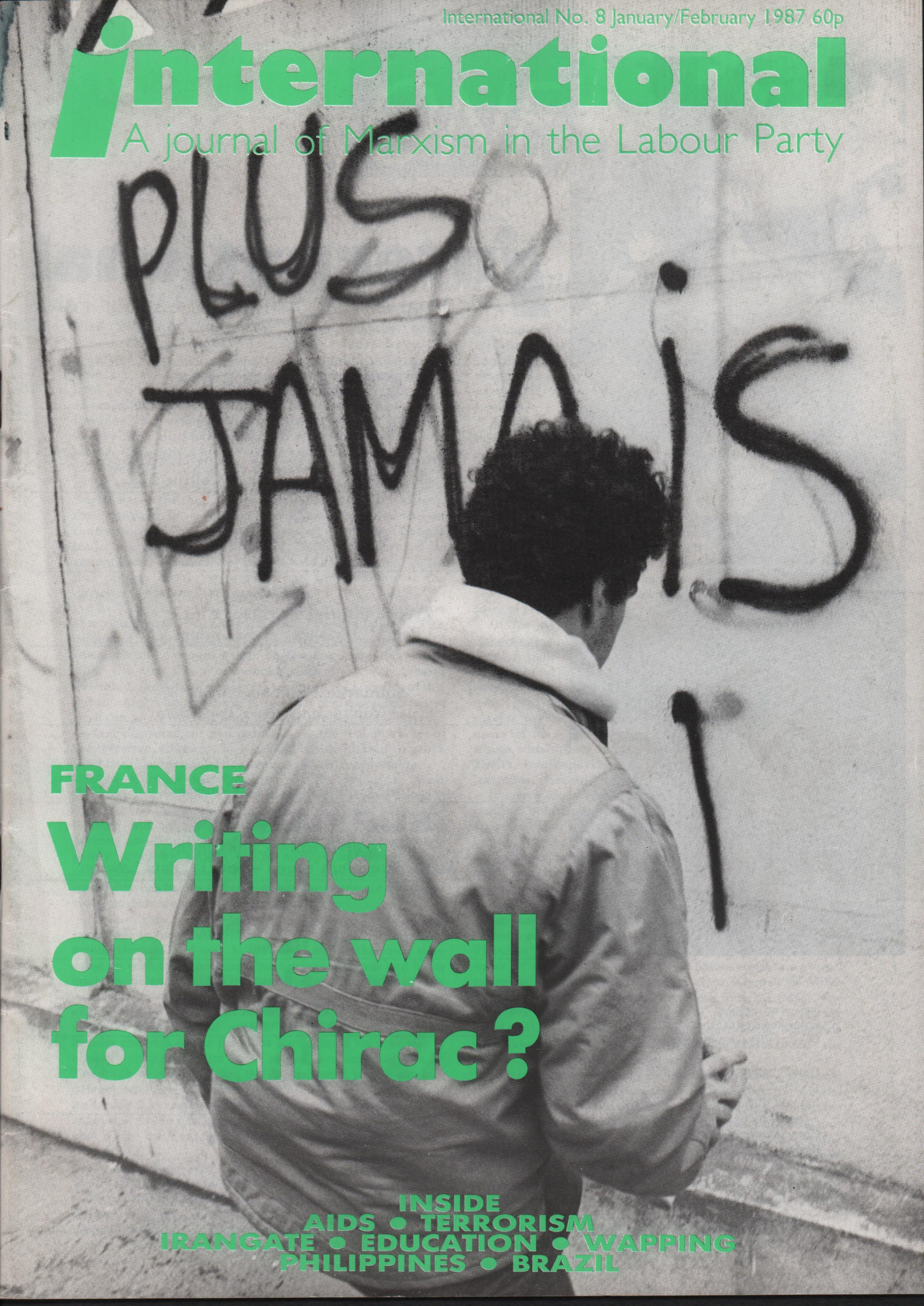


International No. 8 January/February 1987 60p

# **international**

A journal of Marxism in the Labour Party



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New series: No. 8  
Published by **International**  
PO Box 705, London SW2 5UN

Design by Spencers (TU) Ltd,  
1-5 Clerkenwell Road,  
London EC1M 5PA. 01-251 8845  
Typesetting by Spencers and  
Contemporary Graphics.  
Printed by East End Offset (TU) Ltd,  
London E3

ISSN 0308-3217

Cover photo: John Arthur/Reflex

# **international**

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## *Will Thatcher win the General Election?*

THE TURNAROUND in the political situation seems remarkable. A year ago the Tories were in disarray over the Westland affair and trailing in the opinion polls. Now, Thatcher is in the lead, Alliance support has collapsed, and Labour's support has if anything declined. Many who assumed that a Tory defeat at the next election was a foregone conclusion now think that another Thatcher victory is a distinct possibility. What has happened to modify the political situation in this way?

There are many different factors which have contributed to the situation, but behind them stands one basic fact: the Tories have launched a huge reactionary offensive against the 'dangers' of a Labour government and instead of confronting this offensive, Kinnock and the Labour leadership have reeled before it, accepting many of its assumptions. A number of issues stand out in which we see this process clearly at work. First and foremost is the question of nuclear disarmament.

The Tories have seized on this issue, painting the picture of a 'defenceless', 'second rate' Britain under Labour. This campaign has been a daily feature of the national press, with editorials and cartoons galore hammering home this point. After the vote for a non-nuclear Britain at the Liberal Assembly, the Alliance has been caught in the crossfire of this debate. And what has been Kinnock's response? Instead of capitalising on the real mass popular support that exists for nuclear disarmament and pointing out the real character of the 'Western Alliance', he has been beside himself to prove that he is the best defender against 'Russian aggression.'

Thus Kinnock has flown to see the troops in West Germany and made his ridiculous trip to the United States to convince the American political establishment of his loyalty to Nato and 'defence'. Worse still has been the constant harping on about Labour's intention to spend every single penny saved by getting rid of nuclear weapons on new conventional weapons. And finally the whole Labour leadership has begun to fudge about the timescale of getting rid of nuclear weapons and bases.

None of this is in the least bit convincing. It is literally incredible to base your 'defence' policy on all the tired old assumptions of cold war Atlanticism, and at the same time come up with the conclusion that nuclear weapons and bases ought to be got rid of. Ordinary voters, afflicted with the infuriating quality of common sense, just can't see the logic of it. If on the other hand Kinnock said 'we need to spend more on hospitals and schools and not on defence, and besides the idea of the Russians launching a nuclear war is absurd', then the voters could at least see some logic to it. The truth of course is that the commitment to non-nuclear defence has been the one radical policy which the Labour leadership has had to maintain because of the overwhelming support for it in the labour movement. It has been the one area where the Kinnockite move to the right has been least successful.

The second big area of the Tory attack has been against 'loony left' Labour councils, again a theme hammered away at in the press. But instead of pointing to the attempts by Labour councils to defend jobs and services, however inadequately, or defending anti-racist and anti-sexist local

government policies Kinnock has completely accepted the terrain of debate laid out by the Tories, and onstentatiously 'warned' Labour councils that 'extremist' policies are losing votes. Thatcher's offensive on this point is aimed particularly at trying to win some seats away from Labour in London.

But the Labour leadership is caught in a trap of its own making here. Labour councils which, backed up by Kinnock and Cunningham, fudged the fight against ratecapping and resorted to deficit and 'deferred-payment' financing are soon going to face a dramatic financial crisis. The result is likely to be astronomical rate rises in some boroughs, which will weigh heavily against Labour in a general election, as will the cuts in services which go along with the rate rises.

Linked in with the attack on left councils has been the Tory attack on education, centred on 'disruption' by 'Bolshie' teachers and anti-racist and anti-sexist educational policies. On this too the Labour leadership has collapsed in front of the Tory offensive.

In the light of this dismal political performance the remarkable thing has been that Labour's support in the opinion polls has held up so well. After all, an ideological offensive and fiddling the unemployment figures can't at one stroke remove all the mass hatred for the Tories accumulated over seven years of Thatcher government. Thatcher's real success has been to frighten former Alliance supporters, many of them middle class people or better-paid workers whose standard of living has been maintained under the Tories, into believing that only the Tories can prevent an 'extremist' Labour government coming to power.

It seems likely that what we are seeing is a pre-election political polarisation, which is at root a class polarisation, expressed in a consolidation of support for the Tories and Labour at the expense of the Alliance. Given Britain's absurdly undemocratic electoral system, this could well result in a third term for Thatcher.

But this prospect has to be put into perspective, before any panic sets in on the left. First of course a Thatcher victory is by no means a certainty. There is plenty which can happen before a general election. Second, there is little likelihood of Thatcher's 1983 landslide being reproduced even in the worst of circumstances. Even if Thatcher gets an overall majority, it will be a slim one in circumstances in which Britain's economic and social crisis can only get worse. For whatever the political successes of Thatcher, whatever damage she has done in the labour movement, one thing which she has not done is anything fundamental to cure the chronic sickness of British capitalism.

The left stands virtually no chance of altering Labour's now overwhelmingly right wing policies before the general election. But it can and must prepare itself for the inevitable political turmoil which will follow that election, whatever the result. Fatalism, or a naive faith in something 'turning up' is hopeless. Only political organisation and clarity, in the Labour Party but above all in the trade unions, will prepare the basis for a new surge forward by the left. And that is an eminently practical task of co-ordinating the many thousands of activists in the labour movement who are sickened by Kinnockism and all its works ■

## Haringey's positive image

*The promotion of positive images of lesbians and gays in Haringey schools, a Labour Party manifesto commitment, has caused a furore in the press and amongst some sections of the local community. Positive Images was set up to explain and defend the policy. Some of the problems faced by the campaign are discussed below by Jane Connor, an activist in the area.*

LATE LAST year Haringey Council agreed a policy of promoting positive images of lesbians and gays in education. Outside the Council chamber hundreds of people demonstrated in favour of the policy. At the same time a number voiced their intransigent opposition to schools 'teaching our toddlers to be homosexual'.

Although a manifesto commitment, it was not an issue until the newly-created Lesbian and Gay Unit issued a press release outlining the policy. This was too much for the local Tories, who had been routed in the May elections and needed to restore some of their support, while bashing 'Barmy Bernie' in the process. With AIDS hysteria at its height what better vehicle than a left council promoting equal opportunities for lesbians and gays.

The Tories organised a lobby of the Council and a demonstration in the name of the Parents' Rights Group (PRG), and in response the local Communist Party started to organise a 'community campaign' in support of the policy. The *Positive Images* campaign lobbied the Education Committee and the Council, produced material explaining and defending the policy and a special leaflet for distribution at school gates. When the PRG attempted a boycott of various infant schools, even though the policy does not apply to infants, *Positive Images* organised counter-pickets. The campaign has continued to leaflet infant and junior schools in most of the borough, and this policy is supported by Haringey Teachers' Association.

However any credibility the Council has gained with lesbians and gays in Haringey is in danger of being lost as the lack of political will to

implement the policy becomes clear. As long ago as July last year the Council's Publicity Co-ordinating Committee requested a leaflet outlining what the Council's commitment to lesbian and gay rights meant for all Council services. It has still not appeared. Whilst *Positive Images* and the local Labour Parties have produced masses of literature, the Council has kept quiet.

Some councillors blame pressure from the Black communities for their silence. There is some truth in this. Initially some Black individuals were organised through the churches into the PRG to condemn the policy for 'promoting sinful practices'. The West Indian Leadership Conference and the Black Parents Pressure Group organised large public meetings which overwhelmingly opposed the policy, arguing that homosexuality was 'a threat to the Black family' and was a white racist plot to stop Black people having children. Bernie Grant and Martha Osamoor, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, have strongly defended the policy within the Black community, as has the Broadwater Farm Youth Association.

Black lesbians and gays have also organised within the Black community to counter this negative reaction, producing a special leaflet and making their presence visible. But Black lesbians in particular have borne the brunt of often violent attacks against them by lumpen Black youth organised by the PRG.

The opposition to positive images from sections of the Black community has fuelled the debate on 'hierarchies of oppression' which has been raging for some time within the local Labour Party. Some councillors have argued that Afro-Caribbeans in Haringey are the most oppressed section of the population and that the Council should concentrate on meeting their needs. The effect of this would be to fail to meet the needs of lesbians and gays. The left, particularly *Briefing*, has argued that the manifesto as a whole should be implemented and that there are not degrees of oppression, but different

types of oppression, all of which the Council has to confront.

*Positive Images* was set up as a broad-based campaign in response to the Tory backlash. It has made Labour Party activists turn outwards to form alliances with lesbians and gays who are extremely cynical about the Labour Party. Haringey Council has perhaps three years to carry through its policies and *Positive Images* will be campaigning to make sure that it does.

*Positive Images* can be contacted c/o Reading Matters, Lymington Avenue, London N22 •

## M15's Australian outing

THE ATTEMPT by the British government to prevent the publication in Australia of a book on the security services by ex-M16 agent Peter Wright has been one of the most entertaining and revealing pieces of judicial theatre for years. The response to it by the Labour leadership, predicably, has been pathetic.

Peter Wright is an extreme right wing reactionary, who is intent on proving that the security services and just about every other British institution are choc-a-bloc with communist/Soviet infiltrators. This is not an unfamiliar thesis, indeed *Daily Express* journalist Chapman Pincher has made an excellent living proposing similar ideas for years, and he has been on very friendly terms with senior government officials while doing so. So why has the government got shirty with Peter Wright when he wants to say something very similar, and has indeed been one of Chapman Pincher's main informants in the past? Why has it started an extremely expensive and embarrassing litigation in unfriendly courts, and despatched Cabinet Secretary Sir Robert Armstrong to lie through his teeth, to prevent Peter Wright publishing?

The answer is that Peter Wright in his enthusiasm to prove his contention that the security services have been run

by Russian agents for years, must resort to the theory that there has been a conspiracy of silence about the whole thing, involving among others the Prime Minister herself. And as part of his general ammunition Wright reveals some rather unfortunate facts about the security services and M15 in particular — to wit, that they did indeed burgle Harold Wilson when he was prime minister, tapped his telephone calls, and in 1974 were engaged in a plot to prevent him being re-elected. This in turn has rekindled the theorising about the circumstances of Harold Wilson's sudden resignation as prime minister in 1976.

Now you and I, dear reader, might think in our naivety that here's an excellent opportunity for the Labour leadership to put







Carlos Quintero/Reflex



Denis Doran/Reflex

**Neil Kinnock**

one across the Tories and MI5 to boot. What better to put the government on the defensive than showing that its pet security services were intervening in British politics by plotting against the Labour Party? But oh no, here's Merlin Rees on the telly (Rees was the Labour Home Secretary who called the army in during the firefighters strike in 1977) saying that Wright's a terrible chap, he shouldn't reveal state secrets after his oath of loyalty. And next evening, there's Peter Shore saying exactly the same thing — Mrs Thatcher was 'hypocritical' in letting Chapman Pincher publish his stuff, but this fellow Wright is an awful bounder who deserves no sympathy.

Now why exactly have the Labour front bench taken this line? There are two

explanations, one sinister and mysterious and the other straightforward. The mysterious one is that MI5 had indeed got something on Harold Wilson, and the Labour front bench (and particularly ex-Wilson cronies like Rees and Shore) don't want all the business reopened to public view, thank you very much.

The obvious and simple explanation is that the Labour leadership is simply being honest; they genuinely believe that the 'security services' are vitally necessary and that the secrecy of the security service must not be violated.

This is the aspect of the whole business which is of interest to socialists. MI5 and MI6 have a variety of functions, including foreign spying, tracking down terrorists, and counter-acting

Soviet espionage. But the central operational role of MI5, we know from ex-MI5 officer Kathy Lassister, is keeping tabs on 'internal subversion'. That, when it's at home, means virtually any kind of domestic political radicalism from membership of the Labour Party to writing to your local paper in support of CND.

This is hardly sensational news — Duncan Campbell and others have exposed the operations of MI5 in great detail in the *New Statesman* and

elsewhere. MI5 and the Special Branch together constitute this country's political police and their main enemies are the labour movement. For the Labour leadership to leave aside this aspect of the affair is simply a confirmation that in the end they actually themselves believe that institutions like MI5 are needed. Indeed, for people who spend so much time combating 'internal subversion' in their own party this is hardly a surprise ●

## Jack Collins

**JACK COLLINS**, general secretary of the Kent NUM, died on the 7th of January after a long illness, at the age of 56.

During the miners' strike, Jack Collins and the Kent NUM were among the most determined supporters of Arthur Scargill and the battle for victory. They were the last to go back to work.

Jack Collins also played a prominent role in the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974. A militant fighter for international socialism, he had no truck with exclusionary attitudes towards the far left, and frequently spoke on its platforms. He continued the battle for sacked and victimised miners right up until his death.

*International* salutes his memory and sends condolences to his family and friends.



## What happened to the WRP?

JUST OVER a year ago the Workers Revolutionary Party was torn asunder after allegations of sexual abuse and corruption by its notorious General Secretary, Gerry Healy. Since Healy's expulsion the WRP has fragmented into at least four identifiable groups. Healy's own 'WRP' continues the tradition of bizarre ultra-leftism and mumbo-jumbo '-dialectics' and is still able to produce a daily paper, doubtless with financial support from the Redgraves. A second group, Mike Banda's 'Communist Forum', is evolving rapidly in the direction of Stalinism, and Banda himself has renounced Trotsky and Trotskyism altogether. A third group of sectarian crazies, the 'International Communist party' or 'Hylandites' renounced Healy but continue the endless search for GPU and FBI 'agents' in the Trotskyist movement.

The fourth group, the biggest, calls itself the Workers Revolutionary Party and produces a weekly, *Workers Press*. This latter group contains a large proportion of the old cadre of the WRP, including well-known leaders like Cliff Slaughter, Bill Hunter and Geoff Pilling. It is in this WRP that over the past year there have been signs of an increasing willingness to engage the real world, to examine the history of Healyite sectarianism, and to reorientate towards real struggles in the labour movement.

It seemed possible at one time during this process that there was a real possibility of the WRP evolving in a healthy direction. Such hopes, however, must now be counted as short-lived. For there is no doubt now that the WRP leadership is moving towards crystallising out a new version of ultra-left sectarianism.

Of course, there has always been the possibility that in attempting to reorientate itself after the trauma of breaking with Healy the WRP would be incapable of breaking with the fundamentals of its own history and tradition, which are deeply sectarian and ultra-left.

4 While the revolt against Healy



**Gerry Healy**

was led by middle-ranking cadres and even rank-and-file members, leadership of the WRP has now been firmly asserted by the 'red professors' such as Cliff Slaughter, Geoff Pilling and Tom Kemp. Pilling has now taken over as editor of the *Workers Press*. Despite all the discussions of past mistakes, so far the WRP has remained impervious to the idea that a key task for Marxists is participation in struggles in the Labour Party. Indeed in the Knowlesly North by-election by WRP supported the candidate of the Revolutionary Communist Party,

a bizarre ultra-left sect, against the Labour Party candidate.

Equally, the WRP has shown no signs of wanting to revise the sectarian ideas of work inside the trade unions characteristic of Healyism. While rank and file WRP militants may try to come to terms with trade union work on a pragmatic basis, the WRP leadership seems content to repeat lifeless historical abstractions ('trade union consciousness is bourgeois consciousness') instead of developing the theoretical and practical basis for Marxist work in the unions.

The most telling aspect of the WRP's development however is the fundamental theoretical explanation for Healyism which has been developed. This goes as follows; the disgusting internal regime of Healyism, apparently, was a by-product of the crisis of the international Trotskyist movement. This took the form of an inability to answer basic theoretical questions, and in Healy's case an eventual development of theoretical and practical opportunism towards Stalinism and petty-bourgeois nationalism. In other words, would you believe, Healy went off the rails because... he became a Pabloite! This explanation stands everything on its head. The fundamental characteristic of Healyism was *sectarianism*, despite opportunist positions on international questions which are common among sectarians (for example, the Spartacists are characterised by extreme sectarianism, but that does not stop crass and grotesque opportunism towards the Soviet bureaucracy). It was the sectarianism of Healy — towards the real labour movement, real workers struggles and other revolutionaries — that resulted in the internal regime of unalloyed gansterism.

The key to Healyism is not, fundamentally, to be found in this or that theory of Stalinism or the regimes in the Middle East. It is to be found in the psychology and social practice of political sects, which allow self-proclamation and leftist verbiage to cut themselves off from building a living Marxist movement. Unless the WRP leadership understand this, they are doomed to repeat many of the errors of Healyism.

And if the WRP would try to find a way out of its present impasse it must also recognise that the answer to many questions cannot be found merely by interrogating the history of the WRP itself.

It is a sad sign of a sectarian mentality that so much discussion in the WRP is centred on trying to find nuggets of gold in the dross of its own history, when many of the problems being addressed were answered by other currents in the international workers movement decades ago ●





Riot police using their 'right-to-strike' at Wapping

Andrew Moore/Reflex

# A year at Wapping

The struggle against Rupert Murdoch at Wapping has been going on for a year. What have the strikers achieved, and what are the prospects for the struggle? **JOHN TUIITE** explains.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL print dispute is one year old. Outside the plants at Wapping and Kinning Park strikers and supporters still line the streets, still have marches, and most important of all, still demand nothing less than their jobs and union recognition. Inside the plant, behind the police and barbed wire, the EETPU and NUJ scabs still work on, and T&GWU drivers still load up and drive away. It has been a year in which at every decisive point the strikers and Murdoch have achieved deadlock, neither one obtaining any lasting, fundamental victories over the other. One year later the strikers are still there and are not about to go away.

The context of the strike is important. It began after the defeat of the miners' magnificent struggle. The ensuing political realignments, largely to the right, from a background, isolating the print dispute, and other disputes like Silentnight. Inside the trade unions it is no coincidence that it is the same union that pulls the TUC bodily to the right that also joined hands with Murdoch to recruit and maintain the scab workforce at

Wapping. Of course a TUC that was bending a knee to Kinnock's 'New Rights, New Responsibilities', complete with state interference in trade union affairs, was hardly likely to raise a hue and cry when the same state sequestered SOGAT's £17 million assets early into the dispute.

## the TUC's failure hit the miners, now the printworkers

Inside the print industry the situation was equally inauspicious despite the popular impression of the legendary strength of the Fleet street unions. Attacks on the NGA, NUJ and SOGAT had begun outside London well before Fleet Street felt the real heat of open battle. The Messenger dispute at Warrington with Eddie Shah over union recognition in 1983 is only one example, albeit a memorable and historic one, not least because of the failure of the TUC to honour its 1983 deci-

sions to oppose anti-union laws. The introduction of new technology into the provincial press led to a series of inter-union disputes, with the NGA, who had most to lose from the process, clashing with SOGAT and the NUJ. At the Kent Messenger SOGAT and NUJ members crossed NGA picket lines, while at the Portsmouth News it was NGA members who crossed NUJ lines.

The uneven introduction of new technology and work processes also left a legacy of division within the unions. It is unfortunately the case that SOGAT members outside London viewed with dissatisfaction their brothers and sisters in London, whose union strength provided them with better pay and working conditions. It is to some extent this regional membership that provides the right-wing Brenda Dean with her base, whilst her relationship with the London bastions of the union have always been much more hostile. The failure of the print unions to develop a jointly agreed national plan to meet the employers' assaults related to new technology, is now being paid for at a high price.



It was always obvious from the start of this dispute that News International strikers had to turn to the rest of Fleet Street for solidarity if Murdoch was to be defeated. Not surprisingly Brenda Dean and Tony Dubbins didn't agree. But more important was the fact that the London leadership of the unions, the London District Committee (LDC) of SOGAT especially, actually found arguments to back up Dean and Dubbins. It was said that to inflict strike action on the rest of Fleet St would leave the newspaper market open to Murdoch's titles. The arguments against this fatuous position have already been well rehearsed. Yet it is important to look at one result of the LDC's position, that is the effect on Fleet Street itself.

Over the the past year the print owners have struck bargains with the unions, or pushed through plans, which would have been unbelievable one year ago. The Labour Party member Maxwell started off the year with a 25 per cent cut in jobs, after threatening court actions, closures and non-union operations at his Glasgow plant.

The *Express* obtained a similar cut in jobs in April. Associated Newspapers announced plans to shed over 25 per cent of its staff and is moving to a new £130m factory in Surrey Docks in 1988. Job cuts and promises of flexibility are being demanded at the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*, which are also moving to a new printing plant at the Isle of Dogs.

The 'liberal' *Guardian* is also moving to a high-tech Docklands printing plant this year and insisting on direct inputting by journalists. The *Financial Times*, also moving to the Docklands, is cutting staff levels by thirty per cent and demanding direct inputting. The *Observer* is farming out its printing to contract in Portsmouth, Peterborough, Bradford and Worcester resulting in 500-600 redundancies.

So there is a major restructuring of the print industry occurring involving the introduction of new technology, massive job losses, assaults on demarcation and work practices achieved by decades of union struggle, and necessarily of course, a major attack on the strength and very existence of the Fleet St unions themselves.

Solidarity from within Fleet St was not only necessary from the point of view of News International strikers, in order to bring new forces to bear upon Murdoch. It was equally crucial to prevent the enforced separation of the two, which played straight in to the hands of the print barons by presenting them with a divided workforce. To have campaigned for Fleet St unions to take solidarity with the Wapping pickets would not only have brought new forces onto the strikers' side and caused the rest of Fleet St proprietors to come down on Murdoch's head. It would have increased the confidence, combativity and strength of the now-battered Fleet St unions themselves.

The political current around the *Morning Star* is the chief influence on the London District Committee. But, having rejected trying to mobilise Fleet Street, the *Morning Star* has had increasingly little to put forward

as a strategy to win the strike. Even if there are differences between the National and London leadership (who were crucial in campaigning against the two sell-out deals organised by Dean) it is true to say that the LDC has remained within the limits set by the national leadership.

This was most clearly illustrated by events at the SOGAT Biennial Conference, where the LDC handed back the leadership of the strike to a discredited Dean after trouncing her in the ballot over the first money offer from Murdoch.

At every stage in this strike the *Morning Star* has played a role of reunifying the different levels of the bureaucracy, rather than using its key influence to extend the militancy and breadth of the strike. Anybody who still has illusions in the *Morning Star*, and especially

been squandered and dissipated by officials marching them up and down the Highway will know that effective picketing, involving inevitable confrontations with the police, has been carefully avoided.

Perhaps one of the dangerous legacies of the post-miners' strike period is a passive acceptance that pickets are not to stop scab labour getting in or out of the plant, but simply to have a polite word in their ear, or worse, are nothing more than a morale-booster at Wapping.

The LDC has also taken up the demand to expel the EETPU from the TUC for its undeniable role in organising the scab labour force. This correct demand was taken to the TUC conference and won, on condition that the EETPU failed to help resolve the dispute in favour of the strikers. The EETPU did fail.



those forces inside the Campaign Group of Labour MPs and their supporters, looking to it for a ready-made trade union base, would do well to study the rightward role the latter has been playing during this dispute.

So what strategies have been put forward? There has been the boycott campaign, offered up in more vigorous looking wrapping every time events pose the question 'Where now?' It has been an undoubted failure. The small fall in News International sales has been part of a more general decline in sales of all the national papers with only the *Guardian* escaping it for the moment. And it is clear that there has been no push to involve print union branches across the country in even this limited campaign.

The LDC has of course organised pickets. But anyone who has seen how the human resources of large marches to Wapping have

But the TUC yet again took no action against Hammond.

The TUC's timidity is not just a product of fear of a split in the trade union movement and the danger of having to confront a vigorous new right-wing union federation. It also reflects the fact that the labour movement is currently travelling through 'Kinnock-land' in which any major rocking of the boat, such as expelling a major union with others following it, is simply out of the question. The result is a de facto cold split between the TUC and any workers who are forced to 'rock the boat', by resisting attacks on their jobs or living standards.

While Dean and Dubbins have raised this demand and grumbled about the TUC's lack of action, it was also clear during the period between Murdoch's offers that they were relying on the EETPU to pressure Murdoch

into negotiations! However, the printers have decided to keep pressing for the TUC to take action against the EETPU. A weekday 9-5pm picket of Congress House has been mounted. Even if the TUC has requested the pickets be kept to 6 (!) this should become a major focus for all trade unionists interested in democracy and fighting the rightward lurch in the unions.

Support from the TUC is vital for the success of the dispute. But when SOGAT's £17m assets were sequestered because it refused to lift orders to boycott handling Murdoch's papers by its branches, the TUC did nothing. The TUC was of course busy in 1986 getting together with the Labour Party leadership to support the new trade union policies summed up in *New Rights, New Responsibilities*. The print dispute is a living critique of

against scab drivers, but it has been too little and perhaps too late.

The print support groups, set up initially from the experience of the miners' support groups, have been kept largely by supporters of the far left. There are notable exceptions. Tower Hamlets, for example, has mobilised around the important question of police control of their neighbourhood. But support from Labour Parties has been pitifully small in many cases. The realigning Greater London Labour Party has not taken a single major initiative around a dispute involving one of the major unionised industries in their heartland. Unfortunately at Labour Party conference, the only policy reflection of the Wapping dispute was the deeply chauvinist motion against 'foreigners' owning the press.

Wapping have been among the most brilliant but neither Dean nor the LDC took steps to encourage consistent organisation. So when Women Against Murdoch (WAM) was set up in November a great step forward was made. At the first meeting the question of demanding action from Fleet Street was central, illustrating yet again how the strike can be strengthened by womens' organisation.

The Fleet Street Support Unit is the other main force inside the dispute raising the demand for an orientation to Fleet Street. It has also raised the need for mass meetings of the strikers and an elected strike committee consisting of actual strikers rather than full-time officials. It has been the only consistent force in the strike arguing for a strategy that can beat Murdoch. Unfortunately it hasn't yet sought to have a regular printed intervention into the pickets and chapel meetings, but the popularity of the relatively apolitical "Picket" broadsheet shows that the space is there. As the bankruptcy of the London and national leadership's strategy continues to keep the dispute in the mire, it is from the FSSU that the answer to the question 'where now?' must come.

At the time of writing there are three important events which should be supported. On January 24 the strikers will mobilise to commemorate one year of their struggle. There are currently discussions on the mobilising committee elected by FOCs and MOCs about demanding a day of action on Fleet Street. This is vital and a good focus for raising the demand. There are also the pickets of Congress House calling for a reconvened TUC which must gain support from wider layers of the labour movement than printers. Last, but by no means least, the SOGAT executive member and leader of the Wapping pickets, Mike Hicks, has been framed up and imprisoned for one year (eight months suspended). This is an attack of immense importance on the strike. The Labour Party NEC has voted to demand his release. We must pressure them to speak out publicly as well as building broad campaigns to free him.

After one year Murdoch has not rid himself of the huge expenses and harassment caused by his sacked workforce. He is reduced to trying to buy off the strikers one by one. But as the two ballots have shown, the ranks of the strikers remain solid. This is despite the complete lack of a winning strategy from their leadership. Yet without such a strategy the deadlock will continue, with a very gradual erosion of the strikers forces. And meanwhile inside Fleet St the attacks by management will be pressed home even further.

In a year likely to see a general election, no doubt there will be much discussion on the biased, vicious nature of the press. But it is the struggle now occurring at Wapping that will determine in many ways the shape and confidence of the press baron's media machine. The magnificent endurance of the strikers deserves to be matched by solidarity. The tyrannical intransigence of Murdoch needs to be met with a united and defiant labour movement **■**



Andrew Moore/Reflex

these dangerous proposals, which maintain key aspects of Tory anti-trade union legislation. On the issue of ballots, are we to ballot the Wapping scabs before legally enforcing a picket? Where the TUC/Labour Party policies are ominously silent on the question of secondary action, the print dispute demands its legality. Print barons like Murdoch and Maxwell are splitting up previously unified enterprises into small separate companies, making illegal even solidarity of a limited nature.

The drift to the right has of course deeply affected the nature and breadth of solidarity from the rest of the Labour movement. Inside the unions, the NUR has honourably boycotted Murdoch titles, only to find them travelling on lorries driven by T&GWU members. Towards the end of the year the T&G in the North West initiated action

Yet this dispute can reach out to broad layers of the working class and oppressed. We have only to think of the areas of the population attacked by *The Sun* to realise this. Black people, women, trade unionists, lesbians and gay men, all find an enemy at Wapping. A leadership that wanted to win should encourage initiatives like Lesbians and Gays Support the Printers. However at the beginning of the dispute Brenda Dean told non-printers to keep away which somewhat hinders the creation of such alliances.

The role of women, both as strikers and as supporters, has been important in the dispute. But if sections of the left learnt the importance of women's organisation through the miners' strike, it is perhaps the case that the right and the bureaucracy developed a deep fear of it. The women's marches to



# French upsurge threatens Chirac

LAST MARCH the alliance of right wing parties led by Jaques Chirac won the French parliamentary elections, defeating the Socialist Party and CP-led left. But the massive student movement which defeated the proposed university reform and growing working class resistance have thrown Chirac's government onto the defensive. Chirac's programme of austerity and privatisation is a French version of Thatcherism. It has taken less than a year for mass resistance to emerge.

In fact, the student movement, although by far the most dramatic and successful movement to date, did not spark off the anti-government upsurge. In October there was a one day national strike in the public sector against government policies. Important strikes in the naval yards, in transport and telecommunications, as well as the long strike at Agence France Presse, broke out before the student movement.

The political context in which the unrest has occurred is the peculiar one in which there is a right wing government, but a Socialist Party president — Francois Mitterrand. This arrangement is referred to as 'cohabitation' and Mitterrand remains president until 1988. Mitterrand has been highly cautious in opposing reactionary measures by 'his' prime minister Chirac — hoping to manoeuvre for the 'centre ground' in preparation for the 1988 elections. But he has been happy to capitalise on mass opposition to Chirac, vetoing the proposed new 'flexibility of labour' law and expressing himself 'at one' with the students. What of course he has not done is break with the whole cohabitation game and systematically veto all the measures of Chirac.

Both the workers' and students' mobilisations have exhibited high

degrees of militancy and audacious forms of organisation. The students utilised mass assemblies and other democratic forms of organisation throughout the movement. The participation of women and the general 'feminisation' of the consciousness of the movement was noted by everyone. Among the workers, rank and file initiatives and committees have been to the fore. For example, the current national railway strike which started before Christmas was organised by a rank and file committee at the Gare du Nord in Paris, and not by official union decision. In the early part of 1987 gas, electricity and postal workers are expected to join the strike movement.

These developments are accelerating the political recomposition in the left and the workers movement. In the last elections the Socialist Party emerged as the dominant working class party with 32 per cent of the votes, as against only 10 per cent for the Communist Party. New left wing currents are emerging in the SP, in particular *Convergence Socialiste* and a smaller group, *Questions Socialistes*, both led by ex-supporters of the far left. *Convergence Socialiste* played an important role in the student movement as part of the leadership of one of the student unions and *Questions Socialistes* provide the main leaders of the mass anti-racist movement, *SOS-Racisme*.

A new political situation is emerging in France which will have important implications for the whole of Europe. Here PENNY O'MALLEY reports from Paris on the student movement, as we also public an interview with SYLVIA ZAPPI, a leader of the Trotskyist Jeunesses Communistes Revolutionnaires and a prominent member of the students' national co-ordinating committee.

## '68 is out of date — '86 is better!

THE UNIVERSITY and school-student movement that shook France in late November and early December has had a profound impact. In Christmas week, strikes by railway workers, Metro drivers in Paris, and sailors in the merchant navy threw French travel plans into disarray. In between times were the week long strike of the biggest French press agency, Agence France Presse and strikes in the government job centres. The student movement has begun to restore faith among workers that struggles can win.

In less than one month, mass mobilisations of university and high-school students forced the right-wing French government of Jacques Chirac to back down on proposals to reform the French university and lycée systems. Coming some three months after a widely-quoted opinion poll had purported to show that French young people were 'apolitical', the movement took most observers by surprise.

Not only did the government withdraw the contested Devaquet law on the universities but it cancelled the proposed special session of parliament in December which was to consider a number of other measures which had provoked widespread opposition.

### the movement turned to anger against the CRS riot police

The Devaquet and Monory proposals would have introduced a university system similar to the British one. The universities would have been given greater autonomy to decide on admission of students. The diplomas received by students would carry the name of their university. The ruling bodies of the universities would have become dominated by the senior professors at the expense of the teaching staff. Admission fees would be raised. At the same time the automatic right of all those with the baccalaureat to go to university would have been ended with the introduction of three types of 'bac', only one of which would have given this right. Funds for technical lycées would have been cut.

These proposals, aimed at bringing the education system into line with the needs of big business, dressed-up talk of 'educating for jobs', came at a time when 11.5% (nearly 1 million) of the young people in France are unemployed. Going to university is preferable to joining the ranks of the unemployed and is justly regarded as a democratic right.

The first sign of the swelling protest among students was the national coordinating meeting held at the invitation of Caen students on November 15th, which started the strike movement in Caen and in the Paris suburb of Villetaneuse. It was followed on November



**Demonstrating in Paris**

22nd by a student 'parliament' (états généraux) originally called by the students union UNEF-ID<sup>1</sup> but in fact a gathering of the whole movement.

On the November 27th day of action over half-a-million students marched in all the major towns. After this major show of strength, Chirac let it be understood that the size of the national demonstration called in Paris for the 4th December would influence how they would proceed. In preparation for December 4th, the student coordination called for occupation of the universities.

On 4th December, a monster demonstration of a million strong brought central Paris to a standstill as contingents from faculties and lycées all over France marched, danced and chanted their way from the Place de la Bastille to the Invalides. As the demonstrators crowded onto the Esplanade of the Invalides, a delegation from the national student coordinating body went to meet the Education Minister René Monory and his minister for the universities, Alain Devaquet. At this point the government made its first blunder. No concessions were made. Claiming that the demonstration was not as big as planned (official police estimates put the demonstration at 200,000), and that the movement was 'manipulated' by the far left, Monory refused to withdraw the proposals.

The students' delegates reported back to the crowds waiting for them. Disbelief and

anger exploded. Some demonstrators tried to move off in the direction of the National Assembly, confronting the poolice on the banks of the Seine. The notorious riot police, the CRS, used water cannons and then tear gas to try to disperse the demonstrators. Ignoring the rule that tear gas grenades should not be directed at people, the CRS severely injured one student who lost an eye and is still dangerously ill and another who was knocked unconscious. Another student had his hand blown off as he picked up a grenade.

### **the 'apoliticism' of the movement was a distrust of established politicians**

A sizeable contingent of the demonstrators then moved into the Latin Quarter. Violent police charges and student resistance continued until the early hours. The mood swung from reform of the educational system to protest against the police violence and use of state repression to bully the movement. Slogans calling for the resignation of the Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, for an end to repression and rejecting the use of 'Chilean' type methods were taken up by the students and school students who only a few hours earlier were the 'apolitical, well-behaved' children of the 'new generation'.

In the early hours of the morning, the national student coordination called a further demonstration for that afternoon. Again, tens of thousands of students demonstrated. They interspersed solemn silence with protests against police brutality. They called for resignation of government ministers and chanted that it was not in government offices but 'in the streets that laws are made'. Again the police decided to use violence to disperse the demonstrators and evict the students occupying the Sorbonne.

That evening a student, Malik Oussedine, was beaten and killed by police on his way home. This provoked tens of thousands to again demonstrate in Paris and throughout France in silent protest at police violence on Saturday 6th December. Once again the day ended in violence as police tried to break up the demonstration. The actions of police provocateurs led to further violence in the Latin Quarter that evening.

The students had already won much popular support for their opposition to 'universities run by the laws of the market' and their demand for 'equality for all'. But from this point support gathered apace and the government began to make its first retreat, withdrawing some of the most contested points in the new law (on restrictive admission procedures and admission fees) on the evening of Friday 5 December. But the widespread protest over the behaviour of the police forced the government into its final humiliating and



total withdrawal of the proposals on Monday 8th December.

But this climbdown came too late to stop the growth of anti-government feeling and the confidence in democratic and collective action which had grown among the students. Despite the lunchtime announcement of the climbdown, many thousands again demonstrated throughout the country that afternoon. The president, Francois Mitterrand, publicly stated on 9 December that he was 'in step' with the students.

Since the start of the movement the press had made much of its 'apolitical' and good-humoured style. The first two demonstrations had been colourful and lively affairs with many amusing slogans adapted from well-known television jingles and popular songs (unfortunately not easy to translate into English!). After 5 December the demonstrations were of a different nature and an 'Appeal to the population' for support was made by the national student coordination on the sixth. The students were joined by many trade-unionists, parents and others. The slogans called for an end to police brutality, and for the resignations of the Education Ministers Monory and Devaquet, the Interior Minister Pasqua and the Prime Minister Jacques Chirac himself.

The movement formally ended when the Wednesday 10 December demonstration originally called as a memorial for the murdered Malik became also a march in sad and bitter triumph at having won the withdrawal of the Monory and Devaquet proposals, but at such a price. The slogan of the march was 'never again', never again police violence and death.

Although the union confederations except the CP-dominated CGT, called off the general strike originally planned for that day, widespread feeling at the base forced the CFDT and the FEN, and locally even FO, to call for support for the demonstration. A strong presence of trade-unionists was noted on all the demonstrations and in some places such as Montpellier they comprised up to 50 per cent of the demonstrators.

From the Thursday morning students in the schools and universities returned to their classes, often discussing arrangements with their teachers for special classes to catch up on the work they had missed. The national coordination voted to dissolve itself, singing the 'Internationale'. The coordination announced that états généraux on the future of the university system would take place in March, and would be prepared through discussions in every university faculty.

Although the movement is over, it has left its mark. Devaquet has gone; the two main parties in Chirac's right-wing coalition government the UDF (Union de la démocratie française) and the RPR (Rassemblement pour la république) are at each others' throats and their third partner, the far-right Front National, is accusing both of capitulating to hooligans. This was the first time in ten years that a right-wing government has been forced to retreat by the mass movement.

Together with withdrawing the education reforms, Chirac postponed proposals to pri-



vate prisons, tighten up laws for dealing with drug addicts who refuse treatment, end reimbursement for abortions and, most important of all to young people, to reform the nationality laws. The present nationality laws automatically grant French nationality to children born and brought up on French soil.

The proposed reforms would force these young people to make a special request for French nationality, take an oath of loyalty and possibly by refused, particularly if they had any, even minor, criminal record. Despite the government's attempt to pretend that this 'out of respect for different cultures' and that they do not want to 'force' young North Africans to become French against their will, the anti-racist movement has rightly seen that this is nothing more than again an attempt to make these 'second generation immigrants' feel excluded and set apart. The main previous experience of mass activity by the students is *SOS Racisme*, a broad anti-racist movement which has many similarities to the Anti-Nazi League. *SOS Racisme* was prominent in supporting the students and is strong among lycée students. Recognising the movement's anti-racism, many young North African workers participated in the demonstrations.

A favourite slogan of the early days was '68

is out of date, 86 is better'. It was a bigger movement — in 68 the biggest demonstrations were about 30,000. Women played a more prominent role. Even if there was a tendency to over-represent men in the leading bodies, women students in some faculties quickly asserted themselves and ensured they had a fair share of the delegates to the national coordinating meetings. The direct democracy of the movement, daily general meetings, election and recall of all delegates if they did not respect their mandates ensured that, whatever the press claimed, this was not a movement manipulated by the left, neither the 'official left' (Socialist or Communist Parites) nor the far left.

In fact, the 'apoliticism' vaunted by the media was a distrust of political organisations and 'politicians' rather than disinterest in questions other than those directly concerning students. But there was hostility to what was seen as attempts by the left or the trade unions to coopt the movement. The main political experience of the bulk of this generation was under the left government of 1981 to March 1986, and the feeling of distrust this engendered among those who voted for it.

But the left did have its place in the movement. The national coordination had members of the Young Communists, Young Socialists, Convergence Socialiste<sup>2</sup>, and the JCR<sup>3</sup> present as delegates from their faculties. But the places they held were dependent on the confidence expressed in them by other students.

This practical democracy and the determination of the movement to refuse negotiations and accept nothing less than the complete withdrawal of the proposals provided the best possible basis on which to take the movement forward in a united way. In a context where the tradition of workers' struggles is strongly marked by the division into different trade-union confederations and political differentiation this was an important gain. If the workers' movement takes this lesson to heart then Chirac and his government could be in for a rocky road.

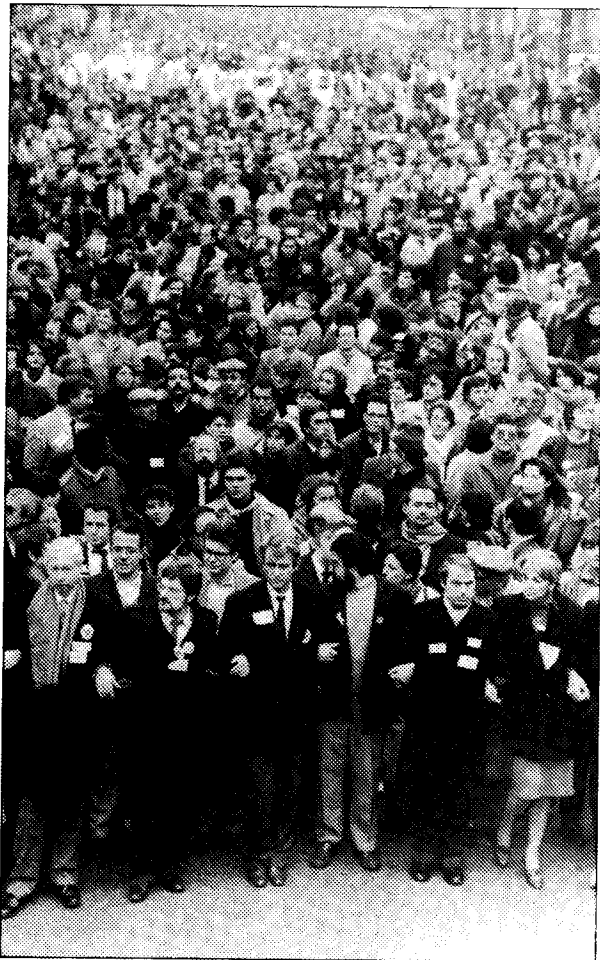
#### Notes

1. Only a minority of students belong to this union which does not have the official status of the National Union of Students.

2. This current originally split from the Trotskyist Parti Communiste Internationaliste of Pierre Lambert, taking most of its student base and is now within the Socialist Party (although not its youth organisation). It dominates the leadership of the UNEF-ID.

3. The Jeunesses Communiste Révolutionnaires (JCR) youth organisation in solidarity with the LCR, French section of the Fourth International, started a campaign of explanation and opposition to the government's proposals on education from the start of the academic year. Members of the JCR, such as Sylvia Zappi, student at Censier (Paris), were leaders of the strike movement in their faculty and elected members of the coordination and its 14-strong bureau.

The JCR turned its monthly journal *Autre Chose* into a daily newspaper printed in 50,000 copies from Friday 28th November to Monday 15th December. Distributed regularly throughout France in universities and lycées it was the only daily bulletin of news and view of the movement.



Scenes from student demonstrations





## Interview with JCR leader

**SYLVIA ZAPPI** is a student at Censier in Paris where, as a member of the national student coordinating committee, she played a key role in the actions. A leading member of the *Jeunesses Communistes Revolutionnaire* (JCR), a youth organisation in solidarity with the Fourth International, she talks below about the situation in the colleges since Chirac's retreat and about the part played by women in the struggle. (The interview is taken from one originally published in *Autre Chose*, the daily bulletin of the JCR produced during the events of December 15, 1986.)

*How are things going in your college?*

At Censier we all felt it was a bit of a mess. Students were saying that if Chirac had announced his retreat earlier we could have avoided the violence and death. There was an overwhelming feeling for continuing vigilance. Everyone wants to watch out for anything else the government might have up its sleeve (like decrees or circulars) in relation to education. Another feeling that is very strong is the feeling of being brought together, of the desire to continue discussing together about the colleges and the fact that no one wanted to go back to their classes after such an experience. There have been parties going on since Monday on this campus. We lived a new life, we developed new relationships with the lecturers and we thought 'shit, we've got to go back to lessons after all this.' At the same time there is a feeling that we will have to work hard to catch up.

*student coordinating committees for March 1987, be organised?*

The discussions must continue in all the colleges. On Friday at Censier, there was a feeling of frustration because the general meeting did not go well because so many of us wanted to carry on being active. People were coming up and asking me when the police committee or the vigilance committee was meeting. They did not want to atomised again like before the strike. The basis of the policy committees in each college is that put forward by the general assembly, that is, for equality in relation to study, for automatic entry to university for those who pass the baccalaureat, in the subjects of their choice, for the maintenance of national diplomas, automatic re-entry in the third year of the DEUG and DUT (technical) degree courses and for equality between French and foreign students... And of course another issue very much at present in the students actions will be for the reform of the Nationality Code.

*Did women play an important role in the strike at Censier?*

Our college is 75-80% women. But at the beginning it was mainly the men who led the strike. They were everywhere, on the platforms, speaking in the general elections, not to mention in the stewarding forces. The election of delegates to the coordinating committee was just as bad: four blokes and me. At coordinating meetings the same thing was reproduced: the room was full of men though there was a slight improvement in the course of the events. At the actual committee there were only three women out of 14. But that was

also the fault of the organisations within the committee who attached very little importance to the issue of feminisation...

But the women wanted to assert themselves at all levels. In my college they were very clever in the way they went about it. They did not want to be seen as hysterical. They carried out their responsibilities despite the men who at the beginning were so predominant.

But when the stewarding force was set up there was a huge debate because some people, most notably the members of the *Convergence Socialiste* were in favour of an all male force. They explained this by saying that you had to be strong and muscley in the face of aggression. We said that this was not the criterion. That what was needed was to create a collective team who had confidence in each other. The Montpellier delegation at the first coordinating meeting was made up entirely of men. The women were really fed up and set up a group 'against machismo in the general assembly'. At the last coordination, the delegation was 50-50.

Even though specifically women's demands like abortion have been taken up in the past at Censier, as no doubt they have been in other colleges, the most important thing was the determination of the women not to let themselves be marginalised but to play an equal role with men in the strike. At Censier, they made up over half of the strike committee and they ran the policy committee, the organisation committee, the media committee and the school committee. They organised strike pickets, representations to the Censier annexes. They were also involved in the stewarding forces and the men just could not ignore the things they wanted to say. ■

Last autumn **TONY BENN** went to Poland for a week. On his return **VALERIE COULTAS** spoke to him about the problems of socialism and democracy in Eastern Europe and the attitude which socialists should have towards anti-bureaucratic movements like Solidarnosc (Solidarity) in Poland. It goes without saying perhaps that the views expressed by Tony Benn are not those of this journal. Nonetheless Tony Benn's views are, in broad terms, shared by many on the British left. We shall return to Solidarnosc and the struggle for socialist democracy in subsequent issues.

## Solidarnosc and socialism

Carlos Cuartia/Reflex



13 Tony Benn

**VC** *One of the things which contributes to hostility to socialism is its popular identification with the system in Eastern Europe. How do you see the problem of democracy in these countries? How should the labour movement relate to movements like Solidarnosc which fight for democracy?*

**TB** Well I've just been to Poland for a week. Poland was under a very right wing regime before the 2nd world war. They lost six million people during the war, which is a higher proportion of the population than the Russians lost. It's frontiers were changed and the nation was all but dismembered.

I think that the way that the Polish Workers Party (PWP - the Polish Communist Party - ed) went about taking power and reconstructing Polish society was the only course of action which they could pursue under the circumstances. For us to look at them in a superior way, when we have never been invaded or suffered more than marginal troop losses abroad, has a certain amount of arrogance about it.

Having said that, Poland did of course have some of the negative features of Communist regimes - centralising everything and seeing unions as an adjunct of government policy. When Solidarnosc began the desire for a genuinely independent trade union movement it was very, very widely shared and understood, and indeed the Polish government now recognises this.

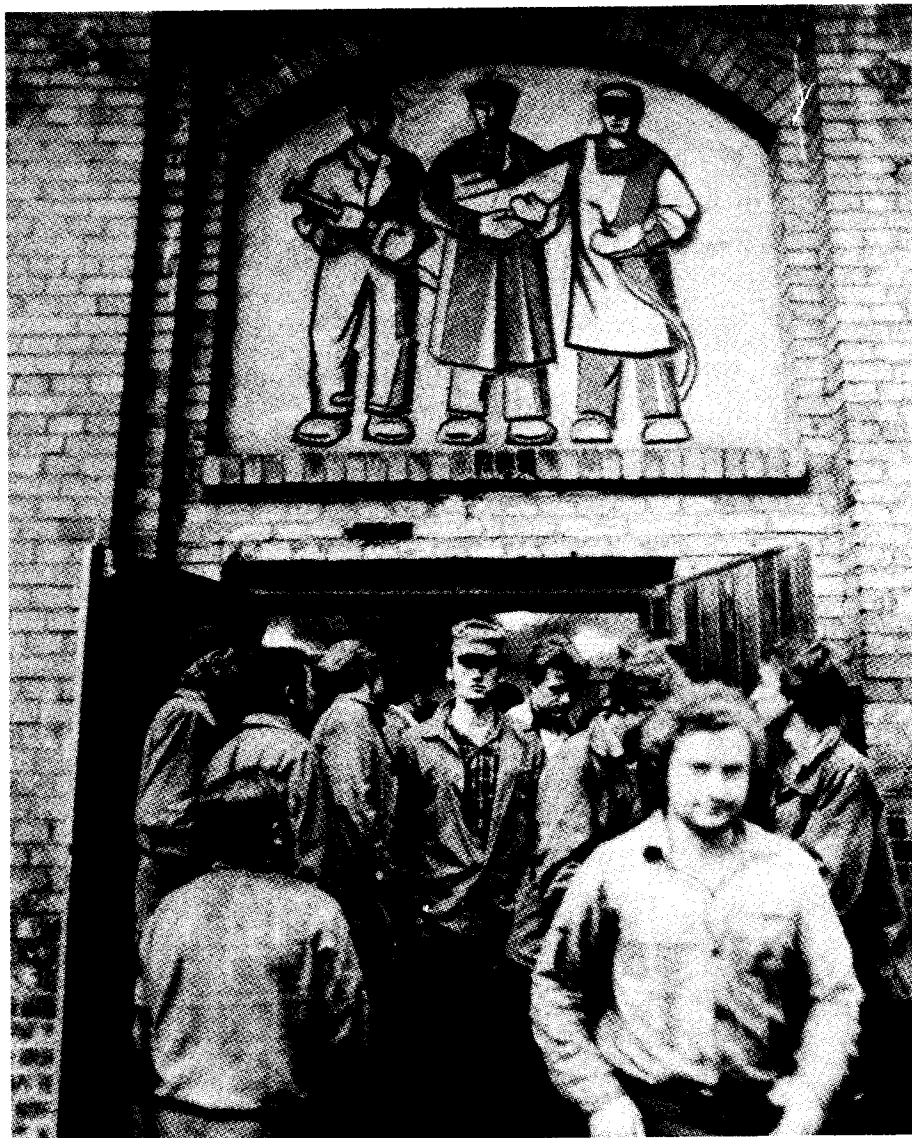
**VC** *But they did suppress Solidarnosc, didn't they?*

**TB** They wanted to reach an agreement with it. But at that stage Solidarnosc wanted to overthrow the regime, which would have meant a Soviet invasion, at great cost to the Soviet Union in terms of popularity. That was averted. I'm a critic of Solidarity because if you read their published material, well it's pure monetarism. They talk about privatisation and Catholic nationalism. Of course they had a radical element, an independent trade union element, but you have to see that the forces who gathered around them wanted to overthrow the state.

Then the question is what lessons have been learned from that? The Polish regime has abolished both the old trade unions and Solidarnosc and are now trying to build up new trade unions which are non-political — workplace branches where the thing comes up as a federation from the bottom and not from the top. They are trying to make the new trade unions and the parliament more independent so there is some kind of clash of ideas within the state.

I think that the Polish government have something of a market economic orientation, and there I would disagree, but much less than is proposed in Solidarity writings. The TKK (Solidarity National Co-ordinating Committee)





**Strike at the Gdansk shipyards, August 1980**

proposals could have come straight from Norman Tebbit! They talk about the need for bankruptcies, the talk about the need for more foreign credit — they are really talking about the dismantling of socialist planning.

I've always been very sceptical about the uncritical support given to Solidarnosc by many socialists in the West because I think there are elements in it which have nothing to do with either socialism or democracy. One of the arguments which I felt had some validity was that there was an intellectual element in Polish society which was using the discontent among the workers to put themselves in power and that this was allied to some of the most right wing forces in Polish society — nationalist and Catholic in character.

I've followed the developments very closely. Following an apparent defeat for the workers it seems that a whole series of reforms which the left of Solidarity wanted will be incorporated into the new set-up.

**VC** *I think that Solidarnosc was a 10-million strong trade union and social movement which was demanding better conditions for the workers,*

*better living standards, freedom of the press and political organisation. These are elementary democratic demands which should be supported by everyone claiming to be a socialist. Solidarnosc was repressed and alternative, government-dominated, unions were established.*

*What you seem to think is the government responding positively to the pressure of the people seems to me to be exactly the opposite. The army has been used to stifle the movement for democracy in Poland, as happened in Hungary and Czechoslovakia before. Your argument that if Solidarnosc had been allowed to push ahead would have led to a Soviet invasion surely tells against the Soviet Union and not against Solidarnosc!*

**TB** Well, that may be so. The Poles of course are very proud of the fact that in none of the periods of conflict since the war has anyone been killed, which is true. You have to look at the actual forces at work and what they thought. Some of the support for Solidarnosc came from some of the most reactionary people in the world. You've got to answer the question of why Thatcher and Reagan supported Solidarnosc so strongly.

**VC** *Enoch Powell supports Britain coming out of the EEC, but that doesn't mean that such a demand is reactionary.*

**TB** Well I know, but there's a little bit more in the Solidarnosc example than that. There were forces there supporting Solidarnosc whose objective was not directed at trade union freedom but at dismantling socialism in Poland, which of course NATO would dearly love to see.

**VC** *Yes, but the British government gave 'support' to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht during the first world war because they thought that these revolutionaries might weaken their enemy, German imperialism. That doesn't mean that it was reactionary to fight in Germany against homegrown imperialist militarism. That fact that the British might give opportunist tactical support has no more to do with an objective analysis of the role of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, than Reagan and Thatcher's opportunist 'support' for Solidarnosc should cloud our judgement about what happened in Poland.*

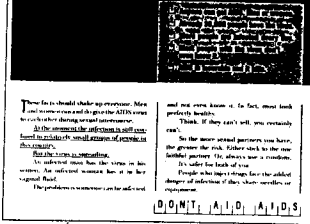
**TB** Do you support the ideas of privatisation, increased investment by foreign banks and of the dominance of market forces — because these are the arguments which the Solidarnosc intellectuals put forward?

**VC** *Well, there are lots of people, in Russia, China and eastern Europe, including Gorbachov, who are arguing for more use of market mechanisms. But in any case I don't think that these were the central demands of Solidarnosc. Their central demands were for the right of self-organisation, of freedom of the press, the right to organise independent trade unions and so on.*

**TB** Look, there's a certain naïvety in thinking that Solidarnosc was a democratic socialist movement from top to bottom. I think it was made up of a whole range of different ideas, some of them extremely reactionary and right wing. Now, it's much too soon to say overall how the Polish system is going to readjust in the light of the pressure which was put upon it. But systems do retreat in the face of pressure put upon them. They fight it off, and then concede later. That's the way that change takes place.

Even in a system like the Polish one the pressures are there. Many of the original arguments of Solidarnosc I found being used by party and state officials when I was there. Some had been involved in Solidarity but were not prepared, when the crunch came, to go along with overthrowing the state. I think you underestimate the extent to which these arguments have penetrated and have registered. I'm not an apologist for the Polish regime. All I'm saying is that we shouldn't either be uncritical apologists for all that was espoused under the name of Solidarity **E**

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**Government AIDS advertising**

# AIDS — prejudice and reality

For both the ruling class and the left the relationship between the prejudice surround AIDS and its reality has been difficult to unravel. In this article **THERESA CONWAY** and **JAMIE GOUGH** look at the way in which the issue has emerged in British politics.

'GAY OR STRAIGHT, male or female, anyone can get AIDS from sexual intercourse.' The government information campaign on AIDS has splattered this slogan over street billboards. A year ago, who would have thought that this would be the Tory's message to the nation? The government campaign has sparked an enormous increase in the coverage of AIDS in the press and the media. In both the 'quality' and popular media the focus on the threat of AIDS to heterosexuals is quite new.

Equally unexpected is to hear the Minister for Health argue that 'we frankly don't have time to rely on changing the moral climate' in view of the pressing threat of AIDS. This was Tony Newton's response to opposition from the 'moral majority' to the explicitly sexual content of the government's advertisements.

Not that the government's pronouncements are without moral judgements. Newton's line does not rule out a reactionary moral crusade, but points out that it isn't adequate. He refused to condemn Manchester Chief Constable Anderton's outburst on the issue, merely saying that it was 'unhelpful, but his views are shared by others and I have to acknowledge that.' And the government's adverts say 'So the more partners you have, the higher the risk' before they recommend condoms. This is like saying the longer your working life the more likely you are to have an industrial accident. It's true but irrelevant. It's not the number of partners that makes the big difference, it's whether you have safe sex or not.

**Sowing the storm...**  
 Anderton himself didn't mince his words.

Homosexuals, prostitutes, pornographers and promiscuous people are 'swirling around in a human cesspit of their own making'. Anderton is not the only right wing ideologue to have raised the temperature. Within the Church of England important figures such as the Bishop of London rage against promiscuity, and argue that AIDS proves the necessity of strict adherence to Christian values. This is part of the debate within the Church on a wide range of issues of social behaviour. But it is also directed against the government, and towards reestablishing the influence of the Church of England in society.

Within the Tory Party itself, there is scarcely unanimity on the government campaign. Many backbenchers have voiced their disquiet. The most outrageous remarks yet have come from the leader of the Tory South Staffordshire District Council who has argued that the way to stamp out AIDS is by 'putting 90% of homosexuals in the gas chamber'. For lesbians and gay men, such statements do not come out of the blue: the Nazis murdered hundreds of thousands of lesbians and gay men in the death camps.

These ravings have all occurred in the last weeks. They are however consistent with the

**THE AIDS VIRUS CAN LIVE ON A DIRTY NEEDLE.**  
**DON'T GIVE IT A NEW HOME.**

**DON'T INJECT AIDS**

**AIDS**

**AIDS**

**DON'T DIE OF AIDS**

**Imagine somebody who knows a bit about drugs. Somebody who's smoked, swallowed and snorted most things. But so far, they've never used a needle. If they do, though, the first needle they use will probably be somebody else's. At that moment, they'll be in serious danger of catching AIDS.**

**And sharing a needle or other equipment with someone who carries the AIDS virus is the easiest way to get infected. Now does this somebody sound a bit like you? If it does, don't inject. And never share. For more information and advice, telephone 01-XXX-XXXX.**

**AIDS is incurable and it kills. And sharing a needle or other equipment with an infected person is the easiest way to catch the virus straight off.**

**0 1 0 0 N T I A I I D I A I D S**



line the moral majority has been putting forward on the subject of AIDS for the last two years. The popular press has consistently blamed the 'victims' and built on the already prevalent image of homosexuality as a disease. Some of the press's venom has been turned against individuals. While the press has stopped referring to AIDS as 'the gay plague', it continues to point the finger at gay people as responsible for the spread of the disease to heterosexuals. The press has rarely pointed out that lesbians are the group least likely to have the virus.

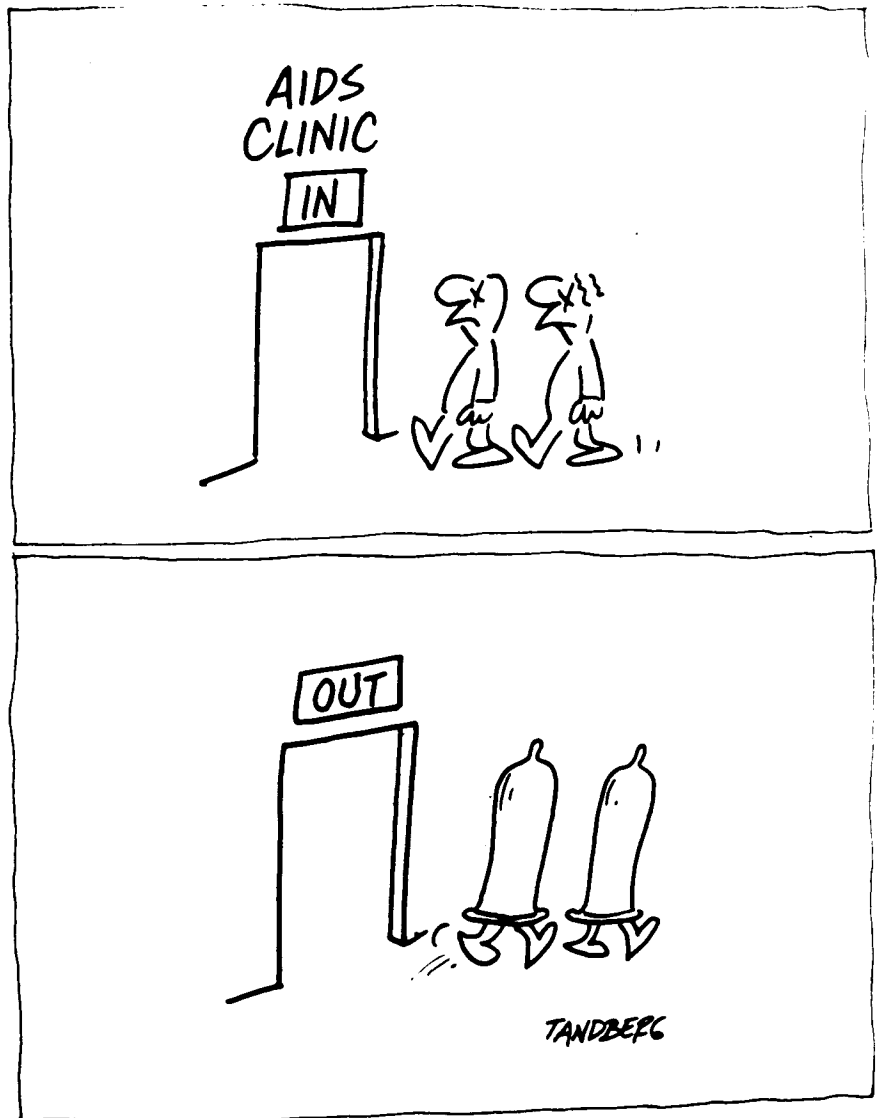
#### AIDS and Thatcherism

So why has the government now departed from the line of the moral majority in launching its information campaign? Partly it is a result of a realisation that AIDS was not going to be confined to 'marginal' groups such as homosexuals, intravenous drug users and haemophiliacs. It has been known for about three years that the disease is heterosexually transmissible. But it has only more gradually become evident how widely the virus is likely to spread among heterosexuals. Current estimates still vary widely, but a Department of Health report gives a figure of 20,000 new cases of AIDS annually by 1991. The government has reacted both to these rising estimates, and to the fact that the disease is evidently not going to remain limited to 'marginal' groups.

### The government has a different policy from the morality brigade

But the government's behaviour has also been caused by its overall political project. This has been to restructure the economy, cut public expenditure especially on the welfare state, and smash up the power of the labour movement. It has not concerned itself with the reproduction of labour power; it is content to leave this to the family, without enquiring *how* the family is to carry this burden. The government's ideological projects have been narrowly focussed on *backing up these economic plans*. For example, the government's propaganda on women has been directed at legitimising cuts in women's wages and a further casualisation of women's jobs — not, as many predicted, in driving women out of the labour market.

This has had two consequences. First, the government has not carried out ideological attacks on lesbians and gay men, although it has been quite happy for the 'morality' campaigners to do so. Second, it has been very slow and cautious in reacting on an issue where it could be compelled to actively intervene in the reproduction of labour power. This has reinforced its reluctance to exploit AIDS ideologically, but also accounts for the lag in reacting to the medical information and for its continuing failure to plan resources to meet the crisis. It is for these reasons that the government has had a different policy from the morality brigade, who do not



An Australian AIDS-prevention cartoon

have to take responsibility for managing the economy or stopping heterosexuals dying of AIDS.

Many have been surprised that the government has not adopted the line of the moral majority. The Eurocommunists and co-thinkers of the soft left, in particular, see the essence of Thatcherism as being an ideolo-

### We must propose solutions to the reality of the disease, not just the ideological attack

gical attack, aimed at instilling 'Victorian values' on every subject. The government's behaviour on AIDS shows just how wrong this view is. Thatcher has not used AIDS for an attack on sexual morality; her main concern has been with the disease as a material reality. And because material reality is much more messy and complex than ideology, the behaviour of the right taken as a whole has been confused and contradictory.

#### ...reaping the whirlwind

Years of government indifference and media disinformation have created massive ignorance about AIDS among the general public. In a recent survey, fifty per cent thought that the virus can be transmitted by drinking from the same cup as someone with the virus. Thirty-eight per cent thought that all people with the virus should be compulsorily isolated, presumably not realising that this would mean one million people in concentration camps by 1990. When the Terrence Higgins Trust was mentioned in a TV programme in November it received 400 calls a minute asking for information.

Considering the number of hours of the media that the average person in Britain consumes every day, it is an appalling indictment of capitalist broadcasting and press that such ignorance can exist about so important a subject.

In the present situation, ignorance easily turns to bigotry and superstition. People's anxieties about employment, about getting an operation, or about the erosion of family life can easily become fixed on a mysterious threat like AIDS. People who are anxious often imagine themselves to be ill, and general

insecurity can very easily be shifted onto fear of a disease. All the easier when the disease can be 'blamed' on outsiders like gay men and drug addicts. This combination of fear and ignorance is also a classic breeding ground for religious ideas. When the *Daily Express* asks 'If AIDS is not an Act of God with consequences just as frightful as fire and brimstone, then just what the hell is it?', it can expect a receptive audience.

Such behaviour by the media led lesbians and gay men to coin slogans such as 'Aids — the prejudice is worse than the disease'. The disinformation campaign has led to an increase in day to day harassment of lesbians and gay men. Harassment at work and physical attacks of both lesbians and gay men have undoubtedly increased and many of these are directly attributable to the AIDS panic. The idea that the disease is transmitted through sharing of coffee cups may seem trivial but it is a potent excuse for queerbashing. Significant numbers of gay men, particularly those in casual employment but more worryingly one employed by a national trade union, have lost their jobs in the wake of this panic.

Not all of these people have had AIDS or have been even carrying the antibodies — their sexuality has been enough. In other cases employers have pressured people who are thought to be gay to have the anti-body test as a condition for employment or promotion. Similar practices are being used by all insurance companies who will not insure pairs of men without the test.

#### A socialist response

The development of a disease such as AIDS, so far with no known cure, and which has provided the right with a vehicle for homophobia and racism, requires a careful response from the left. The disease itself and the hysteria surrounding it need separate but interlinked demands. Many of the issues around AIDS are similar to those raised by other diseases such as cervical cancer or sickle

### It's not the number of partners, it's whether you have safe sex...

cell anaemia: increased money for research, massive input of funds to the NHS and social service, and public health campaigns. On the other hand what is particular about AIDS is the way in which the ideological construction of the disease has become central both to those suffering from it and those presumed to be at risk.

The socialist movement therefore has two tasks. The first is to counter the hysteria. We need to fight for a public information campaign, free from moralism. Information needs to be regularly updated as medical knowledge develops. Within the workplace accurate and complete information should be provided on what are and what are not dangerous practices. Trade unions must de-

pend the right to work of people with the antibodies and people with AIDS. It is also vital to combat prejudice head-on. While the majority of trade unions have issued health and safety guidelines, they and the Labour leadership have ducked the issue of homophobia.

It is also necessary to oppose false solutions. In particular, compulsory testing for the AIDS antibody must be opposed. There is a danger that, in addition to the compulsory testing already practiced by employers and insurance companies, the government may be tempted to introduce it for, for example, some classes of visitors to Britain, in order to appease the morality brigade.

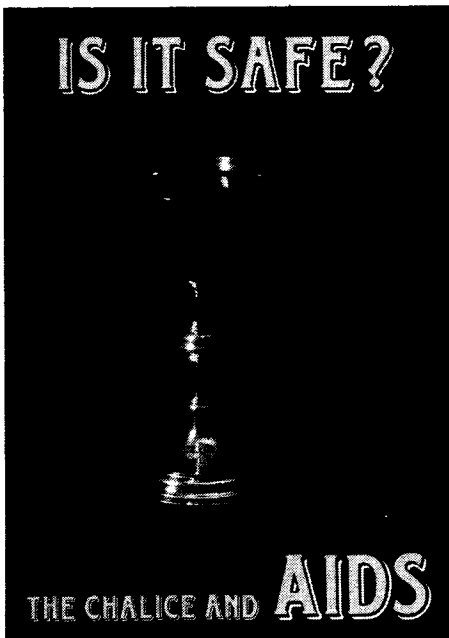
In fact, the test is useless in showing whether someone is carrying the virus, since antibodies may not appear until up to three months after the virus is contracted, there are false negative results, and the virus may be contracted after the test is taken. Particularly given its expense, compulsory testing could well be selective — of people known or suspected to be gay, or of visitors from Africa. It would therefore not only reinforce heterosexist and racist discrimination but encourage the view that AIDS is a disease for 'marginal' people.

The second task for the socialist movement is to demand adequate resources to deal with the reality of the disease. Parts of the left have concentrated on the ideological issues, ignoring the fact that people are dying. In the days when the discussion around AIDS first opened in this country there were people seriously



In California, a referendum proposition was organised by right wing demagogue LaRouche which would have given the state powers to carry out compulsory testing, quarantine people with the antibody and legalise their sacking from many types of jobs. Initial voter support was reversed, and the proposition defeated, by a militant campaign led by lesbians and gay men, some acting in coalition with groups opposing a racist proposition to make English California's 'official language'.





**The Chalice: is it safe?  
by the Terrence Higgins Trust.**

**ANAL SEX**

For your free guide to using condoms  
AIDS Committee of Toronto  
Box 55, Stn F, Toronto, ON, M4Y 2L4  
Phone: (416) 926-1626

**Advert published by the AIDS Committee of Toronto, Canada.**

arguing that the disease had been deliberately spread by the CIA. Others, particularly young people, are very sceptical about any advice on safer sex and argue that this is all a plot to stop us enjoying ourselves. This is to ignore all the contradictions for the ruling class and between the ruling class and the moralists. The ultra-left tendency to neglect the material issues meshes closely with the Eurocommunist perspective.

The appeal of ultra-leftism is backed up by the weakness of campaigns against the cuts in the NHS, social services and housing. AIDS poses a major problem of resources at a time when the Health Service is already falling apart at the seams.

Within four years an additional £500m a year will be needed in the NHS budget just to cope with AIDS, a 5% increase. A massive increase from the present derisory level is needed in spending on research on AIDS.

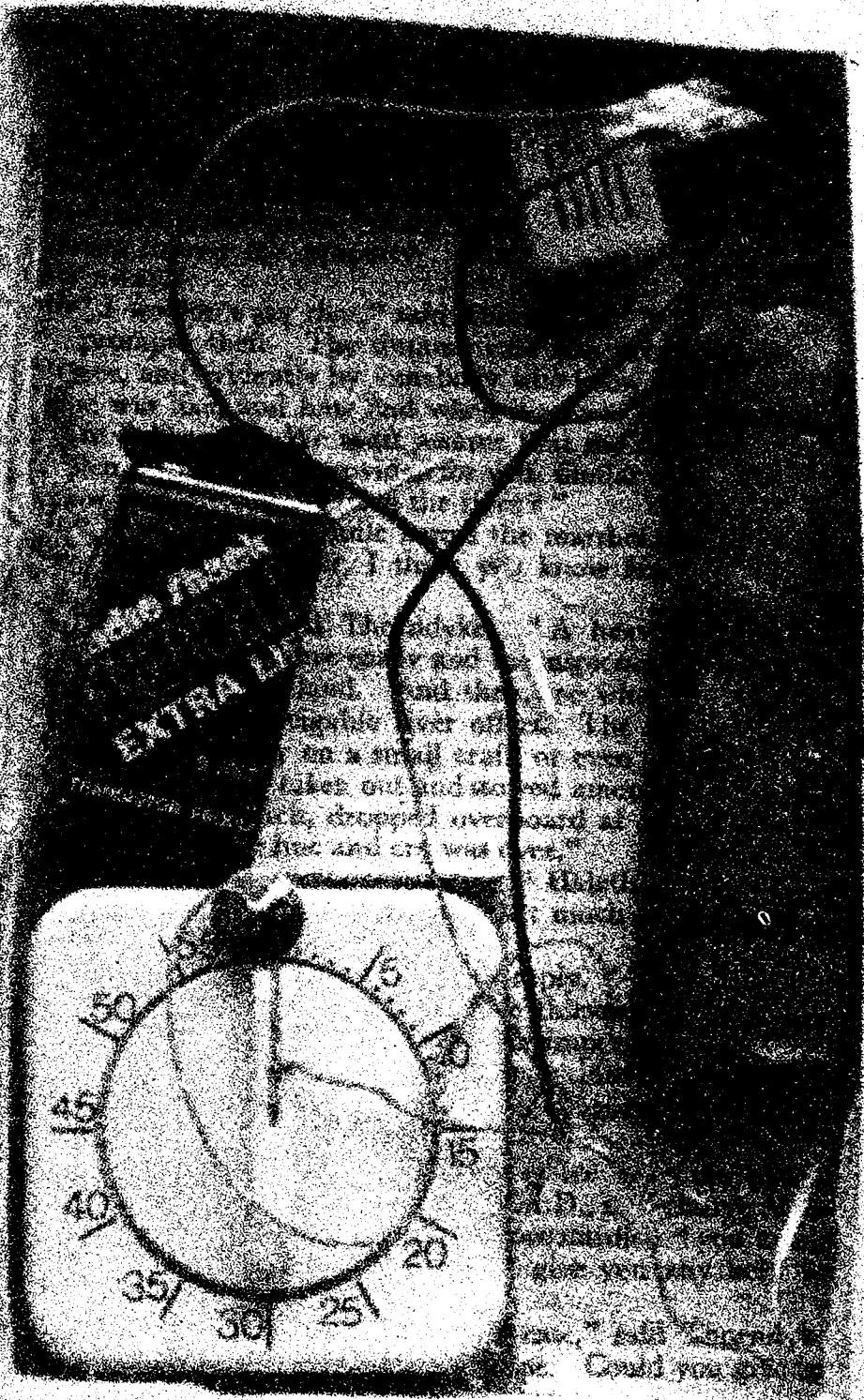
The spread of AIDS has also raised questions about the kind of health care we want. The fact that disease spreads more rapidly in situations of poverty, bad housing and social crisis is one the left is familiar with. But following feminist practices around cervical and breast cancer, the lesbian and gay movement has begun to look beyond the confines of welfarism and western medicine in response to AIDS. Diet, acupuncture, herbalism, meditation and other therapies are being used to build up resistance to the virus, to prevent the virus breaking down the immune system, and to resist AIDS itself.

A premise of these therapies is that people are not ignorant machines to be manipulated by all-knowing doctors. It is therefore not a

question of campaigning for a return to the 1945 Health Service, but for real information and choice about a wide range of medical techniques and practices.

Similarly, many people with AIDS chose to live at home. Social services and housing resources need to be provided to them and those close to them to enable this to happen.

A socialist strategy, then, needs to fight both the prejudice and the disease. Indeed, it is impossible to do either adequately without the other. Lesbians and gay men, as the principle targets of prejudice have been, and should continue to be, in the leadership of this fight. But this is a task for the whole labour movement **i**



# TERRORISM

Carlos Guarita/Reflex



## Brute force and left-wing ignorance

'The fight against terrorism' has become the slogan of the Reagan administration's counter-revolutionary crusade. But, argues **COLIN SMITH**, it is not enough for the left to oppose Reagan. It has to work out its own attitude to the reality of terrorism, and not be seen to condone or support it.

EVER SINCE Reagan sat in the Oval Office his administration's main foreign policy concerns have been to restore the political, economic and military predominance of the US over the rest of the capitalist world and in particular over the sometimes rather recalcitrant allies in Western Europe. From the imposition of cruise missiles and support for Star Wars to full connivance in the attack on Libya the Thatcher government has been a willing helpmate in the revival of American power. It is no surprise therefore that Thatcher has also been the most enthusiastic champion of Reagan's ideological offensive on terrorism in the prime ministerial offices of Europe.

It is one of the most obvious aims of Reagan's offensive to use terrorism as a means to rob the popular struggles for national liberation of their political

and moral legitimacy; to attempt to criminalise before Western public opinion all movements currently engaged in forms of armed struggle as well as most of those countries in the Third World who have in recent history overthrown imperialist backed regimes — Cuba, Nicaragua, Angola for example. Discussion as to the conditions and causes that lie behind armed struggles are violently suppressed.

When George Schultz was urged recently by the Yugoslav foreign minister to look into the causes for Palestinian violence he fell into a fit of rage, pounding the table he announced 'There is no connection with any cause — it's wrong'. Under this sort of schema the sole perpetrators of armed violence are evil men and women manipulated by anti-American, mostly pro-Soviet states (Reagan gave the list in July 1985 — Libya, Cuba,

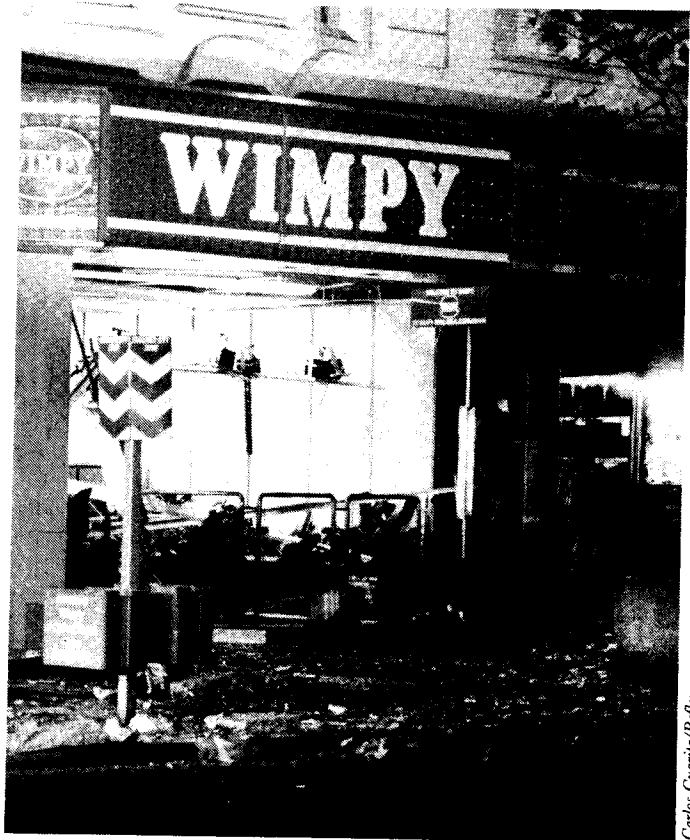
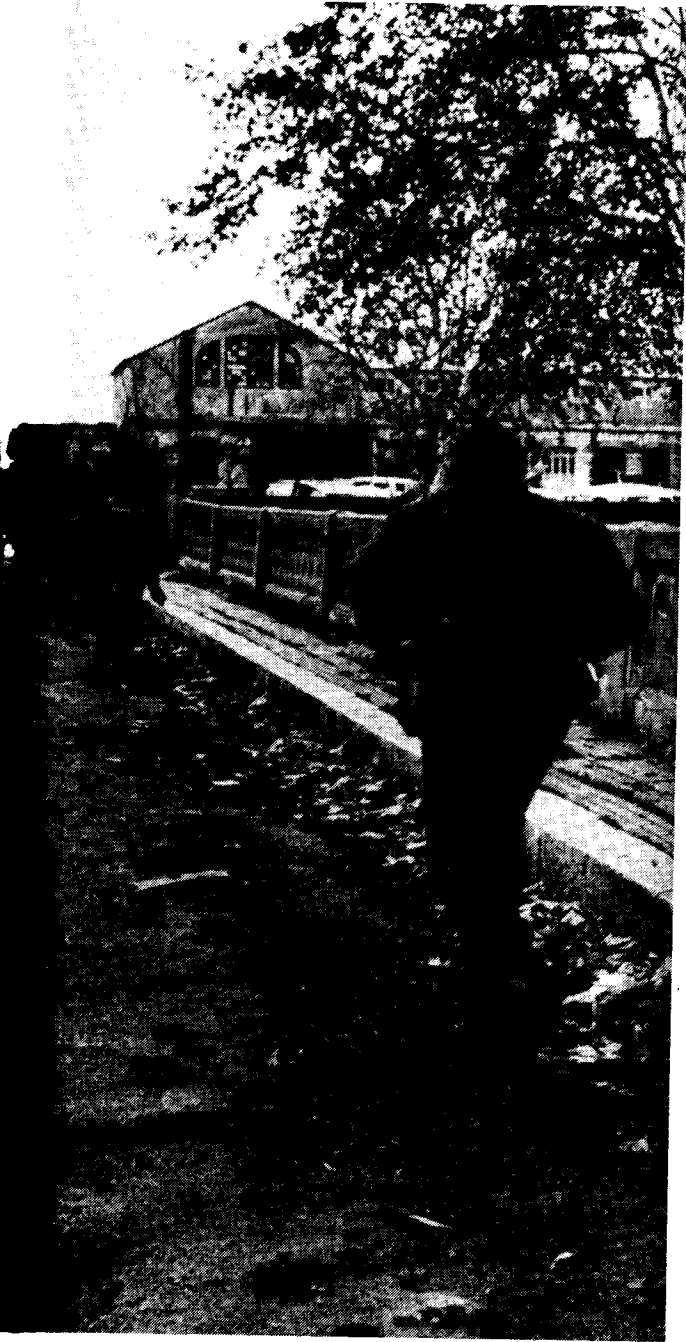
North Korea, Nicaragua and Iran to which must now be added Syria) behind which looms the evil of evils, the Soviet Union.

The Reaganite anti-terrorism offensive however has been given the aura of legitimacy not just by denouncing liberation movements as 'terrorists' but by the fact that there is such a thing as terrorism, and many of its actions are rightly abhorred by ordinary people. In order for socialists to combat the Reagan-Thatcher offensive, it is necessary to clearly distance ourselves from terrorist actions, and to point out the difference between the small and isolated terrorist groups and mass liberation movements.

Among those who fall under the







Carlos Guarita/Reflex

**The Oxford Street Wimpy bombing.**

catch-all of 'terrorism', it is possible to discern a variety of very different movements. First, there are genuinely terrorist groups, which may claim to act on behalf of the working class or 'the people', but are in fact elitist, militaristic sects with no or little connection with the workers movement. These include the Red Army Faction in Germany, the Red Brigades in Italy, or 'Action Directe' in France.

Then there are groups which have their origins in national liberation movements, which have subsequently degenerated into pure terrorism, and may be manipulated by state security agencies. The Abu Nidal group, operating out of Syria and at the behest of the Syrian security services is a classic

example.

Third are genuine national liberation movements utilising armed struggle as an adjunct to mass political struggle — the Provisional IRA and ETA in the Basque country fall into this category.

In addition to this list are right wing terrorist groups trying to create a 'state of tension' provoking repression against the left — the bombings carried out by Italian fascist groups in the early 1970s are examples of this.

The groups which really are 'terrorist', even when made up of sincere militants who are not manipulated by state agencies — and this was certainly the case with the Red Army faction and the Red Brigades during their

initial stages — almost by definition fall prey to militarist deviations. In other words, they fall into the trap of judging everything by military 'success' abstracted from political considerations.

The need to preserve secrecy, protect safe houses, carry out bank raids to get money and conduct raids on arsenals to get weapons become the prime considerations. Military organisation inevitably produces a commandist structure which prevents any debate on political objectives, let alone a dialogue with currents in the workers movement.

This invariably produces an arrogant and contemptuous attitude to the workers movement itself and all forms

of legal political activity. More and more 'left wing' terrorist groups get cut off from their original objectives, and become prey to being used directly or indirectly by the state — either directly through the infiltration of agents, or indirectly through being the excuse for introducing repressive legislation. Inevitably such groups substitute themselves for the organised political activity of the working class. And often workers themselves can become the victims of terrorist bombings and shootings.

Armed actions by working class organisations where there is a military dictatorship, or indeed the activity of 'urban guerrillas' in Latin America are a more complex question. For example, in Chile today both the Communist Party (through the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front) and the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) carry on some armed activities. Leaving aside the overall politics of both these parties, with which we sharply disagree, in principle it is not incorrect to wage an armed struggle as an adjunct to, or part of, an overall struggle to bring down the dictatorship.

The point here is that such activity must contribute to, rather than obstruct, the self-activity and organisation of the working class. Military activity of this sort has to be understandable both by working class militants and broader sectors of the workers movement. El Salvador is a clear case of the integration of armed struggle and mass organisation.

In general, armed activity, even by organisations with mass support, will not be understandable when there are broad democratic liberties enabling mass political action and workers self-organisation to take place. In such circumstances armed action often degenerates and brings down harsh repression. A classic example is the fate of the Montoneros, the left wing Peronist urban guerrillas in Argentina.

After elections and the return to power of Peron in 1973 the Montoneros built mass support, organised in broad fronts for youth, workers and other groups. Peronist demonstrations were often dominated by the Montoneros — to the fury of the trade union bosses and Peron himself, who roundly denounced them.

But the Montoneros continued their clandestine urban guerrilla struggle. Gradually their armed organisation was taken over by military leaders rather than 'politicos'. Indeed state repression led to the deaths of most of the more experienced political leaders. The guerrillas turned to executions of corrupt trade union bosses, actions not understood by the workers. A harsh internal discipline led to executions of guerrillas who had given away infor-

mation under torture. And the needs of being militarily successful overrode political considerations.

Instead of activity aimed at preparing the workers, politically and militarily, for an impending military coup, the Montoneros, and the smaller ERP 'Guevarists', acted on the illusion that the guerrillas themselves could confront the full military might of the state.

When the army coup actually came in 1976 this proved to be a hopeless illusion. In fact the guerrilla war had demoralised and disorientated the mass of the working class, leaving them 'softened up' for the full savagery of the army's 'dirty war'; after 1976 when up to 40,000 people were slaughtered by the military.

A similar balance sheet could be drawn up of other urban guerrilla groups, such as the Uruguayan *Tupamaros*, an organisation which waged perhaps the most successful urban guerrilla struggle in the 1970s, but which was incapable of turning large scale but passive support into mass political organisation of the workers.

The criterion of subordinating armed action to mass organisation and political objectives must also apply to national liberation movements, even if

### terrorism is often the price for the failure of workers' struggles

their armed struggle is already complemented by mass organisation. Otherwise, bombings and shootings can be turned into political weapons in the hands of reaction. It is hard to explain for example what political purpose the IRA Birmingham bombings in 1974 served and how they contributed to the defeat of British imperialism.

Although it would be dangerous to adopt alarmist positions on the current influence of this Reaganite offensive, it is undoubtedly true that such terrorist activities such as hijackings, kidnapping hostages, apparently random bombings and shootings — particularly of civilians — are met with revulsion by the great majority of people in Western Europe. These events have more than a passing resemblance to atrocities of gang warfare and the mafia especially to an audience that has little or no real experience of the bloody brutalities of the class struggle and daily life in for example the Middle East or parts of Central and South America. The fact that these acts are committed in the name of 'national liberation' or of 'socialist revolution' does not at all mean that there is not more than a kernel of moral and political truth in his popular detestation.

In this situation what should the position of socialists and Marxists be? We are faced here perhaps with a Scylla and Charybdis between which we must steer. On the one hand we must avoid giving any credence to the ideological offensive of Reagan and Thatcher which would promote reaction and be tantamount to reneging on our duty to build support for genuine struggles for national liberation and socialist revolution.

On the other hand we must also keep away from seeming in any way to condone the activities of such terrorist groups as the Abu Nidal faction, The Red Army Faction in West Germany or Action Directe in France.

Terrorism is often the price which the workers movement or national liberation movements pay for *failure*. The Red Brigades in Italy arose out of the frustration of a decade of titanic struggles which, because of the suffocating influence of the Italian Communist Party, resulted in very little in terms of advance for the left. And obviously the turn of some sections of the Palestinian movement towards terror tactics is a product of the defeat of more than a decade of armed struggle, and the desperation which the repeated massacres of Palestinians have wrought among many in the Palestinian diaspora.

Thus in distancing ourselves from terrorism, socialists have to point the finger at those who are the real underlying cause of terrorist activity — in the first place imperialism, and particularly United States imperialism itself. The hypocrisy of Reagan waging a crusade against 'terrorism' while supporting the contras in Nicaragua and dozens of similar counter-revolutionary cut-throat movements will not be lost on either readers of this journal, or millions of people worldwide.

Even if we oppose terrorism on political and even moral grounds, the opposition of socialists is not equivalent to pacifism and disavowal of all use of arms. In crimes against the innocent, in crimes against humanity, in the spilling of blood by the millions of bucketfuls, imperialism has nothing to teach even the most wanton and reckless terrorist. The use of force is an inevitability in bringing down this system of organised violence and butchery. But in attempting to turn this fact into a guide to immediate action, whatever the circumstances, terrorism results in violence using the wrong methods, at the wrong time, and often against the wrong people.

Those who practice it are the enemies of revolutionary socialism, which is based on the notion that the liberation of the working class is the activity of the working class itself — not that of self-proclaimed armed vanguards. ■

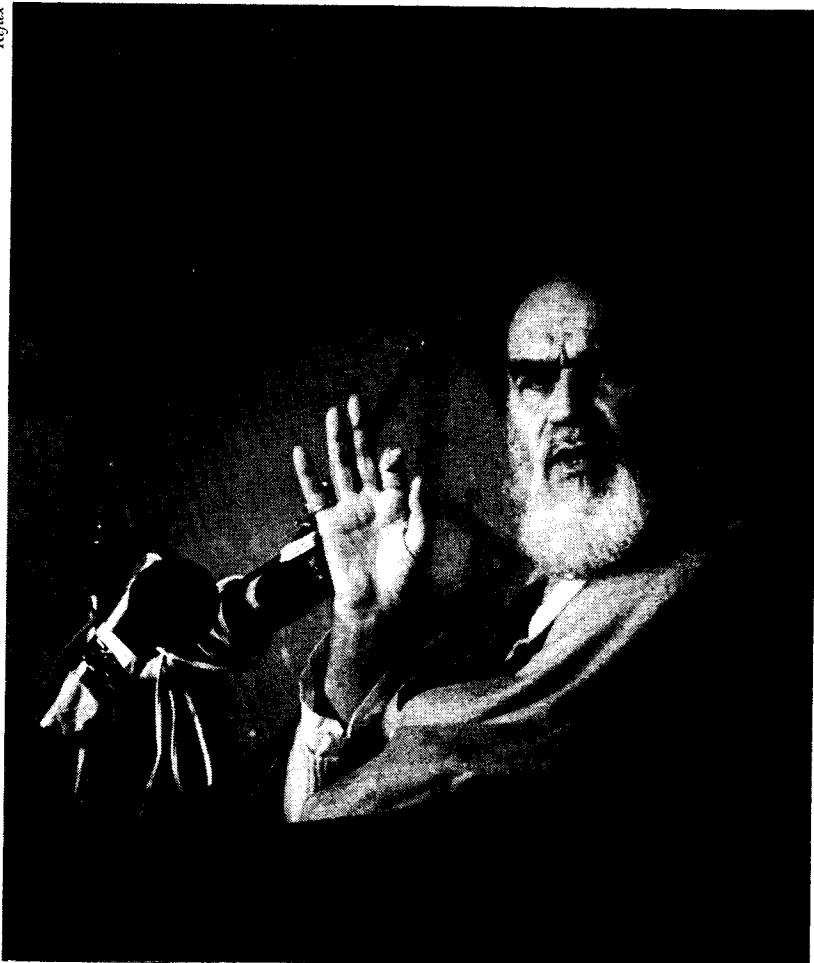
## IRANGATE



Top left clockwise: North, Poindexter, Shultz and McFarlane testify

## All the President's men — pt II

Reflex



Khomeini seems to be complaining about the size of the arms deal

The news that the United States has sold weapons to 'terrorist' Iran has caused a scandal of near-Watergate proportions, which threatens to destabilize the Reagan presidency. What lies behind the decision to sell arms to Iran. **PAUL LAWSON** investigates.

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S administration is now embroiled in a scandal which threatens to become as serious as the Watergate scandal did for Nixon. The root cause is the same — secret operations carried out illegally at the behest of the President and his advisors. And the response of the administration has also been the same — an attempt to sacrifice lower-ranking officials to guard the President and his immediate circle of advisors. The whole affair casts a cruel spotlight on the way that the administration works and its real foreign policy objectives. In particular it exposes the hypocrisy of the 'anti-terrorist' offensive launched by Reagan.

The basic facts of the Iran operation are not now in doubt. The US government has been selling arms to Iran for over a year. It has probably encouraged the Israelis to sell arms to the Iranians for the past five years. An attempt has been made, via the bizarre visit to Tehran by ex-National Security Advisor Robert MacFarlane to develop more friendly relations with sections of the Iranian government. A huge slush fund from the arms profits has been used to finance the contras and CIA-backed right wing insurgents in Angola and Afghanistan.

Why should the US want to sell arms to Iran? After all, when the Gulf war began, many people suspected the US of covert support for the Iraqis. The answer to this is twofold. First, it is now obvious that only Iran can win the Gulf war — it certainly cannot lose it. Huge reserves of Iranian manpower have been bloodily sacrificed in the war to overcome the Iraqi advantage in weapons. This has pushed the Iraqis onto the defensive and wrecked their economy. There is little doubt that Iran will emerge as the strongest power in the Gulf region. It will be better for the US to do business with the Iranians than see them develop better links with the Russians who share their northern border.

Thus the explanation given by Reagan that he was seeking to develop better relations with Iranian 'moderates' is probably genuine. But it is more complicated than that. Israel has





US arms, Iranian soldiers, Iraqi dead

backed Iran from the beginning of the Gulf war because Iraq is an Arab state, geographically much closer to Israel, and thus more likely than Iran to pose a threat to the Zionist state. The US has doubtless been influenced by this assessment of their Israeli allies, who they regard as their major 'strategic asset' in the region. Israel has not only sold arms to Iran, but bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor to prevent the emergence of an Iraqi nuclear weapons capacity. The best solution for Israel is that neither side should win the war. But if there is to be a victor, then Israel prefers Iran.

All of this shows just how absurd the US campaign against 'terrorist' nations is. Iran has been the main sponsor, indeed the organiser, of the Islamic fundamentalist 'Hizbollah' movement in Lebanon which has, among other things, been engaged in kidnapping US citizens. A 'terrorist' outfit if ever there was one! Gaddafi gets bombed by the Americans for far less. Why? Because it suits US foreign policy to whip up hysteria against Libya, helping to drag European political leaders in behind Reagan's cold war offensive and establish US political dominance in the Western alliance, while simultaneously cuddling up to Iran. A holy war against terrorism has nothing to do with it. It must be increasingly clear to the Europeans that they've been conned by Reagan — only Thatcher continues to parrot her absolute faith in what Reagan has been doing.

If Reagan's main credibility problem today is that the American public just cannot understand why arms were sold to 'terrorists', the US Congress has been incensed that during its embargo on arms to the Nicaraguan contras, the White House and the CIA circumvented the ban by utilising the Iran arms slush fund. This operation was run from the National Security Council (NSC) offices in the White House basement, without the knowledge of the State Department which allegedly runs US foreign policy. How was this possible?

For several years there has been a running fight between the State Department on the one hand, and the NSC and the Pentagon on the other over control of foreign policy. While the NSC and military cowboys have favoured an aggressive and adventurous policy, Secretary of State George Shultz has favoured a more stable and cautious approach. Both wings in this fight are equally reactionary — it has been a question of emphasis and departmental infighting. Now Shultz has utilised the crisis, and especially his appearance at the Senate Committee investigating the affair to attempt to wrest control of foreign policy operations.



**No shelter from the storm for Reagan**

The crisis has also highlighted the role of White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan, an immensely powerful character who in effect ran the country during the President's stay in hospital. It is inconceivable that a project as important as the Iranian arms deal took place from the basement of the White House without his say-so. Indeed Regan is the President's major link with the outside world, and is being targetted together with CIA director William Casey as the next sacrificial lamb after Poindexter and Ollie North — if the crisis refuses to lie down.

The immediate problem for the president is that the Democrats are scenting blood and now see the scandal as the best way to ensure a Democratic victory in the 1988 presidential elections. Vice President George Bush, the Republican front runner, is deeply implicated in the operations of the Nicaraguan contras, and it will be difficult to find a senior Republican to be the presidential candidate who has not been in receipt of the President's patronage — and returned it with lavish support. This means that the Democrats, who now control both the House and Senate have every interest in keeping the whole thing running, while Republicans are caught in the dilemma of not wanting to see Reagan go under, while at the same time not wanting to appear to support a white-wash and cover-up of illegal activity.

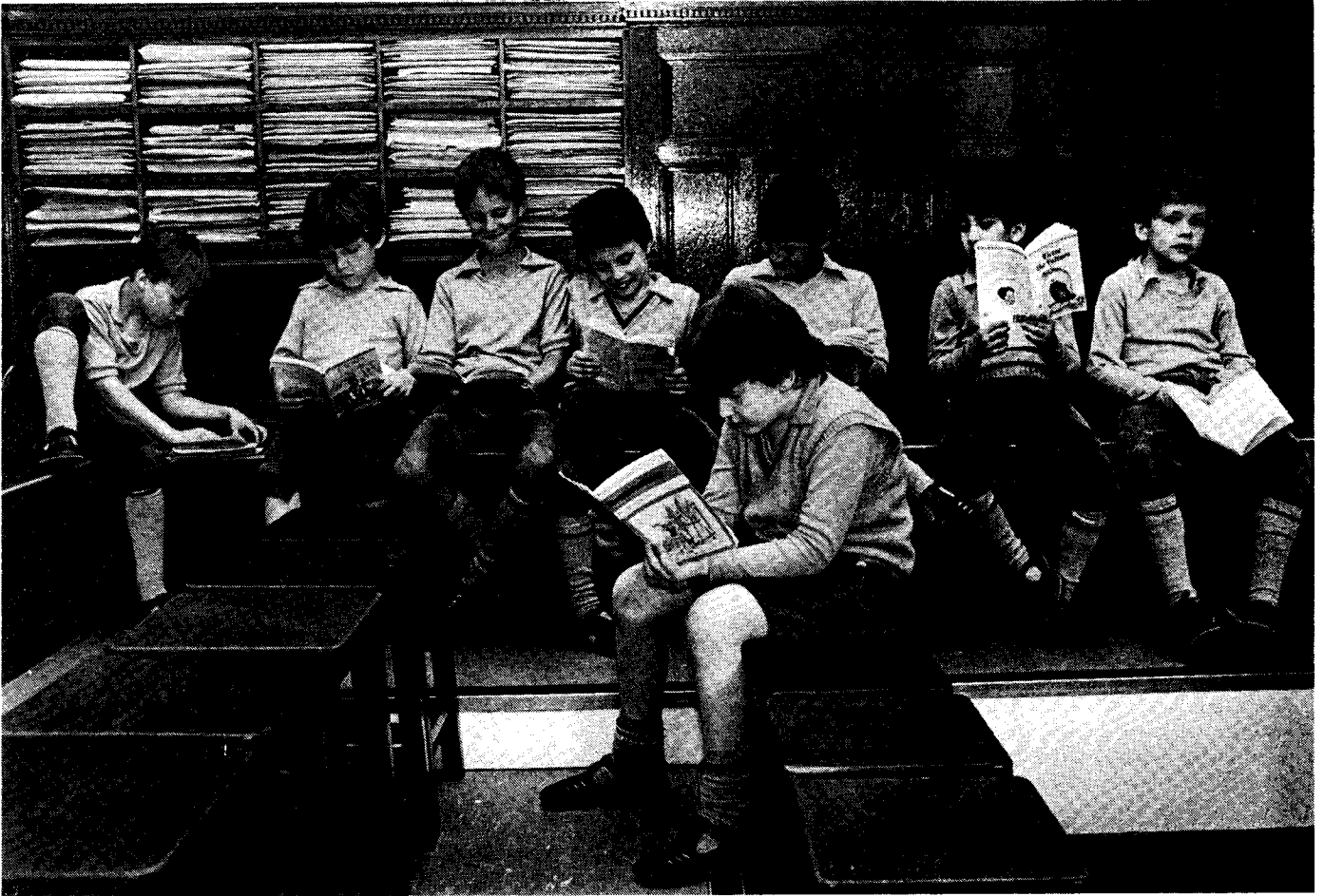
There is a dynamic in this political crisis which threatens to trip up any contemporary US President. US counter-revolutionary operations world-wide necessarily involve activities which are secret and on the borders of legality. Indeed a strict adherence to the guidelines laid down by law and the Congress would make it

difficult for the CIA to do its job properly. Paradoxically, the Congress has much greater powers of supervision and control of the executive than the British parliament, and there is no US equivalent of the all-embracing British Official Secrets Act — in many ways US government is very open to public inspection.

Necessarily therefore there is a semi-permanent need for the administration and the CIA to evade public inspection via dirty tricks and secret operations.

What consequences for US and international policies will the Irangate scandal have? The 'worst case' scenario for the administration would be the impeachment of the president. This would be a real catastrophe which would disrupt US foreign policy all round — from Star Wars to Nicaragua. Even if the scandal is prevented from going 'to the top', Reagan's remaining term in office is bound to be more politically difficult. The linking of the Iran arms deal with Nicaragua is particularly unfortunate, making it more difficult to finance and support the contras. Of course, there is always the possibility that Reagan could try to do a 'Falklands' — a massive military adventure to create a national consensus around his leadership. That is a real danger for Nicaragua. But such an operation would be a wild gamble; unless the military outcome were a very rapid victory the consequences could be disastrous. Much more likely is a period of prolonged stalemate in US foreign policy, with the administration frozen into immobility by the trauma of the scandal. Such an outcome can only be welcomed by all those who oppose the institutionalised gangsterism of US foreign policy. ■

**A private school for the more affluent.**



*Denis Doran/Reflex*

## Tories go back to school



*Denis Doran/Reflex*

**The Tories are attacking anti-racist curricula and ideology in education.**





## E D U C A T I O N

The teachers' pay dispute and alleged racism in Brent schools have attracted considerable attention from both the media and, more

importantly, the Conservative Party. The latter, argues **RICK HATCHER**, have radical designs on Britain's education.

THE PROLONGED pay dispute between teachers and government is not, fundamentally, about pay. Of course, the Tories are anxious to cut spending on teachers' salaries, but behind that are higher stakes. The Tories have a coherent project to dismantle the school system that has grown up since the war on the basis of the 1944 Act, and replace it with the 'new Tory education'. It is a profoundly radical project, designed to transform every aspect of school education: its aims, its structures, its contents, how it is controlled. Until now the Labour Party and the teachers' unions have scarcely begun to address what is happening, let alone develop and mobilise support for an equally bold and radical alternative.

### The new Tory education

First and most obviously, *they plan a substantial reduction in spending on education* leading to as well as the decline in teachers' salaries, a real deterioration in the level of provision such that, for example, many schools are reliant on finance from parents even to supply basic textbooks.

Secondly *the displacement of 'equality' as the central principle of post-war education*, governing the creation of the comprehensive system and the development of progressive curricula and teaching methods from the 1960s onwards. Their success was limited, but they nevertheless represent real gains which are now being rolled back. Thatcher served notice over a decade ago: 'The pursuit of equality is a mirage. Opportunity means nothing unless it includes the right to be unequal'. Now inequality has become a positive educational programme, involving the discouragement of 'mixed ability teaching', increased segregation of pupils into different teaching programmes *within* the same school, with different occupational destinies — academic, technical, basic — and increasingly *between* schools. This is not just the maintenance and future reinstatement of grammar schools, and the new 'City Technology Colleges' (joint government-private selective technical schools) but the successful fostering of differentiation of schools into 'good schools' and 'poor schools'.

The third major prong of the Thatcherite offensive is a *full-scale ideological offensive* against both non-Thatcherite values, attitudes and ideas *within* education — anti-racism, anti-sexism, peace studies, world studies, unpatriotic history, social issues in science...the list is endless — and non-Thatcherite ideologies *about* education, including the battle to define 'standards', what is a 'good school' and a 'good teacher' in Tory terms. Often broader Thatcherite themes are being played out on the stage of education, scripted by the media: freedom, democracy, morality, what it is to be British. Often the demons in education are linked in a wider unholy conspiracy, with for example left-wing councils and black

activists. The Brent affair currently embodies all these themes.

Fourth is a *much closer tying of school to the 'needs of industry'*. This has both an economic and an ideological aspect. Schools must be made more 'profitable', by producing the sorts of labour power that the employers want: hence the emphasis on basic skills for the future semi-skilled workers, the MSC-run RVEI programmes for the future technicians, and an overall concern for 'the right attitudes' through social and life skills training. This is highly ideological in two senses. The needs of the capitalist economy are becoming a prime yardstick of educational processes. And the blame for the failure of the economy is being successfully laid at the door of the schools, for not producing the right sort of 'manpower' (sic).

The final aim of the Tory offensive is to implement these policies via *new mechanisms of control*. Making radical changes in education is difficult, for the Tories as well as for the left. The schools have a certain autonomy, power-relations are decentralised, vested interests representing the old liberal humanism persist even in the DES itself. And above all there are hostile Labour councils and uncooperative teachers. The boldness with which the Tories are dealing with opposition contrasts strikingly

with the criminal failure of Labour in the 60s and 70s even to introduce legislation to compel local authorities to go fully comprehensive.

There are a number of interrelated elements to the Tories' strategy of control:

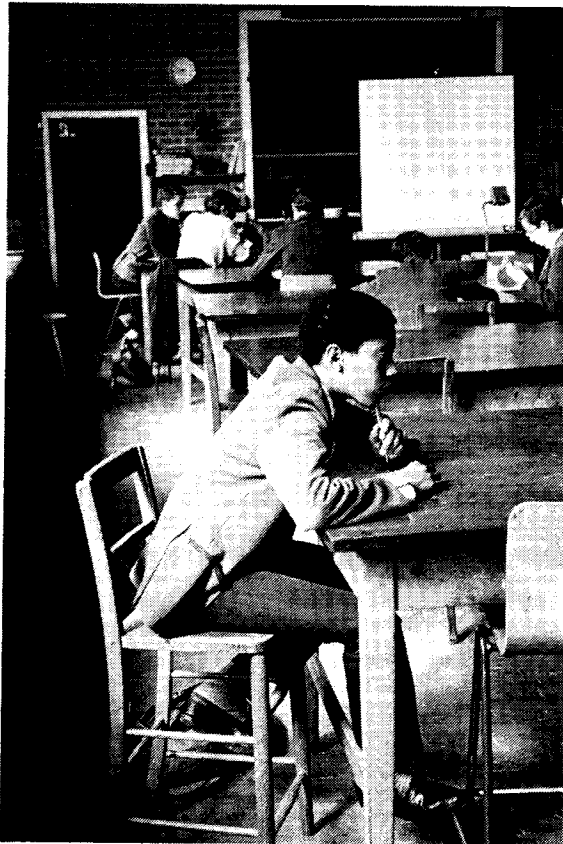
- Greater government control over education finance at the expense of local authorities. Government has starved them of funds (destroying their opposition in the process), and is now making them an offer they can't refuse: cash grants, for which local authorities and schools have to bid in competition with each other, for specific projects that coincide with governmental objectives.

- Direct government intervention at school level, by-passing local authorities and/or even the DES. The most dramatic is the use of the MSC in schools, and the proposed City Technology Colleges.

- Greater government control over the content of education, through a combination of measures including: abolishing the Schools Council to remove teachers' influence over policy formation; creating new examination syllabuses; issuing DES curriculum

guidelines and using the so-called 'independent' Inspectorate to police them; selective funding and in-service training...and all backed up by constant media propaganda.

- The use of parental pressure as consumers in the education market. Their relatively successful appeal (in the absence of a credible alternative) to individualism, and to widespread popular scepticism about education especially some aspects of progressive teaching, assiduously promoted by the media, has



Denis Doran/Reflex



enabled the Tories to seize the initiative in terms of 'democracy' defined as freedom to choose. Schools are under grassroots pressure to conform to the Tory ethos, both from the increased representation of parents on governing bodies, and from the competition between schools for pupils, especially in a situation of falling rolls.

Of course, a section of Tory opinion is in favour of much more drastic measures, effectively privatising the whole system of 28,000 schools. While this option is unlikely to win majority support, it is certain that another term of Thatcherism will see a series of further audacious measures combining strengthening government control of schools — perhaps even removing them entirely from local authority control — with subjecting them further to market forces.

### greater government control and the use of parental pressure

● In order to install the new Tory education, it is also necessary to have a teaching force which can be relied on to 'deliver' it. That means a teaching force that teaches the content the government wants — the new curricula guidelines and objectives; that is more hierarchically structured and subject to the power of the head through a system of 'appraisal'; that conforms to the new DES business-style management ideology; that looks to individual promotion, not collective action, for advancement. In other words, a teaching force that has been rendered compliant through defeat on the union front. That is why the pay campaign is crucial not for pay but for the character of school education in the next period.

#### The left response

What has been the response to the Tory project? The present Labour leadership is distinguished by an almost total absence of creative thinking about education. The precondition for an adequate response to the Tory project is to actually recognise it for what it is. Yet in a recent outline of Labour's education priorities, Giles Radice, the party's education spokesperson, asserts that 'The present government has not made education a priority'. His failure to recognise the radical root-and-branch character of the Tory project means that he also fails to address the issues that they raise.

Radice's ostrich-like posture, deliberately ignoring most of the contentious issues, is part of Labour's 'new realism'. The result is a moderate programme of prudent vagueness, uncosted and dependent, he repeatedly warns, on future economic growth. It promises: to spend more on resources and buildings; to extend nursery provision; to end selection; to improve primary pupil-teacher ratios; to improve standards; to rationalise 16-19 education and training; to end the Assisted Places scheme and tax concessions to private schools; and to create a 'new educational partnership', including a national advisory council of parents, teachers, LEAs, unions, employers and academics.

This programme woefully fails to engage with, let alone offer a socialist alternative to, the Tory project. It has no proposals, apart from some improvement in class size and a welcome end to selection, to seriously address issues of *inequality*, in terms of race, gender and especially, class. There is no mention of the *content* of education, no conception of a curriculum in the interests of the oppressed, building on the positive developments already being put into practice by radical teachers and some local authorities. Further, there is no notion of a *different kind* of relation between school and work and no mention of the *control* of education, an issue out of which the Tories have made so much political capital.

The Socialist Education Association is the affiliated education body of the Labour Party. It restricts itself to playing the role of semi-official policy advisor, from a centre-left standpoint, and abstains from any involvement in union activity, or indeed activity of any sort. Symptomatically, the current issue of its journal *Socialism and Education*, published at the most critical stage of the teachers' pay campaign, makes no mention of it whatsoever.

Nevertheless, the SEA is the only organised educational current in the Labour Party, and as such represents left Labour thinking. It was responsible for the resolution on education passed at the 1986 Labour Party Conference, and in the current issue of the SEA journal its president Caroline Benn presents an alternative perspective for Labour based upon it. Unlike Radice, she acknowledges the failure of 1960s and 70s Labourism — its abandonment of comprehensivisation in favour of attempts to 'placate elitist and business opinion (which is still going on)'. (It was Callaghan in 1976 who launched the 'Great Debate' that prepared the ground for the Tories' pro-industry thrust).

However, Caroline Benn's recognition of the conflict of class interests and Labour's capitulation does not lead her to a clear statement of working-class education interests today. She recognises the need to reappropriate and redefine concepts of standards and equality, democracy and freedom, but she does not do so in terms of class, gender and race. Instead she appeals to the 'personal development of all'. As the SEA Conference resolution puts it, 'The purpose of education...is for the benefit of the individual'. This simply begs the real question. There is no 'individual' existing prior to social relations of class, race and gender from whose essential 'needs' a programme for education can be read off.

As ever, the Tories have a much clearer understanding of their class interests in education than Labour, and Caroline Benn and the SEA's alternative, though it contains specific proposals which should be supported, is not adequate to the task of engaging with the Tory project and articulating the educational interests of the oppressed. For example: is all we can say on the content of education that we need a 'broad and balanced curriculum'? Is challenging racism and sexism really just a question of assigning to LEAs the duty of overseeing equal opportunity practices?

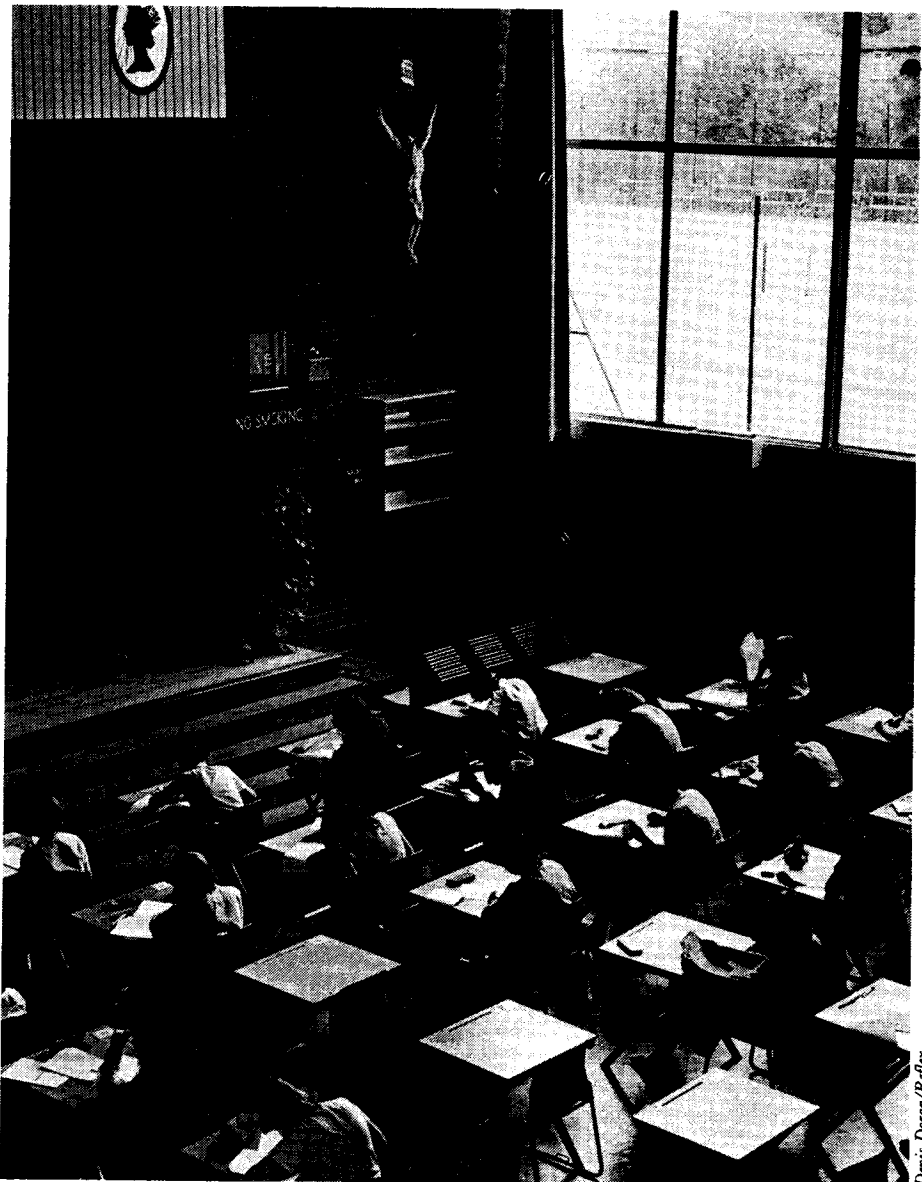
Is all we have to say on the rights of parents that they should be 'consulted', and have the right to see records — hardly an inspiring vision of popular democracy to seize the initiative from the Tories. Do we really need 'positive proposals for developing

### The NUT hankers after the golden age of the '60s

the private sector to serve the needs of the whole community'? And can Labour simply lay hold of the DES and turn the system round with a new Education Act? 'Equality and the comprehensive principle...have never been more alive, nor in better health', says Benn, yet an opinion poll has just shown that half the population support the return of the grammar school system. The SEA minimise the problems, yet their solutions are insufficiently radical to achieve the sort of educational reforms that are capable of generating genuine popular support.

#### The NUT

The NUT leadership essentially occupies the same ground as the Labour leadership, and shares the same myopic interpretation of the Tory project. As Ken Jones points out in the current issue of *Socialist Teacher*, the Tory politics of educational offensive are discounted as a smokescreen for the 'real issues' of the cuts. The



**Exam time in a convent school in North London**

'Broad Left' leadership of the union, largely Kinnockite with a small and declining CP component, hankers after the golden age of the sixties when class interests seemed to happily coincide, education was expanding and the NUT was welcome in the corridors of power.

The NUT is now faced with the choice, posed most sharply in the pay campaign, of adopting a class struggle perspective or pinning their hopes on the return of Labour and a re-run of the past. Baker is in the process of imposing a pay deal which worsens teachers' conditions and subjects them more closely to management. He is introducing a Bill in parliament which will remove teachers' rights to negotiate pay and conditions with their employers. If these moves are successful and the Tories win the next election, we are likely to see moves to break up the national pay structure in favour of local market forces, to remove teachers' right to strike, and perhaps to take the employment of teachers out of the hands of local authorities altogether.

#### **A socialist alternative?**

The Tories have a vision of education which they are beginning to translate into reality. What alternative conception should the left be advocating?

Developing elements of a socialist education isn't just a ques-

tion of replacing their policy-makers with ours and producing a blueprint; it is question of establishing a dialogue between educationalists, politicians, and popular interests, particularly the labour movement and the oppressed. Schools for most people are closed, often alienating places, where the 'professionals' exclude popular involvement except on their terms. They have to be opened up, made genuinely accountable, not to capitalist industry or the Tories' media-manipulated individualism, but to informed collective popular participation.

What are the implications of this for the control of education? How under Labour should power be distributed between government, local authority and school levels? There is no abstract 'democratic' solution: it depends on what is the most favourable balance of class forces at each level. Labour will need to skilfully combine two things: strong central powers capable of establishing and enforcing radical policy frameworks, particularly on Tory LEAs and uncooperative heads and governing bodies; and greater popular involvement at each level. This should entail importing radical staff into key positions in the DES (incorporating the MSC) and the Inspectorate, and the purging of reactionary elements. Labour can't simply lay hold of the state education apparatus as presently composed.

It also means the establishing of a national Education Council, representing popular and professional interests, with the role of





encouraging and focussing informed public debate and generating policy proposals. It should also entail the development of policy aims and frameworks at government level, and the vigorous use of selective funding to encourage their implement and similar measures by Labour LEAs including the maximum cooption of elected representatives of parents' groups, organisations of women, the black communities etc onto Education Committees.

Further elements of a democratic programme include firstly the opening up of school governing bodies, with equal representation of LEA, parents, teachers and the community (and in secondary schools, students), with the representatives to be elected and the meetings to be public. Secondly formally constituted teachers' councils in every school. Thirdly encouragement of governing bodies and teachers' councils to abolish the existing

### radical education can provide the best development of basic skills

role of headteacher if they wish, in favour of either the regular election of a head, or running the school as a collective (to which surely primary schools at least are ideally suited). And fourthly the encouragement of school students to organise: including the right to a pupils' council in every secondary school; the right to organise in, for example, girls' groups or on issues such as CND; full rights for the NUS in tertiary colleges.

#### Content

It must be acknowledged that there are many problems in education that we simply don't know the best way of dealing with. For example, the problem of working-class 'under-achievement' has proved intractable up till now: we have some ideas, but they need to be proved in practice. So the first point to make is that developing socialist education policies requires experiment, and a Labour government should inaugurate *an explosion of progressive experimental projects*, liberating the abilities and energies of teachers, pupils and communities. There should be two main themes to the left's programme for what is taught, and how, in schools. First, we will exhaustively rethink and rework every aspect of schooling necessary to *root out the inequalities faced by working class pupils, and especially girls and blacks*. Secondly, we will develop *an education to change the world*, not reproduce it as it is. These two themes are interdependent. We reject the counterposition that the right makes between radical egalitarian education and 'standards'. On the contrary, we will demonstrate that a radical education can provide the best context for the meaningful development of basic skills and of collective self-discipline.

There is general agreement on the left around such policies as nursery education for all who want it; increased funding for resources; a substantial reduction in class size; a broad common core curriculum for all; and moves to abolish streaming. But underlying these is the need for something more fundamental, and that is to change the relationship of working class pupils to knowledge. For middle-class pupils, school knowledge and the social forms it comes in correspond both to family 'cultural capital' and to their future work destinies. For working-class pupils, school knowledge is much more likely to be alien to the cultural capital they acquire through the family and through working-class youth cultures, and to their destinies in the labour market.

Of course there is nothing school can do to change the fundamental causes, which lie in the social division of labour under capitalism. But what it can do is to open up the whole of social life outside school starting from pupils' own experiences to

critical educational investigation, both by bringing it into the classroom, and by exploiting it directly through off-site enquiry and participation, so helping to break down the barriers between school and society, between theoretical and practical, between school knowledge and personal knowledge. This is the real-life context for developing the curriculum, including anti-racism, anti-sexism and other aspects of political education, and a critical vocational education.

These conceptions are not utopian. On the contrary, they build upon what already exists, even under Thatcher, in many progressive classrooms and in the limited but significant experiences we have of popular involvement in the schools. Nor are they merely items for the agenda of a future Labour government. On the contrary, they have to be fought for now, and they will have to be fought for under Labour. The nucleus of their potential support can already be seen in the struggles taking place in education today and the forces active in them: the large radical minority in the NUT, whose clearest organised expression is the Socialist Teachers Alliance; the work of radical teachers; organisations of parents, including those who have supported the teachers' action; the black communities; left-wing councils such as ILEA, Brent and Haringey.

Many of the most advanced current examples we have are in relation to racism and education, and I want to mention three of them. Honeyford's views are well-known; less well-known is the militant character of the community campaign that forced his dismissal, involving demonstrations, pickets and a school boycott. Equally militant was the Campaign Against Racism in Schools' campaign for anti-racist reforms at Daneford school in East London in 1985. After eleven people were arrested on a picket of the Education Offices, over seventy schools took unofficial strike action and over two thousand teachers demonstrated in protest. And now in Brent the local Black Teachers Collective and the STA are jointly active in defending the left-wing black-led council's anti-racist policies against the right.

For one final example of what is possible, take the case of William Patten Infant School in North London, where the teachers used the school to collect food during the miners' strike, and took a half-day unofficial strike in their support; closed the school for a day to lead a deputation of parents to the Home Office to protest against the threatened deportation of two Turkish children; and demonstrated against an open day public

### socialism will develop an education to change the world

relations exercise at the local police station. Their commitment is also reflected in the work they do in the classroom.

Those are the forces struggling in and for education today. There is one significant weakness, and that is the absence of an organised current within the Labour Party with an adequate programme and above all an active campaigning orientation, integrating work in the Labour Party, the teachers' unions and the community. The SEA does not play this role. The STA does only as an organisation in the NUT, though many of its members are active as individuals on education in the party. It is positive that struggles in education are being taken up by left groupings like Labour Briefing, but sooner or later it will also be necessary to organise the equivalent of the STA in the Labour Party, either as a section of a broader left current, or as a single-issue campaigning body to transform or displace the SEA. ●

#### Notes

1. In *Socialism and Education* 12/3, Autumn 1986.
2. *Socialist Teacher* 34, December 1986.
3. *TES* 1-2-85.

Corazon Aquino

# The Philippines after Marcos



Piers Cavendish/Reflex

The fall of the corrupt right wing dictator Ferdinand Marcos was a dramatic and unexpected breakthrough for the opposition in the Philippines. Here **DAVE KELLAWAY** examines the character of the Aquino government, the role of the military and the future of the left, especially the powerful Philippines Communist Party (CCP).

EVERYTHING IN the Philippines came unhinged with the 'February revolution' as the mass mobilisations in Manila forced Enrile (Minister of Defence under both Marcos and Aquino) to change horses in midstream and ensure Aquino's victory.

The Reagan administration only ditched Marcos at the very last minute. Its plans for reform with continuity, a controlled 'democratic opening' with Marcos still in control, were upset by the strength of mass electoral support for Aquino who was seen as the candidate able to finish with the dictatorship. Despite support for Aquino in the Congress and Senate and even among some elements in the administration the Aquino triumph was no palace coup orchestrated by Washington.

Apart from its economic interests and its concern about the growing strength of the NPA (the New People's Army guerrilla movement), US imperialism is most concerned with keeping its huge Subic Bay and Clarke military bases which are even more strategically important after the loss of Vietnam. Cory Aquino did not seem to provide the necessary insurance against the communists

or any movement to get rid of the bases. The contradictions and divisions within US ruling circles that the Reagan policy in relation to Marcos provoked could reemerge with a vengeance in relation to measures taken by the Aquino government.

## The Aquino government

All the left or progressive forces have to define themselves in relation to the new government. Many of them talk of 'helping' or

## the new Aquino government is bourgeois and pro-imperialist

strengthening the liberal and progressive wing of the government. At the same time they admit, however, that the progressive forces are in a minority and that the 'revolution' is 'unfinished'. None of the left forces including the CCP are demanding the immediate resignation of 'progressive' elements in the government in order that they will not be

compromised. At this stage the dismantling of the dictatorship is seen as the crucial precondition for establishing the political space for further progressive advance.

While this may be a correct approach in the initial period it would be wrong to transform it into a systematic political adaptation to what the 'progressive' elements consider 'realistic'. It is one thing to not make the removal of honest progressives a priority or a major question. It is quite another for anybody claiming to defend the working class and poor peasants to actually join such a government or to refuse to press their just demands. The upcoming constitutional plebiscite and legislative elections will be a test for the left's relations with the government.

Apart from the measures dismantling the dictatorship and introducing a form of bourgeois democracy the Aquino government has a relatively coherent capitalist economic project. The Marcos regime was inhibiting a more modern capitalist development. Behind Aquino are bourgeois forces who reject the capitalist irrationality and corruption of 'crony capitalism'. Pro-Aquino forces like

the sugar and coconut planters suffered economically from the financial stronghold of the Marcos dynasty.

The Aquino government also has support from bourgeois forces interested in developing the domestic market and placing some restrictions on foreign capital. There is a considerable economic crisis. GNP has fallen three years running, investment is down and there is a \$26 billion foreign debt.

Aquino successfully used her support in the US Congress and Senate to get increased aid from the US. In turn the IMF has been accommodating about recycling the debt. The IMF are aware that with Aquino there is a chance that the lid can be kept on explosive social contradictions — two-thirds of the population live below the official poverty line of \$140 a month and 70% of the people depend on agriculture for a living. Land reform, as in most dependent countries, is the key question.

Aquino is aware that if she wants to win the hearts and minds of the Communist Party (CCP) base in the countryside she has to come up with some form of land reform. But

### land reform is the key question for Aquino

there are entrenched economic interests of a modern agribusiness to contend with. In areas like Negros, the sugar island, the effects of the February revolution continue but real changes in the harsh poverty and the repression of the landowners' private armies are not apparent.

The new Aquino government is unquestionably bourgeois. Pro-imperialist forces are predominant in it. But it also enjoys a legitimacy from having been brought to power by an anti-dictatorial uprising. This popular legitimacy is stronger than one conferred by a normal electoral victory and is sanctified by the powerful Catholic Church.

The government is therefore able to employ a populist style symbolised by its references to 'people's power', and by the moral authority of the president. The events around Enrile's failed 'coup' bear out the Filipino left's analysis of the unstable and transitional character of the first Aquino government.

Any summary analysis stating it is just another capitalist government and that the key task is only for the left to keep independent of it and raise programmatic demands fails to grasp the contradictions or provide a framework for setting out the tasks. The building of alliances in particular has to come to terms with the real forces active in the situation.

We have seen in Latin America, particularly in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay how 'reformist' governments carrying out a democratic transition after years of bloody dictatorship can win mass support. These governments have even managed to trade off political reforms with economic austerity at least initially.

### Ceasefire and elections

What is the situation today? Enrile's failure has strengthened both Aquino and Ramos, the head of the armed forces. The military hierarchy did not want any adventures at this stage but wants to reunify a divided army and make sure the anti-military elements in the Aquino government are removed or wea-



**General Fidel Ramos (above) commander of the armed forces, currently backing Aquino. Below is Enrile defence minister sacked by Aquino**



kened. Some reports have talked of a reshuffle to the right, dropping the progressive ministers but this has not been confirmed at the time of writing. Opinion polls place Army Chief of Staff Ramos just behind Aquino in popularity. He is ready to step in if Aquino falters in her project or imperialism later decides her government is too risky.

The ceasefire is a gain for Aquino and an opportunity for the CCP. The CP-led guerrillas, the New People's Army (NPA) has not had to dump arms nor disband. Its areas of control are not going to be attacked during the ceasefire. The CCP has been given the prestige of being negotiated with on a national level. Its fighters will have time to rest and to reorganise. The NPA has staged impressive political rallies in many regional centres to mark the ceasefire. The military are not entirely happy hence the fuss it made about the NPA carrying guns in population centres. A Filipino columnist quoted in the *Guardian* refers to the guerrillas' seizure of the propaganda initiative:

'The strongest propaganda message that has enveloped the country is the NDF message, not that of the government. It means the government has been badly outmanoeuvred. Now the NDF is in Manila and has become a real force in the daily conduct of the Government. The tragedy is that very few seem to realise what it means.'

Imperialist analysts are worried that a long ceasefire — as long as the NPA maintains its forces — could allow the NPA to regroup and then eventually re-launch the armed struggle. Of course the Aquino government is hoping to win a political victory over the CCP base by winning a massive majority in the upcoming elections. Then, their argument goes, a limited land reform might erode the communist base to proportions which would allow a military victory over the rebels. Conversely the CCP and other left forces could take advantage of the vast new political space to develop an alternative political project.

### the regime is moving to the right

The exact positions of all the left forces towards the new government and Aquino's 'reformist project' will become clearer in the upcoming elections.

### The CCP's errors

If Reagan got the February elections wrong perhaps the main component of the Philippines left, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP), got it just as wrong. It saw the election as a farce without significance. It argued that participation in such elections would only create illusions among the masses, that Marcos was going to win anyway and so the moderate, bourgeois opposition would decline further in influence and there would be a continued polarisation between itself and the dictatorship. In fact instead of refurbishing the regime the February elections deprived it of all legitimacy and brought mass legal, political action centre stage.

How did the CCP get so out of touch with the mood of the people? This is a party that split with about 100 people from the old Stalinist PKP (which eventually ended up

Piers Cavendish/Reflex

Piers Cavendish/Reflex



supporting Marcos) on a Maoist course. Through revolutionary action against the dictatorship it became the dominant and only truly national left force in the country leading a 25,000-strong NPA and active coalitions like BAYAN with several million members. It went into sectarian and dogmatic retreat in 1982 centralising its mass work in the various fronts more as a democratic shield than as a real united front. It also had a rigid strategic conception of the theory of prolonged people's war. Because of this the elections were seen as a passing event, with no relevance to the overall political-military accumulation of forces.

Of course there was opposition inside the CCP to the boycott position. Reports indicate the decision was taken on a close vote inside the executive committee. 'Joma' (J. Sison) founder and historic leader of the CCP, who was released after the elections, was putting forward a minimum participation position as early as February.

On the ground CCP activists did not always toe the hard boycott line. After February the party made a self-criticism admitting it committed a 'grave tactical error'. It accepted that the dynamism of the bourgeois opposition was underestimated. The extent of the regime's isolation was not understood and the party's agitation was addressed to a narrow vanguard instead of the masses. Criticism of the leadership on organisational points was also made and a congress is said to be planned (there has been no congress since foundation!).

More interesting still are the contributions made by certain leaders about the party's traditional Maoist analysis of Philippine society as semi-colonial and semi-feudal and about the weakness of the prolonged people's war strategy. The influence of events in Central America on some of these cadres is demonstrated in the suggestion that sectarian attitudes to the united front should be looked at. With the new political space opened up and now further extended by the ceasefire a Peoples Party (Partido ng Bayan) has been set up by Joma Sison and is clearly a key project of the CCP.

Unlike in a less-developed semi-colonial country like pre-revolutionary Nicaragua there are a range of other progressive forces competing for mass influence with the nat. dems. (national democratic current) as the CCP is dubbed in the Philippines.

The soc. dems. (the social democratic current) has more affinity with Christian Democracy than something like the Labour Party. Its origins are very much linked to the Catholic Church which is the country's overwhelmingly dominant religion. This current was particularly inspired by Jesuits who set out consciously to provide an anti-communist alternative, including by establishing American style 'free' trade unions.

Martial law, the influence of liberation theology, Latin American experiences and the revolutionary example of the NPA activists inspired many younger soc. dem. militants to take more radical positions. A whole current, Christians for National Liberation (led by 'Ed' de la Torre) went into the na-



**Woman guerrilla of the New People's Army at a training camp. Her daughter has been smuggled in: it's the first time they have met since her birth.**



Photo: Carenish/Reflex

**New People's Army, the fighting arm of the CCP**

tional democratic current although maintaining its autonomy. Today the moderate social democrats are among Aquino's closest advisors and the more progressive wing are both inside and outside the government.

Small Marxist groups like the Independent Caucus which broke with the national democratic-led Bayan coalition over its unity tactics have seen their political influence grow because of their involvement along with progressive social democratic forces in the pro-Aquino coalition. The Independent Caucus came about after failure of unity moves between several small groups and the CCP at the beginning of the 1980s.

The groups involved were in agreement about a democratic conception of socialism, the use of Marxist and non-Maoist analysis of Philippine society, a non-manipulative use of the united front and on the need to present socialism openly as a solution.

This set them apart from the CCP's national democratic approach which tends to separate the two phases of national liberation and socialism. Independent Caucus activists are involved in a further regroupment pro-

ject of the non-CCP socialist left called Bisig (see IVP 8 Dec, 1986).

The latter groups, progressive social democrats, community-based organisations and human rights bodies have formed Lakas (Peoples Power) in the wake of the elections. Essentially it represents the forces which supported the Aquino campaign. A declaration dated March 2 catches the ambiguous politics of this current:

'[In February 1986] the decisive factors ... were the power of the people, the power of faith and the unwavering leadership of Corason Aquino ... the Popular revolution involved the seizure of state power by the people, it was essentially a political act. However it remains unfinished. To become a social revolution, social relations and social structure need to be transformed... To accomplish these tasks, the people's power must now be systematically articulated and translated into a cohesive, organised and sustained force, which will promote people's democracy, national sovereignty, justice and equity.' (IVP 103 14 July 1986)

Declarations by CCP leaders in praise of Aquino do not yet amount to capitulation and participation in a bourgeois government or even non-participatory external support (since Aquino has ruled out such participation in any case). If there was such a division over the electoral boycott there would surely be even bigger internal ructions over any such major change of position.

The regime is adjusting to the right but the Enrile/pro-Marcos people are still a force to be reckoned with (they intend to stand against Aquino in the elections), the army is still not reunified, the mass movement is still in a big upturn, the left is still strong and Aquino's political project can still produce big contradictions inside the ruling class and for imperialism. Events in 1987 could be as important as in 1986.

● This article has been based on the extensive coverage of the Philippines in *International Viewpoint* a fortnightly magazine published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. [E]



Demonstrating for Lula's release

## Which way for Marxists in...

# The Brazilian Workers Party

THE EMERGENCE of the Workers Party (PT) in Brazil has been widely regarded as one of the most promising developments in the international working class movement over the last decade. It has been referred to, alongside such varied phenomena as COSATU in South Africa, Solidarnosc in Poland, the Greens in Germany, even the Labour left in Britain, as a central part of the recomposition of working-class politics.

The significance and lessons of the PT have been hotly debated, and not only in Latin America. Perhaps most importantly, in South Africa militants of the independent Black trade unions have looked with interest at the Brazilian experience in combining militant trade unionism with an independent political organisation.

The PT was formed out of the big wave of strikes that swept the industrial region of São

The Brazilian Workers Party (PT) emerged out of the huge São Paulo metalworkers' strikes in the early 1980s, and is one of the most novel left-wing developments in Latin America. **STUART PIPER** looks at the background. We also publish an interview with **JOAO MACHADO** a leader of the *Em Tempo* tendency in the PT.

Paulo in 1978 and 1979 (a region which some claim now comprises the largest single concentration of industrial workers anywhere in

the world). Its core leaders remain the trade unionists who led those strikes, best symbolised in the figure of the metalworkers' leader Luís Inácio da Silva, widely known as 'Lula'. However, from the beginning, three other sectors have taken part in developing the PT, alongside the militant trade unionists.

First, and numerically the most important, is the progressive wing of the church, those currents broadly identifying with the ideas of 'liberation theology'. With their extensive network of Christian based communities among the urban and rural poor, these currents have had a decisive influence in extending the PT's popular base beyond its initial roots amongst industrial workers. Indeed in last November's elections it was the PT's vote in the countryside which increased, while its urban vote remained stagnant.

Secondly, there is an array of intellectuals and independents with widely divergent views. Many of the most right-wing among these, including a group of career politicians who dominated the PT's parliamentary group in the early days, have now left the party, or been kicked out for refusing to abide by its policies especially its decision not to support the main bourgeois candidate in the 1985 transition to civilian rule. Another loose grouping calling themselves 'autonomists' have strongly anti-Leninist views and seem to be heading in the direction of social democratic politics.

Further to the left, a very influential group of Marxists, some of whose history goes back to the urban guerrilla movements of the 1960s, identify closely with the Cuban revolution. Thirdly, there are the organised currents of the revolutionary left.

Several factors have helped to strengthen the PT's political resolve over the last couple of years. The most important is the renewed combativity of the working class which has accompanied the transition to civilian rule. This has been clear in a fresh surge of industrial action, reaching out to new industries and new regions, and given expression in the founding and rapid growth of a militant trade union confederation, the CUT, closely allied to the PT itself. The CUT has rapidly outstripped its moderate rival, the CGT (where reformist 'communists' support old-fashioned union bureaucracies), and only last month forced the latter to back its own call for a one-day general strike against new price rises and the foreign debt.

The third factor in the PT's positive evolution, and by no means the least important, is the existence of organised revolutionary currents in its midst, consistently arguing for independent class politics and organising for militant action. Several of these have come together in a 'left bloc' which last June received nearly thirty per cent of delegates' votes at the PT's Fourth National Convention, electing a similar proportion of the party's incoming National Committee.



## Interview with Joao Machado

João Machado is a leader of the revolutionary Marxist current organised around the journal *Em Tempo*. In the earlier part of the interview, he described how the *Em Tempo*'s recent congress had discussed the political situation facing Brazilian workers and the need to prevent any stabilizing of a conservative, anti-working class regime through the institutions of the civilian 'New Republic', as well as the political tasks facing the trade union movement. The interview continues...

*What do you see as the general strategic questions facing revolutionaries in Brazil, and in particular how does their participation in the PT fit in?*

FOR us party-building means building the Workers Party (PT). The question here is how to strengthen the PT and help it advance towards becoming a mass revolutionary party. The issue is also how we as a revolutionary Marxist current fit into this process, particularly in relation to the other revolutionary currents with whom we are seeking greater political unity in order to contribute more to the party's development.

*And did the discussion leave any major debates unresolved?*

Of course we can't pretend to have solved every problem. In general we have achieved greater political clarity in the course of debating with the rest of the PT and CUT, exchanging experiences and trying to develop shared ideas based on the experience of the workers' movement both in Brazil and internationally.

As for the questions which remain unresolved for us, I would pick out two main ones. Firstly, there are a series of debates over strategy for the Brazilian revolution. Brazil is today a dependent capitalist country, marked by profound inequalities, but with a not inconsiderable degree of capitalist development. We

would call it a semi-industrialized, dependent country.

For that reason, the Brazilian revolution will be different from, for example, the Russian revolution: capitalism today is much more developed, we are not confronting a rudimentary state apparatus like that of Tsarism, and the bourgeoisie's ideological domination is today much more difficult to deal with. The weight of movements like those against the oppression of women or blacks will be especially great. On the other hand, the forms of struggle and of power, like soviets, insurrection and the general strike, will certainly have a prominent place here.

The Brazilian revolution will also be different from the revolution in the imperialist countries, which do not have to confront the problem of imperialist domination, nor the tremendous inequality of a country like ours, with all the importance this lends to the land question and to the urban popular movement in the shanty towns and so on. But it will be even more different from experiences closer to us like those of Nicaragua or Cuba: here the development of capitalism, of the state, and of the bourgeoisie, is incomparably greater.

In other words, there is a whole range of international experience for us to assimilate, but which we cannot simply repeat. And this discussion has to be posed for us, in the second half of the 80s, in a much more concrete fashion than the





**Brazilian metalworkers strike in 1980: 'the workers united will never be defeated'**

debates we had, for example, in the 60s, over whether the revolution would be socialist or bourgeois-democratic. That debate has clearly been superseded.

A second unresolved question, which is related to the general problem of strategy for the Brazilian revolution, is that of how to apply, in the here and now, a united front policy.

*But what about the relationship between a Marxist organisation and the PT? Isn't there an inconsistency here? Doesn't this amount, as some people say, to having a party within a party?*

There's not the least inconsistency. Our position, when the process of building the PT began, was that there was no revolutionary workers party in the country, and that it was necessary to build one; we believed that a revolutionary party (and when we say party, we mean something with mass influence) could not be the result of simple growth by one or other of the existing revolutionary organisations, our own included. The general conception which we have for building revolutionary parties today is that various conditions have to be drawn together: processes of convergence and fusion amongst revolutionaries, the development of new, fighting, workers' vanguards, and the fusion of marxist cadre with the workers'

vanguard, leading to a higher stage of unity.

We see the building of the PT as just such a process, developing a broad working-class and popular vanguard, and at the same time involving a convergence of revolutionaries from a variety of origins. If successful, it will result in a revolutionary party. Within this process, our current puts forward decisive programmatic questions which are essential to a revolutionary party; for example, on the critique of Stalinism and the idea of socialist democracy, on class independence, on internationalism.

*But many members of the PT, and others, think that having an organised current inside the PT is disloyal, and that it would be more correct for each current to have its own party.*

I think there's a big mistake here. Why accuse us of disloyalty? Right from the beginning, no one has done more to build the PT than us. We defend our point of view clearly within the PT, we have out the debate with all other currents, and we abide by the decisions the party takes. Maybe we could be accused of disloyalty if we were some secret group trying to manipulate the party. In fact we do precisely the opposite.

And the idea that each current should form its own party is totally absurd. We

have to fight against fragmentation on the left; our aim should be to unite, not to divide. It is obvious that to be divided is to be weakened. What would become of the combative left if we launched our own separate party, the Castroites another, the Christians in the PT one or two more, the autonomists one of their own, and so on and so forth. This wouldn't lead to greater clarity. On the contrary, for the vast majority of people it would be just an enormous confusion, with the differences virtually unintelligible. It would be grotesque, and the left would look really ridiculous.

*What is your position on the new regulation governing tendencies within the PT, planned for early in 1987?*

Of course we think that regulation of this sort is positive and definitely needed. We are in favour, and we intend to operate in accordance with the norms adopted. On the other hand, certain conditions are necessary for such a regulation to be acceptable: it has really to guarantee the right to tendency, on a genuinely equal basis for all, with the right for each to express its point of view freely within the party; it cannot be used as a way of doing away with the existence of currents... **□**

# 'Don't Mention The War ...'

DAVY JONES

Ernest Mandel,  
*The Meaning of the Second World War*,  
Verso Books, £6.95.

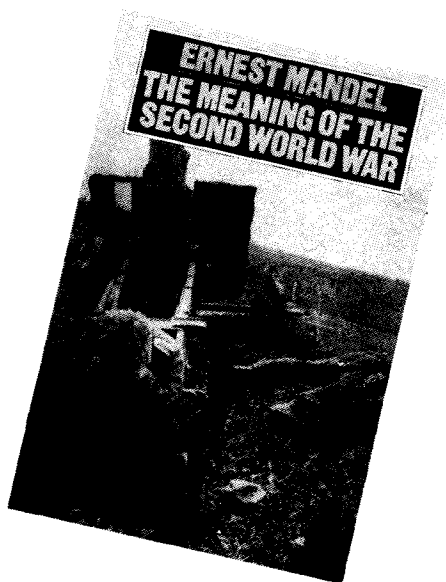
THE WAR shaped the world into which successive generations were born. The teaching of its causes, history and outcome equally shaped the consciousness and ideology of those generations.

From parents and school, comics and films I learned that 'we' had won the war against the fascists. The moral superiority of democracy had triumphed over extremism. The Americans had joined in (late, of course) and helped us, while the sly Italians kept changing sides. 'We' had rejected appeasement and stood firm against the Nazi aggressors in a rare and inspiring display of national unity and patriotism — 'Dunkirk spirit'. Finally the war had ended when the Americans were forced to drop the Bomb to curb the cruel and fanatical Japanese.

If you detect exaggeration, just remember how quickly those themes returned just a few years ago over the Falklands — class collaboration under the guise of national unity, standing up against the aggressor dictators, and racist Argv-bashing. Or how unilateral nuclear disarmament is equated with pre-war appeasement and giving in to totalitarianism. Never mind the irrationality and inaccuracy of it all — Germany and Japan are now on 'our' side, while the Soviet Union is on the 'other' side — the ideology of the war is still with us.

In a typically clear and synthetic account Mandel traces the causes of the different conflicts, the aims of the protagonists, the reasons for the eventual outcome, and its meaning for world politics. If the First World War was fought over the division of overseas markets by the expanding national capitals, the Second was about the subordination of other advanced industrial states' economies in order to achieve world hegemony. The war was the only and inevitable mechanism to bring the military and political balance of forces into line with the emerging industrial/financial one.

This war was only made possible by the defeat of the Chinese Revolution in 1927, the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany, the victory of Franco in Spain and the collapse of the French Popular Front.



Mandel rightly highlights the morally obscene role of the reformist and Stalinist leaderships responsible for these defeats, who opposed developing revolutions on the grounds of their potential loss of life, the net result of which was the loss of 80 million lives in the Second World War.

This first 'war within the war' was won by the United States whose enormous industrial/military capacity once fully harnessed and committed made the outcome almost inevitable. For example, Mandel cites the German author Dieter Petzina's estimates for arms production in billions of 1944 dollars as rising from 3.4 to 13.8bn for Germany between 1939 and 1942, 3.3 to 13.9 for the Soviet Union, and from 0.6 to 37.5 for the United States! Ensuring the world market was open to this mighty industrial/economic strength was the meaning of 'making the world safe for democracy'.

But there was also a second major 'war within the war' — that of the successful defence of the Soviet Union against the imperialist Nazi attempt to overturn the social gains of the October Revolution and to colonize the country. The enormous role of the Soviet Union scarcely figured in most popular accounts of the war that I encountered, blotted out by the Cold War. Yet the facts are staggering: 35% of the Red Army died in the first German blitzkrieg of 1941, three million Soviet prisoners of war captured by Germany by 1942, four fifths of the entire German Army were stationed in the

Soviet Union for substantial phases of the War, more Soviet losses in the single turning-point battle of Stalingrad than the United States suffered throughout the entire war. All sides underestimated the social and economic reserves of the Soviet planned economy.

Neither was the war all Europe and America. In Asia the Chinese people fought against imperialism and overthrew capitalism just four years after the war 'ended'. Various other Asian colonial peoples fought similar wars for national liberation, some such as that in Indochina reaching a successful socialist revolution only decades later and after suffering greater destructive bombing than in the entire Second World War. And in occupied Europe wars for national liberation were fought, some of which subsequently 'grew over' into the overthrow of capitalism as in Yugoslavia and Albania, others as in Greece ending in bloody defeat through the collusion of Stalin and the Western Allies.

The final act of the war epitomised the cynical inhumanity of the imperialist protagonists. Overwhelming evidence exists, including the testimony of General MacArthur, that the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had less to do with ending the war and more to do with warning former Allies, especially the Soviet Union, of the awesome power which the United States could potentially unleash. It culminated a long series of atrocities by 'our side' including the carpet bombing of Dresden, Hamburg, Cologne and Tokyo and Churchill's refusal to send aid to alleviate the 1943 Bengal famine in which 3 million died.

The enormously strengthened positions of the United States and Soviet Union after the war, combined with war weariness on all sides, led not to a direct conflict between the two main 'victors', but to a consolidation of their positions and the developing Cold War. Through the Marshall Plan the United States embarked on the rebuilding of capitalism in Western Europe and Japan firmly under American economic and military hegemony. The Soviet Union bolstered its position by abolishing capitalism in Eastern Europe. The Cold War and the campist ideology so prevalent in the international labour movement were the result. Neither did the war and the Bomb bring peace. Every year since 1945 has seen 'local wars', many initiated by imperialist intervention, whose total victims already surpass that of the First World War.

I found the analytical sections of Mandel's book more compelling than the description of its events. But no matter. It is the best Marxist account of the most important event of the 20th century ●

# international REVIEWS

## Living through Barbarossa

COLIN MEADE

K.S. Karol: *Solik: Life in the Soviet Union 1939-1946* Pluto Press £7.95

THE EXISTING world order is largely the product of the outcome of the Second World War. It is fundamental therefore for those of us who wish to question the pretensions of the powers that be to examine the history of that war. K.S. Karol's vivid, anecdotal and personal account of his experiences in the Soviet Union during the war is of considerable value in giving insights into one of the great outstanding issues of the historiography of the war: the roots of the resiliences of the Soviet Union in the face of the Nazi onslaught.

Karol, a Polish Jew with family in the Soviet Union, finds himself in Siberia when Poland is partitioned between Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939. He escapes and makes his way to his relatives in Moscow who succeed in getting him to the town of Rostov on Don, from where his family came. Here he resumes his schooling, is renamed 'Solik' (little salt) and joins the Komsomol. As a young party cadre, when the war comes he becomes a political commissar in the air force and in this role we follow him, and his companions through the vicissitudes of the early years of military disaster and revival, from Rostov to the Caucasus. The backbone of the book consists of the adventures of this group of young defenders of the Soviet Union, their friendships, love affairs, aspirations — and makeshift arrangements for dealing with day to day problems.

However across this picture of conscious and committed effort in the face of immense difficulties falls the shadow of the terror. Solik, from the start of his time in Rostov, has to conceal his family identity and recent history, and on 10 December 1942 catastrophe strikes. Solik's past catches up with him (although the reasons for his arrest is never completely clear) and he is dispatched into another, parallel world, the world of the Gulag. This is for him an unassimilable experience (it is written about in the third person) and causes a kind of inner withdrawal which persists after his release. The latter parts of the book are marked by a curious kind of split personality: on the one hand Solik continues to live his life in the Soviet Union and gets married; on the other he plans his departure to the newly liberated Poland.

He has by no means abandoned a socialist perspective however. His hope is that Stalinism will be overcome through the development of healthier variants of socialist regime in the countries to the west of the Soviet Union. This strategic conception seems to have been a common one among critical communists at that time — it appears for example in the memoirs of the German Communist Wolfgang Leonhard.



Others among Solik's acquaintances have different ideas. There is Kola, who is something of a deep entrust in the CPSU; there is Chourik who hopes that 'after the war Stalin will give a new impulse to Soviet socialism and take it in another direction, more in the spirit of Lenin's *State and Revolution* or Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.' These are people who have won the war and feel that they have the right to win the peace as well. Karol considers that the new wave of terror in the Soviet Union after the war was directed against the spirit of these kind of people. The pattern of the 1930s is repeated: Stalinism's counter-revolutionary role in the capitalist world is complemented by a smashing attack on the political vanguard in the Soviet Union

itself. The book ends as Karol leaves for Poland where he 'would be able to contribute (his) building block to the construction of this freer and more just society, the dream of which we shared.'

This dream, of course, was to be terminated by a brutal awakening. And Karol writes about his aspirations of that time from a distance. He maintains his objectivity and freshness of vision through the device of writing not about himself but "Solik" — the nickname given him in his Soviet high school on account of the non-socialist associations of Karol (Polish for King). Apart from its function as a facilitating device however the creation of several characters in one — there is Karol himself Solik and then again the 'Pojarnik', the inmate of the Gulag — also reflects the fragmentation of personal history consequent on the shattering experiences of the times. It also reflects the organised hypocrisy of Stalinised Soviet society itself: on the one hand a planned economy, on the other everywhere black market dealings; on the one hand equality, on the other institutional privilege; on the one hand socialist internationalism, on the other virulent nationalism.

This latter aspect is of vital importance to Karol. As he says 'I would not have found it possible to love Klava, nor to feel so attached to my friends, had they shown any nostalgia for a Greater pan-Slavic Russia or to the values that derive from it. On the contrary, they too believed in equality and freedom, in the incessant quest of men and women for the right to determine their lives, their fate.'

Stalin, however employed this repulsive pan-slavic ideology as an explanation and justification of Soviet war aims. Nationalism and xenophobia allowed — and allow — the Soviet leadership to make themselves understood in the thought world of leaders of imperialist states and creates a language which can even be shared with retired Major-Generals in Surrey. This popular front has a wide and long reach; the blurb on the back quotes John Berger to the effect that Karol has provided us with a "true book" about, *inter alia*, a "people's soul". But this is not true; it is about the hearts and minds of internationalist-minded individual people and it is this spirit of authentic humanism which will make the book — whatever the contemporary political orientation of the author — so attractive to adherents of Trotskyism, the single organised political current which defended an internationalist humanist outlook throughout the Second World War •

# Alan Turing Free mind versus national asset

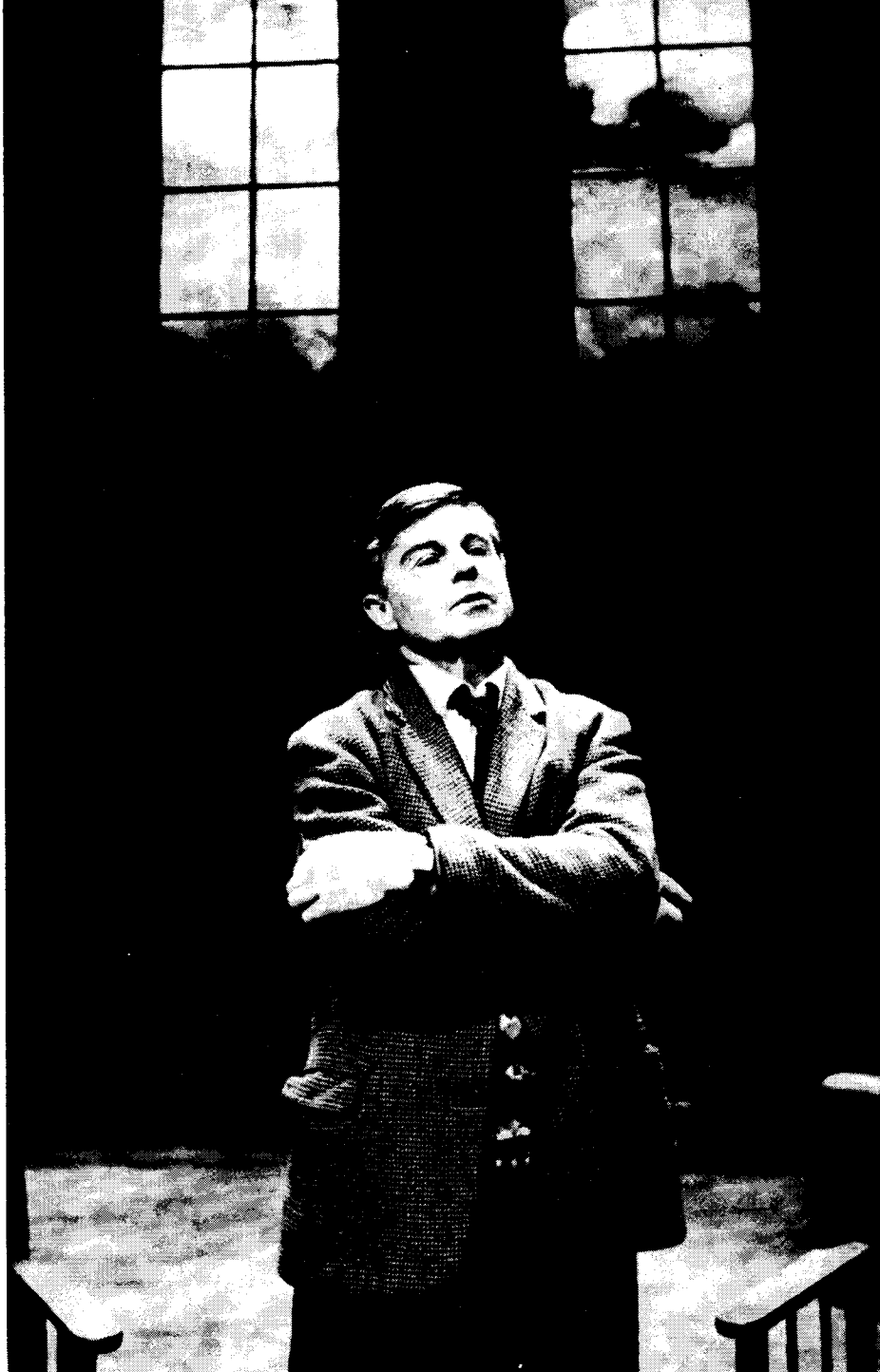
JUDITH ARKWRIGHT

*BREAKING THE CODE* (currently showing at the Haymarket and starring Derek Jacobi) tells the story of Alan Turing, mathematician and intellectual parent of the digital computer who, working for British intelligence at Bletchley Park during the Second World War, broke the all important German enigma code. This was the plan for a German invasion.

For this achievement Turing was feted in establishment circles (and was an especial favourite of Churchill), but not for long. For he also broke other codes which, to the upper middle classes into which he was born in 1912 were just as important. He was honest, openly atheist and a homosexual. For these crimes he was hounded by MI5 as a security risk after the war and eventually driven to suicide in 1954 two years after the court case in which he was charged as a homosexual.

The play deals very movingly with the personal tragedy of a young man educated in the free-thinking Cambridge of the 1930s and utterly incapable of comprehending the narrow-minded attitudes emerging in post-war Britain. At one point he expresses the fear that the notion of free will might all be a myth but feels he has no choice but to act as if it did exist. He explains that his passion for mathematics (developed in early childhood when he found numbers of great 'comfort') stemmed from its change since Einstein's work: now there were no longer right and wrong answers, as we are usually taught, but unending possibilities — in particular possibilities for building a machine that could think — the modern computer.

In a truly excellent performance as Turing Derek Jacobi portrays a man who could not lie and was totally lacking in



Derek Jacobi as Alan Turing

any of the social graces demanded by his class. And to the extent that at a time when homosexuality was totally illegal, he freely admits his sexuality to the police and is shocked and outraged that such self expression should cause offence or be against the law.

In the play Turing is portrayed above all as a lonely figure, condemned, despite his brilliance and hidden from history despite his inventions. It is a powerful blow struck against bigotry at this time of renewed homosexual phobia and a timely reminder of what it was like before homosexuals were given the minimum protection of the 1967 legislation.

But the general political context in which Turing's fate was sealed is more accurately set in the biography upon which the play is based called *Alan Turing — The enigma of intelligence* by Andrew Hodges, himself an activist in the gay movement, and published by Unwin

paperbacks.

Here we see how US sources, in the context of the cold war and in the run-up to the intervention in Vietnam began to put pressure on MI5 to tighten up security. Turing had toured the US during the war and contributed to the development of new intelligence techniques there. Interestingly enough this was also the time of a huge anti-gay campaign in the United States.

MI5 in turn put pressure on the Manchester (where Turing was based at the university) police to keep an eye on Turing and he was eventually charged with homosexuality and kept under close surveillance.

Both the play and the biography show very powerfully just how far the establishment is prepared to go to persecute someone who does not conform, whether that be socially, politically or morally and how this is done with particular venom when that someone is 'one of their own' •





# Touchdown!

**DAVID GRANT**

FEMALE CHARACTERS in *Dallas* and *Dynasty* have discovered that shoulder pads give a screen persona that extra 'hard', 'aggressive', dare I say 'male' edge. Yet long before this, American Football was girding up its gladiators of the gridiron to partake of a sport that is every bit as hard-hitting, calculating, brutal and a full of not-so-subtle ideology as J.R. and Sue Ellen's best efforts.

American Football is a multi-million dollar sport/industry in the States. Since Mrs Thatcher's return to office in 1983 it has, (co-incidentally?), made a big and growing impact in Britain, courtesy of the radical, innovative, creative initiative of Channel 4. Sport on TV — challenging stuff eh! Does Norman Tebbit know of this?

American Football, American television and the American Way-of-Life; the first without the other two would be impossible. Who says sport isn't political? But then who needs history, politics, philosophy and social sciences when you can get all of the fundamentals in one easy-to-understand package?

There are two opposing sides -*check-*; only one team can win -*set-*; there is lots of planning and preparation -*hut one-*; but in the end it's all a matter of brute strength -*hut two-*; we got to beat those bastards -*play action-*; and (best of all) all the competitors are male — TOUCH-DOWN! All a cold-war warrior needs to know to secure a post like National Security Adviser. As Reagan says and Thatcher mimicks, it's not so much a question of truth but a matter of communication. Lying is OK so long as you do it with conviction. After all, sometimes it's necessary to be economical with the truth.

American Football, like many other sports, is however not merely a reflection

of the neanderthal political mentality of the Reaganite right. It helps fuel and sustain the competitive macho values to which aggressive capitalist politics appeal. This also explains why it is, in common with soaps like *Dallas*, compelling, exciting and popular. In Britain up to twenty-six per cent of the adult population will watch some or all of the Superbowl XXI final. While more men than women watch it, in Britain thirty-eight per cent of the Channel Four audience are women. It is noticeable for anyone used to soccer crowds in Britain how many women are in the crowds for the big games in the States. A male preserve on the playing field it may be, but of interest *only* to men it is not.

These days American Football does not merely help promote the ideology of the new right in America. It is now supplying the politicians to articulate such views. For all of us hoping that Irangate spells the beginning of the end for the Reagan era, a certain Jack Kemp should be borne in mind. American Football hero and darling of the Republican Party activists, he is waiting on the side-bench to be called into the game. A rival for the Republican nomination, Kemp's politics have their origins in offense game-plans (hit'em hard and hit'em low) and that's before you allow for all those crunching tackles to the head!

'Hang on a minute!', I hear you all cry, this is a rather snooty *European* view of American Football — reminiscent of all those whingeing Social Democrats and Eurocommunists. 'Oh, if only the Americans wouldn't bully everyone around so much'. 'What happened to good old post-war consensus?'. 'Why can't they find someone like that nice Mr Kennedy?' (Maybe, like Bobby Ewing, he wasn't

dead after all and Nixon and Reagan have all been a dream!). 'Why do the Americans have to be so intent on winning?' 'Why are they so aggressive?'

Of course, the truth is that the values encapsulated in American Football are no different to those common to most sports. That includes the competitive and aggressive values associated with cricket, rugby, football, tennis... aggression, competition and macho behaviour are no more American than they are British than they are inherent to sport. They are part of a cultural system that defends the capitalist order.

The arrival of American Football in Britain is part of a process of the Americanisation of European culture that has been particularly successful in Britain, especially since the 'special' relationship was established after the war. This of course has a lot to do with the pathetic weakness of British culture, especially working class culture, but that's another story. Indeed, unmistakably American styles of clothes, haircuts and music are very popular among young people in Britain (again). And why not?

Yet anti-American sentiment is quite popular with some on the left these days. Some even go so far as to complain of American *imperialist* domination of Britain's economy and culture. This is just so much cheap, ignorant reformist nonsense. It is not so much the American form as the capitalist content that socialists should oppose, whether it be American missiles or American Football.

Accepting that means arguing for the primary struggle to be waged against the economic, social and ideological power of our own capitalist (and also imperialist) ruling class. Which is where we part company with our Social Democratic and Eurocommunist comrades. Now I'm not arguing that many are not right to complain about the amount of competitive macho sport we get on TV. But it does seem to me disturbing that people feel happy to single out American Football for special criticism, apparently on the basis that it is, wait for it... American!

This, of course, raises questions about what socialists think about sport under capitalism, and not just in an abstract way. There is much confusion about these issues. Some comrades express the view that soccer is some sort of historic gain for the workers movement. Others express horror at the thought of socialists enjoying anything as competitive and aggressive as American Football. Perhaps a debate will follow. It seems odd to me that socialists should deny themselves (and others if they had power) enjoyment.

Aggressive, competitive, American yes; but American Football is also exciting and compelling. Anyone for a Budweiser? ●



# **nternational**

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