

the next step

No33 March 1983

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party 20p



Seventeen-year-old Michael... shot dead and his friends... wounded as they fed a neighbour's dog in rural Armagh before Christmas.

Ten unarmed members of the nationalist community have been murdered by shoot-to-kill squads in Ireland in the past three months. Their deaths mark a new round in the reign of terror that has claimed hundreds of Irish lives in the Six Counties over the past 13 years of war.

The Irish Freedom Movement is campaigning for an end to British rule in Ireland. This month we are organising a week of action against the Prevention of Terrorism Act - the law the government uses to terrorise sympathisers with the cause of Irish freedom in Britain. Join us



Ireland:

13 years of British terror



PREPARING FOR POWER

A Marxist celebration of the Marx centenary
A week of discussion and debate,
politics and polemics
London July 16 - 22
page 11

RCP Activities

LONDON

Living Marxism

Thursday 3 March 7.30pm
Marxism and labourism

Thursday 10 March 7.30pm
Marxism, the working class and the revolutionary party

Camden Library,
Regents Park Branch,
Compton Close,
Robert Street
(Warren Street tube)

Tuesday 8 March 7.30pm
International Women's Day Rally
Women against imperialism
John Barnes Library,
275, Camden Road, N7

BIRMINGHAM

Living Marxism

Wednesday 2 March
Tories in power — Labour is no alternative

Wednesday 16 March
Marx Centenary
Marxism in the '80s

Wednesday 30 March
The TUC and unemployment
The great job auction

All meetings at 7.30pm,
Digbeth Civic Hall

LEEDS

Tuesday 8 March
Women against imperialism peace camp
All day

Solidarity with women freedom fighters!
Support the women in Armagh Jail!

Rally at 1pm
Mandela Gardens,
outside Leeds Civic Hall

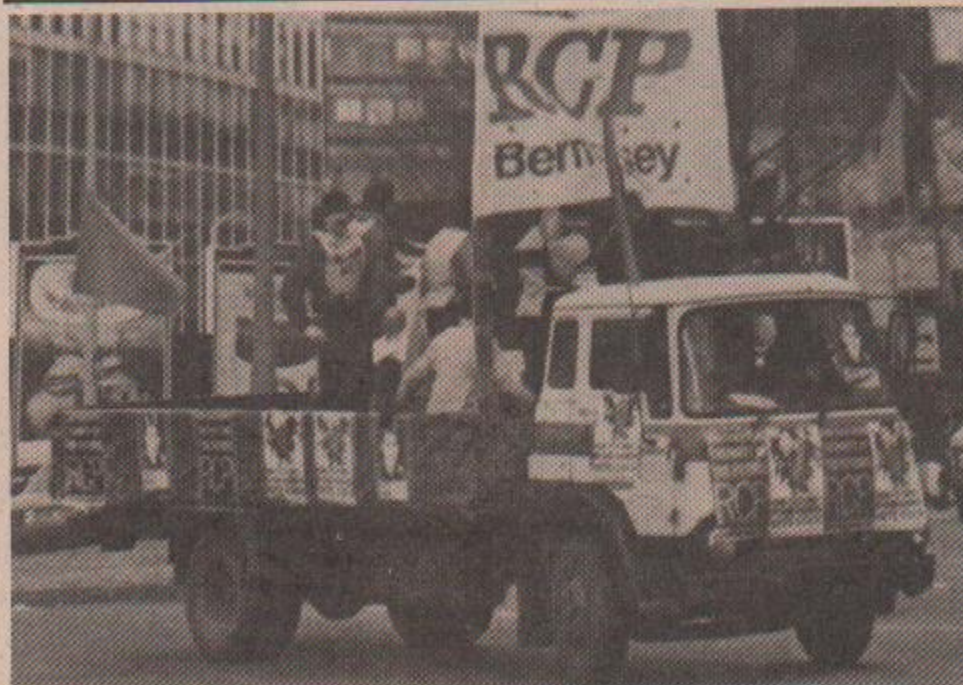
Tuesday 8 March
Public Meeting 7.30pm
Women against imperialism
Victoria Hotel,
Great George Street,
Leeds 1

SHEFFIELD

Tuesday 8 March 7.30pm
Public Meeting
Women and Peace

Friday 25 March 7.30pm
Public Meeting
British Marxism
A revolutionary critique
see the next step sellers
for details

Battling in Bermondsey



On the move: the RCP electoral machine



Fran Eden on a walkabout



'War camp' outside Southwark Town Hall

Bermondsey CND debate: Peter Tatchell points the finger at Fran Eden. Fran pointed the finger at Labour's militarist record. Communist Party candidate Bob Gordon (next to Fran) agreed with everything everybody else said; nobody could work out why he was standing.



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Farewell to the welfare state

A GENERAL ELECTION draws near and the Tories are soaring ahead in the opinion polls. Government leaders are considering the policies and pushing ahead with the measures that will shape Britain under another term of Tory rule. Documents recently leaked to the press ominously reveal the direction of Tory thinking on social policy and the public services. At the same time, the Government is carrying forward the privatisation of selected parts of the public sector and its campaign against trade union rights. On all fronts the Tories are being allowed a walk-over by the official labour movement.

Self reliance and thrift

The Prime Minister and her Cabinet colleagues want to 'encourage the development of children, the country's major resource of the future, into self-reliant, responsible, capable, enterprising and fulfilled adults' (*The Guardian*, 18 February). The Chancellor of the Exchequer intends to train children to manage their pocket money; he also approves of more schools 'with a clear moral base'. The transport minister thinks mothers should stay at home and look after their children as well as the elderly, the disabled and unemployed 16-year-olds (who should be deprived of benefits). Keith Joseph wants to help parents set up their own schools and to extend private education through a voucher system. They all want to promote private provision for social need throughout the welfare services.

The Tories are not as daft as they seem. While many of the 'fresh ideas' under consideration in Thatcher's top-level Family Policy Group are impractical or downright stupid, the main thrust of a coherent Tory strategy emerges clearly. The aim is to marshal all the reactionary values of bourgeois society in a drive to push the burden of welfare on to the backs of the working class. Indeed the process is already underway.

In February health minister Norman Fowler, a key figure in the 'back to the family' think-tank, announced his latest attempt to privatise ancillary services in the National Health Service. Contracts for cleaning, catering and laundry worth a total of £800 million will be opened to private tender. To encourage the new scheme Fowler has subsidised the private sector by making VAT refundable to hospitals where services are contracted out. To show the way to other employers, the Government has offered private health care at a 40 per cent discount to 650 000 of its own employees in the civil service.

The Government's onslaught on the public services moves in parallel with its other attacks on the working class. Employment minister Norman Tebbit has moved beyond his recent Green Paper proposals on making the trade unions even more undemocratic through state-funded ballots. Now he has suggested outlawing strikes in essential public services like gas, electricity — and water. Thatcher has appointed 'the granite Mr MacGregor', as *The Times* approvingly dubs him, to do to Arthur Scargill's miners what he has done so successfully to Bill Sims' steelworkers. And in Scotland, Tory Minister Alex Fletcher has provided £12 million of government money for a £40 million investment scheme at the Hyster forklift plant in Irvine. The only condition was the non-unionised workforce accepting a 13 per cent wage cut. As Scottish managing director William Watson said, 'you have to have a lot of confidence to get away with something like this'.

Beveridge buried

The Tories and their business friends are brimming over with confidence.

The leaders of the labour movement lie supine before their advance. In Parliament, Labour's spokesmen can only froth about the historic gains of the post-war Labour Government. Thatcher's return to Victorian values and the personal unattractiveness of Norman Tebbit. Labour's problem is that, because it accepts the realities of the capitalist crisis, it cannot come up with a coherent defence of the welfare state.

Thatcher's new Rasputin is Ferdinand Mount, an old Etonian who picked up lots of 'fresh ideas' while working on the *Daily Mail*. He is now the man behind the Family Policy Group. Mount is right when he says that the consensus which protected the welfare state for 25 years no longer prevails. But it is not only the Tories who recognise that the welfare state which was inaugurated at the close of the Second World War can no longer be sustained in the face of the recession:

'The 1944 commitment to full employment remains the totem pole standing among the wreckage of every government's achievement for a generation. There is no credible return to that aspiration and the opposition parties know it.' (*The Times*, 5 February)

Full employment was one of the 'basic assumptions' on which William Beveridge drew up his plans for the welfare state. The Labour Party long ago abandoned it even as a distant policy goal. Now its most optimistic plans aim at an unemployment level of one million by the end of the decade.

The Labour Party has consistently accepted that workers' welfare needs must be tailored to what the capitalist economy can afford. In his broadcast to the nation on the foundation of the NHS in 1948, Labour leader Clement Attlee expounded the philosophy that has guided the party ever since:

'All social services have to be paid for in one way or another from what is produced by the people of Britain. We cannot create a scheme which gives the nation as a whole more than we put into it... only higher output can give us more of the things we all need.'

But what if 'output', the national economy 'as a whole', is declining? The inescapable conclusion — and the Labour Party has never hesitated to draw this conclusion — is that we all have to put up with less 'of the things we all need'.

Attlee's Government ruthlessly curbed spending on welfare during the post-war reconstruction of British capitalism. It reduced social security benefits below the minima recommended by Beveridge on the basis of his careful calculations of what it cost a worker to feed, clothe and house himself and his family. The Labour Government cut back spending on the NHS in the first year of its existence and later imposed prescription charges for the first time. The principle of a health service provided on the cheap in converted workhouses was celebrated as a great socialist achievement by the Labour Party. The NHS was continued in the spirit of the same parsimonious principle by a series of Tory governments.

The 1974 to 1979 Labour Government followed the same principles in more straitened circumstances. Labour's response to the onset of the recession was to slash capital spending in the welfare field. In five years it cut back capital expenditure on education by 42 per cent, health by 23 per cent and housing by 18 per cent. After 1979 the Tories took over where Labour left off. They faced a more difficult task: there was little scope for further cuts in building programmes, etc so they had to tackle current expenditure — made up largely of the wages of the five million public service workers. Hence the series of battles over pay in the public sector. The Tories have also

tried to rationalise public expenditure by selling off potentially profitable sectors especially in the industrial field, but also in public services, such as refuse collection.

In opposition to the Tories, the Labour Party has accepted that there can be no return to the welfare state, even at the level at which it existed during the post-war boom. Education spokesman Neil Kinnock has acknowledged that Labour will not be able to restore the cuts in education services in the foreseeable future. Other Labour leaders have been careful to avoid commitments on specific measures to improve and expand services or even to re-nationalise privatised sectors. In local government even left-wing Labour councils have become reconciled to inferior services at greater costs to ratepayers. Labour councils in London, the West Midlands, Sheffield and elsewhere have set up employment committees and women's committees to encourage self-help initiatives such as workers' co-operatives and parent-run nurseries. Labour has accepted that workers will have to bear the burden for services the capitalist state can no longer afford.

The ideology of efficiency

In its latest glossy economic review, *The battle for jobs*, the TUC restates the Attlee outlook on the public services:

'We are concerned that the best use is made of the resources in the economy, and that the way these are allocated reflects the priority attaching to the needs of society.'

The TUC upholds the NHS because it reckons that it gives better 'value for money' than health systems in other countries, such as the USA. Len Murray is not alone in these views. Answering questions in Parliament on the 'back to the family' documents, Thatcher proclaimed that her government was aiming at 'better value for money and better management throughout the public sector'. The TUC and the Tories share the same goals — efficient, capitalist, health and welfare services. No wonder the unions cannot fight the measures the Tories are bringing forward to achieve these objectives.

For the past decade union leaders have attempted to frame their defence of public sector jobs and services in terms of their commitment to the principles of the welfare state. But, as the Tories are making clearer by the day, the only principle behind capitalist welfare services is to provide as little as possible as cheaply as possible. The desperate state of British capitalism means that the welfare system built up during the post-war boom cannot be sustained in its present form. The object of Tory policy is to reconstruct the pattern of services so that they cost the state much less and the working class much more. In this process the union bureaucrats have been reduced to the status of passive, if anguished spectators. 'Standards are bound to suffer' whined NALGO's Ada Maddocks as Fowler announced his latest privatisation plans for ancillary services. 'This will lead to large scale redundancies among dedicated and committed staff' bleated COHSE's Albert Spanswick. Rodney Bickerstaffe of NUPE claimed that the Tories were motivated by 'ideology not efficiency'. Unfortunately nobody could make such an accusation against our trade union leaders.

In Parliament the opposition was even more pathetic. Left-wingers simply shouted their usual vacuous denunciations at the Tories for the benefit of radio listeners; they left the political arguments to right-winger Gwyneth Dunwoody. Her objection to the privatisation of the NHS was that it was impractical, that it

would 'not in any way' contribute to the economy of the NHS' and, rather obscurely, that private laundries might cause cross-infection. Her main concern however was to extract an undertaking from the health minister that health authorities would not be penalised if they refused to contract out their services on the grounds 'that the work could be better, more efficiently and more cheaply carried out in the NHS'. In other words, Dunwoody wanted to ensure ample scope for one of the main functions of the threat of privatisation. This is to force hospitals to raise productivity, increase workloads and cut staff, rather than lose jobs to private contractors. This has been the main use of the privatisation weapon against local government refuse collection workers.

Family favourites

On the broader aspects of the Tory offensive the Labour opposition is equally ineffectual. When Michael Foot challenged the Tories for cutting the NHS, Thatcher rounded on him, insisting that the Tory record on the NHS was better than that of the last Labour Government. This may be a slight exaggeration, but nobody contradicted her. On the Tories use of propaganda about the family to drive women out of work and to accept even more childcare, sick-care, geriatric-care and many other cares in the home, Labour had little to say. After all, it was James Callaghan who, as Labour leader, tried to play the family card in the run-up to the 1979 general election. Labour cannot complain if it is trumped by the Tories on this issue in the coming election.

Even on Tebbit, Labour's hands are tied. The first proposals to legislate against strikes in essential services came, not from the demon Tebbit, but from the trade union leaders during Labour's 1979 'winter of discontent'. Today the union chiefs are formalising a deal with Labour leaders along the lines of the 1974 Social Contract in the hope that it will help get a Labour government elected. Senior union negotiator and TGWU leader Moss Evans beat Tebbit by two weeks in the proposal of measures to restrict strike action in the public services:

'If a Labour government is elected, I think the unions would be prepared to conclude what you could term an accord. There are a number of important public sectors in which we have to devise a way of solving our problems without recourse to industrial action.'

No-one wants to take away, in a free society, the right of workers to withdraw their labour. But there ought to be some practical arrangements made to make a stoppage of work in these sections the last resort.' (*Financial Times*, 1 February)

When the Labour Party and trade union leaders are making plans to outlaw strikes and cut wages (through the 'national economic assessment') under a future Labour government, it's not surprising that they are so ineffective at fighting Tory anti-working class measures.

The working class is not responsible for the capitalist crisis and it does not have to pay for it in mass unemployment, poverty and misery. We have to begin from what we need, not what they say they can afford. That means rejecting any concern for 'efficiency' and 'value for money' in public services: that is their problem, just like the profitability of private industry. We need jobs, decent wages and adequate services — and we decide what is decent and adequate. It also means rejecting the existing leadership of the labour movement in the Labour Party and the TUC which is the major barrier to the defence of the working class as the Tory offensive mounts.



The Irish Freedom Movement, the biggest and the loudest contingent on the Bloody Sunday demonstration in Leeds

Ireland's victory means Britain's defeat

On the day before this year's Bloody Sunday commemoration march, 250 members and supporters of the Irish Freedom Movement gathered for a conference in Leeds, organised around the theme 'New tasks for Irish solidarity'. Here we reprint Frank Richards' keynote address to the conference.

THE WAR in Ireland stirs deeper emotions than any other issue in British political life. No other question provokes the ruling class to such heights of hysteria, mystification and evasion. A television programme that gives an account of events in the Six Counties is denounced as 'providing assistance for terrorism'; an interview with republican militants provides an opportunity for a further burst of venom in Parliament; a proposed visit to London by a Sinn Féin delegation becomes an occasion for mass hysteria. For more than a decade the establishment's portrait of Ireland has moulded public opinion. The ruling class has even succeeded in dominating discussion inside the labour movement, stamping its mark on the British left and forcing anti-imperialists onto the defensive.

The success of the ruling class can be gauged by the pathetic response in Britain to the H-Block hunger-strike in 1981. As one Irish freedom fighter after another was murdered, the British left looked in the opposite direction, hoping that this embarrassing affair would soon be over. The British left becomes even more defensive and apologetic when it comes to bomb attacks on the British state, especially when they take place in Britain itself. Every time a bomb goes off in England, left groups scramble to beat one another to be the first to denounce it as a 'mindless outrage' or a 'senseless provocation'.

The Irish War, however, will not go away. It is no bizarre interlude that will be superseded by a more reasonable form of political conflict. For more than a century, Ireland has haunted British politics. The partition of Ireland in the 'twenties gave the British ruling class a temporary respite, but since the 'sixties the problem has returned with a vengeance. Ireland will remain at the centre of the political stage until it is united and free from British domination. British imperialism may heap scorn and derision on the Irish republican movement, but its forces cannot defeat the national liberation struggle. It is time that our movement — of workers and anti-imperialists in Britain — challenged the mystification and trivialisation of the Irish War and popularised the call for the defeat of British imperialism.

The non-war

An effective movement of solidarity with the Irish people must be based on a clear assessment of the present state of the war. Since the mid-seventies successive British governments have tried to pretend that in fact there is no war going on in Ireland. This was the essence of the policy implemented by Labour's Northern Ireland secretary Roy Mason under the Wilson and Callaghan governments. Mason's policy aimed to portray Irish freedom fighters as a bunch of criminals and psychopaths without popular support. The Army's propaganda machine churned out lurid accounts of crimes allegedly perpetrated by self-seeking terrorists. The withdrawal of special status from Irish prisoners of war was a central component of this campaign to criminalise the republican movement. A crude system of judicial terror, consisting of no-jury courts and convictions obtained on the basis of confessions extracted through torture, provided the framework for criminalising the resistance movement.

The policy of 'criminalisation' was accompanied by a determined effort to make out that life on the streets of the towns and cities of the Six Counties was slowly returning to normal. Every few weeks Mason announced that the IRA was on the run. To prove how normal a part of the 'United Kingdom' the Six Counties had become, Mason insisted that the Queen include 'Northern Ireland' in her Jubilee tour around the realm in 1977.

Government officials further argued that, since the situation was returning to normal and the only problem that remained was one of law and order, the Army could be moved to the background and responsibility for security could now be devolved to the Royal Ulster Constabulary. 'Normalisation' thus meant 'Ulsterisation'. 'Ulsterisation' was an attempt to redefine the war as a local security problem which could be dealt with by a normal police force, rather than by an army. The war between Britain and Ireland was turned into a conflict between criminals and the police.

In fact, 'Ulsterisation' was never implemented — for the simple reason that a war cannot be defined out of existence.

Although the RUC took over formal responsibility for security, the Army remained the basic guarantor of imperialist domination. The British authorities were not unduly concerned about the lack of progress on the 'Ulsterisation' policy. They never seriously intended to leave the security of the British state to the RUC anyway. 'Ulsterisation' aimed to provide propaganda support for the policy of 'criminalisation' — in particular, to show international opinion that the problem was crime not colonialism. 'Criminalisation' and 'Ulsterisation' were ideological devices needed to confer legitimacy on Britain's role in Ireland and to mobilise public opinion in England behind the war drive.

'Normalisation', 'criminalisation' and 'Ulsterisation' were underwritten by state subsidies designed to generate a measure of economic stability. Funds and other concessions were made available to create jobs in new industries such as the DeLorean Motor Company, and to save jobs in the declining textiles and shipbuilding sectors. However, life in the Six Counties remained far from normal. Mason used the full resources of the British state to step up repression. Under the system of judicial internment, hundreds of republicans were detained and covert military operations were stepped up. However, Mason's central objective of 'squeezing the life out of the IRA' was never realised. A secret British army document captured by the IRA in 1979 appreciated the resilience of British imperialism's No.1 enemy:

'The Provisionals' campaign of violence is likely to continue while the British remain in Northern Ireland. We see little prospect of political developments of a kind which would seriously undermine the Provisionals' position.'

The private forebodings of the security forces became public knowledge in 1981. Thousands of Irish people took to the streets to protest against the conditions imposed on the H-Block and Armagh prisoners. The widespread support enjoyed by the hunger-strikers — the election of Bobby Sands and later Owen Carron as MPs for Fermanagh-South Tyrone — tore the policy of criminalisation into shreds. Only inside Britain could the lie that republican prisoners were criminals receive any degree of popular support.

War as usual

Since the end of the hunger-strikes British imperialism has been forced to resort to its traditional forms of repression. The world recession has dealt a severe blow to the Six Counties: mass unemployment and poverty do not provide the best conditions for experiments in 'normalisation'. The electoral success of Sinn Féin in the 1982 Assembly elections showed the strength of anti-imperialist feeling in the nationalist community. Another reflection of this sentiment is the attempt by the moderate Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party to assume a more nationalist stance in the hope of retaining electoral support. British governments have traditionally regarded the SDLP as a bulwark of support for the institutions of British rule in Ireland against the republican movement. But the SDLP's long cultivated middle ground is fast disappearing beneath it. The Belfast magazine *Fortnight* recently summed up the party's predicament:

'At the moment the SDLP are on a hiding to nothing; they know that their grass roots will desert them in droves for Sinn Féin if they make any moves towards the Assembly as presently constituted; their Council for a New Ireland is a non-starter... and they have little hope of outbidding the Provos to become the standard-bearers of hard line nationalism.'

Another symptom of the rising tension in the Six Counties was an article in the same issue of *Fortnight* by the Official Unionist Party deputy leader Harold McCusker. McCusker bluntly insisted violence could not be avoided; he pointedly remarked 'that the recent substantial vote for Sinn Féin is not an accurate reflection of support for violence, but that support for violence is much higher'. McCusker even raised the probability of a new carve-up of the Six Counties as a solution to the troubles.

The response of British imperialism has been more violent than McCusker could have wished. The main elements of the new hard-line approach are more convictions through using 'supergrasses' and selective assassinations by SAS-trained RUC hit squads. The shoot-to-kill policy is a recognition of the fact that there is no political alternative to direct rule and repression. In conditions of virtual economic collapse, the repressive element of British strategy assumes a new importance. The British state has no alternative but to allow the more political aspects of its domination to recede into the background and to devote less resources to 'winning the hearts' of the nationalist population.

Shoot-to-kill

The shoot-to-kill policy exposes the true character of British domination in Ireland. In reality the shoot-to-kill policy is as old as the Irish War. The aim of British military occupation has always been to destroy the movement for Irish liberation. The murder of 14 unarmed civilians on Bloody Sunday in January 1972 revealed the real purpose behind the military occupation of Ireland. At the time General Sir Walter Walker demanded an even more coercive 'siege and slaughter' strategy:

'We have to decide if Northern Ireland is part of Britain or not — and, if so, act accordingly. We should cut off their petrol, gas, electricity and stop food going in, soften them up and go in; give warning so they can get their women and children not before we go in — but go in.'

Even at the height of 'normalisation' the shoot-to-kill policy was in full operation. The SAS and other covert units were busy eliminating their opponents in South Armagh and Belfast. One Army major explained his philosophy to *The Guardian* in 1979: 'Some people believe in selective internment. I believe in selective assassination' (19 February).

In Britain many on the left seem to believe that the worst thing that the British Army does is to shoot plastic bullets. They argue that repression is unnecessary and that a more enlightened Irish policy can be pursued by West-



Sinn Féin assembly member Jim McAllister addresses the Bloody Sunday rally. This myopic view fails to understand something that the ruling class has appreciated for a long time: there is no political, non-military solution to the Irish War. As the former commander of the British forces in Ireland Sir John Hackett put it, the Six Counties contain an 'explosive mixture', one which promises to 'continue to exist into the foreseeable future more or less as before' (*Hibernia* 9 August 1979).

As long as Britain dominates Ireland, there will be a struggle for Irish freedom: British oppression begets nationalist resistance. Hence, despite political initiatives, military considerations remain decisive. The present policy of repression reveals the truth: that there really is a war going on in Ireland. We in Britain must take advantage of this shift in imperialist policy. As the murderous activities of the British Army become more apparent it is more difficult for the left and the labour movement to evade the issue. It is not easy to present the British state as the agency for progressive reforms in the Six Counties when its troops are gunning down nationalists on every street corner. At the same time, the arguments for immediate withdrawal become that much more plausible.

Why Britain can't withdraw

Much of the confusion on the British left stems from an inability to understand why British troops are in Ireland in the first place and why they can't be withdrawn. Sometimes British radicals try to explain Britain's refusal to withdraw by the profits British companies expropriate from the Six Counties. But everybody knows that maintaining the British occupation is a very costly business — one that far outweighs any revenues that may flow back to London. Another argument is popular in Labour left circles: that the British Government would withdraw were it not for the Loyalists in the Six Counties, a community more than one million strong which insists on Britain staying and maintaining the division of Ireland. This 'Loyalist veto' argument is merely the mirror image of the British state's propaganda that its aim is merely to protect the democratic rights of 'the majority' in the Six Counties. The left's version of this 'tail wagging the dog' apology for British domination lets British imperialism off the hook and shifts the blame on to the local agents of British rule in the Six Counties.

The British ruling class has always looked on Ireland as different from its other colonies. Its proximity to Britain has given it a strategic importance that no other colony possessed. That's why as early as 1801 — the year when the Act of Union was passed — the ruling class was prepared to fuse Ireland with the British state. The British establishment was prepared to compromise, but it could never agree to release its hold over Ireland. By the turn of the twentieth century, the integration of Ireland into the British political system meant that the movement for Irish Home Rule precipitated a series of constitutional and political crises. The Curragh mutiny in 1914 showed that the British Army was not prepared to see Britain's close links with Ireland severed,

even if Parliament acquiesced to some other, looser form of British domination.

Even in its weaker moments British imperialism insisted on keeping its grip over Ireland. To have withdrawn from Ireland altogether before the First World War would have created the prospect of instability in Ireland and, more importantly, in Britain itself. The example of a free Ireland would have created irreparable damage to Britain's Empire as other nations would have demanded the same treatment. At the time, Partition seemed to be the perfect solution. It provided a semblance of independence for the South and it divided the republican movement and the Irish working class. Most importantly, it legitimised Britain's presence by portraying it as a response to the democratic aspirations of a carefully constructed majority in the north east. Instead of the old-style colonialism, Britain substituted a facade of democratic consensus to justify its domination. Partition was a major coup that promised to solve the Irish problem once and for all. No wonder that Lloyd George called the signing of the Partition treaty 'the greatest day in the history of the British Empire'.

As everybody knows, Partition did not solve the Irish question. The artificial state it created in the Six Counties proved to be inherently unstable. The local Parliament at Stormont Castle stood for Loyalist privilege and the oppression of the nationalist population. A cycle of repression and resistance and more repression and more resistance finally erupted into armed conflict in the early 'seventies. Rather than being a solution, Partition itself created permanent instability. In fact, today the Irish problem has become an even greater problem for Britain. The division of Ireland was complemented by the total fusion of the Six Counties into Britain. Anything that happens in the Six Counties now has immediate domestic repercussions. Withdrawal from Ireland now would be tantamount to dismantling a part of the British state itself. No significant section of the British ruling class could ever countenance this, because it would represent a major blow to the capitalist system.

Partition has simply raised the stakes. It has turned a colonial situation into one that is at the very heart of British politics. It is not an exaggeration to say that the coherence of the British state depends on its continued domination of Ireland. This is the revolutionary significance of the Irish question. Withdrawal from Ireland would weaken the capitalist class and its state to such an extent that it would fundamentally alter class relations in Britain.

One of the great failures of the British left is its underestimation of the importance of Ireland. The Irish War is seen as an issue of third-rate importance: comparisons are often made with Kenya and Cyprus. The British establishment is under no such illusions — it fully understands that retaining Ireland is a thousand times more important than hanging on to Kenya or Cyprus. The British ruling class knows that its own survival depends on the maintenance of the Irish connection.



The Irish Freedom Movement in conference before the Bloody Sunday march

How they see it

Since 1969, one bourgeois politician after another has stated in plain words that withdrawal from Ireland would have catastrophic consequences for Britain. Sometimes this point has been made in a sensational, even simplistic way. Thus Tory MP A J Beith argued in 1976: 'I do not see how we can contemplate creating something akin to Angola 20 miles off our own shore... There are many interests outside Northern Ireland that would be only too willing to go in with money or arms to advance one or other of the causes which would be fighting for control of a province which would be left without legitimate law or order'.

Labour politicians have usually been closer to the point, emphasising the domestic upheaval that withdrawal would imply. Roy Mason was famous for putting the imperialist case in forthright terms:

'We would be fooling ourselves if we thought that the bloodletting that would flow from the precipitate withdrawal of troops would be confined to Northern Ireland. The undoubted violence could easily spread to the mainland with its Irish population.'

Left-winger Stan Orme hammered home this point at the 1979 Labour Party Conference. He warned that the chaos that would ensue in Ireland would 'overflow into the cities of Britain, into the Liverpools and the Glasgows and the Londons, the Birminghams and the Manchesters'. These statements contain an element of rhetoric, but they do underline the importance British politicians attach to the maintenance of Partition. They know that the stakes are very high and that what is at issue is the integrity of the British state and the maintenance of law and order on the streets of England, Scotland and Wales. That's why Ireland has always been above party politics. Almost instinctively, Labour, Liberal and Tory alike understand that the war in Ireland is an immediate and mortal threat to the British ruling class before which unity is essential.

Why Ireland matters for us

The clarity and determination of the British ruling class stands in sharp contrast to the diffuse and evasive outlook of the left. It has become one of the left's pre-occupations to try to convince successive governments that it is not in Britain's best interests to stay in Ireland. There have been many attempts to trivialise the issue by reducing the war in Ireland to an ordinary colonial conflict — such as Kenya or Vietnam. The object of this exercise is to show that it is possible for Britain to withdraw from Ireland and that therefore all decent people can get together to put pressure on the government. Every time some establishment figure vacillates and calls for troop withdrawal the left clings on for dear life. When the *Daily Mirror* calls for troop withdrawal or Tony Benn suggests replacing British troops by United Nations forces, a major celebration takes place.

These pathetic attempts to discover some common sense, peaceful solution don't impress anybody. Certainly, the

ruling class knows that coercion is the only answer, as the editor of *The Times* recently explained:

'The differences so stubbornly insisted upon in Ulster concern the most fundamental of all political issues: allegiance, national identity, the legitimacy of the state... These are issues which are usually disposed of only when one side prevails decisively over the other.'

For the ruling class there is no room for compromise — the stakes are too high. In a war, the victory of one side implies the defeat of the other. All the attempts of various old Irish solidarity campaigns to appeal to liberal sentiment and *The Guardian* sense of justice, humanity and fair play have been rejected with contempt. These sentiments simply do not exist outside a narrow circle of liberals. They are always in particularly short supply when the issue is Ireland. The reason why tens of thousands of CND supporters have no time for Ireland is because they are on the side of the British Army. They may have many reservations, they may object to the use of torture and plastic bullets, but at the end of the day they accept the British establishment's version of the war.

The last decade has shown conclusively that only those who have taken a stand on the side of the Irish people, on the side of the liberation struggle and on the side of Irish freedom, are prepared to protest against imperialism. The moment that the issue of war is evaded — the objective of building an anti-imperialist movement is effectively abandoned. That's why the IFM insists that the issue of war must be at the centre of all solidarity action.

There are other evasions too. The pressures that lead many to remain silent on the war and to vacillate on the question of immediate troop withdrawal lead others to avoid taking the anti-imperialist case to the working class. Looking for quick results, the left has periodically 'discovered' social groups that spontaneously support the cause of Irish freedom. First it was students, then it was women; recently the list has grown longer — ranging from the Liberal Party to black people to the Irish community to unemployed youth. All these sections have an important place in the solidarity movement — but nobody can be won to the anti-imperialist movement without anti-imperialist arguments. In practice, the quest for ready-made allies has not brought results. It has simply highlighted the necessity for a programme of anti-imperialist action in Britain.

What is really ironic about the old solidarity movements' futile 'get-rich-quick' campaigns is that there does exist a social force whose objective interest lies with the victory of the Irish people: the working class. We know that there are no easy solutions. We know that decades of Labourism have left their stamp on the working class. But that only proves the scope of the tasks in front of us. For if we recognise that any blow which forces the British ruling class to retreat is in the interest of workers, this provides our measure of how important Britain's defeat in Ireland would be for the workers' movement. British workers have a direct interest in the successful resolution of the liberation struggle; they are the only social force that can give effective solidarity to the liberation movement.

This is the crux of the matter. In a sense, we have no choice: either an anti-imperialist movement is built in the working class or we will have no effective solidarity action in Britain at all. Anybody who rejects the perspective of the IFM can do nothing for either the Irish people or the British working class.

The British ruling class is tooling up for a new phase of the Irish War. Tomorrow we march on the streets of Leeds to remember those who have fallen. Let's resolve to match the determination of our enemies. Let's not mince words — we have to match them and more. They may have their sophisticated technology and their millions. But on our side rests history: the cause of freedom, of liberation. If we are uncompromisingly bold, imaginative and resolute in the cause of Irish freedom, the cause of the British working class shall triumph.



Labour's plastic bullets conference

Wrong issue, wrong time, wrong politics

After more than a year of silence and inactivity the Labour Committee on Ireland has backed a campaign and sponsored a conference on the use of plastic bullets in Ireland. Mick Kennedy reports.

THE IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT condemns the use of plastic bullets by the British occupying forces in the Six Counties. We condemn plastic bullets because we oppose all aspects of British rule in Ireland and because we support the struggle for Irish freedom. We are also opposed to the Labour Party's narrow campaign against plastic bullets because it tries to isolate plastic bullets from British domination over Ireland and refuses to take sides in the War. Every example of

British repression in Ireland must be used to mobilise working class support for the national liberation struggle. British socialists should not single out particular features of Britain's machine of terror in an attempt to persuade the British government to adopt 'alternative' methods of coercion.

Lead bullets: the real problem

It is more than 10 months since anybody was killed by a plastic bullet in Ireland.

Yet in the last three months nine members of the nationalist community in the Six Counties have been shot dead by lead bullets. These are the victims of the latest wave of shoot-to-kill murders carried out by special hit squads appointed by the Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Shoot-to-kill is no new departure for the British forces in the Six Counties. Ever since the resistance of the nationalist community to British rule erupted in the late 'sixties, shoot-to-kill has been the Army's operational principle. On Bloody Sunday in 1972 paratroopers shot dead 14 unarmed protesters; in the decade since, literally hundreds of nationalist people have been shot by British soldiers, British policemen or their Loyalist paramilitary allies.

The nationalist people showed their hostility to British rule by voting in large numbers for Sinn Féin in the Assembly elections last October. The British state responded in characteristic fashion — it unleashed more police and a hail of lead against the nationalist community. Britain's response to the Assembly elections confirms that it rules in Ireland, not through political institutions, not through plastic bullets, but through bullets made of lead and troops who do not hesitate to fire them. Our response must be to demand the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, not to quibble over the material from which they make their bullets.

Two years too late

Since the Irish War began, 14 people have been killed by rubber or plastic bullets. The deaths have been concentrated in two years — in 1972 when two people died and 1981 when seven perished. These were both years of major street protests and mass demonstrations — against internment in 1972, and in support of the hunger-strikers in 1981. In 1981 plastic bullets were used in vast numbers to contain the riots and quell the angry protests that greeted the deaths of the hunger-strikers. As well as seven deaths, hundreds of people, including many children, were mutilated or injured by plastic bullets.

There might have been some point in a campaign against plastic bullets in 1981. But why has the Labour left waited two years to launch its protest? Today the struggle in the Six Counties has shifted away from mass demonstrations, and plastic bullets are scarcely being used. Indeed this is why the Labour Party has chosen this time to initiate its plastic bullets campaign. During the hunger-strikes the prominent Labour MPs, trade

union leaders and Communist Party officials who today back the plastic bullets conference, refused to support the campaign for political status in the H-Blocks. They would not even take up the issue of plastic bullets for fear it might embarrass the British government when it was coming under intense pressure in Ireland and abroad over its brutal treatment of the hunger-strikers. But two years later when the hunger-strikers are in their graves, the time is right for a Labour Party campaign against plastic bullets.

British imperialism — the ultimate 'health risk'

In their leaflet for the Manchester conference, the organisers inquire, 'is the plastic bullet part of a political solution, or part of the problem?' This is an 'open-ended' question — it receives no answer. Nor do the organisers have any answer to the question, 'which side in the Irish War are you on?'. However, their pre-occupations indicate that they are more concerned to find an alternative means by which Britain can rule in the Six Counties than they are to mobilise support for the struggle against the British occupation.

One of the leading members of the campaign against plastic bullets — Jonathan Rosenhead — asks in a recent article in the journal of the National Council for Civil Liberties — 'what other alternatives are there to plastic bullets?' (*Rights*, October-December 1982). He has lots of answers to this question:

'Strobe lights to produce fits, electrical water jets, projection of slugs of icy brine, the firing of barbs trailing fine wires (the taser) which are used to paralyse the victim by a high electric current...'

Rosenhead does not approve of these alternatives — he reckons that 'all have 'strong health risks'. He goes for 'a more static, linked-arms police strategy', much as was used against students in Grosvenor Square in 1968. Evidently Rosenhead understands very little about the conflict between the Irish people and the British state.

The Labour left's ludicrous quest to help the Army find a nicer way of crushing nationalist resistance in Ireland exposes the politics of the plastic bullets campaign. Like all previous Labour Party initiatives on the Irish War this campaign begins from a refusal to support the national liberation struggle against British rule and an acceptance of the right of the British state to impose its solutions on the Irish people.



Labour leaders change tune

Labour's Shadow Cabinet has announced that it will recommend that the Party's MPs vote against the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in March. It is interesting to note that many members of the Shadow Cabinet were members of the 1979 Labour Government that introduced the PTA — including one of its chief architects — former Secretary for Northern Ireland Merlyn Rees. This reversal of policy does not reflect any shift in Labour's approach to the Irish War. As Michael Foot and others have argued, the Labour Party has not gone 'soft' on the IRA. The real reason for this decision has little to do with Ireland and much more to do with the Labour Party's desperate search for alternative policies to those of the Tories.

Bipartisanship with the Tories will continue as long as the Labour Party emphasises its interest in civil liberties inside Britain. As long as the Labour Party remains committed to a British solution for Ireland, the PTA or an equivalent 'anti-terrorist' law will remain in force, no matter which party is in government. Anti-imperialists should use the Shadow Cabinet's announcement to press Labour leaders to take practical action against the PTA. The IFM has already called on several Labour-controlled councils to declare their areas PTA-free zones. If the Labour Party means what it says it will take part in the fight to make anti-Irish repressive legislation inoperable.

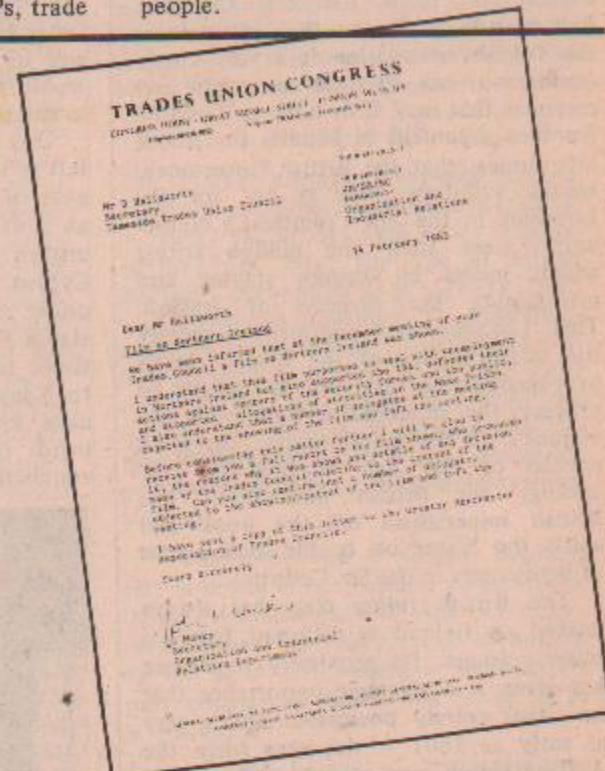
Irish war video

TUC censor strikes

The leadership of the TUC cannot be accused of complacency about Ireland. Last December the Irish Freedom Movement video on the Irish War was shown to a group of trade unionists at a meeting organised by Tameside Trades Council. The video, which looks at the war from the point of view of the Irish national liberation struggle, has been widely circulated in the trade union movement for some time. Now the TUC has decided that it has the right to regulate which videos trade unionists are allowed to

watch. The letter shown above was sent by the TUC to the Secretary of Tameside Trades Council.

The threat to discussion on Ireland implied in this letter should be resisted by all trade union militants. Watch this column for further developments. And get your union branch or trades council to view the IFM video and discuss the situation in Ireland. The IFM will be glad to provide a speaker and the video for your organisation. Contact Helen Swift BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.



The Prevention of Terrorism Act

'Stemming the infection'

The publication of Lord Jellicoe's 'Review of the Operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976' in February confirms the British state's determination to continue its policy of repression in Ireland. It also confirms that it is time to mobilise against it in Britain.

SINCE THE INTRODUCTION of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974 there has been considerable disquiet in liberal circles about the arbitrary and coercive character of this legislation. In nine years, more than 5 500 people have been detained for periods of up to seven days under the PTA — an average of nearly two a day.

Whitewash

The aim of these detentions is to harass supporters of Irish freedom in Britain and in particular to terrorise the Irish community. Less than 2 per cent of those detained have been charged under the PTA. This is an indication not of the ineffectiveness of the act as the liberals claim but of its usefulness. Any sympathiser with the Irish cause can be summarily detained, excluded from Britain and harassed under the wide powers which the PTA gives to the security forces.

The PTA is the main weapon in the arsenal of the ruling class for fighting the Irish War at home. It not only suppresses

potential domestic opposition — it also insulates Britain from the effects of the Irish War. When the Labour Government introduced the Act in 1974, Home Secretary Roy Jenkins argued that it was necessary to 'stem the infection from Ireland'. This respected civil libertarian, now SDP leader, called for 'rigorous controls between Ireland and Britain at the ports... to keep people out, to send people back if they in any way encourage terrorist activity'. Just what Jenkins had in mind was shown last December when a delegation of Sinn Féin leaders was prevented from visiting London.

Lord Jellicoe's brief was to make the PTA look more just: his Review does precisely that. His recommendations are a whitewash. He notes that the PTA 'should be continued as long as a substantial terrorist threat remains'. But of course he is very selective in his definition of 'terrorism'. Loyalist paramilitaries are not the problem — only the fighters of the republican camp. Thus he concludes that the UDA and other Loyalist murder

squads need not be banned. Embarrassed by the lack of anything much to say about the PTA, Jellicoe recommends that the words 'Temporary Provisions' should be removed from the title of the Act. Even Jellicoe realises that calling an act 'temporary' after nine years is stretching a point a bit too far.

On the nod

Jellicoe's whitewash is typical of the British state's attitude towards the Irish War. The ruling class does not concern itself about civil liberties when the interests of British imperialism are at stake. When the PTA was renewed last year it took Parliament just 88 minutes to deal with it. Most MPs stayed away and the rest were half asleep as discussion proceeded and votes were counted.

The annual renewal of the PTA is usually accompanied by ritual protests from a handful of Labour MPs about the arbitrary process of the Act. Last year a few even voted against the renewal of the PTA. Unfortunately this opposition to the PTA is more rhetorical than real. Labour left MPs go along with the view that Irish terrorism is a problem, but they argue that the PTA does not fight terrorism effectively. According to these MPs the PTA breeds terrorism because it indiscriminately harasses all Irish people. The establishment has little trouble with these friendly critics of the PTA. Last December when Michael Foot complained that the Home Secretary's powers to prevent the Sinn Féin leaders from moving from one part of the 'United Kingdom' to another was 'an anomaly', Thatcher soon shut him up. 'That is not an anomaly', she

declared, 'it is inherent in the Act, which Mr Foot's Government passed' (*Hansard* 9 December 1982).

The British establishment can deal easily with legalistic objections from civil libertarians and reformists with a guilty conscience. In the meantime it can get on with the job of preventing the 'infection' from spreading to Britain.

PTA week of action

Every year the PTA is renewed as a matter of course. This most repressive of all Acts of Parliament passes through with barely a comment. The Irish Freedom Movement is determined to change this state of affairs. The PTA is a double-edged weapon. In the hands of the ruling class it is an effective instrument of repression — but for anti-imperialists the PTA can provide a direct focus for bringing the War to Britain. Our campaign against the PTA can show that the Irish War is not miles away across the sea in Belfast and Derry, but is being fought in London, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. We can subvert the PTA by exposing its aims and showing that the real terrorists are all in the camp of the British state. The IFM has organised a week of protest action against the PTA to coincide with the March renewal of the Act in Parliament.

During the week from 14 to 19 March we have organised a series of meetings, pickets and other protest action in Birmingham, Coventry, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Sheffield. Help us make the PTA an issue in the British working class. Speak out for the two detainees arrested yesterday, today and every tomorrow for the duration of the Irish War.

IFM week of action against the PTA

Join the fight to Smash the PTA: protest activities organised in London, Birmingham, Coventry, Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield and Manchester

London

Monday 14 March

Torchlit commemoration of the centenary of Marx's death

March in honour of Marx and the Fenians

Assemble 6.30pm,

Marx's grave,

Highgate Cemetery,

(Archway tube)

Indoor rally at:

Islington Central Library,

Fieldway Crescent,

(off Holloway Road)

nr Highbury Corner

Tuesday 15 March 12.30-2pm

Picket: Smash the PTA!

Central Law Courts,

The Strand

Wednesday 16 March 5pm

Vigil to protest at the detention

of more than 5 500 victims of the PTA

Trafalgar Square

Friday 18 March 7.30pm

Public Rally

Smash the PTA!

British Troops Out of Ireland Now!

Holborn Public Library,

32, Theobalds Road, WC1

(Holborn tube)

Manchester

Thursday 3 March 7.30pm

Public Meeting: Smash the PTA!

Stretford

see the next step sellers for details

Thursday 10 March 7.30pm

Public Meeting

The Irish War in Britain

The Black Horse Inn,

The Crescent, Salford



The St. John Ogilvy flute band in action on Bloody Sunday

Tuesday 15 March 12am

Public Meeting

Smash the PTA!

The Sidney Building,

Manchester Polytechnic

Wednesday 16 March 3pm

Picket of Manchester's Ringway Airport
to protest against the detention of 90

people under the PTA

Assemble 2.15pm, University steps,
Oxford Road

Thursday 17 March 12am

Public Meeting

Fight for Irish freedom — Smash the PTA!

Manchester University Students Union,
Oxford Road

Thursday 24 March 7.30pm

Public Meeting

Fight for Irish freedom — Smash the PTA!

AUEW Hall, St Margaret's Street,
Ashton-under-Lyne

Thursday 31 March 7.30pm

Public Meeting

The PTA and British workers

Wythenshawe

see the next step sellers for details

Sheffield

Wednesday 16 March 7pm

Public Meeting

Why Marx

supported Irish freedom fighters

AUEW House, Furnival Gate

Coventry

Wednesday 16 March 12-2pm

Friday 18 March 12-2pm

Smash the PTA!

Protest outside the General Post Office,
Hartford Street

Birmingham

Grant French, former British soldier
speaks out against British terror in Ireland

Tuesday 15 March 12.30pm

Bourneville Further Education College

Wednesday 16 March 1pm

Room D415, Perry Bar Site,

Birmingham Polytechnic

Thursday 17 March 1pm

Unity Lounge, Aston University

Students Guild

Friday 18 March 12.30pm

Hall Green Technical College

Thursday 17 March 3pm

Make the West Midlands a PTA-Free Zone!

Lobby of West Midlands County Council

Corporation Street

Saturday 19 March 9.45am

Picket Shadow Home Secretary

Roy Hattersley

Smash the PTA!

Sparkbrook Labour Club,

Stratford Road

Leeds

Monday 14 March — Friday 18 March
4-5pm

Daily anti-PTA vigils outside the
Henry Moore Gallery, Headrow

Thursday 17 March 7.30pm

Public Meeting

Make West Yorkshire a PTA-Free Zone!

Victoria Hotel, Great George Street,
Leeds 1

Liverpool

* 14-19 March

Films, meetings, exhibitions,
bookstall at the University

Friday 18 March 7.30pm

Public Meeting

Smash the PTA!

The Irish Centre, Mount Pleasant

Saturday 19 March 11.30-2pm

Public Rally

Make Liverpool a PTA-Free Zone!

Assemble outside the Town Hall, Dale St

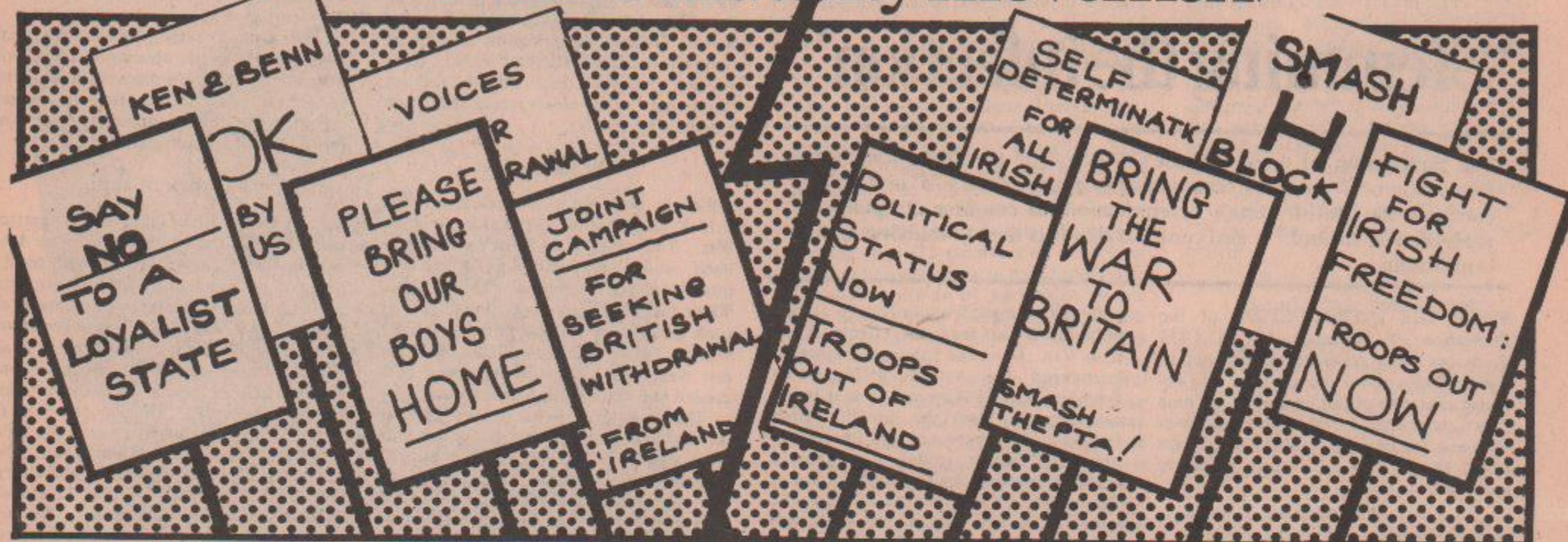
Victims of the Prevention of Terrorism

Act in Liverpool: contact the Irish

Freedom Movement.

Phone 01-274 3951

The British solidarity movement



THE OPPOSING demonstrations with their different objectives signify a profound divergence in the British solidarity movement, representing in a sense, the end of the first phase of the Irish solidarity movement in Britain. Throughout the 'seventies the most influential section of the movement was organised by the Troops Out Movement and its sympathisers in the Labour left. From its inception, TOM sought to influence public opinion rather than build an anti-imperialist movement. The TOM leadership believed that a movement uniting liberals, reformists and other 'opinion-makers' would be the most effective form of solidarity. It rejected the criticism of those who called for a movement to be built in the working class and directed against the British state.

TOM went out of its way to appeal to humanitarian principles and the traditions of British democracy and fair play in which its leaders placed great faith. This search for the middle ground led TOM to drop its defining demand for 'Troops Out Now' on its first demonstration in October 1974. The aim of this concession was to placate the moribund British Peace Committee, one of the sponsors of the march. By the summer of 1975 TOM had forgotten all of its original demands and adopted the awkward slogan 'No to a Loyalist state'. The desperate search for moderate support forced TOM to distance itself from the republican movement. After an IRA bomb attack in London in January 1976, a TOM bulletin issued a stern condemnation: 'Bombs such as the one at West Ham can only weaken support for the Irish struggle'.

The 'middle ground' proved elusive. Inevitably TOM began to lose more and more of its supporters. It split in 1977 and since that time has moved away from public activity towards pressure group politics. By 1980 a loose alliance of TOM activists, Young Liberals and Labour left politicians emerged at the head of Irish solidarity work in Britain. This bloc has proved entirely unsuccessful in mobilising support for the cause of the Irish people. Instead it has become part of the Labour left's electoral machine; its assignment — to win support for this party inside the Irish community.

The anti-imperialist alternative

In the 'seventies the anti-imperialist section of the solidarity movement was very much a minority. But as TOM began to crumble, and as every one of its initiatives proved more futile than the last, even the most fervent believer in British fair play began to lose heart. More importantly, the Smash the PTA Campaign and later the Irish Freedom Movement began to organise campaigns that actually attracted new people to the cause of Irish freedom. The debate on Ireland we initiated inside the working class showed that it was possible to win workers to the banner of anti-imperialism.

The IFM argued that it was impossible to evade the Irish War with flabby appeals

Split down the middle

During the first week in May there will be two demonstrations on Ireland. On 8 May Sinn Féin, the Irish Freedom Movement and other anti-imperialist forces are organising a demonstration in Birmingham to commemorate the second anniversary of the deaths of the ten Irish hunger-strikers. A counter-demonstration is being organised a day earlier by the Troops Out Movement — supported by the Labour Committee on Ireland and other reformist trends — under the slogan 'Voices for Withdrawal'. Pat Roberts explains.

to justice and morality. We took a clear stand: that in a war there are two sides and the solidarity movement had to be on the side of the Irish freedom fighters, not somewhere in the middle. Further, we said that these arguments could actually make sense to British workers because their class interests lay squarely with the defeat of their own state. Growing support for this approach became apparent on the streets during the hunger-strikers in 1981. While TOM and the LCI concentrated on parliamentary lobbying, the IFM emerged as the most active force in the solidarity movement. During the period of the H-Block protest the irreversible decline of TOM became apparent even to its staunchest supporters.

The year of the hunger-strikers marked a turning point in the solidarity movement. The moralistic message of TOM and its allies failed to mobilise anybody in defence of the hunger-strikers. In response to this debacle TOM virtually shut up shop. Reduced to a handful of activists, it set about influencing the Labour left. It hoped that soggy declarations from Labour Party politicians could galvanise support for its objectives. However, by this time TOM's own objectives were far from clear. It certainly ceased to talk about immediate troop withdrawal. Last year some of its members argued that it should become even more opportunist, drop its formal demand for withdrawal of troops, and concentrate on cultivating Labour MPs. Today all that's left of TOM is a name and a few friends in the Labour Party.

Fools rush in

The rest of the old solidarity movement has followed TOM's trajectory. The Revolutionary Communist Group used to pride itself on its independence from Labourism; now it acts as cheer-leader for the Labour left. It has been vocal in the defence of Ken Livingstone despite

his condemnations of the national liberation struggle. The RCG has recently denounced the IFM for criticising Peter Tatchell, the Labour candidate in the Bermondsey by-election. The RCG has even invented anti-imperialist credentials for Tatchell. Whereas Tatchell himself has publicly stated that he stands by the Labour Party's policy on Ireland, the RCG makes out that Tatchell calls for the immediate withdrawal of British troops!

The RCG's move into the orbit of the Labour Party is symptomatic of the political bankruptcy of the old solidarity movement. The failure to base solidarity work on proletarian politics and the reluctance to fight for Irish freedom in the working class inevitably leads towards Labour's camp.

Time to choose

Both TOM and the RCG have turned what remains of their energies against anti-imperialists. In December they both announced that they will be holding demonstrations. The RCG's demonstration to be held in March, and TOM's to be held in May, are desperate organisational measures attempting to guarantee their own survival. Both TOM and the RCG knew that the mobilisation for the commemoration of Bloody Sunday in January was the most important task for anti-imperialists. Instead of throwing their weight behind this demonstration organised by Sinn Féin, the IFM and other anti-imperialists, they began to mobilise for their demonstrations months ahead. At its meeting on 13 December 1982, TOM's steering committee cynically instructed its supporters not to work in the local mobilising committees for the Bloody Sunday commemoration. For its part, the RCG spent the weeks leading up to the Bloody Sunday demonstration talking about its plans for March and demanding speaking rights for the January commemoration rally. Not surp-

risingly the 'forces' which these two groups represent were conspicuous by their absence on the day of the demonstration.

Since January, these two groups have spent all their time attacking anti-imperialists. TOM has even questioned Sinn Féin's right to commemorate its own martyrs in May. In the event, after considerable embarrassment, TOM has changed its tune and argues that its demonstration, to be held a day before the anti-imperialist one, will now be under the slogan 'Voices for Withdrawal' and will not commemorate the hunger-strikes. This weak attempt to hide their objective of sabotaging the 8 May mobilisation will fool nobody. If they were serious anti-imperialists, TOM and the RCG would have mobilised for the commemoration of Bloody Sunday and for the 8 May protest against the H-Blocks. Instead they invent spurious reasons to organise their own efforts which just happen to coincide with anti-imperialist mobilisations. It is no surprise that the Labour Committee on Ireland and other reformist fringe groups are fully behind TOM's plans.

The RCG-TOM campaign against the new solidarity movement has become increasingly bitter. At the Bloody Sunday rally a leading RCG member threatened prominent Sinn Féin activists with physical violence. At South Bank polytechnic TOM supporters have united with Labour student bureaucrats to keep the IFM out. Unable to counter political arguments, the has-beens of the old solidarity movement are forced to resort to bureaucratic manipulations and slander. It's their way of saying that their prime concern is organisational survival and not the struggle for Irish freedom.

Let's forge ahead

The two demonstrations in May express two conflicting class interests. Under the umbrella of the Labour left, the old solidarity movement will attempt to revive its connections with reformist and liberal circles. The refusal of this movement to fight for support for the Irish liberation movement, and its orientation towards the labour bureaucracy and liberals, indicate which class it serves. In direct contrast, the 8 May commemoration of the victims of the H-Blocks will carry the banner of anti-imperialism. It will be a demonstration that's unequivocally committed to the struggle for Irish liberation and determined to assist the defeat of British imperialism. In Britain, this can serve only one interest — that of the working class.

The IFM has no interests apart from those of Irish freedom and the liberation of the working class. Let's make the 8 May demonstration in Birmingham an example of anti-imperialist unity and determination. Every anti-imperialist from whatever quarter has a rightful place on this demonstration. For the first time the choice is clear: Irish freedom or more British meddling.

Promises

Don't believe them!
Don't leave your future
to the politicians!
Take matters into
your own hands

VOTE

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EDEN

Bermondsey
by-election
24 February 1983

Revolutionary
Communist Party



By-election battle

As we go to press the Bermondsey election campaign is in full swing. Whatever the outcome it seems unlikely that the RCP will capture a seat at Westminster in its first parliamentary election. What we have

acquired is invaluable experience for the battles against Labourism that lie ahead. Here we reprint the manifesto on which Fran Eden campaigned in Bermondsey.

The future in your hands

Politicians never tire of making promises. The people of Bermondsey have been promised a lot by politicians running for Southwark Council and Parliament. Remember all the promises about new council houses in Bermondsey? Remember all the lame excuses about the 'difficulties' in actually building them? Today the air is full of promises of more jobs for Bermondsey — but nobody can take them seriously.

Fran Eden has only one promise to make. The promise is this: unless working class people in Bermondsey take matters into their own hands, things will go from bad to worse.

Nothing has ever been won without a fight. Parliament only granted working people the right to vote after they were prepared to go to prison for it. This manifesto isn't full of promises. It is about what we intend to fight for and why.

Slump- you haven't seen anything yet

Millions are on the dole. Those who still have a job are forced to cut down on everything. Things we took for granted in the past are now becoming 'luxuries'. But this is only the beginning.

In Southwark there are 40 people chasing each job vacancy. More than 20 000 have no jobs — one in five men are out of work. The housing situation is appalling. About 11 000 dwellings are unfit for human habitation. Thousands of families have yet to be rehoused and are forced to live in intolerable conditions while they wait. New building has simply ceased.

Unless we do something *now*, our children will grow up to live a life of degradation and poverty.

Bosses profit - at our expense

There is nothing natural or inevitable about all this. In a radically different kind of society events would not take this course. But today — in capitalist society — goods are only produced if Britain's bosses are certain they can make a profit from them. We need jobs, houses, hospitals, nurseries and lots besides; but we will get none of them unless the employers can see a profit in it.

The resources exist to make our lives more comfortable and Bermondsey a better place. But factories are empty, millions have to sign on and none of us can afford the things we need. Why? Because at the end of the day the account books of the rich must show a profit.

When politicians tell us to 'be realistic' about pay, welfare facilities or economic recovery, what they mean is 'put up or shut up'. But the past decade has shown that what's realistic from their point of view is unrealistic from ours. You can't have it both ways. Either the law of profit wins or we do.

Blame the bosses

Those who run Britain arrogantly blame others for the problems their system has created. We're told that the unions have too much power — but how many powerful union branches are there in Bermondsey? We're told that millions of those claiming benefit are scrounging off the state — but how many neighbours do you have who are living it up on the dole? We're told that black people have put white people out of work — but how many black dockers have taken the place of white ones on the Thames?

People who fight back get given the worst treatment. Trade unionists who take industrial action to defend their living standards are 'mindless militants'. Young blacks who hit back against police harassment are 'muggers'. Every Irishman who wants Britain out of his country is in league with — or one of — the 'terrorists'.

This mustn't be allowed to go on any longer. They may try to divide us — but every working class man, every working class woman has a common interest in uniting against the bosses, their state and their system.

The establishment always says that 'we' are all in it together. By this they mean that we should make sacrifices for them. But should workers in Bermondsey unite with their exploiters? The only unity that will benefit Bermondsey is the united action of workers against the employing class.

A vote for Fran Eden is a vote for that unity. It's a way of saying that the independent interests of workers must come first. It means embarking on a struggle to restore past cuts in

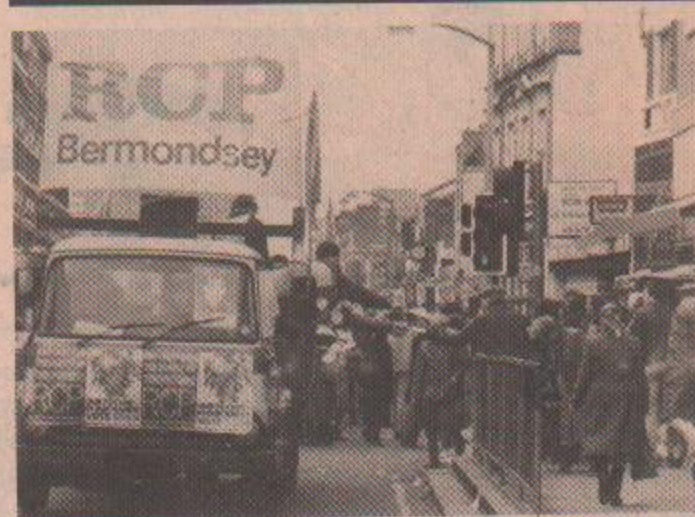
social services and to guarantee everybody a living wage. The bosses say 'we can't afford it'. We should tell them that they *can* but they *won't* — and that we are quite ready to wrest control away from them over the way Britain's resources are used.

Our future- Revolutionary Communism

Our future depends on building a society organised to fulfil our needs — one in which 'realism' means what's in the interests of the vast majority. Bermondsey needs a fresh start. We're offering the only fresh start that's realistically possible: revolutionary communism. All of the 'alternatives' that politicians dream up to bridge the gap between us and them are simply unrealistic. Take Southwark Council. It works out brilliant plans, but they come to nothing. All we get is committees, inquiries and thick reports. Job schemes, but no jobs. Community development schemes that just don't develop.

Revolutionary communism is a genuine alternative. It means ridding ourselves of the class of parasites who grind us down. We know that our problems will not be solved overnight. But the basic obstacles that today deny us our needs will be removed.

Revolutionary communism gives you a real choice. We have no hidden loyalties — our only allegiance is to the working class. For the first time you have a chance, not to vote for a politician, but to register a commitment to fight for a better society. Take it!



We demand

WORK AND A LIVING WAGE

- jobs for all — and wages to be determined by local committees of working class people

A PROGRAMME OF PUBLIC WORKS

- an all-out construction drive to build houses, nurseries and all the other amenities we need

FULL EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

- adequate nursery facilities
- child benefits that guarantee the economic independence of all mothers
- a woman's right to work

- free contraception and abortion on demand

FULL RACIAL EQUALITY

- an end to all immigration controls and the scrapping of the Nationality Act
- an end to police harassment of black youth
- an end to the race checks ('ethnic monitoring') in housing departments, in the NHS and on the dole
- an end to discrimination at work

FREEDOM FOR IRELAND

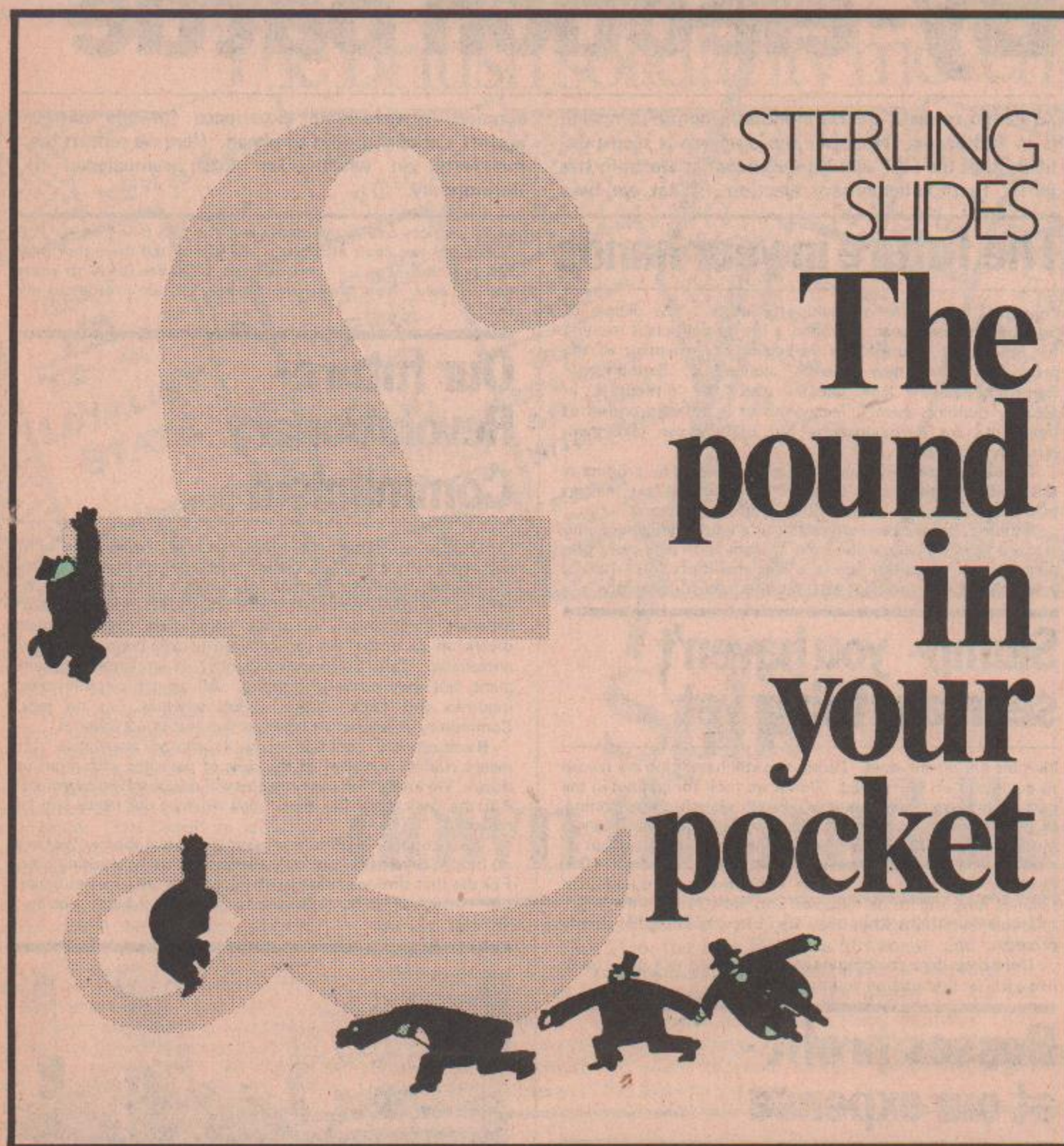
- the immediate withdrawal of British troops
- self-determination for the Irish people
- an end to the harassment of the Irish community under the Prevention of Terrorism Act

FULL EQUALITY FOR HOMOSEXUALS

- no discrimination against homosexuals in employment
- no state harassment and victimisation of homosexuals
- the age of consent for homosexuals to be brought in line with that for heterosexuals

AGAINST THE WAR DRIVE

- working class action to disarm the bosses
- immediate withdrawal of British troops from the Malvinas
- an end to secret diplomacy and NATO
- full solidarity with anti-imperialist movements throughout the world

STERLING
SLIDES

The pound in your pocket

While Margaret Thatcher was visiting her favourite colony in the South Atlantic, panic swept through the London currency markets. Dealers fell over themselves to mark down sterling's value to its lowest ever level against the US dollar. Phil Murphy analyses the falling pound.

THE TORIES blame Labour. Back in November, shadow Chancellor Peter Shore proposed a 30 per cent devaluation of sterling as part of his alternative plan for British capitalism. According to Margaret Thatcher, the men in the foreign exchange markets took fright at the thought of a returned Labour government committed to devaluation and began to devalue sterling themselves. Never mind that these fears have about as much chance of being realised as Labour has of providing Bermondsey workers with council houses with gardens!

Labour blames the Tories. Michael Foot claimed that the pound fell because the financiers had finally seen through 'the follies and fantasies of Thatcherism'. Labour's scourge of the 'gnomes of Zurich' has discovered that the money markets are not moved by anti-Labour prejudices but work according to capitalist principles of rationality. Now, playing the part of the rational capitalist he wants to rally the bankers to his side in an attack on the Tories' policies.

There is no shortage of explanations for why sterling slumped. The more astute bourgeois commentators play safe and cite as many as possible. If we look at the underlying cause of sterling's decline we can see that there is more to it than they would like to admit.

Why bother?

The exchange rate of the pound has an importance far beyond the pages of the

financial press. A 'weaker' pound, with a lower exchange rate, means that everything purchased from overseas will be more expensive for the working class: holidays, food, clothes and video recorders. Industry in Britain will also pay more for raw materials, and take advantage of less foreign competition to put up prices. Devaluation means lower living standards — unless workers can force employers and the state to maintain them.

In recent years Tory and Labour governments have not favoured devaluation because of its potential for provoking social conflict. A falling exchange rate encourages wage demands. It also gives the bosses some room to pay up because their competitive position internationally is improved for a period. By the late 'seventies, Labour saw this problem and tried to promote a stronger exchange rate. This was meant to discipline British bosses to stand up to competition — by standing on their workforce, raising productivity and backing Labour's wage-control policies. The Tories continued this line of action, but were better able to rely on unemployment to push down wages.

The devaluation of sterling is another weapon in the Tory armoury against the working class. However, Thatcher was none too keen to deploy it, unlike Peter Shore and the Labour Party. She exclaimed that devaluation 'is not a substitute for improving the efficiency of industry'. Thatcher's reluctance arises from her own dreams about the best manner of reviving British capitalism. In reality, the depth

of Britain's decline has produced devaluation as a mechanism for slashing living standards to prop up the capitalists' profits.

The pound talks

Why did the value of the pound slump on the foreign exchanges? The decline really began last November: in the period to early February the value of sterling fell by 11 per cent. One popular explanation therefore was the Treasury's November forecast of a current account deficit on the balance of payments for 1983, after the £4.6 billion surplus in 1982. But then in February, the International Monetary Fund and the OECD made a contrary forecast of another surplus for 1983. This was unable to push up the exchange rate again. So much for forecasts.

Another explanation was the decline in British interest rates: from 16 per cent in late 1981, the bank's base rate fell to nine per cent by November 1982. This was supposed to have undermined speculators' confidence in sterling because they could no longer make a high return by sticking their money into sterling assets. But interest rates were falling throughout the world, and no faster in Britain than elsewhere. Given the drop in the rate of inflation as a result of the recession, interest rates were still very high in real terms. Interest rates rose again in November to prop up the pound, but their previous fall had little to do with sterling's decline.

The explanation that comes closest to the truth is that all the 'fundamentals' were against sterling. This is just a polite, technical way of saying that the clapped-out state of the British economy had to be reflected in the value of its currency. There are two main aspects to this.

First, take Britain's oil export revenues. Since 1977 these have played a crucial part in bolstering British exports at a time

when, for most other commodities, Britain's competitive position in the world market was worsening. Last year net oil revenues amounted to £4.6 billion when the non-oil trade balance was in deficit the tune of £2.4 billion. No wonder that the glut in the oil market caused by the world recession — a glut which would inevitably cut oil prices — produced so much concern in the foreign exchange markets, and in the Thatcher Government.

This concern was met by devaluation. Before devaluation, the recent \$3 fall in the dollar price of oil instigated by the British National Oil Corporation would have slashed the sterling value of oil revenues, and the oil tax revenues of the British Government. Now Geoffrey Howe can rest assured that £1 billion will not disappear before his eyes, and before his Budget in March.

Second, the real problem is Britain's low productivity. Despite the cost cutting and greater levels of exploitation forced on British workers last year, British capitalists are still way behind their rivals in the competitive league. Just looking at the number of industrial robots in operation indicates their technical backwardness. Last year Japan had 13 000 industrial robots, the USA had 6 250, West Germany 3 500, and Britain just 1 152.

Sterling's precipitous devaluation is a sign of British capitalism's decline. It means that despite the support which the exchange rate had from high interest rates and oil export revenues, the low productivity of industry has finally come to be reflected in a lower value of the pound. Thus every day worked in Britain is now worth less in terms of the world market than it was before sterling fell. A lack of productive investment by British capitalists — because of their low profit levels — means British capitalism has been devalued too. Now, more than ever, they can only go forward by cutting our living standards.

The Ides of March

The fall of the pound is said to be a blow to Chancellor Howe's plans for a 'giveaway' Budget on 15 March. But like all the other journalistic terms of the financial press, 'giveaway' is misleading too. Howe was only planning to allow what British capitalism could afford anyway, and this predetermined that industry would be on the receiving end of any concessions on taxes. The devaluation of sterling will simply remind the Chancellor that he must take world economic factors into account when doing his sums. Despite the volatility of interest rates and exchange rates, the uncertainty of the future price of oil, the grim prospects of an economic upturn and the likelihood of a major loan default, all the indicators press Howe in the same direction: more austerity measures.

Manufacturing output still stagnates at levels last seen in the 'sixties; unemployment is still rising and investment and profits have failed to recover. For the bourgeoisie this indicates the need for continuing the squeeze on the working class, because in a situation where Britain's rulers are up against more than bracing competition abroad, they have to maintain control at home.

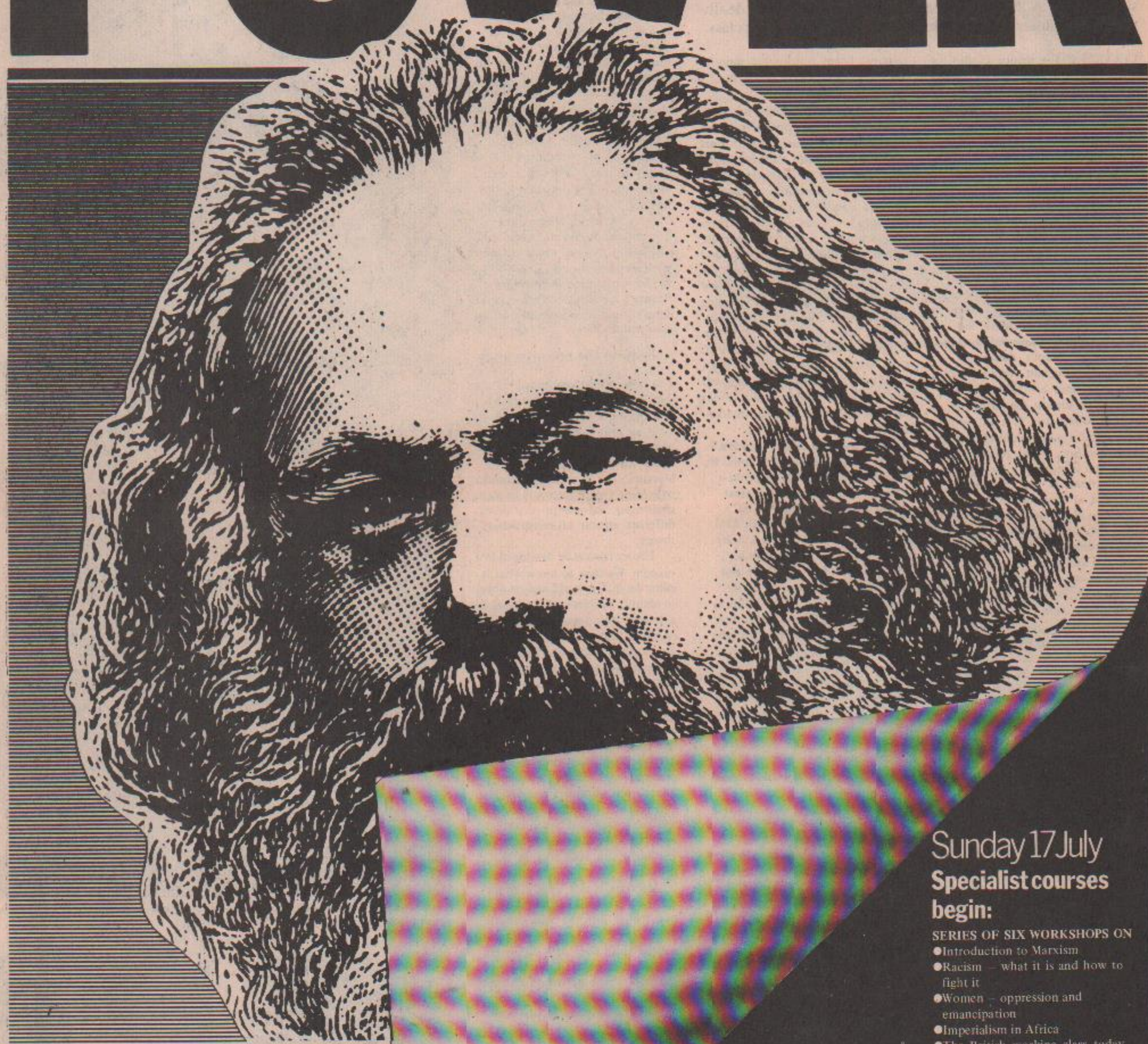
For the working class there will be no 'giveaway' Budget. Nothing will be done to restore the value of social security benefits. Cuts in personal taxation will do little more than compensate for the extra burden caused by inflation. Instead, Howe will do all he can to ease the agony of British capitalism as it staggers through another year.

Meanwhile the capitalists and their state will attempt to grab the 'benefits' of devaluation by holding down wage increases. Whether it is holding out against the water workers' pay demands or, like Hyster Corporation, the forklift truck manufacturer, asking for a 13 per cent wage cut to guarantee jobs, the ruling class is determined to make the working class foot the bill for sterling's slide on the foreign exchange markets.

We have no particular interest in seeing the pound at one or another level against other currencies. What we are determined to do is ensure it is the capitalists, not us, who pay for their crisis.

A LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE FOR THE 'EIGHTIES

PREPARING FOR POWER



A week of discussion
and debate, politics
and polemics
16-22 July
Central London

Saturday
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**Marxist celebration
of the Marx Centenary**

A full day of workshops and special sessions on Marxism after Marx. An evaluation of the theories and politics of the giants of the Marxist tradition – Lenin and Trotsky – and the dwarf – Stalin; revisionists from Bernstein and Bauer to Althusser and Poulantzas; political economists of neo-Ricardianism, under-consumptionism – and capitalist collapse; British Marxists from the tragedy of Hyndman and Morris to the farce of Hindess and Hirst; Marx on women, Marx on Ireland and Marx on the transition to communism.

Sunday 17 July
Specialist courses
begin:

SERIES OF SIX WORKSHOPS ON

- Introduction to Marxism
- Racism – what it is and how to fight it
- Women – oppression and emancipation
- Imperialism in Africa
- The British working class today
- Ireland – the longest war

**OTHER SESSIONS RUNNING
THROUGHOUT THE WEEK**

- Soviet Union and Eastern Europe
- The working class in the West
- Revolutions betrayed
- Issues in British politics: left, right and CND

PLUS: DEBATES featuring stars of learned journals, pub rooms and street corners

**AND: FILMS, MUSIC AND
ENTERTAINMENT**

PREPARING FOR POWER

KARL MARX CENTENARY

The theory of proletarian revolution

Karl Marx died on 14 March 1883. A hundred years later his name is known throughout the world. Millions of workers see in his doctrines their theoretical weapon for the struggle for emancipation. A century after his death Marx is still hated and feared by the capitalist class – and for good reasons. No single individual has contributed more to the cause of proletarian revolution than Marx. A hundred years has passed since his death yet he continues to haunt the enemies of the working class.

MARXISM is the theory of the proletarian revolution. Bourgeois theoreticians try to smooth over conflict and sing the hymns of harmony and stability; Marxism articulates the antagonism between the classes. Many theoreticians before Marx wrote about the class struggle but he was the first to demonstrate 'that class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat'. In other words, Marx demonstrated that the class struggle was not some episodic and aimless occurrence but the historic agency of social change.

Marx showed that working class power is not an unrealistic utopia but the logical outcome of the class struggle within capitalism. The relevance of Marx's theory is indicated by the fact that in every generation since his death a new group of bourgeois ideologues is assigned to refute it. It is not only the capitalist establishment that fears Marxism. Social reformers whose aim is to make a few minor modifications in the oppressive structures of capitalist society see Marx as a threat to this project. Often they are the most vociferous in dismissing Marxism as irrelevant. Thus the foreword to a recent collection of articles entitled *Exterminism and Cold War* edited by the *New Left Review* claims that the nuclear age has made Marxism irrelevant. Ironically, while Marxism is dismissed as out of date, the pre-Marxist utopian socialists come in for strong recommendation: 'The resources of that utopianism will need to be drawn upon and developed again, if socialism is to confront with any realism the universal threat of a military explosion that would annihilate every class'.

Marxism has survived its bourgeois condemnations and its reformist revisers for the simple reason that the class struggle cannot be argued out of existence. Every 'definitive' rejection of Marxism has been refuted by the realities of capitalist society. The triumph of Marxism will be decided on the same plane – in the heat of the life or death struggle between classes. Our task is not to celebrate the individual, but to develop Marxism in relation to present day conditions. We aim to make Marxism a guide to action for millions of workers.

Throw away the icons!

The bitter enemies of Marxism in the capitalist class pose few problems for us. Bourgeois ideologues can make only superficial criticisms and their views consistently fail to capture the popular imagination. A much greater danger comes from the attempts to subvert Marxism by those in the labour movement who claim to uphold his heritage. During the past century there have been numerous attempts to turn Marx into a harmless liberal. Many 'Marxists' have sought to reconcile Marx's theory with capitalist realism, ridding his theory of its revolutionary

content. Lenin condemned those who celebrated Marx only to repudiate Marxism:

'During the lifetime of great revolutionaries the oppressing classes relentlessly persecute them, treat their teachings with malicious hostility, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaign of lies and slanders. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonise them, so to say, and to surround their names with a certain halo for the "consolation" of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping them, while at the same time emasculating the content of the revolutionary doctrine, vulgarising it, and blunting its revolutionary edge. At the present time, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists in the labour movement concur in this "revision" of Marxism.'

Marxism has long been a harmless icon in Britain. At British universities students learn about Marxism as a series of trite formulae; a great revolutionary is portrayed as a clever academic. A journal entitled *Marxism Today* publishes articles which advocate incomes policy, demand that law and order and nationalism become part of the left's programme and urge political alliances with Liberals and other middle class parties. While *Marxism Today* muses about class alliances the other 'Marxists' put class collaboration into practice. So-called 'Marxists' inside the Labour Party are busy preparing for the next general election, projecting a version of Marx after their own image. Thus the much-feared Militant Tendency rejects the need to 'smash the capitalist state. It proposes a 'peaceful road to socialism' and implies that Marx too was a parliamentary cretin.

This degradation of Marx expresses the desire of the British left to narrow the horizons of the working class. It is our job to destroy this caricature of Marxism and degradation of working class politics by rescuing the revolutionary content of Marx's theory.

Living Marxism

To defend Marxism we have to develop it. Too often, even communists have fallen into the trap of treating Marxism as a dogma that explains and proves everything. Marx's collaborator Engels warned of this stagnant scholastic approach shortly after Marx's death:

'All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of existence of the different formations of society must be examined in detail before the attempt is made to deduce from them the political, civil-law, aesthetic, philosophic, religious, etc. views corresponding to them. Up to now very little has been done in this respect because only a few people have got down to it seriously.'

Marxism has to be developed and tested in light of new developments. Otherwise revolutionary theory will be left behind by social experience. Lenin emphasised this point in his introduction to the Bolshevik programme in 1899: 'We do not in any way regard Marx's theory as something final and inviolable, we are convinced on the contrary, that it only laid the cornerstone of science which socialists must push further in all directions, if they do not wish to be left behind by life.'

Lenin's exhortation is particularly relevant today. The capitalist world is in a state of flux. All the old assumptions about economic prosperity have been shattered by the recession. No social class or institution is left untouched: the working class has undergone major changes. Without Marxist theory it is impossible to understand these events and to keep ahead of the rapid shifts in society. That's why we have organised *Preparing for Power*, a week of discussion and debate about Marxism and working class politics today.

No time for complacency

The creative development of Marxism requires familiarity with the categories and concepts of Marxist theory. Thus we have organised a 'specialist course and a series of workshops under the title 'Introduction to Marxism'. For those already familiar with Marx's work there will be more challenging workshops explaining different aspects of revolutionary theory.

Theory cannot be developed in a vacuum. We have to know what is going on in the world and be able to identify problems to work out the solutions from a working class point of view. Many of the workshops are designed to examine the present stage of the class struggle in Britain and abroad. A six-part course will look at the British working class while other workshops will examine class relations in Europe, the USA and elsewhere. There will be a choice of more than 16 workshops on the present stage of the recession, imperialism and liberation struggles. Our presentations of these subjects will avoid technical jargon so that even the least experienced participants can learn and take part in the discussion.

Marxism is not simply about theory – it is above all about how to fuse theory with the class struggle. That's why so many of the workshops will be given over to a discussion of the major political questions of the day. From a six-part course on the oppression of women to a series of discussions on the arms race – from the problem of housing to living on the dole. The choice is yours!

Despite the films, music and other events the aim of *Preparing for Power* is not to entertain. There is no time for complacency. The crisis facing the working class is a test for all Marxists. What's at stake is not some academic debate but the survival of the working class – indeed of humanity. But ideas are important – revolutionary theory is a weapon that will tilt the balance in favour of workers and the oppressed. A hundred years after Marx's death, *Preparing for Power* is a fitting celebration of his ideas and his politics – a call to arms on the side of the working class.



Lenin unveils the Marx and Engels memorial in Moscow in 1918: the Bolshevik revolution was the best commemoration



Lenin with Trotsky, who later carried the Bolshevik tradition in the struggle against Stalinism in the Union and the Comintern

PREPARING FOR POWER

Saturday 16 July Marxism after Marx

Opening plenary —

● Marxism since 1945: humanism, structuralism — and beyond

● The Marxism of the Second International: revisionism and social democracy

● The Marxism of the Communist International: from Lenin to Trotsky

● Was Stalin a Marxist?: No

● Is there a British Marxism?: Not quite

● Developments in the Marxist theory of crisis: Grossman and Mattick — the missing links

● Marxism and women: Engels and after

● Marx on Ireland: from the IRB to the IRA

● Marx on the transition: workers' control means workers' revolution

PLUS — Marx's London — an early morning walk around the places where the great man lived and worked.



Spreading the revolution: Lenin meets Italian revolutionaries 1920

Other sessions

Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

● New directions for Andropov?

● The national question in the Soviet Union

● Poland after Solidarity

● Women under Stalinism

● The strange history of the theory of state capitalism

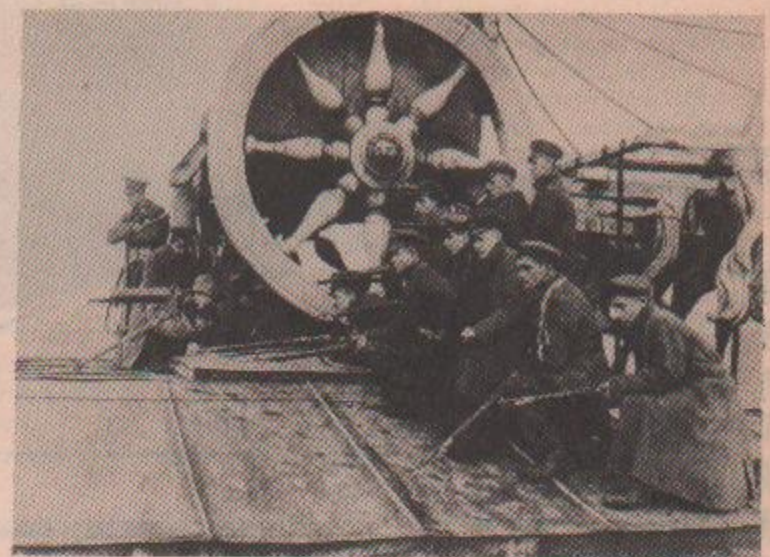
● Moscow vs Washington — the new Cold War



Revolutions betrayed

● Britain 1945?
● The demise of the Comintern 1929-1939

● Germany 1919 — 1923
● Germany 1929 — 1933
● Spain 1936 — 1939



Revolution in Germany 1919

In the week Series of six workshops

Sunday 17 July — Friday 22 July

● Introduction to Marxism

If you think 'the fetishism of commodities' is what goes on in sex shops or that 'abstract labour' is what people do in institutions of higher education, then this course is for you. Or if you're fed up with selling your labour-power and simply trying to get the best price for it, and you want to know how to get rid of the whole wage system, then it's for you too.



● Imperialism in Africa

Africa is sinking into starvation and chaos. The British press hypocritically condemns the brutal mass deportations from Nigeria; but these result from the artificial borders Britain and France have imposed on Western Africa and the recession throughout the imperialist world which demands barbaric solutions in impoverished Africa. From the Horn to the Cape and Morocco, this course will survey imperialist strategy, the African ruling elites and the struggles of the masses.

● Racism — what it is and how to fight it.

Many people believe racism is a problem of attitudes, which are deeply ingrained and spontaneously reproduced, in the heads of working class people. We think racism is a product of capitalist society, promoted in the labour movement by generation after generation of Labour and trade union leaders. This course examines racism and anti-racism today.



● The British working class

The aim of this course is not to provide history lessons or to discuss 'the downturn'. The object is to confront the real problems arising out of the impact of mass unemployment, the changing structure of the working class and the weakness of its political (as distinct from trade union) traditions. The integration and neutralisation of shop stewards; the incorporation of activists into local government and other state quangos; the paralysis of the TUC and the influence of radical reformist politics are some of the issues we will be dealing with.

● Women — oppression and emancipation

The debate between feminism and Marxism initiated by Kate Marshall's *Real Freedom* will continue at *Preparing for Power*. So will discussion of the family, the unions, abortion, employment and unemployment, women and peace, women and war, and women and the revolutionary party.

● Ireland — the longest war

The war in Ireland has now been going on so long that many people becoming involved in revolutionary politics can scarcely remember when it started. This course will review the history of Britain's longest war in Ireland. It will also examine British strategy, military, political and ideological, the republican movement in Ireland and the solidarity movement in Britain.



The working class in the West

● Crisis for the communist parties
● The new social democracy
● The peace movement

● Racism in the car factories
● Reagan's domestic difficulties
● Can Japan's workers rise again



PREPARING FOR POWER

Issues in British politics

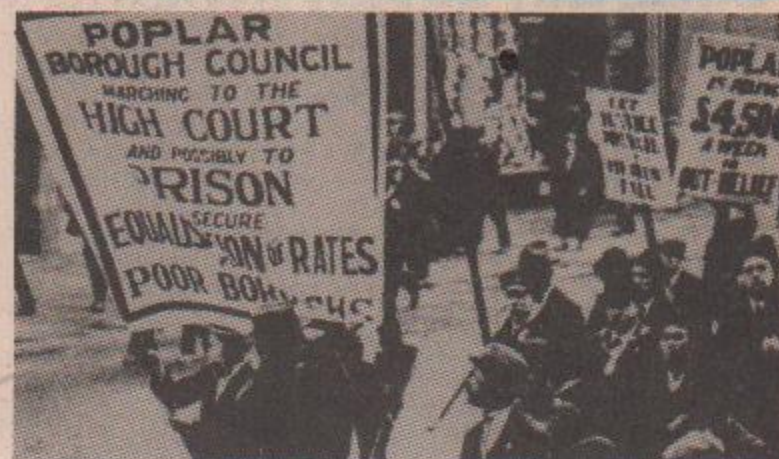


- Who's next for a GLC grant? How the left became one big quango
- Police prepare for civil war; left calls for community accountability

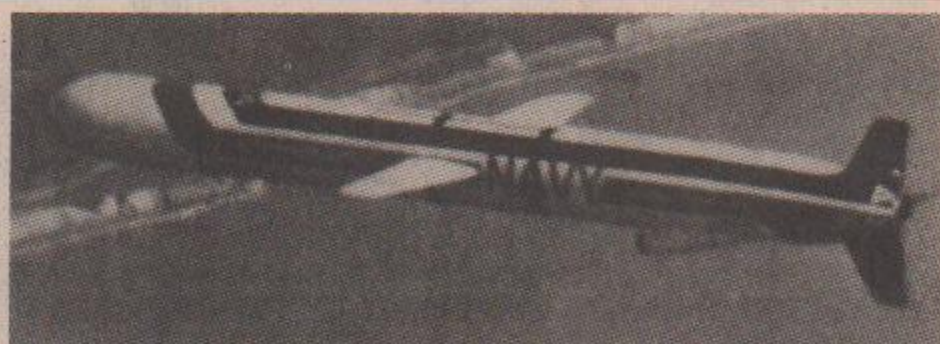
● Who's afraid of Maggie Maggie? The myth of Thatcherism



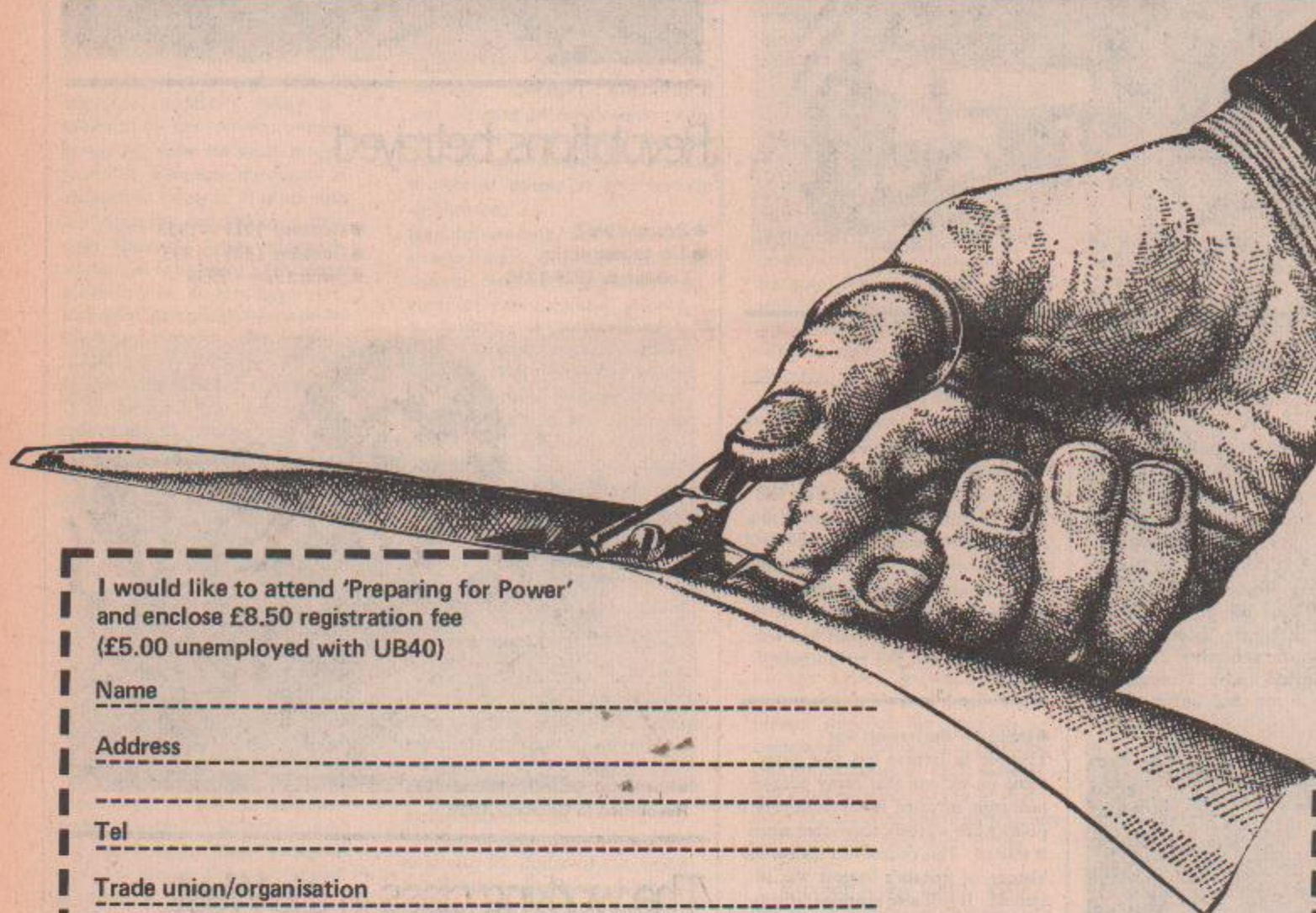
- Fighting for gay rights
- Life in a socialist republic — the Sheffield experiment
- Will the real Labour left stand up?
- De-industrialisation and depression — the West Midlands experience
- Which way in the general election?
- Unemployment and the job creation fraud



● A short history of British socialism



● Fighting militarism — or protesting about American missiles?



I would like to attend 'Preparing for Power' and enclose £8.50 registration fee (£5.00 unemployed with UB40)

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Tell us something new!

Thousands of people are taking on the capitalist system in their own way, day in day out. Many activists have important experiences which they have little opportunity to share with others. We want to overcome the isolation of individual militants and bring them together to exchange ideas and formulate problems and solutions together.

Preparing for Power provides a chance for you to let others learn from your experience. Many workshops will be run by veterans of industrial disputes, anti-racist campaigns, solidarity work and other aspects of the class struggle. Now is your chance to come and argue things out and assess past victories and defeats. Write to us, let us know your interest and we'll make sure that *Preparing for Power* really does help to prepare the working class to seize power. We can't afford to wait for another Marx centenary!

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

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MICHAEL FOOT inherited a defeated and divided Labour Party shortly after the May 1979 General Election. The party had suffered a major loss of electoral support following the 'winter of discontent' when it had attempted to force down the wages of some of Britain's lowest paid public service workers. The Labour Government's insistence on pay curbs and drastic cuts in public spending alienated the senior trade union leaders, especially those in the public sector, from the leading figures in the Cabinet — James Callaghan and Denis Healey.

The left, at that time dominated by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer, emerged relatively unscathed from the later years of the 1974 to 1979 Labour Government. Both played their full part as ministers under Harold Wilson in winning labour movement support for the Social Contract. But both were squeezed out of the government after the 1975 EEC referendum and were thus able to escape responsibility for the consequences of the policies of industrial rationalisation and wage control of which they had been staunch advocates. But the left, and Benn in particular, was not popular with the Parliamentary party which blamed 'extremists' for losing Labour the election. When Callaghan went, union bureaucrats carried on their grudge against Healey. Foot was the obvious compromise candidate.

Foot was acceptable to the union bosses as the man who had administered what few legislative concessions they achieved under the Social Contract. Foot certainly opened the doors of the corridors of power (or at least of quango committees) to union bureaucrats, with an unprecedented zeal. And he was well respected by the party at Westminster as one of their debating club stars, who had shed most of his youthful radicalism. At the beginning of 1980 Foot took over a party with a membership which had declined steadily over 30 years and a popular vote which had fallen even more precipitously over the same period.

Union power

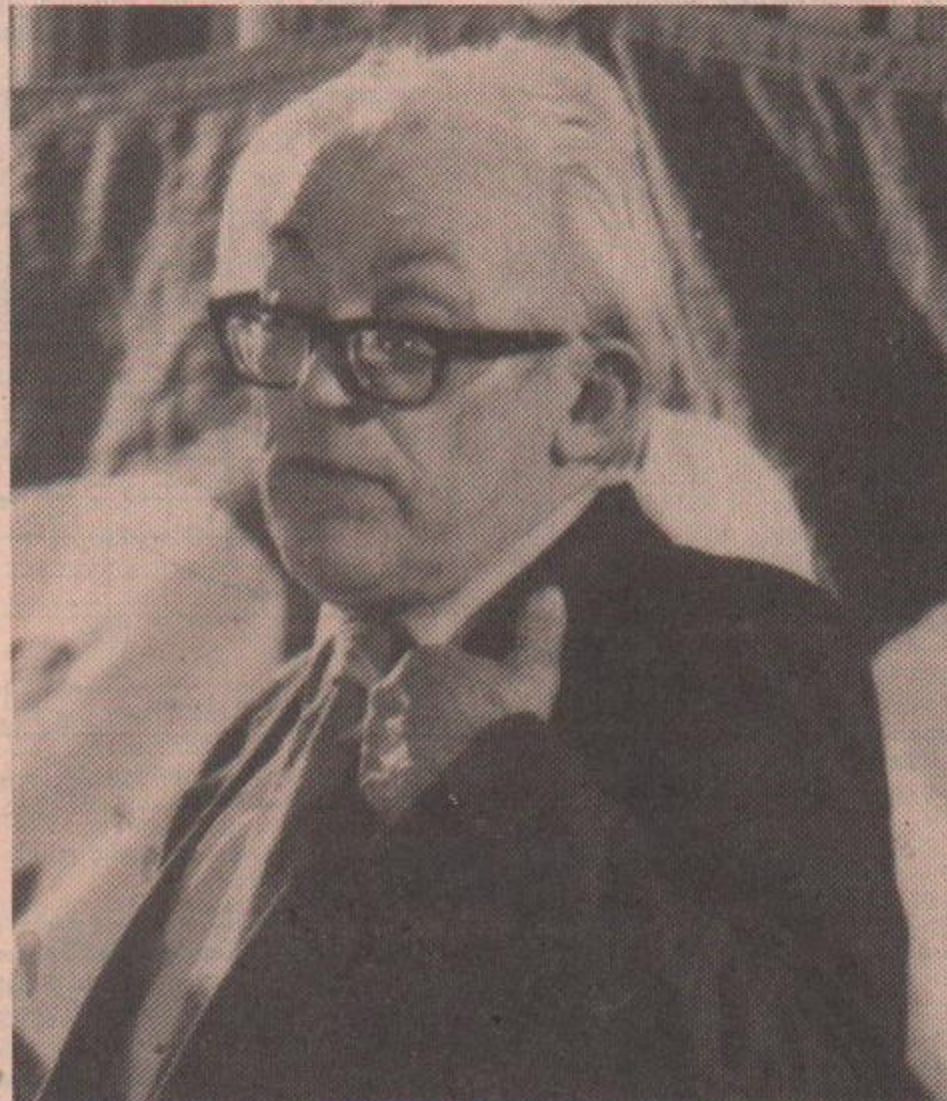
The rise of the Social Democratic Party in 1980 and 1981 was a measure of the crisis of the Labour Party. The SDP had no internal dynamic of its own — no great issue and no mass of enthusiastic supporters drove its three lack-lustre leaders forward. The 'gang of three' — Owen, Williams and Rodgers — became the SDP, and picked up Jenkins on the rebound from Brussels, entirely because of the decay of the Labour Party. Labour's continuing decline was indicated in poor by-election performances, opinion polls and internal squabbles. The conflict over the deputy leadership between Healey and Benn which raged through 1981 revealed the Labour Party turning in on itself as its base of popular support outside withered away. Healey's hair's-breadth victory simply reflected the even balance between the traditional right, supported by the Parliamentary party and the more right-wing union bureaucrats, and an equally narrowly-based left, supported by constituency activists and the more radical union officials. The post itself had merely symbolic significance.

The internal turmoil of the Labour Party meant that its usefulness to the union leaders was being seriously reduced. The union bureaucrats founded the Labour Party to pursue their interests in Parliament. At a time of rocketing unemployment and Tory anti-union measures, the unions badly needed some political clout. Thus in 1981 and 1982 the unions moved in to try to sort out Labour's problems. Senior barons, guided by GMWU chief David Basnett, strengthened party finances and installed veteran union fixer Jim Mortimer as General Secretary. They also intervened to end a decade of left control on the national executive. After last year's conference the top union cabal was in control of the money, the machine and the manifesto-drafting apparatus.

Foot was the best leader the unions had got — so they rallied around him. But the unions' salvage operation could not overcome the two central problems that had resulted in Foot's ascent to the leadership in the first place. One was the steady erosion of Labour's traditional

The Labour Party

The leadership crisis



Foot is a disaster; but who can they replace him with?

As Labour's standing in opinion polls drops even lower and a general election draws near, Michael Foot's leadership of the party is coming increasingly into question. But the problem goes beyond the pathetic figure of Foot: he simply personifies the profound crisis of the Labour Party.

working class base. The other was its failure to recapture that key section of middle class opinion on which Attlee in the 'forties and Wilson in the 'sixties had both built their election victories.

The missing millions

The changing social composition of the working class has weakened Labour's traditional support. Railway and textile workers, engineers, miners and dockers have been Labour supporters virtually since the party was founded. But all these sections of the working class are in chronic decline. Unions which have grown rapidly in recent years — NALGO, CPSA, NUT — are not even affiliated to the Labour Party. Mass unemployment has made the relationship of many, especially younger, workers to the Labour Party even more tenuous. Labour's working class individual membership (as opposed to the vast majority who are affiliated through their unions) has never been high: today it is at an all time low. All recent elections and opinion polls confirm a falling-off of working class support for the Labour Party.

As its isolation has increased, the Labour leadership has become more aloof and the party more bureaucratic. This is one reason why there is no obvious successor to Foot. Labour's leading figures

today — Silkin, Shore, Hattersley — were the backroom boys under Wilson's regime. They are a bunch of mediocrities whom history has pushed to the fore and found sadly wanting. Foot was cast as a fringe backbench orator under Wilson. As party leader it is painfully apparent that even as an orator he is third-rate. Today's pretenders to the Labour leadership have no natural appeal and no significant base of support outside the committee rooms of Walworth Road. The Labour leaders of the past — MacDonald, Attlee, Wilson — at least had strong personalities and some relationship with the rank and file of the party and the working class.

At the same time, Labour has failed to win back middle class support on any significant scale. The only section of the party which has even attempted to build a new base is the left. Prominent figures like Benn and Livingstone have been trying in a rather uncertain way to drum up support for Labour among women, gays, the Irish, blacks, and other ethnic minorities. Labour left councils have particularly tried to promote the party in these sections of society through well-publicised 'positive discrimination' policies for women and blacks and providing council funds for women's centres and feminist campaigns.

Whatever success meets these initiatives it is clear that they cannot compensate for the loss of working class, and broader middle class support. Indeed it is also apparent that these attempts to steer the Labour Party towards diverse minorities can only exacerbate internal tensions. Peter Tatchell personifies the problem. The growing backlash from traditional Labour supporters against 'positive discrimination' gestures for blacks in areas like Hackney in East London is an ominous sign of more trouble ahead for the Labour Party.

Bitter and twisted

The trade union bureaucrats have taken over the Labour Party but they cannot solve its problems. The impact of the recession on their own organisations has left them little extra time or energy to meddle in the Labour Party. Loyal Labour unions like the NUR, the AUEW, the ISTC, and even the TGWU and the NUM are fighting for their own survival against closures, mass redundancies and punitive productivity deals. Even if they knew what to do about Foot, they are unable to pay sufficient attention to the crisis of the Labour Party.

Some of the leading figures in the Parliamentary Labour Party are beginning to despair of its future. Thatcher presides over economic disintegration and mass unemployment — but Labour's fortunes still inexorably decline. Even when the Tories blunder — as over the NHS dispute or the waterworkers' strike — Labour cannot seize the advantage. The demise of the SDP seems unlikely to help Labour's election prospects. And on top of all this the Boundary Commissioners have deprived Labour of some of its safest seats, and precipitated a new round of re-selection squabbles.

No wonder Labour's right is becoming bitter and twisted. Its behaviour has certainly acquired an unprecedented and destructive viciousness. John Golding, the scourge of the national executive, will stop at nothing in the relentless witchhunt of the Militant Tendency. Other senior party figures have made no secret of their feeling that they would welcome a defeat for Peter Tatchell in the Bermondsey by-election. Their confiscation of his election leaflets on the pretext that they were printed by Militant certainly helped to make this more likely. Meanwhile John Silkin is conducting a vendetta against the Bennite *Tribune* which threatens the very existence of the paper. Most of these matters are now before the courts: this itself is a measure of the degree of rancour that now accompanies the fragmentation of the Labour Party.

The left is in no better shape than the right. A recent national conference held by *London Labour Briefing* to bring together supporters of its radical line from around the country attracted barely 50 people. All reported local inactivity and demoralisation; most could see nothing ahead but another defeat. Meanwhile the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has been tearing itself apart over whether or not to register under the terms approved by the party conference as the framework for expelling Militant. After the Campaign's founders threatened to take their stumps home if the radical entrists into the campaign refused to play by their rules, they finally secured a qualified victory. Out in the real world, the left is as isolated as the right. All the Labour left's propaganda sheets called for a big influx of campaigners to canvass for Tatchell in Bermondsey. But on the streets, nobody was to be seen — except for a few ever-loyal Militant supporters, their leaders due for expulsion on the eve of the poll.

Whoever succeeds Foot the Labour Party is in poor shape for a general election. Its only popular issue — nuclear disarmament — is a constant cause of division among the parliamentary leadership. The revelation that the last Labour Government, which included Healey and Foot, was complicit in negotiations to install cruise missiles in Britain has not helped the party's anti-nuclear credentials. As the Labour Party staggers, discredited, riven with strife, and concerned only with its own survival, towards another election defeat, what better time to build the party of the future?

MILITANT SUPPORTERS regard Liverpool as their model achievement: 'what Liverpool is doing today, other cities will do tomorrow' said local councillor Derek Hatton in 1981 (*Liverpool Echo*, 10 December). In fact, far from indicating future trends nationally, Militant's position in the Liverpool Labour Party is largely due to the peculiar historical weakness of Labourism in Liverpool.

Rotten traditions

'Liverpool is rotten and we had better recognise it' said Labour Party leader Ramsay MacDonald in 1910. MacDonald's assessment anticipated the difficulties which would confront Labour's attempts over the following decades to establish a solid base of support in the city. Two characteristics of the working class in Liverpool help to account for its traditional resistance to Labourism. At the turn of the century, about a third of the city's population were immigrants, of whom the vast majority were Irish. The national and religious affiliations of these workers had an important influence, not only on the way they voted, but also on the whole social and political culture of working class communities in the city. In the Protestant areas, social life tended to focus on the Orange Lodge or the Working Men's Conservative Association clubs. Protestant workers voted 'as Unionist as possible' — for organisations like the Protestant Electoral Federation, for Loyalist independents or for the Conservative and Unionist Party. In the Catholic communities, most workers voted for the Irish Nationalist Party until it was incorporated into the Labour Party in the late 'twenties. Thereafter they voted for Catholic politicians on the right wing of the Labour Party.

In addition to religious divisions, the occupational structure of the working class had an important bearing on local politics. Employment was concentrated in and around the docks: Liverpool had a high proportion of casually employed, unskilled workers. The 'casual trades' were highly unionised and very militant before the First World War. The nature of their employment meant that these workers were more inclined to seek improvements through informal controls over their work, direct bargaining with the employer or through industrial action. They did not have much respect for the unions' official negotiating machinery. Dockers' leader James Sexton summed up the frustrations of the emerging trade union bureaucracy:

'I and my reforming colleagues quickly discovered that our big fight was to be with the chaotic want of discipline, the ignorance and petty jealousies within our ranks, rather than with the employers.' (quoted in *Merseyside in crisis*, Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1981)

These workers also had little enthusiasm for the political wing of the official labour movement and the parliamentary politics of the Labour Party.

The combined effects of these factors had serious consequences for the Labour Party in a city with a substantial middle class involved in the trade and commerce of one of Britain's major ports. While the bourgeois parties had a secure base, many workers either didn't bother to vote, or voted for parties or candidates other than Labour. As a result Labour did not win a majority of parliamentary seats in the city until 1945, and took control of the city council for the first time as late as 1955 — only to lose it shortly afterwards.

The Labour Party slowly increased its electoral support among Liverpool workers in the post-war period. The break-up of traditional working class communities and relocation to large council estates, the decline of sectarian tensions in the working class and a decrease in the relative importance of casual work — all helped Labour to attract more working class votes. Nevertheless its position remained insecure. Labour lost control of the city council between 1961 and 1963 and again between 1967 and 1970. The turnout in working class

wards at local and national elections remains among the lowest in the country: until recently, constituency organisation in many areas was non-existent.

Up to the early 'seventies the Labour Party in Liverpool was dominated by a succession of right-wing cliques led by 'boss' figures like Luke Hogan, Jack Braddock and Bill Sefton. Repeated backtracking on local election commitments, particularly on housing issues, provoked widespread working class opposition to Labour, manifested in demonstrations, rent-strikes and independent tenants' candidates in local elections. Labour's sell-outs paved the way for the Liberal Party's 'community politics' in the 'seventies. Local issues, together with the failure of the regional policies of successive Labour Governments to ameliorate Merseyside's economic plight, meant that by the late 'seventies Labour seemed to be heading for eclipse in Liverpool.

Militant moves in

Between 1979 and 1981 the decay of Liverpool Labourism accelerated dramatically: Militant stepped in to resuscitate what was very nearly a corpse. First Labour lost Garston to the Tories in the 1979 general election and Edge Hill to the Liberals at a by-election shortly afterwards. Then three local Labour MPs defected to the Social Democrats — Eric Ogden of West Derby (a veteran right-wing hack), Dick Crawshaw of Toxteth (a Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army) and James Dunn of Kirkdale (a notorious anti-women's rights, anti-abortion campaigner). Within two years, Liverpool's Labour representation at Westminster dwindled from seven to two (of the eight seats in the area). Council elections confirmed the collapse of Labour's already fragile base of local support.

Militant was small — but well-organised, diligent and above all loyal to the Labour Party. While some local MPs, fearful for their own seats, continued to denounce Militant, other party officials were more pragmatic. They recognised in Militant supporters the saviours of the Labour machine on Merseyside. As one bureaucrat told the *Financial Times*, 'they're very hard working, they'll lick stamps, fold pamphlets, canvass tirelessly for the party, speak at all sorts of meetings!' (7 November 1980). The *Liverpool Daily Post* recently noted that moderate leader of the council's Labour group John Hamilton 'has always held back from criticising the tactics of the hard left within the group, despite obviously suffering at their hands' (10 January). Hamilton's reticence is not the result of political masochism. He recognises that however much he might dislike Militant's abrasive style, the party needs activists; and when it comes to cadre, Liverpool Labour Party can't afford to pick and choose. But Militant supporters are not simply tolerated because they work hard. The Liverpool example demonstrates that far from being a threat to Labour's reformist tradition, they are merely an extension of it.

A question of programme

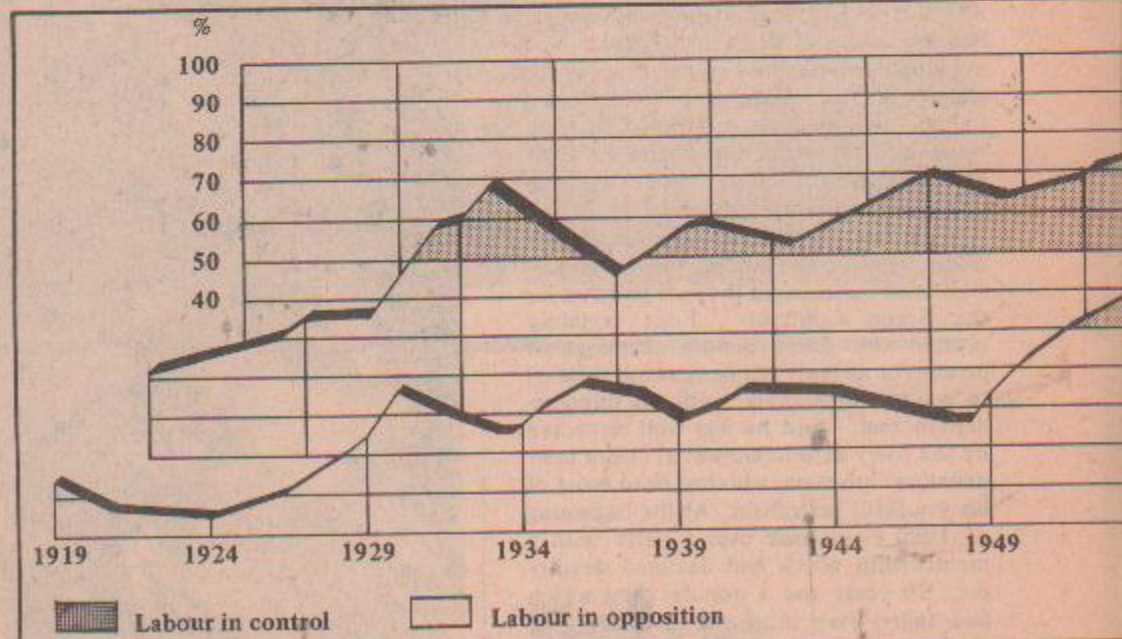
'Our programme corresponds to the interests of the working class on Merseyside. You know, the 35 hour week, the programme of useful public works, the demand to nationalise the 200 monopolies, through an enabling bill in Parliament.' (*Militant* editor Peter Taaffe, *Liverpool Echo*, 11 December 1981)

By the end of 1982 four Militant supporters, Terry Fields, Tony Mulhearn, Terry Harrison and Derek Hatton, had been selected as parliamentary candidates for Liverpool constituencies. The proposed boundary changes, however, will reduce the number of seats in Liverpool from eight to six. This raises the prospect of a confrontation between Militant and Liverpool's left MPs Eric Heffer (Walton) and Bob Parry (Scotland Exchange) — or with former left-wing MP Eddie Loyden (Garston).

But Militant objects only to the Labour right, not to left reformism. Rather than challenge Heffer, Derek

The degeneration of A tale of Liverpool

Liverpool is the stronghold of the Militant Tendency. Three prospective Labour MP's in Merseyside and around a quarter of Liverpool's Labour councillors are Militant supporters. However, as Dave Farrell reports, no place better exposes the hollowness of Militant's claim that Labour is a mass party of the working class — or the emptiness of its own claim to provide a working class alternative to the traditional leadership.



Hatton diplomatically decided to 'concentrate on his local government work' and stood down. Peter Taaffe emphasised that Militant would not oppose reformists in the Labour Party:

'Eric Heffer will walk it. Militant wouldn't put up, wouldn't compete against Eric Heffer because he's stood for the interests of the rank and file of the Labour Party.' (*Liverpool Echo*, 11 December 1981)

What Taaffe means is that Heffer has opposed the expulsion of Militant. The fact that Heffer upheld the wage-cutting Social Contract as a minister in the last Labour Government and loyally supports the present Labour leadership is no reason for Militant to oppose him.

Indeed Militant's programme for Merseyside is in practice little different from that of the Labour leadership. Militant is opposed to unemployment — because it causes social instability. This is how Hatton explained Militant's position shortly after the riots of 1981:

'It's been shown in a survey that over 50 per cent of young unemployed people actually believe that violence is the answer. Now we in no way condone violence but we can understand why it's happening, and we feel that the major cause of it is the fact they've got no job opportunity, no hope for the future. So obviously jobs are crucial.' (*Liverpool Echo*, 10 December 1981)

Militant's 'solution' to unemployment in Liverpool has two aspects. First, the local authority should engage in 'a massive house-building programme'. Second, it should take over firms closing down or making redundancies as 'municipal enterprises'. This, of course, is dependent on the election of a Labour Council, and ultimately on a Labour government with 'socialist policies'. For workers faced with redundancy now, or the thousands who have lost their jobs in the last few years, this strategy can only undermine the ability and will to fight unemployment. Indeed in cases where Militant has been involved in real struggles for jobs its interventions have been characterised by their irrelevance and subservience to the trade union bureaucracy. When workers at Meccano occupied their factory

for 16 weeks against its closure, Militant councillors called on the Liberal/Tory-controlled Council to take it over, and dragged workers into a pointless debate about product viability. It was the same over the closure of the Dunlop factory at Speke.

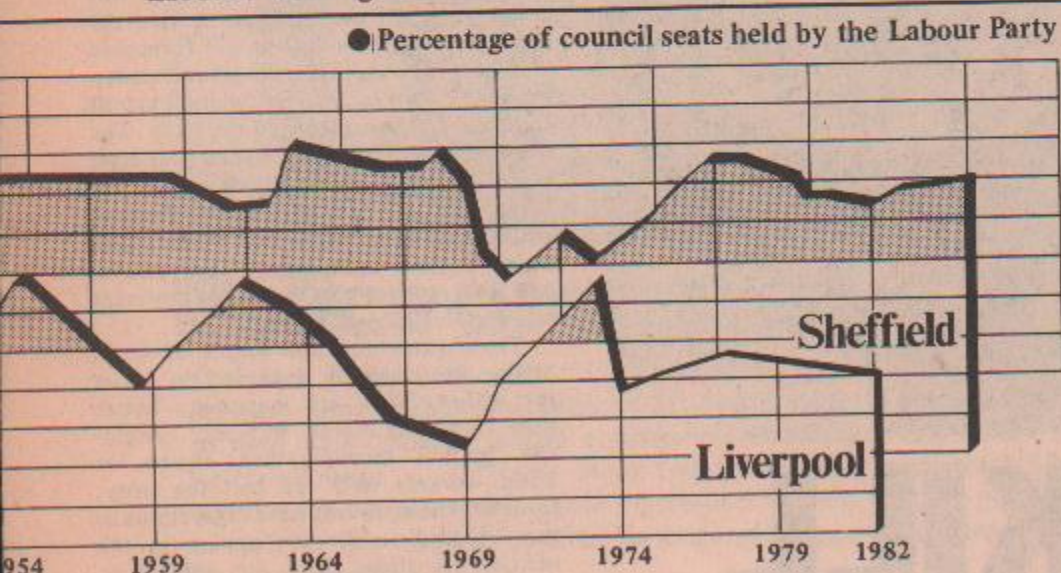
Revolutionaries who are concerned with fighting unemployment seek to arm workers with an independent class outlook which rejects the bosses' criteria of viability and profitability. Militant's priorities — preventing social disorder and securing votes for Labour — render them incapable of carrying out this task.

Militant is being witch-hunted by the Labour leadership to appease ruling class pressure on the party exerted through the media. The Liverpool example illustrates what left-wingers like Tony Benn and Eric Heffer clearly recognise — that Militant supporters are both useful and harmless. It also illustrates in a striking way some more general truths about the Labour Party. First, the Labour Party has never been a mass party of the working class. It has won workers' votes and working class people have been formally affiliated to the party in their millions by the trade union bureaucrats. But, unlike many continental labour movement parties, Labour has never organised millions or even many thousands of workers. The constituency parties have always been predominantly middle class and they remain so today. Second, the Labour Party cannot be turned into a socialist party from within. Militant's attempts to achieve this have led it to adapt more and more to its host, to the extent that it has now adopted the role and the politics of the traditional Labour left. The Labour Party in Liverpool survives today thanks partly to the Militant Tendency. The destiny of the Militant Tendency is to revive and sustain an organisation that exists to contain and betray the working class. We ask Militant supporters: why prop up the Labour Party when you can build a working class alternative? The Revolutionary Communist Party's new Liverpool branch has begun the battle to put the Labour Party in its grave — where it belongs.

working class politics two cities

Sheffield

Sheffield lies at the centre of the 'socialist republic of South Yorkshire'. Its left-wing council is celebrated in Labour circles for its cheap bus fares, its progressive housing policies and its commitment to nuclear disarmament. Yet as Grant French reports, the strength of the left in Sheffield in reality reflects the influx of middle class activists into leading positions in the local labour movement and the erosion of Labour's working class base.



Labour Party control over the Council has been the norm in Sheffield for more than half a century; in Liverpool, Labour has only enjoyed power occasionally — and its support is currently declining.

SHEFFIELD IS PROUD of its traditions of working class radicalism. The city has played a major part in every workers' movement from the Corresponding Societies of the late eighteenth century, through Chartism, to the formation of the modern Labour and Communist Parties. The past half century, however, has seen a steady decay of working class politics in Sheffield.

During the First World War the shop stewards in the engineering industry in Sheffield were in the vanguard of industrial resistance to the war. Sheffield provided the national movement with one of its most dynamic and talented leaders — Jack Murphy — later to become a founding member of the Communist Party. His book *Preparing for power* remains a key source on the early British labour movement. Its title indicates an objective long abandoned by the party he helped to build.

At the time, Sheffield and Glasgow led the working class movement, as another leading shop steward, Stanley Burgess, observed:

'I believe that if there was a serious stoppage in Sheffield, it would mean within a few days practically the whole country would be ablaze ... I do not know why Sheffield has that reputation, but apparently when Sheffield decides to do anything it is a sign for all large centres to follow.'

The Sheffield Trades Council welcomed the Russian Revolution in 1917 and supported the fight for national independence in Ireland throughout the Tan War.

The spirit of class independence in Sheffield took a heavy battering through the 'twenties and 'thirties, to be decisively extinguished in the Second World War. There were many angry protests against unemployment and wage cuts, but the degeneration of the Communist Party, combined with the dead hand of Labourism prevented any serious challenge to the capitalist attack. In the post-war period trade union militants largely confined their activities to the workplace, while the labour bureaucrats took their

places in the local corridors of power.

Municipal managerialism

With only two brief interruptions, the Labour Party has controlled Sheffield Council for over 50 years. In turn the Council has provided the power base for the local Labour Party. Council leader David Blunkett recently paid tribute to the first Labour Council in 1926, 'those pioneers who laid the foundations for the socialist city of which we are all so proud'. In fact the foundations on which modern Sheffield was built were the wartime devastation of large areas of the city centre and the post-war vitality of the steel and engineering industry. The Labour Council seized the opportunities provided by the post-war boom to set up a model of efficient municipal administration.

Labour's major achievements were in reducing atmospheric pollution and in slum clearance. Today Sheffield's air is getting cleaner and cleaner and its views ever sharper as more and more factories cut back production or close down altogether as a result of the recession. And the city's once celebrated high rise housing developments, Hyde Park and Park Hill, have become even worse slums than the ones they replaced. While other developments are considered for early demolition, Labour still cynically claims its squalid housing record as one of the achievements of its 'socialist city'.

On the Council itself, the Labour Party was led by sober, moderate administrators: Roy Hattersley was its proudest product. A right-wing hack apparently from birth, Hattersley spent many years as a Sheffield councillor before ascending to his present high rank in the Labour leadership. Outside the Council, the Sheffield Labour Party was moribund in the 'fifties and 'sixties. There was an electoral machine, kept ticking over by the local trade union officials and sitting MPs, but little else. There was no such thing as a constituency activist in those days. Most of the MPs in the area were solid right-wingers closely linked to the trade union bureaucracy. In

Sheffield the engineering union called the shots — in much of South Yorkshire miners were supreme.

The Labour Party won the votes of Sheffield workers but there the relationship ended. When left-wing MPs emerged in the early 'seventies — Martin Flannery and Joan Maynard — they relied on their close associations with the Communist Party when they wanted to mobilise a few Sheffield workers for an anti-Tory rally or demonstration.

The socialist republic

The Labour left in Sheffield today likes to lay claim to an uninterrupted tradition of working class politics. In fact its tradition began in May 1979 when Labour lost the last general election: the 'socialist republic of South Yorkshire' was not officially declared until February 1980. The emergence of a new-style left in the Sheffield Council was a result of the decline of the local trade union bureaucracy and the influx of middle class members into the constituency parties. Thatcherism swept the country and the Bennites swept the Labour Party.

The recession has been a body blow to the traditional manual workers' unions. In Sheffield, the AUEW has suffered a drastic loss of membership and income. Many of its lay officials have been victimised or simply made redundant by massive shake-outs or closures. One result is a commensurate loss of influence in local Labour Party politics. Already, one of its favoured MPs — Fred Mulley — has been de-selected, and another — Pat Duffy — may yet come under threat. The AUEW and other manual unions have come under pressure from the rising public service and white collar unions (NUPE, NALGO, ASTMS) as well as from a new breed of constituency activist.

Between 1979 and 1981 Labour Party membership grew from 358 to 950 in Sheffield. But, as a tour around the city's January 1983 annual general meetings reveals, this increase indicates the drift of the middle class radicals into the party, not a turn by Labour to the working class. For example, in Handsworth, a solidly working class area, the January AGM attracted 20 people, average age 50. In Manor, another area of working class estates, only 10 showed up.

However, across the city in Heeley and Sharrow, the Labour Party has more members — and is much more petit-bourgeois. Both areas are close to the city centre and have attracted a recent influx of young professional people — teachers, social workers, community workers — mostly on the state payroll. Many of these are *Guardian* readers, CND supporters and feminists who strongly identify with Labour's policies of state intervention to preserve public services and soften the impact of the recession. Heeley's CLP branch has 105 members — 37 turned up to the January meeting. Sharrow got 30 along to its AGM. Sheffield's new left Labour Party is scarcely more active than the old party of the right.

The decline of Benn's star over the past year reflects a degree of demoralisation among the rank and file radicals as another general election defeat looms ahead. At Heeley, officer after officer reported that sub-committees and canvass sessions had failed to attract any new members. The campaign committee reported that leaflets on NHS cuts had not been handed out: its secretary grumbled that there was 'little initiative or support from members, so what is the point of it?'. Meanwhile in Sharrow, members were hotly debating whether the chair should rotate around a pool of members to discourage 'authoritarian tendencies'.

Quango rule

Two examples illustrate the decline of class politics in Sheffield. One is the rise of the Caborn family, the other the role of the Council's latest quango, the employment committee.

George Caborn, who died in 1982, was a life-long member of the Communist Party. A living link with the days of Murphy and Burgess, he became works convenor at Firth Brown steel company. In this

position he won the high respect of management for his collaboration in organising the efficient exploitation of the workers. On his retirement, the Council honoured him with the title of freeman of the city; when he died, management paid for hired cars to take Firth Brown workers to his funeral. He was active on many committees of trade union bureaucrats, and a patron of the Anglo-Bulgarian Friendship Society.

George Caborn is dead, but his politics live on — embodied in his son Richard. Moving with the times, Richard chose to pursue his career in the Labour Party. He is currently Euro-MP for Sheffield, and has recently succeeded in being selected as prospective MP for the rock-solid city seat currently held by Fred Mulley. At a recent meeting on steel redundancies he launched into a chauvinist tirade against foreign imports and a fervent defence of British capitalists that must have had the proletarian internationalists who founded his father's party 60 years ago turning in their graves.

The employment committee is the Labour Party's alternative to fighting redundancies and mass unemployment. Set up under the chairmanship of prospective Heeley MP, Bill Michie, the committee promotes illusions about saving jobs through Council-assisted investment projects, 'planning' at the local level and workers' cooperatives. So far it has saved very few, if any, jobs. But it has provided employment on the council payroll for 40 full-time apologists for the Labour Party's failure to fight unemployment. Many will soon be campaigning for the return of a Labour government — no doubt with time off in lieu.

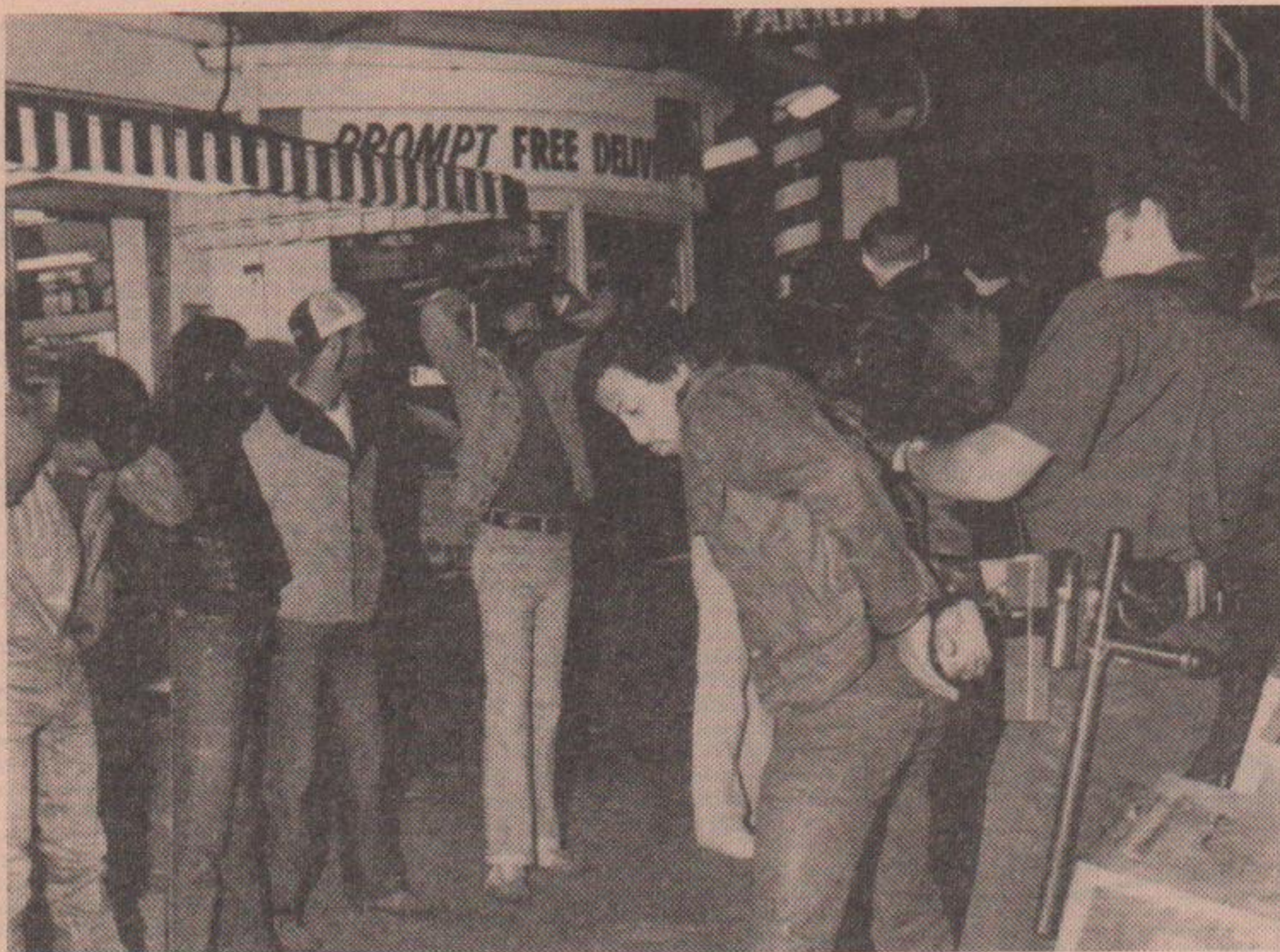
The employment committee employs former trade union officials and middle class activists. It is the most extreme example in Sheffield of a general trend: the transformation of the left of the official labour movement into one big quango. It indicates the desperate attempt of the labour bureaucracy to hold together a base of support with one of the few resources left at its disposal — Council cash.

Sectarians

The Labour Party in Sheffield has shifted its social base from the heavy-metal trade union bureaucrats, towards the public service unions and their middle class members in the constituencies. But one thing has changed little: Labour Party politics. In this sense, Blunkett, Michie and Caborn are in line with the post-war traditions of Sheffield Labourism. As Michie told a *Morning Telegraph* reporter when he was accused of being a left-winger, 'I'm a mixed economy man myself'. The radicalism of the Sheffield left means presenting a more militant style of class collaboration than presented in the recent past. Hence their strident calls for import controls and their urgent calls for the defence of Sheffield's bosses against their competitors at home and abroad. This is the content of the left's 'community politics'.

The Labour Party in Sheffield has had no working class base — except in electoral terms — for more than half a century. And it has had no working class politics for even longer. Today the Labour Party reveals its commitment to the labour bureaucracy and to the state that supports it in response to every challenge from the Revolutionary Communist Party. Labour bureaucrats on the Council and the Trades Council have devoted considerable energies to blocking support from local Labour Party and trade union branches for RCP, Irish Freedom Movement and Workers Against Racism initiatives. But the support is growing all the same.

Class politics are in a sorry state in Sheffield today. The city that produced physical force Chartist Samuel Holberry now has to live with the ignominy of having turned out Labour's aspiring leader Roy Hattersley. Unlike many local left-wingers we are not sentimental about Sheffield's traditions. We only have to look at their inheritors to see that to rebuild the tradition of working class politics, its usurpers must first be ousted from their control over the labour movement.



LICENCE TO KILL

The December 1982 riots in the Overtown district of Miami following the police murder of a black youth show once again the extent to which non-white workers in America are suffering a dual capitalist offensive. On the one hand, their conditions of

existence are being ruthlessly ground down to the point of outright poverty. On the other, the bourgeoisie increasingly sanctions the use of state terror against them. Our American correspondent reports.

POLICE BRUTALITY is nothing new to blacks in Miami. Several incidents have occurred over the past few years which indicate the calculated nature of state repression. In January 1979 police physically attacked a black man, leading to outbursts of rock-throwing and car-burning. In February of the same year, a black teacher and his son were beaten up and their home wrecked by the cops. The official excuse for this provocation was that the cops 'thought' that the man was a cocaine dealer. No official action was taken as a result of this incident. October 1979 saw the murder of a 22 year-old black man by an off-duty white cop who was acting as a warehouse security guard. The cop claimed that the man was attempting to rob a warehouse. The man's family said that he had stopped for a moment to urinate against a wall. Once again, no action was taken against the cop involved. In Miami, if you are black, to urinate may become a capital offence! And then in December 1979 came the murder of Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance company executive. McDuffie was beaten to death by several white and Latin cops following a traffic violation. The coroner who examined the body stated that the injuries received were the worst head injuries that he had ever seen. One of the cops involved in this incident, Alex Marrero, had been previously involved in the January 1979 incident. In May 1980, an all-white jury in Tampa, Florida, acquitted the killers of any wrongdoing.

Miami explodes

This outrageous judgement, which came as a surprise to many white liberals but not to black workers, led to massive disturbances in Liberty City and Coconut Grove, two ghetto areas just north and south respectively of Overtown. The Miami blacks' first target was the police headquarters at the Dade County Metropolitan Justice Building. This building was successfully captured though the

blacks were subsequently ejected by the cops. Days of rioting followed in which many blacks were killed, and which saw the mobilisation of the paramilitary National Guard and of armed white vigilante groups. The riots lasted for several days and then subsided under the weight of heavy state repression.

This history sets the scene for the most recent outbreaks. Nevell Johnson Jr. was shot on 28 December and died the next day. Miami's blacks — who had learned from the McDuffie case not to wait while the wheels of justice go nowhere — launched an immediate response. Yet there were important differences between these riots and those of 1980. First, the area and the numbers involved were much smaller. Police had little difficulty in simply cordoning off the area and the National Guard was not called in. But secondly, the manner in which the state dealt with the outburst was different. From the beginning, the role of peacemaker fell upon Miami's black city manager, Howard Gary, and so-called 'community leaders' (mostly clergy). In well-publicised meetings, blacks saw Gary promising these community leaders to withdraw cops from the ghetto, to ensure that all police two-man patrol teams had at least one black member. He pressed for the recruitment of more blacks into the police force. In the 1980 riots, the most prominent roles were played by Florida's state governor (who called in the National Guard) and the Miami police chief, Kenneth Harms (who lived up to his name). In the interim period the authorities learned that spontaneous anger against white cops could be reduced by the ploy of 'community policing' by blacks and black cops.

By accepting the right of the police to be in the ghetto at all, the 'community leaders' accepted that the blame for police atrocities should fall upon the victims of police atrocity themselves. That all the talk was just talk was proved by the cops' 'Operation Clean Sweep' which took place on the last day of December. Squads of

cops swept through the Overtown area arresting more than 400 people who they claimed were 'drinking in public, fighting, or loitering on the streets'. With few workers left on the streets there was little response to 'Operation Clean Sweep'. And in contrast to the meetings with city manager Gary, the media paid very little attention to the operation.

The Latin connection

One of the most striking aspects of the Miami events was the extent to which the black community leaders joined in the condemnation of non-whites of Latin origin. Miami is a racially heterogeneous city. It is estimated that blacks and Latins together make up 75 per cent of the metropolitan population. In Overtown, and in the May 1980 riots, the state very successfully played off these racial groups against one another. For weeks prior to the 1980 fighting, boatloads of refugees, expelled from Castro's Cuba, were arriving in Miami. Just prior to the explosion, the US government cynically and belatedly discovered that these refugees were 'common criminals' thrown out of Cuba's gaols — and put a stop to the exodus. Yet in 1980 and again last December, black leaders pointed to these refugee Cubans and to other Latins as the cause of the trouble.

Black community leaders claimed workers of Hispanic origin were taking away federal resources from blacks that were due to them as a result of their decades long struggles in the Civil Rights Movement. The fact that some of the cops committing atrocities were Latin was seized upon and all Latins were labelled killers. 'The Latins are the ones who are killing the blacks,' argued Reverend Jonathan Rolle, one of the community leaders. Aside from its obvious racism, behind this political myopia is a naive reformist belief in the so-called gains of the Civil Rights Movement. The fact is that any gains that were made have been stripped away in the past two years of re-

cession and state terror. It seems to have escaped the notice of the Reverend Rolle of this world that the massive military repression of 1980 took place during the Democratic, Carter presidency, whose administration was supposedly dedicated to civil rights and to affirmative action. The ruling class has no resources to give to blacks or Latins, and the only 'affirmative action' it can produce comes from the barrels of police guns.

Dole & Deportation

Miami provides an important illustration of what is happening to non-whites in America today and will no doubt be the scene of future class struggles of great intensity. But on a national level the story is similar. Examples of officially sanctioned police murder can be produced ad nauseam. More than at any other time in the past few years the colour of your skin can be your death warrant in this country. And even if you survive the cops, economic conditions will force you into degradation. The official and underestimated Labour Bureau unemployment statistics for December tell the story. The unemployment rate for blacks is at least twice that for whites in all categories: 9.2% for adult white male workers against 19.0% for blacks; 8.0% for adult female white workers against 16.7% for blacks; and a staggering 50.1% unemployment rate for black teenagers.

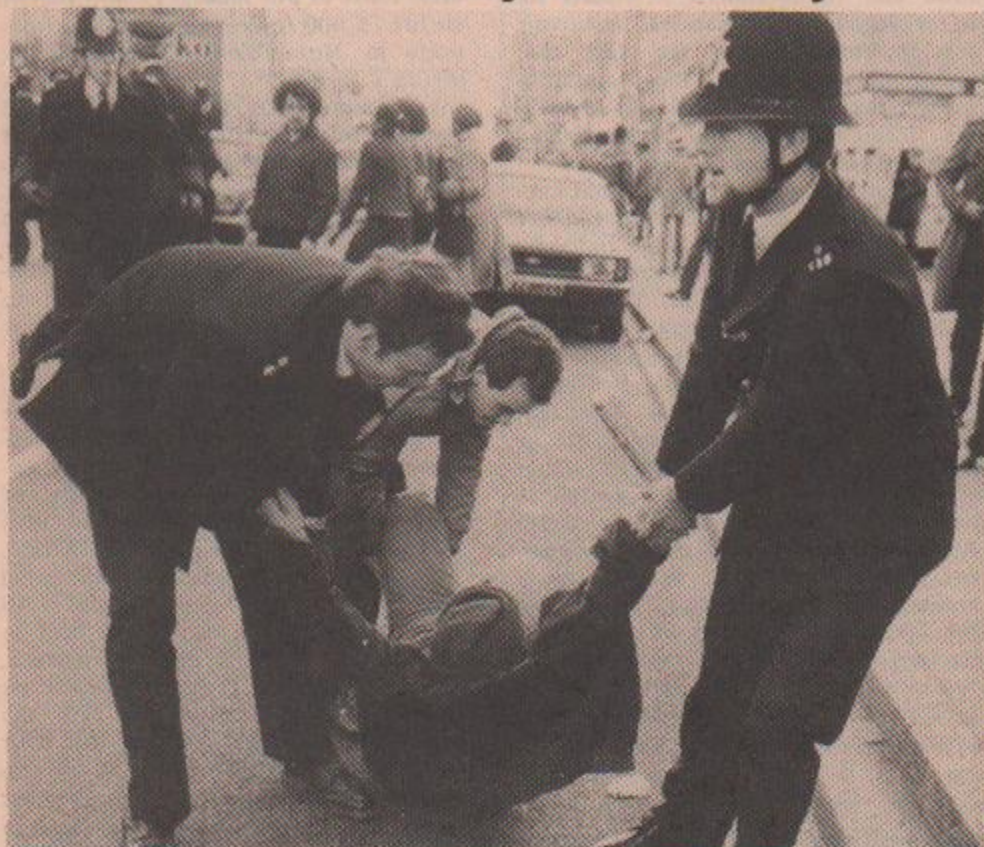
The figures for non-whites of Latin origin are generally included in those for whites. They are marginally better than those for blacks, but only marginally. In fact, unemployment figures for Latin workers only tell half the story. Many of them do not have legal status in the US and so do not appear in the official statistics. They are subject to expulsion at any time. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (referred to in contemptuous terms in Spanish as 'La Migra') regularly launches raids on sweated labour shops, arresting hundreds of workers and deporting them. They are soon replaced by others. As economic conditions worsen in the Central American states, especially Mexico, more and more workers and peasants take the desperate step of illegally crossing the border in search of any kind of work. The US Border Patrol is arresting and expelling these so-called 'illegal aliens' in record numbers, using every available technological means (helicopter patrols, infrared night scopes, sophisticated sound listening devices).

What can be done to defend the interests of non-white workers in America and to carry their defence over into the struggle for communism in the largest imperialist state? The radical left has no coherent political strategy to present. Its most active sections are expending their energies organising sporadic and showy demonstrations against the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party. Yet the main racist offensive is coming from the official organs of the bourgeois state itself, not from its fascist reserves. What is required immediately is a two-fold anti-racist initiative. One side of this must be a campaign against all immigration controls. This inherently combines the interests of all workers, white, black and Latin, and hits directly at the class character of the bourgeois state, attacking its assumed right to control the lives of workers. But there is no activity around this key issue on the radical left at present. In fact, American 'liberals' are starting to campaign for a *tightening up* of the immigration laws on the distorted grounds that it's better that 'illegal aliens' avoid suffering illegality in the US — by staying in their poverty-stricken and war-torn countries of origin!

The second necessary aspect of an effective anti-racist campaign must be the organisation of workers' defence groups against police murder. It is only by building militant defence in the ghettos that blacks can defend themselves both against the cops and against the fascists. Such organisation calls bourgeois legality clearly into question and lays the groundwork for revolutionary struggle against the state itself.

Ashley Neale

Left calls for 'community accountability'



Philip Wolmuth

Police prepare for war

The new Police Bill and Commander Kenneth Newman's plans for policing London show the British state building up its repressive powers to deal with growing social conflict in recession-struck Britain. The left's response — Labour's pleas for 'community accountability' — reveal a labour movement more concerned to help out the police than to defend the victims of their increasingly oppressive powers. Joan Phillips reports.

THE POLICE and Criminal Evidence Bill brings together proposals made by Lord Scarman in his report on the 1981 riots and others contained in the 1981 report by the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, appointed by the last Labour government. The new powers codified in the Bill include:

- A dramatic extension of the police power to stop and search persons 'reasonably suspected' of carrying stolen goods, illegal drugs, firearms and 'items connected with terrorism'
- The power to set up road blocks in any area, at any time
- The power to search homes and workplaces at random in order to look for evidence
- Wide powers to seize and record 'evidence' including anything that might be connected with another offence, and to consult the records of doctors, lawyers, journalists and social workers
- The detention of persons suspected of a 'serious' offence for up to six days

The purpose of the Bill is to clarify and strengthen the powers of the police to stop, search, detain and arrest suspects. It legalises current police practice and sanctions an even tougher approach.

Social contract

Just as the Police Bill was reaching the committee stage in Parliament, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Kenneth Newman was seeking approval from Home Secretary William Whitelaw for his new strategy document on policing methods in London. Newman's document argues for a new 'social contract between the police and the people' in the war against crime. The powers contained in the Police Bill provide the essential back-up for Newman's preferred policy of 'selective targeting of criminals based on sound information and surveillance'.

Both the Police Bill and Newman's report represent a further refinement of the subtle blend of hard and soft policing that the British state has been introducing over the past few years. By increasing police powers and restructuring the Met they are designed to allow the police to go in hard against those they label as 'criminals' and the 'muggers': young blacks are the first target in

Newman's sights. At the same time they answer Lord Scarman's demands for more 'consultation'. The Police Bill proposes to make police-community consultative committees statutory. Newman's document summarised the approach:

'The crime prevention thrust will have two main facets: the rationalisation and redeployment of manpower and a utilisation of consultative committees as a vehicle for directing the overall strategy. ... Problems identified locally will be tackled systematically by co-ordinating the contributions of police, public and local agencies. The concept of a corporate strategy is vital.'

The specific proposals in Newman's document illustrate the way in which public 'consultation' and 'liaison' will be harnessed to the drive against the 'criminals and the muggers'. A radical reorganisation of the Met will result in at least 650 extra constables patrolling 'crime-hit areas'. This answers the Labour-controlled Greater London Council's call for more bobbies on the beat. Following the American experience, Newman plans to set up 'neighbourhood watch committees', based on a street or a block of flats. 'Neighbourhood watch' has been the cornerstone of the Detroit police crime prevention programme in the black ghettos since 1976: it now involves 4200 'block clubs'. These are generally vigilante squads run by off-duty police. Local police units throughout London will be provided with blueprints based on adaptations of Detroit schemes.

Newman is already claiming results from his new method of crime analysis and targeting of suspected criminals. A pilot scheme based on the techniques of intelligence gathering previously used against major criminals, has been in operation in Dulwich, south London, in a bid to combat 'mugging'. After discussion at the Community Police Consultative Group for Lambeth the scheme is now to be extended to Brixton and other areas in south London. The essence of the scheme is to involve the public in the prevention and detection of crime. At the 18 January meeting of the consultative group, commander Marnoch pointed out that the police are only as good as the information they

receive. To improve the fight against crime, therefore, requires a two-way contract between the police and the community. Newman summed up the strategy distilled from the ghettos of the USA and his own experience as police chief in the ghettos of Belfast:

'The selective and accurate targeting of criminals, trying to isolate them from their host community. In West Belfast, if you got the right man, there was no difficulty. It was only if you picked the wrong one that there was trouble.' (*The Standard*, 3 December 1982)

The aim is to develop a good flow of information; cooperation from the public is vital: 'I would hope a block leader or street leader would come forward and be a useful contact for the police'.

Protected birds' eggs

The Police Bill and Newman's strategy document have provoked a furore. The Bill has been hailed as the harbinger of a 'police state', a 'dictatorship' and a 'junta' by the Labour Party, the GLC and the National Council for Civil Liberties. These liberal reformists have all been busy producing 'alternative' documents, amendments to the Bill, and the usual plethora of pamphlets and leaflets. As *The Times* remarked, it is not very often that the NCCL and the Police Federation unite in condemning government proposals on an issue affecting the police. They are both agreed, however, that the Police Bill represents a serious infringement of civil liberties. For the Police Federation, the Bill does nothing to 'remedy the glaring absence of civil rights for police officers and actually threatens the already vulnerable position of an officer who finds himself on the receiving end of a complaint' (*Police*, December 1982). While for the NCCL, the Bill has removed the citizen's 'centuries old right to privacy' and sounded the death-knell for British 'justice' and 'freedom'.

One feature of all the criticisms of the Bill is that they are directed against its 'draconian nature' and its 'excesses'. The Labour Party and the NCCL condemn the Police Bill as 'excessive', 'unnecessary' and 'unjustified'. The libertarians fail to appreciate that the state is preparing to deal with major threats to the capitalist social order. The NCCL seems to be under the impression that the Bill is directed against 'litter droppers', CND demonstrators and those found harbouring the eggs of protected birds. They suggest that 'anti-litter campaigns are a more effective way of dealing with the problem of dirty streets than a new power of arrest' (NCCL, *Briefing to Members of Parliament on the Second Reading*, 1982). The state's problem of containing social instability is thus reduced to a problem of dirty streets. Rather than responding to increased repression against blacks, the unemployed and the working class by mobilising forces against the state, the NCCL pleads with the state to be nicer and puts forward helpful suggestions.

Crime prevention

The most striking feature of all the criticisms of the Bill, however, is their common concern to improve the efficiency of crime detection. The NCCL argues that the Bill 'will worsen police relations with the public and do nothing to improve police efficiency' (*Watch out! There's a Police Bill about*, 1983). The GLC police committee is also worried about the crime rate:

'Since effective policing depends almost entirely on public cooperation it is likely that increasing use of police coercion will result in lower and lower crime clear-up rates'. (*GLC police committee report*, PC 78a, 7 December 1982)

If the GLC is concerned to make the police more proficient in the detection and prosecution of crime, it is hard to see what they object to in the Bill. As the Police Federation argued, they cannot have it both ways:

'It is all very well for police critics to complain about the low clear-up rate for crime and talk of police inefficiency, but they cannot

then reject sensible measures aimed at improving the position.' (*Police*, December 1982)

The aim of the ruling class law and order strategy is to create a broad public consensus on the urgent need to combat crime. This is vital to gain public support for repression, particularly of black youth in the inner city areas. Statutory police-community consultative bodies and the new police powers are two sides of the same coin. The GLC police committee, the Labour Party and the NCCL all accept the terms set for the debate by the ruling class. They too recognise that crime is a major problem which needs to be tackled: they are just a little squeamish about the degree of repression needed to wipe it out. They therefore put forward an alternative strategy for dealing with it.

Taxation without representation

GLC police committee chair and prospective Labour MP Paul Boateng wants to ensure that the police provide value for money in the fight against crime. To do this he reckons they should be transformed into a public service, accountable to the community they serve:

'Londoners paid £323 million in rates for their police force last year. The Metropolitan Police, with the lowest crime clear-up rate in the country and sadly the worst record of relations with local communities, has hardly provided value for money.' (*The Standard*, 6 January 1983)

In early January the GLC police committee produced a 20000 word report on policing in London which presents the GLC's policy on police accountability. The document aims to provide the basis for legislation by a future Labour Government. It outlines the structure for a new police authority in London: Labour would replace the Home Secretary as the capital's police authority with committees of elected representatives. These proposals are founded on the belief that 'the creation of a London-wide Police Authority would provide the framework for a new, improved relationship between the police and the public based on democratic control'. Behind the GLC stand a host of left-wing Labour councils and radical organisations; many (like the Institute of Race Relations and the Community Alliance for Police Accountability) supported by GLC funding; all advocating the same thing — police accountability.

The GLC and the Labour Party are adamant that the type of accountability they are talking about is radically different from that proposed by Lord Scarman and Kenneth Newman. Ken Livingstone condemned statutory police committees as cosmetic exercises which 'would not lead to more crimes being solved, nor to safer streets.' (*The Guardian*, 25 January 1983). The editor of *The Times*, however, could not see much difference:

'Sir Kenneth Newman and the GLC are not, however, all that far apart. They both rightly stress that effective policing depends on community support. No police force can do its job properly if it is mistrusted by its constituents.' (*The Times*, 25 January)

The only difference between the state's version of accountability and the GLC's is in the people promoting it. Whatever the motivations, the consequences are equally reactionary: increased support for law and order, more police on the beat, more infiltration of local communities, and better operational efficiency. The danger of the GLC's call for accountability is that it appears to be radical and even anti-police. Boateng and Livingstone are adept at decrying police racism, police brutality and the SPG. Their demands touch a chord with the victims — and the potential victims — of state repression. Newman and the British state have no worries however. While they are not in favour of bringing the Met under community control, they are quite happy to welcome the assistance of the GLC and the Labour Party in helping to make the increasingly coercive activities of the police more acceptable to the working class.

SOUTH AFRICA'S DIRTY WARS

Botha causing bother

Ten years ago South Africa was steadily building up economic links with black Africa; political relations were stable if not cordial. In recent months South African troops have conducted raids into Lesotho and Angola; South African-backed guerrillas have blown up an oil pipeline in Mozambique and sabotaged railways in Zimbabwe. Today the South African state seems bent on creating economic chaos and political strife among its northern neighbours. Charles Longford explains why.

UNTIL THE MID 'SEVENTIES, apartheid and black Africa coexisted relatively peacefully. The South African economy expanded and its economic domination over sub-equatorial Africa was consolidated. Exports to black Africa increased by more than 130 per cent between 1966 and 1976; imports of black labour-power provided South Africa's gold and coal mines with more than 70 per cent of their labour requirements. While the masses benefited little, black African leaders prospered. They confined their anti-apartheid sentiments to annual speeches to the people. South African businessmen laughed all the way to the bank in their Cadillacs driven by black chauffeurs. Then came the recession.

Gold fever

The world recession had a cataclysmic effect on South Africa. When the price of gold fell in 1975, the underlying weakness of the South African economy was exposed. Massive trading deficits forced the government to borrow overseas and impose austerity measures at home. As the domestic economy ground to a halt, South Africa's domination over its northern neighbours became vital to its survival. The low productivity of South African industry — way below even that of Britain — rendered it incapable of competing with Japan, the USA and Europe. South African capitalists had no alternative but to turn to black Africa to find new export markets. The low profitability of investment at home also pushed them towards exporting capital; the lion's share went to other countries in Africa.

South Africa's role in Southern Africa extends beyond trade and investment, covering the bulk of transport and communications systems in the area. South African trains and planes, oil and electricity installations, and trained personnel operate as far afield as Zaire. Before Zimbabwe became independent, 97 per cent of its exports were carried by South African trains and via South African ports. Zambia's copper, Malawi's tobacco, tea and sugar are all exported through South Africa.

In economic terms, the impact of the recession on black Africa has tended to

increase its subordination to South Africa. Deteriorating terms of trade and shortages of foreign currency resulted in a sharp contraction in all the black African economies. In Malawi for example, trade declined by a third between 1970 and 1979; and Mozambique's was down 17 per cent. Copper-dependent Zambia was shaken by the collapse of the world copper market in the late 'seventies. Massive debts and 'development aid' — foreign investment tied to harsh austerity conditions — became the norm throughout the region. As exports to the rest of the world declined, black Africa's reliance on the markets and the ports and railways of South Africa increased. However, the recession had broader political consequences that have led to growing tension between the apartheid state and the regimes north of the Limpopo.

Immiseration

The recession has further impoverished black Africa. By the early 'eighties real income per head had fallen by at least ten per cent. Millions of subsistence farmers have been pushed to the verge of starvation; industrial workers face chronic unemployment and underemployment in the squalid shanty towns around every African city; children die like flies from malnutrition and disease.

The immiseration of the masses of black Africa has provoked their growing hostility to their own ruling elites and their Western backers, and to the symbol of imperialist supremacy in Africa — the apartheid state in Pretoria.

Domestic pressure has obliged African leaders to stand out more forcefully against the South African stranglehold over their countries. In Zambia for example, relations with South Africa became the major issue in the recent general election campaign. The anti-imperialist pressure of impoverished peasants and workers was a key factor in the formation in 1980 of the Southern Africa Development Coordinating Committee. Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Botswana, Swaziland, Malawi, Angola, Mozambique and Lesotho linked up in a fragile federation. They pledged to liberate their economies from their dependence on South Africa, to over-

come the imposed economic fragmentation and to coordinate... efforts towards regional and national economic development'. Despite the fact that the combined GDP of these countries was only 32 per cent of South Africa's, the formation of this anti-apartheid alliance is a real threat to Pretoria.

The anti-imperialist struggles that have won a measure of formal independence for Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe have already weakened South Africa's grip on the whole region. Thus, since Robert Mugabe took over in Zimbabwe in 1980, Mozambique's ramshackle railways and the notoriously inefficient port of Maputo have claimed 27 per cent of its exports. Zimbabwe itself, with its highly capitalised agriculture and fairly efficient industry, has the potential to become a serious challenger to South Africa. Its potential is particularly apparent in the markets of an increasingly anti-apartheid black Africa. The aim of the SADCC is to realise this potential: its first secretary is a Zimbabwean ambassador. That's why South African premier P W Botha has launched a concerted offensive against Zimbabwe.

Controlled attack

South Africa's strategy for destabilising black Africa is no haphazard series of random guerrilla raids. It is a calculated economic, political and military offensive designed to maintain South Africa's hegemony over the region. The South African armed forces' ruthless attacks on anti-imperialist fighters in Namibia and Angola are familiar to readers of the next step. Their nefarious exploits in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa's immediate satellites are less well known.

Pretoria's first sanction against Mugabe's regime was the withdrawal of the preferential trade treaty in 1981. This resulted in the reduction of Zimbabwe's industrial exports to South Africa and the loss of vital revenues. Then the South Africans withdrew their railway locomotives at a critical stage in the agricultural season. The result was a loss of Z\$4.5 billion per week: only 56 of the 80 wagons which usually ship maize to Zaire every week could be mobilised — no prizes for guessing who made up the shortfall. The South African government next insisted on visa requirements for its citizens visiting Zimbabwe, thus hitting its emerging tourist trade hard.

In recent months South Africa has raised the stakes. In January the South African-backed Mozambique Resistance Movement blew up the pipeline from Beira in Mozambique to Mutare in Zimbabwe. This deprived the country of vital supplies of oil and petrol. Mugabe was forced to negotiate additional food supplies from Maputo, via South Africa. Guerrillas have crossed the border in growing numbers from Northern Transvaal into Matabeleland in southern Zimbabwe. They have helped to foment the conflict between the Ndebele and Shona ethnic groupings which is currently verging on civil war in part of Zimbabwe.

The aim of South Africa's economic sanctions and dirty tricks is not to destroy Zimbabwe. Botha simply wants to curb Mugabe's pretensions to challenging South African power and to force him to accept economic cooperation on South Africa's terms. So far Mugabe has refused to enter the ministerial level negotiations which Botha seeks. But he has already moved away from a joint SADCC energy strategy by pushing ahead with an independent Zimbabwe power project. The result is a major breach with Zambia, which had hoped Zimbabwe would take some of its spare hydro-electric capacity. This is the sort of conflict within the SADCC that Botha is keen to promote.

Dirty tricks

Elsewhere South Africa has pursued a similar strategy. In Mozambique, MRM guerrillas recently blew up the Malawi-Beira rail link at the beginning of the planting season. The only alternative route to the sea — via Nacala — was in a state of disrepair: South Africa refused

to help restore the tracks. It did however offer loans of \$11 million to help Malawi air lift 15 000 tons of vital fertiliser from ports in Mozambique. And it kindly set up a 'benevolent fund' to cope with the consequent food shortage. The end result of this calculated disruption of the railways was that Malawi's exports had to be re-routed via Zambia and Botswana, through Zeerust in South Africa. In January *Africa Business* summed up the aim of the guerrilla strategy in Mozambique: 'MRM attacks are designed to force these states to redirect their trade through South Africa'.

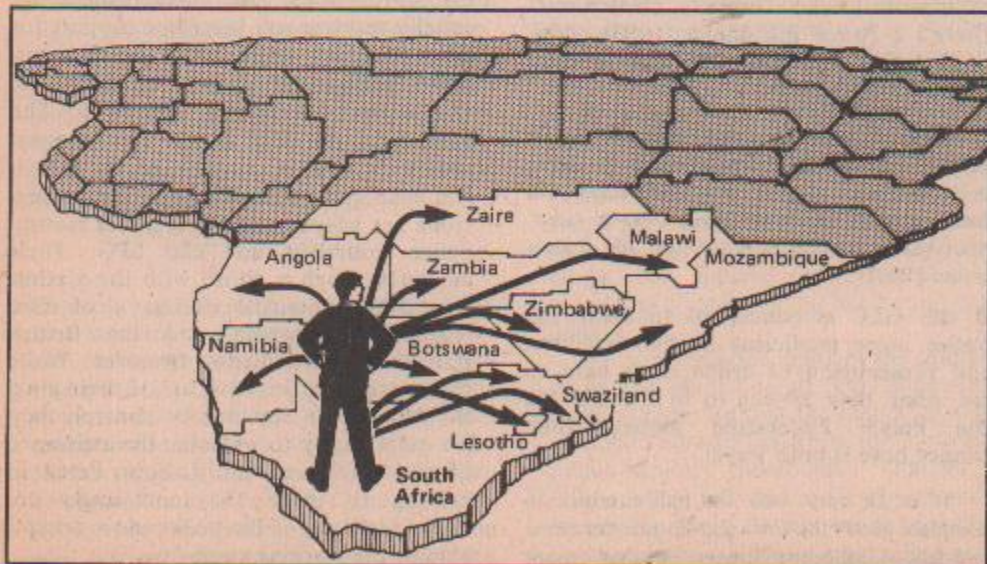
South African strategy in Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana is to combine its economic domination with its willingness to resort to direct military coercion to undermine the fragility of the SADCC. These countries are included in a customs union with South Africa: customs receipts constitute a substantial proportion of government revenue — 60 per cent in Swaziland, 71 per cent in Lesotho and 37 per cent in Botswana. South Africa has recently reneged on a revenue-sharing agreement with the three countries in response to their participation in the SADCC. A government spokesman declared sternly that 'the customs union should not be seen in isolation as a revenue-sharing arrangement, but as part of a comprehensive regional development strategy' — a strategy, that is, in line with South African interests, not those of the SADCC.

Lesotho in particular has been the target of South African manoeuvres to split and weaken the SADCC. The South African military has withdrawn backing from its earlier stooge chief Leabua Jonathan and now gives support to the so-called Lesotho Liberation Army. Like the MRM in Mozambique this guerrilla force is engaged in a limited sabotage campaign designed to ensure Lesotho's continuing subservience to Pretoria. Just to show who is really boss in Lesotho, South African troops staged a direct attack on African National Congress refugees in the capital Maseru last December, only weeks before an SADCC conference was due to be held close by.

Socialism or barbarism

The recession and increasing class confrontation have forced the South African ruling class to undermine the stability they have spent years trying to create. By going to war in Southern Africa they have revealed the weakness of South African imperialism. General Magnus Malan's offer of non-aggression pacts with Southern Africa — while openly acknowledging South African backing for guerrillas in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe — indicates Pretoria's stark options to its neighbours: co-operate on South Africa's terms — or blood will flow.

When it comes to foreign policy, Botha has the full support of the South African ruling class and the backing of world imperialism. The US government's closer co-operation has encouraged South African barbarism in the region. The Americans know how high the stakes are in Africa, for the crisis of South African imperialism has revealed the vulnerability of capitalist social relations in Southern Africa. Pretoria's instability has raised the decisive question in Southern Africa — which way forward — socialism or barbarism? Botha and the class he represents have shown their determination to pursue their class interests even if they have to soak Africa in blood to do it. The black workers of Southern Africa have to pursue their interests with even greater determination. The struggle for socialism in Southern Africa is on the agenda today. Black workers face great odds — not only are they up against a ruthless enemy in South Africa but they also face their own ruling classes whose accommodation with imperialism has betrayed the anti-imperialist struggles of the past. By carrying forward the struggle against South African domination, the masses will free themselves from the yoke of capitalist social relations, and complete Southern Africa's unfinished anti-imperialist struggle.



Fighting for Britain

Richard Croucher, *Engineers at war 1939-1945*, Merlin Press, 1982, pbk £4.60.

CROUCHER'S BOOK brings together a wealth of documentary material on disputes in the engineering industry between 1939 and 1945. It also provides detailed evidence of the increasing accommodation of the trade union movement to the war effort and the role of the Communist Party in using the shop steward's movement as a vehicle for harnessing workers behind the war drive.

CP on the move

Croucher charts the growing influence of the Communist Party within the union. Initially, its power lay in the rank and file, but by the outbreak of war the majority of officials were party members or fellow travellers. The CP went out of its way to avoid a direct confrontation with the reactionary AEU national executive committee. Croucher argues that this was a crucial influence on the future development of the shop steward movement:

'The CP's accommodation to the AEU's official apparatus which became so apparent from 1937 onwards, derived from the more general policy of building a British popular front.'

The CP's influence on trade union organisation in this period was crucial. TGWU General Secretary Ernest Bevin became Minister of Labour in 1940. In his drive to win labour movement support for the war effort he relied heavily on the shop stewards.

From early 1941 industrial conflict spread across manufacturing industry. Apprentices in Scotland were in the vanguard of the action with demands which included a 100 per cent wage increase. They refused to allow their local officials to negotiate on their behalf. Bevin intervened and ordered a Court of Inquiry which resulted in the introduction of a 'wage for age' scale.

Dilemma solved

Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 spurred the CP faction on the AEU's national committee into action. The CP insisted that the war against Germany should be prosecuted with the utmost vigour and argued for a radical change in factory organisation to intensify production and eliminate strikes. Industry had been in a dilemma: not wanting any incursion into management control but wanting to incorporate the trade unions. The CP helpfully resolved this by setting up Joint Production Committees. The CP's task was not easy. It had to convince its own members, workers and even some employers of the need for the committees.

Despite the CP, anti-war feeling grew as did shop floor organisation and militancy. Combine committees were set up and there were increasing demands for closed shops. Rank and file aversion to the CP and the decline in militancy towards the end of the war is presented by Croucher as an argument against the intrusion of politics into trade union affairs. He fails to grasp the fact that it was the political bankruptcy of the CP which was responsible for demoralisation and working class defeat.

Working class — defeated

Croucher also fails to make explicit the integration of the shop stewards' movement and the CP into the official trade union structure. It was these wartime developments which institutionalised procedures for control over the rank and file and set the pattern for relations between labour and capital in the workplace in the post-war years.

Alison Murray

In the eye of the storm

J E Peterson, *Yemen, the search for a modern state*, Croom Helm, 1982, pp 221.

PROFESSORS of government have never been noted for their understanding of politics. Peterson is no exception. His history of the

Yemeni Arab Republic adduces a great deal of information but is unable to advance a coherent explanation of the course of Yemeni history and the social forces at work there.

Britain's legacy

Britain used the Imamate of North Yemen from the late nineteenth century to safeguard its interests in the Arabian peninsula, first to undermine the Ottoman Empire, and then to contain Arab nationalism. The 'fifties and 'sixties saw the ending of Britain's role as imperialism's patrolman in the Middle East. In the wake of Suez, Britain was replaced by the US as the guarantor of the stability of the region. While this rearrangement was going on, the Imam Ahmad Hamid al-Din was assassinated and the Yemeni Arab Republic declared.

The weakness of the movement against the Imamate was that it was based on the aspirations of an almost non-existent local bourgeoisie which intended to replace feudal institutions with a structure that would allow a thriving Yemeni capitalism to develop. Since they had no social base for such a programme, the rebels appealed to Egypt's radical nationalist leader Nasser for assistance.

The fortunes of Yemen in the 'sixties demonstrated the inability of these forces to carry out such a programme. Unwilling to attack the power of the sheikhs, the tribal leaders and the feudal landowners, the republicans never even attempted land reform. The Yemeni masses had to endure seven years of civil war — in order to prepare the way for the underwriting of the Yemeni Arab Republic by American weapons and Saudi money. Peterson remarks that: 'The establishment of the conciliatory regime in 1970 was, in some ways, a reconstruction of the Imamate without the essential figure of the Imam: it basically satisfied no-one'. It satisfied no-one except the American, British, French German, Italian, Norwegian, Swiss, Swedish and other investors and exporters before whom Northern Yemen was now prostrated.

The price of compromise

The failure of the Nasserites to establish an indigenous capitalism has been followed by the invasion of the Yemeni market by Western consumer goods. The tiny bourgeoisie is dominated by middlemen handling foreign goods. The only local industries are small biscuit manufacturers and ice-cream makers. Agriculture has stagnated. The majority of the population are still engaged in subsistence farming. Attempts to stimulate rural development through the Local Development Associations have merely enhanced the power of the sheikhs. Yemen is now dependent on imports for basic foodstuffs. The attempts by the state to stimulate capitalist development have left in their wake a litter of projects unfinished because money ran out, a poorly paid, corrupt bureaucracy, and a growing foreign debt. Yemen now needs subsidies of up to \$200 million a year from the Saudis, just to balance its budget. On top of this, Yemen has obtained a working class almost by default. As the most populous area in the region, it has been the main source of labour for the peninsular oilfields. Up to a third of Yemen's workforce is employed abroad at any one time. The money they send back pays for the country's imports, but when they return they drift into the main cities of Sana and Taizz looking for jobs which don't exist.

For Peterson, Yemen's distorted development, and its political consequences, lie 'almost buried under the dominant imprint of wars, assassinations and ambitious but colliding politicians...'. Peterson ends up explaining Yemeni backwardness by Yemeni backwardness, and the instability of Yemen by the instability of Yemen. In reality, Yemen's instability stems from its position as a backward capitalist country dominated by imperialism.

Peterson also fails to set Yemen in the wider context of the Middle East. Yemen is in a vital strategic position guarding the approach to the Red Sea and the Gulf. For him, the search for a modern Yemen will go on in the same

way as before. But as France, Britain and America prepare to fight for their interests in the Indian Ocean, Yemen will not be allowed to be neutral. The Yemeni workers, who have led the strikes in the oilfields of Saudi Arabia in 1980, 1981, and 1982, must prove Peterson wrong.

John Jenkins

No battle of Algiers

Writing on the wall, directed by Armand Gatti, 110 minutes, Prix du Jeune Cinema 1982.

FILMING for *Writing on the wall* began in Derry on the day Bobby Sands died. Black flag marches and British troops in the war zone that constitutes the Six Counties of Ireland, show the potential to make a vivid and powerful film about the Irish War. Instead the French anarchist director Gatti, has made a film that is lauded by film critics because it panders to the liberal prejudice that Ireland is too complex to understand. Seamus Docherty sums it up when he says towards the end of the film: 'For 800 years you have failed to understand us... You will never know what has sustained us'. What sustains the Irish liberation struggle is the refusal by Britain to allow Irish people to run their own country. But the film dodges this and tries to say that there is instead something mythical and peculiar about Irish culture, something beyond reason, which British people are incapable of ever grasping.

Blaming 'the system'

Seamus Docherty's task in the film, as in real life, is an impossibility. He runs a youth centre for the unemployed of Derry which tries to reconcile Catholics and Protestants within the context of the Six County state. The three propositions put forward to explain the relationship of Protestants to the British Army all fail to grasp the real position. One Protestant youth says that when a soldier dies it is as if a part of him dies. Another says that despite being a Protestant, he too hates the Army; and the third blames the whole system. In reality, when Protestants assert their British connection it is their relative advantages over Catholics that they are defending. Blaming the 'whole system' obscures the central point that it is not simply backward capitalist relations that oppress the Irish, but that the North is ruled directly from Westminster as a colony. Noel, the deaf and dumb communications teacher (get it?) makes one of the few valid points in the film. He strikes out the equation sign between Irish and British workers. They have the same enemy in the form of the British state, but British workers experience class oppression within the oldest imperialist country in the world. Irish workers experience class oppression as part of an oppressed nation within the oldest colony in the world.

What war?

The film goes out of its way to make the war itself seem meaningless. A Catholic woman whose one son has just been killed asks hopelessly, 'What can I do to make all this stop?'. Her son was blown up whilst transporting explosives in the company of a Protestant friend from the Workshop. The explosion is caused by a jolt to their truck once they have escaped Derry and are driving in picturesque surroundings. Like the discussion theme in the Workshop — the death of a British soldier who was trying to rescue a Catholic family from a fire — the war is pushed into the background. The deaths arising from the hunger-strike and protests in the streets — these are ignored. To the fore is the pointlessness of two young men, Catholic and Protestant, being

blown up on a sunny day in the countryside. The Catholic mother with her other son in the H-Block, knows very well what will make the war stop — the defeat and withdrawal of British imperialism.

Writing on the wall is a trashy film which intellectualises about Irish culture as a substitute for confronting the reality of imperialist oppression. If you want to see a real anti-imperialist film go to see the *Battle of Algiers* (again). The Irish War still awaits its Pontecorvo.

David Douglas

'Mistakes' in Lebanon

Michael Jansen, *The battle of Beirut: why Israel invaded Lebanon*, Zed Press, 1982, London, pp142.

The Kahan commission, set up by the Israeli government to inquire into the massacre of around 1000 Palestinians in the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps in Beirut in September, has concluded that it was all a mistake. Defence Minister Ariel Sharon was singled out to carry the can and he has been forced to resign his office. Because powerful forces in the Israeli state, including Prime Minister Menachem Begin, consider the Beirut events were not all that big a mistake, Sharon remains in the Cabinet.

Errors of Judgement

The left in Israel, organised during the war in the 'Peace Now' movement, thought the entire invasion of Beirut was a mistake. Michael Jansen has written an apology for this liberal imperialist standpoint. In fact, the real mistake is made by the critics of Begin and Sharon, who believe that the Zionist state can exist without savage repression of the Palestinians.

Jansen argues that the *Palestine Liberation Organisation* was not a serious military threat to northern Galilee; therefore an Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon was unwarranted and unnecessary. He insists that the expulsion of the PLO from Beirut does not remove the Palestinian threat to Israel: the PLO is already regrouping and re-arming in Jordan and elsewhere. Finally he observes that the goal of a stable and sympathetic Lebanon is as far away as ever.

In reality the Israeli government had little choice but to smash the PLO in Lebanon, not only because of the threat to northern Israel, but crucially because of its need to curb the Palestinian threat on the West Bank of the Jordan. The strategy of cultivating a moderate Palestinian leadership had failed, repression had been stepped up and serious rioting had erupted in response. Once they had crossed the border, the Israeli forces had no alternative but to go all the way and drive out the PLO from Beirut. In these circumstances events like Sabra and Chatila were inevitable. The PLO may reorganise, but its present fragmented and enfeebled condition shows that the Zionist state has landed a heavy blow on the Palestinian struggle.

Barbarism unlimited

On one point Jansen is right: Israel cannot stabilise Lebanon. In the long term its intervention will only widen the sphere of conflict in the Middle East. This is why the USA and other imperialist forces have moved into Lebanon, in an attempt to maintain a degree of order in the region. Meanwhile the Zionists are excavating for Biblical remnants in southern Lebanon, building up commercial links and refusing to withdraw their troops; state-subsidised housing settlements are being pushed ahead on the West Bank.

Israeli militarism and expansionism have little to do with Zionist fundamentalism or the psychopathology of Begin or Sharon (as Jansen and other radicals would have us believe). They simply mark the survival instinct of a state backed to the hilt by Western imperialism and threatened by the anti-imperialist struggle of the Palestinian people. Sharon may have made the mistake of letting his Phalangist allies go a bit too far in front of the world's television cameras in Beirut. But all the signs are of much more of the same sort of barbarism ahead, as the imperialist powers fight to keep their grip on the Middle East.

Inez Landa

Irish prisoners

In recent months the Irish Freedom Movement and the next step have made a vital contribution to the Irish cause by exposing the plight of our prisoners of war in Britain and campaigning on their behalf. Indeed any solidarity movement which failed to agitate and organise around the POW issue could not be taken seriously. The record of Marx and Engels in defending the Fenian prisoners in the 1860s stands as an example to British socialists today.

I write to inform your readers of the harassment of Shane Paul O'Doherty, a fellow Derryman, currently incarcerated in HM Prison Gartree. This is his account in a recent letter about the hardships inflicted on his family as a result of his imprisonment in Britain:

I was to have two visits from my mother and brother on Wednesday, January 5 but owing to stormy weather during the previous two days, the ferries between Northern Ireland and England were cancelled. So on Thursday 6th, my mother flew alone to Manchester (cost £97 return) because my brother could not afford the fare, and went by taxi (£3) to a bed and breakfast (£20) for the night.

On Friday, 7th, she took a train to Market Harborough (£16 return) and got a taxi from Harborough to the prison (£4 return). Because she arrived late we were only granted a 45 minute visit. She spent Friday night in a bed and breakfast (£7) and on Saturday 8th, was told she could not visit me because the limited number of Special Supervised Category "A" visiting places were 'booked out'. So she spent Saturday night in the bed and breakfast (£7, meals an extra £5) and visited me on Sunday afternoon, 9th (£4 taxi) and spent Sunday night in the bed and breakfast (£7, meals an extra £5). On Monday, 10th, she was free to travel home again, having spent over £175 to see me for 2 hours, 45 minutes for the first time in over 6 months. And my mother is a widow and pensioner. Because I am a single man, I have an easier time than married men, whose visits are far more expensive and complicated and infrequent.

Shane concludes with a demand for repatriation to Ireland.

I honestly believe that the British Government in holding Irish prisoners hostage in English prisons, is mistreating them and their relatives, and has every intention of continuing to do so.

For my pains in opposing this transfer in justice, I have been 'on punishment' in solitary for over 18 months with no sign of alleviation due.

I hope your readers will remember these words the next time they see details of prison pickets, etc in the next step and will turn out in solidarity with our courageous POWs.

Fionn O'Foyle
Derry

WAR victory

I'm writing to thank Workers Against Racism for the tremendous effort you put into the campaign in my defence. You will all be pleased to hear that I won my case in the Crown Court on a unanimous verdict from the jury. That will surely force the racists in Birmingham to take note. They can no longer get away with attacks on black people with the full protection of the police. We will fight back and we will win.

It is important to point out that without the Defence Campaign which WAR initiated there would have been no victory. All the pickets, demonstrations, trade union motions and leaflets, helped to make certain that the police and racists could not cover up their attempt to label me a criminal and to congratulate those who assaulted me.

Unlike the local Labour Party - which believes in justice through the courts - I prefer to rely on organised anti-racists to gain justice. The advice I would give to victims of racist or police harassment is, get lawyers and barristers to defend you by all means, but don't rely on them. Bring opponents of racism onto the streets in their hundreds and thousands and fight back.

I thank my friends in WAR for showing this to be the most effective type of defence.

Yours in struggle,
Pino Khan.

LETTERS

UNEMPLOYMENT

WHAT
YOU
CAN
DO

TO SUPPORT TERRY DUFFY AND THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:

1. NOTHING WHICH WOULD FURTHER REDUCE YOUR COMPANY'S COMPETITIVENESS.
2. CHALLENGE YOUR COMPANY THAT THEIR PRODUCT PRICES ARE RIGHT.
3. CHALLENGE YOUR COMPANY THAT THEIR SALES EFFORTS ARE AS GOOD AS YOUR FACTORY EFFORTS DESERVE.
4. CHALLENGE YOUR COMPANY THAT THEIR INVESTMENT POLICIES ARE AMBITIOUS AND SUITABLE.

(ALL OF THE ABOVE IS YOUR BUSINESS FOR YOUR JOB IS AT STAKE)

How the AUEW leadership 'fights' unemployment: Terry Duffy's 1980 leaflet

Engineering elections

In recent years my union, the AUEW, has become dominated by a solid right-wing clique. It was this leadership - under John Boyd and Terry Duffy - which, with the help of the local Broad Left officials, sold out the struggle at Laurence Scott, as they have sold out many other strikes.

However, in the forthcoming elections for national organiser, militants have a chance to vote for a real alternative to the class collaborationist policies of both the hard right and the soft Broad Left. Alex Lawrence, a delegate to the East Kent district committee and a member of the national committee, is standing on a platform sympathetic to the politics of the next step. In the elections for general secretary last year he got almost 10 000 votes on a similar platform.

His election address challenges the allegiance of the AUEW to the Labour Party and its alternative strategy:

'During the last Labour administration unemployment doubled, public spending was slashed, cash limits introduced and workers suffered the greatest reduction in living standards in the post-war period.

It was a Labour Government that brought in the Prevention of Terrorism Act which is aimed at stifling any support for the struggle to free Ireland from the yoke of British imperialism.

The Tory Government's Nationality Act was, in all its essentials, drafted by the last Labour Government. It is aimed at reducing the number of black people coming here, making life intolerable for those living here and deporting as many as possible. . . . We must fight these attacks and defend fellow workers. To do so we must break with the Labour Party and develop an anti-capitalist strategy.

Again the Labour Party and the TUC have produced a social compact. Like the last one it is the price that workers will have to pay in return for the repeal of industrial legislation brought in by the Tories.

The main plank of the AES is massive new investment that they hope will restore higher levels of profitability for British capitalism. The AES is about making British capital stronger than the capital of its rivals by increasing productivity, flexibility and a national economic assessment that puts profit before wages.

Workers I am sure will not be fooled by promises to reduce unemployment to under one million in five years. The AES is an electoral gimmick which does nothing to challenge capitalism. It cannot therefore advance the interests of workers.'

Alex deserves the support of all engineers who want to get rid of the present reactionary leadership.

Dave Hallsworth

Was Lenin a sexist?

Your coverage on Women and Peace in the last issue of the next step was excellent, not least in the way that it challenged the assumption that has been adopted by the Greenham Common women that there is something inherently pacifist about women, which stems simply from their womanliness. Women have fought bravely in many struggles around the world. Working class women have taken up arms and stood beside their fellow republicans fighting against British imperialism in the Six Counties of Ireland.

Recognising this, as I know you do, it seemed somewhat incongruous that you quote Lenin, not to illustrate that women have a part to play fighting in revolutionary struggles, but in educating their sons to fight. Surely this passive role of women, leaving the action to the men, is one that a Revolutionary Communist Party must reject entirely. Women must be involved in every aspect of revolutionary politics, and presumably in the future they will also be given guns to 'learn the military art properly' in this country as they have been in Namibia, Ireland and Palestine. To deny this is to relegate women to the side lines of the struggle, something which I understood the RCP was trying to correct.

Suzanne Young
Keele

Kate Marshall writes:

Lenin's advice that women should urge their sons to take up arms against the ruling class simply reflected the reality of his times - that military activity was an exclusively male preserve. We agree that today women must be involved in every aspect of revolutionary struggle - including military activity. Indeed that is implicit in the article in the February issue of the next step.

It is interesting that many who immediately reacted against the Lenin quote and dismissed him as sexist have been very tolerant of the profoundly sexist statements of supporters of the Greenham Common protest which celebrate the passive, submissive and conservative characteristics of women oppressed by capitalist society.

Women and health

On January 27 Wandsworth District Health Authority voted to close the South London Hospital for Women and Children. The DHA

Working Party, which includes five Labour Party members, made no objections; they reckon the closure will save £12 million in five years and will provide the money necessary to commence construction of phase 2 of St George's Hospital, Tooting.

Having attended several meetings organised by the Labour Party-led campaign to save the hospital, I am angry at the arguments being put forward. The most popular one is that the hospital is a unique facility for women and infinitely more valuable than St George's. The second argument which follows from this is that the women's hospital should not be sacrificed to St George's. Some supporters at the DHA meeting even argued that conditions at St George's were too luxurious and enough money had been spent on it! And GLC Women's Committee chair, Valerie Wise, did no one a favour when she offered £2.5 million of GLC money to keep the hospital open.

We should tell Valerie Wise that we are not in the business of bailing out the DHSS. To win the fight to keep the hospital open requires more than handouts from the GLC - it requires different politics. We should fight this closure not just because it affects women - but because we fight all cuts in our health service and all redundancies. The 'either-or' arguments of the LP accept the economic constraints imposed by the government and are divisive.

We want the Women's Hospital and St George's and more! One hundred hospitals have closed since 1979: we must shout loud and clear: a free health service is our right - and we won't keep it without a fight!

Sheila Phillips



In defence of autonomy

I do not agree with the RCP's position on women as argued in *Real Freedom*. The book's over-simplistic, blanket criticism of the women's movement is unacceptable. Firstly it implies that the women's movement is not in contact with working class women. This is simply not the case. Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Centres, in particular, are in contact with working class women. In fact the vast majority of women dealt with by these branches of the women's movement are working class.

It is working class women who are mostly in need of these services, especially women with children who desperately need women's refuges. These organisations do deal with symptoms of the system, however this is not their only function. The women's movement is a consciousness raising movement and Marxist feminists in the movement argue that through contact with feminist ideology women can develop strong feminist/socialist consciousness. Marxist feminists would argue also that it is impossible to be a true socialist if you are not a feminist. On the point of dealing with symptoms, the RCP too carries out this function. Even if you argue that you deal only with those immediate and pressing problems, eg deportation cases, this does not detract from the fact that you are dealing with the symptoms.

The women's movement is also criticised as being a middle class movement. However the same meaningless criticism can be directed at any left organisation's hierarchy, including your own. It is impossible and grossly unfair to lump the women's movement together and regard it as a political whole. Within the women's movement there is a whole spectrum of politics. Therefore it is important for Marxist feminists within the movement to argue for class politics.

Why an autonomous movement? As *Real Freedom* adequately explains — women's issues have never been dealt with by the left. Women were forced to organise autonomously — working class women — in a fight for equal pay and equal rights. Women began to organise, yet again, by themselves. The history of women's suffrage has shown the power of women organising. Women have been constantly sold out by the left and if the consciousness of women is not raised then there is no hope for the future. If you cannot convince women you will never convince men. Under these circumstances any gesture to alleviate sexual discrimination will remain tokenism. Therefore it is necessary for women to organise to change this.

Also the specific nature of women's oppression under capitalism puts women at a great disadvantage. Women have been treated as insignificant secondary citizens for too long. Working class women suffer more than middle class women in this respect. For too long their jobs have been regarded as menial, from child-bearing and rearing to working for 'pin money'. Working class women do not have a professional position to maintain and can rarely survive economically on their own. The ideology necessary to maintain this status for women is strong. Capitalism uses the ideology of male supremacy as an excuse to maintain the economic subordination of women so necessary for capitalism to survive. It is necessary therefore that women have a place where they can realise their position in society — a place away from male ideology, away from male pressure — not class — male. For example many women for years have listened to how their problems are not important, the class struggle comes first. The women's movement can be a place where women realise that their struggle is the class struggle. From participation in women's groups and women's politics many women find a strength and courage in themselves. They can realise that they are just as important and that their issues must be regarded as just as important. It can give them the courage to go out to the left and say — 'wait a minute, what about us?'

Karen
Leeds

Kate Marshall writes:

Karen recommends Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Centres on the grounds that they 'deal with' working class women and raise their consciousness. She believes our criticisms to centre on the fact that they deal with symptoms not causes, and cites the activities of Workers Against Racism as a comparable case.

LETTERS

The two are not comparable. Although both provide immediate relief to oppressed people under attack they exist for different purposes. The central aim of women's refuges is to provide aid, help, sympathy and comfort. Working class women who are forced to avail themselves of these services are treated to a feminist world view. That means hearing lectures on how all men are potential rapists and that 'it's safer to walk home with a woman' on the one hand, and isolation from men in cramped hostels on the other. The reason why the women's movement has taken up the problem of male violence is because, from a feminist standpoint, this is the single most important issue that all women in all societies face. WAR does help the victims of racial harassment, whether this comes from fascists or the state, but our aim is to emphasise that racism is not just a problem for those on the receiving end, but a political issue for the entire working class.

Our campaigns therefore are 'working class': our political direction is determined by our priority of forging a class conscious vanguard in the workers' movement. Consequently the bulk of our work is directed at workers — in the workplace, in union branches and on the housing estates. It is irrelevant that in some cases the victims of attacks or some members of WAR are middle class. The women's movement claims to be in contact with the working class because it 'deals with' working class women. It has no perspective of getting the working class to fight for decent housing for all, against the economic slavery of women or their inferior social position — all of which create the problems those agencies are responding to.

Karen claims that the autonomy of the women's movement is the result of the failure of the labour and socialist movements to fight for the vote for women, equal pay and women's rights. True. The record of the official British labour movement on issues like women, Ireland, racism, the colonies, imperialist wars, etc is almost uninterrupted compliance with the bourgeoisie.

Autonomous organisation is a response to oppression and to the failure of the left. But the left didn't only have a hand in creating an autonomous women's movement by its inaction. It has constantly endorsed and consolidated it as an excuse for its continuing neglect of issues of women's rights. 'Yes', it says to women, 'go ahead, do your own thing — we wouldn't dream of fighting your battles for you'. Karen says that the women's struggle is part of the class struggle. While this is true ideally, the WLM in collusion with the left has gone out of its way to separate the two. While the women's movement emphasises that it stands for all women whatever their class, the left has busied itself with applauding most loudly those sections of the working class which exclude women (miners, engineers, shipbuilders etc). The left's adulation of heavy metal militancy avoids the political task of transforming the class struggle to include a fight for democratic rights.

However Karen's main recommendation for an autonomous women's movement is that it is away from 'male ideology' and 'pressure'. What is male ideology? And how does it differ from female ideology? Obviously it is impossible to prove any ideology is gender-specific. If she means by 'male ideology' politics which will hold back the struggle for women's liberation, then there is no shortage of it in the women's movement. Pacifists, 'small is beautiful' capitalists, reformists and Stalinists vie with astrologers, goddess worshippers and Catholics for control. Perhaps a rejection of 'male ideology' means no more than a recognition that it's nice to get away from chauvinist men for an hour or two a week. Fair enough — but isolation does nothing to challenge chauvinist ideas in the labour movement.

While Karen endorses autonomy she baulks at its logical consequence — separatism. Why? Because if the women's movement accepted it 'it would lose all meaning'. In fact the only meaning the women's movement can have is that it stands for 'women alone': separatism and autonomy are only slightly different interpretations of the same viewpoint. If anything separatism is the more logical and rigorous position. 'Autonomy' is the compromise for those still hung up on penetration

and radical women who think the Labour Party has got something going for it. Karen wants to straddle the feminist and 'Marxist' positions and provide a justification for her own dual loyalty. Fortunately this tortuous logic is unnecessary — it is possible to fight for women's liberation and working class power, but the RCP is the only organisation which can do this. We are so confident that our politics do defend women, and can fight for all women's interests, that we have no hesitation in simply calling ourselves 'Marxists' — without qualification.

Forever and forever

I looked forward to reading Kate Marshall's book *Real Freedom*, hoping that it would begin to answer some of the many questions that make people hesitate from committing themselves to revolutionary politics. The main problem for many is that as yet no party has been able to produce a convincing enough argument to show that with the removal of capitalism comes the end of women's oppression. This doubt is based on the belief that this oppression pre-dates capitalism, and that the conditions responsible for this original inequality will not necessarily disappear in a communist society.

I do not believe in the biological inequality of the sexes, and cannot accept that the early origins of women's inferior role can be so simplistically reduced to their child bearing role as Kate Marshall seems to suggest. If so how will the removal of capitalism change this view which was so prevalent before it came into being?

Paula Harrison

Kate Marshall replies:

There are vulgar bourgeois economists who see stone-age tools as 'capital', conch-shells as 'money' and all forms of work as 'labour'. There are historians who see racism in ancient Rome, and imperialism in Napoleon's forays throughout Europe. And there are feminists who see women's oppression embodied in mediaeval Catholicism (expressed by Henry the Eighth's appalling treatment of his many wives), or in the subjection of African women to genital mutilation over centuries. A common failure to detect the specific forms of social relations is the rule in the unscientific theories of the bourgeoisie. On the one hand, this means interpreting all past phenomena in terms of today's categories and values. On the other, it implies a 'human nature' which is constant, inherent in mankind and not subject to change. Many people will reject communism because they believe the desires to be rich and powerful, a 'real individual', violent, etc, are like original sin: something we have to accept and learn to live with.

Historical materialism provides us with a scientific understanding of past and present and explains how the future will develop from what exists now. It is always historically specific: the mode of production determines the social relations between people. 'A negro is a negro,'

wrote Marx, 'only under certain conditions is he a slave. A jenny is a machine for spinning cotton; only under certain conditions is it capital.' Because the rising capitalist class was unable to function without the freedom to exploit equality before the law and a free labour market, it's struggle was a revolutionary one, in that it smashed obsolete barriers to capital accumulation. But, in mobilising the masses behind its demands, the rising bourgeoisie also created working class aspirations for real freedom and equality. Once the bourgeoisie had defeated the landed aristocracy it became possible for people to conceive of freedom and equality for women for the first time. It was only with the victory of capitalism that the technical preconditions for women's equality came into existence. Capitalism developed the forces of production in a systematic fashion.

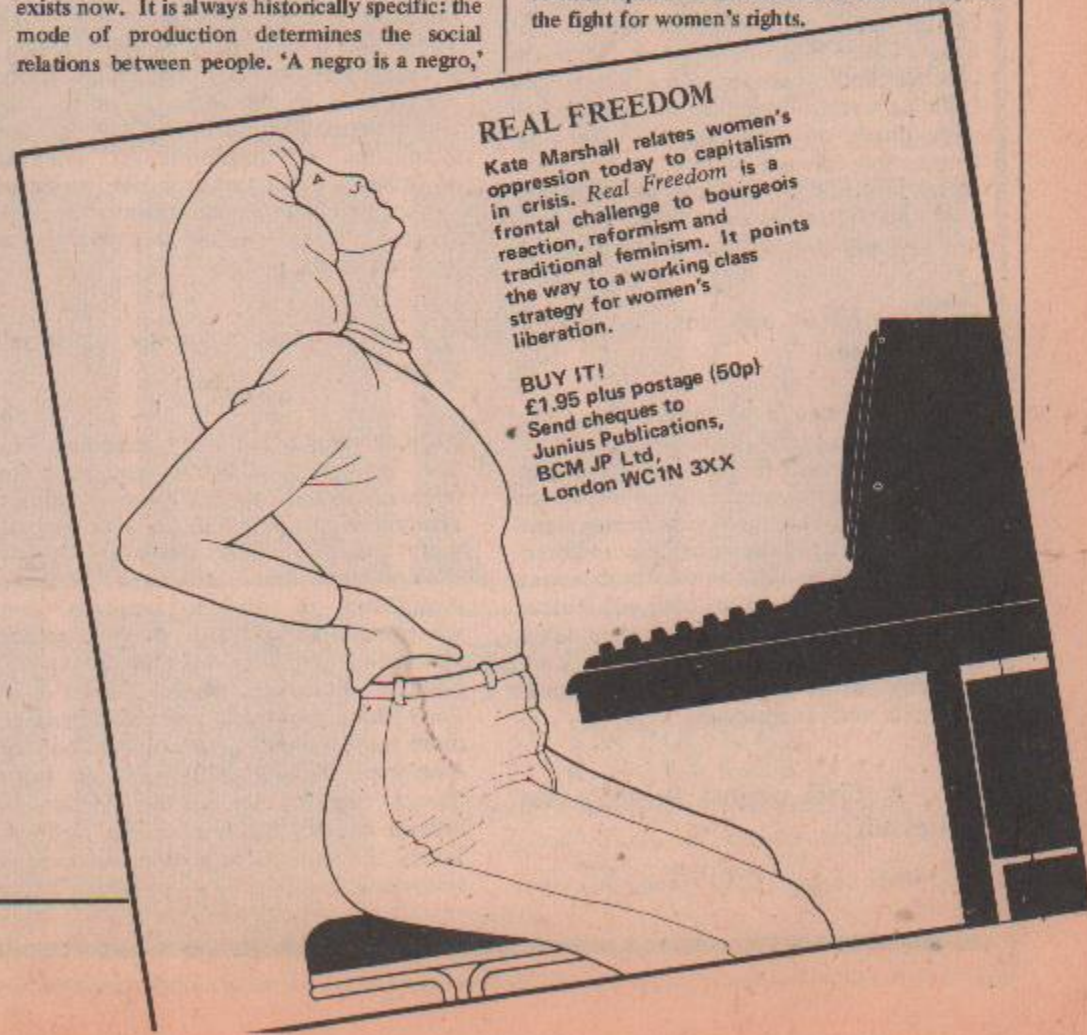
Paula Harrison rejects our discussion of the natural and technical barriers to women's emancipation because she doesn't 'believe in the biological inequality of the sexes'. Nor do we — today. Child bearing is no more 'oppressive' than working outdoors in winter — slightly inconvenient, but technically feasible. A few weeks off work, breast-feeding facilities in factories and nurseries could solve one problem; the other can be solved by better protection from the elements, and longer breaks. But prior to capitalism, having children could severely incapacitate women. With no control over their fertility, women underwent repeated cycles of pregnancy and lactation. Every few hours they were forced to breast-feed the baby, before Nestles began producing artificial milk. And they had to look after the children who were too young to work, which restricted their ability to move about freely. Our description of the effects of women's childbearing facility in pre-capitalist societies does not mean that we think that women's oppression is caused by their biology. Precisely the opposite. Capital, which creates the technical possibilities, cannot resolve them, because the profit motive gets in the way. Free and relatively safe contraception can be obtained in Britain today, but nurseries to enable mothers to return to work cannot. This is what we mean by capital itself being the barrier to the liberation of women. Capital, not nature, oppresses women because its drive for profit excludes the meeting of our needs.

For the RCP it follows that the precondition for the emancipation of women is the abolition of capitalist social relations. Paula Harrison is not convinced that communism will necessarily abolish the oppression of women. But why not? There is no natural barrier to emancipation, either in terms of human nature ('sexism'), or in terms of biology. Thus a society organised to meet people's needs rather than to advance the accumulation of capital has no need to oppress any section of the working class. Furthermore it would be counter productive. A communist society is only justified in so far as it is able to raise the productive forces. Not only will this result in providing the resources to make life easier for women — it will require the full participation of women in production if it is to succeed. The liberation of women can only be achieved in a communist society. The guarantee that the working class will abolish every barrier to emancipation is the attitude it takes today to the fight for women's rights.

REAL FREEDOM

Kate Marshall relates women's oppression today to capitalism in crisis. *Real Freedom* is a frontal challenge to bourgeois reaction, reformism and traditional feminism. It points the way to a working class strategy for women's liberation.

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20 QUESTIONS

1 What is the origin of the drive towards war?

CND blames the blind irrationality of the military-industrial complex, the generals and the arms industry, and the crazy irresponsibility of politicians like Thatcher and Reagan. We blame the capitalist system. The world recession has forced the ruling class of the major capitalist countries into a bitter struggle for survival. They are all re-arming with conventional and nuclear weapons to resolve their conflicts, as they have always done in the past, on the battlefields of war.

2 Will they disarm themselves?

CND appeals to British capitalists to renounce nuclear weapons. But no ruling class in history has ever voluntarily given up its means of defending itself and enforcing its own interests on its rivals. The British capitalists will not commit suicide as a class. They would rather destroy the world than relinquish their power.

3 How can they be disarmed?

The disarming of the capitalist class requires the overthrow of the capitalist system. That's why the cause of peace demands the mobilisation of the working class against the bosses and their system.

4 Have we got time?

Many CND leaders believe that the class struggle should be postponed until after the capitalists agree to disarm. No wonder they are pessimistic about their capacity to halt the drive towards nuclear war. Abandoning the class struggle now means the working class committing suicide. Our only hope is to destroy their system before it destroys us.

5 Why not 'Jobs not bombs'?

Because bombs are not the problem: the problem is the capitalist system. Cruise missiles have not put four million on the dole in Britain; Trident is not to blame for police brutality against blacks; Polaris never chained women to the kitchen sink. The cause of poverty and oppression is capitalism, not its weapons. The only way to defend jobs is to fight the system and its backers, not their hardware.

6 Can arms spending be transferred to hospitals and schools?

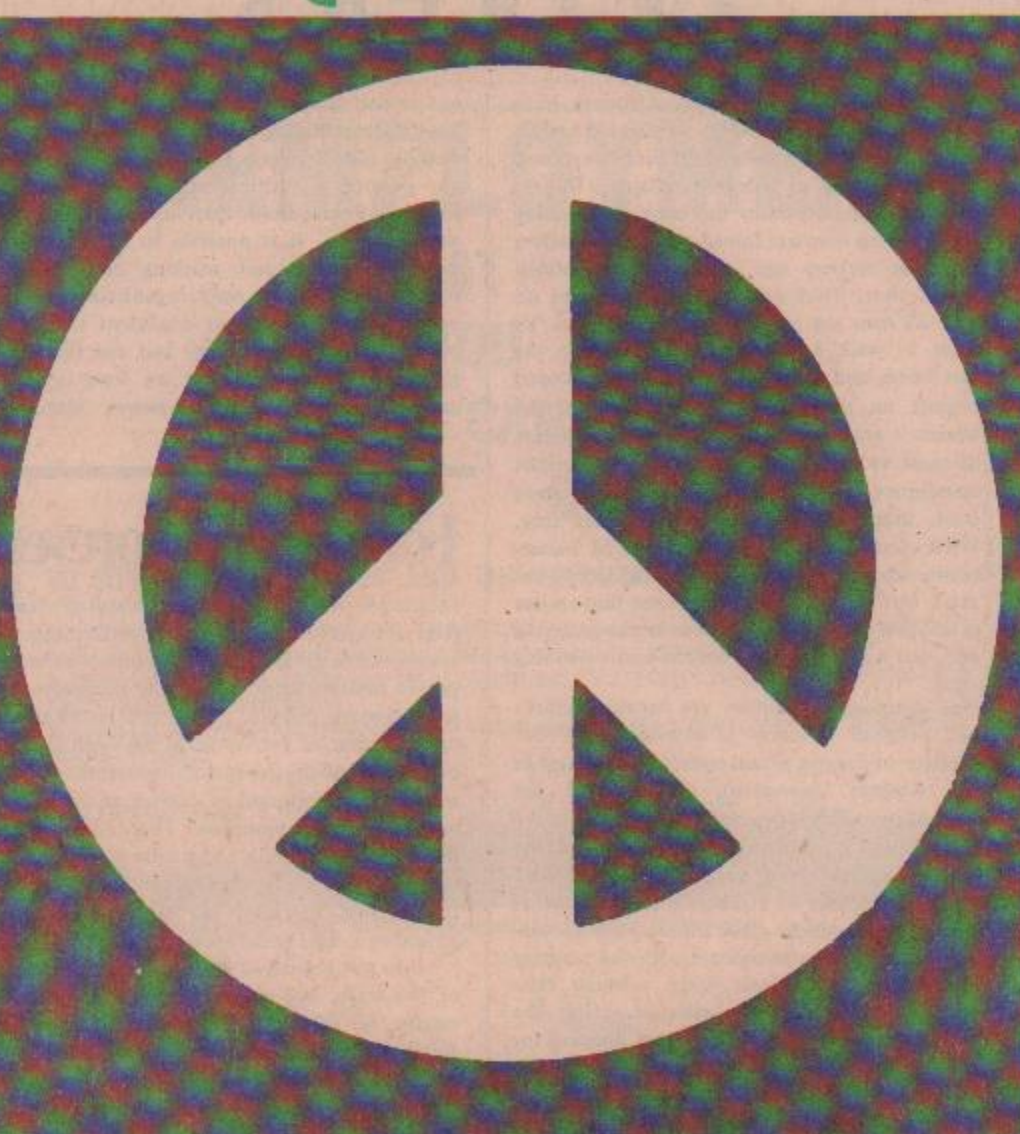
Yes, but not by a capitalist government in the midst of a world recession. The British state — in common with its competitors — has no choice but to cut back on welfare spending and increase its expenditure on weapons. The only way to stop this colossal waste of the resources of society is to overthrow the capitalist state and establish a system that can organise and plan in a responsible manner.

7 Is CND opposed to British imperialism?

No. Most members 'believe in some forms of military defence'. 'Defence' is the polite British word for one of the world's most powerful military machines and the usual apology for its deployment abroad. Britain's 'defence' has required two major wars this century and scores of minor expeditions to 'defend' British interests by crushing anti-imperialist struggles. CND broadly approves conventional British militarism, while criticising its nuclear weapons.

8 Is CND against Britain's war in Ireland?

No. While many CND supporters are



AND ANSWERS ABOUT CND

opposed to Britain's most prolonged war this century — a war which has raged through most of CND's history — its leaders have no policy on the Irish War. Their only statements are condemnations of the national liberation struggle. CND is a tacit supporter of the British military occupation of Ireland and all its attendant brutalities.

9 Did CND oppose Britain's war in the South Atlantic?

Not really. CND called for Britain to impose its will on Argentina through diplomatic rather than military means. It refused to support Argentina's legitimate claim to the Malvinas or to condemn British imperialism: 'we are not supporters of Argentina or enemies of Britain'. CND stewards tried to expel anti-imperialists from anti-war demonstrations and identified activists to be arrested by the police.

10 Why does Labour support CND?

Because the Labour Party believes it can win votes by cynically appealing to popular aspirations for peace. This is cynical because Labour is a consistent party of war. The post-war Labour Government first authorised Britain's acquisition of nuclear weapons and subsequent governments in the 'sixties and 'seventies built up the stockpiles. Today's disarmers, Michael Foot and Tony Benn, played a prominent part in these governments. Labour has solidly supported British military terror from Greece and Malaya in the 'forties to Ireland and the Malvinas in the 'eighties. Today the Labour Party is against nuclear weapons, but remains committed to

the (nuclear) NATO alliance.

11 What about the women of Greenham Common?

The women of Greenham Common have braved the elements, police brutality and imprisonment in their protest against cruise missiles. Their aspirations for peace and their determination to realise them must be applauded. But their association of peace with images of women as passive beings, preoccupied with family life reinforce right-wing stereotypes and detract from the goals of both disarmament and women's liberation.

12 Why does CND back Greenham Common?

CND has seized on 'non-violent direct action', particularly under the control of the middle class women's movement. As one of the Greenham protest organisers said: 'this way there's no risk of violence by anybody; we can contain the whole thing much better'. For CND, Greenham Common can be both popular and respectable. This is especially important in an election year when CND's leaders are very concerned not to let protests get out of hand and embarrass Labour's prospects further.

13 Why does Labour back Greenham?

The Labour Party approves of the Greenham protests because they focus on nuclear missiles, not the conventional weapons which it is in favour of building up; and because they are against American missiles — not against British militarism.

14 Why does the Liberal-SDP Alliance approve of Greenham?

For the same reasons as the Labour Party.

15 What is the danger of CND?

Before both world wars massive peace movements existed in Britain. As war drew near they turned into movements of support for Britain against its opponents. Why? Because, like CND, they campaigned against the militarism of Britain's rivals more than they opposed British militarism. When it came to the crunch their loyalty to Britain exceeded their commitment to peace. CND is already moving along a similar course.

16 Why is CND so C of E?

CND aims to influence the establishment in favour of a different, non-nuclear, 'defence' policy. Hence its concern with winning the approval of vicars and priests, generals, academics and opinion polls. CND is not attempting to mobilise workers to disarm the capitalist class; its major appeal is to middle class people who want to preserve their way of life as it is.

17 Should workers support CND?

No. CND cannot realise workers aspirations for peace — only prepare them for war: Workers have no interest in choosing alternative weapons systems for the ruling class, backing Britain against the USA, or Germany or Japan, or preserving the British way of life — militarism, mass unemployment and misery. Many left-wingers are trying to build trade union support for CND. All they are doing is mobilising working class people for the objectives of the CND leadership and the Labour Party.

18 Why are the Tories against CND?

The Tories oppose CND because they fear that Labour may successfully appeal to the popular desire for peace and widespread anti-American chauvinism, to undermine their electoral support. But this is a problem for the Tory Party, not the British state. The ruling class has always been able to rely on the Labour Party in the past and it is confident it could in the future.

19 What sort of peace do you want?

Do you want the 'peace' of the world today — minus a few US cruise missiles? Or do you want to see the peace of a world free from the capitalist exploitation and oppression that kills and destroys, murders and maims in every corner of the earth, every minute of the day? The latter is not the next stage, or even the ultimate aim of the campaign against nuclear weapons. It demands a start in a completely different direction.

20 How to fight for peace?

We cannot be sure what might happen in the future, if nuclear war breaks out. But we do know that since nuclear weapons were developed millions of people have died from starvation and disease, and through non-nuclear military holocausts as a direct result of the capitalist system. And we know that the same system today condemns millions to poverty, oppression and military coercion. This is where our fight against militarism begins. We fight against the wars going on now, especially the war in Ireland. And we direct our fight against the central enemy — the British state. This, not the campaign against cruise missiles, is where the real fight for peace is taking place today.