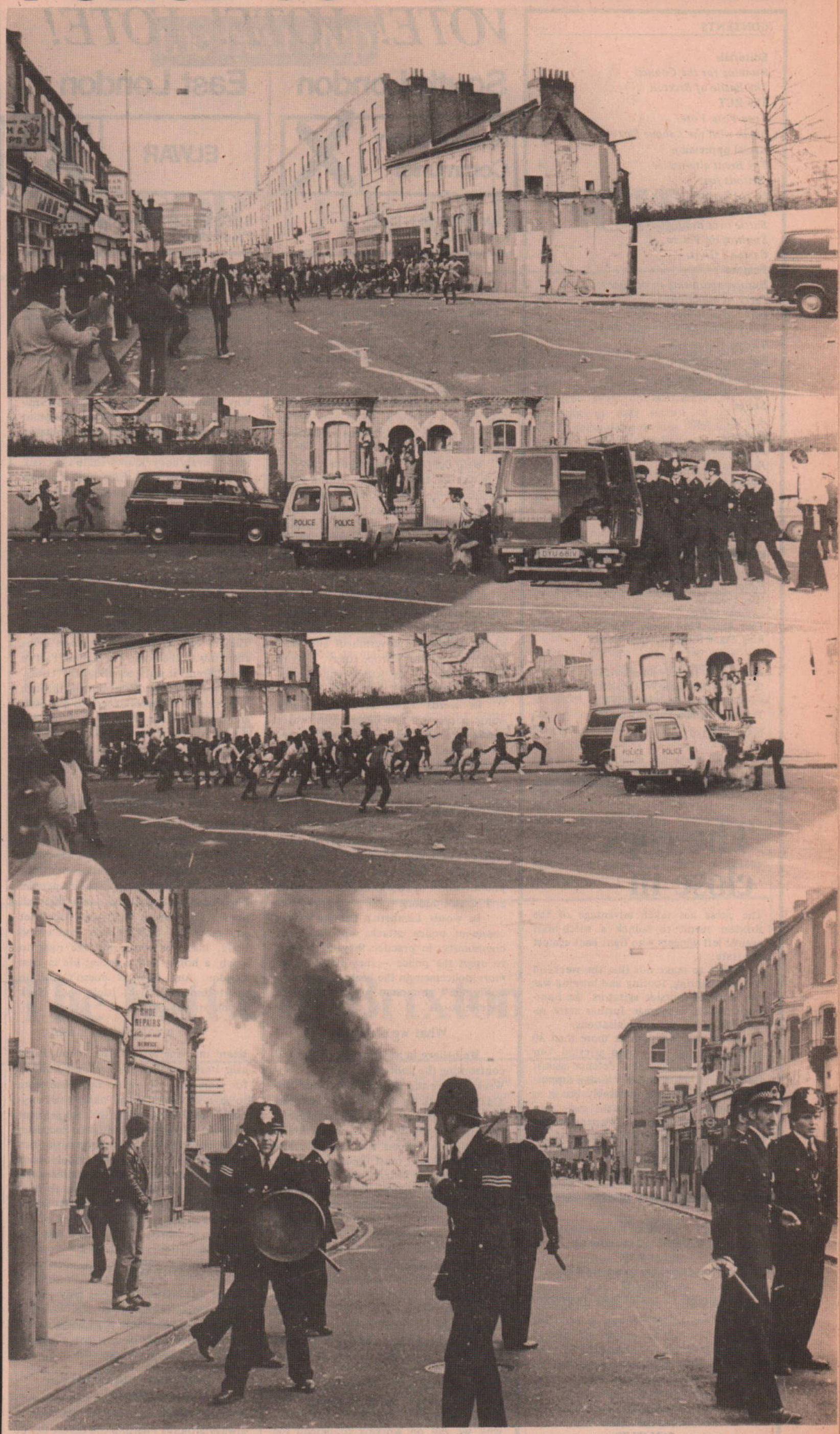
20p

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency

No 12 April 1981

POLICE OUT OF BRIXTON



The beginning of the Brixton revolt. Sick of police harassment, black youths charge up Atlantic Road. Their charge reaches a police van where police hold a young black. Police retreat as their vehicles are showered with bricks. Their van overturned and burning, police draw truncheons and call reinforcements for renewed repression in Brixton

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Editor
Mike Freeman
Editorial board
Tony Allen, Kevin Green, Nick Jenkins, Fenna King, Frank Richards, James Wood

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The cops close in

The press has taken advantage of the Brixton revolt to launch a witch-hunt against left wingers who fight back against the state.

Trying to make out that the weekend of streetfighting, looting and burning was the work of 'outside agitators' the bourgeois media encourage further state repression of left-wing organisations.

In the past six months more than 30 RCT supporters have been arrested. Our work in building workers' defence against fascists and police and in winning support for the Irish struggle inevitably brings us into conflict with the courts.

To carry on our work we need money – money to pay fines and court costs. We need £2000 in the next three months. Please send all donations to RCT Association, BM RCT, London WC1N 3XX.

cut

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VOTE! VOTE! VOTE!

South London

Revolutionary Communist X

LAMBETH CENTRAL
Kevin Green

Vote Revolutionary Communist!

We don't promise you anything
Unlike the Labour Party we don't propose nice schemes for sorting out the mess capitalist society is in. Why? Because they don't work. Only working class action can stop unemployment growing. Only workers organised to fight can stop the cuts. And it's only working class action that can put an end to police harassment of blacks in Lambeth.

We'll fight the bosses all the way
Vote for us and you'll be voting for a candidate who won't compromise about the interests of working people in Lambeth. Vote for us and you'll be declaring that you're no longer prepared to put up with the broken promises and sell-outs of the Labour Party.

Don't vote Labour!

The Labour Party is more or less the same type of party as all the so-called Socialist parties that sit in government and local authorities all over Europe today. They're workers' parties in words and bosses' parties in practice.

In words Lambeth Labour Party wants people to have decent jobs, wages and services. In practice it's put the rates up again and again, and now it's bent on cutting services and raising rents too.

In words the last Labour Government came in to bring about 'a fundamental shift in wealth and power in favour of working people'. In practice it cut pay under the Social Contract and saw through tens of thousands of redundancies in the nationalised industries and billions of pounds worth of cuts in health, education and house-building.

In words Lambeth's Labour leaders condemn police attacks on the black community. In practice they don't want to upset the police – they'd like to see *more* policemen on the beat ('community policemen') and more police control of 'race relations'.

What we stand for

We believe in isolating the racists and confronting the police.
Weeks before the Brixton revolt our candidate declared his opposition to all forms of racial oppression: from employers, fascists, community police, uniform and plain clothes officers and the SPG. The labour movement must fight back against police repression in Lambeth.

We believe that workers' jobs and living standards are not negotiable.
That's why we have formed the Unemployed Workers Group (Lambeth) – to fight for better benefits and for training facilities for unemployed youth, regardless of the cost to the Government. No worker should suffer hardship because of the bosses' crisis. The UWG fights for work or full pay for all workers.

We believe that workers must take the side of all oppressed people against the British state.
That's why we call on workers to support the Irish people in their struggle for liberation from British rule. And that's why we call on workers to defend the rights of black people against the courts and the police.

East London

ELWAR X

BETHNAL GREEN AND BOW
Fran Eden

HACKNEY NORTH AND STOKE NEWINGTON
Joan Lamont

NEWHAM NORTH EAST
Farehk Afzal

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.

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. And a vote for the Liberals is the same as voting Tory. The National Front? They're the bosses' front. They help the bosses by blaming blacks for everything.

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.

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 done 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!

Manchester

Revolutionary Communist X

MOSS SIDE AND HULME
Keith Tompson

Unemployment

Moss Side Job Centre has 5000 people on its register – in January they were joined by a further 200. In the same month how many vacancies were advertised? 30! Many of these were part-time jobs (less money than on the dole), YOP placements (no good if you're over 18, and if you're 17 and get one, who can survive on £23.50 a week?) or they involved so much travelling that the paltry wages would be obliterated by bus fares. The few well-paid jobs on offer are in the British Army, the police force or in the prisons guarding the inmates. If you accept the bribe you'll end up shooting Irish workers or keeping 'law and order' for the rich. Unemployment is so bad here that every tenth person in the British Army was recruited in Greater Manchester and the police HQ in Manchester gets 500 letters every month from local people asking to join!

Racism

All the black people who live in Moss Side know that they have more to put up with than the white people. Less jobs, worse jobs, attacks on them by racists and the police. We want the one-man cop-shop thrown out of the Moss Side Centre and an end to so-called 'community policing'.

Transport

GMT charges the highest fares in the North of England for the bus services. And, although the buses from Moss Side and Hulme into town and back are fairly frequent they are very expensive. Since 1968 the need for the buses to make a profit has been accepted – which has meant cuts in services, one-man buses and now over 2000 redundancies and a 15 per cent increase in fares. Although the Tories are responsible for the severity of the attack what alternative is Labour promising? They *might* freeze fares – *if* there's any money left in the kitty. No commitment there to defending workers' interests. And they certainly won't fight against all redundancies. Labour is no alternative to the Tories in the 7 May election.

Housing

Rents are going up by around £2 a week. In addition we face increases in the rates and the heating charges of about £5. Can you afford £7 – £10 more a week? We have started a Tenants' Charter which we will ask you to sign. It demands a freeze in the rents and improvements in our living conditions. It has at its centre a call for more workers to be employed to build new homes and to maintain our existing accommodation.

Vote Revolutionary Communist!

The only candidate in the GMC elections who is committed to fighting for these policies is Keith Tompson. If you vote him in as a Revolutionary Communist councillor things in Moss Side will never be the same again: we will be represented for the first time in our lives. Our interests lie in fighting the plans that both Labour and Tory share – for more cuts, more hardship, more police activity and more unemployment. Use your vote on 7 May but get involved in fighting now.

the next step

RUNNING FOR THE COUNCIL

ON 7 MAY people in Lambeth, East London and Manchester have a real choice in the local elections for the first time in living memory. Five Revolutionary Communist candidates (including three under the flag of East London Workers Against Racism) are running for the council. In five traditionally safe Labour seats we are shouting out a message not heard in Britain for more than half a century: the interests of the working class demand a break with the Labour Party.

Shires and rotten boroughs

There seem to be vast political variations among local councils, from the rural Tory shires to the red hot boroughs of the inner city areas. The Conservatives, nationally and locally, are pledged to reducing public spending; Labour boasts its commitment to boosting expenditure and maintaining services. However, under the surface councils have much in common. Whether Tory or Labour, 'actual spending on the local level has been falling steadily since 1979' and 'in almost all years almost all councils have met the target that Governments have requested' (*The Times*, 24 March 1981).

Tory and Labour controlled councils share a common commitment to sound financing in local government. Labour's manifesto for the Greater London Council elections insists that its policies are 'realistic', 'sane and rational' and will give 'good value for money'. What this means, at a time of economic recession and cuts in central government funds, is an acceptance of the need to make sacrifices at the local council level. The great debate between Labour and Tories is about *how* the working class in the boroughs should pay the price for the capitalist crisis.

Leader of the GLC Labour group Andrew McIntosh proudly quoted Herbert Morrison (the man who won London for Labour in 1934) at the launch of this year's election campaign:

'Money raised by rates and spent on social services may be the truest economy.' (Quoted in *The Times*, 31 March 1981)

The key question for Labour through the ages is how to make 'the truest economy', how to accommodate the needs of the working class within the economic constraints imposed by the capitalist crisis. Its answer is to cut living standards by raising the rates in preference to cutting services.

Labour jacks up the rates; the Tories cut services. In fact these are not stark alternatives – both parties use both methods in practice. Compare Labour-controlled Lambeth and neighbouring Tory Wandsworth. In Lambeth, workers face astronomical rate rises while in Wandsworth services have been slashed and hundreds of jobs lost. But Lambeth leader Ted Knight's heroic stand on higher rates hasn't deterred him from cutting jobs and services; nor are the Wandsworth Tories reluctant to raise the rates (they're going up by 27 per cent).

Red Ted, Maggie and Horace

The Conservatives' election campaign is being run on their record of 'good housekeeping'. Party chairman Lord Thorneycroft has also raised the spectre of 'the Marxist flag flying over town halls' – especially in Manchester and Greater London (*The Times*, 19 March 1981). 'The Marxist threat to London is no figment of the imagination' warns GLC Tory leader Horace Cutler in his party's manifesto which mentions Marx and Marxists 17 times in the space of 16 pages. We appreciate the concern of the bourgeoisie at the impact Revolutionary Communist councillors could have, but we are not likely to be in a position to take full control of Manchester and the GLC after 7 May. But what Thorneycroft and Cutler are trying to make out is that *the Labour Party* is about to transform concils into Soviets, a proposition so ludicrous that it is unlikely to persuade many people to vote Tory.

The Labour Party too can play this game. The party of alternative cuts disguises its anti-working class policies by ferocious attacks on Margaret Thatcher and other Tory ministers, whom it blames for the rate rises, rent increases and all the other inequities it has imposed on people in the areas it controls. Labour councils have presided, often for decades, over deteriorating services (especially housing and transport), growing unemployment and the steady build-up of racial oppression.

The Communist Party – which we are opposing in Lambeth and Hackney – has been apologising for the Labour Party for many years. The election campaign provides an excellent opportunity to expose this declining parasite on the labour movement. The racist pogroms conducted by its Stalinist colleagues in France clearly reveal the logical outcome of the British CP's approval of immigration controls and 'community policing'.

Break with the Labour Party

The Revolutionary Communist Tendency has been fighting on the issues we have raised in the local government elections for some years. In Manchester we are following up our record of activity against redundancies with campaigns on housing (including agitation around a tenants' charter) and transport (featuring opposition to cuts, redundancies and fares increases on the buses). In Lambeth we have long been active in resisting the reactionary policies of Ted Knight's council; in recent months our Unemployed Workers Group has been fighting for better benefits and facilities for unemployed youth. East London Workers Against Racism has acquired a national reputation for building workers' defence against racist violence.

There are two main themes in our election campaign. First we deny that the working class has any responsibility for the recession: we refuse to accept any sacrifices, cuts or rises in the costs of services in the cause of capitalist rationality. Second we say that the working class has a responsibility to stand up for the oppressed – women, the Irish, blacks. In particular each of our local campaigns takes up the issue of racism and the urgent need for the labour movement to defend blacks against fascists (especially in Tower Hamlets and Newham) and the police (in Lambeth, Hackney and Moss Side). Vote for us and make a real break with the past!

The Battle of Brixton

THE BATTLE OF BRIXTON on 11 April showed the determination of the community to resist their oppressors by all means possible. All workers should wholeheartedly support the revolt of the people of Brixton.

The profound social and political dynamic behind the weekend's events was even recognised in Liberal and Labour circles. Labour councillors talked about the problem of 'over-policing and 'urban deprivation'. Their solution: community policing and urban aid.

Calls for 'democratising' the police force or creating closer relations between the police and the community are in reality calls for a more subtle form of oppression. The police are the agency of a racist state: they enforce legislation which treats black people as second class citizens. Their role is to keep black people 'in their place' and to contain any resistance to racial oppression. Those who contrast the SPG to the community policeman falsely imply that an agency of the state could be non-racist and non-oppressive.

The people of Brixton do not need the protection of any state body. What is needed is workers' defence: organisation at the workplace, on the estates and on the dole against state harassment and intimidation. That's why we regard the Battle of Brixton as a very positive step in 'community relations'.

Tip of the iceberg

The police are only one aspect of the problem. Nor is it simply a question of urban deprivation. Many other localities suffer the savage effects of the capitalist crisis: high unemployment, bad housing and scandalous social services prevail in most working class communities in Britain. Brixton suffers not only poverty but the full impact of racial oppression.

During the last 30 years racial discrimination has become a way of life in South London. Racism in all spheres of society has ensured that black people in Brixton suffer particularly badly. Even at the height of the post-war boom unemployment levels were high. In 1957 the local press reported that 'Employers do not want coloured people and if it's not the employers it is the unions' (*South London Press*, 29 January 1957).

Black workers did not only face discrimination from the bosses but also from the local labour movement. Rather than fighting racism the official labour movement itself turned a blind eye. The Labour Party in Lambeth has a scandalous record. In 1955 the Labour-dominated council expressed its 'misgivings about the continued influx of Jamaicans into the Brixton and Norwood areas of the borough' (*South London Press*, 22 February 1955).

Racial oppression by the state and the despicable role of the official labour movement has ensured that in South London the working class is divided along racial lines. The responsibility for this state of affairs lies with the Labour Party and its chauvinist outlook. It has contributed to the isolation of the black community and created a climate of opinion in which many workers have come to accept police harassment of black people.

Active workers must fight to change this state of affairs. They must combat the racists in the workers' movement and come out in full support of the Brixton revolt. To this end supporters of *tns* have launched **South London Workers Against Racism** to win trade union solidarity with the resistance of the people of Brixton.

Be vigilant

Over the next few weeks the police will try to restore their position in Brixton. Repression has already begun. Police have raided local estates and have made numerous arrests. The immediate task is to organise against racist violence and to defend the victims of the courts and the police. Supporters of *the next step* have already been active, providing medical aid and assisting with legal defence. But this is not enough. Active workers should mobilise resources in their trade unions and make them fully available for the people of Brixton. State repression must not be allowed to succeed!

Labour can't fight racism

The Brixton riot had scarcely begun before local Labour MPs and councillors were calling for more community police, more accountable and more democratic police. For months now prominent Labour politicians like Tony Benn have been exhorting black people to tackle their problems by joining the Labour Party. And some black politicians have responded.

For example, in the North London borough of Brent, Merle Amory, 'Britain's first black woman councillor' claims that 'black people are coming into the Labour Party because they are fed up with broken promises and they are coming in now to take part in the changes taking place' (Morning Star, 24 March 1981). But are there any positive changes taking place in the Labour Party? We look at developments in Brent and at Labour's anti-racist 'arguments'.

The Brent alternative

HUNDREDS of black people have joined the Brent Labour Party in the hope of transforming it into an anti-racist organisation. Brent has one of the highest concentrations of black people in England — 33 per cent. Out of the 38-strong Labour groups on Brent Council, eight councillors are black. Last December the Asian Labour Party Alliance (ALPA) was formed to win more representation for black people in the party. ALPA claims 800 members in Brent alone; it has set up branches in other London boroughs (Lambeth, Islington, Camden and Wandsworth) as well as in Bradford, Leicester and Birmingham. To find out what ALPA hoped to achieve through the Labour Party, Anita Lloyd talked to Manibhai Patel, one of the eight Brent black councillors and former chairman of the Brent Indian Association (BIA).

The lesser evil

'ALPA was formed because the BIA realised that it could not pressurise Brent Council to act in the interest of the black community' said Manibhai Patel. He agreed that the Tory and Labour Parties had similar policies towards the black community but stressed that 'Labour was the lesser of the two evils, and there was absolutely no other way but to fight racism from within the Labour Party'. He added that 'It was all a matter of choosing the right candidates from the community in order to advance the struggle, first at council level and eventually in Parliament'.

What have the Labour councillors achieved? The Labour Council has not organised any investigation of racist attacks in the area, nor has it taken any steps to resist state harassment of black people. All the council has managed to do is pass a resolution opposing racist immigration controls. Like other Labour councillors, Manibhai Patel believes that not all immigration controls are racist. This faith in the neutrality of the state has led the Labour councillors to rely on the police to defend the black community.

Early last year there were a number of racist attacks in the Kingsbury area of Brent. The victims demanded the establishment of defence groups. The BIA opposed this demand because it felt that it was best to develop close links with the police. It invited the police to a public meeting to discuss the problem of racial violence and according to Patel 'the increase in police activity has helped maintain good relations since then'.

Not surprisingly Manibhai Patel voted for a 20.3 per cent increase in the precept that Brent Council pays to the Metropolitan Police. Last year the Council passed a resolution emphasising the importance of community policing. According to our information the police in Brent are much the same as the police elsewhere. We are not sure if they smile when they come to serve a deportation order or if they evoke the spirit of the community when they launch a passport raid.

The Brent alternative

The growing influence of black politicians inside the Brent Labour Party has attracted considerable interest. A popular West Indian weekly noted:

'The recent moves of the black and Asian caucuses to try and penetrate local government must now be taken a lot more seriously than they have so far, and the black councillors who are trying to establish a black presence in the council chamber must be supported with more strength and commitment than the black community has shown so far. . .the argument that the only way of fighting racism is by taking to the streets or fighting with the police is a foolish and dangerous one. . . .' (*West Indian World*, 27 March 1981)

But the council chamber is an illusory alternative. When black people took to the streets in the past it was not because they liked fighting but because they had no choice. Police harassment and racist abuse are an everyday feature of British society. Race relations legislation and institutions have done nothing to improve matters. This is not surprising because the British state is thoroughly racist. A racist institution cannot be transformed into its opposite. All that can happen is that the state can exercise racial oppression in more subtle ways.

The British state will certainly make token gestures. The police have indicated that they want more black recruits. (The Special Patrol Group even has a West Indian constable.) The ruling class also wants to cushion the impact of its oppression by establishing a layer of 'responsible' black leaders. But ultimately the only language that the state understands is the language of force. Bristol and Brixton have done more to strengthen the position of black people than a thousand black Labour councillors fighting for their community in council chambers.

The main beneficiary of the Brent alternative is the Labour Party. As in other inner city areas the local Labour Party was near collapse: until recently only a handful of old timers bothered to come to ward meetings. The infusion of new blood has given Brent Labour Party a new lease of life. And Brent's new image has wider electoral implications — the Labour Party can now portray itself as the party that fight racism. Whatever the intentions of black councillors in Brent the danger is that the genuine anti-racist sentiment of black people will be integrated into the election machine of the Labour Party.

LABOUR'S RECORD

Britons first

MANY PEOPLE — black and white — look to the Labour Party to fight racism. Even leading radical black nationalists like Paul Boateng combine a brand of black nationalism with Labour Party activism. The view that the Labour Party is the best vehicle for fighting racism seems to be confirmed by the recent anti-racist posturing of leading Labour Party politicians. In April Shadow Home Secretary Roy Hattersley went as far as to criticise the Labour Government for passing the 1968 Immigration Act and committed the next Labour administration to repeal it.

Racism with a blush

In the 'fifties and 'sixties prominent Labour spokesmen talked about racial harmony and about building a multi-racial society. However, when racism became a political issue they fell silent. When racists argued for putting Britain first and thousands of Britons agreed, the Labour Party was impotent. For the Labour Party too had been for putting Britain first and it had no arguments against those who drew out the racist conclusions of British nationalism. In the 'sixties the Labour Party caved in and joined the racist assault on black people. Former Cabinet Minister Richard Crossman's recollections of his visit to Smethwick in 1970 make this point clear:

'Racialism has been extremely violent in this area but there were many more questions about doctors and nurses and secondary schools. There is no doubt that stopping immigration was one of Callaghan's great achievements, has done an enormous lot for us and that in places like Smethwick the racial undertone, which was enormously strong in 1964, is now even weaker than in 1966.'

The Labour Party's response to racism was, not to fight the racists, but to prevent more black people from entering Britain.

What many anti-racists don't understand is that the Labour Party can only fight racism rhetorically. Recently *Socialist Worker* reprinted excerpts from a speech by former Labour Party leader Hugh Gaitskell to show how to counter racist arguments. And what did Gaitskell say?

'As the number of unfilled vacancies goes down, the immigration figure goes down. As the number of unfilled vacancies rises, the immigration figures go up.'

Socialist Worker goes on to endorse Gaitskell's arguments wholeheartedly:

'Some of the scum in the Tory Party said immigrants came to scrounge off the Welfare State. Gaitskell swept them aside. Black people in this country were working. They kept industry and social services going. They paid higher rates of tax than most white workers.'

And *Socialist Worker* goes on to assure us that Gaitskell's arguments retain their validity today: 'The black population remains younger than the white population and makes less use of the social services and pensions'. And the 'number of Asian people living in council houses is only a third of the national average'. And to clinch the argument, 'the number of young blacks not claiming unemployment benefit is far higher than the rest of the population' (*Socialist Worker*, 4 April 1981).

This is what *Socialist Worker* calls smashing 'the arguments for immigration controls'! All that Gaitskell and *Socialist Worker* say is that black people are good for the economy. They argue that the racists are wrong because black workers are a good investment for Britain. The numbers game is no way to fight racism; in fact these arguments have a racist premise. They assume that black people have to justify their presence in Britain by pointing to the contribution they make to the British economy.

Gaitskell did not say that black people have a right to stay whether they are young or old or whether or not they use social services. He accepted the terms of the discussion established by the racists and argued that immigrants were not as much of a burden as they were made out to be. No wonder that later, when more immigrants entered Britain, the Labour Party followed through the logic of Gaitskell's argument and slapped on immigration controls.

Labour is guilty!

Not only is the Labour Party incapable of fighting racism but it is also to blame for making racism respectable in the British working class. During the past 70 years the Labour Party has preached the message of nationalism in the labour movement. It has used every opportunity to evoke pride in the British nation and suspicion towards everything and everybody foreign. The Labour Party has made chauvinism acceptable. Today Labour politicians vie with one another to denounce Japanese cars, French apples, Asian textiles, American fingers on the nuclear button, Arab oil and of course the EEC.

The stranglehold of chauvinism over the British labour movement means the black community can expect no support from this quarter. The Labour Party has driven an ideological wedge between the working class and the black community. Racism can only be fought if this wedge is removed. The Labour Party cannot be reformed into an anti-racist organisation: to fight racism we have to destroy the influence of the Labour Party.

The Smash the PTA Campaign goes nationwide

The battle over Bobby Sands

The tremendous victory of H-Block hunger strike leader Bobby Sands in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone bye election has given a great boost to the campaign for political status. As we go to press Bobby Sands and three other hunger strikers carry on their heroic struggle against the intransigent refusal of the British Government to recognise them as soldiers in a national liberation army instead of branding them as psychopaths and criminals. However the hunger strike ends it has brought into the open more clearly than ever before two different approaches to building support for the Irish struggle in Britain.

Bobby Sands MP

'Even if he is allowed to keep his seat, he is likely to be dead of starvation soon.' (*The Times*, 11 April)

The British press tried to portray the recent Six Counties bye election as a bizarre, tribal conflict: a convicted 'IRA felon' against an Orange gentleman farmer. The contest between an active member of the Irish liberation movement and a fervent advocate of British direct rule came too close to revealing the true lines of conflict in the Irish War for the comfort of the ruling class. The result, showing how clearly the people of Ireland perceive the alternatives – for or against British imperialism – was a serious blow to Britain. Crucially, it demonstrated how the nationalist population repudiates Britain's 'criminalisation' strategy and identifies with the national liberation struggle.

Bobby Sands' election to Westminster shifts the focus of the hunger strike from the H-Blocks in Ireland to the House of Commons in England. It draws attention to the key significance of what happens in *Britain* for the outcome of the political status campaign in Ireland. If Sands could come to London he would see an even more disgusting spectacle than the one he has had to get used to over his long years in the Maze: there the excrement merely coats the walls, in Parliament it fills the air. The nausea induced by weeks of forced starvation would undoubtedly get worse at the sight of the Labour MPs who unanimously urged Tory Northern Ireland minister Humphrey Atkins not to make any announcement about the hunger strikers lest it give them publicity, now putting their heads together with the Tories to work out some way of preventing Sands from taking advantage of his mandate from the Irish people.

If antipathy to the Irish hunger strikers were confined to the House of Commons Sands' predicament would not be so dangerous. The problem is that the total solidarity the Parliamentary Labour Party extends to the Tory conduct of the hunger strike reflects the support of the official labour movement outside Parliament for British rule – including British H-Blocks – in Ireland. This is the problem that the Smash the PTA Campaign set about resolving from the first day of the hunger strike.

From Coventry to Derry

The Coventry conference of the Smash the PTA Campaign took place two weeks after the hunger strike began. Its focus was the TUC's reactionary policy on Ireland: after years of pleading the British Government to repress the Irish people more gently, the bureaucrats stood solidly behind the Labour Party's repudiation of the demands for political status. TUC General Secretary Len Murray threatened to expel any trades council that associated itself in any way with the conference: six still sent official observers and members of 20 more attended. Concerted attempts by members of the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party and the International Marxist Group to undermine trade union support for the conference backfired: more than 30 prominent trade union activists gave personal sponsorship and 10 union branches sent official delegates.

Conference convenor Dave Hallsworth (secretary of Tameside Trades Council, disaffiliated from the TUC in 1980 because of its support for the Irish struggle) surveyed the work of the Smash the PTA Campaign over its first year. He explained how our work in building labour movement support had brought us up against the barrier of the TUC and the influence of its 'Better Life For All Campaign' policies. Founder member of the Derry Civil Rights movement and prominent IRSP member Finbar O' Doherty delivered an impassioned appeal for British workers to oppose the British government over the political status issue, not on the grounds of liberal humanitarianism, but in their own class interests. He hailed the conference as the most important challenge to the pro-British stand of the labour bureaucracy for many years.

Derry trade union activist Paddy Logue gave a full account of the work of the local trade union action committee against the H-Blocks and Armagh, focusing on the day of industrial action and the problems caused by the resistance of the bureaucrats in Dublin and London. His call for support from British workers for another one day strike – on 15 April – provided the focus for the activity of Smash the PTA Campaign supporters around the country in the weeks after the conference.

Local committees of the campaign have been initiated in East London, South London, Manchester and the Coventry area. The Nottingham branch of the Troops Out Movement has resigned from the national organisation and is now beginning to operate as a branch of the Smash the PTA Campaign in association with other Midlands supporters. We hope to establish other local committees in other parts of the country.

Our activities in support of the Derry Day of Action drew an immediate positive response in trade union circles. In the short time available we organised a 30 strong delegation to join the demonstration and other events in Derry, with the support of several trades councils and union branches. A few workplaces agreed to token industrial action on 15 April in solidarity with the H-Block struggle, with the backing of their union branches.

Broad and narrow

The 250-strong Coventry conference was the largest and broadest assembly of support for the Irish prisoners during the hunger strike. It voted by an overwhelming majority for political status *and* to back the national liberation struggle. Indeed the conference confirmed that the *only* people who will give consistent support to the Irish prisoners are workers who acknowledge their common interest with the national liberation movement in defeating the British state. But many people in the Troops Out Movement and the left still want to narrow their approach to win the approval of small groups of middle class people. The recent campaign has shown that this method may get a few opportunist politicians to sign a petition in sympathy with dying hunger strikers but it is useless in mobilising active opposition to the Government's refusal to grant their demands.

The difference between the approach of the Smash the PTA Campaign and that favoured by TOM is best clarified by looking at the Don't Let Irish Prisoners Die Ad Hoc Committee. The figureheads of this campaign are Labour left MP Ernie Roberts and assistant editor of the *Morning Star* Chris Myant, but the initiative and the legwork comes from old campaigners in TOM and the SWP. The hunger strike was a month old before the committee had its first meeting, with the declared aim, not of supporting the struggle for political status, but of preventing 'the creation of any martyrs' (circular from Roberts and Myant, 16 March). The meeting in the House of Commons was attended by Communist Party General Secretary Gordon McLennan, the chairman of the Labour Committee on Ireland and a representative of the Young Liberals – all organisations that have done absolutely nothing to support the prisoners' struggle. Apologies were received from the Bishop of Stepney, the Bishop of London, the Chaplain to the Speaker and the Dean of St Pauls, the last doubtless too busy with the Royal Wedding to worry about starving Irishmen.

'Tragic and unnecessary'

The Stalinists set the tone of the meeting. McLennan made the extraordinary remark that 'the H-Block prisoners sold us out when they gave in last time' and his deputy Myant insisted there was 'no way' the committee should associate itself with Bobby Sands. He made the key political point that the committee should appeal for sympathy for the prisoners from people who *don't* support the cause of Irish unity: this is where the CP meets the radical left. Myant declared that demonstrations were not necessary and requested radical left help in organising petitions and lobbies. Having secured general agreement, he went off to write 'an appeal'. Here is the first paragraph of the 'Don't Let Irish Prisoners Die' appeal:

> 'We believe that it will be tragic and unnecessary if Bobby Sands and his fellow hunger strikers in the Maze Prison die. Tragic, because the creation of more martyrs will fuel the conflict for another generation. Unnecessary, because very little is required of the Government to solve the present crisis.'

The word 'martyrs' is commonly used in the bourgeois media about Irish prisoners. It is highly objectionable. It implies that the prisoners are themselves to blame for their conditions and for their fate as a result of weeks of starvation. It shifts attention away from the British criminalisation strategy and the republican prisoners' right to political status. It is not the self martyrdom of the Irish that fuels the conflict in the Six Counties – it is the continuing British occupation in all its aspects, including the regime in the H-Blocks.

The appeal claims that 'very little is required' to end the hunger strike. This squares very badly with the repeated declarations of the government that it will never surrender on political status – and the total support of the Labour Party for its stand. In fact nothing short of a major rupture between class conscious British workers and their leaders in the unions and in Parliament is required to force the Government to concede political status. The DLIPD committee's appeal for an 'imaginative breakthrough' and its quibbling about prison work and clothing is just a tissue of lies to conceal its accommodation to British barbarism in Ireland.

Winning the marathon

Scarcely anybody has heard of the Don't Let Irish Prisoners Die appeal. Yet it is the fruit of the concerted efforts of radical left Irish activists. The committee reveals the result of narrowing the politics of Irish solidarity to make it acceptable to liberals, reformists and Stalinists. The committee is simply an insult to the Irish prisoners. Unlike past campaigns that at least attempted to mobilise active support, the latest committee doesn't even try.

While the SWP, the IMG and the rest follow the futile trail to make friends and influence people in the committee rooms of the House of Commons, they have given only token support to the activities in support of the hunger strike around the country. Demonstrations in Manchester and Bradford were attended by less than 200 people; one in Staines by less than 60. Up to 20 per cent of these marches were made up by Smash the PTA Campaign supporters. Planning meetings and socials were often better attended than badly organised public meetings and rallies. Demonstrations were cancelled, postponed and moved from one city to another, as committee meetings were taken up with recriminations. The major activity for one group during the hunger strike became the increasingly strident and vacuous denunciation of other organisations.

Meanwhile the Smash the PTA Campaign got on with the work of winning labour movement support for the prisoners. We campaigned in workplaces, trade union branches, stimulated debate about Ireland on trades councils and in other labour movement organisations up and down the country. We backed any action initiated by anybody in support of the prisoners' demands for political status, and we welcomed the support of any individual or organisation for our conferences, meetings, rallies, and other events. We published a special pamphlet on the Coventry conference and our campaign to overthrow TUC Irish policy. We produced thousands of Smash H-Block posters, stickers and badges and organised a few stunts (two supporters would have won the London marathon carrying a 'Victory to the Irish Hunger Strike' banner if the police had not intervened to save the Government's face) to create publicity for the hunger strike.

The way to win the support of the working class – the broadest movement in the world – is through a clear appeal to the distinctive interests of the working class. This is one thing that distinguishes the Smash the PTA Campaign from the rest. The other thing is that it's an approach that works.

Annie Dillon

Thatcher/Haughey nightmares

The new round of talks between the governments of Britain and the Irish Republic has stirred up old controversies north and south of the Border. Northern Loyalists have resurrected Carson's 1912 Covenant: the Rev Ian Paisley organised a moonlight parade of Protestants brandishing gun licences and a series of rallies to drum up Loyalist opposition to any new deal between London and Dublin. In the Republic Prime Minister Charles Haughey's opponents have recalled de Valera's stand on Irish neutrality in the 'thirties and 'forties to rally resistance against any surrender of defence concessions to Britain as the price for a say on affairs in the Six Counties. Mick Kennedy looks at the obstacles to Britain's latest 'solution'.

SPIRIT OF DE VALERA

'Ireland, to state the case bluntly, is not a neutral country...

'One defence expert in London dismissed the whole question...as irrelevant. He took the hypothetical case, not of a nuclear war but of a situation of greatly heightened tension in Central Europe...In that case, he said, what would matter would not be the Western Approaches but the position "at the sharp end" in Germany. And in that case the Irish, whether or not they were members of any alliance, would simply have to do as they were told' (*The Irish Times*, 25 February 1981).

Doing 'as they were told' has been second nature to Dublin governments ever since the Partition of Ireland in 1920 created the Free State. The terms of Partition stipulated British control of ports, Lough Swilly, Cobh and Berehaven. The Twenty-Six Counties remained firmly under British control as a dominion with foreign and defence affairs closely supervised from London. Despite the return of the treaty ports in 1938, de Valera's insistence on neutrality in the Second World War and the declaration of the Republic in 1949, Ireland has remained for all practical purposes under British military domination ever since.

Dev backs the Brits

Britain has always got what it wanted from the Republic. In line with British wishes de Valera was obliged even to defy the Church and support sanctions against Italy over Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia. And it was de Valera who reported favourably to the assembly of the League of Nations on Neville Chamberlain's Munich appeasement of Hitler in 1938 (F S L Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*). Although the Free State remained 'neutral' in the Second World War, Britain used Irish air space and coastal waters with impunity. More than 50 000 Irishmen enlisted in the British services while de Valera's Government interned republicans to assuage Churchill's fears of a 'fifth column' in Ireland.

Today Ireland is formally an independent country, outside the Western alliance. But NATO has plans for the use of the Shannon and the West coast for submarines and plans too for the military use of ports and airfields (*Sunday Tribune*, 22 February 1981). There is even a scheme for the evacuation of Margaret Thatcher and the Queen to Donegal in the event of a nuclear strike on London.

The deployment of the Irish army in intensive counter-insurgency operations in border areas show up its role as an adjunct of the British forces. Even in the diplomatic field Ireland has to toe the line: it joined Britain in the United Nations to abstain on sanctions against Namibia and backed Thatcher in refusing to criticise US intervention in El Salvador (*An Phoblacht/Republican News*, 14 March). So what's all this fuss about neutrality?

The unity drum

In response to a British request for closer military co-operation at the outbreak of the Second World War, de Valera offered to abandon Irish neutrality in exchange for a guarantee of a united Ireland. It is this spectre of a trade-off – neutrality for unity – that has been revived during the Thatcher/Haughey talks, most explicitly by the late President's granddaughter Sile de Valera, a radical member of Haughey's Fianna Fail party.

The neutrality/unity discussion was, and remains, a phoney one: the Republic has no neutrality to barter with and Britain cannot revoke Partition. The controversy does however serve a purpose. Fianna Fail can present itself as a determined advocate of Irish unity – and with a general election looming, that's a potent call to the party's nationalist supporters.

The neutrality debate however contains dangers for Haughey – dangers his Fine Gael and Labour Party opponents hope to exploit. More concessions to Britain, in return for a token say in the affairs of the North, expose the lack of any real independence of the Twenty-Six County regime. The ultimate obstacle to the stationing of British troops south of the Border in 1941 was the strength of the republican movement; in 1981 it still is.

Churchill's agents

The British labour movement has an ignominious record on Irish neutrality. Through most of the 'thirties the Dublin government tried to loosen the ties of Ireland to the Empire against the stubborn resistance of ex-Labour Minister and railway workers' leader J H Thomas, by then Secretary of State for the Dominions and a fervent Empire loyalist. In 1941 it was a left winger, Communist Party MP William Gallacher, who wanted to persuade Ireland into war. He saw it as a question of expediency:

> 'Do we invade Ireland and seize the ports once again, or do we remove the Partition and make a friendly Ireland?....The ports might be seized, but they could never be held...the population of Ireland would have to be exterminated first....' (*Ireland: can it remain neutral?*, 1941)

The War Cabinet deliberated in similar terms on several occasions. When Churchill's ambassador Malcolm MacDonald failed to persuade de Valera to renounce neutrality, he tried a different tack. He sent two Labour MPs instead: Dick Stokes 'a devout Catholic' and Aneurin Bevan 'who was known to have admired Jim Connolly and to have friends among the Sinn Feiners' (Jennie Lee, *My life with Nye*, 1980). But to no avail. In the end Churchill, as he said in a broadcast at the end of the war, 'never laid a violent hand on them, though at times it would have been quite easy and quite natural', because it never became necessary (quoted in 'Why Ireland was neutral', *The Irish Press*, 17 May 1945). If it had been necessary we can guess the reaction of Gallacher and Bevan.

CARSON'S GHOST

'I am Mr Ulster'

(Paisley at rally in Omagh, *Belfast Telegraph*, 14 February)

The British bourgeoisie is scornful and contemptuous of the Rev Ian Paisley, but he is just as much their creation as Martin Webster or Idi Amin. The Protestant community in the Six Counties was established as, and remains, an instrument of British domination. Paisley is the leader of the Ulster Protestants: in the 1979 European election he took 30 per cent of the total vote – more than the two other Unionist candidates put together. He is set to consolidate his position and the status of the Democratic Unionist Party at the May local elections. But while Paisley never ceases waving the Union Jack and proclaiming his loyalty to the Crown, the British Prime Minister is just as much the target of his savage oratory as the Irish Taoiseach. What's Paisley up to?

Unionist disunity

Ever since Edward Heath suspended Stormont in 1972 the British government has been looking for some alternative to Direct Rule. But every attempt – Whitelaw's power-sharing executive, Rees' constitutional convention and Atkins' negotiations – has been wrecked by Protestant intransigence. The latest initiative marks a new approach. Instead of seeking an elusive middle ground in Six Counties politics, Thatcher and Haughey have set in motion a series of top level joint studies between British and Irish government departments under the direction of a steering committee presided over by Cabinet secretaries Robert Armstrong and Dermot Nally. Their brief includes 'possible new institutional structures, citizenship rights, security matters, economic co-operation and measures to encourage mutual understanding' (*The Times*, 9 December 1980).

Paisley was suspicious from the start; in January when the IRA, after a period of quiescence through the last hunger strike, began shooting policemen, soldiers and Unionist politicians and bombing towns throughout the Six Counties, Protestants began to queue up to sign his modern version of Carson's Ulster Covenant. They pledged their commitment to fight to defend Ulster.

Direct Rule removed the Unionists from power in the Six Counties and accelerated their political fragmentation. The Official Unionists are now divided between those like Party leader James Molyneux and his mentor Enoch Powell, who favour the total integration of the Six Counties into the UK, and those who want power restored to Stormont. Several prominent members of this 'devolutionist' camp – Rev Robert Bradford, ex-Vanguard leader William Craig and Euro-MP John Taylor – have approved Paisley's strident campaign against Thatcher/Haughey. The DUP leader has been equally stridently condemned by the OUP leadership: Powell called Paisley 'a greater threat to the Union than the Foreign Office and the Provisional IRA rolled into one' What then does Paisley stand for?

What price surrender?

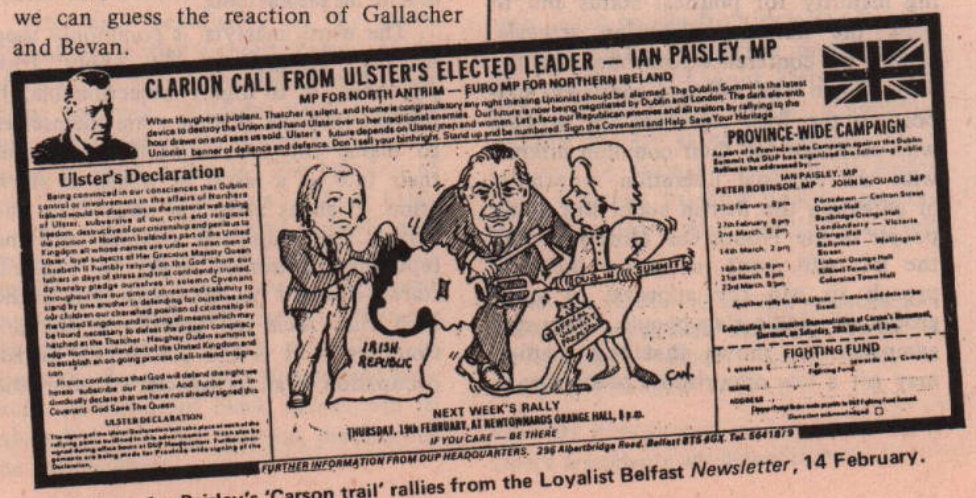
Paisley is the defender of the Protestant way of life. That means, in an impoverished society, a chance of a job, preferential treatment in housing and a higher standard of living. Paisley is more committed to Protestant privileges than he is to their guarantor – British imperialism. Behind the bluster Paisley is coming round to the idea that some sort of new 'institutional structures' might work better than present arrangements. His stunts are designed to strengthen his own position in the divided Unionist camp to ensure that the Protestants, with him as their leader, remain on top. What sort of support has Paisley got?

The New Ulster Political Research Group, the political wing of the Ulster Defence Association, a loyalist paramilitary organisation, wants an independent Ulster. Everybody knows this is not on. Its fall-back position is behind Paisley, whom its leader Glenn Barr defended stoutly against Powell's attack. The UDA also has links with the Ulster Workers Council, the unofficial shop stewards' organisation that brought down the power sharing assembly in 1974 and has now been revived (*An Phoblacht/Republican News*, 7 March). Yet the UDA is reported as being in favour of 'closer North-South co-operation' and as seeing 'nothing sinister' in the Thatcher/Haughey talks (*The Irish Times*, 26 February).

Paisley's other, more discreet, source of support is, paradoxically, the moderate nationalists of the Social Democratic and Labour Party in the North and Fianna Fail in the South. They see a federal system in which the Six Counties remained under Protestant rule 'for a generation or more' as a transitional stage to a fully united Ireland (*The Irish Times*, 26 February).

The bloodbath

The missing factor in this scenario is the nationalist people in the Six Counties. They're absent because any federal solution, any renegotiation of Partition while British imperialism remains in control, can only be achieved through the suppression of the struggle for national independence. Forcing prisoners to starve to death and building up the army/UDR/RUC machine of repression is the vital underpinning to the diplomacy of the Thatcher/Haughey talks. As long as the republican movement continues to wage war in the Six Counties the British state will have no alternative to Direct Rule. Carson and Craig built the Stormont regime on the blood and bones of Ulster Catholics; Paisley and his British masters will do the same again – if we let them.



Advert for Paisley's 'Carson trail' rallies from the Loyalist Belfast *Newsletter*, 14 February.

Eurocommunism

AN OBITUARY

In the mid 'seventies communist parties throughout Europe declared their intention of becoming respectable parties of government: Eurocommunism was the new brand name. It meant a rejection of the dictatorship of the proletariat in favour of a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. In practice the Communist parties had abandoned revolutionary politics a long time ago. But this was the first time that they explicitly renounced Lenin, the 1917 Russian Revolution, class violence and internationalism. The European CPs now aimed to convince the middle classes that they were fit to govern by pushing a new democratic, nationalist and reformist image. And for a while it seemed to work. In the 1976 elections the Italian Communist Party (PCI) won more than a third of the vote for the first time. Eurocommunism was proclaimed as the politics of the future.

In France, the Communist Party (PCF) went into the March 1978 parliamentary elections with a fighting chance of winning power in an alliance with the Socialist Party. In the same month the PCI was included in the governmental majority of the Italian parliament. Pundits reckoned that it was only a matter of time before the party was brought directly into a coalition government. The Spanish Communist Party (PCE) did not fare so well in Parliament. But by 1977 it had managed to establish such a strong position in the trade unions that Party leaders were invited by Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez to take part in negotiations on the future of the Spanish economy.

But no sooner had Eurocommunism become the toast of labour bureaucrats than it reached its demise. To prove their respectability the Eurocommunist parties had moved so far to the right that they began to lose touch with their working class base. At the same time the bosses were still not convinced that the Eurocommunists had totally severed their Bolshevik roots. The idea that the rising wave of Eurocommunism was unstoppable disappeared after the 1979 elections in Spain, France and Italy. The main beneficiaries of Eurocommunism were the socialist parties who won votes at the CPs' expense. In January 1980, the entente between the European CPs broke down when the PCF got cold feet with Eurocommunism. Since then all the parties have had to re-adjust strategy in a desperate bid to hold on to their traditional supporters. After scarcely five years of life, Eurocommunism is dead.

In this three page special feature we assess the politics of Eurocommunism. On pages 8 and 9 we look at the recent record of the Spanish, Italian, French and British communist parties. Beginning on this page and concluding on page 8 Frank Richards analyses the origins of Eurocommunism and explains the forces producing tensions between the CPs and the Soviet Union.

THE SPECTRE OF STALIN

The Soviet Union and the communist parties

The British Labour Party and the French Socialist Party do not have to go around proclaiming their allegiance to the motherland or declaring their belief in a 'national road to socialism'. The traditional reformist parties have deep roots in their national environment. The international communist movement on the other hand was built on the gains of the Russian Revolution with the aim of establishing working class power worldwide. Unlike the social democratic parties it was an international movement whose only allegiance was to the working class.

Revolution betrayed

The leaders of the Russian Revolution were vitally concerned to spread the influence of the Communist International. Lenin and Trotsky knew that socialism could not be built in Russia unless the revolution was extended internationally. Socialism within the boundaries of one country could not compete with the global division of labour established by capitalism. The leading Bolsheviks' recognition of the international character of the struggle for socialism provided the basis for their commitment to proletarian internationalism.

The rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy represented the victory of nationalism over internationalism both within the Soviet Union and in the Comintern. The Soviet bureaucracy sought to defend the Soviet Union by whatever means possible. Stalin argued that socialism could be built in Russia if the country was protected from foreign intervention. The bureaucracy's scheme for 'socialism in one country' narrowed the struggle for socialism to one nation and thus destroyed the basis for working class internationalism.

The degeneration of the Russian revolution had a profound impact on the Communist International. Under the direction of the Stalinist bureaucracy the communist parties were transformed into instruments of Soviet foreign policy. The Western communist parties were too immature to resist the bureaucratisation of the Comintern and quickly fell into line.

The defence of the Russian Revolution had always been one of the objectives of the International. In the early 'twenties the defence of the revolution had always been connected to the development of the revolution world-wide. From 1924 onwards the parties were asked to subordinate the interest of the international working class to the needs of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The transformation of the International undermined the revolutionary character of the communist movement. Moreover the ideology of the bureaucracy strengthened nationalist tendencies in each of the communist parties. If socialism could be built along national lines in Russia, why couldn't it be done elsewhere? Trotsky, the leading opponent of the Stalinist bureaucracy, predicted that sooner or later western communist parties would move along their own national roads. In 1929 he drew out the logic of 'socialism in one country' for the Comintern:

> 'If socialism can be realised within the national boundaries of backward Russia, then there is all the more reason to believe that it can be realised in advanced Germany. Tomorrow the leaders of the Communist Party of Germany will undertake to propound this theory ...The day after tomorrow the French party will have its turn. It will be the beginning of the disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of social patriotism'. (Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, 1929)

The politics of 'socialism in one country' thus contains the potential to fragment the Stalinist movement along national lines. Eurocommunism is the delayed realisation of the forces unleashed by the degeneration of the Russian Revolution.

Slow beginners

Until recently a number of forces held the tendency towards disintegration in check. The ruling cliques in the western communist parties were closely integrated into the Soviet bureaucracy. Party leaders were handpicked by Stalin and his aides and their survival depended on the whim of the Kremlin. Moreover the close identification of the communist parties with Moscow had distinct advantages. Many workers looked favourably on the Soviet Union and supported their local communist party because it represented the revolutionary tradition of October 1917.

When the communist parties began to move in a nationalist direction in the 'thirties it was with the full blessing of the Soviet bureaucracy. The Popular Front strategy aimed to gain diplomatic support for the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany. The strategy postponed the anti-capitalist struggle and mobilised the European working class to defend bourgeois democracy against fascism. Except for the short period of the Stalin-Hitler pact the Popular Front guided the activities of the communist parties throughout the Second World War.

The fact that it was the Soviet bureaucracy that promoted the Popular Front throughout the Comintern obscured the growing forces of fragmentation in the communist movement. The national impulse of the communist parties led

Eurocommunism

each party closer and closer to its own nation state and loosened ties with the Soviet bureaucracy.

For a time the western parties remained too closely identified with their Soviet mentors to be able to break their international links. However after the war they began to assert their national character more forcefully. In November 1946, Thorez the leader of the PCF outlined his party's commitment to the national road to socialism:

'The progress of democracy across the world, in spite of rare exceptions that confirm the rule, enables one to consider other roads to socialism than that followed by the Russian communists. In any case the road is necessarily different for each country. We have always believed and declared that the French people, rich in a glorious tradition, would find its own way toward greater democracy, progress and social justice' (*The Times*, 17 November 1946).

The very term 'national road', taken up in turn by most European parties, was a conscious attempt to distance them from international revolution. It was also a way of pointing out that the 1917 revolution was not the model to be followed. The communist parties now projected a democratic and peaceful transition to socialism: their adherence to reformism became clear. However the parties hung on to their public commitment to the camp of the Soviet Union. The red-baiting hysteria of the Cold War put a stop to the national transformation of the communist parties in the late 'forties and early 'fifties. However the Cold War only postponed the consummation of the tendency toward the disintegration of the communist movement.

Peace with capitalism

The Cold War put the communist parties on the defensive. The anti-working class and totalitarian character of the Soviet bureaucracy became more transparent and anti-communist propaganda found more of a hearing in the European working class. The crushing of the 1956 Hungarian revolution by Soviet tanks further undermined the communist movement and led to the resignation of thousands from its ranks.

The consolidation of anti-communism took place in a period of global capitalist expansion. The boom led to increases in living standards and stimulated illusions in the viability of the system. The growth of state intervention and the provision of social services further strengthened working class support for the existing form of society. Communism appeared to be irrelevant to the needs of the European labour movement.

The communist parties responded to the boom by adopting a more pragmatic stance. One party after another began to throw out revolutionary rhetoric and advance more 'constructive' alternatives. The PCI went the furthest arguing that the working class had every interest in extending capitalist prosperity. Leading spokesman Amendola commented in 1962 on 'our consistent and systematic effort to carry out a constructive policy and our definite refusal to consider that the worse things are the better it is for us'.

The post-war boom led the communist parties to make their peace with capitalism. During the 'sixties the parties brought their theory into line with their reformist practice. Every important element of Marxism and Leninism was attacked by the theorists of the communist movement. Marx's theory of crisis and Lenin's theory of imperialism were declared out of date. Class violence and the proletarian dictatorship were rejected as irrelevant: the bourgeois state was no longer something that had to be destroyed. It now had to be reformed, extended and 'democratised'.

However the condition for winning recognition as truly 'national' and truly 'democratic' parties was breaking the links with Moscow. The PCI led the way. By 1963, criticism of the Soviet Union had become acceptable; in the 1964 municipal and provincial elections, PCI candidates outdid the Christian Democrats in their attacks on the Soviet Union. An uneasy tension developed between the European parties and the Soviet Union.

Crisis communism

The onset of the recession found the official communist movement already committed to reforming capitalism. For revolutionaries, the capitalist crisis demonstrated the necessity for socialist revolution. For reformists, the crisis is a problem that has to be overcome so that stability may be restored. The European communist parties greeted the crisis as an opportunity for demonstrating their capacity to run capitalism. To win the confidence of the ruling class the communist parties had to demonstrate that their only loyalty was to their own nation state.

Eurocommunism was the communist parties' oath of loyalty to the bourgeois state. Now it was no longer a question of occasional fraternal criticisms of the Soviet Union. Every opportunity was used to point out the undemocratic deformations of Soviet society. These attacks on the Soviet Union at the same time affirmed a commitment to bourgeois democracy and pluralism. As CPGB leader John Gollan stated after pointing out the lack of democracy in the USSR:

'Our aim is the construction of socialism in Britain, in forms which would guarantee personal freedom, the plurality of political parties, the independence of the trade unions, religious freedom, and freedom of research, cultural artistic and scientific activities'. ('Socialist democracy – some problems', *Marxism Today*, January 1976)

The most systematic theoretical expression of Eurocommunism was Santiago Carrillo's book *Eurocommunism and the state*. Carrillo aimed to settle accounts with the heritage of the Russian Revolution. The spectre of the Soviet bureaucracy was used to demolish the cause of working class revolution. The democratic and anti-bureaucratic language of Carrillo found a positive resonance in petit bourgeois and social democratic circles: Eurocommunism became respectable. Even the radical left became infatuated with this democratic turn. Speaking for the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, Ernest Mandel enthused about Carrillo's book: 'it is no exaggeration to speak of a genuinely sensational literary event which gives important weapons to the anti-bureaucratic struggle in the bureaucratised workers states and to the anti-Stalinist struggle of revolutionary Marxists in the rest of the world' (*Inprecor*, 12 May 1977).

Stalinist to the core

Mandel's sharp contrast between Stalinism and Eurocommunism is an error that is widespread on the radical left. Stalinism has adopted anti-bureaucratic rhetoric before. In Yugoslavia and China the Stalinist parties launched campaigns against bureaucracy to endow their position with legitimacy. The present generation of rulers has been prepared to criticise Stalin and the cult of personality.

Eurocommunism was nothing more than the political expression of Stalinism in the 'seventies. Identification with the Soviet Union had become an electoral liability and the communist parties responded accordingly. To survive the Stalinists had to distance themselves from their tradition. However publishing a book is one thing – breaking with the past is another. Bourgeois commentators never ceased to remind everybody that the communist parties were the pawns of Moscow. Even poor old Carrillo discovered that despite all his assurances anti-Soviet propaganda continued. Try as they might the European communist parties could not escape the legacy of Stalin.

As long as the Soviet bureaucracy survives Stalinism will continue to be a force in the European labour movement. Despite their sordid record the Soviet leaders can still project themselves as the inheritors of the Russian Revolution to influence anti-capitalist workers in other countries. Pro-Soviet splits from communist parties in Greece, Spain and Sweden have pulled working class backing away from the Eurocommunists. The Soviet bureaucracy retains its capacity to put considerable pressure on the European parties.

The Stalinist character of Eurocommunism is most manifest in its political programme. The Eurocommunists uphold every important tenet of Stalinism: the national road to socialism, the peaceful road to socialism, peaceful coexistence and detente. They stand shoulder to shoulder with Brezhnev in their common hatred of the internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky. The Eurocommunists have little positive to say about Stalin; but they often compliment him for his defeat of the revolutionary wing of the Bolshevik party and his defence of the theory of socialism in one country.

Stalin lives

Many militants have reacted against the gradualist and reactionary politics of Eurocommunism. In Italy many workers have shown their disgust for the PCI by withdrawing support; some in their frustration support the terrorist organisations. In Spain and France militants have looked to the Socialist Party for an alternative. Many favourably contrast the militant rhetoric of the past with the flabby reformism of the Eurocommunists.

While Eurocommunism stands discredited in the eyes of militant workers Stalinism does not. Party bureaucrats have not been slow to recognise this. Thus the PCF repudiated the Eurocommunists and appeased the traditional Stalinists by refusing to criticise the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Even the PCI has recently moderated its Eurocommunist stance and talks a bit more about the interests of the Italian working class.

In Catalonia party leaders have tried to maintain their grip by returning to old-style Stalinism. They have resurrected the language of Lenin, declared their full support for the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and denounced Eurocommunism as reformist. The party's working class appeal has been enhanced as a result.

The recent shifts in the official labour movement show how Stalinism adapts to new situations. There is a real danger that the more militant forms of Stalinism will win the support of many workers who are fed up with Eurocommunism. This development is not surprising because Stalinist politics have dominated the European labour movement for a long time. For many militants Stalinist theory *is* the theory of Marx and Lenin: all the debates in recent years have been between two varieties of Stalinism – Eurocommunism and traditional Stalinism. 'Socialism in one country' and the other theories of Stalinism have never been seriously questioned.

The revolutionary movement has yet to settle scores with Stalinism. Even in Britain, where the CPGB has always been a minor force, Stalinist politics have considerable influence among militant trade unionists. But at the same time the official communist movement is on the defensive. Its numerous twists and turns have taken their toll. The most significant development is that, during the past five years, the communist parties have moved steadily to the right, opening up a political space on their left wing. It is a space that they cannot reoccupy without inducing a major crisis in their ranks.

The PCF's 1981 election campaign shows the problems for Eurocommunists trying to project a left-wing image. Party leaders now talk tough and in March this year even threatened a political strike should the Socialist Party exclude them from government. But at the same time the PCF has decisively moved to the right. Its anti-immigrant campaign is directed not at the most class conscious but at the most backward workers.

Eurocommunism is dead but Stalinism is very much alive. The crisis inside these parties is at the same time an expression of the crisis of working class leadership. The European working class must learn to live without the political movement that has ridden on its back for so long. Patriotic communism must be destroyed for revolutionary communism to be retrieved.

Communist Party of Spain

Party of monarchy

After the abortive coup in Spain in late February, Santiago Carrillo, the founding father of Eurocommunism and the leader of the PCE, visited King Juan Carlos to thank him for 'saving his life'. This was well in keeping with Carrillo's long standing respect for royalty. Republicans got a shock after Franco's death when Carrillo declared – before the establishment of the new parliamentary system – that he was prepared to accept a monarchy. (*L'Humanite*, 6 August 1976)

In the dying days of the Franco regime the PCE, the dominant force in the Spanish working class, advocated the slogan of 'national reconciliation'. Its message was – 'forget about the civil war', 'forget the old feuds'. By the mid 'seventies Carrillo had transformed the PCE into a party that would make the British Labour Party look left wing. However Carrillo persisted in calling his party communist so as not to lose working class support. He told a foreign journalist that there was 'no basic difference' between the PCE and social democracy. And as for the term 'communist'? 'Why should we renounce it and leave it to the extremists'? (*New York Times*, 2 July 1976)

The PCE did everything in its power to get the Spanish working class to accept the post-Franco political system. In October 1977 it collaborated with the Suarez government in drawing up the notorious Moncloa pact which legitimised a wave of austerity measures inflicted on Spanish workers. By this time the PCE had also become the party of law and order and took the lead in denouncing 'terrorism' in the Basque country.

Just in case there were any remaining doubts about the PCE's direction, Carrillo organised a party congress in April 1978: its main aim was to abandon publicly the party's Leninist label. The PCE could now truly boast of being no more dangerous than Spanish petit-bourgeois democrats.

The rightward shift of the PCE did not bring any notable parliamentary success. Moreover the PCE's trade union group, the Workers Commission began to lose working class support. Spanish workers began to move towards the trade union

AN OBITUARY

wing of the Socialist Party, the UGT and the government favoured unions, the USO. In recent factory elections the Workers' Commission has been losing ground to its competitors. A recent estimate puts the number of UGT factory delegates almost on a par with those of the Workers Commission (*Le Monde*, 25-26 January 1981). The most striking indication of the crisis in the PCE is the dramatic decline of its membership. In 1977 200 000 strong, the PCE had lost 60 000 members by 1978. A steady haemorrhage has continued since leading to financial difficulties and the bankruptcy of the party's daily paper *Mundo Obrero* last year.

Not surprisingly there has been growing opposition to Carrillo within the PCE. Many members of the party want to retrieve the PCE's past. They believe that the party must reclaim the mantle of Leninism and draw closer to the Soviet Union. Recently the PSUC, the key Catalonian section of the PCE, rebelled against Eurocommunism. At its January conference the PSUC voted to support Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and to declare its adherence to Leninism. When Carrillo went to Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia to speak at a PSUC rally he suffered constant interruptions and heckling. The mere reference to the term Eurocommunism provoked shouts of outrage and abuse. A leading member of the PSUC denounced Carrillo's speech as 'totally provocative'. (*El Pais*, 15 March 1981)

Eurocommunism has lost all credibility in the militant section of the Spanish working class. The problem is that in the absence of an alternative workers will go back to old-fashioned Stalinism – the very political force that gave birth to the party of monarchy in the first place.

Communist Party of Italy

Party of austerity

The survival of Italy's fragile capitalist economy depends on the active collaboration of reformist parties with the state. The PCI is in a good position to perform this role. It is by far the largest party in the Italian labour movement, dominating the trade unions and controlling several cities and regional governments. The integration of the PCI into the Italian political system has pushed the party further and further away from its traditional base.

The PCI has abandoned any hope of winning power for itself or for the working class. Its goal is the establishment of a national government within which the PCI would play the role of a reformist wing. The PCI has explicitly rejected the option of a left wing coalition government on the grounds that this would scare off the ruling class. This is how PCI leader Berlinguer explains his popular approach:

'we talk not about a "left-wing alternative", but a "democratic alternative", that is, a political prospect of collaboration and agreement among the popular forces of Catholic inspiration, together with formations of other democratic orientations'. (*Marxism Today*, February 1974)

Berlinguer has aptly termed this strategy the 'historic compromise'.

Compromising the interests of the working class in return for a few crumbs from the table of the bourgeoisie is the PCI's historic role. It has been in the forefront of the battle to restructure Italian capitalism and to force the working class to make the necessary sacrifices. The PCI's zeal in pursuing the dictates of capital was greatly increased by its success in the June 1976 elections. In a famous speech to the PCI's Central Committee six months later, Berlinguer argued that the working class must make major sacrifices. The party chief had the nerve to depict austerity as a positive measure, as 'a profound transformation of the make up of society'. He proclaimed that a new 'culture of austerity' would combat 'individualism' and 'consumerism' and hence undermine capitalism. Later in 1977 the PCI signed an agreement with the Christian Democratic government approving curbs on public spending. PCI bureaucrats in the party's trade union federation CGIL went a step further. CGIL boss Luciano Lama denounced workers for their 'egoism' and stated that their salaries were too high relative to productivity (*La Stampa*, 27 May 1978).

Most workers were hostile to these austerity proposals. Throughout 1977 and 1978 workers and students began to take to the streets – often against the PCI. This state of affairs led the PCI to support the so-called 'anti-terrorist' campaign, which aimed to criminalise the activities of the far left. PCI trade union bureaucrats collaborated with the police to root out 'subversives' in the factories.

The PCI's craven pro-capitalist policies did not bring triumph at the polls. In the June 1977 elections they lost ground to the Socialist and Radical parties. The decline in PCI support was also evident in the results of the factory council elections. The CGIL lost substantial support in the two large Alfa Romeo plants and in factories around Turin.

In response to these setbacks the PCI returned in late 1979 to its former role of an opposition party and began to demand more concessions for workers in return for austerity. In 1980 there were signs that the PCI was prepared to revise its 'historic compromise' strategy and return to a more traditional form of Left Alternative Government. Unfortunately the PCI still has the potential to regain the control over the militant workers that it lost during the years 1977-79. Serious attacks on the working class and the victimisation of militants have demoralised many Italian workers. These setbacks, coupled with the lack of a serious revolutionary movement, give the PCI considerable room for manoeuvre in the immediate future.

Communist Party of France

Party of racism

Throughout the early 'seventies the PCF, the leading party of the French working class, lost ground to the Socialist Party (PS). It went Eurocommunist to rejuvenate its democratic and nationalist image and thus reverse its decline. In a flurry of publicity in February 1976 the 22nd congress of the PCF announced that it had dropped its commitment to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Throughout the year the PCF boasted its concern for democracy. It criticised the Soviet Union's treatment of dissidents and even lectured the more militant Portuguese LP on the 'need for democracy'.

The PCF's democratic publicity campaign brought short term gains. Membership soared from 430 000 in 1976 to 550 000 in 1977. However the 1976 Cantonal elections yet again confirmed the growth of the PS at the expense of the PCF. The PCF still needed some way to break out of electoral isolation: nationalism was its answer. The PCF tried to outflank the PS on the right by appealing to patriotic Gaullist voters. In May 1977, the PCF declared its support for a French nuclear strike force. A few months later it launched a chauvinist campaign against the EEC; it declared 'resolute opposition' to the entry of Portugal, Greece and Spain to the Community because this would lead to the 'ruin of an important part of the French peasantry'. (*Le Monde*, 28 July 1977) In contrast to the PS call for Left Unity the PCF put forward the slogan 'union of the people of France'.

Chauvinism became the mainstay of the PCF's response to the recession. It condemned Giscard's ministers as traitors to France; its solution to the crisis was unalloyed economic nationalism. Failure to make an impact on the Gaullist constituency did not lead the PCF to abandon its chauvinism. On the contrary the PCF redoubled its attacks on Germany and the USA, waving the French flag with new fervour.

In 1980 the PCF tried to renew its militant image to hang on to its working class supporters: it downplayed Eurocommunism and returned to the Soviet fold. The only element of its Eurocommunist phase that it retained was its fierce chauvinism. Indeed as the 1981 April elections drew near this degenerated into overt racism. In autumn 1980 the PCF launched an anti-immigrant campaign which led to the now infamous attack on an immigrant hostel in December.

During the last three months the PCF's election campaign has featured activities directed against the immigrant population. It has organised a law and order campaign against drug dealers and criminals, blaming the immigrant communities for drug abuse and violence. The PCF has drawn upon fascist politics to appeal to the petit bourgeoisie and the most backward sections of the working class.

The downward slide of the PCF provides the most striking testimony of the crisis of Eurocommunism. Its national orientation paralyses its working class constituency and gives the more traditional social democratic parties a new lease of life. The PCF has become an instrument of bourgeois domination over the French working class. Racist populism is the logical conclusion to the politics of patriotic communism.

Communist Party of Great Britain

The party's over?

In 1976 the CPGB decided to throw in its lot with the Eurocommunists. It didn't have much to lose. Its 34th National Congress held in 1975 noted a continuous fall in membership and the steady decline of the circulation of its daily paper, the *Morning Star*. The CPGB, an insignificant force in parliamentary politics but influential in the trade union bureaucracy hoped to stop the rot by emphasising its British, democratic and economic nationalist features.

The party began to distance itself from its Soviet connections and to curb the militancy of its trade union supporters. It sought to attract petit-bourgeois support by embracing feminism, educational reform and the reform of parastatal and local government bodies. The short-lived influx of petit-bourgeois support however was more than offset by the steady drift of workers out of the party.

The British Stalinists became renowned as the most consistent chauvinists in the trade union movement. Their calls for economic reforms were always coupled with the demand for import controls. Some party intellectuals went a step further and argued that incomes policy was a necessary component of any attempt to plan British capitalism.

The cumulative effect of all these policies was to make the CPGB even less distinguishable from the Labour left than before. By late 1976 the party leadership had to remind its members that it still had a role to play. National Organiser Dave Cook argued against the 'tendency to operate merely as a "ginger group" to any part of the left' and insisted that 'we must not forget that left unity needs an input of communist politics, like real ale needs good yeast'. (*Comment*, 27 November 1976)

The CPGB lacks a coherent political identity because its programme is merely a variation of Labour's. When, in the run-up to the last General Election, the *Daily Mail* printed the CPGB's election manifesto next to Labour's to draw the similarity between the two, all General Secretary Gordon McLennan could say was that the CP really believed in Labour's programme but that Labour didn't.

The CP's subservience to the labour bureaucracy is particularly apparent in the trade union sphere. On the shop floor CP bureaucrats have been quite prepared to sell jobs to save industry. In the shipyards and in the motor industry CP convenors and stewards have tried to justify their sell outs on the grounds that industry must be competitive. Many workers who looked for a militant lead from the CP have been led into protracted discussions about how to co-operate with management and government. When the disastrous consequences of this approach – closures and redundancies – became manifest, many militants were paralysed politically. The CP thus dug its own grave. Instrumental in containing the class struggle, it disarmed militants against the employers' offensive and thus contributed to its own isolation in the trade unions. It wound up incapable even of defending its own members – like Derek Robinson at British Leyland – against victimisation.

Today the CPGB is fighting for its survival. Many party trade union bureaucrats have lost their positions during the past three years. The *Morning Star* is unlikely to see very many more mornings. And many petit-bourgeois supporters have become disillusioned with Eurocommunism and dropped out. When former President of the National Union of Students Sue Slipman left the Communist Party to join the Social Democrats in February, nobody seemed particularly surprised.

There is no room in the British labour movement for a second rate version of the Labour Party. The CPGB exists simply because the Labour left has no trade union organisation and because the radical left helps to keep it going. British Stalinism has become an increasingly irrelevant appendage of the labour bureaucracy.

The left in the Labour Party

MOLES FOR DEMOCRACY

Moles are known for their lack of vision, but burrowing away trying to make the Labour Party more democratic is no activity for any political animal with an instinct for working class politics. While the right looks ahead to a new social contract, the left, now composed predominantly of the fragments of the radical left groups which have entered the Labour Party, looks back to Wembley and Blackpool and its conference victories on mandatory reselection and the establishment of an electoral college to appoint the party leader.

DEMOCRACY is anathema to the Labour Party. Campaigning to 'democratise' the Labour Party is like trying to make the National Front more liberal – it's impossible and it's a dangerous waste of effort. The Labour Party's function is to represent the interests of the labour bureaucracy in Parliament, and, more broadly, to mediate between the working class and the capitalist state. To do this the party has to appear to be democratic; and it seems to express the views of its six million affiliated members through delegate conferences, the National Executive Committee and the other institutions of the party. But if Labour ever *really* expressed the interests of the working class, the party leaders and their trade union backers would be the first to go. The Labour Party could no longer carry out the job which it was founded to do 80 years ago and which it has done very effectively ever since. Democracy is incompatible with the existence of any social democratic party.

The right rules

The right understands this. That's why the Parliamentary Labour Party has always ignored conference decisions it disagreed with and resisted attempts to make it more accountable. Denis Healey and the rest immediately repudiated the 'democratic' reforms passed at recent conferences: they have no intention of honouring them and will, with the support of the union barons, overturn them at the earliest opportunity.

The left has learnt nothing over the years from its successive humiliations at the hands of the party bosses. In the past however Labour left wingers, while sharing the political premises of their leaders, often opposed their stand on important questions of domestic and foreign policy. Today policy issues are pushed to the background: the left has chosen to fight the right over the structure and organisation of the party. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement, the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy; these are the cumbersome bandwagons that the left has pushed from Blackpool to Wembley – and now on to Brighton. How does the left justify its obsession with democracy in the Labour Party?

The left believes that by making the Labour party more democratic it can turn the party into an anti-capitalist force. Leader of the International Marxist Group (an organisation which has virtually dissolved itself into the Labour Party) Bob Pennington explains:

> 'The extension of control over Labour MPs and councillors and making the Labour leader accountable to the labour movement would seriously undermine the means whereby capitalism has continued to have its interests served.' (*Socialist Challenge*, 12 March 1981)

Labour MPs are accountable to the agencies of capital because the Labour Party has a pro-capitalist programme: both left and right stand for the regeneration of British capitalism through increased public spending and import controls. This has nothing to do with the structure of the party or the manner of its elections. The replacement of the present set of MPs with more left-wing ones committed to a more radical version of the alternative economic strategy would make not the slightest difference – they would still be more 'accountable' to capital than to their Labour supporters.

The left also thinks that the campaign for democracy in the Labour Party will lead to greater rank and file influence over trade union leaders. Pennington sums up the argument:

> 'Rank and file union members are likely to be quite enthusiastic about all this democracy which gets talked about at Labour Party conferences by their leaders. They will surely start to think that what is good for the Labour Party is equally good for their own union.' (*Socialist Challenge*, 12 March 1981)

Surely Bob is indulging in wishful thinking? In reality rank and file union members are bored to tears with all this talk about democracy when they're faced with mass redundancies, wage cuts and setbacks in conditions and workplace organisation. But when it comes to these battles, the left tails behind the labour bureaucrats who have paralysed the fight against unemployment in the past few years.

'Historic struggles'

It seems that the narrower the focus of the left becomes the more grandiose are its claims about the political significance of its activities. This is the concluding paragraph of a major article entitled 'Revolutionary unity and the struggle for the Labour Party' in the theoretical journal of another entrist faction:

> 'From the point of view of serious Marxists, the most important thing is *what to do now*. We are in the middle of a historic struggle. We must rally the forces to consolidate the Wembley decision.' (*Workers Action*, March 1981)

In this 'historic struggle' the slavish adherence of the radical left to the bureaucratic processes of the official labour movement leads it down some bizarre paths. Here is a recent call to action from *Socialist Organiser*:

> 'A campaign must now be mounted to insist that the original recommendation of the Org. Sub. be upheld. Readers should make every effort to ensure that their CLPs immediately write to the NEC to this effect. This matter must be given top priority.' (21 February)

This takes some explaining. Last October the Blackpool conference resolved that every Labour MP should automatically go through a reselection procedure. Conference rejected a compromise proposal from Ian Mikardo that reselection should only take place following a vote of no confidence in the sitting MP from the Constituency Labour Party (CLP). The right later came up with the scheme that the local party executive could put forward a short list (for the consideration of the much larger local party caucus – the General Management Committee) containing *only* the name of the sitting MP. Thus the executive's short-listing decision would effectively become a vote of confidence in the sitting MP, and one he would stand a very good chance of winning. The left quickly perceived that this was the Mikardo compromise by the back door. The left-dominated Organisational Subcommittee of the National Executive Committee proposed to the NEC earlier this year that every local party should draw up a short list of more than one, even if they did not wish to. But at the January NEC – the last attended by Shirley Williams and Tom Bradley – this was voted down, provoking the major campaign launched by *Socialist Organiser*. (The issue was finally resolved at the NEC's February meeting by an agreement that if a local executive put forward a short list of one, the GMC could consider other candidates.) It is worth going in to this in some detail as it illustrates what, for the radical left, 'must be given top priority'. The humble object of the whole convoluted exercise is to replace more reactionary MPs with less reactionary ones.

From Barnsley to Bermondsey

One problem with the left's democracy campaign is that it has an unpleasant tendency to rebound in its face. Power struggles in a number of constituency parties show the danger. Until a few months ago the left was scoring some notable successes in the cause of democracy through bureaucratic manoeuvres on GMCs. Roy Mason's Barnsley seat and Albert Roberts' Normanton constituency both fell to the advance of Arthur Scargill's Yorkshire miners. In Liverpool Toxteth, Militant put the squeeze on right-wing Richard Crawshaw and in Islington North an influx of radicals put Michael O'Halloran's seat in jeopardy. Then, to the outrage of the left, the right struck back.

Electricians' union leader Frank Chapple led the counter attack. Left wingers in three Southwark constituencies (Bermondsey, Dulwich and Peckham) found themselves surrounded by new delegates from the EEPTU and GMWU. They noted with alarm the activities of a dynamic duo in the area – Robert Eadie (Southwark councillor and organiser for the EEPTU) and Helen Eadie (political liaison officer for the GMWU and branch secretary of Dulwich Labour Party). The radical left are novices at this sort of game: Chapple has been playing it all his working life. Having set out to outmanoeuvre the old guard in the constituencies, the left may well end up the victim of more skilful manipulations – all in the name of democracy.

More democratic than thou

The right can also put the left on the spot when it comes to the great debate about the most pure democratic system for electing the party leader. For the left, an electoral college including representation from the PLP (30 per cent), the CLPs (30 per cent) and the trade unions (40 per cent) is the very essence of democracy. The other proposals at Wembley – 33/33/33 or 50/25/25 or 40/30/30 – were not 'slightly better or slightly worse'. The choice was 'between victory and defeat' (*Socialist Organiser*, 24 January 1981). Any reversion to the other options (50/25/25 is the right's current favourite) is now represented as a return to the Dark Ages, necessitating another 'top priority' campaign.

When the right condemns the weight of the undemocratic trade union block vote in the electoral college the left can only thumb their noses like self-satisfied schoolchildren and jeer that 'Shirley Williams never complained about block votes when she was elected to the NEC by them'. This may be true but it's not much of a defence of the block vote.

And when the right says: if you want democracy why not 'one person, one vote?' – chins drop all around in left-wing circles. In the abstract terms the left poses the issue of democracy there is no answer to this challenge. Its representatives end up defending the right of the trade union bureaucrats to the major say in the leadership of 'their' party and mumbling about 'accountability' and 'the influence of the right wing media'.

Backing Benn

Tony Benn is a key figure for radical left-wingers: he needs them and they need him. Last year he appealed to what was left of the radical groupings outside the Labour Party to come on in and join the fight for democracy in the party. Now they're all backing Benn's challenge to Denis Healey for the deputy leadership.

Benn has chosen to fight his corner in preference to succumbing to the consolidation of a moderate leadership under Healey, Hattersley and Shore. Isolated in the Parliamentary Party and on the NEC, Benn needs all the support he can get. And from the deepest entrists of the Militant tendency to the group that still clings on to its *organisational* independence of the Labour Party, the SWP, the radical left is campaigning in the constituencies and, where it can, in the unions, in support of Benn.

While the Rank and File Mobilising Committee unites the fragments around Benn, he provides them with the policy direction they lack almost as conspicuously as the social democrats. Benn's platform is a moderate statement of traditional Labour Party policies: full employment, expansion of social services, democratic rights for women, blacks and trade unionists, abolition of the House of Lords, withdrawal from the EEC and a 'non-nuclear defence strategy'. Benn puts these policies forward as 'a real hope for the recovery and reconstruction of Britain' (*The Times*, 3 April 1981).

Benn stood for all these policies in 1974 when he became a minister in the last Labour Government. A staunch supporter of the social contract, he helped to preside over the creation of mass unemployment, cuts in real wages, a deteriorating position for women, a strategy of ruthless repression and criminalisation of Irish freedom fighters in the Six Counties and the stricter and harsher imposition of immigration controls. Benn makes no claim to have changed his position since he was a Cabinet Minister – indeed he insists that he stands for the continuity of Labour Party policies. He still supports incomes policy and the regeneration of British capitalism according to the criterion of profitability; he opposes the Irish prisoners' demands for political status and is committed to the continuation of immigration controls. Benn is a bourgeois, nationalist, British politician whose career depends on mustering the support of the left wing of the labour movement. And this, under the cover of 'democracy', is the service the radical left provides.

Pat Roberts

Forget CND

Give class war a chance!

Nuclear disarmament is today's great cause for the British left. There may be three million people out of work; Irish prisoners may be starving to death; blacks may live in terror of racist gangs. But the left is more concerned about the prospect of war in the future than with fighting the battles of the present. What captures the imagination of the left, the pages of its newspapers and the energy of its activists is the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. We look at CND, past and present, to refute the left's assertion that it is a campaign that deserves working class support.

THE CND was launched by a clique of radical intellectuals and Labour Party politicians in 1958. At its height, 1960-61, it organised demonstrations involving up to 100 000 people. Its mass sitdown protests and direct action stunts at military installations resulted in great publicity, hundreds of arrests and several terms of imprisonment. CND also won substantial backing in the official labour movement; approval from TGWU leader Frank Cousins led to a vote in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament at the Labour Party's Scarborough conference in 1960. Soon, however, the pro-NATO forces fought back and unilateralism was routed in the unions and the party. Gradually CND ran out of steam. Its annual Easter pilgrimages to Aldermarston drew smaller and smaller crowds. Indeed, before its recent revival, it had become merely a rump organisation.

There were three key planks in CND's platform. Many of its leading members were – often for religious reasons – committed to *pacifism*. They were opposed to violence in any form, in the service of any cause. Many too were motivated by *moralism*. They abhorred the Bomb because, in contrast to conventional weapons, it threatened the destruction of all mankind. Lastly, CND was imbued with *nationalism*. Its members detested Britain's subordination to the USA in the NATO alliance and felt that, although Britannia no longer ruled the waves, she could at least act as an example to the rest of the world and *unilaterally* disarm. Likewise the Communist Party, which only joined CND late in the day (largely because the Soviet Union favoured negotiated, multilateral disarmament) specially stressed the dangers of *German* rearmament.

The importance of CND was that it combined reactionary trends in a novel, radical way. As Campaign founder Michael Foot summed it up a few years ago:

> 'Suddenly, in CND, national pride and disgruntlement, scarcely less than intelligent alarm about the bomb, found notable expression – in the limpid beauty of Bertrand Russell's English, in the humanity of JB Priestley, in the invective of John Osborne, in the release which many of the young described as "a new kind of politics".' (Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan*, Vol 2, Davis Poynter, 1973)

Or, as Polly Toynbee, one of 'the young' of the time, affectionately recalls it, CND was about 'folksy, jolly marches, daffodils and daffy songs, guitars and trad jazz bands, sex in sleeping bags in secondary school halls, bossy loud hailers keeping marchers in line, fractious anarchists refusing to do anything they were asked. . .' (*The Guardian*, 23 June 1980). What fun! But while some CND veterans wound up leading the Labour Party and some writing women's features in *The Guardian*, others now run the organisations of the radical left. Having once shared the same damp sleeping bags, they now share the same happy memories. CND, according to five elder statesmen of the Socialist Workers Party, was 'a magnificent failure' (*International Socialism*, winter 1981). Foot and Toynbee have testified to CND's 'magnificence', but in what sense did it fail?

The criticism of the left was that CND failed to make the Bomb a working class issue, to 'link the issue of defence with the stuff of ordinary life' (*International Socialism*, winter 1960-61, quoted in winter 1981). And this wisdom still guides the left's approach to the CND today. Well, it's true that workers didn't flock to CND. But other people did.

Apocalypse then

The most influential backing for CND came from trade union bureaucrats and the left wing of the Labour Party. In retrospect, their sudden conversion to pacifism seems strange: they had, after all, supported Britain's war against Germany, in which millions were killed, and had supported too British military repression in Greece, Malaya, Cyprus, many other parts of the Middle East and in other places around the world. But their enthusiasm for CND was real enough. It arose, however, out of their own political difficulties rather than from any altruistic concern about the consequences of nuclear war.

In the late 'fifties Frank Cousins was plagued by internal strife in the TGWU. Until 1956 his predecessor, Arthur Deakin, had presided over a regime so autocratic that it had provoked unofficial opposition movements – notably in the docks – which threatened to split the union. Disaffection simmered after Cousins' takeover, exacerbated by redundancies and layoffs in the motor industry in the Midlands, by the Government's provocative stand against the London busmen and by strikes among Covent Garden porters. For Cousins the Bomb was a welcome distraction and an issue which he could use to pull dissident rank and file groups into line. As Richard Crossman recorded in his diary at the time, 'the H-Bomb controversy has been a godsend for Frank'; it had 'diverted attention from the ghastly failure of his industrial policy' (quoted in Philip Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell*, 1979). And as an editorial in *International Socialism* observed, 'the Central London busmen, highly critical as they are of Cousins' leadership on industrial matters, are solidly behind him on the Bomb issue' (winter 1960-61).

CND was the salvation of the Labour left. By the late 'fifties the Tribune group had been vanquished inside the party. When Labour accepted the policy document *Industry and Society* at its 1957 Conference, it showed that it had embraced the mixed economy and had all but abandoned its traditional attachment to nationalisation. Left leader Aneurin Bevan had cut himself adrift from his followers to seek an accommodation with right-wing leader Hugh Gaitskell and a top job in the next Labour government. The left was leaderless, weak in Parliament and even weaker in terms of trade union support. It badly needed some extra-parliamentary backing: CND was the vehicle for winning this.

Nor was the nuclear disarmament issue entirely unwelcome to the Labour Party leadership. When CND was launched, Gaitskell approved the involvement in it of MP Anthony Greenwood, telling him that 'the Party should keep in touch with a movement of this kind supported by what one might vaguely call liberal opinion' (Philip Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell*, 1979). When Gaitskell's attempt to revise Clause 4 and break the party's formal ties with the trade unions went down to a humiliating defeat in 1960, unilateral disarmament provided a convenient issue on which to re-establish his authority. Though he gave up trying to drop Clause 4, Gaitskell promised to 'fight, fight, fight again' against unilateralism. Again Crossman got it right: 'there is really a deep malaise about the party and the leadership which is finding a convenient expression in this nuclear controversy'.

In the early 'sixties the situation in the unions stabilised and the Labour Party leadership issue was resolved by the premature deaths of Bevan and of Gaitskell. The Berlin crisis of August 1961 and the Cuban missiles affair of October 1962 also damaged popular support for nuclear disarmament. The ultimate beneficiary of CND was Harold Wilson who skilfully drafted its battalions into his election campaign in 1964. He thought CND 'a genuine, sincere body'; its members were 'all good chaps, essential to the Party, and it was my job to keep links around them all' (quoted in R Taylor & C Pritchard, *The protest makers*, Pergamon, 1980).

Apocalypse again

Twenty years later the CND show is back on the road. The peculiar periodicity of the nuclear war issue needs some explanation. Britain embarked on its nuclear programme in 1948: the potential for world devastation has existed continually for more than 30 years. Yet nuclear disarmament has excited major controversy only between 1959 and 1961 and in the last year. Why?

The left's answer is that advances in weapons technology at a time of growing international conflict have provoked mass resistance to the nuclear threat. Now there can be no doubt that there has been a build-up of more and more lethal nuclear weaponry and that tensions among rival imperialist powers are intensifying as a result of the recession. But there is no *qualitative* difference between Cruise and Polaris, or for that matter between atomic and conventional weapons.

Historically every new form of warfare has produced horrified protests that the whole nature of war has been altered. The use of gas, for instance, caused exactly this reaction after the First World War. But as long as bourgeois society exists, capitalist governments will equip themselves with the most murderous weapons they can devise. It is futile to quibble over what sort of weapons the ruling class should deploy against its enemies.

So why the CND revival? Just as in 1959-61, the answer is to be found in the official labour movement. CND itself has changed little: the Quakers and Methodists have been displaced by a Catholic priest at the top, and EP Thompson stands in for Bertrand Russell as the movement's daft but lovable intellectual, with a high moral tone and visions of doom. But the Labour Party and the unions once more need to take refuge behind the mushroom-shaped cloud.

The Labour left emerged from the 1979 General Election in serious disarray. It was on the retreat inside the party and its alternative economic strategy had little support in the country. The trade unions were in even worse shape. Blamed for causing Labour's defeat through 'the winter of discontent', they were on the defensive – but they couldn't defend their members against the biggest rise in unemployment since the 'thirties. What better than CND to take the pressure off and get people 'doing things' again?

Another factor in the return of CND, more important now than two decades ago, is the role of the radical left. The SWP, the IMG and the rest were born out of the old CND. They gained in strength through the anti-Vietnam protests and the trade union militancy that succeeded CND in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies. But by 1979 five years of Labour government had taken a heavy toll. Membership had slumped and 'rank and file' groups had virtually collapsed. The Anti-Nazi League only existed on paper; as editorial after editorial worried about 'the downturn', CND seemed to provide a lifeline – and the radical left rushed to grab it.

The SWP is quite explicit about this. Analysing how the Communist Party used CND to arrest its decline in its day, the SWP concludes: 'When the movement was last at a peak, those organisations which stood outside of it paid a penalty in poor recruitment. Those who entered wholeheartedly grew rapidly' (*International Socialism*, winter 1981). While trying to win members in CND, the SWP and the rest keep asserting that nuclear disarmament is an important concern for the labour movement. They seem to be trying to convince themselves: they never feel under a similar obligation to declare that unemployment or racism are 'class questions'. But is CND a working class issue?

Workers first, humans second

A 'class question' is one which can be raised by revolutionaries in the labour movement to clarify the distinct interests of workers as a class. 'Class questions' help to expose the independent interests of the working class, demarcate them from those of other sections of society and show how their defence must lead to the overthrow of capitalism. The nuclear disarmament campaign raises no class questions. Its aim is to save humanity without overthrowing capitalism.

We do not reject CND because we only care about the working class. We don't. However we recognise that the drive towards nuclear war is an expression of the crisis of capitalist society that only the working class can resolve in the interests of humanity as a whole. The only way to prevent war is to destroy bourgeois society before it destroys us all. The survival of the human race therefore depends, not on trying to unite humanity against the Bomb (which is impossible), but on uniting the working class against capital. CND, far from advancing this vital cause, is an obstacle to its achievement.

The politics of CND are the same in 1981 as they were in 1961: pacifism, moralism and nationalism. Frank Cousins summed up the persistent themes in a recent letter to *The Times*:

> 'In the name of suffering humanity, we ask the British Government not to procede with the deployment of cruise missiles on our fair land. . .
>
> 'The only way to peace is through arms limitation not through arms extension.' (24 March 1981)

Far from differentiating the working class from the bourgeoisie, CND binds workers to the ideological outlook of the liberal middle class. Whilst preaching of the dangers of nuclear weapons to humanity, radical CND supporters subordinate workers to a party which has twice this century led them into imperialist slaughter and sells them out on jobs and living standards every day of the week. The fight against nuclear extermination is a fight against the Labour Party and a fight against the politics of the CND.

SERIES

THE WAR AND THE WORKING CLASS

In Part Four of our series we explained why Britain could only resolve the economic problems of the 'thirties by going to war. We also showed how, over the same decade, the TUC was able to turn popular hatred for fascism into support for imperialist aggression; and how the Communist Party in particular made the politics of national-militarism appealing to the most organised sections of the working class. Here we follow the development of these trends in the 1939-45 period.

The war was not a purely military encounter, a rude interruption to an otherwise largely peaceful twentieth century. Though Germany's threat to the survival of the British bourgeoisie was real enough, war primarily expressed the impasse which the accumulation of capital in Britain had reached. There was also a remarkable continuity between the policies of the labour bureaucrats and the Stalinists before 3 September 1939 and those they adopted once fighting had begun.

The six years of working class history spanned by the Second World War remain almost entirely ignored by the left today. Yet the political residue of the era is still with us in 1981. The very name the SWP gave the Anti-Nazi League invokes the past defence of British bourgeois democracy against an alien menace. The TUC's recent document Plan for growth revives the dreams of every wartime radical – of a Britain protected by the state from enemies abroad and unpatriotic employees at home. And the Labour left's current demand for a secret service less prone to cover-ups and more subject to public control harks back to the plebeian days of the Home Guard.

The British left likes to say that, though the working class is now in difficulty, it has not suffered a truly devastating setback since the General Strike of 1926. This reveals just how little it appreciates what the war was all about. During the war the ruling class mounted a prolonged and unprecedentedly vicious economic and political offensive against the proletariat – an offensive in which it was overwhelmingly successful.

'BRITONS GO farther led than driven' said William Beveridge early in 1940; and the bosses fully agreed. It was obvious that they could only get working class support for their war by persuasion, not by force. Who was to do the persuading? The labour bureaucracy.

Ever since the early 'thirties far-sighted Tories like Harold Macmillan had argued the need for a national plan to rescue the country from *economic* destruction at the hands of its rivals abroad. By September 1938, and the Munich crisis, they were openly calling for a coalition with

5. A 'people's war' ~ against the working class

Labour as a means of assuring Britain's *military* survival. The whole working population had to be mobilised for war – and this was something which only Labour could perform.

During the 'phoney war', before hostilities began in earnest, unemployment fell dramatically as manpower mobilisation got under way. Working class militancy rose to new heights, partly as an expression of lower unemployment, but mainly because people were not prepared to accept tougher working conditions from a government made up of Tory 'appeasers'. Their time was up. The disastrous performance of British troops in Norway precipitated Chamberlain's downfall, and, on 13 May 1940, a Coalition Government was formed that was to rule unimpeded for five years.

Churchill's anti-working class past was well known. That of Home Secretary John Anderson was equally disgusting: previously controller of Britain's Black and Tans in Ireland, he had shown his talent for repression in India and, as organiser of 'civil defence', in the General Strike. But despite the make-up of the Coalition, the Labour Party conference that was held the day it was established approved it by 2½ million votes to less than 200 000.

In came Ernest Bevin, leader of the TGWU, as Minister of Labour; and in too came Clem Attlee, leader of the party. After the war the latter remarked:

> 'I can remember no case where differences arose between Conservatives, Labour and Liberals along party lines. Certainly not in the War Cabinet. Certainly not in the big things.' (Quoted in Angus Calder, *The people's war*, Cape, 1969)

Attlee's memory served him well. Labour followed the dictates of the bourgeoisie to the letter. And, sadly, once they saw their representatives given the privilege of power, workers did much the same.

Why the bosses had to get tough

The establishment of the Coalition was swiftly followed by a Labour-backed official campaign against 'aliens' and 'Fifth Columnists' (in the Six Counties, for instance, republican suspects were interned without trial). Yet, with anti-subversive legislation like the Emergency Powers Act and Defence Regulation 18B already on the statute books, the main problem facing the ruling class was not 'security', but 'economics'.

During times of peace the accumulation of capital proceeds in two main departments: the production of means of production (machines, etc), and the production of articles of consumption (food, clothing, etc). The manufacture of *luxuries*, commodities consumed neither in production nor by the working class, has only a very minor significance. Capital is subject to a tendency for the rate of profit to fall; but this tendency can be offset by various factors – including increases in the productivity of labour. Rises in productivity in the two main departments cheapen the subsistence items bought by the worker, reduce the value of his labour-power and supplement the amount of labour-time his boss takes for free. This, the creation of relative surplus-value, acts against the tendency towards a general decline in profitability.

By mid 1940 the accumulation of capital in Britain was changing its form dramatically. Consumer goods industries were turned over to making machines and munitions, and investment in the arms sector soared from a pre-war figure of £4m to £¼ billion (M Postan, *British war production*, HMSO, 1952). The economy became geared to making shells, tanks, cruisers and bombers – 'luxuries' which could never enter into the determination of the value of labour-power. Rising productivity in this sector could do nothing to counter-act the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. Profitability thus tended to fall faster than ever before. This was all the more worrying for the capitalists because they were being punitively taxed to finance unproductive state expenditure on the armed forces.

Once conscription began, pay and allowances for the armed forces climbed from a pre-war figure of less than £100m to more than £1 billion (RS Sayers, *Financial policy 1939-45*, HMSO, 1951). Meanwhile Hitler's blockade of Britain ensured that imports dropped by 33 per cent and, what was worse, that exports dropped by a half. The fall in net profits over the second half of 1940 was soon revealed as 'striking' (*The Economist*, 1 March 1941). Things were clear enough. The bourgeoisie needed to make a savage increase in the rate of exploitation of the working class. The only question was how this task was to be performed.

'Volunteering' for sacrifices

Of one thing the authorities were certain: the task was *not* to be performed by imposing a statutory incomes policy. Since mobilisation had eliminated unemployment, individual employers could not be expected to enforce wage cuts of the scale required. More importantly, as Bevin observed, 'any attempt to upset the wage system, collective bargaining or the rights of arbitration' would have caused a 'debacle' on the shop floor (cited in E Wigham, *Strikes and the government 1893-1974*, Macmillan, 1976).

In fact, officials in the Ministry of Labour had come to the view as early as 1936 that legally-enforceable pay restraint would be impossible in a fully mobilised economy and that reliance should instead be placed on 'the realism and moderation of organised labour' (W Hancock & M

War gives Bevin his great chance: He is made Minister of Labour. He has never sat in the House of Commons. Yet he gets a job in Churchill's Cabinet. It is the job he is cut out for. He calls the workers "my people". He asks them to "work like hell". He asks them to work "to save the lives of our lads". **Photo and caption from** Picture Post.

Gowing, *British war economy*, HMSO, 1953). What this entailed in the war itself was that the labour bureaucracy was charged with the job of getting workers to tighten their belts by agreeing to measures other than wage control. This practice was called 'voluntarism'.

Voluntarism – class collaboration – meant that the union bureaucrats carried out every extraordinary requirement capital made of the proletariat in return for their right to be consulted. It meant that they represented the sacrifices made by the working class as being paralleled by the 'sacrifices' made by all other classes. It meant that, in a period when the state pushed through the most devastating attacks on the working class, the bureaucrats portrayed that state wholly impartial in character.

'Voluntarism' implied more than avoiding coercion on strikes, too. Though the Coalition's Conditions of Employment and Arbitration Order made strikes illegal and immediately subject to 'independent' adjudication, it was used only rarely and in such a way as to satisfy workers' demands more often than not. Its application provoked only seven strikes. These few were the only major disputes of the war and were ended by government concessions in the majority of cases. As a high-ranking government 'industrial relations' expert put it, repeated legal action against strikes 'would probably produce an industrial situation which might well make the prosecution of the war impossible'. Moreover concessions were the best way to isolate militants. MI5, sent in to Vickers-Armstrong, Barrow, to investigate a strike there by 9000 engineers, reported: 'Trotskyist and Communist agitators depend for their success on the existence of real industrial grievances. . .if grievances are dealt with quickly the militant element meet with little sympathy in their attempt to foment industrial unrest' (*Strikes and the government. . .*).

The attack on the working class

To increase the exploitation of the working class the bourgeoisie was willing to use any tactic apart from wage control. In this it had the complete support of the labour bureaucracy.

Real wages were anyway eroded by inflation: between 1939 and 1941 money wages rose by 21 per cent, while the notoriously biased official cost of living index rose by 28 per cent (Central Statistical Office, *Statistical digest of the war*). The budget of July 1940 made ruthlessly regressive changes in taxation, while that for April 1941 established a system of 'forced savings' in which workers were compelled to give a portion of their pay to the unions to invest in bogus government securities. As if that were not enough, the National Savings Movement – backed by the TUC – policed cuts in consumption for 15 million people through 300 000 groups based in streets, factories, schools and air raid shelters.

The combined effect of these fiscal devices was remarkable. While 'national income' expanded rapidly, taxes and savings grew more quickly still:

	1939	1943
'National income'	£5 billion	£8 billion
Direct taxes	£400m	£1100m
Indirect taxes	£750m	£1500m
Personal savings	£250m	£1100m

Yet robbery of the masses by inflation and by the Exchequer was not enough. Profitability could only be maintained by the extraction of absolute surplus-value and by cutting the value of labour-power directly. This meant prolonging the number of hours worked, intensifying the labour process and multiplying the number of workers engaged in productive labour – that is, more and longer shifts, speed-up and industrial conscription; and it meant reducing working class consumption by *rationing*.

Such was the physical and psychological impact of these measures on men, women and their families that the bourgeois state was pushed into intervening, not only in the production of tools and arms, but in the reproduction of labour-power itself. The foundations of the modern 'welfare state' were laid between 1939 and 1945 because the condition of the working class threatened to bring the creation of surplus-value to a complete halt. As Bevin so knowingly put it to the workers: 'everyone of you who holds a responsible position in our unions knows how difficult it is to handle the human being. He is the most awkward part of production unless you handle him right'.

The loyal socialists

How did the labour bureaucracy manage to convince workers that the deprivations they endured were necessary? The bipartisan Coalition represented itself as entirely neutral in its actions – the foe of working class slackers, middle class black market manipulators and capitalist profiteers alike. But in fact workers were not too taken in by this. It therefore fell to 'socialists' more subtle than Bevin and Attlee to rally the rank and file round the imperialist cause.

The Labour left played a crucial role here. Michael Foot, for instance, attacked the remaining 'appeasers' in the Government for their failure to re-arm in time for the war and for the conduct of Britain's military campaigns, but reassured workers that they now had stauncher men like Churchill on their side. *Labour Research* contended that the rations system was fundamentally egalitarian and that its only defect was that it did not extend far enough: 'a fair distribution', it argued, 'can only be achieved through the complete rationing of all necessities' (January 1942). And so the reformists went on. But, in terms of bringing reactionary politics down onto the shop floor, the Labour left was no match for the Communist Party.

The CP was the leading organisation among the most politically active workers – the skilled engineers in the arms sector, in wartime the source of employment for half the working class. Through the Engineering & Allied Trades Shop Stewards National Council (EATSSNC), it urged workers to redouble their efforts by playing on their hatred of the Nazis and – after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 – on their respect for 'socialist Russia' and its fight on Germany's eastern front. As EATSSNC secretary and Napiers Aircraft combine convenor Walter Swanson told the shop stewards' 1941 conference, 'We can only beat Fascism when we can produce quicker and in better quality and quantity more materials than the Fascists, when we supply our armed forces and the Red Army with an abundance of the weapons that can hurl Hitler and his bandits to perdition' (*Arms and the men*, Report on the Conference of the EATSSNC, 19 October 1941).

Identified as militants, the Stalinists gave the bosses' programme of voluntarism a radical and popular form. They presented the working class as the most consistent defender of the nation: when, for example, the engineers were refused a pay rise, their rank and file organ denounced 'attempts of the press to represent those who want wage increases as being unpatriotic' and castigated Fleet Street for its refusal to print shop stewards' accounts of managerial inefficiency (see *The Propeller*, 1941). The CP got workers to be the best Britons in the land.

The Stalinists' successes were, however, not just ideological. In 1942 the Government accepted CP-inspired proposals from the EATSSNC for the formation of worker/management Joint Production Committees (JPCs) and proceeded to set them up in every ordnance factory, thousands of other plants and – in the form of Pit Committees (PCs) – in the mines too. Their function: to 'discuss' the 'maximum utilisation of existing machinery' (shift work), 'upkeep of fixtures, jigs, tools and gauges' (unpaid repair work), 'improvements in the methods of production' (speed-up), 'efficient use of maximum productive hours' (the lengthening of the working day), and so on (*Strikes and the government. . .*). The CP organised the courts at which workers' commitment to 'voluntarism' was put on trial.

Through the JPCs the Stalinists policed the war drive in factories everywhere. But they also policed it outside too. JPCs in ordnance establishments and PCs generally met absenteeism, which mounted considerably as work became more intolerable, with naked repression. For left-wing miners' leader Ebby Edwards, absentees were 'sabotaging' the war effort and had to be made subject 'to the full rigour of the law'; 'deliberate idlers', they could not be allowed to 'besmirch the character and integrity of the mass' (Ebby Edwards. 'The urgent need for coal', BBC Broadcast, 19 October 1941).

The witch-hunts

This was not all that the Stalinists and their allies did. Super-exploitation of women in engineering and forced labour of apprentice boys at the coalface were fine by them: the CP-dominated AEU, for instance, banned women from membership until November 1942 and refused to represent the apprentices when, in the winter of 1943-44, they resisted compulsory recruitment to the mines.

The struggle of the apprentice engineers against forced labour was the most important challenge to the Government throughout the war. Compelled to organise independently, they formed the Tyneside Apprentices Guild and spread their campaign from the Clyde to Royal Ordnance Factories in Manchester, Huddersfield and Rochester. Unfortunately their isolation and the threat of military conscription ensured their defeat.

Apprentice leaders and the militants who fought for workers' interests were labelled as 'Trotskyite Agents' and witch-hunted by the CP. The chauvinist hysteria whipped up by the left ensured that even the most blatantly anti-working class measures aimed at militants received general support.

When the South Wales miners struck in 1944 they were met with the usual nationalist outburst. Bevin launched a vicious press campaign against them and took advantage of the columns of the *Daily Worker* to drive his attacks home. When the strike spread to Yorkshire, he introduced Regulation 1AA to crush them. This made strikes in 'essential services' illegal and strikers faced the penalty of five years' imprisonment. Soon the CP joined the attack. The *Daily Worker* noted that the Government was justified in taking firm action and denounced 'Trotskyists' for 'disruption' (6 April 1944).

The results of the war

What were the political results of the war for the working class? They were many. The most class-conscious workers felt the state could deal with what was termed 'vested interest' and plan military production on their behalf. This had important consequences.

Nurtured by the national and local labour bureaucracy and reinforced by the peculiar appearances of capitalist relations of production in wartime, workers' illusions in the progressive character of the state were further deepened by Germany's eventual surrender to Britain. While the First World War and the General Strike were widely recognised as defeats, therefore, the Second World War was not: on the contrary, it was interpreted as a victory. A 'democratic' Britain, staffed by and fought for by workers, had vanquished Hitler abroad, while the aristocrats, Colonel Blimps and moneyed rich had been discredited. This was the first lasting result of the war. To put it another way, the state could be used and had been used to beat fascism – the enemy of all classes in British society.

The second lasting result followed naturally. Once the war was over, all that remained was to 'plan the peace'. The nationalisation of industry and the provision of welfare, measures vital to the accumulation of capital during the war, came to be seen as 'gains' for the working class.

Matters did not end there. Such gains, workers believed, had to be built on after VE day. Since Labour had been the party that had advocated them most strongly, it was 'only fair' that a Labour government be returned to carry on the good work. The workers had made their sacrifices; now they wanted their rewards. Labour's 'socialist' election manifesto made the war appear to have been worthwhile. The idea of a Social Contract between capital and labour, one that worked to the workers' advantage, seemed more valid than ever.

The war was a catastrophic Social Contract. By voting Labour in their millions, workers renewed that contract for another five years. They greeted Labour's landslide at the polls as a revolution. Labour's programme merely ratified the restructuring of capital that had gone on during the war and before. Yet it came to be regarded as yet another victory and as a model for future Labour governments to follow.

In addition to its political results, the war had important organisational consequences for the working class. The present-day pattern of shop floor organisation has its roots in war-time. The JPCs stimulated the growth of a new shop stewards' movement. The class-collaborationist character of shop floor organisation convinced both employers and union leaders that shop steward bodies should be encouraged. Most bourgeois studies of trade unions show that the important functions of the shop stewards' movement were developed during the Second World War.

Though trade union militancy existed throughout the war and continued afterwards, it was a militancy that took place on terms defined by the bourgeoisie. This is a state of affairs that still prevails.

In the war the deception of the working class was complete. It was a defeat of which very few workers were even conscious. Today many active workers still see Britain's conquest of Germany and Attlee's triumph over Churchill as victories for the working class. The defeat of 1945 haunts the labour movement even now.

James Wood

reviews

'Victor Grayson, a fiery Socialist, without many principles and given to mere phrases.'
Lenin 1913

Labour or Liberal?

Dave Clark, *Colne Valley: radicalism to socialism. The portrait of a Northern constituency in the formative years of the Labour Party 1890-1910*, Longman, London 1981, 225pp, hbk £12.00.

THE COLNE VALLEY Constituency Labour Party is one of the oldest in the country. It attracted national attention when its candidate Victor Grayson was elected to Parliament in the 1907 by-election. In contrast to the dull respectability of Labour Party parliamentary candidates, Grayson preached a fiery socialist message. His militant rhetoric and contempt for parliamentary etiquette soon made him an outcast in parliamentary circles.

Grayson's rise to fame has only an episodic significance. Much more interesting are the circumstances that led to his election and the reaction this provoked. David Clark is right to concentrate on the day-to-day forces that led to the emergence of the Labour Party in Colne Valley. While his book lacks any serious analytical thrust, it is rich in information on the Colne Valley labour movement. Moreover, the material contained in this text allows the reader to develop our understanding of the forces that led to the formation of the Labour Party.

The Lib/Lab phenomenon

In Colne Valley as elsewhere the main force behind the rise of the Labour Party was the desire for independent working class representation. By the 1890s it had become clear to many workers that the Liberal Party could not represent their interests in Parliament. The formation of the Independent Labour Party in 1893 and the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 was the outcome.

The establishment of independent working class organisations reflected the understanding that workers and capitalists had their different interests. The founders of the ILP and the Labour Party however did not understand that the interests of workers were *fundamentally antagonistic* to those of the capitalist class. Thus the new Labour clubs were organisationally, but not politically independent of the Liberal Party. The Colne Valley experience shows this clearly. Liberals who joined the ILP returned to their old party when it suited them. In fact in its essentials the programme of the ILP was virtually indistinguishable from that of the Liberal Party. Lenin aptly called the ILP 'independent of socialism, but dependent on the Liberals'.

The Labour Party can thus be seen as the extension of the Liberal Party in new circumstances. The growth of the working class and the development of trade unions undermined the ability of the Liberal Party to hold together its working class and capitalist constituents. This political continuity is recognised by the author, who is Labour MP for South Shields and sympathetic to Lib/Lab politics. He is grateful that 'an alien political culture' such as Marxism was rejected by the Labour Party and notes that 'The ILP's success was based on the gradual adaptation of part of the existing political culture and by the acceptance of some of the key concepts of that culture' (p181).

So when did the Labour Party become socialist? The author quotes Keir Hardie who wrote that although he was not a socialist the 'socialist conversion' was 'a necessity imposed upon the new party to find sufficiently ample basis for independent existence' (p182). In other words socialism – or more precisely socialist rhetoric – gave the Labour Party an identity necessary for survival. And although many workers joined the party out of genuine socialist conviction the Labour Party never ceased being Liberal.

Ethical socialism

Most of the leading lights of the Colne Valley Labour union and Labour clubs elsewhere can be characterised as ethical socialists. The main intellectual infulences on them were the bourgeois writers Carlyle and Ruskin. Ethical socialism represented a moral rejection of the more unjust and inegalitarian features of capitalist society. In Colne Valley the Labour club could unite workers, small tradesmen and churchmen in search of a more egalitarian society.

The Labour Party today has still not transcended the ideological make-up of the Colne Valley party around the turn of the century. If anything the genuine hatred of the Colne Valley pioneers for capitalist morality is today manipulated by the Labour Party for its own cynical ends. It moralises about nuclear weapons while it actively supports British imperialism throughout the world. It talks about a caring society while it acts as a steward for a system of production that brutalises the working class.

What were political explorations for the Labour Party's founders have today become dogmas that have been invalidated many times over. Read this book even if only to see how little the labour movement has developed ideologically over the last 80 years and to comprehend how much needs to be done.

Understanding the US backlash

Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the right: the 'New Right' and the politics of resentment*, Phaidon Press, New York, $13.95.

America's New Right has the names and addresses of 25 million families on magnetic tape. It mobilises them to oppose unions in general (via the National 'Right to Work' Committee, which is devoted to opposing the closed shop) and public sector unions in particular (via the Public Service Research Council), otherwise known as American's Against Union Control of Government); abortion (via the 'Right-to-life' movement); homosexuality (via Anita Bryant's Save Our Children, Inc); and indeed anything that smacks of liberalism, Europeanism, 'pointy-headed' intellectuals and bureaucracy. The 'moral majority', still a marginal (though growing) influence in Britain, is on the march in the USA.

What is really significant about the US right is its power to destabilise the political consensus that has kept American capitalism alive ever since Roosevelt's New Deal. The New Right is prepared to unleash mass and potentially uncontrollable movements of 'agin-ism' against big business, against political parties, and against government itself. Moreover, it doesn't just rely for its support on the white lower middle class, whose relatively privileged economic position has been dramatically eroded by the US recession. It's after a 'new majority', a coaltion of blue-collar workers and their employers against pen-pushers of all sorts and, specifically, communists ('stamp it on their foreheads and send them back to Russia' says the Reverend Jerry Falwell, one of the top preachers of the new, 'electronic' church). It's prepared to enlist the votes of blacks in Oklahoma and laid-off steelworkers in Youngstown. In short, it's a factor altogether too unpredictable for the US bourgeoisie's liking.

The New Right is political testimony to the decline of American imperialism. Apart from the Panama Canal, it doesn't seem to stress foreign policy issues much, but we should not be fooled by this – as America's entry into the Second World War shows, US isolationsim turns into US interventionism with little diffficulty. Likewise, the New Right's downplaying of racism, the ideology which has proved so vital to the USA's economic prosperity, is deceptive: its links with the Klu Klux Klan and the John Birch Society are well-documented. Yet the New Right isn't only an expression of the petit-bourgeois frenzy that envelops any capitalist country in crisis. It also shows where trade union politics lead to.

When the New Right campaigned among Youngstown steelworker trade unionists, it reported reactions as follows:

'They were saying: "In order to compete with foreign steel, we need modern equipment . . .We can't do it because our companies cannot go into the market and borrow money because the money isn't available". . . .That sounds like top management, but these were the labour people.'

This is not, as the New Right itself observes, unreconstructed New Right politics. It is the politics of those very labour bureaucrats the New Right likes to vilify so much. But it is a system of ideas entirely compatible with those of the New Right.

The real – if unintentional – message of Crawford's book is that the struggle against the New Right in America is a struggle against the chauvinist politics of the AFL-CIO.

Those racist laws

Manchester Law Centre, *The thin edge of the white wedge*, Immigration Handbook No 5, Manchester Free Press, March 1981, £1.

TODAY IT IS FASHIONABLE to be against the *racist* Nationality Act proposals and *racist* immigration laws. This pamphlet argues that *all* such laws are inevitably racist: the state doesn't impose controls in the abstract, but 'precisely to discriminate against particular groups'. All controls are based on national chauvinism, and to be against racism we have to demand the abolition of *all* immigration controls (p55). For this alone, the pamphlet deserves a warm welcome.

The pamphlet has other strengths. The authors base their conclusions on a thorough treatment of the wide variety of laws and regulations already used against immigrants. And they show how these are used, not simply for keeping people out, but for controlling those who are in, legally or otherwise. Impressive documentation, with specific examples, shows in graphic detail the British state's systematic and blatant harassment of ethnic minorities.

The pamphlet exposes the secret instructions from the DHSS sent to doctors at ports to step up refusals of entry on 'medical grounds' and the restriction of supplementary benefits payments to blacks set out in the 1980 Social Security Act. It also looks at the extensive links between the Home Office, the DHSS and NHS for monitoring immigrants.

Where it falls down is when it fails to pose the fight against racism as an issue for the whole working class. It talks of how the 'welfare state' is being restructured to exclude black people and examines the attack on Asian and Caribbean families. But it fails to explain how all this is part of a general attack on the working class today: all workers are being hit by the cuts and the bourgeoisie's attempts to restore profitability. True, the state utilises a whole panoply of laws and regulations to hit ethnic minorities hardest. However, by permitting the state to go ahead with these racist measures workers weaken their ability to resist any attack. That's why workers must oppose all immigration controls.

One final point: the authors condemn national chauvinism but delicately skirt around the question of *who* the chauvinists are. Ears will be burning in the TUC, the Labour Party and the Communist Party. We recommend this pamphlet to the radicals in CARL who want to find a bridge between chauvinism and anti-racism, to help them see no bridge exists.

Why not squat?

N Waites and others, *Squatting: the real story*, Bay Leaf Books, London, 1980, pbk £4.90, hbk £11.50, 240pp.

SQUATTING is the direct action of the homeless. After a decline following the introduction of the 1977 Criminal Law Act, squatting is once again on the increase. About 30 000 people now live in squats in Britain. The decline of the private rented sector, rising rents and rates and the freeze on council house building give many people no alternative but to occupy some of the 750 000 empty homes in England alone.

Contrary to popular myth, most squatters are workers – low-paid, unemployed and/or black. This book, however, reflects the concerns of the small but publicity-conscious group of middle-class squatters which set up squats in London in the 'seventies. Its coffee-table design and narrow 'life-style' preoccupations indicate an outlook far removed from the real fight for better working class housing. Still, Andrew Friend's survey of 'the post-war squatters' is interesting.

Friend reviews the wave of squatting (notably in army camps) in the late 'forties and the role the Communist Party played in it. He shows how the CP's refusal to challenge the courts, and its failure to mobilise wider working class support for the squatters allowed the Labour Government to deal with them with ease. Then Housing Minister Aneurin Bevan took advantage of squatting to relieve the pressure on his building programme – at the expense of working class housing standards.

Thirty years later the authorities responded in a similar way. Where possible they have granted licenses to squatters – often in properties condemned as slums years ago. The burden of cold and damp, bad repairs and inadequate facilities is then borne by poor families. The state thus solves its housing problems while the general state of working class housing deteriorates. The real story of squatting is that both the movement's challenge to bourgeois property rights and its demands for better housing must be pursued from a working class standpoint. Battles over housing will undoubtedly get bigger, as the storming of the Kilner House squat, Lambeth, by 300 riot-equipped police in January shows. It is up to revolutionaries to make sure it's the working class that wins them.

LETTERS

'Jobs not bombs'

Dear comrades,

Your understanding of the slogan 'Jobs not bombs' is somewhat lacking (*tns*, No 11), in that you dismiss it as being both reformist and pacifist.

We are well aware that full employment – or the right to a decent standard of living for everyone – is not possible under capitalism. Sure, for a few years it might be achieved in one country, but at the same time there will be real misery elsewhere. The point of the slogan is to show that capitalism can produce bombs but it can't produce jobs. In that the slogan is revolutionary, and there is a real link between the two.

Not only that. In raising the slogan – call it opportunist if you will, but everyone *is* talking about the bomb – it is possible to show that you won't get rid of the bomb unless you get rid of the system which produces it. *Socialist Worker* and *Socialist Review* have had articles which have said this quite clearly.

It is wrong to suggest that *SW* places any hope in a future Labour government banning nuclear arms or leaving NATO. The actions of Labour governments in the past have been portrayed, and the move to the right by Foot inter alia has been outlined – and the reasons for that move.

The economic and political basis that has led to the arms race has been shown – if you care to read it. SW also links to the slogan 'Jobs not bombs' that of 'Neither Moscow nor Washington, but International Socialism!'.

I suppose that is reformist as well.

Roy Smith
High Wycombe

Helen Swift writes:

Far from showing that 'you won't get rid of the bomb unless you get rid of the system which produces it', the 'jobs not bombs' slogan actually implies the possibility of both dealing with unemployment and the nuclear threat by a switch in government expenditure from cruise missiles to job creation. Far from wanting to overthrow capitalism, most advocates of the slogan see it as a means of stabilising the present system.

The link between 'jobs not bombs' and 'neither Moscow nor Washington' does indeed have reformist consequences. It connects an appeal to pacifism and moralism with adaptation to two other reactionary sentiments which are unfortunately very strong in the British labour movement. First it indulges anti-Sovietism, an outlook assiduously cultivated by the bourgeoisie ever since the Russian Revolution to isolate Bolsheviks. Secondly it appeals to anti-Americanism, a strong chauvinist current in Britain ever since the USA baled the old country out in the last war and took over the Empire.

Apart from their absurdity (bombs do not put people out of work; the Soviet Union is not an imperialist country to be equated with the United States) these slogans reflect the adaptation of the SWP to the traditional prejudices of the British Labour Party.

ELWAR

goes to Paris

Our recent week of action against the Nationality Bill provided an excellent opportunity for discussion and debate between British and French anti-racists. On 31 March and 1 April Mogniss, a representative of the French immigrant youth organisation Rock Against the Police, spoke at rallies in London and Manchester. On 4 April a bus load of ELWAR supporters went to Paris to back a demonstration called by the maison de travailleurs immigres (MTI).

In contrast to the magnificent resistance of many migrants, the French left is very weak in fighting racism. Although the 15 000 strong MTI demonstration attracted support form almost all of the left, the social democratic CFDT, Lutte Ouvriere, Sans Frontiere, most of the 'Trotskyist' groups and a dozen of immigrant organisations, the left refuses to challenge the party that fosters chauvinism in the French working class – the PCF.

Indeed most of the French left adapts to the Stalinists. Almost without exception leaflets given out at the march concentrated their attack on Stoleru and the government. Despite common denunciations of the PCF as 'divisive', no group could challenge its nationalist outlook. Indeed, a group of Senegalese students that shouted anti-PCF slogans was threatened with expulsion from the demo while CFDT stewards manhandled its supporters.

All this goes to show that ELWAR's approach – uncompromising opposition to immigration controls and to labour movement chauvinism together with a preparedness to organise physical defence of blacks – is very much relevant in France. Our leaflet denouncing the PCF's nationalist strategy and calling for workers' defence proved popular and made ELWAR numerous useful international supporters.

Brixton, Belfast

The Brixton revolt and Bobby Sands' bye election victory made a bad week for the British ruling class. When news of rioting in Belfast after Bobby Sands' victory march followed reports of looting and burning in Brixton on 11 April, the two conflicts seemed strikingly similar.

Labour backs Britain

One thing they have in common is that neither the black youth of Brixton nor the nationalist youth of West Belfast gets much support from the British labour movement. Indeed the leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions back up the police and the army, whilst suggesting ways of making their repression more subtle. In London they want 'community police' and more 'democratic' police; in Ireland they want the state that terrorises and impoverishes the people to safeguard their rights and improve their living standards.

Workers the link

We believe that blacks in Brixton and the Irish people should have the support of the British labour movement for the fight against the British state. Workers have every interest in seeing the police driven out of Brixton – and Hackney – and the soldiers forced out of Belfast. Anything that weakens the British state strengthens the working class in its fight to defend jobs, wages and trade union rights. If workers tolerate more repression in Brixton or in Belfast, their own struggle against the British ruling class will be gravely weakened as a result.

Public meeting
Brixton, Belfast – Police out! Troops out!
Friday 24 April 7.30pm
Speakers:
- from Ireland and Brixton
- Joan Lamont (ELWAR candidate Hackney)
- Mike Freeman (Smash the PTA Campaign)

Stoke Newington Town Hall
Stoke Newington Church Street,
London N16

● **COVENTRY**
Public meeting: 'Victory to the Irish people! TUC hands off Ireland!'
Thursday 30 April 7.30pm
The White Lion,
Gosford Green
Speaker: Frank Richards (RCT)

Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign Midlands dayschool
Sunday 3 May 10am
Coventry
Phone (01) 274 3951 for details on venue

● **BIRMINGHAM**
Meetings for supporters of *the next step*
Tuesdays 7.30pm
Committee Room 1, Students Union Building, University of Birmingham
28 April **'Hands off Ireland!'**
12 May **'Racism: how to fight it'**
26 May **'Who needs the Labour Party?'**

● **NOTTINGHAM**
Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign: series of educationals on the Irish War
Alternate Sunday afternoons
Phone (01) 274 3951 for further details

● **NATIONAL EVENTS**

Demonstration to commemorate the Easter Rising, Dublin, 1916
Sunday 19 April 2.30pm
Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, London (Mable Arch tube)
March to Kilburn
Organised by Provisional Sinn Fein

Victory to the Irish hunger strikers!
Sunday 26 April 1.30pm
Assemble Kilburn tube (Maygrove Road)
March to West End
Organised by H-Block/Armagh Committee (London)

banned from Brick Lane

EARLY IN MARCH a dozen fascists attacked ELWAR supporters in Brick Lane during our regular Sunday sale. The police moved in quickly to save the master race from a beating and arrested 5 ELWAR members – including our GLC election candidate for Bethnal Green and Bow, Fran Eden.

When the cases came up the Old Street magistrate allowed bail – on the condition that the ELWAR defendants mustn't go within a half mile radius of Brick Lane on a Sunday. This was a clear attempt to weaken our election campaign in the area – but the magistrate refused to lift the condition. He did, however, suspend the ban on Fran Eden until midnight on 7 May – election day.

The court's attempt to sabotage the ELWAR campaign by banning our activists from the area fits in with the strategy of the local police. Harassment of anti-racists is nothing new, but it has been stepped up in recent months throughout East London in an attempt to curb ELWAR's growing influence. On 5 April, when 200 supporters marched through the Brick Lane area on their way to the national demonstration against the new Nationality Act, police prevented people from joining the march along the way. And they turned away groups of young blacks arriving for the demonstration.

Because of this concerted attack on ELWAR we decided to take the case of the Brick Lane 5 to the High Court. And, on 14 April, we won a partial victory: now all 5 supporters will be allowed to campaign around Brick Lane until the GLC election. However after 7 May they will again be banned from the area – for at least three months.

One place which will not be affected by the ban is Chat's Palace where the Brick Lane 5 will be attending a benefit for their court costs on 15 May. Come and meet them, hear a good band and contribute to the defence of workers' defence in East London. Send all donations to ELWAR, Box 22, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8.

for your diary

ELWAR benefit concert:
'Defend the Brick Lane Five!'
Friday 15 May
Chat's Palace, Chatsworth Road
Hackney
Admission £1.50

East London Workers Against Racism National Labour Movement Conference: 'Workers' defence – the only way!'
Saturday 11 July 10am – 6pm
Toynbee Hall, Commercial Street
London E1 (Aldgate East tube)
Sessions on fascism, defence work, immigration, youth
Phone (01) 274 3951 for further details

the next step

Break with the Labour Party!

On 7 May, the day of Britain's municipal elections, the Labour Party expects to deliver a major blow to the Tories. Such is the unpopularity of Thatcher's regime that Foot's minions are expected to romp home at the polls. But in five boroughs they won't have things all their own way. In East London's Bethnal Green & Bow, Hackney North & Stoke Newington and Newham North East; in South London's Lambeth Central; and in Manchester's Moss Side & Hulme, RCT candidates will be giving prospective Labour councillors a run for their money. Below, we describe how we're using the local government elections to take anti-Labour Party revolutionary communist politics into the working class.

IF THERE'S ONE THING the RCT's election campaigns have done, it's confirm our suspicions. We've long suspected that many working class people have had enough of the Labour Party – in Downing Street, in parliamentary Opposition and especially in their local Town Hall. Now we know we were right. Returning from canvasses of estates, mobile loudspeaker tours of the streets and mass leaflettings of shopping centres, RCT activists have reported that disgust with Labour's failure to oppose the Tories is widespread and deeply felt.

What isn't so widespread is the feeling that an alternative to the Labour Party can be built. That's something, however, that our campaign has begun to change. By offering workers ways of resisting the bourgeoisie's austerity policies now, rather than some time in the future, we've sowed the seeds for a new optimism in working class communities. For once, a vote in the council elections will count: it'll be a token of its holder's willingness to fight the bosses' offensive head-on.

Clean up East London!

The choice between reaction under Labour and progress with the RCT couldn't be clearer than in East London, where East London Workers Against Racism is standing to sweep Labour representatives off the Greater London Council and drive fascist gangs out of the area for good.

A half-built block of flats at the Whitechapel end of Brick Lane serves as a monument to the racist practices of Tower Hamlets Labour Council. The project may be called Hopetown, but the Bengali families who crowd the damp, rubbish-ridden tenements on the Lane don't have a hope in hell of settling there. Labour wants a 'better class of tenant' on Hopetown, so rents will be set at £30 and up – out of the question for Bengalis on the dole or on subsistence wages in local rag trade sweatshops.

Racist gangs are on the rampage in East London. Fascists have recently smashed up shopfronts in Brick Lane; they bring terror to Bengalis living in Mile End and Cable Street too. Local Labour stalwart Dan Jones condemns the setting up of 'vigilante squads' to drill some sense into skinhead skulls, while Tower Hamlets Council's 'Association for Racial Justice' tells Asians who've been harassed to 'complain' to the police (*East End News*, 27 March 1981). Meanwhile council leader Paul Beasley takes trips to Bangladesh to get the authorities there to make emigration to Britain harder.

ELWAR's alternative to this disgusting state of affairs is to take action to get blacks proper homes, to spread the physical defence of blacks into all the districts the fascists think they can control, and to counter-attack whenever the police attempt to enforce the law on immigration. We've disrupted council meetings to force Labour to rehouse Asian families. We're lobbying local trade union branches to send their members on patrol against the fascists. And we're telling the police where they can put their 'community' copshops, their pleas for help ('Anti-racists invited to join police', *East End News*, 27 March 1981) and their incessant demands to see black people's passports.

On Sunday 5 April 200 ELWAR supporters marched through the Brick Lane area on their way to the national demonstration against the Nationality Act. The large and vocal contingent showed that ELWAR has become a powerful force in the fight against racism. It showed the fascists that resistance is growing to their vicious activities. And it served notice on the Labour Party in one of its most rotten boroughs.

Lambasting Labour in Lambeth

Like East London, Lambeth is an excellent place to do battle with the Labour Party, but for slightly different reasons. The local council is a textbook case of the disastrous effect of left-wing Labour politics in implementation.

Here's how the tale goes. In, several years ago, comes 'Marxist' council leader Ted Knight on a platform full of promises to increase spending on social services. Along, after May 1979, comes Environment Minister Michael Heseltine with swingeing reductions in grants to local authorities. Up, in January this year, spring the propertied classes, furious about the rate increases Labour said it would never make but now proposes. And back, in March, slinks Ted Knight – into millions of pounds worth of cuts in house-building, rent rises for council tenants and, most importantly, the loss of hundreds of jobs by natural wastage in council department after council department.

End of story, it might seem; but it isn't. While Labour vacillates and eventually winds up doing the Tories' dirty work for them, the bosses grow in confidence. More redundancies are being announced in Lambeth each day, the dole queues are lengthening fast and state hand-outs are becoming more and more miserly. Labour has no answer to this – but we do:

What we say is that workers must stop conforming to the arithmetic of capitalism and place their interests first. This applies in the corridors or power in Lambeth, in the workplace and on either side of the counter at Brixton Unemployment Benefit Office. The local labour movement should fight for full council services no matter what the outlay in wages or capital expenditure. Trade unionists should resist any further factory closures no matter what the employers' accountants say. And CPSA workers should side with claimants every time they demand more money when they sign on.

RCT sympathisers have been taking this message onto Lambeth and Battersea & Wandsworth trades councils, in local TGWU-ACTSS and GMWU branches, and into the pages of *South London Press*. The Unemployed Workers Group (Lambeth) is pressing for free council premises, so it can organise for work or full pay for school leavers and others without a job, and has arranged to address dole office workers on the need to strike back against checks on 'scroungers'. Our candidate has also challenged his 'extremist' Labour rival, Paul Moore, to a public debate – an offer that has been politely declined. Nevertheless, working class support for our position is climbing steadily, and the 7 May polls will be just a beginning.

Manchester: transport of delight

In the GLC election our main focus is racism (East London) and unemployment (South London). In Manchester it's both of these things; but we're placing particular emphasis on transport and tenants' rights too.

The Tories control Greater Manchester Council, but the Labour Group is no better. When the Home Office told the parents of 11 year-old Manchester Pakistani Mohammed Saeed they'd have to pay fees for him to attend a state school Labour did nothing. When a British army general boasts that 54 per cent of his North West recruits come from the ranks of the unemployed (*Manchester Evening News*, 2 February 1981), Labour merely whimpers. And when it comes to the buses in Manchester and to council housing in the city, Labour's record is just as bad.

Last year the council cut its transport budget by £3m, pushed through one-man-operation and so made 2400 busworkers take voluntary redundancy and raised fares as well. This year, having axed a further £3.7m, it's about to make 200 buses idle, give 300 more workers their cards and put fares up by 15 per cent. Result: more stress for drivers, more accidents, and an even lousier service. Labour's reaction: agreement to one-man-operation, plus a pledge to freeze fares *if* there's enough 'money in the kitty' – which there isn't.

And housing? Rents are going up £2 a week, rates and heating charges a total of £5 a week. Yet Labour can only manage token protests against these measures. Labour accepts that the council has to 'pay its way', but believes there are less aggressive methods of doing this. There aren't.

Manchester RCT has been publicising an approach to local issues directly opposed to Labour's sell-outs. In Moss Side we've held a successful meeting on police racism, made plans for a big demonstration against the 'British jobs for British workers' brigade, and – under the auspices of the North West Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign – mounted a well-attended picket of the local Job Centre to stop the unemployed being enlisted for Britain's war in Ireland. We'll be joining a busworkers' lobby of Greater Manchester Transport for an end to 'sound finance', one-man-operation and redundancies, and for more buses and lower fares instead, paid for from central government funds if necessary. And we've been taking our tenants' charter round the estates, calling for no rent/rate/heating charge increases, no evictions, no gas or electricity cut-offs, no council house sales and for more builders, caretakers and cleaners to be taken on. The response has been encouraging.

* * *

In both London and the North West our election campaign is going well. We've got a chance to put revolutionary communism on the map in Britain for the first time in 60 years. Help us do that. Come to our meetings and marches (advertised in this issue of *the next step*). Give us money to keep the propaganda pumping out. Come selling *the next step* with us – it's getting easier all the time! And tell your friends and workmates to watch and vote for the RCT's candidates in the elections: the day of the Marxist municipal council isn't so far off...

SOUTH LONDON

Lambeth Central – GLC elections
Break with the Labour Party...
VOTE *GREEN* – REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST!

Election meetings:
Wednesday 22 April 7.30pm
Surrey Hall
Binfield Road, SW1 (Stockwell tube)

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

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

Unemployed Workers Group (Lambeth) march: 'We want work!'
Thursday 30 April 10am
Assemble opposite the dole office in Coldharbour Lane
March to Clapham Junction
Lunchtime rally near Clapham Common

EAST LONDON

GLC election meeting (1):
Friday 24 April 7.30pm
Stoke Newington Town Hall
Stoke Newington Church Street
N 16 (Stoke Newington BR)
Speaker: Joan Lamont (ELWAR candidate, Hackney North and Stoke Newington)

GLC election meeting (2):
Wednesday 29 April 7.30pm
East Ham Town Hall
High Street South, E6
(East Ham tube)
Speaker: Farehk Afzal (ELWAR candidate, Newham North East)

MANCHESTER

Election meeting: 'Stay on the bus!'
Tuesday 21 April 7.30pm
Parkside Hotel
Lloyd Street South, Moss Side
Speakers: Warren Bates (TGWU shop steward, Hyde Road bus depot, in a personal capacity), Keith Tompson (RCT candidate for Moss Side and Hulme)

Busworkers' lobby of Greater Manchester Council – 'No redundancies, reduce the fares, improve the service!'
Thursday 30 April 9.30am
Town Hall
Albert Square

Demonstration: 'Fight unemployment – fight racism!'
Saturday 2 May 2pm
Assemble outside the Hot Pot pub, Moss Side Precinct

International Conference on the international labour movement
Friday 11 – Sunday 13 September
Sessions on the Continental working class, Lenin's theory of the labour aristocracy, trade unions and the new technology etc
Phone (01) 274 3951 for further details