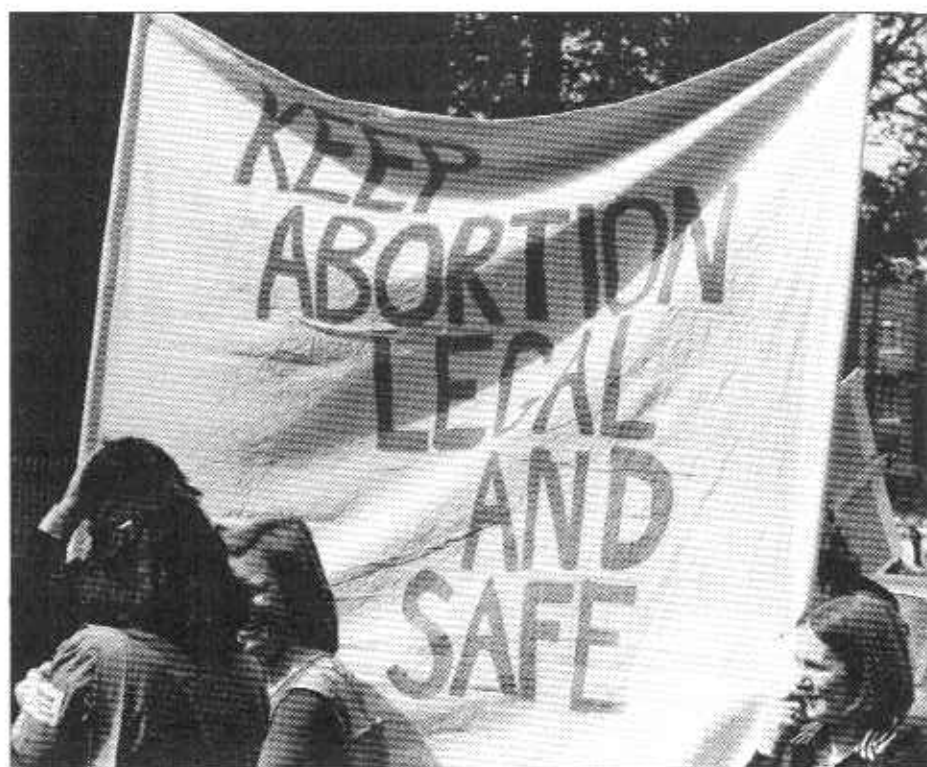
But as well as the defeatists there are also those within the campaign who argue that we cannot defend the 1967 act because it does not guarantee women a real choice. Of course this is true and that is why the National Abortion Campaign is in favour of changes in the law to get rid of the stipulation of two doctors' signatures, to make a statutory requirement on health authorities to provide abortion facilities — in other words for abortion on demand.

But that does not mean we cannot and should not defend the gains of the 1967 act as it stands. Before the act was passed more than 3,000 women each year were being admitted to hospital with septic wombs and hundreds died from backstreet abortions. They would surely not agree that we should not defend the 1967 act from attack. The act did not decriminalise abortion fully but gave a lot of women the possibility of a safe, legal and free abortion.

By fighting to defend the 1967 act we can build a successful movement to defeat Alton and begin to alter the balance of forces towards women fighting for what we really want. This brings us to a further debate which has emerged inside the campaign. *Abortion is not exclusively a women's issue.*

It is a class issue and many within the pro-choice movement have striven to point this out in the last twenty years.

It is a class issue because it raises issues such as the right of the state to take personal decision-making out of the hands of individuals. It is a class issue because of the way imperialism uses



control over women to control populations in a racist way. It is a class issue because it challenges women's role as merely a reproducer of the workforce. But it is also a women's issue and those in the campaign who oppose women-only activities or the need for women to lead the campaign, do not understand one crucial ingredient in the success of previous campaigns — the fact that they were led by women. For, when it comes to it, only women will have the energy and commitment to carry on this fight since they are the ones directly affected and with the direct experience of what the restrictions on their rights mean.

Some in the campaign have argued that abortion is a class issue because it only affects working class women. In fact, all women will feel the effects if the bill becomes law. Upper class or Tory women opposed to Alton will not fight consistently for women's rights — that is their contradiction. In the meantime their participation in the campaign only serves to highlight the divisions among our enemies.

The campaign against Alton is different from previous campaigns and the stakes are much higher on both sides. But the methods of building the campaign must remain the same. Above all, we must avoid divisions within the movement. Already the anti-abortionists are trying to claim that they are speaking for disabled people. Not true. Many disabled organisations support the pro-choice movement. Our demand must be for the right to life, but for the right to a decent life, whether able-

bodied or disabled. Fighting for abortion rights does not challenge that in any way — it merely says that at a certain point the woman who is carrying that foetus, should be able to decide.

As a broad-based campaign in defence of abortion rights FAB must seek the involvement and participation of black women and their organisations. We all have an interest, black and white, in defeating Alton and we all stand to lose if the bill is passed. But this is not to deny that black women are differentially affected because of racism. In her *Marxism Today* interview, Wendy Savage shows just how different women's experiences can be. She explains that in Tower Hamlets where she works, there was a ratio of abortions to births for the West Indian and West African population of 1:2; of white women of 1:3 and for Bengali women of 1:28.

Within the campaign we must link up with black women's organisations and find out such information and draw up demands around it. A black women against Alton group is being established within the campaign to look at precisely these issues.

In order to defeat Alton we need to draw on the strengths of our past history and learn from its weaknesses. To do that we are going to need all the resources we can muster. This fight cannot be shirked or avoided if we are ever to achieve real control over our bodies and our lives. ●

Out now — a new Socialist Outlook pamphlet: Fight the Alton Bill. See back cover for details.

Women for socialism

THIS MEETING was like a breath of fresh air, not only because it provided an opportunity to escape from the left's equivalent of grey-suited, terribly important and serious men. (Though this would have been enough!) But also because the meeting represented something new, something exciting — a real possibility for women in struggle to go forward.

The meeting was sponsored (in a personal capacity) by a number of activists in the women's and labour movements. They included: Sharon Atkin, Martha Osamore, Pauline Purnell (chair of the Labour Women's Action Committee), Dawn Primarolo MP, Nadine Finch and Mandy Moore (national Labour women's committee), Sarah Roclöfs (Labour Women for Ireland), Ros Young (SWAPO women's solidarity campaign), Terry Conway (Labour Campaign for lesbian and gay rights) and *Labour Briefing* women — among others!

Women active in women against pit closures also attended and explained the kind of discussions that have been taking place in their organisation. Betty Heathfield and Kim Young spoke of the frustrations of women active in the labour movement: women who are today fighting to defend their abortion rights, women who are taking action against the destruction of the NHS and the rest of the welfare state, women who find that, when they are not fighting the Tories, they are locked in battle with their 'brothers' in the labour movement, fighting for equal representation within the movement at all levels.

They explained that women against pit closures are discussing the idea of setting up a 'women's union', with the aim of linking up women in the labour movement with women at home. Other groups of women in different campaigns and communities are discussing how best to go forward and what forms of organisation are necessary. Women for socialism could provide a forum for this discussion which has not been seen since the demise of the organised women's liberation movement conferences of the seventies.

Women have begun to draw lessons from their experiences of the past ten years. Many socialist feminists joined the Labour Party in the late 1970s when they saw that a real struggle for socialist policies was being waged. Women in struggle saw the possibility of influencing Labour Party policy. They believed that it was possible to build a strong

At the Chesterfield socialist conference last October a meeting of 200 women called for a new organisation to be set up — 'women for socialism'.

BARBARA GREEN writes.

Labour women's organisation. Most importantly, women recognised the importance of bringing organised pressure to bear on the labour movement.

Some important gains were made in that time. Policies were adopted, attitudes were confronted, questions of women's sexuality, their control over their own fertility and women's right to equal employment were raised and campaigned for. All the sorts of things that Kinnock tells us lost Labour the election.

The Labour Party and trade union leaderships never really gave very much power to women, but the little that women won is now under attack again. The Labour Party leadership has its heart set on weakening the Labour women's organisation and ensuring that the sort of left policies that came out of it die a quiet death. But women in the Labour Party continue to fight to defend their organisation and policies. Time and again we learn the same brutal lesson — women need an independent women's movement based on and in the labour movement, but able to discuss and act independently.

Women at Chesterfield pressed home the urgency for women to build a democratic socialist women's organisation that is able to reach all women in struggle: a movement that will begin to break down the political isolation of many women.

There is a long way to go in establishing women for socialism as such a movement. So far its aims have only been elaborated by the sponsors of the Chesterfield conference. They provide a good basis for socialist feminists to discuss, improve and amend. They are:

- to promote socialist feminist policies in the labour movement.
- to develop links with the whole range of women's organisations, including black and lesbian groups and others challenging racism and imperialism in society.
- to link up with organised trade union women.
- to develop an international perspective for women's struggle.
- to offer a forum where women can exchange ideas and share experiences.

At the next socialist conference it is planned to give over enough time for women to discuss what structures and policies they need. But women can and should get involved now ●

To receive a newsletter and be kept in touch with activities send £5.00 (waged), £2.00 (unwaged) to Mandy Moore, 89 Woodside Gardens, London, N17 6UN.

Labour Focus on EASTERN EUROPE

has for more than a decade provided an unrivalled coverage of events and movements in the Second World - an indispensable source not just for specialists, but for anyone wishing to be informed about current issues and key developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. *Labour Focus* is an independent socialist journal committed to the struggle for democratic rights as an integral part of socialism. *Labour Focus* provides a platform for dialogue and debate between East and West. *Labour Focus* carries analyses, interviews, documents and book reviews.

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Socialist Outlook has published a new pamphlet on the crisis in the economy. **JEAN REILLY** reviews Ernest Mandel's

Questions and answers on the crash.

GIVEN THE massive television and press coverage of the events of 19 October — the day the music stopped in the worldwide game of financial pass the parcel — and the subsequent return to the kind of financial reports we are all used to (lumped in with the weather in a two-minute slot at the end of the news) you could be forgiven for not noticing that the crisis is still upon us. But on three occasions since 'bloody Monday' — on 30 November, on 29 December and again on 8 January — we have had re-runs of the 19th, with billions of dollars wiped from share values and the dollar reaching its lowest level since world war two.

In between those extremes, the value of the dollar and the level of share prices have fluctuated wildly. Only the efforts of the European and Japanese central banks since the new year, in organising colossal purchases of the dollar, have managed to temporarily halt its decline and, just as temporarily, steady share prices.

A feeble new year statement by the 'group of seven' industrial economies (US, Japan, West Germany, France, Italy, Britain and Canada) re-committing themselves to currency stabilisation was immediately undermined by a contradictory statement from Beryl Sprinkel, the chair of the president's council of economic advisors. This made the situation worse: there were huge sales of dollars and share prices fell sharply, especially in Tokyo.

In an attempt to develop a marxist understanding of the crisis *Socialist Outlook* has published a pamphlet by marxist economist Ernest Mandel. *Questions and answers on the crash* provides answers to the kind of questions which many socialists are asking: 'what are the effects of the stock market crash on debt and poverty in the "third world"?' and 'is the recession inevitable?'

The central plank of Mandel's argument is that, despite the frequent statements in the press by establishment figures to the effect that the crash was merely a stock market 'adjustment' amplified and instantly transmitted by computer technology, the underlying causes of the events of October and since are real and their effects will be no less real.

Mandel traces the roots of the crisis back to 1974 and to the overaccumulation of capital and overproduction of

commodities which began in that period. This, together with the disastrous Keynesian policies of the Reagan administration and the decline in the US's ability to compete with Europe and especially Japan, has led to the present crisis.

The American dilemma

SINCE 19 OCTOBER, and indeed, well before then, there has been increasing pressure on the US, from the rest of the major capitalist countries, to do something about its huge balance of payments deficit. Fears that the Americans might devalue the dollar in order to restore US competitiveness and thus reduce the trade deficit, combined with fears that they might also be forced to raise interest rates — with a consequent downward pressure on share prices — in order to attract sufficient capital to finance the huge budget deficit. These fears came to a head on 'bloody Monday' when sales of dollars and shares reached panic levels.

Since then, with the dollar free falling and share prices still very volatile, the pressures on the Reagan administration have been intense and also somewhat contradictory. The most obvious pressure is from the rest of the countries in the 'group of seven' to raise interest rates in order to halt the decline of the dollar. The massive rescue operation spearheaded by the Japanese was forced on them by fears for their own competitiveness and the seeming inability or unwillingness of the US to take the necessary measures to protect its own currency.

Mandel dismisses the theory that the US is quite happy to see a continued decline in the dollar in order to solve its balance of payments problem. He argues that a very low dollar would 'facilitate huge purchases of (American) assets by foreign competitors, modify the inter-imperialist relationship of forces to the detriment of the USA, make necessary imports more expensive . . . and get inflation surging again'. While these things are true, it is also true that a low dollar would revitalise American exports and reduce their trade deficit.

The seeming unwillingness of the US to act can be explained, however, in the contradiction between what is necessary in the long term for US capitalism and what is in the short-term political interests of the president.

There is a clear conflict between the US federal reserve and the White House



Peter Coveney/PA Wire

The city of London:
castles built on
sand?



All you ever wan

over whether to raise interest rates and therefore stabilise the dollar. The federal reserve officials are keen to do this, even at the risk of unsettling share prices again, while the president is resisting any pressure to do anything — raise interest rates, cut expenditure or raise taxes — which might trigger off a recession in the year before a presidential election.

Whichever way the Americans jump, the prospects look bad. They can tighten monetary and fiscal policy as the Europeans and Japanese want them to — either gradually or in one go depending on which of the particular branches of bourgeois economic theory they subscribe to — or they can carry on as before, with the lower dollar dealing with the balance of payments problem in the short term. This will cause inflation



Wanted to know about the crash ...

to rise, wiping out any temporary gain in competitiveness and leading to yet another financial crisis at some future date.

British economy

HOW IS ALL this going to affect Britain? Mandel makes the point that the stock market *anticipates economic trends* and that a decline in production may take some time to work its way through. It is true that the stock market crisis itself may cause future problems. Current investment — future jobs — is reduced by rising interest rates (which are expected in Britain) and the inability of companies with reduced wealth holdings as a result of the crash, to borrow even for productive investment. The possibility of increased takeover activity and asset stripping of firms with reduced

share values has similar potential consequences for jobs.

In addition, despite the loudly-hailed British recovery we heard so much about in late December, the fact is that net investment in UK manufacturing has been negative from 1981 till recently and is the lowest of all the developed capitalist countries. Manufacturing output is not even at the level it was when Thatcher took office in 1979.

One firm of city commentators, Greenwell Montagu, reacted to the publication of the figures showing a buoyant UK economy by saying that 'the UK's growth spurt is basically over, and that the economy is likely to come to a standstill in the second half of 1988 with a sharp fall in profits, a reversal of the recent recovery of manufacturing industry and a return to rising unemploy-

ment.' (*The Observer* 20/12/87)

If you consider further that the effect of the fall in the dollar on the European economies which export to the US will have a knock-on effect on Britain, which exports mainly to Europe, the reality of the crash is clear. The task for socialists is to place the blame for the crisis and its consequences firmly with the *anarchy of capitalist production* and, more importantly, make use of what Mandel calls this 'enormous ideological victory for the workers' movement' and fight to build a remobilisation however long that takes. This pamphlet is a small but useful weapon in that fight. ●

See back cover for details of how to obtain your copy of *Questions and answers on the crash*.

Alan Tuffin — sold postal workers down the river

The deal negotiated in December between the Union of Communication Workers and post office management is one of the finest examples of a face-saving bureaucratic sell-out in recent years. **BILLY CARRON** reports.



Denis Donovan/Reeler

Tuffin's Christmas sell-out

INSTRUCTED BY the 1987 annual conference to obtain a three hour reduction in the working week for all UCW grades in the post office at no cost to the membership, general secretary Alan Tuffin negotiated a one and a half hour reduction for postal workers, an hour for caterers and nothing for the counter and clerical grades. On top of this, postal workers in the larger city offices will suffer a sharp cut in their take home pay because of the introduction of a new bonus scheme and a change in the rates for payment of overtime.

According to some estimates twenty-one per cent of postal workers will be worse off in absolute terms as a result of the deal. Workers in some of the big urban offices, who stand to lose up to £30 per week when the bonus system changes, are being offered a buy-out scheme amounting to £3,000 to be paid over three years. The changes in the bonus system, will come into effect in April; the reduction in working hours will begin some six months later in November. UCW members will be balloted in January on whether they accept the deal.

Despite what is a very obvious victory for post office management, the union's newspaper *The Post* is full of windy articles by Tuffin describing the deal as 'a major success'. It is much more accurate to say that Tuffin was widely known not to support the demand for a three hour reduction and no strings. He was also terrified of leading any kind of big struggle. In *The Post* of 12 December he wrote: 'Unless there was no alternative we were not going to allow our members to become another Thatcher target'.

Undoubtedly the entire executive council feels much the same way. The

most striking feature about the UCW's leadership is its homogeneity. It faces no real challenge from the left — the Broad Left is tiny in a union of 160,000 members.

By conceding this defeat with only the slightest hint of industrial action the leadership has done considerable damage to the union. Not only has the balance of forces with management been worsened, but the long standing strains between the clerical and counter grades and the uniform grades have been deepened. Divisions have been exacerbated between postal workers in big urban offices where bonuses and overtime have always been higher and those in rural offices where people have to get by on a low basic wage. The latter who receive either small bonuses or no bonus at all under the present scheme (22,000 receive nothing at all) will automatically be £7.50 a week better off. They will have one and a half hours off their working week by November and stand to gain from any new bonus scheme. There is not much doubt about which way they will vote when the proposals are put to ballot.

The group in the union which seems to have been almost completely excluded from the negotiations is the people who staff the counters and administrative offices. The government intervened, telling post office management who obligingly confided to the union's negotiators that a reduction in hours for post office clerical workers would be an unwelcome example to the civil service. The union leadership seems to have been taken aback by the bitterness of the Postal Officers and Postal Assistants and a couple of days after announcing the outlines of the proposed settlement for the postal workers they sent out a circular headed

'shorter working week' which talked only of continuing discussions on their bonus scheme. It was such an inept attempt at distraction that it only increased the resentment.

The UCW is a union without any tradition of militancy, having had only one all-out strike this century. It is only in the past five or six years that the post office has had to face some small competition around the fringes of its empire, although in the crucial and prestigious rapid delivery letter and parcel business. Hitherto it had always been a sleepy backwater of British industry in which local and national union officials would come to agreements with the local and national management with little need for struggle and conflict.

But the old ways are dying. New managers are being brought in from outside industries and are trying to introduce a competitive business spirit into all grades of management and the workforce. Traditional negotiating procedures are being by-passed locally. Casual staff are being introduced and ever greater emphasis is being given to concepts like 'business efficiency' which of course means working more quickly.

The pace and ruthlessness of the changes have left the UCW leadership sitting in the bar talking about the good old days. They have forfeited an opportunity for a quick, painless pre-Christmas victory, at a time when the post office's commercial competitors were admitting that they could only handle about one per cent of the post office's traffic. They have signalled to management that they are frightened of a real fight and they have split and embittered the membership. Postal workers no longer trust their leadership; but as yet they have built no alternative. ●

The planned privatisation of the coal and electricity supply industries, writes Yorkshire miner **HM GREENAWAY**, requires a trade union response involving the building of national and international alliances of energy workers.

Miners need new alliances



ALL THE EVIDENCE is that the current election for the NUM presidency will result in a massive victory for national president Arthur Scargill. But with Scargill re-elected, and hopefully more easily able to cope with the stalinist-soft left bloc on the executive, the miners still face major challenges. Among the most important are the government's plans for eventual privatisation of the mines, along with the electricity industry; and the increasing attempts to undermine the coal industry by imports of foreign energy.

The attack on the industry and the miners through the importing of energy from abroad is taking two main forms. First, the government is backing the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) in importing cheap foreign coal as a substitute for buying direct from British Coal. The three main suppliers will be Shell Coal International (supplying Australian coal); Carbocal (Colombian coal); and the Dutch firm SSM providing coal from the new Chinese mine at An Tai Bo. These supplies of coal will be provided at about £19 a ton — roughly half the cost of similar supplies from British Coal. Bringing in cheaper coal from countries with either lower operating costs or a low-wage workforce will aid the process of the electricity industry switching from total dependence on British Coal — and hasten the closing down of so-called 'uneconomic' pits.

The second arm of the attack, is an extremely serious one for energy workers in Britain — the importing of electricity from France. The electricity link-up between Britain and France is via two cables capable of carrying 1000 megawatts of electricity each. The cables are now fully commissioned and the French contracted to provide energy to Britain 365 days a year.

The theory is that this link up, the new 'French connection', will allow electricity to flow either way depending on relative demand and supply on either side of the channel. So, theoretically, if there is a deficit of electricity in France and a surplus in the British national grid, electricity can be supplied to France. In fact, the supply will all be one-way — from France to Britain. In France there is an excess capacity of electricity supply, thanks to the intense programme of nuclear power station

building in the 1950s and 1960s. Already £25 million worth of electricity was imported from France in 1986, and that amount is likely to increase each year.

The international distribution of electricity, at least on a European scale, is a serious threat to European energy workers. As with many other industries today, it means that striking workers in any one country can be faced with simply switching the supply source to another country. If the energy grids develop, it will be very difficult for a mineworkers' strike anywhere in Europe to put the lights out again. Already the French have supplied electricity to West Germany, Holland and Italy, as well as Britain, and the trend towards internationalisation of supply will continue.

The internationalisation of the energy business means that energy workers are now going to have to come to terms with the problem of international co-ordination and links — otherwise the bosses in each country can play us off against one another. Unfortunately, in this industry as in many others, our international links are way behind those of our enemies. Ideally, there is no reason why we shouldn't fight for one energy union for all European energy workers. It is often too late to generate the necessary co-ordination of activity if we have to do it ad hoc — for example, the kind of links that were made with French and other miners during the miners' strike. Imagine the power that would have been created had the NUM been part of a European-wide union capable of challenging pit closures on a Europe-wide basis!

The fight for an international link-up of energy workers should start with a fight for a unification of energy workers in Britain. Thatcher's plans to privatise electricity and the mines poses the need for a united struggle of energy workers. A triple alliance of coal, gas and electricity would have more clout than the old industrial alliance of coal, rail and steel. This is a demand which should be fought for by the rank and file throughout the energy industry. The rank and file should begin the task of co-ordinating the opposition to privatisation, to overcome the sectional divisions which make the struggle against anti-working class plans more difficult — on both a national and international level. ●

'IMPROVE LOCAL services' is the trade union movement's official strategy for fighting privatisation in local government. Unlikely? — yes, but no more so than the double-think which has enabled Labour councillors around the country to argue in recent months that cutting jobs is a means to saving local services.

When the local government bill, now in its committee stage, becomes law, it will make competitive tendering for all the major services presently run by local authorities compulsory by 1989.

The policy is essentially the same as that instituted for the NHS in 1983, when the DHSS instructed health authorities to 'test' their laundry, cleaning and catering services against open competition. Since then nearly 2,000 such exercises have been completed, with around 20 per cent lost to the private sector. Wages and conditions for workers in these services have been cut drastically — and right across the board. The situation is measurably worse under the private contractors, but in nearly every case where services have been put to tender, workers have had to trade their hours, bonuses and other benefits to keep their jobs — whether the contract has gone private or stayed in-house.

But in local government, the 'instruction' to tender will have the force of law, closing many of the loopholes used by sympathetic employers to keep services with direct labour. Tendering terms are strictly commercial, and workers will very quickly become locked into the same ever-depressing downward cycle of cuts in wages, conditions — and services themselves — in order to compete with the private sector.

At a time when local councils are facing yet another round of ratercapping — when the comfortable fudge of creative accountancy is no longer possible and whilst councils of all colours are collapsing in financial crisis with redundancies left as well as right and centre — the possibility of improving local services, let alone relying on that as a vehicle to deliver you from privatisation, is remote.

The union approach is essentially the same strategy as that which was tried, tested, and to a large extent failed, in the NHS: of damage limitation. The idea was to tighten up the service standards, submit a competitive in-house bid, discredit the competitors, lobby the employers, cut your losses and maximise your recruitment where possible. Industrial action was to be led locally, if at all, and usually just sanctioned (increasingly reluctantly after fingers got burnt in the big disputes at Addenbrookes and Barking) nationally. If 80 per cent of NHS

How is the trade union movement fighting privatisation? As **JAN TURNER** reveals not only are they not fighting but in some cases local officials are actually organising to go into business themselves.



Tom Sawyer:
NUPE's
low
profile
leader

The tender trap

services have been saved, it has been wholly at the expense of the people who produce and use those services. And of course once services are run under these conditions for any length of time, the fact that it was competitive pressure that led to their decline will be obscured. Local services — private or public — get worse, leaving little scope for mounting broad based campaigns in their defence.

And of course the stakes are now much higher for the trade unions: more members, and more core members (in terms of the unions' base), as well as their recruiting ground — the services themselves — are under threat.

With a 'strategy' that says simply 'win the service, at any cost', and with mounting pressures to recruit and retain members, confidence in the unions' ability — and in some cases willingness — to fight privatisation effectively is running low.

Under those circumstances it's all too easy for the unions to seek 'creative' solutions to the privatisation problem which seek to dodge but effectively ditch the central (and still publicly espoused) principle of outright opposition to privatisation — in some cases for them to carry workers with them, who, in the absence of a more positive lead, don't see any other way out.

The recent experience of competitive tendering in those pro-privatisation councils which are more 'advanced' in the process is instructive. In Westminster, for example, where a number of services have already been subjected to competitive tendering, and some privatised, three senior managers — all NUPE members — are drawing up a management bid for a very lucrative (£13 million) refuse collection contract.

The trio, who were all involved in drawing up the specification for the contract, are allowed work time by the council in which to go round the workforce to sell them the idea — which for the council itself is attractive insofar as it carries some of the benefits of having the appearance that the service would be

remaining with 'their' people — but with none of the 'disadvantages' of an in-house service. NUPE locally and nationally have condemned the deal as 'insider bidding' and remain opposed in principle to management and joint union management buy-outs of public services.

More serious is a joint union-management bid — *in competition with the DLO tender* — for the refuse collection service in Milton Keynes. There, the council's former chief executive has set himself up in the cleaning business, signed a single union deal with the GMB locally, and put together a bid for the service which they are jointly trying to persuade the workforce (who are currently employed by a private contractor) to accept. The regional GMB official involved has publicly stated that as, in his view, the council would be opposed to a return to direct labour on the contract for political reasons (it was formerly organised by NUPE) the GMB had most to gain by going along with the deal, which, he added, would probably involve the union taking seats on the board in the long run.

What he didn't spell out, and what is probably of most central interest to the GMB in all this, is the new members that the success of the tender would deliver. The GMB nationally have not made their position on this particular deal clear publicly and there have been conflicting signals about how far up the hierarchy support for this kind of deal goes. But the union has suffered heavy membership losses from the decline of manufacturing industry — and the health service and local government are now top of its list of seven target recruiting areas.

Whether or not the deal has the public, or even tacit support of the GMB leadership — or whether it is simply a one-off adventure by one of the regional 'barons' who are known for their autonomy in the GMB — the intense pressure to recruit remains, as does the lack of leadership from the top of the union(s) in the fight against privatisation. ●



January 1986, striking French railworkers demonstrate in Paris — today, left-wing presidential candidate Pierre Juquin is basing his campaign on the themes raised in such struggles

John Surrack/Herald

S U P P L E M E N T

New openings in Europe

As part of our continuing coverage of political developments in Europe, we are publishing below articles on the left-wing Juquin presidential campaign in France, the

new workers' struggles in Italy and the growing crisis in the West German Greens. **DAVE PACKER** opens with some general thoughts on European politics.

THE EUROPEAN workers' movement, confronted with long-term economic depression, mass unemployment, attacks on social security and the welfare state, and attacks on democratic rights, is everywhere hampered in replying to these attacks by the role of the bureaucratic leaders of the trade unions and mass working class parties. But the working class has not been able to simply politically bypass the mass organisations. The most combative sections of the working class continually push forward, and test out new alternative leaders from within their own ranks.

The blockage represented by the different European variants of right-wing 'new realism' is creating the preconditions for explosive developments within the traditional organisations — and even splits from them. Revolutionary socialists have to address themselves to this political recomposition from within the mass organisations.

There are important differences in how this process develops in different countries. For example, although the Labour Party left wing is politically rather different from the left wing 'renouveaux' (renewers) in the French Communist Party, they are both representative of the same general trends¹. The tempo has varied from country to country, but all these reformist parties and organisations which continue either to base their politics on the post-war consensus, or have become 'new realists', are sliding into crisis — the kind of political crisis which the European workers' movement has not seen since the last world war.

Economic depression, austerity and the consequent class polarisation are forcing the pace of political change on both left and right. For example, in France Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front has ten per cent of the vote — ten per cent for a neo-fascist party². This

was unthinkable ten years ago.

But one of the key factors determining the form of the political recomposition is the response of the ruling class and the right wing to the growing tussle over the system of international alliances which the European states should adopt. Simply summed up, the United States, through its cold war offensive against the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc, is trying to force the west European states into a more determined 'atlanticist' posture — political, military and economic subordination to the United States. The main ruling class opposition to the Reagan-Thatcher 'atlanticism' is right-wing pan-Europeanism — counterposing a closer integration of the common market nations against the domination of the Americans. This implies much closer technological, economic and military links than currently exist.

Two questions immediately arise: where does the Gorbachev leadership in the USSR stand on this conflict, and where should socialists stand? As far as the Gorbachev leadership is concerned, their stance is determined not by socialist internationalism but by bureaucratic calculation. In order to give themselves the breathing space for the programme of economic reform (*perestroika*) they above all want international stability. They want to get US military and political pressure off their back. Moreover, they want closer technological and trade links with capitalist Europe to develop their economy. Therefore the political line of Gorbachev in Europe is for the capitalist 'European' option and against atlanticism. In other words, while wanting to see more political independence in western Europe vis-a-vis the USA, Gorbachev is a stout defender of the basic and political status quo on both sides of the European divide.

The response of the more ideological leaders of the European workers movement has been significant. Gorbachevism has won applause from the rightward-leaning eurocommunist parties. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) after years of distancing itself from Moscow, is singing Gorbachev's praises at the top of its voice.¹

Gorbachev's 'westpolitik' is also having its impact on European social democracy, not only within the German SPD, but also in the leadership of the Labour Party and others. It is significant that Soviet represen-

tatives were flown into Britain to attend the recently held Chesterfield conference. Benn and Scargill (who led an attempted standing ovation for the Soviet representatives), appear excited by Gorbachevism.

Gorbachev's approach to European social democracy is far from being an attempt to turn these parties into ideological fellow-travellers of Moscow. It is rather an alternative to 'atlanticism', an appeal that plays on the desire to preserve welfare state capitalism in western Europe, together with effective trade union and civil liberties.

All this is a far cry from the traditional 'atlanticist' preoccupations of the old guard social democrats like Schmidt, Healey, Craxi and Soares.

But reformist pan-European ideas are emerging as an important trend within European social democracy today, and they have close parallels within a number of communist parties. They are as bankrupt as the old atlanticist ideas as a socialist international response.

It is necessary for revolutionary socialists to present a clear alternative to 'atlanticism' and reactionary capitalist 'Europeanism' — including the EEC. A working class solution to the problems of European capitalism, war and trade war, is a socialised and planned economy on a pan-European scale that would include the eastern bloc countries. This poses the task of uniting the west European working class and its allies with the 300 million people of eastern Europe including the Soviet Union in a *united socialist states of Europe* based on a new international economic co-operation and division of labour.

Such a solution would be a goal for the workers in the west, in the framework of a socialist transformation, and for workers in the east in their struggle to throw off the fetters of the bureaucracy and establish workers' democracy ●

Footnotes

1 As Trotsky put it 'each national situation is an uneven crystallisation of the elements of the world process'; for a brief summing up of his views on the relation between national specificities and the international situation see the preface to the German edition in his book *Permanent Revolution*. The same ideas are expressed at length in *The Communist International After Lenin*. At a time when many socialists are expressing concern only for 'national specificities', it is important to emphasise some of these ideas.

2 Even the former leaders of the far left *Il Manifesto*, who have gone into the PCI, are now saying that Gorbachev shows that they 'underestimated' the Soviet Union.

'AT LAST something's moving.' The message on campaign badges indicates the reaction to Pierre Juquin's decision to stand in the French presidential elections. Juquin is a leading 'rénovateur' — dissident Communist expelled from the Communist Party. Although the elections are not until May 1988, French political life is already dominated by the opinion polls and speculation about who will be the final candidates in the race.

The main right-wing runners are already known. These are Jean-Marie Le Pen of the neo-fascist National Front (too much for even the Tories to swallow!) and two candidates from the present majority of the national assembly: prime minister Jacques Chirac for the gaullist 'Rally for the Republic', Raymond Barre for the UDF.

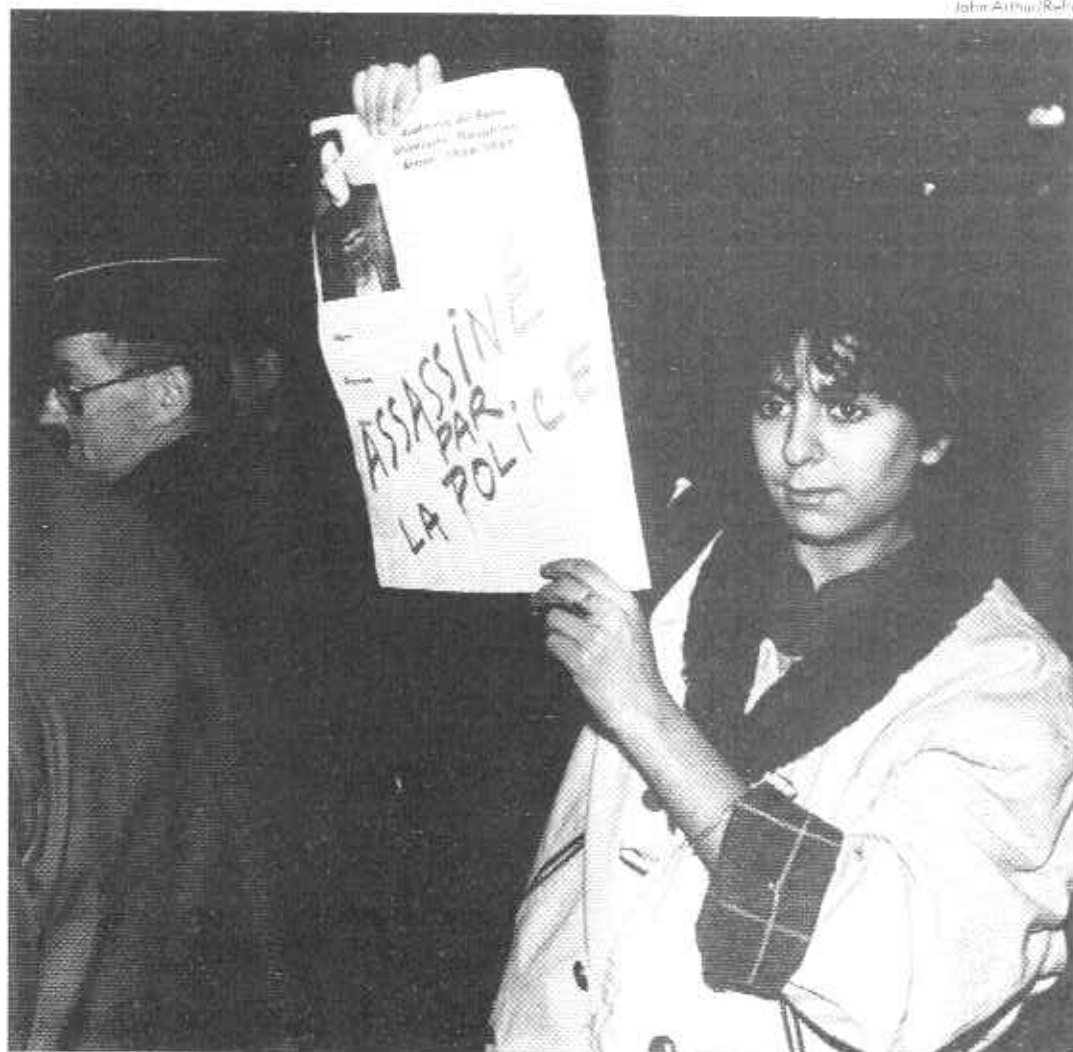
On the left things are not quite so straightforward. François Mitterrand has not at the time of writing announced whether he will stand for re-election as president. He is still doing well in the opinion polls and calls on him to stand are multiplying. His main rival within the Socialist Party (SP) is Michel Rocard from the right wing.

The 'Juquin effect'

SINCE THE BEGINNING of 1987 a left wing has tentatively begun to take shape within the SP led by Jean Popereu and Jean-Pierre Chevènement as a delayed reaction to the experience of the 1981-86 SP-dominated government, the last winter's struggles and the effect of the Juquin campaign. Like Juquin, this current calls for dissolution of the national assembly in the case of a left victory in the presidential election, that is against collaboration in government with the right as is the case at the moment. This current, however, does not have any serious candidate for president.

Despite the unanimity of its recent congress, the Communist Party is still suffering the effects of the crisis which culminated in the 15 October announcement by Pierre Juquin that, at the request of the coordination of Communist 'rénovateurs' (renewers), he would stand as a candidate, thus leading to the expulsion of himself and hundreds of his supporters from the party. Direct intervention from the party centre has succeeded in 'normalising' all but two local Communist federations, but one of the two remaining is in the area of Doubs, a bastion of the Peugeot car workers and reported to be 80 per cent oppositional.

The 'rénovateur' current itself is uneven. In some places it is little more than groupings of individuals, elsewhere it is a real split within the local party apparatus. The first national meeting since the current was expelled



Scene from student demonstrations

Juquin campaign gathers momentum 'Something's moving'



Pierre Juquin

will be on 9/10 January in Lyons where 400 representatives are expected to attend.

The present standing of the CP candidate André Lajoie hardly puts him ahead of the 'marginal' candidates Arlette Laguiller of Lutte Ouvrière

(Workers' Struggle) and Pierre Lambert who is standing for the ADP (Movement for a Workers' Party) the front for his organisation the PCP (Parti Communiste Internationaliste). This is the first time that the 'Luddites' have stood in the presidential elections, a decision they took after deciding not to support Pierre Juquin.

Alain Krivine, who has stood as the candidate of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR, French section of the Fourth International) in every presidential election since 1969, will draw once Pierre Juquin's candidature was announced. This decision, foreseen by the LCR's May congress and endorsed by a special national conference in November, recognised the importance to the French workers' movement of a candidate able to rally greater forces than the LCR alone, defending the essential aspects of a clear left anti-capitalist platform: determination to beat the right, to defend the demands of workers and not to repeat the experience of the left government of 1981-86.



John Arthur/Rehler

December 1986 — French students protest at the murder of Malik Ousseline by police

Juquin campaign supports mass movements

THE CENTRAL planks of Pierre Juquin's campaign are: anti racism and the right to vote for immigrants; the 35 hour week; independence for Kanaky (New Caledonia); scrapping the French nuclear 'force de frappe'; against nuclear power; and for equal representation of women in the institutions through 50 per cent quotas.

These themes are a reflection of the 'social movements' and the struggles of last winter. He has invited representative figures from all these movements to participate in his national campaign leadership. The two most prominent members are David Assouline who was a national spokesperson for the student movement in December 1986 and Kaissa Titous from the national bureau of SOS-Racisme and one of the main instigators of the first 'march for equality' in December 1983.

Also included in his staff are René Buhl, former confederal secretary of the CGT union federation; Maya Surdure, a well-known feminist activist from Paris; Marie-Thérèse Patry from the Class struggle opposition tendency in the Paris region CFDT union federation and Bonvallot, former representative of the CGT to the World Federation of Trade Unions in Prague.

This central staff works with commissions on the different themes where a broad layer of activists can contribute to preparing campaign material. These commissions can be a useful

junction point for activists from the social movements, from the far left organisations supporting Juquin, or from the 'renouvateur' current itself — that is people whose main experience is within the CGT tradition — to discuss and exchange their different ideas and experiences.

Activist committees to build campaign

THE BASES OF support for the Juquin campaign are the committees that are

'Alain Krivine withdrew once Pierre Juquin's candidature was announced'

springing up like mushrooms in localities and workplaces. These now number about 300 nationwide. In Paris itself there are 35, some 25 of which are in workplaces, including hospitals, government departments, shops, railways and the postal service. The local areas where committees have been formed include the Paris 20th arrondissement, the main immigrant area and where the National Front got over ten per cent in the 1983 municipal elections.

One of the most successful meetings so far was at the Sorbonne where students packed into the main amphitheatre to listen to Juquin, provoking the inevitable remark that such a packed political meeting had not been

seen since 1968. A number of faculty-based committees have already been formed.

One of Juquin's central concerns is that the campaign should reflect the ideas and aspirations of those that participate in it and not have a programme imposed upon it. The grassroots committees are therefore drawing up local appeals of support for the Juquin candidature to use as a basis for attracting activists to the committees. However, until these committees begin to develop real activity, the campaign is highly personalised around the figure of Juquin, of course this is partly inevitable given the structure of the presidential system.

The national meeting of the committees called for January will make possible a real assessment of the forces drawn into the campaign so far. Many of them hope that this campaign will open the way to the creation of a new political force in France, to the left of the SP and CP. The committees will be a test of whether it is possible for forces that have not worked together for years (for example in workplaces where CGT and CFDT members are active), to work together.

In the period leading up to the election, however, the main tasks of the committees will be to win support for the campaign, and then achieving a good enough result in the election to demonstrate that there is the space and a role on the French left for this movement.

●
PHILOMENA O'MALLEY

PCI loses one million votes

Italian rank and file re-organises

FOLLOWING LABOUR'S election defeat *Marcion Today* theorist Stuart Hall, casting about for some sliver of hope in his *Guardian* article, advised us all to look forward to the performance of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in Italy's June general elections.

The PCI suffered its worst election defeat since the 1940s losing one million votes and 21 MPs. A lot of the lost votes went to the Greens (in parliament for the first time with 2.5 per cent), and to the 'hard left' Proletarian Democrats (Democrazia Proletaria, DP). The PCI subsequently changed its positions on the anti-nuclear referendum. Its internal debate, unfortunately mostly between various reformist positions, has heated up.

The same Stuart Hall on a recent dreary Channel 4 discussion on Gramsci's relevance today speculated on the importance of PCI-organised 'festas' (festivals) for developing working class hegemony. On both occasions he got it all wrong. He is looking at the wrong part of the PCI and has certainly not been to very many 'festas'.

In the last six months it is not the PCI leadership and its convoluted debates on a new 'eurosocialism' that has made the running, but another resurgence of rank and file industrial militancy involving tens of thousands of workers, particularly in transport and education. As for the 'festas', a recent one I attended only drew a decent crowd when the raffle for the Skoda car was held — hardly threatening bourgeois hegemony there!

The new Goria-led government is more of an armed truce than anything else between the two main protagonists in the coalition, the Socialist Party (PSI) and the Christian Democrats (DCI). PSI success at the polls (up 4 per cent) allowed PSI leader Craxi to veto any more heavyweight DCI prime minister and gives him time and space for his grand project of drawing behind the PSI the smaller secular 'left of centre' parties or forces (Social Democrats, Radicals, even parts of the Greens).

If Craxi can pull off some sort of realignment he believes he will have built a force big enough to seriously take on the Communists — as any realigned grouping would come in around 23 per cent which is not far short of the PCI's declining 26 per cent share of the vote. It is even being

PCI secretary Natta — sporting the kind of snappy suit that every well-dressed eurocommunist should be wearing this year



Sabotini/Granata-Refle-

suggested that he could then threaten his present DCI partners with a new PSI-PCI alternative.

In any case Gorla's government is continuing the tough, *decisionismo* of the three-year Craxi government. This is similar in some respects to Thatcherism: attacking one by one all the gains made by working people in the struggles from 1969-75. It was epitomised by his successful attack on the sliding scale of prices and wages mechanism.

Up to now, however, despite the frontal offensive on working class living standards and working conditions, Italian governments have not been able to go as far as Thatcher. Partly this is because there is less to attack — Italian social security cover has always been less extensive than in Britain — but mainly they are hampered both by the bourgeois political system itself and by continuing defensive struggles.

But perhaps the key question for the bourgeoisie and central to the new finance bill they want adopted, is getting the state budget deficit reduced.

Currently the deficit stands at nearly 13 per cent of GDP. For the bosses it is the maggot growing bigger each year gnawing away at the buoyant growth and export success. The media's fascination with Italian economic performance overtaking Britain's (*il sorpasso*) does not find the real masters who are looking enviously towards Thatcher's medicine for cutting state deficits.

The Italian deficit is partly a result of the political patronage system endemic in much of the state sector, that is jobs and pensions are often distributed in return for political loyalty. A Thatcherite line of managerial efficiency/privatisation comes up against the tradition of sharing out different fiefdoms in proportion to political influence in the majority coalition. Despite this the new finance bill will ferociously rationalise the health service and other state services.

Alongside the battle over the finance bill there is one attack that does threaten pre-1969 gains — the proposals to limit the right to strike in certain sectors, particularly transport.

The other difficulty for ruling class attempts to carry out new austerity policies is the resilience of working class resistance. Undoubtedly this is uneven from sector to sector. Some strongholds like Fiat have not recovered from their big defeats, and some rank and file activists have a corporatist or economist approach disinterested in overall political solutions for working people.

The phenomenon of rank and file committees goes right back to an occasionally ultra-leftist version from 1969-74 and then resurfaced with the *autocoitati* committees around the contract negotiations a few years ago.

They have now developed again in certain important sectors in the last six months.

A feature of these struggles, all of which have been in defence of jobs or working conditions against government restructuring plans, has been the opposition of rank and file workers to deals negotiated by the reformist apparatuses. Time and time again at Alfa Romeo, with the teachers and at Alitalia or on the rail we have seen votes against union leaderships (usually PCI). Occasionally, as with the teachers, even *Unità* (the PCI newspaper) has had to recognise the alienation of the union membership from their leaders.

'significant mass rallies in Milan and Rome'

In fact, Occhetto, heir apparent to the PCI leadership, recognised as much in the balance sheet he drew of the PCI's election losses. It is significant that Democrazia Proletaria took votes from the PCI in its northern industrial strongholds as a result of what has been happening in the unions. Not only are trade union members voting against their leaders they are organising independently in the COBAS (*Comitati di Base* — base committees).

Another reason for this sense that the apparatuses do not belong to the members is the way that union posts are divided out at the top on a regional or national level between the PCI and PSI factions of the bureaucracy, without any reference being made to the membership or the real support for each faction at the base.

'Democrazia Proletaria took votes from the PCI'

More worrying for the union leaders are the first attempts to coordinate the latest rank and file committees, the COBAS. A meeting of about 200 representatives of different COBAS was held on 21 and 22 November and among other things it decided to call for delegations to a demonstration in defence of the right to strike on 12 December. The Socialist-led UIL trade union confederation has more or less accepted such interference with independent trade unionism. The PCI-led CGIL opposes such laws but has proposed 'self-regulation' of the right to strike in such 'sensitive' sectors as transport. Mass sentiment in such sectors is understandably reluctant to hand over the strike weapon to the bosses.

Not wanting to be outflanked, and with the government refusing to concede in any case, the three trade union confederations (the above mentioned

plus the Christian Democrat-influenced CISL) called a one-day general strike on 15 November in response to the finance bill's proposed tax increases and against legal regulation of trade unions. The first general strike since 1981 was a success but it was a one-off means of pressure used by the bureaucracy. The bourgeois and PCI press were also keen to present it as a reassertion of the official unions' authority over the dangerous destabilising role of the COBAS.

The latest developments in the COBAS have revealed some of the political difficulties in organising such an anti-bureaucratic current. A further coordinating meeting of the COBAS in Naples before the planned 12 December demonstration ended in a split between the more rightist, 'corporatist' (anti-political) forces and the hard left activists. The left won a majority but obviously this dispute affected mobilisation for the demonstration. At the same time the bureaucracies and the press did everything to tar the COBAS with the brush of extremism and in fact the police banned the demonstration in Milan.

Nevertheless significant mass rallies were held in Milan and Rome. With the big trade union confederation committed to further campaigns on the upcoming contract negotiations and the finance bill there will be plenty of opportunity for the COBAS to develop.

Revolutionary activists in Italy are encouraged by the opening presented by the slightly increased vote for radical policies at the election and the subsequent rank and file militancy. However they are aware of the limitations of the movement. It only affects certain sectors and has not yet reached even the scale of the *autocoitati* of recent years. At the same time there is the same old problem of how to build a more permanent class struggle tendency in the unions challenging the hold of predominantly the PCI. Such a tendency is needed to build on the gains of each wave of self-activity so that the next wave can go even further. Attempts in the CGIL, the most important union, have highlighted the problems.

Democrazia Consigliare (Council Democracy) was set up in 1984 coming out of the *autocoitati* experience. Many of its leading lights belong to DP but independent activists and the Italian trotskysts of the Revolutionary Communist League (LGR) are also involved. A meeting in October tried to draw a balance sheet of the tendency's activity.

Some of the differences at that meeting revolved around a different conception of how to fight the bureaucracy. DP, with its MPs and team of full time trade union officials — who often play a positive role — tends to skirt

around the question of frontally challenging the PCI on the key programmatic questions for the unions. This can be further seen in general political terms in their 'open letter to the left' which attempted, correctly, to intervene among PCI militants debating their party's defeat.

The letter makes several general points against the idiocies of the PCI's search for the holy grail of the 'culture of government' by reaffirming the need for a real change, a real break with the system. However it is remarkably unspecific about who it is challenging, being careful not to nail the PCI with specific responsibility for the gains made by the right since 1975. Each sector — the unions, ecological movements and women for example — is more or less correctly dealt with but the difficult question of how the left can re-found itself is vague and could even be interpreted as a relatively painless 'coming together' of these different movements.

The exact role of the working class is fudged and the nuts and bolts of the fight with the majority working class organisations like the PCI are not examined.

Coming back to *Democrazia Conciliare* we can see that DP's general framework would favour its development as an ideological current favouring rank and file democracy, but not as a crucial organised movement challenging the PCI's hold over the working class. The trade unions become 'just another movement' and the importance of politically organising against the PCI is underestimated or is left to the DP and the series of movements in society. There is an element of how the British SWP sees united front work in the unions, a sort of reflex not to get too involved in the nitty gritty of united front tendencies because it detracts from projecting the activities of the independent party, competing head to head with the big working class parties.

Hence critics of DP say *Democrazia Conciliare* should have democratically-organised structures of activists which can bring in wider layers than just those who agree ideologically with the DP or the UCR on a national level. Another consequence of such an approach would be a more down-to-earth trade union bulletin for organising activists.

Unfortunately the British press (including the *Morning Star*) has barely mentioned recent developments in Italy. News is ... a porno star MP, Ian Rush's problems with the *catenaccio*, and not turning up to see the *Windsors*. Even *Marxism Today* which seeks so much inspiration there tends to look at yet another interminable PCI seminar rather than the experience of the COBAS. ●

DAVE KELLAWAY



Greens arrive in the Bundestag for the first time in 1983

The German Greens in crisis:

Whatever happened to the 'new politics'?

FOR MANY ON the British and western European left, the rise of the Green Party in West Germany since the early years of this decade has served as the model of a 'new politics': a radical movement which not only managed to transcend the fragmentation of a German far left notorious for sectarian division, but even succeeded in the area of electoral politics — which hitherto had appeared the impenetrable fortress of social democracy.

Imitators sprang up all over western Europe with varying — and generally lesser — success. Even in Britain the intervention of Green-Ecology Party candidates may well have cost Labour a handful of seats in the general election. Beyond the purely electoral scene, the chief impact of the Greens has been on the terms of debate on the intellectual left, where the appeal of the 'new politics' often served as cover for a hasty retreat from an 'outdated, sterile' marxism.

It was in West Germany, of course, where the collapse of marxism's hegemony among the radical post-1968 generation was most spectacular. In this former hotbed of 'critical universities', *Das Kapital* reading circles, quotation-hurling polemicists and left-wing bookshops overflowing with reprints of the socialist classics, theory suddenly became decidedly unfashionable.

The distributors of red tracts at the factory gates abandoned the early morning shift in favour of more rural target-groups in the vicinity of nuclear power stations; and the apologists of China's bomb as a defence against

imperialism and 'social imperialism' took to wearing 'swords into ploughshares' badges. Caricature? Certainly, but the speed at which theory and the class struggle went out of fashion was still breathtaking.

This is not to suggest that the rise of the Greens was merely a matter of the old radical left dressing up in new clothes. A new awareness of ecological issues had gradually spread ever since the oil crisis of the early seventies had put energy onto the political agenda. The subsequent rapid expansion of nuclear power schemes provided a focus for spectacular mass resistance. The women's movement and the 'citizen's initiatives' had spread political activism beyond higher education and the trade unions and laid the foundations of a new, 'participatory' political culture outside the traditional structures of parliamentary and party politics.

The prolonged death agony of the ruling SPD-Liberal coalition in Bonn, now shorn of its initial reformism of the Brandt years, had disillusioned a whole generation of young voters. Thus, by the turn of the decade, the ground had been prepared for a political phenomenon such as the Greens, provided there was an issue capable of focussing the disparate forces of dissent into a coherent challenge to the establishment in Bonn. This issue was provided by NATO's decision in December 1979 to deploy a new generation of nuclear missiles in West Germany and four other western European countries. It was the peace movement and its repercussions both within and outside the SPD that brought down

the Schmidt government and opened the road into parliament for the Greens.

The hundreds of thousands who demonstrated in the streets of Bonn against cruise and Pershing, and the many more whose vote carried the Green Party beyond the critical five per cent barrier¹, did not represent a sudden dramatic increase in the forces of the far left. But inside the organisation of the new party, and particularly in its parliamentary and extra-parliamentary leadership, the veterans of the student movement of 1968 and of the Maoist sects of the 1970s soon played a leading part.

While the public face of the Greens was identified with individuals like Petra Kelly and the former 'Bundeswehr' general Gert Bastian, the political infrastructure came to be dominated by the Hamburg-based group around Rainer Trampert and Thomas Ebermann (formerly of the 'Communist League'), the remnants of the dissolved pro-Chinese KPD, the former ultra-left, Frankfurt-based 'spontaneists' around Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Joschka Fischer, and the erstwhile KBW. Their influence was helped by the fact that despite their electoral successes, the Greens never acquired a mass membership and most of their local party branches lead a marginal existence not entirely dissimilar to that of the local branches of the old far-left cadre parties.

It is only against this background that the present crisis of the German Greens can be properly understood. But what is this crisis? In the bourgeois press, much is made of the public squabbles between the 'realos' — the 'realist' wing advocating a close alliance with the SPD, which has a majority in the parliamentary party and, according to all polls, among the vast majority of the Greens' membership and electorate — and the 'fundis' — the 'fundamentalists' opposed to the coalitionist strategy of the realos, who control the national executive.

But this conflict has been raging since the movement's inception and is nothing new. As long as the Greens were carried along on the tide of the peace movement and electoral success, as long as only they could offer the SPD — whether it liked the terms offered or not — the prospect of a return to government, the warring factions were held together more or less uncasily.

Since the general elections earlier this year, however, the going has become harder. The outright rejection of any kind of arrangement with the Greens by the SPD leader, Johannes Rau, during the election campaign had the effect of simultaneously hardening the sectarianism of the 'fundamentalists', who subsequently suffered a crushing electoral defeat in

their stronghold of Hamburg, and accelerating the abject capitulation of the 'realos' to the SPD's demands of public professions of loyalty to the 'democratic state' before any collaboration could be considered.

Thus what initially appeared to be merely tactical differences to many have publicly solidified into profound programmatic divisions just when the decline of the peace movement and the discovery of the vote-winning power of ecological concern by the established parties have robbed the Greens of much of their momentum.

The losses in the Hamburg elections were followed by the failure to win seats in Schleswig-Holstein, and a total failure to benefit from the Barschel scandal shaking that northernmost state since the election.² From all sections of the party, loud complaints about political paralysis are voiced, and public talk of an impending split has been rife for months.

The crisis is really about the collapse of the illusion that a 'new politics' transcending traditional concepts of left and right, of class struggle and welfare-state reformism, could be founded on the programmatic basis of the ecology movement.

'a left wing has tentatively begun to take shape within the SP'

The widespread notion that the Greens are an 'ecology party' is, in any case, mistaken. While the ecological issues provided a *real*, and by no means only tactical, bond between the various component parts of the Greens, their political success was not exclusively or even primarily based on this. It was based on the *peace movement* as well as on a broad range of other issues which alienated sections of the population from social democracy and helped constitute a kind of 'rainbow coalition', from feminism to 'third worldism'.

This multicoloured protest vote was never solidified into some kind of ideological or organisational coherence. Yet it propelled into parliament (at national, regional and local level) groups of activists who now found themselves in the unfamiliar role of direct electoral competition with groups with more secure social and ideological roots and the ability to nimbly take up the Greens' issues of peace and ecology with unsuspected flexibility.

The present crisis does little more than to lay bare the flaws which have characterised the Green project from its inception. While it could temporarily catch the SPD on the hop as it was eking out its long years in govern-

ment, trying to loyally implement NATO's missile deployment and its own nuclear energy programme against growing resistance from its own base, it was surely naive to expect the SPD to blindly continue on this disastrous course once in opposition. Faced with a growing programmatic convergence with social democracy and the challenge of a 'red-green' alliance to oust Kohl-Strauss-Genscher, the Greens lost their political nerve.

Those whose political activism had never been informed by any great concern for theory, strategy or organisation — individualist radical democrats like the civil rights lawyer Otto Schily, old 'propaganda of the deed' anarchists like Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Joschka Fischer — joined demoralised ex-Maoists in bowing to the 'art of the possible'. This is crystallised in the 'realo' faction which defends the state's monopoly of violence, thinks the police are unjustly criticised, urges the Palestinians to come to terms with Israeli occupation, and accepts NATO membership lest a disarmed Federal Republic should find itself exposed to Russian blackmail.

By contrast, those whose mode of political operation has always been sectarian now revert back to a sterile denunciation of social-democratic betrayals and the quasi-stalinist world view of their Maoist period — wondering aloud whether Gorbachev is not preparing a capitalist restoration in the USSR!

Yet the temptation to gloat over the crisis of the Greens — which may well herald their imminent demise as a significant political force — should be resisted. Not only have they forced the left to widen its theoretical horizons beyond the economism and statism which still passes in many quarters as 'orthodox marxism', but they have also, and *in practice*, exposed the myth that in non-revolutionary times the radical left must, by necessity, be marginal to 'real politics' and reduced to sterile propagandism.

Their demise, particularly if it were to occur now under the present circumstances, would be a setback for the whole European left and a most unwelcome, negative confirmation of marxist orthodoxy. ●

GÜNTER MINNERUP

Footnotes

1 Under the West German system of proportional representation, a minimum share of 5% of the national vote is required to gain representation in the 'Bundestag'.

2 On the eve of the election, the Christian-Democratic premier of Schleswig-Holstein and rapidly rising star in the CDU, Uwe Barschel, was revealed to have employed special branch agents against his SPD opponent Björn Engholm in an attempt to discredit him with leaks about his private life. Barschel, who denied the allegations, has since committed suicide.



The offensive against republicanism

After Enniskillen

November saw the second anniversary of the Hillsborough agreement — the Anglo-Irish accord. Here **PIERS MOSTYN** maps out the response to the Enniskillen bombing, the signing of the extradition treaty and the

increased repression on both sides of the border. He argues that these developments are the continuation of the process which started with the accord, and represent a new, more sophisticated, strategy in the imperialist war against the Irish people.

'in Monaghan county alone, 500 houses were raided in the first week'

THE END OF 1987 saw an unprecedented offensive against the anti-imperialist movement in Ireland — ostensibly in response to Enniskillen and the seizing of a 150-ton arms shipment, allegedly bound for the IRA on 23 November, the 26-county justice minister, Gerry Collins, launched the 'biggest military mobilisation ever seen in the republic'. The raids, involving 4500 gardai (police) and 2500 soldiers, amounted to a virtual declaration of emergency. They were organised jointly with British forces in the north with the stated aim of 'flushing out' IRA volunteers and locating hundreds of tons of military equipment.

The operation was equivalent to mobilising 110000 soldiers in Britain. This was designed as the *Guardian* editorialised, to demonstrate that 'the argument that Dublin is soft on the IRA cannot be sustained any longer'.

After ten days thousands of homes were reported to have been searched. In Monaghan alone, 500 houses were raided in the first week; one housing estate was subject to a siege by troops and police and half the 187 houses were raided. In the Cabra area of Dublin over 30 houses were raided in a pattern that was repeated all over the city. The operation covered every one of the 26 counties. Given the claim that the search was for a staggering 150 tons of armour-piercing shells and rockets, 125000 lbs of high grade commercial explosive, a batch of Sam 7 missiles and so on — it seems pathetic that all they found was a couple of dozen rifles and four republican escapees.

The aim of the exercise was essentially political — to demonstrate 'resolve' in upholding the border by brute force and terrorise any potential internal opposition. Gerry Adams MP has thus warned that it is the beginning of a 'full frontal assault on Sinn Fein' and part of the Hillsborough agreement's 'hidden agenda'. Armed gardai raided Sinn Fein's Dublin HQ and the offices of its newspaper *An Phoblacht/Republican News* — causing damage and removing files, photos and equipment. Republican premises in other parts of the country were also raided.

One of the many victims of the raids was Neil Blaney TD whose vote, ironically, has been vital in keeping Haughey's minority government in power. The targeting of Blaney was symptomatic of the broad sweep of the repression. The offices of the Anti Extradition Campaign were raided as were many activists associated with language and cultural movements. Among those raided were Matt Larkin (general secretary of the National Association of Tenants Organisations); Joe Costello (Prisoners Rights Organisation); Anne Conway (People's Democracy); Gerry Shanahan (Dublin Trades Council president); Jack Bennet (assistant editor of the *Evening Press*); journalists, broadcasters and even members of the Labour Party. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties reported being inundated with complaints.

THAT THE RAIDS weren't simply a reaction to recent events is shown by a broader trend of developments in the south. Attempts are being made to extend the media ban on Sinn Fein members and alleged sympathisers, including feminist and journalist Nell McCafferty. And in an unprecedented legal development, a Cork Sinn Fein member has received a five year sentence for possessing an

IRA poster, thousands of which have been sold in Ireland, backed up by the unsubstantiated word of a superintendent that he is a member of the IRA. As the political fortnightly *Magill* has pointed out, this lays even *An Phoblacht* sellers open to charges of IRA membership.

Central to this frenzy of collaborationism has been the ratification of the extradition treaty with Britain. With the agreement of all the parties it went through with very minor amendments. Extradition orders are to be subject to rubber stamping by the attorney general and the act is to be reviewed in a year. After all the 'concern' about the Birmingham six the Dublin authorities are quite prepared to hand over dozens more victims to Britain on demand. Thatcher and Haughey were described as being on very good terms when they discussed the issues subsequently.

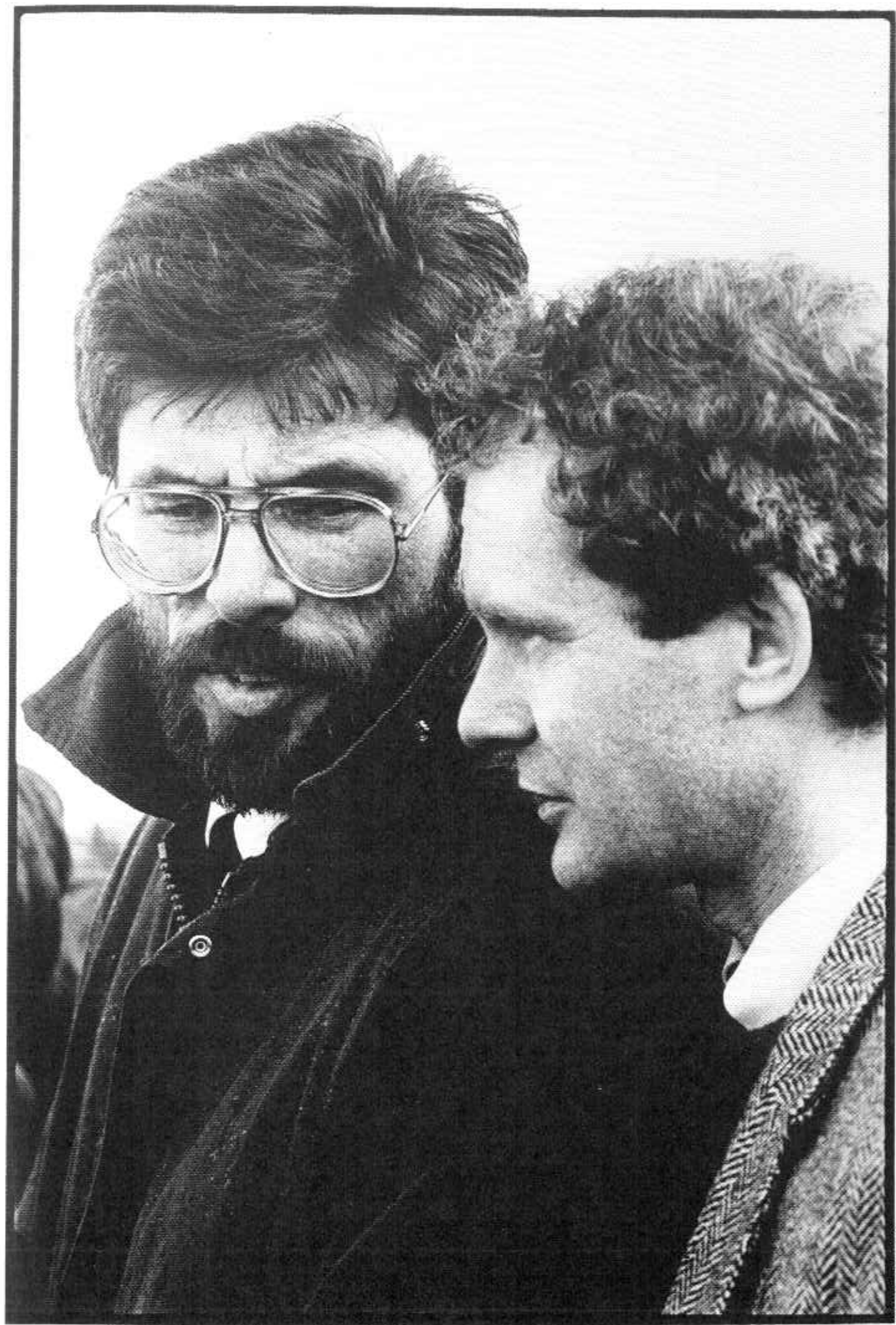
The potential consequences of extradition for ordinary Irish people have been widely recognised. The *Irish Late Times* has described previous extradition attempts as fishing expeditions with the gathering of evidence beginning after extradition. *Magill* estimates that as many as 600 people living in the 26 counties may be threatened with extradition, many of whom had associations with republicanism which are long past.

A large scale British military mobilisation in the north was mounted simultaneously with that in the south, involving over 300 raids. 40 Sinn Fein members were arrested, including five councillors and vice-president Martin McGuinness. The sealing of the border was used to construct three new army spy posts. The reaction to Enniskillen was used to whip up sectarian violence that claimed at least one life and a large number of injuries. The SDLP announced that they would refuse to co-operate with Sinn Fein councillors, and the catholic bishops pronounced that supporting violence against the occupying forces is sinful — provoking spontaneous walk-outs in churches across the six counties.

Enniskillen was only an excuse for the escalation of a process that began well before the bomb went off. Secretary of state Tom King had previously announced a government proposal for a declaration by election candidates aimed at excluding Sinn Fein and floated the idea of an outright ban. This is entirely reminiscent of 1922, when a number of Sinn Fein-dominated councils were suspended for refusing to recognise the British government.

THE PRO-PARTITION offensive has been extended to Britain too — mainly in the form of a vicious witchhunt against the principled stand of Ken Livingstone in re-asserting the need for British withdrawal. The hypocrisy of those denouncing him — few of whom lost any sleep when hundreds of Argentinians were killed on the Belgrano or when the US bombed a mental hospital in Grenada — is nauseating. The offensive in Britain has been part of a determined drive to roll back support for a political solution centred on withdrawal.

The establishment is furious that Tony Benn, an ex-cabinet minister, in defending Ken Livingstone after Enniskillen could say 'this is not a disciplinary problem which has suddenly appeared. It is an ancient historical crime of occupying Ireland. I have met more terrorists who ended up at Buckingham Palace having tea with the



Andrew Moore/Reflex

Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness — the scale of anti-republican repression has been staggering: 50,000 houses have been raided, directly affecting eight per cent of the southern population.

'the accord is the motor-force of the current offensive'

queen than I have had hot dinners.' The establishment is extremely uneasy at the growing political confidence of the Irish community in this country and the fact that even some trade unions are now backing a British withdrawal.

None of this was true ten years ago. In the 1970s the reaction to a large explosion caused by under-cover British agents or an IRA mistake could be guaranteed to be used to ensure silence, mumbling apologies and effective acquiescence to British policy. What the state fears now is not just Livingstone and Benn, but the fact that their views have a resonance and are merely a reflection of a developing public political debate.

Needless to say the attempt to turn back the clock has its allies on the left. Three supposedly socialist Irish parties, the Democratic Socialist Party, the Workers Party and the Labour Party all renowned for their commitment to the border have written to Neil Kinnock incensed to see that despite his attacks on Livingstone, Irish anti-imperialists are still 'being given warm welcomes and standing ovations by British socialists'.

The Labour leadership has firmly re-asserted that bipartisanship on Ireland is still on the agenda; Kinnock and Northern Ireland spokesperson, Kevin McNamara, went to Ireland to help ensure the safe passage of the extradition bill. How they can square this with Labour's policy of scrapping the PTA, strip-searching and Diplock courts — all of which potential extraditees are likely to face, once dragged to Belfast or London — is not clear. For Kinnock, it is no problem, he never believed in those policies anyway. As the *Irish Post* put it, 'it has long been clear that Neil Kinnock is a unionist. By that I mean somebody committed to the preservation of the United Kingdom. He conveyed that most unambiguously back in the 1970s when opposing devolution for his native Wales'.

All this shows that there is a world of difference between British withdrawal and the kind of 'unity by consent' policy espoused by successive Irish governments, the Labour Party and the SDLP. The latter has been used to sideline any popular opposition to the British presence and the border by tying it to the unionist veto.

Once accepted, that veto is then extended into every sphere of politics — preventing even the most basic reforms. Thus the trade union bureaucracies of Britain and Ireland (with some honourable exceptions) cannot even bring themselves to effectively oppose employment discrimination despite a swelling international campaign. 'Unity by consent' now reveals itself as an ideology that is used to underpin attacks on Irish sovereignty, mass raids in the south and the attempted disenfranchisement and criminalisation of a large section of the northern population.

But it has been a tremendous step forward that — despite intense pressure — Ken Livingstone and his allies have publicly stuck to the principle of British withdrawal. The Campaign group have followed this up by backing withdrawal and opposing the accord.

Two or three MPs speaking out has done more to challenge Labour collaborationism than any of Labour's paper commitments to civil liberties. Seamus Mallon of the SDLP, in a racist and homophobic *Tribune* article, has bemoaned this lack of consensus behind the Labour leadership: 'the Labour Party policy of unity by consent treats the concept of unity as a legitimate, viable philosophy — and not as a third-rate issue to be lumped together

with gays, lesbians and coloured (sic) sections into a sure-fire vote-losing formula'. A whole issue of this journal could be devoted to a critique of that sentence.

That the accord is the motor-force of the current offensive can be in little doubt. It began before Enniskillen. What the bomb did was to allow in one month what might otherwise have taken six. Minister of state, John Stanley, thus described the 26-county raids as 'what the Anglo-Irish agreement was designed to produce'. The effect of Enniskillen was to show the accord as it always was, but with the velvet glove taken off. A cursory examination of its 'achievements' demonstrate this — even before Enniskillen. Not a single gain of any substance has been made by the nationalist community. There has been an escalation of violence (in terms of deaths and injuries) and there has been no fundamental challenge to the unionist position.

The aim of the accord was never to challenge loyalism, hardly even to trim its fringes. It was never even based on 'linkage' — the exchange of reforms in the north for security co-operation in the south. As the extradition debacle proves, it was about one side making all the concessions: tying constitutional nationalists to unconditional backing for partitionism with aim of rolling back the growing strength of militant nationalism. As *Republican News* put it, 'Dublin is now quoted by British embassies all over the world as London's ally in any repressive measure it decides to take.'

THIS DRIVE IS occurring at a more sophisticated ideological level than ever before. Openly reactionary and pro-British politics will hardly succeed in undermining support for Irish self-determination in Britain and Ireland, much of which is also socialist. Thus 'devolution' (the stated aim of the accord and the only political hope of stabilising partition and British rule) is now being repackaged for a left wing audience by trendy journalists who dress it up as 'a radical reconstruction of the Northern Ireland state'.

This is referred to as a 'third way' between unionism and nationalism and a 'regionalist perspective'. Relations with the south would be maximised, not just through the assembly, but trade union, cultural and economic links. 'Unity' is redefined as being 'popular' and not 'territorial'. Such a viewpoint dovetails so neatly into the kind of direction that the soft left and new realists in the British Labour Party are moving on Ireland that it is difficult to see the difference.

The potential dangers for the anti-imperialist movement and Sinn Fein are many. History shows that the movement can be driven back, silenced, divided and isolated. But it's also true that the accord's supporters are walking a tightrope by aligning constitutional nationalism so firmly with partition and repression. All the indicators still show the continued potential resurgence of the kind of mass political movement that emerged during the hunger strikes.

In Britain too, there is no reason for the pro-withdrawal current to respond by retreating, apologising or being overly defensive. It is time to step up solidarity and defend the political legitimacy of Irish self-determination as the *only* socialist alternative to the repressive agenda of the accord. ●



Botha's Namibian powder keg

The reign of terror in Namibia's black townships

The Namibian/NCCT

SHOCK WAVES rippled through white society in South Africa when on 17 November last year the SADF was forced to make a rare admission of the deaths in combat in southern Angola of 35 white soldiers, including a captain and two lieutenants, 15 wounded, and a missing pilot, as well three jets shot down in Angola. Typically, there were no reports of the SADF's black — mostly Namibian and Angolan — troop casualties or of their capture in Angola. Such dead are quietly disposed of, usually in their relatives' disgrace.

On 12 November, the Angolan government admitted losing 242 soldiers to the SADF's 230, and claimed to have destroyed several SADF planes; a helicopter and 35 armoured vehicles over two months of fighting. Moreover, SWAPO's armed wing, PLAN, reported a successful ambush in northern Namibia of a SADF armoured convoy on 31 October, killing dozens of SADF troops and destroying 14 vehicles. The PLAN combatants then drove back to Angola in two of the SADF personnel carriers and released photographs of them.

'He was completely incinerated and there is no body left, only ashes' mourned a bitter white father in Jo'burg's Sunday papers. Of course no thoughts were spared for the 20,000 or so Namibians and 60,000 Ango-



The Namibian/NCCT

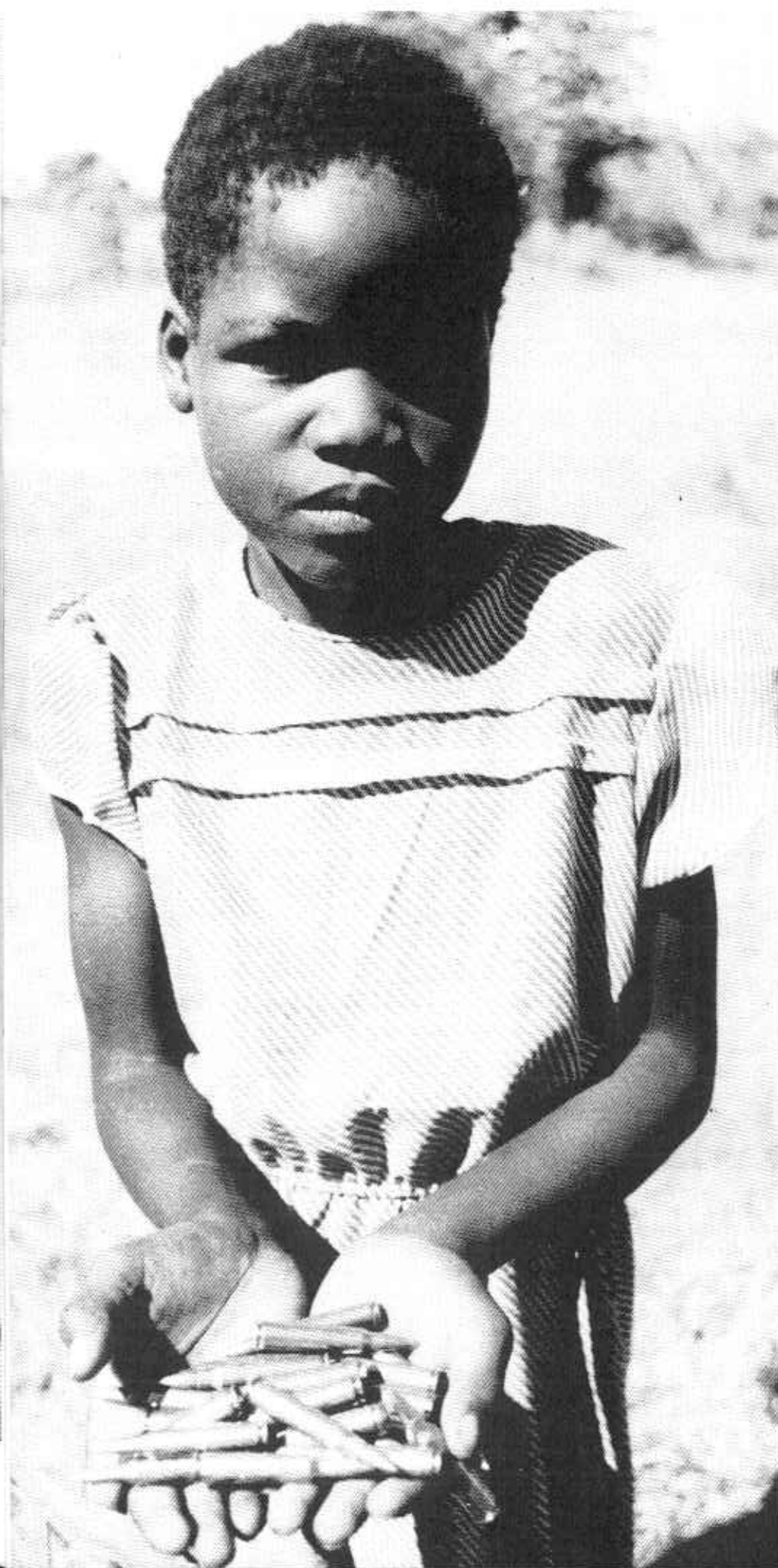
lans, overwhelmingly civilians, who have died violently at the hands of the SADF and its mercenary units, or the 120,000 Namibians exiled and 750,000 Angolans displaced by Pretoria's war since 1975. These death rates are much higher if one counts death through famine and disease, especially of infants, caused by the war. By ratio of population, Namibia is the most catastrophically affected country in the region, not surprising given that there are over 100,000 SADF-controlled troops to only 1.6 million people in open revolt.

Since 1 September, fierce conventional military clashes — the largest in the region since 1975/6 — have taken place in south eastern Angola between the Soviet-equipped, and Cuban backed, Angolan government forces, FAPLA, and the Western-equipped, mercenary backed, South African army, the SADF. Central to the war is Pretoria's refusal to decolonise Namibia, a huge mineral-rich but sparsely populated colony in between South Africa and Angola. Despite huge British involvement blocking Namibia's independence, writes **LESLIE GOULD**, the Labour leadership has failed to act.

The 'Nam syndrome

THE SADF does not now release any annual figures on deaths or severe injuries; it merely sends individual relatives a roneoed form, sometimes months afterwards, which often disguises the cause of death.

A rare study done in 1985 of the SADF's 1982 figures, however, showed how great is the SADF death toll cover-up. It admitted 77 troops killed in action in the course of 1982, mostly in Namibia, but admitted a staggering 850 killed of disease, transport and shooting accidents. If only 60 per cent were



white, estimates for the 1975-83 period would show that, as a proportion of the total white population in South Africa and Namibia, the white South African death rate was *three times* the number of US lives lost in Vietnam. Many of these are British citizens or have relatives in Britain.

Small wonder then, the number of white war resisters (conscripts failing to honour their call-ups) is rising sharply — from 1,500 in 1981 to 7,500 in 1985, after which no further figures were released.

Admittedly part of this increase is attributable to the deployment of the SADF in the South African black townships in 1985, but there were only 35,000 troops there as opposed to nearly twice that number in Namibia and southern Angola (although the north eastern Transvaal has also become heavily militarised by the SADF in a replica of Namibia).

Angolagate unrevealed

INITIALLY, THE SADF tried to pretend as usual that it was in Angola fighting SWAPO in cross-border pursuit, and was not there to protect 'Unita', a tribally based Angolan dissident movement. However, by mid-November it changed its story to that of trying to stop 'a very real threat to Unita', a claim indignantly denied by Unita leader Savimbi.

Actually, 'Unita' is a SADF forward unit, a Trojan horse for Pretoria's imperialist ambitions in Angola. It functions almost identically to one of the growing number of the SADF's Bantustan units, but in this case the unit is located in the most unpopulated part of Angola and protected by the largest concentration of the South African air force anywhere. Over 80 SADF planes, not to mention tanks and helicopter gunships, are based in the Namibian Caprivi Strip, the most militarised zone in the southern hemisphere.

This peculiar colonial carving which originates from the 1884 Berlin conference, extends like a bayonet into central Africa and gives Botha and his generals air-strike capacity over Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and others if need be — like Malawi or Zaire, if Pretoria's puppet Banda, or CIA stalwart Mobutu, are threatened, since they are key players in Pretoria's campaign against the MPLA as well as the Frelimo government in Mozambique.

According to a recent US congress report, this equipment is supplied and its parts refurbished by sources in West European NATO countries (including France) and Israel, despite a supposed mandatory UN arms embargo (a fact that Thatcher, Kohl, Mitterrand et al try to deny). Yet the US is now also almost directly involved in supplying the SADF. In a replica of 'conragate', since 1982 the CIA has arranged the supply of arms and other equipment to Unita (ie: the SADF) via Morocco by using 'kickback' funds paid by Saudi Arabia for the US sale to King Fahd of AWAC surveillance planes. This prompted Israel to try and outdo the Saudis in 1983 by setting up a Unita training programme in Zaire. CIA involvement in both of these



operations was covert until July 1985 when the 1976 Clarke amendment prohibiting US military support to Angolan dissidents was repealed by Reagan. Why this stepped up interest in Unira?

Namibian power vacuum

FROM MID-1982 until now, Reagan and Botha officials had stalled the planned decolonisation of Namibia — and hence the withdrawal of the SADF and demise of Unira — by delaying the previous Anglo-American diplomacy devised in 1977. Carter's officials led by Vance hoped to woo the MPEA gradually through economic dependency, since Angola's main export, oil, was to the US and was virtually run by Gulf. The first step was to secure the gradual withdrawal of the Cuban reinforcements brought in to stem the 1975/6 South African invasion, by implementing a Vance-Owen (that is, Labour government sponsored-) decolonisation plan for Namibia. This would get the SADF out of Namibia, except for a temporary hold on Namibia's only port, Walvis Bay.

The plan was sponsored by the five Western powers in the UN — the US, Britain, France, West Germany and Canada (who also happened to be the largest investors in Namibia) — because of the universally agreed UN trusteeship role over Namibia deriving from its old League of Nations mandate as an ex-German colony. Vorster and the SWAPO leadership agreed it, but Vorster naively thought that his tribal puppets could defeat SWAPO in the proposed UN-supervised elections to a constituent assembly, and that the SADF could then remain legitimately in Namibia.

However, a 1978 'palace coup' in Pretoria upset all this. PW Botha, then minister of defence, and his generals, understood that, if the election was remotely fair, SWAPO would win hands down, and this would mean another SADF retreat and a white sell out to a small guerrilla campaign in a primarily Afrikaaner settler colony. After their previous retreat from Angola in the face of Cuban troop reinforcements, the Soweto revolts of 1976 had followed. A SWAPO victory would be an even bigger powder keg. Botha and his supporters managed to oust Vorster before the UN plan (known worldwide as UN security council resolution 535) could be implemented. This signalled the start of the generals' take-over under the ideology of the 'total strategy'.

Bothapartism and Namibia

BY 1983 BOTHA had created the South African state security council as a de facto inner cabinet for his generals and an elaborate national security management system to control the Afrikaaner National Party apparatus. A hierarchy of secret committees was set up at local, provincial and national level, made up of trusted white business, professional, political and other 'experts' who were 'consulted' by military and police chiefs on all political decisions — a state within a state. Copying the SADF's experience in ruling Namibia, where the white National Party had split and become ineffective, this white 'security umbrella' could then be in place to co-opt select black collaborators at the formal parliamentary and municipal level with a view to creating black puppet armed forces such as those started in Namibia in 1975.

The roots of this 'Bothapartist' dictatorship lay, on the one hand, in Pretoria's internal class contradiction and, specifically, through the growth of the power of the black working class compared to white labour and, with the coming of age of Afrikaaner finance capital, the irrevocable split in Afrikaaner nationalism. On the other hand, it arose from the growing need to export capital by monopoly finance capitalism in the 1970s, and therefore the South African ruling class ambition to develop the state into a minor imperialist power in its own right in the face of growing anti-colonial struggles in the sub-region. Namibia was at the very heart of all of these contradictions.

The 1971-2 general strike and the post-1974 upsurge of guerrilla warfare following the Portuguese collapse, had threatened the boom in plundering Namibia's minerals, fishing and agriculture in which Afrikaaner capital could enter through its privileged political position in the colonial state — 'South West Africa' as it is still called. The threat to 'Boer hegemony', powered by SWAPO's escalating struggle, came in the form of the Vance-Owen plan, itself a response to wider imperialist consideration.

In response, Botha first delayed the UN plan — Owen and co. obliged by dithering over whether to take sanctions measures. Botha planned to build up the client parties in Namibia and severely crackdown on SWAPO and its emerging union wing — the National Union of Namibian Workers. Thatcher's election in 1979 was a filip. She was persuaded that the Cubans would be invited in to Namibia by SWAPO because,



once the SADF left, there would be 'a power vacuum'.

Unlike in Rhodesia which had a local army, police force, judiciary, central bank and so forth, Namibia did not possess the trappings of a local state on which the nationalist movement leaders could be grafted. Botha pleaded for time to state build. The Namibia plan was put on ice as attention focussed on Zimbabwe. With the South African economy in serious recession (including a gold price slump) and the overthrow of the Shah meaning more expensive oil supplies, Botha cooperated with Carrington in a deal allowing the Lancaster House plan in return for British opposition to any sanctions. Hoping for a Muzorewa win, the Mugabe election victory merely confirmed Botha's suspicion about Namibia.

Enter Reagan

BY THEN, HOWEVER, hope was on the horizon in the form of a Reagan election win and Pretoria set about to exploit to the maximum the new right's post-Vietnam return to the cold war. Even before the inauguration, Reagan was calling South Africa 'a friendly country' and was hinting that Angola needed a Lancaster House settlement that would include Savimbi. By stalling Namibian decolonisation with a bogus demilitarised zone proposal to the UN in 1980, Botha was able to scupper any hopes of early implementation of the UN election plan at a last-ditch 1981 conference and begin a crash programme of state building in Namibia starting with a local army and police force.

With the Reaganite Chester Crocker leading a series of secret US-South Africa talks on Namibia, it was made clear that, first, a constitution guaranteeing large private property and minority rights would have to be agreed (thus pre-empting the proposed UN constituent assembly) and secondly, the Cubans would have to start pulling out *before* the UN plan could be activated.

Crocker was able to force the MPLA into talks on the possibility of a Cuban withdrawal and force SWAPO to agree to some 'constitutional principles' guaranteeing private property, but not minority rights, and an agreement that the Namibian constituent assembly would have to make decisions on a two-thirds majority basis. This latter deal was to cater for Botha's renewed efforts to build up an anti-SWAPO bloc of client parties, thus transforming the original UN plan into a virtual Lancaster House deal, yet with Pretoria still able to hold on to Walvis Bay to choke a SWAPO government into submission if need be.

Class base

THE BUILDING blocks for the new Crocker-Botha plan would not take shape, however. First, strong popular anti-colonial support in Angola, especially for FAPLA, and a high Cuban and Soviet military commitment, was able to hold off serious military destabilisation, despite the enormous human costs in the south. Secondly, Botha's black puppet politicians in Namibia, because of an extremely low development of an indigenous petty bourgeois and 'middle' class strata in

Namibia, and SWAPO's strong worker and peasant base, were unable to consolidate their 'multi-party conference' and 'interim government' projects. Moreover, of more critical importance, Botha's new local army and police force, as well as other state structures, were utterly dependent on the SADF, departments in Pretoria and local white settlers.

During this period of stalemate in imperialist strategy, SWAPO was further extending its support inside the country. Most dramatic has been the creation during 1986 of numerous workplace committees under the banner of the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) and then the consolidation of these in four militant industrial unions in late 1986 and 1987 amidst a wave of strikes and worker demonstrations across the country. Obviously, this was not unrelated to similar developments in South Africa.



Women food workers in the National Union of Namibian Workers

By the end of 1987, the unions had over 40,000 members in the Mineworkers Union of Namibia, the Namibian Food and Allied Union, the Metal and Allied Namibian Workers Union and the Namibian Public Workers Union. Counting the other workers committees, SWAPO had organised about 20 per cent of the waged workforce in just over one and a half years.

Silent socialists

INCREASINGLY THATCHERITE and Reaganite politicians, and now followers of Kohl, have been sucked in to the anti-SWAPO crusade promoted by Pretoria's lavishly funded front organisations in Washington, London, Bonn and Paris. In Britain, for example, over 100 Tory MPs have regularly signed motions supporting Pretoria's unelected client 'government' in Namibia. By contrast, social democratic and labour movement leaders remain virtually inactive in campaigning for Namibian independence.

Because of Namibia's unique status in bourgeois international law (the only territory directly under UN sovereign jurisdiction), particular opportunities are open to ban the trade in Namibia's natural resources — of which its uranium is the most strategic, but not absolutely essential, for US, West

European and Japanese nuclear industries — as well as to claim war reparations and economic compensation against some of the largest monopoly corporations which plunder the territory. For example, the last Labour government could have impounded the huge gem diamond stocks of the de Beers cartel in London but this was never discussed. Opportunities also exist for direct workers' blockades of Namibian produce — workers' sanctions — which the NUNW and SWAPO have called for. Currently, for instance, the dockers in Liverpool have stopped cargoes of suspected Namibian uranium.

The dialectic between struggles on the South African periphery and the heartlands makes Namibia's independence a potential achilles heel for the Botha régime and the new imperialist right. Thus solidarity work in this area is urgent.

Another 1976 coming?

IN THE RECENT fighting in south eastern Angola and north Namibia the SADF has received some severe setbacks. When it comes to meeting FAPLA head on the SADF appears to push its black troops to the front. This recently provoked a dramatic mutiny in Angola by over 400 black Namibians in 101 Battalion in November, 360 being sent from the front to Walvis Bay military prison in Namibia as well as another protest in 102 Battalion. A SADF pilot admitted to the *London Sunday Telegraph* that 'Two years ago, the Angolans would try to avoid us in a dog-fight. Now they're spoiling for a fight and even laying ambushes for our pilots.'

The new Mig-23s, superior to the SADF's Mirages and updated Israeli-designed Chertuks, and the Angolans' more sophisticated radar and ground to surface missile systems supplied by the Soviets, have made deep cross border raids by conventional SADF forces increasingly risky. The only counter to this new weaponry is the supply of the US Stinger anti aircraft and Tomahawk anti-tank missiles recently delivered by the CIA to Unita. But there is no evidence that this equipment has tipped the balance against FAPLA, although it should be remembered how many more resources the South Africans have at their disposal — especially if the gold price continues upwards.

The aim of the SADF incursion was, in the words of South African general Malan, to inflict a 'once and for all defeat on FAPLA,' however so far this has failed. But by 16 December — despite a unanimous, but token, UN Security Council call for the SADF to withdraw from Angola by 10 December — Malan's forces had increased in numbers, spread westward along the Cuando-Cubango province and into Carné province and were attacking 12 towns. Angolan president dos Santos, was threatening to 'again resort to internationalist aid from our Cuban friends and allies' in a 'renewal of the 1976 campaign'. Cuban troops were ready to move south of the Mocomede's railway line and up to 17 Cuban generals, many veterans of the 1975/6 war, were reportedly arriving from Havana ●



Clockwise: Tariq Ali and Ken Livingstone (seated), Cora Kaplan, Marc Wadsworth, V.I. Lenin and Ken Loach, John Pilger, and some of the event's younger participants pictured in the creche.

400 at Outlook for Socialism

WHAT IS the outlook for socialism in the light of Thatcher's third term onslaught and the feeble response of the leadership of the labour movement? 'Not very good' would be the short answer; even the most optimistic estimates do not put socialism on the immediate agenda in British politics.

But Kinnock/Willis-style defeatism is not the only possible response to the difficult political situation. The alternatives were discussed by the 400 people who packed into London's Caxton House on 13-15 November to take part in the first Outlook for Socialism weekend.

Organised by *Socialist Outlook*, the event's 23 workshops and plenary sessions covered a wide range of issues and debates. The major plenary sessions were devoted to the seventieth anniversary of the Russian revolution, the future of feminism, a socialist policy for the media and the future for Britain's left. Among the workshops were discussions on anti-zionism and anti-semitism, the stock market crash, British socialists and

Irish liberation, Gorbachev, *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the USSR and the fightback in local government.

Speakers from the British and international socialist movement included Ernest Mandel, Tariq Ali, Cathy Porter, Cora Kaplan, Ken Livingstone, Marc Wadsworth, Valerie Goulas, Leonora Lloyd, Ken Louch, John Pilger, Jeremy Corbyn, Hilda Kean, Sharon Atkin, Alan Thornett, Oliver MacDonald and Moshe Machover.

The event was addressed by Sinn Fein councillor Pat Wright who reaffirmed the need for British withdrawal and Irish self-determination in the aftermath of the Enniskillen tragedy.

Coming only seven months after the fusion of *International* and *Socialist Viewpoint*, and after only four issues of *Socialist Outlook*, the event marked the appearance of the new magazine as a serious voice on the left of the labour movement; determined to develop a marxist understanding of the tasks facing British socialists ●





John Arthur/Reflex

Gorbachev — a turn to the right

In the last issue of *Socialist Outlook* we published an article on 'Gorbachev and the left' by Oliver MacDonald, one of the editors of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*. MacDonald asked

whether marketisation of the economy was an integral part of the socialist programme for democratisation inside the Soviet Union, and whether the left in general, and revolutionary socialists in particular, should not give some sort of critical support to Gorbachev — to become the 'left wing of Gorbachevism'. In this further contribution to the debate **SUE OWEN** argues that Gorbachevism, especially viewed through the prism of foreign policy, is a turn to the right.

IN EARLY DECEMBER we were treated to the spectacle of Mikhail Gorbachev, general secretary of the CPSU, holding an amicable meeting with Margaret Thatcher at Brize Norton and then proceeding to Washington to be fêted by Ronald Reagan. Reagan and Gorbachev signed an agreement to get rid of intermediate range nuclear missiles which the world's press has hailed as a fundamental breakthrough in arms control. It is not clear, however, that the policy shifts in Moscow, which have made possible both the deal and Gorbachev's popularity with the capitalist media and with right-wing party leaders, are positive developments for the world's working class.

The INF treaty has been made possible by the Soviet leadership offering concession after concession: under the new treaty, the US must destroy 300 warheads, the USSR 1,500. The result is very much a *partial* de-nuclearisation: Margaret Thatcher and others are already talking of replacing the lost missiles with submarine launched ones, and Reagan is left free to go ahead with the US project of ensuring a first-strike capacity through 'Star Wars'.

Nor does the Soviet leadership's 'new realism' seem, so far, to be having the propagandist effects (eliminating or weakening western fear of the USSR) that are often claimed for it: after all Thatcher had no difficulty in playing the 'red threat' card in the June 1987 general election.

The INF treaty can be presented as a victory for the peace movement against the irrationality of the arms race; but its effect seems as likely as not to be a partial demobilisation of this movement and a return to the belief that it is possible to leave these questions to the politicians.

There is nothing wrong in itself with a workers' state making partial diplomatic agreements with this or that bourgeois state, or indeed with making military concessions where these serve some useful purpose — all the more when, as with the INF treaty, the result will be a

'glasnost presents limited openings'

substantial saving of resources and the weapons abandoned have no practical military use. The problem comes when illusions in these agreements are promoted, and when the search for them leads to policies which demobilise and disorient the working class.

Fifty years ago, in the 1930s after the Nazi coup in Germany, Moscow pursued for some time a policy of seeking to get 'collective security' agreements with

'the Polish referendum tells us something important'

the 'democratic' bourgeoisie in Europe, with a view to protection against Hitler. Both the Spanish revolution and the mass movement of workers in France were sacrificed by Stalin in pursuit of this policy. When no such deal was forthcoming, Stalin turned to a deal with Hitler and sacrificed the remainder of the European working class for the illusory security of the Hitler-Stalin pact.

Gorbachev, like Brezhnev before him, follows this illusory road in relations with the imperialist powers — seeking 'good bourgeois' who will do deals, and promoting illusions in the permanence

and effectiveness of these deals when they are done. Paradoxical as it may seem, this leads Moscow to prefer right-wing governments: they represent the bourgeoisie and so can make deals stick, while reformist governments only show that the bourgeoisie is weak, and threaten the possibility of a crisis which would destabilise 'peaceful co-existence'. Thus Brezhnev went a long way in supporting Giscard d'Estaing as French president, and Gorbachev is happy to be used to boost Thatcher's poll ratings and to give Reagan a summit achievement which will help the Republican candidate in the next presidential election.

As for the European CPs, the 'Gorbachev turn' has strengthened the euro-communist right-wing and cut the ground out from under those 'lefts' who looked to Moscow for an alternative to the euros' political collapse.

Moreover, Moscow's policy towards the semi-colonial 'third world' follows the stalinist tradition of sacrificing the working class for the sake of deals with this or that bourgeois régime. Moscow presented the fall of Marcos as US interference in Philippines internal affairs, and was one of the last governments to withdraw recognition from the Marcos régime. On South Africa, the Moscow press has suggested a multiracial federation — an idea which, though it fits with the older ideas of the South African Communist Party on South African society, comes close in present conditions to endorsement of Botha's 'reform' project.

The Moscow-based exile leadership of the Chilean CP has taken a sharp turn to the right, advocating negotiations with Pinochet. The USSR has reduced oil supplies to Nicaragua and (in a move possibly connected with the fact that

Cuba is due this year to start repaying its vast Soviet debt) a senior adviser to Gorbachev has made a sharp attack on Cuban economic policy and management.

Moscow's hints that it may respond to US pressure for rapid withdrawal from Afghanistan show a complete lack of interest in any solution to this problem in the interests of the Afghan working class and poor peasantry, or even in the defence interests of the USSR: Afghanistan is purely an irritation and a diplomatic counter.

Trotsky remarked, in *The Revolution Betrayed*, that 'foreign policy is everywhere and always a continuation of domestic policy, for it is conducted by the same ruling class and pursues the same historic goals'. Gorbachev's foreign policy tells us something about his domestic policy, which on the surface looks rather attractive to much of the left.

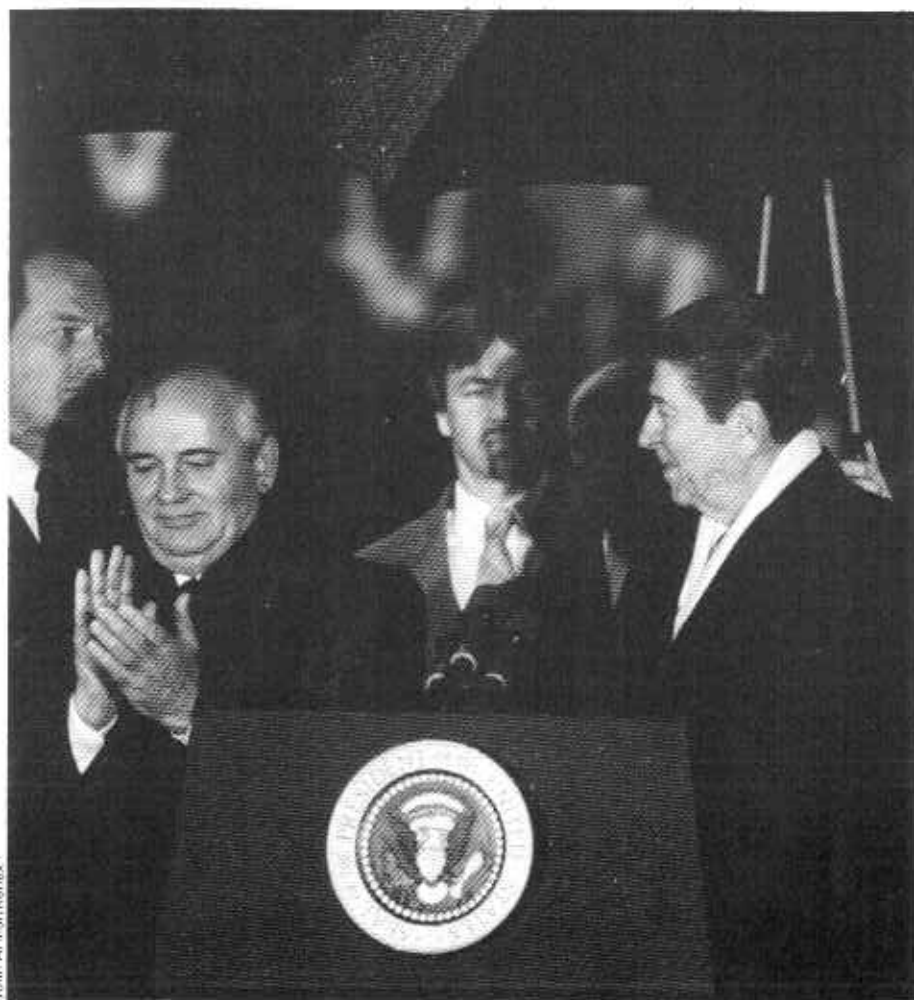
His policy towards the other workers' states tells us something very important, and that is that *glasnost* is entirely subordinate and functionally related to *pres-*

'abused by revisionist and right-oriented groups' (*Guardian*, 5 December) — and, more importantly, Jaruzelski's referendum on 'reforms' in Poland, where a majority of the population either abstained or voted against.

The Polish referendum also tells us something important. The economic crises in Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia are the direct result of the pursuit, over a substantial period, of the type of policies now advocated by Gorbachev and his co-thinkers. Although these policies resulted in a good deal of loosening-up of the repression of the dissident intelligentsia, for the working class they did not mean greater freedom of action or control over the economy. They meant, rather, economic dislocation, price rises, wage cuts and speed-up — and legal and semi-legal repression of working class resistance to these 'reforms'. When Jaruzelski put proposals for more of the same to the vote, the result was clear rejection. It was resistance to this sort of 'reform' which sparked the emergence of Solidarnosc in Poland, even if the main leaders of the movement evolved more and more towards free-market solutions.

Oliver MacDonald argued in the last issue of *Socialist Outlook* that 'the working class throughout the world has shown itself over and over again to be prepared to pay an astonishingly high economic price for greater political freedom'. It would be more accurate, especially in the light of the Polish referendum, to say that the *leaderships* of the working class are willing that the workers should pay an extraordinarily high economic price for a political 'freedom' whose principal beneficiary will be the leaders, not the workers themselves.

Overall, Gorbachev represents a turn to the right in the policy of the Moscow bureaucracy, as much in its domestic as in its foreign policy. *Glasnost* does present certain limited openings for movements of opposition in the USSR. But the left will be lost and separated from the workers, or will mislead them, if it does not start from the firm understanding that the attacks on the working class which are central to the *perestroika* must be resisted; that the only 'feasible socialism' is one which is based on democratic central planning under the control of the workers, not the free play of market mechanisms with limited 'social protection'; and that reliance on diplomatic deals with sections of the bourgeoisie is a snare and a delusion. The only real security for the workers' states against imperialist attack lies in the extension of the world revolution •



Gorbachev with Reagan — he seeks 'good bourgeois' who will do deals

A counter-revolutionary international policy has always been one of the most notable features of stalinism. The only distinguishing feature of 'Gorbachevism' in this respect is the abandonment of the occasional left manoeuvres, and limited support for colonial revolutions, which have been a feature of Moscow's foreign policy since the opening of the cold war in 1948. Gorbachev carries to new levels the stalinist tradition of substituting diplomatic arrangements for any attempt to use the strengths of the workers' states in the interests of the international working class.

troika, to the economic 'reforms'. For all the talk of 'openness' and 'learning from diverse experiences', a policy of the *perestroika* type is being imposed from the top down on the eastern European bureaucracies, using economic pressure, polemics like those levelled against the Cubans (and also against the Bulgarian leadership) and all the bureaucratic leverage the Soviet bureaucracy possesses. In places the results descend into farce, as in the claim by the Czech CP leadership that the Dubcek period was one of the economic reforms similar to Gorbachev's which, however, were

Bomb culture

NICK ROBIN

Robert Del Tredici, *At work in the fields of the bomb*, Harrap, £9.95.

WHO MAKES nuclear weapons? Where are they made? How do they work? Robert Del Tredici's astonishingly powerful new book, *At work in the fields of the bomb* attempts to answer these questions, mostly in pictures.

Del Tredici's proposition is that the frightening power of nuclear weapons has frozen our imagination, and that this freeze is reinforced by the secrecy surrounding bomb production. He therefore wishes to add some new basic images of the bomb to our limited visual vocabulary. After all, what do you think of when you think of the bomb? A mushroom cloud? A city turned to ash? Missiles streaking across the sky? Perhaps you draw a blank?

It's unlikely that you think of the factories that mass produce the nuclear arsenal and all its wares. 'My purpose', writes Del Tredici, 'is to give the collective imagination something graphic and accurate to hang on to as it strives to come to terms with the bomb's reality.'

And it works. Del Tredici's photographs and accompanying comments and interviews enable us to make that leap of imagination — to see the preparations for our own extermination, and to listen to some of the protagonists. It could have

failed, this book, but thanks to the quality of the images and their careful mixture — some sinister, others matter-of-fact, others extremely moving — it succeeds.

The future! The nuclear age has robbed us of our capacity to imagine one. For it is the story of the bomb and its makers ('We wanted to make something. What we wanted to make happened to be designed to kill as many people as possible' — Theodore Taylor,

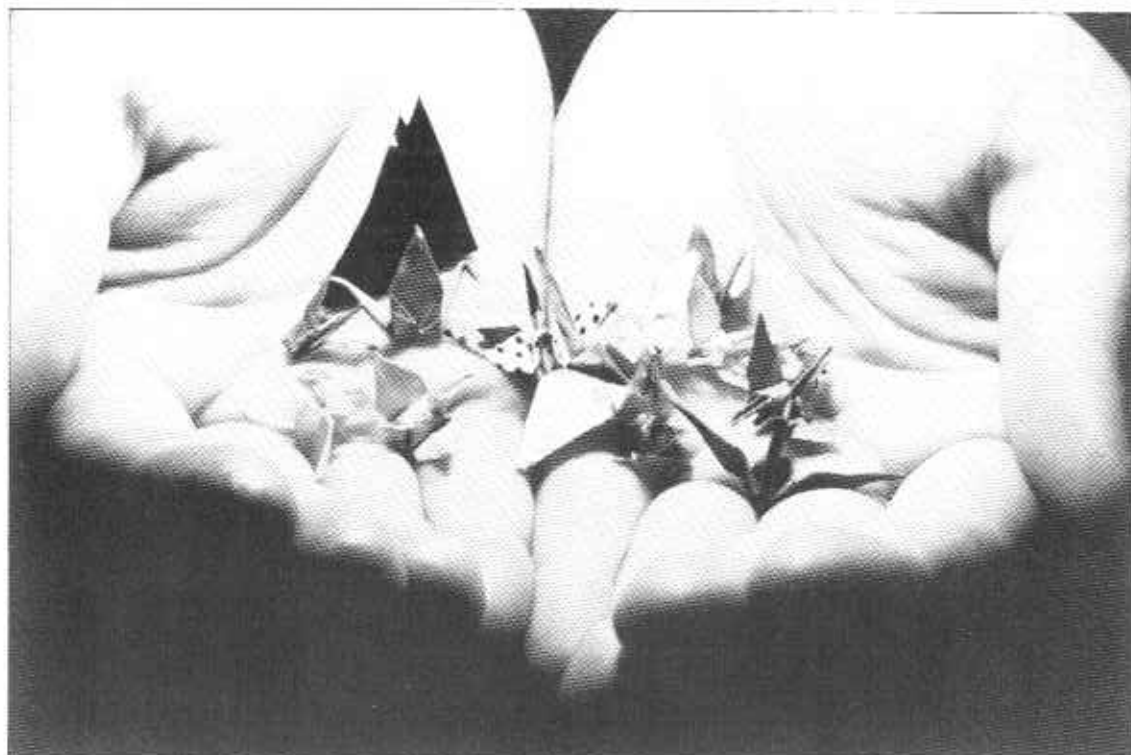
the man who miniaturised the US nuclear arsenal) then it is also the story of uranium-238 and its by-products. They, of course, have one hell of a future. 4,468,000,000 years is the half-life of uranium-238, Del Tredici informs us.

As the Windscale cover-up becomes public, *At work in the fields of the bomb* has an eerie topicality. In a recent remarkable Soviet play about Chernobyl, *Sarcophagus*, by the science correspondent of

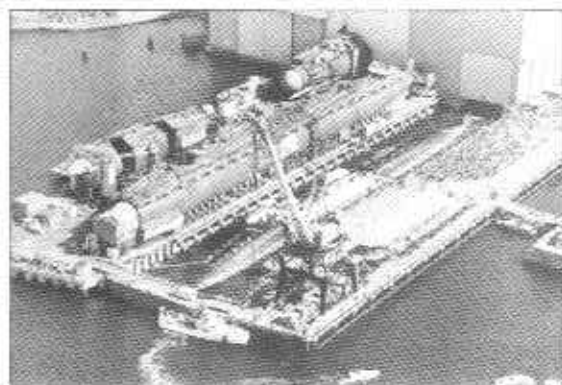
Pravda, the 'hero', Bessmertny observes: 'the pyramids of the pharaohs have been there for a mere five thousand years. But to contain the radiation, your nuclear pyramid must remain for at least a hundred thousand years ... that's some monument to leave to our descendants, isn't it?'

This book did not leave me despairing. Utterly worked over and emotional, yes, but also a little better prepared to 'struggle for the future' ●





Left: Fujiko Sasaki, beside her husband Shigeo, holds a portrait of their daughter Sadako. Sadako was 2 years old when the bomb dropped and 12 years old when she contracted leukemia. She did not wish to die. She refused all medication and took literally a Japanese proverb that says 'if you fold 1,000 paper cranes, you will get whatever you wish'. She folded 645 of the tiny birds before she died.



You're paying for Trident, want to see what it looks like? (It's low in the water to the left of the tent.)



The whey train sits outside Munich. Its cargo is 250 tons of radioactive whey powder — contaminated with cesium 137 from Chernobyl. The Bavarian government has tried to: a) bury the powder, b) incinerate it, c) sell it to Egypt.



Meet Sam Cohen, the 'father of the neutron bomb'. Sam was at Los Alamos the night they bombed Hiroshima, this is what he saw: 'the scientists were a bunch of howling savages, ebullient beyond imagination, as pleased as punch at what they'd accomplished'.

BOB PENNINGTON

Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years*. Collins £11.95.

FIRST, I had better sound a warning. If you prefer your politics dished up like a Presbyterian sermon on a dank Sunday evening, Tariq Ali's *Street Fighting Years* is not for you.

For the political calvinists — and we have more than our share on the left — this book commits all the crimes going. It's far too anecdotal. It is very personalised. And it commits the greatest sin of all, it is written in a racey style that the average Mary or Joe Soap can understand. Yet its style of journalistic and political reminiscences gives the book a particular quality.

When the author recalls his meetings and discussions with such diverse personalities as Bertrand Russell, Marlon Brando, the North Vietnamese premiere, Pham van Dong, as well as Malcolm X and John Lennon you are given an insight into how people from all sides of the social spectrum reacted to events that were threatening to reshape society.

After 20 years of relative quiescence in the western world the 1960s exploded. By courtesy of television the Ter offensive burst into our living rooms. Before our own, often incredulous eyes, the Vietnamese liberation forces not only were fighting back against the 'unconquerable' US imperialists, but knocking the hell out of them. Just across that narrow stretch of water that divides Britain from Europe, in May 1968 the French workers came out in a general strike and the



An unrepentant rebel

barricades went up in the streets of Paris.

In the same year in an all too brief Prague spring, workers and intellectuals in Czechoslovakia tried to give socialism a 'human face'. Here was a reminder that the stalinist bureaucracies no more spoke for socialism and freedom, than did their social democratic counterparts. Once again the toxin of change was ringing out across continents.

Little or nothing remained immune from questioning or criticism. Social mores were affected, it boosted and aided the fight for women's emancipation, its effects reached into the arts, education and even the holy precepts of the bourgeois family. It was the time when the Rolling Stones, The Animals and The Beatles were at their most iconoclastic and vibrant. Above all, the events

of that period drew into their wake hundreds and hundreds of thousands of young people. But not just the young were inspired. They re-invigorated many older militants restoring their confidence in their commitment to socialism, and breaking down their isolation.

Tariq is in a unique position to chronicle those years. He, more than anyone, was the spokesperson in Britain for those that argued that what mattered most was the confrontation between the exploited and the oppressed and capital and its social democratic hangers on.

Yet, his impatience for quick results has now been tempered by an understanding of the errors we all made in those years. He appreciates the marxists often got carried away on a cloud of euphoria. He knows that our desires often obscured our vision of what

was possible. But he still knows that it is better to suffer the faults of revolutionary over-optimism, than the cowardly cautiousness that comes from accommodating to the established order.

There is another reason he is qualified to write such a book. After all he is an unrepentant sinner who is at peace with his ideological past and has nothing but contempt for his old comrades like David Horowitz and Regis Debray who have made their peace with imperialism.

For the youth who have never seen or been part of mass social and political revolt this is a book to read. For the children of '68 and the prior generations it is also to be read. It will remind them of the power of the international class struggle. It will remind them of what was then, and what surely is coming again. ●



Slava bogu, it's the dialectic

TRACY DOYLE

Alan Brien, *Lenin: the novel*, Secker and Warburg, £11.95.

20 JUNE 1917 . . .

'Afterwards when we have won (as we will) or instead when we have been hunted down and exterminated . . . historians will establish that the evidence shows, if we succeeded, that it was impossible to fail, or if we failed then it was impossible to succeed. . .'

Reading the 700 pages of this imaginary diary ('half novel, half autobiography — not a very satisfactory form . . .') as Brien has Lenin state wryly in another context) shows that the Russian revolution was far from 'inevitable'.

Instead we see the vital role of the Bolshevik Party in shaping the future of the Russian masses; the importance of the intervention of thousands of dedicated revolutionaries (of whom Lenin was one of the most brilliant).

Seventy years on, with the spirit of *glasnost* evident in the Soviet Union and a renewed interest in the events of Lenin's time, this book must be one of the most accessible and enjoyable insights into the years from 1905-1917.

Each twist and turn in the struggle is described, analysed and related to the growth and development of the Bolsheviks. We are taken through the debates with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, we look at the treacherous role of the leaders of the socialist international and the progress of the imperialist war. Evident throughout is the incredible



Inessa Armand — did she fall out of bed laughing?

depth of strategic and tactical insight found in Lenin himself.

Beginning in 1886, the first part of the book is rather too 'psychological', attempting to prove it was some obsessive trait in Lenin's personality that led to his dedication to the revolutionary cause.

'Unfortunately I have not got a chosen goal' muses the young Ulyanov before deciding what this goal should be. It is the execution of his older brother for an amateurish attempt on the life of the tsar which leads Lenin to reject populist methods of struggle and decide on the need for a revolutionary working class party.

Some of this is perhaps a trifle pat and unconvincing. The young Lenin rather astutely predicts the manner of his own death (from a brain haemorrhage like his father before him) and his later embalming 'dressed like a

middle-aged state functionary'. (While Lenin certainly was a person of extreme foresight this is maybe a bit much!)

Probably the strongest criticism is that we know Lenin *didn't* write a diary. Indeed, he may well have seen such an activity as a potential security risk: 'Write down as little as possible — it is better to forget a detail than hand it across to the enemy'.

The years after 1922 are rather sketchily covered, as his failing health and Stalin's scheming distances Lenin more and more from the dangers, internal and external, besetting the fledgling Soviet state. Ending with the preparation of his *Testament*, later suppressed by the bureaucracy, this is a novel convincing in its portrayal of a life dedicated to the cause of revolution, and inspiring in its description of victory against great odds.

It is captivating in its

attempt to portray the *personal* in Lenin's life, to build a picture of a real person, human in his weaknesses (of which his attitude to women was one of the most galling).

One question: is it truth or fiction that Lenin leapt from the bed after making love with Inessa Armand for the first time with the shout 'Slava bogu, it's the dialectic!' I can certainly believe the report that Inessa rolled out of bed laughing. •



Nadhezhda Krupskaya

A man apart

JOE SCARLET

Gilles Perrault, *A man apart*, Zed Press, £7.95

HENRI CURIEL was the son of an Egyptian millionaire who invariably wore shorts. A Jew who did not speak Arabic until he was an adult (and, then, heavily accented), his chief theoretical insight — at least in this account by French journalist Gilles Perrault — was recognising the strivings of the Egyptian masses for independence.

Scarcely a promising biographical subject, until you learn that Curiel was also the key founder of the communist movement in both Egypt and Sudan, the educator of the left wing of Nasser's 'free officer' movement, ostracised by the French Communist Party and consequently the rest of the stalinist world and mysteriously assassinated in Paris in 1978.

Now that's more interesting. *A man apart* is a fascinating account of the struggle to build a revolutionary organisation in the colonial world, and is rich in lessons for socialists.

It grips like a thriller, moving along at breathtaking pace. Perrault intersperses chapters on the oppressed Egyptian nation struggling to achieve freedom with Curiel's personal history (itself the history of Egypt's Jewish minority, and, by extension, of all oriental Jewry) and, in the first half of the book, chapters in which the possible identity of Curiel's assassin is unravelled.

It is also a story of disappointment and tremendous personal tragedy as a pre-revolutionary upsurge is yet again resolved not by the left but by nationalist army officers, and Curiel himself is expelled from his country and reviled by many he would consider his comrades.

Following the demise of an earlier attempt to establish a Communist Party in the 1920s, Curiel was a member of a second wave of communist activity in Egypt. The most

singular feature of this was its social composition; there were no Arab members! The membership was drawn from among the children of the Jewish bourgeoisie — Curiel was no exception — augmented by one or two foreign communists who happened to be in Egypt. All spoke perfect French, but few had mastered Arabic — the language of their parents' servants . . . and the rest of the population. This limited their mass appeal!

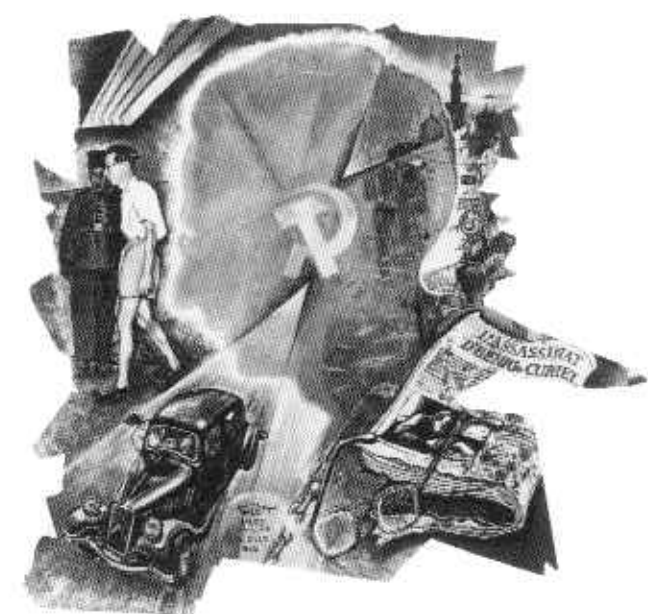
A conscious policy of 'Egyptianisation' advocated by Curiel followed by one of 'Shubraisation' — a tury to the workers of a key industrial complex in Cairo — did bear some fruit although falling short of the creation of a mass movement.

Political opposition to the colonial masters was monopolised by the multi-class *Wafd*. In 1946, a spontaneous uprising forced a British retreat to the canal zone. This movement was something of an historic step for the communists, outside of the control of the *Wafd* they had been among its leaders.

Virtually alone on the left, Curiel understood the importance of organising for the immediate democratic anti-imperialist demand of sovereignty; uniquely, also, he built an organisation of revolutionary action when others were forming discussion circles.

The communist movement never achieved its potential. Curiel was often in prison (indeed such were his personal powers of persuasion that he was known as the only prisoner in Egypt whose jailer had to be changed every week!) and sadly the liberation of the country was forfeited to the nationalist army officers of Gamal Abdul Nasser's 'free officer' movement.

Curiel's organisation, the Democratic Movement for National Liberation had a fraction in the army (and had even recruited a royal pilot) who were the left wing of Nasser's movement. Their



attempt at a further coup against Nasser was unsuccessful and the die was cast for the repression of the left.

By this time, along with nearly all the Jews and many of the communists from Egypt, Curiel was in enforced exile in Paris, as a result of the violent establishment of the Israeli state in 1947.

In a sense, the Zionists 'introduced' anti-Semitism to Egypt, and the rest of the middle east. Cairo's 100,000 Jews, most of them poor workers like their Egyptian Arab neighbours are now scarcely numerous enough to fill one synagogue, and one could say the same of most of the Arab world. Significantly, it was this anti-Semitism which was mobilised to smash the Egyptian left.

In France, Curiel dedicated himself to organising support for his imprisoned comrades. In 1956, however, it was Curiel the patriot and anti-imperialist who supplied Nasser's regime with France's plans for invading Suez and thus played no small part in Egypt's humiliation of imperialism.

To the French Communist Party whose aptly-named 'colonial office' had already slandered Curiel ensuring his illegitimacy in the ranks of their cohorts worldwide, this confirmed their views. They, after all, supported the French in Suez, just as they supported France in Algeria.

Despite this intervention, however, and despite (reportedly) Nasser's personal support, Curiel was unable to return to Egypt owing to the strength of reactionary feeling against him. Of his erstwhile comrades, some of the members made their peace with the new regime and one even went on to become a minister in Sadat's cabinet. But this story stops, provisionally, in 1956.

Tantalisingly, the book concludes: 'Henry Curiel's life story continues in volume II of *A man apart* to be published by Zed Books. It covers Curiel's exile in France, his activities for the Algerian FLN, his efforts to secure a middle east peace, and the operation of the underground network he set up to train militants of resistance movements throughout the world. It was this secret network which led to the accusations of terrorism levelled against him, and perhaps to his mysterious death.'

On the evidence of volume one Curiel was one of those rare and truly international communists gifted with the ability to inspire the party cadres and the masses of any country. As one militant comments, 'take it from me: if that man had been an Arabic-speaking Egyptian, the map of the middle east would have been changed'. It's hyperbole, but I for one am looking forward eagerly to volume II. ●

IAIN GAULT

ORGANIZED TO coincide with the seventieth anniversary of the October revolution, an exhibition selected from the writings of Leon Trotsky was recently mounted in Glasgow university library.

The material provided visitors with an attractive and accessible introduction to his life and work. The items were arranged chronologically, making it possible to follow the development of Trotsky's political thought and activity. A catalogue produced for the exhibition contained background information on each of the 70 exhibits and a short biographical sketch of their author.

Amongst the items on display were a number of pieces which are now virtually unobtainable. Of particular interest was a facsimile of Trotsky's first published pamphlet, *On the workers' movement in Odessa and Nikolaevo*, published in Geneva in 1900, which Trotsky co-authored with 'Domov' (Yu. Steklov).

First editions included the Russian original of Trotsky's *Where is Britain Going?* published in Moscow in 1925; and the first German, Russian, English and Dutch editions of his celebrated autobiography, *My Life*.

Many of the exhibits concerned Trotsky's struggle to defend the gains of the October revolution against the stalinist bureaucracy; a struggle which retains its relevance to the present day. Among these was a copy of the original Russian typescript of *The Platform of the Opposition*, written in 1927, which outlined the opposition's alternative to the policies of the stalinists in the fields of soviet democracy, industrialisation

and foreign policy. The document was signed by thirteen prominent members of the central committee, including Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rakovsky and Trotsky, and was submitted by them to the 15th congress as the *Draft Platform of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition*.

However, despite the wide range of material on display, the exhibition could only encompass a tiny proportion of the library's huge 'Trotsky collection', from which all the items on show had been taken. The full collection runs to over 1800 books and pamphlets by Trotsky in more than 40 different languages; almost certainly the finest collection of Trotsky's published writings anywhere in the world, including journals and publications of the trotskyst movement from many countries. Together they form a unique resource for students

of Trotsky and the movement he inspired.

Glasgow university library are to be congratulated for a timely and useful exhibition, and for a fitting tribute to the 'architect of October' ●

A unique resource



Photos: David King

The complete collection is contained in the 'special collections' of Glasgow university library. Readers wishing to have access to it can do so by arrangement, and day tickets to the library are available on request.

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