No 11 March 1981

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency 20p

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Reagan's war plans

Since his inauguration in January, Ronald Reagan has outdone every president since Harry S Truman in anti-communist tirades and open approval of repressive regimes. We look behind Reagan's Cold War hysteria at the logic of American foreign policy.

REAGAN'S first foreign visitor was President Chun Doo Hwan of South Korea. Last year Chun crushed an uprising of students and workers and ordered the summary imprisonment or execution of opposition politicians. Reagan assured him that the 40 000 US troops stationed in South Korea would stay and that security links with the USA would be strengthened further.

The Republican Administration next agreed the sale of two nuclear reactors to Taiwan; newly appointed Secretary of State Alexander Haig approved the neutron bomb; and Reagan himself sacked the USA's ambassador in El Salvador for suggesting that the government there temper repression with some reforms. Next, the President complained publicly that the arming and training of America's 100 000-strong Rapid Deployment Force was proceeding too slowly, and stated that from now on his major policy objective would be confronting 'international terrorism'. Accordingly, he promptly directed the US Army to establish an SAS-style anti-terrorist unit.

Pax Americana

Reagan's aim is to restore to the USA the economic and political status it established after the Second World War.

Having divided up 'spheres of influence' with the Soviet Union at Yalta, the USA became the dominant force in an expanding world economy. It also came to police the globe: wherever national liberation movements threatened imperialist interests, it was the USA that dealt with them – by sending in the marines (Lebanon, Latin America) or by despatching the CIA (Iran, Chile). As Kennedy summed up the USA's role as keeper of world capitalist peace: 'We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe in order to assure the survival and success of liberty'. But when American economic growth began to slow in the late 'sixties, Kennedy's interventionist foreign policy ran into serious difficulties.

Vietnam marked a turning point. A succession of defeats at the hands of a resourceful liberation movement highlighted America's weakened position. The USA could no longer sustain its military power across the world, and an increasingly vocal section of the bourgeoisie became convinced that the costs of the Vietnam war outweighed the benefit. Washington had to back down.

As it happened, however, America's eventual withdrawal from Vietnam was only part of a wider strategy – one that was first expressed in the 'Nixon doctrine' of 1969. The chief protagonist of that doctrine, Henry Kissinger, showed what that meant in practice: cutting America's worldwide defence commitments and concentrating instead on the appointment of client states (Iran, South Korea) as guarantors of imperialist interests within economically or strategically vital regions. And, for a time, it seemed to work.

Jim'll fix it

With the onset of the international recession, client states proved to be a device of merely temporary value. When Jimmy Carter became President in 1976 he inherited a range of problems brought on by the world slump. The US economy was in a fragile state: revived after the 1974-75 recession only by the expansion of credit, it stood revealed as acutely dependent on Middle Eastern oil. Carter could do little about this. His one publicised 'achievement' in office was to bring a degree of stability to Arab/Israeli relations through the Camp David talks. He was unable to raise US industry's flagging productivity.

Meanwhile America's client regimes became racked by internal instability. But Carter had neither military approval nor popular support for overseas invasions. As late as 1978 National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski noted that the American public was still 'shaken' by the Vietnam war. In circumstances such as these Carter couldn't even contemplate military interference in countries like South Yemen or Ethiopia.

However, 20 years of declining economic and political power – together with humiliation at the hands of popular revolts in South East Asia, the Middle East and Latin America – finally forced a change in US strategy. Carter's real political achievement was to persuade war-weary Americans that military intervention was sensible after all. His method of doing this: crusading for 'human rights'.

Presented initially as a campaign on behalf of 'prisoners of conscience', Carter's human rights offensive soon turned anti-communist. Sympathy and publicity went out to Soviet dissidents; victims of America's vicious allies in the backward capitalist world were ignored. When Iranian militants took 52 diplomats hostage in November 1979 the way was clear for Carter to fuse concern for individual freedom with the 'nuke the Ayatollah and make America great again' fervour that swept the nation. Within two years Carter had turned post-Vietnam isolationist guilt into militant xenophobia.

The President steamed ahead with his war plans. Defence spending reached a peacetime record and conscription began to be re-introduced. But Carter's preparations for Armageddon only exposed his inconsistency and lack of decisiveness. These evident weaknesses were what put long-time hawk Ronald Reagan into the White House.

Reagan moved fast. Taking advantage of the dramatic change in the American political climate, he appointed Watergate veteran and former Nixon aide Alexander Haig as Secretary of State. A gambit unthinkable only a few months previously passed off quietly without too many awkward questions from the Senate or House of Representatives.

Rational Ronald

In Britain's left press Ronald Raygun (as *Socialist Worker* so wittily styles him) is passed off as a B-movie star manque, a crazy sheriff determined to have his last shoot-out with the Russians using cruise missiles over England's green and pleasant land. But in fact Reagan's policies are a rational response to the needs of crisis-stricken American capitalism.

Three factors today determine the line American foreign policy will take. First, markets for American exports must be made secure, particularly as American companies are increaingly losing out to foreign competitors overseas (in Brazil, for example, the USA has lost major nuclear and hydroelectric deals to West Germany and France). Second, the USA needs to contain political unrest in areas which supply it with crucial raw materials – and ensure that other capitalist powers do not supplant it in these areas either. The continuing divisions over the question of Palestine between America on the one hand and the EEC and Japan on the other show how far rival imperialist interests are prepared to jockey against each other for the Middle East's oil. Third, the USA needs stable outlets for foreign investment, the more so as falling profitability at home forces the export of capital abroad.

Together these pressures drive the USA in one direction and one direction alone – war. Reagan's personal idiosyncrasies bear on this not one bit: his policy is only Carter's writ large. Nor can his sabre-rattling be explained as the build-up to an invasion of the USSR. For all his anti-Soviet rhetoric, Reagan is keen to encourage trade with Russia and knows that Moscow does not amount to the same kind of threat as Tokyo or Bonn.

If there is to be a third world war, it will be one in which America fights the other metropolitan countries of the West for the right to be top oppressor of the backward capitalist nations of the world. The groundwork for this has already been completed. More than a quarter of US state expenditure today goes on arms, and Reagan aims to increase that by some seven per cent over the next four years. Plans are now in motion to shift US troops out of Western Europe and so create a second Rapid Deployment Force to police South East Asia. The US naval and army presence in Diego Garcia will be stepped up in case of uprisings in Africa or the Middle East. And at this very moment US marines stand ready to storm El Salvador should events there get out of hand.

Bringing America to its knees

The only force which can sabotage Reagan's war plans is the American working class. But unfortunately, its anti-imperialist traditions are very weak: not since the First World War has there been concerted opposition to American imperialism. The US labour bureaucracy has supported the military from Korea to Vietnam and Iran. Even the anti Vietnam war movement – often looked at today as a model of anti-imperialist solidarity – teaches only negative lessons. Mobilised around pro-imperialist views ('Get it over? Get out!', 'Support our boys? Withdraw 'em!'), it drew on exactly those pacifist and nationalist sentiments Jimmy Carter so successfully transformed into open support for US imperialism.

Despite its relative decline, the USA is still a bastion of reaction throughout the world. It is up to American revolutionaries to turn their working class into a force which can bring US imperialism to its knees.

Kevin Green

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STOP PRESS

Despite the TUC, the Labour Council, the local press, the Communist Party, the SWP and the rest, 250 trade unionists (including official representatives of six trades councils and members of 20 more) met in Coventry on 14 March. They heard speeches from republicans, socialists and trade unionists and debated the way forward for Irish solidarity work in Britain. By an overwhelming majority the conference passed a resolution demanding political status for republican prisoners, supporting the national liberation struggle and calling for a campaign of action to overturn TUC Irish policy.

To carry on this work the Smash the PTA Campaign needs money. Please send donations to SPTAC, BM RCT, London WC1N 3XX.

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War and peace

'ONLY recently Thatcher said if she could press a button and solve the unemployment problem she would do it. Well she could start by doing something about the Trident missile system. The cost of building that – £5000m – could pay every registered unemployed person in the country £50 a week for the next year.'

This statement could have come from any Labour politician from Michael Foot to Denis Skinner, from Len Murray to Arthur Scargill. It could even have been made by David Owen – or Duncan Hallas. In fact its author is John Deason, Secretary of the Right to Work Campaign, writing in *Socialist Worker* on 7 March.

'Jobs not bombs' is the slogan of the moment in the British labour movement. But what does it mean? Let's take first the widespread conviction that unemployment is the result of Thatcher's malice or incompetence, or at least the outcome of profoundly mistaken policies which could be reversed at a stroke.

Anti-Tory and pro-Labour

Unemployment is the product neither of Thatcher's whim nor her 'dogmatic monetarist policies'. Mass unemployment is the result of the capitalist crisis, and at the same time a weapon for resolving it on the backs of the working class. To survive the recession, British capitalism needs to restore profitability; employers need to boost productivity, hold down wages and destroy effective workplace trade union organisation. A large pool of people out of work is a vital factor in the restructuring of British industry. Mass unemployment helps to discipline workers to accept the sacrifices demanded of them to save British capitalism.

Policies that create unemployment are inescapable for any British government in the circumstances of today. The last Labour government doubled and trebled the dole queues; the Tories have carried on where Labour left off. Wilson and Callaghan may have apologised for their work, while Thatcher revels in it. The difference is one of style but, with the survival of the system at stake, the result is the same.

For the official labour movement it's very useful to isolate unemployment from the capitalist system and blame it instead on Thatcher's policies. It distracts attention from Labour's record and it creates a hearing for the party's alternative programme: if unemployment results from Tory policies, then Labour policies may be the solution. And Labour's focus on Thatcher diverts workers from fighting capitalism to save jobs into joining the quest to find the right button to press to solve the unemployment problem.

Britannia needs her Trident

Here we come to 'Maggie's missile madness', a favourite target of attack from right to left in the labour movement. The 'Jobs not bombs' slogan draws together the reformist faith in the redistribution of government spending as a solution to the problems of capitalism with a new crusade for peace. The idea is that the British government could be persuaded to abandon a key element in its military system in the cause of world peace and give the money saved to the poor.

But is Thatcher's purchase of the Trident missile system evidence of insanity? Britain is an imperialist country with vital interests on every continent. The recession makes Britain's reliance on its markets, its sources of raw materials and its investment outlets overseas greater than ever before. At the same time the decline in world trade exacerbates the permanent instability of the Middle East, Africa and other areas. And Britain's competitors – the USA, France, Germany, Japan – already gaining influence at Britain's expense in many Third World countries, are now tooling up to consolidate their interests by military means. British capitalism cannot afford to be left behind in the new carve-up of the backward capitalist world.

All capitalist countries are constantly prepared for war. There is an inbuilt drive in the capitalist system for competition among rival countries to extend from the economic to the military sphere. All capitalist powers need the latest in arms technology if they are to avoid losing out to their competitors. That's why successive British governments have devoted vast revenues to developing and producing the most efficient weapons of destruction. That's why Attlee's post-war Labour Government initiated Britain's nuclear programme, why Macmillan bought Polaris, why Wilson maintained and extended Britain's nuclear capacity and why Thatcher now needs Trident and Cruise.

Trident – or some similar system – is not a free option for the British government. It is a condition for the survival of British capitalism against its competitors. Britain could not abandon its nuclear bombs and retain the world role that is vital to its domestic economy. As long as British capitalism exists it will have nuclear missiles or other weaponry capable of destroying vast numbers of people and devastating large areas of the earth.

Labourism and pacifism

Pacifist slogans like 'Jobs not bombs' always get a certain positive response in the working class. Workers have a strong desire for peace for the very good reason that it is always workers who suffer most in wars. But it is important to differentiate people's yearning for peace and the cynical manipulation of this sentiment by the labour bureaucracy.

The British working class has been here before. Before both world wars leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions (especially left-wingers) urged workers to uphold the cause of peace in face of the militarist tendencies of the imperialist powers. Pacifism proved a useful device against those who recommended class warfare as the only way to confront bourgeois militarism. And it proved totally ineffectual in saving the working class from going to war.

Before 1914 and again before 1939 the Labour leaders abandoned pacifism as war drew near and turned into recruiting agents for Britain once battle was joined. Campaigns for peace lulled workers into silence and prepared them for the draft to the imperialist slaughter. Then, as now, Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats combined pacifism with economic nationalism, with a commitment to save British capitalism from its foreign rivals. So when economic competition burst into military conflict, pacifism turned into patriotism and millions of workers went to their deaths. The fact that Labour politicians can once again mobilise support through pacifist rhetoric is eloquent testimony that the labour movement has yet to assimilate the lessons of its past defeats.

Fighting for the right to work

In one factory after another workers have been defeated, put on short-time and thrown on the dole queues – not by Trident missiles but by their employers. It is the capitalist class that has made three million workers redundant and our resources should be directed against it rather than against bombs. The slogan 'Jobs not bombs' diverts attention from the struggle inside the workplace – the only place where jobs can be defended in the here and now. There is in reality no link between defending jobs and fighting bombs. Those who advocate this slogan only provide an avenue of escape for those who are not prepared to fight for every job.

What the call for 'Jobs not bombs' does is to direct the fight against unemployment into a campaign for an alternative government. Although it could neither create jobs nor bring peace, the Labour Party is the beneficiary of all the propaganda and activity around this slogan. The TUC too likes 'Jobs not bombs'. It prefers a pacifist campaign to a struggle against unemployment which it may not be able to control.

To prevent unemployed workers from fighting for the right to work the TUC has moved in to 'organise' the unemployed. Murray has issued detailed guidelines on the running of unemployed workers' centres by trades councils. To ensure tight central control the centres must be supervised by senior bureaucrats from the TUC's Regional Councils and by officers from local government.

The TUC is terrified by unemployment. Lengthening dole queues reflect the declining ranks of organised workers. The unemployed are seen as a threat to workers who have jobs, forcing them to accept worse wages and conditions. Most seriously of all, trade union leaders are fearful of the unemployed taking up left-wing politics. If the unemployed started a serious fight for the right to work, inside and outside the unions, it would upset British capitalism still further and upset the comfortable accommodation trade union bureaucrats at all levels have established with the present system. So the TUC has set itself up as the police force inside the working class movement.

Heads down!

All this is of no concern to John Deason. 'Dear Colin Barnett', he writes to the chairman of the North West Region of the TUC in the latest of a seemingly unending series of cringing letters to labour bureaucrats, this time offering the services of the SWP for the TUC's 'People's March'. Never asking *why* the TUC is trying to organise the unemployed, Deason warmly welcomes 'the first attempt by the TUC to do something positive about two and a half million unemployed'. The SWP is not too happy about carrying along Liberal MP Cyril Smith or the TUC's request for prayers and church bells along the route, but still it's 'a wonderful opportunity' to put across the 'Jobs not bombs' message. But the young unemployed want aggressive class politics; pious pacifism is the last thing they need.

The TUC goes further than clamping down on the unemployed. Its bureaucratic threats to suppress trade union bodies who backed the Smash the PTA Campaign's Coventry conference show the labour leaders' true colours. The SWP judged the Coventry conference provocative towards the TUC. So is any attempt to defend working class interests today. Mass picketing, unofficial action, resistance to voluntary redundancies – all provoke TUC hostility because they go further than the TUC's restrictive guidelines allow.

The radical left's enthusiastic advocacy of the 'Jobs not bombs' slogan shows its determination not to provoke the TUC. The TUC can thus foster illusions in the efficacy of its campaign against unemployment. It's the same on the issue of peace. The labour leaders' cant about world peace in the future is no deterrent to their approval for the British war in Ireland in the present. Yet the left will do nothing to point out this hypocrisy lest it provoke the TUC.

The Coventry conference signals a different approach to the labour bureaucracy. We are building working class support for the Irish struggle against TUC support for British rule, and support for class war against pacifist class collaboration.

France in Africa

THE BIG CARVE-UP

When Colonel Gaddafi announced in January that Libya had formally annexed Chad, the French Government went wild. President Giscard D'Estaing sent top ranking ministers to 'consult' with African heads of state and despatched troop reinforcements to the Central African Republic. In reality this show of concern about Libyan expansionism serves a different purpose: France is all set to tighten its grip on Africa.

Almost independence day?

WHEN FRANCE allowed its African colonies to become independent in the 'fifties and early 'sixties it made sure that they remained firmly tied to Paris. Reactionary puppet regimes were installed in office; as these governments enjoyed no popular confidence, they relied for their survival on French political and military support. Chad is a good example of what independence means for former European colonies in Africa.

Chad became independent in 1960. The new government led by Tombalbaye was handpicked by the De Gaulle administration in France. This regime had no mass support and maintained its rule through force: between 1963 and 1969 thousands of people were massacred. By the late 'sixties the Chad government had lost control of much of the rural areas. In 1969 French troops invaded Chad to restore law and order. They helped organise a palace coup, got rid of Tombalbaye and installed a new regime under General Malloum. Since that time Chad has staggered from one political crisis to another and French troops have become a permanent fixture.

All through the 'seventies Chad was in a state of civil war between the rebel Moslem forces from the north and the Christian minority in the south. The intensification of the conflict forced France to rethink its strategy. It decided that it did not want to get embroiled in a Vietnam in Africa and in May 1979 withdrew its troops to let the local armies fight it out.

In the meantime France sought an understanding with neighbouring Libya. The French scheme was that Libya establish its influence over the Moslem north while France kept an eye on the Christian south. This compromise made sense: Paris could retain its special interest in Libyan oil in exchange for giving up its stake in a desert area that had little economic importance. The merger of Libya and Chad brought this arrangement out into the open; as *The Times* noted:

> 'It is increasingly clear, however, that the merger announcement has done no more than formalise an arrangement which already existed. The well informed magazine *Jeune Afrique* revealed last November that France had secretly agreed with Libya in 1978 to share out the spheres of influence in Chad, Libya taking the Muslim north, France the Christian south.' (17 January 1981)

On the same day that Gaddafi declared his annexation of Chad the French government-owned oil company Elf-Aquitaine announced the signing of new oil exploration deals in five petroleum zones in Libya.

Who's afraid of Gaddafi?

So why did French imperialism react to Libya's merger with Chad with such sabre-rattling? First, the French were surprised by the scale of Libya's action. Paris was counting on an informal Libyan sphere of influence, not invasions and annexations. Second, they had underestimated the effect of the takeover on governments throughout the region. Unstable puppet regimes in Niger, Senegal, the Ivory Coast and Zaire were profoundly shaken by Gaddafi's bold move. Even Nigeria panicked at his aggressive drive from the North deep into Central Africa.

No government in West and Central Africa is in the least bit secure. All the countries surrounding Chad have sizeable minorities of Moslem people who are responsive to Libya's brand of militant appeals to Islam. In December 1980 large-scale rioting involving a fundamentalist Moslem sect took place in Kano in Northern Nigeria. Niger and the Cameroons are also riven by social turmoil. The weak ruling classes throughout the area viewed the Libyan occupation of Chad as a catalyst for further unrest and instability.

One after another Giscard's proxy dictators hurried to remind their French godfathers of their obligations. France responded quickly, before the United States or some other imperialist rival jumped in to provide protection. Giscard went on television to reassure his African clients that French help was there for the asking. Swiftly he despatched military instructors to Niger and a military mission to Sudan.

Imperial France

In much of west and central Africa capitalist social relations are guaranteed by French imperialism. The French military umbrella provides defence for its ex-colonies. In a sense France has never left Africa. The Central African Republic is a fiefdom of the French overseas ministry, preserved against its own people by a French garrison. Uranium rich Niger, now a target of Libyan political pressure, is more integrated into the French economy than ever before. There are more French technicians, civil servants and businessmen in Niger than there were when it was a colony.

France dominates the West African Monetary Union comprising the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Togo, Benin, Niger and Upper Volta. For France this area is a major export market worth, in 1979, £2.1 billion. France needs Africa for its economic survival. The franc-zone in Africa provides France with access to vital raw materials, protected markets and a sphere of investment.

French imperialism is hungry for more profits. The world crisis of capitalism has forced France to extend its influence in Africa. France is looking to Africa to stave off its decline in a shrinking world market. In a recent series of political initiatives, French diplomats have been active throughout the area – from Angola to Ethiopia to English-speaking West Africa. It has launched what it calls a 'trilogue' – negotiations among African, Arab and European countries. The aim of the 'trilogue' is to channel petrodollars to Africa backed by European guarantees, technology and investments.

To back up its diplomatic manoeuvres France has drawn up military treaties with 18 African countries. France offers protection to any of the rulers it props up when they are faced with major social upheavals. About 12 000 troops are stationed in Africa – the main strike force is in Djibouti. Other important military bases are in the Central African Republic, Gabon, Senegal, the Ivory Coast and Niger. In addition, France has a permanent Overseas Invasion Force based in the Mediterranean.

France has taken advantage of the Libyan invasion of Chad to strengthen its position in Africa. The invasion has highlighted the fragility of the artificially created states of West and Central Africa and the impotence of their ruling regimes. It has allowed France to show that it is indispensible to its puppet regimes. Even Nigeria, which has never belonged to France's sphere of influence and has always denounced the presence of European troops on African soil, has had a major rethink. Nigerian diplomats have been busy working out an informal agreement with French imperialism.

Ready to pounce

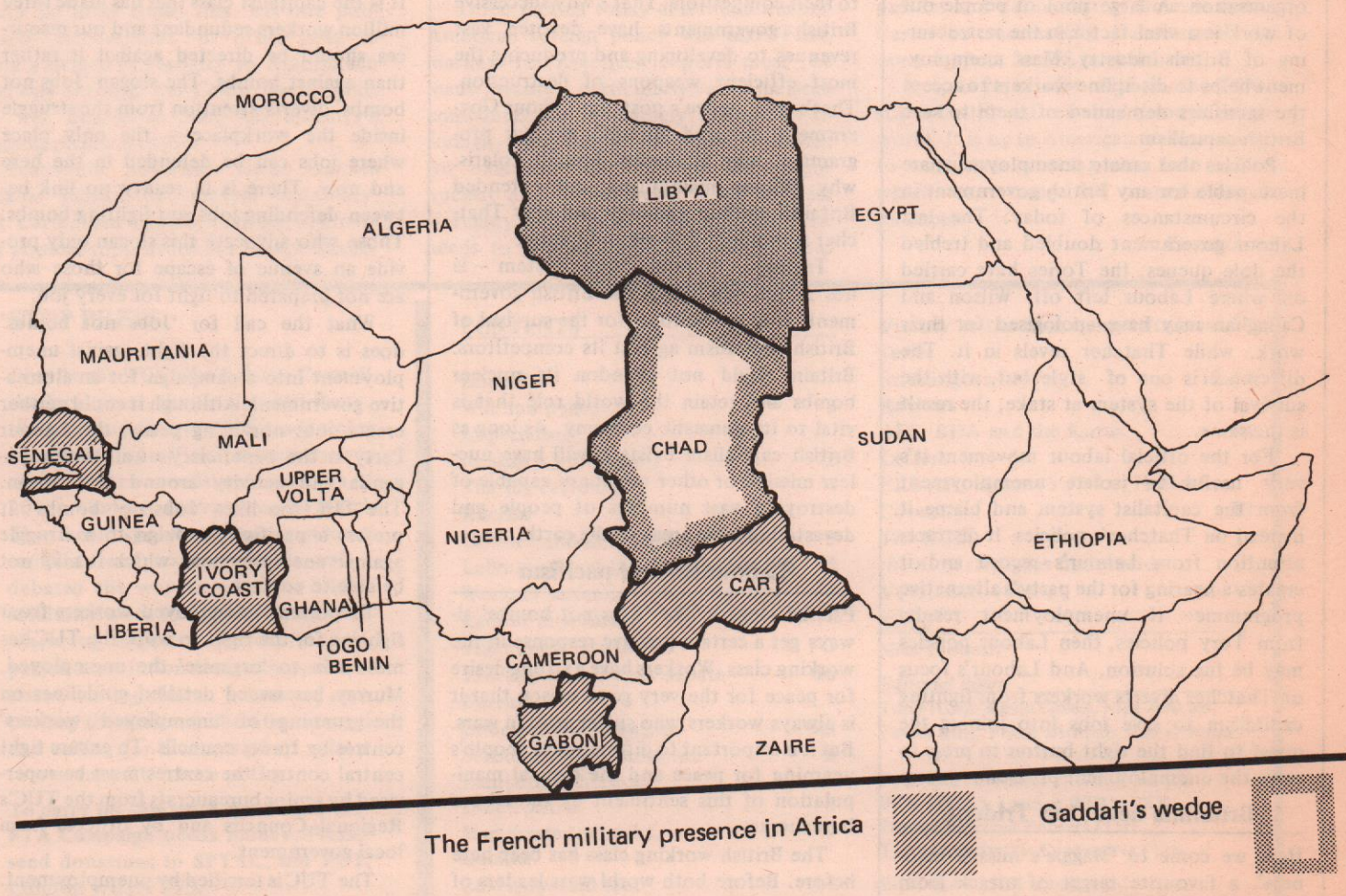
The capitalist crisis forces France to reassume its old colonial role. The French imperialists know that if they don't move in, one of their rivals will. The recession renders African dictatorships more vulnerable than ever before: the imperialists have to show that any attempt to overthrow these oppressive regimes will meet their full military force. This is clearly apparent in the Central African Republic where the tottering regime of David Dacko depends on French troops for its survival.

France cannot afford to lose its prized African sphere of influence. Yet as competition with the USA, Germany and Japan grows, it becomes more and more difficult to maintain stability in Africa without direct military intervention. Chad has provided the excuse for making French intervention acceptable to the rulers of West and Central Africa.

The imperialist powers stand ready to pounce on Africa again. South Africa's invasion of Angola and Mozambique; the British-backed Tanzanian invasion of Uganda; the establishment of American military bases in Kenya and Somalia; all these developments show that France is not the only interested party in the carve-up that looms ahead.

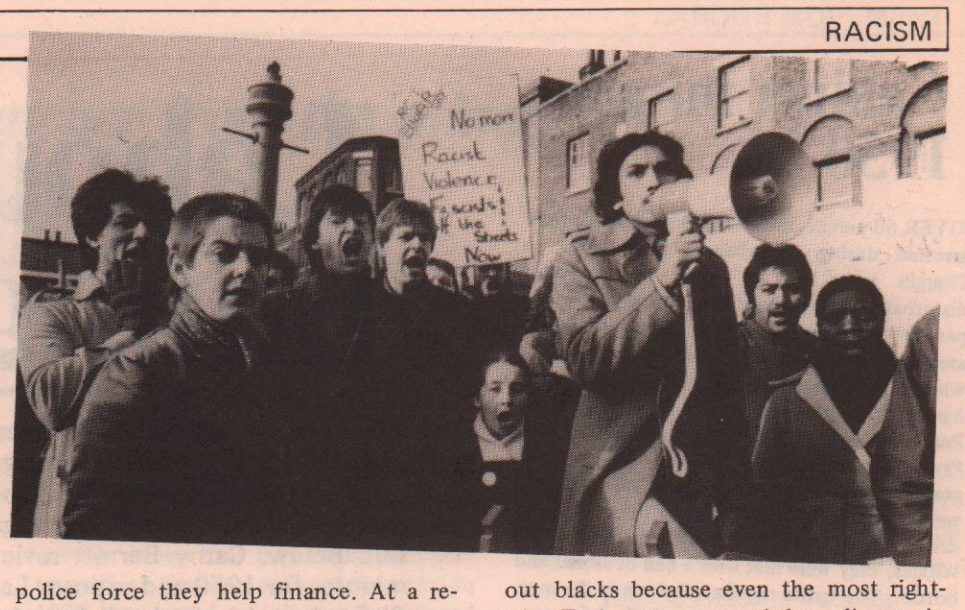
The European working class has ignored the new carve-up in Africa. If the European labour movement continues to allow its ruling class to have a free hand in Africa it will miss an important opportunity to weaken its enemy. The capitalists can only derive strength from renewing the subjugation of the African people. We cannot afford to let this happen. Workers must oppose the imperialists' plans for Africa and do everything in their power to sabotage their expansionist drive. Help prevent the imperialists form returning to naked colonialism in the 'eighties!

Gareth Evans



Police against the Nazis?

Workers' defence – the only way!



Home Secretary William Whitelaw's forthcoming Commission of Inquiry into 'extremist and racialist organisations' got a cautious welcome from the left last month. Everyone agrees the Tories aren't to be trusted but, as Socialist Worker put it, 'at least the Home Office and police now recognise that racialist attacks do take place. That's some progress' (14 February).

Not for black people it isn't. Or for defence organisations like EAST LONDON WORKERS AGAINST RACISM. The all-party Joint Committee Against Racialism gave the game away when it told Whitelaw the emergence of anti-racist vigilante groups was the most 'sinister development' of all.

We look at the background to the Whitelaw inquiry – and the choice now facing the left: prepare to take on the fascists, or strengthen the hand of the police.

THE BUILD-UP in violent racist activity has received plenty of media coverage recently. Spine-chilling accounts of fascist arms caches and military training sessions, exposure stories on the 'brainwashing' of children by the far right, pictures of skinheads wearing swastikas and giving Hitler-style salutes fill the pages of the popular press. Even *Police Review* had its bit to say last month on the dangers of right-wing extremism.

Space for anti-racism?

What's going on? Until recently the Labour and Tory parties were outbidding each other to prove their anti-immigration credentials. Remember the General Election? Thatcher's speeches about 'swamping our culture', and Callaghan's reassurances about his party's firm immigration policy? Even the left was extremely reluctant to talk about racism let alone organise against it. The Anti-Nazi League was wound down and anti-racist activity virtually ground to a halt. As recently as February of this year ANL press officer Peter Hain told *Searchlight* that the priority of kicking out the Tories means there's 'less political space for a specifically anti-racist, anti-Nazi movement'.

However over the past few months it has been gradually dawning on Her Majesty's opposition that anti-racism needn't be a diversion from fighting the Tories. The very opposite. What more striking condemnation of 'Thatcherism' could the Labour Party ask for than the mounting support for the National Front and the British Movement?

Racist violence poses a law and order problem for the Tories which the Labour Party can use to its electoral advantage. Civil liberties, law and order – these are issues that have a wide appeal. Securing the immigrant vote is of some importance in Britain, but that's not the Labour Party's main concern: few blacks vote Tory anyway. The Labour Party's 'anti-racist' offensive has much more to do with blaming the Tories for the violence and lawlessness that everyone condemns.

Bad manners

The Labour Party's solution to rising racial conflict is 'anti-racist police units'. The police and judiciary have been slow to catch on to the new image they're meant to project. The police have conducted intensive inquiries into the New Cross massacre, in which 13 young blacks died in a fire started, in all probability, by a racist's petrol bomb. Hundreds of the black relatives and friends of the dead and injured have been interviewed: some have been detained for long periods. The West Indian community is outraged at the implication that the massacre was the work of black gatecrashers. But the police, familiar with picking up and interrogating black youths, have little experience of investigating racist groups. Three months later nobody has been charged.

Meanwhile at an Old Bailey trial, three of the four fascists who killed Akhtar Ali Baig in East Ham last August were acquitted. A week later Asian youths in Newham were being rounded up and charged with assault and grievous bodily harm arising from fights with local racists. More than 40 local Asians still face very serious charges arising from the demonstrations after Ali Baig's murder.

While Whitelaw lectures immigrant organisations on his government's determination to deal harshly with right-wing extremists, the boys in blue carry on in the same old way. This is causing some concern in higher police circles. Chiefs at Scotland Yard's 'community liaison' division were extremely irritated at 'that fool' PC Jock who, as we reported last month, attempted to befriend Bengalis on Bow Bridge estate, East London, by demanding to see their passports. Whitelaw has tried to set an example by rejecting the Yellowlees Report (which called for *more* X-rays and virginity tests) and warning that fishing raids are not always the best way to cope with illegal immigrants. But it's an uphill struggle for the smooth racists at the Home Office.

Judges' rules OK

The Government's Commission of Inquiry may cause difficulties for the police but it's no problem for the reformists. The British left is very fond of inquiries, particularly if its leaders are represented on the appropriate working parties. In fact they could teach Whitelaw a thing or two about how to spin out investigations into racism. In Newham, a one-man ANL 'monitoring committee' has spent the last year cataloguing racial attacks and neatly filing all the details away. The 'Final report of the working party into community relations in Lambeth' is another model example. Commissioned by Lambeth council, with a radical investigating team, it took nearly two years to complete its proceedings. Its findings? The report revealed that local police are a bunch of racist goons with no respect for obscure rules about police powers made up by some old judges in 1906.

The working party's advice is familiar stuff: scrap Sus, keep the SPG out of Lambeth, give the Judges' Rules the force of law. Ultimately, they warn, the police must become more accountable, more democratically run, or all hell will break loose.

This is the clarion cry of the Labour left and the Communist Party. In London, a central demand in the left's manifesto for the May GLC elections is for control by the ratepayers over the Metropolitan police force they help finance. At a recent Communist Party conference on 'Racism and the police' National Organiser Dave Cook called for more community policing, democratic control of the constabulary and better police training. As a speaker from East London Workers Against Racism pointed out, Cook's approach is *already* in operation in areas like the Brick Lane ghetto in East London. Since 1978 there has been a 'community' police station in the Lane and a proliferation of liaison channels with the local Bengali community. The result? *More* police control over blacks, *more* passport checks and information gathering about radicals – and nil response to the build-up in violent fascist activity in the area.

Broad Church problems

The radical left is less enthusiastic about a reformed, anti-racist police force. It knows that young blacks regard all police with hatred and contempt. And it has to contend with the growing workers' defence movement on its left. The Anti-Nazi League has yet to find its way out of these difficulties.

The ANL has carefully avoided any involvement in organising physical defence against racist attacks. It fears that violent confrontations with the fascists would frighten off its rich and influential backers in the universities, the arts, the media and the churches. ANL leader Peter Hain explains that the aim is to 'broaden the basis of our support' and that 'the issue of community self-defence is one which would undoubtedly injure the breadth of support' (*Searchlight*, February 1981). So what's the answer to the racist thugs?

The ANL's sponsors in the Socialist Workers Party have no alternative to the community policing favoured by their reformist and Stalinist allies. Indeed the radical left has no fundamental objection to the police. What it opposes is the most extreme manifestations of police racism and brutality: the SPG. The SWP ends up telling its followers to 'force the police to bring the Nazis to justice' (Hackney SWP leaflet) and stay at home till the next ANL carnival.

Running for cover

The ANL's quest for broad support is futile. Peter Hain admits that he doesn't think 'it would be realistic . . . to expect the same kind of momentum to develop as developed in '77-'79' (*Searchlight*). Hain's sombre realism has driven the ANL to try to become more and more respectable. Its equivocal position plays right into Whitelaw's hands.

The fascists are far bolder than the ANL. They don't hesitate to attack *all* the established parties – *and* the police – for being soft on reds and blacks. *Newham Front Page*, the NF's local broadsheet, has been delivered door-to-door round East Ham and Manor Park recently. On one side is an attack on 'the openly Marxist "East London Workers Against Racism" ', on the other a picture of police hiding behind riot shields with the caption 'Police hide from red rioters and black thugs'. Their message? 'WE FIGHT BACK WHILE OTHERS HIDE'. As far as the NF is concerned direct action is needed to kick out blacks because even the most right-wing Tories are wets, and the police are in their pay.

How different from the flabby left. Of Whitelaw's new tough line against the fascists, the SWP can only warn lamely that 'any new legislation against the Nazis should be looked at very closely' because it's far more likely to be used against the left.

You don't have to look too closely at any repressive legislation to know that its ultimate target is the working class. Any concessions to the defenders of law and order against 'extremism' strengthens the state today. And it boosts the fascists' prestige as the most militant opponents of the state. While the fascists force the police to ban their marches, leading ANL personalities plead for police protection against the NF. No wonder angry young people find the fascists more appealing.

Whatever the left might say, its refusal to organise independently against the fascists means it ends up running for cover behind the nearest friendly bobby. Blacks know this from first-hand experience. Many are bitter at the left's betrayal of their struggles. At Brick Lane, Southall, Bristol and New Cross, the left's role has been to rush in and take a few pictures, tell blacks that 'self-defence is no offence', set up an inquiry if possible, and retreat leaving blacks to carry the burden. No wonder separatism is growing amongst black youth.

Workers' defence, not self-defence

The old left catch-phrase 'self-defence is no offence' is not only untrue (it obviously is a very serious offence) and open to the ludicrous proposition that the state should 'legalise' self-defence, but it dodges the really central issue: how can we mobilise workers against the racists?

East London Workers Against Racism has been organising workers' defence for more than a year. We have drawn up rotas to ensure that families like that of Jarnail Singh in Hackney, whose house was virtually destroyed by a fire bomb attack, don't suffer further aggravation. We help to arrange legal defence for people like Isak Ali who was charged with threatening behaviour after being mugged by racists – in his case successfully getting the charges dismissed. And we organise regular patrols around areas like Mile End where Asian families are living under siege conditions against gangs of racist youths.

What has to be done is so elementary and obvious that the left groups – although increasing numbers of their members are joining our activities – are forced to make it appear complicated. ELWAR is accused of 'patronising' blacks by mobilising in their defence. We are solemnly informed by *Militant* and others that nothing can be done 'outside the labour movement'. What these obscurantists fail to see is that nothing serious can be done within the labour movement so long as the working class is riddled with divisions and torn apart by racism. The building of workers' defence against racism is not only vital for the black victims of fascist attacks, it's vital for the future of all workers.

Judith Harrison

Labour and immigration

The 1945–51 Labour Government responded to race riots in Liverpool and London with a campaign of repatriation and repression of black people; yet today the Labour Party stands forth as the champion of ethnic minorities against the Government's Nationality Bill. Below, Cathy Barratt reviews the newly released Cabinet minutes for 1950 and exposes Labour's disgusting record on blacks. Right, Inez Landa shows how Labour's support for immigration laws renders impotent its 'opposition' to the Tories' new attacks on the rights of black people.

Cabinet minutes 1950

'OVER 60 people, most of them coloured, were arrested during disturbances last night.... Charges arose out of rather serious racial disturbances which have been going on for the past few days in the Upper Parliament Street area. Attacks have been made by blacks on whites and whites on blacks. Property was damaged, numbers of people were injured.... Police alleged that blacks were armed with "swords and daggers, bottles, stones, iron coshes and axes" (though only two weapons were reported as found). When police tried to drive blacks off the street outside a black club, Wilkies, they were met with a hail of stones and bottles. The battle raged until three in the morning when more police were drafted in .... After a police officer was stabbed those in custody were immediately refused bail: charges and convictions followed, ranging from disorderly behaviour to actual bodily harm.' (From reports in the *Liverpool Echo*, August 1948)

'Disturbances between coloured men living at Brookmill Road and whites, on Sunday and Monday, were reported to police in Greenwich and Woolwich this week.... Police were told of a fight between 20 coloured men and a group of whites in Deptford High Street. One policeman stated he saw 150-200 coloured men in the New Cross Road...they milled about.' (*South London Press*, 22 July 1949)

Labour blames the blacks

There was an outraged reaction in Parliament: first Liverpool, now London, where would it end? Labour MP John Lewis demanded an immediate statement from the Under-secretary of State on the Deptford events. He got one:

'I am informed that towards midnight on 18 July, some coloured men began to shout abuse to passers-by from a window of a common lodging house....a large crowd gathered and there was some disorder. The police...were assaulted and obstructed by these coloured men.'

Councillor Sherward of Deptford Council put the local authority's view that 'recent disturbances were unfortunate but the fault was not all on one side. From time to time coloured people come here ...and we have got to do something with them. They are happy-go-lucky people who come here to what they regard as the land of the free. They look for a job and whether they like it or not there are some people who do not want to work with coloured folk' (*Kentish Mercury*, 29 July 1949).

For all his patronising tone and racist caricatures, Sherward did put his finger on the key feature of 'the disturbances': the hostility of British workers towards competition from blacks for jobs. The Labour Government took full advantage of this hostility as it moved to deal with the 'coloured problem'.

The Labour Cabinet's first priority was to tighten up government control over the black population. In the late 'forties full employment had yet to be attained and housing was in acutely short supply. The Cabinet recognised that tensions were highest 'in areas where there is substantial general unemployment and in establishments where white women are employed'. However Labour blamed the blacks for the trouble: 'the principal obstacle...is the attitude of some of the coloured colonials themselves and their undisciplined behaviour'. To instil a little imperial discipline 'a policy of dispersal of unemployed colonials to other areas' was undertaken (Cabinet minutes). The Ministry of Labour was 'trying to refer these men in areas such as Liverpool and London to areas in the country where there are acute labour shortages'.

The Labour Government also urged the police into greater vigilance and a more repressive role. 'In the areas with aggregates of coloured persons' they were briefed to 'keep a special watch for any incidents likely to provoke a general disturbance'. The other major aspect of Labour's policy for blacks has, in more recent years, become associated with a different political party – the National Front.

the next step

Black youth: Labour tried to send their parents home – but they're here to stay. Now Foot and Benn plot 'non-racist' immigration controls.

'Send them back'

Many West Indians had been encouraged to come and work in Britain during the war. All these, the Labour Cabinet noted, were 'recruited under special schemes' and were therefore 'eligible for repatriation'. The Government's 'send them back' policy had however hit a snag. 'Though persistent efforts were made to induce as many of them as possible to return home, a good many preferred to remain in this country'. And in the austerity conditions of the late 'forties blacks suffered intense discrimination. As the Labour leadership observed of the blacks that stayed behind, 'some of these have not settled down' (Cabinet minutes).

The Cabinet was prepared to pay so that 'destitute or incapacitated persons who would otherwise be likely to become a continual charge on public funds can now be repatriated to their colonies at public expense'. Labour's repatriation criteria were very clear: the manpower requirements of the capitalist economy. 'There are some individuals who are outside the scope of the present repatriation arrangements. Generally these are able-bodied men for whom work can be found by the Ministry of Labour. Men in this category are only offered repatriation when they are likely to become a drain on public funds and it is clearly in the public interest that they should be sent home.' (Cabinet minutes)

The other side of 'send them back' was 'stop them coming'. The Colonial office conducted consultations 'to discourage the migration of unskilled workers from the West Indies and to reduce the opportunities for aliens to obtain irregular documents which might gain them entry to the UK'. 'Illegal immigrants' now became the Government's main pre-occupation.

As disturbances continued with more riots in Birmingham in August 1949 and the racist tide showed no sign of ebbing, Cabinet discussions turned repeatedly to the problem of 'illegal immigrants'. Senior members were doubtful whether regulations were sufficiently tightly observed to 'keep within bounds the numbers who continued to enter this country as stowaways'. Were the colonial governments and steamship companies doing everything possible to prevent blacks hiding out on British-bound ships? Were wider powers required? Should shipowners be obliged to return stowaways to the ports they boarded at? Such were the squalid deliberations of the first majority Labour Government – and it is from these debates that today's Labour Party policies follow.

A new Nationality Act?

Discussion of 'illegal immigrants' soon shifted to a consideration of a wider problem: 'the existing right of any British subject to enter the UK'. Having enforced British citizenship on millions of people in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, the British government was now obliged to consider preventing them from exercising their right to come to Britain. The Cabinet commissioned a review of the 'legal and constitutional issues involved'. However, although the Labour Party was ready to close Britain's 'open door' it was removed from office in 1951 before it got the chance.

The only thing that has changed in the outlook of the Labour Party today is that it has learnt to be a little more discreet in its racist statements. It is still committed to keeping 'them' out but it is more diplomatic in its treatment of 'coloured colonials'. And Labour politicians are sufficiently cynical and hypocritical to set themselves up as anti-racist campaigners against Tory immigration legislation!

Cathy Barratt

Nationality Bill 1981

LED BY ex-Minister Roy Hattersley, Labour politicians are vehement in their denunciations of the Tory Nationality Bill. On 5 April the Campaign Against Racist Laws, which unites everybody from the British Council of Churches to the Socialist Workers Party behind Hattersley, is holding a demonstration against the Bill. But, given that the Labour Party drew up the blueprint for the Nationality Bill and that the party remains a consistent supporter of immigration controls, what's all the fuss about?

No aliens here!

The new law aims to divide immigrants into two broad categories. Firstly there are those who arrived before 1973 when the terms of the 1971 Immigration Act came into full operation. Provided they register within two years they will receive full citizenship. Then there are the rest – blacks who arrived after 1973, 'aliens' and non-Commonwealth migrants with no blood ties in the UK, and the lowest caste of all, 'illegal immigrants'.

The great debate between Labour and the Tories is about the precise division between these categories. Both parties agree on the need to bring nationality law into line with immigration law. But the Labour Party wants a slightly wider definition of what makes a first class British citizen. Not too wide though, as Hattersley explained:

'The next Labour government would introduce an extension of British citizenship, although this would not amount to an open-door policy.' (*The Guardian*, 29 January 1981)

Perish the thought! This sort of opposition is no problem to the Tories. Home Secretary Whitelaw was quite prepared to modify his proposals by accepting Hattersley's amendments.

Illegals – bon voyage

Meanwhile the Government is relentlessly hunting down 'illegals'. Filipinos and other foreign domestic workers are being bundled out of the country in large numbers. Labour opponents of the Nationality Bill are sorry about this, but they accept it. After all, they argue, many of these workers *are* illegal; they didn't settle here before 1973, they have no 'natural' claim to reside in Britain, they may indeed have entered and obtained work permits fraudulently. Accepting the right of the government to divide and police the working class, the best the Labour Party can do is appeal for compassion. This has proved pathetically ineffectual for thousands of deportees.

What about the left? Under the umbrella of CARL all the radical left groups are busy campaigning for new, non-racist laws. This is just fine as far as the Tories are concerned. So long as nobody questions the basic assumption behind the Nationality Bill – that the state has the right to control and patrol immigrants – then its purpose will be fulfilled. This sort of opposition will not stop the Nationality Bill from going through. Indeed it will only deepen the divisions among different ethnic minorities and between black and white workers that the Bill is designed to exploit.

On 5 April East London Workers Against Racism will be marching from the East End to join the demonstration against the Nationality Bill. But we won't be calling for a less racist Bill from a Labour government of the future. Unlike Hattersley, who's worried about the inalienable, 700 year old rights of Britons, ELWAR is concerned about passport raids and deportations in 1981. Join the ELWAR contingent on 5 April!

Inez Landa

How Gormley and Scargill saved Thatcher from the miners

The price of collaboration

Margaret Thatcher has got herself out of another difficult situation. Just when the miners were ready for a national strike, she persuaded union leaders Joe Gormley, Arthur Scargill and the rest to get their men back to work. Her concession: agreement to a 'slowdown' on pit closures. The NUM's: acceptance of tens of thousands more redundancies. How did the Tories get away with it?

THE MINERS brought down Edward Heath. But Harold Wilson brought the NUM into line with the needs of British capitalism. It was not the Tories' plans to send in the troops that subdued the pits, but Labour's Social Contract.

Social contract shake-out

In mining the Social Contract meant the offer of state funds in return for union co-operation. It meant that the NUM leadership, left and right, took upon itself, not primarily the defence of their members' interests, but the defence of the British coal industry. Between 1974 and 1979 NUM bureaucrats set up and sat on joint committees with management to rationalise production – at the cost of thousands of jobs.

Under the colliery review procedure the NUM negotiated the closure of 40 pits in five years. Leading left-wing bureaucrat Arthur Scargill played a major role. His region, Yorkshire, saw more jobs go through early retirement and 'natural wastage' than any other. One pit after another was closed while Scargill quibbled about severance pay.

From South Wales to Scotland it was the same story. The NUM bureaucrats conceded that certain pits were 'uneconomic' and worked with the Coal Board to transfer the miners in them to more profitable – and tougher – seams elsewhere. And, saying that it would improve working conditions, they portrayed early retirement as a progressive measure instead of opposing it for what it was: another way of getting rid of workers from the industry.

The NUM's class collaboration had predictable consequences. The more the union became pre-occupied with investment in coal and the viability of particular fields, the less it was able to look after its members' living standards. Miners were told that their industry could not afford high wage claims and that any outburst of militancy would threaten the Labour Government. In effect, the Social Contract won the ruling class something Heath could never achieve – the co-operation of the miners in making the sacrifices that capitalism required.

The productivity defeat

Until 1977 the miners had always rejected the various devices the Coal Board had put forward to 'reward' higher efficiency with higher pay. Indeed, in a November ballot the majority ignored the blandishments of the union right wing, rejected the suggestion that they tie their wages to productivity increases, and instead instructed their leaders to pursue a 90 per cent claim. In sum, they signalled their willingness to engage in what *The Times* termed 'head-on collision' with the Government over pay (2 November 1977). But then the shock troops of the Social Contract – the labour bureaucracy – stepped in.

On 8 December the NUM leadership voted to accept the Government's pay policy and to try to get wages raised by allowing local areas to introduce incentive schemes. What the Area Agreements meant in practice emerged soon enough: substantial bonuses for the men in the more productive pits and minimal increases elsewhere. By the end of 1978 North Nottinghamshire miners were taking home an average of nearly £33 extra each week, while South Wales miners were merely supplementing their basic by £8.50. Previously united against the Tories, the miners now stood divided – by a Labour government and its henchmen in NUM head office.

The main beneficiary of the Social Contract in the pits was the National Coal Board. Aided by the bureaucrats, management fixed things in order to contain militancy. The effect of incentive schemes was to heighten the contrast between productive and less productive areas, so accelerating closures. As the *Financial Times* astutely observed of the 1981 strike:

> 'One of the ironies of the present situation is that the industry has become a victim of its own success in raising output – the result of the investment programme and a productivity deal with the miners four years ago.' (11 February 1981)

The big con

So devastating was the impact of the NUM leadership's collaboration on rank and file miners that they began to appear to outflank Gormley & Co *to the right*. In 1979 they voted to accept a Coal Board pay offer of 20 per cent despite the NUM executive's recommendation to reject the deal. In February 1980 Welsh miners spurned their leaders' call for strikes against steel closures by a massive 22 000 votes to 4000. And in November 1980 the membership overturned the recommendations of the left wing and voted to accept a 13 per cent increase in wages, that is, one well below the rate of inflation.

It took the threat of scores of closures in February this year to rekindle militancy among the miners. The way unofficial action escalated so rapidly showed that four years of bureaucratically engineered demoralisation had not destroyed their combativity. But once again, the NUM leadership diverted this combativity towards saving the coal industry rather than saving jobs and living standards.

What happened was this. The NUM bureaucracy decided that the best course of action was not an all-out struggle, but a joint union/management approach to the Government. Militancy had its place, but only as a means of strengthening the hand of the NUM and the Coal Board in their negotiations with the Tories. Throughout the latter part of 1980, therefore, the NUM and the Coal Board pleaded for more investment and subsidies.

Their words fell on deaf ears. As far as the Government was concerned Britain was mining too much coal; loss-making pits should simply be shut down and Coal Board funds put elsewhere. The Coal Board thus had to up the stakes. In a dramatic move, it announced a ruthless closure plan and provoked the anger of the miners. The rest, as they say, is history.

More ready than ever to clutch at straws, the radical left declared that the miners won and Thatcher lost. *The Economist*, by contrast, was more subtle in its analysis: 'the Government', it proclaimed, 'backed down in front of the coal industry lobby. Sir Derek Ezra, chairman of the National Coal Board, is just as much a victor as Mr Mick McGahey. . . or militant Arthur Scargill' (21 February 1981). But in fact *everybody* – Government, Coal Board, paid NUM functionaries – won a victory *except the miners*. The Tories and the Coal Board got their closures; the bureaucrats got the 'consultation' with Whitehall they had been pursuing for so long; the miners got the promise of devastation for whole towns and regions.

The closures are coming

Militant miners must be vigilant and follow closely what their leaders are up to. But vigilance is not enough. The real problem is that the politics of the NUM leadership have strong roots in the rank and file. Many miners see their future as being tied up with the health of their industry. Many look to the state, and particularly to a Labour-run state, to defend their interests. The truth is that, in February, the miners reacted only to the consequences of the NUM's collaborationist policies, not to the policies as such.

The left-wing bureaucrats of the NUM completely uphold the reactionary line of the rest of the union leadership. They are the most vociferous advocates of controls on foreign coal, the most ardent defenders of British mining. The Scargills and the McGaheys are highly proficient at turning miners away from the class struggle towards the battle for British industry.

Active workers must point out that British industry is capitalist industry, and that, because capitalism can only survive by driving wages down and by lengthening the dole queues, defending British industry means participating in the destruction of our class. Miners must fight British industry, not defend it. The job of the trade unions is not to try to run the mining business better than the NCB, but to protect workers' living standards. The job of active workers is to explain this and to demonstrate that closures will only be averted if miners repudiate the politics of the NUM leadership.

A good way to start the fightback is to get NUM union representatives off all review boards and joint committees. Let NCB management run their industry – we'll look after our jobs! Militants should not depend on the geological conditions in the pits. Every delegate elected to go to the NUM conference must be forced to pledge defence of every single job. And the 'import controls' brigade? They should be fought with the slogan 'The problem isn't foreign coal – it's British bosses!'.

Frank Richards

London, Manchester... Paris

SMASH ALL IMMIGRATION CONTROLS!

TUESDAY 31 March: LONDON
NO NATIONALITY ACT!
SMASH ALL IMMIGRATION CONTROLS!
Public rally

Speakers from:
* **French immigrant group**
* **Filipino campaign**
* **ELWAR**

Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1 (Euston tube); 7.30pm.

WEDNESDAY 1 April: MANCHESTER
Public rally

Speakers invited from:
* **French immigrant group**
* **New Cross Action Committee, (Manchester)**

Parkside Hotel, Lloyd Street South, Moss Side; 7.30pm.

SATURDAY 4 April: PARIS

ELWAR goes to Paris! Join the demonstration against racism called by French immigrant groups. Protest against communists who act like fascists.

Phone 01-274 3951 for coach details.

SUNDAY 5 April: FROM BRICK LANE TO HYDE PARK
NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AGAINST NATIONALITY ACT

* **Assemble** Itchy Park, Whitechapel High Street; 10am
* **March and Rally** in East London before going to Hyde Park
* **Smash *all* immigration controls!**

Phone 01-274 3951 or write to ELWAR c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Road, London E9 for more information about all these events.

Scroungers and snoopers

THE SMEAR CAMPAIGN against people on the dole is hotting up daily. 'It's dope, dole and dossing' (*South London Press*, 13 February); 'Gambling bug hits jobless', (*The Sun*, 19 January); the unemployed are developing a dangerous 'subculture' in which 'leadswingers, scroungers and moonlighters' are misusing their over-generous dole money to buy 'colour televisions and other luxury goods' (Tory MP in *The Guardian*, 12 November). Employment Minister James Prior claims that there are 'many more people now who did not care whether they worked or not, compared to 10 or 20 years ago' (*The Guardian*, 10 December 1980).

* **Short-time working.** Last December 600 000 workers were on short-time, working less than the full week. The Government spends more than £600m each year in subsidies under the Temporary Short Time Working Compensation Scheme. Up to November 1980 workers under the scheme got 75 per cent of normal earnings for up to six months. Since then the Government has extended the period to nine months – but workers will only get *half* their normal wages! The bosses are quite clear about the function of short-time work. These programmes provide them with 'a breathing space, a chance to keep the workforce together whilst new orders are sought, and a means of financing work sharing for the majority rather than the dole queue for some' (*The Guardian*, 28 January 1981). *The Economist* puts it even more clearly: 'the preventive medicine of short-time working compensation turns out to help employers' rather than workers' jobs' (20 December 1980).

Yet when all these wage cuts have gone through the bosses need harsher measures still to protect their declining profits. For example when the subsidy for short-time work for Vauxhall car workers runs out in May, the company will get rid of an expected number of 5700 jobs 'which it hopes to lose by voluntary redundancy and early retirement' (*The Guardian*, 28 January 1981). Once workers accept a wage cut to save the bosses' profits under the short-time scheme, they set foot on the slippery slope which ends up on the dole queue.

* **Early retirement.** Many workers from 50 upwards 'retire early' when redundancies are announced. But it's not only the case that jobs are lost in this way: many workers over 50 know that they may never get another job until they reach retirement age. And what is your reward for giving up your job voluntarily? If your employer runs a pension scheme you may get some early retirement benefits – but he's not obliged to do so. And what about state benefits? 'Early retirement usually involves a scaling down of benefits because they will be paid longer and there have been fewer contributions' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 31 January 1981). And the new unemployment benefit rules coming into force in April will reduce benefit for men over 60 who receive occupational pensions.

* **Redundancies.** After the short-time and 'early retirement' con, voluntary redundancies are offered with a handshake that is less and less of a golden one. Maximum redundancy payment from the Government's Fund is now £3900 while *average* redundancy pay is now £2500 – or £1000 less than the top state redundancy money (*The Daily Telegraph*, 28 January 1981). Besides the fact that a job given up means one job less for the working class as a whole, it's really not a clever move financially. Leave alone that workers under 20 years of age and those with less than two years' service for the same employer don't qualify for redundancy pay, voluntary redundancy means you have to wait for six weeks before you can sign on (because you've given up your job voluntarily) and if you were lucky enough to get more than £2000 you won't get any social security until you've spent it. And on top of that, if you spend it too quickly you'll be penalised through less social security if you're found to have 'unreasonably disposed of it to get supplementary benefit'. And most redundant workers are still unemployed after two months, 40 per cent after six months and almost a quarter after one year.

The scroungers out of work

The new social security regulations brought in on 24 November 1980 mean that unemployment benefit has now reached its lowest level since 1971 (DHSS *Social Security Statistics*, 1980). Benefits have fallen in relation both to average earnings and to male manual workers' wages. The November rates were cut by five per cent – and will again be cut by five per cent for the next two years until they are taxed the year after.

From January, 'the first cash cuts in state benefits since the 'thirties' (*The Times*, 30 December 1980) took place as a result of the Government's decision to reduce earnings-related supplements. They will be abolished altogether in 1982.

After one year on unemployment benefit, and in most cases during the first year, unemployed people are forced onto the means-tested supplementary benefit. The 'scale rates' in operation since November – which were only marginally increased in the March budget – show the low levels of living standards workers on supplementary benefit are forced onto. The unemployed do not qualify for the long-term rates which are higher and apply to pensioners and single parents, for example. They are forced to live on the ordinary short-term weekly rate – because they are expected to be unemployed for a short period only. Despite the steady growth in long-term unemployment the Government has refused to change the regulations to allow the unemployed to get the higher long-term rates.

As if the cuts in social security weren't enough, the Government has also made major changes in their administration. The new supplementary benefits scheme, introduced to 'eliminate discretion' means, for example, that so-called 'exceptional needs' payments for heating, bedding, clothing and footwear are very much harder to get.

To deal with 'difficult' cases the Government has created 400 'special case officers' working in DHSS offices. They come into operation if social security claimants

* 'persistently mismanage or misuse their resources'

* behave in a way that 'gives serious cause for concern leading to neglect of self, dependents or home'

* have 'characteristics which lead to repeated conflict and tension in their dealings with staff'.

In April the Government is stepping up its 'anti-scrounger campaign'. New instructions are being prepared for the DHSS special fraud squad. The Specialist Claims Control investigators will regularly examine the files of unemployed people and select cases for fraud investigation. What gives them a clue?

They'll become suspicious if unemployed people have

* 'a "suspiciously high" standard of living'

* 'a marketable skill or trade'

* 'a record of self-employment'

* 'apparent good health and fitness'

and of single mothers whose homes show 'signs of male presence' (*The Guardian*, 28 January 1981). 'Discreet inquiries' will also be made among neighbours, employers and 'known third parties'. This snooping around by the fraud squad can only be matched by the proposed increases in penalties for social security offences. Penalties will soon be doubled to a maximum of £1000 or six months imprisonment. 'The prime motive, according to the DHSS, is to bring penalties in line with inflation' (*The Guardian*, 14 February 1981) – while unemployment benefits have been *cut* to five per cent below the rate of inflation.

Lambeth fightback

*** The UWG (Lambeth) is a local organisation committed to the defence of the unemployed against attacks on their rights.**

*** Our principle is that no worker should suffer any loss in living standards on account of the crisis of British capitalism. Workers must refuse to bear any responsibility for this crisis as it is not of their making. The people who run industries do so to make a profit out of our labour. The problems they run into are not our concern. Our concern is that all workers should have decent jobs and decent pay.**

*** It is an indictment of the capitalist way of running society that it puts millions of people out of work. We demand WORK OR FULL PAY FOR ALL WORKERS! If the bosses can't give us jobs, that's bad enough; the least we demand is that we do not have to worry about how to make ends meet. Therefore unemployed workers must be paid the average working wage.**

*** The UWG will fight for work or full pay in Lambeth through direct action, education and publicity. As a first step we intend to build a campaign against cuts in unemployment benefit and social security. We need these benefits and we will not allow them to be taken away. We will also fight the means test: every worker must get the full benefit without his or her private circumstances being looked into by the state.**

*** We intend to win unrestricted access for the unemployed to the files of the Brixton DHSS and dole office, so that all the dealings of these bodies can be made public. That will help us respond to all cases of harassment effectively and without delay.**

*** Thousands of young unemployed people not only get insulting levels of benefit, but completely inadequate training too. We are pledged to fight for proper training facilities, full pay and the right of unemployed youth to join trade unions.**

*** The UWG wants to establish close links with the local trade union movement. We believe the trade unions must be drawn into our struggle. For our part, we are committed to support any resistance that employed workers mount against the employers.**

*** Any person, unemployed or employed, who agrees with and is prepared to fight for the aims of the UWG can become a member. The annual subscription fee is £2.**

WORK OR FULL PAY!
FIGHT ALL REDUNDANCIES!
EMPLOYED AND
UNEMPLOYED MUST UNITE!

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Unemployment statistics register the cris
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Why is this?

The decisive factor is the politics of
capitalist system every day demonstrate
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Here Fenna King surveys the way th
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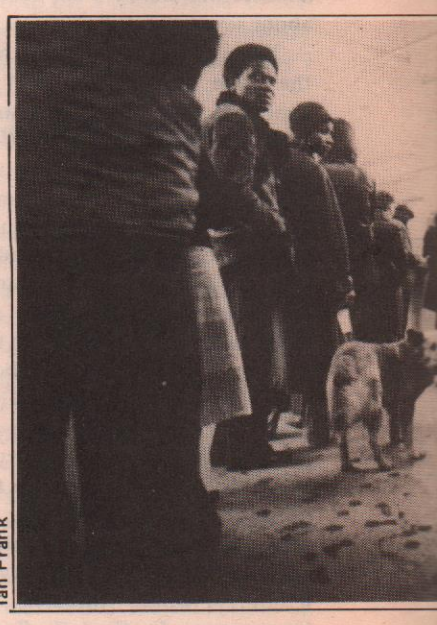
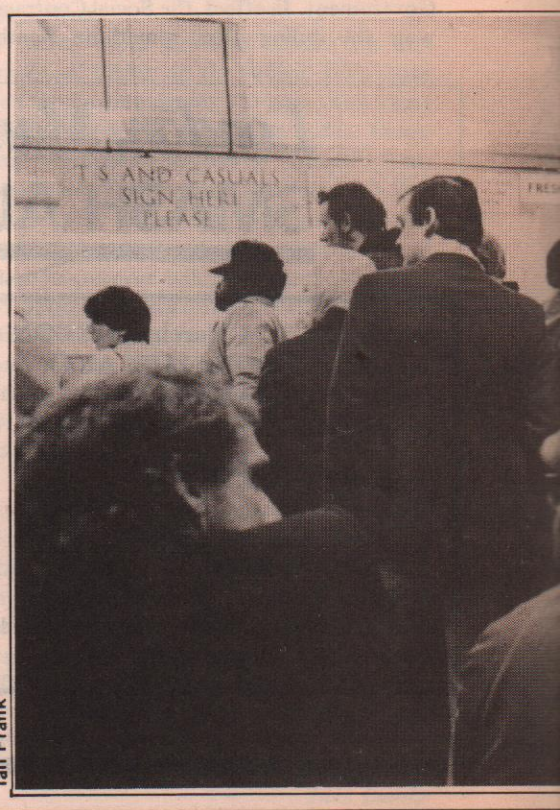
Ian Frank


Ian Frank



Ian Frank

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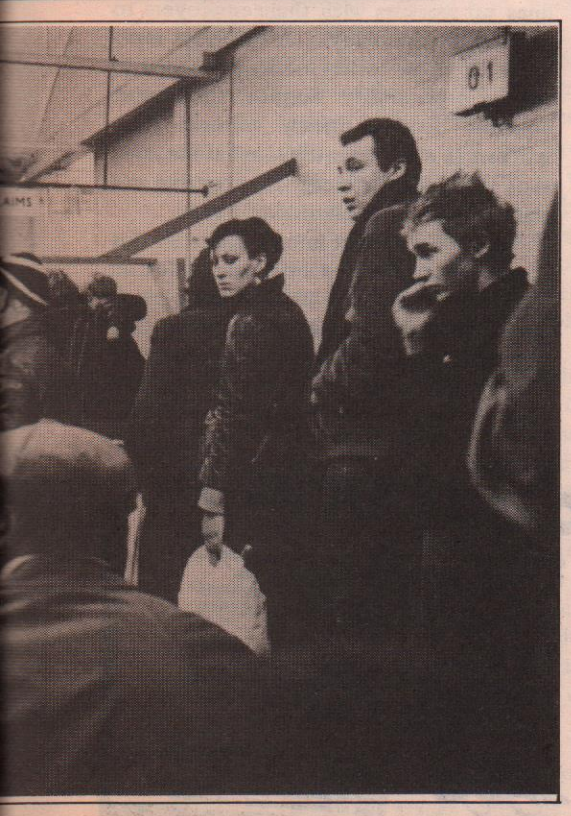

Dole control

THERE ARE TWO aspects of the TUC's quest for a solution to the unemployment problem without upsetting the system. First it tries to convince the government that unemployment is a wasteful burden on government revenues, not in the best interests of British capitalism. Second it helps to maintain social stability by policing the unemployed.

Cutting the dole queues

'Unemployment costs a lot' declares a recent TUC pamphlet, 'it's a waste of human lives' (*Unemployment – the fight for TUC alternatives*). The TUC is not concerned about human life in the abstract, but in the potential of human life to create capitalist profit. 'The millions of people without work could be producing goods, or carrying out badly needed services. They could be contributing taxes to pay for schools and hospitals'. Instead the unemployed are a drain on the state: 'For each person it costs the Exchequer at least £2500. And we lose the output that could have been produced'.

This sort of calculation is popular in the official labour movement. Ex-Labour Minister Gerald Kaufmann recently worked out that if the total spend on dole money for building workers was invested in new construction it would create jobs for a substantial proportion of them (the rest presumably would have to starve). Other Labour MPs figure out how many steel furnaces, car plants or coal mines could be opened up if the revenues poured into the pockets of the unemployed in their constituencies were invested in local manufacturing industry.

This facile argument tries to escape a fundamental feature of the capitalist economy. Capitalists invest in production for one simple purpose – not to provide jobs, not to render services, not even to make useful products – but to make profits. Today British capitalists *need* mass unemployment, whatever the burden on the Exchequer, as a lever to force up profitability.

This is not to deny that the capitalist class is very keen to reduce the cost of unemployment: that's why the Government is cutting benefits all round. This is where the labour bureaucrats' argument ends up. Complaining about the price the state is paying out to the unemployed is an open invitation to the Government to reduce it.

Policing the dole queues

Len Murray asked a leading question last November:

> 'How can we ensure that unemployed young people do not become alienated from the trade union movement as well as from other institutions in our society, and do not become recruits for extremist, anti-democratic groups?'

His answer came in January: *Unemployed workers centres – TUC guidelines.* Centres for the unemployed can only be set up through the TUC's Regional Councils in consultation with local authorities and trades councils. Their boards must contain representatives of these bodies and full time trade union officials (recently retired officials will be tolerated).

The guidelines set out the strict limits of 'permissible activities'. These include counselling and advice, recreation and 'representations'. Making 'representations' means having discussions with local councillors, the Manpower Services Commission and other agencies about reduced busfares, swimming pool tickets and job creation schemes. Voluntary work or even military service may be expected to be included as 'permissible activities' in the near future.

The last paragraph of the guidelines contains the unmistakeable imprints of PC Murray's big boots:

> 'Should any trade union body seeking to establish a centre, or any management body of an established centre, act outside the TUC Guidelines in a way that could damage the interests of the unemployed or the trade union movement, or could put at risk the funding of centres it would be for the TUC Regional Council concerned to inform the TUC and the appropriate local authority that the TUC Guidelines were not being followed. It will be recognised that if public funds are made available to a centre, there are necessarily special requirements for accountability which it is hoped that the strict following of the TUC Guidelines could satisfy.'

The TUC's message is clear: we will keep the unemployed in line. Our message to the TUC is also clear: we know that the fight against redundancies and the defence of the unemployed means a struggle against the reactionary and repressive strategy of the labour bureaucracy.

Manchester militants

The traditional industries of the North West – textiles and engineering – are in a severe slump. Only short-time work stands between tens of thousands of workers and the dole queue. As the scheme runs out factory closures will mount. Unemployment stands at more than 12 per cent – and that leaves out 60 000 young people on temporary job creation schemes.

In response to the rising tide of redundancies a small group of trade unionists has come together in the North West Redundancy Action Commitee (NWRAC). The committee was initiated by the Socialist Workers Party and backed by RCT supporters from several engineering and furniture factories. The fight for jobs at Kellogg's cereals plant at Trafford Park is a good example of the sort of problems facing trade union activists today.

The best to you?

Kellogg's is the largest producer of breakfast cereals in Britain. In 1980 the Manchester plant made a profit of more than £10 million. Given Kellogg's high profits its shop stewards were baffled when Assistant Managing Director J K S Fielding announced in January the company's intention to make 500 workers redundant as new machinery was introduced.

Kellogg's informed the unions (most of the workers are represented by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) that the company hoped to reduce manpower through early retirement and voluntary redundancy. The firm's strongest card was its 1974 agreement with USDAW, which stated:

> 'The company undertake to protect regular employees from enforced redundancy arising from the application of this agreement, and accepts that any normal reduction in manning will be achieved by normal wastage.'

Further, USDAW had agreed to accept voluntary redundancy in times of poor trade. Now Fielding urged his workforce to accept job losses 'to ensure that the company keeps its place as Britain's biggest breakfast cereal manufacturer' (*Manchester Evening News*, 7 January 1981).

Fielding took advantage of USDAW's willingness to put Kellogg's market position before the defence of jobs. This put the union representatives in a difficult position. But all the same, convenor George Cheetham and the shop stewards were determined to fight all redundancies.

Resisting all redundancies

During January 1981 the USDAW shop stewards produced four bulletins and distributed them inside the factory. By early February the mood for a fight was beginning to grow. At a rally organised by the NWRAC, George Cheetham was surrounded by Kellogg's workers demanding action to defend jobs.

The shop stewards were certainly unwilling to accept any redundancy – but they did accept the company's criterion. Their argument was that the company had high profits, therefore the job losses were unnecessary. But Fielding's point was that Kellogg's had to rationalise *to stay* profitable.

When the shop stewards pointed out the company's high and increased production, management could point to its reduced market share. It could go on to demonstrate that unless it installed new machinery it would continue to lose out to its rivals.

When the shop stewards argued that all jobs should be maintained so that the company would have the necessary workforce for its expansion in Europe, management could say that it would not be able to expand into Europe unless it reduced labour costs and increased efficiency.

All the shop stewards' arguments centred around the attempt to run Kellogg's better than its management was already running it. But the problem facing Kellogg's workers is not bad management; it is capitalism and the profit system. So long as capitalism exists workers have only one means to defend jobs and conditions: resolute action against all management plans. All types of compromise – including voluntary redundancies and early retirements – must be rejected.

Import controls

A QUESTION OF CLASS

For trade unionists threatened with redundancy, import controls often seem the only way to save jobs. For trade union bureaucrats import controls are part of a plan to salvage the British economy and their own status. For many left-wingers, import controls are an aspect of 'socialist planning' in the Alternative Economic Strategy; for others they are no good because they 'won't work'. Here we review the import controls debate and show that the only effective arguments against them are based on a refusal to merge the interests of the working class with any consideration of the problems of the capitalist class.

Import controls and jobs

At plant level, in the day-to-day struggle against redundancies, the case for import controls goes something like this:

● 'cheap imports are undercutting our products. That means less orders – and less orders means less jobs. The only way to avoid this is for the government to control imports. It's common sense.'

It may look like commonsense to steelmakers, car manufacturers, textile mill owners and other businessmen facing bankruptcy. But it isn't good sense from the point of view of the working class.

Foreign manufacturers exporting to the British market may benefit from the pound's soaring exchange rate, from government grants, and their own advanced machinery and low wage bills. But this doesn't explain why companies in Britain are collapsing in the face of foreign competition. The basic reason is low profitability.

The rate of profit earned by capitalists in Britain is lower than that of most of their overseas rivals. So when the pound is pushed up on the foreign exchange markets by North Sea oil exports, they begin to get desperate. Low profits mean that British businessmen are under more pressure to raise prices, and so lose competitiveness; that they can't afford to finance enough state aid to industries in trouble; that they can't initiate the massive investment programmes needed to survive in the market. And as capitalists go out of business, so workers lose their jobs.

Would import controls make any difference? Since the fundamental problem is low profitability – import controls can only act to provide a 'breathing space' while industry makes itself more competitive. The operation of existing import regulations shows how the process works.

Take BL. Like the rest of the British motor industry, it's protected from Japanese competition by Tokyo's 'voluntary' agreement to curb car exports. But that hasn't helped the workers at Longbridge. Edwardes has begged – successfully – for massive state subsidies, recently squeezing out almost £1 billion from 'free market' ideologist and Industry Secretary Keith Joseph. He has also introduced new technology (robots) and has tied wages firmly to productivity. Above all, he's forced through thousands of sackings. Thus import controls, far from staving off redundancies, provide the conditions for a jobs shake-out to take place. You lose your jobs, not because 'orders are too low', but because in relation to profits 'manning levels are too high'. The capitalists use their breathing space to asphyxiate the working class.

Planning for disaster

At the level of local or national trade union officialdom, in the day-to-day struggle to reconcile rank and file militancy with the capitalist system, the case for import controls takes a different form. The bureaucrat likes to pose it in broader, more national terms:

● 'The only answer to mass unemployment is to reflate the economy. We demand a massive injection of funds into British industry to reverse deindustrialisation, and greater public spending levels to provide jobs and repair the damage that Tory monetarism has done to our country. But we need import controls to make it work. Otherwise foreign manufactures will flood in, swamp the market and prevent British industry and British workers benefiting from the expansion. We're not talking about blanket protectionism, but managed trade. Our policy for national economic recovery will come to nothing unless we plan our international transactions.'

There's a simple reply to the bureaucrats' patriotic appeal. Money will ony find its way into more investment and the Government can only reflate once profits have risen dramatically. The condition for this is a series of setbacks for the labour movement which would make the last 18 months look like the post-war boom. Reflation out of recession demands the maintenance of mass unemployment and the destruction of shop floor trade union organisation. That's why the call for reflation is a call for catastrophe.

Union bureaucrats do have some sort of foreboding about the consequences of their strategy. So do the guardians of British industry in the left of the Labour Party and the Communist Party. That's why they tell us of the 'years and years' it will take to undo the damage that the Tories have done – and prepare for the Big Reflation in the Sky. But left-wing apologists for import controls try to avoid the consequences of their schemes by explaining that they are part of a grander strategy for changing the way the capitalist economy works! One thing is clear: the capitalist crisis has begun to change their affection for planning into acceptance of economic sacrifice for the benefit of the nation.

Retaliation – their problem

The radical left has no coherent argument against import controls. Groups like the Socialist Workers Party and Militant feel obliged to find some way to counter the chauvinist hysteria whipped up by the TUC leaders and the Communist Party. But their counter arguments lack the persuasive power of those of Len Murray and the Stalinists. Let's see why.

In a recent pamplet, *Why import controls won't save jobs. . .the socialist case*, SWP leaders Nigel Harris and Duncan Hallas have reproduced what today passes for a radical 'critique' of import controls. Most of the points are worthless, some are just inadequate. The useless ones can be dealt with first:

● 'Import controls will lead to retaliation'. This argument is a *concession to economic nationalism*. It is not the business of the working class to worry about reprisals, economic or otherwise, against Britain. Nor is it our business to 'oppose' import controls and 'defend' jobs by stressing the need to maintain Britain's export markets intact.

The TUC gives the 'retaliation' argument short shrift. It simply points to the importance of Britain as an export market and says no one would dare retaliate. The CP goes further still. As Paul Levine, a lecturer in Stalinist economics, puts it:

> 'It is also important for the government to seize the initiative, announce its pattern of import controls on manufactured goods from the advanced capitalist world as a *fait accompli* and make it quite clear that retaliation will lead to counter retaliation.' ('Import controls – on the Left's terms', *Marxism Today*, December 1980)

Retaliation is no problem if you're really serious about saving British capitalism. The radical left's warnings are brushed aside as the peace-loving Stalinists urge British capitalists into economic warfare.

Pricing policies – their problem

● 'Import controls mean increased prices in the shops to pay for more expensive British goods'. This approach can only *draw workers into the bourgeoisie's search for an anti-inflation policy*. Workers have no special interest in keeping prices down: the point is to fight against any cut in living standards, not to attempt the futile task of influencing capitalist marketing policies.

Once again the labour bureaucrats have their own answer: import controls will allow domestic production to expand and thus lower the unit costs and prices of British goods. As for future commissar of Trade and Industry Paul Levine, he argues that government revenues from import tariffs can be used to cut VAT! Ingenious!

We have to take the case against import controls out of this pantomime 'oh yes they will – oh no they won't' debate between the economists of the radical left and the labour bureaucracy. Let's look at some more substantial political arguments.

Internationalism and militarism

● 'Import controls mean exporting unemployment'. This is true, more often than not, but it's unlikely to make much impression on workers who see their jobs being threatened by imports. The argument might strike a chord if there were a strong current of internationalism in the working class, but more than half a century of reformist politics have put paid to this. While we should still point out the consequences of import controls on workers overseas as an issue of elementary class solidarity, we can't really expect this to lead our attack on nationalist solutions to the crisis. And we would oppose import controls even if it could be shown that they *wouldn't* lead to redundancies in other countries.

The TUC, along with its co-thinkers, has concocted an argument that import controls would help other countries – selective restrictions are the only way to prevent the total amount of imports from falling! A reflated British economy protected by import controls would 'in fact' import *more* than today. . . although, of course, the market share of imports would fall. In case that doesn't sound too plausible, they fall back on a more characteristic argument: we've been *importing* unemployment, other countries should take their share of the burden too! The SWP's observation that 'only' 33 per cent of jobs lost in Britain are because of imports is no answer to the TUC's chauvinist sophistry – and little consolation to the 2.5 million on the dole.

● 'Import controls mean trade wars, and trade wars lead to world war'. This essentially valid argument is not to be found in the SWP pamphlet. It prefers to restrict its anti-war outlook within the limits prescribed by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The link between chauvinism in the labour movement and imperialist war is something the SWP prefers to avoid. But we have to talk of the present as well as the future. We argue that putting Britain first in economic matters leads to support for its *current* military operations like the SAS raid on the Iranian embassy or Britain's war against the Irish people. We do not focus on the pacifist's nightmare of getting fried in the future but on the present day *reality* of the British state's violence and the need to oppose it from a class point of view.

Why we say no import controls

We repudiate demands to control imports for one simple reason: to call for import controls means to abandon our interests as workers and go over to the side of the bourgeoisie. The call for import controls lines up workers with their employers to protect the company – it paralyses resistance to all the other measures needed to restore profitability. Support for import controls divides British workers from workers in other countries; and at the same time it renders us incapable of acting as a class against the capitalists at home.

We have to reject import controls. But today this also means a ruthless attack on the chauvinists in the labour movement. It means no more fooling around with polite points of information and concessions to the prejudices of union bureaucrats and their bourgeois nationalist propaganda.

Helen Swift

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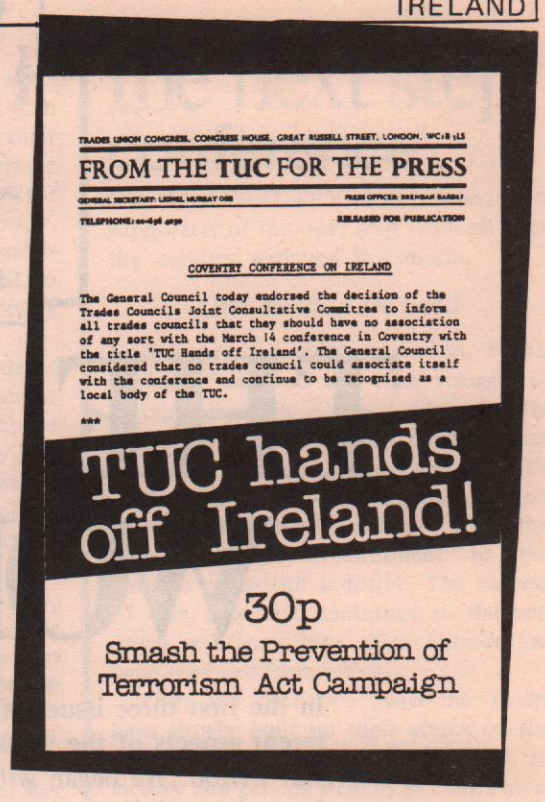
'In co-operation with a leading car finance house' – in co-operation with the bourgeoisie.

The left and the Smash the PTA Campaign's labour movement conference

Coventry cold feet

When the Coventry conference was first announced in January it got a positive response from many trade unionists, trades councils and labour movement organisations. Labour MP Ernie Roberts responded enthusiastically to our intitial circular, agreeing to sponsor the conference. The Steering Committee of the Troops Out Movement later gave its approval to the conference and its objectives. But after the TUC threatened to expel any trades council that associated in any way with the Coventry conference, the left capitulated, blaming the RCT for the authoritarian response of the TUC.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FROM THE TUC FOR THE PRESS

GENERAL SECRETARY: LIONEL MURRAY OBE — PRESS OFFICER: BRENDAN BARBER

TELEPHONE: 01-636 4030 — RELEASED FOR PUBLICATION

COVENTRY CONFERENCE ON IRELAND

The General Council today endorsed the decision of the Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee to inform all trades councils that they should have no association of any sort with the March 14 conference in Coventry with the title 'TUC Hands off Ireland'. The General Council considered that no trades council could associate itself with the conference and continue to be recognised as a local body of the TUC.

***

TUC hands off Ireland!

30p

Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign

JUST OUT – a pamphlet on the campaign to change the labour movement's line on Ireland. From SPTAC, BM RCT, London WC1N 3XX, 30p & postage.

The dog begins to bark

The TUC stated its reason for proscribing the Coventry conference very clearly:

> 'The TUC believes that the conference, organised by the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign, directly conflicts with Congress policy, which does not for example favour withdrawal of troops from Northern Ireland' (*The Times*, 23 February 1981).

The conference explicitly repudiated official policy on an issue of vital national importance. The TUC has little to say about the Irish War and does nothing – but it cannot afford to have the loyalty of the official labour movement to the British state questioned inside the trade unions.

In case this stand seemed excessively authoritarian and its justification unconvincing, the TUC invented the accusation that its leaders were 'imperialist aggressors' in Ireland. This was alleged to have been stated in conference publicity material. In fact no such statement appears anywhere. All the conference leaflets accused the TUC of was 'complicity in British repression' – and that's the truth.

The hounds begin to howl

Once the local press in the Midlands found out about the conference it began a campaign of hysteria against 'IRA terrorists' and 'reds in the unions'. The object was to get the conference banned: Coventry Labour council, Lanchester Polytechnic, Warwick University and 8 other proprietors of suitable halls all cancelled bookings.

The national papers concentrated on the TUC's directive to its 440 trades councils to stay away. They put pressure on the trades councils that had already agreed to sponsor the conference to withdraw. Trade union bureaucrats are always complaining about hostile media coverage of trade union issues. But when it comes to a sensitive political subject like Ireland, the bureaucrats do what they're told by the mandarins of Fleet Street.

The Coventry conference 'story' broke in *The Observer* on 22 February. Communist Party officers on trades councils around the country were galvanised into action. The butter had scarcely melted on his Sunday morning toast before John Catterall of Salford Trades Council was on the phone to the Smash the PTA Campaign. Dermot McNeill of Hackney Trades Council gave up his lunchtime pint to compose a letter, and veterans at Wear Valley began mobilising every possible reactionary delegate.

The Stalinists threw out the rule book in their haste to obey the Congress House edict. Democratic trades councils' decisions were reversed by individuals and cabals, debates were re-opened within days or weeks instead of the statutory six months. Trades councils where the issue had yet to come up took special precautions. At Battersea and Wandsworth one elderly Stalinist was so well primed that he burst into shouts of 'we don't want to be disaffiliated' at the mere mention of the word 'Ireland', interrupting discussion of two irrelevant items on the agenda before the Coventry conference came up.

The chickens run for cover

The radical left felt the need to find some political justification for backing away from the TUC. It took its lead from Ernie Roberts who telephoned the Smash the PTA Campaign to tell us that we had made 'a tactical mistake' in antagonising the TUC and that we should attack the Tories instead. The problem is that the Tories have no policy on Ireland different from that of the Labour Party: the parliamentary unanimity over the hunger strike follows 12 years of bi-partisan harmony. If we can't challenge the pro-imperialist policies of our own movement then we will never mobilise working class opposition to government polices on Ireland. We are not surprised to find that Roberts has not stood up in support of 'political status'.

Looking for more cover for its feeble position, the left seized on a report in *The Observer* that the Coventry conference organisers 'support the IRA's bombing campaign in Britain'. Even the Workers Socialist League, whose paper supported the conference, complained that such statements 'confuse and alienate militants' (*Socialist Press*, 25 February). Interestingly, in the Six Counties where *The Observer* article was widely quoted in press and television, there was no misunderstanding. People in the nationalist ghettoes recognised a clear declaration of support for their struggle against British rule, in place of the left's usual evasions, ambiguous statements, and outright condemnations.

The Observer quote is, however, imprecise. We neither approve nor condemn any particular tactic of the republican movement: we give our unconditional support to the national struggle – whether it is fought in Ireland or in Britain. And we refuse to criticise and join in the chorus of condemnation of the IRA when bombs go off in Britain. This is too much for the British left which blames the IRA for the repressive actions of the British government and for the difficulties it faces in raising the Irish question. 'This is certainly not the way to build support' for the Irish struggle, solemnly opined Duncan Hallas in *Socialist Worker* (7 March). However he urged support for the threatened trades councils against the TUC.

SWP activists soon discovered that the best way to support the trades councils was to back down on the challenge to the TUC. Hackney was a good example. On the Tuesday a left caucus condemned the TUC and fulminated against Secretary McNeill's autocratic response. By the Thursday virtually all the left – SWP, IMG and the rest – were voting with the Stalinists. The same pattern was repeated around the country as radical left members echoed the arguments of Len Murray, Ernie Roberts and the Stalinists.

Sectarian and provocative?

The Coventry conference assembled the broadest labour movement support for an unambiguous working class position on Ireland since the War began 12 years ago. However, despite invitations to left-wing Labour MPs, left-wingers on the TUC General Council, political groups and newspapers – none were prepared to sponsor the conference. *This* is what sectarianism means – not a preparedness to challenge the reactionary politics of the TUC.

The left judged the Coventry conference provocative. But we simply declared our intention to campaign for a change in TUC Irish policy. The TUC reacted in the way it did out of its determination to prevent working class politics from upsetting the close alliance of the official labour movement to the British state. Building a revolutionary party in bourgeois society is provocative towards the labour bureaucracy and the state – but that is something the radical left groups will never find out.

Victory to the Irish hunger strike!

Political status now!

On 1 March Bobby Sands, officer in command of republican prisoners-of-war in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh began a fast to the death to force the British Government to concede the prisoners' demand for political status. His action in starting off a second major hunger strike marks the culmination of a five year struggle against British attempts to brand Irish freedom fighters as criminals and psychpaths.

Irish prisoners are forced to starve themselves to death because the British Government has not been forced to acknowledge that they are soldiers fighting a war of national liberation. The Irish people have not failed to let the British army know that it is a force of enemy occupation. For 12 bitter years they have kept up a heroic struggle against overwhelming odds. In the last hunger strike they turned out in tens of thousands on marches, strikes and protests in support of the political status demands.

No surrender!

However the courage and resilience of the Irish people has not been matched by the determination of the British labour movement to stop its government's dirty work in Ireland. Successive Tory and Labour regimes have enjoyed a free hand to oppress the Irish people. The Government was able to extricate itself from the hunger strike before Christmas without granting political status, largely because it was put under very little pressure in Britain.

This time things are a little different. Early in March Labour MPs joined with Tories to back up Northern Ireland Minister Humphrey Atkins' intransigent stand: they urged him to make no further announcements as this would give undesirable publicity to the Irish struggle. Not a single Labour MP dissented. Outside the House the left seems to be simply waiting for Sands to die.

The death of Bobby Sands would be a blow to the republican movement – but it would be a serious setback too for the British labour movement. We have to mobilise our maximum strength, even at this late stage, to force the Government to concede political status. Not only Bobby Sands' life, but our own class interests depend on us making the hunger strike our central activity in the weeks ahead.

SERIES 4

THE WAR AND THE WORKING CLASS

In the first three issues of our series we have looked at different aspects of the working class movement in the inter-war period. We began with a survey of the defeats of the 'twenties and followed up with reviews of the respective roles of the trade union leaders and the Labour Party in the 'twenties and 'thirties. In Part Four we see how Britain – and the British labour movement – drifted into war.

The years leading up to the Second World War contain a number of features of great contemporary interest. State intervention to restructure declining industries, the burgeoning of the arms sector, the intensification of rivalries among imperialist powers: all these trends are identifiable again today.

In other respects the 'thirties, a time of militant mass anti-fascism and newly created shop floor organisations, was a very different period from our own. But the way the labour bureaucracy exploited anti-fascism, to channel the militancy of advanced sections of the working class into raising productivity in the war effort, made a lasting impression on the labour movement.

BRITAIN GOES TO WAR

THE WORLD SLUMP set off by the Wall Street crash of 1929 caught Britain in an already weak economic position. The oldest capitalist nation, it had lost its global superiority at the turn of the century. When international markets collapsed, Britain was in serious trouble. Between 1929 and 1931 exports fell from more than £700m to less than £400m.

British exports were so uncompetitive that the pound had to be devalued to make them cheaper. But releasing sterling from the Gold Standard proved to have little effect. The USA and France pulled the same trick in 1933 and 1936, and by 1937 Britain's share of world exports was right back where it had been in 1931 – less than 10 per cent, or £500m (W A Lewis, *Economic survey 1919-1939*, Allen & Unwin, 1949).

To keep trade in balance British capitalists were forced to protect themselves from foreign competition. From 1931 onwards Britain built up a whole panopoly of controls on imports; but to little avail. Not a year went by without Britain running up a trade deficit of £200m or more (H W Richardson, *Economic recovery in Britain 1932–39*, Weidenfeld, 1967).

The need to restructure British capital was obvious. But, despite the steep downturn in production, restructuring did not take place. Between 1930 and 1935, for instance, the share of the 100 largest manufacturing companies in net output rose by less than half a per cent (S N Prais, *The evolution of giant firms in Britain*, CUP, 1977). The capitalists were not prepared to put money into old, unprofitable sectors like coal, shipbuilding, iron, steel, cotton or wool. The rise of the new, more dynamic industries based around the Midlands and the South East – cars, radios, chemicals, household appliances – had little impact. The new industries never accounted for more than a fifth of net output and employment and only really managed to export to protected Empire markets.

'Market forces' alone could not restructure industry. Thus, even when the new industries were in their heyday, *The Economist* felt obliged to announce: 'a very wide measure of public control will be necessary if the badly needed work of rationalisation is ever to make any real progress' (*The Economist*, 24 August 1934). The stage was set for increased state intervention.

The drive towards state intervention

Rationalisation by 'public control' had in fact been proceeding since the start of the slump. With the passing of the Coal Mines Act and the formation of the Bank of England-backed firm National Shipbuilders Security Ltd (1930), the Government had begun a series of initiatives to cut excess capacity and cartelise Britain's basic industries. The founding of the British Iron & Steel Federation in 1934 and the Cotton Industry (Reorganisation) Act of 1936 were part of the same pattern. Yet, though the state succeeded in closing down scores of pits, yards, furnaces and mills and putting through hundreds of thousands of redundancies, it did not succeed in restoring production in the basic industries to much above pre-1929 levels.

State intervention didn't just mean encouraging rationalisation. It also meant 'stimulating demand'. Investment was low and unemployment potentially dangerous in political terms, so something had to be done. Inflation had been dampened down by the slump, so some risks could be taken. As early as 1931, therefore, the Government cut interest rates to help capitalists re-equip. Thereafter it granted higher subsidies to industry and agriculture, allowed local authority expenditure spending to rise, helped railway magnates out with credit guarantees and began house and road building programmes. The most dramatic increase in state spending, however, took place in arms manufacture.

In the 'thirties more and more capitalists came round to the view that accumulation could only continue through state aid. But what form of state aid? The question was answered by rearmament. To back up its losing battle for a bigger share of the world market, Britain had to build up its army, navy and air force. Though dictated by political and military developments abroad, this process played a vital role in the bourgeoisie's strategy to beat the crisis in the domestic economy. Pouring money into the making of tanks, destroyers and bombers appeared an excellent way of boosting industrial investment.

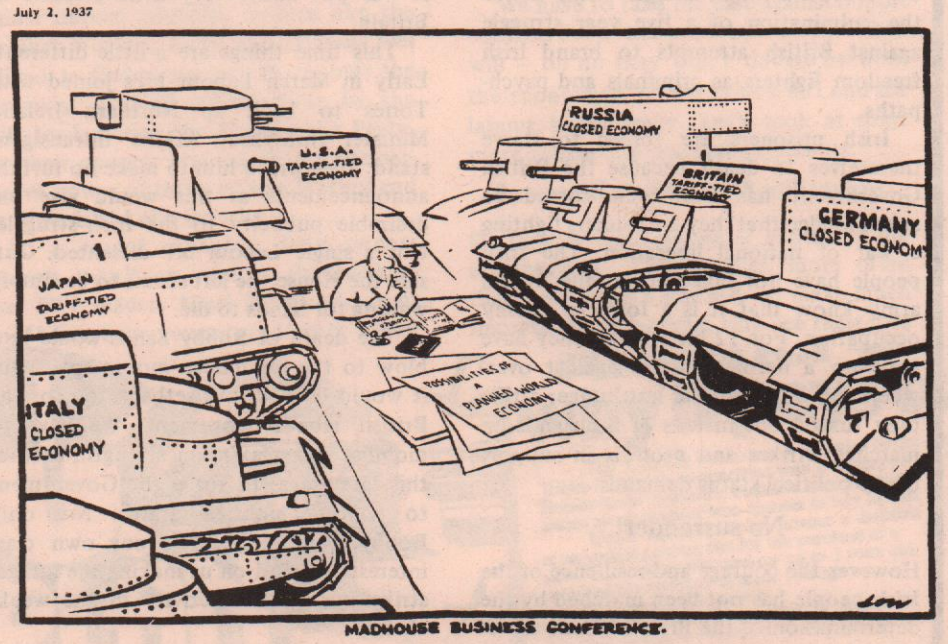
Between 1932 and 1938 state expenditure on defence rose from £100m to £800m. But though arms spending, 'the greatest public works programme ever' (*The Economist*, 22 April 1939), did much to stave off the effects of the slump on particular sectors like engineering, it could not solve the structural problems of the British economy. Britain could still not compete against its imperialist rivals.

Why Britain had to go to war

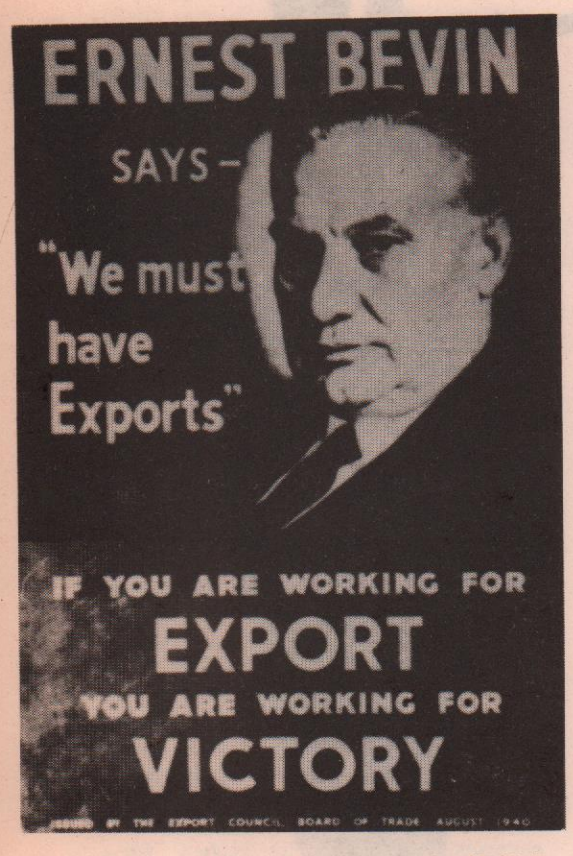
As rearmament gathered pace from 1935 on, it added to Britain's import bill and forced the Government into massive – and inflationary – borrowing (S Howson, *Domestic monetary management in Britain 1919-38*, CUP, 1975). Meanwhile 'invisible' exports took a hammering: Britain's traditional function as shipping and financial capital of the world seemed to be reaching an end, for international trade had failed to recover. And, by 1937, production at home was so unprofitable that the export of capital to the Middle East (oil), southern Africa (gold, minerals and metals), Asia and Latin America (crops) – was being termed the nation's 'greatest single industry' (*The Economist*, 20 November 1937).

To survive British capital had to strengthen ties with its colonies. The creation of the Stirling Area (1931), an alliance of countries dominated by British imperialism, was an important symptom of this. It meant that imports of food and raw materials came cheap, and that high-interest loans to foreign countries grew. But it also meant that Britain could not eat, produce or get its money back unless the Empire remained intact. The same was true of the Ottawa Agreements of 1932: they reduced tariffs against British goods among signatory nations, but at the same time ensured that Britain was reliant for its survival on the protected markets of the Empire.

In the prolonged global crisis of the 'thirties, 'democratic' Britain had to adopt the same imperialist tactics as the 'totalitarian' powers. Japan established the 'Yen bloc' with Korea, Formosa, Kwantung and Manchuria: its trade with these countries rose by 25 per cent, 1929-38. Germany boosted its trade with



By the late 'thirties, inter-imperialist rivalries were proving too much for Colonel Blimp.



Today, a 100 years after his birth, Bevin's reactionary politics live on

south-eastern Europe from five to 12 per cent of its total (C P Kindleberger, *The world in depression, 1929–39*, Allen Lane, 1973). Britain merely followed suit.

Economic necessity drove Britain into war. As Birmingham's Chamber of Commerce observed, once hostilities had begun in earnest:

> 'It is idle to disguise the fact that two wars are being carried out, military and commercial, against the enemy. The opportunity is being taken to replace Germany in markets into which she has crept by methods often closely related to the unscrupulous and unfair practices now exhibited in the more deadly struggle.' (BCC, *Journal*, April 1940)

This was the capitalist reality disguised by Britain's anti-fascist crusade.

The anti-fascist crusade

The carnage of 1914-18 had generated strong anti-war feeling in the working class. But it was a feeling which could not withstand the political offensive the bourgeoisie launched to gain support for rearmament. Paradoxically, the labour bureaucracy was able to use workers' desire for peace to win their backing for war. *Anti-fascism was the bureaucracy's main tool for this.* The bureaucrats transformed the labour movement's genuine hatred of fascism into identification with Britain's war against Germany.

Prior to the rise of fascism the Labour left had looked for an end to inter-imperialist rivalries through international planning and arbitration. Gradually, however, this utopian and reformist dream gave way to support for direct sanctions against 'the enemy'. By 1934 the Labour Party and Co-operative Movement were calling for a British boycott of German goods, not to assist German workers overthrow the fascist regime, but because 'the system of "blocked marks" practised by German exporters with the help of the Hitlerist Government was giving considerable assistance in the selling of German goods abroad, and represented a most unfair method of competition' (National Council of Labour and Co-operative Union, *Statement on Fascism – at Home and Abroad*, 17 August 1934).

Not content with economic aggression, the labour bureaucracy came over to military aggression. In the same year the joint TUC/Labour Party manifesto *War and peace* took an uncompromising stand on the issue. Referring to the fascist 'threat' to world stability – and, implicitly, to the threat Germany represented to the Empire – it pledged the labour movement 'unflinchingly to support our Government in all the risks and consequences of fulfilling its duty to take part in collective action against a peace-breaker' (*War and peace*, London 1934).

After Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in May 1935 the Labour Party took the lead in demanding British-style 'punishments' for war-mongering nations. Both TUC and Labour Party conferences that year came out overwhelmingly for 'action' against Italy, and a campaign against Chamberlain and his fellow 'appeasers' in the National Government began in earnest. By the late 'thirties the Tories and the bourgeoisie were vilified as unpatriotic and disloyal to Britain's overseas interests.

The anti-fascism of the masses was contradictory: it had a progressive character in contrast to the 'anti-fascism' of the labour bureaucracy. Sometimes the two came into conflict. When, in 1936, the TUC refused to send arms to the republican forces in the Spanish Civil War, there were massive protests. But the subjective disgust for capitalist oppression that workers felt was no match for the subtle chauvinist stratagems proposed by the bureaucrats. By the outbreak of war workers were fully convinced of the superiority of British 'democracy' over German fascism. The bourgeoisie therefore had little difficulty harnessing the energies of the labour movement to the British war machine.

Rearmament and reaction

Anti-fascism provided bureaucrats with an ideological formula for mobilising workers behind the bourgeoisie. But anti-fascism was more than just an ideology; it corresponded to the material interests of the labour bureaucracy. Rearmament boosted the flagging fortunes of the trade union leaders. It meant more jobs and more union members. Moreover the bureaucrats were well aware that gearing up for war would enhance their bargaining position and ensure that the Government consulted them. It was these considerations that led the 1937 TUC and Labour Party conferences to pass strong resolutions in favour of rearmament.

The superficial economic upturn created by rearmament assisted the labour bureaucrats in persuading the rank and file to support Britain's war drive. Indeed, a section of the working class came to see rearmament as the only way to keep a steady, reasonably paid job after many years of Depression. A shop stewards' movement grew up which was, politically, very different from that which had emerged around the time of the Russian Revolution. It was a movement which gave the national-militarist politics of the labour bureaucracy a radical, popular form.

As rearmament spurred on the growth of sectors like engineering, so workers were recruited from the dole queues of Scotland, Wales and the North to man the new factories that were being opened. In the process, workers built new organisations to defend themselves. Militant unofficial shop-floor committees were established to safeguard piece rates, differentials and line speeds. At firms like Ford, Firestone and Lucas, a succession of strikes broke out against the Bedault system of work measurement and payment by results. Eventually, after the engineers' official union leadership abdicated from the fight for a national pay agreement, a countrywide shop stewards' movement – dominated by the Communist Party – was formed.

The outlook of the shop stewards' movement was the narrow, sectional one of the craft worker. The engineers, for instance, frequently called on the state to cheap, unskilled labour. But matters went further than this. Workers connected with the arms industries argued for their privilege on the grounds that a serious 'security' policy demanded rewards for those contributing to it. Conversely, papers like the aircraft stewards' *Propeller* saw accelerated rearmament as vital to the maintenance of their colleagues' living standards.

By 1938 the divisive pro-imperialist politics of the Stalinists in the weapons factories had permeated the whole labour movement. The 1939 May Day rally, for instance, became a mass protest against Chamberlain's unwillingness to tool up for war. At it Fred Smith, secretary of the AEU complained:

> 'the sources of skilled labour in this country are not being properly used. . .Skilled men in some centres of the industry are working short time. There is no ground whatever for the suggestion that as trade unionists we are hostile or apathetic on the question of national defence. The very idea is absurd.' (cited in H Dalton, *Air Muddle*, Labour Party pamphlet, London, May 1938)

Having earlier won consultation with the Government on munitions manufacture, the AEU began to request discussions on conscription. It hoped to get its members off military service by contending that they were already engaged in 'work of national importance' (AEU, *Monthly Journal*, May 1939, p184). The AEU's support for the war effort was clear for all to see.

The Amalgamated Union of Britons

The bosses had it made. Having previously split the working class between employed and unemployed, they had now managed to split the employed between basic and arms-related industries. Workers in the latter sector were well organised and occasionally very militant, but they were consistently the most zealous in advocating the militarisation of the economy. By 1939 everybody had, through anti-fascism, rallied round Battleship Great Britain.

While Hitler was preparing to invade Poland, the militancy of the trade unions in Britain turned into a readiness to accept any sacrifice that war required. Warning readers of the possibility of Britain becoming 'a secondary power, a kind of vassal state to Germany', the AEU *Monthly Journal* proclaimed: 'To retain liberty it is also necessary to impose upon oneself a measure of discipline' (February 1939). As the six years of super-exploitation that followed this showed, there was no 'discipline' that the trade union leadership was not prepared to see imposed on its members.

The period 1935-39 had a major effect on the working class. Strong shop-floor organisation had sprung up in the more advanced branches of British industry. Yet because these branches were closely linked with rearmament militancy was heavily alloyed with class collaboration. Militant trade union organisation at home was seen as complementary to British assertiveness abroad; both were held to be in the interests of the working class.

This intertwining of trade union militancy with adherence to the 'national interest' is still significant now, nearly 50 years after Britain last rearmed on a large scale. The TUC has yet to associate itself explicitly with today's efforts to restore Britain's *military* prestige; but, through the framework of industrial relations developed since the war, it has come to back Britain's *economic* survival more solidly than ever before. If workers are not to be used as cannon-fodder once more, they will have to be drawn away from their leaders' attitudes. Opposing the 'national interest' in the trade unions: that is the way to convert militancy to class consciousness in 1981.

James Wood

the next step conference

ON 22 FEBRUARY 200 readers and supporters of *the next step* from all over the country gathered in London.

One division we need

Introducing the morning session, Frank Richards reviewed the class struggle in Britain since the General Election. He emphasised the long-term consequences of Labour's Social Contract and the left's strategy of fusing workers' determination to defend living standards with the Labour Party's commitment to the defence of British industry. The success of this approach continues to dampen down militancy long after Labour has been removed from office.

Over the past two years the Tories have slowly built up their attack on the working class, going from victory to victory and gaining steadily in confidence. The result has been a degree of demoralisation in the trade union struggle and a gradual narrowing of its objectives. Shop stewards who led the mass protests that unseated the Heath Government are now negotiating cuts in real wages and voluntary redundancies.

These developments indicate the importance of demarcating a working class approach, of pushing for a clear separation between workers prepared to put their class interests first and those who are ready to make sacrifices to sustain their employers. It is this division, which tends to open up in any industrial dispute today in response to the tactics of management and union bureaucrats, that the left tries to avoid and disguise, and that the RCT works to promote and clarify.

In the discussion people related their experiences, especially in fights against the cuts and against redundancies. A recurring theme was the way that Labour Party politics – whether put forward by the party or its radical left supporters – acted as a barrier to mobilising workers and the unemployed. There was a generally positive response to the proposal that readers of *the next step* must play a more active part in both selling and writing for the review, if it is to reflect the experiences of a wide range of struggles in different parts of the country.

Fighting racism

In the afternoon Judith Harrison introduced a lively debate on RCT activity against racism. She explained how the present orientation of the RCT follows from our earlier critique of the narrow anti-fascism of the radical left. In the late 'seventies the Anti-Nazi League focused on the NF, while indulging nationalism in the labour movement. Now the left shies away from confronting the fascists and concentrates on the racism of the Tory Government. We challenge the reformist politics of the labour movement by pointing out its responsibility to provide physical defence for ethnic minorities – against fascists and against the state; we give practical shape to our politics by organising workers' defence.

There was some disagreement on the relative importance of physical defence work and our activity against deportations and the intensification of police harassment. The extent to which the ELWAR approach could be extended beyond East London was another subject of discussion.

The dayschool was very successsful in bringing a lot of readers of *the next step* together for a thorough discussion of the review and the practical work of the RCT. Now the task is to turn every reader into a subscriber, every subscriber into a seller and every supporter into a writer. Then we shall be well on the way to turning our national network of readers into a network of RCT branches.

reviews

Alternative capitalisms

TUC, 'Plan for growth: the economic alternative', *TUC Economic Review 1981*, £1.

Labour Coordinating Committee, *There is an alternative: policies for prosperity in the 'eighties*, no date, 40p.

Conference of Socialist Economics London Working Group, *The alternative economic strategy*, October 1980, pbk £2.50.

TGWU, *Control imports now!*, August 1980, 50p.

AUEW-TASS, *Save British industry*, no date, 75p.

Coventry, Liverpool, Newcastle, N Tyneside Trades Councils, *State intervention in industry: a workers' inquiry*, Russell Press, 1980, pbk £2.

EARLY IN FEBRUARY TUC leader Len Murray unveiled his 'alternative economic strategy' (AES) for national recovery. He proposed a £6.2 billion package to reflate the economy, raise living standards and cut unemployment. But the bourgeoisie was unimpressed. *The Times* bluntly dismissed Murray's approach as a 'recipe for inflation' and 'not one which need give the Government great pause for thought' (3 February 1981). Clearly the ruling class has no time for Murray's alternative. As far as it's concerned, the maintenance of capitalism today means more austerity measures.

So what are we to think of the current spate of 'alternative' policies churned out by Congress House, union head offices, the Labour Party and 'socialist economists'? The bourgeoisie won't listen. Should the working class?

After five years' hard Labour

No one can accuse the authors of these strategies of ignoring reality. They have each drawn lessons from the last Labour Government, mass unemployment and chronic recession. Being 'practical' is the important thing. So gone are the radical demands for sweeping nationalisation of industry which hit the headlines in the early 'seventies. After all, which workers would call for another British Leyland or British Shipbuilders let alone another British Steel Corporation! The situation is a little more 'complex' today. Although many of the old favourites – public spending, industrial democracy, import controls – still figure in these turgid screeds, the present crisis of British capitalism calls for a more sober appraisal.

All AES supporters share the same premise: the crisis can be solved in the interests of the working class – give or take a bit of class struggle – while we still have capitalism. In fact, those who specialise in speculating on such matters freely admit that the AES will not bring about socialism at all, but is at most a means to 'begin the process of socialist transformation' (LCC, p4).

Trade union bureaucrats may simply want to argue with Thatcher and Howe, while the radicals insist on mobilising the masses, but on this they are united: economic recovery is the *precondition* for social progress. In fact, capitalism can only survive through a relentless attack on the working class and, through competition, a struggle between the capitalists themselves in trade rivalries and war. Suppression of the workers and destruction of capital are the bourgeoisie's only means of restoring conditions for profitable investment.

But our economic strategists interpret the competitive weakness of capitalism in Britain – and the particular severity of the crisis which results – as a consequence of misguided economic policies. By advancing their 'alternative' policies they tie the future of the working class to the fortunes of British industry.

Profits and wages

Take their attitude to profit – the end and aim of capitalist production. British manufacturing industry complains of its lowest ever rate of profit. The bourgeois solution is to force down wages, push through redundancies and intensify exploitation in order to raise it. The AES worries about profit levels too, but argues for a different method: expand the economy. Len Murray explains: 'Greater profitability is needed in industry, as part of an expanding economy, but with workers receiving their just proportion of the wealth produced' (*The Times*, 3 February 1981). Right now the capitalists are in no mood to share things out, but they will be pleased that the TUC recognises their problem.

The 'socialist economists' of the CSE are a little more coy. Profits would rise with economic growth, they promise, but the point is to 'reduce the role of profit in the economy' (CSE, p45). Like the TUC they accept the right of the bourgeoisie to exploit workers and just want to quibble over the terms.

Or take wages. The TUC has long promised to help 'restrain' wage demands if the Government would see sense on other policies. Unfortunately for the union bureaucrats, the Tories can decline the invitation because they can let unemployment work for them. But even more radical AES enthusiasts agree that 'in an economy such as we are advocating. . .there is a proper place for the planning of incomes too' (LCC, op cit, p22). Under a 'Labour Government of the future' they hope to draw the labour movement into negotiations to agree what the country can afford.

Nationalism

The main political danger the AES holds for the working class is its nationalism. This is inevitable because the AES seeks a national solution to the capitalist crisis: it reeks of class collaboration. Workers are told to sink any differences with their bosses and unite for the good of the nation.

Stalinist General Secretary of AUEW-TASS Ken Gill names his union as the one that 'fights for British Engineering'. In an aptly titled pamphlet, we find the advice that 'Britain's industrial problems can only be solved by encouraging the active participation of the workforce' (*Save British industry*, p29). General Secretary of the TGWU Moss Evans goes one better. Denunciation of irrational Tory policies is complemented by a threat to 'forge direct links with employers' associations against the Government' (TGWU, op cit, p4). The needs of the nation are so great that 'both sides of industry' must rally to the cause. The LCC is impatient with socialist critics of the call for import controls: the country's needs are so urgent that they 'have no time for the type of internationalism which is concerned to reinforce Britain's domination by world capitalism' (LCC, p21).

Who needs it?

When workers are faced with redundancy, the collapse of social services and wage cuts, and demand action, the bureaucrats can point to the AES: control imports now! Expand the economy! They have *nothing* to say about resisting austerity measures today.

Not surprisingly the AES generates little enthusiasm among rank and file workers. This is the problem tackled by the four trades councils' 'workers' inquiry'. The authors are worried about the way 'Tory propaganda played very effectively on this alienation of many working class people from the state' after five years of Labour government, and concerned that today 'people are not confident about the alternative, however angry they are about the Tories'. They produce a cynical apology for Labour's industrial policy, pretending that the reactionary outcome of the NEB was the result of a series of external factors, not the result of the reactionary politics of the left's AES. Exonerating Tony Benn and his allies, they conclude that if his policies are to work next time, then workers will need 'more than publicity' to buy them. If workers are to 'give them commitment they need to be actively involved'.

This is the role the far left plays for Benn – mobilising popular support, building links among shop stewards' committees, tenants' associations, women's groups and the like – integrating the working class into schemes for its own defeat. It's not surprising that the conference convened by the authors recently in Coventry was a low key, almost funereal affair.

Socialism for the bosses

Mike Prior, editor, *The popular and the political: essays on socialism in the 1980s*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1981, pbk £6.95.

This collection represents the viewpoint of academic Marxism, a school of thought now well established in the social science departments of British universities and polytechnics. But the authors of these essays aren't just scholars: they have directly influenced the ideological development of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and their politics also attract the support of newspapers like *Tribune* and *Socialist Challenge*. Their denial of the necessity of the class struggle, their repudiation of the need to smash the capitalist state and their advocacy of spiritual renewal – three main features of British academic Marxism – thus deserve our attention.

It's quite fitting that this book is dedicated to the memory of Bill Warren. Bill Warren's main contribution to Marxism was his attack on Lenin's theory of imperialism and his advocacy of the absurd proposition that imperialism no longer exists and that capitalism remains a progressive historical force. The introduction to the text continues in the same vein. We are told that it is not good enough to reduce exploitation to a simple boss/worker dichotomy' (p1). Instead of naive notions about class society, therefore, we are offered the hackneyed bourgeois concept of the 'community' (p1).

And so it goes on. David Fernbach suggests that social change is best pursued through an 'ethical strategy'. Such a strategy can derive strength 'from the undoubted spiritual crisis' of capitalist society (p27). Paul Hirst and David Purdy offer workers similar advice. Hirst bemoans the narrow focus trade unions have on wages and offers the morally disorientated 'a successful incomes policy' and other forms of class collaboration as an alternative. Purdy recognises that man does not live by bread alone and suggests that incomes policy and a social contract can be a pleasant experience (p111).

Not all the authors concentrate on otherworldly matters. Barry Hindess, for example, sets himself the mundane task of destroying Lenin's theory of the state. Lenin, it seems, lacked Hindess' erudition: he could not understand that the state could not be reduced to class interests. And Peter Lawrence? He develops Hindess' subtle analysis in a novel treatment of the question of the revolutionary party. Since the state is not an instrument of class domination, he argues, it follows that it doesn't have to be destroyed. Thus 'the concept of the revolutionary party as a disciplined vanguard' isn't worth bothering about. Superior ethics and good community relations are the name of the game.

The 14 contributors to the *Popular and the political* are convinced that historical materialism is 'economist', 'essentialist' or 'reductionist'. They believe that life is too complex to be explained in terms of productive forces and social relations, and instead seek solace in religion and psychology; in the eighteenth century ethics of Kant, the social philosophy of Rousseau and the political economy of Ricardo. For them the class struggle is too difficult, class violence too abhorrent.

We commend this book to radical professors, to small businessmen, to their friendly neighbourhood allies in blue, and to vicars of the Church of England.

Defend the Kurds!

Gerard Chaliand, *People without a country: the Kurds and Kurdistan*, Zed, London 1980, 246pp, pbk £3.95.

Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague, 1965 repr. 1980, 304pp, pbk £3.75.

The publication of these two books and the increasing attention now being paid to the Kurds is to be welcomed. It coincides with the growing intensity of the war in the Kurdish areas of Iraq and Iran and with reports of mass arrests of Turkish Kurds in the east of the country.

The Kurds – an estimated 20 million live in an area presently divided between Iraq, Syria, Iran and Turkey – are probably the largest national grouping anywhere in the world denied national rights. Not only are they denied a homeland, their cultural rights are practically non-existent nearly everywhere they live. In Turkey, for example, the speaking or writing of Kurdish is usually punished by imprisonment. In Iraq, the Ba'ath regime has been carrying out a policy of genocide and mass deportations against the Kurdish population. In Iran, Khomeini's revolutionary guards divide their time between fighting the Iraqis and fighting the Kurds.

Kurdish oppression today stems from the period following the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Although promised a national homeland in 1920 by the victorious Allied powers, more important considerations (the discovery of oil in Iraqi Kurdistan and the desire of the imperialists to appease the new regime in Turkey) meant Kurdish aspirations went by the board. Both books give

ample detail of the countless revolts in each of the Kurdish areas ever since.

On several occasions the Kurds have been able to take advantage of the difficulties of their oppressors and win significant victories – such as the establishment of the Mahabad Republic in Iran in 1946. But the petit-bourgeois leadership of the Kurdish movement has often led the Kurds to defeat. The collapse of the revolt in Iraq in 1975 following the capitulation of Mustafa Barzani is a recent example.

The overthrow of the Shah of Iran, the reactionary policies of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime and the changing nature of the Kurdish areas themselves have stimulated a resurgence of nationalism. Capitalist development, especially in Turkey, has led to the growth of a proletariat and the breakdown of residual feudal relations on the land. Agriculture still predominates in most Kurdish areas, but it is increasingly capitalist in nature. Kurdish political organisations are increasingly demanding, not just autonomy, but independence and self-determination. At the same time organisations like the Kurdistan Democratic Party (the Iranian section is presently led by Ghassemlou) remain wedded to the Stalinist notion of a two-stage revolution – first the 'national democratic' revolution against imperialism, followed at a later date by the socialist revolution. This political weakness cannot be compensated for by the determination and courage shown by the Peshmerga guerrillas now fighting in Iraq and Iran.

The Kurdish struggle for self-determination is of enormous importance in the Middle East. Threatening the fragile territorial integrity of Turkey, Iraq and Iran, the Kurds' struggle is a threat to capitalist social relations that the rulers of these regimes clearly recognise. In Turkey the Kurdish areas were under martial law for two years before last September's coup. In Iraq Jordanian troops are presently being drafted in to strengthen Saddam Hussein's tenuous hold over the Kurdish regions – in particular the Mosul and Kirkuk oil fields. And in Iran anti-Kurdish chauvinism is one of the prime means by which the Khomeini regime tries to win all-class unity around its own petit-bourgeois nationalist programme. The refusal of sections of the Iranian left to support the Kurdish struggle can only delay the coming to power of the working class.

Chaliand's book, which contains articles by Kurdish and other scholars, is the most up to date, giving details of the most recent political developments in all parts of Kurdistan as well as a useful chronology. Ghassemlou's book, despite its Stalinist stance, is excellent on the class relations in the countryside and contains much useful empirical information. Both remind us of the importance of the national question in backward capitalist countries and the tragic consequences of failing to deal with it from a revolutionary standpoint.

LETTERS

ELWAR works?

Dear Editor,

'The best recommendation for ELWAR is that it works' – so began the paragraph in 'Fighting immigration controls' (*the next step*, No 10, February 1981). The paragraph then went on to describe the example of ELWAR action working: Mrs King's deportation postponed indefinitely, no more signing on at the Home Office, etc, etc.

Immigration controls, racism and indeed Britain's oppression of Ireland are as permanent as the British state itself. You don't fight the British state by winning small concessions from it and then claiming them as victories (however minor). If along the road of your struggle you manage to force a concession out of the state – well and good. Then the concession itself can be used propagandistically. But the way you have posed it leads one to think . . .well, if they can grant Mrs King the power to stay, why not all the others?

As far as I would imagine, the best recommendation for ELWAR action is that it wins active workers to oppose all immigration controls, not that it forces a mingy, once-in-a-while, special-case concession out of the British state. This approach only fosters the same illusions that the Campaign Against Racist Laws and members of the Labour Party suffer from and that you so vehemently detest – the illusion that the British state can be forced to behave a little more democratically. As far as the working class is concerned the best British state is a dead British state.

Fraternally,
S. Peters
London E2

Fran Eden **writes:**

The aim of ELWAR is to fight racism effectively and to destroy racism as a political force. Whether ELWAR action 'works' or not is not an incidental matter. British workers will only begin a fight against racism if they see such a fight as being in their class interest and if they see how it is to be conducted practically. This is what ELWAR is all about.

Revolutionary propaganda means more than telling people not to rely on the state: it means making clear the nature of the state by drawing out the lessons of each and every action we take.

Working class struggle based on independent politics can force the state to make concessions. When a deportation order is withdrawn it shows the potential such politics have. We do not sneer at any concessions that workers wrest from the state, no matter how partial or temporary they may be. A revolution is inconceivable unless workers have scored a whole series of victories against the state. Our correspondent's resounding declaration that 'the best British state is a dead state' is good enough for pub politicians only. Active workers, on the other hand, have to fight a state that is very much alive and kicking.

Women's Voice

Comrades,

So you turn your august attention to the question of Women's Rights? (*tns*, No 10) Great!

But what's this ridiculous obsession with standing alone on all issues?

For instance: during the 1980 steel strike, you were NOT 'the only organisation to challenge backward attitudes towards women on the picket lines', and an awful lot of *SW* and *Women's Voice* readers know quite well you were not.

I am really glad that you explain how 'the roots of today's violence against women lie in capitalist social relations'. But why do you pretend that this is something different from what *Women's Voice* says? I have been reading this for years in *Women's Voice*.

A pretty neat bunch of correct revolutionaries you may be – a monopoly in correct ideas you do not have!

However, after cheering on your provocative marches of textile workers down Brick Lane, and sharing your amusement at the press hysteria provoked by your 'karate-trained white vigilantes' in East London, your attack on Reclaim the Night marches and Women's Self-defence was really a bit too much.

It can't, and isn't meant to, 'relieve the labour movement of its responsibility to fight for women's rights' – neither is it put forward as the answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe and EVERYTHING. But isn't it just a really good idea for women to learn how to fight? (ELWAR needs us, for instance?)

As for Reclaim the Night marches, you seem to have got hold of the wrong end of the stick: they are not simply protests against prostitution and pornography, but a perfectly valid expression of women's refusal to accept the unreasonableness of expecting to walk safely at night without personal male protection. 'Red-light' areas are good places to choose for such demonstrations since they are well frequented and traditionally among the most awkward places for women to venture out alone. And while demonstrators might personally object very strongly to strip-clubs and pornography, I don't think you will find *Women's Voice*, as you imply, making reactionary demands for government bans and increased censorship.

Susan Tatlow
High Wycombe, Bucks

Denise Taylor **writes:**

The parallel between 'Reclaim the night' and ELWAR is inappropriate. ELWAR does not call for self-defence – it calls on workers to defend black people. The self-defence slogan puts the onus on blacks to fight capitalist oppression and absolves the labour movement of its class responsibility. The last thing we want to see is a situation where every oppressed group has to defend itself. If that happened the state could simply pick off one group after another.

'Reclaim the night' marches are not directed at the labour movement, nor are they intended to win working class support for the cause of women's liberation. These marches reduce the problem of violence against women to its most sensational and brutal aspects. They ignore the day to day oppression of women – at work, at home, on the dole – this is the acceptable face of capitalist violence against women. Instead 'Reclaim the night' supporters focus on pornography and the Yorkshire Ripper as extreme forms of violence. They shift attention from the basis of women's oppression in capitalist social relations onto an 'unacceptable face of capitalism'.

Hostility to the Yorkshire Ripper unites the women's movement with the most reactionary sections of society, people who rant about 'sex and violence' and 'muggers'. Even the National Front praised a woman arrested in Leeds for carrying a weapon. Obviously participants in 'reclaim the night' protests have different objectives, but whether they like it or not their only consequence is to invite stricter state censorship and legitimise the law and order brigade.

But there is more to it than this. 'Reclaiming the night' is a relatively recent phenomenon, but violence against women is not. So what's behind this sudden pre-occupation with Soho? Over the past decade it has become increasingly clear that feminist radical left politics have been unable to fight for women's liberation. Issues which really affect women – such as the provision of 24 hour nurseries – have largely been ignored. Even those who pay lip service to the call for free abortion on demand narrowed the recent campaign against the Corrie Bill to a defence of the restrictive 1967 Act. Incapable of pursuing the fight for women's rights from a working class point of view, radical feminists have sought out soft targets they can use to appeal to people's sense of justice and fair play. The result is bourgeois social work (battered women's centres) and consumer protection services (Depo provera and Playtex tampons).

It is possible to fight against lots of 'things' that are symptomatic of the position of women in capitalist society. Reformists choose problems which can be resolved within capitalism; revolutionaries choose issues which raise workers' consciousness and throw light on the root of the problem. *Women's Voice* may declare from time to time that 'the roots of today's violence against women lie in the capitalist system' but such statements have no practical consequences. *Women's Voice* activists fight capitalist products like Playtex tampons but postpone the struggle against capitalist social relations to another day.

On the steel strike. Both *Socialist Worker* and *Women's Voice* concentrated attention on patronising the small groups of militant women – notably from Stocksbridge – who travelled to picket at places like Sheerness. Both papers ignored male chauvinism in the ISTC.

Ireland

FROM THE H-BLOCKS

In the last two months of 1980 the world witnessed the courage of my fellow comrades as they went on hunger strike to the death. Their deaths were prevented when representatives of the British Government made certain agreements which my comrades accepted. In good faith we began to phase the blanket/no wash protests in a disciplined fashion as laid down by the Republican staff. For seven weeks everything possible was done to give the Brits the opportunity to end H-Block. In typical Brit fashion they reneged on their agreements leaving no alternative than to revert back to the no wash protest and shortly another hunger strike starts (we don't regard lying here for another four years an alternative). Over the years we Irish have witnessed the double dealing and treachery of England. Today we witness the same double dealings and treachery. For over four years now we have protested for political status, you all witnessed the Brits' attempts to break our protest, note I say break rather than resolve our protest. The Brits have never and will never concede anything which has never been taken from them. We have to take political status from them and we need your help. Whatever your position is we ask you to use whatever influence you may have. Do not forget when the Brits deceived the hunger strikers you were also deceived. They gave all cause for joy, God alone knows what was avoided when the hunger strike ended. But the blanket continues and another explosive situation is in the making. It can be avoided and will be if all give their support now. Tomorrow could be too late.

Peter

FROM THE CAGES*

With the continuing refusal by the British to implement their side of the agreement made with the representatives of the POWs in H-Block and Armagh goal on 18 December last, our comrades once again are left with no alternative other than to escalate their protest in the form of a hunger strike as from the 1st March.

The British obviously do not want to avert this hunger strike, and are openly seeking such a confrontation, because they believe that its defeat will have an adverse effect on the overall struggle, by undermining the morale of the prisoners, their supporters and the National Liberation Movement as a whole.

By doing so they have seriously miscalculated the will and determination of the prisoners and the National Liberation Movement, whose resilience has been demonstrated over the past twelve years. Britain has refused to learn the lesson of history, they never have succeeded in breaking the will of the Irish people and this struggle shall be no exception.

Now is the time for all workers and trade unionists in Britain to demonstrate their support for the prisoners' struggle in Ireland, and demand that they be accorded the status that is justly theirs, as captured combatants in the Irish war of Liberation.

There are two choices, either you support the prisoners in their struggle against oppression or else you can uphold British Imperialism and its suppression of the Irish people.

We therefore appeal to all trade unionists and the British working class to show their support for the prisoners and the National Liberation struggle and by doing so, to help expose Britain's hypocritical attempts to misrepresent the war of liberation currently being waged. To remain silent, as the TUC bureaucrats would have you do, is to endorse the continued suppression of the Irish Nation. British workers must realise that by fighting for the interests of the Irish people they are also helping to further the aims of the British working class. As Karl Marx put it, to awaken a consciousness in the English workers that for them the national emancipation of Ireland is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment, but the first condition of their own social emancipation.

IRSP POWs
Long Kesh

***this letter has been shortened**

TO THE COVENTRY CONFERENCE

Dear comrades,

May I on behalf of Sinn Fein generally and our trade union department members in particular thank all of you who have come together to discuss Ireland.

Republicans have long historic links with the labour movement in Britain and we are gratified that today despite pressure from quarters hostile to Ireland's National Liberation that you have come together as a representative group of trade unionists to consider our problems.

The forging of links between Republican trades unionists and our brothers and sisters in the union movement in Britain will speed the victory of the Irish people over British imperialism and the consolidation of a 32 county Socialist Republic.

Yours fraternally,
Paddy Bolger
Director of Economic Resistance

From us

It's hard to get a good argument anywhere these days. But if you want one, or just want to tell our readers something; or if you want to let us know what you think of our review, then write to the editor, *the next step*, Junius Publications, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX.

the next step

Four reasons to vote ELWAR

1 YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED
Why? Because we don't promise you anything in the first place. What's the point of promising jobs for all, decent housing or cheap transport when the money isn't there? Everybody knows there's a crisis. Profits are down and three million people are on the dole. When politicians promise you the earth they're just lying. The only way to get what you need – or even to hang on to what you've got – is to **fight for it**. That's what ELWAR is prepared to do.

2 YOUR VOTE WON'T BE WASTED
Voting for anybody else is a waste of time. The Tories make no secret about it. They're out to cut working class living standards to the bone. The Labour Party's no different: it just goes about the Tories' work a different way – by putting through massive rate increases *as well as* rent rises and redundancies! A vote for the liberals is the same as voting Tory. The National Front? They're a bosses' front. They help the bosses by blaming blacks for everything.

3 IT'S A VOTE AGAINST RACISM
If you live in East London you've got no choice – you're either for racism or against it. *All* the other parties are racist. They all support immigration controls. They all discriminate against black people. The National Front says 'send them all home'. The Labour Party says 'don't let any more in'. ELWAR says that everybody, black or white, has the right to a job, a home, and a decent life in East London. And ELWAR doesn't tolerate racist thugs. We fight back when black people are attacked.

4 IT'S A VOTE FOR SOCIALISM
Heard that one before? The Labour Party calls itself socialist. It's run East London for more than 50 years, and one more to give socialism a bad name than anybody else. But socialism isn't 40 per cent more on the dole in six months. Socialism isn't thousands on the housing waiting list. Socialism isn't unemployed school-leavers queueing up to join the National Front or joining the British Army – where they learn how to keep down their fellow workers in Ireland. If you're sick of the phoney socialists, if you want less talk and more action, vote ELWAR.

■ WHY VOTE AT ALL In the 1977 GLC elections only one in three people bothered to vote. We don't blame those who didn't. ELWAR wasn't around. But now you've got a choice. Don't stay away on 7 May.

DON'T JUST VOTE ELWAR – JOIN US!
Elections come and go. But ELWAR is always around. Fighting the fascist threat on the streets. Leading militant struggles for jobs and homes. Join us now!

VOTE ELWAR – 7 MAY 1981

Election rallies

Brick Lane
Thursday 16 April 7.30pm
Speaker: **Fran Eden** (GLC candidate for Bethnal Green & Bow)
Toynbee Hall
Commercial Street, E1
(Aldgate East tube)

Hackney
Friday 24 April 7.30pm
Speaker: **Joan Lamont** (GLC candidate for Hackney North & Stoke Newington)
Stoke Newington Town Hall
Stoke Newington Church Street, N16
(Stoke Newington BR)

Newham
Wednesday 29 April 7.30pm
Speaker: **Farehk Afzal** (GLC candidate for Newham North-East)
East Ham Town Hall
High Street South, E6
(East Ham tube)

DEFEND BRICK LANE!
Scores of fascists congregate in Brick Lane every Sunday protected by as many police. Join ELWAR supporters there at 9.30am, top of Brick Lane. Stop police harassment of anti-racists.

Money urgently needed to pay fines for five ELWAR supporters arrested there after an attack by fascists. Send to:
Box 22
136 Kingsland High Street, E8
(274 3951)

DEFEND THE BRICK LANE 5!
ELWAR FUNDRAISING BENEFIT
with "DELTA 5", DISCO, BOOZE
Saturday 15 May
Chat's Palace
Chatworth Road
Hackney
Admission £1.50

H-BLOCK

VICTORY TO THE IRISH HUNGER STRIKERS!
POLITICAL STATUS NOW!

London
Hunger strike day of action
28 March 12.00 noon
Rallies in Brixton, Hackney, Kilburn

Bradford
Hunger strike demonstration
14 April 12.30
Infirmary Fields (Westgate/Lamb Lane)

London
Easter Rising Commemoration March
19 April 2.00pm

Kick out Ted Knight~ and in Manchester...

Many of our supporters approve of our political stand against the Labour Party's outlook on Ireland, racism and unemployment. Now we're asking readers of *the next step* in Manchester and London to go one step further. Join us in the Greater Manchester/Greater London Council election campaigns to oust the Labour Party and put RCT supporters on the councils.

Doing the Lambeth talk

There's a lot of talk about fighting the cuts from the Labour Party in Lambeth. Unfortunately it has remained just talk. Council leader Ted Knight, always out to balance the accounts of Lambeth Council, announced massive rate rises earlier this year. But now, with elections in the air, he's decided they would be political suicide – so he's followed Labour councils everywhere and begun to cut jobs and services.

Lambeth is being rapidly transformed into an inner city ghetto. It's an ideal place to challenge the Labour Party: Lambeth Council is a clear example of the uselessness of reformist politics on every issue. The Labour Party is opposed to the Special Patrol Group – but wants more community policemen on the streets. It wants to help the borough's 15 000 unemployed – but all it does is support government-sponsored sweatshops, otherwise known as Youth Opportunity Programmes.

Meanwhile in Manchester...

Distinguishing Labour from Tory is becoming more and more difficult in Manchester these days. The Greater Manchester Council is run by the Tories and is inflicting major cutbacks in bus routes and staff and drastic rises in rents, rates and heating. Meanwhile the City council, which is Labour-run, is enthusiastically selling off council housing and decimating the council workforce with its natural wastage policies.

Labour's 'alternative' to the Tories involves fiddling with the figures for cheap electoral advantage. Take Manchester's buses again. The Tories want to take 300 off the road, make 4000 busworkers redundant and up fares too. Labour's alternative? Instead of a fare increase, a levy on the rates. Pay as you enter is replaced by pay before you leave home.

The RCT is standing candidates in the metropolitan elections in May because we want to make two things clear. First, if you want to defend your job, your school or your services, the only way to do that is to fight – not to rely on Labour or the Tories to defend your interests. Second, you can expect RCT supporters who've been actively engaged in defence of working class interests to carry on that fight on the council.

SOUTH LONDON RCT
GLC ELECTION MEETINGS
VOTE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST

22 April 7.30pm
Surrey Hall
Binfield Road, SW4
(Stockwell tube)

1 May 7.30pm
Clapham Manor Baths
Clapham Manor Street, SW4
(Clapham Common tube)

6 May 7.30pm
Lower Assembly Hall
Lambeth Town Hall
Acre Lane, SW9
(Brixton tube)

RCT GREATER MANCHESTER COUNCIL ELECTIONS MEETINGS

All at Parkside Hotel 7.30pm
South Lloyd Street
Moss Side

Wednesday 8 April
Housing and living costs up – fight the GMC's attacks!
Speakers: **Keith Tompson** (RCT candidate), **Carol Taggart**

Wednesday 22 April
Anderton's cops – racist thugs, not community policemen
Speaker: **Pam Lawrence** (RCT)

Wednesday 6 May
Vote Revolutionary Communist!
Speakers: **Keith Tompson** (RCT candidate) plus local trade union supporters