

No. 6 September/October 1986

international

A journal of Marxism in the Labour Party

How right can you get

**INSIDE: TONY BENN INTERVIEWED
PLUS TROTSKY PHOTO SUPPLEMENT**



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No consensus with the bosses

THIS YEAR'S TUC conference set the agenda for a Labour government committed to austerity. In his speech to the conference, Neil Kinnock said two things to the captains of industry and their fund managers in the city.

First, they have nothing to fear from a possible future majority Labour government. Secondly, the Labour leadership has wholeheartedly embraced 'consensus' as the framework for policy-making whether or not Labour win an overall majority. The message for the rest of us was blunt: austerity, hard work and more austerity.

Is this really the way to persuade the anti-Tory voter to positively vote Labour rather than for the SDP/Liberal Alliance? Surely the drive for consensus, unity of the nation and the rejection of extremists on both sides has been most consistently represented by Steel and Owen?

True, there is a commitment to the creation of one million jobs in two years. But this depends on us not daring to ask for more. In addition to junking the traditional commitment to full employment, also junked are demands for renationalisation, repatriation of capital and nationalisation of the wealth of the financial institutions. This is giving a free rein to the managers of public services and industry — all of whom owe their positions to Thatcher and have faithfully done her bidding.

Congress' decision in favour of a legal minimum wage was equally inadequate. Its implementation will follow the creation of those one million jobs. The actual figure will be set only after Labour has sat down with the bosses and the TUC in the 'National Economic Assessment.' So, perhaps in three years time a part time cleaner must take her firm to the Low Pay Court. Would she risk victimisation? Would she risk her job? Should she rely on the Low Pay tribunal to rule in her favour anymore than it has been advisable to rely on the Equal Pay or Unfair Dismissal tribunals to date?

A very low figure of £80 has been mooted. In a period of recession with the unions severely weakened the employers will either cut the take home wages of weaker sections or cut jobs or both. The TUC and Labour leaders have made it clear that they will oppose anyone paid more than such a figure taking action over pay. After all 'one person's pay rise is another person's job.' Remember that. This version of a statutory minimum is no less than a baseline for an incomes policy.

Prevarication over job creation and low pay is in contrast to the leadership's resolute firmness over trade union legislation. The introduction of statutory rights to secret balloting before strikes and for the election of national executives are a massive extension of ruling class interference in the unions. These measures — which are much

worse than 'In Place of Strife' — greatly strengthen the bureaucrats against the democratically elected stewards and activists. They find the trade union and labour leaders faithfully echoing the two main lessons the bosses want to hammer home from the defeat of the miners' strike. Strikes don't work and 'extra-parliamentary' activists advocating collective class action are indeed the 'enemy within' — the 'saloon bar revolutionaries'.

In attacking collective class action these measures attack socialism. They set in motion yet another conveyor belt of liberal, individualistic ideas into the labour movement. The 'new rights' referred to are apparently collective but are in fact those of the individual who must have them guaranteed by the state and defended by individual secret ballot. They are not to be guaranteed by strong collective organisation at work and defended by collective action. It is classic liberalism. The boss and the individual worker are equals before the law. Tell that to the miners!

The leadership and programme being offered by the Kinnockite majority is the chief obstacle to fighting back against the bosses' offensive. They propose consensus with the very bosses who have thrown four million on the dole. With these 'allies' they propose to stabilise the present situation and then to introduce with infinite slowness a smidgeon of reflation.

But this project is built on sand. It is not acceptable to the owners of capital (except in the immediate pre-election period). With an election due and Labour coming to heel there will be a very short respite in their frontal offensive before relaunching big new attacks. The bosses must claw back more and yet more of what they regard as the 'giveaways' of welfarism, high employment and reasonable wages. It will take just one little economic squall after the election of a Labour government to blow even Kinnock's pathetic promise of one million jobs off course.

Kinnock's political project will breed further demoralisation paving the way for governments to the right of Thatcher's. It will stimulate the growth of far right forces in society as racism, sexism and other divisions in the class deepen. It is a recipe for the disunity of the class not the unity we heard bellowed in Brighton.

Not that the Kinnockites have no differences with full-blown new realists like Hammond. While the spectre of the miners' strike still haunts Congress House and Walworth Road, however, the centre and sections of the left will continue to huddle for warmth around Kinnock temporarily moderating Hammonds approach. At this year's TUC, the trade union bureaucracy tried — quite successfully — to set the seal on the miners' defeat.

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Please write for further information on day sessions.

For programme and further details please send to: **Symposium**, PO Box 503, London N1 1YH.

A socialist alternative in Europe

THAT'S THE theme of the first *International* Symposium to be held in London's Princeton Kingsway College on 17-19 October. The event will try to break new ground in drawing together experiences from a wide variety of European countries in discussing how to construct an alternative to the perceived failure of social democratic governments in and out of power in the last decade.

2

The task is an urgent one for British socialists. Those on

the left like Tony Benn and Eric Heffer have correctly drawn attention to the rightward drift of the Labour leadership in the approach to the next election. Others have pointed out that Kinnock's 'democratic socialist' approach has resulted in the evacuation of pro-working class policies when applied in France and the Spanish state. But what is still lacking is the sort of constructive critique of these experiences that can lead to the building of an

alternative which is credible among hundreds of thousands, let alone millions, of working class people.

Such an alternative must take into account centrally the pan-European dimension of this crisis of traditional working class politics. Since the end of the 1970s the peace movement has not only posed the possibility of a united European-wide movement, but also the aspiration of a united Europe without imperialist bases, a Europe

which dispenses with the post-war division that has shaped politics so profoundly.

It is also incumbent on Marxists to fully evaluate the growth and development of alternative political movements which have arisen in consequence of the crisis not only of the reformist parties, but of many revolutionary organisations which started to flourish with the end of the post war boom and the onset of the political crisis marked

by the events of 1968. Such a friendly critique of broad movements which have based their programme on issues of race and gender, or around the issues of peace and ecology, provides an important challenge for the majority of revolutionary organisations, even if the dominant reaction on the far left has been defensive or, in the case of Britain, hostile.

The symposium will feature major sessions on the alternative to Thatcherite austerity in Europe and on the socialist alternative in Britain. The rest of the weekend will be organised into 'streams' devoted to particular topics.

Series of workshops will examine such theses as:

- ★ the crisis of reformist strategy in Western Europe,
- ★ European alternatives such as the Greens, Sinn Fein and the experience of the revolutionary left since 1968,
- ★ the last ten years of the women's liberation movement,
- ★ a European agenda focusing on the new technology, campaigning against NATO and other central political themes vital to today's socialist movement,
- ★ European labour history including evaluation of the legacy of Hungary and Suez, and the important developments in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Participants in the symposium can either follow one of these streams, or pick their own course from the thirty or so forums on offer. Speakers will include; Ernest Mandel, Hilary Wainwright, John Palmer, Jane Kelly, Valerie Coultas, Dani Ahrens, Tariq Ali, Robin Blackburn, Patrick Camiller, Branka Magas, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Alan Thornett, Gunter Minnerup, Oliver MacDonald as well as speakers from the rest of Europe.

The cost of tickets in advance is £7 and £4 concessionary (£8 and £5 on the door). A creche is provided for which places must be booked in advance.

Write with registration fee to: Symposium, PO Box 503 London N1 1YH.



Colonel Gaddafi at the non-aligned summit

Dollars for the contras, B52s for Libya

AS WE go to press there are persistent reports of US preparations for a major strike against Libya. B52 bombers, which can launch massively destructive stand-off missiles to hit Libya from mid-Atlantic are being prepared, and a US-Egyptian naval exercise is taking place off Libya's coastline. All that is needed is a trumped up excuse for another attack, maybe another attempt to kill Gaddafi, maybe a strike against oilfields or military installations. One way or another a further attack will come in the US quest to overthrow the Gaddafi regime.

These preparations follow

on just a couple of weeks after the US Congress decision to send 200 million dollars to the counter revolutionary contras operating on the borders of Nicaragua, as Reagan seeks to deepen the push to overthrow the Sandinista government.

The project conceived in the late 1970s, that of a major use of US military power to defend US interests against all comers — the Soviet Union, the colonial revolution and even the US' capitalist 'partners' — is being fulfilled with a vengeance. But it is important for the left to understand what this open display of us world-wide

military might means, and to work through what the necessary political tasks for those who stand opposed to the imperialist war drive.

The offensive against Nicaragua is of course motivated not just by global power considerations, but by the fear of the example of 'another Cuba' spreading through Latin America, a continent wracked by the debt crisis and the IMF-imposed poverty which is the consequence. What stands in the way of an all-out US invasion in the short or medium-term is the continued popularity of the revolution among the Nicaraguan masses and the gains which it has brought. The US aim is a long-term effort at destabilisation through bleeding the Nicaraguan economy to death. Through this they hope to create a basis for popular disaffection with the FSLN which can prepare a final blow against the FSLN, either through a direct invasion or substantial military progress by the contras, aided by US air power.

The US still has lots of cards to play in relation to Nicaragua; the problem is that the Sandinistas are running out of options, as the economic situation worsens. The FSLN strategy of driving a wedge between the imperialist nations, supporting the Contadora peace initiatives and playing for time is showing diminishing returns. The Contadora peace process has ground to a halt, and the US is hardly inclined to worry about what its European allies think anyway. A major part of the responsibility for the grave situation facing the Sandinistas lies with the Soviet Union, whose aid is given out with an eye-dropper and who have made it perfectly clear that they will lift a single finger to defend Nicaragua from attack.

The loyalty of the Nicaraguan masses to the revolution derives not from ideological conviction but from the hard evidence of material progress. But living

standards are declining just at the moment the US is preparing to strangle the Sandinista revolution slowly. The main leadership faces difficult tactical choices in both its international and domestic policies. It will have to make them knowing that virtually the sole major resource to rely on is the will to resist of the Nicaraguan people themselves.

In previous issues of *International* we have argued that the US offensive against Libya and 'terrorism' is based on utilising a military and ideological offensive to strengthen the US's global position, especially vis-à-vis European capitalism. The anti-Libya crusade is part and parcel of the same policies which gave rise to Star Wars and the decision to site cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe. Through this political offensive the US hopes to drive a wedge into the European political bloc and to strengthen the right-wing pro-US forces at the expense of social democracy and the workers' movement against temptations towards European neutralism and directly against European economic policies which involve outflanking the capitalism — in particular European trade with Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Through the Star Wars project the US hopes to subordinate European high technology to the dominance of the United States.

The 'counter-terrorist' offensive linked with the new cold war is an elegant solution to many US political and economic problems. But it is also a high-risk strategy; and because of that has to be pursued with a ruthlessness and determination to make it work. The risk involved is precisely that through the escalating use of military power the US will strengthen anti-US and anti-NATO tendencies in Europe.

The first attack on Libya was massive and unpopular in Europe, with the notable exception of France. The peace movement in Britain responded in an exemplary

manner with a large demonstration organised by CND. There is a growing alarm at the use of US military muscle which the left can harness if it acts intelligently.

Of course our first task is to mobilise to defend the Nicaraguan revolution and defend Libya against imperial aggression. But over and above that we have to fight to create as large as possible a current opposed to NATO and British subordination to US policy. As a general election gets closer, the question of US bases and British membership of NATO gets ever more urgent.

Nothing would rebuff

Reaganite military adventurism more surely than a campaign against European and British complicity which won wide support in the labour movement. The use of British bases to attack Libya dramatically showed the correctness of the anti-NATO banner raised by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer in the Labour Party. The fight to get rid of the US bases must be built into a long-term campaign which can really do damage to the interests of maniacs like Casper Weinberger, Richard Perle and the other cold war ideologues, for whom the use of US military power is, as yet, just beginning.

Labour's Irish winter

WHILE LABOUR Party conference and the imminent anniversary of the Hillsborough Agreement, it is clearer than ever that Labour's 'Irish spring' has passed and winter is approaching. Given the marginalisation of the left on a range of questions, a fight will be necessary to keep Ireland on the agenda of the labour movement over the next few years.

In the past ten years the Party leadership has set up three successive working parties on Irish policy — surely more than on any other issue. In 1978 an NEC working party on Ireland reported to Party conference and rejected Irish unity. From 1979 onwards there was an upsurge in interest on Ireland and another working party was established. This time it coincided with the growth and politicisation of the Labour left and the development of mass struggle in Ireland during the hunger strikes and Sinn Fein's successful electoral intervention.

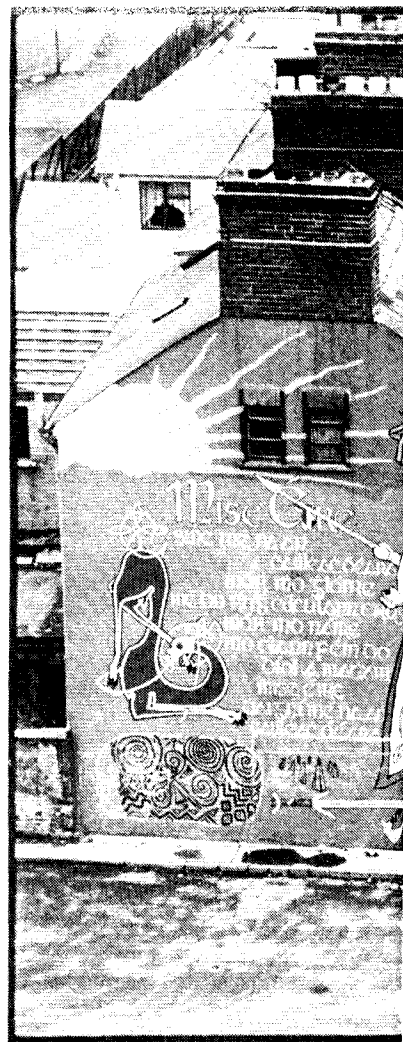
The historic 1981 working party report established Irish unity by consent as party policy and thus heralded Labour's Irish Spring with a promise of continued debate

and an end to bipartisan agreement with the Tories on the issue. When a further working party was set up in 1984 it seemed a possible vehicle for carrying this debate through the party as a whole and the unions, as well as challenging some of its inconsistencies. Such hopes seemed underlined by the presence of a relatively progressive deputy spokesperson — Clive Soley.

But, by January 1985, Soley had been sacked from his post and the pro-'troops out' chair of the working party, Joan Maynard, replaced by Alex Kitson — reknowned for his pro-unionist views.

Kinnock, anticipating the generalised retreat of the left that occurred in 1985, decided to ensure that its visibility on the Irish question was also dealt with.

By the summer of that year, the working party had all but ceased to function. With the 'Anglo-Irish Talks' approaching their conclusion, there was no need to rock the boat. The working party had already achieved something for the leadership — co-opting elements of the party that wanted to see movement on the unification policy through a 'harmonisation' line that



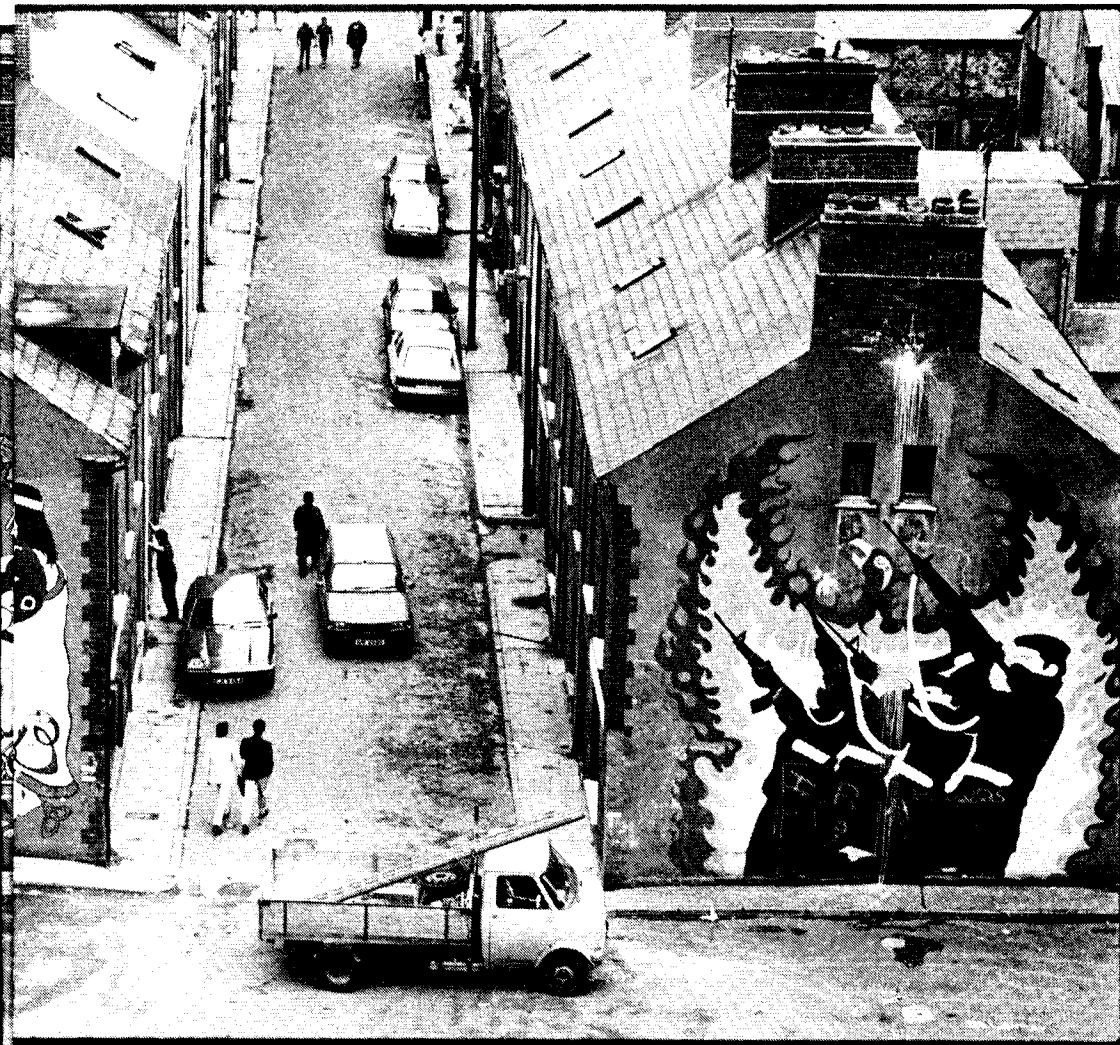
Derry

remarkably resembled Garret Fitzgerald's perception of the Accord.

Some of these figures — like Clare Short MP at the 1985 Labour Committee on Ireland AGM — had also been saying that the argument for withdrawal had already been won, generating dangerous illusions in the state of the debate and disarming the left in the face of developments to come.

At the same time, the leadership was engaged in a crackdown on sections of the party committed to advancing a discussion on British withdrawal involving the Republican viewpoint. Despite being agreed to by a majority of 22 to 3, a London Region Labour Party executive plan to hold a rally on this theme involving Sinn Fein was banned by the Party NEC. And in the new year

international UPFRONT



Andrew Moore/Reflex

prominent LCI member, Kevin Scally, was expelled from the party.

By November 1985 and the signing of the Hillsborough Agreement, Peter Archer, spokesperson on Ireland, was claiming that the Party was 'united' in backing it — going so far as to deny the existence of a 'withdrawal wing' when challenged on television. Of course this hadn't prevented him engaging in a friendly dialogue with the LCI and sending it greetings at Party conference.

Since then nothing has been heard from the working party other than vigorous denials from Archer that it had been wound up. It's total inactivity, he told the 1986 LCI AGM, was due to a lack of resources at Party headquarters. How convenient! Thus, 18 months

after it had been set up and six months after a Labour-backed agreement that was unleashing a wave of Loyalist reaction in Ireland forcing hundreds of nationalists from their homes, Archer was promising 'no full policy review' at 1986 conference.

He explained that a policy package was being prepared combining a commitment to civil liberties and economic reflation in the six counties with backing for the Accord. But this could only be campaigned for in the context of Labour being re-elected to government. The important thing was therefore to wait for the General Election.

1986 has also seen the Party's leadership predictably refuse to mobilise its MPs to vote against the PTA or to implement the Labour Women's conference call for a demonstration against strip

searching — both party policy, supposedly backed by the front bench. Given these developments, the Party seems more likely to return to the vacuous and pro-imperialist 'Better Life For All'-type policies of the 1970s than any progressive policy elaboration... and that's before it's had a change to sell out in government.

Of course very significant advances have been made: the National Union of Students and Labour women's conference commitments to support for withdrawal and opposition to the Accord; the wide base of support in the Manchester and London parties for such policies and very promising developments in the NUR, ASTMS and NALGO demonstrating that it's not all going the leadership's way. But it would be wrong to

conclude that the pro-withdrawal lobby doesn't face major problems.

The attacks on the London Party in 1985 and women's conference decisions this year show that the leadership will not tolerate progressive, let alone anti-imperialist, policies on Ireland being implemented under the Party banner. The fact that in six months the NUS has done nothing visible to put its new policy into effect is convenient for its Labour leadership — if they did they would find their cosy relationship with Kinnock coming to a short, sharp end.

Sections of the left committed to fighting for withdrawal have faced this renewed offensive around bipartisanship for over 18 months now but have tended to duck the issue. Those in the LCC — like Ken Livingstone — are rapidly going to have to choose between their Irish policy and their support for the Kinnock leadership. The Campaign Group of MPs is going to have to sort out what kind of policy on Ireland it really has. Despite official opposition to the Accord, less than a third of its members could actually bring themselves to vote against it.

Support for progressive Irish policy is meeting competition from other priorities on a left agenda that is increasingly squeezed. When the working party was first set up in 1984, there were 18 conference resolutions on Ireland. This year there are 8. In 1985 18 MPs and the Campaign Group as a whole sent greetings to the LCI AGM, this year only 4 MPs bothered.

The favourable conditions for Labour's discussion on Ireland in the early 1980s have changed. The left needs a new strategy on Ireland that both takes these conditions into account and enables it to make use of the gains undoubtedly made. In the run-up to a general election, a strategy based on dialogue with the Party leadership isn't going to work, because that leadership simply doesn't want to talk and neither does it want us to.



Denis Doran/Reflex

that Benn gained 80 per cent of the constituency votes (or nearly 25 per cent of the total), 46 per cent of the 51 per cent vote against him came from the union tops and the PLP. In the absence of left majorities in most of the major unions, something which presupposes a very high level of class struggle and consciousness way beyond the situation in 1981, the left will always collide with this inbuilt domination of the PLP and the trade union leaderships. The old adage that the Labour Party is the 'political expression of the trade unions' — in some versions 'of the trade union bureaucracy' — has a large element of truth in it. Thus looked at objectively, the 'surprise' can surely not have been that Benn lost, but that he lost by such a slender margin. His defeat was a reflection of the current inbuilt bureaucratic domination of the party by parliamentary and trade union leaders. It was not 'chance' or an accident. It would be self-deception to believe so.

The next major shocks for the left in the party were the Falklands war in 1982 and the general election in 1983. The two must be considered together, because the outcome of the latter was so affected by the events in the former. As has been extensively documented, the historical trend has been towards a *decline* in popular support for the Tories. In 1981 the Thatcher government was, measured by the opinion polls at least, the most unpopular peacetime government ever. And yet in 1983 it won with a 140-plus majority.

Three things decided Labour's disastrous showing in 1983 — two major and one subsidiary. Thatcher's successful prosecution of the war, combined with Labour's failure to oppose it, and the failure of Argentinian bombs to explode when they hit British aircraft carriers, massively boosted Tory popularity. The second factor of course was the electoral showing of the SDP/Liberal Alliance. And third was the sabotaging intervention of the Labour right against the party's nuclear weapons policy during the general election campaign. Party policy itself

TONY BENN RECENTLY rightly said that the left often underestimates its own strength. But that is no reason for not looking at the strength of our opponents and our own weaknesses. And the 1986 Labour Party conference is a useful point to look at what has occurred in the inner-party struggle since Thatcher came to power. In the heady days between Benn's resignation from the front bench in 1979 and the deputy leadership campaign in 1981, it looked to many as if the party was about to fall to the left. If these hopes have been dashed, it has been due only partly to strokes of ill-fortune. The main causes have been an underestimation of the scope of the project of defeating the centre-right in the party, and the left's lack of political clarity, especially in the 1979-81 period.

Perhaps the high point of the Bennite offensive in the party was the February 1981 Wembley conference which crystallised the drive for constitutional change. Here the electoral college for electing the leadership was decided. But within two months the Council for Social Democracy, the 'Gang of Four', had consummated the split in the party and founded the SDP. At the party conference the following September Tony Benn lost the deputy leadership election by one per cent of the electoral college.

Despite the brave face put on this loss, Benn's defeat by Healey was a turning point which revitalised the right and demoralised the left. It was rotten bad luck — or was it? These two events in 1981 — the foundation of the SDP and Benn's defeat in the deputy leadership election were hardly just chance events. In their own ways they showed something fundamental about the structure of the Labour Party and the political coalition which it represents. The SDP split

by a group of pro-capitalist right-wingers showed that a section of the parliamentary party was prepared to break the party rather than see it dominated by the left. They left behind many in the PLP and beyond who had identical political views, but who had a different assessment about the possibility of defeating the left.

Benn was defeated in the deputy leadership election by the votes of the right wing trade union leaders and parliamentary erstwhile 'lefts' who abstained or voted for Healey. His defeat showed the weakness of the constitutional reforms, which still left 70 per cent of the electoral college votes in the hands of the union tops and the PLP. Given

The Kinnock operation

How the right fought back

The 1986 Labour Party conference is likely to mark the high tide of Kinnockism and an apparent low-point of the 'hard left'. Whereas five years ago it seemed that the left was taking the party by storm now the trade union bosses and their chosen representatives are back in control. How did we get to this point and what does it tell us about the future? **PHIL HEARSE** looks at the turning points of the struggle, and argues that the hard left needs to reorganise itself to face the tasks ahead.

seemed, in the hands of the compromising Foot, inconsistent and incoherent — especially on the economy and defence.

The 1983 electoral disaster was also a disaster for the left. For, despite the moderation of the election manifesto for those who actually read it, nonetheless it could easily be presented as the defeat of a left manifesto, the defeat of the party because of the worries of the electorate about Bennite extremism. The 'common sense' explanation of the election defeat was that the party lost because it was disunited, and it was disunited because the left had been on the rampage. The message from the right was 'we must never let this happen again'.

From the moment of the election defeat and Foot's resignation as leader, the drive was started to carry out the 'Kinnock operation' — to put in place a new leadership

militant sections of the working class, and that workers given no choice but to fight or surrender would, if the leadership was there, fight rather than roll over.

This showed something significant — that if the 'Bennite' left was being pushed back in the Labour Party, the forces on which it based itself, in two trade unions and the mass campaigns, were by no means finished. Hard on the heels of the NGA struggle came the start of the miners' strike, which itself set the scene for the rate capping fight.

The miners' strike was undoubtedly one of the most difficult phases for the Kinnock leadership and the whole of the trade union bureaucracy which except for the extreme right wing gave verbal support to the miners but loathed Scargill and everything he stood for. It was a difficult tightrope to tread, to support the miners but to oppose their

operations was spearheaded organisationally by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (at one time, lest we forget, a Bennite operation) and politically spearheaded by the ideologues of Marxism Today, who however to this day remain on the extreme right wing of the process. Key factors in this were the emergence of the 'Blunkett-Sawyer' axis on the Labour NEC, and the eventual defection of Livingstone from the hard left camp. As opposed to the hard left's simple opposition to Kinnock, the LCC proposed what might be called a strategy of 'unity-contradiction' — given critical support to Kinnock but trying to influence policy to the left. This has, as it turned out, been a hopelessly utopian ploy, as Kinnock took the support but not the criticism, as has recently been recognised in a shame-faced way by the LCC itself in a recent internal newsletter.

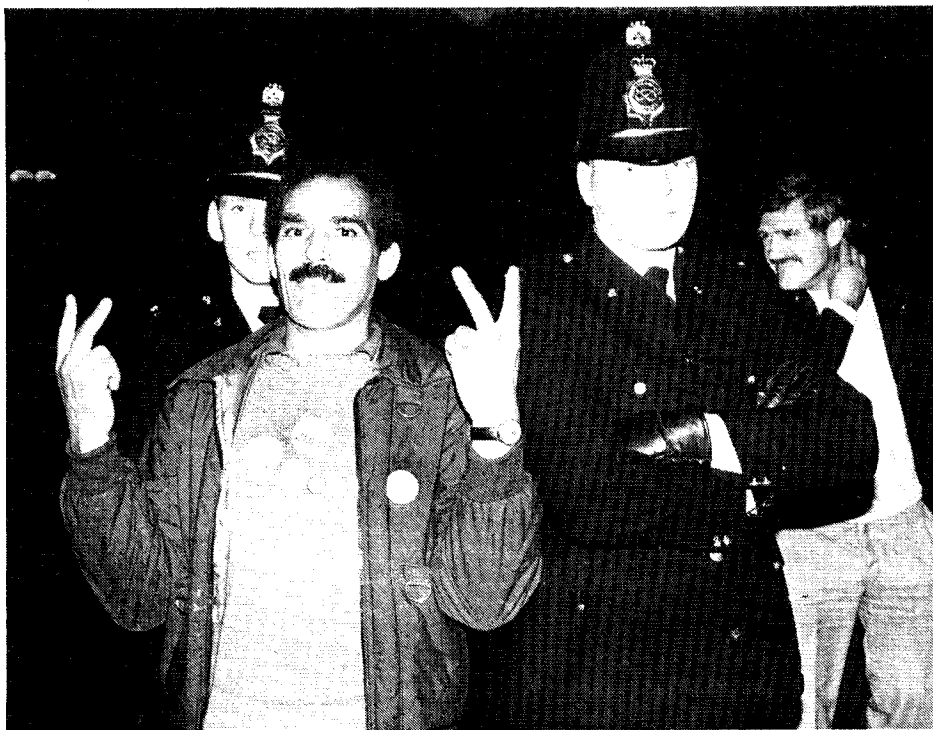
The final stages of the fight against ratecapping were pivotal in the emergence of the soft left bloc including Livingstone and Blunkett, and thus in finally breaking up the 'old' Bennite left. At the GLC, the decision of whether or not to set a rate encapsulated the divide between 'realism' and 'confrontationism', or more precisely between a class struggle and a 'parliamentarist-

'the miners' strike was undoubtedly one of the most difficult phases for the Kinnock leadership'

constitutionalist' approach. Livingstone's argument for 'giving leadership' and setting a rate was that it was the only realistic option to allow the GLC to continue, and prevent its functions being taken over by government representatives. A year later the GLC was abolished, and its functions dispersed or taken over by the government appointed 'residuary body'. Livingstone's capitulation had an important effect in strengthening the soft left in a dozen or more Labour councils which had promised to fight to the end.

But the collapse of the rate capping fight was not just the responsibility of the Livingstone and Blunkett, and all the little Livingstones and Blunketts in Labour councils, but also of the local government trade union bureaucrats who had never wanted a fight but found it necessary to go along with the 'no rate' demagogy. In this context it is necessary to record that the *Militant*-led Liverpool council, despite some appalling tactical errors stuck to a policy of defiance until it was completely isolated and overwhelmed. The parroting of Kinnock's attacks on Liverpool by the soft left and the union leaderships is sickening hypocrisy. Those who didn't fight and who never wanted to fight are not in a good position to attack those who fought but made some mistakes along the way.

The success of the soft-left operation has to be recognised and analysed. Why did a section of the formerly Bennite left crumble?



which would recentre the party politically, adopt the face of 'moderation', and roll back left encroachments in policy. The result was the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership, successfully installed at the 1983 Brighton conference. The extent of the shift in mood as a result of the election defeat was signalled by the poor showing of the left candidates for the leadership — less than six per cent of the electoral college for Heffer standing as leader and just 26 per cent for Meacher standing for deputy.

In the following period the newly installed leadership — the 'dream ticket' of Kinnock and Hattersley — received its biggest challenge not from internal party opposition but from the class struggle — above all from the miners' strike and the battle against rate capping. A change of mood in the class struggle was signalled in December 1983 when the NGA became locked into its fierce battle with Eddie Shah over union recognition at the *Stockport Messenger*. It showed that despite four million unemployed and the ravages of four years of Thatcherism, big reserves of resistance still existed in the most

leadership. A victory for the miners would have created immense difficulties for Kinnock and his trade union backers. Their whole strategy of re-centering the party depended on a declining curve of class struggle, it depended on retreat and demoralisation not on ascending victories. The TUC and Kinnock adopted the tactic of a negotiated 'defeat-compromise' for the miners; but in its absence, thanks to the intransigence of Scargill, a simple defeat would do. The eventual defeat of the miners set the scene for the crumbling of the defiance to ratecapping. But before we discuss that we have to go back a bit and discuss some of the other consequences of Kinnock's accession to the leadership in 1983.

The outcome of the 1983 general election and the change of leadership set in train two linked and vitally important processes — political recomposition on the left and the witch hunt. The 'recomposition' of the left meant the emergence of the 'soft-left' axis in the party and its detaching of a section of the former 'Bennite' coalition from Benn himself and the hard left in general. The soft left

Simple-minded explanations of betrayal and careerism, while containing an element of truth, will not suffice. The truth of the matter is that the LCC homed in on the different strands of opinion inside the old Bennite left itself, its contradictions, political fudges and lack of clarity. For the left which fought for constitutional reforms was never homogenous or totally united. It included a section of the left trade union bureaucracy which could go along with left policies a certain distance but never all the way. The old Bennite left was a partial and temporary political alliance around certain minimal reforms. As new events presented themselves in the class struggle and inside the party a section of the Bennite forces, today represented by the active core of the Campaign group and the forces which support it, radicalised and moved to the left. Benn's own political development has undoubtedly been in this direction, as his policies on questions like NATO and Ireland shows. Another section of the old Bennites polarised in the other direction, towards the right.

Something else has to be recognised here however. The soft left operation was only made possible by a certain style and approach from Kinnock himself. The installation of the Kinnock-Hattersley team was a stroke of inspiration. Kinnock did not simply represent a return to the old-fashioned right. He was not Callaghan reborn. He had a long record as Tribune MP and CND supporter, as Wilson had had in 1963 when he beat George Brown in the election for party leader. He showed the truth of the old adage that the party is 'best led from the left'.

The ploy of putting Kinnock in the leadership was one which implied not a return to the right, but the stabilisation of the party on the basis of acceptance of the constitutional reforms, and no major rolling back of the left wing policies accepted by the party conference — and thus a leader who could create 'unity' in the party. Of course this implied stance contained within it a 'hidden agenda', an agenda of the very careful, deliberate and little-by-little marginalisation of the left and creeping assault on left-wing policies. Two things happened at the 1983 conference which installed the new leadership which indicated crucial mechanisms for this process. On the one hand a new statement on a 'socialist orientation to Europe' was adopted which effectively scrapped any vestige of opposition to the EEC, and on the other the expulsion of the *Militant* editorial board was confirmed.

The choice of *Militant* as the tendency in the party to attack was an obvious one, because *Militant* could simultaneously be presented as big enough to be a 'danger' to the party, while its policies could be attacked from a supposedly 'left' stance, the better to disorientate sections of the left. Thus Jim Mortimer's conference report on *Militant* singled out its lack of support for CND and womens rights as crucial evidence for its sectarianism and dogmatism. In the light of the politics of most of those sitting on the platform next to Mortimer this may seem bizarre, but it was typical of the way that the leadership used the political sensitivities of



President Mitterrand — a lesson in austerity for Kinnock

the left, and especially of the LCC-soft left, to push forward its project.

Subsequently, it has been on the crucial terrain of economic policy where the leadership has scored some of its biggest successes on policy questions against the left, and this has been done by quite openly picking up the ideological themes of the soft left. Roy Hattersley has for eighteen months been attacking nationalisation, but on the

'the leadership want to avoid the U-turn that Mitterrand made by starting off where he ended up'

grounds that nationalisation is bureaucratic, insensitive to the needs of ordinary people and so forth. In its place he has argued for more stress on co-ops and 'new forms of social ownership' like employee share ownership schemes. These policies were lifted, word for word, from the LCC and soft left theoreticians like Geoff Hodgson. The irony of the whole thing is that it has always been the Marxist left in Britain which has attacked the shortcomings of capitalist nationalisation, and argued for a socially-owned economy under workers control. The LCC theoreticians provided the theoretical ammunition for the right wing to take up left wing themes, gut them of their radical content, and present them as 'new' (startlingly radical) policies. On economic policy the role of the soft left in this process is amply demonstrated by the fact that co-author of the NEC's document on employee share ownership schemes, a warmed up version of the Liberal Party's long-standing proposal for 'co-ownership', is none other than David Blunkett.

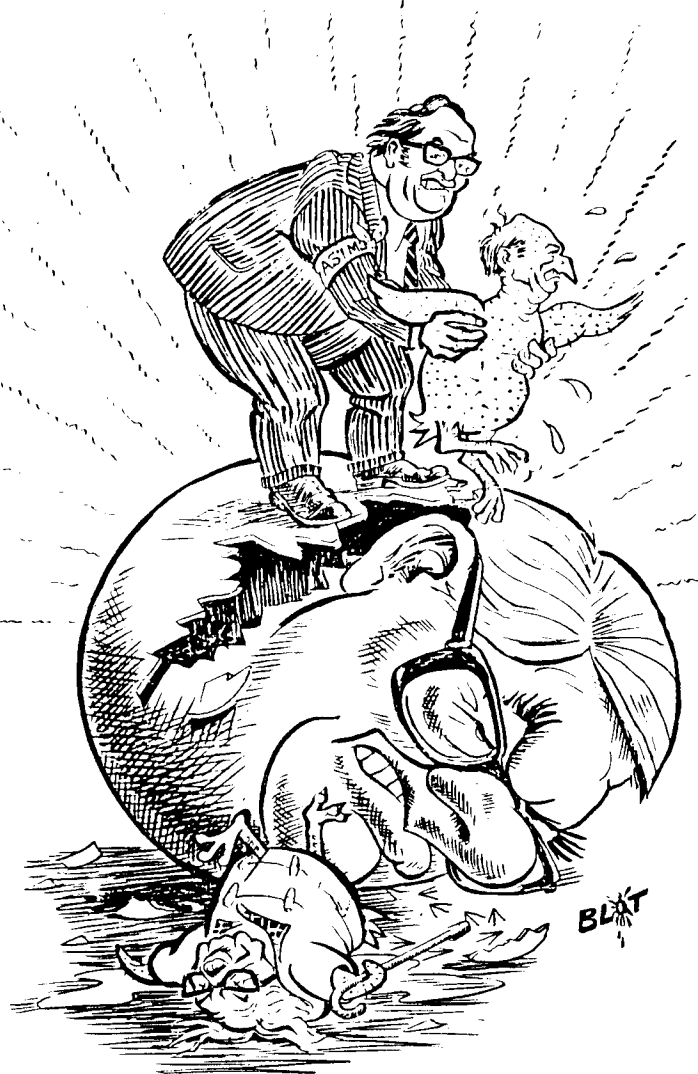
The effect of the witch hunt against the *Militant* and others has not been primarily

organisational, but ideological. Militant, despite nearly forty expulsions, has not been prevented from operating in the party. The bulk of the hard left has not been expelled. But the witch hunt has very effectively drawn a dividing line between the 'acceptable', 'constructive' left and the hard, 'irreconcilable' and above all 'anti-democratic' left which moreover is damaging to Labour's electoral prospects. The objective of the LCC, quite openly stated in its manifestos, to 'isolate' and 'marginalise' the hard left have been the perfect foil to the witch hunters and the right wing. It has provided another crucial ideological implement, taken up in Kinnock's Fabian lecture, and due to be codified in an overall statement of 'democratic socialism', that the main divide in the party is not between right and left, or between pro-capitalist and anti-capitalist, but between 'democratic socialists' and 'vanguardist sectarians'. In Livingstone's first public statement of his defection from the hard left, his *Marxism Today* interview with Bea Campbell, he utilised this distinction as that between the 'vanguardist' left (otherwise the 'Stalinist' left) and the 'participatory' left. This outrageous caricature came directly from the pages of *Marxism Today* and from the LCC, and makes Livingstone's recent adherence to the LCC perfectly understandable.

To say that to date the witch hunt inside the party has had primarily an ideological rather than organisational effect does not of course mean that in the future it could be utilised to try to inflict real damage on the hard left's participation in the party. Indeed the leadership shows every sign of wanting to bring all parts of the party structure under its own control. The proposals for the future of the Young Socialists, effectively putting a large section of its membership outside of the LPYS, is one indication. And Kinnock has been quite ruthless in driving the left out of crucial NEC sub-committees. But it has of course been the balance of power on the NEC itself which has been vital to pushing through Kinnock's assault on left policy in the party. That takes us on directly to a consideration of the motor forces of the leadership's project.

We have identified three crucial events which acted to push back the left — the defeat of Benn in the deputy leadership fight, the general election defeat, and the defeat of the miners strike. We have also discussed the crucial role of the LCC-soft left. But the most powerful allies of Kinnock and Hattersley have not been the right wing thinkers of *Marxism Today* and the LCC, but the trade union bureaucracy who have held the decisive power in the party, and exerted a key role in course of the mass struggle, and especially during the miners strike and rate capping struggles.

Kinnock has constructed an alliance of the trade union bureaucracy, left and right, around his leadership and the project of getting a Labour government installed which they can again 'do business' with. Inside the party he has linked up directly with the right wing trade union leaders on the NEC, exemplified by the role of gross right winger Ken Cure on the Organisational Sub-



Committee. But he has, with the notable exception of the NUM, brought the 'left' bureaucracy into line, with Ron Todd of the TGWU playing a vital role, and the soft-left influenced NUPE leadership as a useful out-ri-der. Even in the NUM, there is a crystallising bloc, led by the CP and encouraged by Kinnock, which wants to drive Scargill out of the leadership. This role of the trade union leaders, able to produce the bloc votes at conference, is of vital strategic significance for the left; a left which fails to confront this question will always be defeated.

The upshot of the whole process which we have been discussing is that the hard left inside the party is more isolated than at any time since 1979, and that we have in place a leadership which, with strong backing from

'few of the policies the left fought for are going to find their way into the manifesto'

the trade union bureaucracy, is driving towards the formation of a right wing Labour government which will maintain some crucial aspects of Thatcherism. Against that, we have to note the continuing strength of the hard left both in the party and outside, still of a qualitatively organisational strength, with a larger social base than existed before 1979.

What are the conclusions which we must draw from this process to arm us for the tasks ahead, about the character of the

Labour Party, the Labour left, and the forms of organisation which we have to adopt? I would put forward four points as a basis for understanding what has happened:

★ The 'Bennite' left which arose in the 1979-81 period, was a coalition with conflicting tendencies within it, which remained dormant so long as they fought together for the inner-party constitutional changes. The main contradiction in this left was between those who wanted to base themselves on the class struggle and mass action and those who, while rejecting the right, mainly based themselves on inner-party manoeuvring and a left-parliamentarist perspective. The conflict between these different tendencies only erupted at a later stage of the class struggle, and especially over the miners strike and the rate capping right. It was, however, inevitable, that this coalition should break up; the emergence of the 'soft left', and the radicalisation of a section of the Bennite leadership (including Benn himself) was the result.

★ During the 1979-81 period, and especially during the deputy leadership campaign, Benn's base inside the party and the trade union's was able to exert pressure on the trade union bureaucracy. Thus, for example, a series of unions were compelled to vote for Benn in the deputy leadership election. However, with the sole exception of the NUM leadership, none of the left trade union leaders based themselves on a class struggle perspective. When the pressure at the base slackened they quickly swung behind Kinnock.

★ The constitutional reforms adopted in 1981 have not reversed the inbuilt structural domination of the Labour Party by the trade union bureaucracy and the right-dominated PLP. Breaking this hold requires a huge level of class struggle and class consciousness; it cannot be achieved through inner party manoeuvres. Given the character of the Labour party as the 'political expression of the trade union bureaucracy', the destruction of the bureaucracy's grip on the Labour Party would require the level of class struggle which resulted in huge conflict between the bureaucracy and the rank and file inside the trade unions, probably leading to a split in the Labour Party itself.

★ Constructing a left wing which does not suffer the fate of the 1979-81 Bennite left means learning two lessons. First, a left which fights must base itself on policies which cannot, like those of the ICC-soft left by co-opted by a right wing leadership, but on the contrary are anti-capitalist demands, which break with the interests of capitalism on the economy and on foreign policy, and which support and extend the struggle of the working class.

Secondly, if a left which fights on anti-capitalist policies wants to confront the right wing in the labour Party, it has to confront the right wing union leaders. While not abandoning the struggle inside the Labour Party itself, the left has to pursue a fight for leadership inside the trade unions. Any policy which is based on pursuing the inner-party struggle, and relying on the good offices of 'left wing friends' inside the union leaderships is bound to be defeated.

As Tony Benn makes clear in his interview elsewhere in this issue, few of the policies

'the "Bennite" left was a coalition with conflicting tendencies within it'

which the left fought for are going to find their way into the manifesto for the next election. Whatever the outcome of that election, the hard left in the party is going to have to sharpen up its policies and organisation. It has not 'won' the fight in the party since 1979. But anyone thrown into despair or resignation by that fact can only have a light-minded and hugely over-optimistic view of what 'winning' the right entails. Breaking right-wing bureaucratic domination of the Labour Party means renovating the entire British labour movement. It is a gigantic task, historic in its aims and scope. The left faces the period up to and beyond the general election with much of its human and political capital intact.

The key thing is not to throw our hands up in horror at the defeats we have suffered, but to grasp that the left in the British labour movement is stronger than for decades; that Kinnockism can never work as a governmental project; and that if we raise our sights to the necessary strategic objective — an anti-capitalist left which fights in the party and the unions — the onward march of the hard left can be resumed with a vengeance.

In South Africa, the state of emergency has taken its toll. But, as **CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN** shows in the organisations of the Black working class new leaders are replacing the old as quickly as they can be arrested. The crisis of white rule continues.

'THE OLD ORDER is dying but the new refuses to be born...'. Gramsci's phrase accurately depicts the South African crisis today. Despite the state of emergency the masses remain combative. The ruling class is divided, uncertain of its next step. Neither reforms nor brutal repression has succeeded in cooling the revolutionary spirit of the black people in the urban townships and the mood of revolt has now spread to the rural areas too.

It is widely expected that Botha will stage a general election for the white chamber of the tri-cameral parliament before his rivals on the right can increase their influence. Central to this project was the success of the state of emergency. With an estimated total of between 10,000 and 15,000 detained under the emergency regulations the regime hoped that it had decapitated the mass movement.

There can be no doubt that the repression with the almost permanent deployment of security forces within the townships and armed combat troops inside the schools, has taken its toll of the liberation movement. But the crumbling of the restrictions imposed on the media under the emergency regulations has revealed not only the extent of the bloody actions taken by the security forces, but also the continuing resistance of Black workers.

Despite the fact that trade unionists from the Congress of South African Unions (COSATU) and the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) figure prominently amongst the detainees there has been a continuation in the pattern of labour militancy. According to *Work in Progress (WIP)*, the radical South African labour monitoring magazine, a partial survey of the industrial relations scene between May and the middle of August revealed that 35,810 workers had participated in strikes and disputes. The penalty was heavy for some workers — some 740 workers were detailed en masse at their factories while on strike at Nels Dairies.

But according to *WIP* the unions coped with detentions and unionists on the run by shopfloor workers taking over union administration and assuming direct responsibility for negotiations while office bearers took annual leave to fill in for negotiating teams. This reaction has shown the deep roots which the new independent unionism has sunk among Black workers.

The true situation in the townships is also beginning to emerge. The official figure issued in mid-August from the government's Bureau of Information (sic) of 221 people killed in political violence since the emergen-

South Africa's continuing crisis



cy was declared was obviously an underestimate. According to the South African Institute of Race Relations a total of 754 people died in political violence between January and May alone.

But the pretence that the emergency has 'stabilised' the townships received the final blow with the Soweto massacre of 27 August. The government was finally forced to confirm the statements of anti-apartheid organisations that 21 people had died and over 200 were injured in the incident. Even

this may turn out to have been an underestimate, since many Blacks do not take their injured to hospital for fear of arrest.

The other aspect of the massacre is that it also represented a repulse of the evictions campaign, a major government initiative. Rents are the principal source of income for the local authorities in the townships. The people do not recognise the legitimacy of the councils and regard all who serve on them as stooges of the regime. As a Soweto pamphlet put it: 'We won't pay rent. We won't pay the

salaries of our enemies, the puppet councillors and their police.'

The nation-wide rent boycott has already cost the state more than R250 million. According to the Johannesburg *Weekly Mail* a special body the *Gesamentlike Bestuursentrusms* made up of representatives from business, community councils, ex-development boards and the security forces was set-up to undertake the campaign. The flight of the 30 town councillors out of Soweto on 29/30 August marked a decisive set-back for the government campaign.

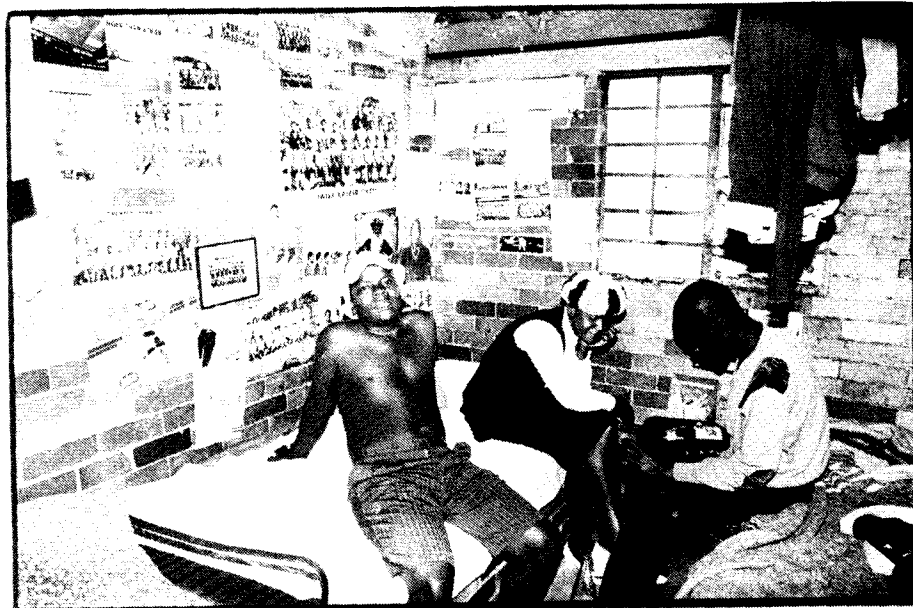
The rent strike has also marked the complete failure of the whole project of creating pro-government Black local councils. Out of the 34 councils elected in December 1983 (with only ten per cent of the electorate voting in townships like Soweto) only three were still functioning at the end of 1985. The collapse of the local councils was paralleled by the decisive rejection of the Black population as a whole of the tri-cameral parliament and the attempts to divide and rule through enlisting Indian and Coloured support.

Botha's reforms have thus been spurned by the Black people of South Africa. But repression is not an alternative to reform. An important section of the South African capitalist class, as well as international capital with a big stake in the South African economy continues to press for much more radical measures.

One hundred important corporations under the auspices of the American Chamber of Commerce in South Africa have taken out full page advertisements in major South African newspapers calling for: the freeing of political detainees; unbanning of political organisations; negotiations with acknowledged leaders about power-sharing; political rights for all; the repeal of the Population Registration Act; the granting of SA citizenship to all; the repeal of the Group Areas Act; common equal education and the equalisation of the health service. This heady programme aims, according to its authors, to save South Africa for 'free enterprise'. So where does the difference with the South African government arise?

Botha accepts that the Verwoed model of apartheid is 'outmoded'. The continued existence of capitalism in South Africa demands major modifications of the system. His problems are political — based on the reactions of the black and white populations.

The government is acutely aware that the implementation of a programme like that of the American Chamber of Commerce could spell not only the end of apartheid, but also of the capitalist system itself in South Africa. Precisely because apartheid has consciously limited the development of a Black middle class of any importance, the only alternative today to the white capitalist regime would be a government based on the working masses. There is no guarantee that such a government would be able to control the aspirations for social justice voiced by a large, strongly organised and economically powerful working class. Botha knows that the pattern of neo-colonialist regimes which exist in the rest of South Africa is highly unlikely to be repeated in South Africa.



Nigel Dickenson

Diepkloff Workenhostel, Soweto

The other side of Botha's dilemma rests in the white population. The ideology of apartheid is deeply rooted, not only among the Afrikaans-speaking section of the whites, but also among a large proportion of the English speaking population.

Nadime Gordimer, the well known South African novelist, explains that there is 'an old misconception still current abroad: the Afrikaansers are baddies and the English speakers the goodies among whites in our country... In November 1983 the then prime minister, Mr PW Botha received an overwhelming "Yes" vote for his new constitution with its tri-cameral parliament for whites, Indians and so-called Coloureds, and total exclusion of the Black majority. The referendum held

'shopfloor workers took over union administration'

was open to whites only, Afrikaans and English-speaking. Mr Botha could not have received a mandate if the English speakers had voted "no". "Yes" they said, voting along with Mr. Botha's supporters in the National (sic) Party. "Yes", they said, twenty three and a half million Black people shall have no say in the central government of South Africa'. (Nadime Gordimer, *Apartheid in Crisis* Penguin, 1986.)

All white South Africans, with a few exceptions, enjoy or have the potential to enjoy the enhanced social and economic status which apartheid has conferred on them. They will not give it up lightly.

In fact it is from those whose living standards tend to converge with those of the Black population that the strongest reaction to Botha's reforms have come. The abolition of job reservation coming at the same time as deep economic recession has allowed industry and commerce to shed costly white labour and replace it with cheaper Black workers. White workers are now competing with Black workers for unskilled jobs and even, horror of horrors, queuing up for soup kitchens. The downturn in the economy is also affecting the smaller farmers

and it is these elements who now are flocking into the NWP (National Resistance Movement), the fascist organisation waiting in the wings to serve the cause of white supremacy when the time comes. Thousands of former supporters of the government National Party are likewise rallying to the parties of the extreme right, the Conservative Party and the Herstigste (Reconstituted) National Party.

Thus, while also being a serious attempt to crush the mass movement, the reign of terror launched against the townships and the Black trade unions is also a signal to the faithful that the government is quite capable of controlling the situation with a policy of *kragdadigheid*, the exercise of brute power. And as Botha made clear at the recent national congress of his party, his policy remains defending the essential cornerstones of apartheid — the Group Areas Act and race-based education.

While these are still enforced the dropping of the pass laws, the Mixed Marriage Acts and the granting of freehold rights for all are simply gestures designed to mollify liberal domestic and foreign opinion, while defying the world to do its worse with sanctions.

There is no doubt that this strategy has temporarily increased Botha's support among the white population. But the continuing heroic resistance of the Black masses in the beginning to undermine this approach and ensure the continuing crisis of the white ruling class. Not only has the mass movement not been crushed, but the reports which have inevitably leaked out depicting the reign of terror in the South African has further aroused world opinion against the apartheid regime and strengthened the call to isolate South Africa with effective sanctions.

South Africa is not on the eve of a successful Black revolution today. The degree of political crisis of the regime has not yet affected the repressive capacities of its formidably modern army, nor has armed struggle of the masses yet come onto the agenda. But the contradictions inherent in the white body politic ensures that its convulsions will continue, while the new order continues to dig below the surface.



Why do you think that the left failed to capture the Labour Party for socialism between 1979 and 1981?

It was the high point of the Labour Party because, in my view, it looked as if it was going to be possible to get beyond an SDP-type of Labour Party, and change the situation whereby the Parliamentary Labour Party comes to power free to do what it likes without consulting the movement as a whole.

I think this frightened the British establishment to an extraordinary degree. Although they have never liked the Labour Party, in the past they have known that if Labour came to power, nothing much would change. But they saw the possibility that, if the left won inside the party and Labour came back to power, then all that would change. They saw the possibility of a Labour government which would bring about as big a swing to the left as Thatcher has brought about on the right.

The events between 1979-81 also frightened the Labour leadership because, like the establishment, they wanted no such thing. And what we witnessed during that time was a combination of the British establishment, the Labour establishment and the media getting together to snuff it out. But they did not succeed in snuffing it out. Everything that's happened since is rooted in what happened during those years.

Now if the deputy leadership campaign had gone the other way I think the results would have been different to what people expected. The Parliamentary party would probably have elected their own deputy leader — they would not have accepted the decision. There were probably also errors in the way the campaign was conducted. Was it right to focus on the deputy leadership campaign? The issues might have been better focussed by pushing the constitutional reforms to the point where the shadow cabinet was elected. I think that's open to argument.

Just as we criticise the party for being an electoral machine, is there a danger of the left becoming an electoral machine, where everything is concentrated on getting power within the framework of the party?

I think the deputy leadership campaign was the highpoint of the left; people knew the issue was about policies and began to organise in the unions in support of left policies. But just on the issue of the reasons for the defeat of the left, some people would argue that it was inevitable because the institutions of the right — the Parliamentary party and the trade union leaders — have

always combined to stifle revolt inside the party.

Well we got nearer to it then than at any other time. I'm sceptical about the ability of a single candidate to encapsulate the whole argument of the left — I don't believe these things are done at the top anyway. But it's true that the simple question of who to support for deputy leader did bring into focus left policies and did radicalise the movement.

I'm not sure I agree that the left can never win in the party. There's a note of scepticism in that. Not a scepticism about the Labour Party, which I can understand, but of the idea of the British working class movement ever adopting — through its institutions — policies which lead to real change. After all the 'Labour Party' is only a name for the constituencies and unions. Are you saying, and I'm sure I wouldn't say this, that 650 CLPs and thousands of unions branches could never develop enough understanding and pressure to bring about real change? The establishment would never believe that, because they've been scared of it since 1649, since 1789 and since 1917 in particular. Of course there are powerful centres of resistance to such change, the PLP and the TUC General Council in particular, but I'm not sure that they are as strong as all that.

You said yourself that if you'd won the deputy leadership election the PLP might have set up its own deputy leadership. All I'm questioning is whether the Labour Party as it is can be a real agency for change.

Well — there are two Labour parties. The relationship between the two was highlighted by the democratic reforms. The PLP, unlike every local party, does not have its own standing orders or constitution incorporated into the constitution of the Labour Party. The PLP is based on the Burkeian idea that when you get there you represent everybody. You are only a party person when you are selected as a candidate. When you get elected you kick away the ladder.

The problem of the PLP has not got to be confused with the nature, character and potential of the Labour Party. The PLP is going to be different after the next election. When an incoming Labour government — we hope — comes forward with policies that might be unacceptable to the labour movement. For at least the first 18 months there is going to be a very high degree of accountability before the re-selections come through. We established the beginnings of a change that would be really important but we never completed it.

OK. Let's talk about what's going on now. What chance do you think we on the left have of a Labour government coming to power that really changes the lives of working class people in this country?

Well the manifesto for the next election will be within the framework of what is acceptable to the establishment, with the possible exception of cruise missiles. It is a manifesto that will merely lead to a Labour team replacing a Tory team. Electoralism isn't the be-all and end-all but the displacing

of Mrs Thatcher is a very relevant question. The one change that will be encapsulated in an election victory for Labour is the electoral defeat of Thatcher, the throwing back of the Tories into opposition. We will then have a new and different labour movement team in power. The question is what does the labour movement do then?

I'm moving away from the idea of a manifesto of promises to a manifesto of demands. You've seen the Chesterfield Manifesto. The idea that the role of the labour movement is to make demands on whoever is in power. The policies as now forecast become less relevant than what we do when there is Labour government. Labour, in this phase, would operate more in the way capital operates — as a pressure on society, and on the government.

But business has a lot of automatic power in our society. The working class has to organise to have any say at all. Going back to what you said about 81 threatening changes on the left as radical as Thatcherism was for the right, I believe that's just what's needed — a radical Labour government. The SDP has no alternative to Thatcher. Labour's NEC is moving towards a manifesto that will differ very little with the SDP. How does the left hold up the banner of the kind of policies and the kind of labour movement we need to fight Thatcher and her allies? Some people want that debate completely squashed.

But they have not succeeded in quashing that debate. There's something else about the political situation in Britain — a shared analysis among a very large number of people about what's going on. The main factor in bringing about that shared analysis — which I suppose you would call a class and socialist analysis — was the miners' strike. But the miners' strike was able to build up the Greenham women, the Black struggle, the democratic reforms in the Labour Party. I think there is a shadow socialist party in Britain inside the Labour Party, not exclusively inside. I think it's that which the establishment fears.

It's very important we don't accept the media definition of the left which is that it's disappeared because that's designed to demoralise us. What makes the establishment frightened is that they know the left has not been destroyed. The arming of the police, the CS gas, the water cannons, the BBC is one long campaign against socialist ideas. The fact that Fleet Street opens fire on anyone that puts their heads above the parapet — be it Bernie Grant, Derek Hatton, Arthur Scagill or myself — all this is an indication of their concern about the left.

I agree with you — we need a Labour government with socialist policies if we are going to carry forward any transformation. It may be that the defeat of Thatcher at this moment — and I don't want to sound like *Marxism Today* because I don't agree with them — and the achievement of a Labour victory will open up prospects for change again. Hope is a very important factor in mobilisation. Fear is a very negative factor. Capital is much more entrenched in our society. Labour is an external pressure and capital is an internal pressure from the top.

But I do not believe that the defeats we've suffered, even the rightward drift on the NEC, is any sort of indication of the strength of the left in Britain which is really quite strong.

Yes but there are still major policies that are left-wing and the team at Walworth Road are going to ignore them. Why can't the MP's that you say are to the left of what is likely to be in the Manifesto commit themselves to campaigning on left-wing policies in the next election?

Well they are. The campaign for the policies is fairly well entrenched. The Million Jobs a Year pamphlet that the Campaign group has produced is a fairly radical policy. If you take the question of NATO, the US bases and non-alignment, that is another very radical policy. The problem for the left is how to advocate those policies in a way that is not sectarian and confrontational. People are as switched off by sectarian internal politics as they are by inter-party politics. We must address working people directly. It makes it more likely Labour will win.

If you look at Mitterrand in France, the Spanish Socialist Party and the Greek Socialist Party in power and the Wilson/Callaghan government here you say that the victory of Kinnock will lead to the emergence of hope but if the left is not organised we could see a repeat of those experiences which do not show so much hope. The left didn't organise against Wilson and Callaghan.

Well I think the left has organised. There were various attempts after 81 to get organised — Labour Liaison, Labour Representation Committee, but the shattering effect of the 83 electoral defeat and the desire to get Thatcher out, which was beginning to operate by early 82, and even more the Falklands war which the Party leadership failed to oppose, made the electoral victory impossible.

I don't want to overdo it but I think the Campaign group of MP's provided a convenient starting point for what is now 100 Campaign groups all over the country, including in the unions. Labour Left Liaison, combined with this, does reflect a left organisation in the Labour Party that is probably the strongest in my lifetime.

Now what will happen when there is a Labour government? In the case of Mitterrand he had to have his common programme with the French Communist Party because it was there. He tried to use the CP to get into power and then kicked it away.

Now the Labour leadership have taken the Mitterrand story and come to a very interesting conclusion. They want to avoid the U-turn that Mitterrand made so let's start off where he ended up. That just won't satisfy people because of the crisis we're in, because of people's expectations and because of the existence of the labour left. There's nothing inevitable about a repeat of 1964 or 1974.

You've talked about struggle being the baseline for the left. How can you square

that with supporting Michael Meacher as a candidate for the NEC when he has refused to support the miners and voted for the witch hunt?

That's not such a difficult question. When you have vacancies to be filled you have to see who is the best candidate. I could ask myself the same question about standing for deputy leader after all the mistakes I've made in my life. I'm not in the business of heroes and villains.

People are being expelled from the Labour Party. It's not nit-picking to ask why the Campaign group isn't supporting a slate of those who will vote against those expulsions.

To concentrate on the merits and de-merits of individuals is a diversion at this stage. I was uneasy about the joint slate with Tribune last year. If you try to negotiate with the trade unions it involves supporting people who have voted against us on the NEC. These are problems associated with electoralism.

OK. There are two candidates being put forward by the Black sections for the NEC. Why is the Campaign group supporting neither of them?

It is a problem and it also applies to the Women's Slate elected at Women's conference, which is slightly different from our slate negotiated with the unions. I suppose in terms of the NEC we're saying who are the best candidates with the greatest chance of electoral success. I'm not sure I can give you a satisfactory answer to that question.

Just on the trade unions demanding support for certain candidates. The T&G have conference policy of opposition to the witch-hunt. Yet the delegation will put its hands up for the witch-hunt and for candidates who support it. If the left is going to make principled alliances with trade unionists isn't it going to be necessary to break with such deals?

Well I think you have to deal with that problem in the T&G. But it's fair to say that whether its the electoralism of a General Election or the inner-party elections there are all sorts of problems and inconsistencies arising from it. The way to escape from those problems is not to escalate the importance of individuals as much as you do. If you're arguing about policy it's a different ballgame.

This year's conference is going to produce a much more right-wing NEC. Many among the trade unions will use their bloc vote to remove people from the trade union and women's section of the NEC who they regard as having been critical of the party leadership. I think they'll keep their heads down on the grounds that if they were to raise questions about this new Industrial Relations legislation they might adversely effect Labour's chances of being elected. This conference can't be judged by people who get to the top of the NEC but instead it must be used to spread an understanding of what needs to be done. This time we need to deepen and strengthen the arguments of the left.

Still here, still fighting



Right wing policies, a right wing election manifesto and a right wing NEC are the likely outcomes of the Labour conference. But, argues TONY BENN, the left underestimates its strength in British society and in the Labour Party. The right wing will not have it all their own way up to and beyond the general election.

The second part of this interview with VALERIE COULTAS on Poland and problems of socialist democracy will be published in a subsequent edition of International.

What prospects for women under Labour?

After all that women have suffered under this Tory government their demands for radical policies, properly resourced, to meet their needs, have become more urgent than ever. Are Labour's leaders prepared to deliver if they come to office or will they fall back on token gestures? A lot depends on how women organise right now, argues **BARBARA GREEN**.

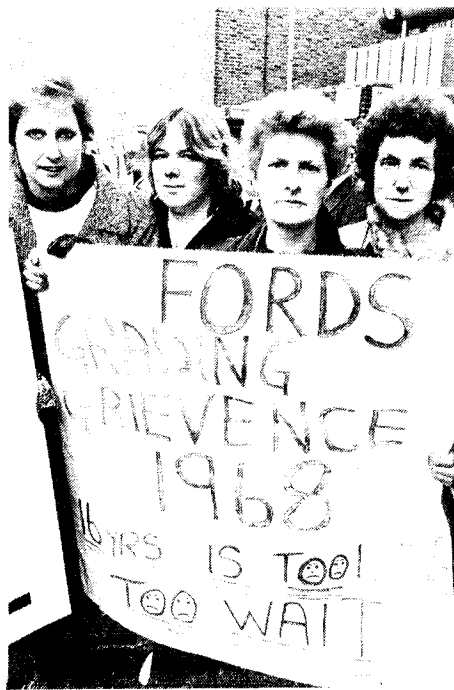
THE TORIES HAVE ploughed their way through their first term of office and into their second promoting the joys of family life and Victorian values whilst doing their damndest to further isolate women economically and socially. The extreme right-wing ideas of Enoch Powell and Victoria Gillick have gained ground. Playing on the fear and insecurity that unemployment and low wages bring, the 'Moral Majority' has become bolder in advocating reactionary solutions.

The law courts have been used increasingly, not simply to crush industrial disputes like those of the miners and printers, but also to attempt to gain control of women's fertility rights. Even though the House of Lords overturned the Gillick ruling, that ruling has left its mark. The fear of young women that doctors will tell their parents has deterred and will continue to deter many from seeking abortion and contraceptive advice.

The economic reality of women's lives has changed dramatically since the seventies. Today women make up 42 per cent of the workforce. It is predicted that by 1990 they will represent half of it. Yet the pay of women workers is between 20 and 35 per cent lower than that of men.

Since the early seventies 2.3 million part-time jobs have been created while 3.5 million full-time jobs have been lost. Women are being pushed primarily into low-paid, part-time jobs. The growth of part-time work, far from being a positive step towards a shorter working week for all, leads to a weakening of the whole labour movement. In particular it exploits women's real difficulties in working full-time because of child care and forces them into the workforce at cheap rates.

The future, even under a Kinnock government, looks as if it will hold more part-time work. This would mean more unemployment for men, and for women low wages and bad conditions with little if any union organisation.



There was real excitement in October 1979 when the women's and trade union movements together defeated the Corrie Bill with its attack on women's abortion and contraception rights. The record of victory since then is not so impressive. Nonetheless the experience of that campaign against Corrie proved not only that the women's movement and the trade unions *could* work together but also showed what an effective and victorious unity it could be.

Where has that unity gone? What does the Labour Party and trade union movement offer women today?

'the economic reality of women's lives has changed drastically since the seventies'

The Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts introduced under Labour previously have proved woefully inadequate, while the gains of the 1967 Abortion Act are slowly being whittled away. The time is well overdue for radical economic and social measures to ensure women's economic independence and their fundamental right to control their own bodies.

In response to these demands, Jo Richardson, women's rights spokesperson for the Labour Party, has recently initiated a discussion within the party and its National Executive Committee (NEC) on the setting up of a future ministry for women's rights. The proposal for a women's ministry offers a

way of integrating the demands of women, their needs at work and within the home, into the coming election manifesto of the Labour Party and of providing a mouthpiece for women under any future Labour government. But if it is not to be a half-hearted attempt to co-opt a section of women in the party and in the unions or to win the votes of women without actually doing anything, some hard questions need to be answered.

For example, Labour's national women's conference has virtually no decision-making power. So how would a women's ministry have more power? Would it have its own budget and, if so, who would control its funds? Would the ministry be accountable to the women's conference in any way? How would it give a voice to women in the affiliated unions? What mechanism would be used to integrate women in unions which are not presently affiliated to the Labour Party? How would the ministry be accountable to, and serve the needs of, women throughout the community?

Feminists in the labour movement must insist on a wide-ranging discussion of the ministry through all the structures of the Labour Party, the unions, and the broad-based women's movement.

It is possible to win women's support and their votes, but only if attempts to meet their demands are followed through. Women can hardly be blamed for their suspicion when Neil Kinnock spends much of his time explaining what the Labour Party cannot promise to fulfil if elected. For example, while stressing Labour's commitment to addressing unemployment he has gone out of his way to warn against expectations of a sharp reduction in the number of jobless people. And he is ambiguous about whether Labour would renationalise all the industries sold off by the Tories.

These sorts of non-policies are bad news for women. Only radical economic and social measures will reduce unemployment, rebuild industry and public services, and produce a crash programme in nursery and creche facilities to allow women with children to work.

The contemptuous attitude of Labour's leaders to the existing forms of self-organisation of women in the party and in the unions hardly provides grounds for optimism about any future Labour government's response to the demands of women in general and to a ministry for women in particular. If the National Conference of Labour Women can be patted on its head and its views ignored when Labour is in opposition, how seriously would Kinnock in Number 10 treat a women's ministry?

The powerlessness of Labour women's conference was clearly seen at this year's gathering. A card vote supported Irish

self-determination, opposed the Anglo-Irish Accord and called for a national demonstration in November this year against the practice of strip searching Irish women held in jail. What happened to that decision exemplifies the real situation of women in the Labour Party.

Opposition to strip searching is official party policy. There is genuine support for it among women and the Irish community in Britain. The proposal was forwarded to the women's committee of the National Executive which in turn took it to the NEC itself. The NEC not only opposed the demonstration but even rejected the idea of organising an 'appropriate event' instead as moved by MP Audrey Wise. It agreed only to issue a statement on 15 November! (Despite the lack of official party backing a rally will take place on that day and the fight for a demonstration as agreed by Labour women will continue, aiming for International Women's Day 1987.)

'Labour National Women's Conference has virtually no decision-making power'

If the National Conference of Labour Women is to become an effective lever of accountability for a future women's ministry the relationship of the trade unions to the conference is another issue which must be resolved. Trade union delegates to the conference hold many less votes proportionally to the vast number they represent. At this year's conference women from NUPE did in fact put forward a resolution — defeated on a card vote — which partly addressed this problem. Unfortunately the resolution also included an attempt to water down the existing policy of Women's Conference that it should have the right to elect women members of the NEC. It proposed as well giving more power to the predominantly male, predominantly right wing Labour and trade union leaders in selecting the delegations.

The blame for this situation cannot, however, simply be laid at the union's door. It is a product of the existing division between trade union and constituency delegates — a division which is dangerous and damaging for the strength of women throughout the labour movement and the community.

Labour Women's Action Committee (WAC), while being in favour in theory of integrating trade union women has in practice still to organise effectively in the unions. Nevertheless, this year's women's conference reaffirmed its support for WAC's demands. WAC is now campaigning for the election of the five women on the NEC to be organised through an electoral college representing 50 per cent women from the constituencies and 50 per cent from the unions. This should be supported as a step towards giving trade union women more power within the Labour women's conference.

Whether or not the trade union bloc vote should apply to women's conference is a

thorny question. The idea that the trade unions should get the number of votes proportionate to the number of women within their unions seems fair enough. The trouble is, who then would decide on the delegations and policies taken to the conference? So long as women are still completely under-represented in the leadership of their unions there is a real danger of the Labour women's conference being handed over to the men at the top of the right wing trade union bureaucracies — the last thing most women would want.

The debate goes on and at present it is virtually impossible to advance one across-the-board solution. But at the very least conference itself must be satisfied that the

trade union delegations are democratically elected by the women in those unions.

There is every sign that women will go on striving for the kind of measures — socialist measures — that will make a real difference in their lives. Because these are so far-reaching, would affect every area of policy and would cost money they are unlikely to be won as a matter of course even under the Labour government. Similarly it will take a fight to secure a Labour women's conference and a women's ministry powerful enough to serve in this process. So much depends on Labour women working right now to forge stronger links and organise joint action with trade union women and women actively campaigning in the community.

Interview with sacked print worker 'The strike is still winnable'



Liz Short

THE PRINT DISPUTE grabbed centre stage at the first day of the TUC Brighton Conference. Delegates voted by 5,823,000 to 3,132,000 to condemn the failure of the TUC General Council to order the electricians' union (EETPU) to instruct their members not to work at Rupert Murdoch's Wapping printworks.

The Conference decision was both an expression of the wide-spread support which has been built up by the print workers and the failure of the TUC leaders to deal decisively with scabbing in the trade union movement.

The evidence against the electricians' union was overwhelming. Sacked *Sunday Times* journalists writing in the *Wapping Post* of 30 August 1986 provided conclusive evidence that EETPU offices in Southampton and Glasgow directly recruited scab labour to work at Wapping and Kinning Park, Murdoch's Scottish plant.

Liz Short believes the EETPU should be

The TUC conference provided a welcome boost for print workers engaged in the eight month old Wapping dispute. But it is the outcome of the current secret negotiations between employers and unions in the Wapping dispute which will have the most enduring effects on the trade union movement. **JUDITH ARKWRIGHT** discusses some of those implications with **LIZ SHORT**, acting deputy Mother of the Chapel (MOC) of the *Times* clerical branch of SOGAT.

expelled from the TUC. 'If you refuse to act to defend members' interests because you are afraid to split the trades union movement, then what purpose does that movement really serve', she asks. 'It is Hammond and the EETPU that are provoking a split in the trade unions and sabotaging any real fight against the Tories' trade union legislation. They are trying to lead us towards the new company unionism.'

The role of the TUC in the dispute, says Liz, has been worse than useless. The TUC and print union leaders have consistently claimed that the law must not be broken but, as she points out, the only way to win at Wapping is through all-out industrial action which under this government automatically means conflict with the law. She points out that: 'The TUC quite rightly talk about the plight of detained trade unionists in South Africa, but what about the more than 1,000 arrests at Wapping and police brutality towards trade unionists on their own door-

step? They are not really serious in supporting South African trade unionists either. Think what could be done to support them if you had strong fighting print unions here. The struggles could be really linked up'.

But the entire blame cannot be laid at the door of the electricians and the TUC, Eric Hammond, the electrician's union leader, has already pointed out the hypocrisy of print union leaders, who while simultaneously condemning him, have asked him to negotiate on their behalf with Murdoch.

The leaderships of the other unions involved in the dispute have themselves consistently undermined the action, not least in

'It is Hammond and the EETPU that are provoking a split in the trade unions'

negotiating deals with other newspapers on Fleet Street which all but concede the sort of demands that Murdoch is making.

* A deal with the *Daily Express* was worked out at Easter which involved the loss of 2,600 jobs and a massive undermining of conditions of service.

* At the *Daily Telegraph* a move to West Ferry Road in Docklands has been agreed along with massive redundancies and an end to branch level negotiations. Instead a system of joint negotiating committees is to be set up, which given the current level of demoralisation amongst the rank-and-file, will severely undermine union strength.

The *Observer* newspaper recently announced that it must lose 550 jobs and envisages putting out printing to four regional centres.

* In the case of the *Mirror* group of newspapers, SOGAT workers have initially rejected a package from Robert Maxwell which offered a 3½% pay rise over two years in return for 'unlimited flexibility' requiring members to cover any job including non-union positions, a move to a new site, changes in shifts, rotas, working hours, holidays and stipulating members be required to work on any of his publications. This was coupled with restrictions on chapel representation. This follows the reduction of the workforce by one third last January. Maxwell has clearly taken his cue from Murdoch and the outcome of the Wapping dispute will obviously influence his ability to push the deal through.

Liz points out that all these proprietors have boasted that they have not had to use 'Murdoch-style' tactics, but have achieved what they wanted through negotiation. In fact Murdoch has paved the way for such deals. And the fact that the unions have been negotiating such deals will only serve to further undermine union strength. 'Why should you join a union if it does not represent your basic interests,' she queries.

According to Liz, the leaders of her own union, SOGAT, have been searching for ways to run down the action and force a settlement on the print workers ever since the overwhelming 2 to 1 vote to reject the Murdoch offer of £50 million and the use of the *Sunday*

Times building.

At the SOGAT annual conference in Scarborough, earlier this year, Brenda Dean and her national executive were given a helping hand by the key London District Committee (LDC) of the union. After having successfully led the moves to reject the Murdoch offer, against the National Executive recommendation, the London leaders then failed to take the initiative and demand a stepping up of the dispute.

Instead they agreed merely to pursue the dispute as long as the independence of SOGAT was not in jeopardy and to continue the boycott of News International papers. The effect was to run the action down.

Liz views this whole episode as a critical turning point in the dispute. 'Now the national union is negotiating at a national level,' she explains, 'thereby cutting out chapels and branches. The LDC managed in the lead up to the ballot to assert some authority but then they bottled out in Scarborough.'

'In any case, since the agreement the national leadership have not even done the minimal things they agreed to. It took them six weeks to come up with a new leaflet for the boycott campaign. The executive have left us to rot until we're so demoralised, we'll accept any deal.'

Since July 31 the national executive have also taken to policing the dispute themselves. On this date, Murdoch obtained injunctions against the unions placing severe restrictions on picketing and demonstrating at Wapping. INT obtained similar injunctions against flying picketing. Brenda Dean sent a circular out to branches all over the country of which main concern was how not to be re-sequestered.

Dated 1 August the circular is an extraordinary document to come from a trade union. It states that: 'the NEC wishes to make it clear that it cannot countenance an action by any officer or member which constitutes a breach of any of the undertakings. In accordance with the legal requirements of the undertakings to protect the union the society will be required to take disciplinary action against any officer or member who takes action which infringes any of the undertakings and thereby places the position of the union in jeopardy.'

It is not clear what 'disciplinary action' means, but here is a situation where scabs are being tolerated within the TUC, in the shape of the EETPU and yet trade unionists who want to fight for basic demands are being threatened. This is the extent to which the Thatcher government has succeeded in undermining and dividing the trade unions through legislation.

As against this the SOGAT ballot and some of the mass meetings that have been held show a willingness to fight. However Liz believes that some kind of challenge to the national leadership of the union would have to be implied in this. She regretted that the London leadership had 'bottled out' at Scarborough since this was the only real existing alternative to the leadership during the dispute. She herself has participated in the Fleet Street support unit which she describes as the only real rank-and-file voice

in the print unions. She does not see this as an alternative to the leadership but as a means of putting pressure to get the right policies to win.

What policies? 'The primary function of the support unit was to mobilise other Fleet Street chapels and to put pressure on for the holding of more mass meetings and the setting up of a strike committee.' Liz points out that there had only been six of these during the dispute. At one very well attended meeting which she chaired a good discussion developed, but none of the officials turned up to it to be accountable to the members. Needless to say less people turned up to the next meeting.

Women print workers have played a role equal to the men. 'At the beginning of the dispute,' says Liz, 'public sympathy was not with the print workers so they used us as an example of low-paid workers. There are 800 female staff on strike and women showed themselves very willing to fight and people began to realise that women could fight.'

One of the biggest mistakes of the strike, and Liz thinks it was deliberate, was that there is no real attempt to link up with the printers' families. 'But if you're trying to contain a dispute I suppose the last thing you want is a force like the miners' wives.'

Liz reports that locally Labour Parties have been very supportive and that support could have built on to a far greater extent. 'But nationally the Labour Party has the same line as the SOGAT leadership - don't

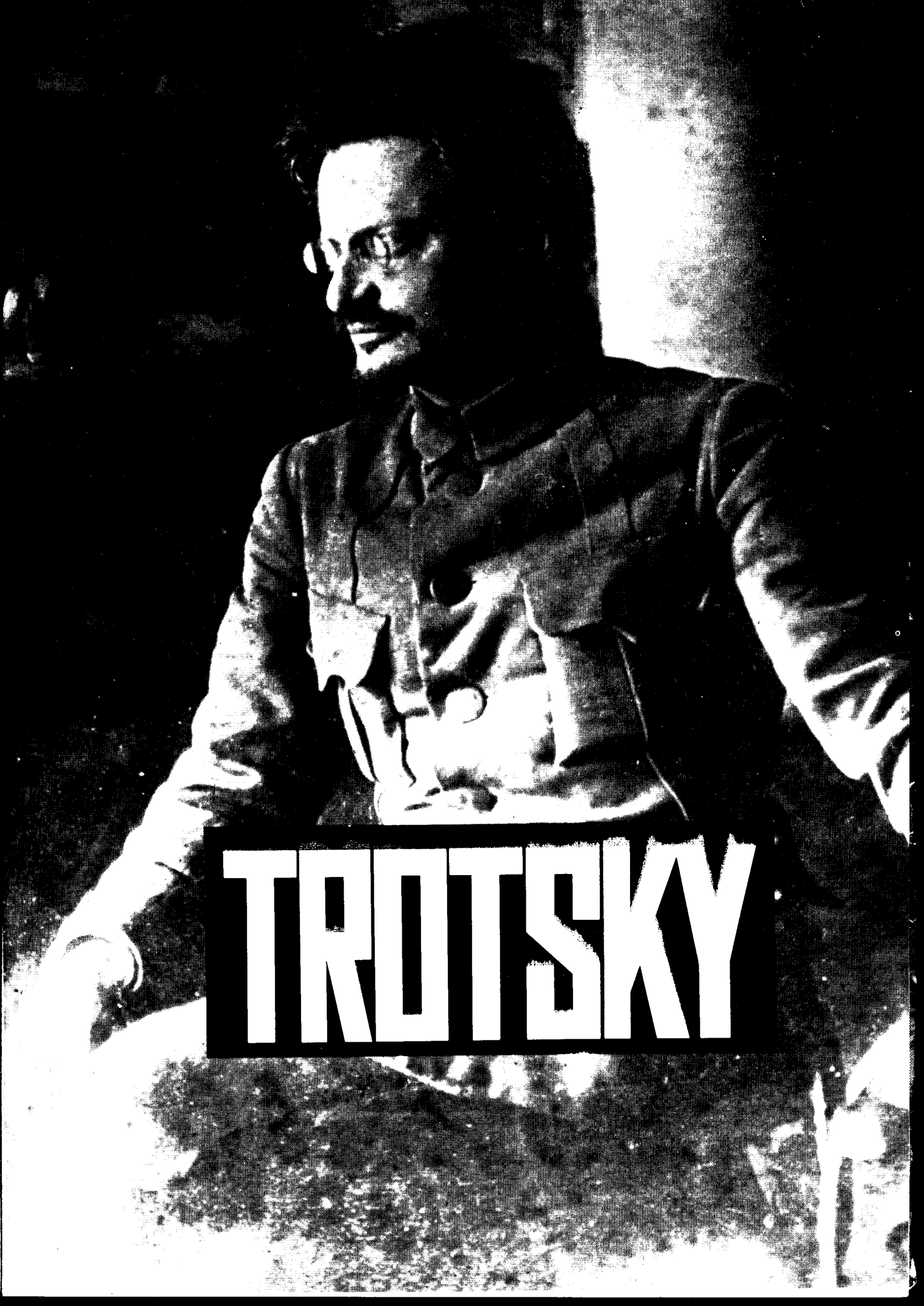
'800 female staff are on strike and have showed themselves willing to fight'

rock the boat, wait for the next election to change things. Despite this Liz has joined the Labour Party. 'I know that there is no alternative but to carry on fighting for our rights. That's why it is no good waiting for the next election.'

A defeat for the printworkers was and is clearly not inevitable. Murdoch's provocative action was a gamble and he has faced losses amounting to £20 million. Like others in the Fleet Street support unit she believes that Murdoch could have been defeated through industrial action in Fleet Street, pointing out to the rest of the Labour movement that the issue is not just new technology, but trade union rights.

'I think the strike is still winnable' says Liz. 'But of course even if we had taken industrial action in Fleet Street and organised mass picketing the forces of the state would have hit us even harder.' She is bitter that there was no TUC enquiry into the events of 3 May, when the police ran riot against the Wapping pickets.

She is candid about her disappointment with her union and their lack of determination to win this dispute. 'But the alternative to not fighting is a future with no jobs and no rights for working people and increasing state repression. You cannot put the lid on pressure from below.'



TROTSKY

TROTSKY



IT IS WITH great pleasure that we are producing here some of the photographs from the new book *Trotsky*, by David King, with a commentary by James Ryan, due to be published by Basil Blackwell in October. David King's book is a re-worked edition of the photographic collection published by Penguin in the 1970s, subsequently republished in a much extended edition in France, with a text by Pierre Broué.

Despite the fact that he outlived nearly all the 'Old Bolsheviks', mainly victims of Stalin's purges, only fragments of Trotsky on film or sound recording survive. In attempting to get a feel of Trotsky the person, and recording the development of his life and political struggle, the photographic record is invaluable. This new book is also testimony to the immense service to the historical record done by David King in establishing the largest photographic collection of post-revolutionary Russia outside the USSR itself.

Trotsky's political legacy continues to reverberate 46 years after his death. With the demise of Maoism, in many countries the revolutionary left continues to be 'Trotskyist', either by choice or by the accusation of its enemies. But why 'Trotskyist', as opposed to just 'Leninist' or 'Luxemburgist' or, given the recent efforts of Stephen Cohen and others, 'Bukharinist'? Indeed, there have been some in the Trotskyist movement itself who have recently questioned this continued centrality of Trotsky's legacy over that of other great revolutionaries in the thinking of the revolutionary left.

Trotsky, uniquely among the great socialist revolutionaries of the first part of this century, continued to analyse and write about events until 1940, when he was assassinated by Stalin's agent. His exile from the Soviet Union in 1929 meant that he wrote, often in difficult circumstances, but also in relative freedom. He was thus able to observe world events and analyse them over a much more protracted phase of the imperialist epoch than Lenin, who died in 1923, or Luxemburg, done to death in 1919, or Gramsci, imprisoned and cut off from events by the Italian fascist regime.

Trotsky's vantage point, that of one of the key leaders of the Russian revolution and of the Communist International, enabled him to observe the unfolding of the historical legacy of the Russian revolution and the post-war revolutionary upsurge in all





Trotsky with his first wife, Alexandra Sokolovskaya in 1902 before his escape from Siberia.

its splendour and tragedy. He was in a unique position to develop and complete the theoretical and political work begun by Lenin, Luxemburg and the Communist International.

What then was his development of the theories of the Communist International, which make the most highly developed revolutionary theory 'Trotskyist'? First, and most obvious, is Trotsky's theorisation of the degeneration of the Russian revolution and Stalinism. Trotsky's analysis of this process was not of course that of an outsider but of a militant struggling to prevent the tragedy which has marked the whole course of political development in the twentieth century.

Today, it is impossible to be a revolutionary militant anywhere, or have an understanding of the development of world politics, without grasping the character of the Stalinist movements and the character of the Stalinist states. Even those on the far



Natalya Sedova in Munich 1904.

left who reject Trotsky's theory of the Soviet Union — those who hold theories of 'state capitalism' and 'bureaucratic collectivism' — feed from the crumbs of Trotsky's theoretical table. There is hardly any serious discussion of the Soviet Union in the world workers movement and Eastern Europe which does not deal, favourably or otherwise, with Trotsky's analysis.

Through his theory of Stalinism Trotsky performed the essential task of providing the theoretical basis for the maintenance of revolutionary communist politics when Stalinism threatened to destroy them altogether.

Secondly, Trotsky maintained and developed the theoretical heritage of the Communist International on the strategy and tactics of the struggle for working class power in the advanced capitalist countries. His work on this, again the work of an active militant fighting to orientate the revolutionary vanguard to the key tasks of the day, represents the most developed and detailed account of any Marxist thinker. From the foundation of the Communist International in 1919, through to 1940, Trotsky wrote on all the major struggles in the advanced capitalist countries.

Probably the high points of this work are his writings on Germany and

the rise of facism (collected in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*); his general exposition of the role of the revolutionary Marxist vanguard in his critique of the Draft Programme of the Comintern (available in the book *The Third International after Lenin*); his writings on France both in the early 1920s where he formulated with unparalleled precision the tactic of the united front, his analysis of the Popular Front between 1934 and 1936; and his writings on the Spanish revolution. *In passing*, he also wrote some of the finest Marxist analyses of the British general strike and the British labour movement.

Trotsky's work is unmatched in its concreteness and theoretical richness, in its understanding of the struggle of conflicting classes and political tendencies in advanced capitalist countries. Indeed in Luxemburg and Gramsci it is virtually impossible to distinguish, whatever latter day followers might say, any general theories of the laws of motion of the struggle for working class power and the role of the revolutionary vanguard. The difference with Lenin's work is that Lenin did not live to employ the categories of his Marxist method to a long period of struggle in the advanced capitalist countries. It was left to Trotsky to complete Lenin's work.



After the trial the defendants were sentenced to deportation to Obdorsk, a village deep inside the Arctic Circle in Siberia. Here the deportees are en-route to Obdorsk, January 1907. Trotsky is second from the left. The fourteen prisoners were guarded by 52 soldiers, who could not conceal their sympathy for the Soviet. Secret police guarded the guards. On 12 February Trotsky escaped and reached Finland before the authorities realised he was gone.



On arrival at the Finland station, Petrograd, 4 May 1917, Trotsky exhorts the crowd to prepare for a workers' revolution.



A Red Guard Unit in 1917. These worker volunteers were the shock troops of the revolution.

Within two and a half years Trotsky had created a Red Army of five million soldiers. This force defeated several major counter-revolutionary offensives backed by armies of fifteen countries, including Germany, Britain, France, USA and Japan.



Contemporary photomontage of leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution. Lenin and Trotsky are in the third row from the bottom. Look, no Stalin.



Lenin addressing a demonstration in Sverdlov Square, Moscow in 1920 while Kamenev and Trotsky await their turn to speak. Later Stalin's propagandists painted Trotsky out of this scene, attempting to delete him from the history of the revolution.



Trotsky with the principal leaders of the Left Opposition in 1927. From left to right: front row, Serebriakov, Radek, Trotsky, Boguslavsky, Preobrazhensky; standing, Rakovsky, Drobnis, Beloborodov, Sosnovsky. However brief the association of some were with the Left Opposition it cost them all their lives at the hands of Stalin.

Trotsky's third great theoretical achievement was to establish the theoretical basis for an independent struggle for power by the working class in the less developed countries. This of course was Trotsky's famous thesis of permanent revolution, developed and refined in the struggle for and reflection on the Russian revolution, and subsequently elaborated especially in relation to the Chinese revolution during the 1920s.

It was Trotsky who most clearly saw the impossibility of the 'national bourgeoisie' breaking with imperialism in less developed countries, and the necessity for the working class to fight for leadership of the democratic revolution which would grow over towards the task establishing working class power and socialised property relations.

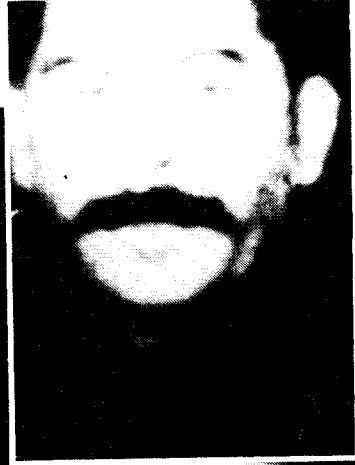
Finally, Trotsky (for example in his *Critique of the Draft Programme of the Comintern* and the *Preface* of the German edition of *Permanent Revolution*) established more clearly than any other thinker the dialectical unity of the world revolution — and hence the need for a world party, the Fourth International, to fight.

Trotsky's work and life speak to us directly on the problems we face today in fighting for socialism; problems of reformism, of Stalinism, of bureaucracy, of socialist democracy, and of the fight for working class power. To be a 'Leninist' or a 'Luxemburgist' today is also to be a Trotskyist. David King's book will, we hope, encourage thousands of people to study the political work of Trotsky, and join the fight to complete it.



Published by Basil Blackwell,
October 9th.

Trotsky's murderer, Ramon Mercader - alias Jacques Mornard - alias Frank Jacson, GPU agent and son of a GPU agent.



Trotsky is dead, 21 August 1940.





TESTAMENT

For forty-three years of my conscious life I have remained a revolutionist; for forty-two of them I have fought under the banner of Marxism. If I had to begin all over again I would of course try to avoid this or that mistake, but the main course of my life would remain unchanged. I shall die a proletarian revolutionist, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and consequently an irreconcilable atheist. My faith in the communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today, than it was in the days of my youth.

Natasha has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence and enjoy it to the full.

L. Trotsky

Coyoacán

27 February 1940

BLACKWELL

Trotsky

DAVID KING
Introduction:
Tamara Deutscher
Text: James Ryan

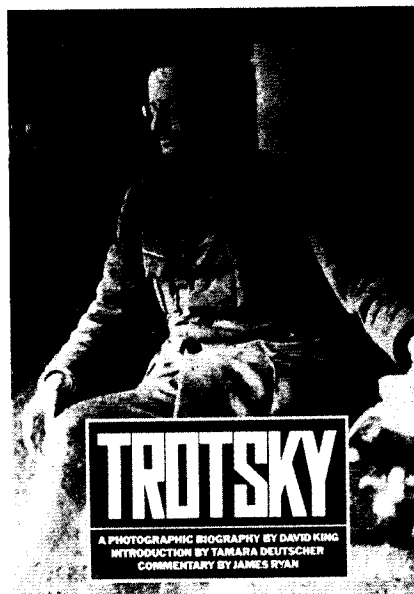
This book is based on David King's unique collection of photographs illustrating the life and death of one of the twentieth century's most controversial political figures.

Without flattery or evasion, but with insight, understanding and humour—the reader is guided through the dramatic events which took Trotsky from his birthplace in a small Ukrainian village to the head of the world's first workers' state and then, as Stalin slowly strangled the Revolution, through opposition, persecution and exile to his assassination in Mexico City by Stalin's secret police.

David King has spent almost twenty years visiting friends, comrades and supporters of the great revolutionary across the world to accumulate the photographic evidence. Now, with meticulous attention to detail, this book reconstructs a life story which has been distorted, falsified and suppressed more ruthlessly than any other in history.

Tamara Deutscher has provided an introduction outlining the enduring significance of Trotsky's life and work while James Ryan recounts the events and summarizes the contributions Trotsky made to political theory and practice.

336 pages, **£19.50** (0 631 14689 X)



Basil
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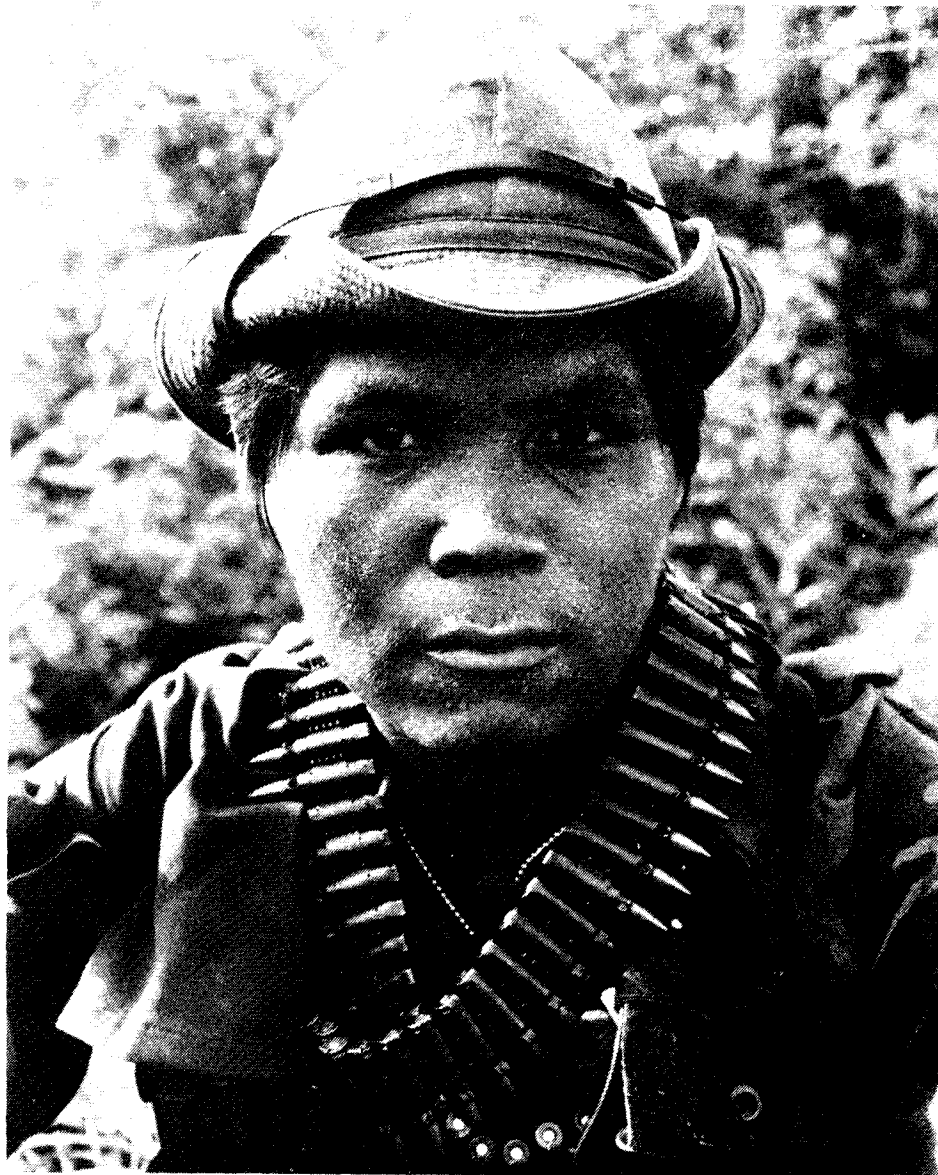


Photo: Cavendish-Reflex

Sandinista soldier

Land reform and the Nicaraguan revolution

The progress of the agrarian reform in Nicaragua mirrors the progress of the revolution itself. **STUART PIPER** shows the Sandinistas' new course is changing radically

the relations of production in the countryside, though while the threat of direct US intervention escalates the FSLN's options are narrowing.

THE STARTING POINT for an analysis of the revolution in Nicaragua is the agrarian reform. This is the crucible on which the character of social changes undertaken, and the level of popular participation in such change can be assessed. The reason is obvious. For several centuries, supplying agricultural products to the market of Europe and later North America has shaped Nicaraguan society. Agriculture accounts for more than 80% of the material product and of the value of exports, and it engages more than half the economically active population.

In Nicaragua, also, this quite typical pattern was based on a particularly low level of development of both material and human forces of production: a small oligarchy making big

profits out of extremely inefficient production, by means of keeping the vast majority short of even bare necessities. As a result, when the revolution triumphed in 1979, Nicaragua had a less developed industrial sector and a lower level of agricultural productivity than even its Central American neighbours: 5.7 quintals of coffee per hectare, for example, compared with 9 in El Salvador, 10.3 in Guatemala, and 14 in Costa Rica.

These figures were reflected in other ways. Illiteracy in the countryside was much higher than the national average of 56% (for women it was in effect total); infant mortality was 130 per thousand; electricity reached less than 30% of the population and only 700,000 people had access to drinkable running water;



Miguel Obando

basic foodstuffs for home consumption were always in short supply. This history also had important consequences, as we shall see, for the class structure of the Nicaraguan countryside.

It is not surprising, then, that after the immensely successful literacy campaign of the revolution's first years, accompanied by extensive health and welfare programmes, it should be *agrarian reform* that became the centrepiece of Sandinista efforts to reorganise the priorities of Nicaraguan society and restructure its abject dependency on world commodity markets. Inevitably, the character of agrarian reform was affected by the concrete features of the historical legacy. In an important summary of Sandinista economic strategy, the Minister of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Reform and member of the FSLN National Leadership, Jaime Wheelock, has said that these material features made it impossible either to undertake a classic agrarian reform, or to begin an immediate transition to socialism; instead, they meant 'looking for the factors which would guide us towards an appropriate social transformation, one both objective and in line with the revolution's interests'.¹

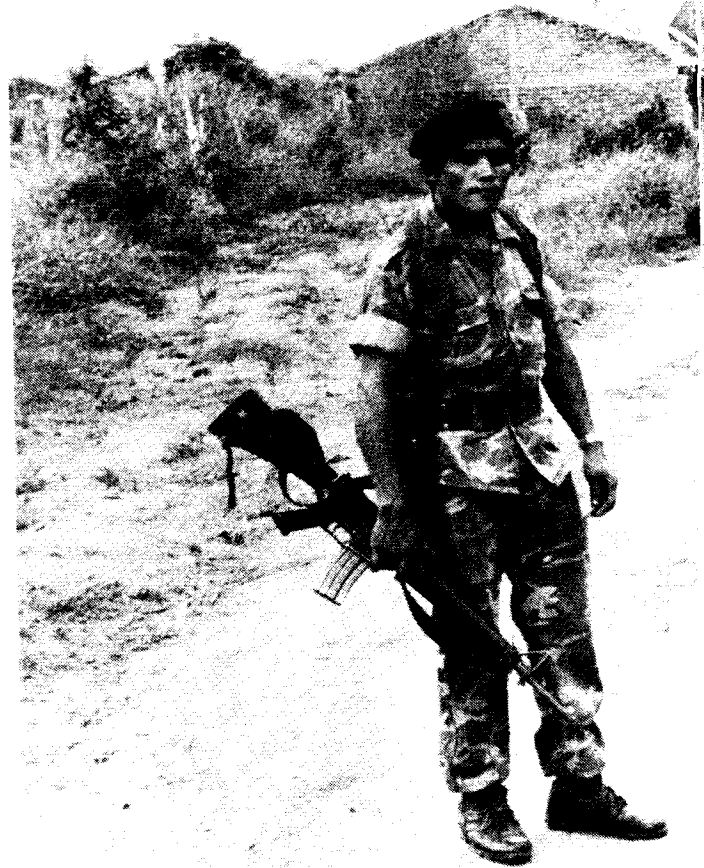
But, as Wheelock also points out, the character of the agrarian reform programme was determined by another, *political* factor, as well: the breadth of the anti-imperialist (or anti-dictatorial) united front which had enabled the Sandinistas to take power in the first place. Wheelock notes that the principal actors in overthrowing Somoza were less the organised, industrial workers — who were few in number and not highly concentrated — than the peasants, the urban poor and the student youth. The balance of forces within this alliance has gone through successive changes. Between the murder of liberal opposition leader, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, in January 1978 and the aftermath of the first insurrection in September the same year, the FSLN decisively wrested leadership of the opposition movement from the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie. With the collapse of the National Guard in July 1979, the same bourgeoisie found itself bereft of any remaining coercive power.

The bourgeoisie walk out

By the time the Council of State was sworn in, in 1980, the two bourgeois ministers on it had concluded that being in the government didn't actually bestow on them any political power, so they walked out. The Sandinistas have always been at pains, however, to ensure that responsibility for each rupture lies with the bourgeoisie. They have judged that any unilateral break by themselves from the framework of the anti-dictatorial united front would be used to further isolate the revolution internationally and provide pretexts for direct US invasion.

Since the withdrawal of their historic representatives into overt or covert political support for the armed counter-revolution, this 'arrangement' with the bourgeoisie has survived only in terms of the so-called 'mixed economy' strategy. Again it is Jaime Wheelock who describes its principles most clearly: the basic condition for capital's reproduction during this period of reconstruction is, 'that the bourgeoisie only produce, without power, that it be able to limit itself as a class to a productive role; that it limit itself to exploiting its means of production and using these means of production to live, not as instruments of power, of domination.'²

To many Marxists this seems a novel idea: a class which owns but does not rule. Whatever the theoretical validity of such a concept, however, it refers to the central dilemma facing



Bridge destroyed by guerrillas in El Salvador.

the Nicaraguan revolution: how to deal with a substantial private sector — the often cited figure of 64% in agriculture is statistically correct (or was at the end of 1984), but misleading since it lumps together completely different *kinds* of private property — a private sector which is at least *partly* responsible for the country's deteriorating economic situation (aggravating the effects of the war), but which nonetheless is regarded as a

'agrarian reform became the centrepiece of Sandinista efforts to reorganise the priorities of Nicaraguan society'

reservoir of skills and resources unavailable elsewhere, and as a guarantee that essential foreign markets and credit lines remain open, thereby helping to safeguard the very existence of revolutionary power itself. This is not merely an interesting point for armchair analysis; it carries with it the whole chain of complicated choices facing new revolutions in small, backward countries like Nicaragua.

The example of Masaya

There is no better place to look at how these contradictions have unfolded than in the region of Masaya. It was here that in June



Piers Cavenon/Reflex

A successful revolution in El Salvador is key to the survival of the Nicaraguan revolution.

last year the FSLN finally gave in to the demands of a disgruntled poor peasantry announcing that 7,457 manzanas of land would be handed over to 1,300 peasant families, including 2,032 manzanas expropriated from SAIMSA, a cotton-export enterprise owned by Enrique Bolanós, the president of Nicaragua's main bosses' association, the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP). It was the first big move in a major re-orientation of the

'the co-operatives have proved most dynamic, contributing to a continuous increase in overall agricultural production'

agrarian programme, designed to benefit landless peasants and increase the weight of individual small-holdings producing basic foodstuffs at the expense of large-scale agribusiness producing export crops, a move that was formalized with a revision of the Agrarian Reform Law in January this year. For the American Embassy — overjoyed with outrage — here was living proof that the Sandinistas would certainly break any promises made to the private sector, that the whole business of a 'mixed economy' was just a tactic on the road to total state control, and that the FSLN were 'Marxist-Leninists' taking their orders from Moscow. The truth is more subtle, of course.

The land in northern Masaya is good quality. The fact that it is close to urban markets and export outlets means its value is high, and so is the population density: 0.6 manzanas per head (the same as tiny El Salvador), compared with 7.5 manzanas per head for Nicaragua as a whole. It also means that the class structure has been more polarized than in most of the Nicaraguan countryside. More land has been concentrated in the hands of a few large cotton, coffee and cattle farmers, whilst in 1978 75% of the economically active population were proletarian or semi-proletarian (that is, they either had no land or didn't have enough to live off, and therefore had to try and sell their labour for at least part of the year), compared with a figure of 66% for Nicaragua generally. In short, there was intense objective pressure for land reform.

Masayan peasants had played a militant role in the overthrow of Somoza. Many had been won over to sympathy for the FSLN years before by Carlos Fonseca's promise, 'In Nicaragua, no peasant will be without land, nor land without people working it'. In 1979, Masaya had been liberated several weeks before the July 19 triumph, and many Masayan peasants took part in a small 'socialist republic' of peasant co-ops formed to keep up the flow of food to those still fighting. Their independent peasant identity remained very strong, however, and people would equally turn out in droves for their patron saint or some reactionary bishop. Indeed, by 1985 this latter aspect appeared to be eclipsing sympathy for the FSLN. People

were not participating in the National Peasant Union (UNAG) or attending FSLN political ceremonies and response to the Patriotic Military Service was poor, where in 1982 and 1983 Masaya had had the highest participation of any department in voluntary military service. Finally, the results for Masaya in November 1984's elections must have rung alarm bells among the Sandinista leadership. The FSLN got only 55% of the valid votes cast (admittedly high compared with most bourgeois elections, but well below their national average), and in villages where less than tenth of the population had received land under the agrarian reform, the opposition parties received a notably higher share of the vote than they did nationally. How had it come to this?

The Sandinistas' agrarian reform has gone through three phases. The first phase, immediately following victory, reflected the contours of the anti-Somoza united front. Without introducing a full-blown agrarian reform law, a series of specific legislative measures expropriated only lands belonging to the Somoza family and immediate cronies, mostly made up of large, relatively highly capitalized, agro-export establishments. Paradoxically, this first phase was also the most collectivist. Confiscated Somozaist land was turned into state farms, going to make up the new Area of People's Property (APP).

Jaime Wheelock has said that this did not necessarily reflect a burning desire on the part of the Sandinistas to proletarianize the peasantry; it was simply not possible to split up large sugar farms complete with processing plants and so forth. Nonetheless, an element of Sandinista hostility to the idea of individual peasant small-holdings also played its part.

The poor peasants of Masaya were not too happy with this new arrangement (even if their overall support for the FSLN remained enthusiastic). At the beginning of 1980 their co-operatives were dismantled; the land belonging to 'non-Somozistas', they were obliged to return to the owners, and the rest was turned into state farms where they were invited to sign up as labourers. Against this, they argued that production on individual peasant plots would be more efficient (and they were probably right, given that the state sector in Masaya was very little specialised, and looking at subsequent productivity figures for the various private and public sectors). Their discontent helped feed a march by thousands of peasants to the ministry of Agriculture in Managua in February 1980 with a series of demands for aid to poor peasants. The government met all their economic demands (to do with credit, rent controls and so on) but ignored their central demand for individual plots of land.

A similar pattern was repeated over and over again during the next five years. For example, the National Food Programme (PAN), begun in 1981: the Sandinista agrarian programme had always intended a shift away from agro-exports towards the production of basic foodstuffs, but although peasant small-holdings had always been the best producers of such goods, PAN concentrated on state-sector projects co-funded with eastern bloc countries. The results were not spectacular.

The second stage of agrarian reform

The second stage of agrarian reform, inaugurated with the Agrarian Reform Law of 1981, represented a new incursion beyond the boundaries of the original anti-Somoza alliance. Any large property (over 500 manzanas on the Pacific coast, or over 1000 manzanas elsewhere) would be subject to expropriation in the case of being insufficiently or improperly utilized. In Masaya, the poor peasants were not impressed. The few remaining large landholders were still regarded as 'patriotic', whilst the majority of properties were less than 500 manzanas. As they put it, 'In Masaya the law passes through the clouds, it doesn't touch anybody'. Two further demonstrations followed, including one at the end of 1982 that demanded expropriation of some of Bolanos' SAIMSA lands. The government, anxious to maintain 'national unity' in order to block the newly aggressive threat from the US and encourage the emerging Contadora peace initiative, refused. Instead they responded with co-operatives.

Throughout 1983 and 1984 the Agrarian Reform Law was used to turn idle or under-used land over to some 33,000 Nicaraguan peasant families, 22% of the total. Here was a new model of collective ownership to meet the needs of landless

peasants, the Sandinista Farming Co-operatives (CAS), backed up by the even more numerous Credit and Service Co-operatives (CCS). It marked an important break with the Sandinistas' previous concern to assure an abundant supply of labour for the large-scale agro-export sector, but it continued to reflect their antipathy towards increased ownership of land by individual peasants. It also involved a perhaps idealistic belief that such co-operatives would find an echo in the collective memory of pre-colonial forms of communal ownership. Either way, this

Nicaragua: changes in land ownership 1978-1985

	(in % of total area)	
	1978	1985
PRIVATE SECTOR	100	64
Farms over 500 Mzs (2)	36	13
200 to 500 Mzs	16	13
50 to 200 Mzs	30	30
10 to 50 Mzs	16	7
0 to 10 Mzs	2	1
CO-OPERATIVE SECTOR	0	17
Credit & Service Co-ops (CCS)	0	10
STATE SECTOR	0	19
Area of People's Property (APP)	0	19

1 Corresponds to the first quarter of 1985

2 1 Mz (Manzana) = 0.7 hectares

NOTE: Although there are variations according to area, crop, etc. as a rough guide it can be said that: Farms over 200 Mzs = large & medium capitalist producers, employing at least some wage labour; 50 to 200 Mzs = independent peasantry relying on their own land and family labour; 0 to 50 Mzs = poor peasantry and semi-proletariat, needing to sell their labour for part of the year.

co-operative sector has proved most dynamic, performing more efficiently than either the large private farms or the Area of People's Property, and contributing largely to perhaps the single most remarkable achievement of Nicaragua's agrarian reform, a continuous increase in overall agricultural production (where every other agrarian reform in Latin America has seen production fall by between 20% and 50% in the first five years). However, the co-operatives still didn't cater for the entrenched 'peasant mentality' of those who wanted to own and work their own land.

So why did the Sandinistas change their minds about peasant smallholdings last year? Obviously there were objective factors: the increased pressure for land from peasants displaced by the contra war; the need to stem the exodus from the countryside to the cities, and to improve the supply of basic foodstuffs from the former to the latter; the diminishing returns from big cotton farms like Bolanos' SAIMSA, and the shortage of public money to keep adequately servicing more co-operatives. But there were more important political factors. Like any serious revolutionaries, the Sandinistas have been learning from their mistakes.

By 1985, it had become obvious that the disaffection of sections of the peasantry made them potential prey to the contras and their civilian arm in the Catholic church hierarchy. In Masaya, for example, it was FSLN militants in the communities who first began to respond to the peasants' concerns at a grass-roots level, and then argued with the national leadership for the need to change course. Daniel Nunez, the President of the National Peasant Union (UNAG), recalls the mistakes of that earlier period: 'we began to abuse the word "bourgeois", and to use it for any small peasant with ten cows or 200 sacks of coffee, without realising the struggle it had been to get them... This made many peasants feel set apart from the revolution.' He cites the case of middle peasants in the northern mountains, seen by UNAG as a priority for organising, in order to undermine the social base of COSEP and the counter-revolution in one of the main areas of 'contra' activity: 'they used to call the Agrarian Reform officials "cave-dwellers", because they spent all their time in their offices, cut off from reality. We explained this to the FSLN national leadership, and that's why they made changes... We need to strengthen

ourselves internally in order to defeat the counter-revolution at home and abroad.²

A new cardinal

There was also an immediate tactical reason for the Sandinistas changing course when they did. Following the failure of Reagan's first attempt to get contra aid voted through Congress, the other command centre of imperialism's counter-offensive, the Vatican, had pointedly promoted its local field officer, the Archbishop Obando y Bravo, to become Central America's first ever cardinal. The new cardinal celebrated his first mass on the way back from Rome, in Miami, before a select congregation of *contra* leaders: he promised to make a triumphal return to Nicaragua, to make war on the government and the Patriotic Military Service, in favour of negotiations between government and *contras* and against the Agrarian Reform. Some 150,000 people were in the streets to welcome him when he arrived, not a few Masayan peasants amongst them. Perhaps many did not fully grasp the political significance of 'their' archbishop's promotion. The FSLN could hardly ignore it.

It has long been a principle of revolutionary Marxist strategy, especially in poor countries where the proletariat is often a small minority of society, that the revolutionary classes (the urban and rural working classes, and their immediate periphery) must win the support of the vacillating middle layers, the 'petit-bourgeoisie', particularly the peasantry, otherwise these will be won over by the other side.

Although the Sandinistas do not come out of this tradition, and do not speak in its terms, the new direction of the agrarian reform clearly corresponds to this continuing eruption of class struggle within the boundaries of the original anti-dictatorial alliance. Along with other, so far less successful measures to curb speculation and promote production in the towns, it is a further move towards defending and strengthening the alliance between workers, peasants and artisans, against the counter-alliance between big capitalists and small owners that is certainly being sought by the US 'low intensity' strategy for counter-revolution.

By 1985, the revolution had already transformed property relations in Nicaragua. The 'revolutionary bloc' comprising state sector (APP), small individual and co-operative production already provided three-quarters of the country's total output. (This is politically a much more significant figure than that showing 64% of agriculture still in private hands.) The new measures will obviously increase the contribution of small individual producers.

It may seem odd to describe measures which strengthen small-scale private property as 'incipiently socialist'. Margaret Thatcher, for one, would have a fit. Be that as it may, one thing is clear. The new course runs directly counter to the interests of large capital, both at home and abroad, in the agro-export sector that has traditionally dominated Nicaraguan society and imprisoned the majority of its people at the most wretched levels of subsistence. It does not signal a break with the so-called 'mixed economy' path, but it does mark a readjustment of the FSLN's 'arrangement' with what is left of the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie, similar in kind to that which accompanied the walk-out of bourgeois ministers from the Government of National Reconstruction in 1980, but several miles further along the road to popular sovereignty over the private sector.

How much further along this road will the revolution proceed, and how quickly? Will we soon see a decisive rupture with the bourgeoisie, wholesale expropriations and the consolidation of a planned economy?

The future of the revolution

Detailed evaluation of the possibilities is beyond the scope of this article. One would need to look at the more worrying developments in the urban economy, where a rampant informal sector accounts for over a quarter of GDP, fuelling inflation and speculation, driving down the incomes of especially blue collar workers, and causing an actual shrinkage of the urban proletariat, with workers quitting their jobs for more lucrative lumpen activities. How long can the support of this vital base of the revolution be assured, solely on the basis of its political

commitment and the admittedly very great social benefits gained in the early years of the revolution?

Most crucially of all, we would have to look closely at the possibilities for mass participation in formulating, ratifying and applying the policies needed to confront America's low intensity warfare. The example of agrarian reform has given some indication of the dynamic interaction between the grass roots and the FSLN leadership, with the mediating role of mass organisations like UNAG. It is understandable that in a situation of undeclared war, the arming of the people in popular militias should tend to displace the role of civilian mass organisations like the Sandinista Defence Committees, and become the backbone of mass mobilization and participation. Nonetheless, it should be clear that this does not offer any sort of long term solution to the questions of proletarian democracy, independent organs of popular power, workers control and so forth. Nevertheless, it certainly is true that the immense success of the multi-party elections in 1984, and the current, very open, public debate about the new draft constitution serve as an important check on any possible erosion of democratic rights, and show the Nicaraguan experience as a real 'example to humanity', breaking further with the bureaucratic, authoritarian or paternalistic examples available than any other revolution in the last 60 years.

In general, however, the Nicaraguan revolution only has three options, and the Sandinistas' freedom to choose between them is limited. First, they can try and hold things where they are, in an effort to use the splits in the international bourgeois camp as a shield against US invasion. They might adapt to their own domestic situation what the veteran British counter-insurgency specialist, Sir Robert Thompson, said to his American hosts at Fort McNair in January: 'where stable peace is unobtainable, a state of stable war is better than defeat'.

Secondly, they can decisively break with the private sector, probably lose their Latin American and European 'defenders' and suppliers, and rely on the Soviet bloc to plug the gap and frighten off the marines. The problem being that it is far from clear that the Soviet Union would be prepared to pick up the tab, and if they did, what would they want in return? In this situation, despite the Sandinistas' intentions, the pressure towards bureaucratic degeneration would be very great.⁴

The third option is to bank on an extension of the revolution to other countries of the region. In a sense this is the only *revolutionary solution* to the problem. El Salvador remains the most likely candidate, and this will be the subject of an article in a future *International*. But such a development is not on the immediate agenda, and the amount of direct influence the Nicaraguans can have is slight. Faced with these half-choices, and given their consummate pragmatic skills, the Sandinistas will probably continue to opt for an evolving blend of all three. After all, the over-riding priority in the short term is that the revolution *survives*.

Footnotes

1 Jaime Wheelock, *Entre la crisis y la agresión. La Reforma Agraria Sandinista*, Managua, 1984. Extracts reprinted in French language *Inprecor*, No. 186, 17/12/84.

2 Jaime Wheelock, *El Gran Desafío*, Managua 1983. Reprinted in English in *The Sandinista Revolution*, Pathfinder, 1985, and cited by Carlos M. Vilas in a very useful study, "Nicaragua: the fifth year - transformations and tensions in the economy", in *Capital & Class* No. 28, Spring 1986. Vilas is an Argentinian social scientist working for the Nicaraguan government. His constructive but critical remarks, like the debate on "market mechanisms" opened in *Pensamiento Propio* No. 31 indicates the scope of the debate about such issues that is going on both within the Sandinista state apparatus and in Nicaraguan society at large.

3 D. Nunez, Interview in *Pensamiento Propio* No. 30, Jan. Feb. '86.

4 For an example of this, see Salah Jaber's article on South Yemen in *International Marxist Review*, Vol 2, No 2 (forthcoming).

THE IDEAL LEADER of the loyalist petty bourgeoisie in the occupied six counties should be a shrewd, charmless, fundamentalist, sectarian thug. In Peter Robinson, presently the deputy leader of the inappropriately named Democratic Unionist Party, they have found such an ideal leader. Without question he is also the man that the majority of the working class loyalists see as their leader.

It was Robinson whom the loyalist terrorists approached to negotiate on behalf of the prisoners during their campaign for segregation from Republican POWs; he has frequently appeared in public at marches and rallies with leaders of the loyalist murder gangs; he was also the man whom Shorts' workers chose to negotiate for them in the dispute over the display of sectarian, triumphalist regalia in the aircraft factory. Robinson is the new leader for a new period in Irish politics. An explanation of what he is, what he represents and where he comes from is an important contribution not only to understanding the apparent changes in loyalist behaviour in the past year or so — it is also an important element in understanding the changes in the Irish situation since the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

In their journal, *An Reabhlóid*, (Summer 1986), the Irish revolutionary socialist organisation Peoples Democracy makes the following points about the aims of the British strategy in Ireland:

- * Britain wants to maintain a presence in Ireland and extend imperialist economic and political domination.

- * Britain wants to preserve Unionism in the North as the only firm base for their military presence and as a bulwark against Irish revolutionary forces and the unity of the working class.

- * Britain wants to defeat the Republican movement and crush the aspirations for unity and independence among Irish workers.

- * Britain also wants to develop a new role for the Irish capitalist class as managers of a 'new Ireland', whose economy has been rationalised and restructured to provide maximum benefit from imperialism.

One would imagine that at least the first three of these four points would give considerable satisfaction to Unionists, but this is manifestly not the case. The essential reason for their marches, withdrawal from local government, murders, beatings and burnings is that what Britain wants out of the North of Ireland, and what the loyalists want out of their statelet is not exactly the same thing. Put crudely, Britain wants to remain in Ireland as an imperialist power, keep the place peaceful and stable enough to make money. It is not concerned with the political and social structures that allow this to happen, just as long as they function relatively smoothly. The people who live there, however, cannot afford such detachment on the question of how imperialism affects their lives.

The group which suffers most from British domination is the Catholic working class. In every sphere of its existence, from infant mortality rates to having their homes

guttured by petrol bombs, this is so. The group which benefits the most is the loyalist big bourgeoisie. Somewhere in between is the Protestant working class and petty bourgeoisie. These are people who sense that they may have the most to lose from imperialism's masterplan. Since the 1920s they have believed that their police force, their marches, their jobs and their unquestioned supremacy were inviolable. They may have lost the B-Specials, but they were given the UDR. There may be a Fair Employment Agency but it has no real powers to do anything. Indeed, so close was the identity between the Orange State and its supporters



RUC with arrested Orange bandsman

Robinson sets the pace

That Peter Robinson, deputy leader of the DUP, is the rising star of loyalism heralds an era of super-violence against the catholic community in the north of Ireland. In the aftermath of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Robinson's ascendancy also signifies conflict between the loyalists and Britain. **FRANCIS DEVINE** assesses the outcome for the republican struggle.

that an Ulster Volunteer Force, (UVF), spokesperson could say:

'There is no essential moral difference between official government action and unofficial loyalist action in the struggle against terrorism and subversion'.

Equally true is the statement: 'Many of our contacts with "Charlies" and "Delta" Royal Ulster Constabulary, (RUC), divisions have reported that the vast majority of grass roots constables were overjoyed at the

results of certain Protestant Action Force operations in recent weeks'. In fact, the loyalist terrorist groups see themselves as the unofficial auxiliaries to the state's repressive apparatus, doing what the average police constable would like to do if only his hands were untied. So does everyone else.

What has changed is that while British imperialism could withstand the IRA's military struggle, Sinn Féin's growth and the mass radicalisation of the nationalist working class means that the Republican movement must be destroyed. One of the pre-conditions for the destruction of the Republican movement is the existence of something to replace it. Clearly, British imperialism and the Irish capitalists can not replace it with a body which is committed to uncompromising anti-imperialist struggle. It will have to be the SDLP, itself heavily dependant upon Dublin's Department of Foreign Affairs (sic).

Strangely enough, even Robinson and James Molyneux of the Official Unionist Party (OUP) also reached a similar conclusion. Molyneux wrote: 'It is to be hoped... that we can consider rationally and maturely how co-operation can be developed between genuine political parties in Northern Ireland'. (*Fortnight*, 17/12/84). Robinson wrote: 'Not everyone in the Province identifies with the constitutional actuality. Ways must be found and mutually agreed which encourage and gain their confidence'. (*Fortnight*, 4/2/85). This, everyone agrees, is the best way to ensure the survival of the six county state.

What neither the SDLP nor the British or Irish governments, nor even apparently the Unionist political leaders had predicted was the reaction the attempts to rationalise the state would cause from the loyalist working

class and petty bourgeoisie. These are the people who are in direct competition with Catholics for jobs, housing, hospitals, even leisure centres. It is an irrelevancy to point out that the Anglo-Irish Agreement will not provide a single job for working class Catholics or disband the UDR. The point is that the SDLP and Free State government are spouting rhetoric about reform and equality.

Now the Orange supremacists, the small business owners who lined their pockets

through the Orange, Black and Masonic orders, the factory foremen who hired and fired through the lodges, the Orange labour aristocracy with their near monopoly of skilled jobs are all revolting against what they see as a threat to their position. For all those people their ascendancy is much more important than the union with Britain because that is what got them the job, the promotion, the nursery school...

However, Unionism is extremely heterogeneous. There are dozens of loyalist political, paramilitary and religious organisations. With every new crisis there are more. This stems from the deformed nature of the

from the possibility of Catholic competition.

However, since the mid-1970s its fortunes have been declining as the DUP's star has risen. This is the result of the fragmentation of Unionism since the fall of the Stormont parliament — to date the high point of this phase of the struggle.

The 1979 election was the first concrete evidence that Paisley's DUP had won a firm base in the Protestant working class at the expense of the Official Unionists. To do so they had to prove themselves sufficiently in tune with the psychology of their voters. Councillor Charles Poots is a good example:

Paisleys, who would have been seen as the natural local leader by many of their congregation. (There have been a number of such figures in loyalist history, generally on the most extreme fringes.) Robinson was a founder member in 1975 and as the first full-time secretary was instrumental in transforming it into a mass party. During this time he built up his power base in East Belfast.

Robinson was elected MP for East Belfast constituency in 1979, one of three DUP MPs, along with Paisley and John McDuade from the Shankill Road. (Even by the very stiff standards of unionist politicians McDuade



Gerry Adams leading this year's anti-internment march

Northern economy, trapped as it is between Britain and Ireland. A small local market caused an outflow of capital to Britain and limited the size of local enterprises. Hence the commonness of Victorian-style family firms which are neither petty bourgeois nor typical of twentieth century capitalism. Robinson, a former estate agent would belong to this group, and this is one of the groups that would be in direct competition with Catholic small capitalists.

The very existence of these Protestant petty bourgeois groups is tied to the fate of their state. They are its Councillors and local government officers. They need to retain their petty powers and privileges and their best ally is the Protestant working class.

The other important faction in the loyalist camp is the big bourgeoisie. This is traditionally represented by the Official Unionist Party (OUP), of James Molyneux, Enoch Powell and Harold McCusker. In the campaign against the Agreement the OUP has also been eclipsed by the DUP because it is essentially a parliamentary organisation. Molyneux himself appears to have given up the ghost and now refuses even to give press conferences. Furthermore, it is historically the organisation of the big Orange capitalist and landowners, more closely integrated with British capitalism than those represented by the DUP and with much less to fear

'If I was in control of this country, it would not be in the same state that it is now. I would cut off all supplies, including water and electricity to Catholic areas. And I would stop Catholics from getting social security. It is the only way to deal with enemies of the state'. Such is the authentic voice of loyalism and how much sweeter it must sound to unemployed shipyard work-

'the DUP won seats by being even more blood thirsty than the competition'

ers than some middle class politician prattling about integration with Britain.

However, in 1979 the DUP was still a largely rural organisation. Paisley himself is from a farming community and sat on the Northern Ireland Assembly's agriculture committee. He is also a very good farmers' advocate in the Westminster and European parliaments. His principle lieutenants tended to be clerics from agricultural areas such as Ivan Foster and William McCrea. The reason for this lies in the origins of the DUP which began as a loose confederation of groups. The central figures in many of these were fundamentalist ministers, mini-

was remarkably unsophisticated. An ex-boxer, his only contribution to the elegant cut-and-thrust of Westminster debating was to shout, 'What about the Shankill?') Thus in 1979 the DUP had won seats in two strongly working class constituencies by being even more blood thirsty than the competition.

One of the decisive factors in Robinson's victory was the support of the Ulster Defence Association, (UDA), whose members canvassed for him. In return he has been more candid about the extent of his collusion with loyalist terrorists than Paisley has. This may be because they operate mainly in Belfast, Portadown and Armagh and Paisley has to rely less heavily on them. More probably, however, it is because the forces that Robinson represents instinctively grasp that their life is near its historical end. A social class is never more vicious than when it is facing extinction, hence the close working relationship between the Robinson wing of the DUP, the terrorist gangs and the Ulster Clubs led by Alan Wright.

Robinson is more typical of the new generation of second rank DUP leaders; men like Jim Alister, Alan Kane and Jim Weils. Within the next few years (if their luck holds), they will be the big names of Northern politics. None of them are clerics, although a large proportion of them are in the legal profession. (Perhaps this is a



Loyalist demonstrator on top of RUC barricade

John Arthur Bolles

co-incident, but this is an area where Catholics are well represented, particularly amongst solicitors.) This is the generation that believes that it will see the long predicted civil war to exterminate Republicanism. The difference between this civil war and that threatened by Carson earlier in the century will be that the big bourgeoisie would have no decisive role to play. In effect, it would be a series of large scale pogroms.

'in the campaign against the Agreement the OUP has been eclipsed by the DUP'

Northern Catholics are already getting a taste of what could happen. Indeed, the ultimate political response of extremist loyalism has always been the pogrom against Catholics. It is not possible for them to target individual IRA members, so they attack the communities in rebellion. It matters little whether or not the victim is a Republican supporter.

Should such a situation develop — not even a full scale civil war — but only an escalation of the current wave of anti-Catholic attacks, the British Government will be forced to take sides. During the 1970s Britain made no attempt to suppress the loyalist murder gangs because they had a central part in its counter-insurgency strategy. But if Britain takes on the loyalists, it will also immediately face taking on the Republicans at the same time, as nationalist resistance tends to go over into an offensive

against imperialism. A defeat, even at the hands of Britain, of the extreme loyalism now led by Robinson would strengthen the anti-imperialist movement immeasurably. But without the buffer of loyalist extremism the anti-imperialist movement could not so easily be contained. Britain cannot remain in Ireland without loyalism and the loyalists can not retain their position of supremacy without Britain.

Consequently, one of the central questions in the coming period in Irish politics is the resolution of the conflict between imperialism and loyalism. In the past, loyalists have shown themselves to be willing to kill RUC men and engage the British Army in gun battles. Should a widespread upsurge occur, the UDR will almost totally go over to the loyalist rebellion. Despite its recent performance, the RUC would be too rooted in the insurgent population to be trusted by imperialism. Such a situation would lead to the creation of an independent state, which at the moment looks as improbably as it is impractical.

Much more likely, given the degree to which the SDLP and Free State government are willing collaborators and the weakness of the Republican movement's political response to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, is that the British government will submit again to loyalist reaction. Every important demand being made by the forces that Robinson represents will be conceded. This does several things. It preserves the position of British imperialism in Ireland. It is a substantial victory for the most vicious and reactionary forces in European politics. It is a catastrophic defeat for the Irish bourgeoisie,

including the SDLP.

A victory on such a scale would give the loyalists two options as regards nationalism and the six counties. Either disregard the SDLP as a political force completely and seek to destroy the Republican movement or, secure in their position after the triumph, attempt a modified version of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The difference would be

'should a widespread upsurge occur, the UDR will almost totally go over to the loyalist rebellion'

that they would insist upon the SDLP being the loyal opposition in the six county state's new parliament, assembly, convention or whatever name is given to it. This was the message being given two years ago by Molyneux and Robinson. Then Molyneux could have expected to be Prime Minister. Now it would be Robinson.

By the strength of the resistance that he is leading, Robinson has managed to cut the ground from under the feet of three parties to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He has ensured that he will be able to bring the SDLP into the new Stormont on his terms, forcing them to be more or less willing partners in the new government's campaign to eliminate the Republican movement.

The only problem is that nothing will have been solved. Should this perspective be proved correct in the short to medium term, it will only be preparing the way for another phase in the anti-imperialist struggle.

Who will win the next election? The question animates the Tory Party as much as the labour movement. **JEANETTE BAKER** and **JANE WELLS** suggest that while Thatcher will not change course, a growing number of Tories are counting the days till her demise.

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY is clearly in crisis. It no longer enjoys the uncritical support of the ruling class which it held in 1979, nor is there enough popular support to make Thatcher's re-election certain. No longer, does the Tory Party offer a strong and compelling ideological vision and unity of purpose behind which to rally the often conflicting interests of capital.

A succession of policy and personality wrangles (usually held behind closed doors) which have hit the headlines over the last few months, indicate the depth of the problem facing the Conservative Party. Far more serious than the superficial problems of style and presentation, central questions of policy and politics are at stake. The divisions in the cabinet and throughout the Tory back benches are based on real political differences about how to conduct the run-up to the next election and reflect the different assessments of the 'Thatcher project' and its continued usefulness to the long term aims of British capitalism.

The country's economy is in deep crisis, and the Tories do not have the answers — nor can they convince the electorate that they do. Without the answers, the ideology or the conviction to carry the Tories through, they are confronted with these deep internal policy divisions. The ruling class are casting about for new solutions and alternative leaderships. And the chances are that they may not back Thatcher for a third term. Why?

The rise of Thatcherism in the mid-1970s represented a new force in the Tory party and a break with the old traditions of paternalism and 'noblesse oblige'. Thatcherism contained within it quite radical departure from traditional Tory politics: an aggressive espousal of one particular economic theory — i.e. monetarism; an abhorrence of almost any type of public spending; a head on attack on working class living standards and rights, and a rigid ideological commitment to private enterprise — not necessarily to free enterprise, as there is often a willingness to intervene in the market to assist private (privatised) firms when necessary.

All this, more brash and 'ideological' style of politics was quite a shock to the old Tory system — bringing as it did, in politics and personnel, lower middle class interests to the forefront in the Conservative Party. Within a decade it seems, the party of landowners and prosperous industrialists has been transformed into an altogether slicker twentieth century machine run by ambitious estate agents, PR people, financial consultants and



Behind the Tory crisis

small business people and their new money.

For as long as it worked and won the votes it was tolerated. But — as we could have warned then — monetarism can't solve the crisis of capitalism.

The unemployment figures for July show a seasonally adjusted rise of 4400, bringing the total number of people unemployed to 3.22 million — or nearly 12 per cent of the total workforce. This is a record level — even without taking into account the endless statistical tricks which the government have introduced (16 changes since 1982) to reduce the figures. Without these fiddles the figures would be over four million. And while unemployment is falling in the other big European countries, it is continuing to rise in Britain and is expected to do so until at least 1988. With no substantial reduction in unemployment expected before the next election, public opinion is quickly turning against the Tories. A recent Gallup Poll found that 71 per cent of those polled thought that the gap between rich and poor was too big and 58 per cent favour redistributive measures to correct this.

The Thatcher project hasn't worked. The crises of confidence and policy — usually so carefully guarded, headed off or simply stamped on in the Conservative Party are now available to public scrutiny. Over the last year we have been treated to some spectacular errors of judgement, U-turns in policy, cabinet rows and the gratifying sight of a Tory party scabbling for an election strategy and strategist. These divisions within the Cabinet and Tory back benches generally on economic policy are becoming more and more pronounced as the crisis deepens and the next election draws closer.

Thatcher herself seems determined to continue with more of the same. She is totally opposed to the increases in public spending which are fast becoming the wet's rallying cry. This is clear from the autumn cabinet re-shuffle. She is expected to go for a team made up of her loyal supporters rather than the 'balanced ticket' favoured by people like John Biffen. The team contains people of the calibre of the present Employment Minister, Kenneth Clarke, whose only response to the crisis is to hope that the world economy will have an upsurge next year which will drag the British economy with it. Thatcher's only concessions to the next election are plans to increase spending in certain areas such as schools, the inner city and the NHS. Fowler's plans for the NHS are probably the most important of all in terms of vote catching — yet all these amount to is an attempt to temporarily cut waiting lists in the run up to the election.

For people like Walker, Whitelaw and even Biffen, all this amounts to is too little, too late. This is a view shared by a number of back benchers, if the rash of Tory MPs (35 at the last count) announcing that they are not going to fight the next election is any indication.

Privatisation — what, when and how — is another major line of divide between wet and dry, poll-panderers and purists in the Conservative Party. Thatcher's conviction that her plans are correct in spite of all evidence to the contrary is giving the traditionalists yet



Norman Tebbit and friend

more cause for concern, and confirms their feelings that something has got to change.

The tactic of selling off profitable bits of nationalised industry at knock-down prices is partly explained by an ideological commitment to private industry, and partly by the necessity for the Treasury to get its hands on large sums of money in order to mitigate, however slightly, the effects of the government's disastrous economic policies.

In this light it is hard to explain the recent events surrounding the 'privatisation' of the Trustee Savings Bank. The legal ownership of the surplus assets of the TSB was certainly not clear when a share issue was first suggested. The government took the view that no one owned the shares, and that the money raised by the sale of the shares should stay with the bank after privatisation, instead of going to the Treasury, as would normally be the case when the nationalised industries are sold off. However it is now clear that the 'state' has full rights over the assets amounting to £800 million — and yet the government is pushing ahead with the flotation on the same basis.

This can only be explained in terms of the effect of the 'sale' of the TSB on the plans to sell British Gas in November of this year. This explanation, denied by the Treasury, but favoured by the *Financial Weekly* (24/7/86), goes like this: the government's dream of a share owning democracy has slipped a bit since the sale of British Telecom in 1984; the 'sale' of the TSB would revive the campaign and serve to popularise the notion of share ownership before the sale of British Gas gets underway. So the government reaps the benefit of the TSB's £5million flotation campaign for its own privatisation policies, in return for giving up all claims on the bank's £800 million worth of assets. Mrs Thatcher has recently suffered a reversal with the shelving of British Airways' privatisation while a trans-Atlantic air deal is worked out, and she is determined not to let British Gas get away — not if she is to keep alive the possibility of delivering the promised tax cuts. And all this despite the nature of British Gas as a natural monopoly, and the strong opposition to the sale from the Chair

of British Gas, Sir Denis Rourke.

Pathological hatred of the public sector has never been a feature of traditional Toryism. Many Tory councils have resisted the pressure to privatise council services. Only 30 Tory councils privatised anything in 1985-6, and nine Tory controlled councils have recently brought back in-house some services which were previously delivered by private contractors. Taking this together with the failure to push through the privatisation of water and the British Leyland landrover division (and the last minute rescue of the Cornish tin industry, requiring a massive injection of government subsidy) — it is clear that the Prime Minister is not having it all her own way inside the cabinet.

'the economy is in deep crisis and the Tories do not have the answer'

Foreign policy has proved to be another minefield for Thatcher and has brought her sharply — and perhaps most publicly — into conflict with influential sections of ruling class opinion.

Central to current British foreign policy (and rows in the Tory party about it) is the relationship of British and American capital. The Westland scandal, of course, had more to do with a strategy of building an economic and defence alliance with America as opposed to Europe within the NATO block, than with the simple accounting of takeover bids for a west country helicopter company. Heseltine, along with other sections of the ruling class, favoured a policy of building up a power base in Europe. Thatcher, as we know, preferred instead to throw in Britain's lot with Reagan and resorted to dirty tricks to make sure she won. The fact that Heseltine should pick this issue and this time to launch his bid to build an independent line and base in the Conservative Party is significant: it suggests that there is substantial support both inside the party and within the ruling class as a whole for an alternative to Thatcher — the tide is beginning to turn

against her.

Even the hard right in the Conservative Party is beginning to question the wisdom of a policy which ties Britain to so dependent a relationship with America. If the Westland row brought out the dangers in this policy and the electorate's suspicion of it, the British co-operation in the American bombing of Libya brought it home. At this point even Tebbit had to doubt, if not the correctness of the policy, at least the wisdom of pursuing it so vigorously.

The Tory 'doubters' had more success in stalling the proposed sell off of the British Leyland Landrover division to American interests. Again, even Tebbit, mindful of the potential damage of a re-run Westland type exposure of Britain crawling to America, pitched his misgivings in along with the lobby arguing that the electorate just wouldn't want to see Landrover go private (and with indecent haste) at all. Internal Tory party opposition to Thatcher over sanctions has been more organised (around Heath and the 1922 Committee) even if, so far, less effective. Again the Tory leadership's insistence on tail-ending America's political lead in order to cement an economic and defence alliance (and all in the face of Commonwealth, electoral and even royal opposition) has led them into conflict within the party ranks.

So if Thatcherism isn't working (and it isn't), and will have difficulty delivering an election victory — what are the options for the Conservative Party and for the bourgeoisie?

Thatcher's hold on the leadership of the Tory Party looks increasingly insecure — both from her own faltering grip on policy direction, and from the apparent attempts of others to unseat her.

Some sections of the left have identified the Thatcher project completely with the interests of capital. That might have been the case in 1979 — and undoubtedly some substantial gains have been made for the bourgeoisie since then (the slashing of living standards along with inflation, the attacks on the trade unions etc.). This was Thatcher's important — and accomplished — mission. Her project fulfilled the recurring need of capital to tackle a relatively well organised and militant working class in a time of economic decline head on. But with the continuing failure of the economy to recover, and the almost complete erosion of the country's manufacturing base, even the CBI are now calling for some limited reflation measures. The ruling class is therefore taking another look at its options — and they aren't necessarily so keen on a third term with Mrs Thatcher. Not only can she not solve the present crisis of capitalism, more importantly in the short term, she may not even be able to win the next election. The ruling class needs a winner to back. If the Alliance were not so lacking in credibility and policies the mould of British politics might indeed have been broken with its emergence as a real challenger for government. But — though it's still quite early to say — it seems most likely that the next year will see moves to restore the old policies of traditional Toryism to grace.

Brookside: the rape and the ratings

Following the rape of Sheila Grant, Brookside's audience increased by 20 per cent. **JANE WELLS** asks why?

RAPE IS usually used in films and television programmes to excite men, or to deliver crude moral judgements on women who are sexually active, independent, or who just go out too much on their own.

The recent treatment given to the issue in *Brookside* (the Channel Four soap set in Liverpool), was different.

The central character in this drama — the victim — was Sheila Grant: a socialist, Catholic, middle aged, mother of four. Sheila moved with her family from a nearby council estate into Brookside Close and up in the world — and found an expanding circle of friends and new experiences. With her older children moving on and out of the Close, a new baby born and a bout of post-natal depression overcome, Sheila joined a local history class. An old family friend, Matty, joined too.

This might have been quite a straightforward and edifying experience. But, remember, this is soap. Matty teams up with a fellow-student, Mo, for a study project and ends up sleeping with her and leaving his wife. Sheila disapproves, finally precipitates their separation, and Matty starts a hate campaign against her. Sheila herself, meanwhile, has become the object of the (unsolicited and unwelcome) romantic ideals of her class tutor, Alan Jones. On top of all this, Sheila befriends another class mate —

married to a violent man — and encourages her to leave him and move into a refuge. The husband subsequently harrasses and threatens Sheila in his search for his estranged wife.

All this adds up to three men with a motive: two with straightforward hate, one with a misplaced passion bordering on an unhealthy obsession. A fourth man, Pat (a young resident of the close), joins the list of

suspects: he was roaming the area drunk after a violent row with his partner at the time of the rape. Sheila is attacked following a violent argument in a pub with Alan Jones and Matty. The identity of the rapist is not revealed for some weeks.

The portrayal of the attack on Sheila and her subsequent reactions, and the behaviour of her family, friends and the police, was



compelling television drama. It was also unusual. Rape is not a subject normally dealt with in programmes with a wide audience appeal broadcast during peak viewing hours. Neither is it generally dealt with in a way which reflects in *some way* women's experience of rape (as opposed to men's interest in it).

But the treatment of the rape in *Brookside* raises questions about men's power over, and often hatred of, women, centrally in the dramatisation (and in fact pointed to these factors as *common* elements in men's relationships to women — even in 'non-violent' and 'non-sexual' relationships). Sheila was not blamed for staying from home on her own (and, recovering from the attack, Sheila expresses her determination to continue her studies).

It also looked at rape as a crime: what that means to women as victims of the crime, how the police deal with it, and what support is available to women. Discussions were held at the planning stage of production with various interested agencies — from the police to rape crisis centres — to get the details right, and to ensure that the treatment was responsible. Sensitive scriptwriting and strong acting meant that the twin traps of sensationalised or sanitised portrayal were avoided to a large extent.

At the same time *Brookside* reached a high in the ratings — at number 47 in the 'National Top 100' programmes, with an audience of over six million.

This is by no means a huge audience for soaps — Eastenders regularly tops the national poll with well over 20 million viewers tuning in each week. The other big three in British soaps — *Coronation Street*, *Crossroads* and *Emmerdale Farm*, regularly attract, in that order of rank, a total of another 30 million viewers. But for *Brookside* the figure is significant even if comparatively small. In January of this year (about the time when the story-line for the summer would be under discussion), *Brookside* was at only 91 in the Top 100 ranking, with 5.10 million viewers — narrowly beating the *St Ivel Ice Gala*, and losing out to *The Best of Birdwatch* and *Dot and the Kangaroo* by a fair margin. Eastenders meanwhile, with Angie and Den's marriage under some pressure, was still at Number 1.

It is undoubtedly true (whether it was included for this reason or not) that the rape of Sheila Grant contributed to an increase of nearly 20 per cent in *Brookside's* audience figures.

This isn't so surprising. In a society which makes a fetish of crime (especially of violent crime, and particularly if the victim is a woman) the portrayal of rape and its effects is sensationalised even when it is not sensationalised. People want to watch it. The highly intimate view which fiction affords (contrasted to the anonymity accorded to rape victims in real life), adds another dimension to a prurient, or even genuine, interest. Many women must have watched the drama with horror, interest, sympathy, anger. Some, undoubtedly, would have been informed by it (some episodes were



accompanied by the transmission of contact numbers for rape crisis centres etc.).

All programme-makers like to get good ratings because it shows that their product is popular, and some like to feel that they are covering an important issue, well. *Brookside's* treatment of rape (as well as numerous other 'social issues') has been, on the whole, responsible, as well as informative.

more valuable and increases the broadcasters' profits. The fact that rape, portrayed in any form, can be 'entertaining' and profitable is disturbing.

In this case, allowing for the male voyeur element in the audience, the fact that the programme (which is watched by many more women than men) attracted so many more viewers during this period points to a strong interest from women viewers. Clearly a powerful and informative portrayal of such a painful experience is compelling — and many women may have no other means of exploring the issue on this level, nor have easy access to information about support available etc.

But television is not a social service (though there are some minimal requirements placed on companies to 'inform and educate') — so there are some 'brownie' points to be earned by this kind of programme. Most importantly though, there is money to be made, and this is why programmes like *Brookside* are made, and why audience grabbing storylines like rape are used. The very fact that high ratings bring greater advertising revenue (high enough in one episode which features the rape storyline prominently to attract a tasteless advert for Samantha Fox's latest single, 'Touch Me'), means that women's bodies and experiences — already reduced to victims in a whodunnit puzzle, are, in effect, simply being sold for profit.

This isn't an argument to say that coverage of this sort is pornographic, or that it shouldn't be broadcast. But it does mean that in the struggle for socialism, women have to fight for a new order of social relations where men's power over women, and its attendant sexual oppression and violence, are overthrown. And part of that involves ensuring that 'social concern' doesn't have to come wrapped up in profit-making 'entertainment' which feeds off the exploitation of women to make that profit.

'the treatment of rape in Brookside raises questions about men's power over women'

But there is another dimension. Ratings are particularly important for commercial (independent) television programmes because they set the price for advertising space between the programmes — sold at varying costs per minute, depending on the number of viewers delivered to the advertisers. An increase in viewing figures therefore makes the product

The verdict on KAL 007

GRAHAM RICHARDS

RW Johnson, *Shootdown — the verdict on KAL 007*, Chatto and Windus, £10.95.

THE DESTRUCTION of a Korean Airlines Boeing 747 by Soviet fighters on 1 September 1983 marked a turning point in the American cold war offensive. The outrage at the deaths of 269 people was fully utilised by the American anti-communist publicity apparatus, and coming on the eve of arms control negotiations was very useful to the right wing in US politics who wanted no agreement with the Russians. The chorus of condemnation of the Soviet Union was virtually unanimous, from right to left. The Soviet counter-publicity was so inept that the US won the publicity battle hands down.

The most influential explanation of the shootdown, expounded at length by Australian journalist Murray Sayle in the *Sunday Times*, was that of instrument and pilot failure, which took KAL over Soviet territory accidentally, where the callous Russians shot down the innocent passenger plane. But a detailed examination of the known facts virtually excludes this explanation.

RW Johnson's book is the first full-scale and serious examination of what happened. Mr Johnson, a liberal academic with no known Soviet sympathies, simply presents the facts and the possible conclusions which can be deduced from them — leaving readers to come to their own conclusions. As it happens, what he records confirms large chunks of the Soviet case.

It is impossible in a short review to do justice to the story which Johnson tells, every bit as exciting as a Le Carré novel, and besides it would be unfair to give the whole story away. However salient facts for those unwise enough not to borrow or buy this book include the following.

There is a long history of United States aerial incursion into Soviet territory. Indeed, such incursions have taken place thousands of times, but US technological supremacy has made the shooting down of US aircraft a rarity; the downing of the U2 spyplane piloted by Gary Powers in 1962 was a spectacular exception. The US today possesses a spyplane, the SR-71 Blackbird, which flies so high and fast that it is virtually impossible for the Soviets to stop it, or even defect it.

KAL 007 was piloted by the senior pilot of Korean airlines Chun Byong-in, a former airforce pilot who had worked with the US airforce. From taking off at Anchorage in Alaska it flew the wrong route throughout, although it made regular reports during the flight that it was on

course. Given the type of sophisticated instruments and checking procedures possessed by airliners today, such an error is virtually impossible.

Many of the reports of KAL's position were relayed to ground control from another Korean airlines plane which followed at a distance; this was an unusual procedure, which minimised direct contact with the ground. The evening of the shootdown was a time of intense US aerial activity off eastern Russia, and KAL 007 crossed the path of a US spyplane just outside Soviet territory.

It took a long time for Soviet aerial defence forces to find and chase the Korean plane. It was shot down just as it was about to leave Soviet airspace having overflown for an hour. The Soviet pilot who destroyed the plane claims that warning tracer bullets were fired, and an attempt to signal the plane was made. US tapes of his conversation with Soviet ground control confirm this. When the Korean jet was hit, it made no Mayday alarm signal, which is standard and compulsory in an emergency situation.

Finally, given the huge amount of US radar and other surveillance facilities in that tense part of the world, it is virtually certain that the whole episode was monitored in detail and minute-by-minute by US military forces. Why did they not signal KAL 007 that it was about to be chased and shot down. Why was no alert to rescue services given?

This is a very brief account of the facts that show something very unusual with KAL flight 007. RW Johnson piles mystery upon mystery.

But, when all is said and done, why

should the United States and their Korean allies bother with the whole combersome procedure of sending a civilian airliner to overfly some of the most sensitive Soviet military installations, when spy satellites could do a much better job with much less fuss, and in total secrecy.

The answer to that question is of course the punchline of the book, and that part of the story at least I am not going to tell, except to say that RW Johnson provides irrefutable evidence of the surveillance advantages to the US which could be obtained from a deliberate and provocative overflight of Sakhalin island. But then to give credence to the whole story you have to be able to accept that the United States would, in collusion with its allies, deliberately endanger the lives of 269 civilians to obtain a military advantage. And who, besides the most hardened leftist, is going to accept that?

RW Johnson argues, again with meticulous attention to the facts, that it seems certain that US naval vessels found KAL 007's flight recorder in the sea off Sakhalin island, but that knowledge of this has been suppressed. Mr Johnson has himself been the victim of suppression. His book has been virtually ignored by the media. Television and radio interviews have been almost invariably cancelled at the last moment. And Magdalen college has been told by establishment figures that Mr Johnson is not fit to be a don there.

But then, as a certain John Stalker found out recently, it can be very dangerous to uncover the facts, especially when they point the finger at intelligence agencies.

Revisionism revisited

JULIAN ATKINSON

Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The retreat from class — a new 'true' socialism*, Verso, £6.95.

SINCE THE early Seventies we have seen the emergence of a political current that has used elements of Marxist ideas to produce a right-ward moving ideology which has down played the importance of the working class in favour of new social

movements and has set itself the task of establishing an alliance between the labour movement and other 'progressive' forces. Both eurocommunist and eurosocialist variants exist and in Britain the major forum for this current has been *Marxism Today*. Ralph Miliband has polemicalised very effectively against this New Revisionism. Ellen Meiksins Wood attempts a similar, but more detailed and more narrowly focussed, attack on these

forces. Wood calls her opponents New 'True' Socialists and echoes the polemics of Marx against those 'true' socialists who rejected class struggle in favour of universals such as Truth and the interests of Man in general.

Wood carries out a searching analysis of the work of writers such as Laclau, Poulantzas, Mouffe, Hirst, Hindess, Kitching and Stedman Jones. She argues that these new 'true' socialists (or revisionists), in spite of obvious differences, have in common a series of similar beliefs. The working class has not produced a revolutionary movement. This flows from the fact that there is no necessary correspondence between economics and politics in general. Economic interests cannot be simply translated into political terms. The working class has no necessary or privileged relationship to the attainment of socialism.

Consequently the socialist movement is independent of class. The aims of socialism are univesal human ones that transcend class and should be addressed to all people irrespective of their material class situations. The struggle for socialism is seen as the linking together of democratic struggles against various oppressions and inequalities. Socialism is radical democracy and can be seen as an extension of liberal democracy.

This bald summary does violence to the detailed care with which Wood dissects the ideas of the various writers under scrutiny. In doing so she makes clear the theoretical basis that underpins the rightist political practice of new revisionists. Take, for example, the attitude to a strike. No socialist automatically endorses a strike. When some dockers struck in support of Powell and immigration controls, socialists opposed the strike. But let us suppose a factory goes on strike for more money. We support it. Life is not as easy for a consistent new revisionist. The strike should not be supported if it were merely a simple sectoral economist reaction of the working class. If, however, it fell within a popular democratic framework and was therefore relevant to the needs of people, then it would be legitimate for a socialist to support this particular strike. Obviously a properly and independently held secret ballot before the strike would be a useful precaution if the workers concerned had serious aspirations to win the support of the editor of *Marxism Today*.

Most of the new revisionists believe in the 'non-correspondence' principle. This argues that material interests do not exist independently but are constituted by ideology and politics. The process of constitution has to involve the theoretical 'discourse' of intellectuals. For something to meaningfully 'be' political the new revisionists have to theoretically propose

that it is. Wood makes the point about the mind boggling elitism of this theory. It has all the arrogant vanguardism of Lenin's theory of the party according to Beatrix Campbell. If non-correspondence is carried to its logical conclusion, it means that no class has a privileged interest in socialism. All people have an equal interest and so perhaps there may be no need for class conflict.

Some of the new revisionists take this even further. The manual working class is so much under the constraints of economic necessity that it does not have either the leisure or the economic well-being of the progressive middle-class that allows these layers to contemplate the general good of all society and to be periodically seized by attacks of altruism. These deficiencies of the working class mean that it has to have an alliance with the professional classes if it is to be rescued from narrow economist selfishness. Stedman-Jones insists that this alliance has to transcend the material interests of class and aspire to the distribution of non-material goods such as knowledge, greater democratic control, a more healthy environment and a better quality of life for all.

This is a very nice idea of socialism and should appeal to all truly nice people. On the assumptions that there are larger numbers of nice than nasty people, then it should be possible to assemble an electoral coalition that will sweep into power a good government based on this alliance... if, socialists can get away from class based narrowness. Kitching explains: 'To be a socialist is not to support the working-class's economic interests against those of the capitalist class. It is to believe in a particular conception of the general interest through abolishing classes themselves'.

It is a paradox that the new revisionists admire the Thatcherite 'ideology' and its populist overtones without relating it to its class-based material interests. The Thatcherites are not squeamish about their references to class. Peregrine Worsthorne made the point: 'we are class warriors and we expect to be victorious.'

Wood makes a series of very valuable points about this new revisionist current. She highlights how many of the writers had a Maoist background and reminds us of the democratic deficiencies of both yesterday's red guards, playing sleep-dog to the masses, and of today's self-appointed field-m Marshalls of the electoral alliance of all progressive peoples. Wood also makes a very sharp analysis of the evolution of this trend. Obviously the defeats imposed on the working-class in the immediate past have induced a despair and a failure of nerve amongst some of the left.

Wood, however, argues that new re-

visionism is not solely a response to the New Right but is also a reaction to the same causes as those which produced the New Right. The miners' strikes of 72 and 74, the 79 'Winter of Discontent' and the strike of 84-85 all pushed new revisionism further to the right and increased its insistence that the working class was not the agent of socialist change. Wood comments acidly, 'The militancy eagerly awaited in theory becomes far less agreeable in practice.' Certainly the response to the 84-5 strike by some of this current was half-way between Cassandra and carrion crow and strengthened their perverse judgement that class politics had come to its end.

Wood has written a thoroughly useful book. This review can only hint at the rigour with which she has covered the books of the new revisionists. But I do have some criticisms. It is not sufficient to logically extrapolate the ideas of the new revisionists and show them to be absurd without also attempting to grapple with the real problems to which these false solutions have been given. Wood correctly hammers the new revisionists for demoting the working class to playing a bit part in the great alliance. She correctly refuses to go along with the 'workerism' that shrinks the working class to a rump of industrial manual workers who produce surplus value and are a small minority of society. But it is also necessary to carry out a concrete analysis of the changes that are occurring within the working class, to disentangle which are features of the current economic crisis and which are of long term structural change, and to realise that on a world scale the size of the working class is vastly increasing. The history of capitalism has also been one of perpetual change in the structure of the working class which produces necessary changes in a socialist intervention.

Not to engage in some of these problems actually gives credence to the new revisionists. Similarly not only do the new social movements have to be recognised as a part of the working class, but also it must be recognised that the integration of the whole of the working class requires a political fight against racism, sexism and other types of oppression. Wood allows herself some awkward passages that appear to subsume new social forces as part of the health food movement.

The book focusses narrowly just on those writers that Wood sees as being thorough and complete practitioners of 'true' socialism. This means that, unlike Miliband, she does not deal with Hall, Hobsbawm, Campbell etc. I can understand the necessity to take on the best coherent ideologists of this trend and to draw out all the implications of their theories. But there is also a problem if too much time is taken on such household

international REVIEWS

names as Hindess and Hirst whose major 'practice' was to exert enormous influence over a scruffy little magazine dealing with semiotics. The influence of those who merely fellow travelled with the pure 'true' socialists but often refused to go all the way has actually been felt in important sections of the labour movement.

Wood deliberately excludes Hobsbawm from her survey since his political approach is based upon the popular front and there is 'no sign of any explicit departure from Marxist theoretical orthodoxy as he has always understood it'. The quasi-caveat of 'as he has always understood it' cannot save this section from a profound ambivalence towards the popular frontism which is re-echoed when Wood appears to endorse this strategy in relation to confronting fascism and other forms of dictatorship. I think I am not just indulging in knee jerk orthodoxy on this point.

Laclau, whom Wood flays for substituting 'radical democracy' for socialism, started his argument exactly from the

point of the popular front. He amalgamated third periodism and the united front as being examples of 'class reductionism'. The popular front was contrasted favourably with both of these options with the minor quibble that the role of 'democratic interpellations' had not been sufficiently grasped. The 'radical democracy' of Stedman Jones and Laclau is not massively different in content to the 'advanced democracy' of Stalinist orthodoxy.

There are distinctive features to the new revisionism but Wood does not sufficiently grasp the continuities with such older ideas as the 'parliamentary road', 'popular front', and 'advanced democracy'. It is this older tradition that has allowed 'more orthodox' members of the Communist Party to at least coexist with the more extreme new 'true' socialists and to be able to utilise a number of their concepts to justify an increasingly right wing political strategy for the labour movement in general and a future Labour government in particular.

a useful introduction to Hoxha's relations to the outside world and in a sense also to the 'Albanian road'. The reader is not told what guided the editor's choice: there is on the whole a preference for the irreverent gossip, the neat anecdote and the cynical comment rather than for themes that would help one to understand the domestic parameters of Albania's foreign policy, stormy and consistent at the same time.

For the central enigma is not the character of Enver Hoxha, but how a fully-fledged Stalinist system could emerge out of a popular revolution and maintain itself unchanged for four decades. Hoxha's rule was characterized by two central features: the ready recourse not just to 'discovery and removal of enemies' (as Halliday somewhat disingenuously suggests), but to frequent and thorough bloody purges of the entire party leadership, a process which, over a period of time, denuded the party of all the original wartime leaders (Shehu was the last to go, in 1982), leaving in the end only Hoxha himself to symbolize continuity with the original revolution; secondly, a degree of internal repression and lack of party democracy that seemed inconsistent with the regime's popular support (that this support remains very real has been proved on several occasions, as Halliday documents). The break with Yugoslavia in 1948 provided the first occasion for a really major purge, and they continued at intervals until the very end of Hoxha's life, draining all the vitality and spontaneity from the system.

Whereas in its isolation, after 1948, the Yugoslav party set about broadening its base (by suspending the brief and disastrous attempt at collectivization, introducing self-management into the factories and liberalizing the cultural sphere), Albania by contrast exhibited a further consolidation of the power of the apparatus and a remarkable tendency of its leadership to settle political differences by violent means.

Hoxha, like Stalin, feared democratisation not only within Albania but anywhere in the communist world. After his 'secret speech' at the 20th congress of the CPSU, Khrushchev joined Tito as Hoxha's most hated enemy: 'The opportunist "new spirit" which Khrushchev was arousing and activating was apparent in the way in which the proceedings of the congress were organized and conducted. This liberal spirit pervaded the whole atmosphere, the Soviet press and propaganda of those days like an ominous cloud; it prevailed in the corridors and the congress halls, it was apparent in people's faces, gestures, and words. The former seriousness... was missing. Even non-party people spoke during the proceedings of the congress... Khrushchev's de-

The artful Hoxha



MICHELE LEE

Jon Halliday (ed.), *The Artful Albanian: The Memoirs of Enver Hoxha*, Chatto, £5.95.

ENVER HOXHA, the head of the Albanian party and state for more than forty years, died in 1985 a committed Stalinist. It was Stalin, of course, whose timely intervention in 1948 had saved Hoxha from demotion (or worse) under Yugoslav pressure. Yet it would be wrong to ascribe Hoxha's devotion to Stalin to purely

self-serving motives. Hoxha was a follower of Stalin out of intellectual conviction and as a result of personal experience. Like Stalin, he too came to identify politics with factional struggle for personal power, personal power with the new state's well-being, and narrow state interest with socialist internationalism. This outlook then defined his domestic and foreign policies — as it did Stalin's.

Jon Halliday's *The Artful Albanian* is a compilation of extracts taken from eleven volumes of Hoxha's memoirs. It provides

nunciation of Stalin was a villainy which had gone beyond all bounds, with catastrophic consequences for the Soviet Union and the movement...' Khrushchev, 'a disgusting, loud-mouthed individual', a 'charlatan, clown and blackmailer' and Tito were 'two revisionists, two agents of capitalism', revisionism being 'the idea and action which leads to turning a country from socialism back to capitalism, the turning of a communist party into a fascist party, it is the inspirer of ideological chaos, confusion, corruption, repression, arbitrariness, instability and putting the homeland up for auction.'

Gomulka was a "communist" who 'after a number of ups and downs and writhings of a heterogeneous leadership, in which the agents of Zionism and the capitalist powers were not lacking' became 'Khrushchev's friend' — perhaps at the price of Bierut's life? The 1956 Hungarian 'counter-revolution' was masterminded by Tito, Khrushchev, Nagy and Kadar, aided — naturally — by Western imperialism.

Similar hatred is reserved for Chinese 'revisionism': 'What rubbish will be introduced into China! How many of them — i.e. the bourgeois 'wasps' — will marry!

How many legal and illegal societies will be created! How many churches and cathedrals will be opened! How much of this rubbish will be granted Chinese citizenship and how much of it will enter the ranks of the Communist Party of China and fight for the CIA, the Soviet KGB and for world imperialism, under the banner of Mao!' And so on.

One of the most remarkable features of Hoxha's voluminous political testimony is the near complete absence of any theoretical insight into the Albanian experience, indeed of any substantive thought on the political events he had witnessed. Halliday's billing of Hoxha as 'far too intelligent' to be compared 'to most other Third World leaders', 'very cultured', 'by far the best-read head of any Communist party in the bloc', is quite inappropriate, when set against the background of the great dearth of analysis (as opposed to personal and sectarian invective) spread over the many thousands of pages of his memoirs.

In the end, of course, a comparison of Hoxha and Stalin is of limited value. Hoxha was the leader of a small and poor country and as such was often at the receiving end of the arrogance and

egoism of his larger and more powerful allies. Characteristic here is the complaint registered after a Comecon meeting: 'Socialist Albania was treated with disdain by others, as if we were a nuisance.' (Only the Czechs are remembered with affection, for their hospitality and civilized manners.) Indeed, behind the verbal bravura, the endless recounting of victories in countless verbal battles, the constant protestation of revolutionary fervour and Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, there lies buried the injured pride of a small nation which — against all odds and largely by its own efforts — in the great cataclysm of 1941-5 (which, incidentally, it entered as a colony of Italy) won its national independence, secured its territorial integrity and conducted a socialist revolution that in turn provided the most solid guarantee of its security and progress.

If one looks at history through the prism of this kind of achievement, then Albania is entitled to its pride. The durability of the Hoxha regime can in the last instance be explained only by the depth of the social consensus established by the revolution. The Albanians do not need Hoxha's extravagant myth-making for their very real achievements to be recognized.

Yellow Earth

GILL LEE

YELLOW EARTH has been described as the most beautiful Chinese film to date and also a film which could not have been made during the cultural revolution. Indeed its director, Chen Kaige has created a film of awe-inspiring beauty, a synthesis of barren Chinese landscape and of music which echoes across windswept hills and barren valleys. *Yellow Earth* is a product of the 'fifth generation' of Chinese film directors who graduated from the Peking Film School which reopened in 1978. The Chinese authorities withdrew *Yellow Earth* for a time after its release.

The theme of the film is the relationship between communism and peasant fatalism, between tradition and change, and on another level about the morality of interfering in something you cannot change. The story is set in 1939 and centres on Gu, a Communist Party soldier who is sent to the remote and barren mountains of Shaanxi province to gather folk songs, the words of which will later be changed to serve as propaganda in the war against Japan. Gu insists upon being billeted with the poorest family in the village and so finds himself in the home of Cuiqiao, her prematurely ageing father and her younger brother. Cuiqiao's

mother has died and her sister has been married to a middle aged man who violently assaults her but with whom she must live in order to eat.

Gu joins the family in their daily chores and in their intense poverty. He helps Cuiqiao haul water four miles from the river and helps her father and brother till the yellow dust with their half starved ox. And he gathers the songs they sing: Cuiqiao sings of her dread at her forthcoming marriage to a man twice her age whom she does not know and cannot love. Working with the family, Gu gains their trust and love and tells Cuiqiao how the Communist women crop their pigtails, wield pick axes and choose for themselves who they will love and marry. But Cuiqiao's father is adamant that she must marry the man he has selected for her — how otherwise can he pay off her mother's funeral, her brother's engagement and how else can Cuiqiao live?

After a time Gu decides to leave the village and return to his army unit. Cuiqiao is determined to go with him to fight against the Japanese, to crop her hair and escape her marriage. But Gu insists that she must stay as he does not have his officers' permission to take her with him. He says that he will return before her marriage and take her with

him to join the army. Gu does not return and we see Cuiqiao's hovel trimmed with the red of celebration as she is forced to marry the man she dreads.

Cuiqiao's brother is left alone with the old father and one night as he is drawing water from the river Cuiqiao appears. She has left her husband, cut off her hair and decided to cross the Yellow river to join the communists on the other side. Rowing and singing across the swirling waters to the freedom Gu has taught her of, Cuiqiao's song is cut off and her brother is left on the bank crying in vain for her to answer him.

Gu returns to the village but finds the house empty and derelict, with the red marriage streamers flapping in a dry breeze. Walking on through the town he comes upon the peasants dressed in leaves, performing a dance to the gods for rain to save their meagre harvest. In the final scene with the anthem of 'the Communist Party will save us all' playing in the background Cuiqiao's brother runs to meet Gu but cannot break through the dancing barrier of peasant reaction to reach him.

Yellow Earth is a visually stunning film. The mountainous area in which the family live is so poor that the fish in the wedding ceremony are wooden replicas and the

river from which Cuiqiao gathers water and her destiny is a sludgy yellow. Yet Chen Kaige's direction gives this barrenness a strange and imposing beauty which is enhanced by the haunting folk songs which begin and end each scene.

The character of Cuiqiao is intriguing — a young woman who has only ever known one way to live, whose whole experience of life should conspire to convince her to resign herself to the fate of all the other women around her, but who still clutches at the only straw she is offered to try and take control of her destiny. Yet ultimately she is betrayed by Gu, and by the director, who having opened up a world of possibilities for her leaves her to be destroyed by the quest for autonomy, like so many other heroines before her.

Rosa Luxemburg

COLIN SMITH

A film by Margarethe von Trotta

A RECENTLY published book of essays on Marxism has a cover design that depicts, as on a bookshelf, various seminal works by the major figures of the revolutionary socialist movement: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky. These are broadbacked, chunky tomes. On the left, almost pushed onto the spine, is a book slim as a volume of poetry. It is *'Reform of Revolution'* by Rosa Luxemburg. It is upside down.

There is something typical, if inadvertent, about this. Perhaps more than any other great revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg's life and work have been the victims of careless caricature and deliberate distortion. Her books are now thought to be of marginal use in the education of Marxists. This is a great pity and thoroughly unjust to her memory. In the words of Victor Serge she was 'the one figure in western socialism capable of equalling in intelligence and the spirit of freedom the leaders of the Bolshevik Party'.

This may be a bit of an exaggeration but it gives some idea of her stature at the time of her death and it is a more correct assessment than will be found in most opinions of her work today. Her voice does not have the authority rendered to the words of Lenin and Trotsky by revolutionary success (an authority often attached to their mistakes as well as their 'truths') but her work is not less rewarding of study.

Politically the film is by no means made in the simple propagandistic style of those produced during the cultural revolution. While its condemnation of arranged marriages, trust in rain gods, and the hopelessness of reliance on 'fate' are clearly aimed against any romanticisation of peasant culture, *Yellow Earth* is not soft on the role of the Chinese Communist Party either. Gu is painted as a sensitive young man, yet his formalism in obeying party regulations is responsible for Cuiqiao's forced marriage and ultimate death. His intrusion into the lives of Cuiqiao's family — which for the first time raises in the minds of the girl and her brother the possibility of an alternative way of life — appears as cruelty because it is not backed up by the material resources to realise those alternatives.

Rosa Luxemburg was born in Poland in 1871 and became an active socialist in early youth which led to her fleeing the country to avoid arrest by the Czarist authorities. Five years later with Leo Jogiches — a life-long political collaborator and erstwhile lover — she founded Polish Social Democracy (Social Democracy was then the common name for revolutionary parties) for which she was the main intellectual voice and Jogiches the organiser. In 1896 she moved to Germany and joined the German Social Democracy, then the largest and most powerful Marxist organisation in the world. Almost immediately she became one of the leaders of the opposition to the reformism of Eduard Bernstein. It was in this struggle with Bernstein that Luxemburg began to develop some of her major concerns.

For Bernstein, as others dominated by turn of the century evolutionism, capitalism was essentially progressive. What was needed was a 'realistic' strategy, to pursue a programme of reforms based on day-to-day trade union and parliamentary activity. Calls for revolution were utopian and unnecessary. This sounds familiar and as Luxemburg correctly diagnosed what Bernstein was proposing was not the pursuit of socialism but a reformed liberal capitalism.

Rosa Luxemburg at this time began to develop a theory which she later elaborated in her major theoretical work *The*

Accumulation of Capital in 1913, that as imperialism engulfed the world capitalism would breakdown through its own internal contradictions. She did not see this eventual capitalist breakdown leading automatically to socialism like the mammals replaced reptiles after the extinction of the dinosaurs, but to a catastrophic breakdown of civilisation into a species of barbarism.

Although she perhaps took her theory to a rather cataclysmic extreme it allowed her to posit to the workers movement a revolutionary alternative to Bernstein and his reformism. In her famous phrase 'socialism or barbarism' she summed up the choice that still confronts humankind. It was not a case of leaving socialist revolution to some distant future or ditching it altogether, as Bernstein proposed, but of finding ways to link the 'minimal' day to day struggle to the 'maximal' revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. For Luxemburg the solution to this problem was a matter of urgency.

It was not in purely theoretical work that she found what she considered to be the seed of the solution to this problem of programmatic dualism, but in the study of actual events in the class struggle — the revolution in Russia in 1905. In her book *Mass strike, Party and Trade Unions* she analysed that such upsurges of the oppressed did not occur at the behest of a party but in response to changes and movements deep inside class society. What to both bureaucrat and police chief would seem like chaos and disorder was to Luxemburg the very face of creative proletarian revolution. It is the nature of such upsurges that partial demands overflow and coalesce, economic demands merge with political demands, immediate demands with more historic ones. In this Rosa Luxemburg saw the 'bridge' between the day-to-day struggle and revolution; that through the experience of its own emancipatory efforts and its mistakes, the working class will learn to confront and overthrow capitalism. This view has led to charges of a naive faith in the spontaneous activity of the mass of workers and a dangerous undervaluing of the role of a revolutionary party.

But this was not a just criticism. Her championing of this self-activity was a vital antidote to the bureaucratic inertia and commandism that can infect even the best of workers organisations at times, and was certainly infesting German Social Democracy in the period before the first world war. As its leadership came to rely more and more on a politically timid electoral strategy, Luxemburg fought for a party which would ceaselessly attempt to prepare for, develop and lead such workers' self activity in a revolutionary direction.

Although she perhaps did not have a full Leninist conception of a vanguard party, she was almost alone among Marxists in pointing out the limitations of such a party. 'The liberation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself' rather than the result of party fiat on behalf of the working class. There may be a taint of utopianism here but the pressure of her thought was towards an understanding of the importance of the broadest form of democracy for building socialism. The right to a plurality of tendencies and parties within the dictatorship of the proletariat. Later, in her book on the Russian revolution of 1917 written in full support of Lenin and Trotsky, she did not begrudge the Bolsheviks their leading role and saw that some of the measures they took which curtailed forms of workers' democracy were forced upon them. But she warned against 'making a virtue of necessity', of making a principle out of what should be temporary emergencies. Lenin and Trotsky could have benefitted by the presence of Luxemburg's sharp insistence on this. She had after all lived through the bureaucratic degeneration of what was once 'the great machine' of German Social Democracy. They had not.

Before the world war one Rosa Luxemburg, together with Karl Liebknecht lead the opposition to German militarism and war at the outbreak of which she was imprisoned while her one-time comrades were voting to support their ruling class in the war. She was freed from prison in 1918 becoming the main intellectual leader of the SpartakusBund (later the German Communist Party) and of the 1918 German revolution. Here was a mass revolutionary upsurge about which she had long thought and fought. Whatever criticism of her tactics we may have it did not find her wanting. She was murdered in January 1919 after the crushing of the Berlin uprising by officers of the right-wing freikorps with the complicity of the then leaders of German Social Democracy.

I have dwelt rather inadequately on only a few of the more controversial aspects of Rosa Luxemburg's politics because they are either not known or

subject to distortion and Margarethe von Trotta's film unfortunately does not greatly illuminate these matters and adds a distortion or two of its own.

The film is consciously not a study of Rosa Luxemburg's work and film is not the best medium for this, it is rather a personal tribute or homage which through a sort of mosaic of scenes attempts to build a portrait of Rosa's life - its tensions, struggles, endurance and moments of happiness. In this it is quite successful and shows considerable subtlety. It is, of course easier to hint at such things as the tensions in her relationship with Leo Jogiches; the warmth of her friendships with other women in the revolutionary movement such as Klara Zetkin, Luise Kautsky and Sonia Liebknecht, the problems faced by women in a predominantly male party and the tensions for a women between political life and 'normal' life with children, as such things are experienced, in one form or another, by most people.

However, this is not so successful when it comes to Rosa Luxemburg, the revolutionary. What is someone without much knowledge of Rosa or the politics of the time to make of the scene where Rosa refuses to dance with Eduard Bernstein? It may be because of her trenchant opposition to his reformism, but it may be because he will tread on her toes. This is not an adequate way of dealing with what were important issues for Rosa Luxemburg as well as the whole revolutionary movement.

More importantly there is little sense of the mass revolutionary struggles of Luxemburg's life. We are given a few minutes of the political power of a couple of her speeches but there is hardly a mention of the 1917 Russian revolution and the German revolution of 1918 is seen merely as a backdrop, in one scene while Karl Liebknecht plays the piano. The German revolution failed but in terms of numbers involved it was the greatest proletarian uprising western Europe has ever seen. Even in a film so focussed on one person von Trotta does not do justice to her subject by dealing with this revolution so scantily.

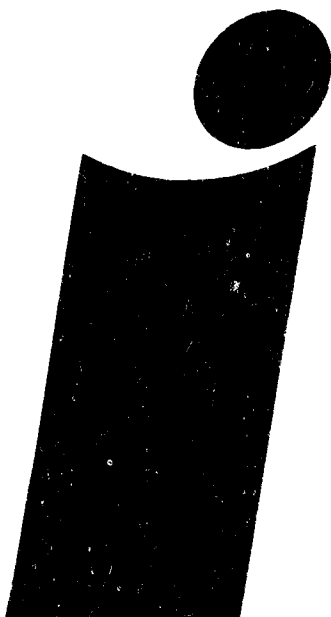
There is a further difficulty. The open-

ing of the film describes Rosa Luxemburg as a pacifist; she is seen disapproving of a cache of arms held by Polish revolutionaries, and later repudiating Karl Liebknecht for calling for a premature uprising. These scenes together with her campaigning against the coming world war are not adequately balanced by other aspects of Luxemburg's politics and career; her full solidarity with the armed Bolshevik revolution; with a clear assertion that the working class will have to arm itself if it is to overthrow German capitalism successfully. So while the scenes shown are true the overall impression given is that Luxemburg was against violence as a general principle which is not true.

Many of my friends did not care for that part of the film which dealt with her imprisonment during the war and what Trotsky called 'her passion for art, nature, birds and growing things'. To them it seemed a bit wet. Present day revolutionaries seem to be trenchantly urban and support Mayakovsky's pronouncement at the time of the Russian revolution 'nature is obsolete'. Well, nature might be about to show us just how obsolete it is. A familiarity if not a burning interest in the workings of nature seem to me to be quite important for those dedicated to struggle for a socialist and rationally planned society. Her language may not be one we would use but just as there was more than a touch of the great Russian novelist about Trotsky, there was a touch of the poet about Rosa Luxemburg. Such things strengthen their politics.

In the end Margarethe von Trotta's film is moving, especially in the performance of Barbara Sukowa as Rosa and the final scenes of her murder are — although restrained — truly appalling. It should be seen.

At the beginning of this article I made a cheeky jibe at the design of a book cover. It was *The Literature of Revolution* by Norman Geras, a book well worth reading itself, but ironically he is also the author of the best account of Rosa Luxemburg's politics written in English, *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg*. Hopefully, after seeing the film people will be sufficiently inspired to go and read it.



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