

the next step

No 28 October 1982

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

20p

In the hospitals, in the dole offices...

WRECK THE RACE CHECKS!

INSIDE:

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- time for a new rank and file p4,5

Ireland

Will Haughey fall before Prior rolls? p6,7

War

Alternative defence: the peace
movement prepares for war p14,15





Between 11 and 14 September, the Catholic church voted against unilateral disarmament, the first clashes took place in post-PLO Beirut, Moss Evans recommended the doomed *Morning Star* as an 'alternative view' of the doom facing the trade union bureaucrats and Lord Shackleton announced that £100m is required to save the Falklands from collapse. Meanwhile, somewhere in London, 300 people discussed the drive towards war and the urgent need for working class politics at home and abroad: the Preparing for Power

conference presented *the next step* as a worker's view of the world and announced that we need £5000 to allow us to improve the paper and extend its circulation and distribution. Preparing for Power lasted four days; we will be preparing for it throughout the other 361 days of the year as well. We can't do it without your help. Send cheques, postal orders and donations to Junius Publications, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX.

RCP activities in October

SHEFFIELD

Every Tuesday 7.30pm
Preparing for power — a series of discussions
Sheffield Poly Student Union, Pond Street
Tuesday 5 October: 'The Falklands factor in British politics'

Workers Against Racism activists' group meets fortnightly to fight the racist checks, combat police harassment and build workers' defence.
Wednesday 13, 27 October at 7.30pm.

Irish Freedom Movement group meets on alternate Wednesdays. Details from sellers of *the next step*.

COVENTRY

Thursday 7 October 12.30pm
Revolutionary Communist Students meeting
Racism in Britain today
Warwick University, details from RCS stall on Freshers' day, Wednesday 6 October

Friday 8 October 12.30pm
Workers Against Racism public meeting
Wreck the race checks now!
Lancaster Poly, details from WAR stall on Freshers' day, Tuesday 5 October.

Friday 15 October 12.00-14.00
Wreck the race checks protest
Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital, Stoney Stanton Rd.

Workers Against Racism meetings every fort-

night. Details from sellers of *the next step* outside the GPO, Wednesday and Friday 12.00-14.00.

EAST LONDON

East London Workers Against Racism activists' meetings, Wednesday 13, 27 October
Brady Centre, Hanbury St, E1.

STUDENTS!

To all students at North East London Poly, City of London Poly, Queen Mary College! Find out about anti-racist, Irish solidarity and pro-working class action in your college from Keith Tompson on 01-274 3951.

BIRMINGHAM

Workers Against Racism activists' meetings
Monday 4, 18 October at 7.30pm
Muntz St Community Centre, Small Heath.

Wednesday 20 October
Pino Kahn Defence Committee public meeting
Venue to be announced

Saturday 30 October 11.30am
Against racist attacks! Stop police harassment!
Demonstration organised by Pino Khan
Defence Committee
Sparkhill Park, Stratford Rd.

Sunday 3 October
Sean O'Connell Commemoration
Organised by Irish Solidarity All Midlands Mobilising Committee, supported by Sinn Fein, Irish Republican Socialist Party, Irish Freedom Movement, Birmingham Irish Solidarity Group and others
Albany Prison, Isle of Wight. Coach leaves The Mermaid, Stratford Rd/Walford Rd, Sparkhill 7.00am.

Sunday 10 October
Noel Jenkinson Commemoration
Leicester Prison. Transport details from sellers of *the next step*.

Sunday 17 October 2.00pm
Remember the Manchester Martyrs
Meeting to mobilise for the demonstration on 21 November
Digbeth Civic Hall, Digbeth.

LEEDS

Workers Against Racism activists' meetings
Wednesday 6, 13, 27 October at 7.30pm
Victoria Hotel (behind Town Hall).

Irish Freedom Movement activists' meetings
Monday 4, 18 October, 1 November at 7.30pm
Trades Council Club, Savile Mount, Leeds 7.

Thursday 7 October 7.30pm
Massacre in the Lebanon: the terms of peace for imperialism. Public meeting
Leeds University Students Union

Thursday 14 October 1.00pm
No more deportations. Public meeting
Debating Chamber, Leeds University Students Union.

Week of action on Ireland
15-19 November
Leeds University Students Union.

MANCHESTER

Tuesday 9 November 7.30pm
Remember the Manchester Martyrs.
Public meeting
UMIST Small Assembly Hall.

Workers Against Racism group meets every other Monday. Details from sellers of *the next step*.

Women for Communism is carrying out a survey of nursery facilities and the sacking of women and their replacement by YOP workers. Anyone who wants to help, write to us at 164/166 Corn Exchange Building, Hanging Ditch, Manchester.

Irish Freedom Movement

LONDON ●

Friday 15 October 7.30pm
Belfast terrorist on the loose in London: Kenneth Newman, on the run from the RUC, now running the Metropolitan Police. Public meeting. Speaker: Sabena Norton
Manning Hall, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1.

MANCHESTER ●

Thursday 7 October 7.30pm
After the Falklands, where will Britain strike next? Public meeting. Speaker: Kate Marshall
Meeting room 1, University of Manchester, Oxford Rd.

LEEDS ●

Wednesday 20 October 7.30pm
Stormont Mark Two? The Assembly elections in Northern Ireland. Public meeting. Speaker: Sabena Norton
Leeds Trades Council Club, Savile Mount, Leeds.

Sunday 21 November DEMONSTRATION REMEMBER THE MANCHESTER MARTYRS

Manchester
Self-determination for the Irish people!
Troops out of Ireland now!
Demonstration on the anniversary of the murder of three Fenians by the British state in Manchester in 1867.
The Irish Freedom Movement is organising transport to the march from Birmingham, Coventry, Leeds.
For details, contact Sabena Norton on 01-274 3951.

New Irish Freedom Movement Video 'No British solution'

Now available for hire to show at your trade union branch. Details from Joe Doyle, Leeds IFM, 59 Cookridge St, Leeds S2.

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THE FALKLANDS FACTOR

'We have seen that the spirit of the South Atlantic, the real spirit of Britain, is kindled not only by war but can be fired by peace. If the lessons of the South Atlantic are learned, then they have to be learned by us all. Nobody can afford to be left out.'

'What has happened is that now once again, Britain is not prepared to be pushed around. We have ceased to be a nation in retreat. We have instead a new-found confidence, born in the economic battles at home and tested and found true 8000 miles away.'

THUS MARGARET THATCHER brought the Falklands Factor to bear in British politics in a speech at Cheltenham race course at the beginning of July. Her first victims, whom she condemned for 'misunderstanding the mood of the nation' were the engine drivers. The success of the Tory Government in rallying popular support for the war against Argentina has given it a powerful weapon to use against the working class.

Who are the true patriots?

Thatcher's bold onslaught has put the labour movement on the defensive. Some in the Labour Party hoped that the South Atlantic war, and the party's irrelevance during it, would soon be little more than a bad memory. The Falklands Inquiry, they were sure, would vindicate their view that it was all Thatcher's fault in the first place and British politics would return to normal. Once all the ships were back – even though their triumphal homecomings seemed to be being dragged on for ever – the jingoism would fade and everybody would resume their preoccupation with Britain's economic and industrial collapse. Labour could then present its alternative economic strategy to an eager audience and revive its flagging electoral fortunes. However, as Thatcher soldiered on regardless, others in the labour movement realised that it was not going to be 'business as usual'.

Some on the left decided that the best response to the Falklands Factor was to try to grab a bit of the patriotic action for themselves. The Stalinist *Morning Star* had attempted to drive a wedge between the hypocritical jingoism of the Tories and its own 'genuine patriotism' during the war itself. *Marxism Today* editor Martin Jacques concluded after it was over that the war had shown that the left neglects issues such as imperialism, nationalism and patriotism 'at its peril'. In September, the *New Statesman* came out straight, complaining that the 'Conservatives have appropriated the emotions of patriotism which can properly belong to the left', pointing to 'the authenticity and value of the experience on which patriotic fervour can draw'.

Tony Benn, pushing behind him his token opposition to the war, tried to strike a note of 1945: the Tories had won

the war, but who would win the peace?

'Now that the fighting is over, working people throughout Britain are thinking. Millions are expecting and demanding that the challenges of peace-time – the securing of jobs, housing, dignity and a future for all our people – are met with a determination no less compromising than that which has been shown in the pursuit of war.' ('Never again', *London Labour Briefing*, July 1982)

Michael Foot, too, took up this theme – 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em' was Labour's response to Thatcher's Falklands fervour as the party struggled to present itself as the true defender of the best interests of the nation. But 'our people' have already got a hard-line red, white and blue party – why should they opt for a flabby one?

No politics here

The Falklands Factor has exposed the inability of any section of the Labour Party to stand up against British imperialism. It has had no less significant an impact on the trade unions, as one revealing incident illustrates.

At an early stage in the NHS dispute the North Manchester hospitals' joint shop stewards committee circulated the local hospitals with a leaflet condemning the Government. It blamed the Tories for 'spending money on a war to defend people on the Falkland Islands who looked after sheep, when it would not spend money on NHS workers who looked after people'. This argument tended to underestimate the importance to British capitalism, not only of defeating Argentina but of cutting wages in the hospitals. However, it was a popular one on picket lines and demonstrations of health workers. But it caused a furore at Prestwich Hospital and particularly angered local COHSE official Eric Cooper: 'We deplore that sort of circular. That sort of thing is politics with a capital P, and it is totally outside the guidelines for action from the TUC'.

Cooper was so upset at the introduction of Falklands politics into an industrial dispute that he called off the hospital's participation in a national day of action.

The stability of relations between employers and workers, and the secure positions of the trade union bureaucrats, rest on a long established tradition of keeping 'Politics' out of trade union affairs. For the past 30 years, workers have pressed for higher wages and better conditions through their unions. Workers who wanted to change society in addition to improving their position in it, pursued their concerns through political organisations, mainly the Labour Party. As long as the economy expanded and workers' living standards rose, these separate economic and political spheres remained separate. Britain's economic crisis has however steadily undermined this division and the

order that rests on it.

The Falklands Factor is the culmination of 20 years of increasing political interference by the government in trade union matters. State intervention in relations between employers and workers began with incomes policies in the 'sixties and carried on with anti-trade union legislation in the 'seventies. The Social Contract between the TUC and the Government under Labour between 1974 and 1979 presented further state regulation in a positive light. Since 1979 the Tories have introduced more anti-union laws and used potent ideological issues – such as the Falklands War – to weaken resistance to their direct attacks on the working class. Successive governments have been obliged to bring 'Politics' more and more directly into industrial relations because of the steady decline of British capitalism. Wage curbs and restrictions on union activity become essential in bourgeois attempts to reverse Britain's decline at the expense of the working class.

The changing pattern of state intervention in industrial relations has determined the forms of working class political activity over the past two decades. Incomes policies forced public sector workers into unions and provoked them into unaccustomed militancy. In the early 'seventies, anti-union laws stimulated trade unionists into a spirited defence of their traditions of independent activity. In the late 'seventies skilled workers revolted against the erosion of their differentials by Labour's wage controls, low paid workers rebelled because Labour made their wages even lower. For 20 years the government has pushed forward against the unions and workers have fought fragmented, defensive, rearguard actions.

Now the Tories are squeezing the unions mercilessly between mass unemployment and the Falklands Factor. Union bureaucrats in desperation hark back to the days when 'Politics' were kept out of the workplace: but Eric Cooper will not see those days again.

Debating non-issues

Multiply Eric Cooper by 1000 and you have got the Trade Union Congress. The fixers at this year's TUC Conference took one look at two motions on the Falklands War and panicked. One came from the electricians, expressing 'deep appreciation for the British task force in recovering the Falklands from fascist aggression'. The other was from the furniture workers: it recommended that 'all conflicts between nations should be settled through the UN'. Fearful of any discussion about 'Politics' – even within these narrow limits – the organisers succeeded in keeping the Falklands off the agenda.

Bureaucratic suppression of real political debate cleared the way for the vital issues at labour movement conferences

these days – internal organisation and constitution, and those subjects deemed important by the media. Thus the TUC first fixed its attention on the structure of its General Council and on the details of its dealings with the Tories. It then proceeded to debate the terms and conditions on which it might endorse an incomes policy of the future with a Labour government of the future. The TUC gave no consideration to what it was going to do about the fact that most of its members have been forced to accept cuts in real wages *this year*. But then, the press and TV never inquire into this matter. There may be three or four million on the dole – but the TUC did not bother to make an issue out of this, or even debate it. Racial divisions may be paralysing hundreds of workplaces, but the TUC saw fit to ignore the problems of racism too.

We can safely predict that the Labour Party conference (which opens as we go to press) will be little different from the TUC. The press has chosen to make a great issue out of the Militant Tendency: the right has obliged and the left responds. Last year – internal democracy; this year – internal democracy. Unemployment has risen steadily, Britain has gone to war in the South Atlantic and carried on a war relentlessly in Ireland. But none of these issues, we can be certain, will take centre stage at Blackpool.

Turning the tide

The official labour movement's conference season reveals its paralysis before the Falklands Factor. But the Tories' resort to the further politicisation of industrial relations reveals their vulnerability. The seriousness of the recession has forced the Government to abandon one of the central pillars of social stability in post-war Britain. It is a dangerous strategy, born of desperation. The Tories' intrusion of explicit pro-imperialist politics into its conflicts with workers over jobs and wages invites an equally explicit working class reply.

This is the real significance of the Falklands Factor in British politics. It shows decisively that the narrow defensive traditions of trade union militancy have reached the end of the road and the time is ripe for a counter-attack on a broad class front. It points to an answer to the most pressing questions facing the working class. How to resist the drive of the British ruling class towards further military adventures? How to reverse the setbacks inflicted on workers through mass unemployment? The answer is 'politics with a capital P'. Politics that are determined and resolute. Politics that don't stop half-way and allow the bosses to retain the initiative. Politics that unite workers against the capitalist state in an offensive that sweeps away the rotten system which can only survive through wars, oppression and the degradation of the mass of society.

The health workers' dispute UP THE ACTION, CHANGE THE POLITICS!

The 22 September Day of Action, the biggest demonstration of trade union solidarity against the government for a decade, was the climax to a summer of discontent in the hospitals. For different reasons the NHS dispute is of vital importance for the Tories, the TUC and the working class. Mike Freeman reports.

THE TORIES badly need to win their pay dispute with the hospital workers. Their attempts to revive the flagging profits of British industry depend on cutting back public spending and forcing down wages. With more than a million workers, the NHS is the country's biggest employer. The Government can ill afford to lose a showdown with the health workers, as Treasury Minister Leon Brittan explained in an article in *The Times* two days before the September Day of Action:

'No-one should be in any doubt about the importance of the issues at stake. First, if economic recovery is to be achieved, public spending has to be kept under firm control. . . . Second, if a limited amount of public money is to provide the highest possible quality of service, the amount going to pay increases has to be severely contained. Third, pay restraint is crucial to Britain's economic recovery generally.' (20 September)

The NHS highlights a thorny problem confronting the Government in its drive to rationalise the British economy. Whereas in much of private industry and in the nationalised industries, exposure to the harsh realities of a world market in recession has forced workers to accept mass redundancies and wage cuts, the public services sector has been cushioned from the worst effects of the crisis. Indeed, as the Tories never tire of proclaiming, employment in the NHS has actually risen over the last three years, by 47 000. The unions that organise in the NHS — COHSE, NUPE and NALGO — are the only ones in the top dozen in the TUC to have increased their membership over the past year.

The Tories are now determined to impose the 'new realism' in the manufacturing industry on workers in the NHS. They are committed to using cash limits to enforce cuts in both wages and jobs. As the Government sticks rigidly to its line on pay increases way below the rate of inflation, several health authorities have already announced plans for substantial redundancies. Yet the Tories have displayed astonishing ineptitude in their attack on the NHS unions. Health Minister Norman Fowler and his deputy Kenneth Clarke have refused to give the union bureaucrats the small margin they would require to sell out the dispute. Their hamfisted attempts to divide the nurses from the ancillaries backfired, resulting in an unprecedented degree of unity among the health workers.

ASLEF —No, NHS —Yes

The Tories thus handed the TUC a popular cause on a plate as *The Guardian* observed:

'The unions have achieved the impossible. They have caused increasing chaos in the hospitals for almost a quarter of a year and yet they have not lost public sympathy. The image remains more of Florence Nightingales at the end of their tether than of Dave Sparts having yet another predictable bash at state capitalism.' (6 September)

This of course was just the image the TUC wanted. Earlier in the summer it had ruthlessly betrayed the train drivers' union ASLEF. To defend ASLEF would have required the national trade

union leadership to stand up and declare its preparedness to defend the living standards of any section of the working class, irrespective of the state of their industry, whatever its dependence on the introduction of labour-saving technology or new job-shedding working practices. That was not a stand the TUC was prepared to take.

The NHS dispute was different. The militant train drivers were unpopular even among the majority of railway workers; but everybody loves a nurse. To support ASLEF it would have had to take a class stand — and that is anathema to Congress House. The TUC could back the health workers on moral grounds and connect with a wave of public sympathy. For the TUC, the NHS dispute provided an opportunity to win back some of the popular support it has lost in three years of Tory rule. After many long months of counting declining memberships, bemoaning the failure of campaigns against Prior's and Tebbit's laws and holding post-mortems on flop days of action, 22 September gave the weary bureaucrats a much-needed boost.

In addition to their broader concern to use the NHS dispute to give some coherence to their opposition to the Tory Government, the union leaders, organised in the TUC Health Services Committee, had two other factors to take into consideration.

Heading for a Megaw

First, they had to respond to the anger and the militancy of their members, undiminished — and often increased — by several months of inconclusive industrial action. The union leaders had to up the stakes, and call for sympathetic action from other unions in a 24-hour national strike, just to stay in control of the rank and file. Second, the health union leaders hoped to use the pressure of their members to press the Government into establishing new systems of pay determination in the NHS that would restore some authority and status to union officials. This concern lay behind the bureaucrats' repeated criticism of the Government's refusal to negotiate.

Indeed, the establishment of procedures for negotiation and for managing disputes has been the main function of the Health Services Committee ever since it was set up in 1971. Only last year it set up a working party to look into 'industrial relations in the NHS'. This was its brief:

'To review the existing system of pay determination and collective bargaining in the NHS and, if appropriate, to recommend reforms which will reduce the probability of future industrial action in the NHS.' (*TUC Report 1981*, p323)

Ironically, this committee now finds itself, a year later, at the head of the biggest industrial action the NHS has ever seen!

The Health Services Committee's objectives remain unchanged. Both it and the Government are moving towards the implementation of some system of 'pay comparability' in the NHS. For the Government this means a method along the lines proposed for the Civil Service



How NOT to back the health workers — the Yorkshire Miner's page 3 pin-up

by the Megaw Report that followed the defeat of its strike last year. This would divide up the health workers into numerous separate negotiating bodies and allow the Government to establish pay norms based on cash limits and comparisons with the wages necessary to entice any of the four or five million unemployed off the dole queue.

The Government's offer of a zero per cent rise to 65 000 junior civil servants this year illustrates how the system works in practice. The unions protest about this — but then go along with it, as long as their officials get some positions on the boards that administer the system.

Our struggle

Despite the cynical manipulation of the health workers' cause by the TUC, the dispute remains one of great importance for the working class. It is a major challenge to the Government's attempts to force down the living standards of all workers, but particularly those of its own employees. The dispute is especially important because it takes place in a sector where trade union organisation and militancy have traditionally been weak.

Ten years ago only half the NHS belonged to a union. Today the vast majority of ancillary workers and a growing number of nurses are union members; and many more hospital workers than ever before are prepared to take militant action to defend their living standards. The militancy of health workers on the picket lines and demonstrations around the country has surprised and shocked the authorities. It reveals the increasing volatility of class relations in Britain. It is significant that this dispute takes place in a sector where not only has union membership been low but the bureaucracy has always been fairly weak. The dead weight of the traditions of the official labour movement bears less heavily on nurses and hospital porters than it does on engineers and dockers.

The NHS dispute has also been import-

ant in confronting workers with bourgeois legality and in revealing the need to defy it in pursuit of their class interests. Health workers have been harassed by police on picket lines and workers taking sympathetic action have been threatened with legal action under the 1980 Employment Act. One union official, Sean Geraghty of the EETPU, received a token fine for calling his members out in support of the NHS workers. The union leaders have tried to play down the challenge to the state implicit in breaking its laws by pleading the exceptional character of this Tory legislation and invoking the sanctity of the conscience of the individual citizen. But workers can recognise the consistent anti-working class position of the bourgeois state and its institutions.

How to win?

The health workers can still win their dispute. Most of them have long known that the only way to do this is to stop dragging out the dispute in token protests and go for all out national action. If workers themselves took control of the strike at a local level from the TUC Health Services Committee and organised their own pickets and emergency cover rotas, they would soon force the Government to deliver the full 12 per cent.

The condition for upping the action is changing the politics. The NHS dispute will not be won through sentimental appeals on behalf of the 'caring' workers. It can be won by appealing for working class solidarity in defiance of the Government's attempts to solve the crisis of British capitalism at the workers' expense. Working class unity against the Tories can be won by winning workers to reject their arguments, that 'public spending has to be kept under firm control', that 'the amount going to pay increases has to be severely contained' and that 'pay restraint is crucial to Britain's economic recovery'. The first place these arguments have to be won is inside our own labour movement.

The 'downturn' disease

ASBESTOS ON THE BRAIN

Socialist Worker

Labour left activists have become resigned to the consolidation of right-wing leadership over the party. The Socialist Workers Party, talking of 'downturns' and 'retreats', has abandoned its attempts to build a rank and file movement in the unions and advised its members to devote their energies to exposing the evils of asbestos. Frank Richards examines the new mood of pessimism and moderation on the British left.

THE LIMITATIONS of trade union militancy were evident a long time before the emergence of the Thatcher Government. During the previous five years the Labour administration managed to manipulate its working class base and weaken support for union militancy. When militant action burst out – for example, in the winter of discontent of 1978-79 – it was easily contained by the union leadership.

The TUC loses its grip

The British working class has never had much difficulty in organising strikes and trade union action. The problem has always been the ability of the labour bureaucracy to control this militancy. This became clear during the celebrated upsurge against the Heath regime between 1972 and 1974. Mass pickets and demonstrations shook the Heath Government to its foundations. But the labour bureaucracy never lost its grip over the mass movement. Thus the TUC could channel the energies of this movement into the campaign to elect a Labour government. At the same time it used the threat of militancy as a bargaining counter to consolidate its own position.

This experience contains two important lessons. First, trade union militancy, despite its potential, remains under the influence and direction of the reformist politics of the labour bureaucracy. Of itself, it has no political independence. The second point follows: militancy can be used as a means of safeguarding the narrow interests of the labour bureaucracy. Thus today we see the TUC encouraging a degree of militancy over the NHS dispute, not out of any love for nurses, but to demonstrate

to the Government that it still has some power left.

Over the past three years, the real retreat has been that of the labour bureaucracy. Unemployment and the capitalist offensive has pushed the labour leadership into a corner. The scope for bargaining, consultation and reforms has become limited and the TUC has lost much of its old muscle. The destruction of industry and the decline of union membership has restricted the need for mediation and arbitration and has forced the TUC to mark time. The TUC has not even been able to defend its own interests against a series of anti-trade union laws.

Rising mass unemployment has had a major impact on rank and file workers. Economic insecurity has strengthened fear and sometimes caused demoralisation. What has taken place is not so much a right-wing shift as the emergence of a growing reluctance to respond to the lead given by the union bureaucrats. Many workers know that traditional union formulas do not work and bitter experience has generated a mood of distrust towards the TUC. As a result the TUC's calls to action often go unheeded and token initiatives like days of action have received only limited support. This reaction is entirely justified – the responsibility for this state of affairs rests entirely with the labour bureaucracy.

Looking for a lead

The British left has an ambivalent relationship to the labour bureaucracy. On the one hand the left often denounces the betrayals of the TUC and attacks individual union leaders. But on the other hand its own political existence is closely

bound up with the activities of the labour bureaucracy. A recent article in the Communist Party's theoretical journal *Marxism Today* described a state of affairs familiar to every rank and file activist – the integration of the shop stewards' movement into the system. However, this immediately provoked a storm of protest and the party's industrial organiser Mick Costello denounced the article as a gross slander on the labour movement. The party's executive committee issued a statement distancing itself from the article and giving an assurance that the party was not anti-trade union (*Morning Star*, 13 September).

The contortions of the Communist Party's executive over the *Marxism Today* article illustrate the ambiguity of the party's criticism of the trade union leadership. This lack of political independence from the labour bureaucracy also typifies the activities of the SWP. For the past three years most SWP activities have been linked to official labour movement campaigns. This did not mean that the SWP did not criticise the Labour Party and the TUC; *Socialist Worker* is full of such criticisms. But at the same time, its practical work has always consisted of mobilising around initiatives launched by the labour leadership. The Labour Party's demonstrations against unemployment, the People's March for Jobs or CND activities have become the main focus for SWP mobilisations. This year they have even abandoned their traditional Right to Work marches.

The SWP's deference to Congress House is no mere tactical posture: it reflects its political dependence on the labour bureaucracy. This is particularly striking in the SWP's relationship with the Labour left. Thus the decline of the Labour left has become a matter of deep concern for *Socialist Worker*. At the close of last year, party leader Tony Cliff was haunted by the spectre of a Bennite collapse:

'What should worry us more than anything else is what happens when the Labour left begins to crumble.

'Our great danger is that as the Labour left collapses CND will fall with it.' (*Socialist Worker*, 9 December)

And it was not only in CND that the fortunes of the SWP depended on the Labour left. When the Malvinas conflict broke out the SWP was to be found waiting for the Labour left to give a lead. *Socialist Worker* reminisced about the heady days of Benn's deputy leadership campaign:

'It's the energy and vitality of that campaign that is desperately needed to lift the anti-war movement. Of course, the left is much weaker than it was last year. But the issue could hardly be more important.' (29 May)

The SWP followed through the logic of its subservience to the Labour left. No lead came from Benn so the SWP simply gave the anti-militarist struggle a miss.

Downturn blues

The SWP's recent shift of emphasis is a direct response to the declining fortunes of the labour bureaucracy. The SWP has no independent political existence and the decline of the Labour left has forced it to abandon many of its pretensions. When Cliff argues that now is not the time to build a rank and file movement, what he means is that without the labour bureaucracy's activities the SWP's efforts will be in vain. In a revealing passage Cliff notes that the pressure of such work would even threaten the organisational coherence of the SWP:

'So what's happened to our organisation under such conditions? We became substitutionist, we became self-defeating. Instead of recruiting people from rank and file groups into the party, comrades disappear into the

rank and file groups.' (*Socialist Review*, 20 May)

Instead of recognising the dead-end of its politics, the SWP blames everything on objective conditions. The 'downturn' becomes an all-embracing explanation for the failures of the past, present and future. The SWP leadership goes even a step further. It not only fails to account for its past romance with the Labour left, it also refuses to take responsibility for doing something about the problems facing workers today. Cliff advises his supporters to wait until something comes up:

'Being a revolutionary in this period doesn't mean leading thousands, it means talking to handfuls. It means each member building up a personal network of contacts – at work, where we live, on local housing estates, in workplaces where we don't have members.' (*Socialist Worker*, 31 July)

While they are waiting for the upturn, SWP members are advised to campaign around the issue of asbestos or anything that can mobilise a measure of support.

The stakes are high

There is nothing wrong in exposing the dangers of asbestos pollution. Nor is it wrong to limit the scope of political activity in accordance with objective possibilities. But the retreat of the British left is of a different order from such tactical adjustments.

The crisis experienced by the bureaucracy and the Labour left is only a disaster for those whose political activity is moulded by the dictates of the official labour movement. In fact, this crisis opens up immense possibilities for revolutionaries. For the first time in the post-war period, active workers have a healthy mistrust of the solutions provided by their leaders. The experience of the past period has led many workers to look for new political solutions. Even the radical rhetoric of the Labour left finds little resonance among workers.

Of course, workers looking for political solutions will not automatically follow the banner of revolution. Only the experience of struggling alongside revolutionaries will convince them of the effectiveness of communist politics. But to draw back from this process and blame objective conditions is simply to give up the fight for an alternative before the battle has begun in earnest.

Reality directly contradicts the SWP's ramblings about the 'downturn'. A decade ago, when the political control of the labour leadership over the working class was near total, the SWP set about building rank and file groups. This enterprise was doomed from the start because of the confidence that workers had in their traditional institutions. Workers were militant but generally uninterested in alternative political solutions. Genuine rank and file groups never emerged – instead a number of fragile SWP caucuses were built in the unions. Most of these had disappeared even before the 'downturn'.

Today matters are different. The conflict between the interests of workers and those of the bureaucracy is becoming more and more apparent. Moreover, the TUC has become less responsive to the needs of its members. Now is the moment when a new rank and file movement can and must be built.

What for the bureaucracy is a downturn means for us the prospect of political realignment in the working class. This process can stimulate the emergence of an independent proletarian movement. Today we don't have to restrict our attacks on the labour leaders to rhetorical denunciations. Fighting for a communist alternative is a realistic proposition – one that can inspire thousands of workers. To realise this alternative requires raising the stakes – not going to sleep until the upturn arrives.

IN FACT, per capita, the Twenty-six Counties' foreign debt is much larger than Poland's. At the end of 1981 £442.5m was due in interest payments alone on the central government debt of £4.2 billion. With more than half of that debt due for repayment in the next five years, the Irish bourgeoisie may soon find itself in the queue behind Mexico, Poland and the rest, pleading for the re-scheduling of its loans at the counters of the world's big bankers.

Wolf at the door

Ireland's massive debt is the most pressing problem facing the Dublin Government. The scale of its financial difficulties simply reflects the final impact — which it has successfully postponed for some time — of the world recession on the fragile Irish economy. The debt crisis marks the end of the export-led boom of the 'seventies as international markets contract and cut-throat competition exposes the low productivity of Irish industry.

The poor productivity performance which characterised the Twenty-six Counties' economy even in better times can no longer be concealed today. Traditional industry is in terminal decline, whilst the imperialist-financed high technology sector which has kept export figures at an inflated level is now a very mixed blessing. Its reliance on foreign raw materials and components has added to the influx of imports which have ravaged the home market. It is now estimated that 80 per cent of any rise in the Twenty-six Counties' income would be spent on imported goods. Even these companies are not immune from the crisis. The Industrial Development Authority, set up to coax foreign investors into Ireland, is now involved in shoring up 600 firms.

With trade figures diving into the red and inflation running at around 20 per cent, interest rates have been forced up to record levels to protect the punt (Irish pound, I£). Industrial growth, once the economy's proudest boast, has virtually disappeared. Output is not expected to rise by more than a quarter of one per cent this year. The OECD's optimistic forecast that it will go up by 2.75 per cent in 1983 is tempered by the recognition that any such increase will be swallowed by interest charges on foreign loans.

As taxation has already passed acceptable limits, the Government has no choice but to cut public spending to ease its debt burden. This immediately leads to further problems. Cutting capital expenditure would amount to courting disaster. Foreign capital has only been attracted into the Twenty-six Counties through massive state spending on infrastructural investment and tax concessions. Without that expenditure in the 'sixties and 'seventies, there would have been no boom. Without it today, there would be literally no industry. Cuts in public spending therefore have to concentrate on current expenditure — jobs and wages. So, when Taoiseach Charles Haughey announced his summer package of cuts worth I£120m, the bulk of them were aimed at public sector workers. The five per cent wage rise previously agreed for November was postponed until January. Haughey announced a freeze on all 'special claims' — ie anything outside of the narrow limits of the existing agreements — until the end of 1983 and an indefinite ban on further hiring in the state sector.

Taking on the unions

This attack is the latest move in an assault on the working class of unprecedented ferocity. Unemployment has risen 26 per cent in a year to reach a record level of 160 070 by September. These official figures exclude the majority of school-leavers, 2000 of whom recently took the entrance exam for six civil service jobs. Where workers have taken action in defence of their jobs, the state has moved in hard. The use of the law, from injunctions to imprisonment for contempt, against striking workers has become increasingly common. Unable to trust the weak trade union bureaucracy to contain industrial unrest, the Government is forced into bludgeoning workers

into submission. But in taking on the 300 000 state employees, the most militant and best organised section of the working class, Haughey has introduced a new dimension to the struggle.

With the stakes as high as the survival of any capitalist stability in the Twenty-six Counties, Haughey has little room for granting concessions. The trade union leaders are equally trapped. With the Government ignoring all the established procedures for negotiation on which their status depends, and their membership in no mood for compromise, they have been forced to take action. Nevertheless, they have done their best to keep events under their control, by dividing up protests by public sector workers into separate half-day strikes to culminate in a one-day all-out stoppage when the Dail resumes in October. However, the potential for workers' anger to get out of hand is so great that even these limited protests have proved too risky for sections of the union bureaucracy.

Senior officials from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions toured the country to 'co-ordinate' the first round of half-day strikes. Not liking what they saw, they then used the pretext of a non-existent 'concessionary move' by Haughey to cancel the rest. However, the union leaders' ability to get away with this sort of action is severely restricted. Their weak grip on the working class has been illustrated by workers organising industrial action independently of the ICTU and, in the case of the bus drivers, independently of the trade union movement itself. One transport workers' official summarised his predicament: 'If I went down there tomorrow and told them to go back to work, they'd tell me

to get stuffed' (*The Irish Times*, 28 July).

Coup or coalition?

Ireland's economic collapse and the growing conflict it is provoking between the state and the unions have contributed to an intensifying social and political crisis in the country. Half of Ireland's population is under the age of 25 and Irish youth are causing growing distress to their elders. They are ignoring traditional structures of authority and turning to drugs, violent crime and even to extra-marital sex. The Church is losing its grip, the police force is riddled with corruption and the bourgeoisie cannot form a stable government.

The present Haughey regime is steeped in the odour of corruption. To preserve critical local support for his Government, the Taoiseach has underwritten the ludicrous scheme to build a multi-million pound airport in the bog near the Marian shrine at the Mayo village of Knock. Haughey has also forked out I£150m on inner-city projects in the Dublin parish of independent TD Tony Gregory. Haughey's premiership may still collapse from the shock waves following the resignation of his Attorney-General in August, after his house-guest was arrested and charged with two brutal murders. Confidence in the institutions of government in Ireland has reached a low ebb.

Two elections in 12 months have failed to give a clear mandate to either of the larger parties: Fine Gael which ruled with the support of Labour until March, or Fianna Fail which now rules at the whim of a handful of unpredictable independents. Irish politics are so unstable that the ruling class has become

nervous even at the thought of holding another general election:

'The idea of an election, of course, presumes that there will be a sufficient infrastructure or sense of order in the Republic for elections to be successfully held.' (*The Irish Times*, 25 August)

Some observers, notably the *Sunday Times*' kept informer from West Belfast Chris Ryder, have even floated the spectre of a military coup as the only way to preserve capitalist law and order in the Republic (29 August). More sober commentators favour a grand coalition of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael.

The polarisation of class relations in the Twenty-six Counties has resulted in the convergence of the two major parties. Both are committed to a sustained attack on workers' living standards: economic ministers under Fine Gael's Garret FitzGerald and later under Haughey have presented virtually the same budget within the space of a few weeks earlier this year. FitzGerald's subsequent opposition to Haughey's cuts has been limited to minor criticisms. However, coalition or not, the consensus of Ireland's bourgeois parties on the need to attack the working class highlights the absence of a working class alternative in the Twenty-six Counties.

Workers Party?

The fine balance of the parties in the Irish Dail has opened a certain space for reformist opponents of the main ruling parties. The collapse of the Labour Party, discredited by its compromises in the Fine Gael coalitions, has created openings for representatives of (Sinn Féin) the Workers Party (what's left of the Stalinist-dominated Official Republican Movement) and various 'independent socialists'. These factions and individuals have high hopes for the future but their politics belong to the past.

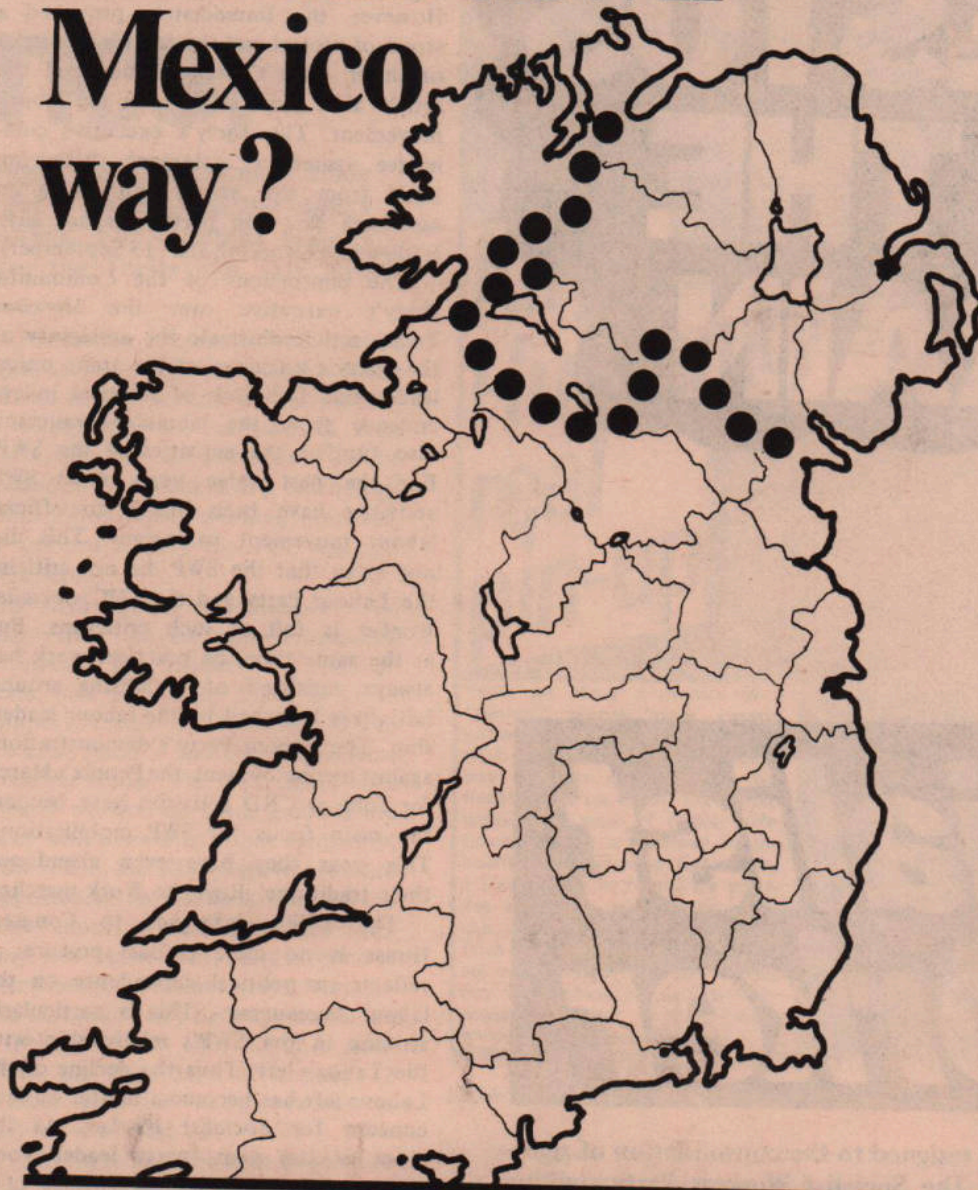
They are united in their commitment to the pursuit of reforms through the Dublin state and their repudiation of the struggle against British imperialism. They vary in the intensity of their hostility to republicanism and the extent to which they perceive imperialism as a progressive force in Ireland. However, the strategy of these reformist fragments presupposes an economy moving forward on the tide of foreign investment: this is now a thing of the past. Their fate is also closely tied to that of the layer of trade union officials that also expanded in the 'sixties and 'seventies and now hopes to preserve its position close to the state apparatus through the activities of organisations like the Workers Party.

The recession brings serious problems for the reformists. More intense class struggle threatens the position of a trade union bureaucracy that is only weakly established, reducing its room for manoeuvre and isolating it from a turbulent rank and file. To survive, the Workers Party will have to complement its infamous techniques of bureaucratic manipulation with an orientation to militant workers increasingly alienated from the trade union leaders: the strain could easily prove fatal.

The reality of the recession too tends to defy the stale analyses of the reformists. Ireland's debt crisis reveals that the central problem of the economy is its domination by foreign capital. The continuing War in the Six Counties and its consequences south of the border constantly reaffirm that the central problem of Irish politics is the oppression of the country by Britain.

The inexorable collapse of the Irish economy will expose the irrelevance of reformist prescriptions. However, by discrediting even further the name of 'socialism' in the eyes of Irish workers, the charlatans of the Workers Party could perform a useful service for the Irish ruling class. If they get the chance, they will provide an opening for the radical republican rhetoric of Fianna Fail to appeal to the anti-imperialist sentiments of Ireland's youth, and so integrate another generation into its shabby compromises with British imperialism. Ireland urgently needs a party that can relate the immediate interests of the working class to the struggle against British domination.

South of the border... down Mexico way?



'We are not a Mexico and we are not a Poland', was the feeble protest of the editor of *The Irish Times* recently, as he surveyed the declining fortunes and the growing indebtedness of the Irish economy (14 September). Mick Hume examines the economic crisis and its political consequences in the Twenty-six Counties.

'STOP TREATING them terrorists like Britons' demanded Tory MP Ivor Stanbrook in the *Daily Mail* in July. He called for Irish people in Britain to be banned from voting in elections and deprived of other civic rights. Thatcher acolyte Patrick Cosgrave, writing in the *Daily Express*, put forward a five-point anti-Irish programme:

- seal the border
- impose strict checks on air and sea traffic
- treat all Irish passport holders as aliens
- take the gloves off the army in the North
- hang the terrorists.

This followed *The Sun's* campaign to persuade British people not to buy Irish butter or take holidays in Ireland.

A number of factors provided the excuse for this orgy of anti-Irish chauvinism. First, back in May the Irish Government refused to back EEC sanctions against Argentina and characterised Britain as 'the aggressor' over the Malvinas. Then Irish representatives in Brussels voted against Britain over farm price rises. And then, most bitter blow of all, came the IRA bomb attacks on British troops in Hyde Park and Regents Park, finally killing 11 soldiers.

However, the deterioration in Anglo-Irish relations cannot be entirely attributed to events in Brussels, Port Stanley or even in London's parks. Italy also opted out of EEC sanctions, but diplomatic contacts remained cordial. Britain has much bigger problems in the EEC than Ireland, and IRA bombs have been going off in England for the last 10 years. The decisive factor in the present chill that has descended on the London-Dublin liaison is British strategy in the War in the Six Counties.

Disguising Direct Rule

In 1980 and 1981 the British Government needed a 'special relationship' with the Dublin regime. The increased scale of nationalist resistance both inside the prisons and on the streets of the Six Counties forced the British authorities to cultivate relations with the government in Dublin. These contacts were vital in promoting ever broader cooperation between the security forces on either side of the border and in ensuring that republicans in the Twenty-six Counties were ferociously repressed.

The increase of diplomatic activity between London and Dublin was also an important manifestation of concern by the British to pursue some political resolution of its long-standing Irish problem. A major meeting between Thatcher and Haughey took place in Dublin in December 1980 at a time when the first wave of republican hunger strikes was in progress. They resolved to establish an Anglo-Irish inter-governmental council in recognition of the deep mutual concerns of the two administrations. The developing 'special relationship' helped to tide the Thatcher Government through the difficult period of the second wave of hunger strikes in which 10 men died between May and October 1981. It then provided the context in which Northern Ireland minister James Prior could set his devolution plans rolling slowly towards fruition through 1982.

However, this year found the British in a stronger position regarding the War in the Six Counties than for several years. The Government had stuck to its brutal policy of criminalising prisoners of war throughout the hunger strikes and successfully contained the wave of revulsion against its stand. Thanks largely to the weakness of the opposition at home, Thatcher rode out the storm in Ireland and survived the adverse publicity around the world. And, using all the dirty tricks of counter-insurgency — mainly informers terrorised or bought off — the army and the RUC has succeeded in rounding up many republican activists and capturing supplies of arms and ammunition.

In these circumstances the Government was more inclined to step up the house searches and the interrogations, the beatings and the shootings, the remands in custody for months on end (the new form of internment) and less concerned with cosmetic political initiatives of the Prior variety. Thus Prior's devolution Bill rolled into considerable



Whatever happened to the 'special relationship'?

Over the summer relations between Ireland and Britain have deteriorated badly. Yet it is less than two years since Irish Taoiseach Charles Haughey gave Margaret Thatcher a silver teapot and they posed for photographs together in a display of harmony and friendship. Mike Wall looks at the fate of the Anglo-Irish 'special relationship'.

opposition from right-wing Tories who saw it as a distraction from the central military task of putting the boot into the nationalist community. It also met with a broader indifference which extended to the Prime Minister herself.

Against all the odds, Prior prevailed and his devolution proposals became law: 20 October has been appointed for elections to his new assembly. However, in his attempts to make the assembly succeed Prior has been forced to make concessions to the Tory right and their Unionist allies — concessions that have damaged British relations with the Dublin Government. To win Unionist support for a devolved assembly Prior had to retreat from any commitment to 'power-sharing' between the Loyalists and the inevitable nationalist minority. And to ensure that he did not provide Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists with ammunition to use in outflanking the more moderate Official Unionist Party, Prior had to step back from any suggestion of an 'Irish dimension' — involving Dublin — in the devolution scheme. Otherwise Paisley would have screamed about a sell-out to Haughey, the IRA and the Pope and probably go ahead to win a majority of seats in the assembly, thus rendering it unworkable (see *The Irish Times*, 31 July).

The problem of course was that the first of these concessions made the assembly unacceptable to the moderate nationalist party, the SDLP; the second made it unacceptable to the Dublin Government. Prior probably calculated

that the SDLP, whose only reason for existing is to represent the nationalist community in institutions set up by the British to legitimise the Six County state, would still crawl into the assembly. Although the party is standing in the elections, grass roots pressure has pushed the leadership to boycott the assembly — but Prior may still hope that SDLP leaders will take their seats at some time in the future. Dublin, however, is a more complicated problem for Britain.

Haughey out in the cold

Prior's exclusion of Twenty-six Counties' leaders from any role in his devolution scheme, and indeed from any consultations about it, was a blow to Haughey and his colleagues. Haughey had presented his 'special relationship' with Thatcher and her acknowledgement of an 'Irish dimension' to the Northern Ireland problem as steps on the road to Irish unity. In July his foreign minister Gerry Collins sharply criticised Prior's final proposals and claimed that the lack of consultation was a violation of the Anglo-Irish accord. In response the British Government summoned Irish ambassador in London Eamon Kennedy to the Foreign Office. Minister of State Douglas Hurd told him that there was no such agreement to discuss the administration of a part of the United Kingdom with a foreign government.

The last straw came in August when Prior, trying to use the long-planned

inter-parliamentary tier of the Anglo-Irish council as a carrot to induce the SDLP to join his assembly, admitted that this institution would be nothing more than 'a talking shop'. This admission was vital to assuage Loyalist anxieties, but it was yet another blow for Haughey who has been promoting the inter-parliamentary council as a major advance towards greater Irish involvement in the Six Counties. Haughey immediately rejected the proposed council as a sham and settled back to ponder the ruins of his Anglo-Irish pretensions.

The demise of Haughey's 'special relationship' with Thatcher is partly a result of Britain's increasingly hard line in the Six Counties and partly a consequence of Haughey's inflated expectations of how far he could use it to bolster his own republican image. The object of all British political initiatives concerning Ireland is to legitimise Direct Rule in the Six Counties: as Prior's No 2 Lord Gowrie told the House of Lords recently, the devolution scheme is 'a kind of Direct Rule Improvement Bill'. But, many Tories ask, when Direct Rule is winning, why work too hard to 'improve' it? So the Government is not prepared to make any concessions to opponents of Direct Rule in the nationalist community. It is happy to turn the army on the Catholics, appease the Loyalists and let Prior's bandwagon roll along until it stops. Haughey simply overestimated the scope of Britain's reforming initiatives in the Six Counties and underestimated the difficulties of trying to use them to his own advantage at home.

Harmony on repression

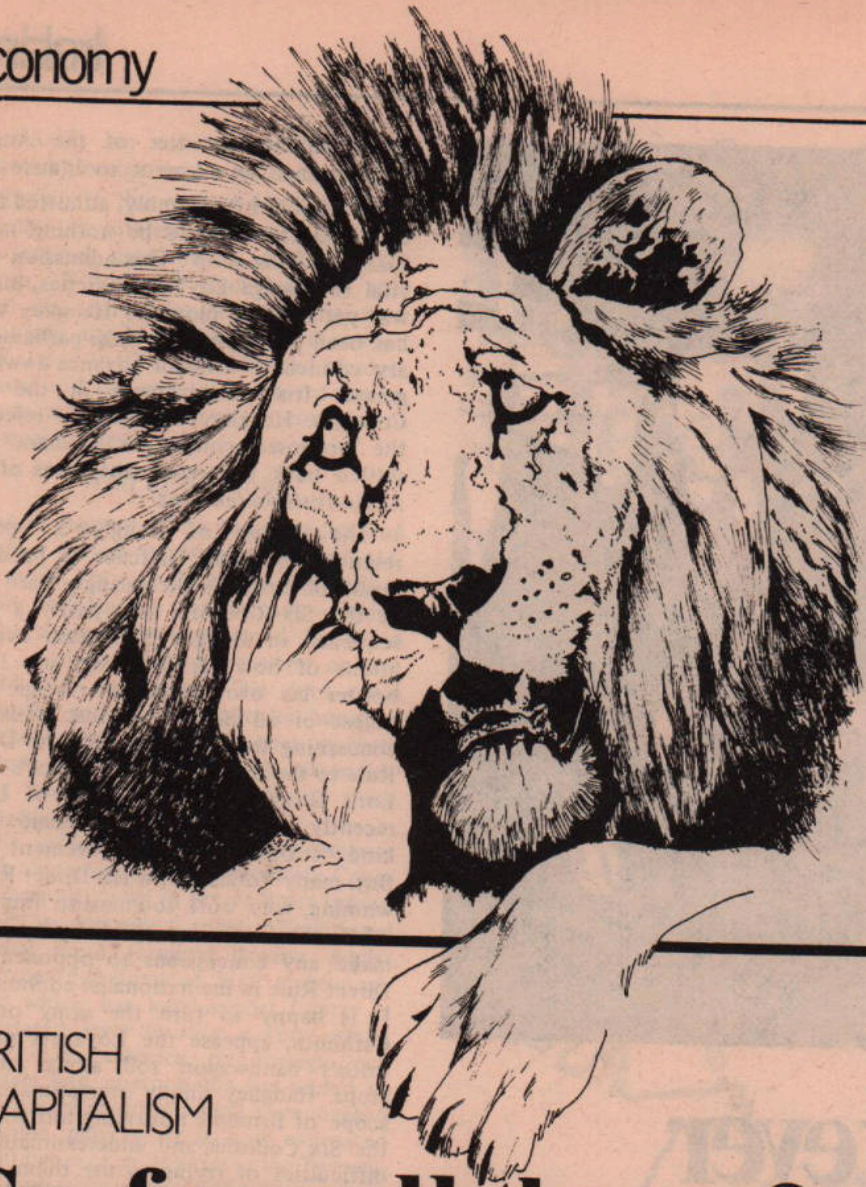
Whilst from Haughey's point of view the 'special relationship' is not working very well, from Thatcher's it is not at all as bad as it seems to some of her more prejudiced supporters. Although the Irish ambassador got a ticking off at the Foreign Office, the Government was anxious to affirm that the 'special relationship' was secure. Indeed the Anglo-Irish inter-governmental council has already met seven times this year to discuss common economic problems. Natural gas from Kinsale will soon be on sale in Belfast — at prices cheaper than in the Twenty-six Counties. The restoration of the electricity inter-connector between north and south is another priority under discussion.

More importantly for both governments, cooperation in the sphere of repression is flourishing. The courts of the Twenty-six Counties are becoming familiar with hearing cases against republicans charged with offences committed in the Six Counties or Britain and giving them heavy sentences. The Irish authorities are enthusiastic in prosecuting anti-imperialists. Gerry Tuite, already imprisoned for 10 years for possession of explosives, is due to stand trial again for conspiracy to cause explosions in London. The possibility of formal extradition for political offences was again raised by a prominent senator over the summer. Close liaison between the army and police in the border areas is well-established. When an undercover hit-squad of four armed RUC men was exposed and surrounded by a hostile crowd in Castleblayney just south of the border in August, the local police, under direct orders from Haughey, intervened and brought them back across the border to safety.

Significantly, the concern that diplomatic difficulties might undermine the effectiveness of imperialist repression in Ireland was the only aspect of the Irish War that worried Labour's leading Irish spokesman, Don Concannon over the summer:

'I am perturbed about the worsening relationship with the South. It will spill over into the relationships in government and into security matters.'

Concannon need not be perturbed. Political initiatives and diplomatic incidents may come and go but Britain's commitment to crush the nationalist movement (with the loyal support of the Dublin Government) will continue unabated.



BRITISH
CAPITALISM

So, farewell then...?

Things have got so bad that the management editor of the *Financial Times* recently searched for 'the roots of the British malaise' in the popularity of 'The Archers'. The success of radio's long-running series featuring the idiocy of rural life reflected, he reckoned, a deep-rooted 'anti-industrial culture' which has been 'one of the main causes of Britain's poor economic performance over the last 100 years' (15 September). Such inane philosophising reflects the growing desperation of Britain's ruling class. Tony Allen investigates the state of collapse of British capitalism.

MANY BOOKS have been written trying to work out why British capitalism has been losing out to the competition. Right wingers blame the trade unions and British culture; left wingers blame the culture of British management and the trade unions. Both, however, seek to understand how to reverse the process. For revolutionaries in Britain the problem is different. We have to understand the specific features of the crisis in Britain, not to find a way to get the country 'back on its feet', but to explain why measures to save capitalism mean disaster for the labour movement.

Under capitalism, economic growth and society's living standards depend upon the accumulation of capital. Capitalist production has to be sufficiently profitable to finance further investment and keep the system going. However, the rate of profit on investment has a tendency to decline as the system grows. As capitalists seek higher profits by introducing better technology and raising productivity to cut costs, they increase the amount of profit each worker produces for them. Yet, this greater level of profit has to be measured over an ever-expanding value of investment in plant, machinery and raw materials. The result is that the rate of profit tends to fall. When this tendency begins to deprive the capitalists of the money they need to make the massive investments necessary to meet the demands of competition, the overall level of investment drops, and economic stagnation sets in.

Where Britain stands

This tendency affects all capitalist countries — that's why there is a world crisis. But in Britain the crisis has hit particularly hard. Profitability on investments in the British economy has been lower than in those of its imperialist rivals, so investment has been lower and British capitalism has lost out in the world market. Twenty

years ago Britain's share of the total industrial production of the developed capitalist economies amounted to eight per cent; last year it had fallen to less than five per cent. Over the same period, Britain's share of world trade in manufactures dropped from 17 per cent to eight per cent.

Britain still ranks high amongst the imperialist powers, and its economic decline must be seen in this perspective. Its overseas investments are second only to those of the USA; in terms of military might, it is again second only to the USA. Britain's industrial output is the fifth largest in the capitalist world, and it takes up sixth position in its share of world trade. And it should not be forgotten that the crisis affects all the capitalist economies. However, in the recession competition between the rival powers becomes more acute, and the relative weakness of Britain means that the impact of the crisis is all the more devastating.

Decade of decline

Low productivity is the British disease. Productivity in 1981 was 162 per cent greater in the USA than in Britain; 119 per cent greater in West Germany; 90 per cent greater in Japan, and 87 per cent greater in France (*National Institute Economic Review*, August 1982).

There are no mysterious psychological or cultural factors behind those figures. The simple reason is differences in investment levels. In the mid 'seventies, for example, investment per head in British manufacturing was only one-third the level in the USA and half that in Japan. In Britain the number of workers employed in manufacturing declined not only relative to the amount of capital invested — a general trend — but as an absolute figure. During the 'seventies, the real value of capital stock in manufacturing rose 26 per cent, but the number of workers employed actually fell by 15 per cent (*Investors Chronicle*, 5 June

1981). Capitalism in Britain was unable to grow quickly enough to maintain employment levels in industry.

The decline in the rate of profit produced immediately obvious effects. From a level of over 10 per cent in the 'sixties, the pre-tax rate of profit earned by British companies, outside their North Sea activities, fell to around six per cent in the mid 'seventies and to a disastrous 2.7 per cent last year (Bank of England, *Quarterly Bulletin*, June 1982).

The shrinking base

As profits plummeted and workers went down the road, the manufacturing base of British capitalism began to disintegrate. In 1970, manufacturing accounted for 39 per cent of all jobs in Britain; by 1980 the proportion had fallen to 30 per cent. Over the same period the proportion of workers employed in services rose from 50 to 59 per cent (*Financial Times*, 30 July 1982).

The rising numbers of service workers worry the ruling class, not simply because of nostalgia for the days when Britain was 'the workshop of the world', but because workers in local authorities and central government, in hospitals and schools produce no profit. On the contrary, these jobs have to be financed out of taxation, as a deduction from the total profits of the capitalist class. And if the new jobs are in insurance, banking, finance, etc — where the largest increase has taken place — these functions, while necessary for capitalism, are parasitic on the profits produced elsewhere in the economy.

For capitalism, being 'productive' means producing more profit. The decline of the capitalist system in Britain is marked by its inability to employ more workers productively. Over the past three years manufacturing employment has slumped further — by 20 per cent to just 5.6 million (*Employment Gazette*, August 1982). This is why the bourgeoisie is determined to screw even more profit out of workers in industry and bent on making 'savings' in public services.

Reversing the decline?

The Tory Government knows it has to deal with British capitalism's 'long-term' problems, and its policies over the past three and a half years have attempted to do just this. The aim of Tory strategy, even though they have often carried things out incompetently, has been to recreate the conditions for the profitable accumulation of capital in Britain — or, as Labour would put it, to 'regenerate British industry'.

This was the objective of Thatcher's much-abused 'monetarist' economic policies. In fact the money supply continued to grow out of control. But Thatcher's refusal to bail out companies in trouble, or do much to protect industry from the effects of recession, were policies designed to tighten the pressure on employers to close down unprofitable firms, increase productivity and the exploitation of the workforce and force through redundancies. For the bourgeoisie, the kinds of economic policy pursued in the 'sixties and early 'seventies were no longer viable: it didn't make sense to try and 'reflate' the economy through ever greater levels of state spending or cheap credit, when it was clear that more investment would not be forthcoming, inflation would accelerate and competitiveness would slump further. 'Monetarism' in practice amounted to a state-sponsored deflation of the economy.

Because of the world recession, things went much further than even the most hard-nosed Tory monetarist wanted. Yet the bourgeoisie has seen some positive results from its attacks on the working class over the past couple of years. Outgoing BL chairman Michael Edwards has had the most spectacular successes. Since 1980, he has managed to raise output per man at BL's Longbridge factory, which makes the Mini Metro, from seven to 25 cars per year. Although aided by new robot technology, the increase has been principally the result of a management onslaught on the workforce, the decimation of its numbers and the destruction of effective shop floor organisation.

The slump has helped the capitalists boost productivity and crush workplace trade union organisation. But it has done little to strengthen them against their rivals overseas. Higher productivity helps, but the gains are limited unless backed by investment in more efficient technology. And today investment plans in British industry are still being revised downwards as profitability fails to recover. The absence of any major investment programme in industry, together with the continued rationalisation and cutbacks in capacity, rather than major capacity expansions, underline the fact that British capitalism is far from being 'regenerated'.

Introducing the market

Economic stagnation is set to continue. However, the ruling class has not given up. The lack of any real sign of an upturn puts even more pressure on employers to make workers pay for the crisis. Now they are all calling for cuts in real wages, or at least real wage increases below the rate of increase in productivity. The CBI recently demanded low pay rises 'from here on out': 'It is not for a decade. It is forever. In the end we will only earn a living by being effective. Otherwise we will price ourselves out as a nation' (*Financial Times*, 29 July 1982). No equivocation here. The organisation of British industrialists knows what will be necessary to keep them in business.

However, while the mechanism of the market economy helps implement such policies in industry, in the public services things are not so simple. The bourgeoisie complains that while industry has been ravaged by recession, the services have been 'let off'. This is why the Tory Government is promoting the extension of free market principles — and free market contractors — into the state sector. The first Cabinet meeting after the summer recess was presented with papers outlining schemes for dismantling wide areas of the welfare state — particularly health, education and social services — and introducing direct payment for services. These plans are in their early stages, but privatisation is already making inroads into local authorities and the NHS. Cash limits are going to be imposed more and more stringently as a means of pushing through redundancies and forcing down wages.

What next?

Nobody now believes that British capitalism can be saved without major setbacks for the working class. Even the indications that the Tories will give more aid to industry — under pressure from the Labour Party, the TUC and the CBI — are all prefaced with statements of the need to control wages, improve competitiveness and cut jobs, especially in the public services. This is what the call for 'reflation' means today. It comes out more directly from the policies of the bourgeoisie than from the labour bureaucrats' plans for a 'national economic assessment'. But since the leaders of the official labour movement are committed to saving British capitalism, the consequences are the same for the working class.

We are faced with a unique situation: the collapse of capitalism in Britain. The bourgeoisie is finding it more and more difficult just to stay where it is, let alone find any way out of the crisis. It relies increasingly on profits from overseas investments and the foreign earnings of banks, insurance companies and other such City institutions.

Behind its stiff upper lip, the British ruling class is beginning to panic. It has to sort out its intractable domestic economic problems at the same time as protecting its interests abroad at a time when the world is becoming a much less secure place in which to make a decent profit. We should be encouraged by the sombre judgement of an American banker: should the 'Thatcher experiment' not prove successful, he writes, the implication 'would presumably be that the UK has a limited future as a mixed capitalist economy' (*Lloyds Bank Review*, July 1982). This is one economic forecast the working class has every interest in helping to bring about.

WE ARE WAR

THE DELEGATES to this year's Trades Union Congress were left in no doubt about the identity of the demonstrators outside their conference on Wednesday 8 September. We told them — repeatedly — who we were. Chants of 'WE ARE WAR — WE ARE WAR — WE ARE WAR!' rang out for two solid hours on the Brighton sea-front. Led by a deputation of Asian strikers from Heathfields in Slough, and the Darr family from Leeds, the 1982 WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM had arrived! (See pages 10 and 11.)

The 400 marchers who set off from Brick Lane, four days and 60 miles

earlier, were backed by more than 200 labour movement organisations. Nobody could ignore such an unprecedented demonstration of solidarity against racism.

For the TUC it was an occasion that embarrassed them no end. Having omitted even to mention racism on their preliminary agenda, they were put under severe pressure to support our demands. Transport union leader Moss Evans stepped outside to greet Shaukat Darr (a TGWU busman from Leeds) and promised to fight his deportation. Next day, the TUC's General Council said it would do the same. General

secretary of print union SOGAT '82 Bill Keys promised the Heathfields workers he would stop his members crossing their GMWU picket line. After a flurry of telegrams and the sudden appearance of officials at the factory, SOGAT is now officially in dispute with the company.

For the inveterate sectarians of the left the march was an even bigger embarrassment. They could not think up one single reason to oppose it so they had to make up lies and slanders instead. Their pathetic endeavours are documented on page 12.

Are you ready?

We are WAR, and we are determined to keep up and increase the pressure we put on the bureaucrats in Brighton. This month we want to see

- industrial action against the race checks in doles and hospitals
- effective mass picketing and blacking at Heathfields
- trade union resistance to the deportations of Shaukat Darr and Afia Begum. You can help make it happen. Read on to find out how.

WORKERS AGAINST IMMIGRATION CONTROLS

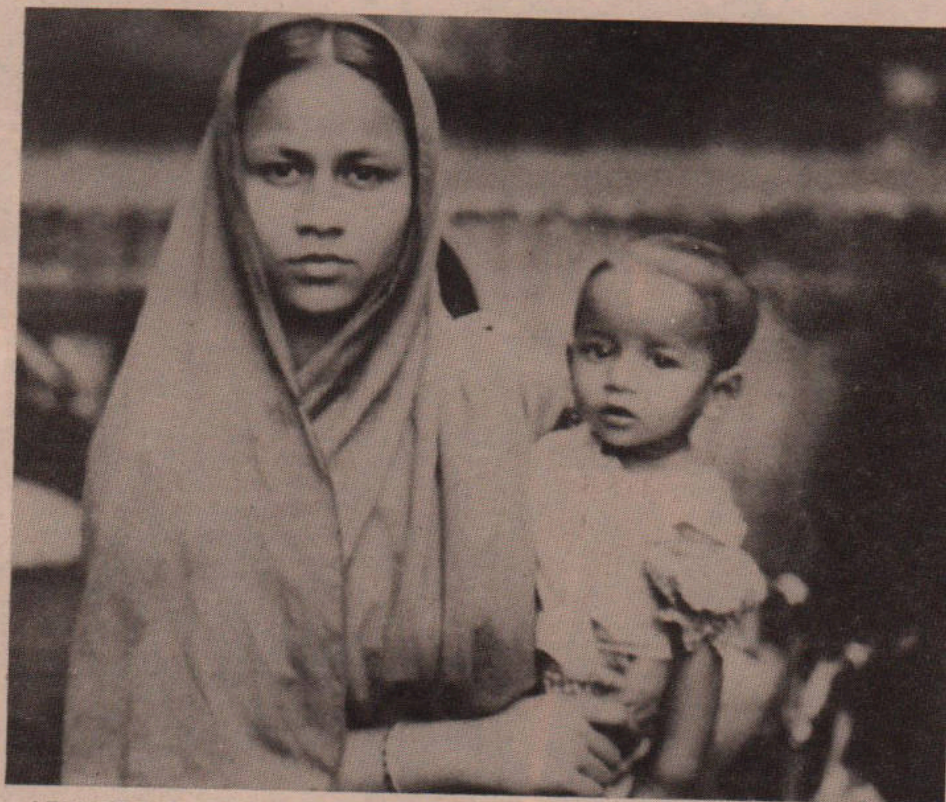
BY JANUARY 1983 the Nationality Act will be fully operative. That means thousands of black people will find they have no legal right to stay in Britain, and tens of thousands more will be permanently separated from their dependants. Anyone who is not a true blue British citizen — as defined under the Act — will no longer automatically be entitled to state benefits.

The Nationality Act is condemned by the left as a particularly disgusting piece of Tory legislation. The fact that it was drafted in all its essentials by the last Labour Government is less frequently commented on. And even when it is, great hope is held out for black people under a future Labour government. Shadow Home Secretary Roy Hattersley has been touring the country assuring audiences that all will be well. The Labour Party NEC's report to this year's conference gives the game away. After a lot of waffle about 'mutually beneficial migration' the NEC panders to the prejudices of every British racist:

'This does not mean that Britain can or should unilaterally abandon all control of immigration in a world of economic inequality in which every country has some form of immigration control.'

The Labour Party has no intention of removing the divisions that the state imposes on workers of different nationalities.

While the Labour left tries to solve the conundrum of how to make immigration controls humane and non-racist, the Government's getting on with the job of keeping blacks out. It has been very successful. Tory Home Secretary William Whitelaw boasted in Parliament recently that only 58 000 people were accepted for settlement last year — the lowest figure since 1973. (Hattersley dutifully leapt up to say that this only goes to show we have nothing to worry about anymore.) But extending the waiting lists for entry by a decade or two is only one way of curtailing immigration. The other way is to make life intolerable for black people already here.



AFIA BEGUM and her one year old daughter ASMA will be deported this month unless we stop the Home Office's plans now. Her husband was killed in a fire in Brick Lane in March. Funds are urgently needed for her campaign. Make cheques/postal orders out to 'Afia Begum Defence Fund' and send to Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.

That's what the new internal immigration controls are designed to achieve. From 1 October onwards NHS administrators have got the go-ahead to accuse anyone who looks 'foreign' of falsely claiming entitlement to free treatment. From 18 October onwards all claimants at dole offices are to be 'visually assessed'. If they look black their details automatically go onto a benefit claims computer. If they look really suspicious, that information goes to the Home Office.

Who needs them?

The machinery has been set up, the data is being processed, to rid the ailing

British economy of the extra burden of maintaining unemployed black workers, even at subsistence level. As for their health, who needs a healthy black workforce when there are millions of whites queueing at the factory gates?

The recent Government 'think tank' proposals for privatising the entire welfare state show the shape of things to come. How convenient to target 'foreign-

ers' as the biggest burden of all.

This is the brutal logic behind the Government's racist interrogation procedures. It's a logic Her Majesty's Opposition cannot answer. Having conceded that Britain should not 'unilaterally abandon all control of immigration', the Labour Party is in no position to defend black claimants or patients from being denied their welfare rights. After all, the race checks are designed to root out 'illegals', as defined by successive governments' immigration laws. Such 'illegals' include AFIA BEGUM (see photo) who faces immediate deportation after her husband was killed in a Brick Lane fire. Protesting about the race checks whilst continuing to support immigration controls, is as futile as trying to fight redundancies while simultaneously accepting the boss's right to his profits.

If the Labour Party has no answers, anti-racist workers have. They have the power to kill the Government's racist schemes — by refusing to implement them. Workers in the dole offices have already registered overwhelming opposition to 'ethnic monitoring' in their returns to the CPSA's recent internal ballot (see the next step, No 27, September 1982). NHS workers in many areas have stipulated non-cooperation with the race checks as one of their demands in the current strike. But the leaders of the public sector unions who could wreck the checks are dragging their feet. In some cases (like NALGO and the SCPS) they are not even putting up token opposition to the race checks.

This is what WAR is out to change in October. Through workplace meetings, pickets and industrial action we intend to build up enough rank and file pressure to force the bureaucrats to respond. Our flying squads will be out all month — at hospital admissions desks and fresh claims counters in the doles — checking on the checks, and raising hell wherever they are being implemented.

If you want to fight the race checks, don't hang around for Roy Hattersley. Get out on the streets and into the workplaces with WAR.

No race checks!

ACTION AGAINST THE RACE CHECKS HOSPITALS ●

From 1 October onwards WAR will be outside and inside hospitals throughout Britain checking on the checks — and wrecking the DHSS's plans.

DOLES ●

From 18 October we shall be giving the Department of Employment the same treatment by organising workplace action at UBOs everywhere.

Phone 01-274 3951 immediately for full details.

New video

NEW VIDEO FILM

Out this month. See the Workers March on the road, ELWAR in action, black workers up against the bureaucrats and much, much more. Order copies now for showing at workplaces and colleges.

Full details from WAR, Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.



AFIA BEGUM WILL STAY!
PICKET HOME OFFICE
Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1
(near St James' Park tube)

THURSDAY 7 OCTOBER 12 — 2pm

Afia will stay!

4-8 SEPTEMBER
WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM
'We are WAR'



The Workers March on the road

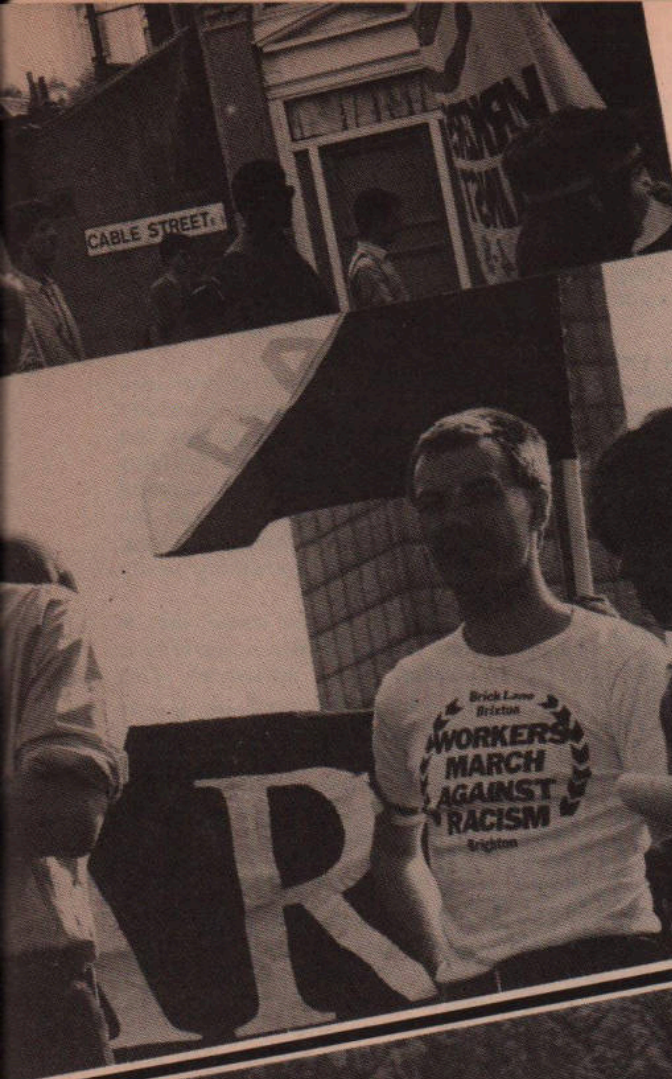
Singing and chanting, sun and driving rain, marchers covered the streets to Brighton in three days. After two nights under the stars with entertainment by the marchers, queues from the catering and political discussion around, we were taken on the TUC.



Bradford 12 Campaign * Thornton Heath Campaign * Reggie Yates Campaign * Paul Worrell Campaign * Indian Workers Association (GB) * Pakistan Workers Association * Birmingham Black Workers Association * Bangladeshi Welfare Association * Asian Welfare Association * Pakistani Welfare Association * Asian Youth Movement * Asian Youth Association Society of Black Lawyers * Peckham Black Women's Group * Namibia Support Committee * Birmingham Provisional Sinn Fein * Brighton ANL Birmingham CARF * Haringey Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Committee * Arthur Scargill * Phil Davies (FTAT NEC) * Rodney Bickerstaffe (NUPE General Secretary) * Pat Denning (NUPE President) * Terry Wood (COHSE EC) * Dennis Barry (Laurence Scott's Convenor) * Nirmal Roy (Ealing NALGO Executive) * John Kirwin-Davey (President Leeds Trades Council) * Jack Taylor (Yorkshire Area NUM President) * Derek Cattle (Merseyside Area Officer NUTGW) * Henry Suss (National Executive NUTGW) * C A Lomas (Divisional Organiser North-West AUEW [TASS])

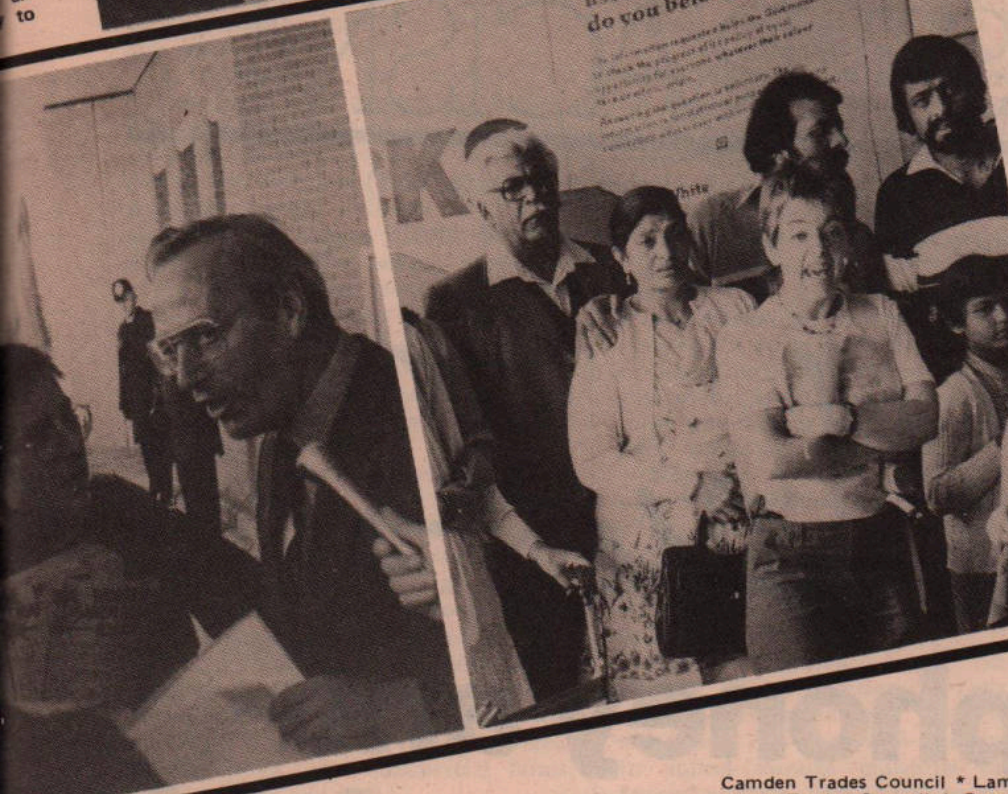
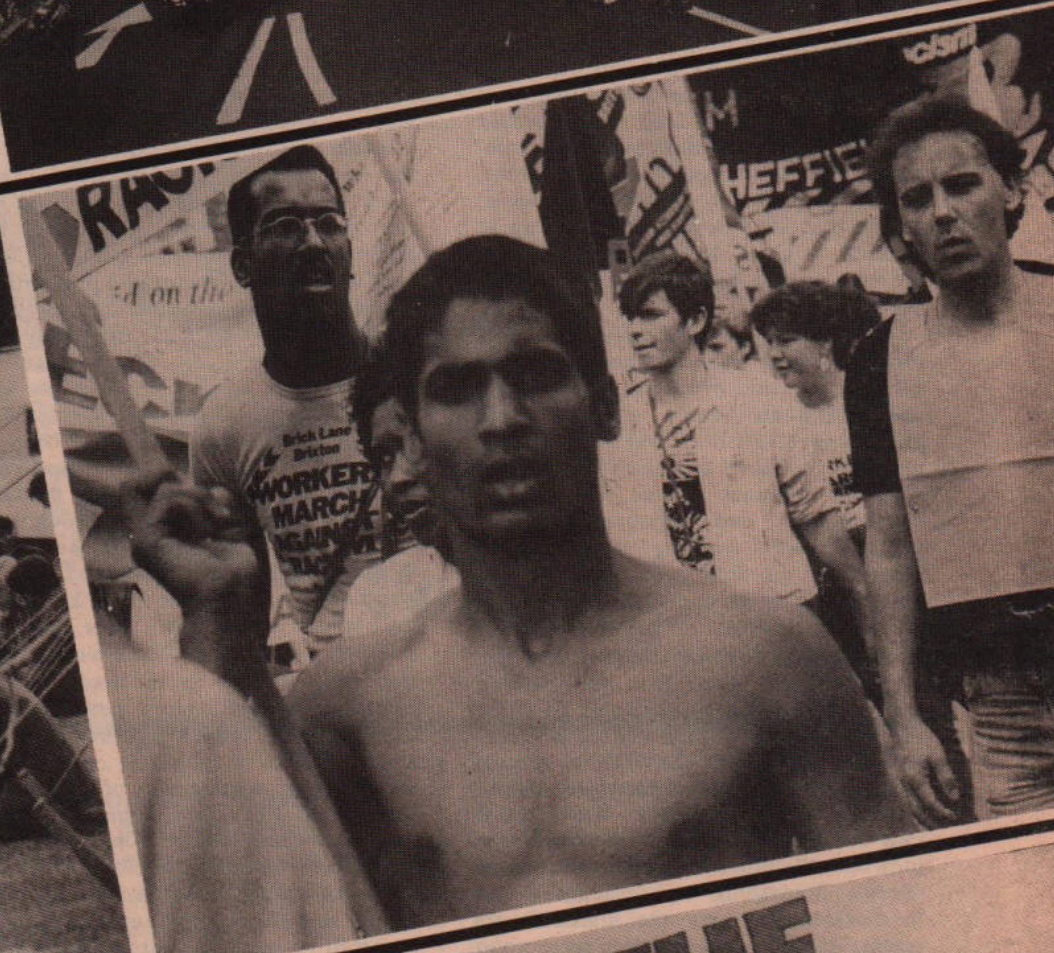
Heathfields Strike Committee * Kaplans Strike Committee * Rulecan Women's Strike Committee * Mono Pumps Joint Shop Stewards Committee * Birmingham Housing Management District Direct Labour JSSC Joint Works Committee Leyland Vehicles * South Yorkshire Crafts Committee (Steel Industry) * Gardners Joint Shop Stewards Committee * Sheffield Works Department JSSC * Liverpool Corporation Building

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



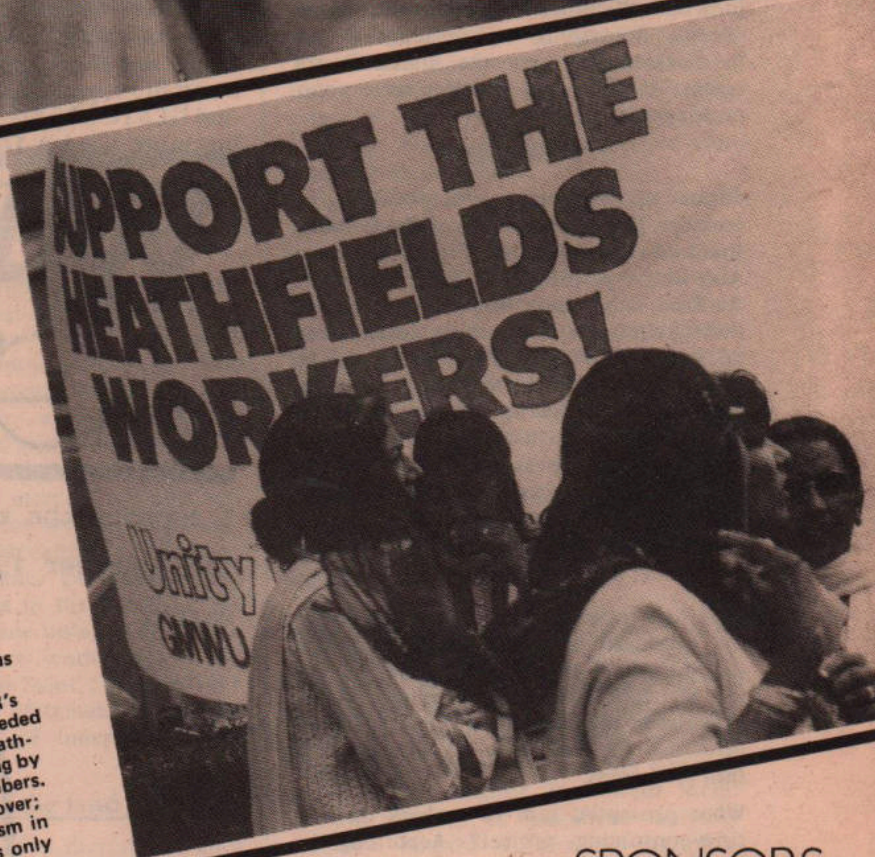
From Brick Lane to Brixton: the first leg of the Workers March

Labour MP Reg Race (left) told the marchers: 'The first step is to clear the racists out of our own movement — and that includes the trade unions and the Labour Party'. Other speakers at rallies on the first day included Lambeth MP John Tilley, Lewisham Councillor Russell Proffitt, Haringey Council deputy leader Bernie Grant and GLC Councillor Valerie Wise.



The Workers March hits the TUC

The General Council would not meet our deputation, but we got the issues of Heathfields and Shaikat Darr's deportation raised inside the Conference all the same. In fact the bureaucrats, under pressure from hundreds of chanting demonstrators, promised us the earth! But they have not delivered much. WAR's support is still urgently needed on the picket lines at Heathfields, to stop the scabbing by SOGAT and TGWU members. The Workers March is over; the struggle against racism in the labour movement is only just beginning.



SPONSORS:

ASTMS W London medical branch * ASTMS NE London medical branch
ASTMS N London medical branch 042 * ASTMS Coventry City * ASTMS
Manchester Central * ASTMS Merseyside Community branch * ASTMS
Midlands Health Services * AUEW Tower Hamlets * AUEW Ashton No 2
AUEW (TASS) Coventry No 4 * AUEW (TASS) Coventry District Com-
mittee * AUEW (TASS) Leeds * COHSE Manchester 332 * COHSE Wad-
sley branch (Sheffield) * COHSE West Leeds 257 branch * COHSE 906
branch (Bangour) * CPSSA Marylebone UBO * CPSSA South East London
(DE) * CPSSA South West London (DE) * CPSSA Greater Manchester Broad
Left * CPSSA Salford DHSS * CPSSA North West London (DE) * CPSSA
Crown Agents (East Kilbride) * CPSSA DHSS West London * CPSSA MSC
Manchester West * CPSSA Manchester and East Lanes (DE) * CPSSA HSE
HQ branch * NALGO Executive Hammersmith * NALGO Walsall Coun-
cil * NALGO Executive Hackney * NALGO Birmingham * NALGO
Tower Hamlets (Health branch) * NALGO Executive Institute of Educa-
tion * NALGO Housing Association branch * NALGO Birmingham and
Solihull (Health branch) * NALGO Kent County * NALGO Manchester
Area Health Service * NATFHE City and East London College * NUJ
Press and PR branch * NUJ Chapel NALGO HQ * NUM Brookhouse Col-
liery * NUM Woolley Colliery (Barnsley) * NUM Kinsley Drift (Ponte-
fract) * NUM Clayton West (Huddersfield) * NUM Houghton Main (Barns-
ley) * NUM Manvers Main (Rotherham) * NUM Silverwood (Rotherham)
NUM Barnburgh (Yorkshire) * NUM Beighton (Yorkshire) * NUM Highgate
(S Yorkshire) * NUM Armthorpe (Doncaster) * NUM Bentley (Doncaster)
NUPE Race Relations Advisory Sub-Committee * NUPE Brent Health
District * NUPE GLC General Services Branch * NUPE Leeds No 1 branch
(Council workers) * NUPE University College Hospital * NUPE Manchester
Royal Infirmary * NUPE Moorfields Eye Hospital * NUPE Hammersmith
North * NUPE West Midlands Divisional Council * NUPE Brent Health
branch * NUPE London Divisional Council * NUPE Coventry Hospital *
NUPE Prestwick * NUPE West London * NUR Holborn * NUR District
Council (London Transport) * SCPS Metropolitan branch * TGWU 1/311
(Bow Bus Garage) * TGWU 5/177 (Imperial Metal Industries) * TGWU
9/10 (South Yorkshire Buses) * TGWU 9/12 (Leeds Buses) * TGWU/
ACTTS 1/128 * TGWU/ACTSS 6/389 * TGWU/ACTSS 9/998 (Leeds) *
TGWU/ACTSS 1/111 (Housing Workers) * TGWU/ACTSS 1964 Task
Force joint shop * UCATT Brixton No 1 branch * UCATT Sheffield No 1
branch * UCATT Sheffield 2nd WC103 * UCATT Crook branch (Durham)

Camden Trades Council * Lambeth Trades Council * Battersea and Wands-
worth Trades Council * Greenwich Trades Council EC * Oxford Trades
Council * Tameside Trades Council

Revolutionary Gay Men's Caucus * Leeds Unemployed Group * Brighton
Women's Centre * Springfield Estate Tenants Association * Southwark
Unemployed People's Action * Dartford Unemployed Group * East Lon-
don Claimants Union * London Gay Workshops * South Sheffield ICCP
Halfway Home Project (Sheffield) * Association for Adult and Continuing
Education

West Midlands Labour Group * Camden Council Labour Group * Green-
wich Council Community Affairs Committee * Graisleigh LP (Wolverham-
pton) * Droylsden East Ward LP (Tameside) * Hale and Bowden LP (Alt-
rincham) * Southfields LP * Crofton Park Ward LP (Deptford) * Hackney
North LP * Balham LP * Warley East LP * Selly Oak LP * Soho and
Victoria LP (Birmingham) * Southam LP (Leamington Spa) * Horsely
Constituency LP * Sandwell Tribune Group * London Labour Briefing
Brighton Labour Briefing * Chichester Constituency LPYS * Horsforth
LPYS (Leeds)

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

ony Benn MP * Reg Race MP * Jo Richardson MP * John Tilley MP *
Joan Lestor MP * Joan Maynard MP * Les Huckfield MP * Alf Dubs MP *
Michael Meacher MP * Ken Livingstone * Paul Boateng * Valerie Wise *
Bernie Grant (Deputy Leader Haringey Council) * Lorna Cohen (Leeds
Councillor) * Denise Robson (Hackney Councillor) * Matthew Warburton
Lambeth Councillor) * Judy Thomas (Leeds Councillor) * Arthur Latham
Chairman Greater London LP) * Vidya Anand (Greater London Regional
Council) * Bob Quick (Liverpool City Councillor) * Anthony Kendall
Leader Hackney Council) * Graham Stringer (Chairman Manchester CLP)
Bliss (Lewisham Councillor) * Jeremy Corbyn (Prospective Parlia-
mentary candidate Islington) * George Mudie (Leader of Leeds City Coun-
cil) * Dave Sullivan (Lewisham Councillor) * Phil Turner (Leader Camden
Council) * David Fryer (Southwark Councillor) * Maureen Colquhoun
Hackney Councillor) * Victoria Lubbock (Hackney Councillor) * Ron
Hartley (Prospective Parliamentary candidate Leeds) * Gerri Ross (GLC
Councillor Hackney North) * David Wetzel (GLC Transport Committee
Chairman) * Nigel Todd (Newcastle City Councillor) * Lewis Herbert
GLC Councillor Lewisham West) * Chris Knight (London Labour Briefing
Editorial Board) * Graham Bash (London Labour Briefing Editorial Board)

Stalinists against the Workers March

Lies and slanders

THE WORKERS March Against Racism has upset a few people. Martin Webster is one of them. At a recent National Front rally in Fulham, he fulminated against WAR and declared that he would soon be leading a 'white workers' march' along the same route. In the event, neither that threat — nor the fascists' claims that they would smash us up at Redhill — came to anything. Clearly, the master race has got a few problems at present.

But they aren't the only ones. The other political parties who took deep offence at the Workers March were the Communist Party and its more Moscow-loyal offshoot, the New Communist Party. These organisations are in a state of terminal decline. Decades of collaboration and compromise have whittled away working class support. What's left of their ageing trade union membership is generally to be found in the lower echelons of the bureaucracy, hanging on to their sinecures for dear life.

No wonder then, that they viewed with alarm a march designed to blow the cover on the TUC's anti-racist track-record. After all, the TUC's various 'equal opportunities' bodies are mainly staffed by old Stalinists. When WAR said the TUC should 'put its own house in order', the blood began to rush to their cheeks. Something — anything — had to be done to stop the march in its tracks: the lies and slanders were soon pouring out.

Volunteers

Offers of assistance were not long in coming. The CP secretary of the Greater London Association of Trades Councils Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Committee Steve Radford appointed himself to execute the hatchet job. If you have never heard of the GLATC ARAFC it's because it does not actually do anything. Thus, its secretary has a lot of spare time on his hands. So back in May he embarked on a letter writing campaign.

In a closely-typed two-page 'briefing document' to the GLATC (dated 25 August 1982), Radford modestly recounts how he set about his task:

'I took it upon myself to write to a few of the individuals named on the WAR leaflets (as sponsors of the march) pointing out the fact that their names were being used by this organisation and asking them if they had given permission for their names to be included in their propaganda.'

What prompted him to embark on this time-consuming project? According to Radford, it was because 'several delegates to GLATC and members of individual Trades Councils expressed disbelief at WAR's claims'. Our leaflets, according to them, 'quoted a surprisingly large number of names of leading figures in the labour, trade union and anti-racist movements' as supporting the march.

Surprising? Perhaps it was for Radford and his associates. They have become so used to a state of desperate isolation that they cannot conceive of anyone supporting anything — other than their nearest labour club bar. But for most people, there was nothing surprising about the support the march received. WAR is the most active anti-racist campaign around. Hundreds of individuals and organisations respect our work and share our aims. That's something the veteran sectarians of the CP/NCP cannot stomach. So they launched a systematic campaign to destroy that support.

Lou who?

They were spectacularly unsuccessful. After months of patient work, Radford was not able to produce one piece of evidence to show that the sponsors of the march were not authentic. True, some individuals admitted they did not support the RCP. But then, nobody had asked them to! It looked as though Radford was going to be out of a job, until he found a backer in a fellow Stalinist from Wandsworth — UCATT organiser, Lou Lewis.

Now, Lou Lewis may not be on a par with Benn, Livingstone, Scargill et al. In fact, most people have never heard of him. But, unlike the more prominent sponsors of the march, he was prepared to write a letter saying he would not, could not and had not sponsored the Workers March. And he stated that he wanted this fact to be made known 'in the labour movement'. This fact was a lie. At a meeting in Wandsworth Town Hall early in May in the local election campaign at which Lou Lewis, as the CP candidate was a speaker, he was approached by a supporter of WAR and asked to sign a statement of support for the march. He agreed, signed his name (see below) and donated 50p.

Radford never bothered to check the facts. Lies were what he wanted. As a result, says Radford, 'I was obliged' to report Bro Lewis's request to the GLATC. And GLATC duly felt obliged to circulate the entire London Trades Council move-

ment with a document (dated 20 July) warning delegates against supporting the march. On the authority of nothing more than Lewis's lies the GLATC made the following declaration:

'It has come to the attention of the GLATC that a number of individuals and organisations named are unaware that their names are being used to drum up support for this march.'

Most London Trades Councils took no notice. They are used to the antics of the GLATC which they know is nothing more than a social club for readers of *Marxism Today* and *Soviet Weekly*. But one Trades Council in particular had to take notice. That was Battersea and Wandsworth, Lewis's own constituency. There, at least, thought the GLATC hacks, we can browbeat the delegates into withdrawing official support for the march.

They were disappointed. After a full discussion, to which a WAR speaker was invited, the delegates not only reaffirmed their support for the march: the Trades Council secretary Calum MacIntosh inspected WAR's sponsorship sheet and confirmed that, yes, Lewis had indeed signed in support of the march. It was there in writing for everyone to see! Clearly, there was no question of WAR using unauthorised signatures.

Vomit

At this point, Steve Radford began to beat an ignominious retreat. Three months' work had failed to undermine support for the Workers March — indeed the list of sponsors had expanded to more than 200 individuals and organisations. But if the flabby Communist Party was about to give up the ghost, the New Communist Party was certainly not.

Down in Croydon, NCP'er Chas Fraser had been putting together an abusive and mendacious article on WAR for *The New Worker* (13 August 1982), entitled 'These phoney anti-racists make me sick!'. As a delegate to Croydon Trades Council, he felt particularly sick about the fact that the Workers March was coming through Thornton Heath. Like *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail* and the *Croydon Advertiser*, he felt that an anti-racist march through an area notorious for racist and fascist activities would be 'provocative'.

Fraser declared the march to be 'an invention of Trotskyists and agents-provocateurs' who 'live off immoral earnings'. 'They make me sick', he ejaculated, 'vomit is the name of the WAR game'.

All this jolted the *Morning Star* into action. Its 27 August edition faithfully reproduced a press release from Croydon Trades Council secretary Pete Spalding which denounced the march and accused WAR of 'slandorous attacks' on the trade union movement. 'Deep suspicions' were expressed about everything to do with WAR and the march.

But *The New Worker* made sure it had the last word. 'WAR not wanted', it told its readers on 3 September. This issue was being distributed by a lone NCP'er at the Brighton TUC Conference as hundreds of marchers arrived triumphantly on the sea-front. It was more than his life was worth to continue selling it under the circumstances.

Cleanse our ranks!

WAR is out to cleanse the ranks of the trade union movement. This means not only overt racists, but also the bureaucrats — big and small — who cover up for racism. The coterie around the CP and NCP, liars and frauds though they may be, have been instrumental in paralysing the growth of a strong anti-racist current in the workers' movement. On paper they bemoan the lack of action against racism. Back in October 1980 the GLATC said:

'There has been a general failure by the trade unions to see the need to fight racism within our own ranks as a major priority.' (Policy statement of GLATC Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Committee)

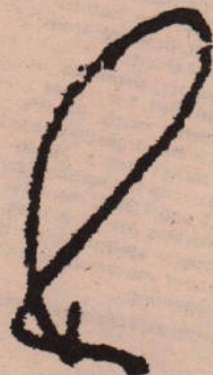
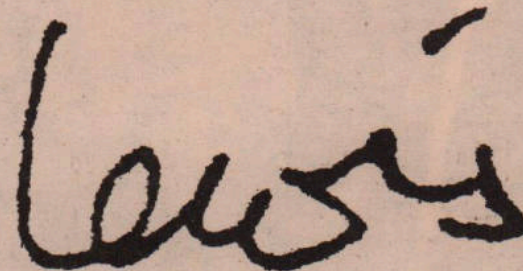
Steve Radford's 'briefing document' concludes by noting 'the desperate need for the movement to give a higher priority to effective action to combat racism'.

In practice, the same people spew out a torrent of abuse at the only organisation that is doing something to achieve that end. It's time the labour movement did itself a favour by getting rid of these hypocrites. Let's get them out of their positions of influence — then we can get on with the job of fighting the bosses.

Judy Harrison

WAR • WORKERS AGAINST RACISM

I support the Workers March Against Racism to the TUC (London to Brighton) in September 1982, and agree to make a donation towards the cost of the march.

These phoney anti-racists make me sick!

By
Chas Fraser

A tenth-rate lie by an obscure ultra-leftist front is exposed in

names quoted by 'WAR' as supporters never gave their consent. The Institute of Race Relation, to name but one, never backed the 'WAR' appeal.

the attempted conference was to achieve the disaffiliation of Tameside Trades Council from the TUC.

In 1981 an RCT front group, 'East London Workers Against

Several trades councils have 'twigged' the RCP game. Croydon Trades Union Council for example, has both a fighting history of anti-racism and anti-RCP stand.

Lou Lewis sponsors the Workers March. (We have deleted the address which was freely supplied.) Although this sponsorship form was widely circulated in response to the attacks on the march and copies sent personally to both Lewis and Radford, nobody has challenged its authenticity.



IT IS NOW two and a half years since the *Second Chimurenga*, the second war of liberation, came to an end with the election victory of Mugabe's ZANU (PF). No sooner was the new government installed than it began to renege on its election promises.

Fruits of independence

Mugabe has laid Zimbabwe wide open to foreign capital. Last year, more than 60 per cent of the shares traded on the stock exchange were those of foreign firms. Mugabe has also made sure that all employers get the firm backing of the state in their dealings with workers. The working class has paid a bitter price for this 'socialist' experiment.

In response to the recession the Government has encouraged the rationalisation of industry. Last year 177 mines were closed down and more than 2000 miners lost their jobs. This year's budget promotes further austerity with more attacks on the consumption level of the working class. The regime raised the prices of cigarettes, beer, petrol and diesel. It increased sales tax from 12 to 15 per cent for general consumer goods and from 15 to 18 per cent for consumer durables. These price rises have been imposed without any increase in the minimum wage.

In the countryside, the situation is becoming desperate. Food shortages — particularly of bread, cooking oil, rice and sugar — have reached crisis proportions. Mugabe's divisive attacks on the Ndebele ethnic group have provoked strife throughout Matebeleland. In June, bread riots erupted in Beitbridge. Thousands of poverty-stricken peasants, mainly women and old men, are fleeing the Western Beitbridge communal areas to find work on commercial farms, picking cotton and fruit.

Mugabe's capitalism

Minutes before last month's budget was announced, Mugabe was on his feet castigating capitalism as 'totally incompatible with humanism and the morality of an equal society' (*Financial Times*, 10 August). Mugabe's speeches are full of rhetoric about socialism and the national interest. But the reality of Zimbabwe stands in stark contrast to Mugabe's promises.

Mugabe has succeeded in implementing measures against workers and peasants

Zimbabwe is on the verge of civil war. Daily skirmishes between Government forces and dissidents create havoc in the countryside. And unrest among workers and peasants has exacerbated tensions further. Independence has brought no benefits to the masses of Zimbabwe. A small clique of capitalists around Premier Robert Mugabe runs the country for itself and for foreign capital. Bob Radcliffe reports.

which the previous white regime could never have carried through. This is the historic role of the ZANU (PF) administration — to reconcile the masses to the realities of capitalism in Zimbabwe. Right from the start, the 'national interest' was proclaimed as a means of suppressing the demands and aspirations of workers. A few weeks after the election, the new Government moved in to crush a strike wave of workers in Harare, Gweru, Mutare, Bulawayo and Kadoma.

In September 1981, all the workers in a hotel in Kariba were sacked when they went on strike. A month later more than a thousand primary school teachers were arrested for going on strike. The Minister of Education and Culture announced that any teacher arrested would be sacked and those who did not return to work immediately would also be dismissed.

When, at the same time, the nurses came out demanding the implementation of pay rises, they were physically attacked by the police. Other strikers have received similar treatment. In February, 1200 striking bus drivers were sacked in Harare.

Mugabe promised a better deal for workers. The Government proudly proclaimed new regulations allowing dismissal only if workers have had the right to appeal through industrial officers. Special workers' committees were established in many factories to provide a semblance of participation in decision-making. But these reforms have made no difference in practice. Workers can still be sacked — the only difference is that now it happens *after* the industrial officer has been consulted. How this farcical 'employment protection' procedure works was revealed in a recent dispute at the Golden Kopje Mine near Chinoyi: 75 miners, including seven of the eight-member works committee were laid off. The mine manager announced that permission had been granted by the

Industrial Relations branch of the Ministry of Labour and Social Services.

The authorities put the blame for the shortages of essential commodities on the workers. The editor of the pro-Mugabe *Sunday Mail* complained about the deterioration in productivity 'due to strikes, indiscipline, absenteeism, malingering and slackening by workers'. He reckoned that 'many African workers misunderstand the meaning of independence'. His conclusion was that the workers needed some education in the harsh realities of life under capitalism: 'The solution to this lies in the hands of the government and trade union leaders who have to teach a new work ethos — the gospel according to Saint Labourer' (11 July). This brutal statement underlines the real meaning of independence in Zimbabwe today.

And on the land

For most Africans, the shortage of land was the most compelling motive for supporting the liberation struggle. While the African reserves were overcrowded, a small circle of Europeans had exclusive control of 47 per cent of the land. Mugabe has done nothing to change this situation. The European farmers continue to control the profitable sector of agriculture while African peasants are doomed to poverty.

Black peasants have given up waiting for government action and have begun to squat on large areas of land. Some 50 000 squatters are reported to have settled on land taken from farmers along the eastern border with Mozambique. The Government has replied with ruthless military terror:

'Police evict 400!... Minister declares war on squatters... Camp demolished as blitz is launched.' (*Moto*, July 1982)

But the peasants have fought back. Angered by government inaction, par-

ticularly in relation to the present drought, passive resistance has broken out in the countryside.

In Matebeleland, the resistance is not so passive. There, ethnic discrimination has fuelled the fire of agrarian unrest. The Shona bourgeoisie around Mugabe has not hesitated to attack the Ndebele minority. Last year 300 dissidents were killed in Bulawayo, but resistance continues in Matebeleland.

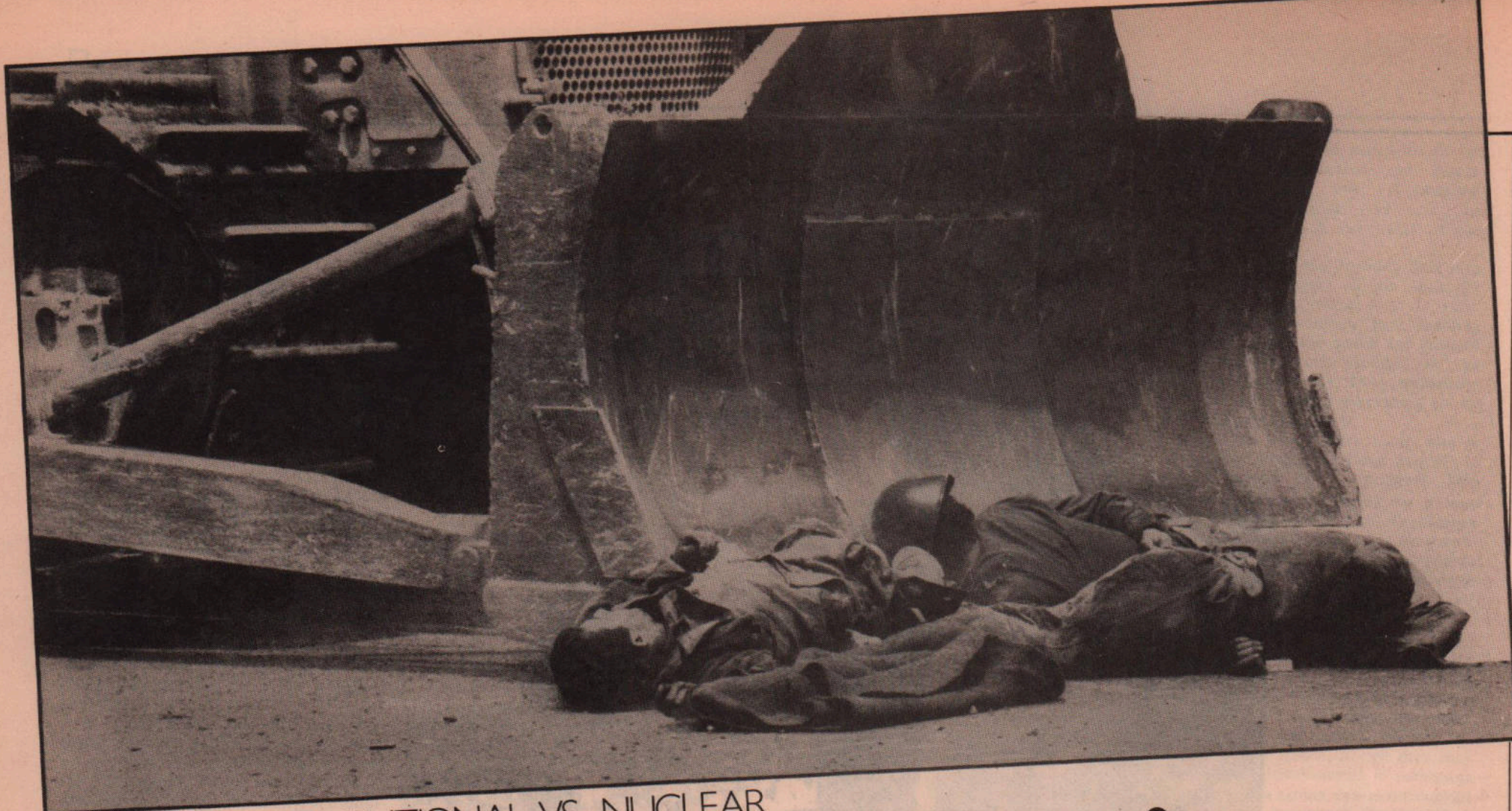
The Government has reacted strongly to the upsurge of rural revolt. The Emergency Powers Regulations, devised by former Premier Ian Smith, were renewed two months ago. Dusk-to-dawn curfews have been imposed in parts of Matebeleland — those who are found more than 50 yards from their homes during curfew hours are liable to be shot. Ndebeles also rightly regard with utmost suspicion the formation of the special Fifth Army Brigade drawn exclusively from Shona ZANLA guerrillas who at present are being trained in a top-secret camp near Inyangu.

Future prospects

The Mugabe regime has continued the repressive traditions established in the pre-independence period. This is inevitable given the unstable character of capitalist relations in Zimbabwe and the commitment of the regime to sustain them. In the attempt to guarantee capitalist stability, Mugabe is forced to discipline the working class and destroy resistance in the countryside.

Mugabe has not relied on coercion alone. His policy of divide and rule has exacerbated ethnic tensions between the Shona and Ndebele peoples. In the short-term this may consolidate a degree of Shona support around the Government, but in the long-term, it will stimulate fragmentation and unrest. The alienation of the Ndebele minority makes continuing conflict inevitable.

The compromises and betrayals of the Mugabe Government have speeded up the process of class polarisation. The regime has lost much of the popular support it enjoyed at independence as Africans have discovered that little has changed since. The lesson for the people of Zimbabwe is that independence without the destruction of the capitalist system makes little difference, and that the new regime, for all its radical rhetoric, is entirely against the interests of the working masses.



CONVENTIONAL VS NUCLEAR The 'alternative war' game

For some time now, CND leaders have been polishing up on their alternatives to nuclear weapons in general and the American nuclear umbrella in particular. Here James Wood describes the evolution of their thinking and looks at how some recently published books relate to it.

DURING THE LAST Labour Government there was considerable friction between Britain and the USA on defence policy, both over replacements to Polaris (Chevaline vs Poseidon) and over the disclosure, in June 1977, that the USA had decided to go ahead and make neutron bombs. But it was NATO's December 1979 decision to site cruise missiles in Europe that really prompted a furore over American nuclear weapons. Casting around for other options became a more urgent business.

In ruling class circles there was much concern about America 'decoupling' from Europe and leaving it to fight a 'limited' nuclear war on its own. But in Britain's newly burgeoning peace movement this concern was joined with hysteria about the special threat to mankind represented by nuclear weapons. The arguments advanced were:

- there are enough nuclear weapons around already to kill every man, woman and child many times over. Building more is therefore irrational
- the scale of devastation afforded by nuclear weapons is unique
- the decision to use nuclear weapons rests on one man, 'his finger on the button' and entirely out of our control. Let's take a look at this more closely.

'Overkill' is a military fact of life. In the First World War there were 1.8 billion lives at risk and nine billion bullets available to end them with. In the Second World War the USA expended 1100 kilos of munitions for every enemy soldier it killed, a figure which rose to 5600 kilos during Korea and 17 600 in Vietnam. All of these wars were fought for 'rational' reasons: overkill is not peculiar to nuclear weapons at all.

The 'scale of devastation' point is wrong too. It is true that 70 000 people died in Hiroshima, but it is not so well known that 85 000 died in a firebombing raid in Tokyo a few months before. Even the standard measure of nuclear explosions — the megaton — is misleading. A million tons of old-fashioned TNT would do a lot more damage than the average nuclear warhead, for in a nuclear explosion most of the energy goes up and out, not sideways (the mushroom cloud that haunts CND so much is graphic evidence of this).

As for the finger-on-the-button line, this is specious. Every imperialist-initiated war this century has been unleashed by authorities 'remote' from popular control.

Nuclear weapons are worse than ordinary weapons. But the difference is quantitative, not qualitative. True, nuclear weapons score in speed of delivery (because they pack a big punch in a small volume) — but who is to say that weeks of dying in Beirut is preferable to death within four minutes? True, they differ from normal weapons in their long-term effects (fall-out, chromosomal damage, etc) — but who, looking at the devastation Dresden suffered for years after it was bombed by the Allies, can say that non-nuclear weapons leave no long-term effects?

The ultimate argument that nuclear weapons are a race apart is advanced by Jonathan Schell in his widely acclaimed *The fate of the earth* (Cape, £7.95; Picador, £1.95). Schell says that nuclear weapons threaten the destruction of the world's ecological balance, and, with this, the total extinction of mammals on this planet. This may be true; but we should not imagine that a prolonged non-nuclear war could not do the same. In this year's edition of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's invaluable *World armaments and disarmament* series (Taylor & Francis, £22.50) there is a spine-chilling chapter titled 'The environmental aftermath of war in Vietnam'. Multiply the damage described there a few times, to take account of improvements in military technology over the past decade, and man's natural habitat looks set for a shaky future even without nuclear weapons.

In the outcry over cruise, however, few in the CND camp questioned the wisdom that nuclear weapons are extraordinary. Since only America and Russia were equipped with nuclear weapons of any substance, for the nuclear disarmament call for a nuclear-free Europe followed at once — especially as Eurocentric hostility to America now had considerable influence among the bourgeoisie. Yet a nuclear-free Europe was not the same as a full alternative defence policy. That was still to come.

First, the 'theoretical' foundations for alternative defence schemes had to be

laid. For peace movement leaders, what had to be explained was (a) why the government indulged in arms programmes of irrational scale, and (b) how it could be persuaded to adopt another course — one that would in fact be in its better interests. Here Labour's Mary Kaldor, an academic expert on the arms race came in.

'Anything but what we've got now'

One of the very earliest expositions of Kaldor's case emerged in 1980, in a chapter in *Technical innovation and British economic performance*, a book published by the Science Policy Research Unit, Sussex University — home of Kaldor's research collaborator, sometime Communist Party member, Harry Dean, now head of the Armament and Disarmament Information Unit. Since then Kaldor's theories have changed hardly at all: her latest book *The baroque arsenal* (Andre Deutsch, £7.95) and her essay on 'Warfare and capitalism' in *Exterminism and cold war* (Verso, £5.50) simply codify her arguments. In each case, Kaldor concludes by calling for the development of an alternative defence strategy, even though she leaves the exact details to analysts with less lofty concerns than herself. Her story goes as follows.

Like America and Russia, but unlike West Germany and Japan, Britain has squandered opportunities for post-war growth by lavish spending on arms. Commercial competition, inter-service rivalry and the international arms race ensure that the British arms sector is technologically very dynamic, for new technologies of destruction are no sooner introduced than they are made obsolete by the arrival of other technologies, so making the introduction of yet more technology necessary. However, the arms sector is at the same time conservative, because the military continue to be organised around weapons systems based on out-of-date Second World War industries — cars, tanks and aeroplanes. While generals remain fixated on the combat methods of 1939-45, therefore, arms manufacturers laugh all the way to the bank. Partly because they make weapons on very long lead-times and experience major cost over-runs, they are in a pos-

ition to charge the government exorbitant prices and thus rack up huge profits, so drawing investment away from the civilian sector. As a result, they concentrate not on the improvements to the production process that characterise mass-market industries 'in their prime', but on immensely expensive refinements to custom-built products, which is 'decadent'. Encouraged by the government and afflicted by the myopia that comes with over-centralisation, arms contractors try to cram more and better 'performance characteristics' on fewer weapons systems: thus, for example, the development of the Anglo-German-Italian Multi-role Combat Aircraft, the Tornado, which accounts for no less than 40 per cent of the RAF's budget.

The problem as Kaldor sees it, is that each enhancement of weapon performance brings fewer benefits but more costs than the last. Each, too, means that weapons systems require more logistical back-up than ever before (America's F-15 and F-16 fighters rely on at least 70 000 spare parts). In turn, this makes them as dear to operate as they are to produce; and it makes them less and less reliable. We are therefore in the age of 'baroque' weapons which serve no useful purpose but to earn their makers money and to serve their owners' desire for prestige.

But there is a way out. An enlightened (Labour) government could defend Britain more effectively and also more cheaply by adopting, say, precision guided munitions (PGMs) — 'small missiles, single-purpose vehicles, ships or aircraft'. Such systems would be 'primarily suitable for the defence of territory against invasion' rather than nasty offensive applications. They would rely on today's modern, progressive electronics industry for their production.

Following in a tradition that extends back at least to the First World War (see, for example, GH Perris, *The war traders*, Chancery Lane Press, 1914), she counterposes peace-loving civilian capitalist firms and the gentle institutions of bourgeois democracy to rapacious, bellicose arms manufacturers. But her analysis does not stand up. First, 'baroque', one-off products are not confined to the arms sector: whichever firms have a guaranteed buyer in the shape of the state, the same things

go on — look at the nuclear power stations, or indeed, Concorde. In the drug industry, too (another of Labour's favourite targets), baroque technological innovation is the name of the game; and so it is in hi-fi systems as well. Second, the state, as guarantor of the general interests of capital, does not need Mary Kaldor to remind it to take steps against rip-offs in the arms sector. The Excess Profits Tax of the Second World War, the prosecution of Ferranti some years ago and the increasing tendency for the Government to demand that arms manufacturers save it money by gearing their products to export markets all bear witness to this. Third, PGMs aren't that cheap and, as Kaldor herself concedes, counter-PGMs are already under development.

Of course, insofar as weapons systems are only tested in battle, it is always possible that military hardware built in peacetime can turn out more sophisticated than it needs to be. But there the matter ends. War is war and, from its point of view, the bourgeoisie is right to prepare for the worst. Blimpish attitudes, the desire to fashion symbols of glorious campaigns gone by — these have nothing to do with it.

'A non-nuclear Britain'

Back in 1980 few people had read Kaldor. But the Government's announcement in July that it intended to replace Polaris with the £5 billion Trident C4 missile made sure that her ideas quickly gained ground in the Labour Party. That same month, the *New Statesman* ran a series of articles by distinguished contributors on defence policy. The most significant was by Robin Cook MP, a rising Labour spokesman on defence, entitled 'Must defence be nuclear?' (27 July). Cook argued that, although leaving NATO was not on (because to do so would encourage West Germany to gain military pre-eminence in Europe and thus encourage attack by the Warsaw Pact), Britain spent too much on it, especially with respect to nuclear weapons. What 'we' ought to be doing, Cook contended, was developing defence against the Russians on British soil. He had in mind the kind of strategy adopted by the French and Italian Resistance during Nazi occupation.

The debate was now opening up, and it flourished in response to growing rumblings among bourgeois defence strategists. In September 1980, Tory Defence Minister Francis Pym resigned, unwilling to impose the all-round cuts in military spending demanded by a Treasury harassed as never before by the need to reduce expenditure in a recession. On 12 January 1981, John Nott arrived at his desk at the Ministry, concluded that Trident was indispensable and began a 10-year forward look at defence policy. By May it was clear that three quarters of his cuts were to hit the Navy: as a consequence, Navy Under Secretary Keith Speed resigned.

Meanwhile, in a discussion paper for the Alternative Defence Commission, Bradford University, *Protest and survive* co-editor Dan Smith had taken Cook's ideas still further. Dated March 1981 and 'not to be quoted or referred to without the author's permission' (sorry Dan!), the paper explored no less than seven options for non-nuclear defence of Britain. Here they are:

A•Simply remove all nuclear weapons from the British armed forces. Problem: we're still locked into NATO, which is nuclear even if we aren't

B•Lessen dependence on NATO by reducing the British Army on the Rhine (BAOR). Problem: we'd still be involved in a nuclear organisation

C•Get rid of BAOR altogether. Problem: our aircraft would still be flying over West Germany and would therefore be complicit with NATO

D•Get out of West Germany altogether. Problem: we're still involved with NATO, chiefly via the Navy in the East Atlantic, North Sea and Channel (which provides 70 per cent of NATO's forces there) and by airborne early warning systems; but also by the provision of British staging posts for US troops

E•Limit cooperation with NATO still further (cut bits of D). Still the same old problem

F•Pull out of NATO altogether and go for an independent defence policy. This is no problem: the Soviet Union may have the capability to invade or incinerate Britain, but has no basic interest in doing so — and getting out of NATO removes any contingent interest it might have. Britain would then be involved, not in expensive, retaliatory, nuclear deterrence, but only in cheap, defensive, 'insurance policy' deterrence against a direct threat to the British state by Russia, or indeed anybody. By 2001, this would mean that our forces would reduce to, say, as little as 80 000 regular soldiers and 70 000 reserves; 21 frigates, 16 submarines and 25 patrol craft; more than 300 combat and reconnaissance aircraft (including 48 Harriers and 36 Jaguars); 70 helicopters and 12 squadrons of surface-to-air missiles

G•Associate with other non-nuclear European countries in some kind of pact. Leaving option G for the future, Smith naturally plumped for option F. Indeed an independent, non-nuclear defence policy appeared so attractive to him that he was prepared to stomach continued membership of a nuclear NATO after all. That, he felt, would be a small price to pay.

With Smith's paper, the shape of CND's alternative defence strategy was becoming much clearer. A consensus was emerging. By the September 1981 issue of *New Socialist*, Kaldor was also arguing that NATO was OK — provided it went non-nuclear: indeed she contended that Atlanticists like Schmidt were so worried about America decoupling from a nuclear war that they too would be prepared to entertain the idea. It was left to SDP leader David Owen, in a speech to the British Association for the Advancement of Science (sic) that same month, to draw the logic of the disarmers' case.

Owen's speech is contained in *The nuclear arms race* (Frances Pinter, £12.50). It is one of the first public airings in Britain of the view that the way to avoid a nuclear war in Europe is to stay in a nuclear NATO but to raise the nuclear 'threshold' by increasing the West's conventional forces in Europe:

'To be certain of holding over a few days, let alone weeks, a Warsaw Pact surprise conventional military attack, few would deny that NATO needs on the ground in Western Europe more tanks, aircraft and weapons... We are not confident that our conventional defence can stop a Warsaw Pact attack and... we reserve the right to threaten the first use of nuclear weapons... Until the non-nuclear strategists face up to this issue of Western conventional forces inferiority, their nuclear strategy lacks all credibility.'

Six months later, Smith did 'face up to this issue'. Recycling his old option F to readers of *New Socialist*, he argued that the withdrawal of a newly unilateral Britain from NATO would be tantamount to deserting the European peace movement. Instead, he looked forward to a nuke-free Britain in a NATO that had completed 'the development of strategy and force structures capable of mounting a defence without early resort to nuclear weapons' ('Fighting for peace — inside NATO', *New Socialist*, March 1982). Smith's policy was simple. Britain should dispense with nukes and opt for cheap conventional defence instead; our NATO allies should build up their conventional forces; nukes could be used on the Continent — but only as a last resort.

'Everybody agrees'

As Smith and Kaldor's tired collection of essays *Disarming Europe* (Merlin Press, £3.60) suggests, not every disarmer will allow for the possibility of nuclear weapons on the Continent. But the fact that Kaldor has felt called upon to say that support for a no-first-use-of-nuclear-weapons pledge from NATO 'should not detract from' the call for a nuclear-free Europe (*New Statesman*, 6 August) shows which way the wind is blowing. And, while nuclear weapons on British soil still evoke knee-jerk reactions from CND defence strategists, their proposals look less like radical alternatives to

nukes and more like sensible additions. The reason is straightforward: over the past nine months the ruling class has become increasingly fond of conventional weapons.

Four developments have been responsible for this. The first was Trident. In the New Year the Government moved towards buying Trident D5 at twice the price of Trident C4. This led to an outcry. Keith Speed and dockyard MPs of all parties complained that pressures to cut the Navy were likely to intensify. Field Marshall Lord Carver questioned the whole value of an independent nuclear deterrent, arguing that the best way to ensure that US nukes are used to protect Britain is to send, as requested by America, more conventional troops to assist US forces in West Germany ('Why Britain should reject Trident', *The Sunday Times*, 21 February).

Though Trident went through on 12 March, a sizeable body of bourgeois opinion favoured a cheaper system (hanging on to the Polaris/Chevaline or trying sea-launched cruise missiles) and extra funds for non-nuclear arms.

The second development was, of course, the Falklands war. This, the biggest naval operation the world has seen since the Second World War, reinforced the importance of conventional weaponry and of Britain's traditional powers of improvisation (Dunkirk and all that). It convinced *The Sunday Times* defence correspondent Jon Connell that nukes were nothing compared to the 'Poor Bloody Infantry'. It forced Nott to reverse a number of the Navy cuts he had previously ordered; and, most recently, it has led to renewed calls to put Britain's merchant marine on a war footing (*The Times*, 15 September).

The third development was the publication, shortly before Reagan's May proposal for fresh arms control talks (START), of a number of influential bourgeois tracts challenging the US administration's idea of a limited nuclear war in Europe. The issues that form the background to this are complex, and are treated exhaustively in Lawrence Hagen's collection *The crisis in Western security* (Croom Helm, £13.95); but what emerged from the likes of former US Defence Secretary Robert MacNamara and London's International Institute of Strategic Studies were new pleas for bolstering of NATO's conventional forces in Europe.

The final development was perhaps the most sinister. It was the growth of quiet but persistent pressure for the revival of something approximating to conscription. In the spring, Nott announced 'adventure training' for young people with a military bent. On 23 June *The Times* came out with a major leader calling for faster expansion of the Territorial Army and greater involvement of temporary, semi-professional civilian specialists (medics, electronics engineers, etc) with it. Then, on 31 July, came the seminal issue of *The Economist*, complete with cover story titled 'Without the Bomb'. This not only showed how a 1.5 per cent increase in NATO conventional expenditure would be enough to keep the Russians at bay (and dispense with a fair number of cruise missiles and battlefield nuclear weapons); it also noted that 'very-rapid-mobilisation readiness' would be necessary if Britain were ever to help fight the Russians by conventional means for a period of more than 30 days.

As Michael Clarke and Marjorie Mowlam's collection *Debate on disarmament* (RKP, £3.95) makes clear, late last year Kaldor, CND leader Michael Pentz, the Reverend John Robinson, the Newcastle University Nuclear Disarmament Group and Jonathan Dibleby had all listened to Norwegian professor Johan Galtun describe the merits of Switzerland's 'people's militia'. And, as well-informed journalist Martin Walker has revealed, during the first half of this year Lord Carver, Dan Smith, the Bradford Alternative Defence Commission and others held a series of seminars at St Anthony's College, Oxford on 'guerrilla defence' (*The Guardian*, 14 August). As far as strategy went, the disarmers had got to the idea of a citizens' army first. But the bourgeoisie was not far behind.

Conclusion

Nott has bought a system which gives Britain the capacity for a first-strike. When asked why he still favoured an independent nuclear capability, he bluntly replied that nobody could tell what state the Atlantic Alliance would be in in the future. Such lack of confidence in US protection the *Financial Times* rightly termed 'Gaullist' (12 March). Of course, the Trident decision enraged the disarmers and the Labour left, because for them the American technology on which the missile relies is further evidence of Britain's subordination to the USA; but when an ambitious young television reporter tried to corner Nott on this in the wake of his recent decision to have Trident serviced in the USA, he replied that if Britain fell out with America we could and would simply service Trident ourselves.

The ruling class is deadly serious about Trident. Just because Britain is not a world power in the American sense does not mean that it does not have global interests or that it is unprepared to back up the preservation of those interests with force. Britain's £67 billion overseas investments make a combination of both nuclear and conventional weapons essential. Now there is more talk of the need for rapid deployment of the army and of the need to fight the (newly discovered) Soviet naval menace with more ships.

Meanwhile CND's nuclear strategists continue to single out nuclear weapons as the great evil of our times. When more than a thousand Palestinians die at the hands of conventional weapons in Chatila they refuse to take the point. No matter that nuclear weapons absorb only a few per cent of Britain's defence budget; they and only they are the problem.

Mary Kaldor? She is in good company. *Financial Times* leaders also worry about the 'one characteristic which is common to all forms of defence procurement, whether nuclear or conventional; the tendency of defence ministries worldwide always to go for increasingly complex and advanced equipment' ('Inflation and the arms race', 12 March 1982). They complain: 'Yet when the piece of equipment finally arrives... not merely is it many times more expensive than originally budgeted for, but too often it does not even work very well'. When Parliament held a post-mortem on Britain's military performance in the Falklands war, it was right-wing Tory backbench leader Edward du Cann who called for an end to baroque naval technology and a return to what he termed 'Woolies' ships.

Dan Smith? It is a remarkable irony that a man of Labour's virulently anti-American left can uphold an all-American institution like NATO. It is another remarkable irony that he can proclaim his internationalist loyalty to the European peace movement in the same article that he says that the Continent may have to wait to follow Britain on the non-nuclear path.

All that the alternative weapons strategies amount to is this. Insofar as they favour maintaining or increasing Britain's conventional forces, the bourgeoisie takes them on board. Insofar as they draw the line at nukes, the bourgeoisie ridicules them. As *The Economist* points out (31 July), Japan was 'non-nuclear' when Hiroshima took place; as for 'no-first-use' policies, they are uncheckable, unenforceable, and bound to be overturned when the going gets rough.

The function of the alternative strategists is to win workers who hate militarism around to conventional defence. Once that is done, the ruling class extends the argument to the nuclear terrain with little difficulty. While talking peace, therefore, the alternative strategists prepare for war. Literally.

More than 60 years ago the great German revolutionary Karl Liebknecht pointed out that Switzerland's 'people's militia' was adept at shooting down strikers. It was Liebknecht who invented the slogan 'Not a penny, not a gun for the bourgeoisie'. This must be our slogan. Liebknecht was executed with the acquiescence of the alternative strategists of his day. We must avenge him.

REAGAN'S NEW cold war rhetoric has failed to convince European imperialists that they should forget their trade wars with America and unite behind the United States against the Soviet Union. However, it has succeeded in terrifying a large proportion of the American population.

Freeze

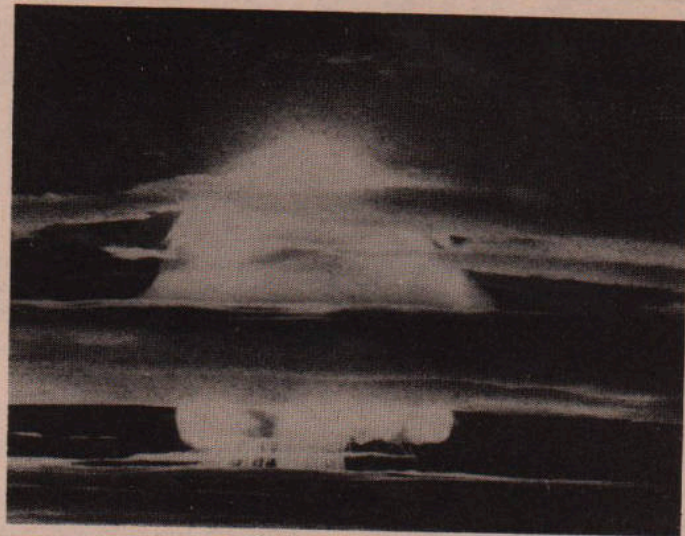
According to a recent *New York Times* survey, 76 per cent of Americans are convinced that nuclear war will happen within the next 10 years. Some, including America's two million 'survivalists', have decided it is inevitable. They have moved their families into bunkers or onto mountain tops or set up private armies preparing to deal with their competitors for what is left after the holocaust. Others have joined the 'non-survivalists', who practice sprinting to areas where the missiles are expected to land to ensure that they are amongst the first to die. Still others who are not prepared to accept the inevitability of World War Three just yet have flocked to the movement demanding a 'freeze' on the testing, deployment and production of nuclear weapons. Their efforts seem to have won some impressive support; 'freeze' resolutions have been passed by many town meetings and state legislatures, they suffered the narrowest of defeats in the US Congress, and they were backed by a demonstration of almost a million people in New York in June. The political thrust of the movement, however, represents even less of a threat to the interests of American imperialism than the people who have fled to live in the hills. Like the anti-Vietnam movement before it, the motivation behind the 'freeze' is a mixture of an individualistic fear of war, and the belief that the government's behaviour is somehow 'irrational' and not in the nation's best interests.

The mixture of pacifism and nationalism on which the 'freeze' campaign is based makes it the perfect counterbalance to the anti-Americanism of the European peace movements. The only problem it presents Reagan with is a personal one, insofar as it represents a possible threat to his own prospects for re-election. The mainstream of the American ruling class, however, is not at all perturbed by the growth of the 'freeze' movement; some of its representatives are so at home with 'freeze' politics that they have become ardent supporters. Millions of other American patriots back the cause.

The 'freeze' proposal was carefully put together in 1979 to appeal to people who wanted to be anti-nuke without being labelled anti-American — an important distinction in a country where communists have always been virulently attacked for their 'un-American' activities. The campaign drew up the least controversial demands, a lowest common denominator programme around which everybody opposed to America's massive rearmament programme could converge. And converge they have.

Freeze forces

The 'freeze' movement draws its most active support from the middle classes and young people. Avowedly 'non-political' organisations are at the centre of all its initiatives. Groups such as 'Physicians for Social Responsibility', an organisation composed of 8000 anti-Vietnam campaigners made good, command considerable respect for their scientific analysis of the horrors of nuclear war. Their efforts are divided between frightening old-age pensioners and making public statements disassociating themselves from any hint of anti-Americanism. There are innumerable other groups from 'Dancers for Disarmament' to 'Parenting in a Nuclear Age',



The American nightmare

'It's like motherhood and apple pie. Who's going to be in favour of nuclear war?' (Republican political consultant David Keene in *Time*, 29 March 1982)

which have seized upon nuclear weapons as the one issue on which radicals can appear to be better defenders of the family than the 'Moral Majority'.

The real problem for anti-imperialists in the United States is the more overtly political side of the 'freeze' movement. It is becoming the focus for a resurgence of American isolationism, providing an outlet for the growing body of opinion which believes that the United States is no longer in a position to play the role of world policeman which it has occupied since the end of the Second World War. The isolationists want to see the state concentrate on putting its own house in order and getting the economy back on its feet. These are sentiments close to the hearts of certain sections of the American bourgeoisie. The apparent irrationality of high defence spending at the expense of domestic investment has drawn some die-hard Republican politicians and capitalists into the 'freeze' campaign. They are backing groups such as 'Business Executives Move' that have mobilised against the arms race under the slogan, 'Businessmen unite! You have nothing to lose but high interest rates!'.

Capitalists from a more liberal tradition have also lent the 'freeze' movement their considerable support. They dream of a return to the days of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, of the extension of welfare provisions and a return to the consensus politics of the past. Reagan's apparent sacrifice of welfare in favour of warfare appears as irrational to them as it does to the American left. Whilst such liberal notions are out of favour in the United States of the 'eighties, their exponents still have enough influence to gain a considerable audience. In California, a 'freeze' petition bearing over half a million signatures has been driven around the state in armoured cars hired by a liberal millionaire.

Bureaucrats for salvation

However, bankers and insurance magnates alone do not make mass movements. The real success of the 'freeze' movement has been its capacity to draw some working class support. The impact of the recession has pushed some American workers into seeking political solutions. The 'freeze' movement's connection between unemployment and arms spending (a US version of the 'Jobs Not Bombs' approach) neatly links the major concerns of many American workers in a patriotic

anti-war package.

The 'freeze' campaign is given some cohesion by the academics of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), now 25 years old and the nearest thing America has to CND. SANE has put together a package of policies for 'economic conversion' from arms production to investment in raising the productivity of American industry to regain the ground lost to Japan and West Germany. The 'working class bit' tacked onto the end decries the nuclear power industry as a capital-intensive sector which provides few jobs.

To convey its romantic utopia — a capitalist economy that sacrifices profits to provide jobs — to working class people, SANE has acquired the services of machinists' union president William Winpisinger. He puts the dream of economic conversion in no-nonsense terms. If American capital was taken out of the arms industry and invested in production for 'human need', Winpisinger claims, 'We would get more job bang for the buck than we ever do from the hightech weaponry of death and destruction' (*In These Times*, 2 June 1982). Since Winpisinger became co-chairman SANE's membership has soared to 30 000.

Winpisinger is a rare bird amongst the top-level labour bureaucracy in the United States. He actively backs the 'freeze', while other leading figures in the AFL-CIO (the US TUC) are still supporting the rabidly anti-Soviet Committee for the Present Danger. Winpisinger's stand has convinced much of the reformist left in America that he is the radical messiah, come to lead the working class into its arms. In fact, he is nothing of the sort. Winpisinger is a far-sighted bureaucrat who has seized on the 'freeze' movement as a means of dealing with some of the problems thrown up by the recession.

The blatantly pro-capitalist outlook of the American union leadership (worse even than our TUC's) has left it devoid of any real support in the working class. The number of factories voting in favour of union representation is declining sharply as unemployment rises. And the bureaucracy is in no position to mount a fight for jobs. Last year Reagan smashed the air traffic controllers and their union (PATCO) and succeeded in intimidating the entire trade union movement. As for Winpisinger, whose machinists' union was in a position to give vital backing to the striking air traffic controllers, he

refused to allow such action on the grounds that it would be illegal. The ideas of economic conversion within the 'freeze' movement give him and other union leaders the perfect outlet through which they can demonstrate their concern about unemployment without taking on the state.

Freezing for Kennedy

The 'freeze' campaign has come to play an important role in the relations between the labour bureaucrats and the Democratic Party. Since the break up of the trade union/Democratic Party alliance, the AFL-CIO leadership has been trying to cement a closer relationship with the Democrats by moving the party towards the working class, while the lower levels of the bureaucracy have been pushing for the establishment of a labour party. Neither proposal offers any way forward for American workers, but these conflicting strategies reflect an important split in the union leadership. Winpisinger and his supporters are attempting to heal that split, by giving long-term support to the idea of a labour party whilst insisting on working for the election of a 'friend of labour' Democratic president in the immediate future.

The left bureaucrats' past support for campaigns to elect Edward Kennedy as the Democratic candidate indicate just which 'friend' they have in mind. With one eye on the White House and the other on the unions, Kennedy has put himself at the forefront of the 'freeze' campaign.

Kennedy may win union support for his stance as the 'peace candidate' and his depiction of Reagan as 'the most anti-union president in American history'. But his politics are as anti-working class as any Republican's. He may talk about the need to restore welfare programme cuts, but his real aim is to see the restoration of the supremacy of American capitalism. In Kennedy's eyes, 'A strong economy is the best social programme this country ever had' (*Newsweek*, 28 June 1982). Any attempt to make the American economy 'strong' in conditions of world recession can only mean further attacks on the working class.

Anti-imperialists not welcome

The national chauvinism that permeates the 'freeze' movement is sharply revealed by the reaction of 'freeze' supporters to the build-up of America's conventional arms and moves towards US intervention in Latin America. The indifference of the peace movement towards the activities of American imperialism around the world — so long as individual Americans are not threatened by them — was a striking feature of the anti-Vietnam war movement. It remains a key aspect of today's 'freeze' campaign. Hispanic, black and radical left groups campaigning against US interference in El Salvador have received short shrift from the 'freeze' movement. They were allowed to march on the massive 12 June demonstration only because they held the police permit for the march. The conclusion the 'freeze' supporters drew from this unpleasant incident was well summed up by a spokesman from the War Resisters League, one of America's oldest bourgeois-pacifist groups:

'The political lesson was that it is essential to build a movement that is multi-racial and cuts across class lines.' (*In These Times*, 2 June 1982)

The 'freeze' campaign's commitment to building a broad-based campaign means excluding anti-imperialist politics. Far from posing a threat to American imperialism, it provides a welcome outlet through which to gain some trade union and working class support for a movement to put American capitalism back on its feet.

Mick Hume

The myths of labourism

Alan Warde, *Consensus and beyond: the development of Labour Party strategy since the Second World War*, Manchester University Press, 1982, pp243, £19.50.

Alan Freeman, *The Benn heresy*, Pluto Press, 1982, pp191, £3.50.

Ed Denis Kavanagh, *The politics of the Labour Party*, George Allen & Unwin, 1982, pp228.

ANYBODY SEEKING to understand the British labour movement would be well advised to avoid authors who identify with its traditions, right or left, and go for the works of the better bourgeois academics, preferably those from overseas. In the 'seventies Irving Richter, Leo Panitch and Doug McEachern came further (from the USA, Canada and Australia respectively) and perceived much more than did the authorities of British reformism — Miliband and Minkin, Pelling and Coates. At best the British left provided detailed chronologies and useful empirical information; but its uncritical acceptance of the prejudices of British labourism prevented much useful analysis of its political development. In the academic mode, Manchester lecturer Alan Warde has produced a serious assessment of Labour politics over the past 30 years. From the left, International Marxist Group leader Alan Freeman has written a book remarkable, even by the standards of British reformism, for the superficiality of its analysis and the opportunism of its conclusions.

Labelling theories

Through a welter of political science jargon, Warde provides a useful survey of the important forces and factions in the post-war Labour Party. He labels the dominant right wing of the 'fifties' 'social reformist', the feeble left 'fundamentalist' and the synthesis of the Wilson years 'technocratic collectivism'. His characterisation of the important elements of these different periods and strategies is better than his choice of labels. The 'social reformists', whom Warde rightly identifies as appropriating the core of 1906 Liberalism and turning it into an outlook that could be embraced by most of the Tory Party, were neither socialist nor much committed to reforms. 'Welfare capitalists' better sums up the commitment of Crosland, Strachey, Jay and Gaitskell to a capitalist economy with its rough edges smoothed by state-administered benefits, social services, health care and education. Nor was the left truly 'fundamentalist' about its socialism, any more than the right could be accused of being 'revisionist' in criticising a caricature of Marxism so distorted as to be unrecognisable. Both right and left referred to Labour's radical reformist traditions of the 'thirties; the right to reject them, the left to cherish them. 'Reformist nostalgies' would be a more accurate description of those in the Party who echoed Michael Foot's emotional protestation in the late 'fifties: 'the old dogmas are as good as ever'. And there was little 'collectivism' in Wilson's white hot technological revolution. As Warde emphasises, Labour's rhetoric in the 'sixties centred on national revival and reconciliation through enlightened technical interventions in social, industrial and political life.

Whilst Warde correctly identifies the restriction of trade union militancy within the confines of collective bargaining as an important component of post-war stability, he underestimates the significance of the absence of working class pressure on the Labour Party. The weakness of class politics after the Second World War and the apparent successes of narrow trade unionism in the post-war boom, provided the context for the shifting strategies of Labour leaders from Gaitskell and Bevan to Wilson, that Warde describes. It was the revival of working class pressure on the Labour Party in response to the recession of the 'seventies that was the single most important factor both in the strengthening of the left in the Party and in its subsequent internal conflicts.

Seeing through the left

From a detached academic standpoint Warde surveys the period of the Social Contract, soberly drawing out the pro-capitalist commitment of the Labour Party in government and its negative consequences for the working class. He considers that this experiment in 'tri-partism:



a collaborative solution to the crisis' was a failure because it could not overcome the recession. But he underestimates the success of the Social Contract in undermining workers' resistance to the solution of the crisis at their expense. The Labour Government inherited a miners' strike, a three-day week and industrial chaos: it got 'the country' back to work, drove down wages, forced up unemployment, crushed the public service unions in the winter of discontent and handed a dispirited working class over to the Tories.

Warde dismisses in passing many myths of the Labour left. He notes the essentially pro-capitalist character of the alternative economic strategy and aptly sums up the left as 'the oppositional expression of working class discontent without transgressing the bounds of prevailing hegemonic forces'. 'Socialism' within the Labour Party he describes as 'a balm, a soothing symbol of unity'; as public policy it is 'just another way of attenuating or combatting social contradictions'. He has no illusions in the capacity of the Bennite left to transform the Labour Party: surveying the politics of the left he concludes that 'it is difficult to imagine that the left could transcend the dual contradictions of the social democratic predicament'.

However, Warde remains the prisoner of the prejudices of his own class. The one most dear to the heart of every bourgeois is that, come what may, society will stay more or less the same. For Warde, there will always be a Labour Party, just as there will always be an England. 'Despite defectors', he concludes, 'it is unlikely that the Party will change substantially in the foreseeable future'. But the recession has already shaken the Labour Party — forcing out the SDP and provoking a witchhunt against Militant. Labour is struggling to shape up to play the stabilising role that cynics like Warde expect of it. The future of the Labour Party remains as much in the balance as does the fate of British capitalism.

Right title, wrong book

One man very concerned to save both is Tony Benn. And one man who is out to help him is *Socialist Challenge* journalist Alan Freeman. Complete with pompous quotations at the head of every chapter from Shakespeare, Blake and William Morris (to demonstrate the author's erudition), *The Benn heresy* is a sycophantic apology for Britain's leading radical reformist. Freeman takes everything at face value, constantly confuses the subjective intentions of individuals and the objective consequences of their politics and invents non-existent contradictions between Parliament and the state it serves, and between the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour Party that serves it.

'The Benn movement' according to Freeman is 'deeply popular', 'a new, mass, popular social movement'. This is a considerable exaggeration. Benn is certainly the favourite of the radical middle class activists who dominate constituency Labour Parties, but, as consultation exercises conducted by several unions during the deputy leadership campaign revealed, he is still short of a base of mass support among the

working class. Freeman also exaggerates the extent to which Benn's democratising zeal is a threat to the British establishment — and this is the central theme of his book. Freeman maintains that Benn is branded a 'heretic' because his radical dissent is truly subversive. Freeman thinks that the vituperative attacks on Benn by the Tory press reflect the genuine fears of the ruling class. But the British bourgeoisie understands well that Benn's posturing over the House of Lords and the monarchy, nuclear weapons and the EEC is no real threat to its interests. Right-wing newspapers lambast Benn as a means of putting pressure on the Labour Party and keeping its supporters in line, not because they fear the insurrectionary potential of 'the Benn movement'.

Freeman draws out the logic of much of the left's 'critical support' for the Labour Party in general and Benn in particular. He provides a fawning apology for his performance in the last Labour Government: 'Benn had to go along with the proposal to limit incomes'. Why? Here we come to another myth of the left, assiduously promoted by Freeman — that the Bennite left was defeated in 1975-76 by the combined forces of the IMF, the Civil Service and the Treasury. The current hit novel on the left *A very British coup* by Benn acolyte Chris Mullin anticipates the mobilisation of all these elements plus the armed forces against a future government of the Labour left. This is nonsense. It was the right wing that defeated the Labour left in 1976, by skilfully deploying the left's own policies against the Bennites. It was Callaghan and Healey who scuppered Benn, not the faceless mandarins. As long as the left retains its allegiance to the Party's programme of national capitalist salvation, the right will not need any outside assistance to keep the left under its control.

Parliamentary cretin

The Benn heresy concludes with some critical remarks on the role of Parliament in the overthrow of British capitalism. Freeman agrees with Benn that 'our existing Parliament could do with the removal of some ceremonial relics' and 'an elected second chamber might be an idea'. But his difference with Benn is over the question 'what should we do when Parliament refuses to set up a democratic state?'. The question can be put more succinctly — what should we do when the British bourgeoisie refuses to commit suicide as a class? Benn argues, writes Freeman, 'we should wait'. And Freeman? He does not answer directly, but he seems to think that the solution to 'democratising' the state lies through 'democratising' the Labour Party. Thus Freeman redefines 'revolutionary socialism' as 'revolutionary democracy' and recycles the banalities of 80 years of social democracy.

The third book under review here falls somewhere between the academic and the reformist camps. It is a collection dedicated to the memory of the recently deceased swingometer king Bob McKenzie, written by lecturers sympathetic to the right wing of the Party. It reveals how the recession has under-

mined the art of vote-watching. The swingometer itself — designed for two-party politics — has become sadly obsolete in an era of complex three and four-cornered contests. The whole business of forecasting and predicting is based on projecting into the future past voting figures and current opinion poll findings: formulations such as 'if these trends were repeated at a general election' invariably preface the pollsters' prognoses. But the recession has introduced a new fluidity and instability into British politics: people will not behave in the future as they did in the past or even as they think in the present. This is the revolutionary's dream but the sociologist's nightmare: it renders useless the statistical approaches of contenders for the McKenzie crown like Ivor Crewe whose turgid calculations are presented here.

The politics of the Labour Party includes interesting essays on local government (by L T Sharpe) and on the trade unions (by Colin Crouch) which brighten up an otherwise pedestrian book. Mike Freeman

Gays and the party

Revolutionary Gay Men's Caucus, *The myth of homophobia: reformism and gay liberation*, Kelson Publications, 1982, pp36, pbk £1.50.

THIS IS the first pamphlet that seriously addresses itself to the relationship between gay liberation and the anti-capitalist struggle. For this alone it should be studied by readers of the next step.

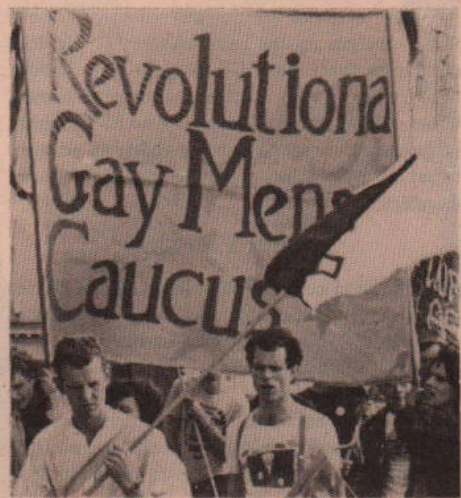
The main strength of the pamphlet is that it takes the problem of gay oppression out of the narrow confines of ideological or sexual politics and locates it firmly as a class issue. This is done through a materialistic reconstruction of homosexuality as a distinct social concept. The development of capitalist industry leading to the destruction of local ties and parochialism created a free labour force. The social flux created by this development undermined the family as the main organiser of social and economic life and provided the basis for same-sex relationships among people who were economically free of the family.

The same process which created the possibility of same-sex relations also conferred upon homosexuality the recognition that it was a social problem. There are good reasons for this. Capitalist development weakened family ties; yet at the same time the reproduction of capitalist social relations relies upon the maintenance of the family unit. Same-sex relationships became unacceptable because they were a challenge to an already threatened family structure.

However, the stability of the nuclear family has remained an essential mechanism for controlling the working class under capitalism. This is why attacks on gays are at the same time a form of social domination of the proletariat:

'The function of gay oppression is to make homosexual relationships less desirable than family life and all the social constraints and disciplines that go with it.'

The RGMC's pamphlet shows the necessary antagonism which exists between homosexuality and capitalist social relations. What's at stake are not backward ideas that could be changed through education but a form of oppression that is structural to the system. Hence the RGMC correctly rejects any strategy for gay liberation based on the illusions of reform. The pamphlet provides a coherent critique of reformist currents in the gay movement. (continued on page 18)



Class unity and gay liberation

The narrow focus of the left has meant that oppressed groups have often been forced to organise on their own. The emergence of a distinct gay movement confirms this general rule and at the same time represents an indictment of the backwardness of the left. As the pamphlet argues 'autonomous organisation among homosexuals did not arise out of any principled commitment to federalism, anarchism or separatism, but simply in response to the sexism of the labour movement and the socialist parties'.

The authors of the pamphlet recognise that although gay people will continue to need special organisations to combat oppression, ultimately an effective struggle can only be waged through a revolutionary party – a party which will overcome the obstacles to class unity.

That's as far as the pamphlet goes. This is not surprising, because we have no past tradition of effective work against the oppression of gays by a revolutionary party. The authors avoid the issue by sometimes arguing as revolutionaries, for example: 'We must fight to build a bridgehead for class politics within the gay scene and the gay movement'. At other times they argue from the point of view of people who are oppressed: for 'homosexual men at least, our distinct social identity is a principal weapon in our day to day struggle'.

It is the duty of revolutionaries to fight all forms of oppression. But revolutionaries can only act as revolutionaries if they assimilate the experience of the entire working class and if they approach all issues from that point of view. The experience of oppression may be an important factor in moulding individual consciousness. But this experience is itself irrelevant to what a revolutionary does.

The pamphlet notes: 'Coming out, being open, stressing what is positive in our sexual and social experience, is a political and cultural weapon for our survival and our liberation'. This is undoubtedly true and the revolutionary party must struggle to create a climate where coming out becomes that much more acceptable. This is the only way we can ensure that it becomes that much easier for gay comrades to become revolutionaries first and gays second.

Another problem with which this pamphlet understandably does not concern itself is how to fight for the defence of gays in the working class. Until now, this problem has either been ignored or alternatively dealt with in a moralistic way. Our approach must be to point out the specificity of gay oppression, and ask the question – why is it that gays are always under attack? In this way, it will be possible to highlight the class character of these attacks and the consequences for workers.

The RGMC pamphlet provides a useful starting point for initiating this discussion in the labour movement. We can only welcome such a constructive initiative and we are confident that through conscious struggle the right tactics and strategy for fighting gay oppression will evolve.

Pat Roberts

Labour – the curse of Ireland

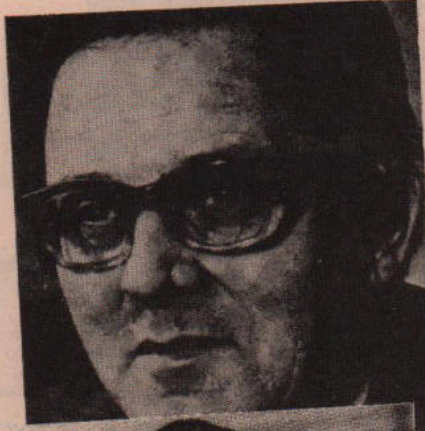
Geoffrey Bell, *Troublesome business – the Labour Party and the Irish question*, Pluto Press, 1982, pp150, pbk £4.50.

A DETAILED analysis of the Labour Party's record on the Irish war could make an important contribution to the anti-imperialist struggle in Britain. This book doesn't. *Socialist Challenge* journalist Geoffrey Bell presents useful documentary material, particularly of early Labour Party debates on the issue up to 1921. He does not spare the venom against right-wing Labour leaders like Ramsay MacDonald, Jimmy Thomas, Clem Attlee and Roy Mason. And he is frankly disparaging about Labour's inability to advance what he calls a 'progressive conclusion' to the conflict.

Labour's mission

The problem is that Bell believes that a British government could do something progressive in Ireland. This belief informs his analysis of Labour's 'failures'. Bell reaffirms the misconception – common to the British left – that the conflict between British imperialism and the Irish people could be negotiated amicably, provided an enlightened Labour administration

reviews 2



Where West meets East

Angela Stent, *From embargo to Ostpolitik*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp328.

THE HISTORY of Soviet-West German trade is equally the history of US domination of West Germany. In 1945 the German economy was virtually destroyed. Reconstruction was possible only under US tutelage, with huge injections of Marshall Aid and US troops to guarantee West German territorial integrity. The political price the re-emergent bourgeoisie paid was US control of German foreign policy, which extended to close supervision of German foreign trade. Angela Stent chronicles US domination and West Germany's struggle to increase its independence in its relations with Eastern Europe.

Soviet annexation of Central Europe was designed to create loyal buffer states which would dissuade Germany from revanchist pretensions. Stalin predicted in 1952 that Germany would rise again and, as a consequence of attempting to 'break out of American bondage', would bring on a new war. The Soviet Union accordingly has tried to counter each step West Germany has taken towards resuming its former power. The setting up of the Warsaw Pact in May 1955, for instance, was a direct response to West Germany joining NATO and gaining international recognition as a sovereign state.

In this early period, the West German government was prepared to demonstrate its loyalty to the USA whenever required to do so. The economy was expanding fast and was the third largest in the world by 1958, led by a phenomenal growth in exports, particularly of capital goods. Although not nearly as significant as the EEC, the Soviet Union offered an important outlet for German goods, particularly after Khrushchev launched a major programme to develop the chemical industry and oil and natural gas extraction as the centrepiece of the 1959 seven year plan. Trade with the Soviet Union expanded two and a half times between 1958 and 1961, even though these were the years of the second Berlin crisis when more than 360 000 people fled the East German forced collectivisation drive and accompanying purges.

However, when in 1962 the USA ordered the West German government to abandon a contract it had already signed to supply large diameter pipe to the Soviet Union, Adenauer agreed without demur. The cancellation of the deal could have had little economic impact on the Soviet Union since Britain and Italy went ahead and supplied the pipes. The American action was more a diplomatic move to bring West Germany into line and extract a demonstration of loyalty. Then as now the language of the cold war was used to mask tests of strength between the imperialist powers themselves.

The decline in Soviet-West German trade in the 'sixties had more to do with a Soviet shortage of hard currency and West German import restrictions than with the pipe embargo. Trade missions were set up in Eastern Europe and diplomatic relations established with Romania, but there was little real movement in relations until the new Brandt Government

of 1969 initiated a new phase of bilateral detente. Stent argues against seeing this as a manifestation of German imperialism, spurred on by big business to conquer new markets in the East:

'It is...difficult to find evidence of any great German optimism about the potential of such trade...The German-Soviet treaty was useful only to the extent that it might be the first step in facilitating an agreement on Berlin.' Certainly the increase in Soviet trade as a proportion of total West German trade from 1.2 per cent in 1970 to 2.3 per cent in 1980 does not seem very startling. However, these percentages conceal a sixfold increase in two-way trade in a period of economic recession when competition for export markets increased dramatically. The Soviet bloc is now the single largest export market for West German machine tools. The Soviet Union earns 75 per cent of its hard currency from West Germany, mainly from energy sales.

Brandt's Ostpolitik was an investment in the future of West German capitalism at a time when all the imperialist powers were preparing to redefine their spheres of influence against the day free trade began to collapse. From 1970 to 1973 West Germany signed treaties normalising relations with Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, culminating in Brezhnev's 1973 visit to Bonn. This period also saw the first of five gas pipe deals between 1970 and 1980, under which West Germany was to supply pipe in exchange for gas, so that by 1990 it is estimated that 28 per cent of its natural gas supplies will be from the Soviet Union. Another important deal was the 1970 contract for the Soviet Union to supply West Germany with enriched uranium, thus breaking the US monopoly: by 1979 55 per cent of West German supplies were from the Soviet Union.

Through his Ostpolitik Brandt removed most of the remaining political barriers to an expansion of West German economic relations with the East. By the 'seventies West Germany was again strong enough to ignore the blandishments of US imperialism. Alone of the West European powers it ignored (officially) Carter's embargo on high technology exports to the Soviet Union in response to the invasion of Afghanistan: its boycott of the Olympics was no more than a sop to US public opinion. Today, once again Reagan is attempting to block the massive Siberian gas pipeline deal, but his embargo will be effective only for supplies from US firms, and probably not even for their overseas subsidiaries and affiliates.

The main obstacle to West German trade with the East is no longer the divisions imposed by the USA but the state of the Soviet bloc economies themselves. West German business would be happy to sell all it could to the Soviet bloc – if it could be paid in hard currency. But an increasing proportion of trade is conducted under barter arrangements, and apart from energy and raw materials there is not a great deal West German business could wish to barter from the Soviet bloc.

Stent's book covers most of these points but offers a turgid academic treatment which in its essentials accepts the standard 'cold war' thesis that the US was forced into partitioning Germany against its will. However, she argues correctly that reunification is not an issue for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, in trying to envisage how reunification could come about she assumes a basic harmony of interests between the imperialist powers and indulges in wishful thinking:

'The only conceivable route to reunification might be through a general European rapprochement involving the dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.'

There is another 'conceivable route': through the violent break-up of NATO and world war.

Gareth Evans

Moving forward?

As a member of the Labour Party, Bell looks to Labour politicians in the hope for a progressive government initiative. This leads him to give credit to recent attempts by the Labour left to bring about changes in Labour Party policy on Ireland. The vote at last year's party conference in favour of a policy of 'eventual' withdrawal and Irish unification is heralded as a step along the road to a 'progressive solution'. But what exactly would constitute a progressive policy on Ireland and what Labour Party members should do to assist the struggle for Irish freedom, Bell does not divulge.

In reality, the debate at last year's conference marked no significant change in Labour's approach to Ireland. Apart from phrases about 'eventual' withdrawal and unity, the policy paper passed by the conference endorsed the Partition and occupation of Ireland. It is not surprising that there has been virtually no Labour Party opposition to the Tory plans for Ireland designed to reinforce British domination, proposed by James Prior this year.

For the Labour leadership, the vacuous debate on future Irish unity served a useful purpose. It succeeded in deflecting a potential challenge on the far more immediate issue: its open backing for the Tory Government's murder of the ten Irish hunger strikers.

Troublesome business ends inconclusively. Perhaps that's because Bell appreciates intuitively that Labour will never be turned into an anti-imperialist party and that the fight for Irish freedom is also a fight against the traditions of the Labour Party and their backward influence on the labour movement.

Sabena Norton



WHY NOT 'JOBS NOT BOMBS'?

As a regular reader of your paper I remain slightly confused about your position on nuclear disarmament. My own position is that it is only through class struggle and socialist revolution that workers can seize and dismantle the military machine.

I was a pacifist prior to my politicisation as a Marxist. Since then I have consistently argued that it is a far more realistic tactic to link the social issues of growing unemployment (I am myself unwaged) and the decline of certain sectors of industry, with the high financial priority that Thatcher places on defence.

I certainly consider that CND cannot achieve its initial aims without embracing a revolutionary Marxist perspective. I do think I can agitate and politicise that arena to discuss Marxist alternatives to the bomb, in a pool stocked with anarchists, peaceniks, Labour left and liberal fish.

I view the rallying cry 'Jobs not bombs' as neither a gimmick nor an easy slogan, but in terms of direct political action.

Had I my way, serious anti-missile groups would collect cash for workers in disputes, show 'The War Game' in works canteens, and win the trust of the workforce and the muscle of the unions.

Why? Because only the unions, collectively pressed into industrial action, have the power to block the military machine — for example the introduction of cruise missiles in late 1983 — even if only for a short while.

If it were possible, a token general strike would be a barometer of political unrest, even though it would spur the wrath of state oppression.

Ultimately I abhor nuclear holocaust because it is one more destructive tactical manoeuvre under the control of the ruling class.

Naturally I believe revolutionaries should be involved, and should be arguing that unless disarmament becomes a threat to the state — as opposed to a mass campaign — then we will never be in a position to take our future into our hands. Where, I would like to know, do you stand?

Alex Warner
Dukinfield
Cheshire

Helen Swift writes:

Our position is the same as your own outlined in your second sentence. However, our view is that the strategy and tactics that you (and many CND supporters) put forward are in conflict with this basic approach.

We do not agree that it is a realistic tactic to link unemployment and defence spending. Were you made redundant by a cruise missile? What is the connection between unemployment in engineering, the docks, shipbuilding, steel, textiles, etc and Trident? Industries are in decline and workers are unemployed because British capitalism is in crisis. The 'Jobs not bombs' slogan deflects workers' attack from those really to blame — their employers, the British capitalist class — onto a remote thing, outside the class struggle.

The slogan also implies that unemployment could be abolished and disarmament effected by a simple switch of government expenditure. If so, why should workers need to 'seize and dismantle the military machine'? The point is that at a time of recession the capitalist state needs both to create mass unemployment and to arm with the most lethal weapons available to deal with its competitors. That is why the only way to fight unemployment and militarism is by fighting to overthrow capitalism now.

CND will never become a threat to the state because it aims to unite humanity against the danger of war in the future; for now it accepts capitalist society and all the exploitation and oppression that it enforces day in day out. For us, the fight against militarism starts from the fight against the military activities in which the British ruling class is currently engaged in Ireland, the South Atlantic and, no doubt shortly, also the Middle East and Africa. If we can mobilise the unions against British barbarism in Ireland today, we will have no problem with cruise missiles tomorrow.

LETTERS



BEFORE THE STORM

Our Derry Correspondent ends his recollections of the early civil rights struggle.

FOURTEEN YEARS ago this month, on 5 October 1968, an historic event took place at Duke Street in Derry, which ever since has been marked by writers and political commentators as 'the beginning of the Troubles'. On that day a civil rights march was viciously attacked by the paramilitary Royal Ulster Constabulary. The slogans and demands of the marchers were for elementary reforms — 'One man — one vote'; 'One family — one home'; 'One person — one job'. But in the context of British-occupied Ireland, such demands were met with naked terror.

The banning of the James Connolly Commemorative March in Derry on 1 July 1968 had left many republican and socialist activists determined that never again would they accept any proscription from Stormont or its Unionist police chiefs, regardless of the consequences. The housing agitation in the city during the summer months had reached its peak. Two of the Derry Housing Action Committee members, Roddy Carlin and Neil O'Donnell had been jailed for refusing to sign bonds to keep the peace. Committee activists regularly disrupted the local council's monthly meetings, and squatting in unoccupied private and public property was organised on a grand scale.

During the summer the Civil Rights Association (CRA), had organised the first ever civil rights march in the north of Ireland. Around 4000 people walked from Coalisland to Dungannon in August to protest against discriminatory housing allocations. The turnout was something really remarkable at a time when many argued that the nationalist population were prepared to adopt a 'wait and see' stance in regard to the new 'reforming' Prime Minister,

Terence O'Neill. The march passed off peacefully despite being prevented by the RUC from reaching its objective, Dungannon market square. A large contingent had travelled from Derry, headed by the Housing Action Committee banner. The homeless refused to let prominent Nationalist Party figures march in their ranks, reminding them that in their own ranks were leading landlords. At the Dungannon march the Derry activists invited the CRA to hold its next march in Derry: within a short time it was agreed that 5 October — a Saturday — would be the date and Duke Street railway station the assembly point. The fact that no CRA branch existed in Derry meant that the republican and socialist radicals would be responsible for the grass-roots mobilisation in the city.

For some weeks Housing Committee members, young republicans and young socialists held street-corner meetings to mobilise maximum support. The Derry activists were determined to plan a route that took the march inside 'the forbidden city', ie within Derry Walls. Surprisingly the moderate CRA leaders did not disagree, possibly because they did not fully realise the significance of such a step. They raised a ripple of laughter when they insisted that the local Unionist Party should be invited to attend, but this rather silly suggestion was finally rejected.

The organisers met nightly as the march drew near, in the home of a veteran republican in Long Tower Street where they painted slogans on placards and nailed these to sturdy lengths of timber. Such sticks, it was felt, might come in handy on the march. Among the young republicans present was Mickey Devine,

then fifteen years of age, who in 1981 was to end his days in the H-Blocks' hunger strike.

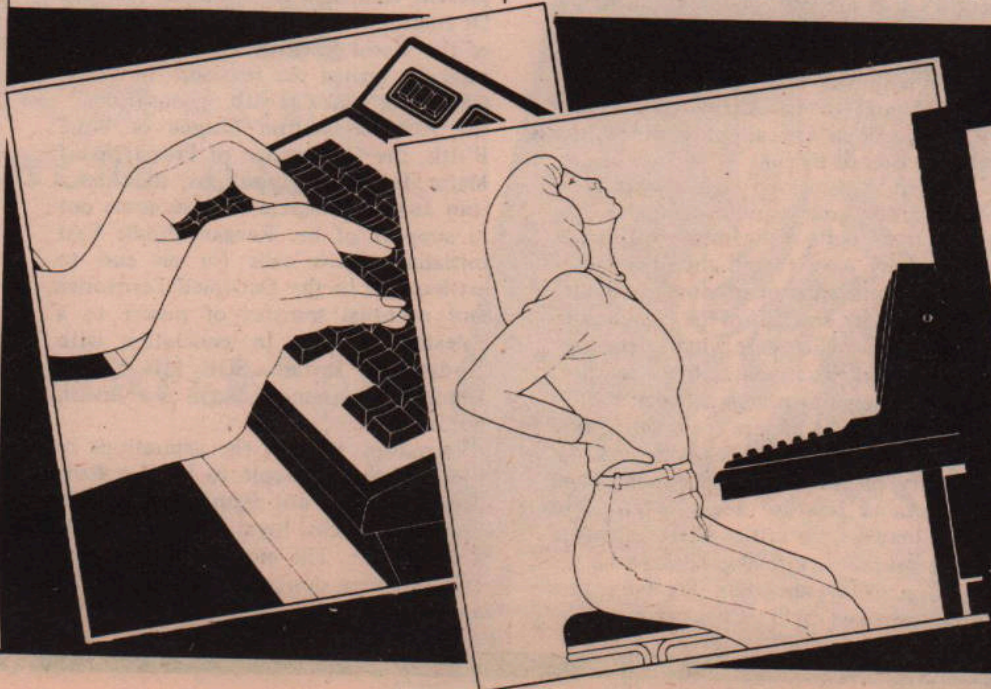
There was no doubt that 5 October was going to be a very significant date indeed. Press editorials, television programmes and Stormont ministers began to sound off, warning of the dangers of the proposed march. Eventually two people, Eamon McCann and Finbar O'Doherty, signed a document notifying the police of the route, and the assembly time of the demonstration. On 3 October, Home Affairs Minister Bill Craig banned the march. Immediately the organisers stated that the march would go ahead despite 'any undemocratic ban'. The CRA leaders arrived in Derry on the Friday evening and called for the march to be cancelled.

The CRA executive had totally underestimated the depth of feeling that existed in the city, and a very heated exchange took place for over two hours. A loudspeaker van passed calling, 'Come out tomorrow and show your contempt for the law', which greatly strengthened the radical wing at the meeting, which eventually ended all discussions by saying that they would march regardless of the CRA.

On the day itself the city was gripped with tension as the East bank of the Foyle jammed with police vans and a new weapon — the water cannon. The loudspeaker van was still touring, announcing, 'When you gotta go, you gotta go and we gotta go today'. The organisers emerged from hiding (in case of dawn swoops) to make a final check on progress. Television crews, some foreign, took up vantage points in various buildings: they later took the events of the day into the living rooms of millions. Gerry Fitt arrived with three Tribune MPs, which seemed to reassure the more moderate among the crowd. The main problem was that the local football team was playing at home. While the 400 or so assembled to march off, some 10 000 Derry people were on the terraces at Brandywell. A half dozen or so Paisleyites, then something of a novelty, assembled with full police protection, to sing hymns and read appropriate sections from the Bible; above them a few Union Jacks fluttered. They were totally ignored by the marchers who had more pressing problems. Our route was blocked by a massive cordon of police, sometimes five deep, and backed up with large tenders and giant, grey, armoured-plated water cannon. As we approached the city's only bridge, some 300 yards from the assembly point, more police and vehicles and dogs closed in behind us. There were no side streets or alley ways leading off from Duke Street, and we were completely hemmed in and at the mercy of the forces of the Stormont state. We marched into the police cordon, and all hell broke loose. From back and front the police attacked using blackthorn sticks, large batons and water cannon. Men, women and even children fell unconscious as waves of police attacked, usually three taking on a single marcher. Nurses and doctors on the march who tried to help the injured got similar treatment, and scores were rushed to the local hospitals for treatment to wounds in almost every part of the body.

Indeed, 5 October had been a significant day. The blood on the tarmac of Duke Street was that of ordinary people who would never again be on their knees: indeed their defiance has outlived the Stormont state. The first barricades were erected within minutes of the police attacks, and the Bogside declared itself 'liberated', a no-go area for the police. Things would never be the same again.

Finn O'Foyle



OUT SOON!

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socialism

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'ONLY THE BEGINNING' was our comment in *the next step*, No 27, September 1982 on Israel's invasion of Lebanon. And since the defeat of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Beirut, the blood bath has indeed continued. Political stability in the region is no nearer despite the return of the US-led 'peace-keeping' force. Israel is compelled to follow through the logic of its strategy to safeguard the Zionist state by trying to wipe out the last vestiges of Palestinian resistance in Lebanon. Begin and Defence Minister Ariel Sharon have approached this task with a cool, detached brutality that has provoked many Israelis to demonstrate against the Likud coalition.

Stomachs turn

For the first time, significant numbers of Israelis, even those in the army, have taken a stand against the militarism of the Zionist state. As the euphemistically-named Israeli Defence Force laid siege to Beirut and completed 'mopping up' operations in the refugee camps they had earlier devastated in their aerial and artillery bombardment of the Lebanese capital, reports appeared in the press in which serving Israeli soldiers and reservists voiced their disquiet at the carnage they had left behind them: 'Up to now we fought armies and we knew who the enemy was', said one soldier, 'but how do you relate to a 14 year-old kid with a gun whom you know you have to shoot because he wants to shoot you? It's demoralising'.

Many soldiers returning from the front line made similar comments. Some came together to form Soldiers Against Silence and mounted a permanent picket outside the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem. One of Israel's most distinguished soldiers, 31 year-old Colonel Eli Geva, the army's youngest brigade commander and the man responsible for the destruction of Sidon, asked to be transferred to other duties away from the war zone. In Tel Aviv an estimated 100 000 people demonstrated against the war. As *The Times* commented on the rising strength of the anti-war movement:

'What began as an expression of dissent by a few isolated academics and members of fringe left-wing groups has now mushroomed into a grass-roots anti-war movement, daily growing in influence, most significantly inside the armed forces.' (29 June)

Signs of the opposition's influence outside the armed forces came when Israeli Knesset member Amnon Rubinstein compared the activities of the supporters of Premier Begin with those of the Nazis towards the Jews, and when distinguished Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz urged soldiers to disobey orders and refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories.

However, although many Jews in Israel disagree with Begin's policies in Lebanon, very few support the struggle of the Palestinians for national self-determination. The radicals criticise Begin for his lack of compassion, his determination to crush the PLO and his refusal to make any compromise over the Occupied Territories. Yet Begin's brand of Zionism, which seeks a 'Greater Israel' on both sides of the Jordan, is no psychopathic delusion. It is the inescapable conclusion of a policy whose aim is to defend the Zionist state through denying national rights to the Palestinian people. Begin's liberal critics cannot stomach the consequences, but they go along with the objective.

Zionism vs Zionism

The limitations of Israeli opposition to the war are apparent from the stand taken by the official opposition, the Labour Party, to the war in Lebanon. On the more radical wing of the Labour Party are groups like Peace Now and those around the journal *New Outlook*, whose influence grew following the Israeli bombing of Beirut in July last year when 400 civilians were killed. Yet even for the left, the main concern is not for the problems of the oppressed Palestinians. Instead it worries

After the Beirut massacre

Down with the Zionist state!



Israel's complicity in the slaughter of hundreds of Palestinian refugees in Beirut has shocked world opinion. Even Reagan and Thatcher were forced to condemn this butchery. In Jerusalem large crowds gathered to protest against the Government of Menachem Begin, whose evil personality liberal Jews in Europe and America too, blame for the Beirut massacre. But Israeli barbarism cannot be reduced to one man's disordered personality. Those who seek redress for the crimes at Chatila camp cannot stop at the removal of Begin: they will have to take on Zionism itself.

about how Begin's policies could destabilise the region, and offers the 'solution' of Palestinian 'self-government', believing that it can pacify the PLO by devolving to them some local authority powers within the framework of Zionist rule.

Mainstream Labour politics are even more compromised. During the Israeli siege of Beirut the Labour Party remained subservient to Begin's ruling Likud bloc in the Knesset. When the Israeli Communist Party delegates proposed a vote of no confidence in the Begin Government — on patriotic grounds of course — Labour couldn't even rise to this: it supported the Government. Labour Party leader Shimon Peres made the fundamental point at the beginning of the invasion: 'We believe it is the duty of Israel to do whatever is necessary to stop these (ie the PLO's) attacks'. While condemning Begin and Sharon for going 'too far', the Labour opposition could not disagree with the aim of liquidating the main threat to the Israeli state — the PLO — nor its logical consequence, the destruction of Beirut.

When it comes to war, a liberal extermination policy cannot compete with one that isn't squeamish. Although Begin may have stirred the liberal conscience and provoked some disquiet among wider sections of the population, his ruthless policies are what's necessary to maintain the Israeli state's 'security'. In fact, Begin is not in as weak a position as it might appear from the rioting of his opponents in Tel Aviv and the ferocity of condemnation coming from respectable Israelis. Begin is safe not only because his critics share the same basic premises, but also because he has been able to rally the Sephardic, or Oriental Jews behind his policies. The

Sephardim, mainly petit-bourgeois or lumpen proletarian and originating from Morocco, Yemen and Iraq, are accustomed to regarding Arabs as enemies. They now make up half of Israel's population. Resentful of their deteriorating economic position and the privileges of the 'white' Ashkenazi Jews, they have turned to Begin who is consistent in his refusal to compromise. They accounted for the bulk of July's 200 000-strong demonstration in Tel Aviv which vociferously acclaimed 'Begin the King!'. Seventy per cent of the votes which returned Begin to power last year were from the Sephardic Jews.

World opinion

Outside Israel, in the Diaspora, there has been unprecedented criticism of the present campaign in Lebanon. The late Dr Nahum Goldmann, former President of the World Jewish Congress, came out publicly against the invasion. In America several major Jewish organisations — the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organisations, the American Jewish Congress — have come out in support of the Reagan Middle East initiative which calls for an end to settlements in the Occupied Territories and eventual transfer of power to a Palestinian entity in association with Jordan. In Britain SDP MP Neville Sandelson denounced Begin as a 'Jewish fascist'.

Needless to say, the aspirations of the Palestinian people to be free from oppression do not figure in the criticisms of these loyal friends of the Zionist state. The most we see are sops and promises designed to try to pacify any unrest, or at least split the leader-

ship of the liberation movement and the different Arab nations.

Even in the official labour movement in Britain, which has traditionally strongly supported Israel, doubts have also become apparent. Well-known Labour Zionist Eric Heffer resigned in protest from the Labour Friends of Israel following the Lebanon invasion. This year's TUC Conference at Brighton, for the first time in its history, came out in support of an independent Palestinian state (despite opposition from the General Council); and 46 emergency motions, all critical of Israel, have been submitted to October's Labour Party conference. But these moves, based on revulsion at the slaughter inflicted by the Begin Government, stop a long way short of supporting the right of the Palestinian people to fight back. All of them accept the existence of a Zionist state that can only exist through continued oppression of the Palestinians.

Yet the unrepentant Zionists outside Israel still dominate Jewish opinion, as the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* noted recently: 'The great mass of Anglo-Jewry stands 100 per cent behind Israel, not necessarily through intellectual reasoning, but, if you like, an emotional reaction that Israel cannot afford to lose one war'. The vice president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, put it more bluntly: 'I think that Israel is doing the dirty job that no-one else wants to do. If the PLO can be eliminated it must be' (*The Guardian*, 16 August). A survey carried out by the American Jewish Committee found 94 per cent of New York Jews 'pro-Israel' or 'very pro-Israel'. And 93 per cent believed support for Israel was 'in America's interest'.

Zionism and the future of Israel

The events in the Lebanon have brought home to workers the bloody consequences of imperialist interference in the Middle East. As the West's major ally in the region, the Israeli state — founded on the denial of national rights to the Palestinian people — is now forced to secure its survival by liquidating even the children of its opponents. The very existence of the Palestinians denies legitimacy to the Zionist state.

Israel was created as an artificial state with the backing of imperialism to act as its policeman in the Middle East. Over the past 30 years it has performed this task to perfection. Now Zionist aspirations have apparently come into conflict with the strategic goals of imperialism in the region. Hence Reagan's warning for Israel to step back into line.

Israel cannot survive for a day without the massive military and economic aid it receives, particularly from America. Yet as the crisis deepens more barbarous solutions are required to 'solve' the Palestinian question. Begin's liberal Zionist critics cannot stomach this and wish for a return to the 'true' principles of humanitarian Zionism. Their desire for a negotiated settlement and an end to the bloodshed is, however, a pipe-dream.

There is one further aspect to the Middle East conflict which cannot be ignored. The murderous actions of the Begin Government have fuelled an upsurge of anti-Semitism, particularly in Europe — the bombings in the Jewish quarter in Paris are an example. Jews who want to fight anti-Semitism and who are revolted by what is being done in their name in Israel have no choice but to break with Zionism altogether and support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Workers in Britain, whilst rejecting anti-Semitism, must stand up against the support the British state gives to Israel and particularly against any intervention in the Lebanon by British troops. Although presented as 'peace-keepers', all imperialist forces in the Middle East have one central aim — the restoration of imperialist stability in the region through the suppression of the anti-imperialist struggle of the Palestinian people. But the Palestinians cannot be wiped out by pogroms in Beirut: their struggle will continue. There will be no peace in the Middle East until Israel is replaced by a socialist state of Palestine.

Nick Jenkins