

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

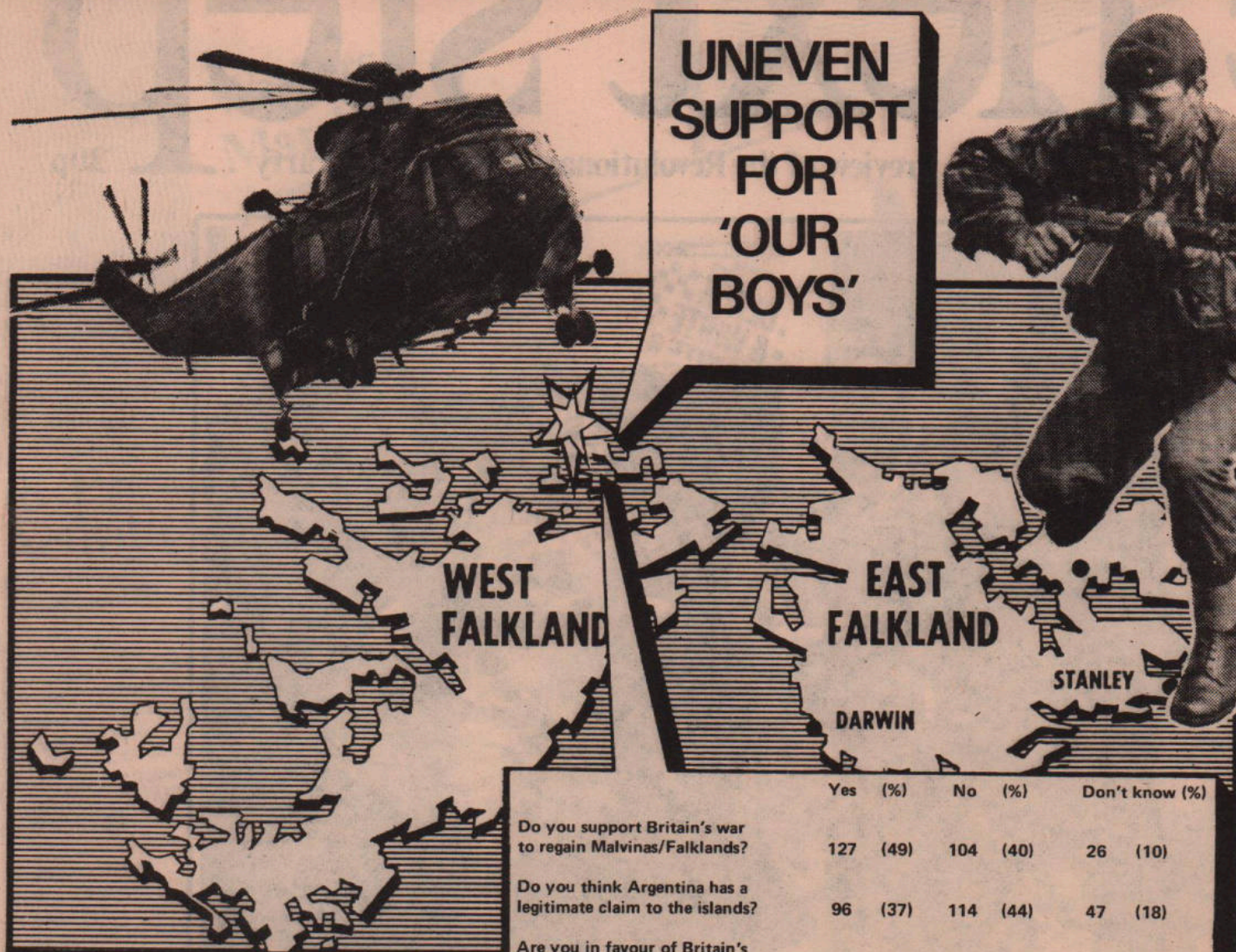
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TOGETHER... WE CAN WIN

RACISM DIVIDES AND WEAKENS THE WORKING CLASS
IF THE UNIONS DON'T FIGHT RACISM THEY WON'T FIGHT ANYTHING
MARCH TO THE TUC!
TURN THE UNIONS INTO FIGHTING ANTI-RACIST ORGANISATIONS

WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM LONDON - TUC IN BRIGHTON 4-8 SEPTEMBER



Argies red cro ship co

THE Argentines may be phoney hospital ship to their garrison on the Falkland. The Task Force have been v be on the lookout for the Bahia Paraiso which is be inside the 200-mile war. The junta transport ship has crosses painted on her side claimed she is being used for reasons only. But the British fear she may ing troops and supplies to ti — and the navy have been to board her if sighted.

QUEEN LASHES ARGIES

Continued from Page One
the cause of freedom.
"The conflict in the Falkland Islands was thrust on us by naked aggression and we are naturally proud of the

ing shown b can people. And she t dent: "We l the honesty, skill with w performed y as ally and

Forty per cent of British people opposed Britain's war against Argentina; 44 per cent supported Argentina's claim to sovereignty over the Malvinas. And 16 per cent were in favour of Britain's defeat. These are the remarkable findings of an opinion poll specially commissioned by the next step at the height of the war in the South Atlantic.

THE SURVEY covered a representative cross-section of council housing estates in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Coventry and Sheffield. In all, 257 questionnaires were completed. The answers showed a consistent pattern in all areas of the country, as the pooled figures indicate.

Our survey suggests that the extent of working class support for the war claimed by Tory spokesmen, bourgeois commentators and radicals alike has been greatly exaggerated. Official opinion polls claimed 70-80 per cent backing for Britain. In our survey, less than half supported the task force and even less, 37 per cent, thought Britain had a legitimate claim to the Malvinas. Most significantly, a surprisingly large minority of the poll, 16 per cent, actually wanted to see Britain defeated by Argentina.

The British left has been outraged by the jingoism of the popular press during the war and is regularly to be found lamenting its pernicious influence on working class opinion. (It is, after all, easier to moan about the pro-imperialism of the bourgeois media than it is to fight for an anti-imperialist position through the media of the left.) But our survey shows that the left need not get so depressed about *The Sun* and the BBC perverting working class consciousness: most workers don't believe a word of it.

Well over half our sample, 56 per cent, said they did not believe media reports of the war.

the next step survey, like all the best opinion polls, confirms our suspicions. Far from being swept by a wave of jingoism, most workers were ambivalent towards the South Atlantic war. While the gutter press whipped up support for the war among the most right-wing sections of the working class, there remained a large body of opinion which opposed the war. There is an audience for anti-imperialist politics in Britain: what it requires is leadership as determined and decisive as that given by Margaret Thatcher to British chauvinists.

Nick Jenkins

the next step

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Labour's crisis ~workers' opportunity

THE SOUTH ATLANTIC war has speeded up the polarisation of British society. The Conservative Government, having pursued a consistent policy and ruthlessly implemented it, is now enjoying the fruits of victory. The Tories have rallied middle class and substantial working class backing, to give them broader popular support than at any time since their election to office in 1979. The Social Democratic Party has been marginalised and the Labour Party seems to have been precipitated into terminal decline.

Labour won no credit for its vacillations over the war. The right supported the war – but always wanted the softer military option. Some of the left opposed all the military options, demanding that the war be fought with economic sanctions. All sections of the party took refuge at the United Nations, which they wanted to fight the war on Britain's behalf. This approach provided no alternative either for the Government or the labour movement. The ruling class was confident of military victory, so why settle for less? Workers wanted answers to the Tory justifications for the war and a strategy for stopping it. Labour is paying the price for its irrelevance in declining electoral support.

The squeeze on Labour

The triumphant Tory re-conquest of the Malvinas has compounded the long-standing problems in the Labour Party resulting from the impact of the recession. The desperate plight of British capitalism dictates a hard-line attack on the working class. The Government leads a relentless drive to shake out jobs, hold down wages and curb trade union rights. As we see on the railways (see page 7), it is a strategy that leaves little scope for the labour bureaucracy to carry out its traditional functions of mediation and conciliation between employers and workers. On the other hand the severity of the onslaught has thrown the working class on the defensive. Under the burden of three or four million unemployed, the trade unions and the Labour Party appear increasingly useless to many workers. While many are still ready to take on the fight for jobs and wages, others have become cynical about the future.

The most striking feature of Labour's crisis is its crisis of leadership. After his performance over the Malvinas, Michael Foot commands respect neither in the country nor in his own party. But the pathetic figure of Foot conceals a deeper crisis of policy. In his recent attempt to rally support for his position, Foot commended Labour's 'realistic policies for economic expansion'. But the depth of Britain's crisis means that Labour's schemes of state intervention to revive the national economy have little hope of success: even Labour's policy makers seem unable to take them seriously. There has been a steady retreat from the

more optimistic aspects of the 'alternative economic strategy'.

Even on some of its more popular policies, there are already clear signs of the party backing down. Even though Britain's humiliation by the EEC over the common agricultural policy opens up new possibilities for mobilising populist hostility to Europe, Labour's increasingly sober realism holds it back. Leading left-winger Eric Heffer and AES theoretician Bob Rowthorn have both recognised that the EEC is vital for British capitalism and that immediate withdrawal is not a viable proposition. And while CND can still mobilise hundreds of thousands for nuclear disarmament, Foot hedged at a recent press conference on whether Labour's next manifesto would contain pledges to close American nuclear bases and to block the siting of cruise missiles in Britain. Britain's defence needs in an increasingly insecure world weigh heavily on Labour's patriotic disarmers.

Left in a mess

The Militant Tendency is the unfortunate victim of the build-up of bourgeois pressure on the Labour Party in the absence of any significant countervailing influence on the party from the working class. Militant exemplifies the plight of the Labour left. It is constrained within the Labour Party, having to take responsibility for its past and present failures and all its reactionary policies. But it cannot exist independently of the Labour Party. Hence Militant's cringing response to the recent National Executive decision to introduce a list of approved organisations, for which Militant, as presently constituted, would not qualify. Its leaders indicated their willingness to do virtually anything short of appointing Roy Hattersley as editor of *Militant* to preserve their parasitic relationship to the Labour Party.

The weakness of the Labour left is borne out by its endorsement of the witchhunt against Militant. So far both the Labour Coordinating Committee and *Tribune* have acquiesced to the new approved list, effectively backing Foot's drive to expel Militant. Inside the party, the left is isolated and impotent. Tony Benn could only swing a couple of dozen MPs to his anti-war posture; his attempts to commit the Labour Party to the abolition of the House of Lords or to a detailed debate on the next manifesto at Conference were defeated by Foot.

Outside the party the left has failed to establish a relationship with any section of the working class. Last year the Labour Coordinating Committee launched a drive to build in the unions and to set up workplace branches. Nothing came of this strategy, not surprisingly, in view of its support for incomes policy and its deference to the trade union leaders. This year the LCC has adopted a new tack: it has given up on the working class in a turn to try to consolidate Labour's new base among the liberal, state-employed

professional middle classes (the LCC's *Labour and mass politics* is reviewed on page 22). The new approach is a synthesis of Liberal Party community politics and the broad democratic platitudes of Eurocommunism. This might salvage some support for the Labour Party – it won't do anything for the working class.

Downturn to despair

What remains of the left outside the Labour Party is just as dependent as the entryists on the survival of their ailing host. As the Labour Party has shifted to the right over the past couple of years, the left has continually restricted its activity within the bounds of what is acceptable to the labour bureaucracy. The debacle of the left's response to the South Atlantic war – when it refused to mobilise any movement against British imperialism independent of the pro-imperialist positions of the Labour left – is the outcome of a long process of collaboration.

The Socialist Workers Party provides the clearest example of the demoralisation of the radical left. Ever since the Tories won the last election it has been lamenting 'the downturn' in working class militancy, sucking up to the Labour left and proclaiming that 'now is not the time' to take independent initiatives. When Irish hunger strikers were dying last year, the SWP decided that the time was not right to build an Irish solidarity campaign in Britain. As racial attacks from the state and from racists and fascists have mounted, the SWP has run down the Anti-Nazi League. While the offensive on women's rights gathered momentum, it seized the time to disband its Women's Voice groups. Even the Right to Work Campaign's activities have been strictly tailored to fit into the token protests against unemployment organised by the TUC, the Communist Party and the Labour Party Young Socialists.

The SWP's latest response to 'the downturn' is to abandon its 'rank and file' groups in the unions. As Tony Cliff argues in the latest issue of *Socialist Review* 'you can't have a rank and file movement if the factories are empty'. Cliff sternly admonishes his members for their efforts to build the party through trade union activity. Now is not the time for such ambitious work – he has much more humble aims:

'If we stop pretending that we are something bigger than we really are, we will actually become more enthusiastic socialists and better trade unionists.'

Now is not the time to build a party in opposition to Labour – Cliff wants to limit the SWP's perspectives to what is necessary to keep up the enthusiasm and basic trade union activity of the members.

The abject pessimism of the British left is totally unjustified. The crisis of the Labour Party opens up enormous oppor-

tunities for building a working class alternative to labourism. Labour's lack of confidence in its basic policies, the degree of fragmentation of its organisation and its enormous loss of working class support all indicate better conditions for challenging reformism than have existed for half a century.

Now is the time

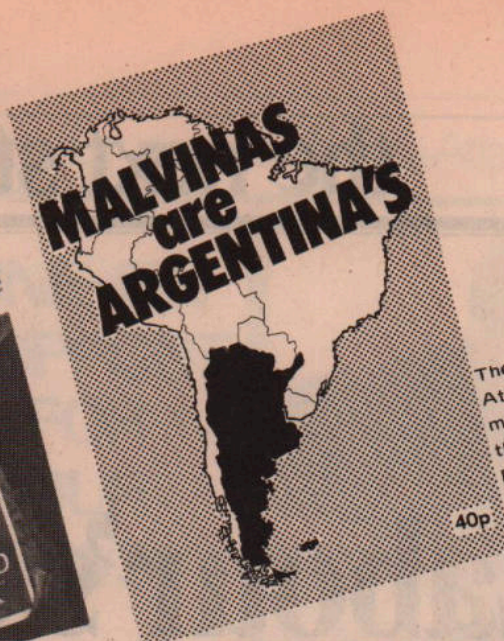
In the trade union field, the recent spate of strikes in the public sector shows that workers are ready to take on the Government – and their union officials – to defend their living standards. The positive response of workers in the NHS dispute to the politics of the RCP (see pages 8 and 9) reveal the potential for breaking the conservative grip of the bureaucracy on major sections of the working class.

More importantly, the South Atlantic war has shown the growing significance of international issues for domestic politics. The 'Falklands factor' may have helped the Tories in the short-term; but as our opinion poll reveals there is a crucial section of working class opinion that is open to anti-imperialist politics.

Instead of trying to give a lead to the more class-conscious workers, the left, terrified of being isolated, chose to hang in there with the Labour left. Every radical left group still hopes that some of the mould will crumble in its direction. Over the Malvinas the radical left fudged its formal anti-imperialist positions and proclaimed to the world a hysterical anti-Thatcherism and a soft pacifism. This was the price of unity with the Labour left. The result was that the radical left was dragged along behind the Labour Party's patriotic non-opposition to the war. The confusion of working class opinion was compounded and potential resistance to the war was paralysed. Nothing could expose better the dead end of the radical left's 'united front' approach to the Labour Party.

As the Labour Party stagnates and the witchhunt gathers momentum the left will concentrate its energies on trying to save the Labour Party. But who needs the Labour Party? The tremendous response to the Workers March Against Racism from throughout the labour movement shows that it is possible to win support for working class politics from working class people. We desperately need a party that will really fight for working class interests in the grim times that lie ahead. If we can build such a party now, why waste time and energy trying to salvage a party that has consistently betrayed working class interests from the day it was founded?

The Workers March Against Racism will provide the main focus for RCP activity throughout the summer. The Preparing for Power conference in September will provide a forum for discussion of the great issues of war and the class struggle today. Join us!



The RCP's pamphlet on the South Atlantic war, focusing on the myth of Argentine fascism and the real relationship between Britain and Argentina. Send 60p for p&p to BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX.

THE MALVINAS ARE ARGENTINA'S THE PROPAGANDA WAR

The Falkland Islands: the facts, HMSO, 50p, pp12.

The Workers Revolutionary Party, Defeat British imperialism: the enemy is at home!, 30p, pp16.

Anthony Arblaster, *The Falklands: Thatcher's war, Labour's guilt*, Socialist Society, 90p, pp19.

Ted Grant, *Falklands crisis: a socialist answer*, Militant, 15p, pp7.

THE GOVERNMENT'S pamphlet *The Falkland Islands: the facts* is boldly produced and confidently presented. It contains a clear advocacy of the interests of the British ruling class. This is how it begins:

'The invasion of the Falkland Islands by Argentine Armed Forces on 2 April, followed by the military occupation of South Georgia, was an act of unprovoked aggression – a clear violation of international law and of the fundamental principles of settlement of disputes by peaceful means and of self-determination of peoples, both of which are enshrined in the UN Charter.'

And this is how it ends:

'Britain remains fully committed to the search for a diplomatic solution to the crisis, which is obviously preferable to military confrontation. Nevertheless, failing such a solution, Britain is fully justified in exercising her inherent right. Her use of military force is governed by the principles of necessity and the use of force proportionate to the threat, as required by international law. British forces have been deployed with the sole limited objective of securing, with minimum casualties on both sides, the withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Islands, as called for by Security Council Resolution 502. They form part of the graduated pressure – diplomatic, economic and military – to induce Argentina to return to the negotiating table.'

This sums up the arguments with which Thatcher won the war at home hands down. When we turn to look at some of the opposition we begin to see why it was so easy.

'British imperialism = Thatcher'

The best of the three left-wing pamphlets is the WRP's. It begins by claiming, with typical bombast, to be 'the only political organisation in the workers' movement to totally oppose the Thatcher Government's imperialist aggression against Argentina'. This is true in the same sense as the Stalinists' claim that the *Morning Star* is the 'only daily paper of the left'. The strength of the pamphlet is its grasp of some of the ABCs of the Marxist tradition which the rest of the left cannot comprehend: Britain is an imperialist country, Argentina is a country dominated by imperialism, British socialists should, therefore, support Argentina against Britain whatever the nature of the Argentine regime. So far so good.

The great weakness of the pamphlet, however, is how it tries to blur the distinction between its formal anti-

imperialist position and the outlook of left-wingers in the Labour Party who opposed Thatcher's war strategy but broadly endorsed British objectives in the South Atlantic. It achieves this by redefining British imperialism as the Thatcher Government. By focusing on the personality of Margaret Thatcher, whose photograph features prominently on the front of this pamphlet, the WRP gives credibility to the only visible alternative government – the pro-imperialist Labour Party.

The WRP often appears paranoid and slightly zany. Towards the end of this pamphlet it issues the following sombre warning:

'Thatcher is assembling the nucleus of a junta in Britain; her inner cabinet, high-ranking Whitehall officials, the service chiefs and chief constables and her ardent supporters in the suburbs. Her aim is to weld these elements into a force which will follow in the footsteps of the notorious German 'Frei Corps' – the predecessors of the SS.'

However, while the WRP talks big about the need for 'a workers' revolutionary government based on community councils', its real objectives are much more down to earth. The emphasis of this pamphlet is on the need to oust the Tories; they could then be replaced by a Labour Party in which the WRP's idols Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone and others of their ilk would play a major role. But this would not bring any nearer the defeat of British imperialism which this pamphlet urges in its title. The pro-imperialist politics of the Labour left would ensure that Britain's domination of the backward capitalist world remained secure.

Academic chauvinism

The worst of these pamphlets is that written by Anthony Arblaster for the Socialist Society. The Socialist Society is a discussion circle newly set up by the editorial board of the *New Left Review*: it incorporates the British children of May '68, now rapidly reaching senility, the feminist fragments, some left-behind Eurocommunists and all the clapped-out intellectuals of British socialism. The South Atlantic war has provided an early opportunity for the Socialist Society to demonstrate just how degenerate and reactionary academic Marxism has become.

The Socialist Society goes almost all the way with the Tories. It agrees that Argentina was guilty of unprovoked aggression and it upholds the rights of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination. The beginning and the end of its criticism of the war is that the British response was out of proportion to the injury suffered and the objectives desired: 'Clearly something had to be done to ensure the safety of the islanders, who could hardly feel secure under a regime such as Argentina's'. But if not the fleet, then what? Arblaster is silent. As the pamphlet's introduction reminds us, it

is for socialist intellectuals to raise 'fundamental questions'; they cannot be expected to answer them.

The concept of imperialism is way beyond our Socialist Society intelligentsia. 'Is not the fragmentation of humanity into antagonistic nation states, exercising their vaunted "sovereignty", a menace to any liveable future on earth?' asks the introduction profoundly. Is not rainy weather a drag? Too true. Is not British imperialism a menace to millions of people day in day out in every corner of the earth? That is what the Socialist Society would dismiss as an outdated, dogmatic and sectarian point.

Arblaster cannot even understand the process through which Britain established its domination over Latin America in the nineteenth century. He thinks that the movements of national liberation that precipitated the collapse of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the area were inspired by 'the ideas and example of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution'. In reality they received most of their inspiration from British businessmen who used these movements to oust the Spanish and consolidate British influence in the area. Arblaster credits General Manuel Belgrano as 'a leading figure in the national struggle for independence'. In fact he was the most servile lackey of British interests in the region: hence the irony of the fate of the ship that bore his name in the recent hostilities.

Arblaster devotes a major section of his pamphlet to answering the question – what is the war about? He toys unconvincedly with Britain's possible economic objectives in the region: oil, gas, the resources of Antarctica. But his central explanation why Britain went to war is because of the 'belligerent personality' and 'belligerent politics' of Margaret Thatcher. He endorses the view of right-wing Labour MP Tom Dalyell that it was 'the war of Thatcher's face'. He condemns her 'wholly repellant relish for military action, her 'coldness' and her 'chilling indifference' to the loss of soldiers' lives. Britain's need to preserve its position as a major imperialist power – by sending the fleet to teach Argentina a lesson – is thus reduced to the peculiarities of Thatcher's personality.

Arblaster concludes that the war was unnecessary, hypocritical and futile. But he accepts its basic objectives. How then, we are entitled to ask again, should they have been pursued? Here the emptiness and irresponsibility of Arblaster's polemic becomes clearly apparent. Many on the left-wing of the Labour Party called for British interests to be imposed through UN negotiations and EEC sanctions. This had the merit of being a consistent, if an ineffectual, pro-imperialist policy. What was the Socialist Society's position? It just ignored the whole question. It simply indulged itself in cheap Maggie-bashing without putting forward any alternative at all. Arblaster

willed the end but not the means – he wanted the Argies defeated but did not want any blood on his carpet.

No proven need

Of all the pamphlets reviewed here, Militant's is the most ridiculous. 'Marxists do not put forward slogans which are meaningless' comments Ted Grant wisely. Oh no? Here is how a Militant Labour government would sort out the Argentina problem (once it had nationalised the top 200 monopolies):

'If necessary, British workers and the Marxists will be able to wage a war against the Argentine junta, to help the Argentine workers to take power into their own hands. But only a democratic socialist Britain would have clean hands. A Labour government committed to socialist policies would probably not need to wage war, but could issue a socialist appeal to the Argentine workers to overthrow the monstrous junta, take power, and then organise a socialist federation of Britain and the Argentine, in conjunction with the Falkland Islands.'

Militant's grovelling capitulation to the Labour leadership over the South Atlantic war has made it the fashionable target for attack throughout the left. Every radical left paper has published its critique of Militant. It is as though they instinctively recognise that Militant has only pursued further positions which are common to the left. It is thus very important for the left to differentiate itself from the consequences of its own politics.

Despite the absurdities of Ted Grant's pamphlet, and some of the more reactionary slogans Militant has issued – for example, calling for British workers to impose sanctions on Argentina through industrial action – the broad lines of Militant's approach are widely shared on the left. It condemns Argentina for its 'fascist methods' and characterises it as an imperialist country – so do most SWP members. It narrows anti-imperialist sentiment to anti-Tory rhetoric – like all the radical left papers. And it disguises its refusal to fight British imperialism by emphasising its commitment to the working class struggle in Argentina – a familiar cop-out.

Militant was not alone in using the alleged strength of jingoism in the Labour movement to justify its own decision to back down on the struggle against imperialism at home. The universal response of the left to bourgeois attempts to whip up war fever was that this made it impossible to rally support for the defeat of British imperialism. Thus the left abandoned the battlefield of working class opinion to the Tories. It whined and moaned about how much the war was costing in dead soldiers and resources spent. But it never tried to confront the Tory arguments head-on, by taking a decisive stand on the side of Argentina against British imperialism. If British socialists want to find out why they lost the war they should forget about *The Sun* and the *Daily Star* and read these pamphlets.

LABOUR SAVES PRIOR'S NECK

LAST YEAR'S Labour Party conference approved a three stage policy on Northern Ireland. In the short-term, Labour backed Direct Rule; in the medium-term, devolved government; and in the long-term, a united Ireland. Labour's long-term policy went straight into the party's 'socialist millennium' file – along with Clause IV and the abolition of the House of Lords. These historic commitments have been gathering dust there for more than half a century, so the new Irish policy will have time to mature while it takes its turn on Labour's long list of priorities. Meanwhile the rest of Labour's policy has guided its day to day approach to the war.

The rancorous debate in the Tory Party is, in essence, a conflict between hard-liners, like John Biggs-Davison, who want Direct Rule to remain unchanged, and those like Prior, who want it softened through token devolution. In other words, it is a dispute between the same positions as are encapsulated in Labour's short-term and medium-term policies. It was thus natural that, when Prior found himself in difficulties against his own right wing and Ulster Unionists, he should turn to Labour to bale him out.

Labour's top Irish spokesman Don Concannon leapt to the rescue. He fulminated against the 'Get Prior Brigade' on the Tory backbenches and gave his full support to the spirit of the devolution proposals. When Prior finally imposed a guillotine on the Bill – to forestall further opposition by pushing it through Parliament without debate – Labour agreed to abstain, guaranteeing the Tories an overwhelming majority. Winding up for Labour, leadership pretender John Silkin urged abstention because 'our attitude to this bill, while it is not one of wild enthusiasm, is that we are prepared to see that it has a run'. It is difficult to imagine Concannon or Silkin being wildly enthusiastic about anything, but they were happy to give Labour's seal of approval to a scheme which is nothing more than a face-saver for Labour's short-term policy – Direct Rule. Whatever the fate of Prior's Bill, in reality, Direct Rule will continue for the foreseeable future.

While a dozen Labour MPs voted against the guillotine, the left has been silent throughout the debate. No Tribunes or Bennites are to be heard berating the leadership for betraying conference policy. Indeed conference policy has not been betrayed, but followed to the letter. Prior's Bill has shown that Labour's Irish policy is as bipartisan today as it has been through 13 years of war.

IRISH NEUTRALITY AND THE BRITISH CONNECTION

THE *SUN* was outraged by Irish Premier Charles Haughey's withdrawal from EEC sanctions against Argentina and his revival of the Twenty-six Counties' traditional neutral posture. 'Stick it up your Punt-a!' it shrieked, turning its jingoist fury momentarily from the Argies onto 'the contemptible, treacherous behaviour of the Irish Government' (19 May). It

Britain's other war

The British bourgeoisie's triumphant success in disguising its attack on Argentina as an altruistic defence of the rights to self-determination of the Falkland Islanders has reinforced its determination to pursue a similar strategy closer to home. For 60 years Britain has justified its oppression of the Irish people through its idealistic commitment to upholding the rights of a minority of settlers in the north-east of the country. In the flush of victory over Argentina, right-wing Tories have taken the lead in encouraging the Government to give up its latest pretence at reforming British rule in the Six Counties – the Prior Bill. They want to see less waffle and more Falklands-style British military brutality.

The political editor of *The Sunday Times* summed up the climate of opinion in ruling class circles:

'The Falklands are pulling in their harvest. Ulster is one such picking. The military solution seems both more justifiable and more necessary, even though it is no solution at all. Peace-makers and constitution-builders find themselves on the defensive.' (6 June 1982)



The problem is, as the paratroopers know to their cost, Crossmaglen is more difficult territory than Goose Green. It is much too close to home, and too accessible to television cameras, for the forces to be able to unleash their barrage of cluster bombs and other heavy artillery without provoking a storm of protest in Ireland and in Britain. Shredding 'Argies' 8000 miles away is one thing; doing it to 'British citizens' in a part of the 'United Kingdom' is quite another. So the charade of 'political solutions' has got to be maintained and the level of military attrition carefully controlled.

James Prior's Bill to create a devolved assembly in the Six Counties will now be forced through Parliament, despite Tory opposition. But there can be no doubt that the British ruling class, with its imperialist arrogance rejuvenated by its South Atlantic adventure, will impose its rule in Ireland with even more brutality than before.

In this issue of *the next step* we look in brief at a number of different aspects of British imperialism in Ireland and the struggle to defeat it.

proposed a boycott of Irish butter and Irish holidays – 'it's not much, but it's better than giving succour to our new enemy'. But had Haughey really struck a serious blow at his London masters?

The more astute spokesmen of the British ruling class took Haughey's posturing in their stride. They knew that Ireland's economic muscle against Argentina was unlikely to decide the outcome of the war. And they welcomed Ireland's continuing support for UN resolution 502 and British sovereignty over the Malvinas. More importantly, they appreciated that on the issues that really matter in Anglo-Irish relations, the Dublin Government was far from neutral. The *Financial Times* noted that 'cooperation in the more mundane areas of mutual interest does not appear to have suffered... day to day cooperation in the real world, between policemen seeking gun-

men, bureaucrats rationalising gas resources and businessmen will go from strength to strength' (24 May).

Britain was happy to let Haughey sound off about neutrality, so long as his regime delivered its full support to British attempts to crush the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland. May was in fact a very good month for Anglo-Irish relations. Suspected IRA man Dominic McGlinchey was given a new choice in a Dublin court: plead guilty and go to prison in the Twenty-six Counties or plead not guilty and face extradition to the North. After taking the latter course he was handed over to the British authorities. Owen McCartan Smyth, a Monaghan man accused of killing Unionist politician Sir Norman Stronge in South Armagh last year, went on trial in Dublin before a bench which included Mr Justice Hutton, a judge from the Six Counties. After a brief hearing,

he too was handed over into RUC custody. On the same day, three men from the North convicted of having firearms near the border were sentenced to eight years each. Gerry Tuite, who recently escaped from Brixton prison, went on trial for bombing offences he is alleged to have undertaken in London. And John McKeever from Derry was imprisoned for membership of the IRA after confessing his role in the 1979 bombing campaign in Britain.

When former Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald appealed in his acclaimed Dingleby lecture at the end of May for an all-Ireland judicial and police force, he was only proposing the ratification of the system that, in practice, already exists. The courts now work closely together across the border: the RUC have close links with the Garda Síochána. They have direct telephone connections at the border trouble spots and the Garda has a special Security Task Force based at Monaghan. According to *The Irish Times*, 'they are said to be almost permanently crossing in cars, armed with handguns and Uzi sub-machine guns and ready to respond to radio calls' (16 June). A garda at the border village of Scotstown said that 'ninety-five per cent of our time is spent watching subversives, searching and on border patrols'.

The Garda works in close cooperation with the Irish army, which has three battalions on permanent border duty, plus four more as a back-up. Of the Twenty-six Counties' 15 000 troops, 2000 are on regular border duty. In 1980 the Army and the Garda undertook 6755 joint patrols; last year the number increased to 10 537. The repressive forces of the 'neutral' Twenty-six Counties are simply an adjunct to the machine of British domination in Ireland.



'FORGET THE WAR, WORRY ABOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS'

THE South Atlantic War has exposed the shallow anti-militarism of many British socialists who oppose nuclear war in the future but refused to fight Britain's war against Argentina. Now the same socialists who have failed to build a movement against the British occupation of Ireland want to extend the politics of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament across the Irish Sea.

'Did you know?' was the ingenuous opening to a Troops Out Movement leaflet given out on the 6 June CND demo.

'Did you know? Britain has in the north of Ireland nuclear bases that
(continued on page 6)

Ireland

Continued from page 5

endanger the lives and freedom of all Irish people, both north and south?"

But the killings and maimings of hundreds and thousands of Irish people over the last 13 years have nothing to do with nuclear bases. No political prisoners have been starved to death by cruise missiles. Thousands of Irish people are ground down by unemployment and police harassment, north and south. But the oppression of the Irish people results from British domination not nuclear weapons.

"Did you know? The independant (sic) Twenty-six Counties of Ireland have been neutral, and nuclear weapon-free for 60 years?"

The Twenty-six Counties are neither independent nor neutral; they are dominated by Britain through its partition of the country. They are nuclear weapon-free only because Britain has no need of bases south of the border — but that fact has not stopped the Dublin government from deploying a wide range of repressive measures against anti-imperialists.

"Did you know? An independent neutral united Ireland would be a severe threat to Britain and NATO's nuclear strategy?"

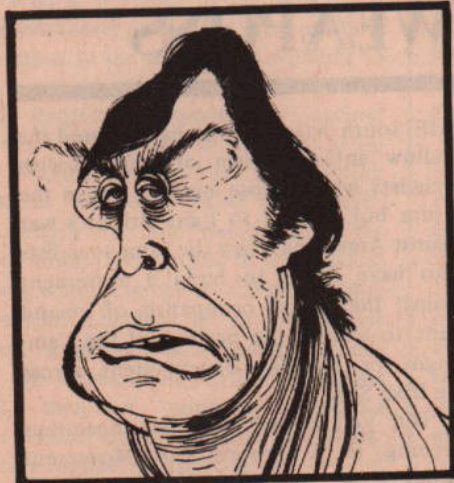
A united Ireland would be such a severe threat to Britain that it would sooner give up its entire nuclear capability than relinquish control over the six north eastern counties of Ireland.

Anti-militarists can be won to the cause of Irish freedom — but only through anti-imperialist arguments. But the Troops Out Movement never learns. For years it has been trying to find a short-cut from liberalism to anti-imperialism. Its confused and opportunist attempts to win nuclear disarmers to the Irish cause are destined to meet the same fate as all its past campaigns.

DELOREAN DELUSIONS

John Zachary DeLorean deluded himself that he could sell thousands of stainless steel, gull-winged sports cars on the American market at \$25 000 each. And he sold his delusion so successfully to top ministers in the last Labour government — Roy Mason and Don Concannon — that they gave him £90 million to set up his factory at Dunmurry in West Belfast.

The British authorities were prepared to subsidise 3000 jobs in a nationalist area of the occupied Six Counties in the hope that it would bring some stability to the area. Last month, after a prolonged period of short-time working, lay-offs and redundancies, the DeLorean Motor Company finally collapsed. The last desperate occupation of the plant by the workers has given rise to more delusions — this time on the British left.



British socialists have long placed their hopes for political progress in Ireland on the intensity of economic depression producing a united anti-capitalist response

from Catholic and Protestant workers. This pleasant dream has the appealing feature that it relieves British socialists themselves from doing anything — they just sit back and wait for the recession to work its magic.

DeLorean employed Catholics and Protestants; both took part in the sit-in. The alchemy had worked apparently. *Socialist Worker* celebrated the occupation as 'an example of working class unity' (5 June). *The News Line* acclaimed one of 'the greatest movements of Protestants and Catholics united against the hated Tories' (18 June).

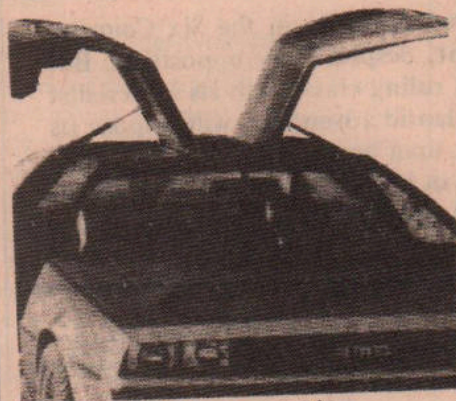
Doing the splits

When DeLorean set up shop in West Belfast in 1978, the local Catholic community (unemployment above 20 per cent) welcomed the prospect of jobs. However, shortly before the plant opened, leading members of the Ulster Defence Association, a Loyalist paramilitary force, met representatives of the British government. They obtained agreement that at least half the DeLorean workforce would be Protestant (*Andersonstown News*, 29 May 1982).

But a mixed workforce is not a united workforce. The Protestants at DeLorean were concentrated in the skilled jobs; the Catholics filled the lower paid positions. And the workers were divided politically on the central issue of everyday life in the Six Counties, the British occupation. Last year, DeLorean's Catholic workers marched on demonstrations in support of the hunger strikers against the British state; they were not joined by their Protestant workmates.

At DeLorean, just as in every other workplace in Northern Ireland, the division in the working class undermined trade union solidarity. The trade unions in the Six Counties endorse and sustain sectarian discrimination in employment. The workers at DeLorean were fully unionised — in the TGWU, AUEW and APEX — but the unions never questioned discrimination at DeLorean. While the company pretended to be a 'fair employer', union officials maintained 'good industrial relations'.

It was not surprising that the official labour movement did nothing to defend the workers against closure. The bureaucrats accepted every sacrifice requested by the company right up to the final closure, when they endorsed a token protest. Even then, they cooperated with the official receiver to allow the release of vital components.



British occupation

The DeLorean occupation was an angry gesture of workers facing the dole queue against their millionaire employer and his Government backers. It was more an expression of the consequences of working class disunity than an example of united Protestant and Catholic action.

In reality, Protestant workers will only be won over to unite with Catholics when the force that divides them — British imperialism — is defeated. When British socialists delude themselves that trade union issues can unite Protestant and Catholic workers, they forget that unity can only come through the ending of British domination. Worse, it is a cop-out from fighting British imperialism in Britain.

STUFF JELlicoe ~SMASH THE PTA!

Following this year's re-imposition of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Government has set up an inquiry into the Act under Tory peer Lord Jellicoe. His Lordship is currently sifting through submissions from various organisations including the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Connolly Association.

The NCCL follows the well-worn path of separating the PTA from its purpose in criminalising opposition to the Irish war and pleading that it is harmful to 'civil liberties'. Indeed it argues that it is an ineffective deterrent to opponents of British rule in Ireland, that 'instead of preventing terrorism, this legislation creates injustices'. The Stalinist-influenced Connolly Association agrees. It wants to see the Act modified because it 'encourages militant tendencies' amongst Irish people (*Irish Post*, 5 June). This sort of opposition won't worry Jellicoe unduly.

While Jellicoe drags out his inquiry, the PTA is still very much in operation. Two delegates from Belfast and Armagh to last month's COHSE conference in Bridlington were detained under the Act at Liverpool. One was held for seven hours, the other until after the end of conference. Trade union delegates from the Six Counties frequently get this sort of treatment. Only a week earlier half a dozen union representatives were held up on their way to a TGWU conference. The worse of it is that trade union leaders have tolerated these attacks on the rights of their members.

At the COHSE conference members of the Irish Freedom Movement won widespread support for a motion to suspend standing orders and debate an emergency resolution demanding immediate action to secure the release of the prisoners. The leadership, however, refused to put the motion to conference. Thus conference carried on regardless while two delegates languished in police custody. Many COHSE militants were outraged by the

bureaucrats' indifference to the suppression of not only the rights of Irish people but also those of their own members.

The fight against the PTA in the unions goes on. Join the IFM in fighting the PTA! Write in for model resolutions and PTA information! And if you know of any PTA arrests ring our 24-hour PTA service on 01-274 3951 immediately.

NALGO STALLS AGAIN

Last year the bureaucrats, who run the local government workers' union, NALGO, blocked a number of motions in support of the Irish hunger strikers at annual conference. They made sure that the union's official policy of 'extending links' with the Loyalist-controlled Northern Ireland Public Service Association remained unchallenged. After the conference was over, the officials surreptitiously slipped into the *Annual Report* a condemnation of the campaign for political status. Even though the matter was never discussed at conference, the report insisted that concessions to the hunger strikers 'would serve to boost recruitment by the Provisional IRA'. As loyal British public servants, that was the last thing the NALGO chiefs wanted to do.

This year supporters of the Irish Freedom Movement attended the conference and mobilised opposition to the official policy. A motion on the Irish War, submitted by Haringey and Greenwich branches, was pushed onto the conference agenda. Around 20 delegations were mandated to support the motion; many more were open to arguments from an anti-imperialist perspective.

But yet again the union leaders succeeded — through bureaucratic intrigue — in preventing the Ireland debate from reaching the conference floor. So now the struggle goes back again to the branches. Many delegates signed up to join the Irish Freedom Movement which will be carrying on the campaign in NALGO, and in other unions. To find out more about our activities, contact Peter Nash, IFM, c/o BM RCP London WC1N 3XX.



The Irish Freedom Movement banner on the annual march to the grave of the founder of Irish republicanism, Wolfe Tone in Bodinstown, County Kildare.

Public sector strike wave

Disaster on the railways

OVER THE past three years the trade union bureaucracy has suffered a series of reversals. Although, as NUR General Secretary, Sid Weighell put it, they have 'delivered', the Government has treated them with contempt. The NUR leaders, like their colleagues in other unions, have accepted productivity deals, mass redundancies and insulting wage increases for their members. But their efforts have not been rewarded. Indeed, Thatcher has launched an all-out attack on traditional industrial relations practices. Union leaders are no longer 'consulted', bargaining procedures in the public sector have been scrapped and the labour bureaucracy has been left licking its wounds.

Sympathy comes cheap

The NHS dispute was a Godsend for the labour bureaucrats. Here was a strike with widespread public appeal – a useful weapon with which to retrieve some of the old prerogatives. Everyone jumped on the bandwagon. The TUC General Council agreed to launch a campaign of support. It hoped that its flagging fortunes and its disastrous campaign against Tebbit's Employment legislation would be forgotten in the euphoria of the NHS workers' dispute. Arthur Scargill thought along similar lines. While he delayed action against the threatened pit closures in Kent, he promised a show of strength on behalf of the health workers.

This generous display of solidarity covered up the deep-seated malaise that prevails in Congress House. Take the transport workers union, the TGWU. While the health workers' dispute was going on, seven TGWU members were hauled before Uxbridge Magistrates Court for illegal picketing. These workers were victims of the TGWU sell-out of 2000 ramp workers at Heathrow airport in February. At that time the ramp workers were the best organised trade unionists at Heathrow. Today their defeat means that British Airways receives 13 000 applications in response to its demand for 9000 voluntary redundancies.

TGWU general secretary Moss Evans kept quiet about all this while joining the

At first it appeared to be the first serious industrial challenge to the Thatcher Government. The public sector seemed to be about to erupt as health and power workers, firemen and railway workers threatened to fight. In the wings stood the miners and other unions proclaiming their commitment to support the NHS workers. But, after only one day, on 28 June the conference of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) called off the national strike, and a day later forced the London Underground workers back to work. Suddenly, the ruling class was back in the driver's seat. What went wrong? On this page we look at British Rail and London Transport; on pages 8 and 9 we survey the NHS dispute.



chorus of union bosses promising solidarity with the nurses and ancillaries. Just what this amounted to was made clear at the union's general executive meeting in May. Evans declared that there would be no official backing for NHS unions, but workers were free to take 'spontaneous' action.

This kind of gesture is as cheap as it is inconsequential. The editor of *The Daily Telegraph* noted with obvious relief: 'So far the secondary action has been an old-fashioned demonstration of sympathy, not really damaging' (24 June). Sympathy action has been widespread entirely because of rank and file action, not because of national directives. Workers have shown real class solidarity in this

dispute. As for the union leaders, they were happy to see their members take action – it put no demands on the union coffers and they got good publicity for doing nothing.

The stitch up

The NUR never really wanted to fight British Rail. The union simply wanted to make a point, and the general climate of unrest in the public sector provided the opportunity. When the strike was called off, the NUR bosses didn't worry about the demoralising effect that their action would have on other public sector workers. The NUR leadership had more important concerns than the success of

the health workers: its main objective was the destruction of the train drivers' union, ASLEF. The Government is out to teach railway workers a lesson and the NUR wants to make sure that it is ASLEF which pays the price. In this operation they have the employers' full support.

ASLEF's militancy has been a thorn in the side of the employers for some time. The British Rail Board's goal is to force ASLEF to take industrial action in order to smash the union. With the NUR strike out of the way the battle lines are drawn. Peter Jenkins of *The Guardian* commented on the way BR had set up ASLEF:

'The NUR strike was never supposed to happen. The chief battle is with the declining engine drivers' union ASLEF, and that battle is now about to begin. The next move is to send a virtual ultimatum to the ASLEF headquarters.' (30 June 1982)

Two days after the NUR returned to work, the Labour Party and the TUC joined in the battle against ASLEF. Of course, at the same time the TUC publicity machine continued to churn out the circulars, press releases and leaflets promising full support for the NHS workers.

The fiasco on the railways is a culmination of two months of disgraceful manoeuvring by the union bosses. While public sector workers surprised everyone with their militancy, the union leaders made resounding declarations at press conferences. Workers fought for their jobs and living standards. But their cause was sabotaged by a union bureaucracy that was only interested in fighting for its own narrow privileges. While workers were ordered out on strike one day, only to be recalled the next, the union bosses negotiated for themselves.

Public sector workers have shown they can fight. But to win they have to fight on their own and reject the divisive and defeatist leadership of their officials. The dead-end of the NUR strike and the drawn out, selective actions in the NHS demonstrate that as long as we allow the union bureaucrats to remain in control our sacrifices will end up saving only them.

Livingstone's legacy

The NUR's decision to call off the strike on the London Underground – which was joined by several bus garages – means that swingeing cuts already threatened will probably be forced through. Bus worker Peter Bush blames Ken Livingstone's GLC and the leaders of the NUR and the TGWU for the recent setbacks to transport workers in the capital.

THE CUTS are due to begin at the end of July. They intend to take 865 buses off the road, tighten up shift-working and make 680 engineering workers redundant. LT is sticking to a five per cent wage offer – while cutting bus services by 15 per cent. The first round of cuts will avoid redundancies on the 'operating' side; drivers and conductors will be forced off rotas, back onto the spare lists. But the 'inside' staff, workers who maintain the buses, will lose jobs, mainly at Acton, Chiswick and Aldenham works.

The employers plan to alter all the shifts and cut down on 'unsocial hours' benefits for week-end and late-night shifts. Many people will be pushed back onto basic wages. This, coupled with the five per cent rise, would result in a loss in real earnings for many workers of between £5 and £10 a week. Closures of routes and the conversion of some garages onto exclusively 'one man operated'

buses will lead to the enforced movement of staff.

Thanks Ken

This onslaught on our jobs and conditions comes just over a year after the Labour Party took over the GLC under the radical leadership of Ken Livingstone. Labour's transport policy was one of the main planks of its platform in the election: it promised 'fair fares' for passengers – and a fair deal for transport workers. Now we're in a mess, people are paying twice as much to go the same distance, but Livingstone is riding high.

Only a couple of months ago he claimed that the transport issue had 'produced a tremendous degree of support for us, as the party that introduced the fare cuts'. His conclusion was that: 'I think we will really benefit'. And, while we face cuts and job losses, it is true that Livingstone has really gained in populari-

ty. How has he got away with it?

The GLC has neatly avoided its responsibility for the LT fiasco by passing the blame onto the Tory Government and the courts. It was Tory minister Heseltine who put the squeeze on local government finance; it was the Tory law-lords who wrecked Livingstone's policy. But this was simply the way the dictates of capitalist rationality were imposed on LT. The GLC radicals were always committed to sound financing within the limits of the profit system; they didn't like it the way it was forced on them, but they didn't fight it either. They just gave in and handed us over to the Tories – and then claimed the glory for putting their tongues out at them.

Thanks Moss and Sid

The unions' campaign faction, led by Moss Evans TGWU and Sid Weighell's

NUR, has centred around a campaign to 'save London Transport'. The slogan goes 'Hold on tight...to your industry'. Its the old story of trying to make out that screwing the workers is bad for business:

'Any decline in public transport in London will damage the future well being of industry and commerce and threaten jobs in the capital'.

The trouble is this is rubbish. British capitalism needs to run its transport system with a drastically reduced workforce.

The trade union leaders would rather waste their breath trying to persuade LT that Britain needs more highly paid bus workers than mobilise the rank and file to fight for their living standards, whatever the consequences for LT. Their mis-handling of resistance to the cuts has meant a face-saving campaign of token resistance, culminating in the recent abortive strike attempt. Next time, we'll do it ourselves.

STRIKES IN THE NHS



Hazards for health workers

The Government has selected the one million plus workers in Britain's health service for a display of its determination to reduce pay in the public sector. For the second consecutive year it has imposed wage rises way below the rate of inflation for some of the lowest paid workers in the country. The trade union leadership has responded more in sorrow than in anger, like a faithful old dog kicked so hard by its master that it had to bark in protest. Here we look at the way that angry and militant health workers constantly came into conflict with the noisy but toothless union leaders assembled together by the TUC. And we indicate how supporters of the next step around the country developed the strategy and the tactics to take forward the struggle for a living wage in the NHS.

THE TORIES are sympathetic to the plight of devoted but impoverished nurses, if not towards the other workers who keep the hospitals in operation. But, as *The Times* explained at the start of the dispute:

'But wages account for 70 per cent of all NHS costs. The control of public spending is so central to the Government's strategy that it cannot make more than minor concessions on the claim... without jeopardising all that it seeks to achieve.' (27 April)

As the campaign gathered momentum, it re-stated the Government's case, after more crocodile tears about 'dedicated service, long hours and low pay'. But...

'But the need to restrain public expenditure remains imperative. The NHS is the largest single employer in Britain, and a percentage point more or less in the settlement costs millions.' (26 May)

The Government's system of cash limits on spending in the public sector allowed it to pit wage rises against cuts in jobs and services:

'The unions' 12 per cent claim would cost £380m more than is budgeted for, according to the Government. Any concessions would have to be found within the cash limits, at the expense of services.'

Health Minister Norman Fowler was not slow to inform Parliament that while jobs had disappeared in their hundreds of thousands in manufacturing industry, employment in the NHS had actually risen by 47 000 between 1979 and 1981 (11 May). (He did not point out that this was largely attributable to increased part-time work and that understaffing remained endemic throughout the service.) Fowler's point, however, was clear: the TUC estimated that the Government's marginally increased pay offer in June (7.5 per cent instead of 6 per cent for nurses, 6 per cent not 4 per cent for

ancillaries), to be funded by cuts worth at least £500 000, would cost around 12 000 jobs.

The Tory strategy is simple and brutal. The Government's hopes of reviving the stagnant economy rest on the ruthless rationalisation of public services. Fowler's repeated message is that the survival of British capitalism now depends on pushing many hospital workers on to the dole queues and the rest below the poverty line; it also requires making the hospitals even more squalid and inefficient than they are already.

Grovelling to defeat

The trade union leaders' strategy was the product of a balance of fear. On the one hand, the bureaucrats were afraid of being pushed into open conflict with the Government. On the other hand, they were terrified of the militancy of their own members. The result was vacillation before the Tories and manoeuvring to stay in control of the rank and file.

Instead of responding to the Government's hard-line approach with an equally intransigent stand on behalf of their members, the unions constantly pleaded with the Government to turn back from confrontation. Their loudest plea was for the intervention of the state arbitration service ACAS. The Tories have used ACAS to good effect against workers in the past, and they were prepared to let its chief, Pat Lowry, intervene informally in the NHS dispute. But they felt strong enough to take on NUPE, COHSE and the rest without using this mask of impartiality. The unions continued to appeal for fair play — the judges, senior civil servants and police had got big pay rises, and even the firemen and miners had got slightly over the odds — why not make health workers another special

case? The Tories were totally impervious to this approach — they never pretended that their 4 per cent was fair, it was simply what the interests of the capitalist class demanded.

While the Government ruthlessly put the ruling class boot into the health workers, the unions refused to mobilise an equally aggressive labour movement response. Instead, the bureaucrats cultivated the sympathy of health service administrators whose managerial positions were threatened by the Tories' intentions to decimate services. The Government simply sacked the four Regional Health Authority chairmen who had criticised the conduct of the dispute, leaving the unions isolated.

Leading from behind

Squeezed between a hostile Government and an increasingly angry rank and file, the unions had no alternative but to step up industrial action. And they stepped it up with all the gusto of a geriatric patient trying to walk after an artificial hip operation. 'COHSE members to support TUC one-hour pay protest' proclaimed *Health Services*, the COHSE newspaper, at the onset of the dispute. But it was soon forcing the pace — with calls for a two-hour stoppage. And so they dragged it on and on, through one-day strikes, and then a two-day protest (spread over a weekend) and then, after a four-week pause to catch their breath, a three-day walk-out.

The trade union leaders did what was necessary to keep a grip on their members, not what was required to beat the Government. They allowed the petty squabbles that have long divided the health service unions to weaken the campaign. They made little attempt to coordinate union action at a local level — except in collaboration with management. Leading from behind was the universal approach: if workers took action, the unions endorsed it — they made scant efforts to promote or organise effective strikes. The unions did not try to direct local activity — they simply left it up to branches to decide whether to take action and the forms it should take. Indeed, the only clear directives from the union head offices concerned restricting the scope of strike action through TUC guidelines on emergency cover and picketing.

The bureaucrats' terror at the prospect of losing control even limited the TUC's attempt to channel the anger of the NHS workers into its flagging campaign against the Tebbit anti-trade union legislation. The contrast between Len Murray's Union Day on 10 June, more a day of mourning than a focus of struggle against Tebbit, and the growing success of the days of action in the NHS, suggested a broader usefulness of the health workers' dispute for the TUC. But when the health workers began calling out miners, engineers, steelworkers, postal workers and many others and engaging in open defiance of the picketing laws, the TUC got cold feet. Murray reprimanded the rank and file militants, sternly reminding them that 'the right to call strikes is the jealously guarded prerogative of unions' and making clear that the General Council 'opposes law-breaking'.

While the bureaucrats squirmed, workers took the fight for decent pay into their own hands. They had no alternative. The basic wage of hospital ancillaries is as low as £59 a week: two-thirds earn less than £80. Four per cent of £59 is an insult; the six per cent offered to nurses was not only insulting, it was so provocatively divisive that even the right-wing Royal College of Nurses rejected it, stimulating the first united pay campaign in the health service. Despite the difficulties of organising industrial action in hospitals, workers knew they had to fight to keep above the bread line, and they

set about the campaign with imagination, enthusiasm and anger.

Leeds

TWO MASS meetings of hospital workers in Leeds brought out the problems facing the campaign for a 12 per cent wage rise. They both took place on 11 June, the first at Leeds General Infirmary and the second a couple of hours later at St James Hospital.

The meeting at the LGI followed a week of all-out strike action. During the 4 June day of action management had used scabs in the sterilising department: the workers' response was to withdraw emergency cover and declare an indefinite strike. Workers attended the meeting expecting to hear proposals for strengthening the strike. They were to be bitterly disappointed. The NUPE official focused on the problem of the scabs. There was no way that workers could oust the scabs or force their dismissal — 'that's the law'. They would have to work alongside one another. He told the meeting that he had won the agreement of management to discuss concessions on the use of scabs, even suggesting that the bosses might take sanctions against the scabs! He added that he had persuaded management to reduce the number of hospital gates in use to facilitate picketing! The official then proceeded to take a vote without clarifying the real point of all this — that he was asking the meeting to endorse a return to work. When the meeting voted to accept his promise of concessions from the employers, he turned to the next question — when do we go back to work? There was uproar.



NUPE steward Betty Ellis led the storm of protest: 'I've finished with the union, they can stuff it. I've been out on the picket line for a week and I'm not going back for nothing'. But, using a combination of deception and confusion, the bureaucrats carried the day against the more militant workers. The action of the local officials followed the refusal of the TUC two days previously to call an all-out strike in favour of another one-day protest. The workers were disgusted — 'they're not leading us', said one domestic, 'we're leading them'. Another expressed the general frustration with token protests:

'If we stop for one day we do the work when we go back the next day. We're stopping out here till we get our money. Who cares about the union leaders?'

But while the bureaucrats discussed trade union business with management they failed to coordinate action among different sections of the same hospital, never mind among the various hospitals in the area. The result was that the workers' actions were fragmented and disorganised and their anger and energy was dissipated.

The NUPE official's next stop was St James, where he told workers of the great victory at LGI — his success at getting a return to work. At St James, too, here had been an all-out strike over the use of scabs. This had been undertaken despite the bureaucrats' insistence that it was in defiance of the TUC's guidelines on

emergency cover. 'Scrap the TUC guidelines', said one worker, 'we're taking over'. Porter Gerry Docherty explained how the guidelines played into management's hands:

'The emergency cover required by these guidelines becomes an experiment for management to see how far you can reduce the workforce in different sections of the hospital.'

Staffing levels described as 'emergency' were often in fact higher than on a normal working day, because of chronic staff shortages in some departments. But after a week of action, including angry scenes on picket lines, the bureaucrats at St James were anxious to get back in control and get everybody back to work.

The COHSE official followed up the announcement of 'victory' at the LGI with an ingenious secret ballot of the mass meeting at St James. Here are the four options and the total of votes cast for each of them:

1 Continue strike, with emergency cover	96
2 Return to work	250
3 All out strike, no emergency cover	100
4 Selective strike action	160

Thus 356 were in favour of some form of strike action while 250 wanted a return to work. This was not how the bureaucrats interpreted the result: they declared a majority for a return to work and called off the strike, amid scenes of bitter recrimination. 'The union has defeated this strike', shouted one worker, 'not the management'.

Supporters of the next step challenged the bureaucrats at both meetings and at every opportunity in the dispute. After the collapse of the strike action in mid-June we issued a leaflet, in cooperation with the unofficial joint shop stewards committee, drawing out some lessons for the ongoing campaign:

- the emergency guidelines are barriers to effective action... the strike committee should control emergency cover... members should decide what's an emergency
- organisation and communication must be improved... the direction of strike action must be determined at mass meetings... we need an action committee under our control - not that of the officials
- one-day strikes are worse than useless... we must take control and initiative into our own hands and go for all-out action to win.

As the protest continues there is a growing response for this approach from workers, disillusioned by the bureaucrats at national and local level, who desperately need to win this strike.

Gary Simpson

Sheffield

BOB RADCLIFFE spoke to a COHSE shop steward at Lightwood House Mental Handicap Unit.

'Right from the beginning we were under attack, not only from management but also from officials of our branch (Sheffield Wadley). After the first one-day strike on 17 May they said we had gone too far. We had been "totally irresponsible", caused "needless suffering to patients" and "acted outside union guidelines".'

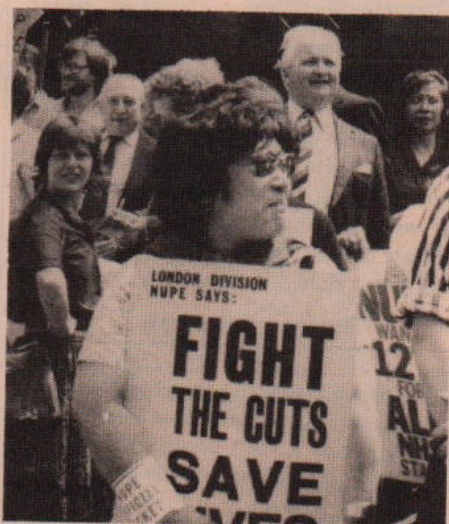
We decide

'But these TUC guidelines - especially the emergency cover provisions - ignored the fact that we were in the best position to establish what constitutes emergency cover. After all, we have to cope every day with the cuts in facilities, staff and even food. The union guidelines really

meant leaving it to management's discretion - and for them present staffing already constitutes 'emergency levels'.

'So we decided what sort of cover was necessary. We told management that for every scab who crossed the picket lines we would remove one person from emergency cover. And we made it clear that any harmful consequences to the patients were the direct responsibility of the administrators and the scabs.

'We also made sure that no strikers benefited from doing emergency cover. To make sure that scabs did not try to get around the pickets by claiming to be emergency staff, we insisted on proper rotas under our control which alternated periods of work and picketing.



All out

'There is a strong feeling around Sheffield for an all-out strike - we've made contact with other strike committees - but we still haven't got a proper unofficial area strike committee. We've been very successful in getting support from other workers. Our early morning picket of the Aldwarke steel works in Rotherham brought the entire plant - three mills and a slag reduction plant - to a standstill. It gave a great boost to our campaign.

'Everybody knows that we're never going to get our pay rise through these one-day stoppages. But the officials in Sheffield have been quite successful in persuading people that indefinite action would bankrupt the union. And they've also made it clear that the union will not defend anybody taking unofficial action against victimisation. Many workers are reluctant to take on the union as well as the Government, so the result is that people have got a bit disillusioned. But what's the union for if it's not to fight for us? It's no good having a well-off union with us on the breadline. We'd have a much stronger union if we fought to win instead of giving in without a fight.

'The officials have just limped along behind us. Communication has been appalling. When workers in NUPE complained at a regional mass meeting on 17 May that they had received no notification of forthcoming action, the officials just laughed and said "Don't you read the papers?". In Rotherham COHSE members were so disgusted with the indifference and incompetence of the leadership that some of them tore up their union cards in disgust.

'We are being blackmailed from all sides. The unions' determination to stage-manage strike action has filtered all the way down to branch secretary and shop steward level. A NUPE branch secretary here instructed a shop steward that it was entirely up to individuals whether they took action or not and that there was no official call to strike. This gave scabs an official excuse and left others in total confusion. The majority took action anyway - but only after a lot of argument that we have to go against the union to get anywhere.

'We can still win this strike - but only if we take it out of their hands and run it ourselves.'

Coventry

TRADE UNION leaders in Coventry have invented a new form of industrial action. You don't have to organise workers to go on strike - you just persuade the employers to lay them off. Health workers in the Coventry area are as determined as any others in the country to take on the Government to win better wages. Mass meetings at all the major hospitals in the area showed a strong feeling for militant action. But the union official on the local TUC Health Action Committee transformed the workers' work-to-rule campaign from being a weapon against the Government into a means of pressing the local NHS management to close down hospital services.

An Action Committee spokesman explained the strategy to the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*.

'We are following the TUC instructions to try to get health authorities to reduce their services to accident and emergency only.' (4 June)

In other words, he was taking control of the dispute out of the hands of the workers and handing it over to the authorities. He continued, explaining that the Action Committee believed this to be 'the best way to bring pressure, rather than involving the members in one-day strikes'. What he meant was that it was the best way of taking pressure off the bureaucrats.

Management jumped at the bureaucrats' offer. What an opportunity to impose cuts in services, save money and undermine the effectiveness of the health workers' action! Action Committee leader and *Socialist Organiser* supporter Julie Redman claimed a victory:

'They have now accepted that a reduction in services is better than the chaos caused by the work-to-rule.' (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 15 June)

Coventry's evening paper commented with relief that 'pickets are not being mounted outside hospitals because nobody is on strike'. Some victory!



The inevitable result of giving the initiative to the employers was that they seized their advantage over the workers. Knowing that they could walk over the Action Committee with impunity, they took the next opportunity to do so. On the next national day of action on 23 June, the authorities ignored their agreements to undertake only emergency services and went ahead with the usual routine of clinics, outpatients, etc. At first the unions acquiesced. At the Coventry and Warwick General Hospital, however, supporters of the next step had argued consistently against the official strategy. Before long, porters, ambulance-men and other hospital workers rejected the Action Committee line and imposed a tight picket line around the hospital.

The whole strategy of letting them organise how we run our campaign has been thrown into question. We aim to show that the first step towards beating the Government is taking control of the dispute from the administrators and from our own officials.

Fran Eden

Manchester

WORKERS FROM LAURENCE Scott and Electromotors had a thorough schooling in hard picketing during their recent 12 month fight for jobs. When the NHS dispute began, some of them took their experience down to the hospital picket lines. Former Laurence Scott worker Dave Hallsworth reports.

We got off to a good start down at the major hospital in Tameside. We stopped and turned back the first half dozen vehicles, taking particulars of those who chose to ignore the picket, and the pickets were in good spirits. But then one of the stewards called us in to the union office in the hospital, where we met the COHSE and NUPE branch secretaries. They were a bit shame-faced. They said that management had been on to them by phone, threatening that unless we non-health workers left the picket line they would call on the police to enforce the 1980 Employment Act against secondary picketing. We said: 'We've been through all this before - let them go ahead'. But they replied that they had a good relationship with management that they didn't want to endanger. They said that they appreciated our solidarity, but would prefer us to leave. We moved on to another hospital.

This story shows up some of the problems workers were up against. On the picket lines at different hospitals workers were far from happy with the conduct of the dispute. They had seen no sign of the officials, they had no idea what was going on at other local hospitals and 'volunteers' were creeping in through whatever entries were available. They were well aware that 'emergency manning levels' meant normal working for most wards. The burden of the token protests was falling heavily on the ancillary workers and while it was having little real effect, it was costing them dear. When you take home around £50 a week, a day's pay makes a big hole - especially if your husband is on the dole, or you're the breadwinner for a one-parent family. The strains that develop are the breeding ground for disunity.

The hospital workers can overcome these difficulties and take control of the dispute into their own hands. We put forward a number of suggestions that emerged from our experience last year. First, there is the problem of every strike - money. This was seen by many workers as the obstacle to an all-out strike. We proposed they do what we did - go out and raise the money from other workers, through winning their backing on the principle at stake. Then, there is a special problem of emergency cover - obviously health workers want to hit the Government, not working class patients. The health workers should draw up their own emergency roster and issue this to management. They should tell them that if they use 'volunteers' or otherwise try to weaken our control over emergency services, then cover will be withdrawn - and management will be to blame for the consequences. Finally, winning any strike requires regular mass meetings to ensure maximum participation and support, and effective committees to organise and coordinate action at hospital and area level.

Everybody knows that it's easy enough to spell out what is required, but another thing to bring it into practice. Health workers have a choice - either they attempt this course of action or they face another setback. Dare to win!

Labour movement

Women for Communism

Rulecan overruled

**Don't
buy
here!
support
trade rights
union**

ON 23 June the women on strike for union recognition at Rulecan Limited, a clothing firm in Runcorn, Cheshire lost their appeal to an Industrial Tribunal. The Tribunal ruled that Rulecan boss Raymond Rattle was not obliged to provide access to the factory to the union official approved by the women — Derek Cattell of the tailors and garment workers' union. However the 60 women, after four months on the picket lines are determined to fight on. Carol Taggart reports.

THE FIGHT FOR women workers' rights at Rulecan is of vital importance to the labour movement. The Rulecan dispute shows how the employers used the courts, industrial tribunals and trade union bureaucracy. It also shows, through the intervention of Women for Communism, how women's interests at work can be defended.

No holds barred

When the Rulecan workers called for the blacking of the company's products by workers at the mail order firm it supplies, the bosses lost no time in slapping on an injunction on secondary action of this sort. When Women for Communism

launched nation-wide pickets of C&A, Rulecan's biggest customer, Rattle again went to the courts. Injunctions and claims for damages were served on anybody who acted in solidarity with the Rulecan women.

For the employers, the Industrial Tribunal was a useful delaying device. It provided a cover for negotiations with the national executive of the women's union. Early in June Rattle, under pressure from the picket lines, made a deal with NUTGW general secretary Alex Smith. The agreement provided for 45 women to be 're-engaged' at a new factory two miles down the road from the plant in dispute. 'Re-engagement' rather than 're-instatement' meant that the

women would lose their protection from unfair dismissal, and their entitlement to redundancy money and maternity leave. The union also agreed to replace the local official, Derek Cattell, with more right-wing senior bureaucrats.

While the union encouraged the workers to put their faith in these compromises and in the outcome of the Tribunal, the employer was not constrained by agreements. When the date for 're-engagement' came on 14 June, he dragged his feet — the new factory 'wasn't ready yet'. When the Tribunal came out in his favour a week later, he claimed 'a total victory'. As its rulings were not binding on him, he stood to win whichever way the verdict went.

Even Derek Cattell, a left-wing union official, who actively supported the Rulecan women from the beginning, put more faith in agreements and negotiations than in rank and file action. At a critical stage in the dispute, he scaled down the picketing at the factory and urged Women for Communism to call off the C&A pickets that were putting the heat on Rattle to facilitate talks. Once the heat was off, the employer regained the initiative.

'Those communists!'

'They needn't think that they've got one over on me, it hasn't been the union that's won — if it's been anyone, it's been those communists!' (from Raymond Rattle's pep-talk to the Rulecan scabs at the height of the picketing)

Supporters of Women for Communism played an active part in the picketing of the Rulecan plant and a leading role in the secondary action at C&A and elsewhere. They helped raise money and organised meetings to broaden support for the women on strike. This was elementary. What really mattered was the politics of the intervention.

The Rulecan women got very little labour movement support. The Labour Party put them at the front of its London women's demonstration in June — but it refused to give them financial or any sort of practical support. (It wouldn't even pay the train fare for the strike committee to come to London to attend the march — it had to come out of the strike funds.) For the rest of the left Rulecan was a case of trade unionists against the Tories, something to fit into its anti-Tebbit campaign.

Women for Communism emphasised the particular problem this group of workers faced *as women*. They work in a sector of industry characterised by hard-nosed bosses who pay their workers very badly to work very hard in very poor conditions. It is a sector organised by feeble trade unions with a record of collaboration with employers and indifference towards their own members. Part-time, irregular work for a predominantly female workforce is the norm. Women for Communism went out to win the support of other workers for the Rulecan women, not just as fellow trade unionists, but as women workers who were entitled to solidarity from the whole labour movement.

For us the demand 'for a woman's right to work' is not the pious platitude it is for Labour Party feminists. It must be at the centre of our movement to unite the working class against capital. As the Women for Communism leaflet to the Rulecan strikers put it:

'Women for Communism raises the demand 'for a woman's right to work' in the context of the necessity to oppose all redundancies and sackings, and in the context of the urgency of beginning the fightback against the bosses today. That is why we have no option but to support you in whatever way we can.'

GAY OPPRESSION

Defective characters

ON 26 MARCH 1981 Mrs Thatcher asked the Security Commission to review the security procedures of the state. The Commission's review, headed by Lord Diplock, was considered urgent. Sir Roger Hollis, ex-director of MI6, had been caught with his trousers down (literally) by the Soviets. The government of Britain and the NATO allies required reassurance. And this is what they got.

The Commission's report,* of course, will not be made public, but a statement on its recommendations was published in May. It recognised 'that the external threat from Soviet bloc intelligence services, although it has been contained with greater success than before 1961, remains undiminished'. On the other hand the 'internal threat has altered considerably':

'The fall in Communist Party of Great Britain membership, however, has been accompanied by the proliferation of new subversive groups of the extreme left and extreme right (mainly the former) whose aim is to overthrow democratic parliamentary government in this country by violent or other unconstitutional means, not shrinking in the case of the most extreme groups from terrorism to achieve their aims. Membership of individual groups is small but, for the most part, active and conspiratorial.'

However, the Statement on Security contains a rather more startling admission. While recognising that revolutionaries pose a threat to the security of the state, it sees the principal threat to government secrets coming, not from

revolutionaries, but from 'defective characters':

'The Commission observes that character defects rather than disloyalty for ideological reasons or subversive tendencies have been the cause of all known cases of disclosure of information to hostile intelligence services that have occurred since Radcliffe (reported in 1962).'

The Statement recognises that recruitment of individuals 'willing to betray this country for ideological reasons must continue to be treated as an ever-present danger'. But the real hole in the imperialist state's security blanket is seen to be individuals who 'may be inveigled into disclosing through indiscretion' the secrets of the ruling class.

Apart from the odd drunk and a few heterosexuals with unconventional sexual tastes, or an intemperate attitude to fidelity in marriage or financial dealings, homosexuality remains the biggest single 'character defect' that threatens the security of the state. The reason for this is clear. Irrespective of class, all homosexuals have some considerable experience of concealing their sexual identities from family, relatives and friends. Therefore, it is not surprising that the men from the Special Branch experience such difficulty in cracking open the closets of civil servants and high officials.

It is in these circumstances that the state has decided to deal with the situation more rationally. The Statement argues that 'unconcealed, acknowledged and stable relations in Great Britain with another consenting adult of the same sex in which no homosexual act takes place

in public no longer involves a party to such a relationship in any vulnerability to blackmail and thus does not constitute a security risk'.

In openly offering security clearance to bourgeois homosexuals in the Home Civil Service, the Security Commission hopes it will diminish their recruitment to the Foreign Office, the foreign service and the defence ministries (from where they are still barred). It is in these areas that well-concealed 'defective characters' have presented the greatest threat to the secrets of the ruling class. From 1950 to the present day the men from the ministry have been haunted by Burgess, Maclean, Vassal and Blunt — not just because they were spies, but because they were homosexuals.

This new move to liberalise the Home Civil Service, has its roots in the Cold War period. In the 15 years following the outbreak of the Second World War there was a fivefold increase in the number of indictable homosexual offences known to the police. Between 1938 and 1955 the numbers of gay men proceeded against rose from 719 to 2504. There had been a steady rise in prosecution throughout the 'thirties but the really dramatic increase took place between 1949 and 1955, reaching a peak in the winter of 1953 and the spring of 1954.

The ruling class was faced with two possible courses of action. It could intensify the purge and damn the consequences, or it could begin the process of sorting sheep from goats; protecting the bourgeois homosexual in the context of heavier penalties and more repression for ordinary gay men within the working class. They chose the second course of action.

In 1954 the Moral Welfare Council of the Church of England produced a document on *The problems of homosexuality*. The church demanded reform. The Wolfenden Committee started work, and in 1957 its report urged that the law be changed to protect people from black-

mail by legalising homosexual relationships between two men, aged over 21, in private. Ten years later these recommendations were incorporated into the Sexual Offences Act 1967.

The Act legalised what nobody ever got caught for. Holding hands or embracing in a public place or private club, smiling at another man in a public toilet, dancing with another man in a public place or private club, or inviting another adult man to have sex can all be, and are, used as the basis of prosecutions under the Act. *The reform of 1967 increased maximum prison sentences and, since it became law, the numbers of homosexual men fined and imprisoned has risen fourfold.*

The offer by the Thatcher Government of full security clearance to homosexual men living in 'inconspicuous stable relationships' has to be seen in this context. It is an entirely pragmatic and rational response to the impossibility of keeping bourgeois homosexuals out of the government service. The Security Commission will put them to work in areas where they will have access to the least sensitive secrets of their class.

Communists must be clear: the recommendations of the Security Commission will have no effect on the situation of homosexual men within the working class. The repression of homosexual workers — lesbians and gay men — is being intensified as the ruling class moves to deploy morality and social chauvinism in defence of imperialist interests. The extension of the 1967 Act to Scotland and the North of Ireland and the provision of security clearance in the Home Civil Service are intended to strengthen the state. Such reforms are designed to refine and sharpen the legal instruments used against gay workers.

Don Milligan

Revolutionary Gay Men's Caucus

*Statement on the Recommendations of the Security Commission, May 1982, (Cmnd), £1.90.

RACISM

THEY SHALL NOT BE MOVED

THE GREATER LONDON COUNCIL recently made an important discovery. They found out that for at least 30 years Bengalis have been all but excluded from modern council estates in the East End. This, according to new GLC housing chief Gerry Ross is highly regrettable, but it is about to change. A man of his word, Gerry has already allocated six Asian families places on a new estate in Spitalfields (Royal Mint Square).

The GLC's new policy has impressed nobody, least of all the local Bengali community. Six flats don't make up for 30 years of over-crowded living in the most squalid estates — with the alternatives of squatting or paying extortionate rents to private racketeers. And since the GLC is cutting back rather than expanding the total housing stock, many local people, born and bred in the borough, are outraged at the news that Bengalis will be getting 'their' homes. White workers in the East End regard the better council property as their birth-right because that's been council policy — both locally and at County Hall — for decades. Gerry Ross may not know it yet, but his benevolent gestures are about to produce a racist back-lash in the Borough. The first victims, as always, will be the Bengalis he professes to want to 'help'.

Cable Street — how it's changed

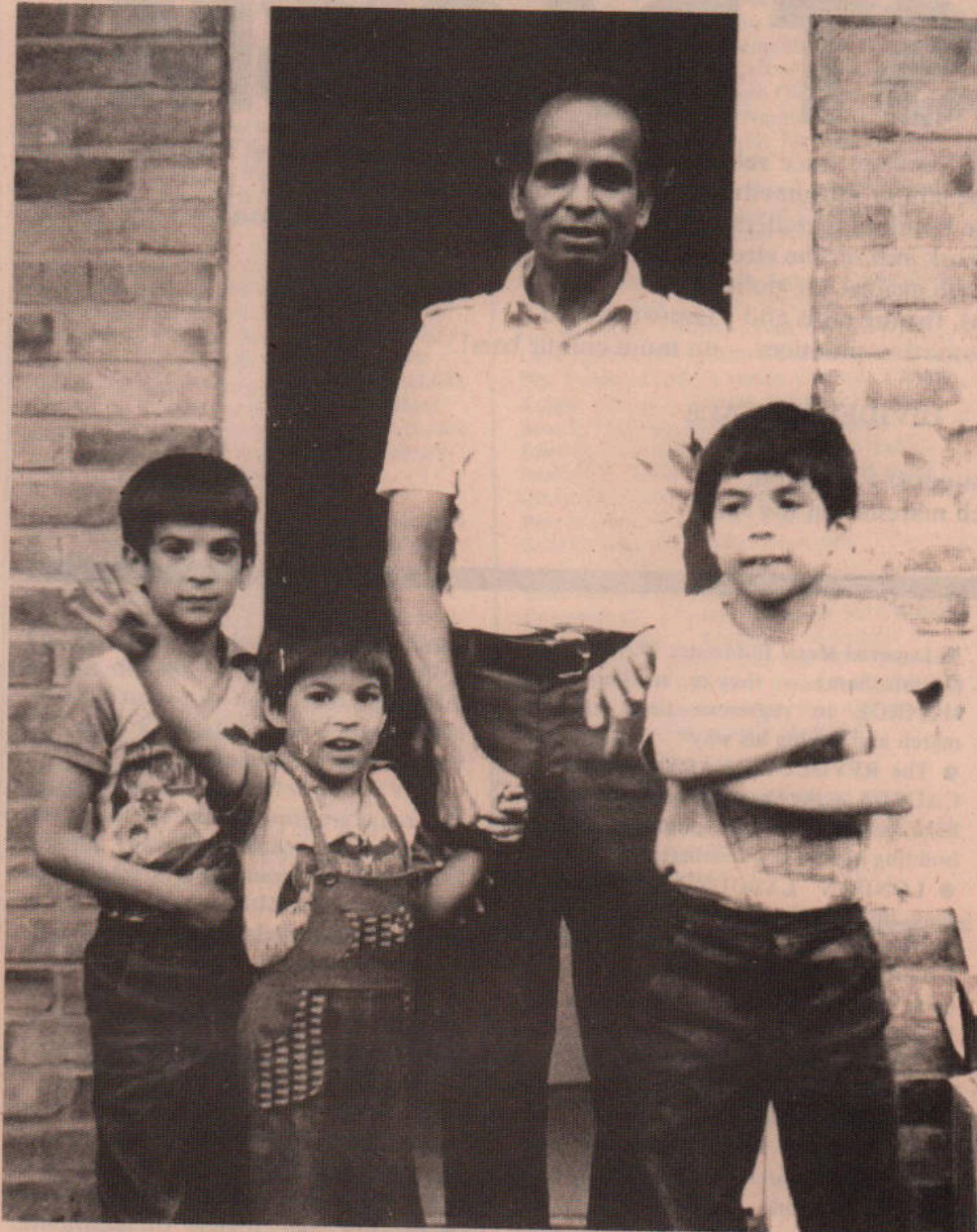
More than 35 years ago East End workers fought a famous battle in Cable Street, against Mosley's black-shirts and their police protectors. On Saturday 19 June another battle took place on the same site. It was less heroic. In fact it wasn't heroic at all. This time the target wasn't a marauding mob of fascists, but a Bengali family — the Alis — with three young children between five and nine years old. They had come to Cable Street to move into a GLC council house on Glamis Estate. Taking a leaf out of the history books, their protagonists had decided the only way to deal with this formidable threat was through direct physical action. When the Alis arrived with their furniture van on the Saturday morning they were greeted by around 40 white tenants who had barricaded the house to prevent them moving in. They waved placards declaring 'PAKIS OUT' and hurled racist abuse.

Unfortunately for these latter-day heroes of Cable Street, the Alis didn't turn and run. With the help of ELWAR supporters and local Asian organisations, they moved in. It wasn't easy. The police, true to their role in 1936, spent most of their energies trying to chase ELWAR off the estate. They somehow managed to be out of sight when Ali Asghar — a local CRC officer — got beaten up by one of the racists. Only very reluctantly, when Naylor Ali produced his GLC rent book, did they allow the family to begin moving in. They didn't seem to mind when the racists, who became more and more frenzied as each piece of furniture went inside, tried to trap one of the children on his own inside the house. Cries of 'They're filling the place with their bugs', 'Paki-lovers' and 'You're a disgrace to your race' (to white supporters of the family) and 'Go back to the jungle' to every black in sight apparently didn't constitute behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace.

The battle was over by Saturday night. The racists retreated to plan their next move. ELWAR mounted a 24-hour guard on the Ali family's house. The real war was about to begin.

If at first you don't succeed

Glamis Estate is quite a pleasant place to



On Thursday 17 June the House of Lords ruled the Commission for Racial Equality cannot investigate the housing policies of the London Borough of Hillingdon. The council is infamous for dumping Asians it refuses to rehouse on the steps of the Foreign Office. Summing up the case Lord Diplock commented that Hillingdon had 'long been aggrieved' because it had to bear the burden of housing so many of the immigrants who fly in to nearby Heathrow airport.

On Saturday 19 June a mob of white racists in East London took their cue from Lord Diplock. JUDY HARRISON reports.

bring up a family — providing, that is, your faces fit. Built in 1974, it looks very different from the Shadwell Gardens Estate on the other side of the road — which is old and run-down. The GLC clearly believes Bengalis don't fit in on Glamis Estate because they never offer them homes there. They did once, by accident, to the Miah family. But the Miah's soon got the idea they weren't welcome (our local heroes made sure of that) and they moved to Shadwell Gardens. There at least they fit in. Over 50 per cent of the tenants are Bengali.

When, after a five-year wait, the Alis were made an offer of a place on the Glamis Estate the same mob was outraged. Since their 'leaders' happen to be self-appointed officers of the Tenants Association, they decided to put some pressure on the council. It worked. The GLC withdrew the offer and tried to fob the Alis off with accommodation elsewhere. But much to the GLC's embarrassment, the Alis refused it. They fought the GLC and won back their house on Glamis Estate.

That was when the racists decided direct action was the only way. 'GET OUT NOW — NF' and 'PAKIS OUT' were

daubed on the door. Shit was shoved through the letter box. When a friend came to view the house a few days before the move, one of the women ring-leaders innocently inquired when the Alis would be moving in, and alerted her neighbours. Their strategy was very straightforward: make it impossible for the Alis to move in — or make life hell for them if they did — and the GLC would be bound to climb down again. And so they would have done, if it hadn't been for the solidarity that's already building up on the estate and in the local community.

The big cover-up

What the Alis have unwittingly exposed is a cesspool of racists on the estate, including at least one prominent local Labour Party activist. For years they've run things their way, colluded with the GLC to keep the estate free of 'Pakis'. And they have been allowed to get away with it by those who should know better.

In fact the racists are only a small minority. ELWAR has already canvassed the whole estate and found many tenants who were disgusted by the events on 19 June. Sympathetic neighbours have been visiting the Alis to welcome them to the estate. Many tenants are prepared to

take some action against the racists and rebuild the Tenants Association.

But there are also those who say 'we mustn't stir things up', who regard the presence of ELWAR as a provocation to the racists. We say to them — burying your head in the sand won't make the problem disappear; the Alis are still under serious threat. Their children have been told to 'fuck off into your own garden' when they tried to play in the communal yard. Stones have been thrown at the window, threats made and — most seriously of all — Mr Ali's workplace was visited by some of the racists to check when he came and went. The local 'Home Beat Officer' has displayed the usual care and concern. He turned up once, four days after the Alis moved in. 'Settling in nicely?' he inquired, 'Don't worry they'll soon get used to the colour of your skin'. After this reassurance he disappeared into the night. Constant protection of the family by ELWAR supporters and local tenants is necessary until the racists have been isolated and dealt with.

Covering up the problem only plays into the hands of the racists. But for the local political establishment there's a lot to hide. The area is riddled with closet racists like Labour Councillor Lilley who, when asked if he would help Mr Ali, observed that 'there are already too many Alis in the country: they're still coming in at Heathrow in hordes'. And there are the Labour Party members of the Tenants Association who took part in the infamous battle to keep the Alis out. That's why local politicians are surreptitiously sending the Social Services around to make offers of 'alternative accommodation'. Council officials sorrowfully shake their heads and say there's no long-term solution — in other words, they'd do everything short of telling the Alis to clear out. The very presence of this Bengali family threatens to expose not only the overt racists but the degree of toleration they've received from the local Labour Party machine.

The real enemy

Naylor Ali and his family have faced physical and verbal terror as a result of the stand they've taken. Their ordeal is still going on. But behind the racists on the estate stands the much more respectable racism of the council. If white tenants fear the intrusion of Bengalis onto their estates it's because of the council. It's the council which operates an apartheid housing policy, meanwhile maintaining a chronic housing shortage that inevitably leads to tenants competing with one another for decent accommodation. It's the council which has created conditions which are fertile for the NF to move in and exploit the situation.

All the ingredients for such a confrontation were there on Glamis Estate. They're also present down at Royal Mint Square, where the GLC is promising to allocate new homes to Bengalis. Already some residents on the nearby Peabody Estate are up in arms about it, complaining that they've been promised these flats for years. At the end of the day the GLC will shrug its shoulders and blame white tenants for resisting its token concessions to the Bengali community. The one thing it won't do is build more homes.

ELWAR has begun to show how the divisions the council has created can be healed, and how the frustrations and anger of tenants can be turned on the real enemy. The Alis have already struck a blow for all Bengalis in Tower Hamlets, and for all white workers too. **THEY SHALL NOT BE MOVED!**

WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM

Every year the Trades Union Congress discusses 'race relations'. They might as well not bother. The more the bosses use racism to divide the labour movement, the less the TUC does about it.

This year it's going to be different. Five hundred marchers will be descending on Brighton to demand

- direct action against the fascists at work and on the streets
- trade union solidarity with black youth against the police
- industrial action against deportations, fishing raids and passport checks
- an end to racist hiring, firing and promotion practices — no more colour bars!

REMEMBER — UNITED WE STAND — DIVIDED WE FALL

Get your trade union/organisation to support the march.
Send us money (it costs £30 to get each marcher on the road).
JOIN THE MARCH!

IF YOU DON'T ASK

PEOPLE told us that mobilising 500 marchers to go to the TUC would be almost impossible. And mobilising them to march against racism — that, we were told, was a real non-starter. Perhaps if we chose a more popular issue we'd have more chance of success.

Well, we're proving all the pessimists wrong. With two months still to go, the WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM has already won fantastic support all round the country. It's become clear that there aren't just 500 but thousands of activists who want to do something about racist divisions in the labour movement. In one week alone we've had support from

• SOUTH YORKSHIRE STEEL WORKERS (Joint Crafts Committee BSC) — they're sponsoring five marchers at £30 each and insist they wear 'STEEL WORKERS AGAINST RACISM' T-shirts!

• Imperial Metal Industries TGWU 1/311 (Birmingham) — they're sending KEN MONROE to represent them on the march and paying his way

• The REVOLUTIONARY GAY MEN'S CAUCUS — they're supporting the march, have issued their own publicity and are building a large gay contingent

• LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING — they invited WAR to speak at a recent conference and are urging Constituency Labour Parties in London not only to back the march, but also join our East London anti-racist street patrols

• BRIGHTON Anti-Nazi League — they sent £5 and want to help build the Brighton end of the march

• SHEFFIELD POLY — they're sponsoring four marchers and laying on a coach to London.

At NUPE's national conference last month WAR supporters not only received overwhelming backing for our motion of opposition to the NHS race checks; delegates were queuing up to support the march, invite speakers to their branches and make generous contributions to the campaign. It was a similar story at CPISA, NALGO, COHSE and other trade union conferences in recent weeks.

If you don't ask, you don't get! WAR has been fighting hard for over three years to build a working class movement against racism. Now more and more people are

acknowledging the value of our work and giving us their support. The left has, in the main, abandoned anti-racist work — believing it's too difficult a task. No wonder they get no results.

The march is building up momentum. Our ranks are growing fast. But we've still got problems. Problems like Sue Slipman (a former Communist Party leader who defected to the SDP) who turned up at NUPE's Race Relations Advisory Subcommittee and tried (unsuccessfully) to stop them supporting the march. And the much bigger problem of raising £10 000 in the next eight weeks. In spite of all the support we've received, we're still a long way from reaching our minimum target of £20 000 — the amount it costs to get the march on the road. Rush us your donations now. Get your workmates and friends to contribute. The only thing that can stop us now is money — it's your job to make sure that doesn't happen.

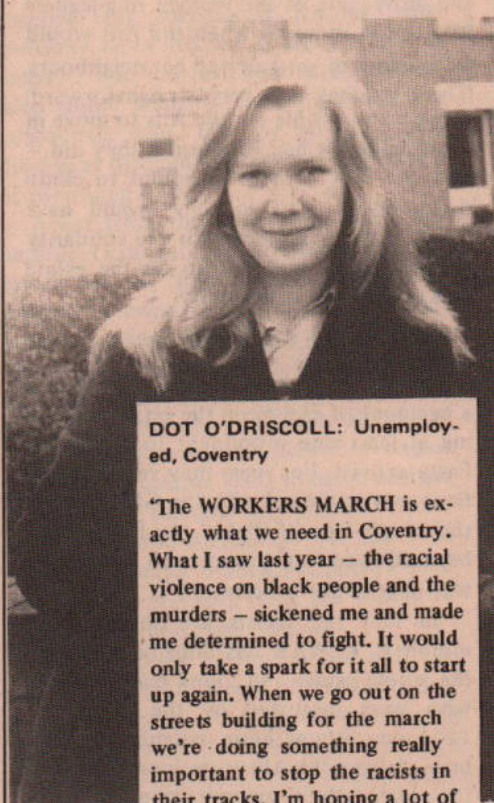
WHY WE'RE MARCHING

TO THE TUC



VERENA O'CONNOR: Regional Convenor, CPISA (Department of Employment), North West Region

'The unions have got to put the fine words they preach into practice. They have to be prepared to see the fight through to the end. If that means going on strike to oppose ethnic monitoring in the dole offices, it has to be done! I see this march as the beginning of a real fightback against racism in the unions, particularly ones like mine who are carrying out the discrimination.'



DOT O'DRISCOLL: Unemployed, Coventry

'The WORKERS MARCH is exactly what we need in Coventry. What I saw last year — the racial violence on black people and the murders — sickened me and made me determined to fight. It would only take a spark for it all to start up again. When we go out on the streets building for the march we're doing something really important to stop the racists in their tracks. I'm hoping a lot of my friends will get involved in the march too.'

The uncomfortable

Cleansing our ranks: a platform for anti-racist over six months ago. The response we've received in the unions is well overdue. One for writes: 'I didn't know the unions were meant to complain about racial abuse the union official black worker, Mohammed Nawaz, complained (a Leeds engineering firm) had victimised him fully advised to 'go to the race relations board, it'

Join the march

Mohammed Nawaz is one reason why you should be organised by WAR this September.

Roland Steven is another. Roland, a black firm from his job because he 'over-reacted' to racist abuse his dismissal was reduced to a reprimand, but not an industrial tribunal. At the tribunal fire officer 'coon', 'gollywog', 'nigger' and other choice names intended in a 'good-humoured and jocular vein'

Abdul Aziz is another worker without the right how he can't see the joke in being off work for refused to be down-graded from his job as a fitter to a labourer's grade. Abdul isn't the only black worker this way. One Asian worker was forced to clean specified he did not have to do) after working after five years in the job, was suddenly told his forced to accept a lower grade job while he was labourer was recently sacked 'for bad time-keeping' was being by-passed whenever better jobs became less experience always seemed to get them. In a — has done next to nothing.

The unions are ours — we

We expect the bosses to be racist. The same police, the courts and, for that matter, industrial such practices inside our organisations, inside the meant to represent all workers. In practice, the says racial harassment and discrimination is 'the bosses' man who, when it comes to the crunch, we

That's the case at Birmingham Batteries who recently framed up on assault charges — workers' union is run by a magistrate! Not surprising as a matter for the police. But plenty of workers and white — are prepared to back up their words as no better than management.

Rhetoric

Our union leaders are strong on anti-racist rhetoric NUT, the teachers' union, declared (in its even inquiry into ethnic education) that it will not change when it comes into effect. But racist practices the future. The Nationality Act is being implemented quotas for black students are everyday practice. children don't go to school for fear of racist playgrounds. The NUT's rhetorical anti-racism does

WAR supporters in the unions are fighting for Roland Steven, Abdul Aziz and Pino Kahn. We're right of Bengali children to go to school in safety the divisions in the labour movement and isolation have no time for token gestures. We demand action why we're marching to the TUC. And that's why

table truth

trade unionists was published just ed shows that the struggle against undry worker from the Midlands to be on our side. Every time we says we're over-reacting'. Another to his AUEW official that Cattons on racial grounds. He was help- s not the union's job'.

h d join the march to the TUC con-

erman from Lancashire, was sacked use from his workmates. Eventually evertheless Roland took his case to pers admitted they had called him ames. But they claimed it was all n'. The industrial tribunal agreed. ht kind of sense of humour. Some- or months without pay because he er with British Rail in Birmingham, worker in his depot to be treated in the toilets (something his contract there for 10 years. An Asian fitter, English wasn't good enough — and nt to evening classes. A West Indian ng', one week after complaining he e vacant. White workers with much ll four cases the union — the NUR

n them back!

goes for state institutions like the al tribunals. But we cannot tolerate e labour movement. The unions are e kind of union representative who ot his concern' turns out to be a ill sell out all his members.

ere Pino Kahn — an Asian worker ks. His branch of the engineering risingly it regarded Pino's problems rs at Birmingham Batteries — black orkmate. They regard 'the union'

ric but weak on action. In June the idence to the Swann Committee ooperate with the Nationality Act in education aren't a problem for mented now. Passport checks and . In Spitalfields at least 200 Bengali attacks on the streets and in the es nothing about this.

or the rights of Mohammed Nawaz, re fighting in East London for the y. In doing so we're breaking down ing the racists in the workplace. We tion from our union leaders. That's you've got to be there too!



Sponsors:

Jayaben Desai * Anwar Ditta * Nasira Begum
Cynthia Gordon * Reggie Yates * Najat Chafee
Nesta Moodie * A Sivanandan * Avtar Jouhl

Bradford 12 Campaign * Thornton Heath
Campaign * Reggie Yates Campaign * Paul
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Welfare Association * Bangladesh Workers
Association * Peckham Black Women's Group
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Brighton ANL * Society of Black Lawyers

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Pat Denning (NUPE President) * Terry Wood
(COHSE EC) * Dennis Barry (Laurence Scott's
Convenor) * Lou Lewis (UCATT Convenor
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Leeds Trades Council) * Jack Taylor (Yorkshire
Area NUM President) * Derek Cattell (Mersey-
side Area Officer NUTGW)

NUPE Race Relations Advisory Sub-Committee
Camden Trades Council * Battersea & Wands-
worth Trades Council * Lambeth Trades
Council * Tameside Trades Council
Holborn NUR * ASTMS NE London Medical
Branch * AUEW Aston No 2 * Hammersmith
NALGO Executive * ASTMS Coventry City
NALGO Walsall Council * COHSE Manchester
332 * NUPE Manchester Royal Infirmary
Hackney NALGO Executive * COHSE Wadsley
branch (Sheffield) * AUEW (TASS) Leeds
South Yorkshire Crafts Committee (Steel
industry) * Bow Bus Garage TGWU 1/311
Imperial Metal Industries TGWU 5/177
ASTMS Manchester * TGWU/ACTSS 1/128
TGWU/ACTSS 6/389 * Tower Hamlets AUEW
Kaplan's Strike Committee * South East London

BRADFORD 12 GO FREE

After several months in prison on remand, a year under restrictive bail conditions and weeks in court on trial, the Bradford 12 were acquitted of all charges against them. Their victory is an inspiration to us all. But Britain's black community still lives in terror of racial attack; the fight for workers' defence goes on.



NAZRA KHAN: East London

'I've had it up to here from the racists in this place. I've seen my mother pushed around by the council, treated like rubbish when we tried to get a decent flat. My brother was arrested when he protested about it to the housing office. And there's all the attacks going on round here. Are those good enough reasons to want to march?'

CPSA (DE) * Leeds Unemployed Group
Brighton's Women's Centre * TGWU 9/10
(South Yorkshire buses) * Birmingham Housing
Management District Direct Labour JSSC

Tony Benn MP * Ted Knight * Paul Boateng
Ken Livingstone * Valerie Wise * Reg Race MP
Jo Richardson MP * Joan Maynard MP
Joan Lester MP * Les Huckfield MP
John Tilley MP * Alf Dubs MP
Bernie Grant (Deputy Leader Haringey Council)
Lorna Cohen (Leeds Labour Councillor)
Tariq Ali * Denise Robson (Hackney Labour
Councillor) * Matthew Warburton (Lambeth
Labour Councillor) * Judy Thomas (Leeds
Labour Councillor) * Neil Taggart (Leeds
Labour Councillor) * Arthur Latham (Chair-
man Greater London Labour Party) * Vidya
Anand (EC Greater London Regional Council)
Ann Bliss (Lewisham Labour Councillor)
Russell Proffitt (Lewisham Labour Councillor)
Jeremy Corbyn (NUPE full-time official)
George Mudie (Leader Leeds City Council)
Dave Sullivan (Lewisham Labour Councillor)
Phil Turner (Leader Camden Council) * Chris
Knight (London Labour Briefing Editorial
Board) * Graham Bash (London Labour
Briefing Editorial Board) * London Labour
Briefing * David Fryer (Southwark Labour
Councillor) * Selly Oak Labour Party
Revolutionary Gay Men's Caucus
Rulecan Women's Strike Committee

London Students Organisation * Kent
University SU * Brunel University SU * Kilburn
Polytechnic SU * Brighton Polytechnic SU
Polytechnic of Central London SU * Sussex
University SU * School of African and Oriental
Studies SU * Kingsway Princeton College SU
Queen Mary's College SU * Sheffield
Polytechnic SU

AUPAIRS * PIGBAG * BABYLON REBELS
ATILLA THE STOCKBROKER * AFRICAN
STAR * ALTERNATIVE CABARET
AMAZULU * AKIMBO * BENJAMIN
ZEPHANIAH

REGIONAL DAYSCHOOLS

WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM REGIONAL DAYSCHOOLS

Pre-march dayschools for activists and marchers, with sessions on:

- Fighting racism in the unions.
- Speakers include Jayaben Desai (Grunwick strike leader) and Nesta Moody (victimised black trade unionist)
- Workers' defence against police and racist attacks.
- Speakers from the local labour movement and Workers Against Racism.

WEST MIDLANDS

Saturday 17 July 10.00am — 5.00pm
Stanton Social Club
243 Stanton Road
Coventry

NORTH WEST

Saturday 31 July 10.00am — 5.00pm
Longsight Library
Longsight
Manchester

NORTH OF ENGLAND

Saturday 17 July 10.00am — 5.00pm
Swarthmore Centre
Woodhouse Square
Leeds

LONDON

Saturday 10 July 1.00pm — 6.00pm

BRIXTON BONANZA

Workshops, music, dancing, exhibitions, stalls. Guest speakers include Jayaben Desai, Reggie Yates.

EVENING 8.00 — 12.00pm

BABYLON REBELS and MOTORBOYS MOTOR

Abeng Centre
Gresham Road
Brixton SW9

Saturday 24 July 11.00am — 1.00pm

LONDON ALL-STARS STEEL BAND

play for the Workers March Against Racism.

Outside Burtons
Brixton High Road
London SW9

Saturday 24 July 9.00pm-1.00am

WORKERS AGAINST RACISM TAKES TO THE RIVER!

Benefit aboard a river boat. Join the boat at Westminster Pier!

BAR, FOOD, BANDS £5/£3.50 UB40

Join us!

I/We want to march on/sponsor/make a donation to the WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM, London — Brighton, 4-8 September.

Name
Address

Tel No
TU/Organisation

No of marchers
£ enclosed

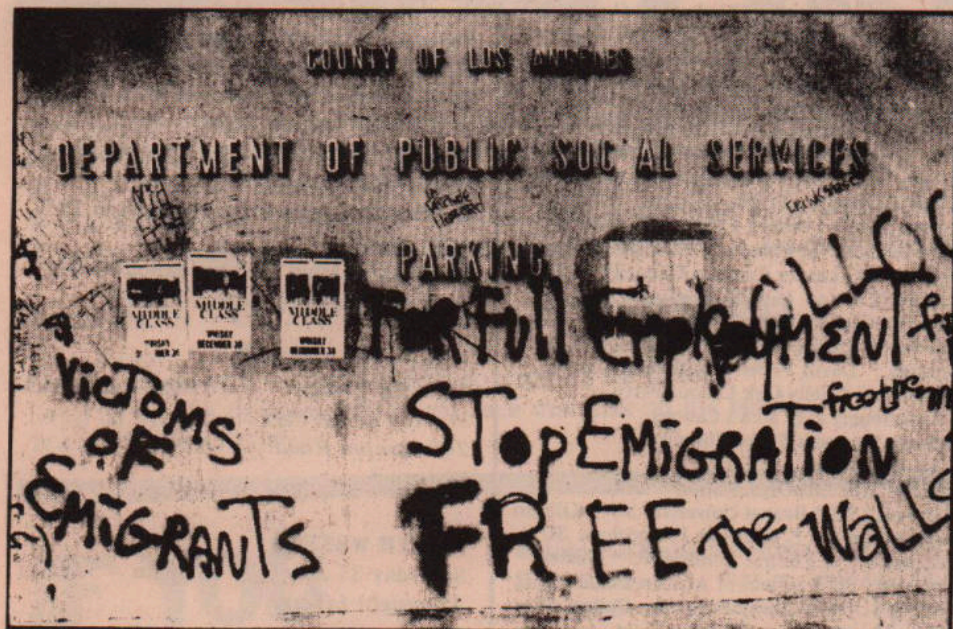
Make cheques/postal orders payable to WAR and send to Workers Against Racism, Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Rd, London E8. Phone 01-274 3951 for details.

KEN MONROE: TGWU 1/311
Imperial Metal Industries, Birm-
ingham: TGWU Power & Engi-
neering district committee

'Let's face it, there's a lot of racist views inside our movement. And it's making it easy for the employers to get what they want by setting us one against the other. It's high time we got our own house in order. WAR's doing the job and that's why I'm marching. We've got to make sure this march is a big success.'

Racism

It's the same the whole world over



America

RACISM IS as American as apple pie. The murder of a black worker by a gang of white racists in New York on 23 June is only unusual because of the wide media coverage that it received. The most insidious development on the race front, however, has nothing to do with the traditional forms of racial harassment. The American state has turned its attention on immigrant workers. Federal and state officials have launched an anti-illegal immigrant campaign directed primarily at Hispanic but also Filipino and Chinese people.

According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), there are between six and 12 million 'illegal' immigrants (60 per cent of them Mexican) in the US. For decades now illegal immigrants have played an important role in the economy. Vulnerable to police pressure and isolated from the rest of society, illegal immigrants provided an ideal pool of cheap workers ready to work at any job at any price.

For decades the employers used illegal immigrants to solve their labour shortage problems. Nobody complained about them. Occasionally, racist union officials would demand their repatriation on the grounds that immigrants kept wages down. But until the current depression the state was reluctant to upset this happy arrangement for the employers. Now matters are different — hunting down 'illegals' creates jobs for Americans and it also helps sustain divisions within the working class.

Like rabbits

It started in April. In nine major cities 400 immigration agents launched a series of co-ordinated raids. Within a week, they hit 275 companies and rounded up 6000 'illegal aliens'. One employer, Tony Ratts, who was prevented from entering his Oakland furniture factory, while 35 sanders and assembly workers were arrested, commented: 'I had the feeling they were chasing rabbits, not people'. The targets of the attack were Hispanic workers, but the raids were designed to terrify and intimidate all 'foreign-looking' employees. 'Operation Jobs' was directed

at Mexican workers. Hundreds were placed on waiting buses and transported from the factory gates direct to Mexico.

A week after 'Operation Jobs' came 'Operation ballot box'. This initiative was launched by US Attorney Joseph Russoniello. A circular went out to Northern California district attorneys and registrars requesting names of 25 randomly chosen non-English speaking people who requested bilingual voting information for the June primary elections. Within three days the names started rolling in — in many cases exceeding the targets. The object of this campaign was to put the finger on the Spanish and Chinese speaking communities. A climate of fear swept across San Francisco's Chinatown, where some 3000 voters receive bilingual voting material.

Both 'Operation Jobs' and 'Operation ballot box' had a purpose which went beyond their immediate targets. The state wants to make immigration an issue so that it is seen to be doing something about unemployment. The next phase of this campaign is to systematise anti-immigrant opinion around support for a new immigration law (the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill) currently before the Senate. The aim of this new legislation is to introduce a national identification system for all job seekers to stem the 'flood of aliens'. Special courts exercising 'quick' justice against immigrants are also envisaged. Just what this justice means is well illustrated in Florida where hundreds of Haitians are illegally interned in camps. Refugees from El Salvador are at present refused asylum and rounded up at a rate of 1000 a month and returned home.

This is just the beginning. The House Sub-committee on Immigration has passed a series of amendments to increase the powers of police and immigration officers and to tighten up entry into the US. Hunting down aliens has become the Number One solution to prevailing social problems. After decades of equal opportunity programmes, race relations legislation and positive discrimination, nothing much has changed. Racism remains the central political question for the American working class.

Anita Lloyd

France

WE ARE SITTING in a run-down canteen on the outskirts of Paris. Two workers, one from Senegal and the other from Algeria thumb through the Workers Against Racism literature I brought with me. Rene looks at Ali and laughs: 'Looks like we won't be moving to Britain, it's no better there than here'. But what about the socialist government; haven't things improved?

'On paper maybe', says Rene, 'They promised a new deal for immigrants. When Autain, the Minister for Immigration, introduced measures to legalise the employment of illegals many immigrant leaders thought we had finally made it. Of course there was a catch. To obtain legal status you had to prove that you had stable employment since January 1981. The cut-off date for applications was 15 January this year. By April over 140 000 applications were made but only about 80 000 were given residence and work permits'.

Ali explained how the new system worked: 'Many were afraid to apply. For good reasons. Thousands who asked their employers for evidence of stable employment were refused and many were sacked for asking. Do you know that if you succeed with your application they only give you a one year work permit? In effect nothing has changed. Only about a quarter of the 400 000 illegals have amnesty and the rest face increased hassles from the cops. Meanwhile, the socialist pigs showed their true colours when they announced that 20 000 illegals would be expelled in June'.

'I could have written your *Cleansing our ranks*', said Rene. 'The unions are the worst because they're such hypocrites. They're up to their necks in it. The CGT (the Communist Party-dominated union) wants more immigration officers to prevent the exploitation of migrant workers by unscrupulous employers. Get that! They want more of these bastards to run us down and they have the gall to say it's in our interests. Do you know that the unions have opposed almost

every action we took. Every time we do something one of them says "It's not right what they are doing to you but if you act on your own it's divisive".'

We then turned to the strike at Citroen, sparked off when the almost entirely migrant workforce at the Alnay-sous-bois assembly plant in Paris stopped work. The five week strike eventually spread to other factories. The dispute was fought ruthlessly by the employers who brought in thugs to break the strike. One worker was killed and more than 50 injured. In the end, the employers were forced to make concessions: a 10 per cent wage rise, and the right to organise.

Rene takes up the story: 'Two aspects of this dispute should be noted. The press argued that conditions at Citroen were exceptionally bad. Many articles were written about the racist abuse that the workers suffered at the plant. But for us, Citroen is not an exception. Immigrants face the same problems everywhere. Secondly, the role of the unions was predictable. At first they weren't interested. But when we closed the plant down they came crawling with advice. They saw it as a straight economic issue and ignored the racist aspects. This allowed the employers to go out and tell French workers that it's only immigrants making trouble. The union bureaucrats ignored these attacks'.

Did the employers manage to isolate the immigrant workers? 'At first, yes. But after the first week things began to change. When the fights began with the strike-breakers a lot of French workers came down on our side. Who knows, maybe there is something in class solidarity after all? Of course, once we got their support the union leaders became very brave and started to make a lot of fine speeches. In public they were fine. But behind the scenes they hurried to end the strike before it got out of hand.'

Ali showed me a picture of a group of strikers armed with sticks and bricks. 'See, we have been doing a bit of what you call *cleansing our ranks* as well.'

Louise George

Since this interview took place racial tensions in France have boiled right over, with very serious race riots breaking out in Marseilles, Villeurbanne and Mulhouse.

Germany



Another Turkish worker killed by racists.

GERMAN CAPITALISTS have nothing to learn from anyone. Since the recession they have expelled some 600 000 workers and 500 000 of their dependants as a contribution to solving unemployment. The union bureaucracy is fully behind these attacks and has called for a ban on all immigration. After all, harassing immigrant workers is easier than fighting for jobs and wages.

Immigrant workers in Germany have always been among the most oppressed in Europe. But recently the situation has deteriorated further. In recent elec-

tions fascist organisations have mobilised considerable support for their anti-immigrant stand. Racist violence on the streets is widespread. Recently a young Turkish woman burnt herself to death in a Hamburg street in protest at the treatment Turks receive in Germany. Immigrant community centres have been vandalised and burnt down.

The growth of right-wing activity has put the mainstream politicians on the defensive. A West Berlin senator has prepared a proposal for the immediate expulsion of any foreigner engaging in any political activity. He is certain to win support from at least one leading Social Democrat. Mr Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski went on record as saying: 'You can't expect neighbours to put up with Turks who slaughter sheep in the bath'.

The present wave of racist hysteria has paralysed the left. For many it is too hot to handle. Others want to develop a race relations industry along British lines. The knives are out — but at present nobody is prepared to mobilise workers against racism. Yet, thousands are ready to demonstrate against Reagan. The labour movement's lack of interest in the racist threat paves the way for an even more reactionary government under the Christian Democrats after the next general election, and a broader offensive against the working class.

Tom Pfeiffer

HEADING FOR WAR

'Crisis' has become an over-used word. But no other word expresses better the now permanent state of international politics. Nothing can be taken for granted, for so much is out of control — as the former US secretary of state, General Haig, has found out to his cost. In the old days everything was straightforward; on one side stood the Free World, on the other the Iron Curtain bloc. Cold War ideology is still churned out for public consumption, but it is now reserved for American Presidential visits to Europe: it is a tired ritual, more likely to cause embarrassment than forge a new sense of purpose. True, the Pope's visit and a royal birth can always be relied on to uplift the national soul. But although the spirit is willing, the flesh cannot but yield to the forces of darkness — interest rates, trade wars and hard cash.

The British invasion of the Malvinas has thrown US foreign policy in Latin America into turmoil, and Israel's war against Lebanon pushes the Middle East closer to the brink. The French foreign secretary offers to despatch his army to Beirut, the British Prime Minister lectures on the evils of aggression and both Thatcher and Reagan dismiss their foreign secretaries. Every capitalist nation is digging in for the battles ahead. Increasingly the recession is redefining political realities. This is inevitable, because just as nobody can regulate the capitalist system, so too international relations prove impervious to old treaties and 'special understandings'. Before our eyes the old equilibrium of the imperialist order has disintegrated. The restoration



of this equilibrium requires the redivision of the world.

West against West

'The economic peace of Versailles, painstakingly constructed by the heads of governments of the seven big Western industrial economies, is in tatters — within three weeks of that much publicised summit meeting.' (*The Observer*, 27 June 1982)

During these three weeks these seven imperialist nations did everything but act as allies. One European Prime Minister after another attacked the Reagan administration for its high interest rate policies. President Mitterand was especially bitter, blaming the US for forcing austerity measures on France.

The Reagan administration struck back. On 11 June the US Department

of Commerce slapped high duties on European steel to protect its own industry. At the same time it tried to sabotage the Soviet-European gas pipeline project. To curb Europe's independence, and to whip NATO allies behind US foreign policy, Reagan extended trade sanctions against the Soviet Union to cover the delivery of vital equipment for the project from US affiliates and licensees in Europe. The dramatic arrest of Japanese computer engineers caught stealing secret documents from IBM was part of a concerted campaign aimed at opening up the Japanese market to American imports.

It is not business as usual. In the past a dynamic American empire ruled over a stable world market. The post-war balance of power was based on the overwhelming superiority of US imperialism. The decline

of US capitalism and the growing productivity of its competitors, particularly in Japan and Germany, has upset this balance. This process is closely intertwined with the world capitalist depression. The fight is on for market shares and spheres of influence. Cooperation is ruled out when the survival of every national capitalist class can only be bought about at its rivals' expense.

Summit meetings can no more stop this collapse into economic conflict than they could stop the South Atlantic war getting out of hand. The Western world is not at one. It is an uneasy alliance of rivals desperately trying to slow down the inevitable. The Middle East is of special importance in this respect. There, the Iran-Iraq war and the invasion of Lebanon show that imperialist domination is fragile and threatens to get completely out of control. The imperialist powers cannot speak with one voice because of the powerful conflicts of interest. These themes have been discussed in previous issues of *the next step*. We continue our survey of the breakdown of the international order with articles on the Middle East and the Soviet Union.

These articles are not designed simply to enhance readers' understanding of foreign affairs. Imperialism is very much a domestic issue. No war is simply fought abroad. As the Malvinas conflict showed, war must also be fought at home. From Argentina to Palestine we need to speak out against imperialism — with a distinct voice that represents the interests of the proletariat.

(continued on page 16)

THE SOVIET UNION ENCIRCLED

LIKE ANY RULING elite, the Soviet bureaucracy seeks to exploit international conflicts to increase its own political security. Throughout its existence it has had to face enormous diplomatic and military pressure, in addition to the economic pressure of the world economy on its backward industry. Its survival is testimony to its ruthless repression of the working class and peasantry at home and its construction of a large-scale military machine.

In retrospect it seems barely credible that the Soviet Union was able to drive the German army back after the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942. Certainly, it was at the cost of some 20 million Russian lives and was greatly helped by supplies of American equipment. But it would not have been possible without the rapid development of Soviet military industry from scratch in the 'thirties. Russian tanks were as advanced as the Panzers they confronted, while all around the economy was in chaos. How was this possible?

The price of security

By the time of Lenin's death in 1924 the working class had been virtually destroyed by war and famine. It was not until the late 'twenties that industrial production was back to pre-war levels. With the decimation of the working class and the rise of the new bureaucracy went the destruction of democratic control over production. The primary aim of the programme of rapid industrialisation which was launched in 1928 was the construction of modern industry for

Reagan, Thatcher and other imperialist cold warriors never tire of denouncing the Soviet threat to the 'free world'. But the portrait of the Soviet Union as a dynamic and expansionist empire bears no relationship to reality. Soviet involvement in Central America has proven to be a fiction of the Washington propaganda machine. And the passivity of the Soviet Union during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon belies all the talk about the real menace to the Middle East. Indeed, the appalling performance of Soviet-built tanks and missile systems in the war raises serious questions about the Soviet Union's military capacity. Gareth Evans examines the constraints on Soviet foreign policy.

military production at any cost. The directives of the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party emphasised that the role of the First Five Year Plan was 'to focus maximum attention on a more rapid development of those sectors of the national economy, industry in particular, bearing the main role in ensuring the defence and economic stability of the country in time of war'. The dictatorship of the bureaucracy made it impossible for the masses to exercise effective control over the production of essential products. But the War Department, as an influential grouping within the bureaucracy, ensured that at least the weapons produced by the ramshackle economy worked.

To provide for its military defence, the bureaucracy has to this day continued to build up a very well-equipped military machine. It is not that the military industry is more efficient than civilian industry; in fact there are good grounds for believing that it is even less efficient. But the bureaucracy has given it priority in supplies and concentrated most scientific research on it. Large quantities of

substandard products are rejected, whereas in civilian industry they would be passed. Since 1960 military spending has increased more than 60 per cent every five years. This has been made possible by squeezing consumption, down from 60 per cent of the national product in 1955 to 52 per cent in 1980.

Today, Soviet military spending is probably as high as 18-20 per cent of the national product and set to grow considerably faster than the stagnant Soviet economy in the 'eighties. This is the reason the Soviet elite is so determined to establish a new round of arms limitations talks with the USA. Those who view Brezhnev's speeches about the need for peace as pure bluff are mistaken. The Soviet Union was unable to generate the resources necessary for military production from domestic sources even during the last decade. As the Pentagon rightly argues, a crucial component of technology and equipment necessary for Soviet military industry was provided through trade with the West throughout the 'seventies.

The Soviet bureaucracy pays for its technology and machinery imports by exporting raw and semi-finished materials — gold, oil, natural gas, timber products and minerals. The Soviet pattern of foreign trade is much closer to that of a backward capitalist country than to that of an advanced capitalist country. It is unable to export industrial or consumer goods to the West, with the exception of a few Lada cars. It only manages to palm off the occasional steel plant or Moskvitch onto backward capitalist countries via a complicated network of barter deals.

But as reserves in the western regions of the country become depleted, it becomes increasingly difficult to extract the raw materials needed for export. Recently the Soviet Union has substantially reduced its longstanding oil subsidies to Eastern Europe in order to release supplies for hard currency sales at higher prices on the world market. But the bureaucracy's strategy for securing foreign exchange depends critically on developing natural gas deposits in Siberia for supply by pipeline to Western Europe, particularly West Germany. These deposits, however, are located in permafrost conditions almost as inaccessible as the Antarctic. They require highly sophisticated and robust drilling equipment for their extraction — to say nothing of the thousands of kilometres of pipeline to carry the gas. This technology is available only in the West. It is being supplied on barter terms by a consortium of banks and industrial firms, including US firms which in theory were subject to Reagan's

Soviet Union



Continued from page 15

post-Poland technology embargo. The Soviet Union, in order to prepare militarily against imperialist attack is thus drawn progressively into a web of financial and commercial relations with the imperialists. But is the Soviet Union in danger of imminent Western attack?

The military threat to the SU

At present the most important rivalries in the world are within the imperialist camp. These rivalries could easily erupt into armed conflicts which would also involve the Soviet Union. Western propaganda about the Soviet menace provides a distraction from the tensions within NATO and a smokescreen to obscure US strategic objectives. Thus Reagan's newly-imposed sanctions on gaspipe technology for Siberia is at the same time an attack on German and French business. Similarly the US arms build-up — justified by the need to prevent Soviet 'nuclear superiority' — is vital to preserve US domination over its imperialist rivals. The Soviet Union, while marginal to these conflicts, would probably be drawn into any military showdown among the imperialist powers, especially at a time when strong forces of disintegration are at work in the Eastern bloc itself.

The Soviet Union, which has a 10 000 mile frontier facing 13 countries, lives in danger of attack all along the length of its western, southern and eastern flanks. For the present, it has little to fear from Western Europe, whose governments and bankers are concerned about all the money they have lent to Eastern Europe and would not countenance an invasion. But Eastern Europe itself, the military buffer zone which bristles with Warsaw Pact forces controlled from Moscow, is beginning to pose a serious threat to the internal stability of the Soviet regime. In addition to the large sums the Soviet bureaucracy pays to maintain and equip these forces, it also has to keep many Soviet Army divisions within striking distance of the borders with Poland and Romania.

The most immediate threat to Soviet territory, however, comes from the south

and east. In Afghanistan 90 000 Soviet troops are tied down in a guerrilla war they cannot win. Yet they have to stay for the same reason they had to invade in the first place — to prevent Islamic nationalism spreading to the Asiatic nationalities within the Soviet border. Further east, one quarter of the Soviet Union's four million strong army is ranged along the Chinese border, backed up by a large array of missiles targeted at Chinese cities. Since the collapse of the USA's war in Vietnam, US foreign policy in the Far East has been geared to promoting Japan as policeman for imperialist interests in the area and building up relations with China. Under US influence, and supplied with US weaponry, Japan has renewed its claim against Soviet occupation of the four southern-most Kurile islands and China has renewed its claim to Soviet-occupied Mongolia. This new US-China-Japan axis poses a serious potential threat to the Soviet Union. It is the reason why the Soviet bureaucracy launched a major diplomatic initiative in March to re-open talks on its 4000 mile border with China. It also explains why the Soviet Union was so careful not to condone Argentina's occupation of the Malvinas.

The myth of 'Soviet expansionism'

The survival of the Soviet bureaucracy has always depended on its ability to exploit the divisions in the imperialist camp. After the Second World War the Soviet Union took advantage of the emergence of anti-colonial movements throughout Africa, Asia and the Middle East to strengthen its own influence in these areas and hence its position in relation to the Western powers. However, the backwardness of the Soviet economy has continually limited the effectiveness of its foreign policy initiatives.

Take India for example. When India won formal independence from Britain in 1948 its bourgeoisie already had several modern industries and it was determined to build a large industrial public sector. Western capitalists were not interested in the low profits available, so India turned

to the Soviet Union which offered loans at 2.5 per cent interest (compared with the West's 7.5 per cent). The Soviet Union did not export capital, so it was not interested in equity participation in Indian industries. It accepted payment of interest and repayment of principal in rupees, which it used to purchase consumer goods — tea, coffee, spices, etc.

The Soviet contribution to the Indian economy was a number of plants producing steel, oil and natural gas. But given the backwardness of its own industry, the Soviet Union could not extend its influence beyond the most basic sectors of the economy. A Bombay business journal commented recently that 'as Indian companies go in for technological updating, the Soviet connection becomes less important' (*Business India*, 27 September 1981).

Soviet trade with India increasingly centred on another commodity the West had traditionally been reluctant to supply to its erstwhile colonial oppositionists — arms. Between 1965 and 1974 the Soviet Union supplied India with weapons worth \$47m. But an arms salesman cannot guarantee a political relationship. Today, as India has moved into a more open relationship with Western capitalists, the Soviet Union has been reduced to a marginal role in Indian politics; it is even being squeezed out of the arms trade.

Another area where the Soviet Union gained — and soon lost — influence was the Middle East. When the imperialist countries refused to build the Aswan Dam for Egypt's Colonel Nasser, the Soviet Union stepped in with an aid commitment worth \$1.5 billion. But the Soviet Union could not provide the economic and industrial input to sustain an alliance with the bourgeoisies of the Gulf in opposition to the West. And its role as the Third World's cheap arms dealer could not compensate. By 1971 the Soviet arms supply programme to Egypt involved \$4 billion and 17 000 Soviet military personnel. But when Nasser's successor Sadat moved to stabilise his regime through a closer alliance with the USA in 1972, he could easily stop buying in Moscow, kick out his Russian advisers and terminate Soviet influence at a stroke.

The decline of Soviet power

Operating through the Camp David 'peace process', the USA has successfully excluded the Soviet Union from the Middle East. Moscow can still sell some arms: between 1974 and 1978 Kuwait, Iran, Algeria, Iraq and Libya spent a total of \$7 billion on Soviet-made weaponry. This helped the Soviet Union pay off its trade deficits to the backward capitalist world. But it did little to strengthen its waning political influence in the region which is now virtually confined to insignificant South Yemen.

In Africa the Soviet Union has also fared badly as the recession has reduced the scope for its manoeuvrings. Moscow gained some respect as arms supplier to the anti-colonial movements in Angola and Mozambique. But it has soon lost it as these regimes have turned to their powerful imperialist neighbour South Africa to consolidate their position. In Zimbabwe, the Kremlin backed a loser in Joshua Nkomo, and it took the Soviet Union a full year to re-establish diplomatic relations after Mugabe came to power. Soviet attempts to exploit the destabilisation of imperialist control in the Horn of Africa have been disastrous. It poured \$2 billion into backing Ethiopia against Somalia and Eritrea and produced only stalemate, genocide and discredit. Soviet financing of Vietnam's incursions into China, Laos and Cambodia have brought similar negative results for the Kremlin bureaucrats.

Far from expanding, Soviet influence

in the world has declined steadily over the last five years. The imperialist powers have begun to reassert their military influence over the backward capitalist countries and have been undermining the Soviet position in those few countries which have been buying Soviet arms (see 'Cold war illusions', *the next step*, No 22, February 1982). In future the Soviet Union will find fewer opportunities to forestall imperialist influence in countries beyond its own immediate buffer zone. The clearest indication of this is the indifference of the virulently anti-American Khomeini regime in Iran to Soviet advances. Iraq, a major customer for Soviet arms and for two years at war with Iran, shows equally little interest.

Behind the arms trade

Because the Soviet Union is not capitalist and doesn't export capital, it has never been able to exploit directly the labour of the working class of other countries. Its interest in trade is to obtain consumer goods and a few raw materials it cannot produce for itself — oil from the Middle East and phosphates from Morocco. Soviet economic involvement in the backward capitalist countries has been minimal: between 1956 and 1978 its total deliveries of goods to these countries amounted to a mere \$7.6 billion (priced as if they had been produced in the West). In 1980 alone, total Western aid exceeded this figure. Over the same period, 77 per cent of Soviet exports to the Third World were in the form of arms.

Two factors are important in explaining the pre-eminence of the Soviet arms trade. First, there is not much else that even a backward capitalist country would want to buy from the Soviet Union, because of the poor quality of its products. Second, the Soviet Union has to produce weapons of reasonable quality for its own defence. It is therefore relatively easy for it to extend its already very long production runs for weapons. The Soviet Union has proved incapable of broadening its economic and political relationships with Third World countries beyond this narrow sector.

In contrast, when an imperialist nation invests in the military repression of a backward capitalist country, its capitalists benefit from cheaper raw materials, larger markets and greater opportunities for profitable investment. The Soviet Union has been able to benefit economically from certain of its arms deals, particularly with the Middle East and India. But these small gains have to be offset against the enormous subsidies it gives to its allies. The International Institute for Strategic Studies has estimated that in 1980 the Soviet Union was subsidising Cuba to the tune of more than \$8 million a day and Vietnam and Ethiopia each by \$2.4 million a day, depending on the season (*Strategic Survey 1980-81*, Spring 1981). The Soviet Union can no longer afford the luxury of subsidising its allies so heavily. This is why it has raised the prices Comecon countries must pay for its oil and natural gas and postponed the admission of Laos and Afghanistan to Comecon.

The Cold War caricature of the Soviet Union as expansionist, echoed by much of the left which labels it 'imperialist', flies in the face of reality. The reality is that the Soviet bureaucracy is being pushed into a corner and its room for manoeuvre is slowly being reduced. Its military strategy, far from expressing the paranoia of a war-crazed elite, is simply a cautious response to the threats the bureaucracy will face in the future. Making this clear is a vital precondition for building a true anti-imperialist tradition in Britain and for helping to provide the understanding which will enable the Soviet working class to wrest power from the bureaucracy which oppresses it.



AFTER KHOMEINI'S VICTORY

THE ISRAELI INVASION of Lebanon provided the excuse for the Iraqis to call an end to the Gulf war. They urged Iran to halt hostilities so that attention could be focused on events in Lebanon. Although this has saved the Iraqis from total humiliation, it is unlikely to deter Iran from claiming billions of dollars in war reparations and the removal of Saddam Hussein. Khomeini has already suggested that he should commit suicide!

But is Iran likely to push into Iraq, or for that matter, into any of its other neighbours? This is unlikely. The present regime has made it clear it will respect Iraq's borders. Talk of exporting revolution is now saved for speech days. Instead the Iranian regime will have to turn its attention to domestic issues and re-establishing relations with the West.

Success begins at home

It is a year since President Bani-Sadr was deposed and the more right-wing nationalist sections of the Iranian bourgeoisie took power in Iran. In twelve months they have gone a long way towards stabilising the Khomeini regime. The greatest successes have been against the opposition — the Mojaheddin and leftist organisations. Up to 20 000 of their supporters have been executed in the last year, many after severe torture. Thousands more languish in the prisons. Some organisations, like Peykar, have been virtually wiped out. While sections of the working class remain combative, any potential leadership has been hard hit.

At the same time as smashing the left the regime has gone all out to reduce workers' living standards: employers have introduced rest-day work in many places cut wages, reduced rations and introduced oaths of loyalty. The ideological reaction in Iran, against women and national minorities in particular, has helped the regime implement these measures.

In decimating the left the regime has acted to ensure its own survival. There has been little outcry in the imperialist countries. Imperialism may not like fundamentalist Islam, but there is a quiet satisfaction in the White House and the European chancelleries at the carnage which has taken place. The West still needs a strong power in the region and Iran's leaders have clearly shown their determination to resist any move towards

After 20 months Iraq's military adventure against Iran has ended in disaster for the Baghdad regime. The pretext for the war was Iraq's territorial claim to the waters of the Shaat-el-Arab which divide the two countries at the northern end of the Gulf. In reality the war marked a bid to smash the Khomeini regime so that President Saddam Hussein could take over the role of strongman in the Gulf, a position left vacant since the fall of the Shah. The bid has failed, with enormous casualties on both sides. Iraq has nothing to show for its dead, its development plans are in ribbons and it is now saddled with war debts to the tune of \$22 billion to its Arab neighbours. The defeat of Iraq now puts Saddam Hussein's position in doubt.

The reactionary Gulf leaders and some of their Western backers now fear that a victorious Iran will create instability in the region and undermine their regimes. Are their fears justified? Nick Jenkins investigates.

socialism. If the economic indicators are to be believed then some form of reconciliation is not far away.

The fall and rise of the Iranian economy

The overthrow of the Shah created tremendous disruption in an already very sick economy. The Iranian Bank Markazi summed up the situation in March 1980:

'The industrial sector was in deep recession. On the basis of a sample of 38 per cent of the large industrial units, industrial production during 1979 showed a 23 per cent decline... of which production in the motor and turbine industry declined by 58 per cent, in the metal tools industry by 53 per cent.'

Nationalisation of large parts of industry and finance at first had a beneficial effect. Although the cost of the war with Iraq and damage to oil terminals exacerbated problems, a slow recovery took place in 1980 based upon rationalisation and the reduction of working class living standards. But this led to an increase in imports, of 30 per cent, as industry and small-scale construction work improved. The growth in imports was most apparent during the first part of last year when the demand for foreign exchange almost bankrupted the regime. By July Iran was importing goods — mainly foodstuffs — worth \$1.7 billion a month.

To overcome the foreign exchange shortage the regime began making a number of barter deals, exchanging oil directly for other commodities. The price of oil was reduced below the OPEC market price and sold on the spot market to

ensure a certain sale. This led to bitter recriminations earlier this year at the OPEC summit in Vienna when Iran refused to back the OPEC minimum price agreement and stick to its sales quota.

The regime has had most success in its agricultural policies. Premier Moussavi, in important policy statements, has emphasised the urgency of making Iran self-sufficient in wheat and rice and cutting down on the annual food import bill of around \$4 billion. High import tariffs and massive financial encouragement, coupled with the threat of expropriation if the land were left unused, has led to a small (five per cent) increase in the amount of land cultivated. Farmers are being offered better prices too. Wheat is up from 12 000 rials per ton to 28 000 rials. As one publication noted: 'Farming offers a better return on investment than almost any other activity and the sector that was once the most depressed in the economy is now the most active' (*Arabia*, May 1982).

Agriculture has a major political significance in addition to its economic importance. Much of the regime's backing comes from peasants and petit-bourgeois producers who have benefited from the recent growth of agriculture. However, much of industry is still at a standstill and political stability is far from assured as unemployment remains at high levels.

Back to the West

There are significant divisions within the ruling Islamic Republican Party over the way forward for industry. While the central aim is to strengthen petrochemi-

cals, steel and copper to reduce the dependence on oil, there are disagreements within the ruling class over the role the state should play in industry. Seventy per cent of industry is nationalised — too much according to some of the more technocratic and independent capitalists. They argue that the 'political' appointments in the state industries should be rescinded and experts — even foreign ones — encouraged to return. Already Italian, German, Japanese and South Korean firms are at work in the country.

The insecurity of officials, uncertain of whether they will keep their jobs, has paralysed the bureaucracy. A recent Bank Markazi report refers to the 'multiplicity of decision-making centres' in industry. As Iran enters a period of reconstruction the pressures on both sides of the debate are likely to increase, possibly with bloody consequences.

Returning to the welcoming arms of imperialism is evidently not going to be a straightforward process. There is for example a strong emphasis on building relations with other backward capitalist countries — Turkey, Brazil, India — and with the Comecon countries. And Iran now imports just 61 per cent of its goods from the West compared to 86 per cent before the revolution. But it can only rely on its supposedly favoured trade partners for relatively unsophisticated commodities. High technology goods can only be supplied by the major imperialist countries. Here the figures show that despite the foreign exchange crisis, the old trading links remain very strong.

Iran hasn't even begun to break with 'the great Satan'. Indeed sections of the ruling stratum — civil servants, technocrats and businessmen — are working behind the scenes to renew links with imperialism. The more traditional wing of the ruling administration finds the move towards reconciliation a threat to its interests. Now that the Iraqi war has drawn to a close, tensions within the ruling circle are likely to be exacerbated. Workers in Iran have no interest in supporting either side in this conflict. They should strike out on their own to defend their interests and those of the oppressed national and religious minorities, women, the unemployed masses and the dispossessed peasantry.

The rape of Lebanon

THE REAL TARGET IS THE WEST BANK

THE WAR has been a major test for the Palestine Liberation Organisation and its allies in Lebanon. It is now clear that only the Shi'ite AMAL organisation, which until recently had been fighting the PLO in the south, stood alongside its former adversaries in the fighting. The Lebanese leftists, in particular the Muslim Druzes led by Walik Jumblatt, clearly agreed not to take part in the fighting. The Syrians, unwilling to risk a major confrontation, sent only token forces against the Israelis when their positions were attacked, and simply retreated to positions to defend the road to Damascus. Syrian President Hafez Assad exaggerated the scale of the fighting to improve his image in the Arab world.

The Arab regimes, while issuing ritual denunciations, remained remarkably calm as the Israelis advanced. In reality, none of them has any love for the Palestinians: in each successive war the Israelis have fought against their neighbours they have had to face at least one less Arab adversary. The Arab regimes are just as keen as the Israelis to deal with the Palestinian problem. There has been no talk of an oil embargo from Saudi Arabia's new pro-American Monarch King Fahd. The Soviet Union has also stood by and watched its erstwhile ally Syria humiliated by the destruction of its SAM-6 missile batteries in the Bekaa Valley and the out-gunning of its Soviet-supplied aircraft and tanks.

While Israel's declared aim was to clear a 25-mile cordon north of the border to protect its settlers in Galilee from rocket attacks, it never intended to stop there. Indeed, the real objective of the military operation lies, not in Lebanon at all, but on the West Bank of the Jordan and the Gaza strip, the areas occupied by Israel in 1967. The decision to go all out to smash the PLO as a military force is a vital part of Israeli ambitions to annex these territories. The raid into Lebanon is primarily punitive, to weaken the PLO and hence the Palestinians' ability to resist annexation. Thus it has the tacit support of the USA which has financed and armed the Israelis.

The main reason why Israel decided to invade Lebanon is because the Camp David treaty which neutralised Egypt has now run out of steam. With its withdrawal from Sinai and the destruction of the settlement at Yamit in April, all that remains of Carter's original Camp David

Once again, thousands of Palestinian people have been killed and maimed while the world sat and watched. This time the scale and ferocity of the Israeli onslaught even pricked the conscience of many in the West. The invasion of Lebanon revealed yet again that the people of Palestine cannot rely on the surrounding Arab states any more than they can on the United Nations. As for the imperialist countries, their only worry was that political instability in the Middle East would erupt out of their control. The Western powers felt that this time Israel had gone too far. They were not moved by the plight of the Palestinians, but worried about the damage that the invasion could mean for their long-term interests in the Middle East.

plan is the talks on the status of the West Bank. These have got nowhere in all the months of haggling between Israel and Egypt. American-sponsored efforts to continue the 'peace' dialogue, such as the Saudi Fahd plan, have offered no way forward. So Israel has decided that where no agreement can be reached, it will impose a solution. Earlier threats to invade Lebanon came to nothing only because an invasion would have made it impossible for Egypt to carry on the Camp David process, and more importantly, win at least acquiescence to it in the Arab world.

'Creeping annexation'

In pursuit of its policy of 'creeping annexation', Israel started some time ago to undermine the authority of the PLO-dominated municipalities on the West Bank and in the Gaza strip. Last year the mayors of Hebron and Halhoul – Arab towns on the West Bank – were deported. This was followed by near-successful assassination attempts on the mayors of Nablus and Ramallah.

In November 1981 the Israelis announced the introduction of 'civilian' rule on the West Bank, followed a month later in the Gaza strip. Far from being civilian, the new administration is headed by Colonel Menachem Milsom, and many of its local functionaries are simply army officers in civilian clothes. Lieutenant Colonel Albert Behar heads the Bethlehem branch and in the Gaza strip the former military commander, Brigadier-General Yosef Luntz, was appointed as the new 'civilian' governor. He has not even bothered to take off his military uniform.

The new regime has attempted to weaken the legitimate Palestinian municipalities by cutting off the steadfastness funds, administered jointly by Jordan and

the PLO. Worth \$100m a year, these funds are used to finance welfare projects in the Occupied Territories which the Israelis will not fund in Palestinian areas. Instead the Israelis have tried to build up the collaborationist Village Leagues, financed directly by Israel, but with little success.

The Israelis stepped up the pressure last December when they annexed the Golan Heights, captured from Syria during the 1967 war. The inhabitants, mainly Syrian Druzes, resisted annexation by burning their Israeli-issued ID cards and mounting a general strike, which the Israelis were unable to break. Bir Zeit, the main Palestinian university, just to the north of Ramallah, was also closed down from November to January in a move designed to weaken resistance to the introduction of the new regime. Only a month after it was reopened, it was closed down yet again and it remains closed up to the present.

The construction of new Zionist settlements in the Occupied Territories has been stepped up in recent months. There are presently 126 on the West Bank and Gaza, containing around 20 000 Zionists, many of them members of the extremist Gush Emunim sect. But Israel hopes to have settled 100 000 people by 1985 and has allocated \$600m for this purpose. This does not include the 60 000 settlers already in East Jerusalem, all of whom arrived after 1967. All of this takes place in an area no bigger than Luxembourg.

The Zionists' aim is to 'encourage' as many Arabs as possible to leave (a quarter of a million have done so since 1967) and turn those who remain into a mobile and cheap labour force for Israeli industry. Israelis already own or control half the cultivatable land in the Jordan Valley. Many of the fanatical settlers

forced out of the Sinai will be directed towards the West Bank: 15 new settlements are planned, one for each of those closed down in Sinai.

The main forces behind the increased settlement drive and the invasion are Premier Menachem Begin and Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, Begin's likely successor and part of Likud's hardline right wing. However, it is clear that large parts of Israeli society, including most of the Labour Party, agree with their aims, however squeamish they may be about the methods being used to accomplish them. Despite demonstrations in Israel against the invasion, there has been no attempt to call a vote of no confidence in Begin's aggressive strategy.

A new stalemate

The invasion of Lebanon has brought only short-term gains for the Zionists. Inflicting a severe blow against the PLO's military capacity is one thing, but defeating the Palestinian people is another. Begin's aim of establishing a united Lebanon under Christian domination, possibly with Shi'ite Moslem participation, appears doomed from the start. Years of conflict have taken their toll on Lebanon. This devastation and chaos cannot be overcome through a foreign-imposed solution – least of all by Israeli dictate. However, having driven his troops to the fringes of Beirut, Begin may now find it difficult to withdraw. The rape of Lebanon will inevitably recruit more fighters to the struggle against Zionism.

The invasion shows that Israel is well able to deal with the forces of the Arab states. The corrupt ruling class of Syria has no real interest in defending Palestinians. But Israel cannot defeat the people of Palestine. Time and again the freedom fighters of Palestine have stood and fought against overwhelming odds. And as long as the Palestinians are denied the right to determine their future, they will continue to fight. But Israel's deployment of its vast military superiority against the PLO is in reality a sign of its weakness. To ensure its domination over the West Bank and Gaza, it has had to invade Lebanon. This has not created stability in the West Bank – it has only stored up new problems for Israel in Lebanon. The Middle East stalemate continues. It will only be resolved through the destruction of the Zionist state.

Pat Roberts

AS SOON AS it took office, France's new Socialist Party/Communist Party (PS/PCF) administration began putting the heat on the working class (see 'Workers against Mitterand', *the next step*, No 20, January 1982). Since the New Year, however, each month has seen insult added to injury:

● **January:** Delors tells businessmen he wants a social contract between them and the unions. 'That's OK with us', say the capitalists, 'so long as you stay in charge for the next five years'

● **February:** Industry Minister Pierre Dreyfus writes to the 44 newly-appointed chiefs of Mitterand's much-vaunted nationalised concerns, calling on them to improve competitiveness, realise sufficient profits to ensure the development of their companies and achieve a satisfactory return on capital

● **March:** in the wake of major setbacks for the left in France's local elections and heavy pressure on the franc, Premier Pierre Mauroy tells the press that his programme of social reforms (a 39-hour working week, five weeks' paid annual leave, a higher minimum wage, etc) is at a 'definite end'

● **April:** Interior Minister Gaston Deferre calls for the police to be equipped with more powerful handguns, to be allowed to make more spot identity checks, and to be granted the right to shoot merely after having given a warning. Deferre also demands the deportation of 50 000 immigrants

● **June:** under the slogan of economic 'rigour', the Government establishes a four-month pay freeze and cut public spending by more than £2 billion. And this is just the beginning. As the economic crisis mounts much tougher measures will be required to save French capitalism.

Given the scale of the difficulties before him, how is Mitterand going to cope? How is he going to get the French working class, one of the most militant in the world, to agree to the sacrifices that are required? It's here that the unions come in.

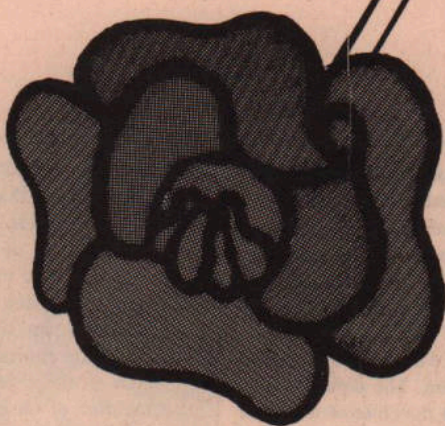
The dynamics of France today

Mitterand's May 1981 election victory showed that the Socialist Party (PS) had finally succeeded in turning itself into a new kind of party. Though most of its deputies in the National Assembly today are teachers, the PS is no longer the weak and wholly middle-class organisation it once was.

Since the early 'sixties it has worked hard to win workers away from the Stalinists of the PCF. And, thanks to the rapid industrialisation de Gaulle presided over and to the growing weight of the working class (especially the white-collar working class) in French society, it has succeeded. Most important of all, it has won a base for its reformist ideas in the unions. This is why, last year, the French bourgeoisie decided to give it a try in government.

The problem for Mitterand is the French economy. Having weathered the crisis of 1973/4 fairly well, it is now running into the full impact of the world recession. But unlike the last Labour Government in Britain, which hit similar difficulties in the late 'seventies, Mitterand doesn't quite have the trade union bureaucracy in his pocket. In France the trade union bureaucracy has only come of age relatively recently — over the same period, in fact, as the PS has.

France was a 'late-developer' as an imperialist power, and its class struggle has been characteristically stormy for most of the twentieth century. France has in the past had little use for such mediation as its trade union leaders could offer. French unions represent only 28 per cent of the working class; they are seriously divided among themselves, chiefly between the PCF-influenced CGT and the upstart, PS-influenced CFDT; and



A FRENCH U-TURN

On 13 June, the French Finance Minister Jacques Delors announced the end of the Mitterand experiment. Just over a year in office and the socialist Government has come to its senses. As we predicted in previous issues of *the next step*, the alternative economic strategy has turned into an anti-working class austerity programme. *The Economist* mused: 'This is good news for the West, not just for France' (19 June 1982).

Austerity is one side of the Mitterand Government's programme. But what about the much-vaunted trade union reforms promised by this administration? James Wood reports.

their membership has been declining for the past five years.

Mitterand's Government wants workers to tighten their belts. But this will only be possible if it can get the trade union bureaucracy to agree to carry the Mitterand message right down to the shop floor. This means finding union officials responsible positions, giving them experience in capitalist economics, and paying them well. The snag is, though, that the trade union bureaucracy is relatively feeble and the working class not a little suspicious. So Mitterand has had to move fast.

Jobs for the boys

First, in February, Mitterand nationalised enough firms to bring the state's share of industry from 18 to 32 per cent. Critics have noted that the French state had informal control over much of manufacturing and finance even before the move; that most of the enterprises were taken over because they were unprofitable; and that the compensation paid to private investors was generous. But the real significance of Mitterand's nationalisations goes beyond this. By making the state a bigger employer than ever before, the Government can consolidate the power of the trade union bureaucracy at national level. French unions are at their strongest in state-owned concerns. A law on the 'democratisation of the public sector, to be debated in the autumn, will ensure that the tripartite (government/management/unions) board structures prevalent in old state firms like Renault will be roughly duplicated in newly-nationalised industries. Trade union incorporation will be the norm even in firms which have some private capital sunk in them.

Second, Mitterand has begun to institutionalise industrial relations procedures at the level of the individual workplace. His aim here is to give the unions a big say in the anti-working class rationalisations France's economic crisis has made necessary. Since 13 May, the National Assembly has been debating a comprehensive programme of workers' participation developed by Labour Minister Jean Auroux. Among the measures

due to become law in April 1983:

- union/management works councils to be company-funded; shop stewards to have 10 paid hours a month off on union business
- works council union members to have greater access to company information (especially that on new technology); to be able to call in accountants and technology consultants; to be able to go on 'financial training courses'
- negotiations on wages and hours to be held annually
- workplace unions to be able to bring in national representatives prior to negotiations
- unions with more than half of a firm's workforce to be able to veto agreements struck between the bosses and the minority (usually right-wing) unions.

As Auroux noted, 'democracy in the firm is the harbinger of economic efficiency' (*Le Monde*, 14 May). And, though the French CBI doesn't want union leaders to have too much leverage in the factories, it supports the spirit of these proposals. It knows that getting the unions to decide the fate of their own members is its best bet for pushing through speed-ups, wage cuts and large-scale redundancies.

Mitterand's ingenuity extends beyond nationalisation and labour reform. He has given the railways, the civil service, the ministry of health and France's equivalent to Britain's YOP schemes to PCF leaders to run; and he has put a PCF/CGT chief at the head of the coal industry, a PS left-winger at the top of Thomson, a PS/CFDT bureaucrat in charge of a new energy-saving agency, the leader of the big teachers' union in control of the ministry of 'leisure' and both a PCF man and a PS figure at the helm of the Paris Metro. Through Auroux, he has asked the trade unionists who sit on the board of France's unemployment benefit fund to come up with proposals for cutting its deficit. He has given the unions a much bigger role in the national administration of social security and in the management-by-committee of health and safety in the workplace. He has encouraged managers to follow Japanese practice and make

workers set up 'quality circles' to improve productivity: already, 180 firms have such circles in operation (*Le nouvel economiste*, 3 May). Since 1980, he has helped the PS raise the number of its workplace branches from 1100 to 1700. He has made sure that Mauroy invites all the unions to his 'round table' with the employers on issues like the working week. And he has fixed things so that neither town halls nor nationalised concerns can become the focus for unrest directed against the Elysee Palace. How? Very subtly: by decentralising government from Paris and by telling the chiefs of nationalised concerns that it's up to them how they run their businesses.

At the crossroad

Despite his elaborate precautions Mitterand faces a rough ride from French workers. Recent, bitterly fought strikes at Renault and Citroen leading to pitched battles against scabs illustrate the combativity of the French proletariat. In March alone there were 550 strikes involving 120 000 workers — the second highest figure since May 1968.

Nor can Mitterand rely on his friends in the union bureaucracy to bail him out. The CGT faces considerable rank and file pressure to deliver some goods to the workers for a change. It has been losing ground to its competitor the CFDT. It has lost over 600 000 members since the recession and has lost out in a number of factory committee elections. In response to its decline the CGT has tried to become the extra-parliamentary 'conscience' of the Government. In February, it attacked some of the new nationalised industry appointments as too technocratic and spoke out against restrictions on pay in the civil service. At its 41st congress in Lille, in June, the CGT gave Mauroy and his wage freeze a hostile reception. The CGT is no direct threat to Mitterand — it was quite prepared to sell out car workers at Renault. But its susceptibility to class pressure makes it an unpredictable ally of the Government. Even the PS-influenced CFDT finds it difficult to retain control over the rank and file. At its 39th biennial congress at the end of May, the CFDT general secretary's calls for austerity met with howls from delegates.

The balance of class forces in France remains unstable and unpredictable. For the ruling class the central problem remains the inability of the Government to contain the tremendous militancy of the French proletariat. The sort of combativity that ensured that 37 out of 46 of those recently hospitalised in hand-to-hand fighting at Talbot Poissy were scabs — this won't easily be deflected by the feeble labour bureaucracy.

For active workers in Britain, the current evolution of the French trade union movement should be the excuse neither for pessimism nor optimism. Because Britain, along with most of the imperialist world, is today ruled by 'monetarism', union leaders' claims for the Labour Party's Alternative Economic Strategy can sound convincing no matter how vaguely they are made. But in France the reactionary consequences of the AES have been thrown into sharp relief. In Britain the TUC's calls for the renationalisation of industries recently privatised by the Tories seem attractive; but in France the self-serving, corporatist designs behind such calls are apparent for all to see. In Britain Labour promises to undo Tebbit's laws when it gets back in office; in France we can observe what such laws are likely to be replaced with. France today is a test-tube for reformist politics in action. Our job is to wave that test-tube and its unpalatable contents in front of union militants still dallying with the Labour Party and ask them whether it represents the kind of experiment they want to undertake here.



Understanding the Soviet Union

David Rousset, *The legacy of the Bolshevik revolution: a critical history of the USSR*, Vol 1, Alison & Busby, London 1982, pp333, pbk £5.95.

The degeneration of the Bolshevik Revolution has proved to be a major disaster for workers around the world. The spectacle of a system which combines police terror with economic stagnation has provided the imperialist ruling class with one of its strongest propaganda weapons. The Soviet Union has become the focus of a deep-seated anti-communist outlook in the labour movement. The causes of the degeneration of the October Revolution have been much debated and to this day the experience of the first successful working class revolution still influences discussions on strategy and tactics. David Rousset's book, published in the early 'seventies in France and recently translated into English, is an interesting recapitulation of some familiar views on the Soviet Union.

Rousset provides some useful insights into the political mechanisms through which the revolution was derailed. His discussion of the rise of the bureaucracy in the 'twenties shows the fragile foundations on which the revolution was built. His examination of the Left Opposition shows how the revolutionary wing of the Bolshevik Party remained a prisoner of the bureaucracy. However, these episodic insights into the process of bureaucratisation of the revolution are clouded by an outlook which is fatalistic and at times verges on the irrational.

Now is not the time

One of the dividing lines between revolutionaries and reformists is deciding when the time is ripe for fundamental change. For revolutionaries the capitalist crisis reveals the necessity for destroying capitalism. Unless the capitalist system is overthrown the proletariat will pay a heavy price for its salvation. Reformists, on the other hand, see the crisis as a problem which has to be solved before the working class can make any important advance. After the First World War reformists argued that economic chaos was so profound that no real change could take place. They said that revolution would be doomed by poverty and chaos and should, therefore, be postponed. Leading social democratic theoretician Karl Kautsky predicted in October 1917 that the Bolshevik revolution would only hold out for a few months because it was premature. Reformists today still cling to this cautious outlook: the acceleration of Britain's economic decline is seen by the Labour left as a problem that will inevitably slow down the implementation of its economic strategy.

The Bolsheviks were well aware of the difficulties that the Russian Revolution would

encounter. But postponing the revolution was not an option that they could countenance. For Lenin, only revolution could avoid the intensification of the exploitation and degradation of the working class. The Soviet revolutionary leadership knew that a single workers' state on its own could not survive for long. That's why it directly linked the future of the Soviet Union to the European revolution. The defeat of the European working class at the close of the First World War was at the same time a crippling blow to the Russian Revolution.

Reformists welcomed the defeat of the European revolutionary movement and the degeneration of the October Revolution as confirmation of their prejudices. Rousset gives the reformists' sigh of relief and their smug self-vindication a facade of theory:

'Russian backwardness operated in a world situation dominated by the technological impossibility of transcending the capitalist mode of production. That is to say, relief could not have come from outside Russia. Western Europe did not possess the means to reverse the conjuncture. Lenin's waiting strategy had no real foundation.' (Rousset, p44)

Rousset's conclusion that the Russian Revolution failed because it was premature is nothing new. However, he goes further and claims that even Western Europe was not ready for 'transcending' capitalism. Rousset's reasoning is simplistic. His claim that industry and technology were too underdeveloped to sustain socialism ignores the central benefit of a socialist economy. It can develop the forces of production at a much faster rate than possible under capitalism.

'It was inevitable' is no explanation. It simply attempts to turn the advantage of hindsight into a theory. But if everything is inevitable, what is the point of analysing the course of events? And yet he sets out to offer policies which the Bolsheviks could have pursued to avoid bureaucratic degeneration. His criticisms of Lenin are devoid of any theoretical content since he has already said that the 'objective impossibility of going beyond the capitalist mode of production did not merely pronounce the doom of the first revolution; it also determined the means by which it would be destroyed'.

A Greek tragedy

Social theory has gone beyond the fatalism of Greek tragedies or the doctrine of predestination. So Rousset is forced to present his discoveries in appropriate theoretical jargon. He declares that the Soviet Union is state capitalist, but he makes no attempt to elaborate the laws of motion of a state capitalist society. The reader is forced to take the author's word for it.

The last part of Rousset's enterprise is to find capitalist-type relations in the appearances of Soviet society. This part of the book is very much a rehash of Tony Cliff's *Russia: a Marxist analysis*. Like Cliff, Rousset does not like what the Soviet bureaucrats do – and if they are nasty, they must be capitalists.

Rousset even adopts Cliff's bizarre procedure. Cliff believes that the tendency towards state intervention under capitalism converges with state control of the Soviet economy. He ignores the facts that state intervention can be governed by different forces and can have different dynamics. For Cliff, superficial parallels suffice: 'The difference between the Russian economy and the Nazi economy is much smaller than the difference between the Nazi economy and the economy of Adam Smith's time'. Rousset continues where Cliff left off. According to him Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia were the products of the same forces: 'the concentration camp institution made its simultaneous appearance (to within three years) in Russia and Germany' (Rousset, p191). The fact that Germany and Russia both had concentration camps is conclusive proof that they're the same. The fact that concentration camps in Germany served different functions from those in Russia is, of course, irrelevant to the author.

In Greek tragedy everything could be explained by a fatal flaw. The theory of state capitalism is the same. Things are bad in the Soviet Union because it is (state) capitalist and it is state capitalist because things are bad.

Rousset simply clarifies Cliff's theory by explicitly stating that it was all inevitable, the revolution was premature.

In the hands of reformists the theory of state capitalism is not so much a theory, it is more a justification for inaction. The Labour left's alternative strategy is an attempt to promote state capitalism. In reality it serves to reconcile workers' demands for change with the continuation of the capitalist system – for state capitalism is a utopia (see *Revolutionary Communist Papers*, No 4). Those on the left who declare that the Soviet Union is state capitalist inadvertently provide reformism with a theory to justify its objectives. State capitalism in Russia is another way of saying that the revolution is always premature.

Frank Richards



A score still unsettled

Seamus Costello, 1939-1977, *Irish republican socialist: political biography and tribute from his friends and comrades*, The Seamus Costello Memorial Committee, Dublin, 1982, pp76.

The life-story of Seamus Costello is in many ways a history of modern Irish republicanism. Born in Wicklow in 1939, he joined the IRA at 16, was wounded on active service in Derry at 17 and by the age of 20 he had already served two years inside the Curragh internment camp. On his release in 1959, he plunged himself into trade union and local community politics becoming a councillor in his native Bray in 1967. Costello became a leading figure in the republican movement in the 'sixties as it moved towards electoral politics in the Twenty-six Counties and to civil rights agitation in the north. When the movement split in 1969-70 he stayed with the Official IRA as its Director of Operations and Vice-President of Official Sinn Féin.

However, when it became apparent that the Officials' socialist rhetoric concealed an acceptance of British imperialist domination over Ireland, he was driven into opposition to the leadership. Following his expulsion from the Officials in 1974, Costello formed the Irish Republican Socialist Party which he led through stormy years of war in the north and savage repression in the south until his murder in 1977 by an agent of the Officials (now the Workers Party).

Costello personifies much of what is best in the long struggle against British imperialism in Ireland. By the testimony of the contributors to this pamphlet, he was a natural leader, an indefatigable activist, a talented organiser and an inspiring speaker. He was deeply involved in campaigning around tenants' rights, trade union issues and the concerns of small farmers – without ever losing sight of the fundamental issue of Irish politics, the national question of British domination. He repudiated the approach of those in the republican movement who advocated downplaying the national struggle to win unity with Loyalist workers on 'community' issues, such as a proposed Belfast ring road. James Connolly labelled William Walker, who put forward a similar strategy in 1912, 'a gas and water socialist'; in the 'seventies Costello called them 'ring road socialists'.

Costello appreciated the crucial role of the modern working class in Ireland in the struggle for Irish freedom and he acknowledged it in his commitment to a socialist republic. But he never succeeded in articulating the political

connection between the bread-and-butter interests of Irish workers and the broader struggle against British rule in Ireland. He thus became the unconscious victim of the reformist politics of the Irish Stalinists who took over the republican movement in the 'sixties, led the Officials in the 'seventies and today form the Workers Party. Costello himself was a leading advocate of participation in elections, the key issue on which the Officials split the movement. Costello and many others failed to appreciate that behind the Stalinists' proclaimed commitment to practical politics lay an insidious accommodation to the British-sponsored institutions of Irish political life. When Costello finally left the Officials it was in response to the consequences of Stalinist politics, not as a result of a rigorous repudiation of the Officials' programme. Costello was expelled – he did not force the split. His subsequent acknowledgement that he should have left two years previously reflects his lack of political clarity about the issues at stake.

Indeed, no section of the republican movement has ever undertaken a decisive critique of the politics of the Officials. The result is that their programme, coherently restated in *The Irish industrial revolution* in 1977, retains considerable influence in Ireland. The failure to settle accounts with the Officials destined republicans to repeat the mistakes of the past. Costello's final contribution – 'the broad front' of anti-imperialist forces – is nothing more than a revival of the Officials' call for a 'national liberation front' shortly before the split in 1969. The central problem for Irish revolutionaries is to clarify the place of the working class in the struggle against British rule: talk of 'broad fronts' paves the way for compromise and collaboration with other social forces – it is the road back to the Stickies.

Seamus Costello lived as a committed fighter for Irish freedom. He died at the hands of the Irish Stalinists whose organisation he opposed but from whose politics he never decisively broke. Last month, the INLA finally shot Costello's assassin in retribution. Fair enough. But it will take more than bullets to destroy the pernicious influence of Stalinism in Irish politics. If this pamphlet stimulates a more systematic attack on the politics of the Official IRA/Workers Party, then it will be a fitting tribute to the tragically curtailed life of Seamus Costello.

Mick Kennedy

Retrieving our revolutionary traditions

Diane Keonker, *Moscow workers and the 1917 Revolution*, Princeton University Press, 1981, pp420, pbk £21.30.

Mary Nolan, *Social democracy and society: working class radicalism in Dusseldorf 1890-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp376, pbk £27.50.

Today much of the European labour movement is on the defensive and is in ideological disarray. Any examination of the history of the German and Russian working class shows that over the decades a real regression has taken place in the ideology, culture and consciousness of the labour movement. Therefore any serious examination of our past tradition may have important lessons for our movement. These authors, although sympathetic to their subject matter, are not committed to working class revolution. Nevertheless as serious social historians they have provided two valuable studies.

The working classes of Dusseldorf and Moscow in the early years of the century had more in common than would meet the eye of the contemporary observer. Even though Dusseldorf was one of the leading industrial centres of a dynamic Germany, while Moscow's industry reflected the backwardness of capitalist development in Russia, the labour movement in both cities had a strong attachment to socialism. This was primarily due to the prevail-

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ing authoritarian political order which stimulated a strong sense of proletarian identification. Although economic opportunities for Dusseldorf workers were greater than for their Moscow comrades they all faced a rigid social system which reduced them to the status of second class citizens. Workers in both cities took part in revolutionary upheavals: in Moscow the workers won whilst in Dusseldorf they went down to defeat. The two studies under review tell us what went wrong in Dusseldorf and why we won in Moscow.

The working class and its leadership

In the later decades of the nineteenth century workers throughout Europe founded labour organisations to defend their interests. In Moscow labour movement institutions had a limited scope. Many workers had only just arrived in the city from the country and they still tried to keep up links with the villages as an insurance against sickness and unemployment. State repression forced proletarian political organisations underground while unions maintained a precarious existence. Things were different in Dusseldorf. Although a large section of the labour movement had recently migrated into the city, workers soon developed a keen awareness that their only hope of security lay in the establishment of working class organisations. At first the influential Catholic Church was able to limit the growth of proletarian institutions but by 1904 they mushroomed into a veritable alternative society. The Dusseldorf working class had immense creative energy. Operating through the Social Democratic Party (SPD), workers set up new institutions covering all spheres of social life – daily newspapers, youth and women's associations, theatres and cultural institutions and consumer cooperatives.

The existence of such a high level of organisation reflected workers' awareness of their interests as a class. Unfortunately these institutions tended to bureaucratise working class politics and strengthen reformist tendencies in the German labour movement. By the end of the first decade of this century the SPD had become transformed into a reformist party – reconciling the aspirations of the proletariat with capitalist social reforms. According to Mary Nolan, Dusseldorf was an exception to this trend – the local SPD was strongly anti-reformist and a fierce critic of the party leadership.

Nolan attributes Dusseldorf radicalism to local peculiarities. The Dusseldorf bourgeoisie was confident, strongly anti-union and contemptuous towards its factory workers. This hostile environment exacerbated class antagonism and radicalised the labour movement. Thus the militancy of the Dusseldorf labour movement was more a reaction to local circumstances than a conscious rejection of reformism. As a result the local party remained merely a loyal opposition to the national leadership.



In Moscow the scope for the development of proletarian institutions was more limited. However, workers made up what they lacked in organisation through the development of an intensely political working class tradition. Repression forced working class politics underground – but it also stimulated discussion and debate.

Political differences which were debated within the SPD could not be contained within a single Russian socialist organisation. Thus the Moscow labour movement was politically fragmented – the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries representing its reformist sections and the Bolsheviks representing its revolutionary wing.

The war and the proletariat

Despite socialist agitation against militarism most workers in both Dusseldorf and Moscow supported the war drive of their respective ruling classes. By the middle of the First World War this support was more limited as workers began to realise the issues at stake. However, the opposition to the war was more successful in Moscow than in Dusseldorf. Why?

The German SPD supported the war from the start. The Dusseldorf leadership was critical of this stance. Indeed as early as 1913, the Dusseldorf social democratic daily paper noted that 'throughout the International reformism and bureaucratisation are widespread, and there is an effort to suffocate all revolutionary strivings'. Unfortunately these views had no organisational consequences. The local party, despite its criticisms, remained tied to the SPD. In 1914 press censorship paralysed the local paper and the SPD's pro-war views monopolised the labour movement. Anti-militarist, internationalist policies did not acquire an independent organisational expression and radicals in Dusseldorf, as elsewhere, feared a split in the working class.

But the war unleashed forces which undid this artificial unity. As the German economy began to collapse and more workers died on the battlefields, proletarian opposition to the war gathered momentum. Workers' experience at home and on the front convinced them of the futility of the war and heightened their suspicion of the SPD. Strikes and other forms of protest flared up and threatened to get out of control. Mass pressure finally forced the split in the SPD which the radicals were keen to postpone. In 1917 the left wing of the SPD set up a new party, the independent social democrats (USPD). Virtually the entire Dusseldorf membership of the SPD formed the new party.

The USPD was not the product of a conscious process of political struggle. It came about as a result of the pressure of events and the party continually lagged behind the workers it was supposed to lead. When the German revolution broke out in 1918 the USPD vacillated and sought vainly to keep the movement under control. The USPD tried to defend the working class, but because it was not prepared to fight the revolution all the way to the finish it became an obstacle to the realisation of proletarian interests. By late 1918, the new communist party 'the Spartacists' became the

leadership of the working class. More audacious than the USPD, the Spartacists emerged too late to change the course of events.

The revolutionary upheaval in Germany was defeated in 1919. During most of the previous five years the left lacked the political maturity and determination to fight for a revolutionary alternative. When workers took the path of revolution they lacked a leadership. The USPD was a makeshift response to proletarian radicalism and the Spartacists arrived too late. In any case by 1919 the counter-revolution was on the march throughout Germany – Dusseldorf was one of the last bastions to fall.

The experience of Moscow is in direct contrast to that of Dusseldorf. Diane Keonker attempts to minimise the role of political leadership by emphasising the different forces that generated mass protest. Keonker sees spontaneous forces, not the Bolshevik Party, as the driving impetus behind the revolution: 'The Bolsheviks' ultimate success as a party in Moscow lay in their ability to exploit this strong class hostility held by workers and to channel it along political lines'.

Class antagonisms were certainly strong in Moscow, but without revolutionary leadership the outcome would have been different. The Bolsheviks agitated against the war. And their message, while unpopular initially, captured the imagination of the masses as the war went on. By 1917 the Bolsheviks had contributed to the development of a class conscious vanguard in the Moscow working class. Even Keonker is forced to admit that this leadership was able to reflect the experience of the proletariat.

'The Bolsheviks, however, had offered the most consistent class interpretation of the revolution, and by late summer their interpretation appeared more and more to correspond to reality.'

Unlike in Dusseldorf, where the left trailed behind the workers, the Bolsheviks led the movement and made a revolution.

The different experiences of the working class movements in Dusseldorf and Moscow have an important lesson for the movement today. The Bolsheviks in Moscow gave an organisational expression to the interests of the proletariat throughout the war. Even when Moscow workers queued up to join the army – the Bolsheviks' message was clear: 'The enemy is at home – our war is with the Russian ruling class'. Their ability to express the interests of the proletariat, regardless of short-term unpopularity, meant that when class tensions intensified the workers spontaneously gravitated to the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks' years of agitation and education strengthened an internationalist outlook among Moscow workers and won the Bolsheviks credibility. Without this work the Bolsheviks would have been left behind instead of being at the head of the struggle in 1917.

The left today shares many of the assumptions of the Dusseldorf radicals. Fear of isolation forces the left to maintain unity with the Labour Party at any price. This reluctance to fight for an organisational alternative allows the Labour Party to retain the initiative. The experience of the Dusseldorf working class shows that criticisms which have no organisational consequences have no political impact. As long as the left remains united with the Labour Party it will become part of the problem rather than the solution.

Pat Roberts

Community cop-out

Labour Co-ordinating Committee, *Labour and mass politics: rethinking our strategy*, 70p.

In the next step we have often been critical of Labour left politics as ineffectual and utopian with a tendency to demoralise the working class. In recent issues we have pointed out that the left's solutions lack plausibility and often drive workers to the right. The interesting thing about *Labour and mass politics*, a pamphlet just

published by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC), is that it broadly accepts our assessment of the Labour left's programme.

Labour and mass politics admits that Labour has 'come to be seen as an "establishment Party"'. It notes that the left's Alternative Economic Strategy (AES) is not popular among workers and it emphasises the Party's lack of appeal to youth. The pamphlet is also forced to recognise that Thatcher's appeals to individual interests have a strong resonance in the working class. So far so good. However, the realisation that its programme is becoming increasingly irrelevant leads the authors, not towards independent working class policies, but in the direction of the Liberal Party.



Community – not class

The authors are irritated by the working class. They feel that the left has concentrated too much on workers; they wish instead to promote the cause of class collaboration. Like reformists in the past they feel that working class politics are too narrow and too parochial. They propose a wider alliance with other sections of the community. 'Community politics' is the latest label for old-fashioned class collaboration – in the past this approach has gone under the names of 'national unity', 'popular front', 'progressive bloc', 'broad democratic alliance', 'historic compromise'.

The LCC upbraids the stick-in-the-muds of the traditional Labour left: 'There are too many within the Labour Party who believe that there can never be any basis for unity with "class enemies" such as for example, sections of the churches' (p4). The term class enemies is put in inverted commas because the authors' aim is to reconcile conflicting social forces, not acknowledge their antagonism. They explicitly deny the need to pursue independent proletarian policies.

'Many Labour activists claim, in understandable reaction against the ideologically loaded concept of "national interest", to be unable to distinguish between the sectional interest of a group of workers and the wider interest of the community as a whole. But such can sometimes conflict. It is another part of the left's "image problem" that, in wishing away such conflicts, we come to seem to be dominated by workers' immediate interests at the expense of others.'

The authors recognise that class interests conflict. But rather than choosing the side of the working class they opt for a fictitious community of interest in case they alienate potential allies.

The LCC is obliged to move towards the community because it is irrelevant to the working class. It is not that the Labour left has been so resolute and unyielding in its defence of workers in struggle. Far from it. During the last five years the policies of the Labour left have been no match against the arguments of the ruling class. The labour movement has lost all the arguments. The views that trade unions are too greedy and too powerful and the primary cause of Britain's decline finds widespread resonance. The view that the national interest must come before the needs of the working class influences many, even in the labour movement. *Labour and mass*

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politics is merely a concession to the prevailing ideological climate.

Of course the authors try to portray their move to the 'community' in a progressive light. They talk about the need to link up with ethnic minorities, women's groups and youth. But this is just rhetoric. Racism, the oppression of women and the marginalisation of youth do not hang suspended above the class struggle — like any social issue they have to be approached from a class point of view.

Lost for words

The pamphlet is an attempt to revitalise the Labour left's appeal. At present the LCC and other sections of the Labour left lack conviction and ideological coherence. Even the bread and butter of the reformist programme — the welfare state and the nationalisation of industry — lack appeal.

'Yet state economic intervention is far from popular at present. For too many workers public enterprise is synonymous with poor service — an equation obviously influenced by media hostility, but also drawing strongly on people's own experience of the nationalised industries. For too many workers the experience of the traditional nationalised industries, largely because of the circumstances in which nationalisation took place, has been one of decline and job loss.'

Much of this is true. But the pamphlet forgets to mention that it was the Labour left that popularised the notions that state intervention is progressive and that nationalisation represents a step towards socialism. They must bear full responsibility for the demoralisation that these policies have generated in the labour movement.

It is one thing to recognise your irrelevance. It is another to overcome ideological paralysis. Cheap rhetoric about the community will not do the trick. The authors of the pamphlet grasp at straws. Instead of offering positive policies — they regurgitate empty but fashionable platitudes about a 'campaigning' Labour Party, 'participation' and 'democratic forms of economic management'. They even implore the Labour Party to change its 'traditional style' and broaden the 'experience' of party members.

Changing 'styles', searching for new constituencies, might appeal to the radical middle class activists, the teachers and town planners, the socialites and social workers that the LCC represents. But the very terms of the discussion, the pre-occupation with its 'image problem', shows that the LCC cannot resist the ideological offensive of the ruling class.

Helen Swift

Freedom betrayed

Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell: *Sweet freedom: the struggle for women's liberation*, Picador, London, 1982, pp258, pbk £1.95.

SWEET FREEDOM is one of the clearest expositions of feminist politics published in Britain. Unlike the much-acclaimed *Women's oppression today* by Michele Barrett (reviewed in the next step, No 14, June 1981), it doesn't seek refuge in academicism and pretentious jargon. Its account of the history of the modern feminist movement is straightforward and accurate. Moreover, *Sweet freedom* itself reflects the changing direction of the women's movement. Coote and Campbell are unaware of this: like the women's liberation movement, they have forgotten many of the original aims of the fight for women's rights.

Philosophy of compromise

Coote and Campbell are proud of the tradition they represent. They see the survival of the women's liberation movement as a real achievement. They note that the movement has 'remained a loose federation of small groups, linked chiefly by a sense of involvement and

a common cause'. They claim that the fact 'that it has survived for more than a decade is a measure of the strength of the idea that has held it together'. It is true that the diffuseness of the movement has helped it to survive. A loose decentralised structure appealed to a heterogeneous audience, ensuring that differences never came to a head. But is survival the only objective of organisation? The survival of the movement as an informal association of individuals has been achieved at a high price. In the end women's groups survive because issues are not forced to any conclusion. Differences have no practical consequences and certainly find no organisational expression.

Conflicting views are not tested out in practice and debate assumes an academic character. This liberal form of organisation, characterised by a fear of argument and resolution, can only ensure the survival of an institution which restricts itself to the role of a talking shop with very modest aims. And that's exactly what has happened. With every passing year the aims of the women's movement became more modest. Since the movement can only unite around the lowest common denominator, the original objectives of the women's movement have increasingly been abandoned.



Anne Coote — autonomous from everything, except Labour Party Politics.

The four basic demands elaborated by the Women's National Co-ordinating Committee in 1971 were ones that every communist must support: equal pay now, equal education and job opportunities; free contraception and abortion on demand; and free 24-hour nurseries. At the time, many women enthusiastically supported these demands. Unfortunately, it required more than an informal organisation to carry out an effective struggle around them. It also required an explicitly anti-capitalist perspective. But the heterogeneous politics of the movement prevented it from systematically pursuing activity in this direction. The one issue which could not be avoided — the attack on abortion rights — immediately precipitated a rethink of the original demand. To preserve the incoherent unity of the women's movement, the National Abortion Campaign dropped the demand for abortion on demand as its campaigning slogan and narrowed its horizon to the defence of the status quo. Of course, NAC activists protested that they still believed in abortion on demand. But in the interest of unity with parliamentarians, this principle had to be dropped in favour of defending the 1967 Abortion Act.

Instead of fighting for its demands, the movement chose issues which were compatible with its organisational survival. By the late 'seventies most women's groups opted for soft issues which could provoke liberal outrage — battered women's centres, sexist advertisements and sexual violence became their preoccupations. These were, of course, real problems, but without a struggle around the original demands, the activities became fragmented campaigns for piece-meal reforms, increasingly complementary to the activities of various agencies of national and local government. It is interesting to see how much Coote and Campbell have forgotten the heady days of 1971. Looking back over the past decade they conclude that 'in many ways, Women's Aid has been the most productive of all campaigns within the women's liberation movement'.

Undoubtedly, Women's Aid has received widespread public support. Even state agencies and voluntary organisations have been prepared to finance houses for battered women. But success in helping a few women victims, however valuable to them as individuals, has little to do with the original objectives of the movement. These objectives were important because they constituted the basis for the only realistic defence of women as one of the most oppressed sections of society.

The limited objectives of today's movement correspond to its informal organisation. An effective movement for the liberation of women requires an organisation which demands of its supporters the determination to fight to change society.

The myth of autonomy

The myth of autonomy is very strong in feminist circles and it permeates the pages of *Sweet freedom*: 'From the beginning, women's liberation developed into an autonomous political movement. It was self-starting, self-regulating and self-directing, owing no allegiance to any other organisation or set of beliefs'. The concept of autonomy has played an important role in cohering the feminist movement. In fact, autonomy in anything but a metaphysical sense cannot exist. Society is divided into conflicting class interests which express themselves in ideologies. Everyone of us is influenced by, and acts according to, these interests. Feminists may have 'autonomously' decided to abandon their slogan for abortion on demand during the NAC campaign. But this shift in policy owed its allegiance to the influence on the women's movement of a definite organisation and set of beliefs — those of the Labour Party.

The very fact that the women's movement represents an alliance between classes and refuses to connect its objectives with those of the working class makes it susceptible to reformist ideology. That is why the radical slogans of the early days have given way to pragmatism and respectability.

Sweet freedom itself cannot sustain its faith in autonomy. It winds up calling on its readers to get serious:

'The women's liberation movement has so far remained on the edge of institutional politics, dabbling a toe in the water, finding it cold... If we are seriously planning to transform society and liberate ourselves, we shall have to get in and swim.'



The authors quickly add: 'This doesn't mean abandoning our politics'. The way forward lies 'in the Labour Party, where there is a strong feminist drive to achieve fuller participation for women — an expression not of ruthless careerism, but of a will to transform Labour politics'. The authors are right — joining the Labour Party does not mean 'abandoning' feminism. Indeed, autonomous organisation has merely disguised a division of labour between a reformist feminist movement and the Labour Party.

Today, most leading feminists are in the orbit of the Labour Party — in body if not in soul. The soul yearns for autonomy but as the years go by autonomy turns into a circle of great friends. Today, the leaders of the women's movement of the 'seventies have given up the

fight for women's liberation in favour of fighting to make the Labour Party, that bastion of chauvinist prejudice, more feminist. That's how much things have changed in the 10 years since the movement began in Britain.

Anne Burton

Spies still out in the cold

Martin Cruz Smith: *Gorky Park*, Pan Books, London 1981, pbk £1.95.

It is customary in left-wing literary reviews to discover political meaning and intent in works of fiction. So perhaps it would be best to stop, just say that *Gorky Park* is a fine thriller, and leave it at that. But *Gorky Park* is not just a fine thriller. It is also a piece of fiction that manages to capture and portray aspects of social tension in the Soviet Union. It is doubtful whether Cruz Smith set out to write such a story — he is much too caught up in cold war myths for that. But his rigorous handling of the subject matter has allowed him to gain important insights into Soviet social life.

In the Soviet Union social relations are relatively transparent. The absence of commodity fetishism means that the prevailing ideology cannot obscure the ruthless and cynical actions of the state. There is no sentimentality here. The struggle for survival breeds corruption, atomisation and a degree of individualism that would surprise Western



readers. These are the traits that thrillers conventionally ascribe to secret service agents. But here the whole of society is imbued with callous indifference and self-seeking.

Why should this book be so popular in the West? Anti-communism? Perhaps. More likely the Western reader finds much corresponds to his own experience — an experience which is much easier to assimilate if it is depicted elsewhere. Cruz Smith alludes to this in the symmetrical relations that he draws out between the secret services of the East and the West. Of course there is no symmetry between the two — the real barrier to social progress lies in the West. But then Cruz Smith writes thrillers and not articles for the next step. Enjoy the book.

Gareth Evans

BEFORE THE STORM

A Derry correspondent continues his recollection of events in the 'sixties before the War.

THE BELLS RANG and the ships sounded their sirens along Derry's dockland as midnight approached on New Year's Eve 1967. Comrades gathered to welcome in the new and bid farewell to the old with a number of homeless families who shared one tenement. Songs were sung from the Young Republican Association news-sheet, and one activist arose to read selections from the Special Powers Act as a party-piece. He read from Regulation 24 A, Statutory Rules and Orders of N. Ireland No. 35, 1922: 'Any person who becomes or remains a member of an unlawful association or who does any act with a view to promoting or calculated to promote the objects of an unlawful association or seditious conspiracy shall be guilty of an offence'.

That New Year's Eve party had been arranged to raise funds for the YRA's anti-eviction campaign and was therefore technically illegal. The following 12 months would see the Special Powers Act come under attack, and by the close of the year the very state itself would be the focus of world attention and popular revolt.

Housing Action

On a cold February day, six people sat in the Corporation Housing Department discussing the housing situation in the city, and in particular the case of the four women present. All had lived in flats at Limavady Road. Their landlord had cut off the electricity supply; cooking had become impossible and the rooms had to be candle-lit. This was the humble beginning of the Derry Housing Action Committee, later to

become famous.

The inaugural DHAC meeting was held at the City Hotel on St Patrick's Day weekend. One important decision was to go to the monthly meeting of the City Council on 29 March. When the council met, a homeless mother tried to address it by reading from a prepared statement, but police were called to the council chamber and in an energetic fashion carried out yet another eviction. This type of disruptive activity aroused much interest in the press and media generally, and the council's meetings became a monthly date for all DHAC activists and supporters. The aim was to expose the council's inadequate housing programme and to demand an extension to the city boundary — both highly political issues. The DHAC maintained monthly protests right up to the abolition of the council in March 1969, and played an important part in alerting the world's media to the ghettoisation of the city's nationalist majority.

June witnessed the first really militant action by the homeless and their supporters. At 11am on the 22nd, at the caravan home of the Wilson family, DHAC activists assembled. The family had recently lost a child — whose death was directly attributable to their appalling living conditions. The caravan was dragged across the main Lone Moor — Brandywell bus-route at the Junction of Hamilton and Ann Streets. It remained there for some hours, surrounded with placards and a revolving human picket. The action attracted much local sympathy and active support and was repeated the following week.

The summer of '68

In the summer months the political climate heated up. While at Easter less than 20 people had attended the annual commemoration meeting at the Little Diamond, there were many engaged in social agitation around homes and jobs. The national question and the social question for most were two separate issues. But the year 1968 was the Connolly Centenary, and this helped not only to change ideas about struggle but also to strengthen the shift towards militancy.

Slogans appeared during darkness reading: 'The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland — the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour'. A small group was established known as the James Connolly Society which saw its role as linking both aspects in a common fight against imperialism and all its manifestations. Plans soon emerged to celebrate the Connolly Centenary, and this once again resulted in conflict with the local police chiefs.

The RUC banned the planned commemorative march from entering the city centre. When the Commemoration Committee then applied for the right to hold a protest march against the ban, this was also banned by the police despite protests from the Committee. But the significant thing was that this was the last time a ban on parades was to be recognised. The Connolly Commemoration finally took the form of a rally, which attracted several hundreds, and it will be best remembered as a turning-point in attitudes and strategy. After that police ban, activists felt they had had enough. They would no longer permit the authorities to deny a fundamental principle of freedom of assembly.

RUC vs DHAC

This new feeling of defiance and disgust spilled over into the DHAC, where a number of members of the James Connolly Society filled executive positions. As the controversy over the route lasted for some weeks, it was clear that the youth were becoming more inclined towards socialist ideology. The blocking of the main bus-route in the Bogside had much to do with these developments, and it soon became obvious that the RUC would not be content with merely imposing bans. The DHAC was now its target, because they clearly recognised that nationalist and socialist forces had been attracted to its ranks.

Eleven people appeared before the Bishop Street court in July faced with charges arising out of the road block. All were bound over for a period of two years 'to keep the peace' and several received fines. Within a few weeks of the court case, however, the Wilsons obtained a home in Bishop Street.

CONNOLLY

Assembly at 2.15 p.m. at the
DAISY FIELD, L'KENNY ROAD, DERRY
ON SUNDAY, 21st JULY, 1968



PARADE TO DEMESNE AVENUE, via City Centre
COMMEMORATION MEETING commencing at 3.30 p.m.

RODDY CONNOLLY GERRY FITZ, M.P.
(Hon. Sec. of James Connolly Soc.) (Hon. Sec. of James Connolly Soc.)
EAMON MCCANN MICHAEL O'RIORDAN
(Hon. Sec. of James Connolly Soc.) (Hon. Sec. of James Connolly Soc.)
BETTY SINCLAIR JANET WILCOCK
(Hon. Sec. of James Connolly Soc.) (Hon. Sec. of James Connolly Soc.)
And a representative of the Republican Clubs

Chaired by
FIONN-BARRA O'DOCHARTAIGH

COMMEMORATION

As the court hearings proceeded one of the most successful DHAC protests took place during the official opening of the lower deck of Craigavon Bridge to traffic. J. J. O'Hara (older brother of the 1981 hunger striker), Tony O'Doherty, Roddy O'Carlin, Niell O'Donnell and Sean McGeehan sat down to block the Mayor crossing the road in the city Rolls. The RUC immediately moved in and grappled with the protestors. At an early stage the RUC walked into the crowd and dragged away a leading member, Finnbar O'Doherty. At this a DHAC sympathiser, John Lafferty, obstructed Sergeant Albert Joseph Taylor in the execution of his duty by landing a well-directed blow with a furred umbrella. All were taken away in police tenders, singing civil rights songs, to the 'Vic', the name given to the local RUC barracks. O'Donnell and Carlin refused to enter into bail and so each served a period of one month in prison. Their imprisonment was the centre of protests and pickets in Belfast, London and Cork. On the evening of their release a group of DHAC members and supporters met them at the station and carried them shoulder high back towards the Bogside.

Finn O'Foyle

New Statesman defended

I read your article a bit ago on the Falkland Islands crisis and the labour movement's response to it. You claimed that the *New Statesman* unequivocally supported the Tory Government's policy.

In the first week of the crisis the *New Statesman* strongly condemned the sending of the task force. A couple of weeks later its front page had a picture of Mrs Thatcher with the caption 'the war monger'. If this indicates unequivocal support for the war then Ronald Reagan is editor of the next step.

There are enough supporters of the war without having to invent new ones.

K O'Connell
Bow, East London

Mike Freeman replies:

The *New Statesman's* position on the war was inaccurately represented as 'straightforward support for imperialist war' in the next step, No 24, May 1982. Indeed, the *New Statesman* could never be accused of being 'unequivocal' about anything. But what was its position?

The *New Statesman* in general condemned Thatcher's conduct of the war — it did however find space for a full-page article on 30 April entitled 'Why Margaret Thatcher was right to send the fleet'. Its central theme was the need for a more rational, conventional military policy. On 7 May it called for 'a new navy with more ships and greater flexibility' observing that 'a handful of frigates could have prevented what we now seek to reverse with a task force of more than 60 vessels'.

Duncan Campbell officiated as Labour's accountant to Her Majesty's armed forces, wringing his hands weekly at the cost of the

war to the Exchequer. The *New Statesman's* alternative navy would not only defend Britain's interests better — it would also be cheaper.

After Britain's final victory, the *New Statesman* could only gasp in admiration at this 'remarkable feat of arms' and criticise Thatcher for her audacity:

'The odds against a successful military operation at that range, without any remotely proximate land base, without any guarantee of effective air cover, in the South Atlantic in mid-winter, were far higher than any responsible politicians should have accepted.' (11 June)

If this is the *New Statesman's* opposition to the war then who needs *The Sun* to drum up support for it?

Off our backs

Most workers only experience of 'liaising' with the police occurs late at night, in Black Marias or sound-proofed interrogation cells — where the closest they get to 'consultation' is being asked if they've had enough.

Perhaps that's why Greater Manchester Council's latest attempt to involve the Moss Side community in a 'Let's talk about it' liaison exercise with the police ended in a near riot. Over 100 black and white residents turned out to the GMC's recent meeting in the area, but they weren't too interested in what the platform full of Labour councillors had to say. They wanted to know why the local constabulary were rumoured to be sporting a new line in ties with an emblem showing a hand wielding a truncheon and 'Moss Side '81' underneath? And what about the van-loads of pigs who'd been seen cruising up and down Princess Road, beating their truncheons on the roofs and shouting 'Nigger, nigger, nigger — out, out, out'? As one white resident said (to a storm of applause), 'Never mind the police protecting us, I want someone to protect me from them!'

The meeting ended in uproar, with two people 'voting for the proposed 'liaison panel' while the rest tried to lock the chairman inside the hall to answer a few more questions. Like, what was this they'd heard about the Moss Side precinct cop shop being expanded into a fully-fledged police station?

Moss Side workers want the police off their backs. And the local Workers Against Racism group is fully behind that demand. We're currently fighting a legal and political battle to stop the non-stop harassment of the Blair family — a black family in Moss Side whose members have suffered terrible physical and mental treatment at the hands of the local 'community police'. And we're holding a day-long conference on 31 July to plan what practical steps can be taken to defend the community from the police. *the next step* readers in Manchester should contact us to get involved in this work.

Mick Hume
Manchester Workers Against Racism
Box 33
164-166 Corn Exchange Building
Hanging Ditch
Manchester M4 3BD

Irish Freedom Movement

I am writing to relate my recent experiences with my trade union branch resulting from joining the IFM Youth Delegation, part of the cost of which I obtained through branch sponsorship. Raising the Youth Delegation and therefore indirectly the question of British military occupation in Ireland, provoked a level of discussion and debate that members confided that they had not seen in years.

While the vast majority present at these discussions by no means supported the Irish

people's struggle for liberation, nor could they be said to be aware of its importance for the British labour movement as a whole, it was obvious from the outset that they did have political opinions to express and wanted to do so when an opportunity presented itself. The effect of my report back on the delegation has been to stimulate some heated argument and has brought about some quite remarkable results.

The branch executive has been split into two, roughly equal, factions. One side opposed any association with the IFM and adopts a chauvinist stand, while the other side is defending my right to bring class politics into the branch. This conflict of views has been very sharp. Heated arguments have taken place and there have been calls for a written statement by the union executive to all members disassociating itself entirely from my activities and politics; calls for the resignation of the member who proposed my sponsorship; and one executive member has even resigned in protest at the union's sponsorship of the delegation after my report.

I think that the response to my report shows that it is still possible to provoke interest in such issues! From the younger, more open-minded union members there was also a significant positive response. This contrasted with the reactionary attitudes I have seen displayed by right-wing trades unionists and bureaucrats, both where I work and at a national level.

No doubt at the next branch meeting there will be continued argument as to whether the union should become involved in questions like the Irish liberation struggle that take place outside the union's immediate confines. I will be continuing to argue for their full support as the only way of making members realise their class interests both inside and outside the branch. The debate that has taken place will help to bring these issues out.

Andrew Perry
Refuge Assurance, ASTMS Branch (Manchester)

Workers March Against Racism

RCP Activities

BIRMINGHAM

Thursday 8 July 8.30pm
Remember the hunger strikers!
Victory to the Irish people!
Picket in commemoration of the
death of hunger striker Joe
McDonnell. Outside the
Irish Centre, Digbeth.

COVENTRY

Wednesday 7 July 7.30pm
Making the unions fit for women
to join. Public meeting with
speakers from the Rulecan strike
committee and Women for
Communism. The Queen,
Primrose Hill Street, Coventry.

the next step is sold every week
at Parkcourt dole 9.30-11.30am
Mondays and Tuesdays. GPO
12.00-2.00pm Wednesdays and
Thursdays. Foleshill Road and the
precinct 11.00-1.00pm Saturdays.

SOUTH LONDON

South London Irish Freedom
Movement activists group meets
fortnightly at Lambeth Town
Hall, Brixton at 8pm. 5, 19 July
3, 16, 31 August. Newcomers
welcome. Phone Russell 274 3951
for details.

MANCHESTER

Manchester Irish Freedom Move-
ment activists group meets fort-
nightly on Fridays. For details of
these and other local activities see
the next step sellers or phone
01-274 3951.

SHEFFIELD

Tuesday 6 July 7.30pm
No British solution!
First showing of a new video
made this year for Sheffield Irish
Freedom Movement. Sheffield
Centre Against Unemployment
(SCAU), Bridge Street, Sheffield.

Thursday 8 July 5-6pm
Remember the hunger strikers!
Victory to the Irish people!
Join the demonstration in soli-
darity with the cause for Irish
Freedom. Town Hall steps, Pin-
stone Street.

Sheffield Irish Freedom Move-
ment activists group meets fort-
nightly to plan solidarity work
in the trade unions, street
activities, and to discuss recent
developments in the Irish War.
For details of all these activities,
see the next step sellers.

the next step is sold from 9.00-
11.00am Mondays to Thursdays
at West Street dole office.

BRIGHTON 7.00pm
Wednesday 7 July
Brighton Workers March Against
Racism mobilising committee
meeting to build for the march
in the south. For details, see
the next step sellers or phone
01-274 3951.

BRISTOL
Bristol Workers Against Racism
meets regularly in the build-up
to the Workers March. Build the
march in the South West! See
the next step sellers for details
or phone 01-274 3951.

BIRMINGHAM 9.30am
Friday 9 July
Drop the charges!
Free Pino Khan!
Picket of Victoria Court, Cor-
poration Street. Organised by
Birmingham WAR and the Paki-
stani Workers Association.

COVENTRY 8.00-12.00pm
Saturday 17 July
BABYLON REBELS and
RANKING DEAD
SOUND SYSTEM
Benefit in aid of the Workers
March Against Racism.
BAR £2/£1 UB40
Stanton Social Club, 243 Stoney
Stanton Road, Coventry.

LONDON 7.30pm
NORTH LONDON
Tuesday 6 July
North London Workers Against
Racism meeting for activists and
marchers to build for the Workers
March Against Racism. West
Hampstead Community Centre,
62 Mill Lane, NW6.

Thursday 29 July 8.00-12.00pm
TALKOVER and PINSKI ZOO
Benefit in aid of the Workers
March Against Racism.
BAR £2/£1 UB40
Pied Bull, 1 Liverpool St, N1.

SOUTH LONDON 12noon
Sunday 25 July
Harlan County and Malcolm X.
Film benefit. £1.50/£1 UB40
Ritzy Cinema, Brixton Oval,
Brixton SW9.
Saturday 14 August 11.00am
Workers March Against Racism
Motorcade and street meetings in
Brixton/Thornton Heath/Croydon
Meet Brixton Oval. Come early
and help decorate the lorry!

For details of weekly street
meetings, activists meetings and
other events, contact Marcelle
274 3951.

EAST LONDON WORKERS
AGAINST RACISM
Join our nightly anti-racist street
patrols. Come to regular ELWAR
activists meetings. Phone Keith
Tompson on 01-274 3951

MANCHESTER
Manchester Workers Against
Racism activists group meets fort-
nightly on Mondays in the build-
up to the Workers March Against
Racism. See the next step sellers
for details.

SHEFFIELD
Sheffield Workers Against Racism
meet fortnightly. See the next
step sellers for details.



PREPARING FOR POWER

FOUR DAYS OF DISCUSSION AND DEBATE
With the Falklands war, the law and order debate, wage cuts and
redundancies, the ruling class seems to be winning all the arguments.
Why? They have good allies in the labour movement.

The third international conference of the next step is for people who
want to change this situation.
Discussion will focus on the urgent problems facing the working class:

- What's behind the war drive?
- Can we stop their war?
- What about the Soviet bloc?
- Plus courses on racism, women, Ireland and the unions.

11-14 September 1982
Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19
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I/We would like to attend the Preparing for Power conference

Name _____
Address _____

Tel No _____
TU/Organisation _____
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Make cheques payable to RCP Association. Send this form or write for more
details to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX (phone 01-274 3951).