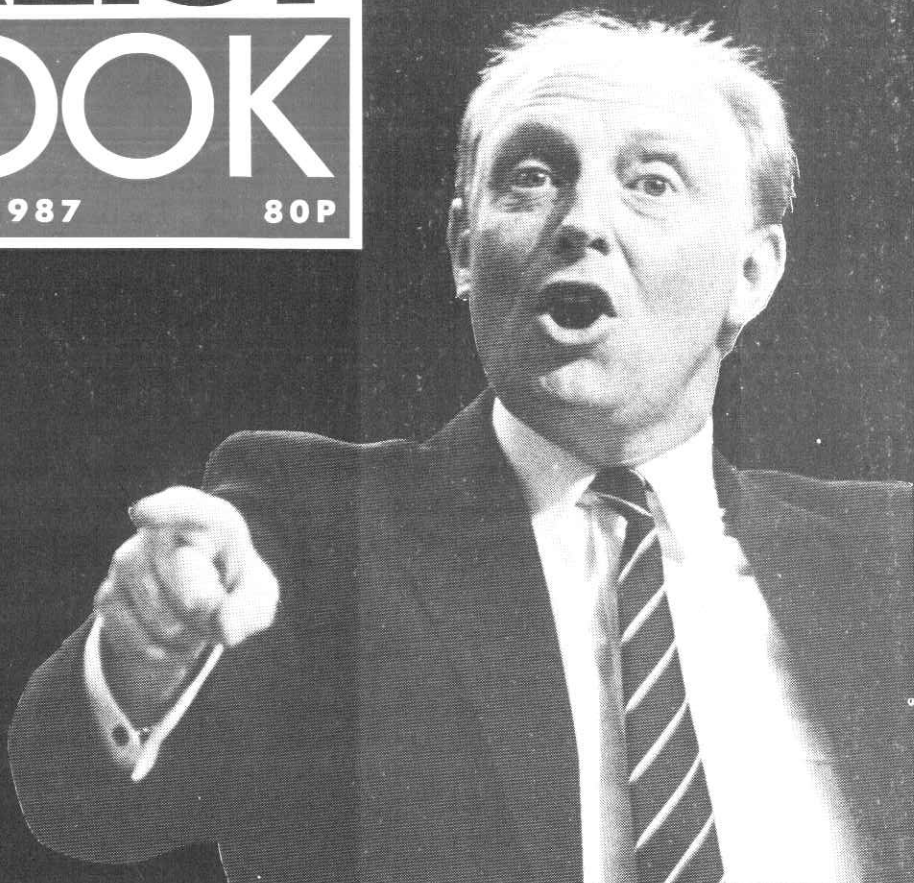


# **SOCIALIST OUTLOOK**

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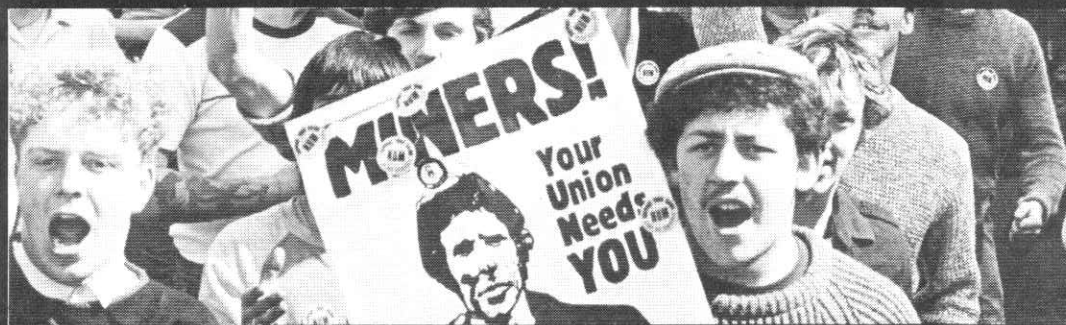
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# **VOTE**

# **LABOUR**



# **BUT**

# **FIGHT FOR SOCIALIST POLICIES**



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## Aboard the empty bandwagon

THEY SAY an empty pot makes the most noise: nobody could prove that by Neil Kinnock, whose election offensive appears to have ground to a halt even before anyone noticed it had started.

Despite the windy speechifying, trendy videos and the scrapping of the red flag for modish pastel shades of bland grey and yuppie peach, Kinnock has proved himself the Lawrie MacMenemy of British politics, taking over pledging First Division results, but delivering only the threat of relegation.

Above all, Kinnock won the leadership because he was seen by his patrons in the union bureaucracy as the answer to the problem of media presentation, as a real contrast from the donkey-jacketed duffer who carried the blame for the 1983 election debacle.

In the event, few Labour leaders can have so accurately matched Winston Churchill's jibe that 'An empty cab drew up — and out got Clem Attlee'. In place of a dynamic, media projection, Kinnock has been pushed into a continual retreat from pillar to post under pressure from the media, apparently lacking the slightest conception of how to fight back. Meanwhile the most adept Labour politicians — especially Callaghan, now knighted for services to NATO and the ruling class — have shown brilliant timing and technique in their public interventions, each time successfully prodding Kinnock further to the right and away from conference policies with which they disagree.

One problem for Kinnock is that no amount of glossy media packaging can conceal the fact that behind the hollow facade of razzmatazz there is almost nothing there — even his conference rhetoric and jokes have been jettisoned in the creation of a marketing executive's identikit 'popular' image.

Another reason why the obsessive focus on media presentation has flopped is that the more bland Labour's policies have become, the more boring and less newsworthy they appear. More basic is the harsh fact that the media are in the hands of the ruling class — and the ruling class is not keen to make life easy for the Labour Party. Instead the tabloids revel in any opportunity not only to witch hunt the 'loony left' but to link the 'extremists' in the public mind with the Kinnock leadership. The more Kinnock engages in the ritual sacrifice of principles and appeases racists by attacking black sections, the worse he makes things for himself.

Above all, Kinnock and his shadow cabinet like Zombies flitting between the graves of discarded conference policies, are clearly unable to come to terms with the fact that the capitalist class neither needs nor

wants Labour's reformist, class collaborationist option at this stage of the game.

The political issues after eight years of Thatcher are brutally obvious for all to see: mass unemployment, growing poverty, low pay, crumbling NHS and education services, union rights and civil liberties under fire, racist violence, Thatcher's undisguised love of nuclear weaponry; the list is endless. Yet each opportunity that opens up to highlight these questions brings a more inept and reactionary response from Kinnock and his front bench team, who appear to have no sense of timing and no trace of any ability to strike a popular chord.

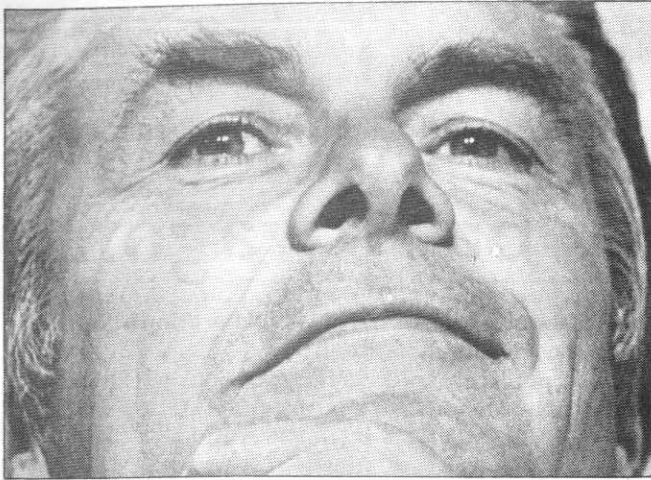
While Thatcher's ruthless policy of confrontation is paying healthy dividends to her class, Labour's only road to office has had to be through rousing the tens of millions who are suffering the impact of Tory policies — a task for which the plastic Neil Kinnock is quite unsuited.

The result is clear to all: with an expected June election looming, repeated efforts at push-starting have now left an empty Labour bandwagon in the middle of the road, with nobody keen to climb aboard. While Tory votes stand firm, Kinnock's do-nothing, tongue-tied and apologetic Labour Party is surrendering the initiative and electoral support to the Alliance.

A recent issue of *Labour Briefing* won prominent coverage in the national press when it headlined on 'Kamikaze Kinnock': but this very title, suggesting rash adventurism is perhaps too generous to the disastrous lead he and his union sponsors have given to the labour movement. Kinnock is leading the most disastrous suicide squad of all: one with no sense of direction or class loyalty, which time and again crash-lands on its own troops!

A vicious third term of Thatcher government, with the lingering menace of still more draconian attacks on unions, local government and the decimation of remaining public services, would be a heavy price for the labour movement to pay for the incompetence of the Labour leadership. And for the hard left and the Marxists, the hardest thing of all is to win support after a defeat by reminding workers 'we told you so'.

However, somebody has to draw out the political lessons of 'another fine mess', and attempt to piece together policies and a programme for class action to defend the workers' movement. Our magazine makes no apology for committing itself to this political task. We hope readers will join us in fighting to carry it through.



Denis Donohue/Reflux

**Hobsbawm's choice?**

## Tactical voting?

ERIC HOBSBAWM, by advocating tactical voting in *Marxism Today*, has shown that all his disclaimers about not wanting a coalition government really have been worthless. Marxists used to accuse *Marxism Today* and the 'Euro' wing of the CP of being to the right of whole sections of the labour movement. On some questions they are now to the right of the Labour leadership itself.

Embarrassingly for Kinnock, the Labour Party's own magazine, *New Socialist* — a dreadful rightward moving affair under editor Stuart Weir — also seems to be advocating tactical voting. Isn't there something in the whole Hobsbawm argument, that the best way to get rid of Thatcher is by voting for the non-Tory candidate who is best placed? Even on its own terms — terms which ignore all considerations of class principle — the argument is fatuous.

In the first place, the tactical voters say that Labour supporters should vote for the candidate who is 'best placed' to defeat the Tories. But how do you work out who is 'best placed'? In the Greenwich by-election this would have been a very difficult calculation.

Second, the argument seems to assume that the objective of all the main opposition parties is primarily to 'get rid of Thatcher' as an overriding political goal. This

of course is just not true of the Alliance. The objective of the Alliance is to maximise its own vote, whatever the outcome of the election. If maximising its own vote means letting Mrs Thatcher in, so be it. This of course is exactly what the Alliance did in 1983. If 'tactical voting' really caught on, the Alliance would use it just as much against the Labour Party as against the Tories — and indeed did just that during the Greenwich by-election. In

countless constituencies they would argue for a tactical vote for the Alliance against the Labour Party, just as in others they would argue for a tactical vote for the Alliance against the Tories. In both these variants, the argument for tactical voting would be aimed at, in different ways, defeating Labour.

The main outcome of tactical voting would be to maximise the vote of the Alliance. Now, even if you take a simple anti-Tory stance, without any qualms about working class principle, you have to work out whether maximising the vote of the Alliance would mean maximising the anti-Tory vote. You also have to work out what its long term effects would be.

It is a simple fact that the main strategic objective of the Alliance is to marginalise and supplant Labour. It is the very bedrock of its outlook. If you believed Eric Hobsbawm you would think that the Alliance was burning with anti-Tory zealotry, and dying to come to an understanding with the Labour Party. But Hobsbawm is caught up in a world of his own schemas and

fantasies, without understanding the real political process at work. The long-term effect of maximising the Alliance vote would be to aid Dr Owen in his objective of dealing further blows against Labour. There is no hope of a share of power for the Alliance while it is the third party. Once it overtakes Labour, then its prospects are transformed.

Maybe it matters not a jot to *Marxism Today* and the Communist Party whether Labour is supplanted by the Alliance or not. But for those who detect a difference between the Alliance and Labour — the difference between a capitalist party pure and simple and a party which is based on the organised working class — then the strengthening of the Alliance at Labour's expense is a matter of some concern — a simple matter of the future of the British labour movement and working class struggle. But *Marxism Today* gave up worrying about that a long time ago. That's why we shall see its followers happily casting their 'Communist' votes for David Owen and all his anti-working class fervour ●

## Black sections witch hunt

'SHADDUP' SNARLED Neil Kinnock when asked by TV news what his response was to critics of the decision to remove Sharon Atkin as the candidate for Nottingham East. The increasingly thuggish response of Kinnock and his lieutenants to Labour Party Black Section and all internal dissent inside the party shows just how far the move to the right and the witch hunt has gone.

On BBC's Newsnight Michael Meacher, erstwhile 'left' and once aligned, in theory at least, with Tony Benn, explained that the NEC couldn't tolerate a candidate who accused the Labour Party of racism.

Well, in truth, didn't Sharon Atkin go 'over the top' in her accusation that the Labour Party was racist? Not



Andrew Moor/Réflex

**Linda Bellos**

at all. The Labour Party leadership and successive Labour governments have shown themselves to be racist to the core. Labour governments have tolerated racist immigration laws, and indeed tightened them up. A Labour government tolerated

the massive use of police violence against the black women strikers at Grunwick. It was under a Labour government that thousands of police were deployed to protect National Front. And successive Labour governments have done nothing whatever to improve the position of black people in British society.

That of course is something completely different to saying that all Labour Party members are racist, which of course is far from the truth, and something that Sharon Atkin never said. But the present Labour leadership has shown its racism in its response to Black Section. The arguments used by Roy Hattersley, a grubby and corrupt machine politician if ever there was one, to counter

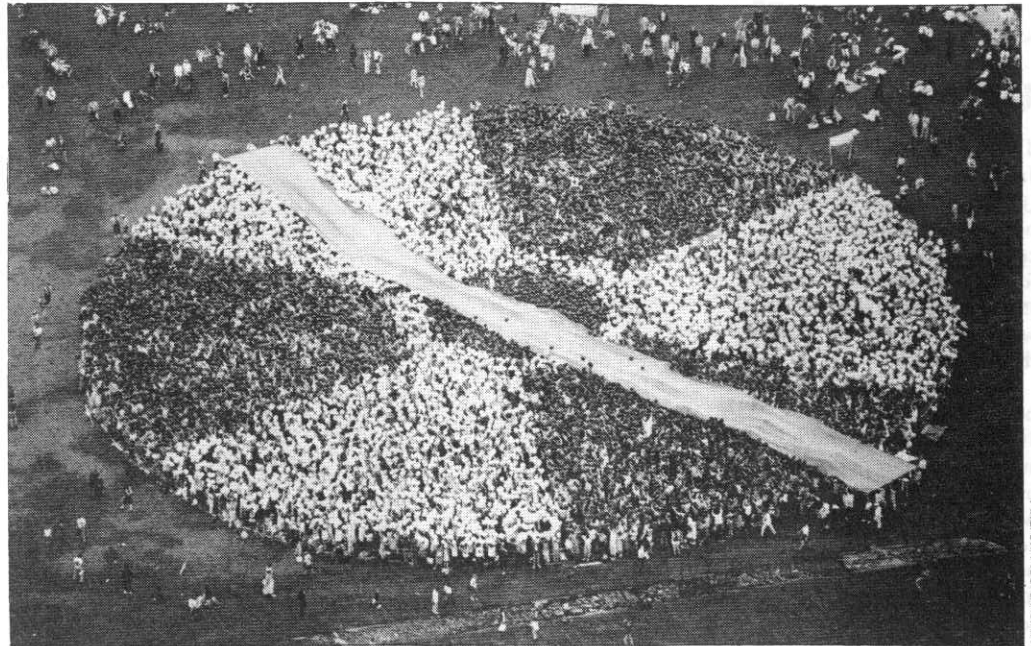
## Kinnock's nuclear cop-out

FOR THOSE like me who have been active in the struggle at Greenham Common the decision of the last Labour Party conference to reaffirm the Party's commitment to ridding this country of nuclear weapons was a sign that it had all been worthwhile. The policy reaffirmed was to scrap the Trident submarine programme and cruise missiles; de-commission Polaris; and close US nuclear bases. The F-111 bomber bases would be allowed to stay, but the nuclear bombs would have to be removed. Nuclear powered US warships would still be allowed to visit, but without nuclear weapons.

It was obvious at the time that this reaffirmed programme for a non-nuclear Britain would provoke massive US hostility — and the pressure from that hostility soon began to show. On 10 December last year Labour unveiled its 'defence

the growth of black sections, are the epitome of racism. He has accused Black Section of wanting to create 'apartheid' in the Labour Party. The leaders of the big unions have backed him up at conference after conference. But to accuse Black Section of wanting to create 'apartheid' in the Labour Party is the opposite of the truth. It is those who want to prevent the Labour Party linking up with the struggles of black people, and to prevent the self-organisation of black people who want apartheid in the Labour Party.

Ironically, the NEC's offensive against Black Section came in the wake of the Runnymede Trust report which accused all the major political parties of racism in practice. According to the



Symbolic protest by CND, April 1987

Andrew Moore/Reflex

campaign' called 'Modern Britain in a Modern World'. According to this programme, instead of the money saved from the abandonment of nuclear weapons going on socially useful projects such as health care and education the money would go towards strengthening Britain's conventional 'defences'. This would reinforce Britain's

'commitment to NATO'. Kinnock, anxious to be seen as being as 'patriotic' as Thatcher, conceded the argument on which all talk of a nuclear deterrent is based — that of the so-called 'Russian threat'. In doing so of course he gave game, set and match to Thatcher. For how can conventional weapons be realistically

expected to defend Britain against Soviet SS-20s, if the Russians really are busting a gut to launch an all-out nuclear attack on Western Europe?

In accordance with the need to 'discuss this programme with our allies' Kinnock and Healy went to Washington. Not surprisingly the president 'did not agree with it, and

Trust, the very word 'black' is being turned into a term of abuse and hatred by the mass media, and this is being reinforced by leading politicians. The use made by the media of the frame-up Broadwater Farm trial has fanned the flames of racism, as has the press campaign against black Labour activists.

Instead of countering these racist attacks, the Labour NEC aids and abets them. It is even more ironic that the attack on Sharon Atkin came after four black parliamentary candidates, led by Bernie Grant and Dianne Abbot, made a statement of 'unity' with Kinnock. Kinnock immediately turned round and showed them what they could do with it.

The frame-up of Sharon Atkin was orchestrated by

sections of the rightward moving 'soft left'. David Blunkett wrote a dreadful witch hunting column in *Tribune* attacking those who, he alleged, used issues of race and sex for their own nefarious political ends. A major attack on Sharon Atkin, which demanded her removal, was made by Peter Kellner in the *New Statesman*, which under its new editor John Lloyd has turned into a base witch hunting organ. Lloyd's central target has been the Scargill leadership of the NUM, but the hard left as a whole has come in for ignorant and slanderous attack; one of the first pieces under his editorship accused Tony Benn of looking senile — a very sophisticated level of political analysis.

It goes without saying that

the attack on Sharon Atkin plays into the hands of Labour's opponents and racists of all political persuasions. For all those who have eyes to see, it demonstrates just how completely the right wing is in control of the Labour NEC, even if they choose people with left reputations like Blunkett and Meacher to mouth their excuses. There is just one item on which it is possible to have unity with Kinnock — at the ballot box, voting against the Tories and the Alliance. But no other kind of unity is possible. The right wing have declared war on the left in the party, and the showdown in that war will surely come after the election. Everyone in the labour movement is going to have to take sides ●

## Japan rail union busted

THE PRIVATISATION of Japanese National Railways (JNR) in April has carved the network into seven new companies: and in preparation for up to 70,000 redundancies JNR management have been waging an all-out war against the militant rail union Kokuro.

In twelve months Kokuro has been halved in size, losing 100,000 members; and it has suffered a major political split into left and right wing factions. Meanwhile collaborationist and company unions have cashed in on this collapse, and are setting up a new national federation of seven 'unions' pledged to cooperate with the seven new companies and the privatisation scheme.

The management offensive against Kokuro was primarily aimed at axing 21,000 jobs prior to the April carve-up of JNR.

Measures taken included:

- refusal to renew job-security agreements, while threatening Kokuro members that they would be made redundant unless they left the union. Meanwhile right wing unions were given extended job guarantees;
- voluntary retirement schemes and wholesale transfers of rail workers to JNR-affiliated companies;
- setting up a network of 1,400 'human resource utilisation centres' to which over 18,000 mainly union members were reassigned. These workers — often skilled railworkers, including engine drivers, linemen, clerks and inspectors — were confronted

with the immediate loss of overtime and shift allowances, and a new routine of demoralising odd jobs such as bamboo work, making paperweights, cleaning and polishing.

81 per cent of the workers assigned to these new units were Kokuro members, 60 per cent of whom were present or former union representatives. JNR has made no secret of the fact that the centres were a means of containing the most militant union members — nor does it deny that these 18,000 are at the bottom of their list for re-employment by the new rail companies when the system is divided up.

Under this pressure, the

removal of medium-range missiles from Europe.

Healy had already declared that 'in seeking the withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from Britain we shall not act unilaterally. All consultation on their renewal would be in discussions with our allies'.

It is now clear that every last vestige of real unilateralism has disappeared from the pronouncements of the Labour Party leadership.

Kokuro leadership, together with top bureaucrats from the General Council of Japanese Trade Unions (Sohyo) and leaders of the Japanese Socialist Party, all cracked. Kokuro right wingers proposed a new policy — of total surrender to privatisation, signing a declaration of support for the government plan.

It was this proposal which divided the union. At an extraordinary national convention last October, Kokuro delegates threw out the right wing line, and forced the resignation of the right wing leaders, who were replaced by leaders committed to fight on.

Needless to say, in true right-wing style, the ousted chair Yamazaki Toshikazu,

Unilateralism in the hands of Kinnock has suffered death at the hands of a thousand 'clarifications' and re-interpretations. Even though Kinnock's policy is attacked from a broad spectrum from Reagan to James Callaghan, it is now clear that a Kinnock government would stall on getting rid of nuclear weapons, waiting (eternally) for the successful outcome of 'negotiations'. The gold of unilateralism has been

immediately organised a faction, the 'National Council of Socialist Party members of Kokuro', controlling 15 of the union's 27 regional headquarters. This faction seems likely to set up its own breakaway right-wing unions.

This decimation of Kokuro, until recently the backbone of the public sector Sohyo confederation, follows on the smashing of most independent unions in the Japanese private sector.

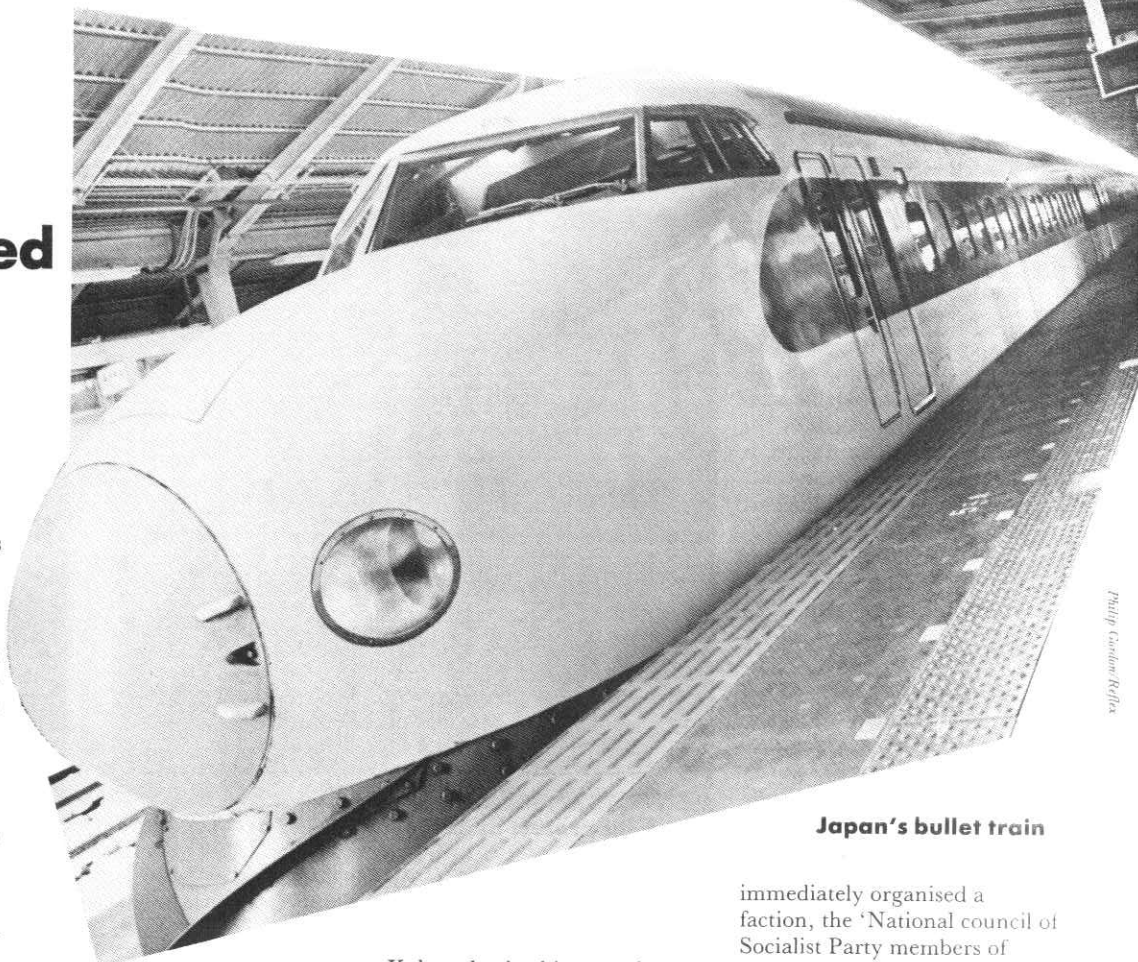
The surviving class struggle wing of Kokuro will have its work cut out: another 40,000 jobs are expected to come under the axe as soon as the new companies start whittling back the rail service to maximise profitability ●

(Information from RODO JOHO, News from Militant Japanese Workers)

transmuted into the familiar dress of common or garden multilateralism, the staple diet of right-wing politicians for more than thirty years.

The Kinnock/Healey policy has been 'clarified', but that of the Labour Party has not changed. It is up to activists in CND and the Labour Party to sound the alarm at the ditching of party policy and call our leaders to account.

**HEATHER LAVIS**  
(Battersea C.I.P.)



Japan's bullet train

Philip Casdon/Kelita

believed that it would weaken NATO, undermine East-West relations and undercut the US negotiating position at the Geneva arms talks'. Kinnock in fact had already started to retreat from even a nominal unilateralist position before leaving for Washington by announcing that Labour would delay removing cruise missiles pending the result of negotiations involving the

## NHS pay: Labour and unions miss the boat

THE CYNICAL Tory announcement that this year it would pay the full 9.5 per cent average increase recommended by the 'independent' nurses' pay review body has been seen as a key indicator of an early election. But the NHS pay issue is further evidence also of the dire failure of the leadership of the workers' movement to exploit an issue where the Tories are most vulnerable.

The pay negotiations, covering a total of 1.2 million health workers, should have been at centre stage of the run-up to the expected June election. Yet instead of seizing the initiative and using the issue to highlight Tory cuts in health services, Labour leaders and the health unions allowed themselves to be outmanoeuvred by Thatcher's cabinet and the anti-union Royal College of Nursing (RCN).

While the Tories unsuccessfully twisted arms behind the scenes to persuade the nurses' pay body to give only a small pay increase this year, the RCN was able to exploit the near-total silence from the health unions to grab the headlines with the easy and popular demand for an immediate £1,000 a year minimum rise for all nurses — a demand which it immediately abandoned as soon as the 9.5 per cent increase was announced.

Belatedly trying to get in on the act, Labour leaders Hattersley and Meacher did not make the obvious and popular promise to pay up the extra £1,000 a year minimum; nor did they promise to restore normal pay bargaining for nurses; instead they offered the meaningless pledge that a new Labour government would pay the full review body award.

Thatcher's team, knowing that they had failed to sway the review body, and seeking easy popularity with 500,000 nurses, easily squashed this by cynically announcing that they, too, would accept the review body's recommendations — and then doing so.

Meacher, left stranded, did

not even have the wit to point out that the Tories had left a £30 million gap (as much as £150,000 per health authority -threatening new cuts) between their 'generous' settlement and the money they are giving to health authorities to pay it with. He could not claim that a Labour government would pay more to the nurses than the review body suggested; he was caught totally on the hop — while radio and TV interviewers scoured hospitals in vain looking for a nurse who would say she was satisfied with the settlement.



Andrew Moore/Kelvin

Meanwhile, what has happened to the health unions? Why did they allow the RCN to make the running, when it has been the RCN's appalling elitist and anti-union approach and constitutional 'no-strike' commitment that has done as much as anything to hold down nurses' pay?

It is well known that hospitals in Britain's big cities have been suffering a growing shortage of key nursing staff as low pay has driven thousands of trained staff out of the NHS each year. With take-home pay for a staff nurse in London as low as £87 per week, a steadily increasing workload, and worsening conditions in an under-funded NHS, there is little to attract new entrants to the profession — and much to demoralise existing staff or lure them into the better-paid private sector.

The new pay settlement — arrived at without any trade union negotiations, and offering

less than £10 per week extra to staff nurses — seems unlikely to be enough to stem the tide of nurses out of the NHS. But the unions still seem willing to sit idly on the sidelines.

The trade union attitude is summed up by NUPE leader Tom Sawyer, who recently argued that now is not the right time to wage a fight on public sector pay. As a result, not only are nurses (a majority of whom are in TUC-affiliated unions rather than the RCN) left without any kind of lead from the labour movement, but chronically low-paid ancillary

staff are also being left high and dry by the unions.

Management have just rejected the joint unions' ancillary pay claim, which called for 'a substantial flat rate increase in all basic rates of pay towards a target of a minimum basic rate of £125 per week'. Present ancillary pay levels range from a miserable £1.93 to a wretched £2.19 per hour — giving a weekly rate of £77.20 to £87.60 for the basic 40-hours. Management seem reluctant to go much beyond the 4-5 per cent mark in this year's pay review, leaving ancillary pay ever further below the poverty line.

The brutal process of competitive tendering for domestic, laundry and catering services has brought a drastic cutback in staff and hours worked, with wages cut by an increase in part-time working and a massive loss of bonus payments. Though the vast

majority of hospital contracts have gone 'in-house', this has been at the expense of worsening poverty and increasingly rapid turnover among a largely female workforce.

Instead of giving any lead in fighting for action by this 200,000-plus section of workers, health unions have focussed on pleas for the establishment of yet another new pay review body — 'an independent third party to judge what is fair' — if unions and management cannot agree!

Almost all of the so-called 'cost improvements' imposed by health authorities in the last five years have centred on cuts in staffing and in the wages of ancillary and other staff. A knock-on effect is more and more ancillary tasks being carried by hard-pressed nurses.

Pay levels are also now causing a major crisis of under-staffing among clerical and secretarial grades: yet the potential for a real, cross-union battle over pay, in which the systematic under-funding of the NHS could be exposed, has been squandered by the union leaders.

Meanwhile the half-hearted and cut-price pledges from Michael Meacher and Roy Hattersley appear so belatedly and grudgingly that few health workers can take them seriously. Instead of developing public concern over the plight of the health service as a major electoral weapon, Labour leaders are running from any commitment that might cost real money.

In a recent crisis meeting of Labour's NEC to review the Party's disastrous showing in the opinion polls, Dennis Skinner stunned everyone by suggesting the Party make some bold commitments on the NHS; to spend whatever was necessary to cure AIDS, and to spend as necessary to wipe out the 700,000-strong waiting list. Instead leaders of both Labour and the health unions have opted for a cautious line least likely to win votes or wage increases ●

**HARRY SLOAN**

# Preparing the fightback

The socialist left is under siege, as the prospect of a third term of Thatcherism looks more and more likely. **JOHN LISTER** and **PHIL HEARSE** argue that the time has come for a strategic re-think for the



hard left in the Labour Party and the unions — it is not enough to rubbish Kinnock, the weaknesses of the Labour left must also be examined.

DISMAY AND DEMORALISATION are running rampant through the labour movement even before the general election campaign begins. Disconsolate Labour activists comb miserably through glossy party handouts, looking for something to campaign on in the local elections; others hide from news broadcasts and papers, dreading the next embarrassing retreat or gaffe by Kinnock or his team.

The 'dream ticket' leadership installed by the union bureaucracy in the aftermath of Foot's 1983 debacle has turned into a living nightmare. Fond hopes and illusions that a re-elected Labour government might ride to the rescue of the working class and roll back the tide of Thatcherism have faded: in the crucial areas of the country for the next election the party and its leadership languish at 1983 levels of popularity and credibility. Kinnock himself — a cut-price Judas — has not even waited for the cock-crow of an election victory before rushing to renounce thrice over every 'radical' party policy.

The Tories, their press, and even the Alliance are left to make all the running: their every attack brings yet another embarrassed Kinnock retreat. Only recently:

- We have seen him try to out-do Thatcher on gagging the Zircon film and upholding 'national security';
- We have witnessed his capitulation on cruise and his cringing pilgrimage to be humiliated by the popularly-reviled Ronald Reagan;
- We have heard Kinnock's team attack the Tories for insufficiently chauvinist reprisals against Japanese capital;
- The same gang of MPs have joined in the Tory onslaught on so-called 'loony left' councils;
- Now they have opened fresh public attacks on black sections — even attempting to unseat Sharon Atkin as prospective candidate for the 'crime' of fighting for black people to vote Labour!

The list is unending: the results disastrous. Four years of witch-hunts, whingeing and weaselling have produced a manifesto less radical, less convincing and less popular than the one which helped Michael Foot lead the party to a crushing defeat in 1983. Those —



**Kinnock's leadership has been a disaster for the labour movement**

including some misguided forces formerly on the left — who gave Kinnock their grudging support, believing that unity behind the 'dream ticket' was the only way to return a Labour government can now witness the fruits of their efforts.

While at the time of writing it is impossible to tell either the date of the general election or its precise outcome, one thing is becoming increasingly clear — a Labour victory is the least likely outcome. Between the other two alternatives — a Thatcher victory or a hung parliament leading to a coalition, the former seems more likely.

Of course Labour's dismal showing in the polls is not Kinnock's work alone. A political lightweight, he was only ever the creation of the key union bureaucrats determined to avoid a repetition of the Foot fiasco, but seeing the answer in a move to the right. They needed a suitably 'left' figure to push through a further dilution of the 1983 manifesto: Kinnock seemed the ideal choice.

While he has chopped away at Labour's skimpy list of promises — ditching such 'liabilities' as renationalisation, repeal of the anti-union laws, restoration of cuts in the NHS and social services, and now unilateralism — the union leaders have sat back or even assisted the employers' attacks on the power of the unions themselves.

Since 1979, dispute after dispute has been cynically isolated by the TUC; almost every major fight has been betrayed. Since 1983 we have seen the TUC consciously allowing the miners to go down to a defeat which many right wing union leaders welcomed as a body-blow to the class struggle line argued by Arthur Scargill. Worse, the blatant scabbing of the EETPU in the Wapping dispute has gone unpunished — with Hammond and the AEU right wing now established as the pace-setters of the TUC.

The upshot is that while Kinnock's bland grey men have deliberately thrown overboard any kind of class politics in courting middle class 'public opinion', union leaders too have done their best to crush class struggle methods under the bureaucratic roller of the 'new realism' — a pretentious title for the old class collaboration.

Yet class conflict has if anything increased in the work places, with the bosses' continual drive towards speed-up throughout manufacturing, service industries and the public sector, and the related attacks on shop-floor union organisation. Though workers — such as the printworkers, the fighters of Silent-



night, the Hangers strikers, the Caterpillar occupation — again and again fight back in defensive battles, a further electoral defeat for Labour, threatening the imposition of still further Tory anti-union laws, would deal a new body-blow to embattled shop floor militants.

Likewise, a further period of Tory rule or a Tory-led coalition can only pile on the agony for millions of unemployed; for countless poverty-stricken families on social security; for pensioners; for millions of low-paid, part-time and unorganised workers — especially women; for black communities and every section of the oppressed. The class divide between rich and poor has been deliberately widened under the Tories. A Labour defeat would mean that the exploited and oppressed would lose even the chance to put real demands on a government which claims to represent their interests.

A Labour defeat at the election will be a political defeat for the working class as a whole. But it will also be a defeat for the Labour left. To put it another way, while an electoral defeat for Labour will be a defeat for Kinnockism, it will also be a defeat for that range of politics known as 'Bennism'.

All political forces in the labour movement are being forced to re-assess, and this will especially be true if Thatcher gets back. In

### 'new realism is a pretentious title for the old class collaboration'

this article we want to pose three basic questions which are vital for the left of the workers movement:

- Why has Kinnockism bellyflopped?
- Why has the implicit project of the Labour left — winning the party to left policies, and then winning an election — also come up against major obstacles?
- And what must we do, in a period of growing reaction to resist attacks on the working class, to redress the situation and prepare for a new working class surge forward?

In posing these questions we want to refute one response straight away — that of merely saying that there is nothing basically wrong with the Labour left's approach, and that we must stick to our principles, battle away and wait for 'better times'. Tony Benn often sounds as if he is saying this. But this response, while having the merit of sticking out for basic socialist principles, is wide open to attack from the right wing and the Euro-communists. It is open to attack because it cannot bring success: the fact is that if the hard left in the party and the unions don't grasp the inadequacy of their own approach, then more and more defeats will accrue. The hard left cannot passively wait for 'better times': it has to create them.

### The Kinnock catastrophe:

#### Wrong answers from 1983

After the 1983 electoral defeat, the conclusion drawn by the labour bureaucracy, and especially the union leaders, was that Labour had lost, and the split of the SDP had taken place, because Labour policy was too radical. The choice of Kinnock as the leader to replace Michael Foot was very precise: he was selected as someone with a left background, who could move party policy to the right gradually, and make the party's image a 'moderate' one. Stripped of its marketing and public relations verbiage, this means something explicit in class terms: making Labour 'fit to govern' in the opinion of the ruling class, and its reflection in bourgeois 'public opinion'. Even in its own terms, this project was misconceived.

It went off cack-handed because the bureaucrats could not see something in front

ship, is delivering the goods — with the help of a docile TUC. Of course the process has been uncomfortable: individual employers, even whole industries have gone to the wall, and some bosses would like some more elbow-room for their own vested interests. But the key sections of capital are more than happy to see profits soaring, banks coining in billion-plus profits, privatisation handing an extra bonanza to the well-heeled, tax cuts, and of course a formidable battery of anti-union laws imposed. That is why there is no serious split in the Tory ranks parallel to the political crisis in the labour movement: as the miners' strike showed, the ruling class as a whole — its confidence restored by eight years of Thatcherism — is largely united around policies designed to hammer down the strength of the working class, and prepared to invest in this strategy.

After all, if the whole TUC leadership will



A bobby being trained for community policing

of their eyes: the ruling class don't want a Labour government!

One reason they don't want a Labour government is obviously their fear of the strength of the left in the Labour Party, reinforced by the comparatively recent upsurge of Bennism culminating in the hair's breadth victory by Denis Healey in the deputy leadership election in 1981. It is towards proving itself in these terms 'safe' for capitalism that most of Kinnock's efforts, and those of the union bureaucracy, have been devoted since 1983. Hence the readiness to witch hunt even the not-so-left 'loony' councils and any left wing opponents of the leadership line. However a Labour government is only ever seen as a second choice by the ruling class, if for some reason its own party cannot hold the reins.

In fact the main reason the capitalists don't want a Labour government is because their own party, under Thatcher's leader-

swallow all its previous policies, and shamelessly grovel on its hands and knees to the employers for *nothing* — in line with the 'new realism' — what employer needs the messy formulae of class compromise and the machinery of collaboration under a Labour government?

Their question is simple: *why* spend public money on job creation, reflate the economy, and risk restoring the confidence of the working class — when there are still vast profits to be made from Thatcher's wasteland Britain? The irony is that every defeat and setback for the working class brought about by the politics of the TUC and Labour leadership serves only to reinforce this ruling class confidence in Thatcher, and to underline the irrelevance of the Labour option.

### Treachery takes its toll

In this respect the miners' strike was a watershed. Starting only eight months after

Kinnock was elected as Labour leader, it posed the Labour and trade union bureaucracy with a choice: they could either fight to make the strike victorious and thus bring down Thatcher, or they could try for a face-saving compromise designed to ensure defeat while not revealing their scabbing role too openly. For the 'new realist' right wing of the TUC bureaucracy the prospect of a victory for Scargill's stand was far more frightening than a Tory victory over the miners.

Kinnock — recognising the dynamic that would be unleashed within the workers' movement and the demands that could be focussed on a Labour government if Thatcher was brought down — was at one with the TUC and the hard-line right. Together they consciously worked for the defeat of the strike; and by doing so they paved the way for a deepening of reaction in British politics, the isolation of other groups of workers engaged in struggle, and ultimately for Labour's own defeat at the polls. If Thatcher, strengthened by the defeat of the miners, does win a third term, she can thank Kinnock, Willis and the TUC for their assistance.

As a general election has approached, the ruling class has cranked up an enormous reactionary offensive. Almost daily the government announces new reactionary measures to compound its attack on the working class if elected to a third term of government. Key to this was the struggle at News International, a mini re-run of the miners' strike, with the same hopeless showing from the Labour leadership. And after the failure of the fight against ratecapping and abolition of the Met-counties, the Tories launched their offensive against 'loony lefties' in local government, again with no counter-attack from Kinnock.

#### Handing votes to the Alliance

So rapid and complete has been the collapse of the Labour leadership in front of the ruling class offensive that it has had the dramatic consequence of strengthening the Alliance at Labour's expense. This is a heavy indictment of Kinnockism, because, despite all its support from the majority of the media, the Thatcher government is still basically unpopular. Its electoral support is dangerously confined to the more prosperous parts of the country and sectors of the population — those sectors and areas where mass unemployment have not hit so hard, and where industrial decline has not immediately led to lower living standards.

Under Kinnock's leadership, Labour has suffered the fate of losing out to the Alliance because its leadership is 'neither fish nor fowl', neither capable of providing the image of a safe bourgeois alternative to the capitalist class, nor of galvanising the mass of workers, women, black people and youth behind a socialist alternative they could have confidence in.

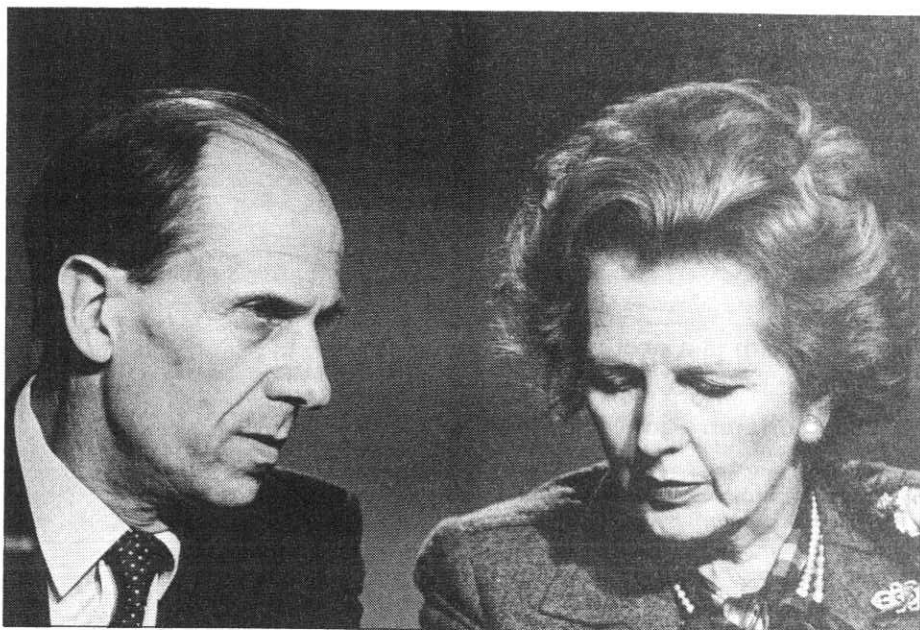
No one should underestimate the extent to which the witch hunt in the Labour party since 1983 has worsened this situation. What was conceived by some in the party leadership as a 'surgical operation' in 1983 —

aimed at laying the ghost of the hard left by expelling the Militant editorial board — has turned into an unending cycle, in the hands of the Tory press and the labour right. The more the NEC disciplines the left, the more the Labour leadership denounces the hard left, — leading to more disciplinary cases, and so the cycle goes on — playing straight into the hands of the Tories. Such is the right wing domination of the NEC, that Kinnock couldn't stop this diabolical vicious circle if he wanted to.

This then is the situation as we approach the general election. The Labour and TUC leaders have created a situation of working class defeats, which have weakened Labour. Kinnock's political collapse has further undermined Labour and strengthened the Alliance. The situation is being set up for a likely return of a Tory government with an even harsher anti-working class programme to implement, or at best for a hung parlia-

When Benn was defeated in the deputy leadership election in 1981 he lost because of the weight of the trade union bureaucrats and the parliamentary party in the electoral college. This election underlined the fact that the labour movement is dominated by a bureaucracy, comprising trade union, parliamentary and Labour Party functionaries. Of these it is the trade union bureaucracy which is overwhelmingly the most powerful. This is the bureaucracy which crowned Kinnock, defeated Benn, fuels the witch hunt, and betrayed the miners, the healthworkers, the printworkers, ASLEF and a string of other groups of workers in struggle. *This means that any left wing which wants to organise to defeat the right wing, in the unions and in the Labour Party, has to organise its forces for a political fight with this bureaucracy.*

This may not seem a particularly original or profound point to make, but it is far from common coin in the Labour left or even the



#### Planning the next five years?

ment with a greatly strengthened Alliance contingent, in which the Tories will most likely be the largest party.

#### The crisis of the Labour left

Readers of this magazine will be familiar with the growth of the Bennite left after 1979, and the way in which after 1983 it split up between the hard left, including the Campaign group of MPs, and the soft left including *Tribune*, the LCC and Ken Livingstone. One clear expression of this division was the fact that the Campaign Group and the hard left gave support all the way to the miners' strike, wanted a fight to the end over rate capping, and have stood out against Kinnockism. But the hard left has to recognise its own inadequacies if it is to prepare for the next period. This is not a matter of factional hairsplitting: it is vital that a new strategy is seriously debated if victories are to be secured.

Marxist movement. On the one hand we find the leadership of the Campaign Group relating to the trade unions largely at the level of establishing links with a few more or less sympathetic bureaucrats, and evading the question of organising forces at the base of the labour movement to fight for a class struggle programme against the bureaucracy. On the other hand we find widespread ultra-left conceptions of seeking only to organise the trade union 'rank and file', conceptions which belittle or deliberately ignore the political fight against the union bureaucrats, leaving workers in struggle vulnerable to manoeuvres and sabotage from their own leaders.

The fact is that any successful political fight against Kinnock and the TUC bureaucracy must base itself upon systematic work at every level in the trade unions — embracing the organisation of oppositional 'broad lefts' and rank and file groupings as well as a

fight inside the official movement itself.

One example illustrates this clearly: 'Campaign Forum', which was to be the vehicle of a left wing fight-back, does not exist. It is a formula in someone's head, not a fighting regroupment of the left. This is not an omission of forgetfulness or bad organisation. It stems, in our opinion, from the failure to understand that the alliance created around the Benn deputy leadership campaign, which included a section of the left bureaucracy, cannot be repeated. It was the product of a very particular conjuncture. It will not be repeated, outside of a massive working class fightback.

The move to the right inside the unions is savage. NUPE, which opposed the the expulsion of *Militant* in the early stages, is now, under the leadership of Tom Sawyer, leading the pack of witch-hunters. Ron Todd, despite having thrown in his lot with the witch-hunters is losing control of the TGWU

and mass support. This is exactly what the Campaign Group has failed to provide or even recognise as necessary. We must go beyond the old 'Bennism' to get it.

**Facing the left's crisis**

Everyone admits that there is a 'crisis of the left'. But different people mean different things by this all-embracing term. So what and who are in crisis? From an historical point of view, the crisis of the Kinnock leadership is not a crisis of socialism or socialist perspectives, but a further stage of the crisis of social democratic reformism in Britain. It is precisely because the capitalist crisis is so advanced in Britain that the political crisis of social democratic reformism is so marked.

If the Labour left is also in crisis, it is because Labour's precarious electoral position puts in question the strategy used to fight for the traditional aspiration of successive

**If Labour were to win**

If the political situation drastically changes and a Labour government is elected, then a Kinnock government would be a right wing government which would pursue many of the attacks on the working class which the Tories have initiated. The trade union bureaucracy would attempt to create 'unity' around this government and head off workers' struggles. The task of the left would be straightforward enough — to counterpose socialist policies to those of the government, to champion the struggles of the working class and the oppressed, and to break up any attempt to impose a new 'social contract. It would also mean fighting for the implementation of radical Labour Party policies — like nuclear disarmament — now ditched by Kinnock. However, a Labour government is the least likely outcome of the next election.

**If Labour loses**

If Labour loses, whatever government emerges, either a coalition or more likely a Tory government, then this will give rise to two inter-linked processes. First, the attacks on the working class will be dramatic and vicious. Anti-trade union laws will be strengthened, the welfare state will be further dismantled, privatisation will proceed apace. Linked to that, the right will go on a huge new offensive in the labour movement, attempting to scapegoat the left for the electoral defeat, and witch hunt socialists both in the unions and the Labour Party. The left must develop a strategy which simultaneously deals with both these attacks.

Our starting point has to be the fact that with trade war and global recession in the wings, British capitalism is still in enormous crisis: any incoming government will need to launch major new attacks on the working class, to further weaken working class organisation, cut public spending and boost the rate of exploitation and profit.

In the aftermath of a general election which Labour did not win, a wave of demoralisation would sweep through the labour movement; the perspective of 'wait for a Labour government' would have gone out of the window, and many workers would see no credible political perspective. Would workers fight against the new ruling class attacks? It is of course impossible to work out in advance the precise line of development. But in our opinion there would be one major factor in the situation — without the perspective of a Labour government in the near future, sections of the working class would be in a situation in which they either struggled against redundancy, speed up and cuts — or they would face immediate defeat. Despite the odds this could lead, in the medium term at least, to major new working class struggles.

How should the 'hard left' respond? Over the past five years the Labour Party hard left has responded with financial solidarity and general political support. This is important but not enough as a strategy. The left has to broaden its horizons towards political intervention giving a lead to workers' struggles, and an extension of its organisation inside



Philip Gordon/Reflex

**The miners' strike of 1984-5 changed the political landscape**

to the hard right wing. Arthur Scargill is fighting for his survival in the NUM against a line-up including the old-guard right wing, the Communist Party and the so-called 'soft left'. 'New realism' is sweeping the board as the new orthodoxy: the EETPU and AEU leaderships have become pace-setters rather than pariahs inside the TUC.

As a result, any strategy based on attempting to fight back against the right wing through manoeuvres inside the union bureaucracy, or by organising inside the Labour Party alone, is doomed to defeat. The hard left has to find forms of organisation able to take forward class struggle and socialist politics inside the unions. What is needed is a forum of socialist education and organisation spanning both the Labour Party and the unions in the knowledge that this will come straight away into conflict with the bureaucracy. The fight must be aimed at securing rank and file participation and gen-

eral labour lefts — a 'left Labour government' introducing bold socialist measures. This whole perspective has now come slap up against its main contradiction — the sabotage of the bureaucracy and the right wing, who would rather plunge the party into turmoil and lose elections than allow a radical Labour government. The fight for a Labour government which introduces socialist measures has to combat that sabotage.

Despite *Marxism Today* and the 'new revisionists' of all stripes, in our view there are still tens of thousands of activists in the unions, Labour Party and mass campaigns who seek a socialist way forward. Their crisis, if crisis it be, is one of perspective, of seeking a practical way forward. The answer to that crisis is only secondarily an ideological level: it is mainly a question of strategy. In order to give the outlines of what such a working class socialist strategy might be, we have to look at the situation we face.

the trade unions. We return to this point below.

After an election which Labour loses, in addition to groups of workers who will have no alternative but to struggle, there will be other important social sectors under attack from whom we can expect prolonged resistance. Sharper attacks on democratic rights, and fresh attacks on the black population, women's rights and the lesbian and gay communities will continue. Equally, there is a trend in Britain today towards the creation of a huge section of the population, maybe 20-25 per cent, which is being completely impoverished. This includes of course the unemployed, many sections of black people, youth, single parent families in all sectors of the working class and other groups. The anger and despair in these groups, especially among black youth, often takes the form of explosive outbursts of anger, and we can expect this to continue.

The left has to find the means to reach out to these groups, to link their struggles to those of the labour movement, and to demonstrate that it is the militant section of the labour movement which is in fact the best fighter for the rights and interests of the oppressed. Special emphasis in this must be put on the fight for fundamental democratic liberties, which are under attack. The use of the police and the courts, to stifle freedom of expression and to baton down on workers struggle, black people and youth is becoming all pervasive in our society. Recent events, from the Broadwater Farm frame-up trials, to the Zircon events, show the extent of this. The left must be prepared to take bold initiatives in response to this, including linking up on specific issues with broad sectors of liberal democratic opinion who are alarmed by these developments.

The crisis inside the Labour Party will proceed apace if Labour loses the election. We can expect a frenzied attack on the left, more severe than anything we have seen. Maybe the political polarisation will lead to some of the 'soft left' breaking away from Kinnock — but the main feature of the situation will be a sharp polarisation to the right. A response to this could well be for some sections of the hard left to lose heart in the fight inside the Labour Party and to seek solutions outside the party. This will be more of a problem as more and more radicalised layers of workers, youth and especially black people refuse to join the rightward-moving Labour Party, and build their struggles and campaigns outside it.

The onus is on the hard left to fight within the organised labour movement for the kind of politics and initiatives that can attract and win the confidence of these radicalised forces, whose energy and commitment are essential to the fight for class struggle and socialist policies against the ruling class offensive.

However to turn to these forces at the expense of continuing the essential political fight inside the unions and the Labour Party would be a tremendous mistake, which should be combatted: it would do nothing to resolve the fundamental problems of leadership facing the working class as a whole. The

right wing would like nothing better than for the hard left to walk out of the Labour Party, leaving the field free for unfettered control by the bureaucracy. The stifling of the left — or its voluntary desertion from the fight — would be an enormous turnaround in British politics and a blow against the working class which still shows no willingness to break in any numbers from the Labour Party to any of the self-styled left alternatives. It would be quite wrong to abandon any ground to the right wing while a fight can still be carried through.

#### The unions

To continue its fight, the hard left has to re-evaluate its whole strategy of fighting the bureaucracy. So long as the major trade unions remain bastions of the right wing, the left in the Labour movement will continue to be on the defensive. That doesn't mean that the fight for socialist policies in the Labour party should be abandoned, but it does mean that it has to be linked with the struggle to organise and build a fighting left inside the trade unions.

### 'the more one defends basic socialist ideas today, the more we create the basis for advance in the future.'

Serious work in the unions must include:

- attempts wherever possible to build left opposition currents inside the unions (in some cases this will mean broad lefts or rank and file bodies like the Yorkshire Miners campaign group; in others more developed political groupings like the Socialist Teachers Alliance);
- a more rigorous and determined attempt to intervene in workers' struggles, raising demands, tactics and policies which can assist workers to win struggles and combat the capitulation and betrayals of their bureaucratic leaders;
- taking the day-to-day struggles for jobs, union rights and against speed-up into the discussions inside the Labour Party.

The News International dispute, following on the bitter lessons of the miners' strike is a warning here. It took place in the centre of London, where the Labour left is strong; but although some sections of the left supported the dispute and even turned up on the picket lines, there was little systematic attempt to link up politically with those printworkers who were looking for alternative tactics and politics from those offered by Dean, Dubbins and the *Morning Star* wing of the Communist Party.

Such a link was not a far-fetched idea: there were increasing numbers of printworkers who became critical of both their national and London leaderships and could have been drawn into serious debate through joint work with local support groups. They were looking for allies and alternatives: they found precious few.

The necessity of confronting the right wing

trade union leaders is something which has to be carried into all the debates in the Labour left. The Campaign Group leadership in the last analysis has dithered about real organisation at the base, both in the party and in the unions. Of course, the left would come under sharp attack if it began really organising at every level of the labour movement — but it cannot evade or deflect that attack by refusing to organise.

The policy of manoeuvring for support from 'left' union leaders and avoiding breaking links with the bureaucracy by not invading 'their' territory is no longer viable. The situation in the NUM, where the CP and the semi-Kinnockites are besieging Scargill, shows the weakness of relying on attempting to win positions without building up left organisation at the base. A concerted appeal by the Campaign Group for a real co-ordination of the left in the whole labour movement could meet an enormous response. In the absence of such an appeal the hard left must get on and organise in the unions the best it can.

#### Fighting the ideological battle

Finally, there are two aspects of the left's approach which cannot be ignored. The ideological fight throughout the labour movement against the right wing cannot be given up. We have to continue to refute the whole gamut of right wing ideas, from Kinnock to *Marxism Today*, through stepping up socialist propaganda and education at every level of the movement.

The 'new' revisionists who attack basic socialist ideas such as class struggle, nationalisation, workers control, and internationalism, are not 'new' thinkers at all, but people who rehash very old ideas — the ideas of social democratic, and even liberal, reformism. Yet the left often gives the impression that it is unconfident about fighting for basic socialist ideas, or appears apologetic for mentioning the 'old' ideas of class struggle and socialism.

The more we defend basic socialist ideas today, even against the stream and the 'fashion' of leftist academic circles, the more we create the basis for socialist renewal and advance in the future.

Secondly, the struggle for a political alternative to Kinnockism in the labour movement cannot avoid the task of fighting for the most consistent ideas which guide the struggles of the working class and the oppressed — and these are the ideas of Marxism. The continuity, coherence and clarity of the fight for a socialist alternative depends on forging a serious Marxist current, rooted in the labour movement and embracing the struggles and most militant of the oppressed. At a time of retreat and crisis in the left, this has to be said loud and clear.

Our magazine aims to provide a political focus and to discuss the essential politics for such a current. We intend to provide the kind of analytical and political approach that is vital to equip militants in the trade unions and the Labour Party for the coming battles against the various wings and layers of the bureaucracy.



Clive Jenkins looking peekish around the Gills

## TASS/ASTMS MERGER

# Dangers and opportunities

THE ASSOCIATION of Scientific Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS) and the Technical and Supervisory Staffs (TASS) are the largest 'white collar' unions in the private sector. Their merging is a major challenge for the memberships involved: it could either mean a strengthening of their hand, or reinforce bureaucratic control. It may be a step forward or a massive mistake!

The logic of the merger is obvious — both unions organise in the technical grades of engineering. In fact the proposal to merge came from the ASTMS Engineering Conference. The members work alongside each other; and the officials of both unions go into joint negotiations with management for members in the same factories. The logic however is not quite so obvious to other sections of the unions. The ASTMS Insurance Sections, health workers and university technicians — including some of the lowest-paid and most militant membership — have no contact with TASS.

The TASS Tobacco workers do not have ASTMS counterparts either; but they are a similar type of member, and if the incredible mixture that makes up a hybrid union like ASTMS can work, then the addition of members from TASS (which is the smaller of the two) should be easy.

The real problem is the totally different structures and histories of the two unions. ASTMS has a relatively open democratic structure (as far as that is possible within the confines of a bureaucratic trade union movement). It has a large annual delegate conference (made up from over 1000 branch delegates); elected lay delegates represent ASTMS at both the TUC Congress and the Labour Party conference; ASTMS even elects its representative on the TUC.

The Broad Left within ASTMS is a vague unstructured organisation based on left activists. In its heyday it has been viciously

THE proposed merger of ASTMS and TASS could this year create a new union nearly as large as the AEU, and challenge NALGO's status as the largest white collar union in Britain. ANNE SOMERS assesses the prospects for the new union.

witch hunted by Clive Jenkins' rightward-moving leadership; but under pressure from *Militant* and the SWP it has declined in strength among independent activists, and now doesn't meet regularly (if at all) any more. ASTMS as a whole is a strange mixture of politics, reflecting its mixture of managerial and supervisory staff with working technicians. Although the leadership is right wing and dominates through the bureaucracy it has never been able to totally strangle the left.

TASS on the other hand has a very bureaucratic structure. It has a small conference (about 160 delegates) that is elected at district conferences. The size of the conference makes it very easy for the bureaucracy to control, and most of its representatives are selected at that conference. The TASS Broad Left is effectively the machinery through which Ken Gill's *Morning Star* wing of the Communist Party has traditionally controlled the union. The entire national executive and over 95% of the conference delegates are members of the Broad Left (or they wouldn't get elected).

The Broad Left is more broad than left. Statements that 'anyone can join the Broad Left' are closely followed by the proviso: 'well, any one except Trotskyists or anarch-

ists.' TASS is a union that is built around its history of a Communist Party leadership — it has a Stalinist structure.

The writing is already on the wall for the left. TASS NEC members and full-time officials have already regularly announced that after the merger they will 'deal with the Trots' in ASTMS. They have a certain amount of contempt for the ASTMS NEC, who have not only not 'dealt with' the 'Trots', but have an NEC member who is a Trotskyist! This anomaly stems from the fact that ASTMS has elections for its NEC — most of which are contested — and Sue Lister, a known Trotskyist, won a secret postal ballot for one of the two national seats. TASS NEC members however, are not usually contested; so they don't have elections! (This is how they manage to 'defy' the Tory anti-union laws without themselves having to break the law!)

If the combined unions were to end up with the best points of both unions — mostly ASTMS structures — then the merger would not only be a logical development but also a positive step forward. It will create a large union which will be potentially left wing, and could have an input into engineering that would counter the AEU and EETPU.

The ASTMS leadership, however, though having far more members, are no political match for the well-oiled bureaucratic machine of Ken Gill's 'Broad Left'. The political direction of the new merged union would swiftly pass towards the TASS leadership — whose contempt for even the most elementary principles of working class solidarity has been shown by their appalling victimisation of jailed anti-apartheid fighter David Kitson.

If the new union ends up being strangled by this bureaucracy, it could destroy the best elements of both ASTMS and TASS, becoming a left-talking but essentially right wing obstacle to any real fight by its members.

THE LIFE CONVICTIONS of Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghup for the murder of PC Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm (BWF) uprising mark a new stage of the relationship between the state and black people in Britain. The message behind the veritable police-judicial-media 'conspiracy' against the Blakelock defendants is clear: attempt to protest against police abuses of your human and democratic rights and you will pay the heaviest penalty.

Over the past 18 months, a number of black people have been either killed or seriously injured at the hands of the police — Cynthia Jarrett, Cherry Groce, Antony Leonard, Clinton McCurbin, Trevor Monerville. Not a single policeman has been convicted of any offence. In fact DC Randall, who led the raid on Mrs Jarrett's home during which she died has since been promoted. This contrasts starkly with the treatment of defendants in the BWF trial. It exposes the dual standard intrinsic to British justice: the ease with which inspector Lovelock who shot and paralysed Cherry Groce was found 'not guilty' of maliciously wounding her at his trial and the treatment meted out to the Blakelock defendants are two sides of the same coin.

The repressive extra-legal nature of the police investigation and the legal process which culminated in the murder trials has been well documented and exposed by the BWF defence committee and the Broadwater Farm Youth Association BWFYA. Direct parallels with the repression of the nationalist community in the north of Ireland can be made from the deployment of plastic bullets on the night of the uprising to the stationing of army surplus Saracens at Tottenham police station following the Blakelock verdict. A clear and conscious link has been made publicly by the BWFYA leadership between the British support for the South African regime and its 'apartheid-like' activities at home.

In understanding the origins of the uprising and meaning of the convictions the following are key pieces of the jigsaw:

- The Gifford enquiry showed that it was the police refusal to even suspend any of the officers involved in the raid on Mrs Jarrett's home which led to the peaceful demonstration making its way to the police station. This demonstration was stopped by riot police on the edge of the estate who then sealed it off. It was only then that disturbances ensued. The police assertion that the uprising was a 'pre-planned' operation has never been sustained in any way — not a single piece of evidence or independent eye-witness has been brought forward to support their claims. Attempts to portray the estate as a 'nest of thieves' conflict with the low crime figures on the estate.

- DC Randall, who led the raid on Mrs Jarrett's house, and DC Sergeant who was involved in the interrogation of those arrested, were transferred to Tottenham from the notorious Stoke Newington police station in the clearout of eight 'bad apples' following the suspicious death of Colin Roach. It was revealed in court that in March 1986 a man was awarded £3,500 in damages at county

## Broadwater Farm trials

# Revenge not justice

The life sentences meted out in the Broadwater Farm trials are a turning point in black politics in Britain, argues **JOHN GREGORY**.

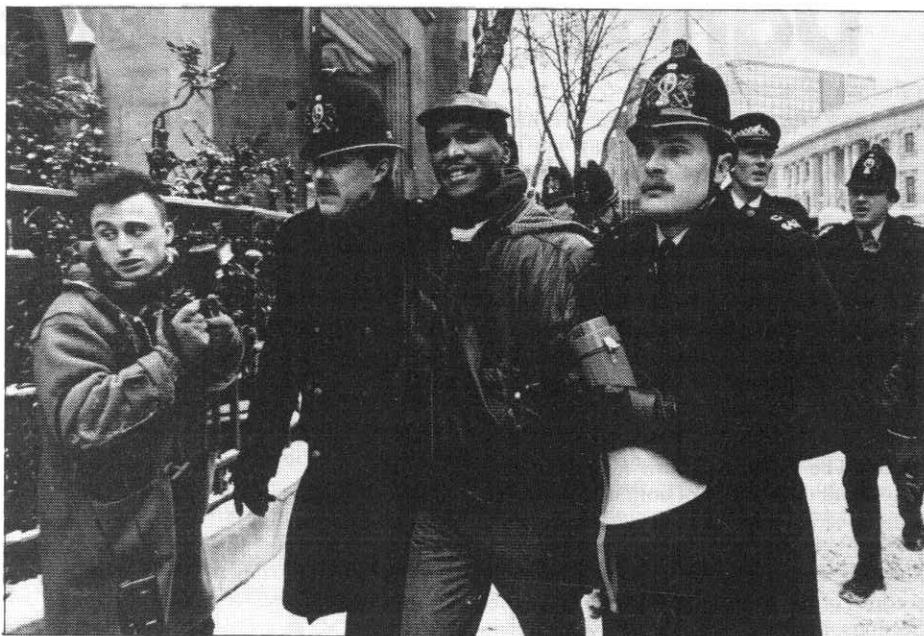
court after a judge agreed that he had been tortured by Sergeant. The Metropolitan police has taken no action against him whatsoever.

**'the entire police case rested on the "confessions" of the defendants'**

- The catalogue of large-scale raids, arrests and brutal interrogations carried out by the

were held incommunicado for days at a time; and were threatened, beaten and tricked into signing 'confessions' incriminating others. Much of this police abuse of human rights was effectively legalised by the police and Criminal Evidence Bill. It has been revealed in court that the police consistently broke the so-called 'judges rules' on the questioning of suspects and the Children and Young Persons Act in their treatment of juveniles.

- Almost the entire basis of the police 'case' against those charged (other than photographs taken on the night) is confessional, obtained under duress and while the accused



**Stafford Scott of the Youth Association arrested outside the courtroom**

police during their 'investigation' — 362 people were arrested and 161 were subsequently charged — constituted a massive 'fishing' operation aimed at obtaining names and confessions. Detective chief superinten-

**'the dynamic at the heart of the Broadwater Farm affair is the conflict between black self-organisation and state racism'**

dent Melvin, who was responsible for operations, pursued a deliberate policy of excluding solicitors; he claimed in court that solicitors were 'not above taking part in a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice'. Detainees — 50 per cent of them juveniles —

were held without access to legal advice. Many were threatened with being charged with PC Blakelock's murder and with life imprisonment in order to get them to sign. This use of false confessions is the central pillar of the police case against BWF youth; without it the entire state case collapses. In several confessions obtained by these methods the 'facts' have been proved to be false. One youth who signed a 50 page 'confession' had all charges dropped when it was proved conclusively that he was in Windsor on the night of the disturbances! Though some cases have collapsed due to the weaknesses of police evidence the judiciary has allowed the 'conveyor belt' to roll on.

So far, on the charges of affray and murder, 37 cases have been tried with 12 acquittals, two retrials, 15 found guilty and eight pleading guilty. Other than those sentenced for murder, sentences have ranged from two to eight years, some for the crime of

throwing stones. Thirty six more cases remain to be heard, including those charged with riot who are to be tried separately. The DPP has learned the lesson of the Bradford 12, Newham 8 and the Orgreave trial on 'collective' trials. This will be the first time that this has occurred in British law.

The police 'evidence' in the actual murder trial was farcical. The main prosecution witness — Jason Cobham, whom the police paid, found two jobs and kept under guard in a rent free flat — told the court that he had been lying all along in his statements to the police. Not a single piece of forensic evidence or scientific evidence was produced to link any of the defendants with the murder of Blakelock or the uprising in one of the largest police investigations ever in mainland Britain. No eye witness evidence, either civilian or police, was produced. Nor was any photographic evidence submitted identifying any of the defendants. The *entire* police case rested on the 'confessions' the defendants made to the police.

One youth, who was thirteen at the time of his arrest, was interviewed for hours clad only in his underpants and a blanket. The judge reprimanded chief superintendent Melvin personally for his treatment of the boy, and said that the boy's confession was 'high fantasy.....incredible'. yet this confession was the source of the 'fanciful' allegation already emblazoned across the press and TV as fact that, in the words of one Fleet Street paper '... a mob of youths who murdered PC Blakelock planned to cut off his head and plant it on a pole'. None of the reasons for the cases against the juveniles involved being dropped were made known to the jury.

In the case of the adults convicted for life, Raghip and Braithwaite, both were denied access to solicitors, and interviewed for 14 hours and 10½ hours at a stretch respectively; they both withdrew their confessions in court and claimed they were obtained under duress. In neither case had they admitted attacking Blakelock anyway. Braithwaite confessed to being on the Farm, throwing stones and hitting a policeman, although not Blakelock. The illiterate Raghip signed a confession in which he admitted throwing stones, pushing over a burning car and being on the edge of a crowd surrounding Blakelock but unable to get close enough to hit him. *The entirety of the evidence against Winston Silcott rested on the single statement that the police allege he made when first arrested, 'You ain't got enough evidence, those kids won't give evidence in court. No one else.. no one else, will talk to you. You can't keep them away from me'.*

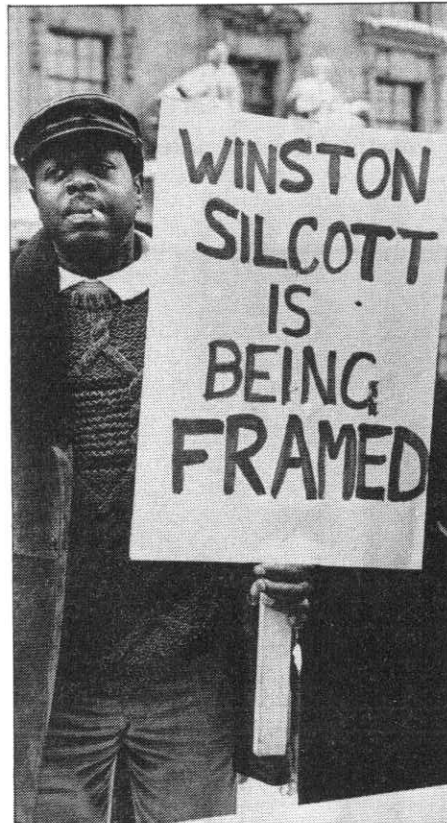
Silcott never signed the police notes of his alleged remark. On the basis of these highly ambiguous and unconfirmed words he received a minimum life sentence of 30 years!

Why then did the jury convict on such feeble police evidence? Undoubtedly there was uncertainty, as the time taken to bring in the unanimous verdict the judge required showed. Margaret Burnham, a prominent black American judge who observed the trial and described the verdicts as 'a gross miscarriage of justice', summed up the probable

reasons as 'racial discrimination...fear whipped up by the police blinded the jury to any evidence'.

The media, of course, had already played a full role in the creation of this climate *prior* to the opening of the Blakelock murder trial. They, like the judges, must have been aware of the consequences of an acquittal in undermining the police case against all BWF defendants. Imagine the media orchestrated outrage against a jury 'perverse' enough to find Silcott and the others not guilty when it was revealed that he was on bail from another murder charge when Blakelock was killed.

Following the verdicts, almost the entire national media engaged in an orgy of racism. The single 'fact' that Winston Silcott had



**Winston Silcott's father outside the Old Bailey**

already been convicted for a murder at a party in Stoke Newington and was on bail on a charge of murder at the time was used to invent an extraordinary demonology around Silcott and the Farm. The gutter press contained repeated references to 'animals' and 'savages', linked to Silcott and the 'beasts of Broadwater Farm' being black.

One policeman giving evidence during the murder trial described the uprising as '... like a scene out of "Zulu"...' A *Daily Star* columnist said he wished he could see Silcott in a cage holding a banana. Colonial war was brought home to the streets of London, and the most atavistic themes of European racism strengthened in a very real sense, by the police and media response to the Blakelock trial. Virtually none sought to consider whether the complete lack of any evidence against him, or the fact that he was at the time on bail on a murder charge, made him the perfect candidate among BWF residents

for a police frame up in the first place.

The parallels between the conviction of the Broadwater 3 and the cases of the Birmingham 6 and Guildford 4 are obvious. Following the Birmingham and Guildford pub bombings, those subsequently convicted were picked out from a community and convicted in trials hyped by the media, on the flimsiest of evidence and confessions extracted under duress. Twelve years later their innocence has been completely established. The government is now attempting to balance two options. The deal it can get from the Irish government as part of the Anglo-Irish agreement over extradition on request and so on, if they are released.

Weighed against this are blows to public confidence in the police and courts that would be caused in the debate over how they were imprisoned that will ensue if they are released. The Broadwater 3 can and should be linked to the Birmingham 6/Guildford 4 cases and the similarities exposed. If they are released then supporters of the Broadwater 3 will have a critical opportunity to unite a wide spectrum of forces to challenge the validity of their convictions.

The use by the police and courts of confessions obtained by duress is the key issue around which support could be unified for all the BWF defendants. A wing of liberal establishment opinion considers such 'miscarriages of justice' are not the best method of ensuring social order and confidence in the 'neutrality' of the police-judicial apparatus. This wing of establishment opinion (academics, legal figures, journalists, MPs) should be mobilised to support the BWF defendants. This in no way contradicts political campaigning around community self defence and state racism. The moves afoot to organise a national march against police murders of Black people, and the activities in defence of the BWF 3 will be entirely complementary.

The main dynamic that lies at the heart of the BWF affair is the conflict between black self-organisation and state racism. To fight for equality of treatment in housing, employment, community services and democratic policing as the BWFYA has done, inevitably challenges the main instrument of state repression — a racist police force. To fight for even the most basic civil rights, democratic demands or reforms for the black working class leads to confrontation with the authoritarianism at the core of the British state — its racist repressive apparatus. The British ruling class will not, and cannot make any 'concessions' on this question. This is the lesson that the BWF youth learned when they demanded at the time of Mrs Jarrett's death that black people and the police be subject to the same equal treatment and democratic justice. In this sense, the BWF affair is the key to the development of black politics in Britain. The question of evolving a political strategy and movement to confront state racism is the essential question for all those who pose themselves for political leadership of black people in Britain. It cannot be subordinated to, or subsumed within, moves for broader black representation within the labour movement or at the electoral level.

# Telecom workers need a fighting strategy

The recent British Telecom strike was the first national strike in the history of the BT union, the National Communications Union (NCU). But, argues Telecom worker **PETER SMITH**, the union's right wing leadership led by John Golding has failed to combat BT's long-term plans for restructuring the industry and drastically cutting the workforce. The only answer, he argues, is for the union's Broad Left to fight for an alternative strategy, which combines militant opposition to BT's plans, mobilisation of the workforce around demands for workers control and a socialist plan for the telecommunications industry, based on renationalisation and workers management.

THE GROWTH AND technological convergence of the telecommunications and computer industries is one of the major features of the restructuring of the world capitalist economy. The world-wide growth in telecommunications of 8 per cent per annum offers mouthwatering opportunities for profit hungry multinationals in a period of slow economic growth.

Hitherto telecommunications has been dominated by state monopolies such as the old Post Office in the UK or by state-regulated private monopolies such as AT & T (Ma Bell) in the USA. The ambitions of the multinationals are also worldwide. The big players in the scramble are led by IBM with an annual turnover of over \$50 billion and the slightly smaller AT & T, now divested of its local US telephone companies — the 'Baby Bells' — each of which is as big as BT.

In this league BT is a relative minnow, seven or eight times smaller than IBM. It is however, hugely profitable on the basis of its continued monopoly of UK telecommunications. Its £2.2 billion estimated 1986/87 profit represents a massive 20 per cent rate of return on capital, compared with British capital's average of 5% or so.

There are nevertheless clouds on the horizon. BT is relatively technologically backward compared with even its French and German counterparts. It will only complete the installation of electronic digitalised exchange equipment in the early 1990s. Its rate of investment is half that of the French network. It operates only 89 lines per employee compared with 140 in France. BT makes the bulk of its current profits from call revenue, and in particular from trunk and international calls. The Mercury company will soon have the capability to provide a serious alternative for business users. Ironically, fierce competition in this area in the USA means that carriers are now losing money, where they expected to make fat profits. BT is already losing market share in the provision and maintenance of private

The solutions are also depressingly familiar, a drive on 'productivity' (exploitation) and massive job loss. Out of a workforce of 236,000, a total of 70,000 jobs are said to be under threat by the early 1990s.

This programme requires the decisive weakening of the dominant BT union, the NCU, and of its militant left wing in the big cities in particular. In this project management have an able and determined ally in John Golding, the union's general secretary. Golding is the first union general secretary to gain office as a direct result of the Tory anti-union laws on balloting. He and the "NCU First" right-wing want a small highly paid NCU membership in BT. This would be



**John Golding, witchfinder general of the NCU**

switchboards and telephones. A high percentage of BT staff are employed in these fields.

Thus the familiar pattern of much of British industry is reemerging — low and declining investment and productivity compared with its competitors, protected only in the medium term by its continued monopoly position in the local networks. Even this monopoly is threatened with the development of mobile radiotelephones, satellite, and cable.

achieved by productivity bargaining and a voluntary redundancy agreement. Thus, for the leadership the only question during the recent strike was the cost of the strings. As an effectively single union employer, substantial redundancies in BT would bring into question the NCU's viability as an independent union. The prospect of a link up with the EPTU may be posed.

But Golding faces many obstacles. The union membership is very young — the average age is under 35 — with specialised



skills. Voluntary redundancy and early voluntary retirement is not an attractive option for many. The strike has not demoralised the bulk of the membership, and a new layer of militants is coming forward. The internal regime of the union is relatively democratic — for example any branch has the unrestricted right to circulate material to other branches. The full time apparatus is relatively small. The big city branches are left-led and are openly hostile to the national leadership, and capable of limited independent action. During the recent strike BT was only forced into negotiations after the 20,000 strong demonstration called by the union's City of London district council threatened to loosen the leadership's control over the strike.

### The Broad Left

The left in the union is organised through the Broad Left, an increasingly uneasy coalition including Kinnockites, *Militant*, a substantial layer of independent lefts, and a sprinkling of marxists. It came into existence after the 1978 35-hour-week campaign. Its greatest triumph was its sweeping to office in the middle of the 1983 anti-privatisation action (in general election week).

Unfortunately, the adoption of a strategy of selective industrial action proved disastrous and within six months the Broad Left majority on the NEC collapsed in front of the Mercury injunction and the prospect of sequestration. This set the scene, for the remainder of its period of office, for avoidance of confrontation with BT (and the Post Office) apart from a half-hearted campaign on the 1985 pay claim. One major missed opportunity was a fight over the 'broad strategy', and centrally its call for a 32-hour, 4-day week to meet the threat to jobs posed by the new technology, privatisation and competition.

Thus with some honourable exceptions, the BL NEC demoralised and demobilised its supporters, creating the conditions for Golding and the right to sweep back in 1986. The Broad Left's failure in office was a consequence of its political and organisational limitations — primarily an electoral machine and conference caucus. The BL organisation itself stagnated during the period 1983-86. Many branch officers and activists took a passive or cynical line towards the national leadership.

During the recent strike the London Broad Left initiated the Coordinating Committee of London branches — an important step but one which never realised its potential. It also produced information and leaflets on the course of the strike. But no more than a handful of activists were involved, many of the traditional supporters being wrapped up in local problems. Thus the impact of the Broad Left was weak. It must be said that this was not helped by the sectarian and abstentionist attitudes of some of the marxist groups.

The Broad Left needs to transform itself into a truly mass force in order to lead the union to take on an aggressive BT management and the new cynics at Greystoke House, the union HQ. That means breaking

with the methods of the past, to which both the Communist Party and *Militant* have subscribed. BT management knows that it needs to break the union in the strategic City district and has decided to victimise leading militants there. A defence campaign including national strike action is clearly required. This should be a central feature of the Broad Left's NEC election campaign.

### Labour's social ownership proposals for BT

The future of BT and its workers is bound up with the general election and Labour's social ownership proposals. We need to have a clear attitude towards these policies. There are two stages in Labour's plan for BT. First to use the government's 49 per cent shareholding to ensure consumer protection, industrial democracy, research and development, and to ensure that telecommunications and information technology are developed in 'the best interests of Britain'. This will be followed 'as soon as parliamentary time permits' by 'full

### 'the future of BT and its workers is bound up with the general election and Labour's social ownership proposals'

scale social ownership' — essentially a swapping of non-voting securities for BT shares. These would still be issued by BT and their price tied to BT's profit performance. The board would be appointed by, and answerable to, the secretary of state.

By 'industrial democracy' is meant the appointment by the secretary of state of a 'significant' number of BT workers and consumers to seats on the national and district boards, 'the size and scope of such representation to be open to discussion and agreement' (with whom?). The clear intent is that these will be a minority of seats — along West German lines.

BT's network monopoly would be restored and Mercury integrated into it. However, the monopoly will not be restored in the customer equipment field (telephones, telex, fax and so forth), thus continuing to subject a large proportion of BT staff to the icy blasts of cut-throat competition in these fields.

These proposals are utterly inadequate and dangerous. Not only are the capitalists to be fully compensated, but BT will clearly be expected to maximise profit at the expense of consumers and workers, despite the waffle about social responsibility. The industrial democracy proposals are window dressing since the worker/consumer representatives would be outvoted on any contentious issue. Needless to say there is no mention of sacking the existing board members or higher management, despite their being totally committed to privatisation, as shown in the recent fight against the unions. Additionally, any socialist strategy would have to nationalise

the major telecommunications suppliers such as Plessey, GEC and STC.

On the other hand Labour's proposals will be fiercely resisted by the City of London and BT management. BT is too rich a prize to let slip, even if Roy Hattersley is happy to let them take the money. The City and BT insist on nothing less than the full control implied by voting shares. They don't trust any government with their money, least of all a government which mouths off about 'social responsibility'. It would be necessary to defend a Labour government against the capitalists' sabotage if it ever acted on its vaguely worded promises.

*Militant* has put forward the only alternative programme to Labour's utopias. *Militant* proposes that a Labour government should reconstitute the BT boards of management with one-third representatives of the workers, one-third from the TUC, and one-third from the government. Lower management personnel and structures would be left intact. This they say would constitute 'a form of workers' management'. But *Militant* does not make it clear that such an arrangement could only be successfully applied in a planned economy. Otherwise such a board would be compelled by the same 'market forces' to take many of the same anti-working class decisions as the present one. *Militant's* plan is a measure to be implemented by a Labour government entirely divorced from the actual course of struggle of the workers themselves. In no way does this plan inform current strategies in the fight against BT management. In this sense it is not qualitatively different from Labour's policy.

Any plan for workers' control must start from the needs of the struggle, centring on such traditional demands as opening of the books and the imposition of workers' vetoes on management prerogatives. BT unions in association with other telecommunication and communication workers need to draw up a plan based on social need along the lines of the Lucas Aerospace plan, to combat the plans of the 'communications' multinationals. Otherwise we leave the highground to our opponents, reacting in purely defensive kneejerk ways to their well thought out strategies. A start to a discussion on the future of the world telecommunications industry has been made at a recent conference in Holland organised by the Transnational Institute.

The NCU strike has brought into united action for the first time a powerful section of the working class, which is right in the middle of the information technology revolution. Its members are fighting not only on pay, jobs and conditions, but for the very survival of independent trade unionism in the industry. In future confrontations BT will be better prepared, having brought into service more reliable System X and Y exchanges, and a housetrained management scab force. We will need the support and solidarity of the working class and the oppressed for our future struggles. Any 'go it alone' strategies are doomed to failure. That means we have now to extend our support to their struggles and break with the inward-looking attitudes of the past.

# Ireland: the cause of labour?

FACTUAL ACCOUNTS of employment discrimination on a sectarian basis in the north have been published in a variety of documents, ranging from those produced by government agencies to republican newspapers.

The division of the working class in Ireland is not new. It was being cultivated by the British as far back as the early eighteenth century, when the south was the centre of industrial capitalism and Ulster the industrially backward and revolutionary part of the country. By the end of that century, though, this order of ascendancy was in reverse with a more dominant north and backward south.

As in Britain, the rise of industrial capitalism went hand in hand with the growth of the early craft unions which, in Belfast, were essentially Protestant organisations. They were beginning to reflect the class structure of Ireland at that time. Divisions began to emerge on a craft and religious basis: Protestant and more skilled; Catholic and less skilled. Despite this early start, the trade union movement in the six counties did not win official recognition until 1964.

There are currently about 300,000 union members in the north of Ireland, of whom 80-90 per cent are in unions which are affiliated to the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), but have their headquarters in Britain. (The NIC was set up in 1944 to deal specifically with problems relating to the north).

The union structure in Ireland is not, however, straightforward. Some of the unions operate only in the north and are affiliated to the TUC. Others operate both in the north and the south. There are a few with membership in the north which are not affiliated to either the ICTU or the TUC. To add to the confusion, a few have their headquarters in the twenty-six counties, have members in the north but are not affiliated to the ICTU. There is no bar on British-based unions being affiliated to both the TUC and the ICTU.

Despite this organisational complexity, one element is dominant: the role of the British trade unions in the six counties.

Their record there has not been a proud one. It has, in short, been one of very selective activity, having found little to say about civil rights, internment, Bloody Sunday, violations of human rights or sectarianism in the workplace.

Yet the trade unions claim to be 'the most representative body in the province, embracing all sections of religious and political opinion' (in the NIC's 'ICTU: Role and Functions'). That being the case, why has this united band of 300,000 not yet achieved anything of significance in the six counties. The answer is that the NIC and ICTU are deluding themselves. They may well represent some 300,000 people but they are a people who have been historically and culturally divided.

A major trade union conference on employment discrimination in the six counties is being held in November. Along with campaigning around the general election, this conference is the main focus of Irish solidarity work in the next year. Here, **ALISON CLARKE** of the Labour Committee on Ireland trade union department, explains why the issue must be raised in the trade union movement.



**unionism and Unionism, the sectarian combination**

When the unions claim to be non-sectarian organisations, what they mean is non-sectarian to the Protestant majority in the north. When they claim to be non-political, what they mean is that they adhere to the accepted status quo, ie that of the Unionists. They cover these labels on the pretext that to do otherwise would split the membership along sectarian lines.

Nor is it any wonder that they adopt this line, given the way the employment scales are tipped in favour of their majority membership. The level of unemployment among Catholic men is two and a half times that

among Protestant men. Catholics are under-represented in engineering, utilities, banking, finance and business and have an unhealthy over-dependence on the construction industry.

Among women, the ratio of unemployment for Catholics is one and a half times that of their Protestant counterparts. Although these statistics suggest a better deal for women than men, they in fact obscure the double oppression experienced by Catholic women.

As a result, the low participation rates of women in the province due to strong religious and social influences are overlooked; the low numbers of women returning to the labour force after completing a family are ignored; the relative immobility of women in terms of looking for work is marginalised as a factor in women's employment experience. And the reluctance of women to register as unemployed is missed. This is to say nothing of the types of industries in which women predominantly find work and the part-time, low paid, low status work open to them.

Employment discrimination against the Catholic community in the six counties has endured — and is getting worse, not better — despite the progressive convergence of educational achievement between the two communities, and despite the passage of the Fair Employment legislation through Parliament 11 years ago.

And yet the issue is not discussed by the British trade union movement which dominates the scene in the north of Ireland. It is the Protestants, as a small minority in British trade unions, who dictate to the majority membership what the policies of our unions will be and even what topics are fit for discussion.

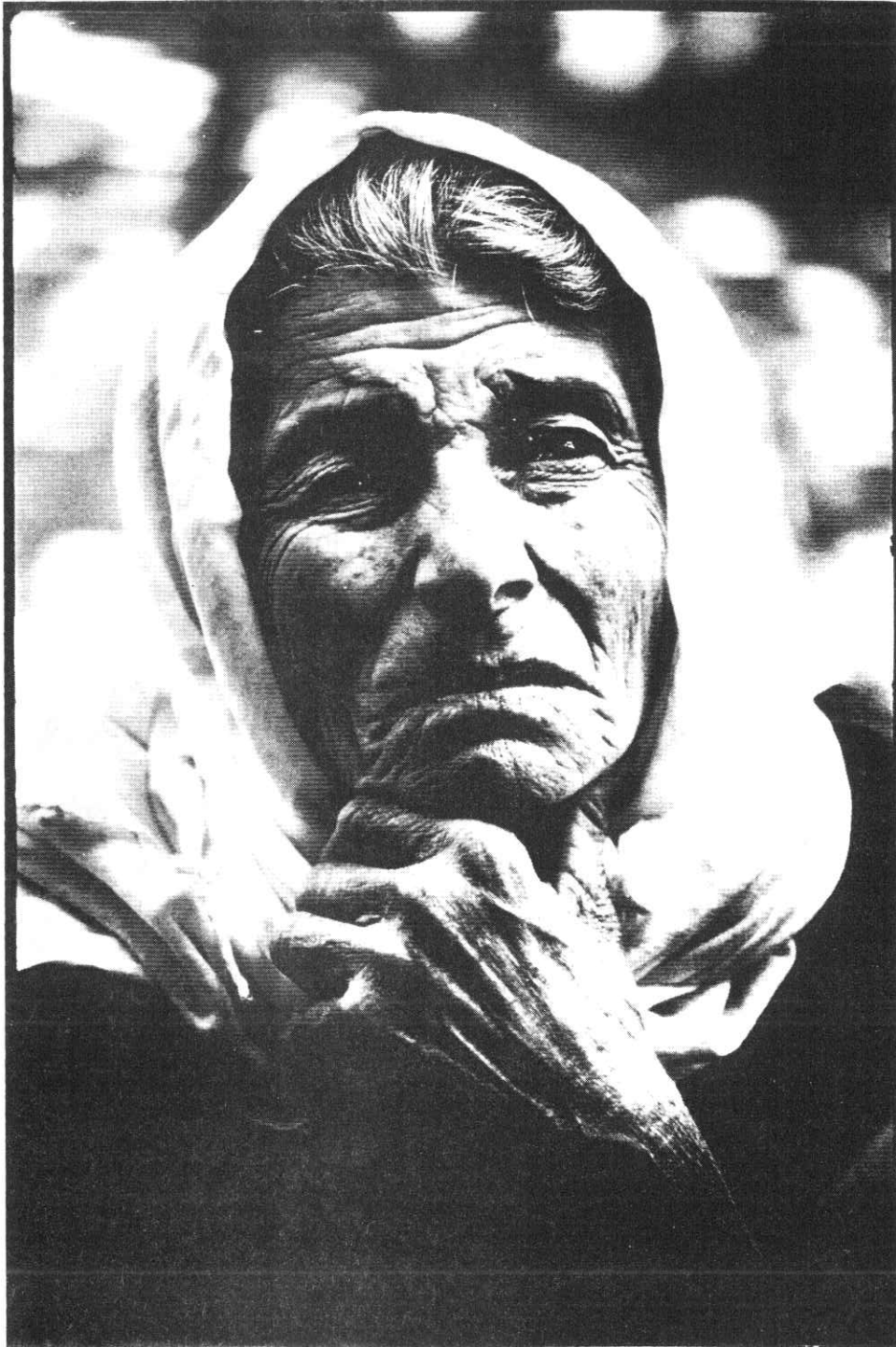
But equal opportunities are the proper concern of our trade union movement. It is the job of the unions to combat discrimination of any variety — be it sexual, racial or religious.

'Ireland: The Cause of Labour?' conference is an opportunity to find out the facts about employment discrimination and discuss policy implications for the unions. It provides an opportunity to hear the views of Irish trade unionists and the response of British trade unionists to them.

The conference will hear differing views on how to combat discriminatory practices, including an exposition of the MacBride Principles, a set of nine equal opportunity guidelines, by Dr Sean MacBride, Nobel and Lenin Peace Prize holder, and the patron of this conference.

It will be open to delegates from recognised trade union bodies in Ireland and Britain at branch, district and national level.

● *The conference will be held on 28 November 1987 at the Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London NW1. Further information may be obtained by writing to 'Ireland: The Cause of Labour?', BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.*

**Palestinian woman**

The recent Palestinian National Congress in Algiers offers vivid proof that twenty years of military and political pressure from imperialism, Zionism, and Arab nationalist regimes have failed to crush the fighting spirit of the Palestinian people.

Marking the anniversary of the watershed 'Six Day War', *Socialist Outlook* presents two extended articles on issues of Middle East politics.

**ANNA WAGSTAFFE** draws a historical balance sheet of the Palestinian struggle since 1967; and **JOHN TURKIE** looks at the combined fight against both Zionism and anti-Semitism.

## Twenty years since the six-day war



**Allenby bridge, 1967.  
Palestinian exodus after the six  
day war**

## Palestine: the liberation struggle which will not die

THIS JUNE marked the twentieth anniversary of the second Arab-Israeli war. It was the war that the Arab masses, the Palestinians in particular, had been waiting for ever since the fiasco of the defeats of the Arab armies in 1948. It was the war that would avenge that defeat which had led to the establishment of the settler Israeli State and would regain for the Palestinians their homeland. It was the war that President Nasser had stridently promised time and again over the air-waves of *Sawt Al Arab* (The Arab Voice); his promises repeated by the other Arab leaders.

But in the event, things did not quite turn out this way. With excellent planning and superior equipment, Israel launched lightning air-strikes on day one against the air-bases of Jordan, Egypt and Syria, wiping out virtually their entire airforces before the planes had even left their hangars. With this advantage secured, Israel then proceeded to take on and defeat all the Arab armies in a mere six days.

In purely military terms, Israel's victory was no great surprise. The Palestinians and the Arab people however could not be blamed for

thinking otherwise. The respective Arab leaders had, after all, constantly used the 'Palestinian card' in order to draw popular support behind their regimes, and also to pre-empt the potential threat of the emergence of an independent Palestinian organisation within their own borders. For years they

**'the six day war had a profound effect not just on the Palestinians, but the Middle East as a whole'**

had been loudly denouncing the colonial Israeli state and heralding the imminent day of its defeat.

Prepared in this way for a famous victory, the Palestinians were stunned when the awful realisation dawned on them that, far from liberating their homeland, this second war had resulted in Israel grabbing the last remnants of their territory: the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The six day war, as it soon became known, was to have a profound effect not just on the Palestinians, but on the Middle East as a whole. It brought to a close the 1950s era of militant Arab

nationalism, ushering in on behalf of Syria a new period of greater conciliation to the West combined with local manoeuvring to protect its own position, and in Egypt a wholesale collapse into the arms of imperialism, with the signing of the Camp David Accords, the stationing of Western military bases on its territory, and the handing over of its economy to the tender mercies of the IMF.

But in a not unrelated development, the 1967 defeat also signalled the emergence of the Palestinians as a major independent political, and to a lesser extent military, force in the region.

Up until 1967, though the Palestinian issue had been a major factor in Middle East politics, the Palestinians themselves played no independent political role. In so far as they were active at all politically, it was mainly in movements such as the pan-islamic movement (which, while adopting a reactionary religious form, nonetheless expressed a popular feeling of extreme hostility to the West, and for which the regaining of Palestine 'for Islam' acted as a strong focus) and various Arab nationalist movements - principally Nasserism and Ba'athism.

The Communist parties also gained a limited Palestinian following, especially in Jordan, where Arab nationalism never became a major force. The support given by the Arab Communist parties to the 1947 UN partition plan — in line with the USSR's peaceful co-existence policy — however, basically scuppered their chances of ever gaining a mass following in the Arab world.

It was only after the decisive defeat of the Arab armies in 1967 that the Palestinians began to recognise, in any number, the crying need for them to organise independently. The six day war effectively spelt the end of the 'Arab-Israeli' conflict and the beginning of the Palestinian struggle for national liberation.

It may at first seem strange that it took the dispossessed Palestinian people so many years to organise themselves. After all, however much the Arab leaders wished to identify themselves with the Palestinian struggle, and however much the Zionists, and to a large extent the Western media, refused to recognise the Palestinians as anything more than 'Arabs', the Palestinian people themselves knew that they alone had been thrown out of their homeland and denied their right to national self-determination.

That any attempt at self-organisation met with strong repression cannot be denied, but nor is it an explanation: for when the PLO did finally emerge, it did so under conditions which were far more hostile than was the case pre-'67.

Looking back on it some Palestinians point to the role of the Red Cross, and particularly the UN. The now familiar concrete refugee huts built by the United Nations Works Relief Agency (UNWRA) shortly after the war lent an air of finality to the situation of the refugees which, combined with the marginal improvements in comfort, helped them to resign themselves to their fate. Also responsible for the provision of medical aid, education, food and other necessities, UNWRA removed from the confused and disoriented refugee population the most pressing needs to organise themselves.

It is no doubt true that agencies such as UNWRA were a factor in determining the level of organisation among the Palestinians. Imperialism has, after all, a long record of giving generous humanitarian aid where such was deemed necessary in order to dissipate struggles or avoid certain upsurges. And there is no doubt that the West clearly recognised the human time-bomb constituted by so many refugees, homeless, stateless and with nothing to lose, camped in their thousands just outside Israel's borders.

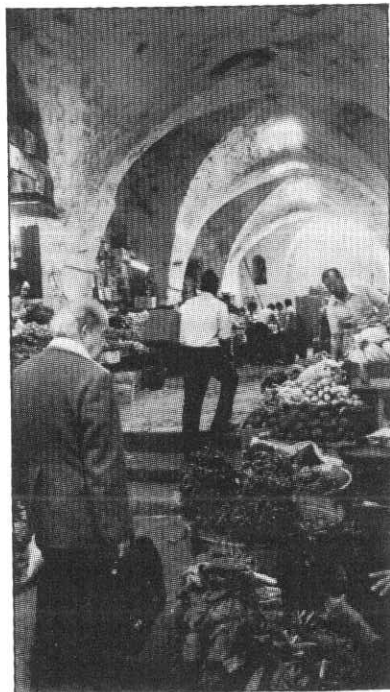
Indeed, on top of this aid 'carrot' they launched, at the same time, a massive propaganda campaign designed to force the Arab regimes to assimilate the refugees, into their own countries precisely in order to avoid the otherwise inevitable emergence of a Palestinian movement which could challenge Israel's right to usurp their country. In fact the whole 'refugee problem' was presented in the Western media *not* as a problem created by Israel for making them homeless, but as a problem *created* by the Arab states which, in refusing to 'assimilate' the refugees, were 'heartlessly using them as pawns in their conflict with Israel'.

The overriding factor explaining the lack of organisation among the Palestinians before 1967 however, must be found in their widespread belief in the determination and ability of the forces of Arab nationalism — to carry out their promises and liberate Palestine. The extent of this belief was signified by the pictures of President Gammal Abdel Nasser which adorned the con-

#### Yasser Arafat at the last conference of the non-aligned movement



#### The market in Jerusalem



crete walls of literally thousands of refugee huts. Of course, they were soon to find out just how wrong they were. But measured against their own apparent impotence, and looking back at the history of Arab nationalism it is, nonetheless, easy to see why they had hope.

Arab nationalism started emerging as a force in 1917 when the French and British, reneging on an earlier agreement, proceeded to carve up the Middle East between them. By the end of the second world war, while most of the Arab world (excluding north Africa) had finally gained its independence, the old feudal regimes that had operated under previous colonial administrations remained more or less intact. A rising class of urban petty-bourgeoisie and a peasantry sinking ever deeper into impoverishment combined to produce an explosive situation. The feudal rulers acted not only as landlords to a largely landless peasantry, but also provided their sole access to credit — a powerful position which they exploited ruthlessly. At the same time the growing numbers of small traders and manufacturers were becoming increasingly angered at the special commercial agreements which the feudal rulers guarded for their ex-colonial masters in return for financial and military backing for their regimes.

It was the impact of the Arab defeats in the 1948 war that acted as the spark which finally led to a series of nationalistic revolutions in Egypt, Syria and later Iraq. That three Arab armies could be defeated by an essentially small and not well equipped Zionist force was widely believed by the Arab

masses to be a demonstration of the total corruption and rottenness of the 'old regimes'.

Avenging the 1948 defeats and regaining Palestine was thus seen as a very central task of the emerging nationalist regimes. And while it is true that the likes of Nasser constantly promised the goods on Palestine that he could not possibly deliver, it is certainly not the case — as it was constantly presented by the western media — that Nasser was nothing but bluster and hot air whose popularity could be explained only through the extreme gullibility of the Arab people.

The fact is that the records of Egypt and Syria in standing up to the West at that time were impressive. And with no authoritative leadership capable of pointing out the limitations of the nationalist regimes, the Palestinian and Arab masses could hardly be blamed for believing their inflated promises on Palestine.

The 1950s was the era of the cold war. The USA was desperately trying to stitch up the newly-liberated third world countries into regional pro-West alliances. In Asia this meant SEATO; in the Middle East it was the Baghdad Pact. It was Egypt's refusal to get involved with any such alliance that precipitated the series of events which led to the Suez crisis, and consequently to Nasser becoming a hero throughout the third world.

Having refused to join a western alliance, Nasser found the western arms markets closed for him and was consequently forced to turn to the eastern bloc for alternative supplies. In a predictable retaliatory move, the US reacted by unilaterally withdrawing the very considerable funding it had promised for the building of the Aswan dam — a popular and prestigious project planned at improving dramatically Egypt's ability to feed herself.

It was in response to this that Nasser announced the nationalisation of the British-French owned Suez canal — a small corridor between the Mediterranean and Red Sea, vital to the military and commercial interests of the West. The move took the West by surprise and won the admiration of the developing world. Here at last was a leader refusing to buckle under the threats of the West. Here was a leader prepared to stand four-square and confront imperialism. The subsequent invasion of Egypt — never backed by the US — left Britain politically isolated, and Nasser, covered in glory, emerging as a leading figure in the non-aligned movement.

Nor was Syria's record any less convincing. By 1957 she found herself the subject of a massive western propaganda campaign at least on a par with that faced by Gaddafi at its height last

year. This was because of her links with the USSR, her support for African and Asian countries still fighting for their liberation and her outspoken condemnation of the Eisenhower doctrine — which offered US financial and military aid to any country 'threatened by communism'. Labelling it as 'communist controlled', the USA tried to destabilise Syria from within,

cient grounds for hope that they would carry through their oft-stated commitment to liberating Palestine. When these hopes were finally dashed by the six day war, the Palestinians were forced to start looking elsewhere.

Many looked to the example of the Algerian FLN which 5 years earlier had succeeded in liberating their country from the French after a protracted



Ein-él-Hilwé, Palestinian refugee camp in south Lebanon

isolate her from without, and threaten her militarily, with Turkish and Iraqi (Baghdad Pact) troops massed on her respective borders.

Needless to say there was never any truth in the US allegation of communist control. Both Egypt and Syria were, in fact, very hostile to communism within their own borders. Indeed Communist Party activists were liable to imprisonment throughout Nasser's rule in Egypt. Their relations with the Soviet Union were aimed simply at balancing East against West in an effort to maintain their own national independence. Nor was the US unaware of this fact. But they were also aware that the bourgeois nationalist regimes were, in the final analysis, more scared of the threat of their own working classes than of western domination which enabled the USA to use the 'communist scare' tactic time and again to tilt the 'non-alignment' balance in its favour. The tragedy was that the Palestinian and Arab people had no leadership capable of understanding the situation with comparable clarity.

Without such a leadership, and certainly with growing cynicism and doubts, the Palestinians believed the records of Syria and Egypt gave suffi-

guerrilla war. Throughout 1968, guerrilla organisations sprouted like mushrooms in the fertile soil of the refugee camps which were soon transformed from hopeless, humiliated and dependent communities into proud hot-beds of Palestinian resistance. Most of these organisations grouped themselves under the umbrella of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

But the PLO did not just emerge phoenix-like from the ashes of the 1967 defeat. It had its origins in many diverse sectors of the pre-'67 political scene, all of which were forced to develop in certain ways under the impact of the defeat and were drawn together into a unified Palestinian organisation.

The organisation itself was first set up in 1964 under the sponsorship of Egypt, in what was actually an attempt to contain the growing radicalisation of the Palestinian refugees. Only after 1967 was it transformed into an independent Palestinian body seeking effectively to organise and give voice to that radicalism. And it was not actually until 1969 that the largest guerrilla group, Fatah, led by Yasser Arafat, gained a controlling majority in the PLO.

Fattah had its political roots in the pan-islamic movement, but following 1967 it developed rapidly towards bourgeois nationalist politics — a transition which was marked by its adoption in 1968 of the call for a 'democratic secular state' of Palestine.

The most right wing of the groups within the PLO, Fattah has always distanced itself from the struggles of the oppressed within the Arab world, seeking instead to build opportunist alliances with the Arab regimes.

Nasserism found its echo within the PLO in the form of the Habbash-led Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine PFLP. A former leading member of the Nasserite Arab National Movement, Habbash moved leftward under the impact of the '67 defeat to reject Nasser's bourgeois Arab nationalism in favour of building alliances with movements of the oppressed throughout the Arab world. With the slogan "The road to Palestine leads through Jordan", the PFLP identified the overthrow of the Jordanian monarchy as a primary task confronting the Palestinians.

Perhaps the most advanced conclusions to be drawn from the period culminating in the 'six day war' however, were represented for a short time by the DFLP — a small group that splintered from the PFLP shortly after its formation. The DFLP distinguished itself by being the first Palestinian group seriously to attempt to build a principled support for the Palestinian cause among Jewish Israelis.

The Syrian Ba'ath movement also found representation within the PLO in the form of As-Sa'iga. It close links with the Syrian Ba'ath Party meant, however, that its post-'67 development owed more to the rightward shift in the Syrian regime than to the growing militancy of the Palestinians.

The emergence of the PLO marked a great leap forward for the Palestinians. For the first time they now had an independent voice which alone had the authority to speak on its behalf. For the first time they had an independent democratic organisation to give leadership and structure to their struggle.

But twenty years on, the question must be asked: what did the Palestinians really gain? Emerging into an Arab world of regimes moving rapidly to the right and anxious above all not to be dragged into further conflict with Israel, the Palestinians have been unwelcome wherever they organised. For the last twenty years they have been led from disaster to crisis, from suffering to suffering.

First came Black September in 1970. Having reached a state of virtual dual power with King Hussein in Jordan and having won the support of large sections of the Jordanian people, the PLO leadership caved in to the

monarch's ultimatum to disarm the Palestinian forces. In the massacre that followed, thousands of refugees were killed and wounded and thousands more exiled from the country.

Regrouping in south Lebanon, the PLO forces joined with the forces of the Lebanese National Movement to overthrow the Maronite minority rule which the French had left behind when they departed in 1953. This time it was Lebanon's powerful neighbour, Syria, which turned its guns on the Palestinians. Seeing its interests in weakening the strong Maronite hegemony on its northern border, Syria initially backed the PLO and LNM, but swapped sides when these, in turn, became too strong. The Syrian siege of Tel al-Za'atar in 1976 bore much resemblance to the similar sieges of the Beirut camps over the last seven months.

The next disaster came with the Israeli invasion of the Lebanon in 1982. Waging a war of attrition against the Lebanese and Palestinian population, Israel relentlessly



pounded Beirut day in and day out with phosphorus and cluster bombs, eventually forcing the PLO fighters to leave as a condition for halting the carnage.

Perhaps an even greater disaster followed in the wake of this. Shortly after the evacuation from Beirut, Arafat staged a reunion with Egypt — a regime officially boycotted even by such cravenly pro-Western states as Saudi Arabia following Sadat's recognition of Israel in 1979. Arafat then proceeded to the court of King Hussein. It was here that Arafat signed the Amman accords, which, by conceding to the butcher King joint right to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians, and by accepting effective Jordanian control over any part of the occupied territories that Israel might care to give up, gave away at a stroke everything the Palestinians had been struggling and suffering for for the last fifteen years.

With the PLO split down the middle at this treacherous move, and with the Palestinian military presence seriously weakened in the Lebanon, the stage was set for the latest crisis: the siege of the Beirut camps. Syria, which has always seen controlling the PLO as an important potential boost to its powers

(especially with regard to regaining the Golan Heights) saw its chance to make a bid for the 'alternative leadership'. While backing the forces of Amal in their attempt to wipe out the last vestiges of PLO power bases in Lebanon, President Assad of Syria planned to step in like a fairy Godmother 'just as the last rat was eaten' to present himself to the beaten and divided Palestinians as their only future.

Assad got his answer with the reunification Palestine National Congress (PNC) that has just taken place in Algiers, when all factions of the PLO supported a resolution reaffirming the PLO's sole right to represent the Palestinians. In answer to King Hussein's bid for power, the PNC formally abrogated the Amman accords, and so clearly re-established their aspirations towards national self-determination. But most importantly, the PNC was one in the eye for Israel, which over the last twenty years has used every trick in the book to try to establish a local 'alternative leadership' prepared to negotiate and implement some form of 'autonomy' (Bantustan) in the occupied territories. Having failed for so long — despite fierce repression that has left no Palestinian family untouched — to break the occupied Palestinians from their total allegiance to the PLO, Israel saw in the Amman accords, the reunion with Egypt, the divided PLO and the Amal attacks in Lebanon, a light in the end of the tunnel. With the latest PNC these hopes have yet again been dashed.

After twenty years of struggle and suffering, the Palestinians have not liberated one inch of their territory. Their victory, however, lies in this: subject to the most incredible pressures from all quarters, they have managed to survive — not just physically, (though under the circumstances this in itself must be seen as something of an achievement) but politically. They have not conceded their right to choose their own representatives and they have not conceded their right to national self-determination in their own homeland.

The incredible militancy and national consciousness that twenty years of struggle have forged in every section of the Palestinian population will not easily be eradicated. Without correct leadership, however, militancy and self-sacrifice can only lead to further suffering. The task of the Palestinians in the coming years must surely be to fight for such a leadership within the framework of the PLO, and rooted firmly in their most oppressed layers, and with a developing understanding of the politics of bourgeois nationalism and its acute limitations, to carry them forward to victory ●

**Many of the photographs in this supplement are from the excellent book *After the last sky* by Edward Said and Jean Mohr (Faber, £6.95)**

Menachim Begin in 1950

THERE IS MORE confusion (even on the left) surrounding the 'Jewish Question' than possibly any other. Surely — some may think — Jews are entitled to a 'homeland', and to attack Israel, for not being right-wing or capitalist, but for being a *Jewish* state, runs the risk of developing into an anti-semitic argument.

Even left-wing zionists denounce anti-zionists as anti-Jewish for supporting the Palestinian people's right to national self-determination while simultaneously not supporting this right in respect of 'the Jewish people'. Left-wing zionists, in common with all zionists, believe that Jews constitute a nation and are, as such, a race.

#### Zionism — a distortion of Jewish history.

Zionism was born in the Russian pogroms of 1882 and the notoriously anti-semitic Dreyfus Affair in France. Theodor Herzl, the founder of political zionism, covered the Dreyfus 'treason' trial as a journalist. In his diary Herzl summed up his reactions in an attitude which has subsequently echoed and re-echoed in zionist literature: 'in Paris...I achieved a freer attitude to anti-semitism, which I now began to understand historically, and to pardon. Above all, I recognised the emptiness and futility of trying to "combat" anti-semitism.'

Zionism is a very young movement, but this fact does not prevent it from pretending that it draws its origins from a past more than 2000 years old, asserting that it constitutes a reaction to the state of things existing since the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in AD70. Zionism's recent birth is naturally the best reply to these pretensions.

How is it that the remedy for a 2000 year-old evil was discovered only at the end of the nineteenth century? Zionism has never posed these questions: why during these 2000 years didn't Jews try to 'return' to Palestine? Why was it necessary to wait until the end of the 19th century for a Herzl to succeed in convincing them of the necessity? Why were all the predecessors of Herzl — like the famous Sabbatei Zebi — fiercely prosecuted by orthodox Judaism?

Zionist claims to Palestine derive from a distortion of Jewish history and are based on the false question: zionism = Judaism. In reality, as long as Judaism was incorporated into the eastern European feudal system, the 'dream of Zion' was nothing but a dream and did not correspond to any real interests of Judaism. Zionism was born in eastern Europe when the feudal system broke down and the persecution of the Jews began in earnest. It developed and came to maturity with the spread of fascism in we-



## Anti-zionism and anti-semitism

Post Perdition, it should be apparent just how powerful, and indeed how paranoid, the zionist lobby is in British society. From the zionist perspective, it is (just about) acceptable to sympathise with the plight of the Palestinian people. However, to oppose zionism at an ideological level almost inevitably leaves one open to the charge of anti-semitism.

This is so even if the

anti-zionists in question happen to be Jewish, in which case the charge is one of being 'self-hating' Jews who deny their history and background. In fact, there is nothing that infuriates zionists more than being confronted with anti-zionist Jews, who are therefore singled out, in particular, for attack by zionism. **JOHN TURKIE** looks at Zionism in the light of the history of

Judaism.



stern Europe. Zionism could not gain a foothold until the social conditions for its emergence were ripe. It is a product of its time.

**Anti-semitism and the myth of Jewish capitalism.**

The tragedy experienced by Jews in eastern Europe in the early twentieth century was due to a combination of the decline of feudalism and the degeneration of capitalism. Hardly born, the capitalist system was already showing all the signs of senility. The general decay of capitalism manifested itself in crises and unemployment throughout eastern Europe. Jews began to face great hostility from both the petty bourgeoisie — who saw them as a 'threat' — and the working class who, suffering from permanent unemployment and poverty, blamed Jews for their problems. Governments and capitalists engaged themselves in organising anti-Jewish sentiment. In Poland in the 1920s, the state organised an effort to 'dejudify' and 'Polanise' all professions. The universities became a favourite arena for anti-semitism. They became places of terrible pogroms, which swept through Poland in the 1920s and 1930s.

**'The fate of the Jews is inseparable from the fight against racism'**

Western and central Europe were also soon to become theatres of a frightful rise in anti-semitism. After World War One, these countries saw tens of thousands of Jewish immigrants — most of them destitute poor from eastern Europe. The Jewish bourgeoisie in western Europe viewed this mass arrival with alarm, and began lobbying for the colonisation of Palestine. Not for themselves of course, but to help the 'poor Ostjuden' ('eastern Jews') return to the land of their ancestors. In other words, the Jewish bourgeoisie, who with reason feared the rise of anti-semitism, wanted them to go as far away as possible.

The seeming post-war prosperity permitted many Jewish immigrants to penetrate branches of business and artisanry. But not for long. The economic catastrophe of 1929 threw the petty bourgeoisie into a hopeless situation. The primarily commercial and artisan character of Judaism, heritage of a long historical past, made it the principal enemy of the middle classes on the domestic market. The concept of 'Jewish wealth' was (and probably still is) solidly entrenched in the consciousness of the majority, and for the racists it was only a question of re-awakening and giving 'presence' — by



Robert Capa

means of well-orchestrated propaganda — to the image of the 'usurious' Jew.

Simply, we can say that the violent racism against Jews during this period not only expressed the will of the ruling classes, it also expressed the hatred of the middle classes in particular toward 'foreign' elements within the domestic market. Capitalism used this racism and saved itself by resurrecting the Jew and the hatred of Jews. This elementary anti-semitism of the working and middle classes was fashioned into a major component of fascist ideology. But it is precisely because Jews did not play the role attributed to them that anti-semitic



Robert Capa

**Settlers arriving in Haifa 1949**

persecution could take on such magnitude. 'Jewish capitalism' is a myth which is why it was so easily 'vanquished'.

**A capitulation to racism**

Zionism came about in response to virulent anti-semitism, its 'solution' being to remove Jews from among non-Jews and concentrate them in a country exclusively their own. It is often claimed that Zionism is 'the national liberation movement of the Jewish people', a claim which assumes that the 16 million Jews around the world constitute a national entity. Yet, a liberation movement of any oppressed group of people should exist, by definition, to fight their oppressors. According to Zionism however, rather than waste time in a futile fight against anti-semitism, Jews should simply emigrate to the 'Jewish homeland'.

For many Zionist ideologues, anti-semitism is endemic among non-Jews. Leo Pinsker, a precursor of political Zionism, came to the conclusion that anti-semitism is a manifestation of a social disease — 'judophobia' — which is hereditary among non-Jews: 'Judophobia is then a mental disease; and as a mental disease it is hereditary; and having been inherited for 2000 years, it is incurable.' And the Zionist historian Yigal Elam writes: 'Zionism has not regarded anti-semitism as an abnormal, absurd, deformed and marginal phenomenon. It has regarded anti-semitism as a natural phenomenon, something given and normal in the attitude of Gentiles to the presence of Jews in their midst'.

Zionist propaganda claims that the extermination of millions of Jews by the Nazis 'proves' the necessity of an exclusive 'Jewish homeland'. Many

**Further reading on the Middle East and Zionism**

- Maseer Aruri, Occupation: Israel over Palestine, Zed Press**
- Lenni Brenner, Zionism in the age of dictators, Lawrence Hill**
- Uri Davis, Israel: utopia incorporated? Zed Press**
- David Hirst, The gun and the olive branch, Faber**
- Ghasan Kanafani, The 1936-1939 revolt in Palestine, PFLP**
- Abram Leon, The Jewish Question: a Marxist interpretation, Pathfinder, £3.95**
- Maxime Rodinson, Israel: a colonial settler state, Monad & Israel and the Arabs, Penguin**
- Edward Said, The question of Palestine, Times Books**
- Rosemary Sayigh, Palestinians: from peasants to revolutionaries, Zed Press**
- Marion Woolfson, Babylon — Jews in Arab lands, Faber**
- Nathan Weinstock, Zionism: a false messiah**

more Jews were saved from the gas chambers and the concentration camps by escaping to the depths of Russia, or to the USA, or to this country, than by going to Palestine. The simple fact is that Jews were exterminated wherever the Nazis reached, and were saved otherwise. The *only* thing that this proves is that the fate of the Jews (as of other persecuted groups) is inseparable from the fight against racism, fascism and reaction.

Even by its own admission, zionism was involved in saving the lives of Jews only insofar as this meant bringing them over to Palestine as settlers. In the late 1930s, under the pressure of public opinion, various projects were proposed by the American, British and other governments for saving the Jews of central and eastern Europe by organising a large-scale emergency migration to places other than Palestine. The zionist movement refused to cooperate and helped shelve these projects. In a recently published book, *Post-Ugandan zionism in the crucible of the holocaust*, the zionist historian SB Beit-Zvi concludes sadly: 'narrow-mindedness and the fear of the "territorialist danger" (the migration of Jews to countries other than Palestine) led the zionist movement to act in a number of cases against the efforts of others, Jews and non-Jews, to save Jewish lives'.

In fact, zionism has on many occasions used anti-semitism to encourage Jews to emigrate to Israel. A February 1969 issue of the daily newspaper, *Yediot Aharanot*, stated: 'It is of course not customary to talk about it in public, but many of us felt a tiny bit of joy when we read newspaper reports of the swastika epidemic in Europe in 1960; or about the pro-nazi movement in Argentina'. Zionism is a response to anti-semitism. However, it is a response which capitulates to racism. According to zionist logic the struggle against anti-semitism should be given up as 'pointless' and the problem 'solved' by segregation, exactly as the racists recommend.

#### Zionism as colonisation

Zionism came into being in the heyday of European colonial expansion, when 'colonisation' was not regarded as a dirty word, certainly not in the European middle-class circles in which zionist leaders like Herzl moved. A country whose population was not European was regarded as 'uninhabited', 'a land without a people'. In the many places colonised by Europeans the 'natives' were used as a source of cheap and super-exploited labour power in the service of the settlers. This practice was not to be followed by the zionist settlers. The specific feature of zionism which distinguishes it from all other modern settler colonisation movements is that it wanted not

simply the resources of Palestine, but the country itself, for the establishment of a new national state which through immigration would create its own classes, including a working class. The indigenous people were not therefore to be exploited, but totally replaced.

This strategy is confirmed in the diaries of Joseph Weitz, an important official in the zionist machine in the 1940s: 'Between ourselves it should be clear that in this country there is no room for both peoples together...The only solution is Palestine, or at least

### 'Zionism capitulates to anti-semitism'

western Palestine (later to become Israel and the West Bank), without Arabs...There is no other way but to transfer all the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries. To transfer all of them; not one village, not one tribe should be left behind...For this purpose money, plenty of money, can be found. And only after such a transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brethren.'

In order to facilitate this robbery, and to 'preserve the Jewish character of Israel' — that is, Jewish supremacy — various racist and discriminatory laws, regulations and practices were introduced. It is not so much a question of zionists regarding Arabs as inherently inferior to Jews, although many zionists do have such views; rather, the point is that in practice, in order to implement the aims of zionism, it was necessary to dispossess the Palestinians and to violate not only

### 'The "Jewish Race" is a myth'

their national rights as a people but also their human and civil rights as individuals.

From the start it was clear to Herzl and the other zionist leaders that in order to colonise Palestine they would need the backing and support of the major imperialist powers. Accordingly, they worked hard in order to obtain — from these powers — a 'charter' for the colonisation of Palestine. It takes two to tango, and zionism had to offer something in exchange for such a charter. In the bible of the zionist movement, *The Jewish State* by Theodor Herzl, the author explains what that 'something' would be: 'For Europe we shall serve there as part of the rampart against Asia, and function as the vanguard of civilisation against the barbarians...We shall keep our times with all the European nations, who will

guarantee our existence there'. Since that time, Israel's role as imperialism's cop in the Middle East — particularly after the USA took over as the major imperialist power in the area — has greatly increased in importance.

#### Anti-zionism: anti-racism

In conclusion, it is incorrect to brand, as do all zionists, any opposition to zionism or Israel as anti-semitic. The false assumption that zionism and Judaism are one and the same thing — an association which allows zionists to label all opposition as anti-semitic — is in fact a distortion of Jewish history. The zionist state is an exclusivist Jewish state which has institutionalised the expulsion of Palestinians from their land, daily discriminates against them in every aspect of life, and does not even officially recognise the existence of Palestinians. The rationalisation of the colonisation of Palestine at the expense of its Arab inhabitants has created an ideology and society which is racist to the core.

And what of the concept of 'the Jewish people' and their 'right' to national self-determination? Surely, left-wing zionists argue, Jews constitute a race and it must be anti-semitic not to support *both* Palestinian and Jewish self-determination? In reality, because of the diaspora character of Judaism, Jews constitute a mixture of the most diverse races. Even in Palestine, Jews far from constituted a 'pure race'. Leaving aside the fact that according to the Old Testament, the Israelites brought a mass of Egyptians with them when they left Egypt, it is enough to recall the numerous races which had established themselves in Palestine — Hittites, Canaanites, Philistines ('Aryans'), Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks and Arabs.

There is no racial homogeneity between the Syrian Jews, for example, and the Jews of Russia. The first are Oriental in type (Sephardic), while the second are European (Ashkenazy). There are black Jews in India, Ethiopian Jews (Falasha) and 'Troglodite' Jews in Africa. The 'Jewish race' is a myth. Judaism has no 'racial characteristics', and it is thoroughly racist to think otherwise. In this respect however, zionism shares many of the assumptions of the racists.

Zionism is a false solution to the problem of anti-semitism and is based on a capitulation to anti-semitic arguments. Indeed, if you believe that Jews can and should live in freedom and dignity among non-Jews; that anti-semitism can be fought and beaten, then you are thinking as an anti-racist and a socialist. But if you believe Jews should go away 'where they belong' to live 'among their own kind', then you are thinking as an anti-semitic. Or a zionist.

Gorbachev

After being postponed several times, a plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was finally held on January 27-28. Mikhail Gorbachev's marathon six-hour report marked a definite acceleration of the course of reforms that he initiated upon taking power, writes **ERNEST MANDEL**.

What was new was that the centre of gravity of these latest reforms has shifted from the economic and social-moral fields (for example the fight against alcoholism and corruption) toward a strictly political level.

## GORBACHEV'S DILEMMAS

THE THREE MAIN measures proposed concerned political structures in the strict sense. For the first time in 35 years, a special party congress will be called at the beginning of next year. The form of selecting candidates for the elections to the local and regional soviets will be modified. (It is not clear if this reform will extend to the choice of candidates for the Supreme Soviet.)

The form of electing party leaders at several ascending levels will also be changed. (Once again, it is not clear whether the introduction of the secret ballot will apply also to the election of delegates to party congresses, as well as to the election of members of the Central Committee of the CPSU.)

A series of such reforms was in the air. These were being discussed not only within the party apparatus but also among the intelligentsia, and even with foreign guests. Some of the proposals discussed, on the other hand, have not been upheld (at least, not yet), such as introducing the principle of compulsory rotation of top party positions and a limitation of terms in office, including in the Central Committee and the Political Bureau, to the life of two legislatures.

Nonetheless, it seems that Gorbachev achieved a surprise effect. While the draft report had circulated among Political Bureau members and candidates, precise details of the new modes of election had been omitted from it. It seems that they have had a bomb-shell effect within the Central Committee.





The surprise effect, the repeated adjournments of the plenums, the interruption of the session, the number of speeches following the general secretary's report (there were at least 34 of them) and the fact that the resolution finally adopted does not mention a number of the more radical proposals all testify to the resistance Gorbachev is running into from the top echelons of the bureaucracy. The extent of this resistance is also pointed up by the fact that the infusion of new blood into the Political Bureau was more modest than expected. Shcherbinski remained a member; Boris Eltsin was not elected.

This resistance is simply the reflection at the top levels of the bureaucracy of the conservatism of the majority of the bureaucratic apparatus. It is afraid of any deepgoing change, of any change that is more than purely cosmetic. It is apprehensive about Gorbachev's two central slogans — '*glasnost*' (openness, that is more honest, realistic and complete information) and '*perestroika*' (rebuilding, radical reform).

All this does not mean that Gorbachev represents a fundamentally anti-bureaucratic element, a reformer in the socio-political sense of the term, in the life of the state and the party, or that he is largely isolated from the rest of the society. He represents the *more lucid wing of the bureaucracy*, present above all among the intelligentsia and the technocrats but also, it would seem, in the police and military apparatus, which has recognised the gravity of the crisis into which bureaucratic management has plunged the Soviet Union.

If Gorbachev speaks more and more of a veritable 'revolution' being necessary, it is to save the bureaucratic system, not because he wants to overthrow it.

The differences between Gorbachev and the so-called conservative faction arise from the conservatives' criminal underestimation of the crisis, which is 'criminal' precisely from the standpoint of the interests of the bureaucracy as a whole. Facing a scalpel the Brezhnevites murmur that all that is needed is an injection.

Much evidence could be cited of points from Gorbachev's report that his objective is defending the bureaucratic dictatorship. The principle of the one-party system was stubbornly upheld, as well as the dogma that the party must always play the leading role in politics. Gorbachev sang the praises of the KGB as an institution (a command performance, perhaps?).

The 'principle' of democratic centralism as it has functioned since the victory of the Stalin faction (in reality, bureaucratic centralism) was considered the touchstone of the entire political system. Its extension from the party to the mass organisations and the state structures was celebrated as the *nec plus ultra* [zenith] of Marxism-Leninism, with which, of course, it has nothing to do. And so on, and so on.

It is precisely by measuring Gorbachev's aim against the means proposed for achieving it that the dilemma he faces is most clearly highlighted.

For nearly 60 years, everything in the Soviet Union has functioned on the basis of a vertical command system, from the top down, without any initiative or self-organisation by the masses. Underlying the bureaucratic dictatorship is the principle that the 'material interest' of the bureaucracy is the driving force

### **'a relaunching of explicit destalinisation in the style of the twentieth congress is not excluded'**

in achieving the plan and turning the wheels of the economic machine.

The monopoly of power and material privileges each flow from the other. Logically, therefore, Gorbachev has started from the top in applying his reforms.

But, the apparatus resists. It demonstrates a ponderousness unsuspected even by its most lucid critics. It sabotages, or worse still, systematically obstructs. So, it has to be shaken up. You start by shaking up the administration administratively. Then you find more obstruction, glaring new manifestations of inertia, new partial setbacks, new delays and postponements.

But the ticking of the time-bomb represented by the crisis of the system goes on relentlessly. But how can some bureaucrats mobilise the masses against others and control and channel their mobilisations? The risks of such an adventure are confirmed by the examples of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, China; and the most terrifying example of all is the Poland of Solidarnosc. Give them an inch, and they'll take a mile.



Like the 'liberal empire' of Napoleon I and Napoleon III, or the 'liberal empire' of the czars, Gorbachev's 'liberal dictatorship' is literally caught between two fires. Divisions within the bureaucracy widen a breach through which sooner or later the autonomous action of the masses can erupt.

While Gorbachev talks about a crisis of the system in the gravest of terms, even alarmist ones, he cannot offer an adequate explanation of how the USSR got into this predicament. Like all the ideologues and politicians of the bureaucracy, he is incapable of presenting and analysing the bureaucracy itself as a social force. For him the bureaucracy is only a psychological phenomenon, a sum of defects and errors in behaviour, at most a sum or system of inadequate ideas. The social roots of these superstructural phenomena are covered over

### 'The Gorbachev team mistrusts the workers and the workers mistrust the Gorbachev team'

#### Bland condemnation of Stalin

Thus, when he condemned the Stalin period in his report to the Central Committee, he did so in such bland and purely ideological terms that it seemed an insult to the victims of the terror:

'The circumstances that we are aware of... [in the course of which] authoritative evaluations and judgements become unquestionable truths that needed only to be commented upon.'

The millions deported? A million Communists murdered? The all-embracing terror? The working class atomised, terrorised, made incapable of action? The proclamation of the omnipotence of the managers in the factories? The elimination of the right to strike? The enormous growth of social inequality? All this disappears from the analysis.

In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the condemnation of the Brezhnev era seems more radical than that of the Stalin era. In the case of the former, the picture is not outlined with a few fuzzy strokes but painted in big bold colours —

stagnation in all areas, inertia, widespread lack of respect for the law, vast corruption, declining morality, holding back of economic and social progress, blocking positive changes, blindness to social problems. The general secretary certainly did not mince any words there!

Indeed, a relaunching of explicit de-Stalinisation in the style of the twentieth and twenty-second congresses is not excluded. The regular Soviet press is mentioning Lenin's last testament, especially its negative judgement about Stalin. But, for the moment, it is not publishing the full text of the document or raising the delicate question of the Moscow trials, or of the composition of the Political Bureau in Lenin's time, or of the testament's generally favourable assessment of the Bolshevik leaders murdered by Stalin, in particular Trotsky and Bukharin.

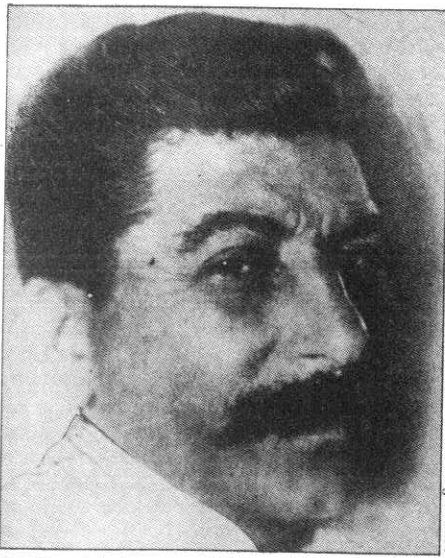
Questioned by Monty Johnstone, an editor of the British Eurocommunist magazine *Marxism Today*, Fyodor Burlatsky, political commentator on *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and quite close to Gorbachev himself, still expressed himself in an evasive fashion about a rehabilitation of Lenin's companions who fell victim to Stalin:

'...we must change our style of teaching the history of our party. It is now without personalities. And they must research the role of all political leaders, of leading members of the politburo, and explain what happened during Lenin's time, during Stalin's time, dealing with every figure. It is our duty. But I can't answer now about the personalities you mentioned because it is a big question, and it is a difficult question, and maybe we'll have an answer in the not too distant future.'

According to the Italian CP daily *L'Unita* of 28 January 1987, a rehabilitation of Bukharin is in the works.

All these questions are not merely historical or symptomatic. They go to the heart of the problem. This is why Khrushchev tripped over the same stumbling block.

You cannot rehabilitate the victims of the Stalin purges without at the same time condemning *en bloc* their executioners, their jailers, and those who bore witness against them — that is, the bulk of the bureaucratic apparatus. You cannot point an accusing finger at this apparatus as a whole without exposing the mechanisms of political power that made it possible to commit these monstrous crimes and the reasons why the bureaucracy tolerated (or wanted) them committed.



David King collection

### Stalin: his leadership and the isolation of the Russian revolution led to the system of bureaucratic rule

#### Bureaucratic privilege versus 'the communist ideal'

That takes us back to the question of the bureaucracy's material privileges, in particular their special stores, special hospital rooms, their vacation homes, their dachas and their state cars. There was some talk about these things before the twenty-seventh congress of the CPSU but a veil has been cast over them since. Gorbachev does not seem to have mentioned these questions in his marathon report to the Central Committee in January 1987.

Here appears the second dilemma facing Gorbachev. He has exposed the veritable 'moral corrosion' that Soviet society has supposedly suffered since Brezhnev (and what about Khrushchev's 'goulash socialism'?). He has said that 'Western values' and 'consumer society' behaviour have asserted themselves in the USSR:

'Groups have grown, including many youth, for whom the aim of existence has narrowed to the search for material well-being, for gain at any cost. The cynical position of such people has taken on the most acute forms and is poisoning the outlook of those around them.' (Summary of the report in *L'Unita* of 28 January 1987.)

So, Gorbachev makes a stirring eulogy to moral incentives and 'the communist ideal'. But how can you fail to recognise that all of that sounds hollow so long as enormous material privileges persist at the top echelons of the bureaucracy? Austerity for the masses, the workers, the producers, pensioners, petty functionaries; 'material incentives' for the top bureaucrats and technocrats — can anyone think for a single instant that the people are not going to notice this fraud, with or without *glasnost*?

How can you break out of this dilemma without striking at the bureaucracy's heart (which lies just below its wallet) and without dumping this cynical red herring of a fight against 'petty-bourgeois egalitarianism' (it would be far more correct to speak of petty-bourgeois opposition to equality) that, in the purest Stalinist tradition, still turns up in Gorbachev's report?

Underneath this second dilemma there is a third. For a year, Gorbachev has been gradually shifting the axis of economic reform from the sphere of consumption toward that of production. At the CPSU's twenty-seventh congress, a lot of space was still accorded to improving the standard of living of the masses, and in particular to the promise of modern and comfortable housing for everyone by the year 2000. But in the background, a new and mounting productivist pressure can be seen shaping up. This is what makes the workers suspicious. Burlatsky admitted this in a veiled way in his interview in *Marxism Today* mentioned previously.

In order for the economic reform to be accepted by the masses, for the workers to take part in it or become the active force in it, it is not enough to appeal to an 'ideal', above all in a society so saturated with scepticism, hypocrisy, double talk, not to say cynicism, as Soviet society is today. The workers need guarantees that extra exertions will not rebound against them, above all that such additional efforts will not put in question full employment, will not aggravate inequality.

But how can such guarantees be given while at the same time increasing the rights and powers of the managers and technocrats in the factories and giving full play to 'material incentive', which remains the essential feature of the economic reform?

You can see the extent of Gorbachev's dilemma by comparing his situation with that of Deng Hsiao-ping in the People's Republic of China. The Chinese old fox held a major ace. His economic reforms could sharply increase the incomes of the peasantry, even if at the price of growing inequality among the peasants. The peasantry represents the great majority of the population of China.

However, the great majority of the population of the USSR is not made up either of peasants or bureaucrats. It is composed of simple wage earners. But to these people Gorbachev does not have a great deal to offer on the material level. Improving supply, even of food, by extending the cooperative sector, brings on a dizzying rise in prices.

In the 'cooperative stores' opened in Moscow you can find high-quality sausages without having to stand in line. But the price is ten times higher than in the state stores. No workers, not even skilled workers (who earn 300 rubles a month) can afford ten rubles for a kilo of sausages. (The equivalent in Britain would be £25 to £33 for two pounds of sausages).

#### Discussion on workers' self-management

Gorbachev's only way out, in these conditions, is to offer something on an institutional level. But the contours and content of what he offers are far too vague to overcome scepticism.

An interesting discussion is going on today in the USSR on the subject of self-management of enterprises. A notable example is in the article by Lev Tolkunov, member of the Central Committee of the CPSU and chair of the Council of the Union of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, in No. 10, October 1986, of *Nouvelle Revue Internationale*. The contradictions in the 'official' position defended by Tolkunov are glaringly obvious.

'Our party...has resolutely rejected the conceptions of 'bar-racks communism' which deny the democratic forms of workers' self-management in order to give primacy to military-bureaucratic methods. At the same time, the party has declared itself, and still does, consistently and resolutely against all petty-bourgeois [sic] anarcho-syndicalist theories of "workers' self-management". The latter are unacceptable to us because they counterpose to the socialist state the self-management of workers' collectives. In reality, as experience shows [sic], the socialist state acts in common with the socialist organisations and the collectives of the workers, as the instrument for people's self-management.' (p 57.)

You can get the full flavour of this hash when you remember that since the victory of the Stalin faction, the principle of management in the enterprises has been the 'unified command' of the managements, that the right to strike or to challenge the managers' decisions has been abolished, and that, as the author himself admits, until quite recently the workers were simply informed of the content of the plans, and not even consulted about it!

Tolkunov proclaims grandiloquently: 'As the complete masters on their home ground in the factories, the kolkhozy, the workshops or the farms, the working people must also be masters in the country' (p 65). However, we learn in passing that in the 'radical' reform that is being drafted concerning management structures in enterprises, 'workers' councils' are to be set up that will 'bring together representatives of the administration, the party organisations, the unions and the Komsomol, as well as team councils, etc...' 'it seems opportune to extend eligibility for election to all heads of teams, and then progressively to certain [!] other categories of leaders in the enterprises: foremen, chiefs of posts, of sectors, of workshops....of sovkhos administrations' (p 66).



The workers cannot determine what they produce, how they produce it, or to whom their product is to go. The workers who are the 'complete masters on their home ground in the factories' have only recently been given the right to elect the factory manager, as they do in Yugoslavia, to say nothing of the higher-ups in the trusts and groups or factories. The state, as the instrument of 'people's self-management' is supposed to represent this 'people' over and above the workers' collectives. One could not give a better illustration of bureaucratic centralism.

What characterises the Gorbachev team is mistrust of the workers. What characterises the workers' attitude is mistrust of the Gorbachev team. This cannot be overcome by propaganda. On both sides, such misgivings by no means reflect any lack of clear-sightedness.

This mutual mistrust clearly outlines Gorbachev's dilemmas. So far, Gorbachev has proven to be a great public relations expert, but he has remained far from expert in dialogue with the working class.

#### Women's councils

Feminist consciousness has advanced by leaps and bounds in recent months. The under-representation of women in the leading bodies of the party and the state is creating a real scandal today. The Gorbachev team has reacted. Discussions have taken place on the subject of institutionalising 'women's councils'.

Although this may appear as a way of getting around the question of direct representation of women in the organs of power properly speaking, at the same time it creates a possibility for a debate on the social demands specific to women — not just an offensive against discrimination in pay but also and above all demands calling for a drastic extension of collective social services; improvement of the system of distribution and public transport to reduce lost time; and re-examination of the problem of the official attitude to the nuclear family, whose breakdown is manifest.

This latter problem is finally being discussed more frankly in the press, instead of being hidden behind hypocritical references to the 'disturbing rise in the number of divorces,' as was the case for decades.

It must, however, be stressed that the reappearance of this broader social consciousness in the Soviet Union has not yet been accompanied by a real *politicisation* of broader mass layers, even within the intelligentsia. The reason for this is two-fold:

First of all, the leaders themselves discourage this. Monty Johnstone asked Burlatsky whether he envisaged the possibility of groups of citizens who take positions similar to those of the Greens getting permission to organise and express their point of view within the framework of a more populist society. He got a very curt reply: 'That is not usual for our society.'

Secondly, the masses themselves hesitate to set out on that road — once bitten, twice shy! A recent event attests to this. The current sensation in Moscow — more than the Central Committee plenum — is the showing of Abuladze's film *Repentance*, which is a violent critique of the Stalin terror, but in

an allegorical form, without the dead dictator being named. (This is obviously no accident; nor is it any accident that the dictator is presented with features that recall those of Beria more than those of Stalin.)

As the crowds leave the movie theatres, groups form discussing the film's message and the balance sheet of the Stalin era vigorously, if not passionately. These discussions seem entirely spontaneous and free. But, at least so far, they have been limited to the past. They have not at all touched on current questions, either on the political structures presently in place or Gorbachev's reforms.

The British weekly *The Observer* also points out in its 8 February 1987 issue that during a pop concert in a suburb of Moscow, a young singer alluded in his song to the absurdity of the war in Afghanistan and to the human losses incurred (there is a similar reference in a recent film by Yuris Podnieks). The youthful audience applauded him frenetically. But there was no political discussion. Only the deaths of Soviet youths were deplored.

For the broader masses, political discussion, political criticism and the development of political awareness can arise only out of *practice and a spontaneous political apprenticeship at the base*. Marx laughed at those who thought that under the enlightened absolutism of Prussia they could teach swimming without letting the pupils into the water. He ridiculed the 'jumping teacher' who tried to prepare for vaulting a precipice with a tape measure. Gorbachev's enlightened paternalism is running up against the same obstacle. Likewise, science cannot progress without free discussion. For their political apprenticeship, the masses need free activity. Such political freedom is not provided for by Gorbachev's reforms.

#### Elimination of censorship needed

That means that the masses — above all the workers and the youth — are waiting for a whole series of tests in order to judge the real portent of these reforms. These can be summed up in the following 13 points, which are given by way of examples (supplementary points could easily be added):

- Elimination of censorship. The right for any given group of citizens (not just writers and journalists!) to freely publish.
- Repeal of the articles in the penal code that restrict freedom of expression, in particular those that prohibit 'anti-Soviet agitation' and 'slandering Soviet power.'
- Release of all the political prisoners.
- Establishment of habeas corpus. Any persons arrested must be presented with a precise charge within 24 hours of their arrest, and have the right to a freely chosen lawyer to defend them. And these lawyers must have the right to see the evidence on which the charge is based.
- As a protection against police arbitrariness, anyone arrested must have the right to appeal to the local soviets. The local soviets must have the right to do their own questioning of any person arrested, without the police present. The soviets have to have the right to investigate police operations.
- The right for any group of citizens, above a certain minimum number, not only to propose candidates for election to the soviets (including the Supreme Soviet) in nominating assemblies — that reform is contained in Gorbachev's report to the Central Committee — but to run candidates in the elections themselves.
- The right of these candidates to publish their platforms and distribute them to all the voters, with no political restrictions, even if they are different from those of the CPSU.
- Free election of trade-union delegates, members of the 'Workers' Councils' and the 'Women's Councils' in the enterprises, with the right to put forward several candidates, without any restriction. For a transitional period, for the reasons indicated by Gorbachev himself, the freedom of such elections would have to be assured by a secret ballot.
- The right for the freely elected trade-union members of the



'Workers' Councils' in the enterprises to contact each other, to consult and organise 'vertically' within an industry, and above all horizontally in the neighbourhoods (in the great urban centres), in the smaller cities, in districts, regions and republics. Elimination of the principle of 'democratic centralism' within the unions, enterprise groups, 'workers' councils' and all mass organisations.

This principle, even in its original Leninist (that is, genuinely democratic) form makes sense only when applied to persons freely associated on the basis of shared conviction, and not to class or state bodies. At this level, to assure that the masses will genuinely exercise the real power, the guiding principle must be that of delegated authority based on a mandate that can be taken back at any time by the electors who gave it.

- Re-establishment and guarantee of the right of the workers to strike or carry out any other kind of action pursuant to their demands.
- Generalised workers' control over all economic activities, at all levels of the plan and management, such as over stocks and movements (shipments out and in, transport) of raw materials; use of, and demands for, equipment; calculation of current production costs; the establishment of production and wage norms; the targets of the plan within the enterprise and in other enterprises; the general priorities in plans governing employment; right of veto over layoffs and other forms of reducing employment, etc.

This is a key measure for increasing real, and not merely formal, 'public relations' participation by the workers in management. This is a decisive step toward the economic democracy that Gorbachev talks so much about, and which is supposed to be the 'updated' version of the 'democracy of the producers' that was talked about in the wake of the October revolution.

- Elimination of the special stores and reserved wards in the hospitals, vacation homes, special restaurants, and so on. Workers' control (and citizens' committees) to assure that these measures are applied.

- Introduction of the principle that no state functionary, including at the highest levels, can get greater remuneration (including non-monetary benefits) than a skilled worker.

In view of the tight interlocking of the state and the CPSU in the USSR, the extension of a series of demands about 'openness' to the structures of the CPSU does not represent illusions about the nature of this party but rather elementary democratic demands.

#### 'Really revolutionary changes'?

Since for the moment the only real political debates that are going on in the USSR are taking place within the Central Committee of the CPSU, it is logical for critical Soviet citizens to demand that these debates be published. Since Gorbachev proposed that there be election by secret ballot of the members of the CPSU's committees, it is logical for the citizens to demand that these elections not be mere shows, but there be a choice of candidates representing real opposing platforms.

All this, obviously, in no way detracts from the importance of demanding a multiparty system, that is, the right of Soviet workers and peasants freely to form political parties of their choice.

Is advocating such demands in the USSR 'too much', 'too soon'? Does this strengthen the position of the conservatives opposed to Gorbachev's reforms? That is one of the most moth-eaten of arguments. Already on the eve of the revolution of 1848, the liberals accused the communists (the revolutionary socialists) of the time of 'playing the reactionaries' game' by putting forward their 'excessive' demands. The real problem lies elsewhere. It lies in the class nature of political activity, in the different social interests that are to be expressed and linked up.

Thinking that you can make 'really revolutionary changes' (Gorbachev's phrase) in the Soviet Union as it is today without the working class moving is believing in Santa Claus. Thinking that you can get the working class to move without appealing to its interests is falling into the most sterile sort of voluntarist and idealist utopianism.

The main roads of both material and moral incentives for the workers follow the markers of solidarity, justice, equality and real decision-making powers and have been well known for more than 30 years.

To those who say that you cannot go too quickly without running into more and more obstacles we should reply — along with Gorbachev — that up until now the movement has been much too slow. According to the London *Sunday Times* of 14 December, a report drawn up by dozens of academicians stressed that the gravity of the crisis ('a terrible mess') calls for faster reforms.

To the Gorbachevites who say that the people can only adjust to democracy step by step, we should point out that their paternalism is leading them into a blind alley. Nothing better than their own slogans could reveal the depth of their contradiction, which borders on the ridiculous: 'Don't be afraid [!] to advance in a brave [!] and resolute way'.

In the real world, the brave are characterised precisely by the fact that they are not afraid, that no one can frighten them. That quality is something that the masses will acquire by their own experience and on their own initiative, as they did during the revolution of 1917, and not by command or according to rules established and strictly limited at the top.

Speaking on 19 June 1986 to a group of writers, Gorbachev came up with a very apt formula. 'The enemy [it would have been better to say the international bourgeoisie] does not fear Soviet nuclear missiles. But they do fear the extension of democracy in the USSR.' (*New York Times*, 22 December 1986.)

Unquestionably, a Soviet Union in which a real socialist democracy prevailed, which would have a power of attraction for the masses of the entire planet, would change the whole world situation at one stroke. That is, it would, if this socialist democracy were real and not fictional, if it gave the workers not only more economic rights and powers but more political rights and powers than in the most developed capitalist countries.





Maria Luisa M. Carrozza/Reflex

French students demonstrate in Paris in November, 1986

# French Communist Party in crisis

THE CRISIS in the Communist Party (CP) exploded within days of the March 1986 election. If the election defeat of the CP was the last straw, the roots of the crisis lay in the CP's recent governmental experience and the oscillation between collaboration and sectarian criticism which has characterised the CP since the 1960s. This crisis touched every generation and all sectors in the party, young, old, workers, intellectuals. Some of the most solid working class bases of the party, such as the cells in the French car firm Peugeot in eastern France, or the Michelin tyre factory in Clermont Ferrand, became oppositional.

The three traditional pillars of the party: the party apparatus, the elected representatives and the CGT (Confédération Générale de Travail, CP-led trade union federation, still the strongest in France) were all affected, although in the CGT the conflict takes a different form.

The developing opposition originally centred on the democratic demand for an emergency congress which was refused. Increasingly however it began to develop discussions and move towards a statement of its political positions.

The main figure of the opposition is central committee member Pierre Juquin. A spokesperson for the politbureau of the party during the governmental period, he was the most prominent CC member to reject the reaffirmation of the CP's analysis of an inexorable 'slide to the right' in French society, reaffirmed in the wake of the student and railworkers movements. This position of the CP is of course an excuse for why it is failing to win votes and members! Another prominent figure of the opposition is Alain Amica-

With its share of the vote dropping to below ten per cent, the French Communist Party has been plunged into crisis.

**PHILOMENA O'MALLEY**  
looks at the politics of the  
opposition.

bil, former steel worker and until recently first secretary of the CP in the Meurthe et Moselle steel region. Endorsed as candidate for departmental councillor in a forthcoming by-election by his local party against the opposition of the departmental and national leadership, he will nevertheless be standing unopposed by an 'official' candidate.

The first statement of a political programme by the opposition was Juquin's speech to the January central committee. A written programme has now been published under the title 'The revolution comrades!' The authors of this document, the coordinating committee organising almost all the oppositional forces within the CP, although its actual composition is not public, have taken pains to state that it is an unfinished document and is open to dialogue and discussion. In fact, public meetings are to be organised throughout France, open to party members and non-party members alike, to discuss this manifesto. The far left has been told it is welcome to attend — an unprecedented invitation from members of the CP!

As the publication of an opposition within a Communist Party this is a radical document. It clearly distances itself from many of

the decisive positions of the CP. The necessity of a total break with everything brought about by Stalinism is clearly stated. The need for solidarity with 'the peoples of the socialist countries in struggle' and the demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan are explicit.

The authors in their text openly state their claim to be Marxist and revolutionary. They base themselves on 'socialist self-management' and the need for a thorough transformation of society. They distance themselves from social-democratic notions that it is possible to 'manage the crisis' to protect the working class. They stand for full employment. The right to work, to health care, to study, to decent housing are prominent. They ask what new ideas can the women's movement bring to the workers' movement, and take a clear stand against any form of racism and in solidarity with the people of the 'third world'.

This opposition is confronting the CP with an historic challenge. Not only is it proving that dissidents are not always the disappointed and the worn-out, but it is also proving that political activity does not necessarily revolve around the Socialist Party. Not everything is sliding to the right! However nothing is yet definite about the future evolution of this current. It is not a homogenous grouping, nor does it have a clearly worked out idea on how to achieve a socialist transformation of society.

Nevertheless, the emergence of this new left-wing current in the traditional mass party of the French working class, and one which through the CGT still influences a sizeable section of organised working class, is a promising sign ●

## AN INTERVIEW WITH KEN LOACH



Ken Loach

# Making a programme for the media

**JL:** *How would you sum up the present stage of policy development on the media in today's labour movement?*

**KL:** Where the labour movement should be developing a programme to restructure the means of mass communication, there is a discreet silence, broken only by the valiant efforts of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

The Campaign's recent *Media Manifesto* is an attempt to frame a set of demands which will 'stimulate public discussion about the crucial role the media play in a democracy, and to influence policy-makers'. The document includes demands for 'the right to fair representation, the right to make contact, workers' participation, freedom of the airwaves, the right to reply', and so on.

**JL:** *These appear to be very defensive demands, geared to an acceptance that the media will always be in the hands of the present owners.*

**KL:** Yes, it seems to me that these demands are useful only as preliminary to an

examination of the true function of the media. The 'right to reply' is a case in point. Even if it were granted, which is impossible to imagine, it cannot balance or inhibit the fundamental stance of those who control newspapers and broadcasting, and who appoint editors and journalists who share their views. For it to be effective, every news bulletin would have to be followed by a longer programme in which the assumptions on which it was based were teased out and explained. Every time a strike was 'threatened' would the trade unionists be allowed to say it was 'promised'? Would 'left-wingers' be allowed to call themselves 'moderate' and 'moderates' be called 'right-wingers'?

Again, it in no way affects the problems of agenda setting. Who decides which stories should be told and which ignored?

A more significant demand is that the present structures like the BBC Board of Governors, the IBA, and the Press Council should be 'replaced by democratic systems of

A Labour government which has no plans to combat the ideological powers exercised by the capitalist class through the mass media can be safely assumed to have no serious intention of undermining capitalist control. But the hard left and the Marxist movement, too, have a long way yet to go in developing a serious programme and perspective for the ownership, control and development of the media.

To initiate a more serious level of debate, which we want to promote in the pages of this magazine, **JOHN LISTER** spoke with film director **KEN LOACH**, whose recent documentary work for TV has encountered repeated censorship at the hands of the supposedly 'impartial' broadcasting authorities.

and continuous assumptions that have prepared the way for those presentations go largely unchallenged. The use of language and images, the choice of subjects, the questions that are ignored, all combine to lead the viewer or reader to a particular view of the world.

Our first task is to consolidate our basic analysis: understanding the media as agents of an ideology. We need to examine how this works and the structures which preserve it. The ownership and control of the press by private capital, and the control of broadcasting by government appointees have a complementary effect.

Broadcasters take their news stories from the press, they feed off each other, prepare the ground for each other, even on occasion playing the parts of the 'good' and 'bad' copper. The crude attacks of Murdoch and Maxwell on — for example — Arthur Scargill had their more polite but equally vicious counterparts in the BBC or ITV.

We have to explain this structure of control: how it works and whose interests it serves.

**JL:** *This year's NUI conference adopted a composite resolution including a section from my branch calling on the national executive to draw up proposals for the 'abolition of the present unrepresentative quango bodies of appointed dignitaries which control established radio and TV channels, and for this replacement by elected and accountable controlling bodies, to include representation from media workers at all levels.' Do you think this offers a step in the right direction?*

**KL:** We certainly have to explore new ways of organising all of the media. How can we make newspapers both independent and democratically accountable to both workers and readers? How does editorial freedom relate to this accountability? Similarly, what is the relationship between independence and accountability in broadcasting? How can we use the extraordinary technical advances of cable and satellite? Should we try to steer people viewing away from the box in the living room, and the consequent passivity of the viewer, towards more public screening?

In a socialist democracy, based on a socialist economy, capitalism will have no



regulation'. But here again, questions are begged. Should commercial television be scrapped? Should newspaper proprietors be expropriated? Is it conceivable that the state will give up its control of broadcasting?

This confusion will remain until we acknowledge that the media relate the prevailing ideology to the unfolding events of contemporary life. Thus peoples' view of the world is impregnated with the main tenets of that ideology, and become 'common sense'.

**JL:** *Most of the labour movement response has been to react against specific witch hunts or outrageous interference rather than to look at these fundamentals.*

**KL:** The relationship between the media and ideology is akin to the that of judges and the law: by its constant interpretation, the set of ideas and values is developed and extended.

The labour movement — or its most active sections — will react angrily when the media present industrial or foreign issues in ways which favour the ruling class, but the steady

**JL:** *Of course it does not simply serve the capitalists: it serves all those who find themselves comfortable in the present balance of forces — not least the right wing of the Labour Party and trade union movement.*

**KL:** Yes, as in other areas, this will bring us into conflict with the leadership of the labour movement, which has had a cosy relationship with the media in the past. The control of the press by big business and the control of broadcasting by establishment figures has never been challenged. Harold Wilson appointed a Tory, Charles Hill, to lead the BBC. Ex-Labour ministers George Thomson and Edmund Dell are present or past chairmen of the IBA and Channel 4. The right wing of the Labour Party likes to have it both ways: use and support the existing structures, while in public attack the media for being unfair to Labour. The use of the press and broadcasting by right wingers to attack the left has a long history.

place in either newspapers or broadcasting. How do we fill the vacuum?

Before that happens, in what terms do we discuss the reform of the media, if we recognise the central part they play in social control? Broadcasting in particular has to be considered in the same light as the police and the armed forces, in its defence of the state and the economic system the state is there to protect.

**JL:** *We hope to pursue this debate much further in the magazine: certainly this outline of some of the key problems to be confronted should help us to convene a wider discussion. Would you be willing to be involved?*

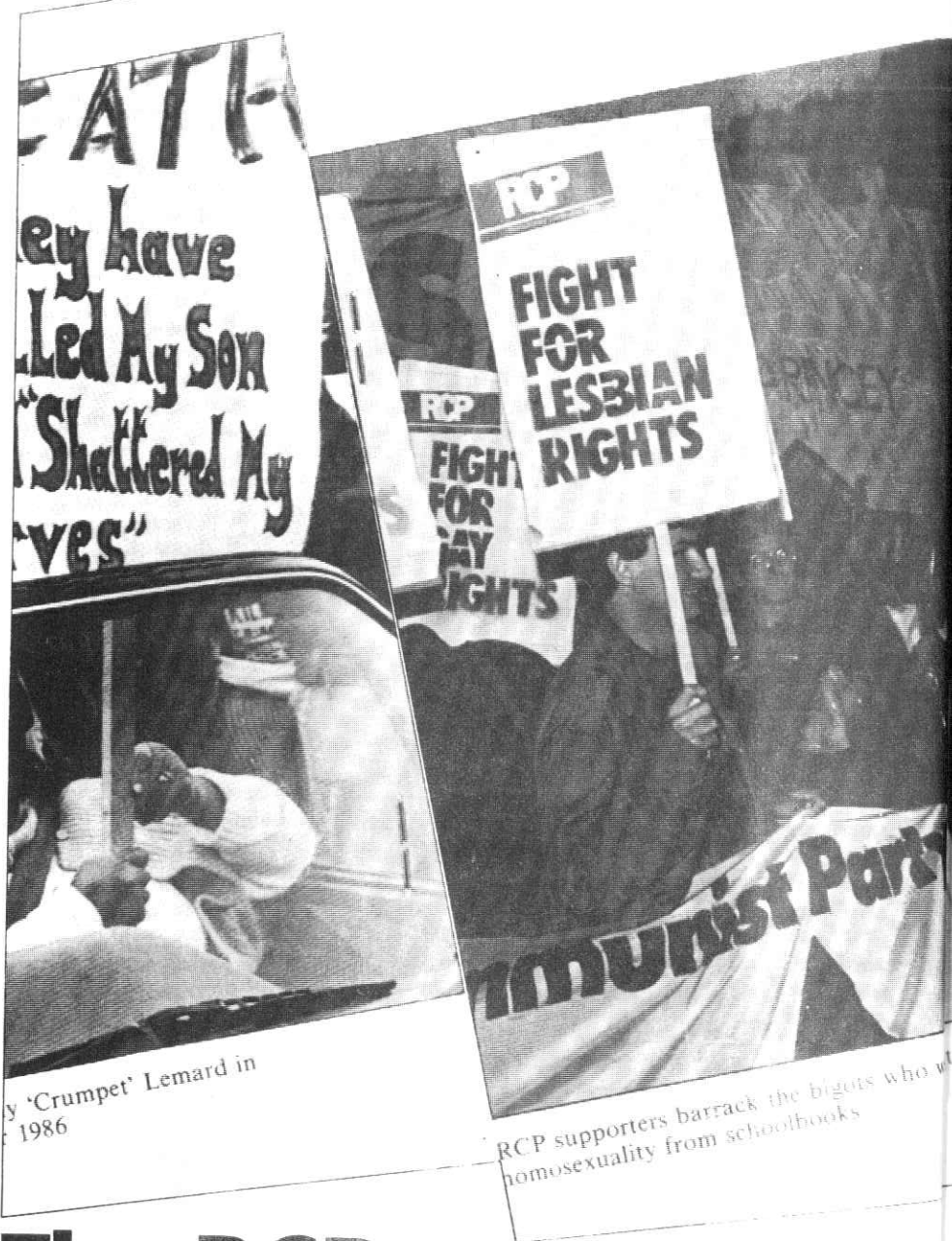
**KL:** Yes, perhaps we could each think of additional people whom we could bring together in a round-table discussion that could begin to hammer out some answers to these questions, and discuss how to take them into the labour movement ●

The Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) has been publicised recently through standing candidates in the Knowlesly North and Greenwich by-elections. Its strident propaganda activities have given it a certain base of support in the student movement. But, argues **BOB PENNINGTON**, the 'alternative' of the RCP is thoroughly sectarian and ultra left.

THE GRIP of reformism over the British labour movement, has been a great obstacle to building a widely-based marxist movement in this country. Time and again, the far left, frustrated by their struggle against the bureaucracy in both the unions and the Labour Party, have attempted short cuts by creating an organisational alternative. Following the defeat of the miners and the printworkers and the ascendancy of Kinnockism in the Labour Party, the idea of the new, independent party once again carries a certain attraction.

Firm advocates of such a course are the Revolutionary Communist Party who say what the workers require 'is an independent programme that can challenge the Labour Party' and claim 'this programme can only be developed in total opposition, both political and organisational, (my emphasis) to this party'.\* Having reached such a conclusion the RCP was then compelled to turn reality on its head. You can hardly describe a group or even a league, as an organisational alternative to the Labour Party. Only another party can be seriously considered as an organisational alternative to Labour. So blithely ignoring the norms of political nomenclature, in 1981, a couple of hundred people — hardly enough for a social never mind a party — immodestly appointed themselves as the Party. While this deceived the leaders and the members of the RCP, strangely enough it left the rest of the Labour movement unmoved.

Since then the RCP has stuck doggedly to its self-appointed role as the alternative leadership. When the Tories brought in legislation which was designed to stop workers paying the political levy to the Labour Party, the RCP found itself in alliance with the SDP, the Liberals, the Tories and the employers who were all against a 'yes' vote. The RCP were of course being logical in arguing against the 'yes' vote; after all you can hardly be in favour of giving money to something to which you have decided you are an immediate alternative. The fact that the consequences of not voting 'yes' would have meant that the unions would have been denied funds to run political campaigns was by the way.



by 'Crumpet' Lemard in 1986

RCP supporters barrack the bigots who w homosexuality from schoolbooks

## The RCP - an infantile disorder

The consistency of the RCP's ultra-left approach goes right across the spectrum. Mike Freeman, a leading theoretician of the RCP explains that 'the labour movement should leave it to the capitalists how they want to run their own industries and services. Our only concern is that in both the private or public sector, workers' interests

**'hardly enough for a social, never mind a party'**

are safeguarded.' Fortunately, workers have up to now shown a lack of reverence towards the RCP's theoreticians and have kept insisting that they don't agree that it's the bosses' prerogative to run their firms or their hospitals just as they please.

This ultra-left posturing really reaches rock bottom when the same author writes: 'middle class left wingers who work as sa-

laried professionals in the state sector may strongly identify with public housing, hospitals and transport. But working class people who work for the low paying councils, health authorities and bus and rail networks, or have to rely on the cut price services they provide, have no such prejudices.' Obviously the 'ideal' RCP militant is the person who is stoically indifferent to the quality of health care, cares nothing for the state of public housing, and is in the realms of political ecstasy when they stand for an hour and a half in the rain with their fellow workers waiting for the bus that never comes. This gives them a 'god sent' opportunity to explain to the rest of the queue the need for the 'alternative'.

The fact that workers try to defend their social rights and claim that proper health care, adequate housing and regular, inexpensive public transport should take precedence over profit is viewed by the RCP as a divergence from the real struggle. All those

An infantile disorder. The RCP campaigned vigorously for a ballot in the miners' strike.



Philip Gordon/Reflex

33

RCP in action

to ban

miners and dockers, along with the printworkers and others who have joined in solidarity action in defence of the NHS must learn to stop pursuing their own misguided conceptions and get into step with the RCP, who after all know what's best for them.

This ultimatic approach showed itself with disastrous results in the miners' strike. For the miners and their supporters the main issue was how to stop pit closures. This could only be done by the miners taking strike action; by a campaign aimed at getting solidarity action in other sectors of the labour movement and by building up financial and political support in the working class and among the oppressed groups. Those tasks overrode all else and they had to be the first concerns of every militant. The stakes in the dispute were high. Victory for the miners would have shown jobs could be saved by class-struggle methods, it would have stimulated the confidence of other workers and without doubt would have strengthened the left forces inside the unions and the Labour Party. Defeat, as we have seen, would undermine confidence in class-struggle methods and strengthen the right wing inside the unions and the Labour Party.

But the RCP was having none of that nonsense. It knew what was best for the miners and had its own prescription for them — a campaign for a national ballot. This would have disrupted the strike and given one group of workers the right to vote

another sections' jobs away. But the RCP claimed this was '...the only way to challenge the class collaborationist strategy of the union leadership' — these 'class collaborators' are the exception among national union leaders, in that they actually wanted to win their strike!

So determined was the RCP to oppose the NUM leadership, they decided to withdraw from the miners support groups claiming such groups helped the NUM bureaucracy. From the outset they failed to begin from the

**'Workers don't have the same prejudices as the RCP...fortunately'**

premise of how best to aid the strike and widen its support, instead they saw their task as being to 'expose' the left leaders like Scargill and Heathfield and thus win some individual miners to the RCP. No wonder at the height of the strike (in what I can only assume was a Freudian slip) their paper the *Next Step* carried a banner which read 'RCP hits the Pits' — what more can I add to such political eloquence?

This type of exposure politics is a consistent thread through all the interventions of the RCP. It stems from the fact that they consider there has been a '...longstanding

depoliticisation of the working class' accompanied by a decline in rank and file resistance.

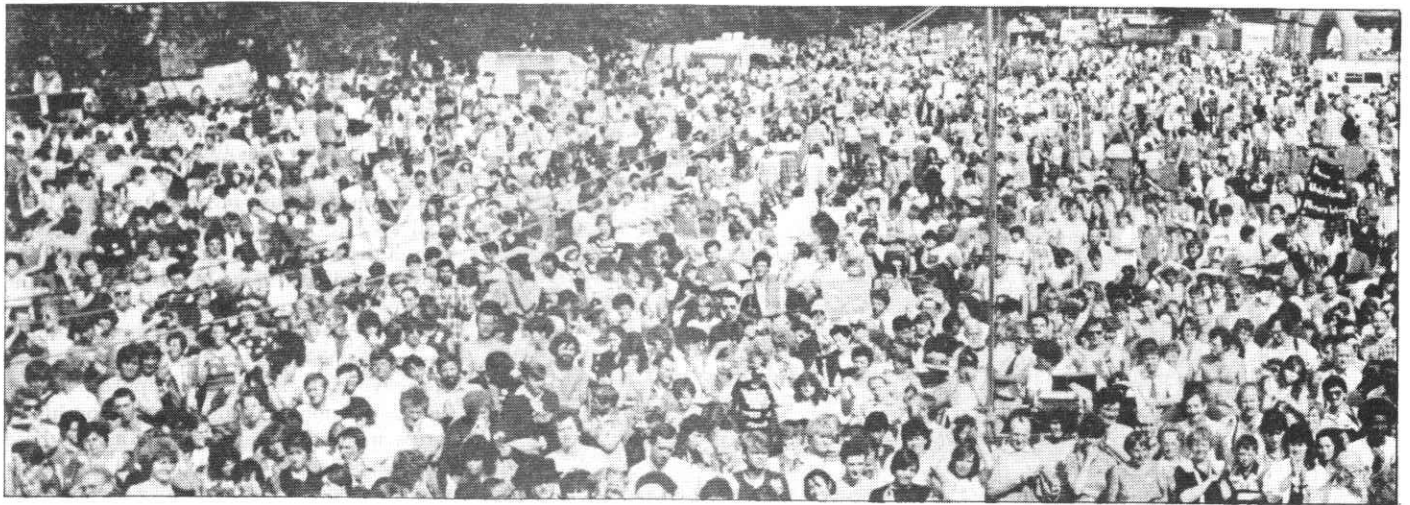
Commenting on the workers attitude to the last Labour government they say they were a rejection of 'the consequences of the government's policies, rather than a rejection of labourism itself'. Accordingly the RCP considers there has been no significant break from labourism, that the resistance at rank and file level is on the wane and the process of depoliticisation has not been halted. If their analysis is correct, and things are as bleak as that in the labour movement it is hardly the most propitious time to launch a new organisational alternative.

For a party to constitute an organisational alternative it should lead a significant section of the working class and the oppressed, and be in a position to change the relationship of forces in the class struggle. None of these qualifications are met by the RCP, but such realities do not deter them, they explain: 'the vanguard does not exist at present — it has to be created'. They add: 'the form of organisation appropriate to building a vanguard in modern Britain is the propaganda party. The RCP is such a party'. So while the rest of the workers' movement carries on its pointless struggles — all guaranteed to be betrayed — the RCP will get on with the main job of creating the vanguard.

The description of itself as a propaganda party means that its work will be concentrated not on widening and extending the struggles of the masses, but on explaining that neither the leaders, nor the organisations of the working class are effective. Presumably when enough workers have suffered sufficient defeats at the hands of the capitalist class, because of the bureaucratic role of their leaders, the RCP will become big enough to form a real party. This schema boils down to saying 'when they have seen the light they will join us' and can only lead to disillusionment and demoralisation; it will never create the basis for a mass marxist party.

Like all sectarian organisations the RCP doesn't start from how best it can advance the interests of the working class, but rather how it can arithmetically increase its membership. Furthermore its other main touchstone is necessarily how can it separate itself from other far left organisations, who also like the left leaders in the unions have equally to be exposed. The 23 January issue of *The Next Step* is a bizarre illustration of this sectarianism. Apparently papers like *Socialist Worker* have been crossing class lines on the Aids issue. In an article entitled 'The dangers of safe sex' it accuses the left of endorsing the Tories' targeting of gay men by advocating the use of condoms. This it claims means the 'left has fallen for the Tories' presentation of Aids as a medical problem requiring a technical solution'. Now you know, it's not a condom that's needed for protection against the Aids virus, it's a copy of the *Next Step!*

\* Mike Freeman 'The Road to Power': *Confrontation* (RCP theoretical magazine) no. 1, Summer 1986. Unless otherwise credited, all quotations from the RCP are from the same source.



# Is the future female?

JUDITH ARKWRIGHT

Lynne Segal,  
*Is the future female? Virago,*  
 £4.95

THE TITLE of this book poses a question for the women's movement. It has sometimes mistakenly been referred to as *The future is female*. But author Lynne Segal sets out with a question which she answers in the negative. The future is not female. This may sound not quite the thing for any right-on feminist to say, but the book is largely a most welcome polemic with ideas which have increasingly become the norm in the women's movement and which Segal identifies as anti-socialist and idealist.

Many of these ideas have some affinity with traditional radical feminist precepts but with the more 'radical' tinge taken out of them. Segal takes issue in particular with Andrea Dworkin, Dale Spender and Mary Daly. In a recent publication, *Beyond Power*, Marilyn French sums up their view in calling upon women to assert the female principles of caring, warmth and nurturing to 'feminise the world' and thus save it from destruction.

French defines patriarchy as a morality which worships power and has determined social arrangements for thousands of years. Segal refutes this view and the underlying assumption that as feminists we seek to accentuate the differences between men and women on the psychological level. She explains that, 'this means not working for a future which is female but working for a future which rejects most of the social distinctions we now draw between women and men.'

She points out that there are several problems with this emphasis on femininity versus masculinity. First, that men's greater power in relation to women is not simply a product of ideas or language 'but of all the social practices which give men power over women'. She goes on to assert that 'ideas and language interact with other tensions and struggles'. She correctly takes up Dale Spender who says that 'feminism refers to alternative meanings put forward by feminists' and that language itself *determines* oppression.

Spender and others constantly see the struggle in terms of female values of security, nurturance, peace, versus the male values of aggression, destruction and competition. These values are seen as given and static and as biologically or rather sociobiologically determined. This leads these writers to support idealist solutions rather than practical answers to the problems of women's oppression. Practical struggles against women's inequality are even seen as of less value than the fight to recognise women's distinct ideas and experience. As French (by no means the most sophisticated but surely the clearest on these ideas) says, 'although some feminists consciously work towards immediate political goals, feminism as a philosophy does not include a political programme for the construction of a more humane world...(this) would contradict feminist principles, for programmes

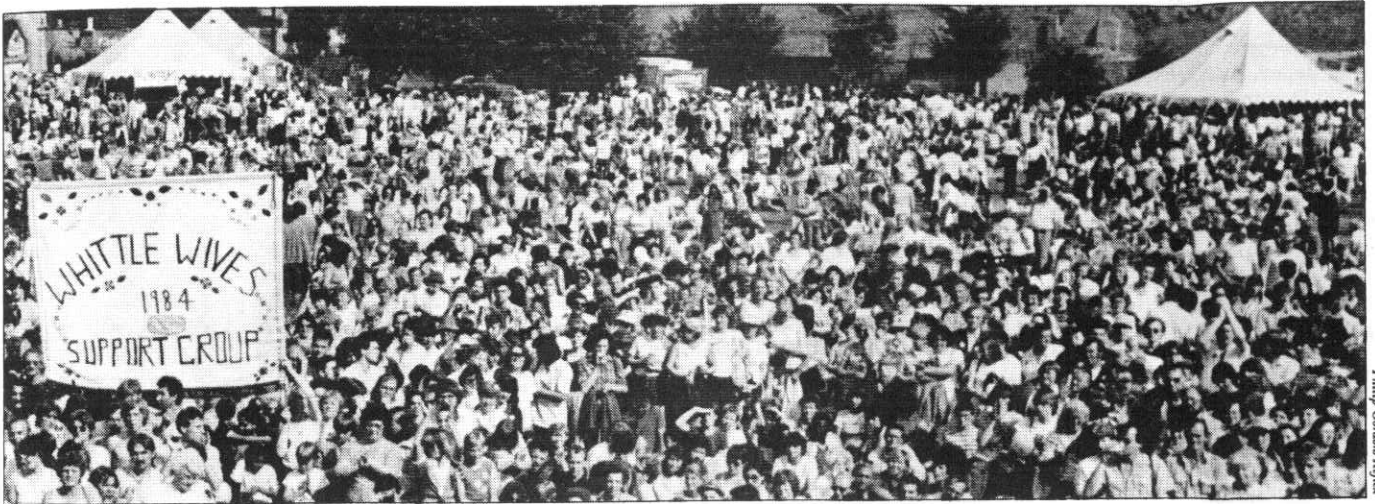
require uniformity and rigidity.'

Segal is correct to single out these ideas and warn against their increasing influence inside the women's movement. There is an increasing tendency among some feminists to go for the soft option which these ideas represent; namely, that nothing much can be done apart from spreading feminist ideas.

This thinking has informed the debate around the activities of the peace women. Segal correctly endorses the courageous action of these women whilst disagreeing with any notion that masculinity means war and aggression and femininity means peace and love. It is true that it is largely men that have been responsible for war but as Segal points out, many women have in the past supported this. Wars do not usually occur because men as a group have clamoured for it. Under capitalism it is nation states that are the perpetrators of war and which then whip up popular support for it from both men and women.

The question of the state and the various institutions which uphold male power and women's oppression is one which Segal does emphasize without always drawing the necessary conclusions. She does point out, however, that there are even those on the left who do not seem to understand this issue. Perry Anderson, for example, had this to say in his book, *On the tracks of historical materialism*; 'There is never any overall centralisation of the structures of women's oppression and this diffusion of

# REVIEWS



Philip Gordon/Reflex

it critically weakens the possibility of unitary insurgence against it.' Such assertions challenge everything socialist feminists stood for in the 1970s when they argued that women's oppression is centralised through state policies, as Segal correctly points out. In fact, it is precisely through using such policies to attack women and the working class that the Tory government has been able to assist in the process of fragmentation and disorientation of the women's movement. Such fragmentation was not an inherent part of that movement.

Segal then goes on to address this issue. Key to the decline of the women's movement of the 1970s was the corresponding decline of the socialist feminist current. This came about because of the difficulties of the objective situation, the failure to respond to new issues such as black feminism and, Segal argues, because of the role of the so-called 'sectarian left' within that current. By selecting women in left groups as the target in this way she presents a one-sided and rather sweeping view of what actually happened.

The problem for socialist feminists at the time was a generalised crisis of perspective. Women in left wing groups bear as much responsibility as anyone for failing to provide a complete way out. As one of the women who was eventually excluded from the South London socialist feminist group to which Segal refers — not because of anything I had said or done but because of my

membership of a left group — I can testify that this kind of scapegoat approach did nothing to resolve the difficulties and probably made the situation worse. In fact, if anything, socialist feminists were beginning to become obsessed with how to keep their structures and ideas intact, rather than with attempting to provide a perspective for the women's movement which corresponded to the changing political situation. Left groups active at the time were undoubtedly as guilty of this as anyone else and some were sectarian, as were some independent feminists. This was the time to reach out and make alliances with broader layers of women, to listen to black feminists for example, and this was not always done. Socialist feminist groups became a substitute for building broader alliances. Perhaps Segal would not disagree with this. It is odd then that in her book she so vehemently opposes one attempt to actually build such a broad alliance, namely the National Abortion Campaign (NAC).

This hostility to NAC is actually out of place in a book which in general is so refreshingly inspired by and supportive of the actual struggles of women of which NAC was surely an example, whatever problems you may think accompanied it.

This apart, however, we can all agree that what we are seeking to build now is not a replica of the old socialist feminist current but something

new and perhaps broader. Segal points out that the broad appeal of the women's movement's ideas must not mean their dilution. She cites all the positive signs that have arisen in the last few years when things have been so difficult for the left which can give pointers to the future. The struggles of women inside the Labour Party and in local government; the struggles of women at Greenham; the healthworkers; the miners' wives. It should not be forgotten what tragic errors were made by some women in rejecting struggles like those at Greenham and even the miners' wives as somehow not feminist. This is the point at which sectarianism became a real problem in the women's movement.

Contrary to those feminists, however, Segal welcomes these struggles, though the impact of the miners' wives merits more discussion than it is given in the book: Here were working class women organising autonomously on a mass scale and explicitly influenced by feminist ideas. What sort of influence will they have on the women's movement of the future? Do they signal a new type of movement altogether? Or was their struggle specific and merely an isolated example born of the environment in which those women live? These questions are not even raised by Segal.

Segal tends to look uncritically at the effects of women working within local councils for feminist policies. Undoubtedly, such experiences

have their positive side.

Feminists can use the existing power structures to further their struggle. However, this should be done in such a way as to promote action and expose the way in which the state operates both locally and nationally to perpetuate women's oppression. Segal does not allude to the potential hazards of localism and co-option which can result from involvement in the structures of the local state.

In looking at the future of the women's movement, such questions as these need to be addressed more thoroughly. Segal attempts to deal with some of the theoretical or philosophical obstacles impeding a clear perspective but there is also a need to address more concrete issues being put forward by feminists in this country. Bea Campbell's ideas on redistributing the wealth between men and women in the family, for example, are but an extension of the idea of female versus male values. Yet they hardly get a mention in the book.

Lynne Segal has had the courage to challenge many views which have become accepted as the norm within the movement, but her book is only the beginning of an urgent debate. Segal's conclusion that making alliances with the workers' movement combined with autonomy, as opposed to any outright rejection of alliances with men is correct. It is vital that the strategy and tactics this requires be addressed by all sections of the women's movement.

The versatility of the luncheon voucher demonstrated

## JANE WELLS

*Personal Services* is on general release Paul Bailey, *An English Madam*, £2.50 Fontana

YOU HAVE to admit that there's something very funny about the idea of a bank manager being strung up, smeared with baby oil and then pelted with the contents of a Hoover bag, or a middle-aged pin-striped politician begging to have his 'bot-bot' spanked

This is the basic appeal of *Personal Services*, and of the myth that is Cynthia Payne. It's about breaking the rules of respectability and pointing the finger at the hypocrisy of the morals of the British establishment — and the film (quite affectionately) pokes fun at a few well chosen stiff-upper lipped representatives, using the best 'carry-on' traditions to do it.

Whilst disclaiming 'any resemblance to persons etc...', the film is clearly a fictionalised version of part of the life of Cynthia Payne (of the Streatham sex-for-luncheon vouchers fame). According to Paul Bailey's more comprehensive and slightly more serious 'real life' version in *An English Madam*, most of the most outrageous and unbelievable escapades shown in the film are true.

*Personal Services* charts Christine Painter's rise from waitress to prostitute's landlady and maid, to hostess and brothel-keeper. From her respectable suburban semi she ran 'kinky' sex parties especially for middle aged, elderly and infirm gentlemen: her clients were clerics, policemen, judges and politicians. The women who worked for her were mainly part timers (often with other, quite 'respectable' lives), specialists who did it for next to nothing or not at all if they didn't want to. No riff-raff, criminals or drugs, insisted the real life Payne.

In the film Christine gets away with it at the end — hauled up in court she just gives the judge a wry little wave (he's one of her favourite customers). In real life the customers disappeared and got off scot-free. Payne got a prison sentence. But she came back again waving two fingers at the



## Carry on Cynthia

stuffy hypocrites ('V for Victory and Vouchers') to run her sex parties again.

Terry Jones' film gives us a lighthearted look at the British establishment caught with its trousers down — but I'm sure there's something more sinister lurking there than frilly knickers and gymslips. What the film *isn't*, of course, is a 'shock expose' of why women are faced with so few opportunities for work that, for some, prostitution can be an obvious and sometimes the only option to take. The question it begs is, what is it in society that makes for this depressingly familiar — and ultimately dangerous — selection of re-cycled male fantasies? (because in fact the fetishisation and exploitation of women is what these little boys' tales are made of). But then again there aren't many laughs in that.

However, some of these issues form the background — if not the selling point — of the biography of Cynthia Payne, *An English Madam*. The story told here by Paul Bailey charts some excruciatingly painful and sad episodes of Payne's early life — the early death of her mother, her cold and critical father, a succession of hopeless men and her struggle to raise her own children with no money and no

support. Cynthia Payne is not a child of the permissive sixties. It was from a stern lower middle class post-war youth (a time when independence for young women could mean nowhere to live and nothing to eat; a time marked for Payne by a real ignorance of sex and its pleasures, and by backstreet abortions), that Cynthia Payne emerged to champion sexual expression — for men and for a price.

In the 1980s when AIDS backlash has given the moralisers the chance to gratuitously read a moral lesson of divine retribution from a public health problem, a film which unashamedly celebrates gratuitous pleasure in sex is quite refreshing.

But the winning and liberated humour of the film is its cover for something more serious and neglected. While for once it is men and their bodies that are being exposed, men that the audience is invited to scrutinise and inspect, this is nevertheless a film that panders exclusively to male sexual interests and values, subtly campaigning for a 'healthy' non-judgmental view of unfettered sexual expression — for men. We are asked to join in and have a laugh, to accept and not to

condemn those men whose sexual needs might be outside the 'norm', or who need to pay for sex. Fair enough. But the real costs of men's unfettered sexual expression is of course usually met by women.

Both the book and the film largely ignore the stories of the 'girls' -who worked the London streets, paid rent over the odds and pay-offs to pimps, and ultimately paid with their health and independence. In fact by telling the story exclusively from Payne's point of view, they fail to portray prostitution as anything more cheeky than a joke.

Perhaps most importantly, both the book and the film fail to question the serious side to men's 'harmless' pleasures in fetishising, humiliating or ridiculing women, that the film in particular glorifies. *Personal Services* is an enjoyable and witty reply to the eighties moral backlash, and a funny dig at British hypocrisy about sex, but it's all too familiar in its limitations. Like the wave of sixties sexual rebellion that followed the repressive fifties of Cynthia Payne's youth, as a plea for sexual tolerance and even a vision for sexual liberation, there isn't much in it for women ●



Dan Smith & EP Thompson (eds), *Prospectus for a habitable planet*,

## Planetary prospectus

OLIVER MACDONALD

THIS IS a useful book with an inflated and irritating title. It contains some interesting analysis, particularly by Mary Kaldor, Dan Smith and Jonathan Steele, some thoughtful reflections and insights in the piece by Kate Soper, and a coherent and provocative political project for Europe by the Czech socialist, Jiri Dienstbier of Charter 77. It is an excellent prospectus on the range of opinion and emphasis within END. But what it does not do is spell out either the contents of, or the conditions for, a securely habitable planet.

The main focus of attention in the book is Europe. Mary Kaldor rightly defends the legitimacy of this focus for people living in Europe and she also rightly says that basic changes in Europe could be of great importance to the third world. Jiri Dienstbier puts forward a project for a demilitarised, neutral European zone involving a re-unified Germany and underwritten by both the Soviet Union and the USA. By recognising the power of the two super-powers and by grasping the German nettle in a frank way Dienstbier has produced a project that can claim to offer a more securely habitable Europe. His vision is one of Europe as the object and beneficiary of a process whose main actors are the super-powers and his project could form the basis for serious political debate.

Yet the book also contains contributions from people seeking a different image of Europe: Europe as an active agent in world politics, as perhaps a voice of sanity or perhaps a civilising influence on the crude elites of the super-powers, or perhaps as a mediator encouraging the Russians and the Americans to cease their dangerous and pointless quarrel. At the very least, in EP Thompson's contribution we have a vision of a Europe of flourishing independent and harmonious nations if only the Americans

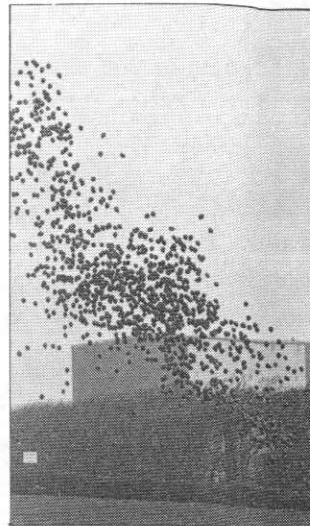
and the (apparently non-European) Russians, Ukrainians and so on withdrew. Nowhere is this vision vigorously argued, yet it is inescapably present in Thompson's piece.

And what is entirely absent from Thompson's essay is any recognition that the problem of making the planet securely habitable is overwhelmingly a *social question*. The plain truth is that for some classes the planet is today eminently habitable — a 'beautiful world' — while for others survival is more than can be asked for. The ferocious and barbaric violence of the capitalist classes against the great mass of people is absolutely central to the world we live in. Thompson does not see this twentieth century reality. He puts American imperialism in quotes, saying it derives from nationalist populism in the USA. Yet it was there before the Reaganites. Was Nixon a populist, or Eisenhower?

Also absent is any notion that the state is an instrument of violence serving class interests. Thompson has reverted to a liberal internationalist view of the world. States for him seem to neutrally reflect the will of nations and so long as no nation succumbs to bullying ideologies like big power nationalism, all states will tend to live in harmony.

The biggest danger, he tells us, comes from the existence of only two power centres. Gain polycentrism in the world and the world will be safe. On the road to this goal the European nations can play a big part by freeing themselves from the Russians and the Americans and becoming what he calls a 'mediating area'. And he thinks that 'Britain' can do a lot because of language links with the US, a past alliance with the USSR and the Commonwealth!

The irony of Thompson's view is that while he



Carlos Garmiche/Reflex

### Hinckley Point

erroneously attributes the source of the cold war to nationalist ideology within the USSR and the USA, he simultaneously himself succumbs to a liberal nationalist conception of international politics. He does not even discuss the socialist, internationalist alternative to his vision.

That socialist alternative begins by refusing to dismiss the class divisions of the world as irrelevant, by recognising what every alert bourgeois takes to be obvious: that there is a great struggle in the world between capitalism and socialism and whatever the nature of and policy of the Soviet leadership, the Soviet Union as a state remains rooted in working class interests. The terrible crimes committed by the Soviet leadership in the past upon its own people and the peoples of Eastern Europe are the burden which all socialists must confront. And political democratisation within the USSR and the Soviet bloc is a fundamental task in making the planet securely habitable. But to equate the USSR and the USA or to imply that it is a matter of indifference as to whether Eastern Europe returns to capitalism or whether the labour movements of Western Europe are crushed by the

new right — all such notions are extremely harmful to the future of the peace movement.

A Europe without the USSR and without the USA of 'independent' nations indifferently capitalist or socialised would be a Europe dominated by West German capital. Thompson should argue the case for this if he supports it. It would also be a Europe of seething tensions between states: Thompson must explain why this would not happen or would not be important. It would also not in fact be 'without' the USSR and the USA, only without (for a while?) their armed forces. Thompson says it would mediate without being a force, a bloc. But how can an 'area' mediate?

Against this vision we would argue the following: for socialist neutralism in Western Europe (or socialist non-alignment), rooted in the labour movements of the region as well as the peace movements; for a socialist 'Helsinki' charter of denuclearisation, and demilitarisation, of massively expanded trade and scientific-technological collaboration, of social and civil liberties across Europe, and of pan-European cooperative trade and aid programmes towards the third world. Far from being excluded from all this the USSR should be drawn into the middle of it. At the same time the socialist-neutralist forces in Western Europe should engage in a vigorous ideological criticism of the Soviet political model and seek to establish a principled dialogue with socialist democrats in the East. The end result of this process would be a united socialist democratic Europe, a federation including the USSR, which would indeed be a 'super-power' in the world, though not a militarist menace. A tall order? Certainly. And even then only a step towards a securely habitable planet. But the alternative to socialist advance looks increasingly like a Reaganite day of Judgement ●

'WHAT BEGINS as a one-sided political debate unworthy of Bertolt Brecht turns into a verbose thriller without suspense or excitement.... A commissar posing as mass-observer, Loach has directed in his hyper-realist style.' (Philip French, reviewing *Fatherland* in *The Observer*.)

Ken Loach, perhaps Britain's best known socialist film maker — despite *Fatherland* being his first feature film for eight years — is no stranger to controversy around, or censorship of, his work. His TV productions, *A Question of Leadership* and *The Price of Coal*, were never broadcast by the commissioning companies. Recently, his theatre production of Jim Allen's *Perdition* was hounded off stage before even one public performance. *Fatherland* can at least be seen, but if London's ICA cinema isn't your local and you don't have a progressive independent cinema near you, then you may have to wait some time to see it.

Trevor Griffiths, who wrote the screenplay, also has direct experience of what can happen to radical scripts, with the reworking of his script for *Reds* for the multi-million dollar Hollywood production. *Fatherland* the first collaboration between Loach and Griffiths, has been eagerly awaited.

In the film, dissident singer/song-writer, Klaus Drittemann, refuses to tone down the critical lyrics of his songs in his native East Germany and eventually accepts a one-way visa to the West. He travels via a brief, alienating stay in West Berlin to Britain. A young Dutch journalist accompanies him on his search for his exiled father, a classical musician and former dissident, who left East Germany after the suppression of the strikes in 1953.

The film is structured in three sections: the first, set in East Germany is titled 'Actually Existing Socialism'; the second, in West Berlin, 'Great Freedom Street'; and the final section, set in Britain, 'Stalinism isn't Socialism, Capitalism isn't Freedom'. The narrative, developed around Drittemann's parallel journeys in search of the

# Fatherland

ROSS KEITH



**Fatherland**

'true' socialism and his father, is interrupted by grainy black and white nightmarish dream sequences.

*Fatherland* is a dense, complex film which raises big issues: the tasks for socialists in bureaucratised workers' states;

the reunification of Germany; the nature of repression in the West ('repressive tolerance'); the problems of developing oppositional cultural practices in the East (overt repression) and the West (commodification and recuperation); notions of

(our) history and heroic myths; the nature of the family. Arguably, there is too much here to expect any one film to deal with adequately, but Griffiths' script is dialectical and subtle. At times, however, there appears to be a tension between the script and Loach's direction; sometimes this tension works excitingly, such as in the early press conference, or in the late scene where Drittemann eventually meets his father. At other times there is an awkwardness, heavy-handedness even — for example, the party in West Berlin or the Molesworth/miners' picket scenes. The dream sequences, which employ paranoid chase images alongside enigmatic images of a gesturing father, seem laborious.

Drittemann, isolated as he moves through Western landscapes, evokes the melancholic protagonist of many an existential German road movie. This is effective at times in making us rethink 'natural' aspects of Western culture. For example, when pressed to sign a recording contract in West Berlin, Drittemann asks for more time as he is unaccustomed to thinking of himself as a commodity.

The scene which perhaps works most forcefully is the father and son reunion. Here, resonances from different strands in the film come together in an extraordinary synthesis of the personal and the political, the past, present and future, myth and reality. The devastating effects of the international machinations of Stalinism as represented here in the crushing of one human spirit are handled in a supremely sensitive way — script, camera and editing working with an intensity that holds the contradictions in uneasy tension; there is no moment of catharsis. *Fatherland* avoids easy answers to the more difficult questions it poses, and Philip French's derogatory remark about a 'one-sided political debate' notwithstanding, should leave its audiences with plenty to think about as they leave the cinema ●

**SOCIALIST  
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INTRODUCING . . .

A NEW JOURNAL OF MARXISM IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

# SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

**T**HE LEFT in Britain is under seige. The defeat of the 1984-5 miners' strike gave a new boost to Thatcherism, and a further twist to the move to the right inside the Labour Party and the trade unions. The move to the right has cut deep into the Left itself, producing apathy, defeatism, and more and more accommodation to the right wing. Journals like Marxism Today, New Statesman and New Socialist have all abandoned any pretensions to radicalism. An inauspicious time then to launch a new Marxist journal in the labour movement? We think not.

The move to the right inside the labour movement has taken place against the wishes of tens of thousands who want to stick to socialist principles. **SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** will give a voice to all those who stand by the fundamentals of socialism — the central role of working class struggle, the fight for a democratically planned economy, the fight for workers control, for internationalism and against racial and sexual oppression.

**SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** believes that Thatcherism has done nothing to solve the crisis of British capitalism and that British politics will continue to be in turmoil. We believe that the forces exist — in the Labour Party, the trade unions, among women and black people — to fight back against the right wing tide.

**SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** will be an organiser and a weapon of struggle. We aim to produce a magazine of debate and analysis to arm activists in the labour movement and the mass campaigns. We plan in-depth coverage of developments in the unions, the struggle in the Labour Party, of the recomposition of British politics and changes in the British economy and class structure.

**SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** will be internationalist, carrying coverage of the major developments in world politics, and carrying articles by Marxists and labour movement activists from many countries.

**SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** will be a journal of Marxist education and debate. We reject the view that Marxism is 'old fashioned' or 'disproved', but believe that only the analytical tools of Marxism can explain the upheavals in world politics.

**SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** represents the fusion of two Marxist currents in the labour movement, those organised around the magazines International and Socialist Viewpoint. We think the new magazine will be a significant step forward in the fight to build a Marxist movement in Britain.

\* \* \* \* \*

## £10,000 for a monthly SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

**SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** is being launched in May but will become a monthly in the autumn. We think that a monthly journal is the very minimum that is needed, given the urgency of the political situation and the speed of events. But to have a regular monthly, with the range of coverage that we want and our readers expect, we need money. We need money for full time staff. We need money for typesetting and printing equipment. We need money to improve the quality of our design and production, and the range of our coverage.

Our fund drive is being set at £10,000 to be raised by the autumn. Given the strength of our existing support, and the potential that the new magazine has, we think this figure is extremely modest. We are asking all our supporters, and all those who sympathise with our objectives, to help us achieve our goal.

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