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International

A journal of Marxism in the Labour Party

FEMINISM FACES THE FUTURE

INSIDE:
TOWN HALL SOCIALISM
ANDY WARHOL
LABOUR'S IMPASSE
SOUTH AFRICAN REVOLUTION MARKS TIME





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CONTENTS

UPFRONT

1 Editorial **2** Lebanon **3** Wapping
4 France **5** BBC **6** Tom Gustafsson

7

Irish election heralds further instability
Brian Pelan

8

Thatcher's offensive and Labour's impasse
Dave Packer & Jane Kelly

11

Anti-zionist Israeli arrested
Ros Young

12

South African revolution marks time
Charlie van Gelderen

15

Self-determination for Scotland?
Jim Niblock

SUPPLEMENT

17-24

Sisterhood, still powerful? Valerie Coultas
Unions must defend women at work Janet Knight
A mixed blessing? Leonora Lloyd Filipino women's
party launched Interview with Maria Gomez

25

Is there a future for town hall socialism?
Davy Jones

30

Why socialists should support Solidarnosc
Zbigniew Kowaleski

32

Communists and the Easter rising
D R O'Connor Lysaght

REVIEWS

36 Andy Warhol Paul Russell **38** New Trotsky
notebooks Chris Arthur
39 The Jaguar Smile Alan Tracy
40 Salvador Dave Robinson

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After Greenwich

THE AFTERMATH OF the Greenwich by-election is an uncomfortable one for the Labour left. The huge scale of the victory of the SDP candidate Rosie Barnes over Labour's Deirdre Wood cannot be simply explained by saying 'the Tory vote collapsed'. Collapse of course it did, but in a certain way — for the SDP and against Labour. The result has reinforced the argument that 'the hard left loses votes'. The truth about this accusation is simple and blunt: in certain circumstances candidates alleged to be 'hard left' do lose Labour votes. But understanding how and why leads us to rather different conclusions to those being drawn into the Kinnock camp.

Much was made immediately after the Greenwich result of the smear campaign against Deirdre Wood in the press. That campaign was real and vicious. But the core of the campaign was not the so-called 'revelations' about Deirdre Wood's private life, indeed that probably won her some sympathy votes. The key to the campaign was the press and SDP accusations that she was a 'loony lefty' who had to be stopped at all costs. That was what generated the tactical voting by Tory voters.

Such an operation could only be carried out in the context of a by-election held under the full glare of national publicity, where the whole of the bourgeois press can concentrate on one particular constituency and the trend in polls during the campaign can be utilised to generate a 'bandwagon'. A central turning point in the campaign was when Roy Jenkins suggested to the media, without any evidence, that the SDP was on the verge of a spectacular victory. Out of nothing, the press conjured the SDP bandwagon.

Tory ministers may be uncomfortable about an Alliance revival, but the bulk of the media have more clear-cut and straightforward class instincts. Their main objective is to stop Labour, and above all its left wing, which it regards as the most dangerous trend in British politics.

The fact of the matter is that the relative success of the campaign against the 'loony left' has not come about because of any permanent features of British political life, but stems from a determined campaign to turn the tide against popular support for the left, a campaign which has received boost after boost from the Labour right wing and the Labour leadership. In the case of Greenwich this is evident enough. Before the writ for the by-election was moved, it was an open secret in Fleet Street that Kinnock didn't want Deirdre Wood and would regard her selection as a 'disaster' for the party. The 'loony left' tag is based on the assumption that there is a section of the Labour Party, especially in London councils, which is barmy and over the political limit. If anyone in politics shares responsibility for aiding and abetting this campaign it is Kinnock and the Labour right wing.

The present situation provides a stark contrast to that two or three years ago, when the GLC, with all its faults, was genuinely popular, and when local government was generally perceived to be under undemocratic attack from the Tories. Of course we should not overstate its extent, but there has been a shift in popular opinion.

Why has this present media campaign been relatively successful, while that against the GLC when it still existed fell flat? The answer is twofold. First, there are the consequences of defeats — the failure of the campaign against abolition of the GLC and Met counties and the failure of the campaign against rate capping. The responsibility for those defeats lies firmly with the Labour leadership and those who flunked the confrontation with the government when it came. Marching

your soldiers up to the top of the hill and then down again breeds cynicism and apathy. Second, the response of Kinnock, Cunningham and Straw to the campaign against 'loony left councils' has been to say that Labour councils should cease to be loony (!) and that, in any case, Labour will not bail out councils suffering from the financial consequences of rate capping.

The campaign against the 'loony left' goes way beyond the sphere of local government. There is now an alliance against the hard left in the Labour Party which stretches from Thatcher and Tebbit, through the Alliance, to Kinnock and the Labour leadership. This campaign, while not new, is reaching new heights of hysteria. It aims to deride and make anathema of any militant socialist ideas, inside or outside of the Labour Party. Socialists should not be surprised or despondent. The very intensity of the anti-left campaign reflects the depth of the crisis of British capitalism and the real fear among bourgeois politicians of all stripes of the potential strength of militant socialism in Britain. But while not giving way to demoralisation or panic, the left in the Labour Party and the trade unions does have to take on board certain consequences of the present situation.

Obviously the pressure on the left is now immense. It takes the form of the witch hunt, and fierce political attack on those who won't recant, and ideological pressure to fall in behind Kinnock. Socialists have to learn how to resist the pressures, to stand and fight their corner, organisationally and politically.

This is not just a question of putting the blame for disasters like Greenwich where it belongs, and refusing to succumb to the 'new realism' or Kinnockite ideology. It is also a question of understanding that the labour and trade union bureaucracy intends to pursue its battle against the left to the bitter end. It is preparing to, once again, blame the hard left for a defeat at the polls. For the left to have any chance of resisting this offensive it has to organise itself, both in the trade unions and the Labour Party. Without organisation and political intransigence, the right wing will score new victories.

The Greenwich by-election sent out confusing and contradictory signals about the likely outcome of a general election. For the Tories, bashing labour is of course a source of satisfaction. But the electoral arithmetic, given Britain's bizarre electoral system, creates paradoxes which will make Thatcher uncomfortable. If Labour maintains its vote around the 37-38 per cent mark, then everything depends on how the 'anti-Labour' vote breaks down. The higher the Alliance vote the more likely is a hung parliament or even a Labour victory.

While in that sense there is everything to play for, Kinnock, by running scared in front of the right wing offensive, is preparing the election in the worst possible way. While socialists will be among the most committed fighters for a Labour government, we should also understand that a Kinnock victory will create a right wing Labour government, of a familiar type. Whatever the outcome of the election there will be no let-up in the turmoil of British politics and no let-up in class battles like that at Wapping. There are long years of struggle ahead before the outcome of the present phase of the capitalist crisis is decided. Socialists have to prepare themselves, organisationally and politically, for that. □

Syria's Lebanon gamble

LEBANON TODAY seems to be a bewildering kaleidoscope of contending political factions and militias, kidnapped Western hostages, besieged Palestinians and threatening Western powers. What is the logic of the recent fighting, and why have Syrian troops been sent to 'restore order' in West Beirut? To understand the maze of contending interests we have to first grasp the fundamentals of Lebanon's recent history.

From the 1943 'national accord' until the 1975-6 civil war Lebanon was dominated by the Christian Maronite community, and especially by the semi-fascist Phalange party. But in the early 1970s the PLO made Lebanon its main base, after being driven out of Jordan. The Palestinians built an alliance with the Sunni Muslims and especially the Arab nationalist Murabitoun militia, the Druze PSP, and left wing forces which threatened the Maronite control of the state.

The civil war which erupted in 1975 pitted the Maronites against the Sunni-Palestinian-left wing national resistance and the Maronites were brought to the brink of defeat. At this point, the Syrian army intervened to prevent total Maronite defeat which would have led to the creation of a state strongly influenced by the Palestinian presence and outside of Syrian control.

For Syria, Lebanon, and its influence there, is crucial to maintaining its position as a 'front line' Arab state in the struggle with Israel. Syrian presence in Lebanon makes Syrian president Assad a crucial actor in Middle East politics, and is a source both of political prestige and financial subsidies from oil-rich Arab states.

In any case, the Assad regime has always seen Lebanon as part of 'greater Syria', and regarded influence there as natural and justified. Assad has operated in Lebanon through proxies, by forming alliances with both Christian and Muslim militia leaders. In return for political allegiance, Assad

provides financial and military support.

One problem for Assad was always the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, which resulted in Israeli intervention which threatened his position. But the 1982 Israeli invasion, while a humiliating military reversal for Assad, nonetheless forced the PLO evacuation of the country. This had two effects, which Assad put to good use.

First, when a split opened up in the Palestinian movement over the decision to evacuate Beirut, Assad formed an alliance with the PLO dissidents led by Abu Musa, in an attempt to win control of at least part of the Palestinian movement. Second, into the vacuum left by the departure of the Palestinians, and the eventual withdrawal of the Israelis, stepped the new mass movement of the poorest but fastest-growing section of the Lebanese population, the Shi'ites. This was Amal ('Hope') led by Nabi Berri. Amal became temporarily the most powerful of the non-Christian militias, and forged a close alliance with Assad.

The recent fighting stems from two factors. The Palestinian fighters have begun to return to Lebanon and especially to the refugee camps in Beirut. At Assad's bidding Amal began to lay siege to the camps, hoping to tie down the Palestinian fighters and inflict a major defeat on the whole Palestinian community. But at the same time, other sections of the non-Christian community reacted against what they saw as oppressive Amal domination, and especially their control of West Beirut. Key here was the tactical turn taken by the Druze PSP leader Walid Jumblatt, whose militia, based in the Druze stronghold in the Chouf mountains is among the toughest and best armed in the country.

The Druze movement is called 'the Progressive Socialist Party', but in fact Walid Jumblatt's position is more feudal than socialist. The Druze sect is a mystical confession, a



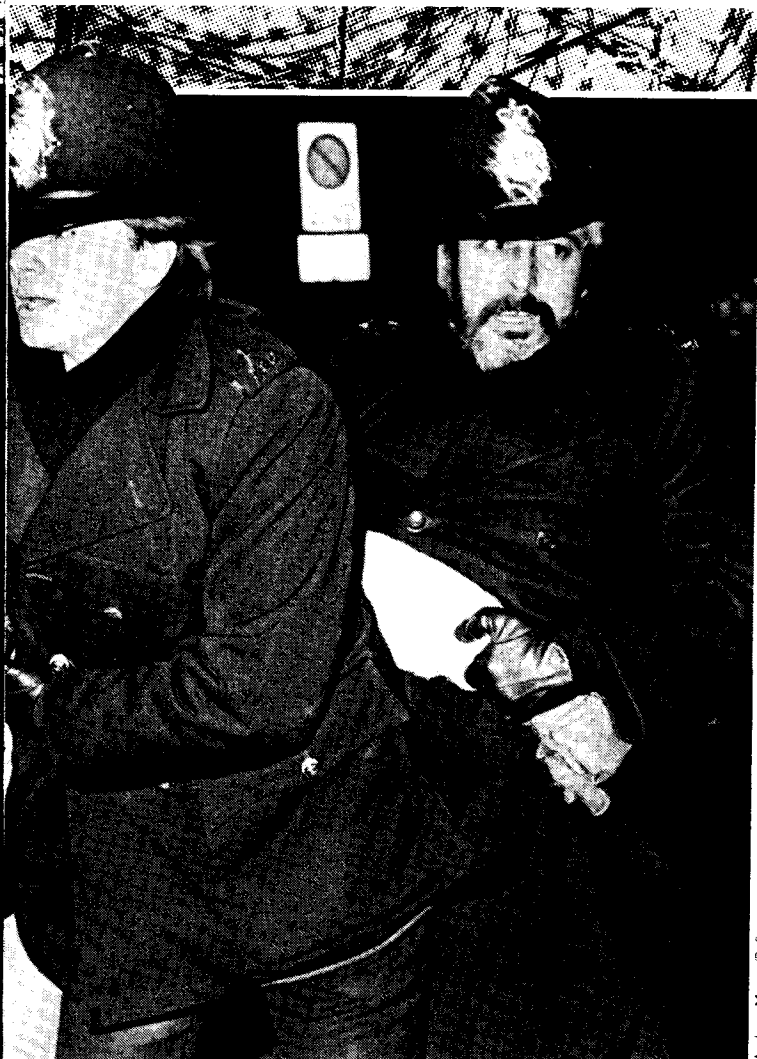
Wapping: strangled by the state

sub-variant of Shi'ite Islam. Jumblatt, like his father Kemal, is hereditary chieftain of the Druze. Like the leaders of Amal, Jumblatt has made his alliances with the Syrians, but began to think the Syrians were imposing an Amal fief on the non-Maronite sections of the country.

The recent Beirut fighting started with the assassination of a leader of the small Lebanese Communist Party, an assassination widely attributed to Amal. The Communists were quickly backed up by the Druze and the remnants of the Sunnite militias, and probably some of the Palestinian fighters were holed up in the camps. Amal got a bloody nose in the fighting, and its hold on West Beirut looked precarious.

At this point Syria took fright and summoned its clients to Damascus for 'discussions'. Here Assad vented his fury on Jumblatt and an 'agreement'

Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini — spiritual leader to Lebanon's hizbollah



Andrew Moore/Reflex

...and the union leaderships

was reached that Syrian troops would enter Beirut to establish 'peace'. But what kind of 'peace' will they establish? The Syrian move is widely seen as an attempt to shore up the waning power of Amal.

Amal is under siege from all sides. It is hated by the Christians and the other Muslim militias, especially the Sunni. However it is rapidly being outflanked in its own Shi'ite community, which dominates the southern suburbs of Beirut and much of the south of Lebanon, by the real pro-Iranian fundamentalists — the Hizbollah movement, and its offshoots like Islamic Jihad.

The Hizbollahs are the fastest growing movement in Lebanon today, and some of its leaders are less inclined than Amal leaders to take a 'softly softly' line towards any military conflicts with Israel. All this is deeply worrying for Assad. It is perhaps not accidental that the

first major firefight the Syrian army had in Beirut was with Hizbollah militiamen.

Assad was reluctant to commit his troops to Beirut because he realised the long-term impossibility of dominating Lebanon as a simple occupation force. His policy of domination through proxies, however, comes under massive strain as the allies fall out and put their own interests first. If the Syrian army can't restore the fortunes of Amal, then Assad is in deep trouble.

One thing for certain is that the Syrian troops will be no allies of the Palestinians. At the time of writing the Syrian troops have not lifted the siege of the Palestinian refugee camps. While the Palestinians are persecuted by Syria and Amal, their persecutors are doing the dirty work of Israel and imperialism ●

PHIL HEARSE



Wapping lessons

ON 5 FEBRUARY the epic year-long struggle of the News International print workers was called off by the SOGAT executive, at the bidding of SOGAT General Secretary Brenda Dean. The next day the NGA executive rushed to follow suit. The printworkers themselves, who had previously rejected offers of compensation from Murdoch in two secret ballots, were given no opportunity to vote on the issue. While a minority of the SOGAT executive voted against ending the dispute, the majority utilised a conference resolution that the funds of the union must not be put at risk, and in the face of another court injunction from Murdoch, SOGAT capitulated.

The Fleet Street printworkers have been among the best organised sections of the British trade union movement. There is no doubt that the Wapping defeat is the most serious defeat inflicted on the British trade union movement in the 1980s, with the exception of the defeat of the miners' strike. Indeed, it was the defeat of the miners which set the scene for a defeat of the printworkers, unthinkable a decade ago. For socialists in the trade unions the task now is to draw out the general lessons of the defeat, in order to prepare for similar battles.

Nothing is more useless than Brenda Dean's plaintive cry that the strike was defeated by the trade union laws, which are 'terribly unfair'. That is only part of the truth, and in any case it is wishful thinking to devise strategies for winning disputes on the assumption that the anti-union laws do not exist. They do exist, the point is to fight against them, and to organise to win struggles taking the anti-union laws into account.

The fight against Murdoch could not have been worse prepared — the SOGAT and NGA leaderships fell into every trap which Murdoch set for them. In the first place, rank and file News International trade unionists had known for two or three years that Murdoch was going to move his operations to Wapping and that there was

every chance that he would utilise the move to attack his existing workforce. But the SOGAT and NGA leaderships continued to believe Murdoch's unlikely story that Wapping was for a 'new evening paper', until the fatal blow fell in December 1985. In other words they continued to believe that they would negotiate themselves out of the corner that Murdoch was putting them in. Two or three years of preparation for the inevitable confrontation were wasted.

Second, and this was to prove crucially important during the dispute, the years leading up to Wapping were marked by bitter inter-union rivalry, especially between the NGA and the NUJ, over the introduction of new technology. The NGA crossed NUJ picket lines and the NUJ returned the compliment as the two unions battled for the jobs left when new technology was introduced on provincial papers. This legacy had an important bearing on the inability of the NUJ to deliver effective solidarity to the printers during the dispute.

Once the Murdoch workforce had been sacked, then to win the dispute they had to overcome three crucial obstacles. First, the obvious fact that EETPU workers were doing their jobs in Wapping; second the fact that the majority of News International journalists went to Wapping, only a small handful of 'refuseniks' refused to take the £2000 scabs' bonus; and third, their isolation and the perfectly useless tactics of their own leadership. To put it another way, the printworkers faced the obstacle of their own leaderships, the NUJ leadership and the EETPU leadership, and behind them the TUC.

If the journalists had refused to go to Wapping Murdoch would have been forced to climb down. But they did go, partly because of disdain for the print unions, but also simply because the majority of Fleet Street journalists, as can be seen from their work, are not pro-union, far from it. The NUJ leadership, while allowing



prolonged disciplinary action to go ahead against a few scab journalists, refused to take immediate and effective action against the Wapping scabs. The reason is straightforward. The NUJ leadership fears that if it effectively disciplines Fleet Street journalists it will lead to a split in the NUJ, with Fleet Street and other London papers organised in a scab union.

The net result is that the NUJ always backs down from confronting the Fleet Street chapels. But maintaining unity at the price of ignoring scabbing is hardly the best way to defend the union.

The attack made on the News International printworkers is going to be repeated, in one form or another, on all Fleet Street workers. Virtually every other newspaper publisher — Maxwell, the *Financial Times* and the 'liberal' *Guardian* — has announced new technology plans involving big redundancies. But from the very beginning of the dispute the NGA and SOGAT refused to make the obvious move to end the isolation of the strikers; to call an all-out strike in Fleet Street to support the News International workers. At the beginning of the dispute such a call would have got wide support; as the strike dragged on the opportunity was lost. The tactics which were adopted — the boycott campaign and concentration on the Wapping pickets — proved utterly ineffective, especially as the TGWU failed to take action against TNT scabs delivering the

papers. Only by spreading the strike could the tables have been turned.

While the pickets were important in keeping the dispute in front of the labour movement and the general public, given the police tactics, they could not in themselves win the dispute.

Finally, the strikers faced the TUC leadership's resolute refusal to take effective action against the EETPU. The sole credible action against them was the threat of expulsion from the TUC. That was the correct demand, but the General Council was not prepared under any circumstances to go along with it. They were aided, at the 1986 TUC, by the complicity of the NGA and SOGAT leaderships, who described the purely verbal support gained there as 'an important victory' — whereas the TUC leadership had made it quite clear it was prepared to do nothing practical whatever.

The 4500 printworkers who stuck out the dispute to the end were ill-served by the Communist Party leadership at district and local levels, who failed to consistently fight for an alternative strategy for the dispute and who acted throughout as a left cover for the Dean and Dubbins leaderships.

The News International printworkers have shown qualities of tenacity, solidarity and determination which are quite extraordinary. The shoddy and sad end to their dispute shows the need for building an alternative rank and file leadership in the unions which can fight the timidity and betrayals of the bureaucratic leaders.

More than ever, there is a need to build solidarity with struggles of this type, and to continue the fight for a growing list of sacked and victimised workers — miners, the Silenight workers, the Hangers workers and others. There is a cynical school of thought which says that workers get the leadership they deserve; those who battled it out on the Wapping picket line know just how wrong that is. ●



Maria Luiza M. Carvalho/Reflex

Workers warm up Chirac's winter

JACQUES CHIRAC has had a bad winter. After humiliation by the student movement he faced an almost total shutdown of the French railway service throughout the period of the Christmas and New Year holidays. A strike in the merchant marine paralysed almost all French ports. This strike movement was in turn joined by the Paris underground and the Electricité de France. The calls by the right wing for consumer protest demonstrations against the strikes drew derisory numbers.

The railway strike was the longest since the three-week strike in 1968. The original spark was the booking office clerks who went on strike in protest at their bonus for work on MDUs being withdrawn. Their

strike spread rapidly and the management was forced to make some concessions after two weeks.

The drivers' strike started on 18 December focusing on two questions: pay scales and working conditions. Working conditions have been an issue since the fatal train crashes of summer 1985, attributed to the fatigue and strain of train drivers. The drivers were joined by the platform staff in support of their own demands, including on wages.

The new element in these strikes was the widespread emergence of broad forms of workers' democracy to run the strike. There were lively mass meetings, collectives, coordination and original forms of action. Control was kept in

the hands of the rank and file by elected and recallable strike committees involving unionised and non-unionised workers, rather than being run by the different union leaderships in parallel.

Two national coordinations were formed in the rail strike, one that mainly grouped the drivers and another cross-sector one, representing a number of forces in the movement.

Although the drivers were 90 per cent solid in their support of the strike, the situation was much more varied among the other staff. This obviously led to problems in uniting all the railway workers in one solid movement. The division between the different unions, there was not one inter-union meeting nor a common set of demands, was another obstacle.

There was a lack of initiatives to build solidarity with the strike either among other workers or among railway-users, who were, however, generally well-disposed to the railway workers. The Communist Party-led union federation, the CGT, called on its own for a day of action in support of the railway workers, but this was in pursuance of its own interests so that it could pose as the most combative union.

Given these obstacles it would have been very difficult for the strike to win an outright victory. The new wage scales linked to 'merit' were provisionally withdrawn, but the real achievement of the struggle was the new feeling of self-confidence among large sections of the workforce.

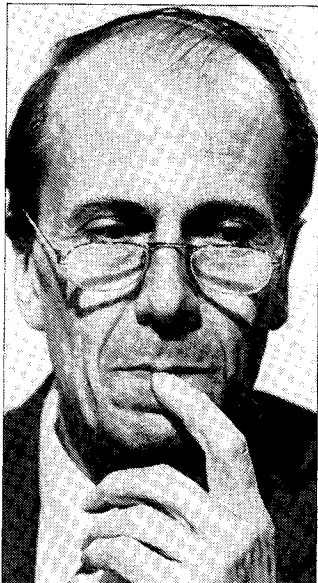
The strikes in the Paris metro, the electricity workers and very partially among post-office workers combined with the effects of the railworkers strike to persuade the leaderships of the public sector unions not to sign any wage agreement with the government. However, in the absence of a commitment to fight the proposed 5 per cent ceiling on the increase of the total sum paid in wages, the minister felt in a position to impose the settlement.

The spark lit by the student

struggles has produced some flare-ups and creeping flames, but not yet a real explosion. But anti-democratic reforms to the education system are the target of the latest round of opposition to the government. In French primary schools, there is not the post of 'head teacher' as it is known in Britain. One teacher performs the administrative tasks but has no authority over the other staff, and the allocation of classes is done collectively, with seniority deciding in case of conflict. The government proposes to introduce a rank of head teacher who would be a 'little boss' in the school, and to cut classes considered 'too small'.

The teachers also have shown signs of a new mood in their forms of action combining local 24-hour or alternating strikes, demonstrations, occupations of educational administrative centres, culminating in a national demonstration on the 11 February, just before the two-week February holidays. Among the teachers, after a fragmented start, coordinations by *departement* began to form, stimulated by the regional demonstrations of the 4 February. The return to school at the beginning of March will be decisive for how the movement continues.

This rapid survey of the main



Denis Doran/Reflex

struggles undertaken by French workers and trade-unionists over the last couple of months should be enough to give an idea of how the atmosphere has changed. What are the implications for the left after the experience of the left government led to the defeat in the March 1986 elections?

The Communist Party came out of this experience worst. Its vote in the 16 March elections dropped to a disastrous 9.78 per cent while the SP could comfort themselves with a more respectable showing. The opinion polls now indicate that it is possible for a Socialist to be elected President in 1988. Most leading lights of the SP are now calling for a governmental alliance with what they call the centre. Various elements of the 'soft right' UDF have indicated interest.

A tentative attempt to regroup the left in the Socialist Party was dropped when the moving forces behind it were offered three places on the steering committee. The leading figure in this attempt was Jean Popere, whose contribution within the Mitterrandist current in preparation for the 1987 Lille congress of the SP is to propose a 'National pact for employment and Growth'. He is, however, among those who criticise the search for a third way and an

alliance with middle-of-the-roaders.

Two well-known figures of recent movements, Julien Dray of SOS-Racisme and one of the leaders of the biggest students' union, UNEF-ID, Isabelle Thomas, have submitted a contribution along with a senator from the Paris region. They state 'We aim to win back a left majority. The way to do so is using the methods of popular struggle. Of course, the CP leadership has to be forced to be in the camp to the left.' These proposals for a union of the left based on struggle would be rather more convincing if they did not come from people who consider that 'President Mitterrand has shown that coexistence is not collaboration' and ask him 'to go on doing as he is'.

Any perspective suggesting that the working class can look to Mitterrand to protect them from the attacks of the Chirac government is unlikely to convince the workers who already know that wages went down and unemployment went up when the left was in government. On the contrary, they are beginning to regain their confidence in relying on themselves and their own forms of organisation, sometimes even at the expense of the traditional union leaderships. ●

PHILOMENA O'MALLEY

Crisis at the BBC

THE SURPRISE appointment of an accountant, Michael Checkland, to head the BBC will not resolve the corporation's crisis. What it signals is a compromise between the conflicting strains pulling at the British establishment: the need to retain a reliable instrument of ideological control and the pressures of an expanding international market.

In 1924, when the BBC was just two years old, its architect John Reith put the case for its public importance: 'an extension of the scope of broadcasting' would be, he argued, 'an integrator for

democracy'.

Two years later, the general strike proved his point. When it ended, everyone agreed the BBC's nationwide coverage had 'greatly assisted the government of the day'. During the strike the cabinet was split. Churchill thought it a scandal not to commandeer the BBC and use it directly to put over the government's case. A majority of the government, supported by Prime Minister Baldwin, felt the BBC might do a better job of maintaining 'national unity' if it were allowed to keep its independence, or, as one of

them plainly put it, its 'semi-independence'.

These old themes have resurfaced in different shapes over the years, most recently in the rows over *Real Lives*, *Libya* and *Zircon*. The irony is that this latter has the Labour Party leader cast in a supporting role for the Churchill camp, seeking to muzzle the BBC for the sake of 'national security'.

Given this fresh collapse by Labour's leaders, the strike action by TV journalists and the 'illegal' public screenings promoted by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom have been welcome. However, these actions also showed up the ambiguity of such democratic rights in our society, and the inadequacy of trying to defend them simply by demanding respect for the BBC's 'independence'. After all, it wasn't the Special Branch which banned *Zircon*, it was the BBC. And it wasn't the Director of Public Prosecutions who threatened to charge all those attending illegal screenings with breaking the Official Secrets Act, it was the BBC's assistant director general who threatened an injunction for breach of copyright.

Which brings us back to the lessons of 1926. For it was a year after winning its spurs in the general strike that the British Broadcasting Company was transformed by royal charter into a public corporation. As the 'voice of Britain' it took on a key role in the exercise of state power. Yet, like the monarchy, it never quite seemed to be what it was. That was part of its success.

When commercial TV came to break the BBC's monopoly in the 1950s, it ended up being fashioned in the BBC's own image. The duopoly which ensued continued the same regulation framework of paternalism which the BBC of John Reith itself inherited from an earlier generation of class rule in Britain, when Matthew Arnold's aristocracy of high culture made a pact with bourgeois vulgarity.

It is this framework which is the target of the government's recent onslaught, not the alleged 'pinko' bias or national security threat of this or that programme. The aim is only secondarily to harden out the BBC for the coming election

campaign. Like last year's Peacock report on financing the BBC, it has more to do with undermining ingrained assumptions and preparing a new consensus on broadcasting. As Douglas Hurd put it in his Commons statement on Peacock, 'our present system of public service broadcasting ... must and should give way to ... a genuinely competitive broadcasting market'.

Why? TV is one sector of production where there is still a lot of money to be made, and it is one in which Britain has a relative advantage. It will certainly be a key component of any capitalist recovery. However, the promised explosion of channels through satellite and cable is coming, despite hiccups, and to remain competitive in this internationalised market will mean cutting costs dramatically.

The present BBC/ITV duopoly has fostered powerful trade union organisation. Channel four has already pointed the way to casualisation of the industry. Much more will be sought after. A major confrontation with the TV unions is brewing.

More generally, Thatcher's recipe for restoring profits runs up against resistance from other sections of the establishment whose business is tending to the stability of the social fabric — like the church, education, public service broadcasting, even the royal family. Economic restructuring requires restructuring of the ideological state apparatus as well.

The stakes involved are immense. In its sixty-five years of existence, the edifice built up around the BBC has become one of the most effective vehicles for political consensus ever fashioned by a ruling class — not something to be discarded lightly.

The stakes for socialists are also immense. In every modern revolutionary upheaval, from Chile to Portugal to Poland and the Philippines, the issue of who controls the media and how has been right at the centre of struggle. What we are now witnessing is a reshaping of one of the main instruments of class rule on a global scale. So far in this country, the left's attempts to come up with alternative socialist policies for broadcasting have been either

Tom Gustafsson (1947-1987)

TOM GUSTAFSSON, a founder and leader of the Swedish Socialist Party, died on 7 February, two weeks before his fortieth birthday. His death, after a short period in hospital, came as a tremendous shock to all those who knew Tom, a physical giant of a person, combining immense energy with great political commitment.

Tom's adult life coincided with the rebirth of the Trotskyist movement in Sweden, a process for which he was directly responsible.

Tom began his political activity in the mid-1960s in the left wing student movement *Clarté*, an organisation which like its counterparts elsewhere in North America and Europe contained the whole spectrum of political ideas on the left. He then became a leading figure in the movement in solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution, and was a familiar figure in front rank of the mass demonstrations in solidarity with the Indo-Chinese revolution.

To the experience of Vietnam was added that of the rise of the student and workers revolt in Europe. Anxious to join this ferment of activity and ideas, Tom participated personally in the mass demonstrations of Berlin and Paris. The combination of student radicalisation and workers' struggles which exposed the passivity and bureaucratisation of the labour leadership was experienced in Sweden too with the bitterly fought strike of iron ore miners in the extreme north Sweden.

The experiences of '68 resulted in the majority of *Clarté* forming a new organisation, the Bolshevik Group, of which Tom was a founding member. In 1971 this organisation fused with the Revolutionary Marxists to form the League of Revolutionary Socialists, the Swedish section of the Fourth International.

For the next 15 years Tom toiled alongside his comrades to build the organisation into the most important on the far left in Sweden. Today the Socialist Party, as it was renamed in 1982, not only plays a vital role in all progressive campaigns, but also has built an impressive industrial base in factories of the Volvo multi-national, despite all efforts from the immensely powerful Swedish labour bureaucracy to oust them.

Fourth Internationalists in Britain have special reason to be grateful to Tom. With unflagging energy and patience he tried to help and advise a movement which was wracked with internal dissension and bitterness. Not only did he devote himself to the minutiae of those problems, but also developed a real understanding of the British labour movement, particularly during the 1984-85 miners' strike, travelling to picket lines and setting up solidarity tours in Scandinavia.

For those who knew Tom personally, the tremendous blow for the Fourth International and its Swedish party is compounded by the loss of a thoroughly decent man. The effort of struggling against the stream for many years makes many of those on the revolutionary left rather cynical and callous in their relations with others. However in his understanding of how human weakness can contribute to political error, his sense of humour and his modesty; all driven forward by a zest for human life and the beauty of the world that he was convinced could be built, he was the best example of how a revolutionary leader could remain a warm and caring person. To all his comrades and especially Birgitta, our solidarity and sympathy. We will miss him terribly.

hopeless or non-existent.

As socialists, we urgently need to fashion a vision of socialist democracy in broadcasting, of a publicly owned system controlled by those who work in it and

accountable to the public who use it, a vision that will grow out of, make sense of, and mobilise support for the difficult defensive struggles which are surely on the way ●
STUART PIPER

Anti-Zionist Israeli arrested

'WHOEVER THOUGHT that it was possible to continue forever in a situation of a military dictatorship for Arabs and a democracy for Jews this week received another blunt reminder that it won't work' declared Gideon Spiro (*Al Hamishmar*, 20 February 1987) in protest at the closure of the Alternative Information Centre (AIC) in West Jerusalem. For the first time since 1967 (the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights) the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance of 1948 (PTO) has been used to close a Jewish Israeli-run news agency.

In a well planned raid on the 16 February, the AIC was ordered to close down for six months, the centre's files and archives confiscated and its equipment seized. Israeli and Palestinian members of the AIC collective were arrested, interrogated and all released within 48 hours except the director, journalist and well-known anti-zionist Michel Warschawsky. Michel was held in detention for one month and released on bail to await trial.

'attacks on freedom of expression and the press is certainly no new development in Israel where Palestinians are concerned'

Police Inspector General David Kraus issued the closure order under the PTO on the grounds that it 'acted on behalf of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terrorist organisation'. Michel was arrested under the PTO and the Emergency Defence Regulations (a legacy of the British Mandate in Palestine which means that a State of Emergency is still in operation inside the Israeli State) and held in detention on the grounds that he was a risk to the security of the state. It appears that the state are trying to build up a case against Michel to justify the continued closure of the AIC.

According to the AIC collective 'the charge sheet against Warschawsky is a unique document' and testifying against him are 12 witnesses — six Jerusalem police from the 'Special Branch — Minorities Division', five General Security Service personnel (or Shin Bet — who will testify in camera) and one is a typist who worked at the centre. There are four main charges against Michel in his capacity as director of the AIC. First, that he gave instructions for a booklet to be typeset. This booklet gives information on interrogation and torture of Palestinian activists by the Shin Bet and advice on how to withstand such treatment. Secondly, that he organized the typesetting of articles for *Al Taqadum*, a student newspaper from Bir Zeit University and for *Al Mara'*, a women's newspaper cir-

ROS YOUNG looks at a serious attack on anti-zionists right to organise in the Israeli state.

culated in the occupied territories. The third charge refers to Michel giving orders for the typing and duplicating of leaflets for (unspecified) 'prohibited organisations'; and fourthly, that he had in his possession leaflets, newspapers and other material belonging to the PFLP and other 'terrorist organisations' which are not named. All the publications referred to in the charges are claimed to be organs of the PFLP although none of this is proved. He has also been accused of allowing the centre to be used by a terrorist organisation.

Despite the charges being laughable — quite clearly he and the centre are being framed — the implications are very serious indeed. If convicted, Michel could face ten years imprisonment and the centre could remain closed. The closure of the AIC and arrest of Michel is not only a massive attack on the freedom of expression and freedom of the press in the Israeli state, but also on the anti-zionist Israeli left.

The AIC has contributed enormously in the last few years to exposing Israel's 'iron fist' policy of repression in the occupied territories. Founded at the end of 1984 (and registered with the Ministry of Interior — therefore it is 'legal') the AIC provided independent information and analysis on political and social developments in Israel and the occupied territories. In January 1985 they launched a fortnightly bulletin *News from Within*, produced weekly reports and since 1986, daily news bulletins on attacks against Palestinians. All its publications were submitted to the Israeli censor and *News from Within* was a registered publication. The centre provided up-to-date information to Palestinian, Israeli and foreign journalists and typesetting and translating facilities (in Hebrew, Arabic and English) to a wide range of organisations, including Palestinian trade unions and women's groups.

In the pages of *News from Within* in recent months there have been reports on the military and economic cooperation between Israel and South Africa, the activities of the Shin Bet and the secret trial of Mordechai Vanunu — the former worker in Israel's secret nuclear installation in the Negev desert. In fact, a week before the raid, the AIC organised a demonstration and petition demanding an open trial for Vanunu and an end to the secrecy surrounding Israel's nuclear capability which is 'in the hands of a government whose sense of responsibility for the lives of the people living in this region, including

Jews, has never been one of its strong points'. Doubtless these are contributing factors to the recent clampdown on the AIC.

Attacks on freedom of expression and the press is certainly no new development in Israel where Palestinians are concerned. While Israel has kept up a facade of democracy (for Israelis), much-vaunted by the zionist lobby in the west, since 1948 (and since 1967 in the occupied territories) it has systematically denied Palestinians freedom of expression — political, social and cultural. Since 1981 no less than five Palestinian newspapers and one press agency have been permanently closed down. *Al Fajr*, *Al Sha'ab* and *Al Quds* have been temporarily closed on many occasions, Palestinian journalists have been arrested frequently, and recently Akram Hanniye (editor-in-chief of *Al Sha'ab*) was the latest journalist to be deported from the land of his birth. The mainstream Israeli press, silent for so long about these attacks, have been jolted into protest at the closure of the AIC; the more astute among them doubtless realise they may well be next. The closure has produced an outcry in Israel among journalists, academics, civil rights organisations and both zionist and anti-zionist political activists.

'the closure and arrests are a massive attack on the freedom of expression in the Israeli state'

The closure of the AIC, in a period of escalating violence against the Palestinians in the occupied territories, will seriously affect the availability of accurate accessible information to the outside world. And to single out Michel Warschawsky for what could turn out to be a show trial may not solely be related to his work at the AIC. As a leading member of the Revolutionary Communist League (Israeli section of the Fourth International), Michel has been active in many coalition groups against the occupation and invasion of Lebanon. He was imprisoned for refusing to participate in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

The work of the AIC and comrades like Michel has to continue which means building support in the international labour movement for them and all Palestinians and anti-zionist Israelis struggling for an end to Israel's expansionism and war-mongering **■**

● For more information contact the Committee for the Freedom of Expression of Palestinians and Israelis (CFEPI), BM 9585, London WC1N 3XX. Donations are urgently needed to help replace the stolen equipment, as well as messages of protest calling for all charges to be dropped, and support.

Thatcher's offensive and Labour's impasse

The general election approaches with Labour apparently unable to dent Thatcher's majority. The defeat of the Labour candidate at Greenwich, a Labour seat since 1945, shows not only tactical voting on the part of the large sections of the Tory vote, but more significantly, the failure of Labour to hold their votes. This poses Labour supporters with some fundamental questions. Why, after seven years of Thatcherite austerity and class war politics, has the Labour Party and trade union leadership failed so miserably to take the initiative from the Tories? **JANE KELLY** and **DAVE PACKER** investigate.



Pritchards — one of many contractors doing very nicely out of the privatisation of council services

TO UNDERSTAND LABOUR's present impasse we must not only look closely at Neil Kinnock's project and the nature of 'new realism', which holds sway in the upper reaches of the labour movement, but we must also look at Thatcher's ruling class offensive. Without such an analysis, it is impossible to comprehend the political situation in the 1980s, nor is it possible to develop a strategy for the working class.

The left has developed various analyses of Thatcher's politics. The most influential is that of *Marxism Today* which describes Thatcherism as 'authoritarian populism', and talks in terms of a new reactionary consensus. Abandoning any pretence to working class politics, which in today's conditions can only be expressed in a fight for a Labour government that is prepared to confront the



All aboard for the general election

ruling class, *Marxism Today* opens the door to an alternative capitalist consensus — the anti-Thatcher alliance and coalition politics with the Alliance parties.

The centre-left and the Labour Coordinating Committee offer a pale version of the analysis of *Marxism Today*. Their naïve attempt to hang onto Kinnock's coat tails to 'save him from the right' has been a complete fiasco — many of their supporters have completely adapted to Kinnock's politics, so much so that former *Tribune* editor, Nigel Williamson is now the editor of the *Labour Party News*. They have failed to develop any alternative to the ideas of *Marxism Today* and so capitulate to them. There is a large section of the right, the Kinnockites and former Bennites who have no alternative to new realism and thus the capitalist consensus.

Thatcher's strategy

What are the main features of Thatcher's project? First and foremost it is a *rational*, if not yet a successful, capitalist policy. Early reactions to the deliberate crashing of the economy and the subsequent bankrupting of many unprofitable businesses, the creation of a large pool of unemployed, led to some false, short-term and misleading analyses of Thatcher's 'lunatic project'. These were misconceived. Anyone who thought that the most experienced bourgeoisie in the world would commit collective suicide, or use a 'lunatic' to carry out their plans are themselves suffering from severe delusions! No, it is a sane,



Denis Doran/Relex

long term strategy of restructuring and revamping the chronically undercapitalised and backward industry of the oldest imperial power. According to this strategy, British capital has the economic reserves through its huge foreign investments and earnings, together with the revenues from North Sea oil, to be able to weather such a drastic restructuring.

The Thatcher offensive has had some considerable successes against the working class and the labour movement. The restructuring has had a major impact on the make up of the labour force. It has created over four million unemployed; it has produced 50% youth unemployment in some inner city areas; it has made 4.5 million people into part-time workers, 90 per cent of them women and few of them qualifying for employment protection or benefits; it has made more than two million people into temporary workers, again including a high proportion of women; it has increased the number of homeworkers, especially among the most vulnerable sections of the class, black and immigrant women. The vast majority of all these workers are not in trade unions.

But this is not the whole story, for while this low paid, 'flexible' workforce has been massively increased along with unemployment, creating the horrifying figure of 16 million living on or below the poverty line, those in work, especially those in the most dynamic sectors of manufacturing have achieved wage increases bigger than in any

Western country. These increases average about 18 per cent since 1979 compared with - 3.9 per cent in the US and + 11.7 per cent in Japan. So there is now a relatively well-paid sector in the most dynamic parts of British industry, in electronics, the computer industry and telecommunications. And while the assembly workers in these sectors are some of the most exploited in employed Britain, at the same time they employ some of the best paid workers. Such sectors are not yet attractive to international investment,

'... Marxism Today opens the door to an alternative capitalist consensus...'

nor British investment for that matter, for they cannot compete in the labour market with South Korea or Hong Kong.

So far Thatcher's project has foundered on two counts. First, the absence of any sustained upturn in the world economy has resulted in a continued failure to attract substantial reinvestment. The City is just not interested. While speculation in the City knows no bounds, much manufacturing industry cannot offer large enough returns to attract capital. Investment is still 17 per cent lower than in 1970 and Britain is the only European country whose manufacturing output had declined in absolute terms in the last

five years. Second, despite the blows inflicted on the organised labour movement, particularly in the traditional industries, wage levels in the more dynamic sector have not been substantially driven down. Britain is still a long way from becoming a 'South Korean type' economy.

But this does not mean that the policy is a failure; rather it suggests that a third term is a precondition for success. For other aspects of Thatcherism have seen some spectacular 'achievements'.

The government have seriously weakened the old, traditional bastions of the working class, those sections organised into the powerful unions which for so long seemed invincible — steel, engineering, ship building, and mining. They have forced through 'rationalisation' plans with massive job losses and the closing down of whole areas of industrial production. Despite courageous defensive struggles, these sectors have been unable to defeat the onslaught.

What we have in store with a re-elected Tory government, will be a similarly vicious attack, but this time on the workforce of the dynamic sectors. This is what is so significant about the NCU strike at British Telecom. If Thatcher is to succeed in the long term aim of making Britain a low wage economy, she will have to increase the level of exploitation of those workers in the developing, dynamic sectors. This is the task of her next term.

The other uncompleted task is the cutting back of public spending and the privatisation

of the welfare state. Rate capping, cuts in local services, in the health service, in education and in welfare provision, have been slowed down by working class resistance and the weight of public opinion. There has been widespread social opposition to the shutting down of hospital wards and to the undermining of education provision. Capitalism needs much bigger cuts to succeed in its necessary restructuring and a third term of Tory rule would undoubtedly see greater attacks on these areas.

In order to achieve this restructuring of the economy, the Tories have had to take on one of the most highly organised working classes in the world. They have had to try and destroy the organisational and bargaining power of the trade union movement.

Thatcherism then is class war politics, a sustained ideological, political, social and economic attack on the working class and the oppressed, an attack aimed at reversing the balance of class forces, to stop and then reverse the decline of British industry, to create a low wage economy in order to attract back both national and international capital, to reindustrialise and make Britain competitive again in the world economy. Thatcher's own comments on the need to expell socialism from Britain, shows her understanding of the historic nature of what she has embarked upon.

Not only is the future of working class organisation involved, but along with it a whole series of previously unquestioned civil liberties and rights. The increased use of M15 against political opposition, the use of the police against trade unions, against people in the inner city and especially against the black communities, the attacks on freedom of speech against the BBC — all pose us with the question of the future of post-war social democracy in the event of another Tory government.

The labour movement response

The response of the leadership of the labour movement to this onslaught has been little short of pathetic. The capitulation of the leadership of the trade union movement to the anti-trade union laws, the refusal to provide any sort of leadership to those prepared to fight Thatcher, whether against the loss of jobs, greater rates of exploitation, defence of local government or the welfare state, the development of the 'lie down and die' new realism has left militants and activists to fight on their own. The major exception to this craven display was of course the NUM leadership, and especially Scargill. But the defeat of the courageous miners led to a strengthening of the hold of the new realists in the trade unions and to the realignment to the right of the whole labour movement. Through this process the entire labour movement has been put on the defensive.

The struggle we have seen since the miners' strike have been of two sorts. First, there have been long defensive battles in some of the powerful unions, often about the very right of the trade union to exist, and with the employers sometimes aided and

abetted by scab unions like the EETPC, as at Wapping.

Secondly, there have been struggles in sectors which are newly militant. The strikes in the teachers' unions for over two years, and the short, sharp strike of the NCU in February this year — a union which had never before taken national strike action — provide examples of workers in the dynamic, new technology sector and a previously 'professional' sector using traditional working class methods to defend themselves.

What all these strikes have shown is that any successful prosecution of the struggle

'What we have in store is a vicious attack on the workforce of the dynamic sectors'

brings the workforce and the union into inevitable confrontation with the law. This has then been used by the leaderships to avoid fighting at all costs. Endless ballots, refusal to face sequestration of funds, refusal to spread the strike, a holding down of militancy, all have been used against the rank and file who are prepared to fight the Tories. The wholesale adoption of the slogan 'wait for a Labour government' has led to active opposition to the very idea of fighting back. When forced into strike action by the rank and file displaying a real readiness to fight, the leaderships have sold out at the first opportunity.

Despite this crisis of leadership the readiness of sections of the labour movement to struggle has held back Thatcher's ability to deliver, making a third term a necessity to complete the offensive. The stakes in the general election are then very high. Yet Kinnock and the Labour leadership is incapable of capitalising on the Tories' unpopularity.

'millions of people in Britain have illusions in the Labour Party'

Although the result in Greenwich showed a large number of Tories voting tactically for the SDP, this will not be repeated on the same scale in a general election when the government is at stake.

What the polls also continue to reveal is the unpopularity of Tory policy. Time and again majorities against their policy are shown: against 'selling off the family silver', as the late Lord Stockton so aptly put it; against lower personal taxation if it means less public sector spending and increased unemployment; against cuts in welfare, the NHS, education; for withdrawal of British troops from the North of Ireland — a sentiment which none of the main parties represents!

But Labour seems unable to capitalise on this unpopularity. Nowhere was this so ob-

vious as in the recent attacks on the BBC programme *Secret Society*. Instead of criticising the undemocratic and unaccountable way in which decisions are made on matters of defence, instead of attacking the use of the secret service to raid the offices of the BBC and Duncan Campbell's home, Kinnock upbraided Thatcher for being incompetent in not clamping down hard enough.

No wonder Labour cannot capitalise on Thatcher's unpopularity. With the Liberal/SDP Alliance making gains by standing up for civil liberties, Labour tries to assume the mantle of law and order, promising to outdo the Tories!

This response, in the face of such high stakes, is hopeless. The Labour leadership's line of drop everything and wait for a Labour victory, while at the same time shifting all Labour's policies to the right to appeal to the middle ground has no future except defeat. First of all no section of the ruling class wants a Labour government, they think it is still far too unstable; secondly, the shift to the right on policy means Labour finds it hard to differentiate from the Alliance, while at the same time offering no real alternative to the Tories; thirdly, by refusing to support the struggles that do exist they undermine any confidence the working class have. The result will be as at Greenwich, a failure to build on minority, solid Labour votes and a large number of abstentions.

On defence, on the economy, on how to combat unemployment, on civil liberties and democratic rights, Labour has developed policies which appeal to no-one, neither to the labour movement nor bourgeois public opinion.

The same story on the economy and civil rights: Hattersley's plans on social ownership, a National Investment Bank; Labour's refusal to reverse Tory anti-trade union laws, racist immigration laws, their refusal to reverse cuts in welfare and social services — all result from the refusal to confront capital and the ruling class.

If Labour wins the election outright we can expect vicious anti-working class policies from the outset; if they go into a coalition with the Alliance, then an even higher price will have to be paid. For make no mistake about it, Kinnock may denounce any deal with Steel and Owen today, but the strategy of new realism makes it inevitable tomorrow.

The labour movement is faced with two choices. Either it accommodates to the capitalist, anti-working class consensus or it fights for an anti-capitalist alternative. The only way is for the left to develop such an alternative, for Kinnock won't do it. It is not enough to say, as do the British SWP, 'we told you that Kinnock wouldn't bring socialism — join us'. Millions of people in Britain do have illusions in the Labour Party. The left therefore has a responsibility to respond to that both by developing real alternatives on policy, by opposing coalition and by organising a left across the whole of the Labour and trade union movement, a left which will have some answers to the crisis of leadership whatever the outcome of the election. ■

In the 17 February election in the South of Ireland, Fianna Fail failed to win an overall majority. **BRIAN PELAN** explains the problems facing the left, and in particular Sinn Fein, in trying to provide an alternative.

THE GENERAL ELECTION in the South of Ireland on February 17 was called against a background of rising unemployment and the collapse of the Fine Gael/Labour government led by Garret FitzGerald on January 20.

The four Labour ministers resigned their seats in the cabinet after they had been outvoted 11-4 by the Fine Gael ministers on the 1987 budget. The Labour Party tried to explain their quitting office as an act of conscience over a harsh budget aimed at further penalising the Irish working class for an economic mess created by right wing policies. In fact, Labour deserted because the ship was sinking; indeed the collapse was signalled months in advance as both government parties had suffered defections in the Dail, and could no longer command a majority.

After the votes were counted on 17 February, Fianna Fail under the leadership of Charles Haughey were the largest party but had failed to gain an overall majority. Fine Gael suffered badly, but part of this was due to the emergence of the Progressive Democrats. Headed by Des O'Malley, a former cabinet minister in Fianna Fail, the Progressive Democrats are similar to Fine Gael with a programme based on Thatcher's precept of putting the boot into the working class.

So while the various bourgeois parties failed to gain an overwhelming endorsement, the shift to the right, coupled with the lack of an effective anti-imperialist opposition, is alarming.

The last four years have seen unemployment rise to 250,000 — at 20 per cent of the insured workforce, it is the highest in the EEC. Emigration now stands between 70-100,000 per annum, as young people leave Ireland in droves. Another figure which highlights the worsening economic situation is a national debt of IR£24.3 billion — 148 per cent of GNP.

A recent report exposes the fact that in 1984, nearly 30 per cent of the adult population in the South of Ireland was receiving some form of social welfare. About one sixth of all households are fully reliant on social welfare payments as their only source of income.

The report also found that the political environment shows a gradual shift to the right, with a growth in support for a move away from state interventionism and the welfare state. The 1987 draft budget which sparked the election had included proposals for cutbacks in unemployment benefit and

Irish election heralds further instability



Derry City — only the ending of partition can bring lasting peace

assistance, charges for previously free hospital services, slashing of public sector budgets, and the privatisation of industries currently owned by the state.

The main focus of attention for anti-imperialists in this election was the participation of Sinn Fein, for while the major parties support attacks on the living standards of the working class, and Fianna Fail has already indicated that its budget will be similar to Fine Gael's proposals, Sinn Fein has a record of opposition to British imperialism. Its programme is based on a reunification of Ireland and the subsequent dismantling of the six county sectarian state, with all the implications this has for British and Irish capitalism.

Sinn Fein's overall performance, however, was weak and in many constituencies its vote was derisory. The explanation given by the leadership of Sinn Fein for the poor poll was that Sinn Fein was not seen by the electorate as a credible alternative to any of the established parties or to the many independents and parties of the left against whom it was competing for rural and urban working-class votes.

They also cited the isolation imposed by the sixty-five years of abstentionism and the fact of state censorship. Section 31 of the Irish Broadcasting Act forbids interviews

with Sinn Fein on RTE television and radio. The main message given is that Sinn Fein can only win seats in the next election by thorough constituency and community work, through agitation and involvement in the peoples' struggles.

During the election Peoples Democracy (the Irish section of the Fourth International) called for a number one vote for Sinn Fein because it was the only anti-imperialist party standing in this election and because it was the only group to advance real solutions based on the needs of working class people. It recognised that Sinn Fein's poor vote was directly related to the absence of a mass struggle in Ireland.

The last time anti-imperialist candidates were elected was during the 1981 Hunger Strike campaign. A major swing towards Sinn Fein during this election was always unlikely as both the Anglo-Irish deal and the austerity offensive were not opposed with mass mobilisations.

Also the failure of Sinn Fein to become a central part of the recent campaigns against the pro-abortion forces during the anti-amendment struggle and the fight to overturn the ban on divorce, meant that it had not created allies in the women's movement or among those forces which had supported those struggles.

The key for Sinn Fein and indeed the entire anti-imperialist movement is to become involved in the workers' movement in the South and to link that with the struggle against the loyalist state in the North. The fight and the demand for an united Ireland remains the most revolutionary challenge not only to the continued rule of British imperialism, but also the rule of the Southern capitalist class. That is why the national question remains at the heart of the struggle for socialism.

So while Fianna Fail starts its manoeuvring for power and Fine Gael exchange nods and winks with the Progressive Democrats and dream of the days of a coalition of interests with no impediments, the Irish working class is still in good shape. Its ability to combat austerity has not been broken. Indeed it is in the industrial arena that the decisive struggles have yet to take place.

What we can forecast is that Fianna Fail will be unable to form a government for any stable period and the economic chaos will worsen. It is up to Sinn Fein and all the forces that oppose capitalist rule in Ireland to unite around a programme of effective opposition to austerity. The stakes are high and half measures will not be good enough. ■



Gideon Mendel/Reflex

The South African revolution marks time

WITH THE LATEST clamp-down on the freedom of the press in South Africa — which gives the Commissioner of Police the right to prohibit the publication of *anything* which he considers 'undesirable' — the apartheid state can definitely be classified as a police state. The recourse to the law courts which have hitherto blocked a total censorship has now been stemmed. It is the South African police, dominated by supporters of the government — and by elements of the far right — who now have absolute control over what people can read, see on TV or hear on the radio.

The state of emergency had two objectives. Firstly to cripple the liberation movement. Secondly, to try and heal the disarray in the ruling class. Botha thought that the limited programme of reforms would soften the criticism from the 'liberal' wing of South African and international capital and that his self-imposed limits — the retention of segregation in education and through the Group Areas Act, and the continued disenfranchisement of the black (African) majority — would be sufficient to slow down the growth of right-wing Afrikaner politics (the Conservative Party, HNP and AWB). He has failed in both objectives.

The ruling class remain divided about the right way to tackle the growing insurgency of the South African masses. Sections of local capitalism, headed by the giant Anglo-American corporation and, with some exceptions, international capital, with huge investments in South Africa, are looking fearfully at a post-apartheid South Africa. They are anxious to see a structural change which will do away with the racism of apartheid while safe-guarding 'free enterprise'.

The recent wave of repression in South Africa has highlighted the divisions in the ruling class, but it has also taken its toll on the forces of resistance. **CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN** argues that this underlines the need to base resistance on the broad forces in the trade unions.

Recently both the British foreign office and the US Secretary of State met leaders of the ANC. This could be said to reflect the legitimacy of the ANC's claim to be *the* representative of the South African liberation movement. On the other hand it could be that the wiser elements in the imperialist ministries believe that only the ANC could be relied upon to safeguard at least some of their interests in post-apartheid South Africa.

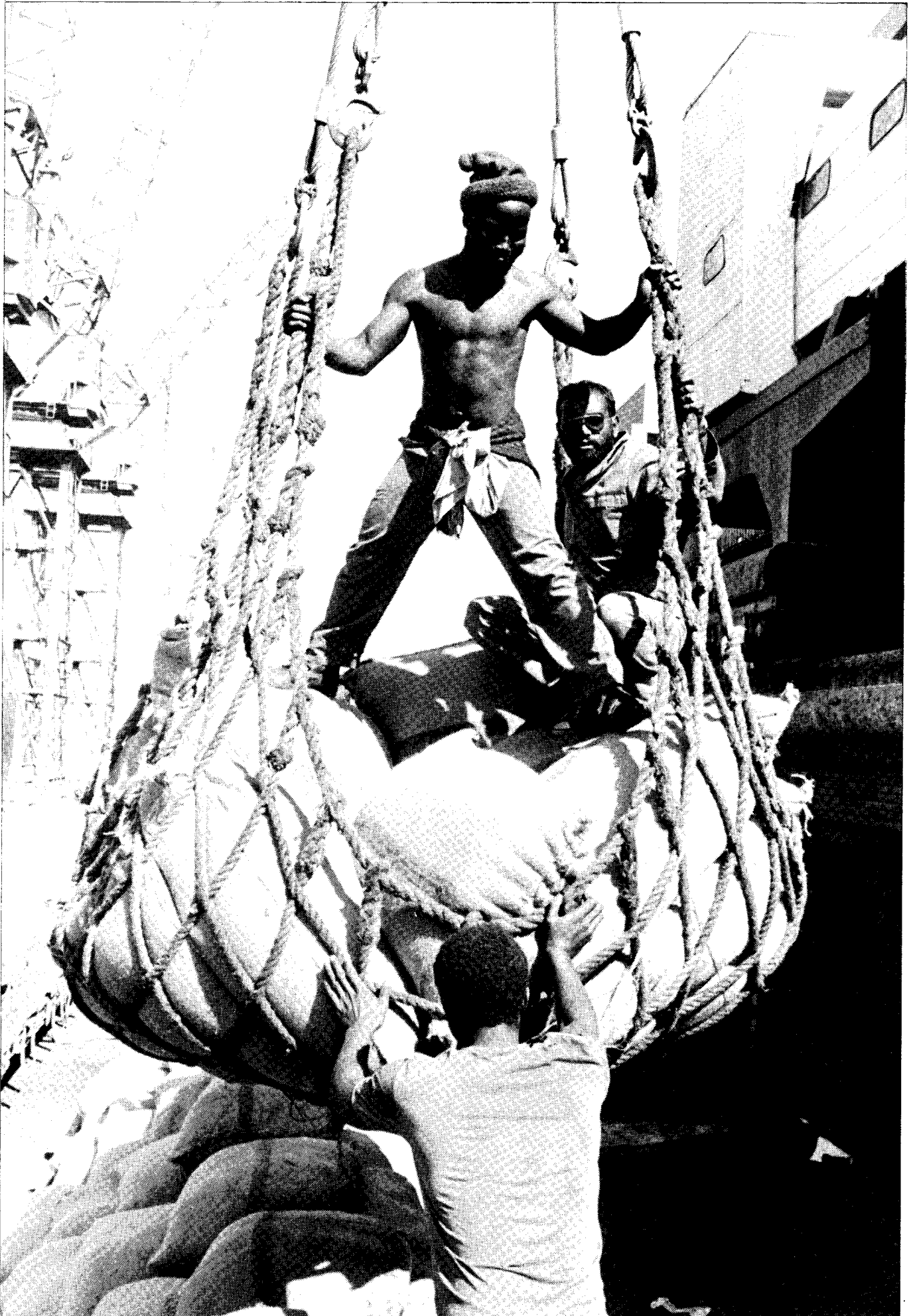
It is in an attempt to resolve these contradictions that Botha decided to call a general election two years before it was due in order to get a fresh mandate from the white electorate. The immediate effect of this was further splits from the ruling National Party, emphasising the disunity which is wracking the ruling class. These elections, of course, have no validity for the black masses. Knowing this, Botha has wisely decided that the two non-white houses of parliament would not be dissolved, despite the fact that only a small number of blacks would participate in the election for them.

There can be no doubt that the emergency has dealt the liberation forces a severe blow. Thousands of national and local leaders have been arrested or detained without charge. The security forces are in the townships in massive strength. The mood of euphoria which expected a quick victory has largely given way to a realisation that the state is still powerful; that the struggle is going to be prolonged and that there will be set-backs as well as advances before the final victory.

These past two years have been years of militant struggle in the townships, in the schools, in the mines and factories and in the countryside. They have also been the years in which the ANC recovered and consolidated its position of pre-eminence in the national liberation movement. Even if the ANC, as such, did not initiate all the activities in the schools and townships, there can be no doubt that the majority of the 'comrades' conceived of themselves as supporters of the ANC. This is reinforced by government propaganda which credits the ANC with every act of violence and insurgency. Although the Communist Party is in close alliance with the ANC and exerts great influence at exile leadership level, there is little evidence that it shares the mass support which the ANC enjoys.

In the *Statement of the NEC of the ANC on the Occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the ANC* (8 Jan 1987), presented by President Oliver Tambo, and the accompanying *What is to be Done*, the successes and failures are frankly assessed.

In 1986, Tambo set his movement the task of further activating the underground army, Umkhonto we Sizwe and of 'drawing in millions of our people into combat'. Now he



Stevedores in Durban. Most are migrant workers living in a men's compound

concedes that 'In this regard we must say that we have not progressed as far as we can'. One of the failures that Tambo highlights is the failure to link up the cells of trained guerrillas sent into the country and the large number of discontented black youths. In short, the call for a 'people's war' could not be translated from propaganda into reality.

It could also be added that while the ANC (and other liberation organisations) have supported the building of alternative forms of popular government in the localities, the overwhelming armed power of the state has prevented the linking up of these local committees nationally into a genuine form of dual power. The slogan 'power to the people' remains exactly that — a slogan.

While the emergency has dealt serious blows to the political wing of the liberation movement (UDF; National Forum) by the prohibition of meetings, rallies, even mass attendance at funerals, plus the arrests of its leaderships and the severe censorship (although there has been a marked increase in guerrilla activities), the trade union movement has shown a remarkable resilience. The main reason for this is the thoroughly democratic structure of the main trade unions in contrast to the highly centralised and bureaucratic leadership of the UDF.

The position is put very clearly in the November/December issue of *Saspu National*, the organ of the South African Students Press Union: 'Workers have drastically changed the balance of power in the workplace and in society as a whole. Trade unions have grown and Cosatu's formation allows for more co-ordinated action on political and economic fronts.'

Commemorating Cosatu's first year, its General Secretary, Jay Naidoo, stressed the increasing importance of the working class, which has not confined its struggles round the issues of wages and working conditions but played a leading role in national politics.

'Debates in Cosatu have placed socialism very firmly on the agenda; the growth of working class politics is clear. It is reflected in the methods and content of struggles being waged by democratic structures from village committees to street committees, from shop steward councils to SRCs.

'More and more, these democratic structures are drawing the link between the oppression they are fighting and the overall methods of political control of the working class in our society. They are drawing this link not only in theory but in action, and the tactics and targets. This is heightening the crisis of control for the ruling class. These organs of people's power are important for advancing mass struggle now; but they are also important to ensure that we really govern ourselves after change.

'We believe workers experience of democracy in the unions is contributing to building working class leadership more broadly.'

In the 7,000 words of the anniversary statement, Tambo devotes only 150 to the role of the working class and in the tasks for 1987 there is no attempt to co-ordinate the workers' struggle to that of the general struggle for people's power. While the ANC make the usual genuflection to the 'leading role of the workers' it gives no content to this



Louis Le Grange, South African Minister of Police — thumbs up for repression

leading role. Almost the same importance is given to the call to the white people to join the struggle against apartheid.

How different the position of Naidoo: 'Workers are more directly confronting the issue of the redistribution of wealth; tactics like sit-ins have also put the issue of control of the means of production on the agenda.'

Cosatu's vice-president Chris Dlamini also spelled out how the 'leading role of the working class' must be given a succinct political programme if it is to have any meaning:

'The unholy alliance of apartheid and capitalism has become obvious and concrete. One cannot expect to eradicate it simply by removing apartheid, nor can economic transformation come about merely by organising workers into unions and demanding a living wage and good living conditions.

'What we are talking about is the total change of the present system in its entirety. This change can never be brought about as the result of a change of heart from big business or a softening of attitudes by the regime or when Thatcher discards her attitude. It will only come through the struggles waged by all progressive forces of our people...I am convinced that the links with all progressive organisations of our people need to be concretised now.'

In strong contrast to the ANC's scant reference to the role of the working class, as a

class, in the liberation struggle, the South African white capitalists are becoming only too aware of the growing strength of organised labour and its effectiveness as leader and organiser of the struggle against apartheid. Many of the 'enlightened' leaders of big business are becoming convinced that capitalism will not survive in South Africa if it does not distance itself from apartheid. The Federation of Industry (FCI) actually proposed that workers and management should form a united front (sic) against the state of emergency. Cosatu gives them a dusty answer:

'We would not consider a united front with the employers because capitalism is protected by apartheid, often at gunpoint.

'How can workers who are fighting tooth-and-nail battles with the bosses in their factories be expected to see them as allies on any level? We believe we would weaken the growth of the working class movement by entering a united front with monopoly capitalism. Instead we have pressurised them to grant us rights in the factory that would allow us to regroup on our own terms. But their response has been fairly lame.'

The Cosatu statement goes on to say that while the FCI proposed a united front, many FCI affiliates have been reluctant to guarantee job and income security to detained workers. Cosatu unions are fighting ongoing battles on this front. There speaks the authentic voice of a working class prepared to play its historic role and place itself at the head of the struggle for national liberation and social emancipation.

All available information shows that despite the severity of the repression, the struggle in South Africa continues, though, perhaps, at a slower tempo. Although handicapped by the denial of bases in neighbouring states, there has been, as stated above, an increase in guerrilla activities within the country.

The state has responded to this, not only by direct military and police assault, but by organising squads of counter-revolutionary vigilantes, the so-called 'Wit Doeke' so that the media can portray the struggle as black against black.

The Afrikaner dominated state machinery now has no other option than a military solution. Despite the increased use of armed guerrillas, the liberation movement is not in a position for an all-out military confrontation with the state. This would indicate the need for the greater utilisation of the industrial muscle of the organised workers than appears implicit in the ANC's strategy for 1987.

While the ANC has rightly refused to renounce violence at the behest of US Secretary of State Shultz, it has always been careful to cultivate the alternative — pressure from international capitalism and the 'liberal' bourgeoisie in South Africa to bring the government to the conference table. It is perhaps no accident that the ANC leadership has compared its present situation with that of ZANU in the 1970s — which culminated in the Lancaster House conference, where Britain ceded power in Zimbabwe to an African nationalist regime — which defended and maintained capitalism. □



Thatcher celebrates the millionth council house sale, in Scotland.

Self-determination for Scotland?

MARXISTS HAVE traditionally, at least since the time of Lenin, been in the forefront of those who demand the right of self-determination for oppressed nations. They have also correctly said that this could only be achieved if it was combined with the fight for socialism. But when it has come to considering smaller nations on the periphery of imperialist states, or oppressed nations which are not underdeveloped and actually integrated into imperialist states (for example Scotland or Euzkadi), they have often had a much more equivocal position.

An argument often heard is that in these countries the national question is a 'diversion' from the 'real' class issues and the fight for socialism. What this means in practice in Britain is that everything depends on the willingness of the English working class to take account of this 'Anglo-Scottish' question. This 'Anglo-Scottish' question is 'socialism' to the right of the national question in Scotland and Wales (and in some cases, like *Militant*, even in Ireland) fails to take account of the progressive role this democratic demand can

What attitude should socialists have to the demand for Scottish self-determination, and to the campaign for a Scottish assembly? Here **JIM NIBLOCK**, a member of Glasgow Central CLP, argues that socialists throughout Britain should back the right for self-determination, and will be outflanked by nationalists if they fail to take a principled stand on this issue.

take in the struggle for a future socialist Britain, which I will argue will not be based on a 'unitary' British state but on a socialist federal republic.

The question of Scottish self-

determination comes up sharply in the long debate in the Labour movement over a Scottish assembly. Today the Labour Party is formally committed to supporting a Scottish assembly. Indeed Neil Kinnock concentrated on this issue at the last Scottish Labour Party conference, to the surprise of many of the delegates. But since until 1979 at least Kinnock was opposed to a Scottish assembly, there must be some doubt as to what brought about this change of heart, and what the powers and functions of the Scottish assembly he proposes will be.

The answer to this seems to be that Labour envisages a Scottish assembly carrying out an expanded version of the present role of Scottish Secretary of State. All the major economic and political powers will be retained at Westminster and the Scottish assembly will rubber stamp decisions affecting its 'province'.

This may be a feasible client relationship if the same political party is in power in both Westminster and the Scottish assembly, but how would it work out, for example, if the

Tories were in power in London, and the Labour Party in Scotland? For example, it is quite inconceivable that if a Scottish parliament had been established as Harold Wilson once proposed, the last seven years of Thatcherism would have taken place without a major challenge emerging from the Scottish working class.

Labour's sell-out on a Scottish assembly in 1979 divided and demoralised Scottish workers. It left us without what would have been a crucial instrument of defence against the ravages of Thatcherism. Kinnock's change of heart, although it reflects strong feelings in the Scottish labour movement, also has a more pragmatic function. That is to head off the main challenge to Labour's vote in Scotland, the Scottish National Party (SNP). This party has been challenging Labour recently, especially through more consistent backing for labour movement struggles. Although Kinnock has managed temporarily to steal the SNP's thunder, the SNP and not the Alliance remains the main threat in Scotland.

cult to challenge a leadership which is winning most elections by large majorities). Second is the stranglehold of the LCC in the Labour Party and the Communist Party in the trade unions as the traditional and dominant part of the left. Although these forces are closely aligned to Kinnock, they live off a 'left wing' reputation, gleaned from the past 'glories' of the CP and the previous Bennite sympathies of the LCCers. Thirdly, of course, is the reluctance of the Campaign group to organise for their policies at the base of the labour movement, which would cut across their attempts to influence the bureaucracy.

But a fourth and specifically Scottish factor is the existence and strength of the SNP whom most disillusioned, Labour voters turn to. It may seem at odds with the facts to suggest that the increasing success of the Labour Party in Scotland and over the past period may be transformed over the next period into one of the reasons for its decline, but this looks likely for the following reasons.

Since 1967 when Winnie Ewing first won a

SNP. To counter this, the Labour left must make the demand for a Scottish parliament a key aspect of its programme, not something tagged on to a list of priorities. However with Tam Dalyell as one of the leaders of the Campaign group a serious question mark hangs over this issue.

Today the Labour Party in Scotland has reached the peak of its authority, the Tory vote has all but collapsed and the SDP/Liberal Alliance is confined to the backwoods. This has given the leadership a false sense of security. False because the Labour Party is based on a unitary British state and Labour's position in England is much weaker. False because Kinnock's politics will continue the assault on the conditions of the working class.

The left of the party must be consistent in its politics. If we support the demand for a Scottish assembly, then that policy must be pursued on its own merits, not for the sake of undressing the SNP.

To raise this demand as a key aspect of programme, it is necessary to say that *irrespective* of the outcome of the British general election we stand on the platform of support for a Scottish parliament. If a majority of Labour MPs are returned in Scotland at the election, we will call a constitutional assembly to establish a Scottish parliament.

Anything short of this approach will be a half-baked compromise and can easily be

'irrespective of the outcome of the election we support a Scottish parliament'

sacrificed on the alter of priorities or abandoned through the revolt of English-based Labour MPs. Many of these MPs from the depressed North and Midlands see a Scottish parliament as a sort of super regional council which can demand a bigger slice of national resources and further undermine their constituencies.

The right of Scotland to self government is a democratic demand which should be supported by all socialists. This doesn't mean we give up the fight for a British socialist party, but rather that the fight must be to establish a socialist federal republic and the vanguard of this struggle may well exist in Ireland, in Scotland, in Wales rather than the south east of England.

We have to combine the fight for socialism with the right to self-determination and not counterpose them or place one in front of the other.

National self-determination is impossible under imperialism, this is why today this demand can only be fully achieved within the context of a socialist programme, not just in the oppressed countries of South America and Africa, but also in the small nations which form part of the imperialist states or are on the boundaries of those states.

Today the national struggle is a class issue and can only be resolved in the context of the fight for socialism. ■



Rob Cowan

Glasgow's necropolis — will another Tory government sound Labour's death knell in Scotland?

Labour has traditionally blown hot and cold on the question of a Scottish assembly, reflecting the ups and downs of support for the SNP. But if Labour's leadership and right wing have an opportunist policy on this question, that is no excuse for the left to do the same. We have to start from the merits or otherwise of self-determination, and not from the ups and downs of support for the SNP. If Thatcher comes back to power and Labour fails to use its majority in Scotland to actually set up a Scottish assembly to articulate the demands of the Scottish people, then Labour will be outflanked by the SNP.

One of the paradoxes of the political situation in Scotland is that despite Scotland having one of the most militant sections of the working class in the British isles, 'Bennism' is relatively weak and the Campaign group shows few signs of taking off. Several factors explain this.

First, paradoxically, is the very strength of the Labour Party in Scotland (it's more diffi-

seat from Labour in one of their Scottish strongholds, the SNP have been led by a layer of middle class nationalists whose disdain for class politics (a British disease which an independent Scotland would transcend) forced them to escape from political reality and concentrate on issues of national pride.

The SNP peculiarly combines praise for pre-working class leaders like Bruce and Wallace at Bannockburn rallies, with a playing down of the heritage of MacLean and the Red Clydeside which smack of 'outdated' class politics. This strange logic is presented with the slogan 'it's Scotland's oil'.

This 'strategy' of the SNP evaded the central problem facing them — how to break Labour's grip on the Scottish working class. To do this they must turn their party clearly towards the working class, both to its organisations and concerns.

Labour's success in Scotland combined with the stagnation of the SNP will have the effect of dragging the petty bourgeois nationalists to the left and strengthen the left in the



Refugee from a devastated squatter
camp in Cape Town

W O M E N ' S L I B E R A T I O N 1 9 8 7

MORE THAN 15 years after the modern women's liberation movement emerged, there are those on the left and right who are anxious to sound its death knell. Its left critics in particular claim that the movement has been co-opted. Feminists, they argue, have turned into 'femocrats' in the hands of local government and trade union bureaucracies while mass demonstrations of women are now few and far between.

Yet this is being said...

...After thousands of women from mining communities have been out on the streets in Britain and as black women are organising to fight racist laws...

...After women have taken a lead in France's recent student revolt...

...After membership of the National Organisation of Women in the US has reached 250,000...

...After 30,000 women in Spain have been prepared to claim publicly that they had undergone illegal abortions and thousands more demonstrated against the socialist government's legislation...

...After women's mass actions against the missiles have shaken Western Europe...

...After Denmark's All-Women Union made the running in the 1985 'Easter Rebellion' of near-general strike proportions...

...As Women in South Africa and Central America challenge apartheid and imperialism...

Because the women's liberation movement brought profound changes directly or indirectly for so many people, that movement — defined in its broadest sense — is still very much alive. Forms of organisation have indeed changed from the early days but feminist ideas continue to spread and have been assimilated by a wide section of society. Women who once saw gender as the determining factor in the pattern of their lives have come to understand that class, race and sexuality also have to be taken into account.

This supplement looks at some of the changes, debates and political issues confronting the women's movement in 1987.

Women have mobilised across the world for peace

Jenny Matthews Format



Under the impact of feminism, the organisation of women in the labour movement, in the mass movements and in liberation struggles around the world continues to grow. So too does the sharp political debate among women. **VALERIE COULTAS** traces developments in western Europe and the US.

Sisterhood, still powerful

THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION movement that emerged in the late 1960s did not simply reflect the demands of college-educated women. It was a movement rooted in deep social changes in women's lives. New economic independence was won as married women poured into the labour market. This gave them greater choice over how they lived their lives and who they lived with, prompting legal changes that abolished the most blatant forms of discrimination. Birth control gave women the ability to plan their children as more and more chose to allocate a smaller proportion of their lives to staying at home with the kids. Access to higher education gave them the qualifications and skills they had previously lacked.

The first four demands of the women's liberation movement — for

equal pay and job opportunity, for contraception and abortion on demand, for equal educational opportunity, and for free 24-hour nurseries — expressed the high expectations of social equality. These were in no sense the narrow demands of an elitist movement. In fact, the first demonstrations in Britain were in support of women at Fords for equal pay in 1969. Although bra-burning and the disruption of the Miss World contest stole the headlines, it was this fight of working women that inspired the first women's liberation campaign, the National Joint Committee for Women's Equal Rights.

Understanding these social origins of the women's liberation movement is necessary in order to appreciate what is happening now among women and to explain the response of both the

ruling class and working class to feminism today.

The ruling class has not attempted, as some predicted, to push women out of the workforce as it did after the last two world wars. Capital is far too dependent on female labour outside the home to do that. The sex segregation of the workforce makes it impossible to simply replace female workers with male. Although women have lost their jobs the overall proportion of women in the workforce in northern Europe and the USA has continued to rise, particularly in the service sector and among part-time workers.

However, the ruling class does need to increase the rate of exploitation and flexibility of the workforce to restore the rate of profit. This means using sexual (and other) divisions in the labour market. New technology is also employed to increase the sex segregation of the workforce and drive down wage levels.

This in turn creates the conditions for the political and ideological offensive against the women's movement. The latter is necessary to legitimise the super-exploitation of women workers, the lack of change towards equality,

the attacks on maternity and social security rights, the closure and the run-down of community, health, abortion and nursery facilities.

Political parties in Western Europe and the US have had to take into account in various ways public attitudes on questions of abortion, sexuality and the role of women. For example, the modernist wing of the Christian Democrats in West Germany has used radical feminist rhetoric to argue that motherhood and part-time work represent the 'best' choice for the emancipated woman. President Reagan in the US has taken a tough line against the women's movement, opposing the Equal Rights Amendment and giving his full backing to the anti-abortionists. Socialist governments in France, Spain and Greece have attempted to use government funds and ministries to co-opt women into a more parliamentarist framework.

The economic crisis and austerity budgets of the ruling class dictate their political objectives whichever party is in control. Thus the social provisions vital to women's liberation come under fire one by one as the crisis deepens. The status of the family has to be reinforced to make it seem acceptable that the burden on women in the home should increase.

Since the mid-seventies the working class movement has been on the defensive with women finding themselves at the sharp end of the economic, social and political offensive both as workers and as domestic labourers. But they have played a central role in the fightback against austerity and in other mass mobilisations on peace, ecology, racism, abortion and democratic rights.

The Women Against Pit Closures movement in Britain, born out of the miners struggle with the Tory government in 1984-5, developed into a nationally-organised autonomous network of women's support groups and still survives today. In West Germany, women workers played a vanguard role in the 35-hour week campaign. In Denmark's Easter Rebellion in 1985 the unskilled All-Women's Union played an exemplary role in the near-general strike.

Some Marxists have insisted that this working class women's movement has nothing to do with the early women's movement — that its goals differ sharply with modern feminism. Yet the struggle for abortion rights, for instance, has continued in such countries as the US, Spain and Greece because the attack on these rights is also clearly part of the package of austerity measures and part of the right-wing backlash.

Moreover many members of the Women Against Pit Closures, for

example, see themselves as part of a broader movement of women and took solidarity action at Greenham to prove it. They were clearly influenced by the women's liberation movement in establishing, as they did, their own autonomous forms of organisation within the fight to defend the pits. Nothing like this emerged in 1926 when the women's movement was in downturn.

Looking at how the workers' movement responds to women workers acting on their specific concerns as women in the workforce, it is clear why independent organisation by women is needed to force the labour movement to act on their behalf. In Belgium, women workers were left to fight alone at Galerie Anspacht in Brussels and at Bakaert Cockerill steel plant over the introduction of part-time work.

At Hoovers in South Wales male trade unionists walked past women on the factory gates when they struck for equal pay. The TUC has called for a minimum wage but the leaders of the labour movement in Britain are already backing down on making this a priority. Their failure to fight the Tories' privatisation plans is leaving low-paid workers, a high proportion of whom are black and female, in the lurch.

All this has made women aware of the need to transform the trade unions and political parties themselves if these organisations are ever to take women and rank and file workers seriously. In Britain, women at the TUC women's



advisory conference have argued for special measures to force the general council to act in defence of women workers — such as having five resolutions automatically referred to the TUC Congress.

In West Germany, women in the printing and textile unions have raised the demand for quotas of women on union bodies in proportion to their numbers. In the recent French student revolt, unlike the students uprising in 1968, women fought alongside the male student and took a lead in many areas.

On a West European level, the political party most responsive to the politics of gender is the Greens. Autonomous women's caucuses inside the party have won all-women lists in elections, gender parity in the election of their leaderships and equal speaking

time for women and men at all meetings. Green women parliamentary deputies created an enormous stir when they launched a public protest at the sexual harassment of women by men in their own party, rounding on male deputies in other parties to revile these men's behaviour too.

In Britain, feminists have transformed the women's organisation of the Labour Party into its most left-wing section but have not been able to win the battle for feminisation to the degree that women in the Greens have done. Kinnock, as leader, has resisted women's demand for power, trying to co-opt them instead through small concessions over parliamentary representation and promises of a women's ministry.

But what about the independent structures of the women's movement? What has happened to the once-powerful sisterhood?

In nearly every Western European country except Spain (where a mass campaign for abortion rights has inspired the growth of an autonomous women's movement), the independent women's movement, structured as it was in the mid-1970s, has fragmented and, in some cases, declined. In Scandinavia it has all but disappeared.

But under the impact of feminism there have been many other examples of growth and expansion. In women's mass actions against the missiles feminists have played a leading role. A black women's movement is taking shape out of trade union and anti-racist struggles, in Britain in particular, but in France and West Germany as well. Women in Western Europe and the US have increasingly developed an anti-imperialist awareness and identity especially with the struggles of women in Nicaragua and South Africa.

Mass mobilisations against attacks on abortion rights have been mounted by feminist organisations such as the National Organisation of Women in the US and the National Abortion Campaign in Britain. In Washington on International Women's Day last year, 100,000 women marched in the streets. And young women and lesbians, too, have highlighted the ways in which they experience their oppression.

Over the last decade, as with all political organisations in the labour movement, there has been a much sharper debate over strategy and a division among activists of the women's movement.

Three relatively distinct political currents have emerged. First, there is a bourgeois feminist current represented, for example, by the pro-Democrat wing of the National Organisation of Women in the US.

The second current includes radical



Gerard Livett/Frame

and reformist feminists, the former seeing women as an oppressed 'class' — victims of male violence — the latter sometimes using the demagoguery of revolutionary feminism to sell austerity policies to women.

Finally, there are socialist feminists linked to the left wing of the labour movement, active in its organisations and campaigns, but critical of male domination.

These differences within the women's movement were bound to develop as the class struggle sharpened. It was clear that, short of a successful socialist revolution, women would be forced to engage more directly with power and thereby open up their movement to the danger of co-option by the bourgeois establishment or the trade union and labour leaders. There will be no going back to the early days of the women's movement but new forms of accountability do need to be found to debate how to make alliances with the labour movement on terms favourable to the mass of women.

The ruling class is incapable of satisfying the aspirations of the majority of women in society today. Understanding the anti-capitalist dynamic of the radicalisation it was marxists who helped build the modern women's movement in Europe and the US, by successfully arguing for demands and tactics that turned that movement towards the mass of women. Now, when many of the gains that women have made are coming under attack, is not the time to desert that movement.

The growing organisation of women inside the labour movement and the mass movements, combined with a sharper political debate among women, provides an opportunity for marxists to re-establish a stronger dialogue with the women's movement. Understanding that women are an oppressed sex, marxists should not hesitate to build the women's movement, prioritising the struggles of working women, so that an effective alliance between women and labour can be built. ■

Unions must defend women at work

The Tories' attempts to restructure the workforce and cut labour costs are hitting women hardest. **JANET KNIGHT** explains why any effective response from the unions would challenge both the 'new realism' of their bureaucracies and the male monopoly of top union positions.

WHEN THE Thatcher government was elected in 1979, many on the labour left believed that one of its main aims would be to drastically reduce the number of women at work in order to force the burden of the social crisis on to individual women and thus save state expenditure on social welfare. The Tories, however, had other ideas.

In fact there has been a *growth* in the number of women at work. In 1986 women made up 45 per cent of the workforce (compared with 41 per cent in 1981) and nearly half of them were



part-time. This growth in part-time work is largely due to the expansion of the service sector where management aims to have a fairly small group of well-trained and multi-skilled full-time staff backed up by temporary and short-time workers plus part-timers. For example, many supermarkets now use part-time workers to cover lunchtimes, late night shopping, Saturday shifts and shelf-stacking in the evenings.

Employers particularly like this type of labour because if their staff are paid less than £35.49 per week companies



Judy Harrison/Format

do not need to pay their national insurance and statutory sick pay. Employees also lose entitlement to unemployment benefit, maternity allowance, death grant, state retirement pension and so forth. Those who work less than eight hours a week have no legal employment rights. Workers on less than a 16-hour week must stay with the same employer for five years to obtain the same legal rights as full-timers. This rarely happens in any case as part-time workers do not often stay in that type of work long enough to fulfil that condition.

It is in the service area where women make up over 90 per cent of the part-time workforce. Thus they represent an overwhelming majority of the low paid who are forced to work unsocial hours while at the same time having the barest minimum of rights and social benefits. Right across industry the progress of women has proceeded at a slow pace. Despite the introduction of the Equal Pay Act in 1975, women's hourly earnings are still only 69 per cent of men's and when compared on a weekly basis they drop to 61 per cent.

Women are essentially concentrated in the low-paying industries or sectors. The National Health Service which is notorious for its low pay policy, employs 81 per cent women. In hotels and catering, women make up 64 per cent of the employees. In retail distribution two thirds of the employees are female. In footwear and cloth 74 per cent of the workforce are women. Even in the better-paid industries women are concentrated in their majority in the lesser paid jobs. In banking and finance where women represent well over half the total employees they earn 28 per cent less than their male counterparts.

The outcome of Thatcherism, therefore, has been a deepening of labour costs and an undermining of rights, especially through the growth of part-time labour. Women have been pushed into part-time employment by cuts in public expenditure and the



steady reduction in day nurseries and childcare facilities, so they have paid the highest price for Thatcher's policies.

At present only a third of part-time women workers are in unions compared to full-time employment where half are unionised. The TGWU recently announced its intention of launching a big campaign to recruit part-timers. This move is to be welcomed and all other unions should follow suit. Up to now, though, the unions in general have been none too enthusiastic about organising part-time workers. This is probably because they know such workers have little legal protection against sackings and victimisation. They are fearful of becoming involved in costly disputes to defend their part-time members. Also other employees sometimes resent part-timers, think-

ing they are a threat to their jobs.

Both attitudes are shortsighted. A growth in the number of non-organised workers weakens the position of the unions, divides the workforce and can lead to the undermining of everyone's conditions.

If a recruitment drive for part-timers is to be successful then the unions must campaign for these workers to have the same legal rights and social benefits as all others — full and statutory sick pay, maternity rights and so on. The unions would have to put their own house in order as well. Recruitment among women workers, both full and part-time, would be aided if led by women organisers. But this would mean some changes in the unions. For example COHSE, the health service union has 80 per cent female membership yet only 12 per cent of its full-time organisers are women. NUPE, with over two thirds women members, still only has seven per cent female organisers.

High visibility of women in their unions' decision-making structures would also help recruitment. However, a *Labour Research* survey published in 1986 revealed that, here again, there is a long way to go. Despite the active involvement of many women trade unionists at workplace level they are still sorely under-represented on union executives and delegations.

Women can be won to unions in large numbers but the unions must have policies that meet their needs. That means the unions must have a social programme which is more than a resolution carried at conference, now mouldering away in the general secretary's filing cabinet. Equal pay means what it says — cutting the gap between male and female earnings and creating genuine job opportunity so women can qualify for higher pay. The basic minimum wage has to apply to all full-timers and to part-time workers on a proportionate basis.

The unions must insist that both parents or single parents are allowed an agreed amount of time off per year for caring for children who are ill. They must take up the fight for adequate childcare facilities, both at the workplace and in the community. Finally, redundancy hits everybody, male or female, and the threat can only effectively be countered by work sharing with no loss of pay.

Such social demands have political implications and run counter to the 'new realism' of the right-wing trade union bureaucracies. The fight for women's rights, therefore, cannot make headway without the 'new realism' being challenged and without many more women claiming their share of leadership of their unions at every level. ■

A mixed blessing?

With lurid stories in the media of 'cloning' and trans-species experimentation, plus cases such as that of 'Baby Cotton' involving the use of surrogate mothers, new reproductive technology has aroused tremendous debate. **LEONORA LLOYD** looks at the benefits and drawbacks for women of the new advances being made.

Some feminists see the new scientific developments in the sphere of reproduction as an attack on the autonomy and bodies of women. Right-wingers often condemn these developments as an attack on marriage and the family, on god-given 'nature' itself. Certainly the questions raised are important for everybody.

The new reproductive technology is mainly used to alleviate infertility, to identify and treat certain conditions before or shortly after conception, to select sex and to try and prevent certain conditions altogether. It is generally taken to cover *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF) — popularly and misleadingly called 'test tube babies', surrogacy, gene manipulation, and variations, combinations of these techniques.

Most of the stories which have hit the headlines concern infertility, a problem thought to affect an increasing number of people. (One in six couples need some help to conceive although of course not all these are actually infertile). Factors thought to affect female infertility include the use of the contraceptive pill and the later age at which many women are choosing to have their first baby.

A common cause of infertility affecting an estimated 100,000 women in Britain is blocked fallopian tubes. Others have problems with their ovaries. Male infertility is being increasingly recognised. So too is the possibility of environmentally-induced causes from our industrial society for both men and women although little in-



Demonstration against Victoria Gillick, 1985.

vestigation has been done and only hundreds out of many thousands of industrial chemicals have been tested for their effects on fertility.

In the case of men, they may produce no sperm at all, their sperm count may be very low, or their sperm may have 'low mobility' or be damaged in some way. Treatment is by some form of 'artificial insemination', using either the partner's sperm, a donor's or even a mixture, with a syringe

employed to introduce the sperm at the right time in the woman's cycle. This is not a new technique — it was first recorded as having been used by a Scottish doctor, John Hunter, in 1776.

This technique allows women without male partners to become pregnant, for example lesbians. The right has protested against insemination by donor, as little better than adultery, and certainly not a technique that

...and be available for the unmarried. However, it is so simple that self-insemination groups have been set up. (One new danger is AIDS and potential donors should first be tested to ensure they are free from any infection).

Sperm can be frozen and so men can arrange for storage of sperm before undergoing chemical therapy, for instance and commercial sperm stores have already been set up in the States to enable women to choose 'super babies' fathered by 'great achievers'!

In Britain, there is a real shortage of clinics dealing with infertility in the NHS and private treatment is prohibitively expensive for most people. There is currently a 12-year wait for *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF) including the time for investigation and trying other forms of treatment. That means that 18,000 women need to be treated in a year just to cope with the current situation, with more coming forward for help all the time.

One NHS clinic in Manchester is seeing six women a week for IVF treatment and has a four-year waiting list, as is the case at Hammersmith Hospital, the major NHS treatment centre. By the end of 1985, there were ten NHS hospitals offering IVF, half of them in London. A further six private hospitals were charging around £1000-£2000 an attempt, and up to three attempts may be needed, before chances are ruled out altogether. (There are now a total of 20 centres, both private and NHS).

The success rate has reached about 40 per cent according to an 1984 study of 58 IVF teams working world-wide. Certain risks are involved for the woman because of the drugs and anaesthetics used, because of the danger of repeated ruptures of her ovaries as eggs are extracted and because of the chance of a multiple pregnancy. Infertility programmes sometimes involve the use of surrogacy (ie one woman carrying a foetus for another). Egg, sperm or both may be donated, either by the 'commissioning couple' or by third parties. In Britain most publicity has centred on commercial surrogacy. In the case of 'Baby Cotton' the surrogate mother was paid £6,500 while the American agency responsible for arranging it was paid a similar amount. Commercial surrogate agencies were outlawed in 1985 in this country (although individuals are not prohibited from acting as surrogate mothers and being paid). They continue, however, in the US where rich white parents have paid poor immigrant women to carry babies for them.

Surrogacy appears to have gone on informally for centuries between friends and sisters. It has caused controversy now because of its potentially

exploitative aspects. Also it brings conflicts when the 'natural' mother refuses to give up her child at birth. The right of a woman who has borne the pregnancy to keep the child should be supported and there should be as much legal protection for surrogate mothers as possible.

The prevention or cure of genetic disorders is another major area of development and research. It can be done in several stages. Genetic counselling is now available on the NHS, although facilities are very unevenly distributed throughout the country, and is given where people's medical history merits it. Women can also be tested to detect disorders several weeks into their pregnancy if they are willing to run the current risks of possible miscarriage or damage to the foetus. If a disorder is found they may then opt for an abortion.

Some feminists have been worried by what they see as part of society's aim to create 'perfect' people, thus devaluing people with disabilities. Society indeed discriminates appallingly against disabled people in the provision of housing, jobs, education and in reproduction itself. It is possible, nonetheless, to fight this discrimination while supporting attempts to eliminate painful and distressing illnesses. There are undoubtedly great pressures on any woman who is carrying a damaged foetus. It must remain that woman's choice whether to continue or end any pregnancy.

Perhaps the area of most concern to



feminists is that of sex education. There can be sound medical reasons for wanting to know the sex of the foetus, because a number of disorders are sex-linked, generally to the male. But it is for the selective abortion of female foetuses that the tests are most often used world-wide. Recent reports suggest that some women are using the results of scans to ask for abortions if they are carrying the 'wrong' sex, and some doctors and hospitals are refusing to give out results which indicate sex, except for strictly medical reasons.

What of the future? There is no doubt that many women and men feel an enormous pressure and desire to produce children in this society, built as it is around the family unit. The social pressures on women to fulfill their 'biological role' are enormous,

and the way the family system works, often excluding other people from a real share in childcare, often means that women feel that have to produce their own in order to be involved with children.

But there is no doubt that infertility and inherited diseases are serious problems for those who face them. Further, infertile women need treatment whether or not they want children, if they are ill. If help exists women are entitled to it and it should be made accessible to all who need it.

Any arguments against further research which are based on the 'humanity' of the embryo or the sanctity of marriage (insemination by donor seen as adultery for instance) or which deny unmarried women the right to benefit from new reproductive technology must be firmly rejected.

At the same time, arguments against the research from the angle of those who feel profound misgivings about the increasing control of scientists and doctors over women's lives and about the scope for abuses opened up by experiments deserve serious consideration.

In capitalist societies most research is either for military purposes or is commercially funded. And so long as it is left to market forces there will always be cause for concern. So we need guidelines. For feminists and socialists the main questions should be: will this research help to improve the quality of life for at least a group of people, without damaging or exploiting another group? In particular, will it enhance women's role in society and women's self-esteem? Will it increase the ability of women to control their own reproductive lives?

We need to start now to work for greater democratic control over scientific research. For example, the 'ethical committees' already established voluntarily by British scientists should include a majority of lay members and — specifically — a majority of women lay members where the research is into reproduction. And there should be strict guidelines about what areas of research should be pursued, how trials should be conducted, rules about informed consent, and so-on.

Our most important allies in this fight — to control scientists and scientific research — will be scientists themselves, many of whom want to be able to work on projects that will benefit humanity. Only when the research is seen as important to us all and not something to be left to market forces, will we gain control. Those feminists who say 'a plague on all their houses' are leaving us without a strategy for campaigning against the worst manifestations of science. ■

FEMINIST BOOKLIST

- Joni Seager and Ann Olson
Women In The World: An International Atlas
Pluto Press and Pan Books. £14.95 or £7.95 paperback.
Editor, Drude Dahlerup
The New Women's Movement — Feminism and Political Power in Europe and the USA
Sage.
Jenny Beale
Women in Ireland: Voices of Change
Macmillan. £20 or £6.95 paperback.
Anne Philips
Divided Loyalties: Dilemmas of Sex and Class
Virago. £5.50 paperback.
Jan Zimmerman.
Once Upon the Future: A Woman's Guide to Tomorrow's Technology.
Pandora Paperbacks.
£5.95.

Filipino women's party launched

In the 1970s Maita Gomez became famous. A former 'beauty queen', she joined the New People's Army, the guerilla force led by the Communist Party of the Philippines. After falling ill she returned to Manila for treatment. She rapidly assumed a major role in the women's movement and the 'national democratic left'.

In October 1986 she became the general secretary of the *KAIBA*, the new women's party in the Philippines. The following interview was given to **SONIA RUPON** and **PAUL PETITJEAN** in August 1986, shortly before the launching of *KAIBA*.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN why you decided to launch a women's party?

This party will assure the political education of women. It will prepare them to take part in the country's political life. It will participate in the elections. It will reinforce women's consciousness. The women's party will not only seek to play a symbolic role. It will fight to win the political competition. We want this party to be as strong as possible to force recognition of women's rights. It will be a party deeply committed to women's rights.

Why launch a party today? Because there is an opportunity that has to be grasped. The women's movement is growing. The present situation in the Philippines is very different from that which prevails in other countries, where the political field is generally firmly occupied by a small number of traditional parties, making it very difficult for new electoral formations to develop.

Under martial law, the Marcos dictatorship created a political vacuum

around itself. Since the fall of the Marcos regime, there is no longer any dominant party in the country. The electoral traditions have to be reconstituted. Everywhere there is a lack of trained and recognised political cadres. There is a vast free space open to new parties.

This is a rare opportunity that cannot be allowed to go by. The situation is exceptional in many respects. We do not claim that what we want to do here may be appropriate in other countries, in other circumstances. But we are convinced that it is possible and necessary today to launch a women's party.

Could members of the women's party belong to other political parties with a compatible programme?

No. The party will be made up only of women, and dual membership will not be recognised. Our initiative would lose all its meaning if people belonged to the women's party 'in addition to' something else.

We will run candidates in the local elections, and sometimes in the regional ones for governorships, or even in national elections. We will run these candidates to get them elected, not to elect the candidates of another party. We will support progressive male candidates where we are weak. We will demand that the other parties support our candidates where we are stronger.

Of course, the members of the women's party will participate in coordinating bodies and movements such as *GABRIELA*, the Nationalist Alliance, the Bayan coalition of mass organisations, trade unions and associations.

What programme will the women's party candidates run on?

We want to show the contribution that women are making to the life of the country. We want their voice to be heard, their rights not to be ignored. Women must be made a real political power in Filipino society.

The women's party will put forward the specific demands of women. But it will not limit its activity to the specific area of women's rights. It will collaborate closely with the various cause-oriented movements and people's organisations, which will be its natural allies. Women's power is an integral part of people's power.

The women's party will fight for the people; it will address itself to the popular strata and to the middle layers. It will put forward a general nationalist and popular programme to assure the dignity, rights and equality of all.

How will you combine women's demands and general demands?

In struggle. There are distinct demands concerning women and other layers of society. But I do not think there is any dichotomy between the two levels of activity. You can see that in the struggle. Poor women are fighting here for their daily bread, their 'rice and fish'. That is perfectly normal. But it immediately poses problems of organisation (childcare and so on) and that creates a collective experience that raises new questions, shakes up traditional values.

I know that it won't all happen in isolation. Women are the 'first and last proletarians'. That is why we are launching the women's party. But you can't have a static vision of things. The women's movement exists. It will grow.

Our party has first to put down roots, to win a genuinely broad base. You have to know how to organise. I learned that in my life as an activist. We will start by agitating on immediately popular questions. We will be radical in action, but we will be less so in our programme on a series of questions such as abortion and divorce.

However, one day we will face these questions head on, even at the expense of losing some popularity among the middle classes. Abortion is common among poor women who can be easily criminalised.

A new generation has come into struggle, in the countryside, in the shantytowns, in the factories, in the society. Through its own experience it will advance beyond the high point reached by the previous generations.

● *This interview is taken from the 9 March 1987 issue of International Viewpoint, a fortnightly magazine published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.*

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Nicholas Ridley — Tory minister for ratecapping

Is
there
a
future
for
town
hall
socialism



Piers Cavendish/Reflex

?

Repeated Tory attacks are reducing the room for manoeuvre of Labour councils. Is there a role for socialists in local government, and can a belated fightback be organised?

DAVY JONES looks at the issues.

WHEN THE TORIES came into office in 1979 their central goal was to restore the profitability of the British economy. This necessitated taking on and defeating the labour movement industrially, thereby weakening the trade unions; running down the welfare state through progressive reductions in social spending; and simultaneously shifting the terms of ideological debate markedly to the right. For their project to succeed the arena of local government was crucial since local councils account for about a quarter of all public spending. As a result the last seven years have seen a battery of new laws and changes to the rules of local government spending.

The net effect of these changes has been enormous. The percentage of central government grant as a proportion of planned council spending in England has fallen progressively from 61 per cent in 1980-81 to 46.4 per cent in 1987-88.

Rate support grant has fallen, at 1986-87 prices, from £12,848m in 1978-79 to £8,988m in 1986-87. The cumulative loss to local government between 1978-79 and 1986-87 is a staggering £17,455m. As central government grant has been cut, so the proportion of expenditure born by the ratepayers has risen dramatically from 39 per cent in 1978-79 to over 56 per cent in 1986-87.

But there was a second major reason for the Tories to tackle the issue of local government: namely, the important role of local councils as potential centres of resistance to the Tories' goals.

The Tories' aim was both to abolish the most powerful of these enemies — the Greater London Council (GLC) and metropolitan authorities — which in radical Labour hands had proved both electorally popular and capable of serious and damaging resistance to Tory rule; and to undermine the potential popularity and influence of local councils controlled by Labour by squeezing their economic autonomy and forcing them to take responsibility for unpopular reductions in services. The crunch is now rapidly approaching both at a local level, as all the tricks of financial resistance to the Tories run out, and nationally, as the likelihood of a majority Labour government committed to bailing out local councils seems daily less likely.

Labour's response

While the Labour leadership and the party as a whole have attacked the government's moves against local government, commitments to restoring adequate levels of local spending have been less forthcoming. And at key points in the campaign against the Tories, the party leadership has been part of the problem rather than part of the solution. They refused to co-ordinate national backing to Lambeth and Liverpool councils just as they have refused to commit themselves to reverse the surcharges subsequently imposed. They have been only too keen to join in the media chorus attacking local councils rather than seeing the potential mileage in championing the cause of Labour councils facing up to the Tories' attacks.

Locally some right wing Labour councils have limply capitulated to the Tories' measures and made cuts in services and jobs, or raised rents to keep within the new financial limits. But for much of the Labour left such options have been unacceptable. Debate has centred instead on the role of rate rises and the myriad of creative accountancy schemes used to deflect the impact of government cash limits.

Raising the rates

For a number of local Labour councils, and metropolitan authorities such as the GLC, the tactic of raising the rates to finance the expansion of services was a deliberate and coherent strategy. The case was made that existing services were completely inadequate and that radical equal opportunity policies needed substantial funds to have any serious impact. In the absence of adequate government grant, and given opposition to rent rises or cuts in jobs and services, rates were seen as the

only method of financing such expansion. It was also argued that rate rises had little impact on the working class — as those supplementary benefit had rates paid by government — but rather hit local businessmen. Supporters of rate rises said that this lesser evil was justified in order to give the council(s) time to win popularity through the expansion of their services, as with the GLC for example.

There were a number of things wrong with this approach. It is simply untenable to claim that huge rate rises do not attack working class living standards. Undoubtedly they severely hit low income wage earners. (In some areas in inner London rates had reached almost the same level as rents by the mid-1980s.) If cuts in jobs and services are unacceptable, why not attacks on living standards? To sanction rate rises as a lesser evil is a slippery slope towards those cuts in jobs and services.

Second, making such huge rate rises at the same time as taking bold equality measures undoubtedly fuelled popular opposition to these initiatives. While the responsibility for this equation lay with the media, it is a fact that the belief that vast sums of money were being 'squandered' on these schemes while rates were going through the roof was firmly implanted into tens of thousands of Labour voters' minds. Funding equal opportunity policies from huge rate rises was to irresponsibly jeopardise their public acceptance.

The most important thing to note about this strategy, however, is that it relied on resolving the problems of local government financing through the actions of councillors, rather than through mobilisation of the community and the workforce. Like all bureaucratic approaches it demobilised the potential for struggling against the Tories' attacks. In retrospect, though of course it was not so clear at the time, the relationship of forces between the classes at the outset of the Tory government in 1979-80 was far more advantageous than the mid-1980s. The early years of the Tories, before the defeat of the miners, was a far more favourable time to struggle against their attacks on local government. The moment was lost as the left councils who might have led such a struggle opted for huge rate rises instead.

The rate rise argument is not an academic one. While the media's 'favourite' Labour councils such as Islington, Lambeth, Liverpool, Brent, Haringey, Sheffield and others have been ratecapped, there are many more which have not. Some have recently fallen into Labour control, some have radical leaderships or members looking to follow the example of the GLC, Islington, Lambeth and others in financing expansion of services prior to the inevitable ratecap the following year. Such is the case with Ealing and Hammersmith and Fulham, planning rate rises of 65 per cent and 40 per cent respectively.

Proponents of rate rises distinguish rates from rents or cuts in services by making the analogy with income tax. Just as socialists have traditionally favoured income or direct taxation over purchase/VAT (indirect) taxes, so it is argued that rates are relatively progressive taxes based on property values, hitting business more than private tenants. Raising rates, like raising taxes, is therefore a tactical question. This analogy has some truth to it, but concretely with a Tory government attacking living standards across the board, how can socialists justify joining it? There is no 'acceptable' rates rise in this economic context. On the contrary, within the framework of a socialist strategy for local government finances and establishing local social needs, a strong case can and should be made for reducing the rates from their current unacceptably high level in some boroughs.

Socialists would oppose an incoming Labour government raising the standard level of income tax, after Tory reductions, in order to expand social provision. They would argue for the funds to be made available from other sources, such as cutting the misnamed 'defence' budget. Equally socialists should not support local Labour councils raising the rates dramatically, after local Tory rule, in order to expand the services. They too



should insist that the funds come from elsewhere, not from the pockets of the working class.

Creative accountancy

With the advent of ratecapping attention shifted to other methods of preventing the Tories from decimating local government. A new industry was born — creative accountancy. Essentially, four main devices have been used under this broad heading, each with varying results and with varying degrees of acceptability from a socialist viewpoint. Overall this was termed both by Kinnock and the 'soft left' as the 'dented shield' approach. First, running down reserves traditionally held to finance major schemes and/or for contingencies. The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) has maintained itself this way for the past two years and its crisis this year stems from having no more reserves

to play with. Second, leasing schemes where council property or equipment is sold to commercial or banking interests who lease it back to the council. This gives the council cash up front. The Tories are committed to closing this loophole. The local government finance act currently going through parliament is likely to outlaw forms of leaseback schemes.

Third, and most significantly, is 'capitalising expenditure'. This entails the council transferring day to day or 'revenue expenses' into its longer term or 'capital budget' thereby avoiding various government overspending penalties on its revenue account. This has been particularly used for repairs and maintenance costs. Its serious side effect however is to begin to run down the council's capital projects programme, which in many cases is central to the manifesto commitments for major growth in areas like housing.

The fourth device, which has arisen partly to compensate for the side effects of 'capitalisation', is deferred purchase. Here a private sector intermediary undertakes to finance various capital works, but repayment from the capital budget is deferred, usually for three years. This also has the disastrous consequence of choking off any future capital growth as the repayments come due in later years. The Tories announced last July their intention to introduce legislation, backdated from July 1986, to prevent any more such deferred purchase schemes, though existing schemes will continue.

There are major objections to 'creative accountancy' as a solution to the government's attacks. First, it puts the onus on experts to elaborate ever more complex and secret deals, rather than relying on the capacity of the labour movement collectively to mobilise and confront the government. Second, as a result, it is divisive among those who could and should be united in fighting the Tories, as each borough seeks its own individual and

'socialists would oppose an incoming Labour government raising the basic rate of income tax'

specific solution based on its own capacity to move 'creative'. Third, it demobilises the potential for struggle not only by referring it to experts, but also by each year deferring the struggle 'to next year' when 'there will be no option left' but to struggle. Fourth, and most devastating, it has led to disbelief among the local communities and workforces as the council seems miraculously to bridge the 'unbridgeable gap' each year through these mechanisms. The result is that claims of huge deficits, imminent cuts and jobs losses, are no longer believed. The councils have cried wolf too often.

The first real opportunity for a counter attack was in the early 1980s when left councils opted instead for large rate rises. The second was the preparation for the 1985-86 budget and the debate over not setting a rate or setting a deficit budget. The co-ordinated campaign not to set a rate led by Hodge, Blunkett, Livingstone and others relied almost exclusively on agreement among council leaders with lukewarm backing from certain local government leaders. Little mobilisation was achieved where it really mattered — among the workforce and in the local community. With the defeat of the miners in March 1985 the resolve of the local government leaders to face breaking the law and possible surcharge and political disqualification rapidly collapsed. The capitulation of Livingstone at the GLC, which had the most prestige and popularity among the authorities, was instrumental in the collapse of all the other authorities 'committed' to not setting a rate.

The only two authorities which had argued for a deficit budget based on mobilising the community and workforce around a budget based on local social needs, in fact became the only two prepared to confront the government — Liverpool and Lambeth. Isolated, and even attacked by their erstwhile allies, they went down to inevitable defeat. Though there are many criticisms of the leadership of both councils, at least they emerged with some credibility from the debacle. Indeed, Liverpool remains the one council to have achieved serious concessions from the Tories in seven years during their mass campaign over the 1984-85 budget.

A socialist response

Any socialist response to the Tory attacks on local government has to start from a recognition of the limitations of fundamental change which socialists can bring about through using the local state machinery. There can be no socialism in one borough. The national (and international) political context of local government places real limits on the capacity of the most socialist-inclined

council to effect radical change. At all times local decisions must be weighed closely against national considerations. In particular actions need always to promote the strength, confidence and self-activity of the working class and the oppressed locally and nationally, rather than relying on the heroic role of individual socialists and councillors.

There is still a useful role for socialists to play as councillors — to use that arena to ensure that the working class and the oppressed do not pay for the crisis of local government finances, and to organise others to fight for the same objectives. What is unacceptable is for left councillors, under the guise of 'realism', to offer lesser evils as options — 'better to have large rate rises than cuts in jobs', 'better a vacancy freeze than handing over to the Tories'. They should not vote for such budgets or measures in Labour group or council, but act as a minority caucus refusing to budge on defending working class interests, if necessary resigning positions of responsibility within the group to do so. At least such a stance prepares the ground for any future confrontation with the government. Whether there would remain even that role for socialists should the Tories be re-elected is open to question.

The demands for central government to foot the bill and for the enormous debts which local authorities have accumulated to the City to be cancelled should be expressed locally through the drawing up of a budget based on local social needs. This entails councils collaborating with the local labour movement, their own workforce, and community groups to establish the real levels of social need in the borough and to draw up a timetabled programme of implementation. Such a consultation process cannot and should not be restricted to council and union leaders. It must be a real process of mass consultation, stimulating the maximum local involvement and mobilisation which will prove vital in any subsequent showdown with central government. Such a process cannot be achieved by relying on financial experts. All the financial information should be made available and subject to rigorous public scrutiny and debate.

'the pressure on Labour councils to muddle through this year has been immense'

Within such debate on priorities and needs all questions must be up for discussion — from the hours and conditions of different sections of the workforce, the rent and rate levels, through to all aspects of service need and provision. Nothing should be exempt from debate and all information should be available. Any such process could only be successful insofar as the council worked hand-in-hand with its own workforce, the local labour movement and community sector.

The struggle over the next year

1987 is almost certainly election year. The pressure on Labour councils to avoid a confrontation and attempt to 'muddle through' this year's budget has been immense. For the centre and soft left this has been a straightforward electoralist decision, avoiding the confrontation with the Tories so as not to embarrass Kinnock in election year. For others, on the hard left, it has been a *realpolitik* decision that mobilisation this year just prior to an election, especially following the defeat of Lambeth and Liverpool, is too difficult to achieve.

However 'realistic' the latter assessment may be, it has led councils into all sorts of shady budget decisions ranging from the totally unacceptable to the less obnoxious. But endorsing such budgets rather than fighting for a deficit budget based on social need fails to prepare the labour movement for the inevitable struggle next year. All too often it leads to councils resorting to traditional high-handed managerial styles, an impatience with

established procedures, and good socialist councillors of yesterday locking out their workforce today.

Over the next year there will be an increasing numbers of struggles between Labour authorities and their workforce as the 'muddle budgets' break down and the money runs out. Vacancy freezes, hidden cuts or deterioration in services and conditions, or even open renegeing on commitments will be par for the course. However 'difficult' the position of left councils, socialists should stand fully behind the workforce and local tenants/community groups in such disputes. Every attack on the workforce this year in the name of realism and waiting for a new government is a nail in the coffin of any serious united struggle by councils and workforce next year.

After the election

Clearly the outcome of the general election will affect the possibilities of struggle around local government enormously. The re-election of the Tories would not only be a huge defeat for the labour movement, it would cause widespread demoralisation within local government. Paradoxically though, a convincing argument can be made for attempting to co-ordinate a national campaign of resistance and confrontation to defend jobs, services and living standards in local government against such a government in its first year. There will be little point in Labour staying in office locally to administer Tory cuts as the screw is tightened to stop any creative accountancy miracles.

With the Tories being the largest minority, or in a genuinely hung parliament with Labour and Tories roughly equal and the balance held by the Alliance, there would be pressure on Labour towards lobbying the Alliance for a common approach to defend local government. Nationally, however, the Alliance have made few commitments on local government, and locally its representatives are frequently indistinguishable from the Tories.

Again a strong case can be made for a co-ordinated campaign of confrontation by Labour councils to such a weak government, which would undoubtedly be susceptible to mass pressure.

An outright large Labour victory with a large majority seems excluded in any election this year. A slender majority or being the largest minority is possible and would present complex problems for those wishing to defend and extend local government services. The pressure not to rock the boat and give Labour a chance would be strong. Labour would attempt to alleviate the crisis of funding local government and repeal key aspects of Tory legislation, but it is doubtful whether it would release enough funds to do any more than prevent the most widespread cuts and redundancies. The accumulated debt and problems of the last few years requires a gigantic redirection of funds from other areas, way beyond Labour's commitments.

Systematic preparation for a co-ordinated fight next year is the most sensible option, whatever the election outcome. The work has to start now. Serious local consultation on establishing a needs budget takes at least six months, and the stronger such local links and campaigns are early on the more difficult it will be for those councillors and union leaders at the top to derail the struggle.

Although needing national co-ordination, this campaign must be prepared in each locality. It is here that any such strategy will stand or fall. The key to local campaigns will be their ability to unite the council, the labour movement and local party, the council workforce, and the voluntary/community organisations.

Such a unity is fraught with difficulties. The workforce unions have to simultaneously defend their own members' interests, in a period where even left councils are often attacking them, and campaign with those Labour councils against their common enemies in defence of jobs, services and living standards. This will not be easy. The unions will have to avoid the contradictory pressures of being 'incorporated' or of ultraleft refusal to build unity against the Tories. An effective local campaign will



Whitechapel, London. Ratecapping means houses are not being built while over a million households are condemned to live in damp, unhealthy conditions

have to involve forms of mass democracy and involvement in decision-making of the workforce and local community.

Such a scenario may seem far-fetched as we approach a general election with a real chance of facing five more Tory years. But it is one which the left must fight for over the coming year. With the defeat of the miners, printworkers and other key industrial sections of labour, the public sector is next for the chop — local government, and the health and civil services. The left is relatively strong in local government, in councils, the Labour Party, and the unions. It must use that strength to prepare the best possible circumstances for the looming confrontation. ■

IN TALKING ABOUT the historical context of the struggle in Poland, Tony Benn states: 'I think that the way the Polish Workers Party (the Polish CP — *ed*) went about taking power and reconstructing Polish society was the only course they could pursue under the circumstances.' The circumstances which Tony Benn recalls about the background to the seizure of power by the CP at the end of the second world war — 'a very right wing regime before the war, the loss of six million people during the war, the change of Poland's frontiers after the war' — justify in his eyes the CP's road to power.

But this road involved the execution without trial by the Stalinist political police of ten thousand people between 1944 and 1948. It involved the deportation to Soviet concentration camps of several tens of thousands of fighters of the Home Army, the principal force of the Polish anti-Nazi resistance; the imprisonment for 'political crimes' of more than 100,000 people; the deportation and dispersal by military force, of the Ukrainian national minority and so forth.

Furthermore, this path involved the suppression of the works committees and workers councils, established spontaneously at the end of the war; de facto state control of the unions, the suppression of political pluralism, the eradication of all forms of democracy and the monopolisation of state power by the Stalinist bureaucracy of the CP. To sum up: the abolition of capitalism in Poland was accomplished by the installation of a system of totalitarian power imposed by the Kremlin — a system which has survived to this day.

Was any other road possible? Obviously there was the road of socialist democracy, established by means of the self-activity, self-organisation and self-government of the working class, the peasantry and the whole of civil society. This road is not reserved for this or that privileged people, but is the sole one which all the peoples of the world deserve — from Britain, to Poland and Central America.

Tony Benn states: 'In none of the periods of conflict since the war has anyone in Poland been killed'. We have already explained what happened in the first years after the second world war. And after that? In whose memory did Solidarnosc erect its monuments, for example the monument outside the Gdansk shipyard, if not the memory of those workers murdered by the 'communist' authorities in Poznan in 1956, on the Baltic coast in 1970 and so on? In whose memory was another monument erected outside the Wujek mine, if not the memory of the miners who fell defending that mine against the army in December 1981? In stating that 'no one has been killed', Tony Benn is repeating a myth of the bureaucracy.

'Some of the support for Solidarnosc came from some of the most reactionary people in the world' says Tony Benn. He asks why Thatcher supported Solidarnosc so strongly. The answer to that question is: solely because the British workers' movement supported Solidarnosc so weakly and because it meekly handed over the cause of the Polish workers'



Solidarnosc, a genuine workers' movement

In reply to Tony Benn...

Why socialists should support Solidarnosc

In our last issue we published an interview with Tony Benn, in which he expressed severe reservations about the mass Polish trade union and social resistance movement, Solidarnosc. He noted the right wing ideas which some of its leaders have developed since the December 1981 Jaruzelski coup. Here we publish a response by **ZBIGNIEW M KOWALESKI**, formerly a leader of Solidarnosc in Lodz, but since December 1981 a political refugee living in Paris. He is the author of a book on Solidarnosc's struggle for workers self-management, *Rendez-vous nos usines!* (Give us back our factories!) published in 1985.

struggle to reactionary forces like Thatcher. Those responsible are all those socialists and trade unionists who turned their back on Solidarnosc, utilising utterly false arguments like those presented by Tony Benn.

When you renounce international solidarity with the just cause of the workers or oppressed people, don't be surprised if it has lamentable effects. When people like Tony Benn turn their backs on Solidarnosc and people like Thatcher say that they support Solidarnosc, it is inevitable that this generates great political confusion among many militants of the Solidarnosc movement itself, and constitutes one of the greatest obstacles to clarifying their political positions. This clarification is made all the more difficult because the Polish workers who fight against the bureaucratic dictatorship, have not encountered in their world any socialism different from that of the bureaucracy's 'really

existing socialism' that they know and recognise.

This is not a problem which confronts them alone — the discrediting of socialism which has been produced by the experience of 'actually existing socialism' in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe confronts the workers of the whole world. The consequences of this are also evident in the British workers movement, which experiences anti-communism and not just 'the popularity of the USSR' as Tony Benn says.

'In Solidarnosc', says Tony Benn, 'there are elements which have nothing to do with either socialism or democracy'. But in the Labour Party there are many more such elements, which not only express anti-socialist ideas, but practice bourgeois and pro-imperialist politics. That doesn't stop Tony Benn being a member, even a leader

of this party. Like the Labour Party, Solidarnosc is a large workers' movement. But given their different situations, in order to judge them you have to utilise very different criteria.

Solidarnosc emerged from the struggle of the working class, from a powerful strike movement. It organised in such a way as to organise the working class to defend its rights, its dignity and its interests — like a trade union. It fought for trade union freedom — an elementary right for workers in the whole world, which in Poland, like the whole of the Soviet bloc, is denied.

It fought for other elementary rights — freedom of expression, ideological pluralism, political democracy — regarded as natural rights since the French revolution. These rights it not only demanded, but practiced in its own sphere in a way which serves as a model for all trade unions and mass movements in the world. No less than in the great historical experiences of the workers movement — the Paris Commune, the 1917 Russian revolution, the 1936 revolution in Spain — workers democracy lived in Solidarnosc!

Solidarnosc was constructed by a working class which, for long decades, was forcibly atomised by the bureaucratic dictatorship, was not able to organise independently or elaborate a collective consciousness and accumulate experiences. Its experiences were partly destroyed and partly appropriated by that dictatorship. But behind the banner of Solidarnosc was a class totally conscious of itself and transformed into an autonomous social subject.

In these conditions, ideological and political confusion — which is characteristic of every great movement of the masses — was inevitably considerable. It included, among other things, expressions of nationalism and clericalism. For a British socialist it should not be difficult to understand the origins of such phenomena — it is enough to remind oneself of those which occur in Ireland.

'Tony Benn is repeating a myth of the bureaucracy'

Nonetheless, these ideological expressions were not the essence of Solidarnosc — any more than they are the essence of the national liberation of the Irish people. Its essence resides in its class instinct and a class practice which gives Solidarnosc the unmistakable stamp of a workers movement. In the course of setting up their organisations, through their collective struggle, the workers organised in Solidarnosc more and more consciously discovered the necessity to totally reorganise society, the economy and the state.

Their aspirations at that time concentrated on a plan for workers self-management, for full power to the workers in the running of the enterprises and the whole economy, towards which end Solidarnosc commenced the building of workers councils. With Solidarnosc, Poland experienced one of the most

advanced and audacious attempts to establish generalised workers' and social control, on the basis of a power as much economic as political.

Launching the slogan 'Give us back our factories' the national congress of Solidarnosc adopted a programme which proclaimed the aspiration to construct a self-managed republic, on the basis of affirming the socialised character of the means of production, workers control and democratic planning, and greatly increased political democracy in the state.

This experience of self-management by the Polish working class deserves study and assimilation in the workers movement in other countries — in the countries of 'actually existing socialism' as much as in capitalist countries — even if they are almost completely ignored by socialists and trade unionists in Britain. Many of the latter prefer to denounce expressions of nationalism or clericalism in Solidarnosc rather than to help the British workers' movement to know the plans and experiences of Solidarnosc in the struggle for workers self-management.

Many people prefer to quote this or that document (such as the document put out by the clandestine leadership of Solidarnosc

'ideological pluralism, political democracy — regarded as natural rights since the French Revolution'

quoted by Tony Benn) which differ from the united programme collectively and democratically adopted, which is the programme launched by the national congress of Solidarnosc in September 1981.

Contrary to what Tony Benn says, Solidarnosc did not want 'to overthrow the state' — although I am personally convinced it was a fundamental error of Solidarnosc not to have decided to suppress the military-bureaucratic apparatus of the state. Neither did it want to 'dismantle socialist planning' — in fact 'socialist planning' has never existed in Poland, and the bureaucratic 'planning' has been partially dismantled by the bureaucracy itself since that time. Neither did it want to 'reprivatise industry' as Tony Benn claims.

It is necessary to recall that democracy, workers self-management and trade union freedom are absolutely incompatible with the totalitarian nature of the regime which exists in Poland. Faced with this fact, which ought to be obvious to every socialist, Tony Benn sings the same song on the Polish drama which the Stalinist choir has been singing the length and breadth of the world.

Despite the bureaucratic-military dictatorship exercised over the Polish working class and civil society, which apparently merits this or that criticism, what is fundamentally important is what Jaruzelski prevented — 'to overthrow the regime, which would have meant a Soviet invasion, at great cost to the popularity of the Soviet Union'. Queer logic and a revolting view!

Obliged to go into clandestinity, in which it has remained for five years, despite ceaseless police persecution, the Polish workers movement Solidarnosc does not deserve in the eyes of Tony Benn, the defense, the solidarity and the support of socialists in the West.

On the contrary, socialists, according to Tony Benn, should be content that 'they (the

'... workers self management and trade union freedom are absolutely incompatible with 'the totalitarian regime...'

bureaucrats in power — *ed*) are trying to make the trade unions and parliament more independent'. What an amazing application of the principles of democratic socialism which attributes any independence to the official unions and parliament, when there is no trade union freedom nor free elections!

Positions on Poland and the Soviet bloc in general, such as those expressed by Tony Benn, divide the international workers movement and constitute a renunciation of the most elementary requirements of workers international solidarity. These views serve perfectly the needs of all the governments of the countries of 'really existing socialism', as well as those of the governments of the capitalist countries (from Gorbachov to Reagan, from Thatcher to Jaruzelski).

All these forces have done everything in their power to isolate Solidarnosc and the Polish working class, and indeed all the workers of the Soviet bloc, from their natural allies — the workers, trade unionists and socialists of the capitalist countries. Is it an accident that the balance sheet of these positions is that they have a debilitating effect on the struggle? Have socialists in Britain not learned the lessons of the British miners' strike, in which Jaruzelski was an ally of Thatcher, sabotaging that strike with consignments of Polish coal?

The Alliance of the Workers Opposition-Solidarnosc (POR-S), a left wing socio-political organisation which has been formed in the heart of the Polish social movement in recent years, states in its manifesto:

'The Polish working class is not isolated in the struggle. It has friends and allies abroad. They are the workers of the entire world. The Polish workers movement can and must draw on the strength of international workers solidarity. The differences between East and West cannot hide the fact that the workers of both camps are linked by common interests, by a common struggle for a common end — the transformation of the working class from object into subject — against common enemies. The question of international solidarity is one of close cooperation of the various national contingents of the revolutionary workers movement; it is one of interaction between the development of the struggle, for example, in Poland, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain.'

We hope we are not mistaken in hoping that British socialists like Tony Benn will adopt a similar position — and raise the banner of support and freedom for Solidarnosc. ■

Communists and the Easter rising

How did Lenin, Trotsky and other leaders of the future Communist International respond to the Easter rising of 1916? Various views have been attributed to them; **D R O'CONNOR LYSAGHT** looks at how Marx and the classical marxists regarded Irish self-determination.

THE ANNIVERSARY of the Easter rising of 1916 provides the opportunity to consider it not only in itself but as a guide to those who reacted to it. This is particularly necessary in the case of the future leaders of the Communist International. To them there has been attributed in turn uncritical support and in some circles an equally unscientific rejection of the event.

The two opposing schools of thought have agreed in acting in a manner to which their subjects would have objected. Their alleged praise or strictures are related only to Ireland out of the context of the debates in which their positions were stated. The result tends to benefit the new revisionist school of thought rather than that of its opponents. By the sheer scale of his abuse of Napoleon III, Victor Hugo added to that individual's importance when he was trying to minimise it. So, by isolating Ireland in Marxist thinking, those who hope thereby to magnify its importance therein succeed only in making it an individual issue that can be dismissed as unrelated to its advocates' overall views and dismissed accordingly. On the other hand such isolation keeps discussion of the rising at a parochial level that serves to boost the most bourgeois aspects of nationalism and give extra excuse for revisionists to declare their opposition to it.

The isolation technique is expressed in two ways, the one historical and the other geographical. Together they tend to turn the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin on Ireland into holy gospel writ unrelated to their circumstances.

The first point to remember even if it is flogged often enough today is that Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, unlike Arthur Griffith or the old republican Brian O'Higgins had as their priority not to win an independent Ireland but to achieve a socialist world in which such independence would in practice have less significance than 'home rule', through it would not be subject to British or indeed European landlord or capitalist imperialist interests. That this aim led

them to support Irish national claims gives this backing all the more value. They saw the Irish independence struggle as an important, if small contribution to meeting the overall needs of humanity. Of course, it could not fulfil these needs by itself, but it could help towards fulfilling them.

Marx and Engels

Certainly today what Marx and Engels decided about Ireland is less important than how they decided it. The world in which they lived was one in which the capitalist system in its then most advanced form (industrialism) was established only in Britain though it was developing in Europe, North America and later Japan. There was no one international economy though the British Empire was already one such.

'they saw Irish independence as a contribution to meeting the overall needs of humanity'

In these circumstances, Marx and Engels' approach to national questions could not be formulated as a general principle. They judged each issue according to its effect on the workers' revolution in capitalist Britain, on the democratic struggles in Europe and on the development of capitalism in Asia, Africa and Latin America. On the second basis Engels expressed the doubts that he shared with Marx about the war for Italian unity since it would tend to weaken Austria, then apparently the strongest German power, and hence strengthen Tsarist Russia, the enemy of European democracy.¹

The national struggles of the Irish were a different matter. Both Marx and Engels agreed that the parliamentary union with Britain had to be ended in favour of separate assemblies that would be hopefully democratic and certainly more representative of their countries' populations than the old Irish parliament had been. After separation, however, there might come federation. They saw that the union strengthened the landlords who dominated British capitalism and believed that because the union had weakened the Irish economy and impoverished Irish workers the latter were reducing wages in Britain, though this is doubtful.²

They changed their opinion as to how this was to be done several times. At the time of the famine and of the British Chartist movement they believed that the said movement's success would result in Britain breaking the union. Then Chartism collapsed, the Fenian movement rose and the American civil war raised the possibility of war between Britain

and the USA. England's difficulty might yet be Ireland's opportunity. Marx and Engels now considered that the Irish might establish their own revolutionary republic. When the Fenians had been defeated and British-American relations repaired they sought to involve their International Workingman's Association in the struggle by getting Ireland represented on its executive by an ex-Fenian. The International collapsed and British military strength remained too great for an isolated national rebellion so they changed their strategy to one of support for reform of 'home rule' (then understood to be close to what was then dominion status) as a possible means towards the end of full separation. Home rule's positive possibilities were increased by the decline in land prices caused by increased food imports from America and the Empire and the resulting ability of the British government to subsidise the purchase of the landlord's estates for the tenants to buy. Finally, after Marx' death, Engels welcomed the possibility of independent Irish labour candidates though he did not live to see them run.³

The Irish question and the Second International

By Engels' death in 1895 a new Second International was in being. Though this was dominated by conscious followers of Marx (unlike its predecessor), they had to develop his teachings under different circumstances. Britain was by now merely the oldest and least vigorous of several industrial countries, all dominated by finance capital. To increase its profits each of its concerns had their host country aid them in exporting their capital, thus uniting the world on their own terms.

This had two immediate results. In the first place the national question was no longer simply a series of tactical questions as to the best choice for individual democratic and socialist movements. It was possible to see a pattern in such choices and to deduce from it a principle. More particularly Irish national demands (like those of the Poles also made a priority by Marx and Engels) became those of just another oppressed nation.⁴

Several leaders of the Second International tried to develop general marxist analyses of the national question. The two most relevant here were on its revolutionary wing: Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg. (Connolly, another revolutionary was very much on its periphery.) The International's most prominent theorist Karl Kautsky wrote about Ireland in the 1890s and, as an honest reformist, in 1922. The first articles would influence all the revolutionary commentators on 1916 and a subsequent generation of reformists has disinterred and published his later work.⁵



William Gladstone: a cartoon after the defeat of the Home Rule Bill in 1886

Partly because she was reacting against the extreme chauvinist, petit bourgeois Polish Socialist Party (PSP), Rosa Luxemburg was for a time the pacesetter for the left. She had little to say about Ireland save in one of her earliest polemics with the PSP when she asked satirically: 'If the national liberation of Poland is elevated to a political goal of the international proletariat, why not also the liberation of Czechoslovakia, Ireland and Alsace-Lorraine?'⁶

As she considered all four demands (except perhaps the last) were utopian, the historical joke was on her.

However, Rosa Luxemburg's arguments were relevant to revolutionary socialists' approach to the Easter rising because they provided the basis for Radek's article which sparked off the debate.

Her main work on the national question appeared between 1908 and 1909 in a series of articles 'The national question and autonomy'. In them she used a wide range of facts to attack the Russian Social Democrats for their programmatic demand for the self-determination of nations. She insisted that this avoided the real national issues. In practice no nation was economically self-sufficient enough to determine its destiny under capitalism, while under socialism no nation would need to make such a claim. Either way the valid, essentially cultural, claims of nationhood could be answered best by local autonomy within the existing state boundaries.⁷

Her premises were not wrong in themselves. Today despite an increase in the number of states beyond anything she imagined only the largest are genuinely economically independent. Similarly, under socialism properly understood the right of the

nation will be reduced to a form of autonomy within the world state. Where she went wrong was in her lack of recognition of nationalism's continuing positive revolutionary role.

Her attack was not answered by Lenin until 1913. He did not reply to her points so much as transcend them. A nation that desires to separate from a state and is prevented from doing so is oppressed. Not only that but the people in the oppressor state have their liberties curtailed by the bonds of chauvinism preventing them from dealing with their own problems. Contrariwise, the struggle of an oppressed nationality against the oppressor will tend to strengthen that feeling in the latter. To Rosa Luxemburg's point that Polish nationalism involved the claim not

'Luxemburg failed to recognise nationalism's continuing positive revolutionary role'

just for independence from Russia, Austria and Germany, but for the 'pre-partition frontiers' and the right for Poles to deny self-determination to Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Byelo-Russians he remarked that this limited but did not negate the right; it stopped where it meant denying itself to others. He did not trouble to reply to her economic argument, merely stressing that the concept was a purely political one. As far as it was possible democracy and hence socialism would be served best by the division of Europe and indeed the world into units corresponding as far as possible to national entities.⁸

Lenin's early writings on Ireland

It is not coincidental that the period in which Lenin developed his view of the national question, 1913-1916, was the same as that of his major writing on Ireland.

Before 1913 his interest in the country had been centred mainly on Kautsky's description of the British solution of the land problem. He used it as an example of successful capitalist land reform.⁹

In fact the reform was not as thoroughgoing as he believed. Nor was it the only change that had occurred in Ireland since Marx' time. Then the landlords had been the backbone of resistance even to 'home rule'. Now the core of opposition was in the imperialist centre, the City of London, and its pressure had succeeded in debating the original home rule proposals. Now it feared that to allow Ireland's autonomy would strengthen opposition to its imperialist interests from the British workers and in the imperial colonies. Because of this it had used the Orange Order to stimulate the latest opposition to 'home rule' that existed among the Ulster protestants.

Lenin's Irish articles do not altogether take these factors into account. This gives his evaluation a somewhat one-sided perspective. Accepting the full solution of the land question and ignoring the new base for the

opposition to 'home rule' (the leader, Carson, he described inaccurately as a 'black hundred landlord') he tended to accept the inevitability of that measure (and to overestimate its significance).¹⁰

The strength of his analyses lies in their description of the positive aspects of the current struggles; the growth of Larkinism and of a new independent Irish Labour Party with more staying power than that welcomed by Engels. He saw also that both the left (Larkinite) and the anti-home rule struggles had in their different ways the potential for educating the workers of Britain and Ireland about the real nature of their state's constitution. In common with most left-wing commentators, however, he underestimated the ability of the reformist leaders to keep their followers from learning such lessons!!

Above all his commitment remains clear. In the last of his pre-1916 writings on Ireland, on 12th December 1914, he wrote:

'Our model will always be Marx who, after living in Britain for decades and becoming half-English, demanded freedom and national independence for Ireland in the interests of the socialist movement of the British workers.'

The revolutionary socialists' responses to the Easter rising

By the time of the last quotation the world situation had changed qualitatively as a result of the first world war. The Second International had collapsed into its different sections. Many once regarded as internationalists had exposed themselves as chauvinists.

In Ireland a possible military struggle against 'home rule' was postponed. The Home Rule Act was passed but its operation stalled until peace. Both home rulers and



Rosa Luxemburg: polemicalised with Lenin on the national question

unionists joined the British army to fight for catholic Belgium and against catholic Austria according to taste.

The bourgeois nationalist politicians knew the fragility of this agreement. The mere passing of the Home Rule Act could not maintain their followers support. So they claimed that the Act was in operation or that it would be, perhaps before the end of 1915, by which time they expected the war to be over. When neither event took place it was not an immediate disaster. Nonetheless, the failure helped the process of disillusion.¹³

In addition, there was an economic factor. Many homes sold their breadwinners or their sons as cannon fodder and got in return a regular economic wage, sometimes higher than they had received previously. Neither this nor the ordinary pay rates, however, could compensate for wartime inflation. Working-class militancy began to revive. The ITGWU led a number of dock strikes.¹⁴ This was the background to the rebellion that broke out on 24 April 1916.

'Lenin was interested in 1916 mainly as a precursor of general socialist revolution'

As it was crushed within a week responses to it from abroad even from the Socialist Internationalists, were slow to appear. The first came from the camp of the Luxemburgists. Though Karl Radek had broken organisationally with Rosa Luxemburg he remained her disciple on national issues. On 9 May he published in the Swiss *Berner Tagewacht* his article 'The End of a Song' based partly on bulletins from Theodore Rothstein, a future British communist leader. In it he applied to Ireland Luxemburg's teaching on national self-determination as an implied attack on Lenin and the Russian Social Democrats' line.¹⁵

Radek's article is well-researched with a quotation from Swift, among others, but its analysis is weakened by its purpose. Its one positive feature is its recognition of Britain's strategic stake in its control of Ireland. Otherwise its argument is summarised in the opening of its second paragraph: 'The Irish question was (sic) an agrarian question.' For Radek the British solved the land problem, the farmers were subsidised *ergo* the Irish national question was answered. Even autonomy is not mentioned; Radek does not seem to have heard of the Home Rule Act. The rising is thus seen as a putsch by the 'purely urban petit bourgeois movement Sin (sic) Fein'.

The only mention of the working class comes in the last sentence: 'the proletariat — tho' negative, often hostile to (the republicans') ideals — has written their part with blood in the big book of guilt of those who unleashed the world war.' As this is clearly the proletariat of the world not just of Ireland, so it would seem probable that Radek saw the country as inhabited only by farmers and urban petit bourgeoisie.



Children in Belfast's Divis estate — one of the worst living areas in Europe.

Worse than this was his complete lack of perspective. All that matters is that 'the Irish question...has come to an end'. For Radek the rising had no relevance to the struggles against the war whether in Ireland or internationally. Not only was the Irish 'song' ended but its singers had no role to play in future struggles. The most for which the Easter rebels could hope was that names be 'written with blood' in the proletariat's 'book of guilt'.

Such a verdict could not be revolutionary Social Democracy's last word. on 4th July there appeared in the Paris based Russian emigrant journal *Nashe Slovo* Leon's Trotsky's article 'Lessons of the Dublin events'. Trotsky was a Russian Social Democrat opposed both to its moderate (Menshevik) wing but also to Lenin's Bolshevik concept of a necessarily highly conscious leadership for the working-class. He supported fully the party's formula of national self-determination but he agreed with Rosa

Luxemburg criticism of the inadequacy of its economic aspects not only objectively but as a subjectively observable fact. Accordingly, he linked national self-determination to the demand for a United Socialist States of Europe.¹⁶

His doubts about the subjective limitations of the self-determination formula led him to make the weakest statement in his article: 'the basis for national revolution has disappeared even in backward Ireland'. Of course he was dealing with the concept of national revolution in the classic nineteenth century sense of a revolution headed by the bourgeoisie and limited to the creation of a capitalist nation-state, not to the phenomenon of which he was among the first analysts — the permanent revolution, which may begin as a revolution for national claims but must become one for working class demands if it is to achieve even its full democratic, political and cultural programme.

That such a struggle was a possibility for Ireland in his eyes is reflected in his admission that the rising 'amounted in practice to a revolt of the workers, albeit with an influx of petit bourgeois nationalist ideas. It was his belief in the spontaneous development of working class consciousness that led him to dismiss the possibility of that influx being the persistent factor it would prove to be. It also strengthened his readiness to dismiss the base for nationalism as he did.

His mistake was the less fortunate in that, as far as marshalling his facts is concerned, Trotsky's article was the best of the three future communists' analyses of the Easter rising. Like both Radek and earlier Lenin he treated the farmers as a bloc. However, not only did he stress the strategic factor (even more than Radek), but he brought the workers into the reckoning (unlike Radek) and (unlike Lenin) his analysis of their role made clear that, despite himself, there was still a base for a form of Irish national revolution even if it would be fulfilled by turning into part of the greater socialist revolution that he expected for the whole British Isles. At the end he declared that 'the experiment of an Irish national rebellion' was over but that 'the historical role of the Irish proletariat is just beginning'. He did not see that, in practice, his second formulation would cancel the first.

“such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet,” said Trotsky

In the same month as Trotsky's article appeared Lenin was completing his final polemic against the Luxemburg view of the national question, 'The discussion on self-determination summarised'. He published in *Sbornik Sotsial-Demokrata* in October, including the chapter 'The Irish rebellion of 1916', his blistering reply to Radek.¹⁷

This work has little descriptive analysis of the event discussed beyond his very definite correction of Radek's description of its class content: 'street fighting conducted by a section of the petit bourgeoisie and a section of the workers'.¹⁸

Its main strength lies rather in its application of the principle that he had developed in his previous works: that the world war was not just leading to 'pure' social revolution, but that such revolution would include struggles for aims far less than socialism.

It has a second strength: a negative one. It avoids Trotsky's mistake of dismissing too readily 'the basis for national revolution'. It does not prophesy, however, a more successful Irish rising. If anything its comment 'it is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely', tends to imply what Trotsky states more explicitly: that such a struggle is unlikely. That Lenin did not believe this was shown in subsequent comments on the subject over the next few months. However, even these statements remain an assertion of possibilities that are on the same level as a possible rising of France's North African

possessions. All in all, like Trotsky, he was interested in 1916 mainly as a precursor of general socialist revolution although he considered it a more effective catalyst than other colonial outbreaks by reason of its closeness to Britain. He was, after all, not an Irish republican but a Russian Bolshevik who did not pretend to be an expert on the Irish question.¹⁹

For all the differences between Lenin, Trotsky and Radek, they would work together eighteen months after the Easter rising to lead the workers to take state power in Russia and then to found the Third (Communist) International to extend that victory. In this task neither Lenin nor Trotsky hesitated to commit themselves to supporting the revived Irish national struggle. At the International's second congress, in August 1920, Lenin proposed:

'In Ireland, for instance, there are two hundred thousand British soldiers who are applying ferocious terror methods to suppress the Irish. The British socialists are not conducting any revolutionary propaganda among the soldiers, though our resolutions clearly state that we can accept into the Communist International only the British parties that conduct genuinely revolutionary propaganda among the British workers and soldiers. I emphasise that we have heard no objections to this either here or in the commissions'.²⁰

And Trotsky at the same Congress:

'The British Socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against the London plutocracy — such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet, but in no case merits either a mandate or the confidence of the proletariat'.²¹

These speeches were made when Britain was fighting and occupying both Ireland and Russia. Nonetheless a year after peace of a sort had been made in both struggles, in 1921, revolutionary Russia backed a statement from the International to the Communist parties of Great Britain and Ireland urging them to support the militant Irish opponents of the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty with Britain.²²

Such were the Communists of seventy years ago. No doubt times have changed the

circumstances. However, those who would argue that they must change diametrically their perspectives should give their reasons or be quiet. Moreover, unless they can argue their case with the factual command of Lenin, Trotsky and even Radek, and with the dialectical command of Lenin, they will lose it by default.

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Footnotes

- 1 Friedrich Engels, *Po und Rhein* 1859 (untranslated)
- 2 Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, Moscow 1971. pp. 124, 133, 160-163, 281, 292-294, 324-325.
- Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in Marx and Engels, *On Britain*, Moscow 1962, pp. 126-127.
- See Fergus D'Arcy, *The Irish in 19th Century Britain*, *Irish History Workshop*, 1981, for another view of the Irish emigrant workers' role.
- 3 Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, op. cit. pp. 45-51, 97, 116, 143, 147-148, 160-163, 316-317, 329, 331, 332, 333-336, 353.
- For Ireland's representation in the International Workingmen's Association, see Sean Daly, *Ireland and the First International*, Cork 1984.
- 4 Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, op. cit. p. 332.
- 5 Karl Kautsky, *Ireland*, Belfast 1974. See also Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon, Henry Patterson, *The State in Northern Ireland*, Manchester 1979. p. 19.
- 6 Rosa Luxemburg, *The National Question*, New York and London 1976, pp. 57-58.
- 7 *Ibid.* pp. 103-182.
- 8 Most of Lenin's contributions to the debate on nationalism is in *Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Nationalism*, Moscow 1967; see also *Collected Works*, Volume 41, pp. 319, 374-375.
- 9 Lenin, *Collected Works* Volume 4, pp. 250-251; Vol 6, pp. 496-497; Vol 13, pp. 287-288; Vol 19, pp. 332-335, 348-349; Vol 20, pp. 226-229.
- 10 *Ibid.* Vol 19, p. 332, Vol 20, pp. 148-149.
- 11 *Ibid.* Vol 19, p. 332-335, 348-349; Vol 20, pp. 226-229.
- 12 *Ibid.* Vol 21, p. 106.
- 13 See *Freeman's Journal*, 19th Sept 1914, 1st Oct 1914, 5th Oct 1914, 10th Oct 1914.
- 14 See *Irish Times*, 2nd Oct 1915, 7th Oct 1915, 12th Oct 1915, 18th Nov 1915, 5th April 1915; *Freeman's Journal*, 9th Nov 1915, 10th Nov 1915, 16th Dec 1915, 28th March 1916.
- 15 An abridged version of Radek's article is in Lenin's *Struggle for a Revolutionary International*, New York 1984, pp. 370-374.
- 16 *Ibid.* pp. 370-374; see also *Marxist Review*, 2 Jan-Feb 1973.
- 17 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 22, pp. 353-359.
- 18 *Ibid.* p. 355.
- 19 *Ibid.* pp. 357, 359; Vol 23, pp. 196, 198.
- 20 *Ibid.* Vol 31, p. 261.
- 21 Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International* Vol 1, New York, 1972, p. 125.
- 22 *Workers Republic* 1st July 1922.

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Andy Warhol

RENE GIMPEL looks at the influence of the 'pop art' cult figure who died recently.

IN THE LATE forties, America found in Jackson Pollack and Wilhelm de Kooning, two artists who were to lead the development of a particular style of painting, abstract expressionism, which put New York ahead of Paris — indeed of Europe — as the centre for avant-garde art. Abstract expressionism was the epitome of gestural painting, a stronghold of the individual-as-creator whose every mark carried equal significance. It was also the culmination of a process begun by Cezanne, which questioned a representation of reality originally developed in the Renaissance.

Many of the artists of abstract expressionism had been radicalised during the Depression and had participated in Roosevelt's New Deal. The movement's impact was such that for a long time it was viewed with the greatest suspicion by Senator McCarthy and the Cold War establishment. Soon American abstraction was being hailed across Europe as the most innovative movement since the war and the United States' cultural establishment decided to subsidise travelling exhibitions by these newly celebrated artists. Covert support was offered by the CIA, in much the same manner as the Agency was supporting *Encounter* magazine. The CIA saw abstract expressionism's hegemony as a useful stick with which to beat the stultified orthodoxy of Soviet socialist realism.

By the end of the fifties, abstract expressionism had exhausted itself in mannerism and repetition. At the same time, a decline in the Cold War atmosphere coincided with a boom in Western economies which was leading to an enormous upsurge in consumer 'awareness'. Under the heading of Pop Art, a number of gifted artists emerged, in particular Jasper Johns, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol. These artists pillaged the media to create a critical mimesis of their images.

'Do you think pop art is...?'

'No.'

'What?'

'No.'

'Do you think pop art is...?'

'No...No I don't'

Warhol began his career as copy artist and illustrator, with a fascination for Hollywood. He used media images more

thoroughly than other pop artists and his painting method was an unorthodox, sardonic challenge to the art world. He invariably used a crude form of screenprinting, which allowed him to reproduce the same image many times over.

The cubists, and more especially the dadaists, had also borrowed existing imagery (such as Duchamp's 'ready-mades'), but they had always incorporated the image into unique works of art. Warhol's contribution to his subject was to crop and enlarge it, inject fairly arbitrary colour and lay on a few obvious brushstrokes; but other than this, his paintings remain a variation on printing.

There is both a paradox and a conundrum in Warhol's work. The paradox arises between Warhol the fine art painter and what Warhol represented on his easel. We face a conundrum in trying to evaluate and locate the specificity of Warhol's practice: a photo is crudely and poorly reproduced in a newspaper — first act of displacement; Warhol reproduces this photo in an even cruder form in a second, passive displacement. He 'reproduces' the picture in mimetic manner but presents each picture as a fine art object, complete with signature — except that Warhol signed his work with a rubber stamp moulded with an imprint of his signature.

'I'm not more intelligent than I appear...'

Advertising agencies can afford to, and do, buy the best talent available in the visual arts world; the agencies then spend a fortune creating and perfecting a potent image whose message is mendacious and duplicitous. Normally there is little that the art world can counter with; but, in the sixties, that counter was located in Warhol's subversive streak.

Insofar as Warhol presented his work as uniformly normative, the frequent appearances of disturbing imagery among the seemingly blander soup cans and Marilyn Monroes was sufficient to create an insidious undertow which helps to explain why the

advertising world rarely reciprocated Warhol's interest in their products.

When it appeared in 1965, Warhol's *Electric Chair* shocked the art world, maybe because Warhol had transgressed the art market's adage 'no purple, no cows, no executions'. As usual, the artist simply recycled a newspaper photo. The chair is isolated, disarmed, slack and humdrum. The absence of victim blocks our attempt to transfer shock into the cathartic, if ersatz pity so beloved of colour supplements. This is an irreducible image, the more irritating because of its deadpan presentation by the artist within the pantheon of his images.

A different approach to a similarly unsettling image is present in *Green Disaster* 1964. The distressing photo is repeated several times over, and the execution is Warhol at his callous best. The correlation of figures in the scene is well-nigh inexplicable, and raises more questions about us as consumers of this product than about the meaning of the original — whatever that is. Is the 'original' the original accident? Or its reproduction? Is not the core of the problem, and an explanation about the painting-as-event, located in the viewer as observer.

Warhol's films rework the film maker/filmgoer relationship in a manner similar to that of his best painted work. We are used to seeing films under a rigid set of codes which might be summarised as follows: film is a self-effacing medium carrying the author/director's message or story; the film process, including the labour and equipment used in the shooting and projection, is hidden, dissolved in the finished product so as to preserve the seamless illusion of the film's narrative.

When we visit the cinema we must, in order to enjoy the film, suspend our reflexive, practical relationship to our surroundings. We must also suspend our disbelief in the story. We identify with the actors' characters and acquiesce in the unfolding story's internal logic. We accept the film's manipulation of space and time. Locations appear as

unobtrusive, neutral backgrounds, and special effects legitimise and naturalise screen violence. A solution is found to the problems, contradictions and conflicts in the story in order to give a happy or satisfactory ending.

Even the surroundings in which we view films are calculated to enhance the mystification. Cinema architecture and furnishings include imposing facade, glitter and neon, chandeliers, frescoes, gilt, plush velvet and uniformed attendants.

In such films as *Sleep*, *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Women* and *Empire State Building*, Warhol completely subverted the genre. Film style is redundant; the finished product is no bearer of a coherent set of truths; there is none of the subjectivist, idealist notion of an artist/creator as a visionary gifted with insight. Neither are the films easy to sit through: we must confront and question the project.

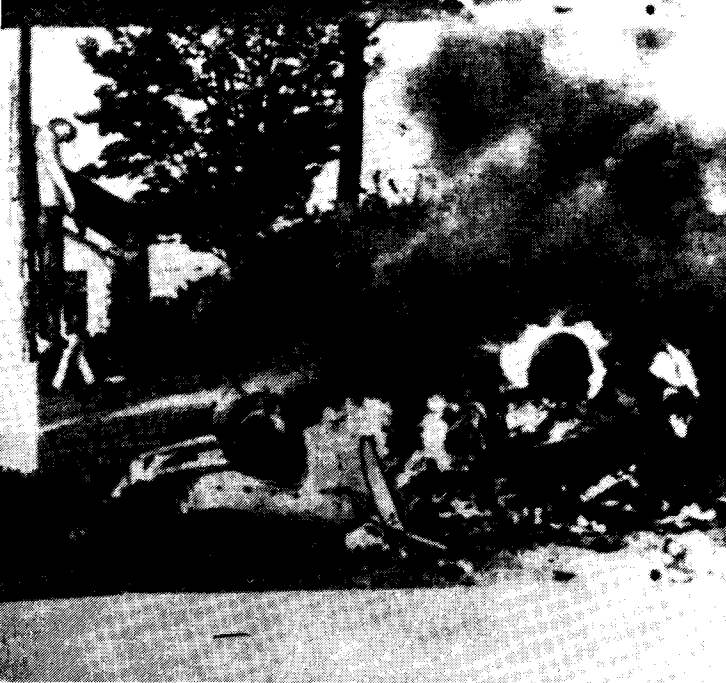
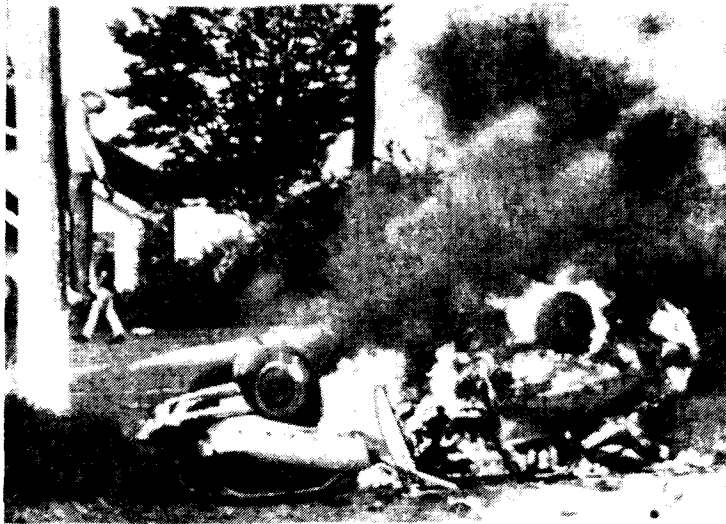
We become self-consciously aware of our situation as engaged participants attempting to decode the flickering images before us. We also reflect on our specific presence as viewers, being no longer disembodied minds whose response is passively triggered by the 'action' on the screen.

'I don't worry about art or life. I mean, the war and the bomb worry me but usually there's not much you can do about them. I've represented it in some of my films and I'm going to try and do more. Money doesn't worry me, either, though I sometimes wonder, where is it? Somebody's got it all!'

Warhol's radical work was over by the end of the sixties. Increasingly he turned to society portraiture, and found himself surrounded by administrators selling Warhol exhibition deals. As though in compensation he became more impenetrable, a victim of his own brand of fame, barely surviving the grimmer fate which befell so many Warhol groupies ('superstars').

If Warhol was in many ways the earliest exponent of post-modern fragmentation, he was also an early casualty; and once again a breakthrough in progressive cultural activity, such as Warhol and Pop Art were, fails to realise its materialist potential because of the endlessly recuperative power of late capitalism.

'I never wanted to be a painter. I wanted to be a tap dancer.'



Green Disaster, 1964

Salvador

DAVID ROBINSON

Salvador (18) Dir. Oliver Stone; with James Woods, Jim Belushi, John Savage, Cindy Gibb.

SALVADOR IS a tense, gripping and horrifying account of the experiences of photo-journalist Richard Boyle (James Woods) who ventures into El Salvador in search of photographs for publication.

The film begins in New York when Boyle, down on his luck and having lost his wife, child and home, decides to change scenery. Arriving at the Salvador border in his old car and with chum (Jim Belushi), the atmosphere becomes suddenly more frightening and ominous as they pass a burning body and find themselves being bundled into a troop carrier and thence into the midst of a civil war involving the physical elimination of 'subversives' by the army and semi-official death squads.

The plot is based on the real events of 1980-81, high point of the struggle of the Salvadorean people against the ruling junta, in the wake of the successful struggle in neighbouring Nicaragua. We see the assassination of Archbishop Romero whilst giving communion; the shooting of crowds on the steps of the Metropolitan Cathedral in San Salvador; the 'dumping ground' of El Playon, where the bodies of 'the disappeared' could often be found; the rape and murder of a group of American churchwomen by members of the 'security forces' and the chilling and sadistic 'Major Max' (Roberto D'Aubisson), head of the death squads and presidential candidate. Always in the background are the officials and 'advisers' protecting the interests of US imperialism.

On the other side we see the resistance fighters, guerrillas of the FMLN, training in their mountain strongholds; women and men, old and young are seen training and learning to use weapons.

Some critics have pointed out that the portrayal of women is highly questionable. Indeed, women appear for the most part fleetingly as prostitutes, shallow journalists or 'simple peasant women'. The main character spends much of his time trying to obtain a set of official papers for



his Salvadorean girlfriend.

The rape and murder of American churchwomen is shown graphically and horribly. Only in the scenes of guerrillas training are some women portrayed positively, and not as 'extras'.

The film also suffers from its liberalism. The murderous role of imperialism is criticised of course; the hypocrisy of the United States apparent concern for democracy and human rights coupled with an

implacable anti-communism is reflected in the dilemmas of Ambassador White. But the critique is blunted.

The essential charge is that if only America could be true to its own professed values, then it could come out of the situation with its hands clean. Thus we hear Boyle make an impassioned plea for a return to true values — to the military advisors! Later on, in the height of a battle between

the guerrillas and army, he rounds on a guerrilla about to execute a captured soldier, accusing her of being 'just the same as them'.

Despite all this, the film is a timely reminder of the grim role of imperialism in Latin America, a time moreover when the threat to revolutionary Nicaragua from direct invasion is greater than ever. I would recommend this film. □

Who is riding whom?

ALAN TRACY

Salman Rushdie *The Jaguar Smile*, Picador, £3.95.

*There was a young girl of Nic'ragua
Who smiled as she rode on a jaguar
They returned from the ride
With the young girl inside
And the smile on the face of the jaguar*

THE FIRST thing to say about Salman Rushdie's book, *The Jaguar Smile*, is read it! It is a short, well written, easy-to-read book, light reading but not light weight. Salman Rushdie takes you with him on his short journey around Nicaragua, from near the Honduran frontier, to Managua, to the Caribbean coast, giving you all the spicy flavourings on the way. The strength of the book is the background that the author comes from, the angle from which the readers sees Nicaragua.

Salman Rushdie comes from both India and Britain and gives you the benefit of both. He is not a naive Londoner laying eyes on the confusion and poverty of the third world for the first time. With his India-trained eyes, he knows that the scene at the market is not a portrait of real grinding poverty, while being in no doubt about the very real hardship faced by the population of Managua. Rushdie's British political concerns are easy to follow, and so you feel in familiar hands as he takes you on his short and poetic guide through Nicaragua. He is no follower of 'the old bastard Marx', nor an economist, so there is no attempt to reveal the major contradictions of the extremely confusing Nicaraguan economy. This is a valuable tour of the superstructure which is penetrating and above all colourful.

So what's the social life like down at President Daniel Ortega's pad then? Daniel himself is portrayed as bookworm who has been doing body building exercises; the mild mannered intellectual who got tired of having sand kicked in his face and so decided to take on the responsibilities of history and leadership. Daniel's party sounded quite fun; listening to revolutionaries sitting in arm



Carlos Guante/Reflex

chairs putting the world's problems to rights, discussing the next blow planned against US imperialism. A lively argument about poetry raged throughout the party as some of Latin America's greatest poets grappled with the problem of promoting poetry in war-torn Nicaragua, encouraging ordinary people like the police to write and discuss poetry.

Debate figures prominently in Rushdie's portrait of Nicaragua, giving a strong impression of the very openness of the country. Criticism abounded in many forms. Revolution? 'I've got no time for that junk' says one woman unperturbed by the proximity of several officers of the state. In the market the government came in for a lot of stick. The shoppers knew that not all the shortages could be blamed on the war. Recently 20,000 pounds of beef went bad in the government's meat packing company because it was stored without refrigeration. The debate and discussion with and between officials was open and relaxed.

Rushdie vigorously disagrees with the policy of closing the opposition newspaper *La Prensa* with or without CIA funding. He tends to dismiss the arguments he came across as 'giving the line' rather than tackling the thorny question himself of when censorship is justifiable. Throughout the book he manifests a certain scepticism towards the Sandinistas which seems to come from a healthy distrust of Stalinism and a liberal's distaste

for revolutionary parties. He is won over though, struggling and kicking to supporting the FSLN. He realizes with surprise, that for the first time in his life, he has come across a government that he could support. This he finds disorientating.

He characterises the FSLN as revolutionary nationalist. The fact that revolutionary nationalism needs an input of Marxism in it to be successful, is something that he seems to ignore or accept without discussion. His view of Marxism comes over as childishly simple; you sum up how much influence Marxism has by the quantity of portraits and quotes of Marx and Lenin on public display, and concludes that 'the Reds in Nicaragua were keeping a pretty low profile'. He does concede though that some of the Sandinistas 'probably were "communists", even "Marxist-Leninists"'. His account of a discussion with a leading representative of the bourgeoisie is far less ambiguous. He leaves you in no doubt about the moral and political superiority of the Sandinistas.

Rushdie's endorsement of the FSLN comes from his impression of the superstructure and the closeness that is apparent between the Sandinistas and the people; what Gramsci would call hegemony — but in this case of a very different kind from that exercised in Europe. When Jaime Wheelock addresses 5,000 campesinos, 'it was impossible not to notice that the emotional

distance between the audience and the orator was very small. I could not think of a Western politician who could have spoken so intimately to such a crowd.' When Rushdie talks to another complaining Nicaraguan, this time of wealthy middle class extraction who is no fan of the Sandinistas, he asks her his well worn question: 'What do you think the government should do? Should it try to make peace with the Americans?' The answer comes with force. 'No, they can't give in. The war must go on. It's difficult to know what to do. The revolution exists. It has to exist, or there's no hope. But what problems! What difficulties! What grief!'

Rushdie's internal disputes go on though, culminating in a bad dream in which he is chased by the jaguar smile from the limerick. He found it necessary to vote for the preferred interpretation of the limerick. The young girl could be the revolution, seven years old, idealistic and youthful with the jaguar as geopolitics or the United States. Alternatively the young girl could be Nicaragua itself, and the jaguar the revolution. Some readers of this journal might find a young girl and a jaguar to be unlikely partners, about as stable as Nicaragua's mixed economy. They will want to know who will end up in whose stomach. What this book gets across is that Nicaragua is a warm and sensitive place, but it ain't no easy meal.

Trotsky notebooks

CHRIS ARTHUR

Philip Pomper (editor) *Trotsky's Notebooks 1933-35*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986, 175pp., US\$25. Hardback.

THERE IS less than forty pages of Trotsky here. But we get it twice, in Russian and in English. The rest of the book is editorial annotations and commentary. Researching the Trotsky archives at Harvard, Pomper discovered these notes in folders for Trotsky's projected biography of Lenin — of which only the first part was written, and published as *The Young Lenin*. They were compiled during Trotsky's exile in France from July 1933 to May 1935. Besides the material on Lenin there is material on the dialectic intended as background for Trotsky's assessment of Lenin's dialectic.

The occasion for the latter arose from a quarrel with Max Eastman. In his book *Marx and Lenin: the science of revolution* Eastman makes fun of dialectic and says Lenin just used it as an excuse for flexibility in the face of fixed ideas. The comedy here is that it is precisely Lenin's study of dialectic which allowed him to achieve the flexibility of thought so admired by Eastman.

Trotsky intended to reply to Eastman in an appendix to his own Lenin book. Since Eastman was his own translator and agent he had to put up with him personally. Eastman notes smugly: 'he was almost hysterical — was actually gasping for breath — when he found himself unable to overpower me with the usual clichés with which the idea of dialectic evolution is defended'. Poor Trotsky — having to cope with the idiocies of an Eastman! In fact Trotsky never finished either the book on Lenin or the project on dialectics. Indeed, it has to be said that these notes are very fragmentary and of no use at all to a beginning student. But those with an insatiable appetite for anything on Lenin, Trotsky or the dialectic, are given some intriguing new material. The editor situates it in two essays of his own, the first covering Trotsky's relation to Lenin and the second Trotsky's philosophical development. He claims the reflections on dialectic here have been overlooked by Trotsky scholars such as Deutscher.

As far as the material on Lenin is concerned there are three points of particular interest. First about Lenin's leadership team, Trotsky notes:

'Undoubtedly, the period of *Iskra* and *Zaria* was the time when Lenin was with a most highly qualified group of exceptionally gifted people, educated citizens of the civilized world... a warm atmosphere of elevated ideas surrounded this group of six people. Lenin did not have the fortune ever again in the future to work in such a milieu. He himself became greater, but his collaborators were of significantly lesser dimensions.' (p 81)

The 'six' were Lenin, Plekhanov, Martov, Zasluch, Axelrod, and... Trotsky. The second point of interest is Trotsky's judgement on Lenin's politics:

'Lenin's dialectic had a massive character... Lenin's thought operated with living classes as the basic factors of society and thus revealed *all* its power in those periods when the great masses entered the scene, that is, in periods of profound upheavals, wars and revolutions. The Leninist dialectic was a dialectic for the large scale.' (p94-95)

In this light Lenin's mistakes can be situated: 'Lenin's political mistakes were always *to the left* of the line of development, thus the farther along the line of development, the rarer they became, the smaller the angle of deviation, the sooner they were recognised and corrected; by virtue of which the relationship between strategy and tactics achieved a higher and more perfect correspondence'. (p96)

Finally, out of nowhere, Trotsky suddenly jots down: 'Lenin created the apparatus. The apparatus created Stalin.' (p86)

But the rest of the page is blank, as if he did not know what to make of this thought and meant to come back to it.

In Trotsky's notes on dialectic, he turns first, like Lenin twenty years before, to Hegel's *Logic*; but unlike Lenin he didn't finish it! As far as the principles of dialectic are concerned he gives pride of place to that transition of quantity into quality. (pp 87-88) But it is important to point out that, while in the hands of a reformist this could give rise to a



philosophy of gradualism, Trotsky gives it a catastrophist interpretation. It is in this light that one must read his praise of Darwin's theory of evolution, for example. The difference between a dialectical approach to history and vulgar evolutionism is brought out particularly well in Trotsky's 1939 article on the petty-bourgeois opposition in the SWP; he says: 'One must not forget the concept of "evolution" itself has been completely corrupted... by... liberal writers to mean peaceful "progress". Whoever has come to understand that evolution proceeds through the struggle of antagonistic forces; that a slow accumulation of changes at a certain moment explodes the old shell and brings about a catastrophe, revolution: whoever has learned finally to apply the general laws of evolution to thinking itself, he is a dialectician, as distinguished from vulgar evolutionists.' (*In Defense of Marxism*, New York, Pioneer, p. 54)

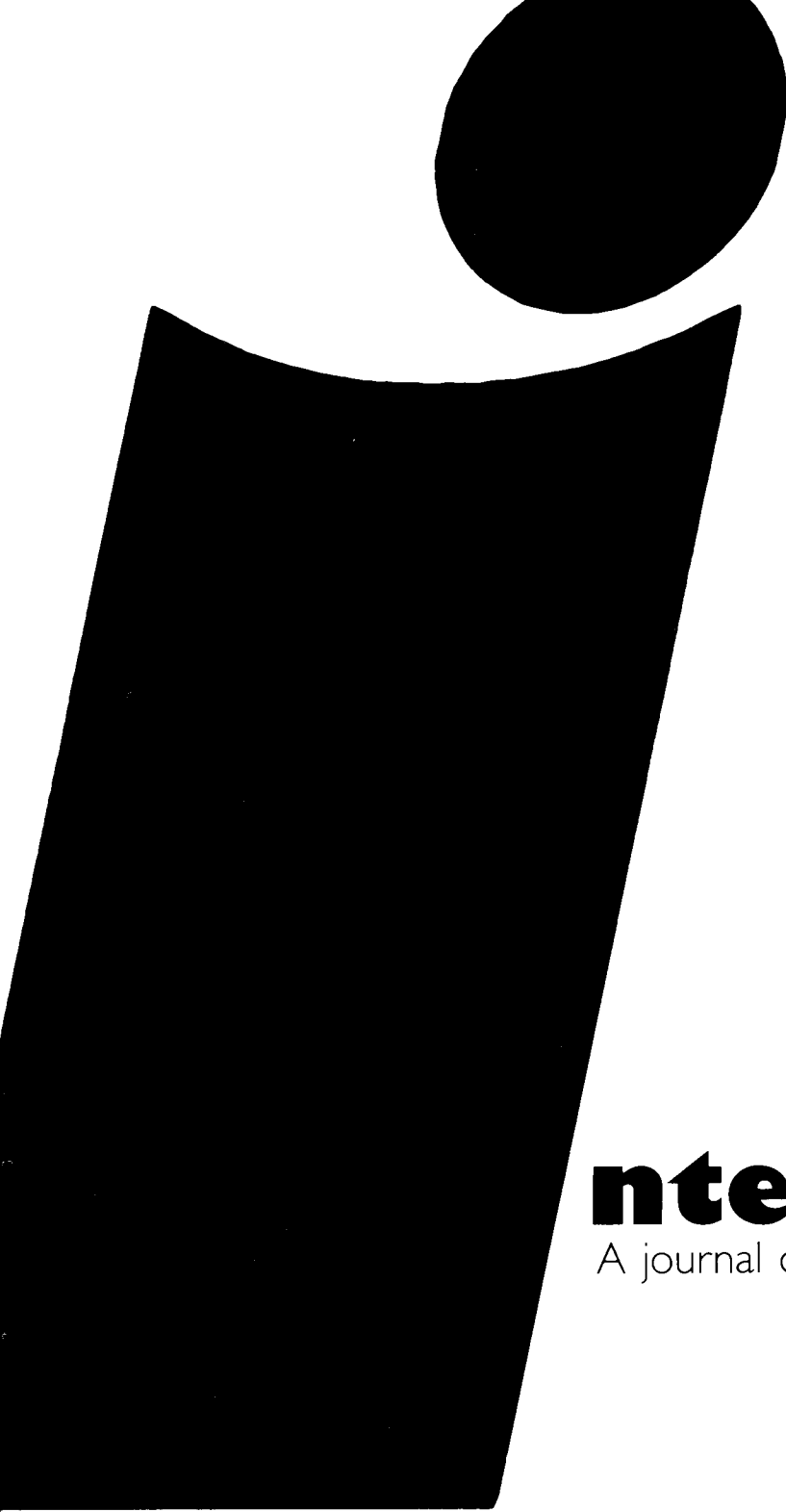
The notebooks reveal that Trotsky's materialism is strikingly non-reductive. He emphatically rejects the vulgar materialism that tried to reduce the forms of consciousness to brain states: 'If consciousness has no independent function, which rises above physiological processes in the brains and nerves, then it is unnecessary, useless; it is harmful because it is a superfluous complication — and what a complication!' (p104) Well before the epoch of computer programmes, Trotsky

speaks of how thought, 'through its own laws', 'switches on' the relevant life processes. This leads him to defend Freud of the charge of idealism, not by showing him to be some sort of biological reductionist, but precisely through arguing that 'by itself, the method of psychoanalysis, taking as its point of departure "the autonomy" of psychological phenomena, in no way contradicts materialism.' (p106)

Here reference to the principle of 'quantity into quality' allows him to conceptualize the possibility of emergent properties: 'the psyche, arising from matter, is "freed" from the determination of matter, so that it can independently — by its own laws — influence matter.' (p106)

In the same way 'politics grows out of economics in order for it in turn to influence the base by switches of a superstructural character.' (p106) The editor's scholarly essays contain a wealth of information. Particularly striking is his comparison of Bukharin, Lenin, and Trotsky. As we have seen, the dominant motif in Trotsky's dialectic is that of *catastrophe* — the emergence of the new. As far as Bukharin is concerned, Pomper argues that his work is structured 'according to the systematic idea of equilibrium' (p59), and he quotes form Bukharin's *Historical Materialism* to prove it. Lenin, finally, was most impressed with *contradiction* as the motor principle of development. (p61)

It is hoped that libraries will get this book.



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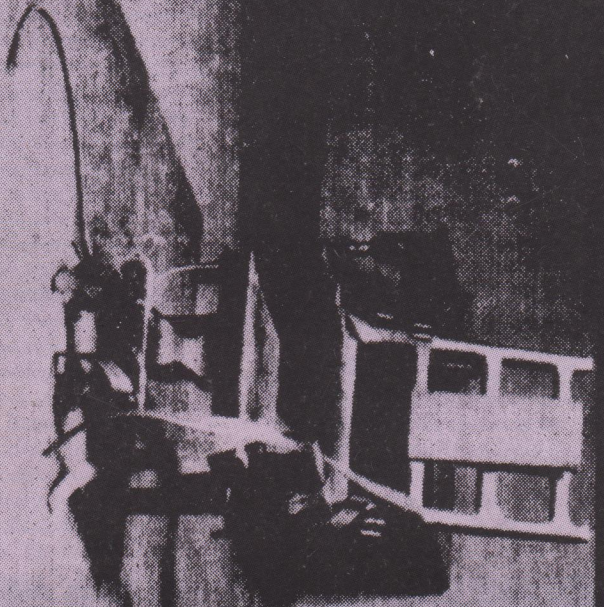
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