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International

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Editorial

FACING THE ELECTION

By the time this issue of International is published a general election could have been called — at any rate it cannot now be far off. There is a very good chance indeed that the Tories will win it outright, perhaps with an increased majority. What is most unlikely, Tony Benn notwithstanding, is that Labour will win. The socialist left must take careful stock of the present critical situation, in order to be able to arm itself for the tasks ahead.

The fundamental trends of development of British politics have to be firmly grasped. As the crisis of British capitalism deepens, there is a long term trend of decline of *both* the Tory party and British social democracy. The 'high tide of Toryism' was the election of 1931, won by the National Government. The Tories and their allies won with 64 per cent of the vote. Thatcher could win the coming election with something like 38 per cent, certainly she will probably not get more than 40 per cent of the poll. In 1970 Heath won with 46 per cent.

To put it another way, the vote of the non-Tory, non-Labour parties has been going up since 1955. This election will seen that trend continue. If Thatcher wins by a clear majority it will be because of the vagaries of the election system.

This secular decline of the votes of the two major parties conforms to the political crisis imposed by the economic decline of British capitalism. From the point of view of the working class, the political crisis is taking the form of the death agony of the Labour Party. If Labour cannot win the coming election, first and foremost it will be because of the rise of the SDP and the fact that a section of the Labour vote has been taken with it. Even if the SDP were to suffer a major reverse at the coming polls in terms of *seats*, the extent of its impact can be gauged from this fact alone.

Thatcherism has not been a success at an economic level. If average profitability of firms rose in 1982, it was merely a statistical consequence of the number of bankruptcies. Only 3 per cent of the total investment of British capitalists is going into manufacturing industries, while huge amounts go abroad. Even if there is a slight world upturn in the economy, Britain will find it very hard to share in any 'revival'. The collapse of British manufacturing industry is so severe that any upturn will be very partial and short lived.

A new Tory government therefore will be one forced to take much harsher measures against the working class than has hitherto been the case. Indeed Thatcher openly proclaims that she needs three terms in office to complete her programme of restoring British capitalism. A truly massive attack on workers living standards and a much harsher assault on the welfare state is what the Tories are planning for the next five years.

If the Tories are not re-elected with an overall majority, then the most likely outcome is a hung parliament with the SDP/Liberals holding the balance of power. Either way the labour movement will face fundamental questions of how it responds to the challenge of being in opposition again.

If the Tories are elected, then the right wing of the Labour Party will want 'respectable' Parliamentary opposition, possibly in an alliance with the SDP/Liberals. The issue of fighting back against the ravages of a second round of Thatcherism, through a mass campaigning Labour Party which promotes workers struggles, will have to be counterposed by the left to any form of parliamentary pact. The response of the Labour leadership to the recent strike of Cowley — silence — does not auger well in this respect.

If there is no overall parliamentary majority, the pressure for a coalition with the SDP/Liberals will be much more direct. Terry Duffy of the AUEW has spelled out the consequences of this very directly: Labour must abandon its radical policies on disarmament, the EEC and incomes policy to ensure the possibility of coalition. Indeed, this — in addition to electoral reform — would be precisely the price demanded by the SDP/Liberal Alliance.

A further conclusion has to be reached on this basis: *the struggles in the Labour Party are far from over*. The relative quiescence in the Labour Party in the pre-election period has led to many illusions. The first is that, following the publication of the *New Hope for Britain*, the right wing has accepted the bulk of the left's policy demands. But the opposite is true: the 'left' character of this document is merely symptomatic of the right's assessment that Labour will not win, and that Labour's leadership never be challenged to put these policies into effect.

What would follow a Labour election defeat would in all probability be a battle against coalitionism of a direct of indirect kind, and a new leadership struggle. Moreover, the right wing in the middle of such struggle would certainly reach for the witch hunt weapon again.

Thatcherism cannot be combatted by counterposing to it the failed social democratic solutions of yesteryear. Only if the labour movement is able to present, in the course of struggle, a bold alternative socialist vision of economy and social life, will the ideologcial offensive of Thatcherism be blunted. The Labour leadership is an unlikely source of such an alternative.

International Features

WEST GERMANY AT TURNING POINT

GUNTER MINNERUP

Twenty seven Greens were elected to the Bundestag in the recent German general election, which returned the conservative Christian Democrats into government. Günter Minnerup analyses the significance of the rise of the Greens and the defeat of the Social Democrats in opening a new period in German and European politics.

The West German election of 6 March this year marked a decisive turning point in the political history of Europe's strongest imperialist power. But its significance lay not primarily in the actual result. The victory of the conservative Christian Democrats and the return of Chancellor Kohl's conservative-liberal coalition government was fairly predictable. The counting of the votes only confirmed what had been analysed and forecast before: in this case, the inevitable demise of German social democracy as the governing party in the Federal Republic[1]. The 6 March 1983 will enter the history books as the day that the era in West German politics which had begun in 1966 finally came to an end.

But if it were just a question of the social democratic (SPD) leaders having to live without their ministerial posts and salaries for the foreseeable future the world-wide interest aroused by the election would be hard to understand. In the eyes of the international media, this was the 'missiles election'. The expected conservative victory would provide Chancellor Kohl with a mandate to deploy the Pershing 2 and Cruise missiles allocated to the Federal Republic by NATO, whereas an SPD government dependent on the support of the Greens would have come under intense pressure from the peace movement to refuse deployment. Thus the public rejoicing in the Pentagon and Whitehall on 7 March.

This rejoicing may have been premature[2]. The missiles were clearly overshadowed by the economic crisis and unemployment as the decisive election issues, and both the extra-parliamentary peace movement and the parliamentary opposition to Cruise and Pershing are likely to grow faster now, possibly throwing the Kohl government into deep crisis if it pursues its original deployment plans this autumn. But Cruise and Pershing and the parliamentary manouevres between the SPD and the Greens from the opposition benches of the *Bundestag*, and even the mass extra-parliamentary peace movement are only surface phenomena of a much deeper crisis beginning to unfold in West Germany today - the erosion of the social and political consensus that underpinned the stability of the Federal Republic from the early 1950s. The true historic significance of the 6 March 1983 is that it finally sealed the end of the post-war era.

The NATO state

The Federal Republic of West Germany (FRG), is not an ordinary capitalist nation state like any other in Western Europe. Its political culture is heavily deformed by the *unbewaltigte Vergangenheit* (unmastered legacy) of fascism, war and national division, and by the circumstances of its creation and early consolidation. The present crisis cannot be fully understood without reference to these deformations.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl

German fascism did not fall as a result of revolution, but of military defeat by an alliance of foreign powers. Germany after May 1945 was an occupied country, its political future in the hands of the victorious allies. For the German anti-fascists emerging from the concentration camps, the underground, or enforced political passivity, Hitler's military defeat also meant liberation. But they were soon to find out how their liberators' interests imposed strict limits on their spontaneous attempts to reorganise post-war Germany on a unitary, democratic and socialist basis. With the break-up of the anti-Hitler coalition and the emergence of the Cold War, the division of Germany into what were essentially two client states of the opposing camps became increasingly inevitable.

Apart from its role as a lucrative investment market for US capital, the West German Federal Republic was assigned a crucial strategic function in a reconstructed imperialist alliance as the easternmost bulwark of capitalism in Europe. The vast industrial and military potential of Western Germany was to weight the scales decisively in favour of the 'free world' in its attempts to 'roll back' Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, with East Germany as the prime target in a domino strategy of anti-communist subversion and destabilisation. At the same time, a massive American economic and military presence would guarantee a special relationship between Washington and its German 'junior partner', making Bonn the principal ally of US imperialism in continental Western Europe.

German fascism did not fall as a result of revolution but of military defeat by an alliance of foreign powers

This project was by no means easy to realise in the face of strong opposition to both national division and rearmament. Neutralism and pacifism remained strong currents even within the bourgeois parties until well into the 1950s, and the workers' movement was in any case strongly suspicious of Allied support for 'capitalist restoration'. The unprecedented economic boom after the currency reform in 1948 certainly contributed a great deal to the erosion of working class militancy, but cannot in itself explain the rapid consolidation of the new regime. It was the intense anti-communist hysteria unleashed during the Cold

International Features

War, fuelled by events such as the 1948 Soviet blockade of West Berlin, the suppression of the 1953 East German workers' rebellion, and the 1956 Red Army intervention in Hungary, which put the pacifist and socialist opposition on the defensive. In divided Germany, the direct confrontation with Stalinism gave this hysteria a virulence unparalleled elsewhere, except perhaps in the USA under McCarthyism. This allowed Chancellor Adenauer to usurp the issue of national reunification under the banner of the liberation of East Germany from communism, creating a ruling bloc which dominated West Germany until the end of the 1960s, centred on the political catholicism of the old Centre Party and the forces of reactionary protestant nationalism attracted to the new Christian Democratic Party.

By 1957, the CDU/CSU (the CSU being the semi-autonomous wing of Christian Democracy in catholic Bavaria) polled over 50 per cent of the popular vote and the opposition had been crushed: the Federal Republic was a fully-rearmed member of NATO, the Communist Party was banned, and the SPD was preparing its final capitulation to the existing order. The ideology identified today with the wilder excesses of the Reaganites represented the respectable consensus upon which the West German state of the late 1950s and early 1960s was founded.

West German Social Democracy

Defeat in the 1949 election of the first *Bundestag* came as a shock to most SPD activists who had been unable to perceive of anything but a socialist future for post-Hitler Germany. The fact was, however, that the workers' movement had been decisively weakened by the division of Germany (which meant the loss of its traditional strongholds in East Germany), the Cold War, and the fact that the allied occupation powers, especially the US, had massively favoured Christian Democracy.

If the odds were thus heavily stacked against it, it was the inability of the SPD leadership to mobilise its base in a bold challenge to the emerging post-war settlement that was, in the last analysis, responsible for the series of defeats suffered in the 1950s. Compared to the present-day leadership of German social democracy, its then leader Kurt Schumacher was almost a class-struggle radical. He did attempt to build a broad popular alliance around the workers' movement by putting the issues of national unity and opposition to any re-militarisation at the centre of his rhetoric of 'intransigent opposition'. But the effect of his opposition was blunted by his obsessive anti-communism which made him denounce the Communist Party, the Soviet Union, and especially the East German regime in terms no less violent than Adenauer himself. He thus delivered his working class following to political paralysis under the prevailing conditions and eventual acceptance of the West German *status quo*.

> in divided Germany Cold War hysteria had a violence unparalleled elsewhere, except perhaps in the USA under McCarthyism

In addition, the SPD leadership had lost nothing of the parliamentary cretinism it had displayed in its meek capitulation to the fascist seizure of power in 1933 and it repeatedly strangled any rank-and-file attempts to oppose the government with extra-parliamentary mobilisations. Its catastrophic predictions about the immediate economic future under the capitalist system carried increasingly less conviction with the progress of the 'economic miracle', leading to growing political demoralisation in the party's ranks. Despite the simultaneous collapse of the Communist Party, the SPD lost hundreds of thousands of members[3] and the influence of those right-wing leaders who were calling for a radical re-appraisal of the party's programme grew rapidly after Schumacher's death in 1952.

The new programme adopted by the SPD congress in Bad Godesberg in 1959 marked the capitulation of German social democracy to the *status quo*. The quasi-Marxist rhetoric of earlier programmes was abandoned in favour of a formal acceptance of the capitalist market economy, the rearmament of West Germany and its integration into the Western alliance, and the purging of any concept of class struggle from its official identity. The Marxist student organisation SDS was expelled soon after, along with its intellectual sympathisers. The SPD was to be known as a 'people's party' that had foresworn its working class origins, and many of its leaders preferred to liken it to the American Democrats rather than the fraternal parties in the Socialist International (Willy Brandt's first campaign for the Chancellorship in 1961 billed him as the 'German Kennedy').

> Willy Brandt's first campaign for the Chancellorship in 1961 billed him as the 'German Kennedy'

Insofar as the SPD continued to find its main social base among trade-unionised working people, its switch from 'Marxist' to populist reform rhetoric could not affect its objective character as the political representative of the working class, and its subjective perception as such by both its supporters and opponents. The real significance of this turn was underlined with the famous programmatic *Bundestag* speech on foreign policy by the SPD's parliamentary leader, ex-communist Herbert Wehner, in 1960, which was an explicit offer to the CDU of bipartisanship in West Germany's external relations, including those with the East. The '*Deutschland Plan*' for negotiated re-unification unveiled only a year earlier was quietly dropped. It was the final recognition by the SPD leadership that while international and German imperialism might be prepared to put up with a mildly reformist government in Bonn, imperialism considered any questioning of West Germany's place in the NATO alliance and the central European *status quo* as unacceptable. The determination to prove itself a 'reliable partner of our American friends' was the new cornerstone of the SPD leadership's bid for power, the first stage of which it consciously anticipated to be a 'Grand Coalition' with Christian Democracy. The strategy of the historic compromise is not, after all, an Italian invention...

International Features

The SPD in government

The plan seemed to work perfectly. By 1966, West Germany was confronted with its first serious economic recession, and the CDU — now without an absolute majority in parliament, and deserted by its liberal coalition partner over a budget crisis — was ready to allow social-democratic ministers to try their hands at a bit of neo-Keynesian demand management. For the ruling class this had the advantages of not only securing trade-union quiescence during the recession, but also of introducing some modernising impulses into the ministerial bureaucracy. The temporary divergence between the demands of powerful capitalist interests and the ideological concerns of the CDU/CSU became even more pronounced over the issue of *Ostpolitik*, when the right wing of Christian Democracy blocked the attempts of Foreign Minister and Vice-Chancellor Willy Brandt to bring Bonn's policy towards Eastern Europe and East Germany into line with the new international climate of developing *détente*. Previously this policy had consisted of strict non-recognition of the GDR and the breaking-off of diplomatic relations with any country recognising it (except the Soviet Union). The export-orientated industrialists feared losing out to foreign companies in the competition over the lucrative East European markets, but the CDU had become imprisoned by its own Cold War ideology and rhetoric. The outcome of the 1969 election — an SPD-FDP ('social-liberal') coalition headed by Chancellor Brandt — was therefore less than a disaster for the bourgeoisie.

The principal reasons for the break up of the 'Grand Coalition' in 1969, however, were to be found elsewhere. It had never been popular with the SPD's rank-and-file membership and was indeed only narrowly sanctioned by the 1967 party congress. A powerful wave of radicalisation was sweeping through the universities, colleges and schools, increasing pressure on social democracy to cut itself loose from the senior coalition partner and threatening to outflank it on the left. In September 1969, unofficial strikes erupted in the iron and steel industry, heralding growing restlessness in the working class. The trade unions demanded a bolder reformist course, and the recently legalised CP recruited heavily among students and young workers. To remain in the 'Grand Coalition' would have seriously threatened the SPD's unity and its traditional place in the West German political spectrum as *the* party of the reformist left.

the dominant issue of Brandt's Chancellorship was Ostpolitik, the treaties with Poland and East Germany earning him the Nobel Peace Prize

Brandt duly carried out a substantial turn to the left — in style and rhetoric, if not substance. 'Democratic socialism' found its way back into the speeches and resolutions, and the new government promised that the era of democracy was only just beginning. Renewed economic growth provided the means for a large-scale expansion of education, public services and welfare spending, and a number of progressive legal reforms were carried out. The dominant issue of Brandt's Chancellorship, however, was *Ostpolitik*, the treaties with Poland and especially East Germany earning him the Nobel Peace Prize and the support of a broad coalition of forces ranging from the Communist Party to modernising liberal reformers. When the Christian Democratic opposition chose this terrain to challenge him in 1972, the SPD won the biggest electoral victory in its history and with 45.8 per cent of the popular vote had become the largest single party in the Federal Republic for the first time.

The remainder of the 'social-liberal era' was slow agony and decline: the onset of the 'oil crisis' and economic stagnation

International Features

removed the financial room for manoeuvre for a further expansion of the welfare state. Pressure from the bourgeoisie (chiefly represented in the government by the liberal coalition partner) for austerity measures and a roll-back of trade-union power led to the replacement of Brandt in May 1974 by the tough-talking right-winger Helmut Schmidt under the pretext of the Guillaume spy affair. In the 1976 election the coalition held on to power by the skin of its teeth, the CDU only just falling short of an absolute majority of the vote. In 1980, the divisions in the Christian Democrat ranks over the controversial figure of Franz-Josef Strauss (the CDU/CSU's candidate for the chancellorship) once again saved the government from defeat, but it was generally seen as only a stay of execution. The FDP's defection last autumn came as no surprise after a long series of public splits over financial and economic policy,

No return to the 1950s

Superficially, the political landscape in West Germany today shows some similarities with the 'Adenauer Era' of the 1950s. A new Cold War between Washington and Moscow dominates international relations, and the Christian Democrats are firmly re-established in government after the worst electoral defeat for the SPD since 1961. Even the terms of political debate suggest a re-run of the 50s, with the CDU emphasising the close alliance with the US as the guarantee of the Federal Republic's security, and the SPD in an uneasy relationship with a peace movement within which the old ideas of a central European nuclear-free zone (Rapacki Plan) have again gained some currency. Certainly the CDU's election campaign this year was conciously geared towards the exploitation of the nostalgia for the good old years of the 'economic miracle', social peace and external security.

But there can be no going back. Adenauer's success of the 1950's was based on a unique set of circumstances that cannot be recreated. Instead of favourable conditions for an expansive boom fuelled by seemingly unlimited domestic and foreign demand for investment and consumer goods, Chancellor Kohl is confronted with the deepest crisis of the capitalist world economy for fifty years, the worst of which is clearly to come. Mass unemployment, falling living standards, and declining welfare provisions are, however, the exact opposite of what the social peace and consumerist depoliticisation of the post-war era were founded on. The years of *détente* and a new *Ostpolitik*, the recognition of the GDR and legalisation of the CP, have furthermore eroded the ability of the ruling class to rekindle the kind of anti-communist mass hysteria that paralysed the labour movement for so long. The disarray in the imperialist camp with the relative weakening of the US position and the intensification of inter-imperialist competition, as well as the disintegration of the former Stalinist monolith, have created new international uncertainties to undermine the foundations of the architecture of the European post-war *status quo*.

The Peace Movement, the Greens and the Organised Working Class

The Federal Republic is therefore now entering into quite unchartered territory. The most visible sign of this today is the peace movement and the election of 27 Greens to the *Bundestag*. The origins of the Greens go back to the student and youth revolt of the late 1960s. That first wave of radicalisation, ideologically inspired by its rediscovery of Marxism and a search for a re-kindling of the class-struggle traditions of the German workers' movement, spawned an array of (predominantly Maoist) 'revolutionary parties' of the early 70s and the revival of a social-democratic left in the shape of the *Jusos* (SPD Young Socialists). Both strategies foundered in their own naivety, working class passivity under the conditions of continued prosperity, and the resiliance of the reformist bureaucracy. The defeat of its initial perspectives did not, however, spell the end to the process of radicalisation. Throughout the 70s, and continuing into the 1980s, a very large section of the young generation continued to be politicised by the anti-imperialist, anti-nuclear, ecologist, and feminist movements, while at the same time alienated from social democracy by the course of the Schmidt government. Initially the expression of the growing anti-nuclear power and ecology movements, the Green and 'Alternative' lists finally made their break-through into the arena of parliamentary politics under the impetus of the peace movement.

It would be very wrong however, to equate the Greens with

International Features

the peace movement of which they are only a part, The Greens represent those sections of the peace movement that have already, at least temporarily, broken with the 'established parties': young first time voters with no traditional political loyalties, the remnants of the old far-left organisations, disillusioned social-democrats and liberals (mainly from professional and white-collar backgrounds). They have their strongholds in the big cities, especially those with large universities, in which an extensive network of 'alternative' social and cultural institutions has created a cohesive 'green/alternative' milieu. The 5.6 per cent of the national vote shows that this is not just a 'fringe phenomenon' of negligible significance: it rather reflects the mass defection of German youth from the established political and cultural values of West German society and as such represents a considerable subjective factor in the unfolding crisis.

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But the impact of the peace movement goes far deeper. All opinion polls confirm that a clear majority of the West German population rejects the deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles in the Federal Republic, including about a third of the CDU/CSU voters. Despite the attempts of the SDP and trade-union bureaucracies to sabotage the peace movement mobilisations from loyalty towards the cabinet of Chancellor Schmidt (who used to boast that it was he who had discovered the need for more European NATO missiles), tens of thousands of working-class activists participated in them, and two-thirds of all SPD district organisations have come out against the missiles. The new SPD leader Vogel's pledge in the March elections 'to do my utmost to make Cruise and Pershing unnecessary', made on huge election posters with the addendum 'in the German interest', are on obvious tribute to these sentiments.

The dynamic of the West German peace movement is to a large extent derived from the peculiarity of the Federal Republic's geo-political situation as the principal military base of the United States and NATO's frontline state in Europe. As

Green Party leader Petra Kelly

the inevitable battleground of even a limited military confrontation in the 'European theatre', Germany faces a holocaust of destruction even by the extensive use of merely advanced 'conventional' or 'tactical' nuclear weapons. This, of course, applies to both German states, and the widespread awareness of this fact, as well as the existence of a peace movement in East Germany, is leading to a growing realisation of a link between the peace issue and the national question. Unlike in Britain, it can hardly be pretended that Germany can somehow avoid the nuclear line of fire while both states remain, albeit 'non-nuclear', members of their respective alliances.

The German peace movement thus implies a fundamental challenge to the European *status quo*, that is clearly beyond a mere protest movement of the politically heterogeneous and socially marginal (in the strategic sense) Greens. The spontaneous sympathy of large sections of the organised working class for nuclear disarmament and for disengagement from the imperialist war drive spearheaded by the US, needs to be harnessed to the developing resistance to the austerity measures imposed by the new bourgeois government in a period of deepening social and economic crisis. It needs a perspective that points beyond capitalism and Stalinism and their murderous confrontation in which a divided Germany is inescapably caught up.

If the Greens succumb to the strong sectarian pressures from their ranks in their attitude to the SDP in the coming period, irreparable damage could be done. Such pressures are the result of the pronounced unevenness of the radicalisation process in West Germany over the last fifteen years, producing a broad layer of youthful activists with deep feelings of hostility towards what they see as 'bourgeois' social democracy fully integrated into the capitalist system. But social democracy is itself in crisis, torn between the conservative instincts of the bureaucratic party and union leaders and the demands from an increasingly restless rank-and-file for decisive action against unemployment, austerity, and the danger of war. The ideological battle now beginning to unfold within the workers' movement is the decisive battle in the long-term, infinitely more important than the shifting of a few electoral percentage points between the SPD and the Greens. It is a battle which the Greens — and the Reds both within and outside them — can only ignore at their peril.

References

1. See my article in *New Left Review* No.99, 1976. 'West Germany since the war', pp3-46, especially the postscript analysing the 1976 election result.
2. SPD membership 1947: 875,479. By 1954 it had shrunk to 585,479.

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International Features

MITTERRAND'S ROAD TO AUSTERITY

CHRIS BERTRAM

The historic victory of the French left in the polls in 1981 raised many hopes for socialists across Europe. Yet rising unemployment and inflation and setbacks in the municipal elections have proved a not very attractive political model, as Thatcher will no doubt explain in the forthcoming election in Britain. Chris Bertram records two years of the Mitterand government, and shows that the popular notion of 'socialist profligacy' having given way to 'realism' is entirely false.

The Mitterrand government has, in fact pursued a shamefaced austerity programme from the word go. It has given way to a political offensive by the employers' organisations and it has demobilised the working class. It has followed a pro-American foreign policy, and has left intact the Gaullist state apparatus at home and its imperial counterpart in Africa.

Abstentions

The municipal elections of March 1983 were an instructive barometer of the state of mind of the French working class. Despite a partial recovery in the second round of the election, the Socialist and Communist parties were hit by massive abstentions among their traditional electorate. An analysis of the results shows that, although very few left-wing voters deserted their parties for the right, many stayed at home. Conversely, the turnout in the well-to-do districts was higher than in the municipal elections of 1977. In Lille, where Prime Minister Mauroy is Mayor, the turnout was 80 per cent in the traditionally right wing northern districts but only 62 per cent in the leftist southern part of the town.[1]

Also significant was the comparatively high vote for the far left, with the combined vote of the slates put forward by the Revolutionary Communist League (French Section of the Fourth International) and Lutte Ouvriere on the one hand, and the Parti Communiste Internationaliste on the other, coming to just under 5 per cent.[2]

It might have been expected that the ruling coalition would conclude from these results that it should pursue economic policies in favour of the working class. In fact the austerity package introduced in the wake of the latest devaluation of the franc is of Tebbitt-like severity. Electricity, gas and telephone bills are up by 8 per cent, along with rail fares. Alcohol and tobacco will be dearer and tourists are restricted to spending 2000 francs abroad. Probably the most extreme measure is the compulsory loan to the government which will add about 10 per cent to most tax bills for that particular month. In the name of monetary stability the French working class is being asked to tighten its belt.

The measures have been coupled with a cabinet reshuffle which reduces its size from thirty-four to fifteen. Perhaps the most significant victim of the changes was the 'CERES' leader Chevenement. Widely described in the British press as 'the French Benn' Chevenement is in fact rather tame. A strong defender of the independent nuclear deterrent, he argued for an alternative strategy involving departure from the European Monetary System, import controls and more state intervention in industry. No great opponent of austerity, Chevenement was the first minister to leap to Finance Minister Delors' defence when a 'pause' was announced in the programme of reforms in December 1981. The Communist Party remains firmly locked into the government, with *l'Humanite* headlining the new package as '10 Government Measures'.

Austerity policies

Despite the attempt to portray the impasse of March 1983 as the result of the grim workings of economic inevitability, the measures adopted represent both a deepening of already existing policies and a capitulation to a political offensive led by the French employers' organisation, the CNPF. Even before December 1981, when the first 'pause' was announced, the administration was obsessed with restoring business confidence. Central to this was a policy of wage and price restraint which limited wages rather more than prices. The measures introduced on 11 June 1982, while envisaging a total wage freeze, allowed the prices of some fresh foods, petrol and steel to rise. This, together with very ineffective means for enforcing price control, meant that the policy probably led to a 4 per cent drop in purchasing power.[3]

The political offensive of the ruling class has taken two main forms. The parties of the Right have waged an anti-government propaganda campaign. Gaullist leader Chirac has endorsed Friedmanite economic theories. But the comparative discredit which still hangs over these people, coupled with the poor level of organisation of at least the non-Gaullist Right, means that they are less than perfect instruments for an assault on the government. The CNPF, on the other hand, puts itself across as the impartial voice of business. As their vice-President, Guy Brana, said: 'Our policies are just common sense. They are not the ideas of the Right or the Left, just policies which favour industry'.[4] Needless to say, these policies are ones which attack the working class, with the CNPF demanding that 5 per cent of purchasing power 'distributed in excess' be taken back by the government[5] at the same time as calling for the removal of wealth tax levies on capital investment.[6]

One of the great ironies of the current situation is that it has been indirectly precipitated by Mitterrand's enthusiasm for NATO. A firm believer in the need to counter the Soviet threat through the deployment of Cruise missiles, Mitterrand backed Helmut Kohl on this particular issue in the West German parliament during the general election campaign. The Christian Democrat victory caused speculators to buy Deutchsmarks and sell Francs, for a time jeopardising the future of the European Monetary System. It was only by threatening Kohl with protectionist measures and withdrawal from the EMS that Delors was able to force Bonn, which has most to lose from the collapse of the EMS, to bear most of the cost of currency realignment. The very institutions necessary if the European bourgeoisies are to compete successfully with the Americans thus mask real conflicts among themselves.

Mitterrand has been, along with Thatcher, one of the most hawkish of the European leaders. Despite French insistence on formal independence from the military structures of NATO, there is no doubt that the French 'force de frappe' is aimed at Moscow rather than Washington. Not only does Mitterrand support the deployment of Cruise, he has also given the go-ahead for the modernisation of France's own tactical arsenal. The new Hades missile has a range of 400km, enabling it to reach East Germany from within French territory. A decision on the deployment of the French neutron bomb is expected shortly, and Mitterrand has told journalists that, 'it is out of the question that France will withdraw a single one of its missiles'.[7]

International Features

Mitterrand points the wrong way for French workers

Of course, as Reagan fulminates against the 'empire of evil', it may well be that the French ruling class will, together with its European partners, evolve an independent strategy from the Americans.

Foreign policy

Many on the left have been misled by Mitterrand's policy towards Central America, which has involved recognition of the Salvadorean FDR. But it would be wrong to see the endorsement of a 'third way' between Washington and Havana as more than a recognition that imperialism must find a political solution to the problems of the region. Since the USA is principally a competitor rather than an ally in the area, Mitterrand hopes to benefit from Reagan's discomfiture.

Far more representative of France's policy in the Third World is its presence in Africa. Mitterrand's term of office has not, so far, seen the kind of spectacular operation Giscard carried out in Chad and Zaire. What made these interventions possible however was the massive and permanent French military infrastructure that exists across the continent. France's direct military presence was down to about 6,700 troops in six countries, with advisors in a further twelve states in 1981. Through a series of defence and military agreements, negotiated in 1960 and 1961, France retains the basis for rapid intervention by special forces, including two divisions and one armoured demi-brigade. France and Belguim's ex-colonies are heavily dependent on France as a weapons supplier: France supplies 50 per cent of the weapons used by its former possessions and 68 per cent of those to former Belgian colonies. This compares with a figure of 21 per cent for the arms supplied to former British colonies by Britain. In addition 2000 African soldiers are trained every year in the French metropolis. France's links in Africa are part of a global military communications system that is second only to that of the USA in its geographical reach.[8] None of this has been dismantled under Mitterrand and Defence Minister Charles Hernu has gone so far as to justify in advance future interventions in the name of protecting French nationals.

France's militarist policies have had particularly damaging consequences for youth. One of the Left's main election promises was the reduction in military service from 12 to 6 months. This has now been shelved. For some 10,000 'volunteers' it has in fact been extended to between 16 months and three years.[9]

The maintenance of France's repressive apparatus overseas has been coupled with a strengthening of the police at home. At first, Mitterrand's Justice Minister, Robert Badinter, carried through some extremely progressive measures. An amnesty was declared for many prisoners, the death penalty was abolished and De Gaulle's notorious State Security Court was disbanded. Since then the movement towards greater liberties has gone into reverse. A government commission has recommended legalising certain police practices 'all the better to control them', such as phone-tapping. It is planned to take on an extra 10,000 police and to organise a further 1300 into 127 'light intervention teams'. All this follows in the wake of anti-semitic murders by the extreme Right, but the resources of the strong state can also be used against the workers' movement. The refusal of Interior Minister Gaston Deffere to clean out the upper ranks of the police force further underlines the continuity of the state apparatus from Giscard to Mitterrand.

Renault strike

The politics of austerity have not gone unopposed by the working class. In particular, workers in the car industry have resisted attacks on their living standards. Mauroy wanted to use the nationalised firm of Renault to establish a pay norm of 8 per cent. The extreme combativity of the Renault workers resulted first in the abandonment of a productivity clause by management and ultimately in the winning of an agreement worth about 10 per cent. This was a real victory won under very difficult conditions. In particular the immigrant strike leaders were subjected to victimisation and racist abuse. Prime Minister Mauroy suggested that the real cause of the strikes was Khomeiniite agitation among the predominantly Arab workforce. The Renault workers, having broken through the pay guidelines, will set a standard for other groups of workers.

The ability of mass mobilisation to win concessions from the government has also been illustrated over the issue of abortion. Despite the fact that the Left had long campaigned for the cost of abortion to be met by Social Security, the government at first succumbed to rightist and clerical pressures. In summer 1982 Pierre Beregovoy, the Minister for Social Affairs, spoke of the need to respect the feelings of the religious. It was necessary to amass tens of thousands of signatures for a petition and to call a demonstration of 15,000 people to force the government to implement the reform last December.

Union movement

Whether the French working class will be successful in halting

International Features

the government's attacks on its living standards depends, in part, on the response of its trade union leaderships. The omens are not good. The Communist-led CGT is the largest trade union confederation. It has a long record as an instrument for containing social upheaval, notably in May-June 1968. One of the reasons Mitterrand has a governmental alliance with the Communist Party, whose votes he does not need in parliament, is to ensure that the CGT contains rather than organises working class resistance. The CGT described the March 1983 austerity package as indispensable to tackle inflation, to reduce the foreign trade debt and to finance industrial development.[10] Although CGT boss Krasucki later voiced some criticism, it was very subdued in tone. There is discontent inside the CGT, and this has mainly focused against the leadership's craven support for the suppression of Solidarnosc. The alliance between rank and file militants and a Socialist Party anxious to build its influence in the CGT was damaged when Krasucki warned the Socialist leadership that its criticisms of the CGT line in Poland might undermine his ability to hold back struggles in France.

> the Communist-led CGT has a long record of containing social upheavals, notably in May 1968

The second largest union confederation, the CFDT, has been more open in its criticisms of the new measures, describing them as 'incomprehensible', although Edmond Maire, the CFDT leader, was until recently calling for more austerity measures. As one of Michel Rocard's closest associates, Maire is on the right of the Socialist Party. The other main confederation, Force Ouvriere, has a long history of right wing leadership and low combativity.

Although the recent car strikes indicate that French workers are prepared to go beyond their leaders in opposition to the government, it is unlikely that a national fightback would primarily take the form of industrial militancy. This is partly because of the low level of unionisation in France and the strong hold of the bureaucratic leaderships, but also the traditional inter-union divisions weaken the working class. A shop stewards' movement of the British type would be difficult to organise, if only because factory delegates are elected on a plant-wide basis.

The Left

It is therefore in the form of a political response to Mitterrand that opposition must come, if it is to come at all. There seem to be three potential sources for this: the revolutionary left, the Communist Party and the left-wing of the Socialist Party.

While broad mobilisations by the working class against the SP and CP leaderships have taken place, this has not yet been translated into a growth of the revolutionary left. Their organisations remain quite strong, but it cannot be said that the working class is ready to leave its traditional organisations in large numbers to join these organisations. The vote for revolutionary candidates in the local elections was impressive, but it seems that many more deserted the traditional parties only to abstain. Nevertheless, the revolutionary organisations, particularly the Revolutionary Communist League, are playing a vital role in the process of political clarification that is necessary if a genuine alternative to Social Democracy and Stalinism is to be built in France.

The Communist Party is unlikely to break with the government. It is locked into a parliamentarist perspective within which it has no prospect of power except in alliance with the Socialist Party. Were it, maybe under pressure from its base, to organise opposition to the regime, that opposition would undoubtedly have a profoundly sectarian character. Whereas it is essential to unite the working class in opposition to the austerity measures of Mauroy - Delors, the CP would stress itself as the alternative, thus excluding many rank and file militants of the Socialist Party, who perceive all too clearly the bureaucratic nature of the CP.

The force normally seen as the 'left' within the Socialist Party is CERES. Violently nationalistic and isolated from the working class, a current that supported every attack on the working class up to March 1983 is unlikely to become a focus for opposition now. But if we have to reject the possibility of existing currents within the Socialist Party forming the basis of an effective opposition, we cannot ignore the many class conscious militants who support the party. Just as the policies of the Wilson - Callaghan government in Britain helped to crystallise a layer of socialists in the Labour Party, it is certain that many SP activists will want to organise against the leadership of their party.

The French left is at a decisive moment in its history. Either the French working class will be led to demoralisation and ruin, or it will build an alternative to the leaderships of Mitterrand and Marchais. It is to this task that the rank and file of the Communist and Socialist Parties must turn their attention.

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British Features

CND'S CRUCIAL YEAR

TONY SOUTHALL

The continuing success of CND and the Greenham Common women in capturing the public imagination should not blind us to the crucial inadequacies in the peace movement's strategy. Tony Southall argues that the Campaign must turn to the labour movement to find the decisive forces for its success.

In the past three or four years there has emerged throughout the states of the western alliance the single most significant international mass movement of modern history. It is undoubtably heterogeneous, including opportunist Democratic Party politicians in the USA, pacifists, church people of all denominations, people with no other political affiliations, and socialists, both reformist and revolutionary. It lacks any single theme or demand. There are those who merely call for a freeze on the development of further weapons or who are opposed to particular new ones, like Cruise or Trident; others who insist the main aim must be to build a movement crossing Cold War frontiers, and those who fight for unconditional nuclear disarmament by their own imperialism. Between them there is no common political analysis. Yet the entire movement is united in a shared convition that in the 1980s the threat of nuclear war is graver than ever, necessitating an urgent political response.

The movement has not yet won any decisive victory through a real reversal of the capitalists' war drive. But it has forced the issue to the fore and won certain partial gains, and it also exercises a continuous restraint on further escalation of the arms race. Important changes have taken place in the way governments present their arguments. Whereas two years ago Reagan and his team were full of the Soviet threat, George Bush's latest trip to Europe in 1983 had the central objective of defusing the influence of the peace movement by proving the West's supposed seriousness about negotiations.

CND has assembled the most significant and sizeable mass single-issue campaign since the suffragettes

In 1983 it is no exaggeration to say that defeating this movement is critical for imperialism internationally in order to gain a free hand to impose real defeats on the working class and its allies. Conversely a substantial victory for the movement, such as the election in Britain of a Labour government committed to even a limited degree of unilateral disarmament, would open the road for pushing back the war drive throughout Europe. It would also make much more difficult military interventions aimed at combating socialist revolutions in Central America or elsewhere.

It is clear that in the past three years in CND in Britain has assembled the most significant and sizeable mass single-issue campaign since the Suffragettes. Its uninterrupted growth and influence was spectacularly underlined in June last year, when Falklands-induced chauvinism, especially in England, could not stop us assembling 250,000 people to protest at Ronald Reagan's visit. Every week tens of thousands of activists in virtually every town and village devote an enormous amount of time and energy to the movement that far outweighs that attracted by older, established political movements. It makes a thoroughly heterogenous, even at times chaotic movement, that nonetheless maintains as its basis opposition to the arms race.

The first wave of CND

It is valuable to compare CND's second wave with the experiences of 25 years ago. In the late 1950s our movement was isolated internationally. Only in Japan was there anything comparable. Today we stand alongside similar movements in virtually every western state — some of them able to assemble forces even bigger than ours. The series of mass demonstrations in Europe — in Bonn, Amsterdam, Rome, Paris, London, — in autumn 1981 provided the clearest picture of this to date. It also resulted directly in one of our partial victories. Reagan had previously refused to open any East/West negotiations until the supposed imbalance in nuclear weapons had been righted through the deployment of Cruise and Pershing in Western Europe. The strength and influence of the European peace movement forced him to open the Geneva talks on intermediate missile control in January 1982. More recently it has caused his closest European allies to distance themselves from the zero option. And Reagan's own recent moves away from the zero option constituted an obvious attempt to reduce the scale and influence of our demonstration.

We should also note the extraordinary significance of the 'freeze movement' in the USA which assembled a demonstration of more than a million in New York in summer 1982. It is true that a large part of the impetus for this was provided by Democratic politicians seeking to make political capital before the mid-term elections. But neither the demonstration nor the massive vote for the pro-freeze candidates in these elections could be reduced to this. Both were genuine reactions among wide sections of the US population against their government's escalation of the arms race. The mass of people involved, as distinct from their leadership, were our fellow peace campaigners. The existence of these allies results from the entirely different political context in which we operate in the 1980s. The present world recession has challenged the myth that capitalism can guarantee an uninterupted rise in living standards. This has promoted a scepticism about government's willingness and even ability to come clean on their election pledges, including on disarmament talks, which has fuelled the peace movement.

British Features

Photo: GM COOKSON

The success of colonial and anti-capitalist revolutions in the 1960s and 1970s has also dented imperialism's myth of invulnerability. The US anti-war movement played a vital role in the victory of the NLF in South Vietnam and the memory of this continues to exercise a constraint on American governments. It helps to explain why even Reagan proceeds so gingerly in his present attempts to crush the Central American revolution. At least part of the reason for the latest US arms drive and increased anti-Soviet hysteria was to make it easier to intervene militarily against such revolutions. But quite the reverse has happened. the existence of a mass anti-war movement puts a brake on further adventures because Reagan and his allies fear they might develop this movement's political consciousness. To put it simply they fear that anti-nuclear feeling may become explicitly anti-imperialist.

Our movement has had another important effect. The imperialists hoped that the nuclear weapons drive would restrain the Soviet rulers from providing support for revolutions in the Third World. Certainly the Stalinist bureaucracy has continued to dole out aid with its traditional eye-dropper. But the emergence of a mass movement of unprecedented size in the West means that there is less excuse for the Andropov team to buckle to this blackmail.

A third feature that distinguishes our movement in the 1980s is its relatively greater political maturity and experience. There are many people in CND for whom this is their first experience of organised politics, but the campaign both nationally and locally has benefited from the participation of veterans of other attempts to build broad campaigns in the last twenty years: the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign and the Anti-Nazi League are the most prominent examples. CND has reinvolved many people who have been through such movements, many of them members of far left organisations. It is perhaps this political maturity that has enabled CND to steer clear of the kind of bitter factionalism that split the movement in the early 1960s between direct action and advocates of pressure group politics. No political party remains untouched by the anti-nuclear movement. There is every indication that it will be a crucial factor in the forthcoming General Election. Thatcher's appointment of Heseltine, one of the few personalities in the Tory cabinet, to the Defence Ministry at the beginning of the year clearly indicated her assessment of the government's weakest link.

CND and the labour movement

It is in the labour movement that CND has had its most profound effect. During recent years union after union has passed conference support for unilateralism. Some of the most convincing victories have been achieved in unions not affiliated to the Labour Party like NALGO, NATFHE and the NUT (although the position of the latter has just been reversed by a small majority). It is also noticeable that many unions with right wing leaderships, for instance USDAW and COHSE, have taken an anti-Bomb line. There is every possibility that the biggest union still not supporting CND, the AUEW, may join the ranks. The support for the Greenham Women's call for a women's disarmament day on 24 May from the organised union movement is testimony both to the popular support for the Greenham Peace Camp, as well as to the extent to which action against the missiles has become a legitimate issue inside the unions.

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it is utopian to believe that appeals to conscience can lead armament workers to terminate their work

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The swing in the unions reflects CND's countrywide influence. It was above all the large mass demonstrations between 1980 and 1982 that laid the ground for the overwhelming votes for disarmament at last year's TUC and Labour conferences. But it is necessary to sound a note of caution here. The unions' support for CND is by no means reflected in a day to day commitment to its aims. The publication of pro-disarmament articles in little read union journals is not sufficient. CND activists in the unions should be highly concious of the fact that union policy rests on a knife edge until members are active in their support for CND's aims and initiatives.

It is therefore disturbing that CND nationally puts so little store on its work inside the unions, as evidenced by the fact that merely one out of CND's 26 fulltime workers is allocated to work on the unions (there is no one allocated to the Labour Party!) and that so few articles in CND's journal *Sanity* so far this this year have been on the Labour Party or the unions. It is equally disturbing that CND's national trade union conference on 29 January 1983 had an attendance of only 200 (compared to more than 300 at Labour CND 's similar event three weeks

British Features

later). Furthermore the conference was far from representative. Worst of all it did nothing to carry out CND conference's commitment to the 6 August Day of Action. Nor was there much discussion about how to build CND's influence at the base of the unions. All experience shows that workplace or occupational branches can attract new members into activity who are not necessarily prepared to get involved in other aspects of union activity. The CND group organised in the Glasgow district NALGO branch for example gets a consistently higher attendance at its meetings than the union branch itself. Factory branches have been built successfully in the Glasgow area at Rolls Royce and Yarrow Shipbuilders, two plants that are heavily dependent on military contracts. A conference held last year jointly by Paisley CND with the Trades Council drew a significant rank and file attendance from local workplaces and presented a good example of the kind of grassroots activity that can turn CND's current paper support into practical action.

Rolls Royce and Yarrow raise a further issue of critical importance for our trade union work. Certain enterprises are heavily, even exclusively, dependent on military contracts. In some cases, for instance at the Faslane submarine depot, large numbers of civilian workers are directly employed by the military. Two things are important here. First, every encouragement and assistance needs to be given by CND to workers to produce concrete plans for alternative productive employment for their industries as happened at Lucas Aerospace. Such plans can have a powerful propaganda value among the workers involved. But secondly it is pure utopianism to believe that appeals to the conscience or good sense of armaments workers can lead them, acting alone, to terminate their work — a position that has been put forward by some peace camp members. Stuart MacLennan, Secretary of the CPSA branch that organises many of the Faslane workers explained this point at the Campaign Against Trident trade union conference last year. No way, he said, will we win the majority of these workers to opposition to Trident until we can show that there is a viable possibility of alternative employment. And that battle will not be won by armaments workers alone. Only when their fellow trade unionists are sufficiently convinced of the correctness of CND's case, will they get the support needed to oppose the government's military preparations. To that extent every initiative must become the property of trade unionists throughout the movement through vigorous publicity campaign.

The tasks outlined above are onerous and time-consuming. But they represent the only way to consolidate CND's support in the unions, and to win to our side the strongest of our potential allies — the only force capable of mounting the direct action against the Bomb which can win.

The Labour Party

In the Labour Party CND's activities have had a profound political effect. The climax came in October 1982 when 72 per cent of the conference vote was cast in favour of Composite Resolution 51. Its main demands were: no cruise, no Trident; no British nuclear weapons anywhere; no nuclear bases on British territory or in British waters. Just as our support in the unions is unstable, so too it is in the Labour Party. Whilst the vast majority of constituency parties vote consistently for unilateralism, their organised links with CND are tenuous. There were for instance only a handful of party banners on the Easter March in Glasgow and only a quarter of Scotland's CLPs are affilated to CND. Above all the party leadership at parliamentary and executive levels is firmly in the hands of opponents of CND.

The new Campaigns Document of the Labour Party is supposed torlirm the basis of the manifesto. It can still be changed and certain items prioritised and others downplayed. Its section on disarmament marks a clear step backwards from Composite 51. Nobody is any doubt why this has happened. It is the product of discussions involving a parliamentary leadership of which only 5 out of 18 are unilateralists and a national executive (NEC) also opposed by a majority to this policy.

The new document turns unilateralism on its head through its repetitious assertions that this is inseparable from multilateral disarmament. True, Composite 51 recognises that 'unilateral disarmament by Britain will be a vital initiative leading towards multilateral disarmament worldwide.' That is the position of CND too. It is a demand for unconditional unambiguous steps which it is hoped will 'break the logjam' internationally. It is justified by the fact that not once in 38 years of the nuclear arms race have international negotiations led to any significant halt in its escalation. But that is in marked contrast to the new document's insistence that 'unilateralism and mutlilateralism must go hand in hand' and its let-out clause that, 'all this cannot be done at once, and the way we do it must be designed to assist in the task to which we are committed — securing nuclear disarmament agreements with other countries and maintaining co-operation with our allies.' Thus the ground of the document is right away shifted to make unilateral initiatives relate to and ultimately depend on the success of the agreements: 'We want to see the Geneva talks on intermediate weapons succeed'. But what if they don't?

On the critical question of the British 'independent' deterrent, the document is plain. It will not accept Trident (something the party holds in common with the Alliance). It will however maintain Polaris — in complete contradiction to Composite 51 — and use this as a bargaining chip to get to Geneva. And suppose we can't bargain it away?

Then again on the bases: 'Labour's commitment is to establish a non-nuclear defence policy ... this means the rejection of any fresh nuclear weapons or bases ... and the removal of all existing bases and weapons ...'. But when is this to happen? It is no accident that this clause is followed by the catch-all let-out clause quoted above.

there is an increasing tendency among Labour Party members who are unilateralists to play down differences with the Campaigns Document

The document has been hailed as a masterly reconciliation of left and right in the party. In the wake of Darlington it is supposed to have created the necessary unity around which Labour can win the next election. Not untypically, *The Economist*, saw things a good deal more clearly in its four page special on 2 April, *Labour and the Bomb*. It seized on the document's continual qualifications about timing. It concluded that the let-out clause could enable Healey and his allies to drive a coach and horses through any unilateralist commitments. In this context it is critical that CND supporters in the Labour Party go all out to re-assert that Resolution 51 in its entirety be Labour's policy for this election. Labour CND has already issued a call that this be done: in particular through local parties insisting that their candidates stand clearly on this.

Campaigning for Composite 51

There is unfortunately an increasingly influential tendency amongst party activists who identify themselves as unilateralists, including members of Labour CND, to play down the differences with the new document. They argue that what is important is to win the election, and any further debate is seen as destructive. Some people argue that if we can only get a Labour government elected, committed to no cruise or Trident, then a whole new state of play will be created. We shall be poised to take much bigger steps nationally and internationally as a result.

Two potentially disastrous errors are made here. First, it is quite wrong to say that playing down these differences is the key to winning the election. It is already rumoured that Healey,

British Features

Hattersley and Shore are taking advantage of this mood to argue that in the final manifesto disarmament should feature low down the list of priorities, subordinated to plans for economic revival. This is not only a sell-out on Composite 51. It is a sell-out on Labour's chances of winning the election. Only a programme that puts **Jobs Not Bombs** up front rather than a new style Social Contract can win. Secondly, for CND supporters in the party to accept this line would have politically disastrous results on the mass of CND activists. We did not win Composite 51 because we argued endlessly in party and union branch meetings, although that was part of it. We won it essentially because CND's massive growth over the past three years has brought the issue to the forefront.

Surveys showed that out of the quarter of a million that marched in London last June only a minority saw themselves as Labour supporters and still less were active in the party. It's easy to surmise the reason for this. Labour in government has never kept a single one of its limited commitments to peace and disarmament. And these people see that the maneouvring around Composite 51 is designed to make sure it fails once again. In this situation any hesitancy by Labour CND supporters about demanding the implementation of Composite 51 will alienate us from the majority of the movement.

those of us in 1961 who got arrested numerous times won a lot of front page space and paid a lot of fines, but we achieved precisely nothing

It is worth drawing some lessons from a previous experience of CND. In 1960 the Scarborough Labour Party conference voted, albeit narrowly, for unilateralism. The Right, led by the party leader Gaitskell and organised by Bill Rodgers (then Secretary of the Campaign for Democratic Socialism), campaigned and manoeuvred throughout the party to reverse the decision. Meantime the unilateralists in the party did nothing, and then under the leadership of Michael Foot, rallied to the flag of the 'Crossman-Padley compromise' cooked up by Dick Crossman and the shopworkers' leader, Walter Padley. This called for abandoning Britain's independent deterrent and negotiations towards a European nuclear free zone. This compromise was the means by which anti-unilateralist trade union leaders were able to shift their positions away from the clear CND policy that was eventually overturned at the 1961 conference.

Some 22 years later CND supporters are faced with not dissimilar manoeuvres and choices. On the one hand we have the Labour leadership backpedalling — by a strange quirk of history this time Michael Foot is able to play the compromiser from centre stage. On the other hand CND activists are less and less inclined to place any faith in the Labour Party as the possible means of achieving our ends. In 1961 Crossman and Padley led activists who had always been sceptical about the party, to turn their backs on it. Thousands of us who had taken out cards in the wake of Scarborough tore them up and threw ourselves into building what we mistakenly believed was a mass alternative to political action — the mass sit-downs of the Committee of 100.

The similarities with the past are uncanny. CND activists are without doubt increasingly drawn to direct action as the way to defeat the missiles. Joan Ruddock and Bruce Kent's statements suggest that the leadership is bending that way too. Foot's fudging of the issue will drive more in that direction. But we should remember the lessons of 1961. Those of us who got ourselves arrested numerous times through civil disobedience, won a lot of front page space and paid a lot of fines but we achieved precisely nothing. By the end of that year our energy and enthusiasms were dissipated, our movement was defeated — in the party and on the streets.

That is why Labour CND supporters should campaign for Composite 51. It is certain there will be increasing numbers of actions of civil disobedience by campaigners over the coming period — especially if cruise missiles do arrive. The best of these will win us important publicity and be so big that no one will be arrested. But the argument that non-violent direct action does not provide a *political strategy* for winning disarmament will not carry any weight unless we can develop an effective fight in the Labour Party.

our general election campaign should call on voters to assess candidates according to unilateralism

In its statement calling for action on Composite 51, Labour CND calls for continuing the fight in the party for a commitment to get out of NATO. It explains that much confusion results from a policy of non-nuclear defence while remaining in the NATO Alliance. The Right understands this and loses no opportunity to stress that everything must be done 'in collaboration with our allies'.

CND and the General Election

In the last issue of *International* Helen John tried to defend the idea of independent peace candidates in the next election. She saw this directed at the Right of the Labour Party. This is as misguided as attempting to commit CND to support for the Labour Party — both are divisive. Our movement will best advance in size and influence by conducting its own independent campaign that seeks, while not standing anyone ourselves, to make sure that every candidate has to confront the nuclear issue. A good example of this came during the Hillhead by-election last year when we mobilised as many supporters as any

British Features

of the main political parties. Our main tactical mistake was to organise around the slogan **Vote for Peace** which enabled every candidate to say they stood for peace — it is just that in some cases they saw the best way to get peace as by having cruise and Trident!

Our general election campaign should start from unilateralism, calling on voters to assess all candidates according to our programme. As a lead up to the election and conference the National Council have endorsed the idea of a Peace Canvass. This suggestion has certain virtues as long as it is not seen simply as getting a propaganda victory. It could be used most productively as a means of recruiting people into active support and membership of CND.

CND and the Left

The international movement against nuclear weapons poses the most important threat to the worldwide plans of imperialism. Its success or failure is critical for the stability of that system. Unfortunately this is far from being understood by the majority of British Marxists. The British Communist Party whose majority wing adheres to the explicitly reformist multi-class line of the Broad Democratic Alliance — has a leading influence in CND. Its politics lead it not just to defend CND as a broad single issue campaign but also to accommodate to all the most backward prejudices of its allies. Little real backing comes from the CP for initiatives to strengthen our work in the unions and the Labour Party.

Marxism does not impress most CND activists whose main perception of it is the negative one from *Socialist Worker* and *Militant*

There may be future developments which will pose a bigger problem from the CP. If some of the ideas in *Marxism Today* take the Broad Democratic Alliance against the Tories onto the party political level then we might in CND be asked to downplay some of our slogans in order to gain a 'broad unity' with the SDP.

The Socialist Workers Party, the biggest of the British far left organisations have analyses of the world (that the worker's states are state capitalist), of the present political situation (that the working class have been defeated), and the Labour Party (that it's irrelevant), that are all wrong. This leads it to view CND exclusively through its chosen means of preserving the 'heritage of the class' in a downturn — namely to build the SWP. While *Socialist Worker* generally gives good coverage to the escalation of the arms race and CND's protest actions, it does not build the movement — only those segments of it that show some promise of joining its own party. This opportunist and often sectarian attitude unfortunately tend to discredit Marxism. The SWP's hostile attitude to the independent women's actions that have been such a positive feature of the last year have been negative and disruptive.

The *Militant* Tendency is unfortunately the most widely known standard bearer of Marxism in the party. Its attitude is a microcosm of its attitude to other single issue mass movement over the last twenty years: we agree with your aims; these will not be achieved this side of socialism; that will only be achieved through the election of a Labour government committed to nationalise the 200 monopolies; therefore you are wasting your time trying to build anything outside the party — come and join us! The circle is squared. Take it or leave it and above all don't expect us to do anything to build CND.

This attidue is particularly disastrous because it comes from the tendency having the leadership of the Labour Party Young Socialists. It misses the biggest opportunity for years to build the LPYS by throwing its energies into Youth CND. To do that would in turn build its influence and weight inside the party.

Right now Marxism does not impress the majority of CND activists whose main perception of it is the negative one induced by the SWP and the Militant. Just as it is critical for CND supporters in the party to organise the fight to implement our policies, it is also essential that Marxists inside and outside the party do everything possible to present an alternative line of action that is firmly located in the traditions of Marxism.

Such a policy is not impossible to envisage. It needs to start from a recognition of which social forces can actually stop the missiles. For example there is no question that the Greenham women have made a tremendous contribution to the development and expansion of the peace movement. Their activities have progressed from the Peace Camps to increasingly mass actions, and now to the appeal for a women's day of action for disarmament on 24 May. This latter has been aimed to a large degree at the labour movement, including an appeal for industrial action on the day. The TUC and Labour Party are both committed to a Day of Action against the missiles on 6 August, Hiroshima Day. The Bakers Union has suggested a one-minute stoppage on that day, which while however tokenistic, nevertheless begins to point in the direction of mass collective labour movement action.

But recent statements by CND leaders point the movement in the opposite direction. Speaking in Glasgow before the Easter Sunday demonstration, CND chairperson Joan Ruddock, claimed CND now had a task force of between 3000 and 5000 prepared to, 'carry out uncomfortable and unpleasant tasks and prepared to run the risk of being arrested and going to prison'. In the *Guardian* the same day Martin Walker wrote up an interview with Bruce Kent under the title 'Preparing for the Politics of the Long Haul'. Its central theme was that despite CND's big public impact, preparations to deploy cruise and Trident were well in hand and official resolve strengthening: 'We have to be ready for a long haul, a very long haul indeed. For us to stake everything on the campaign, on the next election, on this year or the next, on cruise or on Trident would be a big mistake.' Preparations, he said, need to be made for direct action against cruise's likely deployment that were firmly based on a strong and stable disarmament movement that is 'cold eyed, implacable, determined and very, very brave'.

some CND leaders' statements suggest they have opted for putting non-violent direct action above labour movement action

Such statements suggest that CND's leadership have opted to put non-violent direct action at the centre stage, while relegating work in the labour movement to the wings. Whilst is is true that non-violent direct action was overwhelmingly supported as a central tactic at last year's CND conference, it also endorsed the priority of work directed at the labour movement, especially the Hiroshima Day action. And this emphasis on the one tactic over the other undermines the very successes which the Greenham women have had in encouraging labour movement action as the extension of their protest.

But such tendencies are not irreversible. CND is a very open and democratic organisation and the mass support for disarmament is still growing. The task for socialists in the coming months is a vital one: to campaign for a Labour government committed to unilateral disarmament as expressed in Composite 51; and to build every mass action of the peace movement — 24 May, Hiroshima Day, the October march and so on — as steps to consolidate growing support within the labour movement for concerted industrial action as the only way to stop the missiles and achieve disarmament.

TONY SOUTHALL was a full-time worker for the Committee of 100 in 1961. He is now secretary of Scottish Labour CND.

Culture

FRAGRANCE OF THE GUAVA

GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

His epic novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* established Gabriel Garcia Marquez as the best-known living Latin American novelist outside that continent and with his other work won him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. A friend of Fidel Castro, he has been a consistent supporter of revolution in Latin America, most recently of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. In this extract from a new book of interviews* and discussions with his fellow-novelist and compatriot Colombian, Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, he talks of the meaning of his work and the basis of his politics.

What did you mean to do when you sat down to write One Hundred Years of Solitude?

I wanted to find a way of expressing in literature all the experiences which had influenced me in some way as a child.

Many critics see a parable or an allegory of the history of the human race in the book.

No, all I wanted to do was to leave a literary picture of the world of my childhood which, as you know, was spent in a large, very sad house with a sister who ate earth, a grandmother who prophesied the future, and countless relatives of the same name who never made much distinction between happiness and insanity.

Yet the critics always find much more complex intentions.

These must be quite unintentional if they exist at all. What happens is that, unlike novelists, critics find what they want to in books, not what is there.

You always talk about critics very ironically. Why do you dislike them so much?

Because most critics don't realise that a novel like *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a bit of a joke, full of signals to close friends; and so with some pre-ordained right to pontificate, they take on the responsibility of decoding the book and risk making terrible fools of themselves.

I remember, for instance, one critic who thought he'd discovered an important key to the novel when he noticed that one of the characters — Gabriel — takes the complete works of Rabelais to Paris. Having made this discovery he then attributed all the exaggerations and Pantegruelesque excesses to this literary influence. I actually threw in that illusion to Rabelais as a banana skin, and many critics have slipped up on it.

Leaving aside what the critics say, I do think the novel is much more that a simple poetic revival of your childhood memories. Didn't you once say that the story of the Buendia family could be an account of Latin American history?

Yes, I think it is. Latin American history is also made up of immense useless enterprises and great dramas that are condemned to oblivion in advance. We also suffer from the plague of memory-loss. With the passage of time, nobody remembers that the massacre of the banana company workers actually took place. All they remember is Colonel Aureliano Buendia.

And the thirty-three wars Colonel Aureliano Buendia lost could be an expression of our own political frustrations. What would have happened, by the way, if the Colonel had won?

He would have been very much like the Patriarch. When I was writing the novel, at one stage I was tempted to let the Colonel take power. If I had done, I would have written *The Autumn of the Patriarch* rather than *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Must we assume then, that through some quirk of historical fate, whoever fights despotism runs the risk of turning into a despot himself when he takes power?

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, one of Colonel Aureliano Buendia's prisoners says to him, 'What worries me is that out of so much hatred for the military, out of fighting them so much and thinking about them so much, you've ended up as bad as they are.' And he concludes, 'At this rate you'll be the most despotic and bloody dictator in our history.'

Can we look back over the way your political ideas have developed? Your father is a Conservative. In Colombia we say being a Conservative or Liberal depends on what your father is, but your father obviously didn't influence your politics at all because you opted for the left very early on. Was this political stance a reaction against your family?

Not against my family as such because you must remember that, although my father is a Conservative, my grandfather the colonel was a Liberal. My political ideas probably came from him to begin with because, instead of telling me fairy tales when I was young, he would regale me with horrifying accounts of the last civil war that free-thinkers and anticlerics waged against the Conservative government. My grandfather also told me about the massacre of the banana workers which took place in Aracataca the year I was born. So you see my family influenced me towards rebellion rather than towards upholding the established order.

Do you remember where and when you read your first political texts?

In my secondary school in Zipaquirá. It was full of teachers who'd been taught by a Marxist in the teachers training college under President Alfonso Lôpez' leftist government in the thirties. The algebra teacher would give us classes on historical materialism during break, the chemistry teacher would lend us books by Lenin and the history teacher would tell us about the class struggle. When I left that icy prison I'd no idea where north and south were but I did have two very strong convictions. One was that good novels must be a poetic transposition of reality, and the other was that mankind's immediate future lay in socialism.

Did you ever belong to the Communist Party?

I belonged to a cell for a short time when I was twenty but I don't remember doing anything of interest. I was more of a sympathiser than a real militant. Since then my relationship with the Communists has had many ups and downs. We've often been at loggerheads because every time I adopt a stance they don't like, their newspapers really have a go at me. But I've never publicly condemned them, even at the worst moments.

You and I travelled around East Germany together in 1957 and, in spite of the fact that we'd pinned our hopes on socialism, we did not like what we saw. Did that trip alter your political conviction?

It did affect my political ideas quite decisively. If you think back, I put my impressions of that trip on record at the time in a series of articles for a Bogotá magazine. The articles were pirated and published some twenty years later — not, I imagine, out of any journalistic or political interest, but to show up the supposed contradictions in my personal political development.

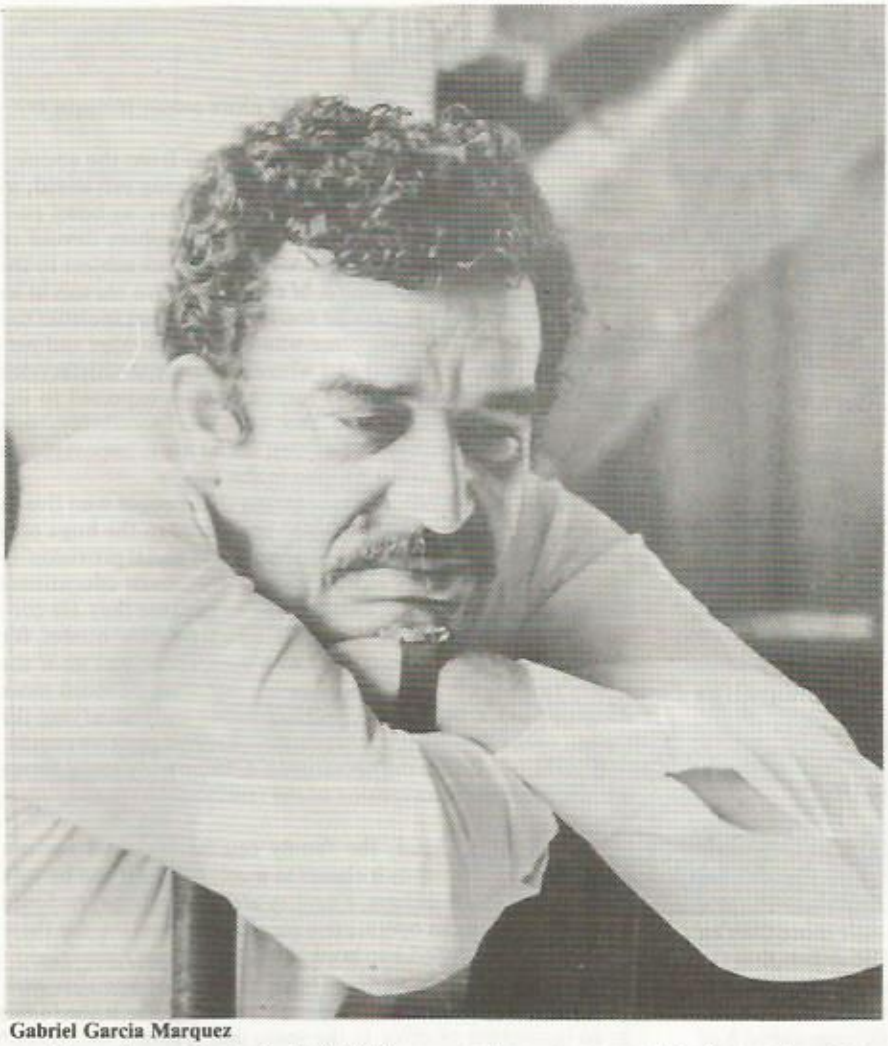
Were there any contradictions?

No, there were not. I made the book legal and included it in the volumes of my complete works which are sold in popular editions on every street corner in Colombia. I haven't changed a single word. What's more, I think an explanation of the origins of the current Polish crisis is to be found in those articles which the dogmatists of the time said were paid for by the United States. The amusing thing is that those dogmatists today, twenty-four years later, are ensconced in the comfortable armchairs of the bourgeois political and financial establishment while history is proving me right.

And what do you think of the so-called Peoples' Democracies?

The central premise of those articles is that the Peoples' Democracies were not authentically socialist nor would they ever be if they followed the path they were on, because the system did not recognise the specific conditions prevailing in each country. It was a system im-

**The Fragrance of Guava*, Verso/NLB, April 1983.



Gabriel Garcia Marquez

posed from the outside by the Soviet Union through dogmatic unimaginative local Communist Parties whose sole thought was to enforce the Soviet model in a society where it did not fit.

Lets move on to another of our shared experiences — our days in Prensa Latina, the Cuban news agency. You and I both resigned when the old Cuban Communist Party began taking over many of the institutions of the Revolution. Do you think we made the right decision? Or do you think it was just a hiccup in a long process which we failed to see as such?

I think our decision to leave Prensa Latina was correct. If we'd stayed on, with our views, we'd have ended up being slung out with one of those labels on our foreheads — counter-revolutionary, imperialist lackey and so on — that the dogmatists of the day used to stick on you. What I did, if you remember, was to remove myself to the sidelines. I watched the evolution of the Cuban process closely and carefully while I wrote my books and filmscripts in Mexico. My view is that although the Revolution took a difficult and sometimes contradictory course after the initial stormy upheavals, it still offers the prospect of a social order which is more democratic, more just and more suited to our needs.

Are you sure? Don't the same causes produce the same effects? If Cuba adopts the Soviet system as a model (one-party state, democratic centralism, government-controlled unions, security organisations exercising a tight control over the population), won't this 'just, democratic order' be as difficult to achieve there as it is in the Soviet Union? Aren't you afraid of this?

The problem with this analysis is it's point of departure. You start from the premise that Cuba is a Soviet satellite and I do not believe it is. I think that the Cuban Revolution has been in a state of emergency for twenty years thanks to the hostility and incomprehension of the United States, who will not tolerate an alternative system of government ninety miles off the Florida coast. This is not the fault of the Soviet Union, without whose assistance (whatever its motives and aims may be) the Cuban revolution would not exist today. While hostility persists, the situation in Cuba can only be judged in terms of a state of emergency which forces them to act defensively and outside their natural historical, geographical and cultural sphere of interest. When the situation returns to normal we can discuss it again.

Fidel Castro supported Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 (with certain reservations it is true). What position did you take?

I made a public protest at the time and would do the same again should the same situation arise. The only difference between my position and Fidel Castro's (we don't see eye to eye on everything) is that he ended up justifying Soviet intervention and I never would. However, the analysis he made in his speech on the internal situation of the Peoples' Democracies was much more critical and forceful than the one I made in the articles we were talking about a moment ago. In any case, the future of Latin America is not and never will be played out in Hungary, Poland or Czechoslovakia, but in Latin America itself. To think anything else is a European obsession; and some of your political questions smack of this obsession too.

Fidel Castro is a friend of yours. How do you explain your friendship with him? What influences it most — your political affinities or the fact that he, like you, is from the Caribbean?

Look, my very close and affectionate friendship with Fidel Castro began through literature. I'd known him casually when you and I were working for Prensa Latina in 1960 but I'd never felt we had much in common. Later on when I'd become a famous writer and he was the best-known politician in the world, we met several times but still, in spite of mutual respect and goodwill, I never felt there could be more to the relationship than political affinity. However, in the very early hours of one morning about six years ago, he said that he was having to leave because he had a lot of reading waiting for him at home. He remarked that, although he was obliged to do it, he found this task boring and tiring. I suggested that he relieve the tedium of required reading with something lighter but which, at the same time, was good literature. I gave him a few examples and was surprised to find that he'd read them all and, what's more, had a good appreciation of them.

on one occasion Castro told me, with a hint of melancholy, 'When I'm next reincarnated, I want to be a writer'

That night I discovered what few people realise — that Fidel Castro is a voracious reader, that he loves good literature from all periods and that he is a serious conoisseur of it. Even under the most difficult circumstances, he has a good book with him for filling in the odd spare moment. When we said good night, I left him a book to read. When I saw him again at twelve the next sday, he'd already read it. He is such a careful, assiduous reader that he finds contradictions and factual errors in places where you'd least expect them. After he'd read *The Tale of a Shipwrecked Salior*, he came to my hotel just to tell me that I'd calculated the speed of the boat incorrectly and that the time of arrival could not be what I said. He was right. So before publishing *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* I took him the manuscript and he pointed out a mistake in the specifications of the hunting rifle. You get the feeling that he really likes the world of literature, that he feels at ease in it, and that he enjoys taking pains with the literary style of his increasingly numerous written speeches. On one occasion he told me, with a hint of melancholy, 'When I'm next re-incarnated, I want to be a writer.'

Interviews

SOCIALISTS AND THE FAMILY

LYNNE SEGAL and MARY McINTOSH

The decline of the family looms large in the rhetoric of the right. But it has recently re-emerged as a major area of debate and discussion on the left as well. Michèle Barratt and Mary McIntosh's *The Anti-Social Family* (Verso, 1982, £3.95) and Lynne Segal's collection of essays *What is to be done about the family?* (Penguin/Socialist Society, 1983, £2.50) both lay down important challenges to much traditional socialist and feminist thinking. Judith Arkwright and Valerie Coultas talked to Lynne Segal and Mary McIntosh about their books.

LS: *What is to be done about the family* starts from the current Tory appeal to strengthen the family and how well this fits in with government attempts to make cutbacks in welfare provision. It argues that their family rhetoric is little more than an attempt to rationalise these cutbacks; but it also argues that the appeal to the family is nonetheless a strong one because the family means so very much to all of us. This is why it's important to begin to consider the family and the debates about it of the last twenty years.

Criticisms started to emerge from many sources during the 1960s of the stifling and inward-looking character of the contemporary family. A central focus of concern was young people's rejection of the family — their flight from the suburbs into the cities and the criticisms they made of their parents' lives. Missing from these critiques by Laing and others, however, was any account of women's specific situation and frustration in the family. It was only with the emergence of a new feminist critique in the 1970s that the focus shifted on to the misery and isolation of home-bound mothers on the one hand and the problems and tensions of women who go out to work on the other. The book outlines these and the ensuing debates around how we live now and how our needs are met in today's families, looking in particular at the situation of children, the connections between home and work, state provision for people with dependents, and how sexuality, especially for women, is quite rigidly controlled by our ideas of family life.

Finally, it tries to think about and separate our ideas of the family and how we ought to live and care about each other from the reality of how we are actually living today and what our needs really are. And as soon as you do this the first thing that becomes clear is that most people don't live in traditional nuclear families. The collection of essays that I have assembled and partly written attempts to uncover how we are actually living and what sorts of changes we'd make if we are to meet people's real needs in the situations we face.

MM: Like Lynne's, the book that Michèle and I wrote is addressed to a socialist as well as a feminist readership, trying to draw on a tradition — or various traditions — of socialist thinking about the family as well as more recent feminist critiques.

One of the things that we picked up on from the socialist traditions was the critique of the family as being privatised, as representing individualism and private interests; as being constructed dialectically in relation to a public sphere devoid of personal relationships and personal satisfactions subject to the cash nexus and the imperatives of capitalism. We see this in its most extreme form in capitalist society but in other societies too the family has become the place where personal value and personal life are monopolised and where all personal satisfactions are expected to be found and responsibilities expected to lie. People are not expected to feel social responsibility, just responsibility for their own families; social life is impoverished by all that is supposed to happen in the family.

We feel that in practice this means that people who live in families may actually be privileged compared to the huge proportion of people who do not. If you look at social provision — young peoples' homes, old peoples' homes, even educational institutions — all these are impoverished because they are considered second best to life in the family; old peoples' homes, for example, are always thought of as places where you go if the family fails. We feel that social provision could be much more adequate — richer, more rewarding, more truly satisfying the human needs — than it is. So there is a kind of positive conclusion to the book: that the necessity to develop truly social forms is bound to involve an erosion of the family and its monopolisation of caring.

On the other hand, the family can be criticised for not fulfilling even the needs it claims to meet: indeed it can be very destructive to its members. Families are such private, enclosed spheres that they can operate in a way like prisons. It is for these reasons that we called our book *The Anti-Social Family*.

We also take up various other strands of socialist and feminist thought. One of the things we emphasise is the family as an institution of class, in the sense that it forms the basis on which inheritance of class positions (and, one might add, inheritance of ethnicity and so on) is organised. As well as the inheritance of property, there is also the inheritance of disadvantage for the working class. Insofar as Tory education policy, for instance, offers families freedom of choice in education, what it is effectively doing is to ensure that though educational institutions are social provisions they shall not over-ride family inheritance of advantage and disadvantage.

The book also makes a critique of some social science ideas about the family that have had some popularity on the left — especially the work of Christoper Lasch and Jacques Donzelot. Both, we argue, attempt defences of an old patriarchal family form which they claim has become eroded and weakened. Donzelot's work, in particular, and the way he has been taken up, indicates that there is a danger of support for the family from the left as well as the right because of the ideology which claims that the family is the embodiment of a great many things that we are all agreed are good: caring for other people, mutual support and so forth. In America, in particular, an explicitly left pro-family lobby has emerged; part of our reason for writing our book has been to prevent the same happening here.

JA: In your book, Mary, you stress the strength of the family in society and the fact that it remains apparently unshakeable. You, Lynne, on the other hand, say in one of your essays that the family is an out-moded institution: a bit like the British Empire it has had its time. What is the state of the family today?

LS: What you are pointing to is not so much a contradiction between us but in what people mean by the family. What Mary is talking about is family ideology and what I was attempting to do was to distinguish that ideology from how we are actually

Interviews

Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh

living. It is when we look at how people actually live that we say that *the* family does not exist: there are many family types and the most significant trend in our society today is away from the traditional family. The ideology of the family, however, is very much alive and it is to this ideology which Thatcher is appealing and whose existence in both men's heads and our own allows for the exploitation of women at home and at work: thus women are still seen as responsible for housework and childcare, old people must be cared for in the home, and so on.

MM: I would agree with that but ideology does not just exist up in the air but has an important relationship to how people live. Insofar as you can describe how people live now — whatever the household forms — they are all related to the nuclear family of parents with their dependent children; everything else is a pre-parental stage or a post-parental stage; everything else is defined in terms of the family.

JA: It is quite interesting that the Tories are also debating this question of whether the family is in crisis. Ferdinand Mount in his book says that it is the strongest and most enduring institution in our society and therefore the Tories must look to it as part of the policies they want to pursue. Some Tory MPs, however, are clearly worried about issues like juvenile crime which they blame on the family.

LS: I'm not sure how we are using the word crisis. Insofar as the family is changing it is changing in ways some of which I welcome and some of which create problems for women and all people with dependents but that is not the same thing as saying it's in crisis. What Margaret Thatcher says is that the changes which have occurred in terms of higher divorce rates, the legalisation of abortion and homosexuality have not been in women's interests. Well, I disagree. These changes, to the extent that they have occurred, have not been in the interests of the traditional family but they have been in the interests of those very many women who were able to leave very unhappy and violent marriages.: over seventy per cent of divorces are filed by women. This 'crisis' in the family is one we should 'applaud' because it really represents an increase in the independence of women. But of course it's also true that if a woman chooses to live on her own then she is very likely to be living a life which is more impoverished than a man's because her wages are lower than his and so on.

VC: It seems to me that this flourish of books on the family is the feminist philosophical, or political, response to what the Tories are fighting on now.If you compare what the women's movement was saying ten years ago about the position of women in the family and in society and the kinds of lives women should lead, these books seem much more defensive. Or perhaps feminism is just growing up. These books are coming to grips with the reality of people's lives who don't necessarily live in the 'official' family structure. What do you say to the idea that these are defensive reactions to the Tory offensive?

MM: I don't think in our case it really is. Our book is very much located in debates among socialists rather than in relation to Tory policies. In fact, despite the revelations about the Tory 'Think Tank', I'm still somewhat sceptical about whether there is a coherent strand of Thatcherism that is concerned with the family: I don't think their policies are terribly coherent. The family is an important political arena and they are trying to cash in on its popular appeal — often to defend a set of policies whose mainspring lies elsewhere.

I think that part of the explanation for current feminist interest is a literal growing up: there are now many feminists who are no longer at the stage of reacting against their own parents but are trying to develop their lives as adults, often as parents, and maybe have to look after dependant parents too. We are still involved in the politics of experience and we have had to

Interviews

tackle a whole lot of issues.

LS: I think there is a change in what we are writing today about the family. But we have not rejected our earlier analysis; rather we have changed direction in terms of what we think we can do about it. Mica Nava, writing in my book, is certainly critical of the voluntarism of the early women's movement in thinking we could set up our own alternative households. I think we were very influenced by the libertarian politics of the 1960s which were very anti-state. If we set up nurseries or other things, we wanted not only to control them but to bypass the state — not to seek resources from it. Today we have to face the fact that while feminists have won many arguments — for example on women's right to abortion, contraception, jobs, in the trade unions — despite a token acceptance of feminism, women's situation overall hasn't changed very much because all sorts of more fundamental change is necessary.

JA: Lynne, you place a great deal of emphasis on the alternative lifestyles which people, discussed and developed in the 1960s; you argue that these had a very profound effect on society. But do you really think that alternative forms of household pose a real challenge to the family?

LS: Speaking personally, I have lived in a collective household all my adult life and it has made it possible for me to have a job and bring up a child and avoid the burdens which many mothers feel alongside the joys of child-rearing. In general, I do think that alternative lifestyles, collective households based on sharing housework and childcare, were significant. For instance, because we emphasised both that men should share childcare and the importance of community provision — trying to break down the division between the home and the community — these ideas were taken into the community nurseries we set up. Today, not only community nurseries but nurseries in general often stress the importance of having a male worker, of young children actually seeing that it is not only women who can care for children. This sort of thing is crucially important in the long term in fighting gender roles.

MM: I very much agree with Lynne. In the last chapter of our book where Michèle and I outline strategies, the first area we discuss is personal politics. Much of the reason for disillusionment with what people called 'communes' was that in the 1960s there was an expectation that you could create a socialist commune in the bosom of capitalist society. We should not have expected this because the domestic sphere is so deeply embedded in the way society is organised.

But, on the other hand, we reject the idea that you've got to wait for the revolution before making changes or that you've got to fight simply for legislation, reforms, nurseries etc. We don't believe that people will know *how* to fight for decent conditions until they have tried struggling with the way that they live their personal lives. The politics of the two must develop side by side.

VC: I don't think anybody disagrees that if you are a woman who is politically active, you have to begin to change your own world; it is not possible otherwise. But the question of how far that is the *basis* of fighting for feminism is a debatable one. There is a massive variation in the way different people can live: whether you can live in a communal household depends on your bank balance. Many people's cultural options simply don't include an alternative lifestyle.'

Lynne said earlier that sections of the labour movement are becoming aware of the need to involve women and to raise questions about things like childcare which were not discussed ten years ago. This is true but I do not think that the fundamental argument to have in a trade union branch is whether or not individual men help individual women in their homes: this is something that the women will fight about at home. The fundamental argument is what to do for women as a whole: how to achieve structural change. Often if you raise demands about sharing household tasks and don't get onto the structural issues it just provides a cop-out for the unions.

MM: But unions are not really concerned with structural change; they are concerned with 'washing-up time', with how jobs are defined. Unless men in the local work situation have their consciousness raised about when shopping gets done and when children have to be collected from school, they won't see that their negotiations about how jobs are going to be done affects whether or not women can do these jobs. Yes, it's a broad structural question but is is also a question of detail.

LS: I would go even further and say that structural change will only come about once the issue of men and women sharing childcare and domestic work is raised. For a start, as soon as you do this you have to talk not just about things that go on in the home but also about a shorter working week and a shorter working day. Demands for shorter and more flexible working time are crucial structural changes in terms of changing the power relationships between men and women.

In this country male workers — and it is mainly males — work more overtime than anywhere else in the Western world. We are not likely to see full employment again unless we take up these kinds of demands which women have been feeding into the labour movement for some years. The issue of hours has become a crucial one for the labour movement as a whole because it is closely connected with the way in which industry has been restructuring. It is not just that male workers have been shed but also the way that female workers have been used because they work part time, because their jobs are now more vulnerable and less protected by the trade union movement,

Interviews

and now, increasingly, because a lot of women are prepared to work at home and this fits in with the development of new technology.

The issue of hours of work and the connection between home and work is crucial for the trade union movement.

JA: No one disputes that. But that is slightly different. What is the real impact of the changes that *have occurred? OK, some trade unions have given more recognition of the need for creches and the sharing of household tasks. These are important; but how much impact have they had in reality? There is almost a sense in which the trade union bureaucracy use these issues as a sop to women, a way of avoiding other issues like unemployment and its implications for women.*

MM: I don't think that is true because I think it presupposes that the family as we know it today, and especially the idea of the male breadwinner, is just a product of capitalism and simply serves the interests of the capitalist class. I think it is more complex: that the family has developed also in response to the needs and demands of the organised working class — that is the organised male working class. They have defended the idea of a family wage, for instance, they have developed the idea of women's wages as pin money and accepted the idea that only full-time work is the real thing.

In a sense, the capitalists would not have cared all that much if they would have gone on with the old factory system employing men, women and children. It was partly the organised working class defending itself that produced the family system which we have today. We have to change this and part of the change is arguing the case within the labour movement and within socialist thought as well as against the Tories and other representatives of the capitalist class.

JA: Yes, there is a need for that battle, I agree. But how and on what level? I tend to think that things like the mobilisations around the abortion issue actually had the most positive impact in changing men's consciousness.

LS: One problem with the classical Marxist analysis is that it sees the division of labour in the home as serving the interests of capital by providing unpaid domestic work and constituting a reserve army of labour. But these things don't just prop up capitalism but also support a crucial power division between men and women. While the abortion issue, women's right to control their own fertility, is central, I do not think that it is sufficient in itself. Many men are prepared to accept that women should have the right to abortion but it is much harder for them to accept that the existing sexual division of labour has created real privileges for them which women are now challenging. We have to recognise that there is a separate power relationship which does not just serve the interests of capital but also serves the interests of men.

MM: Issues like abortion and the vote can become defined as single issues and men can adopt them as liberal issues because they are posed in terms of rights. Feminists may raise other questions about the role of the family and so on in the context of such campaigns but much of this just passes the men by. We have got to convince men that the family is not immutable: it is oppressive to women and can be changed. I think the issue of creches for meetings does raise that. They should not be necessary: they are only necessary because only parents — and only one parent — look after children. Asking for a creche you can make these points. Women don't need single issues, they need a transformation of the family in relation to paid work.

VC: But if you look at the modern women's movement or the suffragettes you see women coming together around a specific focus, but by politically organising as women round that issue they begin to show their force. This must surely be more politicising for men as well as women. It is the self-organisation of women around their concerns which begins to change consciousness: around issues like creches as well. The demand for changing individual practices within the home can detract from that kind of movement.

LS: But we are not talking about changing individual practices within the home. We are talking about changing the nature of work taking into account that men and women have family lives as well: until men and women see this it will always be possible for them to be played off against each other.

MM: I don't think either of us would want to denigrate the campaign for the vote or abortion rights or the women's peace movement. It is not that we do not think them worth pursuing; but there are other things that need doing which have a longer-term impact.

JA: The point is what is the impetus for profound structural changes? The type of campaigns which Valerie and I are talking about do challenge all sorts of ideas and prejudices about the family. But they give a more powerful impetus for actual change of these structures because they involve women organising.

Take the issue of the family wage. I agree that the notion that men are the breadwinners and have to earn enough to keep a family needs to be smashed for things to go forward. But how are we to do this? We can take it up in debate and discussion but a campaign around equal pay for work of equal value or for a statutory minimum wage with women organising is the best way that one can begin to eat away at the idea of the family wage so that it begins to crumble.

LS: But why not campaign for shorter working hours as well?

VC: Any campaign which improves the situation of the working class makes the situation of women better as well.

JA: Take the Labour Party manifesto. They start off the section on women by saying the crucial thing is that men and women should share household tasks, swap roles, etc. That is their starting point but with no proposals to back it up.

VC: It's a cop-out for them because it's a moral assertion of what should be and not a commitment to back it up in structural terms.

LS: Yes, it is a moral assertion. They seem mainly to propose more nursery provision and I do not think that is the only issue. We need it but, for example, what about elderly people? There are more women working part time or not working in order to care for elderly people than there are for children. We need all types of welfare provision. But changing roles means not just these things, it means changing the nature of work as well: flexible hours, more pay, job sharing, positive action and so on.

British Features

SOCIALIST POLICY ON EDUCATION

KEN JONES and RICK HATCHER

Post-war education policy has been marked by a remarkable consensus between the major parties in favour of reform. The twin orthodoxies of the post-war educational settlement — 'equal opportunity' and 'progressive education' — have been superceded during the 1970s by 'the needs of industry', 'declining standards' and 'austerity'. The current crisis of education, argue Rick Hatcher and Ken Jones, require new responses from socialists which go beyond the narrow reforms or class room militancy which different sections of the Left have previously espoused.

British education* expanded after 1944 to the point where, in 1979, it was the biggest single area of government spending. Conservative, as well as Labour governments, accepted that an expanding education system was a guarantee of economic efficiency. Along with the growth of spending went a policy of increasing 'educational opportunity', so as to open up the state and industry to the reinvigorating influence of state-educated managers and technicians. The election of Wilson's first government in 1964 was the highpoint of the argument that the modernisation of education and the growth of opportunity — two sides of the same coin — would see a regeneration of British industry.

Governmental intention, however, was not translated into educational practice. Education was not reorganised in a way that prioritised technological knowledge. The determination of policy goals was rather left to a section of the intelligentsia and civil service which, in the tradition of Matthew Arnold, valued the cultivation of a national unity through a shared experience of education above the subordination of the school to the direct demands of the labour market. Their policy reports — notably Newsom in 1963 and Plowden in 1967 — contained only the vaguest recognition of 'national economic need'. Protected by this tradition of policy-making, and encouraged by the increased involvement of teachers in the shaping of new curricula, a minority of teachers was able to introduce radical changes into the classroom — changes intended not so much to increase the occupational opportunities of individual working class children, as to encourage their critical awareness, either as individuals or (more rarely) as members of a social class.

Change

In the mid-seventies these traditions of reform were still firmly established at the centre of British schooling. The years since then have seen their gradual eviction and replacement.

The onset of recession coincided with a gathering criticism of state priorities. The OECD drew attention to the lack of correspondence between British education and economic need. James Callaghan, shortly after he became Prime Minister in 1976, made a well-publicised speech about the dangers of the allegedly dominant classroom approach, which emphasised, he said, 'social', rather than 'economic' factors: individual child development, rather than the child's role as a future worker.

These critical tendencies found outlet in the 'Great Debate' on schooling organised by the Labour Government in 1977-78, which attempted to create a new consensus on educational policy, whose central feature would be the relationship between school and work. This relationship was understood not just in a technical sense, but in an ideological sense: schools would develop not only the 'skills' but also the 'attitudes' necessary to work. Whereas previously there had been an unquestioned assumption that more schooling (of whatever kind) led to economic growth, now it was intended to specify the *kinds* of education suitable to a trained, consenting and adaptable workforce.

This was the focus of Labour's 1977 Green Paper. Although 'equal opportunity' was retained as a motif of policy, it was in a secondary role. School and work — the need for the school to respond to the requirements of economic life — was the dominant theme. At the same time, of course, the Labour government was responding to economic crisis with cuts in social spending. Policies essential to the 'equal opportunity' strategy — such as the expansion of nursery education — were largely abandoned. Capital spending, essential to effective comprehensive reorganisation, was heavily cut.

While Labour's cuts attracted sharp criticism (though little effective resistance) from party and unions, its emphasis on the school-work connection was welcomed by the TUC and treated with caution rather than condemnation by the teaching unions. The mixture of approbation and silence with which it was received indicated a considerable weakness in the labour movement's educational policy. It had no firm conception of educational purpose to set up against the government's insistence on the needs of (capitalist) industry.

This weakness was to become more glaringly apparent as Margaret Thatcher's government began its restructuring of education.

The Tories' policy

The Tories first moves were directed more towards a reinforcing of educational inequalities than towards a reshaping of the school, to meet the needs of work (and unemployment). The 'Assisted Places Scheme' encouraged students in state schools to take up places in the private sector. Labour legislation compelling authorities to make secondary education comprehensive was repealed. All this was accompanied by a rhetoric of 'parental choice': state education had become unaccountable, teacher-dominated and remote from the requirements of work and family. Individuals must be given the right to exercise some influence over it.

It would be a mistake to see these statements as the mere cosmetic overlay of a policy whose entire thrust was to increase inequality and benefit the rich. 'Parental choice' is an ideology which has some autonomy from issues of the distribution of wealth and of opportunity. Undoubtedly, it allows a greater concentration of educational privilege; but it is intended to do more than that.

The 1980 Education Act, for instance, gave parents the right to choose which comprehensive school their children could attend. In practice, this means that schools already privileged as a result of their intake, location, history and resources will have their popularity reinforced, whereas schools

*Scottish education is administered differently, has different structures and its own teaching union. This article is primarily applicable, therefore, to England and Wales.

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already deprived will have their plight confirmed. Not planning, but the aggregate of individual consumer demand will determine the character of the school. In order to remain open, in a situation of falling student rolls, schools will have to match the needs of a parental choice that is educated, so the Tories hope, in the virtues of a traditional educational philosophy. Inequalities will increase. But the intention is also that parents will have their role as ferocious *individual* defenders of their *own* child's educational destiny confirmed, and that their potential as participants in a collective movement of educational reform will diminish.

> The labour movement has made no attempt to form a collective popular conception of the purposes of schooling

The labour movement, like the other traditional defenders of reform, is ill-equipped to respond to this strategy. It has habitually seen state education as an unmitigated benefit. The inadequacies of the school as a means of forming individuals with the kind of knowledge of the world that allows them to transform it, has never, this side of the war, been seriously dealt with. No attempt has been made to form a collective, popular conception of the purposes of schooling. Not surprisingly, Conservative attacks upon the remoteness and inadequacy of schooling have had some resonance.

Such was the initial focus of Conservative policy. In four years of government, however, the Tories have been forced to come to terms with some of the problems posed in the Great Debate, the urgency of which is underlined by the existence of mass unemployment among youth whose rebellious potential was demonstrated in the summer of 1981. The Tories have thus developed — alongside increased post-16 provision in the schools — a 'Youth Training Scheme' which will be open to every 16 year old in the country. The YTS promises to all a year of training in a range of workplace skills, either directly, through practical experience in factory or office or indirectly, in college-based courses.

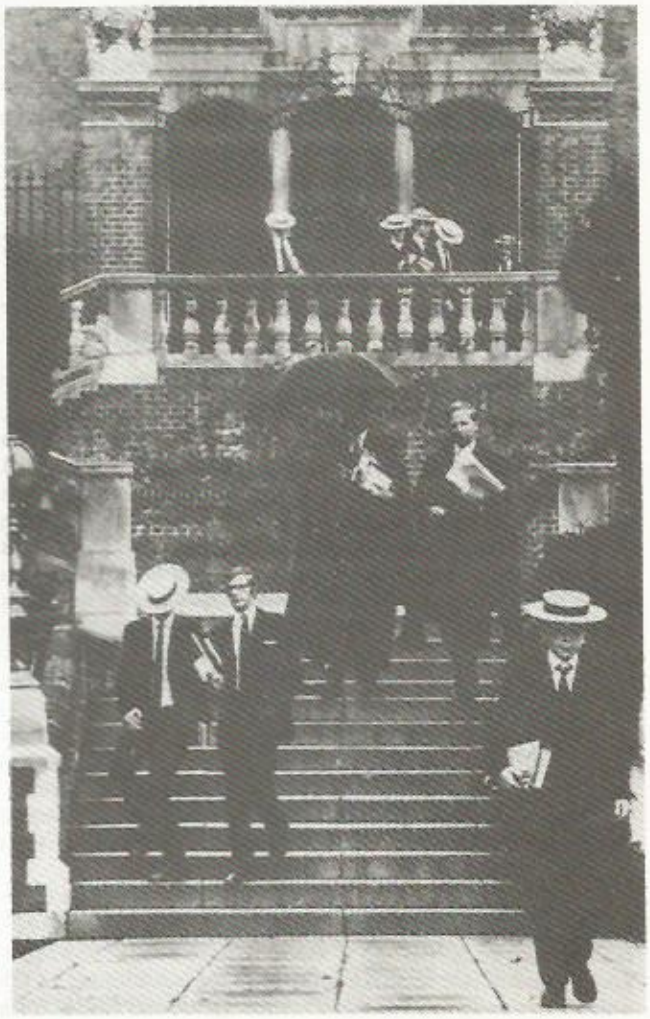
Youth Training Schemes

The YTS marks the biggest change in British education since comprehensive reorganisation took off in the mid-sixties. There are a number of points which should be made about it. First, it is not a system of apprenticeship. The skills to be learned are neither as specific nor as complex as those of the apprentice: the student is to become an adaptable worker, not a particularly skilled one. Second, its 'training' function will be subordinate to its 'management of unemployment' function. It is not as if the YTS will increase the number of jobs open to youth. When the course is over, they are likely to return to a life on the dole. The YTS will have served its purpose if it helps instil the disciplines of work in a workforce which faces an unemployed future. Third, much of the training will be under the control of employers. As the head of the Manpower Services Commission puts it: 'Training is about work-related skills and is immediately concerned with employment. It is for this reason that training in this country must be employer-dominated and ultimately employer-directed.' Thus the school is to be almost completely excluded from the YTS, punished for the years in which it deprioritised the 'world of work'.

What will soon exist, then, is a system of training, operating outside the traditional forms of educational control and considerably influenced by employers, for whom it will largely replace apprenticeship schemes. Its trainees will be paid £25 a week — an inducement, in effect, to leave school or college education, where they are entitled to no maintenance allowance. Meanwhile, the Tories are taking steps to consolidate the traditional 'academic' (and in effect selective) sixth form. What is being evolved is not a comprehensive system of post-16 education in which the study of (and participation in) production would be complemented by an all round general education, but a two-tier 'tertiary modern' system of 16-19 education, in which tomorrow's manual workers and unemployed will be cut off from access to a general education and involved in schemes which offer no right to work at their conclusion. The new initiative, moreover, will have an effect on the curriculum of the entire secondary school. The academic/vocational split at 16 will be prepared for lower down the school.

The YTS is the result of a complex of concerns: with unemployment, with training the workforce to new technical specifications; with outflanking the traditional educational institutions and personnel and with delivering them a traumatic shock to alter their approaches to questions of curriculum and educational purpose.

Unsurprisingly, in view of its contribution to the Great Debate, the labour movement has been sparing in its criticism of the YTS. It has largely been concerned with questions of its own influence and of the conditions of service of the trainees involved in the schemes. Will trade unions be represented on the MSC boards that oversee local implementation of the YTS? Will there be safeguards against the use of trainees as cheap labour? Satisfied with the answers it has received, it has been content to approve the scheme. Trade union officials have been told to ask employers to take on YTS trainees, and to make sure that they have adequate status and conditions and a 'worthwhile' training. YTS schemes which operate in work places will need to have the support of unions there before they are approved by the MSC, but, since the unions agree with the substance of the scheme, this right of veto is unlikely to mean very much in practice.



British Features

Likewise, the main teaching unions — the NUT and NATFHE — have been concerned not so much with the content of the scheme, but with preserving — within the framework of endorsement of the YTS — the influence of their members. The NUT has been unsuccessful in this respect; the general trade union movement, though, has gained some influence. Many of the YTS 'Area Management Boards' are headed by trade unionists. This influence has been gained at the expense of wider principle. The YTS will help put the stamp of 'industrial need' upon post-16 education. Historic developments — the implementation of alternative goals to those of equal opportunity — have been set in motion without the glimmer of a critical response from the labour movement.

Teachers

The exclusion of teachers' organisations from the YTS is part of a general trend to exclude them from the council of state. If follows upon the closing down of the Schools Council, a national consultative body on the curriculum, on which teachers' unions were heavily represented. At the same time, teachers face sharp attacks on their pay, jobs and conditions of service. The most important union, organising half the teaching force in England and Wales is the National Union of Teachers. Economic attack and the closing of the channels of its influence have thrown its perspectives into crisis. The traditional strategy of the NUT leadership of relying on the state, suitably pressured when necessary, to make progressive reforms in education, and to reserve a favoured place for the teaching 'profession' in terms of living standards and influence over the curriculum, is now in disarray. Teachers' pay has steadily declined — an increase of around 30 per cent is needed to restore salaries to the high point of 1975. Job losses — though not compulsory redundancy — accelerate. Employers wish to alter conditions of service to make more use of short-term contracts and introduce an element of compulsion into lunchtime and after-school activity. At the same time cuts and restructuring strike a blow at the NUT's educational objectives.

The NUT's response has been contradictory: partly a greater willingness to use trade union forms of action, partly an attempt to re-establish a (non party political) consensus around educational expansion and reform.

> the shift to the left in the NUT has come up against the limits set by the union leadership's strategic framework

In 1969-70 it took national strike action over pay, and won. Shortly afterwards it affiliated to the TUC. Since 1979 it has been forced to call strikes in several areas against the cuts, most notably the strike in Barking in 1982, which lasted seven weeks and succeeded in retaining nearly two thirds of the jobs that a Labour authority wished to cut. Thousands of teachers struck on September 22nd 1982 in support of the health workers. There has been a change in the make-up of branch officials, leading to a greater emphasis on trade union methods of struggle.

The general social crisis has also affected the union. It has adopted increasingly radical policies on racism and sexism. Its 1982 conference voted to support unilateral nuclear disarmament. A diffuse but forceful movement of women teachers has begun to campaign on both trade union and educational issues. Its effect was felt at the union's first ever conference on equal opportunities in 1983, when the executive's positions were several times defeated.

But this shift to the left has now come up against the limits of what is possible within the union leadership's strategic framework. To go beyond it would require a more thoroughgoing commitment to strike action and the abandoning of the union's avowedly non-political stance. (It refuses to call for a Labour government in preference to another five years of Thatcher, let alone contemplate affiliating to the Labour Party.) The union's executive will not renounce political 'neutrality', nor accept the intrusion of issues like unilateralism into union debate. The union president responded to the disarmament vote at 1982 conference by declaring that it was outside the aims and objects of the union, and would not be implemented. The semi-secret 'left' grouping on the executive chose to sacrifice conference policy for the sake of the unity of the leadership.

State education: Labour tries to combine the needs of the working class with that of the bosses.

The disarmament resolution was in part a symptom of wider politicisation in the union. On many issues this politicisation has been forced on the union by a government determined to make contentious many areas of social policy which had previously been matters of agreement among the parties. In addition, incessant attacks on jobs, education and pay have forced upon many teachers a consciousness that education and politics cannot be separated.

We are seeing, though, a polarisation rather than an homogenous radicalisation of teachers. For every teacher who is stimulated to take up political issues there is another who, intimidated by unemployment or buttressed by political conviction, will argue for a quiescent response, in the best traditions of public service, to the government's attacks.

As a result — and in the absence of a decisive advance by the working class movement — the NUT is struggling to maintain its half-share of the teaching force. Other teachers' organisations which vaunt their non-political nature claim to be increasing their size. They include the Professional Association of Teachers, founded in the wake of the 1969 pay strikes and pledged never to go on strike, and the AMMA, historically the union of grammar school teachers, now 80,000 strong which has a similar attitude, in practice. The NAS/UWT, the second largest teachers' union *is* affiliated to the TUC. It was founded, in the 1920s, to represent the interests of men teachers. More recently, it has presented itself as a tougher organisation than the NUT, combining trade union militancy with a non-political stand. Its militancy is, in fact, questionable — it has taken far less action against cuts than the NUT — while its educational stand emphasises the cultivation of discipline and 'morality' and fits quite neatly into the new educational climate.

The membership war among the unions is an important reason for the NUT executive's counter-attack against the politicisation of the union. Worried by the danger of membership loss, anxious to preserve what remains of the union's traditional influence as a non-partisan educational lobby, and convinced that a successful action-based fight against the cuts is impossible, the executive is now attempting to re-create an educational consensus, and in the process, to demonstrate that its traditional strategies are still effective. Shunning a practical alliance with the labour movement, the executive is now organising, simultaneously with a clampdown on political discussion in the ranks, an attempt to woo politicians of all parties, church people and other notables into a non-political campaign for 'education for national survival'.

The Left

The executive's line is for the most part supported by the teachers who lead the 'NUT work' of the Communist Party. They characterise the executive as 'progressive', and brand its active opponents as ultra-left. Their desire to maintain an alliance with the leadership has, over two decades, drawn them into a position from which they oppose attempts to win the union to support abortion rights, or unilateralism. Correspondingly, they do not organise an active 'Broad Left' group — only a semi-clandestine caucus on the executive itself, which surfaces in unadvertised meetings at annual conference. Many rank and file supporters of the 'Broad Left' have become alienated and have worked with others, further to the left, on such issues as disarmament.

Until recently, the major left opposition was provided by 'Rank and File Teacher', a grouping dominated by the SWP. Its tendency to make continual unsuccessful calls for unofficial action, its failure to address the political arguments of the NUT leadership and its lack of internal democracy led to its decline. It was formally wound up by the SWP earlier this year — a decision which, whatever the vagaries of the SWP line, has weakened the influence of the left in several areas.

The main force on the left of the union today is the Socialist Teachers Alliance, which has two supporters on the National Executive, receives about 40 per cent support for its positions at annual conference and has a growing influence among union activists. Its aims can most simply be described as making the union more militant and more political. Thus it has emphasised the unilateralist campaign among other things, as a means of relating a union on the margins of the labour movement to a major force in British political life. That the debate about the 'aims and objects' of the union — its political or apolitical nature — is now so sharply posed is substantially a result of the STA's emphases.

Labour's policies

No politics of education can confine itself to the teachers' unions. It is also necessary to affect the educational policies of the major classes, and of the parties which represent them. The Black Paperites, who were largely responsible for the changes in Conservative policy and its populist 'cutting edge', certainly understood the importance of rejecting a purely sectoral approach.

In this perspective, the Left has to develop a critique of, and a challenge to, Labour's educational programme, so as to equip it to respond adequately to a situation in which the heights of educational debate have been captured by the Right, and in which state policy is concerned more with the stratifying effects of the 'world of work' than with the equalising of opportunity.

It has to be recognised that Labour's policies are more radical than ever before: full comprehensivisation, the encouragement of 'mixed-ability' grouping, attacks on private education, the introduction of post-16 maintenance allowances. All such measures are to be welcomed; but they do not tackle the fundamental problem — the effects of an unequal division of labour on the curricula and systems of selection of the school. Thus Labour's programme remains weak in several respects. It echoes the assumptions of earlier decades in its contention that the needs of working class children can be met at one and the same time as education is developed in a way consistent with the interests of employers. It neglects to answer the criticisms of the right on issues where they have achieved some public resonance. And, above all, it shows no awareness of the need to mobilise both resistance to Conservative attacks and campaigns for forms of education which differ both in their content and systems of control from present models. Labour continues to rely on administrative action as the major means of change. It seeks to develop no major movement among teachers, or parents, or, least of all, students.

The focus of these various issues is 16-19 education — particularly the YTS. The fate of the YTS, and its eventual impact on the labour movement, cannot be predicted. But it is already possible to point to the success of theYTS in combining in one project both a response to right-wing themes of 'relevant' and 'basic ' education, and to the discontent of the trade unionists with the existing system of industrial training. The priority for the left, in the Labour Party, and the unions, is to put forward an ideological alternative to the YTS which revitalises Marxist conceptions of polytechnic education: the combination of practical work with a high level of general education which starts from practical experience, but which encompasses far broader issues. For the Marxists of the 1920s, polytechnic education entailed not only an understanding of the tasks of the workshop, but of whole branches of production and, indeed, the production process as a whole. Questions of technique were linked with those of the organisation of the labour process. The YTS will be, ironically, an eventual benefit, if it forces the left of the labour movement to produce a unified programme for education which discusses far more thoroughly than in the past, the content of education, its relation to the 'world of work', and to the experience of and motivation of students.

the Left has to develop a critique of labour's educational programme

The forcefulness of such a transformation will depend to an important extent on the winning of teachers' organisations — especially the NUT — to a different conception of their role: politically, in developing a closer relationship to the labour movement and a rejection of 'non-aligned' attitudes; educationally, in a commitment to encourage union members to become practitioners of a (carefully) partisan education.

The immediate focus for such issues is the coming general election. What government offers the best opportunity of the NUT's policies being carried out? It is evident that only a radical Labour government could implement even the existing policies of the NUT on the expansion of education, on disarmament, on racism and sexism. The NUT leadership, however, refuse to abandon the union's traditional non-party political stance — and it is undoubtedly the case that the great majority of union members support them in this. The STA faces the task, not of issuing calls for Labour Party affiliation which can only at the moment have a propagandistic character, but of attempting to explain the political nature of the challenges the union faces, and, in that context, of discussing the aim of Labour Party affiliation. It will be a long process — but one which will serve to provide a political framework for the many separate issues, from disarmament to 'Equal opportunity', which are now common currency in the union.

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British Features

MACGREGOR'S STEEL LEGACY

PAUL HIGHFIELD

The appointment of Ian MacGregor as new Coal Board boss caused considerable alarm throughout the labour movement. Paul Highfield examines how he carried out the Tories' plans to slash the steel industry and to break its unions.

The crisis in steel puts that of other industries in the shade. Output in western Europe in the last quarter of 1982 was the lowest for 30 years and US plants are working at an overall 40 per cent average capacity. The British Steel Corporation's (BSC) projection for 1982/3 steel demand in the United Kingdom is an all-time low of 11.6 million tonnes (of which BSC will supply 6.6 million) compared to the steel strike year of 1980 when BSC lost 13 weeks production and still produced 7.4 million tonnes. BSC's current British market share of 47 per cent is another low, while exports are now forecast to account for over a quarter of BSC output.

The world slump has coincided with *increased* steel capacity in the semi-industrialised countries. In 1981 Brazil, India, South Korea, South Africa and Mexico all produced over 7 million tonnes (see Table 1). The result has been the collapse of steel prices worldwide, as well as the EEC's Davignon restructuring plan which fixed higher steel prices to cut European losses. It has also led to intense export competition and increasingly protectionist measures, particularly from the USA and Britain, alongside attacks on the steel unions to cow them into submission. The failure of US capital to invest in its own steel industry has decimated the East Coast steel towns. During 1982 a staggering 200,000 out of 450,000 steelworkers lost their jobs, and one mill-owner alone, a friend of Ian MacGregor, lost a cool $130 million. The unions were forced to take a 10 per cent wage cut.

Ironically much of the huge sums of money needed to build the new steel mills in the semi-industrialised countries came from US and British banks, highlighting this shift in relative power from the manufacturing to the finance sectors in the two economies. MacGregor explained to the Commons Select Committee on Trade and Industry (CSCTI): '(Brazil etc) are hoping to find markets for a proportion of their products in Europe, the better they can service the capital they borrowed from European bankers.'[1] The British private steel-consuming sector has of course gratefully bought the cheapest quality steel available, causing imports from the Third World to double in the past year. In the US too imports took a record 22 per cent market share.

The Tories strategy

The steel industry has acted as a guinea pig for the Tories' plans to convert the unions to Japanese-style work practices, while monetarist policies send the weaker (and some not so weak) companies to the wall in the great restructuring of the Corporation. Key to this approach is the reduction of wage costs, even though these only account for one third of the total costs in the steel industry. This grand plan was contained in the now famous Ridley Report, an internal Tory document published before the Tories took office. It listed four categories of unions, according to militancy, and amongst those in category one to be taken on first were the steel unions. This came as no surprise to long-suffering militants in the industry. The main steel union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, had not led a national strike for over 50 years, and its annual conference in 1976 was the first for 66 years! Steel-workers were also demoralised by the closure programme of the 1974-9 Labour government when Michael Foot, for instance, was instrumental in closing down the Ebbw Vale works, which provided 65 per cent of all local employment, in his own constituency.

The unions too were disorganised and dominated by the right wing bureaucracy. There was no organised left in the ISTC. A group formed in the late 1970s, the Liaison Committee for Constitutional Reform, was shortlived, its militants being hounded by the union executive. Added to this weakness, was the existence of so many different unions in the industry, such as the National Union of Blastfurnacemen, TGWU, AUEW, GMBATU and EETPU. Non-cooperation between these unions is commonplace and strike-breaking, mainly by the ISTC, has been a regular feature. No wonder the Tories recognised an easy target.

TABLE 1
INTERNATIONAL GROWTH OF STEEL PRODUCTION

Rank	1960 Country	'000 tonnes	% of world production	1981 Country	'000 tonnes	% of world production
1.	USA	90,069	26.1	USSR	148,517	21.0
2.	USSR	65,292	18.9	USA	108,782	15.4
3.	W. Germany	34,100	9.9	Japan	101,676	14.4
4.	UK	24,695	7.2	W. Germany	41,610	5.9
5.	Japan	22,138	6.4	China	35,600	5.0
6.	France	17,281	5.0	Italy	24,777	3.5
7.	China	16,765	4.9	France	21,261	3.0
8.	Italy	8,462	2.5	Poland	15,719	2.2
9.	Belgium	7,179	2.1	UK	15,573	2.2
10.	Czechoslovakia	6,768	2.0	Czechoslovakia	15,270	2.2
11.	Poland	6,680	1.9	Canada	14,811	2.1
12.	Canada	5,270	1.5	Brazil	13,213	1.9
13.	Luxembourg	4,084	1.2	Romania	13,025	1.8
14.	E. Germany	3,787	1.1	Spain	12,919	1.8
15.	India	3,339	1.0	Belgium	12,283	1.7
16.	Sweden	3,218	0.9	India	10,780	1.5
17.	Austria	3,163	0.9	S. Korea	10,753	1.5
18.	Brazil	2,260	0.7	S. Africa	9,004	1.3
19.	S. Africa	2,065	0.6	Australia	7,635	1.1
20.				Mexico	7,605	1.1
	World Production	344,875		World Production	706,856	

Sources: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau, *International Statistics*
International Iron and Steel Institute, *Steel Statistical Yearbook 1982*

The steel strike of 1980

The Tories moved swiftly after their election and steel boss Villiers offered a two per cent pay deal with inflation raging at 17 per cent. The ISTC leader, Bill Sirs, did his best to 'avoid a damaging strike', pleading for an extra two or three per cent over the Xmas 1979 talks, but in the end even he was forced to call the national strike. Thirteen weeks later the strike was over with Sirs claiming a victory with a 14 per cent pay award. There are many lessons to be drawn from that dispute. Suffice to mention here that the lack of an effective national opposition to the Sirs leadership allowed Sirs to strictly limit the terms of the strike to wages. Thus it proved impossible for the South Wales steelworkers to link their fears of job losses into the national strike, especially when militant areas like South Yorkshire had a low consciousness on the jobs issue. Of course Sirs and the TUC did their best to sabotage the chances of winning the strike outright. It took Sirs 25 days to be forced to call out ISTC members in the private sector and secondary picketing of steel users was totally avoided officially. Nor was serious solidarity action organised by the TUC, though on the day the strike was called off a national solidarity strike was starting. Many rank and file bodies appeared during the strike, uniting workers in the various unions in a challenge to the Sirs leadership. But the left was too weak to mount an effective national opposition.

British Features

Ian MacGregor arrives

The fears of the South Wales steelworkers soon proved justified. Ian MacGregor was appointed steel boss and by December 1980, working to Thatcher's brief to rationalise the industry to break even by 1982/3, had produced his Corporate Plan. The workforce was to be slashed from 180,000 to 100,000, wages to be frozen for six months, and several plants were to close. Keith Joseph then brought in the Iron and Steel Act to end BSC's iron-making monopoly to pave the way to full privatisation.

The rest is now history. Exceeding MacGregor's targets, the workforce plummeted from 186,000 in December 1979 to 82,000 in January 1983 with the projection for December this year down to 76,000. 'Slimline', as the cuts are quaintly known, has become anorexia, as the massacre has gone far beyond even the 1960s pits closures programme. Nor has there been any national pay award since the strike (the TGWU estimates that with loss of shift premium payments some workers are now an incredible £64 a week worse off), and decades of union agreements have been torn up in the quest for 'multimanning', with workers doing others jobs.

The moves towards privatisation have seen much of BSC's plant hived off to private contractors, and its highly profitable construction wing, Redpath Dorman Long, was sold at the knockdown price of £10 million to Trafalgar House. Three major BSC private companies have also been created in an attempt to close down duplicate operations prior to handing over entirely to the private sector if they become profitable. Those impoverished minnows, GKN, and Lonrho, are two of the main benefactors.

Such unprecedented, rapid changes in the industry could not have been achieved without the total surrender of the ISTC leadership. This has only emboldened MacGregor and the Tories who have adopted US management methods, and cynically played off different geographical areas against one another through successively rumouring the closure of different plants among the Big Five (Llanwern, Port Talbot, Redcar, Ravenscraig and Scunthorpe). MacGregor has warned Arthur Scargill to expect the same treatment in the coal industry. He outlined his view of the role of the unions as endorsing at a local level the national BSC 'viable formula': 'this business is not run like a communist cell on total consensus,' he declared.

The future for the industry

The depth of the recession took the Tories by surprise. One fifth of all private steel firms are in danger of folding, and the crisis has sparked rows among the Tories themselves over the possible total closure of one of the integrated plants as MacGregor recommended. Secretary of State for Industry Patrick Jenkins, for example, fought to retain Ravenscraig as a steel-making plant. He fears an increased import bill if capacity is cut too far, causing higher costs for British private capital. Nevertheless he has authorised MacGregor to reduce the present commitment to 14.4 million tonnes a year manned capacity, ie capacity with the present workforce (potential output with a bigger workforce at BSC is 22.5 million). Thus MacGregor is attempting to close the steel-finishing part of Ravenscraig plant, and to transfer its semi-finished steel to an ailing US plant. Vehement opposition to the plan has come from the US Congress, which sees it as a back door way round import controls, the US workforce, which fears the loss of its own steel-making plant, and from the ISTC. Such bizarre business deals could well be a forerunner for future arrangements, especially with the EEC.

The future for steel is intimately bound up with that of the steel-using manufacturing industry in Britain, one quarter of which has so far disappeared under the Tories (See Tables 2 & 3). With the likely cuts in British Rail and the National Coal Board, and without any export-led growth from this sector, the market for BSC steel will shrink even faster when the small upturn has petered out. Tory hardliners are not so concerned

TABLE 2

Index of Production for Manufacturing (latest quarter change on 1979)

UK	− 15 %
France	− 4 %
W Germany	− 5½%
Italy	+ ½%
Belgium	− 2½%
Netherlands	+ 1 %
Luxembourg	− 11 %
Denmark	+ 2½%
Ireland	+ 1½%
Greece	− 5½%
USA	− 10 %
Japan	+ 11 %

British Business (10 December)

TABLE 3

Consumption of finished steel by industry group

	1979 average/ 2q. 1982	1982 2q./1q.
Railways	− 43.2%	− 12.5%
Shipbuilding	− 10.5%	− 3.2%
Construction	− 9.4%	− 8.7%
Electrical Engineering	− 31.7%	− 15.5%
Mechanical Engineering	− 20.1%	+ 1.2%
Motor Vehicles	− 10.4%	− 3.7%
Hollow Ware	− 20.5%	− 7.0%
Wire and Wire Manufacturers	− 21.4%	− 6.4%
All Other Industries	− 14.7%	− 12.5%
Total	− 19.4%	− 7.2%

British Business (3 December)

Photo: GM COOKSON

'Well its like this ...' Sirs tries to explain away redundancies

British Features

about this prospect even though the Italian industry increased steel production during 1979-81, while the West German industry held it constant. Thatcher's plan is to invest in high technology and high added value industries such as microelectronics and telecommunications. What could be better than overseas capital from Japan and the USA starting operations here and dictating draconian terms of employment? And what better places to start than those areas devastated by steel and manufacturing closures, like South Wales and Central Scotland, with their grants and rates exemptions and incentives to multinationals, and their plentiful supply of cheap labour, not just those ex-steelworkers unable to buy their own businesses from redundancy money but also youth with no union experience?

Thus South Wales is now the leading area for Japanese investment in Britain, and Central Scotland is a new 'silicon valley'. With the new industries so highly automated unemployment will remain high in these over-specialised areas, as high as the state handouts to multinationals to persuade them to stay (a staggering £5 billion was paid out to Inmos, Sony, Fords and others last year). Meanwhile the Tories refuse to find the £75 million needed for a new rolling mill at Port Talbot (which even MacGregor agrees is necessary) or to provide continuous casting at Llanwern. No doubt these will finally be granted after further concessions have been wrung from the workforce. It is a myth though that state handouts to BSC are high. A recent BSC survey shows that the British government's aid overall to steel, including energy pricing, coal and transport subsidies, is the lowest of all EEC countries except Italy.[2]

It is unlikely that state aid from member countries to steel companies within the EEC will end by 1984 when scheduled, as union opposition elsewhere in Europe is stronger to the planned cutbacks. The Davignon restructuring plan is thus in tatters. Competitive devaluations of the franc and the depreciation of the pound have made French and British steel cheaper for European firms to import, which will lead to further price cutting and dumping. And while the fall in the pound will lead to higher import prices in Britain, nevertheless productivity in British manufacturing still lags so far behind that of West Germany and France, not to mention Japan, that demand will increase for imports like Italian washing machines and fridges. All the signs are thus for increasing strains within the EEC with BSC's export sales vulnerable to protectionist measures. And with the trend towards increased steel production in Third World centres, excluding the USSR and Eastern bloc countries, it is clear that cutbacks in the EEC steel sector have only just begun.

While there are as yet no takers for BSC's large scale operations like tinplate production and the finishing mills because of high losses, the aim is to sell all BSC's potentially profitable 'downstream' activities leaving only raw steel production in state hands. Thatcher and MacGregor admit that Britain may not be in the forefront of the technical development of steel making over future years, but they argue, we will have the lowest wage cost steel industry in the advanced capitalist world. No wonder the Tories feel well pleased with their efforts so far in the steel industry.

The labour movement's response

While the Labour Party and the TUC have bitterly complained about the Tories' cutbacks, the record of the last Labour government is scarcely blameless. Its plan to concentrate steel production at five huge integrated sites — Llanwern, Port Talbot, Redcar, Ravenscraig and Scunthorpe — was faithfully carried out (See Table 4) with resulting plant closures. In 1977 the Labour government went so far as to offer BSC some £835 million to double steel capacity at Port Talbot from 3 to 6 million tonnes a year while *halving* the 12,000 strong workforce! Fortunately BSC turned down the offer as it doubted the need for such increased capacity.

TABLE 4
British Steel Corporation Steelmaking Production Schedule 2

	Installed Capacity	1982/83 Manned Capacity	Production	****
Sections and Commercial	Liquid Steel	Mt.p.a		
— Teeside	3.8	3.2	2.3	
— Scunthorpe	3.8	2.7	2.1	
— Total	7.6	5.9	4.4	****
Special Steels	3.2	2.4	1.6	
Strip Mills				
— Ravenscraig	3.0	2.2	1.3	
— Llanwern	3.4	1.8	1.5	
— Port Talbot	3.1	2.2	1.7	
— Total	9.5	6.2	4.5	****
BSC Holdings	0.5	0.4	0.3	
Tubes	0.4	0.3	0.3	
Unallocated and Stock Movements	—	—	0.7	
Corporation Totals (Liquid Steel Equivalent of Deliveries)	21.2	15.2	11.8	****
Capacity Utilisation %				
— Versus Installed	100	72	56	****
— Versus 1982-83 Manned		100	78	

In Labour's new Campaigns Document the needs of steelworkers are never mentioned. It commits Labour to keep open the 'Big Five' which is less that Michael Foot's commitment at 1982 conference to a 25 million tonnes a year capacity, which entails retaining *all* existing plant. It also calls into question Labour's commitment to renationalising all concerns privatised by the Tories. Nor are the statements from union leaders about the industry any more encouraging. The TGWU in the CSCTI called for a 'thriving profitable industry', whilst Sirs told the same body he wanted to 'reduce the overheads in the cost system, (then) we will reduce the price of making steel ... to have cooperation between men and management and the opportunity to work one of the most efficient industries in Europe.' Of course this means continuing Sirs 'remarkable cooperation', as Industry Secretary Jenkin has dubbed it so that the Tory government can, as Sirs said, 'help our industry considerably by having a correct exchange rate'.[3] They might do better by exporting Sirs himself.

The ISTC's campaign to save Ravenscraig has been based on similar misconceptions. The one day national strike against closures last December was forced on Sirs by an all-unions delegate conference. Sirs' own approach can best be illustrated by the issue of the union journal, *ISTC Banner*, which headlined: 'All Party National Steel Appeal has a big impact on Government'. It continued: 'Over 500 mayors, councillors, clergymen, businessmen and other community representatives from 52 steel towns gathered in Westminster for a national steel appeal called by Bill Sirs.' And Sirs commented that: 'Because it was an all-party affair ... it was all the more effective.' Stirring stuff. Meanwhile any localised unofficial action has been met by stiff opposition by Sirs over recent years on the grounds that it threatens BSC's drive to become profitable, not to mention threatening Sirs' own position. The recent South Yorkshire action shows that some concessions can be won by militant action with firm, local leadership, but it was the craft unions with their greater militancy and unity who won this particular battle with the BSC, not the ISTC members, who were yet again sold out totally by the national leadership.

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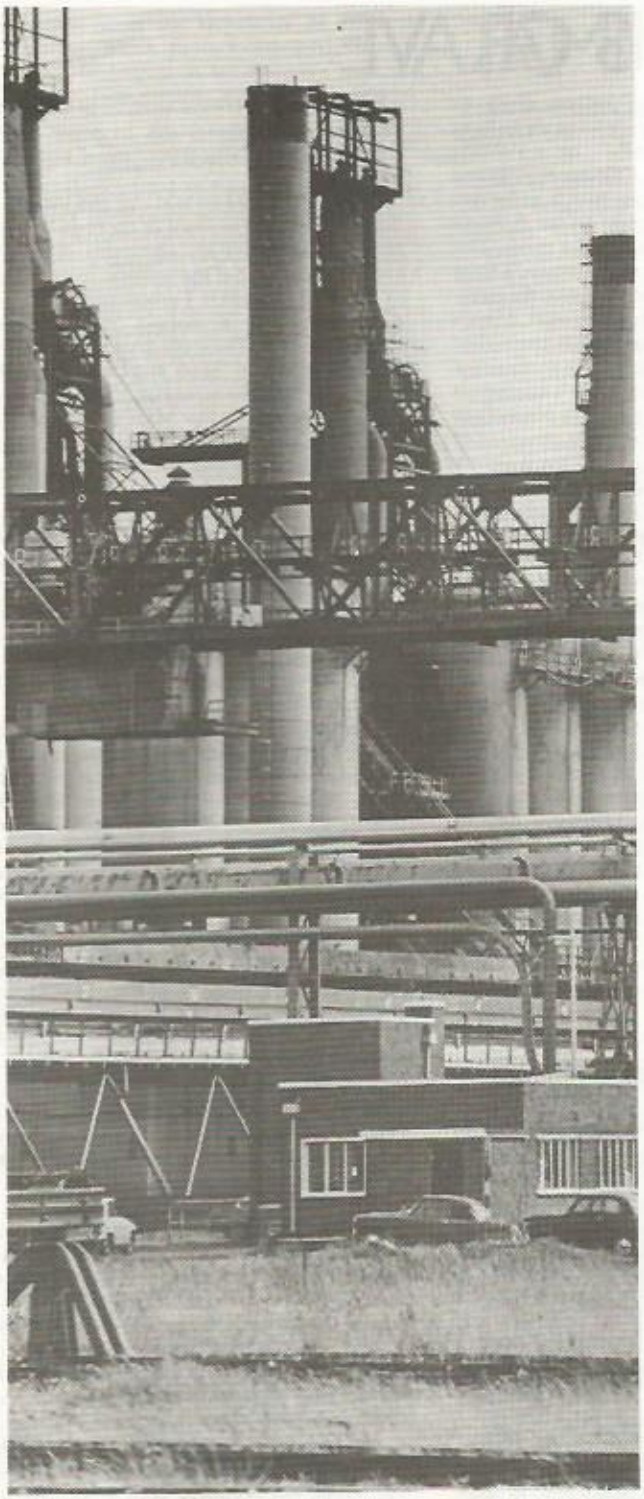

Opposition within the steel unions

Not surprisingly then opposition is growing to the collaboration of the union leadership. Last year's annual ISTC conference voted to transform itself from an advisory to a policy-making body. The executive ratified this move by 11 votes to 10. The union has also affilated to CND, and reserves a quota of places for women delegates to conference. These changes would have been unthinkable before the steel strike, yet the opposition remains weak and fragmented. Unfortunately the right wing has altered the election procedures for the executive in an attempt to further assure its domination by the right. Many activists have been made redundant and many more are demoralised. The continuing divisions into many unions in the industry continues to perpetuate the divisions in the workforce fostered by the Tories. A national Broad Left is sorely needed in the ISTC.

Unfortunately a central plank of the left in the industry is that of import controls. With 'price wars', steel dumping, and 'illegal' importing, as well as the decline in BSC's share of the home market, this option seems very attractive to steelworkers, especially when their union leadership are so commited to such controls. The TGWU suggests: 'We should place restrictions on EEC imports until other countries reduce their capacity as we have'.[4] In other words, import controls until overseas producers sack as many of their workers as BSC has done — so much for international workers' solidarity! This approach comes not only from the British steel unions. 'We need a tariff polity that will keep car and steel imports out — there must be a balance', says a US steelworkers recently made redundant on the East Coast. The prospect looms of another EEC/US steel war, this time involving Third World producers too.

Import controls are not just bad from the standpoint of international trade, they also imply a strategy for the industry based on management and workers uniting to save the 'national' industry against the common 'enemy' of fellow steelworkers overseas. Any notions of linking up with steelworkers from other countries to fight against the EEC rationalisations across Europe are dismissed as utopian. Nor do import controls challenge the way steel firms are run by the multinationals who can transfer operations to other countries to get the most exploitative working conditions. Withdrawal from the EEC and the creation of a 'Fortress Britain' economy sheltering behind import controls is no solution for steel or any other workers. International workers solidarity and workers control of industry would be serious policies to unite steelworkers against their real enemy — the steel bosses and the multinationals.

With the removal of Sid Weighell as General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) there will be increased pressure for the co-ordination of the Triple Alliance of Rail, Steel and Coal, particularly at a local level. Though the Sirs leadership will do its best to undermine any serious national co-operation. The triple alliance and the formation of a Broad Left in the ISTC could also be usefully complemented by the formation of Labour Party workplace branches within the steel industry. They could help to break down the divisions between the different unions in the plants, group together the most political militants, and stimulate discussions on the Labour Party's policies on steel throughout the Labour Party.

The miners clawed their way back from the disasters of the 1960s restructuring programme. Whether the steelworkers can do the same will depend in part on a real alternative to Sirs being built within the steel unions, but also on the capacity of the left in the labour movement as a whole to elaborate a programme of socialist policies for the development of industry, not based on the false solutions of the AES and import controls.

References

1 House of Commons Second Report from the Industry and Trade Committee Session 1982-3, the British Steel Corporation's Prospects, HMSO.

2 Measured in terms of adding to profit (or reducing the loss) per tonne produced.

3 House of Commons Report, p42-60.

4 Letter in evidence to the Select Committee, dated 24/1/83 from Graham Powell, District Secretary.

PAUL HIGHFIELD worked with the South Wales *Steel Sheet* group during and after the 1980 steel strike and is currently a member of the TGWU.

Reviews

MARX TURNS IN HIS GRAVE

PHIL HEARSE

The revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx, by Alex Callinicos, Bookmarks, £3.95; **Marx 100 years on**, edited by Betty Matthews, Lawrence and Wishart, £4.95; **Marx the first 100 years**, edited by David McLellan, Fontana, £3.95.

It was perhaps inevitable that the centenary of Marx's death should produce a crop of books, articles and television programmes which have been deeply partisan and controversial. Marxism is so deeply interwoven with the social and political conflicts of our time, that these three books inevitably reflect in different ways the political views of their authors; or to put it another way, the politics of the authors penetrates their own view of Marx.

The most straightforward of the three is that of Alex Callinicos who is a member of the Central Committee of the British Socialist Workers Party, so there's no mucking about here. The book has got SWP stamped all over it — literally and metaphorically. And that's by no means all bad. In fact Callinicos largely succeeds in his aim of providing a readable introduction to Marx's ideas for socialist militants, in a comphrehensive and concise manner. His account is likely to render slightly more comprehensible all that stuff about Ricardo and Hegel which most of us couldn't quite fathom before, and his chapter on Marx's method is particularly valuable. I particularly liked his defence of the Sixth Thesis of Feuerbach, in which Marx concludes that the 'essence of man' is the 'ensemble of social relations' — and not an unvarying 'human nature'. This *is* the orthodox Marxist view, Norman Geras notwithstanding.

Inevitably perhaps, it's in the chapter on 'Marx Today' that the text gets most convoluted and SWP-ish. Callinicos persists in defending Tony Cliff's ludicrous version of the theory of state capitalism in Russia. The market, it appears, is dominated by state planning and not by the law of value. But the Soviet Union competes with Western capitalism through arms spending, and therefore the law of value re-asserts itself and Russia is state capitalist. I ask you.

Compounding error with silliness Callinicos attempts to explain the comtemporary crisis of the Western economies by the theory of the permanent arms economy. In this version, the post-war boom is put down to arms production — not as a source of superprofit, but as a mechanism for retarding the growth of the organic composition of capital. This in itself would only be viable if you could demonstrate that the average composition of capital in the arms sector was lower than the average in the rest of industry, and that arms spending was entirely financed from surplus value. Even more eccentric however is the notion that the crisis was essentially a *run down* in US arms spending at the beginning of the 1970s, thus allowing the organic composition of capital to rise. In reality all the signs of a decline in long-term growth trends, and the tendency towards a synchronised recession in the western countries, existed after the German recession in 1967. But I digress.

The McLellan book suffers from its 'academic' aprroach. Assembling six authors to write independently on Politics, Economics, Philosophy, Culture, History and Sociology is bound to produce a collection where the effect of Marxism on the different diciplines in the universities is the result. This is particularly true of Tom Bottomore's essay on 'Sociology'. This concludes with the earth-shattering: 'A hundred years after Marx's death Marxism has become firmly established as one of the major paradigms in sociological theory'. God help us. Bottomore's assessment of the value of Marxist theory is precisely to what extent it intersects with the concerns of contemporary sociology itself. Thus it asserts the only worthwhile Marxism to have been 'Western Marxism' — Gramsci, Lukacs, the Frankfurt School, Althusser, Poulantzas and so on. It's not only that the trend in Marxism which these schools represent were, as Perry Anderson has cogently pointed out, the most attached to the universities. It's also that they rejected central elements of not only Stalinism but classical Marxism itself.

Discussing the degeneration of theory under Stalin, Bottomore says: 'Marxism ceased to be a science of society, but instead became the ideology of a political regime. Indeed it had begun to acquire this character in the writings of Lenin and Trotsky — both of whom were political pamphleteers and activists rather than thinkers — in the period before the Revolution'. Anyone who could seriously assign Lenin's *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, or *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* or Trotsky's *Results and Prospects* to the realm of the occasional and incidental political pamphlet, has a rather idiosyncratic view of what Marxist theory is all about — one which replaces the unity of theory and practice with academic 'paradigms'.

By far the best piece in the book is that on 'Philosophy' by Roy Edgely. He takes on the whole question of 'Western Marxism' which pervades the book, by way of posing the problem of whether there exists a 'Marxist philosophy'. He convincingly shows that Marx's work is a rejection of philosophy in favour of historical materialism: 'Marx's materialism is of course *historical* materialism. His conception of thought and theory themselves is a historical materialist conception. That historical perspective is incompatible with dogmatism, but as a point of view which competes with others it is incompatible with comprehensive (philosophical) scepticism...The historical materialist conception of thought implies material social change as a crucial determinant of differential cognitive access'. Thus: 'There is a paradox in Western Marxism. Itself predominantly philosophical, it regards Marx's early work as philosophy. Yet though that early work begins as philosophy, as Marx's own subject and one which he conceives as having intellectual authority over all others, it soon develops a persistently anti-philosophical theme: the end of philosophy'. His conclusion is admirably trenchant: 'Marx's science is materialist and practical, (and) is thereby political and not philosophical...For Marx philosophy is idealist ideology, and his relation to it exemplifies his materialist relation to bourgeois ideology in general; his rejection of it by a process of critical analysis in which he deciphers and appropriates its secret truth about society's practical confusions and contradictions.'

Marx, 100 years on is at one and the same time the best and the worst of the three books. Most of the essays are admirably scholarly and provocative, but the political complexion of the book is frankly Eurocommunist. This gives the book a distinct political and theoretical slant. The scene is set by a piece by Gwyn Williams on 'Marx and Defeat', which re-assesses the class struggles in France from 1848-50. His thesis is that Marx made a radical re-assessment between writing the *Class Struggles in France* and the *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, and that it is in the reflection of *defeats* that Marxism makes most progress. The sting is in the tail of his piece. Just as Marx re-adjusted his perspective, so we have to adjust our perspective in the light of the defeat of the Comintern. Out with Leninism, insurrectionism and the rest, in with Gramsci, 'war of position' as opposed to 'war of movement', and the other leimotifs of Eurocommunism.

This theme is taken up by Alan Hunt, with a more directly political perspective — the rise of representative democracy. According to Hunt, Marx failed to provide an account of politics in bourgeois democratic societies: 'In a profound sense there is no Marxist theory of political democracy'. Everything in politics is in fact changed by political democracy, which requires parties to organise internal and external alliances which are not always 'consistent'. What Hunt of course means is cross-class alliances, historic compromises with the bourgeois parties, popular fronts and so forth. In other words, political democracy means the abandonment of class politics, the expression by political parties of the interests of a single class. Once again poor old Gramsci, Leninist and insurrectionist to the core of his being, is disinterred to give false evidence for these atrocities.

The abandonment of class politics is expressed at a deeper theoretical level in the book. Stuart Hall backs up Laclau's refutation of the idea that ideologies are ascribable to a particular class, or 'represent' the interests of a particular class. The effect of such a refutation is to imply that popular hegemony is not reducible to the hegemony of the working class, or even to an alliance in which the working class plays the leading role. At this point one is tempted to try to make sense of what lies behind this line of reasoning, which has produced such a lamentable move to the right in those significant organisations which take it seriously (the Italian CP). Such a 'discourse' obviously has deep material roots. In a layer of intellectuals polarised by Eurocommunism there is a deeply defeatist mood, which arises from the failure of the working class to take power in the advanced capitalist countries. What has evolved in response is a theoretical framework which effectively displaces the question of working class power by asserting it to be the wrong 'problematic'. Traditional Marxism then gets assailed as 'reductionist' for seeing everything in terms of class struggle, class conflict and so forth. This view entails huge concessions to non-Marxist theories of society, which Tom Bottomore would instantly

Reviews

recognise from his knowledge of classical sociology, which displace class analysis with notions of society as an ensemble of competing interest groups, layers, 'elites' and so forth.

Gwyn Williams' reflections on the defeat of the Comintern however pose another problem, which a book by Lawrence and Wishart on Marx's centenary, should not be allowed to omit. The defeat of the Comintern, and with it the historic defeat of Marxism in the twentieth century, cannot be separated from the question of Stalinism. You can't conduct a reflection on the failure of the working class to take power, without integrating into that reflection the balance sheet of concrete struggles which posed the question of power. If you say 'failure of the working class to take power', then you have to answer the questions posed by Germany 1933, Spain 1936, France and Italy after the Liberation, France in May 1968, Portugal 1975. Edgely is right. Marxism is political. Callinicos is also right. Marxism is about workers' power. After 100 years, as the Eurocommunists continue their 'discourse', that familiar sound of subterranean spinning continues to emanate from Highgate cemetry.

PHIL HEARSE is a member of the *Socialist Action* editorial board.

PLASTIC PEOPLE?

Norman Geras: **Marx and Human Nature**, Verso, 1983, £2.95.

'Marx did not reject the idea of a human nature. He was right not to do so.' Norman Geras' conclusion, backed up by detailed analysis of Marx's writings, which have often been interpreted as arguing against any fixed concept of human nature, is of decisive importance for Marxist analysis.

Most arguments about human actions starting from a conception of fixed human nature are profoundly reactionary, denying the possibility of change and assuming the general attributes of the present generation within its determinate social relations to be characteristic of humankind throughout history. Marx, of course, had no truck with this kind of conception. The actual state of human nature at any time, for Marx, could only be gauged from the totality of the social relations within which the essential and unchanging (or as good as unchanging within the timescale of human evolution) natural attributes of humankind are constrained.

Geras' detailed and painstaking demolition job on 'environmentalist' Marxism removes any excuse for lapsing into 'blank paper' theories of unlimited human variability in arguing against biological determinism. Such theories provide the basis for *Walden 2*, the authoritarian utopia of BF Skinner, not the self-determining Marxist utopia of the associated producers. Marxism is scientific because its utopia corresponds to an unalienated human nature no longer contradicted by its containing social relations.

At 116 pages, the book is too short, especially as 30 of them are devoted to detailed textual analysis of Marx's sixth thesis on Feuerbach. The book ends just where the really interesting questions begin. So we know humans are not plastic; what are they?

TAMING THE WORKERS

Ralph Miliband: **Capitalist Democracy in Britain**, Oxford, 1982, £8.95.

Capitalist Democracy in Britain tells the story of the integration and containment of the working class within the institutions of bourgeois rule. It is an important story and one, as Andrew Gamble argues in *Britain in Decline*, that has decisive consequences for all aspects of economic and social life. But despite his usual talent for the telling comparison and the revealing quotation, Ralph Miliband's long-awaited follow up to his influential *State in Capitalist Society* is a disappointing book in several crucial respects.

First, and very much in the tradition of his earlier book, Miliband consistently overstates the sociological constraints of the state on the possibility of radicalism in government. True, the shared backgrounds and attitudes of senior civil servants and judges have a conservative effect. True, the social isolation of Labour politicians from their supporters, the social aspirations and integration into bourgeois circles of the bureaucracy of labour have led to many sell-outs. But ultimately it is a question of politics that the labour movement has not created leaders committed to sufficiently clear and radical policies to challenge the class basis of the state.

What Miliband consistently ignores in his writing is that the state has a class basis in its economic underpinning quite independently of the class origins of its officers. Any government which embarks on policies which break with the interests of the dominant social classes in any state will first of all create chaos (collapses of confidence, sterling crises etc.). It is only by building a firm base of support for clear and intransigent policies to see this crisis through that fundamental social change can be achieved.

Second, while the British state has proved extremely efficient in taming the working class, this has not been its only function. It is truly remarkable that writing in 1982 Miliband should attempt to analyse the development of the British state without serious consideration of its relationship to different sections of capital and the ruling establishment after all parliament before mass suffrage was designed as a forum for resolving disputes among the ruling class. And while he restricts his account to the period since the passage of the Second Reform Act in 1867, it seems curious that no reference should be made at all to the pre-history of bourgeois democracy, the settlement between the pre-capitalist ruling classes and the emerging bourgeoisie analysed by John Ross in the last issue of *International*, whose character has been so important for the specificity of capitalist democracy *in Britain*.

Despite all these reservations, however, on balance the book can be recommended as an introduction, though a flawed one, to the particular terrain it surveys. It is readable, at times entertaining and will no doubt provide a useful starting point for many educational discussions.

THE OTHER REGISTER

Martin Eve and David Musson (eds): **The Socialist Register 1982, Merlin, 1982, £4.50. This is the nineteenth** *Socialist Register* and the first not to be edited by its founders, Ralph Miliband and John Saville, who we are assured in the preface will be back for the 20th anniversary issue in 1983. It contains much the usual mixture with, if anything, more that is of interest than in recent years. Stuart Hall is in fine form on the battle for socialist ideas in the 1980s; as ever he is readable and thought-provoking though the substance of his argument on the solidity of the Thatcherite ideological ascendancy seems unnecessarily pessimistic hegemony is surely more than a monetary advantage in a war of position.

The greatest strength of the book is in its coverage of Eastern Europe — Bill Lomax's updating of his book *Hungary 1956*, Dennis MacShane's useful account of Solidarity since the Jaruzelski coup, and a reprinted interview with Isaac Deutscher on the history of Polish communism. Ernest Mandel contributes a useful (though slightly dated) account of the Chinese economic crisis and David Ruben and Paul Kelemen provide trenchant though controversial critiques respectively of Marxist writing on the Jewish question (in particular that of Abram Leon) and of Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux's study of the Ethiopian revolution.

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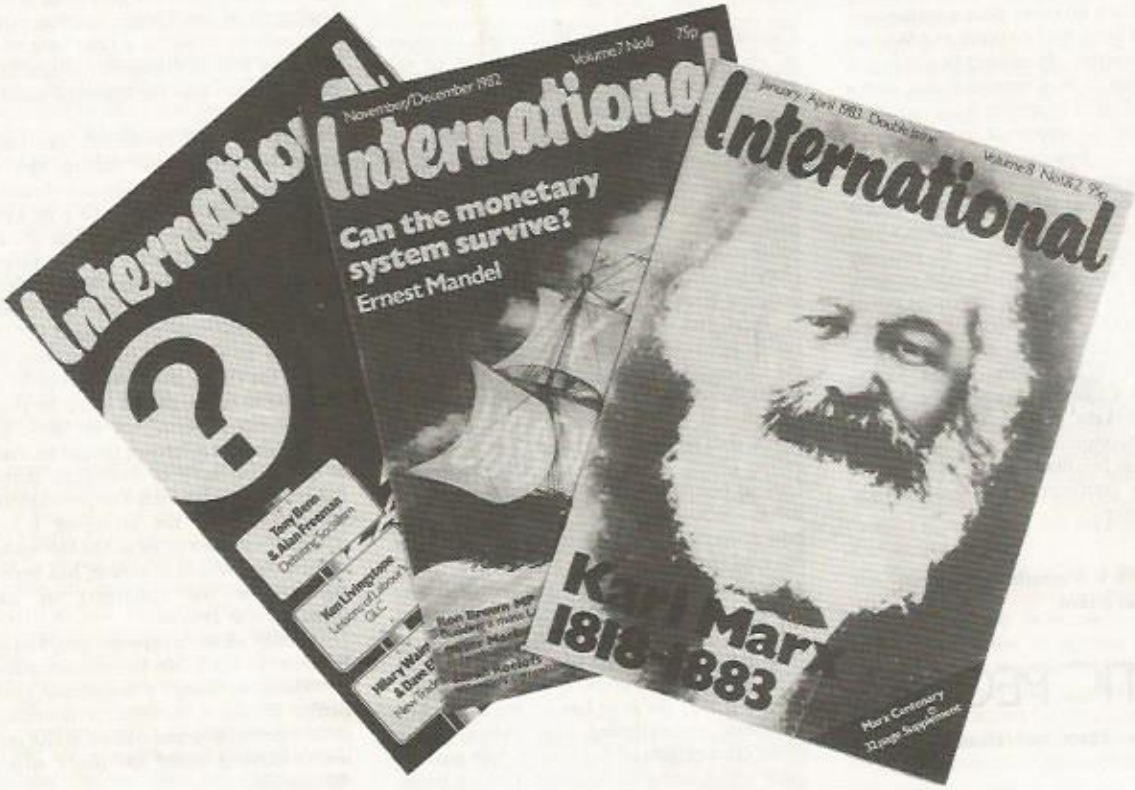

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