the next step

No 36 June 1983 20p review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

Election special issue

BRITAIN ISN'T WORKING

LABOUR ISN'T FIGHTING

HIT BACK WITH THE RCP

OUR PROGRAMME

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY

The Manifesto of the Revolutionary Communist Party

Fight back to go forward

The last four years have been disastrous for the working class. Under Margaret Thatcher, the Tories have launched an onslaught against trade unionists, the unemployed, black people and women. We have been forced to pay the price for their attempts to salvage British capitalism in the face of a world recession. Another Tory government would mean more of the same – and worse.

The Tory offensive

Unemployment: around four million people – including more than a million youth – have been forced into inactivity, isolation and poverty

Living standards: real wage levels are stagnant while social security benefits slip steadily behind; deeper recession means higher rents, rates and prices – and even lower incomes – ahead

War: the Tories have steadily built up Britain's war machine, conventional and nuclear; they have deployed its murderous power in the Falklands and in Ireland

Rights: Thatcher's government has destroyed trade union rights; used cuts and unemployment to drive women back into the home; and made all blacks liable to interrogation by immigration authorities and harassment by the police.

The Tories are the party of the capitalist class; Labour is supposed to represent the working class. But the Labour Party has failed to fight the Tories. It has wasted the last four years in internal squabbles. It has run irrelevant campaigns against the EEC and American missiles, instead of challenging the British bosses and their government at home. Labour promises a future every bit as bad as its past record.

Labour's fightback

No return to full employment: the last Labour government doubled unemployment; the next promises to keep the numbers on the dole above one million indefinitely

Austerity: living standards fell under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan; Michael Foot's National Economic Assessment offers to hold wages down to keep British capital's profits up

Party of war: Labour backed the Tories all the way to the South Atlantic and now it wants to strengthen Britain's military might within NATO by building up conventional forces while cutting back on nuclear missiles; Labour is pledged to maintain the British occupation of Ireland

Law and order: the Labour Party is a staunch defender of strict immigration controls, firm policing and a woman's place at the kitchen sink.

The recession and its consequences – devastation and mass poverty, oppression and war – expose the dead end the existing system has reached. While half the world starves for lack of basic goods, the factories that could produce them are being shut down because capitalists cannot make a profit. But whether or not they can make a profit, we still need the products of industry and the jobs through which to earn a living. The established political parties disagree only over how to make British capitalism profitable at our expense. But why should we pay the price for their recession?

The real alternative

The Revolutionary Communist Party believes that there is an alternative. We believe that with the resources and technology at present available in the world a system of planned production could ensure that everybody has what they need. To build a better world we need to begin by getting rid of the system that at present holds back the further development of society and threatens millions with poverty and misery, death and destruction. The fight for the future begins from resistance to the Tory onslaught today. To go forward, we have to hit back.

No redundancies! If a company cannot compete that is the capitalists' problem, workers still have to feed, house and clothe themselves and their families; if an employer cannot maintain the living standards of his workers, then the state must underwrite all jobs and wages

Work or full pay! The capitalist class must be forced to provide jobs – or full wages – for all workers, and to keep benefits at a level sufficient to maintain a decent livelihood. If they fail, then we will have to keep on fighting until we get a system which can provide for all our needs

Stop the war drive! When Britain went to war against Argentina we stood for the defeat of British imperialism. We fully support the national liberation struggle against Britain's occupation of Ireland

Defend our rights! When the state attacks the unions, black people, the Irish, women, gays – the working class must take sides against the oppressor.

Building a new world requires a new party. The existing leadership of the labour movement in the Labour Party and the TUC is an obstacle to every attempt to defend working class interests. Labour's commitment to saving British capitalism means that it always betrays the working class. The RCP's only commitment is to the working class, its fight against the present system, and its future as the dominant power in society.

VOTE RCP ON 9 JUNE!
DON'T WASTE YOUR VOTE ON THE PARTIES OF THE PAST – FIGHT BACK WITH THE PARTY OF THE FUTURE!

We stand for

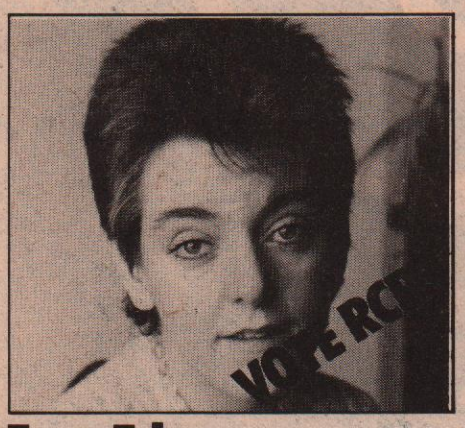
Work and a living wage; no to all redundancies; no concessions to productivity or profitability; trade unions that fight for the working class

A woman's right to work; free 24-hour nurseries; free contraception and abortion on demand

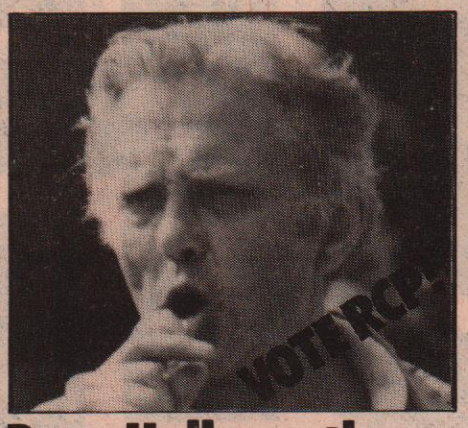
An end to all immigration controls, race checks, police harassment and racial discrimination

The immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland; self-determination for the Irish people; an end to the Prevention of Terrorism Act

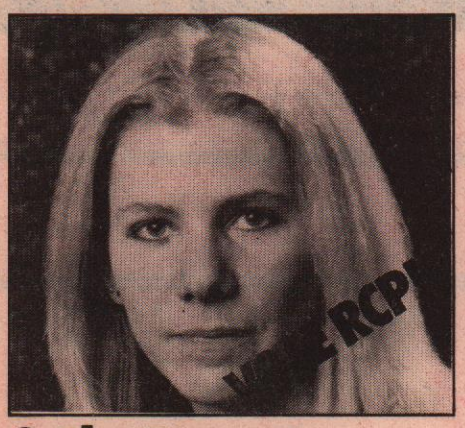
Solidarity with anti-imperialist movements; working class action to disarm the bosses' state; an end to NATO and British withdrawal from the Malvinas.



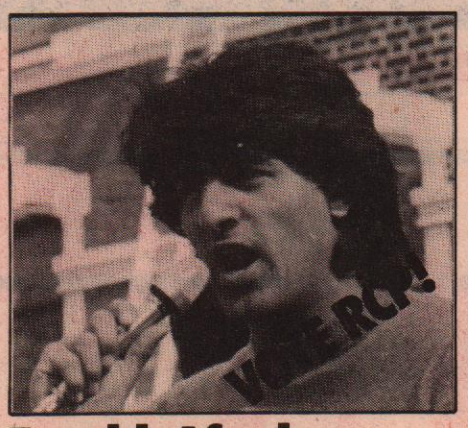
Fran Eden
Birmingham Sparkbrook



Dave Hallsworth
Ashton under Lyne



Cathy Barrett
Sheffield Central



Farehk Afzal
Southwark and Bermondsey

The Programme of the Revolutionary Communist Party

The demise of the old order p4

Who rules? p5

Breaking the chains pp6,7

The unions we need pp8,9

Their state – our rights pp10,11

Fighting the war drive pp12,13

Austerity socialism or revolutionary communism? p14

the next step

VOTE RCP!

THE RESOLUTE Margaret Thatcher versus the ineffectual Michael Foot. Clear and consistent Tory plans, forcefully presented, against fudged and contradictory Labour policies, incoherently argued. The General Election campaign exposes the full dimensions of the crisis of working class leadership.

No match

The spectre of a strong and confident Conservative Party confronting a weak and vacillating Labour Opposition is not new: we have been living with it for four years. The stark contrast between the Tories and Labour has been apparent during every major political controversy since Thatcher came to power in 1979. Every group of striking trade unionists – steel-workers, civil servants, railwaymen, healthworkers and waterworkers – has faced an intransigent government without any effective backing from Labour. The unemployed have been allowed to languish. Labour's biggest gesture to the rising numbers of jobless is to question now and then the accuracy of government statistics and to insist with rhetorical flourish that the dole queues are even longer than the Tories admit. No wonder mass unemployment has not damaged the government's popularity.

When the government forced 10 Irish hunger-strikers to death in 1981, the Opposition remained silent. The best its left wing could manage was to protest a year later about the use of plastic bullets in the Six Counties – by which time the murder of unarmed Catholics with lead bullets by British forces had become routine. When the Tories launched a wave of terror in Britain's black ghettoes in the summer of 1981, Labour condemned rioters and congratulated the police. The left worked overtime to win public approval for more intensive policing methods. When Britain fell out with Argentina, Labour at first urged the Tories into their military adventure, and then quibbled at the cost and the consequences. A year later Labour politicians and journalists are still complaining that fair play was not observed in the sinking of the *Belgrano*. But Thatcher has never looked back.

Suicide pact

Margaret Thatcher is the perfect representative of her class. The British capitalists need her callous and calculating approach to making the working class pay for their crisis. They need her skill in whipping up populist prejudices to isolate resistance to unemployment, impoverishment and coercion. The recession demands harsh measures and Thatcher revels in implementing them. Against this offensive, Labour's leadership is worse than useless.

It is not simply that Michael Foot is rambling and inept. There is no obvious replacement who would fare any better. The whole Labour leadership looks backwards to the 'sixties and 'seventies, while the Tories drive forward into the 'eighties. Labour is full of nostalgia for the days of partnership in industry and consensus in politics, when Dixon of Dock Green was a community policeman on strife-free streets. Whether these days ever existed is doubtful; that they will never exist is certain. In the small print of its programme Labour acknowledges this reality. Hence it admits the need for an incomes policy, which in today's conditions inevitably means wage cuts and austerity for the working class. Instead of leading working class resistance to the Tories, Labour is simply presenting the bosses with another way out of the crisis at workers' expense.

The Labour Party is out of touch with working class people and its politics are unconvincing. The only enthusiastic Labour voters are members of left-wing factions inside the party whose future depends on the survival of the machine. Everyone else votes Labour because they hate the Tories, not because they have any confidence in Labour's alternative strategies. A leading Labour right-winger recently described Labour's election manifesto as 'the longest suicide note in history'. He meant that its concessions to the left – on the EEC and nuclear disarmament – would fatally discredit Labour at the polls. Whether or not this is true for the party leadership remains to be seen. But we can say with certainty that support for this manifesto means suicide for the working class.

The labour movement urgently needs a new leadership and a new political direction. It needs a new *programme* through which the working class can tackle the problems thrown up by the recession in the process of creating a new society. In this special election issue of *the next step* we present the programme of the Revolutionary Communist Party. We will be putting forward our programme in the election campaign and our four candidates (see opposite) will be campaigning around it. However, the programme is not simply an election manifesto: it has much broader objectives. It aims to provide a focus for the mobilisation of the working class in preparation for the take-over of society.

Workers' power

The Labour Party has 'costed' its programme at £18 billion. That's what the party's accountants reckon it will cost the capitalist class to reflate the economy and distribute favours to the union chiefs. We have not run our programme through the Treasury computer. It is a matter of indifference to us what it will cost the capitalists to meet the demands of the working class. We start from what workers need – jobs, decent wages and benefits, political rights – and aim to force the employers and their state to pay up. Ultimately it will cost them everything they have robbed from the working class, and their system itself. For us the only question is how to realise this goal.

Our programme is about workers' control. The working class must begin to assert control over different aspects of capitalist society today, to prepare itself to run a workers' state tomorrow. This means workers taking the day-to-day struggle against capitalist exploitation and oppression into their own hands. It means workers rejecting the interference of the state and the employers in their affairs and organising independently to take them on. The first step in developing workers' control is to fight inside the unions for rank and file power – against the influence of the layer of officials who have turned the unions into machines of containment instead of instruments for collective combat.

More broadly, the struggle for workers' power is a struggle to unite the working class. This necessitates ruthless opposition to the divisive outlook that haunts the labour movement. The prejudices of chauvinism and racism, sexism and sectionalism, are all fostered by the leaders of the trade unions and the Labour Party. The labour bureaucracy's loyalty to the British state means that it continually acts as a divisive force in the working class movement. Forging working class unity demands a consistent campaign against the politics of the Labour Party and a determined drive to rid the working class movement of the parasitic bureaucracy that currently mediates between labour and capital.

Our election campaign aims to expose the conflict of interests between the working class and the Labour Party. The working class desperately needs a lead in fighting back against redundancies and closures, attacks on union rights and living standards. It needs to take a stand on the side of the oppressed against British imperialism. The Labour Party needs to prove its ability to administer British capitalism before the pundits and the pollsters who manage public opinion. It has to convince the establishment that it can enforce wage restraint – as well as maintain law and order, the subjugation of the Irish and the Union Jack on the Malvinas. Loyalty to the Labour Party means loyalty to a party whose programme is consistently anti-working class.

Vote for class politics

Our slogan – Britain isn't working, Labour isn't fighting: hit back with the RCP – indicates our approach. We are putting forward a clear alternative to the established parties and our candidates will be fighting for it. At the same time, we have issued a challenge to Labour candidates. We will back any candidate who is prepared to support a platform of basic demands which are vital to the working class. We do not ask for approval for our entire programme, simply for the following propositions:

- **Work and a living wage** – a minimum wage of £125 a week, whether employed or unemployed
- **Rejection of the National Economic Assessment** – and incomes policy under any other name and all tripartite schemes for the incorporation of the working class
- **The immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland** – and self-determination for the Irish people
- **The immediate withdrawal of British troops from the Malvinas** – and a pledge to fight for the defeat of British imperialism
- **Opposition to all immigration controls** – and support for resistance to racism by any means necessary
- **Support for women's emancipation** – including a pledge to fight for free 24-hour nurseries and free abortion on demand

These simple objectives are essential for the working class. Any candidate who upholds them deserves workers' votes. Any candidate who rejects them in favour of Labour policies does not.

Vote RCP!

Wouldn't anything be better than the Tories? Labour certainly wouldn't be any better. Any party in government trying to salvage British capitalism from the world recession would have to pursue policies broadly similar to Thatcher's. Hence Mitterand's socialist government in France is imposing brutal austerity measures just like the Tories in Britain. Foot would have to do the same – only worse because of the feebler state of the British economy.

Wouldn't Labour at least temper the impact of the recession on the working class? No it wouldn't. Labour would take advantage of workers' loyalty to the party to undermine resistance to austerity measures. That's what happened under the last Social Contract and it is the rationale for the National Economic Assessment.

Isn't voting a waste of time? Voting for any of the old parties certainly is. Voting for the RCP indicates a recognition of the need to break with the parties of the past and fight back with the party of the future. The vote is nothing – that recognition, everything.

The demise of the old order

The age of the microcomputer, the space shuttle and biotechnology is also the age of industrial decay and mass unemployment. While the granaries of the West fill to bursting point, the Third World is ravaged by starvation. Never before has humanity had so many resources at its disposal: never before has so much been denied to so many people.

CAPITALISM is out of control. One moment there is an oil shortage; the next a glut. Interest rates bounce wildly up and down and exchange rate fluctuations throw the money markets into chaos. Every country in the world is in the grip of the recession. Every government aims simply to 'limit the damage'. But there are no economic policies available that can halt the slide towards collapse, because the crisis is an inevitable result of the capitalist system itself.

The rule of profit

Today goods are produced, not because people need them, but because producing goods enables capitalists to make a profit. Yet the goal of profit acts as a constraint on production. If profit rates fall, factories are left empty, machines made idle and workers destitute. Even though people might be in need of the products of industry, capitalists will not produce them if it is not lucrative to do so. Profit, the sole aim and object of capitalist production, holds everything back.

Today's world recession is a result of declining profitability. Any revival of profitability will only follow a long period of depression and havoc – a period like the 'thirties and the Second World War, but much worse. After two centuries of ruling the Earth, capitalism is set to consign it to depravity if not to oblivion.

Forty years ago the destruction of capital, the defeat of the international working class and the global ascendancy of the USA ushered in a profits recovery. Thereafter, the intervention of the state throughout the economies of the West staved off tendencies towards crisis. Government subsidies and government-backed credit counteracted the effects of falling profit rates. Manufacturers could raise their prices and still stay in business. In the 'fifties and 'sixties, industry expanded and living standards improved. But public spending, borrowing and lending proved to be only of cosmetic value. By the mid 'seventies state investments only made excess industrial capacity worse, while state credit only fuelled inflation. The capitalist class had only one option left: austerity.

Austerity – deflation, cuts in public spending and 'tight money' policies – has two aims. The first is to make the working class pay for the crisis. The second is to drive capital's weaker enterprises to the wall, and so enable its stronger ones to forge ahead at higher levels of profitability. The second aim must be achieved both at home and at the international level. To safeguard its own capitals the bourgeoisie of each imperialist power must try to do its allies down.

Austerity means competition and war. As factories close down and incomes decline, so world trade contracts, and the struggle for higher market shares becomes a national political issue. Already the arguments over international trade are heated: soon they may end in outright military conflict. The rule of profit impedes the development of mass production and opens the way for mass destruction.

So far we have lived through a decade of recession, a decade of occasional upswings but of longer and more profound downturns. More credit solves nothing, for as long as profit rates stay rock bottom, capitalists will not invest. Indeed the credit system has become so over-stretched that a major crash is only a banker's rescue package away. Last year more than 25 countries announced that they could not possibly begin to pay back the billions of dollars they owed imperialist financiers.

The upturn that isn't

While the moneylenders worry about a financial collapse, industry is dying on its feet. Output in most Western countries has slumped to mid 'seventies levels. In the USA industrial investment fell by 3.8 per cent in 1982; in France it was down eight per cent. Even Japan the most dynamic of the imperialist powers, plans eight per cent less manufacturing investment this year. As for Britain, once the workshop of the world, it logged an unprecedented trade deficit of £1.4 billion on manufactures in the first quarter of 1983. If this trend continues, Britain this year will have a manufactures deficit for the first time since the Industrial Revolution.

Austerity has only slowed the rate of collapse. Despite record bankruptcies, major rationalisations and sliding wages, industry remains unprofitable. When politicians and economists talk about an 'upturn to come', they are indulging in wishful thinking. The truth is that the recession proper is only just beginning.

From retrenchment to frenzy

Today's much-vaunted improvement in the world economy results from limited measures to stimulate consumer spending. But slight increases in consumer demand will not save the capitalist system. What they will do is increase the rate of inflation and so cause more ructions in the monetary sphere. Some spare industrial capacity will be put to use, but most commentators take it for granted that unemployment will continue to rise.

So far we have only seen hints of what is to come. Over the past 10 years various measures have cushioned the impact of the recession, which has made itself felt unevenly and insidiously. Parts of industry are still prospering – particularly those based on new technology or favoured with government largesse. Real wages have been eroded, but cuts in money wages remain exceptional. Facilities provided by hospitals, schools and town halls have been whittled away almost imperceptibly. But to date there has been no sudden and dramatic impoverishment of any section of society: even those on the dole have just about managed to survive. At the same time mechanisms like the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade have moderated competition on the world market and so have helped to avert an all-out trade war. But the expedients of the past are proving more and more ineffective. A reckoning awaits all classes and all nations.

For the capitalists matters must get much worse before they can get at all better. The working class will have to take a much harder pounding than it has done up to now. Tens of millions will have to be deprived of a living; hundreds of millions will have to work harder for less. Cuts in the most basic social services will begin on a leaner victim and they will reach down to the bone. In the international domain a similar shift from retrenchment to frenzy will occur. The imperialist powers will no longer be able to resolve their differences by diplomatic means – they have too little room to manoeuvre. All their collaborative institutions, including even the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, will be torn apart.

One way out

The recession means disaster for the backward capitalist economies of the Third World. Plummeting raw materials prices and punitive interest rates on foreign loans allow the imperialists to pocket a growing proportion of these countries' resources. Yet the Third World suffers not only robbery, but robbery with violence. The imperialists will go to any lengths to preserve their interests. While an advance guard of ambassadors and loan sharks make 'aid' conditional on more plunder, counter-insurgency experts and helicopter gunships stand ready to enforce Western interests all over Central and South America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

The horrors of Beirut show what imperialism holds in store for humanity.

Yet the capitalist system will not collapse of its own accord. If we do not finish it off, it will live to degrade us all. Nothing less than a new world order can stop a further relapse into savagery.

The capitalist crisis points to the urgent need for a society based on the principles of communism. Subverting and overthrowing capitalism is not merely desirable; civilisation depends on it. There is no other route by which a colossal tragedy can be avoided. There is no other route by which new technology can be used to end exhaustion and famine once and for all. Communism is possible, and there is no alternative.

- **The recession shows that capitalism has reached the end of the line**
- **The traditional ways of dealing with recession – more state spending, extra credit – have failed; even austerity has so far had little effect**
- **The recession means commercial strife, nationally and internationally; it means whole countries laid to waste**
- **The demise of the old order opens the way for a new one – communism.**



While Africa starves, the EEC bulldozes its potato mountain.

Who rules?

The world recession exposes everything that it is rotten about the capitalist system. It confirms that planned production under the control of the working class is both feasible and necessary. The capitalist class has no answers to the historic questions posed by the crisis, yet its system staggers on. It survives largely thanks to the services of the official labour movement. Never before has there been such a mismatch between the possibilities for progress and the conservatism of our leaders.



From the Malvinas to Marks and Spencers, nationalism allows them to divide and rule.

THE BOURGEOISIE is in political disarray. Governments come and go: no government has come up with a team capable of finding a way out of trouble. In every imperialist country the establishment lacks direction and purpose. The volatility of electorates and the instability of governments make bourgeois politics more unpredictable than ever.

In Western Europe, the USA and Japan administrations live on borrowed time. No sooner are they elected than their incompetence is exposed. The recession undermines the morale of our rulers. The only thing that holds them together is their common desire to teach the working class a lesson.

Here there is unanimity. In their determination to crush workers' resistance, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher personify the requirements of the internationalist capitalist class. They are not alone: in Tokyo, Bonn, Paris and Rome their counterparts pursue the same policies, with less strident rhetoric, but with no less resolution. 'Socialist' Mitterand imposes the same austerity as the 'Conservative' Thatcher. They may row over the European Economic Community, but both share a passion for making attacks on the proletariat.

Reaction rampant

The bourgeoisie attacks on the ideological level as well as on the material front. The ruling class needs to unite all sections of society behind its national and international stratagems. Almost instinctively, it stirs up deep-seated public prejudices against foreigners, blacks and women.

Patriotic fervour prepares the nation for war. It conflates working class interests with those of the bosses and strengthens capital's hold over society. Yet patriotism is not only directed against foes abroad. It also targets the 'foreigners' within: immigrant and ethnic minorities. A climate of chauvinist hysteria prevails in every imperialist country. Parties contest elections on the basis of how effective they will be in keeping 'foreigners' out and already-settled or second generation blacks under control. This recourse to racist sentiments takes the pressure off the ruling class while further humiliating the proletariat.

The establishment has turned the fears bred by economic insecurity into a wave of support for 'law and order'. It reduces all the social problems thrown up by the recession to questions of crime, policing and punishment. The victims of capitalist oppression are labelled criminals and blamed for all society's ills. Their criminalisation as 'muggers', 'terrorists', 'drug addicts', 'spongers' relieves the bosses of their responsibility for social disintegration, distracts from the real issues and gives the police a free hand. It also divides the working class. Criminalisation allows the bourgeoisie to turn young unemployed people into outcasts and blacks into scapegoats. It provides a precedent for dealing with other sections of the working class.

Cold-war scaremongering retains an important place in the bourgeois armoury, especially in the USA and Britain. Raising the bogey of the Soviet Union and Soviet spies empowers the ruling class to label every act of working class defiance as subversive. It also legitimises rearmament and fosters an atmosphere of battle-readiness in the midst of civilian life. Britain's 'Falklands Factor' is a model for imperialist statesmen everywhere. It enabled the British ruling class to mobilise mass public backing for its war against Argentina, and strengthen its position against striking trade unionists at home. It made folk heroes of soldiers and sailors and led to growing public approval for conventional rearmament to supplement nuclear stockpiling. It prompted debates about voluntary military training and made the conscription of the unemployed acceptable. The 'Falklands Factor' has an international significance: there is a similar impetus towards the militarisation of peacetime politics in every metropolitan citadel.

Moral rearmament

From Hitler's diaries to the dangers of glue-sniffing, the bourgeoisie's cultural salvoes know no bounds. There are new panics about venereal disease (herpes, AIDS) and fresh debates about the moment life begins (over the 'morning after' pill and test-tube babies). One of the main objects of the ruling class is to reconstruct a system of morality consistent with women's position under capitalism. Confined to the home and cut off from the wider life of society, women are told to be grateful for their lot. Both sexes are instructed that the conformist, privatised family – protected by the benevolent nation state – is the pinnacle of human achievement.

The organisations of the working class are singled out for sustained ideological attack. While the past five years of unemployment have helped to soften up the labour movement, much more remains to be done. In all major capitalist countries the state is moving to curb union activity and help employers put the screws on their workforces. Everywhere parliaments have approved anti-union laws and given employers free rein to victimise militants. In general the bosses have followed a step-by-step approach, selectively challenging different groups of workers. In the USA, unions may soon become extinct: but everywhere else the employers aim to preserve the mediating function of the unions – so long as rank and file rebelliousness is quelled. In France, Italy and Britain the bosses still talk to the union leaders, while promoting unions which are completely tailored to their own needs. When it comes to shopfloor organisation their approach is more aggressive still. They want speed-ups, more flexible working and the removal of 'restrictive practices'. All independent workplace organisation must be destroyed.

In the early years of the recession the labour movement was more subject to jibes than it was to direct attack. The unions were assailed for being too powerful and undemocratic, for being dominated by extremists and even for being influenced by Moscow. Today the machinery itself is being dismantled. None of the old customs are safe: negotiation, bargaining and compromise are all luxuries the capitalists can no longer afford. Naked class warfare is already moving off the inside pages of the papers on to the streets.

Labour's paralysis

One of the most remarkable aspects of the present period is that the recession has not produced a serious working class revolt against the capitalist order. While the bosses prepare for class war, the official labour movement remains in a state of paralysis. Not for generations has the ruling class entered such a major recession with such a weak adversary.

Weighed down by a succession of defeats from the 'twenties to the 'forties, the labour movement has developed almost entirely under the influence of reformism. Throughout the West the parties claiming to represent the working class have become locked into the capitalist system. The unions in particular have developed close links with the employers and their state. State intervention in wide areas of society has created a jungle of official bodies whose job it is to incorporate the labour movment into the day-to-day running of capitalism.

In the 'fifties and 'sixties Labour's alliance with the state seemed to bring results. State intervention meant more and more posts for the labour bureaucrats to staff. Class antagonisms came to be channelled through hundreds of committees, agencies and quangos. When the recession struck, the official labour movement was a long recognised partner in bourgeois policy-making. It was natural that it should shoulder the burden of helping capital out of its mess.

The 'seventies was the era of the Social Contract. The labour leaders of Western Europe took it upon themselves to educate workers in the realities of capitalism, exhorting them to make sacrifices today in return for the promise of jam tomorrow. This experience weakened the working class Workers rarely challenged institutionalised class collaboration; indeed it was employers who turned against it in the end. Now the bosses are bolder, while the irrelevance of the labour leaders and their plans is clear for all to see.

Europe's socialist, communist and labour parties base their programmes on more state intervention. But the salvation of capitalism does not lie in nationalising unprofitable industries, or in extending social services. The state will only intervene today to enforce austerity. As it happens, even the dullest of labour leaders has grasped this point, murmuring that 'now is not the time' for reforms. Once more Mitterand shows the way. He has dropped all pretence of doing anything other than pushing through the measures necessary to save French capitalism.

A realistic alternative

From ministerial salons to works canteens, Labour politics lack plausibility. High unemployment has forced workers to turn from their enfeebled unions to look for a political response to the capitalist attack. But the labour leaders have none that can capture workers' imaginations. The most damning indictment of the labour leadership is that it has failed even to make unemployment a political issue. Millions of workers simply do not believe that Labour's tired 'alternative strategies' supply any answers to their problems.

The energies of labour bureaucrats are increasingly devoted to trying to ensure their own survival. Desperate to ensure the future of their party and union machines, they have become less and less responsive to rank and file pressure. This, together with their lack of credibility, has loosened their hold over the working class. But it has not yet led to a major breakdown in bureaucratic control. The mass of the working class is in retreat and many are cynical and demoralised. However the crisis of the labour leadership has created a new interest in political ideas among rank and file workers. The uselessness of the existing leaders and their staid policies necessitates a search for fresh alternatives. In the short term, this flux may lead to a shift to the right as the less class conscious workers drift towards reactionary solutions. But the same questioning of traditional allegiances also creates an opening for revolutionaries. For the first time since the Second World War, building a revolutionary party has become a realistic alternative.

■ While the capitalist class is in deep economic difficulty, it remains in political control
■ Nationalist and chauvinist propaganda has softened up the working class and prepared the way for more direct attacks
■ The long term integration of the labour movement into the state has undermined working class resistance and stifled initiative
■ The disintegration of the old labour parties and trade unions creates new dangers – and new possibilities.

Breaking the chains

The more the world economy goes from bad to worse, the more it becomes clear that the capitalist system can only survive at the expense of the working class. Our political strategy starts from the basic proposition that there are no solutions for workers that also protect the interests of the bosses. What we need is jobs and wages; what they need is mass unemployment and poverty. Their realism means our misery – our realism demands a relentless struggle against their system.

THE integration of the official labour movement into the bourgeois establishment has gravely weakened workers' resistance to the effects of the recession, leading to a series of setbacks on the trade union front. The result of this has been widespread demoralisation. Most workers can see no way out of the recession other than the route being mapped out by the employers and the government: the rationalisation of industry, cuts in public spending, unemployment and austerity.

The more militant workers know that these solutions spell disaster. They know that it is vital to defend jobs, living standards and services, but they cannot see how to achieve this. They know too that even the most basic defensive aims seem unrealistic to most workers today. Widespread respect among workers for what is realistic from the point of view of the capitalists indicates the scale of the problem we face in the 'eighties.

The fatal embrace

The idea that workers' demands must be tailored to what the system can afford is the inevitable result of the incorporation of the leaders of the labour movement into the capitalist machine. Over the past century, and especially over the last 40 years, the TUC has come to operate more and more as a department of state. Its senior officials rub shoulders with civil servants and industrialists on scores of committees and quangos; its junior staff walk every corridor in local government. Because hundreds of links bind the official labour movement to the state, the priorities of the capitalist system have come to exert the predominant influence on its outlook. The influence and prestige of the labour bureaucracy depends more on its close relations with the state than on its links with the rank and file. The bureaucracy cannot but express the viewpoint of the capitalist interests that permeate the state apparatus.

Many trade union activists know that the TUC and the union leaders play a reactionary role. Their response is generally to try to push the official labour movement in a left-wing direction. But, because the bureaucracy is so tightly bound to the system, and its officials so reliant on government patronage, this strategy is bound to fail. Indeed, the only consequence of the left's persistence in trying to make the bureaucrats more militant, is that the left itself has gone the way of the bureaucracy. Thus the recently deposed left-wing executive of the CPSA, the civil servants' union, proved to be virtually indistinguishable from its right-wing predecessors. Similarly, the demise which the Communist Party has suffered as a result of its complete absorption into the bureaucracy should serve as a warning to other left-wing organisations following the same path.

In accepting the embrace of the capitalist state, the labour movement accepts strangulation. The government declares that holding on to a job *and* maintaining wage levels in the face of a world recession just isn't on. The TUC accepts this premise and conveys it, in trade union language, to the rank and file. It says: 'there's little you can do until the economy picks up'. The left echoes: 'of course more could be done, but you can't do anything without the official labour movement'. It is always what can be done within the strictures of the status quo, never what we need irrespective of the state of the economy.

It is important to see just how far the union leaders' subservience to the state goes. They not only allow, but positively encourage state institutions to fight their battles for them. Under the 1974–79 Labour Government they invited the state to strengthen their position by interfering in trade union affairs, enforcing the closed shop and even, in early 1979, introducing curbs on picketing and the right to strike. The deepening recession since 1979 has not changed their commitment to a similar package of policies to be implemented by a future Labour government. Even the left conducts its business through the state. In 1978 miners' leader Arthur Scargill went to the High Court in an unsuccessful challenge to the NUM's introduction of area productivity deals. In 1982 the Militant Tendency had recourse to the judiciary to prevent its expulsion from the Labour Party. Just after the 1983 General Election was announced, GLC leader Ken Livingstone threatened to support an injunction against his party's national executive, to thwart manoeuvres designed to prevent his selection as a parliamentary candidate.

Be realistic!

The labour movement's dependence on the state must be ended. We must regain the political and organisational independence of our class by rejecting all interference by the state and all futile attempts to make use of it to promote our interests.

Our point of departure must be what is realistic from the point of view of the working class. Every worker needs a job, a decent wage and the maximum political liberty that can be won under the capitalist system. Whether or not the system can afford this is the capitalists' problem, not ours. We have to expose as apologists for the system those who say our demands are unrealistic. Anybody who accepts the need for any sacrifice, however small, cannot defend workers' interests in the recession. To get what we need we must build fighting organisations whose loyalties lie exclusively on the side of the proletariat. Our organisations must be entirely under our control and 100 per cent committed to the defence of workers' interests. The organisational independence of the working class is not a technical question: it is a political priority. It is only through independent organisation that the defence of workers' interests can begin to appear as a realistic proposition to the working class.

The fight for working class independence is the first step on the road to workers' power. Unless we take this step we will never make a revolution, and we will not be able to avert the plunge into barbarism that accompanies the decay of the capitalist system. Our first task is to bring together those workers who are prepared to take responsibility for the defence of the working class – workers who recognise no other interest but that of their class.

So long as workers accept the rules laid down by their present leaders, a defeat of historic proportions lies in prospect. To avoid this it is necessary to guide the mass of the working class in a fight for its interests regardless of the consequences for the capitalist system.

Revolutionaries aim to overthrow capitalism and establish workers' power. But we will not succeed unless the day-to-day struggles of our movement are transformed into a fight for class independence. Every struggle provides the chance to fight for an alternative that transcends the realism of capitalism. To seize that chance revolutionaries must outline goals which highlight the need for class independence in the clearest possible form.

Labour politicians will say: 'now is not the time'; they will 'prove' that the system cannot accommodate our demands. But their obsession with the capitalists' account books should be dismissed with contempt. What the bosses do with their money is not our concern. If the ruling class cannot meet our needs it is their system that will have to go, not our livelihoods. Anyway, profit and loss columns do not determine the outcome of a dispute: the balance of class forces does this. The employers will give nothing away without a fight – so the harder we fight, the more they will come to accept the realism of our claims.

Our answers to the crisis

The labour bureaucracy's Alternative Economic Strategy makes out that unemployment could fall and living standards rise, if only capitalism were run differently. In this utopian scenario economics becomes a technical matter: exploitation and class antagonisms are defined out of existence. But the AES is not just a harmless fantasy. It is an attempt to cajole the working class into taking responsibility for managing capitalism. It begins from the preoccupations of the capitalists and ends up calculating the scale of working class sacrifices required to appease their hunger for profits. Policies of industrial regeneration and planning, trade protection and investment – all these indicate how the bureaucracy wants to make the bosses' problems the concern of the working class. But workers will be in no position to defend their living standards if their leaders are working hand-in-glove with the employers to save the British economy.

Although there are no economic solutions to the crisis, there are measures that can be taken to protect workers from the ravages of the capitalist collapse. Workers will have to fight all the way for measures that will safeguard jobs, provide work for the unemployed and maintain living standards. It would be facile to imagine that these will be bestowed by kind employers or enlightened parliamentarians – or that they will be guaranteed by formal agreement or legislation. The resources required to ensure the survival of the working class will have to be wrested from the bourgeoisie. Once torn out of their miserly hands they will have to be fiercely defended. The bosses will seek to get them back at the earliest opportunity. As long as capitalism exists any gains won by workers will be partial, temporary, and the focus of relentless struggle.

The working class has the power to impose its will on the exploiters. As the class struggle escalates over the next few years, new forms of proletarian activity and new objectives will emerge. To predict what these forms will be, or to specify lists of demands, would be to speculate; but it is possible to map out the general direction in which active workers must move. For the class which aspires to control the whole of society, the extension of control over wide areas of social life must be a central priority. Working class control must begin with the rejection of state and employer meddling in our organisations and go on to encompass control over employment and unemployment, wages and services.

Unemployment is the greatest threat facing us. It haunts millions, raising fear and insecurity among workers who have jobs and condemning those who haven't to a life of misery. Unemployment deepens divisions in the working class, not only between the employed and jobless, but also between men and women, between blacks and whites, and among different sections of the workforce. In particular it isolates young people, women and blacks from the labour movement and multiplies tensions within the ranks of organised labour.

Jobs for all!

All the pundits agree that unemployment is the number one issue in Britain today. Yet unemployment has not become a political issue. It has done little damage to the Tories' popularity, for the Labour Party has failed to convince the public that the Tories are to blame. This is not surprising: Labour knows that the Tories are not to blame. They believe that unemployment is the unavoidable consequence of the world recession, which is why they accepted mass unemployment under the last Labour Government, and why they are not embarrassed to promise the continuation of the same next time around.

In practice the labour bureaucracy always leaves fighting unemployment up to the individual worker. When



Britain's only offer to youth – join the army.



Unemployment divides and demoralises – but we can fight it!

redundancies are threatened, union officials urge workers not to accept severance pay and not to sell the jobs of future generations, as a matter of conscience. Then, when workers respond to the failure of their leaders to organise any concerted resistance to redundancies, when workers pragmatically try to make the best of a bad situation by getting as much redundancy money as possible – then the bureaucrats blame them for being 'selfish' and 'passive'.

The bureaucracy always expresses sympathy for the unemployed. It will sponsor a People's March for Jobs year after year. But because it sees mass unemployment as a fact of life, it collaborates fully in the shakeout of labour from industry. It also cooperates fully in the policing of unemployed youth in the Youth Opportunities Programme, the Youth Training Scheme and centres for the unemployed. The bureaucrats participate in Social Security tribunals that enforce the immiseration of benefit claimants.

The unemployed must not be left to fight alone – unemployment affects the whole of the working class. Every worker who still has a job faces the prospect of redundancy. The very existence of a mass reserve army of labour tends to depress our living standards. The organised working class must take control of the welfare of the unemployed. While the labour bureaucracy is complicit in the atomisation of the unemployed, we agitate for a class-wide response to unemployment.

Because every worker needs a job, every attempt to push workers out of their jobs must be fiercely resisted. But resistance can have only limited results if it is directed against individual employers, for the resources necessary to employ everybody in society are owned by the capitalist class as a whole. Capitalists only employ people if it is profitable for them to do so; today the restoration of profitability demands mass unemployment. Only a concerted struggle, therefore, will compel the capitalist class either to give up the resources necessary to keep everybody in work, or, if work cannot be created, to hand over the cash necessary to maintain the working class.

Only a counter-attack around the demand *work or full pay* can succeed in enforcing the interests of the working class over the demands of capitalist profitability.

No redundancies!

The labour bureaucracy has fixed things so that, in those plants or industries where workers have observed the effects of declining profits and demand, they see no alternative to redundancies. But whether or not an employer can make profits and sell his products, workers still have to feed, clothe and house themselves and their families. Any compromise on the demand for work or full pay is inconsistent with the survival of the working class.

Where it is apparent that there is no future in a particular enterprise (for example, in an exhausted coal mine), workers should insist on the creation of the same number of jobs elsewhere in the industry. Older workers unprepared to move should be maintained on full pay until retirement and their jobs made available for younger workers. Where workers are satisfied that a factory closure is only the consequence of the narrow quest for profit, they should fight to keep the plant open, by occupation if necessary. If the particular employer cannot maintain the workforce, then the capitalist class as awhole must be forced to guarantee the jobs or the wages of the workers. Where substantial redundancies are threatened, the same broad approach applies. If individual workers wish to leave or retire early, they must be appropriately compensated and their vacant places immediately filled.

The working class cannot afford to make a distinction between voluntary and compulsory redundancy. Redundancy pay is no compensation for a job lost: the working class needs every job it can lay its hands on. Compulsory redundancy amounts to the forcible separation of the worker from the only means by which he can survive in a capitalist society. But although voluntary redundancy often appears as the only course open to workers faced with hard-line employers and spineless union officials, it is equally a threat to the survival of the working class. Opposition to voluntary redundancy must form the first line of resistance in our class action against unemployment.

In response to the redundancy onslaught, the labour bureaucracy has sponsored a number of schemes such as job-sharing, early retirement, short-time work, part-time work and retraining. Internationally the call for a 35-hour week is also popular. Yet these projects are designed, not to fight unemployment, but to redistribute its effects among the working class. Their end result is to reduce living standards covertly rather than overtly. For the employers, the semi-employment they encourage may be advantageous; but for us it means extending the ranks of impoverished workers. By itself, a shorter working week is a fine objective. But as a solution to unemployment it is a wretched attempt to stabilise the labour market at our expense. Once again, the demand for work or full pay is relevant here. It expresses our hostility to any and all redistributions of unemployment.

Work for youth

Unemployment has a particularly devastating impact on working class youth. That is why the capitalist state, through the Manpower Services Commission, makes special arrangements to discipline young people and to prepare them for a life on the dole. The central aim of the Youth Training Scheme is to contain and if possible militarise a potentially troublesome section of society. The sordid record of initiatives like the YTS shows that the ruling class is not fit to look after the interests of young workers.

Workers must take up the cudgels for the younger generation. The young unemployed need work schemes – but work schemes *organised by the working class*. A programme of work and training controlled by the working class would ensure that young people are taught new skills, that their energies are expended in ways useful to society, and that they fulfil their historic role as the vanguard of the working class movement. The state should be forced to finance these schemes, but should have no say whatever in how they are administered, or in the sort of activities they involve.

Our benefits

At present the capitalist class decides on the level of unemployment benefit and uses the Department of Health and Social Security to repress the unemployed. The aim is to pay out as little as possible, and to instil fear in as many as possible. Special DHSS 'snooper squads' spy on claimants and investigate their personal lives. Working class women are the subject of particular harassment, especially under the rules about 'cohabitation'.

State repression of the unemployed must become a direct concern for the working class. We must be the ones who control how resources are made available to the unemployed. We must decide how much money the unemployed need to live on, and it is up to us to make sure that the state provides that money. Committees of the employed and unemployed, especially of working class women, must be set up to do this. Similar bodies should take responsibility for the welfare of all the outcasts of bourgeois society – single parents, children, old people and the disabled. This is how to make sure that no section of the working class stands alone, and that all workers are involved in the fight for class survival.

At present unemployment acts as a divisive force in the working class. It has eroded confidence and demoralised millions. Yet the fight against unemployment has the potential for uniting every section of the proletariat. No section of workers can escape the effects of this economic disease. The resources for employing all are there for a working class united and bold enough to seize them.

The wages we need

The capitalist class cannot afford to pay workers a living wage. The laws of profit mean that the wealth of society is denied to those that produce it. As long as capitalism exists, the proletariat will always have to fight to defend its living standards. Over the past few years, many workers have been forced to accept wage rises below the rate of inflation. More recently, some workers have been forced to accept cuts in money wages. The employers have followed a strategy of picking off one group of workers at a time – with considerable success. Against their efforts to divide us, we must unite around the demand for *wages that maintain living standards*.

What is a living wage? At present the labour movement accepts a Retail Price Index drawn up by the capitalist state. But only the working class can decide what wages it needs to get by. Only those whose lives depend on wages deserve to determine them.

Just as we need fighting organisations to uphold the interests of those who are not in receipt of wages, so we need structures to defend those who are. All sections of the exploited and oppressed must band together to monitor prices in the shops, and to make sure that wages increase commensurately. A minimum wage equal to the value of workers' labour-power must be wrested from the bosses. The unions must be transformed so that they can win the maximum concessions on top of this. The demand for wages that maintain living standards can rally the whole of the working class to this cause. It is the only way we can free ourselves from the mindless routine of trying to make ends meet.

■ To organise itself effectively the labour movement must break off all involvement in state bodies

■ Unemployment is a threat to the entire working class – the working class must organise to protect the unemployed

■ Workers need wages or benefits that maintain living standards – our only guarantee of survival is struggle.

THE UNIONS WE NEED

Our prog

RCP

The working class needs powerful mass organisations to protect it from the coming onslaught. But the trade unions lack both the capacity and the will to perform this role. Trade union organisations and their fighting traditions were built up in the past by workers who were determined to band together against the employers and their system. Today they have become more a prop for decaying capitalism than effective combat organisations for the working class.

THE UNION bureaucracy comprises a broad stratum of local officials, full-time convenors and senior shop stewards. This layer is tens of thousands strong, and its interests are distinct from those of the rank and file workers. At national level, union chiefs ceaselessly engage in tripartite consultations with Whitehall and the employers, in long-established forums for negotiation, arbitration, and conciliation. At the workplace level, unions often act as the management's buffer against the rank and file. Frequently appointed by management, and always subject to its approval, shop stewards participate in workplace institutions whose formal concerns are matters like health and safety, but whose real interest is higher productivity. Some firms have sponsored combine committees of shop stewards in different plants to promote union commitment to the company as a whole. When management endorses the closed shop and checks off union dues from pay packets, union officials maintain that this is in workers' interests. Company unions are spreading in newly-established plants, particularly in industries and areas outside the unions' traditional sphere of strength. Unions like ASTMS and NALGO bring management representatives together with workers in a way that militates against independent working class action.

By pushing millions out of work and out of the unions, the recession has weakened the bureaucracy and widened the gulf between it and the rank and file. When workers have gone on strike over jobs, wages and conditions, their leaders have displayed an interest only in safe-guarding their own positions. Officials cling on more desperately than ever to their quangos, proclaim that long-established procedures are sacred, and uphold the mystical powers of the Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory Service. No wonder more and more workers have become disillusioned and cynical about their unions.

The failure of the unions shows the need for mass organisations that are totally committed to the defence of the working class. Whether the present unions can be transformed or new unions will have to be built will be decided through the course of struggle. But this struggle must begin now – in the unions that already exist. Revolutionaries have a duty to fight inside even the most undemocratic and corrupt of unions. Our objective cannot be to win a place in the bureaucracy, but to win the rank and file over to building, from the bottom up, mass combat organisations that are independent and directly under the control of the proletariat.

The struggle for effective unions requires an uncompromising campaign against the narrow trade unionism which particularly afflicts militants in Britain. British trade unionism breeds sectionalism. Its love of procedure, the rulebook and government arbitration defuses militancy and allows the bureaucrats to retain the initiative. Against it we must establish a new tradition: that the defence of workers must always come before union custom and practice.

Break the links

To revitalise the unions we have to begin by reasserting their independence. Union leaders must give up all their seats on quangos, their positions in permanent negotiation and arbitration machinery and all their other links with the bourgeois state. Tripartite bodies have only one aim – to obtain the acquiescence of the representatives of the working class to yet more exploitation. The TUC's social contracts, of which Labour's National Economic Assessment is only the latest version, may give the appearance of 'union power'; but in reality they represent the total loss of the unions' independence.

A complete union boycott of all national and local state institutions is long overdue. The only business unions have is to represent the interests of their members. If officials must meet employers and government functionaries, they should do so on an ad hoc basis, and in public. The same principle applies within capitalist enterprises. Workers' representatives must be pulled out of all consultative and advisory committees on which management is represented, meeting it only when the occasion demands, and then in the open. They should vigorously reject calls to 'widen the sphere of collective bargaining' – a reformist formula for extending the scope of class collaboration in the workplace. And they should repudiate all attempts to draw them into considering the health of the firm or public service, or that of the national economy. Union representatives must consider only their own members' needs, and the broader concerns of the working class as a whole.

Reject arbitration

Workers must not allow the state to poke its nose into their conflicts with the employers. The only guarantee of our interests is struggle; any intervention by government tribunals, inquiries or arbitrators can only be to the advantage of the capitalists. Whether they are fighting over jobs, wages, conditions, or against victimisation, workers can have no confidence in any agreement or procedures drawn up by state agencies that are designed to mediate between workers and employers. Conciliation and mediation can only force workers to settle for less than they could win through their own efforts. The institutionalisation of relations between capital and labour must be destroyed. Workers must get rid of the elaborate system of checks and balances that separates them from their adversaries – and instead take on their employers directly.

Institutionalised collaboration between union and employer has proceeded even further in the public sector, and especially in the public services, than in private industry. The mediating machinery established under the Whitley Councils is a particularly striking expression of this. Illusions in the state as a neutral arbiter are deeply entrenched among public service workers, and their consequences are disastrous: they allow the government to dictate terms to the growing proportion of the working class it employs directly. It is vital that the public sector unions break away from the state's permanent negotiating apparatus and procedures. We must oppose the formulation of public sector pay levels through 'comparability' with the private sector. The only 'comparison' public sector workers need to make is between the wages they get and the wages they ought to get.

The working class must also be vigilant about the employers' attempts to extend their influence in trade union affairs. Anti-union legislation, police harassment of pickets, prosecutions of union members for conspiracy or civil damages against employers: these are all direct attacks on working class organisation. Throughout its history the working class has been forced to break the law to defend its rights. Nothing substantial has ever been won through deference to bourgeois legality. The criterion by which working class action must be judged is its effectiveness in advancing class interests, not the approbation of High Court judges. The employers will use anything to crush their opponents: the occupation of Laurence Scott's in Manchester was ended in 1981 by a series of raids involving helicopters, horses, dogs and squads of riot-equipped police. Workers too must be prepared to mobilise their forces and deploy them ruthlessly to defend basic rights.

Rebuild workplace power

The political life of the trade unions has been choked by bureaucracy and procedure. The officials have run the unions to *discourage* the active

participation of rank and file workers within them. For the bureaucrats administrative convenience comes before effectiveness or accountability; relations with employers and the state are more important than contact with the rank and file. Reasserting working class control over the union machine and union officials will be vital. Rank and file workers must decide themselves what demands to make of management and negotiate them directly with the bosses.

In the workplace workers' representatives must take control of union affairs. To help restore close relations between union and members they must collect dues directly. The check-off system makes sense for the bureaucracy, but the automatic deduction of dues from wages by the employer removes a crucial link between union and workers and gives management and bureaucrats direct control over union funds. Union membership becomes a passport to passivity and the rank and file can no longer take sanctions against their leaders. The traditional collection of dues at union meetings should be re-established. Union representatives must be forced to convince their members of the need for active involvement in union affairs. The automatic deduction from wages of political levies to the Labour Party must also be stopped. Instead, a proportion of each worker's union dues should be put into a fund for political activity useful to the working class as a whole.

Workers must also enforce the collective discipline of the working class on their fellow workers. Once again, this means re-establishing some old practices and discarding some modern ones. Scabs should be intimidated as much as is necessary. Picket lines should be run by the rank and file; workers should be persuaded to join unions by the rank and file, and in person too. And workers who try to sabotage 100 per cent trade union membership in a factory or office should be 'sent to Coventry' and isolated. This does not mean encouraging or allowing management to sack them. The institutionalised closed shop, which reached its zenith under the provisions for automatic dismissal contained in Labour's 1974 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act, can never be a reliable instrument of shop-floor power. A closed shop enforced by the bosses and their state will be used more to victimise militants than it will to deal with scabs. Insofar as it strengthens the unions, such an arrangement strengthens only the bureaucracy. The automatic closed shop turns entry into a union into a meaningless act: it is not surprising that as the practice has spread, many workers do not even know which union they are in. The closed shop as a convenient deal between bureaucrats and bosses must be replaced with a system of 100 per cent union membership based on a dynamic relationship between the rank and file and its representatives.

Make unions accountable

Trade union organisation is sectional and bureaucratic. The unions reflect the structure of the working class 50 or 60 years ago better than that of the working class today. Yet union leaders are often more concerned to preserve anachronistic institutions and petty privileges than they are to bring their organisations into line with modern needs. While unemployment has soared, the TUC leaders have spent the past two years fighting tooth and nail over the distribution of seats on the General Council. However the seats are distributed, the current pattern of union organisation will still hamper our struggles. The fact that workers in the same dispute belong to different unions constantly undermines their capacity to organise resistance. The 1982 health workers' strike was fought by no less than 14 separate unions; every time car workers go on strike, solidarity is dissipated by conflicts between the TGWU and the AUEW. These irrational divisions help to perpetuate union bureaucracies and serve only to disorganise the working class. We must use every opportunity to popularise the necessity for organising workers along 'industrial' lines. A single organisation for all workers in an enterprise, industry or branch of the public sector is manifestly the only sensible arrangement from the point of view of the working class.

Unions only work if they respond to the needs of their members. Over a long period of time unions have become *mediators*: their leaders have one foot in the boardroom and one on the shop-floor. We need to make the unions unconditionally committed and accountable to the workers they represent. To this end, all negotiations and disputes, whether local or national, must be conducted by representatives of the rank and file. Full-time union officers must be restricted to carrying out technical and administrative functions. Every attempt must be made to encourage rank and file organisation at the workplace level. A national network of shop-floor representatives is not a substitute for a union, but is likely to prove the most effective form of working class organisation.

The rank and file must ensure that its representatives are directly accountable to the workforce. Union democracy cannot be guaranteed by the most enlightened constitution or the most radical of officials. Only through the direct accountability of representatives to workplace assemblies can the interests of the majority be expressed. Full-time as well as lay representatives must be directly accountable and elected, not appointed. No union official should be paid more than the workers he represents.

Broaden the unions!

Trade unions are only one among many forms of working class organisation. Even the most powerful can only represent a section of the working class. Trade unionists must establish close links with the less organised sections of the proletariat. They should actively take up the cause of the unemployed and defend all the oppressed. Trade unions cannot be really independent if they ignore the problems faced by non-unionised workers, women and blacks.

Industrial warfare can only be effective if it is fought from the perspective of extending genuine working class control. Every gain will demand class control over its implementation. The employers and their friends in the labour bureaucracy will offer us all forms of bogus control – 'industrial democracy', 'profit-sharing', 'planning agreements'. These fraudulent schemes are blueprints for self-exploitation; far from extending workers' control, they take control out of the hands of the working class. Real workers' control, by contrast, represents the vigilance of the proletariat and nothing else.

Our proposals for reclaiming and re-building the unions will be met with bitter hostility by the labour bureaucracy, to whose vested interests in class collaboration they are a frontal challenge. They will also be condemned by the bureaucracy's left-wing sycophants. But rank and file workers will come to uphold them. They know, first-hand, what the corruption of the unions means.



Standing above their members, union officials push through the recent sell-out at Cowley. It's time we took the running of strikes into our own hands.

■ The trade union leaders' deference to the employers and the state and their respect for institutions of arbitration and collaboration are an obstacle to every working class struggle

■ Workers must take control of their own organisations and use them to fight the capitalists, not to mediate in the class struggle

■ The closed shop must be enforced by workers – not policed by employers and bureaucrats; union funds must be controlled by the rank and file to ensure the accountability of union representatives.

Their state - our rights

The British working class has a long tradition of trade union organisation. Its historic weakness lies in the political sphere, where the commanding position of the ruling class has remained virtually unchallenged. The British left reflects and contributes to the political weakness of the working class through its preoccupation with narrow trade union matters. Yet union affairs are but one of the many spheres of class conflict – and not the most important one at that.

ONE YEAR ON from the Malvinas war, the persistence of the 'Falklands Factor' in British politics confirms that the class struggle goes further than the factory gate. If it is to take over the running of society, the working class must have a distinctive voice on every vital issue. The consensus the ruling class has built since the days when the South Atlantic task force was launched has worked enormously to its advantage. When Thatcher uses Goose Green to tell the union leaders that 'we're all in this together' on the industrial front as well as on the military one, who among them can disagree?

The domination of capital rests on its capacity to restrict the class struggle to bargaining over pay and conditions, over the terms on which exploitation takes place. But capitalism impinges on every aspect of our lives, not simply on our activities as wage-labourers. From education, health and housing through to war, workers are forced to scrape by according to the dictates of capital. The ruling class will never stop ruling unless workers pierce its defences on every front.

Trade union attitudes to the capitalist state show how far the rot has gone in the labour movement. Even militants often see the intervention of the state as a step forward. Although they recognise that the police and the courts are anti-working class, many militants believe that the state can be purged of its objectionable features and made to work on behalf of the working class. It is essential to combat these 'state socialist' views and all efforts to 'democratise' the state or make it accountable to the working class.

We have to re-establish a fundamental principle of proletarian politics: that the state is nothing but the concentrated power of the capitalist class. Whatever party is in government, capital rules. The state is accountable only to the bourgeoisie.



The state is the concentrated power of the capitalist class – it cannot be reformed or democratised

The public sector is not ours

Some activists still see the nationalisation of particular industries as a possible avenue out of the recession. Indeed, Labour Party left-wingers still measure their radicalism by the number of monopolies they want brought into public ownership (Tony Benn thinks 25 would be enough, while Militant ventures a figure of 200). However, state intervention in the economic realm is just as reactionary in its impact as state intervention anywhere else. Over the past 40 years, workers in mining and the railways, and more recently in steel and shipbuilding, have discovered that the state behaves very much like any other capitalist employer. Workers' experience of nationalisation confirms that state intervention in the economy is dictated by the laws of capitalist profit-making, not by any sentimental concern for workers' welfare.

We favour neither nationalised industry nor private employers. How the bourgeoisie makes its money is its business. When an individual firm faces bankruptcy, it is entirely legitimate for workers to demand that it be taken under the management of the capitalist class as a whole. However, such measures provide only a breathing space, not a permanent – or even a long-term – solution. Workers must be ready to organise to prevent the mass redundancies and closures that generally follow nationalisation under conditions of recession.

Revolutionaries must fight the prejudice that nationalised industries are progressive, or that they prefigure a socialist society. This results in blaming the failure of these enterprises on the working class; it helps to discredit socialism. Any attempt to encourage 'workers' participation' on the boards of these industries must be opposed. As long as capitalism exists, participation can only mean a share in self-exploitation.

The welfare state is the soft side of the capitalist state; there is nothing progressive about it. It is simply a cheap system for maintaining labour-power at an adequate standard for the needs of modern capitalism. The class character of the welfare state is apparent in every school and hospital. Nevertheless, the proletariat needs welfare services to maintain and reproduce itself. When we fight the cuts we do so to defend the working class, not the welfare state.

Racism and chauvinism

Deepening recession will inevitably provoke further state interference in the life of the working class. The state stands poised to deliver not just further attacks on workers' living standards, but also more intense oppression and more denials of democratic rights. When the proletariat takes the side of the oppressed this will be a sign that a new independent working class politics is in the making.

Bigotry against the oppressed is a powerful weapon for disorienting and dividing the working class. It has been on the increase for many years. Because they pose a threat to the British state, Irish freedom fighters and disaffected young blacks in the inner cities are the first target for chauvinist attacks. The systematic offensive against black people in particular has laid the groundwork for assaults on the working class as a whole. Racist propaganda not only turns worker against worker, but also rallies large numbers of workers behind the banner of reaction. Even trade union activists who are ready to lead strike action against the bosses will often take sides with the capitalist state against foreigners – whether 'Paddies', 'Pakis' or 'Argies'. Nor is the British left immune from this disease: opposition to the EEC and to foreign imports are two of its major commitments.

The bourgeois state leads the racist offensive. Racial discrimination is underwritten by special laws which treat blacks as second-class citizens. Immigration controls give the state the power to control the movement of workers. Once it is established that the state has this right and can discriminate against one section of society, then controls on the entry of immigrants can also be used as a form of internal control. Passport checks, police raids and expulsions are all used to keep blacks in a vulnerable and isolated position. These controls are reproduced in every aspect of social life – today, discrimination in housing, employment and welfare is the norm. Capital benefits from it directly. It can dispose of immigrant workers at will as the normal protection afforded to British citizens is removed.

State racism underpins the spread of racist ideology. Chauvinism breeds on the demoralisation and despair of significant sections of society. Even the working class is infected with it. Narrow trade unionism looks upon foreign workers, not as class brothers and sisters, but as competitors for scarce jobs. Many labour movement organisations acquiesce to racism and turn a blind eye to discrimination in the workplace and in their own structures.

The working class cannot root out racism unless it opposes all immigration controls. State discrimination must be

fought at every level. Passport checks and raids should be resisted on the grounds that the state has no right to interfere in the life of the working class. Deportations must be actively opposed, by force if necessary. The most effective counter to racism is the organisation of workers' defence groups. Only organised workers have the power to run racist thugs off the streets, and every worker has a duty to defend his class from racist attacks.

Active trade unionists have to set an example by crushing racism inside the unions. The unions deserve no respect so long as they remain indifferent to the discrimination suffered by black and immigrant workers. Too often the response of the unions has been restricted to platitudes about racial unity. They have treated racism as a trade union issue which can be solved by trade union means, ignoring the fact that black workers are not simply exploited as workers but also racially oppressed. Unity between black and white workers can only be forged through a fight against this oppression. The onus rests with the labour movement to prove its commitment to this task.

Women's emancipation

The recession has exposed the sham of women's equality in British society. What limited rights were granted women in the post-war period, the crisis has curtailed. As social services have disappeared, so care for the old, the sick, children and the disabled has once more become the sole province of the family and of women. At the same time millions of women are pushed into part-time work – into the most exploitative jobs, and those with the worst conditions. All the old prejudices are brought out to justify the cruder forms of domestic slavery: housework and motherhood are supremely fashionable, and abortion rights are viewed as sacrilegious.

The official labour movement is often complicit in the attacks on women. It expects women to make way for 'the real breadwinners' whenever redundancies are announced. Although they pay lip-service to women's equality, union leaders do nothing to fight for it in practice. Women are pushed on to a few token committees and told to get on with it themselves. The oppression of women as a vital issue for the labour movement has yet to be brought to the attention of male workers.

The oppression of women is rooted in capitalist social relations. Under capitalism, the family is an isolated and private economic unit. The domestic work carried out within it is essential for maintaining the working class and for reproducing the capitalist system; and it is women who are burdened with this privatised toil. Chained to the home, women are prevented from playing a full role in production and in everyday life. The atomised position of women in the home dooms them to a subordinate position in society. Even when a woman can go out to look for a job, she enters the market as an inferior. Her lack of economic independence is codified by statute and made all the more real by ideology.



Women's rights are a key issue for the working class.

Women have a direct stake in the overthrow of a system which thrives on domestic slavery. The workers' movement has a vested interest in eliminating the sexual divisions which undermine the unity of the working class and which prevent women from playing a full role in social and political life. The ideological drive against women is at the same time an attack on the working class. The call to restore Victorian family values is in reality a call to restore the horrific conditions faced by workers in the nineteenth century.

The campaign to drive women back to the home runs directly against the interests of the proletariat. The whole working class needs 24-hour nurseries, maternity rights, free abortion on demand, equal access to employment and equal rights to social services – for without them women will be denied the jobs they need.

Workers must also fight against the repression of homosexuals by the bourgeois state. This necessitates a clear stand against criminalisation of homosexuality through special legislation. Fighting for women's and gay rights is one of the most effective ways in which workers can assert their class independence.

Towards a workers' state

The state is the employers' main weapon for enforcing the domination of capital. As long as the bourgeois state survives, any gains won by workers will be limited and transitory. The precondition for the liberation of society is the destruction of the capitalist state. Our aim is to establish a workers' state which serves the interests of the vast majority of society. To realise this objective we have to popularise the need for working class control in the course of the day to day class struggle.

Revolutionaries must convince active workers of the urgent need to take sides against the state. Without the development of a conscious anti-state outlook and a determination to resist all forms of state oppression there can be no important steps forward. An independent proletarian movement can only be forged in the battle against the oppression of black and immigrant workers, women, homosexuals and any section of society that faces the violence of state attacks. Workers must challenge the fantasy of democratising the state – through an active commitment to fighting for the democratic rights of the oppressed.

The British left is under the illusion that it can use certain parts of the bourgeois state to its own advantage. But a state machine that oppresses with one hand cannot fight oppression with another. The plethora of liberal, state-sponsored institutions in the field of race relations, community affairs, policing and women's rights are still part of the apparatus of oppression. The vogue for parastatal bodies to defend the oppressed is a dangerous diversion. Whatever the motives of left-wing Labour councillors and community activists, the institutions they staff can only serve to reconcile the oppressed to their oppression. They are agencies for containment and can only defuse resistance to state attacks.

The 'local' state – city, borough and metropolitan district councils – is no less a bourgeois institution than the apparatus of central government. In recent years, some radical activists have promoted a parochial version of 'state socialism' which is no more than old-fashioned municipal socialism dressed up as 'community politics'. These left-wing Labour bureaucrats have attempted to popularise the view of the local state as the saviour of jobs and the defender of blacks, women and other sections of the oppressed. This simply encourages atavistic provincial loyalties: it leads workers to bow down before capitalist institutions and paralyses independent intitiatives against oppression.

Only the direct action of the working class can fight oppression. The starting point for resistance to state oppression is the organisation of workers' defence groups. The organisation of physical defence against racist attacks by Workers Against Racism provides one model of independent action against oppression. The same approach can be used when er any section of the class is under attack. The fight for democratic rights is one o the most educative experiences available to the proletariat. The fight against oppression allows every individual worker to transcend his or her individual experience and gain important lessons about how society is run. This experience is a necessity for a class that aims to lead the struggle for a new society.



Phillip Wolmuth

It's no good trying to make the police accountable – we have to defend ourselves against them.

■ The capitalist state belongs to the capitalist class. It cannot be democratised or transformed. Neither in whole nor in part can it ever benefit the working class

■ The defence of the democratic rights of blacks, women and all oppressed people is a pressing task for the workers' movement

■ The struggle against capitalism will advance through the development of a broad anti-state outlook among workers and the assertion of working class control in every struggle.

Fighting the war drive

A world war is no longer a remote possibility. Economic rivalries can no longer be contained within the traditional channels of trade and diplomacy. The breakdown of the long-established world imperialist order is the first casualty in the struggle to redivide the world. All the imperialist powers are busy building lethal weapons; all are preparing for a showdown.

PAX AMERICANA has broken down. The framework for international relations which the USA has supervised since 1945 gets shakier by the day. Since the 'sixties the USA has declined economically, becoming less and less able to keep up with its more successful imperialist rivals – especially Japan and West Germany. This basic fact explains every quarrel among the superpowers and every inconclusive summit meeting.

One of the most remarkable features of modern times is that the USA, a faltering economic power, remains the strongest political and military force in the world. Such a distorted state of affairs cannot last for ever. Europe and Japan will not tolerate US domination indefinitely. In the meantime, to preserve its hegemony the USA asserts its political and military muscle to make up for its economic weakness. Hence Reagan constantly pushes NATO to the fore, insists on European governments paying out more on its military bills and accepting US missile systems – Cruise, Trident and Pershing.

Washington has been very keen to stress its unique responsibility for containing communism. In reality, however, the new Cold War is much more about bonding Europe back to America than it is about 'Soviet aggression'. The outcry that greeted Reagan's sanctions against the Siberian pipeline, plus the anxiety with which Western European governments regard his inflexible pose at the Geneva arms negotiations, together demonstrate a fundamental divergence of interest.

The arms race is widely perceived as an East-West matter. Yet though East-West conflicts exist, they are secondary to those within the imperialist camp. All the demonology America creates around Andropov is an attempt to get its rivals to see that the American way is the only way. But it serves a wider purpose too, for all the Western powers use it as an excuse to pillage the Third World.

Wars in the Third World

Backward capitalist countries have never escaped from the imperialists' torture chambers. When America, Britain and France got on better, all three prosecuted an endless series of jungle, desert and mountain wars in the Third World. Now that they are falling out, each grabs Third World markets, raw materials and investment opportunities with the help of their armed forces. Meanwhile West Germany, Japan and Italy trade arms with vigour, waiting for their moment.

The imperialists have yet to slug it out with each other directly. For the present the carve-ups are confined to the backward capitalist countries. As the 'eighties progress, we will see more *Belgranos* and more Beiruts; yet the heroism of the liberation movements of Central America, of the Palestinians in Israeli-occupied territory, of the Namibian guerrillas and of the republicans in Ireland will continue too. It will ensure that even the poorest peasant retains his dignity against the imperialist marauders.

For the past 30 years the working classes of the West have not faced the threat of war. Today, however, the instability of world politics makes war a real possibility. Nuclear war is capital's final solution; but every crisis in international relations threatens to drag the working class into a spiral of military violence. The militarisation of political life in every Western country draws all sections of society into the drive towards war.

Fight imperialism for peace

Militarism is not just about cruise missiles. It is about the whole Falklands media circus – the departing troop ships, the heroic homecomings, the vicarious exploitation of the bereaved. Militarism echoes in every sentimental tribute to Charles and Diana; it is what Thatcher means when she invokes 'our national destiny'. And the labour bureaucrats are all for it: the language with which they castigate the American multinationals, Japanese cars and French vegetables becomes more aggressive all the time. At union conferences, the violence of capitalist unemployment supplies the excuse for violent attacks, not on the employers, but on any producer who isn't British.

In each imperialist country the labour movement apes the warmongering of the bourgeoisie. France's ruling Socialist Party, under Mitterand's leadership, has distinguished itself by strident attacks on the Soviet Union, while the French communists, Mitterand's lieutenants, view the nuclear *force de frappe* with pride. In Britain Labour worries about the Bomb – especially the American Bomb – but sees nothing objectionable about the fact that Britain's military machine is still one of the most deadly in the world. Indeed the party is committed to making the murderous warfleet more deadly still.

The labour leaders have cynically manipulated people's yearning for peace. Britain's Labour Party and West Germany's social democrats suck up to the peace movement but stay loyal to NATO. These parties have thwarted the emergence of working class antipathy to war, with the result that the peace movements of Europe and North America have tended to be based on the middle class.

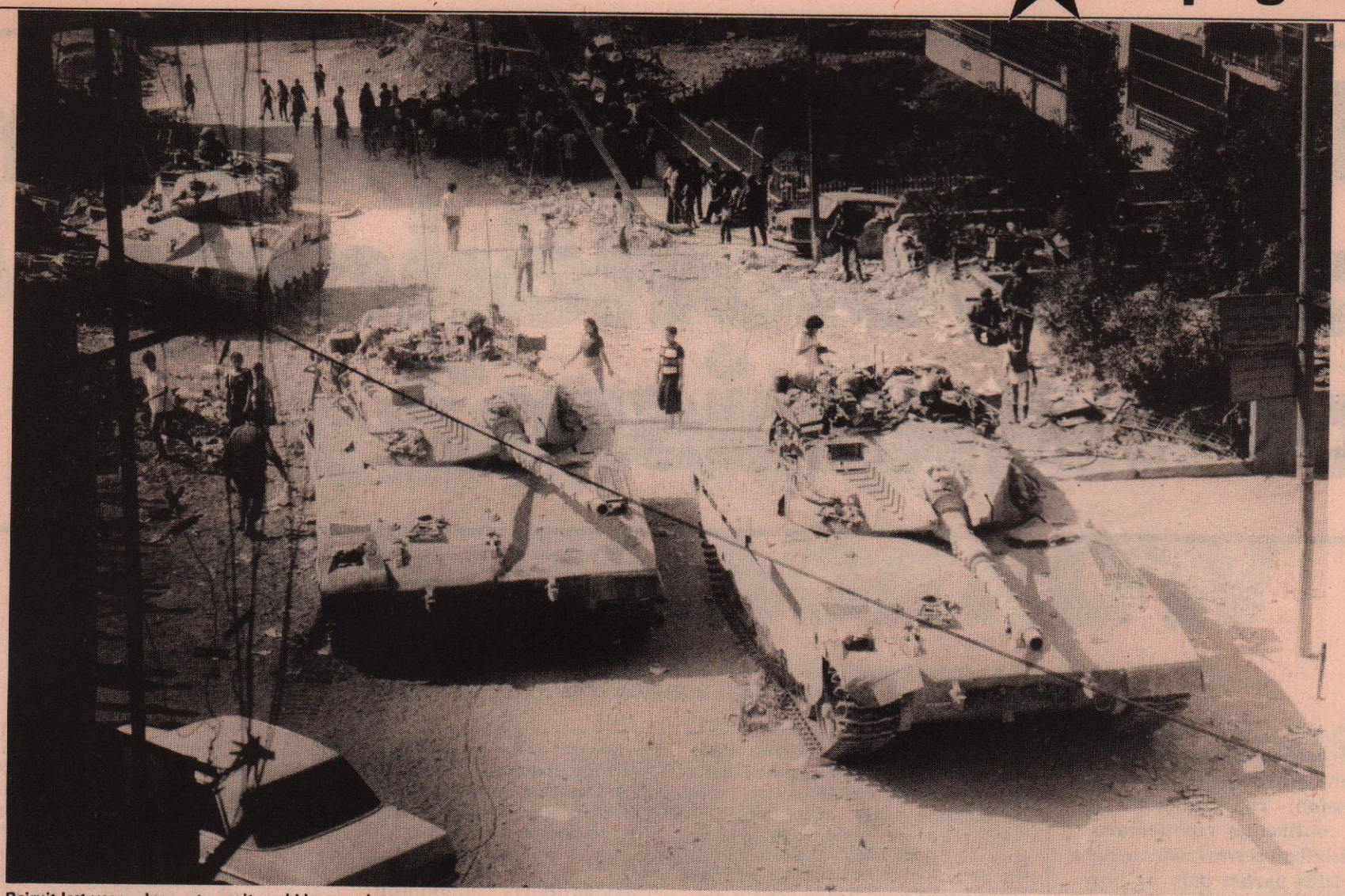
The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and its equivalents overseas stress personal survival and global holocausts above all else. They are narrowly anti-nuclear, not anti-militarist. Rather than opposing militarism, they call for alternative defence postures based on conventional weapons. Hence bourgeois forces, including politicians, generals and bishops who fully support the imperialist order, have had no problems joining them. This phenomenon is most striking in West Germany and the USA, but it is also evident in Britain.

The peace movement has made its peace with imperialism. It says nothing about Nicaragua, nothing about Belfast. It has redefined peace to mean not increasing America's nuclear lead any further (the 'freeze' movement in the USA) or, alternatively, to mean keeping Poland, Portugal and other countries in between free from nuclear bases (Europe's anti-nuclear campaigns). Such parochial aims can easily fit in with the chauvinist perspectives of the ruling class. In Europe, much of the peace movement already exhibits deep anti-American prejudices. Indeed, the European bourgeoisie has been able to use its peace movements to put pressure on Washington.

The politics of the peace movements fly in the face of the widespread desire to avert a nuclear war. The war drive is the inevitable outcome of the crisis of imperialism; it is not a policy that can be



Death merchants Britain, are at home: dealing with them is our first priority



Beiruit last year – by next year it could be anywhere.

adopted or rejected at the whim of heads of state. When competition by peaceful means is insufficient, then preparations for a more forceful kind of competition must begin. In a world recession, peace and imperialism are simply incompatible. A peace movement that fails to challenge imperialism will be at best irrelevant, at worst its accomplice.

Disarm the ruling class

The threat of world war shows what convulsions capitalism is in. Only a return to barbarism can save the capitalist system; only if that system is swept away can humanity save itself from barbarism. The war drive provides one of the most impelling motives for building a communist society, and fast.

The war drive is not a problem for the future: it already exists in the present. Active workers must denounce those who ignore the reality of bloodshed today for the possibility of Armageddon tomorrow. A movement that cannot oppose the wars fought now will never be able to stop wars in the future.

On its own the slogan for nuclear disarmament is meaningless. All the imperialist powers are extending their arsenals; they can no more disarm than they can abandon the search for profits. War can only be averted if imperialism is disarmed by the working class.

The struggle against the capitalist class is a struggle against militarism; the struggle against militarism is a struggle against the capitalist class. Militarism is the only policy that the bosses pursue today, because for them the accumulation of capital is literally a life or death matter. Their interest lies in rallying us against foreign upstarts and usurpers. Our interest lies in defeating them. For us, therefore, the old revolutionary slogan 'the enemy is at home' retains all its validity. One day the working class will sabotage munitions factories, wreck naval dockyards, make runways unusable, jam intelligence signals and pour concrete down missile silos. Any tactic that brings that day closer marks a victory for peace. To turn imperialist war into civil war is our highest goal. Our quarrel is with our exploiters, not with people abroad. For that reason we oppose all their imperialist fronts, from gladiatorial NATO to the United Nations circus.

The working class has to throw its weight behind all wars of national liberation. Oppressor nations versus oppressed nations: this is the essence of imperialism, and it dictates that we take sides. The metropolitan working class will not fulfil its historic mission unless it combats every military adventure against the Third World.

Active workers must repudiate non-nuclear 'defence' programmes. For the imperialist 'defence' means wiping out the enemy: the rape of the oppressed is always justified as essential for the 'defence' of some lofty principle – 'democracy' in Vietnam, 'freedom' in El Salvador, 'self-determination' for the Falklanders. Workers must reject all forms of militarism and all the hypocritical justifications that are peddled out for them.

Workers can have no truck with anti-Soviet propaganda. It is a pretext for rearmament in the West and intervention in the Third World. The bourgeoisie's hypocritical concern for 'human rights' in the Eastern bloc is simply a cover for the war drive. That the Soviet Union is a travesty of communism, that the October Revolution has been overturned into a system of bureaucratic oppression does not change this fact. Similarly, to refute the notion that the USSR is the instigator of today's arms race is not to pay the Kremlin a compliment: it is simply to recognise that the current war drive emanates from the imperialist camp. Every type of smear against the Eastern bloc must be opposed – not because the USSR is progressive, but because any imperialist advance strengthens reaction throughout the world.

The best way we can show our solidarity with the workers of the Eastern bloc is to take on imperialism, the main enemy of the world proletariat. A successful encounter on our part would create the best conditions for the workers of the Eastern bloc to deal once and for all with their rulers:

Peace on our terms

Hatred for war sustains the movement for peace. Yet, divorced from the struggle against capitalism, anti-war sentiments can be put to sinister ends. Pacifism is attractive on the surface but both unrealistic and reactionary beneath. It is unrealistic because it assumes that peace can come about in a system that needs war to carry on. It is reactionary because it rejects all wars and all violence.

From the point of view of the working class all wars are not the same. While we oppose imperialist warfare, we support wars of oppressed nations against imperialism in the same way we support civil war against our own oppressors. Renouncing violence means knuckling under: while we are far from indifferent to aspirations for peace, we point out that it must be fought for, that it can only be secured by disarming the bosses and their state.

Fight for Irish freedom

A successful struggle against British imperialism demands the exposure of pro-imperialist politics inside the official labour movement. The right wing of the labour bureaucracy is fully behind the imperialist war drive. Its pro-imperialist credentials were on view for all to see in the war against Argentina, and it has long approved of British involvement in South Africa, Ireland and elsewhere. And the left wing? It has a tradition of anti-imperialist rhetoric, but prefers to denounce intervention in countries where Britain plays no direct role: El Salvador is its current favourite. Above all, it refuses to challenge Britain's right to occupy and terrorise Ireland. It denies that Britain is a imperialist power and has the gall to paint one of the world's best armed super-powers as a battered colony of the USA. This allows the left to mix anti-American appraisals of remote international events with a form of radical British nationalism in relation to matters close to home.

The prime focus of anti-imperialist activity in Britain must be solidarity with the national liberation struggle in Ireland. We are lucky to have a powerful ally in our fight against our exploiters: the Irish people. The struggle for Irish freedom is a major threat to the British ruling class. This is why the British state puts immense resources into containing it, both in the Six Counties and in Britain.

General endorsement for Britain's oppression of Ireland has allowed the ruling class to stir up anti-Irish chauvinism. This breeds reaction and provides imperialism with a strong ideological prop. British workers stand unable to defend their class interests as long as they accept their bosses' policies on Ireland. From this it follows that the fight for Irish freedom inside the working class will play a pivotal role in the British revolution.

Workers must reject any and all British solutions for Ireland. They must support the right of the Irish people to decide their future and they must demand the immediate withdrawal of British troops. We cannot be idle spectators in this war, but must work for our enemy's final and irreversible defeat.

■ Because militarism is inseparable from capitalism, peace can only be realised through the overthrow of the present system
■ The enemy is at home – turn imperialist war into civil war!
■ Unconditional support for all anti-imperialist movements!
■ No to anti-Soviet hysteria!
■ Forward to the defeat of British imperialism in Ireland!

Austerity socialism or revolutionary communism?

The old parties of the labour movement have come to terms with the recession. The Labour Party and its continental counterparts distinguish themselves from outright pro-capitalist parties only by how many billions they are prepared to risk reflating the economy. But they are not prepared to risk any action that might threaten the capitalist system.

THE AUSTERITY SOCIALISM of the labour parties is one of the strongest weapons in the hands of the ruling class. It restricts the horizons of the labour movement and forces workers to make do with what the system can afford. Austerity socialism demobilises thousands of militants and dispirits the millions of workers who follow them. Many sense that the sweeter versions of the austerity pill are unlikely to work and that they will do little, if anything, to assist their class. But with nothing else on offer, their suspicions can all too easily lead to despair.

Workers do not vote for the Labour Party because they want it in office; they vote Labour to keep the Tories out. Labour's programme enlivens nobody – militants have seen all the played-out demands for nationalisation, state investment, planning agreements and industrial democracy before and expect even less to come of them than they did in the past. For most workers Labour's sole merit is that it isn't as bad as the Tories. Labour stumbles on only because workers can see no alternative to it. Labour movement organisations that have outlived their usefulness to the working class survive because the left refuses to sever links with them. For 60 years the left has operated as a pressure group in and around the Labour Party. It has criticised – and on occasion even denounced – many a Labour dignitary. But in the end it has always advised workers to stay with the party in the faint hope that one day things will be different. Every move the left has made since the recession has been made in Labour's shadow. Each general election has drawn the left further into the mainstream of Labour politics. In the past, sections of the left qualified their support for Labour with the proviso that support was a short-term expedient to expose the party as a prelude to destroying it. Today, however, there are no such qualifications. Indeed the left has become the most active advocate of Labourism. It is the only section of the party that still believes that electing Labour would have beneficial consequences for the working class.

The left's uncompromising support for Labour is the reflex reaction of a movement that has lost faith in itself. The British left no longer believes that it can lead working class struggles or that it has any independent role to play. Having no distinctive politics of its own, it simply provides a radical rendition of the same old Labour ideas. The future of the left is now intimately bound up with that of the labour bureaucracy. This is not surprising, for the left has gradually become part of the labour bureaucracy. Indeed, over the past few years it has found a cosy niche for itself in the machinery of government. Yesterday's down-at-heel activists are today's salaried representatives of the community; some even look forward to becoming MPs. A small army of councillors, race relations advisers, women's rights officers and experts on 'policing' now defines the attitudes, culture, and aims of the British radical left.

Class unity

The labour bureaucrats are more at home in warm committee rooms than in open-air strike meetings – and so, more and more, are their left-wing hangers-on. The bureaucrats try to protect themselves by issuing calls for 'unity': the left follows suit and performs the special job of guarding Labour's left flank by inveighing against those outside the party as 'splitters' and 'sectarians'. Thus workers' genuine desire for a united class response to the bosses' offensive is perverted to boost the bureaucracy.

For the left, unity is a timeless, abstract principle that exists above contending classes and policies. Even when it is obvious that the Labour leaders are pursuing only their own narrow self-interest, the left does not think twice about doing their dirty work. Yet today unity around the labour bureaucracy means putting parasites before the cause of the working class. Salvaging the Labour Party and the union machine means sacrificing the working class to austerity socialism.

Real class unity must be forged through a consistent struggle for socialist objectives. The unity of the working class is not the same as the preservation of the labour bureaucracy. Class unity today requires the rejection of the existing leadership of the labour movement. Today the interests of workers and those of the bureaucracy are more at odds than ever before. Workers need to safeguard jobs and living standards; the bureaucrats offer supine acceptance of redundancies and 'agreed' wage cuts. Workers' interests are directly opposed to British imperialism; the bureaucrats are its most fervent advocates. Our main weapon is our collective social power; theirs is the capitalist state.

Revolutionary communism has only one loyalty – to the international proletariat. This is why revolutionary communists feel under no obligation to the organisations of the labour bureaucracy. On the contrary, ridding the labour movement of the cancer at its head will be a tremendous gain for our class. We aim to give the sharpest possible expression to the conflict of interests between the bureaucracy and the rank-and-file.

Revolutionary communism

Many reluctant and shamefaced supporters of the Labour Party say that they accept our analysis, but cannot agree with the practical measures we propose. They feel that it is premature to build a new organisation right now and exclaim: 'how can a small party like yours hope to make a go of it?' For more than half a century this argument has held sway. Generations of left-wingers have refused to settle scores with the labour bureaucracy because they have been persuaded that the times are not yet right. In fact every retreat only made the bureaucrats more audacious and the prospects for building genuine proletarian politics more remote. The cumulative result of adopting this gambit for decades is a deep fatalism among militants. This tells us that the construction of a revolutionary alternative to Labour is far from premature. It is long overdue.

Those who deny the need to build a revolutionary party today reject the possibility of proletarian power. Yet such power is within our grasp: it is not just something we would like, but the only realistic course of action open to the working class. The labour bureaucracy and its outriders on the left pride themselves on their hard-headed pragmatism. They denounce any struggle outside their control as unrealistic. But is it realistic to leave the future of our class in the hands of a Michael Foot, a Tony Benn or a Ken Livingstone? Is it not a reckless gamble to stake our lives on a party that has betrayed the working class more often than memory can recall?

The twilight of capitalist 'civilisation' provides continuous and irrefutable arguments for communism. It unmasks all the old assumptions and personalities, and forces all the familiar parties on to the defensive. Because we have invested nothing in the existing order, because we are untroubled by the dead weight of tradition, the world will be ours. The programme of revolutionary communism starts today: it is never too early to assert the independent interests of the proletariat.

The working class urgently needs to free itself from the disastrous influence of the labour bureaucracy

■ The working class can only unite *against* its existing leadership, not with it

■ Now is the time to build the party of the future

I would like to know more about the RCP

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

TEL.....

Send to BM RCP, LONDON WC1N 3XX

the next step

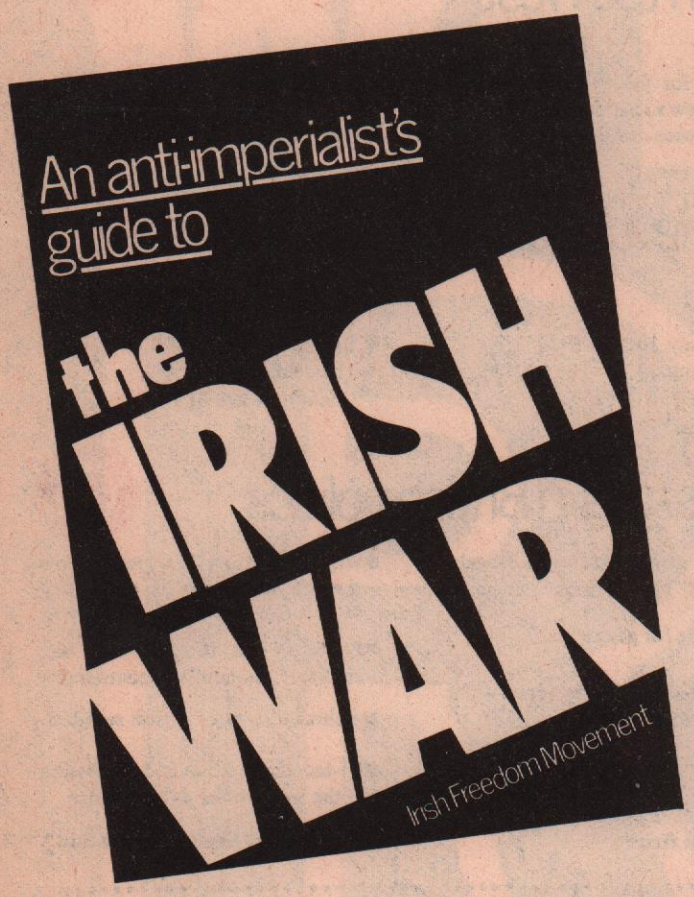
READ TODAY LEAD TOMORROW

For up to date news and analysis of developments on the international scene, in the labour movement, on the question of women's oppression, racism and Ireland – take *the next step* monthly

12 issues for £5
Send cheques to:
Junius Publications
BCM JP LTD
London WC1N 3XX

Subscribe now!
NAME_____
ADDRESS_____
TEL_____
UNION/ORG _____

Irish Freedom Movement handbook



'Clear-eyed and level-voiced arguments supplemented by exceptionally useful guide to personalities and organisations, chronology and other solid information.'
Time Out

'If accepted, the argument will give to solidarity work a central place that it doesn't now have on the British left.'
City Limits

'In many ways this book is a welcome development.'
Saoirse (newspaper of the Irish Republican Socialist Party)

'The *Guide* is excellent value and a comprehensive reference source on our embarrassing 13 year old war.'
New Society

'Attractively produced and well illustrated... The book provides a tidy synopsis of what the North of Ireland is all about...For £1.95, you won't get better.'
The Irish Post

'A mine of factual information...a concise introduction to Irish solidarity work. I have no hesitation in recommending it to sympathisers and activists at home and abroad.'
Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh, founder member, Civil Rights Movement, Derry

Includes...
Compendium of War facts

- Directory of organisations
- What happened when: a chronology
- Irish prisoners in British jails
- Britain's machine of terror
- Personalities of the Irish War
- Information on Ireland: a bibliography

Order your copy now!
Send £1.95 plus
50 pence p&p
to JP Ltd, BM RCP,
London WC1N 3XX.

Make cheques payable to Junius Publications

IFM VIDEO
The longest war

You've read the book – now see the film!
Order the new Irish Freedom Movement video on Britain's war in Ireland to show in your trade union branch, youth club or college.
Invitations for speakers welcomed.
35 mins VHS colour £5 to hire
Write to:
Irish Freedom Movement
BM RCP
London WC1N 3XX
Or telephone 01-274 3951

Real Freedom

Kate Marshall relates women's oppression today to capitalism in crisis. *Real Freedom* takes on bourgeois reaction, reformism and traditional feminism. It points the way to a working class strategy for women's liberation.
BUY IT!
£1.95 plus postage (50p)
Send cheques to Junius Publications
BCM JP LTD
London WC1N 3XX

WAR VIDEO
I'm not a racist, but...

You've read about us in *the next step*, now see us in action:
- in solidarity with black workers on strike
- fighting police harassment
- organising against the race checks

33 mins VHS colour £5 to hire
Write to:
Workers Against Racism
BM WAR
London WC1N 3XX
Or telephone 01-274 3951

A LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE FOR THE 'EIGHTIES

PREPARING FOR POWER

A week of discussion and debate, politics and polemics

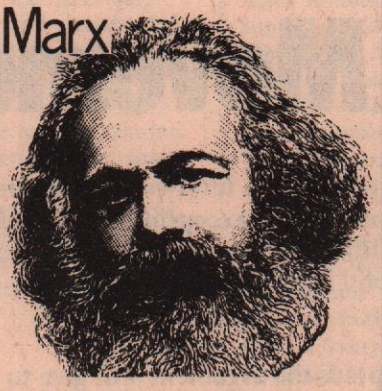
Preparing for Power provides a unique opportunity to find out everything you want to know about Marxism and working class politics. Almost 100 different lectures and workshops will cover a wide range of topics and controversies. If you are new to Marxism – don't worry. We have designed a number of introductory sessions with you in mind. If you think you know it all – you're welcome too. We have planned some more challenging workshops to develop our collective understanding further.

Preparing for Power is not only about theory. It provides an opportunity to meet with socialists with a wide range of experiences; you can learn from them, and they from you. Workshops will be run by veterans of industrial disputes, anti-racist campaigns, international solidarity work and other areas of the class struggle. Don't wait for capitalism to collapse – come and prepare for our class to take power.

Saturday 16 July Marxism after Marx

The conference opens with a full day devoted to developments in Marxism in the century since Marx's death. We do not intend merely to celebrate the great man's memory, but to examine the state of Marxist theory today. Eight workshops follow a broad opening session on Marxism since 1945.

- **The Second International: revisionism and social democracy**
- **The Comintern: from Lenin to Trotsky**
- **Was Stalin a Marxist?**
- **Is there a British Marxism?**
- **The theory of capitalist collapse**
- **Marxism and feminism**
- **Marx on the Irish Question**
- **The transition from capitalism to communism**



Marx's London

An early morning walk around the places where Marx lived and worked

In the week Series of six workshops

In the week: series of six workshops
SUNDAY 17 – FRIDAY 22 JULY

Each course runs for six sessions to provide a stimulating introduction to different aspects of Marxist theory and the class struggle.

- **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 at college, then this course is for you.

- **Racism – what it is and how to fight it**

Racism originates in the relationships established by capitalist society – not the media, and still less from workers' heads. This course looks at racism and anti-racism today.

- **The British working class**

It is 150 years since the Tolpuddle Martyrs were exiled to Australia for forming a trade union. British workers have been organising unions ever since – but they still haven't got rid of the bosses. We examine why not and what needs to be done to make the unions effective for the working class.

- **Imperialism in Africa**

From Ethiopia, through Zimbabwe to Namibia, Africa is sinking into starvation and chaos. This course will survey imperialist strategy and the struggles of the masses.

- **Women – oppression and emancipation**

Charles and Diana, herpes and AIDS, test-tube babies and morning after pills – they will use any subject to stir up conformist, pro-family, back to the home prejudices against women. How to fight back?

- **Ireland – the longest war**

Imperialist strategy, republican resistance, labour movement solidarity, Loyalism, Catholicism and reformism.

Specialist courses

1 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

2 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

3 Revolutions betrayed

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

4 Issues in British politics

- Who's afraid of Maggie 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
- The general election: what now?

Workers Against Racism Benefit

London's most up and coming rock band | Saturday 16 July 7.30pm

The Republic

plus support

16-22 July

Polytechnic of Central London
New Cavendish St.
London W1

I would like to attend Preparing for Power and enclose £10.00 registration fee (£6.00 UB 40)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

TEL.....

TRADE UNION/ORG.....

.....

Accommodation ☐

Creche ☐

Cheques payable to RCP Association. Send to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Enquiries: phone 01-274 3951