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**DEFENCE OF  
WESTERN EUROPE**

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**NUCLEAR POWER -  
NO THANKS ?**

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**COMMENT**

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# THE MARXIST

## PROGRAMME

### General Principles

1. The liberation of the proletariat is the task of the proletariat itself.
2. The proletariat cannot liberate itself without liberating all the classes which are oppressed by finance capital.
3. The liberation of the people can only be achieved by the people themselves.
4. We are opposed to the creation of elites who see themselves as liberators of the people. Such concepts arise from a lack of faith in the ability of people to liberate themselves.
5. The people can only liberate themselves under the leadership of the industrial working class, and that class can only fulfil this role when its most politically advanced elements are brought together as a collective leadership which understands and applies the laws of historical development as discovered by Marx and Engels, and further developed by Lenin, Stalin and Mao.

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## DEFENCE OF WESTERN EUROPE

The Russian invasion of Afghanistan and the American 'Rescue Operation' in Iran have done a great deal to alert people to the danger of a third World War.

While Russian imperialism constitutes the main threat to world peace, the methods by which U.S. imperialism tries to defend its imperialist interests cannot be ignored.

It is a cause for concern that Front Bench politicians in Britain have shown themselves to be more concerned with expressing solidarity with the Americans on this issue than in seeking to lead Europe in an independent initiative to resolve it. The half-hearted approach to economic sanctions against Iran is a sure indication that the Government does not enjoy the support of a large section of big business on this subject, but as long as it remains just a gesture, they are content to go along with it.

The economic effect of these sanctions is likely to be minimal; further, the political consequences are likely to be negative in terms of achieving international unity against Russian expansionism.

It would seem obvious that political and trade policies in relation to Iran should seek to strengthen political trends in that country which favour closer links with Western Europe at the expense of the Superpowers. It is equally obvious that this trend is represented by President Bani-Sadr and that policies should be followed which will strengthen his internal position in the conflict between the secular and clerical

forces.

He has stated on several occasions that he looks to Europe for his friends, and is hostile to both superpowers, whereas Khomeini takes the ultra-left 'revolutionary' line that deals cannot be made with imperialism of any kind. In practice, this along with his attempt to foist a clerical dictatorship on the Iranian people, will eventually create the conditions for Russian involvement in that country's internal affairs.

The line taken by the President is not in contradiction with the contention that all imperialism is a danger to peace and national independence. On the contrary, it is a deepening of this proposition which leads to an understanding that imperialism in general can only be defeated if the countries fighting for their independence take advantage of the contradictions between the various imperialist states and groupings. Failure or inability to understand this dialectical approach is at the rejection of the Three Worlds Theory.

Another contributory factor is the link in the minds of some comrades between this theory and the disturbing trends in China's policies since the deaths of Chou En-lai and Mao Tse-tung. We share the concern but, in our view, the validity of the thesis is borne out by objective observations and is not dependent upon the ebb and flow of the class struggle in China.

Of course, the emphasis which the Chinese government places on this or that aspect

may be affected by the internal struggle, but if we continue to adhere to the teachings and practice of Mao, we will continue to think things out for ourselves and make our own evaluation of events.

Speaking for ourselves, we do not count ourselves among that band of 'Marxists' whose political line changes in conformity with every twist and turn of the class struggle in China. Some of us bear too many scars from the days when we blindly followed the line of the CPSU(B) to readily fall into the same trap again.

Returning to the Three Worlds Theory - due to their colossal superiority in terms of manpower, economic, and military power over all other nations, and their striving for world hegemony, the two superpowers present the greatest threat to national independence of the smaller nations and to world peace.

While the contention between them increases the danger of war, it also offers opportunities to the other countries which, if grasped, can foil the designs of both superpowers and decisively weaken imperialism in general.

The Soviet Union is currently the biggest threat because it is in its expansionist phase, whereas the U.S. has been thrown onto the defensive by reverses at the hands of popular liberation forces, the Vietnamese in particular.

The most important task on a world scale at the present time is to unite all forces possible to prevent Russian expansion. Among other things, this means taking advantage of the opposition which this expansion creates among U.S. imperialists.

For example, the Second World, the Third World, and U.S. imperialism all have their specific interests in Middle East oil. While there are contradictions between them, none of their interests would be served by allowing it to be dominated by the Russians.

The main deterrents to Russian expansion in the Middle East at the present time are, firstly, U.S. economic and military power and, secondly, the possibility of popular armed resistance, as in Afghanistan.

Within this general context it is a matter of urgency that the latter aspect should develop so that it becomes the dominant one. Only in this way will the national liberation forces be able to take advantage of the contradictions between the imperialists rather than be mere pawns in the game.

The Second World countries have some interest in this kind of development for they, too, do not relish the idea of either superpower dominating the region. For this reason they are more disposed towards the establishment or defence of independent regimes in the region that are not under the domination of either superpower.

The situation, therefore, presents opportunities as well as dangers for the Third World countries in that region. By taking the independence of their respective countries as the bedrock of their policies they can make temporary alliances with one or more imperialist states for the express purpose of counteracting the influence of the others.

It is a matter of history that one of the factors leading to the success of national liberation struggles throughout the world has been the ability of the leadership to

take advantage of inter-imperialist contradictions. Zimbabwe is a case in point.

Both Nkomo and Mugabe accepted aid from Eastern Europe but having used them to create a political and military situation that was favourable to the liberation forces, Mugabe is now leaning towards Britain as Zimbabwe's main ally in the imperialist camp.

The British imperialists were the first to reconcile themselves to the inevitability of political independence for the colonies, not because they had ceased to be imperialists but because they considered it to be the best way of maintaining some influence over developments in the former colonies in the new situation.

British imperialism has long recognised that continued support for White rule in Africa is politically inexpedient. For one thing it is flogging a dead horse, and for the other it plays into the hands of first the Americans and then the Russians by giving them an open field to appear as the great champions of blacks in their struggle against White supremacy.

The people of Zimbabwe and British imperialism each have their own reasons for needing to halt the spread of Russian influence in Africa. Both seem to agree that the first step is to establish a multi-racial society in that country. There also seems to be a grudging acknowledgement by both the British Government and the White settlers that something must be done to raise the living standards of the black people.

Of course there will continue to be contradictions between the parties concerned, but

hopefully they will remain secondary to the need to combat Social Imperialism.

The working class of the Second World have a vested interest in supporting this and similar forms of co-operation for the purpose of countering Superpower expansionism. They also have an interest in promoting co-operation between Second World countries themselves for the same reason, the proviso being that the object of the co-operation must be to strengthen the independence of each country and not to subordinate the national interests to some sort of superstate.

The cornerstone of the fight against superpower expansionism must be the right of all nations to determine their own internal affairs free from external interference.

Both Superpowers are contending for the middle ground, and that includes the Second as well as the Third World countries.

The danger that emanates from the U.S. in relation to Europe is mainly economic in character; that which comes from the Soviet Union is mainly military. As far as we in Britain are concerned, the present task in this respect is to build co-operation between the European states so that collectively they will be capable of standing up to either Superpower, but it would be the height of stupidity to contemplate taking them both on at the same time.

The U.S. cannot, in its own interests, contemplate allowing the Russians to dominate the whole of Europe, therefore its aid to Western Europe is self-interested but the countries concerned would be very foolish to reject it. At the same time, it would be unwise to become dependent upon it,

for this would inevitably mean the unqualified acceptance of American 'leadership'.

Comparisons have been drawn between the situation that existed in the mid-1930s when Nazi Germany was preparing for world conquest, and the present time when Russian expansionism is the main threat to world peace. To be sure, the similarities are there, but the differences are also important.

The New Order that Hitler promised was to be brought about by the German people who would, "by virtue of their superiority", impose it upon the lesser races. The ending of the Rhine Occupation and other aspects of the Versailles Treaty were justifiable and legitimate aims of German foreign policy, but the calls to 'liberate' the German minorities in Czechoslovakia and Poland put things on a completely different footing. They were the initial tactics used to get the ball rolling in the drive for world domination.

Nazi supporters in Britain used anti-semitism as a means of gaining support from lumpen elements of the population but as the general tenor of Moseley's propaganda was anti-trade union and even anti-working class, it could never muster sufficient support to overcome the antipathy which Hitler's actions aroused.

The organised working class in Britain was anti-Nazi before the majority of the ruling class came to recognise that Nazi Germany was its main enemy.

The attitude towards the Soviet Union is a great deal different. The feeling generated during the '30s that somehow the Soviet Union was trying to break new ground for

the working class has never been entirely eliminated. The era of prosperity in the capitalist states has weakened it somewhat, but it is still there.

The decisive part played by the Soviet Union in the defeat of Nazi Germany has left a legacy of sympathy, especially among the older generation who lived through those years. All these are assets that the Nazis never had.

It is understandable, therefore, that when Soviet forces invade another country using the banner of working class solidarity as a cover, that there is some confusion among the working class concerning its real motives.

For the ruling class there is no difficulty; anti-Russian is equated with anti-communism and anti-Marxism, therefore all Marxists are to be put to the stake in one way or another.

For us the problem is more complex. How are we to encourage actions to stop Russian expansion while, at the same time, pressing forward with the ideas of Marxism for working class power and socialism?

The main issue on which opposition to Russian expansionism can be generated is that it denies the right of other nations to determine their own path of social and economic development. This is clearly shown in Brezhnev's declarations regarding Limited Sovereignty and the so-called International Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

The main issue on which the ruling class can be defeated is its inability to create the conditions necessary to sustain nation-

al sovereignty and independence, and to pursue economic and social policies capable of uniting the majority of the people so that they will be politically and morally prepared to resist Russian aggression.

The decision to accept the stationing of Cruise missiles in Britain has predictably given rise to an explosion of pacifist sentiment on the 'Left' of the Labour Party.

We say predictably because at every juncture where the pressures for war are increasing, this pacifist tendency gains a new lease of life even though of short duration.

We join with them in the belief that international conflicts are better resolved peaceably rather than by resort to armed struggle. We part company with them when they place their trust in unilateral disarmament as a means of avoiding or preventing war.

Although demands for reduction in arms expenditure are being made, the main thrust of the pacifists and pro-Russian forces is at the present time directed against the inclusion of nuclear weaponry in the British armoury.

The colossal destructive power of atomic weapons is not to be minimised but, by the same token we should not allow ourselves to be put in the situation where we can be intimidated by those who possess them.

The Warsaw Pact forces already have SS20 rockets that can reach any part of Europe but as they cannot reach the U.S. they are not a subject matter for the SALT agreement. Whatever view one takes of these agreements it is obvious that they would not have come about if only one side possessed intercontinental rockets.

Agreements which benefit both parties can only be reached on the basis of bargaining power. In this case - No missiles, no bargaining power.

The Pacifists deny this. They have a logic of their own which says that those who do not possess arms will not be attacked.

The 'logic' behind this is based on the belief that wars between states takes place due to mutual distrust, and that this is caused by the possession of armaments, therefore if one state is 'courageous' enough to disarm unilaterally it will display such superior morality that the other state or states will not take advantage of its military weakness.

That this 'logic' flies in the face of all historical experience does not seem to deter them.

It is, of course, true that a build-up of armaments usually precedes the outbreak of wars but that does not mean that they are the causes. Wars are the result of clashes of economic and political interest.

"War is nothing more than the continuation of politics by other means."

Belgium was neither politically disposed nor militarily prepared to fight Hitler's Germany in 1940, but this did not prevent it being attacked by German forces in order to outflank the French Maginot Line.

Pre-war Poland was no danger to Germany, but that did not prevent Germany marching in in 1939. The same with Czechoslovakia. Overwhelming strength on one side may avoid war but only at the expense of 'peaceful subjugation'.

Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan do not pose a threat to Russian security but Russian troops or Russian surrogates are interfering in the internal affairs of these and other countries. The Afghans do not possess the sophisticated weaponry of the Russians but this does not inhibit their use by the Russians.

The Soviet Union no longer has a claim to be a workers' state for, disregarding their internal policies, what workers' state would seek to impose its will on others, particularly by force of arms?

Russia is the new imperialist power that is intent on achieving world hegemony. Its contender for this position is U.S. imperialism, and each is constantly trying to tilt the overall balance of power in its own favour for this purpose.

The addition of Western Europe's economic potential to that of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe would tilt the balance decisively in favour of the latter vis-a-vis U.S. imperialism.

It is for this reason that U.S. imperialism, being on the defensive, is at present content to support an independent Europe. For Russian imperialism, however, the subjugation of Western Europe is an essential step in its struggle for world supremacy.

The U.S. is content, for the time being at least, to maintain the status quo; Russia must destroy it. This makes Russia the main threat to peace, for it is unlikely that the people of Western Europe would willingly accept the degree of tutelage which the Russians would require, therefore a resort to armed force is likely.

As far as we in Britain are concerned we should direct our attention to the defence of Western Europe. We emphasise defence because we are aware that there are madmen who still dream of an offensive against Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in order to make the world a safe place for capitalism, but in our view history has now passed them by.

Defence requires economic potential, military strength, and the will to fight. The pseudo-Left of the British political scene are, by accident or design, voicing policies which weaken our ability to resist Russian aggression.

The SS20 missiles which the Russians have already targeted on West European cities are intended to frighten the population so that Russian objectives can be achieved without the necessity of actually going to war.

The 'Left' are playing the Russian game by placing all the emphasis on the admittedly terrible consequences of atomic war, thereby contributing to the feeling that the only alternative is the acceptance of the Russian dictat or incineration by the 'bomb'. This is shown in the claim of those 'Lefts' that deployment of the Cruise and (by implication) any similar missile in Western Europe will increase the risk of atomic war.

The absence of a retaliatory weapon gives the Russians both a military and a negotiatory edge.

The deployment in Europe of comparable missiles to the Soviet SS20 will not only take the edge off the Russian military advantage, but will also provide Western Europe with a bargaining counter in order to secure the banning of all such missiles.



In issue No. 33 of THE MARXIST we advocated that it was in the interests of both East and West Europe that it should be declared a nuclear-free zone.

On re-considering this, we have come to the conclusion that this standpoint was wrong, and that the greatest danger to peace would be if nuclear weapons were confined solely to Russia and America.

The more countries that possess them, the greater the threat of retaliation to any potential aggressor, which would act as a stronger deterrent while laying the basis for a bargaining counter for agreed international disarmament.

The destruction of all atomic weapons should be one of the principal disarmament aims, but by international agreement, not unilaterally.

It is said that the stationing of Cruise missiles in Britain will increase the chances of our country being devastated by Russian atomic weapons. The underlying assumption behind this argument is that the only purpose of the Russian SS20 is to 'take out' the missile sites on enemy territory.

If that were the case there would be no reason for the Russians having such missiles because those at present situated in Western Europe could not reach Moscow.

The main reason for the possession of strategic missiles is the same as the one for the strategic air force, namely to destroy the military strength of the enemy by destroying its economic base. This will be dictated by military considerations that have little to do with the existence or

otherwise of missile bases in the country concerned.

Of course, atomic weapons can be used to try to break the spirit of the enemy population, but atom bombs are not absolutely necessary for that, as the Allied attack in Dresden during the last war so clearly shows.

The possibility of a nuclear response to an initial nuclear attack is what inhibits the use of such weapons, and it is essential that Russian military planners are left in no doubt that Russians, as well as West European cities will be devastated if a nuclear exchange takes place.

The deployment of Cruise, or similar missiles in Western Europe will raise the odds against their use by either country.

The possession of both battlefield and strategic nuclear weapons is essential as a deterrent against the use of similar weapons by Russia, but this must be accompanied by a campaign to create a climate of public opinion which opposes the initiation of any nuclear exchange by NATO forces. This would provide a good basis for an international agreement to ban such weapons.

It is essential that national Governments should have complete control over all missiles and other armed forces stationed on its territory.

How does this differ from what is known of the present NATO strategy in relation to the defence of Western Europe?

To get some idea of this it is necessary to go back to the 1957 White Paper on Defence issued by the British Government. The

## NUCLEAR POWER—NO THANKS?

Increasing energy consumption has long been equated with rising living standards. Thus when faced with an impending energy crisis and offered nuclear power as the only solution, whilst half-realising the dangers involved, it is generally accepted as a necessary evil and the only alternative to a deteriorating lifestyle. It appears that, apart from ecology groups who continue to speak out against it, nuclear power is grudgingly being accepted by the public.

The little information given by the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) - a Government backed public corporation, attractive and neatly packaged, presents nuclear energy as a great step in technological progress, and Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace as Luddites. However, the initial assumption that energy consumption should increase must be challenged.

Until about 25 years ago energy supplies were little source of concern and as industries expanded, so did their energy requirements. So high consumption was a sign of flourishing industry. Little thought was given to modifying manufacturing processes, insulation, recycling of waste heat, and no thought was given to the products, many of which are highly energy intensive in manufacture and consume energy in operation, e.g. electrical goods and cars.

British industry is largely based on car production which cannot survive as oil supplies diminish. The 60s was a boom period and the idea was projected (in order to stimulate demand) that the acquisition of

such expensive products was necessary for better living standards. To consume rather than to conserve was the order of the day.

The late 50s was a period of excitement as nuclear power was being developed and possible fears about oil supply and prices were allayed by the prospect of limitless energy. A heavy commitment was made to atomic energy before it had been fully tried and tested as a viable source. The UKAEA raced ahead of themselves.

Facing the energy crisis now, how do we stand? At current rates of consumption there is enough oil and gas to last for 40 years on a global scale and enough coal in the U.K. for well over 300 years.

However, world annual demand is expected to exceed supply by around 1990, according to the Electricity Council. This is where nuclear energy comes in. We are told it will save us in the oil crisis.

It is very important to remember that, at present, nuclear power stations are only capable of providing electricity, a high quality but rather expensive energy form as so many stages are involved in producing it. This includes nuclear-fuelled electricity. Electricity can be converted to heat (the most widely used energy form) but this is a wasteful process and therefore costly, at around 5 times the prices of OPEC oil-produced heat. Only 5% of industries' energy demand is in the form of electricity.

70% of our electricity is produced by coal of which there is no shortage and at

the moment, production is in excess of our needs. The Electricity Council shows a 28% planning margin and power plants are now being built on the assumption of increased electricity demand in the 1980s and 1990s (which our coal output would not be able to meet) despite a decline in the rate of demand growth in recent years.

### Oil

How is oil used, and where can it be saved or replaced? An Observer report shows that 33% is used as transport fuel for which, as yet there is no real alternative. Concorde is a prime example of waste in terms of both oil and finance. However, we can move freight by rail rather than lorries, increase public transport facilities by reducing fares and improving efficiency, and penalise car drivers.

11% goes in chemicals for which certainly no alternative exists and hydrocarbon material should be conserved for this field.

22% goes to manufacturing industry, mainly in heating and steam processes. This is an area where economies by insulating and recycling waste heat would mean vast energy savings, but also mean initial investment.

9% is used in heating shops, offices, schools, etc. and 4% is used domestically. We have seen that heating with electricity is very expensive.

3% powers ships and 7% is lost in refining. The remaining 11% is used in power stations to produce electricity and is really the only area which could be replaced by nuclear power at the moment. However, oil-fired stations are generally the most modern and recently built, with capital in-

vestment yet to be recouped (a very large station at the Isle of Grain is still in construction). Also only oil residues with little use in any other field are burnt in the stations.

Thus it is clear that, as coal is the predominant fuel for generating electricity and is likely to be in good supply for the long term foreseeable future, the use of nuclear energy would not appreciably alleviate the strain on oil supplies.

### Cheap electricity?

Suppose we manage to swing away from our dependence on oil (probably in heating) and our electricity demand increased, requiring a fuel to bridge the gap. How cheap is nuclear energy? The Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) says it is the cheapest; the cost of a unit of electricity fuelled by oil was 1.42p; by coal 1.23p, and by nuclear energy 0.76p for 1977/78.

This is not quite what it seems, though. Apart from not allowing for inflation or for heavy state and military subsidies - important factors considering the high cost and long time in building atomic plants - the figure quoted is only for electricity produced at the 9 Magnox stations. These were the first reactors to be built, dating between 1962 and 1971 and none is operating at full design output.

The largest and most troublesome, Wylfa, was down-rated from 1150 to 840 megawatts (MW). Hunterston A is at the top of the international reactor league table operating at below its design output of 320 Mw.

Working at low power the Magnox are considered the successful, if not entirely

safe, reactors. They are, however, no longer being built, as a programme of the safer, more modern and complex advanced gas-cooled reactors (AGR) took off before even the first Magnox was generating.

Only two AGRs are producing electricity. Three more are hoped to be completed in 1981; Heysham - 6 years late, Hartlepool - 8 years late, and Dungeness B - 10 years late. (This last was planned to cost £88m and is now standing at £400m).

Electrical Review assessed the true cost of electricity from nuclear reactors in operation at 1.48 - 1.67p per unit in 1977, much higher even than oil generated electricity. The AGR record is very poor - no wonder it is not included in the figures published. Yet more are to be built.

Much of the high cost is attributable to problems encountered in running reactors. For example, unforeseen corrosion by uranium hexafluoride gas at Hinckley Point B in 1976 (since confirmed by the Government) necessitated ceasing operation for a year and resulted in downrating its output.

Design faults have appeared in many reactors; in 1978 at Hunterston B, a suckback of seawater caused salt to be deposited in the reactor pressure vessel requiring extensive and very costly repairs (well over £3m) and a very long period of inactivity. There are many examples of leaks and fires, Windscale being a particular victim of several incidents.

A relevant factor in considering these faults is that each Magnox differs in design and there are at least three different AGR designs, and therefore each may, to a

certain degree, be regarded as a prototype with different faults inherent in each.

The AGR programme has been described by Sir Arthur Hawkins, chairman of CEBG in 1973, as a 'catastrophe'. He wanted the Government to sanction orders of American pressurised water reactors (PWRs). This they have finally done but the building of AGRs is to continue. The first PWR is to be started in 1982, though looking over the record, it is difficult to say when it will be completed.

### Safety

The atomic safety issue is one that is debated daily in the press, which points to the fact that there is too much uncertainty all round to sensibly allow the present nuclear programme to continue, let alone expand.

The concept of probabilities of accident occurrence is used by the experts in the nuclear industry to calculate risks, yet tends to minimise these risks. The concept has been completely undermined since the Three Mile Island accident. The probability of the chain of events which actually occurred happening was officially calculated at one in 10 million to 100 million.

The Royal Commission (Flowers) Report of 1976 acknowledged that human fallibility and unforeseen circumstances were possibly the main risks in the nuclear industry, but this argument for checking the growth of the industry would set an "unduly restrictive limit on technological development". The Three Mile Island incident and the recent fire at a French reactor can only have proved this assessment to be completely inadequate.

As much of the PWR is built separately in factories it is easier to maintain stricter quality control over its construction, whilst almost all of the AGR construction is done on site and is therefore susceptible to many errors common in building. Even so, the AGR is regarded in Britain as a 'safer' reactor despite its poor record.

The AGR has proved very expensive and potentially dangerous, but more are being built.

The PWR is proving disastrously unsafe as structural design faults, mainly involving cracks in the reactor vessel, are now being revealed. A programme of these reactors is soon to be embarked upon in Britain.

Then of course approval has been given for the fast breeder. This has the advantage over conventional thermal reactors of producing fuel while burning the reprocessed waste from these reactors and extracting 60 times as much energy. This will be necessary as uranium supplies are limited and all sources would be exhausted in around 60 years. The fast breeder will allow nuclear energy to supply us with electricity for centuries. Thus, if nuclear power is to remain viable, the fast breeder is inevitable.

The Windscale Debate was academic, the result being a foregone conclusion. Accepting nuclear-powered electricity means accepting fast breeders. With its advantages, the fast breeder also carries a greater risk than ordinary thermal reactors, a fact recognised on all sides.

Waste is a touchy subject as far as the UKAEA is concerned since no answer to the

problem has yet been found. The fast breeder produces a fraction of the waste that thermal reactors do but that produced is extremely toxic plutonium emitting long lasting radiation.

Assurances are made that 'glassification' (incorporating the material in a glass-like resin), encasing in steel and embedding in stable rock will be the answer, once perfected. This has been heavily criticised by geochemists, as the heat generated by the radioactive material may destabilise the glass.

Leaching with water occurs in rocks and effects of disturbances such as earth tremors can release the substances. This could have far-reaching consequences if released from under the seabed as, for example, radioactive material concentrates in shellfish flesh.

From the information available it would appear that if all systems ran perfectly and if outstanding problems were solved as the UKAEA and CEBG hope, the dangers involved in nuclear power would not be very great, and probably comparable to conventional forms of electricity generation.

However, systems never run perfectly and many problems, especially that of waste disposal, have not been solved despite the time and money spent on them.

The Harrisberg incident, the many small accidents in the U.K. and accidents in Russia now being admitted to, all illustrate the imperfections in even the most closely monitored systems. It is only a matter of time before a major accident occurs, the consequences of which would certainly not be comparable to anything yet experienced.

## Security

The adoption of nuclear energy has introduced another aspect not present in other energy supply systems - that of security. Whilst telling us that hijacking of plutonium to make bombs is totally impractical, hazardous and simply unrealistic for a 'terrorist' group, heavy security is involved with nuclear generation.

This security has been shown to have weaknesses as far as transportation is concerned, as was publicised in the mock 'hold-up' in London last year of a container of radio active plutonium waste.

However, when it comes to workers, and staff at stations, vetting and surveillance are in operation and a special armed police force maintain security at power stations. Normal trade union rights are restricted. At a strike at Windscale in 1977, troops were brought in. The nuclear industry is excluded from T.U. and Labour Relations Act.

Nuclear power means centralisation of electricity generation controlled by the UKAEA. Very few bodies have right of enquiry into its organisation due to 'national security'. As the nuclear industry expands, this strict control must increase. Our electricity supplies would be controlled by a virtually autonomous organisation with its own military. Its greatest weapon, and one which must be broken, is the barrier of secrecy it has set up.

### Who benefits from nuclear energy?

The reason behind the build up of an industry with so many disadvantages is the vast amount of money tied up in it from the beginning.

The power stations are owned by the electricity generating board, mainly the CEGB. They prefer atomic power stations to coal-fired stations as the nuclear industry is highly capital intensive and therefore increase the CEGB's capital base, and the board will be less dependent on the NCB. Public money is poured into the industry. The UKAEA, as the controlling body, increases its sphere of power and influence as nuclear energy takes a bigger share of electricity production.

Private industry is having a field day with huge and high priced contracts for long term construction. Babcock & Wilcox, Balfour Beatty, Fairey, Ferranti, GEC, McAlpine, Taylor Woodrow, Vickers, and Whessoe are some of the major companies involved in the nuclear industry. (GEC at one time owned the greatest share). From the beginning these, and other companies, formed a complicated series of consortia, the whole of the industry tied up between them and the electricity generating boards.

In the production of electricity at coal-fired stations most of the price of generation goes to the NCB which is nationalised. With nuclear power, most goes to private contractors and financiers, to uranium suppliers (the CEGB is supplied entirely by the huge private company Rio-Tinto-Zinc) and a much smaller share goes to the nationalised reprocessing company British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. (BNFL)

The cost, as well as the predicted shortage of uranium is one of the main reasons for going ahead with the fast breeder programme.

The price of uranium in the fifties and sixties was about \$8 a pound and even fell

to \$5 by 1971. Since then it has leapt to \$40 a pound when output has been exceeding demand!

This was due to the uranium suppliers forming a cartel and fixing the price of uranium. The main beneficiaries in this cartel was RTZ. Enquiries into RTZ's activities were quashed by the House of Lords in 1977. Among the directors of the company are Lord Byers, Lord Shackleton, and Lord Carrington - representatives of the main political parties.

With such financial interests involved, one can see why the development of nuclear energy is being pushed.

### Alternatives

Without atomic energy, what alternatives have we? Renewables energy, solar, wave, wind, etc. have been virtually dismissed with a 'balsa and sticking plaster, back to nature' image. This is far from the truth.

Renewable energy sources have given rise to a sophisticated technology of the type in which British industry excels when given the chance. Solar energy has been shown to work well in supplying heat, even in a British winter and can be adapted for industrial as well as domestic purposes. It can be used for cooling systems, too. Britain is ideally situated as far as wave and wind power are concerned. Prototypes are already in operation. British designed and built wave generators have been sold and delivered on time to a Japanese company who are now providing electricity for the Japanese grid using the installations.

The biggest problem facing renewable energy source development is lack of investment. Government backing is minimal, especially when contrasted with the vast sums poured into atomic energy development.

Renewable sources have the advantage of being safe with very low running costs. There is no problem of security, secrecy or waste, and siting would, of necessity, mean decentralisation with greater local control. Initial construction and development cost would be high but, for example, the building of wave power installation could occupy the shipbuilding industry.

Biomass energy - processing sewage and other common waste - is a potential base for new industry.

There are many problems yet to be overcome in development of these alternative energy sources, but some are already proven. The advantages to the public are obvious but to the combines, financiers, and organisations of power, these developments would be a step backwards and for this reason are given little support.

The growth of the nuclear industry should be halted and progressively reversed. Energy must be conserved in all fields. Any efforts to conserve, at the moment, are mainly directed at home use which is one of the areas of lowest consumption.

Pressure must be put on to industry so that emphasis is taken away from energy-intensive production and channelled into necessary areas.

The replanning of British industry is vital, anyway, for its survival and the deployment of energy and other resources is an  
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## COMMENT

Out on the range factories are closing down at an unprecedented rate, turning whole areas of the country into what is approaching an industrial wasteland. Practically every branch of manufacturing industry is affected to some degree or other.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch situated in the cosy environs of Westminster, the 'battle' continues between the disciples of monetarism who form the Government and, for want of a better description, the anti-monetarists who form Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

On the face of it, the Government seems determined to 'cure' inflation by a tight money policy even if it proves fatal to the patient. Even industrialists are complaining but with little visible effect.

The 'Opposition' is floundering and the contention between 'Right' and 'Left' factions within the Labour Party serve to underline it.

The truth is that both Government and the majority of the 'Opposition' remain committed to a policy of manipulating market forces as distinct from working progressively to restrict their operations.

Largely due to inflation induced by monetary and credit policies, capitalism has been able, for the past 35 years, to keep the rise in effect demand not too far behind the increase in productive capacity, thus avoiding big fluctuations of the business cycle.

However, this contradiction was not eliminated; the problem of its resolution was only pushed further into the future. That future is now upon us and the chickens have come home to roost.

The elemental forces created by this contradiction can no longer be manipulated to any significant degree. All that the Establishment are doing is to try to keep the ship afloat until such time as the storm subsides - or to put it in economic jargon, "until the upturn".

No prizes are offered for guessing who has been assigned the task of bailing out the ship.

The economic stupidity of the whole thing is that the goose that lays the golden eggs is getting killed off. If there is an upturn it will be a fairly difficult and costly exercise to re-start production in factories that have been closed down and the labour force disbanded.

If this was an unavoidable stage in restructuring the economy it would begin to make sense. The gross imbalance between the productive and non-productive sector that has been a feature of our industrial decline is not only being perpetuated, it is being worsened.

Wage settlements are said to be about 21% on average but, taking the manufacturing sector by itself, wage increases are only in the region of 18%. To rub salt into the wound the Government is pushing legislation through Parliament which they hope will



curtail trade union activity and reduce wage levels still further in real terms.

All this in the sacred cause of making British industry more competitive.

At the same time as industry is being driven to the wall, the Banks are chalking up huge profits as a result of the high interest rates. We hear a lot about the productivity of the Japanese worker but precious little about the important question of interest rates.

In Britain it is 16%; in Japan it is 8%. No wonder that the C.S.I. is kicking.

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#### Poland

The workers in Poland are to be congratulated on their success in achieving their demands for Trade Unions worthy of the name. All their well-wishers here hope that they will continue to judge the situation correctly from day to day.

Workers will welcome the statement by one of the strike leaders that state ownership of the means of production is not in dispute.

The capitalist class all over the world are hoping that Socialism will be weakened by the strikers achieving their demands but how can a workers' state be undermined by the workers themselves having a more direct say in the running of it?

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is based on the belief that it is people who are the decisive factor in war as well as in peace.

Technology can supplement the efforts of people but it cannot supplant or supercede them. This runs counter to much current 'wisdom' but it is the fundamental lesson of history, even recent.

During the 1950s the view gained ground among the military men of the West, particularly in the USA, that air power would be the decisive factor in any future war. The Vietnamese destroyed that illusion. Computerisation and extremely sophisticated weapons are now the vogue, even among those who have realised that the atomic bomb is not the ultimate weapon.

The picture is clear if one considers the struggle of the Chinese people against both Japanese aggression and Chiang Kai-Shek (who was bolstered by U.S. imperialism), and also the Yugoslav defeat of the German occupational forces. It was the ability to mobilise the enthusiasm and the expertise of the mass of the people that brought victory over an enemy who had superiority in weapon technology.

The Vietnamese are re-learning this from the opposite side of the fence in Kampuchea as are the Russians in Afghanistan.

The thing to aim for to make the Russian leadership think twice about forcibly intervening in the internal affairs of other countries would be the prospect of more Afghanistans.

At present, the idea of fighting a guerrilla war in Cricklewood, Kentish Town, or Birmingham carries such an air of unreality

that would qualify it for inclusion in a script for "The Goodies", but it is a sobering thought that, even as late as 1936, few could picture themselves sleeping in cellars and Tube stations for nights on end or thousands of miles from home in a slit trench, but it happened.

The danger of a new world war is real but being prepared for it is, to a certain extent, limited by the reluctance of the mass of the people to accept that fact. We are referring to the difficulty in arousing people to make certain demands, such as a Public Deep Shelter programme, universal military training and, above all, a self-reliant economy. This latter is the key link between the fight for better living conditions for the majority, and the defence of national independence.

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important aspect to take into account, and it is here that attitudes must change to reveal the retrogressive nature of energy intensive manufacturing industry.

It is cheaper to plan the use of, and conserve, energy than it is to generate the power necessary to replace that lost.

Finally, despite the failure of the nuclear power programme, atomic research must continue. Energy from fusion, whilst not yet attainable, has a potential which cannot be denied. With water as its fuel and no radioactive byproducts, there is no question of contamination or the consequence of accidents lasting generations. The incredibly high temperatures required for fusion seem to pose an insurmountable barrier now, but will no doubt eventually be overcome and with more caution and open debate than there has been with the nuclear industry, the resultant energy produced will dwarf anything yet achieved with fission.

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