


Socialist Action

75p



*Where is
Gorbachev
going?*

Labour's Policy Review ● *Sexual abuse and the family* ●
Upheaval in Eastern Europe and China ● *Europe in the 1990s*

Editorial

West Germany and NATO

The row that has erupted between West Germany and other members of NATO, particularly the US and the Thatcher government, over the future of short range missiles in Europe, is of major significance. The decision by the Kohl government, led by foreign minister, Hans Dietrich Genscher, to delay agreement on a new generation of short-range missiles, and to call for early talks with the Soviet Union on reducing such missiles, has provoked consternation among its NATO allies. But it also clarifies debate on the left regarding the relations between the United States and Western Europe.

The dismay in NATO is not because the US, Britain or France believe that the Kohl government is itself any less committed than they are to the 'modernisation' of nuclear weapons in Europe. On the contrary, only a few months ago, Kohl was determinedly demonstrating his hawkish defence position, by stating that conscription in West Germany would be increased from 15 to 18 months and supporting eventual nuclear modernisation.

The concern is due to the reasons underlying the Kohl government's tactical step. It was taken for purely electoral reasons. While West Germany's government may be fully committed to NATO's nuclear arms, the same is not true of the West German working class.

There is a saying current in West Germany: 'The shorter the range, the deader the Germans'. The elimination of intermediate range weapons, and the increasing stress on short-range weapons which would only fall on Germany, has provoked an understandable response in West Germany.

Opinion polls reveal that 80 per cent of West Germans want total nuclear disarmament in Europe. At the end of last year 83 per cent trusted Gorbachev more than Reagan, and 80 per cent saw no serious threat from the Soviet Union.

Facing Euro and municipal elections in June, and having received substantial setbacks at the polls in the last two local elections, the Kohl government first retracted its decision on extending military service, and then threw the cat among the pigeons in NATO.

The fear stalking the US and Thatcher is that the strength of West German public opinion is now so roused that it will become impossible for the political dynamic which has now been set up to be halted. A cynical electoral tactic may arouse uncontrollable demands in the West German working class. Fear of the electoral consequences has muzzled the West German ruling class's opposition to nuclear disarmament, allowing popular sympathy for Gorbachev's disarmament initiatives to go unchallenged. Bush, echoed by Thatcher, fears that the tide that has been allowed to run free may be slipping entirely out of control.

The blow-up within NATO reveals two vital facts. Firstly, it demonstrates, once again, that Germany is the decisive country for the development of Europe as a whole — the hinge between its Eastern and Western halves. It is in West Germany above all that the US and right wing domination of Europe can be broken.

Second it shows that it is *not* competition between the imperialists that is the driving force of progressive development. There is no sign at all that it is German *capital* which is the driving force in the present situation. It is the West German working class, reflected through the fear of the electoral consequences, which is striking a blow against the US and Thatcher — as well as breaking the imperialist encirclement of Eastern Europe and creating the first real success for Soviet foreign policy against the West's armaments drive.

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A Policy Review for capital

The documents for Labour's Policy Review both confirm its role and are also an important step in the reorganisation of British politics. The first step in the Policy Review was to bring Labour on all major issues back within a framework acceptable to capital — and in particular to reorient Labour towards the type of right wing European politics that are going to dominate the 1990s. The Policy Review accomplishes this.

On unilateralism the proposal to 'negotiate away' Trident, with no time limit set for this, and no commitment should 'negotiation' not succeed, is simply a proposal Trident will be kept — as it will be.

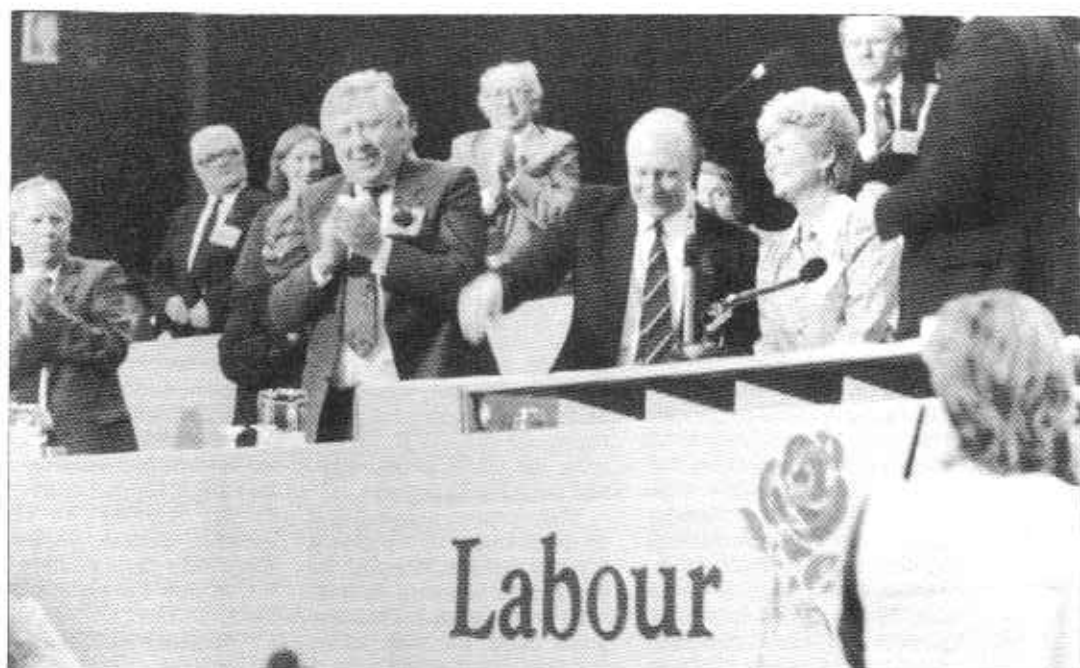
On the trade unions the crucial features of the post-1979 union laws will be maintained — as the immediate disowning of Meacher for suggesting that the right to solidarity action should be restored shows.

On the economy the Policy Review simply states that Labour will set up an investment bank and transform the Department of Trade and Industry — in short it has no serious proposals whatever. Apart from British Telecom and Water there will be no renationalisations.

EEC membership, that is membership of the organisation designed to shore up European capital and create a European military machine, will be maintained.

With the outcome of the Policy Review process, which will be ratified at annual conference, Labour will have abandoned every major policy unacceptable to British capital — the qualitative overturning of every major left-wing policy adopted in the post-1979 period.

But the Policy Review also represents a step in a second process. The Labour leadership still has no credible economic or other policy and, without that, no policy for winning an election. Labour's sole hope of winning in 1991



or 1992 is that there will be an economic collapse sufficient to literally propel Thatcher from office — not a very likely prospect.

The second part of the campaign that the Policy Review represents is therefore already being prepared. This is for proportional representation and, in the world of real politics, coalition with the SLD/SDP.

April's AEU National Committee, by adopting overwhelmingly a resolution on 'electoral reform', and by taking it to the Labour Party conference, has taken PR out of the fringes of politics and placed it in the mainstream of the Labour right's agenda. Meanwhile Charter 88, with the full participation of the Socialist Society, is running a campaign to disarm opposition to PR from the left.

This campaign will not, of course, succeed before the next election. But after the Policy Review there are now no crucial policy differences which divide Labour from the SLD. Everything is now in place for the reorganisation of British non-Tory politics. It merely requires Labour's electoral defeat to precipitate it.

And for capital this is now

a major issue. As long as Margaret Thatcher had the unchallenged benefit of North Sea Oil her government was going to remain in office. Capital did not have to consider Labour from the point of view of an alternative government and it was not an immediate, as opposed to a strategic, matter for capital what policies it had.

Now matters are posed differently. The great oil boom is running down. The most important task for British capital is to rebuild manufacturing industry in order to turn round the deficit in the balance of payments — which is now the largest deficit, as a proportion of GDP, of any major economy. That, in turn, will improve the relation of forces for the working class.

What we are seeing today is a tremendous display of capitalist hegemony — its ability, and need, to control not only the government but also the opposition (and, if possible, the opposition to the opposition). Capital has now secured in place the alternative government, the Labour-SDL coalition, for any point in time in the 1990s when Thatcherism fails. Those in the Communist Par-

ty, *Marxism Today*, the Socialist Society etc who have campaigned for PR have merely provided a left cover for this — they are part of the mechanism of capital's hegemony, not an alternative to it.

For socialists it means a new situation. There is no significant political focus outside the Labour Party to its left. On the contrary the forces that continue to advance, women and black people, are doing so within it. But it does mean work in the party has to change. The fight to maintain any of the key progressive policies won after 1979 will be lost at this conference. The left failed in its task to wage the most effective fight to defend them. The only effective fight was that waged by the forces of Labour Left Liaison and at events such as the Policy Review conferences.

The most urgent task now, leading to conference, is to create the organisation to win the maximum possible vote against the Policy Review. The next crucial step will be to continue that organisation afterwards against Labour's new 'Eurosocialist' framework.

The upturn in trade union militancy

The spring of 1989 has seen a clear sign of an upturn in trade union struggle. 1987 and 1988 already saw a partial recovery from the totally depressed level of 1986 — with 3.5 and 3.7 million days lost in strikes respectively compared to 1.9 million in 1986.

In terms of individual disputes, the solid London tube dispute is in sharp contrast to the collapse of the previous attempt at a strike two years ago. BBC staff are taking industrial action. The right wing AEU is threatening a series of regional strikes. All the signs are the dockers will vote for a strike to defend the National Dock Labour scheme — although this will be a defensive struggle.

The recent upturn in industrial struggles is accompanied by more structural trends in the unions. USDAW this year reported its second successive year of growth. This follows last year's increase in membership by UCATT, NALGO and other unions. Another straw in the wind is that membership of the AEU in Nissan, which a year ago stood at only 7 per cent, has now risen to 30 per cent in sections of the factory.

The vote by the AEU National Committee, by 61-58, against amalgamation with the EETPU is another symptom of the same process. Even if Jordan attempts to circumvent this by a national ballot, as Hammond is urging, the

vote is a clear setback for the right wing. And if the AEU does not amalgamate with the EETPU then the latter is by itself a completely insufficient instrument to carry through capital's plans to split the TUC.

While total union membership is still falling these trends are in contrast to the universal collapse in trade union membership between 1979 and 1986 — when membership of unions affiliated to the TUC fell from 13.4 million to 9.5 million and when the TGWU lost 31 per cent of its members, the NUR 28 per cent, the GMB 23 per cent, and the AEU 20 per cent.

This relative improvement of the situation of the unions is not, of course, stopping the government stepping up their attack on them. The new green paper on trade union law would ban the pre-entry closed shop. Tory backbenchers are increasing their campaign for the step the government is weighing up of banning the closed shop altogether — although certain sections of employers are opposed to this. Teachers remain deprived of their right to pay bargaining.

The vicious campaign around the prison warders at Wandsworth earlier this year was significant not in itself — prison warders deserve no support — but because it was clearly a warming up for the goal of removing the right to strike in 'essential services'. It

is also clear that no significant trade union leadership is going to defy the law. The government has succeeded in creating a new framework of law for the unions.

Nevertheless there are substantial reasons to believe that the recent upturn of trade union struggle has a solid economic base. The labour market, despite mass unemployment, is perceptibly tightening — particularly in manufacturing. More than a million employees have been taken on during the last two and a half years. The number of workers employed in manufacturing industry has not fallen for two years. The average number of hours overtime a week worked in manufacturing industry, at 9.5, is now the highest since 1979.

The background is that the anticipated upturn in manufacturing industry is coming on stream very rapidly. Taking the period since 1979 the growth of UK manufacturing has now overtaken that of France and is catching up with that of West Germany and Italy — although the European economies remain far behind those of Japan and the United States in rate of growth of manufacturing (see Figure 1).

Furthermore rising manufacturing output, and a tightening of the labour market are being accompanied by rising inflation — almost certain to go above eight per cent next month. There is nothing like a combination of rising output — creating a strong bargaining position — and rising inflation for trade union struggle. Pay settlements are now over nine per cent and government attempts to run a wages policy in the public sector are likely to increase the discontent there.

We are not on the eve of a 'spring of discontent'. But there is every reason to suppose that 1989 will see a partial recovery of trade union struggle from the extremely depressed levels following the miners' strike. That will be an important backdrop to the political situation.



The proposed NALGO/NUPE merger is one of the most significant changes in the British labour movement in recent years. The two unions agreed last year to begin positive discussions on merger and to present detailed proposals in 1990, with merger completed (if all goes well) by 1992.

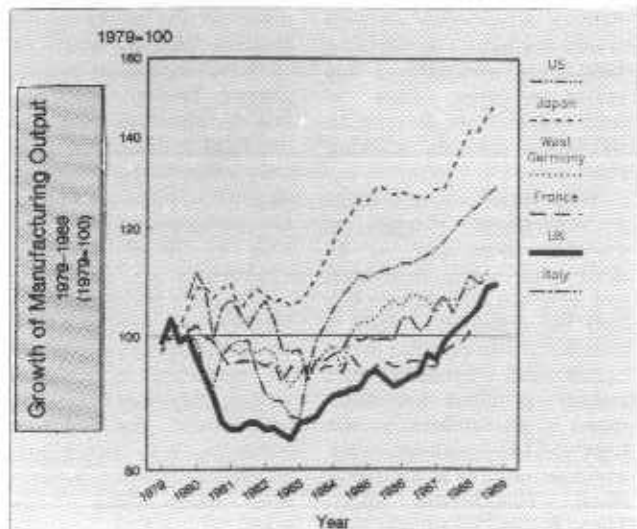
NALGO and NUPE are the largest unions organised in the public sector and are among the fastest growing in Britain. A new union with combined membership in the region of 1,394,700 — larger than the TGWU — would be one of the best-resourced and strongest trade unions in Western Europe.

The proportion of women in such a union would be around 60 per cent (871,000). The interim report recognises, albeit briefly, that women's needs in terms of policy and organisation must be central to the discussions. It is no coincidence that this year will see the first national NALGO women's conference — a step towards modernisation of the union.

However, the interim report reveals a number of problems in the approach being taken.

The report makes the briefest of references to black workers. Given the U-turn the NALGO NEC attempted on positive action and black self-organisation last year, this is clearly an area that needs to be developed.

Merger makes sense as the two unions share the same employers and national and local bargaining structures. They also face



One big union

the same threats, like CCT and cuts in expenditure.

Such a merged union would represent members from across a whole range of occupations from street sweepers to solicitors. Because of the level and nature of the assault on public services, it is vital that the manual worker/officer divide is broken down so that all public sector workers can unite and organise together. A merged union would facilitate this.

However there will be opposition from 'professional' sections of workers which manifests itself most sharply on the question of political affiliation.

NALGO recently comfortably won its ballot for a political fund. Political affiliation was once used as an obstacle to merger, but clearly the political fund result shows that the ground has shifted.

The interim report is mealy-mouthed on the subject of affiliation and refers to maintaining two separate structures. The campaign for political affiliation must start this year. The NALGO membership will have to ensure that this issue is confronted and not dodged. We need a full membership ballot on affiliation and work to ensure its success must begin at this year's conference, with the one composited resolution that has been submitted.

There is a year in which to wage a united campaign among NALGO and NUPE members on this issue in readiness for the 1990 conference. What we must not allow to happen is the creation of a massive trade union, of great weight in the labour movement, with half of its members still seeing themselves as part of a Staff Association.

The 1990s urgently demand something different from this.

CAROLINE HALL
Assistant Secretary
Islington NALGO

NUT conference moves leftwards

The reports of the National Union of Teachers' (NUT) conference may well have given a misleading impression. The narrow defeat in the vote on whether teachers would take strike action over pay belies the underlying trend to the left in the union revealed at conference.

In fact the left emerged considerably strengthened in relation to the leadership of the union. This was particularly clear on anti-racism where the union voted to include black self-organisation within its structure — only the second union to do so.

Another positive development was the large Time To Go fringe meeting involving the dominant left formation, Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) and also sections of the Broad Left which dominates the executive. This meeting, with Ken Livingstone MP as the main speaker, has laid the basis for taking Ireland into the union for the first time.

The union's direction is mapped out by a Broad Left/right wing strategy which arose two years ago when the leadership of the left was being witch-hunted. (The leaders of the Inner London Teachers' Association (ILTA) were suspended from the union). That right turn coincided with the launch of Baker's offensive. At that

time, the executive appeared credible to conference which believed that it had the means to defeat Baker. Today, following defeats, the membership is dissatisfied, but is as yet only prepared to support the left on certain issues.

This has led to a crisis in the Broad Left where clearly a large section of it wants to defend progressive education and advance on social issues, while those most wrapped up in the union bureaucracy are tied to right-winger Doug McAvoy's strategy of business unionism. (Doug McAvoy is the right wing candidate for general secretary to succeed Fred Jarvis).

This alliance between the Broad Left and the right is contradictory and may break up.

Part of the base for the Broad Left is among women teachers who are bearing more of the brunt of Baker's attacks and this too is exerting pressure.

In this situation the STA was able to give direction, convincing conference on a number of issues of the need and the means to defend state education from attack.

The STA should be able to win at least some Broad Left support on a number of issues which will break the alliance

with the right. Ireland and Time To Go is one, but also questions such as the political fund and the 'Aims and Objects' of the union which restrict the policies of the union to very narrow confines, are also positions which could change.

Despite the votes of conference, the executive is not about to make a U-turn. There is not going to be even verbal opposition to Baker, but instead more consideration of 'working within'.

The role of Jack Straw at the Socialist Education Association meeting was testimony to this. What he said essentially was 'Baker's education is what the public wants so Labour will have to show that it can manage Baker's legacy better than Baker'. The executive will happily say that no political party is prepared to turn the clock back, so we've got to sell education and all its 'new' values.

One of the tasks for the left is to understand the threat from Straw and the majority of the NUT executive and take on board the fight within the labour movement to establish education policies which serve the interests of women, black people, and the working class as a whole.

RAY SIROTKIN

Women's conference will test views on policy review

This year's National Labour Women's Conference will be the first national meeting of the party to debate many of the issues in the final policy review documents.

A number of resolutions and amendments defending the party's policy on unilateralism will ensure there is a debate. The outcome of the vote on this issue will begin to reveal the relationship of forces in the party as a whole.

Following the extension to the consultation on women's organisation, agreed by party conference last year, new proposals have come forward which

will also be debated in June.

The most important of these, originating with the TGWU and now supported by NUPE in a resolution to women's conference, is to create a new national women's committee by merging the NEC women's committee and the regionally elected National Labour Women's Committee.

The precise proposal that went to the two committees, and to the full NEC, in April, is to create a body composed of NEC members — who must be women — together with eleven representatives elected

regionally as at present, and six trade union representatives to be elected by the unions at the National Conference of Labour Women.

This proposal includes at least a component of national election to the committee. The weakness of the proposal is that these national elections apply only to the trade unions, with women's sections having no equivalent right.

Ireland will also be debated at conference, with support for the Time To Go campaign and charter a likely outcome.

JUDE WOODWARD

Behind the crisis in the National Union of Students

A right winger was elected National Secretary of the National Union of Students for the first time in many years at this year's NUS conference. The National Organisation of Labour Students is deeply divided over the Labour right's proposal that Labour Students give up the leadership of NUS altogether and reach an agreement with the right wing.

The background to the crisis in the NUS and NOLS is the fact that Britain's elitist education system is totally inadequate to create the skilled workforce which is essential to increase the productivity of British manufacturing industry. In comparison to other education systems, Britain trains far fewer students for far less time.

Rather than allocate more public funds to education and cutting defence spending, the proportion of government spending on education has gone down over the last decade. The government is trying to expand the education system relying on finance from big business and by reducing the living standards of students and teachers.

This is the meaning of the so-called training schemes which provide employers with young employees for wages equivalent to or less than supplementary benefit, paid by the government; the City Technical Colleges, set up by big business to cater for their own needs; the re-ordering of the polytechnic system, which gives business a 50 per cent say in the running of polytechnics, and the final say to the government minister for education.

Likewise the replacement of the University Grants Committee by the Universities and Colleges Funding Committee, will give business the greatest say in the make-up of courses offered by universities.

The mechanisms to make students pay for their own education include massively inflated fees for overseas students, the removal of hous-

ing benefit and vacation benefits for home students, the threatened introduction of mandatory payment of tuition fees, student loans instead of grants and the fact that the student grant now is worth a fraction of what it was in 1979. The most strategic proposal is for student loans, which will have drastic effects on the student population.

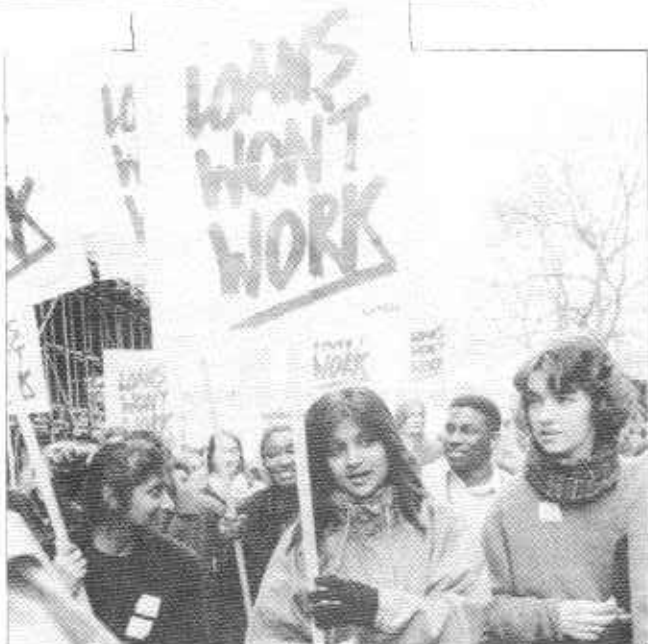
Alongside these measures go ways of removing the political obstacles to their implementation. Voluntary membership of NUS in the form it was originally proposed was rejected by such bodies as the Brewers' Association but is certain to resurface in some other form.

These attacks on the student movement by the government dovetail with the re-emergence of rightwing currents in the NUS which aim to destroy it as a national organisation. Firstly, the SDP are attempting to get support for the project of creating an alternative, 'independent' national association of students unions, on the grounds that NUS is part of the 'foony Labour left'. Having more success is a grouping called 'Students for Students', with essentially the same project as the SDP, and supported by them, which has succeeded in portraying itself as a genuine alliance of independents.

Building on the anti-Labour feeling which has arisen in response to the refusal of the NOLS leadership of NUS to lead a massive fight against loans, Students for Students has received much support in the NUS.

The response of the leadership of NOLS has been to welcome it with open arms. NOLS' right wing leadership decided not to stand a candidate against Students for Students' most prominent personality, 'Cosmo' Hawkes, for national secretary of NUS this year. As a result he was elected to one of the most important posts on the executive stating that he intends to be president of NUS next year.

The right wing in NOLS



would like nothing better than to be part of a centre/right coalition on the NUS executive where they would no longer be under any pressure to carry out the fighting policies which they promise in elections.

The NOLS conference in February this year saw the formation of 'Student Labour Action', a grouping with the specific aim of getting NOLS to drop its involvement in NUS. This grouping emerged from the 'Democratic Left', the 'soft left' group which leads NOLS. The result is that those on the soft left who still believe that NOLS should lead NUS have no organisation. The fight over NOLS' future will be had over the next year.

For the last three years a Labour majority has been elected to the leadership of NUS despite the decision of NOLS to stand a minority slate. But this has been eroded by the failure to lead NUS in a fight against student loans and by their accommodation to Students for Students in the elections to NUS executive.

Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN), which is controlled by *Socialist Organiser*, has responded to this situation with a call for 'left unity' — proposing that the left unites to elect SSiN candidates to the leadership of NUS! The whole project is sectarian, reducing the opposition to the right to those prepared to support SSiN. Furthermore, SSiN specifically have built their support by accommodating the populist, anti-Labour right in NUS.

It was SSiN who first put together the anti-Labour

block which has now been taken over by Students for Students. SSiN's left unity includes anti-Labour forces such as Plaid Cymru (who defeated NOLS in the elections for NUS Wales this year), 'independents' who have stood against Labour slates in various colleges, and pro-imperialist forces such as the Union of Jewish Students.

The only force which can beat the right wing is NOLS, and it would have beaten Cosmo Hawkes had it stood a candidate against him. In the full-time elections NOLS won every post for which it stood by a landslide. It was only in the part-time elections where NOLS candidates stand in a block of twelve with independent Labour and other candidates that their vote is greatly reduced, because at that point it represents the vote for the 'Democratic Left' faction not a vote for Labour.

This means that the task for the left in NUS over the coming year is to fight in NOLS for Labour to continue to lead NUS. The best chance of this would be provided by a left NOLS slate, with a commitment to fighting loans and defending all of NUS' membership.

There is mass support for the politics of the Labour left in NUS, shown by the attendance at the *Campaign Student* fringe meeting addressed by Ken Livingstone, which was the largest fringe meeting of the last NUS conference. The left should unite to make sure that NOLS stands for the key posts in NUS next year with a left slate committed to leading the fight against student loans.

POLLY VITTORINI

New threat to abortion rights

The outcome of the current threat to legal abortion in the United States will have implications for women's right to choose internationally. The most serious threat to US women's abortion rights since 1973 prompted, on 9 April, the biggest demonstration on any matter there for 15 years.

The demonstration was called by the National Organisation of Women (NOW) to defend the 1973 Roe v Wade ruling which effectively guaranteed the right to abortion under the US constitution. Estimates of the size of the demonstration, which was sponsored by 478 organisations, varied between 300,000 and 600,000, of which 90 per cent were women — the biggest ever gathering of women in US history.

The anti-abortion drive, which has become increasingly violent with 30 bombings and 38 arson attacks on clinics in the last decade, was given a huge boost by the declaration of intent by George Bush in his inauguration speech to wipe out abortion.

Any victory for the anti-abortionists in the US will boost their determination elsewhere. Despite the recent victory over David Alton, women in Britain face the prospect of another attempt to restrict abortion rights and one with greater chance of success.

In an unprecedented move the government has indicated its sympathy to allocating government time to a restrictive abortion bill, most likely one to cut the upper time limit from 28 to 24 weeks.

The decision of the Labour NEC in March to recognise an anti-abortion group as a registered organisation does not bode well for the Labour leadership's commitment to fending off this new attack on the 1967 Act.

ANNE KANE

TIME TO GO! SHOW



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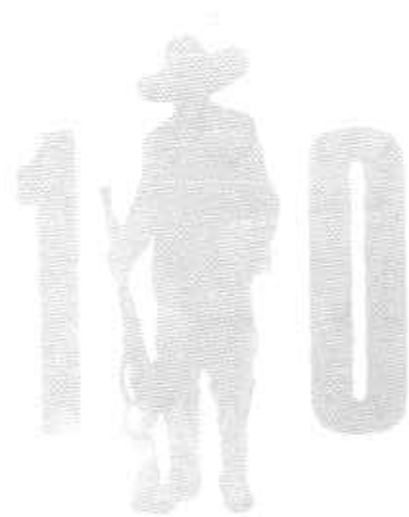
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In 1979, twenty years after the Cuban revolution the FSLN organised the second break with imperialist domination in the United States so called 'backyard'. The Sandinistas' victory against Somoza celebrates its tenth anniversary this 19 July.

The FSLN government pursued policies directed to ensuring universal health and education, promoting full employment and subsidising basic products and services. Schools and hospitals were built, credits advanced to peasants and prices controlled.

Targeted by the Reagan administration, Nicaragua had to contend with the world's most powerful military and economic state using its resources and influence to destabilise the government. This has inevitably placed unbearable strain on the Nicaraguan economy.

Effectively Nicaragua had to sustain continuous war since 1978. More than 40 per cent of the government's budget had to be spent on defence during the seven years of the Contra war, which cost \$12.3 bn and inflicted 50,000 casualties.

Throughout this period the United States has orchestrated an international campaign for a financial boycott of Nicaragua, using its influence to block multilateral credit sources. This cut down the foreign loans the government had initially obtained to assist with its social programme.

The trade embargo has denied Nicaragua access to the US market for its produce and for purchasing the spare parts needed in an economy that had been totally tied to

Ten years of the Nicaraguan revolution

the US for the previous fifty years.

Natural disasters and international prices have wreaked further havoc. Droughts in the mid 80's reduced crops. The devastating hurricane last October caused 5840 m worth of damage and a loss of 30 per cent in GNP. Lower prices on the international market for Nicaragua's main export crops have also reduced its revenue.

The combined effects of war, disasters, lack of foreign currency and spare parts have reduced productivity. Nicaragua currently produces less than it consumes and imports twice as much as it exports. This trade deficit along with its fiscal deficit have fuelled hyperinflation.

At the end of last year inflation was equivalent to an annual rate of 36,000 per cent.

Unable to get significant aid from capitalist states Nicaragua has sought the support of the Soviet Union. Although more substantial

than Western aid, the estimated \$1 bn annual assistance from the Soviet Union, is clearly designed to stave off collapse of the government rather than finance its recovery.

Even then there have been occasions such as in 1987 when the Soviet Union held back on oil supplies. As part of Gorbachev's aim to reach agreements with the US, the Soviet Union has applied pressure on Nicaragua to reduce its armed forces and take other steps called for by the US.

Without access to sufficient aid from either the capitalist or workers' states the FSLN government has been forced to cut back on the size of its social programme in order to ensure the survival of the national economy. In 1988 various measures were taken to cut 10 per cent off the national budget and recent measures, of January 1989, are designed to cut 20 per cent.

Resources have had to be shifted away from wage earners and consumers to producers in order to increase exports and cut domestic consumption. The price that the Nicaraguan revolution is having to pay in order to survive is deepening tensions inside the country.

The economic pressure will continue. Despite defeating the Contras, and the February agreement of Central American presidents to disband their 12,000 strong force, the Bush administration has recently announced a bipartisan accord with Congress on continued aid to the Contras. It will keep them in being as a military force into next year.

The US hopes to destabilise the elections which the FSLN have now bought forward to 25 February 1990. As the elections approach Nicaragua requires stepped up international political and economic support.

BARRY GRAY

Gorbachev in Cuba

Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Cuba at the beginning of April was much less spectacular than expected, especially for those — including some on the 'left' — who hoped for some 'disciplining' of Castro.

Nevertheless, the signals on the economic front given by the Russian leader were ominous enough for Cuba. Cuba will have to compete on an equal footing with other suppliers of the USSR; negotiations have been started about future sugar contracts between the two countries; Gorbachev wants his country to develop close economic ties with the key Latin American countries and is exerting strong behind-close-doors pressure on Cuba to follow suit; and there will be no relief on Cuba's debt to the USSR.

The USSR's policy in the region was accurately characterised by Hugh

O'Shaghnessy in the *Observer* on 23 April. 'On 4 April the Soviet leader moved a great deal closer to the Washington viewpoint. He praised the Nicaraguan government by name for its decision to increase democracy and reduce its armed forces. But by forbearing to criticise the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala whose political and human rights records are sickening, or the government of Honduras, the base for the offensive against Nicaragua, he gave the impression that the guilty party in Central America was Nicaragua itself. Predictably, Gorbachev's change of course has been followed in the past week by a call from US vice president Quayle for further concessions by Moscow to the US line on Central America.'

However, Cuba and the Soviet Union signed a 25-year Friendship and Cooperation Treaty, more-

over Gorbachev stated that the Soviet Union would stop arms supplies to Nicaragua only if the US did the same throughout Central America. This is positive, but it does not represent Soviet commitment to the support Nicaragua desperately needs faced with economic strangulation by imperialism.

Overall the outcome of Gorbachev's visit to Cuba has all the ingredients of a compromise between the two leaders. While it is clear that Gorbachev expects Cuba to become less of an economic burden to the USSR, this time round Gorbachevite policies were politely though firmly rejected by Castro. However, the significant fact remains that the USSR's relationship to the Cuban and Central American revolutions is in state of flux auguring nothing positive for the region.

JAVIER MENDEZ

Massacre in Namibia

Namibia is one of the most militarised countries in the world. The 1.7 million people of Namibia have an occupying force of 100,000 South African troops. In addition, the South Africans have trained 30,000 men in the South West African Territorial Force (SWATF) as a local auxiliary.

The core of this is the Koevoet (Crowbar) unit, 3,000 strong, this is a specialised hunter killer unit designed to kill SWAPO fighters and their supporters in the population at large.

On the 1 April, UN resolution 435 was due to come into effect. Its terms specified that Koevoet was to be disbanded. It had not been, it was simply redeployed as part of the police.

It specified that South African troops were to be confined to base pending withdrawal from the country. SWAPO units inside Namibia were similarly to be confined to base. This was supposed to be monitored by a UN force.

This force was originally to have numbered 7,500. At the instigation of Britain, it was reduced to around 4,000 to 'cut costs', despite opposition from the front line states and other African countries at the UN.

Simultaneously, the South Africans had a veto over the composition of the force. No countries considered actively hostile to apartheid were allowed to send troops.

By 1 April hardly any of these UN troops had arrived and none had been seen in the north.

On 1 April, SWAPO fighters coming into the country to concentrate into UN base camps were engaged by South African forces.

The version of events being touted by the South Africans and Thatcher is that SWAPO was in breach of the Geneva articles agreed between South Africa, Angola and Cuba, and underwritten by the USA and USSR.

SWAPO was never a party to this agreement. They were attempting to carry out aspects of resolution 435 allowing for the concentra-

tion of their forces into camps within Namibia. SWAPO has had fighters on Namibian soil since 1966. The idea that 1,500 lightly armed guerrillas were trying to get into a full scale confrontation with South Africa is quite incredible.

The ensuing massacre, led to over 250 SWAPO fighters killed. This has given the South Africans a stronger position, both internationally and within Namibia.

The whole question of Namibian independence arose following the defeat that South Africa suffered in Angola at the hands of the Cubans and Angolans. Pretoria offered Namibian independence as part of a package which included Cuban troops withdrawing from Angola.

The key to the current debacle is explained by the role of the Soviet Union. What deal has Gorbachev struck with the South African regime that allows South African bandits to carry on terrorising the people of Namibia while legitimate liberation forces of SWAPO are being forced to retreat to north of the 16th Parallel or surrender their arms?

Such a humiliation would not have been possible without the compliance of the Soviet Union. Their role has clearly been to bring about an agreement which has conceded to South Africa major concessions which defy logic given the defeat that South Africa suffered in Angola.

Although the ANC is still

getting Soviet support for the armed struggle, the signs are that this will not be for long. Pressure for negotiation with the regime is already being applied.

There is now a souped up Soviet charge d'affaires in Lesotho who has been meeting lots of South Africans. There have been several meetings between Soviet and South African 'academics' in the last months. On 26 April Vyachislav Ustinov met with South Africa's director of Foreign Affairs, Neil Van Heerden in Cape Town, in the first official Russian diplomatic meeting in South Africa since the break in diplomatic relations in the mid-1950s. All this is ominous for the liberation struggle.

Within Namibia, the events since 1 April have underlined the central problem of resolution 435: that it leaves legitimate authority in South African hands during the transition period. The South African Administrator General is responsible for the police who will keep 'law and order' during this years election process. A good half of those police will be members of Koevoet.

The AG will decide the method of election. The UN is only there to monitor.

All estimates, including those of the South Africans, are that SWAPO would win any fair elections. The question is, will Namibia get them?

PAUL ATKIN and RAY SIROTKIN



Polish socialist refused passport

The largest possible protest must be mounted against the denial of a passport to Jozef Pinior one of the main leaders of the Polish Socialist Party — Democratic Revolution (PSP-DR). Pinior was invited to the forthcoming Socialist Conference in Oxford on 'Gorbachev and the Left'.

There has not been a year since 1981 in which Pinior has not spent time in prison. He is well known for having been the only leader of Solidarity to have anticipated martial law and to have successfully hidden 18 million zloties of union funds in Lower Silesia from seizure by the authorities.

He was a member of the national underground leadership of Solidarity during martial law and spent three years in prison from 1983 to 1986 for trade union activities. He is a constant victim of police harassment.

Now in the new period of 'liberalisation' he is being denied the elementary right to travel abroad and discuss with the international labour movement.

The ostensible reason for the refusal of the passport is the imposition of a suspended sentence of one year's imprisonment last October for activity in connection with the mass strike last May in Poland.

Pinior was convicted of assaulting a state functionary after he and three friends, two of whom were women, were attacked by a group of 30 factory guards in the vicinity of the Dolmel plant in Wroclaw.

This is a foretaste of things to come. Organise protest resolutions now from your Labour Party and trade union branch.

Mexican socialist still missing

It is now over four months since the kidnapping of Jose Ramon Garcia — the secretary of the Committee to Defend the Vote in Mexico. Garcia disappeared following the widespread accusations of fraud in the recent Mexican presidential elections. The Mexican government still claims to have no knowledge of what happened to him despite the appointment of a special prosecutor. There is a long tradition of opponents of the Mexican government disappearing. International protests are requested which from Britain should be sent to President Salinas de Gortari, c/o Mexican Embassy, 8 Halkin St, London SW11.

Eastern and Western Europe today

Europe is today undergoing its greatest changes since World War II. This is obvious in Eastern Europe which has seen the greatest political shifts since 1945. In Western Europe structural shifts on a less dramatic scale, but still the greatest since World War II, have marked the two last decades. How are these developments linked, and what are their driving forces?
ALAN WILLIAMS places these developments in their historical context and assesses the relations between Eastern and Western Europe today.

The first issue to be clarified in examining European trends, and the development of European politics, is the relation between the uniqueness of each state and the overall situation. There are no two countries in Europe in which the organisation of capital, the structure of the state, or the relations in the labour movement are duplicated or in which political tactics can be the same. Nevertheless this does not prevent there being a clear general European development. If we are to understand the individual process in each country in Europe we must first examine the international reality in which it develops. The aim of this article is to consider these broad trends of European development in their full scope. Within that framework the specific situation in each country can then be situated.

This development of Europe as a whole is clear. World War I shattered the equilibrium of Europe. The European powers, after spreading through the world, 'imploded'. From 1914 onwards, starkly from 1917, Europe no longer dominated the world. As Max Silberschmidt put it: 'During the previous four centuries world history had been dominated by Europe; from 1917 onwards the impulses which have given the contemporary world its distinctive appearance emanated from Russia and the United States, Europe's flanking powers.'

The first force unleashed by World War I, the impact of the Russian revolution, is well understood by every socialist. Following October 1917 revolution spread to Hungary, Austria, and Germany. Communist Parties were formed in all major West European countries. The impact of the Russian revolution reshaped the European labour movement. Then, after 1941, the USSR emerged as the victor over fascist Germany. This time not merely defeated revolutions but the destruction of capitalism struck Eastern Europe. This impact of the Russian revolution needs no elaborating.

The West European imperialist states, with their more powerful ruling classes, put up much stronger resistance but this in itself, for reasons we will show, would not have been enough to stop the revolutionary wave spreading through Europe. The force which stopped

this, which first confined the revolution to Russia and then to Eastern Europe, and which decisively shaped the political nature of the continent, was not internal to Europe. It was the United States, with its colossal economic and military resources which, entering Europe from the West, twice allowed the blocking of the revolution from Russia. The Social Democratic bureaucracy, the instrument by which revolution was checked after World War I, was able to sustain that role only because of the economic room for manoeuvre given to it by the United States. The collision of the US with the impulse generated by the Russian revolution determined the political shape of the European continent.

The consequence within the USSR of the stabilisation of capitalist Europe by the Dawes plan after 1923 was decisive. In 1923 Stalin's was not the majority faction in the CPSU. Stalin formed only a part of a triumvirate with Kamenev and Zinoviev and outside this were both the supporters of Trotsky and the Right Opposition of Bukharin. But Stalinism bred on defeat as well as causing it — the most notable in this period being that in China in 1926-27. The stabilisation of Europe by US funds in 1924-29 blocked any new revolutionary wave in Western Europe. By the time the US reversed its capital flows into Europe in 1929, and the collapse of the European economy showed that the continent's stability was dependent on the United States, Stalin was consolidated in power in the USSR. History then followed a course which is well known.

Similar developments followed World War II. If revolution had spread into Western Europe after World War II it would have created the conditions for the destruction of Stalinism — Stalinism was, pre-eminently, the product of the isolation of the revolution in a backward country. Not merely did Stalin orient to blocking revolution in Western Europe but the United States economically sustained the Western European capitalist states through the Marshall Plan without itself being able to advance into Eastern Europe itself. The destruction of capitalism was achieved, outside Yugoslavia, by the Soviet regime. The effect was therefore to consolidate Stalinism in Eastern Europe following World War II.

This historical dialectic is clear. Stalinism, as Trotsky always insisted, was *bonopartism* — a force resting on a contradictory clash of two more fundamental social powers neither of which was able to prevail. Internally to the USSR Stalinism appeared as the 'centre' between the two more fundamental class forces of the Left Opposition, which represented the attempt of the working class to regain the momentum of the Russian Revolution, and the Right Opposition of Bukharin — which represented the pressure of capitalism on the USSR.

But Stalin's bonopartism *did not* rest primarily on forces within the USSR. The Russian peasants, or pathetically small capitalists, could not overthrow the Soviet workers state — and could do so even less today. The small capitalist forces in the USSR were significant only insofar as they were backed up by, and linked to, the forces of *international* capitalism — which were, of course, economically far stronger than the USSR. Stalinism represented the contradictory clash of two fundamental social forces. The Russian revolution was unable to spread into Europe because of the US which confined the revolution to a backward country — and which in turn produced the bureaucracy. At the same time capitalism, propelled by the US, was unable to overturn the Soviet workers state. The 'bonopartism' produced by the inability of either fundamental class force to prevail was Stalin — and, after World War II, the expansion of Stalinism into Eastern Europe. Stalinism was not a social formation in its own right, or even an essential social force, but the product of the contradictory clash of two more fundamental class powers.

This point relates to a fundamental misconception prevalent on the left regarding the 'Yalta' division of Europe in 1945. It is frequently believed that the West and Stalin 'agreed' the division of Europe. But this is a fundamental misunderstanding — ability to forswear expansion is impossible for capitalism. The division of Europe was not 'agreed'. It was a product of a clash between two social forces, two different classes embodied in different states, neither of which could, at that time, prevail over the other. Such a 'division' by its very nature could only be temporary. Either capitalism would overthrow the workers states in Eastern Europe or socialist revolution would spread to Western Europe — and as always the United States stood as the fundamental barrier to the latter.

The US never took the division of Europe as 'agreed' at all. On the contrary it regarded the division of Europe as a defeat — a product of its inability to impose its will in Eastern Europe. The reality was best expressed by George Kennan, the leading US expert on relations with the USSR, at the time of Yalta itself. If the US wished to achieve its goals in Europe after 1945 then, in the conditions prevailing at that time, it had to be prepared to go to war. Kennan himself favoured 'a fully fledged and realistic showdown with the Soviet Union'. However Kennan also spelt out the alternative. If the West was not willing, he wrote at the time of Yalta, 'to go the whole hog' to frustrate the Soviet Union, then the only thing to do was 'partition Germany, divide the continent into spheres'. This clash of forces, not 'agreement', produced the division of Europe. As George Bush declared on

'The US never took the division of Europe as 'agreed'. It regarded the division of Europe as a defeat'

granting \$1 billion of credits to Poland 'we never accepted Yalta'.

In turn during the period of capitalist boom of the 1950s and 1960s this division could exist and remain unchallenged. Capitalism had neither the necessity nor the possibility to attempt to reverse the division in its favour and equally the forces of the working class had no possibility to reverse the split in their favour — spreading socialism into Western Europe and, thereby, destroying the basis for the bureaucracy in the East. With the beginning of the capitalist economic crisis from the late 1960s, however, that compromise became untenable. Inevitably *both* classes would attempt to break down the division of Europe from totally different directions and serving two totally different class interests.

The way this developed after 1968, the turning point in the process, was inevitable given that war was not a viable option. The two fundamental classes existed across Europe — the various class states were 'simply' their most powerful instruments. Across Europe each class possessed not only its own states — but representatives of its class interests in the others' states. Inevitably, therefore, the initial attempt to break down the division of Europe, that is to resolve the conflict between the capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production in the continent, was for each side to use the representatives it possessed in the others states. The class conflicts were waged primarily *within* the states without, as in 1941, the dominant feature being a violent military clash between states of a different class character.

Given that each class possessed agents within the others camp the unfolding of class struggle posing breaking down of the division of Europe was evident.

The first shift came with the impact of the international offensive of the working class in 1968-75 commenced by the January 1968 Tet offensive in Vietnam and which found its base in Western Europe in the developing capitalist economic crisis. The May-June 1968 General Strike in France, the 'hot autumn' of 1969 in Italy, the rising crisis of Francoism, and the Portuguese revolution of 1974-75 all signalled a powerful spreading of the working class struggle into Western Europe. But in each country these working class struggles



ended in defeats — although not all the ground gained was lost. The second wave of such struggle, much weaker than the first, was the anti-missiles movement. But this also was defeated. Out of these defeats imperialism regained the initiative and has begun to attempt to break down the division of Europe from its side — that is to reintroduce capitalism into Eastern European states.

It is necessary to be sober about the stage of this. We are not about to witness the re-establishment of capitalism in either Poland, Hungary or Yugoslavia — to take the countries where capitalism has the clearest ambitions. But it is absurd not to pay attention to evident trends. What is taking place in these countries is, first, a substantial market reform, second, the creation of a qualitatively larger sector of small and medium capital, and, third, in Hungary and Poland, the political right of these capitalist forces to organise. This does not amount to the restoration of capitalism. But it does allow the *groundwork* to be created by capital for a later attempt at a restoration of capitalism — for example under conditions where the USSR would be unwilling/unable to act to prevent this. Meanwhile it placed greater pressure on the working class and the workers state.

This process also shows the distinctive nature of this period of capitalist assault against the workers states. In the 1930s, culminating in 1941, the form of capitalist assault on the USSR was frontal and military — a direct onslaught on the USSR and its bureaucracy. In 1941 the working class, and its most advanced political representatives, were forced into a united front with the bureaucracy against a capitalist attack.

The distinctive feature of the *present* situation is that imperialism, for from directly assaulting the bureaucracy, sees it as its most important instrument in strengthening capital in Eastern Europe. Not merely does the bureaucracy repress the working class, thereby sapping its strength and permitting the penetration of capital, but it also directly creates the conditions for the spawning of small, medium — and not so small capitalists. An entire section of the bureaucracy, particularly in Poland and Hungary, is now directly linked to the developing capitalist sector through the establishment of marketing, wholesaling, production and other capitalist concerns and

through the licensing and regulatory systems linked to them. While the bureaucracy remains that of a workers state a wing of it is now directly linked to capital.

This reality determines the attitude which has to be taken by the working class to the different factions within the bureaucracy. It is not possible for any strategic alliance to exist with the Gorbachevite wing of the bureaucracy. Its proposals for democratic rights in the political field must be supported — for the most vital question in Eastern Europe is to reintroduce the mass of the working class into active politics (a point we elaborate below). But the working class will fundamentally clash with the Gorbachevite wing of the bureaucracy on all more essential issues of policy.

First the international policies of the working class clash with Gorbachev directly. Support for the international extension of socialism and the revolution — which alone corresponds to the international interests of the working class, and is also the only way to lead Eastern Europe out of its impasse — fundamentally clashes with Gorbachev's policy of appeasement of imperialism. Support for the struggle in South Africa, of the FSLN and FMLN in Central America, and, doubtless, at a later date for working class struggles in Europe, clashes with the policy of Gorbachev. The fact that individual initiatives, such as the INF treaty and the proposals for arms reductions, must be supported, does not alter the fundamental further accommodation to im-

perialism represented by Gorbachev's policies.

Secondly, internally, is the market reform. The market reform worsens the position of the working class and reduces its weight in society — most blatantly in Poland where its official aim, sanctioned by Walesa as well as Jaruzelski, is to reduce the living standards of the working class and objectively further sap its weight in society. On the economic and social field the working class directly clashes with the policies of Gorbachev.

Equally, clearly no alliance is possible with the Stalinist faction of the bureaucracy — and not simply because of its blatant repression, corruption, and suppression of democracy. It was the Stalinist wing of the bureaucracy which created the situation in the first place. Their overall international policy propped up imperialism. Their repression and depoliticisation of the working class created the conditions in which illusions in Western imperialism and pro-capitalist currents in their own countries could emerge.

No strategic alliance can exist with either the Gorbachevites or Ligachevites — as, in a previous historical period, no strategic alliance could exist for Trotsky with either Bukharin or Stalin.

The only way forward in Eastern Europe which meets the needs of the working class lies in the re-entry of the East European working class into active politics — to break the political apathy and repression which has gripped the Soviet working class since the 1920s and that of Eastern Europe during most of the post-war period in Eastern Europe.

This reality is strikingly demonstrated in the one case, Poland, where clearly advanced political forces have emerged standing to the left of the bureaucracy — the Polish Socialist Party — Democratic Revolution (PPS-DR). The programme of the PPS-DR leaves no room for capitalism in Poland and it opposes capitalism on the international plane. Equally it is totally opposed to the bureaucracy.

But the PPS-DR is the product of more than three decades of political debate in Poland. Unlike Hungary the Polish masses were not completely defeated in 1956. A certain 'compromise' with the bureaucracy after 1956 allowed a freer political life in which intellectual debate could take

'Support for the extension of socialism clashes with Gorbachev's policy towards imperialism'





place. This, in turn, prepared the political currents which linked up with the Polish working class following its re-entry into political life in 1970. Then for almost two decades, Poland passed through recurrent mass working class struggles which culminated in the creation, rebanning, and then relegalisation of Solidarnosc. Only via this whole period of struggle, debate, and mass participation in politics could a political party be created standing to the left of the bureaucracy.

The same process applies, only more so, at the level of the mass of the working class. In the East European states outside the USSR illusions in capitalism, including in the majority of the working class, are deep. It could not be otherwise given the stability and higher living standards of Western Europe and the US — which rest on an imperialist system which is not understood by the masses in Eastern Europe — and given the degree of political liberty in the Western imperialist states compared to the repression exercised in Eastern Europe.

But illusions in capitalism are one thing, its reality is another. The market reform is the first practical taste the working class in Eastern Europe gets of what a movement towards capitalism means. And while the working class does not rebel against its illusions in capitalism as such — no class forms its actions on the basis of ideas — the East European workers do rebel against the practical consequences of moves back to capitalism as every workers state into which a market reform has been introduced shows. Thus the effects of the market reform have been resisted by mass strikes in Poland, by small strikes in the USSR, and by a strike wave in Yugoslavia.

'The market reform is the first practical taste the working class in Eastern Europe gets of what a movement towards capitalism means.'

The historical dialectic in Eastern Europe is evident. The most advanced political currents are created by the possibility of free political debate. The entry of the mass of the working class into politics, alone, can break the atomisation produced by Stalinism. The two combined alone produce rebirth of left currents. That is the dialectic of political advance in Eastern Europe.

But if we turn to Western Europe what conditions operate there?

The first major progressive advance of the West European working class in the post-war period came in 1968-75. This inter-related not only with a capitalist economic crisis in general but a profound historical shift in the relation between Western Europe and the United States.

From 1914 to the mid-1960s the US was the great subsidiser of Western Europe. However from the mid-1960s onwards, amid the Vietnam war, the US struck progressively greater economic blows against Europe. First inflation fed by the Vietnam war, then the oil price increases of 1973 produced by collaboration of the US with OPEC, and then the effects of 'Reaganomics' hit the West European economies. The result was, first, an explosion of working class struggle in Europe from 1968-75 and then, after this, a profound realignment of forces in the European labour movement.

As regards capital in Europe the effect of the crisis was to drive the European capitalist classes more firmly into the arms of the US. Indeed this is inevitable and logical. West European capital's subordination to the United States is based on three great pillars — the fact that since 1914 Western Europe has not been economically stable without the United States, the strength of the West European labour movement, and Western Europe's military inferiority to the USSR. Simple economic growth does not compensate for these basic realities — furthermore since 1973 European growth, and even more the rate of growth of European capital formation, has fallen behind that of the US.

This process since 1968 is clear. The one capitalist politician in Europe who showed even demagogic independence from US policy, de Gaulle, fell as a direct result of the May-June events. Then, following the oil price increase of 1973,

Gaullism lost the French presidency. Gaullism collapsed not merely because its economy was too weak but *politically* — as soon as the working class moves into action the European capitalist classes necessarily turn to the US for support. It is sufficient to see the European bourgeois response on Cruise and Pershing missiles, in which all meekly toed the American line, to see the weakness and worthlessness of any capitalist opposition to the United States in Europe.

It is absurd to expect, as do forces ranging from Peter Thatchell to those trade unionists who gave EEC Commissioner Jacques Delors a standing ovation at the TUC Congress, that we will see resistance to the United States based on European capital or the EEC. European capital is not a force for resisting the United States, it is force which historically capitulated to it seventy years ago and has no possibility whatever of reversing that course. The precondition for a capitalist policy in Europe independent of the United States would be that the European labour movement had been smashed and therefore posed no threat — a fascist solution in Europe.

Further this capitulation applies on the economic level. The period since 1968 has been one in which the US has increasingly subordinated the European economies to its interests. The 1971 devaluation of the dollar, carried out without any consultation with its allies, commenced the US counter-offensive against Europe. The 1973 oil price increase consolidated it.

The effects of this post-1973 economic period are evident. From 1945 until 1973 the West European economies grew more rapidly than the United States. In the 15 years since 1973 the US has grown more rapidly than Western Europe and its rate of capital formation has far exceeded that of Western Europe. By accepting the economic tutelage of the US the EEC condemned itself to relative economic stagnation.

But that subordination to the US is undoubtedly a far more rational choice for European capitalists than to embark on the hazardous, indeed impossibly dangerous, course of attempting to gain independence from the one force which since 1917 has been the guarantor of their survival.

A break with the United States would mean the European capitalist classes would have to face on the

European continent, alone, the strongest labour movements in any imperialist country and the military reality of the USSR. Better to be a poorer capitalist than to risk not being a capitalist at all is the logic of European capital's capitulation to the US!

The projects of European capital for the 1990s, in particular the Single European Act (1992) are not projects for resisting the United States but for copying it and capitulating to it. The EEC is quite open about this. The project of 1992 is couched in explicitly Reaganite terms. In the words of the official study commissioned by the EEC, the Cecchini report, 1992 is a 'supply side shock... of macro-economic proportions', 'a supply side shock given by market integration'.

Far from being a challenge to the United States, 1992 is about importing US methods into Europe. The goal, and effect, of these is the same as in the US — to weaken the labour movement. Furthermore it is *not* accompanied by any political break with the US as is vividly illustrated in the question of the 'modernisation' of nuclear weapons. There is not a serious *capitalist* opposition to this in Europe at all. The opposition developing in West Germany is based not on capital's objections but on fear of the electoral consequences, that is a political reaction in the working class, not on capitalist opposition to US policy. Kohl himself would undoubtedly like to introduce the missiles.

However this case of West Germany, together with France and Spain, does graphically illustrate one major effect of the policies leading to 1992. This is a crisis in the capitalist parties in Western Europe. The project of 1992 means untrammelled supremacy of big capital. Structurally 1992 includes rationalising European capital through the elimination of major sections of the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie who form a major part of the base of the main capitalist parties. This tends to produce a crisis within these parties.

This tendency is strengthened by the fact that following the October 1987 crash European and Japanese capital capitulated to the demands of the United States and recommenced financing its expansion. This ensured political stability in the United States — but at the expense of spreading a crisis not only into the third world, through exacerbation of the debt crisis, but also destabilising the ruling parties in the other imperialist

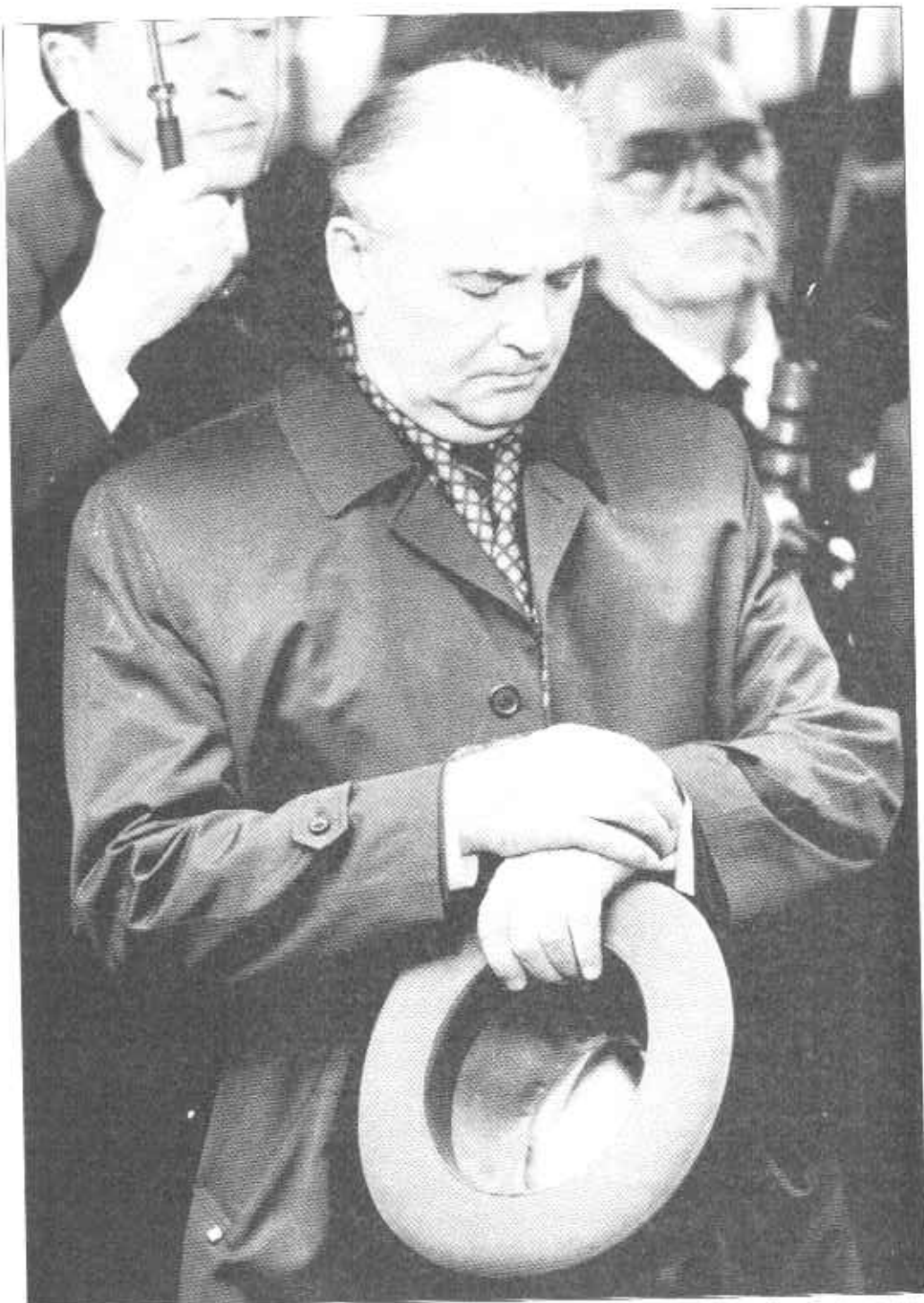


Photo: Rex Features Ltd

'Far from a challenge to the United States, 1992 is about importing US methods into Europe'

countries. The financial scandals and the crisis of Takeshita in Japan, and the current crisis of the Kohl government in West Germany, are by-products of the strain imposed on West Germany and Japan by capitulation to US demands following October 1987.

But if the bourgeoisie capitulates to the US the situation with the working class is different. The force bearing the brunt not only of European capital's demands, and also the extra-pressure of the United States, is not European capital but the European working class. The resistance

which has come to the United States in Western Europe has not come from capital but from the working class and its allies — as shown graphically in the anti-Vietnam war, the anti-missiles movements and the present fears of the West German government.

The West European working class today, however, is fighting under definite conditions which shape its struggle and explain the fundamental features of the reorganisation of the working class movement.

Firstly, taking the most fundamental trend, the changed economic relation of the US to Western Europe, the

fact that it is no longer subsidising but striking blows against its European allies, broke the back of the cravenly pro-American currents in the European Socialist Parties.

The right wing of the European social democracy now see its saviour not in the United States but in the EEC. This right wing social democracy — Mitterand in France, Gonzales in Spain, Craxi in Italy — is today the most powerful current in the workers movement in Europe.

This orientation plays a dual role. On the one hand it corresponded to the need of the Socialist Parties to maintain their base in the working class in conditions where the latter were swinging sharply away from support for the United States. Secondly this orientation played a decisive role for European capital. Given the crisis of the petty-bourgeoisie and its impact on the capitalist parties, the right wing social democracy, with its firm pro-EEC orientation, appears as a bulwark of cohesion and stability for capital.

These political trends fit in perfectly with the economic/social trends produced by the new period of capital — the emergence of the dual society and the tendency to a 'core' of secure, well paid, white, chiefly male, workers surrounded by a 'periphery' of low paid, unskilled, insecure, frequently black, workers whose conditions rapidly deteriorated — and even outside these the widening layers of the long term unemployed. This 'dual society' sharply shapes the radicalisation of both the left and the extreme right.

The forces excluded by the drive to 1992 are the petty bourgeoisie and the unskilled and unemployed 'periphery'. The social bloc represented by the right wing social democracy, in particular, is an alliance of the labour bureaucracy and the best off sections of the working class — of the 'core', of those least touched by austerity — with big capital against the petty bourgeoisie and the poorest sections of the working class.

In that framework the rise of both currents of the left and of the extreme right is logical. Both are based on the forces pushed outside the orbit of big capital and right wing social democracy. The emphasis in the contemporary European left wing on women and black people, as well as ecology and other themes taken up by the Greens, the left wing of the Labour Party, those who voted

for Juquin and the ecologists in France, the left socialists in Denmark, reflects the social recomposition of the working class since World War II and the development of the dual society. At the same time the pressure on layers of the petty-bourgeoisie and the growth of unemployment creates space for the right.

But unlike the inter-war period currents emerging to the left of right wing social democracy are not being drawn into the Communist Parties. The discrediting of the East European bureaucracies is now such that their local representatives, the West European CPs, are no longer capable of attracting the majority of radicalised forces.

However this decline of the CPs does not mean a rise of anti Sovietism or Cold War myths. The Communist Parties are not representatives of the Soviet Union, that is the workers state, but of the bureaucracy which rests on it. The decline of the Communist Parties is accompanied by a *more* favourable attitude by the masses towards the USSR — rejection of the view that it is an aggressor power, belief that the fundamental problem in the world is the US etc. Radicalisation in Europe today is passing through the Greens, the left of the Labour Party, and similar forces.

Finally, these processes give rise to the fundamental trends of development in Europe over the next decade. Every capitalist crisis poses a simple question. It is an illusion created by conditions of capitalist stability that two modes of production, that is two class powers, can coexist on the European continent — any crisis, such as the present, brings this out into the open. One must eventually prevail and overthrow the other — a question which will be decided both by the objective relation of forces and by the subjective quality of leadership given to them. We will examine each in turn.

At the objective level undoubtedly the most fundamental problem that is faced, indeed the most fateful for the entire world political situation, is that today the crisis in the USSR is qualitatively more advanced than in the United States. By centralising the resources of world imperialism in its own hands the US under Reagan underwent seven years of powerful economic growth and significantly rebuilt its military machine. It is this force which stands behind the West European capitalists — without it they would be extremely strategically

weak. The US proletariat today is the only major working class in the world which has not engaged in active struggle as a class since the beginning of the capitalist crisis. In contrast bureaucratic misrule in the USSR has led its economy into profound stagnation and crisis.

Put aphoristically, whereas Jesse Jackson, the first symptom (although not the solution) of profound political shifts in the US, and the break up of the Democratic Party, was knocked back a major crisis now exists in the USSR — and a full blown one in Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia. That the United States remains a pillar of relative political stability in the situation gives to imperialism its relative political advantage — an advantage, incidentally, which can reflect itself not simply in direct drives to capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe but also, in reactions against this, in the revival of directly Stalinist trends as with Milosevic in Yugoslavia.

This situation places a tremendous responsibility on the West European proletariat not only from the point of view of its own struggles but because it is the chief force which can break the encirclement of the East European working class.

This is indeed doubly necessary. In the inter-war period the workers state of the USSR was protected against a combined imperialist offensive by intense inter-imperialist competition, culminating in war. After 1923, even more after 1933, the European working class suffered crushing defeat. Today inter-imperialist competition is not remotely so strong but the working class of Western Europe has not suffered any defeat comparable to those after 1923. This marks a distinct difference to the situation in the inter-war period. It is the West European working class which must break the encirclement of Eastern Europe.

What is theoretically posed is shown by the fact that since 1968 the working class in both the Western and Eastern parts of the European continent has been engaged in mass struggles — in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, West Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia. The ideal variant would of course be that these struggles were synchronised. Under those conditions it would obviously be the West European working class, not capitalism, that would have been the pole of attraction for the East European working class. But unfortunately history does

'Unlike the inter-war period, left currents are not being drawn into the CPs'

not organise itself in such favourable trends of development and behind West European capital continues to lie the power of the United States.

Nevertheless the fundamental trends of development do operate and certain of the movements in Western Europe, notably the peace and ecology movements, and almost certainly very soon the women's movement, do impact on Eastern Europe. What, therefore, must be the fundamental tasks undertaken by the working class in Western Europe in this situation?

The first is simply that the advance of the class struggle in Western Europe completely coincides with the interests of that in Eastern Europe. The more the West European proletariat advances in its own struggles — against austerity, against nuclear modernisation, against unemployment, for women, for ecology — the more it appears as the pole of attraction for the East European proletariat. The more, on the contrary, it is Thatcher or Kohl who appear strong and triumphant the more the illusions in Western capitalism among the East European proletariat are spread — and the more concessions are made to capital by the bureaucracy. It is of course around these mass struggles that the West European working class will advance.

Similarly, outside Europe, every advance by the colonial revolution weakens the ability of Western imperialism to militarily and economically squeeze Eastern Europe and the USSR. Furthermore it is the struggle in the semi-colonial world in particular which reveals the rapacious character of imperialism to the most advanced sections of the population in Eastern Europe.

The struggle inside the workers movement in Western Europe is inseparably connected to this situation. The right wing of the West European social democracy, as with the imperialists, are directly aiding the most pro-capitalist forces in Eastern Europe. Indeed certain of the projects of the East European bureaucracy, such as the creation of pro-capitalist Social Democratic Parties in a number of countries, are directly carried through in collaboration with the Second International. In turn, the right wing social democracy supports the policies of attacks on working class living standards in Eastern Europe, as with the Walesa Jaruzelski agreement, while simultaneously putting up no serious

opposition to repression of left wing currents.

But in addition to the direct struggle of the working class in Western Europe it is necessary to be clear what 'breaking the encirclement' of the working class in Eastern Europe means. It *does not* mean that socialist revolution is on the agenda in Western Europe today — although class struggles are. Also the crisis in Eastern Europe itself is going to develop over a certain period of years. What it does mean is extending the class struggle in Western Europe and linking it to that in Eastern Europe in a way that aids both — taking up specific tasks directed at Eastern Europe.

The demands of this are specific. The first is for the legalisation of the left wing currents in Eastern Europe. While concessions are made in Eastern Europe today to right wing or pro-capitalist forces the repression of left wing currents continues — indeed as the fight against the market reform starts this is going to deepen. It is symptomatic of what is going to happen that precisely at the same time that Walesa went to see the Pope with the blessing of the Polish bureaucracy, and Bush was announcing \$1 billion credits for Poland, Josef Pinior, the leader of the Polish PPS, was refused a passport to travel to the West.

Second is the interrelation of demands for reduction in military spending, and against nuclear weapons. This is both a question of the struggle against the capitalists in Western Europe and, also, corresponds to the most urgent need in Eastern Europe — which is to improve the living and cultural conditions of the working class and thereby its weight in society by releasing extra economic resources. This relates immediately to partial demands such as the elimination of all short range nuclear weapons, in the medium term to the demand for the denuclearisation of Europe, and to more far reaching demands such as the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the countries of Europe — a demand completely unacceptable to Western European capital because breaking their dependence on the US is impossible for them.

Third, is the question of economic credits from Socialist Party governments. Credits from the Western governments are tied to strengthening *their* class forces in Eastern Europe — tied to austerity programmes, market reforms, and, at best, in-

'While concessions to the right are made in Eastern Europe today the repression of left wing currents continues.'

dividual human liberties (which in themselves of course are to be supported). Naturally they *do not* include such questions as the right of socialist political currents to function. The issue of tying of credits to the right of currents such as the PPS to exist, including legally, is a demand which must be raised by the left in Western Europe.

Fourth specific efforts must be undertaken to make known, and aid, the positions of the left wing currents in Eastern Europe. The fashionable orientation today, promoted in this country by the Socialist Conference, is towards Gorbachev — that is to alliance with forces moving *against* the interests of the international working class in Eastern Europe and internationally. It is clear that where left wing currents do emerge, as with the PPS, they are directly *in conflict* with the Gorbachevite wing of the bureaucracy as with the direct Stalinists. Capital, as its supports this, is very happy to publicise an orientation to Gorbachev — but not the socialist alternative. Special efforts have therefore to be put into getting out the views of left wing currents in Eastern Europe.

Fifth, every opportunity has to be taken to clarify the attitude of East European political currents towards the colonial revolution. It is here that the nature of Western imperialism is most graphically revealed — and this can be a powerful influence on vanguard currents in Eastern Europe.

Finally the decisive country in Europe, as always, will be Germany — as the development of the fight against both the missiles and nuclear modernisation shows. Twice, despite huge struggles by the German working class, the impact of the Russian revolution has been halted in Germany by the United States. Whether this can be achieved a third time, or whether on the contrary the West German workers will undermine the grip of the United States, will largely determine the fate of the European continent.

The next decade in Europe will be dominated by that fact that two class powers, that is two modes of production, cannot coexist on the European continent. One must prevail over the other — a crisis merely means that the basic historical choice is posed directly. Which does prevail will play a decisive role in determining the fate of humanity.

The 1990s in Europe will give a large part of the answer to that question.

The greatest upheavals since the second world war are taking place in the workers' states. The dramatic results of the elections and the upsurge of nationalist movements in the USSR, the economic crisis and wave of student demonstrations in China, the political reforms and legalisation of Solidarnosc in Poland and the acute economic crisis and national conflict in Yugoslavia, to mention only the largest scale events. GEOFFREY OWEN looks at these developments.

The upheavals in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe



In its long term implications the most significant development of all these was the result of the elections to the USSR's Congress of Peoples' Deputies. At the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party on 25 April Mikhail Gorbachev described this as: 'A large scale politicisation of the masses, with the emergence of millions of people into the arena of social activity... The politicisation of public awareness changes the political situation in the country.'

The elections mark the first mass political activity by the Soviet working class independent of the bureaucracy in more than 60 years. No-one can predict the precise outcome but the second most powerful working class in the world has started to move.

The turnout for the elections was more than 80 percent. Throughout the USSR people voted against the most conservative party functionaries and for the candidates advocating a radicalisation of glasnost and democratisation, as well as the expected big votes for nationalist movements in the Baltic states.

The bureaucracy was rocked in the heartlands of the Russian working class in Moscow and Leningrad. Yeltsin won 89.4 per cent of the vote in Moscow, with more than 5.1 million votes after the Central Committee had ordered an inquiry into his call for a discussion on the issue of a multi-party system. Yeltsin called for an end to privileges for the

Nomenklatura and stepping up the pace of Gorbachev's reforms. The mayor of Moscow was defeated and the second ranking party leader won only 13 per cent of the vote.

In the Leningrad region 54 per cent of the voters crossed out the name of Yuri Solovyev, a candidate member of the Politburo and the regional party leader, who was standing unopposed. Anatoly Gerasimov the Leningrad city party leader won only 15 per cent of the vote.

In the Ukraine five regional party bosses (standing unopposed) and the party leaders in Kiev and Lvov were voted down.

In the tiny Baltic republics nationalist movements won massive support. In Estonia 15 of the 23 candidates backed by the local Popular Front won. In Lithuania Sajudis had 31 of its 42 candidates elected in the first round. The Prime Minister and President of the Supreme Soviet lost to Sajudis candidates.

In Byelorussia, three First Secretaries and the deputy Prime Minister were defeated. In Armenia a massive poll boycott was reported after the jailing of 11 leaders of the Karabakh committee. In second round voting on 9 April Roy Medvedev and Yuri Cherniechenko, a supporter of Yeltsin, were elected. The decision of the Academy of Sciences leadership not to nominate the dissident Andrei Sakharov was reversed at its conference in March.

The results clearly shook the party leadership. At the meeting of the

Central Committee called to assess the election, Gorbachev made clear that his goal was to hold together the bureaucracy whilst strengthening his own position and pressing ahead with the market reform in the economy. Thus 110 'dead souls' were retired from the CC but no concessions were made to Yeltsin. Gorbachev argued the basic reason for the electoral defeats of the party was: the 'dearth of consumer goods in the shops'.

According to *Pravda* in October last year staple products were rationed in eight out of 15 republics and the situation has got worse not better. In particular agricultural production declined by two per cent last year, with sharp falls in grain, potato, vegetable and fruit production.

Gorbachev's solution is to accelerate the market reform which, unlike China, Poland and Yugoslavia, has hardly begun in the USSR. The centrepiece is the reform of agriculture. A decree of the Supreme Soviet published on 9 April this year, gives farmers the right to lease land for five to fifty years and to pass land on to their children. This is the first step to privatising agricultural production in the USSR. Farmers will have the right to sell the produce as and where they wish and to do what they like with the proceeds.

But state wholesale and retail pricing will remain for the time being on a range of staple goods including

'No-one can predict the precise outcome but the second most powerful working class in the world has started to move.'

bread, butter, eggs, meat, fish, sugar, tea, and wine. Market prices would mean price increases. That is being avoided for the moment because of the potentially explosive political consequences. This will not go on for ever as Gorbachev noted last summer: 'Much now rests on the reform of price formation. The fact that this problem is unresolved is greatly complicating the implementation of economic reform. Without price reform, we cannot, we shall not be able to create normal economic relations in the economy.'

The second step planned is an expansion of the production of consumer goods as well as vast purchases of consumer goods from the West. Every industry and enterprise in the Soviet heavy industrial sector has been told to produce some consumer goods and more than \$1 billion in foreign currency has been set aside for importing machinery and equipment for the consumer goods sector and another £18.3 billion will be spent on importing finished consumer goods in 1989.

Thirdly, the small private capitalist 'co-operative sector' is being encouraged. The number of co-operatives increased in 1988 from 14,000 to 77,500, employing 1.4 million people. But as the *Financial Times* recently noted: 'Most Soviet citizens bitterly resent the new businesses. Sixty years of living in a non-market economy have made them hostile to the high prices co-operatives charge and to the wealth co-operative owners are acquiring.'

Gorbachev's foreign policy aims to reduce defence expenditure and gain credits from Western banks by making political concessions to imperialism. But the response of the imperialists to every concession is to come back for more. The most recent CIA report on the Soviet economy notes with satisfaction the economic strain placed on the USSR by the arms race — the USSR budget deficit reached nine per cent of GDP last year — and argues that increased military pressure will bring more political concessions from Moscow. (*Financial Times* 24 April 1989). Hence NATO's plans to modernise short range nuclear weapons.

With imperialism stepping up the pressure, deep resentment at the failure of perestroika to improve living standards, opposition to price increases and growing resentment at growing social differentiation and inequality, Gorbachev is in

for a rough ride.

The first expressions of opposition, taking advantage of glasnost, are the rise of nationalist movements of various kinds and basic opposition to the nomenklatura. The most coherent forces remain the stalinists and those around Gorbachev fighting for the market reform to be accelerated. But illusions in the market and capitalism will not prevent rejection of their real affects by the Soviet working class. That creates the possibility in the future of socialist currents emerging to the

'The market reform has hardly begun in the USSR'

left. The precondition for that, however is political activity by the mass of the working class — which has now started. The next step will probably be in September when there should be new local and Republican Soviet elections — it will be interesting to see the results!

But in China, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia the market reforms have already been carried much further than so far in the Soviet Union and the results show what can be expected in the USSR tomorrow.

Origins of the Polish Socialist Party

The establishment of the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) (PSP-DR) marks the emergence of a genuinely left current opposed to the bureaucracy and the market reform in Poland.

In this edited article JOZEF PINIOR, the most influential leader of the PSP-DR, explains his views of Polish society and the role of his organisation.

The formation of the Polish Socialist Party corresponds to a particular moment in the evolution of Polish society and the contradictions maturing within it.

The Stalinists' seizure of power at the outcome of the war had a genuinely revolutionary progressive aspect, reflected by the elimination of capitalist privileges and feudal vestiges, which led to large-scale social mobility. On the other hand, the entire society was immediately placed under the tutelage of the nomenklatura, backed up by a Soviet political and military presence.

The anti-capitalist changes were not simply the product of manipulation from above. They corresponded to the aspirations of the Polish masses, aspirations that were expressed notably in the anti-Nazi resistance. Because of this, a section of the society was able to identify with the new system. But, since the regime dismantled the civil society, the traditional divisions between the progressive left and conservative right lost their relevance. In an atomized society, the only means of identification is where you stand toward the existing authority.

Through episodes of working-class activity — in 1956, 1970, 1976 and 1980 — an anti-bureaucratic consciousness took shape. This involved the civil society

becoming aware of its existence as such, separated from the state. The high-point of this process of becoming conscious was in 1980, when Solidarnosc appeared. It was a trade union, but also an overall movement of the society against totalitarianism.

The society won two historical successes on the way to achieving its emancipation, which are irreversible without reverting to a repression on the scale of that employed by Stalin.

It broke the nomenklatura's monopoly over information and organization. Then a new form of public life began to take shape. It became clear that there are different interests within the society in the course of emancipating itself. In this way, the right-left division reappeared within Polish politics, although its new content has not yet been clearly defined.

The leadership of the nomenklatura became aware that it had to make changes in order to render the economy more efficient and preserve its power.

They want to use capital in its classical form to bolster their power. In this framework, the Polish bureaucracy is putting forward an authoritarian model of social development.

Besides the Catholic hierarchy, a part of the op-

position commonly called the 'shadow establishment' is willing to legitimize this authoritarian road. This involves Solidarnosc's most influential intellectual advisors and some highly reputed union leaders, such as Walesa, Bujak and Frasnyniuk.

Another part of the opposition rejects the authoritarian model, and proposed a model of social emancipation from below, of direct democracy. This is where many factory structures of Solidarnosc stand.

In this same current is the new left, grouped primarily in our party, the Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution.

The birth of the Polish Socialist Party is the result of the awareness of the stakes bound up with the bureaucracy's project. This consciousness has appeared independently in various structures of the Polish opposition.

If the shadow establishment continues to legitimize the bourgeoisification of the nomenklatura, sooner or later the Polish society is going to look for an alternative within the opposition. Then the left opposition can be this natural alternative.

We are working to build such an alternative. Of course, we are still very weak. Most of the society had confidence in Walesa and the bishops. In our camp, above all, are the young workers, the university and high school students.

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in International Viewpoint, no 159.

In China the privatisation of agricultural production was started in 1978 with a spectacular increase in agricultural production, the mushrooming of small scale rural industry and a colossal process of social differentiation with the creation of millionaires on the one hand and small farmers being driven out of business on the other. But as time went on new contradictions emerged with vital grain production reduced as farmers looked to more lucrative crops, spiralling prices cutting into urban workers' living standards with inflation now reaching 20 per cent and a huge impetus given to corruption and graft within the bureaucracy at every level. Alongside this domestic policy went an extreme accommodation to imperialism in foreign policy; a de facto military alliance with US imperialism against the Soviet Union and most disgracefully of all continuing Chinese military clashes with Vietnam.

In China today the market reform is being brought to a halt to avoid the threat of a massive reaction by the Chinese working class to its falling living standards and the social differentiation and privileges the market has created. The student protests demanding democracy have dovetailed with the mass working class discontent at the economic crisis in China.

In Poland, the consequences of the market reform and loans from western banks have been successive waves of working class struggle culminating in the creation of Solidarnosc in 1981. Since 1981 the bureaucracy have continued to attempt to carry through a radical market reform but met repeated rebuffs most recently in the rejection of price increases in the referendum on economic reform in 1987 and the waves of strikes which have followed. The decision to legalise Solidarnosc and hold partial elections in which the opposition can participate are political concessions in exchange for the collaboration of the Lech Walesa Solidarnosc leadership in carrying through the market reforms and cutting workers' living standards.

A major factor in this was the direct financial pressure of the United States and Western banks. Credit to Poland was held up by the banks until the agreement with Walesa was signed and upon the legalisation of Solidarnosc George Bush announced a loan to

Poland, his intention to visit the country and that the United States never had and never would accept the division of Europe ratified at Yalta after the second world war.

As the consequences of the market reform have worked through in Poland amid periodic waves of mass working class struggle a social and political differentiation has proceeded in the opposition. Farmers Solidarnosc is campaigning for immediate large price increases — that is for a big transfer of wealth from the urban working class to the farmers. Walesa is prepared to accept a reduction in workers' living standards and has announced his intention to run for president in six years time. And an opposition which opposes any reduction in workers' living standards and supports strikes to defend them has emerged in the factories.

Imperialism is clearly directly intervening in Poland supporting the bureaucracy's efforts to introduce elements of capitalism and building up Walesa as a pro-capitalist political alternative to the bureaucracy as a whole.

For Yugoslavia the results of the market reforms which began in 1966 have been to deepen the national divisions between the richest and poorest nations within the federation, to develop social differentiation and to provoke waves of strikes against the effects of runaway inflation and unemployment.

In the richest republic, Slovenia, the market reform has gone furthest, and there are serious discussions about joining the EEC and opposition to Slovenia economically subsidising the poorest parts of Yugoslavia.

But the most significant political development has been the rise of Serbian chauvinism and nationalism. In the first instance, Slobodan Milosevic's campaign to withdraw the national rights and autonomy given to the regions of Vojvodina and Kosovo by Tito in 1974 — provoking and brutally crushing a powerful fight by the workers and students of Kosovo to defend their national rights. Then the calling of a special extraordinary conference of the federal League of Yugoslav Communists. Milosevic's aim is to change the party's constitution which at present is weighted to prevent domination by the Serbs — the largest nationality. Milosevic wants to increase the weight of the Serbs with the aim

of ultimately establishing himself as a stalinist-type dictator of the whole of Yugoslavia.

Thus we see at different levels of development and in specific concrete situations the three basic class currents emerging in the upheavals that are unfolding in the USSR, Eastern Europe and China. First, Bukharinite type currents seeking to overcome the economic impasse created by stalinism and respond to the pressure of imperialism by increasing radical market reforms domestically and adapting foreign policy to imperialism.

Secondly, the re-emergence of stalinist-type currents, attempting to overcome the rising chaos created by the market reforms by repression and re-centralisation of the economy.

Thirdly, the very first beginnings, in the country which has been through the largest working class struggles — Poland — of currents seeking to strengthen the positions of the working class economically, socially and politically in the workers' states.

It will be the development and struggle of those currents in the coming years which will dominate the internal politics of the workers' states.

Imperialism is actively intervening to maximise the economic pressure on the workers' states and link up with those sections of the bureaucracy who see the market as the way out of the economic crisis in order, over a much longer timescale, to support the genuinely pro-capitalist, restorationist currents which will emerge as a result of these policies.

The working class in the west has every interest in supporting socialist currents — the first example of which is the PSP-DR in Poland.

'Illusions in the market will not prevent rejection of its real effects by the Soviet working class'



The significance of the *Black Section*

Labour Party conference this year is due to debate the form of black representation in the party. While the Labour right will maintain an all-out fight against black self-organisation, and may yet succeed in preventing real progress, it is nonetheless a victory — and a vindication of the Labour Party Black Section — that the issue is now on the agenda in the labour movement. MIKE WONGSAM explains the significance of the Black Section.

The black movement in Britain, like all other sections of society has to face a major question of perspective after ten years of Thatcherism. Black people can no longer benefit from redistribution of resources through local authorities because of the financial squeeze being applied from central government. The Labour controlled councils that pioneered the various positive action programmes in the 1970's have suffered reverses, and the GLC and the other metropolitan councils have been abolished.

Labour councils have used the government's attacks as an excuse to retreat from anti-racist policies. Birmingham City Council have disproportionately earmarked black organisations in the voluntary sector to bear the brunt of its cuts programme. Manchester City Council has begun to roll back its positive action policies following the Burnage School incident and the recommendations of the report of the McDonald Inquiry.

The Labour council in Dewsbury capitulated to the racist campaign for white pupils to be able to effectively boycott a school because of the high proportion of black children there. In London, Labour councils are in many cases cutting back and even eliminating race units — notably with the victimization of Benny Bunsee by Hounslow council.

Pieces of legislation, such as the Poll Tax and Education Reform Act, have had a disproportionately adverse effect on black people.

Direct attacks have continued with recent immigration and nationality legislation. Police harassment of black people continues to be unrestrained resulting in severe injuries and even deaths.

The social indicators showing the continued deterioration of the condition of the black community in Thatcher's Britain, are well documented. For instance, a black person is statistically twice as likely to be unemployed as a white person, and for black youth (and in particular, black male youth) the likelihood of unemployment is even greater.

The ideological gains made by black people in the 1960s and 70s in education policy, employment policy, etc. have come under sustained attack. Honeyford's article in the *Salisbury Review* has started a series of attempts to drive back anti-racist education policy, and the positive action employment policies implemented by London local authorities have been halted by legislative means. This in turn, has led to a rightward turn in the race relations industry itself — the only real institutional embodiment of the gains of the first wave of black nationalism in this country, in the 1960s/70s.

These gains were direct results of an upsurge of struggle by the newly settled black population in this country, and represented the need to create an institutional framework within which the interests of black people could be defended during the deteriorating economic situation of

the 1970s. The result was the mass unionisation of black people, and the Wilson/Callaghan settlement comprising the Race-Relations Act, the establishment of the Commission for Racial Equality, and at the same time, the strengthening of immigration legislation. In other words, 'integration plus limitation.'

Ten years of Thatcher government has succeeded in tightening immigration laws, undoing many of the advances made by the anti-racist lobby in the field of education and employment policy, and through its economic policies, has produced a demographic dislocation which has structured discrimination in society.

The political strategy behind these policies — the 'dual society' — has been to widen the differentials in society and force a split in the labour movement in order to forge a new political consensus based on a reorganised system of bourgeois hegemony. Because the labour movement is now less influential, and because the majority political currents in the labour movement have come to an accommodation with the main features of Thatcherism, the question which faces the black community is how to begin to regain position and defend itself under these changed circumstances.

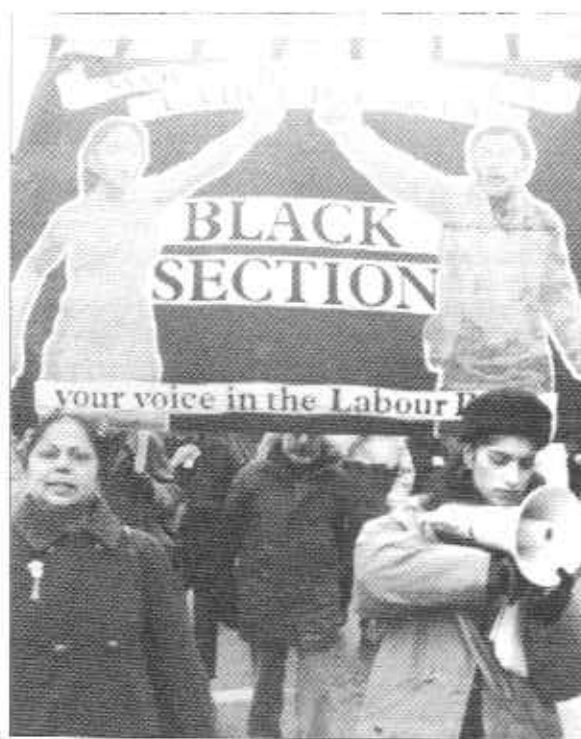
The possibilities which exist for regaining position are few. It is obviously not possible within capital to advance the position of any significant proportion of the black population. Because discrimination has become more structured in society, it will become even less possible to ad-

vance the position of black people as a whole through personal advancement. No major institutions are implementing thoroughgoing positive action programmes. The decline in the number of people in age range 16-19 entering the labour force presents the opportunity for the reserve army of black labour to take advantage. However, only a major decision to commit resources, including a massive programme aimed at countering structured discrimination, enabling this to take place can realise this possibility, and that certainly is not the government's intention. The race relations industry has proved itself to be incapable of defending its previous positions in the face of the ideological backlash of the right, and therefore is not a credible vehicle for advancing the position of black people.

Of all the possibilities for advance, given the current situation and established political framework, the only credible starting point is the labour movement. Within the labour movement black people have established their presence through a long series of unionisation struggles, and constitute a potentially significant force in a number of large unions.

Yet, the labour movement is only a potentially credible option for black people. This is because black people are still a small minority, 4.5 per cent of the population and of the workforce. In order to form the basis on which significant advance can be made, black people have to construct alliances with other sections of the labour movement — black people need to create a wider anti-racist majority that can defend the interests of black people. This has to be the starting point for the strategy of the black movement over the coming period.

The next question is how can the advanced black workers form alliances with other organised forces in the labour movement? An alliance can only be formed by organised parties to the alliance — it is a conscious political act, requiring first an elementary form of organisation. Only organisations can express the collective attitude of individuals to the terms of an alliance. The precondition for advance therefore, is the self-organisation of black people within the structures of the labour movement — in effect, this is the concrete form of the reconstitution of the black movement, and of black



'For black people the only credible starting point is the labour movement'

nationalism in this country.

It is no accident that the Labour Party Black Section is the most national, most organised and most influential black organisation that has ever existed in Britain. Alongside it, and linked to it, there has been a steady, relentless, advance of black self-organisation within the labour movement, including the NALGO Black Workers' forum, the decision of the National Union of Teachers conference to support black organisation within the union and less dramatic advances in other unions like the TGWU and NUPE.

It must be stressed that there are no mass single issue campaigns that present even the remotest possibility of being a springboard from which stable political alliances can be made on anything other than an episodic basis.

The specifically national organisations like the Indian Workers Association, Pakistan People's Party, People's National Party (Jamaica) etc, cannot by their nature represent black people as a whole.

The election of four black Labour MPs in 1987 was a historic breakthrough which was achieved directly as a result of the work of the Labour Party Black Section. But the Black MPs politically straddle different wings of the left in the Labour Party with Paul Boateng aligned with Neil Kinnock, while Diane Abbott and Bernie Grant remain aligned with the Campaign Group. Boateng has tried to sever relations with the Black Section and the hard left in the

hope getting front bench positions. The Parliamentary Black Caucus created by Bernie Grant, Diane Abbott and Keith Vaz has all the limitations of a purely parliamentary body. It can only be effective and useful insofar as it is allied with and accountable to rank and file black organisation outside parliament in the Black Section.

It can be seen that outside of the Labour Black Section, no other formation has come forward with a perspective that can inspire a second wave of black nationalism. The Black Section have fought for autonomous black self-organisation, and have constructed the alliances that have been necessary to ensure its survival in a situation where it was in the forefront of the party leadership's attacks on the left. It has created, as a founding organisation of Labour Left Liaison, an alliance with the Labour Women's Action Committee and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, which is influential in the Constituency Labour Parties. This was strengthened at this year's Black Section AGM by the decision of Women in Black Sections to take up two places reserved for them on the Labour Women's Action Committee's national executive. Through the LLL it has won the support of the Campaign Group of MPs. In the trade unions it has steadily worked for black self-organisation, support for its demands in the Labour Party and built successful campaigns like that which resulted in the reinstatement of Amir Khan and Kevin Scally in to party membership.

The black Section has demonstrated thereby that it has the correct political and organisational framework necessary to lead the fight for the interests of black people. Outside of the Labour Party Black Section, there are no other forces capable of systematically leading this work.

The decision of last year's party conference to support black self-organisation was a major breakthrough for the Black Section. But now a very serious fight is on for this to be translated into official recognition for a unitary black organisation within the party. Because they are racist, and because the politics of a Labour Black organisation will be well to the left of the party leadership, the right wing will fight tooth and nail to prevent the party sanctioning such a genuine form of black self-organisation.

Which revolution from above?

In the midst of the political turmoil facing the Soviet Union the appearance of Tariq Ali's new book *Revolution from Above: Where is the Soviet Union going?* affords an important opportunity to survey the views of 'a leading radical leader of the 60s.' Moreover, as he himself explains, the vantage point from which he surveys contemporary Soviet affairs is that of 'an independent and critical Marxist tradition', greatly influenced by the writings of Isaac Deutscher, Leon Trotsky and Ernest Mandel — but definitely in that order MICK ARCHER notes.

Revolution from Above is in the main an accessible, if familiar, exposition of what is common to all three, peppered with first hand accounts of prominent pro-*perestroika* figures garnered from recent trips to the Soviet Union as a guest of the Writers Union.

As the title of the book suggests, the tradition to which Tariq Ali owes most to is that of the late Isaac Deutscher who gave birth to the idea of democratic regeneration of the Soviet Union fuelling and being fuelled by divisions within the bureaucracy.

Not surprisingly then Tariq Ali's enthusiasm for Mikhail Gorbachev verges on the unbridled, it is only overshadowed by his view of Boris Yeltsin, the more ardent reformer of the two. Thus

enthusiasing over Gorbachev's speech to the Central Committee plenum in January 1987, Ali writes 'this was the authentic voice of the cantankerous old man in the British museum who was working on texts designed to set humanity on the road to self-emancipation.'

Nor is this an isolated example. In the case of Soviet foreign policy Ali argues that Gorbachev's adherence to 'a set of needs geared to immediate Soviet recovery rather than any other long term aims' is merely a reaffirmation of the priorities that existed in Soviet foreign policy since 1927. 'But there is one difference... Gorbachev is not going to pretend that he is doing something that he clearly is not doing, and perhaps cannot achieve. So the rhetoric will be scaled down and some positive changes will take place, such as a realistic assessment inside the Soviet camp of various regimes in the Third World and the real balance of forces inside Western Europe and North America.'

As for those who suggest that more than rhetoric will be scaled down Ali has a simple rejoinder: 'while there is a great deal of talk there is no clear evidence to suggest that the Soviet Union is going to leave black South Africa, Nicaragua, or Cuba to the mercy of the wolves.'

But addressing the future Ali extends two lines of thought. First the decisive task is the democratisation of the political institutions of the Soviet Union, and here, 'what is at stake now is to maintain mass support while engaging in delicate manoeuvres at the top to neutralise the opposition.' Second, 'a settling of accounts with the Stalinist

legacy requires a just appreciation of the necessity of drawing on all that is positive in both Trotsky and Bukharin's legacy. It is sectarian and dangerous to suppose that either a purely Leninist or a purely Trotskyist or a purely Bukharinite position supplies all the answers.'

What Ali means by this advice, confined to a short appendix at the back of the book, is not exactly clear. But in that he goes out of his way to demonstrate that Trotsky was not implacably opposed to the use of market mechanisms within the Soviet economy, the suggestion appears to be that it is these features of Bukharin's legacy that should be rehabilitated.

Here, however, there is a crucial weakness in Ali's book in that having introduced a point he not only fails to explain the sharp differences of opinion Trotsky and Bukharin held on the role of the market, but he suggests that more advanced tactics by Trotsky in 1925-26 may have detached Bukharin from Stalin and prevented the consolidation of the bureaucracy. Within the context of present pressures for market reforms within the Soviet Union, the suggestion that Trotsky and Bukharin had more in common at this stage than divided them is dangerous.

Furthermore on the key questions of the international revolution, notably the Second Chinese Revolution of 1926-27 Bukharin was in agreement with Stalin and completely opposed to Trotsky — which, alone, would have made a political bloc completely impossible in the real world. At the time of the break up of the Triumvirate (Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev) Trotsky wrote an article with the title 'An analysis of the slogans and differences' which cautioned against just such an approach as Ali outlines.

That Ali takes a different view is not in itself reprehensible but its logic would be to take the Soviet Union in a different direction to the one his book claims to espouse.

Poland — debates in Solidarnosc

A new pamphlet on the struggles of Solidarnosc in the early '80s provides a necessary background to current events in Poland. STEWART McCASKELL explains why.

Poland — the fight for workers' democracy.
By Zbigniew Kowalewski
Pamphlet £1.25

This pamphlet is useful for anyone who wants to understand the momentous events taking place in Poland. By describing the debates in the Polish opposition in the early 80's, Kowalewski lays the basis for understanding the current agreement between the Solidarnosc leadership and the Jaruzelski regime — and the upheavals which will follow in Poland.

Kowalewski looks at some of the contradictions of Solidarnosc. Its strength lay in the fact it was a trade union, which gave it its truly mass character, meaning it could become the focus of all the varied aspirations of the Polish working class.

But, at the same time, as a trade union, it did not present itself as an alternative to the central political power of the bureaucracy. 'In a certain sense the counter power accumulated by Solidarnosc held back the formation of organs of power in the strict sense of the word... in fact, the energy of the masses necessary for building such institutions was swallowed up first by the trade union. It was only after this drive had reached a certain level of maturity and experience and had come into contradiction with the trade union nature of Solidarnosc that the masses turned to building institutions outside the trade union.'

Kowalewski gives a wealth of detail on the early debates in Solidarnosc on self-management, the market and the bureaucracy. He explains the link between



Revolution from Above: Where is the Soviet Union Going?
Tariq Ali, Century
Hutchinson £3.95



the strategy of 'self-limiting revolution' adopted by influential sections of Solidarność, and their support for market reforms. The self limiting revolution strategy was a proposal to 'overthrow bureaucratic power at the grass roots — in the workplaces and in the municipalities — but not at the central level.' Therefore they proposed to 'limit the power of the bureaucracy by emphasising the maximum development of the market.' It is precisely agreement on the market reform which underpins the political agreement reached between Walesa and Jaruzelski in April this year with the strong approval of George Bush and the western banks.

Even in 1981 there were currents opposed to these positions which are also documented. For example, in 1981 workers committee representatives called for representation of the workers councils through the establishment of a 'self management chamber of the parliament, as the regime would never voluntarily give up power. A position developed more fully today by the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) (PSP-DR).

Finally Kowalewski considers the present debates on the market reforms, explaining the basis for the attraction of western capitalism in a Polish society riven by political and economic crisis 'an average Polish worker sees western capitalism as West Germany, France, Britain and the USA — not Bolivia' — and not its real content — lower Polish living standards.

For all these reasons the pamphlet is thoroughly worth reading, but above all because it is a first hand account of a tremendous mass struggle.

Telling the truth about rape

The Accused, directed by Jonathon Kaplan and starring Jodie Foster has been one of the most controversial films this year. This is not surprising, argues JAYNE FISHER, given the progressive nature of the film in dealing with rape, and challenging the myths perpetuated to justify or minimise violence and brutality against women.

The beginning of the film is key in situating the whole story. The opening scenes show Sarah (Foster) running away from the scene of the attack. There is no question about what has happened to her — a brutal rape.

The following scenes of her examination by police and nurses, the horrific injuries inflicted during the rape, reinforce this. In my view, these scenes, and the fact that they come at the very start of the film, are the most important. Through them the rape is an established fact, and whatever the events preceding it, they cannot change this fact, or justify it.

The story unfolds around Sarah's fight to tell her story, and bring her attackers to justice. It is towards the end of the film, during the courtroom battle that the rape and the events leading up to it are reconstructed.

I saw the film with a certain amount of reluctance, knowing about the well publicised rape scene, and that rape is so often portrayed in the media as a sexual act, or trivial or amusing.

However, by the time the audience sees the rape scene in *The Accused*, the rape is beyond question. And very importantly it has not been placed in any sexual context, it is simply a brutal assault.

The rape scene is shocking, but only serves to reinforce the truth which Sarah wants to tell. It has nothing to do with sexuality, but is correctly about violence and power exercised by a group of men over a woman.

The film goes out of its way to put forward and then shoot down many of the reasons that are often advanced by the courts, police or media to blame women themselves for the violence which happens to them, even justifying rape.

Before the rape, Sarah goes to the bar, 'The Mill', alone,

after a row with her boyfriend. She is dressed sexily, gets drunk, and dances provocatively with a man, who becomes her attacker, and in front of others who later join in the rape. Yet the film draws a firm line between her flirting with one of the men, dancing with him, and his physically preventing her from leaving when she says she wants to go.

At this point the scene stops being about anything sexual, and is about one man and then a group of men exercising power over one woman as they in turn brutally rape her. The film very definitely establishes that no matter what the events preceding it, rape is still rape, and that Sarah still has the absolute right to say no, and that no means no, whatever the circumstances.

The men who rape her are not portrayed as faceless sex fiends, lurking in the shadows, but as 'ordinary' men, from truck drivers to a

college student who happen to be drinking in a bar together. This turns to violence, as, spurred on by one another, they in turn hold Sarah down and rape her.

It is a disturbing and shocking film for anyone to sit through, as it portrays a most brutal aspect of society which many people would rather ignore. It is easier to blame or simply not believe women, such as the character of Sarah Tobias in *The Accused*, than to confront the truth. This film is important because it communicates a different message.

It left me asking the question: what makes this society so rotten, that the position of women and the perception of women's role is such that some men are reduced to acting like those in *The Accused*?

The story of *The Accused* is based on a real case, and the film ends with some startling facts. In the United States a rape is reported every six minutes, and one in every four of those rapes involves more than one assailant.

This film is a step to telling the truth about rape, and as such is a step forward for women.



Photo courtesy Rio Cinema, Dalston, E8

The dance of the millions

With the recent upsurge of struggle in a number of Latin American countries, coupled with economic and political crisis for the regimes, JAVIER MENDEZ takes a timely look at a book which gives the background to the debt crisis which underpins the situation.

The Dance of the Millions. Latin America and the Debt Crisis
Jackie Roddick, Latin America Bureau, London, 1988.

Written to address more specifically the default crisis that came about in 1982 and the devastating snowball effect it would have had, *The Dance of the Millions* goes much further than this. It demonstrates that the recycling of petrodollars locked Latin America 'into a dependence on commercial finance which was self-perpetuating'.

Underpinned by an impressive array of evidence the book traces the history of the Latin American debt from the beginnings of the 1970s to the explosive and unmanageable levels which it had acquired by the 1980s. It reveals the intricate interplay between politics and economics, and the roles of the myriad of international financial institutions (primarily the IMF but also the World Bank and the leading world private banks), with the US government in ensuring the bleeding of Latin America for easy profits at the expense of the poor, in what Roddick aptly describes as a 'saga of greed'. Should any default provoke financial panic followed by a catastrophic economic crisis, the banks have only themselves to blame.

All the hideous mechanisms of financial exploitation, the actual amounts accruing to the big banks, (the sordid blackmail to ensure the continuation of the dance are exposed and explained. It also demolishes the creditors' favourite argument to put the blame on the victims arguing the present level of debt is due to economic mismanagement inhibiting the free operation of market forces.

Roddick does not lose sight of the fact that the banks got the dance of the millions rolling with the support of military dictatorships and civilian 'democratic' government in Latin America itself, which are together responsible for not having translated any of this mass of wealth into significant economic development.

The point is well substantiated: the figure for the total assets held abroad by Latin Americans in 1985 was \$180 bn. The money that was used in investment went either to grandiose infrastructure projects to help multinational companies to invest locally or 'was funnelled straight out again'. The dance of the millions was 'essentially a boom era for Latin America's middle and upper classes'.

How have the poor fared? This section of the book gives a horrifying picture of the social consequences of the debt. A detailed break down country by country of the growing misery of the masses in health, wages, employment, consumption and education. 'The poor everywhere paid a massive price for this decade of financial bonanza'. Roddick illustrates this point by the fact that since the Great Depression of the 1930s, 'the urban informal sector expanded by a staggering 39 per cent'.

The notion that Brazil or Mexico because of their impressive rates of industrial growth, have grown into some kind of sub-imperialism — common currency in some quarters — is just ridiculous in the face of Roddick's evidence. Furthermore, the idea that the ruling class of the countries commonly referred to as Newly Industrialised Countries is not the lackey of imperialism anymore is resoundingly belied by the grovelling subservience displayed by the Brazilian, Argentinian and Mexican



Photo courtesy Rio Cinema, Dalston, E8

Matewan

Set in West Virginia in 1920, *Matewan* portrays the struggle of the town's mining community to set up a union to fight pay cuts, rent rises and appalling working conditions. Faced with violent opposition from the Stone Mountain Coal Company who own the mine and most of the town, they are helped in their struggle by the arrival of ex-IWW union organiser Joe Kenehan (played by Chris Cooper) who attempts to give some political direction to their strike.

The film follows the black and Italian workers, led by 'Few Clothes' (James Earl-Jones) in their attempt to overcome the racism of the white workers. The film is to be commended for doing this through strong black characters rather than portraying them as passive victims. It also addresses the question of religion and pacifism within the community as the miners are forced more and more into violent confrontation.

John Sayles, who directs *Matewan*, has produced a film which although simple in its story line, never sacrifices its political content and comes down very much on the side of the collective action of the miners. *Matewan* is an excellent film and is well worth a trip to the cinema.

JANE CARO and SEAN GEOGHEGAN

bourgeoisies vis-a-vis the US.

They have rejected several attempts to set up a Latin American cartel of debtors. Besides, 'Five years after the debt crisis (1982), Latin America was US\$ 121 billion poorer' ...brought about with the help of the Latin American ruling class.

However, in the context of an aggressive declining US which is increasingly vicious in its use of the IMF and the World Bank to impose privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation on subservient Latin American

ruling elites, the Keynesian conclusion of the book is incomprehensible. The only serious alternative is to refuse to pay and to achieve it neither a Keynesian government nor a Keynesian economic policy will do.

Despite its conclusion, Roddick's book is an excellent, detailed account of the vagaries of how the debt has become a privileged mechanism of US imperialist exploitation of Latin America. It should be read by every serious internationalist and anti-imperialist activist.



Sexual abuse and the family

'Despite the revulsion incest has provoked, it opens a frightening but vital line of questioning about ordinary family relations. It identifies tensions between family solidarity and individual autonomy and children's rights, between women's status as victims and their responsibility as parents, tensions that one should not expect to resolve easily. It shows that many feminine virtues, not only those one might want to reject — obedience, quietness, obligingness — but also those one might want to preserve — discipline, responsibility, loyalty — can support victimisation.' *Linda Gordon, Heroes of Their Own Lives, Virago 1989.*



An explosion in the number of reported incidents, of information gleaned from the work of dedicated doctors and social workers, the conclusions of academic and professional studies and the campaigning work of women and incest survivors has, in the last few years, established that the sexual abuse of children is a social reality of the most massive proportions. In April of this year the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children reported a continuing increase in the number of cases of child sexual abuse reported to them: 2,876 in 1987/88 being 23.6 per cent up on the previous year. In June 1987 Childline was dealing with 600 calls a day. In June 1987 the Director of the National Children's Bureau estimated that one in ten girls had been sexually abused before they were sixteen.

Despite a concerted campaign — in this country supported by the government, the media, the church and Labour MPs like Stuart Bell — to deny this reality and put the lid back on the suffering endured more or less silently by children, recognition is growing.

However, even among those who have begun from a position of believing the victims and set out to give support and action, sharply differing

analyses have emerged. These reflect exactly the tensions referred to by Linda Gordon above: how we understand the inter-relationships of power within families, crucially how we understand the power of men, especially of fathers; how to balance the oppression of women within the family with their power and responsibilities as parents; what are the limits of 'family' privacy as against children's rights and social concern about their abuse. These matters are far from being just interesting points for discussion. Their resolution is not proving easy. But they hold the key to what is particular about the sexual abuse of children, and therefore to determining a course of action, demands, education that is of most help to those at the heart of the debate, the children.

At the centre of these tensions is what analysis is held of the family itself, its character and function as an institution, the power relations within it, and the relevance of the structural changes taking place in it to the contemporary coming to the surface of child sexual abuse. Placing the family at the core of the social relations through which we understand child sexual abuse is crucial. Deciding not to leads to an analysis and to practices which are, at best, irrelevant and peripheral, or, at worst,

give ground to those who at all costs wish to keep further criticism away from the family.

The backdrop to the growing awareness of the reality of 'family life', are the enormous changes in social relations, with the family at their centre, that have taken place since the second world war, and in the last twenty years in particular. This article looks at Britain but the same discussions on sexual abuse are taking place across Europe and in the United States, based on the political impact of similar changes in the social structure.

Most important has been the revolution in the social position of women since the second world war. In Britain, following a century where women filled a consistent proportion of the labour force of around 30 per cent, since the second world war this proportion has steadily increased, to a point where women are now almost half of the labour force. Such a massive change in women's participation in employment could not take place without precipitating major upheavals in other aspects of women's lives and in social relations.

Directly related effects include the consistent post-war increase in women's participation in higher education. By 1986 women were 41 per cent of students in higher education.

A similar consequence is the sharp rise in the proportion of children under five in pre-school education. Of all 3-4 year olds, 21 per cent were in pre-school education in 1971, compared with 47 per cent in 1986. The total number of under-fives in education rose from 280,000 in 1966 to 671,000 in 1986.

The needs of employers to draw women into the available workforce in this period converged with the growth of social and political expectations and militancy of women, consequent on women's increased economic independence, to intensify pressure for more liberal social legislation affecting the rights of women. Legislation such as the 1967 Abortion Act and the 1969 Divorce Reform Act had the most mass impact. Combined with the mass availability of an effective and convenient contraceptive in the form of 'the pill', leaving aside the serious health risks to women only later revealed, these have brought a virtual revolution in the shape and size of families, of rates of births and marriages.

Where women are marrying they are tending to do so at a later age.

They are initiating a majority of divorces.

In 1961 there were 27,000 divorces. In 1971, the first year under the new legislation there were 80,000. And in 1986 there were 168,000 and the upward trend is continuing. In 1986 72 per cent of divorces were granted to wives, the highest proportion ever.

The 1967 Act and more efficient contraception have effected the rate and patterns of birth. Women's ability to control the number and spacing of their children has led to a sharply declining birth rate. In 1986 the birth rate (per thousand live births) was 29 per cent lower than the post-1950s peak in 1964. Amongst 20-24 year olds there has been a 39 per cent fall in the annual rate between 1964 and 1986.

At the same time there has been a sharp rise in 'illegitimacy', and notably of the proportion of children born outside marriage but registered by both parents. Whereas the number of illegitimate births stayed more or less constant between 1900 and the late 1950s, with exceptions in both world wars, at around 4 per cent of all live births, by 1986 they represented 21 per cent. In 1986 there were 158,000 registered 'illegitimate' births, compared with 61,000 in 1976.

Alongside this there has been a steady increase in the number of single parent families — representing by 1985 13 per cent of all households with dependent children.

These changes add up to an upheaval in the institution of the family and in roles previously adopted within it, putting massive strains on its existing structure, while creating the opportunity for change. Particularly this has alleviated some of the most intolerable pressures on women — enforced motherhood and marriage, lack of ability to get out of marriage, women's individualised responsibility for childcare.

But not only women have been affected. Increased social responsibility for welfare has begun to open up the whole family to intense scrutiny, encouraging new standards of acceptable behaviour and treatment. Pre-school education and the generally available health care for babies and young children, for instance, have encouraged certain minimum norms of care and ensure at the very least that the health and welfare of children in general is the concern and comes to the attention of public bodies outside of their individual families.

The changed social position of women has helped make concern for

what happens in family or domestic relations a matter for social and political concern. It has made it impossible to relegate certain matters to strictly 'private' life and not of general political concern. It has made blaming women for their oppression — 'nagging' wives get beaten, 'promiscuous' women get raped — increasingly unacceptable. Public, or social, concern and responsibility for all familial relations are increasingly legitimate.

This is a phenomenon which has its historical precedents. In a recent study of the evolution of social welfare policies in the United States, taking the practice in Massachusetts specifically, Linda Gordon argues that 'The feminist impulse legitimates inquiry into what actually happens in families. Generally, whenever the women's movement is in decline, people are reluctant to recognise that anything bad could be going on in them.'

In the first period she considered, between 1880 and 1910, a growth in women's militancy and social involvement was the backdrop to the growth of a more progressive attitude to child sexual abuse than had existed previously. There was a consensus that, in the working class families which were the concern of these welfare agencies, child sexual abuse was very common, amounting to roughly ten per cent of their case load. Moreover it was accepted sexual abuse was pre-eminently father-daughter rape. Despite the weaknesses arising from the immense class and cultural prejudices of these agencies, and the limitations of what they had to offer, the important point is that they considered the central location of child sexual abuse to be within families and they believed it to be very common.

In sharp contrast the period between 1930 and the 1950s, which saw a sharp decline in women's militancy and stabs at independence, what Gordon calls a 'quiescence of feminism' and of ideological campaigns in support of the family, also experienced a virtual disappearance in social work attention to child sexual abuse: 'by 1960 incest was conceived by experts, and described in textbooks on family problems, as a rare sexual perversion, a one-in-a-million occurrence'. Moreover where child sexual abuse was considered, it was believed to be something which took place outside families. This period saw the emergence of the 'dirty old man' stereotype. The fact that, as Linda Gordon says 'then, as now,

most sexual abusers of children know them well' was simply ignored.

As with the rape of women, the stereotype and focus of concern, such as it was, was transferred outside the home, away from an assault between people who knew each other, to one between people who were strangers. And as with rape while such a phenomenon, of course, exists and widely, this transfer allowed the majority of assaults to go ignored. Most rapes take place between people who know each other; most sexual abuse of children takes place in the family. This transfer took attention away from the thorny problem of power relations within the family, between husbands and wives, parents and children. It transferred it to random street attacks.

With rape this focus allows blame to be more easily directed at women: women who go out at night, who walk home alone, who wear certain clothes, visit bars alone, somehow 'provoke' rape. A similar process took place with child sexual abuse. While the overall number of reported/believed incidents fell dramatically, the belief that, where it did occur, it was a phenomenon overwhelmingly based outside the home let the family, and fathers, off the hook. It had totally different implications for mothers, as Gordon comments 'Incest' or 'carnal abuse' was reclassified as moral neglect, which was by definition a mother's crime. If claims of children in the home were believed mother's were blamed as 'frigid', daughters 'sexually precocious'.

It is crucial that we learn the lessons of these historical examples and use the present opening up to public view of relations within the family to establish definitively certain truths about relations within it. It is exactly this focus and opportunity that much political debate is tending to miss.

The problem is crystallised in a recent book on events in Cleveland by Bea Campbell. Campbell argues that the sexual abuse of children is 'not just about power and parenting, it is about sex and desire', and that what we are faced with in such abuse is 'that adults in general and men in particular must take responsibility for which forms of pleasure are honourable and which are not'. This is to miss the point and place on the same level sexual desire, which indeed is part of what is learned and distorted in the material and ideological framework of the family,

'Today's concern is the opening up of the family, challenging our ideas of power and personal relationships'

and relations of power and inequality within families which allow assaults to take place.

It is the privatised and unequal power relations within the family which have allowed child sexual abuse to take place and to go unnoticed. These relations have legitimised parents', specifically fathers' 'rights' over children, and these have been extended sexually. The even more extreme interdependence of family support in previous periods only more sharply demonstrates this fact: 'the largest single factor in creating the aura of 'normality' in these families was the father's attitude of entitlement. Not a single incest assailant expressed contrition for what he had done or guilt for having hurt his daughter — only denial, self-justification, and/or shame and humiliation at having been discovered', argues Linda Gordon. It is 'normal' to believe that children have less rights within families, that they are the property of parents.

The tenacity of this belief — and the related acceptance by women of men's/husband's rights, that somehow a father's needs are most legitimate — explains something of the actions of mothers who have tolerated sexual abuse, and indeed abuse more widely.

The lack of adequate alternatives to the family to provide material support conditions the reactions of mothers and children to abuse. We live in a society in which care has been organised primarily through 'families'. As social provision of care has grown, alongside employment opportunities, so has the opportunity for women to place themselves outside of abusive and oppressive relations. Albeit slowly and imperfectly, conditions for seeing their husbands as more expendable than themselves or their children have improved.

For children the family, their parents, are the lens through which they see the world. Children easily believe that their alternatives may be worse, that their parents know best, leaving aside that children desperately want to love their parents, want stability, and easily believe that if something is wrong between themselves and their parent, then it must be their fault, that their actions can 'make things better'. From this comes the leverage which parents hold over children to keep quiet. A child abuse worker quoted in the Guardian pointed out that

while 'ninety five per cent of sex abuse takes place in the family, you could call it a culture which develops, when you talk about discussing it with parents before taking any action with sex abuse you're immediately into the position that the family will close the child down'.

Alternative approaches minimise the role of the family, and instead concentrate on the sexuality of men — not as learned and made possible through the power relations of the family, but abstractly. Bea Campbell's views lead in this direction. It is a recipe, despite much outrage about abuse, for turning attention away from the institution and the society which conditions both the sexuality of men and the abuse of children. Following this, we would fail to make demands today which would lead to empowering the children and victims of abuse.

The recent debates in the National Union of Students are a case in point. Resolutions have been put and carried which have no mention of the family. Child sexual abuse is seen as coming from nowhere, inexplicable. Pornography and the inherent sexuality of men are posed as 'causes'. There is no mention of improving social supports and resources because the social relations within which child sexual abuse takes place are not a focus. Consequently demands are reduced to supporting survivors groups, spreading literature and opposing pornography.

Important though these are they do not even touch the social relations which both condition sexuality and render children powerless and make their abuse possible. Contrary to the claim that taking familial and social relations as the core somehow 'let's men off the hook', the assumption of some quintessential male sexuality and implication that men will more or less automatically abuse children, does this. Such campaigns focus on keeping men's sexuality in check, and punishing abusers, rather than empowering the victims. Similarly, pornography graphically *reflects* social relations; it strengthens and legitimises attitudes which children begin to learn from the real relations in their families and in society.

Placing the family central to our strategic framework leads to other courses of action today. The function of the family as an institution is precisely to ensure the unequal distribution of power between men and women, the reproduction and care of children, the containment

and education of children in patterns of dominance, sexuality and control.

An immediate response to child abuse requires improving education of both professionals and carers and of children, creating more and better welfare services, expanding the social benefit system, extending the legal rights of children and of mothers, creating more, cheaper and available housing, and other concrete steps. This requires a huge financial investment. The longer term impact will be to open up the family, challenge our ideas of power and personal relationships, and create the possibility for other means of living.

Not only the expansion of resources but the inevitable liberating impact and consequent political strengthening of the oppressed which this would involve is exactly what is opposed by those who wish to hush up the attention being given child abuse. The 'crisis of the family' has been met by a massive campaign to idealise 'traditional' family relations. Ten years of slashing social services, privatising medical care, removing rent controls, and unemployment, all limit options and intensify material pressures to stay in violent and abusive situations.

While these policies make individual suffering more protracted and desperate they cannot reverse the qualitative changes in the social structure in the last forty years, themselves spawned by basic economic trends, which explain why child sexual abuse, and other realities of 'family life', are coming to public attention.

Cleveland was not, as Bea Campbell maintains, fundamentally a 'confrontation between genders'. It was *fundamentally* a shattering of the facade of the family, something so unbearable that an almighty campaign has been launched attempting to stick it together again. If we mistake one of the products — the construction of gender and sexuality — for the whole edifice then we will help undermine demands for practical action today and take the focus away from the institution of the family which conditions and gives sense to the systematic sexual assault of children, and much else.

ANNE KANE



'At root Cleveland was a shattering of the facade of the family'

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