No 19 December 1981

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party 20p

INSIDE

LAURENCE SCOTT; PAISLEY, PRIOR AND THE PTA; NATO, GERMAN NUKES; ROOTING OUT RACISM; KHOMEINI'S CHAOS
REVIEWS: HOBSBAWM, US TROTSKYISTS, APARTHEID STORIES, HOUSEWORK

They can't fight unemployment



Give them the sack!

IN RECENT WEEKS we've been receiving more and more letters. Here's a fairly typical one from Chelmsford, Essex:

'Dear Sirs,
Having just read October's *the next step*, I would like to know more about the RCP, what its views are, how it is going to change society etc and what role it can play in relation to the Labour Party, of which I am a member.'

We thought such a direct inquiry deserved a direct reply.

What we think

Our correspondent would no doubt agree that the working class today faces serious problems. There are three million people on the dole, real wages are falling, union organisation on the shopfloor is in decline. But why are workers suffering setback after setback?

Our view is this. Workers find themselves accepting sacrifices because they have been encouraged to believe that their future is bound up with the viability of the sector of the economy in which they work. They tighten their belts now in the hopes that this will help bring about better times ahead. They accept that their bosses are broke and they don't see any alternative to doing their bit to get them out of a jam.

To put it more broadly: workers are encouraged to relate their economic prospects to Britain's. Once they do this, hardships inevitably follow, for today capitalist Britain demands hardships of all workers.

Take the situation at British Leyland. Management at BL has forced through tens of thousands of redundancies; now it has got away with offering a wage increase of less than four per cent. When, however, its line on pay seemed likely to provoke a successful strike, it knew which strings to pull on. Chief salesman Tony Ball made a plea for patriotism: 'We are', he announced the night before 14 000 workers at Longbridge were due to vote whether to stay out or not, 'all on the same side. . .let us unite and fight the foreign competitors' (quoted in *The Standard*, 3 November 1981). AUEW leader Terry Duffy made the same point – 'Back to work for England' was his instruction.

The BL workers were sold out by their union leaders. But the betrayal did not happen in one weekend of negotiations. It has been going on for years in the way the officials put solidarity with the Metro, the Acclaim, BL Cars and the British motor industry before the solidarity of their own members. The collapse of the strike vividly reveals the disastrous consequences of the prevalence of this view on the factory floor. The BL fiasco comfirms a basic premise of the RCP: that the battle against Michael Edwardes, Margaret Thatcher and their class can only be won if workers begin to put loyalty to their class before loyalty to the nation. 'What we think' is that workers can only win their struggles if they pursue them in a spirit that rejects the nationalism of Michael Edwardes, Tony Ball and Terry Duffy in favour of the international interests of the working class.



How we go about changing society

All the work we do aims to strengthen workers' resistance against appeals to put Britain first. We are active in the basic defensive organisations of the working class on two fronts. Through our organisation Workers Against Racism and its *Platform for anti-racist trade unionists* we work to commit branches and trades councils to practical opposition to racial discrimination, immigration controls and attacks on blacks by the police and fascists. We work for industrial action against racist employment policies, legal and financial assistance for victims of the British Nationality Act and similar legislation, the prosecution of police thugs and the physical defence of black families subjected to racial harassment.

Our second line of attack in the unions is on Ireland. Through our Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign we mobilise trade unionists against the Government's power to hold critics of its Irish policy in prison without trial. We seek to convince active workers of the need to support the liberation of Ireland from British oppression, and, to this end, we picket police stations to force the immediate release of people detained under the PTA.

Our agitation in the trade unions aims to drive a wedge between workers and 'Britain'. The more we fulfil this aim, the more the powerful barons who run Britain's trade unions try to drum us out of the labour movement. Attempts to undermine the bureaucrats' patriotic policies are bound to provoke their wrath. The trade union leaders' attempts to suppress the growing influence of anti-racist and pro-Irish liberation sentiments in the labour movement show which side they're on – and they show too that the struggle for class politics in the unions is also a struggle against the union bureaucracy. But the politics of the union leaders are also the politics of the Labour Party. The struggle for internationalism is also therefore a struggle against the Labour Party.

Us and the Labour Party

The Labour Party is the machine that carries the cooperative Terry Duffy-Michael Edwardes approach in industry into the wider world of politics. And it is important to note that the patriotic politics that are so damaging to BL workers, as well as blacks and Irish people, are not the exclusive property of right-wing Labour leaders like Denis Healey and Roy Hattersley. Many see the revived left wing of the party as a genuine alternative to the old leadership. But it is Tony Benn and his followers who are most strident in their appeals to British nationalism.

Everything Tony Benn says indicates that Britain, not the working class, is his main concern. For Benn the Tories' denationalisation of oil is bad for Britain, membership of the EEC is bad for Britain, 'our' defence arrangements with the US are not in the country's interests, British manufacturing must be protected from foreign imports, the Labour Party must be democratised so the voice of the British people can be heard. Benn alloys realistic nationalism with idealistic socialism: the result is a heady mix which incapacitates workers every time the employers appeal to their sense of national responsibility.

Standing up for British industry means accepting the redundancies and wage cuts that are necessary to make it profitable. Standing up for Britain against foreign imports goes along with support for Britain's racist regulations against 'foreigners'. And Labour's concern about Britain's defence fits in with its consistent backing for British repression in Ireland. Benn has his differences with the Labour leadership – but not on the crunch issues in the conflict between workers and the British state.

To people in the Labour Party or moving towards it we say 'Think again'. We propose they *really* oppose redundancies, they *really* stick up for black people, *really* stick up for the Irish, and we offer them the means to do this through our campaigns and our paper.

Why join the RCP?

Ask yourself:

- Do you want to join a dynamic organisation that isn't dogmatic – except about the need to apply Marxism to every problem facing the working class? Do you want to get a thorough training in revolutionary theory, help elaborate it further, and put it into action in your workplace and on the street?
- Have you not only had enough of Thatcher, but of 'Britain' too? Are you fed up with the old, grey men who claim to represent you but in fact try to represent Britain's interests even more forcefully than Margaret?
- Are you incensed not only by racism but also by the union's failure to do anything about it? When Eric Heffer & Co announce the formation of yet another study commission to investigate the possibility of the next Labour government making a declaration of intent about the desirability of getting ready to think about beginning a gradual, orderly, phased withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. . .do you ever get annoyed about this? Do you want to *do something* about racial and imperialist oppression, and do it in an arena that really counts – the trade unions?
- When other left-wing organisations praise Benn in big letters but criticise him in small ones, do you ever get the feeling they're trying to have it both ways? Do you nurse a secret suspicion that, after 35 years of voting Labour with no illusions, calling on the Labour lefts to fight the Labour rights, campaigning for Labour to come to power with a socialist programme and making Labour more accountable to its supporters – do you nurse a secret suspicion that actually the far left has got precisely *nowhere* doing all this?
- Do you want to sell, argue for, discuss in depth and write for *the next step*?

If the answer to *any* of these questions is yes, then you should work with us. If the answer to *all* of these questions is yes, you should really consider becoming a member of the RCP. It's not just a matter of signing up, but of making a conscious move towards membership.

- Subscribe to *the next step*, write to us, phone us up, fight for our politics in your union. Remember that the working class doesn't have a lot of time, and nor do we. Workers can't afford many more reversals from Thatcher. Join us now and help put an end to them.

Tell your bank manager where to put it!

You need revolutionary communist politics and we need money. Support *the next step*. Make us a regular financial commitment each month (£5, £10, £20. . .) and invest in the overthrow of capitalism. Fill in, cut out and send off the box below:

Your bank

Name of account to be debited

Account number
Our bank RCT Association, Natwest, 504 Brixton Road SW9
Account number 17482844
Sorting code 60-03-36
Amount to be paid.....**monthly**
First payment due.....**and on the same date in subsequent months**
Signed

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No turning back!

'It's the end of the road. There is no more money.'

Sir John Boyd

'We don't want any more stories – just more money on the table.'

BL Longbridge worker

THE NEXT STEP is two years old. In our first editorial in November 1979, 'Breaking new ground', we warned that the trend towards economic collapse would force the ruling class on to a savage offensive against the labour movement. We also warned that the existing institutions of the labour movement would prove to be ineffective in dealing with this attack, and that the labour bureaucracy would be hard pressed even to maintain the pretence of leading a working class fightback. Most important of all we noted that the working class would go from one setback to another unless its most active sections were organised around a coherent anti-capitalist alternative.

The past two years have shown our analysis to be only too true. The ruling class, despite its weakness, has won a succession of victories over the labour movement. Hundreds of thousands of redundancies, victimisations of militants, wage cuts, cuts in social services and anti-union legislation: all these reverses have met little opposition. Yet the hold of the labour bureaucracy over the working class remains intact. The bureaucrats have succeeded in calling the tune: for two years militant workers have dissipated their energy in a vain attempt to reform the Labour Party. After two years there is nothing to show for this campaign, and militants are more isolated on the shop-floor than ever before. Since the Labour left has achieved no tangible results even its cheap anti-Thatcher rhetoric has failed to arouse the indignation of workers. Through its vacillation and its antics, the left has only discredited the fightback. The cuts in workers' living standards imposed by Ted Knight, Ken Livingstone and Lothian Council symbolise the ineffectiveness of left-reformist politics. Unfortunately, the failure of these pathetic gestures has been interpreted widely as confirming the futility of any form of resistance.

It is fashionable in left-wing circles to blame the working class for its apathy and passivity. However, if workers lack political confidence the blame lies squarely with their leaders. The latest fiasco at BL is a case in point. Almost immediately after the collapse of the BL strike, workers at Longbridge downed tools over managerial encroachment on their tea breaks. Not even the most cynical union bureaucrat could deny that there is a strong will to fight at BL.

Fighting for what?

But the will to fight is not enough. Workers have little confidence in their unions. There are too many examples of strikes being led to defeat. When threatened with the closure of their factory, most workers take the view that strike action would only make their situation worse. The union leaders joined BL boss Edwardes in telling workers that 'there is no more money'. And who could disagree that BL is in a state of near-collapse? When the books don't balance who is going to pay the wages?

Union bosses go by the books and have no arguments to justify a claim for decent wages. Rank and file militants also face a problem. When capitalism is gripped by a profound recession, trade union militancy directed against an individual employer *cannot work*. The employer can always threaten the ultimate sanction – closure. And these days few are prepared to call the employer's hand to see if he is bluffing. Without a realistic alternative the instinct of self-preservation forces workers to go on the defensive.

The ruling class knows that it has the unions in a corner. As Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) chairman Pat Lowry warned the TUC: 'I don't think things are ever going to be the same again. To wait for the pendulum to swing back would be to wait for ever'. What Lowry has in mind for the TUC is straightforward: *you are in no position to bargain effectively for you have lost your clout. At most you can disrupt our plans to restructure industry, but this would benefit neither you nor your members. You might as well accept the situation and play a positive role. Work alongside us, prepare your members for more sacrifices and we'll all prosper when prosperity is restored*.

This is the realistic advice that the union leaders have more or less accepted. Even the more militant-sounding TGWU leader Alex Kitson gave up any pretence of leading:

> 'It's their jobs that are at stake. If they take the decision to accept I will welcome it. If they reject then I have to have another look and see what we can do to improve it.'

These days, when union bosses fight they are usually fighting for their own skins. This was the meaning of Kitson's threat to use the tanker drivers' strike to force Thatcher to do a U-turn. Kitson sought to strengthen his position through the power of the tanker drivers. This defiant statement coming hours after the BL sell-out did little to inspire confidence. The tanker drivers refused to enter battle on behalf of Alex Kitson. The tanker drivers' strike that never happened shows in a clear form why workers are reluctant to respond to their leaders' calls. They know that there is nothing in it for them.

Another TUC re-run

The union leaders understand that there is no turning back. Their response is to make the adjustments necessary for surviving the recession. Their first priority is to keep their institutions intact and to minimise the decline of their membership. Because they have to be seen to be doing something, they have devised a novel tactic: the strike-that-could-have-been.

The scenario favoured by the TUC goes like this. Management puts forward proposals that amount to a cut in real wages (public sector, engineering, seamen, car industry). The union leaders denounce the 'style of management' that made the 'insulting offer'. They make loud noises and threats and inevitably propose industrial action for some date far in the future. In the meantime they declare their commitment to talk – and talk they do. The closer they get to the date set for strike action – the more feverish the talk. By this time the union negotiators have given in, realism prevails and the dispute is called off.

Another variant of this scenario is to start strike action. After a couple of days the strike is called off while ACAS or the negotiators examine 'new proposals'. By this time workers are too demoralised to reject the 'last minute' compromise (ie the unions' compromise) formula.

Many workers grumble about the sell-out, but in their heart they know that they haven't got the strength to smash their employer. Even better organised and militant section of the working class, like the miners, are reluctant to launch an industrial dispute. That's why the National Coal Board is confident that, militant talk notwithstanding, the NUM executive is ready to climb down and compromise. And as more workers retreat while their leaders' heads are buried in the sand, union activists become more isolated. They want action but lack the political clarity required to organise the fightback.

Halt the retreat

For the proletariat too there is no turning back. The choice is not between sectional disputes sanctioned by the union officials and passivity. Sectional disputes are easily isolated and force workers up against the wall. Nor is it realistic to accept the bosses' terms on the grounds that at least jobs are preserved. BL shows what happens. The collapse of the strike was followed by an attack on working conditions and the announcement of 4000 more redundancies.

Every victory for the employers becomes a prelude for a new attack. If workers narrow their sights and simply try to hang on to their jobs it becomes that much easier for the bosses to push through more redundancies. According to the CBI, more than 250 000 workers have already waived their annual pay rise. Their next move will be to reduce wages further, speed up the lines and make more workers redundant.

There is no salvation in trade unionism – either in its militant or passive form. In the present recession, struggles directed against a single employer have little chance of success. Our fight has to be waged not merely against the indivual boss *but against the ruling class as a whole*. When the employer protests that he cannot pay we have to force the exploiting class to provide the resources necessary for the maintenance of a decent life. While an individual capitalist may go bankrupt, his class brothers hold on to society's wealth.

Workers at Laurence Scotts, at Staffa and elsewhere have shown that they are ready to fight. But the spirit of resistance has to be tempered by a strategy which directs all the limited struggles against the ruling class and its state. In this way all sections of the working class, including the unemployed, can be drawn into a common struggle for the wealth that we produce.

Class unity cannot be achieved simply through trade union unity. Trade unions organise workers along sectional, industrial and craft lines. Trade unions reflect the divisions (sectional, sexual, racial) which capitalism imposes on the labour movement. The unity of our class can only be achieved around objectives which relate, not to a particular section, *but to the interests of the proletariat as a whole*. Proletarian unity will not be achieved overnight. The tension between the transport and engineering workers at BL shows the size of the problem. But it will never be achieved unless we fight for it today. That's what revolutionary communism, which recognises only one interest – that of the working class – aims to do. Those who try to put the interests of their industry, factory or craft first must be fought relentlessly.

The first step towards consolidating the power of the working class is to reorganise its most active and conscious elements. Unity will not fall out of heaven, it will have to be built around the most conscious and resolute workers. *the next step* is engaged in building a political movement that can unite this section of the proletariat. Two years ago on this page we argued:

> 'The review is written for those who are actively committed to defending the working class and for those who realise the need for new political solutions. We believe that this still small section of the working class must be united around a programme that reflects the experience and interests of the international proletariat.
>
> 'We want active workers to take this next step with us. The foundations of a new working class leadership is a prerequisite for winning the mass of workers to anti-capitalist politics.'

We repeat the message. During the past two years thousands of workers have moved closer to *the next step*. Many of them agree with much of what we argue. Unfortunately, too many of our readers hesitate to set out to build a mass movement. It is difficult to start anew, to break with past traditions and institutions. The threat of political isolation has prevented many from joining our ranks. But fears of political isolation cannot override a much more important consideration: the future of society lies with the historic mission of the working class.

Those who refuse to join our fight for a new working class movement have also given up the belief that a new kind of society can be built. Yet there can be no turning back – history will not give us a second chance. Those who have no confidence in the power of the working class, and remain tied to the crumbling institutions of the old labour movement, choose the road to defeat and subordination. But the future is ours if we keep our distinct class interests to the fore and act boldly to realise them.

The High Court injunction against LSE workers Frank Stubbs, Dave Hallsworth and Billy Partlan nailed up outside Mining Supplies, Doncaster.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUST
CHANCERY DIVISION
GROUP B
MANCHESTER DISTRICT REGIS
BEFORE HER
WEDNESDAY
BETWEEN:
MINING SUPP

As the state moves in...

Laurence Scott workers fight to the end

As we go to press three leading militants at Laurence Scott and Electromotors face court injunctions preventing them from picketing the key Doncaster factory in the Mining Supplies chain owned by LSE boss Arthur Snipe. The remarkable fighting spirit of the Laurence Scott workers has seen them through an eight month battle to save 650 jobs in Manchester. They were evicted from the factory in August after a 17-week occupation when bailiffs armed with sledgehammers, pickaxe handles and other weapons stormed in. Yet the fight continued from outside the factory gates.

The LSE workers contemptuously rejected a management scheme to reopen the factory with only 150 workers: 'all or none' was their answer to these divisive tactics. They have fought off attempts to dismantle plant at LSE by scab workers, only to see the scabs helicoptered into the factory in a massive police operation. The workers' response was to step up the pickets on Mining Supplies that have now brought the threat of legal action against 'secondary picketing' in Doncaster.

The LSE dispute is at the centre of the fight against redundancies and mass unemployment. Yet throughout the dispute the will to fight of the rank and file has been constantly undermined by the strategy and tactics of the trade union officials and their radical supporters, not only at a national level, but also at the level of the local Broad Left bureaucracy. Helen Swift reports.

FROM THE MOMENT that Mining Supplies took over Laurence Scott and Electromotors in October 1980 it was apparent that there was a fundamental conflict of interests between Arthur Snipe and his workforce. At a time of deep recession in the engineering industry he had to make the LSE operation profitable. His first move was to put the Manchester factory on short time (October); his second to announce its closure (April); his third to impose 400 redundancies at the largest plant in the LSE chain in Norwich (September). This ruthless approach may be the only way to make profits, but for many workers it means disaster. Supporters of *the next step* at LSE began the fight for jobs with the fight against the short time working scheme:

> 'We have to tell whoever runs Scotts that we are not accepting a worsening of our conditions just so that their position can be bettered.' (*the next step: LSE factory bulletin*, No 1, October 1980)

Our insistence on putting workers' needs before the market position of Arthur Snipe was one tnat drew wider and wider support among LSE workers as the struggle built up into a bitter fight for every job in the factory.

Right from the start the trade union officials tried to avoid the clear-cut confrontation which Arthur Snipe offered the LSE workers in favour of following a path of moderation and compromise. They accepted short time working. And when the closure was announced they recommended the alternative course that has guided their interventions in the struggle ever since – keep the factory open through large scale voluntary redundancy. The leading figure in the Manchester Broad Left, Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions official John Tocher urged workers to accept this 'realistic' course before the occupation began. But the LSE workers preferred the realism of *the next step* (their livelihoods before Snipe's profits) and voted to occupy. Again in June Tocher tried to sell a deal he and the national officials had cooked up with Snipe (re-open LSE in return for substantial redundancies) to the workers: again they rejected it.

By October, when Snipe tried again with this approach – he offered to reopen with 150 workers – the workers were so angry that even Tocher did not try to persuade them to accept it. Months of struggle had strengthened workers' conviction that their need for jobs had to come before any concern about the viability of the company.

If the bureaucrats get up your nose...

The first bulletin of *the next step* put out after the occupation began in April proposed extending flying pickets to Doncaster and other LSE plants. But the local Broad Left bureaucrats in the engineering union, working closely with the union leadership inside the factory, opposed this. They insisted on going through the official channels in an attempt to win solidarity action from other unions and workplaces. It was only after three months of bureaucratic inactivity, when supporters of *the next step* and other militants at LSE formed an action committee to get things moving, that picketing in Doncaster began. Even then the proposal met with resistance from the officials – and from their supporters in the local Socialist Workers Party and International Marxist Group. But the rank and file workers were eager for action against the employers, and the opposition to picketing from the convenor and stewards crumbled.

The engineering union officials were still hostile to picketing. Two months later AUEW North Manchester District Secretary Dougie Daniels told a sycophantic radical left reporter that 'I can't understand why they lifted the picketing. It was the best way forward' (*Socialist Organiser*, 3 September). The mystery was why they even began the picket – especially as Daniels and a fellow Stalinist official from Sheffield *instructed* them to call it off before it started. The July picket was called off after a week because left-wing officials promised some results from Tocher's negotiations with Snipe that ended in an attempted sell-out.

The relationship between the local left-wing officials and the right-wing national leadership in the engineering union has proved a powerful weapon for the trade union bureaucracy in containing rank and file militancy. The Daniels-Duffy double act over LSE is a classic example of this pernicious alliance in action. The President and General Secretary of the AUEW – John Boyd and Terry Duffy are well known as gaffer's men. They seized the earliest opportunity of doing a deal with Snipe and withdrawing backing from the occupation. But Dougie Daniels is known as a member of the Communist Party and a trade union militant. However, he has his position to think about: 'I'm by rule answerable to the Executive. I don't underestimate people like John Boyd. He's been a full time officer for 35 years. He's a shrewd operator and he knows all the tricks. I might end up as a caretaker's assistant!' (*Socialist Organiser*, 3 September). So what is his approach to executive instructions to withdraw support from LSE? 'I'll have to go along with this. What else can I do?'. What about stepping up action at LSE in defiance of Boyd and Duffy? 'I think that would be an adventure. I'd be open to discipline. I think I'd be in front of the executive sharpish'. In fact under pressure from LSE workers the North West Manchester District Committee has been forced to reverse its endorsement of the executive line and press for official recognition to be restored.

But what is Daniel's attitude to further militant action to carry the struggle forward? 'It's up to the lads. They know what my position is.' This is trade union leadership Alex Kitson-style: 'There go the workers. I am their leader. I must follow'. And when workers get demoralised by the defeatist compromises of their officials and confused by their devious tactics, the left-wing bureaucrats have an easy answer: 'the level of backwardness in some of the well organised factories in Manchester would terrify you'. Right-wing Duffy made his peace with Snipe; left-wing Daniels worked to make sure that they got what they wanted from LSE workers.

Beyond the rank and file

Tocher and Daniels share Boyd and Duffy's conviction that jobs can only be saved by making British companies viable. The compromise they have all tried to sell the LSE workers follows from this pragmatic approach. Yet the radical left groups involved in the LSE dispute unanimously blame the betrayals on the right-wing leadership and exonerate the Broad Left officials. They fill their papers with interviews with these bureaucrats, ignore their divisive politics, while reinforcing their demoralising influence on the workforce.

One of the central features of the SWP's 'rank and file' approach is the call for full involvement of workers in strikes and occupations, regular mass meetings and open decision making. But, because the SWP activists related to the LSE workers entirely through the Broad Left and the factory officials, these demands were never raised during the occupation. Only supporters of *the next step* at the factory consistently argued for drawing the maximum possible number of workers into activities around the occupation and for taking all decisions at mass meetings. The bureaucrats wanted to run the dispute through tight committees under their own control – and the SWP and others simply adapted to this narrow approach.

The inevitable result was that more and more LSE workers lost confidence that the occupation would win and dropped out of the struggle. The bureaucrats' strategy also helped to isolate LSE from wider support. When they, often with the help of the SWP or the IMG, approached other factories, it was always at the level of the convenor or the senior stewards. Token support came – but it soon became clear that because the fight had not been taken to the rank and file, effective solidarity action was not forthcoming. Because the SWP is incapable of challenging the politics of the Broad Left, its 'rank and file' orientation leads it to tail along behind the bureaucrats and ignore the real rank and file.

Vote, vote, vote

While the radical left did not seek mass meetings to involve workers at LSE and elsewhere in the struggle, it was keen on using meetings around the LSE to bolster

TICE

1981 M No. 607

TRY

HONOUR JUDGE MARY HOLT

THE 18TH DAY OF NOVEMBER 1981

LIES LIMITED

Plaintiffs

THIS COURT DOTH ORDER that the first Defendant Frank Stubbs the second Defendant David Phipps Hallsworth the fifth Defendant William Partlan be restrained until the 30th day of November 1981 or until further Order from doing in the meantime whether by themselves or by their servants or agents or any of them or otherwise howsoever the following acts or any of them that is to say from picketing or otherwise preventing interfering with or disrupting contractual or other relations of the Plaintiffs with its suppliers customers or any other person having cause to visit the Plaintiffs' registered office which is situated at Hillcrest Works, Carr Hill, Balby, Doncaster, South Yorkshire or any other premises of the Plaintiffs

AND IT IS ORDERED that the costs be reserved.

EX PARTE INJUNCTION
OVER TO 30TH NOVEMBER 1981

PENAL NOTICE

IF YOU NEGLECT TO OBEY THIS ORDER IN THE TIME REFERRED TO HEREIN, YOU WILL BE LIABLE TO PROCESS OF EXECUTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROPELLING YOU TO OBEY THE SAME.

LEE LANE-SMITH

the fortunes of the left of the labour bureaucracy. A 'Laurence Scott' meeting was widely advertised in October at which Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill, Derek Robinson and Bob Wright had all been invited to speak. What had all these celebrities in common? All were involved in election campaigns in the Labour Party NUM and AUEW respectively. In the event they all feared antagonising the top TUC leaders by too close an identification with this unofficial struggle and pulled out. But the radical left widely publicised their messages of support and their sympathies for the LSE dispute to popularise their campaigns among militant workers.

Despite repeated requests, Arthur Scargill has refused to mobilise his mighty Yorkshire miners against Mining Supplies in Doncaster ever since the LSE dispute began. Yet as polling opened in the NUM presidential election, Right to Work Campaign secretary John Deason wrote one of his infamous 'open letters' to 'Dear Arthur', requesting that he take action *now* (*Socialist Worker*, 21 November). If Scargill has done nothing in the last eight months he is not going to do anything now. Deason's letter simply indulges Scargill's militant reputation and enhances his electoral prospects. Instead of exposing his betrayal of the LSE workers, Deason's letter merely pleads for him to think again. Deason writes that he is 'extremely anxious' that Scargill win the election; LSE workers can't see that it will make much difference.

Fighting politics

The LSE workers are up against formidable obstacles. They face an obdurate employer backed up by the courts and the police. They have been abandoned by all the unions with workers at the factory. Their struggle has been weakened by a strategy popularised by the Broad Left officials and their radical left allies. However, at every stage the politics of *the next step* have proved a realistic alternative to the apologetics of the bureaucracy and a genuine rallying point for militants.

It was supporters of *the next step* who called for immediate occupation back in April – and for immediate flying picketing. It was supporters of *the next step* who persuaded LSE workers to resist eviction and not passively acquiesce to the bailiffs as the officials and the SWP proposed. It was supporters of *the next step* who took the lead in defying court injunctions against picketing. The lesson of the LSE struggle is that if you want to fight for jobs the politics of *the next step* will go with you all the way. It you want shabby compromises the Broad Left and the radical left will pave the way.

Who won?

AUEW results favour moderates

Morning Star

Left holds ground in AUEW poll

By MIKE PENTELOW

BROAD left candidate Ken Brett topped the poll in the first ballot for the position of general secretary in the engineering union, the...

The Daily Telegraph

'Red Robbo' beaten as Right retains control of union

By CHRIST... RIGHT WI...

votes to his

Right retains hold in AUEW elections

The Guardian

By Keith Harper and Paul Johnson

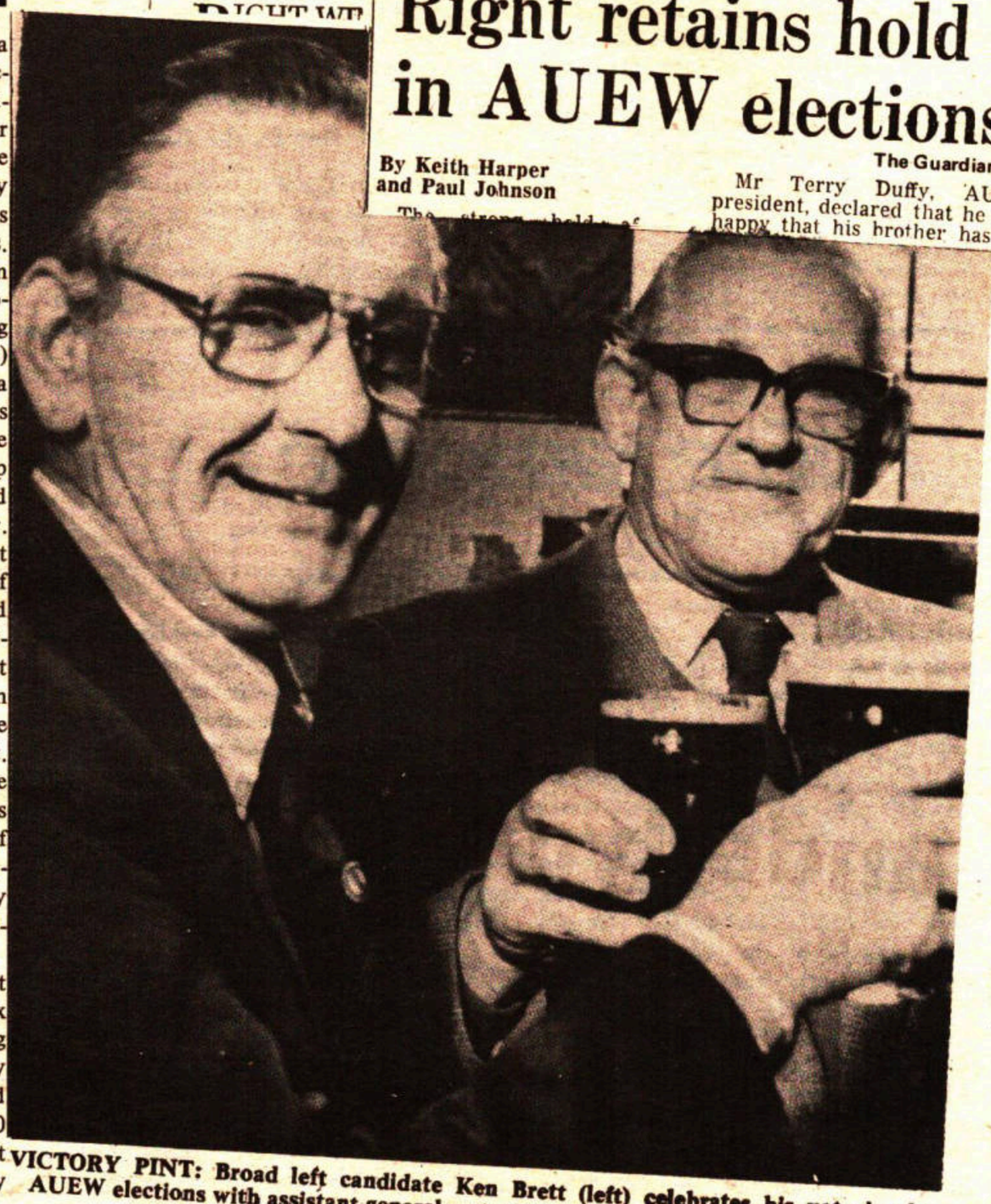
Mr Terry Duffy, AUE president, declared that he w happy that his brother has

Representing setbacks as victories is a Stalinist speciality. Remember the Second World War? Then there was Gardner's, an engineering factory in Manchester where Broad Left officials called the acceptance of hundreds of voluntary redundancies 'a victory' – because it was an alternative to compulsory sackings.

Now we have the engineering union elections. Ken Brett's victory pint celebrates his narrow victory over right-wing Gavin Laird (55 143 votes to 54 708) in the first round of the elections for a replacement for John Boyd who retires next year. But Laird remains favourite to pick up most of the votes of runner-up Gerry Russell (21 805) in the second ballot, and take the presidential chair.

But the result that provoked most comment was the crushing defeat of Communist Party member and victimised BL convenor Derek Robinson by right-wing Denis Duffy for the post of West Midlands divisional organiser. Robinson presumably didn't feel like joining the *Morning Star*'s photographer for a pint. Indeed, he was so disgruntled that he barred the paper's reporter from a press conference where he made allegations of electoral irregularities. In reply the *Morning Star* printed a series of statements by bureaucrats defending the AUEW's election procedures (19 November).

There was, however, one important advance for the left in the AUEW. Alex Laurence, a militant in the engineering union and a member of Canterbury Trades Council, whose platform reflected the politics of *the next step* won 8750 votes in the presidential election. But Alex didn't get invited to Brett's victory celebrations either.



VICTORY PINT: Broad left candidate Ken Brett (left) celebrates his vote in the AUEW elections with assistant general secretary Bob Wright in London yesterday.

The Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign in action

Fighting British Terror

The IRA's London bombing campaign has provoked anti-Irish hysteria and a wave of arrests under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The Smash the PTA Campaign has been busy organising pickets, meetings and street protests to demonstrate solidarity with the Irish liberation struggle and to give support to victims of police harassment in Britain.

We have had to contend, not only with the hostility of the media and the state, but also with the prejudices of the British labour movement. From the right the TUC has launched a new witch-hunt against the growing body of support for the Smash the PTA Campaign in the trades councils. And from the left we have had to combat the so-called socialist organisations that add their condemnations of the IRA and its tactics to the torrent of abuse from bourgeois commentators.

Bombs: where we stand

A WIDE RANGE of arguments has been used by left groups to condemn the IRA's actions in Britain. Some say that the IRA should restrict its activities to Ireland; others that the IRA should only attack military targets. Some have denounced the bombings as the deeds of individual terrorists while still others have condemned the use of bombs outright. All the IRA's critics agree that bombings make the building of an anti-imperialist movement in Britain more difficult.

Irish freedom and British workers

Let's take the last argument first. It is true that the IRA's military campaign in Britain provokes state repression. The state uses the bombings to whip up patriotic anti-Irish sentiment. This response from the ruling class is predictable. So what follows? Are we to tell the Irish liberation movement to restrict itself to actions which will not provoke the wrath of the ruling class? In effect that is what the left is saying. Condemning the bombings means condemning the fight against oppression on the grounds that it makes life more difficult.

Building an Irish solidarity movement in Britain is the responsibility of British anti-imperialists. IRA bombs don't make this struggle any less or more difficult. On the contrary it is the British left's inactivity on the Irish War over the past decade that ensures that any IRA initiative is greeted with hostility by the labour movement. The blame for this working class reaction to the IRA's military campaign lies with the British left – not the Irish liberation movement.

The bombing campaign has brought out the shallow character of anti-imperialism on the British left. British socialists' support for the Irish liberation struggle is hedged around with so many qualifications that when the bombs go off, support turns into condemnation.

That revolutionaries in an imperialist country have a duty to support the struggle of the oppressed no matter what form that struggle takes is one of the oldest traditions of the Marxist movement. Lenin put it very clearly: 'national self-determination is the same as the struggle for complete national liberation, for complete independence, against annexation, and socialists *cannot* – without ceasing to be socialists – reject *such* a struggle in whatever form, right down to an uprising or war'. Those who today criticise the IRA's military action are in effect denying the right of the Irish people to fight for 'complete national liberation'.

Playing Bolsheviks

The radical left tries to cover its tracks by denying that the IRA is a legitimate liberation movement. Once IRA volunteers are labelled 'individual terrorists', then it becomes justifiable to condemn their activities. The November issue of the SWP's journal *Socialist Review* contains an elaborate apology for this point of view. But erudite quotations from Trotsky's writings on a totally different subject cannot hide one simple fact. The military struggle waged by the IRA is not made up of acts of isolated terrorism. Even the British state has failed to sustain this lie. The election victory of Bobby Sands in Fermanagh/South Tyrone in April showed the mass support enjoyed by the IRA. The radical left's ramblings about individual terrorism only show how much they accept the British propaganda machine's lie that the republican movement is just a 'handful of criminals'.

The term 'individual terrorism' makes no sense in the context of the Irish War. It is true that individuals carry out acts of violence against British imperialism. But as Trotsky noted 'under conditions of civil war, the assassination of individual oppressors ceases to be an act of individual terror'. Only the most cynical opportunist can confuse the war of liberation led by the IRA with the individual terrorism of, for example, the student who recently tried to kill President Reagan.

Undemocratic bombs

Recently the SWP has discovered a new and ingenious excuse for denouncing the IRA's bombing campaign. According to *Socialist Worker* 'there IS a contradiction: not between bombing-in-London and 'politics' but between the bombing tactic anywhere and socialist politics' (7 November). This theoretical breakthrough is based on the insight that bombing campaigns are undemocratic:

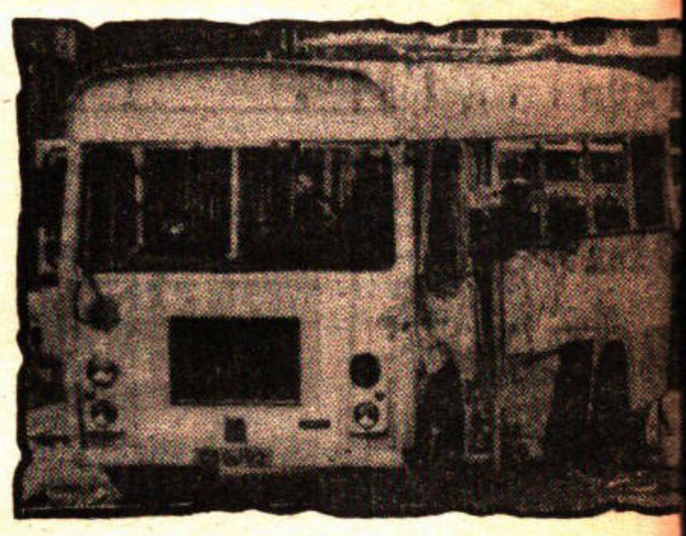
'You cannot have a show of hands at a branch meeting whether to blast Chelsea Barracks next week. . . .

'If it is true – and it is – that internal democracy is necessary for the development of socialist politics, you cannot bomb AND develop socialist politics simultaneously.'

According to this authoritative analysis socialists can only pursue actions which can be decided by a straw poll.

The logic of *Socialist Worker*'s statement is that the working class can never involve itself in class violence. When workers beat up a scab or destroy the property of a recalcitrant employer it is done very 'undemocratically'. Mass factory meetings seldom vote on whether or not to throw a brick through the window of a lorry delivering supplies to a blacked firm. Moreover, if the Russian working class had followed the advice of *Socialist Worker* it would never have made a revolution. The military wing of the Bolshevik Party acted undemocratically for the simple reason that in the middle of a war you can't have elections about when to fight and how.

Trotsky, the leader of the Red Army, fought a ruthless battle against those simpletons who tried to elevate democratic principles above the necessity for an efficient military force. He asserted



Police rampage

ON SUNDAY 1 November we received a phone call from the relative of yet another victim of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. 'Can you help?', he asked. His story was yet another example of police harassment experienced by the Irish community in Britain.

On the previous Saturday night his two sisters, Patricia and Geraldine Garvey had been arrested for being 'drunk and disorderly' in North London. At Hornsey Police Station the vigilant desk sergeant took one look at his identikit 'terrorist alert' picture of the 'blonde bomber', caught the girls' Irish accents and concluded that there must be an 'IRA connection' somewhere. Promptly, they were transferred to Highgate Station and interrogated by the 'anti-terrorist squad'. On the following day they were transferred to the special PTA interrogation unit at Paddington Green where further questioning took place. They were finally released on Monday afternoon.

Patricia and Geraldine were imprisoned for 60 hours – their only crime was their Irish origin. But their arrest was no arbitrary mistake by an inexperienced bobby. The function of the PTA is to terrorise the Irish community and to prevent the growth of public support for the Irish liberation movement. The thousands of people arrested under the PTA are the victims of the war waged by British imperialism on the home front.

No sooner had the Smash the PTA Campaign organised a picket to protest and publicise Patricia and Geraldine Garvey's imprisonment when the anti-terrorist squad struck again. At dawn on Tuesday 3 November a housing co-op in Wood Green was raided. Eleven people were dragged from their beds and arrested. Simultaneously the police raided the home of Frank Murphy, a well-known supporter of the Irish Republican Socialist Party and detained him and his brother. Among those arrested were students from the Polytechnic of Central London and Middlesex Polytechnic and a delegate to Brent Trades Council.

The protest pickets organised on behalf of the Garvey sisters were extended to take up the case of the 13 arrested on 2 November. The nightly pickets were well attended with supporters of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, Troops Out Movement and Armagh Women's Co-ordinating Committee in regular attendance.

We pressed on with the publicity campaign and organised a Press Conference with the IRSP on Tuesday 3 November. The Press Conference itself revealed the attitude of the media. It was the *smallest* press conference ever organised by the Smash the PTA Campaign – only *The News Line* bothered to publicise the case of the Garvey sisters. When Campaign organiser Annie Dillon phoned a usually sympathetic press contact to find out why they ignored all the press releases about the arrests, she was told: 'You're wasting your time – my editor simply does not want to know'.

Over the next week the 13 prisoners were gradually released: seven were held for the full seven days. The police did not charge any of them with any offence under the PTA, nor did they even go through the pretence of inventing other charges such as causing a public nuisance or insulting behaviour. For the police this operation was over. They made their point – activists supporting the Irish liberation movement had better watch out!

The fightback

During the second week of November the Smash the PTA Campaign groups decided to step up its street presence through mobilising for a torchlit march through North London against the PTA on 27 November. Meetings around the arrests and the PTA were held in Deptford, Brixton, Battersea, Ladbroke Grove, Camden, Archway, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Hackney. Most importantly the protest campaign has involved new supporters of the cause of Irish freedom.

But the fightback has just begun. On 16 November the combined forces of Scotland Yard and the Metropolitan and



categorically that 'there was and could be no question of controlling troops by means of elected committees' (*The military writings and speeches of Leon Trotsky*, Vol 1, 1918).

The SWP's latest objections to the IRA are significant because they clearly express a *renunciation* of class violence. The IRA's 'rigid discipline' and 'closed structure' which the SWP finds so objectionable are the same organisational principles the proletariat also needs to adopt in the process of establishing its class power. *Socialist Worker* reveals a petit-bourgeois fear of class terror. While the ruling class never hesitates to use terror when its interests demand it, the SWP puts its faith in elections. We'll let Trotsky, the 'individual terrorist' who led the Red Army to victory, have the last say:

'Only sentimental fools can suppose that the proletariat of the capitalist countries is in danger of exaggerating the role of revolutionary violence and showing excessive admiration for the methods of revolutionary terrorism. On the contrary, what the proletariat lacks is, precisely, understanding of the liberatory role of revolutionary violence.' (*Military writings*)



Thames Valley police launched what they called 'the biggest operation mounted by police' to hunt down the 'IRA bomb cell'. This new offensive will no doubt lead to more harassment of Irish activists and help create a climate of tension and fear.

Keith Tompson, national organiser of Smash the PTA Campaign warned: **'We cannot be complacent. The war is not only fought in the streets of Derry and Belfast. To win the hearts and the minds of the British people the ruling class has to fight a war at home. The thousands of 'Terrorist Alert' posters distributed throughout England and other propaganda operations are all designed to promote the maximum unity behind the state and the maximum hatred for the Irish liberation movement. And the ruling class does not only pursue a propaganda war, it also has the PTA to terrorise the Irish community and solidarity movement in Britain. The job of the campaign is to break down the wall of silence built around the victims of the PTA. To do this we have to extend the campaign in the trade unions and win working class support for the anti-imperialist movement'.**

TUC tyranny

WHILE THE FORCES of law and order pursue the state's enemies on the streets, the TUC polices the labour movement. This was the theme of the October meeting of the TUC's Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee at Congress House. The labour bureaucracy is determined to destroy anti-imperialist sentiment in the working class: it is always vigilant and decisive in its dealings with supporters of Irish freedom. Throughout the past year the Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee has regularly discussed the Smash the PTA Campaign's activities and has taken ruthless measures to destroy the campaign's influence in the labour movement.

Earlier this year the TUC instructed all Trades Councils that they should have nothing to do with the Smash the PTA Campaign's labour movement conference 'TUC Hands off Ireland'. This was no mere fraternal advice, the TUC edict declared: 'The General Council considered that no Trades Council could associate itself with the conference and continue to be recognised as a local body of the TUC'. Despite this ban on the Coventry conference, several Trades Councils defied the TUC's instructions.

Despite the TUC's witch-hunt, the Smash the PTA Campaign's activity in the trade unions has gained momentum. The September march from Manchester to the TUC Congress in Blackpool – the 'Workers' March for Irish Freedom' – gained considerable working class support. It was the success of this march which provoked the TUC to step up its attack. The document (TCJCC 1/3) of the TUC's Trades Councils sub-committee on 12 October was ostensibly about the 'unauthorised use by a delegate or officer of a Trades Council of the name of the Trades Council'. But as the minutes of the meeting make clear the aim of the document was more specific:

'The document stated that problems had recently arisen with material issued by the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign which listed names of supporters described as delegates or officers of particular Trades Councils. More recent material had stated that those listed were doing so 'in a personal capacity'. When informed of this, the Trades Councils concerned have repudiated most strongly the actions of the individual delegates and have made it absolutely clear that the Councils do not support in any way the aims, objects or methods of the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign.'

To prevent any more Trades Council delegates from backing action in support of the Irish struggle the TUC proposed that a new rule be adopted by Trades Councils whereby any delegate who uses the name of a Trades Council without permission will be *excluded*. The proposal was enthusiastically accepted and a document outlining the new rule was circulated to all Trades Councils.

The aim of 'Rule X', as it has been dubbed by the TUC, is clear. In the past the TUC has banned Trades Councils from supporting Smash the PTA Campaign initiatives. Tameside Trades Council was expelled from the TUC for this offence. But while the TUC could force Trades Councils, by threatening disaffiliation, to fall in line, it couldn't make individual Trades Council members buckle under. Indeed, support for the Smash the PTA Campaign has continued to grow. 'Rule X' is designed *to silence individuals* who support the Smash the PTA Campaign.

However, the TUC's assertion of bureaucratic control goes beyond the Smash the PTA Campaign. If the new rule is accepted, then the TUC will have an important weapon for silencing anybody who opposes TUC policy on any issue. In future individual trade unionists will have to have the TUC's blessing before they can take a public stand about anything.

Change TUC Irish policy!

The latest TUC manoeuvre against the Smash the PTA Campaign shows just how important the Irish question is for the British working class. The TUC has very good reasons for fearing the growth of an anti-imperialist movement in the working class. Workers who support the Irish liberation movement express their class interest in the most resolute way possible. Through their actions they show that they identify with the Irish people and oppose the state of the British ruling class. Workers who oppose the British state in Ireland will not tolerate the TUC's policy of collaboration with the ruling class in Britain. The growth of the anti-imperialist movement means the erosion of the TUC's political influence over the working class. That's why the TUC fights side by side with the British state against the enemies of imperialism.

The most important initiative of the Smash the PTA Campaign is its drive to change the TUC's policy on Ireland. The importance of this campaign cannot be overestimated. The future of the anti-imperialist movement depends on the support of the working class. By carrying the struggle against imperialism into the heart of the labour movement, the Smash the PTA Campaign provides a focus for the emergence of a pro-Irish sentiment. This campaign does not only strengthen the anti-imperialist movement – it also exposes the TUC bureaucrats as agents of the state and enemies of the rank and file.

Smash the PTA Campaign News

Manchester Martyrs

After a series of public meetings in Lancashire, Smash the PTA Campaign activists organised a torchlit procession to commemorate the Irish republicans hanged in 1867. The march declared its support for the continuing liberation struggle today and its solidarity with the prisoners in the H-Blocks and Armagh. Despite attempts by the police to prevent the demonstration, it went ahead.

Coventry cops

The 28 November rally against the PTA in Coventry was a culmination of a series of activites organised by Smash the PTA Campaign supporters throughout the West Midlands. The Coventry Smash the PTA Campaign group got to know first hand just what the PTA is in November when one of its supporters was arrested. He was threatened with a PTA charge at first, but after 40 hours incarceration the charge was changed to 'insulting behaviour'.

Street rallies in all the major centres in the region have attracted considerable local interest in the Irish War. A week of action on Ireland organised at Warwick University from 2-6 November made a big impact on the campus. Smash the PTA Campaign supporters are now busy in the Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee mobilising for the march being held in Coventry on 31 January This demonstration called by Provisional Sinn Fein provides an important focus for building the solidarity movement in the area.

Students for Irish freedom

Supporters of the Smash the PTA Campaign at Manchester University and Portsmouth Polytechnic have already passed resolutions for this year's National Union of Students conference declaring support for the liberation struggle and total opposition to British strategy – including the PTA. Supporters at other colleges up and down the country will be co-ordinating their activities towards the goal of overturning the NUS' reactionary 'Peace, jobs and progress' policy which backs Britain – but pleads with imperialism to be less brutal.

During the past two months Smash the PTA Campaign activities have extended to Yorkshire. The first major initiative in the area is a labour movement conference focused on support for the Irish struggle and opposition to the PTA. The conference in Leeds on 5 December will be addressed by northern trade union activists, speakers from Ireland and representatives of the Smash the PTA Campaign. The conference aims to boost anti-imperialist action in the Midlands and the North. Be there!

Saturday 5 December 1981
10.00am–6pm
Belle Vue Community Centre
Belle Vue Road, Leeds

LEEDS CONFERENCE

10am	Registration
10.30–12.30	'Stop the arrests! Smash the PTA!
12.30–13.30	Lunch
13.30–14.00	Slide show – 'Workers March for Irish Freedom'
14.00–15.30	WORKSHOPS
	(a) Eyewitness report from Derry and Belfast
	(b) 'Students and the Irish War'
	(c) 'The fight in the unions'
15.45–17.30	British strategy in Ireland
19.00	SOCIAL with Irish music and play

Registration: £2 (£1.25 unemployed). Make cheques/postal orders payable to RCT Association and send to Box LAP RCP, 59 Cookridge Street, Leeds LS2 3AW. For further information phone 01-274 3951.



Solving the Irish question?

The new Anglo-Irish Council is a convenient distraction from the harsh reality that Britain has no alternative but to continue Direct Rule in the Six Counties. Only the British labour movement can break the stalemate.

FOR THE PAST year the British establishment has tempered its hard line on the hunger strikers and 'the terrorists' with statements of determination to press ahead on the quest for a 'political solution' to the Irish problem. The Anglo-Irish Council agreed between Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald on 6 November is the latest attempt to create some diplomatic legitimacy for the continuing British occupation of Ireland.

Thatcher and FitzGerald agreed:

- to set up an Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council to involve ministers and civil servants from the two governments
- to leave it up to the Parliaments to decide on a future Parliamentary level of the Council to include representations from the Six Counties as well as from Britain and the Republic
- to set up an advisory committee on economic, social and cultural cooperation
- to supply natural gas from the south to the north, to restore the north-south electricity link and to consider the feasibility of an electricity link across the Irish Sea
- to the joint consideration by the British and Irish Attorneys General of closer legal cooperation against terrorism.

The end of 'Ulsterisation'

The British ruling class claimed a victory over the hunger strikers at the beginning of October. At the cost of ten dead in Long Kesh and many more killed and injured on the streets, the Government had weathered the H-Block storm without conceding political status. But there was little sense of exultation and no celebration in London. Britain had won – but it had taken a hammering in the newspapers of the world. British policy was criticised by some of its closest allies and the royal family was mobbed by anti-H-Block protestors from Sydney to San Francisco. And, as the dollars poured in to bolster the military activities of the IRA, a new generation of young people volunteered its services to the republican cause.

From the point of view of the British Government, the most serious consequence of Thatcher's intransigent stand was its success in achieving the total alienation of the national population of the Six Counties from British rule. For five years the object of British strategy had been to isolate the republicans, brand them as 'criminals' and 'terrorists' and deprive them of popular support. Once this had been achieved, strategic thinking went, the British troops could be replaced by 'Ulster' policemen and 'the province' restored to 'normality'. The need for continued intense repression to maintain British rule meant that there was never much hope for 'Ulsterisation'; Britain's response to the hunger strike dealt it the death blow. The mobilisation of virtually the entire national population behind the hunger strikers – the massive funeral marches and the two bye-election victories in Fermanagh/South Tyrone – forced Britain to re-think its Irish strategy.

New Tory Northern Ireland Secretary James Prior floated the notion of a new 'power-sharing' assembly in the Six Counties at the Conservative Party conference in October. But the hunger strike has removed whatever middle ground existed between the Loyalist and the nationalist communities: if Humphrey Atkins could make no progress down this road 18 months ago, Prior's prospects after the polarisation resulting from the H-Block protests this summer seemed bleak. Prior soon realised 'power-sharing' was a dead duck. He quietly dropped the scheme he outlined at Blackpool within a fortnight.

The ten dead hunger strikers, the rising toll of children killed by British plastic bullets and the mounting numbers of soldiers and policemen shot and blown up – all this reduced the diplomatic elbow room in the Six Counties. British strategists shifted their attention to the wider Anglo-Irish sphere and the studies initiated by the Thatcher-Haughey talks in Dublin in December 1980. Prior needed to show people in Ireland, in Britain and abroad that the British Government was looking for some political solution. Meanwhile in Dublin, FitzGerald played his gambit for a stake in the new British initiative – the 'crusade' to reform the constitution of the Irish Republic.

The constitutional charade

There are two controversial elements in the constitution which the Republic's founding father Eamon DeValera drew up in 1937. First, it acknowledges the unfinished character of the Irish national revolution by laying claim to the jurisdiction of the Dublin government over not only the 26 'Free State' counties, but over the whole 32 counties of Ireland. Second, while the formal recognition of the special status of the Catholic Church was dropped in 1972, its influence is still evident in those clauses of the constitution referring to questions of morality: the proscription of divorce is the most unpopular at present in Ireland. Late in September, with the hunger strike virtually over and the talks with Thatcher a few weeks ahead, FitzGerald announced his determination to reform these two features of the constitution.

FitzGerald's rationale for his constitutional reform campaign is that the removal of those clauses which are objectionable to northern Protestants – because they deny the legitimacy of the Six Counties or bend the knee towards Rome – will induce the Loyalists to acquiesce to Irish unity. This is spurious. The Ulster Protestants' opposition to the re-unification of Ireland has nothing to do with the 'sectarian' character of the Republic's constitution. Loyalists are loyal to Britain: they are implacably hostile to Irish unity because it means breaking the British connection that guarantees them privileged access to jobs, housing and other amenities within the United Kingdom. As Ian Paisley commented, he would not accept a united Ireland even if he was invited to write the constitution. The fact that the repression of women and gays is every bit as severe in the Six Counties as in the Twenty-six (abortion and homosexuality are illegal on both sides of the border) and that the Protestant churches in the north promulgate similar backward attitudes on these issues to those preached from Catholic pulpits in the south simply underlines the irrelevance of religion to the constitution controversy.

The driving force behind FitzGerald's crusade is the economic and political crisis threatening his Dublin regime. The worst effects of the world recession have up to now been staved off by massive state expenditure at the cost of steadily rising indebtedness: the exchequer borrowing requirement currently stands at 16½ per cent of GNP. FitzGerald faces a new year in which he will be forced to cut government spending and raise taxes in his first major budget – and watch industries collapse and unemployment soar as the crisis bites. Riots shook Dublin this summer following the deaths of the hunger strikers. They showed the explosive potential of the combination of the continuing war in the north and the deepening crisis in the south. It is a spectre that haunts the Dublin Government.

FitzGerald's campaign to reform the constitution is an attempt to stabilise his own regime. He quotes republicans from the eighteenth (Wolfe Tone) and nineteenth (Thomas Davis) centuries to validate his dubious nationalist credentials. And he has included the popular issue of divorce reform to strengthen his position. As the Church is now more willing than the state to accept the dissolution of marriages, the divorces of a large number of Irish people remain unrecognised in civil law. The result is 50 000 technically illegitimate children. Not only do many Irish people want the constitutional position changed – even the Catholic Church is not opposed to divorce reform. In addition, constitutional reform is dear to the hearts of the handful of 'independent socialist' members of the Dail on whom FitzGerald's precarious majority depends. By claiming the credit for FitzGerald's crusade, decayed Stalinists like Jim Kemmy and Joe Sherlock hope to recover some votes in the next general election, despite their unmitigated pro-imperialist and anti-working class records.

The main target of FitzGerald's crusade is neither northern Protestants nor southern Catholics, but British politicians. The Taoiseach seeks to induce the British Government to give the highest possible status to the Anglo-Irish Council. He wants to use his Government's willingness to drop those features of the Irish constitution that are objectionable to Unionist politicians as a bargaining counter with the British. In return he expects Thatcher and Prior to press the Unionists to cooperate. This achieved, he could present the



Council as a major step towards Irish unity – involving representatives from the north and south, as well as from Britain and Ireland – and proceed to vanquish Charles Haughey's Fianna Fail, the traditional party of a united Ireland, in a general election. While it is difficult to be optimistic about FitzGerald's prospects, it is not hard to see why the momentum for the Anglo-Irish Council comes largely from Dublin. However, Britain has to look at the Council in the broader context of the Irish War.

The state of the War

Britain's first consideration is the state of the enemy. The defeat of the hunger strike has inevitably had a dampening effect on the national population in the Six Counties. The focus of the H-Block protest since 1976 itself reflects the difficulty of sustaining the military offensive against the British forces in the tremendously difficult circumstances that prevail in the occupied area. Despite the mass resentment engendered by Britain's barbaric treatment of the prisoners and the growth in financial support and recruits for the republican movement, its military capacity against the overwhelming might of British imperialism is likely to remain limited. However, the bombing campaign in Britain and the sustained attack on military and paramilitary personnel in the Six Counties show that the War goes on. As long as it continues, Britain's top priority will remain repression. Thus, Thatcher's main concerns in her recent talks with FitzGerald were cross-border 'security' and arrangements for the extradition of 'terrorists' from the Republic to the United Kingdom. The Taoiseach, of course, is enthusiastic to cooperate.

Britain also has to look to its allies – the Loyalists. The Protestant community in the Six Counties is less concerned about diplomacy than it is with the suppression of the Catholics. And, although there is uneasiness about the regular shootings of RUC and UDR paramilitaries, most Loyalists were reassured by Britain's ruthless stand through the hunger strikes and its continuing commitment to coercion in the nationalist ghettos. While the absence of any devolved government in the Six Counties deprives Unionist politicians of any real status and ensures incessant factional strife among them, most Loyalists are happy with Direct Rule from Westminster. The rapid rise in unemployment among Protestant workers over the past year has in no way diminished their commitment to the United Kingdom and their support for traditional Unionist politicians. The Loyalists simply want to maintain the British link and help crush the national struggle. As this is exactly what the British Government wants, why should it want to coerce them towards Irish unity?

The Anglo-Irish Council gives the existing relationship between British and Irish ministers and civil servants a more formal status. Any attempt to include Parliamentary representation from Britain and both sides of the Irish border has been postponed to the indefinite future. The problem is getting representation from the immediate war zone. Although the end of the hunger strike creates some scope for the revival of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, its only elected representative at present is Party leader John Hume, a Euro MP. The only Westminster MPs who represent the nationalist community are the discredited Gerry Fitt and the abstentionist Owen Carron. For Loyalist leaders like James Molyneux and Ian Paisley there is nothing to be gained from participation in the Anglo-Irish Council. The possible gains from economic cooperation are far outweighed by the political risks involved in appearing to compromise the Union.

Meanwhile in Britain

The British media has been full of speculation and discussion of a wide range of possible solutions to the Irish question. Unification and withdrawal, independent Ulster, confederation and condominium, re-Partition – all have their protagonists at some point in the spectrum of British politics between the Labour left and the Tory right. But as Tory MP and percipient commentator on Irish affairs John Biggs-Davison says: 'Direct Rule is regarded as fair and as everyone's second choice' (*The Times*, 4 November). Indeed, 'everyone' would like to see a better political solution, but the great debate and all the diplomatic manoeuvring simply confirm that there is no alternative but 'everyone's second choice' – Direct Rule.

Those who think that Britain could possibly abandon Direct Rule simply do not understand why Britain is fighting a war in Ireland. The War has raged for more than 12 years at enormous cost in terms of money, soldiers' lives and international prestige. Yet while numerous different options have been aired in Britain, the British government has never shifted a fraction from its determination to stay in Ireland and fight to the finish. The Irish War is a threat to the integrity of the United Kingdom on which the stability of the capitalist order in both Ireland and Britain depends. Direct Rule is the second choice of everyone who would like imperialist oppression to be enforced less brutally; it is the inescapable first choice of those who have the responsibility of pursuing the vital interests of the British ruling class in Ireland. They know there is no other way of containing the national struggle and preventing the upsurge of civil strife in Britain that would inevitably accompany the eruption of the anti-imperialist movement in Ireland.

The Daily Telegraph's veteran correspondent T E Utley dismissed all talk of new political initiatives and gave the new Northern Ireland Secretary some sound bourgeois advice:

'The moral of all this for Mr Prior and his colleagues is that Ulster is not a place in which it is wise to be clever. Honour will be won there by statesmen who, like Mr Mason, have the courage to be steadfast, direct and dull.' (6 November)

How the true Unionists long to bring back the golden age of Butcher Mason, Labour's special contribution to Ireland! Dull he was, but he knew what was best for Britain – Direct Rule in Ireland. Prior can use the space opened up by the defeat of the hunger strike to make some show of British concern for political progress in Ireland. But he is not likely to ignore the imperatives dictated by Britain's need to win the Irish War. And as always when the interests of British imperialism are at stake, Prior can rely on Mason's Party to back him all the way.

Condemnation not enough

The IRA bombing campaign in Britain has brought into the open the continuing bipartisan approach of the Labour Party with the Tories in the Irish War. The consensus is so wide that it unites the Labour Party from left to right. The furore over Ken Livingstone's remarks on the IRA bombers soon made clear the Labour lefts' pusillanimous position.

Livingstone provoked an unjustified attack from the red-baiting press with his initial statement that IRA bombers were 'not just criminals'. He soon clarified his position by indicating his condemnation for the violence of the republican movement. He justified his earlier statement on the grounds that he felt it important to urge the necessity for a political approach to crushing the IRA, if this was to be done effectively. As the bombs continued he confined himself to condemnations. His comment that 'no one has ever been able to bully Londoners with bombs' after the Wimpy bar explosion in Oxford Street gave British chauvinism a special cockney twist (*The Standard*, 27 October).

Once Livingstone had been publicly brought to heel, the way was clear for London's evening *Standard*, usually Livingstone's most vitriolic critic, to take up his broader political approach. Livingstone's condemnations of the IRA were now reported approvingly, while the editorial cautioned that 'it is simply not enough to condemn the IRA'. It called for moves towards a political solution along the lines of the Anglo-Irish Council 'to prevent it [the bombing] happening again' (27 October). However, the basis for this reconciliation between 'Red Ken' and the true-blue *Standard* had already been laid at the Labour Party Conference.

The key themes at Labour's Irish debate in Brighton back in October were the same ones that ran through *The Standard*'s editorial: condemnation of 'terrorism' and calls for a progressive British solution. Labour's strategists did not anticipate the Anglo-Irish Council – but their schemes for a future Labour government to impose new political initiatives and the alternative economic strategy in Ireland are entirely compatible with Prior's proposals. The left naively thought that the Conference's endorsement of Irish unity in the future was a major break with bipartisanship. Prior was much more impressed with the Party's commitment to Direct Rule in the present. He found the Conference 'very constructive'.

The Labour Party has been dazzled by the FitzGerald-Prior-Thatcher diplomacy. While Prior welcomed FitzGerald's constitutional crusade, Michael Foot confessed he was 'very greatly encouraged' by the Taoiseach's proposals, and even claimed the credit for his Party's influence in Ireland (*Sunday Press*, 11 October). The left had nothing to say about the Anglo-Irish Council: it has long called for an imaginative British initiative – now it's got one.

Time for action

While the continuation of the War in the Six Counties restricts the scope of the Anglo-Irish Council, the supine posture of the British labour movement gives Prior considerable room to manoeuvre in terms of restoring the British image at home and abroad after the battering it has taken in recent months. Our job is to close this space and weaken the popular support for British imperialism in Britain.

There are three broad lines along which the anti-imperialist movement in Britain must advance in the next few months. We must:

- expose the Anglo-Irish Council as a face-saver for the continuation of the British occupation and all the brutalities that accompany it
- expose the bipartisan policy that unites the official labour movement from left to right behind the Tories and the interests of British imperialism
- mobilise active support for the Irish liberation struggle and active resistance to all British plans for Ireland.

The end of the hunger strike was a blow to the national liberation struggle in Ireland, a blow that has been followed up with renewed military repression. At this level the conflict has reached a stalemate. The British labour movement is the only social force in Britain that can resolve this stalemate in a progressive direction. If Prior's plans were undone through the pressure of an anti-imperialist movement in Britain there would be renewed scope for the national struggle in Ireland. Britain's difficulty could once again be Ireland's opportunity. The conference 'Ireland – time for British workers to act' aims to rally resistance to British strategy and hasten the defeat of British imperialism.

Mick Kennedy

Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign

National labour movement conference

Ireland ~time for British workers to act

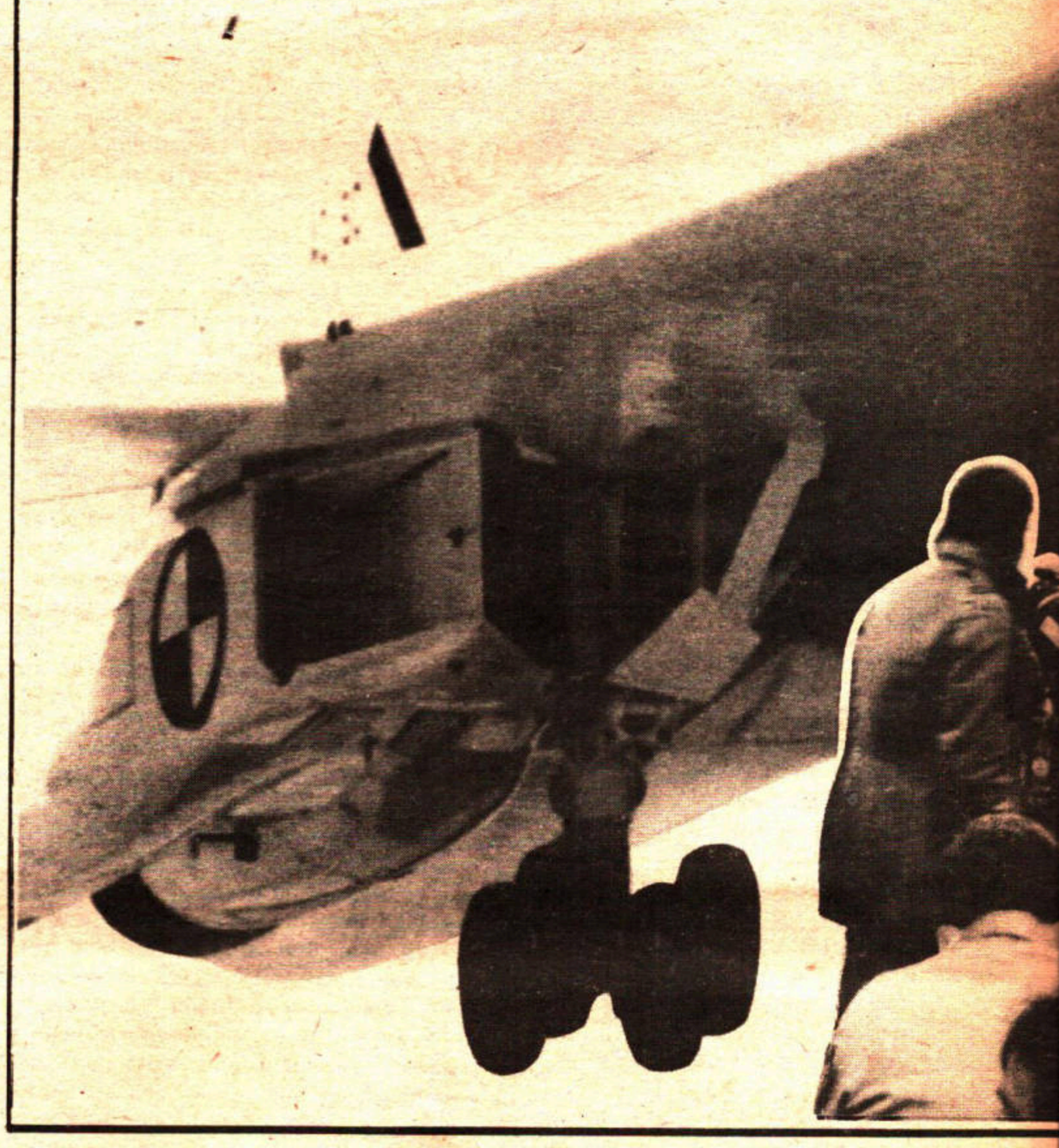


Saturday 6 February 1982

Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19. 10am–5pm. EVENING: Concert for Irish Freedom. ● Get delegated now! Write to SPTAC, BM RCT, London WC1N 3XX, or phone Keith Tompson on 01-274 3951 for details.

America's divisions, Germany's protestors

Germany's Helmut Schmidt and other European leaders have breathed a sigh of relief at Reagan's new 'zero option' proposals on arms reduction. This move allays their growing anxieties that NATO is beginning to break up. At the same time Schmidt can take comfort from the chauvinist direction of the anti-war movement in Germany. In this special feature on 'war and peace', James Wood looks at NATO and Sabena Norton examines the German anti-war movement.



REAGAN WAS ELECTED in the wake of the US hostage crisis in Iran. More than Russia's invasion of Afghanistan, this made the USA look small. Reagan decided to make it look mighty once more. The USA, he announced, would only press for disarmament once it had got itself into a position of strength.

Reagan's 'two-track' theory turned out to be one-track in practice. On a slow rise since 1976, US arms spending is now set to double to $367 billion by 1986. Merely the statistics unnerve Europe, for the USA's combination of big defence budgets with tight money means high interest rates, which is bad for business everywhere; but what has really worried the USA's NATO partners – and particularly West Germany – is that America's arms drive is being accompanied by a series of major diplomatic gaffes. First, in February Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger upset Bonn by talking about reviving the neutron bomb. Then, in mid-October, Reagan made a gobbledegook speech that could only be interpreted as meaning that he thought America could get away unscathed from a nuclear war in Europe. Finally, later that month, Secretary of State Alexander Haig let it slip that the USA might explode a 'warning shot' nuclear device over Russia if a conventionally-fought war got out of hand; and then his statement was flatly denied the next day by Weinberger. To understand the impact of these statements we have to look at America and Europe in NATO.

What a half-life!

Set up in 1949, NATO was and remains an American weapon. The USA uses it not only to threaten Russia, but also to institutionalise its economic, political and military leadership of the West. It's a way of making sure that lesser imperialist powers – West Germany, Britain and France – unite behind Washington in the anti-communist cause.

Even back in the late 'fifties, however, when Europe was still going cap-in-hand to the USA, NATO was not entirely united. Europe didn't mind the USA's 'trip wire' line, which meant that a conventional Russian incursion would provoke nuclear retaliation by America at the strategic level; but as the Warsaw Pact acquired more nuclear weapons and America, in reply, started planting tactical nuclear delivery systems on European soil, Europe began to nurse two private anxieties. First, who was to control the Europe-based missiles? Second, wasn't there a chance that America might 'decouple' from its European allies and let them fight a nuclear war on their own rather than risk annihilation on their behalf?

In the 'sixties Europe regained its self-respect. European-based tactical/theatre weapons also grew in importance, as Western strategy moved away from the 'balance of terror' to 'flexible response' (ie the doctrine that small Russian nuclear attacks should be replied to in kind rather than by all-out devastation). The stage was set for transatlantic differences to come out into the open. They didn't, for round the end of the decade the geopolitical scene took a turn for the better: Russia's new-found parity with the USA in strategic weapons led to the signing of SALT 1, America wound down its commitments in Vietnam and West Germany's *Ostpolitik* went into full swing. But once this interlude was over the underlying conflicts emerged.

By the late 'seventies the world recession was making every NATO member look out for itself a lot more than in the past. Moreover West Germany was now strong enough to express forcefully its fears about American 'decoupling'. The historic December 1979 decision to place 464 Tomahawk ground-based cruise and 108 Pershing 2 missiles in Europe was a reflection of this. It wasn't simply an American attempt to scare the Warsaw Pact powers by installing, for the first time, *long-range* nuclear weapons near their borders. It was an attempt by the USA to convince its allies that Russia's 250 modern three-headed SS20 missiles were a qualitatively new threat (which they were not) and thus worth staying in NATO for; and it was an attempt to assuage, by hardware, fresh European apprehensions that the USA might cut loose from its allies in the event of a nuclear conflagration in Europe.

What Reagan is up to with his 'zero option' is entirely of a piece with this. He wants Brezhnev to climb down on his SS20s, alright; but he also wants European leaders to take NATO seriously and dismiss the idea of the USA standing idly by should Russia launch a strike on their countries.

Reagan, however, faces an uphill struggle. He wants his NATO allies to raise their defence spending by three per cent every year; yet while heavily-armed Britain is prepared to oblige, West Germany won't pay up. True, France is, under Francois Mitterand, due to boost defence spending by 17.8 per cent over the next few years and is also toying with the idea of having its own neutron bomb – but then France has only loose ties with NATO. And all three powers are more or less put out by the fact that Reagan has, in terms of diplomatic arrangements, 'decoupled' next Spring's Strategic Arms Reduction Talks from the Geneva Conference on theatre weapons. Unity against the Russians, they had thought, was indivisible. . . .

Where the splits are

It's not surprising that the NATO powers don't see eye to eye on military matters. They don't see eye to eye on other matters either. In a report titled *Western security: what has changed, what should be done*, published in February, the heads of the top foreign affairs think-tanks in America, Britain, West Germany and France argued that the world economic crisis and relations with the Third World were as big a source of instability to the Alliance as the 'Soviet menace'.

To illustrate some of the problems:

- **America** is in deep recession with a budget deficit of about $100 billion this year. By contrast Japan is predicted to have a current account surplus of $20 billion in 1983
- in the **Middle East** the USA's Camp David peace process is in deep trouble and a source of tension with America's European allies. To show who's boss, the USA has put 4000 Rapid Deployment Force troops into Egypt and sent AWACS to Saudi Arabia
- in the **Far East** the USA is having no luck in getting Japan to police South East Asia
- in **North Africa** the USA has pulled Sudan and Somalia into 'Operation Brightstar' manoeuvres, while France is keeping its hand in Chad
- in **Southern Africa** Europeans want a Zimbabwe solution in Namibia, but the USA wants South Africa to hold the ring
- in **Latin America** Reagan continues to provoke European criticism for backing the regime in El Salvador.

With these kinds of inter-imperialist tensions around, 'whether NATO as we know it will last another decade is not, therefore, the eccentric question it might once have been' ('How Britain could cope without NATO', *The Times*, 30 October). There was confusion among NATO powers over how to handle the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; there remains dissensions over how to help Poland. The USA is not keen on West Germany's gas pipeline deal with Russia; on the other hand Europe is sceptical of Reagan's concept of 'linkage' (ie that disarmament will only be possible if *all* aspects of Soviet behaviour match up to his specifications). Europe blames the US Senate for blocking progress on SALT 2; and then British Defence Secretary John Nott has now got to decide whether to follow the USA and go for Trident 2 submarine-based missiles in the 'nineties, or stay with smaller, less accurate but cheaper Trident 1s. All in all, things are a bit gruelling for the imperialists these days.

Terminal decay

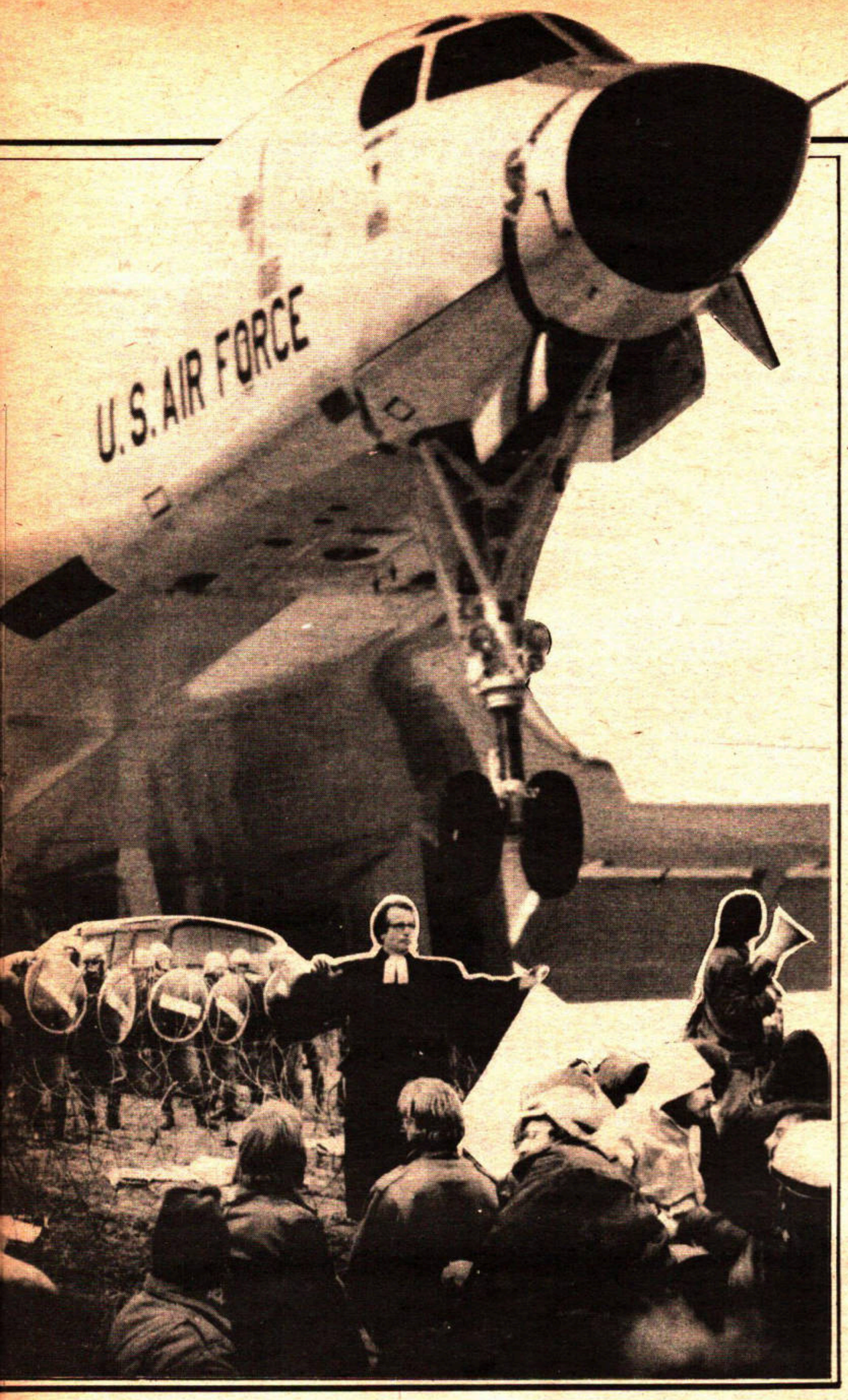
Our attitude to NATO is straightforward. In any conflict between it and the Soviet Union, we defend the Soviet Union. We do so, not because the Soviet Union is a 'workers' state' (it isn't), nor because it has a progressive, planned economy (it doesn't, as Brezhnev stressed in the remarks he made on Soviet agriculture to a recent meeting of the Communist Party Central Committee). We defend the Soviet Union against imperialism because imperialist expansion represents the greatest threat to the interests of the international working class.

We oppose NATO not because it is run by Americans, but because it is a tool of imperialist oppression. We don't care whose finger will be on the launch buttons for cruise and Pershing 2: we oppose them outright. We are against them being sited in Europe, not because we fear that this will incite the Russians to engage in a first strike attack on us, but because we are against them being sited anywhere.

We certainly couldn't care less about America 'decoupling' from Europe: we leave that to Schmidt & Co. But it is interesting to note that the anti-nuke movement's conviction that a 'limited' nuclear (decoupled) war in Europe is an impossibility has recently been seized on by a number of influential bourgeois defence 'experts'. They agree that any deployment of theatre nuclear weapons in Europe will inevitably lead to strategic escalation, and therefore argue that such weapons are redundant. They say that the way to fend off the Russians in Europe is to build up NATO's conventional forces there, even though that would be very expensive; and they go so far as to concede that they'd be much more sympathetic to the anti-nuke movement if it accompanied its opposition to cruise and Pershing 2 with support for this alternative.

The anti-nuke movement could well find itself teaming up with such 'experts' in the future: after all, a few extra tanks on the Rhine is a small price to pay for ridding Greenham Common of cruise (*strategic* nuclear weapons can of course be left to another day). Tony Benn himself already calls for a 'non-nuclear defence strategy'. But all this only reinforces the fact that pacifism always coalesces with the subtlest forms of militarism.

For the rest, the fission of NATO along national lines makes it absolutely vital to combat chauvinism and anti-Americanism. Among the 'experts' there is speculation that Europe might have to 'go it alone' and form its own nuclear umbrella one day. But a European imperialist Treaty Organisation (or, for that matter, an Anglo-American TO) will be no better than a North Atlantic one. Disarm the ruling class with militant internationalism! That is the only way forward.■



VIRTUALLY OVERNIGHT the most diverse political trends have come together under the nuclear disarmament banner. On its extreme fringes there have been ultra-left bomb attacks on US army headquarters and commanders – and fascist rallies demanding the reconstitution of the German Reich.

However it is the moderate centre of German politics that has taken control of the anti-nuke bandwagon with the aim of turning it into a force for conservative nationalism. Sections of the ruling social democratic party (SPD), the trade union bureaucracy, the powerful Protestant and Catholic clergy, as well as farmers, ex-Generals and various professional associations – all joined the recent mass demonstration in Bonn.

The bourgeoisie around the world – especially in the USA – has watched the rise of the German anti-war movement with alarm. West Germany is a bastion of imperialism in Central Europe: its growing neutralist tendencies threaten the whole NATO alliance. The German bourgeoisie is less concerned. A new domestic consensus based on anti-American posturing could strengthen its position with its Western rivals and in dealing with the deepening recession at home. This is the danger of the nuclear disarmament movement for German socialists, who risk seeing their anti-militarism submerged in the fervour of a quasi-religious national revival.

Never again

West German youth have a long anti-militarist tradition. Fascism, the mass slaughter of civilians in the Second World War and the subsequent partition of Germany by the allied powers fostered a popular revulsion against militarism and war. The fact that the SPD made the campaigns against NATO and for the re-unification of Germany the centre of its programme right up to the late 'fifties testifies to the strength of these sentiments.

In 1955 the Adenauer government introduced rearmament and conscription. The SPD and the DGB (Germany's TUC) cooperated – but only after the right-wing bureaucrats had purged strong opposition to these measures from within their own ranks. The German Peace Union (a front organisation for the banned Communist Party) rallied resistance against rearmament. Through this alliance of liberals, pacifists and radical clerics, the Stalinists tried to preserve their influence with an amalgam of anti-Americanism and discreet pro-Sovietism.

As the memory of war faded, the peace movement lost its appeal. Anti-communism and a general lack of interest made the Union an insignificant force by the early 'sixties.

Fighting German militarism

The Vietnam War and the radicalisation of students gave rise to a new anti-militarism in the late 'sixties. Thousands of young people resisted conscription – and organised themselves as *Kriegdienstverweigerer* (draft refusers). The right to refuse conscription on *ethical* grounds was enshrined in the 1948 constitution – a homage to anti-fascism the bourgeoisie has come to regret. The government has tried to destroy the legitimacy of conscientious objectors by submitting them to intensive interrogations in which they must prove their purely *ethical* motivation.

More recently Chancellor Helmut Schmidt has run into militant opposition to his attempts to stimulate patriotic feeling by means of military parades and swearing-in ceremonies. In the past 12 months such ceremonies at Frankfurt, Nürnberg, Stuttgart and Hamburg have been disrupted by protestors throwing bricks and tomatoes. Public sympathy was often with the demonstrators.

After more than 100 youth were arrested at Nürnberg, the army and the military police cordoned off another parade in Bonn to show their determination to crush anti-military activity. These incidents show the potential for a movement directed against *German*, not only foreign militarism.

Integrate and contain

Militant anti-war protests add to the growing instability of German society. The ferocious pitched battles over the extension of Frankfurt's airport in October followed similar confrontations in all major cities after police killed a Berlin squatter in September. These are only the most recent events in a chain of clashes between left-wing demonstrators and the police going back over the past two years. The top priority for the German ruling class is to contain the growing threat to its position from angry young people: its more far-sighted representatives see the potential of the peace movement in advancing this objective.

In the 'seventies repression was sufficient. The general climate of anti-communist hysteria whipped up in response to the Baader-Meinhof gang's terrorist activities and the draconian *Berufsverbot* legislation was fairly successful in isolating and suppressing left-wing opposition. But today's radical movement is on a much grander scale – embracing activists concerned about housing, ecology, education, nuclear power, nuclear weapons and other causes. Blocs formed among these radical groups, such as the Alternative Liste in Berlin, have made substantial electoral gains at the expense of the traditional parties – the Liste now has four delegates in the Berlin Senate.

The growth of anti-establishment forces is a cause of particular anxiety to the German bourgeoisie because it takes place at a time when the recession threatens to weaken its hold over the long quiescent working class. Unemployment has jumped by 50 per cent in the past year and German workers have been forced to accept wage cuts for two years in a row. This year's budget means cuts in education, public employment, health and welfare benefits. Although the post-war state has never won much respect from German workers, who have always seen it as something of an alien imposition, the trade union bureaucrats have generally succeeded in keeping them in line. The spectre which now haunts the ruling class is that Schmidt's 'Modell Deutschland' may be about to crumble. It is the job of the SPD to try and hold it together.

The trouble is that the SPD has become so rigid and bureaucratic and reliant on the state that its capacity to adapt to new developments is very limited. One result is that it has steadily lost electoral support over the past two years – both to the right and to the radical parties. The *Financial Times* gave some advice to the Germans from a ruling class that knows a thing or two about how to use the labour bureaucracy:

> 'The democratic process of controllable and controlled change can be upset both if a dominant "progressive" party is shanghaied by extremists, or if it becomes too conservative.' (21 October)

The former is the *FT*'s concern about the Labour Party, the latter its worry about the SPD. However, the recent strife in the SPD shows that the Germans are getting the message.

To the distress of Chancellor Schmidt it was party leader Willy Brandt who took the lead in trying to swing the SPD to the anti-nuke camp. 'We do not wish to isolate ourselves from this so-called peace movement' he said gingerly, explaining that 'in the 'sixties the party learnt only very late that the youth revolt was but a symptom of social change' to which the party had to adapt (*Der Spiegel*, No 41, 1981). Brandt and the radical wing of the SPD want the party to link up with the nuclear disarmament campaign and use it as a means of containing the incipient youth revolt.

Another imperialist 'colony'

The SPD provides the amorphous anti-war movement with a coherent anti-Soviet and anti-American, nationalist direction. The party's fledgling Tony Benn, Erhard Eppler, told the Bonn rally in October that Germany was an oppressed country and the peace movement its liberator:

> 'A people which allows itself to suffer what is being prepared for us now, has no need to be killed – it is already dead. Far from expressing the despair of a tired and degenerate West, the peace movement shows that the old nations of Europe are more than chess figures for the two world powers.' (*The Guardian*, 12 October)

Given the absence of any distinct working class view of either imperialism or the Soviet Union, the convergence of radical left and right-wing responses to rearmament, NATO and East-West relations was always possible. Eppler's 'Neither Washington nor Moscow' line achieves this reactionary synthesis. The only question remaining is whether he can use it to integrate the peace movement into a new national consensus behind the SPD.

The left outside the SPD is in a weak position to challenge the reactionary drift of the anti-war movement. It generally shares the idea that the problems of German workers are to be resolved by a *national* rather than a *class* struggle. Belief in the progressive character of German neutralism is as strong among the influential Maoist left as it is on the left of the SPD. The division of Germany gives some plausibility to the notion that it suffers national oppression. But Germany, just like Britain and the USA, is an imperialist country. Anti-Reagan sloganising simply reinforces the subordination of the German working class to the interests of German imperialism.

Symmetrical anti-Sovietism and anti-Americanism has a strong appeal to German workers, who hate the East German Stalinist bureaucracy as much as they fear US cruise missiles. Many militant workers want to oust the Russians and the Americans and re-unite Germany. Not only have German left-wingers proved incapable of showing that Germany is an imperialist rival of the USA, not its pawn, they have also failed to challenge bourgeois anti-Soviet prejudices. Generally they prefer to ignore the issue of partition, though some adapt to prevailing prejudiced views by advancing 'state-capitalist' notions of the Eastern bloc. Either way the left leaves the field wide open for the anti-communist policies of the SPD.

The point is in fact straightforward. Whatever happened in 1945 or 1949, capitalist relations in West Germany and bureaucratic despotism in the East have been upheld for the past 30 years by a home-grown German ruling class and its state on one side of the border and by a Stalinist bureaucracy on the other side. West German workers and anti-militarists should turn their attention to fighting their class enemy at home. Their first priority must be to take on the poisonous national revival fantasies currently being peddled by the SPD. ■

Workers Against Racism in the unions

Cleansing our ranks



IN 1968 THOUSANDS of London dockers stopped work and marched in support of Enoch Powell. It was a spectacle which sent a shudder of revulsion through the ranks of the trade union movement. What kind of trade unionists were these, who called for the repatriation of their black brothers and sisters?

The answer wasn't long in coming. In the early 'seventies, National Front 'trade unionists' helped break black workers' strikes up and down the country. In one notorious case – Imperial Typewriters – they marched under the banner 'White workers unite'. The lesson was plain to see: racism turns trade unionists into strike-breakers and scabs. Racism destroys the labour movement.

That's something every trade union bureaucrat will agree with, but do nothing about. The lack of official action against racism has given the government and employers the green light. They can get rid of black workers, deprive black people of their rights, without fear of a militant trade union response.

Deportations of black workers as 'illegal entrants' have multiplied ten-fold over the past decade. Black unemployment stands at twice the figure for whites. With tens of thousands of black people deprived of their citizenship rights under the new Nationality Act, the black worker's position has become even more insecure.

Robbed of his job, harassed by the Home Office, the black worker is no longer even guaranteed dole money, medical treatment or education for his children. As part of a massive cost-cutting exercise, the Government is enforcing racist tests and questionnaires throughout the public services to exclude 'foreigners' from access. The DHSS hopes to save £5m through its hospital checks alone.

But it's not only black workers who pay the price for the trade unions' acquiescence to racism. The dockers who marched for Powell in the 'sixties proved incapable of even defending their own jobs. Workers who go along with the attacks on blacks today will never mount a successful struggle against the bosses, for jobs, social services or political rights. That's why we say it's necessary to *cleanse our ranks*. It's time to purge the trade union movement of the nationalist and chauvinist filth that's accumulated for decades, get rid of racist trade union officials, and make the slogan 'UNITY IS STRENGTH' something the bosses fear instead of laugh at.

Judy Harrison reports on the fight for decisive anti-racist politics in the unions and in the wider labour movement. Information from Rob Knight, Pam Lawrence, Alex Farrell, Fran Eden, Anita Lloyd and Maggie Pearson.

Not an academic question

DARAZ ULLAH, an 11-year old Bangladeshi boy from Stepney, was savagely beaten up by racists at the Sir John Cass secondary school this term. He was set upon during break-time, dragged into the toilets and beaten until he was semi-conscious. His teacher found him later in a pool of blood, with severe nose, ear and eye injuries, broken teeth and battered all over his body.

The growth in attacks like these has prompted the National Union of Teachers to put out a circular, signed by the general secretary Fred Jarvis, recommending a 'Code of Practice' on racism in schools. It's familiar stuff. Based on the premises of the Rampton Report, it emphasises multi-cultural curricula, 'non-narrowly ethnocentric' text-books and better training of police officers in 'racial awareness'. In extreme cases racist pupils are to be suspended or expelled. Above all, teachers are urged to set an example and behave in a professional way.

The NUT's pious exhortations beg the question of why children like Daraz get beaten up in the first place. In Tower Hamlets the allocation of Asian children to schools follows the same pattern as for housing. For years the local Labour Council ghettoised Asian families in the worst slum areas, and segregated the schools. Once this racist pattern is established, Asian families are seen as intruders on mainly white estates and their children made unwelcome in the local schools. The Bangladeshi community has been deprived of its school in Brick Lane, the Robert Montefiore, thanks to the education cuts, and is now faced with the hopeless prospect of finding 'safe' schools in the borough. There have been violent racist attacks in all the schools in the area – Sir John Cass, Stepney Way, Daneford and many others. In another East London borough – Newham – the local authority is even more explicitly racist in its dealings with black children; it authorised passport checks in its schools until a storm of protest stopped this practice.

This is the political climate that breeds the teenage fascists who beat up Daraz. And this is where anti-racists in the NUT must begin from. ELWAR supporters in the NUT have taken several important steps in this direction. First they're determined to get Daraz back to school. A transfer elsewhere would be no more of an answer than moving house is for Asian families under attack. This means getting pupils from the school, with the help of teachers and ELWAR activists from the area, to patrol the streets and the playground during periods when the attacks have taken place. Second, they're encouraging both teachers and pupils at Sir John Cass to get involved in ELWAR's work in Tower Hamlets – particularly our campaign to force the Council to cease its racist practices in education, housing and employment. Third, they're fighting to replace the NUT's Code of Practice, which basically relies on the police to deal with racist thugs, with a policy that commits teachers to act 'unprofessionally' when necessary and stand up to the racists in their schools. Too often teachers have stood by and watched black kids being attacked, and put it down to mere 'hooliganism'. At Sir John Cass and other schools in East London ELWAR's determined to let racist thugs know they'll never get away with beating up an Asian kid in the toilets again, and that fascist organisations will be kicked down the road. This may not be what Fred Jarvis MA has in mind. But it's a code of practice that speaks louder than a million multi-cultural text-books.

No NHS colour bar!

WAR SUPPORTERS in hospital workers' unions have been fighting hard this month to make the new nationality checks on patients inoperable. Ten hospitals were selected for the Government's pilot scheme, which involves interrogating prospective patients about their country of origin, length of residence in the UK, etc – with the aim of forcing them to pay for all health services, including ambulance services, family planning and the use of a GP. At University College Hospital, London, and Wythenshawe Hospital in Manchester, WAR supporters helped organise successful demonstrations involving workers from all the main hospital unions. Elsewhere we've been raising motions urging fellow trade unionists to oppose the scheme.

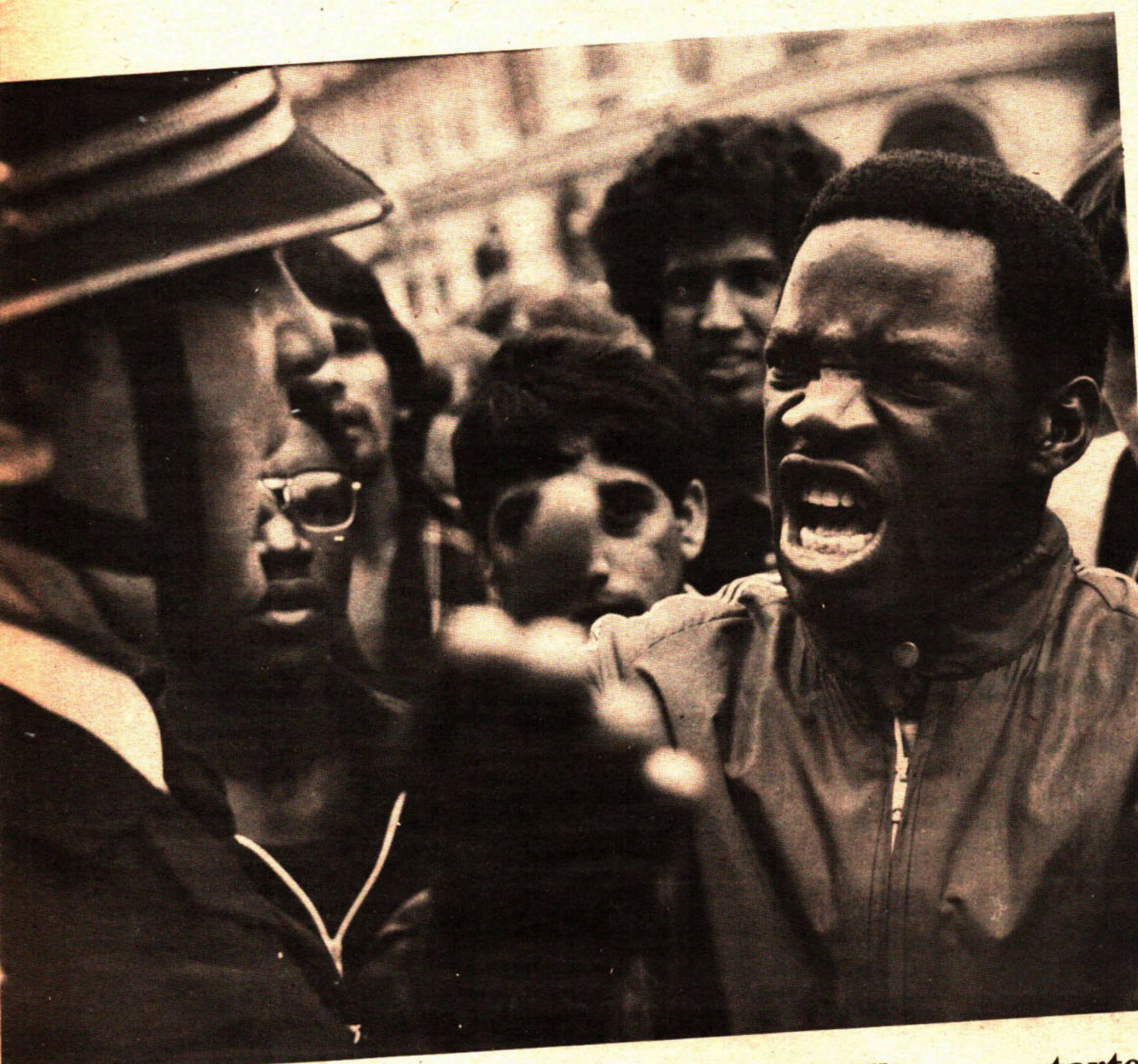
The Government's proposals are only the latest in a long line of attempts to deprive black workers of NHS facilities. The 1949 NHS Act empowered the Minister of Health to make discretionary charges for non-UK residents. In the 'seventies circulars were issuesd by the DHSS – the most notorious one was headed 'Gatecrashers' – urging hospital administrators to act as immigration spies. But now there's a full-blown attack on public health care. Introducing charges on immigrant and migrant NHS users is a prelude to the greater and greater erosion of public health services for the benefit of profiteering private firms.

The response from NUPE, COHSE, NALGO and other hospital unions has been totally inadequate. NALGO's leadership merely complained about lack of consultation. NUPE and COHSE – both unions with a large black membership – have been forced to sound more militant. But all accept the premise that certain 'foreigners' shouldn't be eligible for free treatment, and are engaging in the useless exercise of seeking to demonstrate that the scheme is expensive, inefficient and wasteful. On past performance, we can't expect Fisher and Spanswick to do more than talk. In fact, at an NHS General Whitley Council meeting on 26 October, only *one* of the officials present (from ASTMS) could bring himself to vote for a motion proposing non-cooperation with the nationality checks on the basis of a free health service for all. NUPE, COHSE, TGWU, GMWU and the rest thought this too extreme.

When the full scheme comes into operation in six months time we must ensure that it's made completely unworkable. We have to alert all trade unionists now to its full implications. With the Nationality Act now on the statute book many black people will no longer be entitled to welfare benefits. Schemes like the one in the NHS are designed to weed out the new non-eligible categories – *not* just the proverbial 'Arab oil sheikhs' but black workers and their children. WORKERS AGAINST RACISM is campaigning for the blacking of all work connected with this racist scheme and for the provision of free NHS treatment as a right to everybody that needs it.

UB40 (only whites need apply)

FROM 11 JANUARY onwards, if you're black or have a foreign sounding name or accent, and happen to be signing on at one of fifteen 'selected' employment offices, you're in for a shock. Not to be outdone by the DHSS, the Department of Employment is introducing its very own ethnic questionnaire. Claimants will be



Telling the police where to go: last July's Khan massacre funeral demonstration.

asked about their country of origin, their immigration status and, in particular, their *race*. The DoE insists it's all nothing to worry about, that they've been doing the same thing for years at Job Centres, and it's merely a way of compiling statistics on black employment.

They're lying. The new scheme is designed to pave the way for depriving thousands of black people of their entitlement to benefits. The scope of the questionnaires has been extended and, unlike previously, will include *all* black/foreign claimants including British-born youths. The move from the Job Centres to employment offices is part of the racist scheme; it allows the monitoring process to be directly tied in with signing on.

The Society of Civil and Public Servants has declared its opposition to the scheme, largely on the grounds that there are likely to be riots at the dole offices! The CPSA and other Civil Service unions will no doubt follow suit. But for WAR members in these unions it's not the prospect of riots of indignant claimants we're worried about, but the possibility that the scheme – due to be extended to the whole country in October – will go through. Our members are preparing the ground now for non-implementation of the scheme in January by getting motions through as many branches as possible. And come D-day, WAR supporters will be out in force at the dole offices urging claimants to refuse to cooperate with yet another racist interrogation exercise. And watch out for snoopers, checking out on your 'ethnic' lifestyle.

Asian youth on the march

ON SATURDAY 14 November a demonstration took place in Walthamstow to protest at the mounting wave of racial violence in the area, and the police cover-up of the Khan family massacre in July. The 300 demonstrators heard local Labour MP Eric Deakin and GLC Councillor Paul Boateng pledge their unswerving support for the black community's fight against the fascists and the police. But when some fascists attacked the demonstrators and the police arrested an Asian youth (no fascists of course) Deakin and Boateng were nowhere to be seen! It was the ELWAR contingent that led over 100 people down to the police station and kept up a constant barrage of chanting until the arrested youth was set free without charges.

The Asian community in the area is sick to the teeth with its 'community leaders' and careerist politicians who've done *nothing* all these months to stop the 'mysterious' arson attacks. They've been too busy liaising with the police, setting up monitoring committees by the dozen, and giving evidence to Scarman. The only really useful monitoring in Waltham Forest has in fact been carried out by trade unionists – firemen in the FBU. To the displeasure of Scotland Yard, they've revealed that the highest number of arson attacks on ethnic minorities in London were carried out in the Walthamstow area in recent years. This is the kind of information we need more of. And we need more trade unionists in ELWAR, patrolling the streets to make sure the fires never begin. The Kahn family's murderers are still waiting to be caught.

The non-starter charter

THE SOCIALIST Workers Party launched its 'rank and file' anti-racist charter in November. The charter tries to give the TUC's line on fighting racism a militant Right to Work Campaign approach. Its major emphasis is on strengthening trade union organisation and integrating blacks into the unions. While it contains token opposition to immigration regulations (but not opposition to *all* controls) and police harassment, it is as weak as the TUC Charter in indicating how the trade unions should fight racism in the workplace, in trade union branches and on the streets. However the SWP doesn't even take its own anti-racist charter seriously. Few rank and file activists have been told of its existence and *Socialist Worker* declined to mention the charter in its follow-up report on the Birmingham conference at which it was launched.

Nevertheless, an interesting debate did take place on the day. It began at the door, and revolved around whether or not to let half a dozen WAR members (approximately one fifth of the conference) inside. Anti-Nazi League organiser Pete Alexander said no. Right to Work Campaign organiser John Deason, noting the growing opposition to our exclusion from Indian Workers Association members, Staffa workers and others, said 'don't be silly, let them in'. Deason was clearly in a fraternal mood, making statements like 'Racism isn't a black problem. It's a white problem'. He even acknowledged the role of state repression of blacks in provoking the summer riots, but then contradicted himself with the latest wisdom from his party's theoretical journal on the 'class riots'. Pete Alexander said nothing. He just sat and sulked over his tactical defeat on the door question. As for the other SWP members, they all seemed to have memorised the Central Committee's memorable statement on the 'Industrial downturn, political upturn'; all felt that racism would best be overcome through elementary trade unionism.

The SWP's charter arises out of the same concern as the TUC's – the need to be seen to be doing *something* about racism in the unions. Workers who really want to do something – and not just cover up the complicity of the union bureaucrats in racial oppression at work and throughout society – should not waste their time trying to get hold of the 'rank and file' charter, but get *Cleansing our ranks* now.

Labour's harmony

EVER SINCE THE police rampaged through Dalston and Stoke Newington, arresting, beating and later framing up hundreds of black youth, the local Labour Party has taken an active interest in improving 'community relations' in the area. It arranged a major public discussion on the riots which finally took place on 10 November. The audience of about 25 included small groups of ageing stalwarts and nouveau Bennites, a number of West Indians whose families had been victims of police harassment, and a solitary supporter of *Socialist Challenge*. When the meeting began there were almost as many on the stage as in the stalls.

Hackney North chairman Mervyn Jones began by declaring that progress was being made in curbing 'certain police procedures' and that he was 'very interested' in even greater police accountability. West Indian community leader Lester Lewis agreed: the police must be made accountable to some outside body – and the racist elements in the force must be weeded out.

Asian councillor and aspiring Labour MP Patrick Kodikara thought it a mistake to concentrate on particular policemen – like Hackney's Commander Mitchell. But he felt that the concept of accountability needed to be elaborated. Kodikara favoured accountability to 'the local community'. Labour GLC member for Hornsey Tony Hart spoke next. He favoured accountability to County Hall – but then he's a member of the GLC police committee which he said had been doing some marvellous work recently, 'monitoring' racial violence.

From the floor black people spoke of their bitter experiences at the hands of the police; of beatings, children held overnight without parents being informed, false charges, vicious sentences. But Labour Party members quickly got the meeting back to the subject in hand – how to make police repression more acceptable to the black community. Both white and black Party activists emphasised the need to get blacks into the Labour Party – to make it a more efficient instrument for promoting harmony between angry young blacks and a racist police force. The *Socialist Challenge* supporter said nothing.

Meanwhile the police and the courts are still working through their summer caseload: every week sees more convictions, fines and lengthy terms of imprisonment. And the attacks go on. A West Indian recently emerged from a prolonged stay in hospital as a result of a fascist assault to discover he had been framed by the police. A young Asian's flat in Stoke Newington was stormed by police on an early morning passport raid. While the Labour Party dreams about making the police 'accountable', East London Workers Against Racism has been fighting this sort of police harassment in the real world.





Patriotism and politics

Race and respectability

The Empire, the Royal family and the Union Jack are all aspects of a British political culture imbued with a hatred and fear of foreigners. Racism and nationalism are powerful forces in all sections of society. Yet while racial prejudice fragments the working class, the anti-racist movement in Britain remains weak. Pat Roberts examines why.

POST-WAR IMMIGRATION to Britain took off in the 'fifties. The expansion of the British economy created a labour shortage and black people were encouraged to immigrate to fill the vacancies. Immigrant workers faced discrimination right from the beginning. They were placed in the worst housing and at work they were denied better paying jobs and promotion. In the communities where blacks gathered they often faced harassment and a colour bar at local pubs and clubs. Apart from being treated as second class citizens, the immigrants were also blamed for the appalling conditions in which they were forced to live. Local newspapers and provincial politicians attributed bad housing and deteriorating services to the uncivilised behaviour of the black community.

The golden age

From the point of view of the ruling class the 'fifties was the golden age of race relations. True, racist attacks occasionally turned into major riots (as in Notting Hill Gate and Nottingham in 1958) but race was not a hot issue on the national political scene. In general, employers were more concerned about meeting their labour requirements than with the colour of their workers.

It was different in the emerging inner-city ghettos. Here, bad housing and inadequate services were always a source of tension. The inability of British capitalism to deliver the goods soon drove local politicians to demand a halt to immigration. The black community became a scapegoat for every politician out to make a name for himself. All the major parties exploited anti-immigrant sentiment, creating a climate where racism became an everyday part of British politics.

Right-wing politicians had no monopoly over racism. Many a Labour spokesman took to denouncing the evils of 'uncontrolled immigration'. Even the working class was not immune from racism. Long traditions of loyalty to Britain prevented the labour movement from defending black workers. Many trade unionists simply saw blacks as competitors for jobs, housing and social services. Workers who were anti-racist were often too steeped in British nationalism themselves to stop the tide of racism.

By the early 'sixties widespread hostility to immigration forced the government to act. In October 1961 the Tories introduced the first immigration control legislation. For decades the British bourgeoisie had propagated the virtues of nationalism to tie the labour movement to the interests of British capitalism. As long as trade unionists were British first and workers second the bosses were assured of the collaboration of the labour movement. The employers could not turn around and demand that people should become internationalists just because they now needed black workers to man their foundries, their textile mills, their trains and buses. For the bourgeoisie to have opposed racism might have helped some factories to run more smoothly – but it would have undermined its ideological domination over the rest of society. But the Tories were not simply the victims of circumstances of their own making. In immigration controls the ruling class discovered a powerful weapon for dividing the labour movement. After 1961 racial discrimination in the form of controls on the movement of black people received the sanction of law.

The Labour Party distinguished itself from the Tories in 1961 by opposing immigration controls. Party leader Hugh Gaitskell declared that immigrants were good for the economy. But the pressure for immigration controls was beginning to influence Labour. Slowly it moved towards a bipartisan approach with the Tories. The Golden Age of race relations was coming to an end.

Leprosy is contagious

During the 1964 General Election racism became an important political issue. Labour's defeat at its former stronghold in Smethwick vividly demonstrated the electoral potential of the race issue. Tory Peter Griffiths, dubbed 'a parliamentary leper' by Harold Wilson, stirred up anti-immigrant sentiment in his successful campaign to oust the well-known sitting Labour MP Patrick Gordon Walker. The Smethwick campaign illustrates the evolution of the Labour Party's policy on race.

Right-wing local politicians had been whipping up racial prejudice in Smethwick for some time before the election. Gordon Walker oscillated between ignoring the growth of racism or adapting to it. Rather than fight the racists, Gordon Walker declared his commitment to Britain. As early as 1962 he had tried to rebuff the right by displaying his patriotism: 'This is a British country with British standards of behaviour. The British must come first' (quoted in P Foot, *Immigration and race in British politics*, p53). Gordon Walker dug his own grave. If the British had to come first, then the racists' argument that immigrants had to come second made sense.

Gordon Walker's nationalist approach at first put him on the defensive – until he took to denouncing the Tories as the culprits for immigration. He could then give up arguing against the racists altogether. A leaflet put out by the Labour Party just before the election shows where this cringing approach ended up:

> 'Be fair: immigrants only arrived in Smethwick in large numbers during the past 10 years – while the Tory Government was in power. You can't blame Labour or Gordon Walker for that. Labour favours continued control of immigration, strict health checks and deportations of those convicted of criminal offences.' (quoted in P Foot, p59)

Gordon Walker found himself attacking the immigrant community along with the Tory candidate. His electoral defeat only strengthened Labour's resolve not to be outflanked by racists in future.

Before 1964 the Labour Party used to defend immigration on the grounds that it was good for the British economy. But economic arguments proved useless against the more nationalistic propaganda. Up and coming Labour politician, Hattersley explained his conversion in 1965 from approval for immigration on economic grounds, to acceptance of immigration controls on 'social' grounds:

> 'I now believe that there are social as well as economic arguments and I believe that unrestricted immigration can only produce additional problems, additional suffering and additional hardship unless some kind of limitation is imposed and continued.' (quoted by P Foot)

Hattersley's 'social arguments' meant the necessity for putting Britain first. The Labour Government under Wilson proceeded to do just this and, with the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act, placed new restrictions on immigration.

By 1968 the Labour Party's policy on immigration was virtually indistinguishable from the Tories'. Labour responded to racist pressure by leading the battle for immigration control as former Cabinet Minister Crossman's reflections on his visit to Smethwick in 1970 made clear:

> 'Racialism has been extremely violent in this area but there were many more questions about doctors and nurses and secondary schools. There is no doubt that stopping immigration, which was one of Callaghan's great achievements, has done an enormous lot for us and that in places like Smethwick the racial undertone, which was enormously strong in 1964, is now even weaker than in 1966.' (*The Crossman Diaries*, Vol 3)

Tory/Labour bipartisanship on immigration made racism respectable. Legal discrimination provided a framework within which black people were exposed to the full fury of British chauvinism.

Bipartisanship was never seriously challenged by British socialists. Newspapers like the *Morning Star* and *Socialist Worker* followed Labour's earlier line of countering racist arguments against immigration. They could not bring themselves to argue that it is irrelevant whether black workers are good or bad for the economy. They always adopted a defensive tone when racists charged that immigrant families with high birth rates would swamp Britain. Tony Chater, now editor of the *Morning Star*, noted back in 1966 that 'it is quite on the cards that if immigrants are given the chance to settle down in Britain and become more prosperous, they will come to see the economic and social advantages of family planning' (*Race relations in Britain*, p37). Family planning! The British left fought racism by accepting the terms of the discussion established by the racists. It accepted that immigrant birth rates were the problem and pre-

scribed birth control. Racism in Britain had a field day.

Rivers of blood

The major political parties hoped that strict controls on the movement of immigrants would take the explosive race issue out of the political arena. Their hopes were soon shattered by the capitalist crisis. Even before the crisis racists made clear that their campaign was not only directed against the influx of new immigrants – they also wanted to rid Britain of the black people that had already settled here. Powell's famous 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968 evoked widespread popular support. As British capitalism entered a new phase of decline, frustration and economic insecurity provided the soil on which a more violent racism could breed.

The 1973 recession ushered in a period of racial violence and tension. In 1974, the Ugandan Asian 'crisis' provided an occasion for whipping up chauvinist hysteria against the immigrant community. Two years later the 'hot summer' of 1976 saw a widespread media campaign against the arrival of Asians from Malawi. Two newly-arrived Asian families, who were temporarily put up in a four star hotel, were portrayed in the press as symbols of Britain's national decline. And the racist murder of an Asian youth in Southall showed the practical results of the anti-immigrant clamour.

Chauvinist hysteria grew unabated in the mid 'seventies. In 1976 and 1977, the Notting Hill carnival provided an opportunity for police attacks on the West Indian community. Racist violence by fascist thugs, the police and demoralised youth became an everyday feature of British society.

The most striking manifestation of the upsurge of racism was the growth of fascist organisations. The respectable racism of the Parliamentary parties opened up a space for the growth of right-wing organisations. The National Front (NF) and other fascist groups seized their opportunity and took to the streets.

It was the NF's electoral performances that seized the headlines. The fascists peaked in the 1977 Greater London Council elections – where they received 119 000 votes. But the significance of the NF extended far beyond the polling booth. By putting racism at the centre of a simple and coherent political programme, the NF succeeded in making race an everyday political issue. The fascists did no more than pull together behind their own party banner the chauvinist sentiments that permeate British society. But this was enough. By activating latent racism the NF was able to put pressure on the Parliamentary parties and drive them in a more racist direction.

The ruling class was not averse to the growth of chauvinism. The scale of the capitalist crisis required ruthless measures against the working class. Pointing the finger at black people was a convenient way of distracting attention from the capitalist offensive against the labour movement. While the fascists went on the stomp, Parliament turned the racist screw and the police stepped up their attacks against black youth.

Stealing the fascists' clothes

In the meantime the major political parties were yielding to pressure from the NF. The Tory Party tried to outflank the NF by demonstrating its patriotic credentials. In January 1978, Tory leader Thatcher laid down the line:

> 'The British character has done so much for democracy, for law, and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped, then people are going to be rather hostile to those coming in.' (*The Guardian*, 31 January 1978)

Thatcher declared that the Tories would defend Britain from the alien invasion. The press approved:

> 'At present Britain is taking in about 50 000 coloured immigrants a year, which is the population of a small town. And the population of a fairly large town every two years. It cannot go on. . . .
>
> 'The ordinary native Briton feels left out, almost despised and disregarded.' (*Daily Express*, 16 January 1978)

The response of Labour to this pogrom propaganda was predictable. The Labour Government was not about to be caught napping. On 15 February Home Secretary Rees denied that the Government was 'soft' on immigration. 'The exclusion figures speak for themselves', he boasted. To show he meant business he claimed that in 1977 'over 1100 deportations were made and nearly 500 illegal entrants removed' (*The Times*, 16 February 1978). Rees could have also pointed to other achievements of his Government: more police attacks on black youth, the deployment of the Special Patrol Group in immigrant communities and the preparation of new plans for the tighter control of black people living in Britain. The Nationality Act drawn up by the last Labour Government and eventually enacted under the present Tory regime demonstrates the persistence of bipartisanship.

The decisive steps taken by the Tory and Labour parties reduced the scope for the NF. Its subsequent electoral decline is due in large measure to the fact that the two major parties had stolen most of its policies.

The Nazi diversion

Throughout the 'seventies the British left did next to nothing to fight racism. Whatever it did was directed exclusively against the NF – indeed fighting racism became equated with fighting fascism. This emphasis did a great disservice to the anti-racist struggle. It was easy to mobilise popular support against the NF: most people hate the Nazis – many racists think Hitler went a bit too far. But the enemy was not a virulent form of German nationalism: it was British nationalism.

The British left raised the spectre of German Nazism to avoid taking on the real problem – British nationalism. This spurious approach was well summarised by SWP leader Paul Holborrow:

> 'We want firstly to inform people, as many people as possible what exactly the National Front stands for and secondly to encourage them to take up actively the campaign against the Nazis.' (*Socialist Worker*, 19 November 1977)

The Anti-Nazi League could mobilise practically anybody against the Nazis. Meanwhile the left did nothing to challenge the respectable racism of the state, the vicious offensive of the police and the hold of chauvinism over the labour movement.

While the left denounced the 'Nazis' it did nothing to combat racist propaganda. Every time the racists denounced black people the left sought refuge in economic statistics. The SWP tried to prove that the racists had got their figures wrong. In 1978, at the height of the national anti-immigrant campaign, it observed that *'in fact immigrants are a benefit to the economy'*. Slightly doubtful about the efficacy of this argument, the SWP noted apologetically:

> 'Many black people will feel that it is insulting and degrading to them even for socialists to argue about the immigration and birth rate figures in the way we have done. Why shouldn't black people enter the country freely and have as many children as they want? And they are absolutely right. It is, nonetheless, important to let people have the facts on this issue.' (*The case against immigration controls*, 1978)

These arguments were not only 'degrading', they were also ineffective. Racism cannot be fought with 'facts'. Racism can only be fought by those who are prepared to challenge British nationalism – prepared to argue against those who want to put Britain first.

The left did not organise *one* campaign against immigration controls during the 'seventies. Fighting the 'Nazis' was a cop out from the anti-racist struggle. Significantly the left could not even sustain its anti-fascist campaign. In the mid-seventies some left groups took on the fascists in a series of street fights: 'No platform for fascists' was the slogan. However, as the crisis deepened the radical left moved closer to the Labour Party. During the run-up to the 1979 General Election it decided that physical confrontations would ruin Labour's electoral prospects.

The ANL was the product of a radical left not only reluctant to fight racism but also determined to avoid violent confrontations with the fascists. At the very time when racial violence was acquiring murderous proportions, the ANL turned anti-fascists away from the necessary violent response. The ANL hitched itself to Labour's electoral bandwagon and ignored the wave of racist assaults.

The ANL denounced supporters of Workers Against Racism who fought back against racist violence. ANL press officer Peter Hain condemned workers' defence earlier this year: 'The one thing we're not getting into is a counter-terrorist operation. I think that would be politically wrong, morally unacceptable. I think that it would be totally counter-productive' (*New Musical Express*, 7 March 1981).

The radical left regularly denounces racism. But its activity on this issue tells another story. Its anti-racist work has little independence from the Labour Party; and as the Labour Party sinks deeper and deeper into the chauvinist swamp, the radical left is dragged down with it. That's why this summer when young blacks rose against their oppression the left was nowhere to be seen. As thousands of black youths were processed through the courts the radical left looked to the Labour Party for a lead. The Labour Party advised better policing and more money for the inner cities. Not a word on how to fight racial oppression!

There is another way

In 1981 racial tension exploded in riots on the streets of England. Blacks have shown that they are not prepared to tolerate their oppression. By criminalising young blacks and stepping up repression, the ruling class has shown that racial oppression is here to stay. Throughout the year race has never left the headlines. And yet the anti-racist movement barely exists and has virtually no influence in the working class.

There is another way. During the past two years Workers Against Racism has built up a reputation for effectively fighting racist attacks. WAR does not reduce the problem of racism to the fascist menace. But fascists or anyone else who uses violence against black people understand only the language of fists. That's why we have to take matters into our own hands. We cannot rely on the courts or the police to prevent racist violence – these institutions are part of the same machinery that has made racism respectable in the first place.

Only the strength of the working class can destroy the racist menace. That's why physical defence against racist thugs, although essential, is not enough. WAR argues for the building of workers' defence for the victims of the racist onslaught. But workers' defence groups cannot just be declared. They have to be fought for. The labour movement itself is gripped by chauvinist sentiments. The leadership of the labour movement has been peddling shoddy nationalism for decades. Indeed it has even institutionalised racial discrimination on the shopfloor.

To build an effective anti-racist movement requires that the labour movement rids itself of its chauvinist leaders and discriminatory practices. This is the aim of WAR's campaign in the trade unions: our objective is to make racism unacceptable on the shopfloor. *Cleansing our ranks: a platform for anti-racist trade unionists* is our weapon for forging working class unity against racism. We don't want token concessions from the TUC – we want to crush racism in the trade unions.

Our campaign inside the trade unions is directly linked to our fight to challenge racism on the streets. Racism cannot be fought by economic arguments or facts. It can only be fought by workers who want to pursue their class interest. Politics which show that we are *workers first* and have nothing in common with the British ruling class and its state, isolate the racists in our ranks. For too long reactionaries have made race a political issue. Let's make racism an issue in the labour movement and begin to turn the racist tide.

SOLWAR

South London Workers Against Racism
Public meeting
Cleansing our ranks – fighting racism in the unions

Wednesday 9 December, 7.30pm
Lower Hall, Lambeth Town Hall
Acre Lane, SW2
(nearest tube: Brixton)

Bradford 12

Free the Bradford 12!

WAR is mobilising a large contingent for the Free the Bradford 12 national demonstration in Bradford on Saturday 12 December. Coaches will be going from most major London colleges. Phone 274 3951 for details.

Khomeini's chaos

Almost three years after they got rid of the Shah, the Iranian masses are today still suffering under the tyranny of Khomeini. Inez Landa surveys the chaos in Iran and the harsh choices facing its people.

THE KHOMEINI REGIME is in deep trouble. Iran is embroiled in a damaging and costly war with Iraq. Oil exports, once the second highest in the world, are now almost at a standstill. The economy is largely in ruins. Many of the leaders of Khomeini's loyal Islamic Republican Party have been assassinated by opposition groups and former President Bani-Sadr has fled the country. Executions of leftists and radicals now number into the thousands in the wave of terror unleashed by a regime desperate to hang onto power.

The crowds which used to turn out in mass demonstrations of support for the regime have dwindled away as open fighting rages in the streets between supporters and opponents of Khomeini. People even say that things in Iran are worse now than they were under the Shah. How is it that the euphoria which greeted the fall of the Shah has come to be so cruelly dissipated in the squalor of counter-revolution?

After the Shah

After the demise of the Shah, Mehdi Bazargan's government attempted to restore order and get business and industry back to normal as fast as possible. The state nationalised the banking, insurance and finance sectors, as well as a number of major industries. And to stabilise the new regime Bazargan launched campaigns against socialists, national minorities, the working class, dissident public sector workers and women.

Bazargan's efforts did not please all Iranian capitalists. The small traders who had joined the revolt against the Shah late in the day, in the hope of getting a better deal, rapidly became disgruntled. Their interests were represented primarily by the Islamic Republican Party. The occupation of the American Embassy in November 1979 provided the IRP with the opportunity to mobilise popular resistance to the government, oust Bazargan and install the more radical Mohammed Ali Raj'ai. Although often portrayed as a deepening of the revolution, this change of Prime Ministers was the result of the cynical manipulation of the anti-imperialist sentiments of the masses by one section of the bourgeoisie against another.

The IRP's support came from the entrepeneurs and small businessmen who benefited from the effects of the trade blockade on Iran, as well as from the better-off landowners and the clergy. It had no independent political programme. Once in power, the IRP was able to impose its notion of a radical Islamic state on all sections of society. Purges were launched within the civil service, the armed forces and the universities, with the aim of disciplining the left and shaking out jobs in the public sector. All universities have remained closed since April 1980. Differences over the best way of reasserting control over the revolution led to friction between the IRP and President Bani-Sadr, who was committed to a more secular form of bourgeois rule. Popular at first with the regime because of his impeccable Islamic and anti-imperialist credentials, he fell further and further from favour with the Prime Minister and the IRP. As the IRP's strategy for restructuring Iran's capitalist economy became more and more coercive, Bani-Sadr became an obstacle to the consolidation of its rule.

For a time Khomeini held the ring between Bani-Sadr and the IRP. Bani-Sadr had been the Ayatollah's trusted aide during his Paris exile, and he had some support among the larger capitalists as well as among intellectuals and workers. But it was the power of the IRP on the streets which proved to be the decisive factor. Backed by gangs of Pasdars (revolutionary guards) and Hezbollahi (religious zealots) the IRP forced Bani-Sadr's supporters off the streets by force, attacking his rallies and turning meetings of oppositionists into shooting galleries.

Bani-Sadr reached the end of the road when he criticised the IRP's pragmatic approach to Iran's economic problems. In a speech last February, on the second anniversary of the uprising against the Shah, he denounced the view that 'increasing imports and putting more goods and money in the hands of citizens will solve the problem' (*Scotsman*, 2 April 1981). Desperate to salvage the economy, the mullahs abandoned their anti-imperialist rhetoric and built up a busy trade with South Africa, made arms deals with Israel and signed contracts with major Western companies (eg the £1bn contract with Talbot for car kits). But they still couldn't save Iran's shattered economy.

Economy at a standstill

The extent of Iran's financial instability can be gauged from the fact that the import bill for the first seven months of this year was $7.9bn. Oil sales were bringing in about $550m per month and reserves stood at around $3bn. Reparations from the USA ($1.05bn) and loans from other countries ($600m) staved off financial collapse. However a balance of payments crisis in July forced the IRP-dominated Majlis (parliament) to try to get agreement to double oil production and so bring in more revenue. But the proposal fell because of the collapse in world oil prices and because of the physical impossibility of producing oil from the war-damaged wells and installations.

With businesses collapsing all around and four million out of work, Iranian capitalists are reluctant to invest. Because of the banning of interest on borrowed money, depositors have little incentive to put money into the banks. One consequence has been gold speculation, which has forced the government to buy gold abroad and flood the market to stop the price rising.

As industry at home has stagnated (national income fell 15 per cent in 1979, two per cent in 1980 and 10 per cent so far this year), so imports have increased – to a record $1.7bn in June alone. Bani-Sadr's solution was to try to build up the Iranian economy and restore confidence, rather than relying on buying time at the expense of increasing inflation. With the sacking of his close associate Ali Reza Nowbari as Governor of the Central Bank in June, it was clear that his strategy had been rejected. Instead, the IRP embarked on a programme of increasing taxes and cutting public expenditure – measures aimed specifically at the working class.

While the IRP succeeded in forcing Bani-Sadr into exile it has been unable to accomplish its major task: smashing the strength of the Iranian workers and peasants. Despite the threat of vicious repression, workers in many factories, especially around Tehran, have continued to fight militantly to defend their living standards. Oil workers in Shiraz and Isfahan recently won the right to overtime pay, by threatening to go on a hunger strike. And 1000 workers at the Mechanic Factory in Tehran stopped an attempt to make them work an extra day at weekends. Many strikes took place all over Iran at the end of last year when the Government tried to do away with various profit-sharing schemes introduced as a last desperate concession by the Shah (see *Kar International*, September 1981 for details).

Terror and turmoil

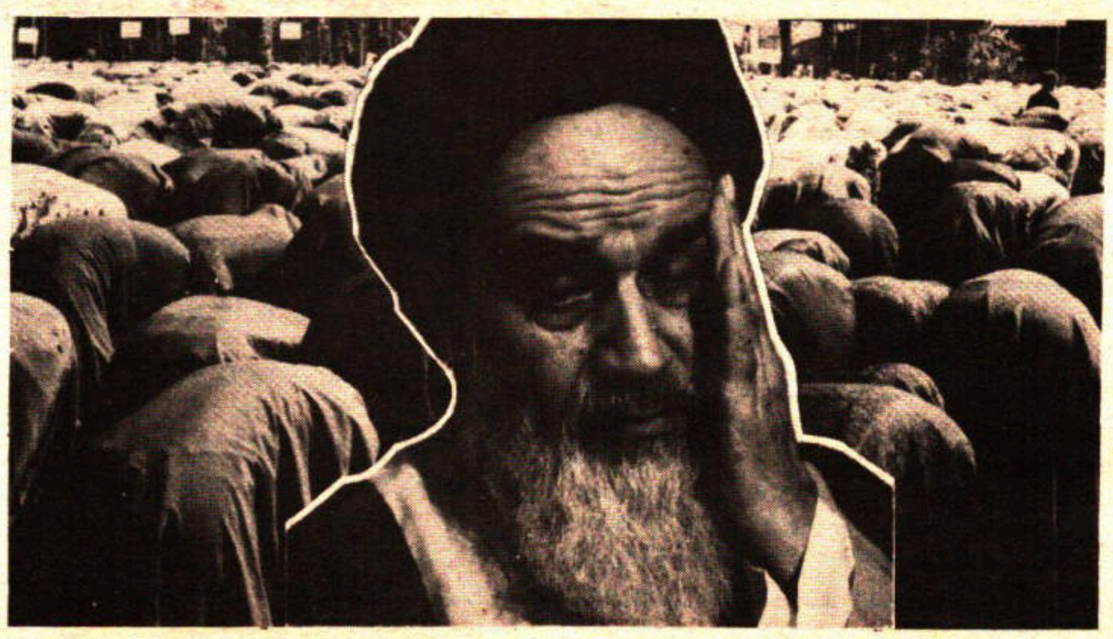
As Iran plunged deeper and deeper into turmoil, Khomeini's regime lost popularity even with its former supporters. The *Financial Times* recently noted growing bourgeois dissatisfaction:

> 'Certain groups like the bazaar merchants in Tehran, who control much of the country's wholesale and retail trade, are now generally against the Government. So too are most of the administrative classes and those who have received a Western-style education.' (3 December).

As his popular support declines, Khomeini relies increasingly on naked terror. The lists of those recently executed which appear most mornings in the Iranian papers testify to his determination to keep control. Now that Khomeini's targets are the anti-imperialist forces in Iran, Western commentators are silent. When, in its earlier days, the regime purged former supporters of the Shah, the press was filled with condemnations of the brutal ruthlessness of the Iranian revolution. Today imperialism welcomes the IRP's counter-revolutionary terror.

The main beneficiary of the growing disillusionment with the IRP in Iran has been the exiled Bani-Sadr. More and more, sections of the bourgeoisie are looking to the former president to form a stable governmental alliance. They seek to exploit the popular sentiment against Khomeini and win the support of the army.

The conflicts in Iran since the downfall of the Shah have centred on disputes between different factions of the ruling class. All seek to strengthen their position by mobilising the masses: but they all want to restore the Iranian economy at the expense of the workers and peasants. Bani-Sadr and his capitalist supporters object to the crude and uncertain methods the IRP uses against the working class. They seek the same goals, but wish to bring them about by more subtle means.



Mojaheddin chooses wrong

The Iranian masses are being forced towards a showdown with the IRP regime. They are faced with a crucial choice. They can fight as an independent force around working class politics – or they can lend their weight to one of the ruling class factions currently striving for power. The first way would require the mobilisation of the workers and peasants of Iran against the capitalists of Iran and their powerful imperialist backers: this provides the only way of defending the masses against poverty and oppression and of taking forward the struggle that began with the overthrow of the Shah. The second way means the working class continuing to pay the terrible price required for the stabilisation of the capitalist order in Iran. Unfortunately much of the Iranian left seems to have adopted the disastrous second course.

The Peoples Mojaheddin Organisation of Iran has led a heroic resistance struggle against the Khomeini regime: many thousands of its supporters have been imprisoned, tortured and executed. However, its decision to form a National Council for Resistance with the participation of Bani-Sadr represents an abandonment of an independent strategy in favour of an alliance with one section of the Iranian middle class, under the leadership of a man who was, until only a few months ago, responsible for enforcing the anti-working class measures of the regime.

The unprincipled nature of the alliance between Bani-Sadr and the Mojaheddin is clear from the programme of the National Council for Resistance. It declares that there is a role in a 'Democratic Islamic Republic' for the reactionary Iranian capitalists who have consistently backed the anti-working class measures of the Khomeini regime – and have only deserted him because his government can no longer defend their interests:

> 'The Provisional Government accepts the national bourgeoisie and the bazaar as well as individual private ownership and personal investment. This is on the condition that (those mentioned above) do not assume unlimited dependency creating dimensions of comprador character and do not hinder or disrupt the socio-economic development of society and the country as a whole.' (*Programme of NCR*)

Furthermore, the programme explicitly rejects the right of the Kurds (or any other minority) to national self-determination. Instead it talks of 'internal autonomy' within the framework of 'unity and the country's indivisible sovereignty and integrity'. It is clear that this programme is incapable of fulfilling even the democratic tasks of the revolution. Lacking a class understanding of events in Iran, it counterposes 'the people' to imperialism, thus glossing over the counter-revolutionary role which the Iranian bourgeoisie inevitably plays.

The enormous dissatisfaction with the regime and the increasingly bloody and arbitrary methods of suppression now being practised by the IRP and its supporters are beginning to create resistance amongst workers and peasants. The ruling class is weak and divided and the army neutralised. The conditions now exist in which a strong revolutionary movement could grow and follow through the overthrow of the Shah with the overthrow of Khomeini and the class he represents. If it does not, the courageous but misguided Mojaheddin seem fated to confirm the old adage that 'he who makes a revolution half way, digs his own grave'.

reviews



Dead end left

Eric Hobsbawm, *The forward march of Labour halted?*, Verso NLB, London, 1981, pp182, pbk £2.95.
Geoff Hodgson, *Labour at the crossroads*, Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1981, pp257, pbk £4.95.

IN HIS Marx Memorial lecture in March 1978 Professor Eric Hobsbawm advanced the thesis that, after advancing steadily for the first 70 years since Marx's death, Labour reached a halt in the early 'fifties. The past 25 to 30 years have for Hobsbawm (the leading intellectual of the British Communist Party) seen a steady decline in the fortunes of the labour movement, reaching 'crisis' proportions by the late 'seventies. Hobsbawm's gloomy ramble through Labour's record in the past century (he is a professorial historian) was reprinted in the Communist Party's theoretical journal *Marxism Today* (the one that boasts of its success in 'redefining theory as discussion of strategic issues'). Hobsbawm's lecture and the comments it provoked in succeeding issues of *Marxism Today* are republished here, together with a Socratic dialogue between the professor and Tony Benn, and several other contributions solicited by the editors – *Socialist Challenge* supporter Francis Mulhern and Eurocommunist Martin Jacques.

Whose crisis?

Hobsbawm confuses the labour bureaucracy with the working class. Both the immediate post-war triumphs that he celebrates and the current crisis that he bemoans reflect the changing status of the official leadership of the trade unions and the Labour Party, not the position of the workers. During the Second World War the trade union leaders were drawn into the state apparatus at every level from the cabinet office downwards; their position was strengthened by their role in the post-war reconstruction under the Labour Government. By 1951 the official trade union movement was an estate of the realm, indifferent to the advent of a Tory government. The great failure of the post-war left in Britain was that it never appreciated that while the victory of 1945 was a triumph for British imperialism and its trade union acolytes, it represented a major defeat for the working class. None of the contributors to this collection challenges Hobsbawm's starting point: the myth of Labour's high tide between 1945 and 1951.

A working class crushed by mass unemployment and regimented into the drive for war and reconstruction by the ideology of patriotic anti-fascism provided the bed-rock of Britain's post-war boom. However as the boom came to an end in the 'sixties and 'seventies, tensions emerged between the working class and its stagnant, complacent bureaucracy. While workers turned more and more to industrial action to maintain wages and living standards, governments tried to use the union machines to enforce incomes policies and to curb rank and file militancy. Under Labour's Social Contract the trade union leaders' role as the policemen of wage control provoked deepening working class dissatisfaction. And as the bourgeoisie turned towards a more coercive approach to resolving its problems of profitability under Margaret Thatcher, the bureaucrats' relations with the state deteriorated. Increasingly scorned by workers, the trade union chiefs were now kicked out of the corridors of power by the Tories. It is the crisis of the labour bureaucracy, squeezed by the recession between its working class base and its allegiance to the British state, that preoccupies Hobsbawm and the rest.

Who's to blame

The bureaucrats need a scapegoat for their troubles: for Hobsbawm and his camp followers this is not a problem – the working class is to blame for the declining standing of its leaders in bourgeois society. First, it went and voted Tory in 1979 and let 'that woman' in. Feminist Hilary Wainwright bears a particular grudge about this, linking it with earlier industrial militancy: 'after 20 years of aggressive trade unionism, the vast majority of working class people elected the most reactionary political regime in post-war history'. Second, workers are held to be at fault because of their affinity for reactionary ideas – anti-trade union, anti-national, even anti-Labour Party. Cultural guru of the Labour left Raymond Williams is especially distressed by the educational backwardness of today's workers. Finally, and this is Hobsbawm's major grievance, workers are incorrigibly 'economist'.

The term 'Economism' has a distinct meaning in the Marxist tradition. It refers to a narrow emphasis, by a labour movement political organisation, on trade union issues at the expense of broader class questions, as a means of advancing towards socialism. Hobsbawm and his Eurocommunist supporters completely misuse the term 'Economism'. Neither workers nor trade unions can be characterised as 'Economist': workers will fight in all circumstances under capitalism for higher wages and better conditions and organise in trade unions to strengthen their position. Hobsbawm is simply adapting to bourgeois anti-trade union prejudice: he blames trade union militancy when the real problem is the political strategy of the labour bureaucracy.

As a matter of fact the vast majority of working class people did not vote for Thatcher in 1979. The most backward sections of the working class always vote Tory; they were joined in 1979 by some skilled workers disgruntled by the effect of successive Labour incomes policies on their differentials and by a massive middle class turn out. Labour lost because, after five years of wage cuts, public service cuts, soaring unemployment and increasingly strident union bashing, many workers were not enthusiastic for another Labour government. And workers insisted on going on strike to defend jobs and wages because they discovered that the Social Contract, nationalisation and democracy in industry all meant massive programmes of cuts and redundancies. Labour was elected to power in 1974 on the left's radical alternative economic strategy; by 1979 the workers had seen it in action and they'd had enough.

No through way

There are broadly three ways out of Labour's impasse put forward by the contributors to the Hobsbawm debate. The King Street old guard – Ken Gill, Kevin Halpin, Digby Jacks – stands its ground on traditional trade union free collective bargaining. As trade union bureaucrats they are too close to the reality of capitalist production to accept Hobsbawm's notion that profit is no longer its driving force. But Gill's insistence that the trade union leaders are moving left is as unlikely to convince Hobsbawm that the forward march continues as is Halpin's claim that the Labour Party and the TUC 'have now been won for advanced policies'. The 'free collective bargaining' position was no match for the Social Contract back in 1975: many workers instead looked to the state to safeguard their living standards because of their inability to keep their real wages up by traditional methods at a time of roaring inflation. Indeed it was Gill himself who scuppered the 'free collective bargaining' opposition to the platform at the 1975 TUC. Today, when political solutions are even more urgently required, the old trade union tactics are obsolete.

The Stalinists have another alternative: this comes from the party's Eurocommunist wing, skilfully disguised in the trade union clothes of Pete Carter, Roger Murray and Mike Le Cornu (The effect of giving the gospel of the polytechnics a proletarian image is somewhat diminished by Murray's indiscreet dropping of the terms 'social formation' in his first paragraph and 'hegemony' shortly afterwards.) They embrace class collaboration with open arms, seeking only to make it broader and more systematic. Carter wants workers to extend the 'narrow and inadequate' struggle over wages to take responsibility for the wider welfare of their company; no doubt discussion of redundancies in the cause of profitability could form a fruitful field for 'extended bargaining'. Murray wants more of the sort of 'participation' that paved the way for 58 000 redundancies at BL. Le Cornu approves state regulation of wages under a new Social Contract.

Both wings of the CP agree on the alternative economic strategy: their differences centre on the precise terms of the cooperation between the official labour movement and the British state and how to popularise it. But there is nothing new here: repetition of the stale formulas of the 'seventies provides no answers to the problems facing the bureaucrats in the 'eighties. This is why the CP is in terminal decline. However, Hobsbawm's collection sportingly includes a third alternative: that of the Socialist Workers Party.

Back to basics

Steve Jefferys quibbles over Hobsbawm's amateurish use of labour movement statistics but concedes the essence of his analysis – disagreeing only about the way of restarting the 'forward march'. He even endorses Hobsbawm's notion of the changing character of the Labour Party – from 'a working class organisation for reform' in the 'forties to a 'middle class organisation for capitalist rationalisation' in the 'seventies. The Labour Party has never been a working class organisation, even though it may have been the means whereby certain reforms were conceded to the working class. In the 'forties it was a much more effective rationaliser of the capitalist system than it ever was under Harold Wilson. Jefferys' false counterposition simply indulges the reformist myth of 'the post-war settlement'.

Jefferys recycles the familiar SWP line on 'the downturn' of the late 'seventies and the party's strategy for reversing it. The Broad Left in the unions collapsed, Jefferys argues, because its activists put their trust in the Labour Party and TUC leaders and in company participation schemes that led to their isolation from shopfloor workers. The result was the acquiescence to falling living standards, rising unemployment, victimisations and the weakening of workplace organisation. The SWP sees the problem as one of *organisation* – not of the pernicious influence of the politics of Labourism, especially left Labourism. Thus its solution is also organisational: 'what really counts is organisation from below. . . really working on the basics' to restore elementary trade union practices.

Jefferys emphasises the importance of ideological issues in undermining working class militancy in recent years more than most in the SWP – this is one reason why he is on his way out of the party. But it is not enough to write vaguely about 'the need to harness rank and file strength to clear, class-wide socialist objectives: to raise the banner of the fight against capitalism in the context of the struggle within it'. If it means anything this means raising issues in the workplace that pose 'class-wide socialist objectives' – the fight for Irish freedom, against racial oppression, for women's rights. But neither Jefferys nor anybody else in the SWP has any strategy for doing this. Jefferys' rhetorical flourish peters out with a feeble echo of Tony Cliff in the call 'to generalise the anti-Tory fight'. There is nothing here to upset the labour bureaucracy whose problems the Hobsbawm debate is concerned to try to resolve.

Benn to the rescue

At 25 pages, Hobsbawm's sycophantic interview with Tony Benn is the longest section of his book. Benn simply expounds the radical populist themes that became widely known during his campaign for the deputy leadership. There is a striking convergence here. All the contributors to this collection (with the possible exception of Jack Jones who seems to have been invited to submit a whitewash of his own record as pioneer of the Social Contract) would agree that Tony Benn should be deputy leader, if not leader, of the Labour Party. And Benn repeats his appeal to all the reborn Stalinists and Trotskyists and the fragments to join him in the Labour Party. Benn is the labour bureaucracy's hope for the future – who else can revive the Labour Party? And what hope is there for all the clapped out academics, hack bureaucrats and weary radicals except in Benn's broad church?

Hobsbawm has the last word. Writing after the near victory of the SDP in the Warrington bye-election last summer, his afterword is even more miserable than his introduction, now two years old. He wrings his hands over the loss to the Labour Party of the SDP and its middle class supporters. He appeals for Labour to stand up as a spokesman for the nation in its hour of crisis. His eyes misty with tears of nostalgia for 1945, he urges Labour to become (what it has always been) 'a people's party not a class party'.

Beware falling rocks

Raymond Williams' main criticism of Hobsbawm is of his metaphors. Can we really speak of the forward *march* of the labour movement, as though it were an army? Indeed, in what sense can we still refer to the labour *movement* as something that combines both coherence and motion? Furthermore, when we speak of the industrial and political *wings* of the labour movement, do we envisage them as flapping (like a bird) or as fixed (like a plane)? This is what 30 years at Cambridge does to grammar school boys from the Welsh valleys. However, if Williams is unhappy with Hobsbawm's figures of speech, he is likely to take even greater exception to those of Geoffrey Hodgson.

Hodgson is into volcanoes:

'Before 1967 the labour movement as a whole was living on the lava of the social eruption of the Second World War which accounted for the radicalism that was present in the 1950s and 1960s and expressed, in particular, in the debates over Clause IV in the Labour Party. But this radical warmth was cooling until 1967. That year was not a major eruption, but the start of new outpourings of militancy as a result of new fissures in the socio-economic system.'

Meanwhile, back with the imagery of the highway code, Hodgson holds up a 'crossroads ahead' sign where Hobsbawm can only see a cul de sac. But Hodgson's view of the past broadly concurs with Hobsbawm's: the volcano became quiescent about the time the forward march halted. But as a younger man with his eye on a parliamentary seat, he takes a more sanguine view of Labour's prospects. With some dextrous juggling of electoral statistics he 'proves' that Labour's decline is not inexorable. He even reckons that 'there is a possibility that with the appropriate combination of forceful organisation, a visionary leadership and radical policies, Labour could achieve an electoral triumph on the scale of 1945'. This sounds like another major eruption – we can only hope the lava doesn't block the road.

Apart from being a dab hand with both seismograph and swingometer, Hodgson is an economist. He is an erudite polytechnic lecturer who is appalled by the 'historical and political backwardness of the British trade union movement'. The most backward ideas prevalent in the labour movement today emanate from theoreticians like Hodgson. His book is yet another attempt to sell the nationalist and naively utopian schemes of the alternative economic strategy.

Mike Freeman

reviews 2

Trotsky on 'the negro question'

CLR James, George Breitman, Edgar Keemen and others, *Fighting racism in World War II – coverage on the black struggle from the press of the Socialist Workers Party 1939-45*, Monad Press, New York, 1980, pbk £3.75.

THE 'THIRTIES and 'forties were decades of class warfare unprecedented in twentieth century America. But during these years of mass industrial struggles, in which some ten million American workers were organised into trade unions, the labour movement was persistently dogged by racism. Racist divisions in the working class came to the fore after the USA entered the war in 1942.

Employers demanded a major drive to increase productivity and output and a halt to all pay increases. The unions complied by agreeing to a 'no-strike pledge'. Workers responded with a wave of wildcat strikes and walkouts against wage cuts and speed ups. But although militant, the US working class was deeply divided. For every joint black and white action *against the employers* there was a walkout of white workers protesting *against the employment or promotion of blacks* that war-time labour shortages made necessary. Racial conflict scarred every major American city. Race riots – frequently provoked by the employers – reached a peak in the bloody conflict between black and white workers in Detroit in 1943.

All this should make the publication of *Fighting racism in World War II* – a collection of documents from the American Trotskyist movement of the period – an important event. The possibility of a revolutionary party transforming workers' militancy into a broader consciousness depended, in the main, on the Trotskyists' ability to conduct a practical fight against racism. Unfortunately this book provides few answers. It reveals the principled stand that US Trotskyists took against the war – for which their leading members were imprisoned. It exposes the treatment of blacks in the US army – where segregated black divisions were sent to the slaughter to protect white American, French and British troops. And it also shows that by the end of the war the Socialist Workers Party had gained few members and no substantial black cadre. However, few of the articles venture beyond agitation around specific incidents or general anti-war propaganda. For an explanation of why the US Trotskyists failed to 'fight racism in World War II' we have to look back at debates which took place in the years before the war between Leon Trotsky and his American followers.

Not important

Racial oppression always had a low priority for American Trotskyists. In 1941, when SWP leader James Cannon presented his definitive *History of American Trotskyism* lectures, he made not one mention of the problem of racism, of practical work on the question or of racism as a subject of debate between the Trotskyists and the Stalinists. In 1933 James Cannon and other leading US Trotskyists had a wide-ranging debate on racism with Trotsky in Prinkipo, Turkey. This discussion ended with a call for a full discussion on the problem in the American movement. But the next time such a discussion took place was six years later, this time in Coyoacan, Mexico. In addition to Trotsky himself, the West Indian leader of the British Trotskyist movement, CLR James, who was spending six months in the United States studying the Negro question was also present. Generally the SWP only discussed racism when it was forced to, by pressure of events, by visiting black comrades such as James or by Trotsky. Trotsky, himself, condemned the SWP because at the time of their discussions in 1939 it had never published a pamphlet or a serious article on 'the Negro question'.

The black republic

Both of the discussions between Leon Trotsky and his US supporters took the form of debates between Trotsky and the SWP. Trotsky continually advocated that the SWP fight for the right for blacks to self-determination and to 'carve a Negro republic' out of the USA. The SWP members argued that the black and white working class were becoming increasingly integrated and that there was no national oppression in the United States.

Typically the left's comments on this debate



have been limited to arguments over whether Trotsky was right or wrong in the tactics he proposed. However, Trotsky's arguments for self-determination were not based on a detailed knowledge or experience of black oppression in the USA. Rather his outlook was dictated by the understanding that the SWP had sorely neglected the fight for black rights and adapted to the chauvinism of white workers and that the fight against racial oppression was a decisive factor in the class struggle in the United States. For Trotsky, any party which did not raise it as a major component of its propaganda and bring anti-racist politics to bear in its intervention in the working class was doomed to irrelevance.

Trotsky may well have been wrong about the practicalities of self-determination. He wrote at a time of mass migration to the northern states and at a time when, alongside persistent conflict and lynching, the unionisation of mass industries opened up wider possibilities than ever before for joint black/white strikes and solidarity. Trotsky was right, however, to point out to the American party that it had until then neglected black oppression and that it should make it a major priority.

Too little, too late

By the time that the articles published in this collection began to find a place in the SWP's propaganda it was too late. Widespread popular support for American entry into the war – even if most workers didn't want to make the wage sacrifices that the war effort entailed – showed that nationalist politics had already won out in the American working class.

Throughout the 'thirties and the war period it was – with a few exceptions – the Stalinists in the Communist Party who spread their influence furthest and fastest and remained the major political force among US militants. They achieved this despite the fact that their support for the war and for the Roosevelt government and their willingness to sell out the black struggle for the sake of US imperialism widely discredited the CP among black workers. Even in 1943, when the Communist Party told blacks not to defend themselves from marauding racists and police attacks but to go back to the factories and work for the war effort, the SWP made little headway among black workers.

If it had had a record of consistent struggle against racism from the 'thirties, things might have been different.

Kevin Green

Not bleak for ever

Mothobi Mutloatse, ed, *Africa South: contemporary writings*, African Writers Series No 243, Heinemann, London, 1981, pp208, pbk £1.95.

AFRICA SOUTH is an anthology of short stories originally published in 1980 by a radical South African publishing house, named Ravan Press. Mutloatse dedicates the book to two old African National Congress figures, Lilian Ngoyi and Fatima Meer, who, he says, 'forever inspire us lost souls azanian sons and daughters'. And 'lost souls' most of the writers represented in this book certainly are.

Despite its cover – Peter Magubane's well-known photo of Soweto students in action in the June 1976 uprising – this collection reflects little of how the fight against apartheid has developed over the last ten years. What the pieces here rather represent is the everyday reality of township life in large South African cities; and this they do very graphically. Stories like Bereng Setuke's 'Dumani', a description of the horrors of travelling by train between Johannesburg and Soweto, are clearly born out of personal experience. It is difficult to remain unaffected by tales like this or by Mtutuzeli Matshoba's 'To kill a man's pride', which describes the workings of the pass system and life in Soweto's sexually segregated hostels.

The trouble is that the authors, while familiar with the miserable lot of South Africa's black workers, have no real experience of the class struggle, or of the growth of trade union organisation and industrial militancy among blacks – particularly since 1974. This is hardly surprising, for most of the authors are employed in universities, white-owned newspapers or Harry Oppenheimer's Anglo-American Corporation; but what it means is that instead of being presented with an optimism born out of the upsurges of the past few years, we are given an almost timeless description of oppression and the drunkenness, violence and superstition it engenders. Cut off from the real movement of the masses, the authors can only offer us moving descriptions of ghetto life. Again and again, we watch a kind of idealised black man scratching out an existence in an unchanging apartheid world.

It is left to the liberal apologist, Bishop Desmond Tutu, to set the political seal on the collection. Just like the tribal chiefs of yesteryear, who regularly travelled to London to beseech of their king a few more democratic rights, the little Bishop writes to hardline Afrikaner, former Prime Minister John Vorster. Addressing him as 'a loving and caring father and husband, a doting grandfather who has experienced the joys and anguish of family life, its laughter and gaiety, its sorrows and pangs', Tutu begs, across the enormous divide of class and colour, for some reforms – 'before', he says, 'it is too late'.

The jacket quotes Nigerian author Kole Omotoso as saying that the creation of popular myths is 'an historical duty'. A duty for guilt-ridden South African liberals, perhaps; such people like to tuck up in bed and read vignettes of apartheid oppression. But the duty of black writers in South Africa is not to create myths, but to give some sense of truth. And the truth in South Africa demands that stories be told not only of the victims of apartheid but also of the growing movement to overthrow it.

Russell Osborne



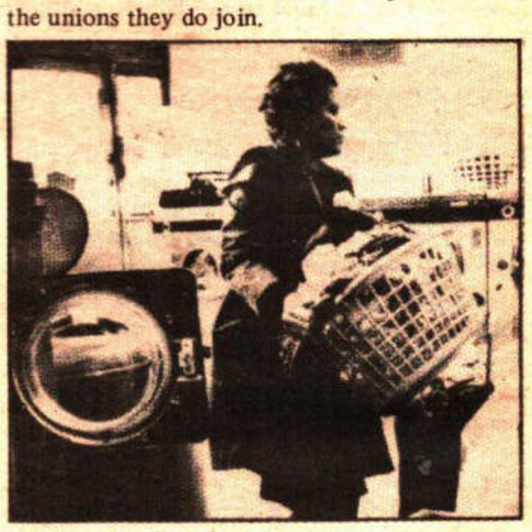
Women's burden

Hilary Land, *Parity begins at home*, Equal Opportunities Commission/Social Science Research Council, September 1981, pp37.

Valerie Ellis, *The role of trade unions in the promotion of equal opportunities*, EOC/SSRC, August 1981, pp37.

REARING CHILDREN, shopping, cooking and cleaning are hard work. Most women know this only too well. But these pamphlets, published by Britain's Equal Opportunities Commission, reveal that at least two women haven't a clue what to do about the burden of domestic work.

Household chores mean that women always get a bad deal when they go out to work: in 1978, for instance, an average of 36 per cent of unemployed women reported that they had left their job for 'domestic reasons'. Employers take advantage of women's family commitments to slot them into unskilled, low-paid jobs, into part-time work and out-work, and into seasonal employment. As Land notes, 'women and men do not compete on equal terms in the labour market'. Most women workers earn their pay in service sectors like retailing, teaching, nursing and catering. Most are both poorly unionised at work and weakly represented in the unions they do join.



Despite all this, feminists refuse to fight against domestic work. Indeed an old feminist idea, that the problem with domestic work is that it isn't accorded the same status as paid employment, has recently come into vogue once more – not only in Hilary Land's explicitly bourgeois tract, but also in the colour supplements (see, for example, 'Feminism: the revised version', *Sunday Times Colour Magazine*, 15 November 1981). It started with Vera Brittain (Shirley Williams' mother), who spent her inter-war years trying to win middle class housewives greater recognition for their labours (after all, they'd won the vote. . .); it continued in the Second World War and during the Attlee Government, when domestic toil came to be regarded as a vital contribution to the 'home front' and to the work of post-war reconstruction; it got a new lease of life with the petit-bourgeois 'Wages for Housework' grouplets of the 'seventies; now it's here again.

Land innocently asks whether, 'by emphasising achievement in the world of paid employment', we are 'further lowering the value placed on motherhood and caring'. This is just what Margaret Thatcher likes to hear. The virtues of the family, the need for women to work out their destinies there rather than in social production – these formed a major theme of the Queen's Speech in November. What better way of keeping unemployment figures down? The fact that Land sees 'men and the economic structures they create' as the problem, rather than Thatcher and the 'economic structure' she upholds, only confirms the incompatibility of feminism with socialism.

Valerie Ellis, by contrast, tries to have it both ways. She doesn't mind about the existence of domestic work, but she does want it shared equally between women and men. 'Some unions', she notes hopefully, 'are groping towards the concept of dual parental responsibility in relation to child care'; they are also, she says, 'advocating that employment conditions for all be made more flexible to facilitate domestic responsibilities'. Ellis misses the point. 'Domestic responsibilities', *no matter who fulfils them*, are, as Lenin put it, 'barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-wracking, stultifying and crushing' (*On the emancipation of women*). When men exhibit philistine attitudes towards domestic responsibilities they must be warned that they are acquiescing in their own oppression – but that must not become an excuse for accepting the necessity for domestic work.

Kate Marshall

LETTERS

Greek drama*

Please refrain from publishing potted histories and the inevitable glib analyses to which they give rise. I refer specifically to your article on Greece – it was extremely irritating, given that country's long and complex history and its undoubted political importance today, to see it merit little more than half a page's consideration in your paper.

In particular I was amazed to see seven years of fascist dictatorship explained away in a mere paragraph. No mention of the US. No mention of Cyprus. Possibly you did not see their significance, but the majority of Greeks did, and do, and the experience of 1967-74 has a crucial bearing on the nature of the progressive movement of today.

Anyway, rather than submit a list of criticisms which would be as long as *the next step* itself I will confine myself to this.

Like it or not, the Greek left has the support of a majority of the working people. That's why it got nearly 60 per cent of the vote. Active members and supporters of the Pasok and CPG are ordinary men and women, workers and peasants.

Might I suggest that the people of Greece (who do, after all, *live* there) can do without the benefit of the advise of your good selves.

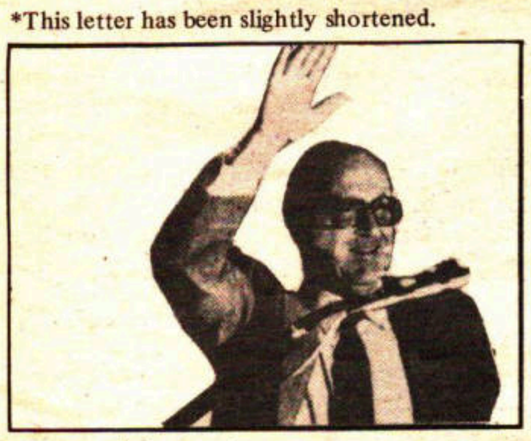
Finally, in response to your statement that 'it is urgent a revolutionary party is built': I note that you conveniently ignore the existence of a number of 'ultra-left' groups built along much the same lines as your own 'Revolutionary Communist Party'. Perhaps you don't know them. That wouldn't be surprising – their impact on the working class there amounts to the same as yours here – precisely nothing.

All the same, I would suggest that, rather than trying to understand the complexities of Greek politics, your talents would be better employed in attempting to analyse why the Greek 'ultra-left' has consistently failed to make any advances whatsoever.

You may well get away with half a page and who knows? You may even learn something!

Marya Durham
Brockley
South London

*This letter has been slightly shortened.



Andrew Clarkson **writes:**
What our correspondent is really angry about is our exposure of the pro-capitalist politics of Greek social democracy. Her criticisms of the shortness of the article, its brief treatment of fascism and its neglect of a large number of other issues all arise out of a sense of outrage at our criticisms of Pasok's programme.

Certainly the Greek left won the majority support among the working people – otherwise Papandreou would not have come to power. But the question for socialists is – can the programme of the left advance the interests of Greek workers and peasants? Our judgement is that Pasok's commitment to strengthening Greek capitalism and its compromising stance in relation to the dominant imperialist powers in NATO and the EEC will lead Papandreou's regime to attack the very people who put it in power. Our correspondent ignores these vital questions. For her it is enough that people who live in Greece vote for Pasok.

We would very much like to hear of any left-wing groups in Greece that fought against Pasok in the recent election 'along the same lines' that the RCP has challenged social democracy in Britain. We strongly suspect they don't exist. The problem with the 'ultra-left' throughout Europe is its adaptation to the revival of social democracy: in Britain it backs Benn, in France, Mitterand, and in Greece, Papandreou. This is why unlike the RCP, this 'ultra-left' has consistently failed to make any advances whatsoever.

Finally we too have a suggestion. We would welcome an account from our correspondent of the benefits of the Pasok regime for the Greek working class. It will be very brief.



SWP controversies

Your disgusting article 'Socialist Workers Party in conference' (*the next step*, No 18, November 1981) was a monument of lies and distortions. Our record on Ireland is second to none. In case you don't know, it is *the SWP* that's organising the coming labour movement conference in February!

PF
Liverpool

Pat Roberts **writes:**
The much heralded conference 'Ireland – time for Tory policies to go' has already been postponed twice, no doubt due to other pressing priorities. But in any case the title of your conference speaks for itself. It is not being built around an anti-imperialist platform – rather it promises a vague discussion about 'withdrawal'. It is yet another tired attempt to unite with the Labour party.

'Socialist Workers Party in conference' (*the next step*, No 18, November 1981) was excellent! When I was in the SWP I worked with the party in Walthamstow, Bangor and Wrexham. In every branch it was the same experience. When I left the SWP I thought that the party lacked drive and a clear direction. Having read your article it is clear that the SWP *does* have a clear direction. And that direction is towards the labour bureaucrats even at the expense of the interests of the rank and file. Even their post-conference report backs you up where it says that some experienced trade unionists have become increasingly tied to union positions (although unable to win their members to activity) and have tended to slip from general SWP activity' (*Socialist Worker*, 14 November). Too true!

DF
Manchester

We do not need *the next step* to tell us that the SWP is far from perfect. Many comrades recognise that the party leadership is a bit opportunist. We recognise that recently we have slipped too close to the Labour Party. We also know that our Irish work is weak. But we are not prepared to sit on the sidelines and make sectarian criticisms. For in the end the SWP retains its basic strengths as a revolutionary working class organisation. What we have to do is return the SWP to its past tradition. As we see it, you have a choice. You can join us and become a valuable ally in the fight for International Socialism or you can maintain your purity in splendid isolation.

Name and address supplied.

Pat Roberts **writes:**
The healthy revolutionary past of the SWP is a myth. The SWP has not moved from left to right. All that has changed are the tactics through which the SWP has adapted to the labour bureaucracy. Don't take our word for it – just look at the past record. If you think the SWP has 'slipped too close to the Labour Party' today, you would have been positively shocked in the early 'sixties. In the run-up to the 1964 general election the International Socialists (forerunners of today's SWP) called for 'Labour to power – with socialist policies' and 'socialist policies' meant that 'a Labour government should be prepared to establish import controls' (*Young Guard*, October 1969). This was no slip of the pen – even a cursory study of the SWP tradition shows its consistent adaptation to reformism.

U-turn at PCL

Students at the Polytechnic of Central London are well known for their willingness to take direct action over cuts or political issues such as Ireland. It was not surprising then that when students discovered that the authorities intended to freeze posts, close down courses and push through redundancies a call for an immediate occupation to block their plans came up at a union meeting. What was surprising was that SWP student members at PCL *opposed* the occupation.

The SWP blocked this rank and file initiative because its members on the students' union executive have just become involved in a 'joint union council' with bureaucrats representing other unions with members in the Poly (NATFHE, NALGO, etc). The officials wanted to wait to see if all the unions could be persuaded to back action against the cuts. The SWP, anxious to preserve its united front with the bureaucrats, called for a postponement of rank and file action. It also opposed various militant forms of direct action – such as disrupting the work of the ILEA auditor – on the grounds that this would damage relations with the union officials.

So the SWP joined with the Tories to oppose an occupation against the cuts. Although the national leadership of the SWP later reversed the position of its PCL members, the incident reveals its general tendency to subordinate its 'rank and file' rhetoric to its desire for unity with the bureaucrats – even at the cost of sabotaging action in defence of jobs and living standards.

Farouk
PCL



'We didn't really mean it...'

When the *Hackney Gazette* followed up a petition raised by the East London Smash the PTA Campaign, and signed by a number of local Labour Party dignitaries, calling on Hackney Council to erect 'a monument to the dead hunger strikers in the forecourt of the Town Hall', they got the following reactions:

Ernie Roberts (Labour MP, Hackney North) 'I do not remember signing this petition; it does not ring a bell at all, and I do not want you to mention my name in connection with this.' Then as the *Gazette* went to press, he announced that he wished to *withdraw* his name from the petition: 'I could not support such an idea without the agreement of my local party', adding that he was unaware that the RCP was involved. (He has in the past written to the RCP supporting SPTAC initiatives.)

Ron Heisler (left Labour councillor) 'The petition I read and signed did not contain that sentence – I am absolutely sure of that. If it had done I would not have put my name to it because the whole idea is absurd.'

Bella Callaghan (Labour councillor) 'I am quite positive that was not on it and I would not have signed if it was. I read the petition carefully before signing and I would be prepared to take legal action about this.'

Patrick Kodikara (left Labour councillor) 'There was nothing about erecting a monument on the petition and I would not have signed it otherwise. Such a monument would have no special significance in Hackney.'

We are disappointed that these Labour politicians are crying off – presumably they thought we treated the Irish struggle with as little seriousness as they seem to. But we are pressing ahead with our plans nonetheless. We have already shown a preliminary sketch of how the monument would look on Thames TV. We will be stepping up our lobbying of the Council and expect to have 500 signatures when we present the petition to its November meeting.

The idea for the monument was taken from the Polish workers who last year erected a statue to their comrades murdered by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1970. What more appropriate tribute to the ten hunger strikers murdered by the British state than a monument in front of our Town Hall? We hope people in other parts of the country will follow our example.

The Labour left can't have it both ways. They like to be seen to be sympathetic to the Irish struggle...and then turn round and condemn it. If they *do* support self-determination for the Irish people they must support it all the way. Having got themselves into a mess, these four Labour politicians should *either* come straight and say they back official Labour policy (ie the same as Tory policy), *or* join us in fighting for the monument. We hope they choose the latter. But if Bella Callaghan wants to back out, we hope she has the courage of her convictions this time around and *does* proceed to take legal action against us.

Paul Saunders
Hackney Smash the PTA Campaign

Women for communism

NOT SINCE the early 1920s has a revolutionary party taken up women's oppression as a vital working class issue. The Communist International's activity against women's oppression had two guiding principles. First, that communism was a precondition for the liberation of women, because it was capitalism that held women in subjection. And second, that the solutions offered by the feminists and the reformists would not only fail to bring communism, but also would betray women. Clara Zetkin warned the Third Congress in 1921 of the dangers of feminism and social democracy:

'Every sort of alliance of working women with bourgeois feminism, (as well as any support by the women workers for the treacherous tactics of the social compromisers and opportunists), leads to the undermining of the forces of the proletariat, delaying thereby the triumph of the social revolution and the advent of communism, and thus also postponing the great hour of women's ultimate liberation.'

It is in this spirit of the communist tradition that a group has been set up in Manchester called 'Women for Communism'. All other parties and organisations which deal with the issue, for example the SWP's *Women's Voice* and Socialist Organiser's *Women's Fightback*, derive from a separate tradition – the tradition of feminism. These organisations proudly state that they have much to learn from the Women's Liberation Movement, that 'sexism' and 'patriarchy' are indeed problems for the working class. At the same time they contemptuously dismiss the scientific understanding of women's oppression under capitalism developed by 'old men' like Marx, Engels and Lenin. By adapting to the feminists, the left has undermined its ability to take on the other class-collaborators – the reformists and the trade union leaders.

'Women for Communism' has three main objectives. We aim to develop and expound the Marxist analysis of women's oppression, to fight for the politics which flow from this understanding in the labour movement, and through challenging feminism, reformism and the radical left, forge an independent movement that can take women to communism. Join us!

Kate Marshall
Women for Communism
Box 33
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Hanging Ditch
Manchester M4 3BD

JOBS EXPRESS

Jobs not trains!

Life is bad enough for the million unemployed youth in Britain today. But because they are a burden and a threat to the British establishment – and that includes the official labour movement – they have to put up with a lot more than meagre benefits and bleak prospects. The young unemployed are also the objects of a vast exercise in suppression and containment. The TUC and the Labour Party cooperate closely with employers and the government in bogus training and work experience programmes to keep youth off the streets. Tightly regulated unemployed workers' centres are the trade union machine's special contribution to maintaining law and order. The 'Jobs Express', a train carrying selected unemployed young people on a tour of unemployment black spots, is the latest stunt in the TUC's campaign to contain the anger and frustration of the young unemployed.

PERHAPS THE ONLY growth industry in the country, apart from the Princess of Wales, is the 'in depth' analysis of the younger generation. *The Observer* added a fine distinction to the debate raging in the press and on television – between 'youth' and 'young people'. 'Youth' only appear in public at juvenile court, in Department of Employment statistics and on '*Youth* Opportunities Programmes'. 'Young people' wear jeans that don't fit and queue to sing 'Rule Britannia' at the Proms. 'Youth' tend to get involved in riots; 'young people' don't. The question is how to turn 'youth' into 'young people'. This is a problem that the TUC is as eager to resolve as the Tories.

In fact the trade union leaders are even more afraid of rising youth unemployment than are the employers. Apart from the concern about social stability the TUC shares with the CBI, the union bureaucrats have the added anxiety of declining membership and weakening bargaining power. Hence Len Murray's insistence last summer that 'the TUC has not looked for a fight with the CBI' and his desperate plea that 'we will work with anybody to get three million unemployed back into useful jobs'. The summer riots have prompted the CBI to take a greater interest in the problems of unemployment. At their November conference the employers decided to invite the TUC to join an unemployment action group which could 'formulate proposals on how to minimise unemployment and its costs'.

YOP control

The main sphere of cooperation among unions, employers and the Government is in the massive Youth Opportunities Programme which signed up its millionth out-of-work youth in October. The TUC has been the most active sponsor of this scheme ever since it began in 1977. Its mainstay is the 'work experience on employers' premises' programme (WEEP) in which young people are taken on by employers at £23.50 a week for six months. Little in the way of useful skills is acquired – but it keeps youth off street corners and initiates them into the discipline of the factory system. However, apart from the fact that most YOP 'trainees' are back on the street after six months, the scheme has embarrassed its trade union sponsors by encouraging employers either to substitute their existing workers with YOP youths or to push their wages down towards the £23.50 mark.

The oppressive terms and conditions prevailing on YOP schemes have led many young people simply to boycott them; others have taken militant action against them. The first YOP strike took place in Strathclyde last year after a threatened walkout in Liverpool; the most concerted action has taken place in the north east. One NUPE official issued a sombre warning that the bureaucrats there might lose their grip if the Employment Secretary did not raise the YOP rates:

'This demonstration is one of the last hopes they have got. The way Mr Prior is talking, it seems that he's not about to increase the allowances. If that happens, even NUPE will not be able to control what these youngsters do.' (*The Guardian*, 14 July 1981)

The focus of trade union involvement in YOP has now shifted towards the recruitment of trainees into the unions. One TGWU bureaucrat John Mallinder candidly explained why:

'There is a big danger. Let's face it, if a lad is on the dole, and he knows a bit of bricklaying and so on from being on one of these schemes, he will set up on his own.

'He may be anti-trade union in his attitude, because he may feel that the union didn't come forward and help him before. That's why we have got to get on to these schemes.' (*The News Line*, 10 September)

The bureaucrats want to organise the unemployed, not to fight for their right to a job or full pay, but because they fear that otherwise the unemployed might compete with their members for jobs.

The big unions have set about carving up the YOP schemes on a regional basis: NUPE – north east, TGWU – north west, etc. The bureaucrats in turn have enlisted the support of the Militant Tendency and the Labour Party Young Socialists in their drive to bring YOP trainees under more direct trade union control. With the TUC's rallying call of £30 a week for all YOP trainees, the bureaucrats hope to prevent the young unemployed from becoming a threat to the organised workers and to contain their resentment against the schemes. £30 a week will scarcely allow trainees to keep up with inflation: it still is way below the average wage rate for young workers. If anything is likely to promote anti-trade union attitudes it is this sort of manipulation of the unemployed.

Control centres

To cater for these youths who avoid the clutches of the various schemes of the Manpower Services Commission, the trade union leaders have promoted the establishment of 'centres for the unemployed'. So far more than 70 have been set up around the country, especially since the riots gave a new impetus to the campaign. When the TUC launched its drive to set up centres for the unemployed this time last year, Len Murray reflected on the preoccupations of the bureaucracy:

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

The answer was through centres tightly administered and controlled by senior trade union officials.

The TUC is solidly committed to keeping left-wing politics away from the unemployed. The TUC does not intend that its centres should organise resistance against redundancies, fight for jobs or better conditions for the unemployed. No, for the TUC the centres have the function of encouraging people to acquiesce to the conditions of their oppression. 'TUC centres provide practical advice, education and representation for unemployed people', said an official spokesman last June, 'they help to overcome the loneliness of being unemployed'. The best way to overcome the effects of unemployment is through fighting it. Len Murray's slick paternalism urges the unemployed to get used to their plight, while concealing the failure of the labour bureaucracy to do anything serious to help the unemployed.

Any centre that steps outside the rigid limits of TUC policy faces proscription. The TUC can block the funds provided through the MSC and local authorities and make sure that local trade unions cease to support the centre. Centres in many areas have already come up against the heavy hand of the TUC, usually exercised through Communist Party hacks in the lower levels of the bureaucracy. The centre in Hull has been struck off the approved list.

Bread and circuses

The TUC has paved the way for a further onslaught on the living standards of the unemployed by its constant harping on about the 'immense costs on society' caused by unemployment.

'The direct cost to the Exchequer in terms of additional expenditure on social security benefits, the loss of national insurance payments, the lost tax revenues is about £6 billion in a full year at current level of unemployment. These costs are rising. For every 100 000 adults becoming jobless, it will cost the Exchequer at least an additional £250m.' (20 October)

If the TUC is so worried about the cost to the Government it has little cause for complaint as the Government reduces its costs by cutting benefits to the unemployed. But if they're going to get even less bread, then they'll need more circuses. Organising diversions for the unemployed is becoming a TUC speciality.

The 'Jobs for Youth' campaign – of which the 'Jobs Express' is the first major initiative – follows the 'People's March' and the 'People's Campaign for Jobs' earlier in the year. The TUC hopes through these activities to monopolise protest against youth unemployment and defuse its militant potential. Thus one of the campaign organisers tells us that in Wolverhampton the local campaign has, since the People's March, organised 'a rock concert, a barge-haul, a weekend festival and a flag day' (*Comment*, 14 November). But what has it done about unemployment? The Jobs Express follows this tradition of apolitical events: even the demonstration in London at the end of the tour has been organised to prevent any link with the fight against unemployment.

According to the TUC, the aim of the march and rally is 'to create a festive atmosphere which will attract a wide range of people both young and old and give them the opportunity to demonstrate their concern for a problem that touches on the lives of everybody in this country' (*Campaign bulletin*, No 2).

Who cares about giving a lot of media personalities, liberals, Tory wets and priests 'an opportunity to demonstrate their concern'? We want to give the young unemployed an opportunity to voice their anger and frustration, not create a 'festive atmosphere' for London's wealthy. And we want the opportunity to kick the official labour movement into doing something practical to force the Government to provide jobs or full pay for the unemployed, instead of making pious gestures and organising rock concerts.

At present most of the left of the labour movement trails on behind the TUC. The Socialist Workers Party tacked its Right to Work Campaign first behind the People's March and now behind the Jobs Express, and it lets the bureaucrats dictate the political terms. Any fight for jobs and decent pay for the young unemployed demands a break with the cynical manoeuvres of the TUC. It means fighting for trade unionisation – at trade union rates of pay on YOP schemes. It means unemployed workers' centres that fight for the unemployed, instead of keeping them quiet on behalf of the bureaucracy. And it means an end to 'people's' charades like the Jobs Express, and the beginning of a broad workers' fight against all the evils of unemployment.

RCP Activities

LONDON

Preparing for power

Polish workers strike against the regime. . .queues grow longer and more angry. . .Walesa and Jaruzelski appeal for food parcels to prevent 'a catastrophe'. . .Soviet bureaucrats get restless. What's going on in Eastern Europe? Come to the last in our present education series for this vital discussion. **Speaker:** Gareth Evans

Monday 7 December
Polytechnic of Central London, Student union building, room 1F, Bolsover St, London W1 (nearest tube: Great Portland St). £1 entrance. Phone 274 3951 for details.

East London WAR meets regularly on alternate Wednesdays at 7pm to discuss and organise local anti-racist activities. Fight against deportations and racist violence! Next meeting 9 December. *City of London Poly, Calcutta House, Old Castle St, London E1.*

East London SPTAC meets every Sunday at 2pm. Come and build support for the Irish struggle and opposition to the PTA. Contact sellers of *the next step* for details of venue or phone 274 3951.

COVENTRY

Public meetings:

- **Smashing the apartheid state.** Thursday 3 December, 7.30pm. *Warwick University, Students union building.*
- **Feminism or communism?** Speaker: Kate Marshall. Monday 7 December, 7.30pm. *Cinematograph Club, 689 Foleshill Rd, Edgewick, Coventry.*

Bradford 12 support committee meeting. Sunday 6 and Thursday 10 December. Mobilise for the national demonstration in Bradford. Drop the charges against the Bradford 12! See sellers of *the next step* for details of venue.

Coventry Smash the PTA Campaign meets on alternate Mondays at 7.30pm. The next meeting to discuss Ireland and organise activities is on 14 December. Contact sellers of *the next step* for details.

MANCHESTER

Fighting for gay rights. Public meeting. Speaker: Alex Farrell. Thursday 3 December. *Manchester University students union building, Oxford Rd.* 7.30pm.

If you want to fight against women's oppression then come to our **Women for communism** group which meets every Monday evening at 7pm. Contact sellers of *the next step* or write for details: Box 33, 164-166 Corn Exchange Building, Hanging Ditch, Manchester M4.

Remember Bloody Sunday!
January 1972: 13 unarmed civilians gunned down by the British army in Derry. Protest at British imperialism's rule over Ireland. Remember Bloody Sunday! The Smash the PTA Campaign will be mobilising for the demonstration called by Provisional Sinn Fein on **31 January 1982.** Phone 01-274 3951 for details.