

For Executive Committee - 8/9th July, 1989

POLITICAL SITUATION

Far-reaching events in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe have dominated the world stage over the last two months. The encouraging and the depressing events will have a lasting significance.

The meeting of the Soviet Parliament marked the first expression of public political pluralism for over sixty years. Disagreements were many, genuine, and occasionally bitter. It marked the clearest evidence yet that Soviet society is moving steadily in a democratic direction. The Polish elections for all their limitations represented a democratic advance on the suppression of Solidarity by martial law only eight years ago. Hungary too is making rapid strides - the public funeral of Imre Nagy and his rehabilitation would have been quite inconceivable even a few years ago, let alone in the aftermath of 1956 when the events were regarded by our own Party as counter-revolutionary insurrection. They are now referred to as a popular uprising, and the SWP is committed to free elections and a multi-party system. Gorbachov has meanwhile repudiated the Brezhnev doctrine and ruled out the use of force within alliances, while Shevardnadze has said that if Solidarity forms a government the Soviet Union is ready to accept such a development.

Undoubtedly, this outbreak of democratisation alongside glasnost and perestroika is a vital companion of Gorbachov's peace initiatives. His initiatives on conventional armament reductions have clearly provoked a profound crisis confidence in NATO. The repeated unilateral initiatives of the Soviet Union have now created a climate where genuine disarmament in Europe becomes realistic.

Thatcher's isolation on short-range and battlefield nuclear weapons modernisation was a product of this. What is more it is clear that both British and French nuclear weapons are becoming higher on the agenda for further disarmament.

The impact of Soviet disarmament plus democratisation is clearest in the "Gorbi-mania" first in Britain and then in West Germany. His visit there crystallised and took to a higher level feelings for a 'Common European Home', for a reduction in East-West barriers, indeed for the resurrection of Central Europe as a political concept.

Coming simultaneously with Thatcher's latest spy-expulsions and her increasingly isolated and isolationist stance on the European Community as shown in her Bruges speech, these developments gave Thatcherism an archaic, regressive position.