

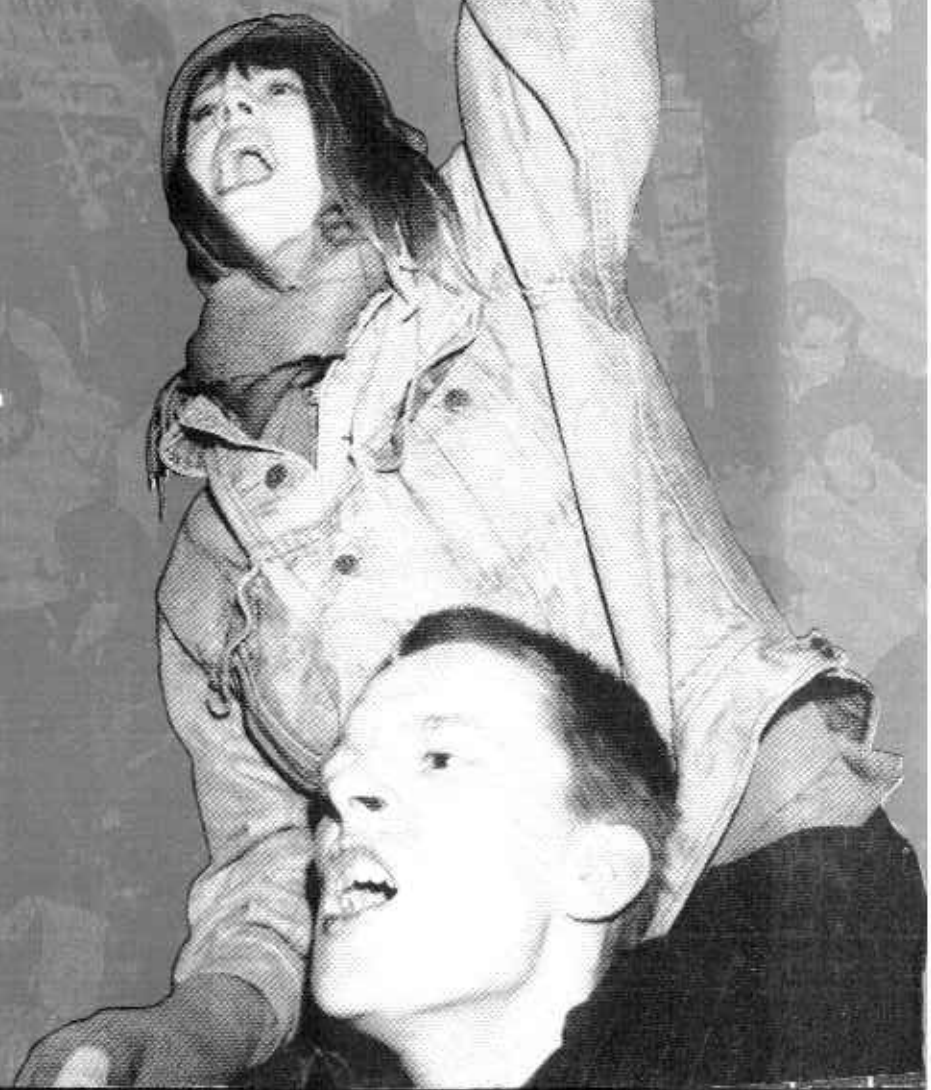
SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

No. 23 April 1990 £1

THATCHER'S CRISIS

Inside

- Nicaragua after election defeat
- South Africa
- Education



**Our bodies
our lives
our right
to decide**



The battle against the reactionary implications of the new Embryology Bill and its amendments from the fundamentalist right, restricting time-limits for abortion and access to donor insemination, goes on. Further coverage in the next issue of SOCIALIST OUTLOOK, along with the latest analysis of the Poll Tax fight, a special supplement on Ireland, and much more!

S o c i a l i s t O u t l o o k

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SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

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C o n t e n t s

UPDATE

1-2 ● EDITORIALS

2 ● Scargill: Maxwell's vendetta

3 ● Gorbachev: Hands off Lithuania!

4 ● Ireland: Time for solidarity

5-7

SOUTH AFRICA: Homelands revolt outpaces leaders
Ben Campbell

7-9

THE POLL TAX
Thatcher's nightmare
John Tuite

10-12

The men who sprang George Blake
INTERVIEW with PATRICK POTTLE
David Grant

13-20

SUPPLEMENT
Stalinism in terminal crisis
COMMUNISM FAR FROM FINISHED
Harry Sloan
Organising workers in a Soviet union
INTERVIEW with Oleg Votovin of SOTSPROF

21-23

IN DEPTH
NICARAGUA: Tough lessons from election defeat
Will McMahon

24-26

BREAKTHROUGH FOR BRAZIL'S WORKERS' PARTY
INTERVIEW with Tatau Godinho

27

Reactionaries win Indian state elections
Oliver New

28-29

Labour's classless policies for schools
Richard Hatcher

30

Colleges in crisis
Louise Holloway

31-33

REVIEWS
Primary lessons in fighting racism
Deep Ecology: the politics of despair?
Born on the fourth of July

Nicaragua: Bush buys a victory

In East Germany the votes for the pro-capitalist CDU were bought for deutschmarks: in Nicaragua the US-sponsored UNO coalition used the promise of dollars as its main attraction.

If money talks, State Department money invested in destabilising a 'target' regime positively shouts. While the Sandinistas picked their way through the wreckage of an economy plundered by the old Somoza regime, and toured the world seeking small packages of aid and support, the White House was devoting big bucks to securing their downfall.

There have been over ten years of US economic blockade on Nicaragua, coupled with political harassment of potentially sympathetic governments; this has run alongside outright destruction, through sustained sponsored sabotage and terrorism carried out by US-funded 'contra' mercenaries. This effort has largely broken the always fragile Nicaraguan economy.

The contrast between the huge resources available to sponsor the contras and the pitiful levels of economic and military assistance supplied to the Sandinistas speaks volumes on the political attitude of the Kremlin leaders. Under Brezhnev, the Central American revolutionary movement was dismissed as a dangerous side issue to the pursuit of detente – not least when President Carter forcefully reminded Moscow that this was a US back yard. Despite the limited support which Fidel Castro's Cuban leadership – constrained by Moscow – could offer after they had seized power, the Sandinistas were increasingly given the cold shoulder and little else in the USSR.

This line – a stark contrast with Khrushchev's willingness in the early 1960s to offer military protection and substantial economic subsidies to Cuba (initially in the hopes of securing a military base in the Caribbean) – has continued under the various Soviet leaders.

The Gorbachev doctrine of 'peaceful coexistence' means refusing to back any new confrontation in the US 'spheres of influence'. Nor is it just Soviet aid that has been withheld: under pressure from Moscow, Cuban support to the liberation forces in El Salvador has also been restricted.

Blockaded by the imperialists, the Sandinistas have been left isolated by the 'anti-imperialists', and pressurised into various forms of regional 'peace initiatives' which if successful would have consolidated right wing capitalist regimes in Central America and made permanent the Sandinistas' isolation.

While the Moscow bureaucrats abstained, Washington's warmongers were quick to seize the advantage.

Reagan and then Bush were able to funnel tens of millions of dollars to the contras through the stooge regime in Honduras and other conduits: they were also able to sustain and build up economic and military support for the reactionary regime in El Salvador.

The border war waged by the contras dragged on, bringing huge suffering, loss of life, and economic costs – not only in terms of the need for a large army and its equipment, but also the dislocation of agricultural and other production.

Meanwhile the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie – egged on from the USA – kept up its opposition to and disruption of the Sandinista regime and its economic policies, showing their refusal to play ball in a 'mixed' economy.

Finally, worn down by war and unconvinced that the Sandinistas could offer an economic future to match Violetta Chamorro's beguiling promises of renewed US trade and aid, a majority of the Nicaraguan electorate became sufficiently demoralised to vote for the UNO coalition.

Fidel Castro from the outset advised the Sandinistas *not* to try



to build a new Cuba, but simply to build 'A new Nicaragua'. There is no doubt that in the very different world conditions of 1979-90, the option of a 1960s-style 'Cuban road', dependent as Castro has always been on Soviet aid, was never on offer to the FSLN, even had they wished to follow it.

But the scandalous refusal of Gorbachev and the Soviet bureaucracy to lend material aid to the Nicaraguan regime has undoubtedly helped Bush and Chamorro win their unexpected election success. Whether the promised dollars will ever materialise, and how long Chamorro can survive if they don't, is another question.

For the moment the Nicaraguan workers and peasants have suffered a serious and demoralising setback, and now face a new stage in the struggle. They need practical and political solidarity for the struggles ahead.

It really is Thatcher's crisis

Slumping in the polls and facing a growing tide of dissent and dissatisfaction as her own party faithful begin to scent defeat at the next General Election, Margaret Thatcher has nobody else to blame for her predicament. She long ago removed anyone with any backbone from her cabinet, and has apparently convinced herself that, given the weakness of Labour's opposition, a resolute Tory leadership can force through anything it wants.

She has miscalculated, and unwittingly constructed a mighty movement of disaffection reaching deep into natural Tory support.

Opinion polls as we go to press suggest she could face the Tories' worst by-election defeat since 1935 as the 'safe' Mid-Stamfordshire seat is swept away in voters' revolt.

Neil Kinnock and his grey men and women are of course revelling in the Tory crisis: but there is little credit due to a Labour front bench that has put the 'shadow' into shadow cabinet, with a consistently low-profile line on almost everything.

The upsurge in support for the Labour Party has nothing to do with Kinnock's parliamentary efforts, let alone the Policy Review (which few voters understand): it is the combined result of Thatcher machine-gunning herself in the foot at the same time as the soggy 'centre' Liberal-SDP alliance has disintegrated, reducing its component parts to a shrivelled minority current on an electoral par with the Greens.



Out in front to take the blame: Thatcher

For proof of this, we just need to ask what are the main issues around which the anti-Thatcher tide has gathered. There is the Poll Tax, the state of the economy (with inflation chipping away at living standards and sky-high interest rates putting even traditional Tory-voting mortgage-payers through the mill), and unpopular Tory policies and cuts in the NHS, education and housing.

Each is costing the government support (as did Kenneth Clarke's hard line on the ambulance dispute): yet on none of them have the Labour leaders a clear, well-known or accepted alternative to Thatcher's line. The Labour Party has not conducted any serious mass campaign on any of these key issues.

The readiness of Kinnock to retreat instantly in the face of the slightest Tory counter-offensive, and to squander the political advantage of the situation in another round of witch-hunts and threatened expulsions underlines the need to fight any complacency in the labour movement after the predictable sweeping Labour gains are recorded in May's local government elections.

A leadership this soft, remote from real struggles and apologetic about its working class supporters could yet pluck defeat from the jaws of victory at the next General Election.

Thatcher's self-inflicted misery can only be made socialists' delight if we take every opportunity to build a firm base of organised resistance in the unions, the Labour Party and the mass campaigns - and ensure that the fight for a socialist alternative is carried through.

Maxwell's vendetta against Scargill

Five highly-paid *Daily Mirror* journalists, travelling nine countries on expenses for seven months, have had a single mission assigned to them by their boss, union-busting millionaire Robert Maxwell: 'get Scargill'.

Money has been no object in the smear campaign, which bore fruit in the recent five-day series in the *Mirror*. It raised a series of allegations over the handling of NUM money by Scargill and NUM General Secretary Peter Heathfield during the 1984-5 miners' strike.

Star 'witness' was Roger Windsor, a former non-elected employee who rose to Chief Executive Officer of the NUM. He turns out to have been paid a fat retainer by the *Mirror*, in addition,

he is a man with a grudge - Scargill last October called in South Yorkshire police to investigate his links with a company doing business on the new Notts area NUM head office.

Windsor now lives in France; he is also facing legal action to retrieve £29,000 he was lent by the NUM when it relocated from London to Barnsley.

Scargill's former chauffeur, Jim Parker, who left his job and cooperated with the *Mirror* has also added allegations that Libyan cash was used to pay off Scargill's mortgage and make loans to Heathfield and Windsor.

There is no evidence that Scargill or Heathfield benefitted personally from any of the alleged dealings, which took place at a sharp point of the strike, when sequestrators were homing

in on NUM assets, and could have seized the houses they were in. Nor is there any proof that any of the actions were motivated by anything other than a desire to keep the union functioning.

In the light of this, it was perhaps foolish of the NUM Executive, in calling for an independent inquiry into the allegations, to decide it should be conducted by the Haldane Society whose most prominent member, Derek Platts-Mills, is also subject of *Mirror* allegations.

One thing is clear: with Thatcher using the full might of the police and bourgeois law, and unlimited millions of taxpayers' money to crush the NUM, Scargill would have been more than justified in taking cash from the USSR, Libya or anywhere else to help sustain the strikers.

Maxwell, politically backed by the TUC right wing, Neil Kinnock and of course cynical elements like Labour MP Kim Howells, who played a key role in manoeuvring the eventual return to work, is attacking Scargill for one reason only: because of the class struggle politics he represents in the unions and the labour movement.

Maxwell himself, still locked in battle with 23 NUJ members at Pergamon Press, sacked for taking 24-hour official strike action, has every reason as an employer to want such politics crushed. Militants in the workers' movement wanting to defend Scargill against the *Mirror*'s campaign of character assassination should also lend renewed support to the Pergamon 23.

Harry Sloan

Gorbachev: Hands off Lithuania!

By David Shepherd

SOVIET troops are massing on the borders of Lithuania (population 3.7 million) as we go to press in what could be the prelude to an invasion of the Baltic state which declared its departure from the Soviet Union on 11 March.

The declaration of independence by Lithuania's Supreme Soviet came in the aftermath of the massive victory of the Lithuanian popular movement Sajudis in the March republican elections, and has the support of the majority of the population. Any Soviet military intervention would be a criminal act of denial of the national-democratic rights of the Lithuanian people.

Coming in the wake of the bloody repression of the Azerbaijani national movement earlier this year, such a show of military force against the democratic movement in the Baltic republics would not bode well for the future of glasnost – at least as far as the Soviet Union's oppressed nationalities are concerned.

This time the Soviet rulers do not even have the fig leaf of defence of an ethnic minority from pogroms to cover their military-bureaucratic repression of the national-democratic movement.

Socialists should defend unconditionally Lithuania's right to independence, which means its departure from the USSR.

As Lenin said, 'Repudiation of the right to self-determination, i.e. the right of nations to secede, means nothing more than defence of the privileges of the dominant nation and police methods of administration, to the detriment of democratic methods.'

Now is the time for socialists and all democratic forces, throughout the USSR and internationally, to rally in defence of the people of Lithuania.

The background to the current situation is the endemic rise of the movements for national-democratic rights in the Baltic states and among the other oppressed nationalities.

Along with Estonia (population 1.6 million), Lithuania had, before the 11 March declaration, already renounced the treaty by which it was forcefully incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940. Latvia, the other Baltic republic (population 2.7 million), is bound to follow suit.

When it does so it will be joining the republic of Georgia (population 5.4 million) whose Supreme Soviet on 2 March declared illegal the treaties under which it joined the Soviet Union in 1921 and demanded immediate negotiations with Moscow to recognise its claim to independence.

In common with its neighbouring Transcaucasian republic, Azerbaijan, Georgia has seen bloodshed in its capital within the last year as Soviet troops repressed nationalist demonstrators.

Moscow's response to the rise of national-democratic movements has been a combination of repression and tolerance, combined with (very belated) attempts at reforming inter-republican relations.

Gorbachev ruled out negotiations with Lithuania on the issue of independence and won by a massive majority a resolution in the Congress of People's Deputies stating that Lithuania's declaration of independence had 'no legal force'.

His strong words, however, do not seem initially to have been taken at face value by leaders of the national movements. Algirdas Brazauskas, leader of the independent Lithuanian Communist Party (and a popular nationalist



The 'super-president' rules out talks

leader) dismissed them as 'just for public consumption'. The implication being that Gorbachev was trying not to frighten the conservatives and, importantly, not to give the green light to the national movements in other republics.

Leaders of the Lithuanian popular movement Sajudis were reported as saying that negotiations with Moscow on the terms of their secession were in fact already under way by mid-March. Clearly a complicated tactical game was being played by the Soviet leader.

Even as he was rejecting the idea of negotiations on Lithuanian independence, Gorbachev was announcing the establishment of a special commission on the implications of the Lithuanian move, to be headed by Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov.

Meanwhile there are no less than five bills on issues to do with the nationalities before the Supreme Soviet in the current session, including one that provides a right of departure from the Union (by referendum, on a turn-out of at least seventy-five per cent and to be ratified by the

Supreme Soviet).

But Gorbachev's assumption of vastly increased powers as the Union's new super-president has been interpreted by many as being in part a move designed to combat secessionist tendencies and hold the disintegrating Union together.

The strongly nationalist first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party Gigi Gumbardze, for example, moved a resolution in the republic's Supreme Soviet saying that the powers of the executive president were unacceptable and a violation of the rights of the republics. On 3 March there was a demonstration of 4,000 outside the government and Communist Party headquarters in Tbilisi protesting at presidential rule.

In Ukraine (population 51.7 million) the popular front movement – Rukh – mobilised 50,000 in the capital city Kiev in a militant protest against the creation of the executive presidency. Rukh won control of the Kiev council in the March elections and at the time of writing look set to win a large number (perhaps a

majority) of seats in the republic's Supreme Soviet.

Lithuania's declaration of independence may come to be the least of Gorbachev's headaches in the coming months, it is already only one among many.

The unofficial 499-member Congress of Estonia declared itself in March to be the legitimate representative of the Estonian people and called for the re-establishment of Estonian independent statehood. It also called for the withdrawal of all Soviet troops, which it said had been illegally occupying Estonia for fifty years.

The Congress was elected by an electorate of 700,000 – only those who could prove that they were descended from citizens of the pre-Soviet Estonian republic. Ethnic Estonians make up only 64.7 per cent of the republic's

population, the rest being mostly Russians (27.9 per cent).

This tiny Baltic state also has plans to introduce its own currency – the kroon – by the end of this year. Economic independence from the Soviet Union will however be rather difficult given that only three per cent of Estonian industrial production currently goes outside the USSR.

For the small Baltic republics economic viability as independent states (either separately or together) is to say the least a questionable concept.

There is talk about a Baltic federation with the Scandinavian countries, Poland and Germany.



Georgian stall: economic issues are key

But the ties that bind the republics to the economy of the USSR will be very difficult to break.

The nationalists in the Soviet republics will have to confront the same problems as those faced by the new governments in eastern and central Europe. They have discovered that, although

the economic relationship with the USSR had a terrible distorting effect on economic development, it cannot easily be abandoned.

The last thing they want in eastern and central Europe is a rapid dissolution of Comecon trading arrangements: their entire economies are geared into that of the Soviet Union, any sudden break would lead to immediate and complete collapse.

If this is true for Poland, Czechoslovakia and the GDR, how much more is it true of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia? On the economic front at least Gorbachev still has plenty of room for manoeuvre.

One thing is clear: police methods of administration, to use Lenin's phrase, have no chance of providing even a temporary, let alone a lasting, solution to the national questions in the USSR.

Ireland: Time for solidarity

The movement for British withdrawal from Ireland is in a weaker state now than it has been for several years.

Time to Go is a debt-ridden shadow of its former, not very magnificent self. The rest of the withdrawal movement does not even appear to be able to hold a conference to discuss some basic joint initiatives. To cap it all, the majority at the Labour Committee on Ireland's (LCI's) AGM voted to exclude the views of 40 per cent of those present from its newly-elected leadership.

An examination of what happened at the LCI AGM is instructive because it tells us about the tensions and dynamics not only within that organisation but in the wider withdrawal movement.

Two choices

There were only two choices facing the LCI at the meeting. Supporters of *Socialist Outlook*, along with many others, argued that while the LCI should continue to support *Time to Go*, it should also realise that it wasn't the run-away success that some people try to pretend.

We also argued that for too long the LCI had neglected such

basic matters as strengthening existing branches and setting up new ones; or criticising the public statements of the Labour Party front bench, a job which will become increasingly important as we approach the next election.

Moreover, we tried to persuade the leadership that it should use its influence within *Time to Go* to make it a more democratic and accountable body, and that the LCI itself should become a force actively trying to draw together the different strands in the withdrawal movement.

The option chosen by the AGM was for the LCI to become *Time to Go* in the Labour Party. Only representatives of this view were elected to the National Council and it is worth recording that a number of prominent National Council members didn't seek re-election.

Most offensive of all, the AGM voted by a slim majority not to censure the leadership for its decision not to support this year's Bloody Sunday march; an event one person flipantly described as 'a Republican Parade'.

So what went wrong? And

what happens next? The first question is much easier to answer than the second. An important section of the LCI decided that *Time to Go* was a secret weapon which would destroy British imperialism by the creation of a (rather nebulous) mass movement. They felt that a precondition was the support of MPs like Claire Short, who could eventually bring pressure to bear on the front bench. To move in this direction they had to smash up and exclude the left-wing within the LCI and erect a Berlin Wall between themselves and the traditional withdrawal movement.

Joke

The joke is that they have chosen to get rid of half of the LCI's foot-soldiers; so weakening an organisation that wasn't very strong in the first place. The Socialist Workers Party and Communist Parties now play no real part in *Time to Go*, and the campaign will find it hard even to re-establish last year's level of activity. The fact that just over 30 people turned up to *Students say Time to Go* bears this out.

The first lesson from the AGM is that democratic left forces will have to be much more

effective at bringing supporters to next year's AGM, at which the unimpressive balance sheet of the coming year will be drawn. Many rightly feel that their voices have been excluded in a most sectarian manner. We must begin to organise in informal caucuses just as our opponents have done so that we can participate as Labour Party members in coming mobilisations around Ireland.

When possible we must take part in official LCI activities – if there are any. We must also strengthen our links with the withdrawal movement outside the Labour Party, demonstrating that the LCI itself is not synonymous with sectarianism and undemocratic behaviour.

The groups and individuals who discovered that they worked so well together in *Year of Action* committees and *Time to Go* groups in 1988-9 must realise that all their efforts will have been wasted if we don't begin a serious discussion on how our meagre forces can work together.

While the Birmingham Six remain in jail, and while Britain remains in Ireland, we have a heavy responsibility

Liam MacUaid

Homelands rebellion outpaces South African leaders

By Ben Campbell

Mass uprisings in many of South Africa's bantustan 'homelands', which spread after the momentous release of Nelson Mandela on February 11, signal the end of Pretoria's system of grand apartheid. But, with the forthcoming official 'talks about talks' with De Klerk's government due to begin on April 12, the dramatic events have exposed crucial weaknesses in the ANC leadership's strategy for power

As we go to press, the official death toll has reached 250, with hundreds more wounded and detained, since the first bantustan uprising began in Bophuthatswana on February 14. The townships and villages of Gazankulu, Venda and Ciskei, inspired into protest by the release of Mandela, have been turned into war zones by corrupt bantustan rulers and their black security forces. Despite ANC appeals for calm, unrest has spread to some urban townships too.

In what appears to be a new strategy by the De Klerk government, only a limited SA Defence Force (SADF) presence has been sent in to the homelands. So far, the government has refused to launch a single rescue operation like the one to save Bophuthatswana's Lucas Mangope two years ago. The main political beneficiary of the beleaguered bantustan puppets is the ANC leadership. Why has de Klerk done this, and what implications does it have for developing working class power?

Left wing surprise

On the day of Mandela's release, a rally organised for Hudson Ntsanwisi, the 'chief minister' of the 'non independent homeland' of Gazankulu, turned into a riot when the platform microphone was seized to pronounce 'away with the bantustans'.

A general strike followed. Local reporters said that 'even left wing organisations were taken by surprise'. Intervention by the SADF was limited to preventing looting and arson. Most of the 25 dead were killed by Ntsanwisi's local police and soldiers as he fled into hiding.

Meanwhile, an estimated 70,000 protesters, led by workers and youth, took to the



De Klerk: hoping ANC leaders will be good for business

streets in Bophuthatswana – or 'Bop', as the supposedly independent homeland is called – on February 7 following de Klerk's reform speech. Sparked partly by the deportation of Jon Lewis, the former editor of the South African Labour Bulletin, the crowd demanded the resignation of the tyrannical 'president', Lucas Mangope, and the immediate reintegration of the territory into South Africa on a non-racial basis.

Mangope dismissed the demands, declared a state of emergency and appealed in vain for military reinforcements from the Pretoria government. His troops fired into the crowds from Casspir armoured cars, then cut off electricity, water and telephones.

Linking socio-economic demands

The demands in Bop were linked to the people's socio-economic crisis. Centred on the Odi region and Garankuwa, working class communities protested against official corruption, lack of public services, unemployment and low wages. Those workers lucky enough to find a paid job earn as little as R30 (about £7.50) per week. From this they are supposed to provide for relatives who scratch a living out of barren plots. Mostly non-unionised, the semi-rural workers have begun to set up committees and have

been joined on marches by black police.

Then, in the first week of March, Venda, another 'independent homeland', was hit by a wave of strikes, including public workers and black police. The white-run army ran amok killing 38, wounding over 50 people, detaining others, smashing marches with tear-gas and cutting off water and electricity supplies. The ANC's internal alliance, the Mass Democratic Movement, issued calls for the formation of village and street committees 'to organise the youth', an indication of the largely spontaneous character of the upsurges.

De Klerk's stand-off tactics became clearer in Ciskei the following week. 'President-for-life' Lennox Sebe, perhaps the most ruthless of the bantustan puppets, arranged for his son to stage a coup when he realised that over 500,000 of his 750,000 subjects were actively refusing Ciskei's pseudo-citizenship and burning his party cards. But, when Sebe went off to Taiwan and Hong Kong, his son was outflanked by army leader Brigadier Oupa Gqozo.

Brigadier under the red flag

In the absence of any SADF intervention in the Ciskei townships, Brigadier Gqozo's Military Council declared it had seized power in the second week of March. The Brigadier addressed the crowd at Mdantsane under the backdrop of flags of the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) and said he wanted 'reintegration into South Africa', a euphemism for a non-racial government.

This surprise development was explained by some observers as a success for the Mass Democratic Movement's new tactic. The Movement's new Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa has been recruiting many chiefs and headmen to support the ANC, a task made easier by the release of Mandela and the prospect of a negotiated settlement. At the large Conference for a Democratic Future in December, it was made clear that those homeland leaders who opposed reintegration, and who looked set to collaborate with the government in the forthcoming talks like the DTA chiefs did in Namibia, would have their base of support



ANC demonstration in February 1990: Lifting the ban was a gamble for De Klerk

removed by mass disobedience campaigns.

On this basis, pro-ANC forces are said to have been able to foment the uprisings described above, while largely preventing unrest breaking out in Transkei, KwaNgane and Lebowa. There, the respective leaders, Bantu Homolisa, Enos Mabuza and Nelson Ramadikwe, have voiced support for reincorporation. The most powerful, General Homolisa, will meet Mandela after he returns to South Africa on March 17. Aware of Mandela's royal Transkei birthplace, the General has surrounded himself with MDM advisers and has promised a referendum on reintegration.

New ANC tactic dangerous

The ANC tactic of selective – rather than generalised – opposition to bantustan leaders may appear very successful, but it is highly risky. Suffering an acute fiscal crisis, the bantustan administrations are unable to meet the masses' demands for jobs, decent wages, fewer taxes, more houses and better services.

Like the British colonial 'Native Reserves' on which they were based, the modern homelands are still the dumping grounds for millions of South Africa's 'surplus' workers and dependents of migrants essential to the system of super-exploitation of the black working class. But in the 1980s, bantustan puppets were allowed to harbour small black armies and police forces to brutally repress any dissent. Obviously the ANC hopes to neutralise these armed forces and prevent needless bloodshed. But how has this been

done?

Ciskei provides one clue. Despite the ANC and SACP flags on Brigadier Gqozo's platform, and his promise to release of all detainees, the impoverished crowd began looting shops. While Gqozo's army held back, the police unleashed a reign of terror for 40 hours. Arson against administrative buildings followed. Gqozo's Military Council began talks to quell the violence with the UDF's East London officers and then with UDF General Secretary Popo Molefe, who was flown in.

In exchange for freedom of organisation, the UDF regional president shared a platform with Brigadier Gqozo to launch a 'clean up campaign'. Molefe told the people that 'the police were yesterday's enemies, but they can be today's and tomorrow's friends'. Various MDM groups, including the unions, rather than the UDF, had to provide marshalls to help the policing effort. The UDF leaders will continue 'for the time being' a tactical alliance with the Military Council.

Pace of masses too fast

Evidently, both the government and the ANC leadership have seen their pre-planned gradualist schedule of talks threatened by the speed of rebellion. UDF spokesperson Patrick Terror Lekota warned Congress supporters after the Ciskei revolt:

"The disappearance [of the homelands] must be timed correctly, not haphazardly. And when a homeland government is sympathetic to the liberation movement ... there should be no hurry to pressure government officials to

abandon their positions."

At the same time, Mandela expressed fears that the talks could drag out like those with SWAPO over Namibian independence – which took over twelve years.

Meanwhile, the government is determined to exploit any hint of ANC collaboration. Foreign Minister Pk Botha said earlier on February 6 that 'We wish the ANC will help us now because what is left [of the state of emergency] is not aimed at any particular party.' In other words, the government will make deals with the ANC leaders, and therefore the SACP as well, once they demonstrate how effectively ANC cadres can discipline the masses in the townships.

Ultimately that means allowing, even if gradually at first, ANC leadership control of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state. What better laboratory than the homelands? There, over the next few years the most impoverished and less organised workers can be taught to live within the existing labour

system, or a slightly reformed version of it, as Mugabe has done in Zimbabwe.

Revitalise socialism – or Slovo's long transition?

Yet, despite calls for calm by ANC-UDF leaders, the new wave of mass defiance has also erupted in townships on the East Rand, around Johannesburg, in Natal, at Crossroads outside Cape Town and even in the Orange Free State. Everywhere, protestors want more resources for housing and services, resources which are not available from their local authorities.

The executive of the trade union confederation COSATU has called for the creation of a national civic association for all townships and 'to revitalise socialist thinking amongst organised workers'. But socialist solutions are the last ones now on the minds of the ANC and SACP leaders.

Like Mugabe (the former propagator of 'Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought') and his ZAPU allies in Zimbabwe and SWAPO allies in Namibia, Joe Slovo of the SACP is learning how to change his language: 'I believe it is possible to live with these realities [the private sector and international capital] and at the same time take structured steps in the direction of socialism.' (in an interview with that curious British magazine that has little to do with marxism or today!)

Slovo's 1988 statement that there should be 'no Chinese Wall between the struggle for socialism and the struggle for democracy' has

now become 'there is no Chinese Wall between systems which succeed one another ... one has to accept the need to go through a lengthy process of transition' (*Marxism Today*, March 1990)

Of course, a 'lengthy process' of capitalism is just what De Klerk's party of Afrikaner business want. They would do it without the ANC and SACP's collaboration if they could restructure the African market at home and throughout the continent by themselves. But a political settlement is necessary, for example, before the South African bourgeoisie can join SADCC or the OAU, and get rid of the extra costs of importing Western capital and paying premiums for white skills, homeland collaborators and militarism throughout the region.

Implicit in all this is the need for the non-racial and black unions to be depoliticised, which is just what has happened under ANC influence of the COSATU leadership over the past few years. This was demonstrated by their subdued presence at the December Conference for a Democratic Future and their attempts to relegate the worker's charter proposals to a liberal constitutional rights plea.

Constituent Assembly now

The only way the masses will accept the consequences of De Klerk's plans, is through back door dealing and propaganda by the ANC leaders. Yet, instead of initiating the call loud and clear for an immediate constituent assembly freely elected on a universal franchise, and directing mass protest at this



Who will do the policing of the black masses?

end, the ANC-SACP leadership have equivocated. The demand was absent from the ANC's policy statements on negotiations right up until December, when the Conference for a Democratic Future called for it in the light of the Namibian elections and the need for MDM

unity with the smaller Black Consciousness forces. Only Mandela has alluded to the demand during the past three months. Link this to the ANC's equivocation on majority rule, nationalisation, and the alienation of the homeland protestors, to see the dangers.

The timing of any government deal with the ANC, and therefore the SACP, will be set by how seriously De Klerk views the electoral and security threat from the white ultra right, as against the pressure of the masses. Yet, while the Conservative Party is defying the government's death squad inquiry, campaigning for one million white votes for the 1994 election, and planning a 'Freedom Manifesto' in May or June, the ANC leadership is trying to defuse black protest and co-opt the homeland bureaucracy and armed forces.

White politicians are calling on the ANC to speed up establishing internal branches to quell 'the violence', while ANC bureaucracy in Lusaka is doing a survey of exiles to assess the costs of return. The ANC national conference inside South Africa is only scheduled for December 16, and decisions on the workers' charter are only scheduled for September. The immediate danger is that the ANC leaders will allow De Klerk to exploit more 'popular' homeland leaders - future Buthelezi launched with the ANC leadership's blessing - whom he could substitute for the ANC and delay and compromise any democratic settlement, as Pretoria did with the DTA in Namibia.

Poll Tax

The Tories' nightmare, our dream opportunity!

Sometimes our most cherished dreams turn into nightmares. It is delighting to see the Poll Tax dream, Thatcher's 'flagship', create the deepest crisis yet for a government that, throughout the last ten years, always seemed one step ahead of the opposition.

Even the most dedicated Poll Tax campaigners are now bemused at the seeming incompetence of the government's introduction of the Tax into England and Wales. We are working day and night to reap the benefits of the massive upswell of opposition that has swept across the country, from Tory shire to inner city borough.

Oxfordshire Tory councillors stole the show from Labour councillors' generally cringing, timid opposition to the Tax. Brighton's Tory ex-leader resigned. Sir Mar-

cus Fox, vice-chair of the back-bench 1922 Committee, talked of Tory MPs being 'punch-drunk' from the Poll Tax levels set in their constituencies. Tory MP, Anthony Marlow, declared 'we risk being confronted by a massive and unchallengeable campaign of civil disobedience'. Thatcher's leadership is now being widely and seriously discussed inside top Tory Party circles. And so it goes on. If we didn't have to keep an eye out for our own ranks and Labour movement leaders it would all be a joy to behold.

So what went wrong for the Tories? It seems they forgot one of the most basic political rules for introducing a new tax: 'start it with all generosity'. They may have been concerned at the public spending figures that the Chancellor announced in last year's Autumn statement - with council spending at around £50 billion, a quarter of all public spending-

They may have been frustrated that extra money made available for the introduction of Poll Tax in Scotland was used not to bring Poll Tax levels down but to keep service levels higher than they wanted. The government were certainly blamed for the high levels of Poll Tax anyway. Whatever the reason, the Tories are trying both to introduce the tax and to squeeze council spending at the same time.

While the government tried to relieve the pressure on individuals by giving slightly more 'generous(?)' rebates than originally planned, it decided to increase pressure on the councils, blithely confident that high Poll Taxes would be immediately blamed on the local, especially Labour, councils.

The Standard Spending Assessment levels that were announced implied a 4% increase in spending, enough in the government's mythology to maintain this year's spending plus in-

flation. With hindsight this was enormously stupid. Wage costs for councils alone increased by twice that amount. Inflation is considerably higher than 4%.

There are other factors too, but the result is that the average Poll Tax is £370, at least £100 over the predicted level, and that the political complexion of the council has made little difference as to whether the target figures for the Poll Tax have been overshot. There are at least 50 Tory councils that are above the target

Penalties.

The penalty system is constructed so that if councils overshoot the government targets, the whole cost of that 'overspend' will be borne by the Poll Tax payer. A 'gearing' system ensures that for every 1 percent 'overspend' the Poll Tax would rise by 4%. This is why the Poll Tax levels are on average 30 percent higher than the targets, while average spending has only gone up by 7 percent. It is known as making the Poll Tax 'sensitive' to spending decisions, and was designed to make the provision of local services as costly and unpopular as possible.

It backfired. Tory as well as Labour councils - and most importantly the Poll Tax payers - are overwhelmingly blaming the government for the high Poll Tax levels. An opinion poll in the *Independent* March 17 showed that 48 percent of the population blamed the government for the Poll Tax levels, while a further 36 percent blamed both the government and the councils equally.

No way out

It is quite obvious that the Tories do not know how to get themselves out of this mess. With inflation running high, and the Poll tax about to add a full percentage point to it, with mortgage rates crushingly high, the political atmosphere throughout the country is becoming noticeably more hostile to them. All the predictions are that the Mid-Staffordshire by-election will show a mass desertion of skilled workers and home-owners from the Tory voting ranks. They are in big trouble!

If the Tories attempt to keep next year's Poll Tax at this year's levels it would cost them around £3 billion, with an additional £1 billion for each further £30 reduction. But this means taking from the Chancellor's shrinking financial surplus, and by 1991 the Tories are going to need a nice big tax cut to stand any chance of winning the next election.

Of course, even if they did make this money available there is no guarantee councils will use it to bring the Poll Tax down rather than use it on services. That is unless the Tories use their powers to cap the councils.

Capping is in the air at the present. It is useful because all the government has to do is say to a council 'No, you can't spend that much money! You must spend this much less!'. Then it can sit back. It doesn't have to make the decision as to what services are cut, but it might just be able to gain some credit for 'protecting' the local population from

preposterous levels of Poll Tax. The same *Independent* survey showed that 50 percent of those asked would support capping even if it meant cuts in their services.

But the problem is how to devise a capping system that hits the Labour councils while leaving the Tory councils largely untouched. It is difficult to see how this can be done, given that Tory councils are among the 'overspenders', and that anomalies exist such as the fact that while Haringey's Poll Tax at £572 is presently the highest in the land, it is actually £1 below the target! And of course, capping would represent a major political retreat from the 'principle' of the Poll Tax, that the electorate should judge and if necessary vote out a 'profligate' council. These problems may prove insuperable to begin with.

Squeeze

The end goal of the Poll Tax is not simply to impoverish and financially crush the population: this is only a means to the end. The idea of the Poll Tax is to squeeze people so hard that they squeeze the councils, and that councils squeeze the jobs and services.

The purpose of the Poll Tax is to destroy the remaining elements of collective provision councils maintain. And along with other changes, such as ringfencing housing finances so as to raise rents, it represents a huge escalation of the Tory's drive for a world in which 'there is no such thing as society, there are only individuals and their families'.

So what of the opposition to the Tax? March has seen a huge mushrooming of the campaign against the Tax, given focus by the Poll Tax setting meetings in England and Wales, and the emerging facts about the levels of non-payment in Scotland. The latter are truly impressive and give the lie to those who claimed that the initial levels were no more than could be expected under the old rates system.

Figures compiled for Strathclyde Regional Council show that summary warrants have already been issued to 352,745 poll tax defaulters, and that a further 10,428 are to be issued. Even then, a further 48,583 people are at least three months in arrears. These figures include 146,129 people in Glasgow who have been issued a summary warrant, an incredible 30.2 percent of the population! When the number of people in serious arrears is added, a total of 205,140 or 42.5 percent of Glasgow's population is reached!

Non-payment

It is likely that non-payment in England and Wales will reach similar levels, if not higher. The tidal wave of opposition throughout the country has noticeably increased the confidence of people passing the innumerable anti-poll tax stalls and defiantly declaring 'Poll Tax! I'm not paying that!'

The question will be whether these people are organised, and whether the Anti-Poll Tax Unions can build solid support among non-

payors. At present public meetings on estates can attract hundreds of working class people, all of whom are angry and defiant about Poll Tax. But turning this into permanent organisation, and expanding the active base of the anti-poll tax movement is a much more difficult job.

Trade unions

In fact, while Anti-Poll Tax unions must be built wherever possible, socialists should not allow this vital work to substitute for the fight to commit the existing organisations of the working class to a real struggle against the Poll Tax. The Labour Parties and the unions hold the key to defeating the Poll Tax, even if the Anti-Poll Tax unions and campaigns are making the running at present. There are a number of reasons why this is so.

The final target of the Poll Tax is to cut jobs and services. Unfortunately Thatcher has one major ally as levels of non payment build up. That ally is the councillors, both Tory and shamefully, Labour. Quite simply, Thatcher is relying on Labour councillors not to form a united front with the anti-poll tax campaigns against the government, but to pass the cost of non-payment on to the workforce, and through cuts in services, back onto the community.

Already, Labour councils are cutting jobs and services. Newham, for example, has cut 500 jobs. By the end of the year, when non-collection rates reach 20-30-40 percent, councils are going to be faced with enormous deficits. Will they balance their books through cuts? Thatcher needs them to.

Front line

The local government trade unions are crucial here. Their fight may determine whether councils get away with this. At any rate they will be on the frontline. It seems that the NALGO bureaucracy has suddenly realised something has to be done, having just decided to spend £250,000 from the political fund for a campaign against the Poll Tax in the run up to the local elections. But it is action that is needed, firstly in defence of jobs and conditions, and secondly in solidarity with the community that faces the Poll Tax.

Those inside the National Federation who argue that first you build the non-payment campaign and then you have the basis for going to the trade unions and demanding non-collection are wrong. There will be some workers who receive their redundancy notices from the council before they get their Poll Tax bill. And strike action against the Poll Tax has already taken place. DHSS workers at the Oval have gone on strike against being forced to grass up claimants to the Poll Tax register. Teachers in Bradford have gone on strike. In Lambeth, even the Poll Tax workers themselves have struck against the draconian conditions a panicking management have imposed.

But the Poll Tax is designed to put a wedge between the trade unions and the local community. For example, the Tories will be

very quick to calculate the Poll Tax cost of any wage claim made by local government workers and attempt to whip up community opposition to such claims. To combat this the trade unions need to give absolute solidarity to the community as it faces the pressures of Poll Tax.

Community support

They need to be declaring real opposition to forcible registration and fining. Ultimately non-collection of the Poll Tax must be posed. This is a strong basis for the trade unions to go to the community asking for support when their jobs and conditions are attacked. What would be disastrous is if the local government unions started to argue for higher poll taxes in order to protect their jobs.

This mistake has also been made by some 'lefts' in the Labour Party. Lambeth council's 'left' leadership argued for a preposterous level of poll tax on the grounds that 'services had to be defended'. The fact is that services cannot be defended without fighting the poll tax, that poll tax represents a savage 'cut' in the living standards of local people.

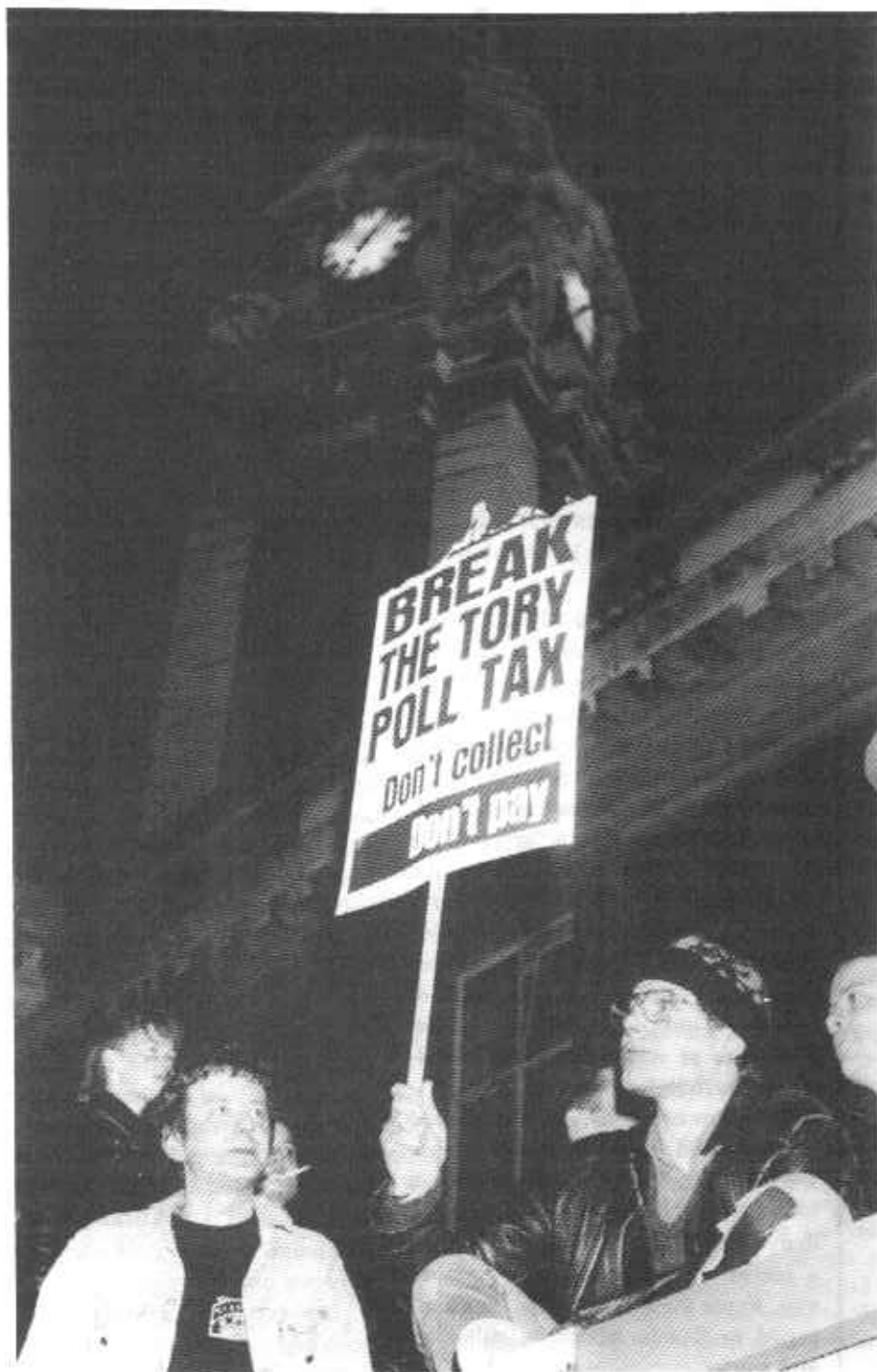
The Lambeth stance would also place Labour Parties well outside the radicalisation that is occurring on the Poll Tax, and which should and could revitalise a beleaguered left inside the Party, by fighting for non-payment and non-collection, together with fighting cuts. We are at the beginning of a real mass movement, possibly the largest campaign of civil disobedience involving the working class this side of the Second World War. If the Labour Parties are to stand in front of this movement and argue for either cuts or high poll taxes they will get short shrift.

Of course the Labour Party leadership has other plans. They do not want the Poll Tax to fall through mass action; and their alternative is not credible.

This is the fundamental reason for their hostility to the modest proposals to hold a national demonstration - lost by one vote on the NEC, on the excuse that they couldn't afford it! But they also said that the Poll Tax couldn't be changed until two years after a Labour government was elected, and Peter Shore told us on television that a Labour government would fine those who did not pay.

They have concurred with the Tories in condemnation of the 'violence' that has occurred on some of the lobbies. Two things should be said on this subject. First, the media have deliberately exaggerated the level of trouble, and downplayed the role of the police, to take the heat off the Tories. Second, given the abject failure of leadership by the Labour Party and TUC to lead a fight, it is hardly surprising that some people get frustrated.

The people who should be blamed are the very people who are shouting the condemnations loudest, the Tories, whose Poll Tax it is, the Labour and TUC leadership, and of course the Labour councils who have met behind lines of police, doors, and security guards. The



'dented shield' strategy now has new meaning as Labour councillors vote for poll taxes behind riot squad formations!

Inside the Anti-Poll Tax campaign there are some healthy signs that the various currents are beginning to work together. In particular, inside the National Federation, and certainly on a London-level, supporters of Militant have at last begun to seek a unified movement taking in the various different strands that have so far been working around the demands 'Don't Pay, Don't Collect'.

Both a national trade union conference and a campaign inside the Party is rapidly required. The left inside the Party is still half-asleep on this question. On another level, some councillors have taken a principled stand on

Poll Tax. They have generally been small minorities, but we need to bring them together.

The anti-Poll Tax movement shows no signs of retreating, and it is difficult to see a way out for the Tories. Suddenly people are beginning to think that they can win this one! That represents a huge step forward for all of us who have been fighting the Tories for ten years and known very little except defeats.

Socialists must ensure that millions of working class people who are squeezed dry by the Poll Tax find a labour movement willing and mobilised to fight for them. The Tories are in disarray. We should add to their problems. Their nightmare will be our victory.

John Tuite

The men who freed George Blake face trial: The case for the defence

Patrick Pottle and Michael Randle, together with Shaun Bourke (now dead) helped George Blake, the MI6/KGB double agent, to escape from Wormwood Scrubs in October 1966.

Blake was serving a 42 year prison sentence, at that time (1961) the longest sentence ever handed down by a British Court, having pleaded guilty to 14 charges brought against him under the Official Secrets Act.

Pottle and Randle are long-standing peace campaigners, involved in the direct action initiatives of the 'Committee of 100'. In the early 1960s they were serving sentences for charges brought against them under the Official Secrets Act as a result of carrying out acts of civil disobedience at various military installations in Britain.

They met Blake in Wormwood Scrubs and upon their release worked with Bourke to help George Blake to escape from prison. Randle drove Blake out of Britain hidden in a secret compartment in a camper van. From East Germany, Blake escaped to Russia where he still lives and works.

For many years it has been an open secret that Randle and Pottle had helped Blake escape. Lacking any hard evidence, however, the police could not bring a prosecution.

After many years of the 'open secret', in 1988 Pottle and Randle were explicitly named in the *Sunday Times* as the people who had helped Blake escape. In November 1988, in an interview in the *Observer*, they openly admitted their participation.

As it became known that they intended to publish the full story of events in their book *The Blake Escape*



Patrick Pottle

—How we freed George Blake and why, a campaign was started by Norris McWhirter's Freedom Association and Graham Riddick, Conservative MP for Colne Valley, to have Pottle and Randle arrested. The police still refused to act, and a Scotland Yard source was quoted in December 1988 in the *Daily Telegraph* as saying, 'The case has been thoroughly investigated and there was found to be insufficient evidence to merit further action. Unless further evidence is forthcoming, that remains the case'. Evidently, the police were reluctant to get involved in what was increasingly seen as a politically motivated campaign to have Pottle and Randle arrested and charged.

However, the DPP intervened, seemingly in response to 111 Conservative MPs signing a Parliamentary motion demanding their prosecution.

On April 27 1989, Pottle and Randle published their book. On May 4 1989 they were arrested. They were charged in July 1989 with an offence under the Prison Act 1952, which carries a five year sentence, and with two offences under the Criminal Law Act which both carry two year sentences as well as unlimited fines.

The trial is set for Tuesday April 24 1990 at the Old Bailey and is expected to last two weeks.

Socialist Outlook interviewed Patrick Pottle about the impending trial.

SO: Many people on the left will have perhaps assumed that you and Michael were sympathetic to stalinism given that you helped Blake, a member of the Soviet Communist Party, escape. Is that true?

PP: No, that couldn't be further from the truth. Michael comes from what would be considered the old traditional Quaker, non-violent background. He was one of the founding members of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War, organised the very first Aldermarston March and was imprisoned many times in the 1950s for breaking into American and British military bases.

I myself come from a much more radical background. The history of my family is one of political activism. My father was a member of the early British Communist Party. My great-great grandfather was one of the leaders of the Chartist movement, and incidentally, was responsible for having Karl Marx thrown out of the English Labour Party. His son inherited some lands near Brighton and believed strongly that individuals should not have the right to own private beaches — of course then many beaches were privately owned — and he refused to pay taxes on his land and was imprisoned for this.

As a result of the awful prison conditions he encountered, he started a reform movement to improve prison life. In fact, up to the 1930s, beds in prisons were called Pottle beds, named after him, as a result of the reforms that he instigated. So you can see that there is a long history of involvement in the radical movement.



George Blake

Certainly, in no way would either Michael or myself consider ourselves sympathetic to the kind of communism that has been practised in the Soviet Union or elsewhere. We have always opposed the nuclear policies of our own country and we have always, just as strongly, opposed the nuclear policies of the Soviet Union.

One of the principles we established way back in the 1960s in the Committee of 100 was that we had no objection to Communists being involved so long as they opposed the 'workers' bomb' as much as the 'capitalists' bomb'. We have a long record of opposing the human rights abuses in the Soviet Union, and in many ways I don't think that even the right wing press consider us to be in any way sympathetic to the Soviet Union, or KGB agents.

I think that even they accept that we are genuinely opposed to all of them.

Indeed, it's ironic that this pro-Moscow label has stuck with us. I can remember when we organised a demonstration in Red Square in Moscow. The editorials in *Pravda* echoed the kind of things that the British press said about us. Only this time, of course, we were the running dogs and lick spittles of the American imperialists, so I don't think that you can really make us out to be either pro-Soviet or pro-Western, for that matter.

I see no difference between a spy operating for Britain and a spy operating for Russia. To me they're just as evil as one another. They belong to groups which are self appointed governments within governments. Their very existence depends upon keeping the Cold War going.

So when it came to George Blake, we didn't say, 'Oh, look, there's a Russian agent who we must help'. We thought of him as a human being who was as much a victim of the very thing he was involved in. His role, as a double agent, was to entrap foreign nationals into betraying their own country. That's what he was employed by the British secret service to do. It just struck us as being so hypocritical that when he did exactly the same thing out of political conviction, they gave him forty-two years.

SO: What was it about Blake and the situation he was in that made you sympathetic to him?

PP: Blake was not a typical agent. You have to go back to that time to really understand what happened to Blake, back to the atmosphere at the height of the Cold War.

Michael and I had just been imprisoned for



Hysteria of the cold war press at the Blake case, June 1961

what we regarded as political offences and we certainly regarded Blake as a political prisoner too. It really was a gut reaction we had to his grotesque sentence.

We were not aware of these things at the time, but we later found out that other people who had done exactly the same thing as him were given or at least offered immunity from prosecution. Philby didn't take the offer, but Blunt did, and they were then allowed to carry on with their normal lives as if nothing had happened.

But you see, you have to remember that Blake wasn't English, he was a naturalised foreigner, he didn't come from some semi-aristocratic English family. He wasn't part of that 1930s, privileged, Cambridge elite and he was half Jewish, which I'm sure didn't help him. He was an obvious person to pick on to set an example. There wouldn't be an outcry in high places, there wasn't going to be anyone saying, 'Oh, poor old George' like there was for Philby and Blunt. Blake didn't have friends in high places. He was a foreigner and was treated as such.

SO: It was something of an open secret that you and Michael had helped Blake escape. So why did you publish your book, which to date, is still the only real evidence against you?

PP: We had kept quiet for 22 years. When Sean Bourke published his book in 1970, of course there was some interest in the Blake case again, but Michael and myself just kept a low profile. We sometimes would meet and talk about maybe going to meet Blake in Moscow, but to all intents and purposes, it didn't interfere with our lives.

Then, in 1987 when a book was published which all but named us, and then the *Sunday Times* actually named us, we issued a statement which didn't either deny or confirm our involvement. But then the press began to speculate as to our motives, about other, totally innocent, people being involved. They speculated about us being KGB agents. Then there were stories that we were really MI6 agents.

It even got to the point where we were the dupes in the middle of a joint KGB/MI6 plot. There were even stories that the whole thing had been organised by the Labour Party - Tom Driberg and a number of others. So we felt that the only honourable thing to do was to write a book explaining how and why we helped Blake escape. We hoped that this would kill off the speculation going around as to our motives, like the idea that all our actions had proved that peace activists were spies using funds from Moscow.

Of course, we knew that in taking the decision to publish our version of the story, we ran the risk of very likely going to prison. If you feel that you have done things in the past that you value, and you now find them being devalued by people trying to taint you, the only way out is to publish your side of things. It wasn't an easy decision, as we had a good idea of what the end result would be. We thought about it for several months before deciding to publish.



Michael Randle at press conference opposing invasion of Czechoslovakia

SO: On what basis are you going to defend yourselves in court and why do you want to conduct your own defence?

PP: We were given legal aid and so we have two QCs. They have said there are two lines of defence. We can either maintain what we said in the book is untrue and on those grounds we will get off. Or we can plead guilty and give all the reasons for doing it in mitigation. Now Michael and I want to take a third course and openly say to the jury that we did do these things we are accused of, but that we think they were right things to do.

Lawyers can't represent you in those kind of cases. Once you accept that you broke the law, to argue that you were right to do so goes against the whole process of law. In the end we have to defend ourselves. The lawyers will come in useful when the trial starts. There will be a number of legal arguments, the main ones of which will be put by us. We shall argue that the police and MI5 and MI6 were certainly aware of our existence as early as 1966. They made a conscious decision not to prosecute us in 1970 because it would have exposed the absolute cock up that they had made in their investigations in 1966.

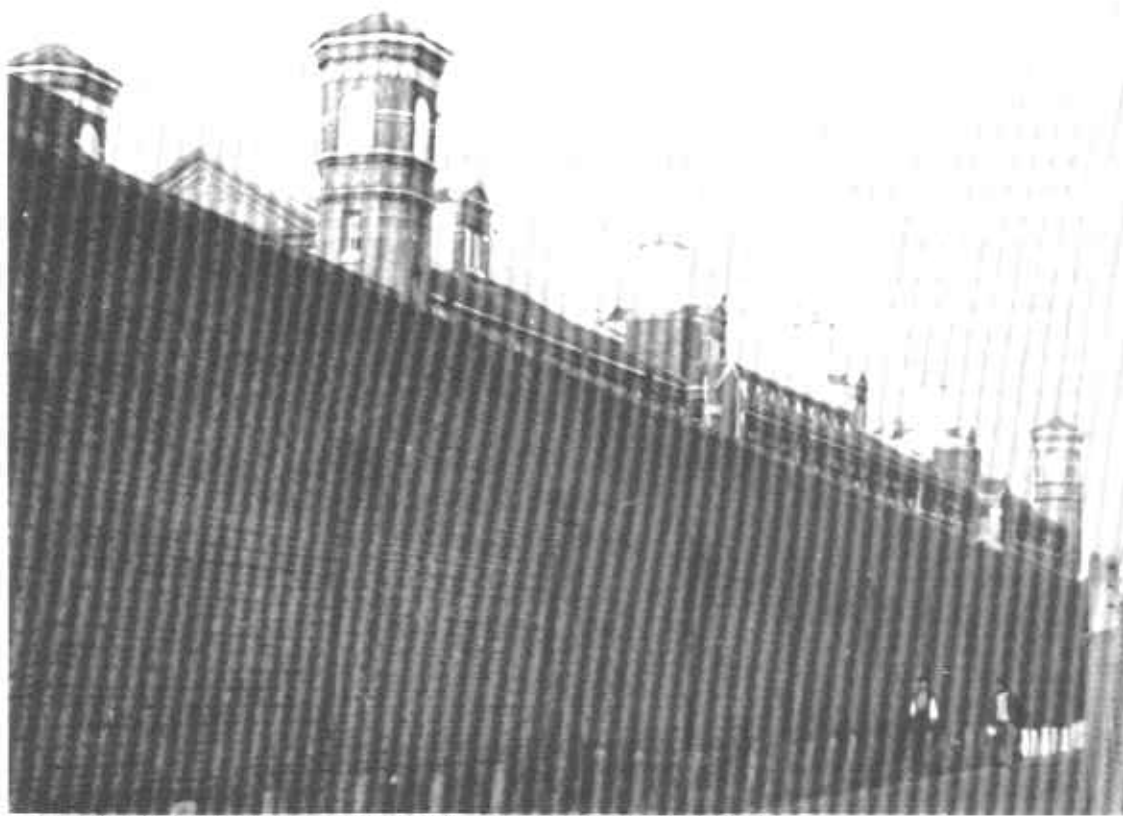
I think you have to go back to the period. You had Burgess and McClean, Philby, Vassal, the Portland spy ring... To admit in 1970 that two people that had been in prison with Blake, had sent him Christmas cards, actually broke him out of prison - well it would have made the security services look complete fools in the eyes of the Americans. So I think those were the considerations when they decided in 1970 not to prosecute us.

SO: What makes 1970 such an important turning point?

PP: Sean Bourke, the main person who broke Blake out, wrote a book in 1970 called *The Springing of George Blake* using pseudonyms for Michael and myself. He described everything about us. A boy scout could have worked who we were.

SO: What do you think the outcome of the court case is going to be?

PP: Sometimes I dream about it. I get this idea that we can tell the jury what we did and they'll say 'Oh yeah, we agree with that - that was great'. But being realistic, every attempt we make to tell people what we did and why we did it, the judge is going to tell us to shut up. I think we will be found guilty. What I



Wormwood Scrubs: 'I can't see anyone would prefer to see Blake rotting in gaol'

think really gets up their noses is that we've written a book about it.

SO: What has emerged from your book and has now come to the forefront in this case is your links with dissident movements in Eastern Europe. What are your links with these movements, and how do you see the ironies connected to that?

PP: When I worked with Bertrand Russell, he used to send off letters to Khrushchev appealing on behalf of somebody who had been sentenced to hard labour. He would get these letters back from Khrushchev saying 'I can't work out why you've taken up the case of this man. He's a sexual pervert...', or a speculator. They were never anything else. Always perverts and speculators. But because they held Russell in such high regard we must have been successful in getting 20 or 30 people released.

At the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Michael and I were involved in demonstrations here but also in Prague, Moscow and throughout the world. We then became involved in smuggling pamphlets into eastern Europe. Many of people who are now in power in Czechoslovakia, like Havel, were members of the groups we were smuggling to.

SO: These are people are like character references. They're now in power and you are potentially going to be put in prison.

PP: I'm not complaining about that - we knew what we were doing.

SO: Do you think with the change of political culture in the East that spying will end?

PP: I would hope it would. But it's so ingrained in society, I can't think of many

people in English public life who weren't MI5 or MI6 agents during the war. Look at all the television people and writers - they all seem to have been at it.

SO: The way these people operate is totally undemocratic. Do you see yourselves as taking a stand on this issue?

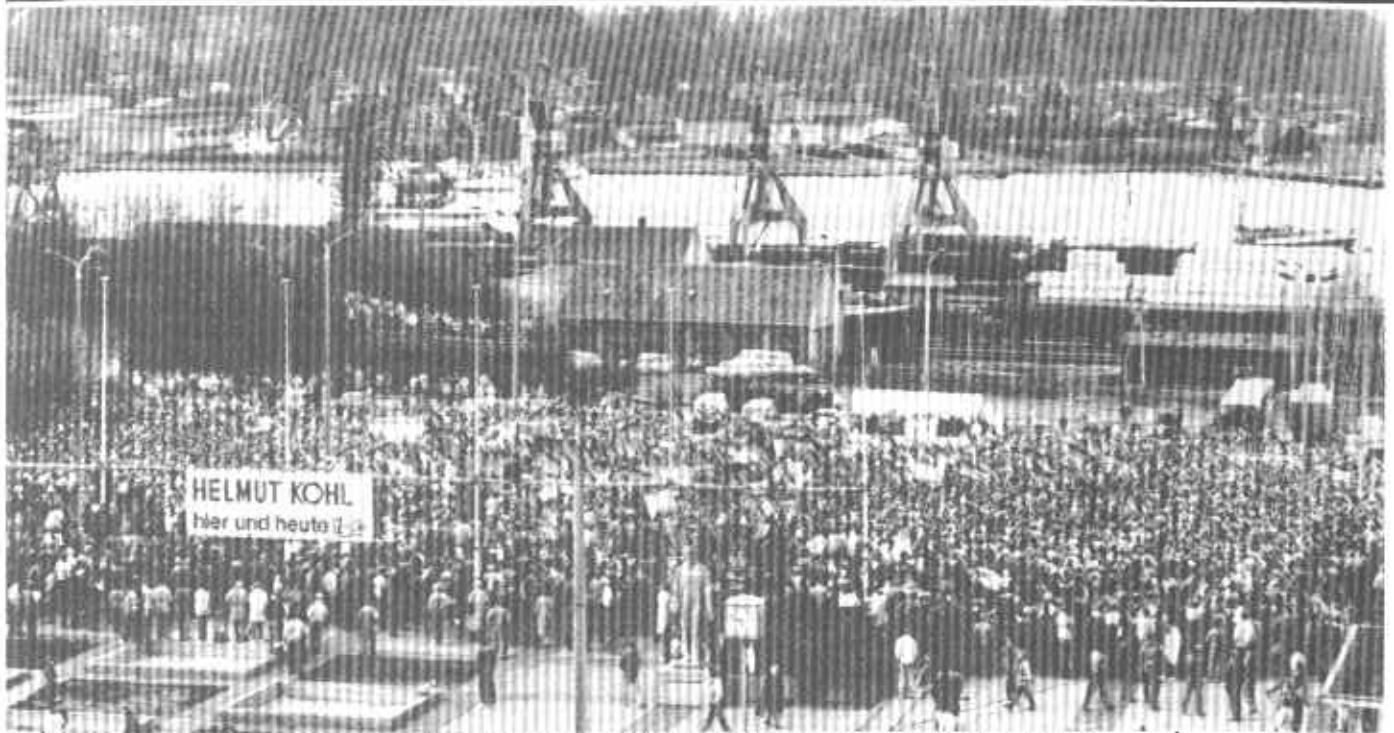
PP: One of the main things we said in our book is that these are totally unelected organisations. There not answerable to anyone. you can't challenge them. You can't print anything about them. You can't quote them on anything.

There's one thing we say in our book - people might think it a little naive - but if only one government would actually stand up and say 'We're getting rid of our security services', then I think you could actually start to get rid of it. In time there must be a campaign to get rid of the whole thing.

SO: Do you have any regrets?

PP: Absolutely none. On a personal level I regret all the hassle of the last couple of years: I'm not looking forward to the idea of going to prison. But the idea of breaking Blake out was absolutely right. I've seen him recently; he has lived a happy life for the last 24 years - I can't see that there would be any one who would prefer to see him rotting in gaol rather than living in Moscow.

Photos from *The Blake Escape* by Pat Pottle and Michael Randle, Harrap, £12.95



Will East German workers wear a change of Helmut? Chancellor Kohl campaigning for restorationist CDU in Rostock

Stalinism's terminal crisis

Why communism is far from finished

By Harry Sloan

The spectre of capitalism hangs over Eastern Europe, but the spirit of class struggle is also being renewed as a new workers' movement has sprung to life.

'Communism' is pronounced dead, not only in the exultant right wing press, but also by the new forces catapulted into power after the collapse of stalinist regimes, and by defeatist elements on the left including journals like *Marxism Today* (which, like the Italian and many other former 'Communist' parties must now surely have to change its name!)

We are lectured on all sides on the view that reform has now triumphed over revolution; the 'market' over the plan; the individual over the collective; yet in Britain all the indicators show a huge popular revulsion against Thatcher and the free market capitalism she epitomises.

Bankrupt East European regimes are urged to 'reform' themselves along capitalist lines, even while the

dire example of Poland stares them in the face, with its programme of privatisation and cap-in-hand appeals to western industrialists running alongside growing poverty, starvation and unemployment for the working class.

Arrogant capitalists sponsor new, immediately corrupt, right wing parties and cynically beckon former oppositionists in East Europe down a road which could transform their countries into dependent sweatshops with the exploited status of underdeveloped Asian, African and Latin American capitalist states. Against the pressure for capitalist restoration there appears little or no coherent mass socialist resistance.

So are the bourgeois ideologists right? Is communism dead?

In the narrow, superficial sense in which the mass media use the term – as a shorthand expression for the bureaucratized, stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe – then, if not quite dead, 'communism' is certainly on its

last legs. It survives only through bureaucratic inertia in Cuba, North Korea and South East Asia, as well as tiny Albania: it required last year's Beijing massacre to keep control in China.

Police regimes

For marxists, however, 'communism' was *never* synonymous with the corrupt, grey, bureaucratic police regimes established by stooge 'Communist Parties' under Stalin's armed might after the defeat of German imperialism in World War Two. Though based on a historically progressive foundation – nationalised and not private ownership of production, after the eradication of the remnants of the old capitalists and landowners, and working to a form of centralised planning rather than linked to a capitalist 'market' – these regimes were never more than grotesque deformed parodies of a workers' state. Though the proletariat was notionally the ruling class, and there was a complete break from im-

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"When would-be marxists lament the exodus of East Germans to West Germany since the Wall was opened, they should also say whether they want to see the Wall rebuilt, or a revived Honecker-style regime resume its repression of the working class"

perialist economic and military alliances, the working class was never allowed to organise itself, and *never* held more than a tokenistic pretence of political power.

To equate the political and economic collapse of these regimes with the defeat of communism is as banal as branding the collapse and defeat of the last Labour government in Britain as the definitive defeat of 'socialism'. It may make handy headlines, but it does little to enlighten the reader on what is actually happening.

Some socialists, however, would disagree. They believe that the working class itself has already suffered a qualitative defeat as a result of the crumbling of stalinist rule, which they one-sidedly characterise as a victory for imperialism. Such notions prevail in sections of the British left which, since the days of the Cold War forced the labour movement to 'take sides' between the USA and USSR, have leaned towards the stalinist political view of the world. We saw evidence of this in 1980-81, in the equivocal or openly hostile line taken by many on the Labour left, including left MPs, and by leaders like Scargill in the unions, towards the struggles of the Polish workers against the bureaucracy, under the banner of Solidarnosc.

The problem with this pessimistic, simplistic view of today's East European events is that it effectively writes off any independent role for the working class, and today flies in the face of most East European workers' aspirations. It assumes that these workers will simply do as they are told by the western bourgeoisie, acting as unwitting dupes, urging on the drive to capitalist restoration.

Such socialists, who draw no encouragement from the ousting of the old repressive regimes are forced to ignore or play down the decisive role of mass working class action in removing their hated stalinist rulers – most significantly in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. They wind up implicitly suggesting that those stalinist regimes – or indeed the conservative Ligachev wing of the Soviet bureaucracy – which have maintained the heaviest repression of the working class, and made least changes in the direction of 'glasnost', are somehow

closer to 'socialism' than those who have fought for workers' self-organisation, and those leaderships which have attempted to accommodate the demands of the mass movement.

This kind of political adaptation to stalinism must logically lead on to questioning the *past* struggles of the working class in Eastern Europe. In Poland, the Solidarnosc government is today leading the bureaucracy's disastrous austerity drive against the working class: does this mean it was

rule that they would prefer to exchange it for a new proletariat?

With no confidence in the working class, these left Jeremiahs join hands with the most optimistic elements of the bourgeoisie, exaggerating the extent to which a barrage of capitalist propaganda, access to glitzy West Berlin shops and a wild fling of consumer spending (until their savings run out) can override the material circumstances of the working class and make them eager advocates of their own exploitation.

Few socialists would defend the stalinist view that to defend 'socialism' the masses must be denied democracy and forcibly contained in a 'workers' paradise'. A socialism imposed on the masses is not socialism at all. Yet still some on the left are led inexorably towards a crude 'campist' view, seeing the world divided into just two counterposed 'blocs' – imperialism on the one hand and anti-imperialists (including the stalinist regimes) on the other.

From this standpoint, any weakening of the stalinist bureaucracy – for whatever reason – is seen as a weakening of the anti-imperialist struggle. This approach not only excludes any independent role for the working class in the west or (especially) the east, but also ignores the squalid history of stalinist political sabotage of anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles from the 1930s to the present day.

The logic of such an approach is to reject the Trotskyist position of fighting for a working class-led *political revolution* that would overthrow the bureaucracies and replace them with organs of proletarian power – since there have never been circumstances in which this could occur without a profound political upheaval which could be seen as a weakening of the 'anti-imperialist' camp; and offering at least a temporary advantage to pro-imperialist and restorationist elements.

Yet for marxists the key issue is the liberation of the working class, and the extent to which struggles mobilise the workers, enabling them to learn politically in mass action. Such a dynamic threatens not only stalinist rule, but also the rule of



Demanding democracy in Moscow

wrong to support the millions of Polish workers who ten years ago defied repression and fought under the Solidarnosc banner to throw off the yoke of bureaucratic rule? Should we turn our heads against some of today's workers' struggles because their leaders, too, may later move to the right?

Obviously all marxists would wish that the mass movements in Eastern Europe were headed by revolutionary socialists: but it does not follow that because they are not, we should fall into the trap of implicitly prettifying the old stalinist regimes. When would-be marxists lament the exodus of East Germans to West Germany since the Wall was opened, or complain at the pace at which the GDR – stripped of its police-state rigidity – is collapsing politically into the arms of Helmut Kohl, they should also say whether they want to see the Wall rebuilt, or a revived Honecker-style regime resume its repression of the working class. Perhaps some socialists are so disappointed at the ideologically imperfect working class created by four decades of stalinist

capitalism: the indecent haste of the West German bourgeoisie to speed through unification is motivated at least in part by the anxiety to head off any further radicalisation and the possibility of a new, mass, democratic socialist current emerging among German workers.

Rolling backwards?

If we cast aside the hype, and ignore the knee-jerk responses, however, there is still a problem to be answered. It is clear that even though an *immediate*, full-scale restoration of capitalism is not feasible throughout Eastern Europe, the capitalists *are* setting their sights on driving much deeper private inroads into the nationalised economies. They want to exploit a vast pool of well-educated yet cheap labour, and to maximise the market for consumer goods. In a more global sense, the imperialist bourgeoisie is also hoping to demolish the Warsaw Pact, leaving NATO powers ascendant in Europe.

As 'Communist' parties change names, ditch leaders, drop programmes, lose members by the thousand and face virtual extinction at the polls, and as yesterday's monolithic 'workers' states' urge in the multinationals, it certainly does appear that the wheel of history is rolling backwards. Do these developments suggest that *communism itself*, as a political objective, a historic goal of the workers' movement, is now really finished, with its partially completed elements beginning to unravel? Should all marxists ape *Marxism Today*, abandon any socialist pretensions, and raise a new flag as a reformist current within capitalism?

No. The very fact that some socialists have such a rosy view of the 'popularity' of capitalism reflects their remoteness from the problems (and political views) of large sections of the working class. With a third of the British population existing at or below the poverty line, an ever-widening gap between rich and poor, and rampant problems of homelessness, the idea that the capitalist system is more acceptable now than it was 100 years ago is a middle class delusion. This is even more the case if we consider the plight of workers and peasants super-exploited by multinational corporations and domestic capitalists in the so-called 'third world'.

Communism as a historic objective – the struggle to put an end to hunger and material want, to exploitation, to the threat of war, and to national, racial and sexual oppression,

has not been superseded any more than the class struggle has come to a halt. Marxism – properly understood as the science of class struggle – and revolutionary politics, remain valid so long as revolution remains the only solution ever to have succeeded in breaking the grip of capitalism and imperialism.

Expanding the productive forces

Nothing in the recent East European events has questioned the basic marxist proposition that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles". Capitalism developed as the most simplified expression of these class struggles, in which the propertyless proletariat, owning nothing other than its labour power, finds itself exploited by the bourgeoisie, in whose hands are the privately-owned means of production.

Marx and Engels argued that such a system contained huge contradictions – among which is a dynamic which forces the capitalists to continuously develop the productive forces in pursuit of competitive advantage and super profits. The *Communist Manifesto* might almost be written about Thatcherism when it declares that:

"Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify...."

"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries



have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations ...".

(*Communist Manifesto*)

As the productive forces advance and expand, their potential to create commodities comes into conflict with the quest for profit – the limitations of the market, restrictions of the nation-state and small enterprise. Lenin went beyond Marx to develop an analysis of the drive to monopoly, to multi-national finance, and the dominance of the banks and finance houses: he defined the period since the turn of the century as the historical epoch of *imperialism*. This would be a period of wars and revolutions, in which imperialist powers contested between themselves for markets and supplies of cheap raw materials and labour power. In the imperialist epoch, the 'highest stage of capitalism', capitalist relations of production begin to act as a *fetter* rather than a stimulus to the means of production.

Since then we have seen this prognosis subjected to the test of history – and pass. Imperialism has generated

"With a third of the British population below the poverty line, a widening gap between rich and poor, and rampant problems of homelessness, the idea that the capitalist system is more acceptable now is a middle class delusion"

"The lowest stage of Communism", to employ the term of Marx, begins at that level to which the most advanced capitalism has drawn near. . . . So long as even a modest 'Ford' remains the privilege of a minority, there survive all the relations and customs proper to a bourgeois society." (Revolution Betrayed)

wars a-plenty: and yet revolution in the USSR and subsequently in China have shown the huge economic advances that can be triggered even in backward economies once the constraints of capitalism are removed. The social overturns of the old, bankrupt bourgeoisies of Eastern Europe also paved the way for the working class to make social gains in terms of jobs, housing, education and welfare provisions that would never have been conceded under capitalism.

However the contradictory aspect of this development has been the emergence in the USSR of a parasitic bureaucracy (replicated in subsequent stalinist regimes): this represents the antithesis of a dynamic development of the productive forces. With the working class politically gagged and excluded from control or management of industry, and power in the hands of a conservative, corrupt bureaucracy, conditions were created for stagnation.

This, combined with the economic isolation of the Soviet and later stalinist bureaucracies from the technological developments in the west, made it inevitable that the initially primitive economies would fall ever further behind, especially in the area of most rapid technological change – the production of consumer goods.

In analysing the bureaucratisation of the USSR, Leon Trotsky in 1935 wrote his incisive analysis *Revolution Betrayed*, which today repays fresh attention as an explanation of developments in Eastern Europe. Rejecting any idealist attempt to blame the growth of bureaucracy simply on bad ideas or bad individuals, he pointed first and foremost to the *material* base, the USSR's economic backwardness and isolation, and the weakness of the Communist cadre as a result of the prolonged wars of intervention and civil war. From this he spelled out the inevitability of a resurgence not only of bureaucracy, but of bourgeois forms, norms and ideology:

"Two years before the Communist Manifesto, young Marx wrote: 'A development of the productive forces is the absolutely necessary practical premise [of Communism] because without it want is generalised, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old crap must revive'. This thought Marx never directly developed, and for no accidental reason: he never foresaw a proletarian

revolution in a backward country. Lenin also never dwelt upon it, and this too was not accidental. He did not foresee so prolonged an isolation of the Soviet state. Nevertheless the citation ... provides an indispensable theoretical key to the wholly concrete difficulties and sicknesses of the Soviet regime. On the historic basis of destitution, aggravated by the destructions of the imperialist and civil wars, the 'struggle for individual existence' not only did not disappear the day after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, and not only did not abate in the succeeding years, but, on the contrary, assumed at times an unheard-of ferocity. ...

(*Revolution Betrayed*, New Park Edition, pp 56-58)

Trotsky was firm in stressing the huge economic advances that had been made since the revolution, but



fought bitterly against the efforts of the stalinists to characterise the 1930s USSR as 'socialist':

"'Is it not monstrous?' – we wrote in March 1932. 'The country cannot get out of a famine of goods. There is a stoppage of supplies at every step. Children lack milk. But the official oracles announce "The country has entered into the period of socialism!" Would it be possible more viciously to compromise the name of socialism?'"

Echoing Lenin, Trotsky went further, and (in words which also have a contemporary relevance to discussions on Nicaragua) branded the bureaucratised Soviet state of the day as a 'bourgeois state' though without a bourgeoisie!

"Marx wrote in 1875: 'Bourgeois law ... is inevitable in the first phase of the communist society, in that form in which it issues after long labour

pains from capitalist society. Law can never be higher than the economic structure and the cultural development of society conditioned by that structure.

"In explaining these remarkable lines, Lenin adds: 'Bourgeois law in relation to the distribution of the objects of consumption assumes of course, inevitably a *bourgeois state*, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of compelling observance of its norms. It follows (we are still quoting Lenin) that under Communism not only will bourgeois law survive for a certain time, but also even a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie!' ...

"Insofar as the state which assumes the task of socialist transformation is compelled to defend inequality – that is, the material privileges of a minority – by methods of compulsion, insofar does it also remain a 'bourgeois' state, even though without a bourgeoisie. These words contain neither praise nor blame; they merely name things with their real names."

Along with the bourgeois state, the struggle for necessities and the inequalities, stalinism turned back on almost every issue – especially the oppression of women, youth, and national minorities – to bourgeois ideology: all this is traced through by Trotsky in detail.

A false start in Eastern Europe

As the outcome of a transitional stage of socialist development, in which the supply of useful goods must be not only sufficient to eliminate the daily struggle for necessities, but must also outstrip the economic levels possible under capitalism, communism was always impossible in any single country – let alone an isolated, backward, bureaucratised economy.

All of the problems which Trotsky analysed in the development of bureaucracy in the USSR applied with equal force to the post-war regimes of Eastern Europe, but with an additional handicap: the Bolsheviks had at least begun their effort at socialist construction with a genuinely revolutionary party at the head of a proletarian revolution which galvanised mass mobilisation against the class enemy. In Eastern Europe these elements were almost entirely lacking: the 'Communist Parties' were hopelessly

bureaucratised and politically degenerate from the very outset, and Stalin's Red Army had repressed the spontaneous upsurges of the working class after the fall of Hitler.

The new regimes that were imposed on the 'buffer' states were ruthlessly purged of any elements that might display political independence. In the nationalised but chaotically disorganised economies, Stalin had plundered most industrial plant of any value as 'reparations'. From this grim material starting point there was never any prospect of an advance beyond the limited progress achieved by the USSR.

As in the Soviet Union, the failure to end the struggle for necessities led to a revival of the 'old crap'. Queues, shortages and stunted economic development lagging way behind the advanced capitalist countries ran alongside grotesque bureaucratic privileges and corruption among the Party elite. The contradictions between such evident inequality and the 'official' marxist ideology could only be preserved through intensified police repression and the imposition of a political monopoly for the 'Communist' parties. And a bureaucracy whose stultifying conservatism and ossified incompetence crippled any potential for development of a properly planned economy turned increasingly to deals with capitalism as a means to secure access to more modern technology and consumer goods.

There was never any prospect that these hideous replicas of Stalin's bureaucratised USSR could grow or be peacefully reformed into socialist societies. They were not 'almost' communist regimes, but something qualitatively different, deformed to the extent that a revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy was the only way the nationalised means of production could be unleashed to their full potential by the working class.

The bureaucracy not only acts as an impediment to the proper development of the means of production, but in securing its political monopoly on the levers of power, it deforms every aspect of daily life, from the regime in the factories to the narrow restrictive curricula of schools and universities. The same pressures helped preserve the backward religious superstitions that are now resurfacing, and bourgeois morality, and fostered absurd illusions in western capitalism and bourgeois democracy as part of the popular backlash against all things



Soviet troops move out of Czechoslovakia: a blow to the working class?

seen as 'marxist' and 'communist' by association with the regime.

As an obstacle to the development of the productive forces, the bureaucracy identified itself long ago as a *reactionary* historic force that had to be removed. For decades marxists have argued that this is the historic task of the *working class* in the process of political revolution: but the fact that the stalinists have proved less able than the capitalists to develop the productive forces has rendered their regimes vulnerable to capitalist restoration. Now we see elements of the old regime openly switching sides, leading the moves for privatisation and restoration, in the hopes of preserving some of their power and privileges.

These developments do not prove the obsolescence of communism so much as the gulf between communism and stalinism. Any attempt now by restorationists to drive forward a capitalist development in Eastern Europe must result in an intensification of the class struggle, a renewed drive to exploit the working class and destroy the limited gains it has secured in the post-war years. It will create conditions in which revolutionaries can put forward a programme of class action to combat the multinationals and defend working class living conditions.

Collapse of the Warsaw Pact: a blow to the working class?

Ever since the crisis of stalinist rule spread beyond Poland it has been increasingly obvious that the Warsaw Pact is a dead duck. With Czechoslovakia having negotiated a withdrawal of Soviet troops, East Germany moving swiftly to unifica-

tion with a NATO power, the Romanian regime declaring communism 'dead', and the Hungarian stalinist party having largely dissolved itself, there are few if any Moscow loyalists in Eastern Europe prepared even to try to deliver the type of support theoretically required of them by the Warsaw Pact.

Worse for Gorbachev, the proclaimed independence of Lithuania (and the likelihood of similar moves by Estonia and Latvia), coupled with nationalist revolts in an increasing number of republics within the USSR make the Soviet Union itself less and less convincing as a homogenous military 'superpower'. Lithuania's lead in rejecting the conscription of young men into the Soviet armed forces would certainly be followed by more and more republics in the event of a major war danger: the revolt of Russian women against Gorbachev sending conscripts to quell the recent Azerbaijan uprising made this quite clear.

Does this new situation make communism or the defence of the USSR a hopeless quest? Lenin and Trotsky did not base the defence of the fledgling Soviet workers' state or the strategy of the new Communist International on grandiose military alliances based on the coercion of a Great Power upon neighbouring satellite regimes. They rejected any notion of exporting revolution on the points of bayonets, and recognised that in the last analysis the defence of the Soviet Union depended upon the revolutionary mobilisation of the international working class. Most important of all was to break the isolation of the Russian Revolution by supporting struggles for the overthrow of capitalism in at least one ad-

"For decades marxists have argued that political revolution is the historic task of the working class but the fact that the stalinists have proved less able than the capitalists to develop the productive forces has rendered their regimes vulnerable to capitalist restoration"

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"The notion of a purely military defence of the USSR was reinforced in the post-war period"

vanced country.

Stalin showed no comprehension or sympathy for this policy: instead in 1924 he began to proclaim his alternative, nationalist vision of seeking to build 'socialism in a single country', while coexisting with capitalism on a world scale. Subsequent twists and turns in Stalin's foreign policy did not change his fundamental view that any other revolution had to be subordinate to the 'defence of the USSR'. By the mid 1930s the Popular Front policy had enshrined the notion of a political alliance with 'democratic' sections of the capitalist class, at the expense of discarding any socialist or revolutionary aspirations of the western Communist parties.

In the late 1930s this switched to a policy of alliance with Hitler, as Stalin attempted militarily to safeguard and extend the power of the USSR by invading eastern Poland and Finland. This notion of a purely military defence of the USSR was reinforced in the post-war period with the annexation of the Baltic states, the carve-up of Poland, the Red Army occupation of the East European 'buffer zone', and the general framework of the 'spheres of influence' deals struck with the imperialist powers. The USA's development of nuclear weapons was met by a parallel Soviet military drive to explode ever-more deadly nuclear bombs and missiles; NATO was countered by press-gang East European regimes into the Warsaw Pact - but all the time the disposition of the Kremlin was to *oppose, isolate* and limit working class and anti-imperialist struggles.

While the Warsaw Pact and the vast Soviet armed forces meet the formal requirements of militarily 'defending the USSR' and guaranteeing the borders of Eastern Europe, they are not communism. Marxists defend historic gains not only militarily, but politically: lost in the wash of stalinist bureaucratic/military manoeuvres is the strategic *political* defence of the USSR through the fight for socialist revolution.

As an heir to Stalin (and to Brezhnev, whose collaborationist policy of detente set the stage for the



Privileged, but not a ruling class: a bureaucrat's limo leaves the Kremlin

isolation of the Nicaraguan revolution and of the fighters of El Salvador) Gorbachev inherited a legacy of *counter-revolutionary* foreign policy, together with an economic crisis which has compelled him to shift his tactics. He decided that the arms race had to give way to attempts at achieving a negotiated balance of forces with imperialism: spotting this weakness, imperialism has dug in to force major concessions. Yet while the superpower hype focusses on the top-level talks on warheads and tanks, on the ground the effect of Gorbachev's conciliatory turn has been felt by liberation fighters around the world.

The result has been a predictable each way setback: imperialism has clearly gained the upper hand in the NATO-Warsaw Pact standoff, while, like a union leader who calls off a strike before negotiations, Gorbachev finds his position weakened in his dealings with the White House by the setbacks of betrayed struggles in Central America.

Difficulties and chances

The basic marxist analysis of capitalism and of stalinism has not been refuted but confirmed by recent events.

Regimes portrayed by some as 'state capitalist' have shown in the rapid turnover of leading personnel that they are controlled not by a new, stable ruling class, but by a privileged bureaucratic caste whose unstable power rests not on ownership of property but on their exercise of political control.

Many with stalinist leanings who regarded one or more of the regimes as simply 'workers' states' have been shocked to discover the extent of the corruption at the top and repression at the base, and how wafer-thin was the veneer of popular support for

'marxism' despite 40 years of intensive schooling.

While the sorry failures of the East European economies to deliver adequate consumer goods or to match the pace of western capitalist development spells out the weakness of bureaucratic 'planning', the huge scale of poverty and hunger in the 'third world' and imperialist countries as well as the spread of poverty in Poland confirm that a restoration of capitalism or the 'market' will simply intensify the misery. Those who doubt the need to defend the nationalised economies against privatisation will soon witness all the evidence they need.

As workers in Eastern Europe flex their political and trade union muscles for the first time in several generations, beset by confusion arising from the collapse of the old official orthodoxies, the new phase of class struggle runs alongside the emergence of new combative workers' movements elsewhere. In Brazil a huge trade union movement and the class struggle Workers Party with a mass base of support have been built; in South Africa and South Korea large, dynamic trade union organisations are challenging repressive regimes.

One positive aspect of the chaotic upheavals in Eastern Europe is that these and other new workers' movements can develop with much less political pressure from the stalinist movement - making it more likely that revolutionary currents can be built. There is a new political space opening up for the development of class struggle politics, amid all the dangers and contradictions of the situation.

The defeats inflicted by the masses on stalinism do not automatically lead on to socialism; but neither does any spontaneous mass movement. The challenge is there for the marxist movement - in particular the Trotskyist Fourth International, which has the proudest record of consistent struggle against stalinism and imperialism - to raise high the banner of socialism, internationalism and communism, developing tactics and strategy for the mass struggles and political independence of the working class east and west, north and south.

"like a union leader who calls off a strike before negotiations, Gorbachev finds his position weakened in his dealings with the White House by the setbacks of betrayed struggles in Central America"

Organising the workers in a Soviet union

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK spoke to Soviet trade union activist Oleg Voronin during his speaking tour in Britain raising funds for the SOTSPROF campaign.

What are the origins of SOTSPROF?

SOTSPROF came into existence because in the USSR there are no real trade unions. The official unions are simply part of the state structure and cannot defend their members' interests. Because workers' rebellions continue to take place in the Soviet Union, trade unions are necessary to defend the interests of the workers.

So, 18 months ago three activists from the democratic movement, an academic, Sergei Kramov, an engineer, Lev Volovick, and a worker in a footwear factory, Valerie Karalya came together to form a co-ordinating committee for an independent federation of socialist trade unions - SOTSPROF for short. They managed to get their own bank account and official stamp from the state.

Under the constitution you don't have to register with the state to form a trade union, just with a higher trade union organisation. So once the co-ordinating committee had announced itself as a trade union organisation, it was then able to legalise other independent trade unions around the country. For the first 3-4 months this was all it did.

That's how SOTSPROF was formed, and now we have about 30 organisations and about 60,000 members. The basic growth took place during the miners' strikes last summer. Our activists were involved, helping the miners to formulate demands in all the major regions. SOTSPROF organisations sprang up after the strike in all the key coalfields.

Why was it impossible to reform the official bureaucratic structures?

We tried to do something inside the unions before SOTSPROF was set up, but we found that if workers simply chose new leaders they rapidly became corrupted, or went over to the official leadership - or

that they found themselves up against a brick wall. The leaders of the official unions are not activists but party workers who are not interested in the needs of the membership. It is impossible in practice to reform the leadership.

Are there any divisions in the official unions? Any allies of SOTSPROF?

Amongst the rank and file, yes, amongst the leaders, practically none.

You see no danger of isolating yourselves from these workers?

No, all workers were or are members. Our subs are deducted automatically from our wage packet. mine still are. I don't consider myself an active member - I don't even know where my card is.

Are SOTSPROF members victimised by official unions?

Not directly, but we suffer a blackout of information. There is total silence about our existence - nothing written in the newspapers. When workers ask the union leaders about us, they say we're just a bunch of intellectuals with no connections in the workers movement. Only today I managed to get hold of *Worker's Tribune*, the paper of the official union movement, published 3 days ago, which has a big article about us. Everything that is written there is a lie - they say that our leaders are working to destroy the economy and create chaos. It's inevitable that we will take court action against the newspaper.

Do the workers' committees that have been formed since the miners' strike have any powers over management? Do they have workers' control?

During the strike the workers' committees of the Donbass, the Kusbass and Vorkuta were in effect the only power in the towns. They or-



Soviet workers, like Solidarnosc, must face political issues

ganised distribution of goods, and set up workers' militias under their own control to keep order. They closed down shops selling alcohol and if they found speculators bringing it in they stopped them and smashed the bottles there and then.

Now in the Donbass and Prokopiievsk, there are workers' committees but there is a big struggle between them and the local state apparatus. For example in Karaganda the workers' committee supported the Committee for a Socialist Party, but members of it had to try and hide their identity for fear of repression from the local state authorities. In the mines on the other hand, management are partly in control through the means of leasing - they have leased the mines but we don't support this because the Ministry still takes large chunk of the mine's profit. They do nothing to assist the mine, but still demand a lot of money.

In the miners' committees in Vorkuta they are demanding changes in working conditions. For example in Halmeriu pit they have to work in almost vertical shafts hanging on to a ladder with one hand and digging coal with another. In such conditions it is inevitable that new strikes will break out. They are demanding that shafts be closed down where conditions are particularly bad.

Why did you call it SOTSPROF? Do you see the need for a socialist union linked to or committed to a socialist party?

In SOTSPROF there are many political currents. For example, some of the intellectuals, journalists, and writers are members of the Constitutional Democratic Party - the Cadets. On the other hand there are some members of the Social Democratic

"During the strike the workers' committees of the Donbass, the Kusbass and Vorkuta were in effect the only power in the towns"

association but neither they nor other activists in SOTSPROF see themselves as being a political part of the workers' movement. They have no links between their political organisation and the workers' movement. Only the new Socialist Party sees itself as indivisibly linked with SOTSPROF, working inside it, along with it. We think in that party we most clearly and most exactly express the interests of the workers.

To what extent does SOTSPROF want to build a union movement like in Britain or to what extent a political movement like Solidarnosc?

In the article in *Workers Tribune* I was talking about, there is one part I agree with. The trade union experts say that to build a big independent trade union is inevitably to take up a political struggle like Solidarnosc. Up to that point I agree with him – but then he draws the conclusion that this is why we shouldn't be doing it.

What is SOTSPROF's attitude to the national question, the rights of self-determination and to building organisations in the different republics?

SOTSPROF exists not just in the Russian republic but also in Byelo-Russia, Ukraine, Kazakstan and hopefully, in the near future, in Uzbekistan – though we're conducting negotiations there with mainly Russian-speaking workers.

We relate totally positively to the question of national self-determination. We are fully in favour of maximum political and economic independence of nations. In other words we are in favour of a real confederation of nations within the USSR. But if, like the Baltic states they want complete secession then they should have the right to do so. We have good links with the workers in the Baltic states, especially Lithuania, but we don't invite them to join SOTSPROF because we fully support their right to national independence, on condition that they secure equal rights for all nationalities within the Baltic states – whether Russians, Ukrainians, Byelo-Russians, Poles, Jews, Lithuanians or Estonians.

How do you see the relationship between the market and the plan?

Our policy is against the command economy which has existed and still exists in the Soviet Union and against the unfettered capitalist market. We are for a real synthesis of these things, not a middle way but a way which is neither one thing or the other. We call for democratic planning from below,

not from above as happens at present.

Plans should be formulated at the level of the firm, at the level of the region and at the level of the republic. And within any plan part of production should not go to the state but should enter a real exchange between firms, firms which are collectively owned. The plans should be reworked at a state level, but the state apparatus should be cut to a minimum; at the moment it is enormous. In the hands of the state there should remain strong



powers to regulate such a market. In particular the state should have control of an investment fund, to avoid the problems of a disorganised market.

I should stress that all these measures only work together as a complex – that is workers' self management, collective ownership of the means of production, and democratic planning from below, introduced together. Also in this scheme we include that there should be small private enterprises in agriculture and in some spheres of distribution and production.

What about agriculture?

Even in agriculture we don't foresee all the Kolkhozes and Sovkhozes being broken up. Some of them don't want to be broken up anyway. The greater part of these enterprises will not remain as they are, but those Kolkhozes and Sovkhozes which make a large profit because they operate on the basis of Marx's conceptions of differential land rent will continue. Some of the Sovkhoz and Kolkhoz, admittedly a few, have high labour productivity and these institutions we would not want to get rid of. The rest we must get rid of altogether, by selling them off to those who want the land. The law we need for this reminds me of Abraham Lincoln's Homestead Act. And part of this plan would need a powerful agrarian bank concerned with giving credit to farmers.

The state would be able to regulate agriculture through the Agricultural Bank. They could freeze prices for

several years till things could stand on their own two feet. There will be competition between the sectors in agriculture – one private and the other collective. We've seen that the private farmers will have to come together to market their goods, in other words to form some sort of collectives.

Perestroika seems in terminal crisis. What is SOTSPROF'S attitude to Gorbachev and the government?

We are against the economic policy of the government because they are attempting to bring in a capitalist market which will simply maintain the positions of the ruling groups. We think that the liberal opposition in the government wants the same thing. The only difference between Gorbachev and them is the speed at which they should be moving. We don't want to be just an opposition, we want to be a real left wing alternative.

In Eastern Europe democratic forces are based on the intelligentsia. What relationships should independent unions and workers' movements have to them?

The movements in Eastern Europe are at the moment general democratic movements including different social elements. We fully support them but always understand that in these movements there is a process of differentiation between the new rich elements and the working class.

Will SOTSPROF be contesting the coming elections, and if so can you tell us how it's being organised and what are the key issues?

We are taking part, but the Central Electoral Commission has refused to register SOTSPROF candidates, and we are at the moment conducting a court case against it. Nonetheless many SOTSPROF candidates have been nominated for the elections in their work collectives, in their factories.

Are you running common candidates with the People's Front or having a common platform?

Not in Russia as a whole but in Moscow and Leningrad. A united Peoples Front in Russia no longer exists. It's in a state of decline and degeneration. It's reached its peak and now is falling away. People's Front candidates in Moscow have formed a bloc called Democratic Russia and are standing on that platform. Some of the ideas for their platform came from SOTSPROF. It's a similar situation in Irkutsk, where I'm taking part in a bloc of left democratic forces.

"We are fully in favour of maximum political and economic independence of nations. In other words we are in favour of a real confederation of nations within the USSR"

**Sandinistas prepare for
new round of struggle**

Tough lessons from election defeat

After a decade of economic boycott, a prolonged counter-revolutionary intervention and the militarisation of Central America, the United States has finally got what it always wanted, a political victory over the Sandinistas.

The US pressure, combined with the recent active undermining of the revolution by the Gorbachev leadership, are two of the three key factors which led to the defeat of the FSLN at the polls in February. It is important also to analyse the strategic line followed by the Frente and its implication for our understanding of revolution in imperialist dominated countries. What was the FSLN's revolutionary project, and why has it suffered such a setback?

The victory of the FSLN in 1979 saw the extraordinary mobilisation of the mass organisations amongst almost every conceivable social class and layer outside the dominant Somoza oligarchy. The social base of the revolutionary regime was clearly much broader than simply workers and poor peasants. The political basis of the revolution was also broad, bringing together a series of key democratic demands, the realisation of which were central to national liberation.

First, opposition to the Somoza oligarchy which was bleeding the country dry and was a vicious and brutal dictatorship. Second, the creation of a popular revolutionary government. Third, the redistribution of land – and the national control of fundamental economic sectors – so that all could have a minimum standard of living. Finally, the right to self determination, free from US intervention.

This basic democratic programme held together the broad revolutionary alliance of the people, and obviated the strategic differences within the FSLN. The ideological gel, the politics of Sandinismo, which underpinned the alliance, had the advantage that it could mean all things to all people – and indeed often did. This alliance was anti-oligarchic and democratic in essence rather than anti-capitalist, and it was not clear, despite the rhetoric of some of the Frente leadership, what socialist content the revolution would have.

The FSLN seized power much more rapidly than the majority of the leadership expected. The murder of Pedro Chamorro, Violetta's husband, led to a year long explosion of popular outrage that brought down Somoza. In the vanguard of this process was the FSLN.

As a result the history of Sandinista power is one of responding to a



The contra war brought conscription, economic ruin and loss of life

myriad of events and attempting to move forward under twin pressures: the aspirations of its popular base, and the blockade by US imperialism (which acted in alliance with the internal sabotage of the bourgeoisie). It was in this context that decisions about economic strategy and democratic forms were made and it was in these areas that the Sandinista leadership unwittingly contributed to its own downfall.

Sandinista power and socialist democracy

The democratic project outlined by the FSLN was defined for the most part by its rejection of the stalinist model, insisting on the necessity of a multi-party democracy, and arguing that this was the only option for a genuinely revolutionary government. This was a breath of fresh air which signalled a break from the tradition of the one party state.

But what kind of democracy did the Sandinistas construct? In the enthusiasm of the moment the elections of 1984 were greeted as the realisation of socialist democracy. Yet, on reflection, the FSLN did not take the opportunity to build a genuine socialist democracy but instituted a liberal democratic system of rule.

Although there was genuine consultation with mass organisations over pertinent issues, the legislative and executive functions were installed in a body which was elected once every six years. This is not socialist democracy. Such elections may have a role in a socialist democracy, but the lengthy time span between each election, and the separation of the people from decision making power creates forms that can only be subsidiary to real political and economic control by the masses.

An alternative was available. The creation of a national assembly based on the mass organisations of women, peasants, small farmers, artisans, youth, indigenous people and workers, alongside the election of

“The victory of the FSLN in 1979 saw the extraordinary mobilisation of the mass organisations amongst almost every conceivable social class and layer outside the Somoza oligarchy”

local barrio committees – all with the potential to be recalled, would have been far more democratic. It would have represented the socio-economic unities and contradictions that existed and have been a direct link between the mass base of the revolution and the leadership. The Council of State and the bodies represented on it were an embryonic form of such a structure.

The Sandinistas believed that the ideological hegemony they had achieved through leading the revolution made it inconceivable they would lose the election. 'It is not possible' was often the reply when this was raised.

The election itself highlighted two other facts. All the mass organisations had become top-down organisations that were used to implement Sandinista policy. They had stopped being vehicles for the expression of mass politics. Had this not been the case the Sandinistas would have been aware of the threat to their political control.

Secondly, although Nicaragua is and was not a 'one party state' it was (and still is, for the moment) a 'one party state machine'. Almost every official, every administrator in a key position, every organiser of the police and army is a member of the FSLN. Confirmation of this was there for all to see from the beginning; the 'Sandinista Army', 'Sandinista Police' and the 'Sandinista Defence Committees' (CDSs).

This domination of the state machinery by the FSLN rather than by the workers, peasants and the oppressed, alongside the declining role of the CDSs, the liberal democratic electoral system, and the unaccountable nature of state bodies, allowed the leadership of the FSLN and its cadre to become separated from the people. The mass involvement essential to socialist democracy did not exist. Thus when mass dissatisfaction began to blow up into a political storm the FSLN neither saw nor heard it coming until it was too late.

Economic democracy

The eye of the storm was the economy. The key factors in the economic situation were the cost of the contra war, which took up over half of government expenditure for eight years, the economic blockade, and the pathetic amount of aid that the USSR gave to the people of Nicaragua.

However, at the same time the question of economic democracy was crucial to ensure that the leadership remained in contact with the base. A system of workers' control of production, a necessary step towards full socialisation and workers' management, was absent. Also, those who created the wealth should have the final say in its distribution. In reality the workers and peasants had very little say in how the economy was run.

In the early period of the revolution the peasantry instinctively outlined a mass strategy for social transformation. The Sandinistas were very reticent about carrying out a full scale land reform, but the mass mobilisations of the landless and the poor peasants increased the tempo in the agrarian revolution.

This struggle from below was necessary because the economic strategy pursued by the Frente was based on state-centred accumulation of the surpluses created by the cotton, coffee and cattle agro-export sector. It was hoped that by using these advanced centres of production the hard currency earned could be utilised by the state to develop and diversify the economy.

However, these sectors were in the hands of the non-Somoza bourgeoisie. The FSLN did not want to disrupt production and had a strategy that was relied on a long term mixed economy and a de facto alliance with the 'patriotic bourgeoisie'. This alliance was sealed at the cost of diluting the revolutionary process. The democratic revolution was not completed in respect of the land – there are still tens of thousands of landless peasants in Nicaragua ten years after the 'victory of the people'.

The concessions made to the bourgeoisie were themselves undermined since the economy deteriorated as the price of cotton plummeted, coffee production declined, and economic incentives to produce lessened. Still refusing to attack the agro-export bourgeoisie, the FSLN then slashed the living standards of its own supporters in an austerity programme which was IMF-like in magnitude. It was at this point that the absence of socialist democracy and the parliamentary nature of the National Assembly became a danger to the revolution.

For many Nicaraguans outside the FSLN, the apparent attack on the democratic gains of the revolution in the economic field and the lack of any forms of

popular control lead to a genuine frustration in a situation of economic catastrophe and continuing war. Denied any meaningful decision-making role in the economic and political programme of the FSLN, and having suffered 50,000 dead in a war which required conscription, whilst the rich continued unscathed, it is not surprising that given only one opportunity to vote every six years a section of the masses, probably the most unorganised sector, voted for an alliance of parties promising peace and dollars rather than further economic chaos and war.

Thus, over and above the US blockade and the impact of the war, it was the failure of the FSLN to complete the democratic revolution that opened the way to the victory of UNO last February. It is a bitter fact that only a small minority of the large farmers, those owning 200 to 500 hectares, in whom the Frente invested so much, voted for the FSLN. Yet the continued vitality of these layers was the seedbed for the reorganisation of the enemy within, and the counter-revolutionary offensive that resulted in the election victory for UNO, an alliance supported by the contras.

Had they broken up the landholdings of the bourgeoisie, the FSLN would have been able to complete the democratic revolution in the countryside. This would have meant a fundamental re-organisation of the economy to a degree that would have forced a transition to a self-managed socialist economy. This would no doubt have been somewhat chaotic given the geographical position and the small size of the working class in Nicaragua, but it would have created a mass peasantry totally loyal to the Frente Sandinista.

It would have also allowed the government to direct investment towards small commodity production for the countryside so that an organic economic relationship between town and country could have been developed. This would have given real content to the political worker-peasant alliance that the Frente supported at the beginning of the revolution.

Of course, such a radical programme would have heightened the



UNO banners – subsidised by US dollars

"The domination of the state machinery by the FSLN rather than by the workers, peasants and the oppressed, alongside the declining role of the CDSs... allowed the leadership of the FSLN and its cadre to become separated from the people"



Sandinista support in the heyday of the revolution: the FSLN leadership became separated from the people

likelihood of a generalised Central American war; but it is a fact that there has never been a socialist revolution that imperialism has not tried to prevent or overthrow by force of arms. This threat of war should not be allowed to place a strategic brake on the transition to socialism since, as Nicaragua in contrast to Cuba shows, equivocation or ambiguity only gives imperialism the encouragement to demand more concessions until there are no more concessions left to make.

Results

Ten years of Sandinista power indicate that far from the revolution being socialist in character, it is, as Carlos Vilas put it some time ago, 'a popular, agrarian, and national liberation revolution' in which the FSLN viewed the 'primary contradiction' as between the Nicaraguan nation and imperialism.

Within this perspective the struggle between classes is a subordinate contradiction and the reproduction of capitalist social relations was not viewed as a problem in itself by the majority of the Frente. The leadership constantly stressed that the 'patriotic bourgeoisie' was an asset as long as it produced without political power. This, of course, was impossible and the Sandinistas have paid a high price for such an illusion. Not all within the Frente shared such a position; but those who did not were rapidly marginalised in the stampede for national unity in the face of imperialist aggression.

The experience of Sandinista rule has confirmed one basic marxist tenet: it has shown that in imperialist-dominated countries it is only possible to resolve the basic democratic questions through the 'growing over' of the democratic revolution into a socialist one. Such a growing over demands a class war to the finish against the comprador bourgeoisie and the big landowners, in order to win to the side of the revolution all the middle and unorganised layers. The need to break with the strategy of a mixed economy is not just an economic question, but primarily a political one. Only by eliminating the big landowners and capitalists can the basic aspirations of the poor peasants be met, and therefore their support for the revolution cemented; and only if exploitation and profiteering has been suppressed can the sacrifices of the masses be felt as an acceptable burden. It is only possible to pursue such a class war through the participation and power of the workers and peasants in all areas of political and economic life. It was this that the FSLN's political and economic strategy would not permit.

Prospects

On the day after the election, UNO called a victory rally at which

only 300 people appeared. On the same day the FSLN called a meeting to discuss what to do next: 50,000 participated. An irony of the election result is that many of those who made the difference to the result were those casting a protest vote, not expecting UNO to win: many probably participated in the huge Sandinista rallies prior to the election.

It is inconceivable that the UNO alliance will hold together for a period of more than six months to a year. Chamorro's inability to put together a government that reflects all sectors of UNO – from the contras to the stalinist Socialist Party of Nicaragua – will soon deprive her of a coherent majority within the national assembly.

Confronted by a Sandinista Army, Sandinista Police, a bloc of 42 percent of Sandinistas in the assembly, and an inability to reform the constitution because UNO do not have enough seats, Chamorro will be revealed as the puppet of the US that she is. Moreover, it is not at all certain that the US dollars that some Nicaraguans voted for will come flooding in.

In such a situation, with the old landowners returning to reclaim their land and what remains of the democratic gains of the revolution under threat, it is likely that a further period of intense class struggle will occur. The masses will once again look to the FSLN to lead their struggle against the returning contras and the bourgeoisie.

The question which has yet to be answered is how will the Sandinistas respond to this challenge? The FSLN is now in the midst of a mass discussion about where to go next. In this discussion three tendencies are apparent. The right argues that the result should be accepted, UNO allowed to govern, and that the Frente should await the next elections. The centre is arguing for an organised retreat, rebuilding the mass organisations and defence of the army.

The line of the third tendency, the left wing of the FSLN, is to allow Chamorro to be president but to defend the gains of the revolution and the army and to prepare for an armed struggle. This tendency is closest to the most uncompromising advice of Sandino: 'Only the Workers and Peasants will go all the way'.

This general perspective should be supported by all those who wish to see a reversal in the balance of forces in Nicaragua. It is only through a uncompromising line of class struggle that the task of national liberation, a task the FSLN set itself a quarter of a century ago, will be realised and the democratic revolution brought to its conclusion by a transition to socialism.

Will McMahon

Breakthrough for Brazil's Workers Party



The result of the presidential elections in Brazil at the end of last year – the first for 29 years – was a spectacular breakthrough for the Workers Party (PT).

31 million votes (38%) were cast for for Luis Inacio da Silva, known as Lula, the candidate of the PT, making it a close contest with Collor de Mello, who was elected president with 35 million votes (43%). In the south east of the country – the key economic centre of the country, where almost half the voters are concentrated – Collor's margin of victory over Lula was only 0.8%.

The campaign of the PT generated a powerful enthusiasm amongst the working class and popular movements, and the whole of the Brazilian left joined the Popular Front (FBP) to support Lula in the second round. The PT continues to consolidate its bases of support and prepare the resistance against Collor's austerity offensive (last year inflation rose to 1,700% and a foreign debt of \$110 billion!).

Here, Dave Packer talks to Tatau Godinho who is a leading militant of the PT and a member of its Sao Paulo State executive. She is also a member of the National Womens' Secretariat and a supporter of the Socialist Democracy tendency.

DP: Could you describe some of the main features of the political situation in Brazil today?

PT: Since 1982-'84 we have seen a bourgeois political transition from the period of dictatorship. The attempt to stabilise the bourgeois government was led by an alliance of two major bourgeois parties. These have been

absolutely discredited. Their commitment to the bourgeois transition, and their responsibility for the crisis led to last year's election campaign in which no bourgeois party wanted to be identified with the federal government. The president himself didn't support any candidate. None of the bourgeois parties wanted to be seen as responsible for the period of what they called 'democratic transition'.

The situation gave room for the emergence of a candidate, (Fernando) Collor, who had been a part of the transition but had been able to distance himself from it. The situation was very much polarised during the elections, not only politically, but socially.

It was the first direct presidential election for thirty years and people's expectations of change were very deep. That is one of the most important reasons why we ended up with two candidates, Lula and Collor, who were very much opposed in terms of political perspectives. It was a very polarised campaign at the end and the other candidates were marginalised in the first round.

DP: What is your balance sheet of the elections?

PT: The two main bourgeois parties were absolutely discredited in the eyes of the population, and received a very small number of votes. Their candidates were not real options despite the fact that these had been very strong parties. The PMDB and the PFL, which had politically supported the bourgeois transition had a ridiculous result in the elections – that's a very important outcome.

The second thing is that because the elections were so polarised, the votes for the PT came from the most organised sectors of society, the organised workers and the social movements.

The votes for Collor were from the bour-

geoisie, sections of the petit-bourgeoisie, or from the unorganised layers – the unemployed and so on, who looked to him as some one who could solve their problems. This was different from Lula, who had the support of people coming from struggles, the working class and the social movements. The very possibility of having Lula as president was as the result of those struggles.

In this situation Collor appeared as an independent candidate. He had huge support from the mass media – the largest television company in Brazil openly supported him – and he campaigned with a moralism which could enter the consciousness of the unorganised, posing as a saviour who was going to solve problems without people having to struggle for it.

In terms of the PT we have three major results. The first is the large vote over the whole country. The PT is now a national party. In some areas where the PT previously did not have had very good results, the results were amazing. Secondly, the PT is undoubtedly the main opposition to the government, even though it is a struggle to keep this hegemony – it is not something that is just given. The party is seen in the eyes of the masses as the possible alternative who will lead the fight against the policy of austerity, privatisation and the IMF policies that Collor will introduce at the economic level. Thirdly, getting so close to victory challenged the party to deepen its internal discussions – it became clear that some of the political positions were not sufficient.

DP: Would it have been a problem if the PT had won at this stage?

PT: Well, I couldn't say it wouldn't be a problem – there would be lots of problems. What it would have done is make a strong change in the balance and relationship of forces in favour of the workers and the popular movements in Brazil. Of course it would be an open situation as to how it would develop. But the ideas the party had, and worked for, were written in the programme of the party.

A PT government – what we would call a popular democratic government – would not be a government to run capitalism or the bourgeois state. It was clear there would be a confrontation – a period of instability. It would open up struggles – the outcome of which we cannot predict.

Then we come to the problems. Although the party has a large influence in Brazilian society – a huge identification with the masses and the working classes – it is still not structured to give all the necessary answers even in terms of defending a Lula government; organising the population, organising the workers and the movements to support and defend the existence of a government.

DP: Would there have been the threat of a military coup?

PT: That could be a possibility. We don't think it is the most probable. The bourgeoisie has already been discussing the changes in the political situation. One solution is to reduce the powers of the president by introducing a parliamentary system. That doesn't mean that a military coup is impossible, it is always a possibility for the bourgeoisie to solve a situation it can not control. But because of the political situation now, the bourgeoisie would look for other solutions to keep control, like weakening the federal government.

DP: Wouldn't the victory of Lula on a radical programme create a situation of confrontation with the bourgeoisie and even promote a pre-revolutionary crisis?

PT: That is a possible outcome. Lula's victory would mean a period of big confrontations and struggles, with attacks from the bourgeoisie on Lula's government, trying not to let it either rule the country or develop the programme that the PT has defended during the election. The possibility of this becoming a pre-revolutionary situation depends very much on the workers' and popular movements response to support Lula's government. Otherwise we would have defeat in a very short period of time. Even though we have not



Mass rally of Brazilian CUT union confederation

posed it like that, the bourgeoisie was very frightened of the prospects of a Lula government.

DP: The PT presents itself as a socialist party, and every one talks about socialism in the PT, but has there been any thorough-going discussion about a revolutionary strategy and programme? For example, has the question of workers' self-defence and workers' control been discussed?

PT: The PT has from the very beginning identified itself with fighting for socialism in a clear way, saying that it has to overthrow capitalism. Secondly, it is identified with the concept of democratic socialism, and that is very important. The fight for socialism will require a confrontation with the bourgeoisie. Our socialist project is a democratic one. And thirdly – which is not very clear – is the strategy: how to build the road to socialism in Brazil. This discussion has had a very positive evolution in the party. In the fifth national convention of the PT a document was carried which is the basis of a popular and democratic government, its programme and strategy. It begins to foresee how to fight for socialism – what are the possible alliances, and which are the key sectors in terms of social alliances, not so much party alliances.

Some specific discussions, like workers' self-defence have not been tackled. In June we are going to have the national convention of the PT in which one of the central themes of discussion is going to be to deepen the discussion on the strategy for socialism in Brazil.

DP: How does the Socialist Democracy Current, of which you are a part, participate inside the PT and influence its evolution?

PT: Socialist Democracy is a current which has existed in the PT since the very beginning of the party. One of our most important posi-

tions is our idea of building a revolutionary party in Brazil through building the PT itself as a revolutionary party. So in this sense we are a part of the party, a current in the party that tries to work in the areas and influence the debates, and help – from our point of view – the development of the party. That means not just being a part of it in terms of leadership or rank and file, but also taking responsibility alongside other currents for the political development of the party.

One of the important things from our point of view is to deepen the transition of the PT to a revolutionary party. This has helped us to have a coherent position in our work inside the party – not being sectarian towards the difficulties of development, because we see them as our difficulties too.

Very clearly the PT is the road to becoming a revolutionary party in Brazil and we think it has been a very positive development. On the other hand with the strength and the PT being so rooted in the working class and the social movements in Brazil, it is also one of best possibilities to build mass revolutionary parties worldwide.

We are in a very privileged position with our political identification with the Fourth International. It is one of the important things in our political position and we don't consider it to be contradictory to being a current in the PT.

DP: Do you have any problems being an organised tendency?

PT: Our tendency is fully respected. There have been problems in terms of internal democracy of the party and how to build a really democratic party. But its democracy is very good, very broad. The PT has never been monolithic. Now it is accepted that the democratic internal life involves people or-

ganising as political currents and fighting for their perspective.

DP: Can you organise around your paper *Em Tempo*?

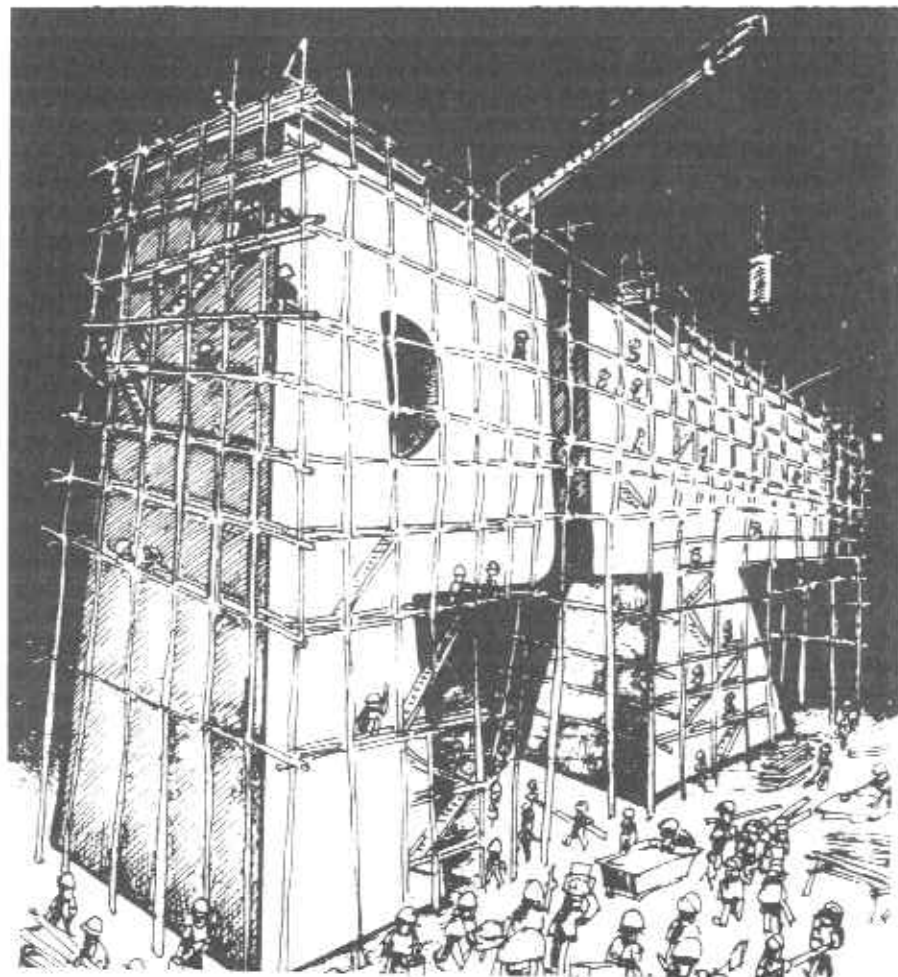
PT: We organise our militants around the paper rather than the membership as a whole. It brings some conflicts because the party does not have official policy on currents inside the party. So it is not always clear. *Em Tempo* is more of discussion journal for politics inside the PT.

DP: What is your attitude to the Lula leadership?

PT: Well we have been working in the leadership of the PT. We have been working mostly for the presidential elections, very much integrated into the leadership, in this sense having normal party relations with the Lula leadership. The position of Lula as a worker, from a very important sector – the metal workers – had a very important identification for the PT as a party related to working class struggles. So it is something important for the party. But it is something that has been developing, in terms of collective leadership; more collective working of the party not centralising on one person.

DP: Could you tell us about the relationship between PT and the Brazilian TUC, the CUT trade union federation?

PT: The CUT organises the most active sectors of the working class – these forces are very much identified with the PT. But the CUT is broader – it involves political currents which are not a part of the PT. The political common ground is quite strong, but the CUT has its own political development in terms of decisions. We do have some political positions



that are quite different – depending on how far a particular discussion has gone either in the CUT or the party. The CUT organises the vast majority of workers in opposition to the government who see the need to organise themselves as workers, apart from the state and from the more bureaucratised sectors of the working class.

DP: What are the affiliation figures of the CUT?

PT: They affiliate syndicates rather than individuals – you're talking in millions but it's difficult to correspond that to militancy.

DP: Can you tell us about the role of women in the PT?

PT: Our current makes working with women a priority in the PT. Until a few years ago, women were in a majority of the rank and file of the party and in the social move-

ments. Unfortunately, the party doesn't always see the importance of this, and women's role in the party needs to be promoted.

DP: Finally, what is the PT's attitude to class independence – what alliances will it make?

PT: The PT has a good position in terms of class independence – building itself as an independent workers' party. But it has always been confronted by the need to develop its hegemony in broader terms and how to deal with class independence in these terms. So the discussion of the popular democratic strategy is to do with social alliances – peasant sectors and social movements which have a very proletarian composition but are not always identified as workers or with the trade union movement. Another important part of it is the relationship to the petty-bourgeois sectors. How much do you try to win them or neutralise them? It has always been clear that specific bourgeois sectors are not a part of this alliance.

In terms of political parties we have attempted to build alliances with the Communist Parties, the Socialist Party, the Greens, and with some sectors of two bourgeois parties – where we could work with them in a united front way, but only in specific situations and with individuals rather than the parties themselves. That has been the policy so far.

Thatcherism in Brazil?

The new Brazilian government of Fernando Collor de Mello has lost no time in announcing a new package of austerity measures, including spending cuts, job losses and privatisation.

Unlike Thatcher Collor argues for 'more government and less state', introducing interventionist policies to tax the richest ten percent, freeze withdrawals from savings accounts worth over \$600, and freeze private bank accounts.

Meanwhile the multinationals are being urged in, import restrictions are being lifted, and the exchange rate will float. State corporations including the giant steel company will be privatised. There will be big increases in prices, with petrol already up 50 percent.

Trade unions have protested at the proposals and their impact on living standards – but there have also been loud squeals from the banks who will be tightly regulated, with new laws threatening up to five years jail for economic infringements.

Reactionaries win three Indian states

The state elections in India have resulted in triumph for the reactionary Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party.

The BJP has now topped its enormous success in last year's national elections by winning control of three important states (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh) as well as winning substantial support in other Indian states.

The general election of last November, which replaced Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister with V.P. Singh, highlighted the frightening rise of communal politics. The chief victims were Muslims, who make up less than ten percent of India. Vicious fighting took place in the state of Bihar, leading to hundreds of deaths. A clear part of the responsibility lies at the door of the Congress Party, which despite its electoral defeat is still led today by Rajiv Gandhi.

The Congress Party is widely credited with having deliberately stirred up the old Hindu-Muslim dispute over the Babri Mosque. The Mosque, constructed 500 years ago on the site of an important Hindu temple, has become a symbolic focus for Hindu chauvinism. There have been dozens of battles over the site, stretching back to the sixteenth century.

Gandhi's Congress Party has tried to escalate this and other latent disputes as a manoeuvre to maintain political support. It was similar cynical behaviour by Rajiv's mother Indira a few years ago which exacerbated the communal conflicts in the Punjab.

Instead of saving its skin, the Congress Party suffered a heavy defeat in November, which has now been reinforced by the state elections. Many Muslims who had traditionally supported the Congress Party defected to the successful opposition alliance, the National Front. But in reality, the hands of the National Front are no cleaner than those of Congress, either in relation to the issue of communalism or on the other main election issue, corruption.

The National Front includes the Hindu chauvinist BJP, along with V.P. Singh's Janata Dal and the two Indian Communist Parties. Singh needs the backing of the left and the newly boosted BJP to keep his Parliamentary majority.

It is an unpleasant fact that communalism has been growing in India over the last few years. As populist communalist forces have grown, so the working class movement has declined. Landlords, religious leaders, business interests and criminal elements have all played the communal card when it suits their interests.

There is a crying need for mass struggle against communalism – but the form that this struggle should take is still not clear. Recent history has shown that periods of heightened class struggle push communalism into the background, but only for it to come creeping back. It is no coincidence that in the Communist-controlled state of West Bengal, communalism has been kept at bay. Secularisation is an important task of the bourgeois democratic revolution which has remained uncompleted in India.

Nevertheless, bourgeois democracy, which was integral to the rise of the national movement, has deep social roots in India: even the BJP accepts in theory the need for secularism. For example, in left-dominated Calcutta, the BJP put forward the slogan 'Equal treatment

for all, privileges for none'. This slogan is designed to agitate against positive discrimination, but in order to be acceptable, the slogan has to take a democratic form.

The BJP also call – again superficially in the name of equality – for the end of the limited degree of autonomy possessed by Kashmir. The actual content of this call is anti-Muslim. It would give Indian Hindus the right to buy land in Kashmir, conflicting with the national identity of Kashmiris and reinforcing the idea of India as a basically Hindu nation.

The popular secessionist uprisings in Muslim Kashmir have been fuelled by the disputes over the Babri Mosque. Prime Minister Singh and his Janata Party will attempt to deal with the uprisings by repression.

The reactionary response of Singh and the Janata Dal to the mobilisations in Kashmir shows that the longer they are in office, the more closely Janata Dal are likely to resemble the Congress Party they defeated. An alliance with the Congress Party or parts of it is on the cards.

Oliver New

More than 100 Kashmiris have been killed and hundreds wounded in the present wave of clashes with the Indian army, which began in January.

Newly-elected Prime Minister sent in 100,000 troops to reinforce the already huge army detachment stationed in Kashmir, and appointed a new governor. In February, the elected government resigned, and the governor declared that Kashmir's legislative assembly would be dissolved.

The reasons for the present crisis are embedded in the sad history of Kashmir, whose people have until now been deprived of their national freedom. 77 percent of Kashmir's 10 million total population are Muslim, 20 percent Hindu. Pakistan claims that with its vast Muslim majority it should be part of Pakistan: India still quotes the 'document of accession' to claim legitimate control over it.

Now the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, headed by Amanullah Khan, is calling for self-determination, refusing to accept any solution imposed by India or Pakistan. Mr Khan has been jailed and tortured in Pakistan, and branded as a Pakistani agent by his opponents in India.

Kashmir has been fought over, invaded, occupied and repressed by successive armies for at least 1600 years, with the last 150 directly involving British imperialism, which supported the brutal Dogra Raj. The British wanted Kashmir to be part of India at independence in 1947: when the Kashmiris resisted, they faced massacres.

Pakistani irregulars and many thousand volunteers entered Kashmir to fight a holy war – a *jihad* – for Islam; freedom fighters established a provisional government of democratic Kashmir: but former Maharajah Hari Singh, under pressure from Pandit Nehru's government in Delhi, signed a declaration acceding to India. In January 1949 a cease-fire was concluded between India and Pakistan, giving India two thirds of Kashmir and Pakistan the rest. 43 years on, India and Pakistan are as far as ever from agreement over Kashmir. While there is little chance of Pakistan risking a war on the issue, India has never been so united as on the repression of the national movement in Kashmir.

Meanwhile Kashmir, called 'paradise on earth' by the great Mughal emperor Jahangir, goes on suffering.

Good Education For All ?

Labour's classless policies
for schools

Education is a vote-loser for the Tories.

A recent opinion poll (*The Guardian* 15-2-90) showed education to be the second most important policy issue, after health. 43% said Labour 'had the best education policies', as against 27% for the Tories.

What are these opinions based on? Some of the myths popularised by the Tory press did not command support. For example, in a recent survey parents did not express particular concern about teaching methods, the curriculum and pupils' behaviour. On the other hand, there was

wide support for some of the key policies in the 1988 Education Act. According to a recent survey of parents (*Times Educational Supplement* 8.12.89), though only just over half had heard of the national curriculum, 9 out of 10 approved. Attainment targets for each age group were approved by 94 percent.

The overriding reason, in spite of this, for the lack of confidence in Tory education policy lies in the real experiences that parents have had of education under Thatcher – above all, experiences of cuts. Crumbling schools, shortages of books, children sent home because there aren't enough teachers, all offer tangible confirmation of the general idea that education is not safe in the Tories' hands, whatever the benefits that City Technology Colleges might provide for the few. (Additional evidence, again contrary to the popular press, is in another survey published in the *TES* (5.5.89) which showed a huge gap between public regard for teachers – among the most highly respected groups in society, third only to doctors and the police – and public perception of the government's regard for teachers – bottom with 4 percent).

For the Tories, who have invested so much political capital in radical education reform, this is a disaster which will not be turned around by the turbulent experiences of the implementation of the 1988 Act in the couple of years before the next election.

However it does not represent any une-



Are they only being educated for 'the market'?

quivocal success for the left. A bedrock of support for comprehensive education, liberal teaching methods and adequate funding provides the basis for resistance to Tory attacks. But it is not enough even to mark out the starting point for a socialist politics of education. This must begin from the understanding that the working class has an interest in education which is fundamentally incompatible with that of capital.

This basic conception is entirely absent from the Labour Party's alternative to Tory education policy. On the contrary, the central theme of *Good education for all?* (GEFA), the education section of the Policy Review document adopted at the 1989 LP conference, is precisely that education for social justice and education for capitalist economic development go hand in hand.

This recalls the rhetoric of the heyday of Labour's educational reformism in the 1960s, when the pools of wasted ability had to be channeled into the 'white heat of the technological revolution'. Twenty-five years later, Wilson's vision has been superseded by the challenge of 1992, but the guiding principle remains the same.

As Neil Kinnock put it, replying to Tony Benn during the Labour Party NEC debate on the Policy Review, the market economy was the system we lived in, and we had to 'make it work more efficiently, more fairly, more successfully in the world market place'. (*Campaign Group News*, May 1989)

This aim is the dominant theme of GEFA. The way that Labour's education proposals are governed by the economic imperative is illustrated clearly in the section headed *The challenge of the millennium*. Far from being the long-awaited socialist millennium, it is the future defined in terms of changes in the workforce to meet the challenge of the Single Market.

There is no mention of any of

the great issues that move young people today, the environment, disarmament, poverty in the underdeveloped countries, human rights, issues of gender and race, empowering the powerless. The notion of education as *emancipatory and liberating* is almost entirely absent from GEFA. There are references to the function of education in 'the establishment of moral values', and to the aim of being able to 'participate fully in a more democratic society', but this is very much a subordinate and token theme in GEFA.

There is no suggestion anywhere in GEFA that the economic imperative might be in contradiction with the quality of people's lives, or with moral values, or other aspects of society's functioning. There is no notion that there might be even a degree of tension between the demands of industrial and commercial profitability and even the modest aim of a fairer society, let alone that social justice may require pupils to be offered a set of educational experiences distinctively different from what exists (that, for example, it may entail a radical reappraisal of 'school knowledge' and of relationships with teachers and institutions). Nowhere is there any suggestion even of a critical approach, let alone one that is based on distinctively socialist, feminist and ecological principles.

It is as though the positive experiences, particularly of antiracist and antisexist teaching, of the 1980s had never taken place. The document, in the section headed 'Multi-racial

education', acknowledges that 'discrimination, based upon class, sex and race, prevent equal access to educational opportunity'. But there are no sections on gender and class.

The only measure proposed on gender in the schools is a broad and balanced national curriculum which will provide 'equal learning opportunities for both boys and girls'. On race, the document says schools must be sensitive to ethnic minority cultural needs and aspirations, with the implication that this will be sufficient to reduce inequality of achievement. An effective challenge to inequality entails seeing class, gender and race in terms of social relationships, not indices of disadvantage, it entails a radical reappraisal of all aspects of schooling, and it entails substantial extra resources.

The absence of the notion of education for emancipation and the explicit acceptance of the interests of capital as the yardstick of education policy places GEFA on the same terrain as Tory education thinking. GEFA distinguishes itself from Tory education policies in claiming to provide *better* answers than the Tories have to the needs of a modernising British capitalism facing the challenge of 1992.

The key contribution that education can make to the task of making British capitalism more competitive is providing a better educated and trained workforce. That requires some egalitarian measures, in order to create a more efficient meritocracy, reducing the obstacles which prevent some competing on equal terms by greater universality of provision: from an expansion of nursery provision, to the abolition of grammar schools, to wider access to higher education.

It also means the renovation of 16-19 education and training, based on the model of the most successful capitalist economy in Europe, West Germany. And it means some limited measures to reduce inequality for working-class, black and female pupils and students. But because it is an egalitarianism that is harnessed to and defined by the interests of capital and *not* radically emancipatory goals, it will actually have very little effect on inequalities which are the product of social relationships of oppression, rooted precisely in the dominance of those same interests.

An indication of the extent to which Labour shares the Tory agenda was given by a joint press conference held in February by Education Secretary MacGregor and opposition spokesperson Jack Straw on the issue of citizenship training. It might be thought that this is one issue on which Labour has something distinctive to say. Yet, according to the *Guardian's* report:

'Mr Straw could be seen wielding a red pen over his speech as he listened to Mr MacGregor telling the conference of the need to train pupils to become the good citizens of tomorrow. He needed to change what he had written because it was so closely in agreement

with the minister.'

The Tories have radically reshaped how school education is controlled, by a combination of centralisation of power to government and devolution of certain powers to governors and parents, at the expense of LEAs. How does the Labour leadership propose to deal with this issue?

GEFA promises a new partnership with LEAs, largely restoring their previous role. The increased powers that have accrued to the DES under the Tories will apparently be largely retained, many of them exercised through a new Education Standards Council. At school level, GEFA speaks of *Parents in partnership*. 'Parents are a cornerstone of a school's success and a pupil's progress'. Labour will give more rights of information and access to parents, more support to parent governors, and encourage LEAs to establish complaints procedures. GEFA is curiously silent on what changes it may make in the Tories' system of Local Management of Schools (LMS).

This is hardly a radical vision of popular democratic involvement in education. Under Tory LMS parents have two key roles. As 'consumers', they can exercise choice in the education market place and thus exert market pressures on the schools. Through governing bodies they can directly influence school policy on certain matters.

Labour's alternative may reduce the impact of the education market, and we welcome that, but it does not replace it with a genuine extension of direct democratic procedures in education. Rights of individual information and involvement by parents in their schools are important, but they need to be complemented by measures that transform governing bodies under LMS into effective instruments of collective local democracy.

There is a need to restore certain powers of planning and provision to Local Education Authorities, but they equally need to be democratised, so that processes of consultation and negotiation are institutionalised and effective. At government level we need, not a government-picked Education Standards Council with no popular roots but a powerful consultative body representative of all the various interest-groups in education.



If you educate your kids right, they could grow up like he did!

GEFA is notably cautious about money. It simply says that 'The Labour Party is committed to increased investment'. Yet even the modest reforms it proposes will require a very large increase in spending. For example, GEFA says that more teachers are needed: classes are too big, teachers don't have enough time to help individual pupils or liaise with parents, pay is too low. 'The result is underachievement in the classroom'.

Again, the document says that its aim is that 'all three and four year olds should have the right to nursery education'. These are vital aims, but no specific commitments are given in the document as to their realisation. Previous experience has repeatedly shown how Labour's promised reforms have been undermined by a failure to make the money available to put them properly into practice, so laying the ground for a subsequent backlash from which the Tories have benefitted.

Discussion of a comprehensive alternative to Labour's policy is currently under way in the Socialist Movement's Education Working Group, in which a number of members of the NUT's Socialist Teachers' Alliance are involved.

The alternative will be finalised at a day-school on 22 September in Nottingham and then fed into the Socialist Movement itself. A resolution on education is also being drafted for Labour Party Conference.

Richard Hatcher

Tory plans create another fine mess

Colleges in crisis

The Thatcherite plan for higher education (HE) is in crisis. A scheme seeking to serve the short term needs of industry and at same time to attract double the present numbers of students, it is intrinsically riven with contradictions.

The aim is to produce a workforce that is compliant, hardworking, and qualified for the immediate needs of industry: all this without the government investing in the longer term needs of education or providing students with financial support.

The Tories themselves are making it impossible to meet their target of 50% increase in student numbers in the next 25 years. They are restricting access and slashing educational funding at a time when there is a demographic shortfall of 18-24 year olds, which puts a premium on attracting and offering easier access to HE for sections who at present make least use of it.

Since 1979 the Tory government has pushed the cost of HE onto students and parents — cutting £36 million in benefits to students between 1983-86. Now with the loans Bill going through the last parliamentary stages, students face the abolition of the full grant and the introduction of top-up loans, and the loss of housing benefit and income support. This is a loss of around £1,300 per year for many students, and that's before your poll tax bill lands on your doorstep or a top-up fee is imposed.

It is ludicrous to claim that this will lead to anything but decreased access, restricting HE to an even narrower group of students than at present.

Even the *Times Higher Education Supplement* stated that "No amount of disingenuous rhetoric about students paying (actually borrowing) their way through college can disguise the true effect of this Bill, which will be to increase dependence and decrease access".

The removal of housing benefit has further implications. It means that study in London becomes virtually impossible — and already applications to London are static compared to a sharp increase in applications to northern colleges. This has led the colleges to a policy of demanding higher grades for entry — which is squeezing out yet more working class students.

The contradictions are clear. The Tories want education to be governed by the market and no state money to assist its long-term development. Yet if colleges go to the wall, or fail to provide choice of courses and quality education, then many students, with no finan-



Architect of chaos: Kenneth Baker

cial support, will vote with their feet, and stay away.

A recent report by the Institute of Manpower Studies states that a dramatic opening of access to HE is required if student numbers are going to double in the next 25 years. "The number of 18 year olds with 'A' Levels must expand by 50%; a further 50% of working class students must gain 'A' Levels; as many women as men must participate and mature students must rise by 50%". It concluded that without a major shift in policy this was unlikely to occur especially with the introduction of loans.

Thatcher faces further problems with the loans scheme. In the face of students and student unions taking action and withdrawing their bank accounts the banks have pulled out of the scheme. And it has been revealed that the scheme won't break even until the year 2050 and will cost £667 million to introduce!

There is another problem. When given a choice, students consistently choose arts and social science courses rather than engineering, even when enticed by the carrot of financial sponsorship. People go to great lengths to self-fund PhDs in English, courses which even with lack of public funding are oversubscribed, whereas PhDs in engineering, with guaranteed funding, go unfilled.

The Tories consistently fail to understand that the only way to increase participation in HE is to make it accessible to all. In the first instance this means providing a living grant

for all 16-19 year olds because the majority of students drop out at this stage. Also funding for mature students on access courses is vital as is the restructuring of the archaic 'A' Level.

All this plus a non-means tested grant with travel allowances instead of our present underfunded scheme is the only way to radically increase student numbers and make education available to all who wish to enter it.

The privatisation of the polytechnics is already resulting in money problems. They are forced to compete and bid for students as commodities — and quality has gone out of the window. It has resulted in taking larger numbers of fee-paying students, especially overseas students paying exorbitant fees, and cutting resources per student.

A materials levy has been introduced for most arts students — in other words a top-up fee. This June the universities are going down the same path and there are serious worries about academic standards being maintained. There are fears of cuts in student representation and the number of courses on offer — also the exploitation of overseas students.

Japanese art at the School of Oriental and African Studies has already been *privatised* — there is no longer access to Japanese art education in this country for ordinary students. Even the big universities such as Oxford and London are in a financial crisis with London expected to levy a £250 top-up fee to all students before the end of the year!

The NUS while trying to fight the government's proposals is itself in crisis. Its leadership has bowed to the philosophy of new realism and has dragged its feet over student demands for mass action. It failed to organise national action when the student radicalisation first demanded it, and only organised a demo in Glasgow and then London when put under enormous pressure.

This year's NUS elections see a real danger if the left does not unite to defeat the right. Cosmo, a Zionist independent with a fake left face stands a chance of winning the presidency if past form of divisions on the hard left is repeated.

Socialists should vote for the left, and transfer to NOLS.

The goal must be a leadership committed to building a mass campaign in defence of free education and against the Tory loans. There is a lot of support out there waiting to be won!

Louise Holloway

Primary lessons in fighting racism

Where it Really Matters

By Debbie Epstein and Alison Sealey.

Published by and available from: Development Education Centre, Selly Oak Colleges, Bristol Road, Birmingham, B29 6LE.

Reviewed by ELEANOR SCHOOLING

The Education Reform Act was never intended to overtly ban anti-racist Education. It was more subtle than that. Backed by public jibes against anti-racist maths, and appeals to all the worst instincts of certain white parents, who found it easy scapegoat, the Education Reform Act has validated the 'return to traditional forms of education'.

Not only the traditional brigade, but 'wobblers' as well, those who went along with anti-racist education when it was trendy, are now saying they don't have time for it any more. But anti-racist education is not a subject: it is an overall approach to teaching.

Teachers who remain in education under this new framework have a responsibility to continue to develop this vital part of children's school experience.

Where it Really Matters by Debbie Epstein and Alison Sealey is a highly useful book because it roots itself in the current developments in the light of the ERA. Subtitled 'developing anti-racist education in predominantly white primary schools' it



It is vital that racism is nipped early in the bud

concentrates on one of the main problems with racism, the attitude of the white majority.

For many people anti-racist education meant raising the achievement of Black pupils by integrating their culture into the curriculum. The authors challenge this notion with a brilliant example of an exchange between a white English person, who has emigrated to another planet, and the teacher from this planet.

The helpful teacher explains she is starting voluntary English classes during the dinner break, Morris dancing after school, the English children could do an assembly on Guy Fawkes, and... 'We'd like to invite the English mothers to make fish and chips... for a cultural evening'. She is also really keen on explaining about her 'Christian cannibalistic rituals'.

What stands out about this book is that it is not a dry theoretical work: it is rooted in the experience and good practise of primary schools. It seems so obvious that anti-racism must go deeper than the moralistic approach that resulted has been seen as one of the contributing factors to the murder of Ahmed Allah in a Manchester school in 1987. Authoritarian teachers telling children how awful they are for being racist can make the whole issue backfire so that racist abuse is part of their resist-

tance to authority.

Debbie Epstein and Alison Sealey devote a large part of the book to the ethos of the school. Without respect for each child, how can we tell children to have respect for black people? That is what immediately appeals to some white parents worst fears.

If a school is an inviting and rewarding place for children, their parents and their teachers, it has an effect on all the individuals in the school. There was a time when some people argued that the major cause of black under-achievement was poor self-image. What this book does is to demonstrate the significance of self concept for all the individuals in the school.

The whole book is based on 'how to do it', not in a prescriptive form, but by example and discussion. Primary education is still firmly rooted in the practise of active learning. This is the principle that a child can only learn by positively engaging with the curriculum.

It shows ways into the issues of racism through the use of gender and age, thereby providing an opening for white children to consider the position of people who are familiar to them before moving on to take on issues of race. It is particularly significant that the authors choose examples of conversations with very young children because many

people still deny racism has any effect on children before about the age of 7.

In a conversation with a mixed race three year old, about a photograph of some black children, the child says 'I don't like them blackie ones', and later she denies being black at all.

Children need to begin to discuss all kinds of issues at a very early age; they often take on very sophisticated arguments on a whole range of issues, like obedience to adults under any circumstances.

The ability to tackle ideas, feelings, principles begins very early and adult recognition of this can help children decentre, to empathise with others. If we wait until a child is 9 or 10 and being deliberately racist, it is much more difficult to give them the tools to analyse their and others' feelings. A early way into this is through most children's obsession with fairness.

This book is very useful for a wide range of people - for teachers who want ideas, for schools who want to develop their anti-racist practise, for teacher educators who want to challenge racist teachers, or for anyone who wants to concretely understand how to take up these issues.

Deep Ecology: the politics of despair?



Is this Ectopia? Or just a bunch of capitalist pigs?

Anyone familiar with the writings of Edward Goldsmith, or who saw his *Fragile Earth* presentation, could not have failed to notice the energy and passion with which he presented us with his vision of paradise: Ectopia.

The inhabitants of Ectopia live in a communal, pre-industrial society, in complete harmony with nature (Gaia). Goldsmith claims to draw inspiration from Gandhi and a whole host of 'traditional cultures'.

With revolutionary zeal Mr Goldsmith points the accusatory finger at 'multinationals', 'governments' and the World Bank as culprits and co-conspirators in the catastrophic destruction of many of the world's ecosystems.

He claims that 'development' and 'industrialisation' have been responsible for the horrendous consequences of debt and dependency of many 'Third World' countries. He rightly points to many of the massive problems facing humanity: global warming, rapid deforestation, widespread famine, and increasing desertification, that threaten our global future. He shows how ill-conceived and large scale development projects have often caused wide-spread and long-term suffering for many millions of people, whilst the benefits of this development are directed towards the few.

The answer according to Mr Goldsmith, is simple: we must *de-industrialise* society, and return to stability and nature. This is the path to Ectopia. But, let us look a little deeper. What we are being offered is attempt- mixture of revolutionary

change and deep conservatism. As an ideology, this has some interesting historical parallels.

According to Mr Goldsmith: 'Man (sic), when organised into a vernacular society and when observing the traditional laws of his society, as they have been by untold generations of his ancestors, is an integral part of Gaia. Such societies have co-evolved with the ecosystem so as to fulfill their differentiated functions within its hierarchy. They thereby contribute to her overall stability and are subject to all the laws governing life processes on this planet'.

He also says: 'The most fundamental ecological knowledge is acquired through intuition', and that 'Ecology is emotional'. For him, 'Gaian systems are organised to form a hierarchy or homearchy', and therefore: 'Man when organised into the institutions that are essential to the technosphere is no longer a member of the vernacular society, nor indeed of the Gaian hierarchy'.

Progress that is technological is intrinsically anti-evolutionary, and an anathema to living within the 'Gaian hierarchy'. We have created a surrogate world that is usurping the natural wisdom of the cosmos, and obviously, we as human beings are paying the price.

Such ideas can be compared with another ideology that has, at times, captured the popular imagination in various countries, with disastrous consequences. It started with the European Romantic tradition. This tradition looked to the 'natural, organic community' as described by Tonniecs. This was taken up

enthusiastically by Fische and Hereder, who looked back to medieval times when everyone lived in a natural, stable and ordered hierarchical society, where everyone 'knows their place'.

Increasingly, the irrational, intuitive component of 'human nature' was seen as the driving force of human behaviour. 'Community, was therefore a safe, traditional, humane and intimate existence, where the ills of industrialisation had no place'. It was a populist vision of heaven on earth.

The concept that held this together was that of the Volk. On a popular level, the Volk could simply mean 'the people', but on the abstract level it could mean a 'system of absolute values, immutable metaphysical idea of peoplehood'. Between these two meanings there was much room for ambiguity, and even room for a mystical interpretation, giving (for those with the intuition) access to the 'innermost will of nature'.

The final (and most successful) synthesis of these views and social Darwinism was made by Haeckel, and represented what has been referred to as 'proto-Nazi volkism'. This new synthesis prided itself on the modernity of its views and laid the foundations for the National Socialist doctrine.

The most extreme interpretation was developed by Hitler, who took Social Darwinism to its logical extreme: the race war. Hitler's followers believed that industrialisation had nothing to

offer them, and they followed the politics of mass despair, an organised tyranny of irrationality against the mind. As Sauer pointed out: 'Since the process of industrialisation as a whole was irresistible, the existence of civilisation is inextricably bound to it. Facist revolt against industrialisation must, therefore, turn against civilisation too'.

According to Hitler, there was a 'natural hierarchy' of races, and a 'natural hierarchy' within the race as well, with the Fuhrer at its head. Coincidentally, and conveniently for Hitler, he and the Fuhrer were one and the same.

Throughout the whole of '67 Principles' concerning 'The Way', not once does Goldsmith mention democracy. Indeed in principle 61 he states:

'In a Homeolectic society, the units of political activity, like those of economic and technological activities coincide with the natural social groupings, the family, the community, the society itself. There are no formal institutions or governments. The elders, and in some cases the chiefs, are first and foremost citizens - that is differentiated members of the social system...their role being limited to enforcing the traditional law - that which ensures social homeolecty, and that which thereby best helps maintain the critical order of the Cosmos'.

This synthesis of what is essentially a 'Volkish' philosophy with environmental determinism is essentially fascistic. Are we

really to do without kidney machines, computers, telecommunications...?

The middle ages were not spent in an idyllic communion with nature. They were hard times; the mortality rate and the suffering that the common people endured were horrendous. Was that really Ectopia?

Do we really have to go back to the time when the forces of natural selection could work freely on humankind? And even if de-industrialisation was a valid proposal, how would it be achieved? There are huge economic and political interests that would ensure that it did not happen.

The Deep Ecologists remain remarkably silent on the issue of their political programme. They find coercion unpalatable. But while they complain bitterly about the presence of left wingers inside the green movement, they say nothing about extreme right wingers – despite the fact that the National Front has launched its own organisation *Green Wave*.

Goldsmith's own record is instructive. He founded the magazine *The Ecologist* – funded by his younger brother, James Goldsmith, who happens to be one of the world's largest financiers. *The Ecologist* is printed using tried and tested industrial processes. Mr E. Goldsmith has a telephone and of course a low-tech, labour-intensive, anti-industrial fax machine.

When he made his 'Fragile Earth' programme, did he use recycled cameras and film? When globe-trotting to Malaysia, Sri Lanka and India, are we to believe he travels by dug-out canoe? Obviously not.

You could call it cynicism, but I am sure that James Goldsmith has realised there could be a profitable (in terms of removing competition) side to any attempt at de-industrialisation.

The Deep Ecology rejection of industrialisation, its world view and its apocalyptic vision of where present trends are leading, make comparisons with fascism unavoidable.

Pulling those political punches

Born on the Fourth of July

Film, directed by Oliver Stone, starring Tom Cruise

Reviewed by Adam Lent

Vietnam movies have a paradoxical effect on the film makers of Hollywood.

The horrific war is a subject so weighty in its moral and historical implications for the USA that it always seems to wrench brilliant artistic efforts from directors, actors and cinematographers.

And yet, as serious attempts to understand the politics of the war, and the system that caused it, the films barely even scratch the surface.

Born on the Fourth of July is only a very minor exception to this rule. It has all the qualities expected of an Oliver Stone movie: actors giving their utmost, war scenes of great beauty that somehow maintain their traumatic impact, consistent attention to detail in sound and scene, and the meticulous, uncompromising analysis of the lead character's thoughts and emotions.

Politically it is undoubtedly an advance on pictures like *The Deer Hunter* and *Full Metal Jacket*. *Born on the Fourth of July* only pulls its political punches: other Vietnam movies don't even bother to throw them at all. In some ways this makes the film even more depressing to watch.

One is allowed a hint of a radical theme – only to see it buried under the safer, but ultimately impotent, views of liberal America. A black hospital orderly tells the initially gung-ho Kovik (Tom Cruise) to shove his Vietnam "up his ass", while another explains that he cares nothing for the conflict because it is a "white man's war".

The film also takes a surprising step forward when, through

Kovik's words, it suggests that the Vietnamese NLF was a brave resistance force deserving of victory. This was the best political scene in the movie, casting shame on all previous Vietnam films, which tend to show, with implied outrage, the brutality of both sides in the war but firmly give the edge on cruelty to the Vietnamese.

Nevertheless, these scenes are minor events in comparison

dramatic effect without raising too many cynical eyebrows shows how heavily these films rely upon the collective amnesiac ideology of American audiences: it is vitally important that political parties and individual Presidents are seen to be at fault rather than the system as a whole.

Born on the Fourth of July, like all previous Vietnam movies, draws its dramatic im-

impact from the siege mentality the USA has nurtured since World War Two. Despite condemning the "reds under the beds syndrome of the fifties, it is only because of the Laager approach that Hollywood can still



Protestors burn draft cards – under Johnson in 1967

to the overall message of the film. This message, like Stone's *Salvador*, argues that if 'we', (the American people) can find it in our hearts to fight the corrupt governments which betray the grand ideals of the Founding Fathers and the Constitution, we can truly create a good America where Vietnams don't happen.

This is most evident in a real wimp of a scene at the end of the film. Kovik is about to address the 1976 Democrat Convention after a long crusade against the war. The welcome is warm, unlike the protest he makes earlier in the film at a Republican Convention. A reporter asks how he feels. Kovik replies – to accompanying shouts of "right on!" and "way to go!" – "At last, I feel like I've come home".

Maybe I'm too pedantic, but wasn't it the Democrats, Kennedy and Johnson, who actually sent the US troops into Vietnam in the first place?

The fact that Stone feels this denouement will have the required

climax out successful movies about the occupiers of Vietnam, and never show the faces of the occupied. For the same reason Hollywood feels comfortable making endless films about the whites of South Africa.

Of course one cannot deny that a hefty dose of racism also plays its part in maintaining this weakness; but maybe with the collapse of the Cold War, Hollywood will tentatively begin to explore the issue of Vietnam in a more serious political fashion. Maybe the tiny hints of radicalism in Stone's latest film will become major thematic concerns in the Vietnam movies of the future? We can only hope.

We welcome letters on any subject: but please keep them brief! Letters over 400 words will be cut. Send to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

