

Mick Hume

40p



After the Brighton bomb

Revolutionary Communist Party

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Tories shaken, workers not stirred

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Cover photograph Chris Black (reflex)

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Cover photograph Chris Black (reflex)

When the war comes home

On Friday 12 October the Irish Republican Army bombed the Conservative Party conference in Brighton. The explosion killed four top Tories and injured 30 more, among them trade and industry secretary Norman Tebbit.

The 100lb bomb which carved through Margaret Thatcher's bathroom at the Grand Hotel cut the British establishment to the quick. When the IRA bombed Harrods in December 1983, Thatcher oozed mock emotion in condemning the 'crime against Christmas'. But there was nothing mock about the fury with which government spokesmen reacted to Brighton. For this was 'a crime' against the heart of the British establishment. The IRA had come within a stone's throw of assassinating its most prestigious target — 'the British Cabinet and Tory warmongers'. Like an old rat, the British ruling class is most vicious when defending its own nest.

Tories shaken, workers not stirred

Press and politicians spared no effort to mobilize outraged popular sentiment against the IRA in the wake of Brighton. Early morning television pictures of a skeletal Norman Tebbit being prised from the rubble ruined millions of breakfasts across Britain. Eulogies for those killed were plastered across the papers. *The Sunday Times* praised dead MP Anthony Berry as a 'harmless' murder victim. Berry had last made the headlines in less glowing terms, as a violent criminal summoned before the courts for drunken driving and trying to run over policemen. All this was quietly forgiven and forgotten in the drive to stir British public opinion against the 'mad bombers'. There were demands for a clampdown on IRA fund-raisers in America and republican sympathisers in Britain. Tory MPs resurrected the call for the death penalty for IRA volunteers.

Thatcher herself played the leading role in this propaganda offensive against the Irish. Shortly after the explosion she swept out of the Grand in full conference rig, to announce that it was 'business as usual' for the Tories and the show would go on. Her keynote address to the party faithful hours later set the tone for the patriotic media circus to follow.

The bombing, Thatcher declared, 'was an attempt not only to disrupt and terminate our conference, it was an attempt to cripple Her Majesty's democratically-elected government'. Such attacks were doomed, she asserted, 'all attempts to destroy democracy by terrorism will fail'.

Media observers compared Thatcher's resolute, statesmanlike performance at Brighton to her stance during Britain's war with Argentina in 1982. The voice of British business welcomed the comparison:

'Mrs Thatcher's determined response to yesterday's events won universal admiration from those at Brighton, underlining her strength of resolution as a national leader also seen during the Falklands War.' (*Financial Times*, 13 October)

The *Financial Times* was indulging in wishful thinking. Public reaction to the Brighton bomb was far removed from the rallying round the government which accompanied the South Atlantic War. Undoubtedly Thatcher 'won universal admiration' from the Tory elect gathered in Brighton. She also received messages of sympathy and support from the leaders of every opposition party. But the establishment's concerted campaign failed to unite the nation against the IRA threat to 'British democracy'.

During the South Atlantic War, and after previous IRA bombings in Britain, support for the government and hostility to its Argentinian or Irish opponents were the prevailing sentiments among British workers. After the Brighton bombing things were different. There was far less hostility to calls for solidarity with the Irish people, and even a sneaking admiration for the IRA. 'Pity they missed her' was a fairly common observation on Thatcher's close shave. A new round of Norman Tebbit jokes began circulating pubs and clubs. The establishment's hoped-for 'Brighton factor' never materialised. Why? What has changed since crowds thronged the docks to welcome home the heroes of the South Atlantic, and gathered outside Downing Street to be told by Thatcher that they should 'rejoice, rejoice' at Britain's victory over 'the Argies'?

Consensus, what consensus?

The Tories' failure to generate a pro-British, anti-Irish climate after Brighton reflects the changing face of British politics during the long months of the 1984 miners' strike. Two years ago Thatcher manipulated the national consensus backing the government against Argentina to deal with her opponents at home. She demanded support for Britain in its hour of need from striking health and rail workers. The patriotic leaders of the labour movement could not contend with the flag-waving fever which gripped the public imagination. When returning troops hung banners from their ships declaring 'call off the rail strike or we'll call an air strike', the trade union leaders meekly obliged.

Two years on, the leaders of the official labour movement are still craven apologists for the British war machine. New TUC chief Norman Willis moved with uncharacteristic speed to assure Thatcher that the Brighton bomb was 'to be condemned by democrats everywhere'. But the mood of many rank and file

workers — more so the further north you go and especially in mining areas — is now out of step with Willis and the rest of the trade union bureaucracy. The experience of the miners' strike has undermined their respect for the British system of government and its armed defenders.



Joe Boatman (reflex)

Boys in blue show their true colours: police act as bosses' army against miners

Months of struggle between the coercive forces of law and order and thousands of striking miners fighting for their jobs have made many workers think again about how society is run — and who runs it. In the past, the overwhelming majority of people accepted the legitimacy of rule by Parliament, the courts and the police. These institutions of the British state were seen as neutral, or at least potentially useful, bodies which could run society impartially.

For months on end striking miners have seen the government mastermind police and judicial repression which has left two miners dead, countless pickets maimed, more than 7000 miners arrested and many in jail. The Department of Health and Social Security has refused benefits to striking miners, while gas and electricity boards have hounded them with threats to cut off essential supplies.

The various arms of the state have been revealed as a repressive coalition openly fighting on the side of the employers. The government has sought to disguise this class coercion by dressing it up in the regalia of 'British democracy' and the 'rule of law'. But the Tories' attempt to cover their tracks by appealing to traditional patriotic values has only encouraged miners to question the authority of the state. Many have equated Tory rhetoric about defending democracy with the reality of

police terror on the picket lines. They have withdrawn their consent from what they have identified as the bosses' law and order.

The *Belgrano* resurfaces

Miners have shown on the picket lines that they are willing to take the direct action necessary to make the strike effective in the face of mass policing. Other workers sympathetic to the miners have gone through this experience with them. Many — though still only a minority — have seen the need to match the bosses' violence with physical resistance. The reaction to Brighton showed that more people than ever before are ready to give their approval to others who resist in a direct and dramatic way. Having rejected the Tories' appeals to uphold 'democracy' by crushing the miners, many workers were less willing to fall in line behind the government's call to defend the state against the IRA.

Against a background of deepening economic recession, the fluctuating pound, falling North Sea oil prices and record unemployment, the miners' strike has accelerated the unfolding of a political crisis within the British establishment. The 'Falklands Factor' which Thatcher used to great advantage two years ago has lost its edge. Even the events of the South Atlantic War have been brought into question. In 1982 the government's sinking of the Argentinian cruiser the *Belgrano* with the loss of 365 lives was generally accepted as a necessary action in defence of the British task force. Now it is widely perceived as a war crime. The crisis of confidence within the ruling class has had the government veering from one 'banana skin' blunder to another. The miners' strike has pushed this process forward. The Brighton bombing took it a stage further.

The current climate of political flux provides a unique opportunity for building a working class movement to take on the power of the state. But the gut anti-Tory instincts of workers who watched, unmoved, as Norman Tebbit lay prostrate on a stretcher in Brighton are not enough to take advantage of the employers' problems. They must be forged into a clear anti-capitalist understanding of the issues dominating British politics today. The first issue to address is the bombing itself. Why does the IRA plant bombs in Britain?

Who are the real terrorists?

Bombing campaigns in Britain are nothing new. The IRA has caused explosions in major towns and cities every year since 1972. And after each bombing, British political leaders unite to condemn the 'mindless violence' of such 'terrorist outrages'. Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock leapt from his bed in the early hours of 12 October to assure Thatcher of his support against 'such vile acts':

'There can be no concession to the murdering madness of those who commit crimes like this bombing. They are the enemies of all the people of normal mind and reasoning politics.'

Kinnock's portrayal of Irish republicans as people of warped mind and diseased

body is in the 'best' tradition of British propaganda. It is the image used by Tory and Labour governments alike to justify their repressive measures against the Irish people. It is about as credible as Victorian assertions that all African victims of British imperialism ate English babies and craved for white women. The IRA's struggle is no 'murdering madness'. Republican attacks in Britain are a response to British violence in Ireland. The IRA is waging a war to free Ireland from the colonial terror Britain visits upon the nationalist community of Northern Ireland day in and day out. The cycle of British repression and Irish resistance will continue until the fundamental conflict is resolved; Ireland will be reunited in freedom, or the Irish nation will be crushed by British imperialism.

The British establishment likes to depict the republican movement as the dark aggressor and the British state as the brave victim of violence. 'Thatcher defies IRA bombers', declared the headlines after Brighton. But Britain is the force for violence in the Irish War. In 1921, 40 000 British guns divided the Irish nation and carried off the north-eastern Six Counties in chains to become a province of the United Kingdom. For almost 60 years, Britain presided over a Northern Ireland state which used institutionalised discrimination and violence to maintain the Protestant Loyalist community in power and the Catholic nationalists in subjugation. In 1969, when armed Loyalist police backed by legalised public flogging, execution and Internment could no longer contain the nationalist revolt against the terms of British tyranny, Britain invaded to put down the Irish again.

Imperialist policing

Fifteen years on, Britain still has more than 30 000 members of the Army, the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Ulster Constabulary under arms in Northern Ireland. The establishment has developed an industry to justify their presence. Its central message is the need to re-establish law and order. In an attempt to isolate the IRA from nationalist support, Britain has sought to portray republicans as outlaws from society and to promote a consensus blaming them for the death and destruction of the war. Republican activists have variously been branded as 'psychopaths', 'Marxists', 'gangsters', or just 'bastards'. Britain has used all the tricks learned during more than 100 years of imperialist plundering around the world to try to legitimise its war in Northern Ireland.

British spokesmen insist that the security forces play a normal policing role in pursuit of 'the gunmen'. But the policing of Northern Ireland is unlike anything seen in Britain. The proudest boast of British governments is that the police in Glasgow or London generally operate with the consent of the population. They can go about their business unarmed, alone and wearing impractical headgear without fear of their authority being challenged. In Northern Ireland, the Crown forces are policing without the consent of an entire community. Half a million Irish people refuse to recognise British authority on their streets as legitimate. As a consequence, the British forces have to roam in gangs, toting machine guns and smothered in armour plating.

Without consent, the police have to impose the government's will through an organised campaign of violence. Police methods used in Northern Ireland make the

force used against striking miners look like gentle persuasion. In October, Metropolitan Police chief and former RUC boss Sir Kenneth Newman was asked to comment on accusations that the brutality he had presided over in Belfast and Derry was now being seen in Britain's coalfields. Newman denied the charges. He made clear that any attempt to control Northern Ireland with the rudimentary police batons wielded in Scotland or South Yorkshire would result in the security forces being driven off the streets.

'No respect, these Irish'

The security forces in the Six Counties might well be upholding the Queen's peace. But it is a British Queen's peace, administered to the Irish people at the point of a gun. The nationalist community has withdrawn its consent from British law and order. The Irish people recognise that they are at war with the imperialist state which writes, passes and enforces legal repression. Their hostility to the central props supporting establishment power in Britain and Ireland — the law, the police and Parliament — is unequivocal.



Joe Rona'tman (reflex)

A body of armed men: the British state exposed in Belfast

The Irish people have no respect for the British legal system. They understand it as a cover for the repression of those fighting colonial domination. British justice in Ireland is meted out through no-jury Diplock courts which convict on the strength

of 'confessions' obtained by torture. In recent years this has been supplemented by the use of supergrasses — paid perjurers — whose word against republican suspects is accepted as law. Days after Brighton, supergrass Raymond Gilmour began giving 'evidence' against 37 Irish men and women in the biggest trial in British legal history. It hinges on the uncorroborated word of a paid police agent who got his own date of birth wrong in court.

The nationalist community supports republican attempts to disrupt and discredit this legal smokescreen for British terror in Ireland. In 1981 10 republican hunger-strikers died in a protest against Britain's attempt to brand them as criminals. Their leader, Bobby Sands, was elected to Parliament with 30 000 nationalist votes. When Sands died, 100 000 people followed his funeral. Fugitives from British justice in Ireland are not shunned but welcomed within the nationalist ghettos. In September 1983, 38 republican prisoners escaped from Britain's H-block concentration camp. Half were recaptured almost immediately. The rest simply disappeared into their community.

The Irish people have no respect for the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Britain has sought to promote an air of normality in Northern Ireland by encouraging Loyalist police to replace British troops in the frontline of the war. But nationalist hatred for the uniformed thugs means the RUC cannot enter republican areas without troop support.

The nationalist community appreciates that the RUC's violent excesses — raids, beatings and shootings — cannot be blamed on a few 'bad apples'. The RUC is a paramilitary, sectarian force which exists solely to police Irish nationalists into the ground. No form of RUC activity is tolerated in nationalist strongholds. In 1983, the RUC opened a new police station in the republican haven of Carrickmore — the first to be built in the town for 30 years. It was quickly closed again by an IRA mortar attack. An RUC spokesman complained that it 'was put there to answer a demand for community policing, and this is what happens'. The mortars which devastated the station forcefully expressed the nationalists' only 'demand' to the RUC community cops; get out of our communities.

The Irish people have no respect for the British Parliament. In her first comments on Ireland after the Brighton bomb, Thatcher insisted that violence in Northern Ireland could not be justified because 'they all have a vote'. But nationalists do not care to vote on which British imperialist will run the Six Counties. They aspire to determine how the Irish people govern themselves. The presence of the institutions of 'British democracy' in the Six Counties is a denial of real democracy to the Irish nation. The Irish people treat these mock elections with the contempt they deserve. In the June 1983 General Election more than 100 000 voted for Sinn Fein's platform of abstention from the imperial Parliament. Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams became a Westminster MP. The overnight conversion of this top 'psychopathic Marxist' into the Honourable Member for West Belfast exposed the lie of Britain's 'law and order' propaganda campaign around the Irish War.

Because it polices without consent, Britain is forced to rely on coercion to keep a semblance of order in Northern Ireland. Tory MPs may scream for the return of hanging after IRA bombs in Britain. But in the Six Counties, republicanism is already a capital offence. Shoot-to-kill has been the watchword of British strategy

on Irish streets for the past two years. Army/SAS/RUC gangs have been unleashed in an orgy of assassination. The Crown forces have made little attempt to disguise their policy of selective execution. In November 1982 the RUC poured 109 bullets into IRA volunteers Gervaise McKeir, Eugene Toman and Sean Burns at a 'road-block' in Lurgan, County Armagh. In February 1983 plain-clothed soldiers shot dead Irish National Liberation Army volunteer Niall McGonagle at his Derry flat and left him lying in a pool of blood. In February 1984 IRA volunteers Declan Martin and Henry Hogan were wounded in an SAS ambush in County Antrim and cold-bloodedly executed as they lay helpless in a field. In July 1984 the SAS shot dead IRA activist William Price and let his body lie where it fell for 10 hours. The message is clear; all republicans are marked for execution.

The IRA's war of attrition against the security forces in Ireland, and its bombing campaigns in Britain, are designed to offer some vital relief to besieged nationalist communities. The first republican bomb in Britain during the present struggle exploded in Aldershot barracks in February 1972. It was an attempt to strike back at the British state after the massacre of Bloody Sunday on 30 January, when paratroopers gunned down 14 unarmed Irishmen in Derry. The Brighton bomb hit the Tories after their selective execution campaign had claimed 22 nationalist lives in two years.

The Irish War has raged for 15 years. It has left almost 2500 dead and 25 000 injured. It is set to run on into the future unless the present balance of forces changes in favour of the Irish people. British workers cannot stand aside as idle spectators in the struggle for Irish freedom. The reality of war demands that we take sides.

Are we on the side of those fighting to smash the system of prisons and police stations which Britain uses to legitimise its occupation of the Six Counties? Or do we support the imposition of British colonial law in Northern Ireland? Workers in Britain have nothing to gain from leaving Ireland in the hands of its British jailers. The Irish people have a fundamental right to fight for national independence — and British workers have every interest in supporting that right. By uniting with the nationalist community against the establishment's law, police and Parliament, British workers can settle scores with a common enemy. Yet the cool response to Brighton is almost the first time British workers have shown any sympathy with the republican struggle. It is one small chink in the public consensus backing Britain's Irish War.

Isolating the Irish War

Within Britain, the establishment has wielded every available weapon to isolate the Irish people from potential British support. The media has proved a loyal servant of imperialism. In 1971, Lord Hill of the BBC assured the government that 'between the British Army and the gunmen, the BBC is not and cannot be neutral'. Lord Aylestone of the ITA was even more forthright. 'As far as I am concerned', he announced, 'Britain is at war with the IRA in Ulster and the IRA will get no more coverage than the Nazis would have done in the last war'.

Fleet Street has gone out of its way to create an atmosphere in which supporters

of Irish freedom are seen as a threat to the British public which must be dealt with at all costs. Two days before the Brighton bomb, the Irish Freedom Movement demonstrated outside the Tory conference. The protest was a reminder to the establishment that there are those in Britain ready to expose its lie that Irish freedom fighters are British criminals. Days after the bombing, London's *Standard* put the demonstration on its front page as 'new evidence' that the attack was known about in advance (see page 12). Such cheap attempts to frame anti-imperialists are useful to the state in stirring up a climate favourable to more repression.

The legal back-up for the media's efforts to label the Irish liberation struggle as a criminal conspiracy is provided by the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). For the past 10 years, the PTA's draconian powers of detention and deportation without trial have dictated how British people view the Irish War. By effectively making Irish republicanism illegal, the PTA has allowed supporters of British law and order to monopolise public opinion on Ireland.

The PTA was introduced in November 1974. An unnoticed exchange of government letters from the time illustrates the thinking behind the Act. Three weeks before the Act became law the Ministry of Defence wrote to Alford council in Lincolnshire requesting that the name of a local soldier killed in Northern Ireland be removed from Alford's war memorial.

The ministry argued that 'Army action in support of civil authorities should not be confused with war'. It warned against the consequences of admitting that British troops were not civil peacekeepers but foreign aggressors in Ireland:

'If one war memorial is added to in this way other towns may follow the example, and in areas where there is a large Irish connection it may promote partisan action.' (*The Times*, 9 November 1974)

Whitehall's fears were never realised. The PTA has stamped on any 'partisan action' in support of Irish freedom.

Raids, detentions, torture and deportations under the PTA have silenced opposition to the war from the Irish community in Britain. The PTA has ruined the lives of countless Irish men and women, and ended others altogether. In 1981 the Irish Freedom Movement campaigned for the release of Leo O'Neill and other Middlesex Polytechnic students detained under the Act. O'Neill's brutal treatment at the hands of the Special Branch under the PTA broke him physically and mentally. He never recovered from his ordeal. In May 1984 he leapt to his death from a block of flats in Newry — murdered by the PTA.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act has successfully isolated the Irish people from the British working class. It has allowed the establishment to popularise the notion that all Irish men and women are dangerous criminals.

The state is well aware that all of this is a propaganda exercise. Police admitted that two Irishmen detained under the PTA after the Brighton bombing were not suspected of involvement in the attack. Yet both were held in Brighton itself to help whip up a lynch mob atmosphere. One was picked up in Liverpool and shipped south to improve the effect.

**LONDON
FASHION
CENTRE PAGES**

THE STANDARD

Tuesday, October 16, 1984

18p

Incorporating the Evening News

Republican paper told of plans to 'rock' conference in issue of Oct. 6

BOMB: THE ULSTER WARNING

EVIDENCE emerged today of a clear and specific warning by militant Irish Republicans that they intended to attack the Tory Party conference in Brighton.

Ulster's Democratic Unionist Party claimed that an article in a West Belfast newspaper should have warned the security forces about the Brighton attack.

The deputy leader of the party, Mr Peter Robinson, said an article in the Andersonstown News a week ago had warned that "The Irish Freedom Move-

ment" would be aiming to "rock" the Tory conference.

Mr Robinson quoted from the article at a Press conference in Belfast and said it suggested that the Republican Movement would be "out to create an anti-British state atmosphere with a large, loud protest."

The feature had said the protest would be to mark the release of a Republican prisoner John McCluskey after serving a 10-year sentence at Parkhurst Prison.

Mr Robinson said the newspaper had been drawn to his attention yesterday but had been on sale since October 6.

He said the feature should have put the security forces on full alert for the Brighton conference.

He acknowledged that total security was impossible but said the conference had merited the highest possible priority.

He said of the article: "Whether one chooses to pick the interpretation that obviously springs to mind in the light of the bomb or whether one chooses to place a more charitable interpretation upon the article, it is still clearly evident that the Tory conference was to be the target for Republican activity."

The Andersonstown News is a community-based newspaper published weekly which circulates in the West Belfast area. It is Republican in its output but is not believed to be connected with any Republican group.

The newspaper reported a Press release from the Irish Freedom Movement 'Troops out of Ireland' sent in time



THE BOMB-TORN GRAND: "a clear target."

for the October 8 edition. It read:

On Wednesday, October 10, Irish Republican prisoner of war John McCluskey steps out of Parkhurst prison after spending 10 years in a British jail for his part in the fight for Irish freedom.

The Irish Freedom Movement aims to mark McCluskey's release by rocking the Tory Party conference at Brighton.

Outside the conference the Irish freedom movement will be out to create an anti-British state atmosphere with a large loud protest against the Prevention of Terrorist Act

and in support of Irish Republican prisoners' right to repatriation.

The IFM demo at Brighton is one part of a national campaign to smash the PTA and every other weapon in Britain's arsenal of legal repression. IFM organiser Mick Hume said: "We're fighting the Tories to make sure that we don't see another 10 years of the PTA."

Another Press release sent to the newspaper after last week's bombing warns of "further surprises in store." "I won't condemn bombing"—Page 5

**Screamed a near-apoplectic MD
'Don't talk about mailing to me!
I want the stuff there
In an hour, not a year!
Brace up man! Ring Addison Lee!'**

Addison Lee BIKES, CABS, VANS
379 7000
Ring us and it's as good as there.

TV 24 • Entertainment Guide 18 • Letters 14 • Ad Lib 20 • Delia Smith 26 • Patricia

Up to Britain's usual Standard: the media tried to frame up the Irish Freedom Movement and legitimise a campaign against anti-imperialists in Britain

Labour and imperialism

The establishment has been successful in conducting its propaganda war on the home front because the British labour movement has offered little or no resistance. The leadership of the official labour movement has long been a servile camp follower of British imperialism. Trade union and Labour Party bureaucrats rely on their relationship with the power centres of Whitehall and Westminster for their status in society and their plans for governing the country. They are more than willing to defend the state machine against the threat from Ireland.

The TUC operates as a patriotic policeman within the organised working class. In 1980 it expelled Manchester's Tameside Trades Council for campaigning against the Irish War. In 1983 it tried the same tactic to gag debate on Ireland by outlawing an Irish Freedom Movement video. The Labour Party leadership plays a similarly despicable role. In May 1984 Labour leader Neil Kinnock instructed party candidates in the Euro-elections to cancel invitations to republican speakers. Kinnock rightly asserted that there was 'nothing in Labour's tradition' of backing Britain that 'justified such a relationship' with the national liberation movement.

The labour movement leaders stand up for British law and order in Ireland. The British left backs down in fear of confronting the imperialist consensus which influences every section of British public opinion. Labour left wingers have consistently refused to take sides with the Irish people against Britain. They timidly offer approval for Irish self-determination in the future. But they forthrightly deny the Irish people's right to fight for it today. Labour left spokesmen joined the 'hang 'em and flog 'em' brigade in condemning the 'crime' of Brighton.

For 15 years this approach has left the nationalist community to take on the might of the British war machine alone. In the struggles of the eighties it has even broader implications. The establishment's success in insulating British politics from Irish republicanism has encouraged it to use the tactic of 'criminalisation' against its internal opponents. The issues of policing by consent and the right to fight against state repression raised in the Irish War are now at the centre of political battles in England, Scotland and Wales. The government's strategy for defeating the miners' strike has brought them into sharp focus.

Bombers, muggers and miners

Thatcher's speech to the Tory Party conference emphasised the tone of the government's law and order campaign against the miners. Its aim is to bolster public support for the institutions of government and reaffirm the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Thatcher's theme was that all social conflict can be reduced to a struggle between 'us' and 'them' — the British people versus the forces of darkness:

'The battle to uphold the rule of law calls for the resolve and commitment of the British people. Our institutions of justice, the courts, and the police, require the unswerving support of every law-abiding citizen.'

Britain, Thatcher continued, 'faces now what is probably the most testing crisis of our time — the battle between the extremists and the rest'.

Thatcher's rhetoric reflects the traditional approach of the British ruling class. Its first priority is to win the majority of the population to support the 'rule of law'. Having gained this consent through an ideological struggle, the establishment is left with a free hand to use legal coercion selectively against those who remain outside the consensus.

In the past the state has used this strategy to good effect against the oppressed. Governments have terrorised isolated, volatile sections of society. The official labour movement's acquiescence to establishment ideas about crime and punishment has allowed the ruling class to win working class support for its acts of oppression. We have seen how labour leaders have backed the Irish War against republican 'criminals'. When Britain's inner-cities erupted in revolt in 1981, the Tories' propaganda machine tried the same tack against rebelling black youth. The campaign to isolate the 'black muggers' subdued any labour movement disquiet about the terror tactics used by riot police in Brixton, Toxteth or Moss Side.

'The enemy within'

It is three years since the riots last put the propaganda machine of the ruling class to the test within Britain. In those three years the power and confidence of the establishment have been undermined by the impact of the recession. Today, in the middle of the miners' strike, the British ruling class has got more on its plate than ever before. Crisis conditions have made it much harder to deal with a significant and militant section of the working class with the relative ease that the government put down the riots of three years ago.

The government has tried to repeat its tried and tested formula against the striking miners. Tory ministers have declared that the future of British democracy is at stake in the battle to crush the NUM. Thatcher has described striking miners as 'the enemy within' and 'a revolutionary minority'. The media has heaped vitriolic abuse on picket line 'thugs', 'bully boys' and 'animals'. While bestial images of striking miners are hurled at the popular consciousness, riot police rampage through mining communities and 'flying beaks' tour the coalfields handing out stiff penalties.

The establishment's use of these tactics against the miners has won the usual ready support from the labour bureaucrats. Neil Kinnock hates violent pickets almost as much as Irish freedom fighters. But the state has found the miners far harder to isolate from other rank and file workers than the oppressed blacks and Irish. Thousands of miners have proved willing to confront police terror. And many other workers have shown themselves none too keen to bow to Thatcher's demands for support from 'law-abiding citizens'.

This is a potential nightmare for the British ruling class. The establishment has always relied on rule by consent to avoid the violent conflict which could destabilise its system. Without consent, the state would be forced to act in Britain as it does in Ireland; as the mailed fist of the employers. And, as in Ireland, such open coercion would inevitably breed widespread resistance. Events in Grimethorpe, Yorkshire in

October, where a whole community rose up against the police, shook every pillar of the British establishment. The future peace of British capitalism is on the line in every mining community.

Hanging on

The response of British workers to the Brighton bomb shows many are now more sympathetic to those prepared to confront the government. The development of these trends has put the British establishment under renewed pressure. But as yet it does not represent an immediate or fundamental threat to the powers that be. The British ruling class has been shaken. Yet the labour movement's failure to capitalise on the crisis in establishment circles means the bosses' system can stagger on.

Despite the widening cracks in the consensus supporting police violence against workers, the legacy of successful past 'criminalisation' campaigns still exerts an important political influence within the labour movement. Most British workers balk at giving active support to the victims of the bosses' terror.

The government is still able to do as it pleases in Ireland without too much fear of an angry response at home. In August the RUC launched a mass attack on a republican rally in Belfast. In front of the television cameras of the world, Loyalist police shot dead 22 year old Irishman John Downes and maimed many more. The instability prompted by the miners' strike encouraged liberal opinion in Britain to decry the RUC's 'over-reaction'. But days after the killing of John Downes, organised workers were as noticeable as ever by their absence from a London march against the war.

The miners' strike has forced police to use coercion and undermined their image of neutrality. But active opposition to this more open repression has been limited to a minority of striking miners. The employers' army has been able to contain their sporadic, local revolts in pit villages and on picket lines.

If British workers are to take advantage of the tensions afflicting the ruling class, we need to refocus our approach to challenging the bosses' law and order. This brings us back to the Brighton bombing and the lessons of the Irish War.

British workers and the Irish war

'Making the links' between Ireland and the miners' strike has become a popular pastime on the British left in recent months. Labour left spokesmen have emphasised the similarity between the treatment of Irish nationalists and British miners by police. They have sought to make the Irish liberation struggle more palatable to British workers by reducing it to the level of an industrial dispute.

The Revolutionary Communist Party has contrasted the Irish people's attitude to legality with that expressed by the official labour movement in Britain. Our aim has been to challenge workers' remaining illusions in the impartiality of the police and courts, and to raise the miners' strike to the level of the Irish War — a political struggle against the state.

The battle for Irish liberation has important lessons for the labour movement here. The Irish people's withdrawal of consent from rule by British law and law-



Fiona Ryan (reflex)

The party of the future fights for Irish freedom today

makers has brought the full force of Westminster's fury down on their heads. Yet their unequivocal rejection of the bosses' institutions and resistance to state power has stood Irish nationalists in good stead. A small, isolated community has withstood the might of British imperialism for 15 years. Armed with a similarly clear-cut understanding of who the enemy is and how to fight it, the millions-strong British labour movement could give the miners effective backing and lay the basis for successful future struggles against the courts, Parliament and police.

The Irish people have fought Britain's efforts to 'criminalise' their struggle. They have campaigned for political status for republican prisoners and against judicial terror. The miners could do well to emulate these tactics in defending their own prisoners of the class war. And supporting the Irish people against the British bosses' law and order would give workers in Britain a powerful weapon against their own employers.

The government has convinced majority British opinion that Irish republicans are mad bombers. This remains the strongest link in the ideological chain which binds the labour movement to the defence of 'British democracy' and the 'rule of law'. Once broken, the establishment's whole 'criminalisation' game would be up. British workers campaigning for Irish liberation behind the banner 'Irish freedom fighters are not British criminals' would never allow the Tories to isolate striking miners from their ranks. At the end of October the media railed against a newly-discovered 'Libyan connection' in the miners' struggle. The press sought to

distance striking miners from the labour movement by linking them with 'international terrorist' and Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi. The establishment had tried to pull an identical stroke in the aftermath of Brighton, arresting Libyans under the PTA and speculating about the IRA's links with 'Terror International Ltd'. A British workers' movement which rejected these attempts to label the Irish people as Libyan agents could have laughed off the bosses' efforts to tie the miners into their conspiracy theory.

Fifteen years is too long for the Irish people to fight for their rights alone. Current crisis conditions provide a unique opportunity for British and Irish workers to unite against state repression. On 24 November 1984, Revolutionary Communist Party supporters from all over the country will be in Birmingham for the Irish Freedom Movement's 'Lessons of the Irish War' conference, which marks the tenth anniversary of the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Join us in Birmingham (see page 18). We are out to force the British establishment to withdraw from Ireland, and convince British workers to withdraw their consent from the rule of their capitalist masters' law.



Irish Freedom Movement

TROOPS OUT NOW! SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE!

Conference

Ten years of the Prevention of Terrorism Act

Lessons of the Irish War

**Saturday 24 November, Birmingham
Timetable**

10⁰⁰am	Registration	
10³⁰am	The Tories, the miners and the Brighton bomb	<i>Judy Harrison</i>
1⁰⁰pm	Lunch	
2⁰⁰pm	● November 1974 - the Birmingham pub bombings ● A beginner's guide to the Irish War ● Labour and the Loyalist veto ● Cross-Border collaboration	<i>Mike Freeman</i> <i>Frank Richards</i> <i>Helen Simons</i> <i>Phil Murphy</i>
4⁰⁰pm	Tea break	
4¹⁵pm	Ten years of terror - why so little response in Britain?	<i>Mick Hume</i>

Sponsors include Harry Cohen MP, Syd Bidwell MP, Ernie Roberts MP, Eddie Loyden MP, Republican Band Alliance (Scotland)

Tickets £2 waged/£1 unwaged from BM IFM,
London WC1N 3XX

Transport from all over Britain. Creche available
For further details phone Mick Hume on 01-729 0414

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After the Brighton bomb

At 2.54am on Friday 12 October an IRA bomb ripped apart Brighton's Grand Hotel and almost tore the heart out of the Tory Cabinet.

This pamphlet sets the bombing in the context of the miners' strike and the crisis facing the government. It aims to explain the lessons of the Irish War for British workers struggling against the forces of law and order.

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