

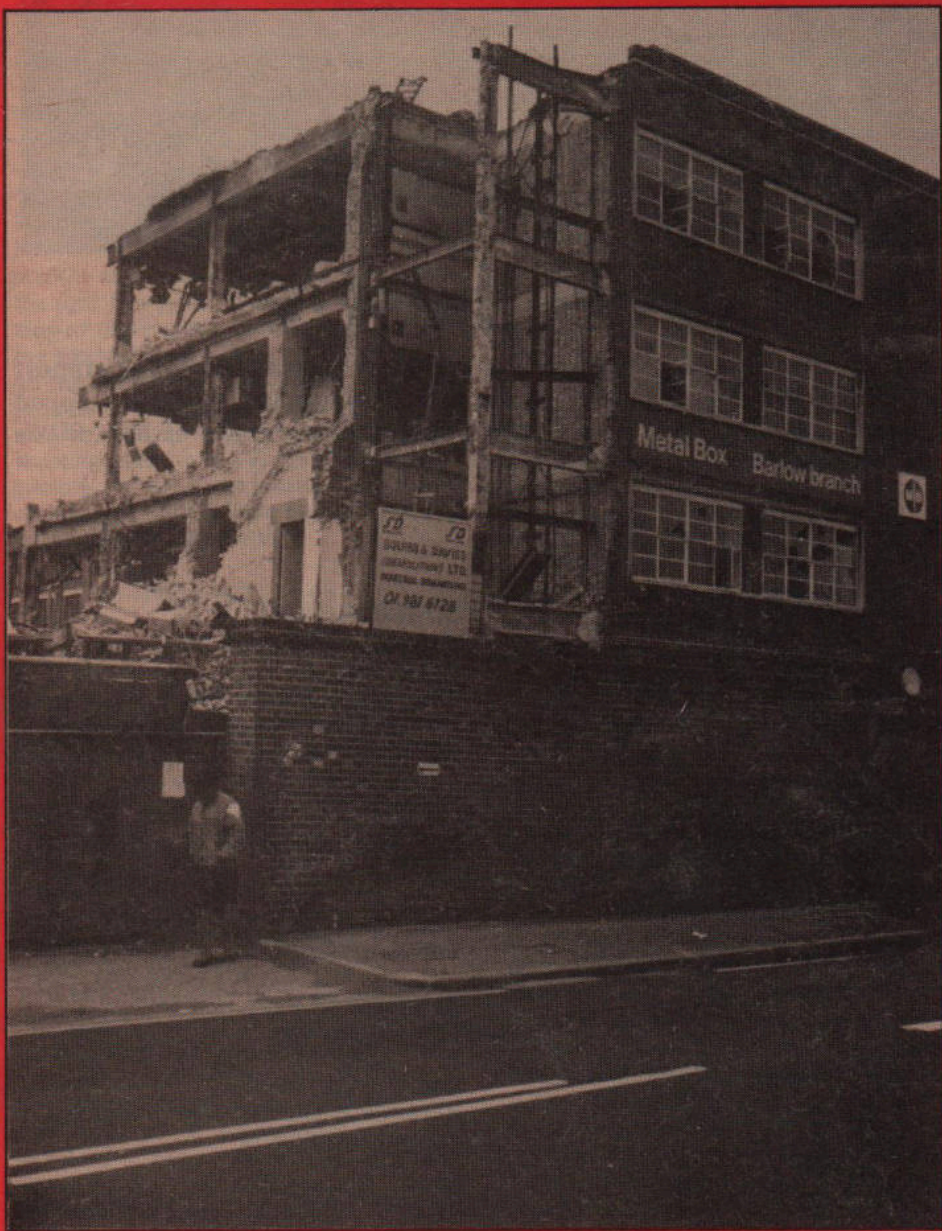
the next step

No35 May 1983

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party 20p

Why should we pay the price for their recession?

STAGNATION



STARVATION

RACISM

Afia Begum
deportation p5

UNIONS

Making them fight
for us p 18,19



Two years
hard posturing p16,17

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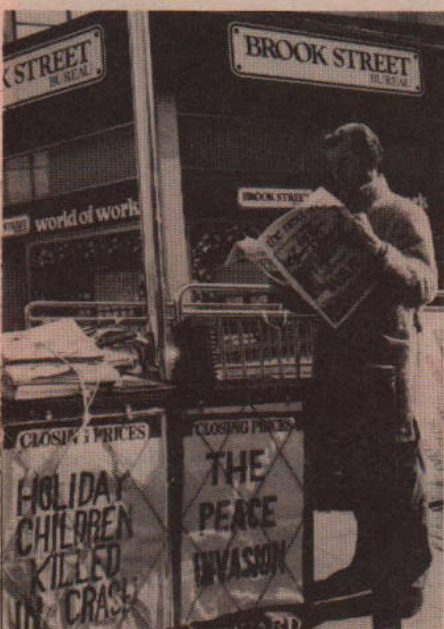
RCP meetings in May

LIVERPOOL
Tuesday 17 May 7.30pm
Public Meeting
Unemployment — no Labour solution
Swan Hotel
London Road
Liverpool 3

SHEFFIELD
Thursday 26 May 7.30pm
Public Meeting
Preparing for power
Sheffield University Students Union

MANCHESTER
Friday 6 May 7.30pm
Public Meeting
Marxism, the working class and the revolutionary party
Speaker: Frank Richards
Black Lion Hotel
65, Chapel Street
Salford

Sunday 8 May 2.00pm
A guided tour of Marx and Engels' Manchester
Meet at the Black Lion Hotel



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Afia will stay!



WAR pickets the Home Office

50 people joined WAR's picket of the Home Office protesting the threatened deportation of Afia Begum. Despite police harassment, the noisy demonstration continued for two hours and ended with the presentation of a petition to Home Office Minister David Waddington.

Activities in May

LEEDS
Thursday 12 May 7.30pm
Public Meeting and video
Support the Aire Valley Yarns strikers!
Leeds Trades Club, Saville Mount

SHEFFIELD
Thursday 12 May 7.30pm
Public Meeting
Police prepare for war
AUEW House
Furnival Gate

EAST LONDON
Tuesday 31 May 7.30pm
ELWAR Public Meeting
No more deportations!
The Brady Club
Hanbury Street E1

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BM WAR, London WC1N 3XX
or telephone 01-274 3951

Fight for Irish Freedom



IFM street theatre

The Irish Freedom Movement on the streets of Sheffield, building support for 1 May hunger-strike demonstration in Birmingham. Workers stopped to watch the IFM street theatre which showed the struggle of Irish POWs for political status.

Activities in May

BIRKENHEAD
Thursday 26 May 7.30pm
Public Meeting
The fight for Irish freedom
See the next step sellers for venue

BIRMINGHAM
Wednesday 4 May 7.30pm
Public Meeting
Remember Bobby Sands
Video: H-Block hunger-strike
Digbeth Civic Hall

LIVERPOOL
A series of forums on the Irish War

Wednesday 4 May
The sectarian state

Wednesday 11 May
The longest war

Wednesday 18 May
The IRA and the national liberation struggle

Wednesday 25 May
Britain — the way forward

All meetings will be at 7.30pm in the McAusland Lounge, Liverpool University Students Union, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool 3

LONDON
A series of fortnightly forums on the Irish War

Wednesday 4 May
The sectarian state

Wednesday 18 May
The longest war

Wednesday 1 June
Republicanism and the national liberation struggle

Wednesday 15 June
Britain — the way forward

All meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the University of London Union, Malet Street, WC2

Victims of the PTA:

Contact the Irish Freedom Movement. Phone 01-274 3951

United with them – we fall

AS WE GO TO PRESS, transport workers' leader Moss Evans and engineers' leader Terry Duffy have accepted the BL bosses' refusal to back down in the dispute over 'washing-up' time at Cowley (see Page 18). They have agreed to present the latest management formula – be sacked or accept a token bonus in return for an increased working time of more than one hour a week – to the Cowley workers, without any recommendations from the unions. After four weeks on strike, the BL workers are faced with a complete betrayal by their union leaders and the prospect of a major setback in working conditions.

To negotiate a sell-out at Cowley, both Evans and Duffy had to take time off from important activities in relation to a longer term project – the return of a Labour government. Both are deeply involved in winning the widest possible trade union support for the National Economic Assessment – an agreement by the unions to collaborate with a future Labour government in holding down wages. Michael Foot's plea to British capitalists and 'public opinion' is that 'Labour is the only party which desires and can secure the working partnership between government and the trade unions essential to national recovery' (Foreword to *Labour's plan: the new hope for Britain*).

The labour bureaucracy's commitment to 'national recovery' is destroying the working class movement in Britain. At Cowley the bureaucrats preface every comment on jobs, wages and conditions by proclaiming their commitment to the Maestro, to increasing its share of the car market and boosting BL's profits. Over the past five years this approach has cost tens of thousands of job losses and led to the establishment of management tyranny on the shop floor in BL plants. Labour's promise of partnership in British capitalist recovery means subordinating the entire working class to BL-style tyranny on a grand scale. Over the gateway to a future of austerity the labour bureaucracy has inscribed the slogan 'unity'.

The road to hell

'Unity has never been more essential', general and municipal workers' leader David Basnett told the Scottish TUC in recommending its endorsement of the TUC-Labour Party plan, *Partners in rebuilding Britain*. Why? Because 'it is essential that this conference takes the view that it is a springboard for what is certain to be an election year'. Basnett was beating the unity drum very loudly in Scotland to enforce the acquiescence of the official labour movement to the leadership's incomes policy plans.

It is scarcely six months since both the TUC and Labour Party conferences voted by large majorities against incomes policy. Yet the prospect of an election has resulted in a united stampede in favour of another Labour incomes policy. The Scottish TUC – one of the first union conferences of the annual season and one of the bastions of the left – was the first to fall. Proposers of a resolution from the miners, backed by the civil servants, calling for opposition to all discussions on wage restraint, including the National Economic Assessment, 'with this or any other government', were persuaded to withdraw it in favour of a bland request for no return to 'old-style' wage controls. The other union conferences can now be expected to respond to similar calls for unity behind La-

bour's election campaign with similar fudges.

The trade union bureaucrats' unity behind the Labour Party is a desperate ploy designed to ensure their own survival. Their response to recession is to turn to the state to be their saviour. Hence *Partners in rebuilding Britain* outlines new parastatal institutions through which the union leaders could serve capital – a Department of Economic and Industrial Planning, a National Investment Bank, a tripartite National Planning Council with sectoral committees consulting management and unions about company plans and developing strategies for whole sectors of industry. A future Labour government would be a bureaucratic Nirvana. But it would be hell for the working class.

Caring for capitalism

Basnett's slogan for the general election is 'caring makes sense'. This theme is the justification for the central commitment of the Labour Party campaign document:

'We will expand the economy, by providing a strong and measured increase in spending. Spending money creates jobs.'

How? Basnett explains why 'caring' makes 'economic sense':

'If you build a hospital you take care of sick people, you create jobs for health service workers, you stimulate the construction, the engineering, the building materials, and equipment industries, and you do the same if you build houses for the homeless, schools for our children, roads and electrified railways for our industrial infrastructure.'

Thus the Labour Party promises to put Britain back to work and bring about industrial recovery.

Basnett's commonsensical scheme is a fantasy. British capitalism is in the grip of the deepest recession in living memory. For capitalists 'caring' makes no sense whatever. All their energies are devoted to cutting back on expenditure on 'caring' in a relentless drive to raise profits on producing.

As a matter of fact 'caring' made little sense for British capitalism even when it was expanding in the 'fifties and 'sixties. That is why it preferred to run the NHS in Victorian workhouses, rather than build new hospitals – a policy followed by Labour as well as Tory governments. What capitalism could not do in the boom, it will never do in the crisis.

Labour's programme for reforming and revitalising capitalism flies in the face of every important trend in the world economy. The Labour Party's colleagues in France have been implementing their alternative economic strategy for the past two years (see Page 15). It has developed into a programme of austerity that is the envy of Margaret Thatcher. The Mitterand Government has discovered that stimulating national recovery means subjecting the working class to the harsh dictates of the market.

If Labour's programme was implemented in Britain we would simply see a replay of the French experience. A rise in public expenditure would temporarily halt the growth in unemployment. But within six months it would become clear that the funds made available were not being invested in industry. The only thing growing would be inflation. A Labour government would then have no choice but to change course and bring in an austerity prog-

ramme. Even if it balked at this option it would make little difference. State funds would drift into the non-industrial sector; industry would continue to stagnate and competitiveness to decline. Whichever way Labour turned, its attempts to revive British capitalism could not avert the trends towards industrial collapse and the loss of millions more jobs.

The left kneels down

The Labour Party and its fellows in Europe are charged with mobilising workers behind capitalist solutions to the crisis. 'Austerity socialism' is today the most powerful weapon in the hands of the capitalist class. It demobilises thousands of militant workers while demoralising millions of others. However, it is not the popularity of Labour Party politics that allows it to remain the dominant organisation in the labour movement. Labour's programme inspires nobody: militants can see the bureaucrats are just looking for a re-run of the 1974 Social Contract and they expect little to come from it. They continue to support Labour only as the lesser evil to the Tories – and because the left has succeeded in convincing them that there is no alternative to unity behind Foot and Basnett.

Labour left leader Tony Benn is right behind the National Economic Assessment. While Basnett tells the world that it's a new Social Contract, Benn tells militants that it's a means whereby they will have direct influence over every aspect of government policy. As he told his fan club paper *Socialist Action*, 'the National Economic Assessment can be read any way you like'. The left gives credibility to this sort of cynical posturing and thus protects Labour's left flank.

In the unions the humble Communist Party can still do a job for its Walworth Road masters. The CP has often proclaimed its hostility to incomes policy of any sort and it has ventured the usual fraternal criticisms of Labour's latest schemes for cutting working class living standards. The *Morning Star* even criticised the TUC's incomes policy and found it 'almost unbelievable that those on the left of the TUC general council could have allowed themselves to be bamboozled into voting for this document on the basis of assurances that it did not mean wage restraint' (24 March). Leading CP trade unionist George Guy replied angrily that the *Star* 'appears to show a complete lack of understanding of what working with the broad left means' (14 April). Guy and his Stalinist general council colleague Ken Gill could have voted against – 'but our broad left colleagues might well have seen us as people they no longer wished to support on other issues'.

Broad left unity means voting for future cuts in workers' wages to keep friendly with Labour Party members of the general council. Guy made it clear in a private letter to Len Murray that he did not like the National Economic Assessment, but he promised dutifully to distribute it to his members.

The CP also played the unity game at the Scottish TUC. Influential Stalinists worked behind the scenes to make sure that the explicit anti-National Economic Assessment motion was toned down – and the *Morning Star* covered up the rear: 'the motion's supporters are expected to

make crystal clear that its revised terms just as strongly prohibit any wage regulations or intervention in free collective bargaining by a Labour government' (19 April). Then why revise the terms? That's broad left unity in action.

The last outpost of the labour bureaucracy is manned by the Socialist Workers Party. In recent months it has taken some satisfaction from the demise of the left inside the Labour Party. This has provided the SWP with some relief from the chronically depressed state into which it has slumped in response to what it calls 'the downturn'. While it looks forward to 'the upturn' and more strikes through which to build the party, it has become more critical of the Labour left. However, the SWP cannot put forward any political alternative to the traditional party of the labour movement. Hence as the election draws near the SWP has come out with its familiar shame-faced at the polls position: Vote Labour.

Socialist Worker editor Chris Harman explains that the SWP has to take sides with workers who want to vote Labour:

'When they vote Labour it shows a desire to do something collectively to change things, even if a very confused desire.' (9 April)

In fact a vote for Labour expresses a wish, not so much to change things, but more to return things to the way they were before – before the recession struck. This is a preoccupation that unites the labour bureaucracy and the radical left. This is what Labour politicians mean when they say that the Falklands factor is now receding and British politics are returning to 'normal'. They dream of a return to economic expansion, full employment and consensus politics. The radical left dreams of a return to its heyday in the early 'seventies. This is the content of the SWP's 'upturn' scenario. The economy will pick up, strikes will erupt and there will be picket lines on which to hold up *Socialist Worker* once again. While they indulge their nostalgia, they all unite to return a Labour government.

Their unity – our defeat

The reality of the capitalist recession is that things are not going to get better, but steadily worse. While the SWP is waiting for an upturn, the labour bureaucracy will be either implementing or cooperating in austerity measures against the working class. The labour bureaucrats' first concern is to preserve their own institutions: this is at the heart of their unity drive for the return of a Labour government. The left responds – and denounces those who refuse to get on the bandwagon as 'sectarians'. Workers' yearning for a united working class response to capitalist attacks is perverted to bolster the bureaucracy.

Many reluctant supporters of the Labour Party feel that it is premature to try to build a new organisation outside it. The preparation for an austerity programme in conditions of deepening recession confirms the urgency of this task. There is an alternative to paying the price for the restoration of capitalist stability through industrial restructuring and mass unemployment, starvation and war. The alternative is revolutionary communism. It's never too early to build a party that can take the working class to power instead of following Labour to a certain defeat.

Police terror now legal

As the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill goes through its final stages in Parliament, the police have launched a wave of terror. In the West Midlands armed police have conducted a series of SAS-style raids on working class families, wrecking homes and intimidating people. A storeman at BL's Longbridge plant received hospital treatment for facial injuries after being taken from his house to a Birmingham police station for questioning about 'stolen car components'. He was lucky. In Coventry James Davey had to be put on a life-support machine after a few hours of 'helping the police with their inquiries' in March; he died a few days later. In London 96 people are going through the courts after being arrested in the course of protests about the mysterious death of Colin Roach, a black youth found dead from shotgun injuries outside a Hackney police station in January.

The new Police Bill legitimises police terror. Fran Eden and Martin Stone look at the Tories' repressive legislation and Labour's limited opposition, and report the case of another victim of police harassment - 13 year old Leonard Lancicott.

THE ONLY CONCESSION the Tories have made to critics of their draconian Police and Criminal Evidence Bill is to exempt doctors and clergymen from compulsion to make confidential records available to the police. This in itself is significant. The Bill has come under a storm of criticism from organisations of professionals who in the course of their work keep records - possibly including incriminating personal details of people who consult them. The Bill gives the police the right to seize and record such information. Middle class professionals - from GPs and priests to journalists and social workers - were less concerned about police powers to repress blacks and workers, than about the threat to their own position contained in the new law. The loss of the vital element of confidentiality in their relationship with patients and punters would seriously undermine their professional functions. The Tories were quite prepared to accommodate at least the most powerful middle class lobbies - the British Medical Association and the Churches - as long as the central thrust of their coercive legislation went unchallenged.

Tory offensive

The Police Bill underpins the Government's 'law and order' offensive against the working class. Together with propaganda about the 'violent crime wave' and 'statistics' fingering blacks as the culprits, the Bill provides for a major extension of police powers. It sanctions existing practices and endorses the riot-style policing that recession-struck Britain needs. The new provisions of the Bill include powers

- to stop and search 'suspects' at random
- to search homes and workplaces
- to seize and record confidential information
- to imprison anybody suspected of a serious offence for up to six days
- to set up road blocks in an area where crimes are likely to be committed
- to take fingerprints, photographs and blood samples, by force if necessary.

The Tories' proposals will become law by the summer: they are having no trouble in crushing the ineffectual protests of the Labour Opposition in Parliament.

While the BMA and the bishops fought a spirited defence of their sectional interests against government interference, the official labour movement's response was lame and muted. The Labour Party stands for law and order, for the fight against crime and for more effective policing. So why do they criticise the Tories' measures to make the police more effective?

The Labour Party dreams of a Britain without recession, class conflict or racial oppression where the police help old ladies across the road and find lost dogs and cats in a society of harmony and justice. While something like this may have prevailed in Britain's suburbia during the post-war boom, this has never been the character of policing in working class areas. The future undoubtedly holds deeper recession, higher unemployment, more rioting - and more repressive policing. But Labour cannot face reality. Its spokesmen claim that the Tories' repressive approach will aggravate social tensions and make the police less effective. The Labour Party proclaims a utopia in which elected police authorities supervise operations and community police councils ensure harmonious relations between police and public.

The Tories are more honest. They do not pretend that 'civil liberties' and 'effective policing' can coexist. They know that the recession means a growing threat to their system from blacks, the unemployed and the working class. They know that to defend *their* law and order they need tougher policing and less civil liberties. As the Police Bill goes through Parliament, the Tories need only to refer to the latest armed bank robbery or attack on a policeman, to whip the Labour Opposition into line. The only function of the Labour Party's rhetoric about 'restoring the confidence and trust of the community in the police' is to reconcile the working class to more police terror. This function is the special responsibility of the left which has made improving police-community relations its special concern.

Labour defensive

Labour's role as apologist for police repression is particularly apparent over local instances of police brutality - especially when there is an angry public response. Labour councils around the country have set up special committees to cope with the outrage caused by the growing number of incidents of police violence. The West Midlands police committee had to work fast to restore the image of local police Chief Sir Phillip Knights after his force's reign of terror culminated in the killing of James Davey. Labour councillor Edwin Shore emerged from a special meeting of the committee with the chief constable declaring that he hoped the meeting would allay public fears:

'We agree that we have in the West Midlands one of the best chief constables in the country.'

Defend Leonard Lancicott!

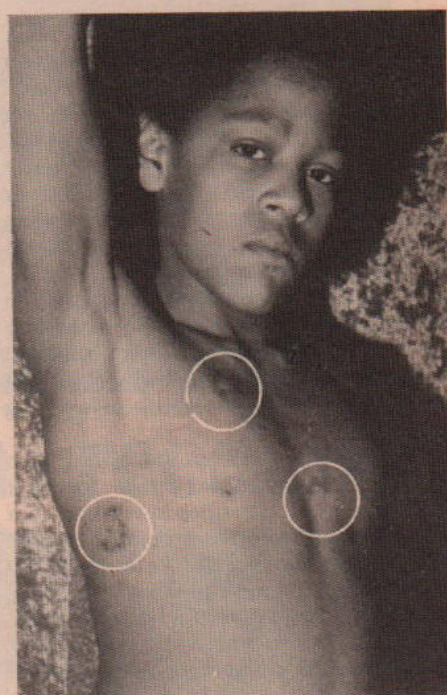
Police terror is a familiar experience to black people in the Notting Hill area of West London. Lucille Lancicott lives with her four children off the Harrow Road. She spoke to us shortly after her 13 year old son Leonard was stabbed in the chest in an incident involving local police on 10 March. He suffered massive haemorrhage, a collapsed lung and bears extensive scars.

Things have gone from bad to worse. The police try and drive black kids off the streets. They operate their own curfew after 11pm at night. It means if your skin is black and you are on the streets after 11pm you've committed a crime. But it doesn't stop there. They come into your home too. The police persist in harassing and intimidating us. They have threatened to break down my front door on several occasions, come into my house looking for evidence - stolen goods, that sort of thing. They never found anything. I'm sure some of them know the interior of my house better than I do. They've picked up my children for no good reason. They have tried to take Leonard to court before but charges have always been dismissed.

Most people round here have a story to tell about the police. I hear stories from my friends about how the police have fitted up young blacks on false charges. They are wantonly giving them criminal records.'

WAR is seeking backing from community organisations, trade union branches and labour movement bodies to defend and support the Lancicotts and get the police off the streets and off our backs in West London.

Contact Fran Eden at BM WAR, London WC1N 3XX.



Tuesday 24 May 7.30pm
Public Meeting

**DEFEND LEONARD LANCICOTT!
POLICE OFF OUR STREETS!**

Notting Hill. Contact 274 3951 for details

All we ask in the West Midlands is that when mistakes happen, the police say: "sorry lads, we have made a mistake. We are human."

Not surprisingly, Davey's brother was not impressed: 'we had the impression that everything was being swept under the carpet'. This expresses precisely the Labour Party's division of labour with the police: they beat people to a pulp in the police station - Labour sweeps the pieces under the carpet in the police committee.

The scale and ferocity of police attacks on white people is something new. But it is the long-standing experience of blacks. This has caused particular difficulties for Labour's police committees in containing black outrage against police violence in black ghettos, especially in London. Labour's representatives on Lambeth's police liaison committee have been enthusiastic promoters of 'community policing' in the Brixton riot areas. They recently had to squirm in their seats as five black youths described how they had been strip-searched in the street on Railton Road in the heart of Brixton. Through its endorsement of 'community policing' the Labour Party has given the police a free hand to rampage around the Brixton area, ruthlessly crushing further resistance to the authorities.

In Hackney, the borough's black population was so incensed by the police's handling of the Colin Roach affair that the Labour Council threatened to stop paying its £4m precept to the Metropolitan Police. This was just an empty gesture which the Council backed down on at the first sign of legal difficulties ahead. Labour councillors have been promoting the mediating services of their police committee to absorb the simmering anger of the black community. Meanwhile it's police terror as usual down Sandringham Road, Hackney's frontline.

For Workers Against Racism, the police are simply the repressive arm of the capi-

talist class and 100 per cent committed to the maintenance of capitalist law and order. They cannot be made accountable to the working class. In today's conditions harmony between the police and the community can exist only if blacks, the unemployed, and workers lie down and let the police walk all over them. This is the sort of relationship between the working class and the state that Labour Party policies aim to create. We aim to mobilise the labour movement to fight back against all manifestations of state oppression.

WAR on the Police Bill

It is vital that the labour movement resists the Police Bill and further police interference in our affairs. We are campaigning against all aspects of the Tory offensive. We must reject the notion that 'law and order' is a legitimate concern for the labour movement. The only order that the police protect is that of the ruling class: only the working class can guarantee the security of working class people and working class areas. We should also reject the idea that 'crime' is an important problem for the working class. Our major problems are unemployment, housing, poverty, racial discrimination, police harassment. Once we get our sights clearly on the capitalist class as our No 1 enemy, then we will have no problem dealing with anti-social elements in the working class. And we should throw out Labour's appeal for 'effective policing'. Calling for 'effective policing' is like demanding a strong rope to hang yourself with. The more effective the police are, the more effective a weapon they become in the hands of the ruling class. Our place is side by side with the oppressed fighting back against state intimidation - not side by side with the police on Labour's fraternal committees.

No more deportations!

Afia Begum threatened with expulsion

The threatened deportation of 19 year old Afia Begum and her baby highlights the barbaric nature of Britain's immigration laws. But Afia Begum is only one of many hundreds of immigrants who are shunted out of the country every year. Her case raises the question of how to fight against deportations — and win. Joan Phillips looks at the campaign.

ALL OVER BRITAIN black people are being hounded by the Home Office and its immigration police. The Nationality Act has made the immigration status of thousands of blacks increasingly insecure. The changes in the immigration rules accompanying the Act have been operated stringently: in the first six weeks of 1983, 56 per cent of the men who applied from the Indian sub-continent to join their wives or fiancées in this country were refused; the comparable figure in 1982 was less than 10 per cent. Recent statistics on immigration released by the Home Office are a stark indication of future trends — entry clearances have been slashed and deportations are on the increase. New immigration minister David Waddington was welcomed to the job in January by Conservative MPs who wanted to see a harder line on immigration from the Home Office. Waddington's message is clear: in future immigrants can expect no mercy from the Home Office:

'If we waived our immigration rules for everyone who felt he would be better off here than at home we would rapidly find ourselves host to enormous numbers of people from all over the globe. It would be folly!' (*The Times*, 30 March 1983)

Combatting these Tory attacks on black people must become a top priority for the labour movement.

Afia Begum has experienced Britain's barbaric immigration laws at first hand. Afia is an 'illegal immigrant'. She is threatened with deportation because her husband was killed in a slum tenement fire in Brick Lane in East London's Bengali ghetto. When Afia arrived at Heathrow airport in June 1982 she was told that her husband's death constituted a 'change of circumstance' which in-

validated her right to take up residence in Britain. Since June she has received two deportation orders and has been hounded from one end of the country to the other with her one year old daughter Asma. Afia's fate still hangs in the balance. She is presently in hiding while the Home Office once again considers her case and immigration police try to track her down. The background to her threatened deportation is so horrific that it is tempting to think that the Home Office will show compassion in her case. But the Home Office is not in the business of showing compassion. Afia Begum is not a 'special case': thousands of other blacks have been deported in the past in similar circumstances.

How to fight

Since September 1982 Workers Against Racism has been fighting to keep Afia and her daughter in Britain. Unlike many other campaigns, ours is guided by the principle of uncompromising opposition to all immigration controls. We do not accept the right of the state to control the movements of workers. We are fighting for Afia Begum and for every other victim of Britain's racist immigration controls. Our aim is not just to win a victory for Afia and other victims — but to convince British workers that they have no interest in siding with their state against black people. That is why we have taken Afia's case into the labour movement. We are demanding that trade union bodies all over the country take up the issue of immigration controls and adopt Afia and her daughter. The campaign so far has achieved widespread support within the labour movement with active support from rank and file workers on Home Office pickets, at public rallies and demonstrations. Never



before has a deportation case gone as far as this one. The only reason why Afia is still in Britain today is because Workers Against Racism has been prepared to defy the law to prevent her deportation.

Most deportation campaigns are characterised by their legal emphasis and their appeals for compassionate and humane treatment. Their sole aim is to win a victory for one particular victim — not also to mobilise working class opposition to all immigration controls. It is fair enough to use every legal means available to avert deportation. And there is nothing wrong with appealing on compassionate grounds, so long as it is recognised that these methods are usually not enough to win a victory, either for the victim — or in the fight to build a movement aimed at smashing all immigration controls. In law, Afia Begum has no right to live in Britain. To fight for her right to stay means to reject the label of 'illegal' and to defy the law.

Labour hypocrisy

WAR's campaign has attracted some support from constituency Labour Parties and Labour MPs. So far 17 MPs, including Tony Benn and Michael Foot, have given their backing to the campaign. What has inspired this sudden rush on the part of Labour politicians to announce their support for this campaign and to associate their names with Workers Against Racism? The simple reason is that Labour is becoming more sensitive to the electoral significance of race. Blacks now form something like three or four per cent of the electorate and more than a quarter of the voters in more than a dozen urban constituencies. As *The Guardian* put it: 'No politician interested in those seats can safely ignore their interests' (26 March). While giving no credibility to the cynical electoral posturings of Labour left politicians, WAR has employed their services in the fight to keep Afia in Britain. We have also been happy to accept a grant for the Afia Begum Campaign from the GLC's Women's Committee — the first grant ever given to stop a deportation. We will take the money but we won't rely on the Labour Party or the GLC to fight for this campaign. The only way to win a real victory is by mobilising the working class against all immigration controls — which is something the Labour Party is not prepared to countenance.

For the past year and more the Labour Party has been denouncing the 'excesses' of the Tories' strategy on immigration and the injustices and inhumanity of the Nationality Act (which Labour drafted!). Opposition Home Affairs spokesman Dr Shirley Summerskill objected recently that:

'The whole immigration scene has been given a nasty atmosphere by Mrs Thatcher's pre-election word, "swamping"... We will have immigration and work permit control, but not on a racist or sexist basis.' (*The Guardian*, 28 March 1983)

But what is the difference between Labour's immigration policies and the Tories'? Labour's latest campaign document states the position very clearly:

'Through their immigration and nationality laws the Tories have divided families and caused immense sufferings in the immigrant communities. We accept the need for immigration controls. But we will repeal the 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 British Nationality Act and replace them with a citizenship law that does not discriminate against either women or black and Asian Britons.'

The Labour Party fully accepts the need for immigration controls in the midst of a world recession. It merely argues that there is a fundamental difference of purpose behind its kind of controls and Thatcher's brand. Immigration controls, we are told, are vital for the construction of a planned socialist economy. What is non-racist or non-sexist about these controls is left to our imagination. In reality, Labour's plans for a 'citizenship law that does not discriminate against either women or black and Asian Britons' cannot be substantially different from the current Nationality Act. Afia Begum is not a Briton — she is an 'illegal' Bangladeshi immigrant. Her position would be no different under a future Labour administration than under the present Tory government!

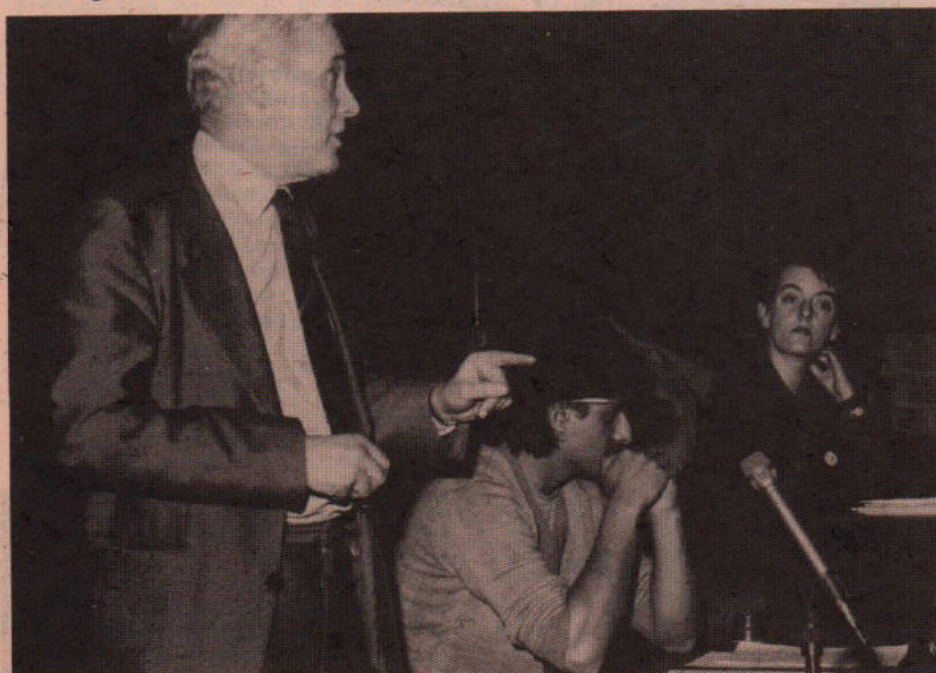
Left pedals illusions

Labour's old 'new' immigration policy has been accepted uncritically by its supporters on the British left. The purpose of umbrella organisations like the Campaign Against Racist Laws is to improve the Labour Party's anti-racist image and enhance its electoral credibility amongst blacks. CARL does not actually do anything except to call a conference every two years followed by a demonstration five or six months later. CARL's demonstrations are meaningless gestures — their only object is to galvanise support for the Labour Party. The turnout for the 27 March CARL demonstration in London was pathetic — a fitting testimony to three years of inaction and compromise. CARL and its sister organisations on the British left are bound hand and foot to the Labour Party. They do not question the basic assumption underlying the Nationality Act: the right of the state to regulate the movements of the working class. They merely hold out the illusion that this can be carried out in a more humane fashion — by a future Labour government. Their belief that immigration controls can be anything other than racist and brutal is both utopian and reactionary.

CARL campaigns against 'racist and sexist laws' and refuses to take a stand against all immigration controls. This is not because it really believes all its rhetoric about 'natural justice' and humanity, but because it is not prepared to confront head on the racism within the labour movement. Workers Against Racism has taken a different stance. We argue our case for smashing all immigration controls within the working class movement. We have stated time and time again that if British workers are to defend their class interests they must make a stand against the bosses' attempts to divide workers along national and racial lines. There is all the difference in the world between winning a purely legal victory in a deportation campaign and in winning a fight which has gained the backing of the labour movement on a principled stand.

AFIA BEGUM WILL STAY!

Send messages of support and donations to Afia Begum Campaign, c/o BM WAR, London WC1N 3XX. For further information contact Joan Phillips on 01-274 3951



Tony Benn — defending Afia Begum and immigration controls

Hammersmith harassment



SUPPORTERS OF the Irish Freedom Movement have stepped up selling and leafletting on the streets of West London in the last three months to mobilise support for the 1 May demonstration in Birmingham. We have met with an immediate response – from an enthusiastic population starved of discussion about Ireland, and from an angry 'F' Division incensed that supporters of the liberation struggle should threaten their regime of harassment and intimidation in Hammersmith, Fulham and Shepherd's Bush.

Three IFM supporters were arrested for obstruction in King Street, Hammersmith on 28 February and one of them was arrested a second time nine days later. On a number of further occasions supporters were driven off the streets under threat of arrest: one Saturday morning six paper sellers were tailed by police for 20 minutes until they eventually went into an underground station.

We decided to hit back. We enlisted the support of a number of local councillors, GLC councillor Dave Wetzel and the local MP, Clive Soley. Councillor Ivan Gibbons wrote a series of letters to Commander Mitchell on our behalf. At the same time we stepped up our activity on the streets and in the housing estates. On Saturday 26 March we organised a three-hour street meeting on King Street. Present with us were Dave Wetzel, an observer from the NCCL, a photographer and a local solicitor. On four separate occasions we were told to move on or face arrest for obstruction; 13 different police officers were involved in this operation, in addition to verbal

harassment from passing police cars and a van. The police made it clear that what they objected to was the selling of the next step with its front page headline 'Ireland: 13 years of British terror'.

Each time the police tried to move us on the solicitor intervened to point out that for years others – including the National Front – had sold papers without harassment, collected money and sung religious songs on the same spot. Confronted with detailed statistics on the number of paces apart that sellers were standing and the frequency of pedestrian traffic the police were forced to retreat.

On Saturday 9 April we celebrated our victory with an uninterrupted street meeting. There was scarcely a uniformed cop to be seen all morning – though the plainclothes variety were everywhere, dressed in the most improbable disguises.

The lesson for all IFM activists is: don't let the police push you around. The support of local Labour Party figures for our right to sell and leaflet publicly was important, and we thank them for it. However, in itself this can never be enough to guarantee the right to speak out on Ireland: the issue is not defence of some abstract 'free speech', but the determination to oppose each and every murderous British solution for Ireland. Clive Soley supports our right to 'free speech', but he is a vigorous opponent of the IRA. The only guarantee of any rights is the will to fight to defend them. It is the success of the IFM in winning local support for Irish freedom that has won it the right to sell in Hammersmith without interruption.

Gareth Evans

'PTA-free zones' spreading

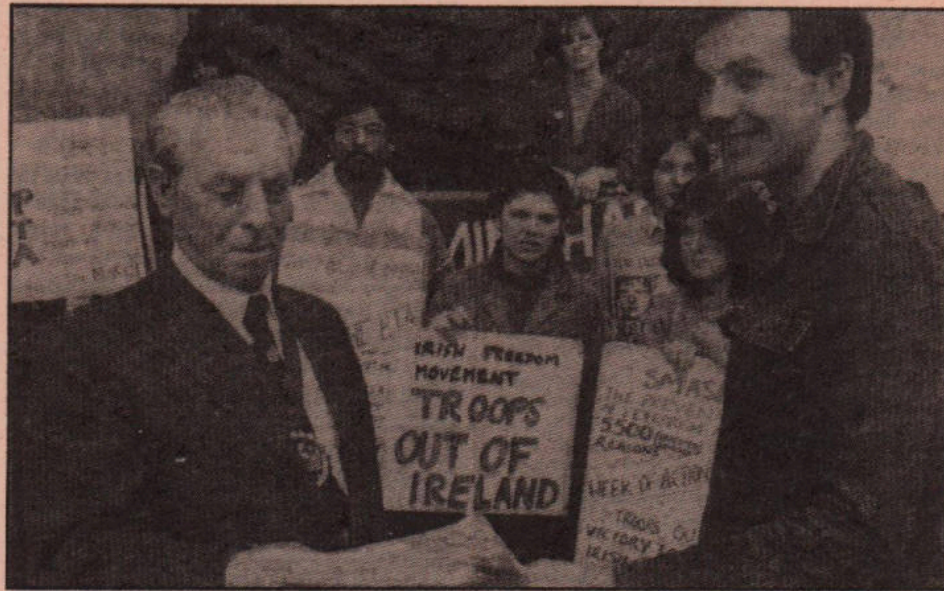
LABOUR COUNCILS around the country have publicised their stands on a number of political issues by declaring their areas 'nuclear-free', 'apartheid-free', etc. Now they are under pressure from the Irish Freedom Movement to take a stand against Britain's war against Ireland by proclaiming 'PTA-free zones'.

In West Yorkshire the council has already ducked its first opportunity of establishing a 'PTA-free zone'. On 14 April the council received a delegation from the IFM, bearing a petition signed by several hundred people, including Councillor Alex Wilson. The delegation addressed the council, indicating that 170 people had been detained in West Yorkshire under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. We called for the council to back practical action against it – such as supporting victims of the PTA and withdrawing funding from the police if they insist on enforcing it. The Tories and some Labour councillors were against the proposal. Left-wing councillor and prospective MP Derek Fatchett that he 'would not support any move to take money away from the police which would make their job of combatting terrorism in West Yorkshire any more difficult'. In the end the majority voted in favour of passing the proposal on to a committee to avoid any further action on the campaign. Our spokesman made it clear that 'we are asking for more than votes and words – we want to make the PTA inoperable'.

In the West Midlands four councillors,

including county council chairman Bernard Downey, and 1000 others, have signed a petition calling for a 'PTA-free zone'. The proposal has gone forward to the all-Labour 'policy and resources' committee for further consideration. The plan has already been attacked by the Tory group leader as 'unwise and stupid'. The Birmingham *Evening Mail* reminded its readers of the 1974 pub bombings, insisted that 'nothing has really changed since 1974' and condemned the 'PTA-free zone' as 'too absurd to be taken seriously'. But the PTA is taken very seriously by the hundreds of Irish people who have been harassed and intimidated under its provisions in the West Midlands ever since the wave of anti-Irish hysteria in the area which provided the pretext for its introduction in 1974. We will keep agitating against it as long as it is being used to criminalise opposition to the British occupation of Ireland.

The movement for 'PTA-free zones' has provoked public debate on the PTA. It has pushed Labour representatives to speak out on an issue they have long ignored. Many – including Councillor Downey – have simply reiterated the official Labour line that the PTA should go because it is ineffective against, or even actually encourages, terrorism. We have consistently put forward our view that the labour movement should oppose the PTA because it opposes Britain's war in Ireland and supports the national liberation struggle.



Tameside Trades Council threatened

AS REPORTED in last month's issue of the next step, the TUC has taken exception to Tameside Trades Council watching and discussing the IFM video 'No British solution'. Following the showing of the video at the December meeting of the trades council TUC hack John Monks wrote to the secretary Dave Hallsworth, demanding further details of the meeting. On behalf of the trades council, the secretary replied that the members intended to decide themselves on the agenda of meetings, but that Monks was welcome to attend the trades council for an exchange of views. His response was an angry condemnation from the TUC of the 'irresponsibility' of Tameside and its secretary.

Now the TUC has decided that when Tameside comes up for its annual re-affiliation, the TUC's top trades council watchdog committee will be called to sit in judgement. The threat to Tameside is clear – toe the TUC line on Ireland, or recognition will be withdrawn. In 1980 Tameside was disaffiliated for organising a conference on Ireland at which representatives of the republican movement were invited to speak. The TUC, self-appointed policeman of the labour

movement, is determined to crush any expression of anti-imperialist views on Ireland in the trade unions.

Rank and file trade unionists should remind Len Murray of his remarks on trade union rights in Chile and Poland in the April issue of *Public Service*:

'It might be difficult for the military mind to grasp. Even politicians here in Britain have difficulty in understanding it, but authentic trade union leaders are not corporals or sergeants or even generals. Authority in unions moves in precisely the opposite direction – from men and women upwards. Nobody but the members have the right to decide their leaders or the policies they are to pursue.'

British trade unionists would welcome this democratic spirit in their organisations when it comes to discussing the Irish War.

Tameside Trades Council is mobilising support for its right to take whatever course its members consider is in the interests of the working class movement. It is also in conflict with the local labour bureaucracy over its plans for an independent unemployed workers' centre. It has circulated the following motion

FUNCTIONING OF TRADES COUNCILS

36

(a) Tameside

It was reported that the TUC office was in correspondence with Tameside Trades Council concerning the showing of a film on Northern Ireland at a meeting of the Trades Council. No adequate reply had yet been received from the Trades Council and the TUC office had again asked the secretary of the Trades Council to provide a full report on this matter.

The attitude of the Trades Council had also raised questions about its continuing recognition by the TUC and it was stated that if and when the Trades Council submitted its application for registration for 1983, this would be referred to the Committee for consideration.

NOTED

to trade union bodies. Take it to your branch or trades council:

This branch/trades council protests against the TUC's attempts to stifle and discourage debate at Tameside Trades Council and supports its right to decide its own policy on Ireland or any other issue free from outside interference.

MANCHESTER

Saturday 21 May 11.00am

Street meeting

No TUC censorship on Ireland!
Defend Tameside Trades Council!

Leningrad Square
Wythenshawe

March for Irish freedom...

...not for a Labour Party solution



Bobby Sands
27, died 5 May after 66 days



Kevin Lynch
25, died 1 August after 71 days



Hunger Strike Commemoration



Francis Hughes
25, died 12 May after 59 days



Kieran Doherty
25, died 2 August after 73 days



Joe McDonnell
30, died 8 July after 61 days



Martin Hurson
24, died 13 July after 46 days

1 May 1983 March & Rally

"If they aren't able to destroy the desire for freedom, they won't break you, they won't break me because the desire for freedom and the freedom of the Irish people is in my heart. The day will dawn when all the people of Ireland will have the desire for freedom to show."
— Bobby Sands

ORGANISED BY SINN FEIN BRITAIN
ASSEMBLE HANDSWORTH PARK 1.00pm
GROVE LANE

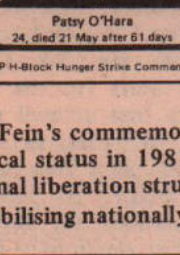
Birmingham



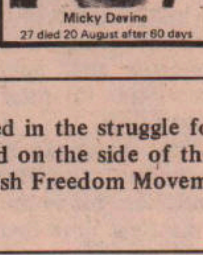
Raymond McCreesh
24, died 21 May after 61 days



Tom McElwee
23, died 8 August after 62 days



Patsy O'Hara
24, died 21 May after 61 days



Micky Devine
27, died 20 August after 60 days

P&P H-Block Hunger Strike Commemoration Committee, P.O. Box 12, 134 Alcester Rd, Birmingham.



MAY 7

DEMONSTRATION ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Another thirteen wasted years in Northern Ireland

ULSTER: Bring home the troops

**How
MUCH
LONGER?**

**An awful
toll of
human
sacrifice**

900,000

WHAT BRITAIN HAS DONE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND SINCE THE TROOPS WENT ON THE STREETS IN 1969.

WORK: Jobs in industry have almost halved to 97,000. This is 15,000 fewer than those unemployed.

POVERTY: One in four houses are considered unfit for human habitation. According to EEC reports, West Belfast and Derry are the most deprived areas in Europe, alongside Southern Italy.

YOUTH: 75% of prisoners are under 25 — a whole generation in jail. The prison population is the only growth industry and is five times greater than when the troops went in.

Two years ago, ten young men who grew up under these conditions of poverty, unemployment and with foreign troops on their streets, died on hunger strike opposing Britain's presence in Ireland. Despite the resulting massive upsurge of opinion for British withdrawal, in Ireland and worldwide, the present government has reacted with more repression and the farcical Assembly. There is only one solution to Ireland's British problem.

BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE

We wish to sponsor the May 7th Demonstration for Britain Out of Ireland and Self-determination for the Irish People.

Name of organisation or individual

Address

We wish to donate £..... Telephone number

Please return to: May 7th Committee, Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

Sinn Fein's commemoration of the ten hunger strikers who died in the struggle for political status in 1981. This demonstration takes a clear stand on the side of the national liberation struggle against British rule in Ireland. The Irish Freedom Movement is mobilising nationally for the May Day march.

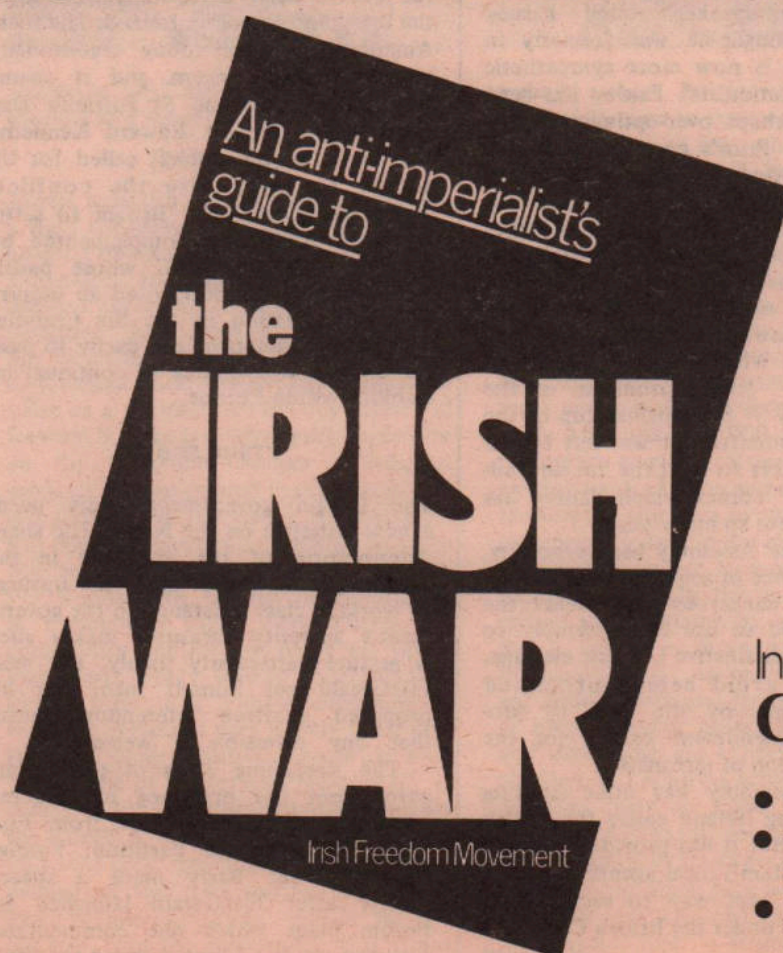
The Troops Out Movement celebrates the *Daily Mirror* and Ken Livingstone's latest call for a British-imposed 'political solution'. The organisers of this demonstration talk about 'self-determination for the Irish people' only to conceal their plans for reforming British domination.

Irish Freedom Movement handbook

This handbook is for people in Britain who want to end the war in Ireland. For more than 13 years the war has raged in the cities, towns and villages of the Six Counties; its violent intensity has regularly spilled over the border into the Twenty-six Counties and across the sea to Britain. More than 25,000 people have died, including more than 600 British soldiers and paramilitary policemen, more than 200 republicans and around 600 Catholic victims of sectarian attacks by Loyalists and British forces. Hundreds of non-combatants have been killed in more than a decade of bombings and shootings, rioting and repression.

An anti-imperialist's guide to the Irish War provides people who want an end to the war with the information and the arguments they need to counter the newspapers and the politicians and to win wider support for the cause of Irish freedom. It provides the answers to the questions that come up every time the Irish War is discussed. Why does Britain stay in Ireland? Why don't they just pull the troops out? What about the Protestants? Why can't a political solution work? We examine the Six County state and British strategy during the war to deal with these questions and many more.

The Irish Freedom Movement handbook is more than a collection of useful facts and figures. It is a guide to action. Hence we include an outline of the way forward for anti-imperialists in Britain in solidarity with the Irish liberation struggle.



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- Personalities of the Irish War
- Irish prisoners in British jails
- Information on Ireland a bibliography

The Assembly and the Forum

Neither can bridge the gap

In the occupied Six Counties British soldiers are busy brutalising the nationalist people as usual. And the economy is collapsing even faster than usual. Times are bad for schemes to stabilise imperialist domination in Ireland through talking shops that try to mediate between the British state and the nationalist population. The two latest attempts are really non-starters, but because their promoters are so desperate they have been given an outing. Both James Prior's Ulster Assembly and Garret FitzGerald's Forum for a New Ireland are already limping badly. The Assembly appeals for Catholic participation, but it is in fact a Loyalist rump. The Forum appeals for Unionist participation, but it is no more than a clique of middle class Catholic nationalist politicians.

Power struggles

DIRECT RULE is a constant source of strife among Unionist politicians. They accept that it is only through military occupation that Britain can maintain its grip on Ireland and guarantee the special position of the Loyalist community. Yet the administration of the Six Counties directly from London deprives local Unionist politicians of any real role in the political life of 'the province'. Hence their continual yearning for a return to Stormont. But, while the war continues, Stormont will not return so the Unionists are forced to try to carve out a position for themselves within the framework of Direct Rule.

The Unionists are fragmented along a spectrum with its extreme poles labelled 'integration' and 'devolution'. The polarisation underlies the conflicts within the Ulster Assembly. The 'integrationists' are led by Official Unionist Party leader James Molyneux and his henchman Enoch Powell. Their response to the loss of Stormont is to call for the total assimilation of the Six Counties into the United Kingdom. They disapprove of any measure or institutions — including the Assembly itself — which distinguish the Six Counties in any way from Cornwall or Kent. At the other extreme stands Democratic Unionist Party leader Ian Paisley, supported in his calls for the devolution of administrative powers from London to Belfast, by substantial sections of the OUP. The 'devolutionists' want the return of powers both to local government and to institutions in Belfast, to restore to local politicians, to some degree at least, the base that Stormont and local councils once provided. There is no dispute here over the sanctity of the Union of the Six Counties and Britain; controversy surrounds the role of Unionist politicians within the structures of British domination.

OUP wreckers

Tory Northern Ireland Minister James Prior addressed the first session of the Assembly last December. As it had been boycotted by both the Social Democratic and Labour Party and Sinn Féin (who between them held more than a quarter of the seats) it had already failed in its central purpose. Yet the Assembly went ahead, out of Prior's rather forlorn hope that something might turn up that would press the SDLP to participate. Ever since, the Assembly has simply been a forum for the power struggles within Unionism. The parties lined up with 26 seats for the OUP, 21 for the DUP, 10 for the middle class Protestant Alliance Party and two independent Unionists.

Led by 'integrationists', the OUP was unsympathetic to the Assembly from the start. After the opening session, the party withdrew from the Assembly on

the pretext that the speaker, independent Unionist James Kilfedder, was showing favouritism to the DUP in his appointments to the Assembly committees. When the Assembly failed to collapse in its first few weeks, as the OUP hoped it would, Molyneux led his deputies back into the chamber in February. Dissensions over committee appointments continued — and so did the walk-outs.

It was not long before Molyneux made another attempt to wreck the Assembly. In mid-March he demanded 'one final confrontation' with Margaret Thatcher. He wanted either the immediate devolution of 'real power' — or the end of the Assembly talking-shop. As there was no prospect of the former, everybody knew he really wanted the latter. The DUP joined forces with the Alliance to block what one Alliance member called 'a cynical move by the integrationist wing of the Official Unionists to undermine the Assembly'. In contrast to OUP wrecking tactics, the DUP's usually wild leader has been presenting an uncharacteristically moderate image.

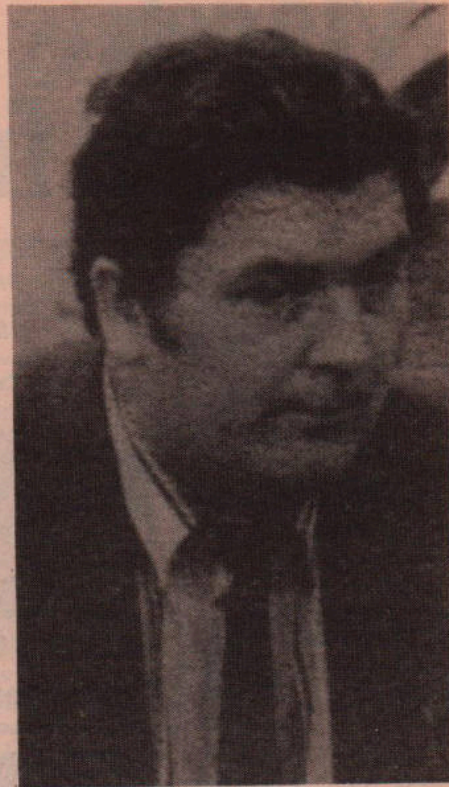
DUP moderates?

Paisley has played along with the Assembly with the hope of winning concessions from Westminster that would restore at least some power and prestige to Loyalist politicians. The election of Kilfedder as speaker suited Paisley because, although he was formerly in the OUP, he is now more sympathetic to the 'devolutionists'. Paisley has been hoping — perhaps over-optimistically — to gain from Prior's concept of 'rolling devolution'. Now that there is no danger of the Assembly rolling towards any concessions to the nationalists, he hopes it may roll some way back to Stormont. Thus Paisley has worked with the Alliance to set up the committee structure of the Assembly, showing a statesmanlike face to the world. When Kilfedder appointed a Catholic — John Cusnahan of the Alliance Party — to chairmanship of the education committee, it was left to the OUP's McCusker to fight the 'no surrender to Popery' corner which Paisley has monopolised for so many years.

Because the Assembly has no powers, and little chance of acquiring any, Paisley is treading a dangerous path. Hence the DUP has tried to use the Assembly to put across its distinctive Loyalist message. It tried to avoid being outflanked in intransigence by the OUP by proposing an amendment calling for the public execution of terrorists.

Prior's Assembly has done nothing to make ruling Ireland easier for British imperialism. But it has provided a useful forum for Britain's local agents to squabble over the best way to secure their own positions under the British Crown.

Mike Wall



The face savers

THE 'FORUM FOR A NEW IRELAND' was launched by Irish Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald in March. He appealed for the participation of all elected politicians in Ireland who repudiated 'violence' — by which he meant the anti-imperialist violence of the republican movement. His appeal was immediately rejected by both major Unionist Parties and the Alliance, and by the Workers Party, which thought FitzGerald's invitation 'inept' and 'unstatesmanlike'. The first meeting of the Forum's backers was held in Dublin in April: it was attended by the leaders of the three major parties in the Dail (Fine Gael, Fianna Fail and the Labour Party) and the Social Democratic and Labour Party from the Six Counties. Three factors prompted the hasty launch of the Forum: pressures from overseas, notably the USA, the economic and political crisis in the Twenty-six Counties and the troubles of the SDLP.

The furore in the USA over the pre-eminent position of well known republican fund-raiser Michael Flannery in the New York St Patrick's Day parade again pushed the Irish War onto the American political agenda. Loyal to his personal pal and close NATO ally Thatcher, President Ronald Reagan issued a stern denunciation of IRA violence. Yet the USA is keen to see some solution to the long-running war in Ireland. The Irish-American political lobby traditionally expresses this concern and it swung into action after the St Patrick's Day controversy. Senator Edward Kennedy, the leader of this lobby, called for US action to help solve the conflict. American concern for Britain to settle its Irish problem is complemented by pressure from the EEC whose parliament has recently authorised an inquiry into the situation in the Six Counties — partly to embarrass and partly to push for an end to a source of continual instability within Europe.

Fraud show

The Dublin government badly needs a new initiative on the North. The sharp deterioration of the economy in the Twenty-six Counties and the upsurge of working class resistance to the government's austerity measures makes such a gesture particularly timely. The mess FitzGerald got himself into over his proposed abortion referendum means that any diversion is welcome.

The deepening crisis of the Dublin government has produced uncharacteristically republican rhetoric from Fine Gael, the party of Partition. Foreign Minister Peter Barry made a speech shortly after FitzGerald launched his Forum plans which one commentator summed up as a blunt demand for 'Brits

out'. This has created problems for the traditional party of republican rhetoric, Fianna Fail. Yet party leader Charles Haughey has endorsed the Forum proposals. Like FitzGerald he is aware of the danger of continuing war in the North, at a time when social unrest in the South threatens to erupt against the state. Hence Haughey has gone along with the Forum, while trying to keep a distinctive position by quibbling over details of its strategy and structure.

Who needs the SDLP?

The common concern of Kennedy, FitzGerald, Haughey and the rest is the dramatic decline in the electoral fortunes of the SDLP. In the Assembly elections last October Sinn Féin surprised the SDLP and shocked bourgeois politicians outside the Six Counties by winning five seats (to the SDLP's 14). Then, in its first council election for more than 50 years, in Carrickmore in March, the Sinn Féin candidate vanquished the SDLP. As Sinn Féin makes its preparations for the forthcoming Westminster elections it is set to take up to four seats. The polarisation of the nationalist community that the growth in support for Sinn Féin represents is a major threat not just to the SDLP, but to British rule in Ireland and to all those — including the Dublin Politicians — who depend upon it. The main aim of the Forum is to revive the SDLP's fortunes by presenting it as a party with powerful friends and influence in the Twenty-six Counties and beyond.

The British government has turned a discreet blind eye to the Forum manoeuvres. Prior knows that his Assembly is a dead duck and he is open to any institutions which give the impression to the world that political solutions are being worked out in the Six Counties. It all helps to distract attention from the day to day brutalities of Britain's military dictatorship. Hence, when pressed in the House of Commons, Prior welcomed the 'constructive talks' around the Forum. He too fears Sinn Féin's electoral advance and would dearly like to see the revival of the SDLP.

The problem for the British government and all its friends is that the Forum will be no more help in solving the war than the Assembly. A war cannot be 'solved' through Forums and Assemblies. The British state knows this and so does the nationalist community in the Six Counties. The war will continue until one side prevails. Our job in Britain is to make sure that it's the right side. Exposing all the fraudulent manoeuvres that disguise imperialist oppression and pretend that it can be reformed is an important part of this process.

Mick Kennedy

LONDON'S HEALTH SERVICE is due to be cut by £27 million in 1983 with a possible loss of up to 4000 hospital staff. For the first time since the inception of the National Health Service, health authorities have had their budgets cut in real terms. Inner London districts will be the worst hit. At least 10 authorities — including West Lambeth, Camberwell and Lewisham, North Southwark, City and East London and Hammersmith and Fulham — will each be forced to make cuts of more than £1 million. Wandsworth Health Authority has been asked to 'find' an extra £3 million by April 1984. The money is to be found by reducing hospital beds and staff, particularly nurses, cleaners, laundry staff and porters. At least 50 hospitals in the London region face an uncertain future. The South London Hospital for Women is scheduled to close and its workload is to be absorbed by other hospitals in Wandsworth. St John's Hospital in Wandsworth is to transfer its services to other hospitals in the authority. The Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital in Lewisham, which provides NHS beds crucial to the borough, is also due to close with a loss of 300 jobs. The British Hospital for Mothers and Babies in Woolwich is also for the axe.

Most Area Health Authorities plan to cope with the cuts by implementing a productivity drive — aimed to get the maximum number of patients through the minimum number of beds in the shortest possible time. But hospitals in London are already full to capacity and chronically understaffed. Patients are already being sent home who, under different conditions, would be offered a hospital bed. A case is being investigated at the North Middlesex Hospital, where a nurse took her mother to the hospital after an apparent heart attack. Her mother was discharged two hours later because there was no bed — she had another attack, and is now suffering serious brain damage.

No right to choose

Where beds are not actually being cut facilities are being 'trimmed' to a bare minimum. Abortion facilities are often the first to go. In February the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department at Lewisham Hospital issued a circular to local GPs:

14th February 1983.

TERMINATION CLINICS — Lewisham Hospital.

There would appear to be an increasing demand for terminations in this District which our hospital facilities are not able to meet. Some restriction, of numbers therefore, will regretfully have to take place. We propose the following course of action:-

1. It is only possible to conduct 2 clinics (Tuesday and Wednesday) per week at present, and an absolute maximum of 8 patients will be seen in each of these clinics.
2. Booking in these clinics will be on a weekly basis only, and if the lists are already full, re-application for an appointment will have to be made at the beginning of the following week.
3. We would like to ask for the co-operation of General Practitioners in screening their patients so that particularly social requests for abortions from women who are able to afford it could be referred to the Pregnancy Advisory Service or similar.

This new policy will take effect from mid-February.

We apologise that this, of necessity, has to happen but we feel that our first duty is to our patients who have a real problem, and we cannot allow our work to be swamped by abortion cases.

Lewisham's Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department is being swamped with abortion cases for one simple reason. The hospital that previously dealt with most of the area's abortions — St John's — was closed down three years ago. Lewisham's doctors are having to cope with an unmanageable workload. The consequence of this for local women is that they will have to turn to private agencies which will only be able to provide abortions at a considerable cost. This is no option at all for many working class women who simply cannot afford private abortions. The limited access to abortion allowed

Abortion rights and health care under attack

Fight Tory cuts!

While Thatcher rants on about the joys of family life and the virtues of Victorian England her government is systematically depriving women of their rights through the insidious mechanism of cuts in National Health Service expenditure. Anne Burton reports on the situation in South London.



under the 1967 Act is being withdrawn in practice as a result of health spending cuts.

Help yourself

Access to health care facilities is no longer a right for working class people. Decent hospital treatment has become a privilege. Admissions to hospitals are going to be decided according to strictly determined priorities: lists have already been drawn up. In most of the Inner London Health Authorities elderly people have been identified as a priority. In the document put forward by Wandsworth Health Authority on the 'proposed changes in hospital services' we are assured that more money is actually to be invested in geriatric care. But does this mean more hospital facilities will be made available? Apparently not. For Wandsworth, priority means priority in 'community care'. Day centres and community centres are being set up in local areas where elderly people can be looked after in a familiar environment. Hospital in-patient care is only to be provided for those classified as medically sick. This is one of the biggest frauds of all. It means that the responsibility of caring for the elderly is being shifted from the state on to the local community. It means that instead of the state paying for nursing care, friends and family will do the job for free. For the government this means

massive savings, but for elderly people it means a decline in services. Even if they are at a centre all day, where do they go when the centre closes? For their families (which means for their wives and daughters) this means an extra burden which most women cannot afford to take on.

These kinds of attacks on the health service affect the entire working class, but they hit women the hardest. Most health service workers, clerical, nursing and ancillary workers are women and most are already overworked and badly paid. The loss of 4000 jobs in a year represents a major attack on women's employment. At the same time, women are also the worst hit by the effects of the closures. It's usually the hospital facilities that directly relate to women which are the first to go in the cutbacks. Gynaecology wards, maternity wards and children's wards — these are seen as the lowest priority. As small local hospitals are closed down and facilities centralised in bigger district hospitals it is mothers and wives who are expected to cart sick children and relatives across the city — or care for them at home. As hospitals reorientate towards 'community care' it's the women who are expected to be caring — giving up their jobs and their other priorities to be cast in a Florence Nightingale role. Women who can't

afford to do this are cast as brutal and inhuman. 'How could you think of putting your parents in a home?' is a question being thrown at us from the TV and from the newspapers. The caring responsible haven of the family is emphasised more than ever.

Is Maggie mad?

Most people aren't fooled by government pronouncements that reductions in hospital beds and staff are a positive development. What the cuts really mean to working class people is only thinly veiled. But the reason why it's happening — and why it's happening now — has been better concealed. The image of Margaret Thatcher as a pathologically mad axe-woman — thoroughly irrational and lacking a heart — has been at the centre of most of the protests. Faceless bureaucrats on the District Health Authorities — out of touch with the needs of the local communities — have also been blamed. Labour MP Reg Race feels at ease sitting in a press conference and declaring that one of the central problems is that District Health Authorities are appointed, not elected, and need to be made accountable.

But fighting the cuts means a lot more than making DHAs accountable. Health services are not being cut because the ruling class is crazy, or out of touch with reality — but for very rational reasons. With profit rates falling in industry, the government has to put the squeeze on those sectors which do not produce any profit — the public services and in particular the health service. Effectively, workers are being asked to pay for the bosses' crisis, and women workers are expected to bear the full brunt of the cutbacks and closures. It's not a mad policy — it's actually needed to get British capitalism back on its feet. The Tories recognise this and have acted accordingly — but so does the Labour Party. The Labour Party may now be squealing in outrage about 'Tory attacks' on 'our health service' — but they implemented the first round of attacks on the NHS.

We reject both the Tory and Labour 'solutions' to the crisis. Why should workers — and particularly women workers — have to pay the price for a decrepit and outmoded system? The bosses' falling profit rates are not our responsibility. But the services we need are our responsibility — no one else is going to fight for them. In Lewisham, the Women's Right to Work Campaign has begun to fight back against the attacks on abortion facilities that have been implemented. We have launched a campaign involving local women demanding that all cuts and facilities are restored — and extended. We will be organising a series of meetings, lobbies and pickets to make sure that women in Lewisham get the services they need come along to our next public meeting and join us!

Public Meeting

NO CUTS, NO CLOSURES!

**FREE ABORTION
ON DEMAND!**

Thursday 12 May 7.30pm

**Brandron Road
Community Centre,
Brandron Road SE13**

For more information contact
Ann Burton on 01-2743951
or write to BM RCP,
London WC1N 3XX

The coalition fantasy

THE LABOUR LEFT cannot be accused of inflexibility. All its members, from the rawest radical left entrists to the most seasoned machine campaigner, are well prepared even before their current crusade collapses, to launch the next. All the valiant 'fightbacks' of Labour left local councils have soon faded from memory as workers pick up the bill in rent and rate rises and deteriorating services. The hard-fought campaign to democratise the Labour Party has been put on ice as bans and proscriptions have come to dominate the internal life of the party. Yet the Labour left stands ready with a torrent of new ideas. Tony Benn's proposal in early March to dis-establish the Church of England was original — at least in this century — but considered wildly ultra-left; no campaign was launched. The great issues of fox hunting, hare coursing and the House of Lords were given their annual airing. But a much more interesting proposal came from one of Labour's most radical factions — a campaign against 'coalitionism' and the damage it might do to a minority Labour government of the future. The 'threat' of coalitionism was first raised in *The News Line*, then popularised by its stablemate *Labour Herald* and promoted around the country by the Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight travelling roadshow. It readily drew a positive response from the wider Labour left.

Give and take

The Labour Party is unpopular because its policies are implausible. This is why it stands so low in the opinion polls and does so badly in by-elections. The Labour Party has not even managed to turn unemployment into a political issue. In contrast the Tories have successfully made the disunity and the 'extremism' of Labour into a subject of popular concern. The most serious casualty of Labour's crisis has been its left wing. The Labour left has never had any real political independence from the party leadership; even when Benn was riding high his faction lacked support from the union bureaucracy and it had no significant base in the working class. Thus, once the right-wing bureaucrats went on the offensive, the left crumbled and soon sued for peace.

The left's retreat is covered by a cloud of rhetoric about party unity. A recent *Party Unity Appeal* launched by two left-wing pressure groups (the Labour Coordinating Committee and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy) is symptomatic of the left's direction:

'We believe that the top priority for the party must be working for a majority Labour Government and that only a united party can achieve this objective. . . . But without some give and take on both sides the divisions within the party cannot be bridged.'

Not everybody on the Labour left is prepared to appeal for compromise in such cringing terms. But a number of recent events reveal that this broad outlook typifies the Labour left.

The left's response to the witch-hunt against Militant has been restricted to symbolic gestures and empty rhetoric. Both the radical left's Labour Against the Witchhunt Campaign and Militant's Labour Steering Committee Against Witchhunts stopped short of doing anything that would have challenged the party leadership. Neither campaign was interested in pushing matters too far. Militant was primarily interested in minimising the scope of the purge while the radical left were mainly concerned to go on the record as outspoken opponents of witchhunts. Ted Knight's response summed up the outlook of the left — if somewhat too cynically even for some Militant supporters. While vociferously denouncing the expulsions he proposed that his local Labour Party merely 'note' the expulsion of one of its



Will the struggle against fox hunting be the Labour left's next great cause?

When the cares of political life bear down too heavily on Britain's radical reformists they like to take the pressure off by dreaming about how they'll fight the battles of the future. It's so much easier than fighting the battles of today. The current favourite fantasy is the struggle against the Labour Party's participation in a future coalition government with the SDP-Liberal Alliance. Pat Roberts has been listening to them talking in their sleep.

members who was on Militant's editorial board.

The left's response to the Darlington by-election was a sign of the times. The left was pushed out of the campaign and veteran right-wing hacks were mobilised to project Labour's moderate image. The left diplomatically ignored the Darlington cold shoulder while Healey and Callaghan, Hattersley and Kaufman took it in turns to lead Ossie O'Brien around the constituency like their pet poodle. The most dishonest response to Darlington was the editorial in *Socialist Action* which claimed that the Labour candidate won because he reaffirmed a commitment to unilateral disarmament (1 April).

The left's response to the party's election campaign document *The New Hope for Britain* is particularly revealing. In general it was greeted as a radical programme that reflected conference decisions. The left perfunctorily criticised the National Economic Assessment, Labour's plan for an incomes policy. But in the main it was portrayed as a step in the right direction. The left simply concentrated on the 'good bits' and ignored the fact that the whole reason for this document's publication was the National Economic Assessment, a promise to maintain class peace and to police the unions in the future. Instead of dismissing this recipe for another Social Contract out of hand the left demanded that the party's right wing publicly affirm its determination to implement it.

Pressure towards party unity threatens to deprive the left of any distinct political identity. Yet another campaign has been launched by the radical left entrists

Socialists for a Labour Victory — in an attempt to give them an organisational profile. In the desperate struggle to please everybody and offend nobody, this campaign for 'radical socialist policies' has been lost even before it has got off the ground. The left has been out-manoeuvred and domesticated and now has no prospect of influencing events. The inspirers of SLV know this — their objective is simply to give left-wing activists something to do.

A much inspired issue

The Labour left dream of the distant future because they know that their day is not today or tomorrow. They also know that their own future is intimately linked to that of the party. Hence they are prepared to 'give and take' — mainly give — to enhance the electoral prospects of their party. The issue therefore is not whether to compromise, but how to compromise and how to save face. This is why they have made the 'danger of coalition' into the burning issue of the day.

This is how *Socialist Action* outlined the problem:

'The prospects of coalitions and of re-runs of the Lib-Lab pact being at the centre of parliamentary life in the next period is growing more likely. This again will provide the opportunity for the right wing to junk conference policies, on the basis that compromises must be made with partners.' (8 April 1983)

The Labour left papers are full of details of lurid behind-the-scenes deals and negotiations over how a coalition is to be set up and vaguely directed polemics against those who favour this course of action.

The threat of coalition is a perfect issue for the Labour left. It is very therapeutic to deliver verbal body blows against a problem that may arise in the future. It distracts attention from the Labour Party as it is today and the manifest incapacity of the left wing to do anything to influence developments in the real world either inside or outside the Labour Party. The campaign is not only a diversion, it is also insidious. By portraying coalition as the problem, the left implies that the Labour Party is all right the way it is. The left's message is that the Labour Party can deliver the goods so long as it does not enter into a coalition with the SDP-Liberal Alliance. This legitimises the left's capitulation to the right, whilst allowing it the pretence of conducting an independent campaign around a non-issue.

Denouncing 'coalitionism' simply lets the Labour Party off the hook. It provides the perfect justification for uniting the party against an external threat. In fact, as every worker with either a long memory or a knowledge of recent history knows, the Labour Party does not need to join a coalition to betray the working class. Successive Labour governments — majority or minority — have demonstrated a highly developed capacity to sell out the working class. Left-wing Labour-run local councils have managed to cut services and raise rates without any coalition partners. In the present situation the programme *The New Hope for Britain* itself indicates the dimensions of the betrayal planned by the party. The only substantial difference between this programme and that of the Liberal Party or the SDP is a few billion pounds in state spending.

So who needs 'coalitionism'? Probably only the Labour left. The spectre of coalition endows the Labour left with a purpose. At a small cost it has given them an identity that they badly lack. And if it doesn't work then perhaps the struggle against blood sports will yet have its day.

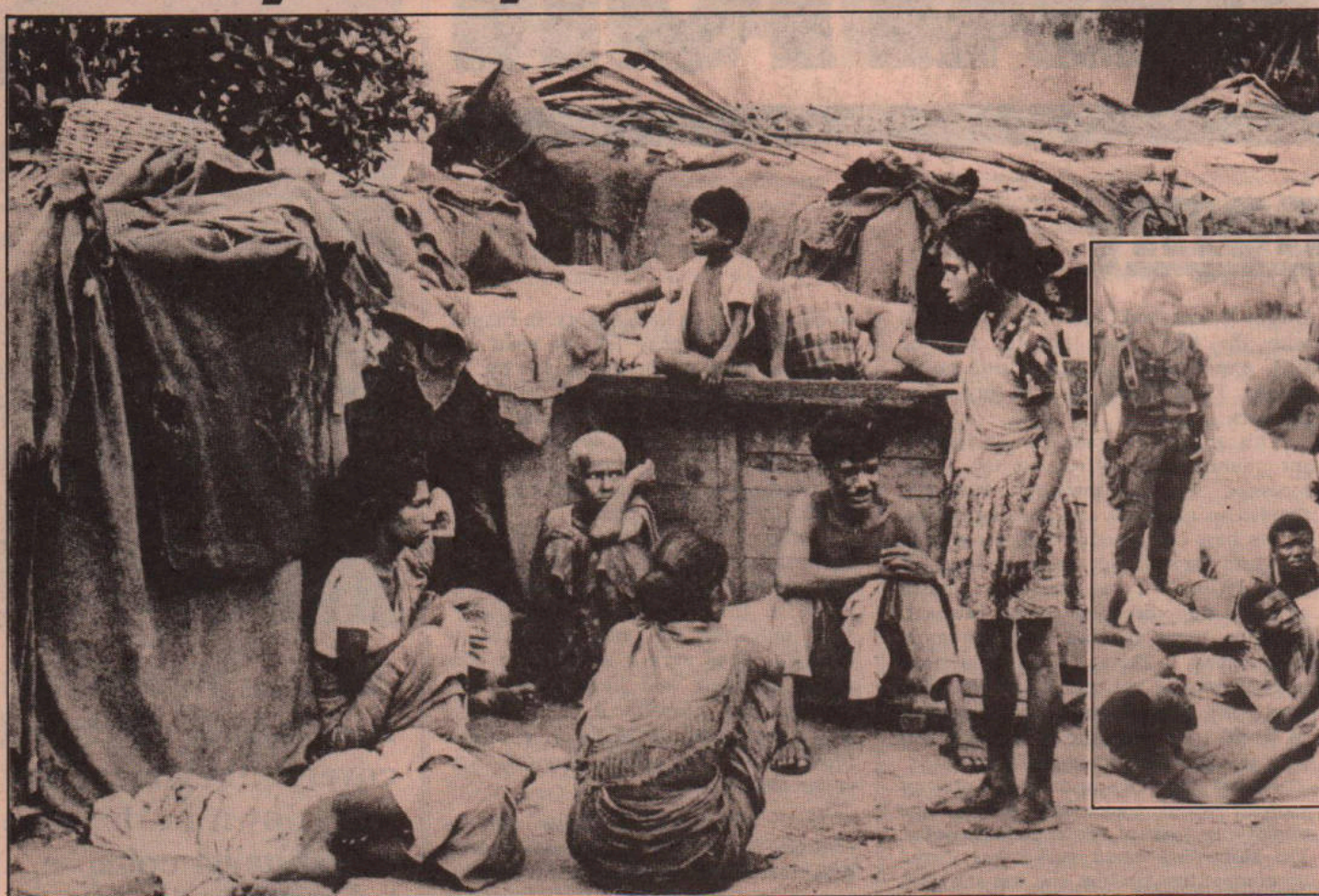
Them and us

The history of the Labour left in the 'eighties is a history of evasions. Ever since the election of the Thatcher Government the Labour left has devoted its energies to pushing the party machine in a left-wing direction. While millions of workers were thrown on the dole and those in employment were subjected to a ruthless attack, the left conducted a campaign on party democracy and for a different deputy leader. For three years the left has spent its time on bureaucratic manoeuvring and the passing of resolutions and more resolutions. The result is that the Labour Party today is as undemocratic and as much under the thumb of the trade union bureaucracy and parliamentary careerists as it was on the day it was founded.

It is a measure of the Labour left's irrelevance that it has to invent the issue of coalitionism. This campaign reveals that the left's loyalty is primarily to itself; it shows that to ensure its survival the left is prepared to go along with a programme directed against workers' interests. *Loyalty to Labour or loyalty to the working class?* The Labour left's response leaves no ambiguity.

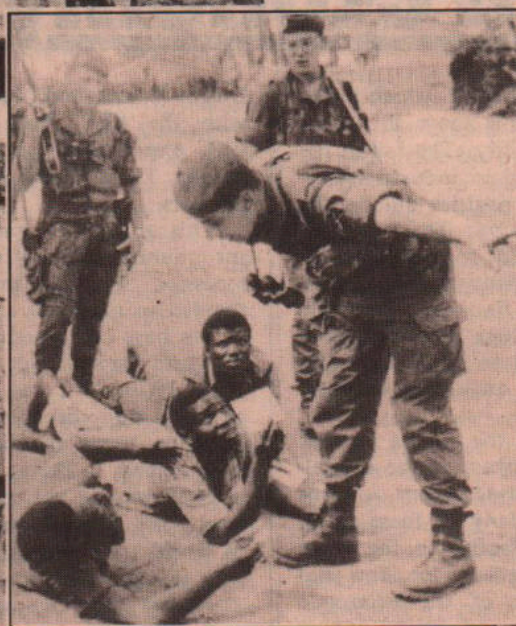
A series of diversions is all the Labour left has to offer the working class. The left has no distinct political alternative to the policies of the Social Contract. The campaign against 'coalitionism' is one more compelling reason for active workers to shake off the yoke of Labour. *Loyalty to Labour or loyalty to the working class?* Revolutionary communists recognise only one interest — the independent interests of the working class. There are too many real dangers facing our class to waste time and energy tilting at windmills. Join our ranks and fight for workers' rights!

Africa, Asia, and Latin America



The impact of the world recession in the West is everywhere apparent in the burgeoning militarism that accompanies de-industrialisation and mass unemployment in every imperialist country. For the Third World the recession brings even more poverty and disease — and the constant threat of military coercion.

Yet while the West slides steadily down the road to ruin, all the pundits are speculating about recovery. Both Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher have proclaimed the end of the recession. The captains of banking and industry are less sanguine about their prospects. On the following page, Frank Richards shows that all the signs point to a deeper slump, not an



upturn in the world economy.

Below and on Page 13 we examine what the recession means for the countries of the backward capitalist world. Here Helen Swift reveals the general trend towards economic collapse and the immiseration of the masses. Overleaf John Johnson looks at the particular case of Ethiopia to show that imperialism is responsible for the famine that stalks Africa in 1983. On Page 14 Bob Radcliffe examines the crisis in Zimbabwe and the consequences of Mugabe's compromises with imperialism.

IMPOVERISHMENT AND WAR

NOBODY KNOWS the exact magnitude of the Third World's debt. It has been estimated that the total debt of the non-oil producing backward capitalist countries is in the region of \$640 billion. In effect this means that Western banks have a claim over a significant amount of the surplus value produced by the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Mexico, for example, will pay almost \$200 million in fees alone for rescheduling its debt. Other Latin American countries — Brazil, Argentina and Peru — face the prospect of handing over a considerable portion of what they produce in the form of interest payments.

The 40 countries that are unable to meet their debts remain very much under the thumbs of the Western banks. These banks, organised through imperialist agencies like the International Monetary Fund, are able to exert considerable leverage over the economic and political life of debtor nations. Even a relatively powerful country like Brazil is forced to step into line and meet the terms laid down by its creditors.

The trade rip-off

The Third World has been badly hit by reductions in income from its agricultural produce, raw materials and minerals. While the prices of Western industrial goods have been rising the prices of Third World commodities have been falling. Industrial stagnation has reduced the demand for raw materials and has pushed prices down. Between 1972 and 1982 the terms of trade for the Third World worsened by 19 per cent. For non-oil exporters in the Third World the situation has been worse still. In 1981 their terms of trade were 30 per cent worse than a decade earlier.

In 1982 world demand for the commodities of the Third World declined for the third consecutive year. The

prices of certain metals in 1982 were less than half the levels of 1980, and in real terms even lower than the price levels of 1930. Thus backward capitalist countries are receiving less for the wealth they produce than ever before.

This sharp fall in commodity prices has impaired the ability of Third World countries to repay their debts. They have become more vulnerable to foreign pressure and domination. To make matters worse the imperialist countries have imposed a series of protectionist measures to keep out imports from Third World countries. Thus the Third World is forced to pay a disproportionate price for the crisis in world trade. Whilst the volume of world trade fell by two per cent in 1982, Third World exports declined by five per cent.

Starvation and coercion

Even in the 'sixties and 'seventies, when certain backward capitalist countries experienced industrial growth, the vast majority of the population remained in a state of permanent impoverishment. Since 1979 the situation has taken a drastic turn for the worse. Imperialist domination has brought millions to destitution and starvation. The crisis of agriculture has intensified and the output of food has fallen behind population growth. In 80 backward capitalist countries in 1975 more than 10 per cent of the population suffered from malnutrition — in 49 countries the level was above 15 per cent. The World Bank today estimates that 600 million people are living on the verge of starvation. Something like 40 million people will die of hunger in Third World countries this year.

Direct intervention

Recession and intensifying imperialist rivalries force the Western powers to

tighten the screws on backward capitalist countries. The backward capitalist countries provide the most important markets for the exports of Western goods and capital. Control over these markets has become essential for any imperialist power trying to survive the depression.

All the imperialist powers are determined to establish their distinct spheres of influence in the Third World. Their aim is to use its resources and markets to bolster up the faltering imperialist economies. Japan has been particularly successful in this enterprise. Japan has managed to carve out the so-called 'yen-block' — an important sphere of influence in South-East Asia. These countries provide Japan with its most important market, as well as providing raw materials for Japanese industry. Japanese imperialists have even transferred many of their labour-intensive operations to countries like South Korea and the Philippines and managed to establish a division of labour greatly in favour of Tokyo.

France has been active in shoring up



its 'franc-zone' in Africa while West German imperialism has been strengthening its influence around the globe. The rules of 'fair play', 'civil liberties' and 'human rights' do not obtain in backward capitalist countries. All obstacles to profit-making can be ruthlessly destroyed. That's why the backward capitalist countries have become the main battleground for imperialist rivalries and the graveyard for millions.

The underlying trend is towards greater and greater intervention in the Third World. The precedent is set by the Western banks which carefully supervise and direct the economies of debtors in their own interest. But with the deepening of depression more active forms of oppression will become the norm. Direct military interference will be necessary to assert control over markets, investments and raw material sources as well as to keep imperialist rivals at bay. Britain's war against Argentina sets the trend: all the big powers are ready to mobilise task forces to assert their imperialist interests around the world. The USA has its Rapid Deployment Force in an advanced state of preparedness to impose the US will in the Middle East. Other American forces supervise mass terror in El Salvador and increasingly inside Nicaragua. In Southern Africa Mugabe's murderous 5th Battalion in Matabeleland and Botha's troops in Namibia, Angola and Mozambique all help to keep the region secure for imperialist domination.

The growing war drive can only be stopped by the united struggle of the impoverished masses of backward capitalist countries and the Western working class. The alternative is genocide on a scale that will make the Second World War look like a small skirmish. This is the real price of capitalist recovery — we simply cannot afford to pay it.

STAGNATION

World economy.

THE WORLD RECESSION which began in the early 'seventies is above all a crisis of capitalist profitability. The fall in the rate of profit has led to industrial stagnation and growing rivalries among the major capitalist powers. The capitalist class is not prepared to invest in industry until profitability has been restored. Unable to find any domestic solutions, the capitalists of every major country have turned towards the world market to solve the crisis at their competitors' expense.

Since the onset of the crisis a number of steps have been taken by the capitalist class to curb the tendency towards economic collapse. Many of these measures have proved effective in the short term and help to explain the slow and protracted character of the economic decline. Credit, trade and capital export have proved the most effective means of forestalling the effects of the recession.

Credit expansion

The extension of credit has allowed many unprofitable enterprises to stay in business during the 'seventies. Even more important was the global banking operation through which imperialist banks gave loans to the Third World countries for the purpose of purchasing the manufactured goods of Europe, Japan and the United States. The opening up of new markets in the Third World allowed imperialist industries to maintain their level of output and helped avert industrial collapse.

This operation led to a tremendous extension of loans and created a massive debt problem for Third World countries. Forty Third World countries face the imminent prospect of bankruptcy — they have not been able to pay the \$280 billion that was due to Western banks. Thus the extension of credit can no longer create a market for Western goods. Indeed the backward capitalist countries have a major problem on their hands to avert economic collapse and meet the demands of Western banks.

The boom in short-term loans has only caused more long-term problems. Borrowed money may have given industrial output a transient boost, but it has created problems of its own — a potential banking collapse now looms over the imperialist world. The Economist Intelligence Unit's *World Outlook* for 1983 summarised the situation: 'The international banking system is not fundamentally sound. In the absence of effective international controls, it has been operated so recklessly as to bring the Western world to the brink of catastrophe, of a financial collapse which would effect the real economy as drastically as the 1929 Wall Street crash.'

Inside the imperialist countries the extension of credit can have only a minimal impact on industry. It can increase consumer spending but not the volume of investment. As long as the crisis of profitability continues capitalists will not take up credit for the purposes of investment.

Trade

The extension of trade has allowed output to be maintained. Throughout the 'seventies trade grew faster than output. During this period the Third World, particularly the oil-producing countries, emerged as the main markets for the commodities of Western industry. The largest slice of Japan's trade — \$75 billion — is with the Far East. This is 25 per cent higher than trade with the

United States and three times the total with the EEC. Both the US and the EEC export more manufactured goods to the Third World than to any other markets.

This growth in trade had an important countervailing effect on the world recession in the 'seventies. However, the fall in oil prices and growing indebtedness have combined to limit the growth of world trade. Trade began to level off after 1979, and in 1982 the volume of world trade declined by two per cent. In value terms the fall was even more pronounced — the value of world trade in 1982 was six per cent below the 1981 level. The present period of stagnation of world trade has already lasted longer than any downturn since the 'thirties.

Rather than acting as the motor of growth, world trade now reflects the underlying crisis of the imperialist order. The shrivelling world market has stirred up competitive rivalries and has strengthened the trend towards trade war.

Capital exports

The export of capital is the traditional mechanism for counteracting the effects of falling profitability. To compensate for the lack of profitable investment opportunities in the domestic economy, the bosses export capital abroad. In this way they can appropriate the surplus value produced in other parts of the world. The export of capital is particularly important for weak imperialist countries such as Britain. As British industry has stagnated, capital exports have increased. British imperialism has become a parasite that survives through feeding off the wealth produced in other parts of the world.

Recently *The Economist* warned those who criticised the export of British capital abroad that business was business: 'If British companies and British investors (eg pension funds, insurance companies and unit trusts) could find more growth and better profits in Britain than they have, there would be less incentive to go abroad. Given that profits are so low, it will be a blessing that income from these foreign assets has been built up to pay the pensions of workers who might have to retire early here as the factory closes down' (19 April).

Capital exports can stem the tide of collapse but only at the expense of turning imperialist powers into *rentier* states. It is an admission of the weakness of the domestic economy and the failure of government policy to restore profitability.

Deflation

Deflationary measures, especially since 1979, have failed to restore profitability. The aim of deflation has been to raise the general rate of profit by allowing the less productive enterprises to go bankrupt. In terms of bankruptcies they have succeeded: last year, in the US alone, more than 24 000 firms went out of business. However deflation has not succeeded in raising profitability — it has only made industrial stagnation worse. Since 1979 industrial output in imperialist countries has barely risen. In most countries it has fallen to the levels of 1976. In the weaker imperialist countries deflation has simply devastated whole industries and regions. The output of British manufacturing industry at the end of 1982 was 15 per cent below the 1979 level.

Industrial collapse and record low profit levels forced the capitalist class

to cut back on its investments. In France, industrial investment fell by eight per cent last year. In Britain it fell by 7.5 per cent and investment in 1982 was lower than in any year since 1964. Even Japan, the most dynamic of the imperialist powers, is expected to reduce its investments in manufacturing industry by eight per cent this year.

Deflation has not been able to clear the way for an industrial upturn because the capitalist class is not prepared to invest in the restructuring of industry. Most industries are running way below capacity. Thus even a recovery in consumer spending will have little effect on boosting investment in industry. One report noted the likely effect of this problem on the much vaunted American recovery:

Some US economists believe that the corporate sector has so much unused capacity lying around that a modest recovery that is shaping up for 1983 will be insufficient to stimulate much growth in capital expenditure.' (EIU, *USA Annual Supplement* 1982)

Austerity

Austerity programmes have proved the only reliable method of mitigating the effects of the recession. Austerity has driven down the living standards of the working class and has allowed the bosses to increase their appropriation of surplus value. The rise of mass unemployment has been a powerful weapon to discipline the proletariat. So far the strength of basic trade union organisation has provided the only limited defence of the working class against attacks on living standards. From the point of view of the ruling class there is much more scope for driving down wages below the value of labour power. To assist 'recovery' they will want to cut state spending on social services even more — especially outlays on dole money and other benefits.

While austerity can and will be stepped up to the benefit of the capitalist class, on its own it is insufficient to restore profitability. Attacks on the working class are necessary, but not in themselves sufficient for overcoming the recession. To restore profitability the fundamental structures of capital have to be reorganised on a global scale.

The myth of recovery

The capitalist class faces a stormy course to recovery. Industrial stagnation, falling investments, decline in world trade and the near collapse of the credit system create insurmountable obstacles to recovery in the short or even medium term. Since the 'seventies many of the counter-crisis measures have been used up and can no longer stimulate production. When the economic commentators today talk of 'recovery', they mean any slowing down in the pace of collapse. Plans for recovery are entirely based on increasing consumer spending through a modified process of reflation. This is not so much a conscious strategy as a response to the devastation caused by deflation. One report motivated reflation in a spirit of near-despair:

'Whatever the long term solution to the central problem of economic management in the West, the balance of advantage in the immediate future favours today a risk with inflation, because the recession is feeding on itself, in a most dangerous way.' (EIU, *World Outlook* 1983 p10)

American imperialism has taken a 'risk



“when Thatcher and Reagan talk about ‘recovery’, they mean any slow down in the pace of capitalist collapse... in reality the present period is not a prelude to recovery but the beginning of a protracted recession”

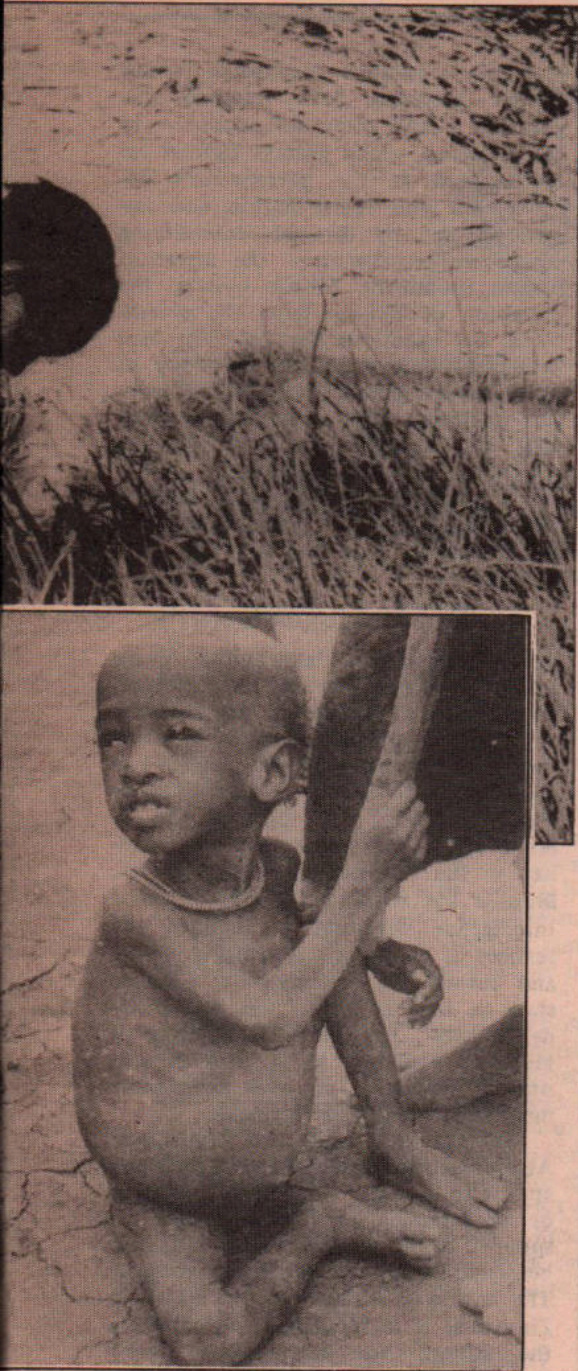
with inflation' by having a budget deficit of around \$200 billion this year. This will stimulate spending and trade, but will not help alter the crisis-ridden structure of its industry.

The same pattern is to be observed in Britain. February's *Barclay's Industrial Survey* looks to a lead 'given by consumer-orientated areas of the electrical/electronic, furniture, textiles, chemical, motor and construction industries'. Growth of consumer-orientated output will help slow down the process of stagnation, but because of its marginal effects it cannot provide the basis for sustained recovery in the economy as a whole.

In reality the present period is not a prelude to economic recovery but to a protracted period of depression. The measures already taken to stabilise capitalism have only increased the interdependence of the world economy. In the years leading up to 1973 downturns in one part of the imperialist world were offset by upturns elsewhere. Today all parts of the world economy are locked into stagnation together. One effect of the recession has been to force all sections of imperialism into the international markets. For Europe, the USA and Japan, export of goods as a share of gross national product has risen throughout the recession. The present fall in trade hits the economies of all the imperialist countries simultaneously. Indeed this synchronisation of the recession means that stagnation in one region has an immediate negative impact on developments elsewhere.

The inevitable response of imperialist powers to the depression is to intensify their drive for markets, spheres of investment and access to cheap raw materials. Economic warfare, particularly in the sphere of trade, indicates the bitter rivalries that have been unleashed. The present period is characterised, not by signs of recovery, but by indications of the coming struggle to redivide the world. Credit-encouraged consumer spending cannot halt the trend towards depression, economic warfare and war.

STARVATION



Ethiopia

The last famine in Ethiopia claimed the lives of more than 250,000 people. It also led to the overthrow of the corrupt regime of Emperor Haile Selassie I. The imperialist powers are concerned about the new famine currently ravaging the area, not because they are worried about the plight of the masses, but because they fear for the stability of the whole region.

AWARD-SEEKING Western television crews have rushed to Ethiopia to record the now familiar scenes of starving children: in fact the famine was reported six months ago by relief agencies and today it is estimated that three million people are affected, more than 100,000 of them in government camps. Reports from the area have sought to discredit the pro-Soviet Derg regime under Mengistu. The Western powers hope to take advantage of the famine to strengthen their grip over the region, by economic measures as far as possible, by military force if necessary. But why is Ethiopia starving?

The imperialists are hard pressed to explain the misery which now afflicts, not just Ethiopia, but wide areas of Africa. All their 'explanations' divert attention from the responsibility of the imperialist countries for shifting the burden of the world recession on to the backs of the masses of the Third World.

One school of thought has it that the famine is entirely a work of God: there is a famine because there has been no rain. A still more fatalistic form of this explanation is that it is simply the result of the southward march of the Sahel desert region. As *The Times* put it - 'farmers the

world over have problems with the climate'. Yet crop failure does not everywhere have the same catastrophic consequences that it has in Ethiopia. Genocide cannot be attributed to bad weather.

Unnatural disaster

Another theory holds that the blame for the advance of the desert and the immiseration of the people of the region can be put down to bad agricultural practices. The World Bank suggests that the low level of agricultural development, the inefficient use of land and the crude methods of preventing exhaustion of the soil - such as allowing land to lie fallow for several years at a time - worked well in the past. Now, however, the growth of the population has put such pressure on the land that the old methods of land use are breaking down. Land is being used more intensively, but no more efficiently. The result is rapid soil erosion and the steady advance of the desert. The Derg itself espouses a version of this explanation, blaming the famine and the failure of its agricultural development programme on the backwardness of the Ethiopian peasantry and on sabotage.

This explanation does have the virtue of removing the problem from the realm of divine intervention, but the essential logic of its argument is to blame the famine on the people themselves. Either they are too stubborn, too ignorant or simply too numerous. *The Economist* adds the element of the protracted conflict between the Derg regime and liberation movements in Eritrea and Tigre in its summary of Ethiopia's problems as 'drought, war, too many people'.

No doubt shortage of rainfall and military disruption have hit agricultural output. But these factors cannot explain the inability of a country like Ethiopia to feed its own people. While the population has grown by three per cent per year over the past decade, food production has expanded by an annual average of two per cent. Yet the World Bank has estimated that Ethiopia has sufficient natural resources to support 310 million people - about 10 times the present population. The explanation for agricultural stagnation in Ethiopia has to be sought in its relationship to the world economy and in the patterns of land ownership and farming established under imperialist domination.

The myth of independence

In 1880, Britain managed to establish effective control of the region through its sponsorship of the Solomonic dynasty in what was then Abyssinia. It carved up the Horn of Africa between the Italians - who took over Eritrea and Northern Somalia - and the French, who established their base in Djibouti. This balance of power was maintained until 1936 when Mussolini seized Abyssinia and annexed it to the Italian territories.

During the Second World War the Italians were ousted from the area and the modern state of Ethiopia was formed (including Abyssinia and Eritrea). While Britain's former role was largely taken over by the USA, the French retained their base at Djibouti. American policy has been to preserve stability in the area by backing first the reactionary monarchy of Haile Selassie and, since 1974, by discreetly cooperating with the Derg. The USA has not been unduly concerned about the pro-Soviet rhetoric of the Derg regime: it wanted a strong central authority in Ethiopia and it fully approved the Derg's use of Soviet weapons against the Eritreans and Tigreans. Indeed the links between the Mengistu regime and both Cuba and the Soviet Union have provided the USA with a convenient pretext for extending the sphere of activities of its

Rapid Deployment Force from the Gulf into the Horn. The RDF now has a base on the Somali mainland at Berbera, a good position from which to safeguard the imperialist order - and keep an eye on the French.

From the 1890s, the Ethiopian market was flooded with textiles from Manchester and India, consumer goods from Italy and France, and cheap food from America. Exports other than coffee and animal skins were effectively eliminated. The stranglehold over trade meant that the imperialist powers effectively dictated the terms of economic development in Ethiopia. Capital investment, 90 per cent Italian, was restricted to industries preparing primary products for export. Local small scale capitalist production, particularly of textiles, was stifled by the inflow of cheaper European goods. In the coffee growing regions of the south some large scale farming developed under the impetus of the export trade. In the North the burgeoning small scale capitalist class was ruined by the flood of cheap grain onto the market. The British-backed Emperor Menelik preserved the power and authority of the old landowners in the face of the threat of capitalist development as a means of social control.

Bread by radio

While there was some improvement in farming methods in the south, and eventually European agricultural capitalist concerns moved into some areas, most agriculture stagnated under the archaic social system guaranteed by imperialism. The effects of this can be seen today. Although 70 per cent of Ethiopia's land surface is suitable for arable farming, less than 12 per cent is actually used and less than 6 per cent is under permanent crop. Less than a fifth of Ethiopia's farm produce is intended for the market: subsistence farming in tiny, unproductive plots remains the norm. The result is that three quarters of the population lives permanently on the edge of starvation.

The 1974 revolution mobilised the peasantry against the monarchy and the landowners, offering the possibility of a real change in the system of land ownership and the creation of conditions in which Ethiopian agriculture could develop. However, the domination of the Ethiopian economy by international commodity markets ensured that the land reform introduced by the Derg in 1974 was robbed of its progressive content. To contain the social unrest in the countryside the Ethiopian state had to assume responsibility for the development of agriculture. Rather than accepting the redistribution of land among the peasants the Derg began to implement state control over large areas. Rather than being allowed to become landowners the peasantry was reduced to the status of tenants. This was a backward step for

large numbers who had seized land in the process of the revolution. When the social unrest continued, the Derg responded by attempting to force through a programme of collective farming. This only made matters worse. In 1975 the first phase of the coffee harvest was lost because of the disruption caused by the Derg's attempt to nationalise the coffee plantations.

In order to finance wars against the Eritreans, Oromos, Tigreans and Somalis, as well as to buy equipment, chemicals and fertilisers needed in the agricultural sector, the Derg was forced to fall back on the traditional export earners of Ethiopia. The fall in coffee prices on the world market further reduced the Derg's room for manoeuvre. Although coffee production has continued to rise, the foreign exchange it has realised has fallen steadily over the last ten years. In 1980 Ethiopia produced more than 80,000 tons of coffee which earned \$305.2 million. In 1982 almost 84,000 tons earned only \$241.4 million. Earnings from coffee constitute 61 per cent of Ethiopia's GDP. Yet Ethiopian exports make up less than four per cent of the world's coffee supply and the regulation of its price is completely outside the control of the Ethiopian masses. The result is that while the southern provinces of Ethiopia are devoted to an ever increasing acreage of coffee for the world market, the northern provinces remain locked into a system of subsistence farming. That is why ten million people live permanently in the shadow of starvation. The Ethiopian masses came to call the land reform Bread by Radio.

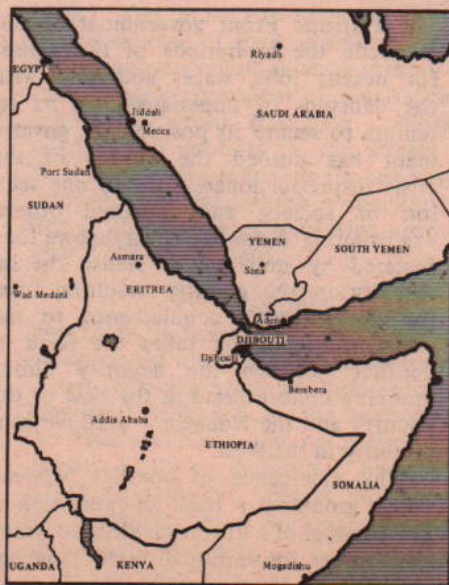
Worse to come

Ethiopia is an important country for imperialism. It is the second most populous black African country (after Nigeria) and potentially one of the three largest markets in Africa. It also has a key strategic position close to the main arteries of world trade through the Indian Ocean and the Gulf. Over the last three years the USA has lost out to European and Japanese traders and investors in Ethiopia. The instability resulting from the famine is prompting growing concern among all the imperialist powers involved.

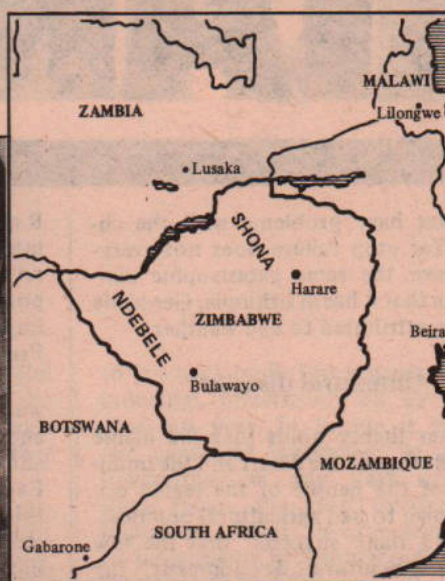
Under the guise of aid, European countries in particular are trying to use the famine to their advantage. Britain has already provided £250,000 for famine relief and the EEC has supplied 15,000 tons of grain. They hope famine relief will stabilise the country and strengthen their positions as foreign investors. Most significant for Britain was its recent success in winning a £25m order for British shipbuilders for two general purpose cargo carriers for the Ethiopian merchant navy. This will be financed substantially through aid: almost half of all investment in Ethiopia since 1979 has been in the form of aid. Liberals and reformists who call for more aid for Ethiopia are simply ensuring the reproduction of the relations of domination that currently threaten the lives of millions of Ethiopians.

The USA has refused to send more aid to the Derg, ostensibly because of its pro-Soviet postures, in reality because of the volatility of conflicts within the ruling clique in Ethiopia. The Reagan administration has concentrated on building up its military strike-potential in the region. Earlier this year the US Rapid Deployment Force engaged in its first exercises in Somalia. The famine in Ethiopia could yet generate an internal crisis which would provoke an imperialist intervention as the only means of ensuring capitalist domination.

However the imperialists carve up the Horn, the masses of Ethiopia will be forced to pay a heavy price in more famine and disease and death. The only hope for the masses in Africa lies through the defeat of imperialism.



Three years of compromises lead to repression and revolt Zimbabwe



Mugabe and Nkomo sign the Lancaster House agreement 1979: its ban on land seizure underlies mass unrest today

The Western media is preoccupied by the conflict between Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and his leading opponent Joshua Nkomo, who recently fled the country, and by the 'tribal' animosities between the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groupings. In fact, as Bob Radcliffe argues, the most important division in Zimbabwe is between supporters of Mugabe's repressive, pro-Western regime, and those who are forced to bear the burden in poverty and coercion.

WHEN MUGABE'S Patriotic Front government came to power in April 1980 liberals and reformists in the West proclaimed a great victory. In the next step we commented on 'the outcome of a successful British holding operation to stabilise capitalist relations in Southern Africa... a victory for imperialism over the masses of Zimbabwe' (April/May 1980). In the event stability has proved short-lived and our conclusion three years ago has become even more apposite today:

'The interests of workers in Zimbabwe now lie in a challenge to Mugabe's compromises with imperialism which mean poverty and oppression for the masses.'

Revolt and savage repression in Matabeleland confirm the urgent need for the Zimbabwean masses to carry through their long struggle against imperialist domination and its local agents.

Mugabe's capitalism

Ever since independence Mugabe has proclaimed his commitment to building a capitalist Zimbabwe through class cooperation with foreign and indigenous capital. His attempts to pursue this course in conditions of deepening world recession have meant a series of setbacks for the masses who fought to free Zimbabwe. Falling prices for Zimbabwe's mineral exports on the world's commodity markets, together with the effects of drought on agricultural production (particularly of maize and cotton), led to a sharp deterioration in the economy in 1982. Zimbabwe's balance of payments deficit increased by 66 per cent and profit growth declined by 26 per cent. Deflationary policies supervised by the International Monetary Fund have resulted in a 20 per cent devaluation and a series of austerity measures: real wages fell by 20 per cent last year (*Financial Mail*, 8 April).

The Mugabe government has done everything possible to appease the imperialist multinationals which still directly control 70 per cent of the assets of commerce and industry. Through the Zimbabwean Conference on Reconstruction and Development (ZIMCORD) the state has promoted joint ventures between foreign and domestic capital, on terms favourable to overseas investors as an alternative to popular demands for nationalisation. However, Zimbabwean workers have had to pay a heavy price for the imperialists' relentless quest for profits. In several past

issues of the next step we have commented on the way that the Patriotic Front government has ruthlessly crushed strikes and denied workers' demands ever since independence (see 'Betrayal in Zimbabwe', No 28, October 1982).

The government's determination to make workers pay the price for building capitalism in Zimbabwe is codified in its new Labour Relations Bill. This gives the Minister of Labour authority to control 'the supply of labour of any class or category of person in any particular area'. The voice of British business congratulated Mugabe on a measure 'which would satisfy his South African counterpart' and 'the most important piece of legislation since independence' (*Financial Times*, 30 March).

While industrial workers have taken a hammering since 'independence', the brunt of Zimbabwe's crisis has been borne by the 75 per cent of the population who still live on the land. The greatest betrayal of the regime has been its failure to deliver on the promise of land redistribution, around which Mugabe mobilised mass support. The government has refused to take any action that might alienate the support of the rich white farmers for his regime. The result is that after three years the Patriotic Front's promise to redistribute land to the masses remains unfulfilled. Only a tiny proportion of landless peasants have been resettled on farms deserted by their owners during the war, and the pattern of landownership established by British imperialism remains substantially intact.

'Tribalism'

The Patriotic Front government cannot reconcile the aspirations of the masses for decent jobs, wages and land with the demands of imperialism. In its attempts to secure its position the government has pushed the burden of the crisis disproportionately on to one section of society and favoured others, exacerbating divisions in Zimbabwe long fostered by imperialism. Hence the instability in the country resulting from the government's acquiescence to imperialist domination takes the form of conflict between the majority Shona grouping concentrated in the East of the country and the Ndebele — a 20 per cent minority in the West.

The emergence of conflict between ethnic groupings is itself an expression of the betrayal of a liberation struggle which was famous for uniting different language and cultural sections against imperialism.

In 1893, after the British defeated the Ndebele, who traditionally dominated the Shona in Zimbabwe, they sought to exploit animosities between the two groupings. Yet it was only three years later that the Shona and the Ndebele united in the first rebellion against British rule. Ever since, the liberation struggle has striven to maintain black unity against the divisive tactics of the imperialists. The divisions which have come to the fore today have their origins in the 'sixties in the conflicts between Mugabe and Nkomo. These disagreements were not essentially tribal, but were about the extent to which the liberation movement should compromise with imperialism. At the time, Nkomo stood for closer collaboration — a policy he pursued in secret negotiations with white supremacist Prime Minister Ian Smith in 1978 — while Mugabe advocated a more radical line. A number of external factors exacerbated divisions.

Divisions

In 1969 the anti-imperialist movement split between its two most prominent leaders. Nkomo's ZAPU organisation and its military front ZIPRA were backed by Zambia (and to a lesser extent Botswana) and launched their guerrilla activities from these countries. As the war intensified in the 'seventies they tended to recruit from the Western, largely Ndebele, part of Zimbabwe. Mugabe's ZANU (and its ZANLA guerrillas) were based in Mozambique and drew support from the Eastern, Shona, area. The Soviet Union's sponsorship of Nkomo and China's backing for Mugabe further reinforced the divisions in the movement. The war, however, tended to pull the different factions together against the common enemy. Although there were regular clashes, and in particular ZANLA allegations that it was forced to do most of the fighting while ZIPRA held back, the two sides united in the Patriotic Front in 1976 which presented an uneasy unity through the 1980 elections.

The decisive factor in provoking the most serious conflict among the ethnic groupings in Zimbabwe for more than a century is the course taken by the Mugabe government since 'independence'. Mugabe's wing of the Patriotic Front won an overwhelming victory in the elections largely because he was seen as the most intransigent fighter for black interests. His subsequent collaboration with imperialism has steadily intensified internal tensions. Mugabe's austerity programme has meant that he has had few favours to hand out; the result of his reliance on the ZANU-ZANLA section of the movement has been that his old supporters have been favoured at the expense of the ZAPU-ZIPRA wing. The reorganised armed forces have been largely based on ZANLA, and land redistribution has favoured

Mugabe's supporters. Meanwhile former ZIPRA guerrillas have returned disgruntled — and often still armed — to Matabeleland, where peasant farmers are disillusioned at the government's betrayal on land redistribution and impoverishment by drought. Intensifying government repression — the arrest of former prominent ZIPRA leaders, the expulsion of Nkomo from the government, the shoot-out that left 300 dead in Bulawayo in 1981, the discovery of arms caches stored away by Nkomo supporters last year — has led to virtual civil war. It has culminated in the deployment of the exclusively Shona 5th Brigade on a campaign of terror in Matabeleland in recent months that has left thousands dead and large areas devastated.

The struggle continues

While Mugabe has launched a savage attack on dissidents in Matabeleland, his attempts to appease the white settlers and their imperialist backers proceed apace. For three years the regime has been trying to disarm former freedom fighters; now it has approved the rearmament of the white ranchers organised in the Commercial Farmers Union. Mugabe has reinforced Smith's Central Intelligence Organisation, retained the services of his notorious 'hanging judges' and turned the country into a police state as bad as it ever was before 'independence'. The inevitable outcome of Mugabe's attempts to stabilise capitalism in Zimbabwe is more impoverishment and coercion for the masses.

What is the future for Zimbabwe? At present the dissidents in Matabeleland appear to lack any coherent organisation or programme. They have simply responded to the consequences of Mugabe's betrayal of the anti-imperialist struggle. The only way forward for the masses in Zimbabwe is to reorganise and complete the struggle for independence many thought they had won in 1980. This would provide the basis for overcoming the regime's attempts to foment ethnic divisions. Zimbabwe is very far from being polarised entirely along ethnic lines. The geographical distributions of Ndebele and Shona overlap considerably; neither is a homogenous grouping and no leader can claim exclusive support from either community.

At present the revolt in Matabeleland is being manipulated by external forces for their own ends. Nkomo, in exile, seeks to exploit dissatisfaction with Mugabe to his personal advantage. But he provides no political alternative to Mugabe — he is simply a bourgeois politician who has been outmanoeuvred. His record is one of betrayal just as much as Mugabe's. The South African government has also tried to use the situation in Matabeleland to further its strategy of destabilising Zimbabwe and consolidating its domination over the region. Botha's regime has given extensive backing to guerrilla actions in Zimbabwe (see 'Botha causes bother', the next step, No 33, March 1983). Clearly nothing progressive can come from South African interference in Zimbabwe. None of this, however, alters the character of resistance to the Mugabe government. This is not counter-revolutionary sabotage of the Patriotic Front's attempts to build socialism, as apologists for Mugabe depict. It is the revolt of the most embittered sections of the ZAPU-ZIPRA forces against the failure of the Patriotic Front regime to develop Zimbabwe against the stranglehold of imperialism.

There is a lesson here for those in the British labour movement who celebrated the deal Britain imposed on Zimbabwe as a progressive solution. Reformists and liberals who congratulated Mugabe on his presentation of his compromises with imperialism as a victory for the masses can now see the consequences of the stabilisation of imperialist relations under the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe. While the masses of Zimbabwe carry on their long fight for freedom, our job is to condemn the barbarous role of British imperialism in Africa and expose its pretensions to a progressive role anywhere in the world.

The left alternative economic strategy in action

Austerity socialism

How can we be so sure that Labour's alternative strategy would be a disaster for the working class? Just look at France — they've been trying out Labour's policies for our future for the last two years.

TWO YEARS AGO the left throughout Europe greeted the election victory of Francois Mitterand's Socialist-Stalinist alliance with euphoria. In contrast the PSF-PCF alliance's narrow survival at the municipal polls in March provoked barely a mention in the papers of the left. This time it was the bourgeois press which congratulated Mitterand. The editor of *The Times* expressed his concern that the Socialists 'should retain sufficient authority to govern effectively'. Bourgeois politicians and pundits have nothing but admiration for Mitterand's achievements in attacking the French working class. Meanwhile the left has gone quiet on the subject of French socialism.

Since the March municipal elections, Mitterand has reorganised his coalition cabinet and launched the most drastic austerity programme France has seen in 30 years. Under the budget measures agreed by Parliament on 11 April a total of 65 billion francs — two per cent of the national product — is to be taken out of workers' pockets by means of a broad range of tax increases, special levies, cuts in state welfare spending and increases in state service charges.

What happened to reflation?

The objective behind these drastic measures is to curb inflation and cut imports of competitive — mainly German — goods. During the past year the value of the franc has declined steadily and France's trade balance has deteriorated dramatically — it is now almost 10 billion francs in the red. These developments in the sphere of trade and currency relations are symptomatic of the stagnation of French capital. France's competitive position has deteriorated drastically — particularly when compared with the much more resilient West German economy.

The turn to austerity exposes the utopianism of the Socialists' promise to solve the problems of the recession by means of a reflationary alternative economic policy. The artificial injection of demand into the economy by means of increased minimum wages and state subsidies during 1981 to mid-1982 served only to accentuate the crisis of profitability. Private investment continued to stagnate and increased demand only led to increased imports of foreign — predominantly West German — goods. While other European governments began to address the problem of profitability by means of severe attacks on working class living standards and jobs, the French policy of increased state expenditure only delayed the inevitable crunch. Now that the problem of declining profitability can no longer be avoided, French workers are being asked to pay a very high price indeed. The *Financial Times*' assessment of Mitterand's budget was that 'there has not been such a single massive deflationary dose amongst the major governments of Western Europe since the 1966 measures of Mr Harold Wilson's socialist government in Britain'. And the budget is only the beginning. Already discussions are underway between government and union leaders over a proposed four per cent wage limit for 1983. With inflation running at 10 per cent this would amount to a cut in real wages of unprecedented proportions.

Since coming to office in 1981, the Socialist-led administration has brought about a remarkable lurch to the right in French social and political life. The



Mitterand strikes a Napoleonic posture as he steps out alongside Marchais in happier times

current shift to direct attacks on the working class is only the most glaring expression of this trend. From the start the national anti-crisis policies of the Socialist-Communist alliance inevitably meant major setbacks for the working class.

Until the winter of 1981 government attention was focussed on creating channels for the containment of the organised labour movement. New labour laws were enacted and tripartite institutions were set up to strengthen the grip of France's fragile trade union bureaucracy over the rank and file. Mitterand sought to establish a smooth partnership between the state and the unions to help control working class unrest. In well-publicised gestures the government introduced the 35 hour week and curbed excesses of entrepreneurial corruption.

How they did it

This was also the period during which the government fulfilled its pledge to nationalise a number of major enterprises. Many on the left took these activities as proof of the administration's 'socialist' credentials. In reality, all these measures aimed to create the framework for a programme of national capitalist restructuring. The nationalisation measures and the injection of vast sums into the new state-controlled industries were central to the Socialist's strategy of rebuilding French industry. Now workers are being asked to pay out of their own pockets for the state funds directed to salvaging uncompetitive industries.

Mitterand achieved what had eluded every French government since the late 'sixties. He succeeded in making the restoration of a profitable capitalist economy a task for the organised labour movement. The Communist Party (PCF) played a pivotal role in the realisation of this class-collaborationist perspective. By drawing Communist ministers into the government Mitterand gained an invaluable ally. PCF loyalty to the government meant the neutralisation of the country's most important — and traditionally most militant — trade union federation, the PCF-dominated CGT.

Occasional socialist rhetoric and sporadic cosmetic concessions were a cheap price to pay for the integration of the CGT. In this way Mitterand was able to construct an alliance between the state and the trade union bureaucracy — a phenomenon previously unknown in France. The alternative economic policy was part of the deal. It helped to win at least temporary working class acquiescence to the government and the bureaucracy.

No room for manoeuvre

However, despite Mitterand's remarkable success in neutralising the official labour movement, the social consensus he has achieved is fragile. The government is coming under increasing pressure as a result of its harsh economic policies. At present the challenge from the right wing is particularly in the ascendant.

Setbacks for the PSF and a major defeat for the PCF in the municipal elections are but one symptom of the swing to the right and the emergence of right-wing antagonism against the government. The PCF lost control of local government in 16 of the 79 cities it formerly ruled. Paris and Lyon, the two largest cities, and the latter a traditional left-wing stronghold, were taken by Chirac's ultra right-wing *Rassemblement Pour La Republique* (RPR). The industrial town of Dreux, 55 miles west of Paris, almost fell to a right-wing opposition alliance of the RPR and France's equivalent of the National Front, the *Front National*. Militant middle class protests in the streets of Paris in the week following the announcement of the budget, were a further illustration of the growth of right-wing pressure against the government.

Union chaos

The trade unions too — the only real social base of the reformist administration — are showing signs of disintegration. Increasing militancy among sections of the rank and file — in particular black workers in the car industry — has undermined bureaucratic control and shown the potential for a working class fight back against austerity.

At the same time the old trade union

structure is falling apart. Rising unemployment and competition in the labour market have deepened the divisions within the working class. Inter-union rivalries have reached a desperate pitch. The recent growth of company-run scab unions and powerful skilled and white collar workers' unions such as the CGC — the *Confederation Generale de Cadre* — indicates the process of disintegration in the trade union movement.

The recent mass strikes led by black unskilled workers in the car industry (see *the next step*, No 34, April 1983) have been characterised by bitter and often violent confrontations between white company-union scabs and the predominantly black strikers. Similar conflicts have occurred in most recent industrial struggles.

The French trade union movement has always been relatively weak — with only around 20 per cent of all workers carrying union cards. This is reflected in the competition between the rival bureaucracies of the CGT, the Socialist-controlled CFDT and the right-wing FO (*Force Ouvriere*), a CIA sponsored post-war break-away from the CGT. Under the impact of the recession these divisions have deepened and multiplied.

The combination of all these factors has created a situation of acute political instability in France. The fragmentation of the trade union movement and the simultaneous growth of right-wing organisations are danger signs for Mitterand's uneasy government alliance. The political structures he has built are being undermined by mounting class conflict.

Stalinism in agony

The problems of the French labour movement are most acute for the PCF and the CGT. Since the late 'seventies the CGT has lost half its membership. In a desperate bid to salvage its position the Stalinist bureaucracy carved out a role as the loyal 'left wing' of the Mitterand administration. At its last Congress in June 1982 the CGT leadership expelled opponents of its craven pro-government line. Henri Krasnicki, the most hardened hack in the PCF leadership was installed as CGT leader to enforce tighter party control over the union. Despite extreme bureaucratic manipulation — all Congress delegates were selected by regional CP leaders — the leadership's annual report received approval from only 49 per cent of the delegates.

Since then, the stream of defections has swollen. In the industrial city of Lille council workers deserted the CGT en masse to form an 'independent union'. Elsewhere whole sections of workers are breaking away to join other unions.

This haemorrhage is only to be expected, given the bankruptcy and incoherence of PCF policy. Its desperate balancing act between its role as a party of government enforcing working class sacrifice, and its attempts to rally rank and file militancy cannot be sustained. The PCF's chosen role as a left front for the anti-working class Mitterand government arouses only indignation and contempt. For the government, however, it continues to tender invaluable service in articulating consent to even the most drastic attacks on working class interests. The PCF MPs' vote in favour of Mitterand's austerity budget was a major propaganda coup for the moribund Socialist administration.

The political crisis in France opens up major opportunities for building new working class organisations based on real class politics. Two years of reformist government have shown that nothing less will do if workers' interests are to be defended. Mitterand's turn to austerity must be a signal for militant workers to act now.

Sabena Norton

Two years of the Labour Greater London Council South Bank socialism

It is two years since Ken Livingstone took power in London. Behind the rhetoric the record of his Greater London Council administration shows the consequences of Labour's attempts to manage capitalism without really challenging the system.



Jobs: the dream turns sour



WHEN THE LABOUR GLC took over at County Hall in May 1981 it said that dealing with unemployment in

London was its top priority. It surveyed the catastrophic state of affairs in the nation's capital. Older industries like the docks have been declining for many years, but over the past decade employment in many modern industries — chemicals, engineering, manufacturing — has virtually collapsed. The GLC erected an enormous sign proclaiming the number of London's unemployed across the Thames to Westminster. Then the level was less than 300 000; today it is nearer 400 000.

The Labour GLC promised to create 10 000 jobs by 1985. It set up the Greater London Enterprise Board with an annual budget of £30m to save and create jobs. Two years later the only real jobs the GLC has created are on its numerous quangos — and it has presided over the elimination of 2000 jobs from London Transport alone. The GLC's alternative strategy has turned out to be not so much an alternative means of creating employment for London workers as an alternative to fighting unemployment.

Market forces

A brief survey of the GLC intervention in industry reveals that it has had disastrous consequences for jobs. Associated Automation was a subsidiary of GEC, making pay telephones in Brent, with a workforce of 400. Since its takeover by the GLC it has become 'a co-operative' called Third Sector — and 280 of the jobs at the factory have disappeared. The GLC also took over Austinsuite, a furniture factory in East London, got rid of 250 of its 430 workers and leased it to a new employer. Output has been maintained at its previous level. This is the sort of shakeout of labour and boost in productivity of which former BL supremo Michael Edwardes or ex-BSC boss Ian McGregor would be proud. Yet under Livingstone's GLC it is held up as a socialist achievement!

Why has Labour's pledge to create jobs turned into a programme of rationalisation and mass redundancy? The answer lies in the 'London Industrial Strategy' drawn up by the team of specialists employed by the Greater London Enterprise Board. The board's Economic Policy Group outlined its guiding philosophy in a recent pamphlet:

'It seems to us to be economic and political madness to turn again to the crude axe of

'Our hands are tied'



THE LABOUR PARTY made a lot of promises in the May 1981 GLC elections. They included

- creating 10000 new jobs and homes
- cutting fares by 25 per cent on London Transport
- halting the transfer of GLC housing to the boroughs
- cutting the price of school meals
- providing nursery facilities for working mothers

It has done none of these things. It made a gesture with the 'Fares Fair' campaign, and had transport committee chairman David Wetzel jumping on and off buses for a while. But the campaign crumbled and the 25 per cent cut in fares was restored as soon as the Law Lords intervened.

As early as July 1981 the new Labour administration conceded defeat over the issue of transferring its housing stock. And it soon backed down on school meals when individual councillors were threatened with surcharges. The housing, jobs and nursery programmes never left the drawing board.

Many socialists were deeply disappointed at the GLC's performance. Labour Party left-wingers who had worked hard to install Livingstone at County Hall felt betrayed. 'But' they told themselves 'what else can he do when the GLC's hands are tied by the Tories?'

Stark choices

It is certainly true that the Labour GLC has had a rough ride from central government. Over the past two years Tory ministers Heseltine and King have deprived the largest local authority in Western Europe of over £600 million in an attempt to force through cuts in public spending.

The GLC has responded to every Tory attack by saying Londoners face a 'stark

choice': rate increases to make up for what the government has taken away, or cuts in vital services. In practice there has been no choice; Londoners have had rate rises and massive cuts in jobs, housing and social services — the worst of all possible worlds.

Mid-way through its term of office the Labour group at County Hall is acutely aware what this will cost in votes. It keeps apologising to the ratepayers: 'loss of Government aid hits ratepayers yet again', says the billboard poster the GLC and 'concerned boroughs' plastered all over London when the rates went up again by 14 per cent in March.

Self-inflicted

Nobody can accuse the GLC leader of being inconsistent. Many do, because they erroneously took his early declarations of war against the Tories seriously. In July 1981 he talked about resigning and 'going to the country'; the following month he said that the GLC would force the Government to back down, to withstand being 'totally crushed into the ground, totally defeated'. In fact all that Livingstone was talking about was the GLC's determination to put up the rates. The working class ended up paying the price for the GLC's refusal to fight the Tories. In two years all that has changed is that statesmanship has imbued a deeper sense of realism, and there is less rhetoric about rate rises benefiting the working class.

Labour's hands are not tied by the Tories — but by the limitations of their own party programme. The Labour Party is committed to economy and efficiency in local government: the Labour GLC has always tailored its demands to what the system can afford. When the system is in crisis and public expenditure is being squeezed, this means the working

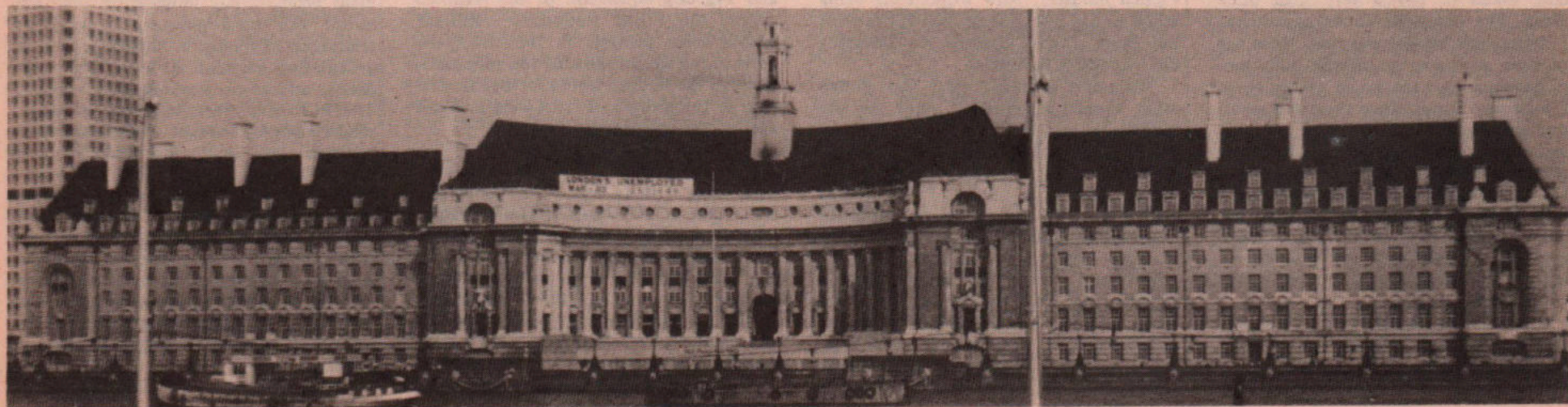
class accepting sacrifices in terms of the jobs and services that local government provides. The Labour left's only quibble is over *how* the sacrifices are distributed: this is the essence of the controversy that has racked Labour groups over the past five years — raise the rates or cut services? The GLC — like most Labour Councils — has resolved the issue by doing both. Petulant condemnations of Mad Maggie, Tarzan Heseltine and the senile Law Lords have all helped to disguise Labour's acquiescence to major setbacks in working class living standards.

The central feature of the Labour GLC is its refusal to challenge the whole rationale for economies in council spending. Bound hand and foot to what is realistic for capitalism in crisis, Livingstone's clique at County Hall is reduced to putting its collective tongue out at the Tories over the river in Westminster, while meekly following the government's dictates. The Labour Party cannot fight the Tories because it accepts the horizons of their system as the legitimate limits on the demands of the working class.

When the opportunity to lead a struggle against the Tories arises, the GLC looks the other way. Labour councillors' only contribution to the long and bitter NHS strike was to appear once or twice on picket lines and demonstrations to have their photos taken. When NUR workers on London Transport put in for a 15 per cent wage claim, Livingstone set a 'realistic' limit of eight per cent.

Workers in London who want to fight the Tories, and defend their jobs and services, will have to look elsewhere than to County Hall for a lead. All the GLC has to offer these days is the faint hope that Labour will be returned in a General Election. Its own performance over the past two years serves as a warning that workers would fare no better even then.

Tony Allen



profit and tight budgets as a way of reorganising the British economy... Profit is no longer an accurate guide to the way out of economic crisis' (*Jobs for a change*)

The GLC's dream is that production can be planned and organised according to human needs rather than to fulfil the dictates of capitalist profitability. This is a dream because under capitalism, which neither the GLC nor the Labour Party have any immediate perspective of overthrowing, production can only be geared to profit. Whether a firm is run by Michael Edwardes or Ken Livingstone makes no difference: to stay in business in capitalist Britain in 1983 you have to sell your products and make a profit.

When it comes down to it, Livingstone knows this. In his major speech to the Council on 'Monetarism in London' in October last year he estimated, as the basis of GLC investment in industry, that the average industrial worker contributed '£160 value-added' per week to the capital's economy. 'Value-added' is a term used by confused economists and guilty socialists when they mean *profit*. But this is not simply a theoretical matter, as the workers at Third Sector and Austinsuite can testify. As the Economic Policy Group puts it bluntly in *Jobs for a change*: 'GLC funds alone cannot protect workers against market pressures... much will depend on the workers' ability to make and sell new products'. In capitalist society there is no escaping the laws of the capitalist market. GLC cooperatives are part of the same economy as BL and BSC. In conditions of recession the same harsh realities cannot be evaded: secure jobs, decent wages and conditions don't mix with capitalist profitability. Hence Third Sector and Austinsuite, the good intentions of the GLC notwithstanding, are forced to shed labour and jack up productivity. It is only a matter of time before they destroy trade union rights, victimise militants and cut wages too.

Popular planning

The GLC 'popular planners' continue to promote their disastrous strategies with a curious mixture of naivety and cynicism. Listen to Industry and Employment Committee chairman Michael Ward:

'The central belief of both the labour movement and, in this instance, the GLC, is that the planned use of resources under democratic control will provide a fairer, more just society than this fair play of market forces. The problem is that the general public — many of them Labour supporters — are not convinced that the economic plans of the Labour Party and the trade unions are for their benefit.' (*Labour Herald*, 8 April)

The intellectuals of the Labour Party cannot grasp the most elementary principles of political economy. Capitalism is a system in which the productive forces of society are owned by the capitalist class; the distribution of the resources of society takes place through the market. This is chaotic, wasteful, inhuman, unfair and unjust — but that's capitalism. Socialism is a system in which the working class owns and controls the means of production and can plan and administer an efficient, humane, fair and just society. To get from capitalism to socialism we have to destroy the capitalist state — then, and not before, socialist planning can begin. You cannot plan what you do not own.

'Popular planning for social need', the clarion call of the GLC employment quangos, is a middle class fantasy. As the GLC's more mundane job projects con-

front the realities of profit-making, the GLC's academics have been given free rein to indulge their wildest fancies. 'Jobs for warmth' — a plan to create 13 000 jobs by insulating every council house in London — has so far created one job for an Islington community worker. But the quest for 'human-centred' technologies, alternative products and novel hallucinations continues apace at County Hall. Of the struggle to replace a system which can never provide for the needs of the working class, there is never a whisper.

'Don't fight back!'

There is however a more insidious side to 'popular planning'. While its promoters claim that it prefigures a free and equal society of the future, it in fact encourages workers' participation and acquiescence in their own exploitation in the society of the present. For example, the GLC encouraged 200 women employed at the Lee Cooper jeans factory in Romford into some 'popular planning' of the future of their company. Now 11 women work for a firm called 'Poco of Romford' and spend their time hawking childrens' clothes around Harold Hill Estate. This is what the cynics of the GLC call a 'workers' cooperative' engaged in 'alternative' production.

Some say — 'well at least the GLC is making an effort to provide jobs in the face of great difficulties caused by the recession and the Tory Government'. They will point at Third Sector and Austinsuite and say — 'well at least some jobs were saved'. This is simply an apology for the GLC's acquiescence to capitalist attacks on the working class. Edwardes might just as well claim as a socialist achievement the fact that he only cut the Longbridge workforce by half, rather than close the plant entirely. Ask the workers who lost their jobs at the GLC co-ops what they think of Livingstone's job creation schemes — or, for that matter, ask the ones who stayed what it's like under 'socialism'.

The pernicious influence of the GLC extends far beyond the firms that it has actually taken over. Now every time redundancies are threatened in London, the first thought of the trade union bureaucrats and the local Labour MPs is — get the GLC in! Instead of organising industrial action against job loss, workers' energies are directed into strategies to bale out their employers through GLC cash. At both Lesney's toy factory and Staffa Engineering in East London negotiations over a GLC intervention were simply a prelude to closure when the bosses finally decided to sell out to other buyers. Workers at the nearby Metal Box plant are threatened with a similar fate. The GLC's message to workers who wanted to take action in defence of jobs was — forget it: 'in the present crisis old defensive strategies need to be rethought'.

The GLC has certainly been confronted by a grim unemployment problem in London. But Labour's strategy for tackling it, through playing the role of entrepreneur on the one hand, or pretending that it is organising projects in a future socialist utopia on the other, has simply made all the problems worse. At least Labour could have done something to help organise workers to fight the bosses and force them to maintain jobs. The very least it could do is preserve every job in any company it takes over. All it has done is to demoralise and confuse workers further and discredit the name of socialism in the eyes of millions.

Paul Bamford

Sharing the crumbs



THE STAND it has taken on the rights of women, gays and ethnic minorities is the aspect of the GLC's politics that has provoked the most controversy. For the right-wing gutter press it provides a staple diet of scandal stories about grants to lesbians, the IRA and vigilantes. For the victims of capitalist oppression and class conscious workers it was initially gratifying to see a local authority speaking out for a change on important political issues. Unfortunately, because this is all the GLC does — talk about fighting oppression — its efforts have proved counter-productive.

Symbolic

The GLC's approach to fighting discrimination is purely symbolic. It does not fight for the jobs, homes and services that would be required to provide everyone with an equal opportunity in life, but prefers to make token gestures to prove its good intentions. These mainly consist of cash hand-outs to deserving minority causes.

This essentially bureaucratic approach to the problem is most evident of all in the GLC's own back yard, amongst its 21 127 employees. Here, at least, the GLC might be expected to set an example by confronting racism and sexism, and giving all its workers an equal deal. But the lofty ideals of the Women's Committee, the Ethnic Minorities Unit and the other quangos contrast sharply with the reality experienced by black and female County Hall employees:

- most GLC cleaners and canteen staff are black women workers on the very lowest grades
 - there are barely any black supervisory staff working for County Hall
 - only 8.5 per cent of entrants on GLC apprentice schemes are black
 - the creche for women workers promised two years ago has never materialised
- Despite expensive trips to the USA by GLC dignitaries ('to find out how they do it') there are still only 35 blacks employed by the 7000-strong London fire service — plus one woman. Black GLC electricians earn between 60 and 80 per cent of white workers' wages. When one worker, Michael Bening, challenged this practice he was sent to Coventry by fellow trade unionists in

the EPTU and informed by the personnel manager that the most he could expect was an 'inquiry' into his allegations. A black pastry cook was recently told by Mr Briscoe-Smith, head of County Hall's restaurants, that she had no chance of promotion in spite of her excellent work. She was told that she had better transfer to the school meals service (where the prospects for promotion are zero).

The GLC is riddled with racist practices, and in many departments the unions collaborate with management to perpetuate the status quo. But the Council has no intention of getting its hands dirty by confronting the problem, preferring to hold its discussions on equal opportunities in the rarefied atmosphere of the members' lounge.

Divisive

At the end of the day the GLC's token gestures make matters even worse for women, blacks and other minority groups. Because the GLC has accepted that there is only a limited, and constantly diminishing, amount of jobs, homes and services to go around, its 'positive discrimination' programmes are bound to exacerbate racism and chauvinism amongst Londoners.

Instead of uniting the working class to fight for more of the resources that everybody needs, the GLC sets workers at one another's throats sharing out a shrinking cake. Token anti-racist gestures combined with acquiescence to cuts simply plays into the hands of the right: a reactionary backlash against 'positive discrimination' policies in all fields is steadily gaining strength in London as a result of the antics of the Labour GLC.

In the context of its drive to economise spending on services, the GLC's grants to women's aid and ethnic minority groups are often little more than subsidies for self-help schemes. Thus while councils cut back on nursery and other provision, the GLC 'grant-aids' cooperative child-minding groups, black youth clubs and 'ethnic' handicrafts workshops. The only people who derive any benefit from the GLC are the middle class representatives of the women's movement and the ethnic minorities who have taken seats on the County Hall quango gravy train. *Judy Harrison*

Working for Labour



'BETTER THE DEVIL you know' is the view of Terry Barrett, Secretary of NUPE's GLC general service branch.

His members, low-paid manual workers, have seen no benefit from two years of 'socialism' at County Hall.

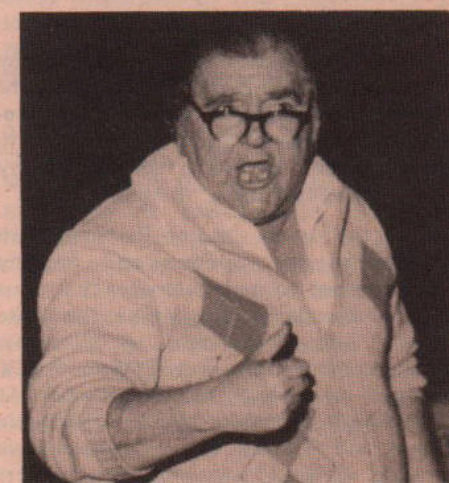
'At least with Harold Cutler (Livingstone's Tory predecessor) you knew where you stood. He was out to get us and made no secret about it. The irony about Livingstone is that we put him where he is today, thinking he was a bit progressive and would do something different. But now the manuals call him "the invisible man". All we see from him are letters like the one he sent out recently saying the Council's lousy 4.5 per cent rise for the blue collar workers "went some way to meeting the needs of low-paid workers".'

Terry Barrett is scathing about the Council's posturing on issues like Ireland:

'A lot of us want the troops out and a socialist Ireland. But we also want some socialism here at County Hall. A lot of what they say about Ireland, peace and the rest is a cover-up for the fact they've got nothing to offer our workers.'

Yellow

He is particularly concerned about the state the unions are in at the GLC. There are more than 17 different unions representing GLC manuals, and the majority of GLC workers are not even in a proper union at all but belong to the



GLC Staff Association 'a yellow-dog union that is so reactionary its journal *London Town* carried a spread glorifying the Falklands war'.

The Association gets 12 seats on the Whitley wage negotiations council, while the 17 manual unions have only one seat between them — 'that hasn't changed either under the Labour administration'.

Terry and many of his fellow manual workers are determined to overcome the divisions amongst trade unionists at County Hall. His NUPE branch has taken the initiative by calling a series of meetings for all GLC workers around the issues they have got to confront — including racism and discrimination against women, as well as redundancies, pay and conditions.

Meetings

Thursday 5 May 5.30pm

GLC Workers' Group meeting

Divide and rule — never!

Speaker from Workers Against Racism

and video, 'I'm not a racist... but'

Sponsored by NUPE, NALGO, AUEW,

UCATT and other GLC unions

County Hall, SE1.

Contact 01-274 3951

for further details

Thursday 19 May 5.30pm

GLC Workers' Group meeting

Women — overworked, underpaid — what the unions can do

Speaker from the Women's Right to Work Campaign

County Hall, SE1.

Contact 01-274 3951

for further details

Sheffield steel

WORLD RECESSION is devastating the British steel industry. While international competition has stiffened, demand from stagnant British manufacturing industry has fallen drastically. The result is over-capacity and falling profitability. The response from the management of the state-controlled British Steel Corporation is a programme of rationalisation, involving closures, a major shake-out of labour and a ruthless productivity drive. In six years BSC's workforce has shrunk from 225 000 to 84 000; in the last three years more than 80 000 jobs have disappeared. Workers in the industry have had no national pay rise for the past two years and they have been subjected to the re-organisation of production to raise work levels and end craft demarcation and traditional safeguards over working conditions. In South Wales, for example, white collar workers have been pushed into manual tasks, and in Rotherham unskilled workers have been allocated to craft jobs. Workplace trade union organisation in the industry, always weak, has been effectively destroyed since the national strike in 1980. This is the background to the rank and file revolt in Sheffield in April.

The strike began when two workers reported back to work after the Easter Bank Holiday to the Aldwarke and Templeborough steel works and refused to accept the redundancy notices which management issued to them: in all, 85 workers were threatened with compulsory redundancy. They led an immediate walk-out and were soon joined by most of the South Yorkshire special steel division: around 8 000 workers remained on strike in Sheffield and Rotherham for the next 10 days. This action followed the reduction of the Sheffield steel workforce from 40 000 to 10 000 since the recession and a relentless management drive to introduce flexible working arrangements and new shift patterns.

Keeping the lid on

Already in dispute with BSC over its refusal to negotiate a national wage claim for the third successive year, the leaders of the main steel union ISTC made the Sheffield strike official. As workers in Scunthorpe mounted a 24-hour unofficial strike in solidarity with the Sheffield workers, pressure mounted on the union to extend the action to Scotland, Teeside and South Wales. An anxious official explained the union's predicament to the *Financial Times*:

'It is not our intention to stimulate sympathy strikes. What we are trying to do is keep the situation under control. But there is a spontaneous movement across the country to oppose further job cuts in the steel industry and anything can happen.' (8 April)

While the union devoted its energies to containing the workers and pressing management to negotiate over the terms of its redundancy programme, the strike rapidly lost momentum. At all plants white collar workers in ASTMS and APEX crossed picket lines to go into work. At two South Yorkshire plants — Shepcote Lane and Tinsley Park — which have already suffered heavy job losses, workers voted for an early return to work. At Stocksbridge, where officials gave little lead and workers' memories of the victimisations that followed the 1980 strike were still fresh, there was a drift back to work. When management announced that 79 of the 85 threatened workers at Aldwarke and Templeborough had collected their severance pay cheques, the union was in a good position to exploit the confusion its lack of leadership had created, and order a return to work.

The terms of the deal finally accepted by the ISTC leaders caused further division and bitterness. Craftsmen in the AUEW and EPTU — the central target of the BSC attack on working practices in South Yorkshire — refused to return to work, and animosity against the ISTC ran high. The six workers who insisted on keeping



Striking back

Three recent strikes — in the Sheffield steel industry, at Ford's Halewood plant and at BL's Cowley factory — show that key sections of the working class in manufacturing industry are prepared to take militant industrial action against the bosses' onslaught on jobs, wages and working conditions. The strikes also reveal some of the problems facing militants in the unions. On this page RCP activists in Sheffield, Liverpool and the Midlands report on the action in their areas. On the following page Mike Freeman comments on some general features of the strikes and their significance for building an effective rank and file in the unions.

their jobs at Aldwarke and Templeborough discovered that they were not going to be allowed to keep their jobs indefinitely as ISTC chief Bill Sirs had promised. They were merely given 14 days to find other workers who would volunteer for the dole queues!

'Vandalism' at Halewood

WORKERS AT FORD'S assembly plant at Halewood, Merseyside came out on strike for four weeks from mid-March over the sacking of Paul Kelly for allegedly 'vandalising' a bracket. The strike had little to do with this incident and more to do with Ford's 'After Japan' offensive against its British workforce. There are approximately one million more cars on the European market than there are buyers for them — and Ford has been losing out in the cut-throat competition, especially from Japanese producers, that results from the glut. The aim of 'After Japan', or 'AJ' as it is familiarly known in the Ford Empire, is to raise productivity by emulating Japanese methods and thus keep Ford's profit levels up. Halewood is vital to Ford's UK operation; hence it is vital that its workforce is subordinated to the quest for profit.

Last year there were 73 strikes at Halewood; the Paul Kelly strike was the eighth so far in 1983. The reason for this is partly the plant's militant traditions and partly a response to the ferocity of management's attacks on the workforce. Ford's plans for Halewood include cutting the workforce of 9 700 by some 1 300 — with the threat of more job losses to follow. The 'AJ' plan also means flexible working, an end to 'restrictive practices', and speed-ups. The March strike in the assembly plant followed a dispute in February when workers were alleged to have vandalised 100 Escorts when their pay was cut as a result of a walkout by foremen. The strike took place shortly before a threat-

ened strike over redundancies in the body plant was due to take place. Many workers felt that the strike was provoked by management at a time when stocks were high and the bosses were keen to wear down resistance to the 'AJ' productivity drive.

Union 'vandals'

Kelly was sacked after an anonymous tip-off to management and on some circumstantial evidence from a foreman. The strike began with a spontaneous walkout from the assembly plant: 3 000 workers joined the stoppage and thousands more were laid off. A mass meeting voted overwhelmingly to stay out until Kelly was reinstated. The company demanded that the case be referred to an industrial tribunal. Well aware that less than one per cent of such appeals lead to a worker getting his job back, the stewards rejected this proposal. After two weeks of dispute the TGWU was forced to make the strike official. Senior union negotiator Ron Todd finally persuaded Ford management to refer the matter to the government's arbitration service ACAS and the stewards recommended a return to work pending the outcome of the inquiry. A mass meeting voted by a large majority to go back. Thus after four weeks out, Kelly was suspended on full pay, and production at Halewood resumed. As we go to press, law professor Wood, banker D Cowan and retired bureaucrat Laurie Sapper sit in judgement over Kelly's 'vandalism'.

Cowley adamant

AS WE GO TO PRESS the Cowley 'washing-up' time strike enters its fourth week: workers have just voted by an overwhelming majority at their fifth mass meeting against any concessions to management's attempt to cut the six minutes a day 'washing-up' time. They won this meagre privilege from the bosses 30 years ago and are determined not to lose it. British Leyland management is equally determined to remove another

small obstacle to the fullest possible exploitation of the Cowley workforce.

Like Ford, BL is a victim of the recession. It is proclaiming loudly the success of its new model the Maestro — but the British motor industry is still in deep trouble. As the *Financial Times* commented: 'the bad news is that all the extra sales are likely to do little or nothing for the trade and industry's profitability' (9 April). Even with both the Metro and the Maestro riding high, BL's market share is still below 20 per cent: six years ago it was 27 per cent. In the same period BL has cut its workforce from 190 000 to 100 000, closed eight plants, smashed workplace trade unionism and raised productivity by 30 per cent. But it is still not enough.

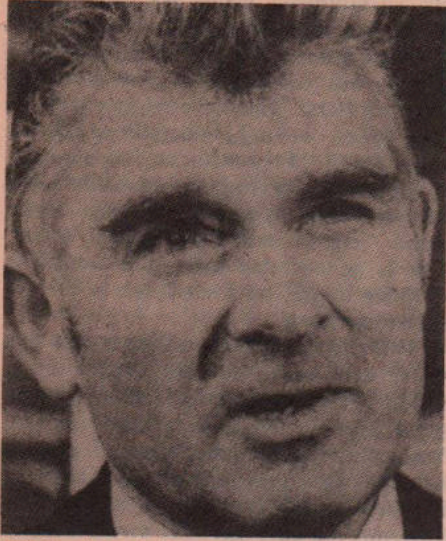
For the Cowley workforce, the bosses' attempt to abolish 'washing-up' time was the last straw. The Maestro production line brought Cowley flexible working, reduced manning levels and speed-up. Following the victimisation of militant shop steward Alan Thornett in 1981, the number of full-time stewards in the assembly plant (the old Morris factory) was reduced to two — nine went back on the line. It was the assembly plant workers who led the walkout over 'washing-up' time at the end of March. They had an additional grievance that increased bonuses paid to workers in the body plant across the road (formerly Pressed Steel Fisher — but incorporated in Austin-Rover since 1968) had not been given to assembly line workers.

Holding firm

After two weeks AUEW President Terry Duffy led TGWU leader Moss Evans into negotiations with management to try to make a deal. Cowley workers rejected their plan for marginal bonus improvements in return for the loss of 'washing-up' time just as forcefully as they rejected BL's first proposal. Austin-Rover boss Harold Musgrove then threatened, first to suspend an investment programme at Cowley, and when that failed, to sack all workers who failed to turn up for work on Monday 18 April. Another mass meeting voted overwhelmingly to stay out. While the bosses and the bureaucrats talked through the night, Cowley workers stood firm in defence of a basic feature of their working conditions.

'We might as well tear up our union cards'

That was the feeling of one shopfloor worker at BL's Cowley plant last month as union officials recommended that the workforce accept the loss of six minutes a day 'washing-up' time in return for minor bonus concessions. The role of the trade unions in the Cowley dispute – and in the Sheffield steel strike and the victimisation stoppage at Ford's Halewood plant – highlights the need for a different sort of union organisation with a different sort of approach to defending working class interests.



Bill Sirs: 'cringing'

THE THREE STRIKES reported on Page 18 show a remarkable determination among rank and file workers to fight back against the bosses. In both the steel and motor industries workers are reeling from successive body blows from management. Mass redundancies, punitive productivity increases, stagnant wages and emasculated workplace organisation are common features at Sheffield, Halewood and Cowley. But workers have still responded to further attacks with spontaneous walkouts, unofficial action (which has usually been endorsed by national union leadership only after considerable delay) and, in the case of Cowley, sustained action against pressure from management, the media and the union bureaucrats. Yet militancy has often crumbled in the face of such pressures – the collapse of the Sheffield steel strike is a more typical example. Workers who were prepared to fight found themselves isolated and unable to convince their fellow workers that this was a realistic approach. Of 85 workers made compulsorily redundant at Aldwarke and Templeborough, 79 could see no real alternative but to accept severance pay. What is it that holds workers back? The front line of defence of the existing system is the trade union leadership.

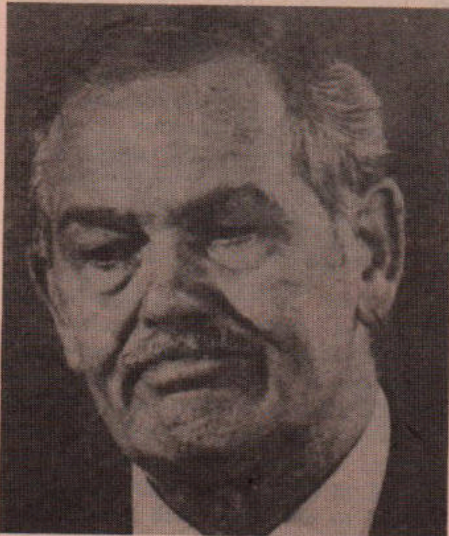
Top brass

The approach of the trade union leaderships to the recent disputes was to use the workers' militancy to further their own objectives – or to contain it. Steel union leader Bill Sirs made the Sheffield strike official at an early stage because he hoped to use the stoppage as a lever on BSC management to press them into negotiations over the union's national pay claim. But this did not override his commitment to getting a return to work in the interests of British Steel: 'I don't want a long strike. It's not good for us and it's not good for the industry'. Union leaders like Sirs are aggrieved that since the recession the bosses are less inclined to negotiate and consult with the bureaucrats and more inclined to impose their will directly. The only virtue of strikes for the national officials is that they may force management to use the mediating functions of the bureaucrats and thus restore some of their status. Thus as soon as BSC offered to consult with the union over redundancy in Sheffield, the ISTC called off the strike.

Sirs also tried to use the Sheffield strike to draw the government's arbitration and conciliation body ACAS into the union's other dispute with BSC –

over pay. This was the way TGWU official Ron Todd finally got Halewood back to work – on the promise of an ACAS inquiry. The union leaders like ACAS because it is a state quango that recognises the authority of the union bureaucrats. It was set up under the last Labour government as a means of resolving industrial conflict. Although its findings are virtually always favourable to the bosses, it gets the bureaucrats of the hook and helps to enhance their prestige in government and management circles.

Engineering union president Terry Duffy prefers a more direct approach to the sell-out. With TGWU chief Moss Evans under his arm, Duffy conceded 'washing-up' time before the negotiations began and only tried to get some face-saving bonus formula from management to cover up the betrayal. Many rank and file workers see right through the cynical manoeuvres of the national



Terry Duffy: 'a direct approach to the sell-out'

leaders. The bigger problem is that the local and workplace union leadership provides no alternative.

Limited horizons

In Sheffield, the local officials limited the objective of the strike to the *suspension* – not the *withdrawal* – of redundancy notices. Militant strike coordinator Keith Jones echoed the strategy of the ISTC leadership: 'We want the BSC to talk to us at national level on the jobs issue so that we can terminate the dispute and have a dialogue to save jobs'. At Halewood the plant union representatives astounded management and confused the rank and file by suggesting that the bosses get the police in to investigate the allegations of vandalism. When the TGWU leadership recommended ACAS – its favourite industrial relations policeman – the stewards could not object.

At Cowley the 'washing-up' time strike came under the leadership of TGWU full-time district secretary David Buckle, a notorious collaborator with both management and the union bureaucracy against rank and file militancy. However, so angry had Cowley workers become at BL's relentless productivity drive, that Buckle had no alternative but to go along with the strike. However, Buckle succeeded in drawing the senior stewards at Cowley into the secret sell-out negotiations with management. When plant shop stewards turned up to attend a meeting between union officials and the bosses on 10 April, they were excluded with the consent of both Buckle and the senior stewards.

The incorporation of workplace representatives into the bureaucracy's schemes of class collaboration is a common feature in British industry revealed in the recent disputes. It reflects the lack of an independent strategy at the rank and file level. However, this is above all a *political*, not an organisational problem.

Save our class

Rank and file activists are tied to the bureaucracy by a common political outlook. In all three strikes considered here militants put forward their defence of working class interests in terms of their commitment to the industry or company in which they work. Thus in Sheffield 'Save our steel' is the slogan under which the defence of jobs is promoted. A leaflet issued by the 'South Yorkshire action committee against steel closures and redundancies' sums up the prevailing view. 'Job losses', it says:

- are unnecessary
- make plants unviable
- undermine the local steel industry
- destroy our communities

Many trade union activists think that saving jobs depends on keeping the company viable. This strategy leads to disaster because, from the point of view of any company in today's recession, exactly the reverse is true: restoring profitability means mass redundancy. It is impossible to defend jobs without rejecting any such concern with company viability. The appropriate slogan is: 'Save our class – job losses destroy workers' livelihoods'.

At Halewood many stewards go along with management plans to raise productivity, because they accept the objective of a competitive Ford UK as their concern. Body plant convenor Steve Broadhead says: 'we are not averse to talking about these changes, which the company now says are to allow us to match best European practice.' His only complaint is that certain 'After Japan' speed-up plans have not been formally negotiated and agreed.



Moss Evans: 'under Duffy's arm'

The same outlook permeates Cowley. In response to BL's threat to sack workers who failed to return to work, a joint statement from the TGWU and the AUEW justified workers' insistence on 'washing-up' time in terms of the unions' record of collaboration:

'Our two unions are completely in favour of an efficient and successful British Leyland. Our members there have accepted low wage settlements for a number of years and have also achieved very big increases in productivity'.

This view of the bureaucracy was echoed

by local officials throughout the dispute. The problem is that the unions' acceptance of past sacrifices only gives the bosses greater confidence to demand even more. They have won big increases in productivity – but BL still cannot make a profit, so they want to intensify exploitation even more. It is no good saying 'enough is enough' – the bureaucrats favourite slogan at Cowley. No sacrifice is enough to satisfy the capitalists' quest for profit. But any sacrifice in living standards or working conditions is more than any worker can afford.

New direction

The king of 'enough is enough' is Bill Sirs. Every time the Tories kick the steelworkers in the teeth he appeals for mercy. His anguished pleading is an embarrassment to the working class. This was his response to the government's refusal to negotiate a national wage rise for the industry:

'If Mrs Thatcher has any principles at all she should say that the steelworkers, who have done everything that could be asked in terms of flexibility and sacrifice of jobs, should not be left out. We are not asking for the moon but for a reasonable increase in line with the cost of living'.

In fact Sirs' claim was way below the increase that would be necessary to maintain the steelworkers' wages: the Tories rejected it anyway. Sirs' futile cringing is an expression of the consequences of the whole strategy of the labour bureaucracy.

The bureaucrats' acquiescence over the past five years to the job losses and productivity increases necessary to make British industry profitable have led to serious setbacks for the working class. Hundreds of thousands of manufacturing workers have lost their jobs, militants have been victimised, workplaces have become like slave camps. Now that the union machines themselves are under threat, the bureaucrats say 'enough is enough'. Yet the bureaucrats continue to exert influence over the rank and file.

The bureaucrats owe their survival to the British left. The politics of the Labour Party and the Communist Party codify the bureaucracy's commitment to saving British industry as its first priority. The left sometimes criticises particular bureaucrats – Duffy is a favourite bogey – for selling out strikes, or for failing to give a lead in struggles. But it never challenges the ideology of class collaboration that paralyses independent rank and file initiative on every shopfloor in the country. It is thus incapable of overcoming the demoralisation that the activities of the trade unions have produced in industry.

The left cannot overcome the isolation of militants who want to fight the bosses, by channelling the cynicism of many workers about the unions as they exist today in an anti-capitalist direction. Instead the left reflects the prejudices of the bureaucrats and blames workers who have lost all confidence in their unions for accepting redundancy money and backing down from strike action. But the real problem is with the unions and their politics. Instead of tackling this problem, the left apologises for the bureaucracy.

Active workers in industry need a new strategy and effective workplace organisation. The only way to combat the demoralising influence of the bureaucracy that undermines every action workers take in defence of jobs and conditions is through a ruthless exposure of the collaborationist strategy at every level. This means taking account of past mistakes – the unions' endorsement of rationalisation programmes at BSC, BL and the 'AJ' plan at Ford. And it means charting a future course which refuses to make workers' livelihoods conditional upon the market position of British Steel, Ford UK or the sales of Metro and Maestro. Most importantly, it means reorganising our unions around this approach so that they fight for workers, instead of the interests of a corrupt bureaucratic clique.

I pay, you own, they profit



As the recession brings a sharp deterioration in working class housing standards two myths continue to dominate the housing debate. One is the Tory notion that individual ownership is a natural aspiration; the other is the Labour Party prejudice that public ownership is a socialist measure. Mike Wall looks at the housing question.

HOUSING, along with food and clothing, is one of the most basic of human needs. However under capitalist society the provision of people's needs comes second to the demands of capital. Modern industry requires a workforce which lives within easy access of the factory or workplace. At the same time, the laws of the market dictate that workers should be housed as cheaply as possible so that wages can be kept down. The result is that since the industrial revolution there has been a permanent housing crisis in Britain. After two centuries of capitalist progress millions of working class people still live in homes that are cold and damp, often overcrowded and in a poor state of repair. And as housing standards get worse, rents, rates and fuel bills are all increasing.

Private squalor, public squalor

In the past, private capitalist entrepreneurs provided most working class housing. Mill, mine and factory owners built rows of cramped, back to back cottages, often in the shadow of their workplaces, to ensure a readily available workforce. In the big cities landlords and builders constructed acres of sprawling slums. Workers paid a substantial portion of their weekly wages in rent for hovels for their families. However, screwing small sums of money out of large numbers of workers over long periods of time is not the most profitable of capitalist enterprises. During the present century the profitability of the private rented sector has declined steadily.

The acute housing shortage that followed the First World War prompted the state to enter the housing market. The state began to provide the accommodation for workers that the capitalist class as a whole required, but private landlords could no longer sustain. The private rented sector has shrunk gradually: today it includes less than 13 per cent of the market. Now most workers pay rent to the council, rather than to a private landlord.

The capitalist class subsidises public housing through state expenditure to ensure that workers are accommodated in such

a way that they will be able to make themselves available for exploitation each day. One principle guides public sector housing: parsimony — house as many people as possible as cheaply as possible. The ugliness and squalor of council estates all over the country are testimony to the consistent operation of this principle. The tower blocks of the 'sixties — mostly erected by Labour councils encouraged by Labour governments — are the most extreme illustrations of the same principle. Ruthless economy of space, materials and labour means a life of isolation and misery, and often cold and damp, for thousands of working class families. The inevitable vandalism and subsequent dereliction and decay have made many large scale housing developments uninhabitable; some have already been demolished and few are expected to survive two decades.

As everybody who lives in a council flat knows very well, there is nothing socialist or progressive about state housing. It is simply an alternative method to private renting which is more appropriate to the needs of modern capitalism. This is why public sector housing has expanded during the post-war period under both Labour and Tory governments: there are now six million households in council accommodation, 32 per cent of the total national housing stock. Housing standards may have improved since the Second World War, in terms of the provision of running water, indoor toilets and bathrooms in most workers' homes. However, this reflects the capacity of an expanded economy to concede workers' demands for higher wages and better conditions, more than any municipal munificence. The ghettoisation of blacks and 'problem families' on the worst estates — patrolled by social workers, community workers and, increasingly, the police — indicates the anti-working class interference of state housing authorities in workers' lives.

The recession has brought a squeeze on all public expenditure and hence an attack on public housing. The capitalist class can no longer afford to sustain the miserable level of council housing it currently supports. Thus over the past

decade Labour and Tory governments have sought to push the burden of housing costs back on to the working class itself. The enthusiastic promotion of 'home ownership' and the sale of council housing are part of this offensive against working class housing standards.

On your own

In the late 'seventies Labour's housing spokesman Peter Shore claimed that owner-occupation 'satisfies deep-seated aspirations in our people'. Labour's 1977 Green Paper on housing explained that this was 'a basic and natural desire'. Tory Minister Michael Heseltine recently expanded on this theme, explaining why he wanted to encourage such natural aspirations:

'Home ownership represents security and stability. It stimulates pride of ownership. The impact of ownership is of itself a stabilising factor in society. To own is to identify a personal stake. To have such a stake is to care more for the stability of the society that protects it.'

In fact it will take more than owning their homes to give workers a real stake in capitalist society. So long as the means of production are owned by the capitalist class, workers will be the underdogs with every interest in upsetting the stability of society. Moreover successive governments have made sure that for many workers decent housing means — own your own. Subsidies, tax concessions, improvement grants, aid to construction companies and building societies have all encouraged workers to buy their own homes. The owner-occupied sector now accounts for 55 per cent of all housing.

Working class home ownership transfers some of the burden of housing costs from the capitalists on to the workers. And the ideology of home ownership helps to reinforce the grip of capital. 'The Englishman's home is his castle' — even if it's a flat on a run down council estate. Home is where workers eat, rest, sleep and bring up the next generation of wage-labourers. The promotion of the normal household where a happy family lives in isolation reinforces the atomised nature of workers' experience. 'Home sweet home' means a stultifying life of boredom, frustration and drudgery for many — particularly women, young people and the unemployed. The cult of home ownership also legitimises the further run-down of public provision. The sale of council housing is the most visible aspect of this process.

Under their 'right to buy' programme the Tories are following Labour's lead in encouraging 'secure' council tenants to buy their homes. Both Harold Wilson's and James Callaghan's Labour governments consented to local councils selling off their housing stock. Many Labour-controlled councils have actively pursued sales policies. Newcastle, Bristol and Nottingham are merely the most notorious examples.

The right to buy

In the 'seventies, the Labour government turned a blind eye to the vigorous selling of stock by non-Labour councils like Leeds and Birmingham, despite breaches of government guidelines that sales should not threaten the authorities' ability to house homeless families, and transfer tenants out of redevelopment areas and high rise flats. There are many examples even today, when Labour MPs are screaming about 'Tory attacks' on housing provisions. In Huyton, Liverpool the local Labour Party agreed to the sale of an entire council estate at Cantril Farm. This is an extreme case of a trend for councils to sell off their stock to private enterprise trusts.

The sale of council housing is part of a wider attack on working class housing which began under the last Labour government and has been accelerated by the Tories. Labour cut expenditure on housing by 17 per cent and reduced building programmes by a third. Both governments have cut back on restoration and repair work. As the better standard housing is sold off to workers who still have jobs and can still stretch to a mortgage, the unemployed and low income families are condemned to the bottom end of the rapidly deteriorating council housing stock.

In April 1983, the Tories' Housing Benefits Act came fully into force. The DHSS is going to deduct claimants' rents directly from social security benefits. This measure — pioneered in the occupied Six Counties of Northern Ireland — will mean real problems for the unemployed, single parents and others who are struggling to balance up their rent bills with bills for other necessities. The DHSS itself calculates that around 65 per cent of council accommodation is inhabited by people officially defined as too poor to afford rent and live a decent life at the same time. The Tories intend to make sure that the state gets its rent money even if workers and their families go cold and hungry.

We want quality

The rise in owner occupation and the decline in council housing both represent attacks on working class living standards. Mortgage payments are a heavy, long term burden on workers, that encourages conservative attitudes. Owner occupation also means the working class directly bearing the cost of repairs and decoration and maintenance. Council accommodation has always been appalling — now the Tories aim to make it worse. Cuts in housing expenditure and the privatisation of parts of the public sector also mean redundancies in construction firms, direct labour organisations and among council employees.

We defend every worker's right to decent housing. This means that we are opposed to any cuts in public sector provision. This does not mean that we hold council housing in any higher esteem than we do paying rent to a private landlord. Our sole concern is that workers are decently housed at the expense of the capitalist class. How they organise their housing policy is their problem. Our problem is to make sure that we get more and better. Thus we reject Labour's apology for public squalor just as we reject Tory blandishments for individual ownership.

Only a society organised by workers, producing what we need, will be able to build the number and variety of homes that we want with all the necessary space, warmth and comfort. But there's a lot to be done today! Squatter's struggles, homelessness, houses unfit to live in, and capitalism's permanent housing shortage — all these are problems to which workers need to develop their own answers.

Problems of Leninism

Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought, Theory and practice in the Democratic and Socialist Revolutions*, Vols 1 & 2, Macmillan Press 1983 pp 700.

NEIL HARDING has written a readable, stimulating book which sets out to defend Lenin as an orthodox Marxist theoretician against claims that although he was a brilliant politician and organiser, his contributions to Marxist science weren't that impressive (Harding includes people like Tony Cliff and Marcel Liebman amongst these critics whom he correctly identifies as Menshevik). Harding seeks to show how Lenin based his views of party organisation and practice on a thorough Marxist analysis.

The book starts out to defend Lenin, but it ends by linking Lenin to the degeneration of the revolution under Stalin. Harding is an honest academic. But he is too concerned with models, forms and schemes.

Volume 1 covers the period up to 1914. It should be read by everyone who wants to know more about the early period of Lenin's political development. Harding captures well all the important debates. He covers the dispute with the populists in 1890, over their illusions in the communal forms of organisation of the Russian peasantry; the debate around economism with *Rabochaye Dyelo/ Mysl* supporters in the early 1900s; the argument with the Menshevik faction over the question of party rules and the Iskra editorial board. His account includes the debate conducted by Lenin after 1905 against 'liquidationists' who argued for a more relaxed form of party organisation emulating the SPD and other European parties against the tight, illegal professionalism advocated by him. Harding explains Lenin's campaign against the 'Otzovists' — a left faction within the Bolsheviks who opposed participation in the Duma elections.

In Volume II, Harding traces three main themes. One is Lenin's analysis of war and imperialism: his discussions with Bukharin and debate with 'ex-Marxist' Hilferding; the degeneration of the SPD and the Second International; the treachery of Plekhanov; Lenin's polemic against Kautsky's ultra-imperialism thesis; and his attempts to build opposition to the war with a handful of comrades from the Zimmerwald conference. The second theme focuses on Lenin's work on the state. Lenin was convinced long before anyone else in the Bolshevik party that the time was ripe for a revolutionary insurrection in Russia in 1917. In the midst of the most intense period of activity just prior to the Kornilov putsch, Lenin wrote *State and Revolution* to spell out what it meant for the Bolsheviks. Finally, Harding examines Lenin's writings after the revolution on the organisation of the new proletarian state, the role of the party, the proletariat and the peasantry.

State or commune?

It is with respect to the state, that Harding makes his most important mistakes. We are told that there has always been an ambiguity in the writings of Marx and Engels on the 'form' of the proletarian state. Is the dictatorship of the proletariat a state, or is the existing bourgeois state 'smashed' and replaced by the commune which is not really a state? Was Marx a centralist in the period 1848-1851 who then turned to a decentralised structure after the experience of the Paris Commune? Is the commune the same as the dictatorship of the proletariat as Engels once proclaimed but Marx never said? Sowing confusion, Harding takes us through a whole chapter on Marx and Engels' writings on the state and concludes that this ambiguity is carried into Lenin's *State and Revolution* and left unresolved. Harding maintains that for the first six months after the revolution Lenin emphasised the creativity and initiative of the 'masses', ie the decentralised, commune model of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Then, when the conditions the Bolsheviks gambled on failed to materialise — such as the extension of the revolution to Europe and class differentiation in the countryside to win over the poor peasant fully to the side of the proletariat — he reverted to the centralist 'model':

'It was not to be long, a matter of six months to a year, before this background model of the dictatorship of the proletariat emerged to the centre of the stage and drove the commune form into the wings.'

For Harding this was the beginning of the end.

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From then on, there was a narrowing of the goals of the revolution:

'it meant that the ambitious project for socialism in Russia would have to be moderated. It meant that a hybrid transitional regime preparatory to socialism would have to be established. Soviet power, according to Lenin's new concept, would have to drop its claim to represent the realisation of socialism and accept that it represented no more than a holding operation, an attempt to conserve some at least of the gains of the revolution as the basis for a future advance when the European revolution finally broke out.'

"Declassed"

This narrowing of the goals of the revolution was accompanied by the narrowing of the social base of the proletarian regime. This became obvious in 1921 with the mass strikes in St. Petersburg, the Kolchak uprising and the expression of this mass discontent for the proletariat in the document produced by the Workers Opposition which Lenin banned. Lenin's response to this was an appeal to the most advanced sections of the proletariat, to create forms of organisation such as the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate which would consist of the most exemplary workers to guide and control the party and the bureaucracy. Harding uses the Inspectorate to demonstrate Lenin's relinquishment of the project to build socialism in the Soviet Union. He claims that by 1921 the Russian proletariat had become 'declassified'. The closure of the factories and famine conditions in the cities drove the working class either back to petit-bourgeois existence on the farm or to small scale commodity trading in the cities, further exacerbating the loss of the social base of the proletarian regime:

'In the past, Lenin had responded to crises with a clarion call to the proletariat. . . Now he

knew that such a course would be to no avail. The proletariat had become declassified, it was alienated from the regime. In any case it could not bring to the Party the skills and expertise it so desperately needed.'

Thus, Harding explains the growing emphasis in Lenin's last writings on the choice of the individual cadre for positions within the party and state bureaucracy: 'Isolated from class support, the significance of personal factors assumed enormous importance in Lenin's writings. . . Almost nothing of his original project remained. He had begun by arguing that only the reintegration of the state with society at large could save the world from barbarism, liberate the proletariat and usher in socialism. Now he was obliged to argue the case, which Stalin was to appropriate as his own, that only the state could reform and direct the economy and society so as to establish the basic precondition for an eventual advance towards socialism.'

According to Harding, Lenin was unable to resolve the duality in Marx's theory of the state. Under pressure of events, he opted for the centralised model rather than the communal form of the state based on initiative from below. The essential connection between Lenin's Marxist analysis of existing conditions and practice was broken, to be replaced by empirical subjectivism — the very same methods Stalin perfected after him. Thus ends Lenin's political thought according to Harding.

Proletarian state

Harding's models and schemas prevent him from identifying the method by which Lenin sought to resolve the problems that faced the infant proletarian state. First, there is no ambiguity in Marx', Engels' or Lenin's ideas about the proletarian state. Marx and Engels never attempted to draw up a blueprint for the proletarian state. What Harding identifies as 'ambiguity', 'duality'

etc is simply Marx, Engels and Lenin studying different practical experiments in proletarian state power; they looked at the forms of rule which workers developed in their struggles and aspirations for control of society. The 'ambiguity' which exists in all their works is a necessary one. Second, in *State and Revolution*, Lenin declares unambiguously that 'Marx was a centralist' and goes on to distinguish voluntary proletarian centralism from bourgeois, military, bureaucratic, centralism. Harding's primitive schema counterposes a centralised bureaucratic dictatorship of the proletariat to a communal, decentralised state. What Lenin sought to achieve was a centralist, voluntary, dictatorship of the proletariat. The cultural and economic backwardness of the Russian working class, however, prevented the evolution of these centralist and voluntary forms of organisation of economic and social activities.

Finally, what about Harding's theory of the 'declassing' of the proletariat as the basis of the final collapse of Leninism? Although the number of industrial workers was reduced by more than 50 per cent between 1913 and 1921, this process was reversed by the New Economic Policy (although unemployment was a major problem until the 'thirties'). Harding is correct, however, to identify the shrinking social base of the regime as the central problem of Lenin's final years. But his abstract concentration on 'forms' blinds him to the solutions Lenin was seeking. Lenin did not put forward the changes in party and bureaucratic structure of the administration of the state as magical formulas. The proposals around the formation of the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate sought to rationalise and reduce bureaucracy, to train the best workers to the highest standard in the running of the state and educate and politicise the working class in self-government. Nor had Lenin by 1923, 'given up' on the working class. In his recommendations to the 12th Party Congress he asks: 'How did we act in the more critical moments of the civil war?' And he replies: 'We concentrated our best party forces in the Red Army; we mobilised the best of our workers; we looked for new forces at the deepest roots of our dictatorship.'

Lenin was a Marxist, a revolutionary whose faith in the working class did not waver in the darkest of times. This faith came not from an idealist belief but from the method of scientific analysis he had developed. Although he has written an interesting text, Harding has been unable to grasp this method.

Inez Landa

Alternative defence

Dorothy Thompson ed, *Over our dead bodies: women against the bomb*, Virago 1983, pp263 pbk £2.95

THIS BOOK is a collection of essays by women historians, novelists, journalists, poets, and peace-campers. Its concern to elaborate a non-nuclear defence policy for Britain is symptomatic of a growing trend in CND and Labour Party circles.

Liz Foley asks: 'are nuclear weapons capable of defending us at all?'. She answers that far from protecting us, they are a dangerous liability. She asserts that 'there are those of us concerned with disarmament who feel we must deal with today's political realities; we must compromise absolute principles if that enhances our chances of survival'. What she has in mind is compromises with the military needs of British imperialism.

Foley outlines the options open to nuclear disarmers: territorial defence, guerrilla tactics, frontier and coastal defence and civil defence. Apart from being non-nuclear, these forms of defence have added advantages which 'any good, cost-effective defence strategy' must take into account. First, they are much more economical and effective:

'relatively cheap and effective missiles like Exocet, and Precision Guided Munitions would be recommended because they can destroy armaments such as battleships and tanks that are far bigger and costlier. For example, HMS Sheffield, valued at £85 million in 1980, was sunk by one Argentine Exocet missile costing "only" £100,000.'

Second, they present the possibility of 'restructuring the British Armed Forces to make them

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capable of defending us properly'. The theme that runs through this essay is that the defence of Britain is a legitimate concern of the peace movement. Foley broadly approves conventional British militarism – while condemning nuclear weapons.

A lesser evil

Others in the peace movement also feel that now is the time to face up to 'political realities' and develop a non-nuclear defence strategy. *Tribune* editor Chris Mullin recently argued that if CND and the Labour Party are to win the uncommitted to disarmament, then they must be able to convince them, that in the event of Britain being attacked, 'the invaders could be defeated without resort to nuclear weapons'. This is not difficult he suggests, citing the recent example of the Falklands War. Mullin's only worry is that conventional warfare has implications that are electorally sensitive:

'It implies the capacity to mobilise the whole population, or at least a large part of it. That in turn, implies some sort of national service for every young adult. CND and the Labour Party should face up to this maturely. If some form of national service is the price to be paid for a non-nuclear defence policy, then so be it.' (*Tribune*, 8 April)

'National service' holds no worries either for another socialist patriot – Peter Tatchell. In a recent issue of *Labour Herald* (1 April) he stressed the need to construct a 'distinctly socialist defence policy'. If major new peace initiatives are to win popular consent, he pointed out, then they must go hand in hand with alternative defence options which guarantee that Britain would be able to defend itself from aggression and 'preserve our right to self-determination'.

Tatchell states that the basis of a non-nuclear defence strategy for Britain could be territorial defence by a citizen's army. The advantage of this strategy is that it would be cost-effective (always a central Labour Party concern) and it would provide an opportunity to 'democratise' the armed forces and create a 'genuine citizens' army'. Instead of conscription, he suggests, a mass citizens' army could be created through a radical reform of the Territorial Army 'to make it attractive both for men and women'.

Foley, Mullin and Tatchell all indicate just how militaristic the British peace movement has already become. A common theme unites the 'alternative defence' movement, female and male. The individualistic response to the fear of war – 'I don't want to get nuked' – slips easily into 'we must defend ourselves'. Individual survival becomes identified with the defence of the nation. The distinct interests of the working class are obliterated in this scenario; they are subordinated with every petit-bourgeois individual under the interests of Britain. But what does the 'defence' of Britain mean? Britain is an imperialist power. Imperialist powers always go to war to 'defend' themselves. Britain invaded Europe in the First World War to 'defend' its ally Belgium and in the Second to 'defend' Poland. It recently invaded the South Atlantic and killed 1000 Argentines to 'defend' the rights of the Falkland Islanders. Britain has ravaged half the world for more than a century to 'defend' democracy. The 'defence' of Britain is simply an apology for backing British militarism. People today sometimes ask – 'will the women's movement and the Labour Party betray the cause of peace again as they have done in the past?' Just look at the 'alternative defence' debate – they already have.

Joan Phillips

A Labour Party front

John Minnion and Philip Bolsover, eds., *The CND story*, Allison and Busby, 1983, pp 158, pbk £1.95

THIS BOOK is an informative account of CND's 25-year history. It is particularly informative about CND's relationship with the Labour Party.

According to both editors and contributors, CND is much more loosely linked to Labour than it used to be. A quarter of a century ago, 'most of those who set up CND assumed that its aims would be achieved by winning over the Labour Party and then helping that party to victory'. Today 'there is a good deal more

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Would you trust this man not to wheel your baby into World War Three?

realism about the relationship between Labour Conference decisions and the performance of Labour governments'. Everybody agrees that CND should be 'non-party political'.

Under the thumb

In reality, CND is even more of a Labour Party front today than it was when it was first set up by Labour left-wingers in search of a popular cause in 1958. In those days CND was capable of independent gestures against the Labour leadership. In a by-election in 1959, CND advised a 'voters' veto' on a pro-nuclear Labour MP, and a leading CND activist stood against Labour in the 1964 General Election. The direct action wing of the disarmament movement was much more militant in the early 'sixties than it is today. It was organised through the Committee of 100 which existed in continual conflict with CND over campaigning tactics. The Committee staged massive sit-down demonstrations in central London – at one of which 1314 people were arrested – and militant raids on military bases. Several of its members got substantial prison sentences – five served 18 months. The politics were as moralistic and patriotic as they are today, but the movement was less under the thumb of the labour bureaucracy.

In the forthcoming general election CND's national council has taken a firmly anti-Tory stand. 'Given the Conservative Government's record we have to create a position where people who support our stance cannot vote Conservative', says CND chair Joan Ruddock. And Ruddock has sternly admonished Greenham Common camper Helen John for her suggestion that independent 'peace candidates' should stand at the polls. CND says 'no vote for the Tories' and 'no independent peace candidates'. So much for CND's independence from the Labour Party.

As CND has subordinated itself to Labour's electoral ambitions, so the Labour leadership has become much more friendly to CND. Twenty years ago most trade union bureaucrats were hostile to CND and Party leader Hugh Gaitskell conducted a vigorous campaign against its influence in the party. Now only a few extreme right-wing TUC hacks oppose

CND: most union leaders are enthusiastic disarmers. The Labour Party itself is now led by a former Aldermaston marcher, and nuclear disarmament is at the centre of Labour's election appeal. The labour bureaucracy sees CND as a vehicle which can win it some of the public popularity it so badly lacks.

The direct action wing of the movement is today safely under the wing of CND. The credit for keeping it there must go to the left – to members and former members of the Communist Party and other left-wing groups, who help to preserve CND's credibility among its younger, angrier and more working class supporters. The CND leadership operates a clear division of Labour. As its spiritual director Monsignor Bruce Kent recently explained to the Socialist Workers Party – 'leave the women's peace movement to us – you mobilise support for CND in workplaces and trade unions!'

At peace with Labour

CND's independent posture suits the Labour Party. Labour is quite prepared to let CND work for a Labour victory now – and let it function as the Party's extra-Parliamentary conscience if Michael Foot ever becomes Prime Minister. That would leave Foot free to renege on his unilateralist commitments and pursue Labour's consistent commitment to British militarism. It will also leave CND free to criticise (if there's still time).

As this book reveals, the politics of CND have changed little in 25 years. The possible consequences have changed dramatically. In 1958 the world economy was expanding and conflict between the big military powers was at a low ebb. (Of course, this did not stop them murdering peasants by the thousands in Africa, Asia and Latin America). In 1983, however, there is a world recession and there is a real possibility of war among the major imperialist powers. Yet the peace movement in Britain remains firmly under the control of a party that has supported every war waged by British imperialism and has participated fully in building up its weaponry (nuclear and conventional) for the next. Read this book and leave CND before it's too late.

James Wood

Family ideology

Lynne Segal, ed., *What is to be done about the Family*, Penguin Books (in Association with the Socialist Society) 1983, pbk £2.50.

This collection of essays by eminent feminists looks at how the structure of the family has changed since the 'sixties and how the ideological role of the family has mirrored these changes. According to the authors, family ideology – the portrayal of the family as a unit with father as economic provider and mother as domestic slave – has never been further from reality. Lynne Segal argues that this 'bourgeois' picture is simply a case of harking back to the good old days when women were confined to housework, and bears no relation to today's conditions. She adduces a wealth of 'sociological facts' to show how the ideas promoted by the Tories' Family Policy Group are just old fashioned Victorian values – which will carry little weight with most women today who go out to work and do not cast themselves in the wife/mother image.

To some extent Segal has a point. The stereotype of the working father, homely mother and two happy kids bears little relation to contemporary reality. But the point is that these images have never fitted reality. What Segal fails to appreciate, however, is the resilience of the 'family image'. Most women may go out to work today and more women may be looking for nursery places – but the fundamental structural importance of the family remains. The family is the place where workers' needs are replenished: where the domestic drudgery of cooking, cleaning and washing is done for free. Even if a higher percentage of women have other jobs and responsibilities – their traditional role as domestic slave has not changed. Underneath all the superficial changes, the basic function of the family – whether 'nuclear', 'extended' or 'communal' – in modern capitalist society remains the same. Under capitalism the family is an economic unit which produces and reproduces labour-power for the capitalists free of charge. The family is an integral part of capitalist society – not a residue of outdated ideology. The fact that only a minority of families corresponds to the nuclear stereotype does not alter the basic function of the institution. Lynne Segal, Bea Campbell et al may think that Thatcher's 'back to the home' proposals are ludicrous – but women who are losing their jobs and suffering the consequences of cuts in health and social services just can't get the joke.

Ann Burton

FREE NICKY KELLY NOW!

Since its formation in 1974 the Irish Republican Socialist Party has faced intense repression both in Britain and the Twenty-six Counties.

Following a mail train robbery in 1976, three IRSP members – Osgar Breathnach, Brian McNally and Nicky Kelly – were convicted in the no-jury Special Criminal Court in Dublin on the basis of signed confessions extracted by force, and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

Anticipating the verdict, Nicky Kelly jumped bail during the trial and went to the United States. As Breathnach and McNally began the long appeals procedure, the Provisional IRA publicly claimed responsibility for the robbery. After a long protest campaign, Breathnach and McNally were released in May 1980. Nicky Kelly returned from the US a month later to clear his name – but his appeal was rejected and he has been languishing in Portlaoise prison ever since.

After serving three years and having exhausted the judicial appeals procedures, Nicky Kelly has decided to go on hunger-strike from 1 May to protest his innocence and obtain his release. Kelly is only one of many anti-imperialists to suffer torture, frame-up and imprisonment at the hands of successive Twenty-six Counties governments.

A victory for Nicky Kelly will be an important step in exposing the common front between the Twenty-six Counties state and British imperialism in their attempts to smash the struggle for Irish freedom.

Gandhi and Greenham

I disagree with the title of the article on Gandhi and 'non-violent direct action' in the March issue of *the next step* — 'Good tactics, disastrous strategy'. Surely one cannot divorce a tactic from the politics and the leadership that advances it. NVDA tactics can never be politically justified by revolutionaries in the present epoch of imperialism. NVDA plays on people's aspirations for peace, gets them to stand up and then leaves them exposed. The political direction is always controlled by non-proletarian organisations, and always results in the slaughter of workers. NVDA is a non-violent response to violent repression by the oppressors. It can only lead to defeat and not victory for the working class. It is designed to get sympathy from the oppressors and other 'observers'. In all the years that the oppressed have suffered brutality (India, Ireland, Palestine etc), sympathy and melting hearts have never prevented the oppressors from getting their way, but have only created the conditions for delaying the eventual fightback. Every step forward by the oppressed has been achieved through the blood of thousands of comrades, never because of NVDA.

Yes, the working class can participate in civil disobedience but always with the full preparedness to disarm any aggressor by *whatever* means necessary. The main heading should have been **DISASTROUS TACTICS, DISASTROUS STRATEGY**.

Jake Patel
Birmingham

Helen Swift replies.

It is important to differentiate 'non-violent direct action' as the earliest response of the downtrodden against their oppressors and the manipulation of this response by middle class politicians. In India the peasants, new to political struggle, wanted to win freedom without violence. As Trotsky commented, the Russian peasantry responded in a similar way in the early stages of the revolution:

'The attempt to disguise its first rebel steps with legality, both sacred and secular, has from time immemorial characterised the struggle of every revolutionary class, before it gathered sufficient strength and confidence to break the umbilical cord which bound it to the old society. This is more completely true of the peasantry than of any other class.'

NVDA was the first step forward by the Indian masses. What they required to realise their aspirations was to move forward, under the leadership of the working class, from NVDA to the inevitably violent overthrow of British rule in India. What they got was Gandhi and the Congress Party: the Indian landowners and middle classes exploited the strength of the masses, whose militancy they contained through making NVDA into a systematic strategy, to strengthen their ambitions for a capitalist India under their control. The masses paid a terrible price for the success of this strategy — and they are still paying it under the rule of Gandhi's daughter.

Around the world the oppressed have learned a lot since Indian peasants first challenged the British Raj. From Vietnam, through Zimbabwe to El Salvador and Northern Ireland, people have soon discovered that anti-imperialist violence is the only answer to imperialist violence. Today NVDA retains its appeal only among the liberal middle classes of the West, among people who object to the growing barbarism and militarism of bourgeois society but cannot face up to the necessity for its overthrow. This does not mean to say that some of the tactics used by advocates of NVDA around the nuclear disarmament issue are not creative and effective — the point made by the headline in the last issue of *the next step*. The problem with Greenham Common is not its tactics, which the left should emulate, but the whole direction of the protest. An effective challenge to militarism must focus on the wars going on now, in Ireland, the South Atlantic, Latin America, the Middle East, not on wars that might happen in the future; it must tackle *British* militarism as its first priority, not American missiles. This is why the women's peace movement, despite its success in mobilising thousands of women into action for peace, is a diversion from the fight against war.

letters

Gandhi and India

Reading your centre-spread on the peace movement (*the next step*, No 34, April 1983) I couldn't help feeling that you supported violence for the sake of it. Although you clearly expose the consequences of Gandhi's politics for the masses in reconciling them to their oppression, you ultimately fail to discredit the tactic of non-cooperation and civil disobedience, because, in the end it achieved for the Indian masses what they desired — freedom from British rule!

Dai Prakash Narayan
Ealing
London

Mike Wall replies:

We do not support violence for the sake of it, but because we recognise that a society which is maintained by violence cannot be changed peacefully. It was not non-violent direct action that drove the British out of India but the threat of violent mass revolt. The influence of Gandhi's politics over the masses made it easier for the British to partition the country (between India and Pakistan) and stabilise a system of imperialist domination that still condemns millions of Indians to poverty and exploitation.

Easter peace protests

I wasn't going to write to your paper, which I bought during the Good Friday 'human-chain' demonstration from Greenham to Burghfield, but when I read some of the accounts of the day in other left-wing papers, I felt I would.

What surprised me was the way they said it was a great success. Well I have been on a few CND demonstrations before and I found this one a real anti-climax, really flat — and I think a lot of other people did too. It wasn't just the weather — that was much worse at Greenham Common in December where the spirit was much better. It was partly that it was so badly organised. I'm not at all surprised the chain was never properly made because nobody seemed to know what they were doing. And then you never got any sense that you were at any one moment actually in a chain. It was just an hour of standing in a line wondering what was going to happen — and then just drifting off asking one another 'was that it then?' When we walked down to the festival site it was just a big field with nothing much going on. And then there was a long, long battle to get out of the field again on to our coach.

Still, I think the general tone of your paper is too dismissive of CND and the campaign against cruise missiles. I agree that Ireland is important but I think it would be an important first step against war to block cruise and Trident. And I think it is important that the Labour Party has now made a clear promise to do this if it wins the election. From there we could move on to getting rid of all nuclear weapons and getting Britain out of NATO. You have to start somewhere and cruise missiles will be here by December so why not start there?

Debbie
Luton

Helen Swift replies

I was at the 'human chain' demo too. It struck me that its disorganisation wasn't so much accidental as part of a deliberate strategy. The CND leadership has become terrified of assembling all its supporters together at any one point, for fear that it might not be able to contain them. With a general election coming up, CND's leaders are particularly concerned that their close friends in the Labour Party are not embarrassed by militant direct action protests, sit-ins in the street or occupations of military bases. Thus all the Easter protests were dissipated as much as possible so that there was no trouble for the bureaucrats. This is what the radical apologists

for CND meant when they said the 'human chain' was a great success — it was — for the Labour Party.

Is campaigning against cruise a first step against war? The installation of cruise missiles in Europe is part of the American drive to assert domination over its NATO allies. They are simply another addition to a battery of nuclear weapons which has long been based in Britain and its surrounding seas. Many bourgeois politicians and generals — especially in Germany, but also in Britain — are opposed to cruise missiles because they want to assert their military independence from the USA. By linking up with this ruling class anti-cruise sentiment — which is reflected in media and public opinion hostility to cruise — the peace movement is allying itself with militarist forces in every European country. Many British politicians in the Labour Party and the SDP-Liberal Alliance reject cruise, but are in favour of Britain retaining nuclear weapons and building up its conventional forces. As the South Atlantic war proved, these have considerable destructive powers, which the British government is not reluctant to deploy. Hence the anti-cruise movement, far from being the first step towards peace, is more likely to be another step nearer to war.

Slanders

The Revolutionary Communist Group's *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* is well known for its low-life polemics. Its attacks on the RCP are generally based on quoting snippets of gossip, rather than taking up our positions as stated in our publications. This in itself is sufficient grounds for any serious reader to dismiss their criticisms out of hand. However, in the April issue of the paper a more serious allegation is made. In an article entitled *RCP/IFM Slander* Terry Marlowe makes a specific allegation about an article in *the next step* No 33, March 1983:

'The filthiest lie in this article is the allegation that "a leading RCG member threatened prominent Sinn Féin activists with physical violence". The RCG's record of support for the Republican struggle, costing nearly 100 arrests including 3 under the PTA, is the clearest possible reply to this lie. Let the RCP/IFM lie machine substantiate it or withdraw it.'

First, it is clear that the RCG's record of arrests has nothing whatever to do with the incident which took place at Leeds before this year's Bloody Sunday rally. Second, I was present on the platform at the rally when the incident took place, as any of the 1000 people in the hall can testify. Marlowe, as the same people might not have noticed, was not present either on the demonstration or at the rally. I personally witnessed Mark Smith, who was pressing for speaking rights for the RCG which Sinn Féin had refused, threaten physical violence against Sinn Féin members. This can be verified by other speakers on the platform.

Neither the RCP nor the IFM has a lie machine. We don't need one.

Phil Murphy
National Organiser, Irish Freedom Movement



Sheffield witch hunt

Sheffield Labour council leader David Blunkett has used the local Tory evening newspaper *The Star* to launch a smear campaign against the supporters of the Revolutionary Communist Party in the city. In a front page article he accused the RCP of being sponsored by sinister 'outside forces' and being 'bent on destroying the labour movement' in the city (7 April). Despite being publicly challenged to retract or substantiate these allegations, Blunkett has done neither.

The Labour Party in Sheffield is evidently feeling under pressure. It has become used to having tame left-wing groups in the city that are happy to work in its shadow and accept its political domination. It is not used to having its record exposed and its influence challenged. The growing support for the RCP in the city has led people to question a council that talks about saving the steel industry but refuses to lead a fight for jobs, a council that proclaims a 'Socialist republic' but raises rates and cuts jobs and services, a council that is an 'apartheid-free zone' but refuses to challenge racism on its own city streets.

Labour's council leader cannot reply to the RCP politically, so he resorts to the oldest smear in the history of the working class movement. Marx, Lenin and Trotsky were all branded police agents and spies by their political opponents; today's slander is 'CIA agents'. The working class in Sheffield will recognise Blunkett's slanders for what they are, and ask only why is the Labour Party so sensitive to political criticism?

Alan Harding
RCP Branch Organiser
Sheffield

Deportation victory

I am writing to tell you that my fight to stay in Britain has been successful: the Home Office has granted my daughter and I the right of permanent residence in this country. I suffer from severe diabetes, yet the British authorities were quite happy to send me back to Ghana where insulin — the medicine I need to stay alive — is not readily available. In fact, you have to be pretty rich to get hold of it at all. To return to Ghana would have meant severe illness or even death.

I would like to thank my friends in Workers Against Racism for all the work you did to help me win this victory — for the meetings you organised and the pickets of the Home Office. I am convinced that I would not be here but for the public campaign.

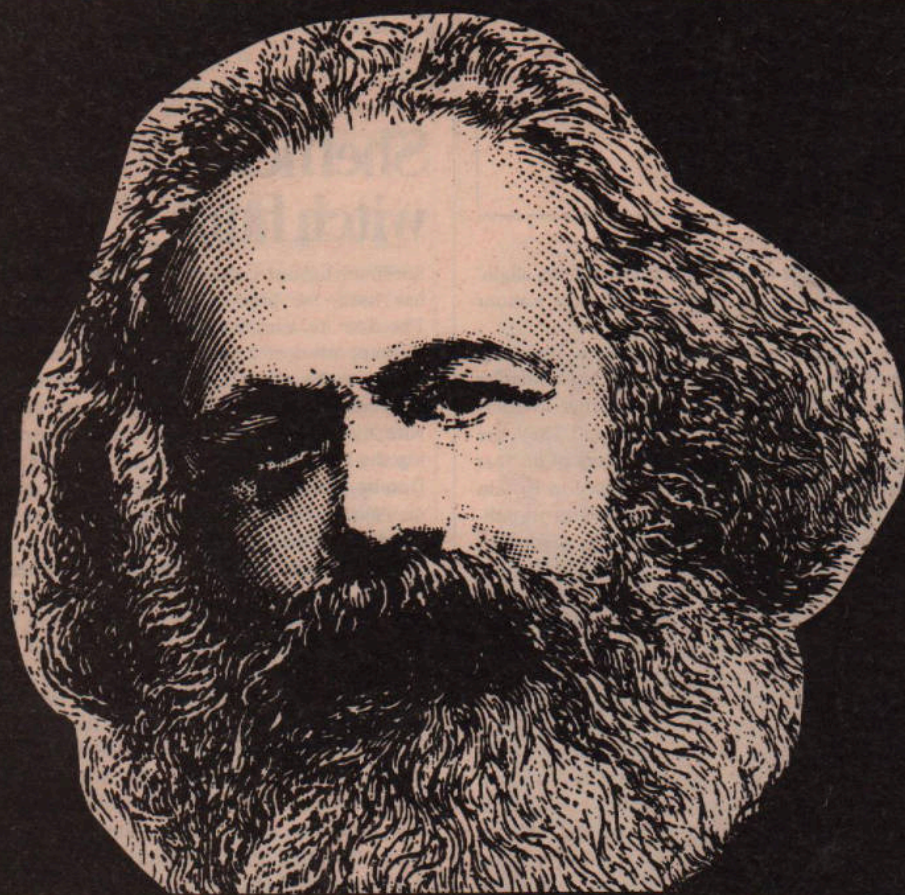
I know that you are now fighting for another black woman and her daughter who are threatened with deportation. I wish you every success in this case and in all your campaigns. Yours in struggle
Joanna Ofusu

Write to the next step

Tell us what you think of the next step. What do you like, what don't you like? What should we be writing about? Tell us what's going on in your factory, office, or trade union branch. Send us letters and contributions to debate.

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PREPARING FOR POWER

And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this struggle of the classes, and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production; (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.

Letter from Karl Marx to Weydemeyer, 5 March 1852

A week of discussion and debate, politics and polemics

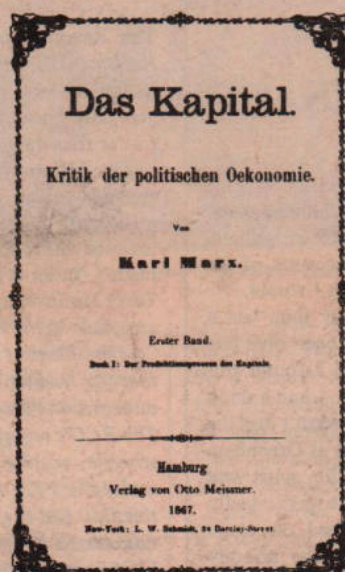
Saturday 16 July Marxism after Marx

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.



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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.

I would like to attend 'Preparing for Power' and enclose £10.00 registration fee (£6.00 UB40)

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- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

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

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

Revolutions betrayed



- Britain 1945?
- The demise of the Comintern 1929-1939
- Germany 1919 - 1923
- Germany 1929 - 1933
- Spain 1936 - 1939

Issues in British politics



- 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?
- Unemployment and the job creation fraud
- Who's next for a GLC grant? How the left became one big quango
- Police prepare for civil war; left calls for community accountability
- A short history of British socialism
- De-industrialisation and depression - the West Midlands experience
- Which way in the general election?

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