

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

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The implosion of Eastern European Stalinism

PLUS Embryology Bill ● Ambulance workers

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Contents

UPDATE

1 ● EDITORIAL

- 2 ● Poll Tax: Who are they trying to fool?
- 2 ● Teachers: get ready to fight
- 3 ● Raising the heat in Central America
- 4 ● Labour shuts up shop on the unions

5-8

Behind Clarke's hard line
Tories aim double blow at NHS
Harry Sloan

8-10

The Embryology Bill
Fighting for a woman's right to choose
Jane Kelly

DEBATE on the Bill

- 1) Oppose the Bill, fight for women's choice
Jane Kelly
- 2) Fight to amend the Bill – or vote against
Valerie Coultas

11-22

SUPPLEMENT

Eastern Europe

The implosion of East European Stalinism
Document from *Socialist Outlook* conference

The Question of German reunification
Document from *Socialist Outlook* conference

Eastern Europe: Where is the left?

GUS FAGAN

Romania: mass movement in search of leadership

Tony Johnson

Unanswered questions for Polish socialists

Patrick Baker

23-26

IN DEPTH

ERNEST MANDEL

Historic defeat of Stalinism

Extracts from speech at *Socialist Outlook* rally

26

The Soviet Left

Rick Simon

28

When laws against bosses hit immigrant workers

Steve Cohen

31

REVIEWS

Rounding up the decade: CLPD pamphlet

32-33

OBITUARY: Gerry Healy
ALAN THORNETT



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Azerbaijan: End the military occupation!

THE HEAVY-HANDED military intervention of the Soviet army in Baku on January 19, which left dozens, possibly hundreds dead, was much more than an attempt to restore law and order.

The massive force of army, navy and KGB troops dispatched by the Kremlin to Azerbaijan was certainly intended to stop the brutal and senseless ethnic slaughter being waged between extremist groups of Azeris and Armenians: but it was also intended to beat down the rising Azerbaijan national movement, upholding the power of the Kremlin and its local agents, the largely discredited and corrupt Azerbaijan Communist Party.

The official Kremlin appeal for support from the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan referred to the 'tragic events' in Baku and other towns, in which 'blood has been shed, and outrages and pogroms claimed human victims'. But it also significantly emphasised Moscow's fear that 'Groups of militants in both republics are being formed. The Holy of Holies – the state border of the USSR – is being violated'.

President Gorbachev himself, explaining on television the decision to send such a large army effectively to invade Azerbaijan, declared that 'Events took a particularly tragic turn in Baku. There were growing calls for the seizure of power by force'. In this Gorbachev was echoing the demands of Central Committee hardliners and army political chief Lizichev, who had called for 'tough measures'.

But while the old guard, echoing the traditional Brezhnevite and Stalinist attitude, reject any notion of a right of national minorities to self-determination – least of all the right to secede from the USSR – and regard the defence of Soviet borders (the 'Holy of Holies') as a task to be accomplished by force wherever it is challenged, Gorbachev had until recently embraced a more progressive point of view. Only days earlier he had conceded to the mass Lithuanian Popular Front that the USSR would take steps to provide a legal mechanism for secession. It is not yet clear whether the intervention in Azerbaijan represents an isolated, bureaucratic response to the particular problems faced by the Kremlin, or a major retreat by Gorbachev from the more enlightened policy towards the nationalities issue which is an essential cornerstone of glasnost.

What is certain is that the attempt to solve this problem simply through military force will fail either to crush the Azeri nationalist movement or to ensure the long-term stability of the Soviet borders. Gone are the days when the Kremlin by Stalin's sheer terror and brute force could enforce its rule on a prison-house of nations. Unless a political solution is found, the Azerbaijan military adventure could prove many times more costly and politically destructive than even the invasion of Afghanistan: the nationalist backlash against Moscow's armed forces is already plain to see, as was the instant hostile response from women in Russia opposing the sending of troops under the slogan 'no more Afghanistans'. Any long-term occupation of Azerbaijan would require not only the call-up of reservists, but also the repression of opposition throughout the USSR: it would be the end of glasnost.

Since the latest flare-up in the centuries-old antagonisms be-

tween the Azeri and Armenian peoples of the region began in 1988, the Azerbaijan nationalists have formed their own Popular Front, with a huge mass base of support clearly embracing most of the population. Mass rallies of up to 1 million at a time have been held each weekend for six months. Despite attempts by the Communist Party to sidetrack this movement by adopting some of the nationalists' demands and some of the methods of the worst and most reactionary elements (the Communist Party itself led the first anti-Armenian pogrom over the disputed enclave of Ngorny-Karabakh in 1988, before the Popular Front had even been formed), the movement is clearly out of their control: in the elections due to be held shortly, the nationalists seemed certain to sweep the Communist Party aside: this is a grave concern to Moscow.

There is no doubt that the case for self-determination, up to and including the right to secede if a majority wish it, applies equally strongly to the Azeri people as to the Lithuanians, though we can see why the oil-rich and strategically much more sensitive Azerbaijan should be even more alarming a possible loss for Moscow than Lithuania. What is also essential to insist upon, however, is that the interpretation of 'self-determination' which appears to animate the most extreme nationalist elements of the Azeri Popular Front is racist and chauvinist, designed to justify them riding roughshod over the legitimate rights of the beleaguered Armenian minority in the enclave of Ngorny-Karabakh.

The Armenians, who called on Moscow to intervene in their defence, also have rights – to live without fear of pogroms, and to national self-determination: indeed a political settlement in the region is only possible through the free association and mutual respect of self-governing and independent socialist republics.

While marxists argue that the Soviet state has a responsibility to defend the safety of endangered national minorities like the Armenians of Ngorny-Karabakh (and the Azeris of Nakhichevan), this must be with the involvement and consent of these minorities, and in the context of working towards a political settlement. This is impossible while a full-scale army of occupation is polarising opinion and strengthening the more extreme nationalist forces in Azerbaijan.

That is why we call for an end to the military occupation, while maintaining sufficient state forces to prevent further pogroms: and for immediate elections and a referendum on the issue of national self-determination to be held in Armenia, Azerbaijan and the two enclaves – whose populations should also have the right to decide which socialist republic they wish to relate to.

Many Azeri people know from bitter historical experience that there is little to be gained in seeking links with capitalist Iran, where their kith and kin have long been oppressed. As socialists, we believe that the best solution for the masses of Transcaucasia, as for the other oppressed nationalities in the USSR is a new free federation of independent socialist republics. Only this solution offers an antidote to the deadly poison of nationalism and clerical reaction, and an alternative to the brute, bureaucratic violence that has been the stock in trade of the Kremlin and helped create the crisis Gorbachev now faces.

Poll Tax

Who are they trying to fool?

The rebellion in the Tory ranks against the poll tax was certainly smaller than many had predicted: however it points up the delicate path Thatcher is trying to tread.

It is clear that few believe government claims that the average poll tax will be £347. Not only the Labour ALA but the Tory controlled Association of District Councils and the Association of County Councils all predict that the average will be around £340.

The Tory argument is that if poll tax levels are above their estimates, it will be as a result of over-spending councils. But their figures are based not only on a calculation that the rate of inflation will be 4%, but also on their assumption that pressure against 'high spending' councils will force them to make further cuts in order to keep the poll tax low. Such arguments cut little ice either amongst the electorate or amongst politicians.

While rescheduling of debts by some inner-city authorities may have some impact on the level of the tax, few can seriously argue that there is a single council now that is anywhere near meeting the most basic needs of the people in its area. Many Tory authorities complain that the level of poll tax they are expected to set will not meet even *their* assessment of local needs.

Nor is there any indication that poll tax activists would be bought off by any local councils who attempt to make further cuts to keep the tax levels relatively low. Rather this would fuel further opposition, particular amongst the council trade unions.

The chaos of the Tory line over the poll tax is also compounded by the overall political situation; the rise of wage militancy and in particular the huge public support for the ambulance workers' claim. This gives further confidence to poll tax activists as they see workers

moving into action on these other fronts.

The poll tax movement itself remains strong after the launch of the all-Britain federation from the successful conference in Manchester on November 25. Despite the fact that there were real problems in the way the day itself was structured, leaving inadequate time for exchange of experiences and open political debate, the fact that the conference passed overwhelmingly a statement setting up the federation on the basis of non-co-operation with the tax shows how far the movement has developed over the last year. The first meeting of the new steering committee, which took place on January 13th was generally positive, with the three 3D supporters being elected to prominent positions on the committee.

The key task of the federation is now to organise a massive demonstration in London on March 31st, for which support must be mobilised in every locality and at every level of the labour movement. Building this demonstration must be seen as a key task for every labour movement activist.

Beyond that, there are undoubtedly more difficult tasks. The movement in Scotland has been consistent in mobilising successfully against every single attempted pointing, but as authorities now attempt warrant sales against the vast numbers of non-payers, there is a deal of work to do to keep up the pressure.

Fighting for industrial action against the tax must be a key priority not only amongst groups of workers who have a specific role in terms of implementation but more generally. Activists should be exploring the possibility of one day actions around April 1. It was unfortunate that the otherwise very positive NALGO Against The Poll Tax conference in Birmingham on January 20 felt unable to commit itself to such a target, but nevertheless possibilities should be explored wherever practicable.



At the same time, it is also becoming increasingly urgent that Labour Party members both make clear their own commitment to non-implementation and defend those being witch-hunted for this stand. As the upheavals continue over Frank Field's deselection, this becomes an even more urgent task than previously.

Building a genuine mass anti-poll tax movement, attempting to involve as large a proportion of those opposed to the tax, in particular those in Scotland not paying, and those in Wales and England committed not to pay, must be the goal before us.

Terry Conway.

Pay, conditions, class sizes: Teachers must get ready to fight!

The Independent Advisory Committee (IAC), established by Kenneth Baker, to impose pay awards on teachers as a result of the abolition of their negotiating rights in 1986, announces its recommendations at the end of January.

These are likely to be unsurprising - the Tories have set a £600 million limit for the 1990/91 pay increase which would work out as a 7 per cent

increase if the money was distributed evenly to all teachers - and will be met with anger in the staffrooms.

Since 1986, teachers have seen their standard of living fall continuously. In addition, the huge increase in workloads that have resulted from the Tories' Education Reform Act have seen more teachers than ever leave in search of other employment, and potential new entrants reconsider.

In some areas, particularly

London, where according to one survey 1000 vacancies existed in the ILEA, children have been regularly excluded or prevented from starting school. The situation remains desperate in the primary sector and there are also serious shortages in science, maths and technology areas in secondary schools.

The Tories are not prepared to spend the necessary resources to finance their own reactionary programme. They will attempt to deal with the teacher shortage by

Raising the heat in Central America

Central America remained in the news right until the end of the decade. In the last two months, US planes bombed large areas of two Latin American capitals, San Salvador and Panama.

After nine years of large-scale intervention in the region, the US still has had to rely on such barbaric acts as attacks on the urban civilian population as it struggles to get its way.

The situation in El Salvador has shifted significantly as a result of the offensive launched in November by the FMLN liberation forces. The FMLN broke through the military defences of the capital, and were still fighting in San Salvador in the new year.

This has been a major military gain both from the viewpoint of recruitment (though the FMLN lost 400 fighters in combat, they have recruited many more) and from the fact that most of the regime's armed forces are now centred in the major cities: this gives the FMLN a comparatively free run in the rest of the country.

For the right wing ARENA government, the mass bombings in the capital were a desperate move, decisive in preventing an uprising in the militant working class neighbourhoods; but they have led to growing international

isolation. Spain and West Germany have suspended loans, and 159 governments in the United Nations have condemned the bombing of civilians.

Air Force commander General Bustillo saw the bombing as a lever to gain more influence, possibly to set himself up as a new military strong man to run El Salvador: instead he has been kicked out into a diplomatic job as military attache to Israel and Europe.

The most recent blow to the Salvadoran and Latin American left has been the assassination in Guatemala of Hector Oqueti, who was assistant general secretary of the Salvadoran MNR and a leader of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR). He was also secretary of the Socialist International's Latin America Committee.

The Guatemalan death squads that killed him were set up by Salvadoran death squad godfather and ARENA chief Roberto D'Aubuisson. Many countries have now called for an inquiry into Oqueti's death and the involvement of ARENA.

In Nicaragua, the Sandinista government is keeping its head down as it approaches a tough political challenge in the February general election.

In December, President Daniel Ortega, along with the

other four Central American presidents, signed a statement in San Isidro de Coronado. The statement says that: "The presidents express their determined support for the president of El Salvador ... and his government as a faithful demonstration of their unalterable policy of supporting governments that are the product of democratic and pluralistic processes with popular involvement".

From El Salvador, the FMLN have declared this statement to be the load of rubbish that it is; but they have not criticised the Sandinistas for signing it, since they see it as the Nicaraguan state using diplomacy to defend itself, rather than as a serious political statement by the FSLN, who clearly do not believe it.

The invasion of Panama has produced confused responses. The Thatcher government was one of the first to recognise the new US stooge regime, which was sworn in in English in an American base.

However too many liberals, relieved to see Panamanian dictator Noriega ousted, were silent about the gross violation of Panama's national sovereignty. The Panamanian regime played an important role in breaking the US trade boycotts on Nicaragua and Cuba, as well as being useful to the FMLN.

Castro and the Sandinistas were wrong to give Noriega political support in return for his limited material cooperation. (Indeed according to some reports, even this cooperation ran alongside offers to the CIA that Noriega would help wipe out the Sandinista leadership - if the price was right!)

In Britain, our main task is to condemn the US invasion. The tactics were brutal: wherever the Americans met determined resistance (for example in the working class districts of Chorillo and Miguelito) they retreated, and sent in the heavy artillery and aerial bombing raids. Only after this would they send in US troops.

Staff in the Sante Thomas hospital in Panama City who revealed the real extent of casualties to the press were removed and replaced. The number of dead is still unknown, but is likely to be between one and two thousand.

At the meeting of the Organisation of American States, the USA secured only its own vote against condemnation of the invasion. Twenty states voted to condemn the move, with seven (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Antigua and Barbuda) abstaining.

Gareth Mostyn

promoting differences within the teaching workforce. They want allowances given by LEA's to teachers with additional workloads and pastoral/academic responsibilities to be used as levers in shortage subjects.

Their longer-term perspective is to introduce 'merit pay' based on market forces, to destroy national pay bargaining and replace it with local or even school based pay schemes. The introduction of *Local Management of Schools (LMS)* will facilitate this.

The main classroom teacher trade unions have policies firmly opposed to these ideas, but, unless national action around salaries is organised, demoralisation will become such that al-

though the Tories are running into stormy waters, their objectives will be easier to enforce. Industrial action is needed now by the NUT and NASWT in the context of the ambulance dispute and the pay claims by Ford and NALGO workers.

While the left in the NUT around the *Socialist Teachers Alliance* will be giving unconditional support for the NUT's 40% pay claim over two years, it will continue to campaign for a flat rate increase for all teachers. This would benefit lower paid teachers who are mostly women and help make teaching more attractive to potential new recruits. Without a serious pay campaign, the action by London teachers over class size for which there

has been a 95 per cent ballot result in favour, will be difficult to maintain.

The second area that socialists need to confront is the question of 'licenced teachers'. This scheme is being introduced by the Tories in an attempt to deal with shortages. It involves unqualified teachers working under licence, on lower pay scales for a period of time in schools before 'qualification'. Again the leadership of the NUT is opposed to this, but lacks clarity over its policies and on the question of action against the scheme.

Socialists should be in favour of increasing the number of routes into teaching for the working class and for black

people. We should distance ourselves from the 'all-graduate professionalism' of the NUT leadership.

However, we should oppose licenced teachers completely. The scheme will undermine longer term pay and conditions within teaching through the creation of a cheap labour market. And it will help legitimate the racist policies of the Department of Education and Science, as the many black teachers from 'New Commonwealth countries' that have had their teaching qualifications rejected by the DES and often work as 'instructors' will be pushed into these schemes.

Martin Allen

Labour shuts up shop on the unions

Neil Kinnock's way with words is well known. In a new development, alongside his tendency to alliterative verbiage, he's now trying out some unusual phrases.

He recently wandered into an unfortunate description of how he tried to 'bare Mrs Thatcher's chest' in Prime Minister's question time - his voice slowing and fading noticeably as he realised, the further he got into his sentence, where it would end up.

Speaking recently in a television interview about the influence of the trade unions in the Labour Party, he assured viewers that though he would do what he could to freeze out the organised working class. The Labour Party, he said, could not be changed by a 'swift flick of the wrist'.

Not so. It just takes a wanker as adept as the newly-promoted Employment spokesperson Tony Blair (taking over from the unmanageably left wing Michael Meacher!) - to issue a press release.

One Sunday, just before Christmas, Blair announced (supposedly to his constituency - in fact big business and conservative public opinion were his more immediate targets) that the pre-entry closed shop had had it as far as he was concerned. Since the 1989 Labour Party conference had supported the European Community's Social Charter (which guarantees rights to belong to a trade union or not), Labour, argued Blair, would have to come into line.

Blair was apparently panicked into the move by the whiff of Tory pressure and political point scoring in the run-up to the government's Employment Bill. The Conservatives were planning to use the debates on the Bill to attack Labour's policy on the closed shop and to wheel out the 'Labour in hock to the trade unions' scare stories again.

Blair's hope was that this concession would stop the papers from being beastly to him, and that it would give his proposed amendments on the Bill more clout. Labour will be asking the Government nicely in the course of the Bill's progress through Parliament if they will give unions collective bargaining and recognition rights in law, restore union mem-

bership rights at GCHQ and protect lawful strikers from dismissal.

As Blair points out, Labour believes in an 'even handed rather than one sided approach to industrial relations law'. God forbid that Labour should ever try to stick up for the workers against management.

Even more worrying though, are the reports in the press that Blair had top-level union backing for the policy shift - with his support not confined to the predictable right wingers Edmonds (GMB) and Jordan (Engineers' Union, AEU) - but said to include the Transport Workers' 'left' leader Ron Todd, too.

How far this renewed headlong dive into new realism gets Labour's leaders in their bid for respectability in the eyes of the Tory law makers, remains to be seen. But one outcome is certain. An estimated one million workers currently covered by closed shop agreements will see their wages, working conditions and jobs cut as their collective protections are removed - and Labour will have been complicit in that, preferring to be seen to bow to a bourgeois notion of 'fairness', 'choice' and individual rights.

Whilst the likes of Ron Todd attempt to cover their tracks with a supremely cynical claim that the closed shop represents cosy corporatism which acts to contain militant unionism (which, though it may be the case, is clearly not the cause of Todd's objection), it will be the workers who pay the price for



More 'wrist-flicking' under way?

their leaders' failures.

Campaign Group MPs led by Eric Heffer are opposing the moves in Parliament, but claim to have much broader PLP support too. The left in the unions face a hard task to build up the pressure needed to fight a rear-guard action on this - but pressure on the likes of MSF leader Ken Gill, and in the printing unions, will be key.

Meanwhile poor old *Tribune* is bemoaning the fact that Blair's move will undermine party members' confidence in the Policy Review. The rationale given for the review process - accepted by *Tribune* - was that by forging a consensus on policy, Shadow Cabinet members would be less likely to ignore the members and make up policy as they went along.

Blair's move will encourage, says the newspaper's editorial, 'the suspicion, nursed by some but not shared by *Tribune*, that the policy review was actually intended to reduce the influence over policy-making of party conference and active members and allow more such traditional Labour-style stitch-ups'.

It certainly takes some people a long time to catch on, doesn't it?

JANE WELLS

Will the Party abandon its own closed shop?

According to the rules of the Party, most constituencies operate a policy of only accepting as members those people who are willing to join an appropriate trade union, where they are eligible for membership. This is because the Party was founded by the trade unions, and most socialists understand that trade unions are a good thing. But Walworth Road looks set to abandon this outdated notion, too.

A cracking pace has been set by Health spokesperson Harriet Harman, and other advocates of closer Labour links with the scab no-

strike Royal College of Nursing, despite angry complaints from health union activists fighting to recruit nurses.

Now an 'advertising writer's' wife has used the pages of the *Guardian* to complain about her husband's difficulties in joining the Labour Party, because he refused to join a union. 'They don't have them in advertising' (NUJ? NGA? SOGAT?) ... 'Anyway, shouldn't union membership be a separate decision from joining a political party?' she argued.

The annoying couple wrote to



Helping Mrs Angry - Whitty

Kinnock. At least he knocked them back by getting a lackey to reply, implying that he shouldn't be bothered by Mr and Mrs Angry.

They got further with General Secretary Larry Whitty, however, who they claim told them that 'union membership was an outdated rule. The idea was to encourage people to join a union - not ban them if they couldn't' (or presumably, wouldn't!).

**Behind Clarke's hard line
on ambulance dispute**

Tories aim double blow at health service

By HARRY SLOAN

National union officials complain privately that a 'settlement' of the ambulance dispute was within reach in secret talks, and was only broken up by the outbreak of strike action in West Sussex, on the eve of the TUC January 13 demonstration.

We can only speculate: but to judge from every recent pronouncement from Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke, including the most recent (January 19) Department of Health press release – ("There is no more money on offer. There can be no question of a formula for the pay of ambulancemen and women. No talks will resume until the unions accept this") – any such settlement must have represented a substantial retreat by the unions.

Press speculation has focussed on possibilities ranging from a pitifully small cash increase above the 9 per cent over 18 months, through localised deals that would threaten the national pay structure, to the possible acceptance of a two-tier pay structure dividing emergency crews from lower-paid non-emergency workers, who may also face the lingering threat of privatisation.

National officials know that much of the rank and file pressure centres on perhaps the hardest demand for them to negotiate with Clarke: the call for a long-term pay formula linking ambulance pay with other emergency services. But in their efforts to get off the hook it is not unlikely that they are biding their time, waiting for a drop in morale that might enable them to ditch this in the search for a settlement.

The five-month dispute has seen NUPE's Roger Poole and other union chiefs, along with private lobby consultants and PR advisors, acting as arch-exponents of 'new realism'. They have won all the media and public relations battles, but failed to dent the arrogant, class-war Tory cabinet. Their tactics have allowed the dispute to drag on to their

own disadvantage, and now the angry calls for strike action from many who have borne the brunt of the action reflect the frustration of the rank and file.

Seldom in the history of the British workers' movement has an industrial action been as overwhelmingly popular as that of the ambulance workers. With opinion polls for Tory papers showing over 80 per cent backing for their fight, and an all-time record 4.5 million signature petition, the ambulance crews have been able to tap the rich vein of public support for the NHS as well as a growing reservoir of anti-Tory sentiment.

The large 40-50,000 turnout on the TUC's poorly publicised and divisively organised January 13 demonstration was also the tip of a vast iceberg of potential support. Had the demonstration itself been open to *all* trade unionists and supporters, headed by uniformed staff, and not designed to reduce supporters to the role of passive spectators in Trafalgar Square, the turnout could easily have been doubled or trebled.

Lobbying Tories

Unfortunately these vivid indications of public support and even the inveigling of a handful of renegade Tory backbenchers into backing the ambulance workers' cause (after weeks of grovelling by union lobbyists) have not been enough to shake the government's hard line. After failing to win a ballot endorsement of their original proposed 6.5 percent settlement, and being forced into a fight, the national officials have consistently allowed management to set the pace, insisting only on one thing even as they have attempted to whit-



Huge public support for the ambulance crews: but no move from the Tories

tle down the claim: that of all the tactics available, the only one to be excluded was strike action.

The gradual and piecemeal escalation of sanctions on non-emergency services and then on the emergency service took place so slowly – and are still applied so patchily – that the government and local management have been given the maximum opportunity to prepare and deploy alternative scab 'emergency' services from the army, police and St John's ambulance.

Millions have been spent in a relentless effort to crush the ambulance militancy: in London alone, figures just released by the Regional health authority which manages the London Ambulance Service (LAS) show that the cost of using police in the dispute has sent the LAS £5m into the red this financial year.

Far from being crushed, the normally conservative ambulance rank and file has, despite the blandishments of Poole and co, become increasingly radicalised in the course of the struggle, with more and more districts voting on strike action, and several stations going it alone unofficially. Strike calls come not only from a desire to step up the pressure on Clarke, but also from confusion on how to implement the often contradictory official guidelines on escalating the dispute, which have instructed ambulance staff still in their stations to refuse to take emergency calls from non-suspended controllers, while Roger Poole

repeatedly pops up on radio and television insisting that the unions are still answering emergency calls. Even the less militant convenors are saying that where management have not suspended staff, strike action – putting ambulance crews out of earshot of emergency calls – would be easier to carry out than refusing to answer the red phones.

That management is not in the least concerned to preserve the emergency service was best demonstrated in Oxfordshire, where a High Court injunction was obtained, naming every ambulance worker and union official, preventing them from using any of the county's ambulances – a prohibition far more draconian than any strike call: as one worker put it 'If we even put a bandage on someone we could face court action and even the sequestration of the union's assets'.

The bitter reality, however, is that the longer the unions keep on trying as they have done to minimise the impact on patients and turning the other cheek to management provocations, the more ruthlessly will Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke stick to his no compromise position, regardless of public opinion.

Much more than cash

Why, then, are the Tories so determined to defeat the ambulance staff? The answer cannot be an economic one: there are only some 20,000 ambulance crew, and even to concede their pay claim in full (winning public applause) would make only a marginal difference to an NHS budget of £25 billion.

The way the dispute has dragged on has certainly increased the importance of one factor which was not strong when the action began: the impact of a union victory on the current pay round. Last autumn, Clarke could have quietly conceded much of the ambulance claim – in the aftermath of government concessions to rail unions and NALGO local government staff – with little public attention.

However the rising public profile of the dispute has coincided with the new year's round of industrial pay negotiations, not least those in the car industry, headed by the Ford 'double figures and shorter hours' claim, which have now swung into the headlines.

The eventual deal will also now influence the 1990 pay demands from other groups of health workers, many of whom were fobbed off early last year with settlements well below inflation. NHS admin and clerical staff, whose low-paid jobs are notoriously hard to fill, had already raised their demands in the wake of last summer's partial victories by fellow

NALGO members in local government.

However Clarke also has a wider political purpose in seeking to wind up ambulance staff – with his cynical and derogatory references to 'professional drivers' – and defeat their industrial action.

The Tory government is determined to confront the still powerful unions in the public sector, and the relatively small, highly visible, rather elitist and (until now) largely conservative ambulance workforce has traditionally been seen as a strong section of NHS union organisation.

To inflict a defeat upon them in the teeth of massive public support would offer the government a double prize – simultaneously



detering pay battles in the public sector, and softening up the NHS unions prior to the implementation in the next 18 months or so of Clarke's wildly unpopular NHS and Community Care Bill, now at its committee stage in the Commons and due for the Royal Assent in June.

Smokescreen for Bill

An added bonus for Clarke has been the way in which the pay dispute has grabbed the headlines in the last few months, acting as a smokescreen to give the Tories a virtually free run to push the Bill unnoticed through parliament, while few health workers or voters are even vaguely aware of its contents or how soon it will be imposed.

The frightening public ignorance on the Bill is a direct consequence of the refusal of the health union leaderships to carry through conference decisions from last year calling for campaigns to be built against what was then the White Paper. With almost no information, leaflets or campaign activity being produced for use in the hospitals, the Labour Party's limp 'new model' campaign of press advertising linked to the half-baked 'post a postcard' initiative was also directed away from building local, active campaigns against the Tory plans.

The result after three months was a miserable 100,000 signatures (a third of these

from Scotland) – embarrassingly short of Robin Cook's rash pledge to deliver 'a sackful of cards from each health authority' (there are 200). Labour's fiasco, let off surprisingly lightly by Kenneth Clarke (who must have been laughing all the way to the bar) was another reminder of the ineffectiveness of half-hearted petitions on an issue such as the NHS, where the opposition to the Tory plans commands 70-80 percent support: this should mean a petition of 30-40 million!

While Cook waged his pointless, passive bid for 'hearts and minds', health unions not only ignored conference calls for a national demonstration against the White Paper, but, in the case of COHSE, actually *opposed* any form of activity as a national focus of opposition to the Tory proposals when this was discussed on the TUC's ineffective and bureaucratic Health Services Committee.

Even in those 70-80 hospitals shortlisted in the autumn by Clarke as likely candidates to 'opt out' of health authority control, local union activists were left to their own devices on whether or not to build campaigns, without any help, information or encouragement from officials at national level. The small, London-based Hands Off Our NHS campaign emerged as virtually the only source of campaign material against the White Paper, sending consignments of leaflets, pamphlets, stickers, badges and T-shirts to isolated unions and community campaigns all over the country.

In November, the Tories decided to take advantage of the elbow-room they had been given, and published the NHS and Community Care Bill, announcing that it would be forced through parliament in double-quick time and implemented from the autumn of this year, with opted-out 'NHS Trusts' fully operational from April 1991.

Groundwork for privatisation

The Bill's proposals are far-reaching, laying the basic groundwork for a possible fourth-term Tory government to press for extensive privatisation of health care – either through imposing more means-testing and charges for treatment (compelling most workers to take out medical insurance) or through floating off more and more 'NHS Trusts' as fully-fledged private concerns.

Its main proposals can be summarised as follows:

- It abandons any attempt to plan for more equal access to local health services, and instead establishes the beginnings of an 'internal market' in health care, setting every hospital and health authority in competition with each other, and requiring the establishment of a vast new administrative apparatus for the cost-

ing, pricing and billing of treatment for each patient, as well as drawing up complex 'contracts' governing hospital services. The government admits that their 'reforms' will require at least another 1,000 accountants and several thousand additional clerical staff to administer, at a cost of over £200m.

From the patients' point of view the new system means it is more likely that they will have to travel to another health district to obtain treatment, and that districts already poorly provided with health services will fall even further behind, with the least 'successful' departments and hospitals losing out in the competition for patients, being starved of cash and forced to close.

■ Within the internal market system, an initial list of up to 80 hospitals are being encouraged to 'opt out' of local health authority control and become 'NHS Trusts' – self-contained businesses ('public corporations') dependent entirely upon income from attracting sufficient patients, and required to generate a profit of up to six per cent per year on the capital assets of the hospital.

The opted-out hospitals would be run by Boards of Directors, half of whom would be full-time managers, and the remainder hand-picked by Kenneth Clarke. They would conduct their meetings in secret (only one public meeting each year), and would be exempt from any requirement to plan services with health authorities or local authorities.

They would be free to reallocate NHS beds to private use, to sell assets of the hospital, and to tear up national pay and conditions agreements for any and all grades of staff, or even to withdraw trade union recognition altogether.

The Bill specifically excludes any requirement or provision for a ballot of staff or the local community on proposals for hospitals to opt out: the decision on whether an opt-out bid drawn up by a handful of managers and top consultants should go ahead is solely in the hands of Kenneth Clarke as Secretary of State.

■ Family doctor (GP) services are to be subjected for the first time to cash limits, whether voluntarily (large GP practices are being invited to apply to become independent 'budget holders', with a rigidly limited budget averaging a mere £60 per head) or as part of a general move to fund the Family Practitioner Service from (cash-limited) Regional Health Authorities. Clarke's assurances to the BMA that this will not limit doctors' ability to treat patients are not worth the paper they are written on.

Cash limits in the GP service will work most fiercely against the elderly and chronic sick who are more costly to care for, and who may well find it increasingly difficult to get on



Moves towards privatising non-emergency ambulance services are just part of the attack on the NHS

to a GP list: there are already complaints in some areas that some seriously ill patients are being squeezed out by cash-conscious GPs. Towards the end of the financial year, when practice cash allocations will be running low, the probability is that waiting lists will be transferred from hospital departments to GP surgeries, where patients will be waiting for referral as outpatients before even getting as far as waiting for operations.

■ The Bill also sets out to squeeze more and more of the frail elderly out of NHS beds (provided free at point of use, funded from taxation) into the means-tested area of local government social services, forcing more and more elderly people to pay (again) – from savings or even the sale of their houses – for their own health care.

■ To prevent these proposals leading to an increase in local government services, the Bill also insists that every aspect of 'community care' provision – from home help services right through to residential care – should be subject to competitive tendering, opening the threat of cheapskate cowboy firms employing teams of low-paid, grudging staff who would then provide a miserable standard of service in the homes of the vulnerable elderly.

Councils are particularly to be penalised if they seek to provide residential care themselves rather than send elderly people to private or voluntary residential accommodation: they will have to foot the whole bill for any patients accommodated in their own directly-managed homes, but will be eligible for subsidies on those sent into privately-run homes, which are already proving themselves a 'nice little earner' not only for individual

proprietors but also for quite large companies.

■ Health authorities are to be reduced in size, partly by kicking off the present local authority representatives (the only members ever to be elected in any capacity by the local community), abandoning the pretence of joint planning with local authorities. Also axed will be the token trade union representative. Instead new 'business-style' health authorities, half of them full-time managers, the rest hand-picked by Kenneth Clarke, and completely remote from the local community, will take over – making it virtually impossible for unions to maintain their present disciplinary and appeals procedures.

■ The Bill as a whole increases bureaucracy while eliminating any coherent planning. There is no guarantee that any health authority will continue to offer the less glamorous and profitable specialities, especially those needed by the elderly and chronic sick.

As management in West Berkshire has said, the specialities most hospitals will offer on the 'internal market' will be "those which do not require substantial support services or long-term continuity of care". But there is also nothing in the Bill to prevent a surplus of health authorities all deciding to compete for any particular speciality – for example orthopaedics – at the expense of another – say gynaecology.

Chaos

The chaos will be compounded by the opted-out hospitals seeking to win patients from other health authorities and to maximise income any way they can. There can be no long-term guarantee that such hospitals will

Fighting for a woman's right to choose

Two campaigns are now combatting aspects of the new Embryology Research Bill, currently before parliament. JANE KELLY explores the basis for joint activity between them.

Since the 1967 Abortion Act, nearly all legislative attacks on women's reproductive rights have been attempts to restrict abortion. The exception was the Gillick Bill which tried to restrict young women's access to contraception. The confused responses to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill are in part because the Bill and proposed amendments cover a range of issues, of which abortion time limits is one.

The National Abortion Campaign, responding as it has in the past to such attacks, organised a national meeting and helped set up the Stop The Amendment Campaign, to which was added the slogan Fight For Choice (STAC-FC).

The Rights Of Women (ROW) Lesbian Custody Project, seeing the question of Donor Insemination (DI) for all women who seek it also under attack, set up the Campaign For Access To DI (CADI). So there are two campaigns. It has now been agreed that a Liaison Committee should be set up to coordinate joint national and local actions, for example during the week of action in February and any national demonstrations.

Local campaigns are being set up all round the country, and often these are being jointly organised, both because activists recognise the connections and so that scarce human resources can be maximised.

The dangers implicit in dividing off the campaign in defence of abortion rights from the rights of access to DI for lesbian and single mothers is not only a question of doubling the amount of work. In the letter sent out from the STAC-FC campaign, the writer of the letter, if not the campaign itself, is ambivalent on whether we should oppose or support the Bill. She accuses the anti-abortionists of 'hijacking the embryo research Bill' which she says will 'further confuse the important debates around embryo research and the issues which are being raised under the Bill'.

Everyone agrees that abortion is a key reproductive right. Women seek abortions whether or not they are legally available. To have a child which is not wanted, to have to look after it until adulthood, often in poverty is a major social issue for large numbers of women. We defend such rights as we have achieved for those reasons. But the Bill seeks restriction of other reproductive rights, equally important to those women who seek

them. And in addition they are rights (for lesbian and single women) which confront the Tory ideology of the traditional nuclear family.

Apart from the tactical decisions, which can be made nearer the time, on whether campaigners should support 14 days as opposed to no research at all, and support for the surrogacy clause, the Bill is an attack on a woman's right to choose, and as such we should oppose it.

Far from it being a problem in taking up all aspects of the attack, it will be a positive benefit to any campaign if all those women affected - lesbian and single mothers, black women, young women as well as pro-abortionists - are involved and prepared to fight for all reproductive rights, not just one. In a sense we have no choice anyway. The Bill takes them up and it would be irresponsible to separate out abortion because that is the one we have traditionally fought around.

Nor can we fight the abortion question on the old 'Defend the '67 Act' ground either. Current medical techniques mean that the basis of the 1967 Act no longer holds. A foetus can be viable at 24 weeks (and even before in some cases). We have to use the slogan of 'A Woman's Right To Choose'. To choose whether, when, where and how to have her baby is an important demand and covers many aspects of reproductive rights so that no woman feels excluded by its framework. And we must include under its umbrella rights of access to DI for all women who seek it, no matter what their status or sexuality.

It's a pity there are two separate campaigns, but both at a local level, where we should support single campaigns and at a national level through the Liaison Committee, we must encourage as much joint activity as possible. Lobbies of Parliament, demonstrations, and meetings should be either set up under one organisation or organised jointly. We cannot afford to be divided over these issues. We must take up the campaigns in the Labour Party and in trade unions. In 1979 the TUC supported the anti-Corrie march. We have to try and rebuild that support.

The Bill represents one more element of the right's pro-family and anti-choice strategy. We are going to have to fight hard to defeat the Bill but given unity in action and a preparedness to work with all who oppose the Bill we can win.

continue to offer any particular service to local people: they may find it more profitable to admit no local people at all, but to focus instead on private patients. Harefields Hospital has already spelled out its expectation that NHS demand will not increase, but that after opting-out it will expand its private beds.

The NHS Bill is indeed a looming disaster for our health service: but the left cannot simply pile the blame for the lack of a campaign on to the Labour and union leaders. The rank and file of the Socialist Movement, the left in the Labour Party itself and the revolutionary left have for the most part been conspicuous by their almost complete indifference and inactivity on health campaigns, except on those occasions - such as the nurses' and now the ambulance dispute - where a wages struggle erupts. The concept of a serious labour movement political campaign to defend the NHS is almost completely lacking.

The fact is that even if the Tories' majority is sufficient to push it through parliament, the implementation of the Bill can be seriously disrupted by the health unions if a campaign is built now to fight back. The complex systems for monitoring, costing, pricing and billing for treatment of each patient can only work with the cooperation of the NHS workforce at each level: and in many cases the new system imposes extra, unpaid and unwanted tasks on staff, such as nurses being required to key information into computers.

Campaign

There must be a campaign now inside and outside the health unions around the clear policy of *boycotting* all work on the new information/computer systems, *refusing to cover* for additional work created by these systems and for vacancies created in admin and clerical staffs by the recruitment of extra staff to implement the White Paper, and *fighting to expose* the squandering of cash and human resources on the bureaucratic madness of the Bill - resources that should be devoted to patient care.

This must be backed up with firm decisions of health unions for strike action in defence of any member of staff victimised for imposing such a boycott, and in opposition to any attempt by management to scrap or undermine existing trade union recognition and Whitley council conditions.

This campaign should already have been well underway: it can't now wait until after the ambulance dispute.

Side by side with our fight for solidarity action with the ambulance crews and an escalation of their fight we must begin the political fightback to defend the very fabric of our NHS against this deadly earnest attack by the Tories.

The two main positions on the Embryology Bill spelled out

1) Oppose the Bill – fight for women's choice

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, introduced into parliament in November last year, is an attack on women's reproductive rights. While it's clear that the ruling class doesn't agree on some of the issues in the Bill, including the use of an amendment to restrict time limits for abortions, nonetheless, the Bill as a whole represents a right wing attack on a woman's right to choice.

The ruling class are divided over a number of issues in the Bill. These divisions are part of the contradictions faced by the ruling class over the whole question of women and work, the family and sexuality. The changing demography of Britain means that it is necessary to draw more and more women into the workforce, albeit in low-paid, part-time jobs and with flexible work patterns. Providing workplace nurseries is only part of the social adjustment necessary to facilitate this. For while the family remains the place where the reproduction and servicing of the labour force takes place, the demand for more working women means that control over this process, including control over contraception and abortion are also highlighted.

The Bill itself is not centrally about abortion; indeed some members of the Government, notably Kenneth Clarke, are unhappy that it is to be amended in. Nevertheless stopping embryo research altogether or restricting it to 14 days, does have implications for abortion rights. It has always been the argument of the right-wing that the embryo/foetus has rights from the moment of conception. To restrict research to 14 days capitulates to that view.

But the right-wing is divided further on other questions in the Bill. For example on the question of Donor Insemination (DI). The Bill sets up a Statutory Licensing Authority (SLA) to license and oversee a code of practice at



Like Gillick, the wacky right cannot accept any form of women's control over fertility or reproduction

clinics for donor insemination; all very vague and no doubt deliberately so. But Tory right winger Anne Winterton wants precision. Her amendment will ban DI for lesbians and single women.

Despite that fact that the number of lesbians seeking DI is very small (for the good reason that DIY is easy) the far right are not content with the vagueness of the Bill. They also suspect that uniting opposition to the Bill will be made more difficult if one of the groups targeted for attack is lesbian mothers. However the right-wing's obsession with 'family values' means they have also attacked single mothers, making the group much larger. While there is not a very strong tradition of defence of women's different needs and rights by all women, it doesn't mean it can't be achieved.

While there are some positive elements of the Bill, for example the section on surrogacy, (Clause 32) which states that such arrangements are unenforceable; and while we would obviously support 14 days as opposed to no embryo research at all, overall the Bill should be *opposed* as an attack on women's reproductive rights.

It narrows choice, gives the embryo rights which could lead to further attacks on abortion. The SLA will undoubtedly attempt to stop any DI to other than heterosexual couples, leading to the closure of clinics, restricting choice further. If the Bill passes the 'no embryo research' position, then the important work on genetically inherited diseases will be undermined.

Jane Kelly

2) Socialists must fight for amendments – or vote against!

The first and most general issue posed is what attitude we should adopt to scientific research and experimentation on the human embryo. Here we have to confront the arguments of the far right, who wish to protect the human embryo as they believe it to be a human being, and are consequently totally opposed to any experimentation.

Socialists must support the position of the *National Abortion Campaign* which argues that there should be no distinction made between the embryo and other forms of human tissue. The 14-day limit on research, as one

option in the Bill, is better than no research at all; but it is an arbitrary limit, and cannot be justified scientifically.

In general we favour experimentation on the human embryo, because it will help in identifying congenital diseases, the causes of miscarriage and infertility, and how gene and chromosome abnormalities develop, and lead to the discovery of new forms of contraception. But we also demand that research must tackle the causes of infertility and sterility which has increased enormously in recent years because of living conditions, and industrial pollution.

In defending scientific research, the use of

Donor Insemination and the new reproductive technologies, we not only have to confront the far right but also some anti-science brands of radical feminism, who argue that the New Reproductive Technologies (combined with increasing intervention in childbirth) represent a threat to women's power to control reproduction and childbirth.

Ironically, Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* argued rather the opposite, concluding that women would only gain their liberation if they stopped having children 'naturally' with men, and had them through donor insemination. This leads to the second question; the need for these techniques to be available to *all* women, on demand, regardless of marital status and sexual orientation.

It is a myth that women have control over reproduction in class society. The dominant mode of organising reproduction is through the patriarchal family and the ruling class is having problems in dealing with these new techniques, not because they are such amazing scientific developments, but precisely because they can undercut the traditional notion of motherhood and fatherhood.

What we see, for example, in the debate around the Embryology Bill is a desperate attempt, by the far right, to assert the biological role of fatherhood and to limit access both to DI and the NRTs to single women and lesbian women.

It is the social relations in which children are reproduced that are focussing the attention of several right-wing amendments to this Bill. Some of these are lunatic amendments, which are just not implementable. One wants to alter a clause in the Bill which says the husband of the women should be the father of the child, and where a different man donates the sperm, to ensure that the sperm donator is the father!

Another amendment seeks to restrict access for single and lesbian women. Donor Insemination is already very restricted on the NHS, and generally only available to women with a male partner, so this amendment is very dangerous. Donor Insemination should really not need to be considered in this Bill at all; it is a very simple technique which has been used widely for over a century. Infertility treatment, involving advanced In-vitro fertilisation is at the moment often restricted by the expense involved; and these facilities should be available to all women and men on the NHS.

The message of the New Reproductive Techniques is not wholly positive for women,



Would women be more liberated if they turned to donor insemination?

however, because they not only put pressure on women to fulfil their lives through reproduction, but they also put pressure on women to have the 'perfect baby'. Socialists must take a critical stance on both these issues.

We favour giving women more choice, more freedom to fulfil a variety of roles in their lives, including the right to choose *not* to have children. This is why the threat to abortion time limits posed by Anne Widdecombe's proposed amendment is such an enormous threat to the gains we have won.

Abortion rights are a separate issue from those raised in this Bill which focusses on Embryo experimentation, human infertility and the New Reproductive techniques. The right-wing are trying to confuse the issues to get government time to cut abortion time limits to overturn the gains made in the 1967 Act. They hope to use the new consensus over the possible 'viability' of the foetus at an earlier stage to stop abortion after 24, 22 or 20 weeks. The fight against this amendment will inevitably be a top priority for socialist feminists who have traditionally understood the significance of the '67 Act and the fight for the right to choose.

It is because we favour giving women a real choice about how to run their lives that we also take a critical stance on the issue of disability posed in this debate. We defend research that helps to identify genetic disorders but we also campaign for facilities for the disabled to give women a real choice about carrying a disabled foetus up to term. Finally we support the right, defended in the existing Bill,

of any woman who bares a child to keep it if she chooses, regardless of any legal contract. We also support the ban on commercial surrogacy but will defend the right of women to have children for other women if they so choose.

Many of these demands can only be fully realised in the context of a free, comprehensive, state health care system which responds to the needs of working class people and women.

Labour Parties should ensure they are informed about these issues and Labour MPs have prepared a whole series of progressive amendments ready to put before Parliament in this debate. If such amendments are not forthcoming or are voted down, they should *vote against* this Bill. Unfortunately the Labour Party, in dramatic contrast to the far right, is unprepared for this debate and is beginning to concede the crucial argument on abortion time limits.

The task of revolutionary socialists cannot therefore be clearer. It is to get out onto the streets and into the trade union and labour party branches to organise a massive fightback against the reactionary amendments and to demand that the Labour Party gets its parliamentary act together and bangs down clear amendments to this Bill, along the lines expressed above. This would help to push the Tories onto the defensive and show that Labour really takes the cause of women seriously.

Valerie Coultas



East Germany's New Forum movement on the march – heralding the demise of Stalinist rule

The Implosion of East European Stalinism

The following are extracts from a document discussed and unanimously adopted at a January 1990 conference of Socialist Outlook supporters. It was drafted before the fall of Ceausescu's Romanian regime.

1990 will be the year of elections in, at least, Hungary, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and probably Bulgaria as well. In each of these countries the elections will in effect be a plebiscite on the continued rule of the Stalinist parties. In each of them, the Stalinists will certainly suffer crushing defeats. It is the end of an era.

The eruption of the East European masses in an attempt to overthrow

bureaucratic rule, together with the events in the Soviet Union, represent the most important development in world politics since the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949. At stake is the continued existence of Stalinism as a significant force in world politics.

The whole world order which arose out of the defeat of Nazi imperialism, finalised at Yalta and Potsdam, is now in question. The division of the European working class imposed by the 'great powers' is rapidly being swept away. The 'bipolar' character of world politics, dominated by two armed camps, has been shaken to its foundations.

As we approach the 21st century a fundamental turning point has been reached: there is an historic opportunity for the victory of the political revolution, but also great dangers that the working class could be robbed of

the social gains inherent in the bureaucratised workers' states.

The revolution underway has shatteringly confirmed the Trotskyist critique of 'actually existing socialism'. Trotsky's watchword of defiance towards what was then an ascendent and victorious Stalinism – that 'the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus' – has turned from a slogan to dramatic reality. To turn this crisis into working class victories, Trotsky's abiding concern – the 'crisis of working class leadership' must be resolved.

The roots of the crisis

The mass upsurge against bureaucratic rule now affects every east European country. What has clearly sparked this crisis is the growing realisation that the Gorbachev regime lacks either the will or the capacity to intervene militarily in Eastern Europe to save Stalinist rule

“the removal of the protective cover of the Red Army rapidly revealed the fundamental weakness and instability of bureaucratic rule. As a parasitic layer, and not a social class, the bureaucracy lacks the deep social roots and mechanisms of support enjoyed by the imperialist bourgeoisies”

“bureaucratic rule, unlike capitalism in boom periods, contains no fundamental mechanism towards innovation and the permanent revolutionising of productive technique”

— as happened in Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. December's meeting of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow was symbolic in this respect: Gorbachev in effect told the East Europeans to go their own way: the Soviet Union can no longer afford its huge subsidies to the other Comecon countries.

The removal of the protective cover of the Red Army rapidly revealed the fundamental weakness and instability of bureaucratic rule. As a parasitic layer, and not a social class, the bureaucracy lacks the deep social roots and mechanisms of support enjoyed by the imperialist bourgeoisies. Its rule has relied entirely on its monopoly of politics, imposed by force.

Compelled to face their own working masses alone, the party apparatuses and secret police forces have crumbled. While the last military action to crush a workers' revolt — the December 1981 coup by General Jaruzelski in Poland — was carried out by domestic forces, it was backed by the perceived threat of direct Russian intervention under the 'Brezhnev doctrine'. Now that doctrine is at an end.

Underlying the revolt is the near-exasperation of hundreds of millions of East European citizens at the failure of the bureaucratic system to deliver either material prosperity, or political and cultural freedom. Despite repeated subventions from the Soviet Union, and vast borrowing from Western banks in the 1970s (especially by Hungary and Poland), the East European economies failed to develop beyond basic industrialisation and the provision of a social welfare system.

With the exception of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, even these gains have been put in question. Every East European citizen understands thoroughly the waste, inefficiency and sclerosis of the centralised bureaucratic command economy. These failings have been especially highlighted in the past 15 years, as the gap between these countries and the advanced capitalist countries has increased, both in terms of productive technique and the standard of living of the employed sections of the working class.

Bureaucratic rule, unlike capitalism in boom periods, contains no fundamental mechanism towards innovation and the permanent revolutionising of productive technique; indeed structurally inbuilt in these economies are powerful tenden-

cies towards the reproduction endlessly of the status quo. That is why the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have fallen behind in the information technology revolution.

However deep the attachment of the proletariat to the social gains of a non-capitalist system, the knowledge that workers in the West are on average more prosperous and in many respects more free, has exerted a permanent pressure.

While the lives of the East European masses are incomparably better than those of the masses in the 'third world', they are still — by the yardstick of the overall development of human productive technique and culture — drab, stultifying and impoverished. Now hundreds of millions of people have decided that to gain a better life they will not go on in the old way, and that their leaders are incapable of going on in the old way: these are the classic conditions for the emergence of pre-revolutionary situations.

The pivotal events of the crisis have occurred in East Germany. Until the autumn of 1989 it seemed that Eastern Europe was undergoing two separate courses of development — that of Poland and Hungary towards radical marketisation and political reform, and that of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany (and in a different way Romania) remaining true to the Stalinist model. But the mass movement of the East German workers smashed this dichotomy and led directly to the events in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, leaving the Ceausescu dynasty in Romania isolated and under siege.

Confusion in the imperialist camp

The response of the imperialist leaders to the events in eastern Europe has been one of confusion: only the Christian Democrats in West Germany have responded with equanimity, seeing the events as strengthening their hand against their imperialist rivals. Both French and British imperialism have responded with alarm.

Overall, the existing world order depends, for imperialism, on the existence of NATO and the bloc system; the division of Europe; the presence of US troops in Europe to ensure their 'leadership' of the Western world; the existence of nuclear powers with special rights and a special status internationally. While the crisis of Stalinism creates the possibility of historic defeats for the deformed workers' states, it also

creates an epoch of instability which puts in question the whole world order which has ensured the hegemony of the bourgeoisie.

For Thatcher and British capitalism the stakes are clear. Britain's international position depends fundamentally on its status as the possessor of nuclear weapons. This depends in return of the largesse of the USA; Britain's nuclear weapons are in fact provided by the United States — in turn a function of the 'special relationship' by which Britain acts as the USA's junior and faithful ally within the NATO alliance — and in the EC. Already Thatcher has suffered a decisive defeat of the modernisation of battlefield nuclear weapons. Once the bloc system and the nuclear competition are in question, then Britain's usefulness as 'sidekick' to the US is removed.

Evidently for both Britain and France the idea of a united capitalist Germany is anathema. It means the domination of Europe, even more than today, by potentially the most powerful capitalist state in the world. British industry in particular would be totally marginalised. Mitterand's dream of Franco-German joint hegemony of the EC would be in tatters.

France's response to the crisis has been to demand the tighter integration of the European Community to act as a joint pole of attraction for capitalist restoration in the east, as opposed to leaving this role to West Germany alone. But this is a panic strategy: at the Strasbourg summit West Germany was happy to go along with moves towards faster economic and political integration, because it knows that, whatever the official format, restoration of capitalism in eastern Europe, or even just a big increase in trade, will unfold to the advantage of the country with the largest economy, the best geographical conditions and the biggest established links — on all three criteria West Germany itself.

The response of the United States has been cautious. George Bush was careful to insist after the Malta summit that the cold war was by no means over. Otherwise, he said, there would be no justification for US troops in Europe. A world without the bloc system and the fundamental East-West divide would create immense problems for the US, which relies for its leadership of the West on its military and political leadership (and the second depends on the first). Once inter-imperialist competition is

more and more reduced just to economic competition, then the USA is in a much weaker position vis-a-vis West Germany and Japan.

While Bush has personally supported moves towards faster European integration, this is not necessarily the position of US capital as a whole. In any case, caught between penetration of eastern markets by the EC as a whole or simply that of West Germany, the US is faced with two evils between which it is difficult to decide.

In general, again with the partial exception of the West German leaders, the main response of the imperialist leaders has been to stress 'order' and 'stability'. While the discomfiture of the Stalinist leaders may be pleasing to them, the mobilisation of the masses contains a potential which is deeply disturbing. Thus the visit of US Secretary of State Baker to Hans Modrow, giving support for 'orderly' change, is an obvious sign of US concerns. This is also the source of Thatcher's insistence that the Warsaw Pact must remain, and the process must not go 'too fast'.

The historic stakes

In the medium term there are evidently three possible outcomes of the present upsurge, and they might not be the same for each country. Either capitalism will be restored; or the political revolution will win; or bureaucratic rule will be consolidated. But in an overall historic sense the choice is between the restoration of capitalism and workers power.

In part the outcome depends on the close interaction between the events in East Europe and those in the Soviet Union. If the crisis of perestroika were to result in the fall of Gorbachev and the restoration of a hardline Stalinist leadership, this could well spur a counter-offensive by the bureaucracy in the East European countries. But this seems an unlikely development, and any sharp attempt to restore the previous system of bureaucratic domination, especially one based on force, would result in a gigantic explosion, with incalculable consequences.

More likely, the events in Eastern Europe which have now overtaken those in the USSR itself, can easily flow back into the Soviet Union, fuelling demands for an end to the Communist monopoly of power. Such a development would really place Gorbachev's position in jeopar-



Czechoslovakia: the Stalinists tried and failed to invoke workers against students

dy: the CPSU's monopoly is central for the continuance of bureaucratic rule in the Soviet Union itself.

Leaving aside some unexpected and momentous event in the Soviet Union, the outcome is much more likely to lie in a protracted triangular struggle between restorationist forces aided by imperialism; the bureaucracy, or rather those sections of it which want to defend Stalinist rule; and the working class.

In practice, as most dramatically shown by Poland, whole sections of the bureaucracy will aid the process of trying to defeat the workers economically and politically in order to prepare the ground for Western investment and the restoration of capitalism.

The main obstacle to the restoration of capitalism is the working class itself. The working class in each country must be defeated in a series of frontal battles if property is to be re-privatised, a domestic bureaucratic-bourgeoisie established, and the social gains of the masses wiped out. Two obviously related questions are at issue here: the level of mobilisation of the masses, and their overall political consciousness. Both are presently in deep flux.

While a spontaneous fight against austerity can delay the restoration of capitalism, only a conscious fight for a democratic socialist order can lead to the victory of the political revolution. Two central problems raise themselves here.

First, it is an open question to what extent the discrediting of any form of 'socialism' and collectivism by the Stalinist rulers has succeeded in driving the masses into the arms of

capitalism. For example, while in East Germany socialist and collectivist values seem to be strong, the pull of Western prosperity on sections of the population is also strong.

Beyond that, even those like Václav Havel in Czechoslovakia who are suspicious of the West, and even most of those committed to some form of democratic socialism, generally remain committed to 'marketisation' as the sole form of possible economic restructuring. This is an historic gain for pro-capitalist ideologues, and a mammoth problem for building a genuine socialist opposition.

Secondly, while the restoration of capitalism implies the defeat of Stalinism and an historic vindication of all currents that argue for socialism with democracy, nonetheless the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe – especially if combined with a similar outcome in the USSR – would be a world historic defeat for the working class.

In this respect it is absolutely irresponsible to ignore – as do state capitalist and bureaucratic collectivist currents – the weight of the deformed workers' states in the world relationship of forces. With their defeat, the continued existence of the Cuban workers' state and of the revolutionary government in Nicaragua would be in peril.

Imperialism would be much freer to engage in adventures, not only, for example, towards Vietnam, but against the whole third world. Imperialism rampant would rapidly lead to resurgent militarism, especially in Japan and Germany. New inter-imperialist wars could not be ruled out.

"the main obstacle to the restoration of capitalism is the working class, which must be defeated in a series of frontal battles if property is to be re-privatised, a domestic bureaucratic bourgeoisie established, and the social gains of the masses wiped out"

The reimposition of the imperialist yoke in Eastern Europe is a nightmare scenario.

An opposite scenario, the possibility of the emergence of new democratic socialist states, or even a militant fight in that direction, could have an explosive impact on the working class in every country, but especially on the workers of the advanced capitalist world, including Europe. The danger for imperialism is not just that of the attractive power of democratic socialist states if they are established, but of the lessons of mass mobilisation. Already there is no doubt that political freedoms are greater in East Germany today than they are in any advanced capitalist state. The right to demonstrate is untrammelled, and everyone can inspect their own police file – if it hasn't been destroyed. The power of the secret police, including the right to surveillance, is completely destroyed. The dangers of these lessons spilling over into Western Europe are immense.

To maximise the opportunities for the working class in this situation requires the construction of a revolutionary political leadership – there can be no political revolution without it. We do not define such a leadership as necessarily explicitly Trotskyist; but it must engage in a struggle around the main themes and demands of the political revolution, on the axis of socialism with democracy.

This must include a rejection of marketisation as the *main* form of economic restructuring, and the building of organisations of workers' power at the level of the factory and throughout society. Through the fight to build organised bodies of support, revolutionary currents and parties in every east European country, and, and through ceaseless contacts and political intervention, we and our co-thinkers internationally can make a major contribution to the creation of such a leadership.

The programme of political revolution

The programme of political revolution which we advocate must go beyond attempts at 'reform' of the system and the establishment of parliamentary-type democracy. Key to our demands must be the fight for the self-organisation and political independence of the working class from Stalinist and bourgeois forces. While we do not write off reform Com-



Fighting ecological catastrophe in Siberia

munists at the base of the Stalinist parties, history has already answered the question of whether they can be transformed into instruments for socialist democracy; by and large they are finished; their working class base will increasingly look elsewhere.

The fight for workers' self organisation must involve the fight for independent trade unions and workers' councils independent of the Stalinist parties. The most important example of developments of this kind was the mass working class movement and an extensive network of workers councils which characterised the emergence of Solidarnosc in Poland. Under these conditions the working class, as an organised force, were the driving force in the process of political revolution. It involves the fight for new political parties based on socialist democracy and the programme of workers self-management.

Socialists must combine the fight for socialist democracy with a struggle around transitional demands in defence of the material interests of the workers which will everywhere come under attack. Key among these demands are a *sliding scale of wages* to protect the workers against the rampant inflation in several East European countries, and the fight for a 35 hour week against the long working hours and growing unemployment. This fight must be complemented by the demand for radical egalitarianism and the end of all vestiges of bureaucratic privilege.

Integral to the fight for political revolution is the struggle for real, as opposed to juridical, equality for women. In east European countries women are completely integrated into the workforce – in the GDR for example they are 51 per cent of the labour force. But in general real equality does not exist, either in terms of employment opportunities or in

terms of childcare or the socialisation of domestic labour. In several countries abortion and contraception rights are de facto restricted.

The fight against ecological catastrophe assumes particular force in eastern Europe. Stalinism's absolute priority to extensive production and large-scale industry has created some of the worst ecological

problems in the world. Thus the programme of political revolution must include the demand for a workers' inspectorate to supervise the environment and the transition to ecologically-sustainable economic growth.

In several parts of eastern Europe the national question increasingly raises its head. Socialists demand the right of national self-determination, including the right of separation, for oppressed nationalities.

Above all, the programme of political revolution must be centred on the fight for a democratically centralised planned economy, under workers' control. The first stage of this is the fight for workers' veto over central economic plans and a regime of workers' control at the level of the factory. This programme does not exclude all marketisation initiatives – for example the creation of small firms in the service sector with profits supervised by the state, or agricultural and other co-operatives. But the key to regenerating the economies is the unleashing of the creative power of the masses, around production objectives democratically decided.

Rational democratic planning assumes not autarky, but an international division of labour. That is why the fight for an international federation of democratic socialist republics, in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is vital. But the key to regenerating production historically is to link production and markets east and west – in particular to unify the economies of the Soviet Union and Germany. This is the centre of the demand for a United Socialist States of Europe.

In particular the programme of political revolution involves the struggle for democratic workers' councils (soviets), the separation of party and state and the smashing of Stalinist control of the police, military and secret police.

"In east European countries women are completely integrated into the workforce, but in general real equality does not exist. In several countries abortion and contraception rights are de facto restricted"



Western 'democracy' in practice? West Berlin cops rough up demonstrators, while East Berlin workers look on aghast

The question of German reunification

German reunification is a question that cannot be evaded by marxists. The division of Europe was jointly imposed on the working class by Stalinism and imperialism. The bloc system, of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, was a system of clamping the working classes of Europe under respectively American and Soviet hegemony.

As internationalists we are in favour of the unification of the European working class, of building stronger fighting links between its component parts as part of a struggle for a united socialist Europe. The division of the German working class is at the heart of the division of Europe. Thus we are for the right of unity of the German workers, and for the removal of all foreign troops from German soil. But quite obviously the national question in Germany is intertwined with the social question in a quite unique fashion.

Concretely, the issue is posed as to whether the unification of Germany will be achieved by the integration of the GDR into a powerful German capitalist superstate, with the destruction of the social gains of the GDR workers, or by the generalisation of those gains in an anti-capitalist direction throughout Germany. At the present time, this poses itself as the question of the *self-determination of the East German workers*.

We raise this slogan not because

we think that there is an East German nationality, but because the East German workers have enjoyed historic social gains, embodied in nationalised property and an advanced welfare system, which would be under direct threat if unification were imposed against their will.

Articulating support for German reunification and the self-determination of the GDR workers in this way can only be advanced in a perspective of permanent revolution. It is not a demand that makes a precondition of the destruction of capitalism in West Germany; the condition is that the East German workers have the opportunity to defend and extend their social gains.

While sections of West German capital have been quick to seize on the demand for reunification, others have been more cautious. It is not just a question of the possibility of extending capitalist production relations eastwards; there is also the possibility that a working class committed to collectivist and socialist values could be incorporated westwards – with massively destabilising social results. The German working class, and its political organisations, including the West German SPD, is one of the most powerful and organised working classes in the world. It has one of the longest and most militant traditions of any working class. Its unification under any conditions would be, at best, a mixed blessing for capital.

Capital in West Germany would

only accept reunification on *its* terms – including the defeat and atomisation of the East German workers, the ending of their mobilisations, the destruction and asset-stripping of whole sectors of GDR industry, and the destruction of the state welfare system. While supporting the historic goal of reunification, again as a step towards a socialist Europe, we demand the GDR workers have the right to say 'no' to the plans of Western capital.

Demanding the right of self-determination of the GDR workers, including their right to maintain the present state boundaries, does not mean yielding an inch on the demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the GDR's right to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. Marxists oppose the joint Gorbachev-Thatcher demand that the present bloc system must stay intact to ensure 'security'.

Insofar as the West German Greens, Left Alternative and sections of the SPD base have raised the demand of self-determination for the GDR workers against the 'free social market' in West Germany, their response is entirely correct. But marxists cannot in any circumstances mix our banners with those, whether Stalinists or influenced by the concerns of British and French imperialism, who oppose reunification Germany on principle. On principle, we are *for* reunification.

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Eastern Europe: Where Is The Left?

There are quite a few people in Eastern Europe – Christa Wolf in East Germany and Alexander Dubcek in Czechoslovakia, to name but two of the most prominent – who see the present revolutions there as offering once more the possibility of creating what Wolf calls ‘real socialism’ and what Dubcek would still call ‘socialism with a human face’. Such people seem to be in a minority. In this article GUS FAGAN looks briefly, and very tentatively, at the new political formations in Eastern Europe and makes some initial assessment of the prospects for socialist movements there in the wake of the overthrow of communism.

The General Framework

Any assessment has to be very tentative because the political revolutions in Eastern Europe are not over. The repressive apparatus is still largely intact in most of these countries (security police and army); in all of them the old political elite and the broader *nomenklatura* still have a lot of power; the formation of political currents, parties, political programmes and class/group interest organisations is still in its initial stages.

I will look only at the countries of Eastern Central Europe, although what is happening in the Baltic states, in Moldavia and elsewhere in the USSR, bears striking similarity to what has happened elsewhere.

The first and most obvious consequence of these revolutions is that ‘communism’ as a political regime is finished, as is also the international ‘communist’ movement, certainly in Europe. With the holding of genuinely free elections for the first time in over four decades, the communist parties of Eastern Europe will become minority parties and, in many cases, mere rumps.

After the horrors of the Ceausescu dictatorship the Romanian Communist Party will be lucky to survive at all. The dominant currents and parties that have emerged out of these revolutions look back to pre-war traditions of national and peasant movements and the church (Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary to some extent). There are also important liberal-

countries as socialist) but the fact that socialists seem to be offering an economic system which doesn’t work as well as capitalism.

This is not just a theoretical consideration. The average worker in the West eats better, has a better and cheaper supply of consumer goods, has better wages, more and better living space and an ecologically healthier environment. This is obvious to the millions of East Germans who visited the West since November 9. And, despite the widespread belief to the contrary, the average Western

European worker enjoys a better health service and a better social welfare system than the average Russian or Pole. Talk of a ‘third way’ or ‘genuine socialism’ (Stefan Heym) doesn’t cut much ice against such harsh realities, as interviews with East German workers in recent months have demonstrated.

In all these revolutions the intellectuals (professional middle classes, writers, technocrats) play an important role, exemplified by Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia. And it is true that in the last decade the majority of these intellectuals, generally organised in the communist

parties, have come over to the view that only some form of capitalist/market mechanism and integration with the capitalist West can bring prosperity. East Germany may be a partial exception to this, but the extent of this difference shouldn’t be exaggerated: the views of many young demonstrators and of writers like Christa Wolf and Stefan Heym reflect a real commitment to socialism as a more humane and emancipated form of society, but intellectuals in the various economics institutes of East Berlin are more inclined to talk about joint ventures, private enterprise and abolition of subsidies.

Apart from the Solidarity trade union in Poland, no significant independent working class organisations have appeared in Eastern Europe. This is particularly true in Hungary,



New Czech President Vaclav Havel

democratic currents that have a lot of support among urban intellectuals and youth (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany).

The existence of these repressive communist regimes in the East has traumatised the socialist movement in Europe for more than half a century. The political revolutions, therefore, although not carried out under the banner of socialism and, in fact, hostile to that tradition, have altered fundamentally, and in a positive way, the framework in which socialist ideas will be debated in Europe.

Socialist movements will inevitably develop in these countries, but these will be minority movements. Just like ‘communism’, ‘socialism’ is also tainted in the popular mind in Eastern Europe. It’s not just the political link between the two that matters (common language, like the official designation, describes these

“socialist movements will inevitably develop in these countries, but these will be minority movements. Just like ‘communism’, ‘socialism’ is also tainted in the popular mind in Eastern Europe”

where the reform movement has existed longer than anywhere else. The existence of small independent unions in some countries doesn't alter this fact. Writing of Hungary in March 1988, Janos Kis suggested that:

"the only chance for workers to shoulder the burden of economic revival would be an open agreement between the government and the genuine leaders of the workers ... The main trouble is that there is no one with whom to enter into a contract. The masses who hold the key to political peace and quiet are unorganised".

Much has happened since then and the mass of the workers were clearly involved in the revolutions in the GDR, Romania and Czechoslovakia. But the absence of genuinely representative working class organisations on the political scene remains an important factor.

This, then, is the general framework in Eastern Europe within which one has to consider the prospects for the development of some form of socialist movement. Let us look now in some more detail at what actually exists in these countries, looking first at what has happened in the communist parties.

The Communist Parties

There will be free elections in all of these countries this year. There is little doubt that the communist parties will be reduced to small minorities. In the meantime, they still hold on to a considerable amount of power in most of the transitional regimes. They are trying to preserve the (CP-dominated) repressive apparatus (*Stasi* in East Germany) and are using their dominant position in the media (the CPs still own most of the papers, publishing houses, and the like) to keep as much control as possible. But a repeat of the Polish outcome is unavoidable in most, if not all, of these countries.

The transformation of Eastern Europe, either through revolutions from below (GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania) or through reforms from above resulting from growing mass pressure (Hungary, Bulgaria), has split all of these parties, although the split was fully consummated only in Hungary, with the majority of the HSWP reforming themselves in the social-democratic Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP). An openly



East German workers ask awkward questions of the new SED party boss

Stalinist rump with an allegedly 'pro-worker' and anti-reform demagoguery is completely marginalised. The HSP has about 14% support in the polls.

In Bulgaria, the old Zhivkov regime paid lip-service to Gorbachev-style reforms while carrying out a brutal repression of the rapidly growing opposition movement. The latter included a large ecological component. When Zhivkov was overthrown, with Moscow's support, in November 1989, the reform current, under Mladenov, who had been foreign minister for 18 years, announced a programme of liberalisation which includes free elections later this year. But the anti-reformist wing of the BCP has been openly stirring up anti-Turkish sentiment to destabilise the Mladenov government.

In the GDR the old leadership was swept out of office by the mass movement and, although the party presents a new face under Gysi and Modrow, the old guard still operates in the background. There is a suspicion that some sections of the SED might have a finger in some of the more spectacular examples of fascist graffiti that have led to calls for the retention of the hated security police (the *Stasi*). The partially-renamed party, which still proclaims its adherence to 'socialism', will be a minority after the elections.

With their marginalisation in the elections later this year we can expect these communist parties, much reduced in size (the SED in East Germany has already lost nearly half its members), to emerge eventually as a component in the minority socialist movement.

The Opposition

Except for the GDR, the vast majority of the organised opposition currents and parties that have developed in Eastern Europe defend a programme of liberal democracy (democratic process, rule of law, private enterprise, market, adequate social welfare system) and are hostile to the traditional socialist left.

In Hungary, where this process is most developed, the main opposition groups that could expect to play a major role after March 25 are all liberal-democratic in orientation. The economic programme of the Democratic Forum (MDF), adopted in October 1989, called for 'a democratic society and a competitive but socially aware market economy'. The Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), although it appears to contain a democratic socialist current within it, called in its Programme of March 1989, for 'the denationalisation of the economy' and rejected the 'utopia of reform communism'. The Smallholders' Party, a major party before the communist takeover, has been re-established and could have a lot of support in the countryside. A number of small leftist groups exist, one of the more interesting among them being the Hungarian October Party, led, among others, by Gyorgy Krasso and committed to the ideals of the Hungarian revolution of 1956. It is, however, quite small.

In Bulgaria, the Union of Democratic Forces, set up in December 1989, brought together a number of different opposition groups (Discussion Club for Glasnost and Democracy, Ecoglasnost, various human rights groups and a small So-

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cial Democratic Party, among others). The Glasnost Club, started in November 1988, held meetings of over 1000 in early November before the overthrow of Zhivkov. It has a membership mostly of academics, writers, artists and prominent cultural figures. It plans to become a political party. Agrarian and Muslim parties would win a lot of support in Bulgaria. An independent trade union movement (*Podkrepa*) has issued a policy statement which calls for 'a market economy of a socialist type' and demands an end to 'the bankrupt ideas of central distribution of the national product'. It is quite small, organises mainly intellectuals, and has close ties with Solidarity in Poland. The ecological movement is very strong in Bulgaria and a green party would do well in the elections scheduled for this year.

In Czechoslovakia, organisation of political currents is at a very early stage but the organised popular movement in New Forum seems very similar to the East German groups - committed to democracy, pluralism, economic opening to the West. Explicitly left-oriented groups, such as the group associated with Petr Uhl, appear to be very small, as is also the PPS(RD) group in Poland.

In Romania, although a small opposition group functioned among the Hungarian minority and some dissident communists were known supporters of Gorbachev-style reforms, the opposition was not able to organise as in the other countries. Since the overthrow of the regime the National Peasant Party and National Liberal Party have begun to play a prominent role. There is no socialist group of any significance, and the reform communists are fighting what seems like a losing battle to hold on (quite undemocratically) to positions of power.

Social Democracy

Social democratic parties have been formed in most of the countries of Eastern Europe. In a number of cases (Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria) these have been established by ex-members of the old pre-war socialist parties. In Hungary, Andras Revesz was deputy general-secretary of the SDP under Anna Kethley in 1956 and the new party's programme is based on the programme adopted in 1903!

In Bulgaria the old SDP was revived in November 1989. It claimed to have 1000 members within a day of its relaunch, one of its leaders being the 86-year old Atanas Moskov from the leadership of the old party. In

Poland the PPS claimed continuity with the pre-war PPS. This has led to inter-generational disputes in Poland (resulting in the formation of the PPS(RD)), and in Hungary, where the old guard, under Revesz, tried to keep control of the party by ruling that only those who had been members in 1945 could be considered for the leadership! The general secretary, Mihaly Bihari, resigned within a week of taking over the post.

The East German SDP has the support of the West German SPD and, in its political statements, appears to be somewhat to the right of the other main oppositional groups. An opinion poll in November gave the East German SDP 10 per cent support.

In all of those countries where social-democratic parties have been formed, basing their legitimacy on the older pre-war socialist parties and traditions, they remain at present quite small. But these parties will undoubtedly play an important role in the future of Eastern Europe. Given their tradition and ideology, they will relate more readily to the concerns of the workers; and they will also have the support of the international social democratic movement.

The West German SPD, until recently preferring its links with the established communist parties, used to oppose the acceptance of the small oppositional socialist parties by the Socialist International. But since the popular uprising in East Germany, and the formation of the East German SDP, SPD leader Willy Brandt has changed his position and has opened the way for the full integration of the East European parties into the social democratic movement: the Hungarian SDP took part in the Congress of the Socialist International in June 1989.

In their programmes or statements, these parties favour western-style freedoms and political pluralism and place emphasis on the need for strong social welfare provisions and on the traditional values of social justice and social egalitarianism.

The Struggle over Capitalisation

The economies of Eastern Europe are a disaster. Even when growth rates were relatively high, they were characterised by abysmally low levels of productivity, low quality products, chronic shortages of consumer goods, long working hours, unhealthy working conditions and technological backwardness. To the waste and distortions caused by bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption were added the dysfunctions caused by

economic autarky and by being cut off from world technological development.

Thus we had such economically irrational and wasteful phenomena as East Germany investing massively in the technology to produce its own microchip when they were already being produced quite cheaply a few hundred kilometers away in West Germany. Similarly, Romania built up a massive petro-chemical industry while the people starved and had no heating in their homes.

Fundamental to any strategy for the future of Europe is the acceptance of the overwhelming need for new forms of European (East-West) economic integration, technological transfer, trade and investment which will improve the lives of the people of Central and Eastern Europe. The economic argument is unassailable. The question posed, however, is the political one: how will this integration be managed? What forms of popular control and democratic decision-making are called for? This will be one of, if not the central issue in Eastern Europe in the next decade.

This, therefore, is a key issue which is already confronting the popular movements, new opposition groups and parties emerging from the recent upheavals. It is also an issue which is of immediate concern to socialists in Western Europe as well. What is at stake now, for the first time since the war, is the real possibility and genuine need for Europe-wide socialist co-operation.

There is universal acceptance in Eastern Europe that their economies have failed and that new internal mechanisms as well as new relations with the capitalist West are needed. The reformed communist parties have themselves all put forward programmes which envisage large-scale dismantling of the central planning mechanism, enterprise autonomy, private ownership, foreign investment and ownership, price and currency reform and greater reliance on the market.

While some, like the GDR economic minister, Christa Luft, may stress the continued role of planning and the compatibility of this programme with socialism, the Polish leaders speak openly of the introduction of capitalism. The actual differences in strategy, however, are not substantial.

This strategy is, in fact, the common currency of the vast majority of the opposition groups, although there are important nuances. For instance,

"the reformed communist parties have themselves all put forward programmes which envisage large-scale dismantling of the central planning mechanism, enterprise autonomy, private ownership and foreign investment ..."

the Hungarian Democratic Forum, concerned about the absence of private Hungarian capital and the threat of foreign ownership, has called for a 'programmed privatisation' which would use various mechanisms to encourage 'group ownership' (for example employee stock ownership). They propose that state funds should be used to assist such a programme since domestic savings (312.7 billion forint) cannot match the estimated value of state enterprises (2,000 billion forint).

The opposition groups, like the Forum and the Free Democrats, face a real dilemma here. Although favouring marketisation and privatisation, they see the need for some form of social control over the process, control which is completely absent at present.

In Hungary, the Forum of Independent Lawyers wrote a letter to the press in September 1989 calling for the suspension of further privatisation.

The Democratic Forum and Free Democrats have also made protests. What they are finding is that the previous managers are being given ownership rights by the state, and state property is being sold below its value.

One Hungarian sociologist, Elmer Hankiss, has written

that the conversion of economic and political power in Hungary is taking place within the country's present elite.

It should come as no surprise that the *nomenklatura* in those states would prefer capitalisation to socialisation and workers' control. In a recent study of Poland, Jacek Rostowski suggests that what is happening in that country is 'a buy-out by the *nomenklatura* itself'. He agrees that:

"privatisation is an easier solution for the reformist communist leaderships than is reform of the socialised sector ... [It] has the advantage of ensuring the economic independence of the enterprises without giving power to workers' councils".

The Polish *nomenklatura* is operating various forms of 'interpenetration' with the private sector, through bribes, seats on boards of trustees of new companies, and so on. Rostowski calls the emerging system a 'mixed economy kleptocracy'. Whatever the validity of this analysis

for Eastern Europe in the present situation, it does point to the kind of problem that the new political opposition will have to confront almost immediately.

The PPS in Poland, as well as all of the major opposition groups in East Germany, have expressed growing opposition to the threat of uncontrolled privatisation and foreign ownership. The austerity which international capitalist institutions are calling for as a precondition for aid as well as the real threats to egalitarian wage structures, employment and social security rights will make the *nomenklatura's* plans for (partial or

tion of Eastern and Western European socialist movements. It must be said that Eastern European democratic and socialist oppositions have, for some time, realised the need for pan-European solutions, but Western European socialists, especially in Britain, have generally failed to make the imaginative leap. In fact, it was the peace movement, especially END, which developed an awareness of this problem in Britain and END was more active in its contacts with Eastern European oppositions than was the socialist left.

This is not the place to go into all the European implications of the



Us too! Soviet workers demand their share of free speech

wholesale) capitalisation, without any form of social control, difficult to implement. A policy of 'socialist autarky', however, is a dead end and would only lead to greater misery and, eventually, a complete embrace of capitalism.

Pan-European Strategy

None of the opposition groups, either liberal-democratic or left-wing, have developed a strategy for solving this problem. Democracy, pluralism and economic reform are not a strategy for social renewal, but a precondition for such a strategy. There is one element of such a strategy, however, which is common to all the East European political movements, namely, that this problem can only be solved on an all-European basis, through the creation of the appropriate pan-European political and economic institutions.

Gorbachev's concept of the 'common European home' has been inscribed on the banners of all the East European revolutions. And it is this which provides the basis for and makes necessary a genuine co-opera-

tion of these revolutions that have happened in the East. But it is essential to at least outline the framework which these revolutions have created for socialists in both parts of Europe. Ignoring, for the moment, the military, security and disarmament aspects of the new situation, the first thing that has to be said is that these revolutions have destroyed the coherence of the Eastern bloc and undermined the rationale for the Western alliance. The CMEA (Comecon) has achieved an even lower level of economic integration than that achieved by capitalist Western Europe, and the signs of its disintegration were clear at its meeting in January.

Secondly, the EC, the capitalist club of Western Europe, is patently incapable of providing the institutional framework for the integration of East and West Europe. Any strategy of expanding or democratising the EC is completely unrealistic. What is needed is a new political and economic framework for the integration of the continent, a new set of pan-European political institutions which are democratic, which respect the rights of people to control and determine their own forms of production and economic life and which breaks down all the barriers to economic exchange, co-operation and trade. The development of a programme to this end is the task confronting European socialists.

"opposition groups, like the Forum and the Free Democrats, face a dilemma: although favouring marketisation and privatisation, they see the need for some form of social control over the process, control which is completely absent at present"

Romania: mass movement in search of leadership

More than any other of the East European revolutions of 1989, the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime in Romania showed the power of the mass movement.

All of these revolutions have exposed the complete isolation of the stalinist bureaucracies from mass support. Their strength has always rested first and foremost on their control of the repressive apparatus of the state, coupled with their links with the Moscow bureaucracy and the threat of Soviet intervention if the masses went beyond the limits permitted by the Kremlin leaders.

Ceausescu's was a regime that even played the 'China card' - attempting its own Tienanmen massacre - and lost. The slaughter in Timisoara and Bucharest represented a policy only narrowly rejected by Honecker's East German regime, which instead opted to concede reforms. Though the Romanian regime appeared more firmly under the grip of the secret police and repressive forces, the advantage of the Romanian masses was that they knew of, and drew confidence from, the huge events rocking the rest of Eastern Europe (indeed even though the detailed news was heavily censored in the Romanian press, Ceausescu himself confirmed the scale and importance of the events when he came out and publicly denounced them). The Romanians also knew that after years of estrangement from Moscow, and especially now in the period of Gorbachev, there was no way Soviet troops would arrive to bale out Ceausescu. The regime came under such pressure that even its conscript army eventually rebelled.

Of course there were the dark days in which Ceausescu tried to cling to power through brute force. On Sunday December 17 thousands were shot dead in Timisoara: but the



A revolutionary invades Ceausescu's study

people of the town continued to demonstrate, and on December 19 the workers went on strike. On the Wednesday they marched from their factories to join the other demonstrators; this time the soldiers did not fire. The masses had control of the streets of Timisoara.

In Bucharest that evening, Ceausescu spoke to a Communist Party rally, trying to isolate the opposition movement: he was shouted down by the crowd, howling 'Timisoara'. That night hundreds of demonstrators were killed in Bucharest, but the power of the regime had clearly crumbled: fear and bewilderment could be seen alongside anger on Ceausescu's face as the heckling broke out in what he expected to be yet another stage-managed official rally - before the official television coverage was abruptly cut off.

The following morning mass strike action broke out in Bucharest, and the streets were awash with people heading for the Central Committee building, containing Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu. *Panorama* has shown the film, taken by a Romanian cameraman living opposite the Central Committee building, of what must be the decisive moments in a spontaneous revolution. His film

showed both the shootings during the night and the masses storming the building the next day. It shows Ceausescu getting into an overloaded helicopter on the roof, and the crowds half-way across to him when it takes off, escaping by seconds. Later the Ceausescus were caught and handed over to the army.

Once they had taken over the building, the leaders addressed the masses outside. The *Panorama* coverage showed clearly that it was only at this stage that the army generals came over to the side of the revolutionary movement, in order to gain control. The very first thing they asked the crowd to do was hand over the arms that they had taken from the vicious 'Securitate'.

Though the army then bore the brunt of the fighting against the Securitate over the next few days, the mass movement had been the decisive factor in swaying their allegiance. Only the courage and persistence of the masses ensured that the army refused to carry out its normal role of gunning down demonstrators.

Once the masses had taken control of Bucharest, they suddenly found they had 'support' not only from army generals, but also from various 'politicians', many of them one-time allies of Ceausescu. The 'National Salvation Front' was formed, including several genuine and long-standing opponents of Ceausescu, but also some obviously dubious forces.

The generals, after declaring themselves late in the day to be on the side of the masses, have acquired considerable influence because of the crushing of the Securitate. Yet the fighting was carried out by rank and file soldiers, while the generals were appointed to key positions enforcing the power of the old regime, and were clearly part of it. The conscript soldiers who genuinely supported the

"the generals, have acquired considerable influence because of the crushing of the Securitate. Yet the fighting was carried out by rank and file soldiers, while the generals were appointed to key positions enforcing the power of the old regime, and were clearly part of it"

mass movement now have no influence over events. There has been no development of democracy – soldiers' councils or similar bodies – within the army.

On Christmas Day the army chiefs announced that after a military trial behind closed doors they had shot Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu. Understandably, most Romanians celebrated: there had been a long queue of volunteers to fire the fatal bullets.

There is no question that these bloodstained dictators deserved to be shot. But why did the army chiefs press through with such a quick trial and execution? Why did they not stage a full-scale public trial?

The official story was that after holding them captive for two days the army was afraid that there might be a bid to rescue them, and that their execution might end further resistance from desperate, hard-line Securitate forces seeking to restore the old regime. But by that point the resistance had already almost ended: the display of the captured couple on television, and the announcement of details for a full trial would have been just as effective.

In fact, by quickly executing the two Ceausescus and rounding up their family and a few other henchmen, the army chiefs are attempting to make it look as if these few alone were responsible for the corruption and brutality of decades of stalinist rule. This is simply another version of the 'cult of personality': nobody could seriously believe that while the Ceausescus lived in the most ostentatious and outrageous luxury, their hand-picked aides and bureaucratic lackeys shared the poverty and shortages of the working class. *If a full trial had taken place, there can be no doubt that the complicity of many of those now parading as defenders of democracy – not least top generals – would have been exposed.*

The quick execution was a useful means of gagging the old dictator, and thus making life easier for those now in control. And the very next decree sought to abolish the death penalty – perhaps fearing that some incriminating information might anyway leak out, and some of the new regime might otherwise face the firing squad. This matter has con-



Nicked! Romanian Deputy Premier arrested by people while escaping in a lorry

tinued to rumble on as the authority of the National Salvation Front has been called into question.

Revolutionary violence is necessary against a brutal regime, which would not scruple at the most vicious attempts to retain power. For revolutionaries the issue is not whether the execution of Ceausescu was deserved, but ensuring that the key political lessons are learned by the masses in the process of the revolution. Much more could have been revealed and learned through a full trial.

Since then there has been growing mistrust of the National Salvation Front. Students have demonstrated, demanding to know who selected the 'student representatives'. The leadership has vacillated to and fro on the death penalty issue, and also on the question of banning the Communist Party, which if carried through in this bureaucratic fashion from above would represent not only a serious diversion from the fight for workers' control and workers' democracy, but a dangerous precedent for the repression of political currents unpopular with the new regime.

The Front has set itself up as a political party to contest the elections set for April: but it is also keeping control of the television service until then, to maximise its chances of victory. Many factory committees and students' committees were formed in this people's revolution: yet the new regime is seeking to usurp rather than base itself and build upon these committees.

As in other East European revolutions, the 'market' is presented as a

solution to all economic ills by the more conscious of the right wing political elements that have slipped into power. Yet many of these are bureaucrats who figure that they personally would benefit from such a free 'market'.

There is a harsh choice to be made: either the fight for a socialist solution, or embracing the bitter austerity that would be enforced if the new regime opts to follow the path of the International Monetary Fund and restore some form of capitalism in Romania.

The working class solution in Romania and elsewhere is to fight for a conception of mass, participatory democracy, and planning through workers' control and workers' management carried out by independent factory committees and student committees: there should also be a consolidation of the militias that set up road blocks and fought the Securitate, and the establishment of councils of rank and file soldiers.

There must be a thorough cleansing of the ranks to purge all of the opportunist ex-bureaucrats seeking now to cling to power by endorsing the new regime. An obvious starting point for this must be a public exposure of the contents of those Securitate files not yet destroyed, full, public trials of the remaining Ceausescu family, and an opening of the books of every major state institution and enterprise to uncover the webs of corruption on which the Ceausescu regime was based.

Tony Johnson

"by quickly executing the two Ceausescus and rounding up their family and a few other henchmen, the army chiefs are attempting to make it look as if these few alone were responsible for the corruption and brutality of decades of stalinist rule. The quick execution was a useful means of gagging the old dictator, making life easier for those now in control"

Unanswered questions for Polish socialists

Previous issues of *Socialist Outlook* have referred to the promising political contribution of the Polish Socialist Party – Democratic Revolution (PPS-RD). The party's congress met in mid-December in a period marked by swingeing attacks on the working class by the Mazowiecki government.

In what is probably the most developed marketisation/austerity programme in Eastern Europe, hundreds of thousands are facing the dole queue and soup kitchens are becoming widespread. Dire poverty is already the norm – but much worse is threatened by the IMF, who are calling the shots.

There is no doubt as to the aim of the clique around Mazowiecki, in alliance, for the moment at least, with the stalinist Polish United Workers Party (PZPR). They aim to destroy the socialised economy. However this project is not without certain obstacles – principally a militant working class.

Though Mazowiecki et al may hail from Solidarnosc, there is nothing to say that they represent its base – the union federation has not had a democratic congress since 1981. Now we are starting to see working class resistance to these attacks begin, with tens of thousands of miners on strike – and we can be confident that others will follow.

However, in circumstances where openly pro-capitalist propaganda is the order of the day, such spontaneous militancy is clearly not sufficient. A clear, democratic socialist response is sorely needed. It was in this context that the PPS-RD met to discuss their programme to resolve Poland's crisis.

The congress confirmed the ideological diversity of the party, with numerous amendments and alternatives offered by different groups within the party. The programme adopted by the congress was 'The Self Management Alternative'; another document submitted by the left leader from Wroclaw, Jozef Pinior, was entitled 'The Post Stalinist Bureaucracy'. There were also other submissions, such as from

the revolutionary Kret group.

While the political diversity of the party is obviously healthy in many ways, and the democratic discussion between the different tendencies is surely the best way to develop a programme for the Polish workers, this heterogeneity is reflected in the party

programme. While socialists should clearly support the general thrust of the document, there are some vague areas and others that are absent. However, this should be seen as an argument for further, positive discussion using the programme as a basis, rather than carping criticism.

The programme challenges the premise that Poland is confronted by only two strategic alternatives: a restoration of capitalism or of stalinism. Their alternative is based around workers' self-management, a rejection of Poland's vast foreign debt, rebuilding democratic trade unionism. In a left amendment passed by the congress, the party identifies itself with the revolutions of 1956 and 1968, as well as with the Solidarnosc of 1980/81.

Further sections of the programme deal with the separation of the army, police and mass media from the state, and the beginnings of a solution to the ecological crisis facing the country.

The document's weaknesses lie chiefly in its sections relating to the state and the economy. While it correctly points to the domination of capital in parliamentary systems, nonetheless it calls for a parliamentary system and a state which 'does not express the interests of any social group'. Perhaps these are problems of phraseology in the document, perhaps a slightly utopian idea.

Again in the section on economy, the general thrust is one that we would have no problem in identifying with. Both bureaucratic planned economies and free market economies are rejected for an



Trotskyist gives greetings at PPS(RD) congress

economy based on workers control. Yet the market is extolled as 'the least arbitrary instrument in ... the division of labour'.

However, the main problems lie not so much in the content of the programme as the omissions; the party's view of international politics is clearly a gaping hole that urgently needs to be filled; and the position of oppressed sections of society such as women and lesbians and gay men is more or less absent. These are clearly dimensions of the document that need to be discussed to make it a more rounded political programme.

Jozef Pinior's document is an assessment of the current position of the bureaucracy rather than an alternative programme. Pinior identifies a tendency on the part of the bureaucracy to seek a new role – neither as a new capitalist class nor a bureaucracy of the 'old type' – but rather maintaining its position while acting on behalf of foreign capitalist investors – a sort of semi-colonial role.

Pinior denounces both Gorbachevism and eurocommunist 'new times' philosophies, reasserting a revolutionary alternative based around 'the destruction of the material basis of the rule of the bureaucracy and the socialisation of the economy ... mass political democracy from below, resting upon workers' committees'. This is indeed the alternative that needs to be put to the revolutionary movements of Eastern Europe – a project that revolutionary socialists in the west must do all they can to support.

Patrick Baker

"the clique around Mazowiecki, in alliance, for the moment at least, with the stalinist Polish United Workers Party (PZPR), aim to destroy the socialised economy. However this project is not without certain obstacles – principally a militant working class"



Ernest Mandel on the Socialist Outlook platform: determined to avoid euphoria on any quick or easy political revolution

“Stalinism’s historic defeat is our historic opportunity”

We reprint here extracts from the speech by ERNEST MANDEL, a leader of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, speaking to an audience of over 350 at the *Socialist Outlook* Rally in London on Friday December 1.

What is happening in East Germany and in Czechoslovakia is the beginning of a revolutionary movement which combines May 1968 and the Prague Spring multiplied, I would say by two or three times.

Sheer quantity transforms itself into quality, if you look at the figures. During three days in East Germany while I happened to be there, from November 4 to November 6, two million people took to the streets in a country with 16 million inhabitants. The equivalent for France, Italy or Britain would have been seven million demonstrators in three days: that has never happened in history.

In Leipzig, for eight successive weeks, every Monday night 200-300,000 took to the streets in a town of 500,000: this means the entire working class and a large part of the high school and student youth were there.

To quantity you have to add quality. Rosa Luxemburg would have had tears in her eyes to see the Berlin working class on November 4 in the largest mass demonstration of German history. One million were in the streets, manufacturing for themselves – 99 per cent of them spontaneously – some 7,000 different banners with different slogans, each more anti-authoritarian than the next, and with a fine spirit of humour and insolence, scepticism and hope. Anti-bureaucratic and socialist to the core, they showed a self-confidence which it is rare to see in such large crowds.

This self-confidence is confirmed and strengthened by the rapidity of the conquests of the mass movement. Practically every day the masses make a new conquest. In addition there has been the tremendous outburst of opposition inside the East German Communist Party, the SED, which is the most unforeseen and gratifying aspect of what has been going on.

There is no precedent in the history of the Stalinist movement for anything of this type. The SED opposition asked first for the right to organise tendencies and even factions. This was not granted – but they started de facto to organise tendencies. Then they tried to combine among themselves to get an extraordinary congress of the party. 25,000

members assembled before the Central Committee building, shouting ‘Extraordinary congress!’. The new leader agreed to call an extraordinary conference at the end of December – which cannot change the Central Committee, cannot change the rules and cannot change the party’s programme.

People shouted him down. Two days later at a demonstration of 150,000, a majority took up the shout of ‘extraordinary congress’. Again the General Secretary came out, but this time he said ‘OK, I have understood you, I will change the extraordinary conference into a congress’. In all the provincial towns similar developments are taking place. I would say that today several hundred thousand members of the SED are involved in a genuine left opposition towards the party leadership, and want very radical changes in the party statutes, with the right of tendency and faction, as well as changes in the programme and the place of the party in East German society.

In Czechoslovakia things have not gone as far as that from the point of view of the duration of mass demonstrations: it was all much quicker. The traditional rule of the bureaucracy collapsed like a house of cards, but in a way significantly different from East Germany. The working class in Czechoslovakia has played the absolutely decisive role.

The students, spurred on by the very courageous work for the last ten years of a small group of oppositionists including our comrade Petr Uhl, took to the streets. They were very severely repressed, beaten up by the police. Then, for 48 hours we could say that the working class, the mass of the population, hesitated on whether to support the students. Then something extraordinary happened: the conservative wing of the bureaucracy sent delegations to the factories. The students, too, sent delegations to practically every large factory in the country, and a real debate started, which counterposed the positions in front of the workers. The workers decided in favour of the democratic revolution, against the bureaucracy. They were finished, and within a few hours the Politburo capitulated.

So we have the beginning of a political revolution today in East

Germany and Czechoslovakia, the two most proletarian countries of Eastern Europe. I say the beginning, because we are still at the beginning: there is no prospect of a rapid victory, but the revolution is developing under exceptionally favourable international conditions.

Lenin and Trotsky, and the Communist movement before them have always looked upon the German working class, and especially the workers of central Germany as the key element for bringing about a socialist world revolution.

This central German working class has the oldest, strongest and deepest socialist tradition of our continent if not the world. In the last general elections before World War One, every MP but one in Saxony and Thuringia were Social Democrats. In 1923, the left Social Democrats and Communist Party had an absolute majority in the parliament of Saxony. In 1946, in a free referendum, 86 per cent of voters in central Germany voted for the expropriation of the banks and large capitalists. That's the historic tradition of that working class.

The international and German capitalists were aware of the explosive strength of these workers, and have made sure that a powerful *gendarme* would weigh down upon them: first it was the imperial German army; then the Reichswehr, then the Wehrmacht and SS; then the victorious armies after World War Two; then the Stalinists through the Soviet army and later increasingly the repressive forces of East Germany.

Now for the first time in 100 years a situation has evolved as a result of all the changes on a world scale, in which there is no longer a *gendarme* capable of intervening in the short term against that working class. The Soviet army cannot (I will not say because Gorbachev does not want to; he doesn't but that's neither here nor there. The Soviet people would not permit it). NATO troops cannot (the American population would not allow Bush to embark on an adventure in central Europe four times larger than the Vietnam war). The West German army won't for the time being: the West German population will not allow it. And the East German army can't because the regime is in a state of total political and moral disintegration.

So we have a set of exceptionally favourable circumstances: the two revolutions have the big asset of time to unfold. Of course I don't mean unlimited time – nobody can really make predictions whether it be two years, three years, I don't know. But they have time to mature, time to achieve decisive conquests. Their revolutions are not inevitably doomed.

But to avoid any danger of euphoria I would also add that this is not a revolution that stands a great chance of success. I think the chance of victory is very limited, because it has great weaknesses. I will mention three, but I could mention more.

■ There is a lack of ideological clarity: it is less advanced than either May 1968 or the Prague Spring, which were clear anti-capitalist movements.

■ There is a lack of self-organisation. In Czechoslovakia it is a bit better than in East Germany, and there are some committees being formed, and it seems some strike committees being formed in some factories. In East Germany there is little self-organisation at rank and file level, though there are oppositional groupings springing up and a



lot of political activity. It might come quicker than we think, but for the moment it is not there.

■ The political power objectives are extremely unclear for the masses in both East Germany and Czechoslovakia. They want to get rid of the Stalinist-dominated state institutions – that's absolutely clear – but they have no clear view of what they want to replace them. Generally they are vulnerable under such circumstances to all kinds of manoeuvres and compromises that will be advanced by the reformist wing of the bureaucracy.

Both in East Germany and in Czechoslovakia the reformist wing of bureaucrats have some powerful reserves. In Czechoslovakia they have the popular figure and prestige of Dubcek; in East Germany the

reformist wing around Modrow is a group of clever manoeuvrists who know all the tricks of the social democratic and trade union bureaucracies. They can present themselves as a 'lesser evil' in the eyes of opposition forces who do not know exactly what they should be fighting for. Free elections, the establishment of a multi-party system and the elimination of the leading role of the CP are all OK, but they don't take us very far, or prevent the real power of the apparatus remaining in the hands of the bureaucrats.

Under these circumstances the movement may become tired out. I think tiring out the movement is the strategy of the liberal wing of the bureaucracy. You can demonstrate in the streets in millions for one, two three even four weeks, but you cannot sustain this for a year, two years or three: that is impossible.

What we have seen in Poland could repeat itself. When a turning point comes, the people become disappointed that the situation is not shaping up in as radical a way as they had hoped, there could be some repressive move – not of the 1956 or 1968 or Tienanmen Square type, but of the Polish type. Some opposition movements might again be condemned to illegality; there could be some restrictions on the freedom of the media. This would not destroy the movement – it is too broad to be destroyed – but it would inflict a big, deep disappointment and a retreat from what seems possible today.

Combined with that danger is the economic danger – the pressure from the western capitalist economies, especially the West German and EC economies and behind them the whole capitalist world market.

We should be clear on one thing: a short-term restoration of capitalism is completely impossible – even the capitalists do not want it. Who wants to buy bankrupt factories? The overwhelming majority of the East European state sector is bankrupt, and needs a long period of restructuring to make it viable.

There is talk, for example of privatising 2,000 state enterprises in Poland, which is a lot. But that is out of 20,000 – only ten per cent. They say it could take 20 years before things turn decisively: in 20 years many other things could change, too.

What we are seeing in Poland and Hungary is a strong deterrent to the workers in East Germany – a process of gradual social and economic decomposition without a real radical restoration of capitalism, involving the dismantling of some of the traditional aspects of the socialised and bureaucratically planned economy. This is especially characterised by two factors:

■ A tremendous phenomenon of corruption, theft and pillage of national wealth – partly by the bureaucracy itself becoming involved in privatisation, but mostly by international capital. One example is the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, to be bought by an American billionaire for \$100m. All experts know that the real assets of that shipyard are worth between five and eight times that much. Every single project of privatisation by international capital carries this same hallmark of sell-out, theft, pillage of national wealth. Poland is being treated exactly like a Third World economy.

■ The other aspect is the tremendous growth of poverty and social misery in the country. I have just returned from Poland, and it would make you weep. Soup kitchens are being set up everywhere.

The government's official figures show 4-5 million living below the poverty line, *twice as many* as there were before the electoral victory of Solidarnosc.

If old age pensioners spent every penny they receive on meat they would be able to afford only four kilos a month: so they don't eat any. When I was in Wroclaw the pensioners had just begun a hunger strike supported by our friends in the PPS(RD), under the terrible slogan 'Die from hunger together, don't starve one by one'.

The *International Herald Tribune* says this:

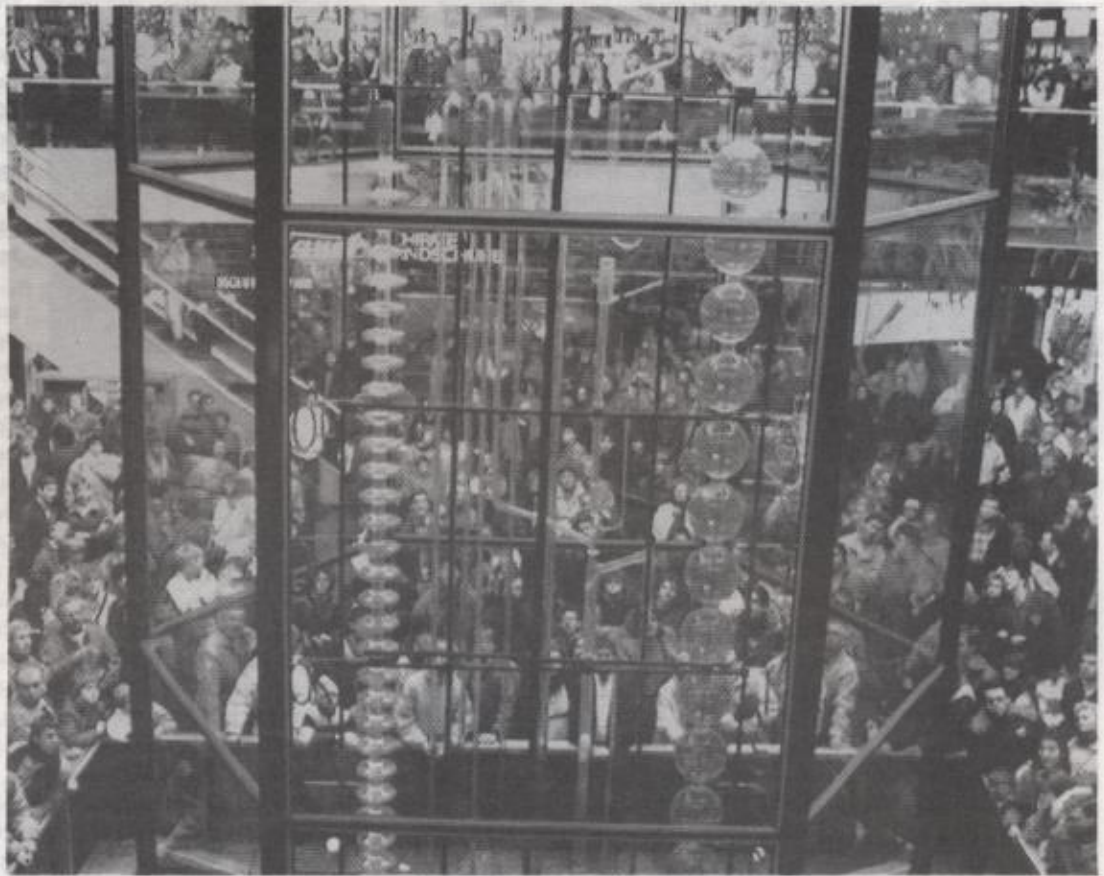
"As they dismantle the pervasive and intricate Stalinist economic system, encourage a new private sector and seek out Western investment, the East European governments must plunge their societies into a whirlwind of dislocation, in which high inflation, high unemployment and the emergence of sharp social and economic inequality will be painful but inevitable features. This process, already well under way in Poland and Hungary, will invite the emergence of radical political movements or even new popular uprisings".

Exactly so. Before you can restore capitalism, before you can bring this disintegration to its final completion you will have to move against these new radical movements and new popular uprisings. This means that the real battle is still before us. The East German and Czech working classes are much stronger than the Polish and Hungarian: and seeing all this, they will think things over ten times before going down the same road.

I must add, however, to counter any euphoria that if there is mass disappointment, it cannot be excluded even in East Germany that the blandishments of the consumer markets of the West could win a mass base of support even for the idea of a capitalist reunification of Germany.

(...)

The demands of political freedom have taken an absolutely central place in this anti-bureaucratic revolution. And the successes they have achieved have had an absolutely historic significance if they can be institutionalised and maintained. They mean that for the first time since the Spanish revolution and Stalin's bloody purges freedom is now more and more coming back into *our* camp, becoming more and more as-



A workers' paradise? East Berliners crowd into West Berlin shops – while their money lasts

sociated with socialism – an unbeatable combination.

The main political objection against socialist revolution will start to disappear if this combination can be consolidated. Capitalism is increasingly vulnerable and losing credibility as a haven of political and personal freedom – not only because so many despotic capitalist regimes have ridden roughshod over democratic rights in the Third World, but also because capitalism is increasingly restricting rights in the imperialist countries themselves. The deeper the economic crisis of the bourgeois states, the more the capitalists will have to attack social security and real wages, the more the unrest will grow, and the stronger will be the attacks on trade unions, the right to strike, freedom of the press; the more Big Brother will be looking over your shoulder not now in Eastern Europe but in Western Europe, the USA and Japan.

In East Germany over 11 million visas have now been issued for travel: but what is happening to the right to travel in the capitalist countries? We know that in one country after another – France, West Germany, Japan, Britain, Hong Kong and the USA – the bourgeoisie is restricting the right of entry, restricting immigration, expelling immigrants, in most cases in blatantly racist ways. The Berlin Wall has fallen and will not be re-erected, but the capitalists' racist immigration laws will be toughened.

So let's imagine an East Germany with a freedom of demonstration much greater than West Germany (not very difficult!); with a much more liberal electoral law (full proportional representation, while in West Germany you need five percent to get into parliament); with a press, radio and television system much more critical of the authorities and open to people such as striking workers than the West German media; with locally elected committees of citizens having the right to veto any project threatening the environment; with elected women's councils having the right to veto any management decision concerning women in factories, shops, and offices; which qualitatively reduced militarism – even disbanding the standing army to implement Lenin's definition of soviet power as having 'no bureaucracy, no police and no standing army'. Imagine an East Germany in which there would be



Leipzig: New Forum headquarters displays photos of the main demonstrations

qualitatively more trade union and workers' rights than in West Germany, fulfilling one of the demands of the November 4 demonstration – for 'workers' self management, not workers' co-determination'. All this could become a reality if the political revolution wins in East Germany.

Can you visualise the impact all this would have on the West German working class, the women's movement, peace movement and green movement? With a single blow, socialism could again become credible as a higher form of civilisation in the eyes of hundreds of millions of people throughout the world.

The chances of this kind of victory for political revolution may be only one in ten: but even if they were only one in a hundred it would be utterly irresponsible to let the opportunity pass. World history is today on a razor's edge in central Europe.

The Soviet Left: the story so far

by Rick Simon

The liberalisation of Soviet society brought about by Gorbachev and the social crisis in the Soviet Union has led to the emergence of an array of political forces, ranging from anti-semitic, neo-fascist groups such as 'Pamyat' (Memory), and pro-monarchist and nationalist groups on the Right, to ecological, social-democratic, Marxist and anarcho-syndicalist currents on the Left.

Some of the nuclei of these organisations existed under Brezhnev, and many individuals were active inside the Communist Party (CPSU) as the only legal political force: Boris Kagarlitsky, one of the most prominent Soviet Marxists, was imprisoned under Brezhnev and expelled from the party for organising a group

of 'Young Socialists' and publishing a journal called 'Left Turn'.

The Soviet Left has undergone a process of differentiation, of splits and fusions, as it has extended its political experience. Initially, the Left saw itself as the 'left-wing of perestroika' and of needing to combine with more liberal forces around the struggle for glasnost and democratic expression. This united struggle was directed against the old Brezhnevites and Stalinists who wished to retain the old economic system and its privileges.

The Left therefore identified with

the only current claiming to be communist which has a stainless banner, and which has condoned no crime against the toilers of any country. We alone can look the Soviet, the East European, the Indonesian, the Spanish, the French, Italian, the Greek and Chilean workers in the face without shame or guilt.

We have also the theoretical and political advantage of being able to explain Stalinism, why it fell upon the labour movement, and the way forward for the Soviet, East European and Chinese masses.

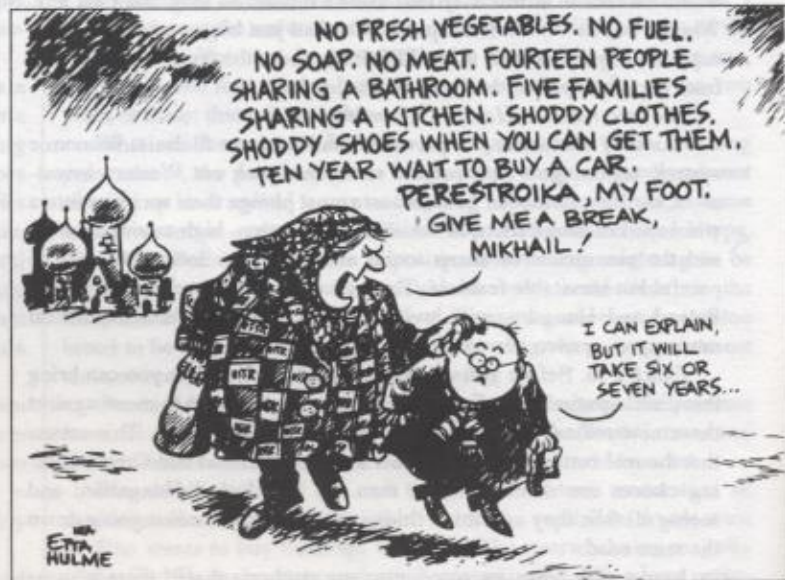
We have a long, long road before us: but the crisis of Stalinism has freed tremendous potential for emancipation, and the possibility of a higher social order and social values.

(...)

The hour of the Fourth International is beginning to strike. We are now at the start of a world-wide rise of new mass workers' movements, in which for the first time in history our movement is like a fish in water. We can speak freely, and raise our programme without fear of slander or repression.

These movements are not yet conscious revolutionary movements: their future depends upon the strengthening of the revolutionary marxist currents and organisation. For us it is a tremendous historic opportunity, not only in Eastern Europe but also in Brazil, in South Africa, in South Korea and many other countries.

What these opportunities reflect is the historic defeat of Stalinism and the vindication of Trotskyism. We are



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Gorbachev's efforts to shake up Soviet society while that process was directed against bureaucratic inertia and while the emphasis was placed on 'openness' rather than economic restructuring. When, in August 1987, left groups united to form the Federation of Socialist Social Clubs, its programme was explicitly one of support for perestroika and of supporting the course adopted by the twenty-Seventh Congress of the CPSU.

A rapid evolution began to take place,

however, from that moment. By June 1988, when the Nineteenth Party Conference took place. The Left's programme was becoming progressively more radical on the political front but a debate was continuing on the question of economic demands. The Left accepted the need for a degree of marketisation but not at the expense of the workers' social guarantees: full employment, subsidised food and accommodation, a free health service and so on.

The Left still remained in small groups and clubs, however, and there was a need to link up with increasing popular resentment at the slow pace of reform. The Left therefore set about the formation of Popular Front organisations which were modelled on the various popular Fronts of the Baltic Republics which had succeeded in uniting broad forces in the struggle for national rights.

Popular Fronts were established in many major Soviet cities, causing the demise of the old club structure, although one or two groups which had moved away from a socialist orientation refused to join the Popular Fronts. These organisations were viewed primarily as instruments for mobilising the masses to support socialist and radical candidates in the March 1989 elections to the Congress of Peoples Deputies, the first genuine multi-candidate elections in the Soviet Union for decades.

Popular Fronts scored big successes particularly in the Russian republic itself. In Moscow, the Popular Front, as well as running local candidates (two of whom were elected), supported Boris Yeltsin for the overall Moscow constituency. Yeltsin's programme was vague in its details but clear on the need to fight bureaucratic privilege, defend social guarantees and quicken the pace of reform.

While the Moscow Popular Front had an explicitly socialist programme, it was still

primarily an electoral machine and not a political party. Leading members, such as Kagarlitsky and Mikhail Maliutin, now saw the need for such an organisation and launched Committees of New Socialists as the constituent units of a new Socialist Party (SP).

These have been formed in Moscow, Leningrad and other cities but as yet the SP is a small political organisation. The SP's position on the CPSU seems rather contradictory. On the one hand, it considers the CPSU to be purely part of the state machine and on the other it has members inside the CPSU, headed by Maliutin.

The SP fights for a programme of revolutionary reforms based on mass action and definite links with the workers' movement. Representatives of the SP were in Karaganda and the Kuzbass during the miners' strike and acted in close co-operation with the strikers - a fact noted with some concern by *Pravda*.



National movements like that in Azerbaijan (above) pose a challenge for the Soviet Left

Leading members have also been involved in the establishment of the socialist trade union organisation Sotsprof. At present, the SP's main task is collaborating with the Popular Front around the republican and municipal elections for a programme involving the municipalisation of property.

Appeal for material and financial assistance for SOTSPROF

A new, independent socialist trade union movement in the USSR

At this time of fast moving revolutionary upheaval throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, socialists in the West face a paradox. On the one hand, we delight in seeing the collapse of oppressive bureaucratic regimes. On the other hand, however, it is 'socialism' rather than Stalinism that is loudly pronounced dead by politicians, pundits and media alike - while they constantly seek to inject 'free market' rhetoric with a new lease of life, despite the savage crisis of capitalism raging throughout the world. This is why the emergence of an independent socialist and trade union movement in the Soviet Union is such an encouraging development. SOTSPROF has now been legally recognised, and is a growing organisation, yet it does not have the basic means to function effectively in terms of office and printing equipment.

We, the undersigned have been authorised by Boris Kagarlitsky and SOTSPROF to publicise this new movement in Britain, and, perhaps more urgently to raise funds for it. We are hoping to arrange public meetings in most major towns throughout Britain with guest speakers from SOTSPROF. We are appealing for donations, and labour movement sponsors of the tour.

Tony Benn MP; Oliver McDonald; Hilary Wainwright; Branka Magas; Eric Heffer MP; Tamara Deutscher; Quentin Hoare; Paul Foot; Alice Mahon, (Treasurer); endorsed by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs

For further information about the SOTSPROF TOUR contact John Rose on 01 538 5821

Send contributions to Alice Mahon, Treasurer, PO BOX 2988, London WC1 N3XX Cheques payable to Alice Mahon, SOTSPROF

When laws against bosses hit immigrant workers

Employer sanctions, immigration controls and 1992

By Steve Cohen

"Equally important would be a check on the employment of overstayers. A Department of Employment witness told us that 'The TUC has expressed concern about illegal working by immigrants, especially in the hotel and catering industry, and the government has made it clear it shares that concern' and 'is keen to take some action to control illegal working'.

"The Home Secretary has undertaken that there will be consultations with both sides of industry about what steps to take. The Department appears to have been dilatory, and accordingly we recommend that, as a matter of urgency, the government, after consultation with both sides of industry, should introduce measures, if necessary by legislation, to provide effective sanctions against employers who knowingly employ overstayers and illegal immigrants.

"But, as a Department of Employment witness explained, 'a difficulty is that there is at present no comprehensive system of documentation in this country recording identity and immigrant employment status, so there is no way in which employers can distinguish applicants for employment who should not be legally employed'. ... We therefore ... recommend that the government should institute an independent inquiry to consider the system of internal control of immigration."

The above are paragraphs 88 and 89 of the First report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, which was published in 1978 - under a Labour government. It supported and legitimised much of the tightening of immigration restrictions that has been implemented by the Tories over the last decade.

For example, the Committee made the recommendation that 'the police, the Immigration Service Intelligence Unit and other authorities should be afforded substantially more resources to trace overstayers and tackle all aspects of illegal immigration'; that 'the department of Health and Social Security introduce without delay new procedures to tighten identity checks'; and that 'the govern-



One struggle: Turkish workers in Hackney on hunger strike in solidarity with Turkish struggle

ment give priority to their consideration of British Nationality Law': the Thatcher government has since obliged on all counts.

Employer sanctions

Paragraphs 88 and 89 relate to employer sanctions: under the 1971 Immigration Act it is a criminal offence for a person with leave to enter Britain to work in breach of any conditions restricting their employment. It is not a criminal offence as such for an illegal immigrant to take employment - though the entry itself can attract criminal liability.

In a little-publicised section of the 1988 Immigration Act, people refused entry but given 'temporary admission', and also those subject to notice of deportation, may have conditions against employment imposed upon them - and breach of these conditions can be a criminal offence. In practice, police and immigration officers frequently conduct raids on factories and business premises in search of illegal entrants, overstayers and those working without authorisation. In 1980 in London in just one month there were raids on the Bestaway Cash and Carry, the Hilton Hotel and the Main Gas Company. Two national union leaders, Moss Evans of the Transport Workers (TGWU) and David Bassett of the General and Municipal Workers (GMB) issued a joint statement saying that black workers would now have to 'carry at all times their papers

proving their right to live and work here. This is a situation more reminiscent of the apartheid system in South Africa than of Great Britain'.

The raids have intensified throughout the decade. On March 2 1989 police raided several sweat shops in Hackney and arrested 37 Turkish workers. However it is still not a criminal offence to hire 'undocumented' labour. Such criminalisation would be extremely reactionary. It would have the effect of making employers the agents to enforce immigration controls - in just the same way as the 1987 Carriers' Liability Act, by imposing fines on airlines carrying 'undocumented' passengers, has turned carrying companies into a private arm of the immigration service.

Inasmuch as the use of unlawful labour in certain sectors of the economy, notably catering and garment manufacture, depresses the wage of all workers, then the answer is not the criminalisation of employment but the unionisation of all workers and a struggle for better conditions for all.

Now with the attempt to harmonise EC immigration laws by 1992 there is a serious danger that these employer sanctions may be legislated in Britain. In fact in 1978 the European Commission produced Draft Directives on immigration, of which Article 3 declared that:

'For the purposes of preventing and detecting illegal migration and illegal employment, member states should organise adequate control, especially of employers and persons and undertakings supplying manpower to third parties'.

In its Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Directives, the Commission stated that:

'In particular, as regards the organisation of controls, the Commission is of the opinion that effective control at the internal frontiers of the Community is becoming more and more impracticable. This will become increasingly the case when the Community establishes a Passport Union and abolishes all internal control on Community territory. It consequently underlines the necessity for providing checks on non-Community labour at the place of employment'.

In its own explanatory statement on the Draft Directive the British Home Office declared that for the UK 'Legislation would be required to make it an offence for an employer to employ a person who may not take the employment in question. To make such an offence effective it would probably be necessary to place upon the employer a duty to take reasonable steps to see that his employees had permission to work, and to provide machinery by which he could do so'.

The US Immigration Reform and Control Act 1986

This is the most extensive hardening of US immigration laws since the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. It is aimed against migrants and refugees from Central America, and contains many repressive measures. It extends the criminal law in relation to illegal entry, particularly in respect of the transport of alleged illegal entrants once inside the United States itself. It vastly increased the budget and personnel of the Immigration and Nationality Service (INS) - including a 50 per cent increase in the personnel of Border Control.

However the most significant feature of the new Act was the introduction of employer sanctions - alongside a bogus 'amnesty' scheme. As such it is a likely blueprint for imminent changes in UK immigration law. Employer sanctions in the US in fact consist of a complex cluster of provisions, of which the main ones are the following:

- Graduated civil penalties (up to \$10,000 per violation) and criminal penalties (higher fines and up to six months imprisonment per violation) for those who knowingly hire an 'unauthorised alien' after November 6 1986 (when the Act was passed);

- Employers are required to verify the

documentation of identity and immigration work authorisation for each newly-hired employee and to keep a record of verification - the Employment Eligibility Certificate, or so-called 1-9 form. The Act imposes penalties on employers who fail to fill out the 1-9 form and save it for possible inspection for a mini-



Whole industries depend upon cheap migrant labour

mum of three years after date of hire or one year after date of termination of employment, whichever is the later.

An employer would comply with the employment verification system and avoid all sanctions if the employee documentation reasonably appears to be genuine and is believed 'in good faith'.

- The Act gives the power to the INS to inspect 1-9 forms at any time, without a warrant.

- It also provides for fines and imprisonment (up to two years) for employees who use fraudulent documents in respect of identity or immigration work authorisation.

Racism and economics

US employer sanctions have sweeping implications. Since November 1986 every worker applying for a job has had to have, as a matter of law, his/her immigration status checked by management. Central Americans regard the new Act as a particular threat. A Houston school teacher described how "One of my students came in and said 'My dad says we have to leave because of the war'. I said 'What war?' He said 'The war against

Mexico'".

The most frequent justification given for employer sanctions was that they would 'save jobs for Americans'. Likewise in this country, a common racist justification for immigration controls has always been that black people 'take our jobs'. In fact the campaign for the US Immigration reform and Control Act was thoroughly racist. Restrictionist groups such as 'Americans for Border Control' worked closely with key members of Congress.

Central Americans - and Asians - were linked in the media with drug smuggling and other crimes. They were characterised as people with high fertility rates and cultures strongly incompatible with US ways. Headlines in the popular press in support of immigration control absolutely paralleled those found in the UK - for instance 'Illegal Aliens Swam Mongrelises Our Strain', and 'Flood of Aliens Coming Our Way'. INS Western Regional Organiser Harold Ezell issued dire warnings that 'those who are invading this country by feet are going to overthrow what we understand and enjoy as a culture'. Senator Alan K Simpson, the main sponsor of the new Act, himself used the language of war when he introduced the slogan 'To regain control of our borders'.

In reality employer sanctions could never - even if this were their true intent - 'save jobs for Americans'. This is because the demand for immigrant labour in the USA is structural: certain sectors of the US economy,

notably the so-called secondary labour market, are dependent on cheap undocumented labour. These sectors include food processing and packing, catering, light manufacturing, house and office cleaning, parking and garage services, building maintenance and sub-contract garment manufacture - even baby-sitting. If employer sanctions were consistently enforced then these sectors would be decimated.

Enforcement of employer sanctions

Sanctions are enforced - but in a selective way. The main aim and effect of this is to undermine labour organisation through rendering undocumented work even more vulnerable for the employee. Certainly there have been many cases of firms being fined for employing unauthorised workers: the Western Regional INS office, which covers California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii and Guam, imposed \$1 million in fines in a 2-year period. However a more frequent practice is for the INS to use its powers to inspect 1-9 forms and then arrest workers for false documentation, whilst excusing employers on the grounds that they had acted in 'good faith'.

This is what happened in Chicago in 1988 when a factory with 126 employees was raided, with 122 being arrested. Moreover management often uses the threat of employer sanctions either to discipline or actually to sack workers. Soon after the Act was passed an official of the *International Ladies Garment Workers Union* said 'We've had several cases of threatened firings'. Employers have engaged in mass dismissals of workers and replaced them with others brought in from abroad on short-term government contracts. In California, following a mass firing of Latino garment workers, thousands of Filipino women were imported, who would work for even lower wages than the undocumented.

This reveals the flip side of employer sanctions, namely the creation of a 'guestworker' layer of imported labour that is totally under the control of the employer by being immediately returnable on termination of employment. This is the same as the notorious 'gastarbeiter' system prevalent today in West Germany, and which will be extended throughout Europe by 1992 with the harmonisation of controls.

In the USA such a guestworker class between 1942 and 1964 undermined the farm workers' unions, with Mexican agricultural labourers imported under what became known as the 'Bracero' programme. Indeed the 1986 Act allowed for the reintroduction of short-term contracts under the so-called H-2A agricultural workers' programme. Dolores Huerta, vice president of the *United Farm Workers Union* said of H-2A: 'The INS has been working hand-in-glove with the growers since day one'.

The Amnesty

Integrally linked to the employer sanctions provisions of the 1986 Act was the granting of an amnesty to illegal entrants. This purported to give legal status to those who could establish that they had entered the US prior to January 1 1982, and had lived there continuously since; or to those agricultural workers who could prove that they had worked for at least 90 days between November 1986 and November 1987.

This 'amnesty' was spurious. It gave protection to relatively few and created dangers for many more. The cut-off date of January 1 1982 was itself quite cynical, since the majority of refugees from El Salvador arrived after that date; death squad activity in El Salvador only came to a peak in late 1982, and 'counterinsurgency' bombings terrorising the region only began in 1984.

Also the US amnesty had all the legal and practical limitations of the temporary amnesty which applied in Britain in 1974. The US amnesty did not apply to anyone who had entered the country lawfully but had then overstayed their leave. More important was the question of how to prove that an illegal entry had taken place prior to 1982. Entire undocumented



Expelled as economic migrants: Boat people in Hong Kong

communities found themselves caught: as most undocumented people are paid in cash, never fill in income tax returns and never make purchases on credit, they had to rely on employers and past employers for the papers they needed to legalise their status. The employers, fearing reprisals from the Internal Revenue Service demanding back taxes, often refused to give the necessary documentation.

The amnesty split families, some of whose members arrived before 1982 and others after. This happened to the Herrera family from El Salvador: Carlos fled in 1981, but his wife, Celfa and children, only managed to get out in February 1982. The INS made a deportation order against Celfa and the children.

As with immigration laws generally the amnesty has generated a parasitic group of 'immigration advisors' charging large fees for bad advice. Latinos in the USA call such people 'abogangsters' – coined from the Spanish word for lawyer (abogado) and the English 'gangster'.

In two respects the US amnesty was even worse than the one in this country. Firstly, the government demanded a fee, \$180 for adults, \$50 for each child, and an additional \$75 mandatory doctor's bill. Secondly, the INS regulations defining the terms of the amnesty excluded anyone 'likely to become a public charge' – and those who did receive amnesty were rendered ineligible for most forms of government welfare for five years. This provision affected women in particular, especially single mothers and those who wished to leave violent marriages. Even in the UK, where the 'no recourse to public funds' requirement runs through most immigration law, such a criterion was not applied to the 1974 amnesty.

Most organisations in the USA which oppose employer sanctions also opposed the amnesty on the grounds that it as bogus, divided documented from undocumented workers, and

led to further government and employer control of migrants. This control became obvious after May 4 1988 – the final date for amnesty applications.

Throughout May 1988 INS agents boarded Chicago Transit Authority buses and detained suspected undocumented passengers. *El Herald*, a Spanish newspaper in Chicago, called these raids 'gestapo-like'. The INS had claimed that information obtained on legalisation applications would not be used to deport anyone if the application failed: in practice applicants for amnesty, even successful ones, were at risk. In March 1988 the INS raided the Swift meat packing plant in Des Moines, apparently after first checking the 1-9 forms with the management. 17 workers were arrested for working with false documents – though the firm was not charged with anything. It was later revealed that many of the 17 had amnesty applications pending. Nonetheless they were charged with having previously used false Social Security cards. One INS agent is reported as saying 'Just because you are an applicant or have been given amnesty, it doesn't mean we are going to forgive your past sins'.

At the moment several other EC countries – most notably France – operate employer sanctions. With the projected dismantling of internal EC borders, such sanctions are anyhow the most obvious method for the capitalist class to control immigration and migrant labour.

The US experience shows what this will mean in practice, and how even a 'sweetener' such as an apparent amnesty scheme can also tighten the screw on immigrant workers. One measure which would make employer sanctions even more viable would be the introduction of a system of national identity cards. Several organisations, not least the Police Federation, are already campaigning for this.

Rounding up the old decade

DAVE PALMER assesses some of the last books published in the 1980s

An Injury To All – The Decline of American Unionism

By Kim Moody
Verso £9.95

Moody, from the staff of the Detroit-based *Labor Notes*, provides a comprehensive (and Trotskyist) history of the US labour movement from Truman to Reagan.

Against the Tide – Diaries 1973-76

By Tony Benn
Hutchinson £20

Part Three of the Benn saga, and the best bit so far ... Those well-known horrors of the last Wilson government (and why Benn ended up meeting people like us!).

New Times – The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s

By Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques
Lawrence and Wishart, £9.95

A suitable gift for any pretentious, shallow cynic in your life. A collection of crass writings from *Marxism Today* to make anyone choke on their Sunday lunch!

Intifada – Zionism, imperialism and Palestinian resistance

By Phil Marshall
Bookmarks, £5.95

The SWP takes on the Intifada in Palestine: 'one solution revolution'?

Critique of Economic Reason

By Andre Gorz
Verso, £9.95

Leading post-industrial, post-marxist thinker Gorz on 'the terminal crisis of a system where every activity and aspiration has been subjected to the rule of the market'. I'll buy that! 'Gorz's greatest work, and a crucial book for our time,' alleges *Le Monde*.

India's Struggle for Independence

By Bipim Chandra
Penguin, £5.99

Highly recommended history of the Indian independence movement, which makes extensive use of primary material.

Coming on Strong – Gay politics and culture

Edited by Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis
Unwin £8.95

Collection of inter-disciplinary essays on the situation of gay men.

Preserving Disorder: Selected Essays 1968-88

By David Widgery
Pluto £8.95

As I am sure you all know, David Widgery writes for *Socialist Worker*: good reading for the less sophisticated ultra-left.

Cricket

By C.L.R. James
A&B, £5.95

Had to include this, given CLR's recent demise. For the sportier marxist who has not yet read it.

Beyond the Casino Economy – Planning for the 1990s

N. Costello, J. Michie, S. Milne
Verso, £8.95

The first really serious attempt for a long while to draft a proposal for a democratically planned economy under a Labour government. I'm sure it's flawed: but then what isn't?

Sacred Elephant

Heathcote Williams
Chatto, £9.95

'Nature's blasting, billowing Archangel -

A land-manatee

A land-siren

A land-whale.'

For all you eco-softies ... the fol-

low-up to the *Whale* opus. Red-Green alliance anyone?

FICTION:

Foucault's Pendulum

By Umberto Eco

Secker & Warburg, £14.95

Ideal companion volume to the *Marxism Today* collection. Salman Rushdie has alleged that it is unreadable twaddle: I couldn't understand enough to be able to disagree. It just happens to have topped the best-seller list.

Libra

By Ron de Lillo

Penguin, £4.99

Now in paperback, De Lillo's book takes a trip through the inner lives of those involved in the event that obsesses the USA ... the Kennedy assassination. Alleged to be 'the novel the shaken American psyche has been awaiting for 25 years'. How can you resist?

A frightening glimpse into Labour's future

Has Conference a Future?

Pamphlet available from CLPD/LLL, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 2SH. Single copies £2.50 incl postage, bulk orders £2 each plus postage.

Reviewed by JANE WELLS

As the Labour leadership prepares to chop up the labour movement into little pieces so that it can never be put back together again, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and Labour Left Liaison have produced a new pamphlet defending conference democracy.

'Much is at stake – not just the future of Conference but also of the Party itself,' says the pamphlet's introduction.

Exactly so. Even if Labour Party procedure and constitution is not your first love, it's worth

struggling through the dense and detailed analysis, argument and proposals contained in *Has Conference a Future?*. The pamphlet is CLPD's response to the proposal by the GMB's John Edmonds, agreed by the 1989 Conference to review conference structures, and the NEC's so-called 'consultation document' on the 'Future of Conference'. It's truly frightening.

If the leadership get their way, we could be going along every two years to a set piece performance staged for the press, with subjects for debate determined and sifted by party managers, with plenty of time for NEC members and MPs to sound off, and with permanent, hand-picked 'policy review commissions' setting the real agenda. We will be electing an NEC guaranteed to be 100% leadership-friendly. Party members will be reduced to making tea at fundraising jumble sales in-

stead of policy.

CLPD have produced an excellent document, with critiques and suggested responses to each of the NEC's proposals, and they highlight the 'hidden agenda', too. As such, the pamphlet is an invaluable tool in fighting the right in the Labour Party, and to give them credit, CLPD are probably the only organisation in the labour movement currently prepared to mount such a response at this level.

Unfortunately CLPD et al mistake the Labour Party for a proletarian and potentially revolutionary party, and therefore see this kind of exercise as the end (defending and improving its best elements) and not the means (to superceding it with something infinitely better and truly revolutionary in potential). This limits their horizons and ultimately the success of their short-term strategy.

GERRY HEALY

The Ceausescu of the British Trotskyist movement



Healy with Vanessa Redgrave on a WRP election platform in February 1974: the WRP ran a slate of candidates.

Thomas Gerard Healy died on December 14th 1989 at the age of 76. For over 30 years he was 'General Secretary' of the organisation which became the Socialist Labour League (SLL) and then the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), and a leader of the so-called International Committee of the Fourth International.

By the 1980s he had done more to discredit the Trotskyist movement, and the left in general than anyone else claiming to be a part of it – despite other strong contenders for that distinction.

Healy came to Britain from Ireland in 1928, and was recruited into the already degenerated Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). This experience shaped his politics in the direction of sectarianism and bureaucracy and laid the basis for the degenerate political monster which he became.

The CPGB always had a tendency towards sectarianism and bureaucracy. In 1928, after some initial hesitations, it enthusiastically followed the Comintern into its ultra-left turn – the so-called 'third period' of denouncing social democrats as 'social fascists' – which continued from 1928 until 1934. It became one of the most slavish followers of Stalin amongst the Western CPs.

Stalin's turn to the third period was within the political framework of the Stalinised Comintern of 'socialism in one country' (the idea that socialism could be built in the Soviet Union by harnessing the international division of labour) but grafted onto it a series of wildly ultra-left policies. These caused most devastation in Germany where Hitler's rise to power was facilitated by Stalin's opposition to any united front action with the mass Social Democratic Party against the rise of fascism. The social democrats were denounced as 'worse than fascists'.

In Britain the CPGB denounced the Labour Party as fascist, and the unions as anti-working class, making a spectacular break with the tactic of working within the mass organisations, as had been advocated by Lenin,

and calling instead for 'red' trade unions independent of the TUC.

Healy was expelled from the CPGB in 1937. He claimed this was for opposition to the politics of the third period; but these had been abandoned three years earlier – in favour of the cross-class line of the popular front.

Probably Healy's departure was more connected with the CP's turn to the right. He joined the newly formed Workers International League (WIL), which worked inside the Labour Party and the ILP, booming editor of its journal. By all accounts he made a significant contribution, arguing for continued work in the Labour Party and for organising the left.

The following year three of the four Trotskyist groups fused to form the Revolutionary Socialist League, with the WIL refusing to join. The effects of the war destabilised the other groups, however, and in 1943 the WIL and what was left of the RSL fused with others to form the Revolutionary Communist Party – led by Jock Haston.

By 1947 the RCP was internally split over the issue of whether to enter into the Labour Party. A year later the minority, led by Healy, began to join the Labour Party (with a journal called *Socialist Outlook*: no relation!). When the RCP was eventually wound up in 1950 most went into the group Healy had established called 'The Club'.

Healy then carried out a number of Stalinist purges designed to give him complete political control of what was now the British section of the Trotskyist Fourth International (FI). Both Tony Cliff and Ted Grant were expelled – to be heard of again! Healy established the kind of internal regime which he was to maintain for the rest of his political life.

In 1953/4 the world movement split over the line of Michel Pablo and the international leadership, which went overboard in uncritical eulogies on the 'revolutionary' nature of the Tito leadership in Yugoslavia. Healy, in-

fluenced by the emergence of a pro-Pablo current in his organisation, performed an abrupt political somersault, breaking from pro-Tito positions and siding with James P. Cannon and the the American Socialist Workers Party, which adopted an 'orthodox' Trotskyist line against Pablo on Stalinism. This marked the formation of the International Committee.

Healy's group established a base inside the Labour Party and did some positive work in the unions which brought British Trotskyists out of isolation. They recruited from the Communist Party after Khrushchev's speech in 1956 denouncing the Moscow trials. Success led to the formation of the SLL in 1959. It continued to work inside the Labour Party for several more years.

By 1963 the SLL had control of the Young Socialists – the youth wing of the Labour Party. The YS was expelled from the Labour Party after a huge campaign in its defence. This was a big opportunity for Trotskyism, but soon Healy swung to a sectarian project of building a revolutionary group outside and counterposed to the structures of the mass organisations.

The SLL grew rapidly and by the mid-sixties was the mainstream of Trotskyism in Britain. Other currents – around Ted Grant who had opposed entry into the LP in the early 1960s, and Tony Cliff, who took a state capitalist line of the Soviet Union – were a fraction of its size.

The SLL made important developments in the trade unions – on the Liverpool docks, on London building sites, in the engineering industry and in the car industry, particularly in the British Leyland plant at Cowley. But like its predecessors the SLL was a sect dominated by a powerful individual – Healy.

His politics in the unions were flawed. He argued it was possible to build a party in Britain not by intervening into the mass or-

ganisations of the working class, but from the outside on a one-to-one basis by intervening into struggles and recruiting workers who were justifiably hostile to the betrayals of their leaders. No distinction was drawn between the left and the right wing of the bureaucracy in the unions, and the strategy of the united front was ignored.

In 1963 a majority of the world movement reunified to form the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International. The SLL in Britain and the OCI in France – now a large organisation with similar sectarian and bureaucratic deformations as the SLL/WRP had developed – stayed outside in the International Committee of the Fourth International. It was not a genuine international, but a fraud: its so-called sections were all subordinated either to the SLL and the OCI.

Though not large, the SLL was by now bureaucratized, with an iron fisted leadership separated from the membership. Healy now had two objectives – a sectarian line on party building in Britain and the destruction of the 'revisionists' of the USFI. To achieve them he turned again to Stalinism and its principal methods; lies, slander, intimidation and violence.

In December 1966 Healy directed a gang of SLL thugs to beat up a USFI supporter, Earnest Tate, who was selling a pamphlet *Healy 'Reconstructs' the Fourth International* outside an SLL meeting at Conway Hall. It was open terrorism within the Trotskyist movement, advertised in advance in the SLL's Newsletter: 'We shall not hesitate to deal appropriately with the handful of United Secretariat agents who hawk it around the fake-left in England'. When several left wing journals defended Tate, Healy threatened them with legal action – a replica of the methods used by the Stalinists against the Trotskyists in an earlier period.

Those who took this up were branded as slanderers of the SLL, whose membership were told that the SLL was besieged by enemies prepared to go to any lengths to discredit it. But the SLL, still doing consistent work in the unions, continued to grow. A rank and file grouping was established called the All Trades Unions Alliance. This had real possibilities but suffered from the sectarianism of the SLL.

Healy launched a campaign for a daily SLL newspaper, raising huge sums of money from the membership. The daily *Workers Press* which emerged in 1969 ended any objective politics. The organisation disappeared into frantic activism with the highest turnover of membership ever recorded for a 'Trotskyist' organisation, compounded in 1973 with the winding up of the SLL and the launching of the Workers Revolutionary Party which had to be seen to be bigger.

With a paper membership of four thousand, it set out to emulate a mass organisation. The gains made in the trade unions produced an ATUA rally in Manchester of 4,000 and another at the Empire Pool the following year of 10,000. But as the numbers went up, the politics went down. Frantic recruitment campaigns were instituted in which branches were given daily targets for recruitment. Members were told to talk to the person they sat next to on the bus and ask them to join.

In 1971 Healy had split with his international co-thinkers in the French OCI. There was little politics in the split, it was a case of two bureaucratic apparatuses which could no longer live together. At an SLL central committee meeting Healy demanded that Lambert

political framework of the WRP. Within weeks we were hounded and slandered as police agents. One comrade was beaten up by Healy personally. In 1974 we were expelled with 200 others.

These expulsions were a terminal blow to the WRP although it staggered on for another 10 years. *Workers Press* collapsed and the *Newsline* was established with any last vestige of political principle abandoned. Healy had turned to reactionary Mid-East oil states, promising them uncritical coverage for money. By the late 1970s he was supporting not only Libya's Colonel Gaddafi, but also the execution of Iraqi CP members by the Iraqi regime. Later he took money for identifying Iraqi oppositionists.

In 1985 the WRP was blown apart by a letter from Healy's personal assistant alleging that Healy had been involved in the systematic sexual abuse of women members of the organisation. Healy was expelled and the group disintegrated as details emerged of gross sexual abuse of a large number of women plus appalling financial corruption.

Despite Healy's crimes and the discredit they brought to Trotskyism and to the left in general, a few WRP zealots, most notably Vanessa and Corin Redgrave, stayed with him and published a magazine called the *Marxist*, which quickly became distinguished as an uncritical supporter of Gorbachev.

Other fragments formed small groups, one publishing the *News Line*, and another calling itself the International Communist Party (ICP). Both of these continued Healy's politics without Healy. The group which expelled Healy and now publishes *Workers Press* made a partial critique of his politics, but failed to carry this through to a conclusion or elaborate an alternative political line for the class struggle in Britain.

Healy's funeral was jointly conducted by the *Marxist* and the *News Line* groups. Fittingly, there was even a sectarian battle at the funeral, in which the organisers physically excluded the ICP. Healy would have fully approved.

Unlike Stalin or Ceausescu, Healy never held state power. He learned about tyranny from the Stalinist movement and exercised it inside the small groups of the Trotskyist movement. The result has done serious damage to the development of the revolutionary Marxist tradition in Britain. The best conclusion from his death is to ensure that there is never room left for his ilk to do such damage again.

Alan Thornett

workers press

INCORPORATING THE NEWSLETTER • MONDAY FEBRUARY 11, 1974 • NO 100 • 40
DAILY ORGAN OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

LABOUR ELECTION POLICY CLEAR FROM THE START HEATH CLEARS JAILS FOR THE 'EXTREMISTS'

Frenzied headlines in early 1974 – the heyday of Healyism

give a yes or no answer to the question 'is dialectical materialism the theory of knowledge of Marxism?'. When Lambert refused, the OCI delegation was forced to leave.

As the SLL became more isolated and more vulnerable to its critics the Stalinist methods were extended. In 1972 Bala Tampo, a Sri Lankan trade union leader and a supporter of the USFI was accused by Healy of being an agent of the CIA. Later Joseph Hansen, one of the leaders of the US SWP, was accused of being an agent of the FBI. This despicable method was then used extensively in Britain. In the Cowley car plants we were encouraged to think that members of the rival International Marxist Group were working for the police.

By 1973 the politics of the WRP had reached crazy proportions. Healy was predicting imminent collapse of the capitalist system: so when the Heath Government imposed a three day week to conserve fuel during the oil crisis Healy announced we were on the verge of a military coup: *Workers Press* headlined 'Countdown to Dictatorship'. Two months later we had a Labour government.

From Cowley we began a political challenge to this, and increasingly, the whole

Fresh NUR attempt to hit train drivers

THE RIGHT-WING leadership of the National Union of Railwaymen yesterday made another desperate attack on the train drivers' union ASLEF.
With almost 500,000 members ASLEF is the largest union in the rail industry. It is the only union in the industry which is not controlled by a party of a speech by one of its members.
ASLEF is the only union in the industry which is not controlled by a party of a speech by one of its members.
The railway is to be closed for several days in the event of a strike by ASLEF members.
The railway is to be closed for several days in the event of a strike by ASLEF members.



Michel Warshawsky, an Israeli journalist, was sentenced to 20 months imprisonment by the Jerusalem District Court on 7 November 1989. His 'crime', as Director of the Alternative Information Centre in West Jerusalem, was to typeset a booklet for Palestinians in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. The booklet, written by Palestinian ex-prisoners, gave information on how to withstand interrogation by the Israeli security forces. Warshawsky's interrogators and the court demanded he give the name of the Palestinian who supplied the draft booklet. His refusal to do so added to the severity of his sentence. The AIC was fined 10,000 Shekels (£3,500) and must raise around £20,000 to cover the cost of legal fees and to replace equipment damaged or confiscated during the security forces' raid on the centre in 1987.

Warshawsky and the AIC's appeal against the sentence will begin on the 8 February. Join us on the picket to show your support. If the appeal is lost it will have serious implications in the future. As repression against Palestinians escalates, Israelis who voice any opposition to the occupation will inevitably also find themselves targets of government repression. Many Israelis have been imprisoned (including draft resisters) or are awaiting appeals against imprisonment for their support of the Palestinian Intifada or for having dialogue with Palestinians. Warshawsky's sentence is widely seen as an attempt by the Israeli authorities to criminalise and intimidate all attempts at Israeli-Palestinian cooperation.

Public outrage at his sentence in November contributed to his imprisonment being postponed until the appeal was heard this month. Similar protest, both in Israel/Palestine and internationally, can help ensure the appeal's success.



Join the picket and ask your organisation to sponsor it. All participants are asked to bring a gag to demonstrate against the gagging of Israeli dissidents. Please send letters of protest to:
Dan Meridor, Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, Salah ed-Din 29, East Jerusalem, via Israel (with copies to the CFEPI).

P I C K E T

in support of

MICHEL WARSHAWSKY

Israeli dissident sentenced to 20 months

and the

ALTERNATIVE INFORMATION CENTRE

Thursday 8 February 12.30pm
Regent Street (opposite El Al office), W1



P L A N N I N G M E E T I N G

Thursday 22 February 7pm
Quaker International Centre
1 Byng Place, WC1

If you are interested in the *Committee for the Freedom of Expression of Palestinians and Israelis* and perhaps want to contribute to work in support of cases such as Michel Warshawsky's, please come to our planning meeting.

For more information please contact
CFEPI, BM Box 9585, London WC1N 3XX. ☎ 01-226 7050

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