

the next step

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After a year of war and mass unemployment

THE FUTURE:

IN 1982 BRITAIN went to war in the South Atlantic. The USA carried on its dirty tricks and proxy wars in Latin America. And almost every imperialist power joined Israel in the rape of Lebanon.

In Britain the collapse of the manufacturing industry and the squeeze on services continued apace. Last January the official unemployment level crossed three million; now unofficial estimates reckon there are four million plus out of work. While the rich got richer, the poor got even poorer.

Workers who stood up to the Tory attack were defeated. Rail workers and health workers took strike action, only to be thwarted by their union leaders and the TUC. The miners lost faith in their posturing, manoeuvring leader and voted to keep their heads down.

Yet 1982 provides signposts to a brighter future. Another 12 months of deepening recession confirmed the inability of the capitalist system to overcome the problems of society. For the majority of British people, capitalism now offers

a future of mass unemployment, militarism and misery. For the masses of the Third World, capitalism can only bring starvation, terror and genocide. The experience of 1982 shows that there is no alternative...but revolutionary communism.

And 1982 weakened some of the barriers to the creation of a different world. In Britain every incident in the class struggle served to expose the role of the leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions. When the Government launched its military might against Argentina, the labour bureaucrats backed Britain. When workers went on strike against the Government, the bureaucrats again backed Britain, either openly or by stealth. The labour leaders have proved incapable of fighting the Tories or of defending jobs and living standards. The disintegration of the Labour Party and the crisis of the TUC confirm the urgency of building a new working class leadership. The decay of the old order prepares the way for a real alternative.

OURS FOR THE TAKING



• International survey **The plunge into barbarism**
• Bermondsey **Fight back with the Party of the future!**

Free abortion on demand!

THE STATE does not really need new laws against abortion. It can resist access to abortion in a much less controversial and equally effective way — through cuts in National Health Service facilities. In 1969 more than two-thirds of all abortions were performed on the NHS; last year the proportion was less than half. Cuts and closures in NHS facilities force those women who have enough money, to pay for private abortions. Those who lack the ready cash are forced to have babies they don't want.

The cuts that count

Gynaecological wards are amongst the first to be closed down as a result of public spending cuts. Women who can't get a hospital bed under the NHS and can't afford one in the private sector have lost their right to abortion without any change in the law. Over the past decade, as abortion has become more and more inaccessible for working class women, a series of attempts to introduce legal curbs on abortion rights has been unsuccessful. James White (1975), William Benyon (1977), John Corrie (1979) — all tried to get private members' bills through Parliament to restrict formally the availability of abortions. These measures acted as a focus for anti-woman and pro-abortion prejudice, but they had no effect on the abortion facilities. The main success of the legal attacks on abortion was in dictating the terms and restricting the objectives of the feminist and reformist campaigns in defence of abortion rights.

Ever since it was first set up as an alliance of feminists and reformists, the National Abortion Campaign has limited its aims to the defence of the 1967 Abortion Act. Thus its activities have largely been defensive responses to the various attempts to amend the 1967 Act. Its campaigning has had a predominantly parliamentary focus, concentrating on petitioning, letter writing and lobbying MPs. When the private members' bills failed, NAC went into hibernation.

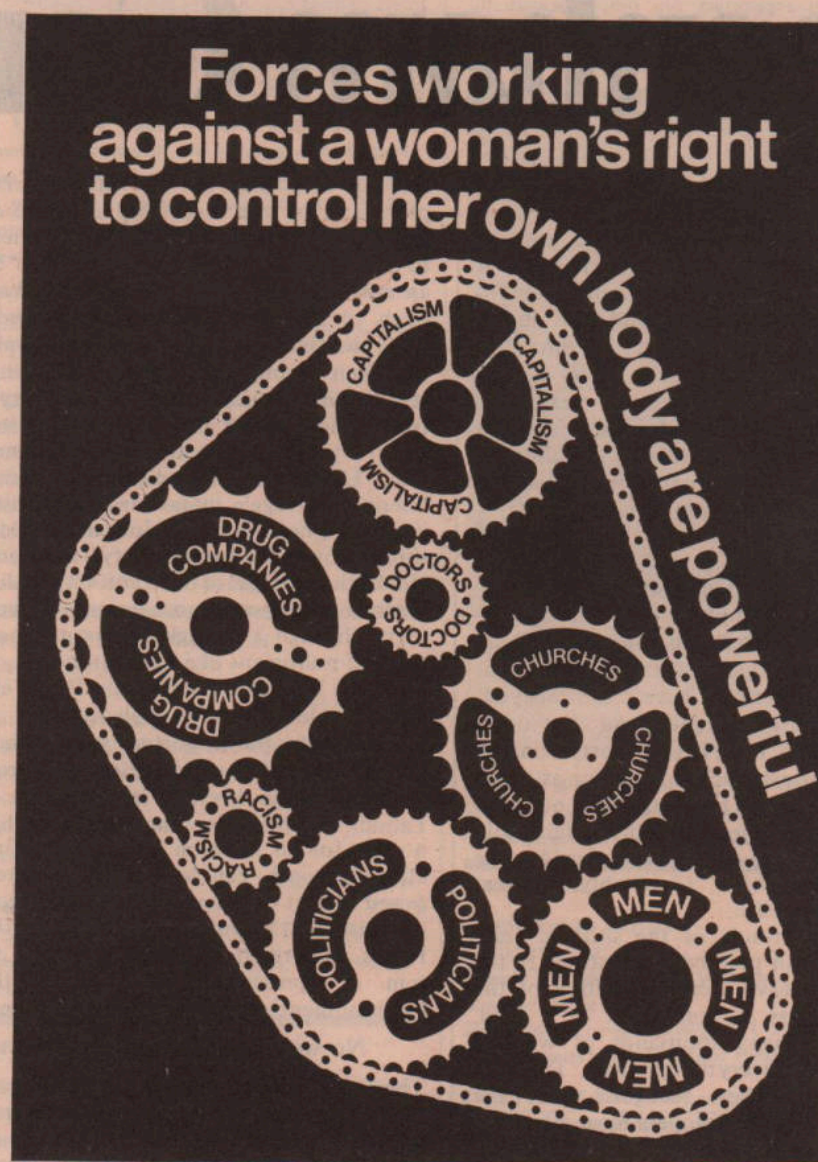
The narrow legislative approach of NAC has blocked any wider defence of women's abortion rights. Indeed its illusory alternative to fighting for free abortion on demand under the NHS — day-care abortion clinics — carries considerable dangers to working class women.

Day-care cover up

Day-care abortion centres do have certain advantages. Women needing abortions can be treated without delay and without an overnight hospital stay on wards with diverse other patients. But these advantages can only be enjoyed by women who are less than 12 to 13 weeks pregnant. Women needing a termination after this stage of gestation still need to be admitted to hospital.

The advantages to hospital finance and administration are, however, considerable. Abortion costs are reduced by around two-thirds, less staff are required and hospital beds are not blocked. For Area Health Authorities day-care abortion centres are introduced not to supplement existing facilities, but as a replacement. Most have been adapted from existing premises as part of a cost-cutting

Lord Robertson of Oakridge failed in his attempt to introduce new legislative restrictions on women's right to abortion through Parliament in December. The feebleness of the opposition, however, has given the anti-abortion lobby increased confidence for a renewed attack on a vital aspect of women's rights. Anne Burton reports.



'Relative autonomy in motion' — a NAC poster
The forces working against women's abortion rights are helped by this sort of confusion

programme.

In Tower Hamlets in East London for example, the introduction of day-care facilities at Mile End hospital simply meant a shift from overnight to day-care for approximately half the women needing abortions — in 1980 the area still performed less abortions than did neighbouring Hackney which has no special facilities.

For those women who need later abortions the introduction of day centres has been a step backward because day centres have been provided as an *alternative* to existing arrangements; vital in-patient facilities have been run down. Thus in Sheffield for example, all abortions are carried out in day centres, unless there are clearly defined complications. This represents a great saving for the health authorities but a blow for women who need abortions with full hospital care.

For NAC day-care centres were a progressive development within the NHS, which it helped to promote. In reality

they have provided a radical facade behind which the government has pursued major cuts in NHS facilities for women and hence a further restriction on abortion rights. We have no objection to day-care centres in principle. But we want them *as well as* in-patient facilities not *instead* of them.

Broader means narrower

Since its hey-day in the campaign against Corrie in 1979, NAC has fallen into quiescence. Last month it called a national meeting to face up to its internal crisis — badly attended national planning committees, funds at an all-time low, local groups winding up. The consensus was that NAC had failed because it was too much of a single-issue campaign. As somebody put it, 'a level of coordination only seems to exist when we are on the defensive'. But how could NAC be broadened?

For NAC activists, widening the focus of the campaign did not mean relating the fight for abortion rights to other

aspects of the struggle for women's liberation. It meant pursuing the particular preoccupations of different sections of the existing women's movement. Disabled women argued that their problem was not winning access to abortions, but persuading doctors that they did not want abortions. Lesbians too had to fight to have children. Others wanted to broaden the campaign into an 'international struggle for reproductive rights', for 'the right to choose' to have babies, to have them at home, and to have them in the squatting position.

In practice NAC's broadening out is another step backwards. The problem facing women today is that under capitalism in crisis they have no choice about abortion. Abortion is a necessity if women are to play a full role in society. Women are not denied the right to abortion because men want to control their bodies, but because women are no longer needed in factories and offices and they can be despatched back to the kitchen sink. The fight for abortion rights cannot be conducted around empty demands for individual free choice. It can only be successfully pursued as part of a broad anti-capitalist struggle for women's rights.

Approaching the issue of abortion from the point of view of isolated abstract free individuals inevitably leads to concessions to bourgeois prejudices. The recent NAC planning meeting refused to defend the principle of late abortion in relation to the widely publicised case of an aborted foetus which was resuscitated and subsequently fostered. The anti-abortion lobby unscrupulously use (and often manufacture) such cases to publicise their cause. But NAC leaders kept silent on the spurious grounds that they did not know whether the mother actually wanted to have the abortion. This sort of response may help to recruit anti-abortionists to NAC but it is no way to defend working class women against the offensive on all fronts — economic, legal and ideological — against abortion rights.

The real links

The fight for free abortion on demand must be linked to other issues which affect working class women. Women need abortions because childcare facilities are not easily available. Women need abortions because under new DHSS regulations women who cannot provide care for their children if they are offered a job are to be deprived of dole money. Women need abortions because of inadequate contraception. There is no choice.

Legalised attacks on abortion rights must certainly also be resisted. On 3 December members of the Women's Right to Work Campaign were at the debate on Lord Robertson's amendment. They disrupted it by throwing condoms and leaflets on the unsuspecting Lords and shouting for free abortion on demand, and unrestricted access. But this is simply one small part of our campaign. The Women's Right to Work Campaign will be fighting for free abortion on demand by fighting the cuts and fighting the increasing privatisation of abortion facilities, not by defending the 1967 Abortion Act which remains inadequate for women's needs.



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IRISH SOLIDARITY OR BRITISH APOLOGY?

How James Connolly became an English opportunist

In recent years we have become accustomed to the tortuous arguments produced by the Socialist Workers Party to justify its equivocation over the war in Ireland. A speech by SWP leader Tony Cliff, reprinted in *Socialist Worker*, 4 December 1982, reaches a new low in the SWP's apologetics for British imperialism.

TONY CLIFF DOES not tackle the problem of how to build an anti-imperialist movement in Britain. This is strange for a party that claims to fight for socialism in the British working class. Cliff justifies the SWP's inactivity on the Irish War on the grounds that 'until a movement develops to break the impasse in Ireland itself, it will be very difficult to mobilise significant numbers of people — whether British workers or Irish workers — in Britain'. In other words, nothing can be done in Britain until the 'impasse' in Ireland is broken. Cliff doesn't explain the logic behind his fatalism. However, we should note in passing that even his magnanimous promise for the future is meaningless. Once the 'impasse' in Ireland is overcome, there will be no need for solidarity action in Britain. The job of British anti-imperialists is to contribute to the breaking of the impasse in favour of the liberation movement *today*, not to make empty promises about the far-off future.

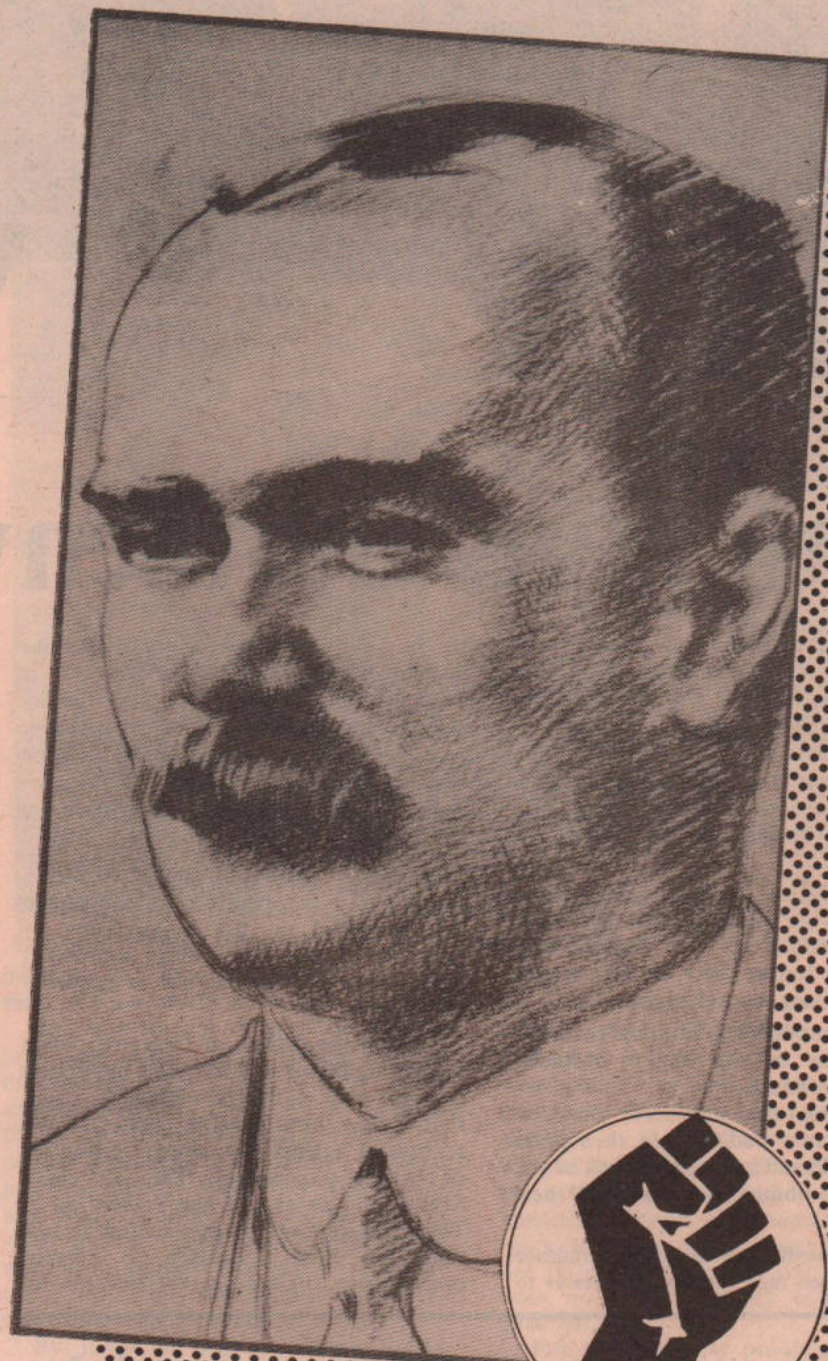
Cliff is an expert at double-talk. He notes that, compared with the mass demonstrations against America's involvement in Vietnam, protests against Britain's occupation of Ireland are tiny. Why? He replies: 'To understand why demonstrations are so tiny you have to start from the Irish Marxist James Connolly'. Cliff doesn't quote Connolly's position on tiny demonstrations, but he does cite his views on the need for the Irish working class to emancipate itself and free Ireland from British rule. But what do the tasks of the Irish working class have to do with the responsibilities of anti-imperialists in Britain? Nothing — unless you are an opportunist seeking to use the absence of a pure proletarian revolutionary movement in Ireland as an excuse for tiny demonstrations in Britain.

Cliff forgets to mention that the absence of a workers' movement in Vietnam did not prevent mass demonstrations from taking place in the United States. But then Cliff is more interested in justifying tiny demonstrations in Britain.

Starting with Keir Hardie

Cliff's central message is to blame the conflict between the Loyalist and the nationalist communities in the Six Counties for the lack of progress in the anti-imperialist struggle. His solution to this problem is 'class unity' between Protestant and Catholic workers. There is nothing new in this argument — Cliff's co-thinkers in the Militant Tendency and the Workers Revolutionary Party have long harped on this theme. What is novel is Cliff's attempt to use the reputation of James Connolly to back up this approach.

Cliff is right in one respect — it is useful to 'start with Connolly' to understand the nature of the Irish revolution. James Connolly argued that it was imperialist oppression that sustained religious conflict in Ireland. According to Connolly, British imperialism provided Loyalist workers with special privileges to divide the working class and weaken opposition to imperialism. The benefits



which Loyalist workers enjoyed ensured that this section of the working class would fight tooth and nail for the imperial connection. For Loyalist workers, Catholics were the enemy — potential competitors for the scarce resources that were monopolised by the Protestant ascendancy. Connolly wrote:

'At one time in the industrial world of Great Britain and Ireland the skilled labourer looked down with contempt upon the unskilled and bitterly resented his attempt to get his children taught any of the skilled trades: the feeling of the Orangemen of Ireland towards the Catholics is but a glorified representation on a big stage of the same passions inspired by the same unworthy motives.' (*Ireland upon the dissecting table*)

Unlike Cliff, Connolly considered that working class unity was impossible as long as imperialist oppression of Ireland continued. Loyalist workers would have no interest in uniting with Catholics while their privileged position was maintained. Cliff's argument was already old hat in Connolly's time — he dismissed it contemptuously:

'The doctrine that because workers of Belfast live under the same industrial con-

ditions as do those of Great Britain, they are therefore subject to the same passions and to be influenced by the same methods of propaganda, is doctrine almost screamingly funny in its absurdity.'

What for Connolly was an absurdity is for Cliff an article of faith. That is because Cliff starts out, not from Connolly, the Irish revolutionary, but from Keir Hardie, the founding father of British Labourism.

War as a trade union issue

Prominent leaders of the British labour movement from Keir Hardie onwards have always treated the 'Irish troubles' from the point of view of narrow trade unionism. Their panacea has always been 'class unity'. Cliff simply continues this tradition. He argues that the 'class struggle is the key to unity between Protestant and Catholic' and he cites three strikes in the past as models for the future.

All these appeals to trade unionism and class unity project onto Ireland the pre-occupations of British reformists. However, the Irish question cannot be reduced to an industrial dispute. Irish workers are not only exploited, they also

suffer from *national oppression*. Britain's domination over Ireland overrides every aspect of political life in the country. All the peculiarities of Ireland, the partition of the country into six and 26 county statelets, the division of the working class into a Loyalist and a nationalist camp, and the bitter war against British imperialism — all demonstrate the centrality of the national question.

National oppression inevitably provokes resistance. The mounting toll of casualties is a testimony to the ferocity of a war that is now into its fourteenth year. Cliff says nothing about the war. He prefers to deal with economic issues: 'The conditions in the Protestant Shankill Road are appalling — even if they are still worse in the Catholic Falls Road'. The conditions of life in Newcastle, Glasgow or Liverpool are not very nice either. And for Cliff, the trade unionist, the recipe is always the same — whether in Belfast or Newcastle, the answer is class unity. By ignoring the war and by refusing to take sides, Cliff, the trade unionist becomes Cliff, the apologist for British imperialism.

Slaves in spirit

Cliff begins by blaming the Irish for the failure of the left to build a solidarity movement in Britain. He ends up by denying the centrality of national oppression and putting the emphasis on trade unionism. Not only does he justify the SWP's abstention from the Irish War, he also demands that the Irish liberation movement adopt the tactics of British trade unionism. *Socialist Worker* falls in line behind *Militant*, which wants the Irish to pursue their objectives through the Labour Party, and *The News Line*, which also makes pompous declarations about class unity.

Like the bourgeois media which propagates the myths about a religious war in Ireland, the SWP sees the nub of the problem in 'the bitter sectarian division that divides Protestants and Catholics'. The underlying cause of these divisions — British imperialism — is mentioned only as an afterthought.

Cliff's speech is an insult to the memory of Connolly. It is also a disservice to the British working class. His slavish celebration of trade unionism only confirms the prejudices of the British labour movement. Marx argued that the English proletariat could 'never do anything decisive' until it 'makes common cause with the Irish'. Marx understood that unless British workers oppose the imperialist domination of Ireland, they will 'remain tied to the leading strings of the ruling classes'. To carry out its historic role, the British working class has to support the cause of Ireland against their own ruling class. A century later the job remains to be completed. Cliff's statement that this is not on the agenda is really a message of doom and defeat. Contrast this narrow philistinism with Connolly's breadth of vision:

'Some men, faint-hearted, ever seek
Our programme to retouch,
And will insist, when'er they speak
That we demand too much
'Tis passing strange, yet I declare
Such statements give me mirth,
For our demands most moderate are,
We only want the earth.' (1907)

Frank Richards



LIVINGSTONE AND THE IRA

'Put down your guns and then we'll talk'

THE BOMBING of the Droppin Well public house at Ballykelly in early December provided an opportunity for the British ruling class to reaffirm its determination to destroy the Irish liberation movement. Parliament congratulated its troops and gave its blessing to the policy of colonial oppression. While the right wing sharpened its knives, liberal or left-wing opinion pretended that the Irish War was a figment of the imagination. Peter Jenkins of *The Guardian* soothed the guilty conscience:

'Britain seems largely to have avoided the corrupting effects which might have been expected to flow from a prolonged, unsuccessful and debasingly-violent military involvement. Ireland has not done to Britain what Vietnam did to America, Algeria to France and what living by the sword has done to Israel.' (15 December)

While the man who won the hearts of the British left with his mild criticisms of Thatcher's position over the Malvinas continued his flattery of British imperial-

ism, the left pleaded for sanity and compromise. Inevitably the people expected to show sanity and compromise are those fighting against British imperialism in Ireland. The *Morning Star* demanded that 'the talking must begin'. Why? Because it sees the struggle of the liberation movement as the obstacle to peace!

'The *Morning Star* does not agree with the Provisionals. Their terror campaign is a major obstacle to uniting the Irish working class itself, and to forging unity in struggle with the British working class.' (8 December)

Not British imperialism, but the Provisionals prove to be the 'major obstacle' for these 'communists'.

Ken Livingstone and Steve Bundred follow the same tradition. In their press statement released in the aftermath of the Ballykelly bombings they explained their stand:

'We are horrified at last night's violence which adds even more unnecessary deaths to

the two and a half thousand killed since the present troubles began. We will make it clear at our meeting with Sinn Fein next Tuesday — as Michael Foot asked us — that the Labour Party is utterly opposed to violence. These further killings confirm our view of the desperate need for a political solution which can end the violence of the last 13 years.'

Livingstone, like the *Morning Star*, wants a political solution. But a solution that is based on the renunciation of violence by the republican movement would represent the victory of imperialist violence.

During the month of December while right-wing bigots and left-wing hypocrites debated the merits of talking to Sinn Fein, there were many opportunities to protest against the oppressive policies of British imperialism. The left could have protested against the Prevention of Terrorism Act and its application against the Sinn Fein delegation to prevent open debate. On 9 December Westminster

renewed the coercive Emergency Provisions Act for Northern Ireland. Where were all the British socialists? The implementation of the RUC/SAS 'shoot to kill' policy in Armagh scarcely raised a murmur in Britain. But everyone on the British left seemed to have strong views on IRA violence.

The IFM is also against violence — the violence of the oppressor. That's why we fully support the struggle for Irish freedom. Let the hypocrites talk. What we need is action to help defeat our ruling class. For too long the British bosses have got away with their war of oppression. It is time that British workers opened up a new front in the very heartland of imperialism.

Pat Roberts

Meanwhile in Parliament

'WHICH HAND of the Sinn Fein is he shaking — the one with the ballot box, or the one with the Armalite rifle?'

That was the question Tory MP for Basildon, Harvey Proctor asked Tony Benn in the debate on Emergency Powers on 9 December. It was a question the Member for Bristol South East could not answer.

Benn was one of the few Labour MPs who voted against renewal of the Act. Why?

In the debate, Benn said that Partition denied self-determination to the Irish people, and that the troops could not solve the problem.

But what had Benn to say about those fighting for Irish self-determination against an enemy occupation?

'I detest the use of violence and want to see it end.'

Benn was pushing a line that is currently popular in the Labour left. It is that the armed struggle of Irish people, and the republican movement's electoral, 'political' success do not have that much to do with each other. Impressed with the seats Sinn Fein won, Ken Livingstone has been contrasting them with the 'terrorists'.

But the Labour left has got it wrong.

The vote for Sinn Fein was largely because of the support that the IRA enjoy in Ireland. The 'political' activity of the republican movement is another aspect of the same struggle that is being waged by the 'men of violence'.

The Benns and Livingstones have seen 'legitimate', 'political' and especially 'non-violent' success for the republican movement. That is how they want things to be from now on.

On 9 December, the right-wing Tory John Biggs-Davison got to the heart of the matter:

'Terrorism, like war, is politics pursued by other means.'

For Irish people, it is not a question of 'either/or'. They have no choice but to fight on both fronts.

Benn's sympathy with Irish unity and talk about 'political' settlements without taking the side of the Irish people fighting for freedom means one thing in practice: support for the continued oppression of Ireland. Loudly condemning 'terrorism', Benn also 'supports' Irish freedom. He is perpetrating one of the myths most dear to the Labour left — that Ireland's freedom can come about without a British defeat.

Mike Wall

The non-visit

THE FOURTEENTH of December was the day that the Sinn Fein delegation was meant to have started its visit in London. Thanks to the British state the Sinn Fein delegates were 'excluded' from Britain. The Tory leadership breathed a sigh of relief — there was no major protest against this blatant censorship of the republican movement's views. The Labour Party caved in and its left wing on the Greater London Council spent more time disassociating itself from violence than arguing for the right of the delegates to come to Britain.

The Tories clearly won the ideological arguments, and with the Labour Party out of the way, they decided to turn 14 December into anti-Irish day. On the previous day the security forces murdered two unarmed men in Armagh. But news of this act of state terror was squeezed out by the pronouncement that a bombing campaign was about to start in London. The timing was perfect. London's evening *Standard* led the way — its front page carried a picture of Irish fugitive Dominic McGlinchey with the prominent headline 'PUBLIC ENEMY No 1'. In case you missed the point the editor issued a sombre warning:

'Once again the Christmas decorations and Christmas lights will be set against the dark



backcloth of a security screen round London. Shops, offices, MPs, big firms have been warned anew of the threat from the IRA and the INLA.' (*The Standard*, 14 December)

Slick media propaganda was supplemented by police road blocks to build up a climate of fear.

In protest against this campaign of hysteria and the exclusion of the Sinn Fein delegates, the Irish Freedom Movement organised a lunchtime picket outside the Home Office. From the start the police made it clear that it did not welcome this initiative. The area was ringed by police wagons and the street was saturated by uniformed and plain-clothes men. Despite constant harassment the picket went ahead. A half an hour of shouting slogans had passed before we reached the Metropolitan Police's threshold of tolerance. Two police wagons pulled up and an inspector threatened to arrest anyone who remained on the picket. The picket was a small gesture but at least anti-Irish day in London did not go unchallenged.

Mick Kennedy

Heathfield – a bitter defeat

THE HEATHFIELD STRIKE is over. On 4 December Gerry McMullen, the GMWU's regional organiser, told the 38 black workers in Slough they had reached the end of the road. Nothing more could be done to get their jobs back – they had better accept the settlement the union had agreed with the Government's arbitration body ACAS (an average of £400 each).

The response of one striker was typical. 'The union has sacked us', said Islam, a middle-aged worker who knows he may never have a job again. Seven months on the picket line, and the Heathfield workers feel completely betrayed.

Bureaucratic inertia

The Heathfield sell-out sums up the official labour movement's inability to defend its members. From the start, the GMWU did nothing to win this strike. It took six months before customers and suppliers were even approached by the union to black Heathfield products. It took until 23 September before a meeting was organised with print union SOGAT '82 officials to request (unsuccessfully) that their members at Heathfield and TPT (the main supplier) honour the strike. When the 1500-strong GMWU branch at BICC's plant in Leigh, Lancashire refused to black Heathfield products, the union's executive council did not even issue a directive. This was particularly damaging as BICC is Heathfield's main customer, and the deadlock at Leigh made it doubly difficult to win support from the unions at all the other BICC plants.

All this would be bad enough, without the additional factor of racism. In a statement issued by the sacked strikers on 9 October, they said:

'Over and above the problem of scabbing, we have faced the extra factor of racism. The GMWU did not tackle this.'

The racial divisions were crystal-clear at Heathfield. All the strikers were black. They had been singled out for attack by management because their section – the plywood department – was the most militant. Not one white worker in the factory would support them, least of all the 31 SOGAT members. Back in 1979, the print workers at Heathfield refused to let three black workers join their union. The all-white branch had worked hand in glove with management for years.

Closet anti-racists

A more graphic example of successful 'divide and rule' tactics by management is difficult to imagine. But throughout the dispute, the GMWU tried to play down the question of racism. Senior officials were embarrassed by strike bulletins that stressed these were black workers. When the strikers got a racist



Seven months on the picket line – their defeat is a disgrace to the British labour movement

response at some plants they visited, the union looked the other way.

The involvement of WAR in the dispute was doubly embarrassing for the bureaucrats. Not just because WAR supporters showed them up – by manning the picket line for months, taking on the police, organising collections and other practical support. What they feared most was WAR's politics. As another striker, Aziz, put it: 'They were worried that, with your support, the strike would be taken out of their hands, they did everything they could to undermine you'.

But it was not only the union officials; the Socialist Workers Party tried to help things along. Although, as an organisation, its involvement at Heathfield was minimal, *Socialist Worker* nevertheless had strong views on the subject. On the day of the sell-out, an article was published ('A

separate union for black workers?', *Socialist Worker*, 4 December 1982) which stressed that racism was not a key issue in the dispute, and that 'it simply isn't true that white trade unionists have, by and large, ignored the struggles of black workers'. These days it's difficult to get solidarity anywhere and even 'black workers do not automatically support the struggles of other black workers'. Furthermore, things are not improved when 'the call for support does not come through official union channels'.

For the SWP, the problem at Heathfield was not racism and the negligence of the union – but WAR, which was constantly accused of exaggerating both problems. As a parting insult to the strikers, *Socialist Worker* has delivered a lecture to them on why separate black

trade unions are not the answer – an idea they never for a moment considered.

Reclaim our unions!

Today, the Heathfield workers could not be blamed if they tore up their union cards and wrote off all white workers as racists. But, bitter as they are, this is not their view. Their message is clear:

'The British labour movement must never let this happen again. The defeat at Heathfield is a disgrace to the whole trade union movement.' (Statement from sacked Heathfield strikers, Slough, 9 December 1982)

Let Heathfield be a lesson to all anti-racists. The time to reclaim the unions for our class is long overdue. Raise the sell-out at Heathfield in your union branch. Send motions of condemnation to the GMWU and SOGAT.

Farehk Afzal

Brother, where's your passport?

WHEN VELAYUDHAN, an Asian worker at Ford's Dagenham body plant, was sacked in February he turned to his union representatives for help. He was surprised at the response he got from both his GMWU district official and his TGWU section steward. Before pursuing his case, they wanted to see his passport.

Velayudhan has worked at Ford since 1973. In November 1981, following an operation, he was advised by his doctor to take sick leave. During that time, he visited his wife and children in India. On returning to work, the personnel officer demanded to see his passport. When Velayudhan refused to comply with this demand, he was sacked for 'absence from work in unacceptable circumstances'.

He went to an industrial tribunal

which, in spite of its sympathy with Ford's 'problems... in dealing with their large labour force which has a large proportion of immigrant labour', decided in Velayudhan's favour. It ruled on 1 September 1982 that 'no contravention of the disciplinary code arose from his visit to India... and that it would be just to order his re-engagement'.

The unions, though, were not so sure. When Ford chose to ignore the tribunal ('Owing to our current operational requirements which show a headcount surplus in our three shift areas, it is not our intention to re-engage Mr Velayudhan'), the GMWU and TGWU continued to ask the same old question, 'Where's your passport – what are you trying to hide?'.

Ford is a multi-national which, glossy 'equal opportunities' brochures aside, is

notorious for its racism. It built the plant in Dagenham on the sweat of immigrant labour. The unions have allowed black workers to be ghettoised into all the dirtiest and worst paid jobs. Now the local bureaucrats have decided to assume the role of immigration police, collaborating with management in intimidating Asian workers. Velayudhan had good reason to refuse to produce his passport. Under Britain's barbarous immigration laws, black workers have been deported for making a visit home.

Workers Against Racism has launched a fight for Velayudhan's reinstatement. On the way, we intend to rid East London of trade union officials who do the bosses' dirty work.

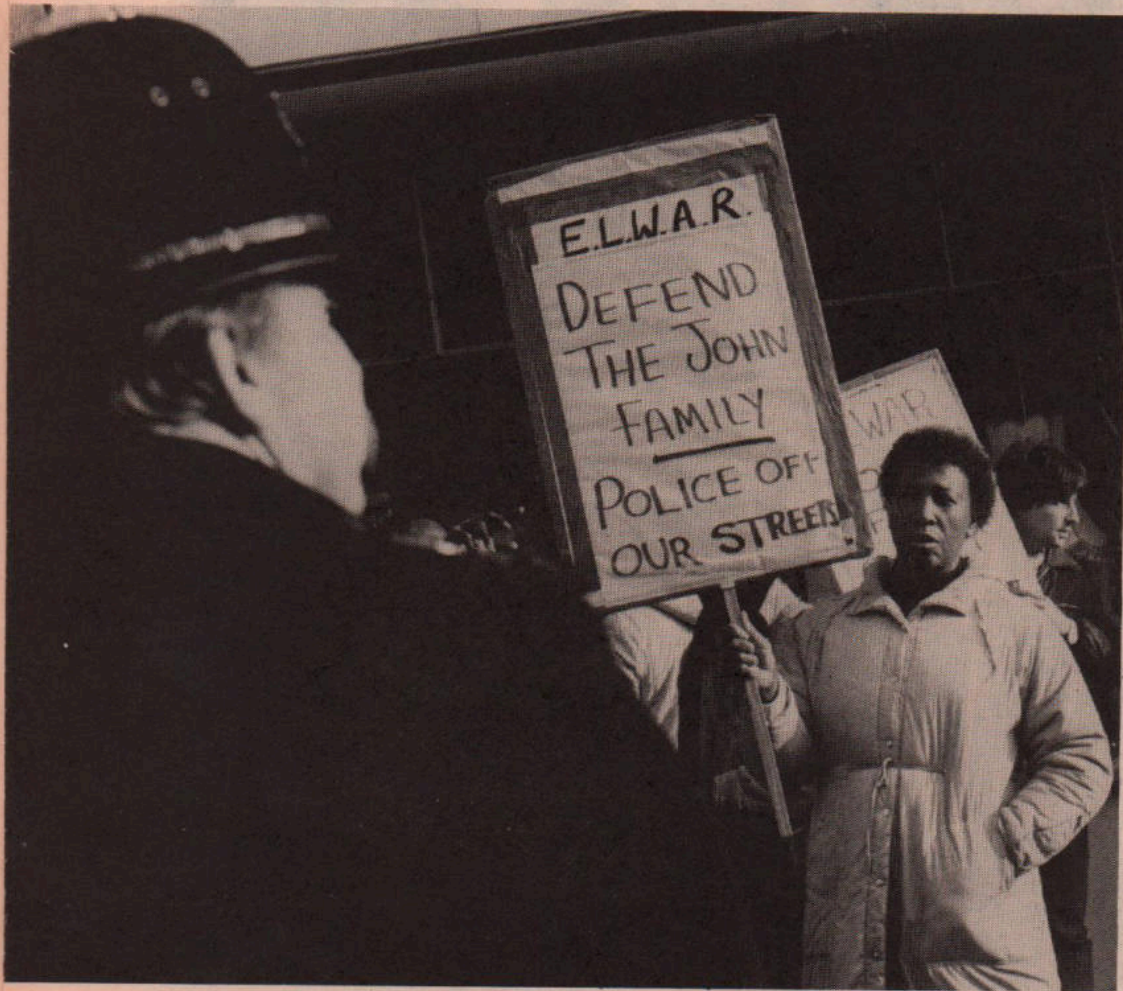
Kirk Williams



Velayudhan – victim of union racism

Police accountability

They're only doing their job



The Labour Party is committed to making the police democratically accountable. Does this mean the Met will come under the control of men like Ken Livingstone, Paul Boateng and Roy Hattersley? Would Michael Fagan have got into the Queen's bedroom if there was an elected police authority in London? Judy Harrison has been down to County Hall to find out.

WHEN BRITAIN'S black ghettos exploded last year the ruling class wheeled out one of their most faithful servants to help mop up the mess. Lord Scarman, who has proved his worth at Grunwick, Red Lion Square and in the Six Counties, was selected to preside over an inquiry into the 'Brixton disorders'. His findings were published in November 1981.

One year later, the lawyers and politicians are still quibbling over the finer details of his recommendations. But, in essence, they have already been implemented. Scarman's package — a subtle blend of hard and soft policing — has formed the basis for Tory law and order strategy throughout 1982.

The operational efficiency of the police has been dramatically improved. The para-military Immediate Response Units that moved into Brixton on 1 November demonstrated their capabilities. Parliament has just voted an extra £96 million for expenditure on police equipment and riot training, and the new Police Bill will massively extend police powers of 'stop and search'. On the other hand, Tory Home Secretary Whitelaw has also proved responsive to Scarman's plea for greater police accountability.

More consultation with the public, more and better community policing, an improved police complaints procedure — these were some of the features Scarman recommended to ensure the police receive the public confidence they urgently need. Whitelaw has gone some way towards meeting these requirements. In February 1982 the Home Office issued guidelines for the establishment of police-community consultative committees in London (the first of which was pioneered in Lambeth) and is now extending the scheme nationwide. Whitelaw has even hinted he may

meet Scarman the whole way by making those bodies statutory. Reform of the police complaints procedures, which even the Police Federation has conceded is necessary, is underway, and local community policing projects are rapidly multiplying.

Nevertheless, there is still a big credibility gap to be filled. Most black people, particularly black youth, have a profound hatred of the police. Most white workers — for different reasons — do not like them much either. If the police are to deal effectively with the deep social tensions produced by the crisis, they urgently need more allies. A consensus must be established, at least amongst a section of the public, that allows the police a free hand to get on with their job. The Tories, and even the police, have recognised this problem. But the most credit for doing something about it, must go to the Labour Party and its friends on the British left.

A 'socialist crime policy'

Left-wing intellectuals have been giving some serious consideration to the problem this past year. The fruits of their work have been published in *Marxism Today*, *The New Statesman*, *New Socialist* and *Labour Herald*. The left's academics broadly agree on the need to challenge the right wing's monopoly over the law and order debate. The key to doing this — and here there is universal agreement — is through struggling to make the police democratically accountable.

A lot of resources and money for all this research is coming from the Greater London Council's Police Committee, based at County Hall. This body was set up in May 1981, by the GLC's new Labour administration, with a specific brief to campaign for police account-

ability in London. It has a full-time 'Support Unit' of research workers and a generous budget for grants to like-minded individuals and organisations. The Police Committee's chairman is Paul Boateng, one of Labour's three black prospective parliamentary candidates. He sees the Committee's role as one of 'developing a proper relationship, in which society as a whole has confidence in its police' (*Report to GLC Police Committee*, 30 June 1982). To do this requires radical change, not just the 'cosmetic consultative initiatives' proposed by Scarman and Whitelaw. They won't work, because they are so transparent. Real accountability, says Boateng, must be based on truly representative local police committees. To this end, the GLC has been busy promoting its own alternative plans.

'Borough police committees' are being promoted by the GLC to give people an idea of how things will work. So far, only seven boroughs (Brent, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Southwark) have set them up. These are all boroughs with left-wing Labour majorities. Elsewhere, either the consultative committee model recommended by Whitelaw prevails, or there is no police accountability forum at all. The difference between the two types of police committee is difficult to discern, but the GLC is keen to emphasise that there is a difference — mainly in the degree of 'community representation'.

Buying off the radicals

A typical local authority committee, like Hackney's, has co-opted representatives from the Community Relations Council, Women's Aid, Asian, Turkish, Cypriot, Jewish, West Indian and other ethnic groups, the Chamber of Commerce, the Trades Council, tenants and disabled organisations. Determining whether or not the co-optees are really representative has proved something of a headache. And the GLC is sensitive to the wishes of some community groups who 'may prefer to be represented by an independent monitoring group which retains its identity separately from the borough' (Boateng, 30 June 1982). For these groups, the GLC has allocated a special budget, initially of £400 000, to provide full-time workers and other facilities. Some examples of the grants so far allocated are:

Lambeth Police Monitoring Group	£14 200
The Institute of Race Relations	£14 973
Gay London Police Monitoring Group	£2250
London & Westminster Trades Council	
Public Order Research Group	£32 000
Islington Police Sub-Committee	£10 438

The GLC Police Committee also promotes specific initiatives, which again cost money. For example, its inquiry into vandalism and racial harassment required a budget of £80 000. And its *Policing London*, a lavishly produced monthly newsheet, takes up another £40 000.

All this expenditure has led the Tories on the GLC and right-wing political commentators to raise a hue and cry about the Labour Party financing 'anti-police activities'. The gutter press has raised the spectre of 'Ken for Sheriff', presiding over a lawless city.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The GLC Police Committee, and the bodies its finances, are not trying to undermine the police. When Paul Boateng was slammed for making some critical remarks about the Met and its new hard-line supremo Kenneth Newman, he dismissed as 'nonsense' suggestions that he was waging a campaign against the police:

'We are concerned that we improve relations between the police and public in London... we are perfectly prepared to work with the new Commissioner. It will give the opportunity for a fresh look at the problems of policing London.' (*Daily Mail*, 1 April 1982)

Martin Ennals, head of the Police Support Unit, has stressed that the organisations which get the GLC hand-outs are 'not vigilantes' and are 'acting responsibly by collaborating with the statutory authorities' (Letters Page, *The Guardian*, 16 November 1982).

In fact, the GLC is providing excellent value for money. At very little cost, it is promoting the views on social harmony that Scarman, Whitelaw and the police all want to popularise — but cannot do on their own. The idea of building bridges between the police and the black community sounds laughable when it comes from an old judge, a Tory Home Secretary or the police themselves. But put another way, by a black Labour politician or a left winger like Ken Livingstone, it has a certain appeal. Especially when their speeches are peppered with critical remarks about police racism, 'over-kill' and the need to abolish the SPG. By not only talking about accountability, but also giving a whole layer of middle class radicals a material interest in working for it, the Labour Party is doing the state an invaluable service. And at the same time, it is helping to isolate and criminalise those sections of society that are really a threat to the police.

Backing for the hard line

A core preoccupation of policing strategy since the 1981 riots has been to try to achieve a public consensus on the need to fight crime. Brixton, Toxteth, Moss Side and every area with a large concentration of unemployed blacks has been designated a high crime area in need of special policing tactics. The occupation of Brixton's Front Line by up to 1000 police on 1 November was an example of those tactics in operation.

The left-wing advocates of police accountability objected to the number of police used, but not to the purpose behind the operation. Lambeth's left-wing Labour leader Ted Knight helped to organise the Brixton operation. Like his colleagues Livingstone and Boateng, he is committed to the fight against crime. Indeed, one of the terms of reference of a borough police committee is 'to seek to develop crime prevention strategies' (Boateng, 30 June 1982). Livingstone wants to see more (preferably black) policemen 'actually out on the streets deterring crime by their presence' rather than just 'sitting in police stations and shoving paper round to each other' (*Caribbean Times*, 30 July 1981).

In fact, the GLC Police Committee feels that democratic accountability could make a really major contribution to beating crime. Boateng is convinced that the security problems at Buckingham Palace have got a lot to do with the lack of police accountability in London. How, he asks, can such 'a remote and distant figure' as the Home Secretary with such 'a wide variety of other responsibilities' really keep a grip on things? Apparently Whitelaw 'was kept in the dark, right until the last moment' when Michael Fagan intruded into the Queen's bedroom (*Labour Herald*, 6 August 1982).

The GLC Police Committee is full of such helpful advisors to Her Majesty's state repressive apparatus. But one thing it does not presume to comment on is operational matters. Police accountability means 'public discussions and consent for the broad strategies employed by the police' and on 'questions of policing "style"'. But 'day to day control of police operations must remain the province of the police command structure' (*Wandsworth Community*, interview with Paul Boateng, April 1982). As a member of the governing body of Bramshill Police College, Boateng knows where to draw the line.

Coercion rules

Labour's big campaign for police accountability is utopian and reactionary. Utopian, because it implies that the police can be accountable to anyone other than their masters — the ruling class and its state. Reactionary, because it helps the state put down those who revolt against police brutality and racism.

Confronted with 'the most serious civil disturbances in living memory', the British establishment has discovered an urgent need to talk about improving police-community relations. While the left is kept busy talking, and talking, in the 'toothless committees' they profess to despise so much, Whitelaw is preparing for the class battles to come.

"Quotes of the year"

★ FALKLANDS FINALS

White man's burden

'Britain has absolutely no imperial ambitions whatsoever. We have no wish to impose our rule on those who resent it.'
(*Daily Mail*, 31 March)

'Britain has no colonialist and triumphalist intentions in the South Atlantic; Argentina likewise should have no need to be seen as a fascist dictatorship ever intent on some unacceptable *lebensraum* for her people.'

The day after Britain had recovered the Falklands, Argentine 'fascism' was dead
(*The Times*, 16 June)

Democracy grows out of the barrel of a gun

'I am an international democratic socialist and I believe in protecting democracy all over the world.'

Michael Foot

(*The Guardian*, 6 April)

★ FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

'I am said to have committed an offence against the Queen, but I was trying to save the Queen's life, the lives of the magistrates and all our lives, but mostly my own life.'

Gillian Booth defends her actions at Greenham Common

(*The Guardian*, 17 November)

★ LABOUR'S DEEPEST FEARS

'Any lingering faith in British democracy which may have existed within republican communities must surely have been destroyed last week.'

Steve Bundred on the banned Sinn Fein visit

(*New Statesman*, 17-24 December)

★ MILITANT RHETORIC

'The task force has been sent, the die is cast.'

Ted Grant as Winston Churchill
(*Militant*, 21 May)

'Boredom drives many youth to play the Space Invaders.'

(*Militant*, 30 July)

★ GROVEL, GROVEL

'The present is no time to weaken the elected Government.'

Sir John Boyd

(*Daily Telegraph*, 1 June)

★ KNOW YOUR ENEMY

'Yanks aim to gain Falklands.'

(*New Worker*, 16 April)

★ A WEEK IS A LONG TIME IN POLITICS

'The WRP unreservedly supports the right of the IRA to struggle against British imperialism by whatever means they see fit.'

(*The News Line*, 15 July)

'We denounce these bombings in the strongest possible terms.'

(*The News Line*, 21 July)

★ THE ANTI-PARTY TENDENCY

'Revolutionary socialists would build a party to fight for their ideas within the system of workers' councils, but in an open and democratic debate, not through any insistence on the "leading role of the party".'

(*Socialist Challenge*, 7 January)

On 19 December the IMG national conference voted to dissolve the organisation into the Labour Party.

★ DIALECTICS: GERRY HEALY

'The democratic-centralist method ensures that the WRP as object (universal) is reflected through the subject (individual party member) whilst the individual, as a party member, enters into particular areas of the external world as the object of cognition. Thus, the source of reflection in the external world apprehends through sensation real objective images in which the reality of the world crisis is implicit. These images, as the negative nature of semblances are indeterminate, become determinate when negated into the positive semblance of the objective knowledge of the WRP.'

(*The News Line*, 31 May)

★ DIALECTICS: TONY CLIFF

'People talk about Ireland being Britain's Vietnam. This is both a true and a mistaken formulation.'

(*Socialist Worker*, 4 December)

★ RACE AND NATION

'Jobless and bored, a significant part of this morass of black despair has turned to drink, drugs and gambling, all of these liberally supplied, usually illegally, by a new breed of black criminal businessmen.'

'To pay for their vices, young black males engage in violent street crime, their sisters in prostitution. The criminal full circle is thus completed.'

National Front News?, No, *The New Worker* on the Brixton riot, 5 November

'Britain cannot rely solely on a nuclear deterrent to protect her vital interests. She needs substantial conventional armed forces.'

New Statesman? No, *National Front News*, May

★ PRIORITIES

'It is time to stop paying lip service to the rule of law. It is time to insist that crime is crime and that criminals are criminals.'

Police chief James Jardine

(*The Guardian*, 18 March)

★ REVELATIONS

'In the Jamaicans, you have a people who are constitutionally disorderly.'

'It's simply in their make-up, they're constitutionally disposed to be anti-authority.'

Sir Kenneth Newman, speaking in America
(*Police Magazine*, January)

'You've got to discriminate against blacks. If 80 per cent of those who commit muggings are blacks, it's no good looking for whites.'

Detective Chief Superintendent Plowman
(*Caribbean Times*, 9 July)

The police must win but we must never be seen to win too easily... It's like a good cricket match: we must thrash the other side, but our public likes us much better if we come from behind to do it.'

Chief Superintendent Rushbrook
(*Caribbean Times*, 9 July)

★ GOODBYE TO ALL THAT!

'Numbers of foreign waiters: 16 000. Get rid of them.'

Arthur Lewis, in a parting shot as Labour MP for Newham North-west
(*Daily Telegraph*, 29 January)

★ GAFFES

'I am obviously shocked to hear of his tragic death.'

Michael Foot on Bob Mellish's resignation from the Labour Party

(*The Standard*, 2 August)

'Would you join me in a toast to President Figueiredo and the people of Bolivia?'

Ronald Reagan on arriving in Brazil
(*The Guardian*, 3 December)

★ THOUGHTS OF CHAIRMAN JUDY

On profit: 'Profit is a loaded word.'

(*The Times*, 9 August)

On typewriters: 'Have you ever tried to buy a British typewriter?'

(*The Times*, 6 September)

On Thatcher: 'She should read Hegel.'

(*The Times*, 19 July)

Judith Hart is MP for Lanark and was chairman of the Labour Party in 1982.

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The shape of things to come

THE RECESSION has accelerated a long-term trend in the British economy — the decline of manufacturing and the rise of the service sector. During the 'seventies, manufacturing employment shrank from 40 to 30 per cent of the total national workforce; jobs in services grew from 50 to 60 per cent.

Social trends

According to the latest *Social Trends*, between 1979 and 1981, there was a 16 per cent fall in the number of people working in manufacturing. Probably only about one quarter of all British workers now work in manufacturing industries. The biggest drop — 27 per cent — took place in metal manufacturing. Last year the rot continued: the top 55 British exporters listed in the *Financial Times* between them shed 200 000 workers in 1982. In 12 months BL lost 22 per cent of its workforce and Talbot 37 per cent. Scarcely a handful of manufacturing firms registered a bigger workforce. Electronics and computers are one of the few growth areas — the highest ranking firm to grow was IBM, and it was only thirtieth.

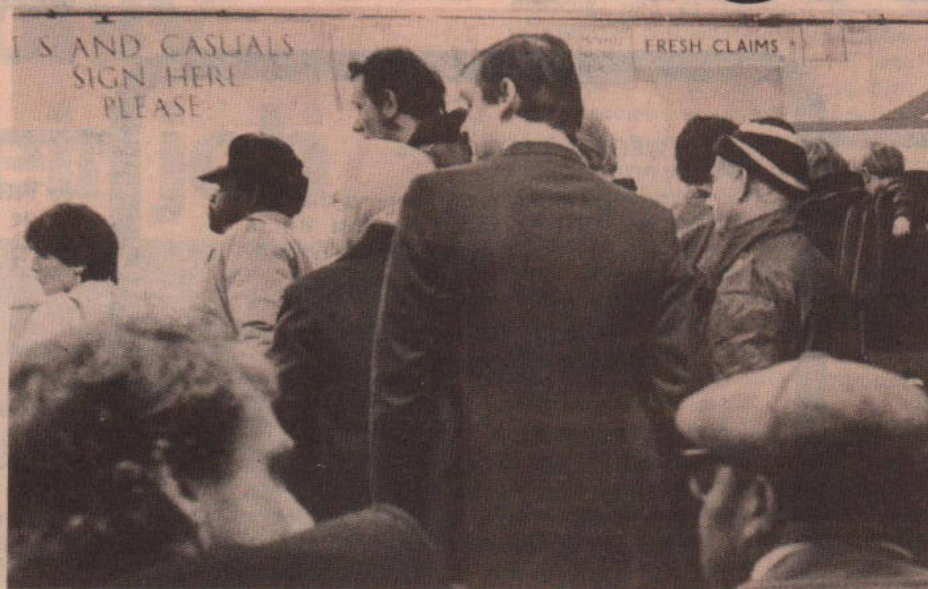
Services have held their own by comparison with manufacturing, but even here, growth has ceased in the 'eighties. Between 1979 and 1981, jobs were cut back by three per cent. Services combine a dynamic and a stagnant sector. Banking, insurance and finance and other professional and 'tradeable' services expanded their share from 19 to 26 of all jobs in the 'seventies and they have held their own in the 'eighties. However, employment in the larger transport, communication, distribution and government services is either stagnating or declining. The general result, however, is that fewer and fewer workers are men in factory overalls, whilst more and more are men (and women) wearing white collars in offices.

Another division of growing importance is that between the public and the private sector. Because the public sector includes the nationalised industries as well as public services, it cuts across the manufacturing/service distinction. Despite the Tories' rhetorical hostility to state intervention, public sector employment has swelled from 31 to 35 per cent of the total since Thatcher was elected. The feebleness of British capitalism means that it cannot survive without extensive government backing. The private sector lost more than one million jobs in 1981. An increasing number of workers are therefore confronted with the state, not only as the overall guarantor of the interests of the capitalist class, but also directly as their employer.

Dole queue doldrums

The most important division in the working class is that created by mass unemployment. Unemployment isolates a growing body of workers, especially young workers, from full participation in the economic and political life of society. It is also a powerful weapon in the hands of the employers for use in driving down the wages of workers who still have a job. The official total of jobless crossed the one million mark in late 1975; the rise slowed in the late 'seventies, until 1979 when it took off, passing two million at the end of 1980 and three million in January 1982. The Tories have now fiddled the statistics to obscure the real total, but even bourgeois commentators concede a level around four million. Of the 16-19 year old generation, 25 per cent are out of work. *The Daily Mirror* recently summed up the results of an *Economist* survey of the young unemployed:

'Boredom. A fatalistic acceptance that the hard life is going to last. Watching the telly. Eating less meat, fewer sweets and snacks. And slowly getting more and more bad tempered with life in general.' (4 December)



The recession is transforming the British working class. New divisions and widening differentials in living standards increasingly expose the structural and political weaknesses of the existing trade union movement.

Unemployment is highest in the North, Wales, the North West and the West Midlands. In many inner-city areas, it is closer to 20 per cent than to the national average of 13 per cent. Even in the South East, where the level remains below 10 per cent, it has been rising fast over the past year. Fed with bogus job creation schemes by the state and patronising gestures by the Labour leaders, the unemployed are the atomised, invisible and largely ignored victims of the capitalist crisis.

In 1982 the living standards of the unemployed took a real hammering. Those entitled to unemployment benefits for the first year out of work received equivalent to less than one quarter of the average wage. Four factors combined to force down benefits last year. The Government abolished the earnings related supplement, it introduced taxation on benefits, refused to replace the five per cent cut imposed in 1980 and altered the method of calculation of the children's element in the allowance. Without these changes, a man previously earning the average wage of £160 per week, with a wife and two children, would have received almost £80 per week in benefit; he actually got slightly more than £40 (*The Times*, 20 November). More than half the unemployed, who are entitled only to supplementary benefits, face all the humiliation of means tests, reinforced fraud squads and more snoopers for cohabiters. The DHSS has also introduced a new claims form and procedure, specially designed to cut staff, deter claims and make it even more difficult for people to get their entitlements.

Immiseration

Unemployment has played its part in widening differentials in working class living standards. Until recently, workers who held on to a job managed to preserve their real wages, while those out of work fell seriously behind. Now, more and more workers are receiving wages which do not allow them to maintain living standards. One third of all workers now earn less than £100 per week — the low-pay threshold. While inflation ran at an annual rate of around 12 per cent during 1982 (despite highly publicised levels of less than 10 per cent since the autumn), wage rises were kept below 10 per cent and in some cases, below five per cent. The result was a cut in real wages for many workers.

The workers who fared worst were those in industries most exposed to the discipline of the market, where the pressures of the dole queue were most acutely felt. Thus in engineering, which experienced 400 closures in 1981, and 200 in the first six months of 1982, and has lost 22 per cent of its workforce in the last three years, workers were forced to accept a 4.8 per cent rise. It

was the same in the motor industry: BL workers had to settle for five per cent, at Talbot they got only two per cent. On the other hand, workers in firms that have braved the recession better, fared better. The impact of unemployment was also apparent in regional variations in wage increases. In the West Midlands, where unemployment has rocketed in the last three years, earnings used to run at about one per cent below London levels. Now they are 13 per cent behind (*Financial Times*, 2 December).

Workers in the public sector, too, generally fell short of what they needed. Arthur Scargill reckoned that the miners needed 31 per cent to maintain their position; in the end they had to accept 8.9 per cent. When local authority negotiators offered 7.8 per cent to their employees just before Christmas, private employers were outraged. One CBI spokesman described this breach of the Government's four per cent cash limit as 'incredibly irresponsible' — but it was still well short of the annual rate of inflation.

Cutting back public sector pay has been a central objective of the Tory Government. The very fact of state intervention weakens the operation of market forces. In the public services, the maintenance of employment levels, at least until recently, has lessened the leverage of the dole queues. Hence, all the big industrial battles of the past three years have been in the public sector — the steel workers in 1980, the civil servants in 1981 and the health workers in 1982. And, despite all the moaning of the CBI, the Government's efforts have met with some success. According to the *New Earnings Survey*, public sector pay rises began to fall behind the private sector last year for the first time since the Tories came to power.

Bargaining barrage

Now that the balance of forces is so favourable, the bourgeoisie is seizing the time to reorganise patterns of wage bargaining to its advantage. In the private sector, the trend is towards decentralisation. Thus GEC opted out of national negotiations to pursue plant-by-plant bargaining around new productivity arrangements. The recession has allowed management to neutralise or destroy effective workplace trade union organisation so that it can enforce its will most effectively on the shopfloor. As the employers put it, 'the closer the bargain to the point of production, ... the more realistic — that is the lower — it will be' (*Financial Times*, 18 December). In the public sector, Megaw is the name of the game.

Sir John Megaw was commissioned by the Government to sort out a way of cutting pay in the Civil Service. His recommendations involved scrapping the old 'comparability' system, which meant

paying civil servants rates in parallel with those for similar jobs outside. The Megaw system begins from rigid cash limits on wage awards; pay rises are to be made every four years instead of annually; there will be no resort to arbitration unless it is endorsed by management; and strikes will only be tolerated after a 'cooling-off' period. A similar system is in the pipeline for local government and the NHS. The central aim is to introduce the pressures of the market place into sectors which have been shielded from its effects.

Problems ahead

In 1983 the Government may be expected to push ahead with its offensive against the working class. The public service workers will bear the brunt of the attack. Despite the lack of leadership from their unions, workers in local government, the civil service and the NHS have proved remarkably resilient in face of Tory attacks. They have suffered some setbacks, but union organisation remains strong and militancy high. The Tories will have a tough fight on their hands. However, they have prepared the ground well, with a series of anti-union laws which have created a more favourable climate in which to take on the unions. Unfortunately, the workers are not so well prepared.

Recent developments in the class struggle have exposed the inadequacy of the existing structures of the trade union movement. The institutions of the TUC reflect the structure of the working class in 1880 better than today. Yet attempts to bring the General Council more into line with the nature of today's working class have almost torn the TUC apart in internal squabbles. Every important strike in 1982 fell foul of the archaic divisions of the bureaucracy. The railway workers were paralysed by conflicts between ASLEF and the NUR; the health workers suffered from disputes among COHSE, NUPE, NALGO, GMWU and ten more unions trying to coordinate one strike.

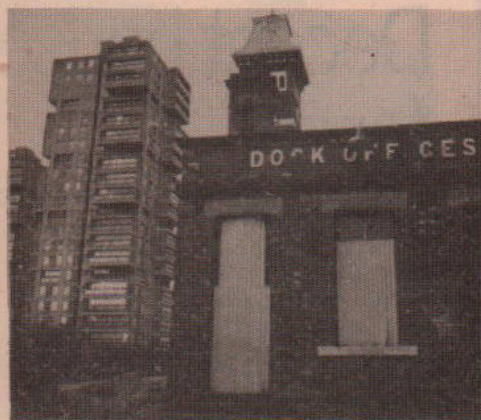
The politics of the unions have proved an even bigger obstacle to overcoming the new divisions in the working class. When the employers and the state attempt to reorganise bargaining systems, the bureaucrats put all their energies into trying to win some position in whatever forum is established. Whatever happens to their members' wages is alright, just as long as they are adequately consulted. 'Tripartite' relations with employers and the government are much dearer to trade union officials than fighting for working class interests.

The other central theme of the trade union leadership follows from this. Over many years they have become more reliant on the state — for recognition, positions on quangos, status, etc — than on their own rank and file. Hence their commitment to state intervention and their hostility to any moves to sell off sections of nationalised industries to private buyers. The bureaucrats' campaign against privatisation — whether of British Telecom or council dustcarts — is based more on their narrow self-interest than on their concern to defend jobs and conditions.

The bureaucrats fear independent working class action more than they hate the bourgeois attacks on the working class. The loyalty of the bureaucracy to the state imposes two tasks on active workers if we are to win the battles ahead. First, we need to get rid of the parasitic bureaucracy at the head of the labour movement. Second, we have to rebuild the organisations of the working class along lines that correspond to its new structure. And to overcome the divisions that the movement of capital accumulation creates and recreates in the working class, we need to make sure that the new institutions we build are permeated with working class not reformist politics.

Mike Freeman

FIGHT BACK WITH THE PARTY OF THE FUTURE



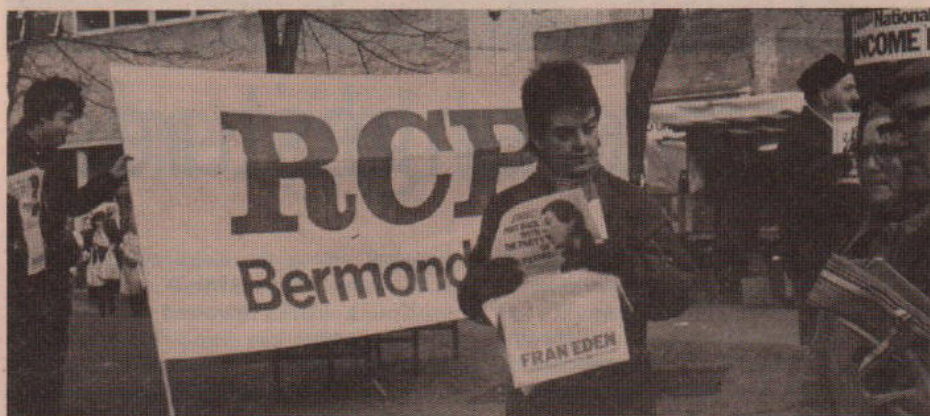
Why stand against the Labour Party when the rest of the left calls for unity against the Tories?

'Because the Labour Party can't fight the Tories. Workers in Bermondsey have become disillusioned with the Labour Party because it has failed to provide any alternative way of defending jobs and living standards. It has failed at the level of government, at the level of the council and now as an opposition.

'Why prop up an undemocratic, bureaucratic shambles when we can put forward something new, different and dynamic? We want to give workers in Bermondsey the opportunity to fight for the things they need — jobs, decent housing, nurseries. The Labour Party is more concerned with its own survival than with defending the working class. The best it can do is make empty promises for the distant future. We are organising action today.'

How do you justify standing against a left winger, a 'good socialist' like Peter Tatchell?

'Is Peter Tatchell a good socialist? Just look at what he stands for. He wants a bit more reflation of the economy than Peter Shore. But nobody has any confidence in Labour's alternative economic strategy — certainly nobody in Bermondsey. Their



Fran Eden, the prospective RCP candidate in the yet-to-be-announced Bermondsey by-election, has been vilified in the press. *The Sun* labelled her Ms Nasty because she said that black people in Britain are oppressed. *The Standard* called her Ms Trouble because she supported their resistance against state harassment. The Labour left's *Labour Herald* and the trendy *City Limits* echoed Peter Tatchell's view that Fran Eden and her supporters are more trouble than the National Front. Even more sympathetic commentators are only interested in her personal life. She talked to *the next step* about her politics.

half-hearted commitment to reducing unemployment to one million by around 1990 is not much of a socialist programme for Bermondsey in 1983. He is in favour of a few confetti jobs in small industry and co-ops, created through government subsidies. But this is no solution to the problems of redundancies and rising dole queues in Bermondsey.

'This sort of job creation has some appeal to middle class community activists — there will be lots of jobs for them on Labour's schemes. But it means nothing to the working class.

What would you do to save jobs on the docks?

'A real fight to save jobs in docklands is obviously long overdue — there are only a few hundred dockers left in the upper docks. It is very clear that the only way that jobs can be saved is through a campaign of industrial action, including

strikes and occupations, to force the Government to preserve workers' livelihoods. To be successful, such a campaign would have to involve workers at the terminals at Tilbury and elsewhere through which most of the container traffic now passes. To be effective, it would also have to involve workers outside the docks — especially in road haulage and rail — and select targets for industrial action outside docklands.

'The blame for the present appalling state of affairs rests largely with the Transport and General Workers Union and the other unions. The bureaucrats have collaborated in the rundown of the docks to the extent that they themselves are now becoming redundant for the authorities. Whilst giving no lead against redundancies, the bureaucrats have been quick to blame their members for accepting severance pay. Many workers could see no alternative. But now there is an



alternative — and it can still work to secure jobs in docklands.'

What would you do in Parliament?

'For a start, I would raise issues in a way no other MP at present does. I would establish the principle that working class living standards have to be maintained and improved irrespective of what 'the nation' can afford. This would make a change from the way even the most left-wing Labour MPs accept responsibility for the best interests of British industry and make workers' livelihoods conditional upon capitalist viability. On Ireland, I would support the liberation struggle instead of condemning it like the entire Labour Party every time British soldiers are hit. I would cut across the Tory-Labour debate on how best to restrict immigration by rejecting the whole concept of immigration controls as racist and divisive. In all these ways, I could use Parliament to provide a national focus for RCP campaigns on the ground.

'For us, a seat in Parliament is like a prolonged election campaign. It is a platform from which to challenge our political opponents — especially the party that claims to represent the working class. It is a useful focus for building the party of the future, around action to defend working class interests today.'

JOBS

Action not promises

THE DECLINE of London's docklands has devastated Bermondsey. The docks have closed down and related industries — Courage's brewery, Metal Box and many more — have pulled out. Only the expansion of jobs in the public and service sectors has prevented a total collapse of employment in the area. Now even office jobs are on the decline and unemployment has trebled in three years to more than 20 000, an all-time record. The old Labour right and the new Labour left have proved equally ineffectual in defending jobs in Bermondsey.

Southwark business

Former MP Bob Mellish and former council leader John O'Grady worked together to promote local business and redevelop docklands. Local workers never figured much in their schemes. The council set up 'Southwark Link' — a panel of senior councillors, industrialists and bankers — to assess the viability of new investments. It established the Southwark Aid Company to dish out grants to promising entrepreneurs. Mellish

and O'Grady secured seats on the Tory-sponsored docklands development corporation which has provided lucrative contracts for Wimpey, Barratts and Lysander.

When the left wing took over the council last May, it made great play of throwing out the previous district plan for North Southwark. This included schemes for a massive office development at Hay's Wharf and for private housing construction at Surrey Docks. These are fashionable causes, but what alternative has the Labour left got to offer? With much rhetoric about 'community accountability' the council is currently consulting the community about its plans for the future. Yet it is doing nothing to defend workers' interests in the present. Tatchell has led stunt protests against private developments in his campaign for 'homes with gardens'. But as far as the council is concerned there is not enough money to build any more council flats, let alone low-rise houses with gardens. It may be trendy to be against offices, but more than 30 per cent of women workers in

Bermondsey are dependent on jobs in them.

A real alternative strategy

Labour's alternative strategy for jobs begins from what is realistic from the point of view of crisis-ridden British capitalism. Hence it accepts mass unemployment as a fact of economic life and promises to try and reduce it slightly towards the end of the 'eighties. The Labour Party in Bermondsey has presided over the steady drift of more and more of the local population below the poverty line. The left is as impotent in confronting these problems as the right — the only difference is that it affects a liberal concern at the plight of the unemployed.

We start from what is realistic from the point of view of Bermondsey workers. Whatever the state of the docks or the crisis of public expenditure, every worker needs a job, or at least a living wage. Workers still have to eat, pay the rent, buy clothes, go out etc even when the capitalists can no longer make a profit

out of employing them. As far as we are concerned that is their problem — our problem is to make sure we get what we need. If individual employers cannot provide a living wage, then the employers collectively, through their state, must pay out. To get what we want we will have to fight for it. The fight extends from opposition to all redundancies to opposition to cuts in benefits. Any other approach can only lead to more poverty and misery as capitalism in Britain in general, and Bermondsey in particular, slides deeper and deeper into depression. There is no alternative but to fight back in the battle to maintain working class living standards.

Tony Allen

- a job or a living wage for all!
- no to all redundancies!
- no to all restrictions on trade union rights!
- all benefits to be brought up to average wage levels and cost of living index-linked!

BERMONDSEY

FIGHT BACK WITH THE

RACISM

From colour bars to token gestures

BERMONDSEY MP Bob Mellish came straight to the point at the 1961 party conference: 'I come to this rostrum today', he said, 'as one who is known to be no anti-racist'. Nobody challenged this reputation, although some left wingers were angered that an MP should be so blunt about official Labour policy. Mellish was a particularly clear exponent of the commonplace Labour concerns about 'this tiny island of ours' and of the familiar 'I'm not a racist, but...' of Labour MPs.

Britons first

He exposed the official party line on immigration:

'We in Britain are now so overcrowded that we cannot keep the door open to all comers. There are now 52 million of us on this island and there just has to be some control of the population.' (New Daily, 26 June 1961)

Like all Labour politicians, he was quick to compliment 'coloured' people for 'doing good work in dirty and dead-end jobs'. He blamed bad housing conditions on Indians, Pakistanis and West Indians and called for 'a reduction in immigration, health checks and deportations'. When Bermondsey dockers came out on strike calling for repatriation of blacks Mellish opposed them. Strikes were damaging to the British economy — they should protest on Sundays.

While Mellish did his best in Westminster to 'keep them out', the local Labour council used its control of 80 per cent of the housing in the area either to prevent black people from moving in or to restrict them to the worst estates. In the 'sixties approximately one third of all people living in inner London boroughs were born abroad: in South-

wark the figure was five per cent. Within the borough, blacks were ghettoised in certain areas — St Giles, Liddle, Lyndhurst — often in privately-owned accommodation. In the Mellish strongholds of Abbey Ward, Bricklayers, Dockyard and Rotherhithe, where the council enjoys a virtual housing monopoly, black people are thin on the ground.

Southwark Council housing department used to demand passports from prospective black tenants attempting to join the waiting list — until Workers Against Racism stopped this. Officials complained bitterly at having to give up 'a long-established practice'. The council, the biggest employer in the area, employs no blacks above the manual level.

What difference has the new-style Bermondsey Labour Party and its new candidate made to the area's deeply entrenched racist traditions?

Empty gestures

The council has set up a quango, a local race equality committee. It has a perspective of adopting an equal opportunities policy — so far even the local community relations council is disappointed with the progress. While the race quango deliberates over its highly salaried 'jobs for the boys', the CRC records in its annual report an increase in racial harassment in the north of the borough. For the Bengali community, ghettoised on the Rockingham estate, life has changed little since the election of a new Labour council. One report, 'On the health needs of the Asian community in the Guy's Health District', concluded:

'Asians have been left to tolerate health problems that would not be acceptable if

prevalent among the indigenous population.' (CRC Annual Report, 1981-2)

Young blacks harassed by local 'M' division police can 'look forward' to the 'Help on arrest' scheme. For the CRC it is 'one of the most significant and positive responses to the Scarman Report locally'. The scheme enjoys the enthusiastic collaboration of the Southwark Council, the police and the CRC. The idea is that when you have been arrested and put in the cells, an 'accredited person' can come and see how you have been treated.

What about Peter Tatchell? He toes the official, Roy Hattersley, line. He believes Britain can operate immigration controls directed at Asian and African countries which are not racist. He also believes it possible to reform and make accountable a police force that has the job of enforcing the oppression of black people in British society.

We don't believe in 'non-racist' immigration controls, 'non-racist' police or that pigs can fly. We believe in realistic solutions to real problems. People in Bermondsey don't need immigration controls that divide and weaken the working class. We don't need police who constantly harass working class people. Blacks are not a problem in Bermondsey — racism is. Law and order isn't a problem — the police are. We will be campaigning against the racists and the real criminals in Bermondsey — those who have robbed us of our jobs, whipped up racism and pushed black workers into their worst jobs and houses.

- No to the Tory Nationality Act!
- No to all immigration controls!
- Stop police harassment!

HOUSING

Decent houses for all!

LONDON'S DOCKLANDS Development Corporation and its private housing plans are an easy target for Southwark Council. Bluster about the Tories, the financiers, the speculators and even about corrupt Labour politicians is the left's stock in trade. It provides a convenient smoke-screen for the Council's own failure to defend the housing needs of its tenants.

'Housing on the cheap' could be Southwark's motto. Thousands of local people live in high-rise and other unpopular flats — many jerry-built in the period when local MP Bob Mellish was a junior housing minister. The council is always cutting corners to save cash — at the expense of its tenants. In 1979 it cut down on repairs, while pursuing a general policy of 'renewal' and 'renovation' rather than building new homes. At the time, 11 000 dwellings in the borough were unfit for habitation; the number now is much higher.

The case of the privately-owned Tooley Street hostel for homeless men shows how the new council's inability to provide for the needs of the homeless forces it into stop-gap measures which offer no real alternative to the LDDC's policies.

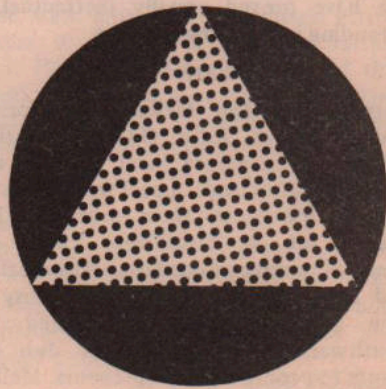
John O'Grady is the old council's former leader, and its representative on the LDDC; Bob Mellish is deputy director. When the corporation granted planning permission for the hostel's conversion into offices, the owners threatened to evict all the men. Faced with having to house them, the council issued a control order to prevent the closure. But the residents are no nearer to getting permanent homes, and the council cannot improve a hostel it doesn't own.

The battle between Southwark and the LDDC over the Lysander Estates scheme is about what kind of state intervention is needed in Downtown to make the provision of housing an economic proposition. The LDDC continues the tradition of the old council, relying on private enterprise. The new 'left' council tries to get round its lack of cash through elaborate schemes with housing associations — still relying on the same shrinking supply of Government money.

We are not prepared to let Southwark Council indulge its principles at the expense of the Downtown tenants. The working class must take whatever it can force the state to provide.

GAYS

Labour in the closet



Old Labour posters, fresh fascist graffiti: 30 years of Labour Party racism have helped to make Bermondsey a fascist stronghold

PARTY OF THE FUTURE

WOMEN

The right to work

WOMEN IN Bermondsey are largely out of work, in part-time jobs or in low-paid employment. Closures of food-processing, drink and tobacco and clothing factories have removed many women's livelihoods. Cuts in public services have led to further job losses and increased burdens of care for children, the sick and the elderly.

One of the biggest problems facing women in the area is the lack of childcare facilities. One woman explained the problem:

'There are no nurseries. Why don't they have nurseries at factories and offices? Then you could take your children and know they'd be looked after.'

Others complained about the cost and poor quality of the service provided by the council.

Southwark's social services department admits that the council does not attempt to provide nurseries for every woman that needs them. Their provision is 'principally related to the department's priority work with families under stress, to safeguard the development of children under five and to prevent where possible the need for reception into care'. In Southwark there are 14 000 under-fives

and 496 day-nursery places (plus 76 places at special units).

Radical Labour councillors like Jessica Wanamaker refuse to accept that the council should show the way by providing nursery facilities for its own employees. NALGO has been campaigning for this for years. But the Labour council takes full responsibility for imposing 'financial restraint' in the borough — ie passing on the cost of the capitalist crisis to working class people. 'If we haven't got full facilities in the borough, I don't see how we can give them to our own employees', Wanamaker told a recent open forum of the council's new women's committee. 'How about the council setting a precedent and then extending it to the borough?', we enquired. No, Southwark Council 'can't afford it'.

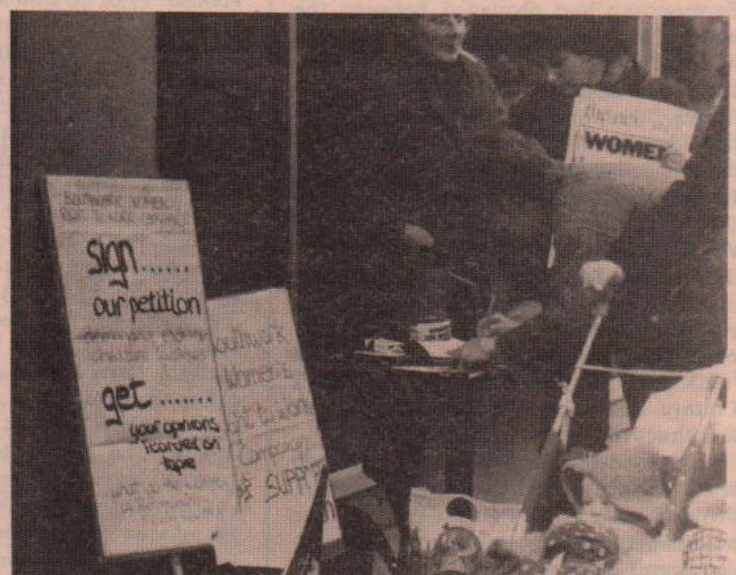
Far from trying to extend nursery provision, the council is investigating ways of getting childcare on the cheap. It is seeking 'the more active participation of parents in the activities of day-care nurseries'. It is also all in favour of 'community nurseries' — where mothers take it in turns to look after their own children. Indeed the council presents its money-

saving self-help programmes — play-schemes, holiday group projects, mother and toddler groups and childminding facilities — as a radical new alternative.

But women in Bermondsey don't want second-rate services on the cheap. They need the sort of nurseries that can look after children properly, during whatever part of the working day is necessary, to allow them to get out to work and play a full part in all aspects of social life. These are the sort of facilities we need and its up to the state to find the money to provide them. As part of our campaign for 24-hour nurseries we are supporting NALGO's efforts to force the council into making a start, by providing a nursery for its own employees.

We are campaigning for women's rights on a broad front in Bermondsey. We are opposing the council's job-sharing plans — these cut jobs rather than create them. We are fighting against all cuts in social services that particularly affect women — notably against the closure of St Olave's hospital in Rotherhithe. We are fighting the run-down of abortion facilities on the NHS and calling for their extension at Guy's Hospital in the constituency.

- no to all cuts in social services!
- free 24-hour nurseries!
- free abortion on demand!
- no to all discrimination against women!



homes for all!
ing for people in unsatisfactory
odation!
s and modernisation for those
d them!
building programme to relieve
ding and bad housing!
rents and rates!

IRELAND

One tradition worth following

BERMONDSEY'S LABOUR movement had a proud record of support for Irish freedom in the 1920s.

It passed this motion at the local Trades Council in May 1920, when the Tan War raged in Ireland:

'That this meeting of Bermondsey and Rotherhithe Trades Council and Labour Party records its strong condemnation of the government's criminal policy of military repression in Ireland and demands the immediate withdrawal of men and munitions to that country.'

The Trades Council invited delegations of Republican speakers to address meetings of up to 2000 people. In Southwark Park in September 1920, 3000 marched demanding 'Hands off Ireland'. Speakers from local Labour Parties, railwaymen, building workers and the National Fed-

eration of Women Workers all put the case for Irish freedom. Bermondsey Labour News captured the spirit of the occasion:

'It was a new and pleasing experience for Bermondsey to witness the Red Flag and the Sinn Fein tricolour flying side by side. A resolution calling for self-determination was carried with enthusiasm.'

Sixty years later the Irish people are still fighting for their freedom. And we firmly believe they deserve the active support of Bermondsey workers in their struggle against the British state. That is why Fran Eden invited Sinn Fein representatives Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison down to Bermondsey, before their proposed visit to London was banned. We will still be campaigning in

Bermondsey in solidarity with the Irish national liberation struggle.

What about the Labour Party? Peter Tatchell used to be known as a supporter of 'troops out' of Ireland. But he refused to invite Sinn Fein speakers down to the constituency. He repudiated rumours that he was in favour of the withdrawal of troops as having 'no foundation in truth' and pledged his loyalty to British imperialism. 'I do not condone acts of terrorism or violence. I toe the Labour Party line on this one'. Tatchell often invokes the traditions of the Bermondsey labour movement — but clearly selectively. When you want a seat in Parliament you have to toe the Labour Party line. If that means rejecting the anti-imperialist traditions of Bermondsey workers, that's Labour Party politics.

- troops out now!
- self-determination for the Irish people!

et
ONE ISSUE which the Labour Party won't be pushing in the Bermondsey by-election is gay rights. Peter Tatchell used to be associated with opposition to the oppression of gay people. But that was before he became a prospective Labour MP. The prejudices of the official labour movement now dictate that attacks on homosexuals are not mentioned in public places.

The REVOLUTIONARY GAY MEN'S CAUCUS has decided to 'endorse wholeheartedly' the prospective RCP candidate. A spokesman declared that 'Fran Eden will be the only candidate in Bermondsey prepared to face squarely the need for workers to fight against all forms of oppression'.

BERMONDSEY

YESTERDAY'S MEN

TATCHELL

A moderate extremist

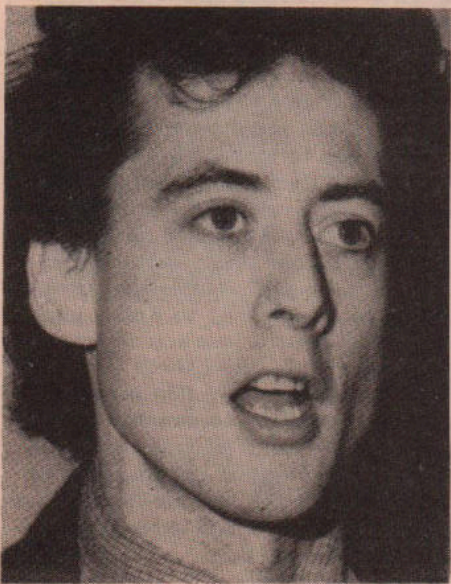
PETER TATCHELL first became Labour's candidate in Bermondsey because the party's roots in the working class had withered to such an extent that a moderate middle class community activist could command a majority of support on the constituency committee. He survived a storm of condemnation from the Labour establishment and the press for two reasons. First, his politics were more moderate than his critics at first thought. Second, the national executive realised that if it ousted Tatchell and his supporters, there would be no Labour Party in Bermondsey at all.

Tatchell achieved notoriety through an article in *London Labour Briefing* in November 1981. In the circumstances of profound internal decay in the Labour Party, Tatchell's article provoked Michael Foot to issue a strident condemnation in Parliament. Tatchell was not yet a candidate endorsed by the national executive and as far as Foot was concerned never would be. Foot was soon forced to eat these words — but what had Tatchell written that so upset his leader?

An old parliamentary chestnut

Tatchell's article was about how, in a period of opposition and unprecedented unpopularity, the Labour Party could give the people the feeling that it was doing more than simply scoring points in the Commons. First, he bemoaned the fact that Labour had lost the kind of anti-Tory militancy that its followers in Bermondsey had displayed between the wars. Then he congratulated Labour's national executive for organising demonstrations against unemployment and nuclear weapons, but upbraided it for not developing 'more imaginative and defiant' challenges to the Government. He wanted initiatives which would force the Thatcher regime to 'listen to the voice of the people and be deterred from its monetarist course'. Finally, he proposed that Labour lead Britain's unemployed in an afternoon's sit-down occupation of the Westminster area or in setting up a 'tent city' in the grounds of the GLC's County Hall. There his polemic more or less ended.

Hounded by the gutter press, Tatchell tried to clarify what he had said in print. Protests such as he had put forward, he maintained, were intended to supplement, not supplant, parliamentary democracy. The TUC-led People's March for Jobs was the sort of thing he had in mind. When, six months before his article, he and a dozen fellow Labour Party members had 'occupied' HMS Belfast on the Thames in opposition to speculative office developments on Bermondsey's Hay's Wharf,



they had in fact bought tickets to go on board. When he had followed this up by protesting at the closure of St Olave's hospital, he had done so only by blocking local traffic — and at a zebra crossing, too. He was only trying to revive a tradition of non-violent civil disobedience that had once been upheld by Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and indeed Michael Foot himself.

The only issue that divided Tatchell from Foot was the degree of community pressure required to move the Labour Party along commonly agreed lines. Professional community worker Tatchell wanted quite a lot of decently applied, respectably packaged pressure; professional parliamentarian Foot would like to settle for a bit less pressure. Down in Bermondsey the locals admitted that Tatchell was a harmless moderate — 'We've got our nutters, but Tatchell's not one of them', somebody told a *Guardian* reporter.

Backdated in Bermondsey

This time last year Tatchell had recovered enough to venture a call for Labour to 'reassert its role as the "natural focus" for all radical ideas and movements, embracing with enthusiasm "new" issues such as feminism, black consciousness, ecology, disarmament and gay rights'. But it was over local questions rather than national ones that he made the most headlines.

The first of these questions was Bob Mellish. Prior to Bob Mellish's resignation from the Labour Party, Tatchell made much of the fact that he was having to run errands for him, so little did the old boy have his heart in Labour. After it, Tatchell declared that he was 'sad and disappointed' by the move (*Morning Star*, 3 August 1982). Mellish's departure was, he said, 'a slap in the face to all those Labour Party members in Bermondsey who have campaigned so hard for his election in the past' (*Labour Herald*, 7 August 1982). It was a 'myth' to imagine that the local Party had tried to force Mellish out: the man had wanted to resign since mid 1981.

When Mellish went the whole hog and resigned as MP, Tatchell could hardly contain himself. 'I am', he stated, 'very concerned that Bob Mellish has quit and abandoned his advice surgeries. He has left people without anyone to turn to for help... In the last week, since Bob resigned, it has got worse' (*The Standard*, 8 November 1982).

So much for Tatchell's differences with the Mellish mafia; but what of a second and more important question — that of his practical policies for Bermondsey? Tatchell's programme is a fusion of inter-war municipal socialism with mid 'seventies community activism. Like his hero, Dr Alfred Salter, the radical local MP of the 'thirties, Tatchell blames all the problems of the borough on remote external forces — the Tory Government, property speculators and the nebulous 'spiral of decay'. His solutions are a Labour government, public ownership and diffuse campaigns. There is still the concern about the gardens and the speculators, but now the interest in gas boards and water boards has been replaced with a fascination with playgrounds and shops. Just as Labour posed it 50 years ago, the issue is not redundancies but industrial dereliction; not the working class as a collective social force at the point of production, but the 'public' as an atomised bunch of consumers of housing.

When Tatchell deals with the oppressed,

MELLISH

A born bureaucrat

BOB MELLISH, Labour MP for Bermondsey from 1946 to 1982, revels in his image as a hard-bitten Bermondsey dock-er. In fact he has never been a docker and never lived in Bermondsey. His chirpy Cockney exterior conceals a career bureaucrat. His father was a docker and an active trade unionist, present at the meeting that launched the Labour Party. When Bob left school at the age of 14 his father fixed him up with a job as office boy for the Transport and General Workers Union. Soon young Mellish was an assistant to TGWU chief Ernest Bevin: he never looked back. In 1946 the TGWU installed Mellish in the constituency seat which he was to occupy for 36 years. The local party preferred its own candidate but the TGWU had the borough in its pocket.

Mellish's career has served two great causes — that of the labour bureaucracy and that of Bob Mellish. Mellish served loyally the union barons who launched him into Labour politics. As Attlee's office boy he gave sterling service in the anti-communist witchhunts of the late 'forties — especially among the dockers. He constantly railed against rank and file militancy — 'I'm sick to death of dock strikes', he told the *Daily Mail* in 1958.

Mellish always defended the union bureaucrats — even if that brought him into conflict with the party leadership. Thus he opposed Gaitskill's attempt to remove Clause IV in 1960 because it would have weakened Labour's ties to the unions. And he joined James Callaghan's opposition to Wilson and Castle's anti-trade union scheme, *In place of strife*, a decade later. His outstanding personal quality — as a bully — was rewarded in 1970 when Wilson appointed him parliamentary whip. He ruthlessly imposed the party line on Labour MPs to secure a narrow parliamentary majority.

Mellish mafioso

Mellish did not confine his social activities to Parliament. In the 'fifties he dined several times a week at the Savoy with Oliver Cutts, a wartime spiv turned property developer, later imprisoned for criminal activities (after being stripped of the MBE for which Mellish recommended him). In the 'sixties he could be seen at the Carlton Towers with T Dan Smith, the man later jailed together with Poulson for corruption related to Labour council contracts in the North East. Another friend was Eric Miller of the Peachey Property Company, who committed suicide when his racketeering was exposed. Other pals included gang leaders Charlie Richardson and 'Scarface' Parsons. And Mellish supporters now claim that the Bermondsey Labour Party has recently

been taken over by a left-wing 'mafia'!

Labour's 1979 defeat was a blow to Mellish. He realised that his greatest ambition — a seat in the Lords and a title like Lord Mellish of London — was beyond his grip. Now Mellish's concern to feather his own nest in old age outweighed his loyalties to Transport House. He soon found a secure future — as deputy chairman of the London Docklands Development Corporation, the planning and development authority of the Tory dockland 'enterprise zone'. The problem was that this body was bitterly opposed by the local Southwark council and the Labour Party for its profiteering approach to local resources. Mellish's acceptance of a seat on this quango for a fat salary made certain that he would not be re-elected for Westminster.

Mellish responded in customary style. He heaped abuse on Tatchell and the local party and blackmailed Michael Foot into denouncing his replacement in Parliament. He constantly threatened to resign his seat and precipitate a by-election to embarrass the Labour leadership into acting against Tatchell. While the national executive dithered, Mellish resigned anyway. In the meantime he sponsored three like-minded councillors, who were de-selected by the local Labour Party, in the Southwark council elections. Running as independents against the Labour Party, they were elected. Now one of these, former council leader John O'Grady, a long-standing ally of Mellish, has declared his intention to stand in the forthcoming by-election. O'Grady stands for the tradition of post-war labourism which Mellish personified — patriotism, racism, graft and corruption. *Paul Saunders*



we just get the usual trendy panaceas. Women? Tatchell speaks not of jobs and nurseries for all, but of 'positive discrimination' — making sure that men are denied access to a certain portion of the dwindling number of jobs on the local council. Racism? It's the same story: forget about Southwark's ghetto estates and about violent fascist attacks, just put aside a few token posts for blacks on the council.

Once is enough

Peter Tatchell isn't interested in the working class. He's interested in the Labour Party. He wants to build a Labour Party for the 'eighties with ideas that were in their prime two generations ago. Loyal to parliamentary democracy, he puts his faith in institutions established

before Cromwell. His prospectus for socialism is equally broad in its historical sweep: he has gone on record to the effect that it may take 20 years to form a left-wing Labour government, and that in the meantime we will have to put up with Peter Shore if necessary.

The Labour Party of Peter Tatchell has nothing to offer the workers of Bermondsey but empty promises for the future. And every time that Labour leaders open their mouths they retreat. Remember full employment? Well — full employment within the lifetime of the next Labour government. Well — unemployment down to one million in five years. Well...forget it. Labour's realism is a recipe for working class despair. Vote Tatchell for even more of yesterday tomorrow. *James Wood*

INTERNATIONAL SURVEY 1982



The plunge into barbarism

The major event in British politics in 1982 was the South Atlantic War. Most British commentators — left as well as right — perceived the war as an eccentric deviation from normal political life. In fact, it confirmed a trend towards imperialist intervention in the Third World.

The USA had long been building up its presence in Latin America and increasingly in the Middle East. France had launched a series of raids into Central Africa. Sooner or later, a larger confrontation was inevitable — and it turned out to be in the South Atlantic.

In this special eight-page feature we survey the tendencies towards

economic collapse, social turmoil and military atrocities in southern Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. We begin by reviewing a trend which is bound to gather momentum in 1983 — rivalry among the big imperialist powers. The growing conflict between these rapidly rearming nations is the major drive towards war today.

The international survey concludes with special features on three particular issues in European politics — the plight of the Soviet economy, the instability of the Polish bureaucracy and the rise of social democratic parties in Southern Europe.

AS 1982 DREW to a close, a group of 26 prominent economists issued a statement in Washington, warning of the 'break-down' of the world's financial system. Their grim forebodings coincided with the publication of some of the bleakest statistics since the Second World War. One common theme emerges: the worldwide economic depression is fast turning into an uncontrollable collapse. World capitalism is heading for chaos.

Stagnation and decay

Underlying all the diverse features of the recession is one all-important trend. Because of the low rates of profit in industry, nobody wants to invest. With the exception of Japan, the capitalist class in every imperialist country is refusing to invest in industry. In the United States, the system survives on consumer spending, while industry goes from bad to worse: 'The US is becoming more dependent than ever on consumer spending. The nation's industrial plant and equipment are deteriorating, and more companies are being forced to sell off or close down businesses in basic industries' (*Business World*, 16 August 1982).

In Britain, the bosses are taking their capital out of industry and investing it in the service sector. Manufacturing investment is expected to fall by five per cent in 1983 (*The Guardian*, 17 December). After a 7.7 per cent drop in investment in 1981, French capitalists reduced their investment by six per cent in 1982. The story is the same throughout Europe. The consequences of this fall in investment are the destruction of industry, falling output and rising unemployment.

The capitalists in every major capitalist country realise that there is no national solution to today's depression. The capitalist class of one nation can only survive at the expense of its foreign rivals. There are three main ways in which capitalists have tried to beat the crisis: through expansion of trade, the extension of

credit, or by directing the flow of capital into new sectors of investment. However, all these solutions exacerbate imperialist rivalries and have a particularly devastating impact on the countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Exporting capital and troops

The capitalists of all nations are frantically searching for new spheres of profitable investment. Because of their particularly serious domestic problems, British capitalists are in the forefront of the drive to export capital abroad. The trouble for the ruling class is that with profit rates so low, overseas investments are not likely to compensate for Britain's stagnation at home. But this simply makes Britain's quest for outlets overseas even more desperate. The long-term consequence of this capital export drive is the reassertion of more direct imperialist control over the backward capitalist countries.

The expansionist trend is most clear in the case of Japan, the most successful exporter of capital. Japan has already taken on the other imperialist powers in their traditional spheres of influence — edging the US out of Brazil and threatening Britain in South Africa. Now Japan is ready to tighten its grip over South East Asia. In a recent feature on 'Security in Asia', the *Financial Times* suggested that Japan 'should not be discouraged from shouldering a greater part of the military burden which, after all, is largely there to defend its own economic interests' (9 November). In fact, Japan does not need advice from the *Financial Times*, it is already doing its best to transform the region into its economic fiefdom.

One important consequence of the export of capital is the growing tendency towards political and military intervention in backward capitalist countries. The invasion of Argentine territory by Britain, CIA plots in Central America and the occupation of Lebanon by the troops of the imperialist 'peace-keeping' force during

1982 are all symptoms of the move towards a new carve-up of the world.

Over the past 12 months, there has been fierce competition to dominate the new technology sectors. Unlike most traditional manufacturing industry, new technology has, until recently, been dominated by the United States. But during the past few years, Japan has established an important foothold, while Europe has been edged out altogether. Thus Japan has managed to capture 40 per cent of the world microprocessor market, while Europe supplies less than 10 per cent (*Financial Times*, 13 December). France has launched a determined drive to form an all-European high-technology cartel. The bitter struggle which has erupted has potential to disrupt many of the links that at present hold the imperialist world together.

Only the strong survive

A key element in the survival tactics of the imperialist countries is to maintain and extend their share of the world market. Since the total volume of world trade fell in 1982, the fight for a shrinking market has become more and more ferocious. Exports to backward capitalist countries, which were important for imperialism in the 'seventies, are now in decline. Even the better-off oil-producing regions lack the cash to buy from imperialist firms.

Britain and the EEC countries are losing out badly in the battle for markets. In August, *The Economist* reported that for the first time since the industrial revolution, Britain has gone into deficit on manufacturing trade (28 August). To make matters worse, the Treasury has predicted that in 1983 there will be no increase in the volume of exports, whilst imports are expected to increase by five per cent.

In 1982 the most bitter rivalries since the Second World War have caused ructions within the imperialist camp. The three main trading blocs — Japan,

the US and the EEC — have been fighting it out on all fronts. The intensification of inter-imperialist conflicts was particularly manifest over the Siberian pipeline project, steel and agricultural goods. In November, there was a vain attempt to patch up the differences at the meeting of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). But nothing could be done to save free trade. The editor of the *Financial Times* concluded sombrely that 'protectionism has been acknowledged as an unfortunate fact of life' (30 November).

The growth of protectionism, frantic proliferation of import controls, quotas and regulations designed to curb competition, inevitably lead towards a trade war. Every corner of the globe becomes a prized possession in the struggle to redivide the world. The United States has threatened to launch a food war against Europe, whilst the EEC has promised to retaliate in a similar fashion. The sanctions that Reagan put on European firms that supplied machines for the Siberian pipeline project have already, in the words of the Trilateral Commission Report, 'strained severely relations within the Western Alliance' (*The Times*, 9 September). But this is just the beginning. If trade rivalries continue to build up at anything like the present rate, the Western Alliance will soon cease to exist.

The big bang

All the conflicts among the big capitalist powers are threatening to precipitate an imminent collapse of the world financial system. This is because, to keep the system going, the imperialist powers have been extending credit on an enormous scale. The United States, alone, is expected to increase its national debt by \$500 billion in the next three years (*Business Week*, 16 August).

The real problem lies in international lending. Throughout the 'seventies, the imperialist banks have been making large

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scale loans to East European and Third World governments. These loans were then used to buy goods from imperialist countries, and thus to help maintain world trade. Now these countries are so much in debt that they threaten to bring down the whole banking system.

There is scarcely a Third World country that is in any position to pay its debt. Between them, they owe \$500 billion dollars, of which almost half is owed by Latin American countries: Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. A recent report by the Inter-American Development Bank noted that Latin America's total debt was running at more than 200 per cent of its export reserves (*Financial Times*, 22 November). The situation is the same in Africa where, although the total amount is smaller, the countries are much poorer.

The imperialist banking system is desperate to avoid defaulting by any major borrowers. The bankers are obliged to keep postponing repayment, whilst at the same time maintaining a flow of loans to keep the system going. Since banks are not prepared to lend on their own account, imperialist governments have been forced to step in. Even Reagan, who in the past has been reluctant to bail out bad borrowers, has had to change his tune. In December he agreed to increase the International Monetary Fund's lending resources by \$30 billion to \$95 billion.

As the year closed, the international banking scene was approaching farce. The City of London was inundated with requests to help out potential borrowers. Just as the IFM bailed out Kenya and Zambia, the Bank of England received news that Mexico was going to go under. The Bank's deputy governor immediately issued instructions to representatives of 50 UK clearing banks to 'set an example' by putting together a new loan package for Mexico. The 'stability of the international monetary system' was at stake, so British banks were asked to cough up \$500m. Two days later, before the banks could breathe a sigh of relief, came even worse news. The Bank of England was demanding that British banks join in a \$1.1 billion international loan to Argentina!

British loans to Argentina show that the imperialist bankers are not sentimental. The spirit of the taskforce notwithstanding, business is business. The integrity of the banking system is more important than some cheap flag waving. *The Guardian* summed it all up: 'The Government is being forced to acknowledge that there will be costs in the Falklands campaign that go beyond the loss of weapons and indeed lives in that conflict. If Argentina were to repudiate its debt that would be such a cost' (17 December).

The desperate measures taken to postpone the collapse of the banking system indicate the scale of the problem. Credit cannot, at this stage of the recession, help curb the tendency towards collapse. In the words of celebrated bourgeois economist Paul Samuelson: 'Deficits do not have the same expansionary kick they had back in the 'forties, 'fifties or 'sixties' (*Business Week*, 16 August). Not only has credit lost its 'expansionary kick', but it has also become a problem in its own right. It is only a matter of time before the existing banking system tumbles like a house of cards.

The end is nigh

The recession is still in its early phase. But already it is wreaking havoc in backward capitalist countries. In Latin America



and Africa, population growth outstrips output and gross domestic product per head is falling. Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, is facing a major struggle just to feed its population. Almost half of its export earnings have to be directed towards payment of interest charges. In Europe the recession brings mass unemployment and poverty; in the Third World it means famine, disease and a daily death toll of tens of thousands.

The Third World is being forced to pay the price of the crisis of imperialism. Workers and peasants who manage to scrape together a subsistence living face Western-backed repressive regimes and, increasingly, Western troops enforcing the subjugation of the masses. As South Africa strikes north across its borders and the British invasion force returns from the South Atlantic and American marines join French legionnaires in Lebanon, the dangers of colonial-style expansion and terror have become abundantly clear in 1982.

It is but a short step from a trade war to a shooting war. The world recession has pushed all the major imperialist powers into programmes of rearmament and military preparation to defend and advance their interests against their rivals. 'Deterrence', the system of international supremacy America established in the 'fifties and 'sixties, when it was at the height of its power, is crumbling fast. In the past, America was so unchallenged that its interests were best served by 'preventing' a world war. In 1983 America may be so harassed that its interests might be best served by starting one.

USA vs USSR: no contest

As 1982 closed, Ronald Reagan's claims, that the USSR was intent on exploiting the USA's 'window of vulnerability' by launching a pre-emptive first strike against US missile silos, became more and more insistent. For the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age, America maintained that it was actually behind the USSR in weaponry. How true is this?

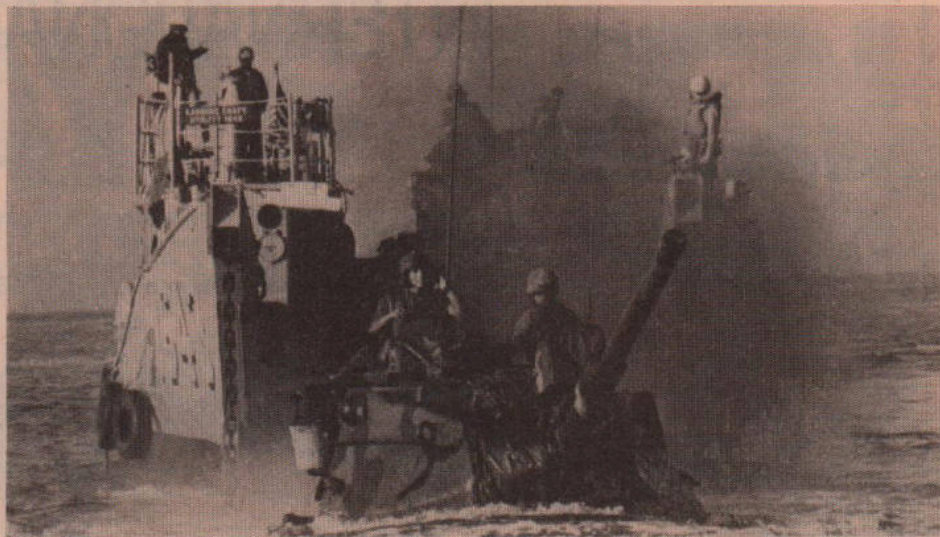
At the most basic level, that of numbers of nuclear warheads, the Soviet Union trails the USA by 7300 to 9300 (*Financial Times*, 28 October). Much more important is the fact that the USSR has 75 per cent of its warheads on land-based missiles, whereas most of America's are kept on submarines. This means that, although the Soviets are in a better position to launch a first strike (because at the moment only land-based missiles can be launched with the requisite accuracy), this advantage counts for little. Because a first strike can only be directed against fixed silos, a Soviet one would leave America's submarines untouched and thus able to obliterate Soviet cities completely.

America is still king of deterrence — it can deter a first strike. Thus, Reagan's December MX initiative is not at all a question of establishing a land-based missile system less vulnerable to an imminent Soviet first strike than the Minuteman. A Soviet first strike is just not imminent. What the MX represents is an opportunity to launch an American first strike against Soviet silos — a first strike to which the USSR, with only a quarter of its warheads on submarines and airplanes, would be in little position to reply. Such is the 'balance' of East-West military power we can look forward to for the rest of this decade.

Western Europe won't play ball

The USA invokes the 'Soviet menace' as a way of binding the ruling classes of Western Europe to Washington. The USA desperately needs to promote this unity in face of the tendencies towards fragmentation within the Western Alliance.

However, as the last 12 months have shown, the West European bourgeoisie is becoming increasingly unwilling to accept the American embrace. The burgeoning anti-Americanism of the European capitalist powers has had two consequences in the USA. First, it gave a big boost to isolationist sentiment in the USA. This cohered around Senator Ted Steven's unprecedentedly popular resolution to cut 18 000 soldiers from



America's 350 000 troops in West Germany. Second, it made Reagan backtrack:

- in May, he followed up his earlier 'zero option' proposals on Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) with a call for USA/USSR Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START)

- in June, he visited major West European capitals in an attempt to reassure his allies that the USA was not bent on war-mongering in Europe

- in November, he got NATO chief Bernard Rogers to suggest that Western Europe turn in some of its nuclear equipment for conventional weapons.

All these gestures, however, have proved of little avail. On every issue Reagan has met dissension from even his most loyal West European allies:

- on INF, West German premier and Americanophile Helmut Kohl has refused to take any more Cruise and Pershing missiles than his predecessor Helmut Schmidt

- on strategic arms, Reagan's announcement of the MX missile has drawn criticism from all sorts of respectable sources

- on a limited war in Europe, America's December decision to construct a 'fall-back from Stuttgart' NATO warfighting command and control centre in Britain has caused consternation in Bonn

- on the Rogers proposals for more conventional weapons, this attempt to 'raise the nuclear threshold' in Europe by a 'no early use' policy has run into snags. At present, only Britain and Norway are meeting America's demand for three per cent increases a year; and all NATO's European members suspect that purchases of (largely American) 'electronic warfare' technology will be costly and likely to strengthen US hegemony, rather than reinforce its European rivals.

Everywhere he looks, Reagan finds transatlantic tensions increasing. His attempts to win Western Europe back to the fold are likely to falter still more in 1983.

Exploiting the contradictions

As Western Europe appears more recalcitrant to the USA, so the Soviet Union appears less and less of a real menace. Every move the USSR makes reveals its feebleness. Leonid Brezhnev's March declaration of a moratorium on the deployment of SS-20s and his call in the same speech for a freeze on strategic weapons merely upheld the status quo — which works to America's massive advantage. Brezhnev's June proclamation of a 'no first use' policy on nuclear weapons was almost the same as giving the Americans the green light for a first strike.

The USSR is in no position to switch its missiles from land to submarines, which are undoubtedly the launcher technology of the future. Yet its proposal to the START talks is for equal numbers of launchers for each side — which would leave the USA free to keep most of its warheads on submarines. Nor will it be able to catch up the USA in conventional electronic warfare, as the pasting US-supplied Israel gave Soviet-supplied Syria in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley last June showed all too clearly (*Business Week*, 20 September).

All the Soviet Union can do is try to take advantage of divisions in the ranks of

its imperialist enemies. The Siberian pipeline episode in 1982 showed how it can play off European and American rivals against one another to considerable effect. Increasing conflicts within NATO will provide more and more scope for this traditional style of Soviet foreign policy. It is a better guarantee of the survival of the Soviet bureaucracy than all its obsolete and inefficient weaponry.

Squabbles among allies

The relations among the three main military powers in Western Europe — West Germany, France and Britain — remain to a large extent unresolved. Disagreements over arms manufacture in the EEC bloc reveal the conflicts. With the increasing significance of conventional weapons, there is a major drive for Western Europe to become more self-reliant in the field. But costs can only be kept under control if a division of labour is established. France, which runs a flourishing export trade in arms, is keen on this idea. West Germany, however, fears that going it alone in Europe might make a conventional war more likely on its borders. Major German rearmament might also encourage the USA to withdraw nuclear protection. Yet, discreetly, Germany has already begun to prepare for war.

French premier Francois Mitterand is going all-out to build up his independent nuclear *force de frappe*. Some French militarists have started to call for the withdrawal of French troops stationed in West Germany. Even Britain, under the guise of the post-Falklands defence review, is ready to establish a new rapid deployment force.

All the major European powers are adopting more militaristic postures. Germany and France, in particular, are moving inexorably in an aggressively anti-American direction. An even greater potential threat to the USA comes from Japan. New premier Yasuhiro Nakasone is presiding over a burgeoning rearmament programme. Japan's expertise in micro-chip technology will allow it to catch up with America in conventional weapons almost overnight. And Japan is moving rapidly into US spheres of influence in the Middle East and Latin America, as well as in South East Asia.

Only one way to stop them

The 'eighties mark the beginning of a new arms race — one in which the major protagonists are not the Soviet Union and the USA, but the USA, Japan, Germany and Britain. At first the testing ground will be the more exposed regions of the backward capitalist world. However, it is only a matter of time before imperialism drags the whole world into its destructive struggle to survive. The drift towards war is beyond the control of any capitalist country or bourgeois politician — imperialism must destroy to survive.

During the First World War Lenin wrote that the crisis of imperialism posed to the world two alternatives — *socialism or barbarism*. Sixty years later, the choice between those two alternatives is more stark than at any time in the history of the world, so great has the destructive capacity of the capitalist class become. The only thing that can stop them is a working class anti-imperialist movement. It's them or us.

James Wood



SOUTH AFRICA

The cracks begin to show

The recession has forced the South African ruling class to reorganise its relations with the neighbouring countries of southern Africa and with its own working class. December's raid into Lesotho, following a series of military interventions in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, shows the direction of South African foreign policy. The Pretoria regime is bent on destabilising southern Africa as a means of consolidating its economic and political control over the whole region. It is, however, its attempts to deal with the working class at home that have exposed the tensions within the apartheid system and led to a split in the ruling National Party. Charles Longford reports.

SOUTH AFRICA'S economy almost ground to a halt in 1982. As gold prices on the world market fell, its growth rate fell precipitately from a record eight per cent in 1980 to an anticipated one per cent last year. Inflation ran at around 15 per cent throughout the year, while the productivity and competitiveness of South African industry declined. The Government has been obliged to impose a surcharge of 10 per cent on the flood of imports and impose strict fiscal controls. It has been forced to go cap in hand to ask the IMF to underwrite a massive foreign borrowing programme.

The regime's attempts to deal with the economic crisis expose all the contradictions of the apartheid state. South African capitalism desperately needs a modern, skilled, organised and integrated working class. However, it can only create such a working class out of the black masses on whose systematic oppression the very survival of the South African state depends. Apartheid is a barrier to the economic development of South Africa; but apartheid must be maintained to guarantee the political stability of the existing regime. Over the past year, the Government has attempted to modify some of the restrictions of the apartheid system — only to provoke divisions within the ruling class itself.

Barriers to reform

All the major political controversies in South Africa in 1982 reflected this basic conflict. The Government pressed ahead with a bill to recognise unregistered black trade unions and accord them negotiating powers. At the same time, it did not hesitate to turn out its vicious riot police to deal with striking workers in the traditional manner. Around 20 trade union leaders have been detained without trial over the past 18 months. One — Dr Neil Aggett — died after being tortured in police custody.

The state passed another law conceding municipal status to black urban townships, thus accepting the existence of settlements of black workers outside the homelands. Accommodation for black workers in the cities is vital to provide manpower for industry. Yet the maintenance of apartheid rests on the homelands policy of 'separate development' for blacks in remote and barren rural areas. This policy took a step forward in November with the establishment of a South African Development Bank incorporating Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana and Venda. While black townships won official approval, regular dawn raids and mass deportations back to the homelands continued as usual. Traditionalists within the Government are now promoting the 'Orderly Movement and Settlement of Persons Bill' which effectively imposes a curfew on blacks in

white towns and tightens up influx controls.

South African premier P W Botha has pushed ahead with measures designed to provide industry with black labour power of the requisite standard. He has encouraged schemes for better education and skills training and the living standards of black workers in certain sectors have been allowed to rise over the past few years. It was, however, the next stage of Botha's 'reform' strategy that precipitated serious disagreements within the ruling class.

Botha proposed to amend the South African constitution to replace the existing all-white House of Assembly with a 'power-sharing' President's Council. This would include not black, but 'Coloured' and Asian representatives. His aim was to broaden the base of the regime by incorporating the 2.5m 'Coloureds' and the 1.5m people of Asian origin alongside the 4.5m whites who currently have a monopoly of political representation in South Africa. Even though 75 per cent of the population — 21m blacks — were still to be excluded, this modification of apartheid was too much for a substantial section of bourgeois opinion. Led by Dr Andries Treurnicht, they perceived this measure as the thin edge of a wedge designed to open up the apartheid system. Taking a stand on the intransigent traditions of the Afrikaners, 'Dr No' led a split from Botha's National Party. His new Conservative Party now threatens to align with the even more right-wing Herstigte Nasionale Party to become a serious challenge to Botha.

Botha's reforms are pragmatic responses to the problems of South African capitalism. Resistance to them is the instinctive reaction of a ruling class that recognises that its survival rests on keeping the black masses down through the apartheid system. The recent mass arrest of leaders of the fascist AWB (Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging) organisation and the uncovering of its large-scale arms caches indicates the scale of the tensions within the ruling class. The AWB has close links with both the Conservative Party and the HNP, as well as substantial support within the civil service, the armed forces and among mineworkers. Indeed, the miners' strike of July 1982 played an important part in bringing to a head the divisions among South Africa's leaders. A closer look at the strike shows the difficulties facing the ruling class.

Divisions down the mines

Gold is the lifeblood of the South African economy. Many of its current problems can be attributed to the decline in international gold prices from a peak of \$850 an ounce in 1981 to less than \$300 an ounce last June. By July South Africa's gold mines had experienced a 35 per cent fall in pre-tax profits. They had no

alternative but to launch a major drive to increase productivity and to raise profits by cutting wages. Their attempts to do this brought them head on into difficulties arising from a racially segregated workforce.

Like most South African industry, mining suffers a chronic shortage of skilled labour. Most employers recognise that the only solution is the gradual introduction of blacks into skilled, supervisory and minor managerial positions. Thus the Wiehahn Commission in 1981 recommended, in the spirit of Botha's reforms, that blacks be recruited and trained for more skilled jobs in the gold mines. The main barrier to this was the federation of white miners' unions. Ever since the 'twenties, when white miners went on the rampage against the introduction of black workers to the mines, job reservation legislation has given the unions virtual control of the labour market. Their control over the issue of 'blasting certificates' effectively restricts all skilled work to whites. Wiehahn advocated the ending of this monopoly and the breakdown of job reservation as essential in the cause of keeping mining profitable.

At the same time, the boom in gold prices and a shortage of black labour created the conditions for wage rises to black workers in the mines. Since 1979 differentials between white and black workers have declined from 20:1 to 5:1. By the beginning of 1982, only one union — the right-wing Mine Workers Union — stood out for the preservation of the white skilled jobs monopoly and the maintenance of differentials. The employers were determined for a showdown with the white unions in the mines to force down wages. The mine owners had to take on their white workers at the same time as they were trying to force through cuts in the real wages of black mine workers. This proved to be crucial.

When MWU leader Arrie Paulus entered negotiations over wages and job reservation, his union nearly split in two. A letter to the MWU newspaper, signed by 45 skilled workers put the rank and file view:

'We do not want any longer to be members of unions which, without consulting us, take very important resolutions and undertakings to sell out their members in favour of the blacks.'

Like the leaders of the Conservative Party, the white miners resolutely opposed any relaxation of the system of apartheid. While the white miners and the employers were shaping up for a confrontation, black workers came out on strike in tens of thousands against their paltry pay offer. The Government acted decisively to defend the privileged position of the whites and to smash the

black workers' militancy.

In the ensuing riots in early July, 10 blacks were killed, hundreds injured or arrested and thousands sent back to the homelands. Government intervention forced management to increase its pay offer to the white workers while keeping black wages down. After three years of narrowing, differentials were widened once again. A satisfied MWU leadership called off its threatened strike action. In the interests of preserving political stability and the loyalty of white workers to the regime, the state stepped in to overrule the attempts of a particular section of capitalists to organise its industry in the most efficient way.

The new unions

Black workers throughout 1982 displayed determined resistance to the attempts of the ruling class to resolve the economic crisis at their expense. In February 120 000 workers demonstrated over the murder in detention of Neil Aggett. In the same month, 1800 workers in 20 factories on the East Rand came out on strike for wage rises. In September 10 000 workers in different car factories also took industrial action. However, rising unemployment and increasing austerity have inevitably helped the authorities to discipline the black working class. The trade unions have also played a key role in containing workers' militancy.

The independent black trade unions have mushroomed since the late 'seventies — more than 250 000 workers have joined them. The more percipient employers have recognised these unions and tried to use them — with some success — as 'institutional channels of communication' and control. The narrow bureaucratic and conservative outlook of some of the independent trade union leaders has deterred workers' defence of their interests.

The *Financial Times* could see what was happening:

'Most of the strike action is not directed by the unions — indeed their job has often consisted of trying to keep up with shop-floor militancy rather than in encouraging it. There is a growing sense of power among black workers who are often unwilling to listen to unionists who urge caution for tactical reasons.' (25 May)

South Africa faces an uncertain future. Its problems in trying to resolve its economic difficulties within the rigidities of the apartheid system are likely to get worse as the world recession deepens. The apartheid state, however, remains a powerful force for barbarism in southern Africa. The powerful support of the USA, and to a lesser extent, Britain, will back the apartheid regime till the end. The black masses face a ruling class that is divided but uniformly ruthless in its commitment to white supremacy.

LATIN AMERICA

Honduras was Ronald Reagan's last stop in his end-of-year Latin American tour. His advisors assured him that 'if Honduras falls to the Marxists, so does the rest of Central America' (*Financial Times*, 3 December). US ambassador and Vietnam veteran John Negroponte endorsed this revival of the old domino theory, commenting uneasily that 'it's a helluva lot closer to home than Saigon' (*The Guardian*, 7 December). American-backed guerrillas invading Nicaragua from Honduras, American-backed regular soldiers fighting insurgents in El Salvador, American-backed forces conducting a rule of terror in Guatemala — all threaten to turn the whole of Central America into an even bigger bloodbath in 1983. This year it may well be US troops visiting Latin America rather than their president. However, not only is Latin America nearer home than Vietnam, the USA is also now in a much weaker state to fight a foreign war. The impoverished masses of Central America may have to pay a terrible price for the USA to be proved a two-time loser.

A lot closer than Vietnam



British soldiers en route for the Falklands: who will be Latin America's next unwelcome visitors?

THE WORLD RECESSION has two major consequences in Latin America. First, the decline of the USA as the major imperialist power has opened up Latin America to its competitors. Whilst economically the USA has lost its hegemony over the hemisphere, politically it still remains dominant. What it lacks in the way of competitive investment and commodities, the USA has to try to make up with grand presidential tours and the formation of military alliances and dependencies. Second, the recession has thrown virtually every country in the region into turmoil. For the poorer countries of Central America, falling world prices for their cash-crops mean mass starvation and disease — and violent repression for those who try to change the system. For the more industrialised countries — Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela — the recession has brought rising debts, inflation, industrial stagnation and political instability. Throughout Latin America the military is never far from the seat of political power: arbitrary arrest, torture, imprisonment and execution of socialists and trade unionists are increasingly commonplace in virtually every country.

Eagle in decline

South America remains of great importance to the USA. It holds over \$30 billion of US direct investment — 80 per cent of US private investment in the backward capitalist world — and provides

markets for one sixth of US exports. However, European countries and Japan have been gaining ground steadily since the 'seventies. The US has been displaced as the main trading partner of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay while its imperialist rivals have begun to outdo the US in importing goods from Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Peru. The US share of Latin America's export trade fell from 17 per cent in 1953 to nine per cent in 1976. The same problem applies to investment, where US companies have lost many large-scale projects to both European and Japanese companies. From 1971 to 1978, for example, the US share of foreign investment in Brazil fell from 38 per cent to 30 per cent. France, in particular, has also moved in to take lucrative arms contracts away from the USA.

In the long term, the greatest threat to US interests in South America comes from its imperialist rivals. At present, however, its major problems arise from the internal instability of its client regimes on the subcontinent. Thus the Argentinian junta's decision to retake the Malvinas from Britain was determined by domestic factors with little regard to the consequences for US imperialism. Britain's subsequent invasion of the South Atlantic revealed the extent to which the USA had lost control in its own backyard domain. The USA dithered for a month before it backed Britain, as it weighed up the uncomfortable choice between its specific interests in maintaining good relations

within Latin America and its common interests with other imperialist powers in opposing such acts of anti-imperialist aggression. As a result of its eventual backing for Britain, US relations were soured throughout Latin America. US plans to secure assistance from other Latin American countries to help put down anti-government forces in Central America received a major setback. Argentina itself was to have played a key role in this strategy of forging an 'anti-communist crusade' — initially by training a 1000-strong counter-insurgency force.

Over the last four months American officials have worked hard to try to repair the damage done during the Malvinas war, but progress has been slow. The US voted in favour of a Latin American resolution calling for negotiations between Britain and Argentina at the United Nations in November. In formal diplomatic terms, this gesture re-established the US commitment to the hemispheric alliance. But it will take more than UN votes to restore America's position. Reagan's five-day December tour was tailored to fit the post-Malvinas scene. A US-proposed meeting between Reagan and President Bignone of Argentina on the Brazil-Argentina border was rejected by the Argentinians. In the end, Reagan visited Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica and Honduras and had additional meetings with the presidents of El Salvador and Guatemala on the final leg.

Brazil was Reagan's most important stop. He was fulsome in his praise for the

Figueiredo regime. In 1975 Brazil signed a deal with Germany to buy eight nuclear power stations — a move deeply resented by the USA. The US Government is working towards the re-establishment of military training for Brazilian personnel in the USA — an arrangement abruptly terminated by Brazil in 1977. 'Brazil is a key political and economic force in the region and an increasingly important actor on the world political stage', Reagan told his hosts, hoping that the USA might be the beneficiary.

Buying time

Apart from cementing political and military alliances, Reagan's tour also aimed to do something about the parlous financial state of the Latin American economies. The problem for Reagan however is that there is very little he can do except talk emptily about 'closer economic ties'. The USA has no ready cash to bale out its debtors. The debt crisis first broke when Mexico declared itself bankrupt during the summer.

With more than \$80 billion in foreign debt, Mexico is the largest debtor nation in the backward capitalist world. In August the Mexican government finally admitted that it could no longer meet its financial obligations. A shock-wave spread through the imperialist countries. A default on debt repayments would have caused a collapse in the world banking system — and the USA would have been hardest hit. Over the years the largest nine US banks have lent the equivalent of 50 per cent of their capital and reserves to Mexico. Now the IMF together with 1600 banks are involved in a \$16 billion rescue operation.

The world banking system can survive the Mexican collapse in the short term by pouring in more money. But Mexico isn't alone. Other Latin American countries rank high in the foreign debt league and are running into similar financial problems: Brazil shares Mexico's position with \$80 billion of debt; next comes Argentina with \$40 billion. Between them the Latin American nations owe \$300 billion — more than half the debt of the entire backward capitalist world.

In the 'seventies credit stimulated export markets in Latin America. Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Argentina — all experienced rapid growth rates. But by 1980 declining commodity prices had exposed the continuing backwardness and fragility of the economies. As growth rates plummeted it became clear that there was no money to repay the loans which had financed expansion. The Inter-American Development Bank expects that the Latin American economies will show an average growth rate of 1.6 per cent in 1982 (*Newsweek*, 6 December). Massive new borrowing must be forthcoming just to keep the economies afloat.

But the US has more to fear than a few banks going under. Economic collapse throughout Latin America necessitates tough austerity measures against the working class. Political upheavals are inevitable: already demonstrations have taken over the streets of most capitals and new guerrilla groups have sprung up in most countries.

Desperate measures at the international level will stave off the immediate economic problems. The IMF is finalising new loans of \$3.9 billion to Mexico, \$1.5 billion to Argentina and \$5.6 billion to Brazil but this provides no permanent respite. Such loans will stretch the IMF resources to the limit and many imperialist countries are reluctant to meet the IMF's emergency request for a doubling of quotas. Today, because of its own banks' excessive exposure and its particular interests in Latin America, the US is backing the request but meeting opposition from Europe and Japan. US treasury secretary Donald Regan has even proposed a joint inter-imperialist approach to the debt crisis. Not surprisingly, other imperialist countries are reluctant to help bale out the US from its particular plight. Whatever new lending is agreed the threat of political upheaval within Latin America will only be temporarily held back.

Phil Murphy



THE MIDDLE EAST

Last year began with the Israeli seizure of the Golan Heights from Syria; it ended with the refusal of the Israelis to leave a Lebanon its forces have occupied and devastated. When 1982 opened the Iraqi military was embroiled in a war inside Iran; when it closed Iranian troops were bogged down inside Iraq. The First World War began with the carve-up of the Balkans in Central Europe; the Third World War may well begin with the re-division of the Middle East.

The Balkans of our times

THE IMPERIALIST POWERS face two big problems in the Middle East – one another and the resistance of the masses. The manoeuvres of the major capitalist nations around the continuing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people indicate the struggle for power in the region. Each capitalist country pursues its own self-interest in a new carve-up of one of the world's most important sources of raw materials and spheres of investment. The Iran-Iraq war reveals the threat posed by the rising tide of anti-imperialist sentiment in the Arab world for the regimes of the area and their Western backers.

The vultures

The recession has cut world demand for oil, but despite falling revenues the Middle East is one of the few investment and trade growth areas in the world today. During 1982 a steady stream of European and American leaders toured the region, vying for the favours of local potentates and seeking to grab export markets. For the USA, Philip Habib did the rounds. Britain sent first Lord Carrington, then Francis Pym – not to mention the Queen. The French, Germans and Japanese, too, sent foreign ministers and trade delegations.

For the USA, according to Commerce Department expert Albert Planagan, 'the Middle East represents the fastest – if not the only – growing market in the world for US exporters' (*Middle East Economic Digest*, 3 December). In 1982 the US chalked up a \$5000 million surplus on its trade in the area. Even Britain is managing to improve its position. Middle East Trade Committee chair Lord Selsdon describes the region as 'the biggest growth area in the world'. Britain notched up a trade surplus of \$1710 million in the first six months of 1982. Exports from the UK to the 18 Arab states and Iran increased by 18 per cent on 1981 – Saudi Arabia and Iraq are the biggest buyers. France also has a major stake in Iraq. French contractors are building Baghdad's new airport and rebuilding the Tomuz nuclear reactor, bombed by Israel last year. Germany has boosted its exports to the Middle East: cars, electrical goods, chemicals and iron doubled in volume in 1982. For Japan the Gulf is the major source of overseas construction contracts.

While all the big imperialist powers have boosted capital and commodity exports to the Middle East, the relative position of the USA has steadily declined. After the Second World War, America pushed Britain out of the region. Now

France, Germany and Japan are squeezing the USA out. In Saudi Arabia, the most important of the Gulf states, the US market share has fallen from 26 per cent in 1975 to seven per cent in 1982. All the economic conflicts of the Western nations are expressed in their relations with Israel and the Palestinians.

No Palestinian 'solution'

The United States assumed the role of guarantor of imperialist interests in the Middle East after 1945: its local agent is the Israeli state it helped to create. Israel is largely financed and armed by the USA to enforce imperialist domination over the whole region. The problem for the USA is that its economic interests in strengthening relations with the Arab countries run counter to its global political and military responsibilities. In recent years Arab states have boycotted around 1500 US firms because of America's close ties with Israel.

The very existence of Israel implies the oppression of the Palestinian people. In turn the oppression of the Palestinian people means their resistance against the Israeli state and its imperialist supporters. No 'peace plan' cobbled together in the USA, Britain, Brussels, Egypt, Jordan or Saudi Arabia can reconcile the opposing claims to the region of Palestine by the Zionist state and Palestinians. In 1982 the Camp David agreement was succeeded by the Fahd plan, the Reagan proposals, the Fez summit and the Jordanian scheme. But the year that began with the withdrawal of Israeli settlements from occupied Sinai, as a last gesture towards Camp David, ended with new Israeli settlements on the West Bank. Zionist leader Israel Harel aims to make the occupation 'irreversible' so that 'the withdrawal from Sinai cannot be repeated in Judea and Samaria' (*Newsweek*, 20 December).

Continuing Palestinian resistance to continuing Israeli oppression is inevitable. The Palestinians are scattered throughout the Arab world and their plight arouses the sympathy and solidarity of workers and peasants in every Arab country. Many Arab regimes are therefore forced to take a stand against Israel's merciless onslaught against the Palestinian freedom fighters both within and beyond its own borders. For the USA's rivals in the region, this presents an opportunity to cement relations with the Arab world at the expense of the Americans. Hence, the French Government has taken the lead in recognising the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The EEC as a whole has approved the PLO's inclusion in negot-

iations over the future of the Middle East. Japan has discreetly pursued a similar line.

The USA has tried to distance itself from Israel to maintain relations with the Arab world. But it has limited room to manoeuvre. The Reagan Government may express misgivings about the aggressive posturing of Israeli premier Menachem Begin, denounce the massacres of Palestinians in Lebanon and replace pro-Zionist Alexander Haig with Shultz, a man more sympathetic to the Arabs. But the US problem has been its military reliance on Israel to safeguard the imperialist order. As a result, the USA has had to hang in there with Israel. However, the sending of US marines, with troops from Europe, to Lebanon shows that the USA is now preparing to assume direct responsibility for military action. The US Rapid Deployment Force is now being strengthened under a unified command structure.

The spectre of the Shah

The Arab regimes are quick to issue rhetorical denunciations of Israel, but they talk less and act much more decisively when it comes to any challenge to their rule from within. Over the past year the Gulf states have united in face of a potential internal threat in the form of an external enemy: Iran. Their hostility to Iran has tempered their criticisms of Israel's backers in Washington on whom the Gulf states, too, depend heavily for military hardware.

Iran is a threat to its Arab neighbours partly because of its considerable economic strength, but largely because of the anti-imperialist character of its recent revolution. The Khomeini regime has

exploited the progressive sentiments of the masses to consolidate a reactionary anti-working class regime which is no real threat to the imperialist powers. However, the radical mass popular mobilisation that ousted the Shah and installed Khomeini remains an influential example to the masses of the Arab world. The fact that it is expressed in Iran in the form of militant Shi'ite Islam only increases its destabilising potential throughout the Gulf where Shi'ite masses face Sunni Moslem ruling elites.

The armies of Iraq's Saddam Hussein have received major financial aid from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. Massive loans have so far lessened the impact of the war on Iraq's fragile economy. The rulers of the Gulf states back Iraq because they fear being deposed like the Shah of Iran by their own peoples. The Islamic radicalism represented by Iran has shocked the Gulf states into a major armament programme. However their lack of military expertise or experience means that they have no alternative but to turn to the USA and other imperialist countries.

So far Iraq has managed to contain the Islamic revolution in Iran. But the instability of the entire region means that any one of the Gulf's dictatorships could be swept by insurrectionary movements. The importance of the region makes further imperialist intervention inevitable – and just as in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon – the masses will be the ones to suffer.

The ruins of Beirut stand as a symbol of 1982. We can expect much more of the same in 1983.

Inez Landa



One of many Palestinian victims of imperialism in the refugee camps of Beirut



SOVIET UNION Andropov looks to nature

The unplanned character of the Soviet economy has been a subject of considerable debate amongst bureaucrats, directors and economists. A symposium on economic planning in May could find little evidence of regulation in industry. It was admitted that 'there is still no clear understanding as to what criterion should be used for evaluating performance results' (*Planovoye Khozyaistvo*, May 1982). As a result, a growing proportion of Soviet society's resources are devoted to compensating for the chaos that envelops the economy. The outcome is stagnation and economic fragmentation. Frank Richards examines the scale of the crisis and the bureaucracy's solutions to it.

THE ABSENCE OF workers' democracy in the Soviet Union mitigates against any attempt to plan the economy. Genuine workers' management of production would provide social coherence, a continuous flow of information and an internal consistency between different branches of industry. Real workers' control is the precondition for the *conscious distribution* of society's resources. Without it, planning becomes a merely technical matter of issuing orders and verifying whether decisions have been implemented. The very existence of the Soviet bureaucracy as a distinct social stratum represents the negation of not only workers' management but also of planning.

The bureaucracy's attempts to plan failed because the system lacks a regulator for efficiently distributing the resources of society. The Soviet Union has neither the traditional capitalist mechanism — the market — for regulating the economy, nor the progressive alternative of the *conscious distribution* of labour time through planning. The steps taken by the bureaucracy to overcome the absence of a social regulator of production in the 'thirties allowed for a degree of industrialisation. However, the drastic measures used to build Soviet industry also contained the seeds of today's structural crisis.

The background to the crisis

The secret of Soviet industrialisation lay in the ability of the bureaucracy to make huge investments in industry. Unlike capitalists, the Soviet bureaucrats were not constrained by the criterion of profitability and the pressures of the market when making investment decisions. Since the bureaucracy was both producer and consumer, it did not have to worry unduly about how much resources went into the making of the product or whether it could be sold. In contrast to capitalism, goods produced did not have to be both *exchange values* and *use values* but only *use values*. This meant that there was a relative lack of constraint on the bureaucracy's utilisation of labour time.

In the 'thirties, massive investments were made in industry. Millions of peasants were drawn into the factories and vast amounts of raw materials were absorbed into production. Drastic cuts in consumption also contributed to the steady flow of investment into industry.

From the bureaucracy's point of view, it didn't matter that much of this investment was squandered and that the resources required to produce goods were much greater than under capitalism. Their sole concern was to ensure that in the end at least part of the investment resulted in new industries and new products. Even if not all the products were use values at least some were. Thus, through the tremendous sacrifice of society's resources, a new heavy industry was created. This was possible because for the Soviet bureaucracy the only restriction on investment was the physical limits of available resources and labour time.

Any working class state could legitimately decide to invest at a level which would be considered inefficient by capitalist standards. There is nothing wrong in principle with subsidising new industries. However, at a certain stage the struggle for a communist society demands that growth in production should be based on rises in labour productivity in industry, rather than on the continuous investment of resources from outside of industry. Through planning it is possible to establish a dynamic of growth and technological development. This shift from extensive to intensive development has inevitably eluded the bureaucracy.

Over the decades, the bureaucracy has tried different methods to stimulate the intensive development of industry. Some methods — like the assimilation of Western technology — have proved beneficial for a limited period. But, in general, attempts at economic reform have failed. Indeed, the growth of industry has put greater strains on bureaucratic control. And recently the manifest exhaustion of raw material resources and the so-called 'manpower shortages' have forced the bureaucracy to cut down on investment. It appears as if nature has imposed its will on the Soviet economy.

The expressions of the crisis

The Soviet bureaucracy lacks a regulator for the efficient allocation of labour. Industrial development and a more complex division of labour create new problems because resources have to be distributed to a growing number of industries. This lack of internal consistency between different branches of production, combined with shortages of labour and

raw materials, limits the scope for investment.

The crisis of the Soviet economy is expressed in a number of ways. Increases in labour productivity have a tendency to decline. Productivity growth fell from 8.2 per cent between 1932 and 1955 to 6.6 per cent between 1956 and 1960, to 4.6 per cent between 1961 and 1965, to zero this year. This decline is bad enough, but at the same time, each input in investment realises a smaller number of new products; the Soviet bureaucrats call it *the decline in the rate of return on new assets*. This means that to get an extra ton of coal in 1982 required 21 per cent more investment than during the previous five years. To produce an extra rouble's worth of equipment costs 39.3 per cent more.

Recently an article in *Pravda* reported that the rate at which the cost of output is reduced has drastically slowed down. During the Eighth Five Year Plan, the cost of outlays was reduced by 4.9 per cent. Between 1975 and 1980, the cost of outlays only fell by 0.4 per cent. Evidence suggests that last year the average cost of output has not been reduced at all (*Pravda*, 28 June 1982). The bureaucracy's investment policy has broken down. The introduction of new technology has slowed down, and the volume of unfinished construction doubled from 1970 to 1980 from 52.5 billion to 105.1 billion roubles.

The bureaucracy's solution

The bureaucracy has proved incapable of rationalising its investments. All that it has attempted is to change the flow of investment. The Eleventh Five Year Plan, drawn up in 1981, planned to limit increases in investment to one per cent per year — the smallest increase in the Soviet Union's history. Not only has the bureaucracy restricted investment, it has also directed investment towards what it calls the 'fuel and power complex' and agriculture. Almost half of all capital investment under the present Five Year Plan is earmarked for these sectors.

Developing agriculture and the energy sector will no doubt help the Soviet Union's balance of payments. But, more important still, it represents an attempt to recreate the conditions that allowed

for industrialisation in the first place. In tapping nature's wealth, the bureaucracy hopes to find resources to invest in industry in the future. That is why one of the first major statements of the post-Brezhnev Central Committee emphasised the priority of tackling the problem of agriculture (*Pravda*, 12 December 1982).

It is unlikely that the bureaucracy's retreat into nature will work. It is true that as a result of the new pattern of investment the output of oil and gas is rising. But while these sectors are doing well, the rest of the economy remains in crisis. The fuel and power complex uses nearly 20 per cent of all metal produced in the USSR and around 15 per cent of the output of the machine tool industry. Yet it is these very industries, which produce machines, equipment and special steel for the energy sector, that are themselves facing a crisis. The bureaucracy simply cannot develop agriculture and the energy sector without the necessary industrial inputs. But it has neither the capacity nor the resources to develop all these sectors at once.

The bureaucracy also faces the problem that a growing proportion of the products of its factories are not use-values. They are simply non-use values. The transportation system works at half capacity. Despite an acute shortage of rail cars, the lack of planning means that, on average, rail cars are on the move just 120 days a year (*Pravda*, 30 June 1982). Up to 40 per cent of the Soviet Union's inventory of machine tools are employed in repairing faulty machines (*Pravda*, 7 May 1982). Consequently, *considerable resources have to be devoted for the conversion of non-use values into useful objects*. One Soviet expert outlined the problem: 'A situation has come about in which the producer, in effect, bears no responsibility for the operational efficiency of his output. After officially turning over the product, the producer walks away, and the customer is forced to correct any defects on his own in a make-shift fashion' (U Trapeznikov, 'Management and scientific and technical progress', *Pravda*, 7 May 1982).

The emphasis on 'makeshift' is important. The only way that the system can survive is through makeshift arrangements to compensate for the economic chaos. The bureaucracy hopes to formalise and institutionalise these arrangements. Thus, the 1982 Food Programme, which aims to increase agricultural output, calls for local initiative to make up for the stagnation of the agricultural sector. The Food Programme is not a strategy for increasing the efficiency of agriculture. Rather, it is an attempt to involve new sections of Soviet society in farming. It calls on every factory to establish an auxiliary farm. It encourages the growth of the private plot. Since these practices already exist, the Food Programme is simply a means of institutionalising makeshift attempts to compensate for food shortages. The coming year will see more attempts by the new Soviet premier Andropov to encourage the instinct of self-preservation to make up for the bureaucracy's bankruptcy.

Cutting consumption

Soviet workers will pay the price for the breakdown of the economy. Already, they have to work harder to feed themselves and their families. Now the bureaucracy is ready to resolve the investment squeeze at their expense. The only way that the Soviet bureaucracy can be certain of finding new resources for investment is by reducing the living standards of the working class.

Andropov is loath to embark on an austerity programme. The experience of Poland is too fresh and too close to be ignored. So far, cuts in consumption have only hit state services such as sports facilities and education. But as the strategy of relying on the fuel and power complex meets its demise, the bureaucracy will have no choice but to attack the living standards of the working class. That will mean that the 'Polish disease' will finally afflict the Soviet Union itself. The present economic decline will give way to a protracted period of social instability.

Short-term rations

POLAND

In December, exactly a year after the imposition of martial law, General Jaruzelski informed the people of Poland that martial law would not be *lifted*, but only *suspended*. That was Jaruzelski's way of saying that there could be no return to the days of Solidarity and independent trade unions. Jaruzelski and the Polish bureaucracy are prepared to remove some of the trappings of military rule and to release some of the detainees — but they cannot afford to relax the reign of coercion. Despite 12 months of military rule, Poland is no nearer to social stability than it was in December 1981.

DURING THE PAST 12 months, the Polish bureaucracy has sought in vain to neutralise opposition to its rule. Many activists and ordinary workers have been beaten up and even murdered on the streets, while thousands of others have been detained. The campaign of terror was made necessary by the growing isolation of the Polish bureaucracy and the gradual disintegration of the Polish Communist Party. Coercion was also essential to reimpose discipline on an increasingly truculent workforce.

At the same time, the collapse of the Polish economy necessitated the implementation of far-reaching measures to cut down on personal consumption and to rationalise industry. Prices were increased to reduce the massive state subsidies to enterprises and, in the words of one Western journalist, 'to squeeze workers out of the food market'. At the same time, the state pressed individual enterprises to cut down on 'lame ducks' and to become 'self-financing'. These measures have done little to reform Polish industry and some of the most important sectors — machine tools, textiles and shipbuilding — have been unable to provide goods for export. Industrial production in 1982 is around six per cent below 1981 levels.

To repay its massive foreign debts, the bureaucracy is almost entirely dependent on coal exports. Coal production is up 18 per cent on 1981 and exports are only a fraction below the 1981 level. The recovery in coal output is not due to economic reform, but is a result of the harsh working conditions established under martial law. Saturday working and round-the-clock shifts have been reintroduced, and even workers who try to leave their jobs face prison sentences.

The wage increases won through Solidarity have been maintained. Miners get an above-average meat ration which they can claim in special shops — special, that is, in that they occasionally stock meat. But many miners fail to enjoy these 'privileges' for long. Safety precautions have been cast to the wind in the headlong pursuit of production targets. According to official figures, there were 65 deaths in the mines during the first quarter of 1982. It is an indication of how bad things are in the rest of Polish industry that 20 000 new workers have been recruited to the mines in the past year.

Bearing the brunt

The example of coal mining shows that economic 'success' is directly proportional to the degree of coercion of the working class. Martial law has, in reality, become a framework for pushing down the living standards of the Polish working class. Living standards have fallen sharply. In February there were massive increases in prices — the cost of some items rose as much as five times. Official statistics show that average living costs increased 104 per cent during the first six months of 1982. In the same period, incomes officially rose 45 per cent — implying an increase in the real cost of living of 41 per cent. Sales of goods in the first nine months of the year were down 19 per cent. In fact, the real cost of living is much higher, as many Poles are forced to compensate for food shortages by making purchases at highly inflated prices on the black market.

Martial law also works to regulate life in other respects. Having a job means

being watched and bullied around the clock. Being without a job — and the official jobless figure has climbed from zero to 200 000 in a year — means being deprived, not only of income, but also of access to goods. The authorities have introduced a new rationing system through which many scarce goods are distributed in the factories in exchange for coupons.

Inside the factories, a reign of terror continues. In October, the workers who went on strike at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk faced a grim list of penal sanctions:

'Up to five years jail for not obeying orders, from six months to five years jail for neglecting duties; for use of force against supervisors, from six months to five years jail; for organising or leading strikes, up to five years jail; for collecting and propagating information without written permission, up to five years jail.'

The removal of direct military control over factories promised for 1983 will not mean the end of forced labour. Jaruzelski's warnings about the need to remain vigilant indicate that the climate of repression will continue.

Martial law succeeded in destroying Solidarity, but it has failed to bring political stability. Support for the bureaucracy continues to decline. It is estimated that 20 000 members leave the Party every month. Periodic upsurges such as the strikes in Gdansk shipyards and in Nowa Huta in October 1982 indicate that the will to resist in the working class has not been broken.

Future prospects

In a pamphlet *Poland's black December*, published by the RCP in January 1982,

we argued that Solidarity would not be able to reconstitute itself. The reform movement had been unable to defend Polish workers and had become an obstacle to the realisation of proletarian power. The subsequent demise of Solidarity has not been entirely due to repression — disenchantment with the leadership was an important contributory factor. While the Polish bureaucracy pressed on with its campaign of repression, the Church and the Solidarity leadership pleaded for compromise and moderation.

Many of the demonstrations against martial law were organised outside of the control of Solidarity. The May Day protests were organised by a network of militants representing 60 factories; similar independent groupings led many of the strikes during the latter part of the summer.

The formal decision to dissolve Solidarity in October 1982 was a way of telling the working class who rules. The bureaucracy had nothing to fear from Solidarity as such. But finishing off Solidarity was nevertheless essential for maintaining the climate of fear. The release of a compliant Walesa was designed to tell the working class that a new period of normalisation had begun.

Normalisation in the 'new' Poland means the bureaucracy keeping a firm grasp over the activities of the working class. Any form of protest and political organisation will be dealt with by the full force of the state apparatus. In return for acquiescence to bureaucratic rule, Jaruzelski has promised a more liberal approach to the economy. In this way, the bureaucracy hopes that the desperate struggle for survival will force workers

away from politics and towards economic self-improvement.

However, the Polish working class is unlikely to be convinced of the virtues of hard work in today's Poland by promises of future rewards. At present, the prospects of an economic upturn appear non-existent. Moreover, economic reforms designed to rationalise industry only make life worse for most workers. These measures inevitably lead to price rises and unemployment.

In 1983 the bureaucracy will have to do better if it is to survive another year. Martial law has done little more than suppress the organisations of the working class. It has not brought about economic recovery, nor has it created a social basis for the rule of the bureaucracy. The Polish bureaucracy needs more than a repressed working class to keep the system going.

Polish workers must also do better if they are to regain the initiative. For too long the leaders of KOR/Solidarity and the Church have influenced workers to take the path of compromise. Yet the experience of the last two years shows that there is no room for reforms in Poland. The imposition of martial law shows that the bureaucracy has very little to give away. Time is running out. The best friend that the Polish bureaucracy has is the fear of poverty, hunger and the winter cold. Jaruzelski and his fellow bureaucrats hope that Polish workers will be too absorbed in making ends meet to worry about politics. This strategy will only be defeated if Polish workers reject their old leaders and prepare themselves for a full seizure of power.

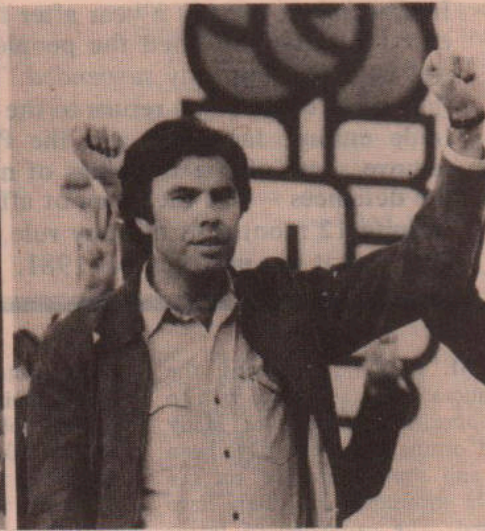
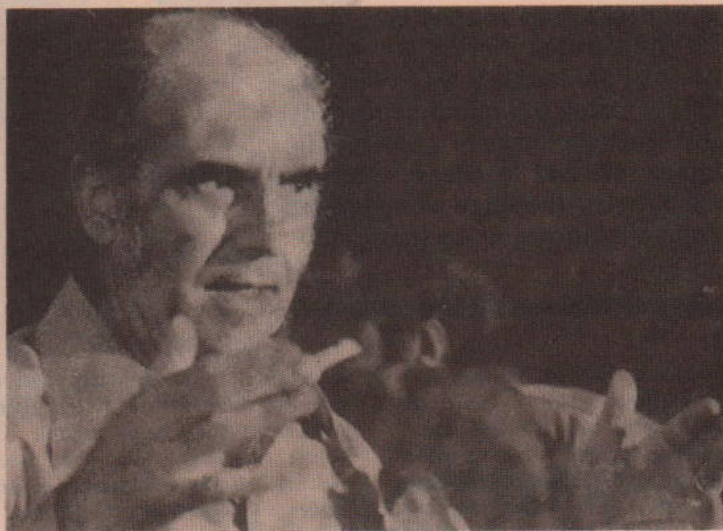
Helen Swift



Mind your backs: the military remain wary of the masses

EUROPE

Stop-gap reformism



Mitterand, Papandreou, Gonzales have succeeded – in the short term – in reconciling workers to the austerities demanded by the capitalist recession. But the reliance of the social democratic parties of France, Greece, Spain and indeed Italy on the petit-bourgeois sections of society means that their capacity to contain the working class in the long term is severely limited. Sabena Norton reports.

MORE THAN A YEAR has elapsed since social democratic parties swept to power in France (May 1981) and Greece (October 1981). Now Mitterand and Papandreou have been joined by Felipe Gonzales, after his recent electoral triumph in Spain. Far from ushering in social reforms, Mitterand and Papandreou have moved quickly to shift the burden of the deepening crisis onto the working class. During the past year the French and Greek economies have deteriorated very rapidly. The turn from reform rhetoric to harsh austerity measures inevitably took place abruptly. The consequences of social democratic 'alternative' policies of national revival have become apparent within a very short space of time.

Socialism made to measure

In Spain, Italy, France and Greece the recession started later than in the rest of Western Europe. The 'sixties and 'seventies were a period of rapid industrialisation and the development of modern public services. Working class organisations grew rapidly and at the same time, a new layer of middle class technocrats and intellectuals emerged. This petit-bourgeois social layer – a novelty in the backward and repressive societies of the Mediterranean – became a key factor in the growth of new social democratic parties.

Until the late 'sixties, social democracy never managed to gain much of a foothold in Southern Europe. The backwardness of capitalist development meant that the ruling classes could not afford to establish institutions of class collaboration. In Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal, dictatorships or authoritarian elites were the customary agencies of bourgeois rule.

Working class organisation, on the other hand, for most of the post-war period was dominated by communist parties. Despite its political bankruptcy, Stalinism appealed to the most militant and class conscious workers, most of them steered by the experience of the severe repression and conditions of illegality. Even in more advanced France, the social democratic PSF remained a small petit-bourgeois party with scarcely any roots in the working class. Indeed, until the early 'seventies, it had no mass base and a very fragile organisation.

The last decade has transformed the political complexion of Southern Europe. The Greek, Portuguese and Spanish dictatorships fell, one after another, in 1973, 1974 and 1975, as a result of increasingly uncontrollable working class militancy. In Portugal the break-up of the Salazar regime took the form of a revolutionary upheaval which, for a time, threatened to

destroy bourgeois rule altogether. In Greece and Spain, the bourgeoisie, realising that it had only one choice – to risk chaos or make concessions – pre-empted a similar course of events, quickly embarking on a strategy of liberalisation to contain working class unrest.

In Italy and France events did not take such a dramatic course. The well-established working class parties and trade unions made sure that the explosion of working class anger in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies never went beyond the framework of trade unionism and appeals for social reform. However, working class pressure meant that the unions and with them, the old Stalinist parties, began to wield far greater political power and to demand a role in running society.

This was the context in which the new Southern European social democracy, which now occupies positions of government, first made its appearance. Unlike the reformist parties of Northern Europe, which were built over a whole century, the PSOE, PASOK, PSI and PSF lacked a traditional working class base; they had to begin from scratch. Felipe Gonzales, ex-student at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, became leader of the PSOE in 1974. When he took over, the party was a rump, but, in the wake of the working class upheaval following the death of Franco in 1975, he was able to build it into a major force.

Andreas Papandreou, returning from emigration to the US, set up PASOK, the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement, one year after the fall of the dictator Papadopoulos in 1974. Both parties received direct financial support and political guidance from experienced social democratic parties elsewhere – notably the influential and wealthy West German SPD. The PSI and PSF were negligible in the early 'seventies – but over a decade they have become major political forces. The remarkable feature of all four parties has been their meteoric rise from virtually nowhere to becoming parties of government. How did they do it?

Copy-cat social democracy

The emergence of the PSF, PASOK, PSOE and PSI reflects the rise of a technocratic middle class whose influence over the working class has grown in proportion to the decline of the Stalinist parties. Throughout the 'seventies, the European communist parties moved steadily to the right until their programme appeared to be virtually indistinguish-

able from reformist or liberal parties. The result of this shift was that these parties lost their working class identity. The communist parties, particularly in France and Spain, could not compensate for the erosion of their working class base by winning new support from the petit bourgeoisie and the middle class. The most dramatic manifestation of this trend has been in Spain, where the Communist Party, the traditional party of the working class, managed to win only five per cent of the vote in the October general elections.

The disintegration of Stalinist parties was one factor in the rise of new social democratic parties. Another was the willingness of the ruling class to allow these reforming technocrats to run government. It has been generally recognised that social democratic leaders like Mitterand and Gonzales are well suited to conduct the affairs of the bourgeois state during the present phase of the recession. Mitterand is the prototype of a bourgeois politician who is able to win workers to accept the objectives of capitalism. The austerity package proposed by the Mitterand administration means that for the first time since the Second World War there will be a fall in the purchasing power of the French working class.

It was with the Mitterand model in mind that the French daily *Le Monde* outlined the tasks facing the newly elected Gonzales in Spain:

'He has to modernise an archaic country. He has to introduce morality and dynamism into a corrupt public administration, ossified by almost 40 years of dictatorship. He has to put workers to work, employers to the negotiating table and keep the military in check.' (30 October 1982)

In other words, Gonzales must devote his energies to the rationalisation of the capitalist system.

The bourgeoisie of Southern Europe has been prepared to experiment with the new social democracy because it faces considerable antagonism from workers. A right-wing government would have provoked even more unrest and created a climate of instability. It makes much more sense from the capitalist point of view to establish a radical government that can pursue policies which are essentially the same as those of Thatcher in Britain.

The new social democratic governments have only a limited role to play. Their job is to neutralise the working class so that the major changes of the future can go ahead with the minimum of proletarian

resistance. We are in a transitory phase during which the role of social democracy is to ensure that the labour movement becomes disarmed and too demoralised to fight the coming capitalist offensive.

A class without a party

The events of the past year reveal a remarkable development: the European proletariat has become a class without a party. The traditional reformist parties of the working class have gone into decline. Even in Italy, where the Stalinists retain a dominant influence over the proletariat, the Communist Party is experiencing a major crisis of confidence and direction. In France, Spain and Greece the middle class has simply taken control over the labour movement.

In Britain we are accustomed to a Labour Party which is essentially in the grip of the middle classes. But the unions still maintain a degree of control over its direction. The Labour Party is no less reactionary than its continental counterparts, but at least it has managed to maintain its role as the party of the labour movement. In Southern Europe, where the trade unions are much weaker, the social democratic parties are much more the direct property of the capitalist class.

The changing class structure in Europe has given rise to these all-class parties. The rise of the middle class technocracy and public sector employees has coincided with the decline of the traditional working class. Unemployment has hit hard at traditional industry, throwing millions of manual workers onto the dole queues. The erosion of distinct working class political parties is, to an extent, a reflection of the changing structure of the working class.

In the short run, new social democracy has considerable scope for wearing down the resistance of the proletariat. The Mitterand Government has proved extremely efficient at isolating militants and neutralising the mass of the working class. It has exploited the divisions within the labour movement to full effect. However, the PSF, like other social democratic parties, is too far removed from the working class to mediate in the struggles of the future.

The present period, characterised by a severe decline of working class politics, is a transitional one. The crisis of the working class leadership is so acute that sooner or later new political forces will emerge to fill the vacuum. We can be certain that we are entering a new phase of working class politics. What remains unanswered is whether it will be reformists or revolutionaries who will fill the vacuum.

On racism

Anne Dummet and Ian Martin, *British nationality: the AGIN guide to the new law*, Russell Press, pp71, pbk £1.95.

Robert Miles, *Racism and migrant labour*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp202, pbk £4.95.

Martin Kettle and Lucy Hodges, *Uprising: the police, the people and the riots in Britain's cities*, Pan, pp272, pbk £2.25.

Ernest Cashmore, Barry Troyna, eds, *Black youth in crisis*, George Allen & Unwin, pp176, pbk £4.95.

Ian Taylor, *Law and order: arguments for socialism*, Macmillan, pp234, pbk £4.95.

John Brown, *Policing by multiracial consent: the Handsworth experience*, Bedford Square Press, pp174, pbk £5.95.

THE ACTION GROUP on Immigration and Nationality (AGIN) does not live up to its name. Like its sister organisations – the Campaign Against Racist Laws (CARL) and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) – AGIN takes very little action. Instead, these cliques of radical lawyers, concerned liberals and church leaders, have spent their time – and their grants – writing prolific tracts, leaflets, pamphlets and books explaining the minutiae of the new nationality law.

As appendages of the Labour Party, AGIN, CARL and the JCWI all share a common political outlook. None of them ever question the basic assumption underlying the Nationality Act: the right of the state to regulate the movements of the working class. They hold out the illusion that this regulation can be carried out in a less brutal fashion. AGIN campaigns against tighter immigration restrictions by appealing to the better feelings of the ruling class. What is needed, we are told, is a Nationality Act reformed along humanitarian lines.

Moralism can never challenge the ruling class: calling for 'non-racist' immigration controls merely legitimises the existing laws. The racist character of immigration controls does not stem from the irrational decisions of politicians, civil servants and lawyers, as AGIN would have it, but from the needs of capitalism in crisis.

Robert Miles' ambition in life, it would appear, is to pen the most turgid and obscurantist book on racism the world has ever seen. As a product of the Research Unit on Ethnic Relations at Aston, he is well qualified to achieve this feat. In this latest work, Miles has surpassed even his past efforts in this direction. After 200 pages of academic meandering, Miles contends that 'race' and 'race relations' are 'ideological constructs' of no analytical value. Despite the author's painstaking attempts to outwit his readers, the message of this book comes across loud and clear. Miles is not interested in fighting racism, or in uniting the working class. Perpetuating a tradition of arid academic debate, this book serves only to mystify, not clarify, the position of black workers in capitalist society.

Uprising is the result of inquiries into the 1981 riots conducted by two journalists, turned concerned social investigators. Kettle and Hodges provide a useful account of the events of summer 1981 and subsequent developments, but their conclusions are pessimistic. The state's response to the riots has been inadequate; if they are not to recur, something more must be done.

At the time *Uprising* was written, the Tories still retained their monopoly over the law and order debate. Things have changed, however, over the past six months. Both Ian Taylor's book and Cashmore and Troyna's collection answer the prayers of Kettle and Hodges.

Black youth in crisis is a collection of essays by Labour Party activists, sociologists and academics. It seeks to present an overall view of 'black culture'. Early on, we are told that we must not let 'naivete cloud our conception of the black youth', because 'young blacks actively and deliberately contributed to their own positions'; indeed there was 'a penchant for violence within the West Indian culture'. This book blames black people for the problems they face, for the riots and for violent crime. It is a sordid testimony to the failure of the Labour Party to side with the oppressed against their enemies.

Law and order is a concerted attempt to break Tory hegemony over the law and order issue. Taylor's thesis is that the increasing

dislocation of capitalist society through crime and violence under Thatcherism has created 'a political space for socialist advance'.

'The left must enter this space... struggling to make popular demands (for example, for policing), and articulating popular fears and anxieties. A public and popular socialist criminology has to be constructed.'

In practice, this means that the Labour Party must become a staunch advocate of policing, preferably of the soft, 'community' kind, but if necessary of the hard, riot-response type.

With its foreword by Lord Scarman, *Policing by multiracial consent* brings together John Brown's 1977 report, *Shades of grey*, and a 1981 update, *Handsworth revisited*. *Shades of grey* initiated a rethink of policing strategy to cope with crisis conditions. Brown targeted 'a couple of hundred "hard-core Dreadlocks"' as the source of crime in Handsworth, and in order to wipe them out with minimum fuss, put forward a strategy of intensified community liaison. He drew attention to divisions within the black community itself, which the police could exploit in order to isolate black youth and political activists.

Brown's new report, written shortly after the 1981 Handsworth riots, assesses the success of his prescription. The value of the book lies in its unambiguous justification for community policing in terms of law and order and the maintenance of social control:

'Issues of "soft" versus "hard" policing are thus wholly irrelevant... the only valid issue here is that of effective versus ineffective policing.'

It was a bad year for anti-racist books.

On women

Marielouise Janssen-Jurreit, *Sexism: the male monopoly on history and thought*, Pluto Press, 1982, pp376, pbk £4.95.

Jenny Beale, *Getting it together: Women as trade unionists*, Pluto Press, 1982, pp112, pbk £2.50.

Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh, *The anti-social family*, Verso, 1982, pp164, pbk £3.95.

Jackie West, ed, *Women, work and the labour market*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1982, pp 187.

1982 WAS THE year the labour bureaucracy swallowed up the women's movement. The GLC got a women's committee, the Labour

Party got Harriet Harman into Parliament and CND discovered Greenham Common. The radical feminists of the 'seventies, out to seize power from male oppressors, disappeared down the deep throat of Labourism.

Marielouise Janssen-Jurreit's book is a blast from the past. A product of mid 'seventies radical feminism, the book attempts to sever the connections between women's oppression and capitalism. Apparently the only thing Engels was right about was the identification of the mother right which was then seized by men across the world. With intriguing chapters on 'the genitals of speech' and 'the vaginal death threat', this book is a must for anyone who missed out on the era of revolutionary feminism.

Getting it together comes from the reformist end of the feminist spectrum. It is part of Pluto's 'Arguments for socialism' series which attempts to present all the old prejudices of social democracy in a style and language accessible to the limited intellects of the British petit bourgeoisie. Jenny Beale touches on some of the barriers to women's advancement in unions – but endorses the traditional bureaucrats' view that what needs changing are 'attitudes', not trade union politics. She concludes with a round of applause for the Women's TUC – the TUC Charter for Equality for Women. The problem for Beale is not one of leadership which doesn't fight for working class interests, but of a bureaucracy with no women in it.

Women, work and the labour market is a collection of articles looking at the problems of women in the workplace. Despite its failure to draw political conclusions, the book is very informative and it will remain an important reference source.

The anti-social family, from the Stalinist wing of the women's movement, is neither use nor ornament. It assumes the familiar feminist prejudice that the family serves an essentially ideological function but it is not an economic necessity for capitalist society. Barrett and McIntosh relapse into a narrow anti-family posture in their attempts to create a vision of a non-oppressive society. The point is that once the economic function of the family is destroyed, human relationships can be formed that are not based on the oppression of women.

All these books have one thing in common – empiricism. None of the authors look for what is at the root of women's oppression – they look at the symptoms and therefore fail to find a cure.

On the Falklands

Anthony Barnett, *Iron Britannia: why Parliament waged its Falklands war*, Allison & Busby, London, pp160, pbk £2.95.

Tam Dalyell MP, *One man's Falklands*, Cecil Woolf, London, pp144, pbk £1.95.

Latin America Bureau, *Falklands/Malvinas whose crisis?*, Latin America Bureau Ltd, London, pp 203, pbk £1.95.

Hugh Tinker, *A message from the Falklands*, Junction Books, London, pp203, pbk £3.50.

THE FALKLANDS FACTOR dominated British politics in 1982. Most commentators have become preoccupied with discovering causal connections between the spirit of the task force and the popularity of the Tory regime. In reality, as we have noted in the next step, the Falklands factor simply revealed forces that have been at work in British society since the late 'seventies. The invasion of the Malvinas consolidated the hold of the ruling class over society – but this was more the result of a protracted ideological offensive waged by the British bourgeoisie than the outcome of one brief military engagement.

Critical accounts of the British performance in the South Atlantic are in vogue. In keeping with left-wing and liberal traditions, all four books underestimate the forces behind the war and reduce the Falklands Factor to the manipulations of Tory politicians. Anthony Barnett's *Iron Britannia* is by far the worst. As a member of the editorial board of *New Left Review*, Barnett has a responsibility to keep up its high standards of pomposity, equivocation and diffuseness. His speciality lies in turning a straightforward imperialist war into a complex problem suitable for an erudite investigator such as himself.

Tam Dalyell opposed the invasion of the Malvinas from the start. His book characterises the outlook of the Labour left MPs who could see no further than the end of their own noses. For them, the whole event was 'Thatcher's war'. Like Barnett, Dalyell cannot face the simple truth that Britain, as an imperialist power, had no choice but to teach Argentina a lesson. Hugh Tinker's book is written around the letters and poems of his son, a naval officer, who died in the conflict. In contrast to other naval officers, David Tinker opposed the war and was critical of the hypocrisy of the government. Many of the letters are moving. But David Tinker died without realising that the war was not some Tory mischief and that the force that employed him was a murderous imperialist war machine.

The Latin America Bureau's special brief on the war is the most informative of the books reviewed here. It provides useful material on the relationship between Argentina and Britain. However, the analysis of Britain's role in the war is very weak and remains tied to the convention of Tory demonology. It is a pity that the authors waste the potential of the useful information they have brought together. It is even a greater pity that they can't bring themselves to adopt a clear anti-imperialist outlook and outline the argument for fighting for Britain's defeat in the South Atlantic.

On the Soviet Union

Alexander Shlyapnikov, *On the eve of 1917*, Allison & Busby, London, 1982, pp237, pbk £4.95.

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, Oxford University Press, 1982, pp181, hbk £9.95.

SHLYAPNIKOV'S MEMOIRS first appeared in 1923. The reminiscences of this great class fighter retain their vitality to this day. His account of the building of the revolutionary movement is particularly useful for it approaches the subject from the point of view of the party activist, who is right in the thick of the struggle.

Sheila Fitzpatrick has written some useful accounts of the development of a bureaucracy over the working class in the Soviet Union. This venture into historical analysis, however, is a failure. Fitzpatrick confuses different moments in the development of the Soviet Union and like all bourgeois historians, sees the rise of Stalinism as the inevitable outcome of the Russian Revolution.



REMEMBER BLOODY SUNDAY

On Sunday 30 January 1972, 30 000 people took to the streets of Derry to protest at the denial of civil rights under British military occupation. Our Derry correspondent Finn O'Foyle remembers a day few Irish people will ever forget.

THE NATIONALIST people in Derry and throughout the Six Counties had long been angry about discrimination and repression; in the winter of 1971-72 we had a new and bitter grievance — internment. In August 1971 the Stormont regime, which then administered British rule in the Six Counties, exercised its powers to intern in prison camps, without charge or trial, anybody it suspected of active opposition to the state. Stormont Prime Minister Brian Faulkner also immediately imposed a 12-month ban on all demonstrations.

Internment

Internment only intensified resistance. Protests began with rent and rate strikes. They carried on with non-payment of television, car and dog licences; then people stopped paying gas and electricity bills and even hire purchase payments. Local government in many areas came to a standstill.

By December reports of torture inside the internment camps sparked off further protests. Groups of trade unionists, civil rights activists and republicans gathered to plan defiance of the ban on public demonstrations. On Christmas Day 4000 people marched through the snow from Belfast to Long Kesh concentration camp 10 miles away. There was jubilation in the nationalist ghettos throughout the Six Counties. The army had been outmanoeuvred, the law had been flouted... and the marching season had begun.

The Civil Rights Association called the next demonstration in Derry at the end of January. As usual, Loyalist reactionaries did Britain's dirty work, stomping around the Six Counties stirring up sectarian animosity and demanding military coercion. William Craig's Democratic Unionist Party demanded firm action against 'Catholic lawlessness'. Lest he be outflanked by his Loyalist allies, Faulkner had to do something drastic about the anti-internment marches. Faulkner had solid support from the British state. The authorities in Westminster considered that a short, sharp shock for those who would not lie down and accept the terms of British rule in Ireland was long overdue.

Any means necessary

On 26 January Faulkner held talks with the officer commanding the occupying forces, General Tuzo. On 27 January he flew to London for private discussions with Tory Prime Minister Edward Heath. On 28 January a high-level defence policy meeting was convened immediately after a session of the 'inner Cabinet'. Something out of the ordinary was in the offing. By 28 January, Faulkner had a public commitment from the RUC and the Army that they would take some, as yet unspecified, action against 'illegal marchers'. On 29 January Paisley called off the DUP's planned counter-demonstration after receiving assurances that the civil rights march would be stopped 'by force if necessary'.

These deliberations were concealed from the throng that set off in high spirits from Creggan on the afternoon of Sunday 30 January, heading for the city centre. One man, however, had his instructions — Colonel Derek Wilford, who commanded the First Battalion of the Parachute Regiment. He was later to receive the OBE for his work that day.

The army allowed the march to leave the Catholic Creggan estate but prevented



it from marching to the Guildhall Square by barbed-wire barriers and armoured vehicles. The organisers diverted the demonstration to a mass meeting at Free Derry Corner, some 500 yards from the army position at William Street. While Bernadette Devlin and Fenner Brockway addressed the massive gathering, a small section of the marchers stayed at the army barriers protesting at not being permitted to march on. Youths threw

stones in reply to dye-spraying and CS gas, and water-cannon were brought up to disperse the small crowd. By Derry standards, the protest was slight, and the chances of injury to the troops negligible.

Slaughter

By 4.15pm, people from this small crowd, fleeing from intense gas and baton attacks, were either walking or running down Rossville Street, making their way

to the mass meeting. Suddenly, three companies of the Parachute Regiment swept along this main thoroughfare in armoured cars. Troops were hastily deployed into firing positions. Without warning, they began firing on the unarmed crowd.

The hundreds of eye witnesses told a horrifying story.

● KEVIN McELHINNEY was on his hands and knees crawling away from the gunfire when a soldier shot him. The bullet entered his left buttock and travelled through his body to exit at the left shoulder.

● BERNARD MacGUIGAN was shot in the back of the head as he was crawling on his stomach towards the dying PAT DOHERTY.

● As everyone fled for their lives, GERALD McKINNEY stood still, holding his hands above his head. A soldier came up and shot him in the chest at point-blank range.

Within minutes, 13 people were dead; another died later. Seventeen were seriously wounded.

Tangle of lies

The army version of events, in official statements in the House of Commons by the Minister of Defence, was a tangle of lies. They claimed they opened fire after coming under attack from nail bombers and a 'fusillade of fire of 50-80 shots from the area of Rossville and Glenfada flats'. No independent witness from among the scores of journalists and other observers present — many of whom were hostile to the republican cause — believed that IRA volunteers were active that day. None accepted the official contention. The British Army could not produce either bullets or bomb fragments.

The British Army claimed that 'in all cases, soldiers fired aimed shots at men identified as gunmen and bombers'. Forensic tests showed that those killed could have had no contact whatever with any weapons; no weapons were found on them; no charges were brought against those wounded. The Army also claimed that some of those shot were on their wanted list; this was later disproved. They said they shot three snipers in the flats, but all the casualties were at ground level.

After Bloody Sunday, the Government set up a 'tribunal of inquiry', under former British army officer Lord Widgery. Simon Winchester was a *Guardian* journalist present on Bloody Sunday who himself narrowly escaped the Paras' bullets. He writes in his book, *On holy terror*, that 'Widgery's conclusions were at astonishing variance with his own report; and the manner of "leaking" the document itself was an appalling travesty of honesty, for which both the British press and the British Government should feel ashamed'. Widgery's whitewash was gratefully accepted; the press helped to make sure his minor criticisms of the paratroopers were ignored.

Widgery's report astonished some British liberals — especially those who saw for themselves the reality of what happened on Bloody Sunday. But it caused little surprise in Derry. The massacre was consistent with the role of the British army since 1969 — to terrorise and break the resistance of the nationalist community. Thirteen years later, they are still trying — and as recent events show, they are as far away from success as ever.

Leeds: Demonstration

Remember Bloody Sunday!

Demonstration in Leeds

Sunday 30 January

Organised by the Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee

For details of coaches leaving from London, Bristol, Canterbury, Sheffield, Birmingham, Manchester and Coventry, phone 01-274 3951.

Conference

Irish Freedom Movement Conference

Eleven years after Bloody Sunday: new tasks for Irish solidarity

Saturday 29 January 10.00am—6.00pm

Leeds Trades Club, Savile Mount, Leeds 6

Agenda

10.00am—1.00pm

1.00pm—2.00pm

2.00pm—4.30pm

Plenary: new tasks for Irish solidarity

Lunch

Workshops:

Report back from the Six Counties

British trade unions and Ireland

The Prevention of Terrorism Act — how to fight it

Racism and Ireland: what are the real connections?

An action programme for anti-imperialists

4.45pm—6.00pm

Evening: Social with food and live music

Accommodation, creche available

Phone 01-274 3951 or write to IFM, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX for details