

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Crisis in Eastern Europe

8 pages of interviews, reports,
debate and discussion

For a Workers'



Tearing down the Berlin Wall

Europe East and West!

People were dancing on the Berlin Wall, smashing it with hammers, pouring through in thousands with looks of sheer joy and disbelief.

Nobody had expected this to happen so quickly — if at all. After nearly 30 years, a 'fact of life' that everyone had had to come to terms with had disappeared literally overnight.

It had gone, not as the result of diplomatic deals between governments, but through the action of those who had gone onto the East German streets in their hundreds of thousands or had voted with their feet by leaving the country. For the first time since the defeat of the German labour movement by Hitler in 1933, successful radical change in Germany has come from below, independently of the actions of the governments.

This independent action caused Western governments to start talking about the 'dangers of instability' in East Germany.

No-one who saw the faces of the four million who crossed the border last weekend can doubt that the end of the wall was a real act of human liberation. Anyone who has seen Berlin will know why: streets are divided down the middle or end in blank walls.

Border guards stood guard with

machine guns on ghostly disused underground stations; tourists could 'jump over' the wall to spend foreign currency in the East, while most East Berliners could not go the other way without risking minefields or shooting.

The wall was built by the Stalinists in East Berlin in the name of socialism and communism. It helped discredit the whole idea that socialism is about working class liberation and democracy.

Last week a slight disappointment could be felt from Washington that one of the US's best propaganda weapons was no longer around. The collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe has finally nailed the idea that these were egalitarian or progressive states, which could claim to be socialist.

The Berlin Wall ended on 9
Turn to page 3

A serious country for socialists

Clive Bradley looks at the forthcoming election in Brazil

Brazil is not a serious country," Charles de Gaulle is reputed once to have said.

The current somewhat volatile election campaign might have confirmed him in this opinion, European arrogance though it undoubtedly is.

It now seems likely that the winner will be right-of-centre populist demagogue Fernando Collor de Mello. But until his recent disqualification, a close challenger seemed to be Silvio Santos, a Brazilian TV mogul standing on a very unserious ticket.

So discredited are most of the country's supposedly serious politicians that even joke candidates are in with a chance.

Top of the popular hate list is sitting President Jose Sarney, not standing for re-election. Sarney, who travels around everywhere with a much-needed bodyguard, was never elected President.

The army, which vacated power in 1985 after 21 years, had set up an electoral college to choose a civilian ruler. It chose a popular but ageing oppositionist, Tancredo Neves, who promptly died on the eve of taking office. Sarney, who was to have been vice-president, was in fact a defector from the right-wing military backed party.

He has made a terrible mess of being President, from the point of view both of the ruling class and the increasingly poverty stricken masses.

Just as discredited, however, is the "official" opposition from the days of the junta, the clumsily named Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB). For the last two years it has had a thumping majority in Parliament, where it has backed Sarney. The first thing it did, within days of winning the parliamentary election, was approve an austerity programme that provoked a huge wave of strikes. The government was forced, not for the last time, to back down.

Now the candidate of the PMDB for President, Ulysses Guimarães, is the "most rejected" candidate, according to opinion polls, which is to say that nearly 50% of those polled said they would not vote for him in "any hypothesis". Unpopular man.

A poll published by *O Globo* in mid-September gave Ulysses 2.5% of the vote, putting him in seventh place. Top of the poll was Collor (41.1%), followed by Leonel Brizola (14.8%) and 'Lula' of the Workers Party (6.4%). More recent polls suggest Lula might do better.

Brizola is the modern face of traditional Brazilian populism. His party, the Democratic Labour Party, is the inheritor of 'Vargismo', the nationalist-populist-statist movement that largely dominated Brazil from the 1930s through to the coup in 1964.

Under Vargas, strict labour laws were introduced trying and subordinating the labour movement to the state. In a slightly more radical guise, under Joao Goulart, 'Vargismo' scared the ruling class in the early 1960s and led to the coup. Brizola was Goulart's brother-in-law, and seen as a radical figure in that period.

From a socialist point of view, the Workers Party, or PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores) is a lot more interesting. It was born out of the enormous strike movement that began in 1978, of which Lula, a

'The existence of the PT has represented an immense gain for the Brazilian working class'

metalworkers' leader in one of Sao Paulo's big industrial suburbs, became the public face, indeed the personification.

The 1978 strike wave, centred around the big multinational car factories, ended a decade of working class inactivity. In subsequent years it was followed by more strikes, occupations and political upheaval; and it was those that forced the dictatorship to give up power.

The dictatorship had presided over the so-called Brazilian economic "miracle" of fantastically rapid economic growth. The growth was accompanied by huge social inequality, which capitalist apologists were always less keen to note: in Rio de Janeiro, appalling slums still get washed down the cliffs every time it rains, while a short distance away the fabulously rich enjoy their pleasure beaches. But an economic transformation it certainly was.

The dictatorship was forced to allow a return to civilian rule, which

it finally did in 1985. But it tried to control the transition. There were to be no direct elections for President. The PT was instrumental in launching the massive 'Dereitas Ja' (direction elections now) campaign that year, the biggest mass campaign in Brazilian history.

Various tendencies came together to form the PT, which became a legal party in 1980. Within the unions, oppositionists had been secretly organising for years, often in connection with the radical church. Many of these union oppositionists were syndicalists, looking to democratic rank and file organisation in the factories and rejecting political organisation; but many also saw the need to supplement trade union activity.

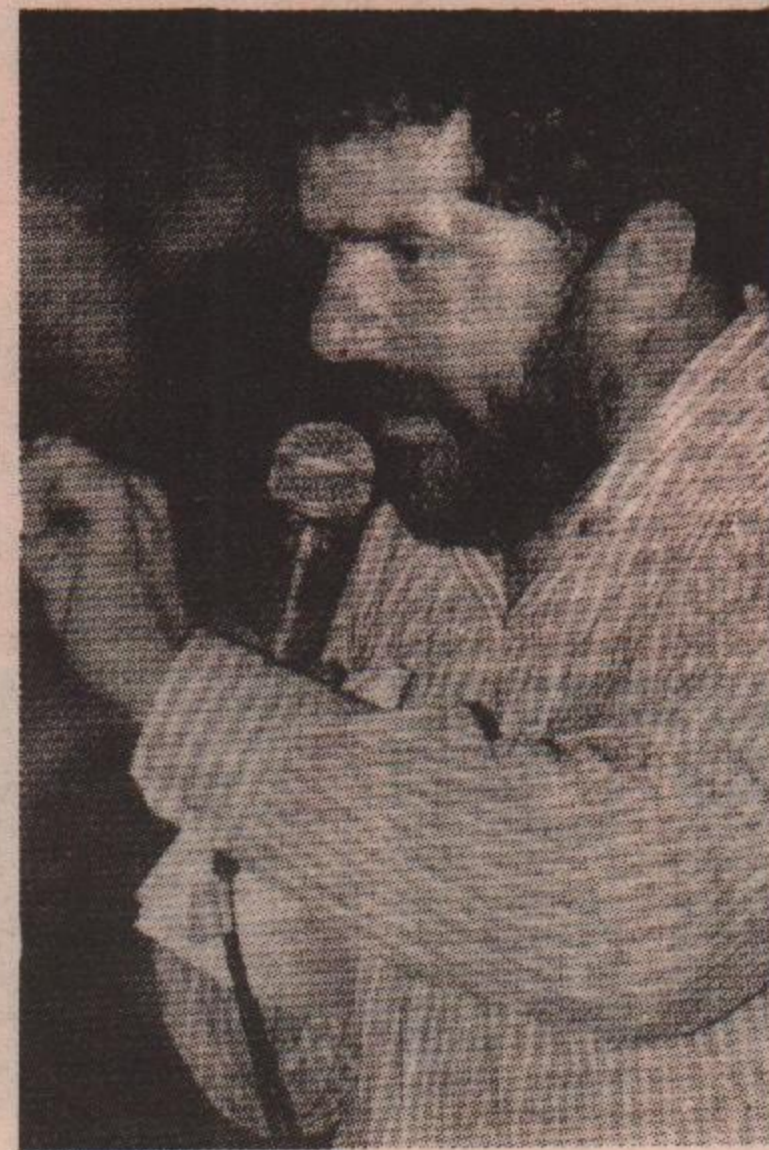
Other forces, including Trotskyists, different leftist currents re-emerging after the devastation of the sixties (pro-Cubans, ex-guerrillaists), and community activists, united to form the PT.

Now the PT is a major force in Brazilian politics, although undoubtedly it has moved to the right since 1980.

Earlier this year the PT scored important victories in municipal elections, most dramatically in Sao Paulo, South America's biggest metropolis. The new PT council under Louisa Erendinha attempted to establish democratic "people's councils" in the city to involve the masses in decision making. Facing economic pressures even worse than local councils in Britain, they have since raised transport prices. How serious this retreat may be is hard to assess from this distance.

The existence of the PT has represented an immense gain for the Brazilian working class, which is the strongest and most independently minded in Latin America. It works closely with the CUT, a ten-million strong rank and file-based union federation now much more powerful than the old official structure (these days called the CGT). The CUT jealously guards its independence from any political party, but it is PT militants who dominate it politically.

14 and 15 March this year saw a general strike by 35 million workers against a new austerity programme (the Plano Verao, 'Summer Plan', nicknamed by the workers the Plano Ladrao, 'Thieves' Plan'). The CGT collaborated in this action, but the CUT largely organised it. A further militant strike wave followed in May.



Lula

The PT has moved to the right, although there remains a distinct left wing in the party, and several Trotskyist groups function in it (with some success it would seem). Lula's programme for the election is quite vague, saying little beyond the call for renegotiating Brazil's colossal foreign debt in tandem with other Latin American countries (a policy criticised by unionists and the PT left as 'third worldist', ie. failing to focus on the fact that the Latin American countries are divided into classes).

Lula himself, apparently impressed by Sweden, has become increasingly ambivalent on the issue of the PT's commitment to socialism; according to reports, he no longer calls for the nationalisation even of the banks, although this remains party policy.

But the PT is still a long way from Western European social democracy. Its future course could depend a lot on the activity of socialists within it. It has half a million members, and certainly any socialist policy for Brazil must start with them.

The current elections reflect the increasing impasse in Brazilian politics and society. They are the first direct presidential elections since 1960, but there is widespread cynicism about them, which enables someone like Collor, who has no policies but is popular for opposing corruption, to gain a lot of support. The PT also has been subject to a scandal-mongering campaign about corruption.

Whoever wins, and it is very unlikely to be Lula, Brazil will continue to face huge problems of inequality, debt, and inflation. But from within its strong and militant workers' movement, inspiring things are sure to emerge. Brazil is a country for socialists to watch. Charles de Gaulle was only very superficially right.

Doctors and "women's complaints"

WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

Doctors all too often treat their women patients very badly, especially where it is a matter of "women's complaints".

How do I know? Guess! Like so many women I have chronic cystitis. Although I don't have the back-up knowledge, I do know about cystitis.

I know what antibiotics I need, and when I need them. I know how to manage the symptoms and how to avoid attacks.

This knowledge has had to be gained over many painful years, and it had to be gained without the help of the medical profession.

Thankfully, the medical profession does now advise women on how to help themselves through an attack and the Health Education Council does produce a booklet. But women are still sent for clinical procedures which do nothing to help.

Doctors do not (in my experience) suggest herbal teas and tablets to relieve the symptoms, or even tell women to take an analgesic for the pain. Only one doctor has ever provided me with medicine to combat thrush — the inevitable side effect of antibiotics.

Because of this experience I am a firm believer in medical self-management.

Take another aspect of my cystitis problem. I am allergic to penicillin. At least I think I am. I don't know for sure because I was a child when I had the allergic reaction to the mystery antibiotic, prescribed to me by a 'locum' doctor.

For a regular antibiotics junkie this is a bit of a nuisance.

A sympathetic doctor once made me describe my childhood symptoms, and deduced that they were most likely caused by penicillin. Since then I have avoided it.

But most doctors don't have time for that sort of thing.

The simplest way to avoid confusion is to take your notes from doctor to doctor. When you sign on with a new practice you would present her/him with your notes showing childhood illnesses, hospital treatments, serious problems, recurring diseases, family history.

Most doctors will ask you these questions when you visit for the first time — and I for one feel a fool for not being able to answer. Have I had rubella? I don't know. But it's a fairly serious question for women of childbearing age. When was my last smear test and what was the result? What is my blood group?

Study after study has shown that self-management of chronic disease saves both suffering and doctors' time.

This is particularly true for chronic pain caused by conditions like sickle-cell anaemia. Research shows that people managing their own dosage of painkillers use smaller quantities, feel less pain, feel more in control of their lives and have fewer side effects.

In the case of a disease like cystitis a half-hour session with a doctor or nurse, backed up with literature, basic diagnostic equipment (litmus paper!) and prescriptions for antibiotics and thrush tablets would put sufferers back in control of their lives and save hours of misery and doctors' time.

Gays marry in Denmark

OUT AND PROUD

By Edward Ellis

History was made recently when a law was passed in Denmark effectively allowing homosexuals to marry.

Some local authorities in Italy have since insisted that they thought of it already, but it would seem that Denmark is the first national government to permit such a thing to happen.

In one of those unbearably pious Sunday religious programmes, Joan Bakewell recently talked to several Danes about how they felt about this, and from politicians to theologians to Jo(e) Public, they all seemed pretty astonishingly

enlightened by the standards of the average Brit. Enough to make you want to emigrate.

Danish homosexuals have been given 'equal partner status', which amounts to a marriage certificate. Marriage is a funny thing. For myself I can't see why anybody, of whichever sexuality, would think a piece of paper makes any difference at all to their relationship. I certainly can't see why anyone should want to recite a few bits of neo-medieval ritual in front of a man in a dismally chic-less frock in the extraordinary belief that some divine intelligence would be not only listening, but interested. Still, if people want to do that, they have the right to, and likewise if they only want a registry office.

Legal recognition of couplehood does have advantages, of course, from tax relief to inheritance rights, if your spouse has got anything worth inheriting. But for lots of lesbians and gay men, even less formal recognition of their relationships would make life much easier. Some councils operate a policy whereby gay couples as much as heterosexual

ones have a right to rehousing if the relationship breaks down; but we need to go a lot further than that.

Some of the most heartrending stories are to do with bereavement. Often lesbians and gay men get nothing when their partner dies, possibly not even an invitation to the funeral. A few months ago a gay man in New York won the right to remain in the apartment owned by his lover, who had died of AIDS. This court ruling was taken to mean that quasi-married status could be conferred on American homosexuals.

Without such rulings, people can get thrown out of their homes, or at least suffer material hardship in the wake of a partner's death that no heterosexual couple would expect. There was a big hue and cry this year when Russell Harty's lover fought to get a better financial settlement than he was originally awarded after Harty's death. But he was only doing what any 'common law' wife or husband would do.

More generally, society's reluctance to accept the legitimacy of

homosexual relationships can be very painful for lesbians and gay men. You are unlikely to get compassionate leave from work if your partner is sick; probably no employer anywhere would accept that the breakdown of a relationship is equivalent in emotional distress to its heterosexual equivalent.

Nor do most families.

Even at the most mundane level, lesbians and gay men often find it hard to talk about their partners, for example at work. Even if you're 'out', it can be more difficult to refer casually to your relationship, and certainly to traumas in it.

Marriage is fine for those that want it, and Britain should follow Denmark's example. But most important is the recognition, by society at large, that homosexual relationships are as valid as heterosexual ones, as exciting, boring, romantic, sordid, contented or sad.

We do need symbols of equality; but even more we need real equality that can be felt in our daily lives.



The Brandenburg Gate

How the Wall was broken

By Bruce Robinson

If anyone has told me a year ago that the Berlin Wall would not exist today, I would have said that they were mad!

The speed and force of the development of the mass movement in the GDR and the depth of the regime's crisis has taken everyone by surprise — from the CIA and President Bush (seen on Friday looking at a map of Germany in some puzzlement) through to Trotskyists.

The movement started following widespread indignation at the obvious rigging of local elections in the spring. It was obviously spurred on by events in Poland and Hungary, which demonstrated that the Soviet Union was prepared to tolerate independent political developments within the Warsaw Pact.

Throughout October demonstrations calling for reform, free travel, a free media, the right of free assembly and free elections spread throughout the GDR and grew until they included hundreds of thousands of people.

On 18 October Egon Krenz replaced Erich Honecker as head of the SED. He seems now to have decided early on that he could not use repression against the opposition, particularly without Soviet backing. Krenz, Honecker's hand-picked successor, who congratulated the Chinese on the Tiananmen Square massacre, then began a policy of conceding just as much as he thought was necessary to prevent things getting worse.

This included a 'dialogue offensive', in which party leaders who until the day before had been die-hard Stalinist backers of Honecker called meetings to listen to what the people had to say to them. Most then concluded that the people's complaints had substance and that the SED was just about to put everything right!

This naturally bred further cynicism, especially when most of the rulers were the same people as before. As always in pre-revolutionary situations, concessions merely appear as a sign of weakness and fuel further demands.

The government allowed GDR citizens out of the country to Czechoslovakia and large numbers again began going into the West German embassy and emigrating.

Having in the meantime seen

Gorbachev in Moscow, Krenz responded by getting the Politburo to resign en bloc on 8 November. The SED Central Committee elected a new one, two-thirds of them old Honecker supporters, some of whom have subsequently resigned after being voted out by local SED organisations.

Only the Dresden party leader, Hans Modrow, now confirmed as Prime Minister, had a serious reputation as a reformer, partly because he had been among the first to talk to demonstrators, before it became fashionable.

At the same time, West German Chancellor Kohl began to put on pressure by hinting that economic aid would be traded for reform and calling on the SED to give up its monopoly on power.

At this point Krenz first conceded the right to free travel and later said that free elections will be held. The removal of border restrictions was partly an attempt to end the exodus and partly an attempt to get some economic aid from the West Germans.

Of the 4 million East Germans who crossed the border last weekend only about 10,000 applied to stay and the flow through Hungary and Czechoslovakia has virtually stopped.

On the economic front, it looks unlikely that any large-scale aid will be given until the economy is reformed along lines acceptable to the West German banks.

An emergency congress of the SED is now to be held in December to allow the election of a new Central Committee to present a post-Honecker face for the SED. Like the Polish and Hungarian CPs, the SED is in a race against time to try to appear seriously reform-minded before having to face real elections.

This has even gone as far as closing the shops with Western goods in the basement of the Central Committee building and removing plush furniture from the homes of Politburo members in case the demand that they be open to the public is conceded!

It is not yet clear under what conditions the elections will be held or who will be able to take part. The 'leading role' of the SED is written into the constitution and there have been statements that only parties accepting the constitution will be able to stand. However, it is unlikely that, in the present situation, the SED could get away with rigged elections. What will come out of them depends on how well the opposition can organise and on what programme.

For a Workers' Europe

From page 1

November — 71 years to the day after the revolt of the workers, soldiers and sailors brought down the Kaiser (Emperor). Like that revolution, last week's events only mark a beginning — a beginning that could lead in several different directions.

Within the GDR now everything is still up for grabs. Krenz has announced elections for next year, though it is still unclear under what conditions they will take place. New Forum, the opposition umbrella group, has gone from a few dozen to 200,000 members in two months. It may soon be legalised. Members of the government have held semi-official talks with members of it.

An action programme published by the government has promised a freer press, independent courts, economic changes and independent unions but leaves in place the SED's 'leading role', which is unacceptable to the opposition.

Nobody trusts Krenz or sees him as a credible reformer. On Monday 13th, between 200,000 and 500,000 people marched in Leipzig and the opposition is still growing and demanding more guarantees of real change.

For a united workers' Germany!

EDITORIAL

Should Germany be reunified? Yes.

Neither the USSR, nor the US, nor France, nor Britain, has any right to stop the German people reuniting the country if they want to.

They say a united Germany of 80 million people would be too powerful and would destabilise Europe. How are the Germans supposed to take that from the world superpowers, the USSR and the US? From Britain, which only recently had a huge colonial empire and is still the Western world's second military power? From France, which still has a sizeable colonial empire?

Only nationalist prejudice can blame the whole German people for Hitler's crimes. The first victims of Hitler were, after all, Germans — German communists, German socialists, German Jews. And most Germans today had not even been born when Hitler died.

The German people have the right to reunify their country. It would be best if that reunification

comes as part of uniting all Europe, but the Germans have the right to reunify anyway.

All the powers-that-be are against reunification in the short term. The rulers of both Germanies fear the reactions of the superpowers. The Eastern bureaucrats also fear that reunification would mean them losing all their powers and privileges, as their territory was swamped by West German capital.

Socialists do not accept the concerns of the capitalists and the bureaucrats. But we are not nationalists, either. For us reunification is not a fetish or an overriding concern.

Most Germans seem to think likewise. The mass demonstrations in East Germany have had very few slogans about reunification. The leaders of the East German opposition say that they don't want East Germany absorbed into the West German system: instead they want a "better socialism" in East Germany.

At mass rallies in West Berlin the day the Berlin Wall was opened, the German national anthem was booed. Kohl was booed, too, not only, it seems, because he is a right-winger, but because of his nationalist rhetoric about reunifica-

tion.

Opinion polls in West Germany show a big majority for reunification in principle, but a small minority seeing it as an immediate answer.

One reason, doubtless, is the pressure of the capitalists and bureaucrats on public opinion. Another is that the question of reunification is complicated by the different social regimes in East and West Germany.

Reunification would mean not just political change, but also changing the economic and social regime in at least one part of Germany. The current talk of reunification is based on the assumption that a private-profit economy will be restored in East Germany.

Socialist Organiser does not believe East Germany is socialist. We do not believe that its state-monopoly system is better than capitalism. But we do not want the state-monopoly system replaced by capitalism. We want it replaced by working class socialism.

If the grip of the bureaucrats over East Germany's workers and over East Germany's factories is to be broken, we want it replaced not by the profit-grabbing of Daimler-Benz, Hoechst, or the Deutsche Bank, but by workers' control and collective workers' ownership. To win democratic rights, the East German workers should look to their own struggle, not to what the West German capitalists may grant them.

Therefore, while we say reunify Germany, we say more than this: we say, reunify Germany on the basis of workers' liberty East and West! Reunify Germany on the basis of the workers overthrowing the bureaucrats in the East and the capitalists in the West!

Monday or by phone Monday

PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Printed by Press Link International (UK) Ltd (TU).

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.

Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of *Socialist Organiser*.

'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823, London
SE15 4NA. Phone 01 639 7965.

Latest date for reports: first post

Is Stalinism a step forward?

Are the Eastern Bloc systems workers' states in any sense at all? Are they an advance on capitalism — half the way, or quarter of the way, towards socialism? Everyday evidence says, more and more emphatically, no. Yet many anti-Stalinist socialists still say yes. Socialist Organiser (which says no) debated last Monday, 6 November, with Socialist Outlook and Briefing (which say yes).

John O'Mahony from Socialist Organiser opened debate. In previous debates Socialist Outlook speakers have not insisted on the term "workers' states" for the Eastern Bloc, choosing to take their stand instead on the term "post-capitalist".

Yet what's happening today shows that post-capitalist is precisely what the Eastern Bloc states are not. They do not represent a whole stage of history more progressive than capitalism. They are not in transition from capitalism to socialism. They are a historical dead end.

The Eastern Bloc bureaucracies

have been the sole rulers of society over decades. That record stamps them as ruling classes, albeit with peculiar features.

To say, on the contrary, that the workers rule there defies common sense. The only possible theoretical argument could be that a nationalised economy, with some planning and the overthrow of the old ruling class, is necessarily an advance on capitalism, and some sort of workers' state. But history demolishes that argument.

Trotsky and the Bolsheviks never believed that socialism would be possible in Russia alone. They advocated a workers' revolution that would have to be spread to other, more advanced, capitalist countries before socialism could be possible.

But the other revolutions were defeated. The Bolsheviks conducted a controlled retreat, with the New Economic Policy, reviving the market, allowing petty capitalism to develop. Alongside the NEP bourgeoisie, a bureaucratic elite developed round Stalin.

The bureaucracy rose above the working class, balanced between the working class and the bourgeoisie, suppressed the working class opposition and then turned on the bourgeoisie. From the early '30s the bureaucracy became the sole controller of the economic structure and the sole master of the surplus product (as Trotsky described it retrospectively in 1940).

The bureaucracy could manage some economic progress by combining imported technology with vast armies of dragooned labour. But as early as 1935 Trotsky pointed out that the bureaucracy's capacity for economic progress would vanish with the need to introduce more advanced technology.

In 1939 Trotsky said that the bureaucracy had all the features of a ruling class apart from stability (eg. the right of inheritance) and a clear role in history. But that same year he conceded the theoretical



August 1961, when the Berlin Wall was built

possibility that the bureaucracy could become a new ruling class on the basis of a fully nationalised economy.

He still insisted that the USSR was a "degenerated workers' state". But he said that if the bureaucracy proved to have more stability than he predicted, then he would have to revise his attitude and admit it had been a ruling class.

After the Second World War, the bureaucracy, far from being overthrown, expanded its control into Eastern Europe. It was imperialism. Imperialism is not just the expansion of monopoly capitalism analysed by Lenin in 1916; it has other forms, and the USSR is one of those.

Meanwhile Stalinist movements in Yugoslavia and China led autonomous revolutions creating systems similar to the USSR.

Those developments made the

"workers' state" thesis untenable. But *Socialist Outlook's* forerunners argued that Yugoslavia, China, Poland and so on were "workers' states" like the USSR.

This led them, for example, credulously to accept the Maoists' claims of tremendous progress during the Great Leap Forward of 1958-60, when in fact some 20 million people died. They didn't call for a workers' political revolution against Mao until 1967.

They were also confused and divided, for example, in their response to the Polish workers' struggles in 1980-1. After martial law in December 1981, Solidarnosc called for a boycott of Polish goods.

The group of which *Socialist Outlook* was then part, the IMG, refused to give that solidarity to the Polish workers. Some people in the IMG wanted to give solidarity, but they were paralysed by others who shied away from action against the Polish "workers' state".

Phil Hearse spoke from *Socialist Outlook*. The bureaucratically centralised Stalinist economies are in a massive, and potentially terminal, crisis.

The historical balance sheet is that they were very good at carrying through basic industrialisation, but incapable of developing a dynamic of intensive growth and innovation. Gorbachev's proposals have little chance of working.

There are two basic solutions to the crisis of the deformed and degenerated workers' states — either the restoration of capitalism or the establishment of workers' power and a self-managed society. We want workers' power and the overthrow of the bureaucracy, so you might think that not much divides us politically in this debate.

But there is one programmatic difference: *Socialist Organiser* no longer defends the bureaucratised workers' states against imperialism. For them it is a matter of indifference whether these countries are ruled by the Stalinist bureaucracies on the basis of collectivised property, or dominated by imperialism.

Indeed, when *Socialist Organiser* says that there is nothing fundamental, as far as the working class is concerned, between Stalinist states and the imperialist-dominated states, except that in some of the capitalist states the workers have more freedom to organise, it comes very close to saying that capitalist rule is preferable. In the view of *Socialist Outlook*, however, the destruction of the socialised property relations in the workers' states and their replacement by capitalism would be a world-historic disaster.

And *Socialist Organiser* are irresponsible because they disagree

among themselves on whether the Stalinist states are "state-capitalist" or "bureaucratic collectivist". How can they know whether there is a ruling class if they do not have a collective theory about the mode of production?

Socialist Organiser says that the bureaucratically dominated societies developed the productive forces in a broadly parallel way to capitalism. But that would imply that the 20th century has been dominated by historically redundant revolutions which didn't solve anything.

The seizure of power by post-capitalist regimes was irrelevant because the productive forces would have been developed by imperialism anyway. The vast bulk of 20th century history has been a historical detour.

But this is a massive piece of historical speculation. The collectivised societies created by the Cuban, Chinese, Yugoslav and Russian revolutions did industrialise their countries. That is historical fact. How can you know that imperialism would have developed those countries similarly? The whole point of the theory of permanent revolution was that imperialism would be incapable of industrialising the semi-colonial countries.

One historical comparison is devastating and irrefutable: between China and India. Compare India, dominated by imperialism, to China, even with its brutal bureaucracy: China's conditions are much better in longevity, infant mortality, and so on.

One of the factors behind the rebellion this summer was the bureaucracy's attempt to remove the "Iron Rice Bowl" enjoyed by the Chinese workers. There is no "Iron Rice Bowl" in India.

When the Chinese workers rebelled this summer, they said they didn't want a return to capitalism, they wanted socialism with a human face. The basic question is this: does it matter if capitalism is restored in the bureaucratised workers' states? Our answer is that it does matter. The masses would be worse off.

If you go by formal arguments about workers' liberty and the rights to organise, what conclusion do you come to? In the United States workers have the right to organise trade unions independent of the state. So are they freer than workers in Cuba? If you say yes, that means critical support for American intervention to overthrow the Cuban regime!

Shachtman said that the bureaucratised workers' states were characterised by totalitarianism, modern slaves, and the complete control of society by the bureaucracy. It's not true. It's bizarre that *Socialist Organiser* should move towards such ideas at the same time as the mass movements are emerging in the Eastern Bloc.

In the Eastern Bloc there are social gains to be defended against capitalism — security of employment, social services, rhythm of work, cheap housing, cheap transport, and so on, all of which reflect the suppression of market relations in those countries. And it is absolutely wrong to say that the masses have no social power in those countries, as alleged by the old Cold War theory of totalitarianism. The USSR today is alive with politics. It is not all controlled by a tiny group of bureaucrats at the top.

And it is not true that the USSR is imperialist. All pre-capitalist forms of imperialism involved systematic plunder of the subject states. But today the USSR subsidises the East European states and Cuba. Contrast that with the Philippines. At least 40 per cent of

Conference

Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc

A labour movement event
Saturday 27 January 1990
 11.00 — 5.00
 University of London Union,
 Malet St, London WC1

• Creche • Stalls • Food
 • Social in the evening — Palms Bar,
 4th Floor, ULU

Tickets, in advance, £8 (waged)/£4 (low waged & students)/£2 (unwaged)
 From Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB), 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5. Cheques to 'Solidarity Conference'

Speakers include:

- Speakers from the Soviet Union, speaking about free trade unionism
- A speaker from the Polish Socialist Party (RD) in Warsaw, on the fight for women's liberation in Poland and the current attack on Polish women's abortion rights
- Cheung Siu Ming (National Secretary of the Chinese Solidarity Campaign) on the need for democracy in China
- Greg Benton (Chinese Department, Leeds University), on the tradition of dissent in China
- Lei Wei Ping (from Front for a Democratic China-UK) — an eyewitness report from Tiananmen
- Gunther Minnerup on German reunification
- Hillel Ticktin (Soviet Studies Department, Glasgow University) — The Soviet Union in Crisis
- Peter Tatchell on the fight for lesbian and gay rights in Eastern Europe
- Adam Novotny — workers and national conflict in Yugoslavia
- Bill Lomax on Hungarian workers in the '56 uprising
- John O'Mahony — why the British labour movement should back workers in the Eastern Bloc



Barricade erected just before the Berlin Wall was built

economic activity there is controlled by the US, and at least 80 per cent of the people live in absolute poverty. Those two facts are connected.

Of course the turmoil of political revolution can create a chance of capitalist restoration. A risk-free political revolution is impossible. We still support political revolution. But we insist that the restoration of capitalism would be a historical catastrophe for the working class.

The workers' states, despite the bureaucracies, have acted as a material buffer against the real barbarism of ecological catastrophe and world war — not the fake barbarism of Shachtman's description of Stalinism.

From the floor, **Belinda Weaver** told Phil Hearse that *Socialist Organiser* is not in favour of capitalism! We don't want capitalism in the Soviet Union; we want a socialist revolution there and in every country.

But East German workers who know about conditions in West Germany prefer the West. If you're a worker in the Eastern Bloc, the bureaucrats can put you into a psychiatric hospital or a labour camp, you can't have a free trade union, you don't have freedom of speech, you can't put out a newspaper.

If we tell Eastern Bloc workers: "At least you're halfway there, you've got nationalised property", they'll tell us it's bullshit. Better "rhythms of work"? All you've got is the rhythm of people stamping their feet in the food queues trying to keep warm.

Maybe China has done better economically than India. But is the system in China what we want? It isn't. The workers don't rule. If they protest they get shot down in

Tiananmen Square. That's not an advance on capitalism, it's barbaric.

Mike Phipps from *Socialist Newsletter* defended the definition of the Stalinist states as workers' states.

They could not be a "historical dead-end" if they developed the productive forces. And if new ruling classes have developed the productive forces, then we are in for a whole historical epoch of state capitalism. The next progressive class on the agenda is not the working class, it is the state-capitalist class.

The Stalinist states lack the freedom to organise — though that's changing in the USSR — but they have developed the productive forces and culture.

Martin Thomas said that the Eastern Bloc states are not just nationalised economies. They are nationalised economies plus totalitarian or semi-totalitarian states and huge privileges for the bureaucracies.

To say that these systems are much better than capitalism — so much better that their replacement by capitalism would be "a historic catastrophe" — is to say that the nationalised property is much more important than workers' rights. It is to say that what the bureaucracies have done in the way of nationalising property is much more important than workers' rights. It is to give undeserved credit to the bureaucracies.

It is also to gloss up the conditions of the workers, talking about "social gains" when Soviet miners have to strike for the demand that they should get a flat **within ten years!** Phil Hearse said that Stalinism was only "fake" bar-

barism. So Phil is so tough that he doesn't find labour camps and mass slaughter barbaric?

The differences aren't over our attitude to the bureaucracies' current moves to denationalise industry and restore capitalism. *Socialist Organiser* is against those moves just as much as *Socialist Outlook*, though our argument to the Eastern Bloc workers would certainly not be that their status quo represents huge gains.

And the differences aren't over whether the US should invade Cuba. We don't like the system in Cuba, but we defend Cuban self-determination against US imperialism.

The difference is over our attitude when workers move against the bureaucracies with confused ideas. *Socialist Organiser* says: support the workers. *Socialist Outlook* tends to say: support the workers if they have clear socialist ideas, but watch out in case they threaten the great progressive work done by the bureaucracies.

After other contributions from the floor, the main speakers summed up.

Phil Hearse said that in the USSR and China today workers are mobilising to defend the social gains which these so-called modern slaves and victims of totalitarianism have established under the bureaucratic regimes. In China the workers were defending the gains of relative equality and job security. In the USSR the workers defend the gains of cheap housing and job security threatened by perestroika.

But from *Socialist Organiser's* viewpoint, why not support an American invasion of Cuba? Maybe the invasion would create the conditions for free trade unions in Cuba.

It's not true that *Socialist*

Outlook only supports the workers if they're opposing the bureaucrats on the right lines. Our comrades supported the Hungarian revolution in 1956 although many of the workers had social-democratic, Catholic, or even counter-revolutionary ideas. In 1980-1 we supported the Polish workers.

Socialist Outlook is for the political revolution. *Socialist Organiser* doesn't even have a new theory of its own, yet it says everyone else is wrong.

John O'Mahony said — suppose it's true that the Stalinist regimes have given the workers some social benefits. That's good. But we're not interested in a totalitarian state keeping the workers as suppressed but contented sheep. Our concern for democracy is not a matter of abstractions, but of the preconditions for our class to organise itself as a force for revolution.

Even if everything *Socialist Outlook* says about the benefits of Stalinism is true, the whole attitude is wrong. For us the working class must be the self-acting subject of history, not the passive, imprisoned, recipient of the welfare benefits of the totalitarian Stalinist states.

We do not want to see the Stalinist states conquered by imperialism. It's a fact that the workers in America have more rights than in any Stalinist state, but it doesn't follow at all that if the Americans conquered a Stalinist state they would then benignly extend the rights of their own country to the colony. That's not how imperialism works.

We don't want a capitalist restoration. We want to replace the existing Stalinist nationalised economies by workers' power. But what's your attitude when a mass workers' movement, as in Poland — for various reasons — wants to restore market forces, and the bureaucracy wants to retain nationalised property? What's most important? In our view, the free activity of the working class is more important than nationalised economy under a bureaucracy.

Socialist Outlook are soft on Stalinism. Trotsky believed the Soviet Union was an advance on capitalism. But Trotsky hated the Stalinist regime. He would never have praised the pauper welfare benefits of the totalitarian states as if they were very important.

This stress on the welfare benefits of Stalinism is new for *Socialist Outlook's* political current. They used to stress its allegedly progressive significance, its 'vanguard role' in the world revolution. There seems to be a slow retreat from the old position.

Of course, *Socialist Outlook* aren't Stalinists. Of course they

want the same thing as we do, a regime of democratic workers' councils. But that's not enough. *Socialist Outlook's* history is one of repeatedly developing illusions, for periods long or short, in the ruling bureaucrats. For China, for example, *Socialist Outlook's* forerunners did not support a political revolution until 1967 or 1969. For Cuba, *Socialist Outlook* still doesn't support a political revolution, unless they have made some recent change of position.

Socialist Outlook have the same programme as us, but lose sight of who is going to carry it through, and are willing for whole periods to accept the bureaucracies as the historical protagonists, with criticisms, but also with great illusions, as when they gave credence to the Maoists' claims about the great leap forward.

So *Socialist Outlook* are Trotskyists on the Soviet Union — for political revolution. In other Stalinist states where there have been autonomous revolutions, they have looked at the bureaucrats not with the eyes of the Trotskyists of the 1930s, but with the eyes of another group of Communists from the 1930s, the Brandlerites.

The Brandlerites were critical of Stalin, they wanted democracy but they did not believe the bureaucracy was an alien force and they did not believe in political revolution.

Likewise *Socialist Outlook*, for a whole historic period, accepted the Maoist bureaucracy as the protagonist of history. Because the working class was in disarray throughout the world and Stalinists in backward countries were making revolutions, *Socialist Outlook's* forerunners accepted those Stalinist petty-bourgeois bureaucrats as the protagonists of history. How does that look when the Chinese working class has become an active force again?

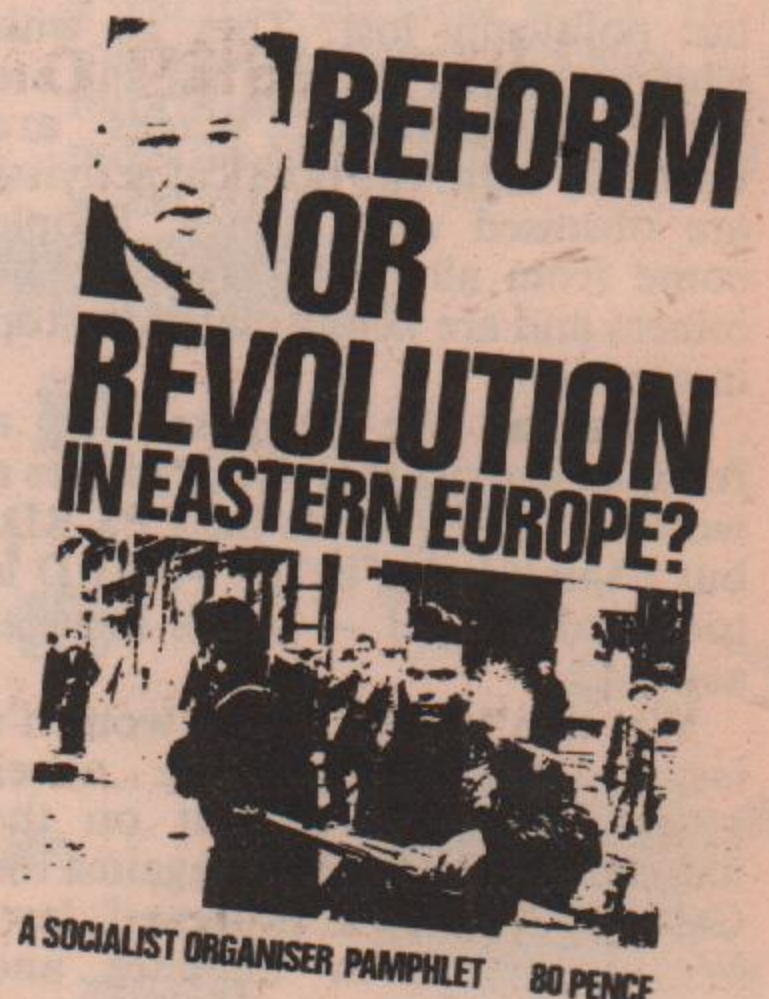
It's true that you can have a pretty clear anti-Stalinist record on the basis of the "workers' state" position. *Socialist Organiser's* forerunners were not sufficiently critical of the Indochinese Stalinists during the war with America, but apart from that we were very clear even when we had a "workers' state" position.

In 1981 Phil and some of his comrades may have been in favour of supporting Solidarnosc's call for a boycott, but the fact is that the organisation they were in, the IMG, did not support that call.

Socialist Organiser is having an open discussion. As a result of that discussion we may solve some of the problems that have bedevilled Trotskyism for 40 years. That's why it is an important discussion.

Further reading

80p plus 15p postage
from SO, PO Box 823,
London SE15 4NA.
Also available:
'Reassessing the
Eastern Bloc', 50p
plus 15p postage



Inside the Polish opposition

Richard Lane, recently in Poland, spoke to members of the PPS-RD (Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution).

Two other interviews are on pages 8-9.

'In Poland a revolutionary party is not marginal'

Zuzanna Debrowska and Piotr Ikorowics are PPS-RD members in Warsaw

Piotr: Furnell Ltd, a British company, is taking over Poland's wood industry. We are organising a meeting to make national Solidarnosc committee.

The workers approached the PPS-RD after Solidarnosc officials would not help them. Furnell offer higher prices for wood than local firms, and have bought out a number of furniture factories.

The workers in these factories want to struggle against private foreign ownership. We have already organised a steelworks branch representing about 20 factories.

We are preparing a combative wing for the Solidarnosc congress — trying to change it back into a trade union and pushing for democracy. All the unions are organised from above — we push for democracy from below.

Solidarnosc leaders use their money from abroad to buy off militants. For example, a young printing workers of ours was paid three times a factory wage to run a Xerox for Solidarnosc. The money comes mostly from the US ('Fund for Democracy'), also from Sweden. Although it is a small amount — some millions — Solidarnosc has been effectively corrupted to a degree.

This will get worse now there is access to state money and positions. Solidarnosc leaders live in big houses bought with overseas money.

Movements from below are a danger to both elites, nomenklatura and Solidarnosc. In steel, the Solidarnosc representatives have set up links, and in case of conflict they would go on strike together.

In coal, too, there are possibilities. We have good relations with the leaders. The miners' branch is controlled by the Solidarnosc bureaucracy, whose leaders are strike-breakers. The Silesian regional board, however, distributes our press.

Miners are radical and explosive, but politically lost. They go with whoever talked to them last and are very nationalistic. Wages are relatively high: the political activists are obsessed with money. People come from all over Poland to be miners and are kept isolated to stop integration.

Zuzanna: We proposed to a feminist activist that she organises a women's group inside the PPS-RD, but I think being in the PPS-RD is too hard for her — she is a social activist.

We don't often raise women's issues — people have other responsibilities. We went on the marches about abortion, against the Catholic Church's proposed law. We wanted both marches and petitions — I wanted a picket of parliament. Protestant activists took petitions in church.

There was a very fine demonstration — something new —

with the slogan: 'Stop the dictatorship of Reds (PUWP) and Blacks (priests)'. For the first time since World War II you can see anti-clerical attitudes, eg. graffiti of a Madonna face saying 'Don't mix me with politics'. That was unthinkable before. Ula wrote us an article for our paper, *Robotnik*, on abortion called 'The Crusade'.

Piotr: We have, relatively, a lot of women members — most political groups have almost none. In Warsaw, 7 out of 30 members, 2 out of 10 on the central council.

Robotnik has been distributed free in front of factories, and sold on the street. We produce 30,000 and sell 10% of them.

Recently at a meeting at Nowa Huta steelworks, Solidarnosc officials told workers not to take it, but they said "But it's *Robotnik*."

Robotnik started in 1982-3 as the paper of MRK(s), an independent underground Solidarnosc organisation. The PPS came later. We have enough material to produce a theoretical journal, but it is a problem of money and time. We are mostly contacting people. It's very exhausting. We have 200 active members, 1,000 have signed the declaration of support and more than 200 pay dues. It is difficult to find places to meet. There are half a million homeless and 100,000 begging, officially.

We are revolutionary because we can't be reformist, not because we know what revolution is. Revolution is from below, reform is from above. The revolution I want has never happened. If a revolution is due, then there is the right to organise it. I don't believe in revolution provoked by a political organisation — the only excuse is that there is no other way.

We have some problems now — our expectations were misguided. We did not realise the extent to which the elite, Solidarnosc and nomenklatura, could make a deal and use formal democracy against the people. We made an error. I would still have called for a boycott of the election but with a different explanation.

Democracy is endangered by oligarchy. There is a huge gulf between the nomenklatura and the workers, no middle-class. The nomenklatura are apolitical, opportunist — neither Stalinists nor capitalists, just sons of bitches.

Zuzanna: Trotskyists are revolutionaries in non-revolutionary situations. In Western Europe they are against most of society.

In Poland, a revolutionary party is not marginal — people begin to spell the word 'revolution'.

Our central council is to prepare for the congress (PPS-RD). We are on the level of the first socialist circles. Economically it is like the beginning of capital.

It is possible that there will be a bloody revolt. The IMF propose to make us like South Korea or Latin America.

There was a time when the nomenklatura could get whatever they wanted so some have no houses, others have many cars, etc.

Piotr: The system is post-Stalinist totalitarianism. All social relations are intermediated by the state. Property has been disintegrated as a system. The bureaucrats can dispose of goods, not of profits. Their privileges are the motivating force: this creates a wasting economy.

The economy is not rational. Privileges are not linked to efficiency. It was possible to make it grow but not to improve it. The essential difference is the lack of a capitalist class and the lack of profit.

When the nomenklatura gets profit and property, we will have a process of transformation to small capital. You shouldn't overestimate this. Their acquisitive force is weak, and they are losing their political power which is what they have to trade for bribes, joint ventures, etc.

There is a marriage between the two elites. The company that publishes the Solidarnosc press is co-operating with the nomenklatura. In one ship repair yard in Gdansk the manager wanted to get it declared bankrupt — 20 nomenklatura companies would then have bought it. The self-management committee threw out the managers.

The Lenin shipyard is 10% owned by the son of the prime minister from Gierek's time. There are private companies, contractors, in the Gdansk shipyard. Their workers are paid four or five times more than state employed workers — but all the money comes from one wages fund, which is fixed. They are hated by the state employed workers. The contractors' wages are now starting to drop, but they will get no support. Under the labour laws it is almost impossible to unionise private companies.

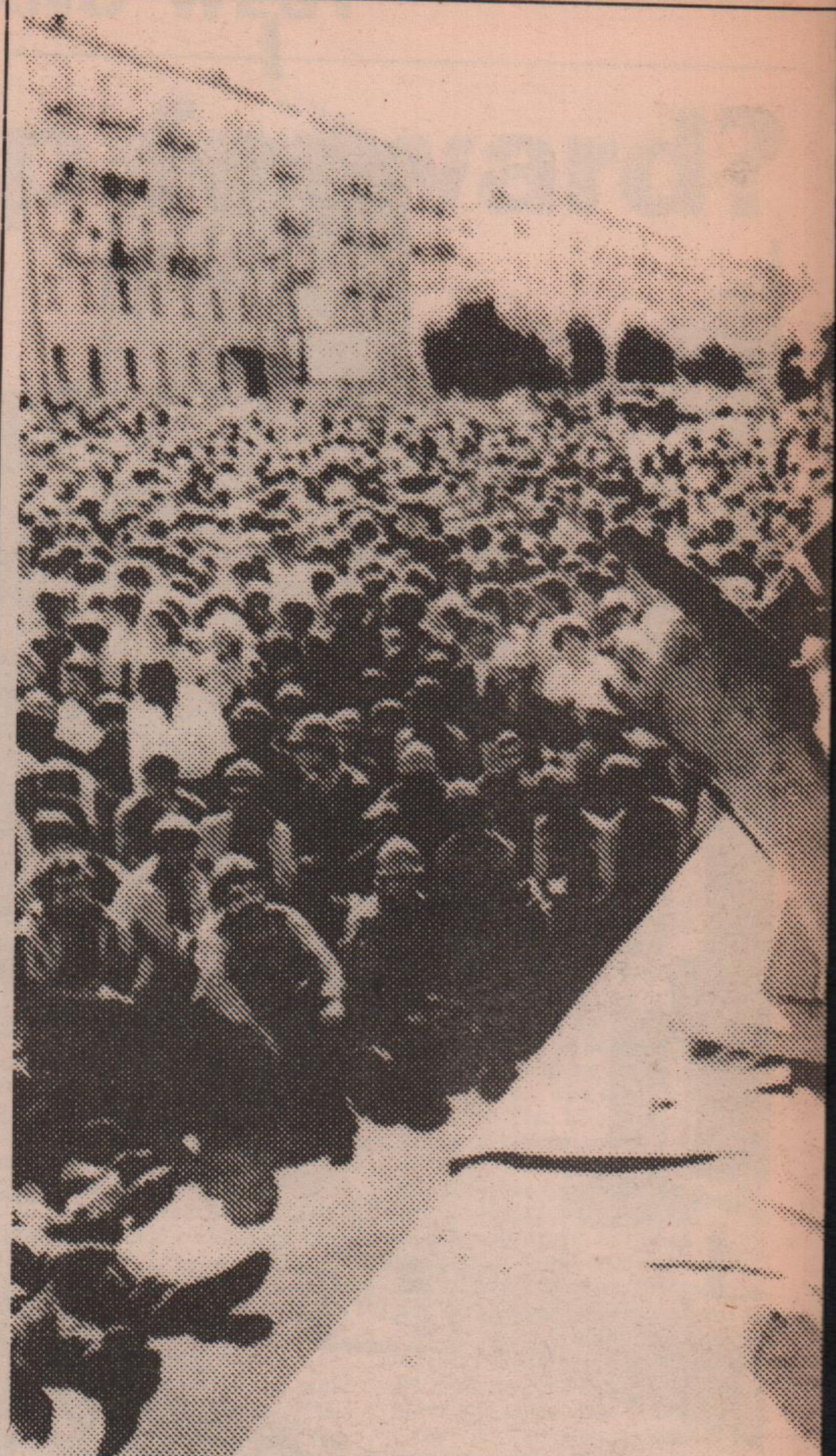
The market is the only way to compare labour, but it has to be an instrument, not goal. We can control the market. Many forms of property should be maintained.

Self-management means workers' control and decentralised government. Nationally, there should be a self-management chamber of parliament to determine social and labour policy.

I don't want only a self-management chamber because that would mean imposing a structure they don't want onto non-workers. Democracy means the conflict of many groups and forces.



Striking workers at the Lenin shipyard, May 1988



Striking Siberian miners protest in Mezhdurechensk

Opposition

Richard Lane reports from the USSR.

Anti-Bolshevism and pro-capitalism seem to be widespread among radical intellectuals in the USSR. There is also a profound lack of faith in the working class. Workers are seen as the means for the intellectuals to make an 'anti-Bolshevik revolution', not as the social force that can lead society out of the impasse.

I spoke to a Leningrad feminist, Olga Lipovskaya. She wants "a national strike to force the Stalinist party to cede power", but also wants a return to capitalism.

started with feminism three or four years ago, then joined the Democratic Union.

At first I had a radical approach

— tried to import Western feminist ideas. Many Western issues seem to be solved in the USSR — women's right to work, etc. In the USSR discrimination is mainly through patriarchal standards.

In higher education, 51% of students are women, but only 28% at bachelor degree, 14% at doctorate, 1% at academic level. Ordinary doctors are women — low paid and with low status. Specialists are men. Teachers are 90% women, directors 38%. The CPSU is 29% women.

Women do the hardest, lowest paid work. There is no concept of women's rights in domestic labour. The media blame women for problems of the family. The divorce rate is 50% and there are many abandoned children.

Many women are forced to come to the cities for work and live in dormitories. Domestic labour is much harder here, with queues, etc.

Now we have the problem of people mimicking the West — introducing beauty contests which treat women as objects. 'Time to return to women's beauty', they say.

Totalitarianism has created a mentality of dependency. Men pretend to be responsible. Women are blamed for lack of masculinity in men because they are 'too emancipated'. Such ideas are very strong in traditional 'Russian peasant writers' and Pamyat.

The Russian nation has degenerated: alcoholism, more and more handicapped kids. There is very poor sex education. Tensions are growing, crime, fears. I think there will be more rape and prostitution.



in the USSR

Women will be the first to be unemployed. Now, unemployment is touching middle management. It is a big problem for people who lose their job near retirement and your pension is based on your final salary.

Articles on feminism only appear in specialist magazines. Even Simone de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex' has not been translated. Kollontai's feminist articles have not been republished. Glasnost has not changed things, and local 'women's soviets' are just an aid to the official party system. They have no legal status and play a minor, material role organising clothes, food, etc.

Even the democratic movement has no concept of how to change, only to elect Deputies.

Poland is more advanced. There is the Catholic Church, and people remember a democratic state. They have a civil society. In the USSR people have no concept of individual rights.

Liberal thought developed at the start of the century. The February revolution was the first chance for democracy with the Constituent Assembly. The Bolsheviks looked to world revolution. Fortunately they did not succeed in Europe.

Now is a good time for Soviet women. The democratic movement from below is bringing out very strongly women political leaders in Armenia and the Baltic.

The greatest danger is violence. These are times of hardship for women, especially working class women. There are mostly men in the opposition, but women's potential is higher. Men are more capable at speaking, women at doing. The

Leningrad Democratic Union is held together by a woman.

There is no law on press freedom — we expect to be outside the law when our paper is produced. Police are starting to arrest people selling papers.

We attended the Popular Front conference in Leningrad as observers. There were delegates from almost 20 areas. It developed nothing on the national problems — eg. nobody from Azerbaijan showed up, and the Armenians had hoped for a debate.

Our main difference with the Popular Front is they look to reforming the Supreme Soviet. We say you need a national strike to force the CPSU to cede power to a Constitutional Assembly. The miners' strike shows the only way to get the CP to give up power.

There are now many types of working class organisations. There are two trade union groups in Leningrad. 'Independence' wants nothing to do with intelligentsia. It has an authoritarian leader, Pavlov, but they may change. The second group was for the democratisation of existing trade unions. Now they are trying to organise trade unionists and strikes.

The Radical Party has also had a congress; their policy includes rights for national, social and sexual minorities. Gays have a very hard situation. Their main idea is to change the criminal code.

Male gays are very badly treated in labour camps. The media says homosexuality should not be a crime, but should be medically treated.

Lesbians won't come out. All gays have problems with parents. In

the army most homosexuality is rape. There is enormous violence in the army. There was a famous case amongst prison guards of a Lithuanian who was raped and then shot the Asians who did it. Apparently, the situation in East Germany is much better.

I have not been successful yet in building a feminist group, but I have produced four issues of a feminist journal.

Russian culture is very specific. We could accept some parts of Western culture, eg. democratic idea. Many people don't agree — authoritarianism is natural. I don't think my kids will live in a democracy.

We will go through all the stages — totalitarianism, authoritarianism, liberalism, democracy. There is always the possibility of repression. I hope we are closer to Poland than China.

We need all types of property forms. We need new laws — the economic details are provided by the radical economists. We want economic independence of local areas, co-ops to be equal with state firms. The state should only cover the army, raw materials, etc.

Agriculture should be owned by the farmers — that is the first problem. The Kolkhozes are a disaster. By selling land to the farmers, loans, machinery, international trade, we could feed the people.

The market is the only example of a living organism. There should be government control of exchange. We need a logic to the system — capitalism. Sweden is not a model for the USSR. We do not have a homogenous people; different cultures and modes of production.

East Germany's new free trade union

This interview with Ralf Borger, one of the founders of the independent union 'Reform', took place in late October and was published in *Der Spiegel* on 30 October. Some of his remarks have thus been overtaken by events (for example, Harry Tisch is no longer head of the official unions), but the interview gives an impression of 'Reform's' aims and relationship to the political opposition. Borger is a 46-year old export specialist in a factory for control devices in East Berlin who had been a member of the official union federation, the FDGB, for 32 years. Translation by Bruce Robinson.

The East Berlin FDGB paper, *Tribune*, remarks that the independent trade union 'Reform' does not exist in the Tettow Controller works. It is "an invention of the Western media".

That isn't right. It is true that no founding meeting has taken place. But after the founding document had been signed by several colleagues, we considered the foundation to have been completed.

We had great difficulties in organising a meeting. The management put a lot of pressure on my colleagues. We were told that even intending to found an organisation was forbidden and that we could reckon with criminal proceedings as a consequence.

I was sent to Bulgaria for three weeks under transparent pretexts. This was totally out of the blue, without the otherwise usual travel directive.

According to *Tribune* only 12 out of 7,236 trade unionists in the factory have left the FDGB.

That's also not true. In my department alone it was 12 out of 35 colleagues. In the entire factory it was over 100, partly entire work

groups. Shop representatives who were called to a meeting by the FDGB in order to distance themselves from the appeal refused to do so.

The 'Reform' proclamation in which, among other things, you call for an end to bureaucrats claiming to speak on your behalf, trade union involvement in decision-making and the right to strike, was published two weeks ago. Meanwhile FDGB chief Harry Tisch has also argued for his organisation to take an independent course. Aren't reforms also achievable through the old unions?

Tisch's statement is tactics. Now he is also trying to bend in the wind. The FDGB hasn't represented the interests of the workers for a very long time — if it ever did. It is totally subordinate to the SED [the ruling party]. So, judging by the way it looks now, the old unions can't be tinkered with. Tisch, of course, doesn't want to split from the SED. So we are demanding that the party totally disappears from the factories.

Do you see the Tettow factory union as the core of a nationwide independent union?

Yes. After our founding, colleagues from several factories, who wanted to start similar groups, called us. We stand, of course, in a close relationship to the entire reform movement in the GDR. It is in the logic of things that now manual and white-collar workers in the factories are being affected by it.

Should this trade union struggle be restricted to the factories?

Now, while reforms are still in the future, we will have a strong political orientation. But once we reach the point where there's a freely elected government, the unions will be able to revert to factory concerns.

Is the example of Solidarnosc at the back of your mind in these visions of the future?

No. Solidarnosc in Poland came into existence under totally different circumstances. Through the strike movement of 1980, it was the spark for reform. It bore the whole development of things in that country. Here it is the other way round: it started on a broad scale in society; the factories stood aside for some time. However, the building of a national Reform Union cannot be prevented in the GDR either.

Not even through the 'turn' that Egon Krenz has promised?

I cannot imagine that with Krenz a real turn can come about. He is a transitional figure. Because if the reform movement goes on as it is now, the SED will have to be led by a real reformer.



Leipzig workers gather to read posters criticising living conditions and government policy.

Should Solidarnosc go for power?

Zbigniew Kowalewski, a leader of the left wing of Solidarnosc in 1980-1, presents a point of view on the current crisis in Poland.

In 1988, the bureaucratic regime, still not 'normalised', and incapable of finding an answer to an interminable and deepening economic crisis, was shaken by the failure of the referendum on economic reform and by two waves of strikes, the most powerful since 1982.

At that point the big bosses of the regime, Jaruzelski, Rakowski and Kiszczak, understood the huge power of Walesa as the only person capable of stopping the strikes and the decisive importance of getting the support of the Solidarnosc leadership for the pro-capitalist plan of restructuring the economy.

They understood also that it was impossible to destroy the independent workers' movement. That movement could only be controlled by a workers' bureaucracy coming from its own ranks. It was vital for the survival of the regime that they should negotiate with Walesa on what his colleagues were proposing to him anyway: a Polish version of the Moncloa pact [the 'social contract' in Spain following the fall of Franco].

But, scarcely two months after the signing of the agreement, and even before it had been put in force, the new institutional system of bureaucratic power — that of "35 per cent democracy" — constructed at the "round table" talks, was smashed to bits.

In a way that was completely unforeseen by the political top brass on all sides, the masses transformed the electoral farce of 4 June 1989 into a victorious plebiscite against the regime. Almost all the candidates of the bureaucracy failed. Almost all the candidates of the Solidarnosc civic committee were elected.

Without an ad hoc and grossly unconstitutional adjustment of the electoral law between the first and the second round of the election, it was impossible even to fill the parliamentary seats guaranteed to the bureaucrats by the "round table" agreement.

The bureaucracy became a lame duck.

This victory was not won by those who abstained, despite the fact that they represented 38 per cent of the electorate, including a percentage, impossible to measure, due to the political boycott. It was won by those who, against the wishes of the civic committee, the Solidarnosc leadership, and Walesa, and despite the appeals for a boycott, played the game of this farcical "35 per cent democracy" right to the end.

The calls for a boycott were made by radicalised dissidents opposed to Walesa's line and the legitimisation of the "round table" agreement, including the Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution (PPS-RD). This is the first left political party to exist not only in Poland, but in the whole of the countries governed by the Stalinist bureaucracy, and it represents a gain for the international and Polish workers' movement. But it failed this central political test, the first it met.

In itself, the mistake — obvious only after the event — was not too serious. What was decisive, on the other hand, after 4 June, was to get a strategy of transition underway: from the moral overthrow of the bureaucratic regime to its material

overthrow. No dissident current tried to do that. Neither then nor later was any central political slogan put forward.

One slogan flowed logically from the popular victory of 4 June: "Down with Jaruzelski, a Solidarnosc government, free elections immediately".

No-one can deny that, in order to assert their victory, the masses needed such a slogan. But the Solidarnosc leaders were no less frightened by their victory than the bureaucracy by its defeat. They set about dismantling the result of 4 June.

"Don't celebrate because you have broken through the framework of the 'round table', look what is happening in Tiananmen Square, retreat!" — that was what Walesa's circle said. Alongside that message they launched a salvage operation for the regime — tacit acceptance of the change in the electoral law between the first and second rounds, manoeuvres inside the Solidarnosc civic committee parliamentary group allowing Jaruzelski to be elected president of the republic, then manoeuvres aimed at getting Kiszczak elected as prime minister. Democracy — even 35% democracy — has its obligations!

All this shameful circus, often broadcast live by television, was followed by the masses, and even the most disoriented workers and those who had most illusions realised that they had been had.

Their response to the circus was simple and elementary. Once again, they turned to their only weapon, the economic strike — in a completely dispersed manner, it's true, but, given the absence of a leadership able to bring about a minimum of coordination and direction, at least they effectively eluded the control of the Solidarnosc leadership and remained deaf to Walesa's appeals.

At the same time, the results of the elections had repercussions inside Parliament. The MPs of the United Peasants' Party (ZSL) had almost all been eliminated at the first round, and owed their election at the second round to the backing of supporters of a bitter rival of their party, the Solidarnosc union of private farmers, which is linked to the workers' union of the same name.

Some of the candidates of another PUWP satellite party, the Democratic Party (SD), and certain candidates of the PUWP itself, also owed their election on the second round to Solidarnosc supporters' votes. So the ZSL and SD MPs, taken hostage by their voters, preferred to drop their old protector, the PUWP, and desert to Solidarnosc. In a parliament where the "round table" agreement should have given the government coalition a guaranteed large majority, General Kiszczak could not find a majority to allow him to form a government.

So Poland proved itself ungovernable in the framework of the "round table" agreement. Such was the effect of the shock wave of 4 June.

But even in this situation, the radical dissidents in the workers' movement put forward no governmental slogan. They continued in



Mazowiecki and Walesa embrace...the IMF

their logic of boycott, or adapted to syndicalist pressures.

In this incredible political vacuum, more and more disturbing for even the most determined supporters of salvaging the regime, it was Adam Michnik who flew a kite. The president is yours, he said, so why not a prime minister from us?

His own comrades in Walesa's circle rebuffed him immediately, with Karol Modzelewski and Tadeusz Mazowiecki in the forefront. In the end it was Walesa who, on 7 August, took a bold step and provoked an earthquake. Without any consultation with his circle, who were too divided and paralysed, he demanded that Solidarnosc should take the responsibility of forming a coalition government with the two satellite parties of the PUWP.

His initial approach, which was rapidly abandoned, even included the exclusion of the PUWP from the government.

Today Walesa explains: "My own plan was different from what has happened.

"On the political level, I wanted there to be a pause on the basis of the 'round table' agreement. There should be a pause, and we should busy ourselves with economic and social affairs.

"But, by misfortune, we won the elections. That's when everything got messed up. The victory imposed certain things. We had to go further" (*Le Figaro*, 26 September).

It is very clear that he had to demand the government in order to avoid being discredited in the eyes

of the workers. On 4 September, Walesa publicly denounced Mazowiecki's soft attitude (in his view) to the PUWP. Walesa's spokesperson, the senator Lech Kaczynski, explains that Walesa's biggest worry is the reaction of public opinion to the participation of the PUWP in the government.

For their part, the Solidarnosc leaders of the Wola industrial region, round Warsaw, report their opinions of their working-class base in the following terms (in the paper *Gazeta* of 12 September):

"As early as July, people were asking us trade unionists why Solidarnosc didn't take power.

Today, everyone agrees that Michnik was right to put forward the idea of them having the president and us the prime minister. It was necessary to take the government, but without entering into a coalition with the PUWP.

We want it to be our government, not a coalition government. People have swallowed, with some difficulty, the business about giving the PUWP the Interior Ministry, but now we are giving too much to the Communists. It is disgusting and the workers don't like it".

But, once again, no political force tried to express the pressure of the masses and put forward the slogan of a Solidarnosc government without bureaucratic ministers.

The loss of government leadership by the PUWP, an event without precedent, is a new and harsh defeat for the bureaucratic regime. And defeat for one means success for another, unless it is a matter of joint catastrophe, which it is not here. Thus it is a success for the workers, though obviously a very partial, fragile and contradictory one.

The Mazowiecki government will probably be taken hostage by the bureaucracy, whose strategy in relation to it is expressed by the slogan: you have the prime minister, we'll have the president and the state machine.

Jaruzelski is transforming the position of president, given immense powers by the "round table", into a *de facto* second government, the real controller not only of the PUWP ministries in the Mazowiecki government, which include the Interior and Defence ministries, but also of the state machine.

Like the previous governments, the Mazowiecki government contains informal representatives of the interests of the IMF and of capital in general. It is clearly a government of collaboration with the bureaucracy and with the world bourgeoisie. Its policy will aim to exploit fully its honeymoon period and the workers' illusions to disarm the mass movement. It may even become the main obstacle on the road of the mass movement. Without being a "trade union government", it does risk making Solidarnosc a "government trade union".

All that said, we must also see the other side of the coin. This government opens up more space for political democracy. Its legitimacy depends to a considerable if not decisive degree on the independent workers' movement. It is exposed to the social and political pressures of the Solidarnosc trade union, of the working class and of the masses, pressures which will tie its hands much more than the hands of the bureaucratic governments were tied. That is, indeed, the decisive aspect of the new situation.

Several times already the Polish workers have shown their ability to take advantage of decisive aspects of this or that political conjuncture. But we can't expect them to do it only on the basis of class instinct.

A strategy of transition to the democratic revolution, seeking the passage of all power to Solidarnosc, can have no other point of departure than the demand for a Solidarnosc government without bureaucratic ministers and a break with the bureaucratic regime.

Centred immediately and in particular on the elimination of the PUPW Interior and Defence ministers, it would be combined with the demand for trade union rights for the police (this demand is beginning to come from the police themselves) and soldiers.

It is equally important to demand the right to form councils of police officers and soldiers in the police stations and the barracks, similar to the workers' councils which exist in the factories, and with similar powers, as well as the dissolution of the secret political police and the political leadership apparatus of the army. In that way the masses can begin to break the bureaucratic state apparatus, including its hardest and most dangerous nuclei.

The second immediate slogan, on the level of breaking with the bureaucratic regime, is for free elections to a Constituent Assembly, combined with the demand that that Assembly should have full decision-making power over the economic reform.

Behind the backs of the masses, and in close collaboration with the institutions of world capitalism, the economists of the bureaucracy and of Walesa's circle are concocting plans for shock treatment, while discussing, and publicly too, whether the patient will survive.

The people must be able to have their say democratically on their destiny, and have guaranteed to them the possibility of choosing between the pro-capitalist plans of this or that group and a workers' plan based on the only orientation adopted on this question by a democratic representative body of workers, the national congress of Solidarity in 1981.

A solution cannot be reached solely by an ideological struggle between the supporters of the two plans. It demands a broad mobilisation of the masses — including sectors who have illusions in the market economy — for a democratic choice.

It is essential to prevent the government carrying out any economic reform until a democratic decision has been made by freely elected representatives of the people. The government must be forced to limit itself to calling free elections, adopting a programme of immediate anti-crisis measures to protect the living standard of the population, and declaring a moratorium on the payment of the foreign debt.

At the same time, to defend its interests, the working class needs full information on the restructuring, privatisation and investment plans, and analyses of their social effects. A right of veto for the trade unions, and where it is used the reference of all decisions to democratic representative institutions, is essential on this level.

The workers' defensive economic struggles will not overcome their present tendency to dispersal and fragmentation, nor regain the effectiveness which they are losing in conditions of hyper-inflation, without being combined with a political intervention of the mass movement into the current crisis of the institutional system of



1988 May Day demonstration

bureaucratic power.

Such a combination is also the way to defeat Walesa's line according to which the struggle for full democracy in the state demands a 'self-limiting democracy' in the

trade union and it is necessary for the time being to give up the idea of a trade union of ten million workers because it would be an obstacle to any authority and would make the country impossible to govern.

The convening of the national congress of Solidarnosc, already announced, will be an effective weapon of the working class, as long as it is the congress of a democratic, mass and militant trade

union, capable of imposing a government of its choice and accountable to it.

Translated and abridged from the French socialist magazine Critique Communiste, October 1989.

Voices from the Polish opposition

Richard Lane, recently in Poland, spoke to members of the PPS-RD

'The radical young workers don't want big capital, or the state, or the nomenklatura's auctions — they want self-management'

Jarek Wardega, Polish chief of the PPS-RD, London Bureau

Jozef Pinior has spoken about the revolutionary current in Eastern Europe — PPS-RD, USSR's Popular Front, Hungary's Left Alternative — and proposed co-ordination of all revolutionary workers' parties in the world, a revolutionary international.

I think that is possible in the future, not today, with Wolfgang Templin in East Germany, Peter Uhl in Czechoslovakia, etc. The Stalinist bureaucracy has an imperial character, the anti-Stalinists must link-up internationally.

A new martial law is possible in Poland. Walesa has illusions in aid from the west, but it's not possible. The left doesn't believe in pro-capitalist reform.

Mazowiecki wants the IMF's programme. PPS-RD wants self-management, workers' control, mass workers' democracy.

The nomenklatura are organising auctions of state property — trying to attract big capital. They are evolving to a new bureaucracy — like social-democracy and capitalist management.

The radical young workers don't want big capital, or the state, or the nomenklatura's auctions, they want self-management.

There is much talk of unemployment, eg plans to shut down Nowa Huta steelworks but there is no social security. And there's inflation. Workers will fight for pay rises.

The main question is to build a left current in Solidarnosc (NZSS). Pinior is a Solidarnosc fundamentalist, reverting to the programme

of 1981. This is a small current today. The bigger current is social-democracy around Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik, with smaller currents around Walesa and the right wing in Szczecin.

The other Polish Socialist Party, led by Lipski, compromises with nomenklatura. But some youth from Lipski's group co-operate with PPS-RD, eg on the first May demonstration.

The Congress of the Opposition has included PPS-RD, anarchists, WiP (Freedom and Peace), radical youth from KPN who are evolving to the left and Fighting Solidarnosc.

Andrzej Gwiazda has not been involved, but his group may come to the next Congress.

We have good contact with his group, and are to have talks about a programmatic document for the Solidarnosc second trade union Congress.

The PPS-RD congress is also coming up. We will work on a trade-union programme for the Solidarnosc trade union Congress, not tied to the government, and on a programme for PPS-RD — self-government of factories and society; minimum wage; indexation; flat-rate wage rises in the short-

term; hospitals; schools; care for the aged, disabled etc; state or social (community) ownership of factories; full workers' democracy. Parliamentary democracy is better than Stalinism but is not full democracy.

There are four main questions. 1. independence of the trade unions. 2. mass workers' control at the base. 3. co-operation of all workers, skilled and un-skilled. (Solidarnosc has tended to concentrate on manual workers, leaving the upper level of the working class under nomenklatura influence). 4. pluralism in the working class.

'We were a social democratic party. Now we are a revolutionary left party'

Mielko

The situation is headed for conflict. Economically, the government needs credits on a Marshall Plan basis.

But in Germany Social Democracy pacified the working class. Here Solidarnosc is a symbol of democracy for the working class. It has the experience of self-organisation from 1980-81, and under martial law.

Statutes existing under the Solidarnosc/Jaruzelski regime make strikes illegal — but workers don't care. Solidarnosc cannot discipline the workers.

Yet it is hard to make progress. Solidarnosc is blocked inside. It can't act on any one programme.

We will try to make a left bloc at the Solidarnosc trade union congress scheduled for December — we

can't take power, but we can be a substantial minority.

Czeslaw Borowczyk, a PPS-RD member, is a Solidarnosc regional leader in Wroclaw, and has organised a 'horizontal' (national) steelworkers' group. Our members are trying to organise similar groups in other industry branches. We are trying to work with Andrzej Gwiazda's group in Solidarnosc and he seems inclined to co-operation now.

In early September we had the first meeting for a united front including PPS-RD, Solidarnosc officials, self-management council representatives, independent student association and leftist groups.

There is a wave of anti-semitism. Everyone dreams about owning a small store. There is a petty-bourgeois consciousness. A chauvinist movement could be used to divert the working class.

I was shocked by Cardinal Glemp's anti-semitic statement over

Auschwitz. When French cardinals criticised Glemp the Stalinist party paper ran a heading 'Jews attack our church leader'.

Our party is evolving very rapidly. We respond dynamically. We were a social democratic party with a small Trotskyist current. Now we are a revolutionary left party with a weak social democratic current.

Most important for us now is developing cadre. It is still possible for revolutionaries and left social democrats to co-operate. It is not possible to go back to capitalism. The bureaucracy have only their power positions — why give them up? 'Joint ventures' are only speculation, not real production, and the bureaucrats only get in on it because of their political position.

They, and the new Solidarnosc 'nomenklatura', are not experienced in handling capital — the West would destroy them if it was allowed in freely.

The despair of a drop-out

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Melancholia'

Over the years, revolutionary socialism has attracted its fair share of middle class intellectuals, but the drop out rate is high. Far from viewing socialism as a lifetime commitment, the political equivalent of a marathon, many see the struggle as a relay race (something to give your best to for a short time, before passing on the baton to someone else).

Most go on to careers that offer rewards and recognition, things they expect as their middle class birthright. The 'youthful folly' of socialist rebellion is left behind.

It's natural. The middle class socialist has the option of a better life now; he doesn't have to wait for the revolution. For many, the early thrill of understanding the world and doing one's bit to change it isn't enough; they want more personal rewards. Middle class children are raised to compete for individual success and approval. Small wonder they feel 'unappreciated' in the collective workings of the left.

Those who give up usually suffer worrying twinges of conscience, but these lessen over time. For a small number, the guilt of leaving lasts as long as life. Their self-hatred is the spiritual hair-shirt they adopt as penance for their crime.

'Melancholia' captures perfectly this rare but recognisable variety of middle class angst. David Keller (Jeroen Krabbe) is a moderately successful art critic, living in comfortable circumstances in 1980s London. Initially caught up in the political stirrings of 1968, he turned his back on the revolutionary struggle, and now despises himself for it.

His excuse is that he had nothing to



The guilt-wracked drop-out (Jeroen Krabbe, left) with the torture victim's widow

offer, but this is false, and he knows it to be false. He's too honest to deceive himself, but the meaningless years since his defection have sapped his strength. Alienated from people, he tries to drown his malaise in drink.

He is shocked from his apathy by a voice from his political past, demanding that he assassinate Adolfo Vargas, a Chilean torturer. At first horrified, he is later drawn to the assignment, to the grand gesture that will wipe out the aimless, pointless years.

When the kill is cancelled he feels cheated. Briefly, he had felt alive, purposeful.

Then he meets Sarah Yelin, the victim of Vargas's tortures, and he decides to go ahead with the assassination. Sarah's calm but chilling recitation of her sufferings breaks through the crust of his selfishness and apathy, and he begins to see the killing in a new light. To him, it is no longer the grand gesture he had imagined, but a smaller act, an act of

humanity and compassion, the relieving of another person's intolerable pain.

But this is self delusion; the killing of Vargas, however justified, solves nothing. It might give Sarah revenge, but it won't bring back the husband she has lost, nor does it provide answers for the countless others undergoing imprisonment and torture in Latin America.

Torturers are not born, but are created by political systems that aim to crush dissent, whatever the cost. Keller's act won't stop other torturers taking Vargas's place, so his act is doubly pointless, since it doesn't save him either.

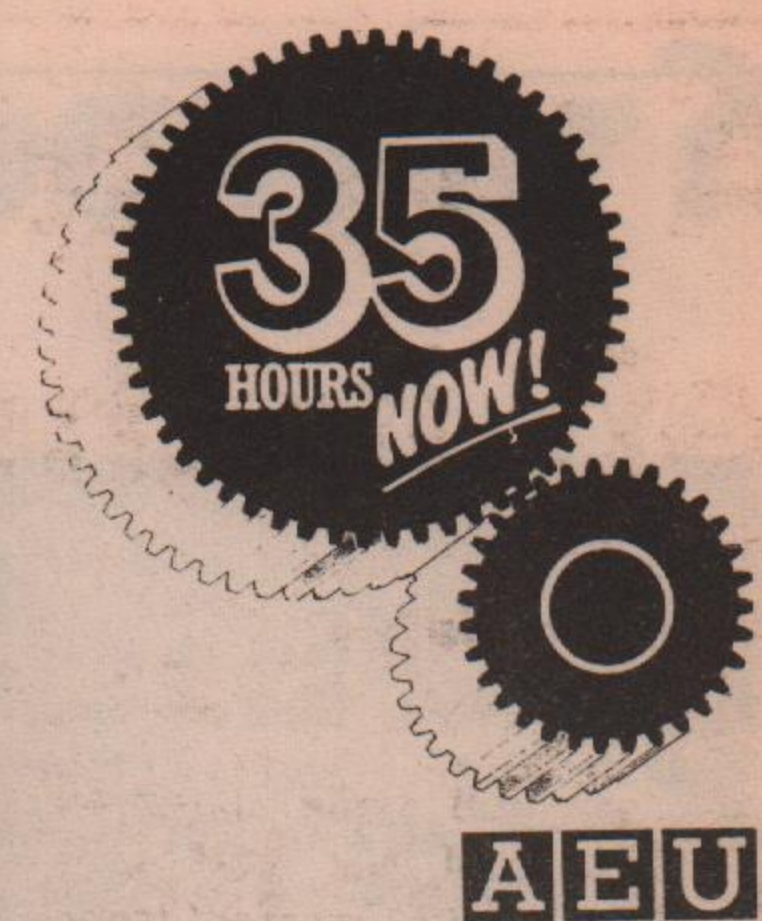
He's too far gone for that. The killing instead of drawing him back to people, only alienates him further.

'Melancholia' is a chronicle of waste, the waste of David's life and energy in deliberate, self-inflicted, and ultimately futile misery. It doesn't romanticise these woes, and it doesn't make his

stance seem attractive. David, though he may dramatise himself, is not presented as a hero, not in any sense. Whatever, the film's intentions, David's uncompromising withdrawal from life doesn't win our sympathy; it's so pointless, so stupid.

Yet the film is permeated by a despair that echoes David's as if life were merely a choice between despairing alienation from the system or a heartfelt embracing of it. But this isn't so. If it were, David's pricklings of conscience would not be so acute. He knows what he's run out on. He has refused to take the third path, the path of struggle.

Once you know how to fight for a better world, it's hard to forget, hard to hide that knowledge from yourself. Drowning that knowledge in alcohol or in senseless acts of violence is no solution. The only possible choice, for those who want to keep their self-respect, is to grit their teeth and stay the course.



Keep driving for 35!

The engineering workers' campaign for a 35 hour week could go either of two ways this week.

It could escalate, or it could break up and collapse.

On Monday 13th workers at NEI Parsons in Newcastle voted 868 to 699 to accept a deal negotiated by the shop stewards there.

The deal would:

- * Cut hours to 37 by January 1992.

- * Increase basic hourly pay rates.

- * Improve conditions for manual workers towards being in line with white collar workers, for example on sick pay and clocking on.

- * Commit the workers to 'team-working' and 'multi-skilling'.

As we went to press, the Confed could give no details of the deal on 'team-working' and 'multi-skilling'. AEU president Bill Jordan and Confed secretary Alex Ferry have, however, endorsed the NEI package.

NEI Parsons was one of the seven factories initially balloted by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (Confed), but not one of the three were called out on strike. Workers at the Hillington (Glasgow) plant of Rolls Royce, who own NEI Parsons, are on strike. The NEI deal amounts to settling for much less than the unions' claim when the battle has scarcely started.

On the same day, Monday 13th, the *Financial Times* reported that "members of the Engineering Employers' Federation are believed to have voted in favour of allowing companies to be full members of the EEF without having to subscribe to its national pay and conditions agreements".

If Bill Jordan gets his way, the unions' campaign could collapse. White-collar workers, and manual workers in some better-organised plants, who already work 37 or 37½ hours, will see little reason for continuing to pay the levy. Stronger plants will get something like the NEI deal. Weaker plants will get nothing. The national engineering agreement will disintegrate.

But the campaign could be strengthened. British Aerospace Kingston is due to strike from Wednesday 15th. The European Metal Workers' Federation has agreed to boycott any work transferred from strike-hit factories in Britain and the West German union IG Metall is already boycotting work transferred from British Aerospace Chester. The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (linked to the *Morning Star*) has called for striking factories to send delegations to other engineering workplaces.

The next steps needed to strengthen the dispute are:

- * Ballot the next nine factories for strike action immediately. Build towards a strike in every Confed district.

- * Local one-day solidarity strikes, and a campaign for a national one-day solidarity strike.

- * Convene local strategy committees elected from Confed stewards.

- * Call a national recall stewards' conference.

The Green's Goddess

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN



The concept of Gaia was much aired at the Green Party's conference recently.

The idea, developed by independent scientist James Lovelock, is that the Earth behaves as a self-regulating organism, rather like a living being. Lovelock gave this being the name Gaia, after the Roman Earth goddess.

It would be ludicrous to regard this hypothesis as literally true (though doubtless there are some who do) but,

as a way of understanding the Earth's responses to various natural and artificial changes in the environment, the Gaia hypothesis has its merits.

As part of the Earth, living things are part of Gaia and may mediate the 'responses' of Gaia to changes in its environment. Thus, increases in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere cause a greater rate of growth of green plants. This uses up the extra CO₂, tending to return things to their original state.

Inanimate parts of the Earth will also take part in Gaia's responses. Greater CO₂ levels will lead to warming of the Earth. Some of this warmth will be used in melting the polar ice. Some will go towards evaporating more water from the oceans. Thus the rise in temperature will be moderated, just as in living things.

The inconvenience this may cause to our species through altered sea levels and climate is of no concern to Gaia, which after all has seen many other species become extinct in the past.

It is easy to see why Gaia should have struck a chord with green activists, but Lovelock himself is highly critical of the environmental movement. He believes, as he told Friends of the Earth a few weeks ago, they have got their priorities wrong.

And speaking at a Schumacher Lecture last year, Lovelock said that environmentalists had "become concerned with narrow human interests... rather than with a proper concern and empathy for the natural world". Groups such as FoE had become obsessed with "often imaginary human dangers" (e.g. radiation and PCB pesticides).

Lovelock disagrees with environmentalists over 'acid rain'. FoE described Britain as the 'dirty man of Europe' for its acid pollution of Scandinavia. It campaigned for the CEEB to install pollution controls on coal-fired power stations. But Lovelock believes that pollution is not the main cause of acid rain.

He told *New Scientist* that half the

sulphur falling on Scandinavia comes from natural marine sources, algae in the North Sea which excrete sulphur-containing gases.

Lovelock teased Lord Walter Marshall, chairman of the CEEB, at Mrs Thatcher's 'Brains Trust' on the greenhouse effect last April for being 'hoodwinked' into clearing up pollution which is not the main cause of acid rain.

Even more heretically, Lovelock describes the depletion of the ozone layer as a 'minor issue' as far as the survival of Gaia is concerned. And in any case, he doesn't believe that CFCs from fridges and spray cans are the cause of the hole in the ozone layer over the Antarctic.

He blames it instead on the eruption of the Mexican volcano, El Chichon in 1982. This hurled much dust into the stratosphere and the resulting chemical reactions destroyed lots of ozone over the next few years.

Lovelock claims to have evidence of a similar ozone hole in 1889, following the eruption of Krakatoa. He says the 'ozone establishment' (whatever that is) knows of this finding but are hiding it, though why they should do so is a mystery.

Lovelock has obligingly made a testable prediction of his theory. The ozone hole over the Antarctic which gaped in 1987 and partially filled in 1988 should not form this year. Antarctic scientist Joe Farman, discoverer of the ozone hole, predicted on the contrary a hole as big as ever.

Lovelock has been proved wrong — for the latest data show a hole as big as, if not bigger than, 1987.

Lovelock's views on nuclear power are no more acceptable to the average green or indeed many on the left. He says "I hate the green movement's obsession with nuclear reaction. Nuclear power would be economic if it didn't have to meet these absurd safety standards". The rocks of Bodmin Moor where he lives, release far more radiation than is permitted from nuclear power stations.

What Lovelock is concerned about is damage of Gaia's fundamental life support systems, such as those that soak up pollution or which keep the planet's temperature within an acceptable range. One assault on the planetary thermostat is the largely human-caused increase in CO₂ in the air. This is caused partly by burning fossil fuels and partly by deforestation.

Lovelock sees the latter as dangerous for another reason, though. The tropical forests cool the Earth by using the Sun's heat to evaporate water from leaves, rather as a sweating animal cools itself. Lovelock estimates the cooling power of the forests as 200 kilowatts per hectare. More graphically, he says "the 55 square feet of land said to be needed to produce enough meat for one burger was providing a cooling service of £380 per year".

NEW PROBLEMS NEW STRUGGLES



A handbook for trade unionists by Socialist Organiser and Workers' Liberty £1

£1 plus 22p postage from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

A big step forward for the left in the unions

By Gerry Bates

Over 450 trade unionists attended the first ever Socialist Movement trade union conference in Sheffield last weekend.

The conference discussed a vast range of issues of relevance to trade unionists. Workshops were held on how to fight the anti-union laws; the employers' offensive; fighting privatisation; union democracy; health and safety; 1992 and Internationalism; positive action and many other subjects.

The conference provided an important opportunity for activists to talk to each other, pool their ideas and exchange information.

The focus of debate was not just on British trade union questions, but the most animated and exciting discussion at the conference took place in the workshop on the Broad Lefts and rank and file organisations.

Speakers from the CPSA Socialist Caucus, NUR Broad Left, NUJ left, Socialist Teachers Alliance and one of the editors of the journal NALGO Action, exchanged experiences. Despite some inevitable differences arising from different experiences in different unions, BLs, rank and file groups, etc., most of the delegates participating focused on what was common in their experiences and on what united them.

The workshop focused on amendments to the main conference document's section on the Broad Lefts. It was widely agreed that it was too weak and sweeping to say that the conference should support all BLs. For instance, the record of the NUT Broad Left meant that there were no teachers in the audience prepared to support it!

Andy Dixon, a member of the NUT executive and of the Socialist Teachers Alliance, focused delegates' attention on a detailed amendment to the policy statement which concentrated on the need to democratise the Broad Lefts and

Broad Lefts and rank and file organisation

Policy adopted by the Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference

We should help to establish them where they do not exist at the present time and they should be based on democratic structures. All Broad Left office-bearers should be accountable to their respective Broad Lefts. They should not just relate to elections in unions, but seek to lead in disputes, to respond quickly and to seize the initiative, spread necessary information and organise solidarity. In other words, they should be active campaigning organisations responding to the needs of the rank and file.

The Socialist Movement should support groupings within the trade

other groups, and turn them to the task of building an effective base in the workplaces, linking this to the task of achieving socialist policies in the unions.

Vince Brown, a member of the Broad Left in the low paid civil servants' union, CPSA, moved another amendment which pointed to one of the central problems afflicting the left in the unions: the lack of proper national coordination and a real democratic framework.

All but one clause of the amendments which came out of this workshop were adopted in the final conference document. It provides the basic elements of a policy to unite all those committed to building democratic and fighting Broad Lefts or rank and file organisations in the unions.

Such a policy provides a firmer basis for unity of the left in the unions than the rather confused talk from some of the conference of building an 'anti-new realist current' which suffers from defining itself not in terms of what we are for, but in terms of what we are against.

And in the form advanced by some people, it appears to exclude in principle common action with people who may wish to look to

unions which seek to:

(a) Build campaigns of action in defence of members' interests and the interests of the working class in Britain and internationally.

(b) Prioritise the active involvement of all members in the trade union movement and encourage policies to fight discrimination against women, black, lesbian and gay, and disabled members.

(c) Promote unity of action of left forces within and between unions.

(d) Encourage the building of broad-based initiatives within unions to advance policies, eg. on a single issue.

(e) Establish and extend democratic control by members over their unions and elect leaderships accountable to their members.

(f) Increase the active involvement of the members as the priority, and regard the winning of elected leadership positions as a product of that process, and not as an end in itself.

(g) Make elected leaders sup-

ported by left groupings accountable to members, and oppose groupings becoming mere election machines or appendages of the bureaucracy.

The Socialist Movement believes that the creation of left groupings should be on the basis of recognising the divergence of views that exist, and support the creation of left groups which are open and democratic and allow presentation of political views. The Socialist Movement should circulate information about existing organisations which sponsor the Socialist Movement and encourage members to join.

To further this aim we instruct the steering committee to approach the Broad Lefts Organising Committee and the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, and all Broad Lefts and rank and file groupings, with the aim of organising a conference within the next six months to launch a democratic national framework linking all such groups.

ways of circumventing the laws rather than directly confronting them. It provides an agenda of more relevance to active trade unionists than the vague talk of building a socialist propaganda current divorced from a real intervention inside the unions which seems to be the approach favoured by *Briefing* supporters who originally opposed even the idea of having a discussion on the Broad Lefts at the conference!

The same concern for a positive orientation to action inside the existing labour and trade union movement was expressed when the workshop on the anti-union laws voted to build support for the resolution moved by Wallasey CLP at this year's Labour Party conference, calling on Labour to repeal all the anti-union laws and institute a series of positive workers' rights, which attracted two and a half million votes, including support from the NUM and TGWU. Those who don't see the point of making any demands on Kinnock got short shrift.

Conference deepened its commitment to internationalism when it threw out the original draft of the policy statement on Europe and 1992 which the author had made

ference. This caused the required degree of confusion but hardly raised the level of informed, democratic debate.

What was most surprising about Alan's arguments was that as a prominent contributor to *Briefing* Alan appeared to act throughout without any consultation with other members of *Briefing's* editorial board, as if they didn't count for anything.

In fact, most *Briefing* supporters couldn't bring themselves to vote for his arguments against a clear unambiguous commitment to trade union democracy. For instance, when Alan's evasive formula of "election of officials for a short defined term" was put up for the vote only two *Briefing* supporters (Patrick Sikorski and Tony Richardson) could be seen to reluctantly and shamefacedly vote for it. A large number of *Briefing* supporters voted against.

But a mystery remains. Alan Thornett is *Briefing* and *Socialist Outlook's* most prominent trade unionist and best-known supporter. He even wrote an article in the latest *Outlook* heaping praise on the conference document he helped draw up. Yet time and time again at the conference he argued against what appear to be the views of the majority of *Briefing* supporters who couldn't bring themselves to support him. What is going on?

Is Alan Thornett so overcome with factional venom towards anything proposed by a trade unionist associated with *Socialist Organiser* that he opposes it on principle? Or is he just out of touch with the unions? *Briefing's* supporters in the unions should call Alan Thornett to account.

The left in the unions is not so strong they can afford such excesses. We need to work together not needlessly against each other. The policies adopted by the Socialist Movement trade union conference can begin to lay the basis for such common action.

clear was a coded call for Britain out of the EEC. Instead, conference supported a policy of developing Europe-wide and international workers' links:

"Workers in different EC countries have already been forced over the last few years to make links with each other in order to combat common problems. This can obviously only benefit the drive towards worker solidarity and the urgent need is for such links — which at the moment face many problems — to be strengthened and made more effective. On the other hand, capitalism will obviously use the European market to 'rationalise' the organisation of production still more ruthlessly, with clear implications for workers in terms of closures and the regionalisation of pay and jobs. To this we have to respond with calls for work-sharing and planning across Europe as a whole, building on existing European trade union demands for a 35-hour week. While there is a debate over the implications of the European market for socialism, this should not blind us to the potential raised by the extended planning of production or to the need for a European-wide response from trade unions involving campaigns across national boundaries in defence of those threatened."

An important first step has been taken towards drawing together the left in the unions.

clear was a coded call for Britain out of the EEC. Instead, conference supported a policy of developing Europe-wide and international workers' links:

"Workers in different EC countries have already been forced over the last few years to make links with each other in order to combat common problems. This can obviously only benefit the drive towards worker solidarity and the urgent need is for such links — which at the moment face many problems — to be strengthened and made more effective. On the other hand, capitalism will obviously use the European market to 'rationalise' the organisation of production still more ruthlessly, with clear implications for workers in terms of closures and the regionalisation of pay and jobs. To this we have to respond with calls for work-sharing and planning across Europe as a whole, building on existing European trade union demands for a 35-hour week. While there is a debate over the implications of the European market for socialism, this should not blind us to the potential raised by the extended planning of production or to the need for a European-wide response from trade unions involving campaigns across national boundaries in defence of those threatened."

An important first step has been taken towards drawing together the left in the unions.

Liverpool council makes cuts

By Stan Crooke

Only six months into the financial year, Liverpool City Council rushed through 'economy measures' last week in order to avoid a £20 million 'overspend', which would have left individual members of the controlling Labour Group personally liable for the interest.

Council leader Keva Coombes has denied that any cuts are involved. It is merely a matter, he claims, of value for money and more efficient services.

In reality, cuts are involved on old people's homes, adaptations for the handicapped, improvement grants, street lighting, and school stationery.

Money for the Gifford inquiry, which has highlighted racial discrimination against Liverpool's substantial black community, has been cut completely. Although the amount 'saved' is negligible (some £11,000) the cuts says a lot about the Council's priorities.

BR Board drop Toolan

By a railworker

Trevor Toolan, BR's personnel director, has now left BR, his contract not having been renewed. According to press reports, he is regarded with hostility by both management and rail union leaders, who are glad to see him go.

However, this common dislike is not the result of a desire on both sides for more calm and reasoned industrial relations than Toolan's methods allowed.

From BR's point of view he failed to do the job he was appointed to do; from the union side he tried too hard to do it.

Toolan was brought into BR management from British Leyland to apply his union-busting skills learned under Michael Edwardes. His brief was to smash up the rail unions so as to make privatisation possible.

The first step in this aim was to break up the national negotiating machinery so they could bring in local, regional and sector pay rates and conditions of service.

This precipitated six 24-hour strikes. Jimmy Knapp of the NUR eagerly sought this clash because he saw his *raison d'être* as a national negotiator about to disappear. The strike campaign hit a mood among railworkers, and, combined with stoppages on London tube and buses, they were massively successful.

BR's attempt to use the anti-union laws blew up in their faces as did their attempts to tough it out. They were eventually forced to make concessions on both pay and a new national negotiating machinery. Toolan had failed.

A 'bridge building' dinner was held between BR management and Knapp, along with other "senior union colleagues" during Labour Party conference. Toolan was not present. (None of the rest of the NUR conference delegation were aware of these goings on, by the way).

Having conceded some national negotiations, BR want Knapp to feel that all is well now. And, judging by the contents of the NUR's journal, *Transport Review*, this is exactly what he does think.

Meanwhile, management is continuing to attack railworkers at all levels, while buttering up Knapp.

They want to replace Toolan not with someone who will be nice to us, but with a more competent Thatcherite who will continue the Tory programme.

The Tories may have put privatisation on the back burner, but everything involved in preparing for it is being kept bubbling.

Toolan was paid £70,000 a year. As compensation for not renewing his contract he will receive a golden handshake of £100,000.

Where is Briefing going?

By Tom Rigby

Many delegates were surprised by some of the arguments advanced by Alan Thornett who moved the conference policy document.

It wasn't that the policy statement itself was poor. It contained many strong points. No, what delegates were unhappy with was the statement's fuzziness on the question of trade union democracy and lack of attention on the central problems of democratising the Broad Lefts and co-ordinating the left across the unions.

But, the process of democratic debate in the various workshops did much to sharpen the focus of the more fuzzy sections. Many amendments put forward were accepted. But from the platform, Alan Thornett, speaking for the drafting committee majority, opposed such democratic demands as:

• The frequent re-election of trade union officials, preferably annually, but for a maximum of two years.

Instead, Thornett put forward a vague formula: elected "for a short defined term". This was taken to mean for five years. Thornett said he didn't mean five years, but he fought tooth and nail against defining it as for two years, and took his defeat by conference with a very bad grace.

• Union executives, appeals courts and disciplinary committees to be made up of elected lay members only.

And in the sections on Broad Lefts and rank and file organisation Alan opposed:

• Campaigning inside the BLs to democratise them and win them to policies against discrimination and in the interests of the working class.

• Approaching BLOC and the LCDTU to organise an open, democratic conference of the Broad Lefts to create a democratic national framework to co-ordinate the left in the unions.

In the event all but one clause of one of the amendments proposed by Alan on these questions were accepted by the majority of the conference. It seems that the great bulk of the active trade unionists present had a much clearer view of the problems facing the left in the unions than the person so eager to put himself forward as summing up the mood of the conference.

This alone should not really be any cause for concern. In any democratic movement there will be disagreements between 'leaders' and the 'led'. Debate to resolve such differences can only have a positive and beneficial effect.

The problems that worried some delegates were the methods Alan employed in attempting to make his case.

At one point the chair had to stop Alan speaking after a point of order from a building worker. The comrade pointed out that Alan was using his 15 minute speech intended to introduce the document as an opportunity to reply to amendments that had not yet been put. The chair received warm applause when she upheld the point of order. Many of the delegates must have thought how good it would be to have such an effective chair at their own union conferences.

When this didn't work, Alan resorted to claiming from the platform that amendments he didn't agree with implied a 'secret agenda'. For instance, he insisted that the phrase "Call a meeting to discuss the way forward" really meant launch a new rank and file movement based only on the affiliates to the Socialist Movement trade union con-

The strike by 130 Child Day Centre workers in Islington is set to escalate this week.

Field social workers will be balloting for all-out action and staff in the residential homes are discussing an admissions ban.

The strikers need your support. Contact Islington NALGO, 2 Orlestone Rd, London N7

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Solidarity with the ambulance crews!

Not even a Tory government can outlaw human decency," said ambulance workers' union leader Roger Poole.

The Tories replied with a coarse jeer. They have got London's ambulance boss writing to ambulance workers telling them that they could face court action if they defy the lock-out to answer emergency calls.

Already the bosses have put lives at risk by locking out London ambulance workers who are taking industrial action for their pay claim by refusing non-urgent work. Now they threaten ambulance crews who by-pass the management and act to save lives with prosecution.

The Tories' tactics are a calculated ploy to break the ambulance workers in their strongest centre, London. In other areas ambulance workers are taking the same industrial action as in London but have not been locked out.

The Tories not only refuse to put the dispute to arbitration, but even rule out any negotiations unless the ambulance workers submit to the government's threats. The Tories dare do this only because their vicious anti-union laws deter other workers from solidarity strikes.

We should not be cowed. The bosses did not dare use the Tory laws against the "unlawful" solidarity strikes for the nurses last year — and the Tories are more shaky now than then.

Thatcher's argument about market forces solving everything has been thrown out of the window.

The Tories realise they can't sell the electricity supply industry with the nuclear attached, so they've taken the nuclear out and said that we, the tax payers, have got to pay for it.

But the non-nuclear part of the electricity supply industry will be privatised if the Tories get their way, and that has very dire consequences for the pits.

The latest decision by the NUM special delegate conference not to take action over flexible holidays means that pits are going to produce 50 weeks of the year at full turn out. The British coal industry is going to be producing extra capacity.

It all points to more pit closures. The pit closures that have been spoken about so far will bring us down to about 50 pits and it may even go lower.

One thing that intrigues me about the breaking of the Berlin Wall was that if you'd asked any major politician East or West, six or twelve months ago 'Can you get rid of the Berlin Wall?', they would have said no.

But when people come together and make a decision then, so long as they are united, they are unstoppable. People made the decision that the Wall had to go.

There is a significant lesson. All these

• Demand the TUC calls a day of action in support of the ambulance workers and in defence of the NHS.

• Invite an ambulance worker to your Labour Party or trade union branch. Discuss setting up a local support committee.

• Demand the Labour Party gives full support to the ambulance workers' action and their full claim.

• Link up the ambulance workers with other NHS workers fighting over pay, cuts and in defence of the NHS. MSF is already balloting members in the health service for strike action over a pay claim: it should hasten the action to help ambulance workers. Other unions should also join solidarity strikes, following the example of Smithfield meat porters who recently struck in protest against cuts at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London.

• Leaflet the police and army, calling on them to refuse to scab. They are being asked to cover vital jobs for which they are not trained and qualified when the trained and qualified staff are willing to do the work and are being stopped only by the bosses' lock-out.

• The dispute should be under the control of regular union reps' meetings in each area.

**March & Demonstration
Saturday 18 November**

**ASSEMBLE
London Ambulance Service
HQ, Waterloo Road, SW1 at
9am**

WHETTON'S WEEK A miner's diary

politicians and world leaders and statemen are being blamed or given credit for things, but it's the common people who change things.

If the labour movement decides something, we will be unstoppable, East or West. They were stopped in Tiananmen Square, but that was only the tip of an iceberg. I've no doubt that we shall see similar events taking place in future. If the people are determined enough, they cannot be stopped.

I was quite cheered by the number of people I saw on television that were coming over to the West but then going back. They hadn't been taken over by all the propaganda.

They were prepared to stay in East Germany and fight for the brand of socialism that they wanted. I thought this was quite significant.

A lot of commentators talked about "tearing the wall down and taking the West eastwards". I have a suspicion that they are singing at the tops of their voices too soon and in actual fact we might be seeing a new-style socialism coming westward.

Many East Germans haven't been taken in by the glitz and glamour of the Western world.

Soviet miners on political strike

By Clive Bradley

Vorkuta, in the frozen wastes of the USSR's arctic north, was a labour camp under Stalin where many of the followers of Trotsky were dumped.

Today, a new Soviet generation is on strike in Vorkuta's coal mines.

From the Donbass in Ukraine to the Kuzbass in Siberia, striking miners are demanding that Gorbachev's government implement promises it made in the summer.

The strikes are in direct contravention of Gorbachev's new anti-strike law. In Vorkuta, there has been a local ruling that the strike, now (14 November) 20 days old, is illegal; but this doesn't seem to have been replicated elsewhere. Living conditions throughout the Soviet coalfields — and especially in Vorkuta — are appalling, and with winter setting in, workers want to see action on the demands they were putting in July. Those included a call for proper housing, supplies of soap, more rank and file control.

In the Ukraine, an independent union to be called Solidarity was demanded. Now, in the Kuzbass, a Labour Union is being formed, described by Russian socialist Boris Kagarlitsky as "half-way between a union and a political party".

The strikers have also called for the abolition of article six of the Constitution, which guarantees the Communist Party a monopoly of power. This thoroughly political demand has clear and far-reaching implications.

Gorbachev's popularity is waning. In the summer he had immense difficulty getting the miners to go back to work. The promises he made he simply cannot meet: so the miners are angry. And if the strikes go on, the government could find itself in a very explosive situation, especially as the signs are that there is a rapid politicisation taking place.

What are Gorbachev's options? In the summer, the Communist Party radicals around former Moscow party-boss Boris Yeltsin were instrumental in getting an end to the strikes. But miners' patience is running out. The radicals in the Soviet Parliament have supported the strike.

There is the 'Deng option' — wholesale slaughter. But with Eastern Europe in turmoil, Gorbachev is very unlikely to want that.

So the odds must be on quite far-reaching concessions. Even if the government can't meet the strikers' demands, it can offer extensive reforms, sack unpopular officials, make more promises, find new resources at someone else's expense and hope for the best.

We must do what we can to help the miners beat Gorbachev. A defeat, at the first hurdle, for the new anti-strike law, would be a major victory.



Troops take ambulance jobs

Liverpool ambulance crews keep the action strong

**Ray Carrick, a NUPE
ambulance shop
steward in Sefton
Health Authority,
Liverpool spoke to
Stan Crooke.**

We are operating a range of sanctions

We are not carrying out discharges from hospitals or casualty units, except in the case of terminally ill patients. We have also restricted transfers. We will do transfers to specialised units, but not ordinary transfers.

Emergency vehicles are no longer dealing with routine out-patient cases, such as someone going into a hospital or clinic.

The routine movement of vehicles on nights — going to workshops for repairs or servicing or being taken for a MOT — is not being carried out. Routine administrative work, including all paper work save that relating to patients' care, is not being done either.

And of course, there is a complete ban on overtime.

Management locally have been co-operative. No-one has been faced with suspensions or forced to deal with cases they are unhappy about.

The officers in control, who are mostly in trade unions themselves, have been quite good in intercepting calls they know we will not deal with.

There are a couple of theories in circulation as to why management have been so co-operative.

One is that the army provision for dealing with emergencies is perhaps not all that it could be in this area, and that a lot of the provision available has been taken up by London.

The other is that maybe management recognises that we have a case. But it is

the same management that wanted a cut of almost 40% in Accident and Emergency cover on night shifts last year. So we're sceptical.

Some people in the Territorial Army have told us that they've heard that the army medical vehicles are not yet fully in position. When they are in position, then maybe things will be different.

We have had full and firm support from the Labour Party front bench in this dispute. We assume that local MPs are supporting us as well.

The national dispute ran into the local dispute over proposed cuts in night shift cover, and we were getting full support from local MPs in that dispute.

We've had a lot of requests to send speakers to Labour Party and trade union meetings. Up to now we've kept the dispute internal and people came to us for speakers, but now that is changing and we realise we have to go out to people to spread the dispute.

At the beginning of the dispute we had three or four other demands apart from pay — early retirement, a graduated increase in pay, according to length of service and longer holidays. These were rejected by management at the outset.

Now the union has dropped these demands as a gesture of goodwill, as it were. That has caused a bit of heartsearching among the members.

We understand the tactical reasons for doing it, but I don't think there is any mood for compromise on the pay issue itself.

Next week

**This week's Socialist
Organiser lacks some of our
usual features, because we've
given extra space to coverage
on the tremendous events in
Eastern Europe. We'll be back
to usual next week.**

For over a hundred years the Irish in Manchester have held ceremonies and marches in honour of the 3 Fenians — Allen, Larkin and O'Brien — who were publicly hanged outside Belle Vue jail in 1867.

Every year for the last decade the annual march has been attacked by fascists and others.

It is an annual test of strength between those who champion Ireland's rights and those who are animated by traditional British bigotry of the sort which framed the Guildford 4 and kept them in jail for 15 years, and which still keeps the innocent Birmingham 6 in jail now.

Socialists in Manchester should back this year's march —

**Assemble at 12.30
Longsight Market
Dickenson Road
Manchester**