

the next step

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UP AGAINST THE TORIES...



A NUPE OFFICIAL POLICING THE PICKET LINE AT ST THOMAS'S HOSPITAL See page 16

UP AGAINST THE UNION LEADERS

WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM

BRICK LANE ★ BRIXTON ★ BRIGHTON 4-8 SEPTEMBER

inside

WOMEN: NO FEMINIST INCOMES POLICY! RULECAN ROUND-UP
WORLD WAR: US ARMS BUILD-UP, EL SALVADOR, LEBANON
IRELAND: THE WAR COMES HOME

FOUR PAGE SPECIAL FEATURE
PREPARING FOR POWER
An international conference
for the 'eighties

September activities

● WORKERS AGAINST RACISM

WAR has branches in
East London
South London
North London
Brighton
Bristol
Coventry
Birmingham
Sheffield
Manchester
Liverpool
Leeds

Phone 01-274 3951 for details of regular fortnightly meetings.

Transport leaving from all these areas Friday 3 September for the Workers March Against Racism.

● WRECK THE RACE CHECKS!

On 1 October the DHSS is planning to introduce 'race checks' in hospitals throughout Britain, designed to force foreign patients to pay for NHS treatment. And the Department of Employment is doing the same thing in dole offices. WAR supporters in the unions are getting ready to wreck these racist schemes. Come to this meeting to plan joint action.

No pass laws on the dole!

Free NHS treatment for all!

Tuesday 21 September 7.30pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1 (near Holborn tube)

Contact 01-274 3951 for details of September 'Wreck the Checks' meetings in your area.

● DEFEND AHMED KHAN — DROP THE CHARGES

Ahmed Khan works as a waiter in Sheffield. He was set upon by racist thugs in his restaurant and then ended up facing serious charges in court. A 500-strong demonstration on 14 August demanded police drop the charges. Join the picket in his defence

Thursday 2 September 10am
Magistrates Court
Snig Hill, Sheffield

NEW

Irish Freedom Movement
VIDEO

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HEATHFIELDS

Black workers strike to save union

THIRTY EIGHT black workers have been on strike for over four weeks at Heathfields cable drum factory in Slough. They are all GMWU members who were instrumental in getting the factory unionised back in November 1980.

Management has been trying to smash the union ever since. When the black workers, who are all unskilled, joined

'I have worked here all my life to make him and his children fat. Now he wants to kick me out. He's not going to get away with it, however long we have to fight.' (Abdul Kahliq, 56 year old Heathfields striker)

the GMWU, Heathfields' bosses responded by setting up a 'works council'. The skilled (all white) print workers, who are in SOGAT, agreed to sit on this body — which is chaired by the works director. The GMWU members refused.

Then in January this year, management tried to disperse the core of black militants in the plywood department to different sections. They responded with a

strike and a four-day occupation of the plant. Despite being served with an injunction, they held out and won.

The next offensive came in April, when the GMWU put in for a 20p an hour across the board pay increase. An overtime ban was imposed by the plywood workers, backed by the women in the assembly plant, to try and force through this claim. The response from management was a lock-out. On 15 July Works Director Fred Rawlet sacked 21 workers, all of them black.

Since then the 21 plus their supporters have been on all-out strike. It has been made official by the GMWU, though no strike pay has been received yet. The strikers are already suffering serious hardship. And they are getting a lot of aggravation from scabs and from the police who have so far arrested three pickets. The biggest problem, however, is that SOGAT is not backing the dispute.

Heathfields is owned by Sonoco Ltd, a US-based firm. The bosses are past masters at divide and rule tactics like paying white workers 30p more per hour for the same work as the black employees. To win this fight and get all the strikers

'In the plywood department we have at least three accidents a week. God knows how old the machines are. And the dust is terrible. The department manager's an ex-policeman. He treats us like criminals. He thinks we're illiterate. We'll show them.' (Zaheer Iqbal, 22 year old Heathfields striker)

re-instated, the Heathfields workers want

- support on their picket line, 7am — 7pm daily at Heathfields Ltd, Western Road, Slough Trading Estate, Slough, Berks

- trade unionists in allied industries to refuse to handle Heathfields products

- generous donations to their strike fund. Rush donations to GMWU, Heathfields Dispute Committee, 103 Greenwood Avenue, Hanwell, London W7.

They also need support from SOGAT, the TGWU drivers and the wider labour movement. The Heathfields strikers will be on the Workers March Against Racism to September's TUC, demanding solidarity for their dispute. Be there with them!

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Beirut – only the beginning

ON 6 JUNE Israel invaded the Lebanon. What was initially portrayed as a military action of limited scope – 'Operation Peace for Galilee' – turned into a full-scale invasion culminating in the siege of Beirut. After several weeks of bombardment and 11 'ceasefires' the battle of Beirut now appears to be drawing to a close. Palestinian freedom fighters stood and fought against overwhelming odds. *But they fought alone*, and the combined pressure of the Israeli military machine and world imperialism ensured that the Zionist state would triumph. In the West significant sections of the media were appalled by what they saw. 'This time', they said, 'Begin has gone too far'. Prominent imperialist leaders, including Presidents Reagan and Mitterand, Chancellor Schmidt and Prime Minister Thatcher joined the chorus. But has Begin acted irrationally? Will the imperialist powers abandon their most reliable ally in the Middle East?

The myth of irrationality

Faced with the devastation of Beirut, everybody, from Reagan to Zionist politicians, has been quick to disclaim responsibility for what happened. Even Begin has hinted that he didn't want to go so far but that his hand had been forced by Defence Minister Ariel Sharon. So who is to blame for the carnage in Lebanon?

Clearly, Sharon did not act on his own initiative. The invasion of Lebanon has been on the cards for a long time. The growing instability on the West Bank which threatened to get out of hand forced the Israeli Government to strike at the centre of Palestinian power in Lebanon. According to Israeli Chief of Staff Rafel Eitan the operation had been planned for eight months.

But it wasn't just the Israeli military that was involved in the planning. The Reagan administration was fully briefed about the operation and American military advisers were consulted during the preparatory stage. In particular, former US Secretary of State General Alexander Haig was a strong supporter of the invasion. An influential American weekly summed up Haig's approach to the problem:

'In what turned out to be his last major "victory" within the Administration, Haig argued that the US should condone the invasion, while making tongue-clacking sounds of disapproval, in the expectation that Israel

would quickly succeed in eradicating or seriously weakening the PLO as a military force.' (*Business Week*, 23 August 1982)

And that's precisely what Washington did.

But didn't Israel go too far? After all, even Reagan was compelled to denounce the 'excessive' use of force by the Israeli military. Virtually the entire Western press from left to right repeated the same point. The editor of the *New Statesman* exclaimed that 'tragically, the Begin Government has systematically destroyed the hopes (which were real enough for those who wished to see them) of a move towards political understanding with the PLO' (13 August).

In fact, Begin went as far as he had to. The survival of the artificially created Israeli state depends on the oppression of the Palestinian people. Yet, this very oppression creates resistance which undermines the stability of the oppressor state. Every war launched by Israel to guarantee its security has only created more tension and more resistance – and each time over a wider geographical area.

The invasion of Lebanon was designed to destroy the threat which represents a permanent danger to the viability of Israel. Begin's simple view – 'it's either them or us' – is an accurate assessment of the situation. The growing instability on the West Bank and the emergence of resistance among Palestinians living inside Israel's boundaries finally forced Begin's hand. For the Zionist leadership, the destruction of Beirut is a small price to pay for ensuring Israel's survival. From their point of view, the invasion of Lebanon was entirely rational. In the short term, the result is that the military threat posed by Palestinian fighters has been severely curbed, Syria has been neutralised and Israel's domination of Lebanon can now be enforced through alliances with right-wing Lebanese forces.

It is essential to understand the logic behind the Israeli war machine. All the talk about the possibility of a peaceful settlement or a political solution or non-military solutions to guarantee Israel's security misses the point. No peaceful solution is possible. The maintenance of Israel requires the systematic application of force – so too does its overthrow. The only choice is which side to support, the oppressor or the oppressed.

It's only the beginning

During the past decade the whole system

of imperialist domination over the Middle East has broken down. When the Iranian masses threw out the Shah, America lost control of Iran, previously one of its most important client states in the region. Saudi Arabia and Egypt suffer from internal unrest and therefore are of limited usefulness for US security. At the same time the USA faces growing competition from its imperialist rivals. France, Japan, West Germany, to name only the most prominent, all want to strengthen their stake in the Middle East – inevitably at America's expense.

The breakdown of the traditional mechanism of US domination provides the background for the violence that now threatens to engulf the Middle East. The weakening of imperialist influence has created wider possibilities for the long-suffering Palestinians to pursue their liberation struggle against the Zionist state, ensuring that their destiny remains the central issue in the region. America would like to distance itself from Israel and assume the mantle of a neutral arbiter, presiding over another Camp David jamboree. But there are limits on the options open to US imperialism. For all the problems Israel causes America in its relations with the Arab world, Israel remains the only reliable force able to defend imperialist interests throughout the Middle East.

The debate in Washington expresses the contradiction between America's overall Middle East strategy and Israel's determination to take any measures necessary for its survival. There will be much talk in Congress about having a more 'even-handed' policy. But that's just wishful thinking. At present, imperialist interests are intimately bound up with the survival of Israel.

The debate will no doubt continue, especially as the invasion of Lebanon is only the beginning of the military conflict. The 'peace' imposed on Beirut is only a prelude to the next stage of the war. It will not bring stability to Lebanon nor will it curb resistance to Israeli oppression. Even if every Palestinian fighter leaves Beirut, Israel will not renounce the use of force. There are still thousands of Syrian troops and PLO guerrillas both in the north and in the Beka'a Valley in the east. If not tomorrow, then the day after tomorrow, Israel will demand new guarantees and new restrictions on who has the right to live in the Lebanon.

By invading Lebanon, Israel has only created new problems for itself. The punishing divisions inflicted on the Lebanese people will not heal with the PLO's withdrawal from Beirut. A Lebanon under Israeli domination is inherently unstable. It will create permanent unrest, forcing Israel into a situation which will make its difficulties on the West Bank seem easy by comparison. The siege of Beirut gives us a taste of things to come so long as the Israeli war machine remains intact.

The British working class

It is very easy to denounce Begin. But the problem is not Begin or even the Israeli state. Without imperialist assistance, Israel would never have been created, and without imperialist aid Israel could not survive. Every Israeli bomb that drops on a house in Beirut rings on cash registers in New York and London.

Beirut must become a symbol for the working class. Those who are genuinely outraged by the massacre must choose sides. On the one side stand the people of Palestine, on the other side is Israel and its imperialist allies. The best assistance we can give to the people of Palestine is to fight imperialism at home. When it comes to the Middle East, even the most anti-Semitic member of the British ruling class is a Zionist. The more we weaken them the more we weaken Israel.

We must fully expose the hypocrisy of the liberal establishment and the Labour Party. Their tears over Beirut mean nothing so long as they recognise the right of Israel to exist. Liberals and reformist politicians want Israel to be more rational. But it is the existence of Israel and the denial of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people which is irrational, not the policies pursued by the Begin regime.

What happened in Beirut was not an accident. It was no more accidental than the murder of Irish children by rubber bullets on the streets of Belfast and Derry. It was no more unplanned than South Africa's recent invasion of Angola. The crisis of the imperialist system forces the capitalist class closer and closer to war. If British workers do nothing when the next Beirut comes then they will have given another green light for the imperialist war machine to drive down the road to war.

Workers Against Racism Against Workers Against Racism Against FIGHTING POLICE HARASSMENT



The Front Line last year - how long will it last?

BRIXTON A bipartisan approach

'GIVE IT THE LEBANON TREATMENT.' That's the unanimous verdict of Lambeth Council on the recurring problem of Brixton's 'Front Line'.

Recent weeks have seen renewed conflict in the 'no go' area bordered by Mayall and Railton Roads. Running battles between police and groups of 50 or more black youths have got Brixton's Chief Superintendent, Robert Marsh, alarmed:

'We just cannot play by the rules we are playing now and expect people to have respect for law and order... we are afraid that we are running out of time.' (*The Times*, 22 July)

But the local political establishment has not been slow to respond. A set of proposals, jointly submitted by Tory Council leader Robin Pitt and leader of the Opposition, 'Red' Ted Knight, more than answer the police chief's prayers. Their solution to the problem of the 'Front Line' is beautiful in its simplicity - demolish it. In its place there will be... trees, more trees and (around the year 1990) an 'Afro-Caribbean leisure centre'.

No one, least of all the police, actually believes the official line that 'between 150-200 young black criminals' are the cause of all the conflict. No one really thinks that razing a few slum tenements to the ground will change anything. But it's in everyone's interests - the police, the Council, the Uncle Toms who are meant to represent the black community - to go along with Robin and Ted's landscape gardening schemes. Why? Because it helps perpetuate the myth that Brixton's riots were the work of a handful of criminals. The aim is to eradicate the 'Front Line' and restore 'normal' police-community relations.

So pressing is this need to restore confidence in the police that Ted Knight and the local Labour Party are fully prepared to sink party political differences. His joint document with the Tories boasts about their cosy relations:

'A feature of the Council's approach to the Railton Road problems has been its bi-partisan nature. The objective has been to achieve a consensus between the political parties and between the Council and the community.' Too right. And the consensus that is

being established is one that says we're behind the police all the way.

Ted Knight is not an isolated case. Alternative strategies for beating crime have become a fashionable intellectual pastime on the left. We are urged, in the August issue of the CP's journal *Marxism Today*, to 'resist a romantic view of black crime'; black crime is an attack on the poor themselves, not on capitalism. Therefore we should ask the capitalists to provide an 'effective policing' policy to deal with it, and allow the 'marginalised youth to re-enter the polity' where they can take part in the democratic process.

The SWP, on the other hand, only gives its critical support to the crime prevention campaign. Of the 'Front Line' it says: 'Demolition yes, but on condition that the occupants are rehoused and that there are no arrests' (*Socialist Worker*, 14 August).

WE SAY - DEFEND THE FRONT LINE from the police and the courts! And from the all-Party alliance that wants to bulldoze Brixton's blacks into submission.

Meanwhile...

While the Labour Party is kept busy on the 'Lambeth Police Liaison Consultative Group' (the bulldozing team), South London's police have got plans of their own.

The press recently reported that full-scale riot training - including the use of 'Pig Squirr' water cannon - is going on in Greenwich, on wasteland by River Way. But WAR has recently exposed a massive riot training centre right in the heart of Lambeth, inside an industrial warehouse on Larkhall Lane. The building is owned by the Met. Plans for its conversion were approved by Lambeth Council in July 1981. Inside there are large quantities of riot equipment and police have been frequently sighted there decked out in full combat gear.

The building backs onto Springfield Estate. Black and white tenants on the estate are angry and alarmed at what's going on in their backyard, and have joined forces with WAR and local community groups to get rid of it. Perhaps the council would like to re-direct its bulldozers down to Larkhall Lane?

BIRMINGHAM Defend Osman Cameron!

OSMAN CAMERON is a young West Indian from Sparkhill. He's been fitted up by the police more times than he can remember. One time stands out. During an orgy of police violence last summer Osman was beaten up in an unprovoked attack by 20 police. He ended up with a £200 fine and two year's probation, convicted of wounding and assault.

Three months ago they tried to get him on another charge - stealing a bike that belonged to his sister! That was a bit far-fetched, so they switched the charge to 'threatening behaviour' (Osman had asked the plain-clothed cop for his ID before agreeing to answer questions).

Osman went to his local Labour MP, Roy Hattersley, for help. Hattersley's response was 'it's a fair cop' - he didn't want to know. But a growing campaign has been mounted by Birmingham WAR to get all the charges dropped. A large and militant picket of the court put the police on the defensive. They were overheard pleading with Osman's solicitor to accept a 'bind-over' instead of going ahead with the trial. Osman refused point blank. He's not going to let the police add even more charges to his record. We're fighting for Osman Cameron and every other black youth the Birmingham police have framed up this past year.

MANCHESTER Defend the Chorlton Two!

ON 13 AUGUST two supporters of Manchester Workers Against Racism were collecting money for the WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM in Chorlton, Manchester. Two plain-clothed police officers drew up and arrested them for 'collecting money by deceit'. The charges were eventually changed to 'collecting money without a licence'. In the police station the officer announced that they were out to crush Workers Against Racism, 'which is connected to ELWAR - a dangerous communist vigilante group'. It seems that the police have been reading up on the campaign in order to make a specific attack, aimed at undermining the significant support which has been building up amongst black people and trade union branches in the area for the September march. Help us fight this politically motivated attack - and send donations for court costs and fines to: Manchester Workers Against Racism, Box 33, 164-166 Corn Exchange Building, Hanging Ditch, Manchester M4 3BD

Balham Job Centre, campaigning to recruit blacks to the Metropolitan Police, was picketed by WAR supporters in August. Since 1967 London's 23 000-strong police force has gained 158 black members.

LIVERPOOL In for the kill

ON 23 JULY - the anniversary of the killing of David Moore - rioting in Liverpool 8 once again made the headlines. Not that it's ever stopped. Liverpool 8 was the scene of the most ferocious street fighting with the police during last year's long hot summer, and sporadic confrontations have continued ever since. Now they're increasing in scale and intensity, and even spilling over to other districts. According to Mrs Simey, Labour Party chairman of the local police committee, they're led by 'tiny revolutionaries' of 12 to 14 years old.

What's going on? Why all the fuss about Liverpool 8 after months of covering up the real situation? The answer is simple. Like their colleagues in Brixton, the Merseyside police are out to get the 'real criminals'. Five thousand people live in Liverpool 8. Eighty per cent of them are black. Over 75 per cent are unemployed. Short of destroying the whole area and dispersing the entire community, the only option the police have got is to go in for the kill.

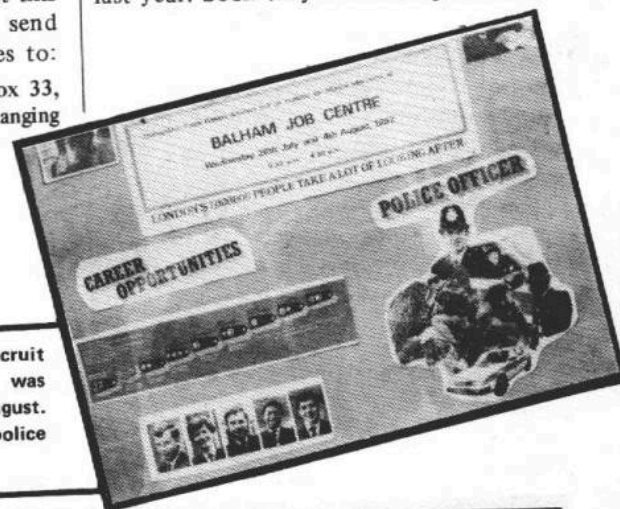
That means provoking riots. A typical scene in Liverpool 8 goes like this:

- eight vanloads of police park by the Cathedral while one patrol car goes into Granby
- it tears up and down the streets, over pavements and lawns, siren blasting, lights flashing
- when the kids (average age 12) come out and respond the eight vanloads stream in and beat them up badly.

So far there have been few arrests. Just beatings. The police want to 'flush out' the older blacks by provoking them beyond endurance.

These tactics are backed up by a massive propaganda campaign designed to seal off Liverpool 8 from the rest of Merseyside. When a 14 year old white girl, Jackie Molyneux, committed suicide recently the *Liverpool Echo* (30 July) screamed 'GIRL FOUND DEAD IN BED AFTER BUS WAS STONED'. The implication was unmistakable; black youths stoning the bus she was in had killed her. Subsequently the Charles Wootton Centre - the black community HQ in Liverpool 8 - was threatened with firebombing by the NF.

For one year Liverpool's race relations experts have worked hard at buying off the supposed troublemakers and setting up numerous projects like the new Law Centre (Lord Scarman called it 'a most imaginative proposal'). But they can't buy off the whole community. Liverpool 8 - too close to the ghettos of Belfast and Derry for comfort - is getting the 'Ulster treatment'. It began with CS gas last year. Soon they'll be killing children.



Anti Workers Against Racism Against Workers

CAMPAIGNING IN THE UNIONS

CPSA

Back door dole checks

THE DEPARTMENT of Employment is trying to implement its racist system of 'checks' on black claimants via the back door. After getting a very negative response from staff and claimants to its 'pilot study' in March — during which WAR organised effective industrial action in a number of UBOs — the DE is now hoping the scheme will go through on the nod. It has been consulting management, who recommend a 'modified visual assessment' system. In other words, if you look black/foreign, you go down on the computer as suspect.

And if anti-racists in the dole offices don't move quickly, the scheme will go through. The main union involved, the CPSA, has very belatedly issued a circular giving branches two weeks to register their opposition! If the CPSA doesn't receive an answer it will assume that's a vote in favour of visual assessment. And this mockery of a democratic ballot is

being conducted at the height of the holiday season, when many members are away. What's more, the circular does not itself oppose ethnic monitoring. It puts the CPSA Broad Left's line, which was manoeuvred through at conference; an absurd proposal for 'voluntary self-registration' by black claimants.

In spite of all its rhetoric, the new Broad Left CPSA leadership is doing no better than the old right-wing at fighting this racist scheme. Rank and file CPSA members will have to take matters into their own hands and organise a nationwide boycott of the scheme whatever the outcome of this phoney ballot. But let's make sure our voices are heard now. Return your results to the CPSA immediately, demanding all-out opposition to the scheme — and demand an extension of the time-limit on the ballot so that all members' views can be expressed.

TGWU

No deportations



WAR/TGWU picket of the Home Office, 12 August

SHAUKAT DARR is an Asian bus driver in Leeds. He's in the TGWU. He came to Britain from Kenya in 1974 and has a wife, two young children and parents-in-law in this country. Like many Kenyan Asians he has now discovered he's an unintentional 'overstayer'.

If something doesn't happen soon, Shaukat will be out of a job, out of the union and — along with his family — kicked out of Britain to Kenya. Originally the Home Office was going to split the family three ways, between Britain, Pakistan and Kenya. After heavy hints that the European Commission on Human Rights might find Britain guilty of violating family rights, the Home Office still plans to deport the Darrs — but all at once, to Kenya!

Numerous representations have been

made on the Darrs' behalf. But the most important support they've received so far is from Shaukat's fellow trade unionists in the TGWU. The union has pledged itself locally to fight his case, and has circulated all branches in the region to back him up. Nationally, Bill Morris (national transport officer of the TGWU) agreed to lead a deputation to the Home Office. Avtar Jouhl — general secretary of the Indian Workers Association (GB) and a leading militant in Birmingham TGWU — was there too.

WAR is fighting in Leeds and nationally to extend this trade union solidarity. The Darrs could be deported any day. Their supporters have made it clear that if and when the immigration police come, they'll have to take on the lot of us!

NALGO, NUPE, COHSE Countdown to October

NORMAN FOWLER — Health Minister responsible for denying hospital workers their 12 per cent claim — plans to enforce DHSS's racist scheme of checks on foreign patients from 1 October onwards. If implemented it will mean untold suffering for thousands of 'ineligible' foreign patients, who can't afford fees of up to £130 per day for NHS treatment. It will mean harassment and humiliation for all black patients, as they get asked to produce their passports as a matter of course.

WAR has been campaigning hard, since the DHSS tried a dry-run of this scheme last year, to build up opposition in NALGO, NUPE, COHSE and all the health service unions. At NUPE's national conference in June, WAR's motion demanding industrial action against the

checks was carried overwhelmingly. Numerous branches in all the relevant unions have voted for a boycott of the scheme. Now is the time for all trade unionists in the health service to demand some action from their national officers. There have to be clear guarantees that when rank and file members boycott the checks, their unions will back them up and prevent any victimisations. A mass campaign by the unions amongst staff and patients, including multi-lingual leaflets and posters, is needed to alert everyone to the Government's racist intentions.

Contact WAR 'WRECK THE CHECKS' CAMPAIGN, c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 or phone 01-274 3951 for information, literature and details of activities up and down the country designed to wreck the checks in doles and hospitals.

NUS

'British jobs for British workers'

WHEN THE TWO P&O liners, Uganda and Canberra, set sail for the South Atlantic in April, the National Union of Seamen insisted that only true Brits were up to fighting the 'Argies'. The 600 Asian seamen on board were promptly removed and replaced with British NUS members.

However, this flag-waving has backfired. The union may have a policy of 'British Seamen for British Ships', but the employers are colour blind. Once the war was over they wanted to get back to business as normal. That meant sacking the patriotic British and re-employing the cheaper Asian labour. Which leaves Jim Slater and Sam McCluskie (general and assistant general secretary) open to charges of racism on the one hand, and 'selling out' their white members on the other.

How did Jim and Sam get into this fix? They are the victims of their own chauvinist policies. For decades the NUS has been complaining about cheap

foreign labour under-cutting their members' wages. But instead of fighting for equal wages and jobs for all, they have simply tried to get rid of the foreign crews. This has been extended to negotiating a 'penalty' payment of £20 to the union by the shipowners for every foreign seaman employed. Of course, neither the British nor foreign seamen ever see a penny of this money.

The outcome of the NUS's patriotic policy has been the loss of 10 000 jobs on British ships for foreign seamen since 1978 — and the loss of the same number of jobs by British seamen. Far from strengthening the union's hand against the shipowners, the NUS has made sure everyone loses out. No wonder Harwich Sealink felt confident enough to announce 2000 redundancies the day after the NUS negotiated a return to work! The moral of the story is plain to see — 'British Jobs for British Workers' means less jobs all round.

GMWU

Uphill for black women



Nilam Khan: 'They won't break our union.'

IF BLACK WORKERS are low on the TUC's list of priorities, black women don't figure at all. Yet they are a continual thorn in the side of the trade union bureaucracy, fighting for their rights with a degree of militancy and heroism that embarrasses the bureaucrats no end.

Nilam Khan is 26, has two children and is a GMWU shop steward at Heathfields. She described how the bosses raised the women's miserable pay offer to try and split them off from the men. It didn't work. Most of the black women are out 'and the ones who aren't don't deserve to be in the union'. Nilam is joining the WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM to the TUC this September: 'Here in the factory racism has been very bad. Management pay different wages to black and white workers. And to men and women. That way they try to keep us apart. They want to break our union. They want to make us crawl. We won't let them'.

Black women experience enormous difficulties when they go on strike. Frequently their immigration status as dependents means they are not entitled to supplementary benefits at the best of times, let alone when they're on strike. The Catch 22 system of child benefits (which excludes black women from claiming for children in their home country) means there are intolerable pressures on many female immigrant workers to keep their heads down at work. But still they fight. And it's about time the unions matched their courage blow for blow.



On Tuesday 20 July two IRA bombs exploded in the centre of London, killing 11 members of two of Britain's most prestigious regiments — the Blues and Royals and the Royal Green Jackets. Injuries to civilians were slight. This latest mainland bombing ranks with the assassination of Airey Neave in 1979 and the ambush of British soldiers at Warren-Point the same year as one of the most dramatic acts of Irish republican guerrilla warfare. And, predictably, it has called forth some of the most rabid anti-republican propaganda from the bourgeois press and the most craven reactions from the left in Britain. Sabena Norton examines the response to the bombings and explains why we give our unconditional support to the Irish liberation movement.

When the war comes home

THE ATTACK had a clear political purpose, as a statement supplied by the IRA explained:

'Now it is our turn to properly invoke article 51 of the United Nations Statute and properly quote all Thatcher's fine phrases on the right to self-determination of a people. The Irish people have sovereign and national rights which no task or occupation force can put down.' (An Phoblacht/Republican News, 22 July 1982)

In the wake of Britain's victory in the South Atlantic — in a war which Britain pretended was fought to defend the so-called 'right to self-determination' of Falkland Britons — the bombings aimed to expose the absurdity of Britain's talk about democratic principles. They were intended to reassert the right and the capacity of the Irish people to pursue its liberation from Britain by military means.

Four legs good, two legs bad

Even the popular press was presented with some difficulty in this case to conjure up the usual parade of innocent victims to help boost circulation figures. So the horses grabbed the limelight. Acres of print were filled with heartrending accounts of unfortunate Sefton and other four-legged members of the Royal Household Cavalry. That the personal

background and history of the dead soldiers and their regiments received only scant attention is understandable. The recent activities of the Blues and Royals in the Malvinas and the Royal Green Jackets in Belfast would hardly fit the desired picture of murdered, peace-loving individuals.

Both regiments are crack troops, notorious and hated in Ireland from their frequent tours in the Six Counties. The B&Rs, one of the oldest British infantry regiments, first rose to fame in the Boer War, following its role in the slaughter of 80 000 internees in Britain's concentration camps. The RGJs, formed in 1958, similarly distinguished themselves in Aden, Cyprus and Malaya before being despatched to occupied Ireland.

The press indulged in flowery descriptions of the ceremonial functions during which the 11 soldiers were blown up. The purpose behind the images of the gleaming knights of the Household Cavalry and the 'gentle British pageantry' (*Daily Mail*) of the bandstand in Regents Park was to get across the crucial message: that these were not war casualties, but innocent victims of heinous crimes.

The whole bourgeois propaganda machine set to work to unite the nation against the Irish freedom fighters. Humane, good and kindly Prime Minister Margaret

Thatcher described those responsible as 'sub-human, evil and brutal men'. These insults were faithfully echoed by the Labour Party leaders, Michael Foot and Roy Hattersley, who dribbled on about 'barbarity' and 'outrages'. Meanwhile, workers on NHS picket lines were bullied to return to work in the face of national calamity. The COHSE leadership called off the strike at St Mary's in Paddington so that its members could tend the wounded.

The *Daily Mail*, which before the bombings had made the health workers the object of its own outrageous attacks, suddenly dubbed the nurses 'angels' and gloated: 'Everyone buckled down marvellously' (21 July). Norman Fowler extended his personal greetings to the St Mary's staff — not omitting a reminder to them to accept the government's pay offer.

The perfect distraction

The British left got the message. Right on cue, came the predictable condemnations of 'terrorism'. For *News Line*, paranoid paper of the paranoid Workers Revolutionary Party, the bombings were nothing other than the fruits of a sinister conspiracy between Thatcher and the IRA ('Who's running the IRA?', 21 July).

Socialist Worker, however, topped the league for dishonesty. In theory the

Socialist Workers Party supports Irish liberation. But in practice it always finds a reason to condemn the struggle for Irish freedom, especially when it strikes too close to home. This time the problem was the IRA's bad timing. The bombs, according to *Socialist Worker*, were 'a perfect distraction'.

Had it not been for the bombs, apparently, unemployment figures, corruption in the intelligence service and scandals at Buckingham Palace could have stayed in the headlines. Then, lo and behold, 'the depths of the government's callousness, hypocrisy and incompetence (sic)' would have been there for all to see. How further reports on unemployment statistics and palace intrusions would have affected the class struggle, *Socialist Worker* did not venture to explain. The main point got across anyway — what a nuisance these bombs!

While the bourgeois press simply attacks the liberation movement, *Socialist Worker* tries to understand it. The result of this sickly, patronising exercise tells us more about the SWP than about any problems faced by the liberation movement. Pat Stack, SWP expert in social psychology, pontificates on 'Why ordinary people become bombers' (31 July). His argument runs as follows: the Irish people have got a point — they are awfully repressed. Not all of them are crazy headbangers: 'The bulk (how

understanding!) of today's Provisionals are not evil or sinister but are ordinary working class men and women driven to arms by discrimination... etc, etc. That done, Pat Stack goes on to heap abuse on the republican movement, in particular on the military struggle. According to the article, the IRA should lay down its arms, forget about the British troops and seek unity in trade union struggle with the allies of their British oppressor — the Protestant working class. The small points that the latter are staunch supporters of Catholic repression, and that repression is enforced through Britain's military rule in the Six Counties, are, of course, passed over in such a profound analysis.

From Clerkenwell to Hyde Park

To cater for the prejudices of its readership, *Socialist Worker* also tries to call on the authority of Marx and Trotsky. Lindsey German contends that 'Karl Marx and his supporters in England had always criticised the Fenians for using conspiracy and uprising as a substitute for arguing their politics to the mass of workers but they supported their aim of a

free and independent Ireland' (7 August).

This is a fantastic inversion of the truth. Marx, unlike the SWP, recognised that the only way socialists could support the 'aim of a free Ireland' was to support the anti-colonial struggle, regardless of its political or military form. Marx and Engels repeatedly pointed out that building support among British workers for the Fenian struggle was the key to the British revolution. They devoted considerable energy to building this movement — and they *never* qualified their support for Irish freedom with criticisms of Fenian tactics.

The criticism of the Clerkenwell bombings of 1867 which Lindsey German uses to prove her point is contained in a *personal letter* Marx wrote to Engels on that occasion. Lindsey German's confusion is breathtaking. Or are we to assume that through an oversight she failed to recognise the difference between the building of an anti-imperialist movement and private correspondence?

Terrorism and war

Trotsky isn't spared any distortion either. Along with *Militant* and the WRP, the

SWP shares a peculiar enthusiasm for a relatively obscure pamphlet written by Trotsky in 1911, in which he subjected Russian anarchism to a thorough critique. Here Trotsky criticised those who substituted assassinations of Czarist officials for the task of building a revolutionary party in Russia. He was *not* talking about a war of liberation against an imperialist oppressor, but about *individual terrorism*, a trend reflecting the impatience and immaturity of middle class radicals. Nevertheless, as has become all too familiar, the SWP tries to use Trotsky's criticisms of the terrorists against the IRA.

With its response to the latest bombings, the SWP leadership has declared where it stands. It opts for that pathetic and despicable tradition of British socialists who mouth fine phrases about revolution in the abstract, but grow dizzy with trepidation whenever the going gets rough. It looks for a solution to the Irish war which does not involve violence. The long-winded talk about terrorism and class unity serves to justify the SWP's leadership's fear of class violence. It ends up providing an escape

route for people who agree with Marxism in theory but can't stomach revolutionary struggle in real life.

The working class can have no use for this tradition. It has nothing to gain from cowering before bourgeois propaganda against IRA violence. Fortunately, workers have not always been reluctant to apply violence to further their class interests, as the current struggles of the hospital workers show. The problem is that Irish self-determination has yet to be understood as an objective which British workers have every interest in helping to achieve.

The revolutionary attitude to the armed struggle of the Irish people is full and unconditional support. It is not up to British workers to lay down the terms for how Irish freedom is to be achieved. Our job is to fight alongside the Irish people for the common objective of destroying the British state. A blow against the state is in the interests of us all. Use the opportunities raised by the liberation struggle to argue with other workers that Britain has no right to be in Ireland. Self-determination for the Irish people! Troops out now!

A memorial in Leeds

THE H-BLOCK hunger strikers have not been forgotten in Leeds. The local Irish Freedom Movement's campaign for a Bobby Sands commemoration mural in the city centre has provoked a major controversy. Letters to the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, debates in the Council chamber and on the streets, have made the Irish war a live political issue.

It started in April when Leeds IFM presented a petition with over 500 signatures to the City Council. The petitioners called on the council to authorise the painting of a large mural on a suitable building in the city centre. This was a demand supported by local workers and trade unionists together with members of most socialist parties.

Shock, horror, mural probe

On 30 April things began to get moving. The *Yorkshire Evening Post* carried a front page article 'Bobby Sands shock mural is unveiled', complete with a reproduction of the model for the mural, depicting Bobby Sands above the famous lines 'I'll wear no convict's uniform, nor meekly serve my time'.

Tory Councillor Keith London told the people of Leeds that they would find it 'offensive' and declared that the council would be most unlikely to grant planning permission for such a 'provocative' mural. A Labour Party planning department spokesman countered that planning permission might not be required. This is where matters threatened to get stuck in the nether regions of the council bureaucracy, with the petition being shoved backwards and forwards between various council departments.

In the meantime, however, the petition continued to attract supporters. One of them,

left-wing Labour Councillor Lorna Cohen, had the courage to make her views publicly known. She issued a statement which said: 'There can be no British solutions. Only the Irish people themselves can resolve the conflicts of sectarianism which centuries of imperialist rule has implanted among them. It was this fundamental truth that Bobby Sands lived by and died for. It is because of this fundamental truth that Bobby Sands should be remembered'.

The statement produced another storm in the pages of the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. But more was to come. On 30 June Leeds IFM was finally invited to attend a full council meeting to formally submit the petition. Amid uproar on the Tory benches, council leader George Mudie agreed to have the petition heard. When the IFM members entered the council chamber all the Tories and the single SDP member walked out. It was the first time in anyone's memory that discord on the council had led to such drastic action. Two days later, having been referred to the Planning and Development department, the petition was turned down. No reasons were given.

Extra-mural activity

Nonetheless, the very idea of a mural continues to make Leeds' patriots foam at the mouth. A Mrs Whitehead of Chapel-Allerton felt that 'Arthur Scargill and the Bobby Sands mural gang' would be better off in Siberia (*Yorkshire Evening Post*, 27 July). And 'Outraged', a frequent correspondent to the paper, demanded to know whether the persons who wished to have a memorial to Bobby Sands in Leeds 'also approve of the latest IRA activity in London' (30 July).

In reply, David Osgood of Leeds IFM asked



the appropriate questions: 'Do our opponents really oppose bombs... or just Irish bombs? Are they opposed to commemorating the war dead... or just those who have died for Ireland?' (6 August). 'Outraged' has since been silent.

But others have taken to more forcible expressions of loyalty to the Union Jack. On 31 July the hunger strike commemoration protest held in honour of Kevin Lynch and Keiran Doherty in Dortend Square, attracted about 30 National Front members equipped

with Union Jacks, 'Red Hand' flags, 'Smash the IRA!' placards and 'Up yours, Argentina!' tee-shirts. Their attempts to disrupt the protest were prevented, however, by more than 60 anti-imperialists.

In the wake of Britain's victory in the South Atlantic and the barrage of chauvinist propaganda following the London bombings, determined action in support of Irish freedom is more important than ever. If you want to join in and beat the chauvinists, contact Leeds IFM.

PTA terror in Southampton

AT 7.00am on Tuesday 6 July the home of the McAllister family in Southampton was raided by half a dozen CID officers. Every piece of furniture was turned over. Every scrap of notepaper and Thomas McAllister's personal notebook were confiscated. Thomas (52) was arrested under the PTA and detained for six days in Portsmouth Police Station.

Three other Southampton Irishmen were arrested the same day. Like Thomas, they all work in the docks or aboard sealiners and ferries. All four were released without charge on Sunday. South London IFM members visited Thomas McAllister immediately after his release. The circumstances of his arrest and a whole history of harassment by the police and Special Branch are a striking example of the repression of the Irish community in Britain.

Press reports on the four arrests

suggested that the police were out to crack an arms smuggling operation involving Irish seamen aboard the 'QE2'. The story was that the Special Branch and the FBI had launched a joint investigation into links between IRA arms smuggling in the US and Irish seamen in Southampton.

Several weeks earlier two Irishmen, Gabriel Megahey and Andrew Duggan, were deported from New York after an undercover FBI agent published an astounding tale of how they had approached him to acquire surface-to-air missiles for the IRA. At one point Gabriel Megahey had been a resident of Southampton. The local police promptly sprang into action.

Throughout the six days of detention, Thomas was never once asked about missiles or other weapons. Instead, he was asked to identify photographs of his

local Irish acquaintances and to account for every name and phone number in his address book. Thomas explained that his interrogators did this to provide some sort of justification for holding him. This information was already available to the police. The Irishmen on the police photo files were very well known to the police as they, like Thomas McAllister, had for years been subjected to persistent harassment. At one time in the late 'seventies, the Southampton police stationed photographers in the northern part of town to get photos of all adult Irish males.

The Southampton police keep the Irish community under continuous surveillance, to inhibit any display of support for the liberation struggle. Thomas told us he decided to remove a tricolour and other republican symbols from his flat several years ago, because otherwise he would 'never get any peace'.

Thomas and his wife Rita grew up in the Markets area of Belfast. He moved to Southampton in 1957 to work in

the docks. His acquaintance with the Special Branch and the PTA started in 1975 when he and five other Irishmen were arrested and detained after an arms cache had been found in the area. Thomas spent a month in Winchester prison before he was released without charge.

His career as a seaman, however, was wrecked forever. On the instigation of the Special Branch, he has been blacklisted from work on deep sea boats and the Vosper Thornycroft shipyard has barred him from work in 'sensitive' parts of the docks.

Thomas's wife Rita was still shaking when we visited the McAllisters' home. In Southampton the PTA has been used to establish a climate of fear to discourage people from showing support for the struggle against British imperialism.

If you live in or near Southampton and want to get involved in the work of the IFM, please contact Sabena Norton on 01-274 3951.



The militarisation of British politics

In previous issues of *the next step* we have argued that the war in the South Atlantic was fought as much at home as abroad. It is now clear that, in the long run, Britain's domestic conflicts will prove the most decisive for the ruling class. The 'Falklands factor' has given the Tories a real edge. The spirit of the task force looms over local council elections, parliamentary debates and industrial disputes. Many Labour politicians, resigned to this state of affairs, are looking forward to a speedy return to normal political life. Pat Roberts shows why their hopes are in vain and urges our readers to prepare for the militarisation of the British political scene.

EVEN BEFORE THE Falklands war was over, sections of the ruling class were predicting the dawn of a new era. The editor of *The Daily Telegraph* warned that the 'public will expect Mrs Thatcher to tackle home affairs with the verve displayed in the Falklands' (24 May). This theme was played on time and again. The fascists noted: 'It is ironic that the British Government should take immediate and entirely appropriate action to protect the way of life of 1800 British Falklands folk while it and preceding governments have allowed our homeland to be invaded by millions of aliens' (*National Front News*, No 41); while the *Daily Mirror* remarked: 'The Prime Minister has demonstrated over the Falklands that she can give single-minded, determined leadership. Now she must apply it to the country's other problems' (23 June).

Towards law-and-order

What are these 'other problems'? For the backwoodsmen of *The Daily Telegraph* they were 'the maintenance of the kingdom's unity' (8 July). For the editor of *The Economist*, they were more specific:

'When the conquerors of Port Stanley return to these shores there might be no trains to whisk them home... The wounded and battle-weary should not expect too much care and attention from the National Health Service: strike action by ancillary workers has reduced hundreds of hospitals to emergency and accident services only. Worse is to come: the coal miners are massing for another fight. Britain is still some way from being a land fit for heroes.' (19 June 1982)

Appropriately, when the Canberra came home to a tumultuous welcome in Portsmouth, television cameras zoomed in on a group of paras holding a banner with the slogan 'Call off the rail strike or we'll call an air strike'.

The national unity the bourgeoisie forged in the heat of battle was at once directed against internal foes. The railway workers were the first casualties. The chiefs of the NHS unions quickly got the message. In what they thought was a clever move, they tried to justify their members' wage claims on the grounds that those treating the war-wounded should be properly rewarded. But the pleas were so transparently opportunist that they could safely be ignored.

The crusade against all things unpatriotic was remarkably successful. Industrial action was denounced as treason. On 13 July, full of confidence, Thatcher taunted the leader of the opposition: 'I have noted Mr Foot's support for ASLEF. He now seems to have become the strikers' friend'. Foot, taken aback, dithered and replied: 'I am the friend of a peaceful settlement in this industry as in others'. Thatcher won the argument — the Falklands factor struck again.

Though, despite ample media coverage of Britain's returning soldiers and sailors, the war began to recede into the political background, things did not return to normal. When a smoker was found in Her Majesty's bedroom, *The Economist* asked: 'Who in Britain can feel safe at home when the Queen is not?' (17 July). National soul-searching began on 'Palace security', only to be combined with national anxiety about leaks at the Government Communications HQ at Cheltenham.

Different aspects of law and order monopolised political discussion throughout the summer. But law and order has been a major issue in British society for some time now. Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan made halting the abuse of union power a key principle in the 1978/9 'winter of discontent'. The aftermath of last summer's street fighting saw countrywide debate take place on the right type of police equipment. This spring, the release of statistics on muggings coincided with a Police Federation campaign to bring back hanging: the result was the granting of new powers to search and arrest to the police.

Is the whole thing a conspiracy?

The answer to this is yes and no. People in the establishment have a clear understanding of its interests. They know that, if their class is to survive, they will have to mobilise the full power of the state against their domestic opponents. Still, until now systematic coercion has only been used against ethnic minorities — primarily black youth. The criminalisation of black youth is part of a conscious policy to isolate and if necessary crush the oppressed. So too is the attack on sections of the Irish community. The Prevention of Terrorism Act is designed to put fear into this community and preempt the emergence of support for the struggle for Irish freedom. But the ruling class uses coercion only as a last resort. The regular application of force is expensive and its results are too often unpredictable. It is much better to get by through organising national political consensus than to rely on force.

It is, however, impossible to achieve such a consensus on issues such as unemployment, public sector cuts and the deterioration of living standards. Even the most backward workers can see that there are in fact two nations — that poverty and degradation coexist, though in a difficult world, with power and wealth. But the establishment knows this, which is why it conspires to generate problems which can overcome class divisions. It refuses to recognise the problems that face us as *social* and instead tells us that they are problems of *law and order*. Invoking an external threat serves its purposes particularly well: then, the ruling class can come right out and says its 'us against them'.

The ruling class is very fortunate. The Labour Party has never challenged the nationalist prejudice that an English worker has more in common with an English banker than an Argentine worker. Indeed, it was the last Labour government that introduced the whole question of 'intimidation' by pickets. Thanks to this service, the Tories can now pass one anti-trade union law after another. As millions are driven onto the dole, the Government can still make

union 'bully-boy methods' the subject of near unanimous criticism.

The official labour movement has helped to construct the Falklands factor. At question time in Parliament, Labour MPs fell over themselves demanding what steps had been taken to batten down the hatches on HMS Great Britain. Typical of this outlook was a recent editorial in the *New Statesman*. After expressing concern with the incident in the Queen's bedroom it noted: 'But she can reflect that her brief encounter with Mr Fagan achieved in a few minutes a movement for police reform, where others fought without effect for decades. Overnight, criticism of the Met became obvious and radical' (23 July). The *New Statesman* saw in the widespread criticism of Palace security the potential for police reform. It forgot that the result of such criticism is always *tougher* policing — something which can only strengthen the law and order lobby. The fact that the establishment can turn a bedroom farce into a topic for scores and scores of newspaper leaders is a measure of just how powerful the Falklands factor has become.

Rule Britannia

The *conscious* strategy of the ruling class depends for its successful implementation on the outlook of the official labour movement remaining confused. But there are also objective pressures which push the establishment towards the militarisation of politics. The economic crisis has unleashed forces which no government can control. Economic collapse threatens to engulf industry and nobody can guarantee that social unrest will not escalate further. New police powers and what the *Report of HM Inspector of Constabulary for 1981* called 'the development of positive, mobile tactics' are just some of the steps being taken in anticipation of future social conflict.

Then there is the potential threat from foreign quarters. Capitalism is a world system, and, internationally, the British ruling class faces economic forces over which it has no control whatsoever. The global dimensions of the crisis weigh heavily on the British state. Cut-throat competition for markets and spheres of investment drive imperialist nations towards conflict. Ultimately commercial disagreements and economic rivalries are resolved by force of arms. Thus, the war in the Malvinas was no passing episode but an indication of things to come.

At present external threats are manipulated to consolidate popular support for the ruling class. For the time being the threats from without can be used to curb the threat from within. This is the significance of the Falklands factor. So long as workers support the bosses on foreign policy issues, the bourgeoisie can deal with 'troublemakers' and the isolated instance of industrial militancy with ease.

In the middle of the NHS dispute, TUC general council member and NUPE general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe observed: 'There is a crisis of confidence that the trade union movement cannot deliver, that it cannot stop the rot, it cannot do anything about unemployment'. Still, he added, 'we have got the Falklands bit behind us, and all the gungho' (*News Line*, 9 August 1982). But we haven't. Slowly, imperceptibly, militarism is becoming an acceptable feature of British politics.

We can't yet prevent the bosses from pushing their militarist message. But we can reject our myopic union leaders. So long as they wish the issues of war, violence and public order away, they prop up the bourgeoisie's carefully-nurtured political consensus. The fight against the militarisation of British politics must begin with a fight against them.

Four day international conference organised by **the next step** • 40 workshops
 • 6 sessions on the Soviet bloc • 5 plenaries • special courses on women's oppression,
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PREPARING FOR POWER

Preparing for Power is a conference about doing just that. The communists, said Marx and Engels in their famous Manifesto, represent and take care of the *future* of the working class movement as well as the present. These days few people on the left think about what seizing and exercising state power would be like; but unless we begin to size up the opposition and map out what will be necessary to replace it, we will never get to see socialism in our lifetimes. Labour Party activists know their party may not win a parliamentary election this side of 1990, SWP activists have forsaken romantic visions of the barricades for the narrowest forms of trade union work. Yet the revolution will not wait. The ruins of Beirut lie in front of all of us unless we prepare for power now.

This year's *next step* conference is about war. It's a topical theme, but it's also one which has a significance beyond the banal observation that nuclear weapons are a threat to the survival of the human race itself. The world's one and only genuine workers' revolution took place in the middle of a war, and there can be no doubt that we will have to master the intricacies of everything from spy satellites to fallout shelters if a socialist Britain is to ward off attacks as successfully as did the Red Army of Trotsky's Russia. The fact that, in 1982, such a prospect seems so distant and so daunting only reinforces the need to get a scientific analysis of modern-day militarism moving right away.

In the bestselling *Exterminism and cold war*, peace movement guru Edward Thompson has done something which, in its rush to congratulate him on his eloquence and humanism, the left has failed to notice. In his attack on American and Russian warmongers, Thompson reserves his fiercest gibes for Marxism. The current war drive, he argues, is not susceptible to Marxist analysis: indeed it is not susceptible to rational analysis at all. Is Thompson right? If he is, doom or the Church seem the only alternatives before mankind. Through Preparing for Power, however, we hope to prove him wrong.

Preparing for Power is a conference marked by a very high level of

debate: you should register *now* so as to get details of what it makes sense to read beforehand. But Preparing for Power is also a conference with a strongly practical thrust. Apart from the workshops and plenaries on war, there are six sessions designed to answer the everyday question 'What about Russia?', and a further three special courses on the fight against the oppression of women, the Irish and blacks. There are also six sessions on immediate political and cultural issues facing the workers' movement. The contrast between Preparing for Power and the concurrent (and thus rival) Socialist Society Summer School could not be clearer. The clotted cream of Britain's left-wing academics will be sitting in seminars pondering whether Britain is a 'viable entity', whether the British state should be democratised, federalised or broken up, and whether we need a Constitutional Convention; they will also be deliberating over 'education for unemployment' and 'the politico-intellectual weeklies'. We will be talking about industrial action to open up the H-Blocks and physical defence of the black community. So make sure you're there! Start Preparing for Power before it's too late!

Dates Saturday 11 September through to Tuesday 14 September

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Timetable Saturday

9.45am prompt: REGISTRATION

10.30am

Plenary introduction to the conference: The arms race today – myth and reality
 There are 120 000 nuclear warheads in Western Europe, and the ones mounted inside cruise missiles take just six minutes to arrive at Moscow. But, as *Frank Richards* will argue, hardware like this doesn't necessarily mean that the next world war will be fought out East-West, as propaganda from both the White House and the Kremlin has made out for the past 30 years. On the contrary, all the indications are that the imperialist powers are spoiling for a fight with each other. Among the issues to be dealt with: economic and political roots of the original Cold War, the Berlin Airlift, the U2 crisis, quiet rearmament in Japan, and the 'workers' bomb'

12.30 Lunch: hot food and drink on sale on the premises

1.30pm

EITHER

Special course on women part 1: The nature of women's oppression

Six times as many married couples get divorced now as did 20 years ago. But if it's obvious that the recession has put

millions of working class families under strain, it's not so obvious why women bear the brunt of this. Why is it that it's *women* who do most of the housework? Have washing machines, launderettes and the welfare state socialised domestic work at all – and what do we mean by the socialisation of domestic work anyway? How does performing domestic work affect the kind of jobs women workers do and how does it make for discrimination in the factory and in the office?

Last month the editors of *Spare Rib* re-affirmed their view that men and only men are responsible for the oppression of women. Other feminists point out that women did domestic work centuries before the rise of capitalism. Here *Kate Marshall* will explain where Engels went right and where he went wrong on the historical and class origins of women's oppression, and will go on to prove why the struggle against drudgery in the home means a struggle to smash the capitalist state

OR

Brezhnev's bomb: the Soviet Union and the arms race

Nuclear arms workers and nuclear scientists are more highly equipped, paid and privileged than most of the Soviet Union's population. But despite the fact that Soviet military spending has probably risen by 60 per cent every five years since the early 'sixties, the Soviet economy is more geared to churning out low-technology Kalashnikov submachine guns than sophisticated Pershing missiles. Even the USSR's millions of infantrymen have problems: if it is still true, as Napoleon observed, that an army marches on its stomach, the parlous state of Soviet



agriculture suggests that a lot of the Warsaw Pact's armed forces won't be up to much of a fight.

Representing the USSR as more combat-ready than it actually is is key to Margaret Thatcher's strategy of getting British workers to rally round the flag. Forcing the USSR to spend more on nuclear weapons is key to Ronald Reagan's strategy of softening it up for US imperialism. Meanwhile, CND is almost as worried about the Soviet 'threat' as it is about the Pentagon. In this session, *Gareth Evans* will use the CIA's latest statistics on the Soviet military to sort out the confusion

OR

Special course on Ireland part 1: From the Easter Rising to the Civil War – the watershed of Partition

'War waged by oppressed nationalities against the oppressor, and the class

war of the proletariat against capital... is *par excellence* the swiftest, safest and most peaceful form of constructive work the socialist can engage in', James Connolly told a huge crowd in Glasgow on May Day 1915; and, within 12 months, he had put his words into practice, by seizing Dublin's General Post Office and declaring Ireland free of British rule. Five years later, however, Britain divided Ireland into two and, in so doing, managed to set Irishman against Irishman in one of the bloodiest conflicts northern Europe has ever seen.

Even now the legacy of that period is with us: backed by James Prior, Taoiseach Charles Haughey has just arranged for IRA hero Gerry Tuitt to be sent down for 10 years for his commendable exploits against British imperialism. *Phil Murphy* will lead the discussion

OR

End of the line in Lebanon

Demonstrations aren't much of a cure for the feeling of helplessness many British sympathisers of the Palestinian cause have. One way we can render that cause real assistance, though, is to expose and destroy the support Labour's Zionists give the Israeli state. Another, as *Inez Landa* makes clear, is to highlight the



Preparing for Power

largely unpublicised developments on the West Bank, where nine local Arab councils have been dismissed since March for identification with the PLO, and where the Zionist-run 'Palestinian Village Leagues' now have a weekly paper to encourage the local population to collaborate with their oppressors

3.30pm Tea

**4pm
EITHER**

Russia, 1924: how the revolution was lost
'A gigantic heap' was how Lenin described the Bolsheviks' machinery of government in Moscow in the early 'twenties; 'a bourgeois and Tsarist hotch-potch' was his term for the Soviet state apparatus as a whole. But it was not until 10 years after Trotsky was defeated



at the thirteenth congress of the Soviet Communist Party in May 1924 that the inheritors of Lenin's tradition realised just how entrenched the Soviet bureaucracy had become. In this workshop *Frank Richards* describes how the degeneration of the Russian Revolution disoriented even its most distinguished critic

OR

Special course on racism part 1: The politics of black oppression in post-war Britain

'If you want a nigger for your neighbour, vote Labour' said the Tory candidate in the 1964 general election campaign in Smethwick. But today, many Labour councils are just as eager as Tory ones to keep blacks confined to the worst council flats and out of the way of clean, decent and law-abiding whites. Has the Labour Party ever defended black people's interests? *Judy Harrison* gives some answers

OR

The guns of August: British workers and the First World War

In 1911 Clydeside revolutionary Willie Gallacher proclaimed that workers 'should condemn all idea of patriotism and all idea of militarism, unless it took the form of shooting down those who exploited them'. But in 1914 workers clamoured to join the army. What went wrong? *Keith Thomas* explains

OR

The peace movement in Europe

Is a nuclear-free Europe a possibility or an illusion? Why is anti-nuclear feeling so strong in West Germany but so weak in

France? Why are protests in Holland, previously the lynchpin of the Continental peace movement, now in decline? Was George Orwell right to link the strength of British pacifism to this country's position as a naval power, and does such a link exist today? *Sabena Norton* investigates

**5.30pm
EITHER**

Plenary: the war at home

The renewed furore over Operation Countryman looks like heralding a cleaner, better managed police force — something that black GLC councillor and prospective Labour MP Paul Boateng has gone on record as saying would be a step forward. Meanwhile, Britain's fascist organisations seem to be keeping out of the news. In this plenary, RCP experts on the police, the far right and the media will field questions from the floor on the bourgeoisie's current efforts to deal with domestic dissent. They'll be asking questions too...



OR

Charlton Heston, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Marlene Dietrich and Orson Welles in Welles' *Touch of Evil*. Manic camerawork, police corruption and American racism in a narcotics tale set on the Mexican border

OR

Peter Lorre in Fritz Lang's *M*. Filmed in Germany before Hitler came to power: how a child murderer can be more decent than stout middle class citizens and lumpen criminals



**8pm
EITHER**

Revolutionary Communist Cabaret with live band

OR

Robert Donat and Madeleine Carroll in Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 steps*. Military secrets, German intelligence agents and British oratory in the London and Scotland of 1935

OR

Cary Grant in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*. Illusion, reality and stabblings at the United Nations building, New York. Look out for Leo G (Man from UNCLE) Carroll...

Sunday

**10am
EITHER**

Special course on women part 2: Women and the unions

In 1953 the TUC opposed the construction of state nurseries; now it says it's in favour of it. But has Congress House really changed its attitude to women? A recent survey by NALGO shows that, despite a rise in the local government union's female membership, women occupy fewer positions in the union now than they did in 1974. Why? Would reserving union posts for women help? *Kate Marshall* outlines what women workers need to do to make unions worth joining — and why male trade unionists must take up the same battle

OR

Special course on Ireland part 2: 1969 — the rebirth of the IRA

Thirteen years ago the Provisionals really were a tiny band of conspirators isolated from the nationalist community. But that situation soon changed. *Sabena Norton* looks at the rise of an organisation the British bourgeoisie dreads more than most



OR

Russia in the 'thirties: the stabilisation of bureaucratic rule

Behind all the purges, the mass trials and the labour camps, Joseph Stalin achieved a remarkable — and, to this day, largely unrecognised — feat. By overhauling Soviet higher education, he was able to recruit the youngest, most articulate sections of the working class into the Communist Party and the state. There they received ample rewards for loyalty. Freshly trained engineers became some of Stalin's staunchest allies: they presided over the USSR's headlong rush to industrialisation and, in the shape of Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny, went on to become some of its most prominent post-war leaders. *Inez Landa* looks at how the Soviet bureaucracy has proved a much tougher parasite than Trotsky supposed

OR

The Labour Party and imperialism

For Denis Healey the problem with Israeli leader Menachem Begin is that his phosphorous bombs only make the PLO more militant. For Tony Benn there appears to be no problem with Begin at all: he has yet to make a major public statement on the Lebanon since the current conflict there began. *Mike Freeman* looks at the attitude Labour right-wingers and left-wingers have taken to the Middle East and other backward capitalist areas of the world and concludes that there's not been a lot to choose between the two

12.30pm Lunch

**1.30pm
EITHER**

Special course on racism part 2: Black workers and the British labour movement

Mr and Mrs Dipak Patel have two children aged six years and 20 months. Ugandan Asians with a British passport in the mother's name, they have spent nine years in an Austrian refugee camp trying to gain entry to Britain. Now they've succeeded. *The Times* helped them; the United Nations helped them; Liberal peer Lord Avebury helped them. The TUC didn't. *Pam Lawrence* looks at what black workers are up against

OR

The nature of gay oppression

Even before the Trestrail affair broke, Richmond CID raided the Spartacus Club, Barnes, and made four arrests on the grounds that a homosexual brothel was being run there. Now three MPs and one judge have been implicated in the business; but, as *Don Milligan* of the Revolutionary Gay Men's Caucus shows, they'll never get the kind of aggravation working class homosexuals experience every day

OR

The US military-industrial complex

Who's going to get the \$300m contract to build eight new 500kw transmitters for the Voice of America? What's the real purpose of the space shuttle? *Kevin Green* explores the world of Bell Telephones, McDonnell Douglas, General Dynamics and Rockwell International

OR

Argentina: 150 years of British plunder

By the end of the Second World War Britain owed Argentina £100m — a tidy sum even now, and an enormous amount of money then. But, as *Mike Freeman* chronicles, a few British threats reduced Britain's debts. Now the Foreign Office is having talks with Brazil about getting the Argies to agree to a Latin American supply route to the Falklands...

3.30pm Tea

**4pm
EITHER**

South Africa: black workers get ready for war

While Prime Minister Pik Botha promises South Africa's Coloureds token parliamentary representation, repudiates Colonel 'Mad Mike' Hoare's raid on the Seychelles and intensifies his raids against SWAPO in Angola, black workers at Volkswagen's main plant in the Cape have been bringing production to a standstill with strikes. *Charles Longford* assesses how much longer apartheid can survive

OR

Anti-war movements in America: from Vietnam to today

'All men are created equal, not cremated equal' said the Master of Ceremonies at an unprecedentedly big (20 000) Chicago demonstration against nuclear weapons in the spring. Today's anti-war movement in the States is as American-centred as the Declaration of Independence in outlook: in fact petitions against war are now popular among lifelong Republicans. *Mick Hume* compares 'sixties US radicalism with the 'eighties variety

OR

Moscow vs the USSR's nationalities, Moscow vs Kabul

Russia isn't the same thing as the Soviet Union: indeed ethnic Russians are more and more being outnumbered by the peoples of the USSR's Central Asian Republics. Books on the yellow peril are also selling fast in Leningrad. *Andy*

Clarkson scrutinises Great Russian chauvinism and its influence on the invasion of Afghanistan

OR Can the unions survive the crisis?

When Len Murray feels duty-bound to slap Michael Heseltine on the back after a speech against bad management at the National Economic Development Council — then it's even more apparent than ever that the unions are in a mess. Again, the NUR and ASLEF are set to see 15 000 jobs disappear this year, while tussles continue on the TUC General Council over the representation of white collar unions. *Gavin Poole* surveys the damage recession and bureaucracy have done to our movement over the past three years and suggests how we can undo it

6pm Break

7.30pm
Plenary: Militarism and the working class

Monday

10am EITHER

Special course on women part 3: War and peace in the women's movement

Is war a male institution? *Kate Marshall* explains why not, taking a look at how the Suffragettes recruited men to the trenches in the First World War, and at how women form the backbone of armed national liberation movements the world over. Also: why Bevin and Attlee's Second World War was as much a defeat for women as it was for the working class

OR Special course on Ireland part 3: The Protestant paramilitaries

Since the hunger strike, the UDA and the UVF have surprised many by not embarking on a sustained campaign of sectarian assassinations. But as *Mike Wall* will demonstrate, that's only because the British Army is operating to their satisfaction; and when Belfast's Lear executive jet factory collapses, Protestant workers there will turn to the Orange Lodges rather than the unions

OR



Beyond the labels: the nature of the Soviet Union

For 40 years socialists claiming Trotsky's mantle have argued over the terms 'state capitalist' and 'degenerated workers' state'. But the Soviet Union demands more profound and more specific analysis than this. What do you say when people demand you 'go back to Russia'? *Frank Richards* analyses the changes in Soviet society

OR UK Ltd: upturn or slump?

Norman Tebbit says millions of jobs are round the corner; Labour MPs are speechless when the Tories tell them that the public will vote for a telephone service that actually works (because it's privately run). But British Airways has £300m in losses and 7000 redundancies to contend with, and even the boom in video shops has collapsed. *Tony Allen* offers a few predictions on the next stage of the crisis

12.30pm Lunch

1.30pm EITHER

Special course on racism part 3: Black liberation in the States

'Burn baby burn' said black rioters in Watts, Los Angeles, in the 'sixties; and even Wall Street heard the cry. Millions of dollars were poured into America's inner cities, blacks were recruited into the National Guard, and strenuous efforts were made to create a new black middle class. But, though Lord Scarman would rather we didn't notice, nothing changed. Today millions of American blacks are on welfare or on poverty-line wages, and the Ku Klux Klan claims a membership of 10 million. *Kevin Green* shows why

OR Poland since the coup

The fact is that most of Solidarity's best-known leaders seem to have learnt nothing from the reactionary role the Church has played since General Jaruzelski took over. Despite imprisonment or being driven underground, many still hold out the possibility of peaceful reform. Yet, *Annie Dobbs* says, with this summer's harvest having to be rescued by the Army and bread rationing on the cards for the winter, Polish workers have little choice but to take up arms

OR The British left and colonial wars

Gerry (*News Line*) Healy, Ted (*Militant*) Grant and Sid (*Tribune*) Bydwell were condemning Republican bombing campaigns back in 1939 — yet the Provos are still decent enough to pick guardsmen rather than ex-Trotskyists as their targets! *Keith Thomas* looks at how the far left has reacted to guerrilla movements over the years, from the IRA to ZANU (PF)

OR Nuclear power: can we handle it?

Next year sees the opening of a public inquiry into the building of the Sizewell Pressurised Water Reactor on the Suffolk coast. CND has opposed it and most of the left can be counted on to do the same. Renegade physicist *James Wood* shows why nuclear power isn't nearly as dangerous as those ubiquitous red-and-yellow badges

3.30pm Tea

4pm EITHER

The bankers behind the Bomb: a beginners' guide to the City and international finance

With Barclays worrying in public whether its loans to bankrupt industrial companies have made it 'over-extended', and the building societies cutting interest rates to hit the Big Four's share of the home loans market, the men in pinstrip suits aren't quite as stiff-upper-lipish as they once were. No wonder they're desperate to rip off the Third World still more — but, as *Tony Allen* makes clear, the Third World's broke too. Watch out for more bankers underneath Blackfriars Bridge...

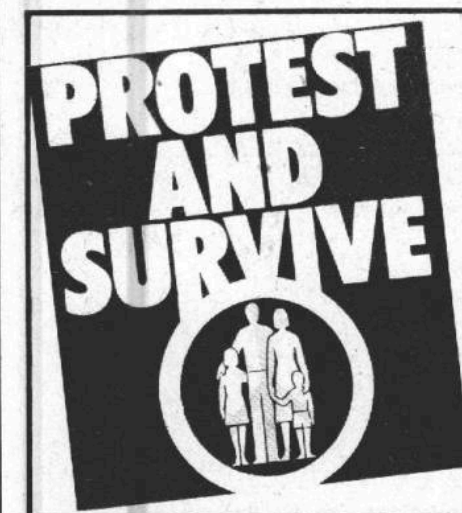
OR Debate with Jewish Socialists on Zionism

Does Zionism have a progressive mission? Do Jews deserve a homeland of their own? Do the anti-war demonstrations in Israel amount to anything? An exchange of views



OR CND: from Aldermaston to Greenham Common

The one time the world really did look like it was on the brink of an East-West nuclear conflagration — the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 — support for CND actually declined. Twenty years later, however, the Campaign's bouncing back. Or is it? *Fran Eden* investigates



OR The New Musical Distress

Even *Time Out* couldn't bear to print rock critic Julie Burchill recently, her line on the Falklands was so bad; but then so was Bob (*The Wall*) Geldof's too. On the other hand, early-seventies-wimp-turned-anti-nuker Jackson Browne had young working class kids spellbound at the Hammersmith Odeon this summer — his homilies to peace and his audience were pure Hollywood, but that didn't matter. *Mike Harris* evaluates the impact of the falling rate of profit on the record business and asks: do personal stereotypes foster bourgeois individualism in the youth?



6pm Break

7.30pm EITHER



Plenary: The hard face of British imperialism

Last year British Leyland did more than £50m-worth of work for the Ministry of Defence. Next year compulsory military service may be brought in for the unemployed. Scotland Yard has engaged the services of Britain's best industrial designers and ergonomists to make sure that the banks of visual display units in its new, multi-million pound 'command and control' rooms make for maximum operator efficiency. All the 1000 female army and UDR personnel who carry out body searches in Northern Ireland are equipped with hefty handguns. In this plenary, RCP specialists on the arms industry, the Territorial Army and the technology of repression will give the details of what we're up against

OR Episode 1 of GF Newman's *Law and order*

The BBC television series on the framing of a blagger caused a Tory outcry when first screened a couple of years ago. But since then yet more evidence of police fit-ups has come to light, and there has been a renewed furore over the case of Patrick Meehan. Ultra-realistic plot and acting, not-so-realistic Cockney dialogue — but rivetting all the same



OR

Clint Eastwood in Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars*.

Operatic, cynical, hilarious: the Man With No Name in one of his best Spaghetti Westerns

Tuesday

10am

EITHER

Special course on women part 4: The past 20 years of unequal rights

You'd think that Labour's 1975 Equal Pay Act might at least be observed by the government, if not by private employers. But you'd be wrong. Since the Act was passed, women's earnings as a percentage of men's have increased by less than one per cent in the public sector, but by more than three per cent in private industry. Yet most women workers' jobs are to be found in the public sector. *Kate Marshall* looks at the revolutionary alternative to bogus laws on sexual equality and hits out at the TUC's *Charter for women's rights*. Also under review: disaggregation of women's incomes from men's, positive discrimination, and why women get such a bad deal from the welfare state

OR

Special course on Ireland part 4: The significance of the hunger strikes

In Portadown the nationalist community rips down street signs named after Winston Churchill and replaces them with ones paying tribute to Martin Hurson, who was starved to death in 43 days. Every morning the police put the old signs up again, every night they've vanished. *Sabena Norton* assesses the impact of the prisoners' heroic struggle



Worldwide the memory of Bobby Sands' murder lives on

OR

Alternative weapons policies

New Statesman contributor and TV South television producer Philip Geddes prefers submarine-launched cruise missiles to submarine-launched Trident D5s — they're cheaper. *New Statesman* investigative journalist staffer and *Hard Rock '82* author Duncan Campbell says the Phantom jets and mobile radar columns now running round the South Atlantic should be brought back here — it's more important to defend the British Isles than the Falklands. *New Statesman* ex-editor Bruce Page says that Europe needs the Royal Navy, not the British Army on the Rhine, to reply to Russian attacks. *James Wood* asks: what's the difference between getting a conventional bullet in the back and getting a nuclear nose-cone on the head?



OR

The left and the Spanish Civil War

While premier Calvo Sotelo struggles to keep his Centre Democratic Union party intact, Spain's socialists are riding high in the opinion polls. But farmworkers in Andalusia are fasting for jobs and parliamentary democracy looks no more stable than it did during Colonel Tejero's attempted coup. Meanwhile ex-premier Adolfo Suarez is making threatening noises about repossessing Gibraltar. *Rob Knight* looks at the lessons of Franco's victory in 1936 and asks: how pleased was Stalin when three quarters of Britain's International Brigades came home dead or wounded?

12.30pm Lunch

1.30pm

EITHER

Liberals, SDP and Labour: why they're tailing Maggie

While David Steel and Roy Jenkins try to make their courtship look more romantic — the Alliance's electoral support has dropped by half since it reached a peak in November last year — Peter Tatchell

says how personally hurt he was by Bob Mellish's resignation. *Mike Freeman* looks at Thatcher's loyal but divided Parliamentary opposition

OR

Toward insurrection throughout Central America

Mexico's economic collapse under \$80bn of debts means the country's highly organised proletariat is being hit hard. US imperialism has already faced insurrections in its back yard: soon it could meet with one on its doorstep. *Phil Murphy* looks at the prospects



OR

The Leninist line on sport

Thirty-nine Bristol City fans arrested after their coach missed an away match at Bridport, Dorset and went to Torquay, Devon instead. Brazilian production lines shut down by the government during this year's World Cup. Italy, one of Europe's least chauvinist powers, celebrates victory with flag-waving on a scale not seen since Mussolini. *Alan Harding* asks why Vladimir Ilyich confined himself to playing chess



OR

Special course on racism part 4: Black women workers — super-exploited, doubly oppressed

Black nurses have been in the forefront of the recent health strikes, but usually nobody notices them — especially as thousands slave away in geriatric, psychiatric and mental subnormality hospitals. Likewise, few of the holidaymakers jetting away from Heathrow notice the Asian cleaners who pick up litter in the departure lounges there. *Anita Lloyd* says it's time the official labour movement paid attention

3.30pm Break

4pm

Plenary: Where do we go from here?

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Why Reagan needs 'the Soviet menace'

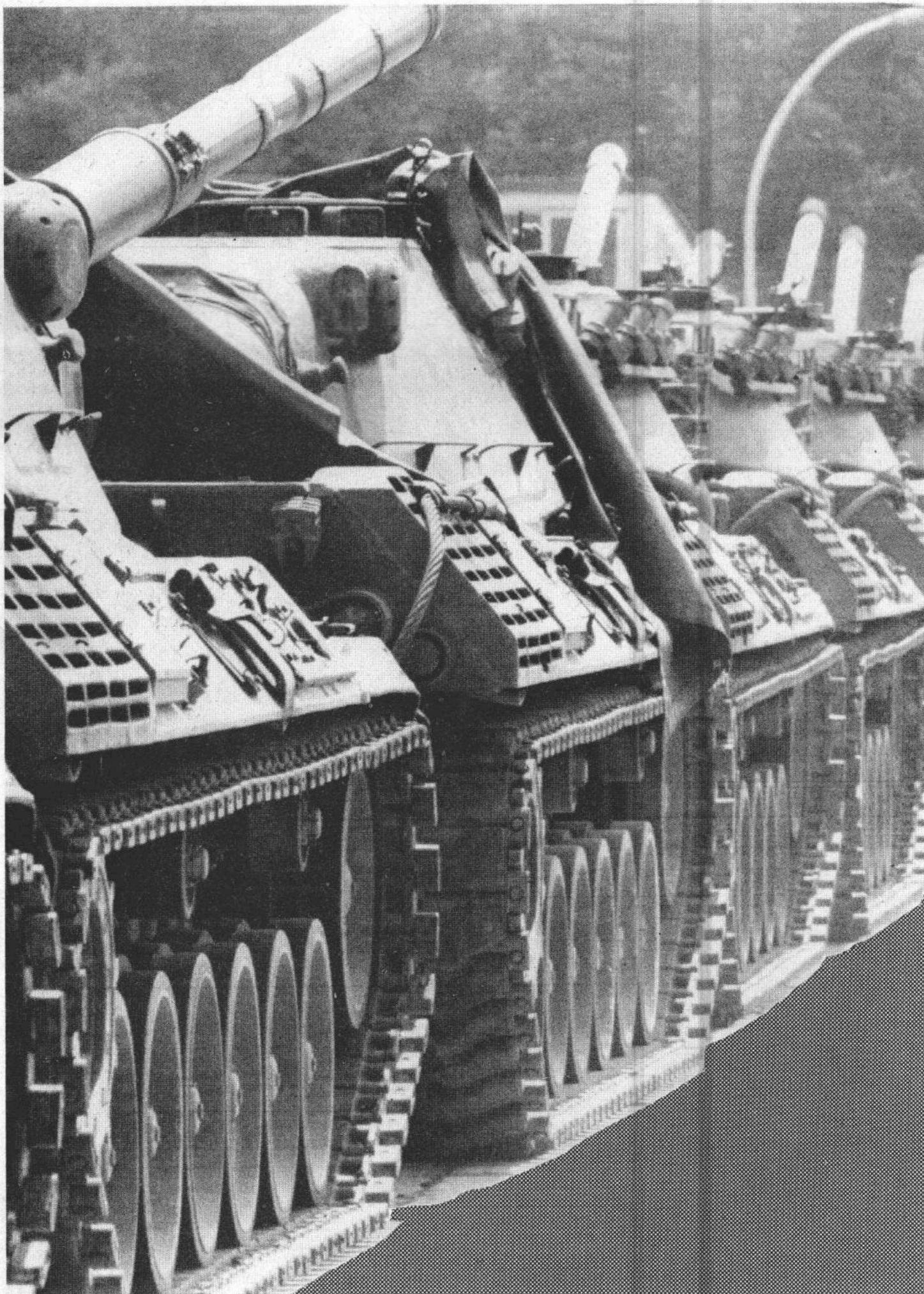
Dozens of left-wing and right-wing analysts have tried to unravel the mystery of why Reagan's handling of foreign affairs is proving just as unstable as Carter's. Some have pointed to the existence of a 'Californian mafia' in the White House; others, to the machinations of the US industrial-military complex. In fact, however, the pattern of American foreign policy is relatively straightforward. The USA is responsible for enforcing political stability worldwide. As the ultimate guarantor of the survival of imperialism on this planet, it is forced to keep an eye on developments everywhere. However, global responsibilities can often conflict with immediate national interests. Washington discovered this in the South Atlantic war, in which it had to balance between Britain and Argentina. Now it is caught in the same dilemma in the Middle East, where it cannot please both 'international opinion' and Israel, its very own client state, at the same time.

America also faces the problem of economic decline. Since the summer of 1981 US industrial output has fallen by more than 10 per cent. Even running up massive budget deficits has failed to stimulate recovery. The effect on interest rates has caused consternation in Europe and Japan, as well as in the USA. And

the USA's imperialist rivals are edging it out of export markets.

Militarism and a menacing anti-Soviet stance are Washington's chief reactions to all this. The US has to flex muscle to force its allies, who are in reality its competitors, into line. Political pressure over the Siberian gas pipeline is designed to intimidate European capitalists and revitalise the flagging western alliance.

US rearmament has nothing to do with what has become known as 'the Soviet threat'. As Robert McNamara argued recently, the USSR is militarily in a weaker position than it was 15 years ago, when he was Secretary of Defence. McNamara added: 'We overstate the Soviets' force and we understate ours, and we therefore greatly overstate the imbalance. This is not something that is new; it has been going on for years' (*The Guardian*, 9 August 1982). America is jacking up arms expenditure to compensate for economic decline. Introducing an element of force into the market — *militarising* market relations — shows its allies that it means business. Below, we examine the direction US arms spending is heading in and go on to look at the situation of a country that has experienced the effects of that spending all too directly these last two years: the situation of El Salvador.



The war drive is on

Since his election Reagan has pursued a major programme of modernising America's military machine. Defence spending is set to rise \$158.6 billion in 1981 to \$237 billion in 1984. Tentative estimates suggest that it will reach \$350 billion in 1986. Why the phenomenal increases? Has Reagan gone mad? Kevin Green investigates.

ACCORDING TO his liberal and reformist opponents, Reagan's main aim is to establish a new level of nuclear terror. But in fact most of the increases in his defence budget this year have gone towards a crash programme of improving the war-readiness of America's *conventional* forces — towards replenishing stocks of munitions and spare parts and, above all, towards catching up on a big backlog of maintenance and repair work on US planes, tanks and ships.

The Pentagon's plans

Reagan's stress on upgrading the USA's conventional weapons capability is only consistent with Carter's approach. Carter's key arms spending innovations looked like this:

Nuclear	
Submarine-launched inter-continental Trident missiles	\$2.4 billion
MX missile development	\$0.7 billion
New generation of air-launched cruise missiles	\$0.7 billion
TOTAL	\$3.8 billion
Conventional	
175 F-16 fighters	\$1.7 billion
60 F-15 fighters	\$1.0 billion
144 Fairchild A-10 reconnaissance planes	\$0.9 billion
AWACS advance warning radar system	\$0.7 billion
B-52 bomber modernisation	\$0.5 billion
TOTAL	\$4.8 billion

Imperialism

Continued from page 13

However, whereas Carter needed only to prepare for the possibility of having to make conventionally-armed interventions abroad, the USA's position in the world has weakened so dramatically of late that Reagan has had to organise a whole new conventional armed forces network: one which, as the *International Herald Tribune* put it, 'can go anywhere in a hurry, not on American terms, but in any circumstances' (3 February 1982). That isn't easy. The USA's current complement of 350 transport planes and 200 transport ships couldn't even move half the tonnage that would be needed to sort out a serious spot of bother in the Persian Gulf. And, earlier this year, the Operation Brightstar exercises confirmed that taking one airborne division, one infantry division and a squadron of B-52 bombers from North Carolina and North Dakota to the Middle East, getting all three into a state of battle-readiness and putting them in position would take a full two weeks.

In fact, ferrying US-based forces around the world is not a viable option. So more troops and planes must be kept at sea — or on naval bases close to potentially troublesome areas. This is why the US Navy plans to have six battle groups (a battle group has at least the firepower of the task force Britain sent to the Malvinas) afloat in the next five years. Two will go in each of the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans; they will help Reagan reach his target of a 600-ship navy by 1987.

The swift deployment of troops is one problem facing the Pentagon. The other new programmes commissioned or speeded up by Reagan are designed to fill the other gaps: they include the XM-1 tank, which is faster and more manoeuvrable than anything the USA has at present; the Advanced Attack helicopter; a new infantry fighting vehicle; and the Patriot ground-to-air missile defence system.

As we have seen, most of the new money for US defence is going on conventional weapons. But when we come to the USA's overall defence budget, we find that spending on the strategic nuclear weapons that Reagan's critics always focus on is completely dwarfed by that on conventional forces. The \$15 billion now allocated for strategic weapons amount to only eight per cent of the \$200 billion the USA will be spending on defence as a whole this year (US Treasury, *The budget for fiscal year 1982*). Moreover, between 1980 and 1982 strategic weapons spending will increase by 35 per cent — quite a bit less than the increase for general purpose forces (41 per cent) and way behind the rise for air and sea-lift forces (66 per cent).

Kissinger is dead

After Vietnam, the USA narrowed its foreign policy goals somewhat; but it has still not abandoned its global pretensions. In the 'sixties, Henry Kissinger suggested the 'limited disengagement' of American forces overseas as the proper way forward. But this presupposed the existence of reliable and stable governments which could do America's dirty work for it. Unfortunately for Washington, such governments were difficult to find. In South East Asia, for example, US troops had to remain stationed in Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand.

Today, even the limited degree of 'disengagement' achieved after Vietnam is not on. Once again the USA must be prepared to 'go anywhere'. A combination of factors — the most important of which are inter-imperialist rivalries and the threat posed by national liberation movements — requires an activist foreign policy response from Washington.

The sheer size of the US military machine is impressive. US defence spend-

ing exceeds the Gross National Product of every nation in the world except the top 12 industrial producers. But America's military strength was even greater in the late 'forties and early 'fifties than today; and its shrinking weight in the world economy over the same period has been even more striking. This is what rearmament is all about — retrieving lost military prowess and holding on to the USA's crumbling interests abroad.

Current literature on the arms race misses entirely the real dynamics at work. The favourite fetish is nuclear arms. True, doomsday rhetoric about neutron bombs makes good reading. But the main objective of the Pentagon is not unleashing nuclear war but creating an effective conventional force that can destroy all local opponents of American imperialism and at the same time keep its European rivals on the defensive.

One long red scare

Since the Second World War every US intervention abroad — whether it has taken the form of political manipulation or military invasion — has been directed against radical, usually nationalist forces out to undermine the influence of imperialism. Moscow never posed much danger to US interests in the Lebanon, Iran or Guatemala, or indeed any of the other countries that experienced US interference in the 'forties and 'fifties.

On a number of occasions the Soviet Union has provided material and military assistance to national liberation movements and to Third World governments. But generally it has only done this long after local battles with the USA have begun. Cuba is the best example of this trend. Here Castro's guerrillas had to endure the wrath of Washington for years before Moscow decided to lend them a hand.

Even the Cuban missile crisis, which is always held up as evidence of Soviet ambitions, proves just how limited those ambitions are. As McNamara noted in his recent interview with *The Guardian*, the Soviet build-up of missiles in Cuba was a defensive response to an unprecedented expansion of US nuclear arms:

'The advantage in the US inventory was so great vis-a-vis the Soviets that the Air Force was saying that they felt we had a first-strike capability... If the Air Force thought that, imagine what the Soviets thought. And assuming they thought that, how would you expect them to react?'

It is true that the USA cannot ignore Moscow. The Soviet Union is a 'threat' to America insofar as the evolution of its foreign policy is difficult to predict. Moreover, the Soviet Union is always ready to take advantage of the local difficulties in which the USA often finds itself. But the White House's emphasis on Soviet aggression has little to do with these two considerations. *The function of anti-Soviet hysteria is to justify the commitment of national resources to military spending in line with America's role as world arbiter of capitalist relations.*

This remains true today. Despite widespread publicity, the real US commitment of resources in El Salvador is small — and, even among the American public, very unpopular. But the bogey of communism in Central America has been successfully used by Reagan to push ahead with a massive increase in general arms spending. Likewise, the Pentagon has argued for enormous outlays on the Rapid Deployment Force and on a better air and sealift capability almost entirely in terms of Soviet designs on Iran and the Gulf.

In reality the USA is more worried about Japanese cars and West German trucks than Soviet subversion or Soviet annexation. The concerns of US imperialism remain quite conventional.

El Salvador and the USA



SHULTZ'S NIGHTMARE

Nowhere has the increasing impotence of US imperialism been more starkly revealed than in El Salvador. Throughout the 1980 US Presidential election campaign, Reagan headlined the country as a test case for his new brand of consistent and forceful foreign policy. When freshly-appointed Secretary of State Alexander Haig held his first press conference, he made it clear that the 'line would be drawn' in El Salvador. But today, 18 months later, Haig's replacement George Shultz has yet to draw that line.

IN OCTOBER 1979 the USA went along with the overthrow of El Salvador's Romero regime and the installation of a new, more 'moderate' junta. A more equitable distribution of land was at the top of its list of priorities. As Roy Prosterman, a former agrarian counter-insurgency expert in Vietnam, put it:

'If the reforms are carried out successfully here, the armed movement of the left will be effectively eliminated by the end of 1980'. The land reform was to be introduced in three phases; but so far only Phase 1, which was supposed to mean the expropriation of the big farms, has been implemented. Phase 2, the

expropriation of medium-sized estates, and Phase 3 — 'land to the tiller' — have been postponed indefinitely.

In practice, Phase 1 has meant that a mere five per cent of the best agricultural land has been taken from the rich — and even it has been handed over to government-picked peasant cooperatives. The whole operation has been used to justify greater army saturation of El Salvador's countryside. As a result, large sections of the radical peasantry have been wiped out.

Why, however, has the USA stopped there? Why not push on to Phase 2 and mix egalitarian rhetoric with ruthless repression as before? The explanation is not simply to be found in the anti-reform campaigns run by El Salvador's coffee-owning oligarchy. It lies also in the collapse of El Salvador's economy and the weakness of America's.

No room for reform

The imports of foreign technology and construction of assembly plants that marked the El Salvador of the 'sixties did little to change its traditional economic structure. Even in the mid 'seventies coffee and cotton still accounted for most export earnings. Since then falling world commodity prices and the exigencies of war have led to complete stagnation. Foreign investment has dried up, large parts of the oligarchy have left the country and taken their capital with them, and much of basic infrastructure has been destroyed. Today El Salvador just doesn't have the cash to engage in any further land reform.

On the other hand the USA is unable to step in to the extent it might like. The fate of Reagan's main initiative in economic diplomacy this year, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, confirms this. When first leaked, the Initiative, a trade and aid package, was reputed to have involved \$780m; when formally announced, in February, it was down to \$350m; and now even this relatively small sum, half of which was destined for El Salvador, has got stuck on Capitol Hill. Many senators are just not persuaded that the benefits are worth the costs. In fact, some feel desperate enough to have demanded that the Initiative be made conditional on the introduction of import controls on Central American leather goods ('Mauled by Congress', *The Times*, 5 August).

All in all, the USA is in no condition to press ahead with economic reforms in El Salvador. It cannot buy off the revolution the way Roy Prosterman envisaged. Nor, too, can it circumvent it by the ballot box.

No place for progress

The USA specifically designed this year's March elections to encourage 'political progress' in El Salvador — in other words, to strengthen the middle ground there at the expense of both left and right. The plan was simple: with the left excluded from the electoral rolls, 'moderate' Christian Democrat Napoleon Duarte would sweep the boards against the hard line right. Thus, a political mandate would be secured for dealing with the guerrillas and at the same time some of their popular support would shift to the centre.

But the polarisation of El Salvadorean society had already gone too far for any of this. The far right romped home at the polls and America, having engineered them in the first place, had no option but to accept the result. The USA was back where it started. True, it installed moderate rightist Alvar Magaña as titular president, but in practice Major Robert 'Blowtorch' D'Aubuisson's Arena Party was the government.

Even at the military level the prospects aren't good for US imperialism. If the

current daily body counts keep up, El Salvador will once again see more than 35 000 people die in the space of the next three years. Yet though the left takes most of the casualties, the government forces have been unable to make any real headway in crushing it. In fact the FMLN has scored some important military successes. During the elections it attacked official buildings in the capital, San Salvador, with impunity; and, in more recent fighting, it shot down a helicopter with two high ranking military commanders on board. Today, El Salvador's guerrillas control about a third of the country. When the government sends its troops into one region, they simply intensify attacks on economic and military targets elsewhere.

US military backing has done no more than stop the government's troops suffering even greater setbacks. Fifty US military advisers, more than \$80m of military aid this year, US specialist training of the 3500-strong Atlacatl and Ramon Bellosa brigades, the provision of modern planes and helicopters — all these have been tried and found wanting. Yet other solutions have vanished. US plans for the creation of a Pan American force, drawing largely on Argentinian troops, to intervene on its behalf, have been set back for a period, if not irrevocably, by its support for Britain in the Malvinas war.

Not only has the US been unable to contain the struggle in El Salvador: conflict is spreading throughout Central America. Since the March coup which brought born-again Christian Efraín Ríos Montt to power, fighting between guerrillas and right-wing government forces in Guatemala has escalated. A state of emergency was announced in July. Even Honduras, run for many decades as a virtual fiefdom of America's United Fruit Company, is shifting still further rightwards; and Costa Rica's unique tradition of parliamentary democracy looks likely to come to an end sooner rather than later. But if Central America is really getting out of control for the USA, today, why did Reagan make such a fuss about drawing the line two years ago, when things were much quieter there? That's a question worth asking.

Backyard blues

At the time of Reagan's election, *The Washington Post* observed: 'The six countries occupying the Central American isthmus are mostly tiny and of little inherent economic or strategic importance' (4 January 1981). It was right: US investment in these countries, for example, is little more than \$1bn. It is thus apparent that Reagan made El Salvador a foreign policy priority not because of its inherent importance for US imperialism (it has none), but because it could help America show itself as being intent on retaining its position as the world's number one power. If the USA could not be seen to be restoring control and exercising its power so close to home, who — imperialist rival or backward capitalist country — would take seriously its claim to be undisputed world leader in any other region? The way would be open for America's European rivals to extend their geo-political influence to the detriment of the USA, or for Third World states to break away from Washington's clutches. The International Institute for Strategic Studies saw the implications of the 1979 Nicaraguan Revolution in similar terms: it had, it said, occurred in the USA's 'own backyard, where her influence was presumed to be strong, even if it was not exercised with the same directness as in the past. That, more than any crucial interests, seemed to give Nicaragua strategic significance for the United States' (IISS, 1979).

The problem for America is that its

strategy has backfired on it. Far from proving the continuing power and importance of American capital, El Salvador has highlighted its decrepitude. For instance: only Britain was prepared to back the March elections. Other imperialist powers condemned them as a farce, and have moved on to curry more favour with the opposition forces in Central America in the hopes of expanding their influence in the region.

The hemispheric connection

The USA's growing nightmare is that El Salvador has given encouragement to anti-American aspirations everywhere south of Texas. The equanimity with which Argentina invaded the Malvinas, recognising the dilemma this would present for the White House, is only the most striking instance of the growing contempt for Washington. Yet Mexico, Panama and Latin America proper are sites of US economic interests much more sizable than those in the countries nearest to El Salvador.

Mexico is the USA's third biggest overseas market: the source of five per cent of America's oil needs already, it has the potential to supply a great deal more in the future (Mexico is now the world's fourth largest oil producer). Yet Mexico is the world's most debt-ridden economy, and any political instability there could spread across the US border on account of the millions of Mexican migrants inside America.

The collapse of the Mexican economy represents a major blow to American strategy in the region. According to US calculations Mexico was meant to be a force for stability in Central and Latin America. Mexico was supposed to provide the ideological alternative to Cuba, Nicaragua and the guerrilla movements in Central America. Now Mexico itself is in trouble. Far from isolating the 'threat of communism', Washington must look again for a new client state.

From Mexico, through to Panama — where tens of thousands marched recently through Panama City against inflation, unemployment and government corruption — down to Argentina, discontent is rising. And the USA is getting worried. In Latin America border disputes, guerrilla movements and trade union action are all proliferating. Here vast US interests are at stake: \$30bn of investments (80 per cent of US private investment in the backward capitalist world) and markets which account for one-sixth of US exports. Losing even a fraction of these would be a massive defeat for the American bourgeoisie.

How to stay alive

US imperialism's options are now severely limited, and US policy-makers know it. As Haig said of El Salvador last year: 'The situation has become essentially stalemated, (but) stalemate could ultimately be fatal' (*Newsweek*, 9 November 1981). The situation that faces his successor George Shultz can be summed up as the same, but worse. The days of cosmetic economic reforms and political consensus are numbered. The fundamental problem for US imperialism rests not in having the 'wrong people in charge', not in lacking 'imaginative proposals', but in its economic decline. A dying beast is characterised by being both erratic and vicious. American foreign policy in El Salvador and elsewhere bears the same hallmarks.

Opinion is divided over what to do. The fall of Haig marks a defeat, for the present, for those in the US Administration who favoured a direct invasion of Central America by US marines as happened in Guatemala in 1954 and Santo Domingo in 1965. Many Congressional leaders favour giving reform another chance and are threatening to cut US military aid unless this happens. Today, however, the dominant view in the Administration and the one likely to be pursued over the next period is that held by the Pentagon. It feels, first, that there should be no direct US invasion in Central America, if only because this would be likely to generate greater hostility internationally to the deployment of US troops in other crisis regions where vital US interests are at stake — most importantly, the Middle East; and second, that what is necessary is to maintain the appearance of seeking reforms as long as possible to contain the popularity of the opposition forces.

Under US pressure, President Magaña has just signed a seven-point plan calling for 'democratic reform, respect for human rights, economic measures and peace' with Arena, Duarte's Christian Democrats and the right-wing National Conciliation Party (*The Times*, 5 August 1982). Alongside this will go continuing US military aid and the encouragement of other regional governments, such as the Honduran, to take a more direct role in fighting any opposition movements in their own or neighbouring countries. But time is running out for the USA — and for the peoples of Central America. British workers must give solidarity to the El Salvadorean masses now. In twelve months time it may be too late.

Phil Murphy

MALVINAS are ARGENTINA'S



'After Galtieri, Buckton' was the Tories' cry as the summer began, 'now we've dealt with the Argies, let's settle scores with the railway workers, the health workers and any other workers who refuse to give in to the government'. The Falklands factor has already proven a powerful force in British politics.

The *Malvinas are Argentina's* pamphlet shows how the acquiescence of the labour movement from right to left in Britain's war in the South Atlantic has given the ruling class a powerful weapon to use against workers. Published at the height of the war, it remains vital reading for anti-imperialists and anybody who wants to fight the Falklands factor in their workplace.

Send 50p to cover packaging and postage to Junius Publications, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX.

INDUSTRIAL NOTES

Squabbling barons

For some time many of the big battalions on the General Council, like the transport workers and miners, have resisted changes to the methods of electing the General Council. Then, last year, the POEU threw a big spanner into the works. It got a motion passed, with a narrow majority, which required the TUC to accept certain principles as the basis for changing the composition of the General Council.

So, for the last year the unions have squabbled over various formulas designed to adhere to the 1981 motion. TUC affiliation is organised along broad sector or industrial groupings. The basis for the sectors was drawn up in the early 'twenties and has since proven resistant to change. In the post-war period, as the composition of the working class has changed and union membership and affiliations to the TUC have grown, so the basis of election to the General Council has become anachronistic.

The current debate about change is merely the union bureaucracy's response to the changing occupational structures of the working class. The changes in occupations are a consequence of the major decline in the manual workforce and the rapid growth in the numbers of white collar workers.

General Council membership, however, continues to reflect the ascendancy of the manual trades. Relatively small unions like the Boilermakers, Sheetmetal Workers, Tailor and Garment Workers all have seats whilst other larger unions are excluded or do not have seats in proportion to their membership. Many of the small unions have retained their positions through the patronage of the largest union, the TGWU. At present union bureaucrats are squabbling over the practicability of the principles laid down by the POEU at the 1981 congress. The main objective of the change suggested by the post office engineers is that unions with over 100 000 members should automatically secure a place on the General Council.

The arguments between the various union executives are not based on any substantial political differences. The fact that the EETPU,

APEX and POEU are on one side and the miners and transport workers are on the other — the former supporting change, the latter desperate to delay it — is politically insignificant for the unions' rank and file. One leadership is proving no more combative in defending jobs and conditions than the other. That the union leaders are locked into a major dispute over institutional change is simply indicative of the political crisis they all face. Their lack of any independence from the machinery of the state and their inability to tackle the economic crisis politically forces them into reactive organisational changes designed to protect their material and financial base rather than prosecute the class struggle.

Illustrative of this reactive approach to organisational change is the current spate of union mergers or amalgamations. The EETPU is busily building up its white collar section, the transport workers are pulling unions like the agricultural workers and textile workers into the empire and the print unions SOGAT and NATSOPA have recently merged, becoming SOGAT '82. In August the executives of the Boilermakers' Union and the General and Municipal Workers Union agreed to amalgamate. These mergers are simply based upon financial survival; they have little to do with improving combativity in the face of massive state attacks. The proof of this is shown by the other method of gaining members: 'poaching'. The health service dispute has seen COHSE and NUPE making militant postures in their efforts to win membership from each other and from the RCN. In the wake of privatisation unions are stepping in to pick up the remains of the workforce who get jobs with the contract firms like Grand Metropolitan and Pritchards.

Beneath the surface of the debate on the reorganisation of the General Council lies the dark side of trade unionism — organisational disputes initiated by self preservation rather than class action. The squabbles between the leadership of NUPE and COHSE during the NHS dispute shows the divisive influence of the union bureaucracy.

Brotherhood begins at home

The preliminary agenda of this year's TUC conference shows that there will be hardly any debate on racism and Ireland. Our readers will be glad to know that the TUC has not failed in its international duties. Conference delegates will be free to make resounding speeches around a number of motions on Turkey, Iraq, Iran and El Salvador.

NHS dispute - what a way to run a strike!

When the health union leaders threatened to step up action in August many workers believed that the crunch had come. But for the union bosses 'stepping up action' simply meant a more intense level of bureaucratic activity. Health union leaders met with their colleagues from other unions and asked for support. By support they meant signatures and not the mobilisation of workers. When the print workers threatened to strike in support of NHS employees the health union leaders panicked. Albert Spanswick, head of COHSE, demanded that the strike be called off lest it should offend public opinion. A worker at St Thomas's Hospital, South London sent us an account of a day on the picket line during the August five-day stoppage.

It's 10.30am and there are only ten of us on the picket line. Not much hostility except from the medical students, who taunt the black workers with racist abuse. Those on the line are from

the Central Sterilising Supply Department. The storemen have also been out but it was decided that they should go back so that everyone could back the CSSD workers by paying a weekly levy. The dispute is conducted by a Monitoring Committee which consists of all the shop stewards and the NUPE and COHSE full-timers.

The pickets are angry. Management had used its meeting with the Monitoring Committee to sneak in four vans loaded with supplies. Storemen who had refused to unload the vans were threatened with the sack. Police were called in, this time to prevent stewards from collecting the levy from workers in the pay queue. Everyone is determined to stop everything from coming in. An oil-tanker is turned away and soon after a lorry loaded with linen. A steward approaches us: 'The Monitoring Committee has decided to allow all essential supplies in'. The pickets explode — everyone understands the implications of this decision. After a

screaming row the steward leaves the picket — never to return.

Minutes later a group of shop stewards and full timers appear to enforce the latest ruling. Bob Hill, NUPE area officer, lays down the line — 'we must keep our side of the bargain for we are responsible trade unionists'. Two women yell: 'If we allow everything in we might as well pack it in'. Hill threatens to withdraw next week's levy payment. He is backed up by Jim Gaughan, the TGWU convenor and prominent Militant supporter. All of a sudden, the oil-tanker is back. We link arms across the road while the stewards demand we let it in. Bob Hill and Jim Gaughan are desperately urging the driver to edge forward. The driver declines the offer and turns around.

Later in the afternoon, after bullying the new shift on the picket line, a number of vans are allowed in. One supporter of the next step who turns away a Coffeemate lorry is jumped on by an official. After slow and patient

work the union bureaucrats are beginning to scent victory. Many workers are becoming demoralised and many pickets are talking about packing the whole thing in.

A week later the St Thomas's strike collapsed and the 25 CSSD workers returned to work. At the very moment when the workers' action had brought one of London's most prestigious hospitals to the verge of a complete standstill (with 500 unoccupied beds), union officials negotiated a sell-out and forced the workers to accept it. Management put the squeeze on the bureaucrats who dutifully communicated threats of dismissal to the workers and assured them that the union could not support them in continuing action. As the NHS dispute drags on, more aggressive management tactics — victimisations, threats of dismissal — and more servile manoeuvres by union officials, are combining around the country to strangle the longest running and most militant dispute the NHS has ever seen.



Neddy and the carthorse

The Trades Union Congress at Brighton this year takes place in the wake of failed campaigns and the sell-out of the train drivers' union ASLEF. It's been a dreadful year for the union bureaucracy. Membership continues to fall, most unions are in deep financial troubles and there is no end to the recession in sight.

The leaders of our unions regard the TUC as a 'national institution' which attempts to influence state policy on a very wide range of matters. Unfortunately, for men like Murray, Basnett and Jenkins, during the last year, like the two before, the Government has simply refused to listen. The union bureaucrats are, therefore, faced with big problems. Their leadership rests upon close links with the machinery of the state. Union organisation is geared toward state institutions. At the top there is the National Economic Development Council (NEDC), consisting of CBI, TUC and Government. At the industry level the same tripartite formula applies to the Sector Working Parties. TUC representatives form a third of the bureaucrats of the Manpower Services Commission and ACAS. Even at local levels union bureaucrats sit on scores of Industrial Tribunals and local MSC committees. The union representatives are drawn from full-time officials, trades councils and other union bodies. Union organisation is linked to the state apparatus at every single level.

When it's quite apparent that the union bureaucracy can achieve nothing for its members from its special relationship to the state, activists begin to ask questions. The role of the union bureaucracy is thrown into doubt. This is reflected in some of the motions to this

year's conference

Some unions are calling for the TUC's withdrawal from the NEDC. The Fire Brigades Union and SOGAT '82 argue that 'in view of the Government's hostility to the unions', it is inappropriate to remain on the NEDC. The Communist Party-led engineering staffs union TASS takes the argument a bit further: 'It is inappropriate for the movement to be involved in NEDC with a government that rejects economic planning' (*Morning Star*, 2 August 1982). The motions focus on the hostile nature of the Tory administration. But no one has begun to question the union bureaucracy's integration into the state. The motions merely offer a pragmatic response to the fact that Thatcher has no time to consult union leaders.

The motions simply address themselves to the TUC's position on NEDC. But as many union activists know, involvement in NEDC is just the tip of the iceberg. The unions are thoroughly integrated into the machinery of the state from top to bottom. Any steps to reclaim the unions as organisations that defend working class interests must go well beyond the withdrawal from NEDC. The TUC must be forced to withdraw trade unionists from all the state-run bodies which at present preside over the most vicious attacks on the working class in the post-war period. To achieve this requires the unions to acknowledge that the real enemy isn't simply an unyielding Tory Government but the capitalist state itself. Such a fundamental shift toward trade union independence provides the only realistic basis for defending the interests of the working class.

A feminist incomes policy? Castle's contract



Michael Foot and Barbara Castle celebrate the implementation of the Equal Pay Act

IN JANUARY 1974 Barbara Castle was pre-occupied with the electoral prospects of the Labour Party in the coming General Election. Writing in her diary, she noted:

'I believe the vote in this country is polarising, not so much on class lines as on sex lines. The pursuit of money increases is a masculine syndrome; the fight for the social wage is a feminine need...so our propaganda should concentrate less on wage demands and more on increasing the social wage.' (Cited in *Over 21*, April 1981)

When that was written, Britain was in the grip of the miners' strike, the most militant and determined strike of the post-war period. One month later, in February 1974, the miners brought down the Heath Government. The stage was set for a return of a Labour government committed to an alternative strategy to resolve Britain's crisis. This strategy had as its centrepiece a Social Contract between the Labour Government and the TUC.

Campbell's contract

In May 1981 Beatrix Campbell, feminist journalist and leading member of the CPGB, was grappling with the problem of how feminists could help the Labour Party win the next election. In the radical London magazine *Time Out* she wrote:

'Over the next couple of years the Labour movement, the women's liberation movement...and the trade unions have a unique chance to compose a new, feminist social contract. Not between labour and capital like the last one, but between men and women. And one which for the first time, would not be at women's expense.' (8 May 1981)

The TUC is at present trying to formulate a new Social Contract with the Labour Party. Both sides recognise that controlling wage increases as the Tories have done, is an essential component of any anti-crisis strategy. But the labour movement leaders also know that the Labour Party will only be invited to govern if the class struggle seems to be a bit too explosive for the Tories to handle. So they have to work out how, in those conditions, militants could be encouraged to swallow another round of wage restraint. This is where people like Campbell come in. By suggesting that an incomes policy can be progressive and in the interest of women, they ensure that future wage cuts are endowed with legitimacy.

Since 1980, Campbell and her fellow reformist feminist Anna Coote from the *New Statesman* have been arguing the case for a feminist incomes policy. It must be rejected on two counts. Firstly, because it takes as its starting point the belief that the economy can be planned under capitalism in the interests of women, and that incomes policies can improve the situation of women. And secondly, because a feminist strategy of trying to defend women at men's expense is divisive and therefore ineffective.

The 1974 Social Contract offered a new strategy of cooperation between the unions and the state as an alternative to the Tories' course of confrontation. But the goal was the same: solving Britain's economic difficulties through a reduction

in working class living standards. The Labour Party won agreement for its measures in conditions where the 'pursuit of money increases' through industrial militancy had proved inadequate. Rampant inflation of around 27 per cent eroded each increase won through strike action, rendering this strategy less and less convincing to the mass of the working class. Many trade unionists accepted the view that wage rises were to blame, and the solution required wage restraint. However, if the Labour government, elected on a wave of radical opposition to Tory assaults on the labour movement, was to carry through this measure, it would have to offer the working class something in return.

The Social Contract allowed it to do this. The union leaders were satisfied with their new role as confidant-cum-adviser to the government, back in the fold, collaborating and discussing the best way forward for them both. But the working class needed something more tangible. The Labour Party offered social justice, an increase in the 'social wage' and a 'redistribution of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families'. These vague promises were the pay-off required if Labour was to sell its attack on wage levels to a militant movement. The Labour Party emphasised the beneficial effect the Social Contract would have on the low-paid workers who didn't have the industrial muscle to keep up with inflation. They would benefit from flat-rate increases. Workers on state benefits, and housewives too, would also gain, because they had to face price rises with a declining income. Wilson, Callaghan and Foot made full use of Castle's insight in their campaign to stress that the poor, the old, housewives and the low-paid were being crippled by the 'selfish' demands of the strong militant unions. The Labour government cynically played on workers' 'charity begins at home' sentiments. It addressed the worker as part of a family, as a consumer rather than a producer, and made what it could of the resentment which existed towards the militant men, to conclude that (female) low-paid workers and (female) consumers of commodities and social services would gain if (male) trade unionists were prepared to tighten their belts.

In practice, women workers gained nothing from the Social Contract. The problem of low pay was simply generalised so that everyone was low paid. The expansion of social services, improvement in benefits and pensions never happened.

A nasty experience

Campbell begins with a few kind words about the last Social Contract. She

claims that in its early stages it allowed a redistribution of incomes within the working class. She argues that, in accepting a flat-rate increase, which meant real wage cuts for the higher paid workers, women workers benefited at the expense of men. In the 'seventies, Campbell claims, the TUC 'tried...to give priority to low pay' (*New Socialist*, July/August 1982) and a dangerous liaison was created between the low-paid and the TUC (*Time Out*, 8 May 1981). In fact the boot was on the other foot. No redistribution occurred. A flat-rate increase made a greater difference to someone on £30 a week than to a worker on £60 a week, but it did not match the rate of inflation for either. Furthermore, the worker on £60 suffered a significant cut in real wages. It is equally inaccurate to assume that the TUC had a special interest in helping the low-paid. All that happened was that every time the TUC was about to make public one of its shabby deals, it wheeled out Jack Jones to ramble about the plight of old age pensioners and the low-paid.

In any case, low pay has nothing to do with the level of wages received by the better-off section of the working class. If anything, wage increases, for say the miners, tend to raise the wages of the lower paid. As one health worker on £46.44 a week remarked, 'If there were more men in the health service we might get a bit more' (*The Guardian*, 20 July 1982). In other words, our goal must be to raise women's wages to the level of men's. Any strategy which asks men to postpone wage rises till women can catch up is a recipe for £46.44 all round.

The sex struggle

The Social Contract did not redistribute wealth towards women because this is impossible within capitalism. Women are a politically oppressed section of the working class. They cannot participate in social production to the same extent as men because they do the bulk of society's unpaid dirty work — housework. This includes rearing children and it prevents most women from working for as long as men (women's working lives span about 35 years, men's about 50). It also prevents them from doing full-time work or overtime consistently. As a result the sale of their labour power is restricted and therefore has less value. It is sold more sporadically and more cheaply than male labour. No incomes policy can change this. But even if the Social Contract had redistributed income within the working class this would be no recommendation.

The idea that there is only a limited pool of money to go around in wages is a

prejudice that has held back the class struggle for decades. It has encouraged trade unionists to seek settlements at the expense of other groups of workers. Recently pleas for special consideration for 'special cases' have undermined prospects for united action. Campbell follows in the same vein, except that for her it is women who are a special case and should get more at the expense of men.

Coote and Campbell assume that 'there is a conflict of interests between women and men in the trade union movement' (*Sweet freedom*, 1982). Men have been a special case for too long, now women must be given preferential treatment. The advance of working class women will have to be at the expense of working class men. In Campbell's words, 'Tarzan, your time is up' (*The Guardian*, 9 August 1982). Coote also insists on 'redistributing labour and wealth within the family' (*New Socialist*, November/December 1981). This follows on from the incomes policy idea. It proposes that men should do more housework and suggests that their wages should be taxed more to supply the revenue for bigger family allowances. If women want more wages they have to wrest them from male trade unionists. If they want less domestic work let the husband do it. If you need more family allowances get the state to hand some of his wages to you! The point is that we want and need all of these things, but why should the working class always be the class that pays?

The bosses and their state must be forced to foot the bill, by the united action of workers. If we make them pay us more in wages and benefits and make them take on the burden of some of our domestic tasks by providing free nursery care all hours of the day and night, then we can begin to taste a sweeter freedom. Sharing our oppression is little better than suffering it alone.

In fact, the apparent conflict of interests between male and female workers arises from the fundamental contradiction between labour and capital. The oppression of women is essential for the reproduction of capitalist relations. Capital gets the daily grind of housework done free of charge. It gets labour power of the right quality in the right place at the right time for the cheapest possible price. And it gets a divided working class. Together these benefits constitute the necessary premise of capitalist production. Working class men who accept this state of affairs help perpetuate the oppression of women. But do they really benefit from all this? Not really, because their slight material privileges relative to women are, far outweighed by the disastrous consequences of chauvinist prejudice. Men's failure to fight for women's rights harms male workers in that it keeps them divided and ideologically in tow.

Campbell elaborates on the war between the sexes in other ways. She claims that men always want more money, women are interested in getting more time; whereas men want to wrest ownership of the factories from the bosses, women are keen on organising the production process. These homilies have

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simply been invented. It is true that women cannot do overtime to the same extent as men because they are too tied up in childcare. But why are there no facilities? It is not, as feminists argue, that men think childcare is unimportant. The low priority accorded this struggle by the labour movement is a result of the greater sympathy the trade union leaders have for the profitability of capitalist industry than for the problems facing working class women. The TUC, which has been betraying women's interests since its formation in 1869, escapes criticism in Campbell's tirades. Yet it is the privileged, corrupt labour bureaucracy which has sought to encourage divisions in the workforce. For example, in many workplaces during the 'seventies, the local full-time officials told the men that equal pay for women would be introduced at their expense. In the Leeds clothing strike in 1970, the unions negotiated unequal pay rises and were resisted by thousands of women and men workers.

The experience of Women for Communism in industrial disputes contradicts Campbell's resignation to the divisions that haunt the labour movement. As the current NHS dispute shows, men are often ready to support their sisters' fight for higher wages and better conditions. However, often this support is derailed by the bureaucracy, with reactionary garbage about pin-money. Most men, even those who suffer from chauvinist prejudices, see women workers as allies and support their demands. Many support equal pay as one way to improve their wages, while also arguing for differentials to improve their own. Many men are confused and backward but at the end of the day they are the husbands, sons or brothers of working women and spontaneously support them. Women generally feel the same about their male colleagues. Both sexes see that they have more in common with each other than with either the bureaucracy or with people of the same sex from other classes.

No more Social Contracts!

Though nominally from opposite sides of the right/left divide within the reformist camp, Castle and Campbell have much in common. Both of them have given a feminist gloss to the changing needs of the Labour Party. Neither of them has anything to offer working class women. In 1974, Castle provided the insight which helped the right-wing bureaucracy to gain acceptance of a Social Contract amongst working class women. The reality of the Social Contract, and the crisis of reformism which has since developed, has left the Labour Party devoid of any credibility in that quarter. Now Campbell has arrived with warmed-up leftovers of Castle's ideas, smothered with a pungent radical-feminist sauce to try and cover the lingering bad taste of the 1974-79 Labour Government. Her brief is clear: to put together a coherent left alternative for attracting the petit-bourgeois strata of women's and community groups to which the Labour Party left is looking to revitalise the party. Precisely today, when working class women most need a concerted labour movement fightback to achieve equal pay and to defend a women's right to work, Campbell has decided that the time has come for wage restraint. The suggestion is ludicrous; but contained within it are the seeds of another four or five years of working class sacrifice in the interests of capital. It is the responsibility of class conscious workers to ensure that those seeds are crushed under foot, and that Beatrix Campbell never becomes notorious enough to have her diaries serialised in *Over 21*.

Kate Marshall

Lessons of the Rulecan dispute

AFTER FIVE months on the picket line fighting for trade union rights, the 60 women from the Rulecan clothing factory in Runcorn have been defeated. Rulecan boss Raymond Rattle closed the factory in July. Even the scab workers who crossed the picket line have lost their jobs. *the next step* has covered the dispute since it began early this year, mobilising support for Women for Communism's campaign in aid of the Rulecan strikers. Here we publish an interview Sandra O'Connor, one of the leading National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers stewards at Rulecan, gave to Carol Taggart of Women for Communism about this dispute.

'Tom Evans, one of the NUTGW Divisional Officers, had an appointment with Mr Neild (the company liquidator) and was very disturbed and dismayed at the thought of Mr Rattle breaking the agreement he made with us to open another factory. He said he was obviously not sincere! But the union officials are still claiming this as a victory. Well, it's a very hollow victory — there are no jobs. I feel that if we'd done something different from what we did — with hindsight — I think we could have brought it to a successful conclusion.'

Sympathy and insults

'On the Thursday the week after the factory closed we had a visit from Henry Suss and Graham Wells (the new member of the NUTGW executive) and we also had a visit from the Deputy General Secretary — the first time they had shown their faces — as well as Tom Evans. They gave magnificent speeches — thanks for your support, and it's a great shame that we haven't won this fight, but you can claim a victory of sorts.'

'I criticised the DGS for (a) calling off the blacking when we were in a good position and (b) for not levying the membership or even sending out letters to the union branches to let people know and for not letting other unions know. She said that "we were very disappointed in you too because you didn't maintain a 24-hour picket and because you couldn't keep us in touch with the style numbers" (numbers classifying Rulecan's products which were needed for blacking purposes). But the change-

overs were so quick this was virtually impossible. Anyway, they called off official backing for the pickets once the factory was closed despite all the machinery still being in there. We were very, very annoyed. We came out in support of the union in the first place and they've let us down more than anybody.'

Union inactivity

'Earlier on in the dispute, we were never made aware of the blacking being done by the USDAW unions at the mail order factories. We had very little word from the union leaders. They just spoke a few times to Derek Cattell, our full-time official, mainly to complain to him about the C&A pickets you were organising!'

'After the legal agreement was made with Rulecan, we were instructed from Head Office that we had just to keep up a token picket at the factory and discourage help from other groups. We officially decided to call it all off, but unofficially to keep things going. We felt it was the C&A pickets certainly that were the strongest card we had and they were bringing Rattle to the negotiating table. But the union, in the wisdom of the wise, decided we had to tone everything down until we moved into the new factory. At the time we were clutching at straws. While that offer was going I was in agreement that we tone things down. With hindsight we'd have said no to that — definitely keep the C&A pickets and the mass pickets at the factory.'

'Anyway, there were no real consultations on what to do. Henry Suss only came when we demanded it and we never ever saw Alec Smith (the NUTGW General Secretary). Instructions were passed down through the official. There were no consultations over ending the mass pickets, just instructions passed on.'

Panic and confusion

'We didn't get any leadership at all, from the General Secretary down. We got some sort of lead from Derek Cattell although it wasn't always correct. He organised the blacking — and the union was very angry about that. But he panicked at quite a few of the suggestions we made. I suggested we get concrete down between the factory gates to stop the vans going in and out. We could have stopped the vans easily, but he said "You can't do that! You can't do that!"'

The women's problems

'Apart from the union officials, most women faced problems from their husbands. We weren't bringing a wage in and they were annoyed at the time we spent on the picket line. They thought because you weren't working then you should be in the home. It was difficult looking after the kids in school holidays as well, especially since we couldn't afford child-minders when on strike.'

'Money was a big problem. We had difficulty in finding bus fares to get down on the picket and this reduced our numbers. Picketing was affected mainly by finances and then through husbands not being understanding enough.'

Solidarity

'The support we got from yourselves and the SWP was tremendous, but the local support was very disappointing. The union did nothing to get other members on the picket line, and the officials in London had the cheek to tell us to stay on it round the clock. We were invited to a Women's Fightback demonstration in London, but a collection only raised £12.01 and we ended up well out of pocket after travel costs. We weren't even allowed to speak at the demonstration! It didn't help us one iota, it was the C&A picketing that did the most.'



Sandra O'Connor: 'We could have won.'

US feminism in retreat

IN JULY THE Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) officially expired. The 10-year long campaign waged by American feminists for legal equality has ended in demoralisation and defeat. Right-wing reaction killed ERA in the end — but the narrow legalistic focus of American feminism doomed the campaign from the start. The alliance of feminists and liberal politicians behind ERA proved an ineffective combination in advancing the position of women.

The leaders of the American women's movement have not drawn the conclusion that the ERA campaign failed because of its petty preoccupation with constitutional change. On the contrary, they feel that they were not legalistic enough. Both the National Women's Political Caucus and the National Organisation of Women have promised to focus their future campaigns more within the 'mainstream' of American politics. In other words, American feminists are prepared to abandon their ambitions of making major changes in the social position of women in return for minor constitutional reforms.

The conservative complexion of American feminism is illustrated in a recent book *The second stage* by Betty Friedan. Betty Friedan's first book, *The feminine mystique*, written in 1963, was one of the most important influences on the then newly-emerging women's liberation movement. *The feminine mystique* pointed out the isolation of the suburban housewife and articulated the anger that simmered among many middle class women in the 'sixties.

The feminine mystique was a product of the 'sixties — a time of relative prosperity when middle class women could experiment and expect important changes in their social status. *The second stage* is the product of the 'eighties — a period when the scope for change is limited. Moreover, the intensity of the present crisis forces the middle class in a conservative direction. That's why Friedan, urging moderation, has to implore her sisters 'to come to terms with our position'. There must be no polarisation. Friedan even suggests that slogans such as free abortion on demand have 'con-

notations of sexual licentiousness, not only affronting the moral values of conservatives, but implying a certain lack of reverence for life'.

Most feminists in Britain will be outraged by the new statements of their former mentor. But they should pause and reflect on the American experience. Feminism in the USA is different from Britain only in form, not in substance. The existence in Britain of a well-organised labour movement and class polarisation has influenced the evolution of British feminism. From the start 'socialism' and a considerable degree of anti-capitalist sentiment shaped the ideology of the women's movement. But, its rhetoric notwithstanding, the British women's movement, too, has moved into mainstream politics — either into the Labour Party or alternatively down the path of legal reform. The radical demands of the women's liberation movement of the early 'seventies serve only as reminders of the past and markers of the movement's right-wing shift into the 'eighties.

Ann Burton

Rulecan solidarity

I am writing to thank all those supporters of *the next step* who assisted the women at the Rulecan clothing factory in their 23-week strike. The dispute has now come to an end following the appointment of a liquidator to close the factory.

In February the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers made the dispute official following the sacking of 50 women who stopped work in protest against wage cuts and a refusal to recognise the union. We had evidence of some women earning as little as £30 a week.

This strike has been a most significant one. A group of women with no tradition of militancy continually picketed the company, held factory gate collections, organised mass pickets, addressed union meetings, and raised over £3000 in addition to official strike pay. Such was the solidarity shown against Rulecan that the bosses were forced to use the present Tory 'employment' laws when faced with secondary blacking.

Supporters of *the next step* assisted the women by leafletting C&A department stores that were continuing to buy clothes from Rulecan which had been produced with scab labour. The leaflets urged shoppers to boycott the stores until Rulecan reinstated the women with union recognition.

This action was decisive in bringing Rulecan to the negotiating table. The result was an agreement drawn up by both the company's and the union's solicitors which gave a date for re-engaging the women on alternative premises with union recognition. Furthermore, it was agreed that if the date for reinstatement was delayed then the women would go on the payroll until commencing work.

At that moment in time, I believed along with others that the agreement was the result of intensive rank and file action rather than a substitute for it which Carol Taggart suggests in *the next step*, No 26, July/August 1982.

To correct Comrade Taggart's report, it was unanimously agreed by all the women to suspend mass picketing whilst waiting to recommence work. Both the shop stewards and I asked supporters of *the next step* to refrain from leafletting C&A stores until we saw if Rulecan would honour the agreement. As it was, some leafletting continued and it took some persuasion to get them to accept the discipline of the strike and suspend this action.

The company used the continuation of leafletting as an excuse for saying that we had broken the terms of the agreement on a return to work, although to be fair, if it hadn't occurred, they would have found another reason for justifying reneging on the agreement. Clearly, they were stalling in order to plan a closure by way of voluntary liquidation. However, these points are minor ones compared with the major lessons of the dispute.

The scabs have been rewarded for their 'loyalty' by being sacked. There is even a doubt as to whether they will be paid wages owed to them.

Obviously we wanted to win back the women's jobs with union recognition, and we failed to do that. But Rulecan's plans to take advantage of Runcorn's high unemployment and create an anti-union sweatshop have failed. To this extent the strike cannot be termed a defeat. It has also proved to be an illustration of how revolutionaries can win the respect of workers in struggle.

Derek Cattell
NUTGW Merseyside Area Officer

● Kate Marshall replies:

Throughout the dispute Women for Communism and supporters of *the next step* pushed for the most militant tactics necessary for victory. We kept up the C&A protests despite a court injunction from the company restraining us. Because we believed that union proposals to call off the blacking, and mass pickets and the C&A leafletting would weaken the position of the women on strike, we issued three strike bulletins arguing to keep them on. In the event, Cattell won the arguments for the union and we had to go along with the wishes of the women although we believed they were mistaken. Only one leafletting session occurred after the embargo, in Sheffield, where we had

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failed to inform them in time. If this had not occurred, the bosses would have found another excuse as Cattell points out. We have a different approach from the union bureaucracy. We too wanted reinstatement and union rights – but we believed that victory required mass pressure and not clever negotiations. This made us unpopular with Alec Smith ('fringe groups'), Henry Suss ('ultra left') and at times, even with Derek Cattell, but as he says we did win the respect of the women because we were able to offer more than bodies on the picket lines: a clear analysis and uncompromising action.

Women's oppression: debate*

In the correspondence below we publish an exchange of views between one of our readers and Kate Marshall of Women for Communism.

It is interesting that you begin your letter with a description of the left's response to the issue of women's oppression since the 'sixties. What of course is really significant is that before the growth of the women's movement, the left ignored the issue. Communists need not only to describe subsequent responses, but explain the reasons for the earlier inability of the left to recognise women's oppression.

It is not only capital which oppresses women – all previous class societies have oppressed women. Women are oppressed under capital in ways which are specifically necessary for the continuation of the capitalist mode of production. You tend to use structuralist language also throughout your letter; structuralism is, I believe, an analysis which is fundamentally anti-communist. It is not some abstract 'capital' which oppresses women – people oppress women as agents of capital.

You attack left groups for giving prominence to issues like sexism, which at least you do not put in inverted commas as *the next step* does. Sexism is one of the main devices by which the working class is divided, and it is the experience of sexism which is often the first step for many women toward revolutionary communism. That many women, feminists, get no further than this first step, is as understandable as the fact that many blacks get no further than becoming virulently anti-white, especially given the record of most 'revolutionary' left groups on the issue of women's oppression. It is still possible, in 1982, to go to a meeting of revolutionaries and trade unions (the setting up of the IFM) and to hear so-called revolutionaries publicly making sexist jokes. Why should women have faith in such an organisation? Would you make racist jokes, or claim that racism was just an ideology which would simply disappear when other issues were fought?

You say you attribute women's oppression under capital to the privatised domestic slavery that women workers carry out. This is only part of the explanation. Engels, and most of the early revolutionary thinkers who discussed women's oppression, Kollontai, Zetkin, etc were wrong in their analysis of the effects on women's position of large numbers of women becoming engaged in social production. The effects have in fact been to strengthen women's specific oppression under capitalism – her *dual role* in social production and in domestic slavery. Communists need to understand this, and the fundamental, attendant sexist ideology necessary to maintain it. You also say that working class men only benefit 'obliquely' from this specific oppression. This is incorrect. They benefit from it quite materially. The point is not that men don't benefit in the present from women's oppression, but that it is not in the long-term interests of the working class as a whole.

Although men get better pay, better jobs,

etc you say that they are still exploited. That you feel it necessary to state this, reflects your fear that to confront women's specific oppression is somehow to deny the exploitation of working class men. Only by understanding the relationship between the two can communists move towards a correct analysis. The Protestant working class in Ireland, the poor whites in the southern United States, etc are also exploited, yet you have little problem (in fact, you are the only organisation capable of so doing) in showing that such groups still have a material advantage over other groups, that they are in effect 'paid off' and the divisions between groups of the working class, whose long-term interests are the same, are used to weaken and divide the working class.

Revolutionaries, you write, must intervene to show the unity of interests between male and female workers in fighting capitalism. But in *the next step* you have said that, for example, in Ireland, women must subordinate their interests in the wider struggle. Why? Such strictures, and many attitudes which emerge in *the next step*, imply that simply by involving women in anti-capitalist struggles, the fight against women's oppression is engaged. It is 'inconceivable', you write, that male workers could be consistent anti-capitalist fighters with their sisters without fighting women's oppression. The whole history of the international revolutionary movement, the main reason for the development of the women's movement in the 'sixties, all show exactly the opposite is true – that male revolutionaries were prepared to be determined and consistent fighters of capitalism, while successfully ignoring the oppression of women. You say that in fighting with their sisters male workers 'will begin to appreciate their broader political interests as a class in an independent way'. But this is pure spontaneism. Only if led by a revolutionary vanguard, which has unflinchingly addressed such issues, refusing to compromise, will workers learn such class interests. The working class movement in the USA was destroyed again and again by the use of racism by the ruling class. The populist and agrarian movements of the 1890s fought together, black and white, for some years before being destroyed by racism. Their struggle together did not lead spontaneously to a recognition of their class interests. Without a revolutionary vanguard, their *experiences* rather led them to believe that their interests were antagonistic (black strike-breaking, convict lease systems, ballot box stuffing with black votes, etc to return anti-working class Democrats).

The RCP is, I believe, the only organisation in Britain with a correct analysis of the Labour Party, of racism and how to fight it and of Ireland. However, in its fear of adapting to feminism, it has failed so far to reach a correct analysis of the specific oppression of women under capitalism; if it fails to do so in the future it will be betraying not only women but the working class.

CS
Reading

*This letter has been shortened due to lack of space.

● Kate Marshall replies:

You claim that you are a Marxist, but distance yourself from the Marxist tradition on women. You specifically attack Engels, and others, for arguing that the large scale introduction of women into social production was progressive. You claim that women's oppression has been 'strengthened' as a result of their oppression by capital, rather than been undermined by it as Engels maintained. In fact, prior to their introduction into the factories, etc women remained isolated in their homes, engaged in privatised production and domestic slavery. Participation in social production partially overcame this isolation and gave women workers the possibility of organising against their oppression. When we say that women are dually oppressed we are not looking at it quantitatively – oppression at home plus super-exploitation at

work. The contradiction between the backward, petty, degrading toil of domesticity, and the socialised organisation of production in capitalist enterprises (along with the privatised nature of appropriation), provides the dynamic for destroying the chains of oppression through the struggle for socialism.

Marx and Engels knew that women would never compete equally with men for jobs and wages because under capitalism they remained domestic slaves – constrained from selling their labour power on the same terms and conditions as male workers. In other words, the value of women's labour power is lower than men's. The family acquires a new importance. Capital could assume that in return for her unpaid domestic work her husband or father would help to support her economically, compensating for the lower wages the capitalist class paid to women.

Having attacked this tradition you then criticise the radical left of the 'sixties and 'seventies as if they represent authentic Marxism. In my last letter I argued that Marxism – revolutionary communism – ceases to be Marxism if it neglects the fight against women's oppression. Yet you claim that because the left believed they were 'determined and consistent fighters of capitalism', that is what they were, despite the fact that they ignored women's oppression. No! They were not fighting capitalism consistently if they ignored oppression, be it in Ireland, discrimination against blacks, gays or women. Since the 'twenties, the British left has never even attempted to do this and restricted its objectives to the 'pure spontaneism' that you accuse us of. For example, the SWP is forever saying 'black and white unite and fight' while refusing to challenge the union bureaucracy by exposing its compliance with the racism of the state. The RCP does in practice what you believe in theory. We raise and re-raise, argue and debate these issues precisely because they often lie outside the immediate experience of workers.

You say you agree with our analysis of the Protestant and white South African working classes. However, it is not legitimate to impose a similar analysis on male workers in Britain. Male workers do not constitute a distinct social stratum, separate from their sisters. Although women are segregated at work, this separation is not carried over into every aspect of social and political life. Working class women live with men, they go to the same schools, pubs and churches. They use the same doctors and hospitals and live on the same housing estates. They join the same unions and support the same political parties. Feminist attempts to segregate women from the rest of society, in schools, or in a 'women's city' for example, are nearly as reactionary as those who seek to isolate women from the working class by asking them to give up their jobs in the recession. The reason why attempts to segregate men and women find very little resonance amongst working class women is because women tend to identify with their class rather than their sex, as most of their experiences are shared by working class men. The social and political segregation of Protestants and Catholics in the Six Counties is entirely different. The continued existence of the sectarian state depends on separate housing estates, factories, forms of transport, political parties and trade unions. In South Africa, apartheid means separate development and total segregation. There is neither an underlying striving for unity nor shared experience as members of the same class, which is why we have said that the fight for women's liberation in these countries cannot be conducted outside of the fight for national liberation. It is impossible to have a set of women's politics which 'bridge the sectarian divide'.

You maintain that Irish Protestants and Catholics share the same long-term goal. Maybe. But for now their goals are diametrically opposed. Catholics want a united Ireland. Protestants want the union with Britain. Men and women do not have such diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive interests. Women need and want abortion rights and contraception which is safe, adequate child-care facilities and benefits, more and better jobs. But none of these conflict with men's interests or require a denial of any existing rights or jobs for men. In fact they are *short-term* interests which are shared by both sections of the working class. The point of a fight against reactionary, philistine and chauvinist ideas about women's natural inferiority is to show this *real* basis for unity which exists *now* and has done ever since women entered social production with men in Marx and Engels' day.

sponsors include:

Jayaben Desai
Anwar Ditta
Nasira Begum
Tony Benn
Arthur Scargill
Ken Livingstone
Paul Boateng

What I would like to ask the TUC is "what are you going to do for us?" "I have attended many conferences, got messages of support and received standing ovations. But at the end of the day, black women are still at the bottom of the pile. We have had enough! The strike at Grunwicks was an ideal opportunity for the union leaders to expose the scourge of racism. But although a lot of workers supported us, the union leaders let us down and we lost. And today we are paying the price for these defeats. There will be no such thing as a trade union if we carry on ignoring the divisions that fragment our struggles. The problem is not just one trade union leader, it's all the leaders and bureaucrats. While our rights are under attack they are only concerned about topping up their pensions. What I'd like to tell the TUC is this: what about us? We are part of your movement too. And if you won't recognise our cause then we'll have to get rid of you."

Jayaben Desai

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