

SOCIALIST

OUTLOOK

No. 16 JUNE 1989 80p



**DENG'S
BEIJING
BLOODBATH**

The crisis of Chinese Stalinism — background and analysis

PLUS Socialist Conference ● South Africa and much more . . .

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

No. 16 JUNE 1989

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PHOTO: J. Greening/Reflex

Shanghai workers and students join the fight

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Stalinist bloodbath in Beijing

Claiming to be acting against 'reactionaries' and 'anti-socialist' elements, the tanks and machine guns of China's 27th Army have mown down thousands of unarmed students and workers in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, in the traditional Stalinist response to a mass popular movement.

The brutality of the armed repression has not succeeded in quelling the courageous resistance of the protestors even in the capital: rather it has triggered a new wave of revolution against the regime, protests and even strikes in China's largest city, Shanghai, and other major cities. Far from snuffing out the flame of opposition, the military crackdown has ensured that the regime will have to contend with a heightened, long-term challenge.

The barbarism of the tactics of the 27th Army has also clearly caused major splits in the armed forces. Some army units refused point blank to intervene against the demonstrators; now it seems that many of the occupying soldiers of the 27th Army itself have already deserted their posts, armoured vehicles and weapons to join the masses in Beijing, while as we go to press rumours abound of a possible counter-strike by troops supporting the more 'liberal' wing of the Communist Party bureaucracy.

Whether or not the crisis escalates swiftly into an all-out civil war, there is no doubt that the crackdown was an expression of the weakness and isolation of the faction around Deng Xiaoping, rather than a sign of strength. As a Stalinist bureaucracy, their power and privilege rest not on private property or ownership of the means of production, but on their monopoly grip on political power and control of the state machinery, especially the armed forces and police.

It is the fact that the mass movement for democracy has threatened this control, and challenged the very government itself, with explicit demands for the ousting of Premier Li Peng and of Deng himself, that has compelled the bureaucracy – after a period of obvious indecision and internal crisis – to strike back, reverting to the traditional tactics of Stalinism. While the students in Beijing, increasingly backed by the workers, demanded democratic reform of the Communist Party and an end to corruption, the tanks that crushed their bodies were defending not socialism but the privileges of a bureaucracy all wings of which are steeped in corruption.

The regime's cynical claim that the students represented an anti-socialist opposition was never more than a flimsy pretext for repression. In over three weeks of massive mobilisations under the microscopic gaze of the western press, not a single serious pro-capitalist current has been uncovered. Indeed, irrespective of the mock 'statue of liberty' erected by art students, the Beijing protestors were consistently demonstrating for socialist democracy, under red flags, singing the Internationale and even unwisely quoting Mao Zedong against Deng. The ruling bureaucracy are the ones who have actually sponsored capitalism and privatisation in China, to the extent where 30 million out of 130 mil-

lion workers are now employed in the private sector.

The economic links Deng has forged with the west are one of the key reasons why the hypocritical response from Bush, Thatcher and other imperialist leaders has so categorically ruled out any thought of economic sanctions. The US and other imperialists have been quite willing to sponsor – even organise – brutal repression of mass movements in their own 'sphere of influence' (Chile!); and now they are reluctant to break politically from the most sympathetic wing of the Chinese CP, especially if this may jeopardise future profits and access to the huge Chinese market.

The heroic students and workers of Beijing have shown they are willing to die in the struggle for their ideals of socialism and democracy. The Deng faction has shown that like Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and regimes in Eastern Europe, it is ready to kill in defence of its material self-interest.

The political line of Stalinist bureaucracies have always vacillated wildly – embracing both right wing opportunism (Stalin and Bukharin's call to peasants to 'get rich' in the mid 1920s; Deng's New Economic Policy after 1978) and 'ultra-left' policies of forced collectivisation and wholesale expropriation (Stalin in the 'liquidation of the kulaks' in the late 1920s; Mao in the Great Leap Forward): the one common factor is that they cannot relinquish political control on the state machinery which is their guarantee of power and privilege.

This is why Stalinism has consistently shown itself more ferocious and determined in repression of the working class than in its measures against capitalism and imperialism. However, Gorbachev has shown that outright repression is not the only tactic available to Stalinist regimes: from the onset of the Beijing protests the Chinese CP and the army high command have been divided on how best to contain the movement. The army chiefs have been torn between the instinctive desire to crush the popular movement, and the practical problems of maintaining a long-term repression of the big cities with a largely conscript army. These political differences have not been resolved by the Beijing crackdown, and could yet lead to civil war.

For the hundreds of thousands of workers and students who continue the fight despite the huge repression unleashed upon them, the bitter lesson of the June 4 massacre is that there is no peaceful way to dispose of the ruling faction or reform the hopelessly bureaucratized Communist Party. Many of the ideas thrown up in the debates of the movement for democracy since the early 1980s have already moved very close to those of Trotskyism: it is now even more important that an organised current inside China takes up the slogan of political revolution to defend China's nationalised economy and oust the reactionary bureaucracy, and for an independent political party to direct that revolutionary struggle.

Kinnock's Review seeks bosses' approval

With the publication of the Policy Review in mid-May, Neil Kinnock now only needs the stamp of approval of Labour Party conference in October to complete the process of bringing the Party back into line with policies acceptable to the ruling class.

Since the demise of the Liberals as the second main bourgeois Party, the ruling class has (reluctantly) used the Labour Party as their fall-back at times of Tory unpopularity, safe in the knowledge that it was also concerned with the orderly running of capitalism, and could even in certain circumstances, police the working class more easily than the Tories.

For a period after Thatcher came to power in 1979 this arrangement looked like being upset. In reaction to the policies of Prime Ministers Harold Wilson and James Callaghan the Labour Party moved (at least on paper) considerably leftwards, introducing measures of democratic accountability (such as the election of the Leader and automatic reselection procedures for MPs) and some socialist policies, such as unilateralism.

Ever since he was elected leader in 1983 it has been Kinnock's intention to reverse these changes. In this he has been pressured and encouraged by the bourgeois media and the Alliance. Kinnock and the SDP renegades from Labour wanted the same thing - to bring 'mainstream' British politics back into safe bourgeois channels.

Despite their tactical disagreements over how this was best done - the Labour right believing they could beat back the left within the Party, and the Owenites believing this was hopeless and setting themselves the task of creating a new force to replace Labour as the alternative Party of government - they assisted each other in this. The support for the Alliance (en-



PHOTO: Andrew Wiland/Report

New realism for old: Kinnock has ditched unilateralism

couraged by the media) gave credence to the Kinnock line that Labour was 'unelectable' with left policies.

Throughout, Kinnock has been assisted by the refusal of the trade union bureaucracy to fight back against the Tories' onslaught on jobs and democratic rights or their programme of privatisation. Every time they have retreated or sold out a struggle they have undermined Left policies feeding the view that there is no alternative to capitalism and little chance of stopping the Tory onslaught other than by eventually electing a Labour government.

Frustrated with the slow process of reversing policy by way of conference resolutions, Kinnock instigated the 'Policy Review' two years ago. It was clear from the start that this was designed to change policies wholesale, while maintaining a (very thin) veneer of being a democratic process. Having defeated the hard left, reducing them to a handful on Labour's National Executive, and confident that the remnants of the 'soft left' would not put up a challenge, the Kinnockites could be sure of winning on the NEC.

The first year of the Policy Review was used as a softening-up process for the more difficult issues, in particular defence. Last year's phase one, with its bland

talk of individual rights rather than collective action, together with significant constitutional changes (one of which was used to keep Martha Osamor off the shortlist for Vauxhall), sailed through the 1988 Conference with little opposition.

Phase two, to be put to this year's conference, is far more significant and crucial to Kinnock's project, and recognised as such by the media. Its sections on the economy, trade unions and defence contain Kinnock's blueprint for the programme of a future Labour government.

On the economy, the programme could not make it clearer that the 'new' Labour Party represents no threat to capitalism. Of all Thatcher's privatisations, only British Telecom and water would be taken back into state hands (and then *bought* back). There would be no wealth tax, with a top tax rate of only 50 per cent, perpetuating the role of Labour as the Party of high taxes - for the working class, not the bosses. There is no threat to nationalise the banks or institute exchange controls, only to reduce consumption.

Key Tory anti-union laws, introduced by Thatcher to hamstring the working class during her attempts to restructure British capitalism, would not be repealed by Labour. The right of the courts

to intervene in union affairs and to declare strikes illegal would be retained, as would secret ballots and the banning of many sympathy strikes.

The statement on defence was the most awaited, even though its broad outline was widely foreseen. In its essentials, Kinnock has not failed the ruling class, rejecting unilateralism and accepting the myth of a Russian threat. His refusal to answer the question as to whether he would actually 'press the button', while the source of much humour, is of less importance.

The outcome of the Policy Review on disarmament has always been seen as the touchstone for the Left's fortunes. For many Party members a commitment to unilateralism has been one of the strengths of the Labour Party in recent years, even if its leaders have refused to campaign for it. It is around this that resistance will be greatest at Labour Party conference and it is the issue on which the soft left on the NEC might have been expected to put up some kind of fight.

Yet opposition to the Policy Review on the NEC was restricted to the hard left on virtually every major issue. Even on disarmament Clare Short, Robin Cook and Bryan Gould failed to support an amendment calling for the removal of nuclear weapons and bases within the lifetime of a single parliament. Short, feted by the 'Time to Go' campaign against the British presence in Ireland, could not even see her way to supporting the deletion of a commitment to the Anglo-Irish agreement.

For years the soft left promised to keep Kinnock and Labour policy out of the hands of the right, while in fact retreating all the time on policies they allegedly support, and directing their attacks at the hard left for their 'oppositionism'. Now it is clear for all to see where their attitude is leading - complete victory for Kinnock and the right

with only the hard left putting up serious resistance.

Kinnock and his cohorts are so certain of winning (especially after their 'victories' against unilateralism at some union conferences) that they have not bothered to wait for Labour Party conference before launching the Policy Review to the media with all the razzamatazz of a Hollywood awards ceremony.

The leaders of the soft left have conceded to Kinnock's central argument - that to get Labour elected it must jettison left policies. In the process they have shown, like Kinnock, that they never had any serious commit-

ment to those policies, and demonstrated their lack of concern with what sort of Labour government all this might produce - a disastrous re-run of Wilson and Callaghan trying to run capitalism at the expense of the working class.

For the present, Kinnock's strategy appears to be successful. Council and parliamentary election results show Labour gaining support, with even the possibility on the horizon of winning a general election. Yet with the economy faltering and inflation rising, and the next round of privatisation (water, electricity) being the least popular, the Tories themselves are faltering despite

the lack of any serious counter-attack from Labour.

The renewed wave of strikes reflects disillusionment with the Tories and contributes to Labour's rise in the polls without the Labour Party lifting a finger in support of those fighting back. At the same time Labour gains from the fact that the 'centre' parties have collapsed - precisely because Kinnock has stolen their clothes and the media no longer sees the need to prop them up.

The Left, however, cannot sit back and wait for Kinnock's policies to be shown to be a failure. There is still an outside chance of winning on unilateralism at this

year's conference if all its supporters can work together.

We have to link up with the struggles taking place over pay, the Poll Tax, the NHS and privatisation, not only to provide a strategy to win against the Tories and bosses, but also to win new forces to the battle against Kinnock's social democratic policies. At the same time the left has to look seriously at the lessons of the last few years and how Kinnock has managed to turn back the left tide.

Pete Firmin.

New bosses aim to carve up NHS

It was a grisly sight: enough to shatter the complacency of anyone who doubted the deadly threat posed to the National Health Service by the government's White Paper proposals. Perhaps it was even enough to break through the traditional apathy of the left on the fight for the NHS.

Ranged on the platform alongside Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke were some of the most notorious asset-strippers, plant closers and union-bashers in British industry, including Graham Day of the Rover Group (formerly BL); Bob Scholey of British Steel, and Sir Kenneth Durham of Woolies and British Aerospace. These men have been drafted onto a new NHS policy board by Clarke, who raved on about the qualities they have to offer: 'They are formidable figures who have shown their ability to run giant organisations. Their presence and advice will be a great encouragement to all managers in the NHS'.

Clarke of course meant that their experience is in running down giant industries: those who remember that British Leyland once employed 160,000 workers, British Steel over 100,000, and that Woolworths once had a much larger chain of stores will look with trepidation at the prospects for 1.2 million health workers, the hospitals they work in and their trade union rights once this 'cutting crew' gets down to business.

Nobody will be safe: the only business figure from an expanding corporation is deputy chair of the policy board, Sir Roy Griffiths,

managing director of Sainsbury's. His report on community care services last year proposed a massive extension of means-testing of services for the elderly, and a policy of forcing those in need of long-term care to pay for it themselves out of their savings or through the sale or re-mortgage of their own homes.

These advisors have been appointed to help Clarke force through the White Paper proposals which include:

- Establishment of an 'internal market' within the NHS involving the establishment of a massive, bureaucratic system of pricing and cross-charging for treatment, and the threat that many more patients will have to travel to find treatment.

- Proposals for hospitals to 'opt out' of local NHS control, becoming pre-NHS style Hospital Trusts, taking all decisions behind closed doors and driven to function more and more like private hospitals in order to balance their books.

- Imposition of cash limits on all family doctor services, with the attempt to press-gang the largest GP practices into becoming 'independent budget holders', subject to rigid cash limits.

- The threat of still further privatisation of services within hospitals, despite the damage already done by private firms that have driven down standards of cleaning, catering and laundry services.

Clarke is stepping up the pressure on local hospital management and consultants to volunteer their hospitals for opting out. So far a preliminary list has shown over

140 possible hospitals - in none of which have hospital workers, patients or the local community been asked their views. There would be no ballot or referendum: a final decision on whether or not any hospital could opt out would rest with Kenneth Clarke himself as Secretary of State.

However the campaign against these and other White Paper proposals has been almost non-existent from the official labour movement. Having failed to exploit the unpopularity of the White Paper in May's local elections or in the current Euro election campaign, the Labour Party has slumped into its usual indifference to the NHS. Indeed the new Policy Review includes a call for the implementation of the Griffiths proposals on community care - presumably indicating a corresponding welcome for his inclusion on Clarke's new board.

Worse still, because their members are in the front line of the Tory attack, is the inactivity of the health unions, which (with the partial exception of the technicians' union MSF) have done nothing to combat the White paper, leaving the initiative in the hands of the 'professional bodies' - the BMA, the medical Royal Colleges and the scab Royal College of Nursing.

This not only leaves tens of thousands of health workers ignorant of the dangers, but reinforces all of the worst hierarchical illusions that defence of the NHS can be left to the doctors. Already



PHOTO: John Harris/FL

Laughing all the way: Kenneth Clarke

the BMA's uncharacteristic flurry of militancy is beginning to drop away, with GP negotiators having agreed a miserable scil-out on the new contract for 32,000 family doctors, and with the BMA's consultant members already talking of 'pilot schemes' to test out Mr Clarke's reactionary plans.

The main resistance to the White Paper has so far come from the Hands Off Our Health Service campaign launched in London in February, which has become almost the only supply of pamphlets, leaflets, posters, stickers, badges and other material against the Tory proposals.

It is vital that this type of campaigning is broadened and taken up by the official labour movement: the demand must be raised for the health unions, the TUC and Labour Party to mobilise a national demonstration in the autumn, and throw their weight behind a full-scale campaign to rally the huge majority of the public who oppose the White Paper - forcing the government to back off

Harry Sloan.

**Hands Off Our Hospitals,
446, Uxbridge Rd, London
W12 0NS. 01-749-2525**

Sinn Fein vote holds

The local government elections in the six counties which were held on 17 May can be seen as a victory for Sinn Fein. Despite losing 19 seats, their share of the total vote dropped by only a tiny fraction – from 11.8% to 11.3%. In addition many of the seats which they lost were lost by a very small margin.

To have achieved this despite the strenuous efforts of the British state and its agents to undermine their electoral strategy shows the depth of the support for Sinn Fein in the nationalist community. The lengths which the British government were prepared to go are also a sign that they recognise the extent of that support – and of

how much they fear it.

The media ban on Sinn Fein, which was only lifted during the election period because of the overriding authority of the Representation of the People Act, had the potential to be extremely damaging. As it turned out, it seems as though the main effect of the ban is to deny people in Britain and elsewhere information on the situation in the six counties and on Sinn Fein's political positions.

The people of the north know well enough what is going on in their own streets and their own council chambers. This fact, together with Sinn Fein's own efforts to counteract the ban through their publicity department, has minimised the damage done. More strenuous efforts will

have to be made to counteract the effect of the ban in Britain however.

The decision by Sinn Fein, at their last Ard Fheis to allow their candidates to sign the 'Declaration' against violence was clearly a correct one. However, a number of seats were lost by the Republican movement when supporters of 'Republican' Sinn Fein refused to sign the Declaration and therefore were not allowed to stand.

Apart from the efforts of the British government to reduce Sinn Fein's electoral support, candidates also had to contend with the response to IRA blunders over the past few years. The Enniskillen tragedy was undoubtedly at least partly responsible for Sinn Fein losing control in Fer-

managh.

Another factor in explaining the result is the existence of local pacts between other parties – including the SDLP and the Alliance – against Sinn Fein. Agreements to give each other their second preference votes – Sinn Fein supporters vote only for their own candidates – led to Sinn Fein candidates being knocked out in later rounds.

There is also some evidence that nationalist voters were turned away at the polling stations because of a change in the form of identification needed.

Overall the result was an encouraging one for Sinn Fein, and the onus is on them to keep up the momentum for the European elections in June.

Jean Reilly

How we plan to SCRAP the poll tax

Southwark Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax (SCRAP) – one of the first campaigns set up outside Scotland – started in October 1988. It was formed largely because there was no effective campaign in the south London borough to stop the Labour-run council implementing the government's poll tax legislation.

It quickly became obvious that most Southwark councillors were not prepared to stand up alone against the Tories and that we could not rely on them to fight for us. We agreed that a mass-campaign of non-payment and non-implementation by council workers was the most effective way to combat the poll tax.

We have argued that the poll tax stands or falls by whether people pay it or not. Our meetings regularly attract 20-30 people, and the composition will be recognised by many activists in the campaign: supporters of *Socialist Outlook*, *Labour Briefing*, *Socialist Organiser*, *Militant* (sometimes), and *Socialist Workers Party* (sometimes), as well as people who define themselves as anarchists, and people in no political party.

Our discussions have always centred on how we can grow outwards from this activist core to be-

come genuinely representative of the community in which we are based. Our strategy has been to encourage council tenants and other residents to organise local poll tax unions on their estates, and some successes have been notched up, with meetings in tenants' halls and community centres throughout the borough. A number of significant tenants' associations have now endorsed the campaign, and we have had successful public meetings.

Our whole world was violently shaken up however with the question of registration. This became a live issue when Southwark council decided to send out the registration forms a month earlier than they were required to do. In a rare display of 'socialist' efficiency, they tried to intimidate people into registering early.

Our weekly Saturday stalls were transformed. People came up and asked us what to do with their form. Could they be fined? Did they have to register in 21 days as it said? How could they pay? What rebate if any could they get? Our stall became a centre of information. Very often people had already been to the 'official' Southwark against the Poll Tax stall 50 yards away, and been told to sign Labour's protest petition and go home!

We designed a poster, produced stickers and advertised our campaign. Our slogan became

'Delay it, don't pay it' and we encouraged people to throw their forms in the bin. Southwark council, in their haste to do the Tories' dirty work for them, had unwittingly given us a huge propaganda coup – and on top of that, legal advice had assured us that the council could not prosecute anyone at that stage who didn't register.

Even now, Southwark council only claim at best a 50% return of the forms – so much for jumping the gun.

Registration not only galvanised us in public work – it also threatened to rip apart the campaign internally. There were two basic positions – which have probably been reflected in other campaigns. On the one side were the SWP and *Militant* supporters, who argued that registration was not the key issue, it was not possible to build a mass campaign, and we should leave it until a campaign had been built against non-payment which we could then come in and exploit.

Many of us, including *Socialist Outlook* supporters, saw this as a defeatist and politically wrong assessment of the campaign, and argued that non-registration was an important tactical question in the overall framework of building a mass campaign of non-payment. This of course could take many different forms, including delaying registration and burning poll

tax forms publicly.

There were disagreements on the tactics, but the vast majority of SCRAP opted for the second course, leaving SWP and *Militant* comrades to re-consider their attitude to the only effective campaign in Southwark.

The registration issue has without doubt caused disruptions in SCRAP but it has been a necessary part of clarifying the debate. We now have a number of tasks to carry out in the next phase of the campaign. These include:

- Building the regular newsletter 'Community Resistance News' throughout the borough.

- Participating in the building of a lively and active South London federation of anti-poll tax groups, set up from a conference in April. In the longer term we should work, together with North London groups, for a real campaigning all-London federation based on non-compliance.

- Transforming SCRAP into a truly representative campaign, based in the community, and made up of street stewards and estate representatives active in tenants' associations, Labour Parties, trade unions and community groups. Our aim will be to break the individual isolation of people through a campaign to obstruct the register and organise collective action to defeat the poll tax.

Graham Topley

CHINA: Countdown to a massacre

On the evening of Friday 3 June unarmed Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) troops were sent on foot from the outskirts of Beijing towards Tianan Square. The people of Beijing and the students repulsed them, with minimum violence. But this was no serious attempt to break up the democracy movement protests. In fact, the troops were sent cynically to be beaten up, in order to provide a pretext for the carnage which was to follow the following evening.

But despite the almost non-violent dispersal of the troops, the waiting battalions on the edge of the city were immediately told that their comrades had been savagely beaten by the students. The units brought into Beijing to carry out the Deng Xiaoping-Li Peng coup were from Manchuria and the Russian border. They had been kept in ignorance of the events in Beijing and the other major Chinese cities, and fired up with stories of about counter-revolutionaries trying to overthrow 'socialism'.

It is now clear that the Deng-Li Peng faction in the Communist Party leadership had intended all along to massacre the student protesters and the large numbers of workers who supported them. The bloodbath was postponed for two reasons; first, because the regime could not carry out their ruthless action during the Gorbachev visit, and second because the Beijing garrison and neighbouring units were unwilling to plough through the barricades erected by the workers.

The coup has a deadly logic. The CP leadership had the choice of either making major concessions to head off the democratic movement, or to drive it off the streets with terror. Once a military solution has been decided upon, it can only be successful by being carried through to the end. And that means murdering the protesters in their thousands - and random killing to intimidate the workers. The ruthless action of the coup was prompted precisely by the link up between the students and the workers, including the un-

official independent trade unions, who established their own organising centre in Tianan Square.

Two events sparked off the student protests in late April. First, the death of Hu Yaobang, a veteran of the Long March, sacked two years ago by Deng following the student protests of December 1986. Hu Yaobang was considered a liberal and 'responsible' for the student upsurge. The demonstrations after Hu's death had strong parallels with the mass demonstrations in Tianan Square after the death of Zhou Enlai in 1976. The second event was of course the visit of Gorbachev, clearly associated in the minds of the student protestors with democratisation, with the glasnost which China has not seen, despite the radical 'perestroika' in the economy since 1978.

During Gorbachev's visit up to two million people demonstrated around Tianan Square and the Forbidden City. It is clear that a fierce struggle inside the CP leadership was already taking place during the Gorbachev visit, between the Deng-Li Peng faction and the 'reformers' led by Zhao Ziyang. In fact, there were already tensions in the leadership before Gorbachev's visit, with former president Li Xianian spearheading a conservative attack on the 'liberalism' of Zhao Ziyang.

By the time of Gorbachev's departure on 18 May, the Li-Deng faction had won the power struggle, turning for support to the 'Consultative Council' of party elders, which crucially includes the veteran Peng Zhen, former mayor of Beijing, who led a long struggle against Mao, from 1959 to the end of the Cultural Revolution. Also vital to Deng's alliances is President Yang Shangkun, a former field marshal, whose son is said to be army chief of staff. Yang's influence with the army was apparently vital in securing the co-operation of its commanders.

Martial law was declared late on the evening of 19 May. Reports suggest that Deng then left Beijing to consult with party and military leaders in Wuhan. China's party and military structure is heavily dependent on regional organisation and leaders. It was the Com-



PHOTO: J. Greening/Reflex

munist Party regional leaders' opposition to Mao Zedong which led to the unleashing of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. It seems likely that the regional army commanders extracted promises of more power and resources to the army, in return for their loyalty to the regime.

Up until the declaration of martial law the democracy movement had created deep divisions in the state apparatus, Magistrates and soldiers in uniform, journalists from the *Peoples Daily* and state broadcasting network, and millions of workers joined in the movement. The first attempts to move troops into the city, on the weekend of 20-21 May, were met by a popular uprising of the workers of Beijing, whose barricades and mass fraternisation with the troops prevented their entry into the centre of the city. For the whole of the next week, barricades were erected each evening to keep out the troops as the workers mobilised.

But by the end of May the movement started to experience a crisis of perspective, as the news that Zhao Ziyang had been defeated and put under house arrest leaked out. In the absence of any organised political opposition to the Communist Party, the de facto perspective of the movement was for a change in the CP leadership to implement democratic reforms. When this appeared less and less likely students began to drift off back to their campuses in other cities or in Beijing itself. A debate broke out among the students about whether to end the movement.

To everyone, it appeared that the regime was staying its hand, and waiting for the movement to peter out. In reality it was preparing to bring hundreds of thousands of troops from Manchuria and the Soviet border to crush the rebel-

lion.

It is now clear that the factories of Beijing were in constant turmoil during this whole period. A motorcyclist unit called the 'Flying Tigers brigade' sent hundreds of workers to factories to mobilise them in support of the students. The Beijing Independent Trade Union Federation began to recruit heavily, and to organise a permanent presence in Tianan Square. The workers soon came under heavy pressure, with warnings that anyone seen in Tianan Square would be sacked. After 20 May the secret police began to visit the factories to arrest the leaders of the independent union federation.

At the time of writing (6 June) reports are still coming in of fighting in Beijing, and of strikes and disturbances in other major cities including Shanghai. Some reports say Beida university has been invaded by troops, others that students have built barricades and are preparing to defend their campuses against the expected onslaught. For 48 hours groups of workers and students have been attacking military convoys with Molotov cocktails. There are also persistent reports of fighting between army units, the meaning of which is not clear as we go to press.

Whatever the immediate outcome of the fighting, the Li-Deng faction in the leadership is bound to lose in the end. They have lost all popular support and legitimacy. The workers and students of China have written one of the most glorious chapters in the history of the struggle for socialist democracy. Army power alone can never finally defeat the mass opposition of millions. When people are prepared to die in the hundreds, in their thousands, to defeat repression, then its days are numbered.

Phil Hearse

New Tory legal threat to unions

PHOTO: Piers Cavendish/Reflex



Removing the barriers to union-busting: Thatcher's seventh anti-union package is coming – with no TUC opposition in sight

The latest attack by the government on trade union rights is the Green Paper which bears the unintentionally humorous title *Removing Barriers to Employment*.

This paper, presented to parliament in March this year, proposes to give new rights to prospective workers denied access to a job by their employer because they do not hold a union card. These non-unionists will be able to go to an industrial tribunal where they can confidently expect to get a compensation payment of up to £8,925. Naturally enough there is no proposed legislation which would give similar rights to a worker denied a job because they were members of a union.

The Green Paper also proposes removing further legal protection from secondary disputes where the other employer is supplying goods to the boss who is in dispute with the original strikers. Workers on strike who call on others to take sympathetic action and embargo goods destined for their employer will face legal penalties.

If the recent proposals had been on the statute book in 1988, then the threat of the Ford workers to take industrial action over the 'single union' deal at Dundee would have been in defiance of the law, and therefore subject to legal penalties. The proposals also recommend giving more powers to the so-called Commissioner for the Rights of Union Members, as well as extending strike balloting laws to cover people working under 'contracts for service' which would affect many people like freelance writers.

Along with the present Employment Bill, due to go on the statute book in the autumn of this year, the Green Paper, which becomes law in 1990 will be the seventh piece of anti trade union legislation since the Tories were elected in 1979. Unlike Labour's *In Place of Strife*, or Heath's 1971 Industrial Relations Act, this administration has not tried to curb union rights in one fell swoop. It has, instead, at two yearly intervals, consistently eroded the rights of trade union members by the device of amending the existing laws which operate in the industrial tribunals and the civil courts.

Unions can be sued by employers, their own members, and by third parties who have suffered damages arising from what they define as unlawful action. Most secondary action is unlawful, and if *Removing the Barriers to Employment* becomes law, will be even more so. Political strikes are in breach of the law. Employers have been granted greater freedom

to dismiss strikers. Unions are not allowed to discipline members who refuse to abide by a strike vote, even though the ballot has been carried out under the government's stringent ballot rules.

If unions do discipline their members for scabbing, then the strike-breaker is entitled to compensation. All these measures which are designed to make sure that workers find it more and more difficult to either call a strike, or win one, are further reinforced by legislation that forbids picketing by strikers anywhere but at their own place of work.

As recent disputes have shown, sequestration of union funds is a powerful weapon in the hands of both the state and the employers. Unions can be bankrupted and often the threat of sequestration is enough to make the timid bureaucrats who lead most of Britain's unions run for cover.

Unions can not now reimburse members' legal expenses for offences allegedly committed during a strike. However, workers who want to take action in the courts against their union are given a helping hand. A Central Office of Information leaflet explains how the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members can probably help them. It says that even if the litigant loses the case in the courts, provided it 'was brought with the Commissioner's assistance the Commissioner will bear the costs awarded against you.'

But state generosity does not extend to those workers victimised, or discriminated against, who want to take their grievance to an industrial tribunal. In 1979, six months' service qualified a worker to appeal against unfair dismissal. This now stands at two years. Furthermore, it is proposed that industrial tribunals can demand that the claimant pays a deposit before their case is heard. Even if the claim is upheld, there is no right to a statutory minimum payment, which is rather a contrast to the compensation of up to £8,925 the dismissed non-unionist might pick up.

The Employment Bill is a real onslaught on

employment protection rights. Clause eight of this Bill amends existing laws, particularly the 1961 Factory Act, so as to remove restrictions on the employment of young people between 16 and 18. As a result many of the present limits on hours of work — total daily hours, weekend work, night work and shift working times, and half-day holidays for young persons under the 1950 Shops Act will be repealed. Women workers in firms employing five or less people no longer have the right to return to work after maternity leave. Restrictions on women doing night work will be repealed.

Clause ten of the Bill makes amendments to the previous rights of all employees to reasonable time off work, with pay, to carry out the duties of a union official, if that union is recognised by management. The amendments limit paid time off for union work and time off for training to matters in which the union is recognised by the employer. This will severely restrict the time lay officials can take off for their union duties and for union training schemes.

This constant attempt by the government to undermine basic trade union rights and workers' job conditions has attracted criticism from far beyond the British labour movement.

The Geneva-based United Nations International Labour Organisation, has called for legislation to bring Britain into line with the minimum requirements accepted by over 100 countries throughout the world. It points out that Britain has broken international conventions on eight counts. It lists these as follows:

- The union ban at GCHQ.
- The denial of negotiating rights to teachers.
- Allowing employers to blacklist union



PHOTO: John Hambley/FL

Up against the law: dockers lobby

members.

- Restrictions on unions' rights to discipline members.

- The ban on unions paying fines on members' behalf.

- The ban on sympathetic action.

- Allowing employers to split companies artificially to limit industrial action.

- Allowing employers to sack workers who go on strike.

Even the Catholic Church, hardly a body known for its advocacy of class struggle militancy has joined in the protests against Thatcher's anti-union policies. A Catholic Truth Society publication *A Threefold Chord*, noting that modern technology can often maintain production long enough for strikers to exhaust themselves, conclude that 100 per cent support of employees and pickets is 'absolutely necessary'. It therefore criticises the legislation that allows union members to defy majority votes, with the apt comment '...if a member of the government were to vote against government policy, that member would be shown the door very quickly.'

If only the Labour Party was so forthright in its criticisms of the anti-union laws! The policy review has come up with nothing specific. It has not one word to say on the vital issue of picketing. Although Michael Meacher, the shadow employment secretary, did talk on television about unions having the right in certain instances, to take secondary action, he in no way argued that Labour should abolish the Tories' anti-picketing legislation. Even this mild stand has brought the wrath of Kinnock and the 'new realists' down on his head and the *Sunday Times* of 28 May reported that in October Meacher would be sacked from his job and replaced by a moderate who would help to 'shed Labour's image of being dominated by the unions.'

One of Labour's new ad-men, Leslie Butterfield, who is involved in selling Kinnock to the electors, calls the new policy stance 'the new realism' which he reckons to be a 'highly marketable product'. Speaking about the



PHOTO: Carlos Guarita/Flex

Retreating before the law: Ron Todd

People at Work, Butterfield commented: 'It's not saying we will repeal every bit of industrial relations legislation since 1979. A Bill of Rights for the workforce offers a lot, and doesn't give *carte blanche* for secondary picketing.'

Now as Peter Mandelson, Labour's publicity supremo, and his ad team are far better informed on policy matters than Labour's elected national executive, you can take what Mr Butterfield says as being from the horse's mouth. Kinnock's new realism is going to be very short on restoring union rights. Their concern is with assuring the bourgeoisie that Labour is fit to govern - trade union members' democratic rights come a poor second.

The struggle against Thatcher's anti-trade union laws cannot be safely left in the hands of the 'new realists'. Right now a campaign must begin in the constituency parties and in the unions, which insists that a new Labour government will repeal all the anti-union legislation brought in since 1979.

The unions are the defensive organisations of the working class. They are the means whereby workers defend their living standards, protect health and safety at work, and defend their members against unfair dismissal and victimisation. It is the members alone who should decide when and where to strike. They must decide whether or not to discipline scabs who have put their own selfish interests above those of the majority of the members. It must be the rank and file and their elected representatives

who determine how a union spends its money. None of these matters should be the prerogative of non-elected High Court judges, who are only loyal and responsible to the bourgeois state.

Without placing any reliance on the capitalist EEC, we should nevertheless demand that many of the aspects of its Social Charter are implemented. Particularly those covering minimum hours of work, access to decent salaries, the right of all citizens to social benefits, the right to belong to a trade union, the right to strike and for a guaranteed minimum wage. But even those quite modest recommendations are not going to be handed down courtesy of a Tory government. Thatcher's present ravings against Brussels are in no small part attributable to the Social Charter.

Only resolute trade union struggle will ensure that these recommendations are achieved. And that means defying the government's anti-union laws. Because the unions failed to take on the law, trade unionism was wiped out at GCHQ. For Thatcher, Cheltenham was just one step along the road to rendering the unions powerless. She and her cabinet are determined to bring in legislation that eventually will prevent all strikes. Even if they do not see themselves able to eliminate the trade unions in the foreseeable future, they do intend to render them ineffectual.

Labour by its silence over its proposals on industrial relations has spoken volumes. There is no guarantee that Labour will win the next election. Nor is there any guarantee that if it does do, that it will restore to the union members their basic rights. By all means let us campaign to commit Labour to a policy of total repeal, but let us start the fight now to build a movement right across the unions which is prepared to break the Tories' anti-union laws. That is the only way to win back the democratic rights of the working people, which the state and its courts have stolen from them in the last ten years.

By Janet Knight

Chesterfield - third time around

The sceptics who thought the Socialist Conference wouldn't survive have been confounded. On the weekend of June 17-18 it holds its third annual conference, this time in Sheffield.

Even better, there is a proposal from the organisers to change the name to the *Socialist Movement*. This implies a higher level of organisation, proper membership, an office and full-time workers to further the movement.

With the Labour Party and trade union leaderships still espousing their new realist politics, the Socialist Conference is the only viable, broad national organisation on the left prepared to fight Thatcher *now* and offering a political alternative, rather than weakly calling for everyone to hold on until we can elect a Labour Government. Its twin-track policy of organising both inside and outside the Labour Party, in the trade unions and in the campaigns is also the only conceivable way forward for rebuilding the left after the hammering it has had from a government intent on destroying socialist ideas in Britain and from the new realist leadership of the Labour movement.

Nor is the situation as bleak as it has been. With Thatcher's economic policy in tatters - huge trade deficits, rising inflation, and interest rates crippling industry and now a large proportion of mortgage-paying home-owners - many groups of workers are beginning to fight back and demand wage rises at least as high as inflation. This in turn is giving confidence to other groups to fight other aspects of the bosses' offensive and Tory moves towards further privatisation. The moment is therefore ripe for the Socialist Conference to consolidate itself into a class struggle current - a movement which defends the interests of the working class as well as Thatcher defends the interests of her class.

The strengths of the component parts of the Conference however, are uneven. There is no doubt that the vast majority of the people who look to Chesterfield are in the Labour Party. With a number of the best Campaign Group MPs involved, the links with the Party are strong, as of course they should be. But the same cannot be said of the trade unions. Despite a similar level of membership

of trade unions among Chesterfield supporters, the links are much weaker. There has been some good work done by the trade union policy group and the links made between the Solidarity Network and the Conference are important. But the links with left trade union tendencies are still weak, and there is no trade union equivalent to the Campaign Group of MPs.

But if the situation of the left in the unions is weak, the situation in the Labour Party is also difficult. Many members are drifting out because they cannot see any way forward in the Party - here lies the importance of organising the left in the constituencies. If the Socialist Conference turns itself into an organised movement, its relationship to the Labour Party will be put into sharp focus - both for the left and for Kinnoch.

Just at the point when Thatcher is looking weaker than at any time since before the Malvinas War, at the point when the mass of the working class are turning again to the Labour Party to solve its problems, to be outside those developments would be a disaster. When the socialist left is fighting against the stream, any discussion about separation from the Labour Party or the formation of a new party is premature. The task of the Socialist Conference is to



PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni

Never to be forgotten? This year's Socialist Conference will be attended for the first time by Ken Livingstone

provide a real focus for all those who want to fight the Tories and who see the current Labour leadership as a block against any fightback.

For any who doubt the overwhelming importance of the Labour Party with its base in the trade unions the history of the old Independent Labour Party (ILP) is a sobering one. In the early 1930s it had up to 100,000 members, though many of these were on paper only. At its split from the Labour Party in 1932 (at the wrong time and on the wrong issue), it had almost 17,000 members, though many older members resigned at this time, leaving politics altogether or rejoining the Labour Party. By 1935 they were down to 4,500, and a year later down again to an effective membership of 1,000. Trotsky argued that part of the reason for the ILP's dramatic decline was that:

'... having become an independent party, the ILP turned not toward the trade unions and the Labour Party, not toward the masses al-

Women For Socialism at Sheffield

After its own successful conference in February, Women For Socialism will be at the Socialist Conference in Sheffield, raising to the centre stage the concerns and struggles of women and building the wider movement for socialism.

During the Policy Group Workshops there will be two plenary sessions on women's policy on *Internationalism* and on *The Economy and the Changing Patterns of Women's Employment*.

The plenary and workshops on internationalism will be a good opportunity to build the links between anti-racist and anti-imperialist struggles as they are experienced by women. It is hoped that the newly

formed *Women Against Fundamentalism* will be at the conference, which will allow follow-up discussion from the February conference on the issues raised by the Rushdie affair, as well as more debate on the general questions of international solidarity.

Discussion on the economy and women's employment too will provide a means to understand the effects of the changing economic and demographic situation on women and work. It is well known that women have suffered from the changing patterns of employment, with very large numbers working part-time, flexible hours or in temporary work - none of which carry statutory benefits such as sick pay, maternity leave, or holiday pay.

The demographic changes which mean less and less trained 16-18 year olds coming onto the job market have led some large employers to introduce workplace nurseries. While we should welcome this, it is also obvious that such nurseries will be available only to the better-paid, full-time women workers, and as council and state child care suffers from the attacks on local government spending, the outcome will be fewer places for the under-fives.

On Saturday there will be two hours of specific time set aside for Women For Socialism. These sessions will be practical and will be very useful to draw women into the activities of Women For Socialism on the ground.

together, but toward the Communist Party ... which had proven its bureaucratic dullness and absolute inability to approach the [working] class.'

(Trotsky's *Writings on Britain*, Vol.3, Page 95)

The long term aim today must be to learn these lessons, and build a new national left wing movement because the election of a new realist Labour Government will solve few of the problems facing working people in Britain.

With policies indistinguishable from those of the Callaghan Government, we are likely to see a Kinnock Government make the same mistakes. There will be anti-working class measures, austerity, and capitulation to the demands of capital both nationally and internationally. The decisive shifts achieved by Thatcher on democratic rights including the right to strike, the right to decent housing, free education, health care, the right to free speech, to freedom from racial attack, and to sexual choice, will not be reversed by Kinnock.

The one difference – and it is a central one – is that the election of a Labour government will create a wave of optimism and confidence among the working class and the oppressed. The anger, when this optimism is seen to have been misplaced, could be very widespread. Combined with a new confidence, it could create very important left developments both in the Labour Party and the unions. To be ex-



Chesterfield's strength in the Labour Party has not been matched in the unions

cluded from this either by design or by accident would be disastrous.

The centrality of the trade unions and struggles in the workplaces means that Chesterfield must put a lot of energy into both developing policy and into supporting strikes as they arise, for example in the docks, among the transport unions, and in the NHS unions in the fight against the White Paper, if it is to build the left and gain credibility in that sector.

Equally the question of democratic rights, at all levels, is very important, given the achievements of the Tory government. Chesterfield will have to give support to black people fighting the racist state and against racist attacks and to lesbians and gay men in their fight to make their own sexual choice without suffering discrimination, as well as supporting constitutional change to make the capitalist state more democratic.

The third area where Chesterfield should place its energies and resources is amongst women. Women have borne the brunt of many attacks by this first British government to be led

by a woman! The shift from full-time to part-time and temporary work has hit women hard; the reduction in social services has made many into full-time carers at home; the crisis in the family, with only 27 per cent now living in a traditional 'nuclear family', affects women above all. But women have continually been among those prepared to fight back. The ultra-right have as yet been unable to legislate to change the 1967 Abortion Act in the face of

mass resistance by women. Women have been in the forefront, leading struggles against Thatcher's policies in the NHS and teaching for example.

Women For Socialism, with its three hundred or so members and its very successful 400-strong first conference behind it, provides the autonomous, organisational form through which Chesterfield can both support women fighting for their rights and develop policy which puts women's rights at the centre of our demands. Its aim of trying to build a socialist-feminist current is a bold and difficult one, but is nevertheless as necessary as is the building of a left current in the trade unions, in the Labour Party and in the campaigns.

Lastly there are several national and international campaigns to which Chesterfield must relate and openly build, if it is to be seen as a useful vehicle for fighting back against Thatcher. It must be more prominent in building resistance to the Poll Tax, particularly at the national level; this must include opposition to registration and refusal to pay.

It should also support all campaigns fighting for the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. It should give wholehearted support to the liberation struggles in South Africa and Central America. And it should continue the fight to defend the Labour Party's unilateralist policy.

If the Socialist Conference agrees to transform itself into a movement that really organises the rank and file and continues its twin track policy of building inside and outside the Labour Party, in the trade unions and campaigns, on the ground in the struggles but also at leadership level, then its future looks pretty good. It will remain the only politically significant left current in national politics today.

Jane Kelly



Women are always in the forefront of struggles to defend the NHS

PHOTO: John Harris/JFL

Time to target the trade unions

The Socialist Conference has never been strong in the unions, not least because it emerged in 1987 as an opposition to new realism, the bedrock of which was always in the top levels of the trade unions.

The exception has been a section of the NUM leadership under Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield, reflecting their distinctive political line within the trade union movement, and the support given to the miners' strike by Tony Benn others now at the center of the Socialist Conference movement.

Potential trade union support for the Socialist Conference has always been at regional and local level and amongst the rank and file, rather than at national level. The Bennite movement of the early 1980s had strong support amongst the rank and file of the trade unions, despite its tendency to look more towards left wing full-time officials. Much of that support is potentially still there, although it has never been properly addressed or organised.

The first Socialist Conference had virtually no trade union side to it. Although it was attended by a large number of trade unionists, including rank and file miners, it did not address their problems or give them a perspective. The second Conference was better, but Scargill was not there and did not organise his potential support for it.

Despite these weaknesses, there has been a clear willingness in the Socialist Conference to take on trade union issues, and some progress has been made. Now new opportunities present themselves. Whatever the outcome of the present wave of disputes it is clear that there is a significant change of mood in the working class, which opens up the possibility of a fight-back.

What makes a Socialist Conference trade union initiative important is that despite this rise in the level of militancy and struggle, "new realism" continues to dominate the leadership in both the trade unions and the Labour Party, which are in fact still moving to the right. In this situation, with the rank and file on the move and leadership in continued retreat, there is a clear opening for the Socialist Conference. There is already evidence of regeneration of rank and file organisation. The Socialist Conference is by far the best placed of any political current to promote such a development.

To fill this vacuum, however, the Socialist Conference must have a campaigning stance and a class struggle line within the unions. It must be seen as the main force tackling new realism in the unions as well as in the Labour Party. The Socialist Conference has to have an effective reply to Kinnock's Policy Review, and that debate has to be had out in the trade unions and at union conferences. This involves the defence of unilateral nuclear disarmament and the fight for the implementation of such a policy when Labour is in office. It also calls for

policies to re-nationalise privatised industry and services, and reverse Tory attacks on the democratic rights of the working class.

Socialists need campaigning priorities for their trade union work.

The trade unions and the law

The Socialist Conference must have a clear position on the use of the law against the unions – both the need to break the Tory laws and for their repeal by a future Labour Government. Recent court decisions show time and again that the Tory anti-union laws and the way they are used by the courts are the single most serious problem faced by the trade union movement in Britain today. The very right to strike in this country is now seriously threatened by these laws.

The trade union movement has been weakened, but is still more than strong enough to take on these laws and defeat them – the problem is that the leadership is opposed to any such action.

Solidarity with struggles

The Socialist Conference has a good record of solidarity with those in struggle and is well prepared to give solidarity to the dockers, particularly through its links with the Solidarity Network. A successful rally was held last year in Finsbury Town Hall and a series of rallies are planned – in London, Liverpool, Hull and Glasgow in support of the dockers.

The employers' offensive

Under Thatcher the employers have introduced a range of new working practices including participatory techniques such as 'quality circles' and 'team leaders' imported from the USA and Japan. They have introduced flexibility, multi-skilling and new shift patterns. The Socialist Conference needs to be able to address these problems if it is to become a force in the unions.

Privatisation and the attacks on the NHS

Socialists in the unions have to discuss an effective strategy against privatisation and the attacks on the health service. Privatisation is an issue in many of the present pay rounds, where bargaining structures are being changed ready for sell-off. Opposition to the cuts in the NHS and the NHS White Paper could be organised far more effectively if socialists became more involved and active in health campaigns.

1992:

The Single European Market in 1992 is a major challenge to the trade union movement in Britain. The Socialist Conference should be opposed to the EEC and the measures it promotes against the working class – not on the basis of defending 'British sovereignty', but from the point of view of defending the inde-



Scargill: Isolated opponent of the new realism

pendent interests of the European and international working class.

Health and safety

Health and safety at work and in the community is now a major political issue in Britain. Hillsborough, the Herald of Free Enterprise, Piper Alpha, Kings Cross, the Clapham rail crash, the escalation of accidents on building sites and the drop in safety standards in industry all have a common factor in the kind of society the Tories are trying to build. They have weakened trade union organisation – which at the end of the day is the only real safeguard of safety standards. The Health and Safety conference, organised jointly by the Socialist Conference and the Solidarity Network, was a useful contribution to understanding this problem.

Democratising the unions

The Socialist conference should see the democratisation of the unions as a major campaigning priority, fighting for democratic internal union procedures; adequate information to members; mass meetings and democratic balloting procedures free from the influence of the courts; the regular election of all union officials, and the democratisation of the block vote at Labour Party conference.

If the Socialist Conference is to campaign effectively on such policies in the unions, it needs to be much better organised. The Trade Union policy group needs to be strengthened and regional policy groups should be set up. There is already a positive initiative in the West Midlands to organise along these lines. The Socialist Conference should support and help to organise left groupings and Broad Lefts within the unions, and should give full and active support to trade union rank and file movements.

The conference of trade unionists being organised by the Socialist Conference in November can provide an important forum to discuss these issues and the general relevance of the trade union movement in the 1990s. It should elect a broadly based trade union steering committee which can organise and develop the various aspects of trade union work.

If this is done seriously, this type of work by socialists in the unions can also play a key role in the political fight against Kinnock's new realism in the Labour Party. That is the challenge before this year's Socialist Conference.

Alan Thornett

PHOTO: J. Greening/Reflex



Before the crackdown: mass rallies of students spread to the largest city, Shanghai

Behind the crisis of Chinese Stalinism

PHIL HEARSE offers a historical overview of the developments in China, and an assessment of the issues at stake and the factional struggles in the leadership which paved the way for the dramatic events in Beijing.

The extraordinary anti-bureaucratic movement of the Chinese students and workers has arisen from the inequalities and injustices created by the home-grown version of 'market socialism', a precursor of 'perestroika' in the Soviet Union.

This has involved the de-collectivisation of agriculture, the re-establishment of a strong private sector in industry (partially in collaboration with international capital) and the restoration of the profit motive as the guiding force in the economy. It has also meant huge attacks on the basic rights of employment and wage-equality enjoyed by the Chinese working class (the so-called 'iron rice bowl').

'Market socialism' in China has gone much further than in the Soviet Union; what we want to attempt to answer here is the question why the

Chinese leaders adopted this road, and what its consequences have been. To get to grips with this it is really necessary to attempt an understanding of the drift of the Chinese economy, social struggles and politics since the 1950s.

From the 'Great Leap Forward' to the 'Cultural Revolution'

The victory of the revolution in 1949 created the basis to begin the process of industrialisation in China. Between 1949 and 1951/2 a single unified state, with a single currency was created; large industry was bit-by-bit taken over (although with huge payouts to the former capitalist owners) and the collectivisation of agriculture begun. The Mao Zedong leadership, copying the pattern of development in Stalin's Russia, put the main emphasis on the development of heavy industry, at the expense of resources to light in-

dustry and agriculture.

The significance of this one-sided emphasis closely parallels some of the debates which took place in the Soviet Union between the Stalinists and the Left Opposition over the pace of industrialisation and relations between industry and the peasantry. By putting all the emphasis on heavy industry – in other words trying to force the pace of industrialisation beyond what was sustainable by a poor economy based on agriculture – the Maoist leadership created an economy which failed to produce goods for exchange with the peasantry, and for the mechanisation and development of agriculture.

It is true that thanks to collectivisation, agricultural productivity increased. But by the mid-1950s the imbalance between heavy industry and light industry and agriculture was obvious, with agriculture lagging way behind. After a fierce debate on the way forward in 1955-7, (the so-called 'rectification campaign' and the 'let a

"the Maoist leadership created an economy which failed to produce goods for exchange with the peasantry, and for the development of agriculture."



Bureaucratic voluntarism: building a canal near Beijing during the 'Great Leap Forward'

"The Great Leap can be described as left-bureaucratic voluntarism, typical of Mao Zedong's thought. Its result was disastrous all round. The whole economy went into anarchy and crisis"

hundred flowers bloom' campaign) Mao decided to attempt to break out of the vicious circle by an extraordinary voluntarist mobilisation of the peasantry – the 'Great Leap Forward' of 1957-9.

The Great Leap Forward is seminal in understanding the character of the Maoist leadership, as we shall show. In the Great Leap millions of peasants were organised into giant 'Peoples Communes' each of thousands of people. The Communes were to be giant centres of agricultural production and at the same time rural-industrial production centres. Everywhere ad-hoc iron and steel producing units were set up in backyards, both in the towns and in the countryside. The peasants were coerced into the Communes. All private property of the peasants, including land plots and personal possessions were confiscated. A semi-military discipline prevailed.

The Great Leap was hailed, by idealistic foreign observers as one of the great breakthroughs in developing countries of the century. In fact it had some parallels with the forcible collectivisation of the peasantry in Russia. The whole exercise can be described as left-bureaucratic voluntarism, typical of Mao Zedong's thought. Its result was disastrous all round. The whole economy went into anarchy and crisis, as agriculture became less productive and industry was dislocated by tens of thousands of ad-hoc experiments in steel production. A huge drought in 1959 further added to the catastrophe. It is now known that millions of peasants died of starvation as a direct result of the crisis. The Great Leap led to a huge fight inside the upper ranks of the bureaucratic apparatus.

The debate over the Great Leap began to intersect with a struggle over 'military policy' and the debates in-

side the international communist movement. Army leader Peng Dehuai (Peng Teh-huai), commander of the Chinese troops during the Korean war, stressed the need for a modern conventional weapons and a modern conventional army to meet the threat of imperialism. Mao on the other hand stressed the importance of guerrilla warfare, 'peoples war'. The link of this debate with foreign policy was of course that the only realistic source of the most up-to-date weapons was the Soviet Union. Peng Dehuai tended towards an alliance with the Soviet Union, while Sino-Soviet relations were coming under heavy strain.

The debate over the Great Leap, and foreign and military policy came to a head at the 'Lushan conference' (so named after the city in which the Central Committee plenum was held) in August 1959. Ranged against the Mao leadership was Peng Dehuai, and old time CP leader Zhang Wentian, tacitly supported by the mayor of Beijing Peng Zhen (Peng Chen). The proceedings of the Lushan conference have never been published, but in its wake the Great Leap was abandoned, the communes were scaled down or disbanded and the experiment in backyard steel production was abandoned. On the other hand, Mao's political leadership emerged strengthened. Peng Dehuai was purged.

But out of the events leading up to the Lushan conference, two distinct factions had emerged in the leadership – that led by Mao and including as a moderating influence Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), and the other led by Liu Shaoqi (Liu Shao-chi) and ... Deng Xiaoping. The debate between the two was essentially a debate about the form of bureaucratic rule. Deng and Liu opposed the 'left' policy of bureaucratic mass mobilisation and voluntaristic lurches, and looked to the

more 'stable' and 'conservative' form of rule which existed in the Soviet Union. In practice this meant more concessions to the rich and middle peasants, a slower rate of industrialisation and a move away from China's international revolutionary rhetoric towards a more open embracing of peaceful co-existence with imperialism.

1965 was a key turning point in this factional struggle. In August of that year the pro-Chinese Indonesian Communist Party, which co-ordinated its strategy closely with Beijing, was massacred by an army coup (with over one million dead). Many Chinese leaders blamed Mao for the fiasco. After the Indonesian defeat Mao left Beijing and went to Shanghai for six months, leaving participation in the leadership bodies of the party and state. In fact Mao had gone to Shanghai where the party leadership was loyal to him in order to prepare his counter-attack. Out of it came the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution'.

The Cultural Revolution was one of the most momentous – and most misunderstood – events of modern times. Widely acclaimed by the left in the West as a fight against bureaucracy and the continuation of the class struggle under socialism, it was in fact a struggle by Mao and the left-bureaucratic faction in the leadership, to defeat their factional opponents. Millions of high school and university youth were mobilised as 'Red Guards' by sections of the party loyal to Mao and the army to defeat 'top party people in authority taking the capitalist road'.

Far from being a democratic mass movement the Cultural Revolution was a reign of terror and philistinism in which thousands were murdered, tortured and humiliated by Mao's youthful zealots. Liu Shaoqi died in prison in 1968 after being brutally tortured in 'struggle sessions' against him. Peng Dehuai eventually died in jail in 1974 after being tortured more than 130 times and kept in barbaric conditions. The cult of Mao's personality, the sayings of Mao's 'Little Red Book' and the fanatical destruction of 'bourgeois' culture thrust China into obscurantism and chaos.

In effect Mao Zedong represented a minority in the leadership of the party and went outside its formal structures to mobilise millions of youth against the leadership majority.

The Red Guards were used as the shock troops to smash regional and local party organisations opposed to Mao. Key to his alliances was the leadership of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), personified by army leader Lin Biao (Lin Piao). His famous text 'Long Live the Victory of People's War' (1965) is the classic statement of Mao's line on military policy against the 'rightist' views of Peng Zhuai.

Inevitably, however, the mass movement generated by the Red Guards got out of control, despite the huge effort at organising them by the PLA. In industrial centres workers fought back against the Red Guard thugs. Different factions emerged amongst the youth and workers fighting over what was the correct interpretation of 'Mao Zedong thought'. In many towns, pitched battles using firearms and even armoured cars were fought between different factions of the Red Guards: more and more local workers organisations and the army were drawn into the military conflict. Mao instructed the PLA to 'support the left' in these struggles, but it became impossible, in the profusion of Red Guard and 'revolutionary rebel' groups fighting one another to decide who the 'left' was. The country was brought to the brink of economic and political collapse.

When Mao had declared 'bombard the headquarters' he had in mind of course the headquarters of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Too many Red Guards started to bombard any headquarters they could find, including some Red Guards who started to express, in a tentative way, opposition to all bureaucracy. In early 1968 Mao, especially under pressure from Zhou Enlai, decided to put an end to the movement. A key turning point was the decision by the 'revolutionary committee' in Shanghai to create a 'Paris Commune'-type administration of the city, after months of bloody military battles had given the committee victory over the local party ap-



The heyday of the Cultural Revolution: a huge parade in Kweichow province

paratus.

The new line of the Maoist faction became the building of 'three in one' revolutionary committees. The committees were to consist of Red Guards, revolutionary 'cadres' and the PLA. In fact this meant demobilising the Red Guard committees under the tutelage of the army and the party. Mao closed down the Red Guards; after their demobilisation thousands were sent to do menial work in the countryside. But the Cultural Revolution had achieved its aim: Mao had defeated his factional opponents.

From the Cultural revolution to the death of Mao

The victory of the Mao faction was however pyrrhic. Mao and his allies had won the factional battle, but the havoc wrought by the cultural revolution turned tens of thousands of party cadres against the 'leftist' bureaucratic commandism of Mao, with its ambitions to transform social relations without having first created the material conditions for such a transformation. The basis was thereby created for a future clash among the different factions of the bureaucracy after Mao's death in 1976.

During the Cultural Revolution a battle had broken out between different cliques in the pro-Mao faction. One was led by Lin Biao, based especially on the PLA commanders; and the other by Mao's wife Jiang Qing,

with the support of the 'revolutionary committee' in Shanghai. At the outset of the Cultural Revolution Lin Biao had been named as Mao's successor, and this was even written into the constitution. But in 1970-71 the struggle between the two groups intensified, and Jiang Qing's group - later to become notorious as the 'Gang of Four' - gained the upper hand. Lin Biao died in 1971, allegedly in a plane crash near the Mongolian border, 'attempting to escape to the Soviet Union'.

After Zhou Enlai's death in January 1976, Deng Xiaoping, who had enjoyed Zhou's protection, was dismissed and fled to Canton. In September Mao himself died and a three-way struggle for power broke out. Jiang Qing's Gang of Four represented the politics of extreme 'third periodist' ultra-left bureaucratic commandism. Jiang, who had used her position to take revenge on political opponents, and had run her own torture chambers during the Cultural Revolution, wanted a return to the more extreme policies of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution itself. Deng, in hiding, now formed an alliance with Zhou Ziyang and constituted a 'right' opposition. A centre group was led by Hua Guofeng, who, it emerged, had been nominated by Mao as his successor.

With Deng in hiding the real struggle developed between the Gang of Four and the Hua Guofeng group. The Gang plotted to carry out a military

"Mao closed down the Red Guards; after they were demobilised thousands were sent to do menial work in the countryside. But the Cultural Revolution had achieved its aim: Mao had defeated his factional opponents"

"In 1975 Deng had written three documents (described by the Gang of Four as the 'three poisonous weeds') in which he outlined a 'new course' for China's development"

coup, but on the night of 5th October 1976 Hua, supported by Wang Dongxing and Ye Jianying, used the Beijing garrison to arrest the Gang at a meeting of the Politburo in a preemptory strike. Hua became the new leader, promising 'continuity' with Mao's policies. But the defeat of the Gang of Four represented something crucial in the battle over China's future: since the end of the Cultural Revolution the Communist Party itself, virtually destroyed by the Red Guards, had been rebuilt. Purged cadres and regional party bosses had gradually got back their positions. The defeat of the 'gang' represented the posthumous revenge of the party apparatus on Mao, despite the accession to power of Hua Guofeng. The party apparatus began to prepare the end of all Mao's policies.

The 'Four Modernisations'

The period 1976-80 represents a critical turning point because it was during this period that the policy changes and the leadership team behind the present Chinese crisis crystallised. In April 1976 the famous Tiananmen Square 'incident' took place, when a hundred thousand people demonstrated in memory of Zhou Enlai, demanding democracy and a better life. The demonstration was brutally put down by troops. Following the death of Mao, and the smashing of the 'Gang of Four', Deng Xiaoping, who had strong links with certain sections of the Hua leadership (especially Marshall Ye Jianying), was officially rehabilitated. A trioka took the leadership (Hua, Ye and Deng), with Hua Guofeng in the official leadership position. But it was Deng who started to make the pace in the debates on policy which ensued.

In 1975 Deng had written three documents (described by the Gang of Four as the 'three poisonous weeds') in which he outlined a wide-ranging 'new course' for China's development. The ideas in these documents, probably discussed with Zhou Enlai before his death, became known as the 'Four Modernisations'. The four modernisations are the updating of industry, agriculture, science and technology and defence, to make China a modern industrial nation by the year 2000. In 1978 a ten year plan was



No sign of socialism: hard labour in a basket workshop in a Mao Zedong-style People's Commune

adopted along the lines of the 'four modernisations'.

The essence of the four modernisations is as follows:

a) de-collectivisation of agriculture and the recreation of private peasant farming – although without abolishing all co-operatives;

b) the modernisation of industry utilising Western management techniques, bonuses for high production, profit and loss accounting, and a 'shake out' of 'surplus labour';

c) an attempt to introduce a much more widespread utilisation of Western technology through the introduction of Western capital in special enterprise zones and in joint projects with Western transnational corporations.

Below we outline the successes and failures of this policy, and its social consequences. But two elements of the political development must be mentioned first.

By mid-1978 a bitter battle was ranging inside the leadership between the Deng faction and the Hua faction. The latter wanted to identify with Mao and the Cultural Revolution, but distance itself from the extreme policies of the Gang of Four. Hua's group was dubbed the 'whateverist' faction – whatever Mao said was right – while the Deng faction became more and more critical of Mao's 'politics in command' line. The final victory of the Deng-Zhao Ziyang group was achieved at the 1980 congress, where an anti-Mao 'economics has priority over politics' line was adopted, and Hua resigned as premier to be replaced by Zhao.

At the height of the conflict between the Deng and Hua factions, in November 1978, Deng was seen by

broad sections of the masses as the more enlightened, anti bureaucratic leader. Suddenly posters claiming that Mao had committed many bureaucratic errors appeared on a stretch of wall opposite the Mao museum and around Tiananmen Square. This 'democracy wall' movement was tolerated by the Dengists who saw it as useful in their battle against Hua. Almost immediately unofficial journals debating every aspect of democracy and the economic way forward appeared. Many purely literary journals appeared, by a real dissidents movement developed with hundreds of journals nationwide. Unlike the Soviet dissidents at that time, the Chinese dissidents nearly all expressed themselves in terms of Marxism and the correct form of proletarian dictatorship. Views very close to Trotskyism and anti-Stalinist revolutionary socialism were expressed. A National Association of Unofficial Publications was set up.

The Tiananmen Square incident of April 1976, and the 'Democracy Movement' of 1978-80 are the precursors of the current developments in China. In both these movements and in the current events, as far as we know, no section of the movement has called for re-establishing capitalism. The 'Internationale' is the universal song of protest – against the bureaucracy but evidently not against socialism.

By April 1981 Deng had had enough of the 'Beijing Spring' movement. His power had been consolidated and the anti-bureaucratic character of many of the unofficial publications was beginning to alarm the authorities. A general clampdown and repression ensued. In some cases

"The Tiananmen Square incident of April 1976, and the 'Democracy Movement' of 1978-80 are the precursors of the current developments in China"

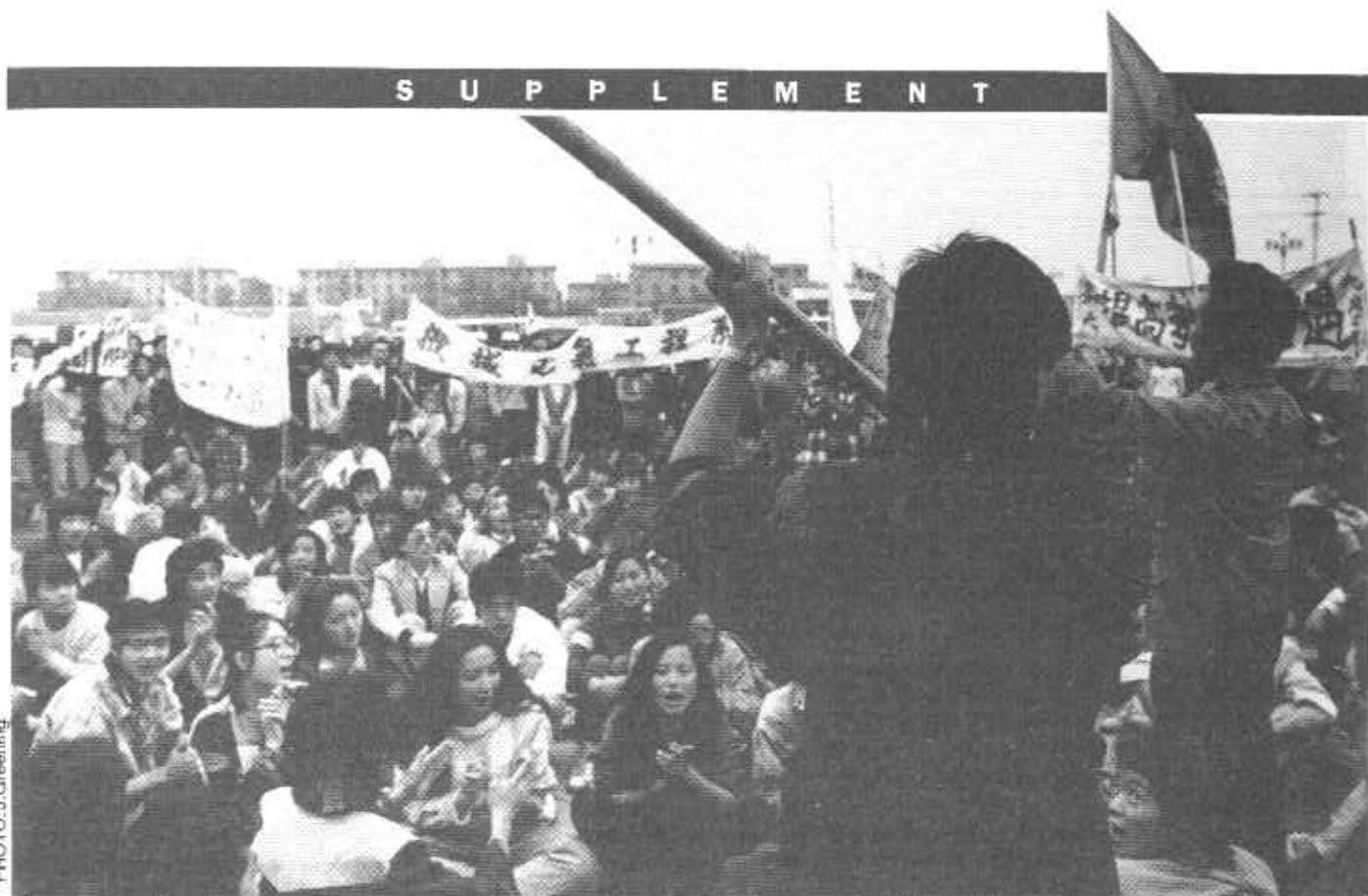


PHOTO: J. Greening

The demand for democracy has reemerged, echoing the student struggles of 1986 and the Beijing Spring of 1980-81

the repression was vicious, with leaders of the movement being sentenced to up to 15 years imprisonment.

Contradictions of the New Economic Policy

The mass student movement of December 1986 and the present massive mobilisation directly stem from the effects of the 'New Economic Policy' initiated by the Ten Year Plan of 1978.

In agriculture the new economic thinking has provided for a run down of collectives and the introduction of the 'household responsibility system'. This envisaged the equal distribution of land to peasants to farm household-by-household. Although in theory the land remains owned by the state, in practice there have been many cases of the land being sold to establish larger plots.

The effects of this plan have been twofold. First – and there is no denying it – agricultural production has increased dramatically. The break with bureaucratic commandism was welcomed by many peasants who took the opportunity of de-regulation to produce more to earn more by selling their produce privately in the city and town markets. Undoubtedly, before the de-collectivisation Chinese agriculture was suffering from the effects of *forced* collectivisation, and peasant resistance to this. This effect closely parallels what happened for decades in the Soviet Union after the forced collectivisation of 1929-31.

However, the obvious social effect of the 'NEP' in agriculture has been

the re-emergence of sharp class differentiations among the peasantry. New layers of rich and middle peasants have arisen, and big disparities have grown up in the wealth of different regions according to the natural productivity of agriculture. Some peasants with unsustainable plots have become in effect proletarianised, turned into rural labourers in the employ of rich peasants. Others have left the land to look for work in the cities.

In addition to the class differentiation among rural farmers, rural industrial enterprises and even social services like schools have come under what is effectively private control, or at least private financing.

In industry, the basic turn in approach was made by the 'Thirty Point Decision on Industry' adopted by the party Central Committee in 1978. This has had the effect of introducing a new management structure, replacing the party and workers' committees by a hierarchical management structure. Differentials in wages have been sharply increased. Tens of thousands of workers have been fired in an economic 'rationalisation'. Security of employment and the egalitarian ethos have been dispensed with. State deficit financing in the ten year plan in industry has impelled inflation, leading to recurrent price rises of basic staples.

Many projects have been started with foreign capitalist concerns, and Chinese enterprises encouraged to deal directly with foreign capital (ethnic Chinese abroad have been espe-

cially encouraged to invest in China). A new class of Chinese capitalists has arisen as owners of private ventures; but despite this the largest and most dynamic sector of Chinese industry remains in state hands.

The effect of the economic reforms in the urban industrial areas has paralleled those in the countryside. Economic inequality and a black market have grown up. Chinese millionaires rub shoulders with tens of thousands of urban unemployed. There is no doubting that the balance sheet of the economic reforms is growth – but at the expense of important sectors of the workers.

The demand for 'democracy'

One effect of China's closer integration with the world market has been the opening up of China to tourism and information from abroad, with thousands of Chinese students going to advanced capitalist countries to study. The emergence of a mass student movement for democracy in December 1986 – the direct descendant of the 'Beijing Spring' movement – was directly linked to the movement of the French students in that month, and also to the announcement in Taiwan that the ruling Kuomintang regime was going to allow the formation of an opposition political party. The December 1986 movement spread rapidly to all the main universities of China, but at that time remained mainly limited to the students. They demanded an independent student union and the introduc-

"Differentials in wages have been increased. Tens of thousands of workers have been fired ... Security of employment and the egalitarian ethos have been dispensed with"



On the same road? Deng (left) with former 'heir apparent' Zhao Ziyang last year:

"The regime as a whole – 'hardliners' and 'liberals' – is a brutally repressive one. Last year up to 30,000 prisoners, many of them charged with petty offences, were executed by the authorities, a clear indication of the savage brutality which the regime is capable of"

tion of 'multipartyism' and a democratic political system.

The present movement in Beijing, Shanghai and other major centres, involving the mobilisation of millions of workers, students and intellectuals, is the continuation of the December 1986 movement. It is inspired not only

by the pitiful and abject conditions in which the students live, and their insecurity about getting a job, but by popular outrage at the inequalities and corruption which have gone with the reforms. In effect, China has had a radical 'perestroika' applied to its economy, but no 'glasnost' whatever.

How Deng's policies sowed seeds of Beijing revolt

The following analysis of the policies of the Deng faction of the Chinese Communist Party is abridged from an extensive document on the situation in China and the perspectives for revolutionaries, published in English in the Trotskyist magazine *October Review*, journal of the Hong Kong section of the Fourth International.

The economic policy of the Chinese Communist Party faction around Deng Xiaoping has aimed from the beginning to preserve and strengthen bureaucratic rule. Its basic approach has been to deprive the labouring masses of their democratic power over production, while conducting an open-door policy, hoping that with the help of technology and capital from other countries China could make economic progress.

At the same time the Deng faction has relaxed the administrative stranglehold on the economy of the Mao Zedong era, and decentralised power to local bureaucrats, seeking to

cultivate a technocracy and encourage the development of commodity production and an invigorated, market economy.

This line, based on the technocrats and the 'competent' in the countryside, has fostered the development of capitalist elements in China, eroding the system of state ownership, the planned economy and the monopoly of foreign trade. The erosion has not yet brought about a qualitative change, but is quantitatively increasing. The present policy of the bureaucracy cannot effectively defend the socialist elements of the economy from further erosion. Part of the state ownership system is beginning to disintegrate, the role of state planning and distribution is lessening, the role of market mechanisms is in-

creasing, and the elements of the private capitalist economy are growing in opposition to and in contention with the state-owned sector of the economy, causing the latter's weight in the national economy to diminish. The danger of capitalist restoration has increased.

The Deng faction did not relax the bureaucracy's monopoly on political power. Its campaigns against bureaucratism and corruption and its programme of redundancies were carried out against only a very small number of party cadres, offering an opportunity to purge alien elements not supporting the ruling faction. When it came under pressure from demands for democracy, especially when the Polish working class secured some gains in 1980 and stimulated the

Indeed, the regime as a whole – 'hardliners' and 'liberals' – is a brutally repressive one. Last year up to 30,000 prisoners, many of them charged with petty offences, were executed by the authorities, a clear indication of the savage brutality which the regime is capable of.

The Chinese students and the millions who have mobilised to defend them have sounded the death knell for the present system of rule. If Deng and Li Peng insist on repression and refuse to institute 'glasnost'-type reforms political unrest and bound to re-emerge. Out of the present movement, new political currents and movements are bound to develop. Behind the red flag and singing the 'Internationale', the revolutionary masses of China are on the march again.

20.5.89

This article is dedicated to the memory of Lin Zhao, a student at Beijing's Beida university, arrested by the secret police in 1957 for opposing Mao's 'anti-rightist campaign'. After 18 years of imprisonment she was shot in 1975.



Deng's line has remained a Stalinist line throughout. here in 1963 he leads a delegation to Moscow including President Liu Shaoqi and Premier Zhou Enlai

Chinese masses, the Deng faction quickly discarded its 'liberal' posture and resorted to bureaucratic repression of democratic demands.

It banned the right to strike and the 'Four Freedoms' (to air views, to contend ideas, to write wall posters and to debate), and deleted these from China's constitution. It banned unofficial organisations and publications, and arrested fighters for democracy. It repressed critical works by writers, carried out a campaign against 'spiritual pollution', and even expelled some members of the Communist Party (CCP) who had advocated more daring reforms. The reaction of the ruling faction to the student movements in 1986 and 1987 fully exposed its determination to repress and crush any accumulation of strength by the people.

Ideologically, the bureaucracy attempted to shirk all blame for the adverse deeds of the final period of Mao Zedong's rule. Though the Deng faction was compelled to admit some of the errors and abuses committed by Mao and the central leadership of the CCP, they did their best to prevent the people from making a radical reassessment of Mao Zedong or the Cultural revolution.

The rise of the Deng faction to power has not altered the line of building 'socialism in one country' as advocated by Stalin. On the contrary, its open-door policy and its general domestic and foreign policy are a continuation of this line. The bureaucracy still refuses to extend the socialist revolution to other countries, and seeks to repress the people's mobilisation within the country it controls. Thus the CCP leadership headed by Deng is by nature Stalinist, and against it Trotskyists struggle for two basic

propositions – socialist democracy in China itself and world revolution outside its borders.

The development of mass struggle

The CCP has always consciously repressed the independent class mobilisation of the workers and peasants, strictly controlling mass organisations such as trade unions and even persecuting or exterminating workers who indulge in independent, critical thinking. This has been one of the key means by which the bureaucracy safeguards its rule.

The 1976 Tiananmen riot showed that the masses had developed beyond their previous long periods of passive resistance, go-slows and boycott, to express their discontent with the ruling faction through massive spontaneous actions. It was a preview of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution, and was only suppressed by the CCP through brute force.

The death of Mao Zedong deprived the CCP of a central leader and opened up a historical opportunity for the people gradually to break away from the chains of autocracy.

The masses began to exert pressure, raising various demands including an end to the political repression of the Mao Zedong era, improvements in the people's material and cultural life, socialist democracy and a system of legality, and the rehabilitation of people victimised by wrong verdicts.

The pressure of the masses and the factional struggle inside the CCP compelled the ruling faction to rehabilitate the Tiananmen incident, recognising it as a spontaneous revolutionary mass action. The partial rehabilitation of this incident and other wrong verdicts (including several hundred thousand

intellectuals who were branded 'rightists' in 1957) further encouraged the mood and struggle of the masses, and this gave an impetus to the 'Beijing Spring' democracy movement, with its wave of wall posters, demonstrations for democracy, protests against hunger and persecution, and the mushrooming unofficial organisations and publications.

The policy of the Deng faction did nothing to alter the superstructure or the relationship between the ruling caste and the ruled people; so political democratisation became the central demand of the popular movement.

The Beijing Spring constituted a milestone in the democracy movement in China. Before its suppression in the spring of 1981, vanguard forces among the masses had linked up extensively with each other. Young people, mainly workers and some former 'red guards' who had experienced and reassessed the Cultural Revolution, gathered around unofficial publications, diagnosed social contradictions and probed alternatives for development. Its mainstream affirmed socialism and demanded the realisation of socialist democracy. In September 1980 the National Association of Unofficial Publications in China was founded, signifying a conscious joining of forces in the democracy movement to form the embryo of a revolutionary leadership. It oriented towards links with the working class, rooting itself among workers and communicating in solidarity with the international working class movement.

The bureaucratic repression in 1981 compelled the democracy movement to turn underground. Continual repression further exposed the reactionary position of the Deng faction and helped vanguard elements discard their illusions in it.

As the ruling faction's urban economic reforms began to unfold, the working class suffered new attacks. Soaring price rises attacked their living standards; the contract system and the widening of wage differentials directly attacked the right to work and welfare benefits. With real living standards under fire, defensive struggles such as strikes and go-slows have increased.

For the peasants, Deng's reforms

"The CCP leadership headed by Deng is by nature Stalinist, and against it Trotskyists struggle for two basic propositions – socialist democracy in China itself and world revolution outside its borders"

"The bureaucratic repression in 1981 compelled the democracy movement to turn underground"

"The rural question is again becoming grave, and by mid 1987 peasant riots against bureaucratism took place in Shandong and Hunan provinces"

offered relief from the bondage of the 'People's Communes'. However the policy of encouraging the 'competent elements' to enrich themselves accentuated rural differentiation, aggravating the gap between rich and poor. The rural question is again becoming grave, and by mid 1987 peasant riots against bureaucratism took place in Shandong and Hunan provinces.

The new social contradictions and mass discontent aroused by the Deng faction's rightist policies in the cities and the countryside began to surface in 1985. Student demonstrations and struggles were reflections of social discontent. Following the demonstration of September 18 1985, the students took again to the streets in massive numbers in December 1986. Their unequivocal demand for political democratisation and their exposure of the social contradictions have drawn extensive sympathy and support, and the state of indifference and lack of confidence or perspective among the masses is beginning to change.

The Deng faction will not be lenient in its suppression of the mass upsurge. Repression will continue, yet it will also lead to the masses discarding their illusions and turning to their own strength in order to change the present conditions.

The planned economy and the market economy

The economic policy of the Deng faction is to make use of material incentives and market mechanisms to activate an economy which had been strangled by the bureaucracy. On the one hand, the regime has not up to now announced any change in its formulation of retaining the 'planned economy as predominant, with market adjustment as a supplement'. On the other hand, it has set out to 'fully develop the commodity economy', develop the market in commodities, gradually 'perfect' the market system, and reduce the scope of planning carried out by command.



Shanghai: workers join with students in revolt at Communist Party corruption and repression of democracy

Until the end of 1986, the result of the initial reform on the planning system was that the categories of products produced by command under the State Planning Commission had fallen from around 120 in 1984 to about 60. Production of grain and other major agricultural products had changed from previous production by command to the present production by non-binding guidance. There had been a reduction in resources centrally distributed by the state from 256 kinds in 1984 to just 20. There had also been the emergence of a labour market, a market in means of production, and a capital market. The gradual reduction of the scope of planning signified a continuing decrease in the weight of the planned economy and its replacement with market mechanisms. Further development along these lines might lead to a predominance of the market economy, which the CCP camouflages with the term 'socialist commodity economy'.

The market economy and the planned economy are in opposition and contradiction. The planned economy calls for conscious analysis of society's overall demand, and allocation of social resources and products according to pre-established priorities. But under the domination of the market economy, production is

geared towards satisfying those who can afford to pay, not the general masses and their most basic needs. What decides investment is not consideration for society as a whole, but consideration of dispersed, individual economic sectors or enterprises; hence production tends towards anarchy. This anarchic state of production is basically similar to the features of the market economy in capitalist society.

In a society in the transition from capitalism to socialism, especially in economically backward countries, the uneven development of productivity and insufficient supply of goods cause consumption goods to retain their characteristics as commodities, and the market and small scale commodity production inevitably still prevail. Administrative methods to repress or eliminate them are not

effective. Only through the gradual raising of productivity and establishing the abundance of products can their role diminish and vanish.

The CCP practised economic planning soon after it gained power. However the plan was drawn up entirely by party cadres and was decided by those above; those below were compelled to execute the plan. The 'planned economy' became an economy planned by bureaucratic command. Under the rule of Mao Zedong, consumer goods were scarce and low in quality, and the bureaucracy tried to ban the market by administrative means, resulting in a series of economic and social contradictions and a serious setback to the enthusiasm of the producers.

The Deng faction relaxed the bureaucratic administrative control, and at the same time swung to the right, permitting the market law of value to operate freely in the countryside and then in the urban economic centres. To permit market functions to operate 'fully' meant more and more a restoration of the anarchy of a capitalist economy, together with the co-existence of under-production in some sectors and over-production in others. At the same time large amounts of social surplus

"Under the rule of Mao Zedong, consumer goods were scarce and low in quality, and the bureaucracy tried to ban the market by administrative means, resulting in a series of economic and social contradictions"



Increased supplies of consumer goods have become available: but at a price, as inflation soars

products were not converted into social accumulation but into the accumulation of private capital. Since both investment and production are now directed by profits, the planned economy will gradually disintegrate.

Accumulation and consumption

After the Deng faction came to power, there was a slight rise in the rate of consumption in the national income. There was more development of light industry and increased production of day-to-day consumer goods. There was also an increase in funds to facilitate a rise in state purchasing prices for some agricultural products.

These moves were intended to stimulate the people's incentives to produce. However from 1983 onwards this policy was thrown into reverse: the rate of accumulation rose, along with the proportion of heavy industry in the value of industrial output. The scale of investment in fixed assets at central level, local level and in non-planned sectors could not be reduced and went out of control. The policy of giving priority to heavy industry remained predominant, and the development of light industry slowed down. Investment in agriculture fell every year (its share of total capital investment fell from 11.1 percent in 1979 to 3.4 percent in 1985). Thus the proportion of consumption shrank while that of accumulation has risen.

Although heavy industry is the most important sector in developing the economy and raising productivity, the planned economy should not pursue the most rapid development of a single sector but seek the optimal efficiency of the economy as a whole. In particular its focus should be on the

improvement of the people's standard of living. In fact the long periods of neglect of the development of agriculture and light industry have created serious imbalances which have in turn impeded the development of heavy industry. Hence a reduced rate of consumption did not bring gains from an increased rate of accumulation.

When they decide the ratio between accumulation and consumption, the bureaucrats pose the question in the simplified formula that 'an increase in consumption means a decrease in investment'. This is not actually so. The productivity of labour is an important factor. Under bureaucratic rule, besides the portion devoted to productive investments and consumption by producers, a considerable portion of the social product is consumed in a non-productive way, in particular in the consumption by the privileged bureaucracy and the expenses of a redundant administrative apparatus. By abolishing the economic privileges of the bureaucracy, productive investments and consumption by producers can both be increased. In addition, the major detrimental factor in the enthusiasm of producers can be removed. Under democratic management, today's massive squandering of resources in production and circulation could also be drastically reduced.

The rural economic reform

The rural policy of the Deng faction was to encourage peasants to enrich themselves. The official formula proposed that a portion of people (the 'competent') getting rich first would lead to common wealth being enjoyed by the entire population.

The practice of the contract respon-

sibility system was to establish the family as the unit of independent production. This means the restoration of small-scale individual peasant production, and the abolition of the mode of collective farming of the Mao Zedong era, when the basic unit of accounting was the production brigade. Such a change means concessions to the peasant tendency for small production, and also signifies official recognition by the CCP that the line of the People's Commune was bankrupt.

The Deng faction was forced to lift the bondage of the People's Commune, and its slight increase in the purchasing price of agricultural subsidiary foods (which had long been maintained at a very low level) resulted in some improvement in the impoverished living standard of the peasants, and increased their initiative. As a result, the first few years of the production responsibility system showed a rather quick increase in agricultural and subsidiary production.

Nevertheless when the CCP changed its previous 'ultra-left' policy it swung to the other extreme, encouraging individual peasants to enrich themselves without restraint, and giving them assistance. This caused a concentration of farm land in the hands of the 'competent growers'. A powerful stratum has emerged in the countryside as specialised households engaged in industry, commerce, communications, construction and services; their capital accumulation is growing. Rich peasants, private industrial and commercial entrepreneurs and even loan sharks have appeared, and 'millionaires' eulogised by the regime obtained publicity. By 1986, the fixed assets of

"When the CCP changed its previous 'ultra-left' policy it swung to the other extreme, encouraging individual peasants to enrich themselves without restraint, and giving them assistance"

"The People's Commune policy of the Mao Zedong era and the Dengist policy of assisting the competent to enrich themselves ... appear to go to two extremes, and yet in essence they are the two alternatives of Stalinist bureaucratic rule"

A complaint prevalent among the masses is 'Nine years of reform; nine years of price inflation'

certain private enterprises reached several million yuan. Economic consortia were also developing rapidly. The CCP cadres in the countryside make up quite a significant portion of the rich, using the power in their hands to obtain the most favourable conditions. Bureaucrat capital is gradually forming.

Alongside social differentiation in the countryside, the gap between the backward and developed regions (in particular between the inland mountainous regions and the coastal provinces) is widening, and class contradictions are breeding.

In some state-run farms, the family responsibility system was also practised. The state farm was divided into small farms, and the state permitted the sale of farming animals, small and medium farm tools, trucks and staff quarters to the staff members. This means part of the state property of the farms is disintegrating and reverting to private ownership.

In sum, the Deng faction's rural policy has struck a way out of the stalemate created by the People's Commune policy, yet it breeds new contradictions. The bureaucracy's laissez-faire type of market reform which violates socialist principles; the cadres' corruption; the privatisation and concentration of wealth, means of production and some land; the appearance of large numbers of hired labourers; the accumulation of private capital; the expansion of capitalist production on the basis of exploitation of hired labourers, and unevenness of the market economy ... all these cause further class differentiation and constitute the motive force for capitalist restoration in China.

In the past we opposed the People's Commune policy of the Mao Zedong era. Now we also oppose the Dengist policy of assisting the competent to enrich themselves. These two policies appear to go to two extremes, and yet in essence they are the two alternatives of Stalinist bureaucratic rule. The same vacillations have appeared in the USSR and in the East European countries.

We oppose the regression of collective production to small production based on the family unit. We propose that bureaucratic control by the CCP over the state farm and extortion of farm workers must be abolished: all farm workers should enjoy the rights



Former allies now in deadly contest: Zhao Ziyang with Li Peng

and benefits of the democratic and collective management of the farm. Agriculture should go on the road of collectivisation and mechanisation. Towards this end, the state must assist the peasants with material resources, coupled with democratic management. Examples must be set for the peasants, and ideological education must be conducted. After long periods of effort, the superiority of collectivisation and mechanisation will show itself and attract peasants to go voluntarily onto the road of collectivisation, since they will see from experience that it brings them real benefits.

The urban economic reform

The Deng faction decentralised power to bureaucrats in local enterprises, and separated the administration from the enterprises which now enjoy greater autonomy, bearing responsibility for their own profits and losses, submitting profits in lieu of taxes. In some enterprises, a shareholding system is being attempted. Some state-run and collective enterprises are contracted to individuals. Workers' wage differentials are widening. The contract system of employment is being promoted.

What the CCP tried to promote in the enterprises is not the autonomy of the workers or the expansion and functioning of the power of workers' councils, but the concentration of power in the hands of the factory directors to breed a layer of technocrats who will act as supporters of the ruling caste. Some of the decision-making powers enjoyed by the workers' councils, as stipulated in state ordinances, are no longer mentioned. The party leadership no longer exercises restraint over the factory directors, but neither is there the practice of 'leadership by workers'

councils'.

In the absence of democratic decision-making and supervision by the workers, the operation of industries and enterprises is more and more subject to the law of the market, and they compete for resources and for the market under the domination of the law of value. Under such competition, the pursuit of profits becomes the aim of economic operation,

and making enterprises responsible for their own profits and losses leads inevitably to price rises, elimination of the weak by the strong, speculation and profiteering.

The contract system means the hiring for private operation of means of production and facilities which are state owned or collectively owned. The operators employ large numbers of workers, run the enterprises on capitalist methods, increase the intensity of labour, and squeeze the maximum surplus value out of the workforce. The relations between the contractors and the workers they employ is in reality one of employer and employee, not qualitatively different from the exploitative relations in capitalism.

Today the right of ownership of some brigade-run enterprises is changing. Peasants can invest and hold shares in the collective enterprises. This is basically similar to the bourgeois holding shares in capitalist society, gaining surplus value without working.

Price reform

A major part of the Deng faction's economic programme was price reform: gradual abolition of the state's uniform setting of prices, which were to be changed to free floating prices. The result was that the prices of the great majority of products and commodities soared, with commodities in short supply soaring the most, and serious consequences for people's living standards.

A complaint prevalent among the masses is 'Nine years of reform; nine years of price inflation'. In May 1988 the CCP stated that 'the difficult barrier of price reform must be crossed' and must not be 'circumscribed'. Thus control over prices was further relaxed, people's conditions of living turned more tough, there were massive withdrawals from the banks, and

a rush for commodities. With this aggravation of the crisis of bureaucratic rule, price reform was slowed down in September. In a difficult situation, the CCP's policy on prices vacillated.

The problem of prices is essentially a question of insufficient products to meet national needs. If the problem is not tackled at the roots, and production is not increased to meet the needs of the people, and instead state price setting is abolished, the consequence can only be runaway prices, greater disequilibrium in production and even more difficulty in meeting people's urgent needs.

While there is no significant general rise in the actual income of the people, and especially while there are no concrete state measures to protect against price rises, the state has an obligation to maintain a subsidy on the basic cost of living."

As for the peasants, the general rise on the prices of industrial goods causes a substantial increase in the production costs of agricultural and subsidiary products, thus reducing peasant incomes. This will reduce peasant incentives to grow grain and lead to decreased grain production.

Safeguarding workers' rights

By the end of 1987, the number of workers in China reached 130 million, with over half of them being industrial workers. This figure is over ten times the number of workers in 1949; moreover they are concentrated in big industrial regions, and their weight is significant.

The CCP has set a quota for every state-owned enterprise fixing its total wage bill, which can only vary according to the success of the enterprise in accomplishing the state plan and its efficiency. The CCP has also set out to widen wage differentials within each enterprise in order to introduce competition. The redistribution of wages within a set total amount was designed to increase the intensity of labour, making workers work harder to gain more wages at the expense of other workers. Workers with weaker labour power or those engaged in unskilled or simple labour faced a reduction in wages.

This was a conscious effort to introduce differentials, competition and inequalities within the working class. In addition, employment on contract terms was introduced for newly recruited workers in state owned enterprises in the winter of 1986. These workers now resemble casual workers, with no safeguards on their right to work or social security. All

these measures are detrimental to the interests of workers and should be rejected.

Although the CCP has always proclaimed that the proletariat was master of the country, it has always deprived it of its power to be the master. Since 1980, due to the impact of the workers' movement in Eastern Europe, and especially Poland, the



Tangshan miners: workers' rights eroded

struggle of the Chinese workers for their rights has also developed. In order to prevent the eruption of a Polish-type labour movement in China, and in order to stimulate workers to help raise production, the CCP promulgated the 'Temporary ordinance on workers' councils in state owned industrial enterprises' in July 1981. This gave workers some powers; yet the promises were very limited, existing more in formality than in reality, and the workers' councils that were set up were in general devoid of power and were basically used by the authorities to implement their policies and to raise production.

Despite this, the promulgation of the ordinance reflected the fact that workers' discontent had pressurised the CCP into making some concessions; the workers could make use of this opportunity to fight for their own rights. Workers in many enterprises not only pressed the authorities to implement the ordinance, but also attempted to go beyond it. For example, it was officially provided that workers could elect their rank and file leaders in the enterprise; however workers more and more demanded the election of *all* leaders, including the factory director. The authorities in fact practised a system where the factory director was the one responsible for the factory under the direction of the party committee; in a number of enterprises workers pressed instead for a system in which the factory director would be responsible for the factory committee - under the guidance of the workers' council!

The defence of workers' interests should have been the central task of

the trade unions. However in China as in other bureaucratised workers' states, the trade unions do not take up this task, and are instead the tool of the party's bureaucratic rule, assisting the ruling caste to implement its policies. In China the working class and its vanguard should draw from the experience of the Polish trade union, and fight to organise a union independent of the government.

In the past two years the workers have ignored the cancellation of the right to strike; with increased discontent over price reform, the frequency of strikes and the numbers of workers participating in them have increased. Go-slows are also more generalised and acute. This shows that the working class has increasingly risen to oppose the policies of the bureaucracy that are detrimental to their interests.

Under pressure from strikes and go-slows, the existing trade union leadership was compelled to change its tone or some of its methods of work. For example, it proposed that the government-run nature of the trade union should be reformed in order to realise the 'mass nature of the of the trade union'. It also proposed the establishment of a minimum wage and a sliding scale of wages corresponding with prices.

We propose that the working class should start its struggle with the fight to organise a democratic trade union, building a structure to fight for workers' rights, consolidating its strength and combativity, from which it can proceed to the fight to establish democratic relations of production and the control of political power.

The individual economy and the private economy

In the past the CCP used administrative measures forcibly to eliminate the private economy, while the state economy and the collective economy, under bureaucratic oppression and with workers deprived of any right to decide, became bogged down in stagnation, resulting in further shortages of goods. It was this objective situation which forced the Deng faction to change its policy.

However the Dengist policy is to stimulate the commodity economy and allow private enterprises to develop in a spontaneous and unorganised way under the domination of the law of value. The commodity

"While there is no significant general rise in the actual income of the people, and especially while there are no concrete state measures to protect against price rises, the state has an obligation to maintain a subsidy on the basic cost of living"

"With increased discontent over price reform, the frequency of strikes and the numbers of workers participating in them have increased. Go-slows are also more generalised and acute"

"by the end of 1987, 30 million workers were hired by private enterprises in China"

economy inevitably leads to the emergence of exploiters and social polarisation. A small proportion becomes small capitalists, while the majority of people are reduced to hired labourers (according to the estimates of Ge Lin, Professor at Nanjing University, by the end of 1987 30 million workers were hired by private enterprises in China).

Under this policy the development of private enterprises is very rapid. In some towns their output value comprises a big proportion of the total industrial output. In the national economy, the weight of state industries has fallen from 83 percent in 1978 to 67 percent in 1987, and further to 64 percent a few months later, indicating the tendency of private and other non-state enterprises to gain strength. This implies that the advantageous position of state enterprises will gradually be replaced, and that the gains of the 1949 revolution are continuously being eroded. Halting this tendency requires the organisation and mobilisation of the proletariat to take control of the running of the state economy.

Open door policy and the special economic zones.

The setting up of four special economic zones, the opening of Hainan Island and 14 coastal cities to the external world, and varying degrees of opening of many other places, all show the extensive opening of China to international capitalism.

No country can develop its economy with its doors closed. However, because the labour productivity of China is relatively low, the monopoly of trade becomes a necessary means to protect national industry from competition from capitalist economies with a higher labour productivity. Under the protection of a monopoly of trade, the state can selectively trade with imperialist countries to utilise foreign technology and resources much needed for national economic construction, as well as learning management methods.

Production items that are in demand but for which there are no state funds for development, can be produced jointly with foreign capital, but under certain principles. The overall guiding principle should be that a project is beneficial to the overall Chinese economy, not harmful to the system of state property or the planned economy, making no harmful concessions to foreign capital, and carrying no heavy political or economic price.



Li Peng: conservative on prices

The people must fully grasp the relevant information, know how much is being paid and why during economic transactions with advanced capitalist economies, and be able to make timely revisions under their own supervision and discussion.

Severe damage was done when China developed its economy in autarchic fashion under the imperialist economic blockade. However the need to maintain economic relations with capitalist countries does not mean that China should fully open itself up to the external world. Unprincipled openings to foreign capital by the ruling faction also cause unnecessary damage.

Under increasing pressure from foreign businesses, concessions made by China are increasingly significant. Initial proposals for joint capital ventures or joint operations are becoming sole operations by foreign capital; joint operation periods of several years (with the enterprise returned to China at the end) are being extended to several decades; plans only to export goods produced by foreign capital are giving way to production partly or even entirely for domestic consumption. The state monopoly of foreign trade is also under attack. This not only provides a very favourable investment ground for foreign capitalists, but also concedes part of the domestic market, hence dealing a severe blow to national industry.

The profits which foreign capitalists make in China can be converted to foreign currency and freely remitted out of the country: this means that the wealth produced by Chinese workers, and national resources can be appropriated legally and without restraint.

The CCP has made big concessions, but the actual gains are small. The balance is unfavourable: the investment of foreign capital is small and mostly concentrated in the non-productive sectors such as tourism and real estate. China even has to provide loans, or invest jointly. The import of industrial technology and equipment falls far short of the level expected.

The activities of foreign capital in China and the interests of the economic system it represents are in acute conflict with China's state economy. The more foreign capital invests in China and coordinates in activities with the growing individual economy and private industries and commerce, the greater their strength and the more threatening the erosion of the state economy will become.

Since the productivity of labour of foreign capitalism is much higher than that of China, when China spontaneously adapts to and integrates itself with the world capitalist market, surplus value will flow out of China in massive volume and China's national economy will find it difficult to develop independently as well as becoming affected by the periodic crises of world capitalism. The experiences of some Eastern European countries have shown this.

When the CCP argues for unprincipled opening up to foreign capital, it misleads the people into believing that capitalism is superior to state ownership and the planned economy, and fosters illusions in capitalism along with loss of faith in true socialism. Meanwhile, under the coordination of foreign capital, the system of exploitation is reviving in different areas of China. More labouring people are exploited; social differentiations increase, inequalities expand, the mentality of privatisation is strengthened, the concept that 'money is the top priority' becomes more widespread, and the social mood worsens.

Some bureaucrats are looking to convert their parasitic basis from the state ownership system to the market economy: instead of pursuing their private interests with power in their hands, they turn to becoming property owners making capitalist private investments. When large amounts of foreign capital enter China, comprador capital may form.

If capitalist forces develop in China more rapidly and extensively, and there is no powerful intervention from the people, then at a certain moment of crisis, the CCP will have to choose between two alternatives: either it changes its present rightist policies and restrains the activities of foreign and Chinese capitalist forces, or it continues to be swept away by capitalist forces and undergoes transformations until the private ownership system assumes predominance and capitalism is reinstated.

The final showdown will be inevitable. This is the inescapable trend of development of the Chinese economy. ●

October Review, which publishes in Chinese, with key articles translated into English, can be contacted c/o GPO Box 10144, Hong Kong

South Africa

Mandela and Moscow join in ANC policy switch

The early years on the 1980s were years of great turbulence in South Africa. Tens of thousands of people took part in massive struggles against the apartheid regime – in the townships, in the factories, mines and workshops. The trade union movement consolidated itself, led successful strikes and increased its potential influence by the building of two national trade union federations – COSATU and NACTU.

The state's response was to declare a state of emergency, banning 90 organisations including the United Democratic Front and youth organisations. From the regime's point of view this has had the desired effect.

With the mass political organisations banned, their leaders detained for indefinite periods without trial, and, when released, subjected to severe restrictions, a down-turn in the intensity of the struggle was, perhaps, inevitable. It recalls the immediate aftermath of Sharpsville when, for nearly a decade after the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) the masses seemed to slumber – only to awaken into insurrectionary-scale activity with the Soweto uprising, and the birth of the new black trade unions following the rash of spontaneous strikes which hit Durban in 1972.

The uprisings in the townships in the 1980s, the formation of street and area committees, People's Courts, and the massive increase in support of the banned organisations, particularly the ANC, led to speculation that the revolution was just around the corner. The oppressed people had given notice that they were no longer willing to tolerate their condition: according to some, the declaration of a state of emergency showed that the rulers were no longer able to go on ruling. These views were particularly argued by the ANC and the Communist Party leaderships.

In 1985, a regular contributor to the South African CP's journal *African Communist*, who uses the pen-name 'Comrade Mzala', could write that South Africa was 'on the threshold of the revolution'. The whole tenor of his article was around the question: 'How should we raise the question of the armed insurrection?'. ANC and CP propaganda continually spoke of 'People's Power' and 'People's War'. Comrade Mzala wrote of the street committees and communal organisations as 'organs of self-government on the one hand and organs of in-



Supporters of Buthelezi's Inkatha movement have murdered ANC and UDF activists, but are now courted by Mandela and the ANC

urrection on the other.' ANC President Oliver Tambo spoke of 'dual power'.

Today there is a completely different atmosphere. Policies which would have been castigated as treason or heresy a couple of years ago are today discussed openly in the pages of the ANC's publications *Sechaba* and *African Communist*. 'Negotiation' and 'dialogue' have now become acceptable for discussion in the policy-making hierarchies of the ANC and CPSA.

In *Sechaba* in August 1988, Alex Mashinini, in an article entitled 'People's War and Negotiation', wrote: 'A relatively new concept, that of a negotiated settlement of the South African conflict, has already won itself a prominent position in the political vocabulary of the country'. He goes on to argue that, 'Since we are confronted with conditions under which absolute victory is impossible, conditions in which both sides must necessarily make compromises on certain positions, we can conclude that the outcome of any negotiations that can be conducted must end up in partial victories for the warring parties. Both sides would have failed to defeat each other absolutely, and we would have to be content with partial victories.

Elaborating on what he meant by 'partial victories', he writes that it would 'impose some limitations on our programme of social emancipation. In practical terms, this means that the concept of partial victory implies the de jure abolition of apartheid, and says less about the de facto abolition.'

On what does he base this argument? He seems to believe that the so-called 'reforms' introduced by President Botha have created 'an infra-structure of democratic transformation –

within the womb of the apartheid system, and within the process of the struggle to destroy it.'

Can he, perhaps have in mind the Tri-cameral racist parliament? The fact that this is now openly being discussed within the ANC does not, of course, mean that the ANC leadership has already changed their position on the need for armed struggle. Not yet! But Mashinini does give more than a broad hint that there is a faction or tendency within the ANC who are thinking along these lines:

'... if we have introduced a new element, that of the negotiated settlement, and if we shared the belief that transition in South Africa will have to come through negotiations, then it is imperative to address and review the strategy of the people's war.' A far cry, indeed, from the heady days of the early 1980s.

Mashinini himself is only a very recent convert to the concept of a negotiated settlement. In April 1986, he argued in the pages of *Sechaba*, that the highly developed capitalism of South Africa has given rise to a large black working class, relatively highly organised and class-conscious, with a political experience and maturity arising from half a century of mass political mobilisation.

He emphasised that this 'as it could be conceived of in any highly developed capitalist country' brought to the fore of the struggle the issue of insurrection. (Quoted by Bundy in *Transformation*, No. 8) What are the forces which are causing this 'new thinking' in the ranks of the ANC? It cannot simply be the abolition of petty-apartheid. The main foundations of apartheid: the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts and the Registration of Population Act, are still firmly in place, with no sign that

they will soon disappear. The mass organisations remain banned. Detention without trial or severe restriction on the political activity of those released continues. Anti-trade union legislation is on the statute book. In what way, then, is apartheid aborting itself? Clearly this is nonsense, and we must look elsewhere.

There has always been more than one source of developments in South Africa in the ANC – a reformist and a revolutionary wing, with shadings in between. There are signs that the reformists, who see the way forward through negotiation and dialogue have been strengthened. Why is this?

Ever since its foundation in 1909, there has always been a strong petty-bourgeois element in the ranks and leadership of the ANC, but in the years of violent confrontation with the state, this sector has been overshadowed by younger elements and workers. But they are still there and they have gained sustenance by the growth of a black trader class and a black bourgeoisie.

Now Moscow has added its not inconsiderable weight and prestige in support of a less intransigent approach.

In an article in the *Weekly Mail* (March 23-30), Alexander Devitt, political analyst of the Novosti Press Agency in Moscow, quotes Uri Yukalov, head of the African Administration of the foreign ministry of the USSR. The language is diplomatic and guarded, but there is enough in it to encourage the 'moderates' in the ANC.

The Soviet Union, said Yukalov, 'preferred a political settlement and a political solution to the apartheid problem ... and struggle is not the sole means (of fighting apartheid). There are others including sanctions.'

'The isolation of apartheid will continue as long as it exists. But this does not mean that we shall only use our fists in dealing with the government of South Africa.'

Yukalov then cited the Angola/Namibia peace process as an example of the drafting of agreements in which there are no winners, nor losers. 'All sides stood to gain', he said.

The striking similarity between the phraseology used by Yukalov and Mashinini cannot be entirely coincidental.

One wonders if the Namibia liberation forces, notably SWAPO, which had no part in this 'peace process' would concur with this sanguine view? And has the Kremlin in mind a similar procedure for South Africa?

In Moscow's view of the future of South Africa, as interpreted by Yukalov, the main role will be played, not by the national liberation forces but by 'multilateral diplomacy' and the abandoning of attitudes based on confrontation. This would depend above all on political consensus among permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Most ominous of all is Yukalov's claim that the position of favouring political over confrontational solutions for South Africa was one that the Soviet Union shared with the ANC. 'There are no differences in our positions. The USSR



PHOTO: Aull Bradlow/Reflex
National Party leader FW de Klerk – 'time for negotiations'

and the ANC believe that the elimination of apartheid by political methods would be in the interests of all South Africans, black and white.' He did, however, add that the elimination of violence depends on Pretoria rather than the ANC or the Soviet Union.

The pro-negotiation tendency must have been further strengthened by the letter from Nelson Mandela to the British Ambassador to Pretoria, Sir Robert Renwick, in which he clearly hinted that he would like talks, and



PHOTO: Billy Peabock/Reflex
Joint platform with Buthelezi and UDF against repression

Mandela's almost effusively friendly letter to Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of the right wing Inkatha movement. It is considered of great significance that he addressed Buthelezi by his tribal name 'Shngi' and signed with his own tribal name 'Madiba'.

Buthelezi has long been Pretoria's favoured candidate for negotiations, but he has always insisted that he could not take part in discussions until Mandela is released. The question arises: is Mandela preparing himself to play a role in seeking a way out of the impasse in South African politics? Of great significance is the passage in his letter to Buthelezi where he expressed his 'fervent hope (to see) the restoration of the cordial relations which existed between the two organisations (ANC and Inkatha) in the seventies.'

Yet in the June 1987 issue of *Sechaba*, one of the leading CP theoreticians, C. Theodoropolous, referred to Buthelezi as a 'quising' and a 'traitor'.

The pre-negotiation position has been fur-

ther reinforced by the statement issued by the ANC from Lusaka on April 19. In this the ANC gives its full support to the peace conference which is being proposed by, among others, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Dennis Hurley, Professor Pete Booysse, Principal of the University of Natal, and by Buthelezi to try and end the black against black violence in Natal.

The statement from the ANC reads: 'Members of Inkatha, the UDF, COSATU, businessmen, clergymen, doctors, lawyers, social workers, youth and women, people of all races, you share the responsibility of ending apartheid – the root cause of all the conflicts. Join forces and present a formidable front against the violence of apartheid.'

COSATU and UDF affiliates issued a press statement giving full support for the proposed conference.

These are all indicators showing the direction the wind is blowing.

But this wind is not only affecting some elements in the liberation movement. Speaking to a National Party conference, the new party leader, F. W. de Klerk also said that the time for negotiations with all South Africans has arrived. Participants in this great *indaba* would be 'free' to put their full viewpoints and counter-proposals. Talks could be concentrated on how the aspirations and expectations of all the people could be reconciled, and he proffered a new constitution which would allow 'full participation' to all South Africans and without prerequisites.

These fine words have been met with scorn by the black majority. They would want to see some sign of seriousness of intent behind the beautiful promises – such as an end to the state of emergency; the release of all political prisoners unconditionally, the lifting of restrictions on political activists; the un-banning of the mass organisations; the abolition of censorship; and an end to capital punishment.

But, of course, the National Party leader was, in the first instance, addressing his white constituency, which he will be facing in the general elections later this year. He has written off the far right-wing Afrikaners. Their vote will go to the Conservative Party. Now he is hoping to win over a section of the 'liberal' English speaking white voters, thus undercutting the newly-formed Democratic Party.

De Klerk, like P.W. Botha before him, is aware that old-style Verwoerdian apartheid is no longer on the agenda. He is seeking a way out which will safeguard the privileges of the white minority and save capitalism. One ear is cocked to the emergence of 'moderate' voices among the oppressed. Pretoria's success in finding a solution to the Namibia problem, with the assistance of Angola, Cuba and the Soviet Union, has raised hopes that it can also find hitherto unlikely allies in the black liberation movement.

Charlie Van Gelderen

'Your weapon is fear - ours is courage'

Over the past month two new groups have been formed which aim to break new ground in the debate in the wake of the Salman Rushdie affair.

On May 27, Women against Fundamentalism organised a picket on the theme 'Religious leaders don't speak for us' against the demonstration called by Islamic fundamentalists; it was scarcely noticed by the media. However Women against Fundamentalism was launched as a network which seeks to challenge the rise of fundamentalism in all religions. Coverage in the June edition of *Spare Rib* looks not only at the growth of Islamic fundamentalism but at the development of Sikh separatism, at the role of the Bible-thumpers of the anti-abortion movement, and of Jewish fundamentalism in Israel's campaign against the intifada.

The Islamic fundamentalists have portrayed themselves as the spokesmen (sic) of the Muslim community in Britain - and it is no surprise to Asian women who have been organising for some time on a secular basis that the organisers of the anti-Rushdie demonstration explicitly stated that they did not want women and children to participate!



PHOTO: John Harris/PA

Muslim men opposed to Rushdie - and women's rights

Both Women against Fundamentalism and Voices for Salman Rushdie (whose statement we reprint below) take up the question of opposition to state funding for religious schools.

There has been all too little debate on the left about this critical issue. Not only does the Labour Party Policy Review totally capitulate on this important matter, but even on the hard left there has often been confusion - and the

banner of anti-racism has been confused with support for religion. It is high time that sharper distinctions were made between multi-culturalism and anti-racism and that the fight for secularism was given a higher priority by the left.

Terry Conway.

For the right to dissent Against racism and fundamentalism

Contact Women Against Fundamentalism and Voices for Rushdie
c/o BM Box 2706, London WC1N 3XX

Voices for Salman Rushdie is inviting any and all labour movement, women's, black or civil liberties bodies to sign the following statement. "We are a number of diverse individuals and groups who have come together to voice our concern about the issues of censorship, racism, and fundamentalism which have arisen around Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses*."

We support Rushdie's right to publish his book and we reject the attempts of both fundamentalists and racists to use this affair to promote their own ends.

There has been much talk of Rushdie's book giving offence. We are offended by:

- the use of this affair to mount racial attacks on the Muslim community in Britain;



- the sanctimonious claims, made in the context of increasing censorship and widespread racial discrimination, that British society somehow embodies the values of pluralism and the right to dissent;

- the racist assumption that Muslim and black communities are monolithic, and the attempt to identify Islam as a whole with fundamentalism and terrorism;

- the use of the book by fundamentalists to control dissent and repress diversity within their own communities, in particular their at-

tempts to thwart women's struggles to control their own destinies.

We reject the attempt to present the controversy surrounding this book as a crude 'Eastern vs. Western' conflict and we believe that such a false view only assists those who would restrict our right to public discussion and dissent.

No culture of society has a monopoly on the values of pluralism and the right to dissent. Indeed, all over the world, people from many different backgrounds and in many different cultures are involved in struggles for these values and rights.

We see our campaign to defend Rushdie and against both racism and fundamentalism as an intrinsic part of those struggles, including the struggles of the Iranian people against Khomeini's repressive regime.

We believe that as long as any religion is given a privileged posi-

tion by the state, the right to dissent, and indeed the right to freedom of worship, is undermined.

We call for the abolition of all blasphemy laws, the end of state aid to religious education, and the disestablishment of the Church of England as necessary preconditions for the development in Britain of a genuinely pluralist, democratic society - a society which has never existed in this country.

Salman Rushdie's right to write and publish is also our right to read, to think, to criticise, to dissent. It is the public's right to open and honest discussion and debate.

In the face of the appalling distortion of these issues by both fundamentalists and racist forces, we cannot be silent. We urge others to join us in supporting the right to dissent and opposing both racism and fundamentalism.

What is the working class?

CLASS OF '89

B
T O **B** A S I C S
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As Thatcher enters her eleventh year of office and the left scrambles over itself in the race to pronounce the working class and class struggle outmoded, Jean Reilly and Jane Wells dust off the old definitions and find the soft left's analysis, and not the working class, lacking.

Class divisions in Britain are now a thing of the past, according to Conservative Education Secretary Kenneth Baker, speaking in a interview for Hugo Young's recent television review of the 'Thatcher Years'. 'You look around you and you can't tell what class people are any more. Ten years ago you could have.', he said. This was, he added, one of the great successes of the 'Thatcher revolution' – brought about by council house and share sales (with, presumably, some help from Next and Marks and Spencer).

Many on the left seem to agree with him. We are all, goes the new conventional wisdom (readily embraced by Labour's leaders too), more middle class now. Like Ron Todd's hypothetical docker earning #400 with a villa in Marbella, we no longer need rescuing from an oppression that isn't supposed to exist any more (a handy formulation too, for a Labour leadership with no intention of rescuing us – or the dockers – anyway).

Ten years of Thatcher have undoubtedly stamped their mark on the working class, with patterns of employment and unemployment, the jobs people have lost and the jobs they do, working conditions and standards of living all changing – and in some cases radically.



PHOTO: Andrew Wlaid

Does working a computer for wages make her middle class or working class?

Ten years of change

Unemployment, together with the decimation of traditional industries and the growth of the service sector, has changed the face of working class occupations. Less people are now employed in the heavy industrial blue collar jobs (factories, production lines, mines) traditionally identified in popular understanding as working class jobs.

An estimated 20 per cent of adults now own shares, and more than a million council homes have been bought since Thatcher came to power. Standards of living have gone up for many households. The 'average worker' who has voted Thatcher in at the last three elections is now, we are told (before the recent increase in inflation and mortgage rates), better off.

Farewell to the working class?

When you apply the 'common sense' criteria for assessing class (elevated into a science by sociologists and pollsters) – categories of 'status', income/jobs, or, failing that, status of housing tenure – then the 'working class', so defined, starts to score lower.

It's not surprising then that some (even some who claim to be Marxists) argue that the sum total of all these changes has seen off the working class itself.

But does a decade of Thatcher add up to a fundamental restructuring in British society? And does it all demand a re-think of what we mean by class, or a reassessment of the actual and political weight of the working class and its role?

Marxists will want to take a closer look

beneath the surface of apparent changes which many are eager to embrace as the dawn of a new era where class distinctions – and conflict – have been discarded along with clogs, shawls and cloth caps.

A closer look beneath the surface

Marxism offers a more subtle and analytical – essentially materialist – approach. Because it examines the 'objective', or the real roots of the problem and not just its 'subjective' appearance, it can stand the test of time.

Capitalist society, according to Marx, is built on the division of people into groups – classes – according to their place in their economy and their relationship to production.

The bourgeoisie, or ruling class, owns the means of production (factories, banks, companies). It lives off income – the 'surplus value' (its profits, share dividends and sales) – that it extracts from the working class.

Then there's the petty bourgeoisie; people who own their own means of production (a shop, taxi or small business, for example), but who don't employ and therefore exploit other workers. Self-employed professionals (eg doctors) also come into this category. Their allegiances are weaker, but ultimately with the capitalist system – as long as it allows them to flourish. The growth of this class has been a marked feature of the last decade.

The working class – most of the rest of us – sells its labour power.

The definition of class, then, comes from the relationship of these major groups in society, rather than being a static category defined by merely occupation or income, lifestyle or place

in the pecking order.

That relationship, between the bourgeoisie and the working class, is necessarily antagonistic, as capital inevitably attempts to extract more surplus value from the working class for itself. The conflict and struggle between capital and wage labour is the class struggle. Class and conflict are necessarily connected. Class is also 'objective' – out there in the real world whether it is perceived as such or not – and not 'subjective' (ie dependent on the analytical abilities of some trendy academics, or the class consciousness of individual workers).

But it isn't quite that simple, or crude.

The working class is not so uniform a block as this definition might seem to imply.

Marx identified two broad sections of the working class: those involved in 'productive' labour (ie usually industrial jobs making 'things' – fuel, textiles, machinery), and those in 'unproductive' labour. This includes those who are paid, out of the capitalist's slush fund of surplus value extracted from productive labour, to 'produce' or run services on their behalf. In turn, the unpaid labour of the 'unproductive' worker reduces the costs to the capitalist of appropriating surplus value produced elsewhere.

In Marx's day this category of workers would have comprised servants and a small number of charity and state administrators, for example. Today, where surplus value supports the welfare state and a whole range of staffed state functions, as well as the private service sector, 'unproductive workers' are an ever-expanding section of the workforce – and might include everyone from teachers to school meals staff (still) employed by the state, from secretaries in local government to refuse collectors employed by private contractors. Like 'productive' workers, all sell their wage labour, although they might not create surplus value as such themselves. All are denied control over their labour-process. And all stand to gain freedom from exploitation through socialism.

Ernest Mandel, writing in his introduction to a volume of Marx's *Capital*, explained that 'the defining structural characterisation of the proletariat in Marx's analysis of capitalism is the socio-economic compulsion to sell one's labour power. Included in the proletariat, then, are not only manual industrial workers, but all unproductive wage-labourers who are subject to the same fundamental constraints: non-ownership of the means of production; lack of direct access to means of livelihood; inability to purchase the means of livelihood without more or less continuous sale of labour power.'

If we don't understand or accept both as part of the proletariat, then it is easy to see non-productive workers as a different class (perhaps petty bourgeois) or, when they are expanding as a section of the workforce, as a new class with different interest from the proletariat. When they are growing at the current rate, panic sets in and the decline of the working class is conflated with the decline of heavy industrial production. And because of the sex and race



PHOTO: John Harris/HFL

Desperate in the DHSS: Thatcherism has widened the gulf between rich and poor

spread of employment with women and black workers forced into traditionally lower paid, low status 'servicing' jobs, such an approach very easily too separates women and black people into the category of 'not real workers'.

This is the mistake of the *Marxism Today* current and the wider, sociologically-inclined analysis prevalent in the traditionally a-historical and anti-theory British Labour movement.

One of the soft left's favourite theorists, the late Nicos Poulantzas, fell into this trap and identifies all non-productive labour as constituting a 'new-petty bourgeoisie'. Applying this definition it would be possible chop the US working class at a stroke down to just 20 per cent of the American population, leaving this newly-defined 'new petty bourgeoisie' with 70 per cent – including, for example, refuse collectors and hospital porters.

The ruling class can live happily with this formulation – since rejection of class struggle follows from a rejection of class. And the promotion of cross-class (and anti-working class) alliances then becomes an obvious alternative political method.

What about the workers?

Where does all this leave 'new' working class workers – those, often in white collar jobs in new or newly-expanding expanding, usually service sector industries (eg high-tec light industrial production, finance, banking, leisure, services – public and private) which are of growing importance in the European economy? A Marxist analysis puts them with the proletariat. Although sociologically speaking they may be 'middle class' (defined as a set of norms, lifestyles and attitudes), this in no way makes them part of the petty bourgeoisie.

But many workers are, undoubtedly, in an

ambiguous, or contradictory relationship to the means of production. Most white-collar workers are fully paid up members of the proletariat since they have no control over their own, or others' labour. But there is a significant, if smaller layer who, although they don't own the means of production, may control production or the labour power of a group of workers. They may even have control over investment in and resourcing of production.

Where a worker, say, manages a budget and department in local government, oversees a factory production line, or draws up and implements company business plans (or hospital cuts and closures) – or is even perhaps a bond-dealer with no substantial shareholdings of her/his own – then their contradictory position as workers is clear, not just because of the day to day content of their work, but because of their relationship to the productive process. As well as selling their wage labour, they control others' labour, they control (part of) the productive process and they control investment/resource allocation.

There have always been sections of the working class, who, because of their particular relationship to the process of production, have occupied such a contradictory class position. The type of jobs they do, and their relative numbers and importance in the working class as a whole may have changed over the last ten years. They are materially affected by their role in production and the economy. This will affect their attitudes and politics – perhaps even their perception of class – but not their class itself.

Have working class attitudes changed?

So, if the changes to the economy since 1979 haven't seen off the working class as such, have they even fundamentally changed working class attitudes – to the point where Labour (with radical or even not so radical policies) is now unelectable? Is the British electorate now more Thatcherite in its values?

Working class people are subject to (and may sometimes actively seek out) contradictory pressures, many of them economic (for example having a stake in the profitability of capitalism, through property or share ownership), or ideological (patriotic allegiance to an imperialist power, or buying *The Sun*, for example).

It is an apparently expanding layer of workers exposed to such pressures, and the better-off working class with a poor level of class consciousness which have led the soft left to panic.

It's handy though to remember that the revisionists have been pontificating and predicting the 'embourgeoisment' of the working class since the 1950's and 60's (when Labour lost three elections in a row, too, and the nation was told 'you've never had it so

good'). Sections (and from time to time even a majority) of the working class then, as now – as they always will – have allied themselves with the ruling class, insofar as they have voted for their parties, or they haven't challenged their power.

It is also a salutary reminder to note that during the last ten years when we are all supposed to have become middle class, that the richest two per cent in this country still own 82 per cent of all company shares and nearly three quarters of all land. Since 1979 the income of the richest one per cent has gone up by a staggering 346 per cent as a result of tax cuts, salary and interest rate rises. The poor, needless to say, have got poorer. 9.4 million people in Britain have an income at or below supplementary benefit level. Their numbers increased by 55 per cent between 1979 and 1985 alone.

In many ways, given ten years of Tory rule and Labour's useless opposition, it's actually surprising that people aren't more Thatcherite. Whilst the fact remains that since 1979 a majority of the working class have voted Con-

servative (and a majority of trade unionists have not voted Labour), polls and surveys of social attitudes consistently find that the values of Thatcherism are shared by even fewer people than the numbers who actually vote Conservative in elections.

One of the latest surveys, conducted for a BBC television documentary on 'Thatcher's children', showed that 62 per cent of people questioned thought that the ideal for themselves and their family would be 'a country in which public interests and a more managed economy are more important.' Only 30 per cent would prefer 'a country in which private interests and a free market economy are more important.' Seven out of ten would pay more tax for better public services, with a four-to-one majority agreeing that 'trade unions are essential to protect workers' interests.'

So there are encouraging signs to be read in these results – but like much sociological material they only hold good until the next survey; and other, similar studies have shown certain shifts towards acceptance of more

Thatcherite economic concepts.

Nevertheless, attitudes do not even determine voting behaviour, much less social class. Whatever shift in attitudes favourable to capital there has been, and whatever peripheral restructuring there has been of working class and individual relation to economy, it remains superficial and transitory. What matters is the underlying relationship to the economy – in production and in the pocket. The working class is still there, waiting to be won. Which explains why there can be a Tory government and still a large working class – which, for the last three elections, has voted them in.

For favourable shifts in the economy and underlying basic sympathies to be translated into votes for Labour, it has to present a confident, socialist alternative. Labour, unfortunately, with the publication of its policy review shortly after Thatcher's tenth anniversary, when the Tories are at last looking vulnerable, shows no sign of coming up with one.

1992: a battleground for Europe's black workers



PHOTO: Julio Etcham/Reflex

Top Eurocrat Jacques Delors at the TUC

Business communities across Europe are currently gearing themselves up to take advantage of the vast profit-making possibilities of the Single European Market, coming into effect in 1992. However, while some EC leaders are keen to combine this single market with a single monetary policy, others – notably Britain's Margaret Thatcher – are more anxious to see this as an exercise in deregulation and free-market principles.

The Single European Market will in any event seek to minimise workers' gains by imposing a downward pressure on wages and social benefits, and exploiting massive inequalities between workers to avert any collective retaliation.

The increased competition among businesses and industries operating in the EC will also mean a far greater concentration of wealth in the hands of a few.

The other significant development of such an integrated capitalist market must undoubtedly be the freer use and abuse of the flexible, unskilled labour provided by migrant, immigrant and refugee workers and black workers in general. These workers, with little protection and few rights, will form the central plank in the drive for minimum costs, either for the com-

pany or the state.

The reality is that this extended playground for Europe's capitalists will also mean an extended battleground for Europe's workers. In Britain the Trade Union Congress received the president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, with much enthusiasm at its 1988 congress, while at the same time passing a resolution (which received much less media attention) stating that 'the internal market represents a further concentration of economic and industrial power in the hands of multinational companies and a significant weakening of the ability of member states to intervene in their own economies'.

Black communities first to suffer attacks

It is in this context that we must view the need, now more important than ever, for capitalist states to maintain a cheap, very flexible and easily expendable sector of the labour market – in the form of Europe's black, immigrant and migrant workforce. Tied to this are the means by which a supply of such 'marginal' labour is to be regulated – both within the EC through internal controls, as well as between the EC and its neo-colonies – through the operation of a common immigra-

tion policy at its borders.

Divisions between the 'skilled' and 'unskilled' working class will widen, with the former having interests protected and finding it easier to cross boundaries in search of work. Unskilled workers will be left behind in the technology drive and in the regional imbalances that will be created. This will hit black and women workers particularly hard.

The setbacks that black workers in the EC are likely to experience if the present implications of 1992 go unchallenged highlight the agenda of worker exploitation inherently embodied in the Single European Act. At the same time, the appeal to racist and imperialist fervour, which will become an increasingly prominent feature of the build-up to 1992, stems from the intrinsically class biased nature of the European Community.

Controls on the black and migrant community in the EC, regardless of whether they have become EC nationals or not, operate in different forms and to different extents in each of the member states. Their fundamental ele-

ments, however, remain the same – that is, a systematic undermining of this community's civil, social and political rights, and thereby also its access to all forms of social provision, benefits and services. This is best exemplified by the use of Turkish guest-workers in West Germany and North African guest-workers in France. These countries have been able to get away with denying this pool of workers any protection from the worst excesses of private profit-making, with the implicit collaboration of the trade unions.

In Ireland, Sinn Fein have identified the problem of emigration as increasing, as Irish firms, unable to compete in size and orientation to international markets, lose out under 1992.

As the informal service sector within Europe grows, and regional disparities worsen, the guest worker system will no doubt appear even more attractive to the ruling classes of the EC states. Not only will these workers be confined to the lowest paid jobs, and not only will governments be able to shed their social responsibility for these workers, but they can then be easily deported when no longer needed.

The continuation and development of such a system will rely heavily on the propagation of racism. Clever use of this powerful tool serves not just to damp down dissent from the working class in general, but also to enable broader recruitment from sections of Europe's black population to the status of guest worker. The subsequent attempts to erode the present rights of unskilled/marginal workers – either from poorer EC countries such as Greece and the Spanish state, or from colonised territories like the North of Ireland and the Basque region – are only a question of time.

It is unlikely that any of these workers will enjoy the freedom of movement across internal borders so enthusiastically welcomed by supporters of the Single European Act. The exact nature of a common system of controls is currently under discussion.

However, one of the ways in which these additional, more stringent controls will be eased in has already been hinted at in a British Conservative Party briefing paper: 'Britain's frontiers will remain closed to terrorists and drug traffickers. The completion of the Single Market does not require the abolition of security and immigration controls at frontiers and ports of entry ... it supports moves to make frontier formalities quicker and easier for travellers without compromising safeguards against terrorists and criminals'.

The British Government is clearly anxious to equate 'illegal immigration' with terrorism and drug trafficking, thereby deeming it acceptable to use the same degree of force in dealing with these matters. In fact, in some cases, such as for workers from the North of Ireland and the Basque country 'anti-terrorist' laws are already in force that enable such restrictions on free movement to be put into practice.



PHOTO: John Hardie/REX

The bosses' ideal of the Single European Market is sweatshop conditions, exploiting low paid black workers with no trade union or other rights

Of course, an internal controls system will only work effectively if control of immigration into the EC is correspondingly hard line. Here Britain leads the way. Refugee and human rights organisations in France, West Germany and the Benelux countries have already been organising against some of the contents of the Treaty of Schengen. This treaty lifts the frontiers between the above-mentioned states in 1990, and among its concerns is the need for these countries to introduce visa requirements, fines on transport companies, an alarm system to prevent the arrival of new groups of refugees, and an exchange of information on immigrants and asylum-seekers. Many of these initiatives were pioneered by Britain, and, as the organisations point out, the Schengen agreement will serve as a blueprint for the restrictive measures to be adopted by the EC as a whole in 1992.

'Fortress Europe'

The issue of firm immigration laws falls into line with the general concept of a 'Fortress Europe' – a term initially used to describe the external protectionist trade policies envisaged in the setting up of European internal markets.

The main project of 1992 is, after all, an attempt to create a capitalist entity able to compete with Japan and the USA; British industry appears unwilling to recognise that this will grow up around the West German/French/Benelux axis already in existence, and will not benefit peripheral or less technologically developed areas such as Britain.

The campaign in Britain for the trade unions to take the issue of immigration and deportation seriously has been a long one, but one with some degree of success. The 1992 Single European Act will test the commitment of the trade unions to their black members and their foresight in recognising the dire consequences of capitulation to racism for the viability of the trade union movement itself.

The left and the labour movement in the EC have an important part to play in bringing to the fore those aspects of the 1992 Act that are

directed at further attacks on the most vulnerable sector of workers.

Heightening awareness in the trade unions and the black community provide the left with opportunities to campaign on radical demands. In the short term, concentrated pressure has to be brought to bear by the left across Europe on the European Trades Union Congress, national trade union federations and the mass working class parties in the European parliament to win their support for a position of no police checks on nationality/immigration status, including at workplaces, or checks prior to claiming public funds or services.

There should be no escalation of immigration controls on ports of entry into the EC and 'no deportations. In addition, such provisions as equal pay for work of equal value and statutory protection for the low-paid must be highlighted in the election manifestos of the mass social democratic and communist parties.

Many groups are already rallying around demands for the right of asylum for refugees, (and the European Commission's proposed directive on this has been promised since mid-1988), but the need is to link this campaign to other problems facing the black working class as a whole.

The principle that cannot be bypassed here is that of support for the self-organisation of black and migrant workers, including black women workers, both inside and outside of existing trade union and party structures. The campaign against the 1992 Single European Market provides a positive opportunity to show that the struggle for black workers' interests is not only compatible with the wider struggle of the working class, but an inseparable, and ultimately fundamental, component of it – nationally, and even more so internationally.

It is now high time that the left, including the far left, ceased to regard this as a peripheral issue, and recognised it as central to any socialist programme for Europe.

Anita Morris and Dan Carter

Real lives?

'Thirtysomething':
Channel Four,
Tuesdays 10pm
*'Balancing Acts - on
Being a Mother'*,
Edited by Katherine
Gelve. Virago £5.99

**Cecilia Tredget
examines two very
different treatments
of similar themes.**

Set somewhere on the East Coast, *Thirtysomething* revolves around the lives, loves and families of a small group of friends who once went to college together. This group have now all 'grown up', shaken off any political commitments, and have immersed themselves in a comfortable lifestyle where stripped-pine and coffee percolators are the order of the day.

Hope and Michael have a daughter, Janey; Hope is in publishing, Michael is a partner in an advertising firm with best friend Elliot. Elliot and Nancy have two children and marriage

problems. Nancy is a freelance book illustrator. Each week the programme concentrates on a different character and theme: the prospect of a childless relationship; the death of a close relative; coping alone with young children. *Thirtysomething* is often humorous, sometimes sentimental - but it rarely considers anything political outside their cosy little world.

Thirtysomething has become something of a cult. So what is it that makes this 'thinking person's soap' so popular?

The programme, unlike the majority of contemporary American soaps, attempts to explore the relationships between friends, parents and their children. This makes it somewhat unique, as few TV programmes are prepared to give airtime to what are thought to be hum-drum, everyday concerns.

Friendships between women and between men are portrayed in a positive light, and what they say and mean to one another is taken seriously.

A favourite theme in the programme is motherhood. Hope has a baby of only about one. I have often found that the image of motherhood presented is something that I can identify with. Again, this doesn't often happen in popular television and

I have been surprised at how accurately this relationship has been depicted.

Thirtysomething hasn't exploded the myth of the serene and blissful mother, but it has come some way toward showing how we don't cope, how we feel controlled by this incessantly screaming stranger, and how it can isolate and un-nerve the seemingly strongest and most capable women.

Throughout the series the relationship between Hope and her daughter changes and develops, as it inevitably does; Hope returns to work and leaves Janey with a nanny. The job Hope does is demanding, she's racked with guilt and her husband is not supportive since he's used to having her around when he gets back from work. So much for the 'New Man' Michael; but is it really any different in any other nuclear family?

Balancing Acts is a collection of thirteen essays on different aspects of motherhood. Each story emphasises a particular experience of being a mother: bringing up a disabled child; the fear of rearing a child in a racist society, being white adoptive parents to a black child, coping with a child that died at eleven weeks, or simply how to juggle

your life to cope with the endless work that children seem to create.

The contributors examine their relationships with their partners and their children, and place them in the context of our society. Some essays are stronger than others and some are too academic, but each one has something concrete to add to the picture of motherhood that the book creates.

For me the most interesting theme that runs through the majority of essays is that of how we as feminists reconcile the woman and the mother in this society. All of us want to be 'Super-Mum' and cope with everything just like we did before s/he arrived. We don't want it to make any difference. However, the reality of the situation is that we aren't the same person, we are something more, and sadly, something less, struggling to keep our heads above water.

Balancing Acts is an invaluable book for women because it is only through sharing our experiences as women and mothers that we can start to come to a better understanding of our role in society and how we can take action, both individually and collectively, to change it.

Bad enough hearing it in the pub!

ON THE GOLDEN
PORCH

By TATYANA TOLSTAYA
Virago

Review by Jean Reilly

I should say straight away that I hate short stories. This collection has not changed my opinion. Described on the sleeve as 'poetic, magical and piercingly funny' this book by Tatyana Tolstaya, a relative of Leo Tolstoy, might be a bit of the first in style, maybe even a little of the second in content, but is absolutely none of the third in any respect whatsoever.

Many of the stories are written from the point of view of children of various ages, all of whom appear to be suffering from a high temperature and feverishness. The author seems

to have got a lot of her ideas from when she had the measles as a child. Take the following extract from a story about a young boy who is obsessed with the mysterious 'louche' Tamila:

'Well, when you eat lemons, save the pips for me, all right? If you collect one hundred thousand pips and make them into a necklace, you can fly even higher than the trees, did you know that? If you want, we can fly together, I'll show you a place where there's buried treasure - but I forget the password to open it up. Maybe we'll think of it together.'

I realise that literature does not have to be realistic, but you have to at least identify with the characters. I cannot, for the life of me, identify with a child who would believe for one second that load of old 'poetic and magical' nonsense.

The other main theme of the book is people looking back on past husbands, affairs and so on; regretting earlier decisions and

fantasising on what might have been. This may be a perennial theme of the short story (not to mention films, popular songs and magazine articles) but it is bad enough listening to that sort of thing in pubs without paying good money to read about it.

I am told that short stories are by their very nature partial and are meant to be evocative of feelings, emotions and so on. All this collection evoked in me was irritation - but then, I hate short stories.



PHOTO: Marlene Stead

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Murder of the men with no names

Mississippi Burning
Film with Gene Hackman and William Dafoe

Reviewed by Debbie Epstein

Mississippi Burning is based on the true story of the killing of three young Civil Rights workers, Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner – two white and one black – in Mississippi in 1964 during the Civil Rights campaign in the South of the United States.

The film starts with the murder – one barely has time to get involved in the fate of the young men – and concentrates on the efforts of the FBI to track down and prosecute the murderers.

The two main characters are FBI men, one a northerner and one from Mississippi, where he had been a sheriff before going north to join the FBI. Making the FBI the heroes makes for an odd feeling, to say the least, knowing that the reality is that they fully back the racist system and indulge in all kinds of nefarious practices which damage civil rights.

That said, the film is interesting and worth seeing. It brings different things to different people. I went to see it with three other people, one of them black. For me, it brought back the horror which I had felt at the time of the murders. Bad as all the other violence and murders during the Civil Rights campaign had been, these seemed particularly horrific because of the way in which the young men had been set up and isolated for the purpose of murder, because of the way in which it was not allowed that they be buried together in Mississippi and, most of all, because of the way in which Chaney, the black man, had been mutilated as well as killed.

This last fact was not referred to in the film, nor were the names of the three victims given either, though the way white Southerners used to inflict castration on blacks was explored. Perhaps the motivation for this was to make the episode seem more general, but I found it disturbing that the murdered men had no identity other than being called 'boys' or 'civil rights activists'.

One of my friends, only a few years younger than myself, knew of the murders, but did not remember them, and for him the film had the effect of making events that he had heard about more real, even given the inevitable gloss given by the production.

The youngest of the party, in her late twenties, was not sure whether these particular murders were fictional, extrapolated from the general history of the period, or factual. She, along with about half the audience, was black, and had had some doubts about going to see the film – much along the same lines as women might have about going to see *The Accused* – but, having seen it, felt that it had been worth the pain. The audience as a whole were obviously moved – the silence was palpable as we left the cinema.

The film was in the liberal tradition – clearly against racism and bigotry, but without any real analysis of their causes. The nearest it came to such an analysis was when the Mississippian FBI man told his colleague a story about his father killing the mule of a neighbouring black farmer who was doing better than his father. He ended the story by saying, 'If he was no better than a



Unlikely heroes: Hackman and Dafoe as FBI men



The film shows the black community as simply passive

Negro, he was nothing.'

However, it does raise a number of interesting questions. The Northern FBI man clearly sees the Southerners as somehow weird and himself as coming South to solve the problems there. The black community is largely passive and frightened, though elements of resistance do come through – as, for example, in some of the church services, in the scene where the black farmer takes his gun out to try to fight off the Klan invaders and in the scene where the young black boy tells the FBI man to ask the sheriff his questions, and responds to the latter's question, 'Why aren't you frightened?' by saying, 'Why aren't you?'

The attitude of white Southerners who are not Klan members is also raised, though not fully explored. For example, in one scene, the camera cuts straight from the beating up of a young black boy to a television interview with a woman in the crowd watching the dragging of the swamp for the bodies. She is asked how she thinks black people are treated in Mississippi

and responds along the lines that they are generally treated well and it's only the Northern student rabble who have stirred up trouble. The turning point in the film comes when the wife of the deputy sheriff gives the FBI the information which leads to their being able to set up and catch the criminals. When she is severely beaten up as a result of this, the feeling of the FBI men changes from one of professional determination to one of emotional involvement. For the audience, too, this scene leads to audible gasps. Do we still feel more about violence against a white person? Or was this because she was a woman? Or because of the realisation that the Klan would attack anyone, regardless of colour?

However, though the questions are raised, answers are not explored and the glossiness of the treatment of the FBI is unrealistic and disturbing. In spite of these reservations, the film is worth making an effort to see. Like *Cry Freedom*, it is a lot better than might have been expected, though it is worse than one would have liked.

HARRY WICKS: 1905-1989

A link with the early Leninist Comintern

A personal tribute by
Charlie van Gelderen

Returning from a prolonged trip abroad, the news of the death of Harry Wicks came as a great shock to me. During the last few years we had drawn closer together both politically and personally. I shall miss him greatly.

Harry Wicks was in many ways a personification of the historic continuity of our movement – until his death, a living link between the early Leninist Comintern and the Bolshevik Party and those who carry on those traditions today.

He became interested in working class politics at the early age of 16 when he joined the Daily Herald Group in 1921. The Group was, in its majority, a participant in the founding of the Communist Party of Great Britain. He helped to form the Young Communist League, where his qualities of leadership were immediately recognised. During the General Strike of 1926, he edited a rank and file journal, *Signal*.

Harry was sent to Moscow for a three year course at the Interna-

tional Lenin School. He arrived a month or two before the 15th Congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union, which voted for the final expulsion of Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition. The school became a platform where the issues which were tearing the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International into warring factions were thrashed out in heated debate.

This experience was to have a profound and life-long influence on Harry, deepening his understanding of the fundamentals of Marxism and his internationalism. The sterile Stalinist doctrine of building 'Socialism in One Country' was an anathema to him. Back in Britain he soon found himself in conflict with the



Lenin with Sverdlov

Communist Party bureaucracy. In Germany, the threat of fascism was reaching menacing proportions. Stalinist policies could only lead the German working class – the most powerfully organised proletariat outside the Soviet Union – into the abyss of defeat.

Joining with Reg Groves, Hugo Dewar, Henry Sara and

others in the Balham Group, Harry fought for the principled Leninist positions championed by Leon Trotsky. Their expulsion from the CPGB followed, but Harry remained true to those principles throughout his life. A high peak in his life was when he shared a platform with Trotsky in Copenhagen in 1932 when Trotsky gave his memorable address 'In Defence of the Russian Revolution' on the occasion of its 15th anniversary.

Harry had many differences with the leadership of the Fourth International and with other British Trotskyists. Never a docile conformist, he did not hesitate to express these differences forcefully. But in a letter to me, written only a few months before his death, he reaffirmed his loyalty to the Fourth International and its programme.

We dip our red banners in tribute to his memory and extend our sympathy to his wife and family.

Our greatest tribute to Harry is in carrying out the political work which was his life blood and to build the Fourth International

CLR James 1901-1989

Thinker, writer, revolutionary

A tribute by Charlie van
Gelderen

Within the space of two months, death has removed from us two of the outstanding pioneers of Trotskyism in Britain – Harry Wicks in April, and now CLR James.

While Harry remained a convinced Trotskyist all his life, James developed political and philosophical conceptions of his own which led him away from Trotskyism.

Born in Trinidad in 1901, James' first interest was in cricket – a sport once considered quintessentially English, but which his native Caribbean has long made its own.

In the heated atmosphere of the political debate which followed the First World War, James was soon

caught up in the mounting criticisms of the colonial regime and he was particularly drawn to the popular movement led by André Cipriani, who was mayor of Port of Spain. One of James' earliest political writings was a biography of Cipriani later republished in a revised version as *The Case for West Indian Self-government*.

In 1932, James arrived in England, first settling in Nelson, a Lancashire town with a strong radical tradition. The industrial disputes which were going on at that time were to leave a lasting impression on his mind. The Lancashire workers, as he was to say later, were his educators in the class struggle. And it was in Lancashire that he read Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian revolution*, which was to turn him to the study of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

From then on, James identified himself with the socialist revolution. He joined the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1934 and became actively involved with the Trotskyist Marxist Group, and soon became its foremost polemicist.

Those of us who were around in those days can still recall his tall, striking figure and his fiery denunciations of Stalinism. Only once did the Communist Party pluck up the courage to engage him in debate. In the Islington Library on Holloway Road he devastated the CP spokesperson Pat Sloan, himself no mean orator.

James' qualities as a speaker and writer of the highest abilities were particularly to the fore after Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia. His articles in the ILP journal *New Leader* still rank as among the best

agitational tracts he ever wrote. They cut searingly through all the cant of the League of Nations. At the ILP's annual conference in Keighley, James succeeded in winning support for workers' sanctions and even in winning Fenner Brockway away from the pacifism of Maxton and the ILP's parliamentary caucus.

In 1936, his *World Revolution 1917-34* was published. This was the first comprehensive study of the rise of the Communist (Third) International under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, and its subsequent fall under Stalin.

Trotsky's comment on the book was that it was a good book but its author did not understand dialectics. This rankled with James, and was to lead him into an intense study of Hegelian methodology. The result was his *Notes on Dialectic*.

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

LETTERS

We welcome your views and comments.
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London SW19 1HA

Reactionary separatism in India

The call for the establishment of a Sikh nation (Khalistan) in the Punjab is a totally reactionary and sectarian demand. Jonathan Jones (*Socialist Outlook* 14) is wrong to equate this reactionary movement in the Punjab with national feeling in Kashmir.

The agitation today in Punjab is not for a Punjabi state but for Khalistan. In any case Punjab is divided between India and Pakistan – a division which took place at the time of independence and which involved the most brutal inter-community conflicts.

This brutal communalism is mirrored today in the pro-Khalistan movement in the Punjab and in communalist parties in other states. As well as systematically murdering socialists and other political opponents, the Khalistanis regularly slaughter ordinary Hindus. In this way they hope to drive non-Sikhs out of Punjab and to have Sikhs driven out of other parts of India.

Despite the fact that the Khalistanis are in

a small minority even among Sikhs, they have had a degree of success in this aim. The Khalistan movement is not one of an oppressed nationality, but of religious fundamentalists reflecting the interests of well-off farmers and petit bourgeois sections, and supported only by reactionary forces in Pakistan and their friends in the CIA.

Thus any success for the Khalistan movement would strengthen reactionary communalist and sectarian forces in other Indian states. Far from strengthening the hand of the Indian masses, it would be an enormous blow, opening up further divisions that would take years to heal.

The I.C.S. (Inquilabi Communist Sangathan – which is the Indian Section of the Fourth International) is implacably opposed to the Khalistan movement as are other socialists in India.

An unrelenting struggle against the Khalistanis, both in Britain and India, should not detract from our opposition to other communalist currents, nor to the increasing concessions which the ruling Congress Party makes to such developments. Indeed in many places it has been sections of the Congress Party who are themselves responsible for fomenting communalism and who have played their part in creating the basis for the rise of the pro-Khalistan movement.

Oliver New, West London

Once again, lesbians made invisible

I am writing to reassure readers that despite the blatant omission of any mention of lesbians from the write-up of the Women for Socialism Conference in *Socialist Outlook* No 14, Women for Socialism is committed to

building a socialist feminist movement that is for all women, including lesbians.

This was demonstrated by the fact that we had a speaker from the Socialist Lesbian Group on the platform in the opening plenary of the Conference, a workshop on 'Lesbians and Socialism' which was one of the best attended of the day and discussed a wide range of issues rarely on conference agendas, and that the 'structure, aims and objectives' which were adopted, specifically state that Women for Socialism is anti-heterosexist and that the steering group would include the post of lesbian liaison officer (which was filled).

I certainly feel that this is a great step forward for a socialist-feminist tradition that has largely failed to take up lesbian issues, greatly to its detriment. Unfortunately this appears to be a view not universally held.

Yours wondering what it takes sometimes,
Rebecca Fleming

The stuff that dreams are made of?

John Lister (*Socialist Outlook* No 14) says 'thoughts ... are material things ...'. They are not. Matter is that which exists independently of thoughts. There is no other definition. If thoughts are matter, how can matter exist independently of them? To say that thought is material is no better than saying matter is 'mental', and turns materialism into a nonsense. Both say 'matter and thoughts are the same stuff'.

Cliff Slaughter,
Leeds

PS I must correct Mike Pearse's letter on the WRP. The WRP's crisis of 1985 was not 'terminal'.

tics, in which he argues that it was Trotsky who misunderstood the dialectic, and that his interpretation of history was flawed.

With Harry Wicks, Reg Groves, Henry Sara and others, James played a prominent part in the Trotsky Defence Committee which was set up to counter the avalanche of falsehoods which came out of the Moscow Trials. Although he continued to play a role in Trotskyist circles, he increasingly concentrated on research and writing.

His novel about West Indian barrack-yard life, *Minty Alley* was published in 1936, and he was working on what was to be his magnum opus, his study of the San Domingo revolt, the first successful slave rising in history. *The Black Jacobins* is now acknowledged as the classical study of that epoch-making event, and showed James' mastery of the theory of permanent revolution.

In 1938 he published *A History of Negro Revolt*. After the unifica-

tion of most of the Trotskyist grouplets in 1938, James was one of the delegates to the Founding Conference of the Fourth International, and was elected onto the International Executive Committee.

In 1938, James left Britain for the United States and immediately plunged himself into the work of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), particularly concentrating on issues affecting black people.

He spent some weeks with Trotsky in Mexico, where they discussed the question of an autonomous black movement. Within the SWP he fought for a turn toward black people as an integral part of the revolutionary movement in the USA.

The outbreak of World War Two and the crisis which arose within the SWP over its position on the Soviet Union gave James the opportunity to develop his differences with Trotsky. For James, the signing of the Stalin-Hitler Pact was the culminating evidence that the USSR was no longer a

workers' state which had to be defended.

In collaboration with Raya Dunyevskaya he formed the Johnson-Forrest Tendency, which developed theoretical positions which took them further and further away from the traditional positions of Trotsky and the Fourth International. They argued that the Stalinist parties outside the USSR were not the 'tools of the Kremlin', but were 'an organic product of the mode of capitalism at this stage'. The Soviet Union was not a deformed workers' state in which the bureaucracy had usurped state power, but state capitalist. His break with Trotskyism was now absolute.

James also played an active role in support of the growing revolt against colonial rule, especially in Africa. Kwame Nkrumah was a protégé of his, and he was hopeful that Nkrumah would lead the fight for a free and socialist Africa. But he did not hesitate to break from Nkrumah when he saw where he

was going.

In his latter years CLR – as he was universally called – almost became a living legend. His room in Brixton became a place of pilgrimage for black revolutionaries from all over the world. His interests were widespread and cosmopolitan. A passionate love for Shakespeare and Beethoven vied with his devotion to cricket and his continued interest in revolutionary politics.

He remained an optimist all his life. On his 80th birthday he told a young audience in Chicago 'I will live to see the South African revolution. I don't think I will live to see the American revolution, but when you make your revolution I will find some way of coming here to join you'.

That revolutionary optimism, that unquestionable belief in the future of humanity was the characteristic which best sums up CLR James – thinker, writer, revolutionary.

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