

# SOLIDARITY

A Journal of Libertarian Socialism. Number 20. Spring 1989. £1.00.



## **Cold Thaw**

**Nuclear disarmament at the crossroads**

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## **After Ten Tory Years**

**Will the real socialist opposition now stand up?**

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## SOLIDARITY JOURNAL 20

(NEW SERIES) SPRING 1989 NUMBER

PUBLISHED quarterly by Solidarity (London), c/o 123 Lathom Road, London E6 2EA, United Kingdom.

EDITED and produced collectively by the Solidarity (London) Editorial Group.

MEETINGS: The London Solidarity group meets for informal political discussion on the first Sunday of every month. Interested readers are encouraged to write for details.

PUBLISHING HISTORY: The present Solidarity Journal (New Series) is the latest title in a line of magazines produced by the Solidarity Group stretching back to the early sixties. Solidarity for Workers' Power, first in this sequence, was founded in 1960 and ran to 89 issues. This was succeeded by the nationally produced Solidarity for Social Revolution, which ran for 16 issues, and was in turn succeeded by the present title. Our publishing history is complicated further by the existence, in the sixties and early seventies, of six or seven regional Solidarity magazines, among them those produced by our Scottish, South Wales, and North Western Solidarity groups; and by the publication of Solidarity for Workers' Self-Management, a short-lived nationally produced magazine.

SOLIDARITY is also the imprint of a series of pamphlets and books which now numbers more than sixty titles; and which have been variously translated into fifteen foreign languages.

PRINTED by the Aldgate Press, London.



AS WE SEE IT

PARTY POLITICS

# The impracticable in practice

After ten years of Conservative rule why is there still no effective socialist opposition? A K BARNARD argues that what is dogging the left is surely its own dismal record in power, rather than Mrs. Thatcher's avowed intention of destroying socialism.

ON MAY 3 THIS YEAR the Conservative Party completes its tenth year in power. In that time it has done immense damage. The deterioration of the industrial economy to the point where ten per-cent unemployment is regarded as good has been matched with an equal deterioration of the social security system and other state services, and by a complacency which regards inner-city

riots as containable (and therefore unimportant). Yet after ten years of government by a party which openly serves the interests of the rich there is not the least sign of any serious opposition from either the soft or the hard left, and at the time of writing it would seem more logical to plan for another ten years of reaction than for a socialist revival. So what has gone wrong? Let's dispense with the easy answer. According to a lot of left

Catti Calthrop





wingers the real problem is that the power of the media is so great that too many people are conned into believing the Conservative message. If this is true then we might as well give up now for the left will never be able to outspend the right on press ownership or media coverage. The fact is, however, that the problem has not been the strength of the capitalist media (the left has always faced a hostile press); the problem has been the real weaknesses of the left in power. The press cannot make good propaganda against an effective and well-organised opposition which argues sincerely for its beliefs and competently implements its policies once elected. But it is all too easy to make good propaganda against those who like Kinnock give every impression of studying the opinion polls before deciding what they believe in. Equally it is far too easy to frighten people into accepting the Conservatives as the only alternative when left wing local councils display levels of incompetence like that of the London Borough of Brent.

The recent record of Brent Council is instructive. Elected on a promise that they would defend services, they began by overspending on projects some of which had little practical value but which provided sinecures for community 'representatives' who became advisers of one sort or another. As a result of the overspending the council left themselves wide open to a deliberate attempt to drive them, and other targeted councils, into bankruptcy via biased rate-capping. To deal with the shortfall created by the rate-capping it was necessary to sell buildings and lease them back. This increased running costs and as the finances deteriorated, those who had earlier lent the council money to obtain leases on valuable land saw a chance to cash in on their investments by threatening foreclosure. The council had to make a choice between receiving repossession claims from the new leaseholders,

selling yet more of their assets, or cutting their services. A number of buildings, such as the local teachers' centre, were sold off, but the self-inflicted crisis became so severe that the only choice left to the council was resignation or cuts in services.

In September 1988 85 per cent of Adult Education was closed down including English classes for Asian women. In the same wave of cuts all nursery provision was scrapped. When every teacher in the borough was sent a letter warning of impending compulsory redundancy and asking for volunteers, desperately needed information technology teachers accepted. Such was the demand for their skills that many moved straight into new jobs (some even in the neighbouring borough of Ealing).

In short, a council which claimed to defend the interests of the working class began its period in office by appointing equal opportunities advisers and ended it by closing down nursery schools. Accurate advice about equal opportunities policies is undoubtedly important but the actual services were of more value. Almost any single mother in the borough could have given the council the advice they needed for free: without nursery schools a single parent is trapped in the home and has no equality of opportunity at all, without the advisers they would have somehow struggled to get by.

If, as virtually everyone now predicts, Brent Labour party gets thrown out at the next local election, it will not be because they have been ousted by an influx of yuppies or defeated by the lies in the Sun newspaper. It will be because they have consistently failed to respond to the needs of ordinary working class people who make up the bulk of the constituency.

This failure to represent ordinary people is arguably the single most important reason for the gen-



eral collapse of the left. Labour Party members often think of themselves as belonging to an organisation which exists to defend the interests of working-class people. I have heard a great many working-class people say that the Labour party doesn't represent them any more. The Labour party is now seen as the party which defends the rights of middle management.

The 'hard' left, of course, are seen not as genuine representatives of the interests of working people, but as disciplined proponents of an even less attractive version of state socialism. In those countries where state socialism has been put into practice, the achievements of 'the party of the class' include mass murder in Cambodia, the dictatorial implementation of the word of one man at the cost of the lives of millions in China (and of course in the USSR), the collapse of the Vietnamese economy after the war, the bumbling incompetence of Brezhnev, the suppression of Solidarnosc in Poland, and the destruction of hundreds of entire villages in Rumania to force their inhabitants to move into high rise flats.

**T**here are now so many examples of countries where the economy has been devastated by the application of state socialist policies by self-appointed 'vanguards of the class' that the vanguards are running out of followers. All over the world 'socialist' regimes are dismantling their state planning apparatus and returning in despair to capitalist methods of organisation. Yet the 'hard' left in Britain still struggles to lead us to revolution behind banners calling for nationalisation of the main sectors of the economy. Small wonder that the Conservatives are settling so confidently into their eleventh year of rule. Given the choice between a state socialist society or a Thatcherite capitalist one it is easy to believe that there is no

safe socialist alternative to Thatcher.

Yet that alternative exists. Real socialism has as much to say about the nature of freedom as it does about the importance of equality, and if we are to create an effective socialist movement it has to be on this basis. The insights of the Green movement and of feminism need to be synthesised with those of the old libertarian tradition of socialism. This argued that socialism isn't about creating parties which will govern people but about finding means for ordinary people to work together to organise themselves. Libertarian socialists do not aim to add one more voice to the ranks of those calling for a 'realistic' vote for Neil Kinnock, nor to help put ratepayers' money into the pockets of political friends who will give gratuitous advice to a class they barely understand, nor to give support to Party planners calling for harder work on the production line at some outdated and dangerous state steel factory.

The aim of libertarian socialists is to speak the truth as we find it and to organise our opposition activities without dominating and intimidating those who might wish to work with us. Our purpose is to create a decentralised co-operative society based on self-management, not a bureaucracy run from party head office. As we said in 1967 in our pamphlet As We See It,

"Our aims are simply that the workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggles and that the control and organisation of these struggles should remain firmly in their own hands."

There is a slow steady job to be done of fostering the ideals of this different tradition of socialism. The pages of Solidarity Journal are open to anyone who wishes to contribute to that process.



## NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

# Anti-nuke movements falter as West cheats on missile treaty

Even as the first cruise missiles were being removed from Britain last September under the terms of the INF treaty (see picture), the Pentagon was preparing massive new facilities at US bases in Upper Heyford, Bentwaters and Lakenheath for their replacement by types of cruise missile not covered by the agreement. Yet, as PAUL ANDERSON finds, with the achievement of INF, support for CND has evaporated.

IT'S NOW MORE THAN nine years since, as Edward Thompson put it, "an 'expert' sort of young man came upon the BBC news and informed us that we were to have 140 cruise missiles with nuclear warheads stationed on our soil". Since then, the missiles - fewer than 140 of them as it happened, but no matter - have come and gone, and so, it seems, has the mass movement that emerged to oppose them.

Just as the signing of the Partial Test Ban treaty in 1963 led to the waning of the popular movement against nuclear weapons that had rocked "never had it so good" Britain, so the superpowers' 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty appears to have taken the wind out of the sails of the eighties peace movement. The signs seem clear: the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is declining in membership and didn't hold a London demonstration in 1988 because it was afraid that hardly anyone would

turn up; European Nuclear Disarmament is almost broke; the Labour leadership is increasingly confident that it can push the party into adopting a less radical defence policy than the one the Labour right claims "cost us two elections".

All of which makes it tempting to hold a post-mortem on the eighties peace movement or at least to write a critical obituary. Tempting, but premature. For although there is much to be said for subjecting the experience of the past nine years to critical scrutiny, there are good reasons for believing that, appearances notwithstanding, the eighties peace movement might not yet have breathed its last.

NATO is planning new deployments of nuclear weapons in Europe in the wake of the INF deal - including extra American nuclear forces in Britain. And that could just mean a revival of the popular outrage that greeted the decision on cruise.





Under the INF treaty, all Soviet and American ground-based nuclear missiles with a range of between 500 and 5,500 km are being destroyed. That means Soviet SS-4s, SS-5s, SS-20s, SS-22s and SS-23s, and American ground-launched Tomahawk cruise missiles and Pershing IIs and Ias.

But the treaty doesn't cover the superpowers' ground-launched nuclear missiles and artillery with a range of less than 500 km; their nuclear missiles and bombs carried by aircraft; or their nuclear missiles and depth charges carried by surface ships and submarines. And there are long-standing NATO and Warsaw Pact plans to introduce new nuclear weapons in all these categories.

It is no surprise that we know more about the NATO end of the operation, which dates back more than five years. An October 1983 meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Montebello, Canada, agreed that

NATO should reduce short-range nuclear forces in Europe while introducing more modern weaponry. Three sorts of new weapons were singled out for development: a new short-range ground-launched missile to replace the ageing American Lance system; new nuclear artillery; and a new tactical air-to-surface missile - a sort of cruise missile - to replace free-fall bombs. Today, the actual hardware for new artillery and short-range missile systems, and one sort of tactical air-to-surface missile, the American SRAM II, is ready or almost ready to be deployed. (SRAM II, incidentally, also looks like being bought off-the-peg by Britain to replace its "independent" WE-177 free-fall bombs, but that's another story).

It's true that since the INF treaty was signed, the NATO consensus for "modernisation" has all but evaporated, largely because of West German government fears that agreement to deploy new artil-



lery and a Lance successor (both of which would be stationed in West Germany and would land on East Germany if used) would revive the West German peace movement. But the NATO military establishment and the British Government have been pressing hard for a swift agreement on "modernisation", arguing that it is essential for the credibility of NATO's deterrent strategy. And with George Bush in the White House, it looks likely that the West Germans will be forced to toe the line.

This is not all, however. The Soviet Union has its own programme for "modernising" its short-range forces, originally presented to the world as a "compensation" for cruise and Pershing (though recent indications from Moscow suggest that it might be willing to change track). More important, in the past eighteen months NATO has floated several projects for "compensating" for the loss of ground-launched nuclear missiles under the INF treaty. That, in plain language, means deployment of weapons with precisely the same role in NATO's "flexible responsible" strategy as cruise and Pershing had.

**F**ive such NATO "compensation" proposals are under discussion in NATO's political forums. Two, the development and deployment of a Lance-successor short-range ground-launched missile and of a tactical air-to-surface cruise missile, were already part of the Montebello plan. But there are three others: moving more nuclear-capable American aircraft to bases in Western Europe, particularly Britain; deploying more American sea-launched cruise missiles on submarines and surface ships in the eastern Atlantic; and assigning more American submarine-launched ballistic missiles to NATO's European command.

At the moment, such plans have not been endorsed politically, but the military is already well advanced in putting them into

practice. During summer 1988, Jane's Defence Weekly reported General William Kirk, the commander in chief of the United States Air Force in Europe, as saying that America intended to deploy in Britain more than 50 F-111 bombers now based in America. He said that the deployment would begin from 1989 and that the aircraft would be rebuilt to carry air-launched cruise missiles capable of reaching targets in the Soviet Union. Official American sources confirmed the substance of the report, adding that the bombers, currently with the Strategic Air Command, would be re-classified as "tactical", though they said that deployment would begin "in the nineties". More recently, NATO sources have said that the British government has agreed to the F-111 deployments. Detailed plans for new sea-launched nuclear weapons have yet to be leaked.

Opposition to deployment of more sea-launched nuclear missiles and nuclear-armed aircraft has so far been more muted than the West German outcry over new nuclear artillery and the Lance-successor. The Norwegian Labour Government has expressed reservations about increasing deployment of sea-launched missiles, many of which would inevitably be stationed in or near Norwegian waters, and in Britain CND held demonstrations (virtually unreported) against new nuclear weapons in late October. Otherwise, the issue is hardly on the public political agenda. Yet.

But that could easily change - particularly if CND moves from cheer-leading for the superpowers' INF deal and back into its traditional oppositional role. There are signs that it might: the mood at its November annual conference was more militant than for several years (largely out of disgust at the Labour leadership's apparent desire to ditch its unilateralist defence policy), and opposition to new NATO nuclear deployments was made a high priority for 1989. Once more with feeling?



## NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

# Dilemma saps European peace initiative

Which is the authentic voice of disarmament behind the Iron Curtain?

The unofficial peace movements or the state-controlled peace committees? The issue is not as straightforward as it seems, and has all but defeated END. BRUCE ALLEN offers this assessment.

EUROPE'S FOREMOST PEACE organisation is standing at the crossroads. If it refuses to get off the fence, it risks being superseded by a new organisation that is firmly committed to 'detente from below'.

A little less than eighteen months ago I wrote those words. The 1987 European Nuclear Disarmament (END) Convention in Coventry, England, had ended just weeks before and there was good reason to think END was at the crossroads. A major internal rift had appeared at the Coventry Convention leading to the formation of an 'Interim Committee'. The purpose of this committee was ostensibly to set things right concerning the appropriate relationship between the Western peace movement and our natural partners, the independent movements in the East. Since both the inception of the END process and the birth of autonomous peace activism in the Eastern bloc a sharp, politically crucial debate has raged within the peace movement in the West.

At issue is the question of who the Western peace movement should give priority to in its relations with the Eastern bloc, the independent groups or the official peace committees at the service of their respective regimes. END has

consistently answered this question by maintaining a desire to pursue relations with both and has acted accordingly. But in the process END has inevitably landed itself in one bind after another precisely because there is no way to truly reconcile the independent groups with state-controlled peace committees which work hand in hand with the political police and their masters in the ruling Communist Parties.

This was quite evident at the 1984 END Convention in Perugia, Sicily, where the attempt to work with both provoked considerable turmoil and led to the formation of the European Network for East-West Dialogue as something of an alternative to END. Subsequently, the pendulum has swung one way and then the other. Thus, at Amsterdam in 1985 the END Convention was marked by an unprecedented degree of support for the independent groups. By contrast, last year's convention in Coventry saw the independents marginalised and heavily outnumbered by the combined presence of members of the official East bloc peace committees and members of some East bloc Communist Parties.

A definitive turn for the worse had occurred. Two developments since the 1986 convention in Evry, France, largely led to this



occurrence and made their impact felt throughout the convention in Coventry. One was the acceleration of Gorbachev's top-down programme of reform in the USSR. The other was the substantial progress being made towards a Soviet-US deal on land-based missiles in Europe.

**B**oth phenomena had the effect of bringing the issue of who really spoke for peace in the East into even sharper focus and helped to spark a new crisis over the issue within END. In particular, they gave a sort of justification to the minority (mainly social democrats) within END who are clearly much more concerned about facilitating 'detente from above', which principally involves established political parties and their spokespersons, rather than 'detente from below', involving independent movements in both blocs. One such individual, Ken Coates, has gone so far as to sum up this view by proclaiming, "We are not a 'league of oppositions'".

Faced with this turn for the worse the few Eastern bloc independents in attendance joined together with a much larger contingent of Western peace activists generally loyal to their cause and held a series of evening meetings. These gatherings led to an inconclusive showdown with the social democratic minority at an END Liaison Committee meeting on the second night of the Coventry convention, and ultimately to the formation of the Interim Committee.

Essentially, the changes envisaged were designed to restore END to a firmly non-aligned course and give the Eastern bloc independents real, meaningful input. The emergence of the Interim Committee was accompanied by serious discussion about a new initiative which would fully involve the East bloc independents and be in tune with the latest developments in the East-West political situation. Indeed, it looked like the new committee might

supersede END and its cumbersome Liaison Committee.

This discussion turned out to be, as one West German Green wryly remarked at last year's END Convention in Lund, Sweden, "hot air". The formation of the Interim Committee proved next to worthless insofar as it did nothing but briefly terrify the social democratic dinosaurs on the Liaison Committee. Worse, some of those who had been so vocal in calling for change and in recognising that the peace movement of 1987 was not that of 1979-1983 fell short of matching their insightful words with meaningful deeds precisely when such deeds would have been most timely. At most, one might cite one tangible result from this stillborn challenge to the END status quo: the END Liaison Committee did go on to formally commit itself to refuse to invite the official East bloc peace committees to the 1988 END Convention unless these committees came along with their respective independent activists.

Yet even this achievement was largely lost. END's Liaison Committee, in a display of cowardice, let the official Soviet Peace Council come to last summer's convention in Lund despite the refusal of the Soviet authorities to grant visas to any independent

## A WORD ABOUT THE PRICE OF THIS ISSUE

Just as we look forward to the day finances permit us to run to 64-page full-colour editions (and go daily!), so we would prefer to distribute Solidarity Journal for free. But circumstances being currently somewhat different, at least as we go to press, we must increase our cover price to £1.00 with this issue, after holding it at its previous price since 1986.

THE EDITORS



peace activists so that they could attend. (The Trust Group and a substantial number of participants at the convention made a formal protest in response). Fortunately for END this act of capitulation was overshadowed by a gift from the Jaruzelski regime in Poland. At the very last moment it granted visas to Solidarnosc leaders Jacek Kuron and Janusz Onyskiewicz so they could attend. Their presence, and especially Kuron's, had an electrifying effect on the Lund convention and gave it truly historical significance insofar as the assembly provided the opportunity for a long-overdue meeting between prominent representatives of the two most powerful social movements to have appeared in Europe this generation.

Were it not for a forceful reminder from Jacek Kuron himself, many in attendance would have forgotten about the other Poles, including Freedom and Peace leader Jacek Czaputowicz, who were prevented from attending by the same Jaruzelski regime which was letting Kuron out of Poland for the first time in his life. No Czech or East German independents were allowed to come either. However, the situation was different with respect to them since the official Czech and East German peace committees boycotted the convention in a characteristic display of loyalty to their respective neo-stalinist governments, which are intensely hostile to END.

**D**espite these things, Jacek Kuron's prominent and enthusiastic participation in the Lund convention was assurance enough that this event would be qualitatively better than the previous year. In Coventry the East bloc independents had been marginalised that two of their spokespersons joked at one point about proposing that END join the pro-Soviet World Peace Council. Kuron's political significance was such that he could not be sidelined by those on the Liaison Committee

who for all practical purposes don't give a fuck about what happens to East bloc independents.

Similar dynamics were at work with respect to the Hungarian attendance at the convention in Lund. The continued presence of the official Hungarian Peace Council on the END Liaison Committee did facilitate the welcome attendance of a large contingent of activists from Hungary's burgeoning independent political scene. But their considerable presence effectively averted any serious discussion or even thought about the political implications of having a body directly backed by a Warsaw Pact state actively participating in the Liaison Committee of a campaign involving the foremost organisations of the European peace movement.

The 1988 END Convention will consequently be viewed in retrospect as having been generally consistent with past conventions. However, it is now more painfully apparent than ever that the European Nuclear Disarmament campaign is ineffectually drifting with the flow of events in Europe and beyond instead of either affecting them or their direction in any meaningful way. Simply stated, END cannot go on as it is much longer. If it does it will become irrelevant. Its role in facilitating the vital convergence between increasingly historic movements for change in the East and the Western peace movement will, accordingly, become a subject for historical debate.

A tragedy is thus unfolding insofar as there is not at present a sufficiently credible formation which is capable of picking up where END will leave off. Clearly, then, the task before those of us who appreciate how important the East-West dynamic is, and who are prepared to turn our words into deeds, is to consciously focus on developing a host of alternatives outside the context of END which are at one and the same time as complementary and consistent with each other as possible.



## FLEET STREET

# No balls, just one big cock-up

Michael Crozier  
The Making of 'The Independent'  
Gordon Frazer, £8.95

Peter Chippendale and Chris Horrie  
Disaster! The Rise and Fall  
of the 'News on Sunday': Anatomy of  
a Business Failure  
Sphere Books, £3.99

Brian MacArthur  
Eddy Shah, 'Today' and the  
Newspaper Revolution  
David and Charles, £12.95

THE INDEPENDENT and News on Sunday had a lot in common. Both were born of frustration with the state of our press, both sought freedom from its baronial structure, and neither wanted to be the mouthpiece of the political establishment. They were also products of the newspaper revolution started by Eddy Shah and consummated by Rupert Murdoch.

One-third of The Independent's journalists had left The Times over the great trek to Wapping or, most of them, in the droves who could not stomach a life of crossing picket lines with choice invective ringing in their ears. One of their main persecutors was Keith Sutton, editor of the strike paper The Wapping Post, and soon to be the first editor of News on Sunday. The two new papers also shared the advertising agency Bartle, Bogle, Hegarty, who went to The Independent after producing the brilliant but sexist slogan for News on Sunday, "No tits, but a lot of balls". There, appropriately, the two strands part.

The Independent's top Times and Daily Telegraph founders were only against the establishment press because they thought it too narrow, while News on Sunday's founders were simply against the establishment and its press. The Independent sought to enlighten the establishment, News on Sunday to defeat it. Both failed. The Independent, however, was only seeking a new establishment voice, while the founders of News on Sunday were seeking to silence all its voices. Better, the latter thought, to fight and lose than not to fight at all. Like Iranian Revolutionary Guards on the front line, martyrdom was as desirable to them as victory.

Of these three books only Disaster! The Rise and Fall of the 'News on Sunday' is a good read. Michael Crozier's The Making of 'The Independent' is the sort of dreary paean of praise typical of companies' annual reports to shareholders after a good year, a self-administered pat on the back. Crozier, the paper's design editor, feels good about The Independent, his bosses do too, and accordingly the book has a complacent tone. Brian MacArthur has produced an equally anodyne book in Eddy Shah, 'Today' and the Newspaper Revolution. Shah is not a success, as the failure of Today testifies, but he can still be a hero, even though the newspaper revolution ate this, its most illustrious child. Today got hitched to Tiny Rowland, and has now gone to grass in the Murdoch stable. His latest venture, The Post, has also folded, but MacArthur is too busy making a peacock throne for Shah to explain why his fame is in inverse proportion to his business success.

Shah's record shows that you don't have to be part of the left to fail in business, but if Chip-



pendale and Horrie's account of News on Sunday is anything to go by, it certainly helps. "Disaster", with its implication of external causes, seems a kind word to use for this act of left-wing harakiri. But it is the scale of the shambles that makes the book so fascinating. Success stories are boring, and if News on Sunday had been one, the authors might well have written the sort of book Crozier has. But catastrophes make better copy.

Was News on Sunday, as so many lefties say, doomed from the start because there was no way a popular socialist newspaper could "be allowed" to succeed? Whatever they and their supporters may say, no. Not only was the paper poorly conceived, its management and decision-making structures were so shambolic they make the Zeebrugge disaster look like a lifeboat drill.

The most important mistake was the paper's failure to carve out an identity for itself. It had no positive character. It did not stand for this, or for that, it was just against sexism, against racism, against imperialism, against the bosses, against the Tories, and so on. It knew better than any publication in the history of the English language what it was not, but could not say what it was. None of the founders had any experience of journalism or commercial publishing; they simply created a publication and then expended all their effort on a structure to police its politics. Meanwhile, Keith Sutton and another major contributor to the paper's creation, John Pilger, battled over what it would be, Sutton's Not-The Sun or Pilger's Right-On Sunday Guardian. This damaging conflict was only possible because each man believed he had editorial control. When the founders finally let on that neither had, Pilger left in disgust.

The end result was the most extreme manifestation of the left's

post-war political project, to convert the working class to the left-wing middle class's concept of what is wrong in society. Bad housing, unemployment, low wages, City scandals and the like appal the middle class lefties - dubbed the 'Grumbly Brigade' by Chippendale and Horrie - who worry that ordinary people do not worry as much as they ought to. This paternalistic point of view resulted in the attempt to squeeze progressive editorial content into The Sun's "Cor-blimey, Gotcha, Up-Yours-Galtieri, Leave-It-Out-Neil" editorial style, which they mistakenly thought to be the only reason that paper sells four and a half million copies a day. But News on Sunday did not have expert tabloid journalists, not even any good stories.

The result? Circulation of 518,000 on launch - less than half the number required for financial viability - followed by sales





declining at terminal velocity. Neither will it do to describe the enterprise as an experiment from which future left-wing publishers could benefit. Apart from the fact that this monstrous own-goal has poisoned the atmosphere for any similar project, nobody should really need telling that you need efficient management to run a £6.5 million business. The Beyond the Fragments people, ex-Big Flamers and former Angry Brigaders did not understand this, despising profit, accountancy, advertising, business management and all the other ingredients of successful publications.

How the founders managed to keep full control of the paper despite their lack of experience and negligible personal financial stakes is explained by the phenomenal fund-raising job some of them undertook. Thrilled by the prospect of a left-wing newspaper, the left-Labour councils of Islington, Haringay, Brent and Lambeth swept their financial advisers aside and threw £250,000 each at the paper. Ron Todd got the Transport and General Workers' Union to cough up £550,000. The shareholders might have been blind to the dangers, but that does not absolve News on Sunday of responsibility for squandering funds held in trust for trade union members and ratepayers. Duty to the shareholders was another unfashionable idea, one of many babies that went out with the bathwater.

Anyone familiar with the left's efforts to found an institutional presence will instantly recognise the archetype of the News on Sunday fiasco. The political gesture outweighs the importance of the business enterprise and 'heroic failure' is acceptable because consciousness may have been raised in the process. But what's heroic about News on Sunday needing a financial rescue after three weeks of publication?

Anarchists in West Berlin have run a daily paper for several

years, France has had a left-of-Communist Party daily since 1977, and there is a left-wing nationwide radio network in that supposed graveyard of socialism, the USA. This book goes a long way to showing how the British left seems to turn to dust every project that has a chance of taking its politics out of the ghetto. All we need now is a book explaining why the British left is locked into a psychology of martyrdom.

ANDY WEIR

## POLITICS

# Loadsa strife

Anthony Wright  
Socialisms: Why Socialists Disagree  
and What They Disagree About  
Oxford University Press, £4.95

"AN ATTRACTIVE STARTING POINT for anyone who has to teach about politics" runs the blurb, and unfortunately the turgid prose of Anthony Wright's primer seems to confirm it as an academic textbook. Had the author displayed some involvement with the development of socialism, the writing might have gained a little excitement. On the plus side, for those of us who tend to feel rather smugly secure that we know what socialism is, it offers a salutary sweep through the plethora of socialisms, which have not ceased to flower for 150 years. Despite the fact that the subject of Wright's earlier study was the guild socialism of G D H Cole, there is not much about libertarianisms in this book. But the sheer diversity of the ideas and practices which have called themselves socialist should be enough to shake off anyone's complacency. It made me think that, if there were no other political creed but socialism, we probably would not have any less strife in the world.

NICK TERDRE



## CHINA

# Change is a long slow process

From TIM FRANCIS, Belfast:

I felt that Andy Brown's article on China (Solidarity Journal 18) lacked a certain perspective. China, a Third World country, is low in the league of per capita income. By comparison with other poorer countries distribution of wealth has remained fairly equal. Here are some (approximate) comparisons of annual rates of pay: factory worker £60-£100, school-teacher £60-£100, doctor £80-£150, airline pilot £200. The nouveaux riches are predominantly some of the farmers nearest the cities and private business owners. Some may earn £100,000 per year - Guangdong (the Canton area) is richer still - and so in financial terms they have entered the First World.

The Chinese themselves must be the best judges of conditions in the late Mao era. In three years I never met anyone who regarded it as a time of plenty. Those who looked back to it with any degree of fondness simply remembered being free to create mischief (or havoc) as schoolchildren. Most commentators would, I think, agree that it was a period marked by wretched poverty and starvation, great cruelty and personal and social injustice.

Developing the poorer and less developed areas can only be a long, slow process in a country the size of China with its special geographical and economic considerations. There is evidence that the task is being undertaken. As for Andy's remarks about corruption, the system of personal connections and lack of care for the down-and-out

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## VERBATIM

"The Russian occupation of Afghanistan was historically progressive... their withdrawal is a betrayal... they still fuck goats in Afghanistan!".

**SPARTACIST LEAGUE MEMBER**  
speaking at recent  
Socialist Organiser meeting

"The Prime Minister said the other day that you have to give up some freedom to protect freedom. I think that's a very dangerous approach to take".

**EDWARD HEATH**

"Many are the intellectuals who, in the 70s, have, how should one put it... 'boasted' to having signed an article [in Socialisme ou Barbarie] or at least to having belonged to the same political territory as the review".

LIBERATION

"If all these people really had been with us at the time, we would have taken power in France somewhere around 1957".

**CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS**

"People throughout Europe and in many other countries felt themselves to be threatened [by Chernobyl], or even harmed; their reactions were often absurd and even self-damaging... radiophobic, in short".

**JAMES DAGLISH**  
International Atomic  
Energy Agency

poor, these are certainly not new problems, nor of course without parallel elsewhere. The debate whether China is turning capitalist will doubtless go on. For anarchists and, I think, for most working-class and peasant Chinese this is not the real issue. The fact, as Andy witnessed, is that China is liberalising. The degree of freedom that he experienced as a tourist may not have impressed him unduly, but in Chinese terms it is a dramatic change. If the Chinese themselves do not enjoy all of these freedoms now, over time they almost inevitably will. It is increasingly difficult for the government to withhold them. We cannot expect miracles, but it is a step in the direction of Mao's great slogan "Dare to think, dare to speak, dare to act".

## CLASS WAR

## In point of fact

From HOWARD MOSS, Swansea:

The interview with Ian Bone (issue 13) was interesting. I remember him in Swansea. What I didn't remember was Alarm getting nearly as many votes as he said they did in the 1979 local elections. I've checked the figures and their total vote in the four wards they stood in was 1,839 out of a total in those wards of 37,387. That's just under five per cent on my reckoning, not the twenty-eight per cent he claimed. Even if you multiply that just under five per cent by three, on the grounds that Alarm put up only one candidate in wards where three seats were going and the big parties put up three, you've still only got about fourteen per cent. As for the Alarm candidate getting 850 in the Mayhill ward, actually he got 737, and the three Labour candidates who stood didn't get 1,200 votes but 2,264, 2,287 and 2,178 respectively.

With fraternal best wishes.