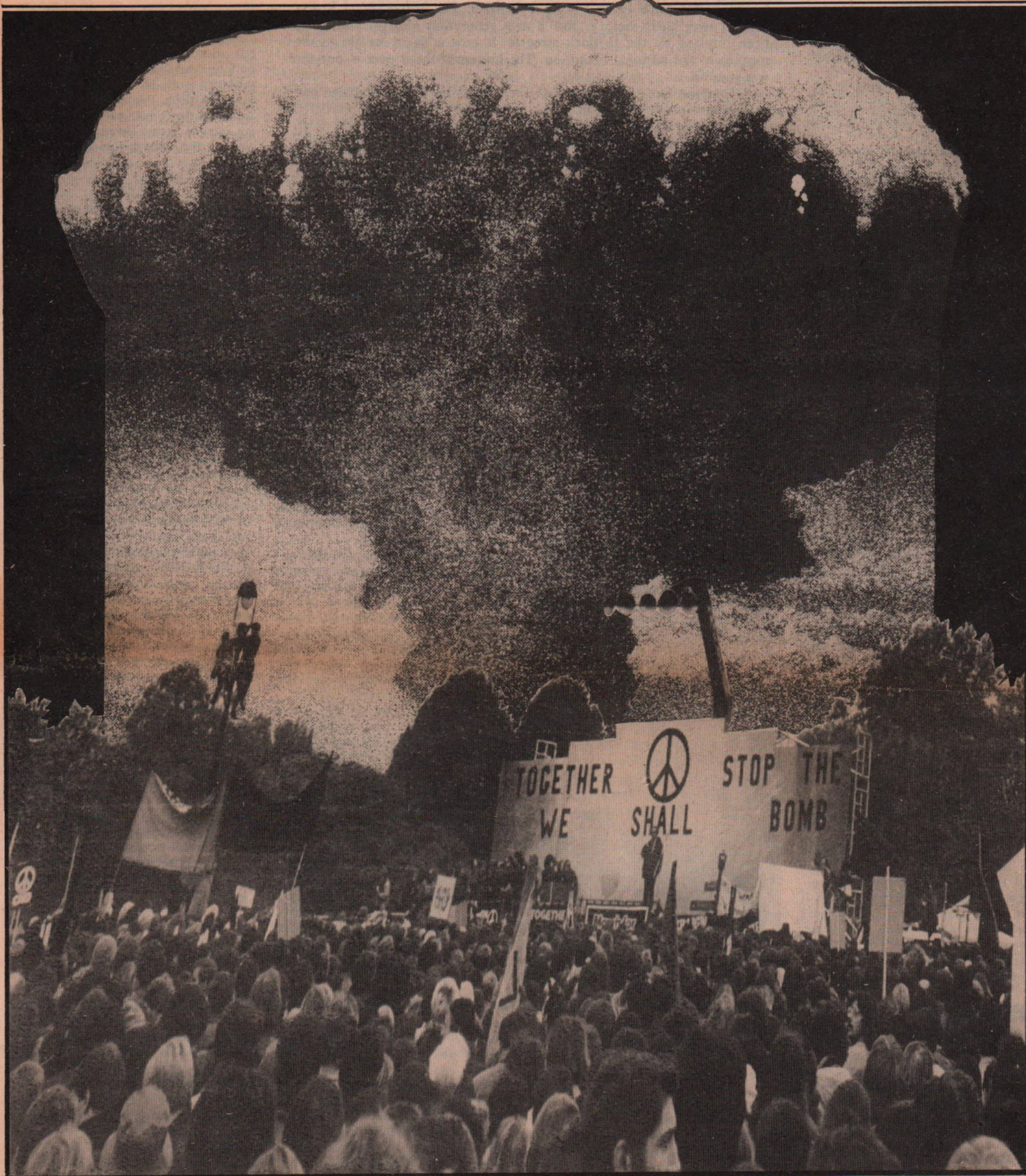


the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

20p



Where is CND heading?

The campaign for nuclear disarmament is a movement for 'peace' and national survival which prepares the way for war just as mass pacifist campaigns led millions to their deaths in the First and Second World Wars.

The anti-war movement's preoccupation with the danger of war in the future is a distraction from the fight against unemployment and exploitation, oppression and war in the here and now. ● 'No peaceful road' page 11

Ireland; anti-semitism; positive discrimination; SWP dissensions; TUC foreign agents. Reviews: Wajda's Poland, the Soviet Union, American feminism, the SDP.

After the hunger strike

Ten dead - what next?

THE HUNGER STRIKE — what caused it, what its consequences were and what ended it — was a central issue in platform speeches and open discussions during the tour. Smash the PTA Campaign speakers emphasised that from *our point of view in Britain* the tactics of the republican movement and the manoeuvres of the Catholic Church, the Social Democratic and Labour Party in the Six Counties and the Fine Gael and Fianna Fail politicians in the Twenty-six Counties, were not of central importance. Nor was Margaret Thatcher's peculiar personal stubbornness the key issue. For us the decisive factor in the failure of the campaign for political status was the failure of the British labour movement to stand up in support of the hunger strikers.

Labour's silence

The British government could never have sustained its stand against the H-Block protest if it had been met with a really powerful campaign in support of the prisoners at home in Britain. The only section of British society that could have shaken the government and broken its resolve against the hunger strikers was the working class.

But as things turned out, far from being a threat to the government's position, the Labour Party and the TUC were reliable allies for Margaret Thatcher in her stand against the prisoners. When the hunger strike was at its most critical moment — shortly before the death of Bobby Sands — the government could send over to the H-Blocks, not a Tory minister, but Labour's Irish spokesman Don Concannon to show the solidarity of the official labour movement with British imperialism. And at the TUC Len Murray acted as Thatcher's trouble-shooter inside the trade unions: whenever opposition emerged to the TUC's loyal stand, Murray rushed to suppress it. Trades councils that took up support for the hunger strike were threatened with disaffiliation; the trades councils' conference resolution in support of political status was repudiated; and the TUC refused to hear a hunger striker's relative brought by the Smash the PTA Campaign to the September Congress.

The British left failed to challenge the collaboration of the labour leadership. It allowed the ruling class to monopolise the debate on the hunger strike. It met Tory intransigence and Labour's spinelessness with evasions and silence. Given this sordid record it's not surprising that British workers did very little to support the Irish prisoners. The result was

After ten deaths and many months of agony for Irish prisoners, their families and the whole national population of the Six Counties, the hunger strike came to an end on 3 October. The brutal Direct Rulers gloated over their victory. But a new generation of Irish youth has been inspired by the H-Block struggle; it now adds its weight to the movement for national liberation. The hunger strike is over — but the war goes on.

Before the hunger strike ended the Smash the PTA Campaign had organised a national tour in which John O'Hara, brother of murdered hunger striker Patsy, was to speak at 16 public meetings up and down the country. In view of the uncertain situation in Ireland in early October John O'Hara was unable to come over. But the tour went ahead with speakers from the Smash the PTA Campaign. The IRA bombing attacks in London and the reaction they generated underlined the importance of the campaign's aim of rallying working class support for the Irish struggle. Attention now turns towards the Northern Smash the PTA Campaign meeting in Leeds on 5 December and the national labour movement conference in London on 6 February.

that Britain itself was virtually the only country in the western hemisphere where prominent representatives of the British ruling class — royalty and senior politicians — could appear without being mobbed by anti-H-Block protestors. And the whole burden of the political status protest fell on the shoulders of the hunger strikers, their families and their supporters in the Six Counties.

What about the bombings?

The Smash the PTA Campaign's unconditional support for the IRA's renewed bombing campaign in Britain was the subject of heated controversy throughout the speaking tour. We regret the death and injury of non-combatants. But these are unavoidable in modern warfare — and the republican movement is at war against the British state. The deaths and injuries

resulting from IRA campaigns in Britain are trivial compared with the savage atrocities inflicted on the Irish people by the British forces and their Loyalist allies in the last 12 years. We refuse to back down on our support for the Irish liberation struggle because it leads to bombs on British streets. We refuse to indulge bourgeois anti-Irish prejudice by criticising the IRA's tactics. We blame British imperialism and its barbarous occupation of Ireland for all the suffering resulting from the Irish War. There will be no progress in Ireland and no lasting peace in Ireland or in Britain until British imperialism is defeated.

Discussions during the meetings and after them ranged over every aspect of the Irish War. Many people raised questions about politics in Ireland itself — about republicanism, about Loyalism,

about the churches, the trade unions, the Dublin government, etc. All these are interesting subjects for debate. But many activists in Britain would much rather talk about Irish politics than discuss the problems involved in developing Irish solidarity work in Britain and how to overcome them. For the Smash the PTA Campaign the burning question is how we are going to extend support for the Irish cause in the working class movement in Britain.

Never again!

During the hunger strike the Smash the PTA Campaign organised some important initiatives and gained support from many trade unionists. We did not succeed in bending Thatcher's resolve; nor did we break the TUC from its servile role. But we did consolidate a wider base in the unions on which to build in the future.

The Coventry conference at the start of the hunger strike back in March assembled the largest gathering of trade unionists in support of the hunger strikers during the whole campaign. The Workers March for Irish Freedom to the TUC in September was widely sponsored in the trade union movement: more than 100 people marched and lobbied the TUC to press the case for a change in policy in favour of the liberation struggle. Our campaign showed that it is possible to mobilise British workers in support of the Irish cause. It requires only determination and clear anti-imperialist argument.

The campaign marches on. One fruit of the hunger strike activity is that several local Smash the PTA Campaign groups are now functioning in different parts of the country. The next big event the Northern and Midlands groups are working towards is an all-day meeting in Leeds with speakers from Ireland and the British labour movement. On the national scale work has already begun in preparation for a 'Recall Coventry conference' — this time in London on Saturday 6 February. Its theme will be 'Ireland — time for British workers to act'. We hope to draw the widest possible cross-section of the working class to this conference. More than this we want to involve more people in day to day activity to make sure that every incident in the Irish War — whether a death from a plastic bullet in Belfast, a bomb in London or an arrest under the PTA — receives a working class response. We want to make sure that the debacle of the hunger strike campaign in Britain is never repeated.

Keith Tompson



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Contents

Editorial

There is no alternative 3

Labour movement 4,5

SWP in conference 6,7

Foreign agent TUC 7

Greek myths 20

Staffa dispute

Ireland

Ten dead — what next? 2

The IRA and the left 8

The war in the unions 9

Larry Quilty: PTA pick up 9

Nuclear disarmament 10,11

No peaceful road

Europe 12

Labour's withdrawal campaign

Racism 13

Equal opportunities: no way

Zionism — never again! 14,15

Reviews

Andrzej Wajda's Man of iron 16

Sovietology today 17

American feminism 17

Michael Foot's pacifism 17

The Cheka's proud record 18

Breakthrough for the SDP? 18

Leisure shock 18

Letters

Letter from Iran 19

Keeping NALGO out 19

Middlesex Poly 19

RCP activities 20

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the next step

There is no alternative

WHEN RONALD REAGAN told the leaders of 22 rich and poor nations assembled at Cancun, Mexico at the end of October that free enterprise, private capital and open world markets were the only hope for the Third World, he was simply repeating the same hard line he has been giving the American public ever since he was elected president. As he said a week earlier in Philadelphia, 'by getting our own economic house in order, we win, they win, we all win' (*The Times*, 16 October). He means that through the revival of the US economy American capitalists would win, American workers would have to accept lower living standards and millions in the backward capitalist world would have to continue to starve to death.

On the same day that Reagan was commending 'the magic of the market' to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, British Chancellor Geoffrey Howe was propounding a similar theme at the Mansion House banquet of the Lord Mayor of London: 'If profits and investment are to recover', he told the assembled City gents, 'there has to be some fall in living standards' (*The Times*, 16 October). For the capitalist class the world over there is no alternative way out of the recession.

The aggressive Reagan-Thatcher approach is not, however, without its difficulties. On the one hand, so crucial is state intervention in propping up their enfeebled economies that controlling government spending has proved impossible. Reagan's recent cuts were hard enough on American workers, but nothing like hard enough for their employers' liking: fearing a bigger budget deficit and higher interest rates, Wall Street slumped and precipitated a 'black September' on the stock exchanges of the world. Thatcher's divided Cabinet could not agree on where to make its spending cuts in October. The Tories' attempts to control inflation have quickened the pace of redundancies, but have also accelerated Britain's industrial decline. At the same time, Britain's Tory voters are groaning under the burdens of rising interest rates, mortgage rates and domestic rates.

Black September

When Wall Street took fright over a Reagan television broadcast on 24 September, the fragility of the US economy was revealed. The chain-reaction in the City of London, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Sydney exposed the fact that the world's financial markets are 'an American-dominated wired village'. *The Economist* speculated grimly on the prospects for 'a market-shattering panic' leading to 'a spectacular economic crash' if not next year, then at some time in the 'eighties' (26 September). But what did Reagan do to upset the stockbrokers?

He announced a \$16bn tax reform and budget cutting package, to follow his July round of \$35bn spending cuts, the biggest in American history. But while Reagan's tax cuts reduce revenues his rearmament programme boosts expenditure — the budget deficit inevitably rises. America's businessmen wanted tougher measures, such as further cuts in social security, to reduce public spending. But Reagan's modest proposals, curtailed as a concession to Congress, failed to inspire Wall Street. The result was a collapse of the stock market.

Stock market prices tend to fall as interest rates rise — or even if they threaten to rise — because speculators and financiers will benefit more by lending

money or purchasing government bonds than by investing in stocks and shares. And a crash in one market spills over into all the others, not just because of the capitalists' panic, but because world interest rates are tied together by the international flow of money capital.

Wall Street sneezed. The London Stock Exchange, already shivering, caught pneumonia. In the blackest day since Edward Heath put the country on a three-day week in 1974, £3.4bn was wiped off share values. After the day's trading not a single stock in the *Financial Times* 30-share index was registering a gain. And, while US interest rates settled down towards the end of September, UK rates hit 16 per cent early in October, under pressure from Britain's own budget deficit and a falling value of the pound on the foreign exchange market.

The high level of interest rates at a time of recession reflects the role of credit in the capitalist crisis (see Tony Allen, 'World in recession', *Revolutionary Communist Papers* No 7, July 1981). Credit is a means of allowing capitalists to stay in business when existing levels of profitability would otherwise dictate a halt. Borrowing finances both the expansion of output and consumer demand. But since the mid 'seventies the bourgeoisie has come to recognise that although credit can foster investment and trade, it does little for underlying profitability and encourages prices to rise. Thus in the current phase of the recession both the White House and Downing Street have been taken over by advisors obsessed with 'supply side' economics. These experts emphasise the need for industrial reorganisation and curbing inflation — even at the cost of raising interest rates and deepening the recession.

But the borrowing continues, even though interest payments claim an ever-growing share of company profits — over one-third in Britain. *The Economist* views the 'overborrowers' as a serious threat to the stability of the whole credit system. They include 'house owners and property men everywhere, holders of many glutted and stockpiled raw materials, bankrupt private companies which cannot afford to make obligatory redundancy payments, nationalised corporations with a dozen successive years of negative cash flow, governments with estimates for small budget deficits that are obvious fibs, countries like freedom-seeking Poland and growing Brazil and starving Bangladesh' (3 October). In short, the victims of the recession everywhere. *The Economist* fears that if the credit bubble bursts it 'could make 1929's little local stock market difficulties look like a controlled parachute drop'.

Reagan's attempts to readjust the US economy have brought him into conflict with European governments over fluctuating exchange rates and the chaos these have caused for international trade. The spectre of protectionism now haunts the capitalist world.

Free trade in danger

Rising interest rates in the USA have pulled the dollar up along with them. According to *The Banker*, the 'effective' exchange rate of the dollar rose by 20 per cent in the 12 months to September 1981, fluctuating wildly within a 23 per cent spread over that time. In the same period sterling fell by 12 per cent, with an 18 per cent gap between its high and low. Even the Deutschmark and the yen moved up and down by about 10

per cent.

Fluctuating exchange rates brought havoc to European trade, finally necessitating a major currency realignment in the European Monetary System. It is true that, since its establishment in March 1979, the EMS has managed to preserve a degree of stability among European currencies. But by October of this year it could stand the strains no longer. After bitter squabbles the Deutschmark and the Dutch guilder were upvalued and the franc and lira devalued, reflecting the balance of economic power within the EEC.

Behind the clamour of European voices criticising the Reagan administration and the internal disputes over exchange rates lie fears of growing US isolationism and concern about a general collapse into protectionism by the world economy. France's finance minister, for instance, threatened to impose import controls against the Belgians in the course of the EMS debate. Moreover, a major row has broken out in the EEC over Belgium, France and Italy's new plans for state subsidies to their steel industries — plans which contravene the Treaty of Rome. The German government has threatened to put restrictive tariffs on steel.

The problem of profit

The nut that neither Reagan nor Thatcher can crack is the problem of profitability. It is this problem that is at the bottom of all the complexities of currency and credit. Profit rates have been falling everywhere. In Britain the net rate of return on capital invested in industrial and commercial companies in 1980 was 4.9 per cent; in 1970 it was 8.7 per cent; in 1960, 13.3 per cent. Leave out North Sea oil activities (which accounted for 41 per cent of the net operating surplus of all industrial and commercial companies in 1980), and net profits last year amounted to merely 3 per cent. (*British business*, 18 September). The \$64 000 question remains — how can profitability in industry be raised?

The answer is — only by intensifying exploitation and driving down workers' living standards. Now, mass unemployment is a powerful lever against the working class; but, as is now apparent, it has not proved powerful enough to solve all capital's problems. Thus, new lines of advance are emerging: and there is a consensus among bourgeois pundits on both sides of the Atlantic about these. Public spending, and especially spending on welfare and wages, must be ruthlessly cut. Meanwhile, private employers must be encouraged to stand firm against wage rises and to shake out labour mercilessly. The message coming from both Reagan's ranch and Maggie's farm is that only the lean survive.

In Britain the prime targets are the public services and nationalised industries. In the former, jobs are being slashed and new decentralised pay bargaining systems introduced with the aim of emasculating the unions and cutting wages. As for the latter, economic commentators bitterly regret Thatcher's agreement some months ago to postpone pit closures. They want to ban U-turns in the relentless onslaught on 'over-manning' and 'restrictive practices', not only in the mines, but in shipbuilding and the motor industry too.

The United States points the way forward. Reagan's brutal treatment of the air traffic controllers showed how to deal

with unions that wouldn't accept that the bourgeoisie means business. Workers at Chrysler, who recently volunteered to forego wage rises for three years in return for a seat for one of their union representatives on the company board, are held up as an example to the troublesome BL workforce in Britain.

TINA — for us either

The difficult problems thrown up by the recession and the harsh measures required to deal with them cause tensions and conflicts within the capitalist class. Financial conditions which encourage some companies to become 'leaner' spell bankruptcy for others. Industries that are more exposed to the fierce competition of the world market than others (textiles, for instance) are desperate for the protectionist measures that the British capitalist class as a whole equally desperately wants to avoid for fear of retaliation.

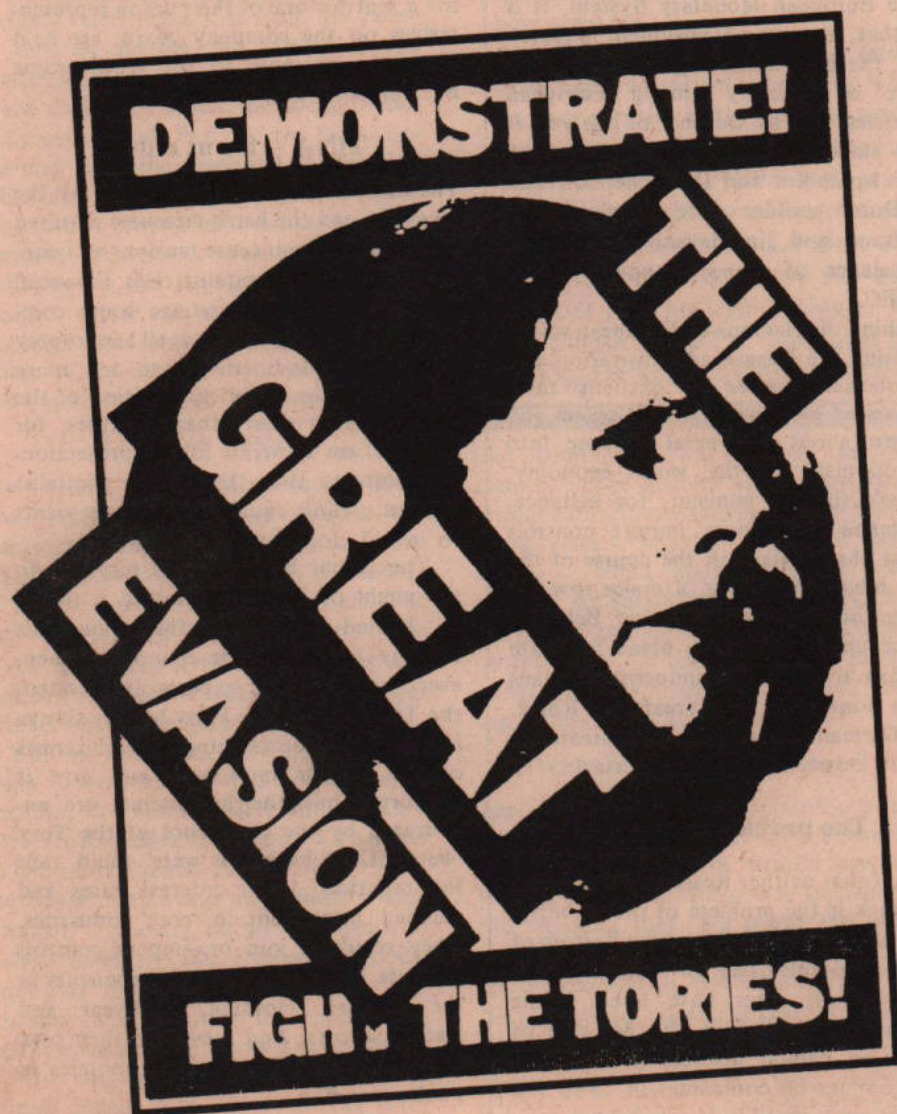
The labour bureaucracy's response to the plight of British capitalism is to fall in behind one or other bourgeois strategy for saving the economy. Whenever the bourgeois experts are divided, the TUC and Labour Party leaders always identify one side as being in the interests of the labour movement and give it support. Thus the bureaucrats are encouraged by the emergence of the Tory 'wets'. They back the wets' timid calls for reflation, lower interest rates and planned investment in 'core' industries. They regularly join pro-import controls protests with beleaguered entrepreneurs in the textiles, clothing, footwear and leather sectors. And they have their own ideas about how to make economies in public spending.

For the working class all bourgeois solutions to the crisis are disastrous. By choosing between different roads to the restoration of capitalist profitability, trade union leaders simply sacrifice their members' jobs and wages to the requirements of capital. Take one recent example. Trade unions at the state-owned National Freight Company campaigned against the firm being sold off to private enterprise: their 'alternative', which was eventually accepted by the government, was for the workers to buy shares in the company. Now we can be sure that, with representation on the board, workers will be able to participate fully in the redundancies and wage cuts necessary to make NFC a viable independent outfit.

Trade union leaders are increasingly coming to recognise that their alternative strategy to save British capitalism means austerity for the working class. 'Draconian' measures would be required to deal with the crisis facing a future Labour government, said TUC economic committee chairman David Basnett recently, 'but we need this survival kit and we need to make it work' (*The Times*, 12 October). But Basnett's survival kit for British capitalism is a suicide kit for British workers.

Our job is to fight for our jobs and living standards now, not to get involved in schemes to save their system at our expense. Reagan and Thatcher are, from their class point of view, right: there is no alternative to driving down working class living standards. With its talk of 'U-turns', 'changes of course' and 'other ways', the official labour movement ignores this and therefore plays into their hands. The recession shows us more clearly every day that there is no alternative for us but to prepare the overthrow of the capitalist system.

Socialist Workers Party in conference



Debate and discussion are essential to the development of the working class movement. Through open debate political problems are exposed, experiences are assimilated and clarity of purpose can be achieved. But debate can also mystify and confuse. The British labour movement has a long tradition of debating things that are not essential — often to avoid discussing things that are. At one Labour Party conference after another passionate and angry exchanges have become part of the routine of inconclusive discussions.

Debates take place — but debates about issues like party democracy and the deputy leadership which only distract from the burning issues facing the movement. The Communist Party of Great Britain is holding its conference during the second week of November. The pre-conference discussion indicates that the leadership has managed to avoid a debate on policy and instead has encouraged a 'debate' on the format of the Morning Star, inner-party democracy and other such non-issues.

One organisation which appears to be an exception to this trend is the Socialist Workers Party. Throughout this summer and during the months leading up to its November conference, a wide-ranging debate on issues such as women, the summer riots and Ireland has been raging inside the SWP. Below we assess the debate inside the SWP and explain the real issues at stake. We welcome comments on our assessment from supporters of the SWP.

THE UNDERLYING THEME of all the debates inside the SWP is its crisis of identity. This crisis stems from the SWP's approach to the labour bureaucracy and particularly from its convergence with the Labour left. The SWP's attitude towards the Labour left can be summarised briefly. In industry there is a downturn in militancy which has forced workers to look for political solutions — and the solutions they have turned to are those of Tony Benn. To influence these workers who identify with Benn it is necessary to form a 'united front' with the Labour left. The SWP's Central Committee explains the rationale for this strategy:

'We can only challenge the Labour left's

ideology of nationalism and class collaboration, its propensity for rotten compromises, if we can draw its rank and file supporters in joint struggle alongside us.' (*Industrial downturn, political upturn*, p3)

Unity — on whose terms?

Rank and file unity is an objective that any revolutionary could endorse. But unity with the Labour left is not necessarily the same as rank and file unity. Indeed, today, unity with the reformists often means unity around reformist policies: the weakness of revolutionary forces ensures that unity is always on the terms of the Labour left. Unity falls apart the instant that the struggle turns against

the labour bureaucracy and the capitalist system that it protects. The leadership of the SWP intuitively understands this problem. Its solution is to fight for a 'united front' that precludes demands which threaten unity with the Labour left.

The SWP is so committed to uniting with the reformists that it tailors its policies to accord with the orientation of the Labour left. Of course, the Central Committee rhetorically asserts the political independence of the SWP. One of its major documents repeatedly warns its membership not 'to ingratiate itself with the Bennites'. However, it offers no guidance regarding the *distinct* policies the SWP membership should pursue in the 'united front'. In the end, to reassure the membership that the SWP has something distinct to offer, the Central Committee brags that the SWP is better than the reformists at organising sympathy for those in struggle: 'on the terrain of campaigning for sympathy we are better than the reformists' (*Industrial downturn, political upturn*, p4).

A lack of distinct policies haunts the SWP's favourite 'united front', the Right to Work Campaign. The *Right to Work Campaign Central Committee Autumn perspectives* document illustrates the difficulties the SWP is in. In a moment of boldness the Central Committee insists that 'we should not shy away from raising the politics of the Right to Work Campaign and its differentiation from the People's March/TUC conception'. But what are the politics that differentiate the RTWC from the People's March? The reader of this perspectives document will search in vain for an answer. In reality the RTWC has no distinct policies. What distinguishes it from the People's March is not politics but the militancy of its supporters.

In every sphere of activity the Central Committee is hard put to discover what distinguishes the SWP politically from the Labour left. In the end, the practical solution that is offered to activists in the RTWC, in industry, in all spheres of party activity, is an exhortation to sell *Socialist Worker*. This downgrading of distinct SWP policies is not mere opportunism. It stems from a flawed analysis of the present balance of class forces and of the obstacles facing the revolutionary movement.

The confidence trick

The SWP's attitude to the Labour left and the struggles of the working class is neatly summed up in a major *Socialist Worker* editorial, 'What now for the left?', written by Paul Foot (3 October). *Socialist Worker* congratulates 'Benn and his campaign managers for their magnificent showing in the Labour Party deputy leadership contest'. It then warns the Labour left against relying too much on electoralism, and exhorts them 'to throw their resources into the fight among the rank and file of the movement against the Tory Government and its policies'. Predictably the article ignores any issue of political substance which divides the SWP from the Labour left. Apparently such matters are best left to private discussions.

The SWP's indifference to the reactionary consequences of reformist politics is illustrated in the way 'What now for the left?' treats the rank and file. For Paul Foot united work in the rank and file is essential. The editorial justifies its appeal to the Labour left by pointing out that the rank and file is to the right of Benn: the 'deeper the electoral process delved into the rank and file, the heavier the majority for the right'. The implication of this statement is that the working class rank and file is more reactionary than Benn, and therefore the SWP and the Bennites should work together to push a right-wing rank and file to the left.

It never occurs to Paul Foot that rank and file workers support the right because of the policies and activities of the Labour left. Wales is a good example. The Welsh region of the TGWU supported Healey rather than Benn, as did many other union and Labour Party activists. Yet, historically, Wales has been a left-wing stronghold. The rightward shift of the Welsh labour movement is the result of decades of betrayals by the left reformists. Left-wing rhetoric lacks credibility with those who have burned their fingers more than once. Those Welsh workers who still hang on to their jobs prefer the realism of the mainstream labour bureaucracy to the illusory promises of the Labour left.

But the SWP wants to reach the rank and file in alliance with the very forces that bear responsibility for the demoralisation that prevails in the workplace. 'What now for the left?' ignores the paralysing influence of reformist politics among workers because it ignores political problems altogether. Instead of providing an assessment of the political problems facing the rank and file, it advances *psychological* explanations for its demoralisation:

'How people think and vote is linked inextricably to the ebb and flow of their confidence.'

'When workers feel confident, when trade union organisation can protect jobs and push up living standards, then the political drift is to the left.' (*Socialist Worker*, 3 October 1981)

Confidence begets confidence and effective trade union organisation means higher living standards. Who can disagree? But the real questions remain. Why have workers lost their confidence? Why have unions become ineffective? The answers to these questions are not to be found in the realm of psychology but in the policies and activities of the Labour left.

The SWP sidesteps the problem of reformist politics and opts for psychology. *Socialist Worker* publicly justifies every compromise in terms of its morale-boosting effect. Privately, its confidence-boosting mission with the Labour left is justified pragmatically — the 'united front' will give the SWP a hearing among Bennite workers.

This strategy simply cannot work. For workers it is no use because it allows the reformists to retain the initiative: it will not increase their confidence, but only strengthen their faith in reformism. Active workers have no psychological problems — all they require is clarity of purpose and political answers. Nor, as it happens, can this strategy enhance the SWP's organisational appeal. Why should workers transfer their allegiance to a party that confirms the authority of their traditional organisation on every critical question? The peace pact with the Labour left simply forces the SWP to justify its existence.

Today the SWP is paying the price for its 'united front' strategy in internal dissension. The organisational diffuseness that is a result of its opportunism has thrown up antagonistic factions and generated a debate. The shallow character of this debate is vividly illustrated by the fact that none of the protagonists have publicly acknowledged the real issues at stake.

The grand debate

The debate inside the SWP seems to be centrally about work around the oppression of women and racism. Opponents of the SWP leadership claim that their organisation is abandoning work which relates to the *specific oppression* of women and of black people. To get to the roots of the conflict we have to examine the SWP's record on these questions.

The SWP relates to political oppression in one of two ways. On the one hand, it treats oppression *economically*, ignoring

the specificity of oppression. Thus, it argues that the way to fight racism is by getting black people to join trade unions; and, as a popular SWP slogan goes 'a woman's place is in her union'. On the other hand, it treats oppression from a classless point of view — discrimination against women becomes a problem for women and the harassment of blacks is something for blacks to defend themselves against.

Over the past five years the SWP has generally veered towards the classless approach. It embraced feminism and told women to get on with the job through the *Women's Voice* groups. Similarly, it set up *Flame* and advised its black members to carry on fighting racism. This approach inevitably led to a separation between the SWP's work in the unions and its activity on race and women. Moreover, the classless character of this activity ensured that women and black members were working as women or as blacks, not as working class revolutionaries. It was only a matter of time before the SWP leadership lost control over these spheres of work. Black members left the organisation as they moved towards black nationalist politics. *Women's Voice* became a radical wing of the feminist movement. Over the summer, as these problems were compounded by the SWP's growing organisational diffuseness, things reached a head. To retain control the Central Committee decided to wind up the *Women's Voice* groups.



The subsequent debate about the fate of *Women's Voice* masks the real issue: the inability of the SWP leadership to exert political control over this area of work. Leading SWP member Chris Harman let the cat out of the bag when he complained in his contribution to the discussion that 'the ideas of the women's movement have been influencing *Women's Voice* groups rather than *Women's Voice* groups carrying class politics to women'. The organiser of the SWP's race work Bruce George also noted the organisational consequences of the SWP's adaptation to black separatism: 'The *Flame* perspective of building a mass separate black revolutionary party... wrecked our black work wherever comrades were unfortunate enough to try and operate it'.

The SWP leadership's instinct for self-preservation has led to a shift away from the classless approach to political oppression. Opponents of the leadership are fighting to retain the old separatist perspective. That the debate is about women and race is incidental; what is really at issue is the SWP's organisational coherence, and the ability of its leadership to keep a grip on its members' activities.

Hocus-pocus perspectives

The Central Committee talks a lot about the working class and appears to be more principled than its opponents. In fact, the leadership's perspectives have nothing to do with working class politics. They treat oppression as an economic problem and reduce it to a trade union issue. Take the SWP's assessment of the summer

riots. The Central Committee denies the racial dimension of the inner-city revolts and tries to make out that they were class not race riots. Because it wants to justify an approach to the street fighting from a trade union point of view, it cannot admit that it was a response to racial oppression.



Devious arguments about 'class riots' are complemented by a clumsy search for white rioters. The SWP needs to dig up all the white rioters it can find to substantiate its case that the real issue this summer was unemployment and not police harassment of blacks:

'There were disturbances in over 40 towns, many of them towns without a large black population. The common thread linking all the rioters was their youth and the effect that unemployment had on them either directly or through family, friends etc.' (Bruce George, party race work committee)

This may be news to black people in Southall, Brixton, Hackney, Liverpool 8, Moss Side, Chapeltown, etc. But it serves the purpose of glossing over the specificity of racial oppression and allowing the SWP chiefs to put race work on ice.

The denial of racial oppression as a specific problem allows the SWP to call for unity between black and white on economic grounds. This is what lay behind the projection of the Right to Work Campaign as the solution to the problems facing black youth. In fact the RTWC has become the answer to all political problems, a 'united front' for all seasons. Once all particular forms of oppression are obscured, then we are all — white, black, women, etc — in the same predicament; and the universal panacea is a march to Blackpool to the Tory Party conference.

Let them die

The Central Committee's dogmatic adherence to trade unionism is most clearly expressed in its Irish perspectives. It is very difficult to portray the war in Ireland as a pure trade union issue. Even the theoreticians of the 'class riot' school did not manage to portray Irish hunger strikers as British trade unionists. As a result the Central Committee concluded that Irish freedom was a lost cause. While one hunger striker after another starved to death, the SWP proclaimed its 'extensive coverage' of the issue in *Socialist Worker*. And that more or less was the end of the matter.

To ward off criticism of its inaction over the hunger strike, the Central Committee noted fatalistically: 'The hunger strike campaign has gained negligible support in Britain'. Why? Because the 'overwhelming majority of the labour movement from top to bottom has swallowed the lie that the prisoners are criminal terrorists' (Central Committee and Irish sub-committee *Irish Perspectives*). Is the SWP going to combat this lie? The answer is a resounding no!

The Central Committee justifies its abandonment of the hunger strikers by blaming the labour movement for its chauvinism. This is more hocus-pocus. If

the labour movement was not dominated by imperialist propaganda and supported the Irish liberation movement, then there would be no need for the SWP or anyone else to try to build solidarity with the Irish struggle. But the Irish perspectives document is not just evasive, it is also hypocritical. The Central Committee sneers at those who try to gain working class support for the Irish people by labelling their activity as 'breast beating' and 'moralistic'. The perspectives document condemns the fight for an unpopular cause as 'moralism'. To give credence to this argument the Central Committee plays on the most backward sentiments of its membership:

'Already our comrades have had to say, "No. We are not going to support counter-productive demonstrations simply to save our consciences". And we are going to have to say that again.' (*Irish Perspectives*)

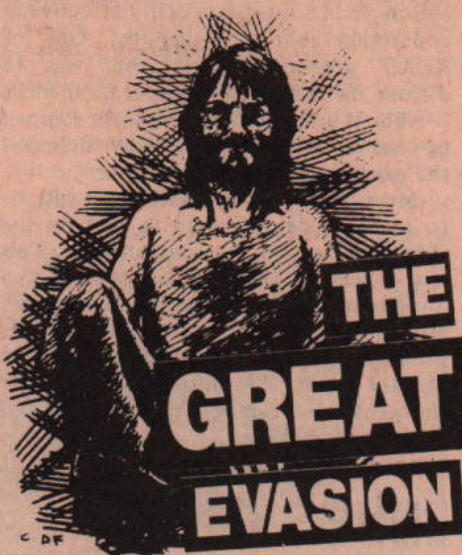
In the vocabulary of the SWP, demonstrations on unpopular issues are by definition 'counter-productive'. The SWP did not lift a finger to mobilise support in case it was accused of 'moralism'. What is the SWP's alternative?

'In place of the moralising we have to look at what political space has been opened up on Ireland within which we can begin to overcome our isolation. There is some. Although support for the hunger strikers remains negligible, a vague feeling that the troops should get out (often held alongside with other very reactionary ideas) is widespread.' (*Irish perspectives*)

Hunger strikes are unpopular — they will have to die. But a certain 'vague feeling' which is 'reactionary' is 'widespread' — just the thing for the Central Committee to build on. In case you wonder what the 'vague feeling' is, it is that of the weary petit bourgeois who has had enough of the war and wants Britain to rid itself of the Irish. And the 'political space' that's opened up is, you've guessed it, inside the Labour Party.

Having abandoned the hunger strikers, the Central Committee has a 'vague feeling' that a 'political space' exists in the Benn camp. We are back with our old friend, the united front:

'Concentrating on building such a campaign marks a new emphasis on our Irish work and of course means building an alliance with those to the right of us. There is nothing strange about this, it is yet another example of the united front tactic. We have to be clear that the alternative is purity — in complete isolation.' (*Irish perspectives*)



'There is nothing strange about this': betraying the hunger strikers for an alliance with the Labour left 'is yet another example of the united front tactic'.

At least the Irish perspectives have the merit of drawing out the real alternatives: fighting imperialism, oppression in Ireland — or uniting with the Labour left around issues which the perspectives themselves describe as something that looks 'very soggy to us'.

Where will it end?

The Central Committee seeks to discredit its political opponents in the debate by swearing its allegiance to the workplace. Every perspective document exhorts the membership to turn to the workplace.

But the record of the SWP shows that it is very selective about the issues that it raises there. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to state that it takes up all questions at the workplace from the point of view of a trade unionist. In other words, the SWP concentrates on issues which are taken up by others in any case at the place of work. This means that issues such as racial oppression and the Irish War become irrelevant to the SWP's workplace politics.

Workplace or trade union politics provide a bridge between the SWP and the Labour left. As trade union activists, both components of the 'united front' have a common interest in defending the official labour movement against the Tories. Causes which the labour bureaucracy support such as CND, EEC withdrawal, fighting unemployment and the Tories, are issues on which the SWP can give full vent to its rhetoric. Concerns towards which the labour bureaucracy is obliged to pay lip-service, such as anti-racism, the SWP treats in a classless way. And issues which are an anathema to the labour bureaucracy, such as the Irish liberation struggle, the SWP prefers to ignore. This is how the SWP sustains unity with the Labour left — but it is a unity that is directly against the interests of workers and of the oppressed.



The rightward shift of the SWP cannot be halted. This summer it defined racial oppression out of existence. By early autumn it denounced supporters of the hunger strikers for their moralism. The RTWC is carefully restricted lest it offend the left labour bureaucrats. More and more the SWP acts as an instrument of the labour bureaucracy and covers its tracks by invoking the 'united front' and the need to boost working class 'confidence'.

Many SWP supporters will agree and say that the SWP is bad on questions such as Ireland, race, women and gays. But they excuse their organisation by claiming that at least it is good in industry. But how can an organisation that abandons the interests of the proletariat in the struggle against imperialism, racism and other forms of oppression be good in industry? The SWP's industrial work suffers from the same politics that lead it to its unity pact with Benn. That's why the RTWC has gone along with voluntary redundancies at Gardner's and has argued for them at Laurence Scotts. The RTWC cannot challenge its allies in the labour bureaucracy — that's why it marched to the Tory Party conference instead of the TUC.

The *Women's Voice* debate is a carefully stage-managed affair, designed to distract attention from the party's flight to the labour bureaucracy. SWP members would do well to ponder whether they want to help build a second-rate Labour Party. If they really want to build a party of revolution it's time they left the SWP and joined the struggle for a real alternative to the Labour Party.

Pat Roberts



+ FOREIGN AGENT TUC +



MISSION ZIMBABWE

OVER THE LAST 40 years the TUC has been ready to execute any mission demanded of it by the Colonial Office. Industrial conflict in the colonies has often been militant and violent. The Colonial Office put the TUC's long experience in containing class conflict to good use in Asia and Africa. Along with the gunboats, the government despatched trade union bureaucrats to the colonies to teach the 'natives' the virtues of moderate trade unionism. In Africa, many unions were the creation of the TUC bureaucrats. Their 'fraternal' assistance ensured that the class struggle would be channelled into safe institutions.

TUC leaders handpicked and groomed future union leaders: some were brought to Britain and trained to become effective agents of British imperialism. And the TUC's services to imperialism have continued long after the African colonies won formal independence: Zimbabwe is a good example.

'The TUC has a long and proud tradition of assisting trade union organisations in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. The General Council intend to expand their activities so that the TUC can respond effectively to the many requests it receives to assist trade union development.' (Zimbabwe: TUC assistance, TUC, 20 July 1981)

The working class of Zimbabwe has long suffered from the attentions of Western union bureaucrats. During the last decade of white majority rule, the International Congress of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and its affiliates were busy sabotaging the struggle of the African working class. The unions they set up and financed were successful in curbing workers' struggles against the Smith regime. In 1971 the ICFTU boasted of its massive investment in Zimbabwe unions: 'It is probably true to say that this country has received in recent years more international trade union assistance than any other country on the African continent' (cited in 'Showdown in Zimbabwe', *Revolutionary Communist Papers*, No 5, September 1979). The money was well spent. When mass strikes broke out in 1972 against the racist regime, the union leaders worked overtime to get workers back inside the factories.

But now the TUC must again come to the rescue. Ever since independence the Mugabe regime has been under pressure from the working class. In 1980 strikes broke out throughout the country demanding higher living standards. The

The TUC is well known for its allegiance to the British state at home. But its services to British imperialism overseas are shrouded in diplomatic obscurity. Here we expose the record of the labour bureaucrats who joined with the British Military Administration in post-war Germany to destroy the influence of working class militants. And we examine the machinations of the TUC in the pro-imperialist international union federation, the ICFTU, whose current project is to sabotage working class activity in post-independence Zimbabwe.

Salisbury government has responded to working class pressure by attempting to develop a system of industrial relations which could institutionalise the class struggle. The government-initiated Riddell Commission published its report in June. One of its central recommendations is that clearly worked out procedures for industrial relations are drawn up.

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has called on the TUC to guide its negotiations with the government over the Riddell report. The TUC promptly despatched former AUEW-TASS official Jim Mortimer to Salisbury. Mortimer is an ideal choice for the job: recently he was the chairman of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). At ACAS Mortimer made a living out of offering mediation in return for the abandonment of industrial action. ACAS was particularly effective in containing industrial disputes. One of ACAS' greatest achievements was to diffuse the famous struggle at Grunwicks – while it arbitrated the employer stepped up the attack and eventually defeated the workforce.

Mortimer's job in Zimbabwe will be to teach trade unionists to rely on the state and not on the class struggle. This visit is seen by the TUC as a prelude to a 'programme of trade union assistance'. Mortimer will be on the look out for promising bureaucrats. In the meantime Mugabe hopes that Mortimer will do to the workers in Zimbabwe what he did to those at Grunwicks.

MISSION GERMANY

WHEN BRITISH TANKS rolled into Berlin in May 1945 the TUC bureaucrats followed obediently in their tracks. While the diplomats of the USA, the Soviet Union and Britain negotiated the carve-up of Europe and their armies enforced the new order, the labour bureaucrats got together with the military authorities to rebuild the institutions and procedures of a modern capitalist society.

This was no easy task. The defeat of fascism meant the destruction of the German bourgeoisie as a political force. Freed from the yoke of fascism, German workers were demanding radical reforms such as nationalisation and workers'

control in industry. The allied military governors were welcomed by local 'people's committees' of social democratic and communist militants who handed over captured fascists and demanded the removal of all ex-Nazis from official positions. They presented plans for the democratic administration of communities and factories and proposals for the formation of new trade unions.

Documents and letters in the Congress House archives reveal the special contribution made by the TUC to the British government's drive to strengthen its hold in Germany against the overbearing might of US imperialism. What Britain lacked in military power it made up for in its long experience of colonial administration and labour relations: it had something the US lacked – a strong labour bureaucracy with decades of experience in controlling a militant working class. The groundwork, however, was done by the military command.

Monty picks his team

Within weeks of the defeat of Germany the Western forces banned the 'people's committees' and all working class political activity. The newly revived Communist Party was outlawed and thousands of its members imprisoned. British military tribunals sentenced workers in the Ruhr who resisted the re-employment of Nazi foremen. Tanks were sent in to quell similar protests among the Recklinghausen miners (Karl Heinz Roth, *Die 'andere' Arbeiterbewegung*, Munich, 1976). But militancy persisted: 70 per cent of the elected councils in the mines were made up of communists right up to 1948 (Harold Zink, *The United States in Germany*, Princeton, 1957).

The prime objective of British policy now shifted toward setting up a reliable trade union organisation to contain working class unrest. Field Marshall Montgomery outlined his tactics in his memoirs:

'The Russians supported the trade unions. I decided not to do this. I was very much in favour of letting them grow as circumstances permitted. But I was against having them forced upon us. I hoped to ensure that in due course the right people would emerge to lead them. If we acted too quickly the danger was that they would end up in the wrong hands and that this could create problems.' (cited in Schmidt and

Fichter, *Der erzwungene Kapitalismus*, Berlin, 1975)

The point was to stall until the right personnel was ready to take on the job.

The TUC joined in the quest for suitable labour leaders from among the aged German bureaucrats who had survived the Nazi period in exile. In Hampstead, the TUC found former white-collar union chief Hans Gottfurcht – then on the payroll of US intelligence – and he became a key figure in the new trade union framework. In Stockholm, the social democratic trade union federation leader of the 'twenties, Fritz Tarnow – the man who drew up the blueprint for Hitler's 'work service' scheme – came out of retirement to take a prominent position in Britain's new scheme. Right-wing reformist Hans Boeckler was recruited to help organise trade unions in the British zone, and rabid anti-communist veteran Kurt Schumacher was brought back to re-establish the Social Democratic Party in Hanover. These hand-picked men presided over the German labour movement until the late 'fifties.

Tewson's tactics

Once the right leadership had 'emerged', the TUC turned its attention to the establishment of a trade union machine that could stem the growth of unofficial organisation. In July 1947 Foreign Secretary Francis Pakenham (now better known as the moralist Lord Longford) suggested an exchange of trade union delegations between Germany and Britain. TUC General Secretary Vincent Tewson blocked the proposal that impoverished German workers should visit Britain lest they gain 'an impression that things are flourishing here and that we could give a lot more assistance'. But he eagerly took up the idea of a British delegation to Germany.

The delegation reported back to the Foreign Secretary in January 1948. It was concerned that the conditions of repression and austerity in Germany were still unfavourable to the consolidation of 'responsible' trade unionism.

'Due to the wages stop, and having in mind the inadequate control of prices, we find the trade unions handicapped in fulfilling their proper functions, and there is the danger that having little or nothing to do in this field, they will fail to make the proper impression on the mind of the average member in the workshop. This danger is increased owing to the existence of works councils.' (*Report of the TUC delegation to Germany*, 1-10 December 1947, Congress House, 21 January 1948)

The report recommended that the powers of the unofficial works councils

be curtailed to strengthen the unions. To lend weight to this suggestion the report referred to the 'statesmanlike attitude' shown by Boeckler and his clique during the food riots of 1946, which the leaders had done their best to contain. The argument against workshop organisation was promptly taken up by the British government. In 1948 the demands of workers for workshop level participation in management were rejected by the occupation administration.

The TUC report was craven in its subservience to British imperialism. It noted, for example, that 'at no stage in our visit was any dissatisfaction with the progress to completion of denazification expressed to us', and that the unions were 'anxious to resume international affiliations', but not anxious for the formation of unions united across the zonal divisions imposed on Germany by the Allies.

In reality rank and file workers maintained a constant hostility to the power and influence conferred upon Nazis by the occupation forces. There was also consistent pressure for rank and file unity and the establishment of a united trade union movement in all four zones.

Divided nation, divided class

While the Allies moved towards formalising the division of Germany between the Eastern and Western blocs, the TUC actively promoted the division of the working class, subverting rank and file aspirations for unity. In 1947 the TUC initiated a concerted campaign to bring about the break up of the World Federation of Trade Unions which included Soviet representatives and Stalinist-dominated unions from various countries. The TUC suppressed the WFTU's 1946 report on German trade unions which (as a copy preserved in the TUC files demonstrates) presented a far more realistic picture of prevailing conditions in Germany.

The anti-communist manoeuvres of the TUC reached a peak in 1948-49. In Berlin, where workers were organised in the communist-dominated trade union of the Soviet Occupied Zone, the FDGB, the TUC set up an alternative anti-communist union, the UGO. Another TUC delegation in November 1948 noted that 'every possible assistance will be given to the UGO, who are regarded as conducting the most important struggle in the whole of Germany'. At its July meeting the General Council recognised the UGO as 'representative of the free workers of Berlin'. Meanwhile, the TUC had persuaded the Foreign Office to finance the UGO to the tune of 800 000 East Marks per month. When it came to splitting the German unions in order to cut out the communists there were no bounds to imperialist generosity.

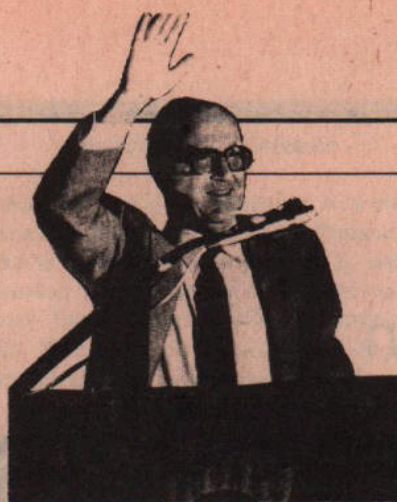
The UGO episode preceded the declaration of the capitalist Federal Republic. Western strategy was to make West Berlin safe by destroying communist and united communist-social democratic organisations there, thus promoting the lasting division of Berlin. In response to the formation of the West German state, the Soviet Union blockaded Berlin in the hope of isolating it from the capitalist republic. The TUC pursued its pro-imperialist role through to the end by adding its voice to the cold war hysteria that ensued. A final quotation from the TUC's report on a delegation to Berlin during the blockade concludes the sordid record of the TUC in occupation service in Germany:

'If the airlift capacity is not increased, there will be an increase in unemployment, which would considerably impair the resistance of the Berlin population to totalitarianism and Soviet aggression. . . Berlin is the social bridgehead of democracy in Eastern Germany, perhaps in Eastern Europe.' (emphasis in original)

Sabena Norton

The Greek election

Mythical socialism



The electoral victory of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok) on 18 October has been hailed as a major gain for the Greek working class. It is no such thing. The new Pasok administration led by Andreas Papandreou represents the interests of Greek capitalism. This shift to the left is the price that the ruling class is prepared to pay to obtain the co-operation of the Greek labour movement.

IT HAS TAKEN over 50 years for the ruling class to allow a left-wing government to take over the administration of Greece. This in itself is an indication of the weakness of the Greek ruling class. The backward character of Greek capitalism has limited the development of a bourgeoisie. As a result, the Greek ruling class lacks the means to enforce capitalist social relations through parliamentary democracy and consensus politics. In the inter-war period the rule of the bourgeoisie took the form of a non-parliamentary dictatorship. During the Second Imperialist World War the Greek bourgeoisie was prepared to collaborate with the German occupiers so as to keep the mass movement in check. After the war the ruling class united with British and US imperialism to crush the movement of workers and peasants.

The defeats inflicted on the labour movement during the Greek civil war gave the bourgeoisie a breathing space. In the 'fifties until 1967 they erected a facade of parliamentary democracy. A degree of economic growth gave the bosses room for manoeuvre. But this period of parliamentary democracy soon came to an end. Greek capitalism could not overcome its backwardness, and hostility to the system was prevalent among workers and peasants. In 1967 a military coup put an end to the parliamentary charade.

During the period of the military dictatorship between 1967 and 1974, the bourgeoisie attempted to restructure Greek capitalism. Relying on foreign capital and state investments, a degree of industrial growth was achieved. Through coercion the working class was held down and the small peasants were kept in check. As hatred of the military regime became widespread the ruling class understood that changes had to be made.

In 1974 'democracy' was restored. It was a step designed to pre-empt a major social upheaval. A right-wing government

was elected to oversee a smooth transition to parliamentary democracy. The establishment of the new form of capitalist order coincided with the deepening of the world recession. And this recession soon revealed the structural defects of Greek capitalism. In recent years the Greek economy has barely grown. Public sector spending designed to fuel the economy has only generated indebtedness. This year inflation is rising towards the 30 per cent mark. And by the end of this year nearly one out of five will be unemployed.

The ruling class has decided that things cannot go on in the old way. To deal with popular discontent and to win the allegiance of the labour movement to the policies necessary to save capitalism, a left-wing government has been allowed to get elected.

From Stalinism to social democracy

The Greek working class has still not recovered from the massive defeat inflicted upon it by the civil war of the 'forties. Responsibility for this defeat lies with the Stalinist Communist Party which betrayed the mass movement and allowed the bourgeoisie to get the upper hand. For much of the post-war period working class politics and trade union activities were either illegal or were tightly restricted by the state; only in 1974 was the Communist Party legalised. Despite widespread suspicion, the CP managed to regain influence in the labour movement because it faced no opposition from any real working class party. Today it holds a dominant position in the trade unions.

The real beneficiary of the earlier defeat, however, is Pasok. Its nationalist and reformist policies mirror those of the Stalinists, but its advantage is that it is not compromised by the past. Pasok is all things to all people. Its emphasis on social change and the renewal of Greek society strikes a strong chord among all



British Army Commander Scobie surrounded by the guerrilla leaders he disarmed in Athens in 1944. British military repression made Greece safe for the Western Alliance; now it's up to Papandreou's Pasok to keep the working class in line.

Social Democracy

classes. It is the perfect instrument to channel the general yearning for change towards the reorganisation of Greek capitalism.

Socialist sophistry

Pasok is strong on anti-capitalist rhetoric but weak on anti-capitalist politics. Unlike Mitterand, Papandreou is not even prepared to launch a cosmetic nationalisation programme. In typical populist vein, he stated that his economic plans would affect 'just ten Greek families — the economic oligarchy'. And to win support Papandreou has called for the establishment of a 'vast movement of agricultural and industrial co-operatives'. But even if these measures were implemented, it would only mean capitalism along Scandinavian lines. Greece, however, is not Scandinavia: the co-operatives will turn out to be a device for rationalising agriculture and industry under state supervision.

As for its social programme, Pasok promises to improve health and social services and to reform the education system. Papandreou has also pledged himself to give legal protection to the trade unions. No doubt some of these measures will be implemented to consolidate the new government's social base. But with the public sector deficit running at ten per cent of GDP, apart from a few token projects, social reforms will be confined to the statute books.

On wages, the promise is a classic case of double dealing. A system of indexation is to make sure wages rise in line with prices — so long as wage rises do not generate inflation. This can only mean that wage rises must fall behind inflation. Of course, Pasok has also promised to reduce price rises while extending social services. The new government will soon learn though that, for Greek capitalism, curbing inflation means cutting living standards.

While the left has hailed Pasok's opposition to the EEC and NATO, this is more a measure of the former's stupidity than the latter's progressive outlook. Pasok's antagonistic stance stems from its commitment to Greek nationalism: it blames institutions overseas rather than capitalism in Greece for the problems faced by the masses. Even its attack on NATO has a reactionary content. As Papandreou told *Le Monde*, the problem with NATO is not that it is an imperialist alliance, no, it is too biased towards Turkey: 'It's an alliance that costs us dear and which profits Ankara' (17 October 1981). Pasok has used anti-Turkish chauvinism to good advantage. It has promised that Greek honour will be salvaged at the expense of the Turks. On the other hand, Papandreou's hostility towards America is more pragmatic. US bases can stay in Greece as long as they are 'isolated' from Greek society.

Where next?

The new left-wing government will implement a few reforms before it launches an offensive against the labour movement. The ruling class, for its part, hopes that Pasok's brand of populist nationalism will be effective in neutralising working class opposition to its counter-crisis measures.

Here the CP poses no problems. If anything the CP's nationalism exceeds that of Pasok. There are no programmatic differences between Pasok and the CP — the CP merely emphasises building links with Eastern Europe. And that's about all. In the short run Pasok and the CP will be able to contain the working class. But the crisis of Greek capitalism is so profound that a major social upheaval cannot be prevented. It is urgent that a revolutionary party is built in time for the struggles ahead.

Andrew Clarkson

The war in the unions

The Smash the PTA Campaign has been building support for the Irish struggle in the trade unions since it was set up two years ago. Here we report on the debate raging in various union forums around the country. Reports from Nick Jenkins, Fenna King, Annie Dillon and Glyn Cohen.

Greenwich: reaction defeated

At Greenwich trades council's October meeting a delegate from TGWU-ACTSS 1/1257 branch moved a motion condemning the trades council's policy of supporting the hunger strikers' demands and threatening to disaffiliate his branch if the policy was not overturned. The only other motion on the agenda, from the same branch, condemned the trades council for supporting the policy of Greenwich NALGO of opposition to all redundancies — including voluntary redundancies. After a short but heated debate both motions were thrown out, with only two votes in favour of each. The ACTSS delegates then left the trades council.

On both Ireland and redundancies the ACTSS motions are a capitulation to the British ruling class. It is not surprising — or unconnected — that failure to defend the prisoners goes hand in hand with a refusal to fight against job losses.

Coventry confrontations

In Coventry three union branches — communication workers (UCW), metal mechanics (NSMM), and local government workers (NALGO) — have threatened to pull out of the trades council because of its support for the H-Block prisoners' demands. UCW branch secretary Gerard Jones told the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* that 'a number of our members have served in the armed forces or have sons now serving. Some are hostile to the IRA because of past events in Coventry'. The trades council responded by convening a special seminar on Ireland and inviting representatives of the dissident branches to attend. The seminar went ahead despite a hostile campaign in the local press. A UCW proposal to withdraw the trades council from the local hunger strike action committee was defeated after a stormy debate at the September delegate meeting.

The trades council's refusal to succumb to right-wing pressure over the hunger strike is commendable: however its Irish policy retains key weaknesses. The trades council has a long record of giving formal support to the Troops Out Movement, the International Tribunal, the Young Liberals' 1979 'Time to go' demo and numerous conferences. However when it comes to action on the Irish issue or a direct challenge to the Irish policy of the TUC, the trades council backs down. When for example back in 1979 it was urged to support a demonstration against a proposed Orange march through Coventry, the trades council refused, declaring that 'working people of this country do

not understand what the Orange Order stands for, therefore any confrontation would be very damaging to the troops out movement' (Minutes, June 1979). And when the TUC proscribed the Smash the PTA Campaign labour movement conference in Coventry last year because it opposed the official line on Ireland, the trades council withdrew its support. It criticised the TUC but blamed the conference organisers — not the TUC.

Shopworkers for self-determination?

In September the Eastern divisional conference of the shopworkers' union USDAW, representing 50 000 workers, called for the restoration of special category status, the withdrawal of British troops from the Six Counties and urged the union executive to campaign for a united Ireland.

The well-supported motion also called for the ending of Diplock no-jury courts, the Emergency Powers Act and the PTA. However all these measures upholding the right of the Irish people to determine their own future free from British interference were contradicted by the conference's support for a Bill of Rights. Proposing such legislation, to be imposed by Westminster, not only denies Irish independence in practice — it also sustains the illusion that Britain could play a progressive role in Ireland, something it never has, and never will.

Builders' build up

The biennial conference of the building workers union is coming up next year: supporters of the Smash the PTA Campaign will be putting motions for the conference to their branches on the December 'star nights'. The first priority is to prevent a repeat of the debacle engineered by Communist Party members from the London region at the 1980 conference where debate on Ireland was suppressed.

The CP was upset by a motion from the Battersea (PG010) Branch that made no reference to the long-defunct Better Life For All Campaign, which remains official UCATT (and TUC) policy. Instead CP members proposed that conference be asked to endorse the idea of a united Ireland in the future, to oppose repressive legislation and to call for the 'progressive' withdrawal of British troops. But in the end rather than let conference decide, the CP hacks prevented the motion from getting onto the agenda.

All anti-imperialist building workers must make sure that the CP doesn't get away with these sort of manoeuvres again next year.

ASTMS action

Irish activists in the scientific and technical workers union ASTMS met in Sheffield in October to coordinate action to swing the union around to support the cause of Irish freedom.

The campaign is based on the call for the immediate withdrawal of troops and support for self-determination for the Irish people. Supporters of the Smash the PTA Campaign proposed that the demand for the repeal of the PTA should be included and this was accepted. Our proposal that support for self-determination should be extended to include support for the movement fighting for self-determination was defeated. All the left groups represented — SWP, IMG, WSL, Workers Power — united to oppose inclusion of support for the national liberation struggle in the programme of the campaign. The illusion that British workers can be won to oppose the British occupation of Ireland without being persuaded that they should support the republican movement dies hard on the British left.

Newcastle conference

Around 80 people attended a Newcastle trades council discussion on 'Ireland — what is the solution?' in October. Speakers included left Labour MP Joan Maynard, Derry Trades Council Militant supporter Bill Webster and National H-Block/Armagh Committee member Paddy Logue.

Joan Maynard reviewed the deliberations of Labour's National Executive inquiry into Ireland and concluded that its report was a 'mish-mash'. She proceeded to put forward a mish-mash of her own: a 'federal united Ireland with considerable autonomy for the Unionists'. Maynard remains locked in the traditional Labour left outlook. As long as British socialists continue to give credence to a progressive British solution the Party's bipartisan approach with the Tories will remain unbroken.

When it comes to Ireland most of the British labour movement finds itself to the left of the Militant sect: Bill Webster provided the most right-wing contribution to the conference. He reiterated his group's ritual condemnation of those fighting British rule in Ireland, blaming the IRA, not British imperialism, for the divisions in the working class. Militant's solution is for the Irish people to lie down and accept partition and British domination and for the Loyalist-dominated unions to set up a Labour Party with the aim of making British rule more tolerable.

Webster and the record of the Derry Trades Council were subjected to a blistering critique by Derry trade union

activist and Anti-H-Block campaigner Paddy Logue. He recalled the case of the AUEW-TASS member Brian Maguire who died under interrogation at Castlereagh barracks in Belfast: Derry Trades Council refused to condemn his murder but promised an inquiry which never took place. He exposed too the 'non-sectarian' pretensions of trade unions in Derry and throughout the Six Counties that operate discriminatory practices against Catholics. And he quoted a statement from the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions (to which Derry Trades Council is affiliated) declaring support for the sectarian para-military RUC police force.

Paddy Logue also took up the Newcastle Trades Council resolution on Ireland passed in May 1981 for its adaptation to British imperialism. It implicitly endorsed partition by referring to 'the province' and 'Northern Ireland'. It condemned violence on both sides, ignoring the fact that British army violence against Catholic workers is the problem. The trades council policy equated the violence of republican resistance with the violence of imperialist oppression. It talked about uniting the working class and then ending the British military presence — posing the whole issue the wrong way round: 'first get the British army out, then there will be the conditions to destroy sectarianism'.

He concluded by urging trades council members 'to re-examine your policy on Ireland' and 'to find out about what's going on, not just from the official trade union movement, but from ordinary workers and ex-prisoners.

Three days inside

When the Smash the PTA Campaign heard that Larry Quilty (42) and his teenage son had been picked up after the Chelsea barracks bombing and held at Paddington Green police station, we immediately organised a picket outside, which continued nightly until they were released. Larry Quilty later spoke to Nick Jenkins.

LARRY QUILTY is a depot keeper for Westminster council. A socialist and active trade unionist, he is shortly to take over as secretary of Westminster council NUPE branch. Shortly after 6am on Monday 10 October he was standing in a small office at his workplace when it was suddenly invaded by four heavily armed members of Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Squad: 'You Mr Quilty? We want to ask you some questions about the bombing the other day'.

At the same moment another squad with dogs was smashing down the door of the Quilts' flat on a nearby estate. The police arrested 18 year old Larry and ransacked the flat, taking away large amounts of clothing and other personal effects. Father and son were both taken to the special 'anti-terrorist' interrogation unit in the basement of Paddington Green police station — though it wasn't until 36 hours later that either discovered that the other had been detained.

Total isolation

'On the way to Paddington no words were exchanged. They gave me no indication of why I had been arrested. When we got to the station no charges were read out. Nothing. I was just dispossessed and taken to cells which were literally in the bowels of the earth. It's a dungeon. They called them the cells for Category 'A' prisoners. You can't hear anything. It's total isolation. The whole atmosphere is set up to psyche you out. Even the interrogators don't wear watches so that you remain disoriented.'

The next 60 hours was a seemingly endless round of questioning under

bright lights in hermetically sealed cells: 'Over and over again, the same questions. Where were you on...? Who were you with...? What did you do...? It's easy to get mixed up and confused'.

Most of the questions had nothing to do with the Chelsea barracks bombing and the events of the preceding days. They were about Larry Quilty's background and his politics, his involvement in the labour and trade union movement.

Both Larry Quilty and his son were denied access to legal representation or any contact with family or friends outside.

'It's not just the fact of being held. It's also knowing that both of us are marked as far as police records are concerned. They try to make you feel like you're a criminal. And the whole thing has been done in such a way as to sow seeds of doubt amongst my workmates.'

Late on Wednesday 12 October the Quilts were released. The charge? None. Their crime? Being Irish and living near Chelsea barracks.

Smash the PTA!

Larry Quilty welcomed the initiative of the Smash the PTA Campaign in picketing Paddington Green and he particularly endorsed campaigning in the unions against the PTA:

'The only way to beat this is to work like mad through the trade unions. They ought to be organised at a branch level to respond. If an arrest takes place the branch ought to come out on strike immediately. After all, this act is quite clearly being used politically to intimidate those who oppose Britain's war in Ireland.'

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The top priority for the labour movement today is to unite the working class against unemployment and wage cuts. But the top priority for the Labour Party and the TUC is to keep people busy working for unilateral nuclear disarmament. The anti-nuclear campaign seeks not to unite workers against the cause of their problems — British capitalism — but to unite the British people against some alien, external menace.

THE REAL THREAT of a third world war has given rise to mass anti-war movements in many western countries. But the failure of these movements to understand the origin of the drive towards war leads to a false and dangerous strategy to prevent it. For the disarmers, the war threat is a product of the psychopathology of bourgeois politicians (especially American politicians); of the unbridled, menacing ambition of the military elites; or — for some — of cruise missile technology itself. For us war is a product of the capitalist system of production.

Capitalism means war

War has only become a danger once more because of the world-wide capitalist recession. Falling profitability intensifies competition among rival national capitals and forces them towards a new conflict for political and economic control over the backward capitalist world. All the major capitalist countries are rearming so that they can get a share of the action in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

Disarmament is the ideal of socialism. But, because war is an integral feature of the capitalist system, disarmament can only be achieved by destroying capitalism. War expresses the interests of the capitalist class — it can only be prevented by overthrowing the class rule of the bourgeoisie. There can thus be no peaceful road to disarmament: disarmament can only come about through violent revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

No matter how many people are mobilised in the process, urging capitalist governments to disarm means abandoning the class struggle. Pacifism means the renunciation of the workers' revolution. It means accepting the tyranny of the bourgeoisie. In even the most democratic of bourgeois societies the capitalist class is armed and ready to use violence against the workers: the regular use of the military or the police to break strikes in every western country is testimony to this. Slogans calling for 'peace' lead workers to acquiesce to the relentless violence of the bourgeoisie.

Pax Britannica, Pax Americana

The campaign for nuclear disarmament appeals to people's aspiration for peace and everybody's personal interest in his own survival, but it obscures the conflict of class interests that lies behind these emotive terms. 'Peace' means different things to different people. Pax Britannica — peace under the British empire of the nineteenth century — meant the freedom of British capitalists to rape and plunder every corner of the world: to millions of people in Britain's colonies it meant brutal and savage oppression. Pax Americana means exactly the same in Latin America and the Middle East today. As far as the British government is concerned 'peace' in Ireland means Irish people accepting British rule — and the poverty, sectarian discrimination and repression that go along with it. 'Peace' for most Irish people means 'Brits out'. 'Peace' in South Africa depends on the stable operation of apartheid; for the black masses it means the destruction of the South African state. 'Survival' for the European middle classes is a problem for the future; for the millions of people around the world it is a problem *this minute*. The struggle against famine, disease and war is always a struggle in the here and now.

Slogans about the survival of the human race in reality express a concern

for national survival. Veteran CND activist Nick Humphrey recently drew out the chauvinist logic of this well:

'Only the unilateralists have identified nuclear war as the greatest threat. They are the true patriots. Only they are standing up for Britain's independence from the cowboy New Right in the Pentagon and the Siberian strategists in the Kremlin.' (*Radio Times*, 17-23 October)

And just as the British anti-war movement stands up for true Britons, so the German anti-war movement speaks for the fatherland. This is how Pastor Heinrich Albertz addressed the mass demonstration against nuclear weapons that was recently held in Bonn:

'I speak as a German patriot. Why should voicing our national interests be left to reactionaries? Everyone knows that in the present state of armaments, the two halves of Germany are to be the killing ground of the great powers.' (*The Guardian*, 12 October 1981)

Mixing pacifism with patriotism is what the left wing of the labour bureaucracy knows how to do best. Thus it was old Tribune MP Ian Mikardo who most successfully broadened the chauvinist thrust of the Labour Party conference debate on 'defence'. He compounded the conference's general anti-Americanism with an onslaught on 'the Japanese'. Japan, he told delegates, is only able to 'knock the living daylight' out of the British economy because Britain puts too much of its resources into weapons.

Labour against war?

The Labour Party and trade union leaders are the most influential force in the anti-nuclear war movement. In peace-time the labour bureaucrats have always kept up tirades against war: before the First World War Keir Hardie proclaimed his undying commitment to peace, and before the Second World War George Lansbury led an anti-war crusade. But because they and their allies always had Britain's interests at heart, they took the lead, once war was declared, in

drafting workers into the forces — there to die for British imperialism. As Trotsky wrote in the 'thirties, 'the imperialists know in advance that the pacifism of social democracy at the first roar of the cannon will be transformed into the most servile patriotism and become the most important reserve for militarism' (*Declaration to the Anti-war Congress at Amsterdam*, July 1932).

Today 'inveterate peacemonger' Michael Foot prepares the way to deliver the working class to fight for British imperialism in the Third World War. Like Trotsky in the 'thirties, we can predict with grim confidence the role that he, Mikardo and the rest will play as war again draws near: we only have to look at the way they 'oppose' the burgeoning militarism of Britain and its allies.

In fact the official labour movement's 'unilateralist' posture accepts that Britain should ready itself for war. 'We are not saying we do not believe in defence: of course we do', left-wing National Executive member Joan Lester told the recent Labour Party conference. Labour's NEC is simply concerned — as are sections of the capitalist class — about the cost and efficacy of some of the measures proposed for defending Britain. Much of the debate about nuclear weapons is concerned with *how* Britain's rearmament programme should proceed. The controversy surrounding the replacement of Polaris submarines by the Trident missile system is a good example.

Because of the colossal costs it entails, Trident is opposed by a number of military experts and by several bourgeois politicians (for instance, SDP leader David Owen). For the disarmers this creates the opening for a progressive alliance of soldiers and pacifists against it. Now, back in June, CND National Council member Dan Smith took an optimistic view of the prospects for such an alliance:

'The political coalition against Trident is now almost extraordinary, and almost certain to win. It includes many in the military, who see the cost of Trident throttling the rest of the defence budget.' (*The Guardian*, 4 June)

But in fact this coalition failed: in July, Trident was given the go-ahead — at the expense of several naval dockyards.

Debates of the Trident/Polaris type prevail in other areas of bourgeois military policy: over the right balance between 'strategic' and 'tactical' nuclear weapons; over the balance between conventional and nuclear weapons; and over the deployment of neutron bombs and cruise missiles. And, needless to say, labour movement defence buffs eagerly join in these controversies too. They like to quibble over the most cost-effective weapons system for Britain, enlisting dissident generals living (Lord Carver) and dead (Earl Mountbatten) to support their preference for conventional forces and obsolete nuclear technology.

On one thing however the British bourgeoisie is united — on the need for Britain to stick closely to its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and especially to the USA. The official labour movement understands this: thus while both TUC and Labour Party conferences voted for unilateral nuclear disarmament both too decided to uphold Britain's membership of NATO. Why? Firstly, because, as the NEC put it, NATO was 'an instrument of detente no less than defence'. A war machine thus became a force for peace. Labour's second defence of the alliance is that 'We' (British imperialism — with which Labour's NEC assumes an identity of interest) can stay in NATO and 'work out new relationships... We can be like Denmark, Norway and Canada'.

These three countries are in NATO but refuse to have nuclear weapons on their soil. Because the creation of 'non-nuclear zones' consisting of such countries is a major theme of the European nuclear disarmament movement it's worth digressing to examine this issue.

No peaceful road

'Idealistic pacifism confronts war with moral indignation the way the lamb confronts the butcher's knife with plaintive bleatings. But the task consists of confronting the knife of the bourgeoisie with the knife of the proletariat.' Trotsky, 1932



Not an anti-cruise missile protest on Greenham Common, but dummies set up for nuclear trials in the Sahara desert.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The 'non-nuclear club'

Like many of today's debates on war, the question of neutral or 'non-aligned' countries was hotly contested in the workers' movement before both world wars. The 'disarmament' slogan itself arose in the social democratic parties of small European countries on the fringes of the major Continental powers — capitalist Sweden, Norway, Holland, Switzerland — before the First World War. At the time, Lenin noted:

'The petty striving of petty states to hold aloof, the petit-bourgeois desire to keep as far away as possible from the great battles of world history, to take advantage of one's relatively monopolistic position in order to remain in hidebound passivity — this is the objective social environment which may ensure the disarmament idea a certain degree of success and a certain degree of popularity in some of the small states.' (The "disarmament" slogan" (1916), *Collected Works*, Vol 23)

Lenin condemned the call for disarmament as reactionary. It was, he said, based on the illusion that small countries could become independent of the imperialist system. Yet that system inexorably drew small nations 'into the vortex of world economy and world politics'. Lenin concluded: "disarmament" is an extremely natural, specially rational programme of small states; it is certainly not the international programme of international revolutionary Social-Democracy'.

Little has changed since Lenin's day. Weapons technology has advanced over the past 60 years but that simply makes our warmongering 'disarmers' more dangerous. Edward Thompson's pie-in-the-sky notion of a corridor of non-nuclear states across central Europe serves only one purpose: to strengthen the narrow nationalism of the labour movements in every European country. His paeans to peace only herald another war in the European 'theatre', with consequences more appalling than even the last two.

Why the bureaucrats love the bomb

Why is it that hard-headed Labour Party and trade union officials are all of a sudden to be found stomping the country making sentimental speeches about their fears for children yet unborn and raising the dreadful spectre of a nuclear holo-

caust? Left Labour MP Frank Allaun gave a clue in his speech to the CND labour movement conference in Manchester last March:

'My constituency is less than half a mile from here and people are living in disgusting conditions. But why bother to fight for change when a bomb could be dropped on us tomorrow?'

Allaun's question needs to be posed differently and more candidly to get to the root of the matter. It should read: 'Because I am incapable of doing anything to defend the jobs, wages and housing conditions of my constituents, why not blame government spending on nuclear weapons for all this and get the local populace out campaigning against cruise missiles?'. Trade union leaders should be equally frank.

The recession has gravely weakened the bureaucrats' position: they are spurned by the Tories and have failed to resist hundreds of thousands of redundancies, cuts in living standards and an onslaught on working conditions. They believe that the disarmament issue is one on which they can drum up popular support and help to ensure the return of a government more responsive to their needs. Thus we find Larry Smith, one of the top officials in the union most hard-hit by the crisis — the TGWU — leading the drive to commit the Labour Party to disarmament:

'The millions of pounds spent on weapons should be used for civil programmes. There is a need for new factories, buildings, roads and investment in capital goods, schools and hospitals. Resources should be diverted into retraining and redeploying workers.'

Unable to fight the bosses, the trade union leaders are reduced to pleading with the government to spend their money more wisely.

The nuclear disarmament issue lets the bureaucrats off the hook. It allows them to dodge the real problems of today by pointing to the danger of nuclear war tomorrow. It allows them to get out of fighting for their members now by promising that a future Labour government will deal with their problems by a simple switch of expenditure. But Labour's commitment to NATO means that it will never cut military spending. Allaun's constituents and Smith's members will have to carry on living and working 'in disgusting conditions'. They will run a greater risk of being vapourised as Michael

Foot faces up to his patriotic duties and leads the labour movement towards war.

Disarming the workers

The radical left groups give the staid campaigning of the vicars and bureaucrats in CND a radical thrust and a dynamic appeal to young people. Their great concern, however, is to take the politics of CND into the working class movement. Thus it was the various left-wing organisations that built the CND labour movement conference: when the SWP was accused by CND hacks of being disruptive it pointed to its work in setting up groups 'against the bomb' among engineers, miners and council workers. Let's look at one example of the SWP's trade union work for nuclear disarmament: the Nalco Action Group pamphlet 'Jobs not bombs', by Alison Williams.

Williams' introduction begins by detailing some of the effects of cuts in public expenditure in terms of services and employment. It then notes that 'one sector far from being cut is lined up for massive expansion: "Defence"'. The conclusion follows:

'The cost of this lunacy is being brought home by trade unionists and their families through declining public services and lengthening dole queues. And having paid for it with our living standards, when the big bang comes we'll also be the ones who pay for it with our lives. That's why we have to organise to stop the missiles NOW. The fight for jobs has to be the fight against the bombs.'

Now, as a matter of fact Britain's declining public services and rising unemployment have nothing to do with the defence budget. The public services are being squeezed because British capitalism is in crisis and cutting back on government spending in non-productive sectors is one way in which the profit system can be stabilised. And the bourgeoisie is able to get away with doing this because of the politics of the public sector trade unions.

Ever since the mid 'seventies, when the cuts began in earnest, public sector trade unions have accepted what the interests of the national economy require of them. But in a series of pamphlets, senior officials have made out special cases for sparing their own members' occupations from cuts. As an alternative, they have urged the Government to make its cuts in other sectors. Now the radical left has come along and, with its 'jobs not bombs' slogan, given all the bureaucrats' campaigns a single focus. What it says is 'we agree that economies are necessary, but don't cut us, cut spending on cruise missiles'.

The cuts campaigns of the 'seventies were a flop. 'Special case' arguments could not save countless hospitals, schools, nurseries and jobs. Workers who accepted the need for rationalisation in the national interest were paralysed when it came to fighting for their own jobs. The fight for jobs means a fight against British capitalism — public sector or private sector. The 'fight against the missiles' is simply a distraction from the serious defence of jobs; it adapts to the prevailing notion that jobs can be saved by redistributing government revenue; far from 'disarming the bosses', it disarms the workers.

Don't despair, fight

Capitalist society has always been characterised by barbarism and brutality: nuclear technology merely adds to the effect. However even though the capitalists are preparing to wreak unparalleled devastation on the society they have created, this is no cause for despair. The plea for the capitalists to disarm themselves, the dream of disarmament, is nothing but an expression of despair. There can be no justification for this at a time when the crisis of bourgeois society prepares the conditions for the only section of society that can prevent the nuclear holocaust — the working class — to realise its destiny through the violent overthrow of the capitalist system.

Many people are drawn into the anti-war movement because they want to see an end to bourgeois militarism; they find the posturings of the major imperialist powers deeply offensive and want to see peace and socialism in their lifetimes. Not every supporter of CND shares the chauvinist prejudices of its leaders, or identifies with the cynical manipulations of the Labour Party and the TUC. But the current campaigns against nuclear weapons can neither fulfil the hopes young workers have for peace in the future nor advance these workers' interests today. The disarmers raise fears of a more or less distant Armageddon to distract attention from the problems of the moment. They speculate about wars that might happen but ignore wars going on right now.

CND activist and academic Stalinist Dave Fernbach thinks we should already get into training to fight for Britain — in a broad and democratic manner of course:

'The Left desperately needs a positive alternative: one that will enable Western Europe to block any Soviet interference in our affairs without presenting any military threat in return. A break with nuclear weapons and the Atlantic alliance would mean either larger and more expensive regular forces, or alternatively a greater degree of popular mobilisation, which is surely the direction in which the Left ought to press.' (*New Statesman*, 24 October 1980)

Fernbach's models are the Swiss domestic militia and the 'Dad's army' of the Second World War.

At the moment 'popular mobilisation' is presented as a 'positive alternative' to both nuclear weapons and conventional forces. But it isn't difficult to see how patriotic outrage at any 'interference' in 'our affairs' could quickly turn such an alternative into yet another weapon in the arsenal of British imperialism.

Mike Freeman



The EEC

NOTORIOUS FOR its wine lakes, butter mountains and faceless Brussels bureaucrats, the EEC will not, delegates at Labour's September conference decided, be the subject of a referendum when the party next gets into office: Labour will simply take Britain out. Along with disarmament, therefore, Europe is now a central issue for the official labour movement. Why?

Scabs and election agents

Behind the vote at Brighton stand the trade union bureaucrats. They have every interest in kicking up a fuss about the EEC.

First, making radical noises against the EEC serves to distract militant workers from the struggle on the shop floor — and from the role the bureaucrats play in sabotaging that struggle. Instead of assisting workers in their fight against redundancies and cuts in living standards, the bureaucrats go around breaking strikes and telling the rank and file to put the finger on the EEC. Foreign imports, they tell us, are causing unemployment, and the Treaty of Rome prevents the government slapping on import controls. Similarly, price rises outstrip wage increases because EEC food is so dear. 'Don't fight the bosses and certainly don't fight us', say the bureaucrats, 'fight the EEC'.

Second, the bureaucrats like to blame the EEC for what workers had to endure under the last Labour government. Spreading the myth that entry into the Common Market is what made the Social Contract so unpleasant suits union leaders well: they come away from the 1974-79 period looking innocent, and so does everybody in the Labour Party bar Wilson, Callaghan and Healey — and those nasty pro-Europeans who've now sold out to the SDP.

Third, the EEC is something all wings of the Labour Party can agree on — at a time when the union bureaucrats are desperate to get party members to pull themselves together and put the Benn-Healey dispute behind them. John Silkin understands this well. His loudly applauded message to the Labour conference was 'Let us unite against the Market today'.

Last, the bureaucrats think that anti-EEC rhetoric is an electoral winner. The EEC is unpopular in wide sections of British society (largely because entry happened to coincide with the onset of the crisis) and opposing it seems like a sure way for Labour to pick up votes. And since the next delicate renegotiation of Britain's payment to the EEC budget, in 1983, is probably within a year of a General Election, the union leaders appear to have it made.

So the bureaucrats like going on about the EEC because it gives them a cover both for the present and for the past; because it helps Labour to put its house in order; and because it is an issue on which differences with Thatcher come cheap and through which they can rally middle class voters. By playing more-patriotic-than-thou and by wooing Britain's insular petit bourgeoisie, they hope once more for the days of beer and sandwiches at Number 10.

Defending the milkman

What are the arguments the reformists use to attack the EEC? Of course they harp on about the costs of membership, about Britain's deficit on manufactured trade with the EEC, about the money Britain has to shell out to finance the Common Agricultural Policy; of course they believe that Britain's crisis originates in Brussels, rather than in capitalist social relations and the low profitability of British industry. But today their case against the EEC goes a bit further than this.

Tony Benn's logic is the most consistent here. It runs as follows: Had it not been for the fact that a number of Labour MPs voted with Heath for entry

In, out - or shake it all about?

This autumn's TUC and Labour Party conferences came out unequivocally against continued British membership of the Common Market. So what's new?

in 1971, Britain 'would still be a parliamentary democracy' (*Arguments for democracy*, Cape, 1981). By entering the EEC the British 'establishment' deliberately arranged things so that there would be no parliamentary democracy through which Labour could achieve 'socialism by consent'. Britain is therefore a colony of the EEC; the establishment is made up of 'colonial administrators'. Signing the Treaty of Rome 'subordinated our key law-making and tax-gathering powers to the Common Market' and, because of this, ensured that Labour governments of the future would be unable to implement the Alternative Economic Strategy. Thus there can be no chance of socialism until Britain gets out of the EEC.

Let's take this point by point. The view that Britain is no longer a parliamentary democracy, for instance, is manifestly absurd. It was precisely through parliamentary democracy, through Wilson and Callaghan's 'socialism by consent', that the 'establishment'

weathered the storms of the 'seventies. In any case, capitalism waves parliamentary democracy goodbye with military coups, not the votes of MPs.

However, Benn's central thesis is that Britain is oppressed by the EEC. This is where the joke ends. Has Benn been down the Falls Road in Belfast? Has he been down Railton Road in Brixton? If he had he would have seen some real oppression.

In fact Benn can say little about the mechanics of Britain's 'oppression'. This is because the machine works in the other direction: Britain is an imperialist power. All Benn is concerned with is the creaking of the British state machinery — straining under the weight of competition in the world market and the problem of crushing its opponents. That's why he wants to lead a 'liberation movement' to get it back into shape, and his oily 'socialist' politics provide the grease.

This leads us to Benn's final point: that the EEC will prevent a future Labour

government from implementing the Alternative Economic Strategy on the scale he would like. Here he may be right. But since the AES is just the bureaucrats' way of trying to maintain British capitalism, the fact that the EEC might frustrate its introduction should not bother us at all.

Qualms about withdrawal

That, you might think, is all there is to the anti-EEC lobby. Far from it. The irony is that some of the EEC's opponents take the maintenance of the interests of British imperialism so seriously that they are beginning to have qualms about withdrawal. Because Europe now accounts for about half of Britain's trade, pulling out obviously poses problems — a fact that Labour leaders from Peter Shore through Michael Foot to Eric Heffer have noted publicly. Already Labour is embarking on 'detailed studies' of what an exit from the Common Market would exactly entail.

Doubts about traditional anti-Market politics also nag the Bennites. Mitterand's election and the growth of anti-nuclear movements on the Continent have tempered the left's diatribes. There are fewer directly chauvinist attacks on the megalomaniac Germans and the selfish French: 'withdrawal', Benn assures us, 'is nothing to do with nationalism' (*New Socialist*, September/October 1981). Instead, paranoid delusions about the omnipotence of the Council of Ministers and the European Commission are given pride of place.

While Labour vacillates over withdrawal, its commitment to Britain's interests remains consistent. When, at a new stage of the crisis, the British bourgeoisie opts decisively for protection against its imperialist rivals, we can be sure that the Labour Party will start campaigning as never before against the EEC. Meanwhile, calls for 'closer links with the Third World' — that is, for renewed economic and political domination of the oppressed — are coming into fashion. That well-known patriot AUEW president Terry Duffy, for example, won unanimous support at Brighton for his motion backing the Brandt report.

The radical left remains as confused about the EEC as ever. It wants to separate itself from the chauvinist implications of the reformists' views; but it still favours withdrawal. It wants to be with the workers (who don't like the EEC) and with the Labour Party (which has good reason to play on the workers' fears) at all costs. And it continues to imagine that, because the bosses put most of their eggs in the EEC basket, forcing them to put their eggs in another would be a major victory for the proletariat.

Nothing could be further from the truth. While the EEC upsets the petit bourgeoisie because it affects the 'British way of life' (metrification, etc), it plays no part in the oppression of the British working class. The EEC is about the circulation of commodities and capital, not the enforcing of capitalist profitability. The British state is willing and able to do this by itself. Any concession to the idea that Britain deserves 'sovereignty' from the EEC (or for that matter, from the IMF, USA, gnomes of Zurich or the dreaded multinationals) is in reality a call for greater freedom for an oppressor. British imperialism is economically weaker than West German and French imperialism, but politically it has plenty to teach Helmut Schmidt and Francois Mitterand about denials of sovereignty.

The choice facing British workers is not the false alternative of continued membership of the EEC or withdrawal. It is to side with their own state or against it. 'In' and 'Out' are the policies of different wings of the bourgeoisie. Shaking the British state to its foundations must be the policy of the proletariat.

James Wood

Brussels bother

THE EEC is not at all the strong, cohesive body the labour bureaucracy makes it out to be. Nor is the British bourgeoisie entirely enamoured of it.

Conceived in the years of the Cold War as an economic bastion against the USSR, the EEC was born at the peak of Europe's post-war boom. For a long time Britain wasn't ready to join it: most of Britain's export revenues came from the 'Commonwealth', while only a small proportion came from Community countries. But when the European market grew faster than their old colonies, the bosses had to find a way into the EEC. Yet, by the time they did, the EEC was no longer the happy club it once had been. Europe was in recession, competition was reaching new heights, and acrimony ruled at Brussels.

Today the ruling classes of Western Europe are faced with falling profits. More than ever they are compelled to search for new markets, for raw materials and for new spheres of investment. Tried and tested in trade, largely barren of oil and precious metals and increasingly unprofitable, the EEC does not appear to them nearly as lucrative a place to do business as Africa and the Middle East.

In fact imperialist exploitation of these two areas is about the only thing the countries of the EEC can now agree on. The EEC has the Lome Convention to help it trade with Africa on the best terms possible. And it wants to keep in with Arab regimes so badly that, unlike the USA, it gives formal recognition to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. It can, though, find agreement on the need to keep imports of things like US steel and Japanese

textiles out, as well as on the urgency of cartelising its petrochemicals industry; and it's unanimous about the need to strengthen NATO against 'Communist aggression'. But there the unanimity ends and imperialist rivalries inside the EEC begin.

A single European currency has proved a chimera; the European Monetary System, a charade. Intra-EEC protectionism — 'non-tariff barriers to trade', as they're politely known — is mounting. Further, enlarging the Ten by bringing backward economies like Spain, Portugal and Turkey into membership looks dicey too. And while France remains fond of the Common Agricultural Policy and wants to see the Community spend more money on strengthening European industries against foreign competition, Britain and West Germany hold them back. They both think the CAP is a considerable burden, and feel too strapped for cash to increase their contribution to the EEC budget.

So why, given all the problems associated with it, do Thatcher & Co still back the EEC? Why, when Lord Carrington addressed the Tory Party conference in favour of the EEC, was the heckling so desultory? The answer is that the bourgeoisie feels neither strong nor desperate enough to embark on an isolationist course. On the contrary, Thatcher knows that free trade and foreign competition provide an excellent means of disciplining Britain's industrial laggards. Anyway, Britain's oil exports to the EEC convert a deficit on manufactured trade with the Ten into a surplus overall. It makes no sense to cut loose from Europe — yet.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES NO WAY

Tony Benn likes it: but many Labour MPs are scared of it. Ken Livingstone wants to introduce it; Ted Knight has been trying it for three years and made no progress at all. The Revolutionary Communist Party is completely opposed to it. We look at the record of positive discrimination.

THE SUMMER RIOTS left the British establishment looking around for new ways of keeping law and order. Many commentators pointed to the success that 'positive discrimination' — alongside widespread repression — has had in calming America's cities after the long, hot summers of the mid 'sixties. Politicians and pundits suggested that positive discrimination might go a long way towards solving the problems of Britain's inner cities. *The Guardian* went so far as to describe it as 'an essential weapon against racial disadvantage' (7 August).

Promoters of 'positive discrimination' propose that government bodies, local authorities and private employers should take 'positive action' to ensure that a certain percentage of jobs were filled by black people and that blacks should be treated favourably when considered for appointment or promotion. The idea is that 'positive discrimination' will alleviate the long legacy of discrimination that blacks have suffered and allow black people to compete equally with whites.

The bourgeoisie is divided about positive discrimination. *The Guardian* is in favour because of its concern for social stability. Tory MP for Edgbaston Jill Knight is against. Knight, notorious for her racist broadsides against the 'debauchery' of Jamaican blues parties, has spoken out strongly against 'reverse discrimination' (*Financial Times*, 7 August 1981). She obviously acknowledges and approves of discrimination against blacks. Somewhere in the middle the British ruling class acknowledges that open racial discrimination only provokes trouble and must be curbed and that in some cases positive action is necessary. As the *Financial Times* succinctly commented on allegations of racism at British Leyland: 'Racial bias is bad business'.

Cutting Lambeth's cake

Some of the most ardent protagonists of 'positive discrimination' are left-wing Labour MPs and local councillors. When he became leader of the Greater London Council Ken Livingstone discovered that the GLC-managed London Fire Brigade has less than a dozen black employees. He immediately set a councillor to work to produce an equal opportunities policy to deal with the situation. When John Carr produced his report in late September it promised that in future the GLC would take measures to ensure that blacks applying to become firemen got a fair deal. He added that despite the overwhelming evidence from the Fire Brigade and elsewhere he had no reason to believe that the council had discriminated in the past! Despite Livingstone's anti-racist

rhetoric, it is certain that 'positive discrimination' will do nothing for blacks in London. A look at Lambeth — where such policies have operated for over three years — shows why.

Lambeth has had an equal opportunities policy, and a sophisticated race relations unit to monitor its implementation, since September 1978. The council produces a slick race relations bulletin called *Positive action* to publicise its progress. Through careful monitoring of employees, use of black papers and community groups and a number of other measures aimed at removing discrimination from recruitment procedures, the policy aims to bring about equality for blacks. When it was introduced the policy was hailed as a model of its kind and unanimously accepted by the council's biggest union NALGO. But what has this progressive policy achieved?

In May 1980 the council sent out a questionnaire inquiring into the ethnic origin of all employees. Only seven per cent bothered to reply in the public service sector. So in December 1980 councillors ordered a headcount. The results of this show just how little impact three years of equal opportunities and dozens of 'positive action programmes' has had in Lambeth.

The construction section return shows an almost total absence of blacks in administrative jobs — despite the fact that blacks are well represented in the craft and manual sections. In public services allegations of racism and collusion between management and unions to exclude blacks are widespread. Last year dustmen in Kennington came out on strike for three weeks in refusal to work with blacks.

Council leader Ted Knight just looked the other way. But the main problem with equal opportunities policies is not just that 'they don't work', but that they strengthen reactionary views in the labour movement.

Jumping the queue

Rather than breaking down the divisions that exist between different sections of the working class, a strategy of positive discrimination takes those divisions, accepts them, and by giving special treatment to particular groups, reinforces the separation of blacks and whites. This is what happened in the USA — and it's happening now in Britain.

Two years ago positive action hit the American headlines over the 'Bakke case'. Bakke was a white American student who was refused a place at medical school. His place was taken by a black student who had lower exam

results but was given a place to fill the black 'quota'. Bakke took the case to the US Supreme Court — and won. More important, his case became a rallying point for reactionaries the length and breadth of America.

Such is the depth of racist feeling in British society that even talk about positive discrimination has already sent the reactionaries into action. Unfortunately they include not just Jill Knight and the Monday Club, but many in the labour movement.

The Labour Party's plans for positive discrimination have already provoked a backlash. At a summer meeting of the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee left-winger Norman Atkinson warned that the unions would not accept 'a black draft' into the factories (*The Times*, 21 July). Atkinson found vocal support on the committee from Clive Jenkins, Judith Hart and Eric Heffer. The Labour Party and TUC are so scared of the strength of racism in the unions that they immediately capitulated to it.

Schemes for positive discrimination inevitably provoke a racist reaction. They take as their starting point the view that there are only so many jobs and so much money to go around. They accept the notion of a fixed 'national cake' to be shared out — and then propose 'positive action' to increase the share going to blacks. The logical conclusion that this means worsening the position of whites is inescapable. Anybody who accepts the constraints the capitalists impose on working class living standards and then proposes some redistribution is talking about deepening the divisions among workers.

Take the whole cake

The oppression of black people is essential to the survival of the capitalist system. It can only be fought from an anti-capitalist view point. But what does this mean in practice?

● Many local councils and private employers operate apartheid systems denying jobs for blacks. Tower Hamlets in East London employs only 2 blacks in Spitalfields — an area with one of the largest Asian populations in Britain. At a bus garage in Havering management and unions have a long-standing agreement not to employ blacks. Where such colour bars exist, they must be smashed. But this will not happen by pleading with management. The example of Lambeth shows that equal opportunities schemes are worse than useless. Unions must ensure that all vacancies are filled, and filled without regard to race.

● Where employers threaten redundancies it's no good defending jobs selectively. What use is it for black workers to have a fixed quota of an ever diminishing number of jobs? The only way to cut across the division between black and white workers is to fight to save every job and to fight for a job for every worker. This kind of struggle challenges the logic of a system which has always denied work to blacks and increasingly denies it to whites as well.

● The rights of black workers cannot be protected just through elementary trade union measures. Every aspect of the oppression of black people — especially police and fascist harassment and the activities of the immigration authorities — must be the concern of active trade unionists. Only this can ensure the development of the political consciousness that will make defence of blacks possible.

● Positive discrimination must be unequivocally rejected. At best it means token gestures, like Lambeth's decision to employ a black mural painter. Look at the USA: there may be quotas of bourgeois blacks studying at the Harvard Business School. But in America's inner city ghettos 75 per cent of black youth have no jobs.

Kevin Green



Looking for some positive action?

Order a copy of *Cleansing our ranks: a platform for anti-racist trade unionists* (20p plus s.a.e. or 20 copies for £3). It's been produced by WORKERS AGAINST RACISM's trade union sub-committee to launch a campaign throughout the labour movement against racial discrimination. It's our reply to the TUC's

'Black workers' charter' — to black and white workers alike. If you want to deal with the racists in your workplace, to fight formal and informal colour bars, to respond to passport raids and police harassment at work make sure you get a copy for your next union branch meeting!

Jew-baiting on the rise Zionism:



Israeli soldiers baton an Arab youth

never again!

Bombs outside synagogues in Antwerp and Paris; pogroms in Argentina; anti-Jewish demonstrations in Poland and Iran; anti-semitism remains a pernicious force in capitalist society today. 'Jewish hatemongers' screams the latest issue of National Front News at the British Board of Deputies. Judy Harrison examines the origins of anti-semitism and the false solution of Zionism.

ON THE EVE of the Second World War millions of European Jews faced the certain prospect of extermination under the Nazi jackboot. The process was already well underway in Germany. It was at this critical juncture that the Western Allies were to discover they could absorb no more Jewish immigrants. As boatloads of Jewish refugees sailed from port to port, including right up to the Statue of Liberty, they were turned away. All but the wealthiest were delivered back into the hands of the Nazis.

Holocaust hypocrisy

Even after the war, amidst hypocritical cries of horror at the 'revelations' about the concentration camps, the same story continued. As late as 1947, 450 000 'displaced persons', mainly Jewish survivors from the Holocaust, rotted in refugee camps in Europe — their numbers continuously swollen by the post-war pogroms in Poland. The allies didn't want to know. Labour British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin made the cynically astute observation that American support for a Jewish state was because 'they didn't want too many of them in New York' (cited in N Weinstock, *Zionism: false Messiah*). As a long-standing anti-semitite he could understand that.

Nearly four decades later, the tragedy-comedy continues. Soul-searching over the cause of the Holocaust is a profitable business. There has been an endless stream of films on the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps. Meanwhile, as Vanessa Redgrave elegantly relives the horror of Auschwitz, anti-semitic atrocities continue in real life. Never far below the surface of bourgeois society, anti-semitism has recently reared its

head in a virulent form in countries as far apart as Argentina, Iran, Belgium and Austria.

What the academics, psychoanalysts and assorted bourgeois apologists can't explain is *why*. Why has anti-semitism proved so resilient? What is it about the Jews that has made them the object of hatred for centuries?

Real Jews

'We will not look for the secret of the Jew in his religion, but we will look for the secret of the religion in the real Jew.' (Karl Marx, *On the Jewish question*, 1844)

For Zionists and anti-semites alike the Jews are a 'Chosen People'. Zionists believe the Jews were pre-destined to flee from country to country — that anti-semitism is insurmountable. The tragic fate of Jews, throughout the Diaspora is for them a confirmation of their historic claim to 'the promised land'.

Anti-semites broadly agree. They argue Jews are an alien, blood-sucking, parasitic breed — congenitally incapable of assimilation into Western Christian society. The solution is to let them go back to where they came from or, better still, eradicate them altogether.

This convergence of outlook has even resulted in Zionists welcoming anti-semitism. In Germany, Zionist leader Joachim Prinz greeted Hitler's rise to power thus:

'The theory of assimilation has broken down. We want assimilation to be replaced by the conscious recognition of the Jewish nation and the Jewish race. Only those Jews who recognise their own specificity can respect a state founded on the principle of the purity of nation and race... From every last hiding place of baptising and mixed marriages [the

Jews] are being pulled out. This does not make us unhappy. In this coercion to acknowledge and clearly stand by one's own community, we see at the same time the fulfilment of our dreams.' (cited in N Weinstock, *Zionism: false Messiah*)

What Zionism and anti-semitic theories have in common is a metaphysical view of Jews and Judaism, which inevitably leads to reactionary conclusions. Marx put the question back on its feet when he drew attention to the 'real Jew' — that is, the role Jews have historically played in social and economic life. Before the rise of capitalism their role was typically as tradesmen, either producing commodities or facilitating commodity exchange. Jews were the artisans, the shopkeepers, the merchants and usurers. As Marx put it, they lived 'within the pores of feudal society'. This was not their lot through choice or destiny, but because they were forcibly barred from playing any other role within 'gentile' society. Their ghettoised existence, the cohesiveness of their communities and their religion were an expression of these facts of economic life.

The basis for anti-semitism already existed in the special relationship Jews had to the rest of society. They were ruthlessly persecuted under the Romans, in the Crusades and throughout the Middle Ages. But systematic pogroms, mass expulsions and the 'final solution' of genocide are modern phenomena — the products of capitalist development. It was capitalism that lent anti-semitism its most complete and most barbaric form.

Exodus

Between April 1881 and June 1882, 225 000 Jewish families fled from Russia to Western Europe and the USA (W Fishman, *East End Jewish radicals 1875-1914*). It was the first in a wave of migrations, prompted by the pogroms that swept Russia and Eastern Europe at the time. Between 1881 and 1925 nearly four million Jews emigrated to the more developed capitalist countries.

They were not too welcome in the West either. Anti-semitism took its most virulent form in the countries where capitalism developed most slowly. But it was on the increase everywhere. The Jews had been dislocated from their traditional occupations with the advent of modern machine-based production and the rise of an aggressive industrial bourgeoisie. The small Jewish artisan was ruined, but could find no work in the towns when he had to compete with millions of peasants driven off the land. His wealthier brother — the merchant or money-lender — came up against the hatred and resentment of the nascent industrial capitalist, but was politically barred from competing with

him on equal terms.

Even in the countries where the Jews had been most integrated and, in some cases, achieved considerable wealth and status, the arrival of thousands of destitute illiterate Jewish refugees stimulated anti-semitism. The *Jewish Chronicle*, the official organ of established Anglo-Jewry, was quick to see the writing on the wall. Referring to their brethren from Russia and Eastern Europe the editors observed:

'Our fair fame is bound up with theirs; the outside world is not capable of making minute discrimination between Jew and Jew, and forms its opinion of Jews in general as much, if not more, from them than from the Anglicised portion of the community.' (G Lebzelter, *Political anti-semitism in England 1918-1939*)

The sensitivity of English Jews was heightened by the mounting campaign for restrictions on immigration, led by an unholy alliance of conservative politicians and trade union leaders, which culminated in the 1905 Aliens Act. Jew-baiting was intensifying in London's East End, where the majority of the refugees settled and sought work in the 'sweated' trades. Against a background of economic recession, the Jews became a natural target of resentment for East End workers. And their sentiments were echoed by Labour politicians and trade union leaders. Dockers' leader, Ben Tillett, complained that 'the influx of Continental pauperism aggravates and multiplies the number of ills which press so heavily upon us' (Fishman). Remembering his 'internationalist' obligations he told the newly-arrived immigrants:

'Yes, you are our brothers and we will do our duty by you. But we wish you had not come.'

Jews and communists

In England anti-semitism never assumed the catastrophic proportions it did in Europe. But, if they'd been put to the test, the British labour movement leaders would have fared no better than their Continental counterparts. A product of bourgeois society, anti-semitism was able to take root in the working class because it was never seriously challenged.

The Bolsheviks had fought an uncompromising struggle against anti-semitism, recognising the importance of challenging 'Great Russian chauvinism'. But by the 'twenties and 'thirties the communist parties of Europe were adapting to anti-semitism all down the line. In Germany, the KPD bent over backwards to reassure the population they were even more patriotic than the National Socialists. This included vehement denials of a Jewish/Communist conspiracy; the communist leaders, they claimed, were Aryans through and through.



Jews surrendering in the Warsaw ghetto: Zionism was a reaction to the labour movement's failure to fight anti-semitism.

In England, during Mosley's anti-semitic campaign in the East End, the CPGB told British workers:

'Hate the Jew, if you must, but do not allow your hatred to make you the victim of the Fascist who, on the plea that he also hates the Jew, makes you his accomplice in worse crimes.' (Lebzelter, p158)

Meanwhile, in the USSR, the Jewish question was far from any resolution. By the 'thirties anti-semitism flourished and the Birobidjan 'experiment' (a semi-autonomous Jewish state) had collapsed. The Soviet bureaucracy was not above using anti-semitic prejudice to deflect from its own failures, in the same way as the old Tsars.

With such an example in 'communism', it's small wonder that Zionism became the most influential ideology amongst Jewish workers.

Zion

Zionism, contrary to the claims of its supporters, is a very modern movement – less than 100 years old. Jews may have made ritual references to 'next year in Jerusalem' ever since its fall in 70AD, but they never seriously meant it until the twentieth century. It was the pogroms, and ultimately the Nazi Holocaust, that lent an old dream a sudden sense of urgency:

'From its inception Zionism appeared as a reaction of the Jewish petit-bourgeoisie (which still forms the core of Judaism), hard hit by the mounting anti-semitic wave, sucked from one country to another, and striving to attain the Promised Land where it might find shelter from the tempests sweeping the modern world.' (Abram Leon, *The Jewish question*, p245)

The fact that this reactionary response to anti-semitism could also take a grip on the substantial Jewish proletariat was entirely the fault of the left. Many aspects of Zionism were repulsive to Jewish workers, not least the unashamedly bourgeois and pro-imperialist statements of leaders like Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizmann (the former modelled his plans for a Zionist state on the success of British chartered companies in Africa). But the abysmal failure of the labour movement to fight the rising tide of anti-semitism in Europe seemed to leave no other option. A 'left-wing' variety of Zionism emerged, inspired by the writings of Ber Borochov, which justified the colonising of Palestine by Jewish settlers on the grounds that the Jews needed their own country to develop their own working class. 'Borochovism' helped sell the Zionist project to Jewish workers and socialists. In particular, the idea of communal enterprises – the kibbutzim – was held up as evidence of the socialist ideals in the embryonic Zionist state. The fact that the kibbutzim were to be built on territory forcibly expropriated from Palestinian Arabs, using exclusively Jewish labour, was justified on the grounds that for centuries Jews had been denied the right to work productively.

Thus it was that the Jews walked into the Zionist trap. The steady trickle of Jewish emigrés to Palestine from the early twentieth century onwards, turned into a veritable flood in the 'thirties. By the end of the war the Jewish population in Palestine had swollen from nine per cent to 32 per cent of the total. From the outset the imperialist powers cynically manipulated the Zionists' aspirations. As early as 1917 British statesman Balfour gave his formal blessing to the Zionist project. Sir Ronald Storrs, a governor under the British Mandate in Palestine, observed that a Zionist state could serve the role of 'a little loyal Jewish Ulster' in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism'. However, the British were only prepared to go so far; they could not afford to damage their traditional relations with the Arab leaders or let the Jews whip up too much resentment from the Palestinians. By the 'thirties British gunboats were turning back thousands of refugees

from Nazi Europe. By 1947 they were locked in a bloody war with the *Haganah* and the *Irgun* – the Zionists' military and terrorist wings.

Britain was forced to relinquish its Palestinian Mandate before the United Nations, and in 1948 the state of Israel was declared. Behind the scenes stood the USA, by now the new masters in the Middle East and hence best placed to take advantage of the loyal little Jewish state.

The Zionists achieved their dream, their 'right to national self-determination', at a terrible cost. Only by becoming entirely subservient to US imperialism, and by brutally oppressing the Palestinians, could they hang on to their promised land.

Zionism, far from solving the Jewish question, has guaranteed that Jews remain the object of hatred by millions. Not only the traditional anti-semites, but also entire Arab peoples who legitimately regard the Jews as the usurpers of their rights, have turned against the Jews.

The Jewish question today

The British left pays lip-service to fighting Zionism and simultaneously opposing anti-semitism. In practice it does neither. At its height the Anti-Nazi League made grotesque overtures to the Board of Jewish Deputies, echoing its prejudice that fascist attacks on blacks was merely a subterfuge for their 'real' target – the Jews. The ANL's opportunism didn't work; the Board was put off by the SWP's pro-Palestinian line.

Anti-semitism is still an important weapon in the fascists' arsenal. Whilst the Jews, unlike blacks, can hardly be accused today of directly competing for British jobs and homes, anti-semitism plays a useful role in lending fascist ideology a populist image. The ordinary, poor British workers versus the greedy, grabbing Jewish speculator, banker or boss is a message that still strikes a chord. *National Front News* still rants on about Britain being 'used as a milch-cow by an alien power' (October 1981). The reformist and radical left has no answer; it is as obsessed with the evil influence of finance capital as the fascists themselves.

It was the Labour Party Young Socialists, not the fascists, who organised a demonstration through the City of London against the merchant bankers last year. It's the International Marxist Group, not just the NF, that tells us repeatedly that British capitalism's disease could be cured if we eliminated the money lenders. At this year's Labour Party conference one speaker accurately commented that all that divides the Labour Party from the Tories is the issue of control over the finance houses. By attacking the individual capitalist, in particular the money-lending variety, rather than capitalist system itself, the left reinforces the prejudices that provide the basis for anti-semitism. The reformists' deep-rooted patriotism, their concern for British industry and British interests, plays straight into the hands of fascist demonology about 'alien powers'.

Most strikingly of all, the left's response to the overtly racist message of the fascists is almost word for word the message of the CPs in the 'thirties. It's not the racism they object to – 'Hate the black if you must' – but the way the NF manages to recruit racists to the Nazi cause. To the extent that black workers turn away from communism and towards petit-bourgeois nationalism, it's for much the same reasons that Jews embraced Zionism in the 'thirties.

The tragedy of the Jews is still with us today. It was possible for the victims of imperialist barbarism, the pariahs of bourgeois society, to become the servile creatures of imperialism themselves *because they had no confidence in the ability of the working class to smash anti-semitism.*

The racist screw

THE FACT that black prisoners in Britain's jails suffer persistent brutality will not be news to most people. It certainly won't be news to the hundreds of blacks sentenced to prison or detention centre in the wake of the summer revolts. But information recently passed on to *the next step* shows both the systematic character of this brutality and confirms that fascists are organised openly in British prisons.

Michael F lives in South Lambeth. In mid-September he was released from Wandsworth prison. He immediately contacted South London Workers Against Racism and made a long statement describing the conditions for blacks in Wandsworth.

Wandsworth is run as a punishment centre: its regime is even stricter than that demanded by Home Office guidelines. No association between prisoners is allowed. Facilities for prisoners are appalling. In some wings of the prison between 70 and 90 prisoners are forced to share access to two toilets and two cold water taps.

Black prisoners face more than just these barbaric conditions: they get very special treatment from the fascist screws. The warders are not worried about openly displaying their political allegiances. Many sport National Front badges and tie pins. And they make sure that black prisoners know their place – as Michael explains:

'From the moment the prisoner steps into the reception area from court it's the NF badge wearers who deal with him. They shout at the prisoners, they call them names, they are petty and demanding.

'They like the black prisoner to know that inside the prison there is a body of men who are ready to deal with him because he is black.'

Open sanctioning of fascist activities – notably at Wandsworth, Strangeways and Wormwood Scrubs – is not a deviation from the normal British prison regime. It is part of a system which starts with the treatment of blacks on the streets by the police, goes through the courts and ends in intimidation by fascist thugs in prison. This is born out by all the statistics and information available about the treatment of black prisoners.

The solution isn't a more humane prison regime. Black prisoners are treated like animals because *all* blacks are regarded as criminals, or suspected criminals, by the state. Liberal campaigners for penal reform have never challenged that assumption. They do the opposite, offering friendly advice to the Home Office on better and cheaper ways of dealing with 'criminals'.

SOLWAR has begun a campaign, involving ex-prisoners and their relatives, to expose the brutality at Wandsworth and fight the criminalisation of the local community.

For more information contact SOLWAR: phone 01-274 3951.

GLC POLICE INQUIRY Behind closed doors

THE SCARMAN SHOW broke all box-office records when it opened at Lambeth Town Hall. But Scarmen was nothing compared with the latest production at County Hall. Directed by Paul Boateng (with himself in the leading role), this one promises to run and run.

FRAN EDEN – WAR's national organiser – was there at the opening on 12 October. Unlike poor old Jeremy Thorpe, who wasn't even short-listed for the GLC's lucrative 'race relations' post, she at least managed to get inside. Accompanied by a number of black people who had submitted evidence about police

brutality to the GLC, Fran tried to attract the chairman's attention. However, it appears that all the Police Committee's talk about 'public accountability' is strictly for press consumption. The minute she opened her mouth, the chairman, Paul Boateng, threatened to... call the police! His side-kick, radical left councillor Steve Bundred mumbled something about dangerous publicity-seekers wasting the committee's time.

Still, we're determined to bring the Police Committee under democratic control. And WAR groups could do with some of the money the GLC's dishing out to the community relations boys and other worthy causes. So rush your evidence of police harassment to us fast and watch this space for details of the committee's next 'public hearing'. For copies of WAR's dossier of evidence to the GLC send 20p plus s&e to WAR, c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High St, London, E8.

RICKY OTESANYA Now drop all charges!

STUDENTS from Kingsway-Princeton college in London were jubilant when they heard the result of Ricky Otesanya's trial at Snaresbrook Crown Court on 23 October. Ricky, a 19 year-old Nigerian student at Kingsway has been in gaol since the Finsbury Park revolt in April 1981. He was charged with causing grievous bodily harm to Commander James Dickenson (breaking his nose!) and actual bodily harm to Chief Superintendent Patrick Carson. According to the magistrates – who've refused him bail all this time – he organised the Finsbury Park riot single-handed. But at Snaresbrook he managed to get off – well, almost.

He was found not guilty on all but one charge, for which he was sentenced to six months. So technically Ricky should now go free. He's already served that six months, and more. But he's back in Ashford Remand Centre, trying to get bail for yet another charge – aiding and abetting escape from a police van.

This means the campaign to free Ricky must continue and be stepped up. The Kingsway students organised a successful series of pickets at the court, and over 600 students voted at a union meeting to back Ricky all the way. Now they've got this far they're determined to win. But support from the National Union of Students is non-existent. The student bureaucrats have done nothing for Ricky, or for the Bradford 12 or the 3000 other youths framed-up on charges resulting from the summer's inner-city revolts.

WORKERS AGAINST RACISM groups have been set up in many London colleges to co-ordinate a fight-back against the NUS leadership and make sure Ricky and the Bradford 12 get the backing they need. For details of WAR activities at your college phone 01-274 3951.

Stop Press

Abdul Ahad, a Bangladeshi worker from Brick Lane, was arrested and held overnight at Bethnal Green police station on Saturday 10 October. Subsequently his home was raided, passports were seized and he was thrown back in the cells again. His crime? He'd gone to Bethnal Green police station to give evidence about a theft! Abdul is demanding the GLC Police Committee takes immediate action against the Brick Lane cops, and is taking out charges against them himself.

Andrzej Wajda, *Man of iron*, Academy Cinema Two, Oxford Circus, London.

SINCE THE formation of Solidarity in 1980 Polish professionals, artists and intellectuals have flocked to offer their services. One of the most illustrious is Andrzej Wajda, the veteran film director whose trilogy *A generation*, *Kanal* and *Ashes and diamonds* is well known in the West. His latest contribution to documenting Polish workers' struggles is *Man of iron* which has been showing in the West End of London since the end of September, and within Poland itself since the spring. It is certain to be a very influential film.

Man of iron is the sequel to *Man of marble*, the first Polish film to deal with the Stalinist terror of the 'fifties, which Wajda finally completed in 1976 after more than a decade of fighting for permission from the authorities. *Marble* traced the efforts of a young film maker to document the career of a fictional Stakhanovite 'shock worker' of the 'forties who was framed and imprisoned in the 'fifties. In *Iron* we learn that the hero of *Marble*, Mateusz Birkut, was shot during the massacre of workers in Gdynia in 1970. His son Macej Tomczyk (played by Poland's James Dean, Jerzy Radziwilowicz) is the man of iron in Wajda's latest film, a worker in the Gdansk shipyard who organises the 1980 strike and is marked down by the state bureaucracy as a dangerous member of the 'second-line' in Solidarity. Tomczyk marries Agnieszka, the television reporter from *Marble* who continues her quest for historical truth in *Iron* and spends the strike period as a political detainee.

In solidarity with Solidarity

Yet *Iron* is made very differently from the earlier film. Wajda has taken advantage of the political thaw won by Polish workers to weave newsreel into his fictional reconstruction of the fight to establish an independent trade union. Newly released film coverage of the 1970 revolt in Gdansk and Gdynia is integrated with shots of the negotiations between the strike committee and former vice-premier Jagielski's Government Commission and with Wajda's own filming within the occupied shipyard. Lech Walesa appears both in his own person – signing the agreement with his ridiculous giant Pope pen and praying at Mass – and also, together with Ann Walentynowicz, as an actor, witnessing the church wedding of Tomczyk and Agnieszka.

The film's narrative is provided by following the antics of Winkel, a radio reporter pushed by the bureaucracy into getting the dirt on Tomczyk. Winkel is a spineless, puffy little hack who could have walked straight out of the pages of a Graham Greene novel. He tracks down and interviews an old student friend of Tomczyk, his mother, his wife (in her prison cell) and others who have known him. With a microphone hidden inside his jacket he wheedles and ingratiates himself with everyone he meets. An alcoholic stumbling through a country where the strikers have prohibited the sale of alcohol, Winkel's reptile progress is a powerful image of the corruption of the society. No wonder Western reviewers identify so strongly with him.

The Tomczyk that Winkel reconstructs is a dedicated fighter of the working class. He is a craftsman, an intellectual, a passionate lover, a devoted son and an adoring father. Wajda portrays his growth to manhood as the result of a decade of tempering in the class struggle, including periods in jail for protesting against police brutality against workers. In 1968 Tomczyk, then a student at the university, implores his father to bring out the Gdynia shipyard workers in support of the student demonstrations; Birkut, fearing police provocation, refuses and Tomczyk breaks with his father, accusing him of cowardice. Then in 1970 the Gdynia shipyard workers go out on strike but receive no backing from Tomczyk and his student friends: the strikers are massacred, Birkut among them. Tomczyk is beside himself with grief, abandons his studies and vows to avenge his father and the whole working class. He goes to work in the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, where he remains, working as a clandestine political agitator, for the next decade.

Wajda's handling of his material makes this a powerful film. There are certainly a number of sentimental passages, particularly between Tomczyk and Agnieszka. But in general the presentation of Tomczyk as embodying the heroism and determination of the Polish workers works reasonably well. The main fictional characters, and particularly Winkel,

FILM

Who are the friends of the Polish people?

have considerable depth and shading. The sophisticated integration of fiction and newsreel and the fluid reconstruction of the events of a decade sweep the audience along and compel identification with the workers' struggle. Wajda moves his audience carefully between scenes of brutality, tenderness, anguish, anger, cynicism and comedy, building up a very credible – and to a large extent true – image of contemporary Poland.

Whither Wajda?

However, the film's artistic success masks its very dangerous politics. It is unlikely that many who see *Man of iron* will recognise what Wajda's own political standpoint is, because it is embedded so deep within the film. At no point is the audience invited to be critical of the material presented. *Man of iron* is a fairy tale of heroism and villainy. The film gives not a hint, and intends to give not a hint, of the tensions, fears and debates within Solidarity.

One clue to Wajda's politics is the film's time-frame which ends with the signing of the Gdansk Agreement in August 1980. Yet the film was completed in the spring of 1981, by which time many of the divisions within Solidarity, which could have been anticipated even at the time of the agreement, were already apparent. Wajda is concerned to present a picture of a working class united not only in action against the reactionary Stalinist bureaucracy, but united also *politically*. Yet as the September Congress of Solidarity revealed, there is strong opposition to Walesa's leadership

which crystallised after he called off the strike in protest at police violence at Bydgoszcz without even informing other members of the Central Co-ordinating Committee.

Wajda may have thrown in his lot with Solidarity, but he is Walesa's man. He portrays the Polish working class as heroic and the leading force in Polish society, but does it no service by presenting its victory as a *fait accompli*. In the film the only power ranged against the workers of Solidarity is the armed might of the state, rendered impotent by the unity and fearlessness of the strikers. Winkel's attempts to assemble information to be used against Tomczyk founder in the face of the fighting spirit of the strikers and end as farce.

The Polish army and the Soviet army are a very real threat to the Polish revolution. But whether the Stalinist bureaucracy would move against the workers with tanks, and the scale of resistance it would meet, depends on the ideological and political strength of the workers' movement. Every compromise by the Walesa leadership with the bureaucracy which goes unopposed makes armed intervention more, not less, likely because it undermines the political unity of the working class.

Time to halt?

Polish workers face many more immediate problems than the use of the army to smash their movement. Some of these are apparent in Wajda's film, but are not recognised as such by him. Others are not even mentioned. For example the conservative Catholic church,

which Walesa, Tomczyk, Walentynowicz and in fact all the workers are shown as supporting, is presented as a benign and natural part of Polish society. Even the atheistic Agnieszka realises that only a church wedding will do justice to their love when she comes to understand the strength of Tomczyk's religious faith. On the other hand, there is no acknowledgement in the film of the reactionary force of Polish nationalism within sections of the working class. Polish nationalism has a positive content in so far as it seeks to preserve the integrity of a country which for two hundred years has suffered invasions and mass murder at the hands of its neighbours; but when Polish workers remain silent in the face of violence directed against gypsies and Jews, that is another matter.

Wajda is most noticeably, and understandably, silent on the role of the intellectuals. Their influence over the mass of Polish workers is fortunately limited, but with their constant urging of caution and moderation they are a major force pushing the leadership back into the hands of the bureaucracy. In an interview with *Film Polski* Wajda made clear his own new position that now is the time for Polish workers to consolidate their gains and call a truce with the bureaucracy:

'Should this revolution be carried through to the end without stopping, in order not to lose all the acquisitions made by the victorious class? Or, on the contrary, should it be recognised that the present state of the revolution demands a halt in order to continue when the time is right? I think this question is still relevant.'

But the economic reality of Poland today is that there are no long term concessions for the state to grant. For intellectuals like Wajda compromise may make sense, but for Polish workers there is no going back.

The working class has no need of eulogy and embalming, however well intended. What it demands of those artists and intellectuals who offer it support is an honest assessment of its strengths and its limitations alike. Above all it needs argument. What Wajda has given the Polish working class is a few cheers from the sidelines which are unpleasantly reminiscent of the praise many intellectuals heaped on the Allende Government which only hastened the slaughter of Chilean workers at the hands of the Junta.

Wajda has found a new artistic freedom in the political upsurge of the past year. However, his own political position, and the use to which he has put it, are working to undermine the very struggle which won him the freedom to make *Man of iron*.

Gareth Evans



Lech Walesa plays himself in Wajda's latest film. In real life Solidarity and its intellectual supporters' tendency to compromise with the Stalinist bureaucracy could well bring disaster for Polish workers.

reviews



Sovietology today

N Tolstoy, *Stalin's secret war*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1981, pp463, hbk £9.50.

M S Shatz, *Soviet dissent in historical perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp214, hbk £11.50.

S Bialer, *Stalin's successors: leadership, stability and change in the Soviet Union*, Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp312, hbk £12.50.

S Bialer, ed, *The domestic context of Soviet foreign policy*, Croom Helm, London, 1981, pp491, hbk £14.95.

WHEN IT COMES to trying to understand the Soviet Union, the bourgeoisie is a victim of its own propaganda. For decades imperialist ideologues have produced material on the Soviet Union which sought to expose the evils of communism. Yet this beast has survived. To explain the resilience of this affront to humanity, Western scholars have examined everything that is irrelevant to a study of the Soviet Union – the mystique of pan-slavism, the Russian mentality, the childhood of prominent Bolshevik leaders, the psychological predilections of Stalin and the influence of the harsh winter. The four books under review maintain the standards long established by Western Sovietologists.

Man as history

In the realm of historical vulgarisation Nikolai Tolstoy has few equals. His authority on matters pertaining to the Soviet Union was established before his birth. For Nikolai Tolstoy, according to the dustjacket, is 'heir to the senior line of the Tolstoy family and his great grandfather was chamberlain to the court of Nicholas II'. Tolstoy's latest contribution to the study of demonology – *Stalin's secret war* – shows that an aristocratic connection can still be turned to advantage.

Tolstoy's originality is emphasised by his publishers who point out that the author draws on 'much more evidence'. The new evidence turns out to be previously published memoirs and books, much of it (thank goodness!) long out of print. Tolstoy's study of Soviet policy during the period 1938 to 1945, even if banal, has the merit of simplicity. Just about everything can be explained by what Stalin ate, thought and did. In the world of the senior heir to the Tolstoy family:

'there has probably never been a ruler in history whose power was as absolute as Stalin's. Though autocracy had its limitations, it is true to say that in all essentials Soviet policy was simply Stalin's policy.'

'This being so, I believe that what Stalin did and what Stalin said are of paramount importance.'

To prove his point, Tolstoy spends over 400 pages tracing various Soviet policies back to one source, old Uncle Joe. Man no longer makes history – history becomes the man.

History and backwardness

Marshall S Shatz has hit on an amazingly original idea. He has discovered that dissidents in Russia are not only a modern day phenomenon.

Dissidents even existed in Tsarist Russia! *Soviet dissent in historical perspective* makes no concessions to historical specificity: history never changes, it only repeats itself in cycles:

'It is the contention of this book that contemporary Soviet dissent though it has its own unique characteristics is the product of a pattern of development Russia has been following since the eighteenth century...dissent since the death of Stalin must be viewed as the latest cycle in a recurrent pattern that has helped to shape Russian history since the age of Peter the Great.'

Shatz' timeless generalisations inevitably ignore what is distinct about different periods in history. He uses the past to rediscover his own prejudices about Soviet society. It is like explaining the current failures of Soviet agriculture by pointing to the persistence of bad weather during the last two centuries.

Elite theory

Seweryn Bialer is considered something of an expert on the Soviet elite. His two recently published books, *Stalin's successors* and *The domestic context of Soviet foreign policy*, show an excessive preoccupation with what bourgeois academics call 'decision makers' at the expense of the basic social processes at work.

Stalin's successors is subtitled *Leadership, stability and change in the Soviet Union*. Unfortunately 'change' is interpreted narrowly in terms of personnel change at the top. Bourgeois academics and journalists are fascinated with important individuals. We had 'after De Gaulle'; now we're getting 'after Sadat'; this is an exercise in 'after Brezhnev' speculation.

This narrow focus on the individual is complemented by the abstract methodology of political science. Each section is introduced by a discussion of concepts and definitions. The rest of the available material is then brought into line with the definitions. Thus a profound discussion on the distinction between 'stable' and 'unstable' (the author feels that it is 'useless and arbitrary' to define 'when the "less" becomes "instability" and the "more" becomes "stability"') is followed by numerous tables and charts which seek to quantify stability in the Soviet Union.

The same scholastic approach is evident in the series of articles collected together in *The domestic context of Soviet policy*. The different Soviet experts who contributed to this text are mesmerised by generalisations. Even the better articles ignore the wider social forces that shape the objects of this inquiry. The focus is too institutional and too compartmentalised. Despite the title, 'The domestic context' never really emerges. What we have instead are isolated chapters of Soviet life abstracted from material conditions.

From right to left

The degenerate character of bourgeois theories of the Soviet Union gives us no ground for complacency. The ahistorical definition-oriented approach of the right also characterises much left-wing writings on the subject. Most left-wing theories of the Soviet Union are really nothing more than expanded definitions. Vulgar theory on the left and the right must be exposed by the world-wide struggle for Marxism. The development of a Marxist analysis of the Soviet Union is an urgent task.

Frank Richards

Sisterhood in the States

Building feminist theory – essays from *Quest*, Longman, New York and London, 1981, pp280, pbk £6.50.

THERE ARE TWO sorts of feminists in the USA. The first sort are in the National Organisation of Women (NOW) which seeks 'to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society'. This means getting women

into campaigning for the Republican Party, onto the boards of big corporations or into activity in their local Parent Teachers Association or ecology group.

The other sort read *Quest*. Published in Washington since 1972, this journal aims to establish 'feminism as a mode of analysis'. Its writers are very critical of 'mainstream' feminism and highly concerned about American working class women and blacks. Behind all the academic verbiage and militant rhetoric *Quest* writers have two central preoccupations: personal/sexual politics and women's coops or advice centres.



More than half the book is taken up by attempts to define feminism. Here the uninitiated reader will encounter some confusion, because in the first 50 pages we are introduced to such concepts as radical feminism, socialist feminism, non-aligned feminism, cultural and spiritual feminism and lesbian feminism, which, we are told 'deliver a unique threat to the complex history of human oppression'. However things are further complicated because 'the lesbian feminist camp itself is divided into what we might call cultural nationalists versus political lesbian feminists. Don't faint if you belong to neither group or both'. Moreover it seems that lesbians are 'oppressed by radical feminists as well as by reform and socialist feminists'.

While *Quest* recognises that 'many of the political divisions among women's groups are simple differences in style and not necessarily ideology', its only conclusion is that 'studying the styles of various organisations should strengthen each group and open communication channels'.

So much for theory and ideological struggle; how about practice? Two models of liberation are presented. The first is to set up capitalist enterprises run by women only. Beverly Fisher-Manick (a self-confessed feminist, community organiser, mother, housing director, contradictory perfectionist, working class, multi-ethnic Detroit, procrastinator, woman-lover, anti-capitalist seeking basic change and survival for herself and her daughter) describes them like this:

'The majority of projects within the women's movement are not at present self-sustaining but can and should be. For example, our women's centres offer free services to women with little planning as to how we will pay for the operating expenses, such as salaries for staff.'

'If these projects operated as "feminist businesses", they would pay for their staffs and at the same time continue to grow.'

The American dream – feminist-style: flourishing companies with no men around.

For American feminists less concerned with corporate viability there is radical social work in health clinics and Rape Crisis Centres. The aim of the DC Rape Crisis Centre, for instance, is 'to work towards the elimination of rape... the dissemination of information... education of people about rape... and work to reform institutions connected with rape including the police department, hospitals and the legal system'. A battle of ideas to make racist-chauvinist cops more sympathetic to women: community policemen – American-feminist-style. It may seem a long way from a lesbian-

owned food store in San Francisco to a women's subcommittee in a South London Labour Party ward, but the concerns and political strategy of bourgeois feminists are the same the world over: personal politics in private and reformist politics in public.

Kevin Green

What did you do in the war, Michael?

Simon Hoggart and David Leigh, *Michael Foot: a portrait*, Hodder and Stoughton, pp216, hbk £8.95, pbk £4.95.

MICHAEL FOOT told the Labour Party conference that he was an 'incurable, inveterate peace-monger'. But Foot's record in the Second World War gives the lie to this.

Hoggart and Leigh's journalistic pot-boiler contains a quick account of Foot's co-authorship of the bestselling *Guilty men* (Gollancz, 1940), a histrionic attack on Neville Chamberlain, Stanley Baldwin, Ramsay MacDonald and a dozen other right-wing politicians for their lack of enthusiasm for waging war against Germany. For Foot the men who failed to rearm against Hitler in time were guilty: they were responsible for the debacle of Dunkirk – for 'the story of an army doomed before they took the field'. His diatribe against the 'appeasers' had a simple message. Apart from some honourable exceptions (such as Churchill), the Tories, Foot argued, weren't patriotic enough. They lacked sufficient ruthlessness in prosecuting the military interests of British imperialism. So much for our 'inveterate peace-monger'.

Hoggart and Leigh's boudoir history ignores the political significance of *Guilty Men*. It also ignores another episode in Foot's wartime career – one that has, however, been exposed in Martin Middlebrook's recent book *The battle of Hamburg* (Allen Lane, 1981).

On the night of 27 July 1943 Bomber Command launched one more raid on Hamburg. As usual, it aimed north of the Elbe – at areas which were almost entirely residential or commercial rather than military. But this time it took more phosphorous incendiaries than was normal.

That night 40 000 German civilians – including 22 500 women and 5400 children – were incinerated in the streets or asphyxiated in air-raid shelters. In terms of civilians killed by bombs, nearly as many died this way as died in Britain throughout the war. Such was the devastating loss of life that criticisms of the raid were even made in official quarters.

At the time Michael Foot was editor of the *Evening Standard*. He received a number of articles attacking the RAF's bombing campaign. He declined to print them.

James Wood



reviews

Heavy duty

George Leggett, *The Cheka: Lenin's political police*, Oxford University Press, 1981, pp528, hbk £22.50.

THE VECHEKA, formal title of a central body colloquially known as the Cheka: the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-revolution and Sabotage. Created in the winter of 1917-18 by the Old Bolshevik Felix Dzerzhinsky ('Iron Felix'): founder member of the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, escapee from several Tsarist prisons, nemesis of Okhrana agents-provocateurs in the Bolshevik Party 1910-12 and a leading figure in the October revolution. Empowered, at various times and in various situations, to investigate, arrest, interrogate, try, jail, send to concentration or labour camps, execute and shoot on sight bourgeois journalists, corrupt officials, profiteers, speculators, criminals, looters, bandits, Black Hundreds, kadets, clergymen, monarchists, Social Revolutionaries, Left Social Revolutionaries, Anarchists, Mensheviks, foreign 'diplomat' spies (particularly British ones), Kronstadt sailors, dissident printer and chemist trade unionists, nationalist peasants, assassins, insurrectionaries, emigre subversives, strikers and common-or-garden capitalists.

Adept at the use of informers and double agents, and at setting up bogus oppositional bodies. Responsible also – at various times and places – for snow-clearing, combatting typhus epidemics, gun control, rail and river security, firefighting, commandeering timber and fuel, enforcing labour discipline, overseeing industrial and military conscription, requisitioning houses and looking after waifs and strays. The Cheka: literally, 'a lynchpin', and certainly the lynchpin of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Held up by Lenin as a model of working class ruthlessness – 'a good Communist', he said, 'is at the same time also a good Chekist'.

Leggett's book is a compilation of a vast amount of interesting information on the activities of the Cheka. However, the data it assembles is turned to a familiar political purpose. Leggett uses the fact that the Tsarist Okhrana, Lenin's Cheka and Stalin's GPU employed similar methods to suggest that the diverse regimes within which these police organs flourished were all similar – that Leninism derived from Tsarism, Stalinism from Leninism, and that all three were characterised by Russian love of cruelty and violence.

In fact all class societies are based on terror. The amount of terror evident at any particular time depends on the balance of class forces and the efficacy of other mechanisms of preserving the domination of the ruling class. Moreover, the systematic use of terror is a feature of unstable societies in which rival social forces vie for power, which is why terror and counter-terror have raged in Russia for much of the present century. Rival terrorisms fought for control during the break-up of the Roman Empire; they fought for it throughout the central Europe of the 'thirties and 'forties; and state terror continues to confront insurgent terror in many parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America today. Parallels between methods of terror under different regimes prove nothing what matters is the social content of those regimes.

The important difference between the Cheka and GPU is that, while the Cheka served the interests of the working class under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the GPU served the interests of a bureaucratic clique that usurped the workers' state. The Cheka's enemies were those forces seeking to overthrow the workers' government and restore the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The GPU's main target was the working class and the peasantry. It is true that there was little difference in their methods, but terror is terror: the question for Marxists is not which side was more brutal, but who was doing it to whom? This is why we unreservedly back the terror of the Cheka. Our only regret is that the Cheka was insufficiently ruthless in curbing the growth of the bureaucratic elements in the Bolshevik Party that eventually stifled the Russian Revolution.

Peter Blumkin



Russia, 1917: to defend the revolution, ruthless measures were necessary

Blast from the past

David Lipsey and Dick Leonard, eds, *The socialist agenda*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1981, pp241, £7.95.

Shirley Williams, *Politics is for people*, Penguin, London, 1981, pp230, £2.50.

David Owen, *Face the future*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1981, pp552, £12.50.

Ian Bradley, *Breaking the mould? The birth and prospects of the Social Democratic Party*, Martin Robertson, London, 1981, pp172, £2.95.

THE RECESSION provokes class conflict, it polarises society and destroys consensus. Political parties that in better times might move away from their traditional constituencies towards the centre are driven today to consolidate their own social bases. Thus the Tories move right and Labour moves left. Margaret Thatcher appeals to the owners of capital, large and small, not without creating some strain with the paternalistic, 'one nation', Tory traditionalists. Tony Benn turns towards the sellers of labour power, so far with uneven success, and at the cost of shattering the rigid Labour Party structure built up in the years of post-war complacency. One fission product of the impact of the recession on the Labour Party is the Social Democratic Party.

The SDP is based on the nostalgia for the past of the professional middle classes. They long to bring back the days when steady growth and rising living standards subdued class antagonisms and gave rise to the illusion that greater equality could be created by an enlightened Labour administration. The popularity of the SDP in the media reflects a widespread bourgeois sentiment in today's harsh times for the old ways of consensus and co-operation. But the crisis that forced the social democrats out of the Labour Party also dictates their irrelevance in the class struggles of the future.

Crosland is dead

The SDP (as many Liberals have uneasily observed) is the direct descendant of the dominant faction in the Labour Party of the 'fifties and 'sixties. Its theoretical legacy comes from Anthony Crosland who redefined socialism to mean acceptance of the capitalist system, rejection of the very concept of class and pious expressions of the need for greater freedom, equality and compassion. *The socialist agenda*

begins with a collection of tributes to Crosland and his politics; its second half consists of attempts by Crosland's followers to reconcile the politics of the booming 'fifties with the crisis-ridden 'eighties. It's an uneasy combination.

Crosland believed in expanding public spending, he rejected incomes policy in principle and he even opposed anti-union legislation. Today's SDPers – like *Agenda* contributor IMD Little – have to differ with their mentor: 'All this was very reasonable in those days, and I believed much the same myself. Alas, there has been a sea-change between then and now'. Alas indeed for Crosland's acolytes who fill the rest of Lipsey and Leonard's collection with apologies for cuts, wage controls and curbs on union rights. Alas too for Crosland himself, who, before he died in 1977, saw his growth-based ideals founder one by one on the rocks of the crisis. 'Croslandism' itself died in late 1976 when Crosland gave up his opposition to Healey's public spending cuts with a statement that could serve as his epitaph: 'This is nonsense, but we must do it'.

Call it a policy?

The SDP is short on policy because the prescriptions that revisionist social democracy based on full employment and social harmony have little place in a society with three million on the dole and rioting in the streets. However, having founded a new party its leaders are obliged to come up with some response to contemporary problems. Their major political theme is to attack state intervention, centralisation and bureaucracy; their solutions are popular participation, decentralisation and industrial democracy. 'Politics', declares Shirley Williams portentously 'is for people'. The merit of Williams' book is to cover these commonplaces in a concise 200 pages while David Owen grinds on for more than 500; and in terms of banality as well as tedium the doctor takes the biscuit.

Hostility to the state is a petit-bourgeois prejudice as old as capitalist society. So is the notion of economic and political control being vested in a community of small producers. Williams makes common cause with today's ecologists; Owen traces his roots from the utopian socialists of the nineteenth century, through the guild socialists and the Fabians, to the 'industrial democracy' schemes of the last Labour Government. Anti-statist posturing has some appeal to the small man frightened by Labour's nationalisation plans. But the problem is that senile British capitalism cannot survive without massive support from the state. Thus the SDP's decentralising zeal has little appeal for British capitalists. Its schemes for 'workers' participation' have even less appeal to workers who know they mean sharing out redundancies, short time work and wage cuts.

A broad democratic alliance?

The link-up between the SDP and the Liberals is not surprising: it's their only hope of playing the electoral system to some advantage. What is more interesting is the convergence between the populist 'community' politics of the SDP and the 'broad democratic' approach of the Euro-communist wing of the Communist Party. They share the notion that Thatcher triumphed because of the growth of anti-corporatist prejudices fostered by the last Labour Government and a repudiation of Labour's supposed narrow working class orientation. They both approve policies that 'integrate class and national democratic interests and perspectives' (Pat Devine, 'The Labour Party – why the decline?', *Marxism Today*, January 1980). Both traditions condemn the 'sectarianism' of the Labour left and seek to promote linkages among diverse popular campaigns. And they have a similar social base in the 'caring' professions and the academic world. Thus the defection of former CP executive member Sue Slipman to the SDP should not be seen as a freak event, but as the logical course which other old colleagues may yet follow.

How the mould will crumble

What are the prospects for the SDP? Ian Bradley is a poor guide. He is a journalist who cannot see behind the personalities and institutions of politics to the social forces that drive them to success or failure. For him, as he writes in the introduction to *Breaking the mould?*, 'the truth, as always, lies somewhere in between'. He would like to think the SDP might make it, but he has his career to think about so he hesitates to commit himself. (If the SDP should prosper Bradley and his Fleet Street colleague Peter Jenkins must surely be in line for honours for the services they have rendered the new party in *The Times* and *The Guardian* respectively).

The fate of a political party depends on its capacity to express the interests of a major social class. There are those – for example at *The Economist* – who would like to see Labour ditched and the SDP become the official party of the working class. This is a non-starter. Despite the flirtation of the Gang of Four with Chapple, Duffy and Sirs, not even one of these charlatans would join the SDP at its launch. Without a single trade union behind it the SDP will never get mass working class support: the recruitment of ex-International Socialist industrial organiser Roger Rosewell will scarcely tilt the balance. And the parade of rats joining a newly-launched ship, MPs and councillors with records in Parliament and local government varying from the nondescript to those reeking of corruption, will not enhance the SDP's chances.

As everybody from Thatcher to Benn now appreciates the SDP is a bigger threat to the Tories than to the Labour Party. But the odds must be on the Tories remaining the party of the British bourgeoisie and retaining mass middle class support. There are plenty of alternatives to Thatcher on offer inside the Conservative Party should a change of course become necessary.

As there are only two classes that matter in British society the fate of the SDP depends on the struggle between them. At present that struggle is simmering. Some middle class people fear the future so they cling on to the past and the plausible figures of Jenkins and Williams, Owen and Rodgers. But when the class struggle erupts, as it must, they will be forced towards the extremes of British politics. The precarious middle ground on which the SDP has staked its future will disappear. The vagaries of the British electoral system may give the SDP-Liberal alliance some short-term prospects. But the dynamics of the class struggle will soon consign the SDP to the dustbin of history.

Mike Freeman

Leisure on the dole?

Clive Jenkins and Barrie Sherman, *The leisure shock*, Eyre Methuen, London, 1981, pp185, £4.50.

'Leisure is a waste of time for the unemployed' (from a videotape on unemployment in Scotland, Photocom, Benwell, Newcastle, quoted in *The Times*, 8 October 1981).

LETTERS

Letter from Iran

The atmosphere in Iran has been electric since 20 June when the Mojaheddin organisation, with the support of the Fedayee guerrillas, alarmed the regime with a half million-strong public demonstration in support of the ousted President Bani-Sadr. To save the Islamic republic Ayatollah Khomeini found no alternative except to begin murdering the anti-imperialist prisoners in Iran's jails. For this purpose the government employed a greater number of revolutionary guards, promising them good salaries and long-term loans for buying houses.

At the same time the Ayatollah called for the establishment of a secret police service. Until the organised force could be set up, he urged all moslems to act as secret agents for the regime. Since then the combined forces of the police, the revolutionary guards and thugs of the Islamic Revolutionary Party have been hunting down, like hungry tigers, the members and the supporters of revolutionary organisations. The victims are often executed within a few hours, sometimes without being identified.

The number of executions has so far been about 200 each day. The Attorney-General Ayatollah Mosavi Ardebili has announced that demonstrators or anybody carrying arms should be executed irrespective of age. This has sometimes meant that children only eight years old have been condemned to death.

History has scarcely seen such cruelty before, even amongst the fascists. Just today one policeman, who had observed a set of executions, told me that the revolutionary guards shot a supporter of the Mojaheddin in the city of Arak 37 times when implementing a death sentence. There are many similar stories: I myself saw a mother crying and shouting, 'You have killed my son. Why are you demanding money for delivery of his dead body?'. The fact is that the authorities demanded 10 000 rials [equivalent to £65] for the bullets spent on his execution by firing squad!

Turning to the activities of the left, we can divide them broadly into two parts; first, there are the opportunists such as Tudeh Party and the 'Majority' of the Fedayee Guerrilla Organisation, who have a policy of total support for this regime. Since their papers were recently banned people call them the wooden stick with two filthy ends (a Persian proverb) because they are despised by both the people and the regime.

Second, the revolutionaries, who consist of the Mojaheddin (although they are not Marxist), the Fedayee Guerrilla Organisation, Peykar Organisation, Komolah, the Democrat Party of Kurdistan and some other small groups. Almost all of these have been in continuous battle with the forces of the regime in all cities and towns of Iran. Many of their members and supporters have been executed, imprisoned, or have been forced to go underground and curtail their activities.

Since July the Mojaheddin have been unable to issue their paper *Mojahed*. The regime also jams their radio transmissions. The Peykar Organisation, which has lost many of its top activists, has not been able to print its paper

for a long time. Only the Fedayee Guerrillas have succeeded in publishing and circulating their weekly paper *Kar*. The circulation, of course, is very limited, for top security must be considered. One mistake by a supporter who is caught with one paper means death without a doubt.

Despite the involvement of the regime in a fierce and longstanding war with Iraq, much military involvement is being put into the Kurdistan front. The army, in co-operation with the revolutionary guards, tried for a long time to occupy the town of Bukan, the base of the Fedayee Guerrillas in Kurdistan, and where the Komolah and the Democrat Party had concentrated. According to the regime's radio, by the end of September the army managed to advance into the town and push the revolutionaries back. But the fighting has been fierce. One soldier who recently came back from the front with a finger missing, said that from amongst 300 soldiers who went to Kurdistan from one military base, only 15 had survived.

Daily life for the masses is harder than before. Roughly two million refugees from the war are dispersed throughout the country. The food shortages are felt by everyone, even though basic foods are sold by coupon. Inflation has put much pressure on the working class and all other non-manual workers on limited salaries. Though the government claims that inflation is about 25 per cent, prices are often trebled. Unemployment has gone well above three million. This figure may well rise because workers who do not identify closely with the regime are being sacked from the public sector. Private sector activity has also diminished substantially and is incapable of creating new employment. As a result internal productivity increases are almost nil.

Besides all these economic pressures on the masses, repression is so fierce that people scarcely dare to object. From the point of view of repression, it is much worse than in the period of the Shah. The Shah imprisoned and tortured his opponents but this regime tortures and eliminates without any fear.

All recreational facilities such as music centres, theatres, swimming pools, night clubs and so forth are banned. Universities are still closed. The TV has no educational programmes.



A woman prisoner out on a pioneering training run from Askhem Grange prison in York, featured in all the daily papers on 16 October. But what is the message on her T-shirt? The Guardian and The Daily Mail blacked it out; The Times blurred it; The Sun scratched out the letters to make it illegible; only in the Daily Express is it just about visible. The message reads: 'Who killed Liddle Towers?' — the boxer who died in police custody in 1979 and one of the rising fatalities in Britain's police stations and prisons. If you really want to know, look in the next step...



All these pressures besides war and economic pressure are increasingly making people fed up with the regime, but still a considerable percentage of people are silent because the war continues. In my view it is very hard to believe that any drastic change is possible before the death of Khomeini. The departure of Bani-Sadr and Rajavi has not brought much hope for the people.

Manesh

Tehran

7 October 1981

*This letter has been slightly shortened.

To affiliate or not to affiliate?

Debate is raging in my NALGO branch about whether we should affiliate to the Labour Party. There's going to be a ballot about it next April. The executive says in the latest issue of *Public Service* that we should join because a moderate union like NALGO could stop the Labour Party from adopting extreme policies!

A lot of Tories at work are against it because they want 'to keep politics out of NALGO'. On the other hand the left is all for it. The Campaign for NALGO Affiliation to the Labour Party is being pushed by supporters of *Militant*. Some friends of mine in the SWP say the Labour Party is a load of rubbish but still think we should affiliate.

I don't think much of the Labour Party but voting against affiliation seems to mean siding with the right-wingers. Where does the RCP stand on this?

'Perplexed'

Jenny Taylor
Southwark

Pat Gordon writes:

We think NALGO activists should vote against affiliation to the Labour Party. Instead we think they should fight for the union to set up a political fund. Such a fund could be used to finance anti-racist and anti-imperialist campaigns or other political activities in the interests of the working class.

Of course we don't want to 'keep politics out of NALGO'. But it's a question of what sort of politics. We want to promote working class politics in the union — and the Labour Party won't assist that. Labour's policies provide no defence against voluntary redundancies and wage cuts, and no way forward on the key political issues.

The SWP's position confirms its irrelevance: why maintain an independent organisation if you advise workers to affiliate to the Labour Party? If the SWP thinks the Labour Party's good enough for NALGO members it should affiliate too. It's fear of taking an independent stand — even if this means taking the same position as the right in a particular vote — reflects its inability to fight the politics of Labourism in the trade unions.

Irish meeting banned

I would like to follow up a letter concerning the suspension and victimisation of seven students by Middlesex Polytechnic authorities which appeared in the last issue of *the next step*.

The writer pointed out that several of those victimised by the Poly Directorate for their part in last year's occupation were also identified as supporters of the national liberation struggle in Ireland. The writer also referred to the hysteria generated after the decision by one union meeting to donate £1000 to the Irish Republican Socialist Party's London support group to cover fines imposed for spray-painting slogans.

Already this term the Poly authorities have demonstrated their willingness to clamp down on any person or group supporting the Irish liberation struggle. Now the victimised students face expulsion from the Poly — not just a one year suspension.

Further steps have been taken to curtail debate on Ireland. On 24 September the Poly assistant director John Duke attempted to ban a meeting organised by the Irish Society at All Saints. The meeting had been scheduled to start at 7.30pm with a showing of the film, 'The H-Block hunger strike'. However, at 4.30pm the All Saints site vice-president received a letter informing him that the booking was cancelled. Subsequently, the lecture room was locked up and the projectionist sent home. The vice-president phoned Duke and demanded an explanation. He was told that all meetings on Ireland would be banned from the All Saints site. Duke later denied this.

The meeting took place despite the ban, although the film could not be shown. Over 40 people attended to hear the two guest speakers: Maureen Maguire of Provisional Sinn Fein and Frank Murphy of the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

On 1 October Duke wrote to the union executive to 'clarify' the position. Despite the rhetoric and intentional ambiguity, Duke succeeded in making his position and that of the Poly Directorate clear: the authorities feel that they are entitled to censor and prohibit any meeting which they consider goes beyond certain prescribed boundaries of political debate. This can only be seen as part of the wider attempt by the state to stifle debate on Ireland and thus emasculate any movement which challenges its role in Ireland.

The response both to the victimisation of the seven students and to the banning of the Irish Society meeting has been minimal. Many students, it seems, are ready to back the establishment on both these issues, despite their consequences for student union integrity and autonomy.

I would urge all readers of *the next step* in colleges to raise motions in support of the seven students, especially those facing expulsion — and to protest at the banning of the Irish Society meeting at the All Saints site.

Joan Hoey
North London
Chairperson Irish Society, Enfield site

LONDON

Preparing for power
Can professors, priests, ecologists and radicals stop capitalism cruising into oblivion? Or will only class war deal with the bourgeoisie's plans? Can the world economy recover from the recession? What's going on in industry? How long will the union bureaucrats be able to sabotage the fight for jobs? When will apartheid be smashed in South Africa? What are the prospects for revolution in Poland? Does the far left in Britain have any prospects at all? Confused? You won't be if you attend the six remaining discussions for power educational discussions. Weekly on Mondays at 7pm. Polytechnic of Central London, student union building, room 1F, Bolsover St, London W1 (nearest tube: Great Portland St). £1 per session. Write to BM RCT, London WC1N 3XX, or phone 274 3951 for more details.



**SMASH THE PTA CAMPAIGN
RECALL CONFERENCE**
Saturday 6 February 10am-6pm
Caxton House, St John's Way,
London N19

The March 1981 Coventry conference on Ireland recalled to assess the work done and the next steps for building labour movement support for the Irish struggle. Get your union branch or organisation to delegate you now!
For more details contact Keith Tompson on 01-274 3951

**SPTAC
Recall
Conference
6 February**



CHANGE YOUR UNION'S IRISH POLICY!
If you are a member of NALGO, ASTMS, TGWU or UCATT and want to win your union to support the struggle for Irish freedom, then contact SPTAC. Trade union support groups are now fighting in these unions to put a motion to the forthcoming annual conferences.
Write to SPTAC, BM RCT London WC1N 3XX

RCP activities

COVENTRY

Coventry Smash the PTA Campaign
Week of Action on Ireland.
2-6 November. University of Warwick, students union building.
● Monday 2 November, 7.30pm
The Patriot Game: film and discussion. Room H052, Arts building.
● Tuesday 3 November, 7.30pm.
Play: Terence McSwiney (died in Brixton prison, 1920 after 74 days on hunger strike). Followed by social.
● Wednesday 4 November, 7.30pm. Debate on Labour Party's Irish policy. Speakers: SPTAC, Labour Party, Tony McNally (CPGB Midlands secretary).

● Rally to mark the seventh anniversary of the PTA and to protest against British rule in Ireland. Saturday 28 November, 11am-1pm. Coventry city centre.

● Coventry SPTAC meets fortnightly on Monday evenings. Phone 01-274 3951 for details.

Public meetings. Warwick University, students union building. 7.30pm.

● Khomeini's Iran. Thursday 12 November.
● Debate with Workers Power on 'the united front'. Thursday 17 November.
● Beyond the women's movement. Thursday 26 November.
● Smashing the apartheid state. Thursday 3 December.

Coventry Workers Against Racism
Fortnightly planning and discussion meetings. Thursdays, 7pm: next on 12 November. Phone 01-274 3951 for details.

LEEDS

Lunchtime meetings. Leeds University, students union building, Woodhouse Lane, 1pm.
● Battle for Iran. Thursday 5 November.
● Pacifism or class war? A debate on nuclear disarmament. Thursday 19 November.

Smash the PTA Campaign Northern labour movement conference on Ireland AFTER THE HUNGER STRIKES - WHAT NEXT?
Saturday 5 December, 10am-6pm. Belle Vue community centre, Belle Vue Rd, Leeds. Registration: £2 (unemployed: £1.25). Trade union activists from Ireland and Britain. Discussion, debate, workshops, films, evening social.

Manchester Workers Against Racism
● Unions must oppose racism in the NHS! Throw out Patrick Jenkin's racist questionnaire! Join the MANWAR protest. Saturday 7 November, 12 noon. Wythenshawe hospital.
● Our answer to Patrick Jenkin's questionnaire. MANWAR public meeting. Speaker: Pam Lawrence. Thursday 12 November, 7.30pm. Manchester University, students union building, Oxford Rd.

Manchester Smash the PTA Campaign
● Taking Ireland to the TUC Tape/slide show of the Workers' March for Irish Freedom, plus discussion. Tuesday 3 November, 7.30pm. Preston Polytechnic, Poulton campus.

● Torchlit procession to commemorate the Manchester Martyrs - and support the H-Block protestors. Thursday 19 November.

● Manchester SPTAC meets on alternate Fridays at 7pm. Contact sellers of the next step, write to Box 33, Corn Exchange Building, Hanging Ditch, Manchester M4 3BD, or phone 01-274 3951.

Staffa fights on!

HOT ON THE HEELS of their infamous sell-out at Laurence Scotts in Manchester, the AUEW mafia have got a new headache - this time in East London. Over three weeks ago nearly 400 workers, 60 per cent black, voted to occupy their plant in defence of jobs. The company, Staffa Products, makes hydraulic equipment. It had announced plans to move its operations to Plymouth, making the entire East London workforce redundant.

The workers voted five to one to occupy. ASTMS staff members as well as the engineers joined the fight. For a workforce that only last November accepted nearly 40 redundancies, in an area that's seen closure after closure go by without opposition, this was news indeed.

You could tell the union officials weren't too enthusiastic from the outset. Chris Newson, one of the AUEW stewards, described how they responded. First, the local ASTMS official came down with a letter from his union's solicitors, advising the staff to get outside the gates - or else forfeit official recognition and their strike pay. The unity between the shop floor and staff workers was undermined by his blackmailing tactics. Then Vic Swift, the AUEW district secretary, subtly suggested to engineering workers they should follow suit. 'We told him to get stuffed, and concentrate forcing Boyd and Duffy to make this dispute official.'

The background to the officials' manoeuvring was of course their fear of legal action against the union, after an injunction was served on the entire occupation. While the AUEW prevaricated, the bosses were moving in for the kill. On Saturday 17 October, at 5am, 200 police descended on Staffa and broke up the occupation. Management moved back in along with a security firm, and proceeded to move equipment out. The workers received letters a few days later informing them they were sacked.

The AUEW had just got around to making the dispute official when the police moved in. Clearly the bureaucrats are hoping they won't have to pay out too much strike pay now. But the Staffa workers are determined to keep on fighting. They've learnt some bitter lessons. Firstly, about the bosses' tactics. Contrary to the advice they received from some local well-wishers, the injunction was not a bluff. Staffa is out to smash the union - and, once the occupation was on, couldn't afford to lose customers by letting it drag out. What's more, the bosses have learnt some lessons from the AUEW's handling of Laurence Scotts. They knew the union bureaucrats would run for cover at the first sign of trouble.

Secondly, it's become pretty clear that all the discussion about the viability of the firm, the 'good economic arguments' for staying in East London, are irrelevant when it comes to the crunch. The bureaucrats have been pushing a familiar line: 'Staffa makes the best hydraulic equipment in the country', 'skilled workforce', etc. Not only is it obvious to everyone that Japanese manufacturers have been very successfully competing with Staffa's parent company (US-based Brown and Sharpe); it's also clear that the bosses aren't in the slightest interested in the unions' apologetics. Even when the GLC made the gesture of offering millions of

pounds to keep Staffa in London they dismissed it contemptuously. Staffa didn't pay a consultancy firm a fortune for nothing. Their carefully laid plans to expedite the move to Plymouth were revealed to the workers when they found secret documents in the managers' offices containing a step-by-step plan of action. The move to Plymouth makes excellent economic sense from their point of view - government subsidies, low wages, reduced workforce and a weak or non-existent union.

The stark reality facing the Staffa workers as they maintain their struggle outside the factory gates is in fact the same for every group of workers taking on the bosses today. Whether it's Laurence Scott, British Leyland or Staffa, trade union militants are faced with a ruthless management - backed up by the courts, the bailiffs and the police - and a spineless union leadership prepared to settle for a pittance.

Staffa can and must win. They need your support. Send generous donations to: STAFFA strike committee 39 Somers Road Walthamstow, E17

Pass motions of support in your trade union branch. And if you live in East London get down to the picket line - mass pickets every Monday 7am.
Judy Harrison



Staffa workers occupying to save jobs.



'Terence McSwiney': a play performed by Coventry SPTAC, Tuesday 3 November.

**the
next step**