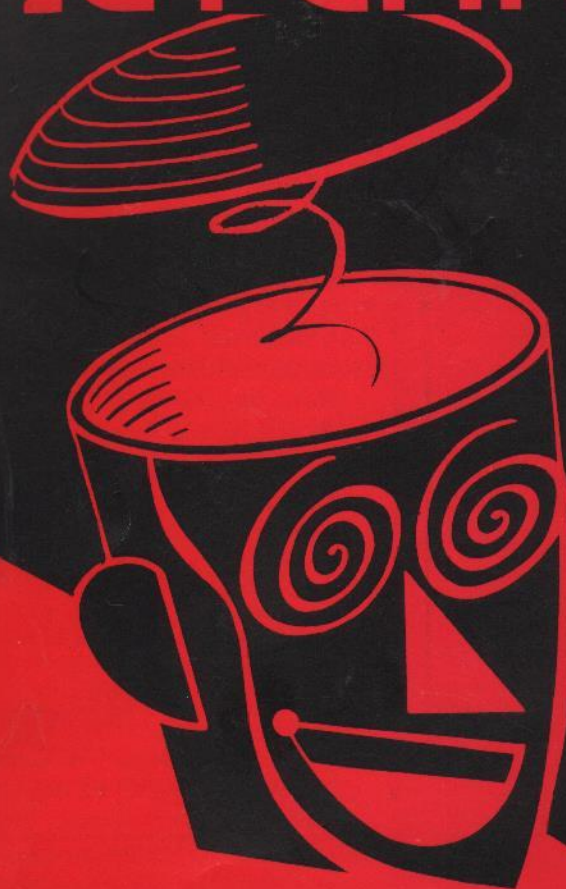


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SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVES



Social- Democracy and the Alternative

MEDVEDEV on
GORBACHEV

Jacek KURON on PEACE

RAPTIS on DEMOCRACY

Building the ALTERNATIVE



This is the day...

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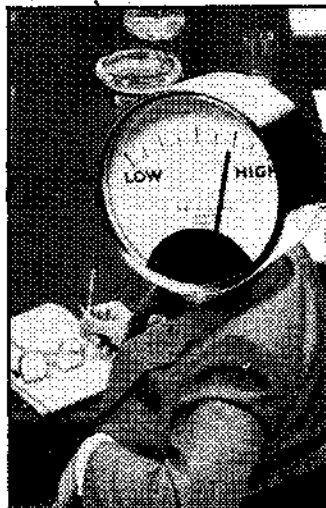
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Where We Stand

At a time when the world is living in a state of permanent ecological crisis that threatens the very survival of the human species, when capitalism in crisis is imposing ever-growing oppression and misery in the developed as in the developing countries, when the "socialist" half of the world has become more part of the problem than part of the solution, the need for a **socialist alternative** is greater than ever.

So far, the socialist movements – social-democratic and "bolshevik" – have failed to advance to realise their promise of radical emancipation. This raises the question of the very content of the socialist project. Furthermore, the rise, alongside the class contradictions of new social movements – feminism, ecology, blacks, gays and lesbians, nuclear disarmament – that don't fit neatly in "marxist" models also calls for a redefinition of the socialist project.

Today, no-one can seriously claim that women's liberation and socialism or socialism and ecological production are synonymous. Nor is it true that socialism would, by definition, bring about women's liberation, ecological production or even social self-management. Thus, without a radical redefinition, the socialist project will never again be in a position to achieve majority support.

On the other hand, capitalism feeds on all forms of oppression thus this redefinition will necessarily have to be rooted in an anticapitalist alliance of all the emancipatory movements.

We recognize that there are no "primary" or "secondary" social contradictions – though this is not to deny the major part the working class has to play. The new emancipatory alliance must be able to take into account the plurality of political and social forces and ideas that exist at any given moment in the struggle and unite them around a common objective – the end of all forms of oppression.

In developing this alternative – nationally and internationally – socialists can neither ignore a century's experience nor simply revive the old ideological and organisational formulae.

Marxism, as a creative method of social analysis and political action, can only be a starting point, if an essential one – concrete answers must be sought in the confrontation of the diverse intellectual traditions of the emancipatory movements.

The task of socialists today is thus to participate in this necessary redefinition of socialism – not just in theory but also in practice. Moreover, we have to find a way to articulate within a common framework the many contradictions of today's society – class and non-class./

Socialist Alternatives seeks to stimulate debate around this redefinition of the socialist project – without prejudicing the outcome of such debate.

The way **Socialist Alternatives** seeks to participate in those debates and struggles is, of course, not by giving out a "line" to its readers. It limits its role to that of a forum for debate from which a common perspective can emerge.

Socialist Alternatives refuses all sectarianism and chauvinism. As a journal of activists in the labour movement, it pays the closest attention to both old and new forms of organisation; to old and new movements; to the social-democratic, communist, trotskyist, and green/alternative currents; to British, European and international debates, struggles and movements; to class, sexual, racial and ecological contradictions.

Consequently, **Socialist Alternatives** will co-operate – nationally and internationally – with all individual and organisations that express agreement with its basic aims. This implies a willingness to widen our Editorial Collective whenever the opportunity arises.

Socialist Alternatives thus welcomes all help – material, financial, political and editorial – from all individuals, movements, national and international organisations who share its project and wish to be part of it.

Socialist Alternatives

GERMANY

BundesGreens?

HARRI GRUNBERG looks at the political dilemmas facing the German Greens after their last Conference.

When the German Greens assembled in Nurnenberg this autumn for their Conference, the question of their relationship with the SPD was highest on their agenda. The question facing the delegates was the following: if, in the next Federal Elections to be held on the 7th January the Greens hold the balance of power between the SPD and the conservative CDU/CSU should they accept some kind of alliance with the SPD, and, if so, on what terms? This gave rise to hot debates and more than a dozen amendments were proposed to the main motion.

Conference closed unable to reach a clear position. The only thing that received a sizeable majority was a proposition to write an open letter to the voters expressing the party's intention to "open discussions with the SPD if the result of the elections requires it". This compromise was reached as a means to avoid damaging splits within the Green Party. It thus suffered from the defect that it was centered more on internal considerations than on the necessity to beat the conservative government at the next election.

There are two reasons why the alternatives need a clear position with regard to federal government. First, they need it if they are to win votes from the social-democrats and ensure that the party surmounts the 5% hurdle to obtain some parliamentary representation. Second, it needs it to win over those who, although discontented with the present government do not, at this moment, see the Greens as a viable alternative.

The Greens also need to clarify their position to the socialdemocrats if they are to fend off the SPD's attack aiming at

wiping them off the electoral map. Johannes Rau and the SPD leadership have, to this effect, declared that they would never envisage any federal-level cooperation with the Greens - thus implying that a vote for the Greens would be a wasted vote. But, the SPD's problem is if they don't ally with the Greens, with whom can they ally?

Johannes Rau has long said this was no question since he was aiming at absolute majority. However, since the recent debacle in the Hamburg state-



Green MPs in Bundestag - a letter to the voters...

elections where the SPD lost its absolute majority for the first time in 30 years, this looks a pipe-dream and hardly a mobilising perspective for the troops. Rau is now saying that he is aiming at gaining "as many votes as possible". This confusion is no help to those who want to put an end to Kohl's reign.

In effect it looks increasingly, as many political commentators have said, that the

SPD does not want to get back in power. Not now. They would rather lose, it seems, than have to tackle the new economic crisis that is looming over the West-German horizon and which promises to be at least as deep as the one that hit the country when the social-democrats lost power five years ago. Peter Glotz, one of the SPD's most prominent thinkers, recently declared: "any government in West-Germany will be confronted with an economic recession and have to effect deep cuts in social budgets. And when I say any, that goes for a SPD-Green government too". But of course, the Greens would have none of that.

The SPD wants the Greens out of Parliament so that it can win over their erstwhile voters for the 1991 elections. It serves them quite well then if the Greens continue to fudge the governmental issue as a clear position would open divisions in the SPD. Rau can only have his ways if there is no perspective of some alliance with the Greens.

So the Nurnenberg Conference took the heat out of the Greens on this issue but this is only a temporary relief and it leaves a question mark hanging over the party's future. In effect, the only registered progress was the advances made by the eco-socialist wing while the fundamentalists saw their support dwindle.

Ironically, only weeks earlier the SPD held its own Conference in Nurnenberg where it adopted quite a few "green" positions. Clearly, this was also meant as a manoeuvre to undercut the Greens. This can be easily seen when one looks at Rau's electoral manifesto. Put in such a position, the Greens only rational course would be to express clearly their agreement with those parts of the SPD manifesto that are progressive in character. But this it has failed to do clearly.

In the end it is clear that this kind of approach serves no-one but the present government. It represents its best insurance policy. Not only will it ensure that the Left stays out of power for some time to come, but it will also weaken the position of the progressive reformers within the SPD. ■

“Cohabitation”, Round 2

FRANCE

GILBERT WASSERMAN

ACCORDING TO ALL THE RECENT OPINION POLLS, the French love “cohabitation”, so much for them. The fact is that the main tendencies of French political life have soon re-established their claims to primacy. We have now entered the second round or, as the satirical weekly *Canard Enchaîné* put it, “cohabi-tension”.

Nobody really believed cohabitation could go on for very long but many clung to this seemingly peaceful phase when knives were only drawn backstage. Even the virulent *Le Monde* columnist, Pierre Bourgeade, renowned for his acid pen, was singing the praise of civil peace.

Some on the Left were ready to praise those reasonable liberals who refused to duplicate the Left’s “dogmatic mistakes” of 1981. National unity was the order of the day.

But what has come over the Right that it had, in the space of a few days, reaffirmed that it was, more than ever, the Right? Denationalisations, privatisation of one TV channel, the abolition of the administrative redundancy procedure, the return to the “majority” electoral system and the resulting gerrymandering of electoral constituencies... All this, of course, was high on the Right’s election manifesto and they had said they would do it but, suddenly, they are really doing it! Not only that, but they are also adding a few authoritarian twists to their “security” legislation aimed at encouraging denunciations, total support for Reagan’s SDI and threats to journalists. Not very reasonable, is it? Mr Chirac is being overenthusiastic, is he badly advised, while those who had forgotten that the Right will only be reasonable when the popular movement is strong enough to worry it. If it isn’t, then it pushes its advantage as far as the reality of the political agenda will allow.

Just look at the example of the abolition of the administrative redundancy procedure. The Right can easily offer this on a silver plate to bosses who have been crying for it, when popular mobilisation doesn’t look as if it

could stop it. Neither is it certain that the socialists, if they regained power, would re-establish it and risk to alienate the bosses unless there is strong popular pressure for it. The fact is that the Right is by no means convinced that society has moved entirely its way. It would only take the slightest exaggeration to say that the French political tradition is in the process of being overturned. Up to now, the “experiences” of the Left in power were few and far between but they helped to establish gains that the Right couldn’t challenge when it regained power. Isn’t the Right today in the process of integrating the possibility of relatively short spells in power allowing it to establish gains for itself aimed at deconstructing in the long term the social



and democratic advances of the past decades? In these conditions, Francois Mitterrand and the socialists should feel much freer to raise their voice than they have been lately. They could even, with some skill, play on two fronts: that of an opposition firmly rooted on the Left which refuses the Government’s most reactionary projects but also that of the guardians of civil peace in the face of an activist Right too eager to make its mark.

This double game should be the socialists’ main hand in the coming months. As a party it looks less dangerous in opposition than in power and it is the most likely of all parties to have its candidate appear as the front-runner in the next presidential race. This is why Lionel Jospin, the SP first Secretary,

should continue to attack the Right in the name of Left values, as he recently did in a *Le Monde* article. The ex-Prime Minister Laurent Fabius for his part should continue to charge the government for being “bad liberals” thus implying that it is his party that represents the “good liberalism”. The combination of the two makes a strategy that could easily combine in a presidential election platform the “necessary measures” with a degree of protection for those worst hit. The socialist calm after the neo-liberal storm, as it were... As regards changing “life” or society, it is very unlikely ever to be on the agenda.

If the emerging political situation puts the Socialist Party in a strong position, it looks likely to confront the Communist Party with even more problems than it already has if it doesn’t deal with it properly. For one it will be increasingly difficult for it to equate the measures taken by the Prime Minister with the wishes of the President. Even though it is true that such a measure as the return to the “majority” voting system might in the end benefit the socialists.

If it is not careful, the CP might find itself once again trapped in one of those vicious circles it doesn’t know how to break. The Right’s attitude disproves the idea that a socialist government is just as bad as an RPR-UDF one and this will of course benefit the socialists. Moreover, an insufficiently dynamic opposition from the communists would leave the socialists alone to cash in on Left-wing feelings.

If one seriously wants to play a role in shaping the popular movement, there is no short-cut but to accept that there complex and contradictory situations, without trying to reduce them to one schematic and dogmatic framework. To postulate an equivalence between the Right and the socialists is unpopular because it is false. Nor should one resurrect illusions regarding the socialists’ attitude and objectives. The point is to speak the language of truth to consenting adults. ■

This article originally appeared in M the Communist Party’s “renovators” monthly magazine. For further information, write to: M, 30 rue Rambuteau, 75003, Paris.

IRELAND

Accord: One Year On...

The Anglo-Irish agreement, barely one year old, seems to have reached a stalemate. Meanwhile, argues GRAEME KIRKPATRICK, the solution to Northern Ireland's problems will yet have to be found elsewhere.

John Hume's brainchild, the Anglo-Irish Accord, is now a year old, and has precipitated a steady and insipid rise in

the level of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. The province's largest paramilitary group, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), has revived its illegal and overtly terrorist wing, the Ulster Freedom Fighters, who are carrying out sectarian atrocities on a scale unseen since the early 1970's. They recently issued warnings to Catholics working in Protestant areas and "are now prepared to widen their targets to anyone who supports the security system in Northern Ireland as an excuse to engage in a sectarian conflict..." (i.e. support the Accord) (UDA publication). Interestingly, this latter threat has mirrored the concurrent campaign by the Provisional IRA and the

Irish National Liberation Army, who have sensed a threat to their operations from the new cross-border security measures proposed by the Accord, and the present restructuring of security installations in the province itself.

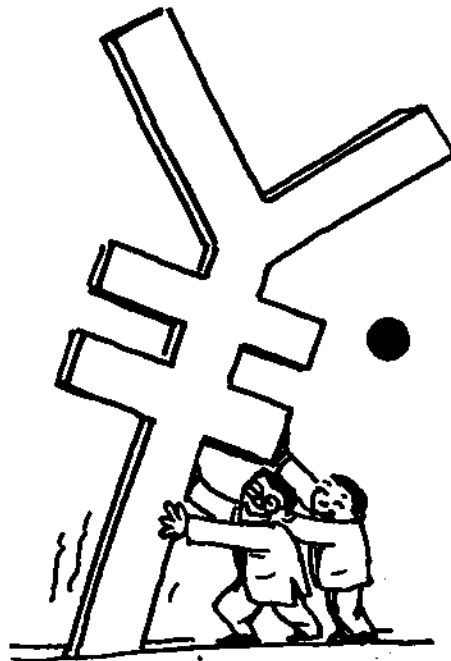
The agreement has been almost universally opposed by the Protestant community because of its in-built commitment on the part of both governments to resolve their differences in policy terms in all areas of government. The ambiguity of the agreement's contents and the inconsistency of its signatories and supporters in defending it, have exacerbated a negative spiral of rejection and violence amongst Loyalists. Initially, many

JAPAN

Is the Japanese economy, once a model, reaching crisis point?

After all these years of non-stop economic expansion, what's happening to the world's second largest economy? Having put up a brave face for so many months, the Japanese authorities finally had to rush to the US to seek a pact preventing any further rise in the value of the Yen against the Dollar. It didn't work. But why did the Japanese want a pact in the first place when any other Government would be only too happy if they could keep their currency high, wouldn't they Mr Lawson?

It looks as though the "Japanese Miracle" might have come to an end. Last month, Japan's Economic Planning Agency (EPA) had to revise its overoptimistic economic estimates and admit that the economy was likely to remain weak for some time to come. Needless to say, private analysts have already made up their own mind on



Japan's prospects - pessimistic is how you would describe their mood.

For the first time in decades, Japan's leading manufacturing industries have had to embark on massive redundancy programmes and start shedding jobs. Unable to sell their production abroad because of the prohibitive Yen rate, market leaders like Mitsubishi, Hitachi,

Isuzu and Nippon Steel set a precedent by sacking workers. The shock is all the greater for having been delayed so long. Ken Iwaki, Sony's corporate planning manager recently declared: "So far companies have been holding people and absorbing the loss, but this cannot go on much longer. People in Japan have not realised yet, but sooner or later they will see how serious this is."

The whole question is what happens to the "Japanese model" when they do. It is often overlooked that the real pillar of Japan's peculiar industrial relations is not so much common management/workers morning gym or "company ethic" as the certainty of life-long employment. Once the workers lose this certainty, the first cracks might start to appear in the "miracle's" facade and we might yet see what people in Britain have dismissively termed "confrontational" industrial relations emerge. Among other things, it will show that capitalism is pretty much the same East and West as well as shattering those myths about the Japanese's blind "devotion" to their firm. Would it not be ironic if, instead of us learning a thing or two from the Japanese, as Neil Kinnock said we should, it was the Japanese workers who had to turn to their European comrades to see how they have taken on bosses who didn't stick by their word? ■

Catholics saw hope from the agreement, in the planned reroutings of supremacist Protestant marches and rumours of American "aid" to regenerate the economy. On the face of it, the Anglo-Irish process, with its policy of "positive discrimination" initiated in the public sector, has made some headway in terms of Catholic employment opportunities, though "how much" is the real question. Taking into account that unemployment levels are twice as high for Catholic as Protestant workers, the answer to "how much" is not much. The effect of this can only be disillusionment with the new HumeMallon style SDLP among working class Catholics.

The Accord represents a piece of constitutional tinkering on the part of the Thatcher and Fitzgerald administrations. It completely fails to deliver on the material deprivation of workers, Catholic and Protestant, and serves instead the collaborative economic and political interests of the two bourgeoisies, and, significantly, the United States. Both the Workers' Party and the newly formed Labour Party of Northern Ireland initially welcomed the agreement, as an attempt to move towards a "peaceful" political framework. The former have subsequently changed their minds as even the Accord's proponents have dropped the initial "peace and stability" rhetoric and have turned their fire on Unionist "intransigence". The treaty's real driving interests are the modernization of the political-institutional framework to consolidate the dominance of finance capital in Britain and Ireland as a whole, and the strategic incorporation of Ireland into NATO seems increasingly likely. Seamus Mallon, deputy leader of the SDLP, has said he would be prepared to pay the price of Irish neutrality for Irish reunification. The Accord has had the coincidental effect of further precluding any coordinated working class unity—an object which was difficult enough before this antagonism of sectarian hostilities.

Despite the popular strength of Unionist opposition to the Accord, its political campaign to remove it has lacked momentum and never looked successful. Whilst the violence will escalate, and popular feeling shows no sign of faltering, a co-ordinated and effective response on the scale of the 1974 Ulster Workers Council strike looks unlikely. At the local level, their rent and rate strike could yet yield some satisfaction, but little else, to



Unionists opposing the Accord

the Unionists—the figures have yet to be released by the Northern Ireland Office. The campaign of withdrawal from public forums by Unionist representatives has shown the first major signs of collapse, with the return to their posts of councillors in North Down in September.

The main hitch to the Accord's success so far has been the referendum on divorce in the south of Ireland. The result, against the freedom of the right to divorce for separated couples, showed that Southern politics has yet fully to secularize itself—a blow to the modernizing aspirations of all its significant politicians. A movement against the church on this issue was supported too, somewhat naively, I think, to make a joint-authority type solution more acceptable to the unionists. Moves on "pro-Catholic" reforms in the North, such as repeals of the flags and emblems act—a discriminatory law mitigating against Irish nationalist symbols and public demonstrations—may be postponed as a result of the set-back, for fear of triggering off a major response from the Protestants, whose aspirations on the national question would appear to be being eroded by stealth.

The return of a Fianna Fail administration at the next southern poll is

unlikely to disrupt the Accord's status. It was Fianna Fail who initiated the Anglo-Irish process in 1980, and while there may be some personal friction between Haughey and Thatcher this is unlikely to impede what is left of the Accord's three year implementation—its intended duration. In Britain, too, the election of a different party to government looks unlikely to yield a significant change in Irish policy. Few Labour M.P.s opposed the Accord when it was voted on in the Commons last year—those twelve that did seem to have done so in support for Sinn Fein.

The extent of protestant mobilization against the Accord, with anything up to 40,000 involved in the UDA and Ulster Clubs combined, makes Sinn Fein's strategy of reunification as the route to socialism somewhat unconvincing. It is plain that a rigorous reassessment of their traditional view of Unionism, as a ruling class manipulated reaction to Irish nationalist demands, is imperative for British socialists. A strategic reappraisal of the problem, such as that provided by Paul Bew and Henry Patterson in their *The British State and the Ulster Crisis* (Verso 1985) should aim at the emergence of an autonomous working class discourse from within the context of the existence of the Northern state. ■

Independent All?

The birth of the *Independent* raises, once again, the question of press bias and independence. But there is more to bias than meets the eye, argues MARK HULME.

The emergence of the *Independent* was unlikely to be greeted with anything but cynicism by most socialists. My faith in its objectivity lasted only as far as the second issue (but then I suppose as a socialist I am bound to be a little too optimistic...). The offending article 'championed the rights of the "unborn child"'.

Still, the emergence of a paper which claims to be independent does at least raise several questions concerning the nature and extent of media bias in a liberal democracy. Both editorially and in terms of ownership the *Independent* does possess a greater degree of independence than other sections of the press. Indeed, in terms of classical liberal theory, the paper seems to possess all the attributes necessary for it to be considered unbiased. The fact that socialists see it otherwise however highlights the whole question of what we mean by media bias.

There has been a great deal of confusion on the Left over just what we mean by media bias, and therefore, more importantly, the solutions to the problem. I hope to show that what we regard as bias is really two phenomena: crude political distortion which has been discussed at great length; and to which many solutions have been proffered – and ideological bias. The latter is much harder to identify but ultimately of much greater importance than crude distortion.

Whereas some channels of the media can escape the charge of deliberate distortion, none of the mass media, from the *Sun* right through to the *Guardian* or *Channel 4* can escape charges of ideological bias. In a liberal democracy, it resides in their very nature. No individual need make a deliberate decision to employ it, it is integral to the "world view" of a

liberal democratic being. In one sense this may seem pessimistic, for if it is part of an individual's view that such a bias rests on, how could it be countered? In another sense, it may be that the media is society's Achilles' heel, for if we can challenge the dominant ideology we may then be more successful in converting the majority to the virtues of the socialist cause.

So, how does ideological bias manifest itself in the media? Well, bias is in effect a term that stands for the ideology of liberal democracy as transmitted and amplified by the media. Liberal ideology obscures

be able to establish an alternative which people will come to see as equally valid.

Thus I have not just isolated what I see as two quite separate forms of bias merely so that I can admire my own theoretical "fancy footwork". It is fundamental to separate the two if we are to employ the correct tactics in the fight against bias. The confusion between the two forms can lead to a simplistic analysis which in turn will lead to inadequate tactics in dealing with the problem. Whilst I am not usually keen on conspiracy theories, they are obviously warranted in



Bias – grossly political or subtly ideological? the true nature of the relations of production and promotes such goals as the protection of private property, respect for authority, belief in political as opposed to economic democracy, and so on. Such all-pervasive concepts are communicated in the media, but in a much wider context than simple political distortion. Thus, while an article might champion the rights of the unborn child and so the virtues of the family unit, when it comes to ideological bias, something as trivial as an advert or a sitcom might subtly promote, say, consumerism or heterosexuality. This is most often not as a deliberate result, but results from a unquestioning belief in society's "fundamental values". Because such bias is all-pervasive, it seems natural, and it is difficult for anyone to question its validity. However, if we can begin to question it, to counter it, we may

the case of the crude bias of most tabloids. But if we deal with the gutter press's bias in the same way as we deal with ideological bias, we will come to confuse the solutions to give to both. Whereas solutions, often impractical, have been offered to deal with crude bias by bodies such as the Glasgow Media Group, ideological bias and how it may be tackled is hardly ever discussed at any great length. So that if the press were taken out of the hands of a rich minority, if the public were given greater access, if greater democracy reigned in the media – unlikely though that might be – it would still continue to perpetuate dominant ideology. The removal of crude political bias might well be a major step but it would still only allow material to be presented "fairly" in terms of liberal democracy.

I hold out very little hope that the media will be transformed into a truly fair and democratic institution in the near future. It is only likely to become so after a major transformation of society has been effected. Of course, if this is the case, then there is little practical point in concentrating on the transformation of the media – unless as a means to highlight the problem rather than solve it. So, if the main channels of the mass media are likely to remain in private ownership until some sort of transformation has taken place, how can we use some sections of it to hasten this transformation?

Well, firstly I think that we can swiftly dispense with a “tradeunion” paper. Quite apart from the commercial pressures that will be brought on it through advertising revenues, it looks a non-starter to deal with ideological bias. I think it’s a fair guess to say that it would turn out a sanitised *Daily Mirror*.

What about the revolutionary press then? Papers such as *Militant* and *Socialist Worker* often confuse two

roles. One, which they are very capable of performing, is that of maintaining morale amongst those who are already committed to the cause – rather like the early years’ *Iskra*. But, almost because they are successful in this sense, they find it hard to produce new recruits. Ask most workers what they think of the revolutionary press and you are liable to get an answer too colourful to print most anywhere. As long as it continues sloganising and preaching to the converted, the revolutionary press will never succeed in converting others to the socialist cause or lead them to question capitalism. Surely it is a negation of marxism to preach the party line. We can only succeed if, left with the facts, people are given a chance to decide what kind of alternative they want. Surely we should be confident enough in the correctness of our analysis that any intelligent adult presented with the facts should come to the same conclusion.

If I am right so far, then it follows that what we need are papers which, whilst highlighting the contradictions of

capitalism, don’t do so in a condescending or patronising way, but instead, do so in a way that is relevant to the lives not only of workers but of all people. A solution, to my mind, would be to set up local community newspapers. To think globally and act locally or, if you like, a “Greening” of the revolutionary press. This, of course, is hardly a earth-shattering suggestion and it is one that is unlikely to precipitate a revolution tomorrow. However, it would give the Left an opportunity to deal with issues in a way that touches on the experience of people’s everyday lives.

Many such papers have sprung up, often produced by green and women groups. It is these experiences that point the direction in which socialists should attempt to counter the mass media. These democratically run local papers also have the advantage that they are produced by grassroots groups which could be developed and built upon to take a full part in the transformation of society. ■

Aids, What U-Turn?

Many in the Government and the British press are having to eat their own words and admit that AIDS is no longer the “Gay Plague” they once made it out to be. Experience in Africa, Europe and the United States reveals that all sectors of society are vulnerable to the AIDS virus in varying degrees. On November 11th 1986, the Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler stood outside Number 10 Downing Street announcing the Government’s New Committee on AIDS, and a proposed leaflet to be distributed nation-wide. Increasing awareness about public health issues is of utmost importance, but how extensive and effective has government policy been so far?

Previous to Mr Fowler’s announcement on the 11th November and its accompanying media hype, there



Action on AIDS – Thatcher style...

had already been a ministerial group coordinating action against AIDS, in existence for over a year. Thus the new committee to be chaired by Lord Whitelaw is scarcely breaking new ground. Indeed, despite the Government’s rush to appear to be doing something about AIDS, it was reported on 21st November that the Government intended to effect £4m of cuts in the Public Health Laboratory Service, a body which carries out important research into AIDS.

The Government’s latest stunt to increase the funding of anti-AIDS publicity is, despite all appearances, totally consistent with its previous policy. People have been dying from AIDS for over ten years now. Very little action has been taken to date, and given the scale of the problem, the money spent so far has been nothing but peanuts. ■

Women and Labour

ELLEN MALOS looks at women in the labour movement and puts the case for "autonomous integration" of feminism within the Labour Party.

The Specific Oppression of Women.

- 1) Women as a group are disadvantaged in all societies that we know of and in many are actively oppressed.
- 2) This is not a simple matter of conscious discrimination – though that can be part of it – but is connected with fundamental questions of social structure, such as the organisation of families, of work, and of education; and of the way gender division is an organising social and psychological principle in all societies, whether or not they are also divided on class lines.
- 3) Therefore if women are disadvantaged as a group, and we, all of us, want to challenge this it is essential for them – like all oppressed or disadvantaged groups – to develop their own understanding of their situation and to develop ways of challenging it, even if it is then necessary to join with others to do so.

I think this is a need of all such groups and I think it is a fundamental idea that socialists need to recognise.

- 4) Because I am talking to a Labour Party, I am concentrating on the need for a women's organisation/movement within the party, but for that to be effective there also has to be autonomous, challenging women's movements outside the Labour Party. If there hadn't been we wouldn't be discussing this subject now, and the kind of issues around the needs of women, of anti-sexist politics, which have become more and more central over the last few years would not have been raised – I believe that socialism and feminism need one another.

That, in the words of the slogan, there will be no socialism without women's liberation and no women's liberation without socialism.

I also believe that the history of Women's Organisation within the Labour Party and within the Labour movement bears this out.

Perspectives.

- 1) The Labour Movement is not the same as the Socialist Movement, nor are either of these the same as the Labour Party.

There are divisions between socialists and not all members of the Socialist Movement are socialists.

- 2) We have to recognise that "working class solidarity", unified class action, happens at rare moments.

Despite common interests in the long run, in the short run and in practice there are many differences within the working class including that of gender, which must be recognised in order for the long term interests to be realised.

The Labour Movement and the Labour Party have never had a unified ideology; there are many kinds of socialism, and beyond that Labourism/Trade Unionism, with roots in radical liberalism as much as, if not more, than in socialism.

Even Marxism doesn't have a clear perspective on women – eg. Engels in *The Origins of the Family* had a long term perspective of the entry of women into paid labour/socialisation of housework/ending of status of the family as an economic unit, but in the short run Marx and Engels in their analysis of 19th century Britain saw women as cheap competitors with men, equated with children in this respect. In *Conditions of the Working Class*, Engels wrote about women working while their husbands were unemployed almost as if he believed that this was a reversal of the natural order of things. The same tension is apparent in Marx. In *Capital* he gives a simplified and unhistorical view of women's participation in economic activity, describing it as "free labour at home for the benefit of the family", in contrast with a more complex historical analysis in other areas eg. slavery.

These tensions are real and cannot be glossed over or wished away.

- 6) One key problem is the notion of a natural division of labour between the sexes based on childrearing and care of the home which is a justification of, and a foundation for, gender divisions both inside and outside the home. In Marx's and Engels's work there was no mention of the possibility of childcare or housework as an activity to be shared among the sexes.

Until the development of the new Women's Liberation movement since the late 1960's the idea of the "natural division of labour" between the sexes was accepted in differing forms by socialists and feminists as well as by conservative ideologies.

So within the Labour Movement there was an emphasis on the "Family Wage" which implied a male breadwinner with dependants, rather than on equal pay for both sexes and a living

wage for all workers. This went with opposition to legislation for a national minimum wage but the accepting of legislation and agreement limiting hours of work for women and their exclusion from occupations regarded as unsuitable for them, usually including better paid work. For the same reason the Trade Union movement opposed Family Allowances for many years.



Kinnoek's idea of politics...

Even within the Women's Trade Union Movement, the Women's Labour League from 1910 and the Women's Organisation within the Labour Party after 1919, because of the acceptance of a natural division of labour based on the notion of separate spheres, campaigns and demands for women workers were separated from those for women within the home, and particularly for married women with children. This often led ultimately to the subordination of the needs of women to those of men and children even within the women's movement itself.

The History of Women in the Labour Movement.

Until recently the history of the involvement of women in radical, socialist and labour movements was either unknown, forgotten or ignored. More and more women writers and researchers are uncovering it. We now know through the work of Barbara Taylor and Dorothy Thompson that women were active in the Owenite socialist movement and in Chartism back into the 1830's and 40's. Dorothy Thompson believes that there was a decline in political activity amongst women because of a change from more informal organisation, with open air meetings, to more formal organisation with meetings often held in pubs, where because of

the spread in ideology of respectability and domesticity of women it became less possible for them to participate. This change went along with new divisions within the working class between the respectable (artisan/skilled groups) and others (unskilled/casual workers).

Political activity of women began to increase again in the late 60's and 70's, among middle class women first, with the development of the Women's Rights and Women's Suffrage movements (though there had been some involvement in the Anti-Corn Law and Anti-Slavery movements which helped lay the ground for this).

By the mid 70's new trade union organisations for women were being formed such as the National Union of Working Women in Bristol from 1874, many of them linked through what ***"For a women's movement within the party to be effective, there has to be autonomous, challenging women's movements outside the Labour Party."***

became the Women's Trade Union League. Some of these were represented at the TUC where heated debates took place on issues to do with women and work.

In the mid 1880's the Cooperative Women's Guild was formed and eventually became a large and influential movement, mainly of married working class women.

The late '80's and '90's saw the development of Industrial Unionism among unskilled and semi-skilled workers which reached beyond the narrow craft unionism of the past. Women got involved and participated in the mass strikes for better pay and conditions and union recognition in 1889 and 1892. The strike of the Bryant and May match girls and of the London Dock workers is well known, but in Bristol for example the women of the cotton factory were on strike in 1889 alongside male workers from the docks and elsewhere, and in 1892 it was women from the Sanders Confectionery Factory who were part of a long strike where the dragoons were called out and many people were injured on Black Friday just before Christmas.

In 1906 the Women's Labour League was formed, as a counterpart for the Women's Trade Union League, mainly for married women who were not in the labour market. This became part of the Labour Representation Committee and then of the Labour Party with the new constitution of 1919.

Like the dissolving of the Women's Trade Union movement into the Transport and General Workers Union and the Women's ***"Engels wrote about women working while their husbands were unemployed as if he believed that this was a reversal of the natural order of things."***

Advisory Committee of the TUC this may have seemed a good thing at the time, but campaigning around the special needs of women tended to be submerged into the "common good".

It meant that the Women's Labour League, in merging into the party rather than affiliating to it, gained by becoming part of the structure but gave up the right which it had before of direct representation from its conference to the NEC, and also the right to put two resolutions directly onto the Labour Party Conference agenda (this change was railroaded through the WLL conference by Marion Philips).

This meant that it became much more difficult to get issues of concern to women, eg. women's wages and working conditions, birth control and maternity rights, family allowances, debated at

the party conference. Sheila Rowbotham's account of the Worker's Birth Control Movement in the 1920's in her book on Stella Browne illustrates this problem.

Women concerned about these things therefore had to look outside the Labour Party. There was a similar problem in the Trade Union movement where equal pay languished as an issue between the 1880's and the 1940's and then again until the late '60's when women started taking direct action for themselves.

Structures and Forms of Administration.

There is a need not just for analysing the situation of oppressed and exploited classes and groups, and of campaigning for their demands, but also for developing structures and forms of organisation that meet their needs.

Structures and ways of working in the Labour Party and Trade Unions are very formal and hierarchical - many women and black people and working class people in general who have

"Women were already active in the Owenite socialist movement and in Chartism back in the 1830's and 40's."

not had experience in the organised labour movement find them very alien. They might need to find ways of learning to work within them or of challenging them or transforming them.

Socialists have never agreed on how to handle unsatisfactory or oppressive structures including state structures. Do we work either in the state machinery, transform it or destroy it?

Should we prepare women or black people or anyone for taking office as councillors, MPs, etc.; if so, how, and for what purposes?

The women's movement in and outside the Labour Party, influenced by the civil rights, student and youth movements and the Nuclear Disarmament and Anti-Vietnam War movements from the sixties onwards, and by their belief in trying to live the

"Socialists have never agreed on how to handle unsatisfactory or oppressive structures, including state structures."

revolution while preparing for it, has its emphasis on less formal, less hierarchical forms of organisation and discussion.

Many women, especially when they are first starting to become involved with political discussion and action, find themselves more able to take part in these, and therefore the often small scale and informal nature of women's meetings can give them time and space to develop their ideas.

But, although it is difficult to do, I think we also need to look at how we do things within the Labour Party and in politics generally. Not just to "allow" women (or black people either) a nice little ghetto to themselves where they can learn how to work one day in the hallowed structures that already exist.

A large national organisation has to have structures, procedures, forms, and these are often a safeguard for democracy and accountability - but we have to make sure that they are only as formal as they have to be, and they don't hinder us from doing what we need to do. Are they what we need if they are putting

people off joining us, or ensure that only those with a stomach for endless numbers of long meetings and elaborate procedures can stay with us?

It is not only women who are put off by or need to think about these things, though these days it might only be women who are raising them.



As they sew, shall they reap?

POSTSCRIPT: Since this article was written, the Labour Party Conference has voted for a Ministry of Women to be set up by the next Labour Government. Against the recommendation of the NEC, it was decided that the Minister should have cabinet status.

In addition, conference adopted a resolution on women's organisation in the Labour Party, calling for a review of the system of voting at the National Conference of Labour Women to provide for a differential vote according to the numbers of women represented by each delegate, the setting up of a standing orders committee on the same sort of model as that for the national conference, the recommendation of "a means of integrating Women's Conference decisions into Annual Party Conference and the NEC", a review of the allocation of seats on the National Women's Committee and of the method of electing women's representatives on the NEC.

This resolution caused considerable discussion between women delegates at conference, in particular between members of Women's Action Committee and London Labour Briefing. The process of developing the detailed proposals and consulting on them is likely to be far from trouble-free.

It is to be hoped that the integration of the decisions of the women's organisations and women's conference into the mainstream is not going to be at the expense of the comparative freedom from bureaucratic forms and attitudes that has been possible up to now. ■

Social-Democracy facing the *Future*

European social-democracy is at the crossroads, caught as it is between an arrogantly confident neo-liberal right and the crumbling of its old Keynesian certainties. ANDRE BERGER looks at its attempts to find new perspectives for the next century.

HAVING LOST POWER IN THE MAIN EUROPEAN countries, the traditional Left is in the process of redefining a new political project aiming at opening a new age of social and political compromises as a response to neo-liberalism, which, as the difficulties encountered by the Thatcher government in Britain seems to indicate, is declining. If it is still the case that there isn't any homogenous social-democratic project at the international level, one cannot but note the relative convergence of the project formulated by the three main components of the European Left which, incidentally, are all in opposition in their respective countries: the German SPD, the Italian PCI and the British Labour Party. This article aims at outlining the main components of this convergence and the perspectives for its development - without however skating over the deep differences that continue to exist in as much as each social-democratic or "euro-communist" party defines itself primarily in relation to the role it plays in its own country.

More or less coinciding with Reagan's victory in the United States, the past 5 or 6 years have seen a clear shift in the tendencies at work in Europe. In what once were the main strongholds of European reformist Left, the conservatives have managed to exploit the political climate and, by playing on the contradictions of social-democratic austerity policies, gained power or made impossible any possibility of a governmental perspective for the Left. This was seen with the end of "historical compromise" in Italy (1977), Thatcher's victory (1979), the defeat of the social-democratic-liberal coalition in the FRG (1982) and the temporary exclusion from power of the Swedish social democrats (1976-1982). Yet, at the same time, a counterbalancing movement took place in the southern European countries where the socialists have managed, often for the first

time, to come to office and to marginalise more or less successfully the communist parties with the victories of Mitterrand, Gonzales and Papandreou in 1981.

During this phase, the general situation was characterised by the following traits: a) an increase in East-West tensions and an accentuation of American pressure on their European allies (Euromissiles, SDI, Lybia), b) a crisis of leadership and perspective in the USSR aggravated by the events in Poland and the Afghan intervention, c) the neo-liberal offensive against the backdrop of a world crisis, d) a crisis of Left parties in opposition (PCI's lack of direction, SPD's problems with the Greens, Labour's internal crisis), e) the rapid decline of all Western Communist parties with the exception of the PCI (crisis in the French CP, disintegration of the Spanish CP, stagnation of the Portuguese CP, general inability of CPs to progress in countries with an hegemonic social-democracy), f) difficulties encountered by the socialists in power in southern Europe illustrating the very same issues that had been met earlier in the North.

Since Chirac's victory in France in March 1986, all the main Western European countries are governed by neo-liberal governments. Nonetheless, the international political situation is changing:

* Renewed dialogue between the superpowers (problems of the Reagan administration, Gorbachev's "new era");

* Difficulties and contradictions encountered by neo-liberalism in the US and the UK and possibilities of political changes;

* Emergence of a renewed political leadership in the SPD, Labour Party and PCI. At the same time, the communist parties (except the PCI) are plunged in deep crisis and the necessary political renewal is yet to come in the southern European socialist parties (especially in France and Spain).

Those changes mark the end of a period that opened with May '68 and the Portuguese revolution. In no major European country is there today any realistic perspective of a political formula of the "Popular Front" or "United Left" type. The labour movement is under social democratic hegemony and still on the defensive in relation to neoliberalism and the US foreign policy. As for the revolutionary Left, it is almost nonexistent. The possibilities for new political forces to play a notable role in the political and parliamentary life are extremely reduced - except in

FRG where, thanks to very specific conditions, the Greens have managed to build an original political current which is not yet declining.

In these conditions, the SPD and the PCI appear as the main political obstacle in neo-liberalism's way and to Europe's submission to Reaganite policies. This is of course also due to the inability of national bourgeois forces of the Gaulist type to represent an alternative so weak is the economic position of countries like France or the UK as compared with the US or Japan.

One cannot skate over the resistance the SPD and the PCI oppose to the Reaganite project. Even though their politics are confined within the NATO and capitalist framework, the type of compromise they propose differ from Reaganite policies in two fundamental respects:

* A social compromise aiming at preventing the emergence of a dual society;

* A political and economic compromise between the two superpowers which, incidentally converges with Gorbachev's wishes to return to detente so as to modernise Soviet economy away from American military and economic pressures.

In this respect, given the SPD's strategic geo-political position and the depth the redefinition of its project has already attained, I will mainly concentrate on the issues and dynamics at work within it.

"The SPD and the PCI appear to be the main political obstacles in neoliberalism's way and to Europe's submission to Reaganite policies."

What is today at stake in the SPD is the supersession of the BadGodesberg programme(1). It is a profound programmatic redefinition which, among other things, aims at putting an end to the Schmidt-type crisis management of the '70s. The party's new programme, already drafted and circulated, will be voted upon in 1988. It updates BadGodesberg and insists on the impossibility of overcoming the crisis through a purely quantitative growth that does not take into account the destruction of the environment and the inherent limits of purely national economic policies. It thus advocates a "Europeanisation of Europe". This is not only seen as applying to economic and social questions but also to that of a defence policy within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance. At the same time, the project insists on the specific role of women in advanced capitalism. The most significant document in this respect is Peter Glotz's(2) "Manifesto for a New European Left"(3) Glotz attempts to define a "realist utopia" for the European Left. His book sharply attacks not only neo-liberalism but also the nationalistic policies and positions of the social-democratic, communist and even alternative parties. Glotz's propositions are attractive in that they clearly reject the narrow national perspectives. They are dangerous in that they unconditionally accept the capitalist framework and sharply deny any relevance to marxist theory. It is also limited by the fact that it appears essentially as an incantatory appeal to a "Europeanisation" without seriously indicating which political forces could take on such a project without directly clashing with the interests of the national bourgeoisies and capitalism in general.

Glotz starts by noting that there is no European Left today. He nonetheless defines a common task: the overcoming of the



PCI's Natta to SPD's Brandt: "Write me a programme..."

neoconservative offensive. To this end, he outlines 7 major objectives:

- 1) To develop capitalism into a social democracy;
- 2) To promote a new European culture integrating both the traditional and the new aspects of this culture (ecology, peace, feminism);
- 3) Social justice and a rejection of class confrontation;
- 4) An industrial Europe;
- 5) East-West co-operation, a new "Ostpolitik" which, by reducing arms spending would foster industrial development. This would be based on the NATO framework and also preserve the Warsaw Pact. It should however aim at transforming both alliances;
- 6) A farewell to the class struggle and a recognition of the entrepreneurial spirit integrated within a broad "ecological accountancy". Renouncing "class politics" so as to seek an alliance with the productive sections of European capital;
- 7) The transformation of Europe into an active political force. To this end, the Left and its allies must draw the lessons of the last decades.

The main idea of Glotz's programme is that neo-conservatism works. A dual society that accept the marginalisation of one third of the population can work, as it were, eternally but it would lead to Europe's political, economic, social and cultural decline. If the Left is to resist this onslaught, it can not just advance democratic socialism since this has become unable to attain cultural and political hegemony. Consequently, the "realist utopia" must be more modest and just advance the "social democracy as an European idea". In other words, we should accept the current capitalist restructuring but try to inject them with some measure of "social content". Politically this implies an alliance between the Left, those leading fractions of the technological intelligentsia, the new social movements and those traditional sectors that have been "left out" ie. small shopkeepers, artisans and, in Southern Europe, the peasantry.

By overestimating the longterm chances for success of the neo-liberal model, Glotz has come to attack the labour movement's traditional positions and, more specifically, the

Labour Party's protectionism. According to him also, it does not make sense to say that the working class constitutes the majority of the population because there can be no common interest between those that stand to benefit from modernisation and those that stand to lose from it. Glotz's mistake resides in his inability to distinguish between the subjective interests and the longterm interests of the different layers of workers. his naturally leads him

“European social-democracy bases itself on the idea that social peace is a productive force.”

to reject the possible alliance of all the workers in favour of an ever greater fragmentation of the workers which come to be identifiable as different classes – since they have different interests.

Glotz also insists that the dangers of neo-conservatism and of class-frontational politics are parallel since they both lead to Europe's accelerated decline. An outcome that would only benefit Japan and the US. This is why “European social democracy” must base itself on “the idea that social peace is a productive force” and also allow for a social policy that alleviates poverty.

This idea of an European-wide social compromise (including the 35 hours week, etc.) goes hand in hand with a political East-West compromise, the essential goal of which is to give Europe the political and economic means to reinforce itself. The key phrase of his theory is “only an unconditional recognition of the status-quo can create the conditions for progressive change of the status-quo that would overcome the status-quo ante. Those would want to overcome Europe's division or simply make it bearable must first accept this division.” Glotz thus attacks both the “Free West” war-mongers and those who support oppressed opposition movements in the East. This, in his eyes, amounts to an unacceptable and dangerous interference in the USSR's internal affairs. By destabilising the Eastern bloc, it would make Detente all the more difficult to achieve.

Finally, Glotz underlines what he sees as the fundamental difference between the new social movements and the movement for “social democracy” as redefined by him. The new social

movements, he contends, are condemned to failure because they are essentially defensive and are merely movements of resistance against specific aspects of modernisation. He nonetheless argues for an alliance with them on the basis of the “social content” of the modernisation (shorter working hours, etc.) because this alliance allows a new individuality that would liberate creativity, intelligence, in short emancipation. His conclusion is thus the following: “Those who want to prevent the minorities' marginalisation, ie. a fragmentation of European communities, must build an alliance based on the Enlightenment's philosophy that transcends the old classes. Those who want to help the weak must be on the strong's side. The Left can break up and the defensive bloc between the old privileged and the rising strata only if it puts technology at the service of a new social, ecological and economically balanced individuality. Our slogan must be the following: For the freedom of all, in the respect of each one's social responsibility.”

If Glotz's theses are not entirely identical with the SPD's new programme, they help to gain a better understanding of the SPD's current orientation. In effect, it has three main dimensions.

* It corresponds to the objective interests of German capital – development of the European market, redefinition on the North's own terms, of the relations with the South and better

“The new social movements, Glotz contends, are condemned to failure because they are essentially defensive.”

economic relations with the East. For obvious geo-political reasons, German capitalism finds itself opposed to Reagan's policy aiming at bringing the USSR down on its economic knees;

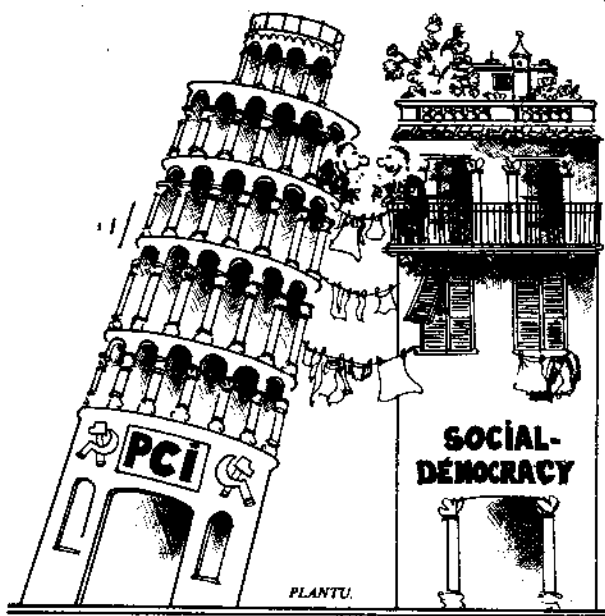
* It corresponds to the German SPD's ideological and organisational links with the labour movement. The SPD, PCI in this sense represent the last defense of what the Americans see as “marxism”. In as much as the SPD and the PCI's orientations are more “European” than the Labour Party's, they represent a greater threat to US hegemony;

* It corresponds to social democracy's renewal (a prudent and contradictory one) under the pressure of the alternative movement. The SPD thus integrates in its programme the failure of neo-Keynesian policies, anti-statism, ecology, pacifism, feminism. Still, this integration is based on a refusal of any ideological compromise with the new social movements.

The SPD is far from having convinced the whole of the socialdemocratic parties of the relevance of its orientation and it

“Glotz's proposals threaten to make the communist parties look even more out of date than they presently do.”

looks as if it isn't interested in winning the next federal elections in January 1987. So far, only the PCI has welcomed the SPD's attempt at “rapprochement”. Its General Secretary, Alessandro Natta has expressed his satisfaction with the results of the last Nurnberg Conference, praising most of all the “continental” dimension of the SPD's approach, its rejection of SDI and the



Peter Glotz

Manifest

für eine Neue Europäische Linke

Der alte Kontinent steht vor neuen äußeren und inneren Herausforderungen – der globalen Strategie der Supermächte und der einer neuen Technologie, die mehr Arbeitsplätze vernichtet, als sie schafft. In dieser Lage proklamiert Glotz das Konzept einer sozialen Europa-Modells, da kein einzelnes Land mehr die Künftigen lösen kann.

im Siedler Verlag



Peter Glotz and his book.

gradual phasing out of nuclear power. If the Labour Party appears more radical with respect to nuclear disarmament, it lacks this "European" dimension. As regards the French socialists, they are totally isolated in a Socialist International that looks increasingly dominated by the Swedish and German social democrats.

Clearly then, the great strength of this orientation resides in its European dimension and in its opposition to wild capitalism a

la neoliberals. These two aspects should allow the international self-managing Left to critically support aspects of the social democrats struggle against neo-liberalism. This of course should not blind us to the fact that social democracy remains profoundly pro-capitalist and anti-selfmanagement.

However, even without leading to Glotz's "utopia", the perspective he is advancing won't fail to appear attractive at a time when some sort of dialogue is again on the superpowers' agenda. Furthermore, the European Left is heavily hegemonised by social democratic parties and the PCI. In this respect, Glotz's propositions threaten to make the communist parties look even more out of date than they presently do – stiffened as they are by bureaucracy, manipulatory practices and nationalism. As with the alternative political forces, they might find it increasingly difficult to achieve parliamentary representation and thus be able to influence social democracy's political evolution. Apart from the German Greens and, maybe Italy's Democrazia Proletaria, the only forces that could put pressure on social democracy to adopt a more self-managing socialist approach will have to come from within socialdemocratic parties themselves. It is thus vital to look closely at the evolution of left-wing currents and socio-political emancipatory movements as they appear and develop within the traditional parties. To fail to do it would amount to leaving the alternative out in the cold. ■

(1) In 1956 at Bad Godesberg, the German SPD formally abandoned any reference to marxism in its programme. Instead, it banked on a gradual development of social capitalism.

(2) Peter Glotz is the SPD's Organisation Secretary and a leading social-democratic ideologist.

(3) *Manifest für eine Neue Europäische Linke*, Siedler Verlag, 1986.

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MICKEY MOUSE is a most famous mouse...

Building the *Alternative*

The building of an alternative movement is on the cards, argues HARRY CURTIS. This article looks at what the alternative represents, what it stands for and whether it spells the end for "class politics".

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT in recent years has without question been the rise of alternative politics. This phenomenon has not purely been limited to Western Europe but has also emerged in Australia and in the United States (both inside and outside the Democratic Party). Nor have they been restricted to developed capitalist countries. In effect, the contradictions that have led to their emergence are also to be found in many developing countries and societies. Although it represents a near global phenomenon, alternative politics has nowhere achieved a majority position over any society. These politics are nonetheless crucial as they have come to question a great many received truths of the socialist movement and also as they sketch a radical redefinition of the general - social and organisational - emancipatory project. For these reasons, socialists can in no way afford to simply ignore the challenge of alternative politics.

The first thing one must do if one is to grasp the importance of alternative politics and the new social movements, is to abandon a certain class reductionism which only accept to consider a social contradiction if it expresses itself in "class terms". Such a position is untenable since it obscures the fact that there is no necessary connection between one's subjective consciousness and one's objective class position ie. the position one occupies in the productive process. This is the reason why "fundamental class interests" do not arise a priori or spontaneously from one's objective class position. This failure of "class interests" to arise spontaneously stems from the fact that once they have organised and secured some advances, it might be more rational for workers to defend those immediate interests than to push long-term revolutionary "interests" of which they have, a priori, no clear idea. This

phenomenon was described by Rosa Luxemburg as the "dialectics of partial and total aims". To her, one's consciousness of the aims of the movement depended, at each given moment, on one's consciousness of one's immediate interests and the best way to advance them. This opened the way for an analysis of social-democracy and trade-unionism that went beyond the ritualistic denunciations of "leaders' betrayal" so popular with some quarters. Suitably adapted, it should allow us to develop an understanding of the new social movements that goes beyond the simplistic and dogmatic rejection of their "revisionism" or the negation of "class politics" they are accused of representing.

As I have suggested, the crucial distinction is that between subjective social identification and objective class position. It would also help to keep in mind that the working class' "fundamental interest" is the classless society ie. its negation as a class - if only not to make a fetish of "class".

"Class interests" as embodied in people's consciousness are thus not a direct expression of their position in the productive process but the product of a political articulation. This is true even if, at the individual level, social identification finds its roots in one's experience of one's position in the productive and social process. In effect, the very diversity of one's experience due in part to the extreme diversity of the ways in which capital and market relations have invaded ever growing sectors of what once was purely social life (leisure, sport, hygiene, personal relations, etc.) and in part to the extreme diversity of already existing modes of social identification has meant that there is a multiplicity of forms of consciousness coexisting in society. This consciousness is at all times shaped by the specific and many-sided character of one's struggle, experiences and particular form(s) of oppression(s).

The capitalist crisis, by destructuring old communities and old forms of social identifications and by its attempt to establish a new mode of surplus-value extraction that could see it well into the XXth century, is greatly reinforcing this process of destructuring and fragmentation of traditional collective identities. But, hand in hand with this fragmentation, we have seen a new type of collective identification coming to the fore that is based on sex, race and particular concerns (ecology, peace), etc...

The job of alternative socialists is to try and identify what, in the conscious "partial aims" that appear here and there, could form the basis of a new identity, what form of identification could unite a new "revolutionary subject" that could take on the historic task of general emancipation and articulate its own hegemonic project.

Such a new "revolutionary subject" is of course not given *a priori* nor is it, as such, necessarily revolutionary (neither was the old working class, by the way). As a matter of fact, such a "subject" will, as it always has had to, have to be constructed in the heat of political action. It is in this sense that its consciousness is the result of a political articulation.

Still, this political construction cannot abstract itself from the objective realities of the capitalist social and productive relations. A potentially successful "revolutionary subject" will thus have to be articulated around those objective social realities. As the capitalist system is directly economically exploitative, the working class, as a category, is central to such a project in the sense that its *objective position* means that a political project basing itself on its objective position as the exploited class, i.e. as objectively opposed to capital, would have the hegemonic potential that one based on, say, gay consciousness wouldn't. Like it or not, the social and productive relations allowing capital to extract surplusvalue remain central determinants in our society. However, this should *not* be taken to mean that the working class is necessarily politically central.

Capital only survives if it manages to reproduce exploitation through time. This it does by a variety of means but typically by means of a specific political articulation. In this respect Marx once spoke of Capital's "permanent revolution". Concretely it means that there are a number of different hegemonic systems on which capital can base itself to secure its reproduction - two

contemporary examples of such systems being Keynesianism and Neo-liberalism. Of course, capital does not change hegemonic systems just for fun, it does it only when forced by some material i.e. economic compulsion. It is only the crisis of Keynesianism that made it necessary for a new model to appear. Still, the specific forms of the new model are not all a direct result of economic imperatives. The specific form and content which the new project takes depend very largely on the political process and capital's ability to turn it into a new hegemonic paradigm. In this sense, although it has had some initial success, it is far from clear the Thatcherism has actually succeeded in imposing its project wholesale.

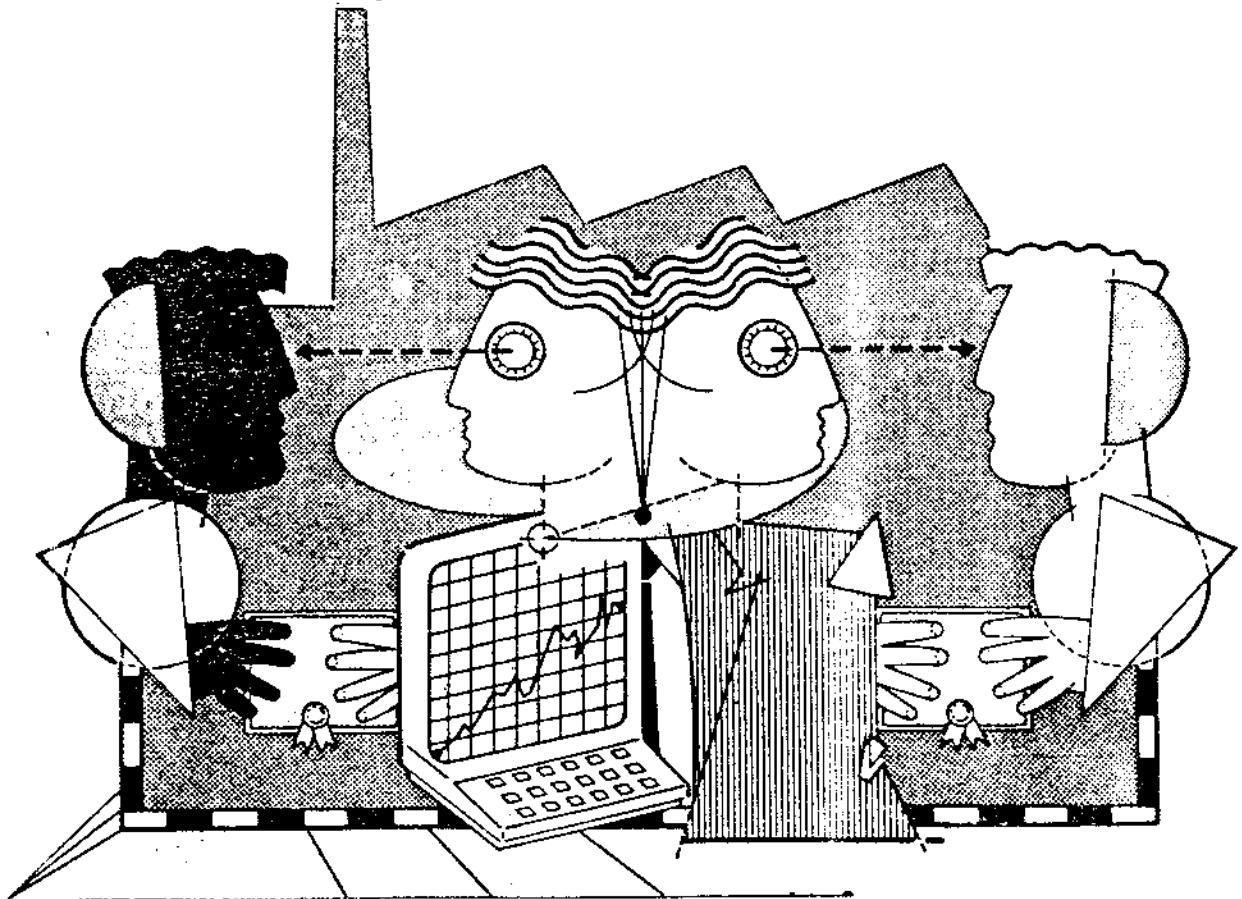
It is ironic how openly the "New Right" refer their practice to Gramsci's writings. However, one has to admire how well they have learned the lesson witness their success in equating the

"Socialists can in no way afford to simply ignore the challenge of alternative politics."

concept of democracy and the aspirations to autonomy to the market, or the right to difference with egoistic individualism...

To Thatcherite neo-liberalism we oppose the alternative. As such, it is a project with outright hegemonic ambitions. However, as a project, it finds its primary articulations on new social contradictions which, as we have seen, are not necessarily determined by one's position in the productive process. The alternative is both an attempt to define a new "revolutionary subject" and to turn it into a mass movement fighting for a new socialist project.

To clear a few possible confusions, let me make clear 1) that these new social contradictions are no more socialist *in*



themselves than trade-union activity of itself is, and that they thus require to be articulated to a global political project embodying the "total aims". 2) that those new social contradictions could be articulated equally well (albeit partially perhaps) to a neo-capitalist project (in fact, this is precisely what some sections of the New Right have tried to do.) whereas the conscious working class, because of its objective place in the productive process as the direct producer of surplus-value cannot in any way be integrated to a capitalist project. On the contrary, the conscious working class is a stumbling block on the way to the neo-capitalists New Jerusalem. The miners' strike can in this respect be seen as an attempt - successful from capital's point of view - to break the working class as a *conscious* collective identity basing itself on such values as the dignity of labour, community spirit, social solidarity, etc. This last point constitutes the reason why, the working class will, in its objectively anticapitalist position, have to be part of any rearticulation of the socialist project.

Just as importantly, the redefinition of socialism must integrate global conceptions that are no part of - or in some case run against - the historical heritage of the labour movement. Productivism and the fetishism of the productive forces has been part and parcel of socialist theory and practice - both reformist and revolutionary. Its critique, as advanced by the ecologist movement, constitutes a specific and irreducible import which allows and necessitates a global redefinition of the aims of socialism. The same could be said of feminism and other movements.

The development of a new "revolutionary subject" and the definition of its project can thus only be the product of a specifically political process. Such a process will of course require a series of compromises between the different forces involved. In this process since each section, each contradiction, has its own specific determinations, it is therefore legitimate in preserving its autonomy over the rest of the movement.

For the time being, the alternative is only the name of such a project. In no way can it, as a project, be said to be the practice of an already-constituted subject. For this reason, it cannot, as some would want it to, be opposed to the working class and its project - socialism. The opposition would only hold if it were a sociological one. That, as we have seen, it isn't. Workers themselves are subject to the determinations of a wide range of contradictions, as women, as blacks, as homosexuals, as members of a national minority, as young people, etc... Such an attempt at postulating a sociological difference of essences would have to take for granted the idea of a male and qualified working class as the expression of the majority of the class which, if it has had a determining role in shaping the labour movement and its project, has ceased to correspond to sociological reality. What I am talking about is an interactive political relationship between the working class and the new social movements, not some nonsensical opposition of essences.

What we are witnessing today is a process led by the bourgeoisie aiming at redefining the mode of existence of those from whom it extracts surplus-value. In effect, what is on the agenda is the creation of a new working class. This goes from the work-place (introduction of "Japanese" methods, development in part-time temporary employment, under protected "training schemes", etc...) to the wider social sphere (redefinition of the role of the Welfare State, questioning of old solidarities, etc...). This agenda is also that facing the alternative. To it, the

alternative responds with its own specific emancipatory articulations that are not less broad in scope than capital's.

This shaking up of society has induced a crisis of the party form of organisation. When the capital-labour antagonism was very much the main social determination, the party form could channel the whole of the anti-capitalist sociality. This is no longer the case and new *socio-political* movements have emerged essentially outside both traditional organisations and traditional organisational forms. This questioning of the traditional party form of organisation has to be taken on board and alternative socialists should aim at promoting a *strategic* alliance between all the emancipatory movements - old and new. This is the deep

"The social and productive relations allowing capital to extract surplus-value remain central determinants in our society... Capital does not change hegemonic systems just for fun."

meaning of the Benn-Heffer proposal for a refoundation of the Labour Party around the whole of the socio-political emancipatory movements: women, blacks, gays and lesbians, ecologists, etc.(1) This project is a major development and should be further developed and refined.

The alternative is also about redefining traditional approaches to political action. It cannot just revamp formulae of old nor can it act as though it was starting from political scratch. It has to look at the real movement of society and find what elements - traditional and new - it could base itself on to wage the necessary "war of position" to deconstruct capital's hegemony. A prime instrument in this will be experiences in self-management and popular planning and, more broadly, prefigurative strategies aiming at giving concrete proof that people can really take their emancipation from their specific oppression as from their global exploitation into their own hands and hearts.

More than this, the alternative is pregnant with a new type of sociality, a new way of being and living in society. To the neoliberals' "social-sadism" it opposes a new type of relationships between women and men, blacks and whites, homo and heterosexuals, young and old, humans and their environment (urban and natural), etc. It aims to provide emancipatory answers to the politicisation of personal relations brought about by capitalist and market invasion of the spheres of social life. In **"The job of alternative socialists is to try and identify what in the conscious 'partial aims' could form the basis of a new identity."**

short, the alternative's aim is, in every sense of the term, to "change life".

Nor is the alternative just a vision. There exists a political space in which to develop it. This is especially the case in Britain where the very same forces that gave rise to the Green movement in Germany in the late '70's early '80's joined the "Bennite" wing of the Labour Party but where the Labour leadership has so far refused to conduct any strategic rethinking of its project and perspectives, preferring a partial return to failed Keynesian recipes - thus leaving Labour utterly unable to face the challenges of tomorrow. This failure leaves a gaping space where the alternative in Britain could be squarely positioned as a possible answer to the strategic questions facing the labour movement. This means that we should campaign for the Labour Party to become, as Eric Heffer put it, the "Green Party in Britain".(2)

If we look round Europe, not all sections of social democracy are so short-sighted as the Labour Party leadership. The German SPD has already started redefining its fundamental programme along "ecologically responsible" and "feminist" lines. This project, presented in Peter Glotz's new book *Manifesto for a New European Left* has been enthusiastically welcomed by the

"The redefinition of socialism must integrate global conceptions that are no part of the historical heritage of the labour movement."

Italian PCI with its General Secretary, Alessandro Natta, declaring that it could just as well become his party's programme. This basically means that the reformist Left has become conscious of the very real threat the alternative represents to its supremacy and is trying, by integrating some of the "issues", to occupy the political space opened by the rise of the new social movements.

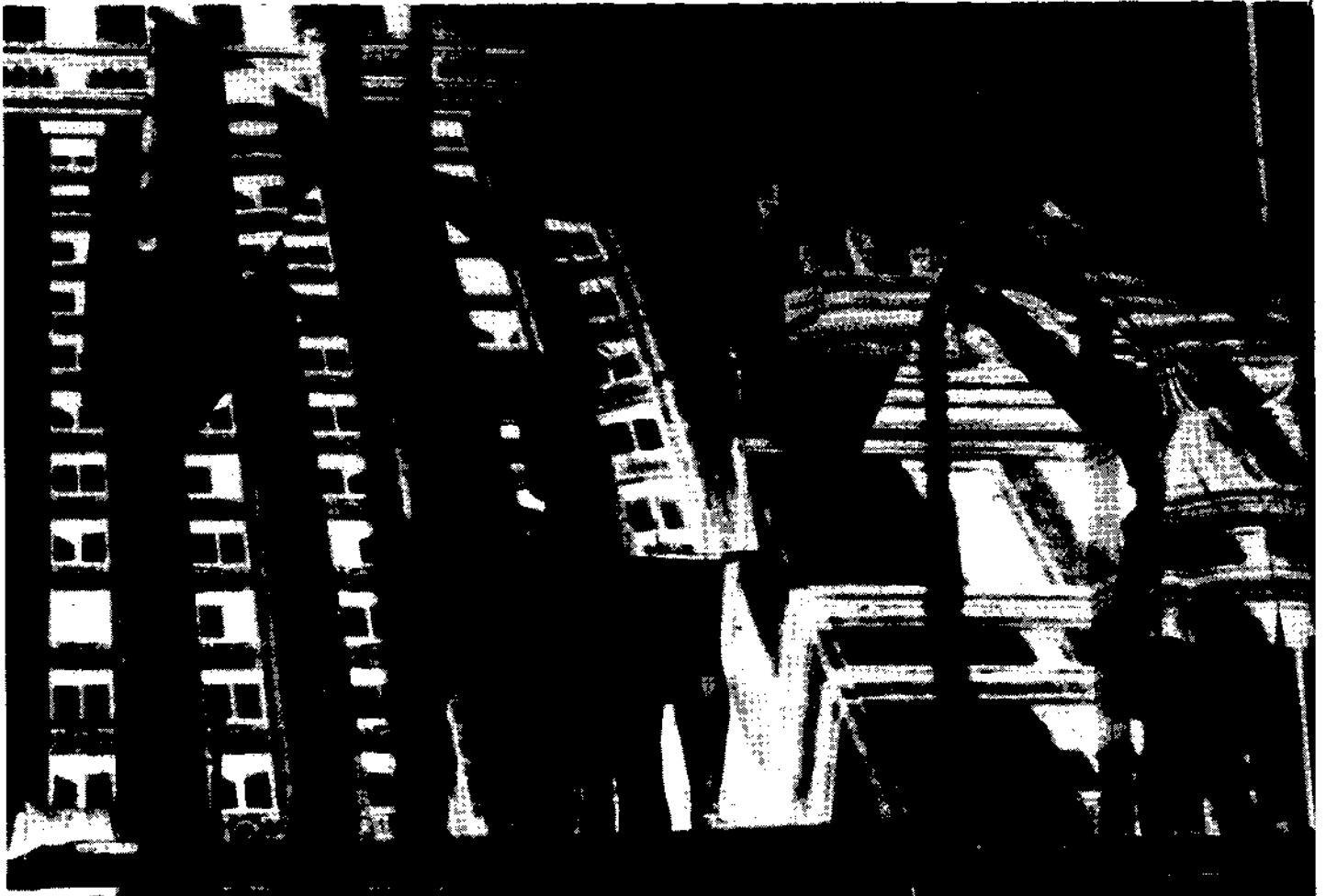
We must therefore be aware of the fact that the alternative political current could finish as one of the factors having helped socialdemocracy's renewal (the Glotz scenario). Alternatively, it could become social-democracy's new "left-wing" (one of the outcomes of the BennHeffer scenario). Finally, it could develop into a new revolutionary force and a mass movement articulating

a new anti-capitalist, selfmanaging, anti-productivist, feminist, anti-racist - in one word alternative - hegemonic consensus.

The eventual outcome of the political battle will of course be a function of the concrete dynamics set in motion. However, today, the alternative is increasingly setting the agenda and forcing political forces to determine themselves in relation to the problems it raises. Nobody can anymore deny the importance of gaining or regaining the new socio-political movements to the socialist project. This is precisely what *Marxism Today* are trying to do using the misleading model of the Popular Front which, as the experience of the 1930s showed, only served to subject the interests of the movement to that of capital represented in the Popular Front by its "progressive" wing. Today as in the 1930s, such a strategy can only result in subjecting the new social movements to the interests of the "progressive" wing of British capital (whatever that may be!). What we need is a United Front of the oppressed against capital and all forms of oppression. In this, we have nothing to loose but old dogmas (and maybe some of our chains too), we have a whole new world to win! ■

(1) Eric Heffer, Tony Benn, *Working for a Labour Victory*, in *New Left Review*, 158, July/August 1986

(2) Eric Heffer, *Labour's Future*, Verso 1986, p.151.



Walking *backwards* Into the *Future*

Unlike its European counterparts, the Labour Party has refused to conduct any strategic rethink. This is bound to end in tears, argues HARRY CURTIS.

After its last Conference, it looked as though the Labour Party had regained much of the lost electoral ground. However, the fact that Labour once again looked set to win a General Election seems to have thrown all those Alliance voters back into the Tories hands with the consequence of putting Thatcher's party back in the lead in all recent opinion polls.

Conference, for the third year running, saw a sharp swerve to the right with the consolidation of the centre-right leadership's position and the further divisions between the "soft" and "hard" Left who seem poised to fight each other until, at least the next General Election.

Three years on, one has to say that the debates sparked by the 1983 defeat have been cut short and that, unlike German social-democracy which, under pressure from the Green-Alternative movement is developing a new strategy into the 21st century, Labour seems to be contented with a cosmetic change of image aimed at glossing over a return to the failed Keynesian recipes which are presented as amenable to some sort of compromise with "supply-side" economics...

Blackpool was very much Kinnock's own show. The stage-managing of the debates made the Tory party Conference look like an anarchist gathering by comparison. Kinnock has managed to impose his mark on the Party - ideologically as much as organisationally. The leadership has effected a return to the '70s style politics banking, presumably, on the electorate's amnesia. In any case, there is today no one force that could impose a credible alternative to



Labour's strategy: nobody in the driving seat

the leadership's right-wing road to nowhere.

If it seems to have definitely ditched the Alternative Economic Strategy, it doesn't look as if the Labour leadership have replaced it with anything more coherent nor convincing. On the contrary, the main amendments to the AES have all gone towards making concessions to Thatcherite ideology. Just listen to Hattersley going on about how little money he will be prepared to spend on anything public. Nor do we hear anymore any talk of "rejection". All that seems available today is a redistribution of the tax-benefits Thatcher awarded to the filthy rich... Hardly enough to warrant a major

spending boost. The trade unions have seen their role redefined within the boundaries of the core of the anti-union legislation which will be preserved. Their job will be to force a redistribution internal to the working class and benefitting the low-paid - mainly through a statutory minimum wage. Finally, renationalisation has fallen off the agenda (only two major monopolies will be reappropriated) and the buzz-word now is "social ownership", in itself a nice word but a vague concept that could include anything from workers self-management down to "popular" share-ownership (Hattersley's favourite). Guess which will prevail... All that is Left for the soft Left to chew are the promise of the creation of Regional Enterprise Boards which could allow for the development of a socially useful economy breaking away from the logic of profit. However, cut off as it is from any popular pressure, it looks unlikely that this project will ever get past the White Paper stage in any recognisable shape or form. Remember Tony Benn in 1974?

Of course, you might say, at least this is a Labour Party committed to unilateral disarmament, and Conference has reasserted this. Well, with Healy going round "envisaging" the possibility that some nuclear war-heads might remain on British soil and with the worrying output from the Left of articles "considering" the difficulties that might yet stop Labour from ditching its nuclear arsenal, I'm not even sure Margaret Thatcher herself believes in Labour's unilateral commitment anymore...

Nor is the Party seriously coming to terms with ecology. The leadership's rejection of the NUM motion calling for the gradual phasing out of all nuclear plants in favour of a vague motion expressing concern and stopping all further development "pending an enquiry" shows that it has no intentions to move away from its productivist



New image or time-warp?

fetishism – well reflected in the “Party of production” slogan.

The only things the leadership have let through at Blackpool have been “minority interests” motions. Thus an overwhelming majority was attained in favour of gay and lesbian rights with some of the grossest heterosexist abuse taking a back seat. Also the motion calling for a “Ministry of Women” with Cabinet status received massive support. For all that’s worth... Look how it has ended sexism in France... On the other hand and tellingly, the leadership refused women the right to elect their own representatives onto the National Executive Committee. This attitude (support for “principles” but opposition to serious structural reform) is indicative of a “manipulatory” approach to the demands of the new social movements. They are at long last recognised as important but, as for the rest, only because they represent votes, not because they represent a new way of “doing politics”. Still, those progressive motions have at least provided ammunition for the soft-Left to go on claiming the Party was moving their way. That they should get

so little is a telling sign of the new balance of forces in the Labour Party.

Anyway, what Conference decides is irrelevant to Kinnock who recently emphatically declared on television that whatever it was, “it was not a policy-making Conference” – two-thirds majority or otherwise.

Is it ironic, then, that Tory MP Julian Crichtley could write in the *Guardian* (6/10/86) on the “injustice of an electorate who cannot forgive Margaret Thatcher for being a real conservative and who are flocking to Neil Kinnock who has just made in front of the TUC Conference a speech no Tory would have been ashamed of”? Maybe, as the last polls tend to indicate, the electorate are more full of forgiveness than Crichtley thinks. In any case, there is no doubt that, today, the Labour party, on balance, is politically somewhere around where it was in the mid-70s – firmly on the right.

But the real questions facing it, Labour, unlike the German SPD, has refused to face. It has managed to conduct the whole of its internal debates without the slightest strategic rethink. Such a rethink seemed a distinct possibility in the hey-day of “Bennism”, and it could indeed well have led to a redefinition of Labour’s strategic objectives around a new non-hierarchical alliance based on all the new emancipatory social movements.

“The question of ‘alliances’ was resolved before it was ever raised, hence it has been easy to see the new social movements in purely electoral terms.”

However, its organisational counterpart, the project for a “refoundation” of the Labour Party around these movements as proposed by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer in May 1985 came too late and has so far received little attention or support from the Left. This, in itself is an indication of the extent of the retreat.

One cannot touch upon these questions without pointing to the negative role played by the euro-communist wing of the British Communist Party. After launching essential debates (cf. Stuart Hall’s pioneering works on “Thatcherism”) they have looked almost exclusively concerned with providing the Labour Right with the ideological sticks to beat its Left. In the absence of any alternative centre capable of counterposing a Left

strategy to the CPGBs “popular frontism revisited”, the impact of the *Marxism Today* type analysis on a British Left traditionally allergic to any serious theoretical elaboration should not be underestimated.

In any event, Labour’s recovery in the polls is bound to be an ephemeral phenomenon which, at any rate, won’t last beyond the next election. The Party’s refusal to seriously consider the challenges today’s society pose to the labour movement and to provide a long-term answer to them – be it of a right-wing type *a la* Mitterrand or be it one aiming at integrating the eco-socialist perspective – make it a party that walks backwards into the future. No amount of glossy leaflets will disguise this fact. And one way or the other, the Party is in for a major crisis which, this time, might not be averted as easily as it has been post-1983.

In this respect, it is important to underline the Party’s refusal to envisage the question of the new social movements in terms of “Alliances”. This has been made easier by the fact that those currents that, in Germany joined the Green Party, in Britain, as Petra Kelly once said, all joined the Bennite wing of the Labour Party. This, paradoxically, has left the Labour leadership freer to instrumentalise the new social movements than, say, the SPD ever could. In Britain, as the question of alliances was resolved (by integration in the Labour Party) before it was ever raised, it has been much easier to see those movements in purely electoral terms? (“Gays? How many votes?” type of attitude). On the other hand, one has to say that this also allowed for a much closer interaction between the new social movements and the traditional labour movement than if those movements had remained outside the Labour Party. The miners strike’s greatest lesson was the possibility for unity in struggle between all the oppressed sections of society.

Because the Labour leadership has refused to consider this lesson (even to defuse its subversive potential), because it still stupidly sticks to a vision of politics that divorces the way people vote from the way they relate to life, politics and society, because it obstinately clings to an idea of Britain in which the new social forces are purely and simply negated, because it is not up to its task (on anybody’s account), it has no future. The sooner the Party at large realises that, the better for the alternative. ■

Renovating Communism

PIERRE JUQUIN, PCF Central Committee member, ex PolitBureau member and prominent 'renovateur' discusses his ideas for a renewal of European socialism and communism with **MAURICE NAJMAN** and **HARRY CURTIS**.

HARRY CURTIS One of the central themes of your latest book, *Autocritiques* is what you term the "third phase of the labour movement". What exactly is this "third phase"?

PIERRE JUQUIN A fact. After a long prelude, the European labour movement went through a phase of organisation - both politically and in unions. This was the time when the large social-democratic and labour parties emerged. This phase closed with the crash of the socialdemocratic movement at the outbreak of WW1. The Second phase was that of the rise of Third International parties from 1917-1921 onwards. For the next 50 years, we had a permanent and complex conflict between the two wings of the labour movement, the socialist and the communist. Today, however, the models - both in terms of society and in organisational terms - advanced by both those currents are increasingly outdated. We are confronted by a challenge from the social movement that requires new perspectives, new models and new forms of organisation. This will open the way to a Third phase for the labour movement. This is not such a new idea anyway, Berlinguer had already said it a few years back...

MAURICE NAJMAN In the book, you insist that the crisis is just as much one for capitalism as for the labour movement.

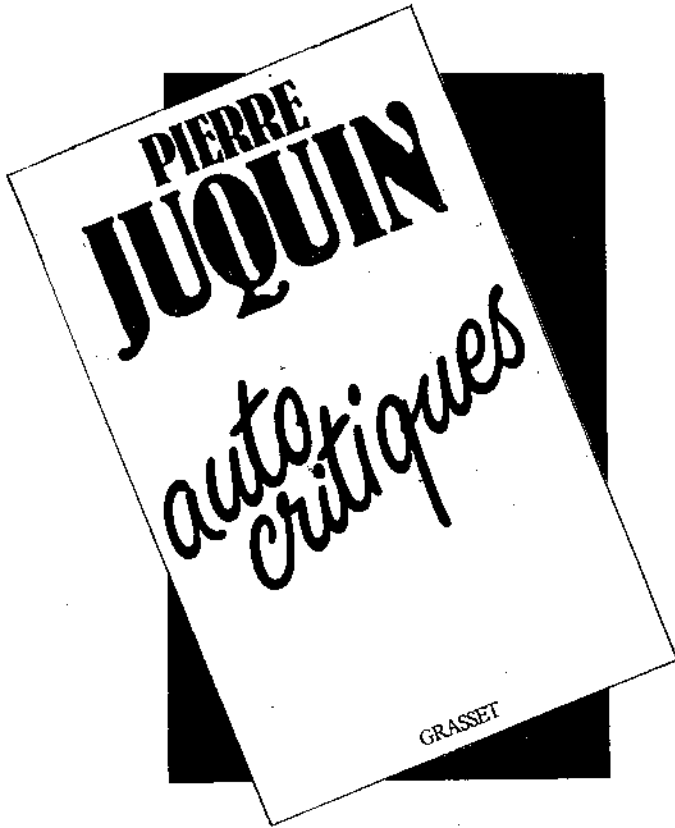
PIERRE JUQUIN Yes, well here again it's a fact. But, the hypothesis I have put forward is that the crisis of civilisation we are in today has got this double and interlinked nature which means there are organic links between the crisis of capital and that of the labour movement. The changes in workplace organisation have questioned some of the values on which the traditional labour movement had based itself over the past hundred years. There is an interaction of the two spheres and I don't think it is anti-marxist to say it. On the contrary!

MAURICE NAJMAN But that doesn't mean the crisis in traditional "class politics" and particularly the decline of the French Communist Party in recent years can be explained purely through sociological analysis, does it?

PIERRE JUQUIN No, of course not. This is of course a crucial point and I disagree with those - neo-liberal sociologists and others - who say that this decline is purely a product of society's inevitable objective evolution. In fact I believe the opposite is true! The extension of wage-labour, urbanisation, the development in communication technologies, all those things should create most favourable conditions for socialists. In effect, they could even represent the premises of a socialist society, embryos, as it were, of a different logic. Of course, there is nothing inevitable in those developments and it is time we renounced positivist determinism. Still, there is a paradox in the fact that, at the very moment when capitalism is in such a deep crisis and when developments that would ease the transition to socialism are emerging, communist parties should find themselves in decline. As regards the French CP, I think part of it is due to an attitude that tends to see the communists as "against the stream" in a generally reactionary environment. But this is not on. Socialism, in Marx's own words, "can only come about through the movement of society", not against it! If we are "against the stream" of society, it means we are giving up on the possibility of a transition to socialism in our own time - which, incidentally is in direct contradiction with all the theses adopted by the last CP Congresses. It also means that we are becoming increasingly marginalised from the real potentialities that exist in society for a revolutionary transformation.

HARRY CURTIS So, this is what you mean when you talk of the need for a real "cultural revolution" in the Communist Party's outlook and practice?

PIERRE JUQUIN By "Cultural Revolution" I mean two things. We should understand social reality from a point of view that is not exclusively economic. Significantly, the first manifestations of this global crisis in 1968 did not take the form of economic demands but insisted on notions such as way of life, human relationships, etc. Also, one has to note that the periods in which communism was the most popular were not necessarily



periods in which it proposed a better economic policy, but periods in which it appeared as embodying human values, as was seen during the Popular Front, the Resistance and the anti-colonial wars. We should reflect on this. What youth, the intellectuals and the workers need are signposts, new values that could come from a reshaping of the old ones we once embodied. This is the task ahead for us all.

MAURICE NAJMAN But surely, your openly Gramscian outlook and the emphasis you put on values and on what Godelier termed "the crisis of the imperialism of economics"(1) will put you up against the traditional marxist orthodoxy?

PIERRE JUQUIN Well, it depends what you call orthodoxy. If by it you mean the stalinist economic jargon, then yes, it is precisely the orthodoxy we're out to get! But your question raises a most important issue, that of the nature of socialism. Polanyi(2) has this hypothesis that capitalism has been the only historical phase where absolute primacy has been granted to the economic. Of course, historical materialism has showed us that the productive forces and the relations of production were the material bases for the development of human life and society, but what Polanyi means is that with capitalism, something quite different is going on. The economy is the one reference and the one determination of the whole of social life. Should it remain so in a socialist society? I think not. I think culture will be the fundamental and organising reference of life in a socialist society. You can already see it in today's economic developments with the increasing importance of intellectual work as opposed to directly physical labour, you can also see it in the changes in the way people relate to each other, etc. So I think that a cultural revolution along those lines is necessary in the Communist Party, in socialist practice and, beyond, in a reshaping of the social project to put an end to, in Godelier's words, the "domination of economics". This whole question requires detailed attention and careful debate, but I think it is an acceptable starting point.

HARRY CURTIS As you say, 1968 saw a questioning of those very values on which the fordist mode of production had based itself. This has led to the emergence of new social concerns. But, in a way, we are today seeing currents of the new Right that, quite openly, try to articulate the values those movements embody (eg. autonomy) to a new capitalist project with the aim of going beyond fordist production. Are we, as socialists and communists, condemned to stand by, as it were, "against the stream", or is there a way the emancipatory movement could reappropriate those values?

PIERRE JUQUIN I don't know whether I would put the question quite this way. I don't think capitalism is adopting new values. As such, it is more itself than ever. But, in order to survive and to find long-term solutions, it has got to make concessions, less in terms of values than in terms of the inevitable transformation of the productive forces and the aspirations that parallel those changes - I won't say they are caused by them, I'd rather be cautious! So, for us, it's not so much a question of reappropriating changes, it's a question of leading them because what capitalism is doing is trying to subject these changes so as to consolidate itself and its values - which are essentially profit, money, the market, etc... When I said earlier that socialism was essentially a cultural revolution I meant just that. Capitalism does not produce to serve human needs, it produces to accumulate capital, money. In effect, as Marx showed in the first volume of *Capital*, it is dominated by exchange value. What the socialist revolution does, is to stand this on its head and establish the primacy of use-value. This, in attempts to answer questions of the type "who is this for, what is it good for, does it promote the welfare of all people and, beyond, their environment? Who should decide?" In effect, what emerges behind use value is the question of democracy. Hence that of management. Then, from management on to self-management. We have to look for new management criteria and a new definition of what is socially useful. This is why socialism implies self-management. Indeed, without selfmanagement, it is not socialism at all. This of course questions the whole of the Eastern European model.

HARRY CURTIS What do you think is the significance of the emergence of the new social movements in the last 15 years? What challenge do they pose to the traditional labour movement given that they do not primarily identify in terms of class but rather in terms of their specific oppression? Would you agree that the British Miners Strike was a very important development in the sense that, for the first time, it effected the junction between the new social movements and a section of the traditional labour movement in struggle?

MAURICE NAJMAN Yes, will the "third phase" you mentioned be a that of a purely "labour" movement?

PIERRE JUQUIN Clearly those questions are linked. I think the miners strike presented both major defects - which led to its defeat - and new characteristics of major interest and which we should study most carefully. Indeed we saw the same thing with the steel workers in Lorraine. A defeat - for the same reasons - but most important new phenomena rising out of the movement. In fact, one of the strongest "renovating" impulses in the French CP comes precisely from the Lorraine region. But of course the other question is that, more generally, of the emergence of new social movements which take the form neither of the traditional political party nor trade union. They have refused to play by the

rules of traditional institutional politics. These movements are essential because of the values they embody, the questions and perspectives they put forward, as well as by the new type of political action they engage in. I see them as a major element in the definition of the third phase. However, if some have come to question the "party form" of organisation, I think experience has shown that, up to now, no better form of organisation has emerged. For this reason, I think it is dangerous to question the "party form" because it would amount to abolishing something that is the best-know way to organise and structure democracy. But my view is that we should remain open about the precise mode of articulation. It is essential for the political parties and the trade unions to establish organic links with all those movements. Those links could promote lively exchanges and interaction. Will the "third phase" movement be a working class movement? Well, if by working class we mean what the official statisticians do, then it is still a very large base. There are still many old-type workers around. But, clearly to concentrate on this particular section would be shortsighted. If, on the other hand we look at the world of labour, at the "collective worker" as Marx had it, then we have a vast community which we can define by objective criteria but who don't necessarily see themselves as "workers". Do the engineers, the office workers see themselves as part of this "collective worker"? Not necessarily, but I think it's up to us to effect our cultural revolution and move away from what is still essentially a "workerist" outlook, if we really want to win them over.

"A real cultural revolution in the PCF's outlook and practice would mean that we understood social reality form a point of view that is not exclusively economic."

MAURICE NAJMAN In the context of what you just said, how do you see the emergence of the German Greens?

PIERRE JUQUIN To me they are much more than simply an ecological, anti-nuclear or pacifist movement. The Greens are a movement that question the very way we live in society. It is a movement representative of a social alternative. As such, they also breed a number of confusions and contradictions as much as they open up the way for social experimentation. I don't know if the Greens will survive in the form and with the autonomy they have today. Nobody knows what will come out of this movement. It could result in a total transformation and renewal of the SPD. Or it could result in something entirely different. In twenty to thirty years time, who knows where the Greens will be? But, as a result of this movement, we could also see the emergence of a radically new Germany. East and West. I don't think it is possible for such a phenomenon to shake the West-Germans without having any impact on their Eastern counterparts.

MAURICE NAJMAN Do you still think that what we need is - with all the relevant qualifications - a revolutionary leap as a step in the socialist transition process?

PIERRE JUQUIN Yes, that's one of the things I do consider. Of course, I accept that it is difficult to articulate the "major qualitative leap with a complex chain of partial qualitative transformations. I think it is very possible for such a process to now advance, now retreat. In any case it will be a most complex

process with many contradictory features and it could go on in the mid and long term. It is first and foremost an essentially democratic and self-managing process. As such, it could go on for decades.

MAURICE NAJMAN Rather as in the Gramscian notion of the "war of position" then.

PIERRE JUQUIN In a way, yes. but there could also be phases in which the "war of movement" is on the agenda...

HARRY CURTIS I wanted to come back a bit on this idea of self-management and its implications. Clearly, it has consequences for the communist movement as regards its internal organisational methods. How can one square "democratic centralism" with mass democracy and how can one foster the tendencies towards self-organisation and selfdetermination that emerge from the mass movement?

PIERRE JUQUIN The masses' self-organisation does not exclude the organisation of a party. The condition is that this party be the expression of the masses' self-organisation and not a party which, essentially, is alien to the whole process. In the CP, we have this thesis - on which we should reflect seriously - that says that we should not try and impose our mode of organisation on society. This mode of organisation, in itself, has got nothing to do with the self-managing society we want to build. I think there is a contradiction there and I want it to be questioned. For I know that, of all our contradictions, this one is particularly dangerous as it alienates us from society and widens the gulf between the people, the world of labour and the party. It is obvious that the self-managing wind has got to blow on the French Communist Party internal structure too. The contradiction between a centralist top-bottom organisation and its self-managing intentions is a deadly one. We must combine these elements.



Photo Alain Rogues / Sygma

Pierre Juquin, alone on the Politbureau, voting against the main motion at the last PCF Congress

HARRY CURTIS You are therefore calling into question democratic centralism as it has been practiced in the organisations born out of the Third International?

PIERRE JUQUIN Well, experience has shown that, even in the Third International parties, the interpretations of democratic centralism have varied widely. I'm not even interested in questioning the concept as such, I think what we need are radical reforms that would devolve more power to the grassroots and, beyond that, ensuring that the circulation of ideas and the common elaboration of strategy become a reality. I think democratic centralism as defined by Lenin is 80% outdated.

MAURICE NAJMAN You also argue for a rehabilitation of the idea of a "withering away" of the state and insist on the anti-

"The crisis of civilisation we are in today is such that there are organic links between the crisis of capital and that of the labour movement."

statist nature of marxism at a time when the communist movement generally, and the PCF in particular, have all but

PIERRE JUQUIN This is a major point. I think the Right's anti-statism has been all the more successful for our outdated and dogmatic conceptions. I think you should fight back by taking the neoliberal critique one step further to the roots of what a state is. This is why I question the very content of the word socialism. I think we should be more political. One of the greatest questions in our society today is that of an individual's place. We tend to emphasise the collective side of things. Yet, the aspirations to full self-realisation of the individual are central to Marx's very

approach. At the root of the *German Ideology* or the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* lies social individuality. I think it's time we went back to it.

MAURICE NAJMAN On a slightly different point, you accept that there is an increasingly global dimension to capitalism's development as well as a crisis of the nation-state. Is it not the case, then, that our emancipatory perspective has meaning only if it integrates an international or even just European perspective?

PIERRE JUQUIN A moment ago, we spoke of the universalist values of the labour movement. I do not think that this evolution towards a world economy is exclusively negative. It also carries the potential for a possible socialist transformation. Still, for the time being, the ball is in capital's court. In its American court to be precise. We are certainly facing a problem of scale. Could a single European-wide nation-state resist the US steamroller? I don't think so. So, when I speak of the necessity to develop the French internal market, it is as a first step, I do not think however that "recovery" for the sole French economy would represent a socialist way out of the crisis at the European level. We should avoid looking at Europe in a simplistic fashion. Maybe variable geometry models are best adapted there. Also, we should be careful not to fall behind the capitalists' Europe seen as a third block - anti-soviet and, most importantly, anti Third-World. By contrast, I propose a Third Perspective based on the long term aim of getting out of the crisis. a) the conquest of management in each European country, region, workplace by the workforce themselves, a major self-managing movement; b) a development of a Worker's Europe through the development of specific

"Democratic centralism, as defined by Lenin, is 80% outdated."

programmes allowing for workforce intervention and decision making and c) the establishment of a radically different relationship with the Third-World. We won't grow out of our own crisis if we do not solve the debt crisis in the Third-World. In such a Europe, profit is not the primary motive anymore. At this stage, we meet again the idea of the cultural revolution...

HARRY CURTIS What do you think the future has in store for the PCF? Will it become a "super trade union" as the Greek and Portugese CPs have, to a large extent, will it split and give birth to a myriad of tiny groups like the Spanish CP has done, or will it rise from its ashes and come to occupy, in its own way, the type of position that is that of the PCI in today's Italy?

PIERRE JUQUIN We are in the middle of an internal battle... For my part, I wish to see a PCF that is not split, that is not just the Socialist Party's left, and that is not what you called a "super trade union" ie. I want a party that goes beyond the corporatist, tribune or opposition functions. I will of course follow very closely the evolution inside the party in the coming months. As French communists, although a part of Europe, we are in a specific situation, with a specific political culture and a specific political environment, we must thus transform ourselves *a la Francaise*. ■

(1) Karl Polanyi: *The Great Transformation*, Boston 1957; *The Livelihood of Man*, New York, 1977. (2) Maurice Godelier: *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology*, CUP, 1977.



Looking beyond "Leninism"

Unions For a New Pluralism

Unionism is in crisis. Being defensive is not enough argues KEIR STARMER, what we now need is to evolve a new type of "industrial pluralism", not between capital and labour but between producers and users.

In the face of world recession and the authoritarian onslaught of Thatcherism, the task of redefining and developing the perspectives of trade-unionism is, in 1986, daunting. But if the continued legitimisation and prioritisation of capital interests, at micro-level through traditional collective bargaining, and at macro-level through the neo-corporatism of the TUC/Labour leadership or the monetarism of Thatcher, are to be challenged, and workers' interests interposed (as part of the fuller conception of socially useful economies based on popular planning) this task must be undertaken.

Historically, trade unions arose as a means of collective defence to the ever increasing demands upon, and encroachment into the lives of working people by capital. Despite early state repression their existence was legitimised by a combination of liberal political theory and managerial practicality. For the liberals the emergence of autonomous trade unions was heralded as the necessary counterpart to capital if industrial pluralism was to reflect the political pluralism of the bourgeoisie. For management accommodating the unions facilitated access to the work-place whilst safe-guarding their prerogatives.

Until the Second World War, the effect of unemployment and slump, in combination with the organisational

weakness of the unions, ensured continued support for this style of industrial pluralism. However, postwar prosperity, with full employment as an important element, instead of ensuring the peaceful co-existence, in fact exposed the inevitable conflict of interests of management and the workforce. Trade union demands were generally around "wage issues", but the structure of the economy denied the confinement of this conflict of issues to the microlevel. By the 1960's, it was conceived that a macro-level response was needed if post-war welfare capitalism was to survive. What followed was a generation of "corporatism" whereby Wilson, and after him Callaghan, attempted to integrate the unions into the state, interpreting the micro-level conflict purely in terms of rank-and-file disorder. Significantly, the break-up of corporatism came about when the decline of Keynesianism meant that governments could not deliver the promised benefits of social-contract, and

consequently, trade union leaders could no longer be relied upon to ensure that their membership paid for the slump.

For Thatcher, the lesson was only too clear - if unions could not be reliably integrated into the state, the state had to move to reduce drastically their power. The root ideology of Thatcher's industrial policy was based in the political-economic thought of Hayek, and revolved around "restriction", flowing from the thesis that trade union force and coercion have caused inflation, unemployment, loss of liberty and the impoverishment of the workers themselves. Moreover, Hayek proposed that the interests of the workers, far from being counterposed to the interests of capital, should be viewed as synonymous with them (through successful capitalist enterprise). This entailed a qualitative, as well as quantitative, change of prevailing industrial policy. Whereas even the corporatism of the 60's and 70's conceded the basic premise of industrial pluralism, albeit controlled from the top down, Thatcherism through the legal restriction of union activity and the active encouragement and protection of non-union alternatives, has marginalised the unions to such an extent that their role as a legitimate interest in the capitalist economy is now in question.

In an unprecedentedly weak position, opinions within the trade union movement itself, have begun to polarize. On the one hand are the advocates of so-called "business unionism", urging that trade unions can and should do no more than obtain protection and limited



enhancement of pay and conditions for their members, which will, they argue, best be achieved by the integration of the union into the company and the longterm acceptance of a relatively unchanged capitalist framework. On the other hand,

there are those, such as Ron Todd, committed to a return and extension of free collective bargaining at the micro-level. Emerging as a third option is the Kinnock/Willis compromise, which seeks to reestablish a loose neo-corporatism, but

which significantly does not totally reject some of the underlying tenets of Hayek/Thatcher (such as, for example, clinging to the restrictions on industrial action and union democracy).

If the capitalist basis and purpose of production is to be questioned and challenged, and a socialist alternative substituted, based on democratic control of production for "use" rather than "profit", none of these options seem adequate.

Traditional collective bargaining is based historically on the compromise of the rights of workers and management, but, of course, with the definitional acceptance of management's terms. Hence, a concentration on issues such as pay and conditions rather than investment policies and production forecasts. Conceding the right of management to manage, a basic belief in collective bargaining, does not simply mean the freedom of management to manage without interference, it entails the right to manage in the interests of the shareholders. Ultimately, the need for a competitive return on shareholders' capital and creditors' loans sets the parameters and goals of company management. Collective bargaining is thus limited to "influencing" how corporate goals are implemented rather than changing the goals themselves.

The "protection" and "defensive" role of trade unions in collective bargaining has had structural effects on them. Basically, unions have to confront management at the levels of bargaining determined by management. This leads to a very fragmented style of collective bargaining with little or no chance of unions being able to form an overall view of company finances and orientation. Such fragmentation encourages vertical hierarchies rather than horizontal overviews of the whole enterprise.

Perhaps, however, one of the most important shortcomings of collective bargaining is emerging in the materialisation of what John Edmonds described at this year's TUC Conference as "the new servants class". As the decline of the manufacturing industries has been replaced by service industries over the last 10 to 15 years, so new types of reorganisation of the workforce have emerged. Part-time work, flexi-work and increased mobility are the order of the day. This type of reorganisation has hit

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women and ethnic minorities (traditionally the backbone of part-time work) particularly badly. The call for statutory protection for the "new servants class" is nothing if not an expression of the failure organisationally, structurally and practically of trade unions through collective bargaining to represent and protect these workers.

If collective bargaining has only been partially successful in establishing real participation in the process of decision-making, other initiatives such as "workers directors" can hardly be said to have been more successful. The most important proposals for "workers directors" were found in the Bullock report with its famous "2x + y" formula. This articulation of participation and the responses to it (with the CBI threatening a virtual "capital strike") highlight the basic problems of this kind of industrial democracy in decision making. Firstly, there has never been an attempt to

"No one group can take ultimate control of all production decisions. A new pluralism must be evolved..."

establish more than a right of "minority participation" at board level. Secondly, there is a fear among trade-unionists that participation at this level is simply a means of "making capitalism work better". Clearly, workers' participation at corporate level can only be usefully developed if decision-making is ultimately made on workers' - not management - terms.

Over the last 20 years, a small trickle of workers' alternative plans have emerged. These are small but crucial adjuncts to traditional collective bargaining so often limited to wage and condition issues. Essentially, alternative plans challenge the managerial process of production (ie. capital's logic) and at the same time counterpose an alternative based on social needs of both workers and the wider community. Hence they allow a move beyond the purely defensive nature of traditional collective bargaining. Faced with an over-production crisis of capitalism, alternative plans conceive the need to restructure the economy but open the way for a restructuration on workers terms. The experience of Lucas Aerospace and the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders are good examples - in both

instances the initiative sprung from the threat of closure or massive job losses. The "Combine Committee" of shop stewards became an organ of representation of workers at the cross-plant and corporate level. This is important not only because of its "bottom upwards" structure (with most committee officials being no higher up union hierarchies than shop-stewards) but also because it cut across traditional union divides, workshop and skills, and hence was in a better position to articulate an overall perspective. Further, the combine committees expend their negotiating role beyond the narrow limits of the firm, into the community, discussing and negotiating with local authorities, the public sector, other industries, and community groups and organisations.

It would be inaccurate and incomplete to suggest that the combine committees that have emerged so far have produced anything more than a qualified success. For example, at Lucas, most of the committee's proposals, if considered by management at all, were soon "pegged back", not because of technical problems of social implementation but as a result of corporate priorities and financial objectives. This highlights a fundamental problem. Whilst alternative plans do a great deal to boost workers confidence by defining an alternative and highlighting the real nature of the antagonism between capital and labour, without popular control of the needs and processes of production, they can do little more than extend collective bargaining into admittedly new and important areas of industrial policy.

Traditional industrial "pluralism" found its legitimacy in its "balancing" the interests of capital and labour. If capital's interest is rejected as a legitimate interest in the development of the socially useful economy, what interests should come into play in the decisionmaking processes in the field of production? It is in answer to this question that a new role for trade unions begins to emerge. No one group can take ultimate control of all production decisions. A new pluralism must be evolved, "pluralism" that encompasses negotiating and counterposing the interests of the producers with the interests of the consumer/users, the community, women and minority groups, the unemployed, the environment, etc. This, of course, is a fundamentally anti-capitalist

"pluralism". In this, the trade unions have a function as autonomous and independent articulators of the workers' interests in the socially useful economy: no longer negotiating with capital but bargaining the terms of production in and for the community.

Clearly, the bureaucratic-prone structures of the trade-unions handicap their adoption and application of such a new strategy. Equally clearly, the total rejection of their "defensive" role would, today, simply mean sacrificing present workers in the pursuance of a then utopian "social pluralism", and threaten the essential nature of autonomous and independent unionism. Alongside and out of the existing structures of trade unions, must be developed a broader structure capable of constructive challenges to managerial prerogatives by developing more and more meaningful alternative plans, involving more and more the wider community (the ad-hoc structures set up in the miners' strike, whilst the main union structure remained intact, is a good example). It is important that these changes are part of traditional unionism for in reality they still represent the aspirations of the great majority of the workforce, and if the pluralism of the socially useful economy is to attain hegemony it must do so by pervading from the workforce rather than being imposed by "forces" external to existing workers' organisations. Hence, trade unions will have a central role in shaping the economy and re-shaping themselves.

In 1986, therefore, the objectives are to retain the autonomous character of trade unions neither integrated into the

"Collective bargaining has so far been limited to 'influencing' how corporate goals are implemented rather than changing the goals themselves."

state or the company; but to broaden trade unions horizontally both within the immediate working enterprise and beyond. This necessitates the fullest internal democracy to avoid vertical hierarchies dominating the unions. Such resulting horizontalism will encourage and pave the way for increasingly ambitious challenges to management prerogatives, whilst enabling day-to-day defensive struggles to maximise their efficiency. ■

Comrade Gorbachev's USSR

Gorbachev is no Krushchev. ZHORES MEDVEDEV and JOHN F WALTER discuss the latest developments in the Soviet Union and the choices facing the Kremlin bureaucracy.

JOHN F. WALTER Do you think Gorbachev heralds a new era in the USSR?

ZHORES MEDVEDEV It's not a new era, he merely represents a new generation of Soviet leaders, he is younger by 15 to 20 years, so his outlook and educational background mean that his attitudes towards many issues are very different. But it's not a new era as was the case after Stalin's death when there was a change from a dictatorial totalitarian system from a less dictatorial party rule. During this process the party bureaucracy developed into the ruling elite of society. In this sense, Gorbachev represents no change. Gorbachev does not plan to move towards socialist democracy as we understand it, he claims that the USSR is already a socialist democracy.

JOHN F. WALTER Yes, but does Gorbachev represent a fraction of the bureaucracy pushing towards more reforms and is there any internal opposition to that?

ZHORES MEDVEDEV Gorbachev doesn't represent a wing of the bureaucracy, he represents party technocracy. It's really difficult to define these people. The people involved are not political leaders like Brezhnev or Chernenko but more "professionals", responsible for certain branches of the economy and certain institutions. Gorbachev was responsible for agriculture - although he didn't achieve much there, he still needed a certain level of professional knowledge in law, economics, etc. This is party technocracy and must follow the party's rules. The ideology of the technocrats plays a dominant role in decision-making. They would not change the system to make it more efficient if it contradicted their ideological principles.

JOHN F. WALTER Yet, recently, *Pravda* called for a "revision of marxist theory and an adaptation to the new conditions". Don't you think this is a sign that things are moving in the bureaucracy?

ZHORES MEDVEDEV The problem is that the language they use: "revision", "democracy", is in their own sense. Marxism as such is already adapted in the USSR to satisfy the party's needs. It's not marxism of the same type as the marxism of the PCI! So they try to revise marxism to suit their current political and technical ends and in this way they can make certain alterations in their theoretical outlook to justify practical expediency. In this sense, they are not revisionist, they just adapt marxist theory to their own needs.

JOHN F. WALTER The last Supreme Soviet decided upon important structural reforms of the economy such as allowing private enterprise in the service sector. Are we seeing an opening up of the Soviet economy as in China?

ZHORES MEDVEDEV No, it's not a Chinese - or Hungarian - type of reform, it's very modest in scale. They don't plan to replace state collective farms, they don't allow people to have free-lance jobs. These reforms are just meant to legalise the black market economy. Earlier this year a decree was passed on "unearned incomes" making those activities illegal. Many forms of private activity were suddenly forbidden, private taxis, etc. This produced enormous dissatisfaction as all those services became unavailable, so they had to make it legal. Except, it won't be legal until May.

JOHN F. WALTER What do you think is the mood in the population. You just described a kind of "one step backwards, one step forwards" attitude - first repression, then legalisation. This is very different from the opening up we saw under Krushchev. So, how does the population react to such instability?

ZHORES MEDVEDEV As far as I know from my brother's letters(1), the population's attitude became very negative over the summer. Letters were published in the press attacking restrictions on "unearned income". So, the public will certainly welcome this



Pravda calling for "democratisation"...

new decree. Still, they will be disappointed about the seven months gap until the decree comes into application. The legalisation process will be very difficult. It could increase tension rather than relax attitudes. People who use their cars as taxis, did so informally. Now, they will have to register – and many will be refused licenses. It will increase control over the population. Incomes must be reported. So that many contradictions will emerge with the whole licensing system. Why should people work for the state for a pittance when they can make eight times as much working for themselves? When Lenin introduced similar policies in 1921, it had an immediate effect. Now, it is delayed.

JOHN F. WALTER Yes, but Lenin's NEP was very different. There has of yet been no structural reform in agriculture unlike in 1921. What is the present state of the crucial agricultural sector?

ZHORES MEDVEDEV It's been very bad for quite a few years now – as can be seen from the harvest statistics and import figures. 30 to 50m tons and over 2m tons of livestock products had to be imported last year. These figures indicate the seriousness of the agricultural crisis in the USSR. There were administrative reforms involving the creation of big agricultural co-ordinating committees, but this did not change the situation much. Agricultural problems have accumulated for years. State farms contradict ecological rules, eg. create erosion, loss of soil fertility, etc. The situation is slowly improving but there needs to be a reform of the massive price subsidy system. 80b rubles per year go towards subsidising agricultural prices. If the subsidies are removed as they probably will be eventually, then the prices

will go up. This, of course will be rather unpopular with the population.

JOHN F. WALTER What was the impact of the Chernobyl disaster on both the Soviet population and party?

ZHORES MEDVEDEV People are beginning to realise that nuclear power is very dangerous. They are becoming conscious of the loss of land, massive amounts of money – not to mention human lives that nuclear power can involve. Then there is dissatisfaction with the party's environmental policies. People recognise the threat to their future nuclear power represents and the myth of the "nuclear dream", with its eternal supplies of electricity, heating, and power for industry is now a thing of the past. At the governmental level, the great problem of electricity supply is paramount because Gorbachev's policy of technological modernisation depends crucially on plentiful supply of energies. The high-tech industries require it. So they are certainly modernising traditional power sources – such as coal and small hydroelectric projects which were up to Chernobyl considered "uneconomic". Chernobyl will also probably result in a limitation of the nuclear power target and this year's figures are already 10% lower than they were last year. The Five Year Plan seeks a reduction in nuclear power with a shift away from Chernobyl-type reactors. What they now want to develop are fast-breeders. Of course these might eventually prove more dangerous than the old ones.



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Chernobyl heroes – victims of the "nuclear dream".

JOHN F. WALTER One of the areas where Gorbachev certainly looks to have made a difference is diplomacy. Do you think there really is a new approach in this field?

ZHORES MEDVEDEV I feel that in diplomacy he has certainly made an impact in the acceleration of the nuclear disarmament process. He has presented new ideas. He wants reductions from both sides and is ready to make a lot of concessions, often unilateral ones. He is less concerned about maintaining parity with the US than about efficient, but less expensive deterrence. This is partly for economic reasons, and partly because the USSR cannot compete in the field of super high technology – like that involved in Star Wars. He wants to prevent the arms race entering a new stage. He understands how wasteful it is. He may make more concessions in the near future, eg. extending the unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, giving separate consideration to European intermediate range missiles and allowing SDI testing to go ahead – in the hope that the whole programme collapses as a result of budget restrictions and technological complexity. However, it would be illogical for him to agree to reduce the number of ballistic missiles while the Americans are developing SDI. So, he is unlikely to make moves in this direction.

This is only one sector of diplomacy, however. We can also look at Soviet attitudes to different regions of the world. There have been concessions in border disputes with China. Gorbachev has made no significant changes in the Soviet attitude to Afghanistan. The stalemate there is a serious problem for him. In general, changes have only come in specific areas where Gorbachev has intervened personally.

JOHN F. WALTER You said that what we are now seeing is nothing like the Krushchev era. But, surely, economic democratisation cannot continue without political democratisation. Is there not a danger here? Might not a dynam

develop which would either set the USSR on a new path or bring the Gorbachev experiment to a brutal end?

ZHORES MEDVEDEV The party still wants to retain control over political activity, but there is an obvious liberalisation of cultural life. Theatres, cinemas and the Writers' Union are being encouraged to produce high quality work. But, liberalisation in this and other areas has not gone as far as under Krushchev – mainly because many of Krushchev's changes were unfinished, eg. the rehabilitation of those imprisoned and those convicted during the show trials, Bukharin, Trotsky, etc. Gorbachev has yet to end censorship both of works by novelists and by historians and social scientists. There has been little change in the content of Soviet political magazines. There is more criticism, but not more analysis of Soviet history and Soviet institutions. Nevertheless, some people are encouraged by what is going on. This trend is partly due to the government's attitude and partly due to a feeling that government control is less strict. This feeling leads people to produce new ideas – many new economic ideas are being discussed, though not implemented.

If the process is not stopped, more liberal attitudes will develop. Scientific progress depends on the free exchange of information within the scientific community. This, in turn, requires freedom of travel. If all this is recognised, then something will be done, but it will be a very slow process.

JOHN F. WALTER Could what happened to Krushchev, also happen to Gorbachev if the bureaucracy doesn't like the way things are developing?

ZHORES MEDVEDEV There were very complex reasons why the bureaucracy got rid of Krushchev. In fact, there were several attempts to overthrow him. Gorbachev is more experienced and does not have such hostile relations with his colleagues as Krushchev had with Stalin's gang. There are differences in attitude but the leadership is much more homogenous than in Krushchev's time.

(1) Roy Medvedev lives in Moscow and is the author of many books among which: *Socialist Democracy, Let History Judge and All Stalin's Men.*



"Are you really ready to make more concessions Gorbachev?"

Democracy, Councils and *Self-Management*

MICHEL RAPTIS argues that generalised self-management is the contemporary embodiment of what once was Athenian 'direct democracy' and workers' "councils" or "soviets".

SINCE THE EMERGENCE OF A CLASS SOCIETY in which the state represented the fundamental interests of the ruling class, the majority has tended, whether in its aspirations or through direct action, towards a regime in which they could maximise their possibilities for direct intervention. "Utopia" and "revolution", vision and praxis are but steps along the path of humankind's long march towards the realisation of another society which would be characterised both by its fundamentally equitable structure - eradicating all oppression and exploitation - and by the possibilities it would offer for an all-round development of its individual members. The "utopian" consciousness of such a society corresponds to those periods in which advanced individuals, helped by theoretical reflexion on social reality and by imagination, reject the present state of affairs and anticipate a different future, which would better fit the tendencies they can see at work in the present as well as their ethical aspirations. "Utopia" is thus this anticipatory process that results at the same time from the deep theoretical understanding of social reality and its dynamics and from the ethical imperatives of advanced people.

"Revolution", on the other hand, is the moment when the revolting masses realise that "the sky's the limit" and endeavour to change a social reality which has become unbearable to them. This happens without a clear consciousness on the masses' part of the precise content of such social change. "Utopia" helps in the preparation of "revolution" which in turn reinforces the strength of "utopia" in the mind and takes it to a superior, more concrete, level of content. Theoretical thought, creative imagination and mass revolutionary action are the historical components which, in their interaction, form the social process of the utopia/revolution dialectic.

A brief overview of the history of class society shows that there have been three major moments in this effort towards

liberation by praxis or by thought and imagination: Athenian direct democracy in the Vth and VIth centuries BC; modern time "council" or soviet democracy; and finally the "self-managed republic" which corresponds to the present complex society. "Direct democracy", "councils", "selfmanagement" are historically equivalent terms to designate in different epochs the reality or the concept, the "utopia" of a society democratically managed by its citizens.

I only mention classical Athenian democracy as the best known example of direct management of the city-state by its citizens, notwithstanding all its historically inherent limitations. The Athenian city-state was limited to a framework in which citizenship was only exercised by a limited number of male individuals (some 50,000), the material base of whose "freedom" rested on the one hand on the slaving mass and, on the other, on a prosperous maritime empire. These limitations, historically inevitable, do not in any way diminish the importance of a unique experience in direct democracy which saw no historical equivalent until, perhaps, centuries later, the Paris Commune, which, for being on a much wider scale, lasted for a much shorter time than the Athenian experience.

The next experience in "direct democracy" was the Russian Revolution of 1917. This experience took the form of "council democracy" and spread over a whole country. This experience of "council democracy" is especially important as a concrete instance of the "socialist utopia" concept as found in Marx's writings.

Marx's marxism saw the coming of a society at first "socialist", then "communist". From the starting point of an analysis of capitalism's realities and inherent tendencies - analysed as "scientifically" as possible - and helped by a creative imagination, motivated by an ethical aspiration for a "better society", Marx defines the "utopias" of "socialism" and "communism" as the result of the inevitable social actions of the masses, resulting at one and the same time from a necessity and a development in consciousness.

It is, incidentally, the sense in which Marx's "utopia" fundamentally differs from all anterior and contemporary social utopias - including the anarchists'. The revolutions that have come after Marx and the explosion of council's direct democracy are a confirmation of the tendencies Marx "scientifically"

analysed in capitalism to lead towards the socialist and communist "utopias". The experience of the councils both during and in the immediate aftermath of the Russian revolution confirms the masses' spontaneous tendency to affirm their power and means of intervention in the form of direct democracy. But this tendency was checked by a conception of the role of the party and of the state during a revolution which, with hindsight, now appears erroneous. The party showed a tendency to identify and

"The vision of the self-managed society represents the unique and concrete content of the term socialism in our age."

merge with state power and thus a revolution which limits itself to the nationalisation of the economy and the consolidation of the one party leads, not to the socialist transformation of society, but to the development of a "bureaucratic state" which grows ever stronger under the control of a new social strata, state bureaucracy.

The main conclusion to draw from "socialist" experiences in the XXth century is that "council democracy" is utterly incompatible with a regime characterised by a stasised economy and run by one party. Capitalism has been abolished by the economic changes, but socialist construction is essentially political, it is determined by the nature of the transition state and by the forces that really manage the state and the economy. What determines the evolution towards "socialism" instead of the "bureaucratic state" is thus the continual broadening of direct socialist democracy and of the masses' effective power both as producers and citizens.

Furthermore, revolution in our age, especially in the advanced capitalist countries, will be the work of a broad front of sociopolitical forces including the traditional proletariat as well as the wide layers of new waged workers, youth, women and all the other radical movements - radical not so much in their consciousness but in the very nature of the questions they raise and the radical answers these require.

This is a revolution, a radical social change, which goes further and deeper than the content of revolution as understood by traditional marxism which sees it as strictly or essentially "class based". This revolution can thus not take the form of "council democracy" or "soviets" for those are class organs which therefore do not integrate the totality of the socio-political forces that could transform today's complex society. The only form of democracy such a society could take is that of generalised social self-management.

The idea of self-management being the content of direct democracy in our age is a new idea, especially in its global content as generalised social self-management. It presupposes the abolition of capitalism but it does not limit itself to it. In this respect, its conception, if it is enriched by all partial experiences in self-management - East and West - is one which is in permanent elaboration. In Yugoslavia, for example, self-management emerged in the 1950s as an attempt by the political leadership, the Communist League, to find a firm support in the country's working class after its break with Stalin. This was done by associating the working class with local economic management so as to preclude the stalinist and soviet threat. But, as Yugoslavian selfmanagement in practice remained confined to the local level and remained under the control of a state led by the one party, it has quickly become bureaucratized instead of opening the way to generalised social selfmanagement. Nevertheless, the

Yugoslav experience still retains a considerable theoretical and practical relevance.

Elsewhere, as in Algeria between 1963 and 1965, self-management arose as an attempt to orient the country's revolutionary process in a socialist direction. But the economic, political, social and cultural context of the country soon led this experience down the path of a stasisation serving the interests of the neo-capitalist military bureaucracy which now controls the state.

Experiences and forms of self-management have sprung up in many countries as, for example in the 70s in Peru during the regime of the "social generals", in Chile under Allende, etc. In



"Demonstration", by May Stevens.

these cases, they have taken the form of spontaneous local attempts by the workers to acquire direct control over their part of the agricultural or industrial economy.

The idea of self-management has met with an increasing success in Western Europe since May 68' and the quasi-parallel experience of the "Prague Spring". So popular is it that it has often been distorted and opportunistically integrated in their discourse and programme by the near-totality of organisations on the traditional and revolutionary Left in many European countries - France in particular.

The most recent development in the praxis and concept of selfmanagement is undisputably that represented by the emergence and development of *Solidarnosc* as a socio-political movement in Poland. The apex of this evolution took the form of the concept of the "self-managed republic" together with a sketch of its economic, political and cultural structures. This is a most important theoretical and practical development. This experience is the one that comes closest to generalised social self-management without however exhausting the content of the idea.

In effect, the concept of generalised selfmanagement emerges as the result of a number of "objective" and "subjective" factors found primarily in the developed countries of East and West.

If wide layers today realise that "existing socialism" is no viable alternative, neither economically rational nor politically and culturally acceptable, it is primarily the new objective conditions that make the masses lean towards self-managing democracy, towards the "self-managed republic".

Under the combined and interactive effect of the capitalist crisis and the emergence of new productive forces (itself a result of the practical application of science and technology), we are today witnessing an evolution anticipated by Marx, that of capital



taking increasingly the form of "fixed capital", an evolution that points towards the automatised mechanisation of the economy. This goes hand in hand with the emergence, not of the individual worker, but of the "integrated collective worker" the effective functioning of which is organically linked to the "self-managed" character of production, that is its level of democratisation and control by the producers. This greater socialisation, an economic necessity, also implies a greater cultural development of the producers which not only makes them fit to work in the complex economy of today but also enables them to run and manage an economy that could be so decentralised as to make superfluous most of the great social and economic concentrations.

Moreover, such an organisation and management of the economy - extended to include the provision of social services: education, health, etc... - would not need to rely on atomic energy at least as long as this dangerous force isn't really and effectively mastered.

A thoroughly decentralised economy democratically run and making full use of the recent developments in communication

technology and robotics could make use of other sources of energy - one of such sources being solar energy which has steadily advanced recently, in spite of the pressures exerted on it by lobbies and vested interests.

It is today admitted that, following the major nuclear and space disasters, any complex technology is prone to accidents and could never be entirely mastered and controlled and that therefore only a democratically run society, which wouldn't seek for the greatest profit, which refused the dictates of a hierarchical, authoritarian and secret state power could choose and control the technologies which appear, at each stage of its development, adapted to its balanced development and beneficial to the vast majority of its citizens.

Finally, such an economy, today made possible for the first time in human history, would result in a dramatic reduction of the labour time socially necessary and thus allow the fullest development of the individual. Of course, it will still remain impossible to envisage a world self-managed society endowed with a level of resources comparable to that of the privileged minority in advanced capitalist countries for many years to come. The level of resources should be calculated as a world average which would level out the shocking and unacceptable inequalities which today exist between North and South.

It is through this process that the vision of the self-managed society emerges. It represents the unique and concrete content of the term "socialism" in our age: a society democratically managed by social labour, services, leisure collectives. In this the elements relating to the specific social functioning of each are integrated in the framework of an overall democratic plan.

Is such a society merely a "utopia"? Or is it a vision that emerges in human consciousness with the help of a critical analysis of today's realities, its necessities, its tendencies and also through the process of creative imagination? Of course, given the constantly evolving nature of social reality through time, given that it is shaped by a quantity of "causes", there can exist no strict "determinism" as regards social evolution that could be compared with that of the physical sciences. Humans are at the same time the subject and the object of history.

Still, the "self-managed republic" "utopia" has deep objective and subjective roots, as I have tried, albeit summarily, to underline. In any case, it is still far more credible than the "utopia" sketched by the apostles of neo-capitalism who dream of a new electronic golden age which they claim will be the outcome of the crisis we've been subjected to for the past 15 years.

This neo-capitalist "utopia" is increasingly appearing under the form of a dual society - including in the advanced capitalist countries where a part of the population enjoys stable and well-paid jobs while the other - in which the young, women, immigrant workers are a majority - is destined either to unemployment or to temporary, unstable and lowpaid jobs.

This is even more the case in the "peripheries" that surround the "centre", the Third-World where mass pauperisation has reached colossal proportions over the past two decades.

There is no way in which a world ruled by money, profit, individualism and the arms race could ever become a global Eden. Everything indicates that it is engaged in an "exterminist" process fuelled by war and the destruction of the environment. The future is of course still uncertain, whether it be "exterminism" or the material and cultural possibility of a world self-managed society. Let us hope that increasing numbers of individuals, that the masses choose the latter alternative. ■

Self-emancipation in Chile

RICARDO VELIZ

I.

One of the most important problems of the struggle for socialism concerns the relationship between "self-emancipation" and "political leadership". It has always been problematic - both in theory and in practice - for marxism to find the true relationship between those two crucial aspects. Historically, one aspect has always been emphasised to the detriment of the other. We believe it is time to reassess the whole problem, in the light of the experience accumulated during more than a century of revolutionary struggle. This will help us not only to achieve a better understanding and a more precise evaluation of the different ways of pursuing or implementing socialism practised by marxists up to now, but also further improve our own "utopias", projecting a fully democratic socialism. In particular, we need to reassess the contributions of Marx and Lenin. After all, their respective input still provide the main arguments in the debates around this problem.

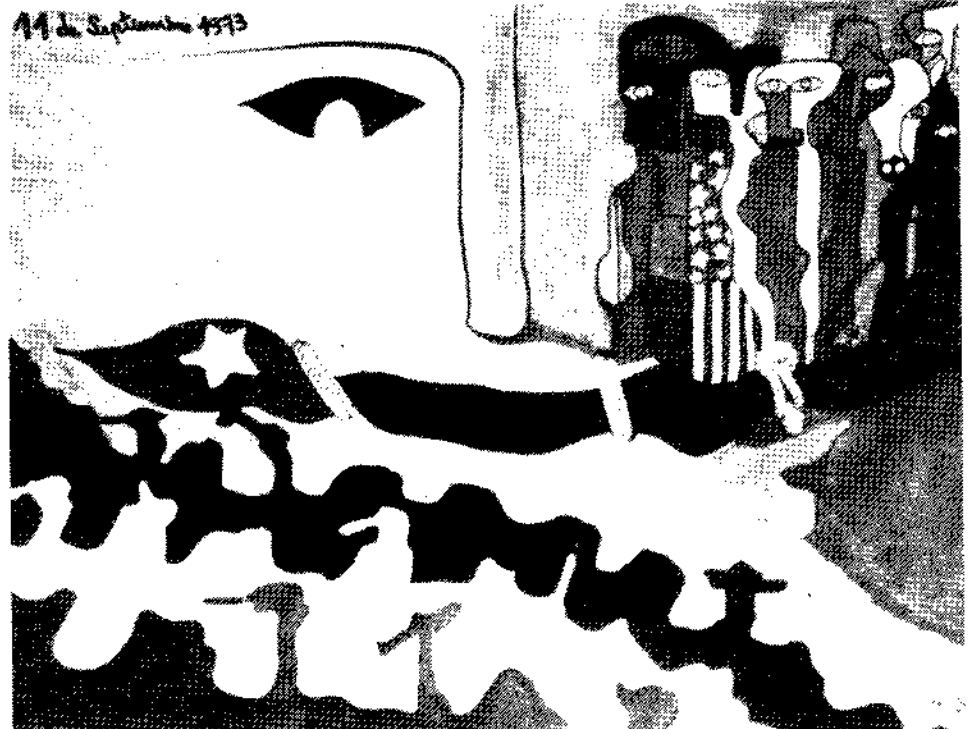
Marx understood the socialist revolution as being the process of *self-emancipation* of the working class from the chains of capitalism. Thus the *General Rules of the International Workingmen's Association* had established that "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves". The working class, taken as a whole, was for Marx the true revolutionary subject. That "only the proletariat as a whole can carry the revolution through" was a typical and fundamental idea of Marx. Accordingly, his main concern was for the development of the working class as an historical subject able to master its own

destiny, knowing that "the working class... in order to work out their own emancipation... will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historical processes, transforming circumstances and men". In this respect, Marx put a strong emphasis on the fact that the central aim of "revolutionaries" was to contribute to the process of "organisation of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party" (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*).

Clearly, the working class can only function as a class and party if it is able to enforce its own class interests "in their own names, representing themselves". It should not be forgotten that the notion of party used here by Marx does **not refer to a specific form of organisation - as in the modern sense of the word - but refers to the ability of the working class to function as an independent historical subject. The role of**

"revolutionaries" is mainly to contribute to the ever growing clarity of consciousness of the class, given the theoretical advantage they have over the class as a whole: "Theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement" (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*).

However, Marx never went beyond a concept of organisation as a mere "propaganda association" and he never truly tackled the problem of political leadership. Every working class organisation (including the "parties") exists, according to Marx, in order to reinforce the selfemancipatory capacity of the working class. It is the self-emancipatory capacity actually managed by the working class at a given moment



"11 de Septiembre 1973", by Pedro Uhart.



Painting by Agna Aguade.



Painting by Jose Balmes.

that is the fundamental criterion to measure and evaluate any revolutionary process. In other words, the success of a revolutionary process should be measured by the degree of power directly exercised by the working class as such.

With Lenin marxism underwent a change of emphasis from the problem of self-emancipation towards the question of **political leadership**. Lenin put forward a particular solution to the problem concerning the nature of party organisation, as distinct from Marx's original notion of the "organisation of the working class as a party". Lenin understood that the revolutionary consciousness does not arise spontaneously nor massively from the

workers' economic struggles alone, but that it is the product of participation of the workers in the political struggle, ie. in the struggle for power. The development of revolutionary consciousness in the working class as a whole is a product of the permanent and organised effort of its most conscious sectors.

This arises from the fact that revolutionary consciousness is not only the consciousness of the necessity to change reality, but also involves a decision about how to achieve this transformation, ie. it requires adhesion to a specific revolutionary programme. Revolutionary consciousness could only develop on the basis of a specific revolutionary project and the bearer of

this project is the party, in so far as it is an organisation offering a determinate option for the revolutionary struggle. Consequently, the revolutionary development of the people as a whole presupposes a dialectical relationship between its conscious and unconscious sections. Briefly, a "party" is the organisation of a conscious section which tries to convince the rest of the people to follow a specific revolutionary path for the realisation of their historical objectives, and thus tries to foster the organisation of the people accordingly. This relationship between party and mass is precisely a relationship of political leadership, in so far as the party aspires to guide the political activity of the masses.

We cannot really go into a proper discussion of the many aspects of the contributions of Marx and Lenin. We only wish to point out that they emphasised two different but essential problems of the revolution. The revolutionary experience now acquired by marxists shows the necessity to rescue both their contributions. On this depends the possibility of further advancing our conceptions of a socialist democracy and thus of advocating a revolutionary practice which could generate the necessary conditions for a democratic socialist society.

II.

Turning to the Chilean case, we will now examine the way the problem of the relationship between self-organisation and political leadership affects the fight against the dictatorship and for a socialist alternative. In particular, we will attempt to discover which conditions are being created that foster the development of a capacity for selfemancipation of the Chilean people as a whole, what form of political leadership is complementing this process and what the perspectives open to it are.

The Chilean struggle for 'socialism presents four essential features which will be at the centre of our analysis.

1. The first important characteristic has been the existence of two large and influential marxist parties: the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. These organisations were formed fairly early in the century (1921 and 1933 respectively) and both emerged from within the labour movement. As a foreign observer once put it, "Chile is the only country of the continent (apart from Bolivia, but in different forms and earlier) in which parties called working class because of their ideologies were also organically working class in their recruitment and social base" (Regis Debray in his introduction to *Conversations with Allende*). The existence of these two parties formed the basis for the multipartism that hitherto characterised the Chilean Left, a pluralism which in this case comes from within the labour movement itself. This plurality of parties was later reinforced by the emergence of other left-wing organisations and parties (MIR, MAPU, IC, etc.), thus strengthening an organic tendency towards ideological pluralism.

2. The second important feature is the fact that the working class and the people as a whole, exhibit a very high degree of social and political consciousness at grassroots level. This is shown - among other things - by the Chilean people's great capacity to give birth to a range of different forms of popular organisations, a sure indication of its capacity for self-organisation.

3. Of equal importance is the growing involvement, over the past decades, of Christians in the struggle for socialism. This phenomenon took irreversible proportions during the period of the Popular Unity Government (1970-1973). Two aspects of this participation are particularly important to consider. First, the existence of two leftwing political parties of christian origin (MAPU and IC), both of which were part of the Popular Unity coalition. Second, the growing and explicit commitment of sectors of the Church to socialism, which culminated during 1971 with the formation of the movement known as *Christians for Socialism*. All this

reinforces the Chilean organisational and ideological pluralism.

4. Finally, it is important to mention the development of a true popular art, giving birth to unique cultural forms. The art of Violetta Parra and the "New Chilean Song" movement are characteristic achievements in this field. These cultural forms are deeply rooted in the popular traditions and closely linked to - indeed part of - the struggle for socialism. They serve as a channel for the expression of the problems and aspirations of the exploited and oppressed people of Chile, and they are thus the basis for the independence of the workers and the people in the terrain of art and culture, which is undisputably another strong element in the process of selfemancipation. ■

In the next issue of Socialist Alternatives, RICARDO VELIZ will consider in detail the concrete forms the process of selfemancipation is taking in the struggle against the dictatorship and for socialism.



Painting by David Angles Lopez.

Dialogue across an *Iron Curtain*

When an independent peace activist (from the West) meets an independent trade-unionist (from the East), sparks fly... MAURICE NAJMAN recorded the Warsaw encounter and the first steps of a unique dialogue between JACEK KURON and DIETER ESCHE.

He looks just like his pictures. From the windows of his rather spacious flat, at the rear of a Warsaw council block, the sky looms grey over the dirty, snowy wasteland where, most of the time (but not today it seems), one or two members of the political police stand watching. His first move, before even asking us to sit and offering us a coffee (he drinks enormous amounts of the stuff), is to unplug the phone. Not to be disturbed or not to be listened to? The former hypothesis is more plausible: his first words were to warn us "*from here one speaks directly in the police's ear...*" His voice also is as one would expect: harsh and broken. The Gitanes and the Gauloises (he smokes enormous amounts of them) have certainly played their part. But his voice is also determined and thoughtful. Dieter Esche has come all the way from Germany to talk to him. Green Euro-MP, he is a leading activist of the "Network for an East-West Dialogue" which brings together those sections of the peace movement for whom "*cooperation with East European democratic opposition's independent organisations is one of the priorities in the struggle for peace*". M.N.

JACEK KURON Yes, we must collaborate. But for this, Polish society must evolve its own vision of international politics beyond the blocs. To us, "disarmament" means nothing as long as there is no possibility of social control over the possible "decisions" that may be reached. But there doesn't seem to exist such a possibility for social control in Eastern Europe. That means any negotiation between the Americans and the Soviets on the question of disarmament can be seen to be a political victory for the Soviets. This is because no matter what, they can do what they like. They don't have, as you do, a society that can find out, a parliament that debates and controls budgets, etc... Of course, satellites might more or less be able to monitor actual production,

but how could they monitor budgets, investments and the funds supposedly earmarked for scientific research? They can't!

This situation can only be changed if there exists a powerful social pressure for better economic conditions and if this pressure has a bigger impact on the budget than the pressure for war preparations. Politically, if such a social control was possible, it would mean that the strength of the social movement is such as to force state power, regardless of what it says, to reckon with it and adapt its policies accordingly. In effect, this would mean a transformation of the system. And that, as you know, is no easy thing! The situation has come to a standstill because society's aspiration for such a global transformation is so strong that it cannot be satisfied: the external forces could never accept it!

This is why, as regards the question of the struggle for peace, our programme is that of the neutralisation of Central Europe: the two Germanies, Poland, Cechoslovakia, etc... I know this is an unrealistic demand today because it is unacceptable to the West: on military grounds and given the present balance of forces, it would be a victory for the Soviets. But still, it is only by linking organically disarmament and neutralisation that the Soviets will be denied any advance.

If this programme became that of a wide movement East and West, then I think we could hope for an improvement in the situation. Our countries cannot take any further military pressures, their economic situation is too fragile. Our proposition for demilitarisation/neutralisation must be understood in this global context...

DIETER ESCHE But the division of Europe, the logic of the blocs also exists and is reproduced in people's heads. This is how we have come to accept the statu-quo in the West. Whence the importance of coming to common East-West proposals. Only in this way could we come again to think of Europe as a whole...

JACEK KURON Be careful! Neutralisation is not one among a number of options, it's the only one possible! Any other option would lead to a Soviet success. The way you envisage the European perspective is not acceptable: it disarms Europe. Like it or not, the US are the only concrete guarantee we have. Paradoxically, our proposition reinforces the two empires: it is only on the condition that the Americans remain the

“watchdogs” in Europe that a disarmament of both Germanies becomes possible...

DIETER ESCHE A “watchdog” role which allows the Americans to exert a permanent blackmail...

JACEK KURON Of course it does! So what? It’s a good thing. Peace has so far been maintained by those who wield military strength.

DIETER ESCHE But such a project for neutralisation will necessarily transform the role of the superpowers on a world scale! It would open the way for new relations between this Europe (East and West) and the Third-World. One cannot exclude that it might lead to a global crisis of domination for the two blocs.

JACEK KURON That would be true if the whole of Europe were disarmed. But what of the USSR? It’s Europe too isn’t it? It is the whole of the system that should be changed...

DIETER ESCHE If such a process were to emerge, there would be an interaction between this dynamics and one of transformation – albeit partial – of the superpowers’ character and of the nature of their relations. Without such changes, the peace process would immediately come to a standstill...

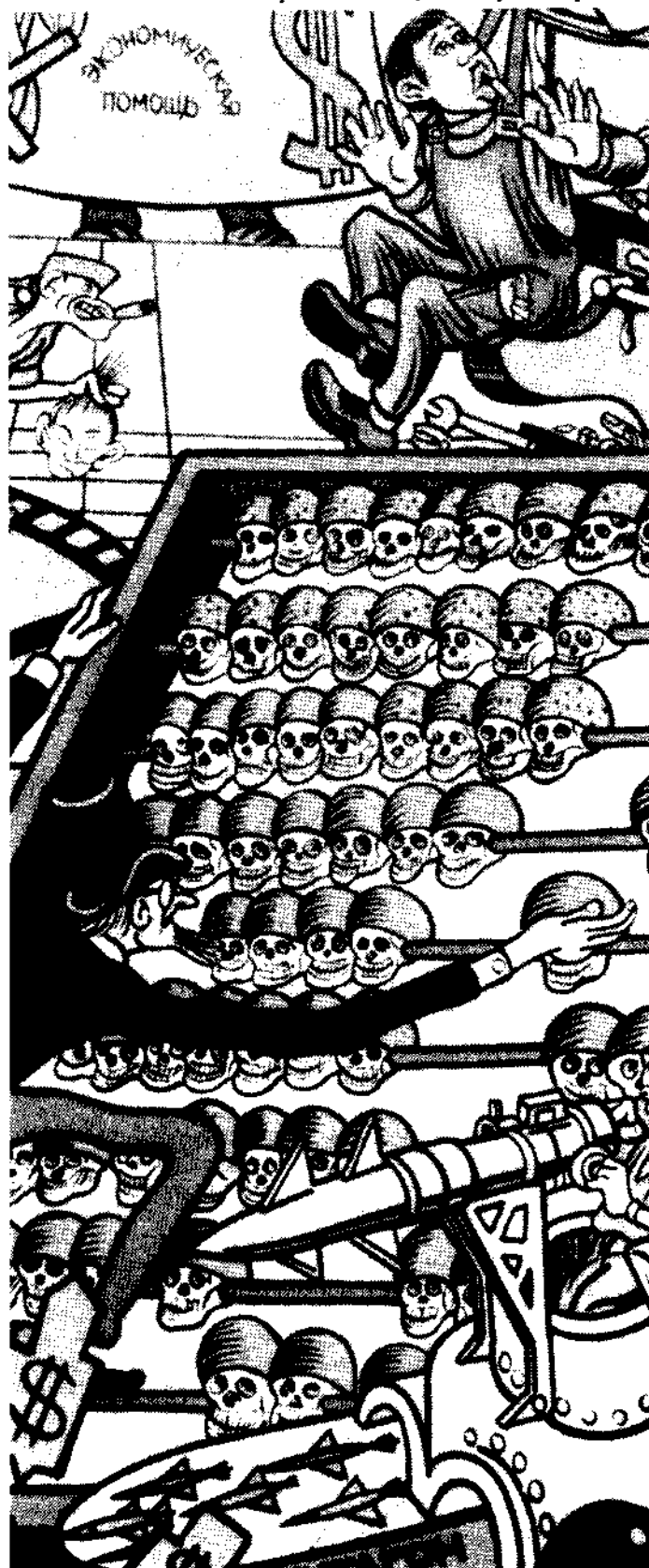
JACEK KURON I disagree! You are still dreaming of the empires’ disappearance. I am telling you that if an equilibrium was reached on the military plane, their role would be all the stronger for it... One must also take into account the fact that in all the satellite countries, the power only holds thanks to the presence of the Soviet army. The day it pulls out, it’s the end... Of course there exists, within this, a space for some national sectors to try and establish some kind of autonomy through the use of a number of “gimmicks”. This is what the Hungarians are doing with their so-called independent pacifists who in fact fully collaborate with the authorities. And of course, if it comes to that, the USSR could always sell this or that country...

DIETER ESCHE Are you thus ruling out the possibility that, in the course of this process, we could find not partners but groups and individuals who, for their own ends, might demand a measure of opening? And if such sectors start to appear, wouldn’t it be worthwhile to try and implicate them into a dynamic of dialogue and thus force them to determine their position in relation to the movement’s propositions?

JACEK KURON I’m not too optimistic on this score... One cannot rule out the emergence of a new Nagy(1), but one knows how such apparatus men, the Dubceks(2) and others, have ended their careers... In Poland, we have suffered a setback among other things because of the absence of a reformist current within the party’s apparatus. More precisely there was such a current but it was so weak that, politically, it counted for nothing. Of course what is true of Poland is not necessarily true of Hungary. But, in my view, the lesson still holds good.

DIETER ESCHE However, we are witnessing, in addition to the movement of society, the emergence of a European political game in which important forces, social democracy for example, are putting a lot of their hopes into these currents.

JACEK KURON Social democracy speaks of disarmament, not of neutralisation. It’s the Soviets’ programme! The Finlandisation of Western Europe! It would be a disaster... No, the question we should ask should be the following: for that much disarmament, how much neutralisation? Apart from this, the only valid question



is that of human rights. War is not only a function of the quantity of weapons stockpiled. The more we advance on the human rights front, the stronger society's influence on the government will be, the more the tendencies towards militarisation will recede.

DIETER ESCHE Does this mean that any disarmament strategy must be combined with a political project if it isn't to play into the USSR's hands?

JACEK KURON Absolutely!

DIETER ESCHE We are thinking in terms of processes, of dynamics but you are posing the final aim as an absolute prerequisite...

JACEK KURON The road you argue for leads nowhere or reinforces the USSR!

DIETER ESCHE That's the crux of our debate.

JACEK KURON Look, we know that the Soviets can accept anything and do exactly the contrary. Don't ever forget that here we have no parliament nor public opinion to make sure that the Soviet Union sticks to its promises.

DIETER ESCHE But one day or the other we will have to move out of the mental framework of deterrence and equilibrium which only fuels the arms race spiral! The point is that the two empires fundamentally agree on this logic which serves them both. We can only start to break it up by making a first step somewhere! If a movement had succeeded in stopping Cruise and Pershing missiles installation somewhere, it wouldn't have weakened the West. The West has got more than enough left to defend itself!



But it would have represented such a step: one has got to start, so as to bring the others to make a step too. If there is no response, then the process stops. This is what the concrete content of our unilateralism which you so much fear is... It aims at opening a dynamic of popular pressure.



JACEK KURON How many times do I have to tell you? The USSR totally masters its cards! In the West, there are ways for society to know whether the "step" you mention has actually been made. In the USSR, the party apparatus is alone in command. Your whole argument rests on two acts of wishful thinking: a) the "first step" doesn't destabilise the military equilibrium and b) it will be followed by another step from the other side...

DIETER ESCHE The problem is the control... But there are other control mechanisms than society! Of course we should never take the Soviet's word (nor, for that matter the American's) for it! But there are other means of control... Also, don't you

"To us, disarmament means nothing as long as there is no possibility of social control over the agreements that may be reached." Jacek Kuron.

think you put a little too much faith in those at the disposal of society in the West? I think you underestimate the change nuclear armaments represent as compared with conventional weapons. From this point of view, a nuclear society is an increasingly authoritarian and secretive society...

JACEK KURON So, according to you, the non-deployment of Pershings would have had no impact on the general equilibrium? I'll admit that... But the US are saying the contrary. Who should we believe? Nobody of course! But then, what of US "guarantees" and what are those means of control you talked about? Wouldn't it be ironic if spysatellites became the watchdogs of each side's good faith!

DIETER ESCHE Let me repeat. Nuclear weapons are qualitatively different from all other forms of weaponry in that they exclude by nature any possibility of social control. It is this fact that has been at the root of the rise of the new peace movement. To believe that one can guard oneself against totalitarianism with nuclear weapons is to let totalitarianism slip through the back door of this vital struggle! The growth in

“To believe that one can protect oneself against totalitarianism with nuclear weapons is to let totalitarianism slip through the back door of this vital struggle!” Dieter Esche.

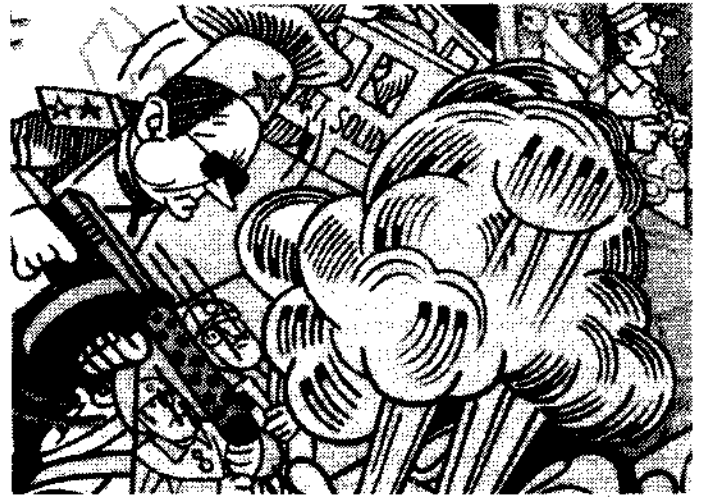
civilian and military nuclear industry has brought about an increasing militarisation of society. You don't seem to fully grasp the tremendous effects this technology has on the nature of a society...

JACEK KURON This is your problem in a way. As for us, we already have our own totalitarianism, slightly more “actually existing” I believe...

DIETER ESCHE Be careful! Why not just admit that we have different priorities in the framework of a general perspective commonly elaborated? The question of human rights in the East is not for us a question of “solidarity” with the “poor” people on the continent's other half: it's our problem too because it's the problem of Europe and it's future. So, why don't you consider that nuclear weapons are also your problem for the same fundamental reasons?

JACEK KURON You are right on this point... With a slight difference though, your nuclear weapons stop them from using theirs...

DIETER ESCHE But if we don't stop this spiral of action/reaction...



JACEK KURON Yes, yes... If this spiral goes on, then the Soviets explode...

DIETER ESCHE Or do they? It might just be an American delusion...

JACEK KURON No, it's a reality. But it's true that society cannot afford it...

DIETER ESCHE Yes, maybe one day the Americans will succeed in “overarming the USSR to its knees”, but democracy will have been the first casualty on the list...

JACEK KURON (laughs)... They will have long since starved us! ■

(1) Imre Nagy: Hungary's Prime Minister until 1955. Executed by the Warsaw Pact troops after the collapse of the insurrection.

(2) Alexander Dubcek: Czechoslovakia's CP First Secretary in 1968. Eliminated from the political scene after the crushing of the “Prague Spring”.

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Labour's Future by Eric Heffer (Verso, £4,95)



K. STARMER

In a relatively small and unambitious book, Eric Heffer manages to relay the key points in the history of the Labour Party, and also to put his finger on the most pressing contemporary issues facing the party today.

There can be no doubting that Heffer is right to suggest that the Labour Party is again at the crossroads, and that in its attempt to articulate answers to the political and economic questions posed by Thatcherism, it is slipping once again into revisionism. Heffer suggests that, unlike Gaitskellism, this is not the revisionism of bold confrontation with the main tenets of socialist theory, rather it is a gradual "softly-softly" erosion of them. *Labour's Future* documents the party's shift to the right since the relatively strong position of the left in 1979-81, using examples such as the miners' strike and the Liverpool crisis. But if we are to reject this shift and counterpose a socialist strategy for the Labour Party, what will this mean for the party and what sort of party do we envisage? Heffer is both bold enough and experienced enough to address these questions.

Starting from the question of groups within the party (prompted, of course, by the recent leadership obsession with purging the party) Heffer unveils his "construct" for the Labour Party based on a more federal, decentralised structure. The rationale for this is based

partly on the historic writings of Trotsky and Luxemburg, and partly (and more effectively) on his own conceptions of pluralism. Just as there must be a pluralist socialism in today's world, there must be a pluralist Labour Party if it is to play any part in the transition to socialism. This means it must accommodate different trends, tendencies and ideas provided only that they are united around the socialist programme of the party. This is a rare but welcome vision of the Labour Party not only as a vehicle towards socialism but also as a prefiguration of the socialist society it aspires to.

Eric Heffer is contemptuous of the political strategy advanced by Eric Hobsbawm and other Euro-Communists, namely that of building a popular front (implicitly with the SDP/Liberal Alliance) capable of opposing Thatcherism. Heffer argues that such a strategy is misguided in identifying the central political task as simply removing Thatcher. Whilst accepting the obvious changes in the structure of the working class, Heffer nevertheless rejects Hobsbawm's analysis that class politics are no longer key in the struggle for socialism.

Heffer's vision of socialism becomes clearer in the chapter *Socialism and the State*. Basing himself on the writings of Gramsci and, more directly, Milliband, Heffer accepts a "dual-role" analysis of the state. On the one hand, there is the civil aspect of state action, for example, the social security system etc.; on the other, there is the repressive side. If the state is to obtain any function under socialism, the repressive side must be broken down by a process of democratisation. State or public ownership must be consistent with the development of self-management in industry. It is at this point in Labour's future that the reader is first urged to reject the "obsolete" distinction between "state" and "non-state" socialists, and indeed between revolutionary and reformist socialism. Rejecting the SWP line that socialism can never be created via the parliamentary road, Heffer goes as far as to agree (but "only just") with Stafford Cripps (writing in 1932) that socialism is possible by constitutional means. Perhaps here Heffer has underestimated the strength of his own proposals for radical changes in left

thinking. For he rightly argues that the struggle for socialism is part of the struggle for women's equality and part of the fight for conservation etc. Hence, the Labour Party must act as the unifying force which will bring these groups together (among other things, Heffer suggests that the Labour Party must become the "green" party of Britain). However, the nature of the struggles of the green and feminist movements in Europe have not been wholly, or even mainly, constitutional - if the Labour Party is to be the unifying force, Heffer suggests, it must surely come to terms with the nature of these struggles.

Labour's Future is both descriptive and prescriptive, and acts as a timely reminder to socialists that at every crossroads, there are a number of options. Heffer suggests that instead of heading towards an "SDP Mark 2", we would be better to go forward to re-build and develop the party as an instrument of socialism capable of integrating into its project the emergence of the new social movements in the last twenty years. He is, of course, quite right. ■

Gorbachev by Zhores Medvedev (Blackwell)

D. FRENEY

On 11th March, 1985, the Soviet people learned that the general secretary of the Soviet Union, Konstantin Chernenko, had died. They also learned that they were to have their fourth general secretary in three years: the 54 year old Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev.

It marked a new era, if only because after a series of ailing leaders, they now had one who could expect to live into the 21st century. But did it symbolise a new era of reforms so necessary to revitalise the equally ailing Soviet economy and society?

Medvedev's book allows some very cautious answers to the last question. It will take more than a year to make such a judgement.

Gorbachev faces an enormous task. After the incompetence, corruption, and ultra-bureaucratisation of the Brezhnev years, there was a brief year of hope under Andropov, but then the USSR sank back

into Brezhnevian somnolence under Chernenko.

On the face of it, Gorbachev's rise to power defied all the odds. It was his misfortune to head Soviet agriculture for six disastrous years from 1979. Harvest failures reached such a state that the USSR stopped publishing the results.

Being head of agriculture was usually a death warrant under Stalin, and a sure sign of a short career afterwards.

One of the 5,000 delegates to the 1961 22nd CPSU congress, Gorbachev moved from the top Stavropol Komsomol job to a party job, concerned with agriculture, in 1962. He was in a position to meet top party leaders because the area was a well-known spa and health resort area, where many party leaders have dachas.



An old hat?

In April 1970, Gorbachev became first secretary of the party in the Stavropol krai - in effect the leader of the area of 1.4 million people. In 1971, he became a member of the Central Committee.

Gorbachev won some fame in 1977 when an experiment in large-scale, co-ordinated harvesting proved a success in the Ipatovsky district of Stavropol Krai.

In November 1979, Gorbachev became a candidate member of the Politburo and a full member in October 1980. The failure of the harvest in 1982 put Gorbachev's position in question, but

on November 10th, 1982, Brezhnev died of a heart attack.

Gorbachev supported Andropov for the general secretary's job. Andropov died in February 1984, having only just begun his drive against corruption that had grown up under Brezhnev.

Those close associates of Brezhnev who remained on the Politburo managed to rally enough support for Chernenko to get the top job, but only after he publicly endorsed Andropov's reforms. Gorbachev emerged as second in command to an obviously ailing Chernenko.

Chernenko's year in power represented a delay that the Soviet economy could ill afford. The purges of the corrupt and grossly inefficient which had begun under Andropov came to an abrupt halt.

Much of Medvedev's book centres on the crisis of Soviet agriculture as reflected in the problems Gorbachev faced.

It would take another review to cover this area. Sufficient to say that despite his energetic efforts and his calls for targets to be reached, the end result was a disaster.

At least his latest changes will end some of the gross fragmentation of the bureaucratic power in agriculture that existed from 1970 to 1984, when farm directors and chairpersons had to deal with more than 13 local ministerial branches and networks. But the bureaucratic monstrosity remains.

Gorbachev has introduced a new style to the leadership. He has gone on many meet-the-people tours and spoken without written text on TV.

His excellent diplomacy has captivated both the Soviet people and the Western media alike. He has taken important initiatives in foreign policy and beaten Reagan at his own media game on more than one occasion.

He has used his popularity to take unpopular but essential measures, such as the severe curtailing of the sale of vodka, which was becoming a national disaster.

Gorbachev pleads very well the case for new inspiration in Soviet life, and no doubt he will achieve some successes. But there is the very real danger that despite his undoubted ability, he will fail as he did when he was in charge of Soviet agriculture.

To succeed, Gorbachev will have to go over the heads of thousands of entrenched bureaucrats and appeal directly to the Soviet people, as he is already appealing for "labour discipline".

That requires real openings for extensive social democracy and selfmanagement through which ordinary Soviet workers can exercise some power.

It also means opening up cultural and scientific life, for only when heretical ideas can be freely debated can these crucial spheres be freed to face the challenges of the new scientific and technological revolution already underway.

Medvedev's book is weakest in analysing the problems in the industrial sector. They hardly rate a mention. The part of the book dealing with Gorbachev as general-secretary shows signs of being written in haste. Nevertheless, the book is a very valuable one for anyone seriously interested in the problems facing the USSR.

How then to judge Gorbachev? Medvedev concludes with some insights. Gorbachev came to power because "he possessed the proper combination of orthodoxy, efficiency, toughness and political and diplomatic skill to move all the way up through the Soviet political system".

"But if he wants the best possible role for the Soviet Union in future world history, he needs to share decision-making power not only with his Kremlin colleagues, but with the people as well. If he does that, he will change from being the ruler to being the leader."

And that change is what the world as a whole needs today, in the era of Reagan and Thatcher... ■

Developing the Socially Useful Economy
Stephen Bodington Ed.
(McMillan)

K. STARMER

Monetarism has failed economically and politically, yet no real alternative is being constructed. ***Developing the Socially Useful Economy*** outlines one such alternative, based on an economy built on "use-value" rather than "exchange value". In this book, the authors develop the theme that the orthodox political economy is essentially a closed system, and that we need the socially useful economy to open it up, so that we may all have the rights, powers, facilities and satisfactions that are currently denied us.

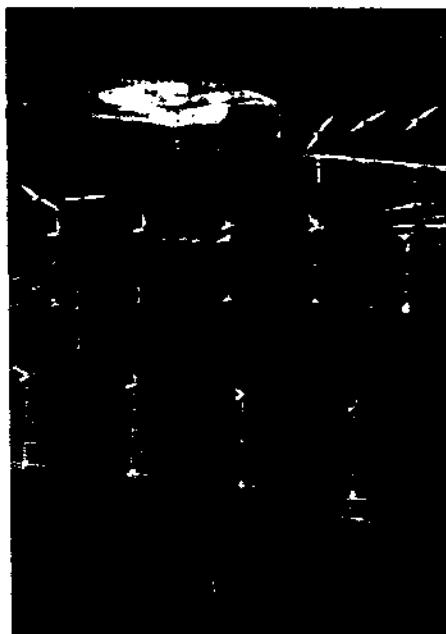
By counterposing the socially useful economy to monetarism, the authors adduce expert evidence in *The politics of Economics* chapter to show that economics is far from being objective and valuefree. It is, in fact, they suggest, a political practice; the conclusion of course follows that armed with a different political philosophy, a quite different set of economic principles and priorities than those advanced by capitalism generally, and monetarism specifically, can be derived. The starting point must, they urge, be found in placing prime value on meeting the needs and aspirations of all sections of the community. In other words, making the economy subservient to those needs, not fashioning them.

In this analysis, the question of technology, which has long been a problem for socialists, is put into perspective. In *Developing the Socially Useful Economy* it is convincingly argued that technology cannot simply be judged in the abstract - it is by nature ideological, political, and social. The common assumption that new technology offers a better life for everyone, that it is a good in itself, is challenged by an examination of the root purposes of technology (i.e. an examination of technology in its political context). The primary purpose of technology, the dynamism by which it is developed, is an urgent pursuit of success dictated by competition. Social usefulness is, at best, an incidental purpose - and, of course, new technology can also generate "incidentally" much that is socially harmful. Significantly, what the authors come to, through this analysis, is not a rejection of new technology as a process of restructuring, bad in itself, but to a re-evaluation of technology. If the criteria of production is social usefulness, so too must new technology be measured by this yard-stick.

Just as technology reflects a political and social phenomenon, so political phenomena, such as types of social organisation, reflect the dominant theory and practice of economics. In the chapter called *The Structure of Authority* this problem is discussed. Whilst the growth of money power liberated us from power determined by the blood of birth and the blood of the sword, it nevertheless, for want of an effective and fair mechanism of distribution, in turn imprisons us. The release from this imprisonment, urge the authors, is not through the "statisation"

of the economy, but through the self-management of the economy, which itself necessitates a radical extension of control over the resources we possess.

Developing the Socially Useful Economy would be incomplete if it failed to suggest some link, however tenuous, between the theory of the economics of use and present day possibilities given the contemporary positions and make-up of social forces. Unlike so many "socialist" expositions of



Fuelling the socially useful economy.

transition the authors manage to identify and develop the realisation that today the challenge to the "status quo" comes from protest movements which are not singularly based on class but represent a wide variety of social groups. These groups include environmentalists, tenants associations, ethnic minorities, feminists, gays, nuclear disarmers etc. This necessary link of theory to practice, then, comes in seeking to construct a framework within which the various interests can be contained. This framework is, suggests the authors, the socially useful economy itself.

Packed with well researched information and very detailed throughout, *Developing the Socially Useful Economy* offers much more than a very effective challenge to capitalist economics. It provides an essential signpost for socialists seeking to define and develop the socialist alternative. ■

Freedom & Fairness (Spokesman)

P. DERRICK

This is an excellent booklet about ways and means of extending workers' participation and influence in a capitalist economy, containing eleven contributions by distinguished socialists. Roy Green of the Labour Party wants fairness through more effective bargaining in a capitalist economy. John Hughes writes about socialist priorities and Stuart Holland about redistribution, though without mentioning taxation. It is an interesting little booklet though lacking, of course, any hint of what the contributors mean by socialism. ■

Social Ownership by the Labour Party

P. DERRICK

This statement on social ownership is curious in that it does not attempt to define what the Labour Party means by social ownership: or what it means by socialism. It rightly proposes a major increase in public investment to reduce unemployment: but how many of its members regard state shareholding in capitalist companies as a form of social ownership and BP as an example? It rightly calls for employee shareholding; but how many socialists regard employee shareholding in capitalist companies as a form of social ownership? It calls for the social ownership of British Telecom: but apparently the company would still be run for the profit of private security holders with the value of their securities increasing with the growth in value of the company's assets. It rightly calls for more local initiatives and more participation by workers and consumers: but apparently most of industry would continue to be run for private profit.

The Labour Party needs to labour a bit more to sort out its socialism. ■



Rosa Luxemburg

by Margarethe Von Trotta

J. FOOT

"Bourgeois society faces a dilemma; either a transition to socialism or a return to barbarism" Rosa Luxemburg, 1915.

Rosa Luxemburg's life and writings have inspired generations of revolutionaries. Her life has been idolised as that of the perfect socialist fighter. Imprisoned six times, involved in three major revolutions, murdered by right-wing reformists - Rosa provokes great passion in almost every major marxist debate. Perhaps this is why reviews of the film have varied from the overtly reactionary "Rosa-the bore (*Financial Times*) to the glowing "an exceptional film!" (*Illustrated London News*). The truth is that the film itself has its ups and downs, but can only really appeal to the committed socialist.

It is the last hour of the film which transforms it from worthy to inspired. The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) are seen backing the mass slaughter of WW1. Kautsky and his "comrades" voted for war credits en masse - with only Rosa's ally Karl Liebknecht dissenting. Liebknecht's speech during the 1918 revolution is superb "we could have had it easy, we could have backed the war". Finally and abruptly, Rosa is murdered by the SPD inspired "Freikorps". As she pleads for mercy the rifle-butt and bullets do their work. Her body splashes into a Berlin canal. In an instant, all the power and dignity Barbara Sukowa has built up in her brilliant portrayal is snuffed out.

Rosa Luxemburg has always been a difficult character to pin down. A firm believer in party democracy and worker spontaneity, she nevertheless was a leader of the ultra-centralist and ultra-disciplined Polish SKDP for many years. Moreover she remained within the increasingly bureaucratic and stifling SPD despite its major role in holding back revolutionary energies and capitulation to jingoism at the outbreak of the war. Luxemburg has also been seen as a critic of leninism (in fact, a collection of Rosa's work by Bertrand Wolf is called *Marxism or Leninism?*). Yet, Rosa welcomed the Russian revolution going as

far as calling it the "salvation of the honour of international socialism". In reality, as many of her contemporaries, she was often more of a "marxist" than Marx himself. She believed in the absolute inevitability of the proletarian revolution. In her *Accumulation of Capital*, she tried to defend this determinism against the revisionists' attacks. She was also fiercely opposed to any nationalism and she earned much of her reputation fighting it in the ranks of the Polish party. Still, she came from a comfortable middle-class background (as the film makes fully clear). One cynical comrade goes as far as asking her if her servants were also in the party!



"Rosa" by A. Raderscheidt, 1919.

Rosa Luxemburg, the film, never gets close to analysing these paradoxes. However, it would be grossly unfair to criticise a twohour film for not examining in detail every aspect of such an incredible life. There are nevertheless a few embarrassing episodes in the film. The ballroom introduction is dangerously close to one of those "spot the celebrity" games; "Oh look! There's Bebel! And Kautsky!" etc... There is an overabundance of red roses (looks like a Labour Party Conference!) and Rosa is shown to have been a genius at the early age of 8... Finally, there's too much trudging around in the snow for my taste. But the film's most crucial defect is the lack of any reference to the 1917 Russian

revolutions. Margarethe Von Trotta recently admitted that this was "a big lack in the film" but rightly points that it could have made "a whole film on it's own". The director also removed the description of Rosa as a "pacifist" at the beginning of the film following justified complaints that this was grossly false.

Above all, Rosa Luxemburg stood for the masses. Her best works, *The Mass Strike* and *Social Reform or Revolution* describe and theorise the



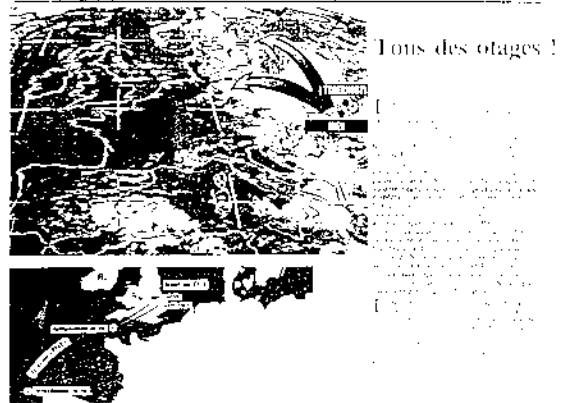
mass struggle as she witnessed it in action in 1905 and later. The masses, as Luxemburg constantly emphasises, are often far, far ahead of their leaders. Rosa never accepted the rhetorical "victory" against Bersteinian revisionism in the SPD which did not in the least shake the old bureaucrats ("bonzes" as they were commonly called) in power. "They were only interested in winning elections and getting more members" (Von Trotta) thus putting into practice Bernstein's dictum that "the movement is everything, the goal nothing". Rosa tirelessly fought against this immobility she termed "Pi less Centralism". As she wrote in 1917 "the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee". She stood, with a few dedicated and brave revolutionaries, against the tragedy of WW1. This film undoubtedly portrays her courage, determination, and revolutionary humanity. Sukowa is brilliant in the title role. It is easy for socialists to criticise the film for not dealing with enough issues or for its sentimentality. Instead, We should urge the director to make the "other film on Rosa" she tantalisingly talks about in her interviews.

Rosa Luxemburg's murder at the hands of her former comrades was a tragedy which helped to open the way for both Stalinism and fascism. This film passionately describes the life which made its premature end so tragic. It also never loses sight of the popular working masses who, in Rosa's words, "continue to be the living matter of world history".

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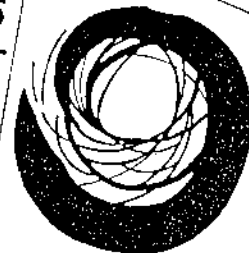
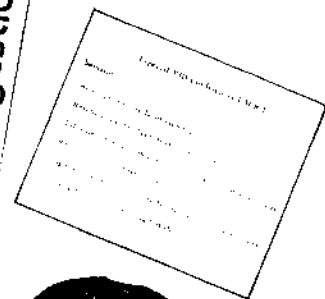


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