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# international

A journal of Marxism in the Labour Party



Ireland

# Labour-Tory Accord



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# The witch hunt and the 'cuddly' left

THE DEFEAT of the miners has not only catalysed a realignment on the Labour left, it has also enabled the party leadership to move its drive against the party's left wing into another gear.

Since the expulsion of the Militant Editorial Board members at the 1983 conference there have been sporadic attempts by right wing local constituencies to expel Militant supporters. The scale of these moves was consistent with Jim Mortimer's claim at the time that the expulsion of Militant's editors was not to be the green light for a witch hunt.

That has now changed. Kinnock's frontal assault on both Liverpool City Council and the NUM leadership at the Party conference has opened the door to both nationally-coordinated media campaigns against Militant, and local witch hunts against prominent leftwingers. Supporters of Black Sections, the Labour Committee on Ireland, and Labour Briefing have either been expelled or threatened with it. And meanwhile the Liverpool City Council, despite its many political weaknesses (analysed elsewhere in this issue), has been unjustly framed up by the media. The result of these processes is a rash of expulsions and a witch hunt atmosphere inside the party where anyone on the 'hard left' of the party feels under threat.

The witch hunt may at this stage be primarily designed to bolster Kinnock's media image, but its overall and long-term target is weakening and undermining support within the Party for those left wing policies which are unacceptable to the bourgeoisie.

More interestingly though the witch hunt reveals the contradictions and limitations of the much-publicised 'realignment of the left'. On the one hand a mere 5 NEC members stood out against the inquiry into Liverpool District Party, yet on the other Kinnock was only able to uphold the expulsion of a Militant Sheffield councillor by the narrowest of margins, 14-13, on the NEC. A petition sponsored by the Labour Left Co-ordination to oppose expulsions on political grounds has been endorsed by Peter Hain of the LCC, Chris Smith of the Tribune Group of MPs and Ken Livingstone. In other words the left wing of the 'soft' or 'cuddly left' cannot and will not go along with wide ranging expulsions for fear of weakening the left as a whole.

The project of the 'soft left' was articulated at the recent LCC conference in Liverpool. It is 'to detach the more realistic and open-minded sections of the "Hard Left" from the Trotskyists, entrists and ultras'; and to 'pull sections of the traditional "Tribunite" and trade union left towards more radical positions' especially on women and Blacks. This is linked into the notion of surrounding Kinnock with structures and people sympathetic to the left to maintain the left's influence on him as party leader. Despite its initial success the project is doomed to failure.

First the party leader does not need the 'soft left' as much as it needs him. The leadership is determined to drive out a large number of Militant and other left activists which will create broad opposition from the 'hard' and 'soft' left

together. Second, the hard left can and should seek allies within the soft left on policy questions such as the economy and international questions where the leadership is weak.

Moreover, the black and women's movements within the Party, along with the other campaigning groups, are not about to become adjuncts to the LCC. Their support again spans the whole of the Party's Left, with the 'hard left' in practice providing the most consistent support. If anything most of these campaigning currents feel more closely allied with journals like Briefing and bodies such as the Labour Left Co-ordination.

In reality the division between 'soft' and 'hard' left is not so simple. There is in fact a continuous spectrum of opinions across the whole left with interconnections which will make the LCC's attempted isolation of the 'ultras' very difficult to achieve. The active core of the Campaign Group has increasingly found itself allied with the hard left despite its own soft wing, two of whom recently defected to the Kinnock camp. Even the LCC, despite containing many who are little more than apologists for the parliamentary leadership, also organises some who are opposed to any form of witch hunt and who favour more radical policies.

The tasks of Marxists in the Labour Party over the coming year are fivefold. First, the broadest unity must be built within the party against the developing witch hunt. With the merger of Labour Against the Witch Hunt into the Labour Left Co-ordination, the role of the latter in co-ordinating left unity becomes more important than ever. Second, the left must take the initiative in the area of policy for the next Labour government. On questions such as the economy, Britain's international policy and continuing presence in NATO and Ireland, and on issues of social policy and democratic rights it is vital that the 'hard left' forces take the initiative in pressing for more radical policies for the Party through broad forums of debate and discussion.

Third, the democratic reforms of recent years within the Party must be defended and extended to take in the demands of women and black comrades within the Party. The Marxist left must show that it is the best champion of these groups' rights within the Party, not the late converts round the LCC. Fourth, it must build up a serious network of activists up and down the country organised through left caucuses who are able to organise around these ideas and projects within the Party. Fifth, this national network must throw itself behind any groups of workers who come into conflict with the Tory government such as the teachers, Silentnight workers and of course the NUM.

Labour Briefing is the only nationally organised network of such groups which is accountable to its supporters and can work closely with the Labour Left Co-ordination and the Campaign Group of MPs. The 'hard left' undoubtedly faces a difficult period ahead, but it is possible that it could emerge from the recent bleak past with a greater unity and strength if it strictly prioritises the tasks outlined above.

**DAVY JONES**

## Silentnight

THE STRUGGLE at the Silentnight bed factories in Barnoldswick, Lancashire and Sutton, Yorkshire is symbolic of the employers offensive after the miners' strike. The workers are striking against the most cynical provocation and attacks by the firm's Tory owner, Tom Clarke. If ever there were a struggle which deserved the support of the whole labour movement and ultimate victory it is this one. If the strike is not victorious, much of the blame will lie with the failure of their union — the CP-dominated FTAT — to mobilise the necessary support and action.

In February 1985 the workers were asked to postpone a nationally negotiated pay rise in return for a pledge of no redundancies. In order to defend the jobs of 52 of their colleagues, the workers agreed. Eight weeks later the management went ahead with the sacking anyway. The workers attempted to demand of the management that the pay rise now be paid, but without success. On 10 July 1985 they started a work to rule; given ten minutes to raise productivity they refused and 200 were suspended. In reply over 500 walked out in disgust. The strike had started. On 22 July the strikers were dismissed.

The strike brings together many features of today's industrial scene. The owner of the company, Tom Clarke, is a 'self-made man', described by Margaret Thatcher on her visit to the plant two years ago a 'Mr Wonderful'. He and his family own the majority of shares, and last year paid themselves £640 thousand in dividend — three times more than the cost of the pay increase demanded by the workers. The local Tory MP is also a shareholder in the company.

Since the strike began the three plants — two in Barnoldswick near Colne, Lancashire and one in Sutton, Yorkshire, have been kept going by a small minority of non-strikers and 200 scabs direct from the dole queue. The DHSS is doing sterling service for Mr Clarke. When one striker wanted to give up the strike because of financial pressures, he went to



the dole office and was offered a job — at Silentnight! When he refused it he was refused the dole. FTAT however has made no attempt to approach the unions at the local DHSS offices to prevent this collusion in scabbing.

Unfortunately the failings of FTAT do not stop there. The workers have only been unionised for 18 months and are inexperienced in challenging their union officials. FTAT has not attempted to organise solidarity action at the other five plants in the Silentnight group, and told workers that picketing these plants would be 'secondary action' and could not be supported. Contacts made have been entirely at the initiative of the workers themselves.

Until the march and rally in Barnoldswick on 30 November, there had been no mass meeting of the strikers for three months. And the march itself was organised for 10.30am making it difficult for London and other supporters to attend.

Despite all the prevarication and fudging from the 'left wing' FTAT leadership, self-organisation of, and solidarity with, the strikers has built up

considerably. On the 30 November demonstration miners' delegations came from Scotland, South Wales and Yorkshire. Links with the mining communities have been built up; Silentnight families have been to stay with miners families to give them a break.

Many of those organised in the miners support groups network have turned their attention to supporting Silentnight, and emergency resolutions of support were passed at both the Labour Party and TUC conferences.

Some industrial solidarity with the strike has already occurred. Dockers in Hull, after being visited by the strikers have refused to handle parts for the beds. In Belgium a company which supplies raw materials has refused to continue supplies until after the strike is finished. And the Co-op, House of Frazer and Littlewoods, among others, have frozen orders for the beds.

The central problem of the strike however is that production is being maintained with scab labour. As is to be expected, the police are providing huge contingents to defend the scabs, and at Sutton there have been many clashes with the police and

arrests. In this situation the strikers have understood the need for escalating solidarity action, and have themselves taken the initiative to go to the TUC and Labour Party conferences and to get out round the country speaking at labour movement meetings.

The passivity and inaction of the FTAT may well stem from a belief that the strike is doomed to defeat, and a hope that it will quietly go away. Victory in the strike requires precisely the opposite approach — building mass pickets, trying to extend the action to the other plants in the group, trying to build the boycott of Silentnight products in the shops. In the new year the strikers are hoping for a new offensive around this type of activity. It is vital that this strike is raised as widely as possible throughout the labour movement.

Send donations to: FTAT Cravendale 92 branch strike fund, c/o Mrs Ann King, 10 Rainhall Crescent, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancs. For speakers ring Terry Bennet on 0282 603055 or Heather Smith on 0282 813662.

(NICK WOLFE)

## Black workers on the march

THE FORMATION of COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) at the end of November marks a big point in the development of the black trade union movement in South Africa. Welcomed by the Labour Party and the TUC, the formation of the new federation also offers new opportunities to the labour movement in Britain to build solidarity with the struggle against apartheid.

The founding of COSATU is the outcome of unity talks between the independent, non-racial unions underway since August 1981. Discussions broke down several times on points of difference between the various unions and federations during the intervening period and a number of issues remain to be resolved, but nevertheless COSATU brings

# international UPFRONT



together the most organised workers in the critical sectors of the South African economy. All the major unions are involved save CUSA (Council of Unions of South Africa, participants in the early stages of the unity talks and affiliated to both the United Democratic Front and the National Forum) and AZACTU (Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions, affiliated to the National Forum).

Together CUSA and AZACTU represent about 100,000-150,000 workers, the main strength being in the industrial unions of CUSA. COSATU unites over half a million signed-up unionists, though the paid-up membership is about 380,000.

One of the founding principles of COSATU is non racialism, and this caused problems for CUSA, which has always inclined toward support for black leadership;

similarly, AZACTU argued for an anti-racist platform that did not exclude blacks-only membership. AZACTU was not involved in the earlier stages of the talks, having emerged more recently than most of the other unions, and coming out of the black consciousness movement. AZACTU has also made claims that the feasibility committee for COSATU was dominated by a clique that excluded them. While the non-participation in COSATU of the 'black consciousness' unions is an important limitation, agreement may yet be reached. In the meantime, co-operation is not excluded, since some organisational tensions of the past have been reduced by the formation of COSATU.

Previously, the issue of registration with the state authorities had proved divisive, but those unions most importantly, FOSATU

that were not opposed to registration have demonstrated that this is a tactical question rather than one of principle, since registration need not lead to co-optation. The success of the independent unions in recruiting, organising and leading effective actions has also encouraged SAC-TU (affiliated to the ANC) to unite with other forces in the trade union movement in support of COSATU rather than counterposing itself organisationally and politically to the newer unions, which had sometimes been the case in the past.

At present, COSATU does not have offices at home or abroad, and many questions of policy and organisation — including international affiliations — are yet to be agreed. However, messages of solidarity can be sent to, and in formation obtained from, the convenor of the inaugural con-

gress of COSATU:

Cyril Ramaphosa  
General Secretary  
National Union of  
Mineworkers  
P.O. Box 10928  
Johannesburg 2000

or the General Secretary of COSATU:

Jay Naidoo  
Sweet, Food and Allied  
'Workers' Union  
3 Central Court  
125 Gale St  
Durban 4001.

Speaking tours by South African unionists are likely to be organised in the new year, and these and other details relevant to building solidarity in the labour movement in Britain will be publicised by *International*.

(EF)

## Scandal in the city

A RECENT report has calculated that British companies are being defrauded of more than £3 billions a year. City fraud has become a major political issue with Labour using it as a stick to beat the Tories. But the debate, which centres on whether self-regulation or legislation should be used to control the fraudsters, is a sterile one. Neither can deal with abuses in the city at present, let alone after the changes which are currently sweeping the city are complete.

In 1986 the so-called 'big bang' will de-regulate the city abolishing the old barriers between banks, jobbers and brokers creating vast international financial supermarkets capable of dealing in everything from mortgages to gold options.

The Tories have been genuinely shaken by Brian Sedgemoor's disclosures about widespread fraud in the city — particularly at Lloyds and Johnson Matthey Bankers. It's not so much the sums involved, but the potential damage to the party that has Thatcher worried.

The Tory party has extensive organic links with the city. A high proportion of the cabinet are Lloyds underwriters. And the normal route for a sacked minister is straight into a lucrative city boardroom post. Geoffrey Rippon, John Nott and Cecil Parkinson have all followed this route recently. And James Prior has found himself a cosy niche as chairman of GEC after being dropped from the Northern Ireland Office.

So the Tories are stemming the revelations about JMB and Lloyds as a priority. But both cases have a lot more mileage in them.

JMB, one of the leading players in the London gold market was rescued from collapse by the Bank of England in 1984. Since then it has come out that bank officials made large loans to unworthy borrowers and in one case received payment from them. Brian Sedgemoor has the bit between his teeth on this one and further disclosures about illegal currency dealings with Nigeria and bribery are likely.

At Lloyds, the world's premier insurance market, the scale and nature of the frauds are astonishing. Leading members of the market quite simply helped themselves to millions of pounds of other people's money. They bought yachts, racehorses, paintings, and in one case funded the making of a pornographic film out of the proceeds.

The troubles at Lloyds run right through the market — at the crux of the scandal, which is also a problem in the rest of the city, is the definition of fraud. Miscreants



Snivelling little...

in Lloyds cases claim with some justification that they were only following 'accepted market practices'. Lloyds have always been resistant to outside interference, it's a closed society — the presence of three Lloyds masonic lodges has helped, as have the hundreds of millions of pounds in foreign earnings which have prompted successive governments to leave Lloyds to itself.

Although Lloyds and JMB have been the worst public city scandals in past months they are only the tip of the iceberg. Insider dealing and phantom share selling are just two other practices which salt away the missing millions.

International fraudsters dealing in non-existent shares, most notably from West Germany and the USA, have been attracted to London because of the lack of supervision.

Potentially one of the biggest frauds that can never be quantified is insider dealing. In the present climate of mammoth takeover bids, millions of pounds can be made second guessing who's going to be the next bid target and getting in before the

share price rockets. Insider dealing occurs when brokers with prior knowledge of a coming bid deal in the share. It's illegal but almost impossible to detect.

The City police say that there was a forty per cent increase in fraud last year. But the Director of Public Prosecutions doesn't even know how many reports have been submitted to him in the last six years and there have been no major prosecutions concerning city frauds.

Now the government has set up a 'self-regulatory' system to police the City. Under the umbrella of a Securities and Investments Board Leon Brittan expects the city to put its own house in order. In other words the SIB anticipates the city poachers becoming gamekeepers overnight! By introducing this system the Tories don't seriously expect to stamp out fraud, but they do hope to sweep it under the carpet. Labour's push for statutory regulations is no answer either. The forces against any effective regulation of the city are immense. International communications technology allows vast sums of money to be transferred abroad at the touch of a button. Companies don't want to damage their reputation by revealing fraud and the old boy network still protects the fraudsters.

(DM)

## Sinn Fein Ard Fheis — breaking out

NOVEMBER'S SINN FEIN Ard Fheis marked a growing maturity of the republican movement in its development towards a serious political party, willing and able to represent the Irish working class. The very openness of the Ard Fheis, with student leaders, other revolutionary organisations, and a strong delegation from the Labour left in attendance, underlined the general political direction towards breaking out of Sinn Fein's isolation.

The leadership used the occasion to prepare the movement for

the outcome of imperialism's latest offensive — the Anglo-Irish talks. They discussed various options, at different political and organisational levels, as a response to what is essentially the purpose of this latest 'solution' — to marginalise the growing support for Sinn Fein among the 'alienated' nationalist population.

In his Presidential address, Gerry Adams explained: 'The talks are about creating a political climate in which this party can be isolated through a mixture of repression and appeasement. The extension of the repression will depend on how successful we are in the continuing process of developing our party and expanding our support.'

Challenging the SDLP and Fianna Fail must become part of this more long-term strategy, and the Anglo-Irish talks have given Sinn Fein such an opportunity. Although defensive in their approach to the Forum, they have contested the SDLP in the North, electorally, for the allegiance of the nationalist population. In the South, the policy of abstention, the effects of Section 31 — a law which bans them from media coverage, and the sell-outs of the constitutional nationalists of the Dublin government, all mean a new political offensive is needed for Sinn Fein to become a major force. Adams' challenge to debate Haughey, and the approach to the SDLP for unity against the loyalists, both mark a heightened political response to the situation.

The continued electoral strategy was overwhelmingly endorsed as a success. Adams praised the role of their new 'middle' layer of political activists, 98 elected councillors North and South. They have already shown the SDLP in the North that they really will defend the nationalist population, and exposed the loyalists' short-sighted bigotry. They are also entering local community politics, touching a wide range of social issues which were reflected in motions at the Ard Fheis on topics such as drugs, poverty and housing.

While the current electoral strategy is combined with the traditional republican stance on abstentionism, this was challenged at the Ard Fheis. This political challenge will continue as a debate in the movement. Arguments put



Ard Fheis

forward to drop 'abstentionism' highlighted the political situation facing Sinn Fein today compared with 1916; asserted that the Stickies and all who went before them were not socialists, not 'real republicans' when they entered the Dublin parliament; described abstentionism as self-imposed restrictions on their ability to reach out to Irish workers.

The leadership's role in this debate cannot be underestimated. This was the only contentious issue, however, on which the leadership had a free vote. This necessarily meant that the debate was not directed and is not resolved. In fact the core leadership of Adams, McGuinness and Morrison abstained on the specific resolution defining abstentionism as a tactic, while voting for more general resolutions which restated Sinn Fein's existence as an abstentionist party, participating in an electoral strategy.

Sinn Fein is moving forward because its leadership is responsive to pressure from the base of the movement, and from forces traditionally outside of republicanism. A significant issue taken up at this Ard Fheis was the commitment to a campaign of education and information against the AIDS hysteria. And undoubtedly, the most important political development at a

programmatic level was the adoption of 'a woman's right to choose' policy.

Today, particularly after the constitutional amendment in the South outlawing abortion, attacks on Well Women centres, the rise of SPUC, and the Kerry Babies Tribunal, Irish women are under serious attack. The impact of the self-organisation of women on Sinn Fein has been impressive, with the establishment of the Women's Department reserved places on the leadership for women, and the opening of women's centres. And the shift in policy from a few years ago, of complete opposition to contraception and abortion, to today's policy which accepts the use of various means of birth control, not just for medical reasons, but at the express choice of women, now makes Sinn Fein the most advanced party on women in Ireland, in practice, save revolutionary marxists.

The leadership opposed the resolution, for a woman's right to choose, in favour of more limited extension of the policy, and were defeated by the political offensive waged by women at the conference. They demanded that Irish self-determination should extend to women to exert their own self-determination. It was a victory for women and Sinn Fein that the Ard Chomairle (National Committee) was defeated on this

issue. With Sinn Fein adopting policy for a woman's right to choose, it is now the conservative, catholic forces who will have to organise to challenge that policy.

Adams' televised Address began and ended on a note of international solidarity with the black majority in Southern Africa. 'We congratulate the Dunnes Stores strikers. To the ANC, we extend our unconditional solidarity. To our black brothers and sisters in struggle we send this simple message of support: "Fight on!" Irish foreign policy should be based on a policy of neutrality and non-alignment which includes the promotion of nuclear disarmament, the promotion of peace internationally, and independence in political, economical and ideological matters.'

Sinn Fein, however, still does not consistently campaign for its policies, despite its left wing evolution, and Marxists have played a role in filling this vacuum.

Clearly Sinn Fein's leadership is very interested in British politics. In the wake of the miners strike, they are following the recomposition of the left, the possibility of a coalition government, and how British parties' attitude to the war in Ireland fits in to this. The dialogue and relationship between Sinn Fein and the left in Britain, particularly the Labour left, is becoming more sophisticated. To break out of its isolation, in order to confront British imperialism, Sinn Fein is looking to develop a serious strategy which includes an orientation to the Labour left.

Adams' strategy is essentially for an organisational transformation into a political party combined with opening up the political debate. By standing in elections they are making an organisational challenge to constitutional nationalism, but this remains to be completely developed into an overall political alternative. Since the hunger strike, Marxists in Ireland have raised this need to challenge 'constitutional' nationalism on a political level. Sinn Fein are on this road. While we can analyse how far they have travelled down that road our main task as socialists in Britain is to fight for an audience in the British labour movement for Irish republicanism, and to win British withdrawal from Ireland on the basis of self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.

**(STEPHANIE GRANT  
& PIERS MOSTYN)**

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## Sell out

The first issue of the relaunched *International* sold out, within three days of publication we had to order a reprint. This issue we offer a value-for-money 36 pages. After the March/April issue we are planning monthly publication and features in the pipeline include a special eight-page supplement on Leon Trotsky. Guarantee your copy by subscribing now, the form is on the back cover.

# **i** **The Anglo-Irish accord — the Labour-Tory accord**

The Hillsborough Accord has predictably roused the ire of the Unionists and Kinnock has pledged the support of the Labour Party for this Tory initiative.

**GEOFFREY BELL** argues that this return to Labour/Tory bipartisanship on Ireland means more not less repression for the Nationalist population and requires an urgent change of tactics by activists in the Labour Party on the question on Ireland.

FOR THOSE acquainted with the history of the Labour Party and matters Irish there was much that was tediously familiar with the response of the leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party to the Anglo-Irish Accord. The phrase that springs to mind is one used by Labour MP Patrick Duffy in describing reactions to a different Irish event. 'Me-tooism' he complained of, nearly five years ago, when the then Labour leader Michael Foot joined with Margaret Thatcher in condemning Bobby Sands on the announcement of the death through starvation of the honourable member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. Then, as now, the House of Commons spoke almost as one in defending the government's policy from attacks on it by sections of the unruly Irish. Then, as now, such unanimity will have little more than a momentary effect on the evolution of Irish realities.

Which is not to say that the Accord is without significance. In attempting to incorporate the government of the South of Ireland into sharing the responsibility for the North of Ireland the British government has undoubtedly adopted a new course, although it is one that the mandarins in the Foreign Office have been urging for some years.

But that is really the limit of the policy change, and it is not the case that this represents the first time a British government has ignored the Unionist 'veto'. Just as the Unionists are opposed to the Accord, so too were they opposed to the abolition of the Northern Ireland parliament in 1972 by the Heath government and the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 which imposed a power-sharing executive and a Council of Ireland.

In many ways, both these steps were of far greater significance than the present Accord, which, for the moment at any rate, does little more than offer the Southern government a consultative role in the North: in effect,

responsibility but no power. Furthermore, it is worth remembering the promises that were made in respect of the Accord. Various leaks suggested there was going to be the disbandment of the Ulster Defence Regiment, Southern judges presiding over the political trials in the North jointly with their Northern counterparts, a Bill of Rights and the handing over of billions of pounds by the EEC and USA to turn the North into an economic and social paradise.

None of this saw the light of day, and if it had not been for the Unionists' traditional over-reaction to anything that hints of change, the whole business may have gone off like a damp squib. Certainly, in the medium and long term it will have about as much effect.

Nevertheless, for socialists, and especially for British socialists, it is important to appreciate what the support of the Parliamentary leadership of the Labour Party and indeed of the PLP in general for the Accord represents. In doing this it is worth remembering the developments that had taken place within the Labour Party in respect to its Irish policy since the 'me-tooism' bipartisanship of the hunger strike days.

**'An Irish political war is necessary in the Labour Party and this time Tory/Labour bipartisanship needs to be broken beyond repair.'**

Since then the party had agreed to support the aim of Irish unity by consent, and to campaign for Irish unity; it had voted for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act; party conferences had voted for the ending of the use of plastic bullets in the North, for the ending of the strip-searching of women prisoners and for the abolition of juryless courts. Labour's parliamentary spokespersons such as Clive Soley and Peter Archer had shown themselves to be willing to advocate these policies in public and indeed Archer had gone further and suggested the disbandment of the sectarian UDR. Tory-Labour bipartisanship was, it seems, becoming little more than a bad memory. At times the very mention of the name 'Roy Mason' was enough to bring looks of horror onto the faces of Labour Party audiences: remember him, the man who presided over the Castlereagh torture camp, the man who said the SDLP was 'extremist', the man who said 'anyone who talks about Irish unity causes me trouble' — how could we have let all that happen, we of the Labour left, and even cen-

tre, and Irish activists in the Labour Party asked ourselves. And then we would pat ourselves on our backs and reassure each other that at least there would be no return to those bad old days.

What now needs to be widely and clearly appreciated is that on 26 November, 1985, when Neil Kinnock stood up in parliament to endorse the Anglo-Irish Accord and when, the following day, Labour's parliamentary opposition to the Accord was restricted to a miserly 13 votes against, then the 'bad old days' had indeed returned. Even the symbolism was supplied when the first Labour speaker in parliament to endorse the Accord after Neil Kinnock turned out to be none other than Roy Mason. 'I do not think there will be a united Ireland for as far as I can see' was his celebratory cry. 'The special position of the Province within the United Kingdom has been strengthened,' was his triumphalist assertion.

Of course just because Roy Mason supports the Accord does not necessarily mean it should be opposed, any more than just because Ian Paisley opposes it means it should be supported. And, in saying there has been a return to the bad old days, it would be wrong to imply from that that the Labour leadership and vast bulk of the PLP have consciously gone back to giving the Tories a blank cheque for spending as they wish in Northern Ireland.

Nor has a definite decision been made to ditch the opposition to the repressive legislation and practices which the party is pledged to oppose. But in supporting the Accord the party leadership and PLP have, from that point on, given their support to a governmental, constitutional and decision-making framework which is designed to substitute for the party's own policy of 'unity by consent' and which will, at least in the short term, see an acceleration of the repressive machinery in the North of Ireland. What is perhaps most disturbing of all, is that in doing all this, the vast majority of the PLP are probably unaware of the consequences of their action or are too uninterested in the Irish situation to be bothered to find out.

This is one way in which it is possible to talk about a return to the bad old days — when only 13 Labour MPs voted against the Accord, what this represented was a majority of the PLP, the left of the PLP and even a majority of the 'hard-left' Campaign group returning to the ocean of ignorance, banalities and apathy in which they swam for so long in the 1970s whenever Ireland was mentioned.

An example is the speech in parliament on the Accord made by party leader Neil Kinnock in which he praised the 'constitutional nationalists' for deciding to 'seek change even at the cost of indefinitely postponing





RUC baton charge loyalist demonstration

International, No. 2, January/February 1986

their own nationalist aspirations'. When the Tories' Secretary of State Tom King said much the same thing a couple of days afterwards he was roundly condemned from all sides, but there is a large element of truth in such remarks.

The important point however is that there is nothing new in this. As far as the main party to the Accord in Ireland is concerned, Fitzgerald's Fine Gael Party, it was founded on the very basis of postponing Irish unity until the indefinite future. Its origins are in those forces who, with the help of the British military, secured by force of arms the acceptance by the Irish people of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 which established limited self-government for Ireland and the partition of the country.

For Irish republicans all Fitzgerald has done is to prove that Fine Gael remains a pro-partitionist party; for what is probably the majority of working class Catholics in the North of Ireland all he has done is to suggest yet again that a 'Free State' government is prepared to sell their nationalist aspirations short in return for a pat on the back from the British establishment.

**'Fitzgerald's Fine Gael was founded on the very basis of postponing Irish unity to the indefinite future.'**

This is one, rather important, reason why the Accord will not work — the Catholic population do not, and indeed should not, trust Fitzgerald and Fine Gael to look after their interests in the consultative process which the Accord has established, and certainly a lot of changes will need to take place before the ghetto dwellers of Belfast, Derry and elsewhere give up their reliance on Provisional Republicanism in return for nods and winks from Dr Fitzgerald.

What are the changes which are in the pipeline? In parliament Neil Kinnock said 'the most critical test of the credibility and acceptability of the agreement is its effect on security in Northern Ireland.' As far as the Unionist population is concerned this indeed may be the case, but for the leader of the Labour Party, a party pledged to abolish the PTA, important sections of the Emergency Provisions Act, strip-searching and use of plastic bullets, to seek to apply the litmus test of 'security' to the Accord is mind-boggling.

Security in the Northern Ireland context is no more than a euphemism for 'getting the Fenians'. Kinnock himself suggested as much when in condemning the use of violence in Northern Ireland he listed the IRA and INLA but declined to mention the UDA, the Ulster Freedom Fighters or any other of the Loyalist paramilitaries. The idea that perhaps, at one time, the dear old British might themselves have been a little heavy-handed in Ireland and might themselves have made even a minimal contribution to the spiral of violence in Ireland, was a thought that was not permitted even for a second to enter the consciousness of the Labour leader. No, for him 'security' meant

smashing the IRA and INLA, and 'terrorism' was an Irish Catholic disease.

It now seems highly likely that the British government will take new measures in an attempt to eradicate this disease. Indeed, within a week of the deal being signed Fitzgerald was promising a new 'security' drive. What this will mean in practice as far as the North of Ireland is concerned is increased use of the PTA and of the Emergency Provisions Act and greater repression generally of the Catholic working-class population.

For, while the long-term aim of the Accord was to attract support away from the Provisionals, and part of this was to be nominal reforms in favour of the Catholics, the noisy opposition to the Accord of the Unionists has meant that in the immediate future, as Kinnock urged, it will be 'security' which gets most attention from the British and Irish governments. Thus the Labour Party in supporting the Accord is, as a consequence, supporting an agreement the first effect of which will lead to an increase in repressive measures the party is pledged to oppose.

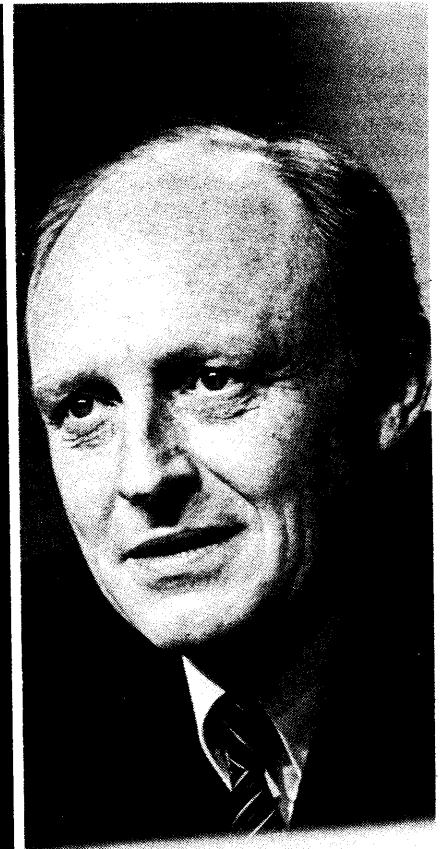
The break with party policy goes even further, and is testified to in the assurances of both Tom King and Roy Mason that the Accord will strengthen the Union and postpone indefinitely the re-unification of Ireland. Neil Kinnock, while reiterating that 'as a matter of policy and commitment, the Labour Party wants to see Ireland united by consent, and we are committed to working actively to secure that consent', also said in parliament 'that is not the reason for our action in approving the Hillsborough accord.'

Indeed it is not, and could not be, for support for the Accord is supporting an alternative to a policy of Irish self-determination and unity, and it is supporting the most undemocratic alternative of all: where the people of the North of Ireland have their fate decided by two governments in which they have no say or influence.

### 'within a week of the deal being signed Fitzgerald was promising a new "security drive"'

Socialists, in supporting Irish self-determination and Irish majority rule, thereby challenge the 'right' of the Unionist minority in Ireland to decide the political fate of that country. That does not mean they can therefore support an Accord which completely disenfranchises both the Unionist and the Nationalist community in the North of Ireland. And certainly that is a very peculiar way to be campaigning for Irish unity.

The excuse offered by Labour's leader for supporting Irish unity while at the same time endorsing the Accord is that the latter will advance 'the priority' of 'reconciliation in the communities'. Even for a British politician like Kinnock who has previously shown little interest in Northern Ireland this is astonishingly naïve.



Thatcher and Kinnock united against the interests of the Irish people

It was almost inevitable that the Accord would attract the wrath of the Unionists while not rousing any great enthusiasm among Nationalists. The Unionists oppose the deal because it is a further challenge to their 'right' to rule their 'Ulster' as they see fit. But because it leaves the British presence in Ireland untouched, indeed in many ways it reinforces it, the Nationalist community, especially that significant working-class section which supports or has sympathy with the Provisionals, is unlikely to see the Accord as meeting its aspirations. Far from the Accord promoting 'reconciliation', it will heighten the sectarianism of the Unionists while bringing in its wake great repression of the Nationalists.

So, the Unionist opposition to the Accord should not be allowed to hide what Labour support for it means. It means a return to a bipartisanship the basis of which is to maintain British presence in Ireland, and to develop a long-term alternative to Irish self-determination. And although the immediate consequence of the Accord has been to rouse Unionist anger, its motivation was an attempt to isolate radical republicanism; while one important consequence of the deal will be another Roy Mason-style attempt to inflict a 'military solution' on the rebellious Irish Catholics.

This is where the new 'left' and 'realistic' leadership of Neil Kinnock is taking the Labour Party. It is to the credit of Ken Livingstone, a much-publicised convert to that

leadership, that he has come out in opposition to the Accord, but the question that needs to be asked of Ken and others like him is: when does his association with Kinnock cease to be an influence for progress and become a cover for reaction?

Yet perhaps the questions that need to be asked with the greatest honesty concern the tactical assumptions Irish campaigners in the Labour Party have adopted in most recent times. These were based on the view that we had 'won' the Campaign group to support for British withdrawal, that we had 'won' the party as a whole to support in principle for Irish unity, and that we had 'won' the leadership of the party to opposition to repression in the North of Ireland. All this has now been shown to be one massive illusion.

Gains may indeed have been made, but they have been easily trampled underfoot in the Parliamentary Labour Party's blind rush to stand with Thatcher, Fitzgerald, and Ronald Reagan in supporting the latest imposition of a British solution to Ireland's British problem.

Which means, as far as those such as the Labour Committee on Ireland are concerned, there can be no more polite lobbying, no more pressure group politics, no more cosy chats with those in positions of influence and authority. An Irish political war is necessary in the Labour Party, and this time Tory/Labour bipartisanship needs to be broken with such force as to make it beyond repair.

# When politics rears its ugly head

## The fall and fall of Gerry Healy

The recent split in the Workers Revolutionary Party made squalid fare for the media but Healyism was more than the personal turpitude of its leader. **BOB PENNINGTON** points to the characteristics that over the years has misled thousands of would-be revolutionary socialists and brought the WRP to its present ignominy and disaster.



Gerry Healy

HEALY MAY have been expelled, but Healyism still thrives in the leadership of the WRP. Neither can a leadership schooled in the WRP's particular brand of opportunism and catastrophism — basing its politics on the belief of some impending event which will change everything — be expected to make a decisive break with Healyism. Militants in the WRP who want to take the road away from the grotesque sect politics of Healy will have to come to terms with the whole history of the SLL-WRP current. It is a tradition which was flawed from the very beginning.

Ever since its formation in the early 1950s, Healy's organisation — then simply known as 'The Club' — has been based on incorrect political perspectives and the victim of undemocratic practices. Its malformations date back to the crisis which beset British Trotskyism immediately after the Second World War. The united Trotskyist organisation which existed then — the Revolutionary Communist Party — believed the war would be followed by a massive economic crisis and a weakening of Stalinism and reformism. But the prediction was not fulfilled. The slump did not occur, and reformism in the working class was strengthened.

A collapse of perspective and a steady decline in membership are sure fire recipes for internal strife, and the RCP got its full

share of that. But none of the internal factions could explain what had gone wrong and there was no majority on what to do next.

In such situations people become susceptible to panaceas and cure-alls. Healy claimed to have the way forward. He forecast a gigantic slump, which would split the Labour Party. Only an entrust group, he said, could take advantage of this. He combined his schema with demagoguery against that faithful old scapegoat — the 'petty bourgeoisie', which meant anyone who disagreed with him. He claimed that these elements, with their endless discussion and interminable bulletins, were paralysing the RCP and stopping it getting on with its work.

This denunciation of intellectuals struck a chord in sections of the ranks who had been attracted by the simplistic theories of Healy. Anti-intellectualism is in reality anti-theory, which is a deeply rooted tradition in British bourgeois society. And unfortunately it is a virus from which even the Marxist left is not immune.

**'Since its formation Healy's organisation has been based on incorrect perspectives and the victim of undemocratic practices.'**

Healy's analysis combined with activism seemed to many to offer a way out of the political ghetto of the RCP. The practices which have bedevilled this grouping were put down therefore at its very inception. For you cannot have an organisation which is made up simply of 'doers' — somebody has to provide a political line, somebody has to work out long-term strategy and immediate tactics, and this can either be done collectively or by individuals. Once the membership put aside the 'petty bourgeois indulgence' of discussion and debate, the more they vest all authority in leaders. That is exactly what happened in The Club.

Prior to 1953, as long as the British section stayed in the Fourth International, there was always the chance that with the aid of other sections a change of course could have been effected. But that was not to be. Healy in 1953 along with the American Socialist Workers Party led a split from the FI accusing its leadership of having 'gone soft on Stalinism'. This was really ironical.

For some years previously the Club's paper *Socialist Outlook* never used the word 'Stalinist' once and studiously avoided criticism of the Communist Party. This was because on entering the Labour Party the group had found a different scenario than the one outlined in Healy's perspectives. The traditional social democratic left was almost non-existent, its leaders and most of its ranks had been won over by the apparently sweeping reforms of the 1945 Labour Government. The only left dissidents of any account were CP fellow travellers, and it was to these people Healy turned to build a left opposition.

The soft approach to Stalinism was dictated by Healy's need to make an alliance with this left. It was a practice which over the next 30 years was to become a constant feature of the organisation's politics. Later, when a left social democratic current did emerge around Bevan, Healy switched tactics, turning towards them and breaking from his old allies — Stalinophobia<sup>1</sup> became legitimate once more. Then The Club played down its criticisms of the Bevanites, and the members sold *Tribune*. Healy even informed one open-mouthed session of the central committee that: 'Michael Foot will join this movement'.

From the beginning the members were trained in opportunism. First The Club had subordinated its politics to get an alliance with the CP and its fellow travellers, then it did the same again, but next time to ally itself with the left reformists. It was thus not difficult in later years to make an alliance with the Arab bourgeois states in the Middle East. This time there was an added reason to ditch permanent revolution so they could laud Gaddafi, the regime in Iraq, and even the Ayatollah, whom the *Newsline* of 10 April 1979, described as 'the man who symbolised the revolutionary aspirations of the Iranian people'. Now money was available from the oil producing countries, money which could finance the WRP.

When an organisation discards its political principles for an expedient alliance it has slid into political degeneracy. When it does that for financial gain it has slithered into the pit of corruption. As soon as money starts com-

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ing in through the back door to pay for political favours, and its distribution lies in the hands of an individual — invariably justified on the grounds of security — bureaucracy has got a firm social base. This is why *Newsline* 31 October 1985 asked Healy's supporters 'to explain why he secretly purchased a £15,000 BMW car and maintained a secret fund of £20,000 in liquid cash.' We can be confident that *Newsline's* revelations of flash cars and secret cashhauls is only the tip of an iceberg of malpractices.

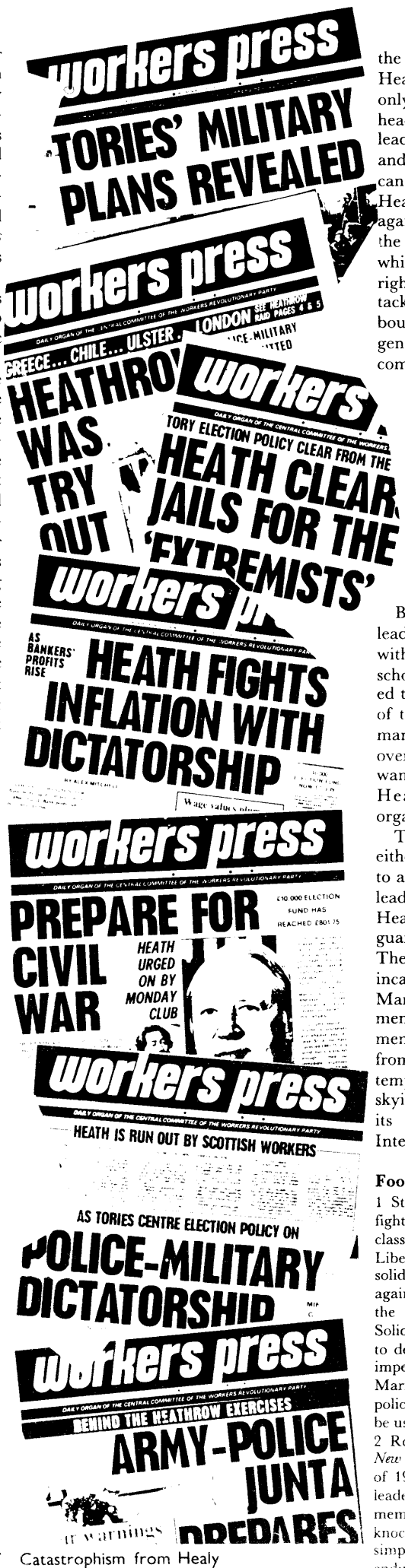
Just as opportunism led the WRP into its unprincipled alliances with the Arab bourgeois states, so did its catastrophic politics strengthen the bureaucratic regime. Catastrophism is not without a base on the far left; it appears to offer small groups the chance to catapult into the leadership of the mass struggle and bypass all the awkward intervening stages that have to be gone through if a wide based Marxist movement is to be built in Britain. The impending end of the capitalist order calls for strong leadership and frenetic activity at the base. After all, if Armageddon is down the road that is hardly the time for the ranks to be bothering about discussion. Instead the time has come to treble the sales of the paper, mortgage the house to finance the revolution — via the WRP treasurer of course — and denounce all those petty bourgeois groups which do not understand the police state is nigh, or that Thatcher is going to introduce a Bonapartist state that very day.

**'When a political organisation discards its political principles for an expedient alliance it has slid into political degeneracy. When it does that for financial gain it has slithered into the pit of corruption.'**

Such a regime with its emphasis on the immediacy of the revolution cannot brook any opposition, either within the organisation or without. Its sectarian party building tactics have no room for criticism — it delays action in a period of 'great crisis' and challenges the idea that the WRP is the sole agency of revolutionary change. The members are there just to carry out the line, whilst the other leaders are there to organise the members along the line of Healy.

This messianic concept ceded the ultimate power and decision making to Healy, who in turn ensured that his lieutenants had no independence from the political line and the apparatus which he controlled.

Those leaders who refused to tolerate such a regime joined the long list of 'police spies', 'CIA agents' and 'members of MI5'. Such a method inoculated the members against Marxist critics of the WRP. Over the years the deviations of opportunism and bureaucratic practice have worsened to such an extent that they became a built-in part of



the structures and daily life of the WRP. Healy's sexual abuse of women comrades only mattered when politics reared its ugly head — ie when a new clique inside the leadership decided it was time Healy went and it took over. Significantly these leaders cannot explain their years of silence over Healy's crimes against the membership and against the interests of the working class and the oppressed groups. Only an organisation which had learned nothing about women's rights, and that had not only ignored but attacked the womens movement as a 'petty bourgeois deviation', could have allowed its general secretary to rape and abuse women comrades.

**'Once the membership put aside the "petty bourgeois indulgence" of discussion and debate, the more they vest all authority in leaders.'**

But we must remember that the present leadership of the Slaughter grouping almost without exception was trained in the Healy school. Like Nikita Kruschev, who denounced the crimes of Stalin at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956, so he could get the mantle of Stalin off his shoulders and take over the succession, so do Slaughter et al want to rid themselves of the mantle of Healyism in order to inherit his organisation.

The disease of the WRP is terminal. It will either go into oblivion or at best be reduced to a small isolated sect on the sidelines. The leaders who for years justified the politics of Healy, were often the leaders who acted as guards at the Summer Camp show trials<sup>2</sup>. They are by their past practices and training incapable of building a healthy, democratic Marxist movement. For those rank and file members who want to build such a movement there is no alternative to breaking away from the WRP. They should join in the attempt to construct a united democratic Trotskyist movement in Britain, which can take its place in the ranks of the Fourth International.

**Footnotes**

- 1 Stalinophobia means to put the emphasis on the fight against Stalinism above the interests of the class struggle. During the Vietnamese War of Liberation, the most urgent task was to build solidarity with the people of Vietnam in their fight against imperialism. Healy's group, then named the Socialist Labour League, left the Vietnam Solidarity Committee because of its alleged failure to denounce Stalinism, thus weakening the anti-imperialist struggle. This does not mean that Marxists should give up their criticisms of CP policy, but it does mean anti-Stalinism must not be used to undermine united working class action.
- 2 Robin Blick and David Caldwell writing in the *New Statesman* tell how at the SLL Summer Camp of 1966 Healy held a show trial of some of its leaders. One of the defendants was a long-time member Bob Shaw who 'Healy kicked ... and knocked backwards onto the ground... Shaw simply picked himself up and resumed his seat to endure further beatings.'

# The split in the NUM

## Scab trade unionism

The defeat of the miners' strike has had bitter consequences in the coalfields and throughout the trade union movement. During the strike the 'new realist' right wing of the TUC was on the defensive; now it is regrouping and making its plans for the consolidation of scab trade unionism. **JANE KELLY, BRENDAN YOUNG and PHIL HEARSE** ask: can the left halt the retreat?

THE SPLIT in the NUM is now a fact, and the Union of Democratic Mineworkers is consolidating itself. Inside the NUM leadership the left is beginning to split up, with a new 'soft left', semi-Kinnockite grouping beginning to challenge Scargill on the executive. It would be foolish to underestimate the gravity of the situation and the depth of the retreat. Without openly facing the facts of what has happened the left will not be able to elaborate a strategy for a fightback.

### The split in the NUM

The defeat of the strike has been used by the NCB to speed up the closure of pits and the redundancy programme. At least 20,000 jobs have been lost since the strike began in March 1984. The Board has closed pits not on criteria of 'profitability' but on an overtly political basis. The closing of the most militant pits is both a revenge against those who fought hardest during the strike, and also makes any regroupment of forces in the future more difficult. Kent, one of the most militant areas, is threatened with total closure and a 'productive' pit like Frickely in West Yorkshire is to lose a third of its workforce in the next five years. But the level of demoralisation is such that even the most solid areas have been unable to mount an effective campaign against redundancy and closure. Bold in Lancashire, Penrhiwceiber in South Wales and, most tragic of all, Corton Wood, where the strike started, have all now voted to accept closure. There is some resistance, but in general the defeat has left the militant leaderships in the NUM areas isolated and demoralised.

The defeat has also led to the emergence of the breakaway, scab UDM. At present this is confined to the scab areas like Notts and South Derbyshire, and includes 1500 members from the Colliery Trades and Allied Workers in Durham and scab pits like Agecroft in Lancs, and Daw Mill in



Jacob Sutton/Reflex

Warwickshire. It is still an open question as to how far it will be able to go beyond this initial organisation, to penetrate into the strongholds of the NUM and extend its present membership of about 20,000. Partly this depends on the response of the labour and trade union movement. All indications at the moment are that the Kinnock leadership of the Labour Party will seek to make a compromise with the scab union. Right-wing MPs like Concannon in the Notts area have been openly supporting the right of individual UDM members to remain on the general committees of local Labour parties. This is being backed up by the national agent, David Hughes, who is said to be seeking 'a form of words' to overcome their lack of TUC affiliation.

Resistance to the recognition of the UDM is coming especially from the women's support groups in Notts. But the right-wing Labour parties have been ruling support group resolutions 'out of order', in addition to refusing to hire out party rooms for them to organise their meetings.

The centre and right in the TUC will also be looking for some compromise with the scabs. It is significant that the Leicestershire area NUM is balloting its members on whether to leave the NUM, but not on joining the UDM. If the vote goes in favour of leaving, an independent grouping could provide the focus for some form of compromise or conciliation with the UDM, which the TUC could back without too much loss of face. Alternatively the EEPTU/AUEW bloc may provide shelter for them. In any case it is an important issue for the left to be fighting.

The fact that the strike was defeated, however, is not an adequate explanation for the development of the UDM. In reality its

formation is the logical development of whole areas scabbing during the strike, and it is this scabbing that needs analysing. Any analysis has to take into account a number of factors, both recent and historical. No one single explanation is enough; rather it is necessary to point to a combination of interwoven pressures and traditions which produced scabbing on such a scale during the '84/85 strike.

Notts was the centre of Spencerism after the defeat of 1926. The bosses' union lasted until the late 1930s, and even then was not politically defeated. Instead the Spencer union was incorporated into the Notts area and Spencer himself given a job as a full-time union official! More recently the Notts area benefitted, as did others, from the divisive bonus scheme negotiated by Gormley in defiance of a national vote against it.

Notts has traditionally had a 'moderate' leadership, most recently that of Richardson and Chadburn. South Wales miners when they went to Notts to try and win support for their fight against the closure of Tymawr/Lewis-Merthyr pit in 82, were horrified by the lack of organisation in the area: they found few meetings to address. This lack of organisation was reiterated by Notts striking miners during the strike. They told how *The Miner* newspaper piled up in the area offices, undistributed; how lodges often failed to meet and that the sense of solidarity with other, less well-paid areas, was very low.

At the beginning of the strike the leadership of the area was indecisive. After some pits were picketed out, the strikers were ordered back to work for a ballot. This was lost and from that point on in Notts, the momentum which in other areas built the



national strike, was lost. The majority of Notts miners saw militant action as a threat to their livelihood and this overcame any residual sense of class solidarity. In this period of Tory attack on the labour movement, the inability of the leadership of the movement as a whole to combat the fear and insecurity created by the Tory attacks, has left workers seeking individual as opposed to collective solutions.

Compared to the debacle in Notts, the South Wales area remained an apparent model of solidarity throughout the year-long fight. With its history of working class solidarity and a tradition of militancy based on a left leadership centred on the Communist Party, 92% of the workforce stayed out for the whole year. They also received strong support from the local communities, dependent on the survival of the pits for financial security. Despite a 'no' vote in the area ballot, the pits in the middle of the coalfield were able to picket out the rest of the area which quickly became solid. It seems contradictory then that it was this same area which led the 'back to work' call in March 1985.

Six to eight weeks after the strike became solid in South Wales the area leadership took financial control away from the lodge-based strike centres and from that point on were able to control the mass action of the more militant rank and file. For example, after the sequestration of the area funds, when there were calls to resume mass action, the executive were able to divert this militancy into the adventure of the Port Talbot crane occupation. The refusal by the leadership of Emlyn Williams to organise and fund mass picketing had the inevitable and perhaps intended result of demobilising the strikers. Trusting their leadership's apparent support for the strike, the strikers failed to build any alternative leadership prepared to confront the lack of action by the TUC and Labour leaderships.

### 'Mainstream is trailblazing scab trade unionism'

The Wales Congress, based on support from the church, nationalist, trade union and Labour leaderships, completed this wresting of the initiative from the rank and file. The mass action strategy was replaced with an attempt to 'win public support back after Orgreave', and a condemnation of mass action on the grounds that it 'alienated' such support. The hijacking of the area leadership on the line of the Euro-Communists became absolutely explicit when Kim Howells led the call for a 'return to work', even before it was agreed by the executive of South Wales. His more recent proposals of the need for 'dialogue and reconciliation' with the UDM fit into the same framework.

For many miners the role of the South Wales area leadership has been an educative, if tragic one. The election of Des Dutfield, a Scargill supporter, against the right-winger Terry Thomas for Emlyn Williams' place on the executive is a significant victory.



Hammond of the EETPU with Link of the UDM: splitting the trade union movement.

The development of a leadership fighting to win the strike put a lot of pressure on the Communist Party during the strike itself, though it is clear too that the CP played a key role against Scargill in playing down mass picketing at Orgreave, for example. Since the end of the strike, however, they have launched a savage attack on Scargill himself and on the methods used. They have used their journal *Marxism Today* to link up with the Kinnock leadership, and the centre and right in the TUC, to isolate Scargill and his supporters. The vote on the NEC on whether the NUM should go to court to purge its 'contempt', which went 5-8 against Scargill, is evidence of the hardening out of the soft left, led by George Bolton from Scotland and Emlyn Williams from South Wales, and the isolation of the left. The last 'Scargill' policy against incentive payments has also been lost.

A whole series of decisions made since the end of the strike also suggest Euro-Communist influence. The dependence on local negotiations to reinstate sacked miners, though successful in some cases, neglected the need to try and regroup the defeated and demoralised workforce by a nationally co-ordinated initiative. Similarly the failure to organise or back, until very recently, any national amnesty campaign, and the disgraceful rejection of the affiliation of the Women Against Pit Closures to the national union, organised from the Communist Party's miners' advisory committee, also reveal their reactionary role.

In the face of the shift to the right it is necessary to try and regroup the left militants in the NUM, along with all those who supported them during the strike. The Yorkshire Campaign Group, the Notts Forum, the Co-ordinating Campaign of Miners' Support Groups and the National Justice for Miners Campaign now given substantial backing by the NUM and other left trade union leaders — all represent attempts to reorganise those militant forces scattered since the defeat.

It is also essential that all such formations link up with and support Women Against Pit Closures groups. The women's support groups have proved to be the most solid in the face of defeat. They have organised, often alone, for amnesty, against

redundancy and closure and against the UDM, ever since the end of the strike.

If there is one lesson from the strike, it is of the need to organise; not just at the level of leadership, nor only in the NUM. The left has to organise across the labour movement. If resistance to Tory attack and resistance to capitulation is to be mounted, it can only be done in this way.

### New realists on the offensive

If the Labour leadership is giving ground to the UDM by trying to engineer Labour Party membership for the scabs, the right wing of the TUC is openly aiding them. David Prendergast, treasurer of the UDM, is vice-chair of 'Mainstream', a right-wing co-ordination founded in April 1985. Mainstream's organiser is EETPU research officer John Spellar, formerly Labour MP for Birmingham Northfield and front-rank Frank Chapple hatchet-person. The other vice-chair is Bill Jordan, right-wing candidate for the AUEW presidency. Gavin Laird and Eric Hammond are prominent members.

The Mainstream supporters have been emboldened by the defeat of the miners and are setting the pace inside the TUC in favour of the acceptance of state money for secret ballots, and the full-scale destruction of the policy of defiance of the Tory union laws. At this year's TUC opposition to the EETPU

### 'The CP advisory committee organised against women's support groups...'

and AUEW over state funding crumbled. In reality, the unease of the other bureaucrats was more over the 'authority' of the TUC, than the actual issue of acceptance of state money. A large number of unions are preparing to accept the Tory union laws, on the back of EETPU/AUEW defiance.

But the trailblazing activities of the Mainstream adherents goes much further than shifting TUC policy to the right. They are pushing ahead the implementation of a full-blown business unionism.

Thus the EETPU has recently signed strike-free deals with Inmos, Control Data,

Hitachi, AB Electronics, Toshiba, Sanyo, Bowater Scott and, just to show their total rejection of any of the normal attributes of trade unions, Eddie Shah's new daily newspaper. The AUEW is not far behind. It has signed several one-union, no-strike deals, the most notable being that with Nissan for its new car plant at Washington, county Durham.

There is a pattern to the deals which the EEPTU and the AUEW are making. They are following new firms, especially anti-union Japanese firms, into areas which have either a defeated or a traditionally non-militant workforce. The choice of Washington for the Nissan plant is significant in that respect. They are also making a drive towards the high-tech electronics industries, which are locating themselves in areas with a high rate of non-unionisation, especially the south and south west — the so-called 'sunbelt' from East Anglia to Bristol. Prostrating themselves before anti-union managements is a vital weapon for the bureaucracy to combat the decline in union membership figures. For example, it has been calculated that because of redundancies and 'natural wastage' the EEPTU needs 60,000 new members every year just to maintain its current membership figure. The alternative of actually fighting redundancies does not occur to the likes of Hammond.

### 'Hammond is planning a right-wing "super union"'

Here the EEPTU has struck upon a significant phenomenon. Trade unionism is weakest in the high technology and service sectors, which given the pattern of Britain's economic development — or rather lack of it — are the only growth areas. Recent surveys have shown that the closed shop, despite Tory legislation, is still relatively popular among employers. Many would prefer to have a servile and cooperative union to discipline the workforce. There is a real danger that the new realists will firmly implant themselves in these new developing industries, while traditional manufacturing declines. In other words the new realist strategy is one to try to corner a greater percentage of the diminishing pool of trade unionists.

Mainstream claims supporters in the NUR, CPSA, ISTC and National Communications Union (ex-POEU). Although support in some of these unions may not be great, it gives an indication of the unions which they are seeking to target and bring firmly into the new realist fold. But there is an even more frightening development on the horizon. Eric Hammond has been sounding out the ASTMS and the AUEW about a fusion into a new 'super-union'. This would be a conglomerate bigger than the TGWU, and far and away the biggest and most powerful union. It could become the core of a new 'Mainstream' right-wing union federation able to challenge the TUC, and with strong links to the SDP/Liberal Alliance. While the merger is being opposed by the left in the



Women marching for the miners

AUEW, Clive Jenkins of the ASTMS is said to be interested in it.

### Resistance and the shape of things to come

Scab trade unionism, like Spencerism after 1926, is a product of a period of defeats. It is only strengthened by the timidity of the Labour and TUC leaderships. Each new capitulation to the Tories' anti-union legislation just gives more power to the new realists. To ask how far Mainstream will go, and how deeply it will establish itself, is to ask to what extent the working class will suffer defeats — which cannot be predicted in advance. Most likely a lot will depend on what happens to the economy. Any upswing would almost certainly give a boost to working class combativity, and work against the new realists. This seems unlikely in the short term. But of course it also depends on the organisation and clarity of the left, especially in the trade unions, and this will be a product of political struggle, not an automatic by-product of economic developments.

We should be under no illusions about just how secure the new realists are in their own unions. In the EEPTU the undemocratic right is completely dominant. In the AUEW the situation is more complex. In the first round of the presidential elections, right winger Bill Jordan got 75,000 votes as against 50,000 for Broad Left candidate John Tocher. Jordan will clearly win in the second round. At the time of writing the results of the AUEW ballot on state funding have not been announced, but almost certainly there will be a thumping majority for acceptance. The right wing have

cornered and won the argument about democracy in the unions, largely because the 'centre' and 'left' bureaucrats have been unable, quite understandably, to demonstrate that the present system is itself democratic. The new realist proposals on

### '...in the unions the far left is in a total shambles'

secret ballots cannot be confronted without challenging the lack of democracy in the vast bulk of the British trade union movement.

The danger which we face, therefore, is that new defeats of the working class could be the prelude to a split in the trade union movement with the emergence of an American-style business union federation. We are thankfully some distance from such a development. Despite the loss of two million union members in five years, the British working class is one of the most massively unionised in the world. There are still vast reserves of militancy and solidarity to draw on to confront the Hammond-Laird-Lynk mafia. But even this enormous strength will count for nothing if the left is incapable of ending the retreat before the Tory union laws and incapable of defending the sacked and victimised miners. Struggling to make the UDM the pariah of the union movement is central to this.

Finally, it has to be said that in terms of strategy and implantation in the unions the revolutionary left in this country is in a total shambles. This is a not unimportant part of the equation and one to which we shall return in future articles.

**i**

# Glyn's economics and socialist strategy

In the first issue of *International*, we published a short review of Andrew Glyn's Campaign Group pamphlet 'A Million Jobs a Year'. Our review welcomed the pamphlet as a riposte to the right-wing statements of the NEC, but only hinted at the differences which revolutionary Marxists would have with Glyn's approach. We continue the debate here with a contribution by **JEANETTE FINDLAY**.

REGISTERED UNEMPLOYMENT in the UK is currently running at 3.2 million and is expected by most forecasters to be around 3 million for the next four years. This means that discounting any pre-election reflation which the Tories may try to engineer, any Labour government elected in the next few years will come into office with real unemployment figures of around four million and rising. Consequently, unemployment will be the single most important issue which a future Labour government will have to deal with and therefore it must begin now to prepare plans to bring down unemployment drastically within one term of office.

Unfortunately the present leadership has already abandoned any attempt to do this. Roy Hattersley, in a speech last year (*Financial Times* 26/9/95) announced that Labour would not be able to 'indulge' in a 'dash for growth'. Far from 'indulging in a luxury' socialists should be emphasising that bringing down unemployment is an absolute necessity, and any failure to make a serious attempt to do so within the life of the next parliament will serve to deepen the apathy and mistrust felt by many unemployed people, especially youth, towards the Labour Party and could lead to greater social unrest of the type seen recently in Birmingham and London.

The statement by the NEC to the 1985 Labour Party conference contains Hattersley's proposed employment and industrial policy — which subsequent statements have begun to water down already. The measures outlined in the statement are quite simply insufficient to



Hattersley — architect of Labour's future economic policy?

deal with the deep-seated crisis which the economy is now in, even if they were implemented fully. The proposals mark a clear shift away from a policy of large-scale nationalisation of major sectors of the economy — a move which has not gone unnoticed or unwelcomed by the capitalist press (cf *Economist* 28/9/85, *FT* 27/9/85) — and a move towards a policy of encouraging co-operatives and 'semi-private' small-scale manufacturing units as an example of 'real social ownership'.

The main feature of Hattersley's policy is the setting up of a National Investment Bank to provide long-term investment finance for industry. The NIB would be funded by the repatriation of funds currently invested overseas and by requiring a certain proportion of all pension fund and insurance company investment portfolios to consist of NIB loan stock. The stock which would be used to force financial institutions to comply with these regulations would be the threat of withdrawal of fiscal privileges, i.e. tax concessions.

The investment funds created by such a scheme would be used to regenerate British

manufacturing industry and to rebuild our industrial base. This, of course, is fine as far as it goes, except that it is extremely unlikely that the financial institutions are going to allow themselves to be forced into the scheme. As the *Economist* (29/9/85) points out, technological advances in telecommunications mean that capital market flows are instantaneous and global, therefore if a general election were to be held this Thursday, most of the investment funds Mr Hattersley wants to reclaim would be registered in overseas funds as early as Friday night. The idea of all those dealers poised over their computer terminals waiting for Vincent Hanna to give them the word on election night may seem far-fetched, but it is precisely what would happen.

The current Labour leadership seem to have no answer to this, apart from saying that at least we will save on tax concessions. This would be small compensation for the drastic reduction in investment which would occur at a time when UK investment in manufacturing is already far below that of its main competitors — in fact the lowest of any OECD country.



This is not to mention the effect on the value of the pound, which would be greatly reduced against most of the major currencies as massive amounts of funds are moved out of sterling. Interest rates would also be pushed up as the demand for investment funds went way over supply and banks competed for depositors.

Clearly, then, the left has a responsibility to come up with some answers. The Campaign Group-sponsored pamphlet 'A Million Jobs a Year' by Oxford economist Andrew Glyn is a major step in this direction. This pamphlet should be read and studied by all socialists, but it is just the beginning of the debate.

While there will probably be major agreement with many of the proposals contained in this pamphlet, there are a number of problems with it. For instance, in all the discussion of how jobs are going to be created there is very little space given to the kinds of jobs and who is going to get them. By which I mean that socialists are not simply concerned with recreating the existing structure of employment and wealth on a larger scale. We should be trying to ensure that the fruits of any expansion should be divided equally and that those who are presently disadvantaged in terms of jobs and pay should be given their fair share of any jobs created.

Conversely, an area in which I think Glyn puts too much stress is in attempting to dispel worries about any expansion leading to a massive increase in inflation. He outlines how we would engineer a non-inflationary expansion using price controls. While I am not against price controls I think it would be better perhaps to look at the question from another angle. For too long both Labour and Tory governments have made the running in convincing workers that inflation is the most serious economic problem. However, there is almost no evidence to suggest that even very high levels of inflation are costly. If it affects the living standards of those on fixed incomes we should index-link them; if it makes us uncompetitive compared to our trading partners, we should lower the exchange rate.

Only variable inflation has been shown by academic economists to entail substantial costs by creating uncertainty and thereby discouraging private-sector investment. But we only have to look at current investment levels to see that we cannot rely on private sector investment anyway. The only real costs of inflation are the administrative costs of index-linking and the physical costs of changing prices in supermarkets. In any case as Glyn correctly points out inflation is a phenomenon of bottlenecks in supply, and with efficiently run nationalised industries and a public investment programme to increase productivity such bottlenecks can be eliminated.

Another weak point in Glyn's analysis is in his apparent shying away from full-scale nationalisation. Whilst arguing for nationalising the banks and finance houses, he seems content to resort to 'compulsory planning agreements' for manufacturing industry with such agreements being policed by the workers in the industry. These

industries would only be taken into public control if they failed to comply with the agreed plans. This at least gives some attention to the need to organise workers to implement such plans, but it seems to me to leave too much room for industrial capital to successfully frustrate any Labour government committed to a programme of investment and expansion.

Glyn dismisses the argument about capital being taken out of the country immediately through the use of 'electronic transmission of money' on the basis that if there was a non-nuclear war we would soon see effective exchange controls, so it must be possible. Surely he can see that a situation where British capital has an interest in making



Salvador Allende — is Glyn's the Chilean road?

exchange controls work is not the situation a future Labour government would be facing. The situation we would be facing requires that workers in the finance and banking industry are organised and ready to prevent such a movement of capital when the time comes.

To come back to an earlier point, the reason why it is so crucial that any plan to expand the economy and create jobs must be seen to be in the interests of all workers, including black workers, women and youth, is because we need to organise these workers in defence of the plan. Only by solid labour movement mass action would we be able to fend off the kind of onslaught such a government would face.

What appears to underlie some of the flaws in Glyn's analysis is his failure to address adequately the mobilisation of workers which would be required to carry through the kind of economic policies necessary to return to full employment. Any Labour government committed to even the kind of programme outlined in Glyn's pamphlet would in fact represent a major challenge to the power of capital. A government

committed to socialist policies would face from its very inception a massive attack by domestic and international capital.

This could only be confronted by a massive mobilisation of the working class to impose nationalisation, and to break the resistance of the capitalists in every field. It would require sweeping measures of workers' control and supervision of industry and the banks to prevent sabotage, the closure of plants and the massive political campaign which the ruling class would wage.

The real character of the government would be tested in such a confrontation. A genuine workers' government would mobilise the working class to impose its power on the capitalists. But a left reformist government, like the Allende government in Chile, would rely on the institutions of the capitalist state to break the mobilisation of the workers.

Maybe Andrew Glyn agrees with all this. But Tony Benn's reaction when interviewed on *Newsnight* about the Glyn pamphlet exposed the ambiguity at the heart of Glyn's position. Benn argued that the multinationals and the big monopolies could be forced to collaborate with the planning agreements. This is naïvety.

The British ruling class, backed by the United States and the EEC, would mount the most furious resistance to even compulsory planning agreements, let alone full-scale nationalisation. It is not a question of forcing the capitalists to collaborate but of mobilising the working class to break their power once and for all.

Here we see a quite inevitable and inescapable logic imposing itself. Once you say 'A million jobs a year', then you say directing the investment of capital on the basis of human need and not on the basis of capitalist profit. Then you have to say nationalisation of the financial sector and the big monopolies. You also have to say a sliding scale of wages and benefits, and workers' control.

In other words, you have to completely override the functioning of the capitalist economy. And that leads you slap bang into a confrontation between the classes, a decisive test of strength between Capital and Labour. Once you say 'a', then you have to say 'b' and 'c', all the way to the barricades.

Now I am all in favour of the project of proposing a plan for the next Labour government to get full employment, through sweeping socialist measures. Through fighting for such a socialist economic plan we can begin to explain what it would really take to get people back to work, outside of a new capitalist boom. But Marxists cannot be content, like the Militant, to imply that simply a series of measures legislated through Parliament would be enough. Only if based on the dynamic of the struggle for workers control, which leads inevitably to a struggle with the capitalist state, could even legislated measures be imposed.

The implication of this argument is that nothing outside of a determined attack on capitalism and its institutions will start to solve the problem of unemployment. We gladly admit this logic. It is exactly our position.



# Lesbian and gay rights in the labour movement

## No room for complacency

Last year the Lesbian and Gay Movement won major successes at the TUC and Labour Party conferences. **THERESA CONWAY**, a lesbian militant in NAIAGO, reviews the achievements and the problems facing the movement.

IN 1985 lesbian and gay rights hit the headlines at the TUC and Labour Party conferences, with comprehensive resolutions passed at both. Behind this success story is a long period of campaigning in the lesbian and gay movement and the labour movement.

Over the last few years, lesbians and gay men have become more vocal in demanding that the labour movement recognize our existence and heed our demands. We have made a series of alliances, most often with other oppressed groups but also with those sections of the left who have come to accept the significance of our struggle. The development of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) and Lesbians Against Pit Closures (LAPC) both represented and created enormous changes. Since the growth of a radical lesbian and gay movement in this country in the early 1970s there have been lesbian and gay banners on every major picket line and demonstration. But never before has there been the same breadth of support and solidarity among lesbian and gay people for an industrial dispute. This is partly explained by the nature of the miners' strike itself.

The existence of LGSM and LAPC made visible the support of lesbians and gay men which would otherwise have been hidden in an assumed heterosexual solidarity movement. The groups were able to demonstrate that it was possible to fight the NCB, at the same time as challenging discrimination against lesbians and gay men; and so draw into activity a layer of people who would otherwise have been distanced from the strike.

It was not just the activities of lesbians and gay men that were different, but the response of the labour movement. Previously lesbian and gay contingents had been met with verbal and sometimes physical abuse. These attitudes did not disappear instantaneously. But the depth of the struggle made people from the mining communities more receptive to new ideas. The length of the strike and the development of the twin-

ing system meant that strong links were forged between lesbians and gay men and particular communities. Many people welcomed our solidarity with open arms, while being ready to admit their initial fears and prejudices.

Needless to say that openness and willingness to change was most marked among the women and reflected the nature of their own radicalisation during the strike.

It was not only at this level that our solidarity was welcomed. The NUM leadership, notably Peter Heathfield, welcomed lesbian and gay support as a valid and valuable contribution to the struggle. That stance was crucial in holding back a reactionary response from the base and in encouraging those who supported us. It was true that the acknowledgement could have been more prominent and that Women against Pit Closures went further than the NUM itself. Nevertheless the fact that it happened at all is a tribute to that section of the NUM leadership.

**'The motion passed at the TUC will not, indeed cannot, be fully implemented unless there are lesbians and gay men organising to do this work.'**

While the significance of LGSM and LAPC should not be underestimated, it is important to understand that they were part of a more general process. Over the past few years lesbians and gay men have become more visible and organised within the Labour Party. They have built a strong national organisation, the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) which was able to organise for the debate at party conference. We have fought to have our needs taken into account in the drawing up of manifestoes to fight council elections. Together with sisters and brothers in the trade unions we have persuaded some Labour councils to adopt comprehensive equal opportunities policies and others to add sections on sexuality to existing agreements. In some places the demand has been raised for the setting up of lesbian and gay subcommittees of the council as an ongoing forum for consultation with lesbians and gay men in the community. In some councils workers have been appointed to attempt to implement these policies. Lesbian and gay centres, switchboards and other resources

have been given grants. Lesbians and gay men have been selected as MPs and councillors.

Many of these changes have occurred because of the hard work of lesbians and gay men; but some of the doors on which we have knocked have been less firmly bolted than before. The Labour left which developed after electoral defeat in 1979 understood that the working class did not comprise only white heterosexual able-bodied men, and that therefore the Labour Party needed to reach out to the doubly oppressed. It is not surprising that it was in many of the places where the left held sway that lesbian and gay rights were taken up. The same places set up womens committees, and took initiatives around disability or race. Indeed it is in the field of equal opportunities generally that the face of local government has been most dramatically transformed over the last five years by the rise of this left. There have been difficulties and problems. It is not possible to take up in detail here the debates that have arisen over questions such as Heterosexism Awareness Training. But it is important to acknowledge that such controversies have arisen because we are moving very rapidly into uncharted territory — with inadequate discussion as to what we are trying to achieve. Lesbians and gay men are beginning now to confront the argument that heterosexism is based on ignorance not on privilege. We have to explain that our oppression is not accidental but is a fundamental part of this society, with its sexual division of labour in the family and in the workplace. Undoubtedly as these debates develop they will lead to new differentiation both within the lesbian and gay movement and among our allies.

Despite these limitations, the action of Labour left leaders such as Livingstone and Benn have been crucial in legitimising lesbian and gay rights as an issue for the labour movement. They have had a similar effect to the attitude of the NUM leadership. The fact that the GLC increased its popularity despite its prominence in taking up the issue gives the lie to the notion that lesbian and gay rights is a vote loser, as does the election of a number of open lesbians and gay men. Certainly a whole layer of younger activists who came into politics during this period are firmly committed to advancing lesbian and gay rights, while not always very sure of how to carry through this perspective.

In the trade unions too, there have been big changes. From the early 1970s onwards, lesbian and gay caucuses were set up particularly in the white collar unions. These

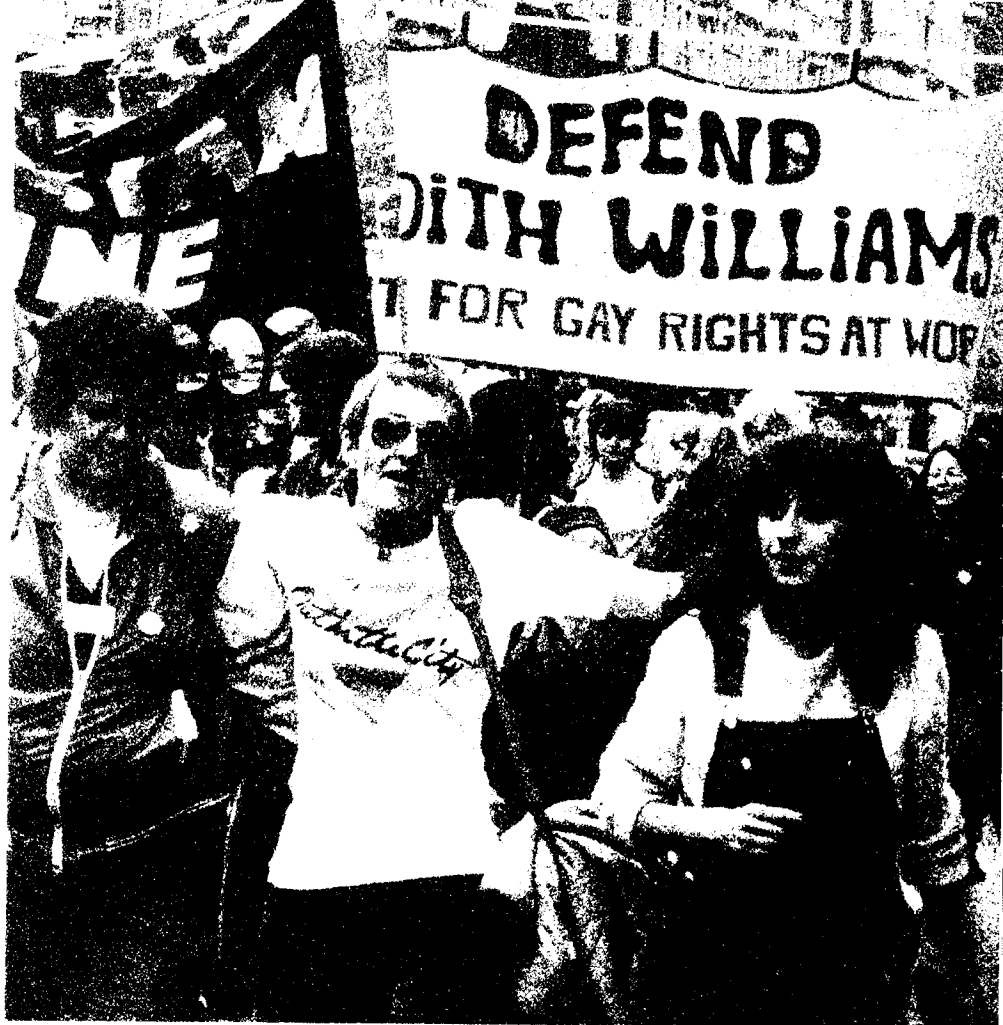
were able to intervene into trade union conferences, get some basic policy passed and launch useful propaganda campaigns — for example the campaign to get the unions to boycott places such as Scarborough who refused to let CHE, a prominent lesbian and gay organisation, hold its conference there. These groups did build links with sections of the left particularly around issues such as the content of education in the teaching unions or the treatment of lesbians and gay men by the medical profession. They laid the basis for actions such as the strike by NUT members against the sacking of John Warburton who was dismissed for telling the children he was teaching that he was gay, or similar actions by NALGO members after Tower Hamlets council sacked Ian Davies.

One of the most significant breakthroughs came with the developments in NALGO. Until 1983 the situation was similar to that in other unions. But in 1983 the London District made a decision to organise groups whose meetings would be open to any member facing a particular discrimination. Thus a lesbian and gay group, along with a women's group and a black members group were set up as an officially sanctioned part of the union structure.

The 1983 union conference took place in Douglas on the Isle of Man where all gay male sex is illegal because the 1967 Sexual Offences Act does not apply. NALGO organised the submission of motions to conference saying that it was incompatible with NALGO's existing policy on lesbian and gay rights to organise its national conference in such a place. They also organised a large protest demonstration from the Conference to the Manx parliament.

That autumn a national conference for lesbians and gay men throughout the union was organised which was supported by the National Equal Opportunities Committee and therefore had the seal of approval of the General Secretary. The conference elaborated a detailed policy motion for submission to the 1984 Annual Conference. It went much further than any previous motion passed by NALGO or any other trade union in detailing the steps that should be taken at all levels in the union to combat discrimination. But perhaps most significantly, it established lesbian and gay groups as an official part of the unions structures to be encouraged and consulted.

The fruits of this victory have been evident. NALGO has produced a national campaigning pack on lesbian and gay rights which is available to every branch and every member. A number of schools have been organised at district level on fighting discrimination against lesbians and gay men. Three national conferences for lesbians and gay men have been organised which have been advertised in union publications and through letters to all branch secretaries. NALGO was involved both at the Womens TUC and the TUC itself in the debates on lesbian and gay rights. At the same time, through that official support, NALGO lesbian and gay groups have developed at branch and district level so that there are far more lesbians and gay men contributing to



the discussion on policy than in any other union.

But again this process has its limitations. Developments in London are far more advanced than elsewhere, and this creates difficulties in taking forward the discussion. The right wing in the union has always been hostile to these developments, and is now feeling strong enough on the NEC to begin to challenge them.

Regrettably the gains made in NALGO have not been repeated elsewhere. The motion passed at the TUC will not, indeed cannot, be fully implemented unless there are lesbians and gay men organising to do this work. The National Association of Probation Officers which submitted the motion has only just affiliated to the TUC and is just developing an equal opportunities structure. NALGO will obviously be heavily involved but cannot take on the full responsibility. The LCLGR understands that it has a role to play in the trade unions but this area of its work is very underdeveloped. It will be necessary for LCLGR to grasp this nettle, and to find ways of working with existing trade union lesbian and gay groups if the achievements of 1985 are to come to fruition.

We must not be complacent. Lesbians are losing custody of their children daily in the courts solely because of their sexuality. Gay men and lesbians are harassed by the police, including by agents provocateurs, and this will increase further with the new Public Order Bill. The Customs and Excise have attacked *Gays the Word* and other bookshops, preventing the sale of literature which presents positive images of lesbians and gays. And the press hysteria around AIDS has increased harassment of lesbians and gay men in the workplace and on the streets.

The question of AIDS provides a fairly accurate marker as to where we have got in the labour movement. On the one hand the left bureaucracy has taken some steps to raise the health and safety issues and the question of resources in a crumbling health service which are raised by the disease. But they have been extremely reluctant to confront directly the way lesbians and gay men are being victimised by other trade unionists. Some good literature has been produced particularly by NALGO and NUPE, but it is necessary to go beyond this and into the workplace to confront ignorance and prejudice.

The period of achievement in local government was one when the left in the labour party was on the ascendant and seemed united. The disintegration of the struggle against ratecapping, the victory of the Tories over abolition and now Kinnoch's attacks on the left make further gains at this level much more difficult. The defeat of the miners strike has had profound implications for every single political struggle. Over the next period, leading up to the general election there will be increasing pressure to drop 'fringe issues' and concentrate on returning Labour at all costs.

The task of defending the gains of lesbians and gay men in the labour movement is a task that the left has to take on board, as part of an alternative strategy to that of Kinnoch. Implementing Labour Party and TUC policy should be raised through every trade union branch, and in every constituency Labour Party. Lesbian and gay rights has to be more than the flavour of the month, it has to be understood as an integral part of the struggle for socialism.



## TIM RIGBY & NICK WOLFE

THE FINANCIAL deal concluded in November between Liverpool city council and the Swiss banks represents an enormous defeat for the struggle waged in the city against Tory-imposed spending limits. Whatever criticisms should be made of the role of the city council and its Militant leadership, there is no doubt where the primary responsibility for this defeat lies — with the Labour and trade union leaderships who did everything in their power to sabotage the Liverpool struggle, and with the leaderships of the other rate-capped and heavily penalised councils, who with the exception of Lambeth, capitulated to the Tory attack when the crunch came.

The response of the 'soft left' within the party to the NEC enquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party is a disgrace. For whether or not expulsions directly result from the enquiry, the whole exercise is a witchhunting one, which will prepare the ground for expulsions at a future date. Whether they like it or not, Tribune and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee are complicit with the witch hunt. Socialists within the party must now close ranks to defend the Liverpool Labour Party. Having said that, there are important criticisms to be made of the role of the city council; many of them stem directly from the limitations of Militant's political line and conceptions of class struggle.

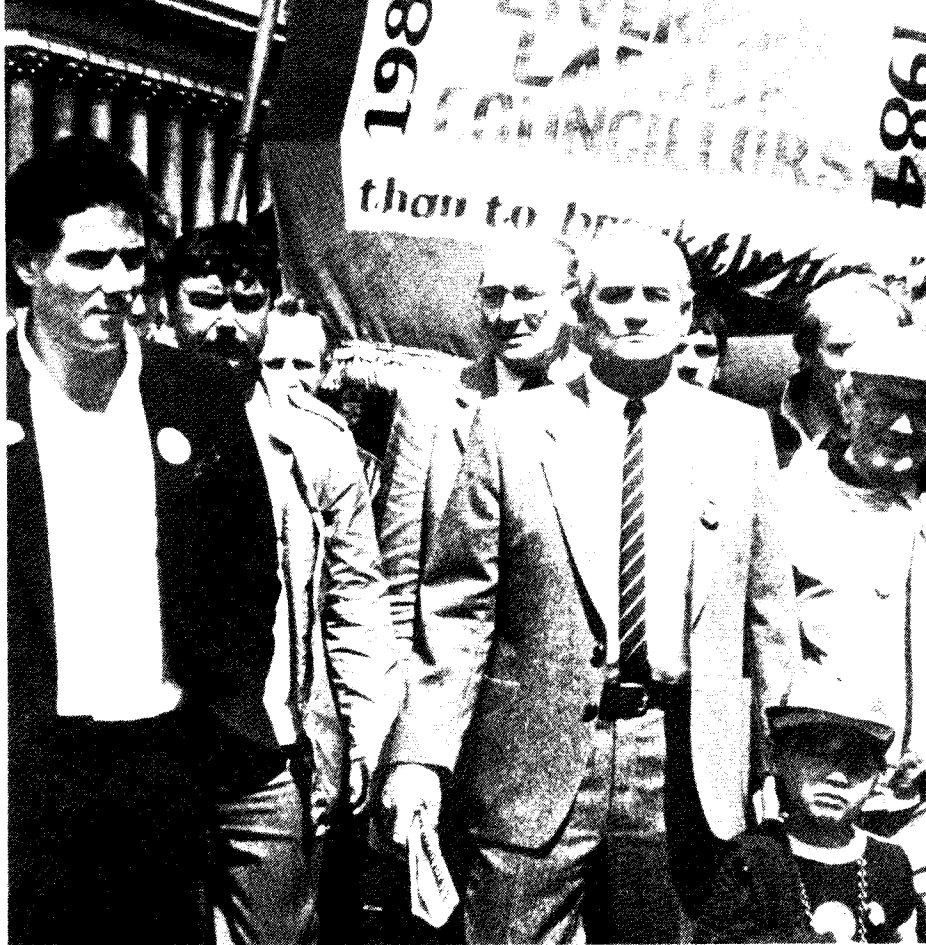
### The first phase of the struggle

The Militant-led Labour Group took control of the council in May 1983. They inherited a disastrous financial situation from the Liberals. Since 1979, Liverpool, one of the most deprived cities in Europe, had lost £270m in government aid. Thus the council were faced with a situation in which they needed either to raise the rates by 170 per cent, or make cuts totalling 5000 jobs — or alternatively to fight. To their credit they decided to fight.

Substantial job losses would have been a disaster for Liverpool; already the Liberals had cut 4000 jobs in the city since 1979. The response of the council was to make a deficit budget for 1984/5, which, however, involved a 9 per cent rate rise.

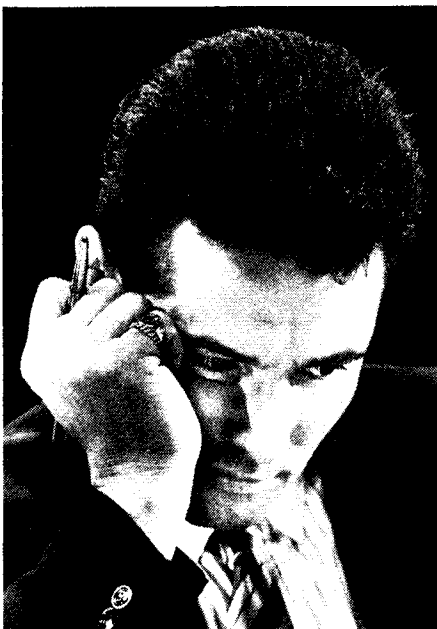
When the council made their first budget in April 1984 there could be no doubting the enormous popularity of their stand. On the day that the council decided the budget, the streets of the city were thronged with tens of thousands of workers demonstrating their support for open defiance of the Tories. In the May 1984 council elections, with a third of the seats being contested, Labour increased their representation from 51 to 58 seats against a combined total of 41 for the Liberals and the Tories.

The budget which had been set was undoubtedly illegal, and could have been challenged as such in the courts. But in the spring and early summer of 1984 the campaign against rate capping was getting into



Liverpool Labour councillors on the march

# The defeat in Liverpool Tragedy and farce



Derek Hatton — a lot on his mind

Carlos Augusto Guarta/Reflex

full gear, and there is no doubt that the Tories feared a head-on collision with any of the defiant councils; a collision could have resulted in sending in commissioners, and an all-out strike by council workers, widely supported around the country. The Tories preferred to bide their time.

Nonetheless, because Liverpool's budget was a deficit budget, the financial crisis soon

began to make itself felt. By the summer of 1984 the council was faced with a choice: either to make a deal with the government involving concessions on both sides, in a situation in which the Tories were under pressure to compromise, or to go for a full-scale confrontation, an all-or-nothing battle. In the end, in July 1984 the council decided a deal involving a large package of government aid in return for a 17 per cent rate increase.

Given that 60 per cent of households in Liverpool do not pay rates, probably including something like 80 per cent of the working class, this deal could not be called a savage attack on working class living standards. But its tactical wisdom must be open to question. The reason is simple: if there was a time to go into confrontation with the Tories it was surely during the miners' strike, at a time when mass enthusiasm in Liverpool for the defiance strategy was at its height.

As against that, the readiness of the other rate-capped and heavily penalised councils to support Liverpool in such a move must have been in doubt, for the simple reason that they had by no means themselves reached the financial crunch. The 'live to fight another day' approach of the July 1984 deal was based heavily on the assumption that in spring 1985, when all the rate-capped councils simultaneously adopted a 'no rate' option, Liverpool would be in a much better situation to fight. As we shall see this



Philip Gordon Reflex

assumption was ill-founded. With the honourable exception of Lambeth, there was no real will for a showdown with the Tories.

### 1985 — increasing isolation

Liverpool city council again decided upon a deficit budget strategy for 1985. Technically, this was again illegal, or subject to being declared illegal, but the government decided to bide its time and face down the rate-capped councils which had declared for the 'no rate' strategy. If carried out, the 'no rate' strategy would have had the effect of confronting the government with around a dozen councils going into illegality, and eventually with no option but to send in commissioners and face the inevitable struggle and storm. But it seems likely that among those leaders who declared for this strategy of illegality there was at least an element of bad faith. They doubtless hoped that the very threat of mass defiance would force the government to back down and make a deal.

But Thatcher and Jenkin were not so easily bluffed. They counted on two things: first, that if they refused to budge, a series of council leaders like Livingstone, Hodge and Blunkett would eventually cave in, and second that where there were leaders determined to fight like Hilda Kean in Hackney, they would have difficulty keeping their majority for defiance in their own Labour groups. This assessment proved a sound one.

The ignominious capitulation at the GLC was pivotal in determining the course of events. Livingstone, in proposing the setting of a maximum rate instead of urging continued defiance as did John McDonnell, was able to present himself as the 'realist'. After all, he could argue, there was no real majority in the GLC, given the split in the Labour group, for the 'no rate' option: it would have

been defeated and a Tory rate set. But this was a hopeless relinquishing of political responsibility.

If there was no majority for the defiance strategy, then Livingstone should have voted for it anyway and precipitated a crisis in the GLC Labour group. This would have put the responsibility for the defeat on the right wing of the Labour group. He should then have resigned as GLC leader and refused to take responsibility for the debacle, as did Hilda Kean in Hackney. By capitulating, he sent out the worst possible message at a crucial time — that 'realism' (read: surrender) would prevail in the face of the sabotage by the right-wing minorities in the Labour groups.

As the other rate-capped and heavily penalised councils began to go down one by one, Liverpool became increasingly isolated. But the Militant leadership in the council were running into problems of their own making which alienated sections of the workforce. There was the dispute with the city NAIGO branch about a group of workers taken on under the job creation scheme and then downgraded, with a loss of around £10 per week in wages. Derek Hatton's comment that 'there are thousands of workers in this city who would give their right arm for a job of any kind' — with the strong implication that the downgraded people should be satisfied with their lot — was not exactly conducive to good relations with the unions.

But much more important was the disastrous Sam Bond affair. The appointment of Militant supporter Sam Bond as race relations advisor was a slap in the face to the black community in the city, and drove a wedge between Militant and many Labour left supporters who had backed the council without supporting Militant. Hatton's obduracy in the face of the outcry in the city only worsened this mistake.

### "There could be no doubting the enormous popularity of the Council's stand..."

The Sam Bond affair highlighted something right at the heart of Militant's approach — a manipulative attitude to the mass support for the council. They were beginning to take this support for granted, and set their face against any open, democratic structures to the campaign. Real decisions were taken in the Militant caucus. Their manipulative, undemocratic and sectarian approach culminated in the ludicrous decision in September 1985 to declare the workforce redundant. This was a decision not subject to any discussion or scrutiny by the workforce themselves. By taking it, Hatton and Mulhearn loaded a gun and handed it to Baker and Kinnock — and Kinnock promptly fired it at the Labour Party conference.

The redundancy decision completely alienated the workforce. It drove them back into the arms of their own union leaders and

the Labour leadership, eager to produce a climb-down compromise.

The union leaders and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities sponsored the production of the Stonefrost report which came up with a package of measures for 'saving' the city. This involved making the city financially viable again through a limited rate rise, borrowing, and a partial 'capitalisation' of its spending funds — which would have had the effect of limiting the house building programme. The only alternative to this Stonefrost approach would have been to let the city run out of money, organise a general strike in the city and prepare to defy the commissioners.

There is no guarantee that the council workforce, in the circumstances of autumn 1985, would have agreed to this strategy.

### "The Sam Bond affair was disastrous..."

But it should have been put to them, for their democratic decision. The factors working against it were of course that the council was now nearly isolated in its defiance of the government. If the council workforce had voted against this kind of mass action to defeat the government's spending limits, then the council should have accepted some variation of the Stonefrost report as the best compromise which could be achieved. What happened in fact was that the council presented the workforce with the ultimatum of accepting the redundancy notices. When this ploy failed, it then reverted to its deal with the Swiss banks which it had been negotiating for months.

It has to be said that in the medium and long term the Swiss banks deal is infinitely worse than any variant of the Stonefrost report. As the debts and interest charges mount up, it will have a devastating effect on the capital spending programme. Militant have been forced back into waiting for a Labour government to bail them out — the precise opposite of what they sought to achieve, and indeed what all the other council leaders are now relying on. It is a sorry end to a campaign that won such support among the people of Liverpool.

### Vultures move in

By alienating their own workforce the council leadership have now opened themselves up to attack from all sides. Kinnock and the Labour NEC are determined to exact maximum revenge. Reactionary forces in the city, supported covertly by the Tories and Liberals, have organised *Liverpool Against Militant*, which has organised big rallies. The stage must now be set for an eventual defeat of Labour at the polls, and the regaining of the council by the Liberals or a Liberal-Tory coalition. This would be a disaster for the people of Liverpool. But if it happens, despite Militant's sectarianism, those responsible will be all those who obstructed a serious fight over ratecapping, first and foremost the Kinnock leadership.



The Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) — Star Wars to most people — is often depicted as either irrational or solely about US military superiority. But, argues **OLIVER MACDONALD**, these are mistaken

impressions. From the point of view of the United States, Star Wars has a rational and deadly *political* logic — the re-establishment and maintenance of US hegemony in Western Europe. MacDonal here charts the course of Star Wars, the outcome of the summit, and the crucial role of NATO as a conduit of American power and influence in Europe.

# Star Wars and the summit

## The struggle for western Europe

WITH THE EXCEPTION of a single article (by the former director of Chatham House in *The Times*), the vast press outpouring on the Geneva summit totally omitted mention of one of the most central issues of dispute between the USSR and the USA: the struggle over the future place in world politics of Western Europe in general, and West Germany in particular.

Yet without grasping the nature of this issue, it is impossible to make sense of US policy over the last six years, impossible to understand the Reagan administration's commitment to Star Wars, and impossible to appreciate why the summit produced the curious result of reaching no agreement on anything except to pretend, for the benefit mainly of West European opinion, that some agreement had been achieved.

And it is only by understanding the *political* problem that the US administration has been facing in Western Europe that we can grasp why the US has been prepared to embark on a course that threatens the world with nuclear war.

Press silence on the West European issue was necessary since discussion of it would have exploded one of the most sacred taboos of domestic politics — the myth that the US-West European relationship is a free, collaborative alliance of sovereign states whose relations are governed by reasoned dialogue rather than power. In the 1950s and 1960s, this myth had great force for the simple reason that US dominance commanded very wide consent, at least in the countries with strong social democratic parties in north west Europe. Such stability depended, however, on a number of factors that by the late 1970s had disappeared. First, a great capitalist economic boom, coupled with massive American economic ascendancy; second, American strategic superiority over the USSR, ensuring that the West European states had to hinge their foreign policies on Washington's axis; third, the attempted integration of the working classes in Western Europe through social democracy, entailing full employment, the welfare state and the replacement of traditional right-wing nationalism with Atlanticist Europeanism.

In the last decade, these bases of American dominance in Western Europe have disappeared. First, and most fundamentally, the boom has gone and international capitalist competition has become a zero-sum game — simply to hold your share

of a shrinking market you have to savage your competitor. And in that game the US has been losing in many fields to its West German and Japanese competitors, so that economic warfare has become more and more the pattern, with capitalists enlisting the support of their states to wage this war. In the mid-1970s, there was an attempt to manage this warfare through so-called trilateralism, involving the annual economic summits of the US, Japan and Western Europe. But at the 1978 summit trilateralism broke down as Schmidt refused to do Carter's bidding.

From then on, the US has been seeking ways to restore its economic ascendancy by trying to re-organise the world market in its favour, but this has run up against the problem of having an adequate means to coerce its rivals into a new relationship. The problem here was that the growth of Soviet strategic military power made the American military ascendancy over Western Europe unbelievable — nobody could suppose that the US would risk its own annihilation for the sake of asserting its interests in Western Europe. The second problem was that detente in Europe had enabled the West German capitalists to increasingly break free from other forms of US coercion: West German dependence on the dollar area for energy supplies and strategic raw materials could be lessened by getting these from the USSR. And as the 1973-74 crisis showed, Eastern Europe and the USSR could be a vital, short-term substitute market for West German exports in a recession. US attempts to find an answer to this problem tell us much of the story of the new cold war since the late 1970s.

The third factor of the old stability was social democracy and the welfare state. In the new conditions, social democracy has ceased to be a bulwark of American interests and is seen as a serious threat to US objectives, especially in West Germany, for the simple reason that to protect jobs and welfare, social democracy is likely to oppose the cold war policies needed to bring the West European states back into line. Thus, unlike in the 1950s and 1960s, US interests now involve backing the most reactionary and militarist forces in north west Europe, the sort of forces they have always backed in countries like Greece, Italy and the Iberian peninsula, not to speak of Latin America.

Against this background, we can now dispose of some of the



John Harris

Greenham Common 1983 — can the peace movement stop Star Wars?

myths that befog serious discussion of US policy. *Myth One* is that the policy is the product of the ideology of the Republican right: in fact, it began under Carter and is *bipartisan* in its essentials. *Myth Two* is that the military build-up has no political rationale and is simply the mindless product of the military-industrial iron triangle: in fact the military-industrial complex was given the green light by a very wide *political* consensus in Washington, and as Strobe Talbot shows in *Deadly Gambits*, it was not super-militarist Perle who fought hardest for cruise and Pershing, but the State Department's chief of European *political* affairs, Richard Burt (now, by the way, US Ambassador in Bonn). We will look later at the political rationale for Star Wars. *Myth Three* is that the US doesn't really care about Western Europe at all and regards its military commitment there as a waste of resources. This is an extraordinarily widespread idea, often now coupled with the notion that the US ruling class has shifted to the south west of America and is oriented to the Pacific rim. It is a dangerously mistaken half-truth that needs to be dispelled.

It is true a sizeable chunk of US capital now has smaller stakes in Western Europe than was the case, say, in the 1950s. This tendency may continue, but in terms of both economic and political power Western Europe remains the fulcrum of the entire US global strategy. If Western Europe swung out of the US sphere and established a new security relationship with the USSR, this would amount to a catastrophic blow to American world power. We must not confuse long-term possible future trends with current realities. As for the growing US desire to pull US troops out of Western Europe, this is true enough but does not at all signify a determination to let Western Europe slip out of US control. The new measures for organising such control in the 1980s will actually be strengthened by the removal of US ground troops: 'limited' war in Europe would become politically less costly in the US.

### The recent history of US-West European relations

Turning then to the real course of US-West European relations since the late 1970s, we can briefly summarise the main phases of the struggle:

*Phase I: 1978-82: Open propaganda war.* In 1978, International, No. 2, January/February 1980

Washington's earlier pre-occupation with Eurocommunism in Southern Europe suddenly gave way to a growing campaign against what was called 'Finlandisation', with West Germany as the target. At the capitalist summit that year Schmidt had refused to do Washington's bidding on economic policy and the following year Germany launched the European Monetary System. Washington was aware of the growing economic links between Bonn and Moscow and also of the potential for much wider collaboration in key energy and raw material fields; the slogan of Finlandisation became a code word for West Germany freeing itself from US control through *Ostpolitik*. With a Social Democratic government in power, Washington feared, the new economic depression could lead Bonn to try to save jobs by big increases in exports to the East. Plans for economic sanctions and trade embargoes against Moscow as part of a new cold war were well advanced before the invasion of Afghanistan, which was used as a pretext for trying to scuttle *Ostpolitik*. This was followed in 1982 by Washington's attempts to block the gas pipeline deal and the resolution of the conflict by the West Europeans agreeing to impose technology embargoes against the USSR. Washington was meanwhile working behind the scenes with sections of West German big business for the fall of the SPD government, an objective achieved in October 1982.

*Phase 2: 1983-84: Nuclear unity plus attempted European political counter-measures.* With the fall of the Schmidt government, Washington was able to force through the installation of cruise and Pershing in Europe. Given the nature of the threat these weapons posed to Moscow, the US calculated that the arrival of Pershings would blow the links between Bonn and the USSR sky high. The Kohl government attempted to maintain *Ostpolitik* on the same lines as under Schmidt, but emphasising closer links with East Germany. By the autumn of 1984, however, this policy lay in ruins as Moscow blocked Honecker's proposed visit to West Germany. At the same time, attempts were being made to establish a Franco-German military and foreign policy axis. The talks on this, begun under Schmidt in 1982, produced proposals for reviving the Western European Union (WEU) as a forum of seven West European states excluding the Americans, where the military-political implications of the struggle between West European and US capital could be discussed. Parallel to

this were plans to strengthen the Common Market.

*Phase 3: 1985 to Geneva: New US political offensive.* From the start of 1985, the Reagan administration has worked successfully to strangle the Franco-German push. At the start of the year it issued formal diplomatic notes warning that military discussions from which Washington is excluded are unacceptable. The WEU initiative has thus collapsed. Washington has also the satisfaction of seeing efforts to make the EEC more politically cohesive fail. On the other hand, the Reagan administration's hopes that Reagan's Bitburg visit would shore up Kohl electorally and decisively cement a new Washington-Bonn condominium in NATO also collapsed. The massive SPD victory in North Rhine Westphalia two days after Bitburg led Kohl to wobble away from his initial endorsement of Washington's grand design for West Germany's and Western Europe's future. And at this point, the new Gorbachev leadership in Moscow entered the scene.

To sum up, Washington's drive since the late 1970s to re-establish control in Western Europe has not yet succeeded, although it has been able to block, without much difficulty, attempts to present a European capitalist alternative orientation. How does the Reagan administration plan to finally stabilise its relations with Western Europe to ensure its long-term control? The answer: *Star Wars*.

### The Politics of Star Wars

Press comment on Star Wars does point to two of its possible rationales. First, SDI is a means of state economic pump-priming in the technology race between the US and its capitalist rivals as well as the USSR. This is true up to a point, but it must be qualified: the US is struggling very hard to drag the West Germans into the Star Wars programme and it is doing so on the basis of promises that it will share SDI research with those who participate.

The second rationale is military-strategic: it could, if successful, give the US a margin of military superiority over the USSR in so far as it could protect key American installations from a second strike. Reagan's stated aim that the US would seek to 'prevail' over the USSR in a nuclear war would then begin to make sense.

But why would any sane US administration go for such a dangerous option that positively invites a Soviet pre-emptive strike in the transition period? The answer may be that given the political objectives of the US towards Western Europe, the administration may not have any choice. Even a partial Star Wars umbrella over the US produces the most elegant answer imaginable to America's European problem.

The arrival of nuclear 'parity' between the super-powers gave West Germany and other European states the basis for an independent foreign policy, enabling them to engage more effectively in the economic struggle with the US. Parity meant that the Europeans could argue convincingly that the American 'guarantee' to fight a nuclear war in Europe was no longer credible since the US itself was now threatened with annihilation for the sake of its European 'friends'. Parity, the Europeans said, meant Western Europe had to turn to the USSR for a negotiated framework of agreed security — 'detente' — since the US had now become 'decoupled' from Europe in terms of security guarantees.

But Star Wars solves this problem: with a partial umbrella over the US, Washington can promise the West Europeans that it won't hesitate to wipe out Europe in a war that will remain limited to Europe, since the USSR would face defeat if it tried to make the struggle inter-continental. So now the West European bourgeoisies can stop all this nonsense of doing business with the USSR, under the guise of security worries. Those German bastards can stop trying to make themselves independent of the US-controlled zones of the third world for energy by getting 40 per cent of their enriched uranium from the USSR. They can knuckle under and start talking seriously about how they intend to stop undermining American agri-business and US industry. Because if they don't they ain't seen nothing yet.

Is there really any other way of tackling this problem short of seeking a Soviet-American condominium over Europe that

would guarantee the USSR would not try to continue business with West Germany? If there is, nobody has published it.

### Gorbachev and Western Europe

The Soviet leadership's achievement of 'parity' with the USA in the 1970s was coupled with its repeated demonstrations of its desire to privilege its relations with the bourgeoisies of Western Europe and downgrade its support for West European Communist Parties. The accompanying detente of the 1970s was found to be very beneficial for capitalist interests in West Germany especially, but also in France and Italy. As the US counter-offensive at the end of the 1970s developed, the Soviet leadership was immobilised by its own internal leadership decay and transition, a crisis only beginning to be resolved in 1985 with the arrival of Gorbachev.

The new Soviet leadership is very frightened of the American drive for superiority and is desperate to modernise the Soviet economy, especially to tackle its growing technological gap vis à vis the West. There are three broad internal strategies in principle open to the Soviet leadership in this situation. One would be to go down the Hungarian road, greatly decentralising



All smiles in Geneva

and marketising the Soviet economy to stimulate innovation and at the same time opening up the economy much more to the world market. This would involve attacking important egalitarian elements in the USSR, almost certainly creating turmoil within the working class as well as within the state bureaucracy. It would also create a form of dependence on the West that would be difficult for the centre to adequately control. The second option would be to create a political liberalisation of major dimensions releasing the controls on ideology and information and generating a great political mobilisation amongst both the working class and the intelligentsia, creating a spirit of experiment and invention and a new social dynamism. But this option, tried by Khrushchev, is anathema to the bureaucracy which fears like the plague challenges to its power from below.

This leaves the third option: a more technocratic and less corrupt version of Brezhnevism, leaving structures basically unchanged coupled with a turn to the world market on a much wider scale. This can produce some quantitative improvements in the short term, but it is unlikely to achieve any lasting success unless it involves a quite new type of close relationship with an advanced capitalist economy.

It is this last option that the Gorbachev leadership seems to have adopted. Technological revolution will come from the top, not from major domestic institutional changes, and will involve



an effort at close collaboration with some advanced capitalist states. And it is against this background that we can see how difficult it would be for the Soviets to agree a deal with an American administration that involved a self-denying ordinance over its relations with West European bourgeoisies. The US Commerce Department has for long been eager to boost US trade in non-agricultural goods with the USSR, but the idea of the US being the font of technological renovation for the Soviet Union is a non-starter: it is the principal enemy, Congress proved unfriendly to stable trade expansion in the Kissinger days and there is the subsequent experience of economic warfare. In addition, the type of technology transfer the USSR wants from the West — engineering in manufacturing industry — is at least as advanced in West Germany as in the USA. And the Soviet leadership also know it can offer tempting economic and political carrots to the Bundesrepublik, not least in being able to supply key raw materials that the FRG otherwise must acquire from the dollar area.

Star Wars, on the other hand, threatens such collaboration in the long term, by making it possible for the US to turn Western Europe into an increasingly menacing armed camp,



mobilised against the USSR. And in the short-term, its acceptance in Western Europe strengthens the sectors of capital there most closely tied to the USA.

### Geneva and the West European States

The glorious days of the late 1970s when Bonn seemed a central actor in international high politics are long since over and the Kohl government has been swinging all over the place, riven by internal disputes over foreign policy and seeking to avoid making an irrevocable choice between the threats and blandishments of its three suitors — Washington, Moscow and Paris. The government has swung in the space of a year from commitment to a Franco-German military and political axis, over to the Reaganite package and then back away from it. Both the SPD and the Free Democrats (FDP) are strongly committed to maintaining *Ostpolitik* and resisting Star Wars this line also has support among some elements within the CDU and the state bureaucracy. On the other hand, the pro-American faction around Stoltenberg is increasingly dominant within the CDU, while Franco-German Gaullism (provided there is a German finger on the French nuclear trigger) remains powerful within the CSU. The only field of agreement between all these forces is over "Deutschlandpolitik" although exactly what lies behind support for close links with the GDR differs between the

groups.

But what the Reagan administration did know before Geneva was that if the summit broke up in acrimony, the result would be to tilt the balance in Bonn against the Stoltenberg group, and West Germany would shift towards a renewed *Ostpolitik*, probably, as the *Economist* pointed out, trampling on the Cocom agreements concerning high-tech embargoes against the USSR. This, more than any other single factor, was the reason why Reagan wanted to grin at the cameras and say things had gone well in the Geneva talks.

French policy has also swung wildly over the last few years, but not because of deep internal divisions within the political elite over foreign policy. It has swung as external conditions have sharply changed. At the beginning of the 1980s and up until the election of the Kohl government, the main French fear was a rapprochement between Bonn and Moscow. Mitterrand acted as a Reaganite vanguard in support of the installation of cruise and Pershing missiles, or at least against the West German Social Democrats staying in power. But the aim of French policy was to create a Franco-German alliance with French military dominance because of its nuclear weapons, an alliance that would dominate Western Europe through the WEU and EEC and that would act as a third force between Washington and Moscow. Reagan has managed to crush this challenge without much difficulty, leaving the French state very much isolated. In such circumstances, Mitterrand has now gone back to square one, pursuing his own *Ostpolitik*, very much in tandem with the SPD and FDP in West Germany. French policy is strongly opposed to Star Wars.

As for British policy, it doesn't really count for anything much because Britain is a client state of the US. It differs from Washington only on one important point: its limitless hostility to French power. Otherwise the Thatcher regime seeks to do the bidding of Washington in the hope of gaining crumbs from Reagan's table, only to find, all too often, that the Americans are more concerned to placate the French, since the British state is too dependent to require bothering about.

### The political struggle after Geneva

The Gorbachev smile to the cameras after the summit meant three things: first, he was not prepared to pay the cost of a break-down since that would have weakened his leverage in Western Europe; second, gestures of some sort of thaw in the cold war make it easier for West European states to pursue *Ostpolitik* in defiance of the Americans; and thirdly, he was doing a favour to the West European right by helping to damp down war fears in Europe and thus weakening the peace movement.

So the Gorbachev smile was the cue for Mitterrand to play host to Jaruzelski — the General's first trip to the West since his coup in December 1981, which he used profitably as a cover for a long-desired purge of intellectuals in Poland. By legitimising Jaruzelski diplomatically, Mitterrand was doing a favour for his new friend Willi Brandt who nipped over to Warsaw the very next day to open up a new era in FRG-Polish relations. Brandt was acting in many ways as a proxy for the Kohl government itself, since Jaruzelski can clear the path for Honecker's trip to Bonn next year, thus beginning a new round of *Deutschlandpolitik* and openings towards Moscow.

But the very same day that Jaruzelski was in Paris, Weinberger was in London signing his SDI deal with London, trivial in itself as far as Washington is concerned, but a vital political precedent in the struggle for Bonn. And in the second week of December Shultz was on the march through London on his way to Bonn, stepping up the pressure. With disarming frankness he used the occasion to stress how SDI greatly reinforces the credibility of the US commitment to be ready to annihilate Europe in a 'limited war'.

Infighting in the Kohl government over Star Wars has reached a new peak with one CDU leader declaring that FRG participation has already been agreed, while Foreign Minister Genscher, the FDP leader who made all this possible by breaking with the SPD in October 1982, still declares his strong hostility to Star Wars.

The signs are that the US will win the political struggle to

draw Bonn into the Star Wars research programme early in 1986. This will not necessarily mean Bonn endorsing the testing and installation of a Star Wars system. No doubt Bonn will try to maintain opposition to these steps and will try to continue developing its economic and political links with the East through continuing to press Washington for an agreement with the USSR on Star Wars and arms control through the Geneva process. But by agreeing to participate, the Kohl government will have allowed the Reagan administration to get at least a foot in the door into the internal political debate in Bonn.

### The new axis of West European politics and the future

Since the late 1970s, Washington has gone a long way towards shifting the entire internal and external axis of West European politics. Externally, there has been a massive shift in Western Europe's military posture, not yet completed but well underway. We can simply list symptoms of this: cruise and Pershing, the new follow-on-forces attack doctrine, the Bundeswehr's acceptance of airland battle war-fighting methods, and so on.

Star Wars is simply the keystone in this arch. The logic of all these changes is to turn Western Europe into a knife pointed East, threatening vital Soviet security interests and inviting a harsh Soviet hostility to the new order in Western Europe. This change in Western Europe's external posture is accompanied by an American declamatory rhetoric is the need to liberate Eastern Europe and unite Europe 'in freedom'.

This American drive to reorient Western Europe's relations with the East is accompanied by an equally vigorous push to ensure its 'allies' dependence on US power in the third world, particularly the Middle East. West European efforts to have their own policy on the Palestinian issue as a means of gaining stable Arab markets (food, weapons, manufactured goods) and possessing secure non-American sources of oil (West Germany and Italy from Libya) have been under ferocious attack from Washington. US policy in the Middle East is as much about ensuring its own grip on Western Europe's economic jugular as about handling substantive regional issues there.

We have argued here that this American drive is motivated above all by the need to restore control over Western Europe. Unable to do this through economic diplomacy, as in the early post-war years, and unable to do it through direct control over domestic political agencies, as in Latin America, the US has had no alternative but to use the only weapon it does control: NATO. This institution possesses two essential features: first, legitimacy within the political systems of North West Europe; secondly, it has a strong bureaucratic column reaching down from Washington through the defence ministries, armed forces and intelligence agencies as well as the capitalist military suppliers of the West European states.

The US has *had* to use this instrument, and has been *able* to use this instrument to wrench Western Europe back towards effective subordination. This has had a consequence — greatly increased risk of war in Europe. For the US administration this consequence is no doubt unfortunate, but it felt it had no choice.

But secondly, the US drive since the late 1970s to regain control in Western Europe has involved a transformation of the domestic politics of these states. This has involved busting the corporatist, welfare-state consensus in which social democracy was so important and achieving what one might call an Italianisation of electoral politics, in the sense of permanently excluding the main working class parties from office and trying to delegitimise them in popular consciousness. This process is well advanced in Britain, though it has some way to go in West Germany.

The brilliance of the Reaganite operation has been to exploit to the full the eagerness of the parties of the right to win power and delegitimise social democracy in internal politics, in order to force them into the Reaganite mould in external politics. Washington forced the parties of the right to win power against the left *by defending US external policy*. Far from fearing the electoral polarisation over Reaganite militarism, Washington relished it as the only means of committing bourgeois forces in Western Europe to an external policy that harms their own economic and security interests.

Resistance to Reagan's new order will continue from

bourgeois forces in the future, but it will be a resistance of manoeuvre, little conspiracies, foot-dragging and whining, without principle or unity. Yesterday's politicians and pundits of the consensus centre and centre-right are learning the hard way that you can't both try to defeat the labour movement domestically and effectively resist US militarism externally. Some such people may try to move leftwards and seek to form a modern equivalent of the Popular Front; the bulk will go all the way down the appeasement road, hoping, as of old, that 1939 won't actually arrive.

The Left tends to vastly over-rate the capacity of bourgeois Europe to resist Raganism. (See the Bloomfield article in the December *Marxism Today* for a classic statement of these illusions). It ignores the fact that as a hard, political entity, Western Europe doesn't even exist: it is fragmented into little states, seething with rivalries amongst themselves, easily exploited by the US for its own advantage. US capital is itself a strong political actor within Western Europe and Reaganism has a natural ally in the military industries, which welcome the political and ideological side of Reaganism, while opposing the US arms competition. Important sectors of West European capital are gaining their profits from the dollar area and will resist strong moves that would lead to strong US retaliation against them. Finally, any strong West European challenge would have to take political and ideological forms that would create chaos in the parties of the Right, at a time when the role of these parties in the offensive against the labour movement to restructure capital is more vital than ever. The limit of the capacity of bourgeois Europe in a struggle with the US in present circumstances is foot dragging to slow down the tempo of events. Only in the event of an American frontal assault on German and French vital economic interests might a hegemonic push for a Franco-German — and thus 'European' — super-state emerge.

But what if, after regaining control of Western Europe, Washington does seek to reduce the risks of war by doing a deal that would institutionalise its relationship with Moscow? This is in principle a desirable objective for the Reagan administration, which does not, after all, want a war. The US has some carrots that would not jeopardise its ascendancy in Western Europe: a big trade boost with the USSR, crisis management arrangements, regional security guarantees over Afghanistan, over relations with China, in the Middle East, some restrictions on the arms race in Europe and on chemical weapons. But none of this seems enough to placate and assure the Soviet leadership. Would the two super-powers be prepared to do a deal whereby Washington limited Star Wars in exchange for cast-iron Soviet guarantees that it would buttress US control over Western Europe, and West Germany in particular? This is perhaps the only possible deal that could be envisaged.

But in the meantime, the left must try to clarify its own course of action. It really has two strategic options: either it can try to live within the new American order, dreaming that it can return to the good old days when Washington was happy to do business with European social democrats, and hoping that it can somehow 'humanise' American policy. This is the politics of yesterday's people like Denis Healey. Or it can defend the progressive elements in social democratic traditions — democratic liberties, economic security, a strong trade union movement, and face the fact that these values as well as a commitment to peace involve a head-on confrontation with the new American order, an attempt to defeat it and force Washington to *retreat*.

This strategy requires the labour movement to confront the basic mechanism through which every step of the American political offensive has been implemented: NATO. It must repudiate the discipline of NATO and must also repudiate the political basis of NATO — namely the subordination of Western Europe to American political objectives, in the defence of capitalism.

The development of an anti-NATO political force in the labour movements of Western Europe, linked to a programme for jobs and planned economic growth, is the only viable option for the left in the late 1980s. The growth of such a movement is also the only way in which Washington could be forced to rethink its orientation and seek to organise an orderly retreat.



Morris Zwi/Reflex

## South Africa

# The strategy of the ANC

The turmoil in South Africa has focused attention on the organisation of black resistance, in particular the African National Congress (ANC). Here **ERICA FLEGG**, initiating a discussion on this topic, looks at the developing crisis and the orientation which the ANC has adopted. Future issues will carry further contributions to this debate. Photographs by Morris Zwi and Jillian Edelstein/Reflex

FOR SOCIALISTS in Britain today the task of solidarity with the struggle against the apartheid system in South Africa assumes a greater importance and urgency than ever before. The political crisis in South Africa is a central question in the international arena, as the Western powers debate the use of measures to pressurise the Botha government to introduce reform, in order to stem the tide of revolutionary unrest. For the imperialist powers there is much at stake:

billions of dollars of trade and foreign investment, the supply of gold and strategic minerals, the 'security' of the Cape sea route, geo-political military considerations involving the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean... but, above all, there is the danger of the unrest developing into a struggle against the capitalist system itself in the most advanced, industrial, capitalist economy in Africa, and the international repercussions that that would be bound to entail.

It is widely recognised that there can be no permanent reversal of the mass struggle in South Africa. Each time a new wave of struggle has broken in South Africa, it has reached a higher level. The defiance campaign of the 1950s and sixties was quelled by the suppression of the mass political parties and organisations after Sharpeville. After a period of relative quiescence, when the two main liberation movements, the ANC and PAC, went underground and adopted a strategy of armed struggle launched from bases in exile, industrial unrest broke out in a wave of strikes starting in Durban in 1973. This was preceded by a general strike in Namibia, and the heightening pressure of the liberation struggle there throughout the seventies and eighties has made a key contribution to the crisis of the South African state, both at home and abroad.

The 1970s saw not only continuing outbreaks of labour unrest, but the birth of the contemporary independent black trade union movement and the upsurge of struggles by students and youth, which fed into the growth of the 'black consciousness' movement and sparked off the 1976 Soweto uprising. Because of the nature of the apartheid system, struggles by any section of the oppressed masses — workers, school students, township residents in white areas or the Bantustans — can rapidly become generalised, confronting the migrant labour system, influx control in the urban areas, forced removals of people, the education system, and all the ways in which blacks are excluded from political and economic power.

### Time of ferment

The last decade has been a time of ferment in the black community in South Africa, as different ideologies and forms of organisation have been thrown up and tested in struggle, in the search for the best ways to advance. The model of guerilla warfare led by a mass liberation movement with bases amongst the rural population, as employed in its various forms in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia, has not been able to take hold in South Africa, the lynchpin of capitalist domination of the subcontinent.

The Botha government has reached a stalemate in Namibia: it cannot defeat SWAPO, or legitimise an internal client regime. Nor have the Western imperialist powers, organised in the 'contact group', been able to impose a negotiated settlement. At home, Botha has attempted belated reforms — the progressive removal of 'petty' apartheid, the attempt to incorporate the Coloureds and Indians through an extension of the franchise; but these concessions have been decisively repudiated. The unions have used the space won through legal recognition or recognition by the employers to organise more widely and to press further demands. Blacks seen as collaborators by the masses — Bantustan leaders, municipal administrators in the townships, black police — live today in fear of their lives. In this context, the attempt to buy off a section of the black petit-bourgeoisie has been made too late, and no longer seems a plausible political strategy, since it is premised on the maintenance of the essentials of the apartheid system: the restriction of the franchise and the division of the territory into segregated racial areas, which is the basis of the South African system of labour control.

The white, mainly English-speaking opposition parties splintered in the seventies as they searched unsuccessfully for an alternative acceptable to the whites while capable of being imposed on the blacks. Their relative political demise is reflected in the demise of the *Rand Daily Mail*, the main English-language alternative to the Afrikaner nationalist press. Meanwhile the Nationalist Party has also been riven by splits and internal dissension: Botha is held back in his reformist drive by the need to placate his party's political base, which was built in the days of Verwoerd on the less privileged section of the white, mainly Afrikaner community. The privileged posi-

tion of white workers, farmers and civil servants rests on the exclusion of blacks from the most productive land and the sections of the labour market reserved for whites. Botha's strategy of minor reforms combined with the intensification of repression — expressed in the declaration of emergency — is failing, but he cannot find an alternative.

These are the ingredients of the political crisis faced by the ruling class in South Africa today and its foreign backers: they cannot continue to rule in the old way, but nor are they willing to risk the dismantling of apartheid, because of the instability that would result and the strength of the forces for change that would be unleashed. Thatcher and Reagan are resisting the international pressure to impose effective economic sanctions against South Africa, but the other



In a township seven kilometres from Johannesburg

Western powers are also nervous: they don't want to intensify the crisis of the South African regime without identifying an acceptable political alternative — a provisional government for a black South Africa, in the last resort. A government that would maintain political and economic stability, protect foreign investment, reassure the white South African bourgeoisie, contain the aspirations of the masses, and keep South Africa safe for capitalism and for Western strategic interests.

### Taking state power

There is only one serious contender, today, that is poised to assume the role of a provisional government: the ANC. In international fora such as the UN the ANC already plays that role: it has an impressive external apparatus that has secured it an unrivalled position, after years of consistent lobbying. The PAC and the Unity Movement have fragmented and declined; the black consciousness movement is politically and organisationally heterogeneous and amorphous. The emergent mass organisations, however vigorous and popular they may be in terms of support and activity, were not formed to take state power. Their objectives do not extend, as yet, to the development of a full political programme, nor do they have an organisational structure or apparatus

developed enough to take power from the forces they are challenging. In this sense they do not provide an alternative to the ANC, although to varying extents, they are often independent of ANC political leadership and sometimes are even hostile to it.

The ANC and its imprisoned leader, Mandela, do of course enjoy genuine, widespread popular support; but so does any black nationalist force or figurehead challenging apartheid. When the leader of the PAC, Sobukwe, died, there was a massive turnout for his funeral; but it should not be inferred from that that the mourners were all supporters, or under the leadership, of the PAC. Similarly, Steve Biko enjoyed a great popular reputation, but that did not make all his supporters activists of the black consciousness movement. Claims of the ANC that the present unrest is a response to their call to make South Africa 'ungovernable' cannot be taken as an index of the level of support for the ANC inside the country or of the extent of their organisational influence over the mass movement. Many of the actions and protests have evidently been spontaneous and local in origin, and it is clear that there is often little or no national co-ordination: this is, in fact, one of the limitations of the current wave of struggles. Had the outbreaks of unrest in different areas been centrally organised, moreover, it would have been irresponsible of the leadership concerned to have allowed workers and communities in the areas involved to take the full brunt of state repression without supporting actions in other areas to deflect government forces. Although the traditions and leaders of the ANC are a major source of inspiration in the mass movement, and undoubtedly it is the biggest, most influential organisation, the ANC does not organise or lead all forms of the mass struggle: nor is it capable, despite its military forces, of defending the masses against repression. One of the questions at issue in the mass movement is, indeed, the role that armed struggle should play in advancing the revolution and defending its gains.

### The Soviet connection

The ANC is hampered in its international diplomacy — its attempts to win universal recognition and support as the representative of black South Africa — by two main obstacles: the reluctance of the imperialist powers to envisage the disruption and uncertain consequences that would follow the full extension of the franchise (one person, one vote) to which the ANC is committed, and secondly, by the organisation's historical and close political links with Moscow and the Soviet bloc.

The first obstacle becomes daily less severe as the pressure of the struggle inside South Africa and the crisis of the Botha regime increasingly points to the concession of a democratic franchise as the only potential long-term solution to the unrest. The calculation is also increasingly made by the more enlightened sectors of capital that democratic demands will have to be met in some measure in order to forestall the danger of a socialist revolution; a prolonged process



Police riot in Johannesburg

Morris Zwi/Reflex

of radicalisation of the masses might produce something 'even worse' than the ANC, which does not have a socialist programme. Social democratic strategists are also aware of the dangers of allowing the Soviet Union to champion the anti-racist cause in the international arena, at the West's expense; they are aware that the ANC has been pushed towards the USSR by the West's support of apartheid.

Moreover, it is precisely the ANC's commitment to the abolition of apartheid that gives the organisation its main strength, not only at home, but also in the sense that only such a leadership would be capable, hypothetically, of meeting another requirement essential to Western interests: that of being placed to contain the aspirations of the masses, because of the popular legitimacy that a government including the ANC could expect to enjoy. Muzorewa's failure, and Mugabe's success, in this respect in the transfer of power in Zimbabwe is a case in point.

The second obstacle, that of the Soviet connection, is a different matter. In the cold war climate encouraged by the Reagan administration and its allies, such as Thatcher, this connection is a significant liability. Right-wing propagandists make much of the horrifying prospect of the USSR and an ANC-ruled South Africa enjoying a world

strategic minerals (in which South Africa, and Southern Africa as a whole, is very rich). A foreign policy document researched by Philip Crowson of Rio Tinto Zinc for the Royal Institute of International Affairs on the theme of British foreign policy options for the eighties based its argument on these considerations. The document lists all the minerals concerned, the Southern African countries that produce them, the strategic end-uses of these minerals, and the possibilities — in most cases, poor — for the development of synthetic substitutes. Similarly, it is argued in Western policy think-tanks that the security of the Cape Sea route, the only alternative to the Suez canal for the transport of oil and other essential commodities — already many tankers are too large to use the canal — would be jeopardised, as would prospects of a Southern Atlantic military alliance to complement NATO. The Simonstown naval base in the Cape figures prominently in these calculations, and has critical strategic significance, amongst other things, for the use of the USA's 'rapid deployment' force.

Realistically, however, the assessment has been made in some quarters that the ANC's 'Soviet connection' does not commit the ANC to socialist revolution, full-scale nationalisation or other horrors for

international capital — rather the contrary — nor does the USSR appear to be following a course of a major upset to Western 'spheres of influence', despite considerable provocation by the US in Central America, the Caribbean and elsewhere. While the ANC has stated that 'we will remember our friends' (a carrot to the West as much as a warning, perhaps?) it has also been at pains to banish these nightmares of Western strategists. Consequently, indications of a Stalinist 'infection' of the ANC, such as the ANC's implacable hostility to the democratic movements of Eastern Europe — the Chartists in Czechoslovakia, and Solidarnosc in Poland — as well as towards liberation struggles like that of the Eritreans, should not be expected to figure prominently in the considerations of the imperialist powers or big capital.

Whether the contradiction between the ANC's espousal of democratic demands at home while it allies with the forces suppressing such struggles in Eastern Europe or the Horn of Africa will strike a note of discord with its mass base in South Africa, or with its supportive milieu in the labour movement in the West, remains to be seen. If, however, the ANC opposes demands for socialist democracy in Eastern Europe, the right of Eritrea to self-determination, and the right of workers,



Scenes from the funeral of a black shop steward who died in police custody

women and other oppressed layers to autonomous political organisation, this must raise questions for socialists about what forms of democracy and national liberation they stand for. At the same time, it is the duty of socialists in the West to lend support to the ANC and other forces that make up the national liberation movement. We should also not equate the rank and file of the movement with its leadership, since it is the mass struggle that we support.

### The Communist Party

As is well known, the South African Communist Party — historically, one of the most unreconstructed Stalinist parties of the international movement — is deeply embedded in the ANC, and has played a central role in the organisation's political and ideological formation. This position appears to have been strengthened in the eighties. The elections to the ANC's executive at its congress last June — the first congress for 16 years — confirmed this. The ANC's lack of responsiveness to the development of the mass movement at home was shown most clearly by its failure to add new forces from this movement — workers, youth, women — to the leadership (there are, for instance, only three women on the NEC).

The ANC's connection with the SACP has, of course, enabled Botha to link racism with anti-communism, presenting white South Africa's resistance to democratic demands as a crusade against the international Marxist conspiracy masterminded from the Kremlin. The prominence given to the likes of the God-fearing Bishop Tutu by the ANC/SACP-sponsored United Democratic Front creates a certain credibility gap in selling this conspiracy theory abroad, except perhaps amongst some deluded Republican senators in the US. More sober analysts in the Pentagon and elsewhere who have had the opportunity to study the theory and practice of the SACP have no doubt noted that the party has quite explicitly excluded the struggle for socialism from the agenda of the day. The receding of the spectre of communism is the reason why the ANC and its leadership — personified by Mandela — is now beginning to enjoy a 'recuperation' of its image in the bourgeois media, as happened more belatedly with ZANU and Mugabe at the time of the Lancaster House settlement, when the gun-toting, land-grabbing, black Marxist terrorist leader suddenly became a respectable, Christian family man with seven academic degrees.

In the analysis of the ANC/SACP, South Africa is a fascist state; therefore, it is argued, the movement should adopt a 'popular front' strategy in order to win demands for basic 'bourgeois' democracy. This involves a class alliance with the democratic sections of the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie — the United Democratic Front being a new version of the old Congress Alliance of the congresses of the four main racial groupings in the 1950s, on the basis of the Freedom Charter. The Charter puts forward basic democratic demands but stops short of calling for workers' control or

full-scale nationalisation of the means of production.

As Oliver Tambo put it in his speech to the last Labour Party Conference, the ANC advocates an alliance of 'the oppressed masses with the democratic forces', or 'workers, the rural poor, progressive whites... and shop-keepers'. This strategy of a multi-class alliance was backed up in the South Africa debate at Bournemouth by the speaker from TASS who argued against a motion calling for political support for the struggle of South African workers on the grounds that support for a struggle for socialism in South Africa was ultra-left and sectarian, since the struggle is not for socialism at this stage but for 'democracy'. Kinnock clinched the point by presenting Tambo with a miner's lamp, which, after his broadside against the NUM the previous day, one can be forgiven for thinking was not intended to illuminate the struggle of black miners in South Africa so much as to extinguish it. While it represented an advance for the ANC to get a standing ovation at party conference, it nevertheless stuck in the craw to see Healy, Hattersley and Co. rising to their feet despite their record of inactivity in implementing party policy on Southern Africa, which for some time has called for support for the struggle against apartheid, economic sanctions, the release of political prisoners and so on.

### Disarray on the left

The debate on South Africa threw the Labour left into disarray, as the Militant-sponsored resolution divided the left and the issues became confused. Sharon Atkin spoke against the Militant resolution, but without motivating her opposition, so that it was not clear how she distinguished her position from that of the Labour right and the Stalinists (if at all). No doubt the failure of the Militant to support black self-organisation in Britain — expressed in their hostility to black sections in the Labour Party — did not help. (To have Hattersley refer to black sections as establishing 'apartheid' in the party is to compound confusion with nonsense...!) But the confusion goes deeper than this. What attitude should socialists adopt towards the ANC? Should we give it our unqualified support or not? If we criticise the ANC, doesn't that put us in the same camp as the reactionaries? If we support it, are we obliged to support the ANC's projection of itself as the sole legitimate representative of the South African masses? If the ANC demands sole recognition as the basis for support, how can we express support for other mass organisations, as well as for the ANC? And what, in fact, is the best way to give concrete support to the struggle in South Africa?

These, and the more fundamental political questions they relate to, press for answers in the labour movement today, and will be discussed more fully in future issues of *International*. As socialists, however, our first duty is not to adopt this or that attitude to the ANC, but to oppose British imperialism: to understand, expose and contest its attempts to hold back the struggles against oppression and exploitation at home

and abroad. We need to build links internationally, to unite the forces contesting the international rule of capital. This is not so much a moral duty as a defence of the interests of the British and the international working class. A defeat for our movement in one part of the world is a setback for us all, whether it be in Grenada, Nicaragua or South Africa. Black people in Brixton and Tottenham, or miners at Orgreave, know there's a link between the repression they suffer and the repression in South Africa: we need to give that link a political expression, and find the best ways to make contact with, and support the struggles that link with our own.

We won't build these links simply by supporting the ANC or some other organisation instead. We need to build a mass, anti-imperialist solidarity movement, that unites workers and trade unionists, blacks and anti-racists, students, youth, women, the peace movement: a movement that can itself impose sanctions against South Africa, impose the oil embargo and halt the arms trade, and not merely call on Thatcher to do so. We must ensure also, that workers' organisations, such as the TUC International Department, are fully accountable to the members who fund them, and serve the interests of the international labour movement rather than those of the Foreign Office.

In this campaign, we must work with the ANC and the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain, because they go some of the way in this direction. But because they do not go all the way, and sometimes provide an obstacle to building the kind of movement that is needed — both organisations want to cultivate the TUC leadership, for instance, and are totally opposed to challenging the bureaucrats of the International Department — we cannot limit ourselves to supporting their political strategies for building solidarity. We must take our own initiatives in building the solidarity campaign, make contact with the organisations of the mass movement inside South Africa and give them the support they call for. The independent unions, in particular, have been calling for such support, and the Labour Party has committed itself to giving it. We should send delegates to South Africa to make these contacts, and invite delegates to visit Britain. The formation of COSATU provides a stimulus for this. Representatives from the ICFTU and other international labour organisations — many with very questionable associations — the churches and international agencies of different kinds travel to South Africa every day; why should we leave the field to them? The policy of boycott must be applied to the institutions of the apartheid state, not to the organisations of the masses in struggle in South Africa.

● Future coverage in *International* will explore further the relationship between the struggle against apartheid and the struggle for socialism, and discuss solidarity tasks in relation to the Labour Party, the trade unions and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. We will also report on the development of the black trade union movement in South Africa and the debate about the independent organisation of the working class within the liberation movement.

**i**

NO ONE CAN read the horrific reports of child abuse and murder splashed over the front pages this last year without feeling shock and revulsion. Young children bitten, beaten, starved, knifed and raped, usually by their father, must surely make us ask what is happening and how it can be prevented.

The right wing media has its own answers. Child killers are 'evil monsters'. Coupled to this, and clearly shown in the tragic cases of Tyra Henry and Jasmine Beckford, is overt racism — implying all black men are potential child abusers. The media are keen to mention illegitimacy rates and 'live-in' boyfriends, concluding that child abuse is a result of the collapse of family life. The right wing answer therefore is a return to a loving, preferably white, nuclear family, coupled with increased law and order, longer prison sentences and minimal social services. There is also a clear attack on local councils with progressive child care policy and often, at the time of media attention, involved in the rate capping struggle.

Especially picked out for blame are local government social workers, NALGO members in the forefront in the struggle against public sector cuts. Some Labour councils such as Lambeth fell for this divisive tactic. Brent NALGO members are currently attempting to get reinstatement of workers sacked in the aftermath of the Jasmine Beckford inquiry.

Yet the left has remained alarmingly quiet on the problem of child abuse. It avoids condemning what must be, like wife battering, a social crime. The left's only public statement on the subject is to blame the huge increase in unemployment and cuts in social services. But is this the whole story?

Let's start by looking at some of the limited facts available about what we would now call child abuse. It is certainly not a new phenomenon and existed long before the rise of capitalism. Early history documents child slavery prostitution, and infanticide (particularly favoured by British royals). Girls faced special mutilations such as foot binding, and infibulation is still practised today. The heyday of the British Empire with its Victorian values, saw appalling atrocities inflicted on children — forced labour, workhouses and brutal corporal punishment, doled out by family, church, and state. In 1870 according to official records, 202 children died from manslaughter, 113 from neglect. Children of the wealthy didn't escape — flogging and fagging were part of public school discipline for boys, educational and sexual deprivation for girls. The 'golden age' gave rise to charities such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).

But apart from a few social reformers and charitable institutions, the problems were left well alone until the tragic death of Maria Caldwell in 1974. The press ran their own trial on the family and social worker and established a pattern for future reporting. The enquiry that followed led to the establishment of registers, kept by the NSPCC, of all children known or suspected of being abused, and specialist NSPCC units to treat abused children and their families.

In 1984 the NSPCC had over 7000 cases

# Child abuse Crisis in the family?

EILEEN STANFORD

**JASMINE:3  
ARE FIRED**  
*Revenge strike  
threat by union*

on its register, with 600 cases of serious injury and 59 children dead. The statistical trends from the 70's indicate an alarming increase in moderate child abuse, while serious and fatal cases seem to be on the decrease, in spite of the press hysteria. The debate rages in professional circles about just what all this data means, but what is clear is that many children in Britain are at serious risk from violence, and with increases in detection and the social crisis, the numbers will increase. The data show a significant correlation between increasing unemployment and increasing child abuse. This raises the thorny question of are we seeing 'lumpenisation' of a small percentage of the working class as a result of the economic and social crisis? Full employment, for men and women, would obviously drastically improve conditions for parents and children and start to relieve the grinding despair that millions now feel.

However, the wealthy also abuse their children, but usually avoid detection and the courts, as American studies have shown. And of course, the rich can buy their way out of the pressures that can result in child abuse — good housing, active social life and most importantly a nanny for 24 hour child-care.

What is strikingly clear from statistics and from the work of feminists is that the biological family is not a particularly safe place for women or children to live. 'Scream quietly or the neighbours may hear' the battering, rape, incest — the horrors committed against women and children in the name of marital or parental rights. The left can't just turn to Marxist economics, we must look to the oppressive nature of the nuclear family to understand the socialist policy and practice needed to start to prevent child abuse.

In today's society children are privatised, they are the private property of their parents. There is an appalling lack of collective responsibility for children in Britain, with the majority of socialists being no better than the establishment — just look at the

lack of childcare at political events. And of course the private daily responsibility for children falls on women, the strain can be unbearable. Feminists have long demanded free, quality 24 hour child care as one of the prerequisites for women's liberation and socialism.

Not surprisingly, child abuse experts find that baby sitting circles, playgroups, and 'crisis' nurseries are central to the rehabilitation and prevention of abuse in high risk families. But few experts draw the conclusions of the need for more and better child care for all.

Monetarism is out to destroy what little childcare there is and we end up defending services which even in their heyday were racist and inadequate in many ways. Some left councils have attempted to extend childcare and equally importantly tried to provide services geared to the needs of children and the vast majority of parents, who do not fit into the white, heterosexist two parent model. But even the most progressive authorities have a policy of keeping families together. Again another difficult area for feminists: we know theoretically that the family is not defensible, but without women's economic independence, without reproductive rights, without socialisation of domestic production and reproduction, without an end to discrimination, what do we do? And we need to understand how racism and imperialism affects black families resulting in black women raising many additional and sometimes different demands to those of white feminists.

The recommendations from the Jasmine Beckford enquiry also challenge 'family is best', but of course it does not propose the finances and equalities to enable an alternative to the family; it however suggests some working class families are not fit and substitute (read white, nuclear) families will do a better job. This report will have a big impact, bringing with it more professionalisation, more management social services and reinforces the concept of the unfit working class family, which will be used, I suspect, particularly against black families and extended into the arena of deportation and immigration policy.

Another theme taken up in the report and again important for us to develop as socialists is the rights of children. Children are seen as parents' private property and therefore parents can do what they like to children. There is also still the assumption that children must somehow be dominated, including by use of physical punishment, to maintain discipline and teach them how to behave. Hand in hand with this 'breaking the spirit' is the assumption that children haven't minds of their own, hence disbelief when girls reveal incest, ridicule when children take up racism in schools.

Clearly then, child abuse poses many questions for socialists and feminists which we can't simply reduce to economic arguments, crucially important though they are. We need to develop our understanding of the family, including the effects of racism and imperialism on the family in order to struggle for the policy and practice needed to end child abuse.



# To Russia with love

DAVID GRANT KEIR

ILLUSION AND escape are the themes of Letter to Brezhnev, a new film currently showing. The very title evokes an era which now seems long past — an eighteen year period when Brezhnev ruled the roost in the Soviet Union, detente was the order of the day, and when Star Wars was just a film. This film deals with the attempts of two young women to find relief from their boring lives in the run-down, depressed Liverpool of the 1980s. Elaine and Teresa, having scorned the petty rivalries of their local pub and boyfriends, make for the nightlife in Liverpool.

In need of money to finance their amorous plans (they are long-standing 'cobbing off' partners) Teresa steals a wallet from a man who tries to chat her up in a bar. Caught red handed they high-tail it to the city's flashiest disco... with ripped-off punter and his mate in hot pursuit. In the disco they notice two Russian sailors, and Teresa, bold as brass, goes off to chat them up. For Elaine it is love at first sight.

From here on in the film deals with the obstacles put in the way of Elaine's and Peter's romance. First they have nowhere to take their two Russian lovers. A hotel is eventually decided upon, despite the fact that this uses up the last of their ill-gotten gains. Chicken factory worker by day and disco queen by night, Teresa is reluctant to 'spend all her money on men', but concedes that a night with Sergei might be worth it after all.

The relationship between Teresa and Sergei is shown as being based solely on sexual attraction — so much so that it doesn't seem to matter that neither understands a word that the other says. But the opposite is the case for Elaine and Peter. Their love remains 'pure' and unconsummated. They spend the night literally 'wishing upon a star'. Unfortunately, the film rather labours the point. Indeed, whenever it reaches a particularly romantic moment, the camera zooms skyward to show 'their' star twinkling in the firmament. This even happened in one scene when it was raining. True love, it seems, has the power to dispel clouds!

The morning after, bus trip round Liverpool and a ferry across the Mersey later, it's time for Peter and Sergei to go back to the ship... and back to Russia forever. The last few minutes are agony for Elaine. In the days and weeks that follow, all she can think of is Peter.

But he is in Soviet Russia, and she is stuck in Margaret Thatcher's Britain. Who can possibly bring our star-crossed lovers back together? Teresa suggests a letter to Brezhnev. The reply from *Pravda's* Marge Proops contains a one way ticket to the Soviet Union. Will Elaine give



Hello sailor!

up her life in Liverpool and voyage into the unknown to be with Peter? With a love this strong, clearly the answer is yes. But the open hostility of her family, not to mention the Foreign Office, have yet to be overcome.

The film returns to a high, dealing with these conflicts with a sharp dry, almost vicious humour. 'Why don't you go out and play with your acne?', screams an exasperated Elaine at her younger sister, as the pressure mounts on her to stay in Liverpool. But leave Liverpool she must. It has nothing to offer her, as the film makes clear. She has to escape.

This central message of the film is both its strong point and its weakness. Life for young women like Elaine and Teresa is pointless and monotonous. A boring combination of dole queues and soul destroying jobs broken only by the shallow 'excitement' of Liverpool's nightlife. There has to be more to life than this. This is where the film disappoints and perhaps betrays the soap opera background of the team that produced it.

It is not so much that the escape offered to Elaine is a prettified vision of the Soviet Union. The film is an indictment of Liverpool under

Thatcher, rather than an apology for Stalinism. Elaine could just as well be fleeing off to Germany or France for all the difference it makes to the solution that the film offers.

'Escape' for Elaine is a one-way ticket into a strictly defined heterosexual relationship with a man she hardly knows. 'Love' is something mystical that happens to people rather than something that has to be build up through co-operation and shared struggle over a period of time. The film's message is that love conquers all, but the definition of love it presents is a thoroughly romanticised and unreal version of an emotion that is so important to human existence.

One or two misgivings aside, this is an excellent film and well worth the time and money you'll spend on going to see it. After all, even the most committed amongst us has to escape from the pressures of the struggle once in a while. If only true love *did* happen like it does in the movies! If only life's problems *could* be solved by wishing on a star! Illusion and escape. If only Star Wars was just a film! But that's another fantasy altogether!!

# What price masculinity?

SOMETIMES IT seems as if the impetus that the women's movement gave to the discussion of sexual politics and gender relations in the late sixties and early seventies has been dissipated, that the issues raised then have lost their focus. There are no longer the same certainties, the sense of direction.

'A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle', defiant feminist graffiti used to proclaim in the loos at political venues. That meant that if you went to the loo to sob your heart out over your bloke going off with someone else, you could cry a little harder with self-recrimination because you knew you were a failure as a feminist as well. 'Abolish the family!' enjoined left-wing agitators, perhaps with the thrills rather than the spills of the sexual revolution in mind.

Today this all seems somehow inadequate: anyway it no longer reflects the mood of the times. There's still the perennial battle of the sexes, but few of us are quite so sure how and where the lines are drawn. Separatist feminism has lost a little of its charm, and gay liberation fell short of abolishing the emotional and even sexual traumas of straight society. The upsurge of our expectations only made the disappointments harder and the unfulfilled needs more bewildering.

The counterpart of defiant feminism was the self-blaming mode of men against sexism, but angry feminists and guilty (therefore resentful) men didn't make a very productive partnership either politically or as individuals. Many men on the left ridiculed attempts to set up men's groups, claiming that 'oppressors' didn't need self-help, or would just sit around congratulating themselves and each other on how self-critical they were. The benefit of this attitude was that the critics were able to feel superior politically (quite important for male revolutionaries) as well as absolving themselves of any responsibility to do anything (also quite important if you don't want to confront anything that makes you feel insecure). The task of these men, then, was to support women's demands as vocally as possible, and try to remember about the washing-up.

The discussion of sex showed this most starkly: it was for women to discover and assert their sexual identity and needs, and for men to learn how to give better sexual satisfaction to women. Men's sexuality and their ability to find satisfaction, according to this approach, was unproblematic: they were assumed, even by themselves, to take their pleasure at women's expense, up to the point of indulging in pornography, prostitution and rape. Men's needs and feelings weren't part of the discussion, and if men felt they didn't conform to the stereotype they were more likely to feel inadequate about that and keep their mouths shut than own up about it. Women researched their needs and feelings and gave them voice, while men remained in a wilderness of silence and ignorance of themselves. Learning to feel ashamed

## ERICA FLEGG

ed didn't teach them how to become more emotionally open or self-aware.

These observations may be a simplification, but most of us now in our thirties will recognise them as part of the experience we went through in the 'counter culture' and on the left. The same attitudes still affect us today, but they don't provide enough answers any more. We are looking, for new answers, better answers, to the old problems; and that entails a reappraisal of some of the more glib positions that we adopted a decade and more ago.

This reappraisal, and new initiatives, have again come mainly from women. Landmarks have been books like *Sex and Love*, in which some brave women said how they really felt instead of how they thought they ought to feel, and *What do Women Want?* by Luise Eichenbaum and Susie Orback, which came out of the experience of women's therapy. Shere Hite, after her world-famous Hite Report on



women, brought out a report on male sexuality. The Hite report on men may have failed to make the same popular impact as the one on women, but in many ways it was a more profound and path-breaking study. It allowed men to say, in their own words, things they had never said before; no-one had ever asked.

Reading the Hite report on men, a fat tome of over 1,000 pages, I was struck that a woman, rather than a man, should have been motivated to undertake the study, and that I, as a woman, was more motivated to read it than most of my male friends and comrades. Reading it in public places like the tube, or the pub during a lunch-break at work, I caught enough odd looks from men to feel almost too self-conscious to concentrate. A woman reading a large, serious volume on men and their sexuality: it unnerved them. If I'd been reading the *Kama Sutra*, or even *Masters and Johnson*, they might have leered or offered to buy me a drink. It isn't yet accepted by men — although they have the most reason to know better — that it is interesting or worthwhile to study and understand themselves. This, indeed, is a large part of the problem.

What is happening today, then, is not that the debate on sexual politics has petered out. While it may not be as prominent a discussion

as it used to be — and needs to be — I believe that it has reached a new level, a higher level, that will prove more fruitful in pointing the direction in which we need to look for the answers to some of these old problems that affect us all, whatever our gender or our sexual orientation, in our everyday lives.

Pluto Press' book *The Sexuality of Men*, published last year, reflects this new process: as Susie Orback says in the frontispiece, the essays 'provide us with a new stimulus for the desperately needed dialogue...' Dialogue, because in the past there has been no real exchange of insights and ideas between men and women on this subject, desperately needed because without such a dialogue there can be no real understanding, and consequently no real change.

For men to read *What do Women Want?* (the question posed rhetorically by Freud) must, I imagine, be an enlightening more than a guilt-inducing or threatening experience, because it helps to explain. It appeals, I believe — although it is addressed to women — to something in men that might enable them to identify with women. Something similar happens for a woman reading the Hite report on men or passages in *The Sexuality of Men*: it seems as if, at last, we might become more intelligible to each other. Our emotional needs, as human beings, are after all not so different; it is the way that those needs are experienced and expressed that is so different between men and women, because of our socialisation.

At last, mutual understanding, communication, seem possible. Most importantly of all, this dialogue points up the possibilities for change, for men as well as for women: the possibilities for transforming the quality of our lives, our relationship with each other, and with children. It points up the costs, particularly for men, of failing to take the opportunity for change.

This, perhaps is the most radical of the insights emerging from this new movement: that men, despite their apparent social power and privilege, are in many respects impoverished and inhibited by their masculinity. Most simply put, their opportunities for emotionally intimate and rewarding relationships with other people — each other, women, children — are constrained by the social construction of their gender. They are not the stronger sex: as Tom Ryan, a therapist, argues in his essay on 'Roots of Masculinity', 'masculinity, not femininity, is the weaker of the gender constructs.'

Ryan's experience of men's problems as they emerge in therapy has led him to view masculinity as a 'defensive construction' developed to emphasise men's difference and separate identity. Many men, he says, deny feelings of need or dependency, which they experience as threatening self-annihilation; they develop an 'exaggerated virility' which is paraded as autonomy. The result is a fear of intimacy, which can have a completely destruct-

tive effect on the man's central emotional relationships:

'His most recent relationship,' Ryan writes of one of his clients, 'survived for several years, but repeated discord and separations left him feeling lonely, depressed and despairing. Away from his partner he felt love and affection for her, but while with her, especially during moments of intimacy, he experienced feelings of irritation and anxiety. A pattern developed whereby when he felt entrapped he behaved in a contemptuous or rejecting manner, inducing his partner to reject and leave him. The pattern of rejection, separation and reconciliation was repeated innumerable times until Dave's partner finally decided to disengage herself from the relationship...'

The contradictory and confused nature of masculinity, then, can have a paralysing effect on the man and make it impossible for his partner to love or help him. In this context, while it is the woman who is the most emotionally abused in the relationship, it is really the man who is most the victim of the situation, as long as he can neither confront, nor escape, himself.

Vic Seidler, in his essay on 'Fear and Intimacy' takes this argument a step further. 'Socialist men,' he writes of the 1970s, 'were learning that they could analyse the fate of the international capitalist economy but they were speechless when it came to talking through issues in their sexual relationships... The power men carry in the structure of capitalist society is at a considerable cost in terms of our own emotional capacities, understandings and desires...' He describes the 'angry, spiteful and jealous' reaction many men have had to being challenged by women in sexual relationships: 'We did not understand why they were bringing up pain from the past ... we didn't understand the need for the past to be opened and the pain shared if it was to be purged... We could only think that women wanted to hurt and punish us.' Instead of working to resolve the problems of such a relationship, Seidler says, the man is impelled to seek another lover: 'If we feel hurt and rejected the only solution we know is to find another partner who appreciates us. It is because, at some level, we have never learnt to take responsibility for our emotional lives that we automatically assume that if things go wrong we have been with the wrong partner...'

Seidler also identifies male strength as an illusion, being based on 'brittle foundations'. Feminists, he says, have often overestimated it, 'even though they have experienced its contradictions'. However, seeing this more clearly won't enable women to change men: only men can change themselves. Seidler offers no easy solution, but he shows that change can only come through men becoming more self-aware - '... learning to take more responsibility for ourselves.' Therapy, he says, can play an important part in bringing men into closer contact with their own emotions, and must be linked to



a 'collective practice' (a political practice) that challenges institutional power and definitions of masculinity.

Again, many on the left - particularly men - are critical of psychotherapy, which they see as self-indulgent and/or only available to the relatively privileged. It won't provide any political answers, they say. Yet, many of the most valuable insights that have been developed on the subject of masculinity and gender relations have come out of the experience of therapy. Herb Goldberg's *The*

*Hazards of Being Male*, published nearly ten years ago, talks precisely from the experience of private practice for the executive class in California, but nevertheless it points to most of the same problems elaborated in *The Sexuality of Men*. Goldberg also gives the statistics on the price of masculinity: death rates, suicide rates, institutionalisation for psychiatric disorders, stress-related problems, behavioural symptoms.

*The Sexuality of Men* and the other books referred to give most of their attention to heterosexual relationships, but not exclusively so. Another advance in the last decade or so has been to draw away from seeing the heterosexual and homosexual forms of sexual behaviour as separate or exclusive worlds, and to look more closely at the construction of gender and social relations. Oddly enough, however, it is the essay on gay sexuality in *The Sexuality of Men* that has the most limited focus in this respect, and does less to explore the problems of homosexual relations than is attempted in *What do Women Want?* or *Sex and Love*. Another book published by Pluto last year, *Gay Liberation in the Eighties*, by Jamie Gough and Mike McNair, goes much further in abolishing the division in its discussion of 'Beyond Heterosexuality'. The latter study, however, is more concerned with the discussion of society than of personality; for the left, it is critical to bring both levels of analysis to bear on the study of what is experienced as 'the personal'.

We spent the seventies defining men as the problem, but analysing women instead. Perhaps in the eighties we will come at last to analysing the social construction, and the experience, of masculinity as a social problem that is oppressive not only to women, and to children, but to men themselves. For men will never change purely out of guilt feelings or under pressure from the women's movement: they'll only be motivated to understand and change themselves when the price they pay in terms of the impoverishment of their own lives begins to seem too high.

The gain of such pressure for change will represent a gain not just for men but for society as a whole. In that sense, *The Sexuality of Men* is an important book for the British left, particularly since it attempts to integrate its analysis with a political critique. The questions addressed in these essays are at the heart of our lives, where too many of us never look... or else we feel that our personal experience is not subject to analysis, it is isolated from our politics. It is to be hoped, then, that this book will enlarge and widen the dialogue that it has helped to start: that depends, in large part, on the ability of the left to respond to the challenge to open the discussion that is so badly needed.

Andy Metcalf and Martin Humphries, eds., *The Sexuality of Men*, Pluto Press, 1985, £4.50.



# Farewell to Sartre

KATHY LOWE

FOR MANY Marxists who have followed the work of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, the 1970s was a time when he lost his political bearings, when the intellectual energies that made him one of the century's outstanding thinkers and writers finally deserted him. For Simone de Beauvoir it was a time when she watched her comrade and companion of 50 years confront the anguish of illness and the sudden shrinking of his creative world.

Sartre died in 1980, physically broken and almost blind. Simone de Beauvoir's latest book *Adieux, a Farewell to Sartre* is written, she explains, for those who would like to know more about his last years. It is divided into two parts. The first is a narrative, largely based on the diary she kept in Paris during the 1970s. This is followed by what she calls her 'Conversations' with Sartre — interviews she conducted with him in August-September 1974.

Structurally, the two sections of the book fail to hang together. Some of the Conversations, by her own admission, are disjointed and repetitious. Yet the book as a whole is as disturbing as anything she has ever written — at times so frank, so personal, that the reader feels almost an intruder.

In recounting her day-to-day collaboration with Sartre in Paris, the many projects and pleasures shared, de Beauvoir sets the 70s before us... in France the factory struggles, police repression and the lingering influence of Maoism... the Yom Kippur war... the stillborn Portuguese revolution... the gradual disillusion and disorientation of left intellectuals Europe-wide.

She describes how Sartre, while working on his massive study of Flaubert, helped to establish and to write for left journals like *La cause du peuple*, *Liberation* and latterly his own journal *Les temps modernes*. He joined demonstrations, spoke at factory gates, campaigned for the rights of immigrant workers, for prison reforms, for the cause of the Basques and the Palestinians. Politically, he had formally renounced Marxism, defined himself as a 'socialist-communist' but was moving towards what Perry Anderson has described as 'a radical neo-anarchism'.

Insights into his ideological evolution are plentiful in this book. But its scope is far wider, its value of a very different kind.

Increasingly, the account of Sartre and de Beauvoir's daily round of writing, reading, giving interviews, evenings spent listening to music or dining with friends is overshadowed by her anxious references to his failing health. Thus we come to the heart of the matter. How does an intellectual and activist so prolific, so long at the centre of things come to terms with 'decline' — with restrictions imposed by sickness and ageing, and with the relative political isolation those restrictions bring?



Simone de Beauvoir

Sartre suffered a series of strokes in 1970–72. With each setback his friends feared that he would be left crippled. Even more, they feared for his mind. Yet each time, to their amazement, he managed to regain lost ground, sometimes showing sudden bursts of his old brilliance and vitality.

The blindness, when it came in 1973, was quite another matter. It prevented him from reading, writing, and, most painfully, from developing his ideas. He knew moments of profound despair, referring to himself on one occasion as 'a living corpse'.

He acknowledged his greater dependence on those closest to him without ever being able to fully accept it. De Beauvoir recalls how one day when she picked up a book to read to him as usual he remarked sadly: 'Before, when I was more intelligent, we didn't read, we talked.' So they talked. Still, she started to notice a new detachment in his manner. He would let discussion drop after a short time, without asking questions or introducing fresh ideas.

Towards the end of Sartre's life, many on the European left became disturbed by what they saw as his increasingly erratic political pronouncements. In particular, an interview with him conducted by his secretary, Bernard Henry Levy and published in *Le nouvel observateur* on the eve of his death, caused great concern. It was seen by many as a sign that Levy, a former Maoist student leader who later turned to the Jewish religion, had 'taken over' Sartre.

De Beauvoir, who often voices her own political disagreements with Sartre in the book, was horrified by this interview and told him so. However, she also argues that Sartre's physical disabilities (for example, being unable to read

back over what had been written rather than simply hearing a tape recording) and his troubled state of mind left him more prey to manipulation. Momentarily her stated vow to merely tell Sartre's story breaks down as she gives full vent to her anger against Levy whom she despises as a political maverick, arrogant and ambitious.

De Beauvoir's relationship with Sartre has been extensively documented, not least in her own four-volume autobiography. *Adieux, a Farewell to Sartre* testifies anew to the immense reserves of mutual respect and comradeship built up over their half a century together and which they now had to draw on to sustain them.

Through the Conversations in the second section of the book, a series of interviews transcribed from tapes, she sought to help Sartre to express himself at a time when blindness had cruelly narrowed his world. The Conversations work best when she abandons stilted interview techniques ('What are your subjective relations to your work as a whole?... Let us talk about the literary and philosophical side of your work...') in favour of real debate. They discuss literature, art, childhood, religion, revolution in no particular order. Sartre is by turns self-mocking, reflective, even mischievous. He returns often to his theme of the need for the 'new intellectual' to become integrated with the life of the masses.

Regrettably, one Conversation about his 'sexual little capers' and his attitude to women strikes a very jarring note. The questions are pointed, challenging to a degree. But the whole exercise turns into one in which they intellectualise together about his sexual experiences and discuss almost clinically some of the young women he has encountered over the years.

Most interesting are Sartre's reflections on the course his life has taken: 'Setting aside this period of wearing away — which I don't grieve over, since it's the common lot — I think I've had a period, from the age of thirty to sixty five, in which I kept a hold on myself and in which I was not very different at the beginning from what I became. A period in which there was indeed a continuity during which I used my freedom properly to do what I intended; in which I was able to be of use and to help spread certain ideas; and in which I did what I wanted — that is, I wrote, which has been the essence of my life...'

With his death came the separation, the desolation for de Beauvoir that she had long dreaded. Yet the strongest images of Sartre she leaves us with are not of suffering and pain but of an unquenchable spirit who never ceased calling himself into question. Her book is in itself an act of courage, of striving, of questioning. Indeed a fitting farewell.

Simone de Beauvoir, *Adieux, a Farewell to Sartre*, Penguin £4.95.

# Cosmic Pain

COLIN MEADE

THE SURPRISE with which the literary world greeted the selection of New Zealander Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* as winner of the Booker Prize for 1985 looks distinctly stage-managed when you read the author's details on the dustcover. Published by a women's collective the book may be, but Keri Hulme you discover 'has been the recipient of many literary grants and awards' while the *Bone People* itself 'won the 1984 New Zealand Book Award for Fiction and the Mobil Pegasus Award for Maori literature.'

Far from raising a struggling unknown from obscurity, the Booker Prize panel has simply decided to set a British seal of approval on a product of a developing New Zealand cultural establishment — also manifested on the TV in the form of the serial 'Heart of the High Country' and underlined politically by the independent anti-nuclear policies of New Zealand's Labour government under David Lange.

The *Bone People* itself however shows the limits of the formation of a stable New Zealand identity, exposing as it does the chronic crisis in human relations which has arisen from the multiple social dislocations involved in the colonial settler experience.

The book has three central characters — woman, man, child — who, despite their formal resemblance to a basic nuclear family unit, are neither blood related nor legally tied to one another. The style of the book — three streams of consciousness, one for each of the three main characters — emphasises their separation from each other and from everyone else.

The woman — very nearly almost the author herself — is a dried-up artist of mixed race descent who emotionally identifies with the 12½% Maori blood in her veins. She lives alone in a tower and is estranged from her family for some unexplained reason. She defines her natural self as being a 'loner on the fringes'.

Her relative equilibrium is upset one day by the appearance of Simon Gillayley, followed by his adoptive father Joe. Joe is a working class Maori whose much loved wife and first child are dead and who is also at odds with his elaborate family network. He has adopted Simon, racially a pure Aryan who was washed up on shore after a shipwreck. Simon is deaf and dumb for psychological reasons, gets bullied at school, and has a reputation in the locality for being a naughty child.

All three characters erupt at intervals from their respective solitudes through outbursts of violence — usually accompanied by heavy drinking (including by the child). Joe beats Simon; Keri at one stage employs her Japanese martial arts training on Joe and Simon precipitates the crisis of the book by murdering

the child molester Biny Daniels, and then wounding Joe, who reacts with an almost fatal assault on the boy.

As the three are torn apart — the child into care and the father to jail — the book begins to press for some kind of conclusion to the tragedy it has unleashed. The author rejects one escape root — for Joe at least — who makes a return into his national past where a dying old man offers him the task of watching over a forgotten Maori religious site for the rest of his life. Joe rejects this offer and returns to the present. However it soon becomes apparent that his return is essential in order that another pseudo-solution should be activated — this time by the *Power of Love*.

The stage has been set for this through the presentation of the theme of pain.

Pain is revealed as the source of the violence, in the sense that violence is a rejection of the burdens which healing the pains of others puts on the characters. One of the most powerful scenes in the book is when Simon gets a hook stuck in his thumb while fishing. While Joe removes the hook, Keri is paralysed and unable to help in the operation.

Specific pain, however, is constantly blurring into abstract, cosmic pain. Thus at one stage the killing of mice stimulates Kerwin to the thought 'You're a morbid subhuman bastard Holmes... where were you when they built Treblinka and Dachau?' One the one hand cosmic pain justifies withdrawal from human relationships and to some extent the violence.

On the other if pain is the result of love then cosmic pain is the result of cosmic love; and so a superhuman force of love is unleashed, able to sweep over all the obstacles of class, culture, and history as well as the effects of the



Keri Hulme

Michael Short

brutalisation that Joe has inflicted on Simon and to provide a happy ending in which not only the three main characters but also their families are reconciled.

This ending flatly denies the reality of the body of the book! The world becomes separated into the realm of cosmic forces and that of history, and each can only dream the other (there are a lot of dreams in the book).

And perhaps this reveals one of the reasons why Booker Prize judges were attracted by 'The Bone People'. If historical problems can only be resolved in dreams then novels — the artefacts from which they make their living — become the privileged site not only of the exposition of real conflicts but also of their resolution.

Keri Hulme *The Bone People* Spiral/Hodder & Stoughton £9.95.

## Stalinism in Europe

PHIL HEARSE

THE QUESTION of Stalinism is central to an understanding of twentieth century history, and to analysing the reasons for the survival of the capitalist world system well beyond the point where it had become 'rotten ripe' for socialist revolution. Here are two books which will greatly aid the socialist movement in coming to terms with this problem. Hallas's book is a no-nonsense primer on the history of the Communist International which charts its rise as a revolutionary movement and its eventual strangulation by Stalinism. Spriano's book is a more detailed and reflective account of the relationship between the Kremlin and the European Communist movement between the

1930s and the death of Stalin in 1953.

With Hallas's book we have few arguments. Anyone new to the socialist movement will benefit from his lucid account, which mainly sticks to Trotskyist orthodoxy. Spriano, the central historian of the Italian Communist Party, is a different kettle of fish. While much of what he says is a searing critique of the history of the Stalinist movement, in a couple of his central judgements he tends to justify the orientation which the Communist Parties eventually adopted.

First, though, it is worth paying tribute to Spriano's skills in marshalling a mass of detail which damns the course adopted by the Stalinist parties and by the Soviet government. Particularly striking are, for example, his ac-

count of the French Popular Front of the 1930s and the gyrations of the Stalinists over the second world war. On France Spriano, covering much of the same material as EH Carr's *Twilight of the Comintern*, shows that the French CP under Thorez went far to the right of the Blum's Socialists in demanding the inclusion of bourgeois forces in the Popular Front, and in forcing the adoption of most right-wing social chauvinist slogans. All this shocked left wing militants in the Socialist Party. No one should think that the right wing antics of *Marxism Today* are anything new: the spectacle of 'communists' denouncing socialist militants from the right is a tradition which goes back to the Popular Fronts of the 1930s.

Particularly gripping is Spriano's account of the policy adopted by Stalin and imposed on the Comintern during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact. To prove his sincerity, Stalin handed 500 German Communist exiles over to the Gestapo. When France was invaded by Germany, the French CP was instructed not to raise any slogans against the German occupation. In 1940 the walls of Paris were covered by CP slogans such as 'The rich must pay!' and 'Long live Stalin!' — but not a word about the minor fact that the country was occupied by the Nazis or that thousands of working class militants were languishing in jail, with all democratic rights and liberties suppressed.

All this turned into its opposite when the Soviet Union was invaded. Communist propaganda was then turned towards the most grotesque flattery of the 'democratic' capitalist powers, the virtues of Mr Churchill, Catholicism, the Christian Democracy and so on *ad nauseam*. Not surprisingly, socialist militants of the PSI, in the Italian underground, regarded all this as disgusting. Again, the bizarre spectacle of social democratic militants denouncing 'communists' from the left.

Spriano in my view makes a couple of errors of judgement which despite all the damning detail, tend to justify Stalinist policy. Significantly they are on questions where he takes issue with Trotsky and Trotskyism — and indeed these points will be very familiar to those who have followed these historical debates.

First, while paying tribute to Trotsky's analysis of the rise of fascism in Germany, Spriano argues that Trotsky was wrong on Spain and France in the mid-1930s, and grossly overestimated the possibility of any revolutionary working class victory in these countries. The real choice for the working class, says Spriano, was not fascism or socialism, but fascism or *democracy* (p125). Certainly this line of argumentation cannot be sustained in relation to Spain where there was indeed a *revolution* following the Francoist coup in 1936.

In the case of France, while nobody can be certain that the 1936 occupation of the factories could have resulted in the conquest of working class power, it is certain that the Popular Front, just like the CP in May 1968, demobilised the movement and prevented its maximum development.



**Aris Velouchiotis, leader of ELAS the Greek partisan army, denounced by the Greek CP for 'adventurism'.**

The point is this: if the real choice facing the working class was democracy or fascism, and there was no hope of any revolutionary breakthrough, then why be so hard on the Popular Front? All you can say is that it did have dreadful rightist, class-collaborationist excesses, but it was right on the central question — that socialist revolution was off the agenda.

Spriano judges it to be 'an old Trotskyist myth' that there was any revolutionary potential in the situation in post second world war Europe. That may be so. But is it a myth that Italy was liberated by the Communist-led Garibaldi brigades; that Mussolini's government was brought down by mass working class strikes and an uprising; that Paris was liberated by Communist-led resistance brigades *before* the allies got there; and that following the overthrow of the Third Reich factory committees were spontaneously formed all over Germany; and that in the end the Communist Parties ordered the armed masses to disband, to turn in their guns, and to accept the bourgeois order. Was there no revolutionary potential in this situation?

Again, one cannot prove that the conquest of power by the working class in one or several European countries was possible, but one can prove without a shadow of a doubt that the Stalinist line of restoring bourgeois order and legality prevented any such struggle for power.

If Spriano is right and there was no possibility whatever of fighting for socialist revolution, then the disarming of the masses at the behest of the CP leaders can be justified: what ultra-leftism to retain armed bands in a non-revolutionary situation!

These points are not mere quibbles, because they go to the heart of post-war political developments. The restoration of world capitalism after world war two and the long economic boom which temporarily stabilised the capitalist system in the 1950s and 1960s, was only possible because of the crushing defeats which the working class suffered between the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 and the defeat of the post-war revolutionary wave between 1945-9.

This raises the question that we posed at the beginning of this review: the relationship between Stalinism and the survival of capitalism and the imperialist world order. It is often argued in left wing circles that the European working class does not have a revolutionary history, compared with the masses of the 'third world' and the 'East'. This kind of argument is a travesty, even when peddled by the would-be Trotskyists of *Socialist Action*.

Time and again sections of the European working class movement have taken the road towards socialist revolution, only to be defeated or crushed through the perfidy of their leaderships; and in all the central turning points of 20th century working class history the role of Stalinism has been key — from the role of the KPD in allowing the Nazis to come to power in Germany, to the defeat of the Spanish revolution, to the post-war stabilisation in Europe.

As Duncan Hallas explains, the Communist International had hundreds of thousands of supporters in Europe during its revolutionary phase in the 1920s. There was a revolutionary mass alternative leadership for the working class. The breaking of that continuity, the result of the Stalinisation of the Comintern, is the fundamental explanation of the temporary stabilisation of the bourgeois order in Western Europe in the 'fifties and 'sixties. It is in this sense that one can speak of a 'long detour' in the world revolutionary process.

The central task for Marxists today is to re-link the new generations of working class militants with the traditions of the revolutionary Communist International, a tradition which was only preserved through the long period of bitter defeats by Trotsky and the Fourth International. Two prerequisites for this are a serious study of the political lessons of the Comintern and an unshakeable conviction of the revolutionary potential of the working class, in Europe as much as anywhere else. Both these books provide much material for the first prerequisite, and ample evidence of the second.

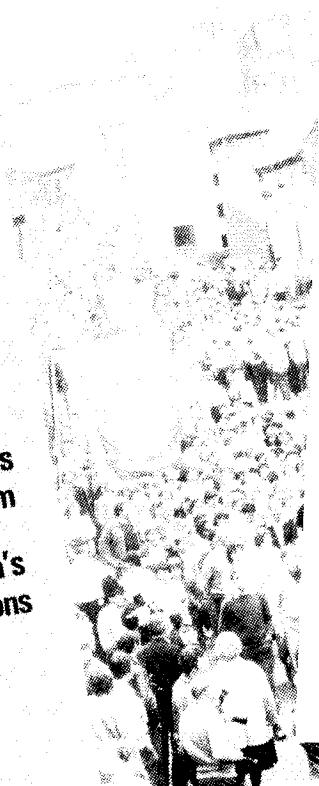
*Paolo Spriano Stalin and the European Communists Verso £16.95.*  
*Duncan Hallas The Comintern Bookmarks £3.75.*

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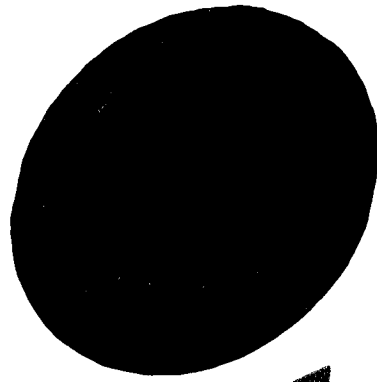
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