

# SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

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**Time for <sup>25</sup>  
Labour to put  
the boot in**

#### Inside

- Special feature on Ireland
- Broadcasting Bill
- South African Communist Party



*Special double feature on Ireland: see pages 15-19.*

## **Socialist Outlook**

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# **SOCIALIST OUTLOOK**

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# Lithuania needs solidarity, not Bush's sanctions

It was Leon Trotsky – parodying the defeatist line of the Communist Party – who ironically commented on the French class struggle in the mid-1930s that if the workers did not resist, the police would not have the job of beating them up. No doubt Mikhail Gorbachev sighs in similar terms that if the Lithuanian government and masses did not demand their national rights, there would be no need to impose an economic blockade on them.

Of course the Soviet bureaucracy has immense economic leverage over tiny Lithuania, whose annual oil bill alone amounts to some \$700 million – far more than its total \$200m a year hard currency earnings. Simply by removing the previous massive (50 per cent) subsidies on supplies and forcing the Lithuanians to pay the world market price for their fuel and energy, Moscow leaders could quickly force the rebellious regime in Vilnius into crisis. The cuts in oil supplies have been followed in quick-fire succession by limitations on gas, electricity, chemicals, components and raw materials.

Of course some of these measures also rebound on the weakened Soviet economy: integration of the two economies is a two-way process and Lithuanian oil refineries and industries play a role in Soviet production. But Gorbachev's calculation is that a short sharp squeeze should suffice to force a substantial retreat by the nationalist government, while avoiding the more traditional heavy-handed repressive tactics of Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev.

This gamble is based on a shrewd estimate of the limited commitment of the US and European imperialist governments to become embroiled in the confrontation between Gorbachev and Lithuania so long as violence and a Tiananmen solution is avoided; and this has been reinforced by statements from an unenthusiastic White House staff. As one told *Newsweek* magazine: "We are talking somewhere above 'deeply concerned' but well below cancellation of the summit. We're talking relatively small potatoes".

Even as Gorbachev's sanctions took hold, the White House was looking no further than cosmetic gestures to placate right wing 'hawks', arguing "We're not going to breach Soviet airspace or challenge their control of Lithuanian ports and borders. That's a ridiculous idea". It seems certain that President Bush shares Gorbachev's wish that the Lithuanians should give in quickly and quietly; the US strategists see the advantage in letting super-power diplomacy resume with Gorbachev still in charge, and the chance of further concessions.

Whatever the White House may plan at present could well change if the confrontation in Lithuania escalates into violence or

becomes protracted. George Bush may yet cave in to right wing pressure and implement more draconian measures, including economic sanctions against the USSR.

Socialists would *oppose* such sanctions: the type of solidarity we call for with the Lithuanian people is working class solidarity, in opposition to the restorationists and imperialists that Gorbachev is so keen to appease. And we would hold Gorbachev responsible for the consequences of any sanctions imposed by Washington.

Exactly how much the Lithuanian leaders expected capitalist governments to rush to their aid is not clear. What is clear is that while for political reasons Bush (and Thatcher) will not, the Scandinavian powers *dare* not run the risk of antagonising the Soviet bureaucracy – and in any event are in no economic position to subsidise Lithuania.

It is also clear that Gorbachev's motives have nothing to do with fears of a restoration of capitalism in Lithuania: the far-reaching

economic reforms he is preparing to force through in the Soviet Union using his new Presidential powers run at least as far in the direction of capitalism as the proposals of the Lithuanian leaders. Gorbachev himself is expected to propose privatisation of up to 75 per cent of industry and breaching existing controls on foreign trade to open the door to 100 per cent foreign-owned ventures.

The pressures driving Gorbachev arise from precisely these sweeping plans for perestroika reforms: if he is to impose policies that will inevitably generate mass unemployment (likely to rise from 2m to 10m or more) and price increases of anything from 40-

50 percent to as much as 200-300 percent, he has to impose a rigid authority on the Soviet working class. He cannot do this if rebellious national minorities and breakaway republics are allowed with impunity to cock a snook at Kremlin control.

He also knows that he must draw the line at Lithuania's unilateral declaration of independence if he is to prevent a rush for the door by other republics. Even if he were to take refuge in a 'special case' formula to get the Lithuanians off his back (taking up suggestions that as territories annexed under Stalin in 1940, the Baltic States should now be allowed special rights to secede), more and more republics – from Azerbaijan, through Georgia to the Ukraine – are looking towards the possibility of secession and independence, and would be strengthened in their resolve by a retreat over Lithuania.

Key among the reactionary forces pushing Gorbachev into a hard line are the top layers of the military establishment. They point to the strategic importance of the Baltic coast, but have been par-



ticularly outraged by the blows to the armed forces struck by the Lithuanian rejection of conscription. They now claim that in some republics less than 50 percent of draftees called up are reporting for military service. Gorbachev knows that the one prop he cannot dispense with in his balancing act at the top is the support of the armed forces. He may yet need them to help contain the anger of the workers.

So where should socialists stand? Fully in support of the right of self-determination for the Lithuanian people - up to and including the right to secede; the massive popular support for these policies has been shown in the recent elections. We support calls for international working class solidarity, for solidarity among the socialist and working class organisations springing up in the Soviet Union, and for the most coordinated possible struggle by the peoples of the Baltic states alongside other national minorities in the fight for the most basic democratic right - to determine their own future. We do this in the context of opposing any restoration of capitalism, and rejecting utopian nationalist schemas of self-sufficiency ('capitalism in a single country?'). New economic and trading relations must be negotiated with the Soviet Union on the basis of equal and sovereign nations.

We must reject the cynical imperialist line of ditching the Lithuanians in order to preserve Gorbachev: not only are the imperialists supporting him (as the leader most likely to make further concessions at the expense of the working class), but even the 'socialist' case for defending Gorbachev as the embodiment of glasnost has been thrown into question by his attempts to crush the Lithuanian national movement.

We oppose Gorbachev's attempts to cow the national movement, and call for the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the resumption of normal supplies of goods while longer-term trade relations are negotiated. In the long run, and especially after the momentous changes which Gorbachev himself has helped trigger throughout Eastern Europe and the USSR, the Soviet Union cannot hope to preserve its 'unity' by brute force, whether this be economic or military: and any

attempt to do so is a reactionary measure that must be opposed.

This does not mean that socialists would always argue for a full-scale confrontation on this issue, especially where conditions are less than favourable: a serious approach to tactical timing is also important alongside a defence of principle. The evident solid mass support in Lithuania, and even the parallel movements in Estonia and Latvia are not likely to be enough to force Gorbachev to back down in the short term, and some form of temporary compromise may be necessary. It would also be useful if the Baltic republics coordinated their efforts in the push for national independence, and if they made clear that they want support not from the imperialist governments but from the workers of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately the limited political horizons of the nationalist leadership in Lithuania focus on outside assistance from the capitalist and imperialist leaders, and do not extend to calls for working class solidarity - or even to working class mobilisation in Lithuania itself. The tentative links that have been made between the new governments in the Baltic states appear to have been at top level only.

The longer-term situation offers more hope of allies for the Lithuanians in their conflict with the Kremlin bureaucracy, showing that there are more choices open than simply between an immediate armed insurrection or a despairing appeal for imperialist support.

Among the first decisions of the new Moscow city council, now taken over by radical oppositionists, was a resolution of sympathy with Lithuania. And as Gorbachev tries to crack the whip over workers in Russia and the other republics, the likelihood will increase of a widening crisis in which new concessions can be won.

As the illusion of Gorbachev promoting a 'revolution from above' disappears under a tide of increasingly authoritarian moves, the necessity for a genuine political revolution from below becomes ever more obvious. The new socialist currents now emerging in the Soviet workers' movement will need every possible solidarity from socialists in the west as they face up to the important tasks ahead of them.

## 1967 ACT BROKEN

On April 25, anti-abortionists scored the first victory in their long assault on the 1967 Abortion Act. MPs voted by 409 to 152 for an amendment to the Embryology Bill reducing the time limit on abortion from 28 to 24 weeks, with certain exceptions.

It was a defeat for women in the struggle to take control of our bodies and our lives. This must not be obscured by the fact that it could have been much worse.

The outcome reflects a major shift around the question of abortion over the last decade. While the 'pro-life' organisations have made no headway with their 'life begins at conception' argument, they have been very successful at focusing on the question of time limits. The abortion debate is no longer centred around women but on foetuses - at what point can they survive outside the womb? It has moved from the political domain to the scientific.

This shift is the result of many complex factors - the decline of the women's movement; the ascendancy of the right; and new realism in the labour movement.

This has been mirrored, to some extent, in the campaign in defence of abortion rights. Strategy has often been dictated by parliamentary procedure and political expediency. This, along with a pragmatic rejection of a woman's right to choose a, led to the division of the pro-choice forces between the issues of abortion and donor insemination (DI) and the weakening of the campaign.

To write women back into the equation is the only way to win back those MPs, particularly in the Labour ranks, who have previously been 28 week stalwarts but whose convictions have now crumbled.

The attention given to the abortion issue and the question of embryo research has obscured another aspect of the Bill - access to DI and infertility treatments.

At the third reading in the Lords, the Government inserted a clause specifying that no woman could be given access to DI or infertility treatments 'unless account has been taken of the welfare of the child who may be born as a result of the treatment.' As the Lord Chancellor said in introducing this amendment, the intention is to prohibit access by unmarried women in a politically acceptable way.

Thus the language and focus is on the welfare of the child rather than explicitly discriminating against lesbians and single women. But the 'welfare of the child' has long been counterposed to the welfare of the woman. As lesbian mothers who have lost custody cases know, judges' view of the child's welfare is all too often shaped by prejudice and support for the nuclear family.

The wording of the clause may be vague and open to interpretation, but then so was Section 28 - and that has been effective in

reinforcing self-censorship and bigotry. It is vital that socialists do not dodge this issue but expose the ideology behind it and the effects the clause will have.

Both the 'welfare of the child' amendment and the reduction in time limits underline the fact that we must now push for the Bill as a whole to be rejected. The vote in favour of embryo research continuing is the only serious defeat suffered by the forces of extreme reaction so far, and the 14 day time limit makes it at best ambiguous.

It is crucial that the time between now and the final reading of the Bill is spent building for the demonstration on June 2nd. Mass mobilisations are the only way to turn this situation around.

We must show the right that public opinion is not on their side!

*By Rebecca Flemming*

# Hong Kong and hypocrisy

As expected the government got its bill allowing up to 225,000 Hong Kong citizens to settle in Britain through the second reading on April 19. The vote was 313 to 216—a majority of 97.

The bill created a split among both Tory MPs and Labour MPs. The former chairman of the Conservative Party, Norman Tebbit, led the opposition to the bill among Tory MPs on the grounds that the bill broke the party's election manifesto, which had opposed any large scale immigration. On April 19, 44 Tory MPs voted against the Bill while some abstained.

The Labour Party had issued a three line whip for its MPs to vote against the bill on the grounds that it was elitist, unprincipled and unworkable. About 25 Labour MPs broke the whip by abstaining.

The Labour MPs who broke the party line did it for a variety of reasons. Most of them belong to the Socialist Campaign Group and did not want to be part of an unholy alliance with the Tebbit gang by voting against the Bill.

Labour criticism of the bill is to a large extent correct. The government's bill will only allow the elite of Hong Kong to get into this country. More than five million ordinary citizens of Hong Kong would have no chance to get into Britain, if they should want to. The bill is giving a privilege to the already privileged.

But the Labour Party leadership is giving no clear alternative to the government's bill. Labour wants to avoid being specific on what should be done. Roy Hattersley said the Labour Party would only give passports to those who need them. For Labour, that means those Hong Kong citizens who become state-

less by 1997 (when China takes over the British Colony) because they cannot become Chinese citizens. That only amounts to a few thousand.

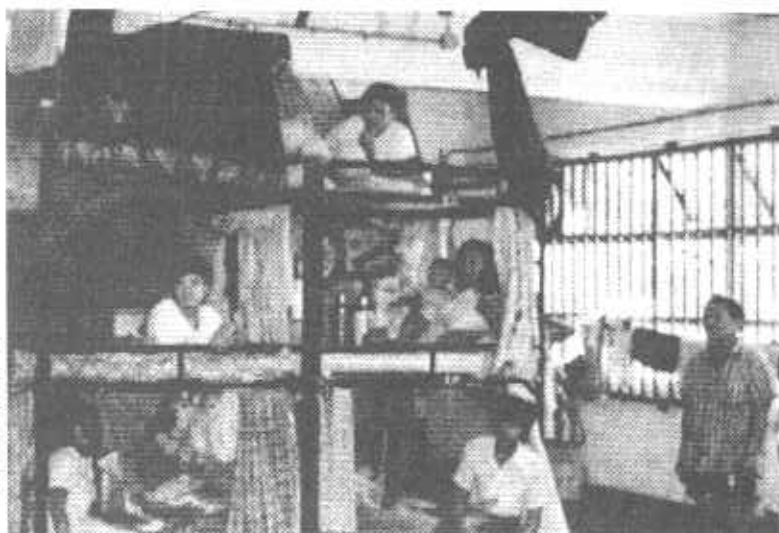
The Labour Party correctly criticises the government for not introducing democracy in Hong Kong. But that is also an indirect criticism of former Labour Governments who did nothing to introduce democratic rights in Hong Kong. Labour's criticism would gain some credibility if they announced that a Labour government elected before 1997 would immediately introduce universal suffrage in Hong Kong, call elections to a General Assembly and respect the wishes of the people of Hong Kong.

A lot of hypocrisy is involved from all sides in the Hong Kong debate. The government only want to give a helping hand to the elite of Hong Kong, who (according to the government) could be very useful for the British Economy if they should choose to come to Britain.

This is in contrast with the government's attitude to the 40,000 Vietnamese boat people living in inhuman conditions in Hong Kong. Instead of offering these refugees British passports the government wants to send them back to Vietnam by force.

Similarly, the government (and probably also Tebbit) accepts that between 50,000 and 1 million racist white South Africans have the right to settle down in Britain. Not only that, but UK immigrants' Advisory Service alleges that the Government is deliberately courting whites fearing black rule in South Africa as ideal Tory voters.' (Guardian 17.4.1990)

The Labour Party's hypocrisy is no less great than the



Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong: victims of hypocrisy

government's. If a Labour Government comes to power in two years time, this law will be implemented. And Labour is counterposing the need for Asian and Black families to get their relatives into Britain to letting 225,000 Hong Kong citizens into Britain, who have no relations in this country. The argument is that by accepting the 225,000 the queue will be much longer for everyone else. But that argument is only real if you accept that there should be a limit on immigration.

The Labour argument exposes what the Labour opposition to the government's bill is really about: accommodation to racist attitudes among the electorate. Labour accepts the argument that a large scale immigration is bad for race relations here in Britain! Labour is opposing the bill because it wants to be seen as not allowing hundreds of thousands of Chinese people into Britain. Of course Labour is not saying that openly. That is where Labour differs from Tebbit. But as Tebbit, Labour wants to stop mass immigration for racist electoral reasons.

That is why Labour is not presenting a concrete alternative to the government's bill. Hard pressed, Labour is willing to admit that only a few thousand Hong Kong citizens should be allowed into Britain (Newsnight 18.4.1990). That is why Labour is not campaigning to let the 40,000 Vietnamese Boat people in Vietnam come to Britain.

No wonder that some Labour MPs had difficulties in following the Labour line. But were these MPs right in not voting against the government's bill? If one can trust the press these MPs mainly abstained in the vote because they did not want to make an alliance with Tebbit and because Labour's alternative vote was absent.

But surely one cannot decide a vote by looking at who will be casting the same vote. One has to judge the bill on its merits—not on who will vote for or against it. If it is a bad bill one should vote against it and campaign for a better bill.

The Liberal Democrats argued that it is better to let 225,000 Hong Kong citizens into Britain than none. The Liberal Democrats have also been arguing that all 3.28 million 'British Dependent Territories Citizens' in Hong Kong should have the right to come to Britain. (That will exclude the more than 2 million non-British Dependent Territories citizens in Hong Kong from the option of leaving Hong Kong).

But by voting for the government's bill the Liberal Democrats missed an opportunity for raising a campaign to let many more Hong Kong citizens into Britain. A defeat of the government's bill would give the opportunity to debate alternative bills, including a bill which grants universal suffrage to the people of Hong Kong.

By Finn Jensen

# Poll Tax: Turn anger into trade union action!

One of the noticeable features about the magnificent anti-poll tax demonstration on March 31st was the small number of labour movement banners.

The fact that the mobilisation on the day was so vast is even more remarkable considering the opposition to non-payment from the leadership of the Labour Party and Trade Unions.

Of course many individuals within the unions and the Labour Party are opposed to this stance, and many indeed are active as individuals within the anti-poll tax movement. But it is vital that socialists take the battle over the poll tax deep into the heart of the labour movement, using the strength of mass non-payment to do so.

Within the unions, anger has been building up over a number of issues relating to the tax. It is clear that the effect of the poll tax on living standards will be a key element in this year's round of pay negotiations. Many councils have made cuts to keep the poll tax lower than it would otherwise have been and this has been further exacerbated by capping, resulting in threats of major job losses and serious reduction in services in many areas.

So capping will have a contradictory effect; not only does it under cut the Tories argument that councils should suffer the results of setting high poll taxes electorally, but it is also likely to fuel further protests from the trade unions and the communities. One consequence of this, both for the Tories and the union leaderships, was demonstrated at NUT conference where delegates voted to support national strike action in defence of jobs even though the Executive argued this would be secondary

action.

But it is crucial that the fight to link opposition to the poll tax and the cuts is taken forward. While the NUT leadership did not succeed in preventing a vote for action, they will use the question of the law to intimidate teachers in practise. Within NALGO there have been worrying signs with branches such as Liverpool demanding the council implements the tax for fear that otherwise they won't be paid.

Such divide and rule tactics are very reminiscent of the dented shield policies put forward during the fight against rate-capping. It is also vital that in highlighting the iniquities of capping, the leadership of the relevant unions are not allowed to ditch those branches fighting cuts which result not from capping itself but from the actions of councils who have made cuts precisely to avoid capping. This will become increasingly important as a large number of authorities adopt such tactics in next year's budget making.

In the same way as it is important to fight for unions to mobilise against the tax, it is vital that the anti-poll tax movement takes up the question of cuts. In authorities that have been capped this will be easier, but again the argument must be clearly put over cuts which are less directly a result of the tax. This struggle will be crucial in mobilising the combined strength of the unions and the anti-poll tax movement in defeating all these attacks on working class living standards.

The tax has other implications for trade unionists. Many workers have been asked to pass on confidential information that they acquire in the course of their jobs to the Community Charge Registra-



Potential trade union support was shown on TUC Poll Tax demo

tion Officers to compile the registers. Workers in local government who are responsible for collection of the tax are concerned that insufficient staffing, pay and training is being provided by their employers.

Action has been taken by a number of CPSA and NALGO branches over these issues. The possibility of arrestment of wages of those not paying the tax is likely to meet widespread opposition from diverse groups of workers and make it possible to win action against the tax in many new areas. The victimisation of Class War supporter Andy Murphy by Hackney Council in the aftermath of Trafalgar Square is another issue that should be taken seriously within the unions, both in its own right, and as possibly an indication of things to come.

The fight to win policy in support of non-implementation is important, but in practice what will be decisive is not the policies themselves but actual groups of workers taking action against the tax.

Within the Labour Party, Kinrock is not having everything his own way. Up and down the country Labour councillors, both in majority groups and in opposition voted against implementation of the tax. And as Labour coun-

cils are faced with decisions about pursuing those who refuse to pay there is a real potential that this opposition can be broadened and strengthened. The attempt to expel those within the party who are supporting and building campaigns of mass non-payment is pathetic when it is clear that it is mass anger against the tax that can sink Thatcher and her flagship.

Opposition to such witchhunts needs to be built, not only in the party itself, but more generally amongst poll tax activists and in the unions. The example of those wards and constituencies that have fought the local elections on a platform of non-payment needs to be followed as widely as possible in the run up to the General election.

That way there is a possibility of winning activists from the anti-poll tax movement to the Labour Party and so strengthening the fight against new realism. The Labour Party Socialist Conference in May intends to make opposition to the tax, and to the mealy-mouthed words of the leadership on the question one of the key planks of its campaign to rebuild the left in the run up to the general election.

Theresa Conway



McAvoy: not appealing to delegates this year

## Teachers chalk up a victory

In education, as is clearly the case almost everywhere else, the Tories plans are clearly faltering. Thatcher is on the retreat on a number of issues; the national curriculum; testing and teacher appraisal, in the context of teacher shortage; and the general lack of resources available to fund the Tories' reactionary programme. At the Annual Conference of the National Union of Teachers held at Easter in Bournemouth, the mood of delegates showed a readiness to fight.

Local Management of Schools (LMS), the cornerstone of the Tories' Education Reform Act, will result in massive threats to security of tenure, for many teachers. Heads and governing bodies will have the power to sack teachers they cannot 'afford' (or simply don't want to employ) and will not have to re-employ 'surplus' teachers from

another school in the authority if they have vacancies.

With LMS beginning now, in some areas, threats of redundancies may soon become a reality. In the light of this delegates voted for an emergency motion calling for national strike action if local action was unable to save teachers jobs. Stalinists and 'ex' stalinists desperately tried to oppose this move, on the grounds that it would constitute 'secondary action' (teachers being employed by the LEA or school rather than the government). After the vote, the NUT's national solicitor was wheeled out and the leadership announced that they would not implement the new policy.

There were other policy successes. Conference voted for a potential boycott of the Tories' national testing scheme, and for industrial action if the conditions of service of primary teachers were undermined by head teachers, and over the loss of

negotiating rights. The leadership only narrowly scraped home on their plans for a Special Salaries Conference. After the debacle of this year's salary campaign, many delegates wanted to decide on a plan of action. On the other hand, motions on support for non-payment of the Poll Tax and affiliation to *Time to Go* were ruled 'out of order'. In addition to legal obstacles erected by the bureaucracy, the NUT still has an antiquated rule book restricting the areas it can discuss. (Conference once again narrowly failed to change this). Because of the way the agenda was organised, there was no debate on the resolution on abortion rights, calling for affiliation to STAC.

This conference will be remembered for the antics of General Secretary Doug McAvoy - an arch new realist even by Labour Party standards who openly opposes industrial action. When it was clear he was head-

ing for trouble on LMS a vicious witchhunt was pursued, with the help of the National Press against *Militant* supporter Anita Dickinson, recently elected to the union's National Executive.

The influence of *Militant* in the NUT is small and their comrades generally participate in the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), which involves far left groups, independent class struggle militants, and the Labour left. The STA can muster over 100 delegates at Conference but its support stretches

way beyond this. It and the smaller Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union are the forces delegations look to to provide an alternative to the defeatist and increasingly right wing leadership. The regular STA fringe and lunchtime meetings were bigger than ever this year and plans are under way for a national salaries meeting to prepare for the union's own Special Conference in the autumn.

The NUT is the first of the main union conferences this year, and with the smaller NAS/UWT the other TUC-affiliated teaching union, already having organised a one-day strike over pay, and giving their leadership a mandate for further action, Thatcher's crisis can be turned into our opportunity. With the long run up to the General Election, many NUT Conference delegates clearly understood the need to fight *now* to determine the type of Labour government we get. Though the NUT is not affiliated to the Labour Party the NUT leadership will simply try to ride the storm and 'Wait for Labour'. McAvoy's jibe about elected Conference delegates not being in touch with their members is just another cynical manoeuvre in this process.

**Martin Allen**



*Thatcher's deregulation is not about press freedom but about profitability*

## Serving up the media on a plate

**Thatcher's controversial Broadcasting Bill is back in Parliament again in May. Here, MICK GOSLING, of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, explains what is at stake for the labour movement.**

Seating arrangements at private dinner parties are not normally subject to socialist analysis. But for those who wish to understand the driving forces behind the government's Broadcasting Bill, the bottom-parking at Mrs Thatcher's Chequers lunch to celebrate ten years in power was instructive.

There were no fewer than 60 guests, seated at ten tables. Alongside Thatcher at the top table were Lords Whitelaw, Carrington, Forte and Thorneycroft - and one commoner, Rupert Murdoch.

Murdoch's papers have served Thatcher well. They have also consistently promoted the commercial broadcasting interests of Murdoch's News International. For both, the Broadcasting Bill is a marriage made, if not in heaven, at least in the sky.

The Bill applies a free market sledgehammer to public service broadcasting; the con-

cept that all broadcast media should inform, educate and entertain and provide a balanced range of programmes. The Bill's key proposals - the auctioning of commercial TV and radio franchises, the lifting of positive programming requirements and the dismantling of controls over ownership - remain intact after three months of debate in Committee in the House of Commons.

Commercially funded cable, satellite and other electronic media services will be allowed to expand to whatever the market will take rather than a staged growth within a carefully developed public service framework.

With limited advertising revenue being spread between more outlets and media multinationals throwing money into buying franchises at the expense of programme-making, quality, diversity and minority interests will all suffer. Far from expanding consumer choice, viewers face the prospect of more of the same, with cheap soaps and game shows predominant.

In readiness for this decline, the public service broadcasting remit of ITV stations, which it was the duty of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to oversee under Section 2(2) of the 1981 Broadcasting Act, is removed from the new Channel 3 services.

In place of regulation comes restriction. Alongside the Broadcasting Complaints Commission there will now be an Independent

Television Commission (Chair: George Russell) with disciplinary powers over commercial stations. Thatcher's 'no sex and violence' quango, the Broadcasting Standards Council (Chair: Lord Rees-Mogg), will be placed on a statutory footing with powers to lay down guidelines for programme makers.

The government intends to keep appointments to all these bodies, and the Radio Authority (Chair: Lord Chalfont) within its powers of patronage. It will also vet appointments to the Channel 4 Board. Channel 4 will be further hampered by having to raise its own advertising revenue rather than relying on a levy from the ITV stations.

If that's not enough, with a nod from a magistrate, police will now be able to seize copies of scripts, tapes and working notes under provisions of the Public Order Act and the Obscene Publications Act, which is extended to broadcasting for the first time. Similar powers under Section 9 of the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act which, again for the first time laid down specific legal procedures by which the police could seize film, have most recently been used against TV and newspapers to obtain footage and photos of the Poll Tax disturbances. The free market needs a strong state.

The Broadcasting Bill claims to put some limits on cross ownership and control by non-European Community nationals. The reality is



that the media empire of Murdoch is left untouched while the Secretary of State retains reserve powers to alter ownership regulations at will without even a cursory reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The BBC hardly rates a mention in the Bill. It will, of course, be the next target of direct government intervention. It is already being starved of cash through the decoupling of the license fee from inflation. And in the run up to 1996, when the BBC Charter is due for renewal, it will come under sustained political attack and demands for privatisation from the same people who led the campaign for deregulation of commercial TV and radio.

The technicalities of the Broadcasting Bill, running to 167 Clauses and 12 Schedules, are complex, but its economic and political purpose is clear: to use market forces to restructure broadcasting in the interests of the media multinationals.

This is why issues of training within the industry, equality of opportunity and representation are not addressed. Where unbridled market forces have been unleashed, as in the USA and Italy, issues of representation and positive employment practices have been pushed into the background. Equal opportunity policies, barely in place in this country, will be undermined by the new financial constraints and decreased level of public accountability.

Not surprisingly, the intense competitive pressures being produced by the government's media policy have unleashed a whirlwind of attacks on the workers in the industry. 1,800 jobs at the BBC have been lost in the past two years, with six to nine thousand more threatened by the BBC's policy of privatising services and the recommendations of the Phillips Committee.

The ITV companies abandoned national agreements with the unions in 1988 and 1989 and started down the road of employer-dominated and, if necessary, employer-imposed agreements. A lock out of its members by TV-am led to the de-recognition of the Association of Cinematograph Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT) in 1988. More recently Thames was only narrowly thwarted from withdrawing recognition from the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance (BETA) in respect of clerical staff. Last October pay talks at Tyne Tees opened, in management's words, with a 'unique' offer of a wage freeze.



**You thought she was selling the 'Tuffo' socks she is wearing: but the ad is for camera equipment!**

The favourite joke in Manchester media circles is that the damage at Strangeways wasn't caused by prisoners trying to get out but by Granada staff trying to get in because conditions were better. Granada staff were recently given the option of personal contracts or the boot.

These attacks will increase as in-house production is eroded and independent productions are increased, under the terms of the Bill, to a minimum of 25 per cent of Channel 3 broadcasting time. With this will go the erosion of standard conditions of service, casualisation and the weakening of trade union organisation. It could also lead to a

material rewards but a say in the future of their industry. Collective bargaining remains the only way to achieve that.

For workers outside the industry and others campaigning for genuine choice, freedom and diversity in the media with access for the many and not just the privileged few, the strength of the broadcasting unions will be decisive in preventing a headlong rush into tabloid TV.

As Tony Hearn, General Secretary of BETA, told the recent Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom conference on *Broadcasting in the 90s: The Democratic Alternative*:

**"The BBC will, of course, be the next target of direct government intervention. It is already being starved of cash through the de-coupling of the license fee from inflation"**

frontal assault on the principle of union recognition itself, as is happening in the print and magazine sector at the moment.

The broadcast unions are alert to the threat they face. The ACTT and BETA are currently deciding on amalgamation, mirroring the process in the print between the NGA and SOGAT. The National Union of Journalists is also looking for a partner.

And workers in broadcasting retain important bargaining powers. The industry, in spite of technological development, remains labour intensive requiring a labour force with disparate but indispensable skills. You cannot produce radio or television programmes without the cooperation of a skilled, vocal, well-informed and responsible workforce - a workforce which will not only want proper

"Our values include commitment to the public good rather than to private profit, concern for the weak and underprivileged, opposition to the abuse and manipulation of the media by government and employers, a belief in widening access to broadcasting and in the accountability of those who control it, care for the quality of the product made by our members as well as the quality of life to which broadcasting contributes. We are against the corruption of the standards of public life, the debauching of the political vocabulary, the trivialisation of the media, the naked appeal to individual interest and the substitution of price for value. These are matters on which we will not compromise."

*The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom can be contacted at 9 Pond Street, London, W1V 3DG (01 437 2795). Individual membership is £10 per annum, organisations from £15 per annum depending on size.*

# A fair cop?

**JANE WELLS** looks at the mounting problems facing the police, and assesses their attempts to contain the crisis.

Senior officers in the Met have got a lot on their plate.

Their force recently came in for heavy criticism in the Wapping report on police conduct at the News International plant in 1987. Officers, it found were 'out of control'.

Complaints of racism, of false arrests and beatings, and of suspicious deaths in police custody have dogged the Met over recent years too.

And a string of successful civil actions for damages against the police are beginning to take their toll: not just the Met's reputation, but their bank balance is suffering as the public by-passes the ineffectual Police Complaints Authority in London and take their cases straight to court. The Met paid out more than £500,000 last year for wrongful arrests, malicious prosecutions and assault.

Just before Christmas, record six-figure damages were awarded to black lay preacher Rupert Taylor who was fitted-up on a drugs charge by police in Notting Hill. More recently, athlete Linford Christie has received undisclosed but 'substantial' damages for unlawful arrest and libel when the police swung into action on their unwritten rule: a black man in a flash car must have nicked it.

But men from the Met are taking the problem seriously. They have at least two ideas.

One has been to introduce a more polished management style, 'The Plus Programme'. This initiative includes a 'statement of values' displayed on police noticeboards all over London. It promises to 'protect, help and reassure people in London... to be seen to do all this with integrity, common sense and judgement. We must be compassionate, courteous and patient... professional, calm and restrained in the face of violence and apply only that force which is necessary to accomplish our lawful duty'. This rings a bit hollow in the light of their actions during poll tax protests across the capital.

Police are also to be treated to discussion groups (where they are advised 'If someone calls you a pig, remember it stands for professionalism, integrity and guts, and say thankyou'), better overcoats, new pullovers, and more pot plants (the green variety, rather than attempted drug busts) in station lobbies.



"Alright! Which one of you lot wants to see our new pot plants?"

The other idea is to bring a bit of market pressure to bear in the force. A working party has been set up at Scotland Yard to explore possible profit-making services. Besides getting driving lessons and vehicle maintenance and repair from your local bobby, you may be able to pop down to your local cop shop (literally), to pick up handy accessories and gifts, with the emphasis on police memorabilia. Whether items stocked will include rubber truncheons or any left-over confessions and convictions remains to be seen.

This latter idea is particularly Thatcherite: it mirrors attempts in the NHS from 1987 onwards at 'income generation', with local targets set for cash-raising schemes as diverse as car parking services and weaving company advertising into hospital carpets.

To see the same disastrous 'solution' applied to the problems of the police force is more surprising. It's a pathetic, desperate response to what many, right across the political spectrum, recognise to be a deep crisis - in public confidence, and in police practice.

A recent MORI poll showed that nearly two thirds of the public think that the police bend the rules to get convictions. Only 17% believe they do not. More than half think there's one law for the public, another for the police. The same proportion have either 'little respect' or 'mixed feelings' for the police.

Thirty years ago 83% of the British public had 'great respect' for the police. Today only 40% will admit to glowing pride in the great British bobby. Another poll a year ago showed that more than one in five people believed that corruption is widespread in local police forces. Only 32% believed that police corruption was rare or non-existent.

Clearly the problem is no longer restricted to the Met, or even to other metropolitan forces at the sharp end of policing inner cities. At least 21 of the 43 forces in England and Wales are currently involved in inquiries into other forces over allegations of corruption and criminal malpractice by officers. Recent well-

publicised scandals show a nationwide spread: set-ups and corruption in Manchester; falsification of evidence by the West Midlands serious crime squad (now disbanded); and over-enthusiastic 'clear-up rates' for crimes in Kent.

The depth of the problem is highlighted by the willingness of the establishment to own up to it. Tory newspapers run stories calling for inquiries and the release of innocent prisoners like the Birmingham Six from jail. Even the police themselves are beginning to admit to the scale of the problem. Deputy Commissioner John Dellow of the Metropolitan Police, and the current President of the Association of Chief Police Officers admitted: 'We have certainly run out of the rotten apple explanation.'

Most marxists will agree that with the rhetoric and the reality of Thatcher's 'free economy' goes the growth of an ever-stronger state. The two go together, of course, because the deep economic and social divisions created by Thatcher's policies require increasingly repressive forms of social control.

Meanwhile the police themselves are calling for urgent action to tackle recruitment difficulties and low morale, with better conditions, pay and status high on their list of requirements.

Socialists will watch with interest to see how far Mrs Thatcher's favourite public sector 'workers' get in fighting that battle, although organising solidarity to support their demands won't be a top priority.

The more urgent battle is to see that the demands for real justice of the many victims, caught in the vicious pincer movement of British 'justice' and Thatcher's laws, are met.

And unlike the leaders of the Labour Party, socialists will be keen to see that the blame for last month's poll tax violence rests, not with its victims but its perpetrators: the police and their paymasters.

# Slovo's retreat from stalinism

The release of Nelson Mandela has generated a new debate within the anti-apartheid forces on the framework and objective of talks with De Klerk. In this context, the changing political line of the South African Communist Party can prove a decisive factor in the politics of the African National Congress. CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN reports on the latest pronouncements by the SACP's leader, JOE SLOVO.

The South African Communist Party (SACP) has, for most of its existence, firmly and uncritically adhered to the general line coming from Moscow. Until very recently, its successive programmes were either dictated by Moscow or subjected to veto there. The *Path to Power*, adopted at the 7th Congress last year was probably the first 'native' programme in its history.

The whole of the present leadership of the party and its predecessors after the expulsion of R.P. Bunting in the early 1930s were indoctrinated with Stalinist, revisionist conceptions of Marxism, the first principles of which was that the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) were always right in doctrinal and practical matters. What it said had to be accepted without question.

In the 1920s, when Trotsky and the Left Opposition were being persecuted in the Soviet Union, the SACP expelled everyone who even mildly hinted of support for Trotsky. After the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, when Stalin proclaimed the 'Third Period' which signalled a sharp turn to ultra-leftism and presaged Stalin's break within Bukharin, it started a witch hunt for 'Right Oppositionists'. Where none existed they invented them. Thus, ultra-loyal stalinists, like the trade union leader Solly Sachs, were summarily thrown out of the Party. Under the leadership of the Moscow-appointed Duggie and Molly Wolton, oppositionists were even



SACP politics have always been a key factor in the line of the African National Congress

physically assaulted.

When war broke out in September 1939, the SACP correctly declared it an imperialist war, and were even prepared to work jointly with the Afrikaner nationalists to resist South African participation. Fascism, it said, had to be fought at home. This all changed on 22 June 1941, when German troops crossed the Soviet frontier. The Party now called for the defence of the socialist homeland, whose victory would bring about the destruction of fascism, the liberation of oppressed nations and a rapid transition to world socialism.

The SACP was used by Moscow to signal its break with Popular Frontism after the war. Later came the 1950s show trials of Laszlo Rajk and Rudolf Slansky, the invasion of Hungary (1956) and the execution of Imry Nagy; the crushing of the 'Prague Spring' (1968) by Soviet tanks; all were endorsed with the same enthusiasm with which in the 1920s they acclaimed the trials and murder of the Bolshevik leaders Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and others.

## Backing glasnost

It is against this background that we have to look at the pamphlet *Has Socialism Failed?* by Joe Slovo, the current General Secretary of the South African Communist Party. In this document, Slovo unreservedly lines himself up with Gorbachev, *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The question we have to ask ourselves is: is this a genuine and decisive break with his self-confessed stalinist past? Or is the SACP just running true to form, and once again following the Moscow line?

It is, of course, impossible to give an incontrovertible answer to this. As Lenin once remarked, a 'sincerometer' has not yet been invented. To discuss his motives would be unprofitable, so we will confine ourselves to ex-

amining just how far he has gone and what this means for the future of the SACP in the South African political scene.

Slovo titles his document *Has Socialism Failed?* which would seem to indicate that he still equates stalinism with socialism. This theme recurs throughout the document. Thus he constantly refers to 'existing socialism'; 'Socialism produced a Stalin and a Ceausescu' and on page 3 he defines 'Stalinism' as 'the bureaucratic-authoritarian style of leadership (of parties both in and out of power) which denuded the party and the practice of socialism of most of its democratic content...' What he does not yet grasp is that where there is no democracy in state and party, there can be no socialism.

Stalin proclaimed the 'complete triumph' of socialism as long ago as January 1931 and the SACP dutifully echoed this, as did all its fraternal parties throughout the world. The lying statistics emanating from the stalinist school of falsification which depicted the ever-growing prosperity and happiness of the Soviet people was swallowed wholesale not only by Party members but by a host of fellow-travellers like the Webbs and Bernard Shaw.

Slovo now recognises that even where there was growth in the Soviet economy, the methods employed resulted only in human misery. Slovo could have saved himself years of travail if he had the moral courage to break from iron stalinist discipline and read, among other, Trotsky, who wrote, in 1936: 'Socialism is a structure of planned production to the end of the best satisfaction of human needs; otherwise it does not deserve the name of socialism' (*The Revolution Betrayed* p.64).

Slovo writes that self-pity is not enough, **SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** no 24, May 1990

that it is not enough to say 'we were deceived' but also to ask 'why were we deceived?'. He accepts that the decades of stalinist-bureaucratic rule brought horror and misery to the Soviet people and to the people of Eastern Europe. But he puts it all down to the subjective factor. The wrong people, wicked people were in power. He ignores completely the false theoretical foundation of stalinism, the utopian, revisionist belief that socialism could be established in one country.

It was the adoption of this policy in 1926 at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International which transformed the Comintern from being the general staff of the world proletarian revolution, as Lenin and Trotsky conceived it, into a border guard for the USSR. Its main role as an instrument of world revolution was inevitably relegated to the background. From then on, the Communist Parties became instruments to implement the policies and interests of the ruling bureaucracies in the Kremlin. Local party leaderships which did not blindly follow the line as dictated in Moscow were unceremoniously ousted.

### A vanguard party?

Slovo deals very well with a number of issues of great importance to the future of the international communist movement and of special importance to developments in Africa. He claims that in some instances the SACP anticipated *glasnost*. This applies particularly to the conception of the vanguard role of the CP. He argues that the programme of the SACP adopted in 1989 *Path to Power* supports his position that 'a communist party does not earn the title of vanguard merely by proclaiming it.'

But is this really the case? In the introduction to the programme, we find 'The national offensive is led by the African National Congress in revolutionary alliance with the vanguard workers' party - the South African Communist Party...' And on page 2 'The Communist Party is the leading political force of the South African working class.'

In that section of the programme which deals with developments in the independent African states, the assumed status of 'vanguard party' is re-emphasised time and again; '...though small in number the African working class is crucial to any radical social transformation but it can only play its revolutionary role to the full if it is...organised...under the guidance of Marxism/Leninism...depending on the actual social and political situation in each country the vanguard revolutionary forces will assume a variety of organisational forms, the highest

expression of which is a Marxist/Leninist party'.

When referring to these states the programme consistently talks of 'countries of socialist origin' and calls on them to 'widen popular democracy (sic) and strengthen the vanguard revolutionary party'. It claims that the victorious revolution in Mozambique and Angola 'set the stage for development towards



The question is where the leaders stand now?

socialist construction'. Since then of course, Mozambique has openly abandoned the socialist path, and, just as it once proclaimed itself Marxist/Leninist, has now disowned the title. The ruling clique in Benin has also decided that it is no longer Marxist/Leninist, and the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia has replaced Cuban and East European military advisors with Israelis.

Slovo, in his document, is somewhat critical of one-party states and admits that 'in both capitalist and socialist-oriented countries... it is used to prevent, among other things, the democratic organisation of working people in either political or trade union organisations'.

But his criticism is not whole-hearted. 'This is not to say that all one-party states in our continent have in fact turned out to be authoritarian; indeed some of them are headed by the most humane leaders who passionately believe in the democratic process' - but ap-

**"his critique of Stalinism is in line with the general trend of 'Eurocommunism', and part of its aim was probably to make the SACP more acceptable to join in the negotiations with the Pretoria regime"**

parently not passionately enough to permit their people a free choice of government. After all, Kaunda, Joe Slovo's host in Zambia, is one of the benevolent heads of a one-party state, and Zimbabwe's Mugabe, who has now declared his Marxist/Leninism and is determined to establish a one-party state, is a close ally of the ANC.

Slovo's document is of course to be welcomed, although it should be appreciated that it is not an official statement of SACP policy. In raising the sort of questions he does, Slovo opens the way for the possibility of a real debate on the way forward for the South African revolution. But his critique of Stalinism is in line with the general trend of 'Eurocommunism', and part of its aim was probably to make the SACP more acceptable to join in the negotiations with the Pretoria regime in May.

Further there is one aspect of Stalinism which is not rejected in either Slovo's document or the 1989 programme - the theory of the two-stage revolution. First, the theory tells us, there has to be a 'national democratic' revolution in alliance with the nationalists, and then later - perhaps much later - a socialist revolution. And anyway Slovo now thinks that socialism could evolve peacefully through the democratic process!

This theory justifies the SACP's definition of South African society as 'colonialism of a special type' and which theorises the existence of an oppressor white nation and an oppressed black nation. Not only is this in contradiction with the fact that the programme itself states that 'South Africa has a developed capitalist economy', but it also flies in the face of the proclaimed aim of the ANC of a unitary one-nation state. The 'colonialism of a special type' theory is a mirror image of Verwoerd's grand apartheid, which theorised the existence of different nationalities, and which provided his rationale for the establishment of the Bantustans.

In South Africa today, the struggle for national and democratic demands predominates. But the workers, now powerfully organised in trade unions playing an increasingly leading role, will advance their own class and socialist demands within that struggle. Indeed many of the COSATU unions are putting forward transitional, socialist demands. The struggle for national and democratic demands and the struggle for socialism are not separate but combined.

Apartheid in its present, naked form can and will be ended without the end of capitalism. But the full realisation of national and democratic demands can only be achieved by the victory of the working class; the establishment of a workers' state in South Africa. Then we will have the chance to test out if genuine socialism succeeds or fails.

# German socialists debate the way forward

**SOCIALIST OUTLOOK** recently interviewed three socialists from East and West Germany on the meaning of the elections in the GDR.

**PATRICK BAKER** spoke to **BJORN KRUGER**, a member of the Fourth International and the United Left (VL) in East Berlin; **ANNETTE SEESE**, a member of the VL in Leipzig; and **LARS STEINAU**, a member of the United Socialist Party (VSP) from Mannheim in West Germany.

**SO:** First, why do you think the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) ended up scoring so much higher than the Social Democratic Party (SPD), when a few weeks before the opposite result was predicted?

**BK:** There was no general difference between the election programmes of the SPD and the CDU. The only difference was that the CDU said that unification had to be carried through as soon as possible. People tended to think that the only way of solving East Germany's problems was to unify with West Germany in order to get their standard of living. So they felt that to achieve this they had to vote for the party in charge in West Germany – the CDU. They had a very clever election campaign – saying 'If you vote SPD, you won't get a pfennig to invest in the GDR economy'.

**AS:** The right also campaigned around the line that half of the SPD were previously members of the Socialist Unity Party (SEI – the East German Communist Party); so if you vote SPD, you are voting for your previous enemy.

**SO:** Didn't the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) – the renamed Communist Party – do quite well, considering their image?

**BK:** Since February fears have been growing over the cost that East Germans are going to have to pay for unification – such as the high cost of foodstuffs. For many, voting PDS was a way of expressing their fears of the future.

**SO:** In the media you could see a lot of these



"Even people who built workers' councils in the factories voted CDU"

fears being expressed: unemployment, rents going up, property being repossessed; given that, which seems quite a popular feeling, it's still quite surprising that more people didn't vote for the parties that made some pretence at trying to defend previous gains.

**AS:** I think that there's a certain amount of irrationality at the moment: there's a very popular argument that said 'We must go through this bad period, because then our economy will be healthy, and that's why we should be logical and vote for the party that can carry this through. We shouldn't make the mistake of prolonging this agony'. Even people who built workers' councils in the factories also voted CDU.

**BK:** I think the result of the election simply shows the extent of polarisation in the population. Most people who voted CDU didn't do so out of devotion for Christian democracy but simply because they thought that they had to accept some short-term negative effects to get a West German standard of living in the long term. But these people are not an electoral base that could be counted on in the long, or even medium, term. In the next elections I think that we can expect big swings.

**SO:** Why do you think New Forum did so badly compared with the level of support that it had in October/November during the big demonstrations in Leipzig? Opinion polls

then gave them 40 percent support, but they won only 2-3 percent in the elections.

**AS:** They didn't do much work around the elections – they didn't have good slogans like the CDU or SPD. People said 'Yes, New Forum is good, but if they won the elections they couldn't get our country out of its crisis'. Also, at the beginning of the demonstrations, the name New Forum could mean many things to many people – a discussion forum, or a new government.

At the first meetings in the factories when they were invited, workers asked 'What is your economic policy?' and they replied 'We don't have one – we want to work one out with you.' Workers were incredulous – they couldn't take seriously a group which did not have an economic programme. What New Forum mostly offered was self-activity – and this was not enough.

**BK:** There was a view that New Forum had no political profile at all, they are too heterogenous. Then as people swung increasingly in favour of unification, they felt that they had to vote for West German-style parties. The ones who didn't agree with that tended to vote for the party that opposed unification and had the strongest apparatus – and that wasn't New Forum, it was the PDS. This also affected the VL – people said it might have a good programme, but it's too weak, so we'll vote PDS.

**SO:** In terms of the results of the elections, it seems as though some form of government led by the CDU will be the result, whether it's a coalition or whatever. What do you think the results of this will be?

AS: I think the process of unification will be speeded up. However, although the CDU have won the political leadership, they haven't built up a proper political structure nationwide. The Social Democrats have more of a real base. I think that the CDU and the SPD will work together to ensure an efficient economic integration - that's why the CDU need the SPD in coalition; they have the apparatus, but they didn't have so much influence before.

BK: I think this is a question that is difficult to answer - even for the CDU; the pace is too rapid even for them. We now have two Germanys, one with a standard of living and productivity half as high as the other. In order to prevent a mass exodus, standards of living have to be raised through a massive investment in the infrastructure. But you won't find many capitalists that want to invest in projects which are insecure.

**SO:** One question this raises is that of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. A few months ago there was a poll over the idea of a neutral Germany which showed majority support in the West and 90% in the East. NATO is now in a much stronger position with a sympathetic government. Has this been taken up in East or West Germany by the peace movement?

BK: In East Germany there is no force which is capable of mobilising powerful opposition to the project of a unified Germany in NATO yet. Of course the Russians will oppose it but I'm sceptical about whether they are in a position to do anything about it - and I don't think that the project of a neutral Germany will be a particular focus. Of course in the next period there will be many struggles, but I think they are likely to be straightforward workers' struggles - workers have other issues to care about before disarmament.

LS: I think that the question of disarmament will be very important. I think that there could be a new peace movement in West Germany, much more radical than in the early 1980s. I think that it will be important for the East Germans too - maybe it's true that at the moment people don't see it as the main issue, but I think there's an opportunity to build up an anti-militarist consciousness.

**SO:** Is the extreme right, which seems to be fuelled by the *Republikaner*, a real threat?

AS: The GDR extreme right is not solely an import from the *Republikaner* - we have our own fascists! In December and January there were attempts by the SED/Stasi to rebuild their base, using our anti-fascist traditions. Many people reacted by dismissing the extreme right as solely SED election propaganda. But there is a real danger - young whites have certainly been physically attacking the 'Autonom' squatters' movement, and other young left-wingers; they have also



East German CDU leader Maziere: cannot deliver on electoral promises

tried to take over demonstrations. Still, we're not in a 1933-type situation - they don't have the economic situation to fuel their support in the same way.

**SO:** What are the perspectives of the United Left after the elections?

BK: The election results had disastrous effects on the VL. From the beginning it made the error of orienting almost exclusively to the elections. The results of those elections left those that had worked around them demoralised. But the strategy hasn't changed - now the VL is concentrating on the May 7 local elections, which will have the same result - with a real danger of splits or dissolution. I think it's important to adjust our activity towards real movements - in the workplaces, around peace and ecology, and so on - towards grassroots activists.

AS: In Leipzig we have been meeting with other groups - New Forum, Democracy Now, women's groups - to discuss how we can work together on a local level. Most workers aren't open to left groups, so I think we need to try to work with other groups around particular issues?

**SO:** Can you say something about the women's and lesbian and gay movements in East Germany?

AS: Before there was only the DFD - the Women's Democratic Alliance - which only organised coffee mornings, and small groups around particular issues. But during the

demonstrations, women began to play an important role and organised a women's group in New Forum. Then they formed an independent organisation, participating in the round table discussions and putting forward quite left-wing policies.

But popular consciousness around the issue isn't very high - the groups are mainly composed of academics. However I think there are possibilities of growth. In the elections they allied with the Greens - but because

the Greens were at the top of each list, they got all 8 deputies, and refused to allot any of these seats to the women. The women have left the alliance as a result.

Women's groups from Berlin have joined the United Left, while still organising independently. Lesbian and gay groups exist - independent, and linked to the church or the very consistently. Under the SED lesbian and gay groups weren't proscribed, but couldn't campaign publicly - now they're becoming more open.

**SO:** What has been the reaction of the left in West Germany to the elections? What is the VSP's perspective?

LS: The movement of October/November caused quite a lot of demoralisation - much of the West German left had a 'campist' position - not just the CP, but ex-maoists, Social Democrats, the Greens. They tended to defend the East European states in general - not just against capitalism, but also defending them as a whole, bureaucracy included. The movement in the GDR destroyed this picture - and now there is capitalist restoration, the growth of the fascists, the perspective of a new 'Greater Germany', and so on. At the start of the mass movement against stalinism in the GDR the left didn't really react - didn't give much support. Now there is a discussion over whether the PDS will organise in West Germany - some of the Greens hope to organise with them and win influence!

This demoralisation has also affected the VSP - it didn't sufficiently support this movement either. We weren't on the wrong side - we were opposed to the bureaucracy as well as capitalist restoration; but there was some hesitation, and lack of clarity. I think some of the VSP will want to build an organisation with the United Left: it remains to be seen on what programme. We need to prepare for the struggles that will come - I think there are particular possibilities around anti-militarist work - perhaps something like the Swiss campaign to abolish the army.



## Crisis in Jerusalem as Bush turns on the pressure

By Benjamin Cohen

Two issues in the last six months have brought the crisis within Zionism to the fore. The first was when news broke of a mass immigration by Jews from the USSR to Israel, which the Zionists heralded as a rebirth of what was fast becoming a dying project.

However, the euphoria was quickly muted after the second major new event, the collapse of the coalition government of the Labour and Likud Parties, as a result of the failure of the two blocs to reach agreement on conditions for Israeli-Palestinian talks scheduled to open in Cairo with American and Egyptian backing. This highlights the crucial relationship between the Zionist State and US imperialism, as well as sharply illustrating the squabbles between the main factions of the Zionist leadership over who will best defend Israel's integrity as a Jewish state.

The temporary unity of the two ruling parties, which extended through the whole Zionist camp, was the consequence of great expectations over the influx of Soviet Jews; some analysts have estimated that there will be around 300,000 new arrivals in the next three years. But discord arose when Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir declared that 'a large

country is needed for a great migration'. Almost immediately, the Soviet Union threatened to change its emigration policy, the US warned that it would not finance settlement beyond the 1967 'green line', and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), together with the Arab states, announced a campaign to oppose the immigration.

The link made in Shamir's mind is obvious: he thinks that the Soviet Jews are the means by which the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip can be annexed, the two and a half year old Palestinian uprising (the 'intifada') crushed, and Israel's regional strength consolidated. Additionally, the threat of a mass transfer of Palestinians to neighbouring Arab States, an idea which has gained ground over the last two years, is increasingly real.

But Shamir's hardline stance was never enough for Industry Minister Ariel Sharon, architect of the 1982 Lebanon invasion and Likud's arch hawk, who quit the government in protest at Shamir's readiness to negotiate with personally selected representatives of the Palestinians. Ironically, this came in the wake of Labour Minister Ezer Weizmann's dismissal from the cabinet for unauthorised contacts with the PLO. Sharon, who has made his disgust at the 'moderation' of the occupation

regime in its handling of the intifada quite clear, argued that negotiations would lead inevitably to a Palestinian state.

Labour, meanwhile, stepped up the pressure on Shamir to come to the negotiating table. Unable to reach agreement, Shamir sacked Labour leader Shimon Peres from the government, whereupon the other Labour cabinet ministers resigned. Two days later, a vote of no confidence was passed in the Knesset (parliament), transforming Shamir into a caretaker Prime Minister. On April 11th, a special session of the Knesset was held to ratify Peres's government, which he formed after several days of bartering with the religious fundamentalists and the right. At the last minute, two rabbis withdrew their votes, and Peres was back to square one.

It was American pressure which tore the coalition apart; the government was unable to reach agreement on acceptance of the Baker plan for Israeli-Palestinian talks. The US is keen to maintain the stability of the Zionist state and neutralise the Palestinian resistance, through a diplomatic process framed in Washington and Jerusalem that requires hefty concessions from the Palestinians.

An Israeli government actively involved in helping to secure these aims would be a ter-

rific boost to the Bush administration, which has taken full advantage of the crisis of stalinism to reassert US global dominance. Importantly, this does not mean bypassing the PLO, with whom the US has engaged in shaky dialogue since late 1988, when Yasser Arafat declared his acceptance of the 'two state' solution. The US State Department has realised that there is no alternative Palestinian leadership to the PLO. Whether the PLO will accept a *pax americana* is already a subject of debate for the movement inside and outside Palestine; the US is chiefly concerned with gaining support from its Zionist ally for such diplomatic moves. Peres has always been keen to present himself as a trusted friend of the US, although Washington is hesitant as to whether he will deliver.

The unfolding crisis in the Zionist State, which is accentuated by its increasingly uneasy alliance with US Imperialism, simultaneously opens up new vistas for the class struggle in the region. The most important factor is, of course the intifada which, despite periodic warnings to the contrary in the media, shows no sign of letting up. Also of significance is the growing resentment felt by the underprivileged strata in Israeli society towards the Soviet Jewish immigrants.

Taken together, these two elements could well transform the nature of the conflict in Palestine beyond the narrow framework of diplomacy. The very fact of the intifada means that Palestinian statehood is not something which can be compromised. Indeed, the structures that direct the intifada are those of a state in the making; a state, moreover, whose citizens, through the struggle of the last two years, will have ample opportunity to consolidate the popular institutions of direct democracy which they themselves have created.

The intifada is also the principal energy source of the PLO, and it has served as a model to the working class in the surrounding Arab states (witness last year's uprising against IMF imposed cuts in Hashemite-ruled Jordan, and the mass demonstrations, brutally crushed, in Algeria in 1988). Yet Israel has remained intransigent, and the principle question now facing the Zionists is how long such a stance can be maintained.

One indicator is the internal struggle in Israel itself, which graphically exposes the contradictions of Zionism. Most perceive it as an ethnic battle, between the dominant Ashkenazi (European Jewish) minority and the subordinate Oriental majority. In fact, it is a class struggle, albeit with strong ethnic overtones, and it is one which displays the somewhat unique nature of the Israeli working class.

As a working class born of a colonial process, Israeli workers are

divided from their Palestinian counterparts both by superior living standards and by loyalty to Zionism (in the last thirteen years, this has been expressed in a vote for the right wing and the religious parties). However, when compared to the situation of Ashkenazi Jews, it becomes clear that working class Orientals have had a rough deal throughout the existence of the Zionist state. With unemployment in Israel now standing at 120,000, the Oriental Jews are beginning to express resistance to the

entry visas, campaigning instead for direct flights between Moscow and Tel Aviv. In keeping with the demands of Zionist colonisation, Israel is not interested in fighting anti-semitism, whether it comes from Pamyat, whose thugs only recently assaulted a Jewish woman in Moscow, carving a Star of David onto her breast with a flickknife, or from within the state apparatus.

Peres himself admitted as much when he said that the issue was not anti-semitism, but emigration. This statement came a few days after Pamyat threatened a pogrom against the Jewish community in Leningrad.

It may seem odd, in the light of the compression of more than two years of crisis into three weeks, that the issue currently mobilising Israelis is electoral reform. Peres's frantic efforts to build a new government aroused a huge public protest against the country's system of proportional representation, which grants a seat in the Knesset to every party that gains one percent of the vote.

On April 8, 100,000 people gathered in Tel Aviv to demand a new

electoral system - Israel's biggest demonstration since the Peace Now rally condemning the massacres at the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in Beirut in 1982, and much bigger than any of the demonstrations held in solidarity with the intifada. Certainly, the large parties would have much to gain if electoral reform was realised; but the protests are not expressions of support for either Labour or Likud. Rather, they signify the anger felt by Israelis, the majority of whom are secular, at the disproportionate influence of the religious parties, whose support the main Zionist blocs have desperately been trying to win.

Yet abolition of the one percent threshold would, in all likelihood, lead to the disappearance of the Arab national lists from the Knesset. In essence, it is not electoral procedure that is at fault, but the institutionalised power of the rabbis in the Zionist state.

Whatever the outcome of the next few months, two basic facts will remain unchanged. Firstly, the tension between diplomatic and revolutionary solutions to the question of Palestine will continue to disrupt the equilibrium of Zionism. Secondly, as long as there is a Palestinian people there will be a demand for a Palestinian state; every day that passes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is a reminder of this.



Celebrating the first year of the intifada: demonstrators in London

influx of Soviet Jewish immigrants. *Matzpen*, the newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist League (Israeli Section of the Fourth International), notes:

"The massive immigration from the Soviet Union will arouse an outburst of fury from the inhabitants of the distressed neighbourhoods and the development towns..."

Unrest amongst the Oriental Jews, which would follow in a militant tradition that goes back to the 1950s, is the last thing the Zionists need. But that in itself will not solve the problem of Soviet Jews: It should be remembered that in the 1970s, Soviet Jews, facing a fresh wave of anti-semitism, provided the US with an important bargaining chip in its dealings with the stalinists. Gorbachev's leniency on emigration is, though, a consequence of the new foreign policy required for perestroika; the issue is not so much whether the USSR will allow Jews out, as who will let them in.

Despite the fact that most Soviet Jews want to go not to Israel but to the US, the Zionists have succeeded in persuading the Americans to maintain the racist policy of not granting

**"the structures that direct the Intifada are those of a state in the making; a state, moreover, whose citizens will have ample opportunity to consolidate the popular institutions of direct democracy which they themselves have created"**





*No change yet for the Birmingham Six – or for many Irish political prisoners in British jails*

## Ireland: are the times a-changing?

**GEOFF BELL takes a look at the most recent government pronouncements on developments in Ireland, and asks readers some searching questions.**

"Great empires have been overturned. The whole map of Europe has been changed... The modes of thought of men, the whole outlook of affairs, the grouping of parties, all have encountered violent tremendous change... But as the deluge subsides and the waters fall short, we see the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone emerging once again. The integrity of their quarrel is one of the few institutions that has been unaltered in the cataclysm which has swept the world".

The words came from Winston Churchill, speaking in the House of Commons in 1922, but could seem as fitting today. The world changes, Germany marches towards unity, the Soviet Union dissolves, South African armed stragglers come in

from the cold, Soviet armies withdraw from Eastern Europe, but in Ireland... in Ireland, the British government minister responsible for the north eastern bit says that some day, if many things change, he just might talk to elected representatives of Sinn Fein... and all hell breaks loose.

Well, at least all hell breaks loose in Ireland, and for those British with a brief for it: the minister responsible is denounced by such stalwarts of red, white and blueism as Mr K. McNamara, Labour (yes Labour !) spokesperson on Ireland and Dr Paisley of the Democratic Unionists. Everyone else says he's talking sense. Then the storm passes and the British polity gets down to bracing itself against poll tax protests, the disintegration of the NHS, huge mortgage rates and the fall and fall of Margaret Thatcher. And forgets about Ireland, again.

For instance, who is the government minister responsible for the North of Ireland? How many, even of an informed, educated and politically aware readership of a magazine such as this, could answer that question without thinking? Or answer it at all?

And how many of the British populace could answer that question? At a rough guess less than 10 per cent. That is very relevant, and will be returned to.

Anyway, his name is Peter Brooke, and he made his controversial remarks last November, in a series of interviews marking his first hundred days in office. Brooke had been exiled to the North of Ireland after being chairman (sic) of the Tory Party and failing to win over the masses to Thatcherism.

Until these interviews he was thought of as a political lightweight and so it came as a surprise when he said the things he did: first, that it was unlikely that the IRA could be beaten; second that he would not use the word 'Never' in reference to talks with the IRA, and he recalled that the same word was used by a British minister about negotiations with EOKA in Cyprus and was later forgotten; third, that it was likely he would talk with Sinn Fein in the event of an IRA ceasefire.

On behalf of Sinn Fein, Martin McGuinness later described Peter Brooke as the first such British government minister 'with some real

**In the following two articles on developments in Irish politics, GEOFF BELL looks at recent shifts in Tory government policy, and LIAM MAC UAID examines the changes in the Republican movement**

**"of the 2.5 million jobs created in the UK since 1983 only a paltry 18,000 had been in the North of Ireland. In short, the employment situation is bad and will get worse"**

understanding of Irish history', and he invited Brooke to elaborate on his remarks. Since then Brooke has declined to do so, but has repeated his willingness to talk with Sinn Fein in the event of a ceasefire. The IRA has said no ceasefire is on the agenda without a dramatic shift in government policy, but Martin McGuinness, in the April edition of the Irish magazine *Fortnight* had again had friendly words for Brooke, saying he 'does appear to suffer less from the intransigent gung-ho style of

previous secretaries of state'. McGuinness added, 'if that really is the case, and Mr Brooke is genuinely struggling with the intricate realities of Irish politics, then republicans - who want peace and justice as much as anyone - have a responsibility to examine carefully any signals that may hold out even the tiniest opportunity for progress.'

The difficulty in figuring out if the British are really up to anything new is that the signals have been confusing. At the start of March the *Daily Telegraph* revealed that Brooke's junior minister, Richard Needham, had suggested in a speech the previous month to business people in the North of Ireland that the revamped Helsinki Convention in 1992 should guarantee the permanent partition of Ireland. In return, providing they openly accepted partition, Catholics would be allowed some participation in power-sharing in the North and the Helsinki Convention would supposedly guarantee their civil liberties.

But perhaps most telling of all was a report issued at the end of March by the Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre on the economy and job prospects for the six counties. Unemployment there is currently at 14 per cent, and the prediction is that it will, at the best, remain there until 1995. To stop the jobless figures getting higher would need government wages subsidies, a massive growth in internal investment and the promotion of migration of up to 10,000 a year. It was reported that of the 2.5 million jobs created in the UK since 1983



**Loyalist noses were put out of joint by the Anglo-Irish accord**

only a paltry 18,000 had been in the North of Ireland. In short, the employment situation is bad and will get worse.

There is no indication that the Tory government will seek to ameliorate this economic situation by interventionist policies. Other dreams of money from America, and elsewhere, which followed the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement have failed to materialise. Accordingly, the economic and social conditions which helped to create mass support for Irish republicanism in Catholic working class districts will remain. The British government does not seem too worried about this; neither is there any indication and it is battling for Catholic hearts and minds by lowering the repression levels. For example, the alterations in the operational role of the Ulster Defence Regiment which were also promised at the Anglo-Irish Agreement remain undelivered.

Despite its unfulfilled promises, the Anglo-Irish Agreement remains relevant. The British strategy indicated by that agreement - the political defeat of Sinn Fein, the building of a new moderate consensus throughout Ireland and the establishment of a devolved power-sharing administration in the Six Counties - remains in place. What has changed since the Agreement was signed are British tactics within that strategy.

The first problem the British faced, as soon as the ink was dry on the Agreement, was the degree of loyalist opposition to it. This in turn meant that some of the reforms of-

ferred to the respectable Catholics in the S.D.L.P., the Irish government and the Catholic Church could not be delivered for fear of further annoying the Unionists. The occasional outbursts of pique shown by the Irish government - such as playing fast and loose with the British over extradition - have been one consequence, and have further dented the whole strategy. So has the continued support for Sinn Fein, (even though that has ebbed slightly), and the military prowess of the IRA. And while it is true that

there is not the militancy in the opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement within the loyalist camp that there once was, attempts to involve the loyalist leaders in serious talks with the British government still fall at the Agreement fence. Those within loyalism who favour a more conciliatory response to the British are now saying there will be no movement from their side until after the general election.

If that is the case it is not surprising that Peter Brooke has decided to concentrate his attention on the nationalist/republican community. His promise of talks with republicans if they became constitutionalists, and even more dramatically his likening of the North of Ireland situation to other colonial ones, were, it is true no more than public expressions of what some sections of British ruling circles have been saying for years; nevertheless it was the timing of the pronouncement that was important. One factor which informed this was a very public and honest self-examination by republicanism as to where it was going, and a recognition of the failure to establish a significant base of support in the South of Ireland.

This self-examination was nothing approaching the rumours of splits that appeared in the British media, and were probably exaggerated in perception by Brooke and his advisors. But they did provide a useful opening through which Brooke could poke his head, utter a few sentences and leave some puzzled faces behind. Seen in this way the remarks, rather than rep-

**"The British strategy - the political defeat of Sinn Fein, the building of a new moderate consensus throughout Ireland and the establishment of a devolved power-sharing administration in the Six Counties - remains in place"**

resenting some great sea change in British strategy, were just one of those rare examples of British politicians being a little clever in their dealings with the Irish.

Brooke was in a no-lose situation: if his words did strengthen a ceasefire wing within republicanism, all to the good, if they did not, at least they would cause a little disorientation. The degree of seriousness with which Sinn Fein appears to have taken Brooke's words do indeed suggest they have over-responded

to what could very well be seen as little more than a bit of mischief-making. On the other hand, the British political system is always keen to offer prestige, recognition and a seat at a negotiating table to its most intransigent opponents, providing they accept the ground rules of that political system.

Either way, there is no great directional change in British policy taking place. Richard Needham's search for permanent guarantees for partition indicate that Britain's bottom line of support for the existing constitutional boundaries does not change. The slum conditions of the North of Ireland economy testify to the familiar British indifference and political laziness in respect of Ireland, which have done so much to sustain Ireland's British problem over the centuries. Peter Brooke may indeed be an exception to such characteristics, he may wish to prove himself not the political has-been everyone assumed he was when he was exiled by Thatcher, or he may be trying to display his independence from her ultra-Unionism, but with the Tories in crisis and the general election not so far away, the idea that deep-seated political initiative is underway does not stand up to examination. The reality is the growing economic depression in the North of



More flexible on colonial policy than Labour: Is Thatcher heading a rethink on Ireland?

Ireland, the unwillingness of Britain to do anything about it, and the very peripheral place occupied by the North of Ireland in British politics. Not only may the readership of this magazine not know who the Northern Ireland, Secretary of State is, not only does the British general public certainly not know, it can even be wondered if, at times, Margaret

Thatcher remembers. And yet the world is changing. If Thatcher really is on the way out, then so, too, is her own very personal commitment to Unionism. A modern European, like Michael Heseltine, would be unlikely to have any such Unionist hang-ups. It could even be that the traditional strategic impor-

ance of Ireland to Britain may have diminished when new Europe emerges from the current convulsions. In such circumstances the age-old Irish republican belief that sooner or later, if the pressure is applied, Britain will want to cut its losses and get out may indeed come into its own.

The depressing thought is that the one circumstance where this seems unlikely to occur is the event of a Labour victory at the next election. As Labour's attacks on Brooke's willingness to consider a dialogue with Sinn Fein indicate, the truth is that today Labour is more conservative than sections of the Tories on the Irish national question. British Tory government's have always been willing to dump their chauvinistic baggage and colonial mentality when it suits wider interests. For Labour, certainly for someone like Neil Kinnock, such baggage and such a mentality are almost first principles.

So unless Michael Heseltine gets his act together pretty soon, or there is some spectacular development in the war front the politics of the stand-off in the North of Ireland seem unlikely to change for a few years yet. So, sorry folks, but there is no end in sight.



Thatcher remembers.

And yet the world is changing. If Thatcher really is on the way out, then so, too, is her own very personal commitment to Unionism. A modern European, like Michael Heseltine, would be unlikely to have any such Unionist hang-ups. It could even be that the traditional strategic impor-

**"the slum conditions of the North of Ireland economy testify to the familiar British indifference and political laziness in respect of Ireland, which have done so much to sustain Ireland's British problem over the centuries"**

# Why Republicans can't say yes to talks

**"In the South, neither the Labour Party nor the Workers' Party differentiate themselves from the union bureaucrats .... But Sinn Fein instead of counterposing itself to its political enemies and the bureaucrats, tries to play the political game on their terms"**

**Is the IRA going to declare a ceasefire in the near future in exchange for some concessions granted by the present administration in Belfast headed by Peter Brooke? LIAM MAC UAID argues that the answer is 'no'.**

Last year's elections in the 26 counties saw Sinn Fein thoroughly marginalised as a political force. It won 1.2 percent of the vote as compared to 1.99 percent in the 1987 election. By any standards it was a terrible result for an organisation claiming to represent the demand of the Irish people for freedom.

In the circumstances it was not far short of a catastrophe. The Progressive Democrats who split from Fianna Fail because it wasn't sufficiently Thatcherite in its economics and pro-British in its politics saw their share of the vote fall from 11.8 percent to 5.5 percent. Fianna Fail retained its percentage of the vote but lost four seats, one to an independent on the single issue of the closure of a local hospital. Most significantly it lost large numbers of working class votes and only saved several seats because of transfers from Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats.

In fact the election marked a radicalisation in Irish politics. The stalinist Workers' Party and the class collaborationist Labour Party each made a net gain of three seats and even the Greens had two TDs elected. Sinn Fein didn't win a single seat. The Irish working class, reacting against an economic crisis and years of austerity offensives, abandoning Fianna Fail, turned not to Sinn Fein but to two parties whose economic perspectives are really no different from the bourgeois parties.



**Gerry Adams: wants new approach to protestant workers**

Sinn Fein, in the eyes of radicalising Irish working class voters, was not seen as a political alternative to the crisis of capitalist rule.

In the North the situation is not quite so dire. In last year's council elections Sinn Fein won 69,000 votes, 11 percent of the total votes cast. The party considers this to be the solid Republican bedrock. Another more accurate way of describing the same phenomenon is that the wave of political radicalisation that followed the H-Block struggle and was expressed by the electoral rise of Sinn Fein has been halted.

This has created two political poles in the Republican movement. At one extreme, activists talk of the need to dig in for a 'long war'. In practice, because the lack of mass struggles allows the repressive forces to concentrate almost entirely on the Republican movement, the armed struggle has become more adventurist, and civilian deaths now comprise a greater proportion of those killed by the IRA (39 percent).

To compound this, Shorts aircraft factory, a major industrial employer of protestants in Belfast has been attacked twice in recent months, once in the same week that Gerry Adams

spoke at the Ard Fheis on the need to address the needs of protestant workers.

At the other pole, and these are people who are being squeezed at the moment, are those Republicans who want to turn to the Southern working class and make Sinn Fein a working class party in its politics as well as its social composition. In both the North and the South there is a large political space which could be filled by a class struggle party with an understanding of the national question which reflects the view of most of the Irish working class.

In the North there is simply no opposition to the collaboration of the trade union bureaucracy in discrimination. Consequently most nationalist workers have only a dim understanding of the connection between trade union struggles and the national question. The SDLP, a member of the Socialist International and party of the Catholic bourgeoisie has an attitude to class struggle that makes Kinnock look like a Trotskyist.

In the South, neither the Labour Party nor the Workers' Party differentiate themselves from the union bureaucrats who participate in what is called 'The Programme of National Recovery', and do not challenge the need for cuts. But Sinn Fein is conscious of its isolation, and instead of counterposing itself to its political enemies and the bureaucrats, it tries to play the political game on their terms.

Between the two poles, there is a gradation of views. The Republican leadership is pragmatic and occupies the centre ground because its principal concern is to hold the movement together. In this it has been remarkably successful, thus far only losing some of the more politically primitive traditionalists.

But sometimes there is a political

price to be paid for organisational unity. The mechanism through which the leadership preserves the unity of the Republican movement is to integrate those ideas which it either finds attractive or can't answer, even when these result in an uncomfortable combination. So, for example, virtually every election in the North sees some sort of appeal from Sinn Fein for a pact or alliance with the SDLP.

During the Hunger Strike in 1981, the SDLP didn't dare stand against Bobby Sands when he sought election to Westminster. But the Republicans don't properly grasp that this was because of the SDLP's terror at being crushed. The SDLP is the most enthusiastic supporter of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, an agreement whose principal aim is to destroy Republicanism as a force in Irish politics. What earthly reason is there for the SDLP to form an electoral pact with the Sinn Fein?

Similarly in the South, Sinn Fein makes constant appeals to Fianna Fail. In a press conference given just after a Dublin court decided not to extradite him, Owen Carron implored Fianna Fail to put an end to all extradition. They are no more likely to repeal the Section 31 restrictions on broadcasting statements by Sinn Fein members; indeed such appeals to them on this basis only reinforce the view that they are the parliamentary defenders of Irish nationalism.

Appealing to the bourgeois parties as representatives of nationalist voters is not the same thing as trying to break the large numbers of working class voters from these parties by putting demands on them. To do so demands a clear understanding of the class nature of the SDLP and Fianna Fail. This is lacking.

Yet at the same time statements by Adams and the pages of *Republican News* are filled with references to the working class. Holding the movement together demands that the adoption of programmatic advances is done at the speed at which it is felt the average cumann (branch) can handle the change. Meanwhile the working class, the Brits and the bourgeoisie move on.

Without their common acceptance of the necessity for armed struggle



The 100,000 at Bobby Sands' funeral was the equivalent of 1.1 million in Britain

against British imperialism, the various strands of opinion in the Republican movement do not have a great deal in common ideologically. They include rampant Catholics, feminists, Marxists who became Republicans, Republicans who are becoming Marxists, people who in Britain or Europe would be quite happy as social democrats and large numbers of people who just hate the British army in their streets.

Accommodating all these is something of a triumph of pragmatism but it produces such equivocation as Sinn Fein's position on abortion and its reluctance to campaign openly for divorce. It also means that a lot of what happens in the world is simply ignored because it cannot be fitted within the movement's ideological framework.

This has very direct political consequences. While the Republicans happily identify themselves with the Palestinian intifada and quote Nelson Mandela's comments on armed struggle approvingly, they just do not know how to respond to the collapse of Stalinism.

This is partly because they do not understand it, and partly because there is some Stalinist influence in their ranks. However the Workers' Party has recently expelled a leading ideologue, Eoghan Harris, who argued that socialism is now nothing but an old peoples' dream. Meanwhile Workers' Party leader Ponsias de Rossa propounds market solutions to the crisis of the Irish economy. Yet, at a time when a political enemy with a large working class base is in turmoil, the

Republican movement is not able to produce a critique or attempt to win its supporters.

Of necessity this survey of the present situation of the Republican Movement has been gloomy. But remember that 100,000 people attended Bobby Sands' funeral in 1981; this is the equivalent of a crowd of almost 1,125,000 in Britain. Remember also the awe-inspiring heroism of innumerable Republican militants who every day face sudden death at the hands of the UDA, UDR, RUC and British army.

Most important of all remember the resilience of the nationalist working class. There have been worse troughs in the present struggle. Between 1974 and 1979 the Republican movement was little more than a military machine and it was the mass movement created by the campaigns in defence of the prisoners which stimulated its political development.

There is no mass movement dominated by the Republicans at the moment and even the recent extradition victories have been the product of conflicts inside the Irish ruling class rather than the fruits of mass struggle.

It is the political heterogeneity of the Republicans which allows us to predict that they will not lay down their arms in the foreseeable future. There is a layer of active and passive support which they know they can rely on. The challenge facing them is to lead the Irish working class in the battle against British imperialism and Irish capitalism – and that is the challenge they have still to meet.

**“while the Republicans happily identify themselves with the Palestinian intifada and quote Nelson Mandela's comments on armed struggle approvingly, they just do not know how to respond to the collapse of Stalinism”**



The boot seems always to be on the other foot: and the other foot is always on a policeman! The March Poll Tax demo.

## Tory crisis: why Kinnock won't put the boot in

The news that fewer young people in Britain recognise the name of Neil Kinnock than Nelson Mandela or Mikhail Gorbachev will surprise few Labour activists: it is perhaps more surprising that a Labour Party which has veered from low profile to no profile on all the key issues of the day should be 20-24 percent ahead in the opinion polls.

This lead has little to do with Labour's policies. The Tories' handling of the economy, together with the massive hatred of the Poll Tax and Kenneth Clarke's NHS reforms, have followed the massive popular support for the ambulance workers, helping to make the Thatcher government the most unpopular for a long time. Since the self-destruction of the 'centre' parties which formed the 'Alliance' in 1987, Labour has been the main beneficiary, picking up a massive lead in the opinion polls, and achieving the spectacular by-election victory in mid-Staffordshire; now there is the probability that on May 3 the Party could even improve on its previous peak support of 1986.

Confidence in the Tories' handling of the economy, usually the issue over which they keep a lead over Labour in the polls, has evaporated. Not only does inflation look like topping the 10 percent mark, with interest (and most significantly mortgage interest) rates showing no sign of falling, but the Tories are under attack from their 'own' side. Both the director-general of the CBI and the governor of the Bank of England have disputed Chancellor John Major's more 'optimistic' forecasts for the economy, and underlined the Tories' failure to avert the decline in manufacturing investment.

A survey of City and academic economists for the *Economist*

**As the Tories' crisis worsens, swinging votes Kinnock's way, Labour's response seems to get weaker, argues PETE FIRMIN.**

**But is this simply the new leadership style of Neil's team, or the fruits of Labour's commitment to reforming a capitalist system plunged deeper into crisis by Thatcher's policies?**

showed two-thirds believing that Labour's John Smith would make a better Chancellor than John Major. Even the (fiddled) figures for the fall in unemployment are no longer heralded as a major achievement, since the Tories recognise them as double-edged. The removal of high unemployment as a psychological deterrent to fighting for significant wage rises is the last thing the Tories want at a time of rising inflation.

The Tories' 'natural allies' have deserted them on other issues too, with the banks withdrawing from the student

loans scheme and the Engineering Employers' Federation criticising the proposed arrestment of wages of non-payers of the Poll Tax as 'detrimental to industrial relations'.

Thatcher's isolation internationally on a wide range of issues only adds to the impression that she is a lame duck. Now that the Tories are on the run over their economic policies they seem unable to recapture lost ground on anything, even their usually reliable standbys of 'law and order' - with crime figures still sky-high, and Thatcher's barmy football identity card scheme abandoned - and racism, with Norman Tebbit leading a reactionary revolt over the immigration of Hong Kong business people that makes the Thatcher leadership seem like woolly liberals in comparison.

### Skilled workers desert the Tories

Thatcher won the support of an important layer of the skilled working class in 1983 and 1987 because her strategy for restoring the profitability of British capitalism not only seemed to be working, but also seemed to be in their interests.

The 'share-owning, property-owning democracy' was always a

sham, but the myth could be sold to those who gained from it in the short term. The ideological benefits of privatisation and council house sales were easy to accept while the share market was buoyant and interest rates were low. Now they begin to be revealed for what they always were – part of a strategy of putting all industry into the hands of large financial companies and attacking the 'welfare state'. Tax cuts, even ones which disproportionately benefit the rich, look different once they no longer offset higher mortgage payments, inflation and the Poll Tax.

Thatcher's policies have always been a direct and immediate attack on that section of the working class which is low paid or unemployed. But in providing short term benefits to better off sections, she managed to persuade them that her policies were in their interests, despite pangs of conscience which have meant that the Tories have always done worse in the opinion polls on issues such as unemployment and the NHS.

Now the economic crisis, and particularly the Poll Tax, mean that the chickens are coming home to roost. Until now the Tories have been very careful to attack only one section of the class at a time. Indeed, this was part of a pre-planned strategy, down to the detail of what order to take on different unions (steel workers first, miners only after other significant sections had



The Tories have their chickens coming home to roost: the Labour Party has these two

been defeated). The difference with the Poll Tax is that they are attacking nearly everyone at once.

### Thatcher's loyal lieutenants

Of course, the Tories have been ably assisted throughout their 11 years of attacks on the working class by the Labour and trade union bureaucracy. From their persistent refusal to lead any defence of trade union rights or jobs and working conditions, to their political bankruptcy in failing providing any convincing ideological alternative to 'the market', which is now the starting point of the Labour programme, Thatcher couldn't have done it without them.

As the Tories' crisis becomes starker, this becomes more and more obvious. At the height of the Tories' unpopularity, the TUC and Labour Party are not willing to defend the working class against the universal attack on its living standards and democratic rights represented by the Poll Tax. Instead they unite in condemning any notion of non-payment, refuse to call even demonstrations against it, and merely say 'Pay up and vote Labour when the time comes'.

Since becoming Labour Leader in 1983, Kinnock has avoided giving support, let alone encouragement, to any section of the working class in conflict with the Tories, from the miners through to the ambulance workers. The most he has ever done is call for arbitration. More often his contributions have been seen to attack or undermine the working class fightback, as when he condemned violence by miners who fought back against police brutality without even the notional 'even-handedness' of condemning police violence, and called on railworkers to call off their strike and accept BR's pay offer last year.

Even within the rules of the parliamentary game, Kinnock has refused to attack the Tories, backing them on 'national security' grounds over the Zircon spy satellite affair and leaving it to backbenchers (occasionally even Tory ones) to probe issues like Colin Wallace's claims of psychological warfare in the North of Ireland and even refusing to go onto the offensive when this

## Labour's electoral strategy

**The supposed high point of Labour's general election campaign of 1987 was the Kinnock video, widely acclaimed by those who matter (the public relations 'experts') as 'much better than the Tories'. Yet the Tories still won, because more people still preferred their policies to Labour's bland 'washing powder adverts'.**

**Come the next general election, Labour's campaign promises to be even less political, judging by the standards of the mid-Staffs by-election. To Kinnock, cashing in on the Tories unpopularity means making no policy statements or promises whatsoever.**

**Kinnock's favoured type of candidate is Glenda Jackson or Peter Mendelson, polished media personalities with right wing politics.**

**An indication of the determination to prevent the left's voice being heard in the election is given by the way in**

**which Walworth Road clamped down on those constituencies threatening to produce manifestos which differed from the 'official' line on the Poll Tax for May's council elections. Those Parties whose manifestos promised not to fine people for non-payment of the Poll Tax were told to remove this or have a manifesto written by regional officials imposed upon them, and face suspension of the Party.**

**Yet in the general election the stakes are too high for the Left to allow its voice to be silenced. To keep our heads down and campaign on Kinnock's policies, or to duck out of the campaign altogether, would be to evade our responsibilities. There has to be a Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory which, while calling for a vote for Labour, demands that a Labour government implement policies in the interests of the working class.**



Smile! It's candid camera! Has Kinnock persuaded these keen photographers to run him off a set of contact prints to ease expulsions?

## The witch-hunt and the Poll Tax

The witch-hunt that has been going on for years against individuals, particularly *Militant* supporters, and Constituency Parties is once again focussed on Merseyside, with the Labour Party machinery stepping in to protect Frank Field by attacking both *Militant* and *Socialist Organiser*. The additional objective is to prevent Wallace from selecting a left candidate. But the witch-hunt is also being stepped up a notch around the Poll Tax.

Councillors from Brighton to Strathclyde are facing disciplinary action for refusing to vote to set a Poll Tax. Many on the left with a track record of opposition to cuts and the Poll Tax have been prevented from standing as councillors on May 3. In Swansea the selection of the Chair of the Wales anti-Poll Tax Federation (a *Militant* supporter) to replace the sitting mayor has been overturned, the party suspended, and the individual concerned now faces expulsion.

This systematic witch-hunt has now extended to letters from Walworth Rd telling parties to have nothing to do with

the All-Britain Federation of Anti-Poll Tax groups, threatening to take action against the activists involved.

Kinnock's offensive against the anti-Poll Tax movement fits nicely in with the attempts of the media to label the movement as the puppets of *Militant*, the Socialist Workers Party or Class War (with the additional neat touch of the right wing and the press blaming *Militant* for the NUT conference decision for industrial action). At the same time we have the scandalous decision of Labour-run Hackney Council to suspend Andy Murphy for being interviewed on Class War's attitude to the Trafalgar Square 'riot'.

The left must have a principled position of fighting this witch-hunt both inside and outside the Labour Party with the broadest possible defence of democratic rights. Socialists must refuse to accommodate to what the witch-hunters consider acceptable, and instead step up our involvement in the mass anti-Poll Tax movement.

unearthed a can of worms.

Kinnock's concern has been solely with a fruitless search for issues on which he could unite with 'wet' Tories or even the Lords against Thatcher. Defence of working class interests hasn't entered his thinking. Now, at a time when the Tories are less popular than ever, he doesn't even call on them to announce a general election putting their policies 'to the verdict of the people', something Harold Wilson regularly called on the Tories to do. Instead he only seems to echo the bleatings of the Tory 'wets' that Thatcher is bad for the country. It is almost as if he is arguing for a change of Tory leader rather than confronting their policies - perhaps not realising that Thatcher's personal unpopularity is a major factor in Labour's electoral support.

### Kinnock's strategy

The Labour leadership's concern has been solely for respectability and acceptance by the ruling class and their media. Turning their backs on the working class, they have done the full round of businessmen's lunches and conferences to win the capitalists' confidence. This quest for respectability reached its most sickening depths when Roy Hattersley, in his role as Shadow Home Secretary, called - without benefit of trial or evidence - for 'the stiffest possible sentences' for those involved in the Poll Tax 'riot'.

This has gone hand-in-hand with a remorseless drive to ditch every last Labour policy which contained even a whiff of socialism, and clamping down on the party democracy which could threaten this course.

The 'lesson' Kinnock drew from the Wilson





**Kinnock's style of twist could leave us all on the rock and roll**

and Callaghan governments of 1974-79 is not that they came to grief because they attempted to resolve the crisis of capitalism by attacking working class living standards, but that they weren't ruthless enough in doing so, and failed to suppress the revolt within the labour movement against these policies.

The austerity measures of those governments met increasing working class resistance, both through strikes and within the decision-making bodies of the labour movement, culminating in the autumn of 1978 in the rejection of incomes policy by both the TUC and Labour

Party conference, and then the 'Winter of Discontent'. The defeat of Callaghan in May 1979 was followed by the adoption of left policies on a wide range of issues, wide-ranging measures towards Party democracy, and the near-election of Tony Benn as deputy leader in 1981.

For some sections of the media and their paymasters in the ruling class it appeared that the Labour Party might change fundamentally, to become a socialist party, committed to more than tinkering reforms.

As a party based on working class support, there are, in the last analysis, two possible routes Labour can take. One is to embrace the system, and reassure the ruling class that - despite its more unruly voters - it is a 'respectable' party committed to policies in the interests of capitalism and better able to control the working class when the Tories are unpopular. The other would be to break with the system, and fight for the interests of the working class and socialism against capitalism.

Kinnock, like every previous Labour leader, is committed unquestioningly to the first road and implacably opposed to the second. In desiring to become prime minister he can see no further than wanting to gain recognition from the bourgeois media. That there is not the slightest concern with winning working class support for policies which might contain the merest hint of a challenge to capitalism was symbolised early on by the closing down of even the mealy-mouthed *Labour Weekly* newspaper, and its replacement with the cynical mail shot glossy *Labour Party News*, the very antithesis of a campaigning publication and epitome of Kinnockism.

Kinnock has been preoccupied with two issues: firstly, reversing all policy commitments unpalatable to the ruling class, such as nationalisation, repeal of anti-union laws, increases in public spending and unilateral disarmament. Secondly, he has attempted to close down all avenues of resistance to these policy changes both now and in the future. This explains his opposition to the self-organisation of black people and women in the Party, the closing down of the Labour Party Young Socialists, and the prolonged witch-hunt, involving the suspension of Constituency Parties and districts which dared to cross him, and the expulsion of individuals (primarily *Militant* supporters).

The attack on Party democracy continues relentlessly, with the proposals to reverse mandatory reselection of MPs (one of the gains of post-1979) for all sitting MPs, the extension of 'one member, one vote' (and postal ballots) to all local party decisions, the downgrading of party conferences, both national and regional, from sovereign bodies to talking shops, and ultimately the abolition of the block vote.

The eventual abolition of the block vote is the most far-reaching of these changes, intended to cut off the possibility of working class opposition to a Labour government's policies reaching into

## Labour Party Socialists Conference

MAY 19th & 20th

This conference offers the opportunity for the building of a broad, democratic organisation of the Labour Left at a time when Labour is riding high in the polls and active resistance to the Tories is greater than at any time in the last eleven years.

In addition to discussing what policies we should be fighting for Labour to adopt in the 1990s and the democratic changes we want to bring about in Labour's structures, the conference will be discussing campaigns over the witch-hunt, Poll Tax and general election.

This is an essential conference for all Party members interested in fighting the politics of 'new realism'.

The Future Of Socialism In The Labour  
Party

SHEFFIELD POLY

The Student Union, Pond Street

Labour conference and overturning the leadership. Of course, despite the demagoguery of some, this would not restrict the influence of trade union bureaucrats on Labour policy, but rather make it even harder for the rank and file to call them to account.

Kinnock wants to be able to tie the bureaucrats to support for Labour policies, such as wage controls, without any backlash from their members. He has of course, had to tread carefully over the speed with which he has moved on this, attempting to ensure that the CLPs are fully 'tamed' before giving them sole decision-making rights.

### 'Sit back and wait to be elected'

With these elements in place, Kinnock's approach has been to wait for the Tories to become unpopular. He couldn't do otherwise, given that Labour has no fundamentally different policies

to offer. Indeed, given Labour's response is always 'why should we say what the Tories should do with the economy, we're not in government' it is hard to see what the economists 'prefer' in Labour's programme.

Above all else, Kinnock desires a smooth change of government without unrest as part of dampening working class expectations of a Labour government.

The risk - one Kinnock is prepared to take because he puts the stability of capitalism even above his own desire to become prime minister - is that the Tories could recover by the time of the general election. Harold Wilson's Labour government nearly did after facing a similarly large deficit in the polls. A change in the Tory leadership (not unlikely if their crisis continues over the summer) and an economic recovery in 1991 could make this at least a remote possibility.

The Tories lagged a long way behind in the polls during stages of the miners' strike. The way to ensure they don't recover would be to support the struggles against them, but this is of course the exact opposite of what Kinnock wants.

### Labour's contradictions

In wanting to suppress Party democracy, Kinnock recognises the contradiction for the Labour Party. While desiring the endorsement of the ruling class, it relies on the votes and support of the working class. Regardless of Kinnock's insistence that a Labour government will promise nothing of any substance, a Labour election victory will raise expectations in the working class that it will carry out measures in their interest.

Indeed, as the Tories hit more and more problems, working class confidence is boosted even in advance of an election. Conflict between a working class fighting for its interests and a Labour government committed to austerity measures in the interests of capitalism are virtually inevitable, even if we can't predict the how and when.

This is already coming to the fore over the Poll Tax, where Kinnock's line of 'Pay Up and Vote Labour' - the equivalent of the old promise of 'pie in the sky' - conflicts with the desire of millions to defeat the Poll Tax here and now. The Labour leadership's insistence that it would take them two years after an election to replace the Poll Tax with an unspecified 'roof tax' makes their line even less attractive,



Fighting the Poll Tax today ... the 'roof tax' tomorrow?

POLL TAX?  
IT'S AN  
ABOMINATION  
SCRAP IT!

and is an indication of their problems to come.

### The Tasks of the Left

The view that Thatcher was unbeatable, or at best could only be beaten by pacts with the Liberals and SDP, put about not so long ago by *Marxism Today*, has been replaced by one that says that Kinnock's policies are the only way to beat Thatcher. Yet a Labour government carrying out the Party's current policies could be a disaster for the working class.

Unless we build a pole of attraction which can offer an alternative political lead, against a Labour government if necessary, conflict between Labour and the working class will lead to demoralisation and disillusionment, with the possible replacement of Labour by a Tory government even further to the right, as happened in 1979.

The tasks of the Labour Left are clear. In addition to building the largest possible opposition now to Kinnock's policy and constitutional changes, we have to link up with those engaged in struggle against the Tories (especially over the Poll Tax), offering both a perspective for these struggles and laying the basis for opposition to the policies of a Kinnockite government.

Despite Kinnock's fervent wishes, such opposition will spill over into the Party itself; our task is to ensure it is organised and united around a clear alternative. The groundwork for this can be laid by drawing those fighting the Tories now into the Party on a perspective of opposing the politics of 'new realism'.

The election of a Labour government would most probably lead to an initial demobilisation of struggles, while people waited to see what it would do. (We only need think of the opposition we would meet in arguing for continued resistance to the Poll Tax after a Labour victory.) But we cannot wait, we need to start now if an alternative is to gain credibility.

While it would be wrong to pose the Labour Party Socialists conference in Sheffield on May 19th/20th as 'the answer' for the left, it can go some way towards preparing the left for the tasks ahead, even at a time when the left is weaker than it has been for years. The setting up of a national, democratic organisation of the Labour Left and campaigns around the Poll Tax and the witch-hunt, and the launching of a left campaign for the general election would be a big step forward.

# A new world order?

**It is widely recognised that the crisis in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe will have knock-on effects worldwide. But, says PHIL HEARSE, the crisis of Stalinism is just one more sign of the collapse of the world system which emerged from World War 2.**

**The long struggle of the twentieth century - what Lenin called the 'epoch of imperialism' - is building up into a crescendo of planet-wide economic and social change. The way in which this evolves will determine not only the immediate future of socialism, but whether socialism is an historic possibility.**

The post-war history of capitalism falls into three main phases: the immediate post-war reconstruction, the long post-war boom starting in most countries in the early 1950s, and the prolonged crisis and spiral towards recession which has lasted since the late 1960s.

Already the post-war crisis has lasted twenty years, as long as the initial boom itself. In Marxist terms, this is a crisis of 'overproduction', a crisis of profitability. The uniqueness of the present world situation is that the elements are beginning to emerge of a radical solution to this crisis, which could set off a new wave of capitalist accumulation and economic boom. The key factors here would be the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe and the defeat of revolution in the third world, which in turn would create the preconditions for defeats of the working class in the advanced capitalist west. We will look at the different elements of the world crisis and finally discuss how they combine.

## The 1980s 'upturn'

When Thatcher came to power in 1979 her government deliberately crashed the British economy, creating a massive deflationary recession. The aim of this deflation, which sent unemployment rocketing over the 3 million mark for the first time, was to 'shake out' and restructure British industry.

When Reagan was elected in 1980 everyone expected that he would do the same to the USA. But 'Reaganomics' turned into something very different, in some ways the very opposite. Through 'military Keynesianism', an enormous increase in the state financed military budget, Reagan turned the United States into a boom economy. Yuppies were born of Ronald Reagan, as the American middle class enjoyed a consumption

bonanza.

But this boom was not the result of any dynamic surge of US manufacturing. In fact, compared with Germany and Japan, US manufacturing was declining. The consumption boom was supplied by imports and financed by credit. Thus the expansion created two unwanted effects; the United States was turned into the world's biggest debtor nation, as high interest rates sucked in foreign loans. And the government's own spending deficit mushroomed into the trillions.

The net result was to generate a surge in the economies of all the major capitalist countries. Thatcher's election victory in 1987 was not based solely on the defeat of the miners' strike, but on the fact that the British economy had been dragged out of recession by this US-led world mini-boom - and thus important sections of the middle class and even sections of the working class had seen their living standards hold up.

The signal for the coming end of the mini-boom, showing its ultimate unsustainability, was the November 1987 stock market crash. The crash revealed the overpricing of shares worldwide - the fact that boom was based on speculative borrowing and not a fundamental restoration of the rate of profit. Like all speculative booms, American military Keynesianism had staved off the crisis but only by creating bigger contradictions which would emerge at a later stage.

Now the world economy is heading into



**Third world poverty? No! It's Britain's Barrow-in-Furness under Thatcher**

recession. That is the basic reason why Thatcher can't turn the British economy round in time for the next election. Only in the medium and long term is there any prospect of a new economic boom: and that requires not just the 'normal' workings of the world economy, but massive changes in world politics.

## Debt crisis

The drift towards deeper crisis in the world capitalist economy has had its first and most dramatic effects in the 'third world'. The truly gigantic aspects of this crisis are often underestimated in the West. Since 1983, net capital transfers to the third world have been negative - in other words the poor are being forced to subsidise the rich countries. In 1977 the net outflow of capital from the imperialist powers to the less developed economies of the third world was \$36.9bn: by 1986 it had exactly reversed with a net capital flow to the West of \$74bn.

Huge outflows of loans to the less developed countries started when the banks were awash with 'petro-dollars' in the 1970s. But Reaganite deficit financing sucked investment into the United States from the early 1980s onwards. The downward pressure on commodity prices, coupled with the problems

of 'third world' industries breaking into protected imperialist markets have made it impossible for Latin American and African countries to service, let alone repay their loans: they have been caught in a spiral of debt. The trend towards the expansion of the third world economies has collapsed, to be replaced with IMF austerity packages.

The 'newly industrialising countries' of Asia - Singapore, Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong - are partial exceptions - and even their growth has sharply slowed down. The fundamental characteristic of imperialism - in which the less developed economies sink ever deeper into poverty to pay interest charges which fund the profits of bankers in the 'first world' - is reasserting itself with a vengeance.

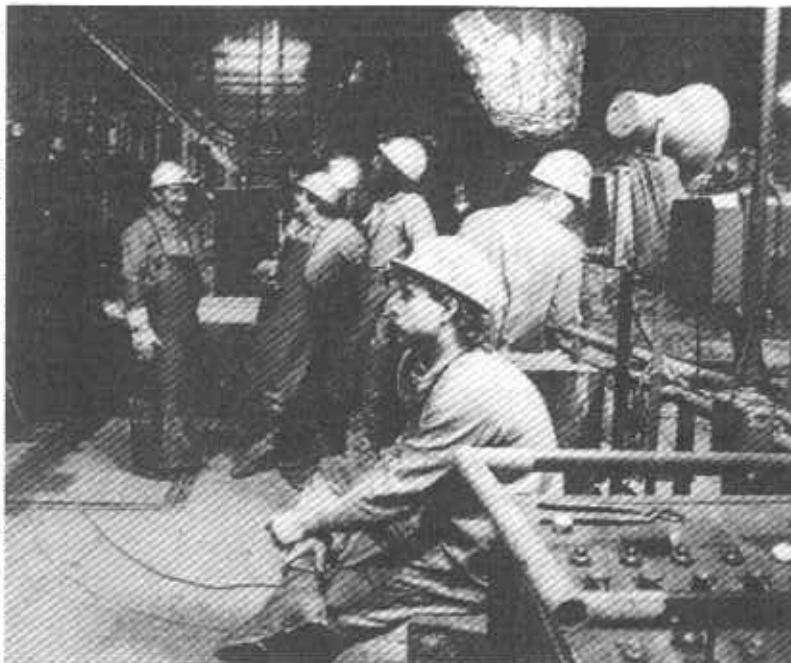
A question mark looms over this process. Will the deepening impoverishment of the masses in the semi-colonial countries spark off new revolutionary explosions? This question is fundamentally one of political leadership and perspective for the mass organisations of the oppressed: it cannot be answered merely by reference to the economic facts. The defeat in Nicaragua is part of a growing political offensive against the masses of the third world, spearheaded by the United States, but aided by the deepening 'peaceful coexistence' policies of Gorbachev, which played a faithful role in Nicaragua.

Any idea of an automatic, triumphant and uninterrupted upsurge by the people of the world's poor countries against imperialism has to be rejected. While in a whole series of countries there are massive revolts against imperialist oppression, there are formidable obstacles in the way of new revolutionary victories.

### The collapse of Stalinism

Central to the hastening collapse of Stalinism, which involves all the post-capitalist states and the communist parties, is the stagnation and failure of the Soviet economy. At root, this is a crisis arising from the lack of dynamism or ability to innovate which paralyses the development of the bureaucratic command economy. Only the military sector partially escaped this, but only at the price of stripping the rest of the economy of much of its productive potential.

The lurch into 'deep stagnation' in the USSR was highlighted by the 1980s inflationary boom in the West. Living standards of part of the population in the West held up or improved. In the USSR it only stagnated. The



East German workers did not think they were voting for unemployment

microchip revolution was able to make some progress in the West; in the USSR it never got off the ground. Thus the gap in the productive potential of East and West has increased.

Socialists of course should have no illusions; the partial successes of Western capitalism were at the expense of the 40 million unemployed, the millions more excluded from the 'two-thirds society', and at the expense of the third world. Capitalism has not

**"Any idea of an automatic, triumphant and uninterrupted upsurge by the people of the world's poor countries against imperialism has to be rejected ... there are formidable obstacles in the way of new revolutionary victories"**

stabilised itself; but its dynamism far outstripped that of the bureaucratic economies.

Perestroika and glasnost are the response of the reform wing of the Soviet bureaucracy to this crisis. But the end of the Brezhnev doctrine has given the space to the masses of Eastern Europe to push through their political revolt. The consequence has been the dramatic collapse of Stalinist rule.

But this collapse takes place in a very difficult context from the viewpoint of the struggle for world socialism. The absence of any viable examples of socialist democracy in the real world have created a situation in which myths of capitalist prosperity and democracy have wide currency in Eastern Europe. There is a great danger that the revolt will lead to a restoration of capitalism. In particular if the

reunification of Germany is achieved on a capitalist basis, the configuration of forces on a world scale will be transformed.

### Capitalist competition

The modern nation state was born with capitalism; the integration of previously separate capitalist states with one another has only ever been permanently achieved by conquest. But in the face of the rise of Japanese and US economic power, there have been four decades of moves towards European integration. Before the events in Eastern Europe, it looked as if the world capitalist economy would soon revolve around three major blocs: Japan, dominating the four newly industrialised countries in Asia; the United States, with domination in Latin America; and Western Europe, trying to make

openings to the East, but in which Germany and France would be the strongest nations.

The events in Eastern Europe have achieved a partial disruption of this schema. European economic integration may still proceed, but only under the absolute domination of Germany. Even in the unlikely event that German reunification were not achieved, West Germany would still be the main beneficiary of new economic links with the east. Although the costs of reunification will be high for West Germany, eventually it is bound to represent an immense increase in economic and political power. A united capitalist Germany would emerge on much more equal terms with the United States and Japan.

The configuration of the world system will of course also depend on whether a series of smaller capitalist states emerge in Eastern Europe and from the independence of a series of Soviet nationalities.

### Development of the crisis

Now do the different elements of the new world situation fit together? If we look at it from the viewpoint of the prospects for world capitalism, then a number of things are clear. In the context of the emerging capitalist downturn, the long phase of capitalist recession has not been overcome. To boost profitability for another long boom would require a combination of the re-establishment of capitalism in one or a series of Eastern European countries with the continued process of assault against revolt in the third world, and major new defeats of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries. In other words, it requires world imperialism to launch a wide-ranging offensive and win enormous victories. There are considerable obstacles to such a process.

Since the 1974-5 recession there has been a protracted attack on the position of the working class in the advanced capitalist West.

Unemployment has gone well above 30 million, whole sectors of the population have been excluded from affluence, and trade union membership has declined. Since the late 1970s a wave of capitalist restructuring, based on a new 'post-fordist' model of accumulation, attempting to reduce the state sector and restructure industry has swept the West. Yet the basic strength of the working class still remains intact. Recession and slump, as the 1930s showed, have limited use in defeating the working class since they bring ruination to sections of capitalists as well.

Even defeats like that suffered by the miners in Britain have been partial. As events since last summer have shown, important sections of the working class are as willing as ever to wage a fight. No generalised defeat of the workers has occurred in any country, despite some bad setbacks. The worst setbacks have probably been the collapse of trade unionism in Spain (although there is a revival of struggle there) and the chronic inability of the US labour movement to stem the decline in the proportion of the working class which is trade unionised.

There is nothing in the new political situation which suggests sweeping new victories against the workers in the advanced capitalist countries will be easy to achieve.

The restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe would of course provide the crucial link in any long-term project for restructuring the world system and creating a new boom. But it can only be done on the basis of utilising the East as a source of very cheap labour, and renovating industry around its most profitable sectors:

In other words, it requires - as the example of Poland shows - vicious austerity, bankruptcies and mass unemployment, and the removal of the state welfare systems. It could only happen on the basis of a defeat, crushing and prolonged, of the East European workers.

That is not exactly the future which the citizens of these countries opted for when they rose up against stalinism! The prospect is therefore one of a long struggle for the future of Eastern Europe. The masses will certainly resist austerity, against the attempts of both the West and the bureaucracy to impose it.

Imperialism appears, in the short term at least, to have a much freer hand in the 'third world'. Despite the grave dangers facing imperialism in South Africa as de Klerk tries to carry out a controlled transition to preserve capitalism as apartheid is at least partially dismantled, Gorbachev's policy of settling



**Undernourished in Honduras: the Nicaraguan setbacks may undermine morale elsewhere in S. America**

regional conflicts in a framework of peaceful coexistence with capitalism means opposing revolutionary struggle, and brings grave dangers for the workers and peasants.

The revolution in Central America has been set back a long way by the defeat in Nicaragua. The invasion of Panama and the renewed threats against Libya also show that the United States feels it has a much freer hand to intervene against its third world enemies. Now, without doubt, Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution are the next major target in the US gunights.

All this could have a profoundly demoralising effect on the masses in Latin America and lead to skepticism about the possibility of revolutionary social change. Setbacks on the political terrain include the defeat of the Lula-Workers Party electoral challenge in Brazil, and the continued stalemate in El Salvador which the FMLN offensive has not been able decisively to break.

In Asia, imperialist eyes are on the continued pressure from Pol Pot's forces against the government in Kampuchea - a direct result of Soviet pressure on the Vietnamese to withdraw from that country.

**Centrality of European events**

While these and other global flashpoints continue to highlight the struggle against imperialist domination, our whole analysis leads us to the conclusion that Europe - east and West - remains a decisive arena of this growing world crisis.

Without doubt the west European workers' movement is organisationally the most implanted and potentially the strongest in the world - much more so than in Japan, the United States, or the newly developing and unstable economies of Latin America. It is difficult to imagine a new 'boom' without big defeats being inflicted here: Eastern Europe

will be the site of the battle over capitalist restoration, a battle which will take place in the context of a sharp increase in the integration and unity of the labour movement continent-wide. The working class in western Europe also has a role to play in this fight, as part of its own struggle against austerity and exploitation. The battle for a socialist future in Europe is crucial as we head towards the next century.

If major defeats on the working class are inflicted in the coming years world-wide, then the future is bleak. Only military competition between NATO and the Warsaw pact has prevented inter-imperialist competition turning into inter-imperialist wars in the last four decades.

Ecological catastrophe looms without international socialist planning. Millions of 'unprofitable' people will be 'closed down' by imperialism in the third world if a massive restructuring of world capitalism is allowed to occur.

There is nothing inevitable about socialism: and if it to be won, the socialist left internationally needs to renew its struggle on the basis of the essential twin themes of the next period - socialist democracy and anti-imperialist solidarity.

Anti-imperialist solidarity must not just be a general support for third world struggles, but a fight against capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe - both by raising the issues in our own labour movement and by helping to build a left wing in Eastern Europe which will fight against capitalist restoration. But in the face of the crisis in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China, 'anti-imperialism' without a full commitment to socialist democracy and complete support to the workers' struggles in the Stalinist states will look like what it really always was - a political concession to Stalinism.

# Wrong lessons from Sandinista defeat?

**In the last issue, an In Depth article by Will McMahon summed up Socialist Outlook's analysis of the Nicaraguan election defeat. Here, GARETH MOSTYN challenges aspects of that analysis, and argues that the emphasis of the article leads to losing valuable lessons.**

Will McMahon's article can be summarised as saying that the main reasons for the defeat of the Sandinistas were:

1) The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) were out of touch with the people.

2) Lack of direct democracy (recallable delegates, workplace elections, a supreme council elected from mass organisations, and so on);

3) Too much of the economy was left in the hands of the bourgeoisie: resources were given to them which served to undermine the revolution.

For these sort of criticisms to be useful to the Nicaraguans or the British, they have to be put in the context of international solidarity. This means more than a position you adopt or a sentence that you tack on to the end of an article: it is something you feel, and that inspires you.

Inspiration is every bit as important as the correct politics; neither one is much good without the other. A movement like ours needs to be able to capture the feeling of hope and identification with the struggle in Nicaragua, and to express the despair that was felt at the election defeat, while pointing the way forward. We have to be able to do all this and at the same time maintain a rigorous analysis and critique.

I found Will's article very dry, academic and uninspiring: so for those in Britain who are moved by the Nicaraguan struggle I think its criticisms will have fallen on deaf ears.

Solidarity is not just about offering statements of principle about standing with the oppressed against the oppressor. We also believe in the self-organisation of the oppressed: so who do we offer both our solidarity and our criticisms to? Will McMahon aims his criticisms squarely at the FSLN, while the solidarity is aimed at the people. The result is ambiguous.

We do not want to see a bashful support for 'Nicaraguan workers and peasants': we

want to see unconditional support for their organisations, proclaimed loud and clear. Criticism should be in that context. The failure to show this kind of solidarity to the Sandinistas makes the criticisms look like conditions, almost as if we were saying 'our support for the people would be support for the FSLN - if they adopted the following policies'. Yet solidarity for the people that by-passes the Sandinista organisation is an illusion, unless you can explain the nature of the solidarity; it represents no more than opposing the intervention of the USA into other countries.

This brings us to the content of the criticisms. Will is quite wrong to put so much emphasis on the FSLN being out of touch with the people. We should have an ideal of socialist democracy, and see how the Sandinistas' example compared with it; but we must also learn how the Sandinistas maintained such a high level of mass participation in such difficult conditions.

Anyone who has tried to build democratic structures, whether in a union, a Labour Party, or a mass campaign will be familiar with the problems. Getting regular attendance of more than 30 percent even for shop floor issues, let alone national issues can be difficult. Will's article unfairly suggests that the FSLN deliberately held back democracy.

It is true that there was a high level of criticism of the Sandinistas. This was a good sign. If you set profound goals and high standards for democracy with limited resources, you will get genuine criticism. Many of us are familiar with this. The tough lesson for us is how can the rest of us win the kind of sustained participation of a significant proportion of people - in the way the Sandinistas did?

The key issue that affected the course of events in Nicaragua was the economy. The worst problems faced were caused by over 50 percent of the Gross National Product going to the war, and the effects of the US trade blockade. In the last few years the Nicaraguans suffered 36,000 percent inflation and massive austerity. No other government could have won 40 percent of the vote after presiding over such an economic disaster.

Would those people who voted UNO have voted FSLN if there had been a different type of democratic structure? No, we



Out of touch? Sandinista leader Ortega

must argue for socialist democracy without using it as a stick to beat the Sandinistas with.

The question of the economy is difficult. We should not listen with a more favourable ear to all criticisms of the mixed economy just because they fit in with our theories. As we know, a badly-planned state economy can easily produce worse results than the effects of a treacherous bourgeoisie. I believe that large-scale expropriations would have had a long-term benefit, but brought short-term setbacks. Nationalisation was by no means an easy solution.

What is clear is the need to develop an economy that runs in the interests of the majority of the people - the workers and peasants. This will never be achieved in the long run if the major economic decisions and investments are made with a view to securing the profits of a small minority.

What we need is an in-depth economic balance sheet of the last ten years. I believe that the Sandinistas will learn the following lesson: that the contradictions between a stable bourgeoisie and a government that serves the interests of the people become greater the longer that government remains in power. If the government does not develop a momentum in opposition to the bourgeoisie, it will become weaker.

The Sandinistas have many gains of the revolution to defend. They have the ability and the mass organisations necessary to do so. They also have an experience of the armed struggle unknown by any previous revolutionary opposition. Let's hope that they never give up their arms, and never have to use them. We want to see them back in office with the necessary backing to move forward once more.

# Green and Socialist Network established

By Steve Potter

A new political current has been established around the idea of eco-socialism. The Second Green and Socialist Conference, meeting in London on 24-25 March, decided to organise a network linking socialists within the Greens and greens within the Labour Party.

The conference attracted nearly 300 participants around a programme of policy and campaigning workshops focussing on questions of economics, political alliances, new forms of political power and pan-European environmental strategies.

The opening plenary was addressed by Robin Cook from the Labour Party, Freda Chapman from the Green Party and Joost Langendijk from the Dutch Green Left.

Cook's presence was a measure of the seriousness with which at least part of the Labour leadership takes the ecological challenge. He won applause from his audience for his self-critical approach to Labour's past practise on Green issues and his call for proportional representation.

Freda Chapman addressed the question of what political platform a new eco-socialist movement should stand on, embracing liberation politics, social justice and defence of the environment.

This was the central theme of two days of discussion.

The eco-socialist current is in a state of flux. Organisationally divided (and therefore weakened) between the Labour Party and Green Party, it is under pressure from both party leaderships to conform more closely to party boundaries.

In the Labour Party's case this is reflected in the result of a recent ballot conducted amongst the 600 or so members of the Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA). The result of the ballot, announced on 26 March, was a 53.47 percent vote to affiliate to the Labour Party.

The result will be that those Greens who participate in SERA will be denied active involvement.

In the Green Party the Association of Socialist Greens found itself under pressure from a leadership which implied that it was a party within a party. After a prolonged internal debate the ASG then held a ballot on its name.

The new name decided on was Green Socialist Forum, a victory for those who wanted to continue the struggle for eco-socialist politics within the Greens.

Under these conditions a network linking both currents with the considerable number of eco-socialists who are in neither the Labour Party nor Greens has become more pressing.

The decision of the Green and Socialist conference to found the network has won the backing of the Socialist Movement.

The task of sustaining the network will not be easy, since Green activists have as a priority the fight for policy within their party. Labour Party activists

too want to turn the boast of their leadership that the Labour Party will be a Red Green party 'by the next election' into action.

The idea that a new party can be launched at this stage would also be wildly premature.

The main task must be the clarification of an eco-socialist strategy, particularly in the field of economics, and the pushing forward of that strategy, not only within the two parties, but also within the trade union and student movement, where the potential for Green and Socialist alliances remains untapped.

*(For further information on the Green and Socialist network, contact the Green and Socialist Conference, c/o 9 Poland Street, London W1.)*



It's not only wild life like these otters that die from pollution



Pollution in Czechoslovakia: not a pretty sight East or West:

## The Green Left in Western Europe

Speech by Joost Langendijk  
(International Secretary of the Dutch Green Left)

Before I start I would like to make a remark about the strange situation in which I found myself in preparing this speech. The discussion on the future of the left and to a lesser extent on Green politics, is far more developed in Britain than in countries like Belgium, West Germany and Holland.

The problem is that the discussion is confined to a theoretical debate, not connected with any political practise. This is particularly the case since the dismantlement of local government and the GLC. In most Western European countries the situation is exactly the opposite way round. No interesting discussion at all, but the presence of Green and Red politicians at all levels.

I believe that the potential for Red-Green vote in Britain is greater than almost anywhere else. The problem is, of course, your electoral system.

I want to deal with two questions: a brief history of the Dutch Green Left and the possibilities of cooperation across Europe between Green Socialists.

In Holland since the end of the sixties there have been three parties to the left of the Labour Party. All three of them had seats in national parliament and many seats in local councils. From the beginning of the eighties all three parties suffered declining electoral results.

These three parties are the Radical Party, the Pacifist Socialist Party, and the Communist Party. In the eighties these three parties

cooperated together, especially in local elections and at a European level.

In April 1989 they started negotiations for united action in the national elections. The result was an agreement to form a new political formation – the Green Left. Besides the three parties mentioned, there was a fourth party – the Progressive Christians, and there was most importantly a whole number of people who were in no party at all....

The central issues for the Green Left in the election was the introduction of an ecological tax, the so-called Green tax, on products which destroy the environment, either at the manufacturing stage or when they are consumed. This is where prohibition is not practicable....

The second point was the restoration of social benefits to the same level as wages; benefits have dropped behind by 50 per cent during the last seven years of right wing governments.

In the 1989 elections we won six seats in the national parliament compared to the three seats the three parties won before. In the local elections that were held on 21 March, the Green Left won more than 350 local council seats, a 50 per cent increase from the votes we received in 1986. Translated in national terms it meant that we would have won 7 per cent of the votes.

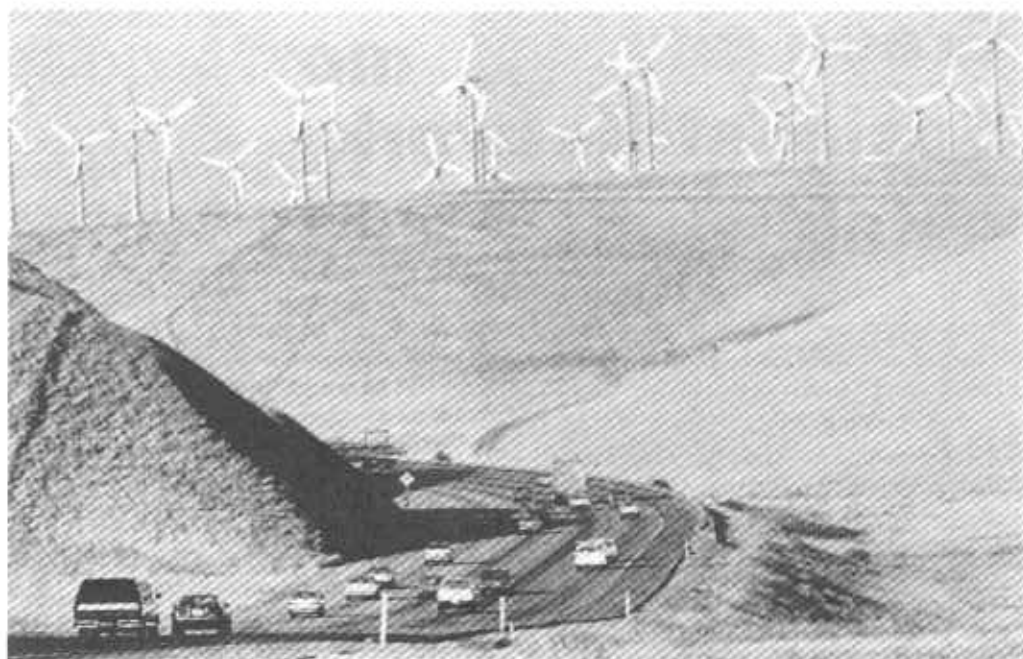
We are particularly strong in the major centres, winning 15 per cent of the vote in Amsterdam and 17 per cent of the vote in Utrecht.

The big debate in the Green Left is how to combine the traditional socialist demands for more just distribution of income along with environmental demands. In other words how to achieve a democratic economy with a sustainable economy.

This crucial question has not been sufficiently answered yet. In the national election the other parties criticised us on the notion of ecological taxes. The social democrats said that such a Dutch tax could not work in unified Europe. The communists and socialists in the Green Left thought that these taxes would affect the incomes of the low-paid. They wanted the Green Left to put pressure on the companies, not the individual consumer.

On the question of restoration of social benefits of course we had right wing critics. But we also had right wing critics within the environmental movement, who said that we were propping up levels of consumption. Instead they argued for a negative economic growth.

We have to admit that some of our critics on the ecological taxes were right. The idea of



It's not just a lot of hot air: German business takes wind power seriously

ecological taxes has to be worked out more precisely.

I would now like to widen the perspective and look around Europe to other parties and movements that could be any help. With a grand gesture, I want to divide Western Europe into three kinds of countries on the point of Green and Red politics.

Firstly, those countries where Left is almost identical with social democratic. Where Green parties develop they define themselves as neither Left nor right. Examples of that are France, Britain and Sweden.

In my view, the task of the Green Left parties of the third category is to form a bridge between the parties of categories one and two. The result should be the formation of one new political current in Europe – the Green Left.

I am convinced the only way both Left and Green parties can survive is to cooperate. In that cooperation the best of both worlds should survive....

I am convinced that this is the only way to deal with both capitalism and the pollution of our environment. Socialists have to give up the idea that these rather strange Green parties are fashionable and will wither away within a few years.

Care for the environment is not a thing you can add on to all the other things you want to achieve without changing the basic premises about economic growth and the wish for more products, production and consumption.

On the other hand Green parties need to realise that the fundamental change in production and consumption patterns is only possible when private ownership of key industries is brought to an end and when the strongest shoulders carry the heaviest burdens.

Both have to accept there there are very big cultural differences between the two movements.

I finish by hoping that we can discuss the question of Green-Left politics in the future from different positions. The Dutch Green Left on the basis of a worked out theory, you on the basis of a strong and successful political practise on both the local and national level.

**"The big debate in the Green Left is how to combine the traditional socialist demands for more just distribution of income along with environmental demands... how to achieve a democratic economy with a sustainable economy"**

Secondly, those countries where there is a strong communist party which is now trying to reform itself into an undogmatic Left party in cooperation with an, up till now, small Green movement. This is the case with Spain and Greece. In Italy the same thing is happening except here the Communists have become social-democratic over the years and you have the formation of a Green-Left party outside the communist party.

Thirdly, those countries where an undogmatic Left party has been able to incorporate Green thinking and as a result of that separate Green parties have failed – Denmark, Norway and Holland. In the same category belong those countries where Green parties have managed to incorporate small Left parties – Belgium and Germany.



## Where was Anti-Apartheid?

**Pete Bloomer reviews the Mandela concert**

Last minute confusion and a car, and we were away down to London to see Mandela. I left my papers, forgot the Poll Tax and was determined to enjoy myself.

The music was slick and well-organised, ranging from the great to the inappropriate. Overall the selection was safe and predictable. In contrast to the Mandela '88 Concert, the artists seem to have been told not to make statements. It was as if the songs were to say it all by themselves. So what do 'Keep on Rocking in the Free World', or 'Wild Women Do' or 'Blowing in the Wind' mean, in this particular context?

In a night of heroes, the music was not at all bad. Many people's heroes, Simple Minds, Lou Reed, Jackson Browne, Tracy Chapman, Peter Gabriel and others performed for the crowd. Highlights included Lou Reed's 'Great American Whale' with words charged which ended in cheers after his line referring to apartheid, 'stick a fork in their ass and turn them over, they're done'; the oration for Stetsonic, the only rap group; Tracy Chapman coming on after Mandela to sing 'Talkin' about a Revolution' and an emotional Jerry Dammers singing 'Free Nelson Mandela', which made the crowd move.

Much has been written in the press on Mandela's speech, before a platform of over a billion people. All I can say is that it was remarkable only in its brevity and for being so unmemorable; yet the audience

responded generously and enthusiastically

The crowd was overwhelmingly young, and genuinely there to express solidarity as well as to enjoy themselves. Comparisons to the March 31 Poll Tax 'battles' can be made, not that the groups are the same but commentators seem to respond to crowds of radical youth in an almost mystical way - treating our expression of vitality as a surprise, as if they were new.

I did enjoy myself, everyone did. But it always seemed unclear what it was all about. The Anti-Apartheid Movement was absent from Wembley, with no speaker, and no mention on the tickets;

no-one leafleted the gig. It was as if they were determined *not* to use the opportunity to build the movement - which is more than a mistake.

So what is the effect of an event like this? Such media events level consciousness - many new layers are made aware of the struggle, while other more conscious layers are persuaded that maybe their active involvement is not required. Yet such mass audience and goodwill must be addressed. All socialists must take note - don't denounce popular support - politicise it!

Whilst respectable resistance will be strengthened, for myself no amount of commemoration can change the meaning of solidarity. I like Peter Gabriel a lot; and I'll always remember 70,000 clenched fists aloft, and the deafening sound of singing to 'Biko' in memory of the fallen and the victory to come.



Top of the bill: Mandela

## Murder in the playground: the Burnage Report

**The report of the Macdonald inquiry into racism and racial violence in Manchester schools**  
Longsight Press £9.95

**Reviewed by Debbie Epstein**

Two years have passed since the Macdonald Inquiry completed its work. Almost twice that length of time has passed since Ahmed Ullah, a 13 year old Bangladeshi student arrived at school half an hour before the session began in the morning and was dead before school started.

In response to the demands of the local black, particularly Bangladeshi community, Manchester City Council set up the Inquiry; yet when the Committee submitted its full report, Manchester refused to publish it on the grounds that it was libellous.

The members of the Committee have always denied the media claims that the Report condemned anti-racist education, and have pushed for its publication, saying that they had firm evidence for all the allegations made in the book. Manchester City Council would not relent, so now the members of the Committee have published the report in their own names, taking any risk on their own heads.

However this was not the first information we have had from the report - its final conclusions were leaked to the *Manchester Evening News*, and the Council published a selection of chapters.

So was the publication of the full Report worth it? The answer must be an emphatic yes. The Burnage Report may well turn out to be the most important and authoritative document on the practice of anti-racist education and the effects of racism in schools to come out of the 1980s.

It documents in detail the way in which racism can and does af-

fect the running of schools; and though that has been done before in documents ranging from the Rampton Report to the Commission for Racial Equality's *Learning in terror*, the evidence provided by the Macdonald Inquiry, and particularly the survey carried out for the committee by Elinor Kelly is an important addition to previous knowledge.

What is new and important about the Burnage Report is the documentation of the failure of a particular kind of anti-racism, labelled by the Committee 'moral anti-racism' in which black students are seen as 'the victims of the immoral behaviour of white students'.

This kind of anti-racism, says the Report, places racism in a moral vacuum, with no reference to class, sex, age, sexuality or size difference;

'In practice it has been an unmitigated disaster. It has reinforced the guilt of many well-meaning whites and paralysed them when any issue of race arises. They have become the wimps of race relations. It has taught others to bury their racism without in any way changing their attitude. It has created resentment and anger and stopped free discussion'.

Far from being a wholesale condemnation of anti-racism, this is part of a passionate and compelling call for *effective* anti-racism: 'We do not believe that an effective anti-racist policy can exist unless the other issues (of equality) are also addressed and dealt with, in particular class and gender.'

The Report calls for more democracy and accountability within schools and LEAs; for the involvement of students and parents, both white and black, in the development of anti-racist policies and practices; for the recognition that oppressions cannot be put in a hierarchy, and that to deal with one we need to deal with the others. We ignore these conclusions at our peril.

# SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

## Gerry Healy: a victim of 1953 split

Alan Thornett, in his obituary to Gerry Healy in *Socialist Outlook* No 21, rightly points out the serious damage done by Healy to the revolutionary Marxist tradition in Britain.

But in order, as Alan Thornett concludes, 'to ensure that there is never room left for his ilk to do such damage again', it is necessary to understand the causes of Healyism.

Although Healy came from third-period Stalinism, and later aped its methods, he was essentially a product of the split in the Fourth International that started in 1953. Although Healy did not cause the 1953 split, he was certainly one of its most obvious victims.

Two years after the 1974 expulsion of Thornett and what became the Workers' Socialist League from Healy's organisation, the International Marxist Group published the famous/infamous series of articles 'Faction and Party' written by Alan Jones, taking the form of a polemic against the comrades of the WSL.

The positions in these articles were broadly adopted by the IMG. Jones considered Healy's degeneration to have been inevitable because of his inability to distinguish between a faction and a party. This idealistic and schematic nonsense (and these words are not used lightly) has not been criticised. It has helped to hide the real causes of the 1953 split and in particular has helped to obscure any broad understanding of how the degeneration of Healy and his organisation could have been avoided.

Revolutionary Marxists have a much greater history of defeats than of successes, and it is from these defeats that lessons really have to be drawn. The programmatic and tactical issues involved in the 1953 split are particularly topical given the present developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and are well worth studying.

But it is essential to study *all* the questions that were raised (especially the organisational questions raised by the comrades of the early International Committee of the Fourth International) in order to understand the causes of the split; how these causes destroyed the International's ability to correct Healy's developing national isolationism; and how revolutionary Marxism in Britain can recover from the tremendous setback of the 1953 split.

**Roy Wall**  
NW London

## Now who's not a Marxist?

In a recent article in the *Financial Times* (Weekend FT, 10/11 March 1990) Martin Jacques presents us with his most ludicrous falsification of Marxism yet.

The article takes the form of a fictional interview with the 'ghost' of Marx. Apart from this whimsical novelty, Jacques' article possesses no originality whatsoever. Instead Jacques re-hashes all the old reformist and opportunist falsifications of Marx's work - and puts them into the mouth of Marx himself!

Jacques repeats all the usual *Marxism Today* fallacies about the demise of the working class and the end of communism in Eastern Europe. These views have, of course, been effectively rebutted in previous issues of *Socialist Outlook*.

He next claims that the Russian Revolution failed completely. In reality, of course, Stalin undoubtedly betrayed the revolution, but he did not destroy all its social gains, as Trotsky showed.

According to Jacques's article, Marx would have favoured the reformist policies of the 'parties of the second International like the German Social Democrats'. In reality these were the people whose undermining of class struggle is most strikingly expressed by Rosa

Luxemburg's ironic formula: 'Proletarians of all countries, unite in times of peace but cut each other's throats in time of war'. Furthermore, the bankruptcy of Social Democracy's reform policy has been demonstrated time and again this century.

In addition to his claims for reform, Jacques tries to make a rejection of revolutionary insurrection consistent with the writings of Marx. In order to demonstrate this he distorts Engels' 1895 Preface to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*.

This shabby trick originated with the publication of this Preface by the German Social Democratic Leadership, who cut the preface to try and justify the abandonment of insurrection. The full Preface suggests some possibility (with reservation) of peaceful revolution for Germany in the 1890s, but that for most countries insurrection was still necessary.

Finally Jacques refers, unsurprisingly out of context, to Marx's comment that he was not a Marxist. One thing is certain; Marx would not have regarded Jacques as a Marxist!

**David Emm and Richard Pearson**  
High Wycombe

## Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers

In the March issue of *Socialist Outlook* (No 22) Sunil Fernando draws the attention to the killing fields in Sri Lanka. But his judgement of the Tamil Tigers seems sectarian to me.

Towards the end of the article Fernando says: 'For the moment things are relatively quiet in Sri Lanka because the government has made common cause with the Tamil Tigers (LTTE), one of the Tamil nationalist groups, against the more progressive Tamil groups,' and refers to 'the opportunist policies of the Tamil Tigers'.

Fernando's article does not explain what has been the relationship between the Sri Lankan army, the Indian troops in Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers in the North and Eastern provinces of the island.

The Sri Lankan government invited in the Indian troops to defeat the Tamil Tigers militarily - something the Sri Lankan army had been unable to do in years of fighting. For 32 months, 50,000 Indian troops tried to defeat the Tamil Tigers - unsuccessfully.

The Tamil Tigers (LTTE) fought the fourth biggest army in the world - and the Indians lost the lives of more than 1,100 soldiers, with more than 2,000 seriously wounded. No guerrilla army would be able to do that without massive popular support.

The LTTE's popular support is widely recognised. In the *Guardian* Derek Brown writes from New Delhi that the Tamil Tigers 'have emerged as the *de facto* power in the

Tamil provinces.'

Now for nearly a year the LTTE has been in negotiations with the Sri Lankan government. These negotiations seems to Fernando to be a proof of the Tamil Tigers 'opportunist' policies.

The Tamil population undoubtedly wants peace. After years of fighting with the Sri Lankan army, 4,000 civilians were killed during the 32 months of Indian occupation.

One can compare the Tigers' negotiations with the Sri Lankan government with FMLN's negotiations and peace initiatives toward the government of El Salvador. Neither the LTTE nor the FMLN have handed over their arms while negotiating. Both use negotiations as part of the political struggle.

The Tamil Tigers' negotiations with the Sri Lankan government did increase the pressure on the government to get rid of the Indian troops. That is a step toward independence and self-determination for the Tamil provinces.

Fernando did not offer much political guidance in his article; but solidarity work with the Tamil people will have to recognise that the Tigers are the leading force in a national liberation movement. Socialists, and in particular revolutionary marxists, should therefore take care to avoid sectarianism towards the LTTE.

**Finn Jensen,**  
Manchester

# Sloan's Square

## Second time around

'History', said Henry Ford, is 'just one damn thing after another'. He was wrong, of course: some damn things just never go away.

Just as the more adventurous bourgeois ideologists such as Fukuyama had begun their efforts to persuade us that history is at an end, and that human progress had culminated triumphantly in the Thatcher/Reagan era, along came the upheavals in Eastern Europe.

Long-forgotten territorial disputes and national questions that seemed buried for ever under decades of invasions, wars, stalinist domination and tank tracks, are bubbling back up to the surface.

Best-forgotten and hopelessly oppressive religious superstitions and traditions are erupting from apparently secularised societies, as a reaction to years of 'official marxism', just like zits on the face after a fatty diet.

Vaguely-remembered monarchies are resurrected, and long-lost royals hauled back from oblivion in the lounge bars and country retreats of Europe, while ageing veterans of pre and post-war bourgeois and peasant parties squabble over who can use the words 'new' and 'Democrat' most often in their new labels - rivalling the Monty Python 'spam' menu.

Now is the time to dust off your history books, and brace yourself for an ironic replay of some of the selected low-lights of the past. If the capitalists get their way and install new bourgeois governments, we can expect to roll once more through a process of crisis and decay of what were almost uniformly reactionary and increasingly dictatorial regimes.

'Where's Hitler?', you may

well ask. He couldn't make it, but has sent Kurt Waldheim to deputise: appropriately, *Newsweek* magazine reports a new surge of enthusiasm in Austria for the old Austro-Hungarian empire.

Now who was that who said 'the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce?'

## Roll out the barrel!

As this magazine goes to press there are still as many theories about the alleged Iraqi 'supergun' as there are journalists to write and pages to fill. Only *Socialist Outlook* can reveal the truth: the key death in the whole riddle was not that of barmy ballistics expert Gerald Bull, but of wacko ex-Trotskyist Gerry Healy.

Fed up with Sky TV's lack of live executions and its excess of Derek Jameson, Saddam Hussein decided to launch his own TV satellite channel, beaming Ba'athist propaganda back at the Brits. He looked to Healy, whose daily *Newsline* paper had impressed him with its servility in the 1970s (the Iraqi regime had been one of its few readers), and who still boasted a loyal following in *Equity*, to play the 'anchor man' role as Baghdad's answer to Frank Bough.

Healy was keen, but Hussein's agents screwed up, leaving the fat sectarian mysteriously and suddenly crushed to death under suitcases full of hard cash, and the scheme began to unravel.

The satellite plan was scrapped, and the pipeline converted into a huge target set: any day now another hapless lorry driver will be caught driving in the three gigantic rubber suction tips to go on the end of



Hussein's darts.

Meanwhile, not to be outdone, Libya's Gaddafi has caused havoc in his country's underwear industry by commanding the entire stock of elastic to build the world's biggest catapult.

## Bare bones of a policy

'But when she got there The cupboard was bare, And so the poor doggy got none.'

The dog died of neglect years ago, but Old Mother ('Sister') Hubbard, one of the first-ever new realists, is now heading Labour's team formulating policy for the next election.

It is on her orders that the Party's stall of vote-winning goodies has been stripped to the bone and beyond, leaving from men like John Smith flogging the most unappetising load of leftovers.

Hubbard has analysed the various phases of British politics, and deduced that the 'new times' call for a fresh approach. In the early years of bourgeois democracy, there were rampant scandals over 'rotten boroughs', bribery and the buying of votes. These techniques have had a new facelift under Thatcher who has perfected the idea of bribing voters using *our* assets and cash seized from the poor.

After the masses won the vote, there came the heyday of party promises, with each

politician vying with the others to win votes through extravagant pre-election promises - few of which were carried out. As recently as Harold Wilson Labour leaders still believed in trying to attract votes by dressing up their programme to look attractive.

'New times' mean all this must stop, says Ms Hubbard: Labour under Kinnock will adopt a more sophisticated approach - offering nothing, promising to change almost nothing, and promising no benefits to anyone. Far from buying - or even seeking - votes, the Labour strategy is to put forward a programme so unappealing it defies workers to support Kinnock in an orgy of masochism.

No longer does Labour promise to bring home the bacon; and pie in the sky, the traditional reformist fancies, and even crumbs of comfort have been crossed off the menu.

But for Labour leaders toadying round business chiefs, the new slim-line menu works very well.

John Smith's policy may sound like a dog's dinner to socialists, but his promise to be frugal on our behalf if he ever gets elected goes down a treat at lunches with bankers and industrialists - especially when washed down with a little Moët & Chandon.

Let that be a comfort to you as you struggle to pay your Sainsbury's bill!

By Harry Sloan

# **INTERNATIONAL YOUTH SUMMER CAMP**

**July 21st-29th  
De Kluis, Belgium**

This year sees the seventh International Youth summer camp of the Fourth International. It will be a week of sun, fun and political discussion. There will be a women only space and a Lesbian and Gay only space. The theme of this year's camp will be 'Europe - East and West'.

Speakers include; Ernest Mandel, a Young Sandinista, and an FI supporter from South Africa. There will also be a delegation from Eastern Europe.

The cost for the whole week inclusive of food and travel will be £120 and there will be a possibility of the cost dropping even further! If you are interested, please write to:

*International youth summer camp* PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

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