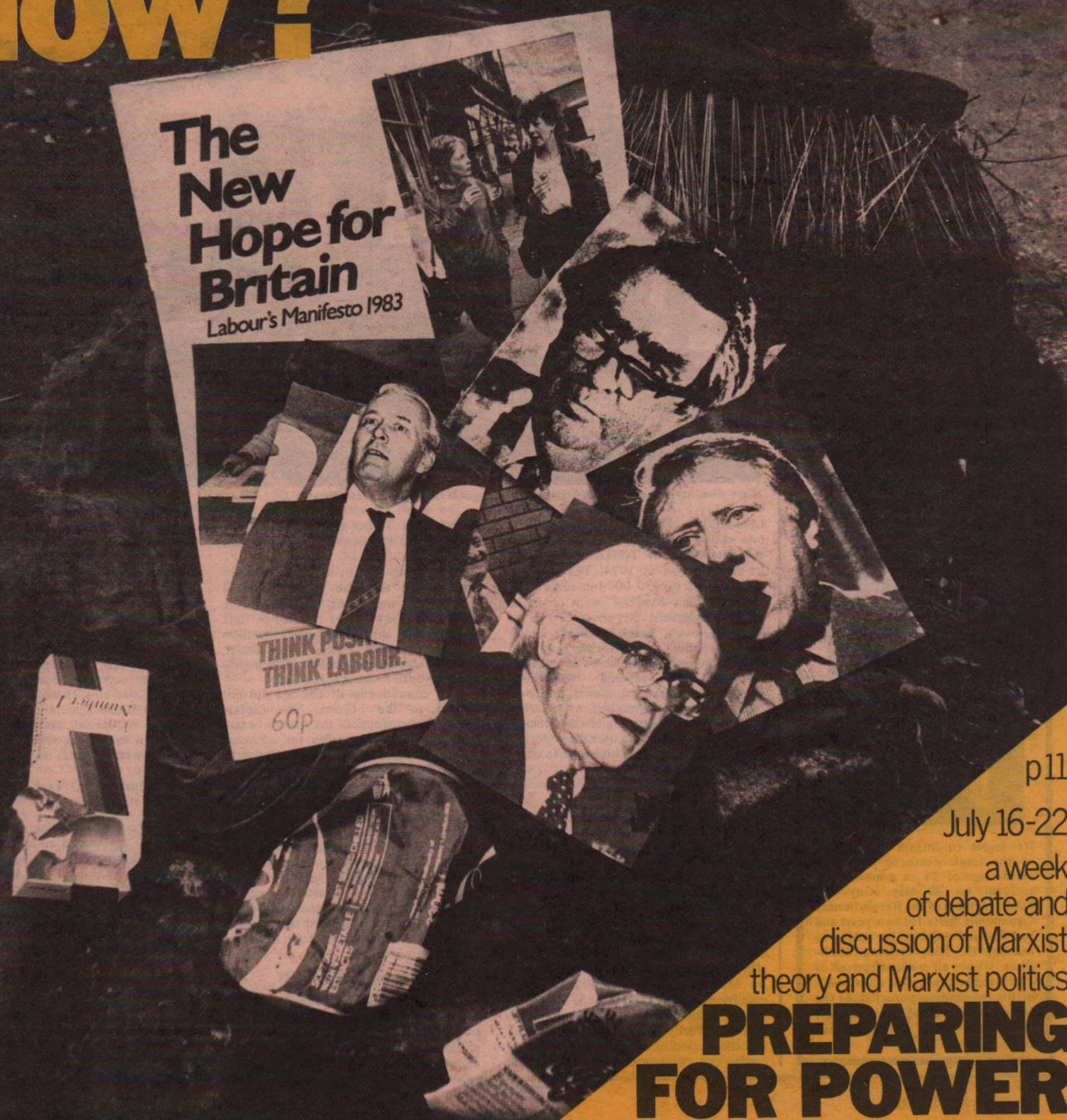


the next step

No 37 July 1983

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party 20p

Who needs the Labour Party now?



p11

July 16-22

a week

of debate and

discussion of Marxist

theory and Marxist politics

PREPARING FOR POWER

Contents

the next step No37

Editorial

Out of the ashes 3

General Election

Defence — 'emotional spasms' 4

Labour's decline and fall 5

The RCP campaign 6,7

Imperialism

El Salvador 8

The pressures on the PLO 9

South Africa's black trade unions 10

Revolutionary Communist Party

Preparing for Power 11-14

Ireland

Fighting the PTA 2

Labour left soldiers on 15

Defend Tameside Trades Council! 16

PTA-free zones 16

IFM handbook and video 16

Racism

Black workers fight back 17

Afia Begum will stay! 24

Housing

The homeless — victims of the slump 18

Gay rights

The demise of Gay News 19

Soviet Union

Russian nationalism 20

Reviews

Ben Tillet 21

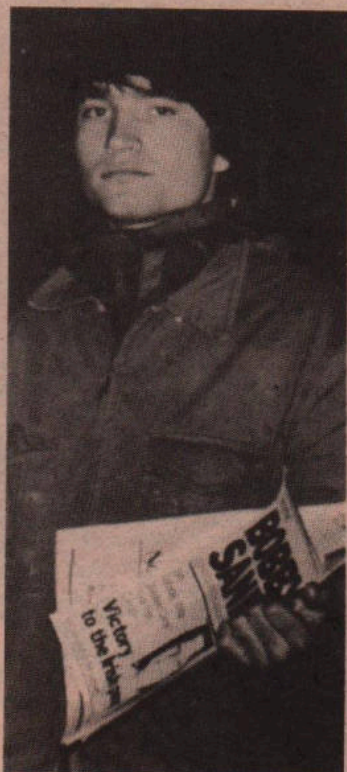
Crisis, Soviet Union, Ireland 22

Letters

Sexual harassment, the family 23

Zimbabwe, Tameside 23

Published by Junius Publications Ltd
BCM JP LTD, London WC1N 3XX
Printed by Morning Litho Printers Ltd(TU)
Typeset by Junius Publications (TU)
ISSN 0144-350 X July 1983



We regret to inform our readers of the tragic death of Guy Ross at the age of 21 in a motorcycle accident on 30 May. Guy had been a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party for two years and had devoted much of his energy to building the Irish Freedom Movement. We are all cruelly deprived of a talented comrade and, most of all, of his tremendous potential for the future. We extend our deepest sympathies to his family, friends and comrades.

Fighting the P.T.A.

The General Election campaign began with IRA prisoners protesting on the roof of Albany prison on the Isle of Wight and ended with armed guards on every major politician in case of 'terrorist' attack. When Scotland Yard identified the potential assassins as John Downey and Sean O'Callaghan, the press went on an anti-republican and anti-Irish 'Jackal hunt'.

The Tory *Daily Mail* tried to make the Prevention of Terrorism Act — and Labour's half-hearted pledge to repeal it — an election issue. This backfired badly when it emerged that the alleged terrorists were living the quiet life at home in Ireland. It could have backfired much worse, but of course the Labour Party was not going to make the Irish War, or the PTA, into election issues. Labour discreetly agreed to let the matter drop and the customary bipartisan harmony between Labour and Tories on terrorising the Irish in Ireland and Britain reigned through the election campaign.

Yet once again the PTA served its purpose. The Act is not designed to 'catch terrorists', but to create a climate of fear and prejudice in Britain and unite public opinion against the 'Irish menace'. While the state was making full use of the PTA during the election campaign, RCP candidates were making it a major issue and the Irish Freedom Movement was defending some victims of the Act..



Aussie seamen beat the P.T.A.



Crew members of the *Australian Exporter* striking against the Prevention of Terrorism Act

LIVERPOOL DOCKS last month saw one of the most effective actions against the Prevention of Terrorism Act since its introduction in 1974. The 20 crew members of the 30 000-ton cargo ship, the *Australian Exporter*, went on strike in protest against the arrest of one of their shipmates, Frank McGleave, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and refused to sail until he was released. Their action secured widespread support from trade unionists in Liverpool, particularly members of the National Union of Seamen and the dockers' union, the TGWU, and eventually forced the Home Secretary to intervene to order Frank's release.

No Pom!

Frank McGleave is an Australian of Irish origin who was brought up on the Falls Road in West Belfast. In 1980 he was arrested under the PTA at Heathrow Airport and held for seven days before being served with an exclusion order and forced to return to Belfast. Shortly after this incident he returned to Australia and started work for the state-owned shipping company. When the *Australian Exporter* docked in Liverpool on Monday 9 May, Frank decided to visit friends and relatives in the Midlands. Within 24 hours he was picked up by the police in Corby and arrested for breaching the exclusion order. He appeared in court and was remanded in Bedford

Prison for a further week — despite the fact that his ship was due to sail within four days.

It was only shortly before they were due to sail that the crew discovered that Frank was being held under the PTA and would not be released in time to join the ship. The crew, members of the Seamen's Union of Australia, called a meeting and voted unanimously to strike until Frank was released.

The comradeship of the sea did not extend to the officers. The captain immediately stopped the crew's wages and even closed the galley for 24 hours in an attempt to starve them back to work. There was, however, an immediate response from Liverpool workers in the port. Dockers and tug-boat men refused to cooperate with any plans to move the ship without the agreement of the strikers. The local branch of the NUS visited the ship daily to give practical and moral support and arranged transport for the strikers to attend the court hearing. Supporters of the Irish Freedom Movement also visited the ship and began to mobilise support for a picket of the court hearing.

Action brings results

For the first week of his detention Frank was denied access to a solicitor and his relatives and workmates. But the strike, and the publicity and support it generated, immediately put the police on

the defensive. Frank was first allowed to see a solicitor and then granted a visit by the Australian High Commission. The threat of holding up the departure of the *Australian Exporter* indefinitely and the mounting protests from the unions in Australia, forced the Australian government to put pressure on Britain to release Frank. The threat of further disruption in Liverpool docks and of solidarity action by dockers and British seamen was also crucial. The following day the Home Secretary intervened and ordered a special court hearing: the exclusion order was revoked and Frank was allowed to rejoin his ship that afternoon.

Back on ship, Frank told us why he was detained:

"They put the exclusion order on me in May 1980 and accused me of being involved in 'acts of terrorism'. But they had no evidence against me. I don't have any convictions and I wasn't involved in the republican movement. It's just the area you come from and your family. The support from the lads on the ship was great. There's no doubt that it was the strength of the unions that got me out."

Wednesday 29 June 12.30pm
Lobby Liverpool City Council
Make Liverpool a PTA-free zone!
Town Hall
Castle Street
Liverpool 1

THE RETURN of a Conservative government with a massive majority in Parliament is much less important than the collapse of the Labour Party in the General Election. The results of the 9 June election confirm a rapid acceleration in the downward course Labour has been following for the past 30 years. The Tory landslide underlines the steady shift in the balance of power towards the capitalist class and the feebleness and fragmentation of working class politics.

Many militant workers look ahead to the next five years with a sense of doom. The fact that hundreds of thousands of workers have transferred their votes from Labour to one of the explicitly bourgeois parties certainly calls for sober reflection. But the decline of the Labour Party also signals a period of unprecedented political uncertainty and unpredictability. The breakdown of traditional allegiances creates the opportunity for new alternatives to prove themselves to the working class.

One of the first comments Michael Foot made after conceding defeat to Margaret Thatcher was 'now the Labour Party will have to be rebuilt'. Like his colleagues on both left and right wings of the party, Foot believes that Labour's defeat was due to miscalculation, the wrong emphasis in the manifesto, or some organisational defect. The left blames the right and vice versa. Some blame Foot's leadership, whilst others point the finger at Tony Benn's unpopularity or at James Callaghan's repudiation of Labour's manifesto commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

But Labour's defeat was not due to accidents or campaign 'own-goals'. Labour's defeat is symptomatic of the progressive paralysis which has overtaken the official labour movement during the past decade. Institutions that have not only their roots, but also their whole outlook and approach in the past have become increasingly irrelevant to the needs of the working class. The weakness and vacillation of the trade union and Labour leaders in the face of four years of Tory rule have contributed to the fragmentation of the working class. As a result, the influence of the official labour movement has been restricted to only a *section* of the working class. How can the Labour Party win back the votes it has lost when it cannot even count on the loyalty of the working class?

In contrast, the ruling class parties have made deep inroads into the working class by taking the initiative on issues like the sale of council houses, anti-trade union laws and cuts in social security benefit. The Tories can take advantage of divisions in the working class — between owner occupiers and council tenants, non-trade unionists and organised workers, the employed and the unemployed — and win a growing base of support among working class people.

Even the union bureaucracy now senses that there can be no return to the past. At the height of the election campaign the TUC leaders had already begun to speculate about how to improve relations with the Tories. A number of union leaders made it clear that they were prepared to work things out with a new Thatcher government. TUC president Frank Chapple's advocacy of an SDP candidate and the recommendation by clerical workers' leader Roy Grantham of tactical voting for the Liberals may have shocked a few naive Labour Party activists but this was consistent with some of the sentiments that prevail on the General Council of the TUC.

As long as the labour bureaucracy itself is in crisis the Labour Party cannot be simply rebuilt. The Labour Party does not operate in a vacuum; it depends on the strength of the official labour movement. But, as we have argued in *the next step* in recent months, the

labour bureaucracy itself is to blame for the disintegration of the organisations of the working class. Its divisive pro-capitalist policies have pushed millions of workers into passivity and despair and sapped their will to fight back. But the campaign now underway by left and right to revive the Labour Party begs a crucial question — is the Labour Party worth reviving?

The campaign was distinguished by the absence at the national level of any effective representation of the interests of the working class. The Tory campaign made no promises except to make clear that another Conservative government would ruthlessly pursue the interests of the British capitalist class. Thatcher and her lieutenants scoffed at political niceties and rejected compromise. The Labour Party could not cope with the resolute approach. In the first week of the election campaign the Labour Party, and particularly the left, began to protest about the extreme demands of the Tories. Thatcher was criticised for being authoritarian towards her cabinet members and for demanding a landslide victory.

Why any political leader should be ashamed of wanting a landslide victory was beyond the comprehension of anybody not bound hand and foot to the labour bureaucracy's tradition of compromise and vacillation. Instead of directly and forcefully putting forward the clear interests of the proletariat, the leadership of the Labour Party took refuge in the vocabulary of the social worker. With all its pleading about 'compassion' and a 'caring society', it wasn't clear whether Labour was begging for mercy for its leaders and charity for its followers — or simply pursuing the biblical myth that 'the meek shall inherit the earth'.

The contrasting campaign styles flowed from the policies of the two main parties. The Conservatives knew exactly what they were fighting for — Labour

didn't. The evasions, ramblings and silences of Labour politicians stemmed from their incoherent manifesto. The manifesto emphasised Labour's good intentions. But a party that remained firmly attached to capitalism, and only criticised some of the consequences of the survival of that system, could not convince anybody that its good intentions would be fulfilled. Labour offered a capitalism with jobs and prosperity. Not even the most incorrigible optimist could believe in this fairy tale.

Because nobody believed its promises, the Labour Party was forced to emphasise the noble qualities of its leader and its policies. In contrast to the Tories, who argued that the main thing was to make industry profitable and insisted that unemployment was beyond government control, Labour politicians vehemently declared that unemployment was an evil that they cared about, and that Michael Foot was a fine man. None of these rhetorical flourishes worked. In the second week of the campaign Labour gave up the fight and turned its attention to limiting the size of the Tory victory. It left the battlefield cursing the media, opinion polls and the SDP-Liberal Alliance, mumbling that Thatcher had induced a sense of defeatism in the British people.

Labour's left wing didn't wait two weeks to leave the battlefield — it never joined the fight in the first place. Throughout the campaign the Labour left maintained a diplomatic silence. Overtaken by a true sense of its own irrelevance, the left was determined not to become an embarrassment to Labour's campaign. Not even the leadership's renunciation of unilateralism in the middle of the campaign could shake the left out of its torpor.

The sudden demise of the Labour left should not worry active workers. The Labour left never had any independent existence. Its policies were not only unrealistic but also imbued with British

chauvinism. The left's brand of radical populism appropriately won the support of the eccentric racist Enoch Powell, who echoed its concern with the threat to British sovereignty from the EEC and American fingers on nuclear missile buttons. But even Powell's support is not worth much for the Labour Party today.

The left is always bleating about the media. But if anything is the creation of the media it is the Labour left and the myth of its takeover of the Labour Party. Labour's domesticated 'extremists' have demonstrated yet again that their loyalty is to the labour bureaucracy, not to the interests of the working class.

For revolutionary communists the election confirmed the necessity for building a new working class party. The collapse of Labour's vote and the retreat of its left wing shows that these obsolete institutions can no longer sustain the loyalty of the working class. The building of a revolutionary party has become a practical proposition.

The British left dreads the implications of the decline of the labour bureaucracy. Even left-wing parties that are organisationally independent, such as the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers' Party, survive in Labour's shadow. They criticise the labour bureaucrats — but only up to a point. They would rather participate in a bureaucratic charade like the People's March for Jobs and campaign for votes for Labour than fight for workers' rights around an independent programme.

Because the left is so steeped in the past and locked in a fatal embrace with the labour bureaucracy it has allowed the right to exploit working class grievances. Thus the main beneficiaries of the decline of the official labour movement have been the SDP and the Tories.

The only way to stop the political fragmentation of the working class is to build a new proletarian party.

The choice is not between holding on to past gains with Labour or risking everything with a new party. There really is no choice, for the alternatives are a defeat of massive proportions or the creation of a movement that organises the proletariat as a class. The future of our class depends on building a movement that has not been corrupted by the past, that has no stake in the present, and with no interests to defend other than those of the proletariat. This is our interpretation of the significance of the 1983 General Election.

Building a new movement will not be easy. We do not underestimate the resilience of the Labour Party. Labour remains by far the most influential force in the working class. It will not collapse of its own volition — it will have to be defeated politically.

The experience of the last four years shows that the Labour Party cannot be defeated by left-wing criticisms from the inside. The criticisms of *Militant*, *Socialist Action*, *Socialist Organiser* are easily tolerated because they have no practical consequences. Even the entrists' most radical critiques prove ineffective because they legitimise the traditions and institutions through which present-day working class politics are defined.

To build a new movement is not an act of faith or a gesture of political principle. The material basis for a new movement is given by the world-wide crisis of capitalism that demands a new balance of class forces. Thatcherism is not a philosophy, but the spontaneous response of the bourgeoisie to the problems of capital accumulation. To survive, the capitalist class has been forced to adopt new policies in every sphere of life. The underlying trends which have forced the bosses to reorganise their politics also demand a response from the proletariat. We are part of that response. The 1983 General Election has shown that class relations in Britain have changed. There will be no re-runs of the past. Class relations have altered, the field of battle has changed and the stakes are higher than ever before.

Out of the ashes



Defence - Labour's banana skin

'An emotional spasm'

Labour started off by opposing Cruise, Trident and the sinking of the *Belgrano*. But by 9 June, it was for Polaris and worried, too, that it had appeared unpatriotic over the Falklands. The left learnt what Nye Bevan discovered

25 years ago: that if you're for the defence of imperialist Britain, then quibbling over what weapons it uses and how it uses them is merely to indulge in 'an emotional spasm'. James Wood reports.

EMOTIONAL SPASMS go down well at Labour Party conferences, CND rallies and meetings of constituency activists. Middle class people, terrified by the growth of class conflict and international tensions, are particularly susceptible. Normally cautious and restrained trade union officials have even been affected by the sentimental appeal of unilateral nuclear disarmament, so desperate are they to find some issue on which to win popular approval as their membership, funds and status plummet. But hard-headed traditional Labour voters have remained unmoved by Labour's crusade for peace. This is not because Labour's leaders have not properly explained the party's disarmament policies, as the left makes out. It is because the party has all too well explained, over many years, why the working class should support the economic, political and military interests of British imperialism. In this well-established context, unilateral nuclear disarmament simply makes no sense at all.

Ever since it was founded the Labour Party has striven to sustain working class loyalty to British imperialism and labour movement participation in British militarism. It has played a key role in drafting millions of workers into the slaughter of two major imperialist wars and countless minor colonial engagements. Labour leaders have given full support, in government and in opposition, to the British occupation of Ireland. And when Argentina asserted its legitimate rights over the Malvinas, the party united to press the Tories to send the naval task force to terrorise the South Atlantic. Labour has consistently persuaded its supporters that it is the duty of the labour movement to uphold the military interests of the British state.

The Labour Party has tried to reconcile its anti-nuclear weapons policy with its traditional loyalty to British militarism. Hence its election manifesto opposed Cruise and Trident while promising that 'the next Labour government will maintain its support for NATO'. Labour spokesmen declared they were against the Bomb — but in favour of the effective 'defence' of Britain. But even the widespread and unquestioned use of the term 'defence' by Labour's peacemongers exposes the fundamental flaw in their argument. For a major imperialist power 'defence' always means 'attack': every aggressive war Britain — or any other Western power — has engaged in has been justified as essential for the 'defence' of the nation. Britain's 'defence' policies are all British war policies.

The defence of Britain

Labour's 'defence' spokesman John Silkin exposed the logic of his party's policy during the election campaign. In the course of a major television debate on the Bomb, he began by claiming that NATO had been set up by Labour's post-war Prime Minister Clement Attlee in 1949. While something of an exaggeration, this statement did express the depth of Labour's commitment to the military alliance with the USA through which British imperialism guarantees its 'defence'. Silkin went on to put Labour's 'non-nuclear defence policy' in the context of NATO's quest for stronger and more effective conventional forces. Silkin's proposal was that 'our fleet', which he proudly assured viewers was 'the best navy in the world', should be built up into an all purpose NATO fleet — a sort of standing South Atlantic task force ready to steam around the world 'defending' British and American interests as required.

The more Labour proclaimed its commitment to the 'defence' of Britain and to NATO, the more absurd its unilateralist policy appeared. The banana-skin was laid in front of Labour's leaders by the last party conference and placed in position by the manifesto: once the campaign opened they could be relied upon

to step on it. The press made sure they didn't miss it. 'If the Russians refused to get rid of their missiles, would Labour still abandon Britain's Polaris nuclear system?' inquired a battery of reporters and interviewers. 'Yes' said the left, committed to the end to its emotional spasm against nuclear weapons, while preserving its affection for conventional means of butchering opponents of British imperialism. 'No' said Denis Healey and James Callaghan. It is still unclear what Michael Foot said on this issue as on many others: he probably said 'Yes...and no' in an accurate synthesis of Labour's position.

But Labour's voters had already made up their minds. They were not enthusiastic about Cruise and Trident. But they had been convinced over many years by the Labour Party of the need for Britain's defence, a nuclear deterrent and NATO. For Britain to renounce nuclear weapons when all its rivals were armed to the teeth with them seemed an absurdity. The left's final resort to moralism and sentimentality — best exemplified by CND's election posters — cut no ice with the working class. The simple lesson is that you can be for the defence of Britain and for the Bomb, or you can be against both; but you cannot convince anybody in 1983 that you can defend Britain without the Bomb.

Task Forcers triumphant

If the Labour left was chastened over nukes, Labour's right wing fell down over the Falklands. On 1 June, Healey accused Thatcher of 'glorying in the slaughter' of the Falklands and of 'stupefying hypocrisy' in continuing to lend money to Argentina. On 2 June, Healey retracted the word 'slaughter', substituted 'conflict', and repeated the charge of hypocrisy. But *The Times* had the last word: in a major leader ('The Falklands Factor', 3 June), it pointed out that Healey himself sold ships, missiles, helicopters and turbine engines to Argentina when he was Labour Defence Secretary.

As for Thatcher's motives in sinking the *Belgrano*, nobody was very convinced by Labour's innocent inquiries. A war is a war, and an enemy warship is there to be sunk, no matter what zone it is in or what direction it is heading in. As *The Times* asked,

'Has anybody bothered to ask which way HMS Sheffield's bows were pointing when she went down? It takes a mere 30 seconds to alter course, as *Belgrano* had done many times before she was sunk.'

Labour's advocates of a public inquiry into the *Belgrano* affair deserved every bit of this ridicule.

The Times did not expect to have to repeat these points — but it had cause to only a week later, when Neil Kinnock hit the Falklands banana skin with his off the cuff statement that it was a pity that just to prove that the Prime Minister had guts, soldiers had to leave theirs at Goose Green. As *The Times* observed, Kinnock's remarks 'merely reminded people of the naval action in the South Atlantic, a general cause for pride'. Only the Tories could benefit from Labour's clumsy attempts to take advantage of 'a war that was briefly fought and brilliantly won' — and with the full support of the Labour Party at that! Kinnock cringed and wept over his gaffe — and Eric Heffer put him out of his misery by apologising publicly on his behalf.

Just as you cannot be pro-British and anti-nuke, so you cannot be pro-British and against doing everything it takes to win back the Malvinas. You cannot have it both ways: this is the primary-school principle which Labour forgot. It was significant that the most important opportunity in the election campaign to raise the anti-militarist argument — the Williamsburg summit — entirely passed Labour by.

Summit blues

Since 1975, when the West started holding them, economic summits have never dealt with military matters. But at Williamsburg on 29 May, Western leaders issued a joint statement refusing to compromise with the Soviet Union at the USA/USSR talks on Intermediate Nuclear Forces (principally Cruise, Pershing and SS20s) at Geneva.

Williamsburg threw into sharp relief the frictions that threaten to bring the countries of the West to war with each other. First, Western Europe confirmed its hostility to high American interest rates — rates made high, among other reasons, by the massive budget deficits President Ronald Reagan is running to finance his rearmament programme. Second, France, a country whose weak economy makes it particularly sensitive to the rising dollar that flows from high US interest rates, finally ended the honeymoon it had had with Reagan over nuclear weapons in Western Europe. French President Francois Mitterand, the staunchest advocate of Cruise and Pershing when he was elected in May 1981, is now as critical of American defence policy as West Germany. He forced Reagan to:

- delete all reference to NATO's December 1979 'dual track' decision to deploy Cruise and Pershing — on the grounds that France was not party to it
- delete all reference to Reagan's 'Zero

Option' and substitute a call for 'constructive negotiation' with the USSR ● make Cruise and Pershing deployment conditional only on Soviet intransigence (*Le Monde*, 1 June).

Finally, Williamsburg marked Japan's first entrance on to the stage of international arms diplomacy for nearly 40 years. Egged on by Mitterand's offer of 'technological cooperation' with Europe (something which, significantly, already goes on in consumer electronics and cars), Francophile Japanese Premier Yasuhiro Nakasone made it clear that he was just as much on military alert as Reagan himself.

That a joint statement on defence was made at all at Williamsburg says more about Thatcher's efforts to act as a broker between the USA and the rest, than it does about unity among the imperialist powers. Thatcher suggested making a statement because Britain is the country most torn apart by transatlantic tensions on defence; and today, six months before the Euromissiles are about to be deployed, those tensions are a lot more worrying than the Soviet 'threat'. The statement was made because, as *Newsweek* commented the same week, 'keeping the alliance together behind the (December 1983) deployment schedule remains a top NATO priority' and because holding the alliance together through the physical deployment of 572 Pershing II and cruise missiles is likely to be a yet 'more difficult — and more dangerous — second act' ('Euromissile talks are going nowhere', 30 May).

Labour prepares for war

Why did Labour miss all this? Not just because it was soft-peddling on nukes, but because it is all in favour of fortifying West European imperialism against America. Despite all its chauvinist outpourings against the EEC, Labour is right behind linking up with 'the wider Europe'. Every call it made for withdrawal from the EEC was coupled with careful remarks about 'due consultation' with other signatories to the Treaty of Rome. Together with his fellow members of the Bradford University Alternative Defence Commission, TGWU chief negotiator Ron Todd has likewise discovered that if NATO breaks up, a European defence association 'might have to be seriously considered' (ADC, *Defence without the bomb*, Taylor and Francis).

Williamsburg showed that Europe is gearing up for war against America more than ever. And Labour is not against this. Labour is for Polaris, for the Task Force and, as it happens, for more European cooperation on arms. That was the long and the short of its election programme.



Labour's campaign against American missiles mobilised a few thousand youth — but alienated millions of voters



The state of the parties

Decline and fall

ELECTION

As veteran vote-watcher David Butler observed, most people took a negative view of the 1983 General Election. People voted against the Tories, and to an even greater extent, they voted against the Labour Party. The decline, by almost 700 000 to 13.0 million, in the vote for the Conservative Party, indicated that there was no great surge in popular approval for Margaret Thatcher and her government. The fact that the Tories increased their parliamentary majority from 43 to 144 seats, despite a 1.5 per cent decline in their share of the vote, was largely attributable to the advance of the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

On aggregate, the Alliance took roughly 700 000 votes from the Tories and 3 million from Labour. The combined Alliance vote of 7.8 million claimed 25 per cent of the popular vote – but won only 23 seats in Parliament. The Liberals' vote actually declined slightly – by 100 000 – to 4.2 million, but they increased their

seats from 13 to 17. The SDP won 3.6 million votes at its first General Election – but lost 23 of its 29 seats, all but one previously held by defectors from the Labour Party. David Steel and Roy Jenkins now preside over a parliamentary rump whose major contribution to British politics promises to be a sustained bleating in favour of proportional representation.

The key to the General Election was the collapse of the Labour Party. The Tory victory rested on Labour's demise, and the very existence of the SDP is simply an outward sign of Labour's internal crisis. Labour lost 3 million votes and its share of the total vote fell by 9.3 per cent to 27.6 per cent; its representation in Parliament was cut to 209. In terms of votes, Labour's total of 8.5 million was its lowest since 1935 – its share of the popular vote was lower than at any election since 1918. The shape of British politics in the next few years and the fate of the labour movement in particular, depends to a large extent on the direction taken by the Labour Party as it tries to restore its shattered ranks.

THE GENERAL ELECTION exposed the gulf between the Labour Party and the working class. The party hacks deluded themselves right up to polling day that because Michael Foot drew enthusiastic crowds of supporters to meetings around the country, the opinion polls must be wrong. In reality, the popularity of Foot and Labour Party conference policies at mass meetings of Labour activists only underlined the seriousness of the party's problems.

The campaign revealed that the trade union officials and middle class constituency members who populate Labour's inner circles are out of touch with traditional Labour voters. The left's leaders and its policies – unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from the EEC – can inspire a few hundred of the party faithful. But neither the personalities nor the policies have much appeal to millions of Labour voters. The right's new Social Contract, the national economic assessment, was designed to enhance Labour's appeal to the middle classes. But nobody could take either this or Labour's promises of reflation seriously: the whole programme only seemed to confirm Labour's nostalgia for the past. All Labour spokesmen showed a penchant for quoting the heroes of past generations – Keir Hardie (Pat Wall), Clement Attlee (Foot), Nye Bevan (everybody). Workers who wanted answers to today's problems got only bluster.

The crumbling mould

A provisional assessment of the election results reveals a decline in Labour Party fortunes in every part of the country and in every section of its former support. Even in Scotland, where Labour's vote held up well in 1979, the party registered a fall of more than six per cent in votes. In the Midlands, the North West and

Yorkshire, Labour experienced a below-average decline in support. In the North, Wales and the South West, the Labour vote fell by more than the national average of 9.3 per cent. And in Greater London, the South East and East Anglia, more than 10 per cent of people who voted Labour at the 1979 General Election deserted it in June.

The Labour Party has lost most of its middle class support, virtually the entire south of the country and the rural areas. It has also lost even more of the skilled and semi-skilled workers who swung to the Tories in 1979. It appears that most trade union members voted for parties other than the Labour Party; the decline in the Labour vote was particularly marked in areas of relatively low unemployment with low concentrations of blacks. Labour's parliamentary representation has been reduced to the traditional heavy industrial and mining areas of the North, Scotland and South Wales and inner-city areas elsewhere.

The Labour Party also seems to have lost considerable support in the marginalised sections of the working class. Polls suggest that of the unemployed who voted, less than half voted Labour, and as many as a third supported Tory candidates. Black voters stayed away from the polls on a greater scale than ever before. Many were outraged by the failure of the Labour Party to select black candidates in viable seats, as well as by the evident emptiness of its anti-racist promises. The crushing defeat of Paul Boateng in Hertfordshire West, the only black candidate in a marginal seat, after local party workers refused to support him, can only intensify the alienation of black people from the Labour Party.

One measure of the disaffection of the unemployed and blacks – and probably more widely of young people – with

the traditional party of the working class was the level of abstentions in inner-city areas. For example in the six constituencies covering East London, an area of high unemployment and large black communities, the turnout varied between 54 and 56 per cent – some 17 per cent below the national average. All six are safe Labour seats. A similar if less dramatic level of abstention was also apparent in Birmingham and other inner-city areas. It should also be remembered that many young blacks in particular do not even bother to register on the electoral roll.

Kingmakers in confusion

How can the Labour Party arrest its apparently terminal decline? This is the central question behind the leadership battle which follows fast upon Foot's resignation after the June debacle. After Labour's last major electoral defeat in 1931 the trade union leaders salvaged the party. They took over the machine, drew up policy, and after the 1935 election – which showed some improvement – installed a new leader, Clement Attlee, who steered Labour alongside the TUC into the Second World War and the 1945 landslide victory. The man behind this revival was Transport and General Workers union leader Ernest Bevin. The trouble with the Labour Party today is that it lacks on Ernie Bevin: the union bureaucrats are having to make do with General and Municipal Workers Union leader David Basnett.

The problem is not simply one of personality. In the mid 'thirties the trade unions began to recover slowly from the years of slump. By the end of the decade union membership and income were up and government consultation in matters of rearmament and war gave their leaders enhanced status. The TGWU was strong and centralised; its leader called the shots

in the TUC and the Labour Party. This state of affairs prevailed until the late 'seventies. Today the TGWU is a victim of the recession. Its power bases in the docks and car industry have been destroyed; it has lost hundreds of thousands of members and its authority within the labour movement. Even if he had the ability, Moss Evans could not play king-maker in the Labour Party today.

The other unions face similar problems. All are fully preoccupied trying to ensure their own survival, without having to save the Labour Party at the same time. They have tried, through Basnett, to sort out the party's finances and organisation. But they have failed to turn it into the vehicle they need to restore the close relations with government they once so much enjoyed. After the election defeat they simply did not know which way to turn. While Len Murray worked overtime at the TUC mending bridges with the Tories and pleading for some 'cooperation and consent' from Thatcher, the rest of the General Council was picking a successor to Foot. It was a measure of how far the TUC left – Moss Evans and Arthur Scargill – are from the centres of power, and indeed from political realities, that 48 hours after the polls closed they were still declaring loyalty to Foot. While the votes were still being counted, a terse Basnett declared that Foot should go 'sooner rather than later'.

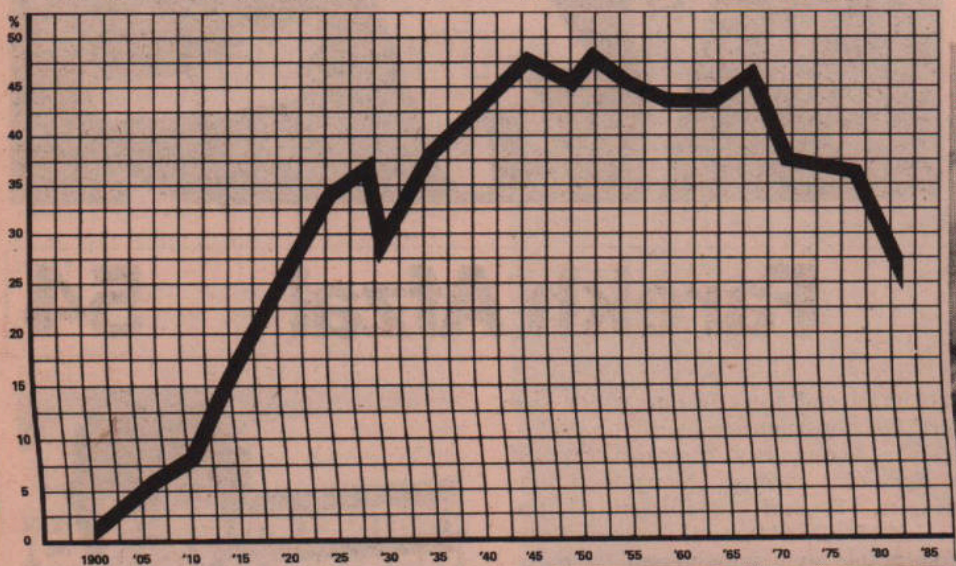
But who should succeed? Basnett made clear his contempt for the old guard – Healey, Shore and Silkin – in his comment that Labour should 'skip a generation' in its quest for a new leader. All three are judged too old, too closely associated with the failures of past Labour governments and with the recent catastrophic election campaign. Only Peter Shore seems to be a contender: he is strong on experience and expertise, but lacks personality and popularity in the unions or the party rank and file.

The contenders

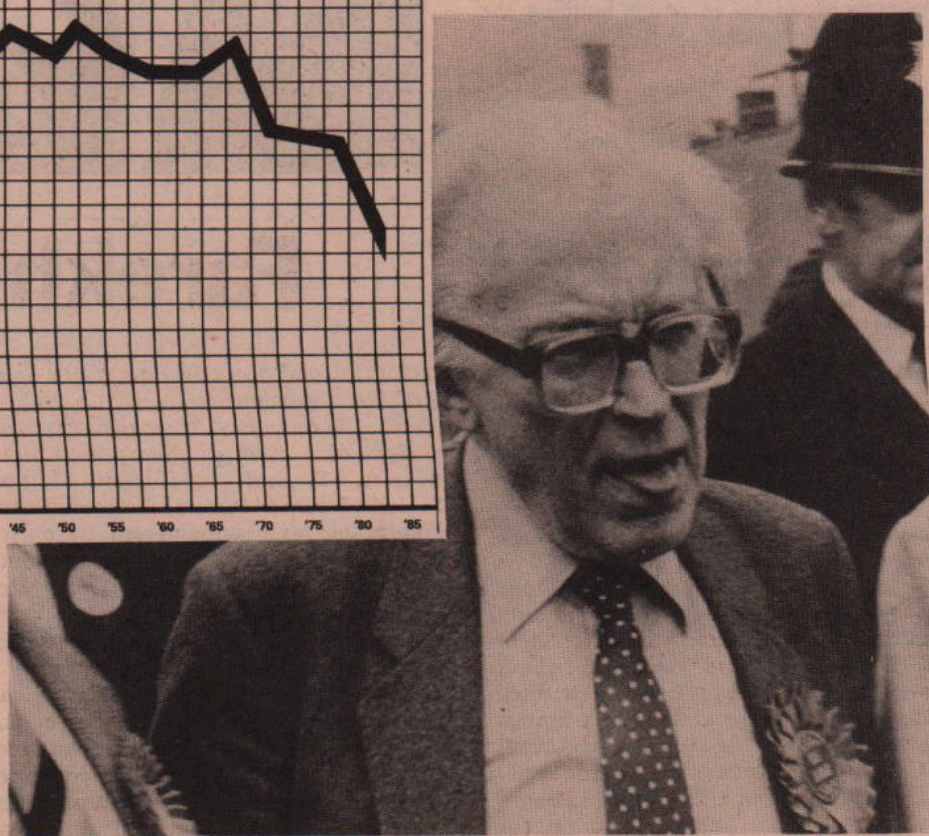
The real fight now appears to be between Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley. The contest itself says much about the plight of the Labour Party. Both are career politicians without any real experience or backing within the trade union movement. Both are intellectual lightweights without much of a base of popular support among working class people. Most importantly, neither has shown any sign of having a clue how to lead the Labour Party out of its current malaise by rebuilding its relationship with the working class. While the right strains to make Labour more like the SDP, the left aims to make it resemble the American Democratic Party – a coalition of single interest pressure groups. Kinnock and Hattersley have no distinctive strategy to revive the party.

Kinnock, however, has a Welsh accent and a youthful demeanour. He probably has Foot's backing as well as that of CND (for what that is now worth). He lacks ministerial experience, but may well drum up some union votes. Hattersley has more heavyweight parliamentary support and can probably swing the more right-wing unions. As a former acolyte of Labour's right-wing leader of the 'fifties Hugh Gaitskill, he will have Thatcher's discreet approval for she has declared she would like to see such a Labour Opposition. Hattersley had a good election campaign and is not tainted by any commitments to the left's losing causes of nuclear disarmament and EEC withdrawal. Yet he has skilfully cultivated a radical image on issues of race and immigration and law and order.

Neither Kinnock nor Hattersley can steer Labour back towards the working class. Neither, for that matter, do Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone outside Parliament stand much chance either. Linking Labour to the working class requires that the party take up anti-capitalist positions – as opposed to the radical nationalist policies that constitute the left's programme at present. To take up such positions in the present climate of the labour movement would tear the Labour Party apart between its rank and file and the alliance of its parliamentary rump and the union bureaucrats.



Apart from the setback following Ramsay MacDonald's betrayal in 1931, Labour's share of the popular vote rose steadily from the party's foundation until 1951. Then it fell just short of 50 per cent of the vote. It has declined steadily ever since – except for a transient rise in the mid 'sixties. The collapse has accelerated in the last decade. Now Labour's vote stands at slightly more than a quarter of the voting electorate, its lowest level since the First World War.



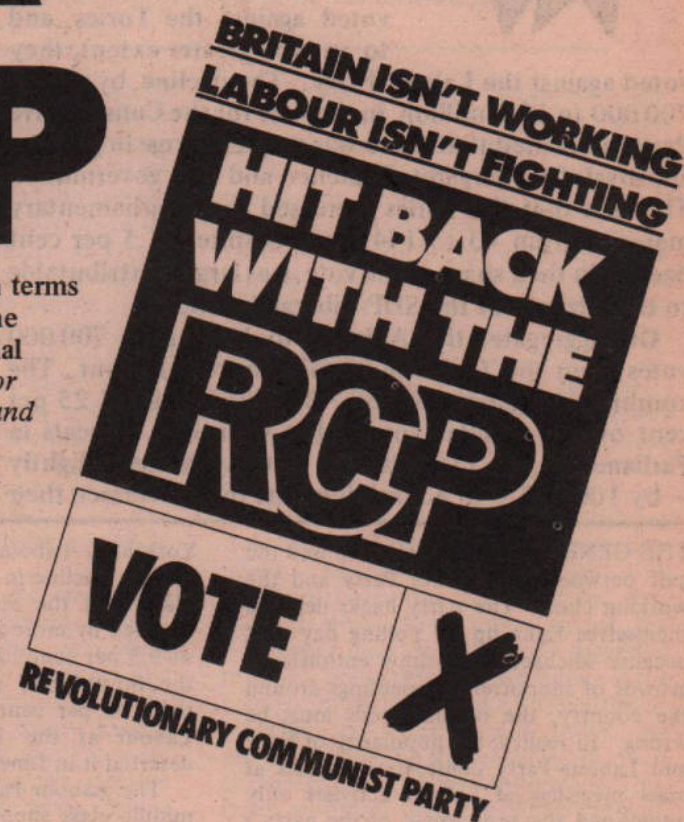


Hitting back with the RCP



In the General Election four RCP candidates won a total of almost 1000 votes. In terms of winning seats in Parliament, or even altering the existing balance of forces in the labour movement, this was a small start. Yet, as we indicated in our election special issue, a vote for the RCP is not the same as a vote for the other parties: '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'. In the four constituencies in which we ran election campaigns, and in the other areas where we intervened in election meetings and discussions around our programme (published in the June special issue), our emphasis was on the need to build a new fighting working class alternative to the Labour Party.

For the Labour Party 1000 voters are just 1000 numbers to weigh in the electoral balance and perhaps a few hundred addresses to visit every five years in an election campaign. For the RCP 1000 voters are 1000 potential revolutionaries. In all our election campaigning the central aim was to use the opportunities opened up by the General Election — for discussion and debate, for local and national publicity for our policies — to win new active supporters to the cause of revolutionary communism. While the Labour Party spends the next few months looking for the missing thousands and millions of its former voters, the RCP will be working to turn our 1000 voters — and the many more new supporters won during the campaign — into RCP members.



Birmingham Sparkbrook

Fran Eden 305

Fresh from the Bermondsey by-election in February, Fran Eden took on Roy Hattersley in his Birmingham stronghold and won more than 300 votes.

In a city with large populations of various ethnic minorities and a Labour candidate who is Shadow Home Secretary with responsibility for party policy on immigration and law and order, it was inevitable that racism would be a central issue in the campaign. It dominated a debate staged by a local church at the outset of the campaign.

When challenged by the Tory candidate that Labour's policy meant 'opening the floodgates' to immigration, Hattersley vehemently denied the accusation. He stated Labour's determination to 'keep them out'. Challenged by Fran Eden with a real anti-racist programme of opposition to all immigration controls and workers' defence against racist attacks, Hattersley accused her of being 'the mirror image of extreme Toryism', denounced the use of 'vigilantes' and upheld the law. Many people in Birmingham and beyond think that 'extreme Toryism' needs to be opposed as forcefully as it is inflicted on the working class. Many victims of racist attacks know workers' defence is as effective as the law is useless in dealing with them.

Housing was another issue on which Fran tackled Hattersley, during a tour of

Sparkbrook's depressed areas. When Fran reminded him that the Tories' Housing Benefits Act allowed the automatic deduction of rent from social security benefits, Hattersley decided that he approved of this as a useful measure to prevent rent strikes.

When Margaret Thatcher made one of her few campaign visits to a working class area — to Aston Science Park — she was met with a spirited demonstration. More than 100 CND supporters and others joined in RCP slogans against the British occupation of the Malvinas and for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. A flustered Prime Minister was hustled away by her goons.

The election campaign underlined the weakness of the left in Birmingham. The Socialist Workers' Party, Workers' Power and the rest all opted for the Labour Party when offered a clear choice between it and a real working class alternative. The result is that while they are affected by the gloom of the Labour Party in its terminal decline, we are moving ahead to carry on building the party of the future.

Thursday 30 June 7.30pm
Public meeting
Who needs the Labour Party now?
Digbeth Civic Hall



Southwark and Bermondsey

Farekh Afzal 54

Although we registered a 40 per cent swing in our favour since the by-election in February, this was not a good result for the RCP. The seat was won again, although with a substantially reduced majority, by the Liberal Simon Hughes. As in February, potential RCP voters swung back to Labour in the hope of preventing the gross anachronism of a solidly working class area being represented in Parliament by a middle class wally.

Nevertheless the Bermondsey campaign provided a useful focus for the RCP's General Election intervention in the London area. While Labour's John Tilley scurried around the constituency desperate to prove that he was definitely not Peter Tatchell, Farekh Afzal campaigned across London around RCP

policies. He joined an Irish Freedom Movement platform in Brent to speak on the issues in the election. He challenged Lambeth MP Stuart Holland on Labour's record on housing in a debate sponsored by the Springfield tenants association in Lambeth. At a Brixton Defence Campaign meeting (in Tilley's old constituency) Farekh blamed the Labour Party's support for 'community policing' for the intensifying harassment in the Railton Road area; the Labour Party defended this policy and rejected Farekh's case for workers' defence against police brutality. In Bermondsey itself RCP supporters engaged Tilley and other Labour speakers in argument at Labour's desultory public meetings and on the streets. The RCP motorcades were a

colourful and noisy feature of the General Election campaign.

The Bermondsey campaign exposed a significant division among local left-wingers. Student supporters of the Socialist Workers' Party at the South Bank Polytechnic were unimpressed by party leader Chris Harman's arguments about why they should campaign for the Labour Party. Several backed the RCP position against Harman, one accusing him of 'sounding like *Socialist Organiser*'. Indeed during the election campaign *Socialist Worker*, which Harman edits, did come to resemble *Socialist Organiser* and the other Labour left papers. Not surprisingly several SWP supporters came around to endorsing the RCP approach to the election.



Ashton under Lyne

Dave Hallsworth 407

Challenging right-wing former Treasury minister Robert Sheldon in a secure Labour seat, Manchester RCP won the party's largest vote. In the process we won new supporters in Ashton and drew in campaign workers from around the Manchester area.

High points in the Ashton campaign were our own public rally, our activities on the unemployment issue and other election meetings in the constituency. At the RCP rally Dave Hallsworth kicked off an excellent discussion by outlining our election manifesto. Debate ranged over local, national and international issues. Our election campaign began with a well-attended picket of the Labour Council meeting — called to appoint a new mayor — demanding practical support for the unemployed. 'We want an unemployed people's centre, not a mayor' explained Dave Hallsworth, himself an unemployed engineering worker.

Labour Party hacks contrived to keep Dave and RCP supporters from participating in an NUT election meeting, an official Labour Party rally and a Labour Party Young Socialists meeting. But they couldn't stop numerous street meetings in Ashton, Droylsden and Mossley, factory-gate meetings and meetings with the local Asian community. The RCP campaign lorry toured the constituency at weekends, putting across our politics in words and song. Our manifesto was translated into two Asian languages and widely distributed among Ashton's large black community.

Our campaign won considerable support from young people, especially the unemployed. It also won unexpected approval in the final stages from Labour Party activists disgruntled at having spent four weeks apologising for a lack-lustre right-wing candidate and a lack-lustre left-wing party leader. Our uncompromising advocacy of a working class approach to problems of unemployment and living standards won growing respect. It was more difficult to convince people of our positions on racism, Ireland and the Malvinas; but we have opened up important discussions on these vital issues, especially racism, which the Labour Party has long pretended is not an issue in Ashton.

Dave Hallsworth summed up the campaign in his speech on election night:

'For the first time in years, we've raised the spectre of communism over Ashton. And we're not just here for the election. We're going to stay in Ashton to organise the unemployed and the rest of the working class to take on the bosses.'

Wednesday 29 June 4.30pm
Lobby for a free independent unemployed workers' centre in Tameside Town Hall
Ashton under Lyne



Sheffield Central

Cathy Barrett 222

In a solid Labour seat, won by Euro MP Richard Caborn, Sheffield RCP built up a young and energetic group of campaign workers and won more than 200 votes after little more than a year's active work in the city.

The election campaign opened shortly after a scurrilous attack on the RCP as 'CIA agents' by Council leader David Blunkett. The Sheffield Labour Party had been stung by RCP exposures of its appalling record in defending jobs in the city and of the empty rhetoric of the council's employment committee. The attacks continued during the election. Local Labour Party leader Dan Sequerra urged a meeting of several hundred Sheffield Asians not to vote for the RCP and predicted we would get 30 votes.

The RCP made racism a focus of the election campaign. Our supporters have already won widespread support in the local trade unions for opposition to race checks and immigration controls. We raised the threatened deportation of Afia Begum during the election but, while NUM and COHSE union branches condemned it, our Labour opponents refused to take a stand. Labour leader



for Heeley Bill Michie took it upon himself to read out Labour's manifesto commitments on immigration to a large meeting of Asians. When he came to the line which reads 'we accept the need for immigration controls' he choked, paused and discreetly omitted it. When an Asian Youth Movement supporter criticised Labour's racist policies, Caborn accused him of being 'racist'.

A striking feature of the RCP campaign was the 'Smash the PTA Roadshow', a mobile street theatre focusing on the war in Ireland and the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Britain. The Isle of Wight prison protest and the 'Jackal hunt' scare made this particularly topical. The show had to be highly mobile because the crowds of up to 200 people it attracted in city streets quickly drew complaints from Tories and Labour Councillors and then police harassment.

The Tories may have won the country, but Sheffield remains firmly in the grip of Labourism. The election campaign has helped strengthen our base and widen our support. As Cathy Barrett commented when the election campaign was over — 'now the real battle begins'.

Next stop for the Marines?

Reagan's stand in EL SALVADOR aims to show who's boss



Brutal massacres cannot stop the advance of the FMLN guerrillas

The assassination of US Navy Commander Albert Schauffelberger at the end of May as he stood on the steps of the university of San Salvador throws the crisis of American foreign policy in Central America into sharp relief. On the same day a large force of guerrillas blew up a bridge on the Pan-American highway, killing 44 government troops. How much longer before Reagan has to send in the Marines to keep order in this turbulent and impoverished region? Phil Murphy reports.

CENTRAL AMERICA is Uncle Sam's back yard. The prevailing view in Washington is that if the USA cannot rule in Central America then the role of world policeman it has enjoyed since 1945 is in jeopardy. Already US global pretensions have taken some hard knocks from the masses of Vietnam and Iran — and, more insidiously, from the traders and investors of Japan and Germany. Hence President Reagan has chosen to take a stand in El Salvador, to show the world who's still the boss.

Bogged down in El Salvador

American interference in El Salvador increased dramatically in response to the overthrow of the US-backed Somoza dictatorship by the populist Sandinista movement in next door Nicaragua in July 1979. To prevent the El Salvador regime falling to a similar insurgent guerrilla movement, the USA rushed dollars, military supplies and expert advisors to the country. The incoming Reagan administration proclaimed El Salvador a foreign policy priority.

Three years and \$750m later the El Salvador government is in a weaker position than ever. The regime's 22 000 strong, US-trained and US-equipped army has been unable to stop the advance of 5000 FMLN guerrillas. Today the FMLN controls almost half the country; it has recently captured the large towns of Berlin and Santa Rosa de Lima. Grand US-inspired plans for major military sweeps through the provinces of San Vicente and Usulután have been postponed and postponed again. The gen-

erals have been reshuffled, but the regime's only hope lies in more US support. Secretary of State George Schultz recently summed up the achievements of the FMLN as demanding Congress' approval for a further military aid package worth \$110m:

'They have destroyed 55 of the country's 60 bridges and damaged many more (sic). The National Water Authority is carrying out 112 reconstruction projects to restore facilities damaged by guerrilla action. 249 separate attacks have caused millions of dollars of damages to the telephone system. Electrical systems have suffered over 5000 power interruptions in a 22-month period ending last November — an average of almost eight a day. The eastern region was blacked out for over a third of the year in both 1981 and 1982...' (US Information Service, 21 March 1983)

Not only is the El Salvador army on the retreat but guerrilla movements and civil war have spread; to Guatemala, where some 30 000 people have died, as well as the Honduras — and even to the traditionally tranquil Costa Rica. The whole region is now aflame. Far from solving America's foreign policy problems, intervention in Central America has made them worse.

Three years ago America's military supremacy over Central America was unquestioned. The USA chose to make a minor disturbance in the region into a major test of its right to global hegemony. As the Pentagon's friends at the International Institute for Strategic Studies commented, 'the only way in which Central America could become an issue

of international security was as a result of US determination to make it so' (1981-82 Strategic Survey). The failure so far of the USA to control events in El Salvador is thus all the more embarrassing for Washington. Instead of allaying doubts at home and gaining respect abroad, the continuation and spread of the conflict has further undermined confidence in US imperialism. Nor have American attempts to construct an ideological justification for its intervention in Central America helped to restore its prestige.

Crusade against communism

From the beginning, Reagan and his aides, notably Jeane Kirkpatrick and William Clark, have presented their Central American policy as part of the worldwide struggle against 'Soviet expansionism'. Nicaragua was identified with Cuba as a Soviet foothold in the Americas and the El Salvador guerrillas as Marxist zealots directed from Moscow in a campaign of world subversion. The aim was to pull the USA's imperialist rivals into line behind its stand against the communist menace and to justify its wider rearmament plans. The scheme has backfired with a vengeance.

Virtually every US 'exposure' of Soviet influence in Central America has rapidly been invalidated. When challenged by American investigative journalists, the US State Department was forced to withdraw many of the claims put forward in its February 1981 White Paper *Communist interference in El Salvador*.

In March Reagan released satellite photographs of a new airport on the Caribbean island of Grenada, recently taken over by a radical government. These were supposed to reveal secret preparations for a Cuban and Soviet military base. British reporter John Snow revealed that Grenada's airport could be photographed freely by any passer-by. British companies cooperating with four Arab countries and a dozen other Western powers, as well as with Cuba, in building a runway for Grenadian tourism were surprised to hear of the sinister military objective behind the scheme. Anticipating that things might go wrong again, Reagan finished his latest anti-Soviet snap show with the lame comment 'I wish I could show you more without compromising our most secretive intelligence services and methods'.

Reagan has been hard pressed to substantiate Soviet interference in the region for one simple reason — it is negligible. Just before the new cold war opened *The Financial Times* calmly assessed Soviet relations with Latin America:

'Soviet policy towards the area has in general been cautious. Its main bridgehead in the region is undoubtedly Cuba. But in recent years Soviet economic assistance to the Castro regime has been costing the Soviet Union over \$3bn annually and it is not anxious to add to the list of client states in an area so far from the Soviet Union... In practical terms there is not a lot which the already economically hard-pressed Soviet Union can do to increase its presence in the area. According to CIA statistics, Latin America, apart from Cuba, received less than \$1bn in Soviet aid in the 1954-78 period out of total Soviet aid of around \$17bn.' (30 June 1980)

Since then the Soviet economy has become even weaker. Far from being expansionist — in Central America or elsewhere — the Soviet Union can hardly keep itself together. Soviet activity in Central America is an invention by the USA to disguise its real objectives in the region and to legitimise its broader

rearmament programme. A landowner who fled El Salvador to exile in Miami commented wryly: 'Last year (1980) it was just a class struggle between local oligarchs and oppressed peasants. This year we have become the frontline of the new cold war between East and West' (*Newsweek*, 4 January 1982).

The real rivalry

In reality the USA is more concerned about the threat from its allies than it is worried about the traditional Soviet enemy. Only Britain of the major imperialist powers backed the US-inspired fraudulent elections in El Salvador in 1982. West Germany and France have criticised US actions as they try to extend their influence in the region. The Mitterand government, for example, has formally recognised the FMLN's political wing, the FDR, and has proposed joint peace initiatives with Mexico. Other imperialist powers are seeking to take advantage of the wave of anti-Americanism which is sweeping Latin America in reaction to US interference in El Salvador. Not only is the EEC helping to finance the new Grenadian airport against US wishes, it is also threatening to break a long-standing pact under which the Latin American food market is left mainly to the US exporters (*The Guardian*, 8 February 1983). Inter-imperialist, not East-West, rivalry is at the centre of the USA's Central American crisis.

The way forward

What can US imperialism do now? The options are limited. Withdrawal is not on. Reagan concluded his address to a special joint session of Congress in April on an apocalyptic note:

'The national security of all the Americas is at stake in Central America. If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere. Our credibility would collapse, our alliances would crumble, and the safety of our homeland would be put at jeopardy.'

Withdrawal from Central America would be a much greater blow to US imperialism than that suffered in Vietnam.

The various peace initiatives being floated have no prospect of bringing stability to the region. There are many on offer: some backed by other imperialist powers who want a piece of the action; others by local Latin American states such as Mexico and Venezuela who fear that instability could spread further and threaten their relationship to imperialism. Others are proposed by American liberals who want to turn the clock back three years and extricate US imperialism from the mess it is now in. The precondition for any of these to work even in the short term would be the crushing of the national liberation forces.

The only realistic option for US imperialism is military build-up. Already, it is involved in the largest 'covert' action since the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile. At the same time Reagan is demanding \$110m in additional military aid for El Salvador this year. Despite some congressional opposition, due to fears of getting sucked into a Central American quagmire, the President is likely to find the money one way or another. There is talk of exceeding the existing limit of 55 US military advisers. The US ambassador to El Salvador and the State Department official responsible for Latin America have just been replaced by two 'hard-liners'. The pledge that US combat troops will not be deployed becomes less and less convincing every time it is repeated. Whatever form US involvement takes — CIA agents, US-trained troops or US marines — a military solution is now the only option for US imperialism.

The pressures on the PLO

Torn between accommodation and resistance to imperialism, the PLO stands divided and demoralised

The assassination of leading PLO 'moderate' Issam Sartawi earlier in this year, and the recent rebellion of Fatah militants against the leadership of Yasser Arafat, illustrate the deep divisions in the movement for Palestinian independence. As the conflict between Israel and Syria rumbles in Lebanon, Inez Landa reports on the struggle against Zionism and imperialism in the Middle East.



Imperialism promises more death and destruction in Lebanon

Ryuchi Hirokawa

IN 1948, WITH the backing of the USA and Britain, Israel seized three-quarters of Palestine; in 1967 it occupied the whole of Palestine (including the West Bank of the Jordan) and parts of Syria and Egypt (including Gaza); last year it annexed the Golan Heights from Syria and seized the southern area of Lebanon. At every stage, Palestinians have been expelled to live in refugee camps in surrounding countries, or have stayed on to live as second-class citizens in their own country. And at every stage they have fought to free their homeland from imperialist domination.

The Zionist regime in Israel has sought to consolidate its expansionist policies by establishing settlements in its occupied territories. Since 1967 it has sponsored 121 settlements on the West Bank; this has been speeded up since last year's invasion of Lebanon — there are plans to settle 20 000 more people this year. But the Zionists have met concerted Palestinian resistance to these policies. In the past few months there has been a series of strikes, demonstrations and riots in the West Bank and Gaza. In Ramallah and El Bireh street barricades have been erected; riots took place in Tulkaran and other refugee camps; there were protest strikes against the takeover of Temple Mount, a Muslim shrine. At the end of March there were mass demonstrations against land appropriations — all involved the unfurling of the Palestinian flag as a symbolic challenge to the Israeli state. Yet while the Palestinian masses are resolute in their defiance of the Zionist state, the Palestine Liberation Organisation is divided and demoralised.

Accommodation and resistance

The divisions in the PLO are a result of the different experiences of different sections of the Palestinian community in exile. They have been compounded and confused by the pressure of the various Arab regimes on the PLO, as they have tried to reconcile their commitment to the Palestinians with their accommodation to the pattern of imperialist domination in the Middle East.

Each successive wave of war between Israel and its neighbours over the Palestinian question — 1948, 1967, 1973, 1982 — has filled refugee camps with bitter Palestinians pledged to return to their homelands.

The poor refugees in these camps have provided the personnel for the armed struggle against Israel, through Fatah and numerous other guerrilla groups from the 'sixties onwards. They have also been the most resolute in rejecting the succession of diplomatic initiatives sponsored by the

United States and its local allies.

The Palestinian diaspora also includes a stratum of businessmen and professionals, initially concentrated in Jordan, but now scattered throughout the Gulf. The oil boom of the 'seventies encouraged the expansion and growing prosperity of this section of the Palestinian community. It also strengthened its deference to its Arab host regimes and their imperialist backers in America and Europe. The rich Palestinians have come to exert their considerable influence within the nationalist movement for a conciliatory approach towards Israel and for acceptance of compromises with imperialism to be pursued through diplomatic channels.

When the PLO was formed in the mid 'sixties it was dominated by moderate Palestinians and the Arab regimes. The rulers of Syria, Iraq and Egypt all promoted a radical 'Pan-Arab' nationalism as a means of stabilising their own regimes under imperialist control. Support for the Palestinian cause was a central component of this ideology. Former Saudi Arabian minister Ahmad Shukairi was appointed chairman of the PNC. However, the continuing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians — especially the 1967 war — forestalled progress down the diplomatic road. The poor performance of the Palestinians' Arab backers in the Six-Day-War seriously discredited them and led to the growing influence of guerrilla organisations, notably Fatah — formed in 1965 — within the PLO.

At the 1968 PNC Shukairi was ousted as Fatah and other guerrilla groups came to form a majority of the Palestinian leadership. The council adopted the goal of a 'democratic secular state of Palestine'. The 1968 charter remains the objective of the PLO today. Yet the PLO leaders still left the door open to compromise. As one observer comments, even as early as 1967, Fatah leaders had floated 'putting an end to the policy of all or nothing' (M. Rodinson, *Israel and the Arabs*). In 1969 Fatah leader Yasser Arafat was elected chairman of the PLO and by 1970 he had united all the guerrilla organisations under the PLO umbrella.

No conciliation!

Throughout the 'seventies Arafat presided over the PLO, maintaining a precarious unity among its diverse factions and, in particular, reconciling both the diplomatic and the armed struggle wings of the movement. The changing relations among Israel, its Arab neighbours and the major imperialist powers gave some encouragement to both the broad strategic

orientations contained within the PLO.

The humiliating defeats of the Arab regimes by the Israelis in 1967 and 1973 led them to a more pragmatic acceptance of the imperialist order in the Middle East. Rising oil prices and closer economic ties to the West gave the Arab states a greater stake in the existing order. 'Pan-Arabism' was replaced with an openness to US-backed political initiatives to stabilise relations between Israel and its neighbours. Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia have all played a central role in the series of political solutions to the Palestinian question proposed by the USA, from the Rodgers plan of 1970 to last year's Reagan scheme.

All the imperialist solutions to the Middle East problem have one central theme — they involve the recognition of the state of Israel and the denial of the Palestinians' right to national self-determination. In return for the Palestinians' abandonment of their democratic aspirations, the USA and its local Arab stooges offer Israeli withdrawal from some of the territories they have occupied, usually involving some bargaining over the constitutional status of the West Bank and Jordan.

Over the years the more middle class section of the Palestinian leadership has come around to accepting some sort of compromise along these lines. At the Cairo PNC in 1974, the PLO position shifted to accepting a 'mini-state alongside Israel, rather than a unified state in place of Israel'. This view was restated in 1977 and 1979. It was further developed at Algiers last year where it was indicated that this 'mini-state' would incorporate the West Bank and Gaza. As the leading states in the Arab world became more and more subservient to imperialism, their influence pushed the PLO into an increasingly conciliatory approach towards Israel. The PLO's quest for diplomatic recognition in the West reflects its pursuit of an accommodation with the imperialist powers.

The drift of the PLO leadership towards diplomatic compromises with imperialism provoked a reaction from the more radical elements, backed by the mass of Palestinian refugees. The emergence of the Black September guerrilla group, which carried out the attack on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972, was the most extreme indication of the rejection of any reconciliation with Israel by the Palestinian masses. The popularity of the armed struggle against Israel and its backers among the poor Palestinians has constantly limited the scope for compromise and manoeuvre

available to the PLO leadership. The simmering crisis in Lebanon in the 12 months since the Israeli devastation of Beirut has brought deep-seated tensions in the PLO to a head. Israel's attempt to strike a death blow against the PLO stronghold won a military victory, but has only prolonged the Middle East turmoil. The imperialist powers have had no choice but to interfere directly to preserve order in Lebanon. American, French, Italian and British troops now police Beirut, while the country remains partitioned between Israeli and Syrian forces and their allied militias. While protesting about Soviet supplies of inferior missile batteries to fortify Syrian positions in the Bekaa valley, the Americans have effectively turned Beirut into a NATO base and its ports into an anchorage for the Sixth Fleet. Under Syrian sponsorship the PLO preserves a foothold in Lebanon; the rest of its forces have been dispersed around the Eastern Mediterranean.

Reckoning in Lebanon

At the February PNC in Algiers the intransigent wing of the PLO just succeeded in preventing Arafat from endorsing Reagan's latest scheme for subordinating the Palestinians to US imperialist objectives. The plan has now followed its many predecessors into the dustbin of history. However, the significant feature of the Algiers meeting was the weakness of the radical opposition to Arafat. The defeat in Beirut and the fragmentation of the guerrilla organisations have weakened the 'rejectionist' camp. But the central weakness of the rejectionists has always been political. They have counterposed the armed struggle to diplomacy, but have never challenged the petit-bourgeois nationalist politics of the PLO with a working class alternative. The PLO has swung backwards and forwards between compromising with imperialism and organising against it. It has never mobilised the Palestinian workers inside and outside the occupied territories in a relentless struggle against Zionism.

The fight for Palestinian freedom has reached a critical stage. The courageous protests raging in the West Bank and the heroic guerrillas of the refugee camps have been manipulated too long by opportunist politicians both in the PLO leadership and throughout the Arab world. The future of the Palestinian struggle depends on it being seized from the control of the compromisers and collaborators and taken over by the Palestinian masses.

One step forward, two steps back

As employers go on the offensive, black trade unions hold back

IN THE SAME week as the ANC car bomb the South African courts ruled that the security police were not to blame for the death in detention of union organiser Neil Aggett 15 months ago. At the time of his murder, over 120 000 black workers had joined protest strikes and demonstrations. At the end of May, the court's verdict was met with sullen resignation. In the first quarter of 1983 strikes were down to a third of the level of last year. What has happened to the labour movement which has shown such militancy and determination over the past few years?

If it's black – contain it

In the late 'seventies independent trade union organisation mushroomed in South Africa. After the setbacks suffered in the massacres at Soweto in 1976 and the subsequent bans on black organisations, black workers began to fight back in a new way – through workplace-based trade unions. Between 1979 and 1981 the membership of the independent unions grew to more than 250 000.

The growing combativity of the working class posed new problems for South African capitalists. In the past, police terror had always been their standard means of settling industrial disputes. But now the economy was afflicted by a serious shortage of skilled labour. All the experts and the politicians agreed that the problem could only be resolved by taking on and training more black workers. The employers recognised that economic expansion at the close of the decade would strengthen the bargaining position of black workers. And they recognised too that brute force alone was neither appropriate nor effective in dealing with the expanding (and rising) black workforce. The state's response was the 1979 Wiehahn Commission.

The Wiehahn Commission proposed the recognition of the independent unions as a means of institutionalising and containing the class struggle. The problems were first, that the black unions lay outside the established procedures followed by employers and their white workers; and second, that because they were 'unregistered', black unions were free to engage in political activity, from which the 'registered' white unions were banned. The employers feared that the growth in black unions would 'constitute a rallying point for underground activity: an industrial relations problem would become a security problem'. The solution was to draw the independent unions into state-sponsored structures and procedures.

The Wiehahn proposals created tensions among both whites and blacks. The apartheid system rests on an alliance between the state and the white working class, which guarantees white privileges. This set-up had to be modified to allow the state to curb the emerging black unions, while preserving the status of white labour. At the same time, the state's most critical task was to win over the black unions themselves.

To register or not to register?

The unregistered black and non-racial unions responded to the Wiehahn proposals with suspicion and hostility. They all objected to the provisional registration stipulations which aimed to prevent the black unions from recruiting among 'coloured' and Asian workers. They also objected to the exclusion of migrant workers from trade union rights. However, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), the largest grouping, broke ranks and applied for registration in November 1979. Three abortive 'unity conferences' have failed to patch up the divisions among the black unions on the question of registration. Yet these divi-



Blacks still take a back seat down the mines, despite union recognition

The African National Congress car bomb which exploded at the heart of the Pretoria military establishment on 20 May was a blow struck at the heart of the apartheid state. Yet it came at a time of sharp decline in the militancy of the black working class. Colin Meyer reports.

sions do not reflect substantial political disagreements, but the different pressures on each of the unions and the tactical considerations that arise from them.

FOSATU was formed in April 1979 through the amalgamation of the Eastern Cape motor unions (NUMARWOSA and UAW) and the major trade union grouping in Natal which emerged from the 1973-74 strikes in Durban. NUMARWOSA was already a registered union and operated through the Industrial Council – a joint committee of employers and unions – that Wiehahn recommended across the board. For FOSATU, registration was a means to building up national industrial unions from fragmented local bases within its federation.

Striking against apartheid

Other unions refused to register because the state's prohibitions on political activity would restrict their scope for expansion – the South African Allied Workers Union is one example. Centred in East London, SAAWU was strongly influenced by the Black Consciousness Movement from which it emerged in the 'seventies. Its biggest constituent was the Food and Canning Workers Union of the Eastern Cape, which was closely tied in the past to the outlawed South African Congress of Trade Unions, itself sponsored by the ANC. SAAWU emerged from the strike wave of the mid 'seventies in an area of high unemployment with a strong tradition of political struggle. It became a general union, concerned not only with plant-level disputes but also with opposition to the proposed 'independence' of Ciskei. Registration offered SAAWU nothing and it held out against it. The General Workers Union in the Cape opposed registration because it relied on recruiting migrant black workers in an area where the majority are 'coloured' workers in registered unions.

The unions' internal disputes about registration were rapidly overtaken by events in 1980 and 1981. Militant black workers flocked into the unregistered unions and out the factory gates in a series of frontal challenges to the state's industrial relations legislation. The unions' tactical differences over registration

merged into the background as intensifying class struggle exposed their common political weaknesses.

Black and coloured workers at the Fatti and Monis plant in the Cape showed the way. After a seven-month strike, backed up by a consumer boycott, victimised workers were reinstated. The dispute centred on the refusal of management to negotiate wages with an unregistered union affiliated to SAAWU. A spate of similar recognition struggles forced the employers to reconsider. All the large employers associations agreed to negotiate with unregistered unions where they represented the majority of workers in a particular factory or industry.

However, while employers came to terms with unregistered unions, their system for containing registered unions collapsed. FOSATU unions in the Uitenhage Volkswagen plant entered a bitter and protracted dispute over wages and conditions. At Colgate-Palmolive the registered Chemical Workers Industrial Union refused to accept conditions imposed by management through the Industrial Council. After an 18-month battle, the unions' threat of a nationwide consumer boycott of the company's products forced the bosses to back down. Workers in the paper and sugar industries won similar victories. Success increased militancy and by the middle of 1982, two strikes a day were taking place over issues of recognition, victimisation, pay and conditions. The employers had increasing recourse to police brutality to keep order in the factories; the new machinery of mediation lay in ruins.

Courting disaster

Over the past two years the employers have reasserted control in the factories. The government revised its industrial relations laws in recognition of the fact that registration was not the central issue. What mattered was drawing the unions into any form of participation with the state. Paradoxically, for a country in which the class character of the legislature and judiciary is clear to anybody, the courts have played a prominent role in

this process of incorporation.

Faced with conditions of recession – closures and mass redundancies – the unions have attempted to safeguard their positions by using the courts to seek redress against intransigent employers. Earlier this year, for example, FOSATU won a court case against a firm called Braitex which was forced to pay the union R40 000 for breach of contract. Even unregistered unions like SAAWU have filed papers before the courts – concerning a stoppage at a Berlin smelter which led to the sacking of 73 workers and which threatens one of the unions' oldest recognition agreements. This increasingly common feature of the independent unions – appealing to the apartheid state to act as arbiter in conflicts between capital and labour – expresses the partial success of government strategy.

The key to the new stability of class relations lies in the success of the employers in forcing the unions to rely upon narrow legal criteria to defend themselves. Survival in today's conditions has forced the union leadership to place greater reliance on the very industrial relations legislation it previously regarded with hostility. This has opened up a gap between the union leadership and the rank and file. Black working class experience of the apartheid judicial system – job reservation, pass laws, the hanging of ANC guerrillas and the outrageous sentence of periodic weekend imprisonment passed this month on a white youth guilty of beating a black man to death with karate sticks – leaves them with no doubt as to the courts' 'impartiality'. No union which represents black workers can ignore this either. The General Mineworkers Union may have won recognition, but it still faces all the racist legislation which excludes blacks from skilled jobs, and therefore, decent wages and conditions. Indeed, it is this reality which has obliged all the black unions to engage in political activity in organising consumer boycotts together with community organisations. The workers who wrecked the first round of capitalist schemes to contain industrial struggles expressed their opposition to apartheid in the clearest possible way.

Class in need of a party

Unemployment has never been an effective weapon for disciplining the South African working class. Indeed, the strike wave of the late 'seventies took place against a background of rising unemployment. Today, however, the narrow legalistic approach of the union leadership has shifted the emphasis away from industrial action and wrested the initiative away from the rank and file.

The present paralysis of the union leadership results from the absence of a broader political movement against apartheid within which the black unions would play a vital role. The black trade unions have been reduced to pursuing a narrow trade union strategy divorced from a broad mobilisation of black workers against the apartheid state. A similar problem led to serious setbacks in the 'fifties when the ANC and the South African Congress of Trade Unions channelled a mass working class upsurge into a campaign for minor reforms. As long as the South African working class remains confined to the trade union sphere, its tremendous courage and determination will be contained – and the authorities will be able to isolate occasional guerrilla incursions without much difficulty. But if the militancy of rank and file black workers was raised to a higher level, through a revolutionary anti-capitalist working class party, nothing could stop the South African revolution.

LABOUR'S MANIFESTO lays out the now familiar three-stage policy adopted at the 1981 party conference. As its ultimate objective 'Labour believes that Ireland should... be united'. In the medium term Labour would 'aim to establish an agreed, devolved administration' in the Six Counties. And now? 'In the meantime, we will continue with Direct Rule'.

In its attempts to reconcile the aspirations of many Labour supporters for Irish freedom with the party's deep commitment to the British establishment, the manifesto is a mass of contradictions. It accepts the goal of Irish unity — but this can only be achieved 'by peaceful means and on the basis of consent'. Yet Labour endorses the continuation of British military repression in the Six Counties. Only those who want Irish freedom are obliged to use peaceful means. The violence of the occupying forces and their Loyalist allies is approved without question. Only anti-imperialist violence is condemned.

The Labour Party envisages the way forward to Irish unity through 'the introduction of socialist policies'. But if the Irish have a right to national independence, what right has the Labour Party to impose policies on Ireland, socialist or otherwise?

Livingstone toes the line

Ken Livingstone greets the Labour Party's commitment to a united Ireland as 'a first step in the right direction'. What should be the next step?

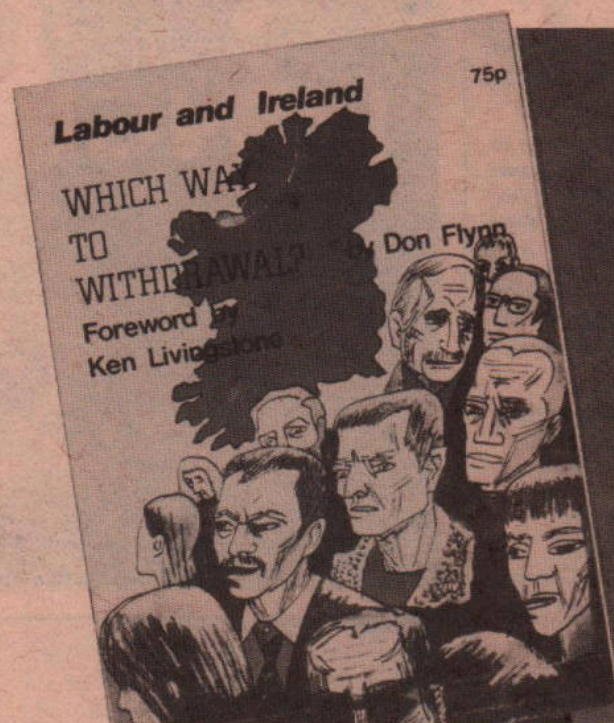
'This government, and particularly the next Labour government, must refuse to be bound by the Unionist veto, announce a planned withdrawal within two years and convene a conference of all north and south Irish parties to agree the constitutional guarantees that the Northern Protestants will require.'

Leaving aside for one moment the fiction of the 'Unionist veto', let's consider the timing of Livingstone's 'planned withdrawal'. On page six he proposes two years. However, as a pragmatic politician, he is open to negotiation on this point. On page three he indicates the extent of his flexibility in his assurance that he has 'no doubt that we can achieve a British withdrawal within the next decade'. Maybe two years, maybe 10 — after recent events in Brent East, Livingstone is taking a longer term view of British politics. But what happens in what the Labour manifesto accurately refers to as 'the meantime'?

Livingstone wants a conference of political parties — so does the Labour manifesto. For 13 years every British government has been promoting conferences, assemblies, conventions, forums and discussions — anything that will distract attention from the day-to-day brutalities of the British occupation. But, the question remains, what happens in the two- to 10-year period before the 'withdrawal' ultimately envisaged by Livingstone — while all this talking and bargaining is taking place? Livingstone is silent. His silence must be taken as indicating his acquiescence, for the time being, to the state of affairs that currently exists. 'In the meantime' therefore — Direct Rule and military occupation.

Hence we see behind Livingstone's radical postures and his widely-publicised trip to Belfast, nothing more than Labour's official three stage policy: unity in the future, talks tomorrow, Direct Rule today. Livingstone's convergence with the Labour leadership is confirmed by his hostility to the armed struggle against British rule and his faith in a British government playing some progressive role in Ireland. He has repeatedly repudiated the violence of the republican movement — while tacitly approving the continuation of British military violence for a minimum of two years, and in all likelihood for much longer. And he accepts that the British government could make some useful contribution, both while negotiating over the leisurely pace at which it could agree to stop terrorising the Irish, and after Ireland had achieved its national independence.

Where Ken Livingstone meets Don Concannon 'Soldiering on'



Livingstone's Irish policy envisages unity in the future, talks tomorrow, Direct Rule today



One consequence of Labour's defeat in the General Election is that it will be able to keep posturing as a party that supports Irish reunification, free from the responsibility of maintaining the division and domination of Ireland which it has always dutifully accepted in government. Three recent publications cast new light on Labour's Irish policy. *The new hope for Britain*, Labour's election manifesto summarises the official line. A new pamphlet *Labour and Ireland: which way to withdrawal?* puts forward the views of GLC leader Ken Livingstone and Labour Committee on Ireland founder Don Flynn. In *Renewal: Labour's Britain for the 'eighties* senior Northern Ireland spokesman Don Concannon outlines the views of the party leadership. Mick Kennedy reports.

Don Concannon is not known as a thinker: he came to prominence as understudy to Labour's former Northern Ireland Minister Roy Mason. Whereas Mason won a reputation as 'the butcher' for his ruthless prosecution of British strategy in the Six Counties, Concannon has yet to transcend his role as butcher's boy. His most infamous errand was to Bobby Sands' death-bed, to transmit a message of which his former boss would have been proud. But Concannon has been doing some studies in the tranquility of his post as Labour's No 1 Irish spokesman. He has made particularly good progress in Geography:

'Northern Ireland is a special case — it is unique in the United Kingdom in having a land border with another EEC country.'

In History he has been trying hard, but must do better: he seems to think DeValera led the pro-Treaty forces in the Civil War! In politics he just follows his own chauvinist nose and the traditional Labour pro-imperialist line and keeps out of trouble.

Concannon in consensus

When it comes to Labour's Irish policy, Concannon is right behind the manifesto. He is for 'unity by consent' and progressive policies for the Six Counties, and he agrees that 'Direct Rule has proved to be an acceptable, if not an ideal, interim solution'. On one other point he agrees with both the manifesto and Livingstone. Britain's 'guarantee' that the Six Counties will remain part of the United Kingdom as long as the Loyalists wish 'must not be allowed to act as a veto on political progress'. The myth of the Loyalist veto unites all sections of the Labour Party.

The notion that Britain stays in Ireland because of its commitments, past or present, to the Loyalist community is absurd. The Loyalists are Britain's agents not its masters. They were established in Ireland and placed in authority within the Six County state by Britain with the object of securing British domination. When the post-war Labour Government issued its famous 'guarantee' to the Loyalists that their status within the United Kingdom would never be altered against their wishes, the Cabinet noted in a confidential

minute that even if they wanted to leave the UK the British state could not allow it (see *An anti-imperialist's guide to the Irish War*, Irish Freedom Movement, p10). The obstacle to a British withdrawal from Ireland is not the Loyalists, but the interests of British imperialism. Britain stays and fights in the Six Counties to keep Ireland securely under British control and to prevent the break-up of the United Kingdom and its consequences at home. Don Concannon and Ken Livingstone link arms to tilt at the windmill of the 'Loyalist veto' because they cannot challenge British imperialism over a threat that strikes at its very heart.

Unlike Livingstone, Concannon does not pretend to be an anti-imperialist. Indeed he tries to present Labour's policies as a realistic option for British imperialism to secure its best interests in Ireland. Thus he tones down Labour's distant dream of Irish unity and concentrates on schemes for minor modifications in the system of British domination. The inclusion of 'Northern Ireland' in a section on 'regional policy' and *Renewal's* subtitle 'Labour's Britain in the 'eighties' indicate an acceptance of the status quo of Partition and occupation and an even longer timetable than Livingstone's for progress towards unity. In passing, Concannon chucks out Labour's much-vaunted (by the left) commitment to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act: 'it might be necessary to introduce alternative legislation to deal with the serious dangers inherent in the Northern Ireland situation'.

Flynn's fatalism

Concannon is not the only one who approaches Labour's Irish policy in a mood of sombre realism. Livingstone's interventions into Irish politics have given the impression (mistakenly) of a change in Labour Party policy and have led to a revival of the radical left Labour Committee on Ireland. Yet its leader Don Flynn is still unhappy about Labour's policy, which he accurately dubs as 'an uneasy amalgam of hazy perspectives for long-term Irish unity combined with the practical proposals for getting on with the business of running the Six Counties'. For Flynn 'the question is, which of these two tendencies... will gain ascendancy

in the future thinking of the party — the principled commitment to British disengagement and support for the unification of the country; or soldiering on with a programme of reforms?'. 'Soldiering on' is an appropriate literal metaphor for the tendency which will always remain ascendant in the Labour Party as long as Britain is at war in Ireland.

Flynn concludes that it is difficult to be optimistic:

'Hence the balance sheet so far gives the clear impression that Labour's support for reunification — now or at any other time in its history — cannot be taken seriously.'

Of course, this does not prevent Flynn and his colleagues on the Labour left taking it seriously, and proclaiming it as evidence of a major transformation in the outlook of the Labour Party.

The left's horizons are limited by what is possible within the Labour Party. This is Flynn's tentative perspective for the future:

'If in the coming period of political debate it could prove possible to present a sympathetic critique of this reformism then the critical left wing within the party might force a re-evaluation of the present balance between the principled statement of the need to get Britain out of Ireland and the detailed reforming proposals, in order to bring about a re-casting of this balance in a firmer support for the former.'

'If', 'could', 'might' — maybe, perhaps, hopefully. No wonder Flynn is so glum. In fact there is no hope of the left accomplishing even this limited objective. There is no principle in Labour's commitment to Irish unity — it is simply a facade to reconcile the left and Labour's Irish supporters to the rest of the party's pro-imperialist policy. Even if it really wanted to, the left could not 'present a sympathetic critique' of Labour's policy. On all the key points — anti-imperialist violence, Britain's 'progressive' mission, even the 'Loyalist veto' — the left goes along with the right; Livingstone is in tune with Concannon. It's high time Labour's left-wing supporters stopped pretending their party has a progressive Irish policy and started building an anti-imperialist Irish solidarity movement in Britain.

Defend Tameside Trades Council!

TAMESIDE Trades Council is appealing to all trade union bodies to defend it against the threat of disaffiliation by the TUC. In 1980 Tameside was disaffiliated for calling a conference to discuss Britain's war in Ireland, to which representatives of the republican movement were invited. Today's threat comes after it showed the IFM video 'No British Solution' at its December 1982 meeting.

Fulltime TUC official John Monks wrote to the secretary of the Trades Council Dave Hallsworth, complaining about the meeting and demanding further details. A meeting of the full Trades Council voted to reply to Monks that it would 'listen to and watch whatever we democratically decide to'. Monks' response was to condemn the Council's insistence on its democratic right to discuss Ireland as 'irresponsible and not worthy of genuine trade unionists'. Monks also made it clear that disaffiliation is on the cards again. The minutes of the 21 March TUC Trades Council Joint Consultative Committee meeting reveal that Tameside's application for annual reaffiliation will be referred to the Committee itself for consideration.

Tameside Trades Council will continue to resist the TUC's attempts to stifle debate on Ireland within the trade union movement. At the end of May the Irish Freedom Movement lobbied delegates to the Annual Conference of Trades Councils in Scarborough in support of Tameside's right to discuss the Irish War. Seventy

delegates to the conference — about half of those present — gave their support to the following statement:

'We protest against the TUC's attempts to stifle and discourage debate at Tameside Trades Council and support its right to decide its own policy on Ireland or any other issue free from outside interference.'

Take this resolution to your trade union branch or trades council and order the IFM handbook and video to read and discuss in your meetings.

The following trade union bodies have already passed the motion:

Manchester Area

FTAT (Schreiber), Tameside NUPE, Tameside NALGO, TGWU Denton, GMWU Hyde No 2, ASTMS Hyde General, TGWU Walls 6/133, AUEW Ashton No 2, TGWU 6/749.

Leeds

Halifax Trades Council, Cleveland County Association of Trades Councils, TGWU ACTSS 9/988.

London, South East

TGWU ACTSS SW London 1/1148, TGWU ACTSS 1/524, NALGO Kent County, ACTT Hemel Hempstead, UCATT Stoke Newington.

For further information contact Phil Murphy on 01-274 3951

Leeds against the P.T.A.

IN April we reported that Leeds Council received a deputation from the Irish Freedom Movement calling for the establishment of a 'PTA-free zone' — and referred the matter to a committee for further consideration. The council's leading Labour group has now decided *against* going ahead with the plan. 'Nuclear-free zones' which carry no practical commitments are OK by the Labour council; but accepting a commitment to make the PTA inoperable in West Yorkshire as a practical measure in support of the rights of Irish people — that is out of the question.

PTA-free zone backed

The Trades Council, however, has backed the IFM's call for a PTA-free zone. The Trades Council took this stand despite opposition from Stalinists and supporters of the Militant Tendency. Some feared that passing such a resolution 'might give the Labour Party bad publicity close to the election'. Others considered it impracticable: 'nuclear free zones can be implemented, whereas a PTA-free zone can't' said one Militant supporter. Delegates were bemused by this comment, especially after the IFM proposer had already explained how the council could cut off funding to the police authority unless it stopped terrorising the Irish community. Leeds Socialist Workers Party has condemned the IFM's petitioning against the PTA as reformist — but it has been too busy campaigning for the Labour Party either to explain this or to do anything about the PTA itself.

IFM supporter harassed

While selling the IFM handbook in Leeds Dave Benson was detained by plain-clothes detectives and threatened with charges under the PTA at a local police station. When he refused to answer questions about his personal and political life he

was abused and intimidated. He was luckier than most — he was released, without charge, a few hours later.

LEEDS

Tuesday 21 June 7.30pm
Preparing for Power public meeting
Victory to the Irish freedom fighters!
Plus new IFM video: The Longest War
Trades Club
Saville Mount
Leeds

Friday 15 July
Lobby West Yorkshire Council
Make West Yorkshire a PTA-free zone!
Minibus leaves Parkinson Steps, Woodhouse Lane at 1pm

SHEFFIELD

Friday 24 June 7.30pm
Public meeting
IFM video plus speakers
The Longest War
Speaker: Phil Murphy
The Mailcoach
West Street

Sheffield IFM meets fortnightly at 7pm at The Brown Cow, The Wicker. Next meetings Tuesday 28 June, Tuesday 12 July

BIRMINGHAM

Wednesday 22 June 7.30pm
IFM video plus speakers
The Longest War
Digbeth Civic Hall

COVENTRY

Monday 20 June 7.30pm
IFM video plus speakers
The Longest War
Hare & Squirrel
New Union Street

IFM video



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

IFM handbook

Reviews :

'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 arguments 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.

An anti-imperialist's
guide to

the
**IRISH
WAR**

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

Black workers on strike

Up against the wall

BRITAIN'S TEXTILE industry is in terminal decline. In the 1950s textiles was the main source of employment in West Yorkshire, accounting for more than a third of all employment. But declining profitability and rising competition from Europe and the Third World have resulted in a series of factory closures throughout the industry. The survival of the remaining industry has rested on productivity increases achieved through the intensification of labour. For the workers this means low wages and bad conditions. From the 'sixties onwards Asian and women workers were drafted in to work in the textile mills. By the late 'seventies, 23 per cent of all production workers in the textile industry were Asian immigrants.

The recession has not only accelerated closures and the shedding of labour, it has also enforced even more barbaric conditions on more and more workers, particularly in the smaller sweatshops. Aire Valley Yarns is one such sweatshop.

Sweated labour

Aire Valley Yarns was started five years ago with capital of £20 000. Last year its turnover was £750 000 and it employed more than 30 workers. The antiquated carpet-making looms are kept running 24 hours a day, six days a week. The air is perpetually thick with carpet fibre. The Asian workers have to work 12-hour shifts for £1.02 an hour. Weekend work is compulsory and receives the same hourly rate. There are no safety guards on the machines and no brakes — the workers have to stop them by hand. There are no face masks or fan extractors in the factory, neither are there first-aid kits. The skilled and office workers are all white, they work a 40-hour week and are on a higher rate of pay.

Management recently tried to abolish cleaning time at the start and finish of the shifts, to force the workers to clean the machines for free. In February the Asian workers decided to join the TGWU and elected Liaquat Ali as their shop steward. Up to this time there had been no union organisation in the factory — but the workers were determined to fight for better wages and conditions. None of the white workers wanted to join the union. The first response of the directors, Malcolm Rawson and Derek Bedford, was to try to bribe Liaquat to disband the union. When this failed they sacked him and then the rest of the workers who stood by him.

Laying down the law

A 24-hour picket around the factory has been maintained ever since. The white workers still cross the picket line, as do newly-recruited Asian scab labourers. Scabs are driven through at high speeds — so far one striker and one RCP supporter have been hit by lorries. The strikers and their families have been threatened and physically intimidated, and the police have made their presence felt on the picket line. During shift changes when strikers and supporters join the picket, six police Transit vans move into operation. Off the picket line, the police are also doing their duty: Liaquat's brother, Riasat Ali, was detained at Bradford police station because he 'resembled' someone who had beaten up one of the scabs. The police have also harassed and threatened RCP supporters who regularly attend the picket line.

As well as using the police to lay down the law on the picket line, the

For three months now, 22 Asian textile workers have been manning a 24-hour picket line at the Aire Valley Yarns spinning mill in Farsley, West Yorkshire. They were locked out when they walked out in protest at the sacking of their newly-elected TGWU steward, Liaquat Ali. Members and supporters of the RCP in the Leeds area have been backing the strike, as Rob Knight and Inez Landa report.

bosses have used the courts to undermine solidarity action by other workers. In the second week of the strike, TGWU members at a commission dyers factory, Charles Busfield of Guiseley, voted not to dye the wool that came from Atlantic Yarns. Atlantic Yarns contracts out yarn for finishing and dyeing from Aire Valley Yarns. Two of its three directors are also directors at Aire Valley Yarns. The third — Mr Thomas — took out an injunction against local TGWU official Peter Booth and Busfield's shop steward Peter Attack, claiming that blacking at Busfield amounted to secondary action.

Bureaucrats backtrack

It was clear from the start that to win this dispute, effective mass picketing had to be organised and the factory had to be blacked to prevent both scabs and supplies from getting through. But three months later, TGWU Dyers and Bleachers section organiser Peter Booth has retreated on all these issues and done very little to win the strike. The TGWU would rather wait for the tribunals of the state to sort out this dispute. The workers are learning, however, that neither tribunals nor the union bureaucrats can be relied on to defend their rights and jobs.

The union has neither led the dispute, nor taken any effective action to win a victory for its members. Although the workers have tabled a number of initiatives, they have not been pursued by the union. When management served the injunction on the Busfield workers, both Booth and the Busfield shop steward agreed 'not to attempt to induce the workers there to break their contract.' Booth's later comment that 'he was reasonably happy with this as he had not induced the Busfield workers in the first place' was more damning. As he told *Leeds Other Paper*:

'I am quite happy to agree not to do some-

thing that I haven't been doing anyway.' (22 April)

Indeed the blacking undertaken at Busfield was entirely the initiative of the workers. Booth didn't have to go to argue for solidarity. Nor was he going to argue that the blacking should be maintained after the injunction hearing — but the Busfield workers wouldn't even consider lifting the blacking.

From the start, the TGWU regional officers were concerned not to induce anyone to break the law. They turned down all proposals from the strikers and RCP supporters for mass pickets because it would be 'out of their control'. To date the TGWU has made no attempt to mobilise solidarity on the picket line. Instead, the bureaucrats are planning to turn a one-off demonstration on 18 June into a mass picket.

Booth and the bureaucrats are banking on an Industrial Tribunal to reinstate Liaquat Ali. If this is successful they reckon the other workers should do the same to get reinstated — end of strike, end of Booth's headache. Others have argued for a different approach. *Race Today's* Darcus Howe proposed a three-pronged strategy: international solidarity, trade union support and black community support. *Race Today* sees its role as the organiser of the last of those three elements, leaving the trade union work to bureaucrats like Booth.

While support from all sources is vital, this division of labour conveniently lets the bureaucrats off the hook and detracts from the need to build support from other workers.

Fight to win

The 22 strikers are demanding the reinstatement of Liaquat Ali and all the workers on strike, and trade union recognition. Unlike the bureaucrats who would prefer to see the strike sold out at a tribunal, the workers know that they

will have to fight to win these demands. As Liaquat told us:

'We have seen the police are against us. Tribunals never support the workers and they are using the courts against us too. We will not win by sympathy — only by beating the company through cutting off the factory through blacking and strong pickets.'

We have consistently argued that the strike should be controlled by the workers — not the union officials. There must be no resort to Industrial Tribunals — workers will win nothing through the courts. The Tebbit law and injunctions must be resisted to ensure effective action. Blacking must be extended — RCP supporters have gone out to win solidarity from other unions and TGWU branches in the area. This can only be done by putting to the fore the need for all workers to take a stand for the rights of black workers who face racial oppression as well as exploitation in their day-to-day struggle to earn a living. If this work is done the workers at Aire Valley Yarns will win their strike. Already, the pickets have succeeded in cutting the number of scabs going in by more than half.

Like many black workers before them, the Aire Valley Yarns strikers will be forced to fight not only against their bosses but also against their own trade union leadership. In 1977 at Grunwick and 1982 at Heathfield, militant Asian workers were sold out by the official trade union leaders. Every time this happens racist divisions within the working class are deepened. Rallying support for the Aire Valley workers therefore means generalising resistance within the labour movement to the divisive strategies of the trade union leaders. Both the bosses and the bureaucrats must be taught a lesson at Aire Valley Yarns. The lesson is that if the labour movement as a whole stands up for black workers, we will have no trouble in dealing with the likes of Rawson and Bedford.

Send letters of support and donations to: AVY Strike Committee, c/o 34 Dirkhill Street, Bradford, B7.



Up against the bureaucrats at Aire Valley Yarns

SEVENTY THOUSAND people are officially recognised as being homeless. This figure does not include children in care, those in old people's homes, or those who live in bed and breakfast hotels, hostels or cheap hotels. Nor does it account for the 200 000 families with young children who share accommodation with others, or the half a million single people who share a home. Over the past few years the number of homeless has soared — particularly in the inner cities and particularly amongst the young. The national housing campaign, Shelter, estimates that in London alone 30 000 young people are without a home.

Nowhere to go

People do not choose to live on the streets. They are there because the system has thrown them there. It is the unemployed, the sick and the oppressed — blacks, Irish, women — who make up the growing army of the homeless.

Unemployment has made its biggest impact on youth. Young people are also bearing the brunt of rent increases, attacks on state benefits and the rising cost of living. Many young people from the recession-struck North and from Scotland take Norman Tebbit's advice and get on their bikes for London, in search of work. Often they end up jobless and homeless. Impoverishment and debt have resulted in hundreds of young people being evicted from homes for which they cannot afford to pay.

Many young people never reach the streets but are homeless nonetheless. Of 500 people seeking help from an advisory group to the under 25s in Handsworth, Birmingham, more than three-quarters were staying with friends or relatives and faced eviction for living in overcrowded conditions. Half of these were unemployed and 90 per cent of those working earned less than £40 a week — many were on YOP schemes. All but 13 were black. The state's response is straightforward: Birmingham council does not take single people under 25 on its housing waiting list!

Young blacks make up a growing proportion of the homeless. Discrimination at every level in employment, welfare benefits, housing and social services means that black people are much more likely to find themselves without a job and without a home. According to the government statistics, from February 1979 to February 1980, black unemployment rose four times as fast as overall unemployment. Today, more than 60 per cent of blacks in the 16 to 20 age group are without jobs — and the figure is much higher in certain inner-city areas.

The state uses homelessness as a pretext for racist attacks. When Antonian Bon Saez went to Ealing's Homeless Persons Unit in March 1980, he ended up in Pentonville prison awaiting deportation after the housing advisor informed the Home Office that he did not have his passport. Many councils implement passport checks as a matter of course and operate virtually apartheid housing policies. In London, Tower Hamlets' Labour council, which has some of the worst housing problems in the country, has ghettoised the Bangladeshi community in the worst slum housing in the borough and simply failed to provide accommodation for thousands of homeless families.

Another group which has always constituted a high percentage of Britain's homeless is the Irish, especially single Irish men. Over many years Britain's domination of Ireland has produced high unemployment and poverty and made emigration in search of a decent standard of living the only option for generations of young people. Ireland has provided British capitalism with a steady supply of cheap labour — especially in recent years for the dangerous and super-exploitative building industry. Up to the Second World War migrant Irish farm labourers were accommodated in barns — many perished in a series of fire disasters. In the 'fifties and 'sixties they survived in temporary digs, hostels and caravans. Now the recession has stopped the demand for Irish labour in Britain. Most try and make do at home; some manage to get work and lodgings in Britain. The least fortunate

Victims of the slump



Homelessness is becoming an increasing reality for thousands of working class people

In April, the headless, handless and partially-burnt body of a 17-year old black youth — Stephen Gaspard — was discovered on waste ground in Stepney, East London. In May his head was washed up on the Thames. Shortly afterwards another black youth was found hanged by his own jumper in a cell in the local police station 'while helping the police with their inquiries' into the Gaspard case. Both were homeless. Their deaths illustrate the growing brutalisation of the homeless in Britain. Following the recent exposure of the alleged Muswell Hill mass murderer Denis Neilson, Detective Superintendent Geoff Chambers was at pains to point out that the victims were 'not necessarily all vagrants'. The death of 'vagrants' — by murder, hostel fires or exposure — has become part of everyday life in modern Britain. Clare Fox reports.

are condemned to lead a twilight existence around night shelters, hostels and the streets. The casualties of Britain's oppression of Ireland can be found on the streets of every British city.

The recession has driven women back to the home — but it has also driven many of them out of it and on to the streets. More and more women are trapped into accepting accommodation as payment for sex or housekeeping — or both. Many become prostitutes after finding themselves homeless; others become pregnant to get preference on council housing waiting lists. Local authorities go to great lengths to avoid responsibility for housing homeless families. Parents are split up, and the woman and children are placed in mother and baby homes for assessment. The mother is often judged unfit to care for her children because to be homeless is considered irresponsible. The children are taken into care and cannot rejoin their mother whilst she is homeless. Without her children she is no longer a 'priority need' and will not be housed. Battered women who move to new areas with their children face similar problems since many local authorities have a policy of not accepting homeless people from outside their borough.

Institutionalisation is an important factor in the process of homelessness; almost half of those interviewed in the DoE survey *Single and homeless* in 1981 had recently spent time in hospital or prison. National Health Service cuts have led to a huge increase in the number of psychiatric patients being discharged after many years in hospital. Even if accommodation is secured for them by social workers, it is usually unsuitable. Unable to cope by themselves, some of them end up being evicted — some never find a home in the first place. Prisoners often face similar problems on their release from overcrowded gaols.

Containment

Press exposes of the squalid conditions of hostels for the homeless and media concern for the plight of Britain's homeless express not so much a desire to do something for the victims, as a fear that things are getting out of control. Cutbacks in public housing expenditure from £1697 million in 1981 to £950 million in 1983/4 have resulted in savage council cuts in building, fewer houses, more unemployment — and more people on the streets. Between 1979 and 1984, the government will have halved its total expenditure on public housing. The number of new houses started by local authorities, new towns and housing associations fell from 168 447 in 1976 to only 36 725 in 1981, and the decline

continues. Unable to provide the houses and the amenities that workers need, the state has no choice but to adopt a policy of containment.

Six years ago the Labour Government introduced the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act which for the first time imposed on housing authorities the statutory duty to provide accommodation for the homeless. Claimed as a great victory by the Labour Party, the Act has done nothing to alleviate the problems of the homeless. In fact, through its arbitrary distinction between 'priority need' and non-priority need, and between the 'intentionally homeless' and the unintentionally, the Act is a very effective means of regulating who gets housed and who doesn't.

The facilities available to the homeless are at best spartan and at worst squalid. In every city, landlords rake in the profits from accommodating a steady supply of newcomers referred to them by council social services and housing departments, probation officers and the DHSS. Frequently these 'hotels' are filthy, overcrowded and well below minimum standards for environmental health and fire safety. Many have been judged unfit for human habitation.

Night shelters, run by the Cyrenians and other voluntary bodies, are subsidised by local authorities and employ cheap labour to run them. Workers — often ex-residents — are paid little more than the dole to work long and unsocial hours. Access to these shelters is only available for the night — and the homeless are ejected early in the morning to walk the streets for another 12 hours.

Many homeless people are referred on from shelters to hostels, where they are supposedly housed. Overcrowded and impersonal, hostels fall into three categories. First, there are private hostels, most of which do not comply with health and safety regulations, and whose owners make a steady profit through guaranteed rent from the DHSS while their residents live in atrocious conditions. Second, there are charitable hostels, run on the cheap by religious orders like the notorious Salvation Army whose guiding ethos is that of the 1834 Poor Law — disciplinarian and moralistic. These people operate strict and puritanical exclusion policies against former psychiatric patients, 'intentional bed-wetters', alcoholics and other 'undesirables'. Residents are often not allowed to remain in the hostel during the day, and if they are, they have to perform menial and degrading jobs. Finally there are local authority hostels. Here the homeless are herded into cramped, grim and filthy conditions in inadequate and

overcrowded barracks-style dormitories — and charged extortionate rents. In government reception and resettlement centres run by the DHSS the workhouse ethic prevails. The substandard, institutional buildings are in remote and segregated areas, the better to hide away the 'problem'. Residents are forced to do 'task work' and may be fined or imprisoned if they refuse. The male warders at these centres are often former policemen, well-practised in harassment and brutality. Deprived of state benefits, but allocated 'pocket money' of about £5 a week, homeless people are subjected to compulsory baths, vermin inspection and interrogation. Few attempts are made to settle them in permanent accommodation.

Brutalisation

The stigmatisation of the homeless is a relentless process. From welfare benefits to the right to vote, the homeless are treated as social outcasts. Single homeless people are characterised as tramps, dossers, winos, degenerates and vagrants who neither want nor deserve a home. Once homeless, you receive the title of 'no fixed abode' (NFA). As the Greenham Common women recently discovered to their horror, NFA status means that you lose the right to vote. It also means reduced benefit — £18.60 a week — often paid in small amounts, requiring daily visits to the dole office. Benefits are also paid in the form of a voucher for a hostel over which the claimant has no choice. The mass arrest of 283 homeless claimants in Oxford last year, in a joint swoop by the DHSS and Thames Valley police, illustrates the lengths to which the state is prepared to go to criminalise and degrade the unemployed homeless.

The homeless face constant harassment, abuse and brutality from the police. Skipperers (those who sleep in 'skippers' — derelict buildings) are followed and intimidated and the police use every opportunity to smash up discovered skippers. Having been beaten up in police cells, they are often charged with assault and with being drunk and disorderly. Many homeless Irish men tell tales of even more savage attacks after an IRA bombing campaign. Police terror is a fact of life for the homeless — and particularly for blacks.

The brutalisation of the homeless is something which the working class has every interest in fighting. All workers are threatened with the loss of their job and their home. We must defend the homeless against all attacks and demand that decent housing for all is our right — and something we are prepared to fight for.

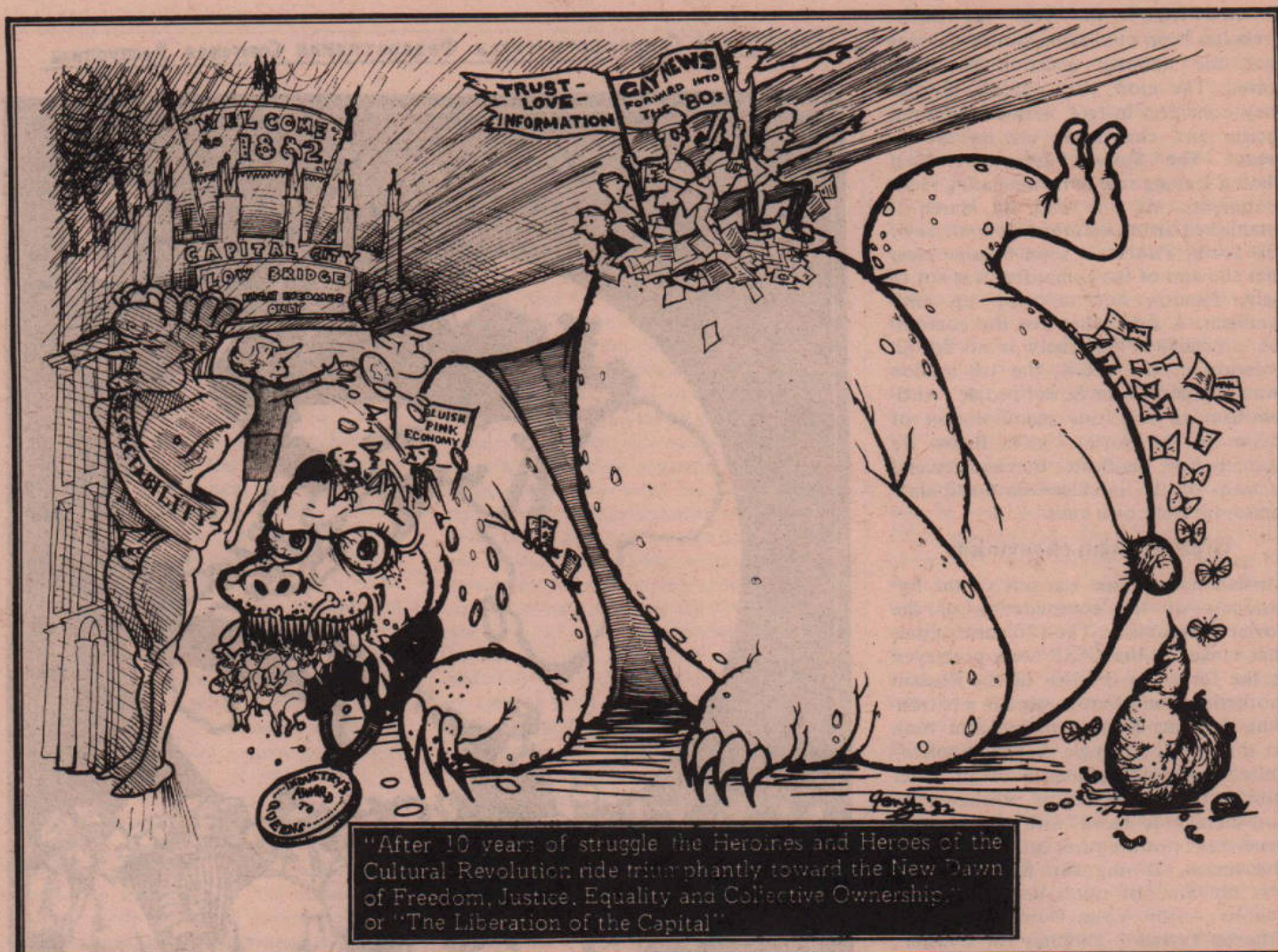
IN APRIL, *Gay News* 'the world's largest circulation newspaper for homosexuals' ceased publication. The closure came after several months of negotiation between the staff, owner Robert Palmer and former owner Dennis Lemon. Back in 1981 Lemon had sold the paper to Palmer for £50 000 down and a further £70 000 repayable over five years. By October of last year the burden of repayments to Lemon forced Palmer to look for ways to cut costs. He demanded six redundancies and the introduction of part-time working for six other staff. The staff demanded to see the books to find out whether the redundancies were justified and then decided to appeal to the GLC's Greater London Enterprise Board for £50 000 to buy the paper and relaunch it as a cooperative as it had been in the early 'seventies.

seventies. In November the staff agreed to four redundancies, but by December it had become clear that Palmer was unable to make the £10 000 payment that had fallen due. Lemon returned as editor-in-chief to protect his interests. By April this new arrangement was breaking down. Palmer tried playing to the gallery by offering to sell out the staff. But the staff's hopes of transforming *Gay News* into another GLC quango came to grief when the GLEB turned down their grant application. At the end of April the staff kidnapped the boards of what was to be the final issue of the paper, delaying production for two days. By the end of the week *Gay News* had gone into receivership. The staff tried to get £25 000 from Islington Borough Council to buy the title but in the middle of the council elections the Islington soviet refused to countenance such a controversial grant. At the end of May the title was sold to a businessman from outside the movement who said he intended to relaunch it as soon as possible.

End of an era

The response of the gay movement to the wheeling and dealing at *Gay News* is instructive. Former vice-chair of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality Harry Coen spoke for the whole movement when he pontificated: 'No individual has the moral right to own *Gay News*'. The collapse of *Gay News*, and the reaction to it by the movement, reveals the stage which has now been reached and exposes the weakness of the narrow gay liberation movement over the last 10 years. Indeed *Gay News* provided one of the few constant themes in the history of the movement. The only campaign it carried on consistently over that period was the drive to get public libraries to take the paper.

Gay News was born out of the Media Workshop of the Gay Liberation Front. In its early days it reflected the radicalism of GLF and the early gay movement. Against the background of the anti-Vietnam war movement, the women's movement and youth radicalism GLF declared itself for the revolution. Some even went so far as to assert that 'gay shows the way'. The movement was dominated by an idea of gay unity which placed the burden of defending homosexuality upon gays themselves. When the GLF adopted its statement of principles in 1971 the Maoist founders of GLF dropped opposition to fascism from the list on the grounds that it might be divisive. The strategy for fighting for gay liberation adopted by the movement was for gay people to come out. This amounted to arguing that the reason that homosexuals were oppressed was that people were simply unaware of their existence. One of the most influential pamphlets of gay liberation put it this way: 'ripples of self-disclosure reinforce each other in a wave of social change' (*With downcast gays*, Hodges and Hutter, 1974).



From a recent issue of *Gay News*, a cartoon depicting its own demise

So farewell then Gay News

The early gay movement separated the struggle for gay liberation from the struggle against capitalism. Since homosexuality has the appearance of being a personal problem many argued that the way to end gay oppression was also a personal question. If everyone knew one or two homosexuals then the problem would disappear. This position was given a theoretical justification by the so-called Marxist journal of gay liberation *Gay Left*, which argued that 'As gays our specific struggle is ideological, though as socialists we fully participate in the necessary economic and political struggles against capitalism'.

The emphasis of the gay movement on gay unity and on 'cultural struggle' conceded the leadership of the gay movement to the middle classes. In the 10 years of its existence the gay movement has been transformed into an appendage of the commercial gay scene. In the USA, where there already existed a thriving gay market from the early 'fifties, the militancy generated among homosexuals by the seige of Christopher Street in New York in 1968, when the gay community held off the police and Mafia thugs for three days, was rapidly absorbed into the existing gay organisations. Those who could not be taken on board by the smooth operators of the Mattachine Society or the Democratic gay caucus were simply marginalised. In Britain, however, the comparative weakness of the commercial gay scene allowed the gay movement to project a more radical image. In recent years entrepreneurs have begun to appreciate the importance of the gay market.

Most major cities now boast a network of pubs, clubs and other commercial facilities aimed exclusively at gay men. In London and Brighton there are now identifiable 'gay ghettos'. Since the beginning of the 'eighties straight businesses have begun to orientate themselves specifically towards the gay market. All this has been faithfully reflected in *Gay News*. At first the tiny gay scene was actively hostile to the paper and the advertising section consisted of a couple of pages devoted to groups and movement events. However, pubs, clubs, saunas

and bookshops soon began to advertise. By 1982 everybody from Fox the filmmakers to Boodle's Gin and computer firms wanted to buy space in the gay press.

Quango time

Given the tension between the expansion of the gay scene and the interests of the capitalist class in defending the family, many proprietors have shown an increasing willingness to sponsor some political activity. Inevitably this has led many in the gay movement towards the Labour Party. The emphasis on gay unity and on building alliances with other oppressed groups has found its echo in the alliances of the oppressed promoted by a parasitic Labour left desperate for wide popularity. One result of the gay movement's integration into Labour Party circles is that much of it has been transformed into a quango. Manchester Council showed the way when it started funding a local gay centre. Several years ago the Labour council reckoned that paying for gay counselling by volunteers would save the city thousands of pounds a year. This year the GLC has already given grants to the NCCL and Gay London Police Monitoring (GALOP) and £8000 salaries for two workers to set up a gay centre on which the GLC is preparing to spend £100 000. The GLC intends to spend £50 000 on a gay arts festival in September. Ken Livingstone thinks the GLC might spend as much as £1 million on gays in 1984.

Neither the expansion of the commercial scene, nor the creation of jobs for the self-appointed middle class representatives of the oppressed, provides any hope for the defence of homosexuals. Police attacks on homosexuals continue unabated. About 7000 are arrested every year. Like Jeffrey Weeks in his book, *Sex, Politics and Society*, the gay movement dismissed this by saying that at least the stigma is no longer as severe as it was. But the police and the reactionaries are not only interested in causing embarrassment. Queerbashing by freelance thugs, discrimination in employment and the stepping up of anti-homosexual

ideology are increasing. Throwing grants at the gay movement merely sustains the illusion that something is being done.

The response of the gay movement to the invention of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) by bourgeois medicine demonstrates what a reactionary dead end the politics of the gay movement have arrived at. Unity in the face of this 'gravest threat to the gay lifestyle' means uniting with the capitalist state in patrolling the gay community. Policing the bars and containing homosexuals within the ghetto is the new function of gay unity. The arrival of the 'Gay Plague' is only one aspect of the recrudescence of reactionary ideology. The case of Oscar Wilde indicates what consequences Thatcher's appeal for a return to Victorian values would have for homosexuals. Capitalism requires the domestic family, and in the crisis the ruling class is thrown back on the sexual morality which justifies it.

A class response

Any strategy which places the burden of fighting for gay rights on the gay community leaves homosexuals isolated and vulnerable to state attacks. Revolutionaries do not believe that only homosexuals have an interest in fighting for gay rights. The working class as a whole has every interest in defending homosexuals against attack by the state. By challenging the hold of the anti-gay chauvinists within the working class we can root out the ideology which divides our class. Homosexual workers can take their place beside their heterosexual fellows in the struggle against the capitalist system which oppresses all workers. The working class needs to defend homosexuality in order that it can assert its independence as a class. Workers have no need for the domestic family, nor for the sexual morality which goes with it. 'Our task is to draw out from the chaos of present day contradictory sexual norms the shape, and make clear the principles, of a morality that answers the spirit of the progressive revolutionary class' (Alexandra Kollantai, *Sexual relations and the class struggle*).

THROUGHOUT the year the Soviet press has been publishing stories claiming that the national question has been solved. The more they publish, the less they convince. In fact, national tensions, racism and chauvinism are on the increase. The Soviet bureaucracy itself plays a leading role in manipulating racist sentiments. At the end of March it established an *Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public*. It soon became clear that the aim of the committee was not to fight Zionism but to whip up anti-semitism. A spokesman for the committee proclaimed that there is no Jewish question in the USSR, the 1.8 million Jews are 'part of the Soviet people'. Anti-semitism is only one manifestation of racism in the Soviet Union. Below we examine how the Soviet bureaucracy and sections of the intelligentsia manipulate racism for their own ends.

Great Russian chauvinism

Russian nationalism was one of the by-products of the consolidation of the Soviet bureaucracy. The 130 nationalities that make up the USSR were portrayed as the fortunate children of the Russian motherland, and were treated in a patronising fashion. Russian nationalism took on the form of a single 'Soviet People' — united under the guidance of an 'elder Russian brother'. However, whenever the bureaucracy is faced with a crisis this benevolent posture turns into an insidious chauvinism. During the Second World War the Stalinist rulers deported entire nations — the Volga Germans and the Crimean Tartars — allegedly for 'treason'. During the crisis of the late 'forties the authorities launched an anti-semitic campaign. And in the 'sixties they whipped up anti-Chinese sentiments.

The zig-zags between benevolent Russian nationalism and Great Russian chauvinism reflect the expansion and contraction of the economy. Since the 'seventies, the economic crisis has forced the bureaucracy to look to the nationalist Russian intelligentsia for support.

Russian nationalism

In the 'sixties a growing section of the Russian intelligentsia began to gravitate towards right-wing national forces:

'The intelligentsia suddenly began taking their holidays in the villages at the graves of ancestors instead of the Crimea, the Caucasus or the Baltic. Suddenly everyone noticed that the peasantry of north western Russia — the cradle of the nation — was disappearing. Young people began to wander around the dying villages collecting icons, and soon there was almost no intellectual's home in Moscow which was not decorated with symbols of Russian orthodoxy. The writer Vladimir Solukin appeared in the House of Writers wearing a signet ring which carried the image of Nicholas II. An insane demand arose on the black market for books by "White Guardsmen" and "counter-revolutionaries" who had died in emigration.' (Yanov, *The new Russian right*)

The liberal nationalists coalesced around the journal *Veche*. They argued for the isolation of the Russian economy and the development of the Russian North-East, as well as the replacement of Marxism by Russian nationalism.

But the liberal nationalists could not promote Russian nationalism without inspiring chauvinism — particularly against the main military threat to the USSR in the 'seventies — the Chinese. The editor of *Veche* wrote 'When the Chinese say they will drown the enemy in a sea of people, they are not bragging at all. This sea is always increasing and with each year the hour comes closer when it will burst its bounds and roll in a dense wave over the empty spaces of Siberia'.

The circle of intellectuals around Nobel prize-winning novelist, now hero of Western reaction, Alexander Solzhenitsyn opposed the aspirations of the national minorities, claiming that their problems were due to Marxist ideology rather than Russian oppression:

'The theory of "Russian colonisation" is not only unfair to the Russians but also erroneous in fact, and therefore damaging to the other peoples by imposing an improper understanding of their own national life. In fact the basic

Российская Социалистическая Федеративная Советская Республика.



Russian chauvinism has replaced the internationalism of 1917

Racism in the Soviet Union

Reaction rampant

Journalists in the West are fond of highlighting the plight of Russian dissidents. Increasingly, however, it is the national and ethnic minorities who are at the receiving end of Soviet terror and the objects of Russian chauvinism and racism. The idol of the Western press, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, played no small part in encouraging the growth of nationalist sentiments against the minorities. Andy Clarkson reports.

features of national life in the USSR are a direct result of the hegemony in our country of socialist ideology... The Russians no less than others are its victims; indeed they were the first to come under its fire.'

Even left-wing critics of the bureaucracy, like Roy Medvedev could not bring themselves to support the right of the national minorities to self-determination. By 1974 correspondents to *Veche* were calling for the nationalists to launch a campaign against Zionism and Satanism. The ultra-nationalists under G Shimanov gained increasing support for their call for unity between Russian orthodoxy and Leninism (ie Stalinism) in the hunt for 'Kike Masins' (Jewish devils). According to Shimanov, the natural function of the Jewish nation was the 'decomposition of peoples into a dung'. From a position of outright hostility to the Soviet regime in the 'sixties, the Russian nationalists had moved to calling on the bureaucracy to promote pogroms in the 'seventies. The nationalists had moved closer to the bureaucracy — how did the bureaucracy react?

Chauvinistic communism

Previously the reaction of the bureaucracy to the revival of Russian nationalism was repression. In 1965, a leading

member of the Moscow Young Communist League (Kommosol), V Shurlatov, distributed leaflets at the Moscow City Council calling for 'laws to preserve racial purity and prohibiting inter-racial marriages'. He was expelled from the party, only to be given a post later as a professor in a Moscow engineering institute. Throughout the 'sixties Kommosol publications, particularly the *Young Guard*, became the organs of the nationalist intelligentsia. One writer, Semanov, described the 1917 revolution as a great Russian nationalist achievement. The chief sin of Trotskyism was 'the most profound aversion for our people'. Stalin was praised as 'our Generalissimo'. When in 1970 the Communist Party's theoretical journal *Kommunist* attacked *Young Guard* for deviations from the Leninist line, the editor was merely replaced by another Russian nationalist. A number of Central Committee members were sacked by Brezhnev in the early 'seventies for nationalist deviations — Melentev, Polianskii and Shelepin. However this only served to advance their careers later on, when detente began to fail.

Indeed the experience of Yakovlev, the head of the Central Committee's Agit-prop department, showed the dangers of

campaigning against Russification. On the 50th anniversary of the USSR, in November 1972, he attacked the Russian nationalists, accusing them of bringing back the past and of polemicising against Lenin. Within a couple of months he was sacked and sent to Canada as ambassador. However, it wasn't until the detente policy was in ruins that the Russification programme received official endorsement. Throughout the 'sixties the teaching of Russian in the schools of the national minorities was promoted as part of the development of 'Soviet Man'. Russian was portrayed as the only logical *lingua franca*.

By the 1980's the real motives behind Russification were clear. As an influential academic professor Arutyunyan noted:

'Although migration policy has different goals in different regions, the ethnic factor should always receive special attention. This means that the emphasis in migration policy should be shifted from economic to social factors. The distribution of labour resources to labour-short regions will depend to a great extent on the wide-scale development of fluency in Russian, the training of young people — especially rural youngsters — in industrial occupations, and the overcoming of customs and traditions that discourage migration among the indigenous peoples of several republics.'

In other words, the language, customs and traditions of the national minorities had to be eliminated to develop Soviet industry. To mobilise all available resources the bureaucracy gave the Russian nationalists its seal of approval.

The intelligentsia

In contrast to its resonance among workers in capitalist societies, racism has no direct appeal for Soviet workers. Russian workers do not fear that their jobs will be lost to foreign workers. Indeed there is a tremendous shortage of labour. Moreover, living conditions in Russia are so austere that national minorities are reluctant to move to where labour is required. It is true that the atomised working class can be susceptible to nationalist sentiments, but these can have only an incidental character.

The social basis for racism in Soviet society is the intelligentsia. Russian nationalism provides the intelligentsia with an ideology with which to consolidate its position and to mobilise resources at the expense of the national minorities. Despite their bourgeois character the Soviet bureaucracy has made its peace with the Russian nationalists. As a young scientist explained:

'After the Revolution, especially in the 'twenties but also in the 'thirties, people believed in socialist proletarian internationalism. It was wrong to assert Russian nationalism, We against Them. You could get into trouble for that. But with the war, Stalin emphasised nationalism. Since then it has been growing. Now people do not have God, or the Czar or socialist internationalism. They have Russia, *rodina*, the Motherland and the Party makes great use of this.'

A Amalirik, author of *Will the Soviet Union survive until 1984?*, has described 'neo-slavism' as being linked to Stalinist nationalism by chauvinism. It is able to 'count on very broad-based support from the urban and rural semi-intelligentsia, as well as from the more general public.' It is in this atmosphere that a popular culture of racism is promoted by the intelligentsia: 'On every street corner, in front of every beer stand, in every store and on every bus, a Ukrainian can hear the contemptuous epithet *kholkol* (yokel), a Jew the annihilating *zhid*, a Korean *kozoglazyi* (slant-eyes), an Uzbek *ishak* (ass). The bureaucracy hopes to secure the continuing assent of the Russian proletariat for its rule by recreating a new Russian consensus. The full development of this tendency would require the reorganisation of class relations in the Soviet Union. But whereas in the past, racism against the national minorities had an incidental character, today the bureaucracy is preparing to wield it as its foremost weapon in the assault on the working class in the USSR.

Birth of the bureaucracy

Jonathan Schneer, *Ben Tillet*, Croom Helm, 1982, pp 241, hbk £14.95.

BEN TILLET was one of the founding fathers of the British labour movement. He organised unskilled workers on the London docks in the 1880s and was one of the leaders of the great 1889 dock strike. He played an active part in the establishment of the Independent Labour Party in 1893 and the formation of the Labour Party itself in 1900. Tillet was deeply involved in the wave of militant strike action – and in angry rank and file criticisms of the Parliamentary Labour Party – up to the First World War. A long-standing opponent of militarism, he patriotically supported the war and became Labour MP for Salford in 1918. He passed his twilight years as a TUC hack, fully complicit in the betrayals of the Triple Alliance in 1921 and the General Strike in 1926. He died in 1943, the rabble-rouser of the docklands turned drinking pal of prominent Tories and millionaires.

The conciliator

American academic Jonathan Schneer has written a biography of Tillet that is full of insights into the formative years of the official labour movement as we know it today. However, his conclusion on Tillet, that 'to examine his experience is to examine that of the working class movement as a whole' obscures the essential process which Tillet's career exemplifies. Tillet's experience was not so much that of the working class as a whole, as that of a labour bureaucrat in the making. His apparently wildly inconsistent behaviour through this stormy period reflects the conflicting pressures on a man bent on establishing a layer in the working class movement mediating between workers and the capitalist class.

Like the leaders of the established craft unions, Tillet began organising the unskilled under the influence of the politics of the Liberal Party. As secretary of the Tea Operatives and General Labourers Union which he founded on the London docks in 1887, he declared 'we want a bloodless victory...we want our position so adjusted that by arbitration we shall prevent conflict with our employers'. This commitment runs as a consistent theme through all Tillet's subsequent trade union activity. His receptiveness to the intervention of the state as a neutral arbiter and conciliator in conflicts between workers and employers was not to be fully rewarded until the First World War. In the meantime Tillet's activities were devoted to building up union organisation to strengthen its hold over the rank and file and its claim for government recognition.

The dock strike was a key step forward for the emergent labour bureaucracy. As Schneer notes, it took place in particularly fortuitous circumstances for the workers: there was a trade upturn, the employers were divided and the unions – craft and general – united. Victory was won through widespread public support and the mediating services of Cardinal Manning. Union membership mushroomed virtually overnight and Tillet's Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers Union of Great Britain and Ireland was established on a sound basis. It formed the central component of the Transport and General Workers Union when it was formed in 1920. However, the success of the dockers' militancy only strengthened Tillet's conservatism. Before the strike he had written to Liberal trade unionist MP Henry Broadhurst pleading that 'our union has not the strength to maintain itself'. Now that the union had become more securely based, Tillet's central preoccupation, as the employers regrouped to go on the offensive in a deteriorating economic environment, was to maintain the union machine.

The employers' attack on the dockers, and Tillet's concern to preserve the union even at the cost of betraying its members, led to serious setbacks in strikes at Bristol and Hull in 1892 and 1893. Defeats on the trade union front and a rapid decline in membership led Tillet and other leaders of the new unskilled unions to look to the political sphere to strengthen their positions. Thus Tillet spoke after the Bristol defeat of the need for 'a labour party' for 'the purpose of securing direct labour representation upon all public bodies which are now systematically used in the interests of employers against workers'. The trade union leaders sought

reviews

the protection of the state and increasingly articulated the need for a political organisation to advance this objective more effectively than their existing alliance with the Liberals. Schneer notes that Tillet's desire for a political party emerged from his concern over the problem of unofficial strikes: 'Perhaps the decisive factor, however, leading to Tillet's repudiation of trade unionism as the sole instrument of the working class was the unmanageability of the rank and file'. The problems of attempting to mediate between workers and employers in a period of intense and often violent class conflict led Tillet and other union leaders to Bradford in 1893 for the founding conference of the Independent Labour Party.

Tillet is renowned for his chauvinist denunciation of socialists and Marxists at the Bradford conference as the 'harebrained chattering and magpies of continental revolutionists'. He had repudiated socialist involvement in the 1889 dock strike. However, Tillet was pragmatic: he now embraced a 'socialism' which he defined as 'a claim to that protection which the vast bulwark of the constitution affords the (capitalist) class now'. He summed up his view that 'the socialist new unionists desire a share in government'. The trade unionists' 'state socialist' strategy, strongly influenced by the middle class Fabian Society which Tillet joined in 1891, came to dominate the outlook of the ILP. The vulgar Marxists of the Social Democratic Federation, who also attended at Bradford, were incapable of combatting the class collaborationist approach implicit in state socialism.

State socialism

During the last decade of the nineteenth century the new unionists and the craft union leaders converged around state socialism. In 1893 the craft-dominated TUC still held aloof from the ILP; but in 1894 it adopted a resolution in favour of 'collective ownership of the means of production' which anticipated by more than 20 years the adoption of Clause 4 by the Labour Party. After a series of further capitalist attacks the craft unions joined with the ILP, the new unions and the socialist societies to complete their organisational break with the Liberals and found the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 (which became the Labour Party in 1906).

A key factor in the emergence of the labour bureaucracy, which Schneer neglects, was

the growing responsiveness of influential sections of the capitalist class to the union leaders' pleas for arbitration and conciliation. Indeed the Hull dock strike in 1893, which was still in progress when the ILP conference took place, was the first strike in which the services of the Board of Trade as arbiter were formally employed. Over the next 20 years trade union leaders were drawn into much closer involvement with the state apparatus as their mediating powers came to be increasingly appreciated. Former trade union leaders were employed in the labour department of the Board of Trade and leaders such as Tillet were consulted by government officials not only about strikes, but also about unemployment and welfare reforms. The career of John Burns provides an extreme example of the integration of the labour leadership: in 1889 a leader of the dock strike, by 1906 he was a valued working class member of a Liberal Cabinet. By 1912 he was negotiating over another dock strike with his old friend Tillet, still the dockers' leader. Tillet revelled in his new status. When the state requested that the union release mail held up by the strike he was highly flattered. 'But think of it', he said, 'the Government coming to us for permission'.

Rhetoric and reality

Tillet was well known for his oratory and, especially during the strike wave up to the First World War, for his almost revolutionary rhetoric. As early as 1893 he was charged with sedition for his inflammatory addresses to the British dockers. During the 1912 dock strike he urged the workers to arm themselves with cudgels and even encouraged an embryonic workers' militia. Schneer convincingly exposes the hollowness of Tillet's rhetoric. The dockers' leader was adept at rallying militant workers around the union through his fiery speeches, while behind the scenes he invariably pursued a moderate and conciliatory approach. As Schneer comments, the only times he called for national strike action were when he was sure it would not happen. In common with other trade union leaders of the period, Tillet struck militant anti-capitalist postures – often using syndicalist terms – to strengthen the negotiating position of the bureaucracy and further its quest for state recognition and approval. Thus Tillet was an outspoken advocate of industrial unionism, 'one big union', in the docks – as long as it was his union. While he was at a peak of syndicalist fervour and strident attacks on the moderation

of the Labour leaders, he continued to pursue his campaign for state arbitration in industrial conflict; he even visited Germany to study the integration of the trade union leaders into the state apparatus.

Tillet has often been condemned for his chauvinism, which was indeed a consistent feature of his political outlook. From the 1880s onwards he opposed immigration from a narrow trade union viewpoint. In the 1890s he wrote that 'all the dregs and scum of the continent make fetid, putrid and congested our already overcrowded slums' while 'good patriots are starved and driven to desperation'. In 1910 he ran an anti-semitic election campaign against Liberal MP Alfred Mond in Swansea and during the 1912 dock strikes he regretted that 'the men had not enough food in their bellies to raise a cheer for the King'. When the First World War broke out it was no great surprise that he took Britain's side. However, while Tillet may have expressed the prejudices of the bureaucracy more forcefully than others, his view was the majority position of the official labour movement on all these issues. State socialists must defend the state to which they look for progressive policies when it is threatened by foreign competitors: hence chauvinist views have generally been more influential on the left wing of the movement, with which Tillet was identified.

Tillet was a colourful character whose own mercurial temperament fitted well the requirements of the early labour bureaucracy. They had to alternate sharply between militant rhetoric and conciliation as they manoeuvred their way to a place in the Westminster sun in a period of strikes and lockouts, riots and demonstrations. Today's labour bureaucrats are under less working class pressure and have had none of Tillet's hard experience of building a union from scratch in face of often brutal attacks from scabs and employers. Their colourless mediocrity reflects a lifetime of operating in the shadow of the state protection which Tillet had to fight to win. In this sense Schneer's parallel between Tillet and George Brown is inappropriate and rather unfair to Tillet. Yet there is a clear *political* link from Tillet to the leaders of Labourism today – a common deference to the capitalist state, a faith in state-sponsored arbitration and conciliation and reliance on government reforms, and a loyal subservience to British imperialism. Tillet's own comment on the role of the official labour movement around the First World War should serve as the epitaph for a parasitic bureaucracy which has unfortunately long outlived its founders:

'If the capitalists take one word from me, the capitalists owe not merely the success of the war to the general trade union movement, but the capitalists of the country owe the maintenance of their industries to that success of the trade union movement'.

Mike Freeman



Jubilant dockers celebrate the end of the 1889 dock strike led by Tillet

Out of this world?

Stuart Holland, Ed, *Out of crisis: a project for European recovery*, Forum for International Political and Social Economy, Spokesman 1983, pp200, pbk £2.95.

Out of crisis is the product of a formidable array of academics, social workers, politicians and trade union bureaucrats from more than a dozen European countries. The book brings together most of the economic ideas developed by the reformist left over the past decade. The key issue it addresses is the failure of the economic policies of the post-war boom years to avert the crisis.

Left Labour MP Stuart Holland argues that the present crisis is 'structural as well as cyclical', so that traditional economic policies to promote expansion cannot work. The 'supply side' of the economy is dominated by large multinational corporations which can bypass government tax regulations, export incentives and devaluation plans. The economy cannot be boosted by 'demand side' policies either because, given the present distribution of income, it is not possible to create higher levels of demand for many private sector commodities. Consequently, while there should be *reflation* – to reverse the deflationary policies followed throughout the world – this should be done in the context of *restructuring and redistributing*.

Out of crisis says nothing about the crisis of profitability that has brought the capitalist economy to a near standstill. Here, the barriers to capital accumulation are seen in the failure of the market to expand, both because of 'structural' demand problems and because of monetarist policies over the past few years. In fact it is the fall in the rate of profit – an inevitable consequence of capital accumulation – which in turn has brought about the stagnation of the capitalist economy and led to a failure of markets to expand sufficiently. The deflation of the past few years was triggered by government policy. But these policies were the bourgeoisie's response to the failure of previous attempts to alleviate the crisis, and a desperate move to enforce a long overdue restructuring of capitalist production.

For Holland, *big business* does not really face a crisis of profitability at all. It is simply that 'large scale international deflation' has caused it problems. Hence, Holland argues, 'there is considerable ambivalence and ambiguity among big business with regard to policies for economic recovery'. He turns the big capitalists' fear of going bankrupt into a progressive sentiment. A large section of the book is taken up by an attempt to prove that the ideas of 'monetarism' and the policies of the financiers and bankers work against the interests of large industrialists. Instead, we are told, these beleaguered bourgeois should unite with the labour movement and support reflationary policies.

It is true that big capitalists, just like all capitalists, and even bankers, would prefer to operate an expanding economy. But their ambivalence towards 'monetarism' – as seen at CBI conferences which have criticised Thatcher's policies – is not a protest about unemployment or austerity, but expresses the fear that they too may have to pay for the recession.

Unity is strangulation

Having established the basis of unity between workers and the bourgeoisie, Holland goes on to draw out the consequences – simple reflation is not enough – we also need restructuring and redistribution. 'Conventional restructuring', that is the mechanism of the crisis for eliminating unprofitable firms and attacking the labour movement, is criticised as irrational. What is needed is 'cooperative restructuring'. This amounts to a system of state aid and the formation of 'cooperatives and social enterprises'.

When it comes to redistribution, Holland presents the usual litany of ideas for realising the potential of 'leisure time' (ie unemployment) and giving cash handouts. The trade unions will have to take on 'a new responsibility', through a 'process of democratised planning'. This book dresses up class collaboration in industry and the disastrous consequences it holds for workers, in euphemisms about socialist planning and democracy.

Out of crisis is a book about European recovery plans. This does not mean that all of a sudden the chauvinist left both in the British Labour Party and the socialist parties in Europe

have become internationalists. Their strategy still rests upon the national capitalist state; it has simply been extended in a pragmatic fashion, in the recognition that it is impossible to reflate a single economy with any chance of success (France being a case in point).

The book combines the call for international cooperation with a recognition of 'political realities'. While countries are asked to join in the reflation programme, it is understood that some countries are more reactionary than others. The USA and Japan, for example, are last in the queue for the reflationary process. Furthermore, the international monetary system is still 'dollar dominated' and existing EEC institutions such as the European Monetary System and the Common Agricultural Policy are unable to serve the needs of the grand design. Thus measures of national protection by European powers – especially Britain – are justified.

Out of crisis is a textbook of reformist prejudices. It is a welcome warning to workers about the apologies for austerity with which any Labour government of the future would justify its attacks on the working class.

Tony Allen

The myth of Soviet imperialism

E. Engin, *The Revolution in Afghanistan*, Iscin Sesi Publications, pp174, pbk £2.

In Afghanistan at present 105 000 Soviet troops are bogged down by a few thousand Moslem insurgents. For reactionaries the world over, Afghanistan is a living example of 'Russian imperialism'. *The Revolution in Afghanistan* is worth reading if only for its frank assessment of Afghanistan's recent history and its convincing repudiation of the myth of 'Soviet imperialism'.

Engin's book is sponsored by the Iscin Sesi movement in the illegal Turkish Communist Party (TKP). It supported Hafisallah Amin, whose *Khalq* faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) overthrew the monarchy in April 1978, and subsequently proclaimed the insurrection a proletarian revolution in the tradition of October 1917. Despite a comprehensive survey of the Amin days and of his downfall at the hands of the Soviet Army in December 1979, Iscin Sesi maintains a devout loyalty to Moscow:

'There is no clash between the revolutionary



Moslem insurgents take on the Soviet Army in Afghanistan

reviews

centre (Moscow) and revolutions in individual countries in terms of their fundamental and long-term interests. The Afghanistan experience confirms this once again in a very complicated, roundabout and contradictory manner.'

The author cannot however avoid certain harsh facts. Amin made 14 appeals to the USSR for 'urgent military assistance' against the Moslem insurgents. When the Soviet Army finally arrived in December 1979, Amin was kicked out in favour of the leader of the liberal *Parcham* wing of the party, Barbrak Karmal. Amin and 97 of his followers were killed by the KGB. He was vilified as a CIA agent, a sectarian and a tyrant in the pages of the Soviet press. From this, the Turkish Stalinists conclude that although 'the world communist movement has shifted to the right' nevertheless 'through the support it is providing, the Red Army is fulfilling an internationalist duty'. The murder of Amin was merely 'a historical injustice'. Thus 'in a very complicated, roundabout and contradictory manner' Stalinists continue to justify the reactionary role of the Soviet bureaucracy.

By force of arms

The question remains about the character of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The Kremlin rulers intervened in Afghanistan for one reason: to put down an Islamic rebellion that they feared would provoke similar movements in the Soviet Union's Moslem republics in Central Asia. Today, the Soviet Union rules Afghanistan by force of arms. Bureaucratically-inspired changes in the economy – heralded as 'reforms' – are merely designed to stabilise the military regime.

None of this however makes the Soviet Union an imperialist country. Imperialism is defined by the export of capital and capitalist social relations. Hence, although both Iran and Zimbabwe dispensed with their pro-imperialist rulers, they were unable to escape from imperialist domination. Egypt and Syria both established, and then moved away from, close relations with the Soviet Union: yet their basic characteristics as backward capitalist countries have remained unchanged.

Today, the sole response of the USSR to the 'Afghanistan problem' is to 'throw guns at it'. If force is the defining characteristic of an imperialist power, then Julius Caesar and Genghis Khan were as much imperialists as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan are today. To label the Soviet Union as imperialist is not only false – it also plays into the hands of the real imperialists: the capitalist classes of Britain, the USA, France and the rest of the thieves' gang. The Soviet Union is an enemy of the working class, but it is not imperialist. The absurd concept of 'Russian imperialism' lets our main enemy off the hook.

Andy Clarkson

The Irish 'laboratory'

Roger Faligot, *The Kitson experiment: Britain's military strategy in Ireland*, Zed Press, pp249, pbk £5.95.

BRINGING TOGETHER the best bourgeois and radical investigative journalism of the past decade, *The Kitson experiment* describes the extension and perfection of counter-insurgency techniques in Ireland by the British imperialist war machine. Faligot meticulously documents the core components of counter-insurgency pioneered by Major-General Frank Kitson in the mid 'seventies along the lines laid out in his book *Low intensity operations*.

Counter-insurgency

French journalist Roger Faligot relates the various facets of counter-insurgency warfare to British imperialism's central objective: the suppression of the nationalist community and the liquidation of the republican movement. The example of the women's peace movement which Faligot describes provides a good example.

Formed in August 1976, when three children were killed by a car which went out of control after its IRA driver was shot dead by the British Army, the women's peace movement was incorporated into the British strategy of 'normalisation' and 'criminalisation'. This face of the war, which came to the fore when the Labour Government took control of the Northern Ireland Office in 1974, was an attempt to isolate republicans from the nationalist population.

By giving practical, political and financial assistance to a network of 'reconciliation centres' and 'conflict research groups', the British state provided the infrastructure through which the peace movement could function. The movement's success was short-lived. It soon compromised its neutral image by siding with the British Army against the republican movement. Yet while it lasted, the British state used the peace movement to some effect to divide the nationalist community and divert attention away from day-to-day repression.

'Training ground'

While Faligot provides rich documentary evidence about British military strategy in the Six Counties, he falls down politically in giving succour to the opportunist 'training ground' argument so favoured by the British radical left. The argument is that the Irish War is an important issue in Britain because the counter-insurgency techniques developed there will be used in Britain in the event of civil disorder. There is no doubt that the British state will always deploy its most effective techniques to put down any threat to its rule, whether in Ireland or in Britain. In this sense it has 'learnt' from its experience in Ireland. But the conclusion that a solidarity movement can be built in Britain by appealing to British people's fears that they might be next for plastic bullets, sensory deprivation, deep interrogation and shoot-to-kill squads exposes the political weakness that has long plagued the solidarity movement in Britain.

Faligot's view that Britain remains in Ireland partly 'to facilitate political and military research' only encourages this narrow viewpoint. For Faligot – as for much of the radical left – the use of black propaganda, informers, intelligence units and psychological torture is not so much the product of British imperialism's need to crush resistance to its rule in Ireland, as of the evil psyche of one individual – Frank Kitson.

But Kitson was not a mad professor at work in a university laboratory. He was an officer in the British Army deployed in the practical implementation of terror techniques against real people in the real world. The main concern of the British state was not, and is not, with training, testing and preparing for the future; the central objective is to smash the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland in the present.

Faligot's exposure of the British state's dirty tricks department is useful for anti-imperialists in Britain. It reveals the cynicism and barbarism behind the carefully constructed image of the British Army as a 'peace-keeping' force. Combined with an approach that appeals to British workers' class solidarity with the liberation struggle against the British state, it could play a part in building an Irish solidarity movement in Britain.

Pat Hughes

Sexual harassment

A month after being sacked from Lady at Lord John in Liverpool, Audrey White has got her job back. Audrey was sacked when she dared to complain about her boss's constant sexual harassment of two women members of staff. The official explanation for her sacking was 'unsatisfactory work'.

A member of the TGWU, Audrey managed to get a picket line together by the first Saturday after her dismissal. It was very successful – only a few shoppers ignored the picket. However, on the Monday the local TGWU official Bobby Lamb called off the picket, arguing that management had agreed to negotiate. Faced with no picket, management took a hard line. Instead of offering Audrey her job back, they tried to buy her off with a lump sum payment. Audrey rejected the offer.

On Saturday 14 May we again picketed the shop. Again Lamb had done nothing to make the picket effective. About 13 people did manage to keep the shop empty for most of the day, but our numerical weakness cost us dearly. At four o'clock the police moved in and without warning arrested eight pickets. We were held for over five hours and charged with wilful obstruction of the highway. One picket – an 18-year-old school student – was strip-searched in a room with an open door.

Despite the union's reluctance to take direct action to get Audrey reinstated, the pickets continued for four weeks. Eventually management was forced to give in – the regular pickets were hitting them where it hurt.

Audrey is now back at work and the union has claimed a great victory for itself. But unfortunately the union did very little to win Audrey's fight. It was the determination of those who manned the picket lines that forced management to reinstate her.

Audrey's case highlights the problems that many working class women face when they go out to work. Forced to take the worst low-paid and unskilled jobs, women are treated as second-class workers and often subjected to degrading sexual advances by their employers. This situation has been tolerated for too long by the trade unions – they must be forced to defend their women members against the sort of treatment meted out to Audrey White.

Paul Saunders
Liverpool

Love and the family

You rightly point out that marriage has been based on such things as duty, responsibility and convenience (*the next step*, April). But you then suggest that it could be based on love, as if love is some grand ideal which could transcend and transform social relations if it were not dragged down by the dull weight of economic

letters

necessity. In the same way, you propose a 'super-family' which, with a few reforms, would be the ideal attainable in communist society. You argue that the family has always been with us in various forms and from that you suggest it always should be.

Of course it is necessary to consider the attractive aspects of the family to explain its importance for the working class in capitalist society. But why do you not challenge the stultifying effects of the family on the individual? These will not magically disappear by socialising domestic labour. The family needs to be abolished because it contradicts basic communist principles. No one, least of all women, will be free until it is gone. 'Comfort and close personal relationships' should not be family centred.

In addition it is naive and simplistic to suggest that most women marry for love and because they want children. We challenge the assumption that all women want to have children. It is not a natural instinct but a socially inculcated desire, no more fundamental to women's existence than wearing skirts or keeping a home clean.

Yours monogamously
Linda and Felicity
London

Ann Burton replies:

The abolition of the family cannot just be declared. It is not the family per se or the relationships between men and women in marriage which are the source of women's oppression; it is capitalist social relations which oppress women.

The main function of the family under capitalism is to reproduce the labour-power of workers so that they can be exploited by capital. Women carry the main burden of unpaid domestic work so vital for maintaining the working class and for reproducing the capitalist system. It is this that explains the persistence of the working class family. Unlike the bourgeoisie, the working class does not need the family as a means of passing on property. The working class family survives because of the necessity for domestic work.

We are not out to 'save' the family. To free women, domestic work has to be socialised. You argue that the stultifying effects of the family on the individual will not disappear by socialising domestic labour. But there is not something intrinsic to the family that makes it oppressive. It is because the family under capitalism forces women to carry out degrading and menial domestic labour for free that it is oppressive and degrades relations between people.

The effect of socialising domestic work will be to destroy the social and economic reasons for the family as we know it. The work of childcare, laundry, cooking etc. will be done at

the expense of society by employing workers to carry out the services required to meet people's needs. Once the family as an economic unit is abolished the social relations between producers – no longer dependent on exploitation and oppression – will be free. The form that relations between people take will then be a matter of choice.

There is no future for the working class under capitalism, still less for women, whose oppression is enforced by a system which thrives on domestic slavery. To free women from the family as we know it and to ensure the highest development of the individual and of society requires more than the communalistic living of the kibbutz; it requires the destruction of the capitalist system.

Mugabe's 'socialism'

For an organisation which places such emphasis on solidarity work, your articles on Zimbabwe and Imperialism in *the next step* No 35 were a disgrace. It amazes me how British 'socialists' find it so easy to condemn nationalist movements which for years fought bloody struggles against the British state and their agents. Your condemnation of Mugabe is dishonest and based on blatant lies. In the article 'Impoverishment and War' you state that Mugabe's 5th Battalion and Botha's racist troops are essentially the same – they 'all help to keep the region secure for imperialist domination'. How then do you explain the fact that it has been South African interference in Matabeleland which has been the cause of unrest? Have you not read in your 'studies' how South Africa is intent on destabilising Zimbabwean independence?

You conveniently don't mention this. In fact, it is precisely the interference of the apartheid regime in Zimbabwe which is preventing the development of socialism in Zimbabwe. This is of no consequence for you. Instead of attempting to understand the reality of Zimbabwe, you condemn it because it does not fit in with your text book conceptions of a socialist revolution. Mugabe has no choice, just as he didn't when he was forced to sign the Lancaster House Agreement. Instead of presenting the positive steps Mugabe is taking towards socialism to your readers, like the co-operatives that have been developing in the countryside, you line up with the imperialists and condemn him.

Morris Mavi
Coventry

Bob Radcliffe replies:

It is absolutely correct that Mugabe was forced

to sign the Lancaster House Agreement. We do not condemn Mugabe for entering into negotiations with imperialism. However, what we have consistently condemned is ZANU's presentation of the compromise as a victory for the masses.

Mugabe's 'realism', which you so vigorously defend, has nothing in common with building socialism but has a lot in common with maintaining capitalism. Because ZANU separated the democratic struggle against the Smith regime from the anti-capitalist struggle, black majority rule today is nothing more than a reconciliation of the aspirations of the Zimbabwean masses with capitalist reality.

The revolts taking place in Zimbabwe today are not, as you would have it, solely the result of South African interference. They are a consequence of the failure of the Patriotic Front to continue the anti-imperialist struggle. Apologists for Mugabe, both inside and outside Zimbabwe, are in reality asking the Zimbabwean masses to reconcile themselves to continued capitalist exploitation in Zimbabwe and the region. Moreover, by implying that Britain played a progressive role in Zimbabwe and by defending the Mugabe regime, they can only undermine the potential for future struggles in Zimbabwe and in Britain itself.

Stifling debate

After all its posturing against the TUC and the Stalinists during the People's March for Jobs, the Workers Revolutionary Party showed its true colours at the last meeting of Lambeth Trades Council.

When a letter from Tameside Trades Council came up under correspondence, the chairman warned the meeting about the controversial nature of the issue and the dangers of taking a position without prior consultation with the TUC. This inspired one delegate – a WRP member – to point out that Tameside Trades Council had been associated with an organisation (the Irish Freedom Movement) proscribed by the TUC. She also argued that since the letter was signed only in a personal capacity, it should not be discussed.

As a matter of fact, the IFM has never been proscribed by the TUC. Tameside Trades Council, however, was disaffiliated by the TUC in 1980 for calling a conference on the Irish War. Now that the TUC is again threatening disaffiliation over the showing of an IFM video, the WRP is supporting the bureaucracy. The Tameside letter was not unofficial – it was signed, in his official capacity, by the trades council secretary.

The WRP often proclaims its support for the Irish national liberation struggle (though it condemns the violence of the republican movement). However, when it comes to giving real solidarity the WRP toes the TUC line and, like the Communist Party, supports its attempts to crush debate on Ireland within the labour movement. While the WRP criticises the bureaucrats and the Stalinists and their methods, it is not above siding with them and employing their methods against anti-imperialist politics.

B Brown

Hit back with *the next step*

Write to us...

Tell us what you think of *the next step*. What do you like, what don't you like? Tell us what's going on in your workplace, on the streets, in your union. Send us letters and contributions to debate.

Write to:

the next step
c/o Junius Publications
BCM JP LTD
London WC1N 3XX

...subscribe now!

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

NAME
ADDRESS
TEL.
UNION/ORG

NO MORE DEPORTATIONS!



Workers Against Racism has just won another partial victory in the fight to keep Afia Begum and her daughter Asma in Britain. Their third and 'final' deportation order has been temporarily suspended, but their fate still hangs in the balance. The onus lies on the labour movement to win a full victory. Joan Phillips outlines what is required to win.

FOUR WEEKS AGO the Home Office instructed Afia Begum to report to Heathrow Immigration Office with her two-year-old baby, to board a flight to Dacca. Afia was first refused leave to enter Britain in June 1982, on the grounds that her husband's death in a Brick Lane fire invalidated her entry permit.

Over the past 12 months numerous Labour MPs including Tony Benn, Ian Mikardo and Michael Foot have made representations on Afia's behalf. Ken Livingstone and the GLC have backed WAR's fight and given a grant to the Afia Begum Defence Campaign. Yet the Home Office has rejected every appeal. It chose to issue the final deportation notice in the middle of the General Election campaign when most MPs were away in their constituencies. WAR has defied the intransigent position adopted by Home Office minister David Waddington and taken direct action to ensure the safety of Afia and her daughter. What has the Labour Party been doing?

Empty rhetoric

The Labour Party made a lot of promises in its election campaign. It pledged to repeal the Nationality Act and to defend the rights of black people. Many individuals like Tony Benn and Roy Hattersley said they would make sure that Afia was not deported. Ken Livingstone stated that Labour should defy the law to keep her in Britain and offered her a refuge at County Hall. But what has the Labour Party done in practice to win her case?

The Labour Party tried to use the publicity generated by WAR's work to make political capital during the election campaign. At press conferences and in interviews, prospective Labour MPs referred to Afia's threatened deportation and implied they had played a part in preventing her removal. In Tower Hamlets, where Afia's husband lived and died, and an area with a large Bangladeshi community, the Labour Party, the Alliance and the Communist Party all made statements condemning the Home

Office decision – but they have all done little or nothing to fight it.

'Provocation'

In fact, the Labour Party in Tower Hamlets has made slanderous allegations, accusing WAR of destroying any hope of Afia being allowed to stay in Britain because of the 'provocative' nature of our campaign. Labour Party representatives have argued that Afia should not be in hiding as this can only 'provoke' the Home Office and provide the authorities with an excuse to deport her. Instead, they have urged a policy of conciliation and have argued that the best way to ensure Afia's safety is to inform the Home Office of her whereabouts.

Not only is this advice naive, it is also dangerous and irresponsible. It is the consequence of a touching belief in the capacity of the British state to show compassion to yet another victim of its racist immigration laws. It is also an expression of the legalistic approach to fighting deportations that characterises Labour Party campaigns. Because the law states that a person cannot be detained or deported until they are issued with a removal order, so long as they comply with the regulations, the Labour Party believes that Afia has nothing to fear from letting the Home Office know where she is living. But the last few years have proved that the law provides no protection for 'illegal immigrants'. Countless numbers have been arrested by immigration police in factory raids, at housing offices, hospitals and DISS offices and then detained in prison or at Harmondsworth detention centre pending expulsion.

We do not believe that 'hiding' is an option for Afia – but a stark necessity. The Home Office has demonstrated that it does not need to look for an 'excuse' to push through this deportation. If they wanted to allow her to stay, the authorities already have every conceivable 'excuse' to do so on compassionate grounds. But this they have resolutely refused to countenance. Such an uncompromising stand on the part of

the British state should be met with equally uncompromising resistance – not with pleas for conciliation. But for WAR, nobody would even have heard of Afia Begum: she would have been deported last September when she received her first deportation order. As long as it sits back and does nothing, the Labour Party has no right to criticise our campaign or condemn our actions.

The Home Office has so far demonstrated that it is not prepared to compromise on this particular deportation. We in WAR are equally determined to fight it to a successful conclusion. We have issued a challenge to the labour movement to declare its commitment to fighting racism – not in words – but in deeds. Afia's fate depends entirely on the willingness of the labour movement to face up to that challenge. If she loses her right to remain in Britain

permanently the blame will lie with those who have failed to make her case an issue in the labour movement. Every victory wrested from the state, however small, can only strengthen the workers' movement. Afia's removal would not only go down as another statistic on the Home Office records – it would be a graphic example of the inability of the labour movement to defend the oppressed against the attacks of the state. Let's make sure it doesn't happen!

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

★ 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