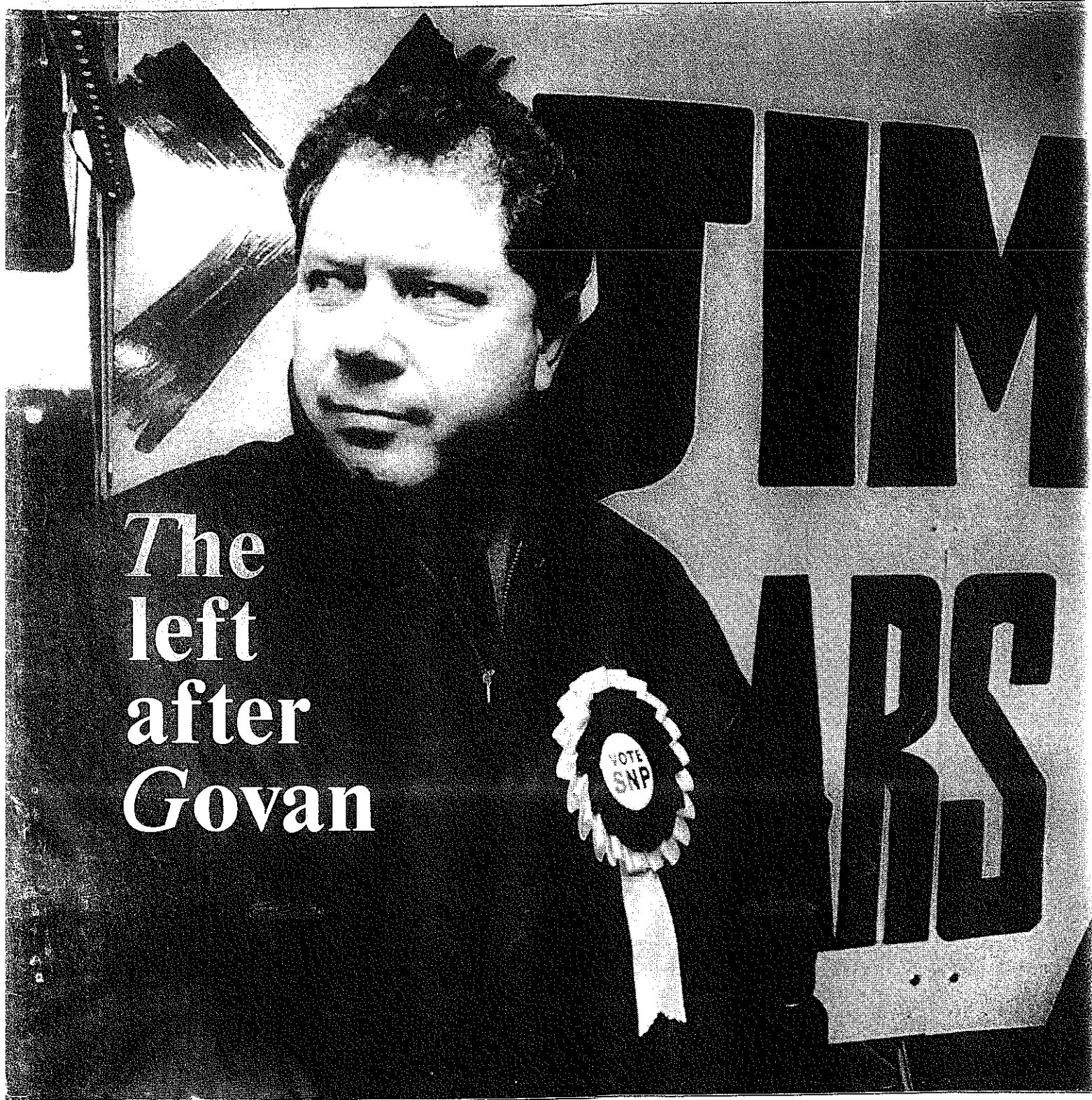


Socialist Action

60p



**The
left
after
Govan**

Interview with Ken Livingstone

Editorial

The left after Reagan

George Bush elected president, Gorbachev pursuing his policy of detente with the US and Thatcher, South African withdrawal from Namibia and Cuban withdrawal from Angola, a victory in the popular vote for Bhutto in Pakistan, a strong advance of the left in the elections in Brazil, a balance of payments crisis in Britain, the tremors of the Govan by-election. These are not obviously connected. Yet, despite the different scale of the events concerned, they all represent, in their own way, manifestations of the legacy of Reagan.

Reaganism represented an attempt to resolve the problems facing imperialism by concentrating all its force in a single centre — the United States. The entire international economy, international capitalist political leadership, and military force were concentrated in the US — an attempt to reverse by these means some of the trends of the post-war period.

There is no denying that by these methods imperialism gained some significant victories. It imposed a tremendous economic squeeze on Eastern Europe. It produced a prolonged boom in the US and East Asia. It succeeded in introducing Cruise and Pershing missiles into Western Europe and extracted significant concessions from the USSR for removing them. It invaded Grenada, bombed Libya, forced the Soviet leadership onto a more pliant line towards imperialism, and demonstrated convincingly that there is only one 'superpower', not two, on the planet. Thatcherism, built on the foundation of North Sea oil, also basked in the reflected glow of Reagan.

But for all that Reaganism failed. The US economy could not take the strain imposed upon it. The economic support which the US demanded from its partners to maintain its own position could not be granted without destabilising their own social and political orders. Last October's Wall Street crash was the public announcement that the international capitalist order could no longer take the strain.

But the aftermath poses problems for Thatcher. The great oil price boom, originally engineered by the United States, on which the British economy has floated has come to an end. The British economy threatens to be crushed between two forces, the United States and West Germany, with which it cannot possibly compete. The substantial increases in living standards on which Thatcherism has maintained its political support is under threat. The economic and social conditions which have reigned for the last decade are substantially changing.

The conclusion which capital draws from this is that it must now 'seal in' and render permanent the gains of Thatcherism. Its instrument to achieve this, as always, is to housebreak and render compliant the Labour Party and labour movement. In the next three years capital must ensure either, or both, that Labour is pledged not to reverse any fundamental changes of Thatcherism or that it has no chance to enter government alone to do so. By removing any real alternative this also makes most likely the achieving of what is still capital's preferred alternative — the return of a fourth Tory government in 1991.

In that situation *Socialist Action* has no doubt about the priority in the next year. It is the fight in the Labour Party to ensure that not all alternatives to Thatcherism are foreclosed. That Labour pursues a course independent of the SLD and avoids the right wing line that produces disasters such as Govan.

It means that the left must pursue priorities and tactics to gain what can be achieved in the party: winning the vote on unilateralism, agreeing a coherent economic policy on the left, winning real advances for the representation of women and black people, defending the CLPs against proposals to substitute postal ballots for political discussion, increasing the minority support that exists for British withdrawal from Ireland, blocking any possibility of coalition with the SLD and linking with the international struggles that will develop against imperialism.

Those are the most important tasks in fighting for political independence of the working class in the next year.

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An affiliated black society?

THIS YEAR'S party conference adopted a resolution which recognises that: 'Conference believes that the socialist societies structure within the party contains both the tradition and prospect for creating forms of organisation for the representation of black and Asian members.'

This was carried overwhelmingly, with the support of the NEC, on a show of hands. At the same conference the trade unions BETA and the NCU voted for Black Sections for the first time. As a result, and whilst still not recognising Black Sections, the Labour Party now stands at a crossroads of possibly accepting the fact of black self-organisation. That should be the meaning of passing the resolution in Blackpool.

This possibility results not from a conversion on the road to Damascus — nor from a wish to bring the practice of the labour movement into line with the policy of the TUC. It is purely and simply the official recognition of the fact that Black Sections cannot be removed from the labour movement's agenda.

Ever since the first resolutions on the rights of Labour's black members were brought to annual conference in 1983, there has been the wish to snuff it out.

Five years later, and after virtually permanent confrontation with the party leadership, the Labour Party Black Section is still able to organise in thirty constituencies, is still able to bring sufficient resolutions to conference to guarantee a debate, and is able to publish the major policy discussion document produced by any group on the subject of black rights, *The Black Agenda*.

That is why the vote taken this year is so significant. It signifies a change in orientation away from trying to confront the Black Section head on, and towards trying to minimise its influence within a wider, looser, and more pliable formation

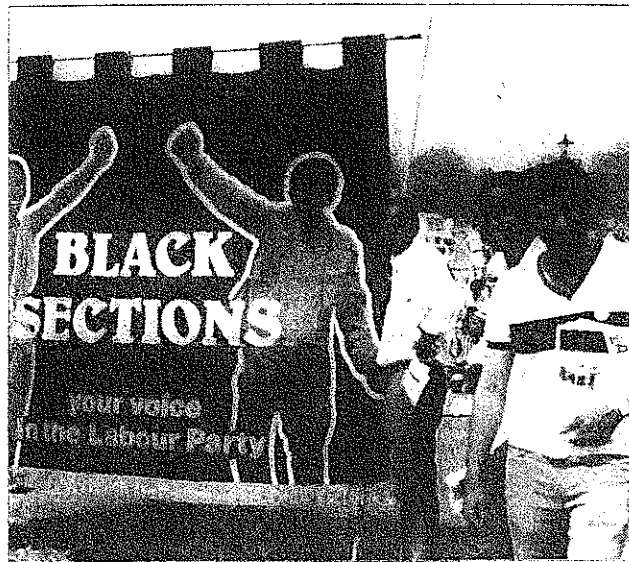
under the rubric of the affiliated societies option.

The major questions involved for the Black Section here are twofold. Firstly, the most advantageous formula possible must be won from the discussions resulting in concrete proposals going forward to next year's conference — including making clear that a society open to white members defeats the objective. Secondly, the Black Section must take the political debate into the black community — it must maximise its position within those forces contending for leadership within any new formation.

Because the Black Section has been tied down in the struggle for survival for the last five years, it has not had the ability to build a mass popular base in the black community. During the years of expulsions and suspensions, the major imperative was the need to construct a system of alliances with all forces in the party prepared to fight against political expulsions — primarily the left, through Labour Left Liaison.

Now the tactics have to be expanded by concentrating on popularising *The Black Agenda* within the black community. This is because the only way left open to the party leadership to minimise the influence of the Black Section within what will be a fully recognised formation having representation of a kind to be determined, will be to attempt to mobilise right wing forces within the black community — to turn the Black Section forces into the marginalised left opposition. The fight for political supremacy — to be the hegemonic force in black politics — is therefore now becoming a greater imperative.

This relates to the type of affiliated society which emerges. A society that has to horse trade with other affiliated organisations for representation on the NEC does not go anywhere



towards meeting the organisational objectives of the Black Section.

The strategy, of attaining and maintaining a hegemonic position both in

terms of black politics, and in the concrete discussions on the structure of the affiliated society are the immediate tasks facing the Black Sections movement. MIKE WONGSAM

Time to Go campaign takes off

The 'Time To Go' campaign launched last June has already won wider support than any movement for British withdrawal from Ireland since the troops were sent to the Six Counties in 1969. It is endorsed not only by the hard left — which has been the backbone of activity on Ireland in recent years — but soft left Labour MPs, the National Union of Students, the Communist Party of Great Britain, the *Morning Star* and the *Irish Post*, the highest circulation newspaper of the Irish in Britain.

Bringing these into alliance with the established current on the hard left, the LCI, Ken Livingstone and Tony Benn as well as a wide range of lawyers, journalists, artists, musicians and other public figures to campaign for withdrawal has been a major achievement of the 'Time To Go' campaign.

Support from the 'soft left' and both wings of the Communist Party offers openings to increase support in the trade unions where, in addition to all of the other political obstacles, there is also the issue of British unions organising members in Ireland. These members are then given a veto over trade union discussion on Ireland quite disproportionate to

their numbers. If open debate on Ireland can be achieved in the unions significant progress will be made in winning support for British withdrawal as well individual issues of discrimination, democratic rights and civil liberties. The 'Time to Go' alliance must be translated into a force for such change in the major unions.

The Troops Out Movement and the Irish in Britain Representation Group have refused to support the 'Time to Go' campaign and been supported in this by *Labour Briefing*. They are just wrong. It is obligatory for any organisation or individual who wants to support the struggle for Irish self-determination to seize this opportunity to work with far wider forces than has previously been possible for British withdrawal from Ireland. As *An Phoblacht/Republican News* put it some heads need to be knocked together in Britain if people don't see the need to support the 'Time to Go' campaign.

'Time to Go' is now organised through a council of national organisations supporting the campaign. Its conference on 19 November was a big success, attended by over 500 delegates and observers. It is translating this into similar alliances locally and in the trade unions.

Chilean dictatorship suffers electoral defeat

Chile was jubilant at the result of the plebiscite on 5 October, 1988. Despite being tailored to ensure Pinochet's victory — he was the only candidate and voters could only vote yes or no — the regime was defeated by 55 to 43 per cent.

The minimal extensions of democracy, including the return of political exiles, and allowing some measure of organisation to the opposition do not explain the result.

Pinochet had grossly miscalculated his strength. The first signs of this were the demonstrations held in September: the regime, with all the resources of the state and media behind it, gathered around 8,000 people at a march in Santiago; the opposition, authorised to hold its own demo in the southern outskirts of Santiago, gathered a crowd of 300,000.

The final campaign rallies showed the regime faced certain defeat: the regime gathered 100 to 150,000, the opposition 1 to 1.2 million — the population of the entire country is 12 million (4 of them in Santiago).

Moreover, the electoral registration campaign showed the odds were against the regime. The registers were abolished by the military in 1973 and the opposition embarked on a national registration campaign. Of a total potential voting population of 8 million, 7.4 registered and 7.2 turned out to vote.

Sections of the military, especially in the Air Force and police, were never happy with the choice of candidate. Some favoured a right-wing civilian candidate who 'could unite rather than divide Chileans'. Others called on Pinochet to call the referendum off.

After initially trying to disregard the defeat,

Pinochet finally announced the result at 2am. The joy of the masses was shown at the next day's rally which was nearly 2 million strong. Banners of all opposition parties, banned under the harsh provisions of the 1980 constitution, were unfurled.

As expected, leaders of the opposition — an extremely heterogeneous group including Conservatives, Social Democrats, Socialists, Communists and even sections of the far left axis around Christian Democracy — called on the masses to stay calm and wait.

Their line is to use the electoral victory to begin negotiations with sections of the military to start a process of return to democracy. Ricardo Lagos, leader of the Social Democrats, and the opposition's second national figure put it in a nutshell: 'We need a government of national unity like the one Britain had during the World War II when Churchill and Attlee formed a coalition government to face the threat of Nazi Germany'.

Their project is for a gradual transition to some form of protected democracy, more democratic than Pinochet but which would exclude the possibility of a repeat of 1970 when Allende came to power. This involves a centre-right civilian government, with the support of the bulk of the military and the US.

Time on 17 October revealed that the US administration 'funnelled more than \$1 million to opposition groups to register plebiscite voters'.

Some leaders of the opposition are talking about negotiating 'aspects of the 1980 constitution' and not its abolition. However, the precondition is that Pinochet must go. He has become a liability. His position within the army has been severely undermined.

However, although the dictatorship is damaged in its prestige and in the midst of a political crisis, it is still in place and has no means exhausted its possibilities.

Both the ruling class and the proletariat face a crisis of leadership in Chile. For the Chilean bourgeoisie a conservative civilian-military government axis around Christian Democracy, a party with a temporary popular social base, is a very inadequate instrument for the project of protected democracy.

The working class and its allies, on the other hand, suffer from the lack of leadership, which became tragically apparent in the events leading to the coup d'état in September 1973, and which repression has deepened.

The victory at the polls is still far from being translated into tangible gains for the masses. And given the line of decisive sectors of the opposition leadership the period to come could well see the snatching of defeat from the jaws of victory.

The decisive political axis remains the struggle for the restoration of all democratic rights and the elimination of the dictatorship.

This means demanding the immediate resignation of the military junta, the holding of free elections, the abolition of the 1980 constitution, the repeal of all repressive legislation, the legalisation of all political parties, the release of political prisoners, the resignation of appointed university rectors, the dismantling of the secret police organisations, and the bringing to justice of those guilty of assassinations, torture and other atrocities.

The results of the referendum, while a tremendous victory for the masses, are far from ensuring a peaceful road to democracy in Chile.

JAVIER



Apartheid shadow still hangs over Angola and Namibia

The UN backed 'settlement' of the war between South Africa on the one side, and Angola, Cuba and the freedom fighters of Namibia, despite any other reservations, is a major victory in the struggle against apartheid.

However, the terms of the settlement, imposed from outside by the twin pressure of the US and Gorbachev, have deprived the liberation struggle of the full fruits of its military and political victory.

The exact terms of the deal are yet to be announced, but the main elements are well known. UN supervised elections on the basis of majority rule in Namibia next year which SWAPO will almost certainly win; the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia and from Angola's borders; the ending of South African military support to UNITA within Angola are the concessions made by South Africa.

On Angola, Cuba and SWAPO's side the concessions centrally involve the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, the exclusion of

ANC guerillas from both Angola and newly-independent Namibia, and the unresolved issue of UNITA.

The background to the deal is straight-forward. It is clear that severe military defeats had been inflicted on South Africa through stepped up Cuban involvement in the war, backed up by Soviet-supplied radar equipment.

However the deal that has been struck does not fully reflect the scale of the defeat inflicted on South Africa on the ground.

The scale of Gorbachev's behind the scene intervention is understood by every bourgeois commentator. Both Cuba and Angola were forced to accept that they would not be able to emerge the clear victors in the war, despite their joint military success. Undoubtedly both countries were told that the USSR — the main arms supplier to Angola — would not sustain the war on its existing level. Given the strains on both countries' economies this would have made a settlement virtually unavoidable.

The concession involving the exclusion of the ANC is potentially the most damaging to the anti-apartheid forces in South Africa.

However a particularly chilling note is struck by the apparent agreement that South Africa will retain legal ownership rights to Walvis Bay, Namibia's main port. This echoes the situation confronting Mozambique where South African troops control key export lines out of the country, and are able to provoke a devastating internal economic and political crisis, bringing the regime near to the point of collapse.

The achievement of Namibian independence and the end of the war against Angola should be hailed as a victory by all those opposed to apartheid.

However, the struggle in Southern Africa is far from over, and the terms of the settlement imposed on Namibia and Angola leave the door open for attempts to turn the relation of forces by the apartheid state.

JANE NAIR



Poland — through the looking glass

The spectacle of Margaret Thatcher being greeted by cheering crowds of industrial workers tens of thousands strong is a difficult one to swallow. Poland and most especially Gdansk is almost certainly the only place in the world where this could happen.

It did not happen because Polish workers are ignorant or stupid. During the British miner's strike Polish TV screens were full of scenes of baton wielding police attacking workers, but then ample coverage too was given to Arthur Scargill's dismissive attacks on Solidarnosc.

We have to understand what has taken place even if we don't support it.

In Poland Thatcher is above all the Iron Lady who stands up to the Russians and is not taken in by their blandishments. What is more she has three times been returned by the British people in General Elections.

It is worth remembering that only in a few short years following the World War I, and before the Pilsudski military coup in 1926, have Poles had the opportunity to elect national governments which enjoyed any degree of sovereignty and independence. Those who do enjoy this right are envied in Poland because people desperately want to see the western democracies as sturdy and viable. They do not take

into account, because they are not so conscious of, the imperialist roots of these bourgeois democracies — their base in the exploitation of the semi-colonial countries.

Every 3 May there are demonstrations on the streets of Polish cities commemorating the anniversary of the 18th century constitution which guaranteed democratic and civil rights which are yet to be achieved in 'socialist' Poland.

It is against this background that the liberal democratic and vehemently anti-communistic ideology of the Polish opposition must be seen.

It is not surprising either that this political liberalism, reflecting an unfinished agenda of the bourgeois national revolution in Poland extends too into economic liberalism. Many, perhaps most, Polish workers have relatives in the west, many of them also travel, they see that living standards of workers under capitalism were much higher than their own. To try and tell people struggling on the wretched purchasing power of an average wage in Poland about the evils of unemployment under capitalism is like trying to tell a man dying of thirst about the danger of flash floods.

The threatened closure of the Gdansk shipyards dramatises the ideological dilemma of the opposition. It

has always favoured economic reform and marketisation. On the other hand how can a working class trade unionist movement, instinctively egalitarian and collectivist, possibly accept the reality of efficiency promoting Thatcherism.

The coming to power of a Rakowski government and the new combativity of Polish workers shown in the mass strikes earlier this year together signal a new period of movement in Polish politics. Only a short time ago Rakowski, the regime liberal, a persistent advocate of more open daring political strategies, seemed sidelined by the depressing hack technocrats of the Messner administration. So too did Walesa. Thus the chief antagonists in 1981 have an opportunity for a second round.

Socialists in the west gazing into the puzzling mirror image of East European social conflict must hope this time that a more desirable model of socialism will now emerge from the turmoil.

Workers showing support for Thatcher is not a pretty or desirable sight — nor is the support given to her by some such as Walesa. But without the Polish workers beginning to have a political life of their own there is going to be no rekindling of genuine socialist forces in Poland — or any other East European country.

DAVID HOLLAND

The Govan by-election was of major significance in British politics. It came after a Labour Party conference where the left suffered a substantial defeat in the leadership contest but won important votes on unilateralism, the rights of women, for the principle of a black socialist society affiliated to the party, and on employment training and a national minimum wage. *Socialist Action* interviewed KEN LIVINGSTONE for his assessment of the situation after Govan and the party conference. Editing is by *Socialist Action*.

The left after Govan

I think Govan is a very major political event. No matter how much the front bench try to find rationalisations the truth is that people voted in Govan for a party which they saw as to the left of the Labour Party. Naturally the SNP is not to the left of Labour historically, and we will have to bring out into the open what its positions on the EEC mean, but on tactical issues at present the SNP appears to the left of Labour. It appears to be, firstly, for much stronger opposition to the poll tax, and, secondly, for much stronger defence of Scotland against the economic and political ravages of Thatcherism. It is also, incidentally, a unilateralist party — which should be another nail in the coffin of the right wing argument that it is unilateralism which loses Labour elections rather than its lack of any coherent economic policy.

The idea that this wasn't the fundamental situation, the rather pathetic attempt to put the blame on Bob Gillespie, is yet another example of the party leadership burying its head in the sand — and refusing to take responsibility for its own actions.

The party leader and Walworth Rd have intervened continuously in the Scottish Party. Neil Kinnock went specifically to last year's Scottish conference to lay down the law that there must be legality at all costs in the fight against the poll tax. He failed to deal with devolution in his last major Scottish speech. He was also

personally responsible for forcing the byelection in Govan by appointing Bruce Millan as an EEC Commissioner.

The leader of a party should not attempt to avoid responsibility by not accepting the obvious facts of the situation. Govan was a test, and an indictment, of the line the party is pursuing.

It will also therefore have major implications for Scotland and for Britain as a whole. Obviously the implications in Scotland are for the Scottish comrades — so I'd only make a few tentative comments on these and can only argue certainly on Govan's impact on the party as a whole.

Firstly the processes, the right wing political line, which led to Govan poses an immediate threat to Labour in Scotland. The Tories virtually don't count as a factor in Scotland any more. Their vote has fallen by more than a half since 1955. They hold only a few rural constituencies Labour cannot win anyway and I would expect their vote to fall even further at the next election. Neither do the open sub-Tories, the SDP, count. The real fight in Scotland is between Labour and the SNP — with, on a smaller scale, the SLD playing some role.

Labour does not appear as the most left wing party in this situation. The SNP does today. Even the SLD historically appeared more committed to devolution than the Labour right wing old guard — although this

is now being overcome. But Labour is fighting in a situation where it appears to be a party on a relatively right wing part of the spectrum and this demonstrably isn't working electorally — let alone the fact that it's not the right part of the political spectrum to be on anyway. It is clear that Labour has to take a sharp turn to the left in Scotland if it is going to defend itself against the attack of the SNP. But that in turn has implications and lessons for the entire party in Britain.

Govan was the first test since Labour Party conference of the centre-right bloc which is put together in the Kinnock-Hattersley ticket. And it was a catastrophic failure. There is no point in Robin Cook, for example, pledging not to pay his poll tax if he organises for a leadership of Kinnock-Hattersley which commits the entire structure of the Labour Party to legality at all costs on the poll tax.

We have also seen the impact of the centre-right bloc on other issues. It was that bloc which clearly pushed Neil Kinnock into his disastrous television interview on unilateralism — which set back our position in the polls throughout the spring and summer. It also prevented, through the role of John Cunningham in particular, the party taking any clear line against nuclear power — leaving the field open for the SLD and even, ridiculously, Thatcher on green

issues. This centre-right bloc is the central problem confronted within the party in holding us back from policies which can win the next election and form a successful Labour government. I thought that a year ago and still do.

That is the issue which Diane Abbott, Ann Pettifor and I tried to address in an article in *Tribune* (11 November) on modernising the party. This is an issue I don't think the left should be diffident about. The Labour Party has to change, to be 'modernised' in that sense. The only issue is in what direction it should go.

The right wing want to change the party in the direction of chasing a small group of skilled (male) manual workers organised in unions like the EETPU and AEU which they believe will be won over by right wing policies. Actually the right wing are not even very good at that because the most important thing which drove the skilled manual working class over to Thatcher in 1979 was the Labour government's incomes policies and the thing which drove them away from Labour decisively in 1987 was Roy Hattersley's taxation policies. If Labour goes to the skilled manual workers and says 'we are the party of incomes policies and high taxation on average incomes', that is the policies of the right wing, it won't win them over at all. But that is a different issue from the broad social changes going on.

What is vital is that the present, so called, 'modernisation' of the party doesn't at all match the real social changes that are taking place, or the real international shifts. The only thing that has really been updated is presentation, and as the result of the last election shows brilliant presentation without policies that back it up doesn't win elections. The reality is that the Policy Review is *failing* to bring the party into line with the real shifts taking place, *failing* to modernise the party, and that is the real charge against it.

Take as example what happened at conference. The crucial vote on the first day was for a woman on every short list — which was won. But the NEC, with the right wing so called 'modernisers', voted against it.

There is no issue where Labour has to more drastically revise its policies and structures than on women — both are completely inadequate. Furthermore it has been an electoral disaster for the party. Labour would have been in office continuously during the 1950s and 1960s if it had

received the same vote among women as among male voters. Any serious modernisation of the Labour Party has to start with its position on women. And similar arguments apply to many other issues — unilateralism, black sections, nuclear power. That is the point Diane Abbott, Ann Pettifor and I were making in *Tribune*.

It is ridiculous for the left to be portrayed as backward looking. Most modern ideas — on democracy, on women, on modernising the economy, on the environment, on party accountability — were pioneered by Tony Benn over a decade ago — and fought against tooth and nail by the right wing at the time. It is the left which has always been the modernising trend in the party and should reclaim that ground.

Where I think there is some need for the left to get its act together is over tactics. Here I believe the situation has not been seen clearly.

There are today three currents in the party and *none* has a majority.

The first is the right — the real hard right represented by Hattersley, Smith, Cunningham, Laird, Hammond. They know perfectly clearly what they want — the bomb, acceptance of the anti-union laws, the EEC, women and black people can go to hell etc. They are more and more openly going towards a coalition with the SLD — it is interesting that Rooker, Cook and Cunningham have all come out in favour of proportional representation which, in today's conditions, can only mean a coalition with the SLD, a coalition for maintaining Thatcherism.

The second current is the left — the Campaign Group, the campaigns in Labour Left Liaison, and the left in the unions. That is also a significant current — the attempt of the soft left to destroy it failed. But it is also a minority.

The third current, the largest, is the centre, or the soft left in the unions — I say in the unions because in the CLPs the main group which used to term itself soft-left, the LCC, has now completely gone over to the right. It is this centre/soft left which is today running the party in alliance with the right with disastrous consequences as seen at Govan.

In reality the present situation in the party has to turned around. The alliance which has to be forged to fight Thatcher is that of the hard left and soft left against the right —

with the left setting the agenda.

Of course I'm not naive, there has to be a policy basis for that. And we're not going to arrive at that situation overnight. But we have to bring out that type of agenda. This is why I think the votes at party conference on unilateralism, on women on the short list, on the black affiliated society, on employment training, and on the national minimum wage were all important not only in themselves but as beginning to hammer out an agenda with which the left can win over the soft left/centre. The basis for this is a successful fight against Thatcherism and against the SLD.

It is really astonishing in showing how far the left has gone off base on some tactical issues that it doesn't take this for granted — that it is accused of being 'rightist'. When CLPD won the constitutional reforms in 1979-81, or we won on unilateralism that was exactly the line up. USDAW did not become a left wing union because it supported the electoral college for the leadership. And on unilateralism we had to win over unions that weren't left on everything at all. I know that at the GLC there were many in the centre who were in the administration. What was decisive was the left set the agenda and gave the leadership — we were never a numerical majority on the council. These points should be basic but they are not always applied.

I haven't altered my approach from the statement on left unity that was put out between the LLL and some left members of the LCC a year ago. That spelt out an agenda that was correct and if it had been followed up, if the left had been able to work together on at least some issues, then I believe the right would never have got away with even trying to overturn unilateralism, or that leading right wing MPs today could come out with their calls for accommodation with the SLD. I believe the fact that the soft left allowed themselves to be browbeaten into a course of rejecting the left working together on the issues where it agreed was a serious setback and has had very bad consequences — including in Govan.

Exactly the same issues are faced today as a year ago — how to defend unilateralism, how to advance the position of women in the party, how to advance the position of black members, how to prevent the institutionalisation of Thatcherism through coalition with the Alliance. It is posed in the resolutions to party conference, in the Shadow Cabinet elections, in the make up of the NEC.

'Rooker, Cook and Cunningham have all come out in favour of PR'

This view is not at all contradictory to strengthening the left. I think that is completely necessary. I think the Campaign Group overall has defended the principles worth defending in the party. I think Tony Benn's were the original 'modernising ideas in the party. I think the Campaign Group should be strengthened. I think Labour Left Liaison is a uniquely useful organisation because of its links with the rank and file and I think it contains some of the best strategic thinking in the party.

But as well as strengthening the left it is also ridiculous that people don't talk to each other. Do you know that on the NEC even when people vote the same way on an issue they won't talk to each other! The left should be working together on issues and not be blackmailed by sectarianism on the left, or right wing members of the Tribune group, into refusing to do so.

Because of this refusal of the left to work together where there is agreement the right has strengthened in confidence. The extreme right wing, the coalitionists, have been encouraged to state their views openly. In the shadow Cabinet elections last year it was the left Tribunites — Meacher and Prescott — who topped the poll. This year it was the hard right — Gordon Brown, John Smith, Gerald Kaufmann, — who topped the vote. This showed a significant shift to the right.

On the other hand I think a significant part of this is due to wrong tactics perused by the left. At the conference itself there were a series of important successes — the victory in the vote on unilateralism, women on the short list, the compromise forced out of the NEC on a black affiliated socialist society, the decision against Employment Training and for the minimum wage, and the votes for the left in the constituency section of the NEC held up well.

Each of these had a simple formula. The driving force was an organised left in the party. But it set out to ally on issues with much wider forces in the party.

This was particularly striking with women. I wasn't able to attend the Women's Action Committee conference fringe meeting on the new changes in the German SPD — I had to speak at another meeting. But everyone tells me it was politically one of the most significant meetings at the conference. With Margaret Prosser of the TGWU, Maureen O' Mara of NUPE, Diane Abbott, and Ann

Photo: Report



Tony Benn, Tom Sawyer, Harriet Harman, Clare Short and Livingstone at the recent 'Hard Labour'

'Last year was the first time we lost members during a general election.'

Pettifor you had women in the CLPs, in the unions, and in the PLP coming together with an international speaker. Certainly on the floor of the conference there was an electric atmosphere when you saw women in the CLPs and unions co-operating — and they handed out a thrashing to the right wing on the NEC.

I think it is the fruit of the general turn around in feeling in the party created by the long campaign of WAC and CLPD's tactical campaign around a woman on the shortlist was a model. Similarly while the NEC continues to oppose Black Sections the concession on an affiliated black socialist society was obviously gained by the long campaigning of the Black Section.

Over the next five year's we've got to bring that CLP based left into a relation with the type of left in the unions which delivered on ET and the minimum age.

Unilateralism of course takes in far wider forces even that these. The decisive vote in the next year will be that at the 1989 conference on unilateral nuclear disarmament. And that can only be brought to success by the same formula as the successful votes at this year's conference. On each of these issues the formula which brought success was that the campaign was driven forward by the left but they deliberately sought issues and tactics whereby they could unite with the 'centre' of the party. That is the general lesson of the last



conference.

conference.

It's also the lesson of Govan. As long as the party remains dominated by the bloc of the right wing and the 'soft left'/centre it is going to go from setback to setback. The best it can hope for in that situation is that the economy takes a really bad turn for the worse and Labour is propelled into government despite itself. But in that case the Labour government that would follow would be a catastrophe — demoralising its supporters on a scale even worse than the Wilson and Callaghan governments. Much more likely it would finish up in a coalition with the SLD that would permanently institutionalise Thatcherism. Govan is a real warning about that.

The figures on party membership give the same warning. Last year was the first time ever that Labour lost members during a general election year. Previously even if we lost, we won members during the campaign. And that is going to continue as long as the members are treated as though they were rubbish — as Peter Kellner, I believe, put it that the problem with the Labour Party is its members.

That is just a dereliction of duty as I said at the beginning. The leadership has to take responsibility for what takes place in this party — it has all the levers of power in its hands. It should stop blaming it on Derek Hatton, or Bob Gillespie, or the party membership.

It is also up to the left to take its

choices in what is potentially a very serious, but also a potentially hopeful, situation for the party. I am not very interested at present about those on the left who want to keep it in sectarian isolation when out there millions of people are being hit by Thatcherism. But neither am I very interested by those on the soft left who are blackmailed by those who, in practice, are in alliance with the right into not uniting with others on the left where there is agreement.

I hope in the Scottish party those who want to fight Thatcher, the right wing, and the SNP threat will get together to campaign. I am going to watch it with a lot of interest because I hope it will provide a model for the party as a whole.

The dilemmas of George Bush

There is no problem understanding George Bush's electoral victory in the United States. The US proved capable of postponing the basic choices created by the October 1987 crash until after the presidential election. This, coupled with the right wing character of the Dukakis campaign, was enough to keep Bush in the White House. But the new decline of the dollar, and the tremors on Wall St confirmed that the US cannot indefinitely put off the day of reckoning.

DAVID HOWARD looks at how the Bush administration sees its relations with the USSR.

To grasp the problems now facing Bush it is worth understanding why the Reagan administration, the most vitriolically anti-Communist in recent years, finished up in a rosy glow of summit talks with the chief of the 'Evil Empire' Gorbachev himself. One reason is certainly that the United States had gained a significant number of victories against the USSR. The US believed it was negotiating from a position of strength. In particular the left still has not absorbed, although the bourgeoisie has, what a sharp defeat was suffered by the Soviet Union, and the international working class, by the inability of the West European working class to prevent the stationing of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe. This strengthened the most right wing forces inside the USSR and, thereby, delivered a major blow to struggles against imperialism in a number of parts of the world — because material aid from the Soviet Union is a decisive factor in the ability of a series of international class struggles to continue.

If the West European working class had been able to prevent the installation of the missiles that would have meant that an objective line of the Soviet Union relying on international class pressure would have been strengthened. Strain would have been taken off its economy. But because the missiles went in, firstly, the necessity of the USSR increasing its defence spending to cope with the new threat was posed and, secondly, those forces which argue that no reliance can be placed on the international working class, that the only force which can deliver are the imperialists, were strengthened. The rightist line of Gorbachev on foreign policy was a logical outcome. Even more than previously the USSR will pursue 'socialism in one country'. The class struggles throughout the world are seen by the Soviet leadership not as a means of pressurising imperialism, let alone to be supported in their own right, but primarily as a drain on the economic resources of the USSR — and as something which may antagonise the imperialist states into not giving economic aid to the USSR.

But if the outcome of the anti-missiles struggle was a setback for the international working class, and led the Soviet leadership further to the right, nevertheless for its own reasons the United States had very strong reasons for needing support from Gorbachev. While the arms

build up of the Reagan era had succeeded in delivering a sharp reverse to the USSR — as well as providing the backdrop to the invasion of Grenada and the bombing of Libya — nevertheless it placed a great strain on the US economy. Reagan had aimed at cracking the Soviet economy by relentless military pressure but to a significant degree he had also overstrained the US economy. In the prevailing political conditions in the United States, with the US population unwilling to pick up the bill for the increased arms spending, the effects of Reagan's military policies were to accelerate the transformation of the United States into the world's largest international debtor. The servicing of this debt, and turning round the balance of payments deficit which underlies it, will dominate US economic policy for the next decades.

The political consequences of the economic course followed by the US feed directly into its foreign policy. The correction of the US balance of payments deficit will be deeply destabilising for world politics.

Firstly the United States is the single biggest importer from third world countries — in particular the Latin American states in which the debt crisis is centred. Reduction of the US balance of trade deficit will cut back the ability of the debtor states to export and thereby to meet debt repayments. Secondly there will be a knock on effect from Europe and Japan. As the latter come under pressure from the United States they will respond by redirecting competition towards the semi-colonial countries — exacerbating the situation of the debtors. Finally, to achieve the necessary turn around of the United States trade balance, it will almost certainly be necessary to raise interest rates in the US in order to cut back its domestic demand and thereby shift resources into exports. As most international debt is at variable interest rates, an interest rate rise will mean a further turn of the screw on the debtor states.

What is developing is a crisis of the model of accumulation which was pursued in an important number of semi-colonial countries during the 1970s and early 1980s — that of export led growth. On this model — of which South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and earlier Brazil were the cases *par excellence* — severe repression was con-



Reagan and Bush

ducted internally, which ensured a high rate of exploitation but restricted an internal market, and demand for goods was found in exports. Rapid industrialisation resulted amid severe internal repression.

This model encounters sharp problems under conditions where the chief export market, that is the US trade deficit, is cut back. An alternative, domestic, market has to be found as Western Europe and Japan are not prepared to accept the exports diverted away from the United States.

Purely logically the need to create a larger domestic market could be satisfied either by a higher rate of investment or in arms production. But in the real world the necessity to expand the internal market makes it possible for the working class to extract concessions from domestic capital — as the latter is under pressure to expand an internal market which includes working class consumption.

The result has been a crisis in the countries of the East Asian 'miracle economies'. South Korea has seen a sustained mass movement. In Taiwan the ruling Kuomintang has been under political pressure. In Singapore the regime of Lee has encountered increased opposition. In the Philippines, a slightly different case but sharing some of the same features, Marcos was overthrown. In

Pakistan, combined with the consequences of the crisis in Afghanistan, and a timely assassination, the centralised dictatorship of Zia is likely to be replaced by the pseudo-populism of Benazir Bhutto.

In Latin America the same problems are being encountered. Here the political expression has taken the form of populism — bourgeois currents standing for greater demagoguery against imperialism and a model of accumulation more oriented towards the domestic market. A sharp expression of this was the vote for Cardenas against the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico's presidential election. The re-advance of Peronism in Argentina, and the continued bourgeois opposition to Pinochet in Chile, is a further example of the trend. In more heavily industrialised Brazil the process went further in November's provincial elections with spectacular gains for the Workers Party (PT) and Brizola's populists. The result is a greater political instability in some major semi-colonial states coupled with an increasing state of desperation in a number of poorer ones.

In this situation the United States' link with the Soviet leadership is particularly important to it. While the US was successful in Western Europe against the anti-missiles movement it, until recently, had achieved no comparable success against colonial problems. The suc-

cessful invasion of Grenada, or the bombing of Tripoli, did not compensate for the defeat of the Nicaraguan contras, the renewed deterioration of the position of the regime in El Salvador, the fact that the United States could not remove Noriega in Panama, the fact that the Cubans had handed out a significant military defeat to the South Africans in southern Angola, that the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories continues, and South Africa remains unstable. If the international economic situation is going to deteriorate then these problems for the US can be expected to intensify.

In this situation the United States considers that the Soviet leadership can play an indispensable role for it. If imperialism cannot directly defeat the Sandinistas, or the FMLN in El Salvador, or the Cubans in Angola, then the Soviet leadership can choke them by cutting off its aid. The result is that the Soviet leadership and the United States are today systematically working through the so called 'regional problems', that is the most advanced class struggles in the world, in order to 'sort them out'.

The first was the Gulf War. That Iran found its military machine paralysed rapidly following the last Reagan-Gorbachev summit was no accident. The US and the Soviet leadership agreed a package to cut off Iran's arms supplies and bring it to heel.

The second was Angola. Here the Soviets supplied short term extra military aid to Cuba — but with the aim of getting a negotiated compromise both on the issue of Namibia and, possibly, inside Angola itself. The new regime in Namibia is being firmly committed not to give serious material aid to the ANC against South Africa. There are constant reports of the Soviet leadership pressurising the ANC to negotiate with Pretoria.

The third case was Palestine. The US openly acknowledges that Soviet foreign policy played a decisive role in pressuring Arafat to recognise Israel and work for a 'compromise' settlement.

Time will tell what equivalent pressure the Soviet leadership intends to exert in Central America.

In this situation the need for George Bush to maintain close ties with Gorbachev are clear. At least in its first phase the Bush administration is going to attempt to find a way out of the problems which confront it through a closer than ever collaboration with the Soviet leadership.

'the US was successful in Western Europe against the anti-missiles movement'

The left has had difficulty arriving at a coherent attitude to Mikhail Gorbachev.

While the most right wing

Eurocommunists are waxing lyrical in support of Gorbachev's foreign policy, national liberation movements find themselves under pressure of the new line from Moscow. GEOFFREY OWEN looks at how the apparent contradictions of 'Gorbachevism' can be understood.

The 'contradictions' of Mikhail Gorbachev

Martin Jacques, editor of *Marxism Today* predicts: '... if Gorbachev has his way, we could find a Soviet Union as an organic part of an interdependent world. No longer will socialism and capitalism be chalk and cheese, neither internationally nor nationally... We can dimly perceive here, perhaps, the contours of what might be described as an historic compromise between socialism and capitalism' (*The Guardian* 9 August 1988)

For the same reasons that Jacques — and Thatcher and Reagan — see positive developments in Gorbachev's foreign policy, socialists and freedom fighters in the so-called Third World are rightly concerned that their struggles are being sacrificed to any global accord between Gorbachev and imperialism. At the same time, the limited but real steps that Gorbachev has taken to democratise the USSR are obviously preferable to the repression of either Stalin or Brezhnev. The issue is how socialists should evaluate 'Gorbachevism' as a whole rather than this or that facet of it.

Mikhail Gorbachev was elevated to the leading role in the Soviet state and party because the USSR could not continue in the old way. In the contest between the two so far it was Ligachev, Gromyko and other opponents of Gorbachev's reforms, not Gorbachev, who were purged from leading positions in the Politburo and state.

The background to these events is clear. For twenty years the Soviet economy stagnated to the extent that

the USSR was threatened with becoming a second rate power.

This situation came to a head as throughout Reagan's terms in office the United States government exacerbated the economic problems of the Soviet Union by stepping up the arms race and enforcing strict controls on the transfer of technology to the Soviet Union. Reagan explained this in 1985: '... we want to develop as complex a weapon as necessary to force the Soviet Union into bankruptcy if it should want to find a defence mechanism against it'. As the US economy is twice the size of the USSR's the Soviet Union spends double the proportion of its GDP on military expenditure.

The inability of the Western anti-missile movement to stop the deployment of Cruise and Pershing in Western Europe was a severe setback which left the USSR in a still more exposed situation.

Gorbachev's proposed way out of this crisis is an overhaul and 'modernisation' of the Soviet domestic economy by the massive introduction of the market mechanisms internally and by progressive integration of the Soviet economy towards the world capitalist market. A key aim is to increase production of food and consumer goods by some decollectivisation of Soviet agriculture and encouraging the development of small scale cooperative enterprises.

Gorbachev wants to finance the reorganisation of the Soviet economy through cutting state subsidies on food and to unprofitable enterprises — which will result in price rises and enterprises closing down — and by cutting military ex-

penditure and obtaining financial credit from international capital. So far this year the USSR has borrowed an estimated \$7-\$9 billion from capitalist banks.

Gorbachev's foreign policy aims to facilitate this economic course by negotiating a global accord with imperialism in order to make possible a reduction of the burden of military expenditure on the Soviet economy and to place no political obstacles in the way of securing financial credits from capitalist banks. Such a policy is politically reactionary and economically utopian. We will take them in reverse order.

Firstly it is impossible for a modern economy to function for any length of time with the kind of bureaucratic stranglehold on all fields of intellectual activity and the stifling of all creative activity and effort that has characterised the USSR from Stalin through Brezhnev to today.

One typical grotesque consequence, was quoted in a recent study: 'No bureaucratic miscalculation cut deeper than one made in 1962. "There was a government decision to completely cancel the computer division in the Academy of Sciences," says Yevgeny P. Velikhov, vice-president of the academy. Now the Soviet Union can't mass produce a personal computer, let alone advanced scientific instruments or computerised controllers for factory machinery. There are only about 200,000 personal computers in the entire country... its semiconductor industry makes only three per cent of

the world's chips' (*Business Week*, 7 November 1988). Soviet biology was decimated by Lysenko. But still more serious is the crushing effect of a society where the workers, the most powerful productive lever, feel they have no stake in the economy.

The economic function of Glasnost is supposed to be to create the intellectual conditions for rapid technological development and to overcome resistance to Perestroika by the bureaucracy at various levels — for example to mobilise public opinion against corruption, waste and inefficiency. The political problem for the bureaucracy is where to limit the process.

For its part the left has been caught in an apparent paradox in coming to terms with 'Gorbachevism' because it involves this particular combination of elements. On the one hand democratic reforms are necessary and must be supported. On the other Gorbachev is pursuing a foreign policy the net effect of which, if successful, will be to weaken, not strengthen, the position of the Soviet Union vis a vis imperialism and meanwhile its market mechanisms reinforce social inequality inside the USSR. Partial analyses seize one or other of these aspects.

In reality, Gorbachevism cannot



be understood by an eclectic analysis of aspects of its policies. For a more coherent view it is necessary to go back to the last great debate on the way forward for the Soviet Union conducted between Trotsky, Bukharin and Stalin in the 1920s. If that is analysed then the class function of Gorbachevism becomes clear.

Trotsky analysed the Soviet Union as it emerged into the 1920s as a society in transition between capitalism and socialism. As such it necessarily combines within itself elements of both the past — capitalist social relations from which it is developing — and the socialist social relations of the future. It is and remains a non-capitalist society in a world where the most powerful economic forces remain under the control of capital. This subjects the Soviet Union not just to the military pressure of imperialism, but above all, to the pressure of superior economic development — and this will remain the case until capitalism is overthrown in one or more of the most developed capitalist states. It presents the USSR with the objective problem of how to participate in the international division of labour without subordinating Soviet development to the world market.

In the 1920s these contradictions manifested themselves economically in the conflict between the planned development of nationalised state industry and the spontaneous commodity production of the 25 million private family farms dominating agriculture. Internationally it expressed itself in the continual pressure exercised on the USSR by the capitalist world market.

In class terms, these economic forces expressed the contradiction between the working class in the Soviet Union, the immense peasant majority in the state, and the pressure of international imperialism. These forces in turn were expressed politically by the protagonists of the debate in the Soviet Communist Party, with Trotsky defending the position of the working class, Bukharin the position of the larger peasants and private traders and Stalin occupying a bureaucratic position seeking to avoid the basic class choices by drastic administrative and repressive action. Thus Stalin first allied with Bukharin to crush Trotsky, then acted against Bukharin and the right.

These contradictions come down to a basic political and economic choice for the develop-

ment of the USSR — towards capitalism or socialism. That is, seeking an accommodation with capitalism internally and externally, which ultimately, in class terms would lead to the restoration of capitalism and the capitalist class to power, or, seeking to extend the socialist revolution internationally and within that framework developing the Soviet economy at the optimum feasible pace which corresponded to strengthening the position of the working class in the Soviet Union and internationally. In the Soviet Union in the twenties Bukharin sought to apply the first course and Trotsky the second.

In the mid 1920s it was Bukharin's line that was applied. In class terms this line was driven through by an alliance on the growing state, trade union and party bureaucracy, controlled by Stalin, with the rich peasants and private traders against the working class. Working class opposition was suppressed first by the destruction of party democracy and later by the use of administrative and repressive means against its opponents in the Soviet Left Opposition. Stalin allied with Bukharin. Politically, therefore Bukharin's line, meant an alliance with the bureaucracy and petty bourgeoisie in the USSR against the working class.

Internationally, its corollary was both the policy of 'socialism in one country', which it shared with Stalin, but also a particularly close alliance with imperialism. Bukharin pioneered the politics of the Popular Front and, in alliance with Stalin, sought to neutralise the international bourgeoisie through diplomatic agreements and concessions to which the international working class was subordinated.

The result was a series of catastrophic reverses internationally, most spectacularly in China, and internally in the USSR. The international isolation of the USSR was reinforced with the real danger of the growing layer of big farmers and private traders trying to link up with international capital against the Soviet state. When the kulaks tried to pressure the cities into submission through a grain strike in 1928 Stalin broke with Bukharin and resorted to massive repression against the private traders and kulaks. The outcome was the forcible collectivisation of agriculture.

The net result was a catastrophic famine and a historical disaster for Soviet agriculture from which it has

yet to recover. It was only the fact that the imperialists were tied up with their own problems in the form of the 1929 crash and subsequent international depression, which prevented them taking advantage of the chaos resulting from the application of Bukharin's line and Stalin's attempt to overcome it through bureaucratic means.

Despite bestial repression Trotsky considered Stalin's the least fundamental of the three political currents which emerged in the USSR in the 1920s. Stalin tried to *administratively* avoid the basic choices facing the Soviet Union. To paraphrase Napoleon one can do many things with a bayonet but not sit on it — Stalin could crush his political opponents and atomise the Soviet working class but neither Stalin nor those that followed him were able to suppress the basic choices confronting the USSR. Although Stalinism undoubtedly succeeded for a longer period than Trotsky had foreseen, Gorbachev dramatically illustrates the correctness of Trotsky's basic analysis.

Gorbachev's policy is in essence an attempt to escape from Stalinism through a sharp shift back towards Bukharin's line. The foreign policy corresponding to this was spelt out by Gorbachev's foreign minister Shevardnadze: 'the struggle between the two social systems (capitalism and communism) is no longer the decisive factor'. Instead, as General Dimitri Yazov, the Defence Minister, said at this year's Red Square parade commemorating the Russian revolution: 'the new political thinking, based on the priority of common human interests... finds ever-growing understanding and support among the world public and leaders of many states'.

This means, firstly, putting pressure on socialist and national liberation movements to come to a compromise with imperialism.

Petrovsky, the Deputy Foreign Minister, in a recent interview with the *Independent* described that line as follows: 'an international consensus ... is developing' on a multilateral approach to the Middle East question. 'If you look at the map of crisis situations, it's being filled with solutions', he said referring to the efforts by the UN and others to end the Iran-Iraq war, negotiate a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and a Cuban withdrawal from Angola and gain independence for Namibia. Recent results include the PLO's deci-

sion to recognise the state of Israel.

The USSR has changed its position on the Common Market — the chief mechanism of the European imperialist states. In June this year the first ever mutual recognition agreement between Comecon and the EEC was signed.

For its part the line of European capital, is that while it would like to see more trade with the USSR, it will not extend the massive credits needed to modernise the Soviet economy without much greater political concessions to imperialism and, in particular, without deeper cuts in Soviet military spending and more concession in foreign policy. As the US has undoubtedly gained concessions by this route there is no reason to suppose European capital will not achieve this.

Overall, if successful, Gorbachev's foreign policy will weaken, not strengthen, the position of the USSR vis a vis imperialism. Defeats for the international class struggle will make imperialism more, not less, aggressive. It is defeats inflicted on imperialism that will force it to negotiate and compromise with the USSR. It was precisely the defeats of the USA in Indochina which led it to seek detente with the USSR and China in the seventies. Setbacks for the class struggle merely encourage the imperialists.

But for a more balanced view of the outcome of Gorbachev's policy account must be taken of two further facts. Firstly, the US has its own massive economic difficulties which were temporarily put off for the presidential elections and are now reasserting themselves. Secondly, the very existence of the USSR, not to mention the international class struggle, are tremendous objective problems for imperialism.

In conclusion, what overall attitude should be taken to Gorbachev? First, whilst individual measures such as the INF treaty must be supported, Gorbachev's foreign policy and overall course, based on concessions to imperialism must be opposed. Secondly, the limited, but real, concrete measures of democratisation in the USSR, must be supported — most importantly because the only way out of the impasse into which the USSR has been led is for the masses to become involved in political life. Only on this basis can left wing currents defen-

ding the working class in the USSR, and internationally emerge, clarify themselves and win support. Every measure that helps this must be supported.

This *does not* mean supporting any and every manifestation of activity independent of the bureaucracy. On the contrary, Lech Walesa's type of meeting with Margaret Thatcher, as with the Polish government's expressed support for her economic policies, was a blow against the international class struggle. Most of the currents emerging in Eastern Europe and the USSR at present share Gorbachev's commitment to 'market socialism' — some in more extreme versions. Others like the anti-semitic, great Russian chauvinist Pamyat organisation in the USSR are straight forwardly reactionary. But the point is such views can only be dealt with by bringing them out into the open. It is beneath the shelter of repression, the political atomisation of the masses, that they grew and developed.

To conclude, nothing illustrates more clearly the policies now reigning in sections of the higher levels of the bureaucracy in the USSR and Eastern Europe than the following interview with Jenő Andics, the Hungarian CP's propaganda chief. He admitted: 'My party has been an absolute failure for the past ten years.' Asked if 'Marxism's evangelical tendencies were to be abandoned' he replied acidly: 'The basic economic idea has gone down a cul-de-sac so why spread it?... I believed what Khrushchev said about communism overtaking capitalism. Now I can hardly believe I really believed that ... One thinks all kinds of crazy thoughts at that age.' He refused to regard Western societies as 'capitalism', against which 'socialism' must wage an endless war. What existed in the West was not even accurately described as quasi capitalism. 'It is simply modern economics.' (The *Independent* 1.7.88)

Trotsky analysed in the 1920s that the bureaucracy in the USSR could ally itself with capitalism. But it could not strategically ally itself with the working class. Bukharin, now not merely rehabilitated judicially but posthumously readmitted to the party, was acceptable. International extension of the revolution was not.

Fifty years on Trotsky's analysis is as acute today as it ever was. It is the only analysis in the world which makes sense of the apparent contradictions of Mikhail Gorbachev.

'Overall, if successful, Gorbachev's foreign policy will weaken, not strengthen, the position of the USSR'

Believing the children

'The crisis in Cleveland was a crisis of over-confidence' *New Statesman*, 30.9.88

'There is an attitude of mind within Cleveland social services which is positively detrimental to mothers and children and this attitude really has to be purged' *Stuart Bell MP*, 13.10.87.

ANNE KANE reviews the arguments about Cleveland.

Unofficial Secrets — Child Sexual Abuse: The Cleveland Case, Beatrix Campbell Virago £4.50

The work of doctors Marietta Higgs and Geoffrey Wyatt, and social workers Sue Richardson and Mike Bishop, in Cleveland during 1987 confirmed what had been revealed by paediatricians, social workers, women's campaigns and academic researchers: that sexual abuse of children takes place on an enormous scale. Moreover it takes place in 'normal', 'stable' families, between children and adults who are known to them. It was not the abuse that was new, but the response: to believe children and take action to protect them.

The 'Cleveland controversy', created by the coalition of Stuart Bell MP, the press, the church, the government and 'outraged parents' was simply the attempt to screw the lid back on the silent misery endured by thousands of children and the truth about the family.

In *Unofficial Secrets* Beatrix Campbell explains the procedures developed in Cleveland, their background and the outrage they provoked. A completely unanticipated level of problem had been revealed. The response of journals like the *New Statesman*, though not taken up by Campbell, was one of barely concealed contempt: 'child sexual abuse was suddenly transformed into the occupational hazard of any young child ... living in a family'.

The response of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children contrasted sharply. In July 1987 they announced their cases of child sexual abuse were continuing at least to double each year: 1,261

cases in 1986 had been three times the number in 1985. The director of the National Children's Bureau was quoted as estimating one in ten girls are sexually abused before the age of 16.

A tissue of lies was promoted in Cleveland: the image was created of huge numbers of children, dragged away from parents on the flimsiest of evidence. In reality 121 cases of suspected sexual abuse were reported between spring and summer, on the diagnoses of two paediatricians. Higgs and Wyatt were blamed for overloading the hospital service, when their option was to send children back to further abuse. Social workers were accused of refusing to work with police, when it was the police who withdrew from consultation.

Then there was the very special role of Stuart Bell. Bell resigned his post as Labour's number two spokesperson on Ireland to concentrate on Cleveland. It was he who levelled the accusation of 'empire building' against Cleveland social services. Yet his response to a challenge by MP Frank Cook was 'You had your NIREX, this is mine'.

Bell worked hand in glove with an obstructive police force. Finally, far from being rebuked within the Labour Party, Stuart Bell was able to attach a supportive note from deputy leader Roy Hattersley when submitting his evidence to the enquiry.

Campbell accounts this well. Which makes it all the more unfortunate that this is cobbled together with a thoroughly false analysis of the fundamental issues involved. For her the key issue raised by Cleveland was that of the sexuality of heterosexual men.

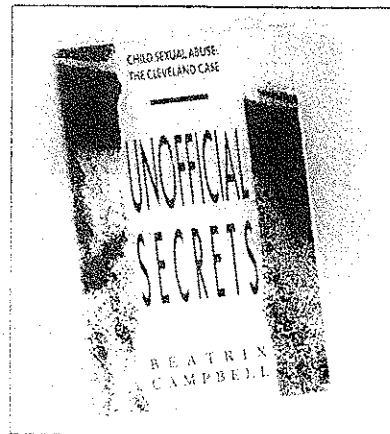
She contends that 'sexual

abuse is not just about power and parenting, it is about sex and desire', and again: 'what the spectre of sexual abuse faces us with is that adults in general and men in particular must take responsibility for which forms of pleasure between adults and children are honourable and which are not'. Or more specifically: 'The hidden agenda of the inquiry was the prevalence of buggery and by implication a challenge to the received nature of masculinity' and the panic caused was 'about the naming of the guilty perpetrators — men'.

On the contrary, the sexual abuse of children is all about power. The abuse is possible — and the cover-up — because of the powerlessness of children within the family. Sexuality is constructed within the family. These are aspects of its function as an institution. To see the problem foremost as one of an abstract male heterosexuality dodges the core of the issue.

Furthermore, while most abusers are men, and this raises issues of male sexuality, and the power of men within the family system, there is also the element that the child finds itself powerless in relation to both parents and abuse her child, or not believe her child, or not act the child has no other recourse, feels betrayed and is left to the consequences.

Campbell finds it amazing that the child often 'has a dynamic relationship with the abuser', cares for him, and takes responsibility for the situation. The surprise is that it is sometimes otherwise. We live in a society in which care and support is organised primarily through 'families'. Children learn to believe that the alternatives may be worse, leaving aside the small fact that children want to love their parents, want stability



and easily believe that their actions, their care, may 'make things better'.

For Campbell the family as an institution of class society does not feature. She refers to the role of 'civil society' and the 'state' in protecting 'men ... and fathers in particular'. But these terms are rendered meaningless because she argues that sexual abuse has nothing to do with class society and class politics. She explains: 'sexual abuse has not been on the agenda of class politics. Sexual abuse is about sex. It is about gender and generation, desire and power'.

The backdrop to the new awareness of what happens inside families is the massive change in social relations that has occurred since the second world war. Women's changed relationship to the labour force has provoked what has been called a 'crisis of the family'. Capital has responded with political and ideological campaigns, aimed at propping up the family in every country across Europe.

The violence of the response in Cleveland has been at root an attempt to maintain the legitimacy of the family. It was the idea that abuse was taking place in 'normal' families, not images of male sexuality and masculinity, that was so threatening about Cleveland.

The sexual abuse of children is a massive social reality which spans all social classes. Responding to it needs recognition, a great expansion of resources and expertise. If we believe that Cleveland was fundamentally a 'confrontation between genders', we will fail to take the steps to empower children in relation to adults, end sexual abuse, and we will let the institution of the family which structures the particular features of child sexual abuse off the hook.

The greening of West Germany

West Germany is the military lynchpin of Western Europe, and the economic mainstay of the attempted European response to US domination of the world market. The eruption of the Greens into political influence in this quintessential Cold War state has revealed many of the fractures underlying the apparent stability of post-war West Germany. JUDE WOODWARD reviews Werner Hulsberg's recently published book on the German Greens.

The German Greens by Werner Hulsberg, Verso, £9.95.

This book, in detailing the phenomenon of the West German Greens, also provides a general introduction to the post-war history of West Germany. It gives an insight into many of the developments taking place today across the whole of Western European social democracy.

Hulsberg describes how the post-war West German state was built on the influx of US dollars in Marshall Aid, its army was rebuilt by NATO, and the permanent 'right' of the Western powers to station troops and weapons was written into the post-war treaties. Cold War ideology, attacks on democracy such as the *berufsverbot*, and the continuing influence in government and military of prominent officers in Hitler's armies, gave Western Germany its apparent overall political character.

The organised workers' movement, destroyed in the '30s, was rebuilt from above, and implicated from the start in the Cold War politics of the West German state. The SPD, the West German social democracy, was and is the most lickspittle to US imperialism of all the European social democratic parties.

Long predating Kinnock's Aims and Values the SPD's Godesberg programme.

adopted of 1959, states: '... free competition and the freedom of entrepreneurial initiative are important elements of Social Democratic economic policy. ... Totalitarian centrally directed economies destroy freedom. Therefore the Social Democratic Party confirms its support for the free market.'

This politics reached its fruition with the election victory of 1969, whereby in coalition with the FDP — the small West German liberal party — the SPD formed a government with Willy Brandt as chancellor.

However coalition with the bourgeois FDP was not simply forced on the SPD, but was a positive choice. When in 1972 the FDP's vote had begun to fall. The SPD leadership actively called on its voters to lend their support to the FDP to ensure its survival.

The long period of SPD government from 1969 to 1982 is the model for the 'Eurosocijalist' ambitions of Kinnock, Mitterrand and other social democratic party leaders.

But the peculiar stability of the West German social democracy and its ability to maintain an extremely rightwing course in government with minimal internal strife, is rooted in the post-war West German reality and not simply the clever, rightwing tactics of the SPD leadership.

THE GERMAN GREENS



A Social and Political Profile
WERNER HÜLSBERG

The division of Germany, the presence of massive NATO armies and the FDR's crucial role in Western military strategy together with the rapid post-war industrial development on the basis of US dollars pumped into the country allowed working class living standards to rise massively, and underpinned the particular internal stability of West German social democracy.

It meant the only way a left alternative could develop was *outside* the traditional workers' parties. This combination explains why the political developments in the masses which are the basis for the Greens could only find political expression in a formation outside German social democracy.

The politics reflected in the development of the Greens in West Germany — for nuclear disarmament, against nuclear power, for women's rights, for a shorter working week to fight unemployment, for immigrant workers' rights, for increased democracy — are similar to those espoused by other political currents in Europe. The Labour left in Britain, the current around Juquin in France, the anti-NATO and women's movements in the Spanish state, the left social democratic party in Denmark all champion similar politics to those of the Greens in West Germany. But only in West Germany have these political currents in the masses found expression in the development of a serious left-wing Green party.

Understanding why this is means understanding the whole development of West Germany, and its labour movement since the war.

Beginning the debate on withdrawal

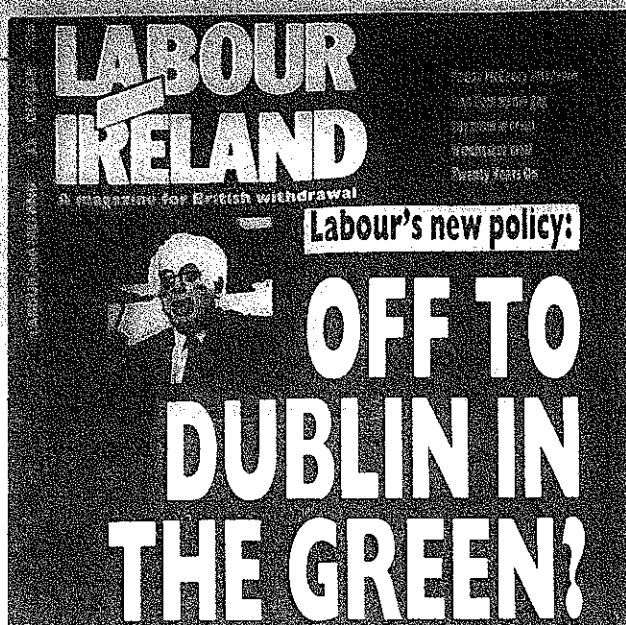
The British left's history on Ireland is largely one of factionalism and self-destruction. *Labour and Ireland* editor, MARTIN COLLINS argues that the time has come for some serious thought: Bob Rowthorn and Naomi Wayne's new book provides a useful starting point.

Northern Ireland: The Political Economy of Conflict by Bob Rowthorn and Naomi Wayne, Polity Press, £8.95 pb, £29.50 hb

Bob Rowthorn and Naomi Wayne are prepared to confront the unmentionable and examine what the threat of a bloodbath — pushed by politicians and media alike in order to dismiss the case for withdrawal — amounts to. Introduced by a thumb-nail sketch of Irish history, and a more thorough study of the political economy of the North, *Northern Ireland: A Political Economy of Conflict* starts by comprehensively demolishing the myth of an independent Ulster as a political option.

Not only do they show UDI is an untenable option which could be easily smashed by economic sanctions, they also show that without a political settlement, the maintenance of the status quo is ruled out as well. Drawn to a conclusion that withdrawal is the only feasible option, they begin to answer objections. That sections of Ulster loyalism threaten a bloodbath is a matter of fact. Do they have the means or the will to do it?

Once the problem is reduced into its component parts, it becomes easier to deal with. Which groups of loyalists have arms? And how



can they be prevented from using them? First there is the Ulster Defence Regiment — full-time and part-time it is a thorough-going sectarian force and must be disbanded.

Second there is the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Rowthorn and Wayne argue that in the disturbances following the Hillsborough Agreement, the RUC was involved in direct confrontations with loyalist protesters and maintained discipline. They argue that the force must be disbanded, but in order to minimise the risk of mutiny would employ a mixture of financial inducement and threats to remove them as a force from post-withdrawal conflict.

Third there is the British army and dirty tricks departments of MI5, which should be removed from the scene as rapidly as possible.

Finally there are the loyalist paramilitary groups — the sectarian killers of the UDA, UVF and UFF. It would be pointless to use the army on a house-to-house search for arms. Instead, you have to acknowledge the right of nationalist areas to defend themselves against loyalist sectarian attacks. Maybe the IRA should be legalised.

But there is another side to the story: to disarm the sectarian assassins politically and deprive them of the support of their own community. This can only be done by convincing the loyalist population as a whole that violence will not affect the determination of the British government to withdraw in the slightest. The Unionists must be told that their veto, enshrined in practice since partition, and in law since 1948, has gone.

Rowthorn and Wayne argue that the bloodbath

scenario is only posed if Unionists perceive that their threats will work.

This book is a first strike in the debate about not *whether*, but *how* Britain withdraws from Ireland.

We have to look also at what a united Ireland would really mean. Rowthorn and Wayne show how guarantees of civil and religious liberties for Protestants would be readily forthcoming from any current of nationalist opinion.

But in my opinion they cast the possibilities for reform of the Labour Party in too favourable a light. The Labour Party has, in the form of Northern Ireland trade unionists, its own, built-in loyalist veto. How is that to be overcome? If reform of the Labour Party is not inevitable, under what circumstance will Britain withdraw from Ireland?

Despite the logical presentation of the case for economic subsidies through a transitional period, the government of a united Ireland might well find itself out of favour with world banks and financial institutions in the City. What options would it have then?

The present government of the 26 Counties does not offer the positive image of a united Ireland that can secure the consent of former loyalists. So, is there an existing, or potential force in Ireland capable of defying a British government and forcing withdrawal? Is it possible for an Irish government to survive if the British government decided to institute economic sanctions against it and spent money on arming a force of loyalist contras?

The debate is just beginning.

The nature of Thatcherism

Andrew Gamble is a serious analyst of British history. It is therefore disappointing to report that Gamble's latest book, *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The politics of Thatcherism*, is not up to the standard of its predecessors.

Andrew Gamble. *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism*, Macmillan £7.95

The reason for this is that Gamble is led by *Marxism Today* into a shallow version of what Thatcherism represents.

Gamble outlines his essential dichotomy on the first page of the book when he asserts 'hegemonic projects are encountered much more frequently than hegemony itself'. Thatcherism, on this analysis, does not represent a force which has achieved hegemony but is a 'hegemonic project'.

The reason for that is, in Stuart Hall's words; 'True hegemony requires the economic dominance of a successful regime of accumulation to be combined with the winning of political, moral and intellectual leadership in civil society.' Thatcher has not created a 'successful regime of accumulation'.

Clear away the jargon and what does this mean? Firstly there is nothing remarkable in the fact that Thatcher had a hegemonic project. Any serious political party has a hegemonic project. Heath had one — to take Britain into Europe and revive its manufacturing base. The SLD has one — to create a modern social democratic state with permanent coalition government. Even the Labour Party has in its own way a hegemonic project of a revived welfare capitalism. The problem is that *none* of these is economically, socially, or politically viable.

As Gamble is a sufficiently serious writer

to actually pay attention to facts — he has to admit the low level of support of the Thatcher government, the strong evidence of disagreement with its policies and values and its economic problems etc throughout the book.

Gamble, in fact, would have done best to have considered his own view expressed earlier in the book. 'Thatcherism should be seen to clear the way for a new hegemony, not as that new hegemony itself.' *What would be the hegemony which 'sealed in' Thatcherism* — which ensured that all governments, administrations and practical political choices took place within confines it established?

Such a system would be one in which *all* potential governments accepted the essential changes wrought by Thatcherism. Such a regime is clearly to hand — its other essential pillar is the SLD. Ashdown's SLD accepts all essential features of Thatcherism — its privatisations, its freedom for international economic operations, its anti-union laws. A *hegemonic* situation would be one in which the only available governmental systems where either the Tory Party, pursuing Thatcherism, or a Labour-SLD coalition which maintained the essential features of Thatcherism.

The latter is also the system espoused, in the Labour-SLD government version, by *Marxism Today* — which is why *Marxism Today* is the least hegemonic of all political journals in Britain.

It is a pity Andrew Gamble has got entangled in their clutches.

How Bush and Kohl will crush Thatcher

Now that the US presidential election is out of the way the world economy can get on with its main course — working through the forces unleashed by last October's Wall Street crash. Immediately following the crash the chief imperialist economies responded in the way their textbooks told them to — they poured money into their economies. Interest rate cuts and credit stimulation were aimed to ward off recession. In the United States they were also designed to shore up Bush's chances of winning the presidency. ALAN WILLIAMS look's at the political implications for Thatcher of the latest developments in the world economy.

Political manipulation of the US economy in the run up to the presidential election was particularly direct. The US Treasury Secretary until August was James Baker — who had already been chosen to be campaign manager for Bush. Baker ensured that the mechanisms of international finance were used to maximise stability in the US economy leading to the election.

The mechanism Baker used was simple. He kept up the value of the dollar by large scale international borrowing. This had two short term beneficial effects for Bush's electoral chances. The first was what is known as the 'inverted J curve'. This is the fact that if a currency is kept at a high level then, for a short initial period, this has an apparent positive effect on its balance of payments. Both imports and exports are ordered ahead and will not initially be cancelled as a currency rises in value. As an overvalued currency means exports are more expensive and imports cheaper the result is that there is an apparent narrowing, in money terms, in the balance of payments deficit.

The long term effect is sharply in the opposite direction — overpriced exports and cheap imports means that the balance of payments deteriorates. During the few months leading to the US presidential election Baker was able to use this to apparently keep the US trade deficit on a downward course.

Secondly the overvaluation of the dollar cut kept down the inflation rate, and therefore pressure on standards of living, inside the United States. An apparent state of prosperity continued.

The fact that Baker was able to use these mechanisms does say something important about the state of the imperialist economies. It means that they are not at all flat on their backs and without reserves — people were just as intelligent in 1929 but were unable to control anything. It confirms our view that what is most important about the present situation is not a recession or slump, although a recession is certainly on its way, but the shift in the structural position between the major imperialist economies.

With the presidential election out of the way, and Baker departed from the Treasury, the chief trends in the situation re-asserted themselves. The dollar peaked in August when Baker left the US Treasury and then began a slow downward drift. It sharply fell the day after the election to a virtual

record low against the yen. Martin Feldstein, Bush's chief economic adviser, stated that he is seeking a 10-20 per cent devaluation of the dollar over the next two years. The main course of events started by the crash is now continuing.

This resumption of the downward course of the dollar has particularly sharp implications for Britain. Lawson responded to the crash like all Western finance ministers — by pouring money into the economy. The runaway credit boom of the last year, which he is now trying to bring to a stop by raising interest rates, is typical of any major country.

But what is not typical is the savage squeeze on the British balance of payments. It is this which drastically limits Lawson and Thatcher's room for manoeuvre and is going to create a political situation unlike that seen for the last decade.

The basis of Thatcher's economic and political success since 1979 was North Sea oil money. Ignore *Marxism Today's* talk about deep ideological hegemony in civil society and similar rhetoric. Whatever hegemony Thatcher enjoyed was generated by the £110 billion flood of oil money. *Whatever* government had been in office when that came through would have been popular — although it is of course not accidental that Labour found itself out of office at the moment when a government could have achieved real popularity.

Capital wanted the Tories in office when the oil money came through and duly gained this through the sterling work done by the Wilson and Callaghan government's in attacking Labour's working class base. The sharp increase in real wages for those in work, over twenty per cent in a decade on average, is the bedrock on which Thatcher has built her support.

It is that situation which is now turning around. When Thatcher came to office she gained not simply from the physical coming on stream of North Sea oil but also the second large oil price increase of 1979. While physical production of North Sea oil has scarcely declined at all its real price has fallen to a quarter of its 1979 level — and at present it is falling still further. Exactly in parallel with this the oil surplus in the balance of payments has fallen from over £6 billion at its peak to only just over £1 billion so far in 1988.

To add to this squeeze the British economy suffered directly from the